UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA
FACULDADE DE LETRAS

"So many voices urging:"
Transformation, Paradox and Continuity in the Poetry of James McAuley

Rosemary Jean Page

Orientador: Prof. Doutor Mário Vítor Fernandes Araújo Bastos, Professor Auxiliar, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa

Tese especialmente elaborada para obtenção do grau de Doutor no ramo de Estudos da Literatura e Cultura, na Especialidade de Estudos da Literatura e Cultura de Expressão Inglesa

2018

UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA

FACULDADE DE LETRAS

“So many voices urging:” Transformation, Paradox and Continuity in the Poetry of James McAuley

Rosemary Jean Page

Orientador: Prof. Doutor Mário Vítor Fernandes Araújo Bastos

Tese especialmente elaborada para obtenção do grau de Doutor no ramo de Estudos da Literatura e Cultura, na Especialidade de Estudos da Literatura e Cultura de Expressão Inglesa

Júri:

Presidente: Doutora Maria Cristina de Castro Maia de Sousa Pimentel, Professora Catedrática e Membro do Conselho Científico da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa

Vogais:

- Doutor François-Xavier Giudicelli, Maître de Conférences, Département d’Anglais, UFR Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne, França
- Doutor Kenneth David Callahan, Professor Associado, Departamento de Línguas e Culturas da Universidade de Aveiro
- Doutora Isabel Maria da Cunha Rosa Fernandes, Professora Catedrática, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa
- Prof. Doutor Mário Vítor Fernandes Araújo Bastos, Professor Auxiliar, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa
- Doutora Maria Teresa Correia Casal, Professora Auxiliar, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa

2018

Copyright information

The copyright of this thesis is held by the Universidade de Lisboa

The copyright of James McAuley is held by the James McAuley Estate

(executor Curtis Brown, Sydney)

DEDICATÓRIA

Time out of mind
And out of the heart too
Yet I am not resigned
To be what I do. […]

But I shall know this
Only in knowing
My self's Self, who is, and is
The end of my going.

"Time out of Mind" 1962
James McAuley, *Collected Poems,* 179

I have pursued rhyme, image, and metre,
Known all the clefts in which the foot may stick,
Stumbled often, stammered,
But in time the fading voice grows wise […]

Ern Malley, (James McAuley and Harold Stewart), "Petit Testament,"
"The Darkening Ecliptic," 1943/44

Acknowledgments

I would like first to express my gratitude to my supervisor Mário Vítor Fernandes Araújo Bastos for his excellent guidance, insight, advice and continuing support, without whose assistance this work would not have been possible.

I also wish to express my gratitude to staff and facilities of the following libraries in Australia who have facilitated my often long-distance research: Austlit, Australian Defence Force Academy Library, The Fisher Library (U. Sydney), National Library of Australia, Pascoal Franciscan Library (Box Hill, Vic), State Library of NSW (Special Collections), State Library of Tasmania, State Library of Victoria.

I owe especial thanks, in Australia, to Michael Ackland, David Brooks, Peter Coleman, Sarah Day, Jim Franklin, Patricia Giles, Graham Hetherington, Jennifer Livett, Lyn McCredden, Louis Magee, David Page, Peter Pierce and John Winter for their help, advice and information. I also thank the teaching staff at the Department of English and American Studies at the University of Lisbon, and my fellow researchers who have provided support, encouragement and inspiration, and also Dorothy Alves and Margarida Oliveira.

Finally, I especially thank my family Carlos, Frances and Thomas, and my friends who have always supported me and given me sound advice.

Abstract (English)

This dissertation addresses the paradoxical work of the Australian poet James McAuley, (1917-76) known for his polemic "anti-modernism" as co-inventor of an anti-surrealist hoax poet (Ern Malley) and subsequent neo-classical verse, but also for an inward lyric poetry using modernist, imagist forms. Through a sequential close reading, I underline the diversity, strength and consistency of this important poet, showing how McAuley's "anti-modernist" phase, and his many experiments, revisions and transformations, were produced by an antithetical impulse in search for an adequate poetics, a knowledge of self and how best to be a poet in his own time. An extensive analysis of McAuley texts, including unpublished work, shows how such transformation was generated through cycles of response to and against the cultural, literary and artistic background of the poet's time, in a dialectic between romantic, modernist, avant-garde and realist impulses.

A consistent, if unpremeditated, pattern of transformation is observed in McAuley's use of different successive voices evolving in his early modernist work from the nature observer, urban wanderer, to the controversial parodist, marking McAuley's statement against surrealism. During the 1950s McAuley shifted to neoclassical genres and dialogues, in his celebratory Christian-lyricism and the seventeenth-century focus of his epistle "A Letter to John Dryden" and the heroic characters of his modern epic *Captain Quiros.* His turn "against the grain," was abandoned, surprisingly, in the mid-1960s for a contemporary autobiographical approach, exploring personal history, and in his last poems of the 1970s, for a seeming return to his early neo-symbolist lyricism, and also the realist voice of the stoic nature-observer.

The dissertation traces thematic and symbolic constants, McAuley's insistence on formal craftsmanship, the search for an image-based symbolism, and, as a cosmopolitan Australian poet, ongoing questions about identity and culture, place and its differentiation, as well as an energising quest for order and a metaphysical element in the mid-twentieth-century.

Australian literature / twentieth-century poetry / place / influence / voice

Portuguese abstract

Esta dissertação aborda a obra do poeta australiano James McAuley (1917-76), conhecido pela polémica "anti modernismo" enquanto coinventor de um poeta anti surrealista, mas também pela poesia íntima e lírica usando formas modernistas e imagistas. Apesar de se tratar de uma leitura sequencial de proximidade, sublinha-se a diversidade e consistência deste importante poeta, mostrando como a fase "anti modernista" e as muitas experiências, revisões e transformações foram produzidas por um impulso antitético em busca de uma poética adequada, do conhecimento do eu e da forma de ser poeta no seu tempo. Uma análise extensiva da obra mostra como tal transformação foi gerada por ciclos de resposta e oposição ao contexto cultural, literário e artístico do tempo, numa dialética entre impulsos românticos, modernistas, *avant-garde* e realistas.

Um padrão consistente, mas não premeditado, de transformação observa-se na utilização de vozes sucessivas que vão, na obra inicial modernista, do observador da natureza e vagabundo urbano, até ao parodista contra o surrealismo. Posteriormente, mudou para géneros e diálogos neoclássicos no lirismo comemorativo cristão, no foco seiscentista da epístola "A Letter to John Dryden" e nas personagens heroicas do épico moderno *Captain Quiros*. Esta postura "contra a corrente" foi abandonada, surpreendentemente, em meados da década de 1960, preferindo um tema mais contemporâneo e autobiográfico explorando a história pessoal e, na década de 1970, num aparente retorno ao lirismo neossimbolista inicial e à voz realista do observador da natureza.

Esta dissertação explora constantes tópicas, simbólicas e temáticas, a insistência de McAuley na competência formal, a busca de um simbolismo baseado em imagens e questões permanentes sobre identidade e cultura, o lugar e a sua diferenciação, assim como uma estimulante procura da ordem e de um elemento metafísico em meados do século XX.

Literatura australiana / poesia do século XX / lugar / influência / voz

RESUMO (Extended Portuguese abstract)

Esta dissertação de doutoramento aborda a obra diversificada de James McAuley (1917-76), poeta australiano do século XX conhecido sobretudo, se bem que negativamente, pela polémica "anti modernismo" como coinventor de um poeta anti surrealista fictício (Ern Malley) e posteriormente como autor de poesia neoclássica. Contudo, é menos conhecido pela sua poesia íntima e lírica com um estilo modernista e imagista. Uma dialética contínua, muitas vezes contraditória, entre o romântico, o modernista e elementos realistas posteriores nas ideias e poéticas em constante evolução é acentuada pela herança dividida de um poeta australiano fortemente atraído pelo cosmopolita, mas incapaz de resistir a um discurso ligado ao local. Devido a essa divisão e à plasticidade de forma e ideias, McAuley é considerado um poeta de paradoxos.

Inicialmente, o meu interesse pela obra de McAuley relacionava-se com os seus poemas sobre exploradores espanhóis e portugueses, relevantes na Austrália em meados do século XX como teorias alternativas à "descoberta" do continente australiano (*Terra Australis*) pelo Ocidente. O interesse do poeta por questões ligadas às identidades australianas incluiu um encontro inicial com o pós-colonialismo, assim como com a diferenciação local e regional.

Esta análise representativa e sequencial ilumina a diversidade, força e consistência deste importante poeta. Ao seguir o percurso das suas transformações literárias, afirma que, em vez de polémico, o desenvolvimento da obra poética de McAuley foi impulsionado por uma originalidade consistente e antitética que o levou a escrever contra a corrente do discurso dominante. A fase "anti modernista" de McAuley e as suas experiências, revisões e transformações foram produzidas por um espírito de demanda rumo a uma poética coerente, a um conhecimento do eu e da melhor forma de ser um poeta no seu tempo. Uma análise mais detalhada de textos poéticos e críticos mostra como tal transformação foi gerada por ciclos de resposta e oposição ao contexto cultural, literário e artístico da época, ou seja, o modernismo, o *avant-garde* e os modelos dos anos sessenta de poesia pessoal e realista. Não sendo o primeiro trabalho a observar as qualidades camaleónicas de McAuley, esta é a primeira tentativa de oferecer um estudo sistemático das mutações e do tema emergente da transformação através da sua poesia e ensaios. Na terceira fase, a partir do começo da década de 1960, o tema associado da viagem ou demanda torna-se uma busca interior pela compreensão do eu. Os temas recorrentes ligados a impulsos para a transformação, em particular do início da fase intermédia (década de 1950), são trabalhados até se tornarem um

símbolo de criatividade na última fase. Esses temas são centrais à compreensão do compromisso enérgico de McAuley com o seu tempo e o seu lugar, mostrando um poeta que nunca se queria repetir, apesar de estar profundamente empenhado em cada período consecutivo, em cada reinvenção.

A chave para compreender a faceta "paradoxal" de McAuley reside em não ser uma voz, mas muitas. Iniciou a sua produção literária como poeta lírico, intuitivo e modernista em meados da década 1930 e início da de 1940. Envolveu-se na paródia à vanguarda, colaborando na criação do poeta anti surrealista fictício Ern Malley (1944), uma controvérsia literária local com repercussões internacionais. Contra a corrente do seu tempo, sublinhando a seriedade do que tinha sido iniciado como paródia, fez experiências com formas poéticas tradicionais, prosódia e ideias, incluindo formas impessoais neoclássicas e poemas discursivos. Procurou a objetividade e universalidade contra aquilo que considerou uma excessiva subjetividade contemporânea e submissão ao inconsciente. Na segunda parte da carreira, em meados dos anos sessenta, McAuley desviou-se discretamente, surpreendentemente, para uma expressão poética pessoal mais contemporânea, incluindo formas mais abertas.

A receção literária da sua obra ainda é dominada pela visão negativa manchada pela "polémica" e conservadorismo, resultante de uma perceção persistente de "anti modernismo" na "experiência" Ern Malley e no seu deliberado tradicionalismo "fora de moda" na década de 1950. Não está em causa a competência literária de McAuley.

Esta dissertação mostra como um padrão consistente, se bem que não premeditado, de transformação é enunciado através da utilização de diferentes sujeitos ou vozes sucessivos que vão, na obra inicial modernista, do observador da natureza e do vagabundo urbano até ao parodista que marca o momento em que McAuley se volta contra o surrealismo. Na década de 1950 mudou para vozes e géneros neoclássicos na epístola controversa dirigida ao poeta do século XVII John Dryden, no polémico ensaio sobre a modernidade, no lirismo comemorativo cristão e nos personagens e narrador do épico moderno *Captain Quiros*. Esta aparente postura "contra a corrente" foi abandonada, surpreendentemente, em meados da década de 1960, preferindo um tema mais contemporâneo e autobiográfico e explorando a história pessoal. Também o foi nos seus últimos poemas da década de 1970, nos modelos poéticos da tradução que fez de Georg Trakl, num aparente retorno ao lirismo neossimbolista

inicial e também ao realismo-naturalismo, e no estoico observador da natureza dos poucos conhecidos poemas de Coles Bay.

A obra de McAuley exibe constantes tópicas, simbólicas e temáticas, insistências na competência formal, busca de linguagem e formas simbólicas e, como poeta australiano cosmopolita, preocupações sobre questões de identidade e cultura, com o lugar e a sua diferenciação. É unida por uma estimulante busca da ordem, de um elemento metafísico no mundo de outra forma secular e materialista de meados do século XX. Esta análise sequencial mostra como, sem desaparecer completamente, o grau de dialética e paradoxo diminui à medida que a obra de McAuley se liberta das formas e impulsos anteriores, evoluindo em direção a um estilo mais estável caraterizado pelo poema curto e um simbolismo conciso, dentro de uma perspetiva realista predominantemente meditativa.

Esta dissertação aborda a questão da receção da obra de McAuley, incluindo tentativas de o designar como simbolista/decadente, (anti) modernista, neoclássico, neoromântico, realista ou naturalista, baseada em valiosas críticas à obra do autor. Também oferece uma leitura objetiva da obra na sua evolução e mudança das vozes. A análise apresenta uma perspetiva original utilizando materiais negligenciados nos estudos abrangentes anteriores, em particular os poemas em colaboração do poeta fictício Em Malley, a tradução que McAuley fez da poesia de Georg Trakl, os seus poemas tardios sobre a natureza de Coles Bay e a obra não publicada, em particular a sua tese de mestrado sobre o simbolismo e outros escritos pessoais.

Reconhecendo que a reputação de McAuley continua associada ao seu chamado "anti modernismo" da fase intermédia, este trabalho afirma que, mesmo as experiências tradicionalistas, pertencem ao diálogo sobre o modernismo tardio na Austrália e a um discurso mais vasto sobre desafios poéticos em meados do século XX, sobre a natureza da imagem e do simbolismo, subjetividade e técnica poética. Em vez de sufocar a criatividade literária, a obra deste poeta australiano, complexo e talentoso, pode ser vista, na sua mutação formal constante, como estabelecendo ligações férteis com diversos movimentos literários, do simbolismo no início do século XX ao confessionalismo e poesia do lugar das décadas de 1960 e 1970, preparando o caminho para sucessivos poetas australianos. A poética de McAuley, constantemente em revisão, está dividida, mas adquire tensão e riqueza ao pertencer a diferentes mundos.

Literatura australiana / poesia do século XX / lugar / influência / voz

Table of Contents

	Introduction	**1**
1	The First Apprenticeships: 1934-39	**11**
2	Adrift in Modernism: Aesthetics and Revolution (1939-43)	**39**
3	Hoax, Experiment, Mask: The Poetry of Ern Malley (1943-44)	**61**
4	The Turn to Exploration: History, Geography, Cosmography (1942-1945)	**83**
5	The Quest for Tradition: Art, Society, and Metaphysics (1946-1953)	**111**
6	The Poetry of Christendom (1951-1956)	**139**
7	Writing Against the Grain (1956-1959) (The End of Modernity, 1959)	**165**
8	The "Out of Fashion" Sea Voyage of *Captain Quiros* (1958-1960)	**181**
9	The Journey South (1961-1969)	**227**
10	The Darkening Pastoral (1970-1973)	**261**
11	The Sister Arts (1973-1976)	**297**
	Conclusion	**323**
	Bibliography	**333**
Appendices	Paintings and Images:	**377**
	Albrecht Dürer. *Innsbruck 1494-1497*	
	Franz Marc. *Tower of Blue Horses*	
	Patricia Giles. Watercolour "Courting swans," facing "Swans on Moulting Lagoon" by James McAuley.	
	James McAuley. Calligraphy "Swans on Moulting Lagoon," facing Patricia Giles "Courting Swans."	

Abbreviations

Ackland Michael Ackland, *Damaged Lives: The Damaged Men: The Precarious Lives of James McAuley and Harold Stewart* (2001)

Coleman Peter Coleman, *The Heart of James McAuley* (1980)

CP *Collected Poems 1936-1970* (1971)

CP94 *Collected Poems* (1994)

EM *The End of Modernity* (1959)

DE "The Darkening Ecliptic" (1944) in *Angry Penguins,* 6, Autumn 1944

De Berg Hazel de Berg interview with James McAuley (1975)

GR *The Grammar of the Real* (1975)

HH *The Hero and the Hydra* (1948)

JM *James McAuley, Poetry, Essays and Personal Commentary* (1988), Ed. L. Kramer

SP *James McAuley: Selected Poems* (1963,1967)

MAV *A Map of Australian Verse* (1975)

MLN *Music Late at Night: Poems 1970-1973* (1976)

Morphett Morphett interview of James McAuley, *Spectrum*, ABC radio (25/9/1966)

McAuley papers Norma McAuley Papers, ML MS 7920, State Library of New South Wales

NLA National Library of Australia

Notebook James McAuley notebook, McAuley papers

Primer *A Primer of English Versification* (1966)

Quiros *Captain Quiros* (1964)

Santamaria Catherine Santamaria interview with James McAuley (May 1976)

"SEP" "Symbolism: An Essay in Poetics"

SLNSW State Library of New South Wales

SLV State Library of Victoria

SuS *Surprises of the Sun* (1969)

TG *Time Given* (1976)

Thompson John Thompson interview, "Poetry in Australia: James McAuley," *Southerly*, (27/2/1967)

UA *Under Aldebaran* (1946)

VC *A Vision of Ceremony* (1956)

WO *A World of its Own* (1977)

This thesis follows, as closely as possible, the Guidelines of the Faculty of Arts, and the MLA Handbook, 8th edition, 2016. In citing De Berg I refer to the oral recording number on the transcript (eg 11,328). For citing McAuley's often undated letters to Dorothy Auchterlonie (Dorothy Green Papers) I refer to Green's system of notation (A, B etc). Where possible I use in-text citation, for longer references I use footnotes.

INTRODUCTION

James McAuley, regarded as one of the important Australian poets of the mid-to-late twentieth-century, remains a complex of seeming paradoxes, regarded variously as representing the "second wave of modernism"[1] in Australia in the 1940s, but predominantly as an anti-modernist, formalist poet, Catholic convert, polemic and critic and editor of a conservative literary magazine. Known internationally for a conservative poetic neo-classicism linked with his apprehension of the "horrors of modernity" and his turn to the "dubious haven" of the church,[2] in Australia he is still best known for his controversial anti-modernist collaboration in the dazzling surrealist parody, the "Ern Malley" hoax poems of 1944, which he dismissed, but which nonetheless remain a celebrated feature of Australian literary culture. He is also admired, though less known as one of the most "inward and subtle of Australian poets."[3] He was born in Australia in 1917 towards the end of the early modernist period and died in 1976 at a time when post-colonial concerns were emerging in Australia. Writing in 1970 Vivian Smith, six years before McAuley's death thought it was too early to judge the work of the poet who showed such promise in the 1940s.[4] Now one hundred years after his birth and forty since his death, it is opportune to review his achievement.

The poet's work is more diverse than is generally known. McAuley started his literary production as an intuitive but also modernist lyric poet in the mid-1930s and vibrant early-1940s of Australia's delayed modernist phase, strongly influenced by T.S. Eliot, and then by R.M. Rilke. After his involvement in avant-garde parody – the Ern Malley poems – he turned "against the [contemporary] grain,"[5] in adopting traditional poetic forms, prosody and ideas, experimenting with impersonal, neo-classical forms, including intellectually conceived discursive poems. He pursued objectivity and universality in contrast to a prevalent interest in subjective and unconscious modes, a course promulgated in his extensive critical writing. In turn, in the third phase of his poetic career from the early-1960s, he shifted quietly, surprisingly, to a more contemporary confessional poetic expression, mainly though not always using traditional poetic or prosodic forms.

---

[1] H.M. Green. Letter to McAuley, 15 March 1944. Green Papers, NLA.
[2] "Australian Poetry." *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics.* ed. Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan, Princeton UP, 1993, 108.
[3] David Bradley. "James McAuley: The Landscape of the Heart." 1976, 444.
[4] Vivan Smith. *James McAuley: Australian Writers and their Work*. 1970, 3, 40.
[5] James McAuley. "The Grinning Mirror." *The End of Modernity*, 1959, 65.

An ongoing, contradictory, dialectic between romantic, modernist and finally realist elements in the poet's evolving ideas and poetics is accentuated by the divided heritage of an Australian poet strongly attracted to the cosmopolitan but unable to resist a discourse with the local. For such dividedness, and plasticity in form and ideas he is perceived as a poet of paradox.

The first phase of the youthful McAuley's work, from 1936-1944, places him in the literary and intellectual context of modernism. T.S. Eliot's profound impact is recorded in the young poet's 1937 essay on Eliot, following his first acquaintance with "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock."[6] Also important is the divergent influence of the German-language decadent poet and proto-modernist Rilke, who McAuley was reading in 1938, arguably, in the terms of critic Harold Bloom, McAuley's first "master." Important local influences include the cosmopolitan compatriot precursor, the symbolist Christopher Brennan, and the Australian Jindyworobak nationalist movement which pursued local topics, themes and imagery. By the end of this phase (1944) McAuley emerges as a recognised, modernist poet, responding both to local themes and to avant-garde influences which had reached Australia in the early 1940s, evident in early poems inspired by modernist visual arts – Franz Marc of *Der Blaue Reiter* ("The Blue Horses," *CP*, 7)" and by the Renaissance painter Albrecht Dürer ("Durer: [sic] Innsbruck, 1495," "DE," 8).

Surrealism, which arrived in war-time Australia in the early 1940s, represents a turning point in the young poet's work. The English New Apocalypse poets were vigorously promoted by the avant-garde, Adelaide and then Melbourne-based, literary magazine *Angry Penguins*, (1940-46) edited by the young South Australian poet Max Harris. McAuley's now notorious response was the less receptive than combative production of the collaborative "Ern Malley" hoax poems written spontaneously in 1943 with work-colleague, poet and school friend Harold Stewart to "test" its young editor Harris. In what is still a divisive issue in Australian letters, Harris's reputation as avant-garde editor was compromised by his support for and publication of the fabricated Ern Malley poems (1944), allegedly thrown together in a few hours, yet whose literary quality is still attested to in current anthologies.

The initially positive reception of McAuley's early modernist poetics of *Under Aldebaran* (1946), shifted to strongly negative, following the "Ern Malley" "experiment," (1944) for which he and Harold Stewart were incorrectly described as "grey, sour, hostile

[6] McAuley. "The Journey of the Magus." *Hermes*, 43.1,1937, 12-17.

academics"[7] (they were high-spirited twenty-six year-old army officers), charged with having committed "violent anti-modernist oppression"[8] and with having set back modernism in Australia. This arguable "jest" triggered the deliberate commencement of McAuley's journey "against the grain" both in the exploration of genres, forms and especially ideas about the nature of man and society. A "tepid" reception carried over to the unfashionable formalism of his Christian lyricism in *A Vision of Ceremony* (1956) ("[…] freed from all tension, all complexites [sic] of mire and blood").[9] During this second phase, following his conversion to Catholicism in 1952 after intense reading on anthropology, and on the western tradition of Christianity, the poet developed a theory of impersonality and universality in poetry. This is supported in an anti-romantic poetics in his polemic essay "The Magian Heresy" (1957) which extends his critique of excessive subjectivity beyond Australia to hieratic poets within the western romantic tradition, including the symbolists, and notably Rimbaud.[10] There was an equally negative reception to the "dead," cool classicism of McAuley's anachronistic, "Renascence" [*sic*] modern epic poem *Captain Quiros* (1964), his last neo-classical exercise, retelling the myth of the Portuguese navigator who led the search for *Terra Australis* with the last Spanish expeditions of the early seventeenth-century. Nonetheless *Captain Quiros*, his most important Christian poem, represented his serious if not first engagement with emerging questions of "post-colonial sacredness"[11] in Australia, and is a key to understanding the "haunted, homeless and displaced register" (Ashcroft et al 105) that permeates even the early poetry.

Poet Vincent Buckley noted significant variation from the early 1960s: "[…] remarkable changes in the tone and emphases […]"[12] and Smith "the end of another stage in the poet's life"[13] in McAuley's shift, in his third phase (1961-76) to the surprisingly contemporary autobiographical, colloquial voice of the series "On the Western Line" in *Surprises in the Sun* (1969). This phase represents a move from the journey out to a journey within, an addressing of the self, memory, personal history and, increasingly, the present. The new poems received a strongly positive response as did his last work in the next decade *Music Late at Night* (1976) and *Time Given* (1976) enriched with his reading of the Austrian expressionist Georg Trakl. Returning full-circle, he had seemingly revived the concise if

[7] Max Harris. "The Hoax." in *Ern Malley Collected Poems*, 16.
[8] Philip Mead. *Networked Language: Cultural History in Australian Poetry*. 2008, 92.
[9] Vincent Buckley. "Classicism and Grace." 1957, 194.
[10] McAuley developed in parallel his polemic discourses on modernity published in *EM*.
[11] Bill Ashcroft. Frances Devlin-Glass, Lyn McCredden. "Displaced: James McAuley's Haunted Poetics." 2009, 105.
[12] Vincent Buckley. "James McAuley: The Man and the Poet." 1960, 15.
[13] Vivian Smith. *James McAuley*. 1970, 26.

accessible modernist-symbolist poetics and submerged stoic voice of *Under Aldebaran* (1946), as well as the very different, realist, laconic nature-observer poetics of his parallel Coles Bay poems (*A World of its Own*, 1977). While frequently labelled as a classicist, even in his most classical poem *Captain Quiros*, McAuley paradoxically remains one of the most inward of Australian poets. While his literary craftsmanship is not in dispute in the broader body of his work, most praise is reserved for his earlier and later lyric imagist-symbolist poetics, which are often compared and, ironically, for the Ern Malley collaboration which he devalued and disowned.

A somewhat negative view of a tainted "polemicism" and conservatism still dominates his literary reception, deriving from a combination of factors, some of which are literary – mainly in relation to his parodic avant-garde stance in the Ern Malley "experiment" and his concerted "out-of-fashion" neo-classicism of the 1950s, as well as non-literary factors, associated with his cosmopolitanism and the increasingly conservative, outspoken politics that overshadowed his late poetics. As recently as 2009, McCredden with Ashcroft and Devlin-Glass, have associated McAuley's negative reception with his choice of traditional forms in the 1950s and an implicit cosmopolitanism evident in what they see as his post-colonial dialectic between the binaries of "Europe and Australia, institutions and individuality, tradition and modernity, religious belief and the secular world,[14] suggesting that McAuley always fell on the one (wrong) side. While such argument is tenable until the end of his second phase in the late 1950s, it does not hold for the work from the 1960s when McAuley's work turned significantly to his local world and his "belief" was more shaky.

Nonetheless, the authors have recognised that McAuley's poetics, and his formulations on sacral, social and cultural questions have, in the past, been "too easily dismissed as conservatively backward-looking" (Ashcroft et al 112). McAuley's literary craftsmanship is not in dispute. To read McAuley is to see a poet alive in and highly responsive to his times, often moved by a "radical disquiet."[15] This thesis argues, in tracing the course of his literary transformation and change that rather than being merely polemic or reactionary, the Australian poet's approach to art and ideas was driven by an antithetical, adversarial originality in what was frequently a writing against the grain of the dominant discourse.

---

[14] Ashcroft et al. "Displaced." 2009, 112.
[15] R.F. Brissenden. "The Wounded Hero: James McAuley's *Collected Poems.*" *Southerly*, 32.4,1972, 269.

The objective of this thesis on the multifaceted poetry of James McAuley, is to present a more systematic view of the poet's diverse work, to connect the querying combative discourses and formal experiments evident in his second phase, the 1950s, with the different, at times, quietist search, in his earlier and later phases, for order and values in a world where they seemed lacking and for suitable expressive form. It suggests these discourses and experiments are part of a pattern of assessment, self-revision and innovation. In examining this hypothesis I follow a close sequential reading of McAuley's texts, poetic and critical, to trace patterns of change and transformation through his work, arising from significant influences, both from literature and culture, and the other arts notably painting and music, often deriving from personal experience including travel, of both Australian and international genesis. Influences traced through his work range from imitation, intertextual submersion, translation, appropriation, but also paradoxical parody, and other rejections, and shifts in new directions. I also examine how ideas outside the literary sphere, notably anthropology from McAuley's work on New Guinea, and philosophy mainly from the Christian tradition including his discussions with the Catholic missions in New Guinea, had bearing on his emerging and evolving work. McAuley pursues a poetics often at variance, but always engaging with the dominant literary models for his time, swinging between the adversarial and the highly empathetic. Mostly his favoured models are outside his time. I draw especially on McAuley's own critical dialectics derived from his eclectic reading, generally in reaction against contemporary trends. These include his evolving dialogue with and attempt to situate or differentiate himself, as an Australian cosmopolitan poet, within or against past and present traditions, the Classicists, the Augustans, the French symbolists (and their disciple, McAuley's first Australian model Christopher Brennan), the continental romantic movement, including Rilke who verged on modernism, of which T.S. Eliot, was the most notable early influence. Significant later influences include the confessional strain from the 1960s, notably the Russian Boris Pasternak and, in the poet's last six years, the Australian lyric nature poet John Shaw Neilson and Austrian expressionist Georg Trakl.

I am not the first to observe McAuley's multiplicity[16] of voices, nor his chameleonic adoption of different forms and styles. Mirroring the complexity of the man,[17] this analysis of the literary texts accepts, as a point of departure, recent critical recognition that there is no

[16] Cf. Lyn McCredden, 1992, Michael Cook, 1993.
[17] McAuley passed through many roles, including university poet, jazz-playing orchestrator of university reviews, teacher, war-time desk-officer, anti-modernist hoaxer, lecturer and adviser on Australian post-colonial administration of New Guinea, family man, Catholic-convert, anti-communist activist, editor of a conservative literary and general affairs magazine, university reader in poetry and later full professor.

single "McAuley of language."[18] In this argument the "voice" of the poem is associated less with the "implied author," than with the utterance of the different poems' varying subjects, as the former imposes an overly unifying approach on McAuley's work. Confirming what might be called his different poetic personalities, "*personae"* or voices it acknowledges how the multifaceted McAuley is represented twice in three recent Australian anthologies,[19] first, with collaborator Harold Stewart as Ern Malley, and second as the "orthonymic,"[20] James McAuley with poems representing his other poetic phases. Beyond the more obvious experiment of the Malley parody, I trace how McAuley's journey of conscious and sometimes unconscious poetic transformation is enunciated through the use of different poetic *personae*, masks or voices, arguably "a conventionalization of his own experiences, his life."[21] This sequential analysis aims to throw light on an ongoing, organic rather than premeditated, process of evolution in response to influences, the poet's own exacting demands, rejections and new directions, the experiment with different forms, and what I call variant "voices" and in the early work, *personae* or "masks." Such analysis aims to explain paradoxical qualities but also evident consistencies through his developing poetics.

In his first modernist phase (1936-46) in *Under Aldebaran* (1946), I trace the emergence of such *personae* or voices from that of the naïve nature-observer, (akin to the rustic poet John Clare and William Blake), the urban wanderer or *flâneur*, (echoing Stefan George, Baudelaire, Eliot and Rilke), the vertiginous, modernist "revolutionary poetic"[22] of a "disappointed radical"[23] (inspired by painters Albrecht Dürer and Franz Marc). Other voices included the embryonic literary theorist of his MA Thesis on symbolism (1940) – ever accompanying and sometimes dominating the poetic production, and the parodic surrealism of the avant-garde "Ern Malley" *persona* (1944). In McAuley's divergent second phase (mid-1940s-1960) a seemingly anti-modernist stance can be seen with the representation of heroic figures, including explorer, in neo-classical forms as in "The Hero and the Hydra" (1949) consolidated in the decade 1948 – 1958 in a writing against his time, using neglected voices

[18] McCredden. *James McAuley*. Oxford UP, 1992, 29.
[19] *The Literature of Australia*, (ed. Nicholas Jose, Norton, 2009) has three Ern Malley poems including one solely by McAuley ("Dürer: Innsbruck") and 6 by McAuley. *Australian Poetry Since 1788*. ed. Geoffrey Lehmann and Robert Gray, (UNSW Press, 2011) has 5 poems by Ern Malley and 10 by McAuley. *The Bloodaxe Book of Poetry*, ed. John Tranter, and Philip Mead, 1991, includes all 16 poems by Ern Malley and 19 by McAuley.
[20] The term "orthonym" is used to describe the poetry of Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa written in his own name in distinction to that written in his various masks or "heteronyms."
[21] René Wellek and Austin Warren. *The Theory of Literature*. 1949, 73.
[22] McAuley quoted by Ackland. *Damaged Men: The Precarious Lives of James McAuley and Harold Stewart.* 2001, 65.
[23] Manning Clark. *The Quest for Grace*. 1991, 129.

and genres. Notable are the "out-of-fashion" voices of the seventeenth-century Drydenesque interlocuteur ("A Letter to John Dryden,"1953), the celebratory Christian lyricist (*A Vision of Ceremony*, 1956), and the intellectual cosmographer in his ongoing cultural and literary critique of modernity (*The End of Modernity, EM,* 1959). The poetic counterpart to such critique is seen in the character of the heroic Renaissance Catholic explorer and his authorial narrator in the eponymous narrative *Captain Quiros* written between 1958-1960.

In McAuley's third phase (1963-1976) a remarkable, if unheralded, turnabout is evident in the poet's approximation of contemporary form and style. New, quite different, more contemporary voices reflect an inward or more local journeying, the thematics of a retrospective self, or revenant. The poet's subjects quietly assume an intimate, confessional, unpoetic voice, the seeming mask of a private self, expressed predominantly in simpler, more colloquial, pared lyric forms (*Surprises of the Sun,* 1969). In parallel, marking continuity rather than change, can be seen the theorist on prosody and literary form in McAuley's *A Primer of English Versification* (1966*).* This pattern continues through his last years, 1970-1976, in two parallel strands. The first is the voice of the "poignant singer of mortality"[24] of *Music Late at Night*, (1976) and *Time Given* (1976), ill, aging, resigned stoic, alternately traveller, trespasser and exile figure, employing a lyric imagist-symbolism, drawing strongly on the voice of his romantic-decadent precursor Georg Trakl whose work he translated. The second voice from this period (*WO*) is that of the naïve nature-observer, the field-naturalist, expressed in pared, simple, mainly free verse, marking the inheritance from McAuley's realist precursors – Wordsworth, Crabbe, perhaps again Clare, also Horace, and the painters Van Eyck, and especially Albrecht Dürer. This thesis argues that through these different phases McAuley can be seen as aware of and responding to the "many voices urging,"[25] as he himself admitted as a mature poet, explaining the title of this dissertation. It traces the emergence of successive rather than overlapping voices, reflecting significant innovation and transformation.

This analysis also traces continuities through the diverse work in the dynamic of change and thematics. Linked to change is the theme of journey or quest, which after the early and middle periods is absorbed in his final phase from the early 1960s into a search or journey within, for a discovery and understanding of the self. It examines how recurring themes and *motifs* associated with "transformation," from his middle period (1950s) onwards, as well as his

---

[24] Ashcroft et al. "Displaced."109

[25] John Thompson. "Poetry in Australia: James McAuley." *Southerly*, 27. 2, 105.

revisions in form and language, are worked into an important theme for and symbol of creativity. Other recurring themes traced relate to growth and wholeness, home, place, and poetic vocation, and their opposites. The work addresses how from his earliest poetic and critical engagement the poet attends to the role of the image in the creation of a resonant symbolism both in his own poetics and also more generally. This carries through to the very last poems on the poetics of transformation in the ekphrastic poems of *WO* where the poet considers the realist artistic maxims of the classical Horace and the Renaissance painter Dürer.

The study gives most attention to a textual close reading and analysis of poetic form including prosody, as that coincides with the poet's overriding orientations and the prevalent approach of the period in which he was writing. Harold Bloom's theory of influence,[26] concerning poetic history or intra-poetic relationships, has been particularly helpful in examining the early influences of McAuley's literary masters and ancestors, notably issues of intertextuality, and this poet's "strong" reaction, both early in his career but also in his later work (Chapters 1 and 10). The work of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault is relevant to questions of authorship in the Ern Malley poems (Chapter 3). I pursue a loosely "historicist" approach in addressing the poet's evolving biographical and critical writing in his situation-specific, reactive prose-writing and discursive poetry of the mid-1940s to 1950s (Chapters 5-7), though do not suggest the poet surrenders authorship to the culture of the period. A post-colonial perspective helps address questions about the western encounter with the cultural other in the South West Pacific in the early explorer poems (Chapter 4) and *Captain Quiros* (Chapter 8). Comparatist, translation, as well as Bloomian readings assist discussion of McAuley's approximation to the literary Other in Chapters 1, 7 and especially 10 (the encounter with Trakl). McAuley's own rich but often antithetical critical writing offers a framework for critical assessment, notably his attempts to situate contemporary writing in a more extensive tradition. In dealing with the underlining and central question of the author and subject, I recognise that I follow the essentially Humanist assumption that the author maintains or struggles to maintain "agency" over his literary product. McAuley was strongly linked to the Humanist convention of the individual artist as controller of work, though gradually allowed a greater role for the subjective and temporal over the objective and universal. In McAuley's evolving work there is considerable play in the construction of subjects that reflect greater or lesser degrees of absorption by what might be called dominant literary cultures of his time. In terms of McAuley criticism this work tries to step away from the still pervasive focus on the neo-classical style

[26] Harold Bloom. *The Anxiety of Influence*: *A Theory of Poetry*. 1973, 2nd ed., Oxford UP, 1997.

and anti-romantic poetics of the 1950s,[27] and its tendency to overstate the paradoxical and belated in his work: it gives more focus to McAuley's still less known, later more contemporary poetry and the poetics set out in his important late essays.

James McAuley's work, poetic and critical, offers many clues about poetic intention and direction, in the diverse intertwining searches for form, self and truth. I draw upon these to relate his strong reaction to, and dialectic on, contemporary trends in literature and culture to his own work's evolution, and show how his development was, to an important degree, a product of, if also against, his own time and culture. I try to limit the intentional focus by giving strong emphasis to textual analysis of the work under consideration. In this study I also try to situate the paradoxical within McAuley's work, arising from his often self-contradictory shifts between the objective universalist traditions and the more subjective confessional traditions of his own time, and from his differing styles. This analysis only refers to McAuley's political views when necessary to understanding the literary text.

McAuley's work offers some local interest because of his poems about Spanish-Portuguese explorers, relevant in mid twentieth-century Australia to an alternative Iberian theory of the western "discovery" of the Australian continent (*Terra Australis*) in the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries. He thus engages with questions about Australian identities including one of the earliest encounters with the post-colonial, as well as with history, place and its regional differentiations. But this is only one element of the diverse work of this complex poet writing in one of the new culturally diverse English-language and post-colonial cultures who was conscious that being Australian, he belonged to a culture both new and different. He was at the same time aware of belonging to, if divided from, a main tradition not just of the English-language and culture but of a more deeply cosmopolitan European West, with its varied philosophical traditions.

McAuley's poetic work up to 1970 has been assembled in *Collected Poems: 1936-1970* (1971). The poems between 1971 and 1976 are included in *Collected Poems* (1994). The latter more complete collection is, however, out-of-print, and contains some textual inaccuracies. This study therefore refers to the 1971 collection where possible, and to the 1994 collection for the later poems, and occasionally *WO*. Some of McAuley's important poems have not been included in those collections, including the collaborative Ern Malley

[27] McCredden's *James McAuley* neglects McAuley's later essays on poetics for the early "The Magian Heresy" (1957).

poems, reflecting the author's attitude. Other poems have not been published and remain in manuscript form. While many of McAuley's early essays on literature and culture are collected in *The End of Modernity* (1959) and essays from the 1960s and 1970s in *The Grammar of the Real* (1975 and *A Map of Australian Verse* (1975), many reviews from the 1960s have not been collected. Leonie's Kramer's edited *James McAuley: Poetry, essays and personal commentary* (1988) is the most comprehensive scholarly compilation of McAuley material. A collection of many of McAuley's essays, including political, is in preparation. Generally, the McAuley scholar is faced with unpublished material – letters, notebooks, essays – dispersed across collections in Australian libraries though the bulk is contained in the McAuley Papers in the NSW State Library. Work needs to be done in dating the poems. This thesis is indebted to the work of previous scholars, critics and biographers. There have been two concise and incisive critical publications, Vivian Smith's 40-page *James McAuley* (1965/1970) and Lyn McCredden's 117-page *James McAuley* (1992). Neither give much attention to the Ern Malley poems. While Vivian Smith's sensitive reading is incomplete for not covering the fertile and divergent last six years of McAuley's work, he nonetheless considered McAuley "one of the most interesting and considerable Australian poets to emerge since the 1940s, [with] a secure place among writers of his generation."[28] This thesis gives attention to the Ern Malley poems themselves, and the subsequent 1944 statement as without them it is difficult to understand the trajectory of McAuley's work and his determination in plotting an alternative literary course. This study includes materials overlooked in McAuley publications, the poet's translations or versions of Trakl's poems, the late Coles Bay poems (*WO*), and unpublished materials – McAuley's Masters 1940 thesis on symbolism, his notebooks, lecture notes and correspondence. The invented author Ern Malley receives more focus in the three biographies. Michael Heyward dedicated a study in his *The Ern Malley Affair* (1993). Peter Coleman's *The Heart of James McAuley* (1980) and Michael Ackland's twin biography *Damaged Men: The Precarious Lives of James McAuley and Harold Stewart* (2001) offer insightful literary biographies. Cassandra Pybus' *The Devil and James McAuley* (1999) focusses on ideological biography. The Malley poems continue to attract critical attention, reflecting interest in the Pessoan poetics of mask, and have been collected in recent Australian anthologies often next to McAuley's "orthonymic" work. However, those poems represent one small part of McAuley's diverse poetics. Because of space limits I cannot explore many in the detail they deserve.

[28] Vivian Smith. *James McAuley*, 1970, 41.

1

The First Apprenticeships: 1934-1939

1.1 The Early Years

James McAuley was born in Sydney on 12 October 1917, the youngest of three children, to a lower middle-class Australian couple, Mary and Patrick McAuley. His father, a former stockman, was a small investor in properties in an expanding suburban Sydney. A bright student, McAuley taught himself to read before going to school,[1] attended public schools including the selective public school, Fort Street High School, in company with students who would be important in his own ventures and in Australian public life. He was musical, played the piano well from an early age, later playing jazz, and was a choirboy at the local church.[2] The youthful James McAuley was precocious. Between 12 and 16 he had also published twelve poems in his school journal *The Fortian*.[3] They were competent verse, using rhyme, mostly in quatrain form. His youthful picture of impressions "Shadows" depicts the railway near which he lived that would feature in his later autobiographical poetry: "The train comes by with steaming lamps / That pierce the darkness' pall; / The flicker of phantom carriages / Races 'cross the wall." One titled "Madness" foreshadows the darker topics he would later address. The dialectic between poetic creation and criticism in his essay was to offer a momentum that, together with an already determined personal quest, moved him onwards throughout his creative life in a series of transformations, metamorphoses and what might even be called rebirths.

As an aspiring poet it was normal for McAuley to be subject to strong influences. Coming to literary awareness in the late 1920s and early thirties of the twentieth-century, he was deeply drawn to the literary developments of European and American modernism. McAuley's poetic and intellectual consciousness was susceptible to other influences, not necessarily contemporary. His early writing shows the emergence of the motifs and related *personae* for quest and journey, and the linked objective of space and place, (the object of journey) that would appear throughout his work and consolidate as important themes. They contribute to an understanding of McAuley's continuing process of artistic, intellectual and spiritual metamorphosis and transformation. Following the mid twentieth-century French

---

[1] Catherine Santamaria. Interview of James McAuley. (Santamaria), 5/5/76, Tape 576, Transcript, NLA, 3.

[2] McAuley's youthful engagement with Anglican Christianity had been undermined by his reading of the anthropologist J.G. Frazer. McAuley. "My New Guinea." *JM*, 23.

[3] Nine poems were reprinted in *Quadrant,* 21, 3, March 1977, 65-67.

writer André Malraux (1901-76), the critic Harold Bloom emphasizes the openness of the young aspiring writer to all sorts of influences: "Every young man's heart […] is a graveyard in which are inscribed the names of a thousand dead artists but whose only actual denizens are a few almighty, often antagonistic ghosts. […].[4] Bloom concludes: "The poet is haunted by a voice with which words must be harmonized […]" (26). McAuley's own poetic development–thematic and stylistic, both his early and late series of apprenticeships, is strongly marked by several central "almighty, often antagonistic ghosts." McAuley's literary development can also be said to be submitted to several "voice[s] with which words [would soon] be harmonized."

As an Australian poet McAuley belongs to the intellectual European cosmopolitan tradition with his forbears the Germanic scholar and symbolist poet Christopher Brennan (1870-1932) and pioneer Australian modernist Kenneth Slessor (1901-1971). "No Australian poet before McAuley, with the exception of Brennan, was so saturated in European poetry, notably the decadentist."[5] Critic Livio Dobrez describes the early McAuley as "derivative and pretentious but full of passion."[6] McAuley's early work shows echoes of the French symbolists, the English William Blake (1857-1827), the German Stefan George (1868-1933), the Austrian Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), Christopher Brennan and the Anglo-American T.S. Eliot (1888-1965). McAuley's early poetry, while departing little from traditional forms, shows the influence of the broken, semi-musical punctuation of the symbolist Stefan George, as in the early uncollected poem "At Balmain:"

> Thin strip of moon · Discoloured sky
> Like rust · the houses humped and dark
> Along the waterfront · No sign
> Of earth-and sea-breath, foam-and-dust
> Visits disconsolate lovers in the park. [7]

McAuley's spectral, pictorial nightscape of moon, sky, and houses by the waterfront of the working-class suburb, presents an atmospheric symbolist scenario for its human inhabitants the "disconsolate lovers in the park." The "discoloured sky like rust" and houses "humped and dark" suggest closed-ness and decay, signs not of transcendence but hope withheld. This

---

[4] Bloom. *The Anxiety of Influence.* 1997*,* 26. In this passage Bloom cites and translates into English André Malraux's "La Création Artistique, III:" "Chaque coeur d'adolescent est un cimitière où figurent les noms de mille artistes morts, mais que peuplent seuls quelques grands fantômes souvent ennemis […]," 315.
[5] Heyward. *The Ern Malley Affair*. 2003, 48.
[6] Livio Dobrez. "The Three McAuleys." *Southern Review*, 9.3, 1976, 84.
[7] "At Balmain" in McAuley's undated unpublished letter to Dorothy Auchterlonie (before October 1938). Dorothy Green Papers, NLA MS 5678, Sub-series 1.4, Folder 146, BB, 1, (Green's notation).

irregularly rhymed stanza ("dark" and "park" in lines 2 and 5, and the imperfect rhyme "sky" and "sign" in lines 1 and 3), its paratactic, imagist form and rhythm halted, syncopated, by its innovative punctuation,[8] its tone of negation show how in his early work McAuley was drawn to the forms and mood of (moderate) experimental modernism.

The literary and intellectual milieu into which McAuley emerged has been well documented: his own reflections on poetics and important influences[9] are an important resource. In his school-journal article in June 1934 "Aspects of Modern Poetry,"[10] the 16-year-old, writing under his first literary "nom de plume" "J.Mc.," focussed on the modernist poets, many American (including Ezra Pound, Conrad Aiken, Marianne Moore,[11] Carl Sandberg, Hart Crane and John Crowe Ransom) and some English – Edith Sitwell and Herbert Read. He wrote: "The modernist is always trying to present something new to the world" qualifying perhaps, in anticipation of his later criticism, that "everything is risked for the sake of experiment" (24). He admired e.e. cummings' "original scheme of punctuation" in one of his love poems, praised T.S. Eliot's "perfect set of chants in "The Hollow Men" (25), acknowledging the beautiful effects of free verse "under skilled hands" (26) in lines from the proto-modernist, Imagist poet T. E. Hulme, in whose hands the image was "clear and definite not blurred or vague" (26). McAuley considered Eliot "the most important poet writing in the present day" and "the epitome of the age" (24). Though appreciative of the older poet's "fastidious and subtle style, depending largely on the association of ideas," McAuley was critical of Eliot's "elegant nihilism" (25) and of the barrier to some readers of the "intellectual quality" of such modernist poetry (25). However, he was drawn to the exciting modernist period into which he was born, asking his readers to take a reasonable interest in modern developments– "an interest which is woefully lacking [in Australia] at the time" (26). Such comments situate McAuley as a local advocate for literary modernism and are hardly those of the conservative, anti-modernist that McAuley would later be regarded.

By 1938 the 21-year-old was a published poet, and a collaborator in the Sydney University literary magazines *The Arts Journal (Arna)* and *Hermes*, the latter which he edited in 1937. After graduating, majoring in English, Latin and philosophy, during 1938 and 1939 McAuley tutored for a family in Bungendore near Canberra. His first knowledge of rural life

---

[8] McAuley. Letter to Dorothy Auchterlonie, c. September 1938. AA, 5. Attentive to prosody, McAuley asked Auchterlonie if such punctuation might cause a "dangerous restriction of rhythm."

[9] Many are compiled in *James McAuley, Poetry, essays and personal commentary*. (*JM*), ed. Leonie Kramer, 1988.

[10] McAuley. "Aspects of Modern Poetry." *The Fortian*, June 1934.

[11] In his short account of free verse in his *A Primer of English Verification* (1966) McAuley recognised Moore's use of syllabic form.

"left a considerable print […]."[12] His correspondence with fellow poet and friend Dorothy Auchterlonie (1938-1939), then editing *Hermes*, documents his interests in writing and in reading, both modern and classical, notably *The Faber Book of Modern Verse* (1936) and Rilke's *Lettres à un Jeune Poète* (1929) and *Selected Poems.*[13] These and his early uncollected publications of poetry, prose and criticism offer insight into his mutable, emerging poetic style. Influences from different sources are vested at the same time, some absorbed, many thrown off in the search for what he spoke of, once, as his "*voie*"[14] (way) – as if the poet's quest were for a "path," but perhaps also the (voice) of "*voix*"– "manner" or "style." In his first letter to Auchterlonie he wrote: "[...] my chief function in life is not to be a poet – it is to follow the paths of virtue."[15] Here McAuley probably drew on *The Path of Virtue* (the *Tao Te Ching*) by Lao Tzu (604-531 BC), arguably reflecting discussions with student friends, particularly his close literary collaborator, Harold Stewart, also a Fort Street alumni.

This first section traces style, motifs, themes, vision and the use of poetic *personae* or masks in his formative years between 1934 and 1939. Unsure of his own authorial personality, he employed several pseudonyms, "nom de plume" (or heteronym) – "Glaucon,"[16] "J.Mc." and with Harold Stewart, "Dulcie Renshaw," until eventually feeling comfortable to write under his own name. As well as for reasons of subterfuge this practice was dictated by the need, when editing the university literary journal *Hermes*, to "ghost write" a too homogeneous literary output. McAuley was aware of his borrowings: his mock review of his recent "Aspects of the Moon" (*Hermes,* 44.*3,* 1938, 29*)*, parodies it as "[...] a case of a bad attack of Heine, which, altho [sic] a variation on his usual Eliotism, does not become him very well."[17] Unbeknown to McAuley, his discourse matches the attacks by the recently-deceased Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935), in his more conservative and orthonymous mask, upon his own more experimental heteronym Álvaro de Campos.[18]

[12] Hazel de Berg. Interview of James McAuley. (De Berg), Tape 856, Transcript, NLA, 11,333.
[13] McAuley. Unpublished letter to Dorothy Auchterlonie, 19 October [1938]. CC, 3.
[14] *Ibid.*. Letter to Auchterlonie,13 October 1938. CC, 5.
[15] *Ibid*. c. September 1938. A, 1.
[16] Glaucon was Plato's *interlocuteur* in *The Republic.* It has been argued that Pessoa, like McAuley a student of the classics, learned the practice of poetic voice, *interlocuteur* or character, from his early exposure at school in Durban to the stoic philosophers.
[17] McAuley. Letter to Auchterlonie, circ. 7 November 1938. D, 4.
[18] While the OED defines "heteronym" as being "subject to the rule of another being or power," or alternate voice of a writer, the term is associated with its twentieth-century practitioner, the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa.

1.2 Early Verse

The poetry between 1935–1938 shows many “unassimilated influences.” (Smith, 1970 12) Noting the strong influence of the French symbolists, Charles Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine and Stéphane Mallarmé, Coleman describes the “voluptuous sadness” of the early poems (1980 11), a similar spirit of decadence. The mood of McAuley’s early poems tends to be crepuscular, anxious and enclosed: “[…] chaotic night / Dim with unborn sorrow which the restless stars / Shall yet shake out on a bewildered world...” (“Lines Written in Anxiety,” *Candide,* June 1937, 20). This excerpt reflects a plaintive use of sidereal symbolic (stars, dawn, night) and sensual symbols (song and singing), blending visual and musical, though in a disjointed rather than integrated landscape, to reflect the emotional life of the poems’ subjects, the “unborn sorrow” falling on a “bewildered world” (*Ibid.*). Such restlessness suggests the creative struggle of the modernist poet trying to emerge from a symbolic maze not necessarily of his own making:

> Words lose meaning, meaning words […]
> In the airless bat-blind upper dark
> At the grim daunting hour
> When words fail in the ivory tower.
> (“Preludes,” *Hermes,* 42.3, 25)

In this poem replicating a well-known Eliot title, the motif of linguistic *aporia* underlines the important influence of the older poet. This evocative, if stifling, symbolist vignette, though lacking the distinctively modernist urban scenario of Eliot’s own poem “Preludes” sees McAuley employing for the first time the important Eliotian motif and theme, the “word:” the implicit struggle to find common meaning would be a recurring trope in McAuley’s work. Such elliptical tenor explains why the realist philosopher Professor John Anderson[19] asked younger McAuley’s younger literary colleague, Donald Horne: “‘What’s McAuley trying to *say*?’ […] ‘He seems to be sad about something. But what does it *mean*?’” [20]

Partly it was the poet feeling his way out of a melancholy and vague late-romantic and symbolist mode towards the more concrete language and sentiment of modernism. The questing spirit of the late romantics was not merely a mask or *persona* tried and discarded but would remain an important element in his work. Coleman argues (1980 14) that what McAuley confessed to be his “Mallarméan” poem “Departure,” suggests a journey to the

[19] Anderson, born in Scotland, was president of the University’s Literary Society.
[20] Donald Horne. *The Education of Young Donald*. 1975, 238.

underworld to find a principle of recovery." The young poet wrote[21]of "kingdoms […] whose darkness must be fertilized:"

> In kingdoms hidden by the sun
> "Tis your bright torch shall sow the dark with seeds
> Priestess of visions which there caverned lie. ("Departure," *Candide*, 1937, 36.)

It is perhaps Mallarméan in the dream-like use of symbols of the unconsciousness to express the subject's sense of election in his poetic quest. The suggestion of an Orphic role for the young poet, and its Blakean echoes, underlines the late-romantic tenor of this early symbolist phase.[22]

1.3 Christopher Brennan

An important influence from the cusp between late romanticism and modernism was the Australian decadent-symbolist poet Christopher Brennan, the "first Australian to write within and be worthy of the great European philosophical – poetic tradition."[23] In McAuley's early poetry the crepuscular images of night, the sidereal world of the urban *flâneur*, the romantic mode associated with tropes of the heart and quest is inherited from what he later identified as his first Australian poetic "ancestor and […] master."[24] McAuley's designation of ancestor is a sign of his own romantic search for origins, an intuition of Bloom's theory of poetic origins. The Sydney-born former professor of classics, Brennan who died in poverty in 1932 when McAuley was still at school, had won a doctoral scholarship to study classics in Berlin, and corresponded with the French symbolist poet Mallarmé. Brennan had made famous the elegiac voice of the homeless wanderer in the long poem "The Wanderer" (*Poems 1913*), written between 1901-2, which McAuley would later cite in his 1957 essay on the older poet: "[…] I know I am / the wanderer of the ways of all the worlds."[25]

The *persona* established in the strong "I" voice, drawn from a rapport with German romanticism, uncannily intuits Brennan's disturbed latter years. In his MA thesis of 1940,[26] McAuley linked the Australian poet ("one century later in Sydney") with Novalis, as the poet who "armed with his 'Logos' was indeed 'en état de créateur absolu.'"[27] The direct and literal representation of the world evoked by "The Wanderer" *persona,* with its logical narrative,

---

[21] McAuley. Letter to Auchterlonie, 22 November 1938. F, 2.
[22] Cf.1.6. (pp.24-26) & 8.16 (224).
[23] *The Australian Dictionary of Biography* http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/brennan-christopher-john-5345, 20 June 2013.
[24] McAuley. "Homage to Chris Brennan." *Southerly*, 18. 3, 1957, 135-136. Cf. 7.10 (178).
[25] *Ibid*. 141.
[26] McAuley's "Symbolism: An Essay in Poetics" (SEP) is discussed in 2.2-2.4 (40-45).
[27] *Ibid*. II, 2. The citation is from a French expression used by Novalis.

contrasts with the ambivalent metaphors of McAuley's earlier symbolist models, even though the mood is comparable. Brennan's questing spirit, tinged with the romantic sublime,[28] is celebrated in hyperbolic, heroic metaphor ("The unimagined tumult of the blood") in McAuley's youthful tribute to Brennan ("In Honour of Chris. Brennan,"1938) six years after the famous poet's death in poverty in inner Sydney in 1932:

> Who knows what tidal impulse sweeps
> The unimagined tumult of the blood . . .
> Peace will come only when the veins subside
> To that whose fate is not shut up or spent […] (*Hermes,* 44. 1, 1938.19)

Brennan is lauded in grandiloquent terms[29] echoing the older poet's diction and more generally an exalted romantic concept of "genius," and his metaphoric "window" illuminated with its "lamps of earth:"

> Seen from afar,
> This too no glory has but of a star;
> But nor that heaven of galaxies is worth
> One Genius's window, bright with lamp of earth […] (*Ibid.*)

The poem shifts to concrete modernist urban imagery: "See from the train. – Recumbent suburbs turn / A face that's Nubian upon earth's shoulder […]." A surreal quality of disconnection and disjunction, confirms that, in McAuley's early work, modernism was already evident in 1930s Australia. McAuley's lines recall the modernist in Brennan, who, in "Towards the Source," drew from the eighteenth-century German romantic Novalis and from the French symbolists, notably that poet of the city, Baudelaire, as in the following lines:

> The yellow gas is fired from street to street
> Past rows of heartless homes and hearths unlit
> Dead churches, and the unending pavement beat […] (*Poems 1913*)

McAuley wrote that with these lines: "We are, with differences of style, in Eliot's *Waste Land."*[30] McAuley's early Brennanesque lines are evident in urban motifs of pavements and similarly crespuscular "soft yellow station lamps" in McAuley's own "Out of Childhood" (1938):

> The late sky clears – wet pavements shine
> With hard blue light – shrill mother-cries
> Twang on quick ears – then fading sight

[28] Paul Kane. *Australian Poetry: Romanticism and Negativity*. Cambridge UP, 1996, 81.
[29] Frank Kermode has argued that Brennan's work as late romantic-symbolist is "deprived of classic status only because it is trapped in the iconography and diction of an age too early […]," "The European View of Christopher Brennan." 1961, 60.
[30] McAuley. "Homage to Chris Brennan."1957, 136.

Intense, intenser dusk till down the line
Soft yellow station-lamps bud for the night.[31]

Brennan is clearly the intermediary between the French symbolists and McAuley. Perhaps from that influence, McAuley's poem echoes urban motifs of Eliot's "Preludes:" "A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps./ And then the lighting of the lamps."[32] Donald Horne thought of those lines when he anticipated first meeting the charismatic McAuley: "In 'J.Mc's' verse the late sky cleared and wet pavements shone with hard blue light; the night was fearful and empty; dawn burnt low and pale upon its wick."(1975 224) Brennan's work also reflected McAuley's own quest for creative power, a "solipsism"[33] which, however, he would later reject.

1.4 T.S. Eliot

In the mid-to-late 1930s McAuley participated in the University's Literary Society headed by the first professor of philosophy, John Anderson, pioneer of empirical Australian realism. Freud and the modernists Joyce, Pound and Eliot were the focus for exploring logical approaches to understanding literature. Eliot was increasingly criticised after his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism in 1927. In 1934, Harold Stewart described Eliot as "out of touch with his time," his mind "following the most arid of academic roads, viewing *The Waste Land* as "[…] the most thoroughgoing piece of intellectual snobbery in the annals of modern literature […]."[34] P.R. Stephenson's *The Australian Mercury* (1935) attacked the: "nastiness, obscurity, formlessness and occasional flat triviality" of Eliot's poetry."[35] In Eliot's defence, the same year, McAuley published the first poem under his initials "J.Mc." – "Homage to T.S.Eliot." While beginning as a seeming pastiche of Eliot's tawdry urbanised *personae* and situations – "[…] His face is symptomatic, stale. / Hinting dark nocturnal ills, / Cigarettes and liver pills […]" – it expresses sympathy for Eliot's philosophical preoccupation with questions of time and meaning:

[…] But I shall still with downcast eyes
Adore the Abstract Entities;
Observing all their avatars,
The moribund Particulars –
The curving chin, the wandering hair,
The eyes– Plotinus' ancient snare,

[31] "Out of Childhood" is one of "Four Poems from a Series." *Hermes*, 44. 2, 1938, 10-11.
[32] T.S. Eliot. "Preludes." *Collected Poems, 1909-1962*, Faber, 1963, 23.
[33] McAuley. *Christopher Brennan, Australian Writers and their Work*. Oxford UP, 1973, 49.
[34] Harold Stewart. "T.S. Eliot and the New World." *Hermes*, 40.2, 1934, 9-11.
[35] A.E. Pearce. "Modernist Poetry." *The Australian Mercury*, 1.1, 1935, 77.

Circean island of the quest, the mystery of life and suffering
Which all must pass, where none may rest.
(*Hermes*, 41.3, 1935, 23.)

The allusion to Plotinus' "snare," associated with the "eyes," may refer to the fact that the third-century A.D. Plotinus, a presence in Eliot's work including through St. Augustine, looked at times sceptically, as a Neoplatonist, on the bewitching world of appearances. Such world, including Plotinus, would also be part of McAuley's own quest, including in his Master's research on symbolism. (SEP.I ,46)

McAuley's main statement on Eliot came two years later in 1937, when editing *Hermes*, in an essay written as "Glaucon," "The Journey of The Magus,"[36] clearly alluding to Eliot's poem "The Journey of The Magi" (1927). He describes the poetry's reflection of the famous poet's sense of distress at: "the disorder, the futility, the meaningless of life and suffering" ("The Journey of the Magus," 12). The 20-year-old describes *The Waste Land* as "a vast canvas composed of "situations" representing the whole range of Christian culture and origins, which merges into one another as a motion picture." McAuley's was not merely an impersonal critique, but a personal tribute, to Eliot's importance for the developing poet, who Bloom calls "ephebe:"[37]

> I, personally, owe more than I can calculate to the stimulus of his poetry, and of our generation as a whole it may be said that the debt to Eliot is greatest where it is least acknowledged. I can remember vividly my first acquaintance with his poetry. I opened "Poems 1909-1925" in a café and looked at "The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock." The first few lines were an Italian quotation which I could not translate and still cannot, and I read on with very mixed feelings, only half catching the significance of this new technique until I came on three lines expressing an image which I have often tried to find words for – rendering the picture so exactly and with just the right degree of emotional restraint:
>
> Shall I say I have gone at dusk through narrow streets
> And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
> Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows?
>
> From then on I was a convinced disciple of Eliot. "The Waste Land" threw a bright light on my own boyish attempts to explain the world to myself. In the end I came to profoundly disagree with Eliot's attitude, but my opinion of his poetry never altered.[38]

McAuley's reservations mainly related to Eliot's overly rational and intellectual bent and, ironically in terms of his future direction, the harmful impact of a religious stance in Eliot's

[36] McAuley. "The Journey of the Magus." *Hermes*, 43.1, 1937, 12-17.
[37] Bloom. Introduction. 10.
[38] McAuley. "The Journey of the Magus." 1937, 16.

poetry.[39] In Bloom's term this represented a "misreading"[40] or correction of the precursor. However, the influence of Eliot's poetry, and particularly the Baudelairean prototype of the modernist urban *flâneur* – "of lonely men in shirt sleeves" – is a profound and haunting presence in this early period, as in later poems when McAuley was less in awe.

The influence can be traced in superficial inter-textual resemblances and echoes in the early poetry. McAuley's direct and obvious parody of what he admired in Eliot: "Garlic and sapphire in the mud / Clot the bedded axle-tree," from "Burnt Norton," can be found in his own "Possessed:" "Thunder and rubies at the axle-tree […]" (*Hermes*, 43.3, 1937, 11). Several of Eliot's phrases entranced the young McAuley. The line "Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing / memory and desire"[41] is echoed in McAuley's Yeatsian, slightly later poem "The Incarnation of Sirius" (1944), in which McAuley infuses Eliot's pairing with his own metaphor linked to the star Aldebaran: "Blue as of memory, red as of desire."(*CP, 23*) Aldebaran held a strong and lasting personal significance for McAuley, as revealed to Joan Fraser, his close friend and collaborator in translation of French and German poets in the late 1930s. It hinted at his own divided nature, of a life that would never be easily lived or settled.[42] In this early period of influences its Arab meaning, "The Follower," suggesting a vulnerability to influence, is relevant. References to Aldebaran reappear in McAuley's epic poem *Captain Quiros (Quiros),* written later between 1958 and 1960. There is even a European, late winter viewing of the star recorded in the late poem "At Assisi" (January 1975): "[…] Aldebaran glitters in the cold […]" (*CP94,* 313).

Perhaps linked with this motif, and also Eliot, is McAuley's short story of the same title "Under Aldebaran," (*Hermes*, 45.2, 1939,15-17) written as "Glaucon." It is noteworthy for its presumably autobiographical character, a youngish man returning to but rejecting his parents' home. It suggests the divided prodigal destined to be an "old/young" alienated, but transient and homeless young man – kin to Eliot's Prufrockian "lonely men in shirt sleeves." The character possesses a pretentious, though significant, questing discontent: "[…] It's better for a prophet to remain in his own country where he will have no honour: it needs him for that very reason" (16). He evokes the charismatic McAuley whose poems conveyed to Horne an Eliotian "sad emptiness of metropolitan youth," (224) and the legend of "[…] the lonely

---

[39] *Ibid*. "[…] the more a poet becomes reconciled with Catholicism the more his art suffers […],"15.
[40] For misreading, Bloom uses the term "Clinamen," 14.
[41] T.S. Eliot "Burial of the Dead," *Collected Poems*, 63.
[42] Amy Witting. "Posthumous Dialogue Concerning Certain Errors in Michael Ackland's *Damaged Men.*" *Quadrant,* 45.11, 2001, 37-39.

rooms he had lived in […]" (226) somewhat like Eliot's (or Rilke's) disenchanted or dislocated young men. Drawing on Horne's descriptions of McAuley, Livio Dobrez described the young poet as: "a young Romantic, an individual without a centre […]" (1976 174).

An important Eliotian motif linked with transience or vagrancy, is aridity, desiccation and nature dying. It is seen in "Gerontion" – "tenants of the house" and "thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season"– but especially *The Waste Land* that had deeply impressed McAuley, which he cites in detail when discussing the modern "desiccation of feeling" ("The Journey of the Magus," 14). Citing an excerpt from "The Burial of the Dead,"[43] McAuley observes Eliot could see "no solution except in terms of redemption, and of his redemption he despairs […]" (*Ibid.*). The poem was written before Eliot converted to Anglo-Catholicism in 1927: arguably McAuley intuited Eliot's crisis of faith, a state echoed in McAuley's poem "The Tomb of Heracles" (1949), written twelve years later, three years before his own conversion to Catholicism. As concluding part IV to a longer poem "The Hero and the Hydra" (1947-48), McAuley's 9-lined segment "The Tomb of Heracles," fuses similar images of aridity in nature and negativity from *The Waste Land* ("the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief," I, 23) and also from "The Hollow Men" (the broken column, hollowness) – to evoke the spiritual sterility, fragmentation and emptiness – that Eliot had represented earlier:

> A dry tree with a broken honeycomb
> Stands as a broken column by the tomb;
> The classic anguish of a rigid fate,
> The loveless will, superb and desolate. ("The Tomb of Heracles," *CP,* 59)

McAuley's poem uses closed rhymed form, unlike Eliot's irregular verse. Somewhat recalling the young prodigal in his earlier short story "Under Aldebaran," these images, like Eliot's, introduce a prophetic tone: – "This is the end of stoic pride and state." The prospect, however, is negative, even apocalyptic. An ameliorating factor is nature, represented by the cranes, a regenerative, motif recurring throughout McAuley's work:

> Look cranes still know their path through empty air;
> For them their world is neither soon nor late;
> But ours is eaten hollow with despair. (*Ibid.*)

These modernist motifs of aridity and sterility, the latter of which McAuley would soon reject[44] would be taken up in memorable form in one of McAuley's finest and most

[43] T.S. Eliot. "The Burial of the Dead:" "What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow […]//for you know only/ A heap of broken images […] / And the dead tree gives no shelter." (I, 19-24) .
[44] Cf.1.7 (32).

anthologised early poems "Envoi" (*CP,* 6) written in 1938, one year after his essay on Eliot.[45] The Anglo-American poet was McAuley's most important early modernist model, an appreciation not necessarily shared by his colleagues. The young poet shared some of Eliot's literary predilections, including a wish to pronounce on acceptable literary form.

1.5 Seventeenth-Century Lyric Poets

Interestingly, the young 16 year-old critic in his review of modernist poetry in "Aspects of Modern Poetry" gave particular attention to a love poem by e. e. cummings which, if experimental in form, notably punctuation, and "impressionistic" in style, follows a playful love convention similar to that of the group of poets named by Samuel Johnson as the "Metaphysicals." The allusion to hair in cummings' poem: "the keen primeval silence of your hair"[46] clearly links it to motifs in the seventeenth-century lyric. McAuley had declared, like many modernists, his appreciation for this period: "[…] Except for the 17th C lyric give me the moderns for my money any time."[47] His esteem was another mark of his early kinship with Eliot who, in 1921, had pointed to "a simplicity emulated without success by numerous modern poets."[48]

Elsewhere McAuley referred to his admiration for other "metaphysical" poets – Henry Vaughan (the poem "Night") and Thomas Traherne. Richard Crashaw's "silver cry" is cited fifteen years later as a lost aesthetic model in McAuley's complaint against modernity in "A Letter to John Dryden," (*CP*, 86). McAuley would have agreed with Harold Stewart's words in *Arna* to aspiring poet Harry Hooton, especially the link between prosody and feeling:

> […] the real excitement of verse comes from the conflict between the rigid laws of metre and the freely flowing lawlessness of your emotional outpourings. […] Read again Marvell and Donne and the satires of Dryden and Pope. […] If you can only combine your force and energy with their wit and form you will be a great poet […] [49]

McAuley had already described how, in nostalgic mood, Eliot and fellow modernist Day [Lewis] had woven Marvell's famous lines "[…] But at my back I always hear Time's winged chariot hurrying near […]" into their work. ("The Journey of the Magus,"13.) He cited Eliot's pastiche: "[…] But at my back from time to time I hear / The sounds of horns and motors,

---

45 Cf.1.8 (33-37).
46 e. e. cummings, "if I have made, my lady, intricate," *Complete Poems: 1913-1962.*
47 McAuley. Letter to Auchterlonie, 22 October (1938). CC, 3.
48 T.S. Eliot. "The Metaphysical Poets." *Selected Essays*, 1960, 245.
49 Harold Stewart. (letter to Harry Hooton) "Dionysus Ad Lib." *Arna,* 1942, 31-32.

which shall bring / Sweeney to Mrs Porter in the spring […]"[50] This, he argued, was written "in the form of parody, whereby the unpleasantness of contemporaneity is scrawled over the fairness of tradition like a palimpsest […]"("Magus,"13). McAuley, thus, intuits how parody was integral to modernism: a recognition that foreshadows his own exercise in parody – the 1943-1944 Ern Malley poems.

Even McAuley's own early love poem "When Shall the Fair" has an element of ironic pastiche in its "telescopic"[51] sketch "When shall the fair / Hair on thin scalp spilled / (Wherein the summer lies distilled) / Suffice? […]" (*CP*, 3) recalling Eliot's balding dandy Prufrock. The "Metaphysicals" were an important reference in the modernist literary scene in which McAuley moved, the journals *Hermes, Arna* and the Literary Society, the latter valuing poetry for its capacity to be subjected to rational analysis. A report attributed to McAuley notes how "Donne was influenced by the Renaissance love poets who considered love a […] replica of the union of the soul with the divine."[52] Some of these earliest "metaphysical-esque" poems would be included in McAuley's *CP* (1971) – "When Shall the Fair," "She like the Moon Arises" and "Monologue" (1936-38). They echo, both the sentiment and the form of the "metaphysical" love poem, in their telescopic and imagist form. They weave an archaic, universal language of conventional, briefly sketched bodily tropes (lips, eyes, hair) with concrete symbolic binaries for time (sun, light and darkness) into a web of cosmographic conceits. The last quoted line of the cummings poem cited by McAuley in 1934 – "[…] the keen primeval silence of your hair […]," is echoed in McAuley's own "metaphysical" in "Monologue" (1936-1938, *CP, 3)* written two years later and intended for a first collection *Prelude, Suite and Chorale*: "*And that flung plume of hair*[53] / Which from your body breaks / In bright desire […]."The poem is an accomplished attempt at a chiselled, crystalline, often epigrammatic lyric voice to which McAuley would return, in more naturalistic manner, in his last poems of the 1970s.

The genre of love poem was "surprising [in its] extent,"[54] notably after 1939, reflecting the poet's more stable and deepening relationship with Norma Abernethy, who he would marry. It offered differentiation from the alienated *flâneur* of the earlier work. The conventional conceit dwells on the idea of the body as world, the lover and lovers generally as

---

[50] T.S. Eliot. "The Fire Sermon." *The Waste Land,* III,196-8.
[51] In "The Metaphysical Poets" Eliot wrote of the poets' "telescoping of images and multiplied associations […],"243.
[52] "Metaphysicals." Literary Society, *Union Recorder,* 2 July 1936,126.
[53] Writer's italics.
[54] McCredden. *James McAuley*. 49.

explorers in the cosmology of their bodily defined experience, as seen in crisp, short lines: "Your heel / Must tread a wilderness, / Merely perhaps create / In me a loneliness […]" ("Monologue," *CP*, 3) Varying slightly the posture of wanderer, love and its various moods and manifestations might seem to offer to lovers (and the young poet) the opportunity for voyage within, for self-discovery as is suggested in the second stanza of "When Shall the Fair": "[…] A smile appears on lips / (Like sunrise of the spars of ships) […]"(*CP*, 3), a perhaps metaphysical pastiche with its suggestion of the power of a beloved's smile in dawn breaking and, elliptically, of a sea-journey about to begin. Its motifs recall Donne's "The Good Morrow:" "[…] Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone, / Let maps to other worlds on worlds have shown, / Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is one. […]."[55] Donne's navigational metaphor, a commonplace in the seventeenth-century love lyric, would be significant in McAuley's next decade in an identity-building cosmography for the journey of the self.[56]

1.6 William Blake

McAuley's attraction to mystical seventeenth-century poets, explains the allure of William Blake (1757 –1827), addressed by McAuley in his 1940 Master's thesis and described as the "greatest and most difficult of English mystics."[57] Blake's visionary quality in his *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* is recalled (Coleman, 1980 7) in the rapt apprehension of several of early poems written as "J.Mc." including "Communion:"

> I saw an apple tree in Spring
> communing with the moon:
> Dim silver fire lay on its boughs,
> and its leaves were a silver tune. *(Arts Journal*, 1935, 26.)

The subject's utterance verges on the apocalyptic, in the apprehension of the figurative "silver fire" on the tree's boughs and the synaesthetic "silver tune" of its leaves. In the second stanza, while continuing to use a Blakean, seemingly modernistic style of a short-lined, alternately rhymed, mainly iambic, tetrameter and trimeter quatrains and a pared, imagistic text, the subject projects a romantic, visionary apprehension.

[55] John Donne. "The Good Morrow." in *Generations*, ed. McAuley, 1969, 33.
[56] Cf. 4.6 "Exploration and Love."
[57] McAuley SEP. I, 31. SEP. I, 31-37, explores "mystical symbolism" in the poetry of Blake, Traherne and D. H. Lawrence.

Elements of several of McAuley's early poems display a literal inter-textuality, underlining the importance of Blake's succinct form and ideas to the young poet. The last stanza of "When Shall the Fair"(1936-38) which commences "Five senses build / A pentagon of pleasure"(*CP*, 3) echoes Blake's "Five windows light the caverned man […] ("Europe").[58] McAuley's stanza concludes: "But mind, exceeding common measure, / Is unfulfilled."(*CP*, 3) This echoes Blake's thoughts on the insufficiency of the purely empirical to the complete man and also signals the poet's divergence from the rationalist approach of the University's Literary Society. Later in his Master's thesis (1940), McAuley refused to understand Blake in a solely empirical way, using Blake's own metaphor: "to put him back into "a single Vision and Newton's Sleep" (I, 33).[59] McAuley argued that Blake: "never doubted for a moment that the four-fold vision in which he delighted was a genuine perception of a reality infinitely greater than the world of the five senses."(SEP, I, 35) McAuley deliberately cites Blake's statement on his vision: "I question not my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye any more than I would question a window concerning a Sight. I look through it, and not with it" (*Ibid.*).[60] Significantly, McAuley's appreciation of Blake was shared by a small group of young surrealists emerging in a late-blossoming of modernism in Australia.[61]

Appraising Dorothy Auchterlonie's poetry, McAuley commended "that inward stir and outwards simplicity that I love […] the form you chose has the same kinship to popular poetry, the "rhymes" and ballads" that delights me in Blake."[62] In an essay attributed to McAuley he admired Blake's "[…] innocent eye, the capacity for wonder, and disregard for conventional values that a child has." Blake "[…] combined in the highest degree the power of seeing with the power of thinking […]."[63] McAuley returns to the "role of the eye" in poetry in his late ekphrastic poems.[64] Anticipating the symbolist topic of his MA thesis McAuley explained his particular admiration for Blake's shorter poems:

> Like all great mystics Blake made great use of symbolism in the attempt to communicate his vision. […] Symbolism reaches its greatest poetic value in such things as the parables of Christ where a plain and interesting story… is found adequate to express the underlying vision […]." ("William Blake," 245)

---

[58] Blake's expression is echoed again in McAuley's early poem "Departure:" "[…] visions which there *caverned* lie […]." McAuley would discuss Blake's "Europe" five years later in the first part of his MA Thesis.

[59] Blake. Letter to Thomas Butt. 22 November 1802.

[60] McAuley cites Blake's "Vision of the Last Judgment." Cf. Keynes, *Complete Writings,* 617.

[61] Blake's phrase the "Vegetative Eye" would be used by McAuley's contemporary, the young surrealist writer Max Harris (1921-1995), as the title for his first novel, *The Vegetative Eye*, Reed and Harris, 1943.

[62] McAuley. Unpublished letter to Auchterlonie. G, 1.

[63] "William Blake." *The Union Recorder*. 28 October, 1937, 245.

[64] Cf.11.7 (305-307).

The symbolism of the parables would be developed in McAuley's *ars poetica* poems of 1952. These perceptive comments reflect the impression Blake made on the developing modernist poet and embryonic critic: they show recognition of artistic kinship and signs of self-election. Although the limpid, concise style of early love poems ("When shall the Fair" and "Monologue") might be compared with Blake´s early poems, McAuley's poems seem closer to the metaphysicals in their use of dense conceits and in the projection of the cosmic character of the human body. In the use of sidereal imagery, McAuley's symbolic language is more particular, but with greater subjective fancifulness: "She like the moon arises / And tranquil sees beyond dark window-bars / The exquisite circumspection of the stars […]." [65] Nonetheless, the limpid, microscopic and also allegorical, epigrammatic quality of the young poet's early nature studies suggests a successful appropriation of what McAuley called Blake's "paths of natural symbolism" (*The Union Recorder,* 245), as seen in the short-lined, trimeter quatrains of McAuley's concise early lyric "Sleep" (1939-42):

> The rose that leans its chin
> Upon a curling leaf
> And looks across the land
> Knows not my grief;
>
> The slug that frets the leaf
> Blindly with mincing jaw
> Obeys its life's command
> Each has a law […] (*CP*, 15)

Blake's binary images of beauty and corruption in "The Sick Rose" are suggested in the rose and the slug of McAuley's poem, the mix of particular and abstract. Similarly, Blake's poems about the lamb in *Songs of Innocence* are recalled in the topic and concise trimeters of McAuley's early pastoral "At Bungendore:" "Now the white-buskined lamb / Deserts his ewe and bawls; […]." (CP, 5)[66] While a simple, rhyming and metrical form may borrow from Blake's succinct songs of innocence, McAuley's impressionistic landscapes are more detailed, symbolist, than Blake's simpler visionary allegories. McAuley recognized the generalized quality of Blake's poetry: "His imagination was so shot through with vision that he seldom gives us any clear notion of the precise nature of his experience." (SEP. 1, 6, 37) McAuley eventually favoured the precision of the Imagists and the more differentiated "poetry of fact" of Blake's younger contemporary John Clare (1793-1864).[67]

---

[65] "She like The Moon Arises." 1936-38 (*CP*, 4.)
[66] Cf. 1.7 (30).
[67] Cf. 11.2 (298).

The short-lined quatrains of "Sleep" show the poet employing rhyme (abcb) in basic iambic metre alternating with trochaic beginnings, with a lightness and musicality, despite modernism's pervasive shift towards free verse. McAuley's fidelity to traditional formal verse was deliberate and precocious. Lifelong friend and poet Alec (A.D.) Hope reconstructed a letter from the twenty year-old McAuley received in 1937 or 1938 expressing the latter's early adherence to prosody: "My idea of a poem is one that should obey all the laws of rhyme, of metre, of syntax and of logic, and be able at the same time to display the perfect ease and grace best summed up in Horace's phrase *lucidus ordo*."[68] McAuley would seek to adhere to Horace's "lucid arrangement" throughout his work: it would be a base for his contentious struggle against the free forms of modernism.

There are many other echoes of Blake in McAuley's early poems – the motif of infancy, in McAuley's dark, early poem, "Gnostic Prelude" (1939-42) "I rose up in my infant might," (*CP*, 6), recalling the indignant figure of Blake's "Infant Sorrow." Notable is the interest in Christian cosmology, the trope of Eden, associated with what Paul Kane calls the romantic "myth of origins" (83): "[…] The dawn was dark and streaked with pain, / Dark Eden would not come again […]" ("Gnostic Prelude," *CP*, 6). McAuley would have been aware of Blake's unconventional approach, (notably in "Milton, a poem") though probably McAuley's "lost Eden" trope is inherited more from Brennan than Blake. Behind both Brennan and Blake, was John Milton. McAuley would soon observe in his MA Thesis (1940) how Blake worked traditional Christian mythology, concerning Eden, visions of eternity, and the figure of Adam (an old and a new) into his own personal symbolism or mythopoeia.[69] McAuley would develop some of Blake's Christian motifs, notably the concept of the new Adam, in his love poetry in the next decade, on his own journey to conversion to Catholicism, and later in the myth of quest and discovery in *Captain Quiros* featuring another seventeenth-century figure the Portuguese navigator searching for *Terra Australis*.

1.7 Rainer Maria Rilke

The most significant early influence described to Dorothy Auchterlonie was the Prague-born poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), part of the German-language late symbolic and decadent movement and, precursor to the modernist movement. Rilke's impact is recalled in McAuley's later autobiographical poem "Self-Portrait, Newcastle, 1942" (1967):

---

[68] Ann McCulloch. *Dance of the Nomad: A Study of the Selected Notebooks of A.D. Hope*. Pandanus, 1991, 123.
[69] McAuley. SEP. I, 3, 13-17.

With friends he talks anarchism,
The philosophical kind,
But *Briefe an einen Junge*
Dichter speaks close to his mind. (*CP*, 204)

In letters during 1938 to Auchterlonie from Bungendore, McAuley wrote that he was reading Rilke, both the poems and his *Letters to a Young Poet*.[70] Auchterlonie (Dorothy Green) later described in her article "Letters From a Young Poet"[71] how McAuley profoundly absorbed Rilke's advice to Franz Xaver Kappus (1903-8), including a veneration for solitude as a necessary aid to creativity. McAuley wrote "[…] Rilke allures me with the impression of an 'inwardness′ I have not penetrated […],"[72] adding in another letter: "In the last 6 to 10 days I have written 6 poems, translated two of Rilke's […]."[73] One of the translations was of the Austrian poet's "Herbsttag," translated by McAuley as "Autumn" (*CP*, 5):

Lord, it is time. The fruitful summer yields;
The shadows fall across the figured dial,
The winds are loosed upon the harvest fields.
See that these last fruits swell upon the vine;
Grant them as yet a southern day or two
Then press them to fulfilment, and pursue
The last of sweetness in the heavy wine.

Who now is homeless shall not build this year.
He shall be solitary and long alone;
Shall wake, and read, and write long letters home,
And on deserted pavements here and there
Shall wander restless, as the leaves are blown. [74]

The first 7-line stanza reflects Rilke's pictorial scene, its images of a lush, sensual, Keatsian Autumn in a rural setting of "harvest fields," "fruits" and "vines" and wine-pressing. "Fruitful summer" yields to time in its rustic concrete form – "the figured dial." The poem's initial prayerful invocation: "Lord, it is time" suggests a pious past world. The trochaic subjunctives of "See" and "Grant," express hope that the perennial rhythms of harvest eventuate. A sonnet-like turn in scene and temporality in the second 5-line stanza, disturbs the traditional rural harmony, with the possibly authorial portrait of a mysterious *persona* of the

---

[70] McAuley mentioned Rilke's letters to Auchterlonie in 1938 so had probably read the 1937 French translation of R.M. Rilke. *Lettres à Un Jeune Poète*. trans. Bernard Grasset, Éditions Grasset.
[71] Dorothy Green. "Letters From a Young Poet." *Quadrant*, 21.3, 1977.
[72] McAuley. Undated letter, c. 1938 to Auchterlonie. B, 4.
[73] *Ibid*. Undated letter, BB. 4.
[74] While this study does not evaluate the technical merit of McAuley's translation of Rilke, American poet and academic Keith Harrison praised McAuley's translation. "The Geist in the Mirror: Harold Stewart, James McAuley and the Art of Translation," 2005, 54-57. Harrison judged "Autumn" to be his favourite poem: "Interview with Keith Harrison, 4 December 2002 (apps.campus.edu/now/stories/story–id=4032)

present and future: “Who now is homeless” and who will be “solitary and alone.” The idyllic sempiternal time of stanza 1 is dislocated to an alien environment of “deserted” pavements, the model for modernity (perhaps Paris where Rilke was secretary to the sculptor Rodin). The mysterious figure is prophesied grimly as one who “Shall wake, and read and write long letters home,” and “wander restless, as the leaves are blown.” (*Ibid.*) Such *persona* seems akin to the original author Rilke, and the poem’s interpreter and translator McAuley from his association with pavements[75] and as writer of letters home from Bungendore. This solitary figure mirrors the Eliotian urban *personae* of his early poem “Preludes,” and its charged description in stanza two recalls “The Wanderer” of McAuley’s first literary ancestor Brennan. McAuley’s translation of Rilke’s evocative poem is the tribute of the young apprentice, Bloom’s “ephebe”[76] to his two precursors, one European and the other a Eurocentric Australian, who foreshadowed the modernist usage of images of alienation and loss. In the tradition of Hölderlin, and also Australia’s Christopher Brennan, Rilke offered to McAuley the link between European late-romanticism, symbolism and modernist literary movements. Rilke’s deserted streetscape recalls Baudelaire; his evocation of a homeland and an interest in the poetic quality of objects were more reflective of decadentism and early expressionism.

McAuley wrote later to Auchterlonie of his 20 poems planned for a first collection. One, originally titled “Chorale,”[77] was a tribute to his first master, Brennan. After two initial original stanzas, the poem incorporates with slight changes, the entire body of “Autumn,” McAuley’s translation of Rilke’s “Herbsttag,” as its concluding two stanzas.[78] Bloom has described a strong influence, such as this, as a “profound act of reading that is a kind of falling in love with a literary work” (xxiii). “Chorale,” thus reflects dedication to McAuley’s former master Brennan and the ultimate dedication to the second master Rilke in the form of an outright, undisguised “swallowing” (Bloom, xxi). McAuley commences his new version of “Herbsttag” with the more personal “Heart, it is time” – replacing the original “Lord, it is time” – and changing the second stanza from an impersonal third-person address to a personal second-person *apostrophe*: “You shall be homeless shall not build this year. / You shall be solitary and long alone; […].” Reflecting other important influences McAuley confided to

[75] Cf. 1.3 (17).
[76] Bloom. Introd. 10.
[77] Text of “Chorale” in McAuley’s undated letter to Auchterlonie, G, 6.
[78] The original “Chorale” was published as “In Honour of Chris. Brennan” in *Hermes* 44.1,1938, 19, and as “German Chorale” in H.M. Green’s *Modern Australian Poetry*, Melbourne UP, 1946, 27.

Auchterlonie how the poem's title "meant to suggest a certain largeness and sweet gravity of utterance, like the conclusion of Baudelaire's "Bénédiction."[79]

McAuley was pleased with the pictorial, Rilkean, element of some landscape poems he had started to write, drawing Auchterlonie's attention to an "atmospheric"[80] quality in the first stanza of his early lyric landscape "At Bungendore:"

> Now the white-buskined lamb
> Deserts his ewe and bawls;
> The rain spills from the dam;
> A far-off bird cry falls […] (*CP*, 5)

The poem shows the concrete power of the symbolists about whom he would write in his Master's thesis – the poet's presentation of "emotional experience […] in images alone."[81] McAuley's early lyric landscapes were well received. Critic and poet Chris Wallace-Crabbe praised how in this short three-stanza rhymed lyric: "[…] the careful observation of a landscape prepares the way for a statement of personal emotion."[82] The voices or sounds of lamb, rain, bird, the bough and peach buds enact a life wanting in the poetic subject:

> So harsh the bough, yet still
> The peach buds burst and shine.
> The blossoms have their will;
> I would that I had mine: (*CP,* 5)

McAuley rebutted possible counter-argument that it was "not my *voie*" (way, or arguably "voice") by explaining: "[…] the impulse to write this sort of lyric visits me every now and then and I don't feel as sure as I did that I can't do good work in this field […]."[83] Wallace-Crabbe unknowingly concurred with McAuley's early assessment, regretting that "the enforced clarity of his [later] more public muse" had triumphed over "McAuley's [early] lyric impulse to inner exploration" (1971 324). Wallace-Crabbe's link between external observation and the Rilkean evocation of personal emotion can be seen in the earlier-mentioned uncollected poem "At Balmain:" "Thin strip of moon · Discoloured sky / Like rust · the houses humped and dark / Along the waterfront · No sign" […]:[84]

> And I in youth · who seek an art
> Like twilight inward and resigned ·
> Now for an instant free, apart ·

[79] McAuley. Letter to Auchterlonie. F, 2.
[80] McAuley. Letter to Auchterlonie.13 October 1938, CC.
[81] McAuley. SEP. II, 41.
[82] Chris Wallace-Crabbe. "'Beware of the Past:' James McAuley's Early Poetry." *Meanjin* 30.3, 1971, 326.
[83] McAuley. Letter to Auchterlonie, 13 October 1938. CC, 5.
[84] Cf. 1.1 (12).

Give forth instead of love and ruth
The wordless inner moving of the mind.[85]

The dream-like focus on the personified “houses humped and dark” under a thin moon assists in suggesting an inwardness “[…] like twilight […]” for which the young poet yearns, inspired by Rilke’s call (“Entrez en vous-même” / “Come inside yourself).[86] There is a push, however, towards a free and separate artistic restlessness, a projection of: “[…] The wordless inner moving of the mind.” McAuley explained how he wanted “his verses to fold in on one another with the complex pattern of dreams”[87] as in the contemplation of the sleeping houses. These words anticipate his observation two years later (1940) how the: “psyche gazes upon external images as symbols for our own conflicts,” and how such a technique underlay Baudelaire’s construction of a: “[…] paysage d´âme.” (SEP, II, 16.) Baudelaire’s formulation for the short imagist lyric evidently touched McAuley deeply: he would use the same words much later in describing what he admired in the poetry of the Austrian Georg Trakl – “a landscape of the soul.” (“The Poems of Georg Trakl,” *GR*, 207.)

While it reflects less Rilke’s style, the third and fourth stanzas of McAuley’s “Monologue,” (1936-38) written at the time he was reading Rilke’s *Letters*, closely echoes Rilke’s advice, about love and finding self-hood, in his seventh letter to his young correspondent, Franz Xaver Kappus:

[…] O but the self, to live,
Must be apart, How else
Can either say, I give

Myself when what is given
Is unpossessed, unknown?
So hard a thing is love:
To give, to be alone […] (*CP*, 3)[88]

This Rilkean monologue on the questing self, a romantic sub-text through McAuley’s work, would be taken up again in the poem also initiated in this period but not finished until 1962 – “Time Out of Mind:” “But I shall know this / Only in knowing / My self’s Self, who is, and is / The end of my going.” (*CP*, 179)

The strong influence of Rilke, George and the symbolists suggests, in Bloom’s terms, the young writer wanting to become or appropriate them – the “tessera” Bloom associated with completion (66). However, six years later in 1946, the poet was already distancing

[85] McAuley. “At Balmain” in letter to Auchterlonie. BB, 1.
[86] Rilke. *Lettres*. 20-22.
[87] McAuley. Letter to Auchterlonie, c. September 1938. AA, 5.
[88] McAuley. Letter to Auchterlonie. before October 1938. BB, 2.

himself, rejecting for his first collection a poem, "Jesus," considered "too Rilkean."[89] In 1957 Rilke would be criticised for his "intense subjectivism" and his "magian"[90] pretensions as a poet. Nonetheless, the "apprenticeship" represented an important phase for technical development and for self-definition within an Australian literary environment, which comprised the Jindyworobak localism[91] and the European literary models of Sydney University's literary circles. Some of Rilke's influence would return in McAuley's shift to the inward in his last decade; nor would McAuley forget Rilke's advice to Kappus to beware of irony,[92] explaining the Australian poet's increasing rejection of what he saw as sterility and negativity in T.S. Eliot's and other modernist work. Even if McAuley's lyric landscapes sometimes drew on recognisable Australian motifs (the lambs of "At Bungendore" and the Sydney foreshore of "At Balmain") such landscapes seemed less recognizably Australian because of their symbolist form.

Translation assisted McAuley's ongoing self-differentiation. With the help of Joan Fraser, later writing as Amy Witting, he translated French and German, especially the late romantic poets, mainly for his MA thesis on symbolist poetics. (Witting, 2001 37) McAuley's translation work continued through the 1950s, with German poets Hölderlin, Von Hofmannsthal, Albrecht Haushofer (who died resisting the Third Reich) and Austrian expressionist poet Georg Trakl, who became as important to McAuley in the 1970s as Rilke had been in the late 1930s. Many of the poets McAuley admired – Dryden, Hölderlin, Rilke, George and Pound ("a remarkable translator")[93] – were poet-translators. McAuley lacked the cultural advantage of contemporary Australian writers Martin Boyd and Patrick White who drew into their artistic dialects their geographic reach across two worlds. For McAuley translation represented as an opportunity for travel and enlargement into a world, a realm of experience, culture, tradition, only accessible during post-war Australia to a privileged few in a less internationalised Australia. From a post-colonial perspective, translation might be considered as a "colonial 'mimicry'[…] of the 'original' and 'true' which exists at the source of power"[94] representing "a strong identification with a cultural other."[95] Alternatively

[89] Harold Stewart. Letter to McAuley, 20 December 1945. Box 7, McAuley papers.
[90] Though McAuley would observe in his MA Thesis the "magic powers" Novalis had ascribed to the "word" (SEP, II, 6), he would later criticise the "magian" tendency of the romantics and their more contemporary descendents in "The Magian Heresy" *EM*, 155-156, and "Journey into Egypt," *GR*,181.
[91] Cf. 1.8 (33) and 4.9 (100-103).
[92] Rilke. *Lettres.* 28.
[93] Glaucon (McAuley). "The Book of Ezra." *Hermes*, 44.1, 1938, 11.
[94] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back.* Routledge, 2002, 88.
[95] Lawrence Venuti, ed. *The Translation Studies Reader*. Routledge, 2004, 20.

translation could be viewed as another process for dislocation, displacement, alienation or, more creatively, knowledge, for the appropriation of nostalgic masks, the detached description of landscapes not one's own but perhaps coveted.[96] McAuley certainly learned from his early models, George, especially Rilke, what Michael Hamburger describes as the "use of *personae*" because of their "gift of empathy that enabled them [citing Keats] to "fill some other body" and make it speak with a voice not muffled with the mask."[97] In his dialogue with Vivian Smith in 1964, McAuley addressing the question of influence directly, anticipates Bloom on the literary "ephebe:"

> […] A young poet just wants what he needs. He rips older poets apart like carcasses and takes the liver and the lights out because that is what he wants, and leaves the carcass scattered all over the place.[98]

In terms of this metaphor, the main carcasses which McAuley would discard would be those of Eliot and Rilke.

1.8 <u>A shift to the local</u>

The young McAuley was cautious about taking up the themes and motifs of local literary movements. When editing *Hermes* in 1937 McAuley warned against the essentialist tendencies of the Australian publisher and critic P.R. Stephenson: "Literary nationalism, the theory that the artist should sit and write on his own dunghill, is being harked around Sydney once more […]."[99] In the late 1930s Australia the modernist aridity became iconic for local writers in the Jindyworobak movement's pursuit of literary nationalism and different, concepts of identity. Its annual anthology of Australian poetry offered publishing opportunities for young poets wishing to explore this new idiom.[100] In its poetics, the realm of dry inland, indigenous Australia was preferred over other landscape variants, as seen in Ian Mudie's "My Land:" "Give me a harsh land to wring music from, / brown hills, and dust, with dead grass / straw to my bricks."[101] In early 1942 he wrote how he was "feeling his way towards an increasing directness of presentation and a more "localised" setting for my themes […]."[102] This is seen in several lyric landscapes.

---

[96] Jean Page. "Writing from the periphery: the haunted landscapes of James McAuley." *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, 14.1, 6.
[97] Michael Hamburger. *The Truth of Poetry*. Penguin, 1972,78.
[98] J. McAuley and V.B. Smith. "Poetry Today: A Dialogue." *Diogenes: A Literary Annual*, 1964, 16.
[99] McAuley. "Less of It." unsigned editorial, *Hermes*, 43.1, 1937, 37.
[100] The Jindyworobak movement is discussed at 4.9 (100-103).
[101] Ian Mudie. "My Land." in *The New Book of Australian Verse*, ed. Les Murray, Oxford UP, 167.
[102] McAuley. Letter to George Mackaness, 19 January 1942. Mackaness papers, MS 534, NLA.

"Envoi," (*CP*, 6) comprising four quatrains of alternating rhyme, in basic iambic metre, written in 1938 the year after his essay on Eliot and his critique on literary nationalism, was published as "Envoi for a Book of Poems," in the *Jindyworobak Anthology 1940*, (32). The original title shows how the short poem, an "envoi" or *coda*, was meant to introduce a planned first book of poems. McAuley's modernist poem, with its disjointed, surreal imagery signalled in the traveller's gesturing *deixis*, echoes the mood, themes and layering of Eliot's *The Waste Land,* using particular *topoi* to describe a local variety of waste land, a stereotypically harsh, untidy Australian dryland landscape:

> There the blue-green gums are a fringe of remote disorder
> And the brown sheep poke at my dream along the hillsides;
> And there in the soil, in the season, in the shifting airs,
> Comes the faint sterility that disheartens and derides. ("Envoi," *CP*, 6)

The national icons of "blue-green gums" (eucalypts) and "brown sheep," metonymies of the pastoral industry, do not conform with the usual European pastoral. The disorderly gums and the brown sheep, poking "at my dream," have the unsettling quality of nightmare. The third line evokes images of dryness in which a desultory sibilance is broken by hard-sounding "t's and "d's:" – "[…] And there in the soil, in the season, in the shifting airs, / Comes the faint sterility that disheartens and derides. […]." "Envoi" reflects what Kane describes as the "difficulty of assimilating an Australian nature to the aesthetics of the picturesque," (13) a matter McAuley would dispute, both in this poem and in his late nature poetry. The gaze[103] of the subject, gestured repeatedly by *deixis*: "*There* the blue-green gums […] *There* in the soil […]"[104] suggests the subject is reporting, from a distance, perhaps in Europe, like a traveller describing a foreign land. Sign-posted with desert, sterility, and futility, McAuley seems to step Eliot's track through *The Waste Land.* As in Eliot's work, the subject describes a grim, unfamiliar, desiccated social landscape from which he seems strangely detached, like its inhabitants described in stanza 2 below:

> Where once was sea is now a salty desert,
> A futile heart within a fair periphery;
> The people are hard-eyed, kindly, with nothing inside them,
> The men are independent but you could not call them free […]. (*CP,* 6)

The portrait is built by an accumulation of paradoxes, a future characteristic of McAuley's verse. The scenario of the first two stanzas seems unpromising – founded on harsh

---

[103] I use "gaze" to indicate point of view. McAuley uses "gaze" in a contemplative sense, to describe the psyche contemplating images as symbols. (SEP, II, 16.) The term carries psychoanalytical concepts developed by Sartre *Being and Nothingness* (1943) and Lacan relating to subjectivity, the functioning of the "I" or subject, within its environment. The gaze or "regard" can induce a sense of objectification.

[104] Writer's italics.

natural and social cultural stereotypes: the landscape described foreshadows McAuley's later, negative observation about Australia in the 1930s – its "certain thinness of the environment" (Morphett 2). Ashcroft et al have detected in the poem a world-weariness perhaps incongruous in their 21-year-old young author (181). It recalls the *persona* of the old/young *flâneur* Prufrock that McAuley, in his Eliotian legacy, was bringing to life in his early poems and prose. The third stanza brings an unexpected twist, when the detached subject announces a stoic reconciliation with this otherwise unhomely[105] land: "And I am fitted to this land as the soul is to the body […]." Abstract qualities are introduced to amplify the more physical elements of the landscape: "I know its contractions, waste and sprawling indolence; / They are in me and its triumphs are my own […]" (*Ibid.*). As in any relationship the subject's connection is built from knowledge and intimacy, of the real rather than the ideal, a long-cultivated empathy.

Stanza four articulates a seemingly sure if unstable resolution – signifiers of abundance (gush) are outweighed by those of negativity and sparseness ("not fail," "impede," "reluctant," "uneasy," "lean," "fretful"):

> Beauty is order in the artesian heart
> And does not wholly fail, though we impede;
> Though the reluctant and uneasy land resent.
> The gush of waters, the lean plough, the fretful seed. (*CP,* 6)

The metaphor "artesian heart" richly associates life-giving underground water of a dry land with blood of the also interior, physical heart. Nonetheless the last line resounds with McAuley's words the year before in his essay on Eliot, concerning his preferred "Ash Wednesday" (1925) and the "Ariel" poems (1927-1931)[106] – "some of the loveliest poems he has yet achieved. […] A *gush of hope*[107] has broken the drought of the waste land, new possibilities of growth disturb the soil. […]" ("The Journey of the Magus,"15). Perhaps the "gush of hope" engendered by Eliot's poems echoed in the "gush of waters" in "Envoi," points towards restoration through creativity. McAuley told Auchterlonie how his poems offered an escape from that pervasive mood: "They are all brief moments of liberation from the menacing sterility that I have come to fear."[108] Nor is the landscape of "Envoi" as invented as it might seem, as it reflects the period McAuley spent in the sheep country of

[105] Ken Gelder and Jane Jacobs. *Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Post-Colonial Nation*. Melbourne UP, 1998, xiv.
[106] One of Eliot's "Ariel" poems was "The Journey of the Magi" (1927).
[107] Writer's italics.
[108] McAuley. Letter to Auchterlonie, c. September 1938. AA, 5.

Bungendore between 1938 and 1939. “Envoi” represents the mask of inexperience, nurtured by intuitions about themes which would matter to him as the poet he was sure he would be.

Many themes can be explored in McAuley’s “Envoi” – dislocation, alienation, homelessness and the resolution of homecoming, the experience of seeing one’s country from “close up and from far away” with a “doubled vision.”[109] For McAuley, a poet opposed to the nationalist school, it articulates, unusually, the first uneasy glimpses of a national self-consciousness, in the voice and gaze of the traveller from the periphery describing his land, his people, his society. The poem reveals dividedness: it initiates a dialogue between the European “metropolitan” and an essentialist Australian “peripheric,” notably its rural *topoi* from which McAuley, though intuitively metropolitan, could not escape. and to which he would return in his last poems in the 1970s.[110]

The gaze of the poem’s subject is of a stranger, a wanderer, observing a seemingly liminal landscape, with figures, from between this landscape and another world. For this reason, the landscape has a strong element of otherness, Freud’s *unheimlich* or uncanny which critics Gelder, Jacobs and Ravenscroft[111] have explored in post-colonial apprehensions of the Australian landscape. The subject is writing from the periphery to the centre, but it is also as if he were writing from the centre to the periphery. Dobrez’s description of the young McAuley is pertinent: “[…] a figure without a centre in a world without a centre […].”[112] The subject is also the post-colonial writer “whose gaze is turned in two directions.”[113] The poem presents themes, central to McAuley’s work, of alienation and homelessness. Despair would also be mitigated by moments of acceptance in the later work. It is both the peripheral wasteland from which he is compelled to journey but it brings into being the search there for place, an Eden, the originary home, with which the poet must reckon and to which he must return.[114]

If “Envoi” is a portrait from the Australian interior, then the short poem “Terra Australis” (1939-42, *CP*, 16) is its counterpart. Like “Envoi” its main purpose is the celebration of Australia or its Australian author’s, both inner and outer landscapes. In its first stanza, it gives the directions to and an evocation of the unknown land, as issued from a Renaissance European imaginary:

---

[109] Robert Dixon. “Scenes of Reading: Is Australia a World Literature?” U Sydney Press, 2012, 71-79.
[110] Cf. 11.4 (301-303).
[111] Alison Ravenscroft. *The Postcolonial Eye*: *White Australian Desire and the Visual Field.* Ashgate*,* 2012.
[112] Dobrez. 1976. 174.
[113] Ashcroft et al, *Empire.* 60.
[114] “Envoi” is twin to the national portrait “Australia” by his older friend, poet A.D. Hope (1907-2000) written the following year, 1939. *Generations,* ed. McAuley,1969, 233.

Voyage within you, on the fabled ocean,
And you will find that Southern Continent,
Quiros' vision–his hidalgo heart
And mythical Australia, where reside
All things in their imagined counterpart.

It shows McAuley's first use of the explorer *persona,* a variation on the wanderer, popular in the Jindyworobak focus on national identity including its history. Such focus addresses the romantic "poetics of origins" (Kane 28) which McAuley investigates intensively in his explorer poems during the next decade.[115]

1.9 Literary *personae* and symbolic landscapes

The literary subject designated to deal with the task of identity in McAuley's work would be the wanderer figure, ranging from desultory *flâneur* to heroic sea-voyager of McAuley's heroic tribute to Chris Brennan – riding on "the centre" of the "tumult of the flood,"[116] later realised in the Renaissance Portuguese navigator Quiros of "Terra Australis" and more fully, in *Quiros*. McAuley became increasingly drawn to the explorer hero, the voyagers to the undiscovered self: "[…] that South Sea Continent, That worthy mariners failed to find, / Was never charted: its extent is in our undivided mind […]."[117] It is also the burgeoning autobiographical quest of the romantic artist figure outlined in McAuley's early prose piece, "Under Aldebaran" (1939), in which the fictional, but semi-autobiographical, rebel and imminent *flâneur,* turning his back on his family home declares: " I seek what I do not possess […] If God had known all his work from the creation of the world, he would never have troubled to create it. And the labour of his Creation is pain."[118]

Various critics (including Kirkpatrick, Kramer, Macainsh, Maver, Smith) have commented how the great European writers Eliot, the symbolists, Baudelaire, Rilke and George, and their various and interwoven strands of influence, enabled McAuley to mediate into his own poetic practice the essence of Western (European and American) modernism: "whatever views he [later] prosaically expressed about the end of modernity." (Kramer, *JM* xxvii) In McAuley's move to infuse his impersonal lyric "landscapes of the soul," with the colour and spirit of the local provides another strand to be woven into an increasingly complex fabric. McAuley's absorption of Rilke's advocated solitary journey involving growth,

[115] "Terra Australis" is discussed at 4.2 (100-103).
[116] McAuley. "In Honour of Chris. Brennan." *Hermes*, 1938, 19.
[117] McAuley. "Landscape of Lust." *Arna,* 1942, 39.
[118] "Glaucon" (McAuley). "Under Aldebaran." *Hermes*, 1939, 15-17. Cf. 1.4 (20).

("Croître selon votre loi,")[119] "évolution" and transformation (98), marks the beginning of the young Australian poet's lifelong quest as poet – to "Voyage within you."(*CP*, 16) At the seeming urging of Rilke and his first master, Brennan: "What do I know myself alone […],"[120] the seeming "authorial subject" of McAuley's early poems, would pursue the theme of self-knowledge, the inner journey outlined in the poem "Time Out of Mind" drafted in Bungendore in 1938 though not published in final form until 1962:

> But I shall know this
> Only in knowing
> My self's Self who is, and is
> The end of my going […] (*CP*, 179)

Already showing signs of a life-long predisposition to change, the young poet was keen to pursue both new techniques and consciousness, as admitted to Dorothy Auchterlonie: "I'm not trying to develop a new style, but to extend my way of writing into a new mental field, to embrace new words and rhythms, and new structures of thought."[121] This sentiment persisted throughout his early phase: he hoped to complete his first collection planned for 1938 titled "Prelude Suite and Chorale" (which never eventuated) "because I want to do other things, experiments of various kinds."[122] This experimental desire would be carried out in dramatically different ways in his next fertile phase between 1940-1944.

---

[119] Rilke. *Lettres*. 24-25
[120] Excerpt of Brennan's poem "The Wanderer," cited in McAuley's MA Thesis, SEP, II, 3.
[121] McAuley. Letter to Auchterlonie, 22 November 1938. F, 4.
[122] *Ibid.* c. September 1938, AA, 5.

2.

Adrift in Modernism: Aesthetics and Revolution (1939-1943)

2.1 Concerning the "Black Chapter"

In 1939 McAuley published one of his Bungendore poems, "At Bungendore," in the first issue of the Sydney-based literary journal *Southerly.*[1] The young poet had started to be noticed outside university circles. The seven years between 1939 and 1946 represent a period of changing circumstances, meetings, friendships, productions and happenstance, which would significantly affect the life and work of the poet. Peter Coleman called the first five years (1939-1943) the "black chapter" of McAuley's life, the "impoverished time" indicated in Friedrich Hölderlin's (1770-1843) poem, "Brot und Wein," which McAuley cited as epigraph for the troubled poems of those years in Part 3 (1939-42) of his first collection *Under Aldebaran (UA,* 1946.)

> So zu harren und was zu thun indes und zu sagen,
> Weis ich nicht und wozu Dichter in dürftiger Zeit[2]
>
> (Tarrying thus I know not what to do meanwhile, or to say,
> And what is a poet for in such an impoverished time?)[3]

World War II broke out on 1 September with Hitler's invasion of Poland. In choosing Hölderlin's lines, McAuley arguably intuited the crisis for the modern poet, which Adorno elaborated after WW II – the difficulty of writing poetry from that time. Coleman refers (1980 1) to McAuley's nocturnal ramblings in inner Sydney with fellow university poet Alan Crawford on the eve of the Allies' declaration of war. The graduate's consternation is evoked in McAuley's short imagist poem "Dawn, 2 September 1939," whose title mirrors Auden's poem "1 September 1939" – a challenging time for young men:

> The newsprint like a bouquet in my hand.
> The darkness shrugged, the eastern sky
> Lifted an eyebrow on my vanities...
> And in the luminous hollow of the dawn
> A flock of birds usurped the Pleiades […][4]

The mixed urban and natural imagery in this modernist poem in blank verse, nonetheless using iambic pentameter, signals serious life-change: the portentous image of the birds

---

[1] "Envoi for a Book of Poems" was published in the *Jindyworobak Anthology*, *1940*.
[2] Friedrich Hölderlin. "Brot und Wein."1801, Stanza 7.
[3] McAuley. "The Magian Heresy." *EM*, 145.
[4] "Dawn." *Hermes,* 45.2, 1939, 6.

"ursurping" the Pleiades,[5] suggests, in reference to the literary "Pléiade,"[6] that the coterie of university days was ending.

2.2 The Would-be Scholar

In February 1940 McAuley submitted his thesis towards a Master of Arts in English Literature at Sydney University, titled "Symbolism: An Essay in Poetics."[7] Its triple objectives of investigation were to examine:

> (i) mystical symbolism and literary implications, in the work of William Blake, Thomas Traherne, and D.H. Lawrence
>
> (ii) symbolism in nineteenth-century poetry from Novalis to Mallarmé and modern English language poets, including T.S. Eliot, and the surrealist tendency
>
> (iii) symbolism in experience, in language and in poetry, and a general theory of the nature of poetry. (1)

The thesis drew upon McAuley's undergraduate studies and intensive reading in Bungendore. It shows grounding in the romantic tradition of literature including its French and German components, from the poets Novalis and Friedrich Hölderlin, until the modernist T.S. Eliot and the English "Apocalypse" poet David Gascoyne. The mystical symbolism (part i) of Blake, Traherne and Lawrence represents a continuation of the romantic tradition even into high modernism. It reflects McAuley's university studies in philosophy. The thesis reflects an academic and a growing personal engagement with symbolism, the subject that would drive his own poetic growth. Nonetheless, he described the thesis as a "thing of doubts and indecisions."[8] One of his "burning questions" was how to: "relate symbolism in literature to symbolism as Freud and Jung and others were talking about it [as well as to] repel the invasion by Freud into literary symbolism, to distinguish between the two […]" (Santamaria 4). McAuley resisted a purely psychological approach to symbolism.

As well as its principal argument in defending a mystical approach to symbolic language the work reflects the developing parallel paths of the scholar and literary theorist and the emerging poet. With his thesis McAuley hoped to win the University's scholarship to Oxford, and an academic career.

---

[5] The Pleiades, with Aldebaran, is part of the constellation Taurus and focus of McAuley's interest.
[6] "Pléiade" was the name used by several literary coteries, notably the third century Alexandrian and the 16th century French Renaissance poets including Ronsard.
[7] McAuley, "Symbolism: An Essay in Poetics," (SEP), Fisher Library Rare Books, U of Sydney.
[8] McAuley. Letter to Auchterlonie, 15 November 1938. G, 7.

2.3 Logic and Mysticism

McAuley's adoption of a logical and scientific approach to image and symbol is immediately evident, and was assisted by his adherence to the realist philosophy of the University's Literary Society.[9] The Society favoured modernists: it defended freedom of expression, especially relating to ongoing attacks on James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). It objected to the romantic poets, notably Wordsworth, because his "transcendental" intimations were not able to be subjected to realist explanation. In an earlier article in the University's literary magazine *Hermes,* the Andersonian Margaret Mackie had voiced the realist's disagreement with the escapist tendencies of mystical poets (admired by the young McAuley) arguing that realist critics and writers worked towards the "creation of coherent works of art and the tackling of actual problems."[10]

McAuley uses contemporary psychoanalytical approaches for assessing the imaginative life reflected in symbolic language. In Part 1 McAuley offers psychological readings of several mystical poets, including a Freudian reading[11] of the sexual symbolism in Blake's "I Saw a Chapel" (1793), noting the father-figure apparent in the powerful snake symbol (I, 9) and also in Blake's "Nobodaddy" Jehovah figure (I, 9). McAuley describes in Freudian terms how, in Blake, "the "old Adam" must be done away with so that the new regenerated Adam can appear […]" (I, 12). The influence of Jungean archetypal readings is evident in his analysis of several mother archetypes – the moon and the sea in two mystical poems of D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930), "Invocation of the Moon" and "The Ship of Death" (*Last Poems*, 1932). McAuley also drew upon psychological analysis to assist in his defence of mysticism. He refers to *Problems of Mysticism and its Symbols,*[12] a study by Herbert Silberer (1882-1923) a younger Viennese psychoanalyst in Freud's circle, which: "accounts for the value to be found in the mystical tradition, without distorting the subjective origins" (I, 4). Like Silberer, McAuley contests the "Freudian argument […] that mysticism was a symptom of a morbid condition [arguing that] the mysticism of some persons does not exhibit his regressive character […]" (I, 3). McAuley reasons that the neurotic shyness of the Irish nationalist mystic poet AE (George William Russell, 1867-1935), an early favourite, had

---

[9] Cf. 1.4 (18).
[10] "Mysticism." *Hermes*, 43.2. 1937, 14.
[11] McAuley's thesis bibliography includes Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* and *Three Contributions to Sexual Theory*. He considered *Civilisation and its Discontents* a "great, moving essay." ("The Perennial Poetry,"138.)
[12] Herbert Silberer. *The Problem of Mysticism and its Symbolism*. 1914.

diminished as he made "progress along the 'Via Mystica'" (I, 3).[13] McAuley also pronounces: "The mystical purity of D.H. Lawrence's mature vision is unquestionably his great achievement in literature." (I, 21).

A growing sense of the insufficiency of purely empirical psychoanalytical approaches is expressed in a satirical poem written at this time (1939-42) "The Family of Love," (*CP*, 10-14) in which the young poet, in Eliot's early lampooning style, has the third stanza including Freud ("Sigmund") as guardian or "intellectual moralist" of the "bickering," "sullen crew" of the authorial "captain's" ship of modern times, along with figures from the Old Testament (Noah's son Shem, the backward-looking emotional spirit) and Plumb, according to McAuley's endnote,[14] the physiologically robust figure from Friedrich Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*:

> Captain I am, and would be master too,
> Though Shem and Plumb are of my sullen crew
> With Sigmund the guardian; bickering we sail […] (*CP*, 10)

While comical in intention, the authorial "captain" of the allegorical crew offers a sardonic reflection on how influential philosophers, from Nietzsche to Freud, unsettle the modern "Family of Love." The poem mirrors McAuley's dialogue in the thesis between the rational approach of Freudians and Andersonians and the transcendental impulses of the mystics, in which he favours the latter.

While McAuley makes his best effort to be objective, his sympathy is clearly with the mystics Thomas Traherne, William Blake, AE and D.H. Lawrence. He defends the mysticism of the seventeenth-century poet and Anglican clergyman Traherne, because he could observe a psychological pattern in the process of the "rebirth" of the mystic poet, whose child-like love of god and nature anticipated the romantic movement by 200 years. Traherne, in looking "wistfully towards an idealised childhood" grows convinced that "a return to that ideal state is not impossible, but necessary for the soul's happiness […]" (SEP, I, 22). A personal empathy emerges when McAuley writes of the mystic's progress: "So the mystical journey begins" (I, 22). McAuley's own mystical turn arguably prepares the way for his coming spiritual journey: his diaries show him copying Traherne's prose reflections on the Christian life *Centuries of Meditation* (1908) in the late 1940s before his conversion to Catholicism in 1951/52. The

[13] McAuley probably refers to the expression of St John of the Cross, as he would later in his diaries.
[14] McAuley's endnote (*CP*, 227) references Nietzsche's allusion to Plumb, associating the adverse effect on German philosophy of the national cuisine.

mystical inclination of the young poet, was recorded somewhat wryly, by the older autobiographical subject in the later poem "Soundings" (1966/67, *CP*, 203):

> At sixteen, was it, I used to take
> Soundings in my inadequacy.
> Could I have visions, like William Blake?[15]
> Or that strange Irishman AE?
>
> At dusk I lingered in the yard
> After the fowls had gone to roost,
> Pressing my senses hard
> For revelation self-induced […]

While in this mature, realist poem the author seems distant from his mystical phase, in 1940 mysticism was a serious interest. Paradoxically, the older, less overtly Catholic, McAuley, would show some continuity with his early admiration for Traherne in his later meditative turn to the world of nature.[16]

2.4 Exploring the Symbol

Part II of the thesis shows McAuley's understanding of French symbolists, Baudelaire's and Mallarmé's "perception of the emotional content [of] the image" (II, 38), which offered the basis for modernist approaches. McAuley describes how Mallarmé's "set of symbols" show a "careful search for the right word" (II, 34) that brought "such compulsive beauty" (II, 32). The young scholar notes Jules Laforgue's and T.S. Eliot's use of the "situation" as "a symbol for a subjective emotion […]" (II, 45). McAuley, still the modernist, writes that he values surrealism for: "[…] opening up a valuable source of poetic material" for exploring the "interior workings […]" of the poet's mind (II, 44). At the same time, he criticises a poem, "In Defence of Humanism," by the English surrealist David Gascoyne for presenting "words that correspond to no conscious experience" (II, 43), and for being "more like a description of a surrealist painting than an independent poem. [Gascoyne's] symbols confront us with blank faces" (II, 43- 44). Even at this early phase in which McAuley's sympathies were largely with the modernists and the mystic poets admired by the surrealists, his response to the surrealists was well-argued but conditional. He coined for the movement the phrase "mysticism decapitated" (II, 43), perhaps intuiting his later striving towards the "whole." This expression underlines a nascent, still unconscious, antipathy to the surrealist aesthetic to be promoted in Australia that year by the young Melbourne and Adelaide-based writer Max Harris in his

[15] Cf.1.6 (24-27)
[16] Cf. 1.5 (22), 5.8 (132), 9.10 (252), 11.7 (308).

surrealist magazine *Angry Penguins.*[17] McAuley was prepared to defend a "mystical" approach but not one which abandoned control of meaning behind its poetic image or symbol.

McAuley's encounter with symbolism shows his developing awareness as an emerging literary critic. In Part III he shows his intuition of the structuralist approach to language, (what Michael Cook calls "proto-structuralism"),[18] of the word being a symbol, as outlined by Ferdinand de Saussure in 1916,[19] though the poet does not cite the linguistic expert. In a brief citation McAuley also showed an awareness of the critical writing of the New Critic, I.A. Richards (1893-1979). McAuley demonstrably diverges from the Literary Society's criticism of romantic and mystical strands in literature, in defending a mystic appreciation of literature, arguing against a purely "indicative" function in language in the realist approach of the philosopher John Anderson.

In exploring the experience of perception, McAuley focusses on the apprehension of the image, using the seemingly un-poetic object "butter." In describing this process the scholar describes a situation whereby the butter's "mere 'Dasein,'[20] the pure fact of its existence – fills the mind." He wrote: "It is the exhilaration of really seeing the piece of butter […] or uniting the mind with its object […]" (III, 18). The phenomenological inclination of McAuley's investigation into language, symbol and mysticism is apparent, in his exploration of the "contemplative state," how the "self disappears as a barrier – there is an "ecstasis" in the strict sense of the word" (III, 19). McAuley's future destiny with words was clear, including the questions as to how "metaphor, simile and allegory" could be used to bring out "the intuitive aspect of things" of "laying them bare as objects of absorbed and disinterested contemplation" (III, 34).

What emerges is the increasingly personal tenor of McAuley's scholarly arguments in exploring the mystical way. Referring to commentaries by the English art critic Roger Fry, perhaps publicised during the 1939/40 tour of a major exhibition of European post-impressionist art,[21] McAuley identifies with Fry's description of a creative vision whereby "even the ugliest and least aesthetic appearances can be subjected to the creative vision of the

---

[17] *Angry Penguins* (1940-1946) published work by Dylan Thomas, Gabriel García Márquez, James Dickey and Harry Roskolenko.

[18] Michael Cook. "James McAuley's Encounter with Modernism." unpublished PhD thesis, 1993, 123.

[19] Ferdinand de Saussure. *Cours de Linguistique Générale*. ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, Paris: Payot, 1916.

[20] The term "Dasein" is often associated with the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. However, Heidegger's texts were only available in English translation later (*Being and Time*, 1962.) The poet probably found "Dasein" elsewhere, perhaps in the writing of Hegel, Nietzsche or Rilke.

[21] Cf. 2.6 (46).

artist" (III, 19). McAuley remarks: "My description of intuitive awareness corresponds to this last kind of vision" (III, 19). Half-way through Part III the detached mode of the scholar has been replaced by that of the poet McAuley, propounding his own new poetic theory: "When we consider the material that poetry works with, it is seen that intuition must extend itself beyond the domain of sense perception" (III, 20). He writes in the urgent and imperative tones of one at the forefront of aesthetic renewal: "The poet's vision is very much concerned with human material which cannot be apprehended by the senses alone. […] *The poet has a particularly difficult path to follow*"[22] (III, 21). This latter statement, from an aesthetic and creative perspective might be considered a reiteration of what was becoming McAuley's conscious quest to be a poet, and not just any poet, but a poet-thinker eager to scrutinise and debate modern literary theory and trends. McAuley's embryonic but increasingly confident, critical writing signals not only perceptiveness but also a sense of kinship with the great poets and of self-election.

McAuley's increasingly engaged thesis, concludes with strongly worded advice about "what the poet must be able to do" (III, 21) which probably explains why McAuley failed to win the academic scholarship he thought he wanted. In exhortatory words recalling Rilke in his *Letters,* McAuley writes: "The disinterested contemplation of objects must be directed towards the interior life" (III, 21). "The poet, in his moments of creative vision, must cease to identify himself with his loves and hates, and regard them purely as objects of contemplation" (III, 21). In writing of the "via contemplativa" of the "mystic" (III, 26) McAuley may not have realised the significance of his words, as in the next decade, he loosed himself from the rationalist approaches of student circles as well as the contemporary forms and impulses of modernism. By the early 1940s he had: "become more convinced that I was a poet and that this was central to my life whatever I might find myself doing […]" (De Berg 11, 333). However, both the *personae* of the scholarly critic and literary theorist and the poet searching for an individual voice were beginning a dialectic that would surface briefly and spectacularly in the rushed manifesto he wrote with Harold Stewart following their Ern Malley surrealist parody[23] but more profoundly in McAuley's serious engagement in philosophical, aesthetic and metaphysical questioning from the late forties to the late nineteen-fifties. This would culminate in the series of essays to be published in *The End of Modernity* in 1959.

[22] Writer's italics.
[23] Cf.3.3 (64-65).

2.5 Collaboration

The young scholar-poet valued the contribution of close collaborators from his university circle: Joan Fraser,[24] probably in love with him, helped translate poetry from French and German. McAuley commented later "[…] as a poet is it very useful to have some close associate with whom you can have endlessly minute discussions of the drafts of your poems and all the matters that interest you […]" (De Berg 11, 334). Fraser observed that even at the age of twenty-two McAuley combined in his person "two quarrelling halves."[25] He had already accumulated a number of disparate roles (poet, bon-vivant, jazz-pianist, church organist, musical director). The most important collaborator at this time was his friend, poet and Fort Street High fellow-alumnus Harold Stewart, who worked closely with McAuley, in sharing notes on poems they were writing, including parodies, introducing new reading material and ideas. Both McAuley and Stewart had identified themselves with modernism, McAuley in poetry and Stewart also in art. McAuley later said of Stewart: "[…] He shared my passion for poetry and this remained a very close association for a long time […]."(De Berg 11, 334) Stewart, an avid reader and buddhist, who from the mid-1940s worked in bookshops in Melbourne, probably initiated much of McAuley's important reading especially the traditionalist philosophers René Guénon and Ananda Coomaraswamy in the late 1940s. Stewart's most important collaboration with McAuley occurred several years later in the literary experiment of the Ern Malley poems.

2.6 The Sister Arts – Painting and Poetry

Among the moderns, Baudelaire had already identified, as early as 1857, attempts to break down the conventional boundaries between the diverse arts, how painters resorted to musical motifs, sculptors used colour and writers used plastic devices.[26] This overlap would become a feature of high modernism. In late 1939 and early 1940 a major Melbourne *Herald*-sponsored art exhibition arrived in Sydney, featuring modern European impressionist and post-impressionist painters.[27] McAuley's thesis indicates that he had been reading and thinking about visual aesthetics, including Roger Fry's art criticism**.** Donald Horne records that the

---

[24] Joan Fraser's novel *I for Isabel* (1990) written under her pen-name Amy Witting, features a character based on the young James McAuley.

[25] Michael Heyward. Unpublished interview of Joan Levick/Fraser. Heyward papers, PA/96/159, Box 9, SLV.

[26] Matei Calinescu. *The Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism.* 1987, 166.

[27] It represented artists Seurat, Cézanne, Gauguin, Braque, Matisse, Bonnard, Vuillard, Van Gogh, Dali, Gris, Picasso, de Chirico, Ben Nicholson, Augustus John, Jacob Epstein, Sickert, Chagall, Ernst, Derain and Vlaminck.

exhibition was the subject of discussion at Saturday afternoon meetings at Sherry's café in which McAuley, Stewart, A.D. Hope and Fraser also participated (Horne, 244). Stewart, a friend of contemporary modern painters William Dobell and Donald Friend, spent time talking about surrealism and experimentalism in modern art (237).

In 1939 McAuley had started courting Norma Abernethy, a young music and mathematics teacher, who he would marry in 1942. "My interest in Dürer developed early in my tentative exploration in visual art in the late 1930s. My wife-to-be and I bought what we could afford of the things that caught our eye – mainly postcards[28] and reproductions cut out from magazines […] Dürer attracted us considerably."[29] A watercolour landscape of Innsbruck, inspired McAuley's poem "Durer: [sic] Innsbruck, 1495" probably written about 1939/40 or at the latest October 1943. This arguably first, of what might be called McAuley's ekphrastic poems, would be the initiating poem for the Ern Malley texts. It is the only one of the Ern Malley poems considered to be written entirely by McAuley prior to the "experiment" though has not been included in collections of McAuley's work.[30] This unrhymed, 12-lined single-stanza poem in conversational iambics presents, as implied through its title, an impression of that same postcard scene of Innsbruck, with its spires, roofs and high snows, through the disjointed lens of the perceiving subject. It unfolds as a meditative remembering of a scene like a dream-fragment, a perhaps Andersonian meditation on the real:

> I had often, cowled in the slumberous heavy air,
> Closed my inanimate lids to find it real,
> As I knew it would be, the colourful spires
> And painted roofs, the high snows glimpsed at the back,
> All reversed in the quiet reflecting waters – […] ("Durer: Innsbruck, 1495")[31]

It offers an intense, Rilkean, absorption with and into the object, the physical scene or art-image contemplated, re-imagined in time and brought back to life again by the mysterious viewer subject. It also imagines, from line 6, a fleeting engagement with its original viewer, the historical artist Dürer who visited Innsbruck on return from Italy in 1495, followed by a meditation on the aspiring artist's (the subject's) dilemma of belatedness:

---

[28] A postcard reproduction of Dürer's watercolour "Innsbruck" is in Box 6 of the McAuley papers. See Appendice.

[29] McAuley. "Albrecht Dürer: Self and World." *JM*, 1988, 46 – 59.

[30] This "authorless" poem is not included in McAuley's *Collected Poems* (1971) and comes from the "Darkening Ecliptic" poems attributed to the Ern Malley *persona* invented by McAuley and Harold Stewart discussed in Chapter 3. Drawing on Stewart's recollections Michael Heyward wrote: "to set the ball rolling McAuley plucked "Dürer: Innsbruck" out of his own unpublished poems. Stewart remembers he read [McAuley's] poem intact and adjusted it only lightly, if at all […]," Quoted from Heyward, *The Ern Malley Affair*, 112.

[31] "The Darkening Ecliptic," *Angry Penguins*, 6, Autumn 1944, 8.

[…] Not knowing then that Durer [sic] Perceived [sic] it too.
Now I find that once more I have shrunk
To an interloper, robber of dead man's dream,
I had read in books that art is not easy
But no one warned that the mind repeats
In its ignorance the vision of others. I am still
The black swan of trespass on alien waters. (*Ibid.*)

The motifs of the beholding subject as "interloper," "robber of dead man's dream," offer rich tropes for a Bloomian reading of replica– the latecomer artist's ("ephebe's") experience of "kenosis" –the horror at and wish to avoid being only a copy of what has come before. (90). Thus, the "ephebe" subject finds how: "[…] art is not easy […]," how "the mind repeats / In ignorance the vision of others," or unknowing borrowing. The poem displays what Julian Croft associates with high modernism in Australia in the 1920s and 1930s, a: "concentration on interior states, the depiction of alienated consciousness, a concern with the limitations of language; and the total uncertainty in an agnostic age."[32] We see McAuley's first use of the term "trespass" in an artistic sense, in the catching, if opaque, image of "the black swan of trespass […]." This sense would be amplified in the poem's next usage in the transgressive Ern Malley exercise, and also later in a more conventional semantics. The surreal "black swan […] on alien waters," McAuley's first use of what would be an important Australian motif throughout his work, draws upon an etymological sense that such creature was an example of impossibility in European logic. [33]

There is a probable connection between McAuley's poem (and his turn to the German artist) and the Dürer poem "Nuremberg" by the older Australian poet Kenneth Slessor (1901-1971) published in his important collection *Five Bells* (1939). Slessor's European topic would have appealed to McAuley, as a devotee of Rilke and the German romantic poets, and also Dürer. In a later essay McAuley comments on Slessor's poem "Nuremberg" about Dürer's printing technique.[34] The older poet's voluptuously sensuous and sonorous poems dense with alliteration and lush but chiselled, modernist imagery would have attracted the young McAuley. Critic Dennis Haskell observed that Slessor's work, "[…] more than any other, turned Australian literature towards the modern […]."[35] The European cityscape of Slessor's "Nuremberg" may have reminded McAuley of Rilke's exotic visual townscapes:

[32] Julian Croft. "Responses to Modernism." *The New Literary History of Australia*, 1988, 411.
[33] Cf.11.6 (304).
[34] McAuley. "An Imprint of Slessor," *Quadrant*, 1973, 6.
[35] Haskell, Dennis. Introduction, Kenneth Slessor, *Selected Poems*, iv.

So quiet it was in that high, sun-steeped room,
So quiet and still, that sometimes with the light
Through the great windows, bright with bottle-panes,
There'd float a chime from clock-jacks out of sight,
Clapping iron mallets on green copper gongs […] (Kenneth Slessor, "Nuremberg")

McAuley's imagining of Dűrer's landscape, while not representing the painter's hometown Nuremberg but his traveller's watercolour of Innsbruck, nonetheless adopts an uncannily similar lofty vantage point to Slessor's "Nuremberg" in its view of "the colourful spires / And painted roofs, the high snows […]" (McAuley, "Durer: Innsbruck, 1495"). Perhaps McAuley, on reading Slessor's vivid evocation, and viewing the postcard image of Dürer's watercolour, decided to offer his own ekphrastic tribute to the great painter's images of European cities. The spires and roofs of McAuley's "Durer: Innsbruck, 1495" echo those in Slessor's poem: "[…] those thousand towers of Nuremberg / […] Those gabled roofs with smoking cowls, and those / Encrusted spires of stone […]" (Slessor, "Nuremberg"). The unusual adjective "cowled" in McAuley's poem (l.1), meaning covered by a monk's hood, can be traced to Slessor's poem where it appears as "cowls" (the hood covering a chimney). Arguably, some imaginative play links the architectural term with the aspect of the watchful monk-like observer of McAuley's more subdued poem, with the sense of the viewer seeing things twice removed – as the subject of the poem imagining Dürer viewing Innsbruck and also as the author McAuley observing Slessor imagining Dürer in "Nuremberg":

[…] Not knowing that Durer perceived it too.
Now I find that once more I have shrunk
To an interloper, robber of dead man's dreams […][36] ("Durer: Innsbruck, 1495")

Even without such a connection, McAuley's "Durer: Innsbruck, 1495" must be noted as one of the young poet's important ekphrastic poems that might be compared with Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" (1938) and the poetry of Rosemary Dobson[37] who, through the visual arts and typesetting, mixed the genre of poetry and painting with much greater dedication than McAuley, though he would return to this approach later. Dürer remained an abiding interest: in his 1976 essay, McAuley writes about his long admiration for the German painter for his drawing, watercolour and his total objectivity. The painter *persona* would be at the centre of one of his most important last poems "Sister Arts" (1974-75).[38]

[36] Unknowingly, the putative author figure suggested in the expression "robber of dead man's dreams" would prove to be telling in the poem's next usage as the decoy poem in the body of work of the soon-to-be invented dead poet Ern Malley.
[37] Rosemary Dobson was a Sydney University colleague and poet
[38] Cf. 11.9 (311-313).

2.7 Crisis and Revolution

Written in McAuley's high modernist period, his poem "The Blue Horses" (c.1939-40) was inspired by paintings of a similar name[39] (1911) by the German expressionist painter Franz Marc (1880-1916), to whom the poem is dedicated.[40] The paintings feature cubist depiction of a group of horses in close focus in vivid, if cold and metallic, transcendent, blue, executed with strong movement and energy. Marc's images of pure animal force, though perhaps idealised and therefore unreal, give rise to a powerful meditation on what the young poet saw as symbolic of the brittle but dynamic mood of the times. The energy of Marc's painting is captured in McAuley's opening stanza. The urgent first sentence posits the dream-presence of loud horses' hooves, begs the meaning of and amplifies the (war-like) chaos they bring:

> What loud wave-motioned hooves awaken
> Our dream-fast members from the cramps of sleep?
> The tribal images are shaken
> And crash upon our guardians. The skies
> Are shivered like a pane of glass. […] ("The Blue Horses," *CP,* 7, c.1940)

Akin to but more positive than Eliot, an age of iconoclasm is suggested in the alliteration of "shaken" images and skies "shivered" like glass. Mythologist Juan Eduardo Cirlot describes the horse as associated with change, primeval chaos and magic.[41] It is a vitalist, Nietzschean motif, including in literature known to McAuley – the horse featured in D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* (1920) and in several poems by Yeats, "Hear the Shadowy Horses, their long manes awake / Their hooves heavy with tumult, their eyes glimmering white […]."[42] *UA*'s opening section's epitaph from Jeremiah, xii.5: "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?" (*UA*, 7) sets the collection's prophetic tone, suggesting to the reader a similar chaotic scenario in the mid twentieth-century.

Part 1, comprising 4 alternating shorter and longer stanzas, elaborates the portrait of the horses in the dream-sequence. The horses' symbolic energy for social change is celebrated in the poem's fluid free-verse format using occasional, rather than regular, rhyme and emphasised through powerful trochaic line-beginnings, to highlight inventive compound-nouns ("earth-bestriders"):

[39] McAuley states "the symbolism was suggested by Franz Marc's two paintings "Blue Horses" and "Tower of Blue Horses" as presented with a commentary by Peter Thoene, *Modern German Art*, (1938)." Footnote, *CP,* 227.
[40] Marc, associated with Der Blaue Reiter school in Murnau, Germany, produced many paintings featuring blue horses.
[41] Cirlot, J,E. *A Dictionary of Symbols*. 1962, 152.
[42] Yeats. "He Bids his Love be at Peace." *The Wind among the Reeds,* 1899.

> Progeny of winds, sea-forms, earth-bestriders […]
> Blue Horses lift their neighing trumpets to the moon!
> They stamp among the spiritual mills
> That weave a universe from our decay:
> The specious outline crumbles at the shock
> Of visionary hooves, and in dismay
> Men hide among the tumbled images […] (*CP*, 7-8)

The (tumbled) images remain disconnected from a recognisable context, surreal like the dream-vision from which they emerge (Marc's painting), its vision of collective man, the fugitive from iconoclastic chaos, hiding in a ruin of tumbled images. The hooves of the spiritual blue horses are celebrated as "visionary" in being destructive: "Beneath the knocking of the magic hoof / New spaces open and expand." The sense of excitement at abstract possibilities for the new, even a microscopic scientific dimension, is expanded in the last stanza of Part 1: "For in the world are spaces infinite / And each point is a mighty room / Where flowers with strange faces bloom / In the amazing light […]" (*CP*, 8). In contrast to modernism's usual tropes of uncertainty, alienation and pessimism, it shows an avant-garde hope for renovation, through tumultuous change.

Part I reflects McAuley's interest in the late 1930s and early 1940s in the "cultural and historical crisis,"[43] with the outbreak of World War II. "I felt within myself the attraction of what one might call a revolutionary poetic – vitalist, lawless, a thing of passion, impulse and wild humour."[44] The poem echoes the fascination with the primitive evident in the early modernist and late decadent movement (Calinsecu 163). While McAuley's poem "The Blue Horses" begins with a surreal, nightmarish almost apocalyptic quality, its longer Part II attaches to a more recognisable world – its redeeming human feature. Mindful of his early influences Eliot, or Brennan, McAuley depicts an urban industrial landscape but in the celebratory mode of his modernist compatriot Slessor as he describes, in lyrical manner, the dynamic urban technology of inner wharf-side Sydney in the early 1940s:

> The delicate steel cranes manoeuvre
> Like giant birds above their load;
> The high song of the tyres is heard
> Along the whitening road. (*CP,* 9)

It gives poetic resort to the "ugliest and least aesthetic" *topoi*, a phrase approvingly cited from Roger Fry's aesthetics, in his Master's Thesis (III,19). At times the words have the mechanistic

[43] McAuley. *A Map of Australian Verse*. (*MAV*), 1975, 201.
[44] McAuley. "Culture and Counter-Culture." *Quadrant*, 1976, 16.

vitality of the Futurists: "The sacred turbines hum, the factories / Set up their hallowed roar […]" (*CP,* 9), suggesting a progressive connection between war-time dynamism and mechanical production.

This cityscape is not only a symbolic landscape for the modernist age but also the backdrop to a more particular, variant, tender love-experience, probably reflecting his recent encounter with Norma Abernethy, rather than the anguished love episodes of earlier poems. Here the poem pursues the timeless argument used by the Metaphysical poets, also more recently the modernist Eliot and the younger Auden (1907-73), about seizing life in the present moment – as in Auden's prophetic: "You shall love your crooked neighbour / With your crooked heart."[45] Nonetheless, the allusion in "The Blue Horses" to the truce played out in the battle of love (the ambiguous "arms of love"), seen below, foregrounds the political and military strife of that time, the time of war:

> Naked you lie and your own silence keep;
> The arms of love are laid aside in sleep.
> Soon it will be day like other days:
> I cannot hold this hour in my hand
> Nor press
> Its image on a substance beyond time. (*CP*, 8)

Demonstrating an Eliotian and Metaphysical concern about time, Part II sees McAuley keeping company with Auden in his depictions, in gentler iambic meter, of love and its necessity, against the grim urban scenarios in a time of war and change: "This appalling catastrophe in which whole nations simply tumbled to the dustheap […]." (Thompson 98) The subject's imperious order, in trochaic meter, to his love to "Sleep no more" is set against a scenario of global chaos, suggesting that while love would not be denied, neither would it be a panacea:

> Sleep no more, for while you sleep
> Our love is stolen by the cheating sun
> And angry frightened men destroy
> Our peace with diktat, pact and gun.
> The old men of the tribe go mad
> And guard with malice, fraud and guile
> The sacred enzymes of a world gone bad. […] (*CP*, 9)

The sense of emergency is underlined by the use of emphatic spondee stresses ("diktat, pact […] world gone bad"). The passage matches McAuley's later description, how for many including him until 1943, there was: "a fantasy film with an ideological scenario running continuously in

[45] W.H. Auden. "38." November 1938, *Selected Poems*, 62.

the theatre of their head, on a screen dividing them from the world out there."[46] We can sense the young McAuley's attraction to the creative chaos of that state: "Today as the opaque and simplified surface of the conventional world cracks, a few artists and scientists are struggling to enlarge their perceptions and penetrate beyond it."[47] The subject speaks apprehensively of a "slum culture,[48] […] not / The area where love begins […]" (*CP,* 9) in opposition to which change was desired and welcomed. The initial visual frame of the poem is restored at the poem's somewhat ambivalent conclusion –"uncertain and not without hope" (Coleman, 1980 19) with the return of the revolutionary Blue Horses who "scream aloud" while the crowd is "Stampeded on the hooves of fate […]" (*CP,* 9).

The vivid surreal construction – the dream vision of the horses interspersed, in cubist manner, with concatenated images of the industrial architecture of the city, the victorious silver trumpets, the lovers' quiet space, the frenetic energy and musicality of the poem, the larger-than-life animal and technological tropes, reflect what McAuley and fellow poet Vivian Smith later discussed as McAuley's own understanding of and participation in the "apocalyptic forties" ("Poetry Today" 14). McAuley's "The Blue Horses" presents what Michael Hamburger has described as the "apocalyptic vision of cities" (305) seen in McAuley's early models Baudelaire and Rilke and also in European expressionist poems at the outbreak of World War 1, the time Marc painted "The Blue Horses."[49] McAuley is reported not to have liked being considered by the Australian critic, H.M. Green, as a "follower of Auden." Green, who had included "The Blue Horses" in the 1943 *Australian Poetry* anthology, subsequently explained both to McAuley and Harold Stewart how he thought there were two waves of modernism, with McAuley representing the second wave "out here" [in Australia] just as Auden and others represented it in England.[50]

Calinescu describes how in the nineteenth-century the "crisis of religion gave birth to the religion of crisis […]" (62). In such a culture of rupture, visions of utopia and dystopia emerged, at times attached to dualist Manichean premises of Gnosticism (in which the world was made by the Devil), contributing to an impatience with the world as it was, and

---

[46] McAuley. "Culture and Counter-culture." 15.
[47] McAuley note for H.M. Green on "Blue Horses" for Green's edition of *Australian Poetry 1943*, 10 June 1942, H. M. Green Papers.
[48] McAuley might recall his phrase later when reading Eric Heller's critique of modernist creator poets: "the world as it is nothing but a slum to the spirit and an offence to the artist [...]," *The Disinherited Mind,* 1952, 170-1.
[49] One of those expressionist poets was Georg Trakl whose rural and urban landscapes and strong apprehension of evil McAuley would discover in the mid-1950s, and for whom he felt a strong affinity that would be explored in greater depth in a series of poems in the early 1970s. Cf. 10.5 (269-270).
[50] H.M. Green. Letter to McAuley. 15 March 1944. H.M. Green Papers.

manifesting itself as messianism and Marxism (62-64). McAuley's attraction to such themes underline his interest both in Blake and Milton. Arguably, this matches the environment described by Coleman in which the young poet circulated in the late 'thirties and early 'forties, along with other "anarchists and latter-day millenarians" – "[…] there was a life of poetry, gin and jazz, free thought and loveless licentiousness, sour wit and revolutionary gestures." (1980 19) "The Blue Horses" clearly issues from the anarchist phase which McAuley alludes to in his later poem "Self-Portrait: Newcastle, 1942"– "With friends he talks anarchism / The philosophical kind […]" (*CP,* 204). As a student Peter Pierce witnessed the resurrection of the anarchic facet of the young McAuley when, as older university professor, he recited with "especial relish" the words in Shakespeare's *Henry IV*: "Let order die!"[51]

The nightmare elements McAuley refers to in this later poem – "In sleeping panic he shatters / The glass of a window-pane," ("Self-Portrait, Newcastle, 1942, "*CP*, 204) and in "The Blue Horses" written in those early years ("The skies / Are shivered like a pane of glass") were not, however, invented: they described elements of the poet's own experience, which he had brought naturalistically, to the expressionist idiom he was exploring, rather than imagining a stereotype. Such nightmare motifs, with their element of the apocalyptic, would recur throughout McAuley's work especially in his encounter with questions of evil. It was already present in the nightmarish visions of this period in McAuley's expressionist[52] "Gnostic Prelude" ("the heart is a blind man in the rain") (*CP*, 7, 1939-42) and in the calm grotesquerie of the Auden-like[53] ballad "Dialogue" (*CP*, 10, 1939-42) where "[…] The rats had come and eaten my face away" (*CP*, 10). It would reappear in his discussion of modernity in "A Letter to John Dryden" (1953) and *Quiros* (1964*).*

McAuley later commented on his intellectual community at that time: "we regarded ourselves as on the left"[54] and "anti-war" (Santamaria, 7). In 1941 when pressure was put on the young teacher by the headmaster of Shore School to enlist in the Australian war effort McAuley quietly resigned. During that year McAuley was musical director of the University of Sydney musical anti-war revue "I'd Rather be Left" which played for six months at the Communist New Theatre League and for which he wrote several lightly subversive lyrics and accompanying music, including:

[51] Peter Pierce. "McAuley, James Philip (1917-1976)." *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.
[52] Dobrez compares "Gnostic Prelude" with early expressionist paintings by the Australian Arthur Boyd, 173.
[53] They recall Auden's early ballads "'O where are you going?' said reader to rider," 20, and "O what is that sound that so thrills the air?"26-27, W.H. Auden, *Selected Poems*; ed., Edward Mendelson, Faber, 1979.
[54] "[…] on the left but critical of the main core of Stalinism," (De Berg 11,333).

The rich man gets a Buick
And gives it to his wife.
The poor man gets a lemon
And he can suck it all his life […]
(“I’d Rather be Left”) (Coleman, 1980 19)

The next year, 1942, while teaching secondary school in Newcastle, north of Sydney, McAuley found congenial company with the anarchist worker-poet Harry Hooton. Max Harris, editor of the fledgling modernist literary magazine *Angry Penguins* launched in 1940 had recently declared himself an anarchist.[55] Biographer Michael Ackland argues that both McAuley and Harris would have subscribed to the influential critic Herbert Read’s “assertion that the poet was an anarchist.” (2001 65) McAuley later recalled his interest in anarchism as a “nineteen-thirties intellectual, alienated from ‘capitalism’ and assuming without question that some form of socialism was desirable and inevitable.”(“Culture and Counter-culture,” 15) In a letter from Melbourne in late 1943 where he was enlisted in the Australian Army, McAuley described to Donald Horne his decision “to go on being little anarchy [sic] in my own way.”[56] However, by this time McAuley already rankled a little at what he noted as the Melbourne compulsion to wear a political label.

2.8 The Disappointed Radical

Several factors contributed to a major change in McAuley’s political journey. By the late 1930s Professor John Anderson had already raised doubts about communism, as information continued to emerge about Stalin’s purges. McAuley’s left-leaning, pacifist beliefs began to collapse in early 1942, with the fall of Singapore to the Japanese invading forces in mid-February 1942 and the bombing of Darwin four days later. “I had just discovered myself without any real reason [for being against the war] and […] it made me gradually re-think what it was all about, being leftist and radical in the late 1930s and early 1940s […].” This had led to “[…] a quite deep-seated, fairly rapid revision of views in ‘43 and ‘44. By 1945 I had very distinctly changed my view […]” (Santamaria 27). McAuley’s ditty “Ballade of Lost Phrases” was written in early 1942 after the invasions, in parodic riposte to the once revered University Revue:

[55] Max Harris. “I am an Anarchist – So What!” *Bohemia*, July 1939, 12.
[56] McAuley. Letter to Donald Horne. November 1943, Horne Papers.

In what museum now abide
The pamphlets that we read of yore;
Where are the orators that cried
“We will not fight a bosses’ war,”

“The system’s not worth fighting for,”
[…] Comrades we argued, fought and swore:
We might as well have stuck to beer.
The Japanese are in Johore
–Where are the phrases of yesteryear?
(“Ballade of Lost Phrases,” *CP*, 18-19, 1942)

The poems records the change, the poet’s “recantation of revolution” (Coleman, 1980 25).

By March 1943 McAuley had already been called up, and enlisted, in the Australian Infantry Forces (AIF). By June 1943 he had been assigned to Melbourne to join his university colleague Major Alf Conlon at the Directorate of Research and Civil Affairs (DORCA). When 25-year-old Sergeant McAuley introduced himself in winter 1943 to the teacher and future historian Manning Clark, he described himself as “a disappointed radical.”[57] McAuley had told Clark him how he was “[…] on a quest to find what holds the world together in its innermost parts […]” (129). McAuley’s intimation signals important shifts and significant reorientation occurring in this formative decade of his life.

McAuley found Harold Stewart, installed at the Alf Conlon’s[58] Directorate as librarian, engaged in war-time research into geographical, cartographic, strategic, anthropological but also philosophical matters important to both young writers, if in different ways. McAuley’s poems had become “increasingly critical” of the “myth of revolution that had been so powerful in this century.” (McAuley, *MAV*, 201.) The eight-stanza fixed-form (rhyming quatrains in iambics) but modernist poem, “The Incarnation of Sirius,” (c.1944) reflected that disillusion, towards the end of the young poet’s “black chapter.” It was first published with “The Blue Horses” and other apocalyptic poems in Part I of *Under Aldebaran (UA)* (1946). In its almost occult, imagistic texture the poem uses an astrological reading of the skies to prophecy a birth that would immeasurably change the contemporary world. Drawing upon the poet’s fascination with the symbolism of stellar and planetary skyscape, as seen in “Dawn,”[59] “The Incarnation of Sirius” envisages an alignment of the giant Sirius with stars from other constellations:

In that age, the great anagram of God
Had bayed the planets from the rounds they trod,
And gathered the fixed stars in a shining nation

[57] Manning Clark. *The Quest for Grace.* 129.
[58] “The Blue Horses” section of *UA* was dedicated to Alf Conlon.
[59] “Dawn” invoked the constellation of the Pleiades. Cf.2.1 (39).

Like listless birds that flock before migration.
("The Incarnation of Sirius," 1944/45, *CP*, 23)

The oblique "anagram of God" is "dog" – Sirius is traditionally known as the "dog-star," one of the dogs of the hunter Orion. McAuley may have found the reference to Sirius in a text he was reading, probably for DORCA –the *Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea,* (1448)[60] by the Portuguese late medieval chronicler Gomes Eanes de Azurara. A footnote[61] to one Azurara text on the "dog-star" describes the poisonous effect of Sirius's "dog-days" of mid-summer, how "the sun still poisons when it passeth through that sign," offering background to the poem's imagining of the auspices for an evil birth. The configuration of Sirius, considered the most important star by the Egyptians, with the Pleiades, is conveyed as portentous:

For the millennial instinct of new flight
Resolved the antimony that fixed their light;
And echoing in the troubled soul of Earth,
Quickened a virgin womb, to bring to birth […] (*CP,* 23)

The "virgin womb" presages the troubling birth ("incarnation") of demagogic leaders with millenarian utopian schemes, who drastically changed the history of the early to mid-twentieth century Europe, probably Hitler, but also Stalin. Sirius foretells the birth of:

What scarce was human: a rude avatar
That glistened with the enclosed wrath of a star
The woman died in pangs before she had kissed
The monstrous form of God's antagonist. (*CP,* 23)

McAuley's use of the resonant trope of monstrous birth re-imagines both Yeats' seminal modernist prophetic poem "The Second Coming" (1920) and Eliot's related poem "The Journey of the Magi" (1927) that gave the title for McAuley's 1937 essay on Eliot. McAuley had cited lines of Yeats' famous poem in a letter to Dorothy Auchterlonie in 1938.[62] Instead of the imagery of the beast lurching towards Bethlehem McAuley's poem continues the Egyptian motif portraying the dark new leader as an "Anubis [dog]-headed heresiarch" who "sprang to a height, fire-sinewed in the dark." Interestingly, McAuley's poem describing the demise of the demagogue uses stellar metaphor recalling Milton's Lucifer in *Paradise Lost*, an important reference for McAuley in addressing the theme of evil:

[60] One version McAuley read was Azurara's *Chronicle*, edited by Virginia Castro de Almeida and translated by Miall, (1936) mentioned in McAuley's endnote to "Henry the Navigator," *Under Aldebaran*, 75. Cf. 4.3 (87).
[61] Footnote 151 to p. 181, on p. 341 of the Azurara text translated for Hakluyt by Beazley, 1899. This footnote on "Sirius" is not found in the Azurara text translated by Miall (1936). McAuley probably saw several versions.
[62] McAuley. Letter to Auchterlonie. 19 October 1938, CC, 2.

And the vision sank, bloody and aborted.
The stars that with rebellion had consorted
Fled back in silence to their former stations.
Over the giant face of sleeping nations […] (*CP,* 24)

The figurative language constructs a powerful modernist allegory about significant political movements in the early and mid-twentieth century. It expresses McAuley's farewell to and disenchantment with the "myth of revolution" celebrated in "The Blue Horses," echoing Yeats' disillusion 24 years earlier. McAuley arguably shared in what Calinescu has described as the "new sense of crisis that was experienced after World War II […]." (136)

The final stanza of "The Incarnation of Sirius" suggests McAuley's understanding of a perennial capacity for destruction and evil residing within the human breast, symbolised by the double-natured star Aldebaran (with which he felt kinship), buried though it might be temporarily:

The centuries thick coverlet was drawn.
Upon the huddled breast Aldebaran
Still glittered with its sad alternate fire:
Blue as of memory, red as of desire. (*CP,* 24)

In psychological terms, echoing Eliot's pairing of memory and desire in the first lines of "The Burial of the Dead" ("The Waste Land"), McAuley's "own sign," Aldebaran, rendered here "with its alternate colours of pink and blue"[63] would continue to bide his time, like a fallen Lucifer, reappearing in the future long poem *Captain Quiros.* With its intense Rilkean capacity for interiority, its dense mythological metaphor, "The Incarnation of Sirius" retains McAuley in a modernist framework, though the poem uses fixed form rhyming quatrains (aabb) in mainly iambic pentameter. The poem reflects what McAuley would later describe as the struggle for an "adequate symbolism"[64] driving his poetic evolution. In dialogue with McAuley, Vivian Smith described the "apocalyptic forties" as an important formative time in Australian poetry, borrowing Philip Larkin's expression, with many poets doing "[…] their mythological knitting," ("Poetry Today" 13-14). McAuley's resort to myth would continue until the end of the 1940s, and not be put aside until finishing his long poem *Quiros,* though that topic might be classified as historical rather than mythical.

It was for vital modernist poems from the early 1940s such as "The Blue Horses" and "The Incarnation of Sirius," that McAuley was first recognized, including by contemporaries H.M. Green and Dorothy Auchterlonie, as one of the outstanding young modernist poets in Australia. His shift towards neo-classical forms after his early flirtation, in *Under Aldebaran*

[63] Cf.1.4. Heyward interview of Joan Fraser/Levick (Amy Witting), 4/7/1989, Heyward Papers.
[64] McAuley, Introd. *James McAuley*: *Selected Poems* (*SP*), viii.

with the “dangerous temptations of […] modernism,”[65] would be considered retrograde by many, including Auchterlonie. As Coleman commented, by 1943 McAuley seemed largely to be have been “freed of revolution” but “had not yet come fully to terms with modernism, the last writhings of Romanticism, the world of Ern Malley.” (1980 26) The mask of the modernist poet, the dense figurative language in the apocalyptic perspective of “The Incarnation of Sirius” and futurist “The Blue Horses,” together with those of his even more apocalyptic Australian contemporaries, would soon be subjected to scrutiny through a seemingly Dionysian jest. This experiment would be defended by McAuley’s other more Apollonian face, that of the emerging literary theorist.

[65] Tom Shapcott. “Australian Poetry Since 1920.” *The Literature of Australia*, 1976, 132.

3

Hoax, Experiment, Mask: The Poetry of Ern Malley (1943-44)

3.1 The poet who did not exist

In early June 1944, the Melbourne-based[1] avant-garde literary magazine *Angry Penguins*, edited by the 23-year-old author Max Harris, published a special edition dedicated to the discovery of unknown 25-year-old surrealist poet, "Ern Malley," recently deceased, whose poems had been sent by his "sister Ethel." Harris published Malley's 16 surrealist poems under their title "The Darkening Ecliptic" (DE) headed by their author's Preface and Statement, with Harris's explanation about the discovery.[2] The poems are marked by an elliptical, connotative style with an invocative, vatic stance:

> Rise from the wrist, o kestrel
> Mind, to a clear expanse.
> Perform your high dance
> On the clouds of ancestral
> Duty […]
> ("Sonnets from the Novacord,"DE, 9)

This neo-romantic demeanour alternates with the confessional posture of its riddling, almost prophetic, "I" *persona* and a hyperbolic texture, as seen in: "My blood becomes a Damaged Man / Most like your Albion […]," ("Sweet William," DE, 11). The dense riddling style, using both rhymed and unrhymed verse, and the playful allusiveness (to Blake in "Sweet William") typifies the extensive web of canonic literary intertextuality (including Shakespeare and Keats.) The reading is captivating, combining an apparently structuring, if shifting, "I" narrative, through a puzzle of many disconnected images as suggested in its title ("Documentary Film," DE*,*16), in a confessedly "hysterical vision" ("Baroque Exterior," DE, 20) of what seem to be strongly visual, frequently erotic, dream sequences: "The windowed eyes gleam with terror / The twin balconies are breasts […]" (*Ibid.*). Both texts and titles recall surrealist and cubist art. They also display a neo-romantic freedom, lexical daring and a formal randomness, intuiting postmodern practices, as we see in "Boult to Marina:" (DE, 12)

> Sainted and schismatic would you be?
> Four frowning bedposts
> Will be the cliffs of your wind-thrummelled sea
> Lady of these coasts […]

[1] Max Harris and his magazine *Angry Penguins* relocated from Adelaide to Melbourne, after receiving sponsorship from arts patron John Reed.
[2] Ern Malley. "The Darkening Ecliptic." (DE), *Angry Penguins,* 6, Autumn 1944, 1-34.

Upon his discovery of Malley in November 1943, Harris's praise for the poet's alluring surreal voice had been conveyed to Ern's sister Ethel:[3] "[…] your brother was one of the most remarkable and important poetic figures of this country […]."[4] This reaction was reciprocated in avant-garde circles in Melbourne and Adelaide: the young Ern Malley was on the way to becoming an international celebrity, his work being read by the international surrealist critic Herbert Read, the hoaxer's main target. However, only a few days after publication, towards the end of June 1944, the popular press, inadvertently alerted by a young journalist close to the perpetrators, revealed that the figure of Ern Malley was a hoax,[5] that the inspired young poet did not exist. The inventors of Ern Malley were eventually, if reluctantly, revealed to be the young Sydney poets James McAuley (26) and Harold Stewart (27), then based in Melbourne. The crowning humiliation, for Max Harris, was that as publisher he and the poems were subsequently submitted to a trial in Adelaide, over allegations of indecency. The affair was rapidly transformed from literary marvel into public farce. Thus was fulfilled the hidden message to the avant-garde *Angry Penguins* of the mischief- maker in the poem's sub-text: "Sting them! Sting them my Anopheles[6] […]" (DE, "Culture as Exhibit," 24).

The Ern Malley affair became a *cause célèbre* in Australia and also internationally, as documented by Michael Heyward.[7] It was highlighted in the 17 July 1944 issue of *Time* magazine and was apparently discussed with T.S. Eliot, a director and editor at Faber & Faber, who was, reported to be extremely interested, (Heyward, 2003 195) probably the only occasion the "mighty"[8] poet ever heard of the work of the young Australian writer so moved by his early poems. In Australia, while the Malley poems had been admired in avant-garde circles, the hoax and subsequent trial drew ridicule upon the surrealist model from less sympathetic literary circles and a wider audience. The Ern Malley affair was, and still is, charged with having set back modernism considerably in Australian literary and artistic circles. Even seventy years later, Ern Malley remains a topic of debate. The "Malley" poems are, arguably, better known than the wider body of either McAuley or Stewart's work, but perhaps never included in either of the poet's oeuvre but located separately in recent anthologies.

---

[3] The poems were sent by Stewart's sister Marion from Sydney.
[4] Harris. Letter to "Ethel Malley," 2/11/1943. Box 7, McAuley papers.
[5] Adelaide-based literary critic and poet Brian Elliott suspected that Max Harris had written the Malley poems.
[6] Anopheles is a genus of mosquito.
[7] Michael Heyward. *The Ern Malley Affair*. 2003.
[8] McAuley's "A Letter to John Dryden" (1953) alludes to T.S. Eliot's "mighty line" (*CP*, 86).

The collaboration between McAuley and Stewart continues their tradition in *Hermes*, even though both would continue to dismiss the Malley poems as either prank or experiment. I do not speculate upon the difficult question of the respective poets' contribution to the *oeuvre*, but rather how the exercise reflects upon a stage of McAuley's stylistic development and also upon the experiment in a particular genre. Heyward, who interviewed Stewart 50 years later, records that "McAuley did most of the writing" but noted that Stewart recalled "stages when we probably had two pens and two bits of paper." (2003 111)

3.2 *Angry Penguins:* The New Apocalypse in Australia

The stimulus for the Ern Malley poems was the growing influence in Australia of late literary modernism, mainly the surrealist avant-garde, through the agency of *Angry Penguins*. It drew inspiration both from the neo–romantic post-surreal[9] work of Dylan Thomas (1914-53) and the resurgence of surrealism in English poetry in the British New Apocalypse poets, David Gascoyne (1916-2001) and Henry Treece (1911-66), a disciple of Gascoyne and Herbert Read (1893-1968), the modernist literary and art critic and imagist poet with whom Harris was in contact. Read had recently published his influential introduction to the International Surrealist Exhibition in London (1936), advocating a poetic creed envisaging a shifting process of reality (Heyward, 2003 20). Harris used *Angry Penguins* to promulgate his and Read's views on modernism and anarchism as well as to publish work from like-minded Australian and international poets. Inspired by D. H. Lawrence, Kafka and Read, and through contacts in the American review *New Directions, Angry Penguins* published the work of Dylan Thomas,[10] American modernist poets Robert Penn Warren and Kenneth Rexroth and visiting American servicemen poets Karl Shapiro and Harry Roskolenko. It was an alternative to the other avant-garde format offered by the contemporary nationalist Jindyworobak movement.[11] Four years younger than McAuley, Harris had already published two collections of poetry and one novel.[12] McAuley and Stewart had only published individual poems mostly in Sydney University magazines,[13] though both were young, committed modernists. Cassandra Pybus conjectures an element of professional pique behind

[9] Joaquim Manuel Magalhães. *Dylan Thomas: Consequência da Literature e do Real na sua Poesia*. Assírio & Alvim, 1981, 16.
[10] Dylan Thomas. "Fern Hill." *Angry Penguins Broadsheet*, 3, 1946, 11.
[11] Cf.4.9 (100-103).
[12] Max Harris had published two collections of poetry *The Gift of Blood* (1940), published by the Jindyworobak Club, *Dramas From the Sky* (1942) and a novel *The Vegetative Eye* (1943).
[13] McAuley and Stewart had both had poems published in the annual *Jindyworobak Anthology* and the new Angus and Robertson anthology *Australian Poetry*.

McAuley and Stewart's plan to trick "Comrade Maxie" (1999 40). A consensual antipathy to Harris and *Angry Penguins* is recorded in McAuley's letters to Donald Horne in 1943[14] and in articles by Horne for the Sydney University newspaper *Honi Soit* at that time.

Many factors, the motivation, the construction of the poems, remain known only to the perpetrators, who are deceased, McAuley in 1976, Stewart in 1995. The authorial version is that all but one of the 16 poems had been written "one afternoon"[15] in the Victoria barracks in Melbourne where, by mid 1943, both McAuley and Stewart had both been placed following their "call-up" to the Australian Infantry Forces (AIF)'s Directorate of Research and Civil Affairs (DORCA).[16] McAuley and Stewart claim to have invented their poet-author "one Saturday afternoon in early October [1943],"(Heyward, 2003 101) with further work done later on the elaboration of the *dramatis personae* of their invention in order to satisfy Harris's request to sister "Ethel" for information. Ern Malley was thus created as a Sydney surrealist poet who had died young, leaving a set of poems under his bed to be found by his sister. Several of the poems, including the "lure" ("Durer: Innsbruck,1495")[17] were posted from Sydney to Max Harris's office where he received them in late October 1943. After Harris's request to "Ethel" for the remaining poems, the authors sent them on, duly aged and marked with coffee stains, as well as a covering "Preface."[18] Harris, with his literary patron John Reed and young artist Sidney Nolan, while wary of possible inventive handiwork of poets closer at hand, felt they had a significant find and proceeded to dedicate a special edition of *Angry Penguins* to the work of their discovery. The tragically deceased prodigy Malley seemed a romantic figure of genius, who, like John Keats, had died young at 25 having produced stunning, if elliptical, neo-romantic texts in Australia.

3.3 Experiment as Manifesto

The circumstances, including motivation were set out later by the authors in a "Statement"[19] requested by the Sydney *Sun* newspaper which, on 25 June 1944, was published in its Sunday

---

[14] Donald Horne Papers.

[15] McAuley, James and Harold Stewart. "Ern Malley, Poet of Debunk: full story from the two authors." Report, *Fact*, supplement to the *Sunday Sun and Guardian*, 25 June 1944, 4. McAuley later recalled "a pretty idle afternoon in Victoria Barracks" (John Thompson, "The Ern Malley Story," ABC Radio, 1960, 177.)

[16] Both had been hand-picked by the Directorate's chief, Colonel Alf Conlon, who knew them from Sydney University student circles. McAuley told Catherine Santamaria: "[…] it was very agreeable to have Harold there – so much in common," 8.

[17] Cf. 2.6 (47-49).

[18] The original Malley documents and most of the associated correspondence have been lost. The authentic Ern Malley document remains *Angry Penguins*, 6, Autumn 1944.

[19] James McAuley and Harold Stewart. "Ern Malley, Poet of Debunk […] 4.

Fact supplement once the hoax had been uncovered.[20] In a much more serious manner than the Dionysian experiment itself, the Statement described the authors' distaste for "the gradual decay of meaning and craftsmanship in poetry" (*Ibid*.) as represented in the:

> Australian outcrop of a literary fashion […] prominent in England and America […]. Our feeling was that it rendered its devotees insensible of absurdity and incapable of ordinary discrimination […] The work appeared […] to be a collection of garish images without coherent meaning and a structure.[21]

In their "Statement," the authors voiced their objection to the "cultism" underlying this surrealist movement, and how "doubters are shamed into silence by the appearance of appearing stupid or (worse crime) *reactionary*" (*Ibid.*). Accordingly, the authors, in order to test their own judgment, had set out what was to be a "serious literary experiment," noting that "if Mr Harris proved to have sufficient discrimination to reject the [fabricated] poems, then the tables would have turned" (*Ibid.*). The "Statement" also describes the more elaborate and time-consuming fabrication of their plot, the construction of the fictional poet's sister Ethel who sends the first few poems to Harris, largely by the trickster Stewart, and the production of a "very pretentious and meaningless "Preface and "Statement" covering the remainder of the poems explaining the aesthetic theory" (*Ibid.*) behind the poems. In contrast the authorial "Statement," represents an important formulation of poetics, but also raises questions about the role and limits of authorial intention. The apparent random and chaotic methodology adopted by the perpetrators was also set out in the Statement:

> We produced the whole of Ern Malley's tragic life-work in one afternoon, with the aid of a chance collection of books which happened to be on our desk: the Concise Oxford Dictionary, a Collected Shakespeare, Dictionary of Quotations &c.
>
> We opened books at random, choosing a word or phrase haphazardly. We made lists of those and wove them into nonsensical sentences. We misquoted and made false allusions. We deliberately perpetrated bad verse, and selected awkward rhymes from a Ripman's Rhyming Dictionary […] (*Ibid*.).

The authors elaborated how "there must be no coherent theme" and in style the poems were to imitate "not Mr Harris in particular but the whole literary tradition as we knew it from the works of Dylan Thomas, Henry Treece and others" (*Ibid*.). The authors concluded that "the *Writings of Ern Malley* are utterly devoid of literary merit as poetry" (*Ibid*.). Notwithstanding their statement, their work unconsciously anticipates postmodern psychological techniques and poetics.

---

[20]Another newspaper the *Daily Telegraph* revealed the names of the hoaxers on 24 June.
[21] McAuley and Stewart. Poet of Debunk. 4.

3.4 Constructing the *persona*

In hindsight it is not hard to observe that the Ern Malley poems had been constructed deliberately with the artful randomness and discontinuity described by its authors. The following summarises themes and characteristics that may have swayed its first (modernist) readers late in 1943. Fifteen of the sixteen poems were constructed in the manner set out in the authors' "Statement" (25 June 1944). McAuley later broke his silence to explain that "when a 'come-on' poem was needed, it was Dürer's watercolour of Innsbruck that came to mind to provide subject matter […]."[22] McAuley's existing "Durer: Innsbruck, 1495" offers a convincing perspective of an "I" persona, the artist viewing a replica of Dürer's landscape of Innsbruck that he painted on his way from Italy. McAuley explained that the poem was meant to be "one of two or three on the boundary-line dividing the end of a supposed middle period from the poet's triumphant break-through into his final phase. The effect of the description of Dürer's picture was to lull the reader into acquiescence." (*Ibid.*) Coincidentally, and convenient to McAuley and Stewart's new project, the first "I" *persona* of the "Malley" poems is an "interloper; robber of deadmen's dream […]" (DE*,* 8), not only of Kenneth Slessor's vision of Dürer, but who introduces the mysterious and somewhat illicit nature of the subject through all of "The Darkening Ecliptic" sequence. That *persona* and voice is also, as in the concluding line, "a black swan of trespass upon alien waters." (*Ibid.*) This *motif* of illicit author connects the poems and gives them a sense of continuity, tension and climax as the fiction is elaborated. The sixteen poems can be seen as an integrated work, akin to Baudelaire's "livre composé," a set of short, linked poems which constituted an integrated collection. The "interloper, robber of deadmen's dream" becomes the basis for constructing the *persona*, the putative Ern Malley who no-one had met but who speaks to the reader in a shifting "I" voice throughout the collection. In that first poem the "I" subject might once have been the voice of the young author James McAuley himself: "I have read in books that art is not easy" (*Ibid*.).

From that point it would be read as the authorial Ern, the *persona* of a riddler making his tantalizing revelation, leaving hints, and signs, throughout the remaining 15 poems. The "I" *persona*, or putative author is elusive, slippery, flawed, the "[…] Damaged Man […]" ("Sweet William," DE*,* 11) that inspired the title of Michael Ackland's 2001 double biographical study of McAuley and Stewart. What must have been tantalising to Max Harris

[22] McAuley. "Albrecht Dürer: Self and the World." 46. Cf. 2.6 (47).

is that the enigmatic author is, above all, a young artist of some pretension looking back on a life he knew would be short:

> "What Inigo[23] had built I perceived […]" ("Baroque Exterior," DE*,* 20)
>
> "I have been noted in the reading rooms […]" ("Culture as Exhibit," DE*,* 23)[24]

Ern's *persona* can at times be prophetic, or mock prophetic, and provocatively allusive, playing, for example, with words found in T.S.Eliot's "Little Gidding" (1942): "[…] and speech impelled us / To purify the language of the tribe,"[25] and earlier in work by Stéphane Malllarmé and Jules Laforgue. Ern Malley's parodic version follows:

> Yet there is one that stands i' the gap to teach us
> The stages of our story. He the dark hero
> Moistens his finger in iguana's blood *to beseech us*[26]
> (Siegfried like) *to renew the language.*
> ("Young Prince of Tyre," 28)

The poems' audacity partly resides in the author's apostrophic addresses to famous, dead, precursor poets William Blake and also John Keats: "Yet why did you not finish Hyperion ("Colloquy with John Keats," DE*,* 29). In this new reappearance Blake, important to the New Apocalypse poets, Max Harris, and the early McAuley, is also the precursor for the romantic Ern Malley.

Malley's shifting *personae* also speak at times in the voice of Shakespeare's characters: interestingly Prospero, the great creator character: "[…] not till then did my voice build crenellated [cloud capp'd] towers" ("Colloquy with John Keats," DE*,* 30) at times perhaps Caliban: "Then first I learned to speak clear" (30) or sometimes even Hamlet "[…] the rest is not one's concern […]" ("Preface and Statement," DE*,* 7), and also from *Pericles*. The "I" voice is a shape-shifter: "I am content to be / The sole clerk of my metamorphoses" ("Petit Testament," DE*,* 31). The search for the revelation of the authorial voice's identity, through "layers and layers of text"[27] keeps the reader intrigued until the end as in a detective fiction:

> Meaning and narratives are continuously deferred, and a plurality of voices change owner with such agility they leave the reader […] feeling as if he is just inches away from finding out, what, or who lies behind the text. (Atkin 31)

---

[23] Inigo Jones was the 17th century English Palladian architect.
[24] McAuley, Stewart, and *Angry Penguins* artist Sidney Nolan frequented the reading rooms of the Sydney and Melbourne public libraries.
[25] "Little Gidding." *Collected Poems, 1909-1962,* 218.
[26] Writer's italics.
[27] Evelyn Atkin. "*Locus Solus*: The New York School Poets' *Missing Manifesto*." *Tijdschaft voor Tijdschaft Studies,* 35, July 2014, 31.

This random sequence moves relentlessly to the *denouement* of a seeming confession in the last poem "Petit Testament" (DE, 31-32).[28] Against all possible suspicions it assures: "[…] I tell you. / These things are real […]" (32). But the hint lies very close to the surface, though in what appears to be prohibited territory, that of meaning:

> It is something to be at last speaking
> Though in this No-Man's-language appropriate
> Only to No-Man's-Land. (32)

The reader's doubt is probably interrupted by authoritative prophetic rhetoric:

> Set this down too:
> I have pursed rhyme, image and metre […]
> But in time the fading voice grown wise
> And seizing the co-ordinates of all existence […] (32)

Perhaps Max Harris may have been confused by the poems' compelling, strange conclusion, changing what he thought was a typing error in the concluding, nonsensical "I have split the infinitive" to the seemingly intended "I have split the infinite" (33). His error would be corrected in Harris's later edition, as the repentant illicit authors granted him copyright of the poems.

3.5 Authenticity and the Text

Probably Harris, and other readers, would have been convinced by the sensuous power of the imagery, the arrestingly surrealist concatenation of a disconnected yet patterned mosaic of visual tropes, including swans, dark birds, fish, fists, arms and hands, a medley of writers and artists, art and literary motifs, united by a recurring watery landscape of sea shores and swamps, as well as of fairground and nightmare. Striking phrases and aphorisms, with a dynamic, confident prophetic rhetoric, and sly authorial traces gave the poem momentum and *panache.* All in combination might easily relieve any reader from more prosaic logical questions. In his communications with Max Harris, even after knowing the poems to be a hoax, Herbert Read defended them as having "poetic quality" and the hoaxer, in the process of "imitating certain types of modern poetry […] had become a genuine poet."[29]

What is fascinating for the enlightened reader, is discovering the web of hints of trickery the authors scattered through the text. Not only is the authorial *persona* an "interloper" attesting himself to be "no cheat" ("Boult to Marina," 12), he is working in the

[28] The enduring influence of the Malley poems can be seen in the title of McAuley's last autobiographical essay "A Small Testament," *Quadrant*, 20.12, 1976, 6-12.
[29] John Thompson interview of Herbert Read. "The Ern Malley Story." 1960, 173.

realm of the "man at the fair" ("Colloquy with John Keats," 29) and the "dark eclipse" ("Boult to Marina,"12) . The entire body of poems is titled "The Darkening Ecliptic" which somehow echoes the "elliptic" of "something missing." Similarly the reader might be "[…] the fool" who "makes a brisk / Tumble" ("Sonnets for the Novachord," 9) but she would do well to be aware of "the careful spider" spinning "his aphorism in the corner" ("Petit Testament," 32). There is even a hint of the dual identity of the real authors in: "We are the double almond concealed in the shell" ("Colloquy to John Keats," 29). McAuley admitted to Hazel De Berg thirty years later: "It was sown through with all kinds of suggestions that it was a fraud, we cunningly lay sticks of dynamite here and there." (De Berg 11,345.)

3.6 "Ambages" and "Question marks"

Apart from those direct semantic signals, the reader may also have been alerted to warning signs of parody in the recurrent hyperbole, exaggeration and symbolic obscurity, though characteristic of the prophetic apocalyptic style. Even in context the following texts reveal no more meaning than when cited out of context as here:

> I assert my original glory in the dark eclipse ("Boult to Marina," DE, 12)
>
> The Icthys shall swim in the mind's disaster ("Sonnets for the Novachord,"DE, 9)

There are many more examples. Also notable is the odd usage of words, out-of-context, whose non-sense, is revealed with the help of a dictionary. The ethereal seeming "enteric substance" of the Prosperian voice in "Colloquy with John Keats" (DE, 30) relates to the intestines. The evocative seeming "umbellipherous dark" ("Night Piece," DE, 15) is explained by botanical terminology for a type of petal structure. The most outlandish occurs in Ern Malley's self-contradictory aphoristic statement in his Preface: "Simplicity, in our time, is arrived at by an ambages" (DE, 7). The OED describes the archaic French term "ambages" as roundabout or indirect modes of speech, but also deceit and ambiguities. With such nonsensical but suggestive strokes the authors were working to undermine prophetic utterances. "The Darkening Ecliptic" became thus a mask of captivating visionary obscurity with which the authors planned to test the committed surrealist Max Harris. But it was the clever construction of a no-person, though the reader would have been well advised to heed the authors' strong early warning in the appropriately named poem "Sybilline:"

> It may be necessary to understand
> That a poet may not exist, that his writings
> Are the incomplete circle and straight drop
> Of a question mark […] ("Sybilline,"13)

These lines uncannily foreshadow Portuguese poet Jorge de Sena's description of Fernando Pessoa as "the man who never was"[30] – suggesting that the elusive Portuguese poet may also have been a hoax.

3.7 Death of the Author

The poems, or set of poems, are thus found to be a clever parody, a riddle, a mystery or detective story targeted at the small readership of Max Harris and his surrealist circle, as a test or "experiment" as its authors later described it. Brian Elliott considered them "a piece of literary criticism."[31] The lure duped Max Harris and would have fooled their chief target Herbert Read, had the hoax not been revealed so early. For McAuley and Stewart the poems might also have been a mocking *persona* developed out of high spirits**,** out of "a genuine Aristophanic hilarity"[32] as Brian Elliott suggested, or as a one-time mask with which they fell in love as they constructed it, if only to abandon it. McAuley's admission that: "Ern Malley was rather more funny and high-spirited than most of the poems you'd read in Angry Penguins," (De Berg 11,345) suggests that the "Aristophanic" was an important element of what was subsequently described, "anticlimactically," by the authors as a serious experiment.

Various questions arise about the poems, not all of which are literary. Perhaps the first is that of the authors' motivation, whether from a jealous pique, (Pybus, 1999 40) or from the authors' proclaimed pursuit of a serious literary experiment. However, as Wellek and Warren have observed: "The meaning of a work of art is not exhausted by or even equivalent to its intention."[33] A second question relates to the method of construction, whether during one afternoon at the Victoria barracks as claimed by the authors, or with greater planning and premeditation. David Brooks, has argued the latter,[34] and that the Malley poems were inspired by and modelled on an earlier hoax in 1885 by Henri Beauclair and Gabriel Vicaire of the French symbolists Mallarmé, Verlaine and Rimbaud, in the *persona* of Adoré Floupette in his collection of poems *Les Déliquescences*. McAuley and Stewart may not have had access to those models but after their play with pseudonyms and parody in *Hermes* probably did not need such incentive to embark on their own experiment.

---

[30] Jorge de Sena. "The Man Who Never Was." Address to the International Symposium on Fernando Pessoa, Brown University, Providence, USA, 7-8 October 1977.
[31] John Thompson interview of Brian Elliott. "The Ern Malley Story." ABC Radio interview, 1960, 170.
[32] Brian Elliott. "A Summing-Up." *Meanjin*, 3.2, 1944, 119.
[33] René Wellek and Austin Warren. 42.
[34] David Brooks. *The Sons of Clovis: Ern Malley, Adoré Floupette and a Secret History of Australian Poetry*. 2011.

On the question of the poems' literary merit a range of views has been expressed, including the joint authors' – that the "writings of Ern Malley are utterly devoid of literary merit as poetry."[35] Roland Barthes' and Michel Foucault's reflections on the death of the author[36] have bearing on all these questions. In this, McAuley and Stewart were precocious: "[…] Written while Roland Barthes was still in his twenties, "Malley's" poems speak of the death of the Author in a subtle duplicitous voice."[37] The "Malley" poems are a model example of the death of the author, in terms of genre, intention and methodology, notably their persistent *bricolage*. Concerning methodology, the possible success of the poems may have derived from allowing the conscious control of the author to be subjugated to the unconscious, if that were true. Perhaps the biggest question relates to the poems' impact on Australian literary production, including on what was described as modernism, at that time and later. I do not attempt to assess that large question in any detail, other than to refer to comments from the time of publication and later. These matters have been described and analysed skillfully by many.[38] Herbert Read's comment on the hoaxer is pertinent: "[…] to be convincing he must use the poetic faculties."[39]

3.8 Reception

The poems' greatest impact was on Max Harris who, on receiving them, wrote directly to *Angry Penguins* fellow co-editor and sponsor John Reed who considered them outstanding.[40] In introducing the poems Harris wrote: "I was immediately impressed that here was a poet of tremendous power, working through a disciplined and restrained kind of statement into the deepest wells of human experience."[41] After the hoax was revealed Harris and John Reed maintained their confidence in the quality of the poems.[42] The intended butt of the hoax or experiment, Herbert Read cabled Harris after seeing the texts and knowing they were a hoax: "HOAXERS FOISTED BY OWN PETARD AS TOUCHED OFF UNCONSCIOUS SOURCES INSPIRATION WORK TOO SOPHISTICATED BUT HAS ELEMENTS GENUINE POETRY."[43] Original *Angry Penguin* poet Geoffrey Dutton considered Ern

---

[35] McAuley and Stewart. Poetry of Debunk. *Fact*. 25 June 1944, 4.
[36] Roland Barthes. "The Death of the Author." 1967 and Michel Foucault. "What is an Author?" 1969.
[37] Tranter and Mead. Introd. *The Penguin Book of Modern Australian Poetry*, 1991, xxx.
[38] I refer to Max Harris, and also Michael Ackland, David Brooks, Michael Cook, Michael Heyward, Paul Kane, Philip Mead and John Tranter.
[39] Quoted in Harris. "The Hoax."10.
[40] Heyward. 2003, 73.
[41] Harris. Introduction. "The Darkening Ecliptic," in *Angry Penguins,* 6, Autumn 1944, 2.
[42] Heyward. 2003, 160.
[43] Quoted in Harris. "The Hoax." 8.

Malley's work marvellous, possessing a real voice.[44] Brian Elliott, the first to suspect a hoax, observed that "the stuff had been carefully (diabolically) designed to fit in with Max's idiom of ideas – images, symbolist method, literary references etc."[45] A.R. Chisholm, Australian symbolism expert, thought: "one of the two poets is so genuine a poet that even when he sets out to mystify an editor he cannot help writing poetically."[46] In the mid-1940s the question of the experiment's impact as literary or critical comment was overshadowed by the trial which brought a philistine public humiliation of Max Harris and, by association, of "literary modernism." The poems had, however, been noticed in the United States soon after their publication in 1944, including by the avant-garde poet John Ashbery in Autumn 1945[47] who would later draw on them in his undergraduate teaching on modernism. Three of the poems[48] were printed in December 1944 in *Voice*s, (118), a US-based poetry quarterly, with Max Harris's commentary on Australian poetry. In Australia the Malley phenomenon seemed to be forgotten until revived in 1952 in Max Harris's *Ern Malley's Journal* (1952-55). In 1960 the poet was resurrected in an ABC radio interview of major players by poet and broadcaster John Thompson, and soon after taken up by the New York School poets John Ashbery and Kenneth Koch and published in the anthology *Locus Solus* II in 1961. Australia had to wait until the late 1960s for what was depicted as the "easing of a previous order"[49] with help from a resurrected modernism in the United States.

3.9 Impact on Australian Poetic Modernism

In 1965 Judith Wright considered that after the Ern Malley affair: "the atmosphere of Australian writing changed, […] for the worse [bringing] a certain distrust and suspicion […]" (194). Such argument was voiced more strongly by former *Angry Penguin* Geoffrey Dutton when he observed how McAuley [and Stewart] had dealt "[…] a near death blow to modernism under the guise of Ern Malley" (1984 103). Don Anderson considered it: "the great catastrophe to our letters."[50] Australian poets and critics Philip Mead and John Tranter soon after in their 1991 anthology took a similar line, describing Ern Malley as "[…] a ghostly presence designed to self-destruct and take Modernism with him into the void."[51]

[44] Heyward. 2003, 83.
[45] Brian Elliott. Letter to Clem Christensen, 23 June 1944. *Meanjin* Archive.
[46] A.R. Chisholm. "The Case of Ern Malley." *Angry Penguins*, 7, Summer, 1944, 9.
[47] John Tranter. "Australian Poetry 1940-1980: A Personal View." *Poetry Foundation*, 169.1, October 1996, 88.
[48] "Documentary Film." "Night-Piece (Alternate Version)" and "Perspective Lovesong."
[49] Tranter and Mead. 1991, xxix.
[50] Don Anderson. "The Intellectual Environment: Conservation v Conservatism." *Island Magazine*, 1988, 91.
[51] Tranter and Mead. 1991. xxviii.

Their anthology included all the sixteen poems under the authorship of the Malley *persona*, recognising the literary merit of the poems. Such diagnosis about the poems' destructive effect was perhaps exaggerated. In 1991 the avant-garde poet John Forbes ridiculed: "[…] the idea that somehow you couldn't write modern poetry because of this hoax seemed ludicrous to me."[52] McAuley shared that argument: "[…] If you've got good writers, they go their own way and are not going to be frightened off by Ern Malley or anybody" (De Berg 11,346). Leonie Kramer argues that McAuley was opposed not to the modernists, "the achievements of the French and German poets, [but to the] poor imitators and tasteless excesses of the English poets of the Apocalypse and their Angry Penguin champions. […] For McAuley, the mysteries of pseudo-modernism were manufactured by a purposeless assault of the 'grammar of the real.'" (1985 35)

Forty years earlier Auchterlonie had described the Angry Penguin movement as "advanced romantics."[53] Heyward, judged the hoax not to be "*the* determining factor" of the literary conservatism of the nineteen-fifties, noting that the avant-garde revived in Australia in the 1960s to become "modernism" […] institutionalised as "post-modernism"" (1993, 283-4). Philip Mead (2008 88), and later David Brooks (2011 xiii), credited Ern Malley with the "beginning of literary post-modernism in Australia." Paul Kane, probably correctly, has described the reaction to the Malley poems as a "symptom" (143) rather than a cause, in part of what was a broader trend after World War II: "a conservative entrenchment not unlike the one experienced in America at that time," (151) with the exception of the New York School and of the Beats. This would be manifested in a distrust during the 1950s of elaborate poeticism and a shift to what Hamburger described as a "New Austerity" (242). Max Harris admitted in 1952 that "the simple reason why all the excitement, energy, the creative passion […] petered out – we didn't have anything to say anymore."[54]

It is not the purpose of this study to assess the impact of the Malley poems on Australian literature but rather to note how the Malley poems, and their aftermath, contributed to a generally hostile reception of McAuley in Australia, both as poet and as public figure. This was more pronounced for McAuley than for Stewart who retired from the Australian literary scene to Japan where he translated Japanese haiku. Nonetheless, the poems were the stimulus for McAuley's developing poetics, marking a break from the

---

[52] Qtd. in Heyward. 2003, 287.
[53]Auchterlonie. Rev. *Voices:* A Quarterly of Poetry*,* Summer 1944, *Meanjin Papers* 4.2, 1945, 146-7.
[54] Max Harris. "The Faded Years." 6.

contemporary modernity of surrealism, and his adoption, of different, if seemingly antagonistic, formalist approaches.

3.10 The question of modernity

Part of the difficulty of discussing Ern Malley's influence on modernism derives from a uncertainty in the definition of that term. In 1959 in his later book of essays with the ambivalent title, *The End of Modernity (EM)*, McAuley defined "poetic modernity" as dating from the onset of romanticism in 1750, and which he variously calls "Western modernism" (*EM*, 23), the "modernist period" (30), or "Western modernity" (32).[55] Even if "literary modernism," the concern of some of McAuley's critics, were described, for practical purposes, as including the iconic "modernist authors" of the 1920s notably T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and James Joyce, one would need to observe that such modernism in Europe and America came (and went) earlier than its equivalent in Australia. In Australia, modernism started with Slessor in the late 1920s, and with an international "second wave" in the mid-to-late 1930s, being noticeably evident in university magazines and journals at that time, and also the early 1940s. An understanding of the mixed genres of modernism is essential to appreciating the Ern Malley poems. Michael Cook argues fairly that McAuley and Stewart's disagreement was not with "all modernism or all poetic experimentation," but with its latest manifestation, or perhaps its decadent form, surrealism, as manifested in the work of "the Angry Penguins and the English Apocalyptics."(1993 159) Harris in his December 1944 commentary on Australian poetry admitted, paradoxically that: "[…] romanticism is the product of the modernist or Angry Penguins school […]."[56]

Calinescu[57] describes five forms in which twentieth-century modernism can be observed – Modernism, the Avant-garde, Decadence, Kitsch, and also Post-modernism. Modernism, in the pure logical or semantic form of the word, might never be precisely dated or located, but would always be one step ahead and perhaps including whatever might be the current vogue. This is implicit in the description offered in the 1950s by the American critic Lionel Trilling when he wrote of "the adversary culture"[58] of modernism. Similarly, in 1927, Robert Graves and Laura Riding characterised "modernist poetry" by its "willful deviation

[55] McAuley's understanding of the term "post-modernism" used in his essays does not coincide with the current literary concept. Cf.7.4 (173).
[56] Max Harris. "Commentary on Australian Poetry." *Voices*, 118, Summer 1944, 45.
[57] Calinescu. *The Five Faces of Modernity.* 1987
[58] Lionel Trilling. *Beyond Culture*: *Essays on Literature and Learning*. Viking, 1965, xiii.

from accepted poetic tradition."[59] Under Calinescu's schema for understanding modernism, which gives broad focus to a period from the late seventeenth century until the 1940s, the Malley poems might be considered as falling under various of those categories which are closely interlinked. Calinescu has written of the *avant-garde* as a (perennial) opponent of existing systems and "consciously involved in fuelling the 'natural decay' of traditional forms in a world of change, which does its best to intensify and dramatise all existing systems of decadence and exhaustion" (124). An expression of such an apprehension of decadence is the genre of parody, the category best describing the Malley poems, hoax being a narrower version of the form. Heyward has observed correctly that the authors' "assertion that Malley lacks all literary value will not do because it does not consider the poems as parody" (184). Clearly the poems have the strongly jesting element, the "genuine Aristophanic hilarity"[60] of the construction which the perspicacious Brian Elliott appreciated more than the "academic philistinism" of the authors' subsequent explanatory "Statement." McAuley and Stewart had been well trained in the art of parody in their literary apprenticeship in the university magazines *Hermes* and *Honi Soit w*here they had given life to various *personae* or pen-names (McAuley was Glaucon, Glaucus, Proteus or Protex, and Stewart – Kenning Skald, if not more).[61] They shared the identity of critic Dulcie Renshaw. However, the parody inherent in Ern Malley's "The Darkening Ecliptic" while unquestionably a jest, must also be recognised as a serious exercise in criticism of what the two authors judged to reflect "the gradual decay of meaning and craftsmanship in poetry."[62] Heyward describes the hoax as "the most serious piece of literary criticism ever produced in Australia" (293). He sees Ern Malley's "Preface and Statement" as a manifesto (Heyward, 1993 82): I argue this is a more correct description of the co-authors' subsequent explanatory "Statement."

Calinescu has observed that "periods of decadence [linked with the avant-garde] are strong in criticism" and that often the criticism produced "is superior to composition […]" (1987 163). While it might be argued that surrealism was not sufficiently mainstream to be considered a tradition in decadence, McAuley and Stewart would have argued to the contrary, as McAuley did later in his essay "The Magian Heresy" (1957) in seeing it as the last manifestation of a dying "Romantic modernity."[63] Parody operates via mimicry, subversion and coded messages. Thus, parody, as applied to the seemingly subversive form of surrealism

---

[59] Robert Graves and Laura Riding. *A Survey of Modernist Poetry*. Heinemann, 1929, 56.
[60] Elliott. "A Summing Up." *Meanjin* 3.2, 1944, 119.
[61] Cf.1.1 (14).
[62] McAuley and Stewart. Poetry of Debunk. 25 June 1944, 4.
[63] McAuley. "The Magian Heresy." *EM*, 156.

might result in an Aristophanic statement of utter seriousness, albeit one of a conservative turn. The cultural confusion caused by the outbreak of war should also be recognized as favourable to modernist and avant-garde processes as had been seen in Europe at the outbreak of World War I. Heyward describes how, at the outbreak of World War II, McAuley was "alive to the horrors of war in Europe and in Asia" (167). The apocalyptic and nightmarish elements in McAuley's own apprehension of revolution and world war are evident in his poetry during the early 1940s. Ern Malley was produced during that period of life-changing tension and apprehension, being written by two young soldier-poets recently conscripted to join the armed forces of a country now at war, even if they were both in the safe domain of research in Melbourne's military barracks. G.H. Rhodes considered McAuley's "The Blue Horses" in its "mystery and obscurity […] not remote from Ern Malley."[64] Malley's words for Shakespeare's fictional Boult (*Pericles*) would have been personal: "What would you have me do? Go to the wars?" ("Boult to Marina," DE, 12). Heyward, referring to DORCA, argues that: "Ern Malley, court jester of the court poets, was almost an inevitable outcome of Colonel Conlon's weatherboard theatre of war […]" (2003 110).

3.11 "Ern Malley" as Critique

Much of what motivated the Ern Malley exercise reflected the authors' serious concern about the void they perceived at the heart of surrealism, to recall what McAuley had written in his MA Thesis three years earlier:

> […] there is nothing more boring than other people's unelucidated symbols.(SEP, II, 44) [It is] only by using symbols in a consciously realised context that they can be effective at all – they can reach back into the dark hinterland with a profound emotional effect which is not achieved by a purely surrealist concatenation of blank pictures […]" (SEP, II, 45)

Coleman teases these admissions out further, arguing that McAuley "despised the obscurantist, modernist verse of *Angry Penguins* […] for the way it toyed with the Symbolist agony which was central to his life" (1980 27). *Angry Penguins* represented a modernist pastiche, a betrayal of McAuley's own long-held and deep-felt intuition as to how the poetics of symbolism ought to function. McAuley's impersonation with Stewart, of the pseudo-romantic Malley, his controversial skillful parody, reflected the resentment of what was considered to be an abuse and trivialisation of the powers of the symbolic image

[64] F.W.W Rhodes. "Simplicity and complication." Rev. of *UA, Southerly,* 3, 1947, 170-75.

That critique can be easily linked with the authors' intention with their Malley experiment. In part they succeeded. Max Harris failed to detect their messages, refusing to believe the many warnings he had both from the text and from other early readers. What was not the authors' intention, was what they actually achieved –the establishment of two of the enduring characters of Australian literature, the fictional characters of Ern and his sister Ethel Malley. It increasingly irritated the two authors, who had hoped Ern would be ephemeral**.** Malley, however, refused to go away, persistently overshadowing their serious work. As Heyward has suggested, the two poets had "lost control" (2003 189). It shows how literature has evolved from time to time with such unexpected developments – for example, Pessoa's surprising summoning of his major heteronym,[65] the "Master" Alberto Caeiro in 1915, that contributed to the modernist *Orpheu* movement in Portugal. In this way the Malley poems bring to mind the eternal comic motif of the "deceiver deceived."[66] The poems completely convinced their target the young avant-garde poet Max Harris. Some ten years after the hoax, despite the discrediting over the affair, he would admit:

> I still believe in Ern Malley. […] I was offered not only the poems of this mythical Ern Malley but also his life, his ideas, his love, his disease, and his death […] In all simplicity and faith I believed such a person existed […]"[67]

The figure described by Harris brings to life the younger poet McAuley imagining the solitary observer that he translated from Rilke's sonnet "Autumn" in 1938 and for which he felt affinity, the lonely city dweller writing letters home. This figure seems reincarnated in Ern Malley, a reflection of, or mask for McAuley's and perhaps many young poets' former selves. Ern Malley is like one of Fernando Pessoa's "imaginary characters without a play," as Pessoa described the heteronyms that he largely invented, the characters that enable the poet to speak with different voices.[68] Kane has drawn attention to the generative power of McAuley and Stewart's created "voice, […] persona, or mask" (152). For Heyward: "[…] the poetry constructs a voice readable as that of a young man who believes in his vocation as a poet" (2003 186). Sidney Nolan, the young expressionist painter within the *Angry Penguin* group in Melbourne, thought that Ern Malley had been to Europe (Heyward, 2003 88). Nolan credited Ern Malley with inspiring him to paint his first Ned Kelly series (1946–47) saying "It made me take the risk of putting against the Australian bush an utterly strange object."[69] Nolan would

---

[65] Fernando Pessoa. "Towards Explaining Heteronymy." Letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro, 13 January 1935.
[66] Calinescu. 262.
[67] Max Harris. *Ern Malley's Journal*. I, I, 1952, 6.
[68] Fernando Pessoa. "Towards Explaining Heteronymy."
[69] Earle Hackett interview with Sidney Nolan. (1975) in Barry Pearce, *Sidney Nolan*. Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2007, 96–97.

also paint a Malley series in the early 1970s. But Malley's was a failed vision. As Heyward has observed, Ern Malley is a "visionary who arrives at the dreadful knowledge that his vision is second-hand" (113). McAuley's and Stewart's creation is also one of Harold Bloom's "latecomers," being conscious of so many powerful literary predecessors.

3.12 The dramatic persona or mask of Ern Malley

Ignoring all the signs, Max Harris had found upon the reading of the texts, that "these things are real" as the last of the Malley poems sought to convince ("Petit Testament," 32). McAuley and Stewart had succeeded in creating a *persona*, moving from the lyric mode in their "livre composé" to a dramatic voice, in the manner Hamburger has described: "[…] with personalities, lyrical poetry becomes dramatic poetry" (138). It was the same dramatic process that created the *personae* in Browning's poetry which, in turn, inspired the writing of the Portuguese modernist poet Fernando Pessoa, the master of the heteronym. Ern Malley might be described as a heteronym[70] or dramatic character, of the collective authors, so convincing, if flawed, is the imagined voice of its creation. Yet there is a clear distinction between the theatrical, character aspect of the heteronym, or even the pseudonyms of McAuley and Stewart's early verse, and the "imposter" character Malley so strongly associated with its intention, the act of "spuriosity" of its perpetrators.[71] Eventually though, in the distance of time, things might be viewed differently – Malley, like Ossian,[72] becoming a legitimate "orthonymic" text, respectably anthologised.

The concept of masque or mask is pertinent here to the construction of a *persona.* McAuley and Stewart always considered the "Malley" poems to be nonsense. Brian Elliott, who guessed they were hoax, considered some to have "real poetic values" or at least that the authors "wrote nonsense seriously." (1944 117) The Ern Malley concept was cunningly, cleverly and skilfully constructed to do its work of convincing or fooling the skilled poet, critic and editor Max Harris. The sequence continues to be admired for its "energy and vitality" (Kane 144) accentuating the divergence between authorial intention and reception described by Mieke Bal as occurring when: "[…] the artist is involved only part of the way. He disappears, he gives his work over to a public he will not know. What happens after the

[70] Cf.1. (14).
[71] K.K. Ruthven. *Faking Literature*. 2001, 36. Ruthven makes a comprehensive study of the genre of imposture. Descriptions range from hoax, fake, forgery, fraud, trickery – relating to the action, all of which might be said to apply to the Malley creation, and at a greater distance relating to the text, *apochrypha*, *pseudoepigraphia* (texts with a false title), paratext, etc (34-62).
[72] Ossian was the Gaelic epic poet invented by the Scottish poet James McPherson from 1760, influential in the romantic movement and the Gaelic revival.

work has been made is not determinable by artistic will."[73] In 1960 Elliott considered the Malley poems "decidedly superior […] to anything [the authors] had written independently."[74] In contradiction to authorial intention on what he sees as the double-edged exercise of parody, Calinescu argues that: "On a profound level […] the parodist can secretly admire the work he sets out to ridicule" (1987 141).[75] It were as if both authors had been carried away in the hilarious exercise to create something greater than they allowed themselves to imagine, something which reflected themselves as young poets of high imaginative desire. It also suggests a genuine liberation offered by the experimental automatic writing that they so denigrated. McAuley, speaking thirty years later about "the upsurge of neo-romantic semi-surrealist sort of modernist writing" surely reflected the facility of the Ern Malley exercise when he confided:

> I understood very well all the impulses within oneself that might make one, as it were, accept the neo-romantic formula […] Virtually it is a sort of assumption that the real self is not the fully structured, rational person but it is that spasmodic and largely subconsciously motivated basic psychic raw material and that therefore poetry should be written, not out of a highly structured, developed discourse, but out of the images thrown up from the unconscious […] (De Berg, 11,344).

Many critics have noted the contradictions or suppressions inherent for both poets in the Ern Malley exercise. Kane considered surrealism an avant-garde with which both poets had affinities, while their creation Ern Malley was the "romantic–symbolist poet *par excellence*" (1996 152). In an interview with poet and broadcaster John Thompson in 1960, 17 years later, about "the wave of surrender to irrational forces" of the early 1940s, McAuley commented on the processes leading to artistic production: "I would call one pseudo-inspiration and the other one genuine inspiration."[76] Surrealism was the product of the pseudo-inspiration that so disturbed McAuley, touching too close on something about which he genuinely cared. Kane elaborates further: "Far from attempting to demystify the mysterious, [McAuley and Stewart] were struggling to understand and control it, while at the same time reacting to what they perceived about them as the abuse or degradation of it" (147). Their original 1944 "Statement" is stronger than McAuley's later "Ern Malley Statement" in John Thompson's 1960 radio interview of McAuley, reflecting the fact that a more mellow McAuley does not repeat that the poems are utterly devoid of literary merit. This suggests a distancing from the anguished, but vital, self-differentiating struggle against an arguably prevalent literary convention.

---

[73] Mieke Bal. *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities*. 255.
[74] John Thompson interview of Brian Elliott "The Ern Malley Story."1960, 169.
[75] See also McAuley's seeming parody of T.S. Eliot in "A Letter to John Dryden:" "Perhaps you'd use T. Eliot's mighty line, /To drift and flutter, hesitate, opine […]," *CP*, 86.
[76] John Thompson interview of McAuley. "The Ern Malley Story."1960, 178.

3.13 Rejecting earlier masks

Kane rightly sees, in the Ern Malley exercise, more serious experiment than hoax, and beyond that sees Malley as a "free-floating signifier" through Australian literature, recurring in as diverse figures as "Brennan's "Adamic poet," and the dead young lyric poet Michael Dransfield"[77](152). Arguably Malley was the magian spirit McAuley and Stewart were trying to exorcise. McAuley's struggle with surrealist tendencies in the Malley poems reflects a reassessment of his former inspiration during the late 1930s and early 1940s, arguably the quintessence of the late romantic spirit, the poet Rainer Maria Rilke. Hamburger observed (109) that Rilke had written of the need for masks[78] and how they can take possession. Two years later in 1946 McAuley excluded from his first collection *Under Aldebaran,* as "too Rilkean,"[79] his character poem "Jesus"[80] imagining a literary encounter between the founder of Christianity and the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel.

McAuley would more vehemently attack, in his later anti-romantic essay "The Magian Heresy" (1957), the Rilkean tendency to "audacious excesses of spiritual pride in the guise of devout humility."[81] The timing of the Malley poems, and the Rilkean "Jesus," seems to coincide with or consolidate his conscious turn against the Rilkean model. Only five to six years earlier the young McAuley had marvelled at Rilke's "interiority," which comment mirrors Hamburger's description of Rilke as "a master of the use of *personae.*"[82] Rilke possessed, Hamburger argued, a capacity only bettered by the master of "multiple selves" Fernando Pessoa (153). Rainer Maria Rilke may have been the Fernando Pessoa that McAuley never met.

3.14 Farewelling the Romantic Self

Recalling McAuley's use of the word "palinode," (a song of recantation), as a title for one of the Ern Malley poems, Coleman has argued that "if "The Ballade of Lost Phases" was [McAuley's] palinode of revolution, "The Darkening Ecliptic" was his confrontation with modernity" (1980 28). The poem sequence represented the poet's formal farewell to the poetry of his youth. Joan Fraser has argued that by rejecting the fully-realised character or

[77] The Australian lyric poet Michael Dransfield (1948-1973) died very young at 24.
[78] R.M. Rilke. *Gesammelte Werke*. Insel-Verlag, 1927, III, 127.
[79] Harold Stewart. Letter to McAuley, 20 December 1945. Box 7, McAuley Papers.
[80] McAuley once dated "Jesus" as between 1937 and 1940 but it is probably closer to 1944/45.
[81] Cf.7.4 (172).
[82] Cf. Rilke's "role-poems," "thing-lyrics," and dramatic monologues of *New Poems.* Insel-Verlag, 1907.

what McAuley called "impersonation"[83] of Ern Malley, the divided McAuley was rejecting one half of himself,[84] that young romantic-modernist self so touched by nightmare, apocalypse and the subconscious life. Modernism thus experienced was akin to the "Romantic modernity" later described in "The Magian Heresy" (*EM*, 156) as Max Harris himself implied in 1945 in *Voices*, bearing in mind the romantic cliché of dying young. Similarly, Brooks saw the death of Ern Malley in his 25th year as reflecting the two young poets' farewell to their old Sydney Bohemian selves after entering the military life in 1943 (18). Malley was thus also a product of the war. The Ern Malley exercise precipitated a watershed in McAuley's own poetic development, to parallel that shift from the left-leaning political inclination of the previous year. It was the quest for a viable personal poetics. McAuley confided to Hazel de Berg:

> The debate in my own mind with myself turned increasingly to saying "No, it's out of the whole person that poetry must be written. If you look at the great poetry, that's what it comes out of, it does not come out of spasmodic and irrational inspirations, however glittering or possibly part of raw material […]" (11,344)

This comment issues from the poet's recollections thirty years later. Yet as early as 1938, in a letter of 15/11/1938 to Dorothy Auchterlonie on Michael Roberts' 1936 anthology of verse for Faber,[85] McAuley had already identified what he had seen as the "purely verbal" in the *Angry Penguins* model: "[…] there is too much verse that is purely verbal in its context (eg a lot of Hopkins, Laura Riding, Edith Sitwell and W.H. Auden). Here we find exploration of language as a thing-in-itself, a world unconnected with the realities underlying the words" (G,8). These words recall McAuley's more recent critique of David Gascoyne's "symbols confront[ing] us with blank faces" in his 1940 Master's thesis (SEP, II, 43-44).

McAuley's first positive literary articulation of an "ars poetica" at this time, emerging from his and Stewart's critique through Ern Malley of the dazzling obscurity of the *Angry Penguins*, is expressed in a succinct and serious poem of three half-rhyming quatrains in iambic pentameter. "Marginal Note" was written in 1944/45, very soon after the Malley affair had subsided:

> A ray of light, to an oblique observer,
> Remains invisible in pure dry air;
> But shone into a turbid element
> It throws distracting side-gleams everywhere
>
> And is diminished by what takes the eye.
> So poetry that moves by chance collision

[83] John Thompson interview of McAuley. "The Ern Malley Story." 183.
[84] Heyward interview of Joan Fraser. Heyward Papers. SLV.
[85] Michael Roberts, ed. *The Faber Book of Modern Verse*. 1936.

> Scatters its brightness at each random mote
> And mars the lucid order of its vision.
>
> The purest meditation will appear
> Faint or invisible to those who glance
> Obliquely at its undeflected beam;
> The level eye receives its radiance. (*CP*, 38)

This modest, tightly built, cryptic meditation on light and physical vision, proceeds like the "metaphysical" poets, exploring the physical observation that light beams, ("a ray of light")[86] can easily be seen if they glance off impurities in the air. The observation becomes a controlled conceit pursued through the three quatrains in alternately rhymed iambic pentameter – in contrast to the dislocated free forms of the Ern Malley poems. In stanza two it builds an allegorical argument against a "vision" or "poetics" whose "lucidity" may be marred by "chance collision," (an allusion to the randomness of the surrealist method) which "scatters its brightness at each random mote." Continuing the visual figuring, in the third quatrain it argues, subtly, for a pure un-agitated meditation, which otherwise must be invisible to the eye whose "glance" is "oblique," and only able to be "received" by the "level eye" that is capable of receiving its resonant "radiance." The important epistemological motif of the "eye" reappears, recalling Blake's "innocent eye." The poem echoes the density of the "metaphysical" method used by McAuley in some early poems from the mid-1930s.[87] However, the topic of McAuley's conceit nearly ten years later is not love but poetics.

McAuley's modestly named "Marginal Note" is a farewell to the apocalyptic mode and the obscurity (its "distracting side-gleams" and the "chance collision" of language) which he rejected in Max Harris's surrealist poetics. The poem announces the poet's pursuit of a "lucid order" in vision ("the level eye," "the undeflected beam"), for a degree of personal detachment ("the purest meditation") and for precision and control in the construction of a "radiant" or resonant poetic symbolism. Such movement away from random subjectivity ("the turbid element," the "chance collision") would be apparent in his work for the next two decades, a quest in apprehension as much as stylistics. While the Malley experiment shows perhaps McAuley's most remarkable stylistic change in its ambivalently modernist mask, it is, more important for its statement of intention, and its emerging "ars poetica," an advocation of a controlled symbolism and standards of poetic craftsmanship.

---

[86] The "ray of light" foreshadows McAuley's encounter with Thomas Aquinas, through Traditionalist philosophers Coomaraswamy and Guénon: "The ray of divine revelation is not extinguished by the sensible imagery wherewith it is valid." *Summa Theologica,* 1.1.9, cited by Coomaraswamy in "The Christian and Oriental, or True, Philosophy of Art,"144.
[87] Cf. 1.5 (23).

4

The Turn to Exploration: History, Geography, Cosmography (1942-1945)

4.1 The explorer poems

The introductory stanza from the Proem to McAuley's poem "The Family of Love" (1939-42, *CP,* 10-14) seems heroic, appropriate to the archaic form used to launch a neo-classical epic.

> Mercator, merchant I have burned your chart.
> In three dimensions is my sailing art,
> To search a word unsimplified, and find
> A desperate North-East Passage of the Mind […] (*CP*, 10)

The poem was written before the end of 1942, a year before McAuley's Ern Malley collaboration with Harold Stewart between 1943-44. In its mock-heroic opening, it shows McAuley in parodic mode. McAuley described "The Family of Love" in a long footnote[1] as "an attempt at a kind of intellectual vaudeville […]" (*CP*, 227), an intellectual attempt at burlesque comedy in song and dance. McAuley also undertook a similar exercise using the motif of exploration two years later, following the Ern Malley trial, after November 1944, in his satirical poem "The True Discovery of Australia" in 1944/45 (*CP*, 29-34). "The Family of Love," McAuley's first "explorer" poem, shows the poet on the verge of the discursive mode of the following decade in the 1950s. It shows the turmoil of the poet's changing consciousness and values during the first half of the 1940s: "Nightlong they talked, the lodgers of my house / Whom I have given the comfort of a home" (*CP*, 13). It reflects the "sense of vertigo"[2] during the tumultuous days of radically shifting values and lifestyle challenges affecting a young man in a country recently gone to war.

Rosemary Dobson commented on the "many different styles" present in his first collection from this period (*UA,* 1946), foreshadowing his multiplicity. Distinct from McAuley's modernism observed in Chapters 1 and 2, and the arguable "postmodernism" of Ern Malley (Chapter 3), this Chapter addresses the third important, local, strand of this period, McAuley's adoption of the tropes and *personae* of exploration, important to the contemporary Jindyworobak nationalist movement.[3] McAuley reflected on the dominant figures (*personae)* appearing through his work: "the lover, the saint, the artist, the ruler, the hero […]."[4] Thinking of the hero figure, Michael Cook's "favourite image" for McAuley is

---

[1] The early poems published in his first collection *Under Aldebaran* (*UA)* (1946) are notable for extensive footnotes, recalling Eliot's *Collected Poems*.
[2] John McLaren. "Poets Against Novelists – Cold War Courts and Crusades." *Journal of Australian Studies*, 22, 1988, 93.
[3] Cf. 4.9 (100-103).
[4] McAuley. *Selected Poems (SP).*1963, vii.

the “explorer” (326), the dominant poetic *persona* for McAuley’s poems in the early 1940s to the end of the 1950s, a variant on the earlier wanderer figure. The poet admitted his “fascination with the whole theme of voyage and discovery” (Thompson 102) in this period. Such themes would be associated with an abstract process of philosophical, aesthetic and political exploration or quest that gave momentum to the poet’s work. In the early 1940s McAuley, however, had an immediate connection with chronicles and maps in his war-time research with DORCA, less linked with abstract concepts of identity, than with the strategic concerns of a country engaged in the WWII Pacific war, where the Japanese had invaded New Guinea.[5] DORCA was responsible for gathering maps, including historic ones, to assist in cartography for the South West Pacific campaign.[6] The motifs open important thematics of space and place in McAuley’s work.

4.2 <u>The Renaissance Navigators</u>

Between 1940 and 1945 McAuley wrote five poems influenced by the narratives, themes, myths and figurative tropes of exploration by Portuguese Renaissance navigators of the fifteenth and sixteenth-centuries “discoveries.” The first – “Family of Love” and “Terra Australis” – were written between 1939 and 1942, the second group – “Henry the Navigator,” “The Incarnation of Sirius” and “The True Discovery of Australia” – were written between 1944 and 1945. Several important love poems from 1944/45 used the motifs of exploration figuratively. Most of these “visionary” poems were placed prominently in the first group of poems (Part 1) of McAuley’s well-received first publication *Under Aldebaran* (1946). One explorer, the Portuguese navigator Quiros[7] introduced in “Terra Australis,” would be taken up again in greater seriousness in the late-1950s and reworked in McAuley’s long modern epic *Captain Quiros*.

The first of these explorer poems, “The Family of Love,” (*CP*, 10-14), a philosophical poem about the nature of man, uses the motif of water to evoke the sea-voyage of key philosophers Freud and Nietzsche and also time (“before the [Biblical] flood” *CP*,11). They also suggest an implied author carried along in his mental journey: “My thoughts are wrecked upon that sea, / The hauntings of a drowned man’s cry: […] (*Ibid.*). The trope of drowned

[5] Papua New Guinea is the full name for what I refer to as New Guinea.
[6] Several American servicemen poets passed through New Guinea (Karl Shapiro and Harry Roskolenko) and the South Pacific (Frank O’Hara and James Dickey).
[7] The Portuguese navigator Pedro Fernandes de Queirós (1565-1614) participated in the last Spanish Pacific expeditions in the late 16th and early 17th centuries searching for *Terra Australis.* Portugal was temporarily under the dominion of Spain (1580-1640).

man, echoes motifs used by Eliot, Shakespeare, and closer to home, the poet Kenneth Slessor, admired by McAuley, who had recently published *Five Bells* (1939), his elegy for a friend who died by drowning, and "Captain Dobbin," one of his many navigator-themed poems.

"Family of Love" uses the exclamatory, vaudevillean voice of an intellectual, more modern, "mariner subject" to reject and ridicule the charts of "its false prophet" – the sixteenth-century cartographer Gerardus Mercator (1512-1594), and his "flat projections." Thus the subject exclaims: "But oh the foggy Greenlands of the Soul! / The monstrous malformations round the Pole!" Though expressed playfully, McAuley's introductory Proem raises *topoi*, themes and philosophical concepts central to his work for the next two decades: the symbolic significance of the Dutch cartographer Mercator (or merchant) (1512-1594), the aesthetic and intellectual character of the implied author's multi-dimensioned "sailing art" – (aspiring beyond the flattened two-dimensional technique of Mercator), and the nature of the desired "world unsimplified" – things clearly weighing on the subject's quest for a liberating, if dangerous, "North-East Passage.[8]

McAuley's second explorer poem "Terra Australis" (1939-42),[9] a short poem of four five-lined half-rhyming stanzas, differs in tone from the satirical "The Family of Love:" its invocative apostrophic voice is intimate and lyrical:

> Voyage within you on the fabled ocean,
> And you will find that Southern Continent,
> Quiros' vision – his hidalgo heart
> And mythical Australia, where reside
> All things in their imagined counterpart […] (*CP*, 16)

Whereas "The Family of Love" employs the trope of the late sixteenth-century Dutch cartographer Mercator to depict the poetic subject's intellectual journey, "Terra Australis" chooses an exploration legend particular to Australia. The two last Spanish voyages of 1595 and 1606 were captained by Pedro Fernandes de Queirós (McAuley's "Quiros") whose personal utopian project, rather than the gold-inspired objectives of his Spanish masters, was to discover *Terra Australis*, the South Land, westward across the Pacific, with a view to establishing a new Christian society there. Initiating the poem "Terra Australis," the subject urges the presumably, but not necessarily, Australian reader to imagine an interior journey as immense as that of Quiros in his day, travelling with the Spanish towards "mythical Australia" across the "fabled ocean."[10]

---

[8] In a footnote McAuley explains that the "North East Passage" refers to the disastrous expedition of the 16th century English Arctic explorer Hugh Willoughy who froze to death in a Lapland Bay. (*CP*, 227)
[9] Cf. 1.8 (36-37).
[10] Cf. *Quiros* 8.5 (187).

While the poem approximates to blank verse, (rhyme is used in only two of its five-lined stanzas, c and e), the power of the imperative trochee in the line-beginnings of the first stanza ("Voyage within," "Quiros' vision," "All things") sets up the magisterial, discursive rhetoric of a visionary authorial subject. It demands action, through the initial imperative verb (and noun) "voyage" outlining authoritative directions towards a land of ideas – "mythical Australia." It also sets up essentialist projections about the *Terra Australis* deemed necessary by Renaissance cosmographers as a counterweight or complementary half to the northern hemisphere: "Where reside / All things in their imagined counterpart." (*CP,*16). In his focus on national identity and history McAuley addresses the same romantic "poetics of origins" (Kane 28) as the Jindyworobak movement.[11]

Unlike the parodic "Family of Love," no heroic land of soul is mentioned, the mood is more quietly inward. The imperious ("Voyage within you") probably echoes Rilke's urge for inwardness to his acolyte Franz Xaver Kappus: "Entrez en vous-même" ("Come inside yourself")[12] and Thoreau's "Direct your eye right inward,"[13] though its urgency might be equal to that of seventeenth-century navigators. Beyond the universal theme, the poem has specific geographic and historic significance: the discovery of self or identity is linked with an encounter of place. The second stanza begins epigrammatically: "It is your land of similes […]" – a metaphor to which McAuley returns repeatedly in the coming decade. It suggests that this new land Australia offers a Platonic model of inner reality, or alternatively a comparative process through which newcomers orient themselves in place. However, the subject quickly shifts to a more intimate and confiding point of view, not of the imperial foreigner imagining Australia but of the local, or Odyssean homecomer, who knows or rediscovers his own home, giving witness, in a present-tense naming of local particulars of such "similes:"

> […] the wattle[14]
> Scatters its pollen on the doubting heart;
> The flowers are wide-awake; the air gives ease.
> There you come home […] (*CP,* 16)

As in "Envoi," (*CP*, 6) the gaze is still that of the local, a traveller, thinking of but not yet at home. He is speaking from afar, even if to fellow countrymen (the "you" addressed in the first line), guiding them, as if unconscious of their origins, like Australia's originary explorer Quiros, on their and his own inner voyage of self-discovery. After a satisfying cataloguing of the concrete, the deixistic gesture

[11] Discussed at 4.9 (100-103).
[12] Rilke. *Lettres.* 20-22.
[13] H.D. Thoreau. *Walden* (1854). Chapter XVIII.
[14] The wattle (*Acacia dealbata or mimosa*) is Australia's emblematic national flower, blooming in late winter.

"*There* you come home […]" invokes the universal symbol for attaining wisdom and wholeness. In its directness it imparts an intelligible intimacy with its clearly understood audience, the Australian reader, though is open to any other to understand. This important early poem shows how voyaging can lead to discovery and also homecoming. The adoption of an intimate voice captures what Wallace-Crabbe praised in the poet's early work: "the lyric impulse to inward exploration." (1971 324) "Terra Australis" reflects the Jindyworobak celebration of the local, of unspoiled, undiscovered place. The poem was well-received, and published almost immediately in *Southerly* in 1942 and in the 1943 *Jindyworobak Anthology*. Through it McAuley introduces questions about identity, home, location and dislocation that would be prominent in his own and later Australian post-colonial perspectives.

4.3 Portuguese Explorers

During 1944/45 McAuley wrote the explorer poem, "Henry the Navigator" (*CP*, 21-23) in tribute to the fifteenth-century Portuguese prince responsible for the program of maritime exploration (the European "Discoveries") southward along the west coast of Africa unknown to Europeans, fed with information brought by his brother, the diplomat, Pedro, from Venice and Genoa.[15] The poem offers a sympathetic portrait of the visionary Renaissance hero-prince "who made thought an act, and fastened a command," *CP,* 21). Cook connects the poem with Australia, surmising that the "black coastline of Sagres is the Iberian counterpart of the "reluctant and uneasy land" that "impedes the poet's progress" (227) in McAuley's earlier poem, "Envoi."[16] In "Henry the Navigator "[…] roots of stunted bushes scrabble earth / Like withered birds, between hard rock and sand […]" (*CP*, 21).

The barren landscape resembles that of Eliot's *The Waste Land* [17] which McAuley also mirrors in his poem of the following year, the dramatic poem "Philoctetes" (*CP*, 39) inspired by the Greek myth. Significantly "Henry the Navigator" is also McAuley's first narrative poem. The poet commented later how:

> […] some poems [from *UA*] were symptoms of a dissatisfaction with the precariousness inherent in my method, or lack of method. The narrative poem "Henry the Navigator" arose from a deliberate decision to try writing a poem of a narrative and discursive kind […] (*MAV*, 202)

[15] Beazley. Introd. *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea.* by Gil Eannes de Azurara, Hakluyt, 1899*,* Fn 1, cxiii-cxiv.
[16] Cf.1.8 (33-35)
[17] Cf. 1.4 (21).

This choice of form shows a deliberate deviation from the subjective, non-linear form and symbolism of the neo-surrealists which McAuley had himself written. Written in the immediate wake of the Malley experiment in late 1944, the poem reflects the poet's turn against the random subjectivity of the avant-garde surrealist style. It mixes narrative with dramatic and even historiographical form, using citations from the translated fifteenth-century *Chronicle of the Discovery of Guinea* by the Portuguese Gomes Eanes de Azurara,[18] which inspired McAuley's text, and to which he referred (*UA,* 75) in a footnote on the poem:

> "Direct your ships
> Southward upon the Shadowy Sea
> Dispel the hand of Satan hiding in eclipse
> Those waters from my mind; your lips
> Shall bring more treasure than your caravel." (*CP,* 22)

The focus on treasure (a recurring motif in these explorer and other poems) brought by "lips" suggests how information was important. While Henry did not travel, he was a visionary: "The Navigator saw no distant seas / Yet guided ships: his spirit went with them" (*CP*, 23): He is foreshadowed in the inward spiritual voyager anticipated in "Terra Australis" two years before, one exploring the third dimension of the "sailing art" ("Family of Love," *CP*, 10), arguably a further development of the Quiros figure. However, unlike the predominantly inner journey set out in "Terra Australis," that of "Henry the Navigator" is historical and relevant to the momentous time in which McAuley was writing, when Australia was engaged in the Pacific theatre of the ongoing WWII:

> Our age is early too, and must prepare
> Its new projections, of great circle-routes
> Into an unknown world. Thus our despair
> It [sic] put to the straits again, although in air;
> And the old terrors take new attributes […] (*CP, 22*)

Identifying with Henry's past visionary projects, the unidentified subject claims "Our age is early too," speaking of alterative "projections" and "circle routes" and "our despair" "put to the straits" – "although in air" – in reference to recent air battles in the Pacific. Henry's project thus foreshadowed a similar contemporary need for strategy, a cartography for the unknown, disturbing but also challenging future of the country in war-time Australia.

Like the Portuguese Quiros, Henry the Navigator seems connected with issues of Australian identity. His initiation of the Renaissance navigations south and eastward from

[18] McAuley read Bernard Miall's English translation of Azurara's *Conquests and Discoveries of Henry the Navigator,* ed. Virginia Castro de Almeida, 1936. Azurara was the official Portuguese 16th century chronicler. McAuley probably read other earlier translations, including Beazley's 1899 version for the Hakluyt Society.

Europe brought European acquaintance with the southern continent. Thus, McAuley's poem concludes with a playful tribute to Prince Henry as Australia's "fountainhead," with the subject imagining Australia as odd "crumbs" salvaged from Atlantis (*CP*, 23). The sardonic McAuley may have been downplaying an otherwise heroic tone, as in "The Family of Love," at a time when the Jindyworobak literary movement was urging Australian writers to focus on national identity.[19] McAuley appears ambivalent, more comfortable in a rational, satiric mode though at the same time attracted to a romantic quest for identity. This explains the hybrid quality of the explorer poems. "Terra Australis" and "Family of Love" shows traces of Thoreau's *Walden* whose nautical metaphors urge its reader to "figurative, internal voyaging." Interestingly, McAuley's epigraph for another explorer poem, "The True Discovery of Australia" (1944/45), is from Thoreau's citation, in Chapter XVIII concluding *Walden*, of the Roman poet Claudian: "*Erret, et extremos alter scrutetur Iberos*" which Thoreau translated as "Let them wander and scrutinise the outlandish Australians" (*CP*, 29). (Thoreau's resort in the nineteenth-century to "outlandish Australians" reflects his attempt to find a contemporary equivalent of Claudian's peripheral "Iberians.")

At a time of major changes in the global strategic order McAuley would have been sensitive to new readings. Possibly the poet saw a parallel between the small nation of Portugal emerging towards a global role in the fifteenth-century and the young nation of Australia in the mid-1940s, in the precarious but strategically significant South-Western Pacific. The sense of some embryonic emerging identity seen in the landscape of the early "Envoi" (*CP*,6) is also suggested in early stanzas of "Henry the Navigator" in *UA (1946),* culled by McAuley from later versions:

> And Pedro Nunes came […]
> All men, both Portuguese and foreigner,
> Who in that age breathed a more fiery air
> Forgathered and made up another nation. (*UA*, 13)

Australia in the mid-1940s, like the Portugal of its day, was conscious of being at the known world's periphery, and subject to the influence of powerful neighbours.

4.4 Historical Note

Biographical background helps explain the significance of this central "navigator" poem for the poet's encounter with issues of Australian identity. The Army Directorate for Research and Civil Affairs, (DORCA), headed by Col. Alf Conlon, for which McAuley had been

[19] Cf.4.9 (100-103).

working since June 1943, advised the Australian Army's Commander-in-Chief General Thomas Blamey, on "questions of morale" in war-time Australia. Sergeant McAuley, a young research officer, was "put to work to […] establish what the Americans might be up to […]" (Pybus, 1999 56) in a post-war strategic role in the South-West Pacific, and later on the governance of post-war New Guinea[20] after an eventual Japanese retreat. Heyward records that the Directorate "produced maps and geographic surveys […] and built up a considerable library" (2003 106). Eddie Ward, Labor Minister for Territories, "turned to Conlon to deliver [an idealistic] policy [for New Guinea] that would redeem the portfolio from the stigma of colonial exploitation" (Pybus, 1999 53). McAuley explained that "the Directorate was like a Renaissance court […] with Conlon as the Medici prince and McAuley and Harold Stewart as the court poets" (Coleman, 1980 26).[21] The "visionary" poems of the first part of *UA* were dedicated to that "Renaissance prince" Alf Conlon. Of those, "Henry the Navigator" was the most obvious tribute to the man plotting a role for Australia, through DORCA, including an enlightened oversight of post-colonial New Guinea: "The Navigator saw no distant seas but guided ships" (*CP*, 23). McAuley recalled his admiration of Conlon's vision and leadership: "[…] a sense of things opening out, […] that great enterprises were still possible,"[22] in mid-twentieth century Australia.

There is a strategic element in the "Henry the Navigator" theme of voyages in the subject's reference to a cartographic need to prepare "new projections" in our "early age." In his role in DORCA advising on American affairs, McAuley would have shared concerns[23] that the United States might weigh too heavy an influence in the South-West Pacific zone in which Australia was principally engaged. Such sentiment is reflected obliquely in McAuley's satiric explorer poem concluding *UA* — "The True Discovery of Australia" (1944/45, *CP*, 29-34).[24] A parody of traveller fiction, "The True Discovery" borrows the fictional world of Jonathan Swift's prose satire *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), using, as mask, the "found letter" of the explorer Gulliver as witness to travels to the Australian continent where, according to mapping co-ordinates, the original Lilliput may have been located. McAuley's Gulliver refers to the spectre of the powerful nation of Swift's fiction: "North-east across the water,

---

[20] Papua New Guinea was under Australian administration between 1905 (British New Guinea only), 1919 and its independence in 1975.

[21] Cf 3.2 (64).

[22] McAuley. "Professor James McAuley." *Alfred Conlon: A Memorial by some of his friends*. 1963, 24.

[23] Peter Ryan recorded "Conlon was a powerful Australian nationalist who opposed the influence of both the UK and USA in what he regarded as Australia's main sphere of influence." *Brief Lives*, Duffy and Snellgrove, 2004, 51.

[24] It was written towards the end of 1944, after the obscenity trial of Max Harris as publisher of the Ern Malley poems, to which the poem also satirically refers: "'For lucid Ern, ye penguins, weep no more" (*CP*, 33).

Brobdingnag / Casts its momentous shadow across the sea / And fills the sky with thunder." (*CP,* 31) In a poem written in late 1944, just after the battles of the Mariana Islands, Brobdingnag might refer to the invading forces of Japan who were directly north. The passage probably also envisages the nation which lies exactly in a north-easterly direction from Australia, the United States, an Australian ally but also aspiring post-colonial power in the South-West Pacific.

The purpose of this mid-1940s explorer poem is less the portrayal of a personal spiritual or strategic identity as in "Henry the Navigator" than a more down-to-earth, parodic portrait of discovery, in contrast also with McAuley's earlier more lyrical "traveller" poems "Envoi" or "Terra Australis." "The True Discovery […]" ironises the Dutch navigator Willem Janszoon (1570-1630), the first explorer[25] lining up for "epic-treatment:"

> Willem Janszoon may well have been the first
> To leave a bootprint on our shore, but he
> Disqualified himself by being Dutch
> From celebration in our history; (*CP*, 29)

Consistent with the satiric manner of the Swiftian *persona* Gulliver, in his "discovered" letter to sponsor Lord Peterborough, the poem offers a comic caricature of Australia and its citizens, seemingly undermining the Jindyworobak's more reverent imagery. Notwithstanding the threat of "Brobdingnag," the famous Australian complacency is described in Gulliver's letter: "They sit upon their verandahs taking tea […]" *(CP*, 29), echoing what McAuley called Eliot's "situational" motifs, as in Prufrock's: "before the taking of a toast and tea." Gulliver's "chronicle" on Australia adds a historical reference to the Ern Malley poems for which Max Harris was tried for obscenity in September 1944:

> "Their Addison, their Swift,'s a magistrate,
> Matters of aesthetics courts determine.
> Detectives play Petronius Arbiter
> And hunt the poetasters down like vermin […] (*CP,* 32)

"The True Discovery […]," the last of the *UA* poems, "functions as a light-hearted coda […] after the intensive seriousness of the earlier poems" (Cook 228). However, the light, satirical approach, uneven as it might be in literary terms, remained important in the coming decade, as McAuley explored the discursive mode. "Henry the Navigator" marks an orientation towards the neglected narrative form as well as in consolidating experiment with the heroic themes of exploration, both of past history and the "present" 1940s. This reflected a turn from

[25] Janszoon (1571-1638) was long considered the first European navigator to have seen the west coast of Australia, 1605-06.

prevalent literary modes, towards the classical world, earlier literary forms and ways of apprehending the world. Paradoxically, such turn to esoteric topics and older worlds, was also evident in the modernism of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound.

4.5 The Mapping Motif

McAuley's interest in Renaissance explorers is reflected in the objectivity, clarity and often ornate details of imagery and figurative devices, notably his fascination with the details of old maps, consolidating an ekphrastic turn already evident in his recent poems "Durer [sic]: Innsbruck, 1495" and "The Blue Horses." McAuley's description of significant recurrent imagery and symbolism in his work can be traced to this period: "Voyages, maps, stars, birds [were] imaginative means of exploring, ordering and expressing the sentiments connected with certain recurring subjects […]" (*SP*, 1963, vii). The description of maps in the explorer poems shows many arresting passages of ekphrastic depiction. Such exactitude reinforces the metaphoric function of the map as instrument for understanding a new or unknown world. Rosemary Dobson identified the importance of music, painting and cartography to McAuley in the 1940s.[26] An accomplished ekphrastic poet and typographer, she recognised the skill and, arguably, the modernist exactitude, with which McAuley transcribed the visual art-work of old maps, as he would later in *Quiros.*

The intellectual voyager of "The Family of Love" (*CP*, 10) rejects the false prophet of Mercator and his "monstrous malformations," preferring an expansive spiritual course in global navigation to the "flat projections" of the Dutch cartographer's 1569 map: "In three dimensions is my sailing art, / To search a world unsimplified […]." Mercator's projection, thus represents an antithetical "simplified world," a recurring concept in McAuley's developing symbolism associated with either political or religious systems deemed inadequate because of their excessive simplification and, often, materialism. Its ideal opposite, the "world unsimplified," expressed here for the first time in McAuley's poetry, would be the object of and symbol for the poet's spiritual quest, discussed further at 4.11. In "Henry the Navigator," (*CP*, 21-23) there is delight in the poet's decorative depiction, in rhyming iambic pentameters and somewhat archaic diction, of the map-making process and achievement of the pre-Mercator fifteenth-century map-makers and cosmographers, which guided Henry's navigators across un-navigated expanses:

[26] Rosemary Dobson. "A World of Difference: Australian Poetry and Painting in the 1940s." *Southerly*, 33. 4, 1973, 365 -383.

> The Hebrew, Master Jayme, worked for him,
> Master of maps and sailing instruments;
> And Master Pedro was employed to limn
> His bright designs of puff-cheeked cherubim
> Blowing wind-spokes over continents. (*CP*, 22)

McAuley evidently had the opportunity to look at older fifteenth and sixteenth-century *mappae mundi* and enjoy the quaint imagery and cosmographic icons common to many – whales, fish, wind-spokes, cherubim, scrolls, and compasses.

The map motif features in several parallel poems. The negative discourse on Mercator's mercantile cosmography in "Family of Love" is elaborated in "Chorale" with a delight in the subject's encounter with the visual richness of ancient, colourful pre-Mercator maps:

> The map of earth he sees in contemplation
> Is not Mercator's, with the hues of trade,
> But as the sun beheld it on creation
> Green, with rivering silver, like brocade. (*CP,* 26)

However, the extension of the mapping conceit in a eulogy to creation ("green, with rivering silver, like brocade") becomes, towards the end, difficult, if precise, in its use of mapmakers' geometric language:

> And yet our praise, intent upon one truth,
> Distorts the truth as maps do in projection:
> The centre gives a perfect azimuth
> But other bearings have a false direction (*CP*, 27)

The figurative language cannot, however, be accused of being arbitrary or inconsistent with McAuley's at times dense poetic arguments of the time, as it echoes the thought which informs his important poem on the art of poetry, "Marginal Note," concerning clarity of vision instead of the "chance collision" of surrealist imagery.[27] The complexity of McAuley's figurative concepts, reflects his participation in the language and metaphor of modernism. McAuley himself commented on the "acceptably modern quality" of his first collection *Under Aldebaran* (1946) and its "elements of tension, wryness, serious comedy, the vivacity of unusual imagery." (*MAV* 202) The reviews of *UA*, while positive, noticed its erudition: Rosemary Dobson commented on the difficulty of some of McAuley's "learned references"[28] and Douglas Stewart, editor of *The Bulletin*'s literary *Red Page*, on a "reliance on scholarship."[29]

[27] Cf. 3.14 (81-82).

[28] Dobson. "Poets in Three Countries." Rev. of *UA*, *Australasian Book News and Library Journal*, 1.8, 1947, 356.

[29] Douglas Stewart. "Poetry and Polysyllables." Rev. *UA*, *Bulletin*, January 1947, 2.

4.6 Exploration and Love

Following earlier "Metaphysical" experiments linking love and exploration,[30] McAuley's mapping and explorer motifs recur in several love poems, the most important being "A Celebration of Love" (*CP*, 34-37) written the following year (1945). The admittedly delayed Spenserian[31] epithalamion celebrating marriage, is laden with astronomical and cosmographic language comparing love with the discovery of the new world:

> Now from her eastern road the moon sets sail
> To voyage on the *summer map of stars*[32]
> Between Canopus[33] and the Whale.
> Let that celestial mood prevail
> In us, that we may *set our course*
> *For new discovery* and find the source
> […] The *continent that we infer*
> *Awaits a bold devout discoverer* […]
> (*CP,* 35)

McAuley elaborates on the metaphor of cosmography (for love) in what might be described, or criticised, as the timeless and universal metaphoric language of lovers, if, however, honed, in rhymed iambic pentameter, with some very specific regional detail:

> *Cosmography*[34] is infinite for love:
> The contours change at every step we move.
> Always the eager spirit can explore
> *Beyond the Wallace Line* of known delight
> To an *unmapped* premonitory shore.
> Our meeting makes this summer night
> *A new world* […] (*CP,* 36)

No footnote explains the technical term "Wallace Line," which maps the dividing line for fauna between South East Asia and Australasia. In terms of apprehension "A Celebration of Love" is far removed from the dark and bitter love poems of the previous decade. The poem's proposition of love as a means of self-discovery and self-knowledge illuminates the poet's ongoing reading of identity and creativity (personal or national) being found through simile or comparison: " […] Worlds rejoice / To find their lost identities restored/To morning brightness by a clear voice / Recovering the creative word […]" (*CP*, 37) One of his love poems ("The Muse,"1944/45, *CP*, 27-28) casts the poet in the role of the wandering navigator,

---

[30] Cf. 1.5 (23-24).
[31] McAuley's marriage to Norma was three years earlier in 1942. McAuley also considered Spenser one of his masters. "Shelley Unbound." *Bulletin*, 12 May 1962, 57.
[32] Writer's italics.
[33] Canopus is visible from the southern hemisphere and low latitudes in the north.
[34] Writer's italics.

Ulysses, and his wife Norma as patient Penelope, perhaps reflecting the poet's long visits to New Guinea after February 1944. They offer perhaps conventional figurative language in comparison with the Malley poems:

> She is Penelope, waiting to resume
> The threads of language, […]
> Yet still she hopes, content to spoil,
> Until the wanderer whom the gods exiled
> Comes to his kingdom, and her waiting's done […], (*CP*, 28)

Coleman noted the productivity of the years 1944 and 1945 as a breakthrough (1980 30) from "a period of dryness"[35] between April 1942 and December 1943, which coincided, nonetheless, with the fertile Ern Malley production. Coleman traces the breakthrough to December 1943, the date of what Harold Stewart described[36] as McAuley's "Frostian" poem "Revenant" (*CP,* 19-20), perhaps noting its homely, autobiographical posture and use of colloquial speech. "Revenant" marked the poet's revisitation of and departure from a former home or familiar dwelling in Sydney, recalling the short story "Under Aldebaran," which finds the subject: "[…] no glance backward thrown, / Walking like a man that has been freed."("Revenant," *CP*, 20) In various ways, the explorer poems articulate a personal quest, what poet Wallace-Crabbe described as "tentative or partial positions in a larger quest for the true self" (1971 327).

4.7 <u>The explorer provenance</u>

The poet's fascination with the world of the old explorers, towards the end of 1943, through his work in DORCA, and his travel to New Guinea, brought new productivity and relief at the end of the tumultuous Ern Malley episode. His poetic explorer interest, from the literal narrative and tropes of early navigators, maps and stars, to the more abstract use of navigational tropes reflecting personal development and relationships, coincides with this period. From April 1944 DORCA was joined, for its work on maps (Heyward, 2003 106) by eminent Mitchell librarian Ida Leeson, the "presiding genius of this world-famous collection of books, maps, pictures, autograph letters and other archival treasures of the history and literature of Australia and the South Seas."(Ryan 141) Leeson's bibliographic expertise[37] is celebrated, in colloquial iambic

---

[35] McAuley may have taken this expression from Rilke's "sécheresse," *Lettres à un Jeune Poète, 28.*
[36] Harold Stewart. letter to McAuley, 20/12/1945. McAuley Papers.
[37] When requisitioned to join DORCA Leeson had spent 12-months compiling a bibliography on the South-West Pacific Area for the Allied Geographic Section of the Armed Forces (Ryan, 153). She had a notable career collecting important Australian documents, including material on Quiros (Martin, *Ida Leeson: A Life*, 2006, 42). From 1939 she initiated an international project for copying relevant Australian and the South West Pacific historical documents, much of which was loaned to the military, including maps on New Guinea (Martin, 139).

meter, in McAuley's comic satiric poem: "The True Discovery of Australia" in which the researcher subject investigating the antipodean voyages of Swift's Gulliver imagines a meeting with the famous Australian librarian, who locates Gulliver's "chronicle:"

> […] I felt that Swift had left me in the lurch
>
> By writing everything that could be known
> About the great sea-captain; but I went
> To Ida Leeson at the Mitchell, saying:
> "I don't suppose you have a document ...."
>
> Of course she had one! Had it there for years.
> Near "Phar Lap" (see Houyhnhnms)" on the shelf […][38] (*CP*, 30)

The expert Leeson would have encouraged McAuley and other officers, notably her assistant, Harold Stewart, to examine map and chronicles of early Portuguese navigation, representing as they did in "Henry the Navigator" the "fountainhead" of later discoveries. Possibly, Leeson may have led McAuley to Azurara's *Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea* of 1448[39] that inspired McAuley's "Henry the Navigator" (1944). Like Leeson, Azurara was a librarian and record keeper, but to the fifteenth-century court of Portugal's King Afonso V.[40] As might be expected, Azurara's work was a hagiography of Prince Henry. McAuley's poem, perhaps uncritically, mirrors Azurara's praise for Prince Henry's vision and determination, his foresight in pushing expeditions into unknown, feared seas past Cape Bojador in present-day Western Sahara.[41] "Henry the Navigator" cites or paraphrases passages from the Chronicle up to Chapter III, including the editor's introduction, and both original and later footnotes. Stanza 4 mirrors sources from both Beazley's and Miall's texts reflecting the genesis of Prince Henry's visionary project, following a sleepless night:[42]

> Marooned in a wide night the lantern burned,
> For in the noon of night the Prince's eyes
> Consumed in study the repose he earned:
> A world of labour – so much to be learned
> To fasten and ensure the enterprise […] (*CP*, 22)

These lines foreshadow McAuley's own night at the desk twelve years later, on his own inspired return to the exploration project in 1956: "Midnight once more […] The lamp stares

---

[38] "Phar Lap" was a famous Australian racehorse.
[39] Cf. 4.3 (88).
[40] It seems a copy of Fra Mauro's *Mappa mundi* (c. 1450) was sent to Afonso V in Portugal c. 1459. Cattaneo, *Fra Mauro's Mappa Mundi and Fifteenth Century Venice*, 2011, 53-54.
[41] Other chronicles of the time by Portuguese Franciscan do Prado, 1448, and the Venetian Cadamostro, who accompanied several early Portuguese expeditions to West Africa, 1463, praised Prince Henry (Cattaneo, "Venice, Florence and Lisbon, Commercial Routes and Networks of Knowledge, 1300 – 1550," 24 - 26).
[42] Cf. Beazley. vii, also De Castro & Miall. 122.

down upon the book unread […]" ("The Inception of the Poem," *CP,* 108). This 1956 poem anticipates the longer narrative explorer poem *Quiros*, including the thoughtful Quiros in his "restless vigil on the deck" (*CP,* 128/ St.5). An introductory note to the De Castro/Miall edition of the Azurara text on Prince Henry's Hebrew map-makers (De Castro/Miall, 26), and footnotes on the *mappa-mundi* (Beazley, 338) [43] are elaborated in stanzas 6 and 7 of McAuley's "Henry the Navigator:" "The Hebrew, Master Jayme, worked for him / Maker of maps […]. / He drew those *mappae mundi* […]" (*CP,* 22).

McAuley later told A.D. Hope how poems, such as "The True Discovery" and the earlier "Envoi," reflected how difficult it was for writers in the late 1930s and early 1940s to "[…] ignore the challenge of what "being an Australian" was."[44] The two earlier explorer poems – "The Family of Love" and "Terra Australis" (1939-42) – which predate McAuley's move to Melbourne and DORCA's geographic and strategic world, probably also drew upon the explorer motifs of Kenneth Slessor, the proponent of the concrete image. Slessor's Spanish galleons would have been evocative for McAuley with his interest in Iberian, especially Portuguese, explorers whose expeditions symbolised courageous projects, if also their failure. Slessor's poetry was a trove of navigational, nautical, harbour and mapping motifs and narratives. "Captain Dobbin" offers the fictional world of a retired sea-captain surrounded by maps, atlas-leaves and old journals of Captain Cook, who, in the eighteenth-century was exploring the shores of *Terra Australis.*

Another source for the explorer figures in McAuley's early work was the City of Sydney Lending Library (CSLL), his and Harold Stewart's "alma mater" (De Berg, 11,331) from student days until his move to Melbourne in June 1943. The library maintained a rich collection of Australiana, maps and records, catalogued and assembled by librarian Ida Leeson and colleagues. The Australian amateur historian George Collingridge de Tourcey, in *The First Discovery of Australia and New Guinea* (1906),[45] wrote extensively about his theory of Portuguese discovery of Australia, a view contrary to contemporary notions of Dutch and English "discovery," referring to ancient maps, both Portuguese and Spanish. McAuley may been acquainted with Collingridge's "discoveries" text when writing his early explorer poems "The Family of Love" and "Terra Australis" before placement at DORCA. Collingridge's account in Chapter XI about Quiros' voyages may have sparked sufficient interest in McAuley to inspire a reference to Quiros in the first stanza of "Terra Australis:"

[43] The "portolano" (book of sailing instructions) usually accompanied the medieval world map.
[44] McAuley. Letter to A.D. Hope 1/12/1959. A.D. Hope papers.
[45] George Collingridge de Tourcey. *The First Discovery of Australia and New Guinea.*1906.

"[…] Quiros' vision. […] / And mythical Australia," (*CP,* 16) Material provided either by Leeson or Collingridge's text may have inspired McAuley's interest in Prince Henry. Collingridge's text opens with a portrait of Prince Henry, about whom McAuley would read in Azurara's chronicle, and on which he would base his poem "Henry the Navigator" in 1944. A key reference in Collingridge's Portuguese "trail" occurs in the epigraph to his history which cites the Portuguese epic poet of the discoveries, Luis de Camoens [sic]: "Olha a Sunda tao larga, que huma [numa] banda / Esconde para o Sul difficultoso." This can be loosely translated as "Behold expansive Sunda, whose flank hides the inaccessible / elusive South." Camões celebrated the exploratory genius of the Portuguese Renaissance, in his 1572 epic *Os Lusíadas* (*The Lusiad*) the then recent history of nation-building heroes and voyages culminating in expeditions to India and as far as Japan. He was the imaginative literary counterpart to the historians, chroniclers, and geographers about which McAuley would have been reading. Possibly, Collingridge's reference to Camões' epic led McAuley to consult that work. Alternatively the 1854 English translation by the Australian inland explorer, NSW Surveyor-General Major Thomas Mitchell, would have been available in the CSLL.[46] McAuley certainly read Camões as there is a direct reference in the narrative of the chronicler Belmonte in the poem *Quiros* 16 years later.[47] A much earlier reading is evident in the first stanza of "Henry the Navigator" (1944) which mirrors an important stanza from Camões' *Os Lusíadas.* In Canto III, strophe 20 of his epic, Camões describes, by visual analogy, the map profile of Portugal as Europe's face: "quase cume da cabeça / da Europa toda, o reino Lusitano, onde a terra acaba e o mar começa […]" ("the Lusitanian kingdom, almost the head of all Europe, jutting, where the land ends and the sea begins […]"). McAuley's first stanza of "Henry the Navigator" (*CP*, 21): "At Sagres, where the stark Iberian chin / Of Europe facing west juts in the sea […]" surely replicates Camões' famous description. Unknown to McAuley, another echo of Camões was found and immortalised ten years earlier in the twentieth-century in the work of the Portuguese poet, Fernando Pessoa, in the opening poem "Primeiro: O dos Castellos" ("First: The Castles") of his national modernist epic-inspired sequence of poems *Mensagem, 1934* (*Message*) – "A Europa jaz, posto nos cotovellos: / De Oriente a Occidente jaz, fitando" ("Europe, stretched out from East to West / And propped on her elbows, stares […]."[48]

---

[46] *The Lusiad* of Luis de Camoens [sic]. Trans. Lt Col. Sir T. Livingston Mitchell. T.W. Boone, 1854. Inland explorer and Australian Surveyer-General, Mitchell understood Portuguese from his time serving in the British Army repelling Napoleon's forces from the Spanish border and on the staff of Wellington.

[47] "Freely the great Camoens could contrive/A magic isle of Venus […]" (*Quiros,* II, 33/149). McAuley's narrator uses the common English representation of the Portuguese poet's name.

[48] Fernando Pessoa. "Primeiro: O dos Castellos." (1924-1934) *Message*, trans. Richard Zenith, Oficina do Livro, 2008, 30.

4.8 Ekphrastic Descriptions

Both Pessoa and McAuley were modernists reworking a poetics or rather a mask of patriotic sentiment through historic voyage even though it proved a brief episode in their work. The ekphrastic description of the bird's-eye or aerial view (preceding the map) of a country shows a knowledge and delight in the technique of Renaissance geographers and map-makers, a symbiosis between "writing" and "pictures." (Cattaneo, 2009 17) In his early twentieth-century history, Collingridge observed the propensity for decorative visual analogy in early Portuguese and Spanish mapping, where imaginative descriptions of or similes about land formations, especially islands, would be fed by the chroniclers to the mapmakers to assist them in their task.[49] It seems McAuley consciously worked some of that decorative detail and analogical technique into his explorer and geographic poems, not only the Camões-inspired conceit of Iberia as the face of Europe. In "The True Discovery of Australia" (*CP,* 30) the researcher *persona* describes the map of Australia as a bloated creature – in keeping with the poem's Swiftian satiric spirit:

> Till now the population-maps display
> An acne rash, disfiguring the whole rind
> Of white Australia, as she hugely squats
> Above her pint-pot, fly-blown and resigned. […]

(The pint-pot suggests Tasmania.) Possibly such an animal likeness is designed to match what Collingridge recounted of the Portuguese chronicler's image of Java as a pig? In the same passage Collingridge speculated: "had the Spanish and Portuguese known the map of New Guinea as we know it nowadays they would, no doubt, have described it as a guinea fowl, Bird of Paradise or some such creature" (45). Collingridge's analogy anticipates McAuley's poem of tribute ten years later to the island that would take hold of his professional life and imagination for sixteen years. "New Guinea" (1953) begins – "Bird-shaped island, with sensitive bird-voices […]"(*CP*, 80).

For a brief but notable three years in the mid-1940s the Renaissance world of exploration permeated McAuley's poetics: its form – its narratives and details of form,[50] *personae*, thematics, its metaphoric structures, its technical tools of description and its imagery and *topoi.* The embrace of the Renaissance metaphor of significant global voyage with its vibrant trappings enabled this young Australian poet to travel through space and time,

[49] The island of Java is compared with a pig (Collingridge, 41), New Guinea with a guinea fowl or bird of Paradise (45).
[50] "The Family of Love" uses the introductory Proem of old chronicles. "The True Discovery" refers to epic, envoi and coda.

with a heightened sense of consciousness, to confront his own epoch, his history and identity both as an individual and citizen, in that crucial period of mid-forties war-time Australia. McAuley's patriotic questing *personae*, in search for an identity and destiny with individual, national and perhaps global context might be seen to parallel that of his unknown modernist predecessor Portuguese Fernando Pessoa in his historic, mythological and nationalist poem *Mensagem* (*Message*) published only ten years previously in 1934.

4.9 A National Literature – The Jindyworobaks

Questions of national identity were a major literary preoccupation in Australia during the late 1940s and early 1950s, and McAuley's development of his explorer poems can be understood in that context.[51] The struggle for influence in Australian arts and culture between European modernism including Max Harris's surrealism and the culturally nationalistic Jindyworobak school, which also emerged in Adelaide, may explain the varying styles of seemingly "different authors" (Cook 194) in McAuley's first collection *UA*. The Jindyworobak movement named from an Aboriginal word meaning "joining" was founded by South Australia-based poets led by Rex Ingamells (1913-1955). Their 1938 manifesto "Conditional Culture" promoted a recognition of the local, the reflection of environmental values and the use of imagery drawing upon Australian history and tradition especially of the Aboriginal people. Ingamells had been strongly influenced by Lawrence's novel *Kangaroo* (1923), and its observation of an Australian spirit of place. Rosemary Dobson described how the group saw European modernism "as a kind of intellectual colonialism" and, in defence of the local, advocated "an improvement of the level of descriptive writing in Australia."[52] Since 1938 the group had issued its own annual anthology, offering a publication opportunity for emerging poets including embryonic "Angry Penguin" and surrealist Max Harris and also McAuley.[53]

That element of Australian nature writing is evident in McAuley's "Terra Australis," published in the 1943 *Anthology,* the year that former acolyte Max Harris would attack as "serious Jabberwockery" the Jindyworobak experiment in adopting Aboriginal languages.[54]

[51] Cf.1.8 (33).
[52] Dobson. "A World of Difference." 377.
[53] McAuley published "Envoi" in the *Jindyworobak Anthology, 1940*.
[54] Harris. "Dance Little Wombat." in Brian Elliott, (ed), *The Writer in Australia,* 249.

McAuley had not published much beyond the university magazines of *Hermes* and *Arna*. Three of four stanzas of his poem offer a generous recitation of typical Australian indigenous flora and fauna from different regions: – wattle, unidentified flowers, magpies, the angophora (related to the eucalyptus), white cockatoo, and emu. However, "Terra Australis" lacks the still presence of companion poem "Envoi," (*CP*, 6). The landscape of the surreal stanza 4, seems more dreamscape than real:

> But northward in the valleys of the fiery Goat
> Where the sun like a centaur vertically shoots
> His raging arrows with unerring aim,
> Stand the ecstatic solitary pyres
> Of unknown lovers, featureless with flame. (*CP,* 16)

It possibly evokes the northern inland valleys of the Tropic of Capricorn, suggested by the emblem of the goat: Cook suggests the flaming "solitary pyres" are "termite mounds like Paulo and Francesca in the *Inferno*" (318). Leonie Kramer, lecturer and later Professor of Australian Literature at the University of Sydney, who knew McAuley well, records that "Terra Australis" was: "an attempt to write a Jindyworobak poem [although] McAuley did not subscribe to the Jindyworobak theory."[55] However, in writing "Terra Australis" McAuley was also a young poet absorbing influences, looking for a voice. McAuley's prophetic landscape of "mythical Australia" with its "unknown lovers, featureless with flame" is not one of simple meanings about identity, but rather the object of a dazzling private, unexplained finding, one varied and difficult to understand. While McAuley takes up the arid, inland motifs of the Jindyworobak movement, he also pursues a more complex, personal representation (its "ecstatic solitary pyres / Of unknown lovers […]") rather than a commonly recognisable landscape. The expression offers an instance of his own perhaps gnostic fascination with the striking ambivalent image – suggesting both love and death. But it corresponds to Kane's description of a wider apprehension of romantic sublime in "[Australian] nature so strange and fantastic, so massively other." (14) In this the poet followed contemporary modernist approaches. Nonetheless, "Terra Australis" brings into being a geography or cosmography of identity, both inner and external, that becomes increasingly important in McAuley's poetics.

Another poem from this "explorer group" of the early to mid-1940s shows McAuley's experimentation with the Jindyworobak's celebration of local landscape. The earlier-mentioned epithalamion, "Celebration of Love," (1945, *CP*, 34-37),[56] begins with elaborate

[55] Kramer. Footnote to "Terra Australis." in *JM*, 238.
[56] Cf. 4.6 (94).

descriptions of Australian animals and birds to welcome the bride (Norma). Stanza 1 creates a credible setting, a peaceful, rural landscape in calm iambic pentameter: "The river gliding slowly as my will / Beneath the heron's solitary gaze." But the cavalcade of pre-lapsarian wildlife enumerated in Stanza 2, notwithstanding some witty, neo-classical descriptions, shifts the celebratory towards the excesses of Disney's "Fantasia:"

> Wild creatures to our meeting-hour respond
> With new alacrity: the sudden flocks
> Of parrots hanging in the summer trees
> Scatter with loud cries; […]
> Magpies fly up from the grass; and even
> Those sober citizens of Sweet Content,
> Koalas, feel the tug of the event
> And look down from their sleepy galleries
> In grave astonishment.
> (*CP*, 35)

The comic effect was probably not intended, and the remainder of the poem is an articulate, if conventional, love tribute. McAuley's "Jindyworobakesque" epithalamion nonetheless offered the opportunity of experiment in the descriptive art of landscape or nature poetry that later became a major focus of his work, though with marked understatement.

The Jindyworobak path was clearly not McAuley's way. He later spoke of contemporary expectations: "[…] that in some way you weren't writing the right kind of thing unless you had wombats and coolibah trees occupying prominent positions in your verse" (Santamaria 50). Somewhere between 1944 and 1945 McAuley openly expressed his reservations about the Jindyworobak movement in his "light-hearted satire on subsidized nationalist art,"[57] with its title's play on "baksheesh," the Persian term for a bribe or alms. It opens with a parody of Psalm 137:

> By the waters of Babylon
> I heard a Public Works official say:
> "A culture that is truly Babylonian
> Has been ordered for delivery today."
> ("Jindyworobaksheesh," *CP*, 29)

In its understood insinuation of babble in the twice-cited "Babylon," McAuley's poem is not distant from Max Harris's allegations of the movement's "Jabberwockery." McAuley would modulate his reservations about nationalism in literature and its limitations but they would not change significantly from those expressed ten years later in his Commonwealth Literary Fund lecture "The Grinning Mirror" (1955):

---

[57] Kramer. Footnote to "Terra Australis." *JM*, 238.

> I am not […] objecting to the appearance of a distinctively Australian colouring in our poetry. My own work should make this evident. It is not the poet's business either to avoid or to seek local colouring. […] It is a mark of the stultifying effect of the cultural climate that so many of our writers should become obsessed with Australianity as their object, subject and programme, and show an incapacity to deal with themes of permanent universal importance. […] [58]

This statement by a mature, respected poet differentiated McAuley from the anti-cosmopolitan mood of the 1940s and 1950s in Australia. It was evident in the cultural nationalism promoted by the journal *Meanjin* (edited by Clem Christenson) and the weekly *Bulletin,* a major publisher of Australian poetry (edited by poet Douglas Stewart) and also the canonising works by Russell Ward (*The Australian Legend*, 1958) and by A. A. Phillips (*The Australian Tradition*, 1958). However, as we have seen in the poet's early encounter with the Australian landscape, his Jindyworobak experiment in "Terra Australis" and also "Envoi," assisted the dislocated wanderer *persona* find place – if temporarily. The author's more authentic encounter with place would occur later, both in New Guinea and more definitely in the 1960s after his move to Tasmania.

4.10 Figurative Language of Exploration

McAuley's early poems of exploration are distinctive for their use of figurative language, for describing the new or unknown places which the poet's subject imagines or at which he arrives. The simile, described as "a comparison between two distinctively different things,"[59] is, in McAuley's explorer poems, a means of relating the new and unknown to the old and familiar, whether of place or self. In several of McAuley's explorer poems the simile itself becomes the conceit, for the process of exploration, for making associations, for finding home or new worlds. As seen in "Terra Australis" (4.2), the voyager imagines: "mythical Australia, where reside / All things in their imagined counterpart" (*CP*, 16) proclaiming to the perhaps dubious or puzzled reader: "It is your land of similes." A conceptual use of simile is employed in "Henry the Navigator" (1944) in the passage describing the work of Henry the Navigator's mapmaker Master Jayme: "He drew those *mappae mundi*, where the soul / Finds its similitudes […] (*CP*, 22). The figurative language suggests a Platonic higher order, as if the apparent world might be a reflection of the unseen, higher form from above. The fertile trope of map as locus for "similitudes," arguably indicates the process by which the map-makers drew upon known experience in expanding upon and elaborating new and unknown spaces, as if by comparison.

---

[58] McAuley. "The Grinning Mirror." *EM*, 67.
[59] W.H. Abrams, Geoffrey Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms.* 119.

The early Venetian cartographer Fra Paolini (1270-1344) wrote of the process in mapping of bringing together two sources, picture and text in describing the unknown world. (Cattaneo, 2009 17) The image without text would show new lands in a confusing way.

Thus, the merging of the image and the explorer's text involves acts of comparison. Expressions invoking comparison and recognition recur frequently in the explorer poems and trace how McAuley's increasingly philosophically-inspired poetry draws on the works and methodologies of medieval and Renaissance cosmographers, imagining and embellishing the new world they were trying to describe and chart. The theorist on place Paul Carter has described the difficulty for early European-born writers finding themselves in the alien landscape of early colonial Australia.[60] "The association of simple ideas to form complex ones depended on the ideas (or objects they derived from) being comparable. And first among the qualities of objects that made their comparison possible was, as Hume wrote, 'resemblance.'"[61] Carter described how the nineteenth-century English-born writer Barron Field found Australia "indescribable […] and its nature undifferentiated" (351). Such a description recalls and perhaps informs McAuley's own early poem "Envoi" with its description of "the blue-green gums […] a fringe of remote disorder" (*CP*, 6).

For Carter's early explorers there was "no possibility ever of allowing oneself the lazy luxury of comparison" (352). The break-through to comparison can be seen in McAuley's early love poem "Celebration of Love" where the lovers' meeting and growing acquaintance exploits the figurative conceptual language for discovery by association and comparison. It can be seen in such language tropes as "gleaming intimations," "the continent we infer" (*CP*, 35) the finding of a "new world" (36), of "lost identities" (37) and overall through "recognitions" (36). McAuley's figurative language for the lovers' mutual exploration is driven by the language of the traveller's expectation of discovery and recognition. The action of comparison, while an embryonic means for establishing identity, would facilitate the process by which the dislocated traveller would, as Carter and Derek Walcott have described, begin the act of naming, even if only in McAuley's self-consciously playful and overly iconic landscape of angophora and emu in "Terra Australis." The poem shifts beyond a declaration about the "land of similes" to announce the concrete new world itself, thus summoning "place" from "space:" "The flowers are wide-awake; the air gives ease. / There you come home […]" (*CP,* 16). Much later, A.D. Hope gives an illuminating reading in his memorial poem to his friend, linking McAuley's expression to Hope's own boyhood home Tasmania,

---

[60] Paul Carter. "Spatial History." *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, 333-335.
[61] Carter. "Naming Places." in *PCSR*, 351.

the place first known, which is home: "It was my island too, my boyhood's home, / My 'land of similes;' from all you gave […]."[62]

The poem "Celebration of Love" (CP, 34-37) establishes the substantiality of the woman rather than object for the projection of fantasies: "you are more, being yourself; not merely / A script of symbols […] You are yourself" (*CP*, 36). This statement suggests a distancing from obscure "script[s] of symbols" towards the celebration of the phenomenological subject itself. Thus, McAuley succeeds in shaping specific place or personality from a conceptual envelope of ideas and concepts. "Without place names [Carter asks] could agreed points of reference, could directions be given, information exchanged, "here" and "there" defined?" ("Naming Places," 353). Both "Terra Australis" and "Celebration of Love," as they evolve, transform to become spatially oriented in the "here" and "there," involving the speaker in giving directions (*deixis*) and physicality to their onlooker, the reader:

> There too the angophora preaches on the hillsides […]
> But northward in valleys of the fiery Goat […]
> ("Terra Australis," *CP*, 16)
>
> […] touched by sunlight, my words change back
> Into the daily acts of life. ("Celebration of Love," *CP*, 37)

It was not simply a matter of finding "home" in nature or love, or aesthetic satisfaction in nature poetry. McAuley's poetry was not ready to settle for depictions of a paradisal natural world, reflecting a higher order, explicable by simile. The opposite is suggested in motifs emerging in McAuley's poetry by the mid-1940s. The anti-heroic eponymous traveller from Greek myth in "Philoctetes" (1945),[63] juxtaposes a darker social portrait of man against the visionary element of the other explorer poems. A dramatic dialogue in unrhymed, iambic pentameters, it marks McAuley's shift, following the Ern Malley experiment to a plainer, more neo-classical, narrative mode. The discourse shows Heracles' efforts to persuade the sceptical Philoctetes to help the Greek forces win the Trojan war. The dialogue uses modernist tropes in depicting the modernist anti-hero Philoctetes ("Friendless, homeless, wounded," *CP*, 41) questioning the morality of heroic enterprises. In McAuley's version of the myth, Philoctetes is the wanderer anti-hero who, in his search for a deeper order, calls the ways of the gods into question:

> – Rarely do they appear,
> Who move behind the invisible curtain,
> And every showing-forth is partial, turning
> A broken mirror to ourselves: (*CP*, 41)

[62] A.D. Hope. "In Memorium J.P.M, 1976." *WO*, 53.
[63] The rebellious Philoctetes has inspired post-colonial interpretations, notably by St Lucia poet Derek Walcott.

The motifs of Philoctetes' "broken mirror," and "dark maze" (*CP*, 40) which would recur in McAuley's work, are emblematic of the modernist sense of fragmentation and disorientation, as we see in Eliot and Pessoa, the seeming opposite of the optimistic maps of explorers, or the order of similes.

4.11 A World Unsimplified

The trope of revolt is present in McAuley's mythological enactment of a modern quest. After 1944, it was no longer the chaotic fervour implicit in "The Blue Horses" but the search of the individual for a vision of society, what McAuley later described as his preoccupation with: "order and crisis in the soul and in the city of man" and also the "heroic virtues."(*SP* vii) It carries forward what the self-confessed "disappointed radical" confided to Manning Clark, at their first meeting in winter 1943: "[his] quest to find what holds the world together in its innermost parts."(129) This would become part of a perhaps romantic-symbolist project, what McAuley described as: "the search for, and the struggle to express, an intuition of the True Form of Man."(*SPvii*) These were issues he would describe in his social and philosophical explorations in the early 1950s, in poems such as his polemic "A Letter to John Dryden."

McAuley's turn from the random subjective in both an aesthetic and personal perspective is traceable to the ordering impulse of this period. He spoke of "recurring themes and images in his work [for] exploring, ordering and expressing the sentiments connected with certain recurring subjects" (*SP*, vii). A notable recurring motif initiated from his explorer theme and symbols is that of the "world unsimplified," an arguably visionary concept McAuley would develop through the first half of his work. It first emerged in the 1939-42 poem "The Family of Love," the allegory of the mental traveller in which the speaker rejects Mercator's two-dimensional map in order: "To search a world unsimplified and find, / A desperate North-East Passage of the mind […], (*CP,*10). Kramer noted the "implicit contrast between the merchant cartographer and the mental traveller […]."[64] In "Chorale," Mercator's map "Distorts the truth, as maps do in projection" (*CP*, 27). While it seems clear that the allegorical mental traveller's search is for an appropriate map to understand the modern world, via a symbolic "North-East Passage of the mind," and that Mercator's map is not adequate, the desired, if oxymoronic, "world unsimplified" is at first obscure. The pre-lapsarian cosmography of that "world unsimplified" would be alluded to, successively, and defined in negative terms, like a riddle.

[64] Leonie Kramer. *A World Unsimplified*. U of Tasmania Occasional Paper 47, 1988, 3.

McAuley's later explorer poem "Chorale," written in 1944, elaborates that negative definition. The speaker describes the universe as an "[…] algebraic / Choir of symbols" – a pre-lapsarian "map of earth" which the third-person artist *persona* will inherit, as discussed at 4.5, "not Mercator's but "as the sun beheld it at creation" (*CP*, 26). This depiction of something quite different to Mercator's material world, echoes the quaint, luminous figures of the "*mappae mundi*" of the fifteenth-century Portuguese navigators in "Henry the Navigator," with their colourful dragons, unicorns and whales. Such delight in the imagery of old maps, and distaste for the rational Mercator, would be revived when McAuley returned to the explorer theme in the long narrative poem "Captain Quiros," fourteen years later in 1958. The world map, drawn by Mercator, would represent what some historians consider as the beginning of modernity, that period starting at the middle of the Renaissance period (the late sixteenth-century) until the present time of the mid-twentieth century.[65]

While several explorer poems of the early to mid-1940s hint at what the "world unsimplified" is not, McAuley works towards defining what this might be. As we see in Chapter 5, McAuley's classically-inspired poem of 1947-8, "The Hero and the Hydra," suggests a longing for the lost early classical, or pre-lapsarian, metaphysical world once ruled by the exiled goddess Ceremony (*CP*, 51).[66] After the poet's conversion to Catholicism in 1952, his long "Jeremiad" against modernity "A Letter to John Dryden," adds a little more definition to the poet's Christian vision of a "world unsimplified," (*CP*, 95) referring to "A cosmic map Mercator never made" (94)."[67] Equally, the simplified world symbolised by Mercator's map would be given further political definition in McAuley's other long poem, of the late 1950s (*Quiros*), being associated with simplified totalitarian modern political systems reflecting McAuley's own political engagement during the 1950s. McAuley's elusive "world unsimplified" might be associated with originary places described as "the land of similes," ("Terra Australis"): it can arguably be found in the early seventeenth-century world of the Solomon Island chief Malope in *Captain Quiros.*[68]

Post-colonial theorists, including José Rabasa,[69] have described the motif of the Atlas as reflecting Eurocentrism: "an erasure and overwriting that transformed the world" (311). Graeme Huggan has written of: "the prevalence of the map *topos* in contemporary Australian

---

[65] In *EM* (1959) McAuley saw modernity as dating from the Enlightenment. Cf.7.4. (174)
[66] Cf. 5.1 (114-115).
[67] Cf.5.8 (133).
[68] Cf.8.6 (189).
[69] José Rabasa. "Allegories of Atlas."1985, in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, 321.

post-colonial literary texts and its frequently parodic or ironic usage."[70] Deleuze and Guattari describe earlier how the map reflects "shifting ground," is detachable, reversible, and capable of being "reworked" by individuals or groups.[71] McAuley's use of the map motifs in the 1940s, along with Slessor and some of the Jindyworobaks, pre-dates but anticipates the post-colonial period in Australian literature. McAuley, from his work with DORCA and ASOPA, would have been well aware of the map's nature as "palimpsest," one of many successive conceptual historic layers, and its role in "erasure and overwriting."

McAuley's dialectic on Mercator is further elucidated by Rabasa: "The map mirrors the course of history and the macrocosmos [and that] the historical is indissoluble from the geographical in Mercator's map. […]"(321) In terms of McAuley's quest for a "world unsimplified" not able to be found in Mercator's mid-Renaissance map, Rabasa locates where McAuley's "world unsimplified" might have originated, in what he describes as "the pulsating Utopian and millenarian disruptions of European history that the discovery of the New World provoked in Spanish historiography […] long gone from the totalizing global view of Mercator" (322). As a recent Catholic convert, McAuley would revive, in his long poem *Quiros* (1958-60), the utopian millenarian quest in that of the explorer Quiros westward with the Spanish across the Pacific. The glimpse of a "world unsimplified" in Malope's Solomon Islands[72] or elsewhere, was, however, tragically inseparable from the poet's "own growing apprehension of the power of the 'carnal maze'" (Kramer 1988), evident in the apprehension of grim human actions during early seventeenth-century colonization and also in contemporary atrocities occurring during World War II. The motif of "maze" in the poet's vision of a corrupt human world, the antithesis to the undiscovered worlds of the colourful *mappae mundi,* also surfaces in McAuley's poetry during the mid-1940s. His dramatic narrative poem "Philoctetes" (1945) addressing the Greek hero's confrontation with the less noble human nature of his fellow-adventurers on their way to the Trojan war, presents Philoctetes apprehending: "the dark maze / Through which their minds are led […]" (*CP*, 40). It would be through that "dark maze" that the poet voyager would have to travel to make meaning of his life in the contemporary condition.

4.12 Travelling North

The explorer poems provide a lens through which McAuley develops a vision of the

[70] Graeme Huggan. "Decolonising the Map." in *PCSR*, 1989, 355.
[71] Deleuze, Gilles & Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus.* 1987, 12.
[72] *Quiros* offers one of the early post-colonial perspectives in Australian literature. Cf.8.6.

contemporary age, by reference to an illuminating distant past – "New ways begin / From starting points lost in antiquity" ("Henry the Navigator," *CP*, 21) and an urgent present – "Our age is early too, and must prepare / Its new projections […]" (22). While the explorer *persona* and tropes, alternating between playful, parodic and more profound treatment, gave momentum and richness to McAuley's development of questing themes and a vision of the world, it was not a matter of mere fascination with exotic geographies and histories. The more correct analogy for McAuley's evolving subject, while using the masks of the explorer, is rather that of cosmographer, the drafter of a vision about the nature of the world. McAuley's interest in the past history of the Pacific discoveries, was not merely one of curiosity about an exotic geography, but a vantage for viewing from a distant, but related, past, (its "fountainhead" the Navigator?) the present global challenges which he was experiencing in his work with Conlon's Directorate. His travel to New Guinea, starting in February 1944 and continuing until 1960, offered him an opportunity to witness and explore cultures and traditions of the Pacific, which seventeenth-century explorers may have encountered, and from that experience to consider questions necessary to his understanding of the "True Form of Man," (*SP* vii). Thus, a continuing shift away from the realm of subjectivity, to the use of discursive and narrative modes and heroic *personae* in his aesthetic and intellectual experience was nourished by the new horizons of his professional experience.

Towards the end of World War II, Conlon's DORCA was disbanded and transformed into a School of Civil Affairs (SCA),[73] which prepared future interim administrators of New Guinea. Refusing offers of teaching positions in universities in Melbourne and London,[74] McAuley was excited at the prospect of doing something useful, important and possibly heroic, for New Guinea at this crucial stage of post-colonial development: "I found it very rewarding to feel that one was having a certain kind of influence, one hoped for the good, in the development of a country I care very much about." (Thompson 98) He found this choice important to his work as a poet, being remote from literary concerns. He elaborated later: "You've got to be in contact with ordinary life in some way. […] poetry has to come out of the fodder of experience that one takes out of oneself and processes and sends out again" (De Berg 11, 333).

Linked to his objections about the surrealist preoccupation with the purely subconscious, he insisted: "It's out of the whole person that poetry must be written" (De Berg,

[73] Established at Duntroon Army-base, Canberra, September 1944, the SCA started its first training course in February 1945.
[74] Offers were from the University of Melbourne (1946) and LSE (c.1947/48).

11,344). 1942-1945 had seen an intense period of change in McAuley's experience and as a poet, in the discursive and narrative forms, themes and motifs, he used to represent his chosen historic world of exploration. While his divergent track and new topics reflected his insistence on growth, there was consistency in his choice of traditional forms, reflecting his intuition about the route poetry must take. These markedly different professional life-experiences, together with his own mental and spiritual journeying (arguably the "third dimension of [his] sailing art") would increasingly be linked with that "bird-shaped island" of which Collingridge had written in 1906.

5

The Quest for Tradition: Art, Society, and Metaphysics (1946-1953)

5.1 Rewriting the Hero

After the drama of the Ern Malley poems in 1944 and the acclamation of his first publication *UA,* the years until 1952 represented a dry period. Apart from the long narrative poem "The Hero and the Hydra" (1947/48), McAuley wrote no poetry between 1946 and 1952.[1] It was nonetheless a period of intellectual change and growth.

His work with anthropologists and visits to New Guinea, that "land of apocalypse," would significantly affect his view of his own world and culture. His experience brought about changes in his work, as poet, as essayist and social being. His new trajectory would test his wish to combine the poetic calling with a life that embraced wider than literary concerns, reflecting his sense of literature's historicity,[2] and concern for reality and truth in art: "[Poetry] is concerned with the true stature of things […] all great poetry is realistic."[3] This was linked with what he increasingly called becoming or fulfilling "the whole man" – a concept derived from the "Traditionalist" philosophy of A.K. Coomaraswamy and René Guénon,[4] which offered an appealing alternative to what the poet considered the fragmented or broken man of modernity. He had commented how Jung had sourced contemporary plays and art to "ancient metaphysical conceptions."[5] In his exploration of more diverse literary forms and subject matter (against a contemporary trend towards a lyrical representation of complexity and subjectivity), McAuley increasingly reflected on the role of poet or writer (including the Australian writer) in society.

The theme of cosmic disorder continued to be important. It is developed in the long dramatic and narrative poem "The Hero and the Hydra" (1947-48, CP 45-59), one of the few poems of late 1940s. Using reflective, speech-like iambic pentameters, it outlines a dystopian vision of the world – the poet's attempt to "experience imaginatively the crisis in modern civilization in the mirror of Greek myth."[6] This is conveyed in the dramatic Part I, in the dialogue, between its two main characters, the titan Prometheus and the persecuted Io, transformed by Zeus into a cow to evade Hera. Io's pronouncement to Prometheus: "Your

[1] McAuley. 19/9/1955, Journal 7 (1955-1963). Box 1.
[2] "Poetry in its simplest lyrical forms is still culturally conditioned." "The Grinning Mirror," *EM*, 66.
[3] *Ibid.* 64.
[4] Cf. 5.2 (115-116).
[5] McAuley. "Beauty, Use and Meaning." *EM,* 82.
[6] McAuley. Note on "Prometheus." *SP*, 58.

wound bleeds in the cold air […]" (*CP,* 45) introduces McAuley's re-working of the classical drama by Aeschylus (c.525-456 BC), revised by Percy B. Shelley (1792-1822).[7] It reflects man's struggle with capricious gods to find a just and peaceful order in which they might co-exist. Prometheus's response to Io establishes the prevailing mood of scepticism and despair at a breakdown in the social and cosmic order:

> Both gods and men have raged beyond their strength.
> In this exhausted hour they look clear-eyed
> Into themselves, and see the irrational knot
> Of flesh and feeling writhe in empty darkness,
> Shuddering they fall silent. […]
> (*CP,* 45)

In seeming disproportion to his famous heroic exploits, the reclusive "hero" of the poem's title, Heracles, only appears in the penultimate section III "(The Ascent of Heracles," *CP*, 55-59) which depicts his homecoming, and accidental death. It shows how Hera, his "bitter stepmother" (*CP*, 56) tricks Heracles' unknowing wife to send ahead to the homecomer, the vest of Nessus, envenomed with the Hydra's blood. The monster Heracles slew becomes his nemesis.

> Driven in circles by his agony
> He seemed to trace a second Cretan maze
> In which the bellowing monster was himself,
> Himself for quarry, for the venom turned
> That world-defeating strength against himself […] (*CP*, 57)

In this modernist rewriting of the Greek symbol of maze or labyrinth, increasingly important in McAuley's work as symbol for society and the path, we see the modernist, sceptical anti-hero Heracles, paradoxically fighting against the monster (the hydra's blood,) in the maze of his body (the blood vessels) and his own psyche. The elegiac Part IV "The Tomb of Heracles," (1947-48, *CP*, 59) concludes the long poem with a bleak vision:

> Look cranes still know their path through empty air;
> For them their world is neither soon nor late;
> But ours is eaten hollow with despair. (*CP*, 59)

In contrast to the ordered natural world of the cranes (associated with justice and longevity) (Cirlot 66) that of Prometheus and his fellow men is "eaten […] with despair." Thus the poem concludes with an evocation of alienation and belatedness reminiscent of Eliot's "The Waste Land."[8] Bradley saw in it McAuley's: "rejection of the secular heroic stance as the antithesis of poetry."(452) It continues the mood, vision and the narrative genre, of the earlier

---

[7] McAuley's defence of Shelley matches that of Harold Bloom, whose *Shelley's Mythmaking (1959)* McAuley cited in his later lecture notes "Prometheus Unbound," Box 16.
[8] Cf. 1.4 (19).

"Philoctetes."(1945, *UA*)[9] McAuley's depictions of the Greek heroes Prometheus, Heracles and Philoctetes, represent a rewriting of the modernist "wounded hero" *persona.* Mindful of higher models of peace and justice in human society than the old myths, McAuley's Philoctetes rejects the prophesied role his fellow-Greeks urged him to uphold in their strategy to defeat Troy: "— The myths are lies. […] I shall not go […]" ("Philoctetes," 1945, *CP*, 41). By refusing to co-operate, the dramatic subject of McAuley's rewriting denies the conventional version of the classical myth itself.[10] Such a dystopian vision of human nature and the cosmic order foreshadows McAuley's later long poem *Quiros*.

In this occasionally rhyming sequence of poems McAuley uses the Greek Promethean and Heraclean myths as a means of: "encountering the agony of a civilization which seems to have lost its principle of coherence, unable to bring together the twin themes of order and justice in the "polis" and order and justice in the soul."(*MAV* 201) How to deal with "this exhausted hour" (*CP*,45) of the mid-twentieth century was the principal challenge in McAuley's reworking of the nineteenth-century romantic poet, Shelley's lyric drama. The poet's mid-twentieth century choice, of a dramatic narrative poem which he called a "secular masque,"[11] and its figuratively spare, conversational style, reflects his continuing resolve, during and after the Ern Malley experiment, to work with more traditional poems of a "narrative or discursive kind" rather than the short lyric generally, though not always, favoured by the modernists. (*MAV* 202).

McAuley's mid-1950s essays collected in *The End of Modernity, (EM*, 1959) drew on a vision of the dystopian "disinherited mind" traced by the twentieth-century British-German essayist, Eric Heller (1911-1990), in his eponymous study of German literature and thought.[12] Heller was, like McAuley, strongly influenced by the pessimism articulated by Hölderlin and Rilke. McAuley associated the expression ("disinherited mind") with the work of poet and cultural critic Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), evident in his poem "Dover Beach:" "The sea of faith / Was once too, at the full, […]."[13]A.D. Hope confided to McAuley his observation about "The Hero and the Hydra:" "the warp is McAuley – the woof is Matthew Arnold."[14] McAuley was clearly sensitive to a "profound nihilism underlying the extreme aestheticism

---

[9] Cf.4.11 (108).

[10] This text would be used by fellow poet A. D. Hope as epigraph to his first collection of poems *The Wandering Islands*, 1955, dedicated to McAuley.

[11] Although this "secular masque" had dramatic characters it is not known if it was ever recited or enacted.

[12] McAuley read Heller's *The Disinherited Mind* (1952), in the early 1950s in which Heller cites Rilke's "the world has such disinherited children," "Seventh [Duino] Elegy" (*Ibid.*, 157). Arnold's influence on McAuley diminished after the 1950s.

[13]McAuley. "The Background of Modern Literature." *EM,* 30.

[14] A. D. Hope. Letter to McAuley, October 1947. Box 7. McAuley papers.

of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries."[15] His turn to a nineteenth-century discursive mode, (*MAV* 201) represented his wish to engage in commentary on contemporary culture, and the related tropes of truth and belief,[16] in keeping with his argument that poetry should not be devoid of intellectual content.

Whereas Aeschylus offers the classical account of the reconciliation between Prometheus and the gods, Shelley's drama countenances the downfall of the old order. Following Shelley (Santamaria 61), McAuley's Prometheus becomes the mask for articulating man's revolt, an arguably more contemporary, dystopian apprehension of this "exhausted hour" of human history, a time of decay and disorder in relations between man and his gods, a world of darkness, perhaps recalling Plato's allegory of man hidden deep in a cave, such as the outcast wanderer Io describes as the "huge blind caves:" (*CP*, 47). Nonetheless, Prometheus prophesies an overthrow of the old order by a new, more harmonious one, emphasised in the return of full rhyme:

[…] the mind
Shall rise up from these ashes to repair
Ten thousand years and build its world anew.
The plough that turns the blackened waste will turn[17]
The heart to peace; again the meek will learn
In suffering and patient thought to share
The task of gods, and *hold a world in care*. (*CP,*51)

Following the Greek myth, Prometheus's revolt is energised by a sense of loss and wish to restore an old order and relationship between man and the classical gods, a sharing in the task of governance in "holding a [devastated] world in care." McAuley embellishes the myth of a Shelleyan revolutionary Prometheus, by introducing the allegoric figure of the goddess Ceremony, inspired – McAuley admitted, by the character from the long narrative poem "Hero and Leander" (Third Sestiad, 155-161) by the Elizabethan poet and translator of Homer, George Chapman (1559-1634). Chapman's Ceremony persuades Leander of the importance of the ritual of marriage (Santamaria 61). McAuley's own passage sees in Prometheus' vision, a new figure Ceremony:

[…] in vision once I saw
The goddess Ceremony giving law

To creatures of the wild air and the wood;
Excitement changed to dance and courtesy. ("The Hero and the Hydra," *CP,* 51)

[15] Hamburger. 31.
[16] Wayne C. Booth (1921-2005) links such tropes with values of sincerity or expressiveness, *The Rhetoric of Fiction,* 1961, 124.
[17] Writer's italics.

McAuley's Ceremony has a broader role in "giving law" (order, such as "dance and courtesy") to the human and natural world. His lyrical rendering of the natural world is through a discursive mix of iambic and anapaest pentameters: "[…] Far out upon a seaward rock she stood / And watched the wheeling gulls, the parquetry / Of fish that slide […]." (*CP*, 51) It recalls its seventeenth-century Elizabethan model in Chapman's long poem, vivifying Prometheus's vision of the goddess and her long-lost world of customary order or ritual:

> For Ceremony blessed their anxious loves
> And made the swarming darkness jubilant.
> Also I marked how widely she prescribes
> Tradition to the uninstinctive tribes
>
> Of men; to live in a concentric maze
> Of custom while the big flute and the drum
> Proclaim the dance, and well-tuned voices raise
> A shield of sound to ward off what may come. (*CP,* 52)

The "concentric maze of custom" (including ritual) ascribed to Chapman's goddess Ceremony, linked with Prometheus' plea to "hold a world in care" (*CP*, 51) would become a theme in McAuley's anthropologically-influenced poems[18] of this period. Prometheus' vision of Ceremony articulates a possibly utopian objective to counter dystopian views, as would be represented in the customary societies of the south-western Pacific islands in *Quiros.*

5.2 Ceremony and the Traditionalists

The figure Ceremony (and Prometheus too) might be seen as another classical allusion by an increasingly backward-looking poet. Nonetheless, the utopian element in McAuley's figure Ceremony, recalls Marxian critic Fredric Jameson's comment that an author's utopian impulse is "situation specific, linked to a concrete historical dilemma."[19] The concept of "Ceremony," inspiring the title of the poet's next collection of poems,[20] draws from a contemporary influence, his intense reading and absorption between 1944 to 1950, of the small twentieth-century school of Traditionalist School of thinkers, the Anglo-Sri Lankan expert on traditional Eastern and Western art and philosophy A.K. Coomaraswamy (1877-1947), and the French expert on Eastern and Western traditional religion and convert to Islam, René Guénon (1886-1951). These thinkers advocated the: "essential rightness attached to a traditional mode of life

[18] Notably "Palm," *CP,* 71-72, and "Celebration of Divine Love," *CP*, 74. Cf. 6.4 (147).
[19] Fredrich Jameson. "The Antinomies of Utopia." *Imagining the Future*, 2006. 18.
[20] McAuley. *A Vision of Ceremony*. Angus and Robertson, 1956.

whether found in Europe, Asia or elsewhere."[21] They condemned Western colonialism, its empirical mentality and also industrialization because it deprived people of "the sacred motivation which is the true satisfaction of the need to work,"[22] and advocated a return to the great traditional cultural texts of the East and West. McAuley's papers and notebooks for this time reflect careful reading of Coomaraswamy's and Guénon's articles.

McAuley's visits to New Guinea gave insight to his commentary on the contemporary "secular" or "sceptical empiricist" condition. The poet's absorption of Traditionalist arguments and re-evaluation of twentieth-century western patterns of thinking is reflected in "The Hero and the Hydra:"

> [Those arguments have] to do with feelings and images of the last chorus of my Prometheus and the intuition of a spiritually organized pattern of life that I cannot get clear or put into words and the opposition between this and the sceptical empiricist conventions of thought that I have acquired […].[23]

This intensive reading honed on pursuing the "spiritually organised pattern of life," probably started as early as February 1944, at the urging of his like-minded DORCA colleague, Harold Stewart, to whom the long poem was dedicated.[24] McAuley's parallel[25] embrace of Traditionalism was nurtured by a growing understanding of the different traditional culture of neighbouring New Guinea – its people, their culture and metaphysics, the landscape and the Catholic missionaries he would meet there. New Guinea enlivens McAuley's description of the lost world of the goddess Ceremony. Thus, McAuley's rather "odd" vision of traditional society, was based "on his own lived experience."[26] His divergent quest might seem to be the antithesis of a modernist dystopian perspective, an arguably romantic obsession with truth and the "real" which allies the poet with the philosopher and scientist. (Booth 286) As Booth argues, in rhetorical terms the quest genres […] invariably beg questions about art's relation to the author, in contrast to more recent critical interpretations (*Ibid.*).

5.3 "In this exhausted hour" – the loss of the metaphysical

Prometheus's vision of an ordered traditional world governed by Ceremony relates to a lost and unattainable past: "But now that men are cast out from the sleep / Of ancient order, they

[21] Marco Pallis. Prologue. "A Fateful Meeting of Minds: A.K Coomaraswamy and R. Guénon." 9.
[22] *Ibid*. 16.
[23] McAuley. Notebook 1, 6 August 1949. Box 1, McAuley Papers.
[24] Stewart's reading would lead him to Buddhism and a life in Kyoto dedicated to traditional Japanese culture, in compelling contrast to his Australian homeland.
[25] These parallel paths inspire Michael Ackland's joint biography, *Damaged Men.* 2001.
[26] Evan Jones. "Australian Poetry Since 1920." *The Literature of Australia*, 1964, 118.

no longer keep / The ratio of the planets […]" ("The Hero and the Hydra," *CP*, 51). This passage implies McAuley's Prometheus regretted having helped mankind on the path of progress and knowledge. In the vision of loss, the subject shares a (modern) apprehension of disorder and belatedness, probably reflecting McAuley's developing sense of dismay at the visible disintegration of a traditional world in New Guinea, but also in Australia and the contemporary world:

> […] Once they knew
> A natural tuning of their love and hate
> By ritual enactment and taboo;
> But though they try again it is too late:
> Their myths are void, their patterns wear away
> To markings on the street where children play. (*CP*, 52)

The arguably authorial Prometheus, speaks of his own epoch with its "blackened waste" and about the urban modern world of the late 1940s, reeling from the destruction of World War II. Its imagery, the "markings on the street where children play" echoes Eliot's urban wastelands. This ironic Prometheus captures the alienation and horror McAuley recorded, on hearing news of the Nuremberg trials:

> Your soul is like the butter that absorbed the smell of paint, it has been left out in the atmosphere of a civilization gone valueless and nasty and nothing will ever destroy the taint of it […] (Notebook 1, 13 May 1949)

On seeing Shakespeare's *Macbeth* performed a month later McAuley diagnoses the condition of the contemporary world: "The whole metaphysical tradition is our Duncan." (Notebook 1, 20 November 1949)[27]

McAuley's inspiration for reading the Traditionalists was driven by his professional research and reading for ASOPA, staffed by political scientists and anthropologists, several trained by the social anthropologist expert on the South-Western Pacific, Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942). He reflected on this latest phase of professional transformation: "[…] so I turned myself into a political scientist […] that's what I became." (De Berg 11,339) His professional reading, described in his notebooks and ASOPA reading lists, represented a range of anthropological, economic, sociological and cultural texts.[28] Inspired by the Traditionalist School, McAuley read Hindu traditional texts including the *Bhagavad Gita*, and the *Upanishads* as well as Western transcendental and mystical texts, including

---

[27] This thought is echoed in McAuley's later essay "The Background of Modern Literature," *EM*, 33.

[28]McAuley's reading included anthropologists, Malinowski, the South Pacific expert Raymond Firth, sociologist Emile Durkheim, political scientist Oswald Spengler (*The Decline of the West*), Neo-Thomist philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882 – 1973), American political scientist and Catholic Eric Voegelin, philosopher and writer Jean Jacques Rousseau and 19th century cultural historian Jacob Burckhardt.

H.D. Thoreau's *Walden (1854)* and traditional cultural and anthropological studies. While his professional interest in New Guinea drove McAuley's cultural and intellectual search, his visits there would bring about "the sorts of exploration that finally also, as a different product, led me to becoming a Catholic." (De Berg 11,359)

5.4 The initiatory quest

The fact that McAuley started a diary in December 1948,[29] reflects the poet's striving for growth. A personal urgency in the citations (Notebook 1) from his reading of mainly mystical or transcendental texts,[30] arguably a return to his early interest,[31] suggests a call to action: "Stand up now, son of Kunti, and resolve to fight." (*Bhagavad Gita*, II, February 1949). While the poet was reluctant to turn into "a literary aesthete who likes a touch of mysticism with this season's wear." (Notebook 1, 13 May 1949)," he persisted in the initiatory journey alluded to in his earlier letters to Auchterlonie and in the quest motifs of earlier poems: "Therefore I must keep trying, because of the secret conviction slowly formed over years that this way is the only real chance of growth." (13 May 1949). This impetus is explained later that year: "Looking back I can see how, especially since 1944, my spirit has been secretly in convulsion with a metaphysical hunger [...]. In certain poems (eg the "Chorale," especially at the end) it was able, by a degree of ingenuity, to come to expression without a too explicit disowning of empirical-sceptical 'orthodoxy.'" (15 October 1949). Tension arose between his search for a wholesome spiritually-based society, advocated by the Traditionalists and a drive for something more personal, more mystical. In his notes on reading, in his 1949 diary in which he is "troubled" by a "haughtiness and rigidity" in the tone of Guénon, his entry erupts with an urgent citation from the German medieval mystic Meister Eckhardt (c.1260-1328) which I translate as "Become like a child, become deaf and blind."[32] This was accompanied by notes on his own experiment with a more visionary path:

> Once having taken Puss for out for her frolic [...] I suddenly imagined what it would be like if one suddenly perceived, [...] a motionless over-coated silent, grey figure of a man who had sat on a park seat there all the time – something like an apparition – in that slight moonlit mist of dew between the trees; and I felt the physical thud of fear that one would feel. It stayed in my mind and was recalled by reading Wordsworth's

---

[29] As seen in Chapter 4.2-3, McAuley was influenced by the American diarist H.D. Thoreau's *Walden*.
[30] He read *The Cloud of Unknowing,* the anonymous c. 500 AD text ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite.
[31] Traherne was a subject of McAuley's Masters thesis. Cf. 2.2 (40, 42).AE was an early influence Cf. 2.2 (41).
[32] McAuley's Notebook 1, 15 October 1949 cites p. 432 of Christopher Isherwood's *Vedanta for the Western World* (1949) which reproduces the Eckhardt poem in an article by Gerald Heard. The Isherwood collection included essays by oriental thinkers and western writers, including Aldous Huxley.

> encounter with the pallid soldier on a moonlit road in "The Prelude" (Book IV). (Notebook 1, 3 May 1949)

The poet's growing susceptibility to uncanny possibilities in the everyday, as in this autumn recording, shows a striving for heightened consciousness and also for tutelage from visionary precursors, notably the romantic poet William Wordsworth (1770-1850).

Cautious about deserting his customary "empirical sceptical orthodoxy," the 1950 diary shows a careful reading of texts favoured by Traditionalist thinkers, including on the traditional arts, which led McAuley back to the Neoplatonist philosopher Plotinus, (204/5-270AD), encountered a decade earlier. McAuley recorded:[33] "[…] in the souls within ourselves there is true knowing: and these attributes are no images or copies from the Supreme […] wherever there is a soul that has arisen from body, there too these are: the world of sense is one where, the Intellectual Kosmos is everywhere." Plotinus's "world of sense," arguably repeats his description of Prometheus' longing to "hold a world in care" ("The Hero and the Hydra," *CP*, 51). It returns transformed in his later poetic work to the "world of sense and use" of his 1970 poem "At Rushy Lagoon" (*CP*, 223.)[34]

5.5 <u>Reason, Evidence, Faith</u>

During 1950 and 1951 McAuley's reading moved from oriental, mystical, or Traditionalist texts towards those explaining the Christian world view. The most convincing answer to the poet's search for an intellectual and faith-based metaphysics came through his reading of the French scholar of medieval philosophy Étienne Gilson (1884-1978) whose *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* (1930-32) outlined Neo-Thomist thinking already embraced by the French Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882-1973):

> What is the adequate object of the intellect? The Thomist answer is that the natural object is sensible things […] Our intellect can, by seeking the intelligible within the sensible, ascend to the necessity of positing a super-eminent essence as first cause, but cannot directly know this essence. The divine intellect alone of itself sees the divine essence; if our intellect is to know it, it must be rendered capable by a divine action: grace perfects intellect." (Notebook 1, 12 October 1950).

However, McAuley had started to reject the purely intellectual path, admitting, after his vast reading exercise, "that reading is an insidious, drying and a compulsive habit" which frequently interfered with his spiritual goal – "supplanting meditation" (4 August 1950). "I have been

[33] Probably copied from Stephen McKenna's translation of Plotinus' *Ennead* V, Tractate 9:13, Medici Society, 1917-1930. Notebook 1, 22 May to 9 June 1950, 90, Box 1, McAuley Papers. McAuley links this passage with Coomaraswamy's "A Figure of Speech or a Figure of Thought?" (Ch. IX).
[34] The 1970 poem "At Rushy Lagoon" (*CP,* 223). Cf. 10.9 (279).

occupied with questions of reason, evidence and faith; but see no clear way." (11 December 1950). By June 1951, the month before his next visit to New Guinea, he had rejected René Guénon's syncretic approach to world religions.[35] McAuley asked: "[…] whether the Roman Catholic Church is not in fact the mistress, guardian and muse of the infinite spiritual wealth of the Christian traditions, the only full and authentic source of that living water for which my soul is inflamed with an increasing thirst" (*Ibid.*). Again, McAuley invokes the recurring spiritual motif of absence, or lack of sustenance, first mentioned in October 1949. His argument matches T. S. Eliot's in *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948): "When we consider the Western world, we must recognise that the main cultural tradition has been that corresponding to the Church of Rome" (1962, 73). However, McAuley's path had been driven by his Traditionalist readings. Ultimately, rather than reading or meditation it would be encounters with people of faith, and place, that helped the poet advance in his intellectual and spiritual quest. Such encounters took place at the French Sacred Heart Mission at Kubuna in the Mekeo district of southern New Guinea.

5.6 Christianity and New Guinea: the world of "the dance"

Notebook 2 records McAuley's visit to New Guinea in early 1949. While not his first visit [36] it reflects the strangeness and the exoticism of the place. "Rats squealing and scurrying in the roof. Rain." (13 February 1949). It offers background to the poem "New Guinea" (1953), written four years later as an elegy for resident missionary, the Catholic Archbishop Alain de Boismenu (1870-1953) who played a pivotal role in McAuley's spiritual quest, together with the powerfully ambivalent land, and people still following a customary life:

> Life holds its shape in the modes of dance and music,
> The hands of craftsmen trace its patternings;
> But stains of blood, and evil spirits lurk
> Like cockroaches in the interstices of things. (*CP*, 80)

McAuley's first meeting with Archbishop de Boismenu, the retired head of the French Catholic Sacred Heart Mission in Kubuna, N.W. of Port Moresby, probably occurred in February 1949, one Sunday after attending the "sung mass" and benediction (Notebook 2). For the musical and now "Traditionalist" McAuley, the ceremony of the sung mass recorded in that colourful setting would have acted as powerful prelude to his meeting. In contrast with the multitude of spiritual texts McAuley had absorbed, the mission was a place of faith in

[35] McAuley. Notebook 1, 13 June 1951.
[36] McAuley visited New Guinea about 8 times.

action, where the traditional way of life, notwithstanding western influence, remained in evidence, and where elements of that practice were built into church liturgy. McAuley took his life-changing spiritual decision against this unusual background of living faith. In the place he'd come to call, borrowing de Boismenu's expression, "a school of detachment and of sanctity,"[37] the other significant factor was McAuley's encounter with facts about the legendary former Mother-Superior[38] of the Mission, Marie Thérèse Noblet (1889-1930). De Boismenu told McAuley that Noblet, who died in service at the Mission in 1930, "would be canonized" for her demonstration of faith, despite her nightly sufferings, being, in De Boismenu's allegorical language, "constantly assailed by the devil himself" (Notebook 2, 13 February 1949). McAuley described to A.D. Hope the role of Noblet, the existence of demons and states of possession in:

> the psychological, intellectual history of his conversion […]. This history became important to me because it brought the supernatural home more vividly. Through the living witnesses I was in close contact with such events and knew the places in which they had occurred […]" [39]

He accepted, however, that his receptiveness to Marie-Thérèse Noblet's witnessed subjection to "demons" might not conform "with a sober Anglo-saxon good taste." (*JM*, 28)

Like many writers, McAuley was susceptible to the influence of place. In this unexpected twentieth-century manifestation of the traditional but also Catholic microcosm on Australia's Pacific doorstep, the poet had taken the step "[…] to heal the dislocation which haunted his life and poetry." (Ackland, 2001 274). He was struck by the paradox of his conversion: "If it was in the midst of James Frazer's speculations on the primitive that my early religious faith succumbed, it was in the midst of the actually primitive that it stirred and woke at last to a fuller and more assured life." (*JM* 28) McAuley's return to the Christian, if Catholic, faith, had ironically been through a rational, anthropological study of ritual and the traditional life, with his ASOPA colleagues, more recently of the Traditionalist cultural thinkers and finally by observing the adapted primitive Christian mission in action in New Guinea.

McAuley's diary entry during his visit in mid-1951 underlines the New Guinea mission's significance for his decision to convert to the Catholic faith: "I told [Bishop Sorin] of my hope that I could make my decision finally at Kubuna." (Notebook 4, 23 July 1951). Even in Kubuna McAuley debated the relation between faith and intellect recorded in his

---

[37] McAuley. "My New Guinea." *JM,* 27.
[38] Noblet was Mother superior of the Carmelite Congregation of the Handmaids of our Lord.
[39] McAuley. Undated letter to A.D. Hope c. 1954. Notebook 7, Box 1.

diary the previous year. As if to solve his spiritual impasse, he suddenly fell ill with malaria, his decision seemingly made. He wrote, after years of poetic drought since 1946,[40] the first poem reflecting the recuperation accompanying this sudden spiritual shift, a simple visual narrative account in iambic tetrameters in seven rhyming quatrains (abab) – "Kubuna:"

> […] The quiet sister, clothed in grey,
> Who had a saint once in her care,
> Clears the medicines away
> And lets in the sweet light and air.
>
> To sink into a dream of home,
> Or, propped in comfort, idly look
> While the sheep of fancy roam,
> In a gold illumined book.
>
> To see the Virgin, aureoled,
> With little hand upraised to bless,
> Holding Him who shall uphold
> All creatures in their feebleness.
>
> […] Kubuna, in your sunken vale
> Lies earth's peace, and something more
> The suffering that does not fail
> The joy of those who go before. [41]

McAuley's simple, autobiographical poem in rhyming quatrains, describing the ritual of convalescence, foreshadows his later lyrics about illness of the early 1970s. While its Christian punctuation (the capitalization of "Him" for the infant Jesus, and the "Virgin"), suggests a declaration of shared belief, it remained private, and unpublished. Ackland observes how the poem: "celebrates the mission as a realm of lost faith come to life, likening its scenes to pages 'in a gold illumined book' where Virgin and Child consorted daily, and where Providence was ultimately justified." (2001 112) With its poignant focus on suffering it even suggests a Pietà. It were as if, in its almost medieval setting, the Kubuna mission, in its peaceful "sunken vale," retained the power, mystery and ceremony that the Christian and more specifically Catholic faith could no longer hold in the temporal Western world, of which Australia was part.

"Kubuna" was the first poem written since 1947-48, one of a series of predominantly religiously-inspired lyric poems he would write in the next five years.[42] An uplifting descriptive focus is also evident in a diary passage describing nature at Kubuna: "And everywhere butterflies veer and flitter: a huge blue and black one with yellow keel like a

---

[40] McAuley. Notebook 7, 1955. Box 1.
[41]McAuley. "Kubuna" 3 August 1951. Unpublished poem, Notebook 4, 3 August 1951, Box 1.
[42] Cf. 6.2 (139-140).

ship in full silken sail […],” (Notebook 4, August ’51 to ’54, p.37). McAuley wrote nervously to Norma in Sydney about his decision to convert, recognising the negative reactions he expected from his intellectual and literary colleagues. In the early 1950s in predominantly Protestant or secular Australia, where the minority Catholic church was associated with early Irish settlers or recent southern European immigrants, his conversion was a brave act, reflecting a continued going against the stream. McAuley’s turn against both the Protestant and the secular was one of the first in a spiritual, not necessarily, Christian trend that would gain momentum in Australia in the fourth quarter of the twentieth-century.[43]

5.7 The Essayist: Anthropology and the Traditional Arts

McAuley had not abandoned aesthetic interests during his spiritual quest. Questions about the traditional nature of art, explained by Coomaraswamy, were integral to the poet’s wider quest. The Traditionalists had convinced the poet of the importance of the artisanal aspect of art useful to a wider community, rather than narrowly aesthetic.[44] Reading about the British arts-and-crafts sculptor Eric Gill (1882-1940) McAuley noted how Gill rejected works of art: “which have no meaning and, as such, are divorced from the common life of men and women” (Notebook 1, 5 August 1949). Such thoughts reinforced McAuley’s rejection, in Ern Malley, of a Romantic-Symbolist creative sensibility isolated from collective experience and focussed exclusively on the subjective.

McAuley’s literary output after 1946 was largely in prose, in articles published in the *Pacific Affairs Journal* (1950-1955) and the official ASOPA journal *South Pacific* (1947-1959). A developing focus was the traditional arts, of thematic interest since 1945, as seen in the Ceremony section of “The Hero and the Hydra” (1947-1948). McAuley admitted that his conversion to Catholicism came from an interest in the Traditionalists, by way of the traditional arts – song, dance and music, in New Guinea and the Sacred Heart Mission at Kubuna:

> Another prompting that gradually worked upon me came from art and literature. I saw more clearly that the art I most admired and loved was rooted in a spiritual tradition. I could not but acknowledge that the way one’s mind works naturally under inspiration is incompatible with all shallow, sceptical and merely sophisticated views of life.[45]

[43] Wayne Hudson. *Australian Religious Thought.* 2016.
[44] A.K. Coomaraswamy. “A Figure of Speech or a Figure of Thought?” *The Essential A.K. Coomaraswamy.*
[45] McAuley. Letter to Norma McAuley, 27 August 1951. Box 21, McAuley papers.

In the first article "A Defence of Native Art," (1951)[46] McAuley defended a recent exhibition in Sydney (July 1951) of art by New Guinea school students against a local critic's allegations of it being a "watering down" of an "authentic," "machistic" standard. For the poet New Guinea art and culture represented the lost rich traditional society from which the West had become removed and for which it was yearning. He noted how: "Western anti-traditional art […] boast[ing] of its emancipation from use and meaning, finds it necessary to plunder the traditional arts of its own past, […] in order to supply the defects of its impaired vitality […] (99). He wrote:

> […] the type of problem raised by native art closely resembles the problems encountered in other departments of native life which have been disturbed by culture contact. The West brings about a disorientation which it itself suffers from, its own disorientation. (*Ibid.,* 100)

In what would become a broader dialectic the debate moved into a wider forum in his essay "The Traditional View of Art" (1951)[47] in the current affairs journal, *Australian Quarterly*, where, drawing on arguments of modern anthropologists and cultural historians as well as Traditionalist and Neoplatonic ideas, he explained how traditional art focussed on the use and meaning of the artifact: "[…] being well made […] so as to embody meanings and serve economic, ceremonial and ritual contemplative purposes." (*EM*, 73). He argued that with the "onset of industrialization" in the sixteenth-century West "the divorce between beauty, meaning and utility was completed; art was excluded or drew back aghast from the utilities and prided itself on being fine […]" (*EM,* 74). His essay embarks upon a critique of modern aesthetics, in a sententious tone recalling his anti-avant-garde stance seven years earlier:

> It is becoming recognized […] that art for art's sake – the isolation of an aesthetic motive – far from being the natural and original condition of art, is rather to be considered a perversion and decadence, and a sure sign of the approaching exhaustion of cultural vitality. (*EM*, 76)

McAuley argues, as he did intuitively in the Ern Malley statement (1944), but this time from Traditionalist perspectives, for an art of utility or universal value against the purely aesthetic, subjective or "art-for-arts-sake" of modern art, also the subject of contemporary differences among contemporary modernist and social realist artists.

His critique mirrored nineteenth-century British arts-and-crafts views, but also, contemporary Marxians in the Frankfurt School, in their attack on mass culture. Such common ground would lead one commentator, Geoff Sharp, in a later *Meanjin* issue (1953),

[46] McAuley. "A Defence of Native Art." *South Pacific, 5.6,* August 1951, 99-100.
[47] This essay would later be titled "Beauty, Use and Meaning," *EM*, 1959, 73-85.

remembering McAuley from the Ern Malley affair, to ask flippantly if McAuley might be hoaxing Marx.[48] Robert Dixon also remarked how McAuley shared the perspectives of cultural critics, F.R. Leavis and T.S. Eliot, and the Frankfurt school theorists, in their critique of modern mass culture:

> A remarkable feature of [his] attack upon modernity is that McAuley could be speaking equally about contemporary western societies, or about westernized societies in the third world. Suburb and colony comes together as the common ground of modernity.[49]

McAuley's article provoked an exchange of essays between 1951 and 1952 including with Judith Wright, on the state of the modern arts and culture. The argument reached a peak in his essay later in 1952 ("Tradition, Society and the Arts,"1952,)[50] for the left-leaning magazine *Meanjin.* McAuley elaborated his views on art in society including on what constituted the relationship between the sacred and the secular (*EM*,5). No doubt genuinely, but in what would later be described as a sanctimonious tone,[51] he argued: "It is by standing in the right relation with this spiritual order that man and his society become authentic" (*EM*,4). He emphasised the loss of creative vitality in western non-traditional art, its "aimlessness and sterility" (*EM*, 5) for its disconnection from central symbolic traditions. McAuley's defence of traditional art had thus shifted from the narrower anthropological focus to a diagnosis of a debasement in the broader artistic, cultural and metaphysical condition of Western society, with a provocative prescription for what might be the remedying condition for a normal, authentic culture: "The normal condition of the arts, is to exist under the presidency of the spiritual tradition and in symbiosis with other social needs and interests" (*EM*, 5). McAuley also displayed for the first time his changing political affiliations by attacking the "totalitarian pseudo-religions," (*EM*,7) of the international and Australian Marxist-inspired left and art associated with "The People's Hall of Culture" (*EM*, 8), Unsurprisingly McAuley's polemic views, no doubt sincerely felt and searchingly attained, would be widely attacked, from the Anglican theological mainstream to the Marxist left.

Recognising the developing polemic, the *Meanjin* editors, perhaps unfairly, solicited a response in the same edition as McAuley's text from Anglican clergyman Arthur Burns,[52] who asked how contemporary art practitioners might conform to McAuley's "impossible" canon (342). Even A.D. Hope privately criticised McAuley's neglect of the influence of

---

[48] Geoff Sharp. "An Artful Theory or a Theory of Art." *Meanjin*, No, 52, XII, 1, Autumn 1953, 116.
[49] Robert Dixon. "James McAuley's New Guinea: colonialism, modernity, suburbia." 2001, 158.
[50] McAuley. "Tradition, Society and the Arts." *Meanjin*, 51, 1952, 328 -341. In *EM*, 3-21.
[51] Elizabeth Vassilieff. "The Temple and the People's Palace." *Meanjin* 53, 1953, 211.
[52] Arthur Burns. "Theology and the Arts." *Meanjin*, 51, 1952, 342 -347.

pagan Latin literature and art on Christian art.[53] Hope's was probably fair comment, however, McAuley's divergent perspective seemingly insisted on further self-differentiation.

McAuley had set himself up in an acrimonious dialogue with the left-leaning Australian intelligentsia, of which he had been part and into which he had again dared to step now, as a conservative, polymath intellectual. In his parallel *Meanjin* essay the theologian Arthur Burns had observed: "there is a prose tradition – that of Dryden, Swift, Addison and Johnson – to which [McAuley's] present subject would have been particularly apt" (343). As seen in his borrowing of Gulliver in "The True Discovery of Australia,"[54] McAuley admired the work of the eighteenth-century satirist Jonathon Swift (1667-1745) and also the late seventeenth-century Restoration poet and satirist John Dryden (1631-1700). It is impossible to ascertain whether Rev. Burn's observation provoked McAuley's subsequent step, the epistolary satire "A Letter to John Dryden." It was written a year later (1953) and published the following year in *Meanjin* (1954) as if to conclude, in verse, the ongoing dialogue about modern culture and society, his increasing concerns about "Western modernity," empirical science and technology, anti-metaphysical scepticism and secularism. Nonetheless, the poem was a carefully considered project. McAuley's diaries also reveal that: "Illness [perhaps a bout of malaria contracted in New Guinea] gave me the leisure to write "A Letter to John Dryden."[55]

5.8 Satirical verse – "A Letter to John Dryden" (1953)

Far removed from that earlier parody of Australian surrealism, we find, in his 1953 "A Letter to Dryden," a transformed McAuley, seemingly dressed in preacher's costume, unleashing a satirical "Jeremiad" against his own times and people, in the way the Puritans had employed such critical prose[56] in the time of the Restoration poet Dryden to whom the letter is addressed. McAuley's choice here of the epistolary poem can be linked to his later (modernist) proposal for experiment in older, neglected poetic kinds ("Notes and Speculations," 1958, *EM*, 174). Writing, as if to the seventeenth-century past from the mid twentieth-century Cold War in Australia, the author invokes his predecessor Dryden, in a colloquial manner, consistent with his chosen epistolary form.[57] As recent Catholic convert

---

[53] A.D. Hope. Letter to McAuley, 26 December 1952. Box 7, McAuley papers.
[54] Cf. 4.4 (90-91).
[55] McAuley. 11/8/53, Journal 7. Box 3, McAuley papers.
[56] Jonathon Edwards. "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Connecticut, 1741. https://digitalcommons.unl.edu
[57] McAuley may have been aware that Dryden translated Ovid's poetic epistles.

McAuley felt he had shared values to discuss: both were Catholic converts in a time of Protestant majorities:

> Dear John, whoever now takes pen to write
> Or at the keys tap-taps through the night
> To give a new *Religio Laici*
> Or *Hind and Panther* to this vacant sly
> Neurotic modern world […] (*CP*, 85)

Using the heroic couplet of rhyming iambic pentameters favoured by Dryden and the Restoration narrative convention, McAuley's "Letter" sets itself in Dryden's tradition, by citing the poet-laureate's two major poetic works written before (*Religio Laici*, 1682) and after (*The Hind and the Panther,* 1687) Dryden's conversion to Catholicism.

The subject of this poetic *apostrophe* to Dryden can be identified with the mid-twentieth-century Australian poet and now essayist. The familiar tone of the subject, or authorial *persona,* suggests desired affinities with Dryden,[58] in ideas, values, and in the satirical mode for which he was known. In a familiar address to his precursor and desired mentor the subject intimates how Dryden: "[…] knew the answer […] to strife of creed" (*CP*, 91). Dryden had witnessed at close range the political upheaval and religious turmoil of Puritan and Restoration England. However, the reader, in relatively peaceful, post WWII Australia, might have wondered about the twentieth-century narrator's knowledge of a parallel "creed of strife" that launches such an unlikely sense of kinship. One of McAuley's not-entirely-private, but personal, perspectives would concern the "creed" of communism in Australia, the struggle from 1954-1960 between Catholic-affiliated "groupers" and extreme left-wing elements within the trade-union movement and the Australian Labor Party.[59] When writing the poem, McAuley was not yet politically involved, other than being a well-known Catholic convert, poet and essayist.

From the poem's beginning the subject (thinly masking the new-convert) in a stance of alleged reasonableness, though with a tone of unrelenting, shared disdain, launches into his invective against a second issue, the modern cultural condition in Australia and the west generally, bemoaning the fact that: "[…] things are not the same as when you wrote. / The Modern Mind was then scarce embryonic / Which now stands forth loud, indistinct, moronic" (*CP*, 85-86). Dryden,

[58] McAuley's sense of affinity with Dryden was probably reinforced by the fact of his being a poet-translator. Three years later in 1956 McAuley embarked on his second phase of translations – of the German-language poets Hoffmansthal, Hölderlin and his first translations of Trakl.
[59] Cf. 7.1 (165).

cited from his political satire *Absalom and Achitophel*, (1.1.227) is presented as prophetic for contemporary times already described by the Traditionalist philosophers:

> The great Unculture that you feared might be
> "Drawn to the dregs of a democracy"
> Is full upon us; here it sours and thickens
> Till every work of art and honour sickens. (*CP*, 85 -86)

The dense fabric of allusion of the first 12 lines sets the pattern for the epistle, underlining the troubling questions about cultural literacy throughout McAuley's text, including his possible audience: "The disinherited defrauded rout / Who do not think or dream, deny or doubt, / But simply don't know what it's all about" (*CP*, 88).

The 10-page discursive poem can be divided into three sections – the first the apostrophic address introducing Dryden and addressing his similar concerns about society and politics and the desired rule of reason (*CP*, 85-87), the second longer section outlining the subject's panoramic, if polemic, perspective on history and contemporary society (*CP*, 88 -93) and the third, lyrical and confessional tone of the Christian poet (*CP*, 94-95). While the content seems arcane, intelligible only to a politically and historically literate few, the poem is addressed both to the scholarly Dryden, and to McAuley's mid-twentieth-century intellectual contemporaries: "whoever may take pen to write / Or at the keys tap-taps through half the night." (*CP*, 85). In its confident seventeenth-century epistolary style, the authorial voice seems grounded in European literary space. In common with more cosmopolitan fellow Australian writers, the subject views his nation and time ("this vacant sly / Neurotic modern world," *CP,85*) simultaneously, both "close up and from far away" with a "doubled vision."[60] A.D. Hope placed McAuley's satirical political poem in the same tradition as Horace, Juvenal, Pope and Johnson.[61] While Rev. Burns may have directed McAuley towards Dryden, this conformed, after the Ern Malley experiment, with McAuley's announced interest in neo-classical approaches and in traditional narrative and discursive forms. (De Berg 11,358)

The subject describes Dryden's seventeenth-century epistolary verse, as appropriate for cultural critique, being: "Well-bred and easy, energetic, terse," – verse in which "Reason might walk" (*CP*, 85). Reason, rationality and cultural literacy are key motifs within the poem as also in McAuley's critiques in his contemporary essays. The question of culture is addressed to Dryden in the context of audience: in the addressee's time the role of the poet

[60] Dixon. "Scenes of Reading." 2012, 71-79.
[61] A.D. Hope. Letter to McAuley, 19 March 1956. Box 7, McAuley papers.

was still of teacher or communicator, as earlier outlined in Sir Philip Sidney's "Apology," with an assumed audience:[62]

> When you invoked your genius, to write
> Within that seventeenth-century twilight
> When Milton loomed and Crashaw's silver cry
> Rose like a fountain in obscurity,
> It seemed the serious poet could rely
> Upon a well-instructed audience. (*CP*, 86)

The implication is that such well-instructed audience cannot be taken for granted in modern times, unlike the seventeenth-century of the "looming" Protestant Milton and mystic poet Richard Crashaw (1613-1649), a Catholic convert and exile, at the time of Cromwell. Crashaw's "silver cry" rising like "a fountain in obscurity" reintroduces the water/drought opposition that intensifies McAuley's evocation of the creative powers. In mid-twentieth century, predominantly secular, Australia the subject is right to be uncertain about what stance to assume with his readers. In the second part of the discourse the subject offers his illustrious, if three-centuries-dead, *interlocuteur* and fellow moralist Dryden, a tour of the modern world and asks questions about the present and the past.

In the conversational, and alternately sermon-like critique, the impediments to reason and truth are a constant sub-text in the survey of contemporary intellectual and civilizational beliefs, political systems and culture both of twentieth-century Australia and the Western world. Such impediments are evident in indifference and numbness towards essential human values: "when men of sense / Would let things slide in mere indifference" (*CP,*86), spiritual, cultural and historical illiteracy, misinformation: "Poor Public Beast, so stuffed with raw opinion" (*CP,*93) or suppression: "In silence those unmeaning doctrines rest / That once were the foundation of the West." (*CP,*87). The target of this poem's critique is modern society's lack of a solid spiritual and cultural basis for its values. While he had rejected the syncretist beliefs of the Traditionalists Guénon and Coomaraswamy, their advocacy of traditional knowledge and values as antidote to a contemporary focus on material progress, ensuing secular indifference and loss of culture, permeates the Dryden poem from beginning to end.

The following segment typifies the subject's dexterous cataloguing critique, mixing emblem ("the Wheel of Progress") and rhetorical contrasts ("age of Poetry to age of Prose).

[62] Echoing Horace, Sir Philip Sidney spoke of the poet's role as "to teach and delight […]," "An Apology for Poetry," *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 331. The Scholastic and Traditionalist philosophers upheld the role of clarity in communication against complexity and sophistication. See A.K. Coomaraswamy, "Beauty and Truth," 99.

Its rhyming couplets give emphasis and authority to the comprehensive catalogue of cultural and historical decline:

> Science-powered the Wheel of Progress goes
> From age of Poetry to age of prose […]
> The University confronts the land,
> Neutral of course, and secular and bland;
> Where Christ, Augustine and the Stagirite
> Lie dead and buried, neither wrong not right [. . .]
> […] No fear at all the student will find out
> What all those wars and poems are about. (*CP,* 87)

The survey presents the political and civilization horrors of the Second World War as an attack against Christian values, describing recent historical scenarios in vigorous demotic language:

> Neither did Adolf's Kampf long hesitate
> To tear Christ's body with frenetic hate;
> And doubtless there will be, as the world goes,
> Still other korans, in yet filthier prose. (*CP*, 88)

The term "korans" recalls McAuley's earlier prose reference to the "totalitarian pseudo-religions which offer to restore unanimity and give meaning and direction to life by imposing a secular ideology which is an inverted order of religious doctrine." (*EM*, 7) A similar apocalytic invective is used to describe extreme political systems "Millenarian, / Secularist, totalitarian" (*CP*, 89) and the emergence of tragic events in recent twentieth-century history, notably the rise of totalitarian systems in Europe and Asia. The followers of Eastern mysticism, such as Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood (and temporarily McAuley and Harold Stewart), are described as "a fellow travelling band […] / Of Westerners with means who look for ends." (*CP,* 90).[63] Positivism (described, in line with Neo-Thomist thinking, as the legacy of the fourteenth-century theologian and philosopher William of Ockham) is attacked as the cause of man doomed "to live and die/ In an impoverished reality […]" (*CP,* 88). The satiric epistle, in its panoramic, partisan, well-informed portrait of the intellectual and political history of the recent post-Enlightenment modern world sets the parameters for McAuley's definition and critique of modernity in other essays written between 1953 and 1958 and published in *EM* (1959) or for the conservative magazine *Quadrant* he would edit from 1956.

[63] A.D. Hope told McAuley he liked this send-up of Eliot's parody of the *Bhagavad Gita* in "Dry Salvages" (1940): "Fare forward, travellers! […]," T.S. Eliot *Collected Poems,1909-1962*, 210.

Noel Rowe[64] has described, as McAuley would also admit, the "aggressive" tone of the poem's discursive "polemic"[65] about the difference between empirical and the more favoured intellectual or metaphysical knowledge. For some of its contemporary audience McAuley's authorial subject also commits the bad etiquette of speaking critically of its chief topic (modern man) behind that person's back. Les Murray alludes to "that slightly peevish tone […] a certain despairing preachiness […]."[66] Through its erudite web of allusions it also commits the indiscretion of what readers such as Marxian John Docker would object to in McAuley, of a "cultural elitism."[67] Some of the negative reception might be explained as arguing that McAuley's syncretic modernist satire is founded on a negative understanding of twentieth-century Australia – his description of a "certain thinness in [the Australian] environment." (Morphett 2) However, McAuley's criticism is not local but directed at a broader Western prevalence of secularism and positivism, already elaborated in his essays on tradition and society. Even a supportive critic like Rowe argues that in this long poem McAuley: "exhibits the kind of certitude which contributed so much to his image as a conservative, if not doctrinaire, Catholic." (1984 45)

For the chief topic of the writer's concern, twentieth-century man, the attitude is not entirely derision but also, predominantly, one of pity and concern. From the perspective of the Catholic poet, modern man is ignorant of the riches of Western philosophical tradition, he is indifferent: "They do not *disbelieve*, because they do not *know*" (*CP,*87). McAuley's modern man belongs to the "disinherited and anxious host" (*CP,* 90) described by Matthew Arnold and Eric Heller. Such twentieth-century modern man – stunted, ignorant, pitiable, was, after all, the poet's lost, desired, if patronised and belittled audience, and his main concern. When he first met Manning Clark in 1943, McAuley had told the historian of his idea, having absorbed several philosophical texts of German Oswald Spengler (*The Decline of the West*, 1926) and Spanish José Ortega Y Gasset (*The Revolt of the Masses,* 1930), that the mass age in which we lived: "had been disastrous for high culture."(Clark 130) While the perspective of "A Letter to John Dryden" is founded on McAuley's war-time, rational apprehension of "apocalypse and revolution," of an exhausted modernity, it identifies the reason for this as the falling away from the Christian tradition and a metaphysical apprehension of the world. On such occasions, when the subject wonders how such a way of being might be restored, the text shifts into a different tone of voice. This is where the third part of the poem begins and ends (*CP*, 94-95).

---

[64] Noel Rowe. "The Catholic Element in James McAuley's Poetry." *Quadrant* 28.5,1984, 45-46.
[65] McAuley admitted the poem displeased some by its "aggressive polemic," *MAV,* 202.
[66] Les Murray. "James McAuley - A Personal Appreciation." 1978, 187.
[67] Docker. "James McAuley: The Poetry and the Attitude." *Arena* 26, 1971.77.

In contrast to what Rowe has identified as the "aggressive apologetics" (1984 46) of McAuley's "polemic" voice, Rowe associates a second, less hectoring, voice with "a silence that sings," a "lyricism which breaks through the polemic" (*Ibid.*). It is by this mood of lyricism and the tool of invocative poetry that the subject tries to speak to common men about a higher spirituality. The subject transforms to incantatory invocation what was before merely discursive: "These [the common men] somehow I would touch, if only by / The arrow and the gleam of poesy" (*CP*, 88). In language reminiscent of the early nineteenth-century romantics, the author acknowledges a shift from the operations of reason to those of the heart: "Perhaps the heart has something left to tell." (*CP*, 94) These words recall the dictum of French philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623-1662): "[…] the heart has reasons that reason does not know" cited in McAuley's essay "Reflections on Poetry" published in *Meanjin*[68] the same year as the long poem. The poem launches from this point into its second, lyrical voice of invocation:

> Incarnate Word, in whom all nature lives,
> Cast flame upon the earth: raise up contemplatives
> Among us, men who will walk within the fire
> Of ceaseless prayer, impetuous desire.
> Set pools of silence in this thirsty land: […] (*CP*, 94)

The Incarnate Word is Christ, and the sequence which follows is the imperative invocation of prayer, representing a shift in tone from the familiar complaint. It introduces sentiments beyond the rational, invoking faith in a being ("in whom all nature lives") who has power to affect and improve humankind by casting "flame upon the earth," by "raising up contemplatives." Les Murray, a later Catholic convert, corroborates: "grace can't be communicated through argument: it must find other channels […] beyond disputation, channels of inspiration […]." (187) Here the subject is persuasive. The petition to Christ to set up "pools of silence in a thirsty land […]," (*CP,* 94) repeating in geographic terms the recurrent motif of spiritual hunger in McAuley's journal, revives the earlier symbolic Australian drought landscape, its "salty sunken desert, / A futile heart within a fair periphery" of "Envoi" (1936-38) which almost resents the "gush of waters, the lean plough, the fretful seed." (*CP*, 6). Such "pools of silence" would assist in preparing for creative acts,[69] including encountering faith. A receptivity to faith might open another kind of knowledge or understanding, by which the heart, together with reason, might newly approach Mercator's purely material world:

[68] McAuley. "Reflections on Poetry." *Meanjin 12*.4, 1953, 43. (Renamed "The Perennial Poetry" in *EM,* 1959.)
[69] Inspired by the mystic Traherne, McAuley wrote: "Poetry grows out of silence [...] there is needed a certain attentiveness and waiting in darkness [...]," "The Vocation of Poetry" (1954-55), 124.

Then reason can unlock faith's treasury.
To rapt astonishment is then displayed
A cosmic map Mercator never made. (*CP*, 94)

Such liberating conjunction of reason with faith (linked with the recurring transformative symbol "treasury") recalls the visions sought and evoked in McAuley's explorer poems of the mid-1940s.[70] In tribute to his new-found faith, the poet re-works those imaginings of marvellous new worlds, which predated the purely empirical apprehension of the world after Mercator's 1569 projection. The passage echoes: "those *mappa mundi*, where the soul / Finds its similitudes" of "Henry the Navigator" (1944, *CP,* 22) and the pre-Mercator quest of "The Family of Love" (1939-42, *CP*, 10). The questing language and map symbolism of his explorer poems before conversion, is loaded this time with the spiritual vision brought by the subject's search for and finding of a Christian faith (arguably elaborating one of the "three dimensions" already described in the earlier "Family of Love"):

In new dimensions is the sailing art
Skilled in the secrets of this ancient chart,
Where greatest may be least, all signs reversed,
The straight way winding, and the last the first. […]
("A Letter to John Dryden," *CP*, 95)

The prophetic tone and the play with paradox resounds with the scriptural expression in Mathew 20:16, "[…] the last will be first." Arguably, the "ancient chart" might be the Scriptures themselves. The visionary language is that of the spiritual mariner: "World undistorted, world unsimplified, / So long by me desired, so long denied!" (*CP,* 95) Such questing language would be repeated five years later for the Portuguese navigator in McAuley's next and last long poem *Quiros* (*CP,* 157/St.1). What might seem a vatic plea to himself, the recent convert, or the addressee Dryden, seems rather an appeal to contemporary (probably unbelieving) readers:

Open, eyes of the heart, begin to see
The tranquil, vast created mystery,
In all its courts of being laid awake,
Flooded with uncreated light for mercy's sake. (*CP,* 95)

The text is doubly rich for a Christian reader, tracing the echo of Ephesians 1.18 ("the eyes of the heart") to convey metaphorically such sense of "understanding" through the organs of visual perception, the eyes – a consistently important motif. However, the recurring motif of a "world unsimplified" in symbolic opposition to Mercator's distorted map[71] outlined in this

[70] Cf. 4.3 (87-88).
[71] Cf. 4.11 (106-107).

visionary section of the poem is probably informed by the Swiss cultural historian Jacob Burckhardt's suspicion of the utopian schemes of what he considered the millenarian "terrible simplifiers,"[72] the "heaven on earth men" of totalitarian schemes whether left or right.

In its concluding stanza, the text shifts back to the original colloquial, familiar but less bitter tone, in resuming the conversational address to Dryden:

> It's true, dear John, I envy other days
> When poets had a public, and the bays
> Were fresh and green on many a public brow:
> But there's good writing to be done even now […] (*CP,* 95)

Despite the poem's overbearingly critical tone, its conclusion is not entirely desperate: the subject wants to encourage his contemporaries "even now" to continue their "good writing."

McAuley's poem does not comply with contemporary forms and themes, and broaches divergent questions on politics and literary fashion normally addressed in prose. They were matters McAuley dared raise in his experiment with an archaic epistolary verse mixing satiric commentary with a subdued if powerful lyric voice. The poetic satire had been out-of-favour since John Stewart Mill deemed poetry the proper vehicle for lyric expression, and Edgar Allan Poe queried the long poem as a contemporary genre.[73] McAuley's long poem offers insightful perspectives on complex political, social and cultural factors arising in the Cold War period in Australia and internationally, as well as an apocalyptic political and poetical commentary. However, it poses difficulties for the contemporary reader, in blending a prosaic, if arcane, polemic with a sensitive subjectivity. "A Letter to John Dryden" and the parallel religious poems which McAuley initiated the previous year (1952) after his conversion, represents the intense epistemological questioning of the relationship between faith and reason he had experienced recently. It is an extraordinary satirical, long Christian poem – polemic, provocative, overreaching but also lyrical. Manning Clark saw in it the last throes, after McAuley's conversion, of his former "delight in knocking people out."[74] It seems to be a *riposte*, part of a wider dialectic – though the reader might one wonder to what. Tipping back and forward between the discursive and the lyrical, its strangeness is best explained by its genesis in McAuley's reading and prose-writing, serving to conclude, in

[72] McAuley cites this expression in "The Background of Modern Literature," *EM*, 42, Burckhardt (1818-1897) was popular in the mid-20th century because of his prophecies about nationalist tyrannies ("les simplificateurs terribles") in Europe. McAuley would have read the essay on Burckhardt and his younger colleague Friedrich Nietzsche, in Eric Heller's *The Disinherited Mind* (1952).
[73] Edgar Allan Poe. *The Philosophy of Composition*. 1846.
[74] Heyward. Interview with Manning Clark, 7/7/1988. Heyward Papers.

verse, the ongoing dialogue of commentaries in the *Australian Quarterly* and *Meanjin* on the question of traditional art.

Unsurprisingly, his Dryden poem would be the subject of lampoons, one by the art critic from the *Vision* group, Jack Lindsay, and also in an unpublished poem sent by Joan Fraser (aka Amy Witting) to McAuley in 1956, when newly installed as editor of the current affairs and literary journal *Quadrant*. Fraser's parody[75] reflects the outrage McAuley's new role as a moralising Catholic poet would have provoked among his former free-thinking university colleagues. Similarly, A.D. Hope's lampoon gently parodies the sanctimonious polemic of his Christian-convert friend in the figure of a (hypocritical) black lamb:" Look, then, on me and rise and shine / And win a fleece as white as mine! […] (A.D. Hope, "Lambkin: A Fable").[76]

5.9 Looking for an Audience

McAuley's entry into prose continued to put him in the public eye. Though he resumed poetry after 1952, with an outflowing of religious lyrics inspired mainly by New Guinea,[77] prose was his dominant form in the 1950s culminating in the collection of his Traditionalist and Neo-Thomist inspired essays in 1959 in *EM* and also from 1956 in his new role as editor of the conservative journal *Quadrant.*[78] His long poem was a step towards re-establishing, after his university days writing for *Hermes*, his own "Republic of Letters" in the unpromising terrain of predominantly secular, Cold-War Australia. It was not surprising that McAuley's new *interlocuteur*, following his conversion in 1952, the Melbourne Catholic poet Vincent Buckley, confided to McAuley his belief that prose-writing might be McAuley's true strength.[79]

McAuley's modern long poem is difficult to classify. It is often more akin to prose – a letter in rhyming verse, or a dramatic monologue through which a fictional *persona is* created. The poem is hybrid, combining elements of the eighteenth-century epistle with a Juvenalian abrasive satire. In its last passage (*CP,* 94-95) it switches into the nineteenth-century confessional lyric before signing off in epistolary manner (*CP*, 95). Its audience was mainly a bemused or outraged intelligentsia so perhaps it lacked any real audience, though McAuley

[75] Amy Witting. "A Letter to James McAuley." unpublished poem, Amy Witting Papers, Ml Ms 5303, SLNSW.
[76] A. D. Hope. "Lambkin: A Fable." *Collected Poems*, 121.
[77] Cf. 6.2 (144).
[78] Cf. 7.3 (168).
[79] Vincent Buckley. Letter to McAuley, 5 November 1953. Box 6, McAuley papers.

read it several times to small, appreciative gatherings.[80] It recalls how Abrams, mindful of John Stewart Mill, described "the [romantic] poet's audience [as] reduced to a single member, himself."[81] Arguably, McAuley's long poem might be merely an overheard and rather lonely soliloquy.

Geoffrey Dutton[82] quipped that the first, polemic voice of the poem conveys the *persona* of a Swiftian Gulliver complaining in the stables to his noble horses about those despicable Yahoos, his fellow men – a comparison McAuley, an admirer of Swift, would have understood. In terms of Hamburger's study of twentieth-century poetic symbolism and the mask,[83] McAuley's imagined monologue with the long-time dead, but longed-for Dryden, is arguably one of a series of "chameleon-like" transformations in the poet's dramatic repertoire. The subject of "A Letter" had "Tradition [in the form of a Dryden-like *interlocuteur*,] as his alibi […]," as Hamburger observed about Yeats (82). In his shift from earlier modernist forms, McAuley appeared to be pursuing a Romantic or late-Symbolist invention of successive "fluid identities," "a succession of *personae"* (Hamburger 50) in his construction of a poetic universe. Joan Fraser (aka Amy Witting), commented on McAuley's "neurotic […] conviction that one could invent oneself, create a *persona* without limit."[84] While referring to his 1943/44 Ern Malley experiment and her own understanding of McAuley's character from university days, the pattern would continue. McAuley's polemic critique through "Dryden" of secularism and positivism represents a colourful, enfleshed precursor of burgeoning contemporary commentary on emerging spirituality in Australia from the mid-1990s.[85] McAuley's views also gain flesh in the rebellious Prometheus and the irascible Philoctetes.

5.10 <u>The Metaphysical Gap</u>

That spiritual dimension is explored overtly in the second, "lyric" voice of the poem (Rowe, 1984 46), which appears and dominates from *CP,* 94, but can also be linked to certain earlier passages, dealing with the common, anonymous "disinherited, defrauded" (*CP,* 88) rather

---

[80] This included private readings in Sydney to gatherings of the Poetry Society of Australia. (Writer's conversation with Peter Coleman, July 2014).
[81] M.H. Abrams. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, 25.
[82] Geoffrey Dutton. "The Classical Pose." *Australian Letters*, 2,3, 1959, 51.
[83] Hamburger. *The Truth of Poetry.*
[84] Heyward. Interview with Joan Levick/Fraser, 11/9/1989. Heyward Papers, SLV.
[85] See David Tacey. *Edge of the Sacred: Jung, Psyche, Earth.* 1995, Daimon Verlag, 2009. Also the collection of essays in *Sacred Australia: Post-secular Considerations*, ed., Makarand R. Paranjape, Aditya Prakashan, 2010.

than historical man. It is the more personal, lyric pleading for man to follow a more human and spiritual way,[86] the reason of the heart. In that second voice, the poet registers the hiatus, which Chris Wallace-Crabbe called the "absence of metaphysics"[87] in Australian writing. Bill Ashcroft also observes how, until the 1990s, mention of the metaphysical in Australia was regarded as "intellectual bad taste."[88]

The polemic voice in "A Letter to John Dryden" usually attracts more attention than the quieter, more transformed lyric voice also seen in the religio-lyric poems written after 1952.[89] Although initially positive, A.D. Hope wrote later that he considered the poem a "decline in taste and judgement."[90] The authorial *persona* of "Dryden," a thinly disguised McAuley, was provocative and not well-received, notwithstanding the spiritual questing. Satire would not be considered one of McAuley's strengths.[91] McAuley recognised that in his use of the epistolary form in "Dryden," as well as in many poems collected in *A Vision of Ceremony (VC)* (1956), he was "going away from the main line of taste of the time" (De Berg 11,348) but insisted on this approach as a necessary deviation from contemporary avant-garde trends in his divergent experiment in traditional form:

> These things were consciously different in spirit. This is what I had to do. I had to explore the possibilities of doing things of this sort. I wasn't fully satisfied myself. [...] All I knew was that I had to go through this, I had to work my way through the exploration of traditional resources and the kind of poems that I could make out of those sources, and as a vehicle for developing, explicating my own mind. (De Berg 11,348)

Sensitive, nonetheless, to being labelled as "simple-minded, dogmatic and declamatory" he was grateful for critic R.F. Brissenden's refutation of that notion and for the recognition of the "great deal of inner division and doubt and anguish" within the poems of this period (De Berg 11,350). This admission of complexity reflects the probability that McAuley's spiritual quest did not end with his conversion to Catholicism in 1952.

In the next decade McAuley would leave his experiment in the seventeenth and eighteenth-century poetic tradition behind. Hope recalled McAuley saying: "he could no longer "feel" the Augustans and that they had taken poetry on an arid course."[92] Three years later he would admit: "The so-called more classical *formulae* of the eighteenth century

---

[86] From the 1950's McAuley wrote hymns with musician and broadcaster Richard Connolly, published in *We Offer the Mass: An English Mass Book*, E. J. Dwyer, 1965.
[87] Chris Wallace-Crabbe. *Three Absences in Australian Writing.* 1983*,* 15.
[88] Bill Ashcroft. "The Sacred in Australian Culture." 2010, 21.
[89] Cf. 6.3 (144).
[90] Ann McCulloch. *Dance of the Nomad.* 124.
[91] Vincent Buckley. Letter to McAuley, 21 /2/1953. Box 6, McAuley papers.
[92] McCulloch. 123.

represents too great a narrowing of the spiritual resources on which it is necessary to draw."[93] However, it was the stimulus for a necessary phase of growth and self-definition. Such dynamic is corroborated in A.D. Hope's comment that he had paid little attention to McAuley's Dryden poem "because all his life Jim had been subject to 'conversions' to various systems of ideas and before he could work his way through and out the other side, he would be filled with reforming zeal."[94]

This comment underlines the accelerated nature of change where during seven years McAuley had experimented as policy advisor, anthropologist, political scientist, teacher, art expert, cultural philosopher, Neo-Thomist, Catholic, essayist, lyric poet (again) and satirist. Nonetheless, "A Letter to John Dryden," for all its flaws, reflects McAuley's view that the poet had a role in society, though he would never become Yeats' "smiling public man."[95] The argumentative but questing long poem was a culmination of his theoretical and formal interests of the past seven years and its underlying dialectic impetus. McAuley also told Hope of his view that "his poetry, however, 'pure' it might seem, was a product of his engagement in practical affairs […]"[96] recalling what Booth identified in quest literature as the strong link between author and writer.[97] This reflected the argument McAuley had used in rejecting surrealism, reinforced by the Traditionalist philosophers in the mid-1940s, the importance of the functioning of the whole man,[98] this time as a being that was active and practical, intellectual and contemplative, including in aesthetic or social questions. This ongoing quest for a harmonising of competing elements, would continue as a main theme in McAuley's work.

---

[93] McAuley. "The Magian Heresy." *EM*, 159.
[94] McCulloch. 124.
[95] W.B. Yeats. "Among School Children." 1928.
[96] McCulloch. 125.
[97] Booth. 284-300.
[98] Marco Pallis. 32.

6

The Poetry of Christendom (1951-1956)

6.1 The New Christian Poet

Peter Coleman describes the changes in the Christian poet's life in 1950s Sydney: "He played the organ in the Mass at the School of Arts Hall at North Ryde, wrote hymns, read the *Revue Biblique*, attended Parish meetings, recommended books to those who wanted a reading list" (1980 46). Some of those were friends and poets Donovan Clarke, Dorothy Auchterlonie, and even A.D. Hope. Harold Stewart complained to Hope: "Blast McAuley for a meddling chauvinistic Jesuitical Popish pomposity! *Why doesn't he save his own soul first*?"[1] Several Australian poets would convert to Catholicism but McAuley's was the most notable conversion.[2] Perhaps replacing the Buddhist-inspired Stewart, though not the ever-reliable Alec Hope, McAuley's new literary *interlocuteur*, would be the Melbourne Catholic poet and academic Vincent Buckley. McAuley knew he was going against "the main line of taste of the time" (De Berg 11, 348): an important question is how McAuley's new-found status as a practising Catholic affected his evolving poetics.

6. 2 A (Christian) Art of Poetry

McAuley's premise for the artistic life had been initially stated in 1952 in "Tradition, Society and the Arts," how "Artistic beauty" [goes hand in hand] with use and meaning" with the artist as "a whole man [whose] art is not divorced from his interests as a man." (*EM*, 5) McAuley's insistent questioning is evident in his poem on the poetic process "An Art of Poetry" (June 1952), dedicated to Vincent Buckley, soon after McAuley's conversion. It is an intimate, confessional poem, conveying the sense that Buckley was probably one of the few among contemporary literary circles who might be able to understand McAuley's aesthetic dilemma as a Christian poet. It is arguably the experimental short epistle rehearsing the longer Christian poem "A Letter to John Dryden." "An Art of Poetry" *(CP*, 70) asks questions about being both a Catholic and a poet, and serves as a private manifesto on poetic form and intellectual approach.[3] It further elaborates McAuley's critique of "the twitchings"[4]

[1] Harold Stewart. Letter to A.D. Hope, c 1955. A.D. Hope Papers.
[2] Bruce Dawe (1954) and Les Murray (1964) converted to Catholicism. Francis Webb and Vincent Buckley were raised as Catholics.
[3] The increasingly classically turned McAuley may also have been echoing Aristotle's phrase and expatiations on "the art of poetry," *Poetics*, 12.2.
[4] McAuley. "Notes and Speculations." *EM*, 172.

he identified in contemporary late modernist poetry against which he and Harold Stewart launched their Ern Malley "experiment" nine years earlier (1943-44):

Since all our keys are lost or broken,
Shall it be thought absurd
If for an art of words I turn
Discreetly to the Word? (*CP*, 70)

The first line reflects the despair of the newly Christian poet at living in what Eric Heller described as the age of the "disinherited mind,"[5] one lacking common cultural and religious values. The loss of keys metaphor reflects a mix of Western and fourth-world despair and possibly derives from a citation in McAuley's essay "My New Guinea" (1961) of ASOPA colleague Hal Wootten's recorded conversation, with a New Guinea village cult leader: "If the white-man would only open his hand, we would be brothers. But he keeps it tightly shut. He has locked all his knowledge in a box, and where are we to find the key?" (*JM* 25)

The daring question in McAuley's confessional poem, albeit to his Catholic familiar Buckley, is the proposition for finding an art of poetry, a poetics, in the teaching of Christ, indicated by "the Word." While "the Word" (translated from the Greek "Logos") might have multiple meanings – philosophical, scientific and rhetorical, McAuley's allusion refers unequivocally to the New Testament Gospel of John 1.1: "In the beginning was the Word" and John 1.8: "And the Word was made flesh."[6] These puzzling, much interpreted words, are widely accepted as indicating Christ (representing the Word of God) descending to earth to become human. Thus, the admittedly private poem establishes in its first stanza the acceptance of a special vocabulary imbued with Christian values, references and symbolism. Lucy O'Connell underlines the importance of a liturgical understanding in an enhanced reading of McAuley's religious poetry.[7] "An Art of Poetry" is a Christian poem from its inception, which continues in its further questions to Buckley.

The form of simple quatrain, alternating lines of tetrameter and trimeter often used in hymns, establishes a lyrical, prayerful and invocative plea in its speaker's question to his Christian *interlocuteur*, but as in several of McAuley's Christian poems also mixes the lyrical with the discursive, reflecting a typically questioning rather than entirely serene or confident approach to matters of the spirit:

Drawn inward by his love, we trace
Art to its secret springs:
What, are we masters in Israel
And do not know these things? (*CP,* 70)

[5] McAuley. "The Background of Modern Literature." *EM,* 30.
[6] Biblical citations are from the King James translation, 1611.
[7] Lucy O'Connell. "The Liturgy in James McAuley's Poetry." *Quadrant*, 47.1-2, 2003, 91.

The subject appears to argue that the new form of their art might be found in the "secret springs" of traditional Christian teaching. Important in this were the parables of the Gospels which Christ urged his disciples to use for their symbolic power in teaching "the Word." McAuley had told his spiritually curious friend, poet Donovan Clarke, about the need to "wholeheartedly accept the miracles in the Gospels and their link to Christian truth."[8]

> Lord Christ from out his treasury
> Brings forth things new and old:
> We have those treasures in earthern vessels
> In *parables*[9] he told, (*CP,* 70)

The stanza works well at first literal reading, notably its musicality, in alluding to the rich treasure of teachings of Christ through his parables. Yet the poetic text is loaded with additional meaning, the symbolic language familiar at different levels even to those only vaguely-schooled in the parables, but certainly Buckley. The parable in Matthew 13: 52 is re-iterated in this stanza: "Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which *bringeth forth out of his treasure, things new and old*."[10] The third and fourth lines of this stanza, offer a variation on the Biblical motif of "treasures" associated with the Middle-eastern terracotta pot. This second reference restates a related scriptural text using the symbol "treasure" for Christ's teaching to the disciples: "We have this treasure in earthern vessels, that the excellency of the power will be of God and not from ourselves" (Corinthians 4:7). In this case the motif of "earthern vessels," read with its subsequent text, underlines the necessary humility of the teacher (or poet), speaking of "treasure […] of God not from themselves" in case the grandeur of their message lead to pride and self-importance or in poetic terms, inflation or attention-seeking obscurity. To the initiate addressee, (or ideal reader) Buckley, (the author will have hoped) the deeper Biblical sub-text would foreshadow the poet-subject's subsequent arguments about the necessary escape from personality in his proposed new poetics.

The following stanzas proceed more literally, though also allude to the instructive and symbolic power of the parables:

> And in the single images
> Of seed, and fish, and stone,
> Or, shaped in deed and miracle,
> To living poems grown. (*CP,*70)

[8] McAuley. Letter to Donovan Clarke, 4 June 1952. Donovan Clarke Papers.
[9] Writer's italics.
[10] Writer's italics.

These images have Biblical resonance: the seed from the parables of the mustard seed (Matthew 13: 31-32) and the sower (Matthew 13: 1-23), the fish recalling the draught of fishes (Luke 5. 1-10) the loaves and the fishes (Matthew 14: 14-22) and the stone, punishment by stoning (John 8: 7). Therefore, "shaped in deed and miracle," and matching those elements in McAuley's own New Guinea-inspired conversion, "living poems" might grow from the treasury of common imagery and symbols found in the Bible and more widely. The parables that offered the way for the Church to talk to ordinary man (in "words which were no longer mine," "Invocation" *CP*, 63), foreshadow the universal poetic language to which McAuley seemed to be aspiring. While these first four stanzas elaborate the ideal, the model both for a universal poetic language and perspective, the succeeding fifth stanza shifts tone from probing question to a strict imperative, in its prohibition of unsuitable approaches for the aspiring poet, spiritual or otherwise.

> Scorn then to darken and contract
> The landscape of the heart
> By individual, arbitrary
> And self-expressive art. (*CP,* 70)

The implied author's proscription of the arbitrary (showing McAuley's predisposition to statement) as the basis for art recalls the rejection of the random in the Ern Malley parody and statement.[11] His proscription of the individual and the self-expressive, sees him re-affirming, if through his own individual, ecclesiastically-inspired route of discovery, one of the main precepts of modernism, outlined by T.S. Eliot in his aphorism prescribing de-personalisation: "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality but the escape from personality."[12] Vivian Smith identified in McAuley's other lyrics of this period a "consistent attempt to escape from personality and emotion in Eliot's sense."(1970 20) Again in the 1950s McAuley begs comparison with Eliot, this time because of McAuley's turn towards a traditional religion-centred way of life, his emerging role as literary critic and increasingly literary theorist.[13]

From this point the subject continues with a litany of subjunctives invoking the preferred manner and forms of poetical utterance:

> Let your speech be ordered
> By an intellectual love;
> Elucidate the carnal maze
> With clear light from above. (*CP, 70*)

[11] Cf 3.3 (64-65).
[12] T.S. Eliot. "Tradition and the Individual Talent." 10.
[13] McAuley considered Eliot, with Paul Claudel, one of the most important writers on the contemporary condition. "The Perennial Poetry," *EM*, 140.

Vivian Smith saw in these words "an attainment of the great basic metaphysical truth of poetry that it is celebration," (1970 21) that is important in McAuley's poetry. An invocative mood lends an uplifting but nonetheless firm instructiveness in a poem about poetic process.

> Let your literal figures shine
> With pure transparency:
> Not in opaque but limpid wells
> Lie truth and mystery. (*CP,* 71)

Once more, a prescription for lucidity (light, limpid wells) and space (air) as the natural environment for the flourishing of the intellect and its emblematic imagery is set up in binary opposition to "Dionysiac" images of confusion (the carnal maze) and darkness (the opaque) drawn from "pseudo-inspiration."[14]

The speaker continues with similar logic to argue the merits of a universal meaning in the simple (for example in language):

> And universal meanings spring
> From what the proud pass by:
> Only the simplest forms can hold
> A vast complexity. (*CP, 71)*

As if in Biblical exegesis, "An Art of Poetry" proclaims, epigrammatically, that universal meanings may be by-passed by the literarily "proud" (with the parable of the Samaritan, suggesting that the "proud" might be contemporary critical searchers for complexity, ambiguity and irony). The stanza pronounces in favour of a poetics of simplicity and a language of universality in its confident if paradoxical even oxymoronic aphorism: "Only the simplest forms can hold / a vast complexity." These words also echo McAuley's earlier reading of St Augustine and Plato recalled in the poet's 1951 essay "Beauty, Use and Meaning" in which he describes how both scholars complained about anti-traditional art, against the "degradation of rhetoric" into *sophistic*, the art of verbal gratification and display."[15]

McAuley's private text to Buckley proposes both a way of life and a way of art, with Christ outlining the paradoxical way, as described in the Gospels, to what the neo-Thomist ecclesiastical philosophers had described as the "real," an increasingly important trope in McAuley's poetics:

> We know, where Christ has set his hand
> Only the real remains:

[14] Smith sees as "Dionysiac" poetry which "emphasises the dark chaotic sides of man's nature" to which McAuley was increasingly opposed. (1970, 21).
[15] McAuley. "Beauty, Use and Meaning." *EM*, 73.

I am impatient for that loss[16]
By which the spirit gains. (*CP,* 71)

In the poet's continuing quest to define the correct form and manner of a new poetics capable of seeking after the "real" the poem increasingly assumes a style of authoritative, intellectually rigorous if often elliptical statement by epigram or even aphorism (figurative forms which Frye has described as being linked to prose).[17] It mixes simple universal language and authoritative statement with contrastingly rich oxymorons. This pattern so characteristic in McAuley's lyric forms, derived from hymn and ode, is at odds with the modernist rejection of definite statement. For a text prescribing impersonality, it displays a curiously strong personal voice, what Vivian Smith described as "a poetry of personal conviction." (1970 23) This underlines the inherent paradox surrounding the anti-modernist and yet modernist McAuley. The poem's question-cum-argument for universalist art would be answered in McAuley's parallel prose argument in favour of the universalist poetic tradition drawing on Claudel's neo-Thomist *poesis perennis*.

6.3 *A Vision of Ceremony* (1956)

After his conversion in 1951-52, McAuley wrote a number of lyric or elegiac poems and three longer narrative and discursive poems. Some were published in mainstream publications and several in the Melbourne-based Jesuit journals *Twentieth Century* and *Direction* (for which Buckley was poetry editor). Most were included in his second collection of poems *A Vision of Ceremony (VC,* 1956), dedicated to the charismatic deceased Mother Superior Marie-Thérèse Noblet.

Many lyrics are inspired by nature, notably from New Guinea. McAuley translated two German-language poets he admired: "Winter Nightfall," from a poem by Georg Trakl, the expressionist Austrian McAuley first encountered at this time (1956), and the important "swan" poem, "The Middle of Life," from Hölderlin's ekphrastic landscape lyric "Hälfte des Lebens." Other lyrics are associated with Christian themes and content, in which Morphett identifies a "nature-lyric-religious fusion" (10), as seen in "To the Holy Spirit" (a celebration of the New Guinea bird of paradise with its companion poem "To a Dead Bird of Paradise"), the earlier portrait "Jesus" (1942-1954)[18] and "In a Late Hour" (1956), a seeming pledge to a

[16] The paradoxical "loss by which the spirit gains" reflects Luke 17:33: "Whosoever shall seek to save his soul shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it".
[17] Frye. *An Anatomy of Criticism*. 1990, 297-298.
[18] McAuley told Harold Stewart "Jesus" was "too Rilkean." Cf. 3.13 (80).

contemporary Christ threatened by modernity. A secular lyric "Canticle" draws upon the Christian liturgical song form for its celebration of love through nature. Four of McAuley's poems deal directly with his conversion experience, but only one, the narrative "A Celebration of Divine Love," would be included in his later *Collected Poems:1936-1970* (1971).

McAuley's question to Vincent Buckley about the basis for a Christian poetry is answered in his essay "The Perennial Poetry" (1953) in which McAuley expresses his adherence to the aesthetic approach of the French late-romantic, Catholic poet Paul Claudel (1868-1955). Claudel's "perennial poetry" was an extension of the traditional "perennial philosophy" advocated by St Thomas Aquinas:

> It is the main tradition. […] it does not break down into mere fashion and mannerism. Its themes and images are in a high degree universal, because they are found in reality rather than ingeniously contrived. […] It knows the art of combining intellectual vigour of conception with the ability to speak home to the unlearned. […] Its practitioners have tended to recognize Virgil[19] as their patron: master of the sophisticated rhetoric of his time, labyrinthine artificer, yet everywhere great, simple and humane."[20]

In "The Perennial Poetry" McAuley argues that the perennial tradition of metaphysics, drawing on Traditionalist and neo-Thomist devotion to the "real" and the "whole" is distinguished by its "submission to reality" unlike the "individual deviant 'systems' […] of opposing sceptical schools [who tended] to disintegrate reality […] truncating [man] with the cleaver of dogmatic rationalism, naturalism or positivism." (*EM*, 136) McAuley calls it the "natural poetry of the human mind." (*EM*, 136.)

6.4 "Black Swans" – A Christian lyricism

Another guide for McAuley's Christian lyricism is found in the Latin epigraph for the first section of *VC,* from a hymn by the fourth-century Roman Christian ecclesiastic, theologian and musician St Ambrose:[21] "*Laeti bibamos sobriam / Ebrietatem spiritus* ("Let us drink with joy / The sober drunkenness of the spirit."). McAuley judged the Latin hymns of Ambrose and the twelfth-century Adam of St Victor to be at the apex of the "pyramid" describing the relation between sacred and profane art, and as notable for the "austere simple strength, the

[19] In advocating a simplicity associated with Virgil, McAuley anticipates his later statement on poetic aesthetics, in "The Magian Heresy" (1957).
[20] McAuley. "The Perennial Poetry." *EM*, 137.
[21] McAuley encountered the hymn-writer Ambrose in reading about St Augustine and medieval rhetoric in late 1949, notably in C. S. Baldwin's *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic*, 1928. (Notebook 1, 28 December 1949, Box 1, McAuley Papers, 64.)

impersonality, the narrow range of subject and imagery."[22] He described Ambrose as revolutionary, in taking up the "broken and decayed resources of pagan rhetoric and offering […] to God […] the poetry of Christendom" (*EM*, 21). This epigraph from Ambrose applied to the section titled "Black Swans," comprising 23, mainly short lyrics.

The mood of calm, transcendent exaltation evident in many of McAuley's latest hymn-like lyrics follows Ambrose's prescription for "sober drunkenness." In contrast with the dense modernist texture of "The Incarnation of Sirius," and the sardonic tone of the explorer narratives, there is a shift to simple forms, lucidity, musicality and a choice of universal language and concepts. With its distinct New Guinea colouring, the short lyrical ode "To a Dead Bird of Paradise" (1952), had been prompted by the gift of two dead, birds of paradise, an elusive, beautiful species coveted by collectors, which the ecologically-sensitive bird watcher saw as an act of desecration:

> Ah, fabulous fancy,
> Now cold and forlorn.
> Go dwell with the phoenix
> And unicorn. (*CP*, 67)

Composed of six short quatrains, using what would become characteristic musical trochees to vary the basic iambic trimeter, the lucidly argued lyric is marked by invocative, slightly archaic rhetoric, recalling the decadent poets. It offers a colourful description, in alternating, occasionally half-rhyme (abcb), of the bird of paradise, transformed through what McAuley would call the Christian poet's work of the "hallowing of creatures."[23] The poem questions Western man's moral relation to the cosmos, signalling disturbances brought to the pristine world of mid-twentieth-century New Guinea. A lyrical celebration of the rare bird, the poem is also, poignantly, an elegy[24] for a natural and social order endangered by modernity: "Your opaline plumage, / Deep-burning jewel, / Falls prey to the hand that is / Cunning and cruel […] (*CP, 67*). The realist subject recognizes that the bird of paradise, cannot be like the fabled phoenix, living through "myriad lives" in which "Love burns its ecstatic /And redolent pyre." (*CP*, 67).

Another example of the poet's "hallowing" work is McAuley's more understated ode to nature, "Palm" (1953). Drawing on sketches ("palm – a candle," "windmill with shuttered sails") from his New Guinea notebooks, "Palm" is an observant apostrophe to the tropical tree:

[22] McAuley. "Tradition, Society and the Arts." *EM*, 18.
[23] McAuley. "Notes and Speculations." *EM*, 168.
[24] Northrop Frye describes elegy as a special panegyric form of the lyric genre. 296.

> Earth, air, water, light,
> Are one within your slender grace,
> Formed by Wisdom to requite
> The labours of a shadowed race. (*CP*, 71),

The suggested banishment of a "shadowed race" from the prelapsarian garden reflects both post-Christian and post-colonial perspectives. "Palm" describes the tree in its social role, situated as if by divine providence ("Wisdom") for the benefit of the local people, threatened by modernity. The serene indicative mood establishes a meditative calm, enacting through the tree's "sacral column" a special relation between man and the universe: "pure / Presence to the inward eye, / There rests for an entablature / The invisible order of the sky" (*CP,* 71). While suggesting a celebratory "canticle to the vast order, tranquility, and purposefulness of nature." (Smith, 1970 19) "Palm" represents ambivalence, less the secure natural realm of inward meditation than a real world of ever-present threats. "Formed by Wisdom," the palm resounds with Eden's tree of knowledge:

> Though in our verdant crown may lurk
> The crab, the viper, and the rat,
> Through you the spirit-watchers work
> Their visible magnificat. (*CP,* 71)

The juxtaposition of those real threats – the crab, viper and rat – with the more abstract, Christian but also pagan, "spirit-watchers" singing "their magnificat," builds a crescendo, a powerful tension, underlying the struggle between good and evil forces within the tree itself. More than the energetic bird of paradise poems, "Palm" establishes the sober hymn-like, celebration advocated in Ambrose's epigraph. Nonetheless, both natural entities – bird of paradise and palm – participate in what the subject projects as a transcendent cosmic dance, the natural subject of perennial poetry.[25] The bird in its gorgeous plumage, and the palm in its steady, resistant, earthed role, as provider of essential food, are not only of creatures of beauty but also of use and meaning: "[…] You serve the race's humble need / For food and craft and festival." (*CP,* 72) The meditation on the palm fulfils another stricture in McAuley's revised statement of values for life and the poetic process: "Beauty […] is rather a normal result of things being well and truly made so as to embody meanings and serve economic, ceremonial and ritual contemplative purposes."[26]

The swan inspires another pair of bird poems (c.1954), in the same meditative, indicative mood of "Palm." The Australian black swans were probably observed in the

---

[25] McAuley. "The Perennial Poetry." *EM*, 136.
[26] McAuley. "Beauty, Use and Meaning." *EM*, 73.

Melbourne Botanical Gardens visited when McAuley lived in Melbourne (1943-1945). "Mating Swans" (c.1951) uses regular rhyming iambic tetrameters (abab) in longer 12-line stanzas to describe swans in their natural habitat in the act of mating: it portrays their graceful, sinuous forms:

> A pair of black swans on the lake
> Twine their necks in amorous play.
> The cob turns in a swirling wake,
> Treading the maze of love's delay […] (*CP*, 64)

"Tune for Swans," (*CP*, 65) with two stanzas of eight short, dimeter lines in alternating rhyme (abcb), and its elemental natural motifs, after describing its ambivalent natural habitat, voices a warning "[] While you are far / The grey rat has come / Destroying despoiling: / Turn again home." (*CP,* 64), which is repeated in refrain, echoing perhaps the nursery-rhyme warning "Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home" which McAuley, a father of young children, may have recited.

Both sets of bird poems are allegories about love, familial, sexual and divine as an integral part of a divinely-dispensed cosmic order in which evil is present. Important in Western and Eastern symbolism, the swan, the bird that flies at night and famous for fidelity, is often seen as a link between the natural and the divine. Cirlot describes the swan as an ambivalent symbol, dedicated to Apollo as the god of music, because of the myth that it would sing sweetly on the point of death, but also cites other readings, including self-sacrifice and the mystic journey over waters by night to the other world. (322) The second stanza of "Tune for Swans," "Black swan dipping / Your neck to feed" (*CP*, 66) suggests communion with other dimly known realms. The lines directly echo those by the German Romantic poet Hölderlin whose hymn McAuley translated at this time as the poem "The Middle of Life" (c.1954):

> O lovely swans
> To drunkenness kissed
> You dip your heads
> In sober hallowed water. (*CP*, 83)

In his essay "Notes and Speculations" (c. 1956) written when organising his collection *VC* including the epigraph for "Black Swans," McAuley links with Ambrose the swan of Hölderlin's poem ("to drunkenness kissed"): "as an Ambrosian hymn says:[…] One is reminded of Hölderlin's image of tranquil swans dipping their beaks in 'sober hallowed

water.'"[27] McAuley thus further explains Ambrose's prescription of an enhanced tranquility for the creative process:

> The idea of inspiration is also indispensable to the description of the poetic process. It is not a question of a mantic state or state of possession […] the poem is composed with the ordinary powers of consciousness, yet there is a strange heightening and enabling of these powers. It is a state of sober drunkenness, to use the technical term used by Philo and the Church Fathers for mystical contemplation […] (*EM,* 161).

McAuley directly borrows Ambrose's oxymoronic "sober drunkenness," for his important short poem on the poetic process "To Any Poet" (1952-54), a companion to "An Art of Poetry," in which the subject, an apparent tutor-poet, advocates to all poets, a combination of fulsomeness ("Living is thirst for joy") with a restraining sobriety, underlined in its crisp trimeter quatrains:

> Living is thirst for joy;
> That is what art rehearses.
> Let sober drunkenness give
> Its splendour to your verses. (*CP*, 85)

The swan symbolism linking Ambrose and Hölderlin is thus central to the poet's concluding aphorism concerning controlled but transcendent poetic practice:

> Move like the sable swan
> On the luminous expanse:
> In sight but out of range
> Of barking ignorance. (*CP*, 85)

Alliteration ("sable swan") and the sibillance of the first three lines also suggest the effortless poetic effect desired in contrast to the harsh consonants of "barking ignorance." Such ideas rework and embellish McAuley's evolving, but consistent poetics set out one decade previously in the Ern Malley Statement, criticising the turbulent, opaque constructions of late Australian poetic modernism[28] and developed in his essays on aesthetics from 1951 to 1956.

The serene, naturalistic black swans of *VC* are remote from the oblique "black swans of trespass" of Ern Malley's "Durer [sic] Innsbruck, 1495" (c.1940-1943). Significantly, McAuley chose the swan as the symbol for the entire *VC* collection. Important throughout his work both for natural and symbolic reasons, the swan was, in *VC,* linked to themes of spiritual transcendence, both Christian and universal, which McAuley wished to convey as a Christian poet. In this he may have been influenced by Yeats' use of the classical motif:

[27] McAuley. "Notes and Speculations." *EM*, 161.
[28] Cf. 3.3 (64-65).

> Yeats was telling us that the Western cycle is nearly over and that a new Classical one, with Leda and the swan taking the place of the dove and the virgin seen in his poem "Leda and the Swan" is about to begin […] (Frye, 1990 62)

What Frye said about the older Irish poet could not, however, be said of McAuley. The fading Western Christian era, with its symbolism of dove and virgin was exactly what McAuley wanted: "Today so much of the literature that counts is masked, or openly, an unconsecrated mythopoeia in substitution for the Christian mysteries."[29] While many of McAuley's poems of this period, notably those celebrating the natural world (the black swans), are not overtly Christian in theme, they are nonetheless imbued with a quality hinting of transcendence or transfiguration (Morphett 10):

> The visible world undergoes naturally a transfiguration within the poet, becoming "the collected treasure of the heart" [citing Dürer], and coming forth in new sounds and images. So in a higher but analogous manner all things are taken up or recapitulated in the Whole Christ, to become manifest at the end of time as a new creation.[30]

This reflects another use of Dürer's transformative symbol "treasure," for its artistic rather than strictly Christian connotation. McAuley explains the Christian poetics, as offering a hallowing:

> In this way the poet has a role in the instauration or recapitulation or transfiguration of the cosmos […] there is taking place in an unseen way the *opus Christi*: namely, the hallowing of creatures, the redintegration of a damaged reality. (*EM,* 168)

Such a "hallowed" aura surrounds many meditative nature poems of this period, a quality which would persist through his work. Vincent Buckley concurred: "McAuley has found a new use for poetry – a use of which he had scarcely been aware previously. Poetry may now be used to praise." (1957 186) One of the most deft, imagist examples of this new poetics of celebration is what the now-Buddhist translator of Haiku poetry but increasingly hostile, Harold Stewart, described in rare praise as McAuley's "miniature"[31]— "Late Winter" (c. March 1954):

> The pallid cuckoo
> Sent up in frail
> Microtones
> His tiny scale
>
> On the cold air.
> What joy I found

[29] McAuley. Notebook 7, 4 March 1962, Box 1.
[30] McAuley. "Notes and Speculations." *EM*, 167. McAuley probably cited Dürer's words "collected treasure of the heart" from Richard Ford Heath's *Albrecht Dürer* (1894) which he read in the 1940s. Cf 11.9 (311-312).
[31] Stewart. Letter to McAuley, 9 May (1954?). Box 7, McAuley papers.

Mounting that tiny
Stair of sound. (*CP*, 84)

A delicate sense of sound (and music) rising is almost visibly built, synaesthetically, by the spare, alternately rhyming quatrains in short dimeter. Otherwise, Stewart had few positive words for McAuley's latest poetic productions in *VC*. Buckley preferred another, denser minimalist poem, "Nativity" (c.1954) of two quatrains, in alternating iambic pentameters and tetrameters, again in meditative indicative mood:

The thin distraction of a spider's web
Collects the clear cold drops of night.
Seeds falling on the water spread
A rippling target for the light.

The rumour on the ear now murmurs less,
The snail draws in its tender horn,
The heart becomes a bare attentiveness,
And in that bareness light is born. *(CP,* 69)

Another seeming allegory on the *ars poetica*, "Nativity," proceeds from the observation of visuals in nature in the first stanza, to the most passive acts in the second stanza, in metonymic representations – of listening (the ear), sensation (the snail), and quietist attentiveness (the heart) suggesting a meditative state essential for poetic creativity and productivity. McAuley elaborates further in his 1953 essay, drawing again on ecclesiastical precepts for his aesthetic ideas: "By tranquility may be understood what St. Thomas [Aquinas] called 'the leisure that goes with contemplation'" (Proverbs viii, 30-31), not an inert state but an active receptivity."[32] This is arguably the positive aesthetic counterpart of the manifesto against opaqueness and confusion in literary composition set out in McAuley's early *ars poetica* in his Ern Malley phase: "So poetry that moves by chance collision / Scatters its brightness by each random mote / And mars the lucid order of its vision [...]." ("Marginal Note" c. 1944-45, *CP*, 38).[33]

6.5 The Christian Narratives

McAuley explored Christian themes in several long and shorter narrative poems following conversion, in his own "poetry of Christendom," an effort to revive neglected traditional poetic forms against the contemporary tendency towards: "a standard non-descript all-

[32] McAuley. "The Perennial Poetry." *EM*, 132-133.
[33] Cf.3.14 (81-2).

purpose 'short poem.'"[34] Amongst other exercises he advocated the writing of "a moving and significant narrative" (*EM*, 173).

Smith considered "New Guinea" a discursive poem, at least in its second half (1970 25). It begins as a lyrical elegy to Archbishop Alain de Boismenu, instrumental in McAuley's conversion. Invoking the explorer-epithet – "bird-shaped island," it is also a hymn to the New Guinea terrain in which the Sacred Heart Mission was situated:

> Bird-shaped island, with secretive bird-voices,
> Land of apocalypse, where the earth dances,
> The mountains speak, the doors of the spirit open,
> And men are shaken by obscure trances.
> ("New Guinea," *CP*, 80)

The concrete, richly figurative, language constructs a spirit of place, of surprising instability, in which the earth dances, inanimate mountains speak, and men are shaken in trance. It evokes concrete, sensual impressions and comparisons: "The forest odours, insects, clouds and fountains / Are like the figures of my inmost dream" (*CP,* 80), recalling the dreamscape of "remote disorder" in "Envoi" (1938) in which "the brown sheep poke at my dreams along the hillsides" (*CP*, 6). In stanza two the use of two successive oxymorons, suggest the paradox, for the author, of the limitations of language in describing the land's strange, powerful influence. New Guinea situates the subject almost beyond the scope of speech: "Vibrant with untellable recognition: / A wordless revelation is their theme" (*CP*, 80). Elaborating on sensations of a physical disorientation of the stranger, this variation on the probably autobiographical wanderer figure, or Western other, the third stanza evokes a sense of the sublime, the romantic concept associated with untamed nature:

> The stranger is engulfed by those high valleys,
> Where mists of morning linger like the breath
> Of Wisdom moving on the specular darkness. (*CP,* 80)

The last two lines echo Genesis (1.2), in which the spirit moves across the dark waters. A sense of awe at presences, divine or primeval, evokes the landscape's powerful ambivalence: "Regions of prayer, of solitude, and of death […]," emphasised in the rhyming of "breath" with "death." Stanza four projects the authorial subject's admiration for ceremony in New Guinea's traditional society:

> Life holds its shape in the modes of dance and music,
> The hands of craftsmen trace its patternings;
> But stains of blood, and evil spirits, lurk
> Like cockroaches in the interstices of things. (*CP,* 80)

---

[34] McAuley. "Notes and Speculations." *EM*, 174.

Dance and music might be considered essential precursors of poetry. Destabilising possible sentimental imaginings, the stanza also introduces motifs of blood, evil spirits, in the "interstices of things," seemingly apocalyptic insects recalling paintings by Hieronymus Bosch. The fifth stanza shifts the subject's perspective from neutral third-person, indicative of what Smith noted (1970 25) as a discursive first-person plural. The authoritative speaker of the "we" is now one among a group of witnesses observing this "land of apocalypse." Arguably these new *personae* are the westerner, the missionary, the public servant, the administrator, modern man or author – all who visit this magnificent, mysterious land and its community. It reflects the poetic subject's apprehension of tragedy:

> We in that land begin our rule in courage,
> The seal of peace gives warrant to intrusion;
> But then our grin of emptiness breaks the skin,
> Formless dishonour spreads in proud confusion. (*CP, 80*)

It conveys the sense of loss in knowing how the West, with "its grin of emptiness," might help communities such as New Guinea, in which the traditional primitive borders precariously on the empirical west. The emptiness of the contemporary secular world would be addressed in McAuley's 1955 lecture "The Grinning Mirror." Robert Dixon describes McAuley's apprehension of modern New Guinea as an "Australian suburbia beheld like an unfamiliar self in the grinning mirror of colonialism." (2001 174)

With this recognition of impasse, the concluding two stanzas reflect the subject's most powerful tribute to De Boismenu, in depicting the hinterlands of New Guinea as a spiritual battleground, both McAuley's own and that of missionaries, including the Christian thaumaturge Alain de Boismenu, a place of saints and demons mirroring that of Christ in the first century:[35]

> Whence that deep longing for an exorcizer,
> For Christ descending as a thaumaturge
> Into his saints, as formerly in the desert,
> Warring with demons on the outer verge. (*CP*, 81)

Curiously, this figurative combination of Christian and pagan symbolism competing "on the outer verge," uncharacteristic in this calmer more lucid phase of McAuley's work, recalls the rich intensity of the admired apocalyptic poem "The Incarnation of Sirius," written ten years earlier. Arguably, Archbishop de Boismenu was the long-awaited thaumaturge and nemesis to "God's antagonist" the demonic, Miltonian heresiarch imagined in McAuley's earlier poem: "Anubis-headed, the heresiarch / Sprang to a height, fire-sinewed in the dark […] (*CP*, 24).

[35] Cf 5.6 (120-121).

Written the year he converted, the narrative "A Celebration of Divine Love" (1952), is a third-person testimony of the (presumably) poet's new journey as Christian poet, albeit disguised in a narrative of Christian doctrine and *topoi.* Beginning with a Blakean universal present-tense allegory of the Christian man evolving from innocent child ("An infant laughs beneath the cosmic tree," *CP*, 73) to exiled, graceless adult, it recites a progression of humanity. The infant naming "the creatures of his father's bower," with the "magic savour of the words," (*CP*, 73) foreshadows the naming-process that would engage the author. A telescoped replay unspools (authorial) past lives – of painful adolescence, the terrors of early manhood reflecting his earlier poems and literary influences in the loss of childhood's grace:

> Night-terrors come; the Eden colours fade;
> The joy that seemed a supernatural power
> Weakens and grows discouraged and afraid. (*CP*, 73)

Learning the "outer life of exile on the plain" (*CP*, 73) the impersonal child comes, like the narrator to feel "love's shattered law" which, as for mentor Christopher Brennan, will "drive him, marked with an inward flaw / To wander in the earth without vocation" (*CP*, 73-74). Like other castaways of the legendary "flood" (*CP*,74) the poem's child/exile/wanderer *persona* resurrects others from McAuley's past – the Rilkean urban exiles from McAuley's translation "Autumn" (1938) who have: "[…] no kin, and pass their days unknown, […] and wake alone […]" (*CP,* 74).

The second half moves to a closer present, thinly veiling the essayist McAuley's concerns about the contemporary "anti-metaphysical"[36] period and the loss of a traditional Christian culture, in which the exile-*persona* relives an Old Testament dismay: "Out of the bowed darkness a voice sings / 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem…'" […]" (*CP*, 74). From this point of recognition, or *denouement* the subject (closest, briefly, to an "I") apprehends: "Like an Annunciation a deep sense / Of natural order in the way of things / In star and seed and in the works of love." (*CP,* 74) The wanderer encounters old mysterious Christian symbols – Ark, Rainbow and Dove, (*CP*, 75) that retain subliminal power even for the most lapsed believers. The narrative arrives at its most Catholic set of *topoi* and symbols with the wanderer's vision of the Virgin Mary, with child, as if describing, ekphrastically, a Byzantine "living Temple," (*CP*, 75) which traditional crafts and Wisdom have polished, and where other capitalized and blessed abstracts ("Holy Poverty," "Joy" and "Love") assemble. Their ultimate focus within this living Temple is Christ at his tragic symbolic apotheosis:

> The figure on Eternity's gold ground
> Behold Christ reigning on the cosmic tree,
> His blood its sap, his breath its respiration […] (*CP,* 75)

[36] McAuley. "The Perennial Poetry." *EM*, 139.

Similar icons of western civilization would reappear in Quiros' death-bed vision in McAuley's modern epic. Until this point the poem is a fictionalised catalogue of seemingly archetypal past experience, which meditates about symbols and icons of a faith longed for but no longer shared. The poem's mood gains in power when it shifts from the distant narration of a script into a dramatic present tense, mixing Christian motifs and symbols in a landscape, blending New Guinea and the Jerusalem of the crucifixion:

> Now is the three hours' darkness of the soul,
> The time of earthquake; now at last
> The Word speaks, and the epileptic will
> Convulsing vomits forth its demons. […] (*CP,* 75)

These sudden lines echoing Christ's passion on the cross,[37] a Wordsworthian "spot in time," like McAuley's earlier vision of a silent, grey figure,[38] mark the surrender of a flat narrative mode "to the lyrical, mystical moment" Rowe saw in the last part of "A Letter to John Dryden" (2000 33). The poem's omniscient subject thus brings to life the poet's own experience in New Guinea, that land of earthquakes and demons, described in "New Guinea." Thus, the reader can imagine the distanced subject of this poem (the poet) envisaging the sanely spiritual man, or even Christ:

> […] Then
> Full-clothed, in his right mind, the man sits still,
> Conversing with aeons in the speech of men. (*CP*, 75)

These words, concerning, arguably, the teacher Christ, in Jerusalem, or his intermediary the retired missionary, Alain de Boismenu, also echo the poet-subject's petition to the Muse for desired impersonality and universality in poetic voice and language, in another poem of this period. The subject's invocatory words unfold in the poet's "lucid line" in "Invocation." (c. 1954):

> Teach me at once to speak aloud
> In words that are no longer mine;
> For at our touch, discreet, profound,
> Ten thousand words softly resound. (*CP*, 63)

These words reminded Vivian Smith of Paul Valéry's "La Pythie" "where the poet declares that the august and noble voice of Universal Wisdom: 'se connait quand elle sonne / N'être plus la voix de personne.'" (1970 20-21) McAuley's discourse with the Muse continues in classical allusiveness:

[37] Matthew 27: 45-51.
[38] Cf. 5.4 (118).

> I do not now revolt, or quarrel
> With the paths you make me tread,
> But choose the honeycomb and laurel
> And walk with patience towards the dead […] (*CP,* 63)

Buckley pointed to something lacking in the Muse's divergent pathway for McAuley:

> It is something in any age to walk with patience towards the dead; and it is something to have a lyrical poet say as much so beautifully. With more ambitious poetry, however, it seems to me of equal importance that one should walk in company with the rest of the living. (1957 188)

Buckley found the "loveliness" of the long poem "A Celebration of Divine Love:"

> […] too formalized and cold; it exhibits the paradox of a statement very generalised as to technique, but insufficiently general in grasp and application. […] This poetry seems to me inadequate to McAuley's fine intelligence and great lyrical grasp of the factual." (1957 188-189)

What Buckley identified was McAuley's greater skill as a lyricist, notwithstanding his aspirations for the narrative.

With the narrator concluding, in an overtly evangelical testimonial to the "gentle" audience we learn is waiting in the walled garden, there is a refreshing return to the present (the realm of the factual) in the garden's emblematically transient Autumn images. They foreshadow the poet's concrete poems inspired by his Tasmanian home in the next decade:

> Before the herons return
> Abide the sharp frosts and the time of pruning;
> For he shall come at last for whom you yearn
> ("A Celebration of Divine Love," *CP,* 76)

This merged motif of return, second coming and homecoming, introduces a Christian inflection of the personal wanderer figure in the prodigal: "who knows what wanderer may turn, / Responsive to that fragrant hidden pyre!" (*CP*, 76). The "prodigal" would surface again in the late poems as "trespasser" in "Private Devotions."[39]

6.6 The Search for an Adequate Symbolism

Several years later McAuley stated: "The hardest problem confronting the poet in my time has not, I think, greatly changed or become less urgent: it is the struggle for an adequate symbolism."(*SP* viii) By the early 1950s his approach to language was both to simplify and universalise: to bring out of his naturalistic *topoi* (the fish, the seed, the stone) an emblematic symbolism, giving "a new lyrical context to traditional images."(Buckley, 1957 186) After

[39] Cf. 10.8 (277).

his conversion McAuley moved from his neo-classical, neo-platonist phase of the late 1940s to the medieval world of Christendom, adding to his glossary motifs from a still culturally-resonant Christian and Biblical mythology, in literal and figurative references to the scriptures, the pastoral elements of the Old Testament as well as its angels and demons, the parables including those which offered a deeper personal symbolism, notably the parable of the prodigal son. The prodigal figure offered a personal variation of his earlier wanderer figure as well as the associated trope of home or homecoming. McAuley appropriated language from Christian scripture and doctrine, from Ambrose's "sober drunkenness" to his literal use of "the Word" (or Logos).

The question arises as to whether McAuley's increasing resort to a Christian glossary and symbolism could make a poetics that appealed to a wider rather than narrow Christian audience. Arguably McAuley's audience would become increasingly narrow (for certain Christian poems it would) if his specialised symbolism remained purely literal and untransformed into a more universal voice. Northrop Frye addressed this question:

> […] the critic, *qua critic*, has nothing to say for or against the affirmations that a religion makes out of these conceptions. If Christianity wishes to identify the infinite Word and Man of the literary universe with the Word of God, the person of Christ, the historical Jesus, the Bible or church dogma, these identifications may be accepted by any poet or critic without injury to his work – the acceptance may even clarify and intensify his work, depending on his temperament and situation. (126)

Nonetheless, Frye qualified his response:

> But they [his identifications] can never be accepted by poetry as a whole, or by criticism as such. The literary critic, like the historian, is compelled to treat every religion in the same way that religions treat each other, as though it were a human hypothesis […]. (*Ibid.*)

In other words, the reader or critic would be called upon in reading McAuley's Christian poems, in the way that Coleridge counseled all readers, to "suspend their disbelief." [40] Some critics would not. Frye also emphasised that, for the poem to be effective it could not depend on any external theology or metaphysics (75) but rather what is inherent in the poem itself: "Poetic images do not state or point to anything, but by pointing to each other they suggest or evoke the mood which informed the poem […] they express or articulate the mood […]" (81).

McAuley's "An Art of Poetry" is important for its statement of an *ars poetica,* derived formally from the scriptures, from early Christian Fathers Ambrose and Prudentius and philosophically from Aristotle and St Thomas Aquinas. What Frye might have called the "assertive" (75) metaphysical statement opened in McAuley's private question to Vincent

[40] Samuel Taylor Coleridge. *Biographia Literaria*. 1817, Chapter XIV.

Buckley as to whether "the Word" might be the basis for a new poetics,[41] somewhat removes the poem from a purely literary performance to that of the statement of belief, what Frye also calls "religion's 'This is' in contrast to poetry's more tentative 'but suppose this is.'"(127) However, McAuley is clearly being tentative, too, in asking his question and in this way, at least this Christian poem might also be seen to remain within the sphere of Frye's poetic "hypothetical."

Buckley elaborated on points raised by Frye in his essay "Poetry and the 'New Christians'" (1957). Commenting on the work of the Christian poets American Allen Tate (Catholic) and Welshman Vernon Jenkins (Anglican) he argued that:

> […] "religious poetry" is not a special genre because religion is not a special part of life; Christian life is the whole of life transformed, and Christian poetry is not poetry about Christ, no matter under what guise he is conceived, but an attribute of mind which sees the whole world at once re-ordered and transformed in Christ.[42]

In this Buckley matches McAuley's earlier argument: "[…] the complex of non-aesthetic factors in [a Christian poet's] art does not impose a servitude but is an insurance against sterility and aimlessness; it conserves creative vitality.[43]

6.7 The Rational Paradise

Buckley described the dynamic of McAuley's lyrics of this period as "emotion, guided by the intellect." (1957 189) The connection between faith, the intellect and reason suggested in key poems of the early to mid-1950s is elaborated in McAuley's introduction to his *Selected Poems* of 1963, in adverting to a "poetry […] of the whole man:"

> Wordsworth's remark to the astronomer Hamilton is well justified: 'The logical faculty has infinitely more to do with poetry than the young and inexperienced, whether writer or critic, ever dreams of...'Putting a phrase of the Fathers to another use, I would call poetry "the rational paradise." (*SP* viii)

This later summary is addressed in McAuley's essays of the early 1950s that mirror key Christian and *ars poetica* poems of this period, including the parable of receptivity in "Nativity."[44] They argue that the intellect is more closely linked to the intuitive, the contemplative, the work of the heart than the more discursive reason. Summarising Traditionalist philosopher Coomaraswamy's essays on Eastern approaches to aesthetics and experience of art, McAuley had been impressed by: "its transcendence of sense pleasure, its luminous stillness, its apprehension of its object by *amor intellectualis*, beyond discursive

---

[41] Cf. 6.2 (140). "If for an art of words I turn/ Discreetly to the Word?" (*CP*, 70)
[42] Buckley. "Poetry and the New Christians." *Essays in Poetry,* 1957, 88.
[43] McAuley. "Tradition, Society and the Arts." *EM*, 5.
[44] Cf. 6.4 (151).

reason, 'in the mode at once of ecstasy and intellect.'"[45] In contrast to this model, McAuley criticised the prevalent modernist aesthetics which "instead of that discreet and transparent beauty required of a 'support' for religious contemplation, the eye is blocked off from the inward vision by an opaque screen of personal emotion, caprice, rhetorical luxury, trivial realism, or modernist excess. […]" (*EM,* 20). His poetic and prose language systematically enlists the opposing motifs of lucidity, transparency against opacity and turbulence.

Continuing with the physiological metaphor of the "eye" as the organ of perception and vision, McAuley elaborates in his next essay "The Perennial Poetry" (1953) on the role of the intellect in the poetic art, restoring the "heart" to its traditionally more elevated role in "symbolic physiology" by connoting the "entire person" rather than merely the emotions: "In the old symbolism, the heart was the principle organ, the seat of life, soul, intellect, memory, will."[46] Starting from that assumption he argues that "The language of the heart is different according as it is turned towards the grasp of the metaphysical principles, or towards prayer and contemplation, or towards the experience of life in its multiplicity." (*EM*, 131-132) On this basis he argues, contradicting yet again his imagined avant-garde adversaries: "Poetry is an intellectual act. Sensations do not write poetry. Emotions do not: […] Reasoning, all admit, does not. The act to which I refer corresponds to words like vision, intellect, intuition, contemplation." (*EM*, 132) This could also be a modernist statement.

While skill and technique and judgment were important in the creative act McAuley would argue that "[…] the poem as a whole must first be visioned by the intellect and issue from it" (*EM*, 132). McAuley cites Aquinas from the theologian's *Summa Theologica*: "Creation is 'by a word conceived in the intellect'" (*EM*,132)[47] a phrase he may have encountered in reading Coomaraswamy's work[48] in the late 1940s. To this thought McAuley connects Wordsworth's well-known dictum on the poetic process:

> It was this, I think, that Wordsworth meant when he said of poetry that 'it takes up its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility.' By tranquility may be understood what St Thomas called 'the leisure that goes with contemplation,' not an inert state but an active receptivity. (*EM*, 132-133)

McAuley repeats earlier arguments against the contemporary literary avant-garde, echoing his much earlier attacks through Ern Malley: "If poetry is an intellectual act it is not a random,

[45] McAuley. "Tradition, Society and the Arts." *EM*, 14.
[46] McAuley. "The Perennial Poetry." *EM,* 131.
[47] Cf. 6.3 (145). These ideas match notes taken in 1949 when McAuley was reading St Augustine's *De Doctrina Cristiana*; Book IV, (Notebook 1, 25 February 1949) "how the sublime springs from an intellectual vigour of conception" Notebook 1, 28 December 1949, 66.
[48] A.K. Coomaraswamy. "A Figure of Speech or a Figure of Thought?" 23.

indeterminate process but is governed by a previsioned end. It is something more than an experimental dredging of the subconscious in the hope of finds." (134)

He develops the theme of a modern "loss of intellectuality"[49] in his essays of the mid-1950s, describing what he called "the English Malady" – "the modern man's residual creed: that *ideas do not matter*: that civilization can be maintained without intellectual commitments – and incidentally that literature can flourish on talent and sensibility alone.[50] While McAuley's work at times showed the "danger of using poetry to make intellectual points instead of enacting intellectual ideas" (Buckley, 1957 193), this was a risk McAuley preferred, to keeping to a restrained and inoffensive utterance. The primacy of the intellectual idea in the creative remains constant in his work.

6.8 Reception

The poet's insistence on a poetry of ideas explains difficulties such poems would pose for commentators, including Dobrez, who objected to "unpleasant outbursts of polemic verse" in "inferior pieces" such as "A Letter to John Dryden" and "A Celebration of Divine Love" (1976 177). R.F. Brissenden observed how the assumption of an orthodox religious position could be "both a crippling and liberating business for a poet […]."[51] Other contemporaries, criticised the formal, remote turn of McAuley's poetry, notably the lack of contemporaneity in "A Celebration of Divine Love" (Vassilieff, 1953 212). Vincent Buckley forewarned McAuley of a "pallid press" for his forthcoming collection of poems (*VC*):[52] he observed later that McAuley was tending: "[…] not to the over-specialised but to the over-simplified"(1957 194), using forms of 'hymn' and 'canticle' […] which no longer receive much public support" (1957 188) and that the poetry lacked "the exciting energy of his youthful poetry"[53] as if it had been "freed from all tension, all complexities of mire and blood." (1957 194). While Buckley accepted that the poetry was "calm and authoritative" (1957 194) he joined the generally lukewarm reception to the new work, though expressing the hope that McAuley's "latest phase is transitional." (*Ibid.*)

On the other hand, Vivian Smith considered "McAuley's lyrics collected under "Black Swans" among McAuley's most perfect works [which] have still not received full recognition." (1970 18) Morphett saw a "more personal tone after conversion, less fear of

[49] McAuley. "The Grinning Mirror." *EM*, 68.
[50] McAuley. "Notes and Speculations." *EM*, 177.
[51] R.F. Brissenden. "The Wounded Hero." 278.
[52] Buckley. Letter to McAuley, 28 March 1954. Box 6, McAuley papers.
[53] Buckley. "James McAuley: The Man and the Poet." *Westerly*, 1960, 15.

sentimentality" (9). Harold Stewart was divided: in June 1955 he told McAuley he "was pleased you are writing lyrics again for although your longer poems are excellent, I still feel the former are your forte."[54] Stewart later told McAuley that his poetry had "No Zen"[55] (presumably Zen's non-conceptual insight). Chris Wallace-Crabbe, who had admired the inwardness of McAuley's early lyric poetry, was more negative, seeing McAuley's desired universality as "not easily won" (1971 330) and risky because of its tendency to produce a "strange deadness" in McAuley's language (1971 327). It may have seemed to some of McAuley's critics that he could easily be described by his own juvenile critique in 1937 of T.S. Eliot's more overt religiosity in *Four Quartets*: "The more a poet becomes reconciled to Catholicism, the more his art suffers."[56]

6.9 "Writing Against the Grain"

On the publication of *VC*, McAuley's audience was not persuaded by his pursuit of an unfashionable formalism and classicism nor by his posture as religious poet. Vincent Buckley could not hide the difficulty of McAuley's position as an Australian poet in the mid-1950s:

> Christian humanism is beginning to supplant the humanism based on a bushman hero. Even so, the process is slow, Christian poets such as Picot or James McAuley are still slightly apart from the tradition of our poetry as a whole – which may be the reason why James McAuley, in particular is not given the proper recognition by Australian critics. (1957 90)

Buckley observed that McAuley's "poetry of statement" was "quite out of the mainstream of Australian poetry."[57] McAuley also acknowledged the difficulty of being out of alignment with contemporary concerns and forms in his lecture for the Commonwealth Literary Fund lectures in 1955 "The Grinning Mirror." He observed that the contemporary Catholic writer:

> […] still has to face the problem of writing against the grain of his society, of creating works of art which cannot be in intimate correspondence with its prevailing sentiments, of using forms and styles which have been developed under alien auspices, of communicating with an audience that hardly knows what he is talking about. [58]

His language echoes his recent reference in "A Letter to John Dryden" to the "disinherited rout [who] simply don't know what it's all about." (*CP*, 88)

For these reasons in the mid-1950s, McAuley might seem, in the terms of M.H. Abrams' expressive theory, to be comparable with the Romantic poet for whom "the audience

[54] Harold Stewart. Letter to James McAuley, June 1955. Box 7, McAuley papers.
[55] Stewart. Letter to McAuley, c. mid 1955. Box 7, McAuley papers.
[56] McAuley. "The Journey of the Magus." 17.
[57] Buckley. "The Poetry of James McAuley."1954, CLF lecture, 10.
[58] McAuley. "The Grinning Mirror." *EM*, 65.

disappears" and may only be "the poet himself." (25-26)[59] McAuley's appreciative audience was certainly smaller than that which read *Under Aldebaran* in 1946. In his role as a Christian poet, he would also start to write lyrics for hymns in the mid-1950s with composer Richard Connolly (b. 1927), with the encouragement of the Liturgical Movement within the Australian Roman Catholic church seeking to renew church music in English.[60] This was McAuley's most significant contribution to the traditional art forms discussed in his recent essays.

6.10 The Path of Transformation

Buckley who knew the poet well during this phase remarked how: "[…McAuley's conversion to Catholicism in 1952 has led to quite remarkable changes in the tone and emphases of his poetry." (1960 13) Vivian Smith saw "A Celebration of Divine Love" as marking "the end of another stage in the poet's life" (1970 26). Harold Stewart identified something more structurally unstable or malleable in McAuley's make-up when appealing, in 1955, to his former collaborator to consider the qualities of Buddhism: "It is truly Catholic in scope, and in no wise precludes the chameleon-natured poet [McAuley] from placing himself by an effort of imaginative sympathy, or the viewpoint of certain other Traditions […]."[61]

Such changeability might be as extreme as the adoption of a completely new literary *persona*. Transformation of such a degree met little sympathy among contemporaries. Dobrez saw McAuley's new "commitment to the objectivity of the Catholic tradition" as "an obliteration of the younger [favoured] poet" (1976 176). His fanciful, theatrical description of McAuley's transformation is arguably testimony to its effect: "[…] Clothed in Jesus, McAuley will forget himself as effectively as any Methodist […]" (*Ibid.*). Dobrez observed in *VC* a "ghost supposedly at peace with itself" (1976 178) which had once "traversed dense forests at night" and "which now floats weightlessly in a limbo of translucent forms with little content" (*Ibid.*): this reflected the "creation of a new *persona*, that of Classicist and convert" (1976 183). Borrowing Harold Bloom's language, Dobrez detected the "ghostly presence of the old McAuley hovering," and that "behind those swans fret hobbled blue horses" (1976 177.) In terms of Bloom's theory this was less McAuley rejecting earlier literary influences than his own earlier modernist literary self. Ackland has pointed to the instability of the poet's new *persona* even in this most solid of transformations: "By 1952, a faith had been found that fitted his habits of mind and explained his fragmented being, but as

[59] Cf. 5.9 (135).
[60] Ken Goodwin. "James McAuley as Hymn-Writer." 2003, 131 -144.
[61] Harold Stewart. Letter to McAuley, undated c. 1955: Box 7, McAuley papers.

Amy Witting and Peter Coleman have underlined, the sceptic in him never died."[62] His avowed faith did not bring him the peace-of-mind he might have expected.

Notwithstanding the difficulties, McAuley writing to younger poet Donovan Clarke about his conversion to the "divine tradition" described the "res cristiana" [the Christian matter]"[63] as the only possible path for him as a poet at that time. Ivan Head describes McAuley's Catholicism as "not simply a panacea. He knew something of the agonies of the pathway."[64] McAuley reflected later on this period: "I had lost my path through the maze,"[65] language echoing that used by Étienne Gilson in *The Unity of Philosophical Experience.* McAuley's conversion to Catholicism was an important part of his search for order in the "maze" of the modern world. In another essay of this time ("My New Guinea,"1961) McAuley described his conversion and his search for appropriate forms as his own *via crucis* (*JM* 29) (path of the cross). The transformation evident in *VC* represented an important, but not final step, a passage of significant growth and change, in the poet's journey along his still unknown literary trajectory, as he honed his theory and practice of poetry, this time favouring the universal instead of the particular, though continually pursuing lucidity and pattern in language and form over the chaotic.

[62] Ackland. "James McAuley and the Communist Menace." 2001, *Quadrant*, 51.
[63] McAuley. Letter to Donovan Clarke, 26 June 1952. Donovan Clarke papers, NLA.
[64] Ivan Head. "Worth the Lifting and Stacking." *Quadrant*, 47. 5, May 2003, 56.
[65] McAuley. "A Small Testament." 9.

7

Writing Against the Grain: 1956-1959 (*The End of Modernity,* 1959)

7.1 The Political Turn

Leonie Kramer observed how, during the mid-1950s, "the man of letters seems to have been submerged in the activist." (1985 38) McAuley's anti-totalitarian sentiment had already been evident in his "A Letter to John Dryden."[1] Since 1953 he had learnt of factional struggles in the trade unions from his industrial lawyer friends John Kerr and Hal Wootten. Without going into detail, from late 1954 until as late as 1960, McAuley's life was overwhelmed with the struggle for influence in the trade union and the Australian Labor Party (ALP) between the Catholic-affiliated "groupers" and left-wing influences. This struggle led to schisms in the ALP and in the Catholic church itself, which would be reflected in the few poems McAuley wrote, notably the epic, *Captain Quiros,* in the mid-to-late 1950s. It explains his significant divergence from poetry to political work, and prose writing on culture, society, echoing these tensions. As a Catholic poet McAuley understood what was "writing against the grain of his society, […] of communicating with an audience that hardly knows what he is talking about."[2] In his political engagement of this time he was arguably working "against the grain" at another level, but in a way that seemed necessary for his own evolution. While this thesis does not discuss in detail the markedly political element of McAuley's activity, notably in the mid-to-late 1950s, it acknowledges that his subsequent literary work can be better appreciated in the light of the political experience driving his divergent path. Much of that would be expressed in his prose. The poet observed later that while "very little of my poetry has any overt political tendency, much of it has been born out of a concern for political struggles."[3] McAuley's trajectory through politics, explained in his reflections on modernity, feeds into parallel reflections on literary history.

7.2 Commitment and Betrayal

The spirit of crisis is reflected in one of the few poems of this period, sent to his mentor, and spiritual and intellectual collaborator in these political struggles, B.A. Santamaria, the Melbourne-based Catholic anti-communist political activist. Though from different worlds,

---

[1] Cf. 5.8 (128).
[2] McAuley. "The Grinning Mirror." *EM*, 65. Cf. 6.9 (161).
[3] Maurice Dunleavy. Interview of James McAuley. *Canberra Times*, 5 August 1967, 8.

they became close friends and collaborators: the first generation Italian/Australian lawyer and Catholic social activist, Santamaria, pursued his utopian vision of a pre-industrial agrarian society dominated by church and family, with a Keynsian economic basis. In contrast with the mood of spiritual respite in McAuley's poetry after his conversion, a tone of desolation can be seen in the private apostrophic poem, "In A Late Hour," sent to Santamaria, reflecting the tensions of their struggle.[4] It is arguably a political counterpart to the intimate Christian 'letter' to Buckley 4 years earlier in 1952:

> Though all men should desert you
> My faith should not grow less,
> But keep that single virtue
> Of simple thankfulness.
>
> Pursuit had closed around me,
> Terrors had pressed me low;
> You sought me and you found me,
> And I will not let you go. (*CP*, 105)

The sentiment expressed in the simple hymn-like quatrains is of love, fidelity and finding sanctuary in a hostile world. This seeming expressing of devotion to Christ against the background of an imperfect world can be partly explained by the fact that the first stanza was based on a hymn (1799) by the German late-Romantic poet Novalis: "Wenn alle untreu werden."[5] The subject's tone to the addressee is intimate, as in a conventional blend of love poem with religious testimony. However, the sense of desolation of this ambivalent pledge-poem, using stereotyped abstracts of "pursuit," "terror" and "desertion," as well as "faith" and "virtue," is energised by the intense testimony to a shared political impasse:

> The hearts of men grow colder[6]
> The final things draw near,
> Forms vanish, kingdoms moulder,
> The Antirealm is here; (*CP,* 105)

The dystopian cosmic vision is represented in the apprehension of an allegorical "Antirealm," reviving the apocalyptic element which had seemingly subsided in McAuley's serene and meditative poetry after conversion. Man's isolation in urban society – "the sense of nature gone" a world in which "forms vanish" and "kingdoms moulder," would become an important motif in McAuley's work. The poem was a private expression of despair and fidelity after the Catholic collaborators' hopes for their breakaway political party had been

---

[4] The poem was supposedly sent after their first meeting in early 1955 but the mood suggests it may have been sent later after a tactical defeat by the NSW Catholic Bishops the following year.
[5] McAuley. *SP*. 59.
[6] McAuley's note (*SP*, 59) connects this line with Matthew xxiv.12: "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold," and "the sense of nature gone."

undermined by the NSW Catholic Bishops. The prophetic “In a Late Hour” was not published until seven years later in 1963,[7] reflecting its private nature, and also the poet’s intense dedication to the cause of political and religious struggle in mid-1950s Australia.

Santamaria reflected later on his first meeting with the similarly divergent thinker McAuley in Melbourne:

> For both of us it was a voyage of personal discovery. Throughout that short time we did not speak to any other person, as we traversed areas of thought and experience far beyond the limits of the current political crisis, into the fields of religion, philosophy and the rest.[8]

They would presumably have discussed the outlook already expressed in McAuley’s essays.

7.3 The Question of “Modernity”

McAuley’s polemic political stance, in his vocation as a committed Christian, was articulated in essays in the mid-1950s outlining his views on shortcomings in the spiritual and political condition of contemporary modernity, collected in *The End of Modernity*, 1959.[9] In his preface McAuley advocates the perennial philosophy of Claudel (and Aquinas) as offering a framework for expressing the “natural pieties of the human mind.” (*EM* vi). The essays are organized in three sections, General (society and literature), Art and Poetry, reflecting the broad interest and knowledge of a writer described by one reviewer as a “polymath.”[10] McAuley’s views drew heavily on the understanding of *The New Science of Politics* (1952) by anti-communist political scientist Eric Voegelin (1901-1985), a German-American refugee from Nazi Germany. McAuley’s acceptance of Voegelin’s apprehension of political “modernity,” notably what he considered “totalitarian tendencies,” is evident in the poet’s essay “The Grinning Mirror” (1955) which sources to Voegelin the definition of “modernity” and the term “gnosticisim” which McAuley introduces to his essays on politics and culture, and later to literature:

> I must apologise for using the term “modernity” in a special way here, following on as I am the line of political analysis traced out by Eric Voegelin in his very important study of political ideas. By “modernity” is meant anti-Christian illuminism or gnosticism seen as a movement which has developed over many centuries in ever more secularised forms. […].[11]

---

[7] McAuley. *SP*. 1963.
[8] Santamaria. *Against the Tide*. 277.
[9] The title replicates that of the last chapter of Eric Voegelin’s, *The New Science of Politics,* U Chicago Press, 1952.
[10] Brian Buckley, “Facts or Theory?” *Prospect*, 2.4, 1959. 20-21.
[11] McAuley. “The Grinning Mirror,” *EM*, 56.

McAuley uses Voegelin's outline of modernity in political, social and cultural history to explain the evolution of Enlightenment thought through "naturalism, scientism and materialism" in the nineteenth-century and into twentieth-century "modernity" as "atheistic, technolatrous [sic], ruthless totalitarianism" ("The Grinning Mirror," *EM*, 57).[12] The poet adds his own urgent apocalyptic reading, as a committed Christian, to Voegelin's perpectives on historical evolution, and his recent experience of Catholic engagement in the arena of Labor and trade union politics, opinions he would express in strong terms to a narrower Catholic audience. McAuley saw Australia's condition as less disturbing than that of most Western developed nations, tracing it to an "old-fashioned […] nineteenth century heritage" and historical experience that was "limited and provincial." (*EM*, 59)

Increasingly noticed for his political and cultural commentary, McAuley was chosen to be founding editor for the new magazine *Quadrant* established in 1956 by the conservative Congress for Cultural Freedom, to match the standard of *Encounter* in the UK and *Preuves* in Paris. Politically conservative, *Quadrant* aimed to be open to all ideas and combative by nature, combining literary content with essays on political and cultural questions: it offered McAuley opportunities to express both literary and political perspectives, and what might be called literary perspective on the political. The following citations are illustrative of how the poet-activist exercised his new role.

McAuley's unsigned editorial of *Quadrant*'s first issue in December 1956, dedicated, opportunely, to the USSR crushing of the Hungarian Revolution in November 1956, uses strongly apocalyptic imagery to describe these events in Eastern Europe:

> Suddenly this one huge glaring visage, this enormous mask made of blood and lies starts up above the horizon and dominates the landscape, a figure of judgment speaking to each person in a different tone or tongue, but with the same question: And what do you think of *me*?[13]

Rich metaphorical language is mixed with a Voegelin-style political critique in depicting the West's failure to aid Hungary:

> Then indeed, we hear the ghosts of rhetorical humanisms, academic positivism and progressive illuminisms (whose frightening heir and fulfillment Communism is) speak and gibber in the streets, imploring us to maintain the most rigorous neutrality between the "warring fanaticisms" of right and wrong, truth and history, liberation and slavery […] But events whirl these ghosts around and resistlessly away like dead leaves in a gale. (*Ibid.*, 5)

[12] Arguably McAuley probably brought such perspectives on modernity to his first discussions with B.A. Santamaria in Melbourne in the mid-1950s.

[13] McAuley. Unsigned editorial, "By Way of Prologue." *Quadrant*, 1,1, December 1956, 3-5.

As John McLaren[14] has observed, McAuley borrows the simile used by Milton, in the image of fallen angels lying "thick as leaves" in *Paradise Lost*. McAuley would have cultivated the echoes of the eschatological dimension of Milton's famous long poem: "His legions; angel forms, who lay intrans't/ Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks."[15] However, Milton, writing in the seventeenth-century, had a more homogeneous audience than McAuley, even at his desk at *Quadrant*. McAuley was concerned not only with Catholic laymen, but with those other "children of the Enlightenment […] the Liberal intellectuals […] much given to scepticism and indecisiveness" including that "disquieting lack of resistance to totalitarianism."[16]

Sixty years later, McAuley's Cold War concerns seem remote. Yet in the intense perspective of that time, McAuley recorded his excitement at actively observing the world at a political cross-roads: "In spite of all that can be said against our age, what a moment it is to be alive in! What an epoch for a magazine to emerge in!"[17] He recognised how at this time, as in the 1940s, his poetry "was concerned with the feeling of historical change and the great crisis in culture of the time." (Thompson 98) Close experience of Cold War tensions played out in Australia, the struggles between a minority Christian idealism and both secular and ecclesiastic indifference, including the perceived "betrayals" of the Catholic Bishops, would be the subject of and give impetus to McAuley's long poem *Captain Quiros* written in the last years of the 1950s.

7.4 Literary History or Manifesto? – "The Magian Heresy"

McAuley admitted later that his work of the mid-1950s was concerned with "the big public issues, the nature of culture, the nature of our own crisis in society [involving] a much darker view than I tend now to take […]." (Morphett 9) As historian Gregory Melleuish remarked, McAuley was neither a "philosopher or historian, [but] as a poet, was largely interested in the conditions under which literature flourishes."[18] In an important literary essay, "The Magian Heresy," *Quadrant* (Autumn 1957), McAuley subjected "poetic modernity" to the panoramic historical survey he had applied, using Voegelin's model, to post-Christian "modernity" in "The Grinning Mirror." [19] McAuley develops further his argument against the excessively

---

[14]John McLaren. *Writing in Hope and Fear: Literature as Politics in Postwar Australia*. Cambridge UP, 1996, 98.
[15] John Milton. *Paradise Lost*. 1.301-2.
[16] McAuley. "On Being an Intellectual." *Quadrant,*13, IV, 1959-60, 25-26.
[17] McAuley. Unsigned editorial, "By Way of Prologue." *Quadrant* 1.1, 1956, 4.
[18] Gregory Melleuish. "James McAuley and the End of Modernity." 2012, 70.
[19] McAuley. "The Grinning Mirror." *EM*, 55-69.

subjective in poetry, expressed earlier in the Ern Malley statement and in his poems on the poetic process.[20] Declaratory in tone, this theory of excess, attempts to trace a genealogy of romantic-modernity, a tradition with which he initially identified, and to explore the poet's role in the quest for truth.

In this highly personal history of romantic poetry, McAuley begins with Hegel's pronouncement of the "death of poetry," how poetry had been superseded "as an organ of the Absolute by the emergence of the supreme rationality of philosophy," and being "overpassed" by the prose of reason" ("The Magian Heresy," *EM*, 144) McAuley repeats Hölderlin's question: "what is a poet for in such an impoverished time?" (*EM*, 145) Keats, in his Hyperion *persona,* arguably not seen since "Ern Malley," is useful to the poet's argument in voicing doubts about the role of poetry in the age of scientific rationalism: "Do not all charms fly / At the mere touch of cold philosophy?" ["Lamia"] (*EM*, 145), and also about the role of the poet "tribe:" "What benefit canst thou, or all thy tribe, / To the great world? Thou art a dreaming thing" ["Hyperion"]. With Keats, McAuley also conjectures: "Sure a poet is a sage, a humanist, a physician to all men" (*EM*, 146) before expanding upon Keats' meditation in his own narrative:

> But it was difficult in the intellectual atmosphere of the time to specify and justify this poetic wisdom. Is it, for example, something to which the poetic imagination alone apprehends, so that the imagination is a special instrument of discovery? (*EM*, 146)

Though McAuley steps in to deny that line of approach there seems an element of identification with the questing mood of these earlier romantic poets:

> How far is the poet's wisdom related to religion and philosophy, especially to a philosophy that seems to leave no place for the sort of truths that poetry lives by, and to a religion that has paled into pietist feeling or agnostic yearnings? (*EM*, 146)

The essay documents how the romantic poets and authors had tackled and been linked to the new ideas of their age – Blake, Shelley, Coleridge Wordsworth, Goethe, Schiller, Byron, Pushkin and Hugo: "but could not remain fruitful in contact with systems of thought which […] tended towards the debasement of the great themes and values of literature: devotion, love, honour, courage and adventure." (*EM*, 147) Recording how "Engels [had] noted […] that the great period of German literature coincided with a decline in enthusiasm for revolutionary ideas," McAuley deduces that: "[…] 'Modernity' in poetry therefore had to mean something different from the official [political] 'modernity' of a society" (*EM,* 147) whose nineteenth-century-intellectuals leaders included Bentham, Comte, and Feuerbach.

[20] "Marginal Note" (*CP*, 38), "An Art of Poetry" (*CP*,70) and "To Any Poet" (*CP*,85).

“*Poetic* modernity,” on the other hand, McAuley argues, was “not the direct image and construction of the neo-gnostic [using Voegelin’s term] secularist Enlightenment of modern times” (*EM,* 147) which he considered the poets feared and rejected. Nor did it celebrate the belief and values of Christianity. Cutting loose from the nineteenth century notions of reality and utility poetic modernity was, rather, “an attempted conquest of the Absolute” (*EM*, 148). At this point, McAuley broaches his theory of excess:

> Far from confining themselves to a purely literary domain the poets tended to despise mere “literature,” which became a word of reproach. They wanted to lift poetry out of this domain and transform it utterly. It must become magic, gnosis, paracletic inspiration, prophecy, revelation, even divine creation. The poet was to be no longer a mere literary person: his true role was that of hierophant, prophet, seer, shaman or magus. (*EM*, 148)

Though he does not name him McAuley would have been thinking, among others, of the symbolist poet Paul Verlaine, and one of his early models the French symbolist Stéphane Mallarmé for whom the poet’s task was to sing divinely.

In developing his theory, McAuley was influenced by another central European émigré, and literary counterpart to Eric Voegelin, the Bohemian-born Germanist Jewish scholar Eric Heller, author of *The Disinherited Mind* (1952). McAuley’s “The Magian Heresy” is an endorsement and elaboration of the text in which Heller sought to analyse the disappearance of Truth from man’s environment and the ensuing efforts of “Art” to fill the gap.[21] In his essay’s narrative, McAuley describes how, perhaps recalling Milton’s fallen angels: “[…] against the completely secularised and anti-metaphysical gnosis of the Enlightenment, the poets took flight in hope of attaining a new *poetic* gnosis, fed however by the underground streams of European occultism, cabbalism and theosophy (*EM*, 148). For such poets: “It was hoped that the poetic word would be the Logos of a new dispensation, the informing spirit of a new age in which the truths and powers and values of which had once been the property of religion would be restored and thereby the world transformed” (*EM*, 148). This ambition of “poetic modernity,” ascribing to the poetic word a preternatural power, McAuley names, in denunciatory, ecclesiastical language, “the magian heresy” (*EM*, 149) Interestingly, the most notable of McAuley’s “gnostic heretics” on the literary horizon were his early influences Novalis and Matthew Arnold (who saw religion being replaced by poetry). They also included Yeats (for whom “the poet would replace the priest”), I.A. Richards (1893-1979) and John Middleton Murry (1889-1957) for both of whom poetry could be redemptive. McAuley traces this “poetic heresy” as evolving within the romantic tradition

[21] Erich Heller, *The Disinherited Mind,* 1957, 170-174.

through Blake, Hölderlin, the French symbolists (Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé and Valéry) and finally Rilke.

McAuley is particularly harsh on his early model Rilke who he describes as "the culmination of the Romantic strain in German poetry" in taking up "the idea of Novalis that 'in the end everything becomes poetry'" (*EM*, 155). Drawing on Heller's study, McAuley denounces Rilke's exalted witness of the transformative power of poetry ("'Gesang ist Dasein' – song is existence" (*Ibid.*) as the "most audacious excess[es] of spiritual pride in the guise of devout humility." (*EM*, 156)[22] With its pointed attack on Rilke, the essay represents a complete turn against the poet's own much earlier self, in that "anxiety of influence" which Harold Bloom saw in strong poets reacting against their key models, as a son might "wrestle with his ghostly father."[23] Consistent with his earlier statements McAuley's most severe denunciation was still reserved for surrealism, summed up here as "the late birth of Romantic modernity" (*EM*, 156), inspired as it was by:

> […] the Nietzschean discovery that "God is dead." With this comes the feeling that ordinary reality has lost its value and become intolerable. Any alternative visions and revelations that are offered have lost their metaphysical dimension and are reduced to purely inward and senseless subjectivity. (*EM*, 157)

McAuley argues that the "drive towards 'inwardness' had reached its 'final degradation: the Romantic movement devours its offspring.'" (*EM*, 157) In McAuley's fanciful allegory, the "gods" of the romantic movement had thus become as perverse as their ancestor Cronos. The poet-essayist reaches the peak of his denunciation, naming the "gnostic" (the term borrowed copiously from Voegelin), as the new literary heretics. In some respects, McAuley's censorious approach echoes that of Plato, who had given the youthful McAuley the *persona* of Glaucon,[24] in proposing exile for poets displaying god-like powers.[25]

Notwithstanding his strong convictions about what was no longer admissible, the writer is less sure about future directions. For that reason, and its sole authorship, "The Magian Heresy" cannot be regarded as a manifesto, unlike the Statement on the Ern Malley poems, though it remains a strong critique of a prevalent trend. From this point, the essay takes the form of a blunt question. "After modernity, what?" (*EM*, 157). McAuley would have intuited the great crisis in modern literature caused by the tumultuous and disastrous events encountered in WWII that caused Theodor Adorno to declare "There can be no poetry after

---

[22] This is cited from an unnamed critique of Rilke, *TLS*, 11 July 1952, 456, *"The Magian Heresy," EM,* 155-156. The critique was later revealed to be by Erich Heller.
[23] Bloom. 88.
[24] Cf 1.1 (14).
[25] Plato. *The Republic*. III, 398, a-b, Loeb.

Auschwitz."[26] It was less Adorno's sense of the impossibility of poetry than the need for a sense of proportion, which the increasingly neo-classical McAuley was suggesting against "the perversion of the poet into pseudo-prophet" whose poetry is "paste imitations of authentic spirituality"(*EM*, 158). In this essay on the future of poetry the poet continues to employ questing language, using the symbol of the road,[27] of ends and deviations, to suggest the journey of discovery, but also of retracing steps, he considered necessary for himself and contemporary poets:

> One cannot escape the impression that poetic modernity, whose inner impulse was the magian heresy, has come to an end. It does not seem possible to go further along this road when the futility of this exercise has been so patently demonstrated. (*EM*, 157)
>
> We stand too near to this immense deviation to be able to judge it securely (*EM*, 158)

While not offering easy answers, and perhaps in contradiction of his own condemnation of prophetic behavior by poets, McAuley adopts, like his navigator Quiros, the approach of a literary cosmographer, with his question about how to proceed: After this "immense detour […] the question […] is how to link up again with the main road." (*EM*,159). His rhetorical answer to his own question is to suggest an anti-romantic neo-classical or realist approach, again further elaborated using cosmographical and geographical metaphor:

> It is by lowering the transcendental pretensions of poetry that […] its true greatness opens out once more before us: we come out of the Romantic modernist cavern into the broad and high world of Virgil and Chaucer and Dante and Shakespeare. (*EM*, 159)

In his attempt to revise the literary canon of a romantic modernism, he proffers these perennial authors as an antidote to recent displays of what might be called literary and spiritual *hubris* and evidence of how "the true proportions of things are recognized, and the presumption of men is corrected by the measures of the gods" (*EM*, 159). In his conclusion however, McAuley recognizes, more realistically, the limitations of his grand prescription:

> The way forward to a post-modern poetry[28] could not lie simply in a return behind the Romantic deviation to the eighteenth century. The so-called classical formulae of the eighteenth century represent too great a narrowing of the spiritual resources on which it is necessary to draw. (*EM*, 159)

Somewhat arguing against himself and perhaps reflecting, what must be seen as his own attack upon his own Rilkean side, McAuley also recognises: "We cannot *suppress and deny the*

---

[26] Theodor Adorno. "Cultural Criticism and Society." (1951) in *Prisms*, 1981.
[27] McCredden observes McAuley's use of spatial language to describe his literary task. "Mastering Romanticism," 267.
[28] McAuley's early formulation here of "post-modern" does not match the later definition of the post-modern school of literary interpretation. As Melleuish has commented, McAuley would have regarded post-modernism as a more extreme version of modernism. ("James McAuley and the End of Modernity." 2012, 67).

voices of that period that continue to speak in us.[29] It is necessary to understand what happened, to experience it deeply, to absorb and master its results, before one can pass beyond it." (*EM,* 159) This recognition of "the [many]voices that […] speak in us" underlines the vital impetus of change in his work, also explaining its paradoxical element. This admission foreshadows what he told John Thompson later about his own ambivalent reaction to the modernist movement in producing the subversive but Dionysian surrealist parody in the Ern Malley poems of 1944:

> I, like so many others, experienced the sort of choice that, I think, lies before the modern poet. Will he accept the siren voices that tell him he can write gorgeous poetry by just dropping the logical controls and allowing the stuff to surge up […] or should he adopt a more traditional method?" (Thompson 97)

Thus, at the conclusion of this historicist essay on "poetic modernity" McAuley shows profound comprehension, in his own evolution, of what Harold Bloom would observe generally in his later study,[30] about the role of influence in the creative process. This is evident not only in McAuley's sketch of the evolution of poetic modernity but also in his own admission of self-recognition, his implicit and reluctant acknowledgement of the various voices still present in him, even the "romantic modernist" voices he tried so hard to suppress.

With the greater hindsight of distance, various scholars have attempted to describe the nature of poetic or literary modernity.[31] In "The Grinning Mirror" McAuley, drawing on Voegelin's and Heller's particular definitions, identifies a broader "modernity," as dating back before the Enlightenment to the Renaissance, and even the Middle Ages (*EM*, 56-57). In "The Magian Heresy" McAuley seems to date "poetic modernity" with the beginning of "the modern period" at Hegel (*EM*, 144). As he himself recognised, McAuley was too close to literary modernism, [32] or "the modernists of yesteryear" (*EM*, 57), and too much a part of the dialectic it engendered, to be able to judge it either impartially or in its entirety. His diverse writing in this period and over the years, contained in his poetry, literary and philosophical essays and his journalism, is a manifestation of the paradoxes implicit in the nebulous concept of poetic modernity with which he engaged.

Clearly many of the ideas put forward in "The Magian Heresy" would have confirmed to the Australian reader of *Quadrant*, his literary and intellectual contemporaries, McAuley's shift to an unfashionable neo-classicism, though it generally accorded with modernist views

---

[29] Writer's italics.
[30] Bloom. 1973.
[31] Notably Matei Calinescu. *Five Faces of Modernity.* 1987.
[32] Michael Cook has examined McAuley's encounter with literary modernism. "James McAuley's Encounter with Modernism." 1993.

on romantic impulses. As remarked by Vincent Buckley, the other essays grouped in *The End of Modernity* (*EM*), mainly from the early to mid-1950s,[33] were also provocative: "In [*EM*] he plays his match against the age's mind […] It is as irritating as it is exciting […]"[34] It was probably in reaction to the poet's assertions in "The Magian Heresy" or the essays on politics and philosophy such as "The Grinning Mirror," that caused the New York reviewer, Irving Kristol,[35] to throw McAuley's *The End of Modernity* (1959) to the floor after three attempts to review it (Coleman, 1980 90). Nonetheless, McAuley's rather rushed narrative on poetic modernity, "The Magian Heresy," dating from his middle phase, is still regarded by many[36] as an iconic statement of McAuley's literary creed, though he revised it, in 1974, as "Journey into Egypt," to a more modulated text. The latter would be praised by his contemporary, the poet, translator and literary critic Michael Hamburger who saw it as "[…] very close to my own preoccupations in *The Truth of Poetry* (1969),"[37] in which he examined the nature, assumption and functions of modern poetry (post-Baudelaire). Like McAuley, Hamburger, agreed with the analysis of the "empty transcendentalism" and also "dehumanisation" in modernist poetry in the line of Rimbaud and Rilke.[38] McAuley's later critical appreciations add more complexity and subtlety to an evolving *ars poetica*.

7.5 "Linking up with the Main Road" – Form and Prosody

McAuley's ideas for a way forward are outlined in another essay written in 1956, published in 1958 in *Quadrant* under the title "From a Poet's Notebook" (later titled "Notes and Speculations"[39] to which I refer). It translates into practical detail the panoramic pronouncements of "The Magian Heresy" and reflects McAuley's consistent support for the use of traditional prosody and traditional poetic kinds throughout his work (*EM*, 169).

The poet focusses on the modern preoccupation with the "non-descript, all-purpose 'short poem'" (*EM*, 174), arguing that: "One might start today by seeing what can be done with some of the old poetic kinds: eclogue, elegy, epistle, epigram, epithalamium, epyllion – to name only a few […]," while noting the need to "remove any archaisms" (*EM*, 174). He also promotes the exploration of currently neglected literary forms: "[to] develop a

---

[33] Cf 5.7 (125).
[34] Vincent Buckley. "[…] The Man and The Poet." 1960, 13-15.
[35] Irving Kristol was an atheist anti-communist New York-based member of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) who later argued for the common values offered to society by a Christian cultural framework.
[36] It is the focus of McCredden's assessment of McAuley's poetics (*James McAuley*. 1992.)
[37] Michael Hamburger. Letter to James McAuley, 2 March 1976. Box 4, McAuley papers.
[38] Hamburger. *The Truth of Poetry*. 31.
[39] McAuley. "Notes and Speculations." *EM,* 160-180.

dramatic action with real human persons, write a moving and significant narrative, or genuine love poetry, or a satire with consistent range and depth of penetration […]" (*EM*, 173). Picking up the thought expressed in "The Magian Heresy" and noting how the Symbolists had tried to expel the discursive element[40] from poetry (*EM*, 175), he argues that the discursive is one of the voices which must be expressed: "The poet must render justice to all the voices within him. The way of refusals and exclusions is not the only way that must be followed." (*EM*, 176)

The way had already been prepared for McAuley's work with the long poem in A.D. Hope's contribution to the first edition of *Quadrant* (December 1956). In his essay[41] Hope argued that the discursive mode had been neglected as a result of Edgar Allen Poe's promotion of the non-discursive short lyric poem. Later as critic and teacher, McAuley would join Harold Bloom, in defending the romantic poet Shelley's long poem "Prometheus Unbound" against attacks by F.R. Leavis and the "cult of tight-lipped casualness,"[42] citing Bloom's reproval of New Critic "misreading" of Shelley's long poem and the contemporary "literary vice" of having "forgotten how to read a long poem.[43]

7.6 An exercise in translation: vignette with wanderer

McAuley's poetic output had been slight. Apart from several personal poems and others reflecting his political concerns, a significant poem was his 1956 translation[44] of a short, three-stanza landscape poem "Ein Winterabend" by the Austrian expressionist poet Georg Trakl (1887-1914). "Winter Nightfall" (*CP*, 103) was dedicated to the British anthropologist Camilla Wedgwood (1901-1955) who had died the previous year. Its melancholy but serene mood, and use of winter archetypes, offer a touching elegy to his friend, colleague and mentor at DORCA and ASOPA. It would anticipate his later significant work translating Trakl's work from 1970. In the wintry evening scene of the first stanza, the poet reworks Trakl's "simple words and images"[45] – "Snow falls on the darkening boughs." "Travellers" appear in the second stanza, moving in from "field and fold" through the "dark pathways to the gate."

---

[40] In this essay the discursive also encompasses the narrative technique.
[41] A.D. Hope. "The Discursive Mode: Reflections on the Ecology of Poetry." *Quadrant*, 1.2, 1957, 27-33.
[42] McAuley. "Shelley Unbound." *Bulletin* Red Page, 12 May 1962, 57-58. McAuley. Early 1970s unpublished lecture notes "Shelley," Box 16.
[43] In his unpublished lecture notes, "Prometheus Unbound," c. 1970s, McAuley cites Harold Bloom's *Shelley's Mythmaking*, 1959, 110. Box 16
[44] McAuley also translated three of the "Moabiter Sonette," of the German poet and anti-Nazi Albrecht Haushofer written while imprisoned in Berlin's Moabit prison before his death in 1945 ("Three Sonnets of Albrecht Haushofer," *CP,* 106-107).
[45] McAuley. "The Poetry of Georg Trakl." *GR*, 203. Cf. 10.6 (273).

The ekphrastic build-up of the scene until the third and last stanza creates an enticing diorama for both traveller and reader that actively welcomes, in its switch to the imperative tone, as they enter the house:

> Hard with pain the stony sill;
> Indoors on the table shine
> With pure brightness bread and wine;
> Enter, wanderer, take your fill. (*CP*, 103)

Most of McAuley's readers would have been Australian so the experience of reading, like the translator's, will have been of travel to the exotic scene of a traditional central European village in winter. Its author McAuley, aged 39, had not yet travelled to Europe. However, Trakl's landscape offers no idyllic rural sojourn: "The stony sill" over which the traveller steps is "hard with pain," evoking the death of Camilla Wedgwood, and other difficult transitions.

7.7 Christopher Brennan: Ancestor and Wanderer

From 1956 Trakl's *motif* of wanderer gathered momentum in McAuley's work. Trakl's (and McAuley's) chosen sojourner appears in a severe, even dark, world, albeit with the consoling background of a Christian landscape, rural rather than urban, its bell ringing in the background and, in the foreground on the table, the eucharistic symbols, bread and wine. The motif of dislocation, Christian or otherwise, is a constant theme in McAuley's *EM* essays. In "The Background of Modern Literature" (1955) McAuley had been struck by the sense, in Matthew Arnold's work, of the "disinherited mind" of modern man (*EM,* 30) and by Yeats' vision of profound disorientation in "The Second Coming" (*EM*, 31). McAuley's prognosis was to view contemporary Western man, in its Christian variation, as: "the prodigal son who could not endure to remain in his father's household" and was thus compelled to live "in a far country, the Land of Unlikeness"[46] (*EM*, 45). The pre-Christian motif of wanderer surfaces in McAuley's essay in "Homage to Chris Brennan" (1957)[47] concerning the earlier Australian symbolist poet remembered for his "The Wanderer" poem. McAuley cites a major excerpt:

> I am the wanderer of many years
> who cannot tell if ever he was king
> or if ever kingdoms were: I know I am
> the wanderer of the ways of all the worlds,
> to whom the sunshine and the rain are one

[46] The theological post-lapsarian concept of the "Land of Unlikeness" can be traced to St Augustine's *Confessions*, Book 7, though also gave title to a book of poems by Robert Lowell (1944)
[47] McAuley. "Homage to Chris Brennan." *Southerly*, 1957, 135-142.

> and one to stay or hasten, because he knows
> no ending of the way, no home, no goal, […]
> (Christopher Brennan, "The Wanderer," 141)

It is a strangely grand, haunting first-person statement in unrhymed verse about identity ("I am the wanderer," "I know I am the wanderer") whose assertive repetitions are paradoxically undermined by its own repeated negatives described in a remote third person voice: "who *cannot tell if ever* he was king," "because he knows *no ending* of the way, *no* home, *no* goal."[48] Brennan's wanderer *persona* that so appealed to McAuley in 1938 and again in 1957 celebrates dislocation and solitude.

Chapter One describes Brennan's influence on the young poet and McAuley's poetic tributes.[49] In his later, 1957 essay McAuley returns to that earlier point of contact, expressing admiration for his scholarly, cosmopolitan Australian predecessor, a follower of the French Symbolists who had corresponded with Mallarmé: "the only Australian poet about whom the question of greatness can be raised."("Homage to Chris Brennan."135) This later sense of identification signals self-recognition: "it was in this poet, who died in 1932 at the time when my poetic aspirations were beginning to develop, that I found that point of contact which every poet wants and needs with the preceding literature of his own people" (135). Twenty years later, in another phase of his transformative journey, McAuley rediscovers in the older poet not only his first and true literary ancestor, but one pulled between modernist and romantic worlds.

> If I could feel that Brennan was a poetic ancestor, and to some extent a master, it was because these vicious traits of his style and sensibility could not completely obscure what was grand and genuine and important in his conceptions. I shared his interest in the French Symbolists, especially Mallarmé, and the German Romantics, especially Novalis. (135).

Anticipating Bloom's later theory of influence[50] with its roots in Eliot,[51] McAuley identifies the true point of affinity with his national poetic ancestor – the spiritual quest: "Behind these literary sympathies was my basic sympathy with the spiritual quest which is the subject-matter of Brennan's poetry. […] The journey was in fact a lifelong one […]." (136). McAuley's journey included the excursion through politics and prophecy.

McAuley's essay gives attention to motifs of home and homelessness which Brennan's work explores, and also the related motif, man's yearning for Eden, the lost

[48] Writer's italics.
[49] McAuley. "In Honour of Chris. Brennan." *Hermes*, 1938,19. Cf. 1.3 (16).
[50] Bloom. *The Anxiety of Influence*. 1997.
[51] Eliot speaks of the influence of "the dead poets, his ancestors" in the mature work of poets in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), 48.

paradise.[52] Such *tropes* detectable in McAuley's earlier poetry are prominent in his next work *Captain Quiros.* The solitary path of the romantic-modernist Brennan in his poetic subject in "The Wanderer" appealed strongly to McAuley at this second encounter, conscious as he was of being out of step with his intellectual and literary contemporaries, while also insisting on his own experimental way. In 1957 it will have been reinforced with the experience of the "voyage of personal discovery"[53] of which Santamaria had spoken in their shared political and cultural project. McAuley's intensely personal writing on Brennan suggests that this literary forefather offered to the younger poet a mask for the next exploratory steps of his literary journey and transformation, the wanderer and sea-voyager Captain Quiros, and a project for exploring the narrative mode.

[52] McAuley also wrote an important monograph: *C.J. Brennan*, 1963, (Revised 1973).
[53] Cf. 7.2 (167).

8

The "Out of Fashion" Sea Voyage of *Captain Quiros* (1958-1960)

8.1 The impasse

Towards the end of the 1950s McAuley was feeling restless and unsatisfied about his poetic output. (De Berg, 11,340) His creative impasse is expressed in his poem of three five-lined rhyming stanzas "The Inception of the Poem" (c. June 1958) through the subject's repeated catalogue of negatives and the *topos* of the "low" "untended" fire (rhyming ironically with "know"):

> Midnight once more; the untended fire sinks low;
> The lamp stares down upon the books unread;
> The papers on my desk have nothing to show:
> I have not learned the things I wished to know,
> The things I wished to say remain unsaid.
>
> Again the dead pause, the need for a new start […] (*CP,* 108)[1]

The adjective "dead" rhyming with "books unread" would become important in linking the poet's critical vocabulary with his developing poetic *topoi.* McAuley reflected how this period of dryness symptomised his need for change, with "dead" opposing growth, as signalled in his essays "The Magian Heresy" and "From a Poet's Notebook:"

> The subsequent decade [the late 1950s] was a difficult one in my poetical development. I had an inner necessity […] to move still further away from contemporary critical preferences in order to grow in my own way. I felt the need to re-absorb some residues of nineteenth century poetry which were part of my experience: Byron's lyrics, Tennyson, William Morris; Eichendorff, Heine, Morike. In the midst of dryness and uncertainty I suddenly took up again an almost forgotten project of writing a long narrative poem about Quiros. (*MAV*, 202-203)

Anticipating Harold Bloom again, McAuley explained to A.D. Hope the importance of recognising literary precursors from an earlier nineteenth-century tradition:

> I think one can't have the ghosts and locked-up skeletons of one's different phases of literary growth merely excluded, […] It's not just that the nineteenth century preceded the twentieth and gave rise to it: It's even more a question of what one has been oneself and therefore, ineluctably, is. [2]

Paradoxically, in contrast to a neo-classicist approach suggested in "The Magian Heresy," (1957) it was after looking back to those mainly romantic poets and writers, that McAuley describes the experience of breakthrough ("suddenly, unbidden") in the poem's last stanza:

---

[1] The passage recalls a sleepless Henry the navigator and the vigil of Quiros (*CP*,128/St.5), Cf 4.7 (96).
[2] McAuley. Letter to A.D. Hope, 27/8/55. A.D. Hope Papers.

> […] suddenly, unbidden, the theme returns
> That visited my youth; over the vast
> Pacific with the white wake at their sterns,
> The ships of Quiros on their great concerns
> Ride in upon the present from the past.
> ("The Inception of the Poem," *CP*, 108)

Time (the "past"), as well as space (the "Pacific"), is signalled as the object of the voyage.

Convinced by his own argument for the revival of old "poetic kinds" including "moving and significant narrative,"[3] McAuley started his project of a long narrative poem, using traditional narrative form, resurrecting the theme of exploration in the character of the Portuguese late-Renaissance navigator Quiros from his earlier explorer poems.[4] "Terra Australis" (1939-42, CP, 16) had already prophesied the poet's significant literary and personal journey: "Voyage within you, on that fabled ocean, / And you will find that Southern Continent,/Quiros' vision […]."

8.2 The Narrative

Written between 1958 and 1960,[5] *Quiros* recounts, in a neo-Renaissance epic style, three Pacific voyages, 1595, 1605-7[6] and 1614 for the Spanish king Phillip III by the Portuguese navigator Captain Pedro Fernandez de Quiros (in Portuguese, Pedro Fernandes de Queirós) in search of the legendary "Terra Australis." Comprising 305 seven-line alternately rhyming stanzas, it has three parts, each relating to the successive expeditions, that "multiple plot" for which Aristotle considered the epic appropriate.[7] Part I "Where Solomon was Wanting" describes the 1595 expedition under Spanish General Álvaro de Mendaña, revealing Quiros' fascination with the innocence of the island societies and his concern and disillusion at the unethical and violent behaviour of the Spanish expeditioners. Part II "The Quest for the South Land" describes the second expedition of 1606, headed by Quiros, a Third Order Franciscan, in his pursuit of establishing a new society (an apocalyptic "New Jerusalem," *CP*, 158/ St. 2), his peaceable wish to find and settle the last undiscovered continent. This is thwarted by the trials of the sea journey and his plotting fellow officers. Quiros claims for the Spanish Crown an island of Vanuatu, mistaken for the Great South Land, naming it "Austrialia del Espiritu Santo" (The South Land of the Holy Spirit). Part III "The Times of Nations" describes Quiros'

[3] McAuley. "Notes and Speculations." *EM,* 174.
[4] Cf. 4.2 (84).
[5] McAuley. 13 June 1960, Notebook 7. Box 1, McAuley papers.
[6] The second voyage of 1605-7 was the last Spanish voyage of discovery.
[7] Aristotle. *Poetics*. XVIII, 1456a, 11-12.

seven-year struggle to mount a third expedition (1614) which, never eventuates. Exhausted and ill, Quiros remains in Panama, only to deliver his death-bed prophecy for the still undiscovered *Terra Australis*.

8.3 Synthesis

McAuley's "heroic mystery" (*CP*, 141 /St. 1) is a twentieth-century retracing and retelling of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century voyages in search for the fabled continent of *Terra Australis,* already foreshadowed in his earlier poem "Where reside/ All things in their imagined counterpart" ("Terra Australis," *CP*, 16).[8] It is an important, if archaic, quest for discovery and identity, both national and personal, lived through the constructed *persona* of the explorer Quiros and his narrator secretary the semi-authorial Belmonte, the intra-diegetic author. It charts Quiros' and its author's utopian quests to find, or re-find, *Terra Australis* and establish a Christian society there and also one of the first European encounters with the New World – the people and the lands of the South-West-Pacific ocean. Looking back from the future, it projects an alternative regenerative, if failed, history of the "discovery" of the mythical continent of Quiros' original vision, – the Australia, as microcosm of the developed world, McAuley saw increasingly diminished by secularity.

The narrative device of voyage unleashes a rich thematic array: discovery, identity, place, home, encounter with the Other, history (European, global, Australian, traditional) and time in its various aspects. It establishes numerous fertile binary perspectives concerning human nature and society: centre and periphery, utopia and dystopia, civilised man and traditional natural man, modernity and traditionalism, concepts of good and evil, the ideal and the real, and a dialectic on what theorist Jean-François Lyotard calls the "meta-narratives"[9] underlying ideologies and their political systems, society and ethical ways to live. McAuley explains how as "reconvert"[10] he was "seeing the world in the light of a recovered acceptance of Christian tradition and orthodoxy." (*MAV*, 202) McAuley's overriding thematics, concerning society, history and ethics, against the ideological struggles of the Cold War, are carried by his Renaissance characters in their journey to the New World and futurity.

---

[8] Cf. 4.2 (85).
[9] Jean-François Lyotard. 1984 (1979), xxiv. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/postmodernism/ accessed 17 July 2017.
[10] Friend Louis Magee advised that McAuley would refer to himself as a "re-convert" (writer's interview, March 2015).

8.4 Context

In his second encounter[11] with the explorer, Quiros' Catholic dimension offered significance for the now-Catholic poet and cultural commentator. McAuley was aware of his poem's divergence from Australia's traditional preconceptions about its own history. Through historian Manning Clark, he became aware of the Australian Franciscan historian Celsus Kelly's work on the first English translation from Spanish[12] of Quiros' journals by the geographer Sir Clements Markham for the Hayluyt Society.[13] McAuley met Kelly briefly on 3 July 1958 to discuss his work. McAuley's annotation to *CP* (229) explains how Kelly's research,[14] had caused modifications to the existing English language account of Quiros' expedition.[15] Suggesting a detailed research plan, McAuley lists, in his Quiros Notebook,[16] a number of texts on regional exploration.

Looking back at a supposedly quiet mid-1950s Australia, McAuley's experience with Catholic and union politics[17] had been neither calm nor detached, but gave tension and relevance to the navigator hero in his utopian project to found a just, free, spiritually-oriented society. McAuley's important proto-post-colonial poem can be seen as the voice of the settler coming to terms with the "New World" to which his European ancestors had brought him, enriched with the insight of McAuley's work in New Guinea with a society Quiros might have encountered. In 1962, a time of reflection on national identity, McAuley wrote of the European vision of the South Pacific as: "[…] the Antipodean realm, where everything is the reverse of the European order of things; the light of the Golden Age lingers upon it; it is the New World; man's chance for a new start; the Promised Land of a latter-day chosen people."[18]

8.5 Genesis: The Crossing

McAuley was inspired to write *Quiros* after reading Patrick White's novel *Voss* (1957) basing his fictional character on the explorer Ludwig Leichhardt who died during his 1848 inland

---

[11] Cf. 4.2 (85).
[12] Quiros' manuscripts were first published in Spanish by Don Justo Zaragoza in 1876, Introduction, Hakluyt, xi
[13] Clements Markham. trans. & ed. *The Voyages of Pedro Fernandez de Quiros 1595 -1606*. Vol. 1, Hakluyt Society, 1904, including Quiros documents by Don Justo Zaragoza in 1876, *Historia del descubrumento de las regiones Austriales hecho por el General Pedro Fernandez de Quiros.*
[14] Celsus Kelly. trans. & ed. *La Austrialia del Espiritu* Santo. 2 Vols. Cambridge UP/Hakluyt, 1966.
[15] Gerald Bushell. "Captain Quirós: James McAuley and Celsus Kelly: O.F.M.."1977.
[16] McAuley. Journal 10, (Notebook for 1958/59). Box 3, McAuley papers.
[17] Cf. 7.1 (165).
[18] McAuley. "Literature and the Arts." 1962, 123.

expedition crossing Australia from east to west. Moved by how White had undertaken "things normally the business of poetic narrative and drama,"[19] McAuley embarked on a similar exercise. Of his 305 stanzas the majority, approximately (200), use the third-person narrative or a first- person plural narration, some (60) use the dramatic first-person voice and a lesser, though important (40) have the intradiegetic narrator *persona* Belmonte speaking in authorial first-person voice from within the poetic narrative. McAuley's unusual poem of exploration is a journey not through sandy deserts but through the treacherous, blue deserts of the "Ocean"[20] that surround it. Being an historical poem, looking from both the future of its author and its authorial narrator Belmonte, to the past of its protagonist hero Quiros and back again to an unwinding and even more remote future, *Quiros* involves the crossing of oceans and also time – mythical, historical, colonial, reaching his own time and the unknown future of his readers.[21]

McAuley launches his poem by recreating in "exquisite images" (McCredden, 1992 37) the physical world and consciousness of the Spanish and Portuguese explorers commencing their perilous first voyage at the end of the sixteenth-century: the third-person narrator evokes a haunting oceanic space which Renaissance navigators might have experienced in pioneering an unknown oceanic world:

> Blue Ocean atmosphere from Pole to Pole,
> Vast crystal globe where ignorance could scry:
> Projecting fears and longings of the soul
> On the unknown – monsters that swim and fly,
> Whirlpools of primal darkness on the deep;
> Leviathan unchained; dolphins that leap
> Over the mainyard. (*CP,* 111/ St. 2)

In its precise descriptive "residues of nineteenth century poetry" (*MAV*, 203), the opening stanzas revive old maps preceding Mercator's 1569 chart, already important in McAuley's explorer symbolism,[22] from the time of Mendaña's first expedition (1567), and 25 years before his second and Quiros' first journey:

> So in old maps we see
>
> *Imago Mundi* done in red and gold,
> With fabled lands through which green rivers run
> To a blue scalloped sea: *(CP,* 111/ St. 2-3)

---

[19] McAuley. "The Gothic Splendours: Patrick White's "Voss." 1965, 35.
[20] "Ocean" is always capitalized, as is Coleridge's "Moon" in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner."
[21] Cf. 8.7 (192-3).
[22] Cf. 4.5 (92-93).

Quiros is set in Mercator's time, McAuley having depicted it, in earlier explorer poems, as a period of reduced idealism in world exploration.[23] The passage recalls maps in those earlier explorer poems, here embellished in a hallucinogenic intensity.

The epic form is further echoed by *Quiros'* technique of iambic pentameter,[24] alternating rhyme and framing occasional heroic couplets. Its 7-line stanzas slightly vary the 8-line stanzas of McAuley's possible model, the Portuguese Renaissance poet Luis de Camões' *The Lusiad* (1572) which McAuley read in the early 1940s,[25] styled on Virgil's *Aeneid,* which recounts Vasco da Gama's voyage to India (1497-8). The influence of Camões' national epic (*epopeia*) is evident in the second Proem when Quiros' secretary, asserts his literary ambitions by "bragging" of his own, "Luis de Belmonte's epopee" (*CP*, 146/ St. 1). McAuley's most significant borrowing from Camões is the tracking of ocean in Vasco da Gama's epic journeying through the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Unlike Da Gama, Quiros sailed west across the Pacific from the Americas. Part II describing the Pacific island "Gente Hermosa" (of the beautiful people), alludes, in epic manner, to Camões' hero, Vasco da Gama's amorous adventures through the tropical islands of the Indian Ocean: "Freely the great Camoens could contrive / A magic isle of Venus in the sea," and to the Greek goddess of fresh water, the "blushing" Tethys who arrives: "To Vasco as the prize of mastery." (*CP*, 149/ St. 5)

The Portuguese *epopeia, The Lusiad,* provided an important antecedent for McAuley in asserting the oceanic identity, not of Camões' Portugal, but of Australia four-hundred years later. By re-imagining discovery, McAuley joined contemporary Australian poets R.D. Fitzgerald, Kenneth Slessor, Douglas Stewart, Francis Webb and Jindyworobak poet Rex Ingamells[26] in their 1940s-1950s poetic historical projects. McAuley's poem comes closest to a traditional epic form. Dobrez describes this pattern of writing as: "Australia [being] re-explored, but from the inside." (1994 39) As in the great explorer narratives, the poem is driven by the *topos* of the voyage south[27] associated with early voyages from Europe into unknown, paradisal tropical regions, the motif of the "happy isles" seen in Nietzsche and Pessoa. As in McAuley's earlier explorer poems there is abundant imagery and vocabulary of navigators, maps, charts – Quiros is a navigator involved in "cosmography" (*CP*, 113/ St. 2, 141 /St. 3). These are appropriate signifiers for tracing a voyage into the territory of the

[23] Cf. 4.11 (107-8).
[24] Iambic pentameter matches the dactylic hexameter of heroic verse Aristotle thought appropriate for narrating action in the classical epic. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 10.3, 40.
[25] Cf. 4.7 (97-98).
[26] Cf. 4.9 (100). McAuley would have known Rex Ingamells' *The Great South Land* (1951), a 300-page free-style epic reciting the history of navigators searching for *Terra Australis,* including Quiros.
[27] Mary Louise Pratt. "Mapping Ideology: Gide, Camus and Algeria." 158.

unknown Other (place) “the centrifugal movement from name-laden Europe to the periphery, where legends and drawings characterize vast territories without history.”[28] In the mind of Quiros, the Great South Land evokes a virginal waiting for a beginning: “the last continent / Still waiting for the impress of the dreamer” (*CP*, 129/ St. 1), recalling Edward Said’s European: “battery of desires, repressions, investments and projections.”[29]

Part I is dominated by acts of crossing, its text abounding with the motif of Ocean being navigated, a vast wasteland the quester must cross – invariably blue, empty, a grey cold element, of infinite latitudes: “Ocean’s empty tract” (*CP*, 115/ St. 5), “The Antarctic void” (*CP*, 143 /St. 5), and “blue desert plain” (*CP*, 149/St. 2) as well as capriciousness in “Ocean’s changefulness” (*CP*, 162/ St. 1). The *Quiros* epoch precedes by two centuries the exploration of Australian space Carter addresses in *The Road to Botany Bay* (1987). In *Quiros* the narrating traveller’s descriptions of the barrier Ocean are denoted by strong emotions of alienation, or epic suffering[30] – “loneliness” (*CP*, 148/ St. 4), “strangeness” (*CP*, 151/ St. 2), “uncertainty” (*CP*, 161/ St. 1), and the journey through it with “hardship,” and “vicissitude” (*CP*, 162/ St. 1). The endless horizon suggests “excess of space” or “horizonal sublime,”[31] as Bill Ashcroft describes the nineteenth-century Australian settler’s alienated response to the endless inland horizons, unlike the European landscapes of their provenance. *Quiros*’ vast oceanic landscape evokes absence, reflecting that creative *aporia* from which McAuley, as poet, was fleeing.

The sea voyage is an archetype of transformation. Quiros’ long voyage suggests distance and remoteness in the apprehension of *Terra Australis’* oceanic identity and also gives narrator, intra-diegetic author Belmonte, the opportunity to define the nature of Quiros’ quest: “Then of that noble voyage I shall tell/ That sought the South Land; of what there befell” (*CP*, 112/ St. 5). The Spanish expedition which Quiros navigated was an important imperial quest under Spain’s Phillip III, sanctioned by the Roman Church, to claim unconquered lands for both spiritual and worldly domains. With unknowing irony, after the failed first expedition, the naïve Quiros’ project would be: “To bring the light of Christ to the South Land” (*CP*, 145/ St. 2). This utopian project of the Franciscan Quiros[32] is in contrast to the mainly imperialistic, avaricious motives of his Spanish sponsors. The fabled South Land is projected as inextricably linked with the nobility of the heart or soul and its projects: “*Terra*

[28] Rabasa. “Allegories of Atlas.” 323. Cf. 4.11 (107-8).
[29] Said. “Orientalism.” 36.
[30] Aristotle. *Poetics*. XII, 1452b, 9.
[31] Ashcroft. “The Sacred in Australian Culture.” 2010, 26.
[32] Bushell. “Captain Quirós: James McAuley and Celsus Kelly: O.F.M.” *Quadrant*, 1977, 24-29.

Australis you must celebrate / Land of the inmost heart, searching for which / Men roam the earth" (*CP*, 113/ St. 4). The utopianism of the quest, in Belmonte's voice, who shared Quiros' dreams and purpose, is almost essentialist, as were many 1950s Australian explorer themes. It introduces the underlying motif of the lost, desired paradise central to Christian and other "grand narratives."

8.6 The Other – "Malope's Place"

The use of paradisal images in Quiros' missionary quest is consistent with Renaissance projections of the New World. Nonetheless, the historical Quiros comes one century after Columbus' time with its "pulsating Utopian and millenarian descriptions for the New World provoked in Spanish historiography […]."[33] While such idealistic perspectives inform Quiros' project and, to some extent that of the textual author, Rabasa argues that the millenarian epoch ended 25 years earlier than Quiros' first voyage, with the advent of Mercator's map (1569) and later, with the growing influence of the Enlightenment, and associated empiricism and secularism. McAuley's narrative reflects that transition from the utopian, arguably an *aporia* of the early modern age.

The anticipated goal and highlight of Quiros' late Renaissance expedition was its contact with the New World, described by Tzvetan Todorov as the "Other."[34] The dramatic highlight, in the expedition in Part I led by Spanish General Mendaña,[35] occurs in the encounter in 1595 with the traditional society of Santa Cruz in the Solomon Islands. Even as the first faction-ridden expeditioners approach the volcanic island they are overwhelmed by its physical presence, rendered in mimetic present tense: "The mountain is awake, with utterance / Of flame and burning rock and thunderous sound – " (CP, 119/ St. 5) Through 9 stanzas, the narrator observes, remotely, from the distance of the ships, a still-functioning traditional society, seemingly re-introducing, if abstractly and idealistically, the societies already described in McAuley's anthropologically-inspired essays of the early 1950s:[36]

> And then ecstatically they imitate
> The dance of blissful spirits deified,
> And rapt in *deep communion* [37]celebrate
> The tutelary beings who provide
> *Health, harvest, wisdom, prowess, progeny*.

[33] Rabasa. 322. Cf 4.11 (107-8).
[34] Tzvetan Todorov. *The Conquest of America*. 1984, 4.
[35] Quiros' first expedition (1595) was Mendaña's second. Mendaña's first was in 1567.
[36] McAuley. "Tradition, Society and the Arts." 1952. Cf.5.7 (124-5).
[37] Writer's italics.

Protection in the night and on the sea,
And pleasure to the bridegroom and the bride. (*CP*, 121/ St. 1)

Dobrez describes the narratorial viewpoint for early explorers as a "Discourse of Unfamiliarity" or "First Contact," (1994 26), the stance natural to the traveller encountering new landscapes, people, animals and vegetation. The gaze[38] of McAuley's late sixteenth-century expeditioners, evokes the first idealising, or objectifying, pre-landfall, encounter with a lost traditional world in the South-West-Pacific. The descriptive stanzas (*CP*, 119/ St. 4 to *CP*, 121/ St. 3) recall passages in the poet's earlier New Guinea poems.[39] The gesture of deixis – "this is," and the use of present tense, building on the previously more concrete descriptions, conveys a sense of place: "This is that island world, Malope's place, […]." Nonetheless, the blurred, remote description of the originary, peopled landscape underlines the idealising nature of the expeditioners' gaze:

[…] Much like our childhood world of presences
That looks out from a mythic time and space
Into the real: a land of similes
Where man conforming to the cosmos proves
His oneness with all beings, and life moves
To the rhythm of profound analogies. (*CP*, 121/ St. 2)

In seeming authorial voice, it elaborates an epiphanic celebration of abstract, even philosophical qualities, linked as much to the author's fourteen-year experience with pre-independence New Guinea, as to the translated chronicles of Quiros, though, like the historian Celsus Kelly, McAuley offered a renewed representation. Re-writing or translation, also offered the poet the opportunity for empathetic recreation, as Hamburger described those poets of *personae,* Rilke and Hugo Von Hoffmannsthal, also admired by McAuley, for their ability to "fill some other body" (78).

The depiction of the Other (in *CP*, 121/ St. 2), in "mythic time and space," recalls Rabasa's comment on the millenarian approach of early expeditions of discovery, their apprehension of the angelic nature of the native people. (323) This figurative stanza reflects McAuley's increasing apprehension of the spiritual quality of the natural and customary world. Building on the rhetoric of earlier poems, [40] Malope's "childhood world of presences" is also "a land of similes" (CP, 121/ St. 2) containing analogies for order for customary man Malope, and arguably, the entranced western onlooker, the enlightened Quiros. Aristotle had

[38] The present use of "gaze" draws on Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) in which the Other is objectified by the observing subject.
[39] Cf 6.4 (146-7).
[40] "It is your land of similes," "Terra Australis," *CP*, 16. Cf.4.10 (103).

noted in his *Poetics* that "to use metaphor well is to discern similarities"[41] akin to the trope "similitude" in McAuley poetics.[42] Kramer argues that in *Quiros* "the phrase ["land of similes"] is elevated and transformed. 'Man conforming to the cosmos' is man at home in a 'world unsimplified' – one which being unsimplified holds both good and evil, hope and despair, beauty and ugliness."(1988 7) Thus, the "world unsimplified" intuited in McAuley's early poems anticipates Malope's originary island, which had been anticipated earlier in the lost world of ceremony in the "The Hero and the Hydra."[43] It looks out from a "mythic time" into the opposing "real" of historical or contemporary time and encompasses the practice of ceremony.

There are different philosophical and psychological interpretations of the "real" into which the people of Malope's originary, childhood world might be "looking." Such "real" might be the historic, actual world of the visiting expeditioners of the story as opposed to Malope's mythical time. Or the "real" might be something from which the visitors are twice removed, and seen as something to which the island folk have privileged access. Arguably, the unattainable "mythic time" world most proximate to the "real" might be found in Plato's world of forms, his ideal world of Being. A similar reading can be found in Kant's "noumenal" world, in which the objects we intuit in space and time are appearances, not objects that exist independently of our intuition (things in themselves). An authorial apprehension of the "real" in Malope's world can be traced to McAuley's earlier Neoplatonic readings of Traditionalist philosophers (Coomaraswamy) and later, prior to his conversion to Catholicism, the neo-Thomists. Once reconstructed in *Quiros* it has become something else of the poet's own making, including from his earlier reading of the Neoplatonic Plotinus.[44] McAuley's evocation of Malope's "world of presences" may be inherently romantic, what literary theorist Geoffrey Hartman describes as a "desire for originary innocence" or a return to the "Unity of Being."[45]

Malope's "childhood world of presences" anticipates what has been described in Australian post-colonial theory as a sense of sacred[46] in the proximate physical world, a "presence culture" akin to a Heideggerian sense of "Being in the World." [47]Ashcroft describes

---

[41] Aristotle. *Poetics*. XXIII, 1459A, 5-6.
[42] Cf 4.10. (103).
[43] Cf. 5.1 (114-15).
[44] Cf. 5.4 (119).
[45] Geoffrey Hartman. "Romanticism and 'Anti-Self-Consciousness.'"558.
[46] Ashcroft notes how mention of the sacred "has been considered a sign of the worst kind of intellectual bad taste […]" "The Sacred in Australia," 2010, 21.
[47] Ashcroft draws upon the Heideggerian-influenced theory of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht *The Production of Presence* (2004).

how some Australian white settler-writers managed to shift beyond a nineteenth-century colonial sense of displacement in experiencing a "horizonal sublime," (2010 26) of Australia's vast space and distances. The well-read Catholic convert and New Guinea expert McAuley would have shared such understanding when writing *Quiros,* thus also belonging to that small group of writers who anticipated the depiction of a sacral (spiritual fullness) in such a "presence culture," both in his representation of Malope's neighbouring South Pacific "childhood world of presences" (*CP*, 121-122), and in Quiros' later death-bed apprehension of a more specific Australian sacral, the "South Land" of "man in his tribes":

> "I saw the South Land, vast, worn down, and strange:
> Man in his tribes, and insect, beast and tree,
> Set in a cyclic pattern beyond change.
> There solemn long-shanked birds danced ritually,
> And painted men enacted and renewed
> With mime and song in rapt exalted mood
> The figured Now which is eternity. (*CP,* 173/ St. 4)

This later passage echoes the description of the idyllic "Malope's place" (*CP*, 121/ St. 2): in its naming of an elemental world of man and nature ("insect, beast and tree") it recreates the ancient "cyclic pattern" (suggesting Malope's "rhythm of profound analogies") particularised in the latter four lines, describing the "long-shanked birds" (probably the brolga – *grus rubicunda*) and "painted man" in "mime and song." This diorama from a changeless past, nonetheless, articulates and enacts a sense of presence, emphasised in ritualistic "dance," "mime and song," the transcendence of time through ceremony, that help convey the tantalising concept of "The figured Now which is eternity." (*CP*, 173/ St. 4)

It is difficult to paraphrase McAuley's potent expression, or consider whether such a "figured Now" might still be attainable in the mid-twentieth century in which McAuley wrote. Quiros' death-bed vision (*CP*, 173/ St. 4) recalls the medieval dream-vision genre, and the sense that such an imagined "vast," "strange" paradise, might only be achieved outside time or the span of human life, perhaps in "God's time," but also something earlier, the "mythic time" of an originary Aboriginal "dream-time"[48] and Malope's now-threatened originary world. "Figured" suggests symbolic representation, perhaps echoing Eliot's "figured leaf,"[49] so "the figured Now" linked to eternity suggests an everlasting present-time invoked with tribal man in his cyclic life-pattern, in his mime and song, and the birds' dance.

[48] The expression "dream-time" connotes the Aboriginal expression for the time of creation and its stories which McAuley's stanza evokes.
[49] T.S. Eliot. "Burnt Norton." "Four Quartets," *Collected Poems*, 191.

In the encounter with Malope and his village, based on the source chronicle (Markham, Chapter X, 48), there is a rudimentary exchange of names (*CP*, 122/ St. 5) and basic language ("Amigo," *CP*, 123, St. 1) which, subsequently, drastically loses its original meaning. At one point the narration projects the islander's gaze as the mirror image of that of the traveller, in an "exotic discourse of unfamiliarity in which Europeans are seen as ghosts, pale counterparts of blackness" (Dobrez, 1994 40):

> Next day from up the coast the rumour spread
> That three tall floating structures had appeared
> With white-skinned crews, the colour of the dead. (*CP*, 121/ St. 4)

This reflection on gaze raises the question asked by Margery Fee[50] as to whether even a sympathetic identification with the Other as in *Quiros*, can in post-modern times, be regarded as an authentic discourse. Perhaps if looked at in the context of 1950s writing McAuley's embryonic post–colonial poem might be seen as just that, a sympathetic identification?

Quiros builds up tension between the idealistic and spiritually-inspired Quiros and the powerful, pragmatic but morally frail Spanish civil and ecclesiastical members of the expedition. Symbolically, the expeditioners are depicted as destroyers of Eden. While roaming the earth for riches and new kingdoms, in the moralising narration, they still: "bear the old selves with them that could turn/ The streams of Eden to a standing ditch […]" (*CP*,113/St.4). The imagery emphasises the third phase of time in the narrative,[51] that of pragmatic and increasingly murderous expeditions more interested in economic and political gain than in peaceful co-existence with the local. In such a world, Quiros' attempt at Pentecost, (14 May 1606), to establish a Christian community on one of the islands of present-day Vanuatu, which he mistakenly names *Austrialia*[52] *del Espiritu Santo* (South Land of the Holy Spirit), was doomed to fail.

8.7 Time, History, Space

A dialectic on time and human history threads through *Quiros,* like his ships: "[…] Rid[ing] in upon the present from the past." (*CP*,108). Time or tense is an important tool of narratorial technique in this representation of a historical chronicle, set in various epochs, shifting from a predominant, low-key past tense (an epic time of *chronos),* to an occasionally epiphanic present (*kairos*) and a prophetic future. As asserted by the posterity-seeking Belmonte, the

[50] Margery Fee. "Who can write as Other?" 2006, 171.
[51] Cf.8.7 (193).
[52] "Austrialia" reflects the Spanish tribute to their dynastic partners the Austrian Habsburgs.

work itself is a "wonder-working icon against time" (CP, 143/ St. 1). Aristotle saw the epic as "unlimited in time span."[53] Six different time phases are envisaged in Belmonte's narrative:

(1) the mythic time of customary man before the Western discoveries, seen in the Pacific islands, notably Malope's South-West-Pacific "childhood world of presences" and the pre-colonial Australia seen in Quiros' death-bed vision (*CP*, III, 172, St.4),

(2) Renaissance time, and the first Western, millenarian, encounters with the New World, in its original idyllic state as visited by General Mendaña during his first encounter (1567-8),

(3) Quiros' time starting in 1595, 26 years after what McAuley called "Mercator's time" (dated from Mercator's 1569 map) in the late Renaissance up until at the time of Belmonte's telling (1624),

(4) the historical future after Renaissance time – the Enlightenment, Western colonisation, and the history of political revolution (the eighteenth to twentieth-centuries), as outlined in Quiros' death-bed prophecy of futurity (*CP*, III, 172-174),

(5) the post WWII 1950s, the immediate recent-present-time in which the poem was conceived and written by its textual author McAuley, and received by its first and future audiences, and the future historical period it envisaged (*CP*, III, 175/ St. 2-4), and

(6) arguably a sixth phase, the concept of a Christian understanding of history, God's time or "the End of Time" described by the authoritative and sympathetic Father Commissary to the reluctant Quiros at the end of the second voyage in 1606 (*CP*, II, 163/ St. 2-3).

These sequences, sometimes overlapping, represent successive palimpsests that overlie and unravel any clear linear vision of a history of Australia. The sixth phase is central to the poem's competing ideological narratives. The Father Commissary's statement of orthodox Christian doctrine, traceable to the Apocalypse, concerning the impossibility of utopian societies (any "new heaven and earth," *CP*, II, 142/ St. 1) of Quiros' imagining, is set beside other utopian schemes outlined in Quiros' vision of futurity (the fourth phase of time), the secular Enlightenment utopias of Diderot and Rousseau inspired by the noble savage, the French and Russian revolutions and, notably, Hitler's Third Reich and contemporary Marxian-inspired projects that troubled the author at the time of writing, as earlier represented in "A Letter to John Dryden" (*CP*, 88). The Christian doctrine, from St John's Apocalypse, that utopia is heretical is repeated authoritatively in the voice of the Father Commissary:[54]

"For in the midst of time God has not willed

[53] Aristotle. *Poetics*. VI,1449b, 12.

[54] Bushell observes that this figure was based on the Franciscan chaplain to Quiros' second expedition, Martin de Munilla whose diary Celsus Kelly translated, 27.

The End of Time. Not ours to bring to birth
That final Realm; nor shall our labours build
Out of the rubble of this fallen earth
The New Jerusalem, which shall never be
Christ's perfect Bride save in eternity. (*CP*, 163/ St. 2)

Notwithstanding the Christian doctrine, that such desired utopia or paradise is only attainable after death, the poem also hints that if the "End of Time" may be found "in eternity," this might be found in the pre-lapsarian societies of the New World (CP, 121, St.2), with their privileged apprehension of "The figured Now which is eternity" (*CP*, 173, St. 4). For the seventeenth-century thinker, such utopian ("no-place") state only exists in such customary societies that remain inaccessible, or *lost*, to the corrupting West: "Until He comes, who will come, may there be/The cosmic dance pursued in that lost land […]" (CP, 165, St.1). Quiros' final vision of *Terra Australis,* and all the projections he had bound up in it, is paradoxically, also utopian: "*Terra Australis* – mine, yet never mine" (*CP*, 173/ St. 1).

Quiros portrays man in many aspects of human time and space. However, the author's twentieth-century present is informed by past narratives influenced by the Christian archetype of the fall, of man's flawed nature ("this blind world's evil," *CP*, 164/ St.1), of the impossibility of a return to paradise, or any apprehension of that "figured Now which is eternity." Arguably, in its experience of "belatedness," the post-colonial consciousness might be rediscovering or echoing a fundamentally Christian post-lapsarian understanding. Quiros' vision of man in the future, or modernity (the fifth phase of time), is dystopian:

The just shall live by faith without the aid
Of custom that bound man to heaven and earth.
Estranged within the city man has made […] (*CP*, 175/ St. 2)

Phase 5 setting out the author's present of the 1950s and the futurity of Quiros' vision, modifies a little the Father Commissary's and the implied author's seeming ruling against utopia or societal improvement ("heaven and earth"). The Father had already suggested, at the end of the second expedition, some amelioration in the human condition through "broken efforts" or "labour" as mentioned earlier in his discourse:

[…] For neither are our failures nothing worth.

"For through our broken efforts He prepares
The hallowing of creatures that shall bring
Eternity upon us unawares
Beyond our best hope or imagining […] (*CP*, 163/ St. 2-3)

Such chance "Eternity" coming "unawares" might be akin to an experience of the "figured (or transfigured) Now," that humankind might obtain through a close and caring bond with the

natural world in its present moment, a being in time or even a Heideggerian "being in the world?" McAuley describes elsewhere "the hallowing of creatures" as linked to the *opus Christi*, the "close and caring," work of Christ taking place, in an unseen way, in child-rearing, house-keeping etc.[55] He argues that this "hallowing" would contribute to "the redintegration of a damaged reality," that is, restoring the whole through a part (*EM,* 168). The Father Commissary gives value to Quiros' effort:

> [...] God will approve
> The work you have pursued with burning love,
> And all shall be made perfect at the last." (*CP*, 164/ St. 2)

This foreshadowed reward of Quiros' earthly effort in God's time ("at the last'") is developed further at the end of Quiros' vision of futurity, framed by a contemporary post-colonial sense of belatedness: "The times grow late; deep silence falls around" (*CP*, 174/ St. 2) and homelessness "But nowhere can man's spirit find a home" (*CP*, 174/ St. 3). The estranged city of modernity becomes Quiros' chief point of reference in his ongoing vision:

> "Yet in their lives time's fullness has begun.
> Nature has taken refuge in their hearts
> And there it puts its wedding garment on;
> They give fresh impulse to men's failing arts;
> They take the world from which they seem estranged
> Into love's workshop where it will be changed,
> Though they themselves die wretched and alone. (*CP*, 175/ St. 3)

Quiros' prophecy for the future ("time's fullness," – the author's or reader's present), offers a link to Nature's "hallowed creatures," and, thereby, some possibility for the amelioration of humanity's conditions. The abstract concepts of "Nature" and "love" enter the discourse about a post-Christian modern world, still loaded, as the latter is, with Christian values. "Love" also carries with it the traditional Christian connotations of charity and caring. In "love's workshop" Quiros envisages mankind as capable of carrying out love's work and bringing about small but useful changes. This echoes the prospect for the post-lapsarian Adam outlined by Milton's archangel Michael: "[…] by small / Accomplishing great things, by things deem'd weak / Subverting worldly strong […]."[56] "Nature," while abstract, unlike Rousseau's physical world, seems to carry Rousseau's sense of inherent goodness, a natural caring as might be known by customary man. Thus, a positive moral force is envisaged as entering into the heart of a transformed, if stoic, modern man inspired by Christian forms of love.

---

[55] McAuley. "Notes and Speculations." *EM*, 168. Cf. 6.4 (146).
[56] John Milton. *Paradise Lost*, XII. 566-567.

Quiros' words lead the reader out of the world of voyage, encounters, ideology, and human imperfection, through the sphere of McAuley's public man *persona* into the increasingly private domain of the nature poet McAuley, the phenomenological world of "poets and painters."[57] The vision in which "Nature has taken refuge in their hearts" (*CP*, 175/St.3) posits proximity to the natural world as enabling the young nation Australia to overcome its heavily tarnished history of dispossession and servitude. Arguably, proximity to Nature might be one of the few options available to modern man to connect with that ideal apprehended in Malope's place (*CP*, 121/ St. 2) and the suggestion of a restorative presence in "the figured Now" (*CP*, 173/ St. 4).

8.8 Protagonist and narrator: the dialectic on Utopia

Quiros, offers an idealistic quester archetype, the elevated character[58] appropriate for the epic. Markham noted Quiros' strong idealistic and religious bent, stressing his Portuguese identity, as distinct from the Spanish expedition leaders, whose negative qualities had been omitted from the text published by the Spanish Zaragoza.[59] Information Kelly gave McAuley in 1958, and later published, highlighted the missionary rather than imperial objectives of Quiros: "The intention of the Captain is in the first place the conversion of souls, and secondly that your Majesty may become a greater monarch by the submission of those people to your Majesty's obedience."[60]

To establish Quiros' questing credentials as a latter-day Christian visionary or crusader he is described in the third-person, somewhat remotely, usually, favourably, by Belmonte. Very early we learn Quiros' journey would be a "noble voyage" (*CP*, 112/ St. 5), his project "to win for Christ the Southern continent" (*CP*, 143/ St. 2), which would be peaceable in intention – "to lead with bloodless sword" (CP, 129/ St. 1), in an oxymoronic epithet. In Belmonte's credulous seventeenth-century voice it would be "this last true Crusade" (*CP*, 143/ St. 5). Belmonte uses epic epithets to describe the hero's various qualities: Quiros was a visionary "dreamer" (*CP,* 129/ St. 1), would go through "hard apprenticeship" (*CP*, 138/ St. 4), be compared to a poor pilgrim (*CP,* 142/St.1, *CP*, 143/St.2, *CP*, 144/St.5) or to the "one man wakeful" witnessing the "nightmare" (*CP*, 167/ St. 2). Against deteriorating violence he is described as a peace-maker (*CP*, 153/ St. 5), "prince of charity and valour" (*CP*,

[57] J.H. Van den Berg. *A Different Existence*. 1972: "Objects have something to say to us […] this is common knowledge among poets and painters." 76.
[58] Aristotle. *Poetics*. VI, 1449b, 8-9.
[59] Markham. Introduction to Hakluyt. xii.
[60] Celsus Kelly, ed. *Austrialia del Espiritu Santo*. 1966, 18.

171/ St. 4) although by his enemies called “crazy” (*CP*, 169/ St. 6), “‘that talker Quiros’” (*CP*, 161/ St. 5) and, with Belmonte, “headstrong zealots” (*CP*, 169/ St. 2). The mixed, hyperbolic descriptions underline something quixotic about the idealistic seventeenth-century Quiros.

Occasionally Quiros’ thoughts have an accented physical presence, as in several “spotlight” scenes (*CP*, 128-29/ St.5&1) after he has begged General Mendaña to stem the violence on Malope’s island:

> His troubled thoughts were like reflections thrown
> By water underneath an arch of stone,
> A wavering flow of chains of golden light. (*CP*, 128/ St. 5)

Aristotle had urged poets, in constructing plots to “work them out in diction with the material as much as possible in the mind’s eye,”[61] arguably even the hero’s visions. McAuley uses the physical, linking stars, the guide of navigators, with Quiros’ noble vision:

> Then calmed by prayer, southward his vision went
> Where like a kite of stars with blazing streamer
> The Cross hung over the last continent,
> Still waiting for the impress of the dreamer. (*CP*, 129/ St. 1)

The Southern Cross constellation is described with the newcomer’s observant periphrasis, as “kite” with its flying “streamer,” the latter rhyming with (the visionary) “dreamer.” In several dramatic passages the epic describes Quiros in more active mimetic mode, described by Plato as “the dialogue of characters – not the poet’s explanatory narration.”[62] These include Quiros’ brief questioning of the Vicar of the first journey with Mendãna about God’s purpose in the failed and bloody first excursion to the Solomon Islands: “‘How is it you, entrusted with Christ’s audit,/ Let this unnecessary blood be shed?” (*CP*, 134/ St. 4). The satirical thread through the narrative, arrives in the Vicar’s cynical reply: “[…] a priest must tread//“With circumspection when the sword is lifted/By lawful civil power” (*CP*, 134/ St. 4&5).

McAuley’s bitter disillusion with senior Catholic prelates flavours these words. The second major dramatic intervention occurs in the peace-loving Quiros’ pledge to refuse the more conventional robust leadership style advocated by Admiral Torres against disloyal expedition officials: “‘I vowed the blood would never stain my sword; / And though this resolution costs me dear, / And will cost more hereafter yet my word/Is more than life.” (*CP*, 153/ St. 2) The strength of his “word” (its meaning reinforced by the semi-rhyme of “sword”), underlines the primacy of his project’s peaceable objectives. In his epic

[61] Aristotle. *Poetics*. XVII, 1455a, 21-2.
[62] Plato. *The Republic*. Book III, 253.

proclamation mid-way through the action, Quiros highlights the heroic, God-sanctioned project, shared by the narrator:

"[…] This Great Work must rise clear
Of the earth's dross, refined by heavenly fire.
I am persuaded it is Christ's desire
That we should drive men on by love, not fear. (*CP*,153/St.2)

Another dramatic episode occurs in Quiros' brief and poignant questioning of the Father Commissary at the end of the failed expedition to the islands of Vanuatu: "'Where was the fault, that we have merited/No more than this from Heaven?" (*CP*, 162/ St. 4). The greater interest here lies in the authoritative Christian response of the dying Father Commissary on the impossibility of utopian settlements on earth, whether Christian or other – "'For in the midst of time God has not willed /The End of Time" (*CP*, 163/ St. 2).

Generally, the hero Quiros does not play a major dramatic role in the narrative, being mainly described in third-person, seemingly from afar, as part of the ongoing action. Quiros is several times portrayed by spotlights, including the ekphrastic, Byzantine portrait of him, as new leader, contemplating the second voyage:

By now the mind of Quiros had become
A temple in which Christ Pantocrator
Gazed down from the mosaic of the dome
To the symbolic world map on the floor. (*CP*, 143/ St. 2)

After the failure of his second expedition, Quiros, humbled, becomes the more interesting, unheeded prophet, who "[…] when a nation sleepwalks in a dream" is "the one man wakeful who must seem/ To act the nightmare, sole, delusion-bound" (*CP*, 167/ St. 2).

8.9 Quiros' Prophetic Vision

Drawing on the motifs of "sleep-walk," "dream" and "nightmare," Quiros becomes a fuller dramatic *persona*, at the conclusion of the poem, in the prophetic death-bed vision of his own projects, of history and futurity and a way for man to live a Christian life on earth in the time of modernity. In Part III, McAuley's inventiveness can be seen in his departure from his epic narration of the third expedition, to concentrate the desires and plans expressed in Quiros' many Memorials[63] into his death-bed vision. What Bushell describes as: "[…] a sequence of prophetic visions which have become apocalyptic […]," (26) recalls the powerful visionary

[63] After his second expedition in 1606 Quiros wrote numerous Memorials in support of his third expedition: three appear in Appendix to Hakluyt, 1904.

passages of McAuley's early work.[64] This fourth significant instance of mimetic representation occurs in the 21 stanzas between (*CP*, 172-176). The passage displays greater powers of invention than those described in the historical base-text.[65] McAuley recorded when writing, – how "the prophetic themes […] drag at the roots of my mind."[66] When Quiros eventually arrives at the South Land, if only through a vision at the conclusion of the poem, he gains greater dramatic power than in any of the other depictions. Quiros' death-bed prophecy describes how the unachieved objective of his expedition, this new world *Terra Australis* would be found, and transformed. It gives dramatic focus to the theme of historic origins at the core of this romantic quest poem.

In this "panel"[67] of elevated poetry, Quiros comments on the grand project and upon futurity, recounting the poem's penultimate period of time covering European exploration, colonization and settlement until the late 1950s of the poem's inception and completion. The auspiciousness of the occasion, the shift into an elevated tone reflects McAuley's powers of transformation of factual diegetic material into the epiphanic moment. This is seen when the narrator Belmonte describes Quiros' transfiguration when delivering his death-bed vision: "His eyes were prophecy that seemed to break / The seals of an illuminated scroll:" (*CP*, 171/ St. 5). "Scroll" connects with the original ekphrastic chart passage at stanzas *CP*, 111/ St. 2&3, and makes natural Quiros' prophetic evocation, first of time and then subsequent history. Time is conveyed symbolically through the poem's all-consuming, oceanic space:

> The long blue rollers of the Southern Ocean
> Had washed away the outlines of my dream.
> Over a sunken world forever lost
> The keels of navigators crossed and re-crossed
> And history was shaped to a new theme. (*CP,*172/St.1)

In his visionary travel through time Quiros sees many erasures[68] and overwritings of history, its motifs described ekphrastically, in map-makers' terms, as those "flat depictions in cartography" (*CP,* 173/ St. 3). As Bushell noted: "Conscious of the result of the publication of the "Memorials," the poet McAuley sees Quiros' dream become other men's reality: that of the Dutch, of Bougainville, of Cook." (26)

In contrast with the lush descriptions of tropical islands, the more factual and negative account of the sequence of historical encounters by and reports of the Dutch and English

---

[64] Such work includes "The Blue Horses," "The Incarnation of Sirius" and part of "A Letter to John Dryden."
[65] The 1904 Hakluyt English translation of *The Voyages of Quiros.* Cf.8.4 (184).
[66] McAuley. Notebook 7, 2 May 1959. Box 1, McAuley papers.
[67] Smith. "James McAuley's Recent Poetry." 1964, 27.
[68] Cf. 4.11 (107-8).

navigators is diegetic, as is the reference to the "illustrious Frenchman "(Bougainville) impeded by the "coral maze" (*CP,* 172/ St. 5), (a recurring symbol, underlining the quest's difficulty). Quiros' vision records the sighting of "the barren coast" of Western Australia "endowed with plagues of flies and brackish water" (*CP,* 172/ St. 2). True to traveller conventions the first description of a kangaroo, probably citing Dampier, conjures the unknown animal's strangeness, in its description by periphrasis, as: "[…] Strange beasts that stand/Or fleet on their hind legs" (*Ibid*.). Described from off the coast in Dobrez' "tourist speech of unfamiliarity" (1994, 29) with its "epistemology of difference," (1994 31) Australia "the true South Land [is] Unwelcoming and useless in their eyes (*CP,* 172/ St. 2). But the gaze is described as "their" (the British and European) as distinct from "our" point of view: the perspective of the Portuguese captain is distinguished from the gaze of the peripheral Europeans, suggesting that the Portuguese navigator may have been among the first authentic locals.[69]

Last among Quiros' arrivals is the "English captain" (Cook) for whom "At last the continent stands forth in relief" (*CP,* 173/ St. 1), a phrase which underlines the continent's tragic inaccessibility to its first quester Quiros. Thus, the death-bed vision shifts between steady narration and heightened soliloquy on the part of Quiros as he recites: "*Terra Australis* – mine, but never mine." (*CP,* 173/ St. 1) His vision involves the contemplation of, and sudden shifts, in time, that is one of the main subjects of the long poem: ""And many births of time I saw displayed / Like flat depictions in cartography […]" (*CP,* 173/ St. 3). This includes his plunge "Through deep perspectives of futurity" (*CP,* 173/St.3) until his epiphanic vision of the "South Land, vast, worn down and strange" (*CP,* 173/ St. 4). Quiros' first vision of Australia, in prophetic first-person voice, describes the continent he never reached in its pre-colonial idyll. "'I saw the South Land, vast, worn down, and strange / Man in his tribes, and insect, beast and tree," […] (*CP,* 173/ St. 4). Quiros' apprehension of an ancient strangeness echoes the experience of the uncanny frequently encountered in the first European gaze on the Australian landscape; it also echoes the earlier fateful visits to Malope's originary world. The destruction of that utopian world is outlined in images of a nightmarish newsreel of recent dystopian history and its accumulating catastrophes, especially for the original occupants:

> […] Under the shadow of harsh penal law;
> The natives shot and poisoned for their land; (*CP,*173/ St.4).

[69]The historian Gordon McIntyre has suggested Quiros was the "first patriotic Australian." 1987, 181.

It foregrounds McAuley's apocalyptic preoccupations with cold-war Australia, foreshadowing the end of what he saw as Christianity's benign influence being replaced by the deadening influences of secularist totalitarian systems. This is depicted as no longer confined to the personal vision of Quiros but rather the collective experience of universal man, albeit through an authorial voice, who describes the collapsed structures of faith and tradition:

> "The architecture of the world we knew,
> The cosmic temple framed with cross and dome,
> […] Lies empty like a ruined honeycomb.
> For colder, vaster systems rise instead; (*CP,* 174/St. 3&4)

The text resounds with the theme of homelessness, understandable in a travel narrative, but also the dominant contemporary theme of modernity and its settler-nations, the sense of mankind's spiritual alienation: "Beyond this earth discovery lies ahead/But nowhere can man's spirit find a home (*CP,* 174/St.4). That phrase reverberates with the sentiment of Christ in what seems a modernist moment of alienation described in Matthew 8:20: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air their nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." The apocalyptic "blue horses," motifs of the German expressionist Franz Marc present in McAuley's early 1940s poems, return to amplify a vision of global historical change after World War II which combines with imagery from St John's Apocalypse to depict a disastrous twentieth-century equivalent:

> The ancient Dragon wakes and knows his hour,
> The shaken stars fall in a burning shower,
> Blue horses rearing throw their charioteer. (*CP,* 174/ St. 4)

This section is both diegetic and mimetic in its fast-moving invocation of strong historical and symbolic imagery. It belongs to Northrop Frye's archetype of winter (223-239), and its associated genre of satire and irony.[70] This element is arguably seen in the poem's satirical pen-sketch (*CP,* 169/ St. 2-4) of the churchmen who seek to frustrate Quiros. Drawing on his own experience,[71] McAuley portrays and caricatures 1950s churchmen who opposed Santamaria's Catholic Social Movement:[72]

> One was a churchman in the recent style,
> Well suited to the failing age of drift,
> A cold, mean creature with placarded smile […] (*CP,* 169/ St. 3)

This is only one of the examples in the apocalyptic Part III of how the poet's tumultuous experience of Catholic lay politics in the mid-1950s informed and drove his cynical portrait of

[70] To the contrary, the outset of the journey (Part I) might be linked with the wonder of Frye's Spring archetype.
[71] Bushell (28) suggests that Kelly, in his studies, gives no evidence of the two Court clergy depicted.
[72] Archbishop Gilroy and Bishop Carroll. Cf. 7.2 (166-167).

clerical institutional authorities both in the seventeenth and twentieth-centuries, as well as broader concerns about secularism and the demise of the Christian world. Quiros' desperate vision of the present "like a ruined honeycomb" (*CP,* 174/ St. 3) and future matches the vision of the decadent world from which the expeditioners were departing in Part I: "a blind world of rain where men despair" (*CP,* 113/ St. 3). The explicit apocalyptical imagery of much of Quiros' vision in Part Three, reflects McAuley's dystopian view of modernity expressed in his essays in *EM,*[73] underlining his kinship with earlier twentieth-century poets – the later Yeats of "The Second Coming," and T.S. Eliot in the "The Waste Land." McAuley's technique in *Quiros* matches what Eliot described, reviewing Joyce, as a writer's mythic method, of looking into the past to glean meaning about what has been lost in the present.[74] This can be seen in McAuley's reading of the Apocalypse whose imagery is reflected in the motif of the dragon and falling stars in Quiros' vision.

In addition to the anxiety felt about modern decadence and loss of spirituality, in *Quiros* there is also a sense of rupture felt on behalf of Oceania's original people. The vision's fast-forward of fragments from Australian history brings to life the trope of "palimpsest," used later by José Rabasa (319) and others to describe successive imprints of the colonisers upon Australian and Pacific space. Quiros' Australia is "Still waiting for the impress of the dreamer" (*CP,* 129/St.1) and acknowledges the concept of rhizomic multiplicity in Australia's cultural roots.[75] Touched by questions of national identity, McAuley's own vision of Australia was ridden with ideals, doubt, fear and shame. *Quiros* is one of the few poems in which McAuley deals with the human as distinct from geographic Other, drawing on his experience in New Guinea. In it he shows what Derek Walcott has called "the remorse of the descendants of masters,"[76] linked to what Ashcroft et al. allude to in *Quiros* as the "melancholic sublime" (2009 124). The poem reflects the Empire "writing back"[77] to its centre or what Edward Said, perhaps in response to Pratt's earlier "voyage south," has described as "the voyage in."[78] It could also be compared with what Chinua Achebe said of his novel *Things Fall Apart*, as an attempt at an "act of atonement."[79] In this

---

[73] Cf. 7.3 (167-8).
[74] T.S. Eliot. "Ulysses, Order and Myth." *The Dial*, November 1923.
[75] Ashcroft and Salter. "Australia: A Rhizomic Text." 21.
[76] Derek Walcott. "The Muse of History." 329.
[77] Salmon Rushdie's iconic phrase, used for the title of the post-colonial text by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back*, 1987.
[78] Edward Said. "Resistance, Oppression and Representation." 1993, 97.
[79] Chinua Achebe. "Named for Victoria, Queen of England."145.

McAuley may have been taking forward Quiros' wish that in the southern continent "the evil deeds perpetrated in Mexico and Peru [against native people] should not be repeated."[80]

8.9.1 The Task of Narration

The narration of the major action (some 200 of 305 stanzas) is described at a distance, in diegetic mode, by a narrator busy describing action, time, and, to one commentator, offering "generalising,"[81] moral commentary, or homily, including on the flawed nature of human enterprise:

> He who would rise, in deed or poetry,
> To the height of a great action, must have first
> Eaten the harsh bread of reality. (*CP,* 138/ St. 5)

Smith describes "McAuley's use of a flat and narrative line" to recount the events of Quiros' story, noting how "this rises to 'high poetry' especially in […] the 'three panels' of the poem, including Quiros' vision." (1964 27) To the contrary, Vincent Buckley was dismayed to see the final draft as "even more persistently prosaic and pedagogical" than the first draft. (1983 178) The flat, classical diction was out of keeping with contemporary poetic fashion. However, McAuley deliberately resisted his friend's earlier advice, defending "a resolute acceptance of that level" in the narrative because of the "effective rendition in reading aloud."[82] The poet seems to have been mindful of what Aristotle has advised the epic poet on diction: "The poet should elaborate his diction especially in quieter passages which involve no characterisation or thought; "highly brilliant diction, on the other hand, obscures character and thought."[83]

Thus, the narrative occasionally erupts with patches of extraordinary lyrical, concrete beauty, especially in "quieter passages" of the ocean voyage and island visits. In researching the poem McAuley had read, among many other texts on early navigation, the study by the environmental writer Rachel Carson, *The Sea Around Us* (1952), notable for its poetic citations, including from nineteenth-century and classical writers. Carson's scientific background on ocean phenomena, is reflected in McAuley's poem, echoing Abrams' view of the epic as "that most ambitious of literary enterprises." (2009 97) McAuley saw the work "as a reply to Rimbaud, the heresiarch of modern poetry,"[84] who had written "Le Bateau Ivre"

[80] Markham. Introduction. Hakluyt, xxix. Ref. Quiros' Will, 291.
[81] Talbot. "Reasonable, Decorous and Epic." *Quadrant* 8.4, 1964, 71.
[82] McAuley. Letter to Buckley, 6 March 1959. Buckley Papers, Ms 229, ADFA.
[83] Aristotle. *Poetics*. XXV,1460b, l.37-40.
[84] Journal 10. Box 3, McAuley papers.

from reading books.[85] To the contrary, *Quiros* allowed McAuley to draw on his New Guinea experience, giving him "an empathy with Melanesian ways of thought […]."[86] Arguably, McAuley was following Aristotle's description of the mimetic role of the poet in depicting that wondrous world of the Ocean, also known as the early Greek god "Oceanus:" "Since the poet, like a painter or any other image-maker, is a mimetic artist."[87]

Quiros' voyage is studded with passages about the ocean, its moods and creatures and the region of sky and constellations, phosphorescence and the southern hemisphere *Aurora Australis*. The delight in such concrete language, foreshadows McAuley's subsequent departure from his universal style of diction. In high mimetic passages the seeming authorial narrator (Belmonte) invariably switches to present tense to evoke presences observed in the island landscapes, as in the first arrival at the volcanic Santa Cruz island, a passage which echoes his earlier New Guinea landscapes.[88] These are among the most evocative passages in *Quiros*. McAuley later confided that his long poem was "saturated with New Guinea. I couldn't have written it without that experience,"[89] as represented in the present-tense description of Quiros' exploration of the rainforest:

> The air hangs heavy like a warm wet cloth,
> Torn by the cockatoo's ominous scream;
> But where old gardens lapse to undergrowth
> Or the thick bush is cloven by a stream,
> As large as birds, the perching butterflies
> Parting their wings disclose in brilliant dyes
> The secret inner surface of a dream. (*CP,* 126/ St. 1)

The sensuous, if slightly nightmarish, stanza hints at the settlement's last moment of peace. It replicates the chronicle's record of Quiros' visit to the rainforest. The last three lines concerning the butterflies and their wing designs, with its metaphor of the "secret inner surface of a dream", however, derives from an observation in an earlier New Guinea notebook from the time of his illness.[90] The blending of sound with the tactile and visual in stanza 74, recalls the surreal dream landscape of McAuley's poem "New Guinea" – "The forest-odours, insects, clouds and fountains/Are like the figures of my inmost dream," (*CP*, 80). It recalls a description of butterflies' wings in Patrick White's poetic narrative and drama *Voss* (1957),

---

[85] *Ibid.* McAuley's note from Edith Starkie, *Arthur Rimbaud.*
[86] O.H.K. Spate. "Luso-Australia: In Maps and Verse." 16.
[87] Aristotle. *Poetics*. XXV, 1460b, l.7-9.
[88] McAuley. "A Celebration of Divine Love." *CP,* 75. Cf. 6.3 (144).
[89] Graeme Kinross Smith. "James McAuley:1917-1976." 317.
[90] McAuley. Notebook 4, 37. August 1951-54, Box 1, McAuley papers, Cf. 5.6 (122).

cited in McAuley's 1965 review: "[…] the world of semblance communicated with the world of dream. (*Voss,* 1957, 277.)[91]

This passage illustrated what McAuley perhaps tried to imitate, "White's ability to render the external scene in such a way as to convert it into a visionary landscape […]" (36) His New Guinea Notebooks would have unconsciously prepared the poet for his later work. In the nexus between his life and art, McAuley recorded in his Notebook (24 August 1958) that he would try to write the Malope section after he returned from New Guinea, with a fresher view of that tropical landscape. Not many of the *topoi* typically associated with Australia are present in McAuley's long, if out-dated attempt at a patriotic poem or *epopeia.* However, with the palms, turtles, rainforests and people of the south-western-Pacific – the "colour and marvellous world of the Pacific explorations" (Thompson 102), McAuley adds to the palette of Australian *topoi* its tropical north.

8.10 Luis de Belmonte: "The work that I was born to do"

In the source chronicle, *The Voyages of Pedro Fernandez de Quiros*, Belmonte's role as Secretary is only suggested in Markham's footnote: "Luis de Belmonte Bermúdez, the Secretary to Quiros, and probable author of the narrative."[92] Drawing on Markham's speculation, McAuley gives the Spanish narrator Belmonte a much bigger role in his *Quiros.* Belmonte is introduced briefly (*CP,* 112-113/ St. 6 & 2) in McAuley's first Proem (I) but only appears as a character half way through the narrative well into the Second Expedition in Part II (The Quest for the South Land): "I with Ercilla's[93] poem in my bag/ Had come on board as Quiros' Secretary" (*CP,* 146/ St. 1). Such detail signals Belmonte's ambitious poetic and literary aspirations. In his Quiros notebook (10) McAuley had recorded that: "One of Lope de Vega's disciples Luis de Belmonte Bermúdez, lived in Mexico 'where he wrote many comedies.'"[94] In Notebook 10 McAuley recorded his idea that Belmonte, the narrator, who is only mentioned briefly (twice) in the source chronicle, might have used information from one of the native boys[95] taken from the island Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides in the second

[91] Cited in McAuley. "The Gothic Splendours: Patrick White's 'Voss.'"1965, 37.
[92] Markham. Footnote, 1606 Voyage, Chapter IX. 200.
[93] Spanish epic poet Alonso de Ercilla (1533-1594).
[94] Journal 10. citing Madariaga, *The Rise of the Spanish American Empire,*186. Ercilla's poem, the three-part sixteenth-century epic *La Araucana* (1569-1589), is considered a national epic of the Spanish Empire in its war to colonise Chile, and like Quiros' chronicle, deals with the encounter with the Other. Like Belmonte, its author was a participant in the action. Perhaps more typical of its age, *La Araucana* did not show the empathy with the Other of Quiros' chronicle (Chapters X-XVII, Markham).
[95] Markham. Chapter XXX1, 275-6.

expedition, "with some licence [to] build up the picture of Malope's culture, transferring some themes from the New Hebrides to the related Santa Cruz."[96]

Consistent with the epic convention Belmonte enters the narrative halfway through ("in medias res.") However, the reader knows that Belmonte has been there vicariously, since the first stanza of the first Proem, recording actions of the First Expedition: "Spain bore me, Lope[97] and Ercilla gave such art as I possess in poetry" (*CP,* 113/ St. 2). In sequence, the first stanzas of the Proem of Part I ("Where Solomon Was Wanting") were collected and composed by the epic's narrator in about 1623/24 – 9 years after the end of the poem's last main action, – Quiros' death in 1614[98] – and 18 years after the 1606 Second Expedition. Belmonte's first-person account, if not his experience, begins early with Quiros' First Expedition of 1695: "With this new enterprise and its disaster / My theme begins" (*CP,* 112/St.5). In 1950s Australia, "[…] little [was] known of Luis de Belmonte Bermúdez."[99] Sevillian adventurer, soldier, notary, poet, secretary and faithful ally, Bushell records that Belmonte was well known in Spanish circles. He suggests that McAuley may have accepted the Spanish scholar Don Justo Zaragoza's theory that much of the Quiros journals were written by Belmonte, although some, probably dictated by Quiros.[100] Belmonte plays a major role in the articulation of the story, if not in its events: McAuley would have been acquainted through Celsus Kelly, with the content of the Spanish texts.[101]

In the action Belmonte is a minor character – memorable for being rescued from a whirlpool (*CP,* 149/ St. 1), and for officially proclaiming, on the beach at Vanuatu: "That the South Land as far as to the Pole / Was henceforth in the King of Spain's control" (*CP,* 157/ St. 2). His main role is as narrator: "Then of that noble voyage I shall tell […]" (*CP,* 112/ St. 5), from the beginning portraying himself as recorder of the Portuguese Captain Quiros' project and unfailing ally:

> […] my soul's friend and captain was the brave
> Projector of a new cosmography:
> O Lusitanian Star, now set in death
> Nine years ago, I vow my latest breath
> To bring your vision to posterity. (*CP,* 113/ St. 2)

---

[96] Notebook 10. Box 3, McAuley papers.
[97] Spanish poet and dramatist Lope de Vega (1562-1635) with Cervantes, reflected the high point of Spain's Renaissance literary "golden age."
[98] The date of Quiros' death is unclear, and the death-bed scene reflects poetic licence.
[99] Smith. 1970, 44, Fn 22.
[100] Markham. Intro. xi-xii.
[101] McAuley had only a brief, if significant, meeting, in July 1958, with Kelly, who published his research on Quiros in 1966, 6 years after McAuley's poem was completed.

From the outset, Belmonte sympathises with Quiros' desire to pursue the "inner and outer" voyage, including, in his first brief address as poet, to his art, and its own voyage, in the first Proem (or "Envoi" to Part I: "Go little stanza, set like a ship to sail/ Inner and outer Ocean […]" (*CP,* 113/ St. 3). Again, in the second Proem, echoing the "cosmography" of his "soul's friend and captain" (*CP,* 113/ St. 2) and the determination in his quest for *Terra Australis* (*CP,* 113/ St. 4), Belmonte renews his pledge to undertake the difficult task as narrator, poet and the heroic chronicler:

> […] to map that inward vision
> Or spiritual cosmography, whereby –
> As Noah in the vessel of derision
> Raised from the Flood a new humanity […] (*CP*, 141/ St. 3)

Such "stylistic abnormalities" for "mapping" Quiros' "inward vision" belongs to the repertoire of the epic poet, described by Aristotle.[102] The elaborate comparison with Noah's venture in his "epic" craft, demonstrates an appropriately rich allusiveness:

> Of settlers bound for a new heaven and earth –
> Our voyage was to be a solemn rite,
> A passing through the waters to rebirth
> In a new world […] (*CP,* 142/ St. 1)

"Our voyage" reinforces the strong alliance and identification of narrator with protagonist in joining, and recording in layered rhetoric, the settlers' consecrated utopian voyage ("solemn rite") of "rebirth." Belmonte accompanied, the eventually almost destitute, Quiros for eight years after the failed second expedition, until the Captain's death in 1614. He gave "such help to Quiros as I might" and "finding a patron, I began to write" (*CP,* 167/ St.4).

With Part II Belmonte's praise for Quiros' heroic action and vision transfers to praise for the work of the epic poem itself, "the heroic mysteries" (*CP,* 141/ St. 1). In invoking his own noble artistic project, the epic narrative, Belmonte imposingly establishes himself in the narrative, bearing the epic call, or "chamada,"[103] as much as its hero his project, and arguably replicating the presence of Camões:[104]

> O for the gift of tongues and prophecy!
> For these heroic mysteries require
> The voice of Elders chanting solemnly
> […] Let the resources of our fictive art
> Thrill to such tones, burning with new desire. (*CP,* 141/ St. 1)

[102] Aristotle. *Poetics*. XXV, 1460b, 10-12.
[103] Helder Macedo. *Camões e a Viagem Iniciática*. 1980, 33.
[104] *Ibid.* 34.

Belmonte's recital is artfully mimetic – its first-person plural "*our* fictive art"[105] projects an exclamatory and invocative voice to make an impassioned call to the muse linking the epic's "heroic mysteries" with a contemporary "fictive art." Belmonte's invocations, with Quiros' death-bed vision, represent the most heightened passages of an otherwise flat narrative, though, ironically, they dramatise a poetic voice McAuley had denounced as "magian."[106] Arguably, such bardic voice might be permissible in a grand work where invocations were to the traditional external muses of the genre rather than the hubristic god within the poet himself (Rimbaud) attacked in McAuley's "The Magian Heresy" (*EM*, 153). Nonetheless, Belmonte's envisaged "wonder-working icon against time" (*CP*, 143/ St. 1) might be compared with the "Great Work" envisaged by Rimbaud.[107] McAuley saw *Quiros* as "very much a Renascence poem [conjecturing that, at that point] all my best poetry [was] situated in the period between Spenser and Dryden [although] That does not prevent [*Quiros*] from being a production of a twentieth century consciousness." [108]

Abrams observes how the literary epic was ranked by Renaissance critics as the highest genre: "the most ambitious of poetic enterprises, making immense demands on a poet's knowledge, invention, and skill to sustain the scope, grandeur and authority of a poem that tends to encompass the world of its day and a large portion of its learning." (2009 97) McAuley commented similarly, after finishing *Quiros*, on the poetic subject: "Poetry needs the weight and discipline of a significant subject, deeply experienced."[109] Belmonte's Proem (Part II) describes that artistic challenge in characteristic amplified rhetoric:

> To chart in verse the voyage that I took
> In youth and hope to seek the Great South Land;
> To shut the sounding Ocean in a book
> By verbal spells; charm to an ampersand
> Each curling sea-horse; teach rough waves the dance
> Of formal metre – might one not sooner chance
> To draw out huge Leviathan with a hook? […] (*CP,* 141/ St. 2)

Using the first-person singular, it underlines the central role of the narrator poet – perhaps in contrast to his more reclusive navigator hero. The rhetoric is intricate, fanciful, almost Baroque**,** in the display of the epic technique of allusion, to prosody and other arts: navigation, cartography, calligraphy[110] dance and even whaling, suggested by the biblical name Leviathan.

[105] Writer's italics.
[106] Cf. 7.4 (171).
[107] McAuley. "The Magian Heresy." *EM*, 153.
[108] McAuley. Notebook 7. 30 December 1959, McAuley papers.
[109] McAuley. "Literature and the Arts." 1962, 133.
[110] Rosemary Dobson recorded McAuley's interest in calligraphy and cartography. "A World of Difference," 373. Cf.4.5 (92).

The verbal spell suggests the "magian" work of transformation necessary for Belmonte's grand project. The nautical allusion ("voyage") prepares for the extended navigational simile for a personal account of artistic voyage that lifts the reader from the impersonal pseudo-seventeenth-century poem into a more contemporary confessional mode:

> My life's concerns have seemed like ships dispersed
> On different coasts without a rendezvous;
> A set of unrelated roles rehearsed
> Without a play; jig-shapes belonging to
> No single puzzle. Now the parts combine,
> And I begin by unforeseen design
> To do the work that I was born to do. (*CP,* 142/ St. 2)

Belmonte's reference to "work" foreshadows Quiros' statement of his heroic, project when leading the Second Expedition: "This Great Work must rise clear/Of the earth's dross," (*CP,* 153/ St. 2). Belmonte's statement of artistic mission, of escape from the doldrums of *aporia*, resounds with McAuley's own initiatory poem "The Inception of the Poem" (*CP*, 108) recording his inspiration, two years earlier, by Quiros' ships "riding in" from his own past, with "their great concerns," to rescue him from "the dead pause" and offer him "a new start," or new "work" (*Ibid.*). Belmonte, like McAuley in "The Inception," can now begin: "To do the work that I was born to do," consciously echoing the words of Homer's translator into English, George Chapman.[111] Chapman had recorded, after translating Homer's *Iliad*: "The work that I was born to do, is done."

Belmonte's growing eloquence shows the intersection of the narrator and author with the next stanza's defiant statement of authorial purpose and commitment to this unusual, difficult project for a poem – outdated even in the voice of Belmonte in the early seventeenth-century when the first European voyages of discovery were being overtaken by the trade and colonising expeditions that followed Mercator's more secure maps:

> Therefore I have less care who shall approve;
> For poems in this kind are out of fashion,
> […] I play a match against the age's mind:
> The board is set; the living pieces move. (*CP,* 142/ St. 3)

McAuley's work weaves in and out of itself: the robust defence here in *Quiros* of the "out of fashion" long epic narrative recalls the obstinate adoption of the archaic epistle five years earlier in "A Letter to John Dryden" (1953), evoking Dryden's seventeenth-century world "When poets had a public" (*CP,* 95), although cultivated, very small in number. Such "kind of verse / Well-bred and easy, energetic, terse" (*CP,* 86) complies with urgings in McAuley's

[111] Chapman's "Hero and Leander" had furnished the goddess Ceremony for McAuley's "The Hero and the Hydra." (1947-48). Cf. 5.1 (114).

essays earlier in the 1950s[112] to revive old poetic kinds, like the epic, that favoured rational discourse, and gave scope to subjects of moment, in contrast to the currently fashionable, short image-centred lyric. Among McAuley's works, and following in the tradition of "A Letter to John Dryden," the work of the epic narrative *Quiros* strives to be "A wonder working icon against time" (*CP,* 143/ St. 1) in what subject and author consider "a failing world" (*Ibid.*).

Belmonte foreshadows the end of the quest-work through completion of the poetic-work. Thus, in Part III, when the narrator-companion records Quiros' last words at his death-bed vision – "The travail of my soul is satisfied" (*CP,* 175/ St. 5), it links Quiros' "Great Work" with both the French "travail," and the Middle-English meaning of "labour" as suffering. With the death of the hero, the faithful, likeminded narrator, a man of literary representation rather than a man of action, also reaches the end of his journey and task. McAuley, the textual author, not far beneath those lines, shares the lightening of Belmonte's burden, and the observation of a new day: "I heard the voices of the silence sing;/And then the birds woke ready for the day." (*CP,* 176/ St. 3)

8.11 Reception

McAuley referred to novelist Patrick White's "[…] own admitted ekphrastic plan, to make *Voss* like a Blake drawing, on the mystical, and a Delacroix on the worldly."[113] Of his own work, McAuley admitted to being decidedly architectural. (Thompson 104) Its style is arguably Baroque, or even Mannerist like that of his master, Camões, and possibly Ercilla, in its epic allusiveness, its ornate shifts backwards and forwards in time, its elaborate and artfully laboured metaphors, and its archaic diction, a style appropriate to its setting in the late Renaissance/early Baroque period. In 1950s Australia it would seem extraordinary beside the more austere, "naturalistic" language of contemporary poetic tradition, which McAuley described as: "against imitativeness in writing, and impatient with care and refinement as being in some way incompatible with the 'dinkum.' In fiction the tradition imposes the naturalistic approach."[114]

A defensiveness, in the authorial voice of *Quiros*' narrator, underscores the anachronistic extense of McAuley's project, pursued doggedly, against the advice of his literary colleagues. Belmonte, foreshadows and anticipates such criticism even in his

[112] McAuley. "The Magian Heresy." 1957, and "Notes and Speculations,"1958.
[113] McAuley. "The Gothic Splendours." 36.
[114] McAuley. "Literature and the Arts." 123. "Dinkum" is a colloquial Australian expression meaning authentic.

seventeenth-century literary circles when he confides to the reader, as also implied in McAuley's letter to Dryden: "Poems in this kind are out of fashion" (*CP,* 142/ St. 3). Quiros' reception in early 1960s Australia was luke-warm if not critical. An early reviewer, Norman Talbot warned: "few critics are sure how to treat McAuley's poetry."(75) A.D. Hope, acknowledging the poem was "a match against the mind of the Age," admitted "such reviews […] as I have seen indicate that the age is reluctant to entertain the idea."[115] He diagnosed the problem as one of genre in that it:

> […] asks [the reader] to take de Quiros' vision quite as seriously as he took it himself […] In other words the poem is a serious religious epic and like its models Camoens' epic and the *Aeneid*, it is both religious and patriotic. This sort of religion and this sort of patriotism seem both completely out of fashion among modern critics and readers. (1964 109)

McAuley had sent Vincent Buckley an early draft, telling him that the poem was meant to be read aloud,[116] and had already been well received. Buckley thought that McAuley had not been well served by that audience." (1983 178) Some reviews were positive, though the response was at best mixed. Talbot considered it "by far the most important poem McAuley has written." (75) Smith praised its "balance and harmony, the fineness of its architecture, […] the skilled placing of emphasis and scene, (1965 41), though later judged it "less than a complete success." (1981 388) *Quadrant* co-editor Coleman described it as "McAuley's discursive masterpiece." (1980 89) Historian Oscar Spate observed: "Quiros is nobly honoured in [a] memorial written centuries after him." (1979 18) The descriptive passages about the journey across the Pacific Ocean and chief Malope's island world at Santa Cruz in stanzas (*CP*, 119-121) were widely praised. Smith thought they evoked "a sense of the world of presences and natural harmony and delight in which Malope and his people move." (1964 27) David Bradley judged that "only in such passages is the poet free of architectural problems," (457) underlining once more the problem of form.

Echoing Abrams Bradley adverted to the notorious difficulty of writing reflective narrative: "the task of composing a meditative epic […] is staggering in its immensity [and] the dramatic and narrative aspects of the story are constantly sacrificed in order to retain the essential subjectivity of the poem."(457-458) Hope thought the poem deserted "the epic pattern for that of the reflective or discursive poem.[…] its characters are therefore presented at second remove and cannot have the immediacy, the dramatic presence of the true epic."

---

[115] A.D. Hope. "Captain Quiros." *Twentieth Century*,1964, 111.

[116] *Captain Quiros* was broadcast on radio in instalments for a total of two hours. Deborah Hayes, "'Visions of the Great South Land' in Peter Sculthorpe's Opera *Quiros,*" *The Soundscapes of Australia: Music, Place and Spirituality*, 2007, 151.

(1964 115) Once he had identified its narrative form, as "not epic but discursive, not dramatic but descriptive," Hope, with qualification, acknowledged that "in its own genre it is a remarkable and a beautiful poem and a profound one." (1964 116) McAuley thus offered a hybrid of the epic form. Smith observed McAuley's "use of a "flat" narrative line to recount the events of Quiros' story, [which] rises to "high poetry," especially in the "three panels" (1965 42) of epiphanic or mimetic representation, including Quiros' death-bed vision (*CP*, 172-176). Hope accepted such "flatness" as "quite deliberate. The author intends to catch the tone of any authentic, plain-spoken contemporary chronicle history or traveller's report." Nonetheless Hope concluded that, in his deliberate and predominant pursuit of plain speech, McAuley "sacrifices two of the traditional aspects of epic poetry: energy and grand manner." (1964 115)

Whether the poem was intended for a listening or a reading audience, a significant problem was its length, and the difficulty of sustaining impact over a period of time: this probably explained McAuley's insistence on a plain style to facilitate the narrative. While many passages of heightened poetry would attract attention and praise for the originality of the ideas and rhetorical richness it would have been harder for a contemporary audience to "suspend its disbelief," as Coleridge suggested, over a protracted period.

8.11.1 Diction: "the difficult height of the sublime"

Aristotle advocated in the poet's exercise of imitation, "diction which includes loan-words, metaphor and many stylistic abnormalities; we allow poets these."[117] Notwithstanding, the tendency to follow plain style, *Quiros* abounds with archaic language, arguably extravagant metaphor, and obscure vocabulary, helping to locate his work in another age. The elevated figurative language is evident from the beginning: – "How faint these images have faded since / Daring Magellan set his keel to plough/Reality […]" (*CP*, 111/ St. 4) – although this rhetoric benefits from a saving sparseness. Other passages veer into bathos: "Daily they searched the empty latitudes, / Where the exultant whale finds pasturage:" (*CP*, 118/ St. 5). Some exoticisms are borne out of the author's esoteric musical knowledge, when describing the island canoeists' approach: "Antiphonally they sang as they advanced" (*CP*, 149/ St. 3). Many archaisms can be accepted as the language of its time, such as Quiros' warning to his church superiors of his fear of the South Land being claimed by the Protestant nations: "the cockatrice of heresy" (*CP*, 169/ St. 1).

[117] Aristotle. *Poetics.* XXV, 1460b,10-12.

In a long narrative, a certain enrichment and variation of descriptive expression, including archaisms, was conventional and necessary, including the prevalent literal use of a frequently capitalised Christian language of belief, both by the characters and their narrator. Similarly amplified would be Belmonte's invocation: "O God, amidst distractions manifold" (*CP*, 143/ St. 1), the Quiros/Belmonte language: "the long exile of the Lord's delay" (*CP*, 151/ St. 1), and the more elaborate figurative expressions, of the oxymoronic description of Christianity as "Love's gentle yoke" (*CP*, 145/ St. 2) from Matthew 11:29-30. A consistent objection to *Quiros* relates to the author's pursuit of a universal if decorous diction, as outlined in his *EM* essays (1959) and exemplified in his latest collection of poems *VC* (1956) and

further described in the title of Talbot's review – "Reasonable, Decorous and Epic." (69-75) Thus, McAuley's diction appears too flat, prosaic, universal and lacking in local colour, or too elevated.

Reflecting on his artistic challenge of pitching the poem at the right level, Belmonte states: "To hold the difficult height of the sublime" as something other poets might "lightly" "refuse" – "Soon tiring, soon distracted, it pursues/Some lesser fancy, trifling for a rhyme […]" (*CP*, 143/ St.1). In this hybrid passage the poet-narrator-subject presumably understands "sublime" in terms understandable in the seventeenth, or even anachronistically the late eighteenth-centuries, – as "lofty in thought or language."[118] Kane refers to sublimity's romantic heritage – "what the romantics called imagination or vision or sublimity […]." (14) The doubt raised by the author, through Belmonte, is the "difficulty" anticipated in a contemporary disinclination to heightened, imprecise language in a time of plain style. Nonetheless, the "sublime" was considered necessary to the narrator's (and author's) heroic goal of conveying, through the "wonder-working icon" (*CP*, 143/ St. 1), the vision of the architectural *Quiros* project.

Talbot expressed little patience with the narrator's "too predictable use of epithet." (72) Yet readers might be moved to suspend their disbelief, to accept such language as that of the Renaissance characters of this long narrative. McAuley reflected on his recent approaches to diction, insisting he had wished: "to use a language without mannerisms or period characteristics: a living speech, but distilled, as it were, from the whole poetic reservoir of language since Spenser."[119] He noted:

[118] It precedes an understanding of Ashcroft's "horizonal sublime." Cf. 8.6 (191).
[119] McAuley. 30 December 1959, Notebook 7. Box 1, McAuley papers.

> No doubt the result is not without idiosyncracy and period peculiarities, but I have not sought or cultivated a style in that sense. Not that I would dare to say that this sort of relatively "timeless" and non-individualistic language is the proper thing to aim at: it is merely a deep-seated wish of my own, which I have been conscious of for fifteen years or so.[120]

Angry Penguins sympathiser, Geoffrey Dutton, wrote a vituperative review for *Australian Letters* (1959 53)[121] about early published passages of *Quiros,* ridiculing what he saw as McAuley's "girding his old rhetorical armour […] to have a crack at the sublime" (53) and condemning "the hollowness of McAuley's diction" (52). Taking up Belmonte's rhetorical challenge to the age: ("I play a match […] the living pieces move […]" (*CP*, 142/ St. 3), Dutton stated: "Let's hope that the pieces do live; chess-men are usually very dead indeed." (53). More moderately, Talbot noted the "datedness of the language" and "a woodenness of inflection." (72) This critical allegation of "deadness" intuits McAuley's sense of *aporia* when he started the poem.

Assertions of "deadness," described by Jennifer Strauss as "mechanicalness of mimesis,"[122] are constant in critiques of McAuley's diction in his more impersonal phase up until 1960, including *Quiros* and long after he had abandoned formal language for more contemporary, simpler vocabulary. Dobrez was impatient with the poet in his Catholic phase, describing *Quiros* as "cold, formal and remote." (1976 178) In 1971, Wallace-Crabbe reinforced Dutton's 1959 assessment, in his own critique of "Belmonte's Prologue:" "too often the search for a classic order has entailed the loss of response to the language as a living thing, with the result that McAuley has produced a species of deadened English – he has 'writ no language' but has instead laid down stunned words side by side." (1971 329) This was perhaps unfair given McAuley's poetic diction and tropes had changed considerably since the late 1950s. Les Murray, in an obituary piece for McAuley, more precisely described *Quiros* and "other consciously splendid poems of this middle period" as "overblown and their language dated and dead." (187)

Such assessments can be traced to taste and fashion which McAuley deliberately transgressed. Nonetheless the cool reception might be partly explained by the fact that the polemical McAuley had caused upsets in literary circles.[123] Buckley comments: "His politics brought much obloquy on him […]. (1983 177) McAuley, stung by this criticism, took it so

---

[120] *Ibid.*
[121] Buckley comments that the South Australian journal *Australian Letters* campaigned against McAuley (*Cutting Green Hay*, 177).
[122] Jennifer Strauss. "From Heroism to Pietàs." *Meanjin*, 1989, 598.
[123] Mainly in relation to the "Ern Malley" affair and "A Letter to John Dryden" but also his increasingly conservative politics.

seriously as to introduce “deadness” (akin to *aporia*) as a motif within his own poetics, notably in the much anthologised autobiographical poem “Because” (1967),[124] underlining his revisionary approach. In it the presumably autobiographical subject refers to a childhood apprehension of “that central deadness: the despair / Older than any hope I ever knew” (*CP,* 201) Nonetheless, McAuley defended his pursuit of a universal language: ”I feel I want to draw upon the common stock of language and to write a poem that people 500 years ago could have read, largely, and that one might read in 500 years’ time.” (Thompson 99) After finishing the long poem, in a more nuanced reflection on his supposed “neo-classicism,” he wrote that since his public engagement in matters of contemporary literary style, [from 1944 with the Ern Malley statement]:

> […] the only “style” I want is what happens to one’s language in the course of aiming at the realisation of a particular vision. One can no longer be a classicist in the sense of believing that there is only one true natural law and order for poetry – except perhaps in some wide sense that yields no special prescriptions (*poesis perennis*) – and it is a narrowing thing to be a neo-classicist imposing special rules of artifice in an over- intellectual fashion.”[125]

McAuley thus underlines his later abandonment of the “narrowing” rhetoric of *Quiros*, again signalling the dynamic of change in his work.

8.11.2 The myth of Quiros

McAuley’s choice of navigator explorer was “a natural one for an Australian poet – the discovery of the South Land and the significance of that discovery, and hence of modern Australia, in the history of the human spirit.” (Bradley 455) The poet admitted: “Part of my poetry has always been concerned with this feeling of historical change and the great crises in culture.” (Thompson 98) Strauss noted Quiros’ “epic possibilities” and “special relevance to the defining of an idea about Australia.” (606) In the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries *Terra Australis* was already a European imagining. Philip Mead, has argued that *Quiros* could be considered “false genealogy” in the tradition of the constructed mythical tales of Camões’ *The Lusiad*, Virgil’s *Aeneid* and the hoax Gaelic epic poem by “Ossian.” Nonetheless, Mead concedes that “fake language and literature can function as powerful foundations of national identity and culture.” (2008 93) McAuley’s historical *epopeia* can also be compared with the historical set of short poems by the Portuguese twentieth-century exponent of poetry of mask, Fernando Pessoa, in his long-contemplated *Mensagem* (*Message*) (1934), significantly written

[124] Cf. 9.8 (244-246).
[125] Notebook 7.30 December 1959, Box 1, McAuley papers.

in his own name or Fernando Pessoa orthonym.[126] While not in epic form, it takes up epic subject matter in re-imagining Portugal's future ascendency out of its rich history of navigations and discovery. Both intrinsically essentialist, evoking an oceanic identity of absences, *Quiros* and *Mensagem,* are twentieth-century poems imagining historical regeneration. Both are haunted by the imposing work of the common predecessor Camões, using the mask of historical voyagers and voyages to explore unattainable, unknowable futures. However, the influence of the epic poet Camões would be stranger and more exotic in the work of the Australian poet than in that of the earlier twentieth-century Pessoa unknown to him.

Later critics, sensitive to post-colonial perspectives, have expressed discomfort with the choice of the colonial journey as the poem's archetype. Even in 1964, Hope adverted to the problems associated with McAuley's religious, patriotic subject matter. Strauss, in 1989, saw it as "simply indecorous to speak a good word for colonisation in this day and age." (606) However, Strauss was perhaps reading too literally. As McCredden remarks (1992 43) there is constant ironising in the depiction of Quiros' heroic objectives, such as seen after the first port-side *debâcle* even before their departure from Peru when Mendaña encourages Quiros to stay with the expedition: "[…] to share/Christ's holy purpose in their voyaging." (*CP*, 115/ St. 2). The text's empathetic depiction of the Santa Cruz segment, (Malope's world), and the narrative's consistent critique of the Spanish atrocities reflect the poets' extensive experience through ASOPA with strategies for decolonisation and an understanding of contemporary anthropological questions. At a time of strengthening post-colonial consciousness in the 1980s the objection would have been to the choice of subject,[127] a problem McAuley would have shared with his contemporaries. Talbot commented quite fairly: "Quiros might blight the Southern Land rather than bring the light to it." (72) Quiros was well aware of the tragic and ironic consequences of the encounter between the old West and the New World, as Strauss eventually recognises: "McAuley shows an appreciation of its cupidinous [sic] and violent farce." (607) Robert Dixon thought it: "[…] worth remarking how closely McAuley's criticisms of Australia's colonial project in New Guinea anticipate the thrust of much current post-colonial theory." (2001 174)

McAuley was not entirely free to control his subject matter, though he did choose it: it was his personal mission to retell a chronicle about a Catholic missionary explorer seeking to bring the Word to the "untold" Other peoples of the Southern hemisphere in the early

[126] Cf. 4.7 (98).
[127] Aspects of this question are explored by Margery Fee in "Who Can Write as Other?" Cf. 8.6 (192).

seventeenth-century. The description of Quiros' Corpus Christi day celebrations in Vanuatu is embellished by McAuley's own experience of its colourful enactment at the Sacred Heart Mission in Yule Island, New Guinea. (Santamaria 45) Despite the recurrent ironising, a lingering utopianism sometimes surfaces in McAuley's text in describing Quiros' visionary Christian project for the first world peoples of the southern hemisphere. The poem's prime subject matter of early European colonisation draws on authorial debates on contemporary ideological questions. Marxian cultural historian, John Docker, objected to what he called McAuley's "medieval Aristotelianism"[128] in his exploration of his Catholic social theory. He criticises McAuley on ideological grounds for "seeing modern history not as a period of defeat, but as a crucial apocalyptic moment, the moment in which traditional values can step in again and win." (74) Though he was mainly referring to McAuley's argument's in the *EM* essays, like many critical readers, Docker conflates the author McAuley with a literal reading of McAuley's character Quiros.

The reworking of the myth of Quiros, as seen in his last vision, shows McAuley's concern with change, an interest first evident in his early apocalyptic poetry written during the period of World War II, as reflected in "The Blue Horses" and "The Incarnation of Sirius." He commented later:

> The face of Europe was changed. This did something to me. Part of my poetry has always been conceived with this feeling of historical change and the great crisis in culture. (Thompson 98)

Quiros' journey to Australia offered McAuley a unique trope for exploring "his search for a unified world view by embracing the Catholic faith," (Bradley 443) "an image for existence and motivation […] for religious dedication, for the search for Eden and for the meaning of life" (Kinross Smith 317) but also most importantly for stating "McAuley's belief that any kind of this-worldly fulfilment is impossible." (Smith, 1981 389) Others observed the difficulties associated with the *Quiros* exercise. Biographer Peter Coleman saw his friend and colleague Jim, "trying too hard, they say, to be in Milton's terms "doctrinal to the nation."[129] Mead thought McAuley had "wasted a decade […] on anti-modernist polemics and a retrograde attempt at epic." (1990 519) Mead's critique of the "anti-modernist" author of *Quiros* applies to ideas and forms and McAuley's inherent need for something pre-modern. For this reason, McAuley's "retrograde" attempt, his resolute going "against the grain," shows him, here, more than in any other work, grappling with romantic motifs, tropes and

[128] John Docker. "James McAuley: The Poetry and the Man." *Arena*, 1971, 74.
[129] Coleman. "Remembering James McAuley." 1999, 57.

postures rarely met in the Australian literary tradition, other than in McAuley's precursor Brennan. The work is consistent with all the romantic archetypes proposed by Northrop Frye: McAuley's words on Brennan seem apposite to his own work: "the quest itself is a positive value, and failure in the quest is better than failure to seek."[130]

Not only its forms, but the questions the poem poses about national identity and purpose, utopian questions about the basis for establishing a just society seem to belong to an earlier time. Nonetheless, they were being asked by contemporary Marxian theorists. If only because of the scope of its imagining, McAuley's long narrative, notwithstanding its "Catholic taint" and its "old-fashioned" carapace, can be seen as an ambitious, courageous, sometimes visionary effort among the twentieth-century renderings of the journey south.[131] McCredden links Talbot's earlier comment on Australian literary critics' difficulties with McAuley's poetry, to the tendency to "equate the man with his texts."[132] He was "dismissed by many (left) literary critics of the sixties and seventies as a cold-war Catholic apologist and right wing political voice."[133] Nonetheless, Vincent Buckley, who knew McAuley well, saw him "'not [as] a right wing catholic' but a thinker whose main concern was 'the destiny of man.'"(1960 14) McCredden has argued for readings that enable "the texts to be seen again by a literary establishment which had rigidly assigned McAuley to a purely public schematic posture, in some ways taking him simply at his own literal word."[134] This suggests a reluctance to read the "myth" of Quiros as an imagining of an alternate historical and cultural regeneration rather than as a literal critique of Australia's historical foundation. It may further reveal possible grievances against the instigator of the Ern Malley *fracas*, with Paul Kane also asking "whether there was not something in Australia fundamentally antagonistic to romantic idealism." (16)

8.12 Looking for Quiros

McCredden argues that "the mixed reception [of] the largely neglected long poem […] is partly due to critics' failure to deal with the rhetorical manoevres which construct its mythical/ iconic landscape."[135] Confusion may arise between the *personae* of Quiros and the narrator/secretary/intra-diegetic authorial voice of Belmonte. Smith observes that "one can

[130] McAuley. "Homage to Chris Brennan." 141
[131] Pratt. "Mapping Ideology." 158.
[132] McCredden. "Any Hope of Self-Construction." 1989, 61.
[133] McCredden. "Mastering Romanticism […]." 269.
[134] *Ibid*.
[135] McCredden. "Between Position and Desire: The Love Poetry of James McAuley." 1991, 44.

see in Quiros the kind of *persona* McAuley has always needed – a Henry the Navigator, a Prometheus – to voice his spiritual aspirations and his intellectual convictions." (1970 37)

When he wrote "to read Jim McAuley is to know a questing spirit,"[136] Coleman must have been thinking primarily of the quest-epic *Quiros*. There is a distinction between the *persona* of Quiros, secretary Belmonte, the authorial voice and others, especially the authoritative Father Commissary. On Quiros' pacifism McAuley commented that "my own choice in situations is not likely to be that of Quiros." (Morphett 13) Initial readings tended to equate Quiros with the author McAuley. His choice of the historic *persona* Quiros is explained by Bushell as deriving from strongly felt kinship:

> Diverging from the English-history version of Spanish voyages of discovery, he found a Portuguese character congenial to himself, and through him was able to express something of his own world-view, which shared a remarkable feeling for the culture of the indigenous people. (24)

In his review Hope contests that Quiros' vision is not to be taken as McAuley's. Hunt[137] conjectured that Quiros was inspired by the political activist Bob Santamaria, who seemed to want to establish, like Quiros, his own "new heaven and earth" (*CP*, 157/ St. 4) in Australia, nearly 400 years later. A description of Santamaria as "hugely persuasive"[138] also suggests "that talker" Quiros" (*CP,* 161/ St. 5). Another more recent portrait confirms a likeness: "the skeptical, secular, isolated Anglophone society of mid-twentieth-century Australia was surely stony ground for an ideologue with a European sensibility and a vast plan to reorder society according to a rational and divine moral order."[139] McAuley seemed to expect Santamaria's recognition: "You will perhaps see more in the poem in certain aspects than most people, because the experiences that I have brought to bear in interpreting the historical situation is our experience."[140]

While a possible avatar for Quiros – devout, idealistic, campaigner, fighter, Santamaria, was probably less suspicious than McAuley of utopian schemes. However, Santamaria was also real and complex. Quiros' value to McAuley was his remoteness. "Riding in on his ships from [McAuley's own] past," he offered the poet a degree of creative freedom. Shadowed by his cultivated chronicler Belmonte, Quiros readily offered McAuley the historic mask he needed for undertaking a grand literary project to explore a dialectic about man's possible role in society, in times past, present and future.

---

[136] Coleman. "Remembering James McAuley." 1999, 57.
[137] Peter Hunt. Letter to McAuley, 17/3/1976. Box 5, McAuley papers.
[138] John Challis. "Recollection of a Perth Movement Chaplain." *Journal ACHS*, 2014, 86.
[139] Franklin, Nolan, Gilchrist. *The Real Archbishop Mannix*. 2015, 243.
[140] McAuley. Letter to B.A. Santamaria. in B.A. Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, 281.

8.13 <u>Where is the Author in the Poem?</u>

McAuley considered the poem: “mainly objective, though it has some personal ingredients in it” (Thompson 102) McAuley had wanted to write the poem in the 1940s but had found “I wasn’t ready for it. It’s a complex of things. Quiros represents to me the fascination of the whole theme of voyaging and discovery, which has been one of the themes that’s stayed with me. He represents also the combination of the heroic, with, in his case, an extraordinary sensitivity and humanity. It's the humaneness and the religious dedication of the man […] I felt “Well, it’s the perfect theme.”[141]

Quiros' author might be described, as Belmonte described Quiros, as the “Projector of a new cosmography” (*CP*, 113/ St. 2) who travelled, mentally at least, on an inner journey, far from the shores of his Australian intellectual contemporaries into the conceptual realms of metaphysics and the apocalyptic. McAuley’s ideas however, were not the same as those of Quiros though they overlapped, seen in the moderating comment offered by the Father Commissary and to a greater extent by the narrator: “that stalking horse for McAuley, an ironic cover for his own personality.” (Talbot 71) Removed from the political and spiritual engagement of Quiros or Santamaria, we might observe McAuley’s true mask in the secretary and poet Belmonte, whose dedication to his epic chronicle closely matches that of McAuley.

An authorial voice is evident in the Proems, notably Belmonte’s elaborate address to his epic project in the Proem to Part I, evoking the risk of the artistic process suggested by the voyage trope: “Go little stanza, set like a ship to sail/Inner and outer Ocean. […]” as it travels through “wintry storms,” “the reef-maze” and “a blind world of rain where men despair.” (*CP*, 113/ St. 3) Bushell detects the barely disguised puppet-master behind the narrator, in Belmonte’s invocation in the Proem to Part II: “O for the gifts of tongue and prophecy,” how it reflects “the aspirations of the Belmonte Bermúdez (alias James McAuley).” (28) An authorial voice is also present in Belmonte’s reference to the artistic process of inspiration and composition in the Proem to Part I:

> And all thing I have long kept in my heart,
> Collecting them in ceaseless meditation
> Till like a horded [sic] treasure after cleaning
> They glowed for me in their true light and meaning,
> According to the method called Ignatian.
> (*CP*, 112-113/ St. 6-1)

[141] Thompson.102. See also McAuley, Notebook 7, 22 June 1958-30 January 1960.

This narratorial meditation reflects McAuley's long-held argument for objectivity in the artistic process: "ceaseless meditation" on Quiros' history is linked with the symbolism borrowed from Dürer of polished "treasure," presenting the artistic process as a meditative, Wordsworthian, inner transformation rather than inspiration arriving suddenly from above in the classical tradition. The motif "horded treasure after cleaning" (*CP*, 113/ St. 1), also linked with Ignatian meditation, was becoming an important recurring motif in McAuley's work, which is discussed in Chapter 11.[142] Hope attributes the narrator's statement – "The work that I was born to do" (*CP*, 142/ St. 2) to the author McAuley (1964 111). In this we, surely, must conclude that with Belmonte speaking, the author, is nearly always, somewhere safely behind.

8.14 The Heroic Project: "This lonely passage to tread"

The vision of man and society in *Quiros* was the culmination of themes and concepts already elaborated over ten years in McAuley's *EM* essays.[143] It was however, a lonely project: neither the vision nor the poem met with more than a cool reception, even from McAuley's closest supporters. Les Murray attested: "McAuley was anything but a conformist in the age he lived in." (187)

By 1960 McAuley was increasingly out of step with the mainly left-leaning intellectual and literary mainstream though he remained in the intellectual milieu of the politically conservative *Quadrant*. With *Quiros* nearly completed, McAuley told Vincent Buckley about the difficulty of "this lonely passage to tread"[144] in his current political, philosophical and literary undertakings. Buckley understood that McAuley's "poetry and criticism alike come from a willingness to stand alone […]." (1960 13) Dutton, less sympathetically, saw "the pose of self-conscious martyr, of the unwanted serious and unfashionable poet." (1959 51) McAuley's discomfort was evident when he recalled 15 years later how: "I was certainly going against the stream, and one suffered in estimation because of that […] People whose critical judgment or approval one would most like to have had […] clearly thought I was going off in the wrong direction […]" (De Berg 11, 349) McAuley, nonetheless, felt a frustrating lack of comprehension: "people who read my poetry weren't really reading it." (*Ibid.*) Like Belmonte, he stuck to his project "One simply has to go through this, it's not without a good deal of discomfort that one does feel one is isolating oneself." (*Ibid.*) Strauss recognised that such

[142] Cf.11.9 (310-311).
[143] Nonetheless the maze *topos* central to the journey archetype would be linked by McAuley with the quest for self.
[144] McAuley. Letter to Vincent Buckley, 6 March 1959. ADFA.

solitude, was an integral condition of his "overtly heroic art." (598) The archaic poetic form and the historic *persona* of Quiros and his chronicler Belmonte, chosen by McAuley were part of the mask that he deemed necessary for this part of his twentieth-century poetic journey. As theorist Michael Hamburger observed about Yeats and Hofmannsthal, (the latter admired by McAuley) "poetic form itself can act as a mask." (82)

The critic Elizabeth Sewell, investigating lyric explorations,[145] wrote about the epic nature of Wordsworth's nineteenth-century project "The Prelude:" its loneliness might be comparable with McAuley's arguable "national autobiography" in *Quiros*. McAuley reflected later on the role the long poem had played: "After I published *Captain Quiros*, I felt in a way free of the task I seem to have set myself – I thought I'd never write another long poem, almost certainly. I was glad I did that. *Captain Quiros* was the vehicle for lots of the things I had in me and wanted to say, when I didn't know what I wanted to do." (De Berg 11, 349) McAuley also adverted to the imperative journey inherent in the writing of *Quiros*: while it had been as "opposite as possible from the prevailing expectations" it had not been from a "wilful intransigence but by the need to follow a path intuitively sensed and [like a Renaissance navigator] dimly descried." (*MAV*, 203)

8.15 "The end of voyaging"

The final four stanzas of *Quiros* have considerable lyric power. The dramatic conclusion includes Quiros' death-bed vision, his farewell, the completion of and final release from his spiritual project, a sense reinforced by the emphatic end-stopped lines:

> For me the watch is past, the night is done;
> However men report when I am gone,
> The travail of my soul is satisfied. (CP, 175/ St. 5)

For "*Terra Australis*, heartland of the South" the dreamer Quiros also envisages his difficult project's success for the future: "And from our broken toil may you inherit/ A vision to transform your latter days" (*CP*, 176/ St. 1). McAuley now seems able to draw something positive from the "broken," since presenting the "broken mirror," symbol of man's fractured understanding of divine operations, offered by the gods to the reluctant hero of "Philoctetes" (*CP*, 41) in 1945.

Quiros' death foreshadows the narrator Belmonte's own release from the journey, and, later, its poetic chronicling:

[145] Elizabeth Sewell. *The Orphic Voice*. 1960, 308.

With purest ray the star of morning shone,
Like a bright jewel in the angel's wing […]
Calm to the west the clouded Ocean lay;
But I had reached the end of voyaging. (*CP*, 176/ St. 3)

McAuley's luxuriant ekphrastic passage, repeats the voyage's hopeful inception with Belmonte contemplating the still clouded, mysterious, ocean at dawn, where the oracular morning star,[146] seen by Mendaña fifty years earlier, reappears. With Belmonte narrating the reader hears not only the secretary, but the voice of his author in the ambivalent "I," a liberation from his quest and task. With this simple, "remarkably self-reflexive" (Strauss 607) sentence the poet seems relieved to remove both his own and Belmonte's mariner's cloak, what Talbot described as the "favourite Australian fancy-dress of the explorer." (70) He also puts down Belmonte's pen. As Vivian Smith observed "*Captain Quiros* is a poem that McAuley had to write […]." (1970 37) The completion of the long, unfashionable poem would clear a new, and welcome way forward.

8.16 Transformations and Departures

When asked about the impersonality of his early poetry (up to 1960), McAuley had replied: "I think one has to speak through masks to some extent. One has to distance oneself. Over involvement means one cannot play it the right way." (Thompson 99) This strategy was developed and refined since the Ern Malley experiment in 1944. If McAuley's role as unfashionable poet was the "pose" Dutton implied, (1959 51) the figure Quiros, or his double Belmonte, would be the last consciously employed mask McAuley would use before his transition to a more confidently personal, even autobiographical approach in his poetics after 1960. Though that in itself might imply a natural mask or "un-mask".

Leonie Kramer thought *Quiros* "represented the end of a phase, […] the culmination of a poetic ambition going back to the 1940s […] Into it he poured his anthropological knowledge, his religious faith, his political experience, and his belief in poetry itself. It is a grand design." (1985 38) For the poet the heroic poem had been a difficult, long harboured and unwelcomed project, but it had to be done. "I don't expect to write another large narrative poem. I wanted to write this. I'm quite happy with what I've done, but it has freed me in a way, and I'm happy writing short poems now." (Thompson 102) Of all his poetic works, it was the most extensive reworking, adaptation and transformation, of an existent work, akin to his later interpretative translation of Georg Trakl's poetry. If the *Quiros* voyage ended a phase

[146] Milton associated the morning star (Venus) with Christ.

in McAuley's writing, the motif of the journey in the evolution of McAuley's poem and work is evident in Belmonte's proclamation: "But I had reached the end of voyaging." (*CP*, 176/ St. 3). Kramer saw McAuley in those lines: "He is like a traveller who has made a long and arduous journey from home, about to return the place where he belongs." (1985 38)

McAuley was probably thinking of his experience in New Guinea crucial to the writing of *Quiros*, when he speculated later on the creative process and the transformation that occurred in his own work after finishing the poem: "There's another way in which it's the job of a lifetime to write entirely out of yourself […] what I feel, and what other people have said, is that in every decade I've changed and I think I've grown." (Santamaria 56) Such writing "out of the self" contradicts what McAuley had argued in "The Magian Heresy" or the early 1950s poems "To Any Poet" or "An Art of Poetry" about the avoidance of "purely inward and senseless subjectivity." (*EM*, 157) Nonetheless, such variation was presumably permitted by McAuley's increasing admission of the factor of change in his work, a variable constant which explains some of the paradoxes threaded throughout.

A similar thought about the artistic process of change and self-transformation can be seen in his 1956 essay "Notes and Speculations:"

> An emblem of the poet: the cicada. Born on the Tree of Nature, his life-course requires that he fall from the branch and go into the dark underground. There for perhaps many years he lies hidden, feeling at the very roots of things, until an upward impulse sends him at last forcing his way through the heavy earth until he returns to the sun and air. There he sheds his skin and soon with vibrant body and head like a dance-mask and glistening transparent wings his passionate song clangs and throbs through light and darkness. (*EM,* 180)

Whatever, McAuley had written in "The Magian Heresy" at the same time, this lovely piece of natural observation, about hibernation, skin-shedding,[147] about the gaining of wings, and rhapsodic song, is a metaphor for what McAuley saw as the Orphic role of the poet, and also his own ongoing evolution. In contrast to those critics who had taken "McAuley simply at his own literal word,"[148] some remained sceptical about his apparent neo-classical demeanor. Rowe observed the paradox:

> [...] the moment when the discursive, dogmatic enterprise falters and a lyrical mystical discourse momentarily emerges. This moment, and it is a fault-line in McAuley's poetry, shows how the poetry negotiates between the classical and romantic, discursive and lyrical." (2000 33)

[147] This perhaps builds on McAuley's earlier notes on Faber's observation about Anacreon's ode to the cicada in Notebook 1, 30 December 1949, Box 1, McAuley Papers.
[148] McCredden. "Mastering Romanticism."1992, 269.

Talbot had noted the inconsistency in what the author seems to say and what the poem (*Quiros*) does: "Admittedly, McAuley repeatedly renounces the subjective, but he is too much of a poet to ignore the romantic effort to discover himself which appears so consistently […] I consider it the aspect of *Captain Quiros* to be most emphasized." (70) Talbot also considered the presence of Brennan's romantic wanderer. Writing in 1964, he considered *Quiros* "by far the most important poem McAuley has written, and it is striking that his odd blend of neo-classicist, symbolist and romantic traits should excel in that most Australian of modern poetry modes, the meditative narrative, in spite of his largely lyric work in his earlier poetry." (75) Bradley argued that to call that: "most ardent upholder of the European tradition in Australia, a classicist, was a misnomer […] McAuley is the most inward and subtle of the Australian poets, and the prime fiction of his verse […] is romantic and symbolist." (444) Previewing *Quiros* in 1960, Buckley had been one of the first to detect this paradox:

> It becomes even more obvious every year that the title of "classicist" (whatever it means) is not only inadequate but inaccurate. It would be a piece of critical *naiveté* to cramp the real McAuley within the person of the polemical hoaxer who created Ern Malley." (1960 15)

McAuley's own acknowledged desire to explore a neglected, "out of fashion," predominantly romantic literary ancestry in the "residues of the nineteenth century," including decadents and symbolists, points to what Kane has identified[149] as the absence of the romantic tradition in Australian poetry (4), and its re-emergence, traceable in motifs and gestures of loss and belatedness in the Australian post-colonial consciousness. Such motifs are strongly apparent in *Quiros*.

In *Quiros,* McAuley was seeking romantically to immerse himself in the exotic epoch that countenanced exploration and quest in order to gain a dimension of psychic and literary imagining necessary to his development, his goal of achieving wholeness both as poet, visionary or literary theorist especially tackling the absences within the Australian literary tradition. McCredden summarises: "The poem produces many "voyagings" – those of interpretation, those of physical and spiritual exploration, that of floating one's own commitment before an alien readership." (1992 47-48) In his quixotic encounter with literary modernism, political utopianism, modernity and secularism, the author McAuley leaves his heroic protagonists, his masks Quiros and Belmonte, either dead or chastened. Like the narrator he invented, at least he would have played his heroic part in his "match against the age's mind" (*CP*, 142/ St. 3).

[149] See also Dennis Haskell, Andrew Taylor and Chris Wallace-Crabbe.

9

The Journey South (1961-1969)

9.1 "A New Life and a New Start"

Leaving behind the Portuguese voyager upon completing *Quiros* in early 1960,[1] coincided with McAuley's leaving of New Guinea, the world that had made such a poem possible. He was offered the special position of Reader in Poetry at the University of Tasmania, in the very different location of Hobart, in the southern temperate island Tasmania. Finishing the task of *Quiros* had opened the way for a change of direction in his work, the writing of short poems, the genre initially rejected for its dominance in contemporary literary production, but which would become his principal genre. Exhausted and disillusioned over Catholic politics, and after 16 years, increasingly frustrated with ASOPA, he welcomed the change and the opportunity "to pursue my basic interests in the field where the history of ideas is involved in literary forms […]."[2] A crucial shift in McAuley's life, comparable with his work on New Guinea, it is recorded simply in his Notebook entry for 21 May 1961: "We left Sydney and drove to Hobart in easy stages arriving 25 May (Pentecost)."[3] "It was all a great adventure with a young family of five children, a new life and a new start […]." (De Berg 11, 353) The small-town environment of Hobart gave more space for time with the family and the experience of being closer to nature, very present with the high "dolerite walls" ("Autumn Ode," *CP*, 188) of Mt Wellington towering over the port capital. Life operated "on a more human scale," with the accessibility of the countryside (McAuley. "Hobart," 162-76). On previous visits the poet had already been welcomed by the Faculty and the small literary community clustered around the University, the poets Gwen Harwood (married to linguistics lecturer Bill Harwood) and Vivian Smith, an academic in the French department.

Poet Clive James has observed that McAuley's hero figures, such as Quiros, up until 1960, were not involved in an "exploration of the self."[4] The move to Tasmania is intricately connected with the turn in McAuley's poetry after 1961 towards a more personal, often autobiographical, subject matter and a shift from mythological or historical themes and subject matter to the local and the everyday.

---

[1] Some drafting and editing would occur until 1961, and the long poem was finally published in 1964.
[2] McAuley. 23 October 1960, Notebook 7. Box 1.
[3] McAuley. 28 May 1961, Notebook 7. Box 1.
[4] Clive James. "There You Come Home." *Quadrant* 55.4, 2011, 13.

9.2 Poet and Professor

McAuley was aware of his "patchy background" as a Professor of literature (Santamaria 21), notwithstanding his continuous production of literary reviews including *Quadrant* since 1956 (In 1961, an average year, he produced 17 reviews, short articles or longer essays.) He had written perceptive essays on Australian writers, notably the novelist Patrick White of whom he was an early champion, and poets, his contemporary A. D. Hope and his important early influence Christopher Brennan.[5] In his 1960 review "The Critic's Task" (*JM*, 1988, 155-56) he commended Helen Gardner in her censure of T.S. Eliot for seeing criticism as the ability to select between good and bad poems, rather than as she advocated: "the ability to respond to a good poem." (*JM*, 155) As editor of *Quadrant* and public intellectual, he had begun moving in such circles, including 1960-61 in his first overseas trip aged 43 to Europe and the USA where he met writers and intellectuals,[6] including the "poet-professors" he would soon join.

In "a period of enforced growth" (De Berg 11, 343) McAuley tried to redress the gaps in his teaching experience and his academic publishing profile, including for his inaugural professorial address on 4 April 1963,[7] a comparison of characters in the long poem *The Faerie Queene* (1871-2) by Renaissance poet Edmund Spenser[8] and George Eliot's *Middlemarch,* and a monograph on the poetry and prose of Christopher Brennan.[9] His essay one year later "The Languages of Poetry" (1964, *GR*, 56-68) shows his craftsman's interest in poetic diction, in the work of another favourite, the eighteenth-century poet George Crabbe, for his "realistic texture" (58). McAuley notes Crabbe's "complexity and irony [as qualities which] modern criticism prizes highly […]" (*Ibid.*) but differs with "modern criticism" over its insistence on such qualities at the expense, for example, of Milton's "amplifications" (62). "This thin trivial and boring sort of irony and complexity is supposed to be the mark of an adult mind. It seems rather to be the very thing that adolescent minds arrive at." (63) In his visit to North America in 1960/1961 McAuley had probably been more swayed by the Aristotelian tendencies of the Chicago Critics encountered in Elder Olson than by John Crowe Ransom's New Criticism. However, McAuley shared the latter's focus in calling for an "improved phenomenology of both poetry and criticism. Let us keep close to particular texts

[5] McAuley. *The Aunt's Story* by Patrick White. *Quadrant,* 3.4, 1959, 91-93; "The Pyramid in the Waste." *Quadrant,* 5.4, 1960-61, 61-70; "Homage to Chris Brennan." *Southerly,* 18, 1957, 135-142.
[6] He met Lionel Trilling, John Dos Passos, New Critic and poet John Crowe Ransom and the poet and Chicago School literary critic Elder Olson.
[7] McAuley. "Edmund Spenser and George Eliot: A Critical Excursion." in *JM*, 69-85
[8] McAuley considered Spenser one of his masters.
[9] McAuley. *C.J. Brennan*. 1963, revised 1973.

[…]" (58). In 1965 he wrote a eulogy for his former master, "In Regard to T.S. Eliot," (*CP*, 195). He established with Faculty member Laurie Hergenhan, the first Australian literary journal, *Australian Literary Studies*[10] in 1963.

The introduction (vii-viii) to his small collection of his poetry, *James McAuley, (SP),* 1963[11] offers an important, retrospective statement of McAuley's art of poetry up to this point on form, theme, symbolism and his conception of the nature of the artistic and human personality, notably "the struggle to express, an intuition of the True Form of Man." This statement highlights McAuley's ongoing search for a symbolism, his interest in recurring *personae* (the lover, saint, artist, lover), in which he measures "experience […] instead of taking a sensitive, non-committal, rather passive, modern ego as the sole measure of things." He reiterates a continuing preference for "traditional metres," which yield "subtlety, complexity, and balance." He reaffirms his view of "poetry as coming from "the whole man," on which, he cites Wordsworth: "The logical faculty has more to do with poetry than the young and inexperienced […] ever dreams of…." (*SP*, viii). Some, though not all, of these approaches would be modified by the end of the decade.

While still expressive of his own personal views as a poet, the essays written after *EM* (1959) adopt a less prescriptive tone than "The Magian Heresy" seven years earlier and advocate close reading for prosodic and metrical analysis as well as semantics. "The Languages of Poetry" (1964) reflects sensitivity over criticism for his earlier formal approaches and an implicit refusal to abandon such a style but reflects acceptance of contemporary trends in poetic production to emerge in his evolving style. In noting "contemporary preference […] for an ordinary language poetry […]" (61) he recalls Wordsworth's then revolutionary approach in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). McAuley also showed increasing openness to the contemporary interest in the short poem he had previously criticized.

During the 1960s the question of poetics is mainly confined to McAuley's critical essays, both on specific writers and also in more general essays including *The Personal Element in Australian Poetry* (1970). Only one poem tackles the questions of poetics in the philosophical manner of the poems of the early 1950s ("An Art of Poetry" and "To Any

---

[10] Laurie Hergenhan. "Starting a Journal: ALS. Hobart 1963: James McAuley, A. D. Hope and Geoffrey Dutton." *Australian Literary Studies*," 2000.

[11] McAuley. *James McAuley.* Angus and Robertson, 1963. Reprinted as *James McAuley*: *Selected Poems* (*SP*), 1967.

Poet"). "Credo" (1966) showing a shift to blank verse, reflects philosophically on the poet's tools of language – word and its meanings:

> That each thing is a word
> Requiring us to speak it:
> From the ant to the quasar,
> From clouds to the ocean floor –
>
> The meaning not ours, but found
> In the mind deeply submissive
> To the grammar of existence,
> The syntax of the real; (*CP*, 192)

The short poem itself enacts the recital of a creed, in this case of the poet craftsman affirming his belief in the power of his tool, the word, ranging from the microscopic "ant" and "quasar" to large-scale "clouds" and "ocean floor" but for their symbolic power rather than for the traditional religious connotations of "logos," thus departing from the Christian glossing of "An Art of Poetry." In the second stanza the order-making symbols of "grammar" and "syntax" suggest the ontological mind's success, after patient, attentive searching for the enduring motif of the "real," or "existence," an understanding in which meaning is not made but "found," a realisation corresponding to modernist creative approaches.[12] McAuley's poetics of the 1960s is less philosophical, less abstract, involving intuitive innovation and the emergence of a personal voice in addressing place, time, memory with the perspective of experience.

9.3 The short poem

The most significant change in this new decade is McAuley's experiment with the short personal poem. In May 1962 a year after his arrival in Tasmania McAuley wrote "Time out Of Mind" "[…] the first poem I have written since *Quiros*."[13] Formally the poem is unlike his recent work, especially the impersonal long poem he had just written: it comprises six short-lined quatrains of alternating dimeters and trimeters in abab rhyme, with emphatic trochaic line-starts:

> Time out of mind,
> And out of the heart, too:
> Yet I am not resigned
> To be what I do.
> […]

[12] The modernist painter Pablo Picasso stated about his art: "I don't seek, I find." in *Futurism*, ed. Didier Ottinger, 5 Continents Editions 2008, 311.
[13] McAuley. Notebook 7, 20-24 May 1962. Box 1.

In youth my range
Was fear, vanity, lust.
Shall I take in exchange
Fatigue, rage, self-distrust?
[…]

Yet, at best or at worst,
This unknown self will see
What its Creator first
Though it to be.

But I shall know this
Only in knowing
My self's Self, who is, and is
The end of my going. (*CP*, 179)

The questing poetic subject departs significantly from the impersonal tone of the 1950s poetry in its existential meditation on the succinct dilemma: "To be what I do." The pithy quality of the short lines reinforces the epigrammatic statement of the urgent quest for self-knowledge: it echoes the late-romantic theme of self-exploration pursued by "ancestor" Christopher Brennan: "What do I know? Myself alone / A gulf of uncreated night […],[14] though more concisely. Harold Bloom's generic description seems apt: "All quest-romances of the post-Enlightenment, meaning all Romanticisms whatsoever, are quests to beget one's own self, to become one's own Great Original."(64) The words "knowing/My self's Self," reflecting the Hindu philosophical concept of Atman, seem to continue the existential journey resigned by McAuley's authorial *persona* Belmonte at the conclusion of *Quiros*: "But I had reached the end of voyaging" (*CP*, 176/St.3).

The second above-cited Stanza shows the seemingly mature subject looking back on his youth: however, the range of abstract emotions and allegorical qualities (fear, vanity, lust, fatigue, rage, self-distrust) seems inconsistent with the concrete, contextualized character of McAuley's mature voice. In its intensely personal voice "Time out of Mind" is an example of the self-expressive poetry proscribed in 1952 in "An Art of Poetry." In her 1977 article,[15] Dorothy Green (Auchterlonie), throws light on the paradox of the seemingly youthful poem within McAuley's more mature phase, tracing "Time Out of Mind" to an early version of 3 stanzas of the same title sent to her from rural Bungendore by the 21-year-old McAuley in 1938.[16] While only the first stanza remains intact, the theme of change and growth are present

[14] Christopher Brennan. "The Twilight of Disquietude." c. 1896, in *Poems* 1913.
[15] Green. "Letters from a young Poet." 1977, 18.
[16] McAuley. Letter to Dorothy Auchterlonie, 22 November 1938. Dorothy Green papers.

in the early version. It seems a continuation of his early "Monologue" (1936-38) "Oh but the self, to live, / Must be apart." (*CP*, 4)

Not knowing how to start this new phase, "[…] now I didn't know what I wanted to do […]" (De Berg 11, 350), the poet had resurrected an old draft from a time in which his poetry had given fuller expression to the intimate voice. He elaborated further:

> The tendency, as it developed was towards short poems, finding suitable forms that allowed a fair amount of lyrical quality. Interestingly enough, I tended to come over nearer to the things that are in the popular line of modern poetry. The poetry was very personal. (*Ibid.*)

It was such qualities of inwardness in McAuley's early verse which Wallace-Crabbe had admired and whose lack he lambasted in the poet's neo-classical phase. (1971) Ironically, "Time Out of Mind" was published in the anthology *Australian Poetry* (1962) edited by Geoffrey Dutton, an "Angry Penguin" enthusiast who had strongly criticised early excerpts of *Quiros*.

McAuley resurrected several other youthful drafts publishing them in his 1969 collection *Surprises of the Sun (SuS)*.[17] One of these, "Released on Parole," (1938-66), in short (mixed iambic and trochaic metre) 6-lined stanzas with regular ababcc rhyme, offers the dramatic monologue of a human figure in a landscape, a contextualised short poetic narrative, an increasingly important form for McAuley's new short lyric verse:

> Out walking in July
> I see wind, cloud and light
> Weave pictures in the sky.
> Blest by so clear a sight,
> I never want to look
> At shadows in a book.
>
> Light snow there on bare rock;
> A hawk balanced in air;
> And over his cirrus flock
> The sun's silver stare
> Saying, look what *I* give:
> Won't you consent to live? (*CP*, 196)

Unlike the abstracted monologue in "Time Out of Mind," the crystalline concreteness of the landscape setting, revived in 1966 from 1938, the naming of natural features in monosyllables (wind, cloud, light, hawk, air) with few though metaphoric adjectives (cirrus flock, sun's silver stare) suggest a landscape barely inflected by the human gaze filtering it. The scene is probably rural Bungendore, with the "release" of the title being of the visiting city dweller

[17] McAuley. *Surprises of the Sun.* Angus and Robertson, 1969.

"on parole." It re-introduces a pastoral quality to McAuley's new short, situated lyrics, which Green valued most in McAuley's work, as in the early "At Bungendore" (1938) – "the verse written in his John Clare mood." (1977 19)

9.4 Turn to the Personal

The next two personal poems would be produced not from the past but from events of the poet's present – the death of his one-day-old son Andrew on 4 February 1962 and of his elderly father Patrick McAuley on 6 August 1962. McAuley, who had eschewed "self-expressive" art in his *ars poetica* poems of 1952,[18] seemed in these new autobiographical poems to abandon that proscription though not necessarily the associated quality of the "arbitrary" also rejected in "An Art of Poetry," (1952).

"Pietà" is an elegy addressed to the poet's deceased infant son, reflecting the parents' grieving, mostly that projected on "your mother," also present in the poem, whose physical loss the poetic subject, confesses he cannot begin to understand. This short personal address does not relax McAuley's formal approach, being expressed in sonnet form, whose short-lined trimeters (mixing iambic with emphatic dactyls and spondees) offer a controlled rhyme structure – abba, cddc, efg efg. Its language is, however, simple and limpid:

> A year ago you came
> Early into the light.
> You lived a day and night,
> Then died; no one to blame.
>
> Once only, with one hand,
> Your mother in farewell
> Touched you. I cannot tell,
> I cannot understand
>
> A thing so dark and deep,
> So physical a loss:
> One touch and that was all
>
> She had of you to keep.
> Clean wounds, but terrible,
> Are those made with the Cross. (*CP*, 179)

While the *trope* of the death of a child, involves a convention of high pathos, the poem is marked by restraint and laconic understatement in mainly monosyllabic,[19] diction constrained by short sentences: "You lived a day and night, / Then died; no-one to blame." This may be

[18] McAuley. "An Art of Poetry." (June 1952, *CP*, 70) and "To Any Poet." (c 1952, *CP*, 85).

[19] McAuley observed in *A Primer of English Versification* (1966) how monosyllabic words "slow down" whereas polysyllabic words "speed up […]," 43.

because the confessional subject is looking back to an event of one year earlier. Distanced in time from their grief, the situation has become universal. The unnamed pair is transformed through undifferentiating, simple language into the *pietà* of the unnamed "you" (the infant) and "your mother." Pathos is rendered in stanza 2: "Your mother in farewell / Touched you" – completing the iconic scene that demands the mother's touch. This gesture unleashes the outburst of uncomprehending sorrow by the father subject at the mother's loss, conveyed through repeated negatives in emphatic spondees: "I cannot tell, / I cannot understand" (//|u/|//|u/|u/|). Such use of negatives becomes increasingly evident in McAuley's later, laconic poetic style.

The final couplet of the sonnet offers an epigrammatic if elusive conclusion of the sonnet: "Clean wounds, but terrible, / Are those made with the Cross." The poem's scarcity of adjectives or multiple syllables accentuates the richer diction of the enigmatic last stanza – the "Clean wounds, but terrible […]." In its succinct ekphrastic rendering of the Christian archetype of a *pietà,* the poem underlines questions its author, the Catholic father McAuley, may have asked about the mysterious will of God, with the death of an innocent child. McAuley considered "Pietà" one of his finest poems, (*MAV*, 203) perhaps because of its simple if profoundly universal statement. It may have been his first poem to reach the international reader in the British literary review *Encounter* in June 1963.[20]

The death of his father Patrick McAuley several months later (8 August 1962) offered another exercise in autobiography. "Father, Mother, Son" (CP, 181), recalls the poet's early childhood, and his portrait of the poverty of his family's emotional life, a theme which would be repeated in a poem written five years later "Because," (*CP*, 200). "Father, Mother, Son" has a looser metrical structure than McAuley's earlier poems and also a looser scheme of half or oblique rhymes compatible with the conversational style, and its depiction of a non-elevated scene from ordinary life:

> From the domed head the defeated eyes peer out,
> Furtive with the unsaid things of a lifetime, that now
> Cannot be said by that stiff half-stricken mouth
> Whose words come hoarse and slurred, though the mind is sound. (*CP*, 181)

The poet's father Patrick McAuley, was born in 1880, a fourth generation Australian (Ackland, 2001 11) and lapsed Catholic.[21] The poem's main focus is the son's discovery, in his last days, of the father's continued recital of the "Hail Mary," despite being forbidden

[20] *Encounter* XX. 6. 1963. Like *Quadrant, Encounter* was later found to be funded by the CIA.
[21] McAuley was told by the matron of the hospital that his father confided he had secretly recited the Catholic prayer of intercession "Hail Mary" every night of his life. He had been forbidden by his wife, a Protestant, to return to the practice. Notebook 7, 14 September 1959, Box 1.

such practices by his Protestant wife. McAuley's own conversion (or "re-conversion") may, thus, have seemed to him an intuition of his family's own cultural and spiritual ancestry, and his father's secret practice, an instance of the broader suppression of the Catholic minority in Australia. In this notably confessional poem McAuley moves away from his interest in remote history, from classical *topoi* into the realm of the everyday, of family life in the suburbs, of seemingly undramatic, but powerful interpersonal relations. Using simple language, the poem concludes with the strong metaphor of "Our sad geometry of family love," the stiff distance of the three-pointed triangle suggesting the "relatedness that cannot touch" (*CP*, 182) in the bonds between father, mother and son. It shows McAuley's creative resort to personal experience in his rewriting of the *trope* "family love" since his early psychological vaudeville "Family of Love," (*CP*, 10).

In these two poems McAuley moves closer to his contemporaries in pursuing an interest in the personal short poem or lyric. Unlike the last decade, he was now moving "with the grain" rather than "against" it. He denied, however, that his poems were strictly "confessional" in the manner of Robert Lowell (1917-1977), but that they were "informal and […] centred upon some details significant to me emotionally in my childhood and younger years up to my marriage." (De Berg 11, 351)

In his later study *The Personal Element in Australian Poetry* (1968-70), McAuley shows his changed perspectives on form (the short lyric) and personal content. Rowe argues that McAuley's suspicion of the personal and subjective came from an arguably false, philosophical understanding "[…] that to be subjective was to be self-centred, not God-centred." (1984 45) In his shifting attitude McAuley was responding to Eliot's comment on the need to understand "the type to which [the poems] belong […] and what the poet was trying to do and what he was trying not to do."[22] He examines the traditional reading of the lyric and the more modern expression in the short modern poem:

> […] song-lyric normally expresses feelings: they may be public and communal […] […] the more song-like the poem, the less particularized the personal situation tends to become. […]. On the other hand, there are short poems in which the concrete particulars of an individual situation are rendered; the feeling in such a poem comes to us, not as an abstract universal thing, but as specified by the circumstances in which it arises. This is personal utterance in a very particular sense […] A good deal of modern poetry is personal in this sense: its aim is to give us the kind of felt life that is

[22]Eliot's 1941 essay on Kiplings' poetry was cited in McAuley's "The Languages of Poetry," 1964, 64. Cf. 9.2 (228).

conveyed by concrete particularity. Such poetry tends to stay closer to talk rather than more towards song.[23]

Such acceptance is reflected in McAuley's own poems from the 1960s, in his shift to the short poem, to more colloquial personal language and a notable "concrete particularity."[24] Contrary to earlier aspirations to impersonality, McAuley admitted in the same study that "the poet's personal imprint is upon even his most impersonal productions."[25]

9.5 Figures in a Landscape

McAuley's move to Tasmania involved an encounter with the new space, or place. "St John's Park, New Town," (*CP*, 180) is one of 16 short-lined sonnets, written at this time, arguably aiding his turn to the short poem. It describes the landscape of the inner-city suburb where the family lived. A focus of his evening walk is St John's church built in 1834 by the official civil engineer and architect, John Lee Archer. The historic architecture presents the grim history of Tasmania's foundation as a British penal settlement, the second after Sydney, in 1803:

> Often I walk alone /u|u/|u/|
>
> Where bronze-green oaks embower //|//|u/u|
> John Lee Archer's tower //|/u|/u|
> Of solid Georgian stone. u/|u/|u/|

The rich polysyllables and adjectives of lines 2-3, stressed in trochaic and spondee metre contrast with the short laconic monosyllables of the first, mainly iambic line. This small vignette of place, in a small town capital quite different to Sydney, still little explored in his poetry, and the exotic New Guinea, raises important themes in Australian literature and culture, the question of tradition or its lack, which McAuley had addressed in his anthropological essays of the early 1950s. Contemplation of the convict-built church raises the contemporary cultural commonplace of the paucity of Australia's European cultural history, though Tasmania, with its longer history of European settlement, and well-preserved Georgian period architecture, often claimed to have more "tradition" than other regions.

The short sentences of "St John's Park, New Town," built mainly of monosyllables and argument through negatives, create a laconic tone, including through a tightly controlled abba rhyme, and use of emphatic trochaic line-beginnings:

> Tradition is held there,

---

[23] McAuley. *The Personal Element in Australian Poetry.* 1970, 4.
[24] McAuley considered "tension, irony, ambiguity and concrete particularity (the familiar modern demands)." "Shelley Unbound," *Bulletin* 12 May 1962, 57.
[25] McAuley. *The Personal Element [...].* 3.

Such as a land can own
That hasn't much of one.
I care – but do I care?

Not if it means to turn
Regretful from the raw
Instant and its vow. (*CP,* 180)

Spondee metre reinforces the statement: "That hasn't much of one" and the colloquial "I care – but do I care" (//|u/|//) shows McAuley's increasingly colloquial tone. It is another poem of contextualized situation: the subject, the "I" is the poet, the human figure in a landscape, observing "John Lee Archer's tower / Of solid Georgian stone," recalling the *flâneur* figure in his early translation of Rilke's "Autumn" (1938), wandering restless on "deserted pavements." (*CP*, 5) While in *Quiros* McAuley shows a strong concern for history, deep and more recent, through the navigator *persona*, in "St John's Park, New Town" the subject acknowledges Tasmania's difficult colonial history but consciously deviates from this cultural commonplace of the past. History and tradition, the obsession of the divided Australian cosmopolitan poet are recognised but not at the cost of neglecting the present, so as not to "turn / Regretful from the raw / Instant:"

The past is not my law:
Queer, comical, or stern
Our privilege is now. (*CP,* 180)

The last line ("Our privilege is now") connects with what the visionary Quiros, was struggling to describe in more portentous terms in "the figured Now which is eternity" understood by the Australian tribes (*CP*, 173/ St. 4). The vow to the "law" of the "now" rather than the "law" of the "past," signals the poet's turn from history to the present in his future work.[26]

If less its architecture and history, Tasmanian space or place attracted the poet considerably: the fascination of the first weeks deepened. In "Autumn Ode" (1965), written two years later, McAuley focusses on the particular details and *topoi* of the temperate European-style landscape of Tasmania which at latitude 43,º similar to Biarritz in south-western France**,** was notably different to that of Sydney (latitude 33º) or tropical New Guinea (latitude 9º). "In the Huon Valley" (1966) shows the poet naming and celebrating a region of Tasmania's rural landscape, the Huon Valley, famous for its apple orchards. For McAuley the place was still an unfamiliar new space if in the process of becoming familiar, an expression

[26] McAuley's only focus on Tasmania's grim convict history was in a light narrative told during a visit by John Betjeman. "The Convict and the Lady" 1964, (CP, 194).

of the classical *locus amoenus* or place of safety, retreat and harmony. In this autumnal poem of 4 stanzas of short-lined alternately rhyming quatrains, we see again a Keatsian celebration of the season of ripe harvest time:

> Propped boughs are heavy with apples,
> Springtime quite forgotten.
> Pears ripen yellow. The wasp
> Knows where the windfalls lie rotten.
>
> Juices grow rich with sun.
> These autumn days are still:
> The glassy river reflects
> Elm-gold up the hill.
>
> And big white plumes of rushes.
> Life is full of returns;
> It isn't true that one never
> Profits, never learns:
>
> Something is gathered in,
> Worth the lifting and stacking;
> Apples roll through the graders,
> The sheds are noisy with packing. (*CP*, 208)

The poem is constructed through the detailed naming of a rural landscape in the first two stanzas: the apple boughs, pears ripening, their predator – the wasp, the river and reflected (northern European) elm trees are described statically, as in still-life. The mainly monosyllabic language, notable for a gliding sibilance, in the "s" of "apples," "Springtime," "Pears," "wasp," "Knows," "windfalls," "Juices," "days," "still," "glassy," and "reflects," slows down the depiction's repeatedly stressed trochaic line-beginnings, and full lines of emphatic spondee (Stanza 3): "And big white plumes of rushes" (//|//|u/u|) as if the description of the abundant ascending rushes offers a vision of transcendence, to be interpreted philosophically in the following epigrammatic line: "Life is full of returns […]." This crisp positive statement is backed up laconically in double negatives ("litotes") of understatement: "It isn't true that one never / Profits, never learns." Even the concluding, epiphany is half grudging: "Something is gathered in / Worth the lifting and stacking." The shift to verbs of action with their present participles (the "lifting and stacking") makes the epiphanic vision of order and reward, dynamic with noisy physical meaning, and offers a sense of being in the scene in the present moment: "Apples roll through the graders, / The sheds are noisy with packing".

From his classical studies, McAuley was probably conscious of the poem's echoes of the pastoral poetry of Theocritus (c.310-250 BC) "Pears at our feet and apples at our side /

Rolling in plenteousness […]"[27] The poem also echoes McAuley's early translation (1938) of Rilke's poem in "Autumn" (*CP,* 5) though this time it is apples rather than grapes that the "fruitful summer yields." Nonetheless, McAuley's mature "In the Huon Valley" (CP, 208) has a resolution and contentment, albeit precarious (signalled in the sinister presence of the wasp), which his "restless" precursor Rilke could not offer to him when younger, highlighting the evolving apprehension of autumn, from decay to plenitude. In this poem McAuley shows his preference, like Thomas Hardy to whom he has sometimes been compared,[28] to depict what Jeremy Hooker describes as "landscapes with human associations."[29]

9.6 The Regional

McAuley, through naming and elaborating the particular landscapes of Tasmania's regions, was arguably turning space into place: "For by the act of place-naming, space is transformed symbolically into place, that is, a space with a history." (Carter, 1987 xxiv) In 1963, McAuley collaborated with Tasmanian composer Peter Sculthorpe (1929-2014), working to reflect Australian landscape in music, in the first performance of Sculthorpe's orchestral composition *Fifth Continent*. McAuley recited, and perhaps selected, the libretto, comprising excerpts drawn from D.H. Lawrence's text on the Australian landscape in *Kangaroo*.[30] McAuley tried to persuade Sculthorpe to make an opera about Quiros.[31]

McAuley's reading of the writer about the spirit of place possibly reinforced his own interest in the depiction of the local, notwithstanding the fact that Lawrence as traveller would have adopted a more self-conscious approach in depicting the Australian landscape than a home-grown author. However, McAuley's response to the Tasmanian landscape needed no prompting though it was initially also that of a traveller from the Australian "mainland." McAuley had already expressed his ideas on the role of the writer on questions of national identity, and the *topos* of Australia, in his Commonwealth Literary Fund lecture "The Grinning Mirror." (1955)[32] When he first spoke in favour of a "regionalism," McAuley was unaware he would be living in Tasmania but may have been thinking of the tropical New

[27] http://vintagewinepoems.com/Theocritus_Dangling_above_our_heads_Headlam.html, accessed 3 August 2017.
[28] One of McAuley's teaching colleagues at UTAS, John Winter, would place Thomas Hardy texts next to those of McAuley to see if students could detect the difference. (Writer interview with John Winter, August 2015).
[29] Jeremy Hooker. *Writers in a Landscape*. 1996, xi.
[30] Excerpts were mainly from Chapter 1 of *Kangaroo* with its meditation on the power of the Australian bush.
[31] Sculthorpe eventually composed *Quiros* for ABC TV in 1982. See Deborah Hayes. "'Visions of the Great South Land' in Peter Sculthorpe's Opera *Quiros*." 2007.
[32] Cf. 4.9 (102-3).

Guinea landscapes so different from the mild urban landscape of Sydney about which he had still written little. Ten years later, he added to his earlier comments on the national *topos* in discussing what he called:

> […] programmatic nationalism. The duty to have Australian décor in your verse. This is what I object to. But on the other hand there's a healthy regionalism, which is very natural. *One lives here*, this is where one's experience largely is, and it would be […] a little surprising to find the environment not being registered in one way or another. (Thompson 97)

The idea of the region is thus linked with the places where one lives, consistent with McAuley's turn to the present and the actual. His interest in the role of nature, arguably builds on Quiros' vision of "Nature [taking] refuge in their hearts" (*CP*, 175/ St. 3). McAuley's affirmation of poetry's connection with place corresponds with D. H. Lawrence's dictum "Men are free when they are in a living homeland, not when they are straying and breaking away."[33]

9.8 (Re)turn to childhood

While the turn to place in Tasmania offered McAuley creative resources against recurring moments of dryness and loss of faith, something akin occurred through another quite unexpected journey through time to another more familiar place, his Sydney childhood home. The poet describes another shift in topic and idiom:

> An unexpected turn in development came late in 1966 when I suddenly began to write some autobiographical poems about childhood and youth, which in the volume *Surprises of the Sun* (1969) were grouped under the title "On the Western Line. (*MAV*, 203)

In his collection *Surprises of the Sun* (*SuS*), whose title, suggesting change, was inspired by lines from the Australian late nineteenth-century nature poet Henry Kendall (1839-82) – "soft serene surprises of the sun,"[34] McAuley grouped twelve mainly autobiographical poems of which all but one (the earlier "Mother, Father, Son," 1962) were written between November and 1966 and May 1967. The first three "Numbers and Makes," "Soundings" and "Wistaria" [sic] were probably written before the poet's visit to America and Ireland from January to March 1967 where the remainder of the poems were written in a flood of travel-inspired creativity of reminiscence.

[33] D. H. Lawrence. "The Spirit of Place." *Studies in Classic American Literature*, 1923.
[34] Henry Kendall. "The Beautiful Manning." (1881), *Poetical Works of Henry Kendall*, 453-454.

In "Numbers and Makes," the poetic subject, is James McAuley as child, the scene is his childhood home in the Sydney suburb of Homebush, hitherto neglected in his work. The poems capture McAuley's early memories in an unprepossessing suburb, abutting the railway line, an important *topos* of suburbia, whose constant activity gives the child energy and interest:

> The house we lived in faced the western line.
> I used to sit and write the numbers down
> Of every locomotive as it passed:
> From the humdrum all-stations-into-town, (*CP*, 199)

The four quatrains employ a laconic, conversational, mainly iambic pentameter, with a looser alternation of rhyme with blank verse, using a simple diction, seemingly appropriate for the recollections from childhood. They are, however, coloured by the colloquial, in technical transport jargon, "humdrum all-stations-into-town" whose jolting metre brings to life the young boy's passion for watching and describing the passage of trains. The subject matter and recollections seem un-momentous, realistic, mechanical, defiantly prosaic, hardly the subject matter of poetry, but precisely the point of the poem. In contradiction of the Wordsworthian romantic convention for exploring significant childhood events, the mood of "Numbers and Makes" is deliberately anti-epiphanic, loaded with de-signifying, unanswered questions, again accentuated by McAuley's syntax and semantics of negatives and plain language. The results of the youthful observations are dismissed as:

> [...] Pure research,
>
> Disinterested – but why, and into what?
> There was no question then, no answer now.
> Why change the memory into metaphors
> That solitary child would disavow. (*CP,* 199)

Peter Kirkpatrick's description of McAuley's suburban homeland in Homebush as "material, urban wasteland"[35] overstates what might be described as the ordinary suburbs. The poem's de-poeticising drift recalls a similar child's perspective in John Shaw Neilson's (1872-1942) "The Orange Tree" (c.1919), in the child's resistance to the adult's relentless interpretation and hunt for meaning in the presence surrounding the tree: "Silence the young girl said. Oh why, / Why will you talk to weary me? […]."[36]

In contrast with the stark evocation in "Numbers and Makes," we see a more expansive recollection in the same locus in the meditative "Wistaria" [sic], composed of five quatrains in rhyming iambic pentameters (abab):

---

[35]Peter Kirkpatrick. "Patience and Despair: James McAuley's Pessimism." *Southerly* 44.2, 1984,194.

[36] John Shaw Neilson. "The Orange Tree." *The Poems of John Shaw Neilson,* ed. A.R. Chisholm, 1973, 63.

Does that wistaria vine still break in flower
Like grape-clusters transformed to lilac light
For bees to hover in? It had a power,
Then to absorb all feelings into sight. (*CP,* 202)

"Wistaria" introduces nature, and its visionary potential, to McAuley's suburban backyard, in the adult's reminiscence upon the flowering vine,[37] alongside the contrasting mechanical motifs of trains and cars. The mature subject, recalling a childhood loitering in the suburban backyard, recalls the flowers' striking appearance:

And the mute aching sweetness of its scent
Stored up the quotient of long afternoons
Where time stretched forward, empty of event,
Drifting with bells, pagodas, pale balloons. (*Ibid.*)

The almost conventional description of scent's "sweetness" is strengthened, and differentiated with the surprising mathematical symbol of the fluid dactyl "quotient," – scent thus being the mathematical production of "division." It suggests the schoolboy's mind, crammed with poetry and "maths,"[38] in which scent is the by-product of the long afternoon in a childhood recollection in which time metaphorically "stretches forward, empty of event," inspiring dream-like musings, and periphrastic descriptions of the wisteria's flowers as – "bells, pagodas, pale balloons." There is a double process of transformation, in the subject's reliving the recalled fantasy on the wisteria flowers and its associations, which in turn, "at a touch" "change […] back to flowers," concluding with the adult's somewhat wry reflection:

The soul must feed on something for its dreams,
In those brick suburbs, and there wasn't much:
It can make do with little so it seems. (*Ibid.*)

The older poet looking back on his childhood, recognises, that against all expectations, the transcendent moment normally associated with the production of poetry as such, (Ashcroft et al. 117) is still possible in the "brick suburbs" of his earliest memories. As McCredden has remarked: "Hardly western-suburbs reality, but this is the point the poem makes." (1992 86) Again McAuley's manner of stating the transcendent is conveyed in its laconic, almost churlish, anti-poetic rhetoric of negatives (Rowe's "via negative," 1984 47). Transcendence remains connected with the world of nature if only in its solitary stoic, stunted forms: "that tough old vine/Roping our side fence" which echoes the desiccated Eliotesque "tree that does not bear" of "The Tomb of Heracles" (*CP*, 59) written 20 years earlier. There is something

---

[37] "Wisteria floribunda" is a Japanese creeper producing tassels of purple flowers in Spring.
[38] Mathematics furnishes McAuley with figurative constructions as in poems of the mid-1940s, *UA*. Cf. 4.5 (93).

positive to be had from this suburban yard – occasional poetic epiphany, not always attainable in McAuley's later work.

A parallel backyard poem "Soundings" (1966-67), with the "unpoetic" *topoi* of the back-yard with fowl pen, however records the failure of epiphany in its recollection of the sensitive self-doubting late adolescent, arguably the young writer of the Master's thesis on mysticism:

> At dusk I lingered in the yard
> After the fowls had gone to roost,
> Pressing my five senses hard
> For revelation self-induced. (*CP*, 203)

His subsequent disillusion: "But all I saw was the light fail" is summed up, as if in parody, by an (Andersonian) scepticism: "What did it mean?"[39] (*CP*, 203-204) Nonetheless, the poem offers an evocative description of the place that fed and nurtured the aspiring poet, who it seems, only at his maturity at 50, could be reborn and transformed with the Wordsworthian recognition that the child was an important part of himself, something he was already searching for in 1938, and again in 1966, in the resurrected poem "Time Out of Mind" (*CP*, 179).

A poem describing the subject's act of seeing, "Soundings" portrays what poet and critic Jeremy Hooker identifies in the English landscape poet and mystic Richard Jefferies (1848-87), also known by the young McAuley,[40] whose "lyrical vision" has the "sensibility of the seer: a man who is lonely, tender, stoically enduring, attached to an earth that he knows to be a precarious 'home.'" (1996 ix) Dorothy Green, recalling McAuley's inward poetry in "At Bungendore," (*CP*, 5) described "Soundings" and the other poems of the late 1960s as getting "to the heart of the matter" (1977 19), in that they recreate McAuley's quintessential early lyric impulse. The romantic nature poet John Clare had written much earlier that: "there is nothing but poetry about the existence of childhood," and "there is nothing of poetry about manhood but the reflection and remembrance of what has been"[41] – reminiscent of what Wordsworth argued in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollection of Early Childhood" (1804). McAuley's mature poetry evoking his childhood haunts of Homebush, Sydney, falls into Clare's second category of poetry, that of manhood reflecting upon places and occurrences of "what has been."

---

[39] Cf.1.2 (15).
[40] McAuley discussed Jefferies in his Master's thesis, "SEP," I, 44.
[41] John Clare. *Selected Poems and Prose*. 1966, 66.

When McAuley emphasised to Thompson the importance for a poet to "find out what you really are and where you really live […]" (Thompson 105),[42] he had just learnt that himself in the writing of his poems about his Sydney childhood. Arguably the shift to the southern island Tasmania enabled McAuley to see, as if for the first time, those formative and meaningful symbols, from his childhood place in inner suburban Sydney. McAuley would have travelled back to Sydney occasionally, as editor of *Quadrant,* and would have been able to glance again at his natal Sydney from afar, almost as an expatriate. Hooker argues that:

> […] the literature of place in the Romantic and modern periods […] is the art of the displaced: those who, for a variety of reasons, […] are either sufficiently "removed" to see the place as a landscape, or who exist in the uneasy but creative state of tension between a sense of communal belonging, and separation from the place and people (5-6)

The landscapes McAuley creates from afar, usually featuring a childish figure in the landscape, contribute to the *topos* of the suburban in the Australian landscape being constructed during the second half of the twentieth-century, notably by contemporary novelist Patrick White and poets A.D. Hope and Bruce Dawe (b.1930).

McAuley's travel into the imaginary homeland of his suburban childhood of the 1920s and 1930s, however provoked, was enhanced, and focussed, by much greater geographic distance in his travel to North America and to Ireland during his sabbatical leave in early 1967. The flood of recollections to be transformed into more autobiographical poetry may have been provoked by news, received in America, of the death of his childhood friend Ulick King. McAuley wrote: "thinking about a poem for Ulick's death […] my mind went back in the past."[43] McAuley's 8-stanza poem "Vale" (*CP*, 206) remembers his physically disabled courageous friend and fellow chorister from adolescent years in Homebush: "It was no crippled self you chose to wear." An important detail is the portrait's celebration of the remembered summer soundscape of the cicada song,[44] sound being important to the musical, metrically sensitive poet and his chorister friend:

> Greengrocer and black prince in shrilling choir
> Respond from the dark trees that line the road
> To the long throbbing cadence of desire
> That ends the Sapphic Ode. (*CP*, 206.)

Another, much anthologized, autobiographical poem, "Because,"1967) was written ten days later (11-12 January 1967) in Santa Barbara where McAuley had been sight-seeing and visiting the Franciscan Mission. "Because" (1962), is an interior scene, a stiff, Bergman-

[42] Cf. 9.6 (240).
[43] McAuley. letter to Norma, 3-4 January 1967. Box 21, McAuley papers.
[44] The cicada (*Cicadoidea*) is a singing, tree-dwelling cricket, appearing in summer.

like portrait of family life. It is summoned in the introductory, almost clichéd "vignette" in the first-person voice of the subject, the young authorial witness of the suburban family at breakfast on a typical day:

> My mother and my father never quarrelled.
> They were united in a kind of love
> As daily as the *Sydney Morning Herald*,
> Rather than like the eagle or the dove. (*CP*, 200)

The ten quatrains in predominantly rhyming iambic pentameters offer a prosaic conversational lilt, which impressed Clive James in its "filling a strict form with free rhythms" in a metrical strictness and ease he compared with that of Phillip Larkin. (2011 12-13) The conversational narrative recalls an incident, illustrating a cultural sub-text for McAuley, the emotional poverty of the Anglo-Irish family presided over by a father who has "dammed up his Irish blood / Against all drinking praying fecklessness / And stiffened into stone and creaking wood." (*CP*, 200) The emotional pattern of paralysis, recalling its pair the earlier "Father, Mother, Son," (*CP*, 181) is set by one childhood incident half way through at stanza 5, whose first curt line is emphasised by single syllables and spondee metre:

> Small things can pit the memory like a cyst: //|//|u/|uu|/u|/
> Having seen other fathers greet their sons,
> I put my childish face up to be kissed
> After an absence. The rebuff still stuns
>
> My blood. (*CP*, 201)

This observation is underlined by the curt alliterative phrase "still stuns," (also in spondee), with the striking stanza break before the following: "My blood." It sets up a language of caution, non-giving and regret, as if something sensitive had been bludgeoned: "I never gave enough, and I am sorry;/But we were all closed in the same defeat." (*CP*, 201) The scene recalled from so long ago, yet still so powerfully, in a motel in Santa Barbara, proceeds to gather other hurtful accusations that seem part of this pattern of withholding vitality and warmth in which the subject, like his father, seems complicit. It is a grim conclusion of the present meeting itself in the past, highlighted by the strong alliterative (d) in line 3 below:

> It's my own judgment day that I draw near,
> Descending in the past, without a clue,
> Down to that central deadness: the despair
> Older than any hope I ever knew. (*CP*, 201)

In this the subject-author dwells not only on emotional but also creative failures, echoing those raised in Dutton's cutting criticism in 1959 of McAuley's language in *Quiros*: ("chess-men are usually very dead indeed") (53) and a similar critique by Wallace-Crabbe recorded

by McAuley: "I was found without my usual defences: it penetrated through my mood of depression and rankled."[45] These criticisms contributed to McAuley's own, by now recurring, *topos* of creative *aporia*: "Again the dead pause, the need for a new start" of the earlier " The Inception of the Poem" (*CP*, 108) which had foreshadowed *Quiros*. Paradoxically the more informal, everyday language McAuley was using in these later autobiographical poems was the converse of the universal language for which he had been criticised. His language in these new informal poems frequently resorts to the colloquial: "The living cannot *call the dead collect*"[46] in stanza 9 (*CP*, 201) draws on a technical telecommunication expression.[47]

After finishing this poem McAuley wrote excitedly to Norma from Los Angeles: "Since I've left I've composed two poems, both among the best I've ever done: I'm beginning to form a new group of poems about childhood and youth and they are a real break-through after years of trying to reach a certain style and method."[48] The second poem was either "Vale" or, according to John Ridland,[49] his host, at the Faculty at University of California at Santa Barbara and also poet, another autobiographical poem "One Tuesday in Summer" of which Ridland had been given "autograph copies" along with "Because."[50] "One Tuesday in Summer"[51] would have been written after McAuley left Australia perhaps in San Francisco, his first stop in America. Like many poems inspired by childhood, its genesis was an incident, sharply remembered, a realization or epiphany like the "spots of time" identified in "The Prelude" by the poet of childhood, William Wordsworth,[52] or what Mikhail Bakhtin later described as "time-space."[53] The confessional quatrains of iambic pentameters with a looser alternating rhyme offer a vivid narration of the occurrence, a violent thunderstorm, with the testimonial issuing from the "I" subject, the author as child:

> That sultry afternoon the world went strange.
> Under a violet and leaden bruise
> The air was filled with sinister yellow light;
> Trees, houses, grass took on unnatural hues. (*CP*, 199)

In these consecutive lines' strong spondee metre underlines the accumulating intensity of the unsettling event, the thunder rolling near, with its prime witness, the unlikely: "[…] Mr Pitt, the grocer's order-man, / Who made his call on Tuesday's at our place," described in low-key iambics:

---

[45] McAuley. Notebook 7, 10 August 1961. Box 1.
[46] Writer's italics.
[47] "Calling collect" means reversing charges in a telephone call.
[48] McAuley. Letter to Norma, 20 January 1967. Box 21, McAuley papers.
[49] John Ridland. "Kindness and Courage:"" Eight Letters from James McAuley." *Quadrant*, 1994, 67- 75.
[50] Ridland had offered to publish the poems in his magazine *The Little Square Review.*
[51] Dated December 1966 in Ridland's "autograph copy."
[52] William Wordsworth. "The Prelude." 1805, 12.208-218.
[53] Mikhail Bakhtin. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. 1981, 84.

> Said to my mother, looking at the sky,
> "You'd think the ending of the world had come."
> A leathern little man, with bicycle clips
> Around his ankles, doing our weekly sum. (*CP,* 199*)*

The scene is evoked in a fixed scene, involving contrasts, that of the extraordinary, the thunder storm, and seeming enactment of apocalypse set against the humdrum ordinariness of an everyday scene "at our place." Confessedly "uncanny" and "strange," the incident unfolds in a suburban Gothic, with the unlikely Mr Pitt, the grocer's order-man as emissary, in an everyday landscape where "angelic messengers" could appear: "Pronouncing the Lord's judgments why and when." A tension builds in preparation for the prophesied apocalyptic event:

> For nothing less seemed worthy of the scene.
> The darkening imminence hung on and on,
> Till suddenly, with lightning stroke and rain,
> Apocalypse exploded and was gone. (*CP,* 200)

Notwithstanding the *denouement* and anti-climax, the recording subject stands powerful witness 40 years later to an epiphany, having seen "the world, stand in dismay." "One Tuesday in Summer" shows how a humble suburban home, rather than the realm of nature, might still be the *locus* for transcendence.

McAuley commented on the impulse to write when travelling: "It was very strange because normally, when you are out of context travelling, it's not a good idea to write, but the impulse to write was so strong." (De Berg, 11,351) Hooker's comments on the author's "removal" from the place of action are relevant. In this group of poems there is not only an absence of time, but also the geographical distance from continent as well as region. Hooker argues:

> Removal […] enables the writer to see the ground he stands on with peculiar intensity […] but at a psychological and sometimes a social distance, because he is no longer part of it. […] Place is that which we perceive with all our senses […] This is one of the reasons why childhood is important in the literature of place, because it is associated with the primary state of belonging. […] When landscape is the writer's original place, it may move him to his depths. […] (1996 6)

An elegiac quality marks McAuley's depiction of scenes from his childhood, also an intensity of seeing that place in the manner to which Hooker refers – "with all our senses." It is as if McAuley suddenly recalled Rilke's advice to the young Franz Kappus to draw upon memories of "[…] enfance, cette precieuse, cette royale richesse […]."[54] However, thirty years after his Rilkean phase, McAuley's adult perspective of childhood is not through the lens of nostalgia for a lost Eden, as understood by Clare, but maintains a realistic, unsentimental regard. He sees his world as it is – the bicycle clips around Mr Pitt's ankles, his

[54] Rilke. *Lettres à un Jeune Poète*. 22.

father's emotional inadequacies, the humdrum daily reading of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. He is writing at the same time, in the mid-to-late 1960s, and in the same vein about life's ordinary unheroic domestic scenes as his different contemporaries the English poet Phillip Larkin and the American Robert Lowell,[55] even though McAuley thought his own autobiographical poems of this period were not the same kind as Lowell's influential "Confessional Poems." [sic]" (De Berg: 11, 351) What McAuley may have meant is that his own autobiographical poems are more formally controlled and narrated, and confined to isolated incidents in childhood or youth than Lowell's more free-form poems closer to dramatic soliloquy or stream of consciousness of the present. The Australian poet probably had more in common with Larkin in terms of their shared formalism if not their outlook.

9.9 The Journey through Culture

McAuley's autobiographical chronicle is continued in the next phase of his travel in Ireland from April to May 1967. It addresses his childhood recollections of the deeper cultural past of his father's rejected Irish ancestry or rather his rejection of it as set out in the poem written in early April 1967 "Tabletalk." (CP, 202). It carries forward, in narrative style, "In tabletalk my father used to tell…") bitter recollections on the impoverished family values and constrained relationships expressed in "Because" (January 1967) and "Father, Mother, Son" (1962). The realistic reporting is tinged with satire in the sardonic depiction of his parents' small-minded prudence in limiting what was projected by the Protestant mother as a problematic (Catholic) family heritage, the assertive voice being underlined by spondees in lines 2 and 4 below:

> On relatives my parents were agreed:
> Too much association doesn't do, //|u/|u/|//|u/|
> And doubly so with the bog-Irish breed –
> They're likely to want something out of you. //|uu|//|u/|u/| (*CP, 203*)

McAuley wrote at least another poem in Ireland which draws upon and recreates a phase of his early adulthood as a young teacher and his first year of marriage. Like the other autobiographical poems it shows a strong particularity, evoking with ekphrastic skill a strong sense of place. "Catherine Hill Bay 1942," written in Clifden, Galway,[56] recalls a visit with Norma to a small coastal mining town near Newcastle, NSW, where the young graduate had been teaching. Rich with colour and natural imagery, the first three stanzas of short, alternately rhyming quatrains,

[55] Robert Lowell, also a Catholic convert, was McAuley's almost exact contemporary (1917 -1977).
[56] McAuley. Notebook 8, 9 April 1967. Box 1.

create a vivid, almost surreal landscape, recalling the visual strength of the early poems "At Bungendore" and "Released on Parole" ("I see wind, cloud and light," *CP*, 198):

White clouds twirled above us
Like the clean head of a mop.
Cattle found green pasture
To the brink of the cliff-drop.
[…]

The miners' little houses
Lined the narrow street;
And people sat on the doorsteps,
The road beneath their feet. (*CP*, 206)

The human landscape of "miners' little houses" possibly recalls similar cottages seen in western Ireland. Again, the physical scene serves as the starting point for an observation, which does not moralise but offers a lighthearted affirmation of being in the present:

The place was inbred and backward,
With enough evils there
For a dozen funny stories:
For once we didn't care.

Not yet rotted by artists,
Or some poetic tout,
That day it just existed
In time turned inside out.
(*Ibid.*)

"Not yet rotted by artists" continues the anti-metaphorical approach both of the recent "Soundings" (CP, 203) and the essay "The Magian Heresy." The whimsically described microcosm, where "people sat on the doorstops," with its mix of "evils" and beauty – water as "clear transparent glass," arguably has the "nursery rhyme topsy-turviness" McAuley earlier ascribed to Wordsworth's "The Idiot Boy" ("The Languages of Poetry," 61). Part of such "topsy-turviness" is "time turned inside out," the autobiographical route or passage through the poet's past to explore narratives of childhood and early adulthood, in which past becomes present. It suggests an idealisation of that state, as often seen in the pastoral convention. As in the late romantic tradition in which McAuley's later poems can sometimes be placed, the journey through time and place in Hardy-like reminiscence, becomes his lens for understanding himself. Terry Gifford describes the literary device of "retreat and return,"[57] a strategy McAuley arguably uses in these poems reflecting on his family life and youth. There is little idealisation of the past but rather the addressing of significant scars: in this McAuley

[57] Terry Gifford. *Pastoral*. 1999, 5.

seems part of what Gifford differentiates as the tradition of anti-pastoral (5), involving a preference for realism against the sentimental, and among whom Gifford includes a number of poets admired by (and perhaps akin to) the young and mature McAuley – notably John Clare and George Crabbe.

In his pursuit of this tradition McAuley maintains his long-held, if until now unparticularised, pursuit of the "real." However, in the 1960s, the "real" seems less Platonic and rather linked with the realism of earlier poets dealing with the subject of nature and the regional, notably the late eighteenth-century poet George Crabbe whose "realistic texture" McAuley praises in his essays[58] and also the young Wordsworth. McAuley admired Crabbe for his lack of "that modern ambiguity, which comes from uneasiness about one's standpoint and values. Crabbe knows where he stands […]" ("The Languages of Poetry," 58). McAuley paid homage to Crabbe in the Preface to his own *Collected Poems* (1971), adverting to the late eighteenth-century poet: "The only poet I can think of whose comment on his aims and his work is completely acceptable is Crabbe in the preface of his *Tales* (1812)" (*CP*, vii). McAuley was presumably alluding to Crabbe's statement there that literature should deal with "the painful realities of actual existence," and that "Fiction […] and every work of fancy must for a time have the effect of realities."[59]

9.10 <u>An ekphrastic turn</u>

During the stay on the west coast of Ireland, McAuley probably wrote other autobiographical poems which travelled back through time. Several autobiographical poems of this period ("Catherine Hill Bay 1942," "Soundings," "One Tuesday in Summer" and "Numbers and Makes") are notable for their pictorial evocation of emblematic, epiphanic scenes. They demonstrate what McAuley now describes as bringing the personal to much modern poetry: "the kind of felt life that is conveyed by concrete particularity."[60]

"Self-Portrait Newcastle, 1942" describes the industrial setting of the steel-making town Newcastle as backdrop to the solitary room of the newly arrived bachelor teacher:

> First day, by the open window,
> He sits at a table to write,
> And watches the coal-dust settle
> Black on the paper's white. (*CP*, 204)

[58] Cf.9.2 (228). McAuley. "The Language of Poetry."1964; "Wordsworth and Crabbe and the EighteentCentury Heritage." 1975.
[59] George Crabbe. Preface to *Tales.* (1812), xv.
[60] McAuley. *The Personal Element* […]. 4.

"Coal-dust" on the papers evokes the industrial space of his new home, also the poems of his early mentor Rilke: "But *Briefe an einen jungen/Dichter* speaks close to his mind" (*CP*, 205).

Increasingly the poetry is characterized by a painterly rather than a meditative approach. McAuley remarked how: "Oddly enough, a vivid stimulus, rather than influence or model, was provided during those months [of travel] by constantly reading in English translation the late poems of Pasternak" (1890-1960) (*MAV*, 204) Looking at this new set of distinctly different poems, with their spare form and concrete, pictorial diction the nature of their impact must be considered. McAuley, now approaching middle age, probably read the older Russian poet Pasternak's recently published late poems.[61] The later work of the aging Pasternak ("Women in Childhood,"1958) shows how his succinct form, his short-lined quatrains, the pared imagistic details evoking place both rural and urban, the confessional approach[62] may have been absorbed by McAuley, if, subliminally:

> Clear as today I picture myself, a boy
> Head poked through the window to survey
> A side-street dark as a quarry of stone
> At height of day. (Pasternak, *Late Poems*, 16)

Clive James' observation is pertinent: "Auden's poetry possessed the quality which Pasternak so admired in Pushkin – it was full of things."[63] Such a quality had also attracted the early McAuley to Rilke: McAuley's later poetry, since his move to Tasmania, was also already "full of things." Probably, McAuley's strong reading while travelling, of Pasternak's impassioned, direct and succinct invocations, and, above all, the questing turn towards reminiscence, appears to have coincided paradoxically, with both greater immediacy and emotional presence and also a bird's-eye-view detachment in McAuley's new poems, in looking back on and reliving distant incidents from his past, a perspective described in Pasternak's poem "Unique Days" (1959):

> Massing in memory till
> The pattern is complete;
> Remembered as the time
> When time was standing still.
> (Boris Pasternak, *Late Poems*, 25)

There seems a parallel between Pasternak's[64] poem and McAuley's poem of reminiscence "Catherine Hill Bay 1942" (*CP*, 206) with its suggestion of a period of "time turned inside

[61] McAuley probably read Pasternak's *Poems 1955-1959,* (1960) translated by Michael Harari, London: Collins and Harvill. The book was republished as *Late Poems*, Greville Press Pamphlets, 2006.
[62] Hamburger described the confessional as the "reassertion of the 'personal principle.'" 316.
[63] Clive James. "On Auden's Death." *Cultural Cohesion: The Essential Essays,1968-2002*, 2013, 4.
[64] It was close to this time that the anti-communist McAuley was excluded from the Soviet anthology of Australian poets. On related Cold War matters, the scandal of CIA funding of *Quadrant*'s sponsor, the Congress

out," that creates the strange intersection between time and place. That might also be seen as yet another reaching after "presence" – building on "the figured Now" in *Quiros* (*CP*, 173 / St. 4) nearly a decade earlier. The poems bring to life what McAuley admired much earlier in the childlike apprehension, the "innocent eye" of the mystic Thomas Traherne.[65]

9.11 <u>Considering form</u>

Notwithstanding his turn to the short poem since *Quiros*, McAuley remained committed to traditional prosody as the basis for poetics. He described this epigrammatically: "Poetry is pattern" (Santamaria 55): his emphasis on "pattern" recalling Plato: "rhythm and melody […] penetrate to the innermost part of the soul."[66] Coincidentally, the poet's role in promulgating formal prosody had been the subject of conversation between him and John Ridland teaching in Santa Barbara.[67] McAuley had just published his formal study of prosody *A Primer of English Versification*[68] which Ridland had seen reviewed in the *Times Literary Supplement*. The young academic, occupied in "describing such metres" in his PhD, "read it with excitement. It was all I could hope such a text could be, compact, authoritative and informed by a thorough understanding of both poetic tradition and structural linguistics." (Ridland 67) McAuley's 60-page monograph illustrates the poet's profound understanding of the accentual metrical system underlying traditional poetry at the foundation of his own work in composition and also in assessment of poets past and present. In defence against stereotyped views about the metrics of traditional verse McAuley argued that:

> Unvarying regularity is not the ideal towards which English verse aspires. The kinds of metrical variations we must now consider are not breaches of the rules. They occur at regular intervals at the choice of the poet, but they are part of the normal and expected behaviour of verse. (*Primer*, 11)

The young poet Geoffrey Lehmann recalled McAuley's elaboration on irregularity, in a talk to Sydney University students in 1958:

> […] he pointed out that by writing in fixed form, and occasionally departing from that form, tension is created between how the poem is *spoken* and how it is supposed to scan. This tension creates interest and surprise that is not possible with free verse, as free verse has no rules that you can break.[69]

---

for Cultural Freedom (CCF), was revealed during McAuley's visit to Europe in May 1967, a matter of which McAuley and probably all *Quadrant* and *Encounter* colleagues seemed to have been unaware. Many resigned.

[65] McAuley. "SEP." I, 25. Cf. 2.3 (42).

[66] Plato. *The Republic*. III, 401, d.

[67] Cf. 9.8 (246). McAuley had shown Ridland some of his first autobiographical poems in early 1967.

[68] McAuley. *A Primer of English Versification*. U Sydney Press, 1966.

[69] Geoffrey Lehmann. "James McAuley: Literary Criticism in the Form of a Memoir." *Quadrant*. 46. 12, 2002, 56.

What McAuley explains here about the difference between the scanned and the spoken poem seems widely accepted. However, Lehmann's report reflects McAuley's inflexibility about free verse, which, when well done, is able to create rules of its own. Nonetheless, the *Primer* shows McAuley's sound knowledge of the shifts within prosody in English literature through the past two hundred years, how the:

> […] deliberate departure from the norm became established as a special kind of writing [and] transformed by the Romantics into such irregular performances as Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode" and Coleridge's "Kubla Khan." The prosodic restlessness of the second half of the nineteenth century included further exploration of this kind of verse, which has continued into the twentieth century. (*Primer* 18-19)

The tone of McAuley's study of traditional prosody was neutral and not chiding, unlike his essay "The Magian Heresy" (1957), showing greater confidence in his attachment to traditional forms and his now demonstrated ability to write in the forms of his contemporaries, his own "lowering of formality as regards tone and diction."[70] McAuley's production of his *Primer* at the height of his literary powers underlines what former McAuley student, Peter Pierce learnt from McAuley's teaching: "[…] that the craft of the poet needed to be understood in order for readers to discern meaning."[71]

In 1966 McAuley admitted that:

> On the whole I seem to become more optimistic as time goes on. […] I tended to move away from a certain rigidity […] and at the same time to accept the notion of expressing myself both in a somewhat more contemporary idiom and with a degree of personal feeling [...] I still do think this – the biggest challenge is to write lyrical poetry which is full of personal feeling but which is about something important […] which is packed with complex meaning. (Morphett 9)

He had already expanded upon the more modest objectives of his new genre, in which the seemingly simple could be packed with "complex meaning" – the modern short poem which:

> […] offers the chance of […] exploring a limited situation; you are not committing yourself to a whole world view at every point […] rather a modern poem is trying to find out what ideas are appropriate, […] what is the appropriate reaction to this particular situation, […] even reacting *ambiguously* and saying that it is difficult to sort things out. […] This is what I find interesting in the best of Larkin's poems. (McAuley and Smith, 1964 11-12)

Such acknowledgement of ambiguity in his own work answers to some extent McCredden's identification of ambivalences in the decentered self of the autobiographical poems: "I care – but do I care?" (St John's Park, New Town," *CP*, 180)[72] It also seems an admission that the

[70] McAuley. "The Rhetoric of Australian Poetry." 1976, 115.
[71] Peter Pierce. "Full of Returns." Review, *Collected Poems*, James McAuley, 1994, *Quadrant*, 39.4, 315, 1995, 88.
[72] Cf. 9.5 (236).

admired eighteenth-century poet Crabbe's escape from "modern ambiguity"[73] was not an option for the contemporary poet, including himself. Generally, McAuley recognises a mellowing from his earlier rigidity, such as the proscriptive tone of his earlier poetics against "individual arbitrary/and self-expressive art" and also in accepting a lowering of formality in poetic forms.

9.12 Reception

Literary critics were unanimous in their praise for McAuley's new collection *Surprises of the Sun (SuS)* with its "autobiographical" poems. Signalled as "heralding a major change" (Lehmann 58), most expressed extreme surprise at McAuley's new direction, echoing McAuley's own words to Norma on his outburst into poetry in California, a radical "reorientation of the personality" (Dobrez, 1976 180) and "shift in McAuley's style and tone." (Pybus, 199 227) Pybus admitted that even McAuley's severest critics had been "disarmed by a set of candid, autobiographical poems" (*Ibid.*). McCredden using the labels of McAuley antagonist John Docker observed that McAuley had "at last come in out of the cold; the iceman of the 1950s was thawing into more congenial and accessible forms" (1992 72) Leonie Kramer who knew the poet's work well found the change "astonishing." (1976 5) Philip Mead, who had dismissed *Quiros* and the *VC* poems as a waste of a decade, praised the poems, notably "Because," as "wonderful meditations on ordinariness." (1990 519) There was particular praise for the poems about childhood: "[…] some of the most moving poetry [McAuley] ever wrote."[74] The new poems were seen as representing the most significant change yet in McAuley's work. Several identified something totally new, in "voice" (Strauss 608) and as poet. Kramer found the change so extreme she needed: "to learn the tones and accents of a new poet." (1976 5)

Being more personal, imagistic, spare, underwritten and less stylised, the poetry was appreciated for its poetics of "reduced pretensions." (Smith, 1981 390) Linked to such observations, however, came some criticism of flatness and even "triteness" (390). Clive James described the poetry as prosaic, if admiringly: "its poetics are without poeticism." (2011 13) In this respect they display what the poet admired in Philip Larkin's work – "an anti-rhetorical note" (McAuley & Smith 12) akin to McAuley's other observation about how the modern lyric was "close to talk."[75] Again his addressing of the *topos* of "central deadness" in "Because" evinced praise for his honesty both on personal matters and his art (Wallace-Crabbe, 1971 327) but also the observation that "deadnesses" remained a recurrent problem

[73] McAuley. "The Languages of Poetry." 58. Cf. 9.2 (228).
[74] Dennis Robinson. "The Traditionalism of James McAuley." *Australian Literary Studies*, 1983, 213.
[75] McAuley. *The Personal Element in Australian Poetry*. 4.

even in some passages of his latest work (McCredden, 1992 72). The once-criticised "deadness" had now been incorporated into McAuley's "anti-rhetorical" approach. Such a manner he considered important in explaining "how difficult it was to arrive at a firm and loud statement of value." (McAuley & Smith, 1964 12) He would however qualify: "My trouble is to find out how far this rather glum sort of anti-rhetorical poetry […] is a limitation on the value of the poems themselves." (12) The anti-rhetorical tone reinforces the emerging strain of negativity in his poetics.

Most acclaimed the return to the short, meditative lyric of McAuley's early work. Dorothy Green who knew the early work almost as well as McAuley argued that the latest autobiographical poems "bore witness to the truth of that early [lyric] impulse." (1977 19) Given McAuley's observed return to his earlier personal lyric forms several commentators, including Les Murray remarked upon a "rebirth." Murray quipped: "Professor McAuley was dead. Long live James McAuley!" (1978 187) Paradoxically, and contrary to lingering stereotypes about McAuley as an academic poet, as seen in Murray's quip, McAuley's best-received, more down-to-earth poetry had been written in the years after becoming an academic in 1961, as represented in *SuS*.

9.13 Change and Journey

Even though McAuley seems to have arrived at his mature phase the theme of change remains constant. He described his arrival in Hobart and adaptation to academic life as a "period of enforced growth," (De Berg 11, 343) given the need to teach and publish in a new field and to become acquainted with a new environment. In a 1968 article on Judith Wright's poetry, following his turn to short autobiographical poems, he expressed some self-reflexive comments about literary development:

> At a certain point in the career of most poets the first élan ceases. There is a time of reassessment: a need to deepen or widen one's range, a change in values or emphasis. The passage from one state to another is often through darkness and bafflement. Sometimes the poetic solution lies precisely in including this experience of defeat within a new victory.[76]

Such reassessment and adaptation seemed inseparable from an inbuilt requirement in McAuley's evolving poetics for experiment, practice, defeat or submergence and then renewal, or rebirth, as seen in his symbol of the poet, the cicada. (*EM*, 180) It represents a confession how his technical and imaginative "*via negativa"* also related to his "going against the grain." The admission of defeat but also its overcoming was intrinsic to the poem

[76] McAuley. "Some Poems of Judith Wright." 1968, 38.

“Because” with its confrontation of a “deadness” for which his earlier poetry had been and would continue to be criticized.

He admitted in 1975: "I’m also pleased and interested in the fact that I have changed a lot. I don’t think I just go on reproducing myself. I took the title *Surprises of the Sun*, partly because there was a lot of new departures and people were a bit surprised at the kind of poems.” (De Berg 11,352) McAuley himself seems to have been surprised. The poetics of change was increasingly noted in critical commentary on McAuley’s literary development: the shift to the personal in the mid-1960s as McAuley’s “second turning point” (Lehmann 58) – the first, presumably, being the turn to classicism in *VC* and *Quiros.* Understandably, the related symbol of journey, suggested by the Quiros archetype and his resurrection of the early quest poem “Time out of Mind,” frequently appears in critical appreciation of his autobiographical excursion into past *topoi* and past genres. Leonie Kramer proposes: “He is like a traveller who has made a long and arduous journey from home, about to return to the place where he belongs.” (1985 38) Dobrez writes: “McAuley’s voyage has only just begun [...]” constituting: “a return of that excommunicate prodigal to: ‘My self’s Self who is, and is/ The end of my going’” […] McAuley has been forced like one of his explorers, to journey deviously to the personality who was there in the first place […]” (1976 184). In this the poet reflects less a critique of the world, fear of mortality or sense of atonement than an ontological concern about his own state of being. While associated with journey, McAuley was not attempting anything on the scale of a Joycean odyssey. The symbol of journey for his work’s evolution is naturally explained by the poet’s earlier explorer interests, not unnatural for the Australian writer, and also effectively underlines the deeper internal quest, including through time, in the search for the creative self.

In this sense the journey was cyclic, a return to the beginnings, but also a transformation, the move to a new understanding, as Catalano suggests.

> If the autobiographical poems suggested that McAuley had begun to mutate into what for him was a kind of new writer, the exquisite “In the Huon Valley” pinpointed the direction in which he would move […] The poet who had previously drawn so much of his inspiration from the world of ideas turned to the *minutiae* of recurrent processes of nature.[77]

In McAuley’s transformation through his explorer episodes he increasingly reaches out towards the phenomenological world in “a process of re-acquaintance, […], with the world of things.” (Kirkpatrick, 1984 203-4) The late poems signal the imminent and surprising end of quest, whether for the “self’s Self” or understanding, that involved being away from the normal world: they are expressive of return, and reconciliation.

[77] Gary Catalano. “The Language of Sight.”1996, 135.

9.14 The Voice of Self

Kramer, in speaking of learning "the tones and accents of a new poet," (1976 5) and Dobrez in mentioning "the personality who was there in the beginning" (1976 184) raise the question of what might be described as McAuley's new voice. Always conscious of the dynamic of change throughout his work, he considered the more personal poems "among my best, including Pietà."(*MAV*, 203) McCredden's implicit question about the "so-called autobiographical poems" (1972 72) joins company with Wallace-Crabbe's claim that: "the will continues to construct and the mind continues to produce the forms of verse when the heart has withdrawn from it all." (1971 327) One needs to consider how the autobiographical past might be seen as good for poetic copy. McAuley had admitted in 1938 to Dorothy Auchterlonie how in his early poetry he was "Dredging fragments out of the past to make lyrics of them […]" (Green, 1977 20) The autobiographical self McAuley was establishing in the childhood poems of 1967 might depend on the construction, as Pybus formulates, of "a solitary self-doubting child in the emotionally drained environment of an undemonstrative family" (1999 227-8) – a variation on the wounded hero of his earlier poetry. However, the charge that McAuley's autobiographical scenarios were willfully and intellectually constructed is hard to reconcile with a new form of poetry praised for its honesty, humility and sincerity and with the poet's own stated objective for this new phase: "to write lyrical poetry which is full of personal feeling but which is about something important" (Morphett 5).

The emotional poverty of his early family life becomes itself the cause of emotion, either of despair or stoic resignation. Travel and the loss of a close childhood friend, (the encounter with mortality) triggered a genuine rather than constructed outburst of reminiscence. Emotion now plays a larger role in McAuley's poetic outlook than the "rational paradise" posited in the introduction to his 1963 collection *SP*. He admitted that he had arrived at the personal mode with a great degree of caution: "It took a degree of maturity and an ability to avoid self-consciousness and sentimentality, to really speak about one's own private feelings rather directly. This, I think, comes only with time." (Thompson 99) He described his technique for poetic statement: "I think one has to first speak through masks to some extent. One has to distance oneself. Over involvement means one can't say it the right way." (99) In this latest phase of his expression, he had removed his masks, his voice becoming more strongly linked with the poetic self, searching for the nature of being.

McAuley commented many times how personal experience contributed to the act of writing, in contradiction to Wallace-Crabbe's imputations of the poet's merely intellectual

constructions: "[…] you need a basis of experience. You've got to be in contact with ordinary life in some way. One can't prescribe any of this but generally speaking, I think, poetry has to come out of the fodder of experience, that one takes into oneself and processes and sends out again." (De Berg 11, 333) This suggests the "whole man"[78] to which McAuley had aligned himself in the early 1950s, but in this more recent time connected less with anthropology and post-colonial projects than with nature observation, looking outwards.

The perspective McAuley chose to adopt from the mid-1960s saw him, for the first time in 20 years, writing with "the grain" of his contemporaries in a personal mode, if still adhering to traditional forms. It drew him closer to the youthful lyric poet of his own past but still retained the perspective of the older man looking back, in an exercise of honesty which encompasses a bitter-sweet understanding of scenarios from the past, the sense of belatedness, but also a strong focus on the present.

While McAuley did not deny his earlier stances he was more cognisant of a multiplicity of postures, as reflected in his comment to John Thompson when writing the autobiographical poems: "There are so many voices urging you to be this, to like that, to arrange yourself in certain attitudes and so forth. Discover what you really are." (Thompson 105) In discussions about the English New Apocalytic poets with Vivian Smith in the mid-1960s both commented on the datedness of poetic inspiration from what they called "the myth kitty," "giving everything some sort of mythical dimension […] instead of speaking directly about human experience […]." (McAuley & Smith 13) While this comment distances McAuley from his early poems such as "Philoctetes" (1945), "The Hero and the Hydra" (1947-48) and the poems drawing on Biblical themes, it also touches on his longstanding concern about contemporary poetry's resort to "an unconsecrated mythopoeia in substitution for the Christian mysteries,"[79] that match his concerns about willful poetic personal fancy, or myth-making, raised in "The Magian Heresy" (1957).

Dobrez offers a pertinent model for McAuley's most recent transformation, the figure of the revenant. (1976 181) drawing on his reading of McAuley's early companion poems "Revenant" (1939-42, *CP*, 19) and "Released on Parole" (1938-1966, *CP*, 196), the latter published only 30 years later. What McAuley had written to Auchterlonie in 1938 on his early personal poem seems pertinent: "It is not that the past has become dead, but that it has come to life, has ceased to be a dead weight in my present, has disappeared into my future." (Green, 1977 20) Thus, the poet has become liberated from his past, if only "on parole," but now a

[78] McAuley. *SP*. viii.
[79] McAuley. Notebook 7, 4 March 1962. Box 1.

fertile new resource, becoming part of life to come. In the approaching decade of the 1970s, after his engagement in the poetics of revenant, McAuley was free to explore the world of the present in his home in Tasmania as well as other literary landscapes that resonated with his delighting though always precarious vision of the world.

10

The Darkening Pastoral (1970-1973)

10.1 The short nature lyric

McAuley's "late lyrics" from 1970, were also widely acclaimed. They comprised the last sequence "The Hazard and the Gift," of *Collected Poems 1936-1970,* (1971), *Music Late at Night: Poems 1970 to 1973* (1976) and the less known translated versions of 20 poems by Georg Trakl in his essay "The Poetry of Georg Trakl" (1973). These poems make the early 1970s one of McAuley's most productive periods. The poet considered these short lyrics his best work, perhaps because they revive his earliest, most inward voice. "In the last three months I have written more and better lyrical verse than I have written in my life."[1] Having received news earlier that year of the diagnosis of bowel cancer, with the prospect of five more years to live, he also understood it might be his last. "In 1970 I had a serious illness and emerged with that exquisitely keen sense of life and its fragility which such experiences give. The result was a number of short poems which use a language of sense-impressions to render a sense of world." (*MAV*, 204)

Such language of heightened sense impressions, grounded in a landscape of the present rather than the past of his memory-based poems of *SuS*, can be seen in the visual and olefactory presence of the modest two quatrain poem "August Weather:"

> That illusory warm spell
> That fooled the plum-tree into flower
> Has vanished with the spicy smell
> Of pink stars in the freezing shower. (*CP*, 213)

Its light epigrammatic observation about a seasonal detail suggests McAuley may have been approximating the spare effect of Japanese Haiku. He had commented on the recent publishing success of his former "Ern Malley" collaborator, Harold Stewart, in his translations of Japanese Haiku.[2] More relevant was what McAuley described as the effect of his illness:

> [...] the experience of convalescence after that sort of illness leaves you very much open, very sensitised. In the first place the world seems extraordinarily beautiful, intense. […] Thomas Gray wrote a poem talking about the way the world looks after an illness. (De Berg 11, 351)

A sonnet "Convalescence" (c. August 1970), with its curt end-stopped lines and basic iambic metre in McAuley's preferred quatrain form, catalogues vividly in colour and sound, the heightened sensitivity of illness, an indoor, everyday domestic world, probably in late winter:

---

[1] McAuley. Letter to A.D. Hope, 11 November 1970. Box 5, A.D. Hope Papers.
[2] Notebook 10. 15 August 1969, Box 1, McAuley papers. Harold Stewart had corresponded earlier on the haiku form, 9 May c.1954, Box 7.

> Coffee and jasmine on a tray.
> The stairs resound with feet to school.
> That fills the silence like a pool.
> The world outside is windy grey. (*CP*, 220)

Sound – "silence like a pool" is also important for the probably immobile invalid. However, the harmonious, listening, observing and still mood of the first quatrain, as in many of the poet's texts, is subsequently disrupted by that "world outside:"

> A girl was strangled at Thirroul;
> The market steadied yesterday.
> I try to read, I ought to pray,
> But lie and think how wonderful
>
> To lift the phone or write a letter.
> As I get well I grow more sure ´
> (*Embarme dich, du heiliger Retter)*[3]
>
> There's no relief or natural cure.
> I drown in silence and endure
> The thought of never getting better. (*CP*, 220)

The contrasting dissonance in stanza 2 gathered from the newspaper or TV news, raise the invalid subject's concerns (expressed in the "I" voice) about his grim prospects ("no relief," "never getting better"), lending an intense personal perspective to the current of despair running through McAuley's work. An unexpected element – the cited prayer in German in stanza 3, suggests an important presence in this period, the influence of Georg Trakl. The seeming "pastoral" beginning of this domestic poem shifts to a darker, more sombre tone (Kirkpatrick 197), arguably of the anti-pastoral, or naturalistic poem.[4]

McAuley had explained his conscious shift to the lyric during his recovery: "After a serious illness I wanted to write a set of lyrical poems […] 'A Garland for Shaw Neilson.' They were to be my poems, but written in Neilson's moulds and intended to be in his honour."[5] The poems modelled on Neilson are probably the first 10 poems in the "The Hazard and the Gift" section of *CP,* from "Keep the Season" (*CP*, 213) up until "The Hazard and the Gift" (*CP*, 219), including the poems already discussed. The second group of 13 poems in that section, including "Convalescence," (*CP*, 220) reflects the stronger impact of the Austrian decadent expressionist poet Georg Trakl, from McAuley's translation of Trakl in "Blessing of Women" (*CP*, 220) to "Plein Air" (*CP*, 226). The dialogue with Trakl is also evident in most of the poems from 1970 to 1973 in *Music Late at Night (MLN)* 1976, also in *CP*94, 279-295. This indicates, again in McAuley's life, in the terms of Harold Bloom, strong encounters and the recognition of significant affinities.

---

[3] From the liturgical prayer in German: "Have mercy on me, Holy Saviour."
[4] Cf.9.9 (249-250).
[5] McAuley. "The Rhetoric of Australian Poetry." 116.

10.2 John Shaw Neilson

The untutored but intuitive nature poet John Shaw Neilson[6] came to the poet's attention in the mid-1960s. In McAuley's 1966 essay "Shaw Neilson's poetry,"[7] the poet from country Victoria, was compared favourably with the scholarly and cosmopolitan Brennan, McAuley's first chosen "mentor." Neilson's verse had been shaped by limited forms – ballads, recital verse and popular song, with their strong dependence on refrain. Notwithstanding Neilson's limited formal scope, McAuley admired the poetry for its "pure true quality" (*GR*, 1) and the "strange enchantment" even in "flawed and wayward pieces" (3). He compared Neilson with other formative influences Clare and Blake, other "lonely self, taught poets" (3) and thought Neilson shared Blake's "visionary quality" (4). McAuley especially valued Neilson's realist poetry of "human pathos, which he thought obscured by too much critical insistence on his refined visionary lyricism" (8). He also valued Neilson's metrics, his "intuitively fine ear" (15) and his specific descriptions of nature (in "The Smoker Parrot") which still gave rise to an "intrinsic symbolism" (7).

McAuley struggled to explain his admiration for one of Neilson's elusive, riddling poems, "You Cannot go down to the Spring," a poem made difficult by its "lack of overt connections, its oblique phrasing." He was nonetheless "convinced of its rightness" in conveying "a mystery of being" (16): "The song will deceive you, the scent will incite you to sing;/You clutch but you cannot discover: you cannot go down to the Spring." (16) Neilson's poem offers a riddle in meaning and form. McAuley produced some 10 nature lyrics for his floral "garland," a linked sequence of poems in honour of Neilson. However, except for one poem about the poetic process, McAuley admitted to failing in his poetic project: "Nothing would come as I wanted it to come. The muse – if I may revert to the old way of saying it – refused my intentions and found her own way, in a single poem […] It is called "The Hazard and the Gift:"[8]

How many more times will the silver birch-tree
Change its green fortune into thin gold pieces
And squander them, *pair-impair*, across the lawn?

How many winters, white bark in the moonlight
Gashed with black wounds, will it entangle stars
In a tracery of tassel and delicate spur?

Something implacable, a rasp of terror,
A beauty pointing past itself, the folded
Gift of an impossibility...

---

[6] Neilson's first collection was *Heart of Spring*, 1919.
[7] McAuley. "Shaw Neilson's poetry." *GR*, 1- 17.
[8] McAuley. "The Rhetoric of Australian Poetry." 116.

It isn't ever found, it's only given;
But given only if we try to find;
And even then it's very rarely given. (*CP*, 219)

The energy of the poem in four unrhymed triplets comes from the three mainly spondee-stressed questions of the first two stanzas ("How many more times" – //|u/|/), which are arrested by a Neilsonian riddling answer in the imprecise noun-phrases of stanza three: "something implacable […] A beauty pointing past itself." The heavy spondee metre, increasingly used by McAuley, is associated with weariness and despair.[9] Despite using it here, McAuley had questioned Neilson's riddling technique "the infinite circlings of the questioner" in "The Orange Tree."[10] The mystery-engendering phrasing of the last stanza is conveyed by the increasingly common short syllables: the end-stopped lines, of encircling double negatives which repeat "given," the word encapsulating the poetic "gift." In posing philosophical questions about time, fertility and mortality, the poem's focus is upon the presence of the silver birch tree, a motif which reappears in McAuley's later work, probably from the poet's garden. The transformation of green leaves to gold in stanza 1 suggests alchemy, enhancing the author's paradoxical theme of fullness even in this time of Autumn and pointing to a concrete symbolism drawn from archetypes and universals. McAuley wrote how the poem:

> […] tries to express—even somewhat obliquely, making us reach beyond the words, as befits a poem in Shaw Neilson's honour – what cannot be fully expressed: the strangeness of the precarious gift of poetry in a precarious life, and the relation of the gift to those intimations of mystery of being which visit at moments the unguarded heart: ("The Rhetoric of Australian Poetry," 116.)

The poem's cool wintry mood evokes the poet's concerns about the uncertainty of life foremost in his mind. It also recalls "the implacable mountain" from an earlier wintry Hobart landscape "Autumn Ode" (1964, *CP*, 188), reflecting an existing, arguably constant, meditation on the "implacable" in McAuley's human and natural world and the parallel recognition of plenty in "apples ripening/In air sweetened like wine." (*CP,* 188)

As in the "The Hazard and the Gift" poem sequence, a nostalgia for "the plainchant we have lost," the song-lyric discussed in his 1970 essay on "The Personal Element," reflects an admission of failure in the poet's attempt – "sick with art," ("Keep the Season", *CP*, 213) to honour Neilson with a "garland." It suggests another phase of "deadness," both personal and universal, unexpected considering the critical success of the recent *SuS* (1969). In "Keep the Season" McAuley is searching for a way forward, blending his insistence on traditional forms with the confessional expression of the mid-1960s autobiographical poems, originally seen in his early

[9] Enid Hamer. *The Metres of English Poetry*. Methuen, 1930, 11.
[10] McAuley. "Shaw Neilson's Poetry." *GR*, 13. Cf. 9.8 (241).

lyrics. The mournful, seemingly unresolved blockage surrounding the failure of this invocative option would be released by new apprehensions arising out of his illness.

10.3 Representing the Physical

Some poems from the first part of 1970 reflect McAuley's wish to draw on the particularity of some of Neilson's descriptive landscape poems. "At Penstock Lagoon" (1970), a mixed pictorial and discursive poem in five sections set in Tasmania's central highlands, begins with detailed, visual depictions of water, land and livestock and also, a motif from his earliest poems, the sidereal domain of the night-skies. In a seeming relaxation of form, McAuley has moved to a looser half-rhyme or no rhyme in his quatrains which mix anapaest and trochaic trimeter and tetrameter:

> The still water picks up u u /| u /| u
> Dark-honey colour and blue / / |u /|u u /|
> Out of the agate light
> That dies behind the snow-gums.
>
> Sirius wakes, then the Pointers
> But soon they are lulled in cloud.
> Closed off. The night is vague,
> Vacant, the lake a dark glimmer. (*CP*, 216)

The painterly "agate light" incorporates the dark-brown gemstone colour into the metaphor. The cloud-"lulled" stars, including the Pointers near the Southern Cross constellation, suggest a sleepy, subdued mood. The subject seems suspended, if not despondent, in the dreamily blurred detail of sky and water.

Departing from a tone of calm understatement in Part I and II, the solitary, observant "I" merges into or "speaks" in the scolding "we" voice expressing despair and alienation in Parts III and IV. In McAuley's shift to informality there is a loosening to alternating oblique rhyme patterns. Dismay at the loss of the sense-making customary world resurrects the despondent tone and dialogue of earlier work, such as "A Letter to John Dryden." A move to emphatic trochees and spondees reinforces the complaint:

> No soil, no understanding – / / | / / |u / | u
> Sword, lineage, place, / / |u u | /
> The discipline of weather,
> Even a local voice, […] ("At Penstock Lagoon," 216)

With the reversion to a calmer, nature-observing "I" voice in the concluding stanzas, testifying to the soothing effects of nature: "How alien all that seems/Here at the lake-edge […]," (*CP*, 217), the text seems an unwieldy collage of different voices. "At Penstock Lagoon" might be considered as failing for not restraining an over-strong personal voice, displaying an imperative

rhetoric largely absent from McAuley's voice in his late lyric mode. Nonetheless, his unerring lament for a past, lost way of life refuses to lapse into a gentle nostalgia but gives energy to his discontent about the time in which he lived, his apprehension of belatedness. When describing McAuley's late lyrics as a return to the pastoral, Ivor Indyk identifies two subsets of pastoral – a first lighter tradition aligned to the third-century BC Greek poet Theocritus and, a second, "the Virgilians, who are forever using pastoral to speak about their other concerns."[11] McAuley's late lyrics belong to the latter tradition, both Virgil's *Eclogues* and his *Georgics* because of their social engagement and rural realism.

10.4 The Re-appearance of Trakl

During his convalescence throughout 1970, McAuley wrote his second translation,[12] of Georg Trakl's "Frauensegen," (1913), "Blessing of Women"[13] (*CP,* 220) located immediately before "Convalescence." Its stylistic effect, the strong sense of presence, colour but also dark tones, already evident in "Convalescent," would make a strong mark on McAuley's subsequent work.

> You move among your womenfolk
> Smiling often but oppressed,
> For the anxious days have come.
> Along the fence white poppies fade.
>
> Like your body swollen ripe
> The grapes are golden on the slope.
> The pond reflects the sky's far height,
> And a scythe swishes[14] in the field.
>
> Bushes fill with evening dew;
> Autumn-red the leaves flow down.
> Brown as a Moor the farmer greets
> His wife with a rough tender love. (*CP,* 220)

The three quatrains in tetrameters, using imperfect rather than full rhymes in the translated version, are notable for their concreteness. This apostrophe to the farmer's wife presents a physical world of pond, fence, slope, field and (implicitly) home, strongly evoked visually with colour (white "poppies," "golden" grapes, leaves "autumn red," even the farmer "brown as a Moor"), as well as sound – the onomatopoeic scythe which "clatters." It is a rural world in autumn, also inhabited by

[11] Ivor Indyk. "The Pastoral Poets." 1988, 368.
[12] McAuley's first Trakl translation was "Winter Nightfall" (1956, *CP*,103) Cf.7.6 (176).
[13] In "The Poetry of Georg Trakl" the poem was renamed "Woman's Blessing," *GR*, 203.
[14] In the 1982 edition of McAuley's Trakl translations the line was altered from the *CP* 1971 version to replace "swishes" with "clatters," and also the 4th line of stanza 1. See *Georg Trakl, Music in the Mirabell Garden*: *Translations, Images and Songs, James McAuley, Larry Sitsky, John Olsen*, ed. John Winter, Introd. Gwen Harwood, n.p.

human figures working at fulsome harvest, the pregnant woman ("Your body swollen ripe"), her fellow workers, and the farmer, her husband. The observing subject seems absent, denoted only by the address to the woman – "You" at the beginning of the poem, "your" in the second stanza and in a slanted interpretative comment in "for the anxious days have come" also in stanza 1. The poem offers an affectionate portrait of an inhabited natural world at its ripest but recognises the "anxious days" of life's uncertainty, accentuated by the symbolism of the scythe.

A similar detached, arrestingly visual and sonorous intensity can be immediately seen in McAuley's subsequent "St John's Park" (1970), comprising 5 quatrains in strong rhyme (abba), in mainly iambic pentameter. It is marked by a dream-like detachment within a vividly described world in intense present tense:

> The mountain is streaked white, the air is cold.
> Under a pure blue sky the players begin.
> Thickly-clotted prunus lines the way in,
> And wattles put on helmets of heavy gold.
>
> A dark-green gum bursts out in crimson flowers.
> Old people slowly rot along the wall.
> The young ones hardly notice them at all.
> Both live in the same picture-book of hours.
>
> Four-turreted a square tower balks the sky,
> Casting a shadow; an organ softly plays.
> The afternoon wears out in a gold daze.
> On ragged wings, uttering its carking cry
>
> A raven scavenges; a flock of gulls
> Flies from the tip. The last teams leave the park.
> The old have crept inside to meet the dark.
> Loss is what nothing alters or annuls.
>
> At nightfall glaring traffic rushes by
> Filling the air with reek and the scream of brakes.
> Faint stars prick out a sign. And Vega wakes
> Liquid and trembling on the northern sky. (*CP*, 222)

This strongly visual landscape, with colour language, set between late afternoon and dusk begins in stillness, as in a watercolour or rather the suggested medieval "picture book of hours"[15] (St. 2), contrasting with the sense of deprived modernity. It is scarcely interrupted by the slight movement suggested by the (hockey) "players" in stanza 1 and "old people" in stanza 2 who statically "rot along the wall." McAuley specifically associated such highly visual poems with the period of his convalescence in 1970:

> I often used to walk up the long avenue of trees to St John's Park Church and the old hospital while I was convalescing, and then came back along Creek Road. In that ill state I

[15] Cf. 11.11 (318).

was very alive and sensitive to the external world – hence the St John's Park poems [...] (Kinross Smith, 319.) [16]

"St John's Park" shows the invalid subject's aliveness and sensitivity to the external world at this time. The power of the swift visual descriptions in the present tense: "The mountain *is* streaked white, the air *is* cold,"[17] is reinforced by curt end-stopped statements through the poem, notable in McAuley's increasingly understated visual poetics. Sound and musicality are also important, as seen in the organ "softly playing" (St. 3) but thereafter becoming dissonant: the cark of the scavenging raven (Sts. 3&4), the flight of gulls from the tip (St. 4), and the "scream of brakes" of "glaring traffic" (St. 5). With autumn and the tropes of age McAuley summons into this landscape the motifs of the anti-pastoral,[18] which is akin to naturalism in its detachment and scientific method of observation.

There is a random comprehensiveness in the accumulation of detail, through end-stopped descriptive sentences, in the paratactic method of McAuley's later style. Kirkpatrick also notes the "growing emphasis on the line as the basic 'semantic' unit of his verse," which, he argues, "reflects a certain fragmentation of perception, a less rationally structured movement away from his earlier more discursive mode." (197) It also shows McAuley's technical virtuosity. Such fitfully catalogued descriptions and statements (Bradley 459) suggest a lower level of expectation, a humility, and a reluctance to make grand claims. The commentary, when it arrives, introduced by firm trochaic meter, seems masked, enigmatic and surprising, in the manner of an aphorism: "Loss is what nothing alters or annuls" (St.4). Nonetheless, in aesthetic terms, the attainment of a stillness and objectivity seems an advance on the quarrelling voices of "At Penstock Lagoon."

These late poems continue the form of landscapes with figures, resumed in the mid-1960s from his early short, situated lyrics.[19] The poet now draws upon the landscape and scenes of the suburban neighbourhood where he walked during his convalescence. It comprised St John's Church (described seven years earlier in "St John's Park, New Town,"1963, *CP*,18), its associated park – the homes for the elderly and for boys, the hockey fields at nearby Ogilvie Girls High School, and the suburban bird-life of gulls, ducks, ravens, starlings as well as flora. McAuley's careful description of vegetation according to season means the poems can be accurately dated through those descriptions (the flowering, the fall). "St John's Park" (*CP*, 222) is an early Spring poem, because of the snow on the mountain, the flowering wattle and the *prunus*. Notwithstanding

---

[16] The "convalescence" poems include those in the latter part of "The Hazard and the Gift," from "Convalescence" (CP, 220) to "Plein Air," (*CP*, 226), and "World on Sunday" from *MLN* (*CP*94, 279).
[17] Writer's italics.
[18] Cf.9.9 (249-250). Gifford. *Pastoral*. 5.
[19] Cf.9.5 (236).

or perhaps because of their limited range, the images (clock-tower, church, mountain, the old people's home, raven, the individual trees) project a universal, symbolic power. Kramer argues that the earlier landscape poem "St John's Park, New Town" (1963) set the scene for a return to "the question of the unsimplified world" (1988 8-9), the poet's earlier symbol for a presence-based world.[20] Similarly Kirkpatrick suggests that in McAuley's shift toward landscape that the early "interior voyager" of "Terra Australis" [1939-42] was trying to find "his "land of similes" closer to his own suburban home" (193). However, it is doubtful McAuley would have intended the pressure of such an imposing symbolic schema to weigh upon the more ambivalent vision of his later work. Nonetheless, he continued to find ample meaning and figurative patterns in his clearly delineated domain.

Speaking of his walks to St John's church, McAuley had told a friend, John Cotter: "I simply love this place. It breathes!"[21] Arguably the space or neighbourhood of New Town, Hobart, in which McAuley was living and walking had become place, through constant evocation and naming. Within McAuley's texts New Town starts to come to life in the sense of Thomas Hardy's "genius loci,"[22] the concept of "spirit of place" further developed by D. H. Lawrence in his 1923 essay.[23]

10.5 Reading, writing, translating – the dialogue with Georg Trakl

The lyrics written from the end of his convalescence, late December 1970 until late 1973, were published in 1976 in the slim 24-page chap-book *Music Late at Night: Poems 1970-73* (*MLN*) (1976). Coleman observes that in *MLN*: "there is none of the direct statement of theme that still occurs in 'The Hazard and the Gift.' Now almost everything is evoked in symbols. […] The bardic impulse does not appear, but is incorporated within the lyric impulse." (1980 111-112) A symbolic quality enters the work earlier, already in the more concrete poems within "The Hazard and the Gift" section, and is evident in the highly imagist impersonal poems written after his translation, "Blessing of Women," in *CP*, 220-226. McAuley's encounter with the Austrian poet in 1970 was the second poetic encounter of McAuley's convalescence, following that with Neilson, but the far deeper one. It involved not only textual and imaginary encounter but translations and even a visit to Trakl's native Austria. This experience is described in McAuley's essay "The Poetry of Georg

[20] Cf. 4.11 (106-107). "The Family of Love," (*CP*,10), "A Letter to John Dryden," (*CP*,95), and *Quiros*, (*CP,*121).
[21] Qtd. in Ackland. *Damaged Men*. 233.
[22] Thomas Hardy. *Jude the Obscure*. 98.
[23] D. H. Lawrence. "The Spirit of Place."1923.

Trakl,"[24] including his earlier brief literary encounters with the Austrian poet's work in 1956 and in 1960: "[…] it was not till nearly 10 years later, in 1970 in a period of convalescence, that with the aid of a commentator[25] I began to learn Trakl's difficult personal language and realize his achievement." (*GR*, 203).

Georg Trakl was an Austrian expressionist poet who struggled with drug addiction, an apparently incestuous relationship with his sister Grete (a talented pianist) and died of a possibly suicidal overdose in the early stages of WWI. (*GR,* 205) McAuley noted the traces of early twentieth-century decadence in Trakl's work but specified what he admired: "In the last two years of his life [1913-14] he found his authentic voice, his real subject, his special mode of expression." (202) McAuley's own preference was:

> […] not for the very last [expressionist, free verse] poems, but for the ones immediately before them: for the first half of his mature period […] the penultimate part of his mature output: some 50 poems […] well-formed lyrics of extraordinary, intense, inward and mysterious beauty, unease, disgust and suffering dread. (202)[26]

McAuley considered those poems "perhaps the finest poetry written in our century." (202). His comment on his first translation in 1956, when he reworked "Ein Winterabend"(1913-15) as "Winter Nightfall" (*CP,* 103), reveals what had entranced him in Trakl's work from that first encounter – the poem's simplicity but "controlled ambiguity."(*GR*, 203) Coincidentally, McAuley's praise for the elusive but powerful presence within Trakl's lyrics had been expressed, 20 years earlier than McAuley's profound encounter in 1970, by Martin Heidegger in his essay "Language" on "Ein Winterabend."[27] McAuley's simpler but acute observations also identify the way in which Trakl manages to create a powerfully felt, if ambivalent world in which the subject often transforms into the landscapes and its figures:

> These poems are beautifully shaped lyrics that mingle sound and colour in a way I cannot hope to render in translation. They are set in a recognizable place and construct a recognizable situation out of a relatively small number of elements. The place in many of the poems is Salzburg and the surrounding countryside. […] There is often a solitary figure moving through the landscape, walking, listening, seeing. Sometimes the poet refers to himself as "eye", but more often he avoids saying "I" and leaves this solitary figure as "the solitary" or "a stranger" or "the silent one." Nothing much happens. But the scene, apparently so simple, becomes charged with meaning. It is a landscape of the soul, of the divided soul in torment and longing. (GR, 207)

Curiously, in his statement – "It is a landscape of the soul," McAuley reverts to Baudelaire's term cited much earlier in his Master's thesis (1940) – "[…] paysage d' âme […]" – in describing the

[24] McAuley. "The Poetry of Georg Trakl." *GR,* 1975, 202-222.
[25] The commentator mentioned was Eduard Lachmann. Fn 3, *GR*, 223.
[26] Most of the translated poems come from Trakl's *Gedichte,* Wolff, 1913.
[27] Heidegger. "Language." (1959) 187-208. (Original lecture, 7 October 1950.)

French symbolist poet's technique in constructing his lyric landscapes. (SEP, II, 16) McAuley's reading of Trakl, during the lonely walks of his convalescence, fits him particularly to the role of wanderer, an older *flâneur*, in his tender, fragile encounter with a new and immediate world of his own mortality.

The following sections examine McAuley's own translations or versions of Trakl, written between mid-to-late 1970 and July 1973, together with his own poems written in dialogue with Trakl, to ascertain what McAuley may have learnt from the Austrian poet, any commonality in themes, motifs, diction, form, rhetoric, *personae*, world-view. This includes in the light of comparisons already made[28] but mainly by McAuley himself in his essay on Trakl. As Catalano remarks, McAuley's essay is a "primer on the work of both poets, for a number of the observations he makes about Trakl's poetry can also be applied to his own." (1996 136) The translations cited are taken from McAuley's 1975 essay on Trakl, based on his 8 July 1973 ABC Radio broadcast and collected in the 1982 posthumous publication.[29]

While McAuley considered Trakl's poems difficult to translate, Tasmanian poet Gwen Harwood, who understood German, considered McAuley to have "caught the tone" of Trakl.[30] Critic Keith Harrison described McAuley's earlier, 1938 translation from German of Rilke's "Herbsttag" (McAuley's "Autumn," *CP*, 5) as "remarkable" (2005 53) but did not comment on, or perhaps know, his Trakl translations. This study accepts McAuley's poems as his interpretation of the Austrian poet's work but does not assess the quality of his translation.[31] Handwritten drafts with glossaries and synonyms in German suggest that McAuley received some interpretation help in preparing his translations.[32]

McAuley admitted in 1970 that rediscovering Trakl "[…] happened at the right moment, because I found that he had worked out ways, procedures for the writing of intense, small rather lyrical poems which were the kind that I was ready to do." (De Berg 11, 352) The Trakl poems translated included one sonnet translated as "Decay" and 10 short-lined poems in quatrains mostly only three or four stanzas long. McAuley's Trakl-influenced poems followed those short quatrain forms of Trakl's "early mature" period, though McAuley already favoured the short quatrain.

[28] Comparisons have been made by Coleman (1980), Catalano (1996), Gaffney (1976), Kirkpatrick (1984), Macainsh (1984), and Maver (1990).
[29] McAuley. trans. *Georg Trakl, Music in the Mirabell Garden*: *Translations, Images and Songs. With Larry Sitsky, John Olsen*, ed. John Winter, Introd. Gwen Harwood, New Albion Press, 1982.
[30] Gwen Harwood. Introduction. *Georg Trakl,* 1982.
[31] An assessment of the quality of McAuley's Trakl translations would be invaluable. An honours thesis commenting on McAuley's translations of Trakl, by Elaine Wells for the German Department in 1972 at U Tasmania (McAuley note, 20 March 1972, Journal 13, Box 1), unfortunately, has not been located.
[32] Box 8. McAuley papers.

In "In Autumn," McAuley's translated version of Trakl's short poem "Im Herbst," 1913, he will have noticed some characteristics of Trakl's unique lyric form, the end-stopped lines:

> The sunflowers are bright along the fence.
> Sick people are sitting out in the sunshine.
> In the field the women [sing][33] at their toil,
> Into which falls the ringing of cloister bells.
> […]
> People there appear joyful and mild.
> Today the tawny wine is being pressed.
> The rooms where death comes are open wide
> And brightly painted with the sunshine. (*GR*, 222-223)

He will also have noted the musical repetition of the line: "Today the tawny wine is being pressed." In the difficult task of translation McAuley adapts different forms of rhyme to evoke Trakl's originals (fence/bells, bells/pressed, mild/wide.) "In Autumn" has the same quality of simple figural concreteness, of landscaped homogeneity, as McAuley's translations "Winter Nightfall" and "Blessing of Women." The motif of "sick people sitting in the sunshine" later linked to "The rooms where death comes […] brightly painted with the sunshine" is echoed in McAuley's own above-mentioned, "Traklean" "St John's Park" – "Old people slowly rot along the wall […] The old have crept inside to meet the dark."(*CP*, 222) The seeming "village" terrain of McAuley's walks to the old precinct of St John's church, with its old people's home and orphanage replicates the integrated rural Christian world of villages, churches, vineyards, fields and hospitals, depicted in the translated poems. The almost invisible "you" subject ("the solitary figure moving through the landscape," *GR*, 207) is evident in the first line of the second stanza: "The birds tell you news from far away." (*GR*, 223) Gwen Harwood remarked on the sense of presence in McAuley's "profoundly beautiful and disturbing" translations of Trakl, and arguably, the quality of Trakl's poem themselves:

> You have entered into Trakl's world as if you lived there physically. I don't feel these poems are a recreation; they give the uncanny feeling that you are there […] not calling up Trakl's world by an imaginative act but quite simply moving about in it and speaking from it […][34]

What McAuley described in his essay as the "interplay of positive and negative in a value-charged landscape" (*GR*, 214) is evident in the paradoxical quality of the last lines of "In Autumn:" "The rooms where death comes are open wide/And brightly painted with the sunshine" (223).

McAuley's own short poem of two rhyming quatrains in iambic pentameters, "Nocturne," written in the rural location of Bruny Island off South-Eastern Tasmania (during summer 1972,

[33] From ABC audio-tape, 8 July 1973.
[34] Harwood. unpublished letter to McAuley, 25 May 1975. Box 7, McAuley papers.

the time of many of his Trakl translations) also displays an arresting physicality in depicting, what the poet admired in Trakl, as a precise "composition of place" (*GR,* 210):

> A gull flies low across the darkening bay.
> Along the shore the casuarinas sigh.
> Resentful plovers give their ratcheting cry
> From the mown field scattered with bales of hay.
>
> The world sinks out of sight. The moon congealed
> In cloud seems motionless. The air is still.
> A cry goes out from the exhausted will.
> Nightmares and angels roam the empty field. (*CP94*, 280)

This acutely observed natural landscape, begins, in present tense as does Trakl, with the subdued alliterative sibilance of lines 1 and 2 broken by the uneasy onomatopoeic "ratcheting" in the plovers' cry in lines 3 and 4. Set by that tone, the poem's reclusive subject emerges from the disembodied "cry" going "out from the exhausted will" in stanza 2. There is also a contradiction between the still, empty, frozen quality of this world (the "congealed" moon, the "motionless" clouds, the "empty field") and its unquiet inhabitants: the flying and crying birds of stanza 1, and the paradoxical "nightmares and angels," or premonitions of death, in the last line of stanza 2. The powerful evocation of a physical world suggests the *hypotyposis* Harwood observed in McAuley's translations of Trakl.

10.6 A "small stock of images"

McAuley stated it was "simple words and images" in a "small number of elements" which kept afloat "a range of multiple meanings" throughout Trakl's work (*GR,* 203), seemingly repeating the poet's earlier precept for the art of poetry: "Only the simplest forms can hold/A vast complexity" ("An Art of Poetry," *CP*, 71). Yet both poets, apart from a symbolist and imagistic use of colour from their acutely observed worlds use adjectives with precision. The substantives of both poetics therefore retain their universal, archetypal or figural quality. For this reason McAuley judged Trakl's "themes, images, key-words" to be "very varied, and subtle and 'polysemous' and 'multivalent' within that range" (*GR*, 211) – as McAuley's own work had become.

What McAuley called Trakl's "colour language" (221) tends to be more symbolist than McAuley's – even synaesthetic, as in "God's azure breath is blowing" in "Geistliches Lied," ("Spiritual Song," 212) or "the brown stillness" of "The Ravens," (214), or "the red evening hours" of "Der Gewitterabend" ("Evening Thunderstorm," 222). However, as McAuley noted, it was not "inflexibly fixed." It tends mainly to be naturalistically imagist like much of McAuley's own colour language – "White geese feeding on sweet grass, / Crows flying over yellow pears" of

McAuley's impressionistic poem "Autumn Images" (*CP*94, 282) or "Sparkles of violet, green and blue? / Above a headland of dark pines / A white sea-eagle holds the view" from a similarly ekphrastic "Watercolour" (*CP*94, 285). The realistic painterly tendency noted by Coleman becomes important in McAuley's construction of landscape and creation of presence – what he admired in Trakl's precise "composition of place" (*GR*, 210). McAuley had left behind the more universal, unsituated imagery of his work before the mid-1960s.

10.7 Decadent expressionism to naturalism

In "Decay," McAuley's version of Trakl's sonnet "Verfall" (1913), the poem's wandering, observing "I" subject is more prominent than in most of Trakl's poems. However, a physical sense of place is made vulnerable by the interplay of negative with the positive, and by haunting ambivalent presences. McAuley himself notes a frozen stillness in the subject's apprehension of the depicted landscape:

> At evening as the bells are ringing peace
> I follow from afar the flight of birds;
> Strung out in flocks, like files of pious pilgrims,
> They vanish into autumn-clear distance.
>
> […]
>
> Then a breath makes me shudder with decay.
> A blackbird sings lament in the bare tree.
> A red-leaved vine sways on the rusty trellis.
>
> And like pale children in a dance of death
> Round about dark fountain-rims, that crumble,
> Blue asters bow and shiver in the wind. (*GR*, 207-8)

From the hopeful symbol of peace – the bells (Stanza 1, line1), decay or abandonment is unleashed with the bird's departure from the autumnal landscape, and in the following frail actions experienced by the subject – "shudder," and by the landscape – "sways," "crumble" and "shiver." By breaking his pattern of end-stopped lines, in the enjambment of the 3-line sentence in the last triplet, McAuley's version of Trakl builds greater focus on the metaphoric and symbolic play building up to the final image of the shivering blue, metallic-coloured asters in their "dance of death." The translating McAuley seems to speak through the mask of Trakl's poem. His comment on this poem applies more generally to Trakl's unique style of construction and the lightly-hinted ambivalences in his vision:

> This is not an autumn of fulfilment and contentment. The spirit cannot rest or be consoled in its surroundings, because it is a landscape of decay. But in this landscape there is also the sound of the vesper bells, and the sight of cranes or other migrating birds like pilgrims on

> the way to a distant land, a holy land. The watcher's spirit is drawn to make the transition with the birds from this existence to those "brighter destinies" from here to the beyond. (208)

Gwen Harwood links the unstable motif of hope (and its departure) in Trakl's migrating birds to McAuley's own use in a much earlier poem to evoke sentiments of despair, belatedness or unhomeliness, felt deeply at that time:[35]

> Look, cranes still know their path through empty air;
> For them our world is neither soon nor late;
> But ours is eaten hollow with despair"
> ("The Tomb of Heracles," *CP*, 59)[36]

Those notes of unbelonging in McAuley's poem of 1949, a time of intense doubt and searching that led to his adherence to Catholicism, seem revived and sharpened in his reading of Trakl.

The theme of decay, relocated from Baudelaire's city to rural landscapes, is reflected in many of McAuley's poems written in the early 1970s, including one of the 12 sonnets in *MLN* – "In Northern Tasmania:"

> Soft sodden fields. The new lambs cry,
> And shorn ewes huddle from the cold.
> Wattles are faintly tinged with gold.
> A raven flies off silently.
> […]
> At dusk I look out through old elms
> Where mud-pools at the gatepost shine.
> A way of life is in decline,
>
> And only those who lived it know
> What it is time overwhelms,
> Which they must gradually let go. (*CP94*, 288.)

Here the natural creatures, the lamb and raven reappear as *leit-motifs* for vulnerability and threat. As well as showing some of McAuley's delight in naturalist detail (the "mud-pools at the gatepost") and his enduring adherence to rhyme, the poem displays what Smith describes as a "valedictory mood" (1981 391) or the subject's predisposition to epigram in the above-cited sestet, "A way of life is in decline" and "What it is time overwhelms." This is less apparent in the work of Trakl.

Evident in 1949, and surfacing again in the early 1970s, McAuley's sense of his own belatedness "Lateness is my fear, my crime" ("The Garden," *CP*, 218) pervades the work of his last half-decade and notably his "Trakl versions" and his "Trakl-like" poems. Curiously, the term "belatedness" matches the German "Verlassenheit" (translated as abandonment, desolation, aloneness) on which both Trakl and Heidegger had written. In McAuley's case such a sense of

[35] Harwood. Intro. *Georg Trakl.* ii.
[36] Cf 1.4 (21).

lateness derives from a mix of elements: the foretaste of his mortality and of life's uncertainty, questions about poetic vocation and his relation to his own culture and time. Edward Said comments on these elements of "Lateness" in words which seem to repeat McAuley's own observations about the effects of illness:[37]

> But death does sometime wait for us, and it is possible to become deeply aware of its waiting. The quality of time alters then, like a change in the light, because the present is so thoroughly shadowed by other seasons: the revived or receding past, the newly unmeasurable future, the unimaginable time beyond time. (2006 xi)

These are discussed further at 10.14.

10.8 "The solitary figure […] walking, listening, seeing"

In McAuley's 1972 poem "In Northern Tasmania," the subject emerges briefly as a wandering, watching "I" figure: "At dusk I look out through old elms." (*CP*94, 288) In McAuley's Trakl translations, the presence of the subject is often omniscient or disguised. McAuley noted the lack of such an authorial "I" figure, replaced it seemed to him in Trakl's work, by "a solitary figure moving through the landscape, walking, listening, seeing." (*GR*, 207) In McAuley's translation "Winter Nightfall," the apparently omniscient gaze of the subject seems to transfer to that of the wanderer coming in from the dark: "Enter, wanderer, take your fill." (*CP*, 103) Sometimes the subject may be hinted at or disguised in an ambivalent figure or shadowy presence. In Trakl's "In Winter," a presence in the landscape may even be suggested slantwise in the (perhaps hunter's) footstep in the last stanza: "The reeds quiver yellow and erect./ Frost, smoke, in the empty grove, a footstep" (214); in "Music in the Mirabell Garden" the observing subject may be the "pallid stranger" (209) entering in the last stanza (the poet Trakl stepping quietly into his house where his sister plays a sonata). Trakl's elusive "flâneur" prowls through his poetry at this time like that precursor for McAuley, the "solitary," "homeless," "wander[ing]"one in his earlier, 1938 translation of Rilke's "Autumn" (*CP*, 5).

At times McAuley's poetry approximates a masked omniscient gaze through the figures, the apparent *personae,* that haunt his own landscapes – the "fevered sleeper" and "tired watcher" in "Sickroom" one of his first poems written during his illness:

> The fevered sleeper, dreaming a call
> From somewhere outside, stirs in answer.
> Cut flowers wilt. The tired watcher
> Leans forward and touches the wet brow. (*CP*, 223)

[37] Edward Said. *On Late Style: Music, Literature Against the Grain,* 2006.

The three-stanza poem "Motel, Burnie" offers a contemporary, colloquial autobiographical variation on the wanderer figures of Rilke, Trakl and Brennan: "Travellers breakfast from a tray. […] Then check out at the desk and go." (*CP*94, 286) The colloquial "check[ing] out" would have held a strong symbolic meaning in the face of terminal illness. It also shows the former neo-classical poet's facility in the use of colloquial language, and wry humour. A fearful tone can also be seen in the autobiographical figure "Friday's child" in "Private Devotions" and "Morning Voluntary." McAuley, born on a Friday, was a "Friday's child."

The autumnal sketch "Morning Voluntary" is charged with the poet's own pressing reflections on mortality: "Flat strokes dinned out […] / Tell the tale that must be told. / Friday's child is full of dread." (*CP*94, 286) McAuley's "Friday's child" is a dark variation on a verse of the popular nursery rhyme – "Friday's child is loving and giving." "Private Devotions" also introduces a "trespasser" figure linked to the subject, a Christian variation on the wanderer, including prodigal (the "wanderer in the darkness of the heart"),[38] which recurs throughout McAuley's work, as in his precursor Brennan. Such a *persona* also needs, like persons of moral consciousness to tread carefully in order to attain either peace of mind or salvation:

> Beads held in reluctant fingers
>
> Guide the murmur of his breath.
> Trespasser now tread with care
> Between the reasons for despair
> All the way as far as death. (*CP*94, 281)

The contemplation of good and evil is ever present for the inhabitants of McAuley's and Trakl's Christian landscapes. Those contemplated so intensely in McAuley's most recent work still mostly remain unhomely, incapable of delivering the sense of redemption or reconciliation desired. His texts remain the terrain of the fevered sleeper, the watcher, the wanderer, the trespasser, the outsider, all acutely sentient, observant but too often unwelcomed, homeless or dislocated.

10.9 Shared Landscapes

In his poems of the early 1970s McAuley shows a Trakl-like translucent impersonality, an utterance through symbolic motifs where the figurative burden, either of despair or reconciliation, is woven evenly across an entire and integrated symbolic landscape in which human figures may be absent. His early spring poem "Pastoral" evokes the precarious balance between life and death:

---

[38] McAuley. "A Leaf of Sage." *CP,*80.

Rain-filled ponds and *brimming*[39] dams
Hold an image of the sky.
Shadows wheel above new lambs
With a dark dismaying cry.

Harsh the hungry ravens' cry,
Brief the wattle's age of gold,
Silent the blue depth of sky
That the *brimming* waters hold. (CP, 224)

The landscape, and its components, often enormous (reflecting "an image of the sky") whose silence is broken by the "hungry raven's cry," seems sentient or animate, and is charged with contrary forces of both fullness and danger. The "brimming" presence of the dams, repeated for emphasis, and the Spring wattle's "age of gold," contrasts with the threatened lambs. In McAuley's poetry "gold" is multivalent, both a Spring image as here, and of Autumn's spent foliage, as in "Autumn Images" – "Clouds fill the enormous sky, / Young poplars tremble in their gold." (*CP*94, 282). Such constructions resemble Trakl's ambivalent landscapes, animated with sounds, breath, utterances and quivers. In Trakl's "Evening Thunderstorm" (*GR*, 222) – "Seagulls cry round the window frames" and more expressionistically "The sick are screaming in the hospital." More often the representation is shadowy, elusive and inhuman, but also harsh, as "The Ravens:" the poet's version of Trakl's "Die Raben," (1913):

And often one sees them morosely resting.
[…] quarrelling

About some carrion that somewhere they scent;
And suddenly they fly off north
And dwindle like a funeral procession
Into airs that tremble with sensual delight. (*GR*, 214)

McAuley associated the flight of birds seen in Trakl's poems, including "Decay" as "representing a transition, a passing over from here to the other realm – the idea, but not an actual release." (208). The bird motif is present throughout McAuley's own landscapes: in symbolist manner, as in Trakl's work, they suggest human desires, fears and longing: "Resentful plovers give their ratcheting cry." ("Nocturne," *CP*94, 280). At times, as in Trakl, such a cry emits from the landscape itself, as a kind of earth force: "A cry goes out from the exhausted will." ("Nocturne," CP94, 280). A similar cry is apparent in the sonnet "Saturday Morning" (*CP*94, 287): "Boys voices from the Home next door/ Ring out like chimes […]" in which the boys' voices belong to a vital vocal life-force. These vivid pictorial stanzas, of both Trakl and McAuley, elaborate a precise world: nonetheless the detached focus, the somewhat random cataloguing of scenes without a

[39] Writer's italics.

narrative or narrator, render the atmosphere of a dream world. Northrop Frye describes this structure of "discontinuous units of the stanza" (1990 272) and its dream-world effect, as characteristic of the lyric genre, though Trakl's and McAuley's are not only dreamy but decadent.

McAuley's precise detailing of a symbolic world often gives rise to epigram. Occasionally this reflects a sense of reconciliation, as in "At Rushy Lagoon" (*CP*, 223) and in the concluding sestet of the sonnet "Saturday Morning" in which there is harvesting of firewood and sodden leaves:

> After the tempest of the night;
> Boys' voices from the Home next door
> Ring out like chimes, and every chore
>
> Seems blest in ordinary light:
> Firewood is cut, and sodden leaves
> Are scooped in handfuls from the eaves. (*CP*94, 287)

These poems resound with the life-affirming activity of the earlier pastoral "In the Huon Valley" (1966). The "chime" of "boy's voices from the Home next door" also recalls "The orphans are sweetly singing vespers" from Trakl's "Im roten Laubwerk voll Guitarren," ("In the Red Foliage Full of Guitars" *GR*, 221). More often though McAuley's epigrams are pessimistic, reflecting a failure of understanding, the failure to attain epiphany as in "Another Day, Another Night" where: "[…] there is less and less that can be said./ When the wind lapses in a vast silence […]" (*CP*94, 289)

Trakl too, if less frequently, lets his symbolic evocations shift into philosophical commentary:

> And yet how sickly all this becoming seems!
> A breath of fever circles round a hamlet;
> Yet a mild spirit beckons out of branches
> And opens the heart wide and timorous […]. ("Glad Spring," *GR*, 216)

By the Heideggerian-seeming expression "becoming" ("Werdende") it appears that Trakl means the birth/death cycle, or simply living. Referring to this sentence of the poem, Calinescu suggests a "[modernist] Utopia that is silently embodied in the image of decline." (209) Interestingly, Trakl's philosophical observation shifts from negative into a positive statement in the ultimate stanza, underlining the powerful articulation of paradox in apprehending the world:

> So painfully good and true is all that lives;
> And quietly an old stone touches you:
> 'Verily I am with you all the days.'
> O mouth! that quivers through the willow trees. (*GR*, 217)

The paradoxical aphorism – "So painfully good and true is all that lives" seems less linked with a human subject but rather, as here, fused with the wise touch or counsel of Trakl's symbolic "old stone," which McAuley judges either to be "a cross or a statue of Christ." (*GR*, 217) A similar

declaration is seen in stanza 2 of Trakl's "Verklärter Herbst," 1913, ("Transfigured Autumn,") after its description of autumn's bounty in stanza 1: "And there the farmer says: "It is good."/Ring soft and long, you evening bells […]." (209). This unexpected simple statement: "It is good" is here attributed to the poem's farmer figure rather than to the subject. It offers colloquial acceptance. McAuley noticed its echoes in his essay on Trakl: as "almost like God pronouncing it is good after his creation." (209) To the contrary, almost all of the epigrams in McAuley's texts issue from the subject, a heavier presence in McAuley than in Trakl.

10.10 Travel and Dedication

The major tribute to Trakl's influence was McAuley's "pilgrimage" to Trakl's homeland, including Salzburg, Innsbruck and the Wachau district of Austria during October 1973, following the translation of the poems and the ABC radio broadcast of 8 July 1973. It culminated in the poem of dedication "Trakl: Salzburg" which comprises four poems under the heading "Trakl: Salzburg." The first, titled "Mönschberg," (the fortified hilltop within Salzburg) was written between April and May 1973, before McAuley's visit to Salzburg in October 1973. The second "In the Mirabell Garden," third "In A Village Churchyard" and fourth "Spiritual Song," were probably written during or after the visit as they display descriptive details suggesting knowledge of the city and region. These, unlike his versions of Trakl poems included in his essay, were all included in McAuley's publication *MLN* (1976, 289-292) and *CP*94, 289-292.

"Mönschberg," comprising four triplets in blank verse in trimeter form, begins as an apostrophe to the poet for whom McAuley felt such affinity, named only in the overriding title – "Trakl: Salzburg:"

> Heavy is such a task:
> Born in a broken time,
> To carry it all within,
>
> And bear it into freedom,
> In a world towards evening where
> Insatiate hungers prowl.
>
> O music out of decay
> Intoning a dark prayer!
> Rooks build in the sound
>
> Of bells. A level mild sun
> Lights up new sprigs of green
> On boughs that shiver with cold. (*CP*94, 289)

The poem's spare form, perhaps McAuley's most curt, and its trochaic line beginnings, accentuate its dark themes – of decadence and belatedness, of being "Born in a broken time," and "In a world towards evening" (St. 2). They reinforce a fellow-lament, at the burden of the poet fated to be "out-of–his-time" or even "born in an impoverished time," as already cited by the young McAuley from his earlier source of inspiration, and possible precursor of Trakl, Hölderlin.[40] The "Heavy […] task" of Stanza 1 is that of being a poet. McAuley's earlier apostrophic style returns in stanza 3 in the utterance "O music" and also his focus on themes (time, freedom, hunger, decay) in contrast to the objective concrete symbolism of his late lyrics. However, that later method reappears in the last four lines evoking a dark, cold late-winter landscape, redolent of Trakl. Its rooks echo the deathly raven motif both of Trakl and of Edgar Allen Poe. Its landscape is infused with Christian motifs, dark prayer (Stanza 3), and musicality – the sound of music (St. 3) and bells (St. 4) – all typical of Trakl. Even the "insatiate hungers" that "prowl" (St. 2) recall the evasive hunter-figures that step through Trakl's "In Winter" (*GR*, 214) and McAuley's Trakl dedication "Spiritual Song." (*CP*94, 292.) The shivering boughs with "new sprigs of green" typical of Trakl's animated landscapes, suggest vulnerability and hope, like the music born "out of decay" (St. 3). The emphatic trochaic meter of the first triplet ("Heavy is such a task: / Born in a broken time,") reflects what McAuley observed about Trakl's despair at the state of the world: "His deeply pessimistic view of man's condition […] that mankind had never before sunk so deep as it had now sunk *after* the resurrection of Christ." (*GR*, 217) McAuley's words about Trakl retrieve his own sentiments, about the poet's burden at being born in such a broken time, expressed earlier in McAuley's life, in his spiritual crisis in 1949, as noted by Gwen Harwood.[41] Stanza 1 echoes a remark in McAuley's Notebook (11 December 1950) in this time of crisis: "It has occurred to me over many years that my role is to *bear it all within me*, and not grasp at quick solutions."[42] Reading Trakl, at the time of his illness, McAuley seems to revisit that early period of despair, as reflected in his essays collected in *The End of Modernity* (1959). Such strong resonances explain how McAuley saw in Trakl not only a poet of admired skill but one who also shared his own blend of hope and despair for the worlds in which they lived. "Mönschberg" is a poem about kinship and self-recognition.

[40] Cf. 2.1 (39). Heidegger shared McAuley's admiration for the German romantic strand in the "ontological poets" –Hölderlin, Trakl and to a lesser extent Rilke, as outlined in his Hölderlin-inspired essay "What are Poets For?"

[41] Cf. 10.7 (275).

[42] Unpublished Notebook 1, Box 1, McAuley papers.

The second poem in the dedicatory series, "In the Mirabell Garden,"[43] a rhymed sonnet written predominantly in iambic pentameter, begins with a particular description of the Salzburg garden Trakl frequented. The ekphrastic sketch of what seems to be the fountain's statue, the tableaux of "lust and violence" of pagan vintage features Paris abducting Helen. This is juxtaposed against a tawdry view, via the camera, of modern marriage, in the "bridal pair" photographed beside them in the Garden (St. 1):

> Tableaux of lust and violence explode
> In grey baroque marble. Bell-strokes pulse the air.
> A camera circles round a bridal pair
> Married this morning by the civil code.
>
> Wrought–iron fronds are rusting on the gate.
> Blond Helen smiles at being lifted high;
> A weather-stain has blotched one cheek and eye
> Of Paris as he abducts his opulent freight. (*CP* 94, 290)

While the iconic scene retains some dramatic sense of the original sexual transgression, it is diluted with a sense of irony and decadence concerning "blond Helen" and weathered Paris. Coincidentally, the description of the rusting park gate resonates with the similarly decadent motif from the Ern Malley poem "Night Piece."[44] The contemporary detail of the camera and bridal pair suggests that McAuley wrote this poem during or after his visit to Salzburg in October 1973. The interplay of historic and contemporary imagery creates a dialogue between the past and present strollers in the Garden which assists the transition to the subject's apostrophe to Trakl in stanzas 3 and 4. The present tense of the subject's contemplation in stanzas 1 and 2 shifts into the past, to Trakl's more elegant if tortured world, in the latter triplets, in its apostrophe to the Austrian poet:

> You paced this formal garden through and through.
> Primroses filled the scrolls of the parterre.
> The band played brightly. Ladies took a chair,
>
> And stealthy lovers disappeared from view
> In turns of the Irrgarten; which for you
> Became the crisscross maze of your despair. (*CP*94, 290)

In re-imagining the past garden, the subject sets up, somewhat ironically, a dramatic performance with band, and chairs for ladies in the foreground. With its allusion to the motif of the lovers strolling both secretly and freely, in contrast to Trakl's secret and forbidden love for his sister, the poem transforms the place so well known by Trakl into a metaphor – "the crisscross maze of your despair." Here the apostrophising subject implies the Austrian poet's profound understanding of

[43] The Garden is mentioned in Trakl's poem "Decay" ("Verfall.") — "Wandering where the Garden gathers twilight" (*GR*, 207).
[44] "Though on park-gates / The iron birds looked disapproval […]," "Night Piece," DE,15.

the maze symbol, associated in McAuley's early poem "Philoctetes," (*CP*, 40) with emotional blockage or despair.[45] Trakl's "crisscross maze," like the ancient labyrinth, was one from which it was difficult, if not impossible, to escape.

10.11 Other places, cultures, times

The remaining two of the four dedicatory poems, (probably also "In the Mirabell Garden") seem the product of travel, marking the poet's entry into Trakl's geographical world not merely through translation, as Gwen Harwood had noted. These are the constructions of McAuley's journey to Salzburg, Innsbruck and the Wachau area of Austria during October 1973. The sonnet "In a Village Churchyard" offers such detail in the description of a church-yard, not described in Trakl's poems, it must be that of a recent visitor. The other of this second series of McAuley's "travel" poems, though not part of McAuley's Trakl dedication, is the sonnet "Autumn in the Wachau," (*CP*94, 295) the last of the *MLN* poems. The reader might identify McAuley, the late twentieth-century traveller, as being among the "busloads" "in the church." (CP94, 295) Unlike the poems of his visits to the USA and Ireland in 1967 which, through a detachment from normal circumstances unleashed travel through memory to the writer's past, these more recent "travel" poems are associated with transportation into the place and culture of another, the translated, possibly, appropriated, "other" poet.

"In A Village Churchyard," (*CP*94, 290-291) a sonnet in regular rhymed iambic tetrameters, offers the precise, detached, almost photographic view of the visitor to a village graveyard. To Igor Maver it recalls Thomas Gray's "Elegy written in a Country Churchyard," showing McAuley's "pre-Romantic affiliations."[46] The churchyard was probably viewed in the late Autumn, Christian calendar of All Saints, when graveyards are visited by relatives, and offers a cultural as well as physical observance. The fluid iambic meter reinforces the unchanging in the world, and time, portrayed, though with some wry humour:

> Their graves have holy-water stoups for prayer;
> And little lamps they try to keep alight
> To make the bed of darkness faintly bright;
> And flowers of course, renewed with constant care. (CP94, 290)

The first triplet shifts from a description, albeit still impersonal, of the physical landscape to its human occupants, their habitual, and proper tending of the graves:

[45] Cf.4.10-11 (105, 108).
[46] Maver. "The Mirabell Garden Revisited."1990, 117.

They come in from the village and the farms,
And tend the graves. They do what they should do.
There's grief, and hope, and pious habit too. (*CP94,* 291)

This is linked, in seeming epigram – "They do what they should do" – to the seasons of emotional and spiritual life, that are both personal and universal. The concluding triplet reverts to the physical scene and, as in a small play, attributes commentary to the character it depicts – "the Risen Lord:"

Over each grave a dead Christ spreads his arms.
Within the church, in carved and painted wood
The risen Lord proclaims that it is good. (*CP*94*,* 291)

The scene of the village, the graves, and the associated mood of elegy, resurrects motifs of the Trakl poems. The statement attributed to the risen Lord ("it is good") echoes, like a refrain, that of Trakl's farmer in "Transfigured Autumn" – "And there the farmer says: "It is good." (*GR,* 209) Even while seeing Trakl's world anew, McAuley's poem draws upon and is coloured by the past world of "scattered villages" in Trakl's "Melancholie des Abends" ("Melancholy of the Evening," *GR*, 215/ St.3), the neglected "cross" which "surmounts the tangle of vine" and the beggar praying before "an old stone" and the image of Mary both from Trakl's "Geistliches Lied," as "Spiritual Song" (*GR*, 212-3), as well as the "lament" and the "dance of death" of Trakl's "Verfall" ("Decay," *GR*, 207).

Like the neglected cross, this rural Christian world was already a landscape of decay in Trakl's time but one in which "God's azure breath" could still be observed to be "blowing" ("Spiritual Song," *GR*, 212). This sense is reflected in the last of McAuley's Trakl dedications also titled "Spiritual Song," McAuley's attempt to recreate Trakl's poem "Geistliches Lied" (1913). McAuley saw Trakl's poem as demonstrating, despite "so much that is fearful and horrible and distraught in the poems […] a vision of innocence and peace and happiness, of goodness and rightness, and of intimacy with God." (*GR*, 211)

While it does not belong to McAuley's formal tribute to Trakl, McAuley's poem "Madonna," probably written while he was translating and recreating Trakl, takes up some of the Christian iconography and motifs of Trakl's "Spiritual Song." In its three unrhymed triplets followed by an irregular single line, "Madonna" offers an expanded apostrophic portrait of the "Mary" briefly mentioned in Trakl's "Spiritual Song." Its beggar in prayer,[47] in Stanza 2, reappears in McAuley's "derelict counting grains of prayer:"

Your head bent in the gesture of caring,
You hold the gold child aureoled
Against the blue sky of your breast.

[47] Trakl. "Geistliches Lied." "Bettler dort em alten Stein/Scheint verstorben im Gebet."

> Grace falls in folds. The child leans out
> To bless the world. A derelict
> Counts grains of prayer into the silence. (*CP*94, 283-284)

The portrait re-draws a statue of Mary, the central figure of Christian iconography and his own faith. Trakl's stable Christian landscape is one McAuley may have coveted. However, the subject of this poem does not settle for a safe nostalgic glance at such a desired world. Somewhat upsetting the serenity of the portrait, an undisguised autobiographical voice bursts out of the final triplet in protest, as it did in 1969 in "At Penstock Lagoon," (*CP*, 216-7), at the ritual-deprived Catholic world,[48] leaving the desolate apocalyptic tang that never seems entirely to disappear from the poet's work:

> Give us back the images. And shut
> The foolish mouths. Outside, a forewind
> Whirls bits of paper, dust, dead leaves.
>
> The sky runs cracks of jagged glare. (*CP*94, 283-4)

The imperative Eliotian "Give us back the images," and abrupt "Shut/The foolish mouths" shatter the otherwise serene descriptive tone. The poem concludes desolately with a random array of images, dead leaves, paper, dust, evoking both decay and, in the last line, apocalypse – "The sky runs cracks of jagged glare."

By the early 1970s of McAuley's viewing of Trakl's old Christian landscape, its decay was clearly well advanced even within the European rural community but more so in the vision of the more modern outsiders in McAuley's contemporary "Autumn in the Wachau" (*CP*94, 295) who come to observe the old-world graveyard and frown at their failure to understand the old symbols of the medieval "coat of arms and martyr's crown." The poem leaves a sense of belatedness, reminiscent of Thomas Hardy, that the Christian world with its icons, that is passing or has already passed, is as transitory as its pagan predecessor in the face of time and indifferent nature. Rowe suggests that McAuley's fractious relationship with the Catholic Church was "[…] fortunate for his poetry. It meant that the Church which might have falsely consoled him, received him as, secretly, he would have wanted: as the trespasser, the exile, the wanderer in the darkness of the heart." (1984 48). In "Autumn in the Wachau," sensitive to the presence of the past, the evidence of recent human history and conflict endured in the hub of central Europe bordering western Asia, the poet offers the seemingly pagan simile of the "sun" of the present and past times "riding" across the landscape, perhaps like the horse warriors of the "Hunnish nation" of a more remote past:

---

[48] McAuley saw the Vatican reforms as unleashing "a riot of anti-traditionalism." "Culture and Anti-Culture."1976, 18.

The sun rides like a nameless god
That the Hunnish nation saw.
Ancient ground cries out with blood, (*CP*94, 295)

It is an isolated simile, offered by the short visit to the wine-growing Wachau valley on the Danube, but typical of what the poet might now expect to find rather than an abundant "land of similes" even in his own terrain. The "ancient ground" crying out with blood suggests the more recent witnessing of the young citizen Trakl, posted to the German front in the early part of World War 1. The "blood" of this stanza and the "vanished flesh" of the succeeding stanza are both ancient and "raw:"

Vanished flesh is bruised and raw.
In the church the busloads frown
At coat-of-arms and martyr's crown. (*CP*94, 295)

A contrast between the "young" poet Trakl who died on the front in late 1914 and the "older," ill, visiting poet is suggested by the metaphor of the "busloads" of foreign visitors (among whom McAuley may have been, although distancing himself) who "frown" uncomprehendingly at the once-significant symbols of the past.

McAuley's poems for Trakl and his world are elegiac, for the Austrian poet, for his apprehension and for McAuley's recognition of lost, past times, past places. The poems McAuley wrote for his Trakl sequence while in the Salzburg region are sketches or re-imaginings of Trakl's imaginary but past world – but also an observed world in which Trakl once lived and breathed. McAuley's travel texts create doubled layers of text, of place observed both by McAuley's imagined subjects and the apostrophised character Trakl, a dialogue resounding between present and past, between an Australian poet and more significantly the other, earlier European ancestor or precursor who would continue to haunt McAuley's own present and his own poetic "landscapes."

10.12 Becoming Trakl: – Reading, Translation, Adaptation, Appropriation

Reading McAuley's versions of Trakl beside his own poems from this time the imprint of the Austrian poet on McAuley's work is overwhelmingly evident. Poem speaks to poem, in an echo of motif, phrase, mood, form, diction, colour-language, theme, rhetorical and metaphoric construction and figurative landscapes. It seems that Trakl's landscape of Salzburg and its rural surrounds were the landscape McAuley himself desired and attempted to replicate or discover in his own immediate imaginative world of New Town and rural Tasmania. Paul Ricoeur argued that an

understanding of "otherness [was] at the heart of selfhood,"[49] notably in the travel involved in translation or reading, as evident in McAuley's literary journey and his Austrian visit. McAuley admitted Trakl's was the most powerful of influences:

> I don't think my work bears the mark of strong influences such as Yeats who marked the work of many of my contemporaries, but I did in fact at such a later stage, come under quite a strong influence of a remarkable kind, an Austrian poet, Georg Trakl, who belonged to the pre-World War One generation in Europe […] (De Berg 11, 351)

He admitted that Trakl "[…] has marked certain features of my late work. […] I have been extremely interested in him." (Santamaria 56) These late poems, the dedication "Trakl: Salzburg" and the associated Trakl-influenced poems and versions demonstrate the disconcerting affinity between the two, a coincidence of lyric apprehension and forms, a shared vision of man in his search for order and meaning in a precarious world. Ignorant of his Australian acolyte, born three years after his death, Trakl's poetry and world haunts the later verse of McAuley to an extraordinary extent.

Maver has underlined McAuley's *fin-de siècle* affinity with the decadent Trakl (1990 121). Kramer considers that McAuley's personal crisis and increased sensitivity arising from his illness made him feel especial kinship with Trakl's "disturbed and sensitive spirit." (*JM* xxiv) Pybus argues that McAuley, visiting Salzburg with a girlfriend, was, like Trakl, tormented with sexual guilt, a trespasser like McAuley's *persona* in "Private Devotions" (*CP*94, 281): "It was his own guilt and sense of corruption that helped him find Trakl's voice so unerringly" (1999 238). Ackland, surmises that McAuley's own addiction to alcohol "drew him towards his doomed poetic double in Trakl" (2001 218) and that the Australian poet felt "compelled to replicate aspects of the doomed European's life" citing McAuley's own acolyte, Graeme Hetherington: "[…] with so little time left he tried to get into Trakl's shoes. He elected to be Trakl."[50] While that claim seems overstated, Trakl does become the overriding ghostly presence in McAuley's late work, and in a much more pronounced way than in his early apprenticeship to Rilke in the late 1930s. However, as McAuley explained "they were intense, small, rather lyrical poems which were the kind I was ready to do." (De Berg 11. 352).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Harold Bloom emphasised André Malraux's observation how a young man's heart might be haunted by a "few almighty, often antagonistic ghosts […]." (1997 26) So if Rilke was one of the ghosts of McAuley's youth, the poet Trakl, already a light influence in his late thirties would be the even heavier ghost of McAuley's late middle age, his penultimate productive period. In Bloomian terms, McAuley's "profound act of reading" of Trakl (xxii),

[49] Paul Ricoeur. *Oneself as Another*. U of Chicago Press, 1992, 318.
[50] Qtd. in Ackland, 230

resulting in his combined tribute of dedication, translations and appropriations might be described as a "swallowing" (xxi) of the *personae*, landscapes, motifs and vision of Trakl's own haunting verse. Throughout McAuley's profound "Trakl" encounter we sense, more specifically Bloom's "return of the 'apophrades'" (139) – the powerful dead, in McAuley's work, in which Trakl, in his middle pre-expressionist period, represents a restrained, more compatible, relative of the early Rilke, as well as a brief influence in McAuley's early middle age. Bloom saw such vulnerability to a "revisionary relationship to the dead" as characteristic of the "mature strong poet [evident in] poems that quest for a final clarity." (140) It also reflects an endorsement of the style to which McAuley returned – the short nature lyric, though enriched with experience and refinement of the symbolic language. What Laurence Venuti has written about translation in the romantic period, in which the translator "loses his national self through a strong identification with a cultural other" (20) also applies to McAuley's relationship with Trakl. The translation work feeds the growth of the poet. While we saw, in Chapter 9, how McAuley's physical travel provided literary stimulus and productive remembering, his interpretations of Trakl provided another kind of travel.

In his essays *The End of Modernity* (1959) McAuley argued that the "[modern] world of industrial progress was a world of disinherited beings, cut off from the deepest sources of human satisfaction, restless and jangled, driven by unstilled cravings, through a course of life without meaning or direction."[51] He wrote of the dilemma of poets writing in such an alienated world and spoke wistfully, if not hopefully, of the order possible in a "metaphysically-oriented society."("The Grinning Mirror, *EM*, 69) He may have been thinking then of the central European villages of which Rilke had written in "Herbsttag"? Or the "old social order" he would find in Trakl's early twentieth-century Salzburg? (*GR*, 209) Throughout this time McAuley seemed to be less nostalgic for place than for time and culture, a kind of prelapsarian anguish he had also encountered in Brennan. Since settling in Hobart, Tasmania in 1961, and learning to embrace its natural and human landscapes, McAuley had found a "community small enough to be experienced as a whole, unsimplified," (Kramer, 1988 8) whose temperate European climate and landscape in some way matched the images of his European translations, and became in his own poems transformed into a world parallel to and identifiable with Trakl's. McAuley's Trakl translations brought about dislocation, but more creatively, an experiment with a different, arguably nostalgic mask, and the description of other landscapes quite close to his own.

Gwen Harwood describes the translator (but also poet) McAuley as walking with ease through Trakl's worlds, suggesting thus a two-way or double occupation – Trakl in McAuley:

---

[51] McAuley, "What Must be Developed," *EM*, 25.

McAuley in Trakl. McAuley's late lyrics share motifs from what he described as "the earlier half of [Trakl's] brief period of mature composition" (*GR*, 207) vignettes from a village – or suburban – Christian society, as well as concern with redemption and the fall. The solitary figures present in and observing the landscape pervade both poet's work, even before McAuley's intensive study of Trakl. For McAuley, reading and translating Trakl may have been, to recall Bloom, like looking into a mirror at his "gnostic double" (145) or, in Freudian terms, an "encounter with one's own alterity." (Ravenscroft 82-83) That crisply imaged and musical voice, that recognisable sense of place and situation McAuley so much admired in Trakl had, to some extent, already been established, if intermittently, in his own poetics in poems such as "In the Huon Valley" or his early 1970s lyric landscapes celebrating the temperate environment of his new home, Tasmania. McAuley himself commented that while Trakl's influence had been "more identifiable than any other poet, [it had served] to liberate, not deflect, my native impulse." (*MAV*, 204) Later he observed: "I was going the same way myself already and it was a kind of meeting which took me further along my own way. I haven't felt that I've been subjugated but rather have got further along my own way by the accidental meeting with Trakl's work." (Santamaria 57-8)

10.13 Differentiations

Some differentiations can be noted. McAuley was not attracted to Trakl's late expressionist poems. His observation that in "Grodek" "the symbolic script has become detached from any particular place and situation" (*GR*, 206-7), recalls McAuley's (and Stewart') objections to detached surrealist techniques in their Statement on "Ern Malley," and reflects McAuley's long-held objection to obscurantism in some of the symbolists.

Whereas McAuley considered Trakl to have "a deep and persistent Christian outlook" (217) which may have made him able to face the evil evident in his world, paradoxically his own poems more often tip to despair, seem heavier, less alert to the whimsical paradoxes of life than those of the Trakl he admired. The signifiers of despair can nonetheless be traced in both poets to the recurring motifs of vanishing, emptiness, frozenness, silence, mutedness, pain, even death, and the archetypes of autumn, winter and evening. However, McAuley's late lyrics are marked by a pronounced use of negatives in syntax and semantics. It is also evident in relation to understanding and speaking more generally – for example: "I make no comment; I don't know, /I don't know what there is to know,"[52] what McCredden calls "speechlessness" (1972 94). This may also derive from a

[52] McAuley. "Childhood Morning—Homebush." *CP*, 225.

riddling, paratactic technique McAuley learnt from Neilson: "It *isn't* ever found, *it's only* given"[53] ("The Hazard and the Gift," *CP*, 219). Associated with this accumulation of negatives in McAuley are verbs, nouns, and adjectives, indicating diminution, fading, rotting, breaking and loss that reinforce the themes of decay and hopelessness, a "lack of connectedness," (Macainsh, 1992 219).

To the contrary, Trakl is more disposed to say what "is" than what "isn't. McAuley succeeds, at times, in emulating such as in "St John's Park" – "The mountain *is* streaked white, the air *is* cold," (CP, 222): as well as in his own vatic affirmation in "At Rushy Lagoon" – "It is a world of sense and use." However, McAuley's late poems (*MLN)* offer mainly a pessimistic vision.

At the same time, as seen in the anti-poetics of "On the Western Line" there is also a reluctance to metaphorise.[54] These elements suggest the belonging of McAuley's late verse to what Frye has described as the "*mythos* of winter," in which the modes of satire and irony predominate. These Frye calls the "mythical patterns of experience, the attempts to give form to the shifting ambiguities and complexities of un-idealised existence." (223)

In McAuley's late lyrics the paradoxical co-existence of not saying at the same time, of the tendency to aphorism points to another stylistic difference between McAuley and Trakl – McAuley's own "I" or "we" appears more frequently and more heavily than in Trakl's lyrics. It casts upon his landscape like a shadow, as in the following image:

> I turn back from the sunset strain.
> A huge moon yellow like dull brass
> Lengthens my shadow down the lane. ("World on Sunday," *CP*94, 279)

Very often, in his Trakl phase, the "I" or "we" subject is associated with epigram or aphorism, not the paradoxical but light expressions seen in Trakl's texts, but more laboured, and sometimes clichéd expressions of complaint, loss or despair, and usually expressed in terms of negativity, including on the condition of speechlessness. In the increasingly pared, plain style of the late verse, the subject voice tends to be wry and laconic, dispersing scant lines of pessimistic wisdom:

> But the lie is in the soul,
> And it rots the world we have
> Till there's nothing left to save. […]
> What is left to make us try? ("Winter Drive," *CP*94, 283)

In Frye's theory of modes, or genre, the epigram or aphorism is associated with the truth-telling seer, close to god. The "social function of the poet […] who sings about gods […] is that of an inspired oracle. […] The oracle develops a number of subsidiary forms, notably the commandment, the parable, the aphorism, and the prophecy." (56) McAuley's late poetry seems pervaded with the

[53] Writer's italics.
[54] Cf.9.8 (241).

philosophical voice of a stoic, lamenting the experience of belatedness, or absence of gods, but with a calm detachment. Speaking in the first-person plural this is clearly a shared rather than a personal perspective.

On questions of form and apprehension, McAuley observed that in these late poems: "I have come full circle back to the kind of [short lyric] poems I began with, but with a greater depth of experience […]." (*MAV*, 204) He commented to Vivian Smith on the short lyric to which he had returned:

> One thing that the modern short poem offers the chance of doing is exploring a limited situation; you are not committing yourself to a whole world-view at every point […] rather a modern poem is trying to find out what ideas are appropriate, what reactions and sentiments are appropriate. (1964 11)

The short lyric offered a less ambitious-seeming perspective, a humbler outlook on the world in contrast to the more ambitious perspectives of McAuley's earlier verse. Coincidentally, the poet's older, West coast contemporary, American Yvor Winters posited his canon for the plain-style short lyric in *Forms of Discovery* (1967), at the same time McAuley shifted to his short autobiographical poems.[55] Winters wrote: "The short poem is the most civilised, that is to say the greatest."[56] While Winters may not have known McAuley's poetry[57] what he wrote about the American poet F. G. Tuckerman, describes McAuley's late lyrics (and also Trakl's), notably the blend of an image-based but also epigrammatic poetics:

> Instead of the obscurity we find in Rimbaud, we have a theme of some intellectual scope with enough abstract statement to support the theme; theme and abstract statement charge the imagery with meaning, with the result that the imagery has the force of abstract statement. The imagery is not ornament as it would be in the Renaissance, nor is it merely the pasturage for revery [sic] as much of the poetry of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries […] The structure is that of controlled association. (Winters 259)

Winter's emphasis on "controlled association" also echoes what McAuley much earlier had found lacking in surrealist methods, arguably the Australian "descendents" of Rimbaud, in the early 1940s. McAuley will have shared Winters' position seemingly balanced between modernism and anti-modernism, and particularly Winters' insistence on the craft of prosody and closed forms. Similarly, what Winters admired in the poetry of Louise Bogan "the rational structure of the Renaissance" (278) is arguably evident throughout the works of McAuley notably in his defence of poetry as "the rational paradise."[58] Winters' description anticipates what Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht

---

[55] McAuley had referred to Winters'1960 study of versification (*In Defence of Reason*) in his own *Primer of Versification* (1966).
[56] Yvor Winters. *Forms of Discovery: Critical and Historical Essays on the Form of the Short Poem*. 1967, 314.
[57] From 1970 some of McAuley's verse was published in *Poetry* (Chicago) so Winters may have read his work there.
[58] McAuley. *SP*. xviii.

has described more recently as "symbolic realism" linked "to medieval thought [in which] spirit and matter were believed to be inseparable, both in human beings and in all the other elements of the divine Creation."[59]

10.14 "Music Late at Night" – A Tradition of Belatedness

Like McAuley, Winters was also an admirer of the realism of the poetry of the late eighteenth-century realist poet George Crabbe (albeit a writer of long poems and not within his canon of short poems) for "his true picture of village life in all its rustic filth and ugliness." (Winters, 1967 159) McAuley's predisposition for such "realities" is evident in his admiration for Trakl's "impressively disgusting" "vision of everyday degradation" in his poem "Suburb in the Föhn." (*GR*, 213)

At the same time there remains, paradoxically, a mood of resistance to realist observations in the texts' conveyance of "lateness," which Edward Said has described as "intransigence, difficulty and unresolved contradiction" (2006 xiii), an ambivalent acceptance and at the same time rejection of the desolate vision. This is evident in McAuley's syntax and semantics of negativity. Brissenden identifies a "persistent note of radical disquiet and uneasiness, of dissatisfaction not only with the nature of man but with the nature of the world in which he finds that he has been placed."[60] The theme of being out of one's time had been addressed by Heidegger in his 1946 lecture "What are Poets for?"[61] dedicated to McAuley's early precursor R. M. Rilke.

Several aspects of belatedness accumulate for McAuley at this phase of his life and work, perhaps the least being the sense of literary belatedness, of not participating in the literary forms of his time, that he had suffered in his neoclassical phase, though he was always restless, trying new approaches. The other, mentioned by Said,[62] relates to a phase of life through which the poet was passing, and sense of lateness, that brought an acute awareness of what might be or not be possible, a heightened sensitivity to life's precariousness, but also intransigence. Such awareness gave an edge, and intensity to his inwardness, a lyric impulse, unleashing what Kirkpatrick calls "the strong Romantic leanings of his genius," (204) the Magian Heresy hitherto denied. In his seemingly needy response to the voice and forms of Trakl, the mutable McAuley reabsorbed a good element of the late romantic decadent, liberating the early lyric voice which became a richer late voice. The pared symbolist and epigrammatic techniques he practised in reading and

---

[59] Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht. *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey*. 2004, 25.
[60] Brissenden. "The Wounded Hero." 1972, 269.
[61] Heidegger. "What Are Poets For?" in *Poetry. Language, Thought,* 89.
[62] Cf.10.7 (276). *Late Style*. 2006, xi.

translating Trakl, his most important "poetic forefather"[63] represented a felicitous return, though as we see in his next phase not necessarily his last. Said considered that for some artists a late style might display a "new spirit of reconciliation and serenity" (2006 6) as it did, at times, for McAuley. Said rather saw artistic lateness as more inclined to intransigence and difficulty. The latter describes phases McAuley had certainly traversed, in the "via negativa" ascribed by Noel Rowe to McAuley, (1984 47) not just in the negative construction of sentences, but in the poet's contrary method of advancing in form and ideas, his insistence in confronting difficulties and *aporia.* Though his struggle for form seems to have settled, in his Trakl phase, McAuley still voices a resistant plaintiveness, oscillating between realism and stoicism (Frye's winter *mythos)* and a nostalgic regard for traditions of a lost past (Frye's autumn).

Something of romantic yearning can be seen in the "heart" motif of McAuley's *MLN* title poem, a sonnet "Music Late at Night" in abba rhyme, written before McAuley travelled to Salzburg. It starts with the usual concrete Trakl-like quality of most of his *MLN* poems, evoking the silent world at daybreak:

> Black gashes in white bark. The gate
> Is clouded with spicy prunus flowers.
> The moon sails cold through the small hours.
> The helpless heart says, hold and wait.
>
> Wait. The lighted empty street
> Waits for the start of a new day,
> When cars move, dogs, children play.
> But now the rigid silence is complete. (*CP*94, 294)

It is mainly a frozen scene, featuring the familiar birch-tree with its violent "black gashes in the white bark," in which action is mainly withheld or in suspense, ruled by "a cold moon" sailing above. This explains the heart, "helpless," holding, waiting. The only hint of life or breakthrough is in the "spicy prunus" blossom suggesting Spring. The anticipated shift into daybreak in the sestet, is held back, on a "threshold," by the oxymoronic aural motif of "soundless music: a taut spring:"

> Again that soundless music: a taut string,
> Burdened unbearably with grief
> That smiles acceptance of despair,
>
> Throbs on the very threshold of spring
> In the burst flower, the folded leaf
> Puzzling poor flesh to live and care. (*CP*94, 294)

It positions, in Neilson-like riddles, a precarious array of life's possibilities – the options of grief and acceptance, stasis and flowering. This apprehension of waiting, in a liminal zone – of night

[63] McCredden. "Mastering Romanticism."1992, 266.

bordering day, spring breaking from winter, life beholding death, offers a poignant expression of life's ambivalence, between belonging, being, and their contraries. While the poem incorporate traces of the precarious from both of McAuley's poetic masters, Trakl and Neilson, the "burden" of "grief" imputed to Trakl in "Trakl: Salzburg" and the "silver birch–tree," and "folded gift" from McAuley's tribute to Neilson in "The Hazard and the Gift" – the "gift" of both precursors seems powerfully blended.

The poem reflects McAuley's adoption of what he described in the "Magian Heresy" as the romantic "voices of that period that continue to speak in us" (*EM*, 159). It is tantalisingly that even in McAuley's cultivation of a new late "voice" there are variations, a sign of McAuley's gift for adapting and transforming voices, masks, some new, some resurrected. This he admitted in recognising how his late poems returned to "the kind of poem I began with," the short, paratactic, symbolist nature-lyrics that he had long desired to write: "poems that are lucid and mysterious, gracefully simple, but full of secrets, faithful to the little one knows and the much one has to feel." (*MAV*, 204) They are enriched with laconic experience.

10.15 Transformation – the stoic speaker of belatedness

The presence of Trakl, arguably a poetics of decay and mortality,[64] with its autumnal metaphors of harvest, the phantoms and ghosts of its gardens and graveyards, the old and sick from the villages and the hospitals, cast a strong shadow over McAuley's lyric landscapes in *MLN*, being the strongest of his Bloomian precursors. McAuley sensitised by his illness to questions of his own mortality, lifted from Trakl's sensitive apprehensions from another hemisphere and time a lens for viewing and representing his late twentieth-century Tasmania at the time of his impending death: "Each breath we draw draws in the time allowed." ("In Aeternum," *CP*, 225). The mortal thematics of his work gives shape to a somewhat older more experienced, heavier *persona* than the haunted younger Trakl who steps beside McAuley through his lyric landscapes.

In the underlying theme of change running through McAuley's work, Dobrez' articulation for McAuley's late phase is the *persona* of a Yeatsian "mad old man." (1976 179) While comprehensible, Dobrez overstates the madness in McAuley's cool laconic statements. The speaker of his late poetics is, rather, an outsider, stepping away from and observing life and also death. Smith points to a "valedictory mood, the sense of a fading life" (1981 391), Bradley to McAuley's propensity for writing "*In Memorium* stanzas" (459) while Ashcroft and co-authors

[64] Calinescu sees Adorno's apprehension of decadence as "a culture of negation," as belonging to modernism, (1987, 210).

describe him as a "poignant singer of mortality." (109) The elegiac mood of McAuley's late verse applies not only to himself but to the world more generally.

It is worth noting the motifs of decay and death in Trakl's work and also a persistent funereal mood – "the rooms where death comes" ("In Autumn," *GR*, 223), the ravens "dwindl[ing] like a funeral procession" ("The Ravens," *GR*, 214), and at times a seeming impatience with living: "How sickly all this becoming seems" ("Glad Spring," *GR*, 216). However, such contemplation also inspires Trakl's own "poignant singer" to issue his own paradoxical epigram: "So painfully good and true is all that lives". This is followed by the contemplation: "And quietly an old stone touches you/ "Verily I am with you all the days" ("Glad Spring,"217). The old stone which touches, with its "Gospel" inscription, McAuley observes to be "a cross or a statue of Christ" (217) but may as easily be a tombstone, probably the original source of all epigram and the most ancient of poems. The motif of stone, whether tombstone or grave, including the grave-like threshold of "Winter Nightfall" or the stoups for holy water in the church, or the "tabernacle […] like a tomb"("Private Devotions," *CP*94, 281) or graveyard cross, or the worn marble statues in the gardens of Salzburg or Sydney is widely spread through Trakl's poems, and naturally McAuley's translations and his own Trakl-influenced poems and dedications. It is as if the predominating voice of McAuley's late poems becomes the writer not just of aphorisms but of epitaphs about existence:

> There's no escape from what we need. ("Private Devotions," *CP*94, 281)
>
> And there is less and less that can be said ("Another Day, Another Night," *CP*94, 289)

In a poem perhaps written seven years earlier (c.1966) McAuley had uncannily imagined a harbinger of his own mortality in the medieval-seeming, allegorical *persona* "Death the magician, his dark coat crimson-lined" ("The Cloak," *CP*, 189). That may have been linked with his later visit to the historic graveyard at Richmond, Tasmania, and his apparent fascination by tombstone inscriptions there, one of which he copied down:

> Go winning ways that never gave offence
> Go female sweetness joined with manly sense
> Go innocence that never gave a frown
> Go virtues and receive thy Heavenly crown[65]

This noted "tombstone" style suggests the criterion of sincerity in writing which Wordsworth, 150 years earlier, had advocated in his "Essays upon Epitaphs."[66] It was seen not only in a writer's sincerity but in "earnestness and a moral interest in the main object." In his search for

[65] November 1969. Journal 10, Box 1, McAuley papers.

[66] William Wordsworth. "Essays Upon Epitaphs." (1810), *Selected Prose,* ed. John O. Hayden, Penguin Classics, 1988, 322-370.

the true, among the "many voices urging […]," (Thompson 105) by late 1973 with the completion of the *MLN* poems, the "honest" speaker of McAuley's lyrics (Brissenden 277) has shifted from the autobiographical stance of the late 1960s, while borrowing for some time Trakl's cloak, to assume the distinctive voice of a stoic, if unwilling, survivor – owner of a laconic and subdued wisdom, whose spareness indicates a despondency measured with the humility of lowered expectations: "Whatever it was we thought we knew, / Grows hazy as the sun declines" ("Watercolour," *CP*94, 285).

This wanderer not only of European towns and churchyards but especially the old park of his home in New Town has finally found, not so much a rich, epiphanic "'land of similes' closer to his own suburban home" (Kirkpatrick 193) but a familiar terrain from which, at times, he could draw meaning and of which he could speak authentically. Perhaps the most significant point of recognition occurs in McAuley's observation how: "In the last two years of [Trakl's] life he found his authentic voice, his real subject, his special mode of expression." (*GR*, 202). McAuley's own excursion with Trakl, reflected another transformation, but in the sense of coming "full circle," to recover the symbolist "short lyrics" (*MAV*, 204) with which he had begun. It was less a new voice than something familiar and rediscovered, though its greater depth of experience brought a new inflection, the laconic, stoic voice, weighted with epitaph.

11

The Sister Arts (1973-1976)

11.1 1974-76

In the three years from 1974 until his premature death, aged 59, in October 1976, McAuley continued to develop the short symbolist lyric, emerging from his experiment with Trakl, and to explore a celebration of nature, in a naturalistic form embracing the visual. The poems would be published posthumously in two visually impressive collections – *Time Given (TG),* (Brindabella Press, 1976) and the collaboration exercise *A World of its Own (WO),* (ANU Press, 1977) which combines poems written in McAuley's manuscript with paintings by Patricia Giles celebrating the east-coast Coles Bay region of Tasmania. The exercise of a painterly description of landscape in the *WO* poems was accompanied by a deeper interest in the relationship between the arts, particularly poetry and painting, but also music, a recurring theme to which McAuley gives closer focus.

Many would have been written during McAuley's leave from June 1974 to June 1975, mainly in Australia but some during his European visit in early 1975, and others after his surgery in October 1975. It is not possible to date exactly the poems of "the Coles Bay book" mentioned in a letter (10/5/1975) from his friend, Leonie Kramer.[1] However, it seems the majority of the Coles Bay poems or sequence would have been written before his European trip to Europe and the United States in early 1975. In the poet's travel through both hemispheres, there is an attunement to what is similar in nature and what is different.

11.2 The Coles Bay Sketchbook

In his Preface to *WO,* McAuley referred to the Coles Bay area as "a rather special part of Tasmania's east coast […] which includes the sea and bay sides of the Freycinet Peninsular, which is a national park, and such adjoining places as the swan-haunt Moulting Lagoon, and the long stretch of the Friendly Beaches" (13). Long a bird-watcher and interested in the preservation of the environment, a growing local movement, the poet admitted his connection with a place special to him: "My acquaintance with it has been of recent years, extending over visits when my wife and Patricia painted together and I wandered about […]" (*Ibid*.). Though it has been suggested McAuley "borrowed" the idea of a collaborative project after

[1] Leonie Kramer. Letter to McAuley. 10 May 1975, Box 15, McAuley papers.

meeting American poet and novelist James Dickey in March 1975,[2] the Coles Bay poetry-painting project seems to have had an earlier genesis:

> When the first idea of the book as a joint project came, I intended to write some descriptive prose, which would run along with the visual material, without any requirement that the one should exactly match or illustrate the other. Subsequently I felt that I should, and could make my contribution in verse. But the same rule holds that the verbal and the pictorial elements are not meant to match so much as generally to cohere as a set of impressions […] (Preface, *WO*, 13)

The idea of the poet "wandering about" with his notebook, sets the tone of poems which modestly offer a "set of impressions." (*WO,*13) The introductory poem for such impressions, "Coles Bay Images," emphasises the image:

> These images were gathered at Coles Bay,
> Pink granite peninsula of shore and forest
> Crowned by the Hazards: Dove, Amos, Mayson;
> Where the sea-eagle sails out from the bluffs,
> And milky opal gleams in horizon cloud. (*WO,* 17)[3]

The poem is unlike McAuley's earlier closed-form poems: a single stanza of 16 unrhymed, enjambed lines, it is loosely held together by a prose-like description in a mostly iambic speech rhythm alternating with some spondaic line beginnings for emphasis (e.g. "Pink granite […]." It offers an understated, but certain celebration of place by naming a known topography – "peninsula of shore and forest" and its mountains (Mayson, Amos and Dove). The last-cited line: "And milky opal gleams in horizon cloud" strangely echoes the "clouded Ocean" of the last stanza of *Quiros* (*CP*, 176/ St. 3). In bringing the "gathered" array of the more temporal images of flora and fauna, the omniscient subject, shows delight in a comprehensive cataloguing, in paratactic sequence, of a familiar place and its species. The subject is like a field-naturalist using the common names of plants, birds, and natural features, including their colours, as seen below:

> White iris, running postman, sun orchid shine
> As the whole heathland, flowers, silly with honey.
> Turquoise-coloured waters in small bays
> Shawling towards the beach say *shalom*, peace.
> Gannets put on a diving display. A skate
> Glides in the shallows. (*WO,*17)

The poem is organised in the linear narrative, arguably, of a photographic observer, moving progressively from far distance to middle distance, in language, and from past to present

---

[2] Kinross-Smith. 1980, 320. Dickey probably mentioned to McAuley his recent collaborative "coffee table" publication of poems with water-colours and drawings by Hubert Shuptrine recording their visit to the American south (*Jericho: The South Beheld*, 1974).

[3] In citing poems I normally use *CP*94 but in case of textual inaccuracies I refer to *WO* (1977).

tense. The focus on present concludes, in the final four lines, with a precise use of colour, recalling the recent lyrics written parallel to the Trakl translations:

> […] After a storm
> The beach has ramparts of fine matted weed,
> Brown, violet, green; and jelly-blobs like glass.
> Pink bivalves not yet fallen apart lie empty. (*WO,*17)

In contrast to his earlier neoclassical style, the diction is mostly plain, informal and demotic, as in the tactile "jelly-blobs." The alliteration of the Hebrew salutation "*shalom*" with "waters […] *shawling*[4] towards the beach," conveys the hypnotic rhythm of waves, but also shows the poet's preference for accessible (domestic) metaphors. In this understated, spare style the focus falls on the images and impressions, assembling the various parts of this "world of its own" in an almost timeless, sempiternal present tense. Contrary to his later denial,[5] it seems a "locus amoenus," an idealised place of safety and comfort. The subject seems hardly present or inflected at all in the rich imagery gathered in the poem, except maybe in the emptiness of the pink bivalves. The ingenuous, objective cataloguing performance in "Coles Bay Images," which typifies the form for the other poems, arguably aspires to what McAuley described in an essay written at this time: the "hunger of the mind for such a poetry of fact" [as that of John Clare.][6] Cook identifies another return (325), seeing a link between these nature poems with McAuley's early Rilkean poem "Jesus" (c.1942-46) who "rose and walked/ Among the stones and beasts and flowers of earth; [which] turned their muted faces to their Lord,/Their real faces […]" (*CP*, 20).

11.3 The world of senses

A high level of natural detail rendered in a strongly visual style is evident in all of the poems of *WO*, but in a highly painterly manner in several poems. "Cloud, Light" in its methodical but vivid description of light and colour seems a skyscape in the tradition of William Turner[7] or Claude Monet – "a watercolour-in-verse" (Catalano 141). Its incomplete opening sentence evoking time suggests a brushstroke – "Long stillness of afternoon. […]" before describing the visual aspects: "The sky / Is ranged with terraces of grey […]" (*WO,* 34). "The sun [which]

[4] Writer's italics.
[5] "Bush Scene," (*CP*94,301), Cf.11.6 (305).
[6] McAuley. "Wordsworth and Crabbe and the Eighteenth-Century Heritage." *GR*, 130-131.
[7] Turner used poetic epigrams to accompany his landscapes.

rides in the north, abstruse […]" recalls the personified sun which "rides" in "Autumn in the Wachau," (*CP* 94, 295), a Trakl dedication.[8]

> Above it, a narrow sinkhole brims
> With blueish-white ethereal light
> Intensely incandescent; below,
> A wider opening pours down
> Mild yellow rays dissolving to
> An area of silver sheen
> On the transverse grey-green subtle shifting
> Textures of the waters of the bay. (*WO,*34)

As repeatedly seen in these descriptive poems, the poem's subject uses the gesture *deixis* with particularity ("Above," "below") in elaborating the colour, light and shapes of his richly textured skyscape. The recurrent sidereal motifs of stars and planets are highlighted. Compared with the clipped symbolist style of the *MLN* poems "Cloud, Light" depends on the extensive use of adjectives, related to colour, shape ("blueish-white ethereal"), or amplification ("the transverse grey-green subtle shifting / Textures […]." The use of metaphor is restrained, accessible and limited to the descriptive ("the terraces" of sky) though with one element of personification (the "abstruse" sun). Neither elevated nor "poetic" the effect is powerfully evocative. The slow, deliberate evocation of light beams falling through a seeming "sinkhole" of clouds, and an ultimate degree of "ethereal light" – "intensely incandescent" – suggest the subject being overwhelmed in an understated apprehension of the sublime.

The poems are marked by objectivity, and impersonality, the thoroughness, of the field-guide offering an accurate report to an absent or innocent audience. This quality fulfils what McAuley described earlier (1970) about modern poetry: "[…] its aim […] to give us the kind of felt life that is conveyed by concrete particularity."[9] Underlining the return to his early particularity against the more universal diction of his middle neo-classical phase, that observation echoes what the 16-year-old admired, in 1934, about the imagist and early modernist T. E. Hulme who understood: "that in poetry an image had to be presented in a way which was clear and definite, not blurred or vague."[10]

Such attention to accuracy in representation was mirrored in his essays on the English romantic nature poet Wordsworth (1770-1850) and the eighteenth-century poets, noting their "appetite for fact […]." ("Wordsworth and Crabbe," *GR*,120). His 1970s lecture notes on the

---

[8] Cf.10.11 (285).
[9] McAuley. *The Personal Element in Australian Poetry.* 1970, 4.
[10] ("J.Mc"). "Some Aspects of Modern Poetry." 1934, 26. Cf. 1.1 (13).

picturesque tradition record what might be seen as his own definition of ekphrasis: "[…] the habit of viewing scenes as pictorial compositions, the descriptive mode which sees poetry as a kind of painting with words."[11] In his published essay he notes Wordsworth's "determined emphasis on the common thing in itself, even to the exceedingly small pond in "The Thorn" which the poet had carefully measured […]." ("Wordsworth and Crabbe," 124). Closer to home and the present, McAuley had recently praised in the natural scenes of Australian lyric poet Kenneth Slessor "[…] the test of accuracy and intelligibility […]" ("An Imprint of Slessor," *GR*, 20) noting Slessor's debt to older poet and painter Norman Lindsay's "doctrine of the concrete image […]"(20). He praised in Slessor: "the role of the observer looking out through the window pane, seeing the harbour and the city and suburbs […]" (*Ibid.*). In an essay written in the last year of his life (1976) on the German Renaissance painter Albrecht Dürer, a long-held favourite, the poet commented upon his own interest "[…] a late development for me" [in] "verifying minute factual details."[12] This included an inspection, in a visit in February 1975, of the site of the Old Man of Coniston, the mountain which inspired a scene in Wordsworth's "The Prelude" – "I find increasing value in this sort of physical recognition or "backing" to poems when they call for it."[13] McAuley remarked upon "[…] what seemed total objectivity […]" in Dürer's painting ("Albrecht Dürer,"46) commending the German artist's *dictum* to fellow artists present and future: "[…] Depart not from Nature in thine opinions, neither imagine of thyself to invent ought better, else shalt thou be led astray." (56)[14]

11.4 Nature notes

In his lecture notes McAuley had noted the eighteenth-century interest in nature walks and the production of walking guides. He thought "John Clare's knowledge of nature […] much greater than Wordsworth's […]." ("Wordsworth and Crabbe," 130). The Coles Bay poems show a return to what Dorothy Green described as the "John Clare mood" of McAuley's early nature poems (1977 19),[15] a hint of the detail seen in Clare's "Shepherd's Calendar" (1827). Catalano describes the detailed focus of *WO* as McAuley's "naturalistic" approach, (140)

[11] McAuley. Unpublished lecture Notes on Wordsworth. Box 16, McAuley papers.
[12] McAuley. "Albrecht Dürer: Self and World." 1976, *JM,* 44.
[13] McAuley. Letter to Norma, 15 February 1975. Box 2.
[14] Footnotes 3 and 5 of McAuley's Dürer essay suggest McAuley's main, if not first, sources were W. M. Conway's *The Writings of Albrect Dürer,* trans. and ed. 1910, and Erwin Panofsky's *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, Princeton UP, 1954.
[15] Cf.9.3 (232-233).

especially in the close observations of plant and insect life, in "Wolf-Spider's Nest" and "Secret life" (also reflected in Patricia Giles' ink drawings). Some poems show the observer's light presence, as in "Flooding has piled / With timber debris the stream-bed where we scramble […]" ("Sleepy Bay," CP94, 301) and in "Wolf-Spider's Nest," CP94, 300) – "It made me pause along the track: / A perfect round hole finger-nail wide […]."

"Granite Boulder" offers a lesson on the giant boulder's evolution in distant geological and more recent botanical time and the emergence of its minute ecosystem, with some technical insight on both rock-type and plant and animal species:

> This boulder rolled and crashed and came to rest –
> How long ago? – an isolate in the bush:
> Pink orthoclase, black biotite, glassy quartz,
> Coarse-grained from cooling underneath the earth.
> Lichen began to spread in light-green patches […] (*WO,* 19)

This understated, prose-like but evocative narrative about nature, moving from deep past to immediate present in one 14-line stanza, is descriptive, factual, geologically accurate, rather than "poetic." McAuley's initial prototype notes[16] which he transformed into poems, correspond with his observations on the boulder and what is noted in the final poem. Apart from the rhetorical "How long ago" in line 2 reflecting the scale of time, the subject seems to disappear completely, into a sublime observation of the timeless natural world. A. D. Hope has commented more generally how:

> […] an ecstatic aloneness […] breathes from the poems and the pictures in this book – a sense of intense awareness of every detail, of total immersion and absorption in the life of rock and bird, lizard, spider and tree, and yet a sort of intense detachment of the spirit. (*WO*, 8)

McAuley enjoyed using both correct geological, and in other poems, botanical terms as well as colloquial names for animal and plant life: he admired Clare's use of the demotic. McAuley might have been anticipating these simple nature poems when he described Clare's poetry as "simply presented as notations of present fact, with an implicit feeling of pleasure and love." ("Wordsworth and Crabbe."130) The Coles Bay poems comprise a comprehensive, if not complete listing, of local species, approximately 20 birds and 20 plants, 11 species of animal (mainly marine), and 13 insects endemic to the area.[17] Occasionally McAuley, in field-naturalist mode, uses scientific Latin names both to show his knowledge and to use the

---

[16] McAuley. Undated, unpublished notes "The Hazards: Dove, Amos, Mayson." Box 9.

[17] In a draft for a Commentary for *Quadrant* McAuley remarked how he had been "toying with the idea of a Handbook of the Fauna and Flora of Australian poetry." Box 9, McAuley papers. This section was not eventually published in "More about Kendall's Bell-birds," *Quadrant*, 19.9, 19.

lingering musicality of the longer Latin word as in "Sleepy Bay," (*CP*94, 301) describing the giant orchid – "Dendrobium hangs in flower, as creek-water gurgles." Similarly, the poet resorts playfully to the Latin name to evoke, by onomatopoeia, the morose screech of black cockatoos in "Bush Scene:"

> Three yellow-tailed black cockatoos
> (*funereus funereus!)*[18]
> Screech harshly from the breeze-swept boughs. (*CP* 94, 302)

Sound, as well as image is important in the rendering of this rare natural world. The accurate and onomatopoeic sound of the brush-pigeon in "Sleepy Bay" – "With loud *whomp-whomp*[19] of wings in its short flight" – can be traced to McAuley's original notes.

11.5 Man in the landscape

Many of the poems are confined to simple, inconclusive descriptions, for the purpose of celebration and naming: they have very few of the epigrammatic commentaries of his more recent poems in *MLN*. In most poems the subject seems almost hidden inside the landscape represented in and by the poem. All of the poem titles relate to images, natural life or scenes, none to the human presence or the envisaging or observing mind except perhaps "Bush Scene," which presents a philosophical observation, as also the figurative "Sister Arts."[20] Nonetheless, the perspective and at times body of the field-naturalist is present in several of the poems. As an engaged public figure, frequently criticising human behaviour in his column in *Quadrant*,[21] and given his past poetic reflections, it is unlikely that McAuley could escape human reality even in these descriptive short poems celebrating the Australian *locus amoenus* which is the Coles Bay natural reserve.

Several poems comment on man's destructive role. Trakl's hunters are literally present in "Swans on Moulting Lagoon." The poem describes a wetland bordering the park, where Australia's endemic black swans live and breed. The lagoon, a half-sanctuary for the birds, is described during the autumn season, the official hunting season for ducks. Emphasis is given to the changing colour of vegetation:

---

[18] McAuley's italics. The description of the birds'call, reflects the yellow-tailed black cockatoo's zoological name, *Calyptorhynchus funereus,* probably derived from sound.
[19] McAuley's italics.
[20] Cf. 11.9 (311).
[21] McAuley berated those "who would litter and destroy when they go out into the bush." "A Record of Greatness," his review of Max Angus's book on the Lithuanian photographer and environmentalist *The World of Olegas Truchanas, Quadrant,* 19.8, 12.

The green weed bordering the lake turns red,
As autumn brings the duck-shoot season in.
Thatched with brush, the hunters' hides are ranged
Like small square boxes over the wide lagoon. (*CP*94, 304)

The description of the hunters' hides is matter-of-fact, objective and seemingly neutral in tone, describing a seasonal occurrence, as is the report that later "for a few days there will be/ The swan shoot." However, the *enjambement* of this line, breaking before revealing the swan-shoot, lends surprise and, horror at the thought these majestic birds, linked in legend with the gods as messengers, will also be massacred. For the following two lines the tone describes objectively the swans' fear of man: "Thus for all the year/ The swans retain a nervous dread of man: […]." The concluding three lines are more vivid, replete with nervous energy, as they shift to describing the swans themselves in an ongoing present:

At even the most distant approach they move
Far out and keep in readiness to fly,
With anxious cries, and wing-beats flashing white. u /|u /|u /|/ /|u /
(*CP*94, 304)

The last lines also demonstrate the poet's knowledge of the species, how the swan's hidden white nether wing-feathers can be seen flashing during flight, as the hidden white blaze become a signal of panic and warning. Such alert movement is evoked by the spondaic metre underlining "wing-beats flashing white."

The poem revives the recurrent motif of much earlier poems seen in "Mating Swans" (*CP,* 64) and "Tune for Swans" (*CP*, 65) (c.1951) though in those poems the swans were in an urban park-setting, rather than this natural setting. The poem recalls, though is quite different from, the poet's memorable early, surreal, symbolist usage of the motif as the "black swan of trespass" in McAuley's famous "come-on" poem for the *Angry Penguins* editor Max Harris "Dürer: Innsbruck, 1495" (c. 1939-1943), in that earlier collaborative exercise with Harold Stewart to generate the Ern Malley poems. McAuley had travelled a long way from surrealism to naturalism.

11.6 A Landscape of Difference

Symbolically, the black swan is important in the colonial history of "discoveries" for its contradiction of the European or Northern hemisphere philosophical prototype of the white swan.[22] McAuley did not dwell upon this angle in his meditation on swans: he tried to avoid

[22] Cf. 2.6 (48).

the nationalist preoccupation with fauna and flora. However, in one of his few meditative Coles Bay poems he dwells upon difference in terms of place and nature in a way that recalls his two early poems on nature "Envoi" (1938) and "Terra Australis" (1939-42). In building his poems dedicated to place, "Bush Scene" addresses cultural stereotypes of beauty in nature, a preoccupation for literatures in the English language geographically remote from European prototypes. Its introductory diction broaches, in concrete and conceptual terms, the question of difference:

> Harsh, dry, abrasive, spiky, rough,
> Untidy, tattered, irregular:
> Beauty is not a word you'd choose
> For what's most characteristic here. (*CP*94, 301)

Even his characteristic fluid iambic, in this unrhymed 20-lined single-stanza poem, is abandoned for a halting, ragged trochaic and spondaic metre. Similarly, those first two important lines contain a preponderance of harsh "sh," "t," "d," "f," and "k" sounds and also the disorderly negating adjectives "untidy" and "irregular." The argument continues in a discursive eighteenth-century manner, interspersed with illustrative natural imagery:

> Although the bush has many things
> Of perfect beauty – butterflies,
> The graceful spinebill, tiger-orchids –
> By no stretch is it a *locus amoenus*
> In which imagination finds
> Man's paradisal garden or park. (*CP*94*,* 301-2)

The use of the outworn "graceful" here to describe the native spinebill and even the rather conventional motif of butterflies suggests that the describers of traditional beauty have become lazy and that the "spiky" words of the first lines may be more honest. The subject, admits that this clearly Australian place, not named as such but evidently implied in adjectives describing spikiness and untidiness, may not be the traditional *locus amoenus* ("splendid place") reflecting classical taste in nature which the cultured, presumably northern hemisphere, mind would expect. Landscape so clearly "other" in terms of conventional preconceptions, must, as Paul Kane argues, be original (31) and therefore authentically different. "Less easy attractions hold the mind:"

> Of all these varied eucalypts
> Choose one – this alone; and let the eye
> Explore its rangy airy structure:
> (*CP*94*,* 302)

In direct apostrophe the reader is urged to be open, "let the eye explore," and, with the subject as guide, move upward into the boughs of the tree, and observe:

How long-stemmed leafy parasols make
A balance of asymmetries,
Sustained once only by one tree. (*CP*94*,* 302)

Luxuriant adjectives describing the figurative "parasol" of the upper boughs combine softness and sibilance in their repeated "s" and "l," making unexpectedly attractive, the asymmetry created by the intertwining boughs. Such asymmetry, aligned with things spiky and untidy, and the raucous screech of the cockatoos sheltering there, disputes conventional stereotypes of a symmetric beauty and sonority.

The asymmetry invoked in "Bush Scene" pronounces the idea of difference in Australian nature first seen in McAuley's early landscape poem "Envoi" in which untidiness is raised – "[…] the blue-green gums are a fringe of remote disorder […]" ("Envoi," *CP*, 6). A similar, arguably utopian, concept of model, orderly worlds, occurs in McAuley's other early poem "Terra Australis" (1939-42),[23] which envisages "mythical Australia" in the mind of the voyager, Quiros or the Australian reader, as the place "where reside /All things in their imagined counterpart" ("Terra Australis," *CP*, 16). This term is invitingly suggestive if ambivalent. Perhaps it implied a counterpart of European imagining of ideal prototypes. *Terra Australis* is thus a place suggesting the furnishing of meaning: "It is your land of similes" (*Ibid.*). In the much later "Bush Scene" McAuley seems much less inclined to stereotypes in his view of nature, or beauty, than in his early poems, but rather to see things as they are.

The concluding poem, "Sister Arts," like "Bush Scene" also emphasises difference, the opposite of "simile" – "Different too this land: […]" (*CP*94, 309),[24] underlining McAuley's support for regional perspectives[25] on nature and identity. This admission of diversity is reflected in the poet's essay on Dürer in which he noted how, under Leonardo's influence, the painter "remained convinced 'there is not one absolute beauty:' the original unitary theory of ideal form was broken up into providing specimens and methods which would register nature's actual variety." (*JM,* 55)

An understated experience of the sublime emerges in the *WO* poems in contrast to the earlier poems. Indyk observes how in the poet's quest in the earlier poems (*VC* and *Quiros*) "to affirm the power of poetic vision and religious faith […] the landscape is made to carry a

[23] "Terra Australis" was published by the nationalist annual *Jindyworobak Anthology*, 1943, 20.
[24] Cf. 11.9 (313).
[25] McAuley noted the original contributions of less cosmopolitan, more regional writers, "addicted to closely observed fact - Hardy, Edward Thomas, Frost, Larkin and Betjeman." *GR*, 131.

symbolic burden […] often overwhelming […]" (367). In the more modest Coles Bay poems, with their greater focus on receptivity, the unexpected, almost surreptitious, insights, if of modest significance, seem authentic. Leonie Kramer had suggested as title for the poems – "A World Unsimplified,"[26] McAuley's phrase from the early explorer poem "Family of Love" (1939-42). It is uncertain of his response: possibly the poet may not have agreed. Being less grandiloquent in his mature years, the title suggested in McAuley's manuscript was the more objective "Coles Bay Sketchbook,"[27] describing the field-work of both poet and painter. McAuley had no choice as the book was published posthumously, with the more figurative title – *A World of its Own*.

11.7 "The curious eye"

In their accurate description of a world, the Coles Bay poems underline the importance of the art of seeing – both for subject and reader. Seeing is at the centre of the dialogue with the reader in "Bush Scene" on the question of beauty and difference, the possibility of being open to what the immediate environment offers:

> […] Of all these varied eucalypts
> Choose one – this one; and let the eye
> Explore its rangy airy structure: (*CP*94, 302)

The pun on eye, (here "I") in an advocated exploring, should lead to "seeing" or "discovering," perhaps in the way of the questing Quiros in *"Terra Australis*" 30 years earlier, not for new lands but what is closer to home: "How long-stemmed leafy parasols make / A balance of asymmetries." In this sense a concentrated, faithful seeing, or observing, seems an act of faith, a naïve and positive link with the physical world – what Catalano has called "a *rediscovery* of his innocence of eye" (139).[28] Possibly McAuley was reflecting Dürer's advice to the artist on Nature: "The life in nature manifests the truth of all these things. Therefore observe it diligently, go by it, and do not depart from nature arbitrarily, imagining to find the better by thyself, for thou wouldst be misled."[29] The counterpart of seeing – not seeing, is thus a failure, a lack of union, a Heideggerian seeming lack of presence or being, a sense of not belonging. Such failure, or moment of *aporia*, is suggested in the only negative poem of the group, whose laconic framing lines recall the mood of the recent *MLN* poems. "Behind Friendly Beaches" posits the condition of absence: "At times I'm absent from my walks, […]."

[26] Kramer. letter to McAuley, 10 /5/1975. Box 15, McAuley papers.
[27] McAuley. Undated handwritten manuscript "Coles Bay Sketchbook." Box 9, McAuley papers.
[28] Cf. Blake's "innocent eye."
[29] Cited from Panofsky, 279.

Such denial might be seen as a sleight of hand which allows for some surreptitious, understated celebration as in the following lushly descriptive lines:

> […] Those miles of track behind the beaches.
> Small dotterel run in marshy ground.
> The heathland's thick with crimson and white, […] (*CP*94, 306)

But the argument is clear in the Wordsworthian conclusion, a consciousness of possibilities of disconnection and defeat:

> Such marvellous things, they ought to fill
> The eye and ear, and still the mind:
> At times I hardly know they're there. (*Ibid*.)

The lines evoke the failure to link the aesthetic appreciation, by "eye" and "ear," with a corresponding reflection which ought to "still the mind." Any foreshadowed epiphany seems undermined by failure, the disconnection between aesthetic consciousness, understanding and faith.

In the conclusive poem of the series, "Sister Arts," the subject refers to the important, related role of human intelligence – "the curious eye:"

> […] Different too this land:
> Assimilation by the curious eye,
> The experienced heart, the restless hand, […] (*CP*94, 309)

Once again, the "eye," like the first person "I," has a significant epistemological function, associated with the quest for "assimilation," or adaptation of the human to his environment, and encounter with what McAuley called the "real." The curious eye is not merely intellectual however, but as will be seen in "Sister Arts," discussed at 11.9, is profoundly connected with "The experienced heart, the restless hand […]." The aesthetic gaze can thus be traced to the "innocent eye" which the young poet so admired in the mystics Blake and Traherne,[30] and apparent in McAuley's early lyric landscapes, but which has since been enriched, by incorporating more reflective experience.

In terms of genre, the Coles Bay poems might be described as eclogues,[31] short celebratory nature poems, curiously one of the forms the poet recommended in his 1958 essay on diversity in poetic kind. (*EM*, 174) Collectively, the poems advocate a greater attentiveness to the natural world, an attitude proposed in the hymn-like invocation of the key concluding poem of the series: "[…] all things visible, / Become a treasure hoarded in the heart […]" ("Sister Arts," *CP 94*, 308). In Indyk's distinction between Theocritan and Virgilian pastoral, (369), in

[30] Cf.1.6 (25) & 2.2 (40,42).
[31] Eclogue was the Renaissance term used to describe Virgil's shorter nature poems.

contrast to the more Virgilian style of McAuley's naturalist poems in *MLN*, the Coles Bay poems seem to follow Indyk's first model – Theocritus, that of the purist: "[…] who regards ease or fulfilment as the proper mood of pastoral […]." (*Ibid.*)

11.8 Poet and Painter – work in ekphrasis

McAuley's appreciation of a painterly or ekphrastic approach in the poetic representation of nature and landscape, involves a dialectic on the arts of poetry and painting. In his 1973 essay on Rosemary Dobson (1920-2012), written just before his Coles Bay poems, McAuley praised her ekphrastic poems about Flemish paintings as "[…] living tableaux observed like pictures […]."[32] In mentioning the "affinities with painting" (*Ibid.*) in Dobson's work, McAuley would have been conscious of the markedly ekphrastic quality of his own texts in the last three years, and of being well-prepared for the coming collaborative exercise with painter Patricia Giles.

The proximity of painters and poet in their collaborative artistic visits to the different locales around Coles Bay, McAuley – "just sitting and looking or listening or wandering in the bush" [33] – clearly affected the work of the poet, in his absorption of painterly technique, methods of observation, tools and language. "Sky and Water," the most strongly impressionist poem, shows the borrowing of technical names from the watercolourist's palette: "The west is brightened by *rose-madder* clouds […]." An unpublished poem, "For Patricia Giles," shows the enthusiastic extension of McAuley's painterly diction:

> The textures of a secret world
> Which is also the world out there –
> Tussock, reed, lichen, fern, […]
> Translated by viridian, gamboge yellow, black,
> Rose madder, raw sienna, cobalt blue,
> All these become presences, feelings,
> In the waking dream of art. [34]

The first lines show the artist's task of representing the "secret world […] out there," a physical world and its "translation" by the painter's colours, recalling his Trakl collaboration. An enriched chromatic vocabulary ("viridian, gamboge yellow, black […],") being the ekphrastic artist's tools, is used to give physical presence to the also sonorous names of nature's features ("[…] tussock, reed, lichen, fern […]") viewed and represented by both poet and painter. It salutes the process of transformation. A.D. Hope mentions the loose

[32] McAuley. "'This Fabled Grace:' The Poetry of Rosemary Dobson." 1973, *GR*, 44.
[33] Patricia Giles. "Tribute to James McAuley." December 1976, unpublished, Patricia Giles papers.
[34] McAuley. "For Patricia Giles." Undated, unpublished, Box 14, McAuley papers.

relationship between the paintings and the poetry, a "marriage of two visions of the same world in different mediums."[35] Yet this little-known poem shows that in working from the external world, but also the inner life of experience, in the "waking dream of art" there was an understanding and celebration of the visual and word artists' kindred task in transforming life and experience into art. The original idea of Horace, the first-century B.C. Roman lyric poet, of a kinship between poetry and painting, – "*Ut pictura poesis*"[36] ("as for painting, so for poetry") would be transformed into the metaphor of the "sister arts" in McAuley's concluding poem of that title.

Reflecting her ekphrastic leaning, Rosemary Dobson also wrote about the parallel artistic interests of fellow poets who started to publish in the vibrant 1940s, arguing that "[…] competence in one art can greatly assist in competence in another […]"[37] McAuley's significant parallel interests at the time were recorded as "[…] music, painting and cartography […]" (373). While these interests were always evident through his work, music but particularly, painting, became more important 30 years later, during the 1970s.[38] McAuley's elegant handwritten manuscript is set beside Patricia Giles' watercolours in their attractive collaborative publication *WO*.[39]

While writing the Coles Bay poems, McAuley was exploring in depth, in connection to his academic work on the picturesque, the concept of "sister arts" deriving from Dryden's prose translation from French of the Latin poem "De Arte Graphicâ" (1653-56) by French painter Charles-Alphonse du Fresnoy.[40] It is reflected in McAuley's discursive poem, "The Martyrdom of St Cecilia: A Cantata in Spoken Verse," (*CP*94, 323-331) written for the Festival celebrating St Cecilia, the Roman Christian patron of music, in Canberra on 24 November 1974 (*CP*94, 323-331). It repeats some of the text of "Coles Bay Images."[41]

---

[35] A.D. Hope. "Introduction." *WO*, 9.

[36] "[...] Ut pictura poesis, erit quae, si propius stes,/ te capiat magis, et quaedum, si longius abstes;[...]," Horace. "Epistola ad Pisones." l. 361-2 (c. 19 B.C.).

[37] Rosemary Dobson. "A World of Difference: Australian Poetry and Painting in the 1940s." 1973, 366.

[38] McAuley's would share his other interest, calligraphy, with Dobson, a trained typographer, who, with her publisher husband Alec Bolton, promoted quality typography in Brindabella Press, including McAuley's *Time Given* (1976).

[39] McAuley's Faculty colleague John Winter commented that the poet-professor introduced to the U of Tasmania English honours curriculum a seminar in typography and publishing. (Writer's unpublished interview with John Winter, August 2014). McAuley's *WO* calligraphy is at Appendice (4).

[40] McAuley's lecture notes cite an excerpt on the "sister arts" of painting and poetry from Dryden's 1695 translation *The Art of Painting* from French of the poem by C.A. de Fresnoy (1653-56). (McAuley papers, Box 16.) Du Fresnoy's opening lines are "Poetry and Painting are Two Sisters." Dryden translates Du Fresnoy's fuller citation of "Ut Pictura poesis" as "Painters and poets, free from servile care/May treat their subjects, and their objects draw."

[41] Cf. 11.2 (298).

11.9 <u>The Sister Arts – the Return of Dürer</u>

The title of "Sister Arts," the concluding poem of the Coles Bay series, offers a *resumé* of the broader ekphrastic collaboration in McAuley's poems and Patricia Giles' watercolours, in its translation of Horace's description of the kinship between poetry and painting, in their artistic task – "*Ut Pictura Poesis.*" The 13-line unrhymed poem in the iambic meter of natural conversation is a statement of McAuley's arrival at his final poetics. Before reaching and as if to embellish, Horace's famous words, the argument of "Sister Arts" begins by drawing on the passage from Dürer's aesthetics:

> As Dürer noted, all things visible
> Become a treasure hoarded in the heart
> Till brought forth by the artist's hand, transformed
> Into an image […] (*CP*94, 308)

The abstract tenor of Dürer's metaphor in the first sentence of this philosophical poem contrasts strikingly with the earlier, concrete, naming poems of the collection. The words – "All things visible / Become a treasure hoarded in the heart" come from a Dürer text[42] McAuley had encountered in the early 1940s.[43] Dürer's text is cited in the poet's essay written between 1975 and 1976, about his long interest in the German painter, an obvious companion to the poem, and important in understanding the poetics of these ekphrastic nature poems. After noting Dürer's exhortation to "Depart not from Nature" (56) McAuley interprets the painter:

> […] But immediately he makes it clear that for him art is "imbedded" in nature and must be extracted. Moreover, a mind well stored with the study of nature can and should invent new things: 'But then that is no longer to be called his own; it is art acquired and learnt, which soweth, waxeth, and beareth fruit after its own kind. Thence *the gathered*[44] *secret treasure of the heart is openly manifested in the work, and the new creature, which a man createth in his heart, appeareth in the form of a thing.'* […]*"* (*JM,* 56)[45]

The phrase "all things visible" in "Sister Arts" is McAuley's own approximation for the painter's description of nature: "[…] Depart not from Nature […]." Here McAuley draws on echoes of the Nicene Creed "all things visible and invisible"[46] which prefaces the statement of faith in the Anglican and Catholic liturgies.[47] The phrase "all things visible," and Dürer's original, "secret treasure of the heart" have Biblical resonances – the latter recalling the

[42] Dürer. "Aesthetic Excursus."1528, cited in Richard Ford Heath's *Albrecht Dürer*. 1894. Cf. 8.13 (220).
[43] For Dürer sources see Fn. 14 at 11.3 (301).
[44] Writer's italics.
[45] The translated English text cited by McAuley is from Conway's translation, presumably based on his 1889 first edition (*The Literary Remains of Albrecht Dürer,* Cambridge UP, 1889, 177.
[46] Based on Colossians (1:16).
[47] "Sister Arts" develops the artistic "creed" seen in McAuley's earlier poem "Credo" (*CP*,192). Cf.9.2 (230).

description of Mary in Luke 2:19: "But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart […]" (*Bible*, New International Version).[48] The appropriating poet, the Catholic McAuley, recognised and embellished the rich source of the painter's expression for artistic transformation. The concepts in the first line ("all things visible") link essential parts of the body – the "eye" of the "visible" so frequently seen in these ekphrastic nature poems, the human "heart" of emotion and experience,[49] which does the transformative work on the original image ("hoarded in the heart," (*CP* 94, 308) implied in Dürer's metaphor producing "*the new creature, which a man createth in his heart."* This process is linked by the also transforming "hand" of the artist, which in this concluding poem links the painter, Dürer, to the fellow word-and-image artist, the poet.

The beginning of McAuley's poem is thus, a meditation upon, and enrichment of the painter's own metaphor. In this way, the poem argues, that by an alchemy of experience ("the hoarded treasure of the heart"), reflection, and with art, the visible can be:

> […] transformed
> Into an image: Something which is neither
> The original nor the impression stored within.
> So that old maxim of the sister arts
> *Ut pictura poesis*, is true
> Thus far, that both are grounded in the real, […] (*CP*94, 308-9)

The poem's initial reflection upon the artistic process of transforming the image: "something which is neither / The original nor the impression stored within […]" derives from McAuley's reading of Dürer. But the subsequent argument connects this with the earlier "maxim" of Horace: "So that old maxim of the sister arts/ *Ut picture poesis,* is true. […]" the paraphrase of which gives the title of the poem "Sister Arts."[50] The poem's argument, how "both are grounded in the real," thus links Horace, Du Fresnoy, and Dryden with Dürer's original dictum for painters: "Depart not from Nature" which McAuley's poem considers essential to the poetic art.[51]

---

[48] Such Biblical echoes may acknowledge that the painter was a devout Christian who, in the turbulent 16th C., turned to the Reformist Luther.

[49] McAuley uses the heart motif twenty years earlier in the more inward section of "A Letter to John Dryden" (1953) which links the heart with reason in enabling religious faith: "But when the heart is once disposed to see, then reason can unlock faith's treasury." (*CP*, 94) The heart is attributed with the perceptive faculty of vision: "Open, eyes of the heart, begin to see/The tranquil vast created mystery"(*CP,*95).

[50] Horace's framing phrase for "Ut picture poesis," "[…] *si propius stes,/ te capiat magis*,[…]" transcribed roughly as "the closer you stay, the more you capture" throws light on the artistic kinship of Horace and Dürer.

[51] Heidegger who, like McAuley, admired Trakl and Hölderlin, also praised Dürer: "Someone who was bound to know what he was talking about, Albrecht Dürer, did after all make the well-known remark: 'For in truth, art lies hidden beneath nature; he who can wrest it from her has it.'" *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 68.

The implication is that the task of poets, as for painters, is to offer accurate renderings of the physical and natural world. In "Sister Arts" the "real," a persistent trope in McAuley's work,[52] while continuing to be abstract, is linked with the world of the "eye" – the "visible" concrete world that is the subject of the Renaissance painter's focus. In his Dürer essay, McAuley explained his renewed inspiration in "the "objective" painter, to which the poet, in the last years of his life, "came back once more" for his "wide-open ranging retentive study of the external world […]." (*JM*, 57) The essay's tribute to the "total objectivity" of Dürer's watercolours: "the object observed with such an acute and attentive eye and rendered in a hand of incomparable steadiness and skill […] (45) makes it a companion, a supplement to both the summary poem "Sister Arts" and a synthesis of what McAuley may have been aspiring to in his own de-personalised, objective descriptions of the Coles Bay landscapes. Those poems were also "grounded in the real" of that Tasmanian locale and "painted" and described as faithfully and carefully as Horace and Dürer might recommend to both painter and poet, how truth resides in the images of the real world faithfully recorded.

In its last 5 lines the poem descends from McAuley's poetics (derived from Dürer and Horace) to the more particular, offering a liberal acknowledgement of difference in the actual productions of poet and painter in depicting what is their particular "[…] real. /Though in their transformations they are free, / And different […]:"

> […] Different too this land.
> Assimilation by the curious eye
> The experienced heart, the restless hand,
> Is still a work for many years and lives. (*CP*94, 308)

The poem pivots at this point, repeating and elaborating on the motif of difference, relating it to "this land." "This" designates the Australian landscape of the Coles Bay poems, a *topos* explored powerfully in the descriptions and diction of "Bush Scene." Thus, after the meditation upon the transformative process of art, learning through the experience of the heart, these concluding 3 lines neatly repeat the human bodily and sensory motifs of the first 3 lines – the perceptive and aesthetic "curious eye," the "experienced heart" of the reflective emotions and the "artist's [skilful] hand." The poetic subject has thus journeyed from the gifted artists of Rome and the German Renaissance to the present of 1970s Australia. "Assimilation" (by the curious eye) borrows undertones from the problematic official

[52] The "real" is part of the title of McAuley's essays, *The Grammar of the Real* (1975).

Australian Government policy from the 1930s[53] coercing indigenous population's adaptation to Western lifestyles. For the poetic subject, the word suggests an inverse reading, of the Australian settler population and its artists, poets and painters, understanding and adapting to the ways of the very different land they now inhabit.

The poet has moved on considerably from the young poet, experimenting with a post-colonial double-vision of Australian landscape seen in "Envoi" and "Terra Australis," into rich new apprehensions of space, not as something fixed but rather to be discovered. "This land," the subject considers, remains rich in possibilities – "a work for many years and lives." (*CP*94, 308) The poem's concluding lines can also be seen as a valedictory gesture from the increasingly autobiographical subject to his Australian contemporaries. Such gesture is also echoed in the last line of another nature poem, "Moulting Lagoon" (*CP*94, 315) written a little after the main group of Coles Bay poems (November 1975) but depicting the Coles Bay *locus* of Moulting Lagoon:

> […] it always seems too late, but it isn't.
> The beauty almost destroyed, or the light fading.
> The true proverb is still the Flemish master's
> *Als isch kan*. It sounds so simple. (*CP* 94, 315)

Notwithstanding a returned apprehension of belatedness, in the above lines there is a stoic resistance to the sentiment of failure ("[…] too late. But it isn't.") expressed in the maxim of another Northern Renaissance painter, the Flemish Jan Van Eyck, the proverbial – "as (best) I can."[54] The artist subject cites Van Eyck's words with both admiration and envy.

The idea contained in the motif of the "artist's hand," of either poet or painter," a motif used for the first time in "Sister Arts,"[55] is central to McAuley's evolving poetics, a symbol of artistic craftsmanship, work and exactitude, notwithstanding the impediments of "beauty almost destroyed, and the light fading." Linked with this idea, in "Moulting Lagoon," is the notion of the painter, the meticulous craftsman as sage. M.H. Abrams, offers an interesting interpretation of Horace's formula for artistic production which seems compatible with the emphasis in McAuley's work:[56] "The notion that some poetry is spontaneous was out of harmony with the Horacian tradition that poetry, although requiring native talent, is in

---

[53] http://www.workingwithindigenousaustralians.info/content/History_5_Assimilation.html, accessed 16 September 2017.
[54] *Als isch kan* was the [painter]'s inscription on the frame of Van Eyck's portrait "Man in a Red Turban,"1433.
[55] The motif of hand is used less directly in describing the craft of the poet Belmonte in *Quiros*, and even in the handiwork of Christ in "An Art of Poetry" ("[…] where Christ has set his hand […]" (*CP*, 71)
[56] Craftsmanship was also emphasised by McAuley's early model T.S. Eliot.

practice a laborious formal craft […].[57] Notwithstanding his adoption of a more informal style, McAuley continued to insist on poetic craftsmanship. The poem's gesture of farewell, the painterly signing-off, using Van Eyck's "true proverb" in these last lines of the poem echoes the last line of its apparent companion poem "Sister Arts." That concluding poem of the Coles Bay series invokes through the synecdochic "restless hand" the much admired artist Dürer, as well as the poetic-subject McAuley, who, in turn, is passing on to his fellow Australian poets the task of describing "this land" which remains: "[…] still a work for many years and lives […]" (*CP94,* 309).

11.10 Poetics of Transformation

In its statement about the process of artistic transformation, "Sister Arts" can be linked with the poems of the early 1950s on the "ars poetica" in which McAuley advocated detachment in the artistic process and the drawing upon an imagery with powerful rather than arbitrary associations. Twenty-three years later, the poet adds to detachment the element of experience and time, the formula of a transformation of the viewed objects of nature and the world, through long and buried brooding, as in Dürer's metaphor. McAuley's resumé of Dürer was that "the true sources of art are to be found in stored-up experience." (*JM*, 56) This recalls Wordsworth's Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* 1800: "[…] how poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings [which] takes its origin in emotion recollected in tranquility […]."[58] Both *formulae* for detachment involve simultaneous engagement with and distancing from the immediate subject, consistent with McAuley's criticism of the overtly self-expressive and arbitrary in his poem of early 1952, "An Art of Poetry:"[59]

> Scorn then to darken and contract
> The landscape of the heart
> By individual, arbitrary
> And self-expressive art. (*CP*, 70)

The idea of a long-buried, genesis as key to poetic transformation recalls McAuley's contemplation[60] of the buried life of the cicada, the "emblem of the poet," who "in his life-course" goes into "the dark underground" for many years until returning "to the sun and air" where he "sheds his skin" to make "passionate song […] through light and darkness."

[57] Abrams. *The Mirror and the Lamp.* 1953, 190.
[58] Wordsworth. "Preface *to Lyrical Ballads* (1800)." *Wordsworth*, ed. John Butt, Oxford UP, 1964, 213.
[59] Cf. 6.2 (139).
[60] "Notes and Reflections." *EM*, 180. McAuley's notes on Faber's observation about Anacreon's ode to the cicada, Notebook 1, 30 December 1949, Box 1. Cf. 8.16 (224).

Notwithstanding what McAuley had argued in "The Magian Heresy" against the hierophantic role of the poet, this analogical piece of natural observation, about hibernation, the gaining of wings, and rhapsodic song, represents, paradoxically, an admission of the Orphic role of the poet, and the divided tendencies in his own evolution. He had just finished *Quiros*. The shedding of skin is prophetic for McAuley's own trajectories.

Dürer's metaphor for creative transformation haunts McAuley's work, both essays[61] and poetry. In *Quiros* Belmonte, the ambitious epic poet, expands the concept in elaborate Renaissance manner, as giving life to his long, difficult narration:

> And all things I have long kept in my heart,
> Collecting them in ceaseless meditation,
> Till like a horded [sic] treasure after cleaning
> They glowed for me in their true light and meaning, […] (*Quiros*, I, *CP*, 112-113) [62]

The persistence of this metaphor testifies to Dürer's influence, its haunting of the poet's work and formation, and contribution to a poetics of a polysemous imagery steeped in universal meaning and tradition, anticipated and praised in Trakl. It had been associated, twenty years earlier, with the motif of the artistic "treasure" of the image, in "An Art of Poetry" (1952): "We have those treasures in earthen vessels, / In parables he told," (*CP*, 70), linked with the word of Christ's parables, and in the later description of gemstones linked with the heaven of the apocalypse: "Stones fit for heaven's courts" in "Tailings" (1970, *CP*, 214). More generally, the image itself can be seen as part of the poet or artist's "treasury" of poetic devices: "And in the single images/Of seed, and fish, and stone, /Or shaped in deed and miracle, / To living poems grown." ("An Art of Poetry," *CP*, 70) As in his early poetry, even late poetry McAuley adheres to a poetics of simplicity and a language of universality, notwithstanding a shift to particularity.

> And universal meanings spring
> From what the proud pass by:
> Only the simplest forms can hold
> A vast complexity. (1952, *CP,* 71) [63]

As set out in the oxymoronic aphorism of the last two lines, he remained constant to this early advocacy of a traditional symbolism – the image as reflecting common rather than arbitrary private associations.

---

[61] Cf. McAuley. "The Perennial Poetry." 1953, *EM*, 133. "Notes and Reflections." *EM*, 167.
[62] Cf. 8.13 (220).
[63] Cf.6.2 (139).

One of his last essays on poetics, "Journey Into Egypt," (1974),[64] a precursor to his essay on Dürer, restates much of his argument in his 1956 essay, "The Magian Heresy," against excesses in subjectivity in the recent and contemporary poetry of that time,[65] how the Romantic and Symbolist movement's resort to private associations, "uncommon reading sources" and the establishment of "opaque private universes" (182) (or "mythopoeia") had created "a special cult of the poetic image or symbol" (185) and brought about a "debasement of traditional meanings and symbols.[…] (188). Arguably some of the criticism applied to the poet's own early work, a kind of revision or "skin-shedding." As in "The Magian Heresy," McAuley argued, perhaps thinking of the more austere, informal and confessional styles of the 1950s and 1960s, that "some poets have been seeking a return to the high road of "poesis perennis" […]" ("Journey into Egypt", 187). What he continued to propose was a move from the esoteric and the avant-garde to more traditional forms and prosody. He enlarges on the Old Testament allegory implicit in his essay's title: "It was not a question of abandoning anything that is permanently valuable in Romanticism and Symbolism: we need a new poetic Moses who, having overcome the magicians of Egypt, will lead us, laden with the spoils of the Egyptians to the Promised Land." (187) What he continued to criticise in the "Romantic-Symbolist movement" was "a perversion and subtle debasement of traditional meanings and symbols [seeing] only sterility and bewilderment in that direction." (188) He was aware of renewed interest during the 1960s in North America and Britain in surrealist approaches, even in his own long-buried surrealist parody.[66] Who the "new poetic Moses" would be McAuley would not or could not divulge. It was clearly not him, who apart from this brief return to the magian theme, had become less prescriptive in his later years, concentrating rather on his own poetic art and critiques of poets and artists whose work he admired – Crabbe, the inward Trakl, Wordsworth and Dürer, including realist elements of their poetics.

Notwithstanding the increasingly inner quality of his later poetry, McAuley persistently and relentlessly opposed the limitations of an unreferenced, undiluted subjectivity, the "go into-yourself," as he saw advocated by his early mentor, Rilke and the surrealists Andre´ Breton and Louis Aragon.[67] It was not out of conservativism, but an intuited sense that objectivity, experience in the world, offered the best means of growth. For

[64] McAuley. "Journey into Egypt." *GR*, 1975, 175-189.
[65] McAuley noted Frank Kermode's insight on this question in his study *Romantic Image* (1957), written the year after McAuley's "The Magian Heresy." ("Journey into Egypt," 187.)
[66] New York poets John Ashbery and Kenneth Koch republished the Ern Malley poems in the 1961 anthology *Locus Solus.* Ashbery continued to include Ern Malley in his classes.
[67] Mentioned in "The Magian Heresy," 156.

McAuley the strength and simplicity of the image was enhanced by its traditional resonances – the opposite of what he attacked, paradoxically, as contemporary poetry's "wilful, self-destructive intoxication with images […]" ("Journey into Egypt,"188).[68] His longing for the return of a traditional meaningful symbolism is emotively voiced in his 1971 poem "Madonna:" "Give us back the images […]" (*CP* 94, 284). This perhaps explains his turn to the realism of Dürer and Van Eyck. It reflected another experience of belatedness.

11.11 "Through an Upstairs Window" – A Book of Hours

McAuley's Coles Bay nature poems are succeeded by poems from the poet's travels during his study leave in southern Europe (January to February 1975), and later, notably interior, perspectives.[69] This latter group of poems employs similar forms to the concise, imagistic lyrics of his Trakl phase. The poems are informal, displaying a mix of rhymed and unrhymed forms, some without stanza breaks. They tend to celebrate the present in natural life, as in the following unrhymed 3-stanza poem "At Assisi:"

> Walk and grappa and prayer and sleep.
> Gnarled vines and crippled olives drive
> Stubborn roots into stony ground.
> It's not the past that matters here. (*CP* 94, 313)

They pursue a seeming Horacian *carpe diem* of living each day intensely but with tranquility. These ekphrastic evocations of landscape show considerable virtuosity in McAuley's hand.

A meditation on the intensely viewed physical world of the subject's present, and its ultimate meaning including that of seeing, is offered, in a rhymed sonnet, mainly in the poet's preferred iambic pentameter, with the intriguing title "Book of Hours,"[70] a genre foreshadowed in the "picture-book of hours" of his earlier convalescent poem "St John's Park" (1970, *CP*, 222). Interestingly the physical world is, as natural to a house-bound convalescent, viewed through the window, as is another poem of this time, "Through an Upstairs Window." It is as if the world itself were a work of art, positioned and framed by the apprehending artist, the poet, in the meditation he is about to begin:

> The world spread open through the window-frame
> Offers a language only known by sight.
> Two little girls pass by and one is lame;
> Six yachts ride at anchor on broken light. //|/u|/u|u/|u/

[68] McAuley cites an illustrative episode from a novel by Joseph von Eichendorff to show the abuse of traditional, notably sacral symbolism. *GR*, 188.
[69] These poems were written during the poet's convalescence after an operation for cancer in October 1975.
[70] Cf. The unpublished poem "Kubuna" alludes to a "gold illumined book." Cf. 5.6 (122).

("Book of Hours," *CP*94, 316)

As if in defiance of attempts to draw meaning, the thought being developed in the first quatrain about the language of sight is arrested by the randomness of the images in the window, the six yachts at anchor (emphasised by spondaic metre), the two little girls, the fact that one is lame. Nonetheless they are part of this "Book of Hours," generically the medieval devotional book or prayer-book made of images, recognisable as belonging to the world if not fully comprehensible. It underlines McAuley's preoccupation with the image in the poem, and the role of the eye whether innocent or experienced – "the language only known by sight." The next quatrain assembles further evidence to show the shifting, fluid, evanescent, if at the same time entrancing state of the physical world:

Moment by moment nothing is the same:
Against a blue with drafting bulks of white
A windblown tree is twisted to green flame;
Birds shift among the branches and take flight. (*CP*94*,*316)

A painterly eye records the impression of clouds – "drafting bulks of white," and an expressionistic tree perhaps seen as Van Gogh did in his days in Provence – "twisted to green flame." The shifting birds suggest movement and transition. The following lines in the concluding sestet offer no further images but an attempt to make meaning of, the images, seemingly posited, as in a "Book of Hours," as a code or language which the subject should try to "decipher:"

And all this seems to make a kind of claim,
As if it had been given that one might
Decipher it: if there were such a skill.
Which one could learn by looking – get it right,
As children learn to read a word, a name,
Another, until meaning comes at will. (*Ibid*.)

Like "Sister Arts," "Book of Hours" is one of McAuley's last poems on the art of poetry, but is less prescriptive and more tentative than similar poems of the early 1950s, and concerned with the mysteries of language itself rather than questions of subjectivity. In the poem's representation of the questing subject there is the same focus on seeing and looking as in the visual Coles Bay poems. In these lines, seeing is symbolic for deciphering and understanding the world, as also expressed in the concluding poem of that series "Sister Arts." The skill of "looking" of "Book of Hours" goes a little beyond the "curious eye" of "Sister Arts." To "learn by looking" is more active than "seeing," even "curious" seeing, and is, thus, the precursor to reading and or "learning" to read – "until meaning comes." The action of looking implies an "awareness of the failure of language," (Macainsh, 1992 223) but also a

humility, that the searcher, the seer, cannot always be guaranteed understanding but must become like the child learning to read the word, or his world, in order to understand. It almost implies, like the Book of Hours, the humble prayerful state.

11.12 *Als isch kan* – The Valediction: The artist signing off

A sense of resignation but also celebration and "serenity" (Catalano 142) enters the last of McAuley's nature poems written during what would be his last summer (1975-76). "Fingal Valley," describes the rural landscape of an area in north-eastern Tasmania: "A lark flies from a tussock, / Unseen a cricket chirrs." (C*P*94, 317). The alternatively rhymed quatrains in regular trimeter bring to life the stillness, silence, but also intermittent natural sound – the alliterated "cricket chirrs" and movement, not of the poet's familiar landscape but a place visited:

> Insect and bird are owners,
> But nothing here is mine,
> At most a moment's leasehold,
> To cherish and resign. (*Ibid.*)

In this memorable last stanza, the sense of homelessness, conveyed in characteristic negative phrasing – "Nothing here is mine," is established in contrast with the landscape's "owners," its insects and birds. A stoic recognition and acceptance of human impermanence is expressed tightly in the aphoristic and valedictorian gesture of farewell: "At most a moment's leasehold."

Partly explained by a heightened consciousness of mortality, a prayerful tone can be detected in another, later nature poem," Moulting Lagoon," depicting the wetland before Coles Bay: this poem however is inflected with melancholic personal reflection:

> Grant, if so it may be, still other seasons,
> To watch the black swans at their early mating.
> The hunters have left their hides, having thinned the numbers,
> And now the pairs are proudly nesting. (*CP*94, 315)

Again we see in McAuley's Coles Bay natural world the reappearance of Trakl's hunters, who are also Tasmania's seasonal swan shooters. Uncannily, the subjunctive verb of the first line – "Grant," recalls similar phrasing from his early translation of Rilke's "Autumn," another poem laden with the sense of passing time: – "Grant them as yet a southern day or two […]:" ["Autumn," *CP*, 5] This later poem represents not just a plea for further time – "still other seasons" for the mortal subject: it transforms into the authorial subject confronting, fears of creative inadequacy and, at the same time, the need to make some kind of final

inscription, even if that really means little more than more time to write, more time to be. In his ekphrastic phase the subject poet thinks of the visual artist.

> There's nothing I can do with brush or crayon;
> My marks on paper are a kind of postscript.
> I'm not afraid, but yet, if so it may be,
> Let me take note a little longer. (*CP94,*315)

As in the first line the mood is conveyed in an invocative imperative– "Let me take note […]." There is however, a dissociation from the painter (his "brush" and "crayon") and a shift to the poetic subject's own somewhat belittled craft ("my marks on paper") in signalling what is to be his own "postscript." The last stanza sees again the apprehension of belatedness, but nonetheless a stoic attitude, which borrows from the valedictory wisdom of the kindred artist, the late-medieval painter Jan Van Eyck:

> Late, it always seems too late, but it isn't.
> The beauty almost destroyed, or the light fading.
> The true proverb is still the Flemish master's
> *Als isch kan.* It sounds so simple. (*CP*94*,*315)

As McAuley realised in his poems of homage to the nature poet Shaw Neilson, simplicity is one of the hardest qualities to achieve – "It sounds so simple." In his seeming humble farewell – "*Als isch kan"* (as I can), his "signing off" to his own poetic art in "Moulting Lagoon," ventriloquised through the painter Van Eyck, the poet seems detached, already moving out of the picture. He seems not to be standing in judgement upon, but merely gesturing to and farewelling his own varied *oeuvre,* the many masks and voices tried over the past 40 years, though his attachment to a disciplined formal art was always constant.

Arguably the poet's last poetic and real-life farewell appears in the philosophical meditation of the invalid housebound subject, yet again, on a tree in the garden. Seen through the window-frame, the unrhymed 12-lined stanza-poem proposes an inside-outside inversion of the usual human-centred perspective on nature: "This single tree's become a world; a house / Of life; […]," ("Through an Upstairs Window"). The observed tree becomes a symbol for the world in which the subject has lived and been bound:

> A huge green world that seemingly floats free,
> Cut by the window from its base in earth,
> It concentrates my world into itself: (*CP94*, 334).

This detailed physical observation explains the tree's seeming liberation, how the bottom of the tree, the trunk, is cut from view by the window frame, leaving only the green leafy boughs visible. The tree seen thus differently, floating almost free, offers, to the viewing

subject the ultimate symbolism of transition. Enticed by its gestures, the seeming lure of a floating freedom, the subject, surreptitiously transformed in the last two lines into the first-person "My" and "I," seems to accept its invitation of liberation from life itself, a distancing: "My native world, the green original one./I balance it in my hand and let it go."(*Ibid.*). It suggests deep care for that originary-seeming world, "the green original one" like the image of the globe seen from space, to be "cherished" but also "resigned." ("Fingal Valley" (*CP*94, 317) The image of the natural world raises themes and motifs recurring through his work from the *opus Christi* advocated in "The hallowing of creatures" in *Quiros* (*CP*, 163/St.2-3) to the overriding sense in the later poetry of nature's nurturing, healing spiritual power.

There is an important link between the hand of the subject poet, those of the painters Albrecht Dürer ("Sister Arts") and Jan Van Eyck ("Moulting Lagoon") in the three poems, the hand being the symbol of control, the will, and ultimately, art. In "Through an Upstairs Window" the housebound and ailing poet-subject is speaking about the world of his art but also his own life. He has stepped out of the nature-observer voice of the Coles Bay poems, shedding the artist's dialogue with kindred painter for a much simpler and lighter vestment, the human self.

Conclusion

Joan Fraser commented that even at the age of twenty-two the young poet James McAuley combined in his person "two quarrelling halves."[1] A degree of struggle is apparent in differing, paradoxical, elements through his work, in voices, ranging from the inward lyricism in his early and late short poems, to the disputative "A Letter to John Dryden" (1853), a plaintiveness which never completely disappears but surfaces surprisingly in later poems "At Penstock Lagoon"(1969) and "Madonna" (1971) – "Give us back the images." (*CP*94, 283). A self-admitted "rival poetics"[2] encompasses one of impersonality which gives way to an acceptance of a more personal approach in the mid 1960s though neither was entirely renounced. Neo-romantic strands of mystical symbolism give way to modernism and subsequently parody, then neo-classicist modes cede to a confessionalism, while in the later work a rediscovered symbolism coexists with a meditative realism. McAuley's dispute with modernity, showed a sense of belatedness, that he did not belong to his time. Fraser's prognosis of conflict was borne out in the pervasive mood of disquiet, of division, instability and dissatisfaction throughout McAuley's work. From another point of view it also reflected growth. Such mutability was reflected in a multiplicity of voices, a protean element which has made it difficult to categorise McAuley's work.

As we have seen, diversity and difference, but also consistency and continuity mark the work of this mid-twentieth century Australian cosmopolitan poet and literary and cultural theorist and critic. This literary reading of McAuley's poetic work has identified a significant ongoing dynamic of revision, explaining the sequence of different styles, forms and shifting voices, showing a pattern of evolution that diminishes, to some degree, the extent of paradox in his work. Given that such progression also reflected a consistent dialogue on symbolism and the image, themes in development of his own poetics, the impetus of reassessment and innovation contributed to a carefully contemplated, if not premeditated, process of transformation. The element of surprise in McAuley's revisions, was integral to the paradoxical nature of his work and its evolution.

Such alterations, especially in his early work, were shaped by emerging and contemporary literatures from the time he started writing, the 1920s and 1930s of European modernism on the one hand, and of Australian literary nationalism on the other. As T.S. Eliot

[1] Michael Heyward. Unpublished interview of Joan Levick (Fraser). 1989.
[2] McAuley. "Culture and Counter Culture." 1976, 16.

stated: "[…] in poetry there is no such thing as complete originality, owing nothing to the past."[3] The early work of McAuley shows the impact, among others, of T.S. Eliot, R.M. Rilke, and to a lesser extent, the Australian Jindyworobak nationalist poets. One question arising in McAuley's work has been the nature of his own response to influence, a matter evident in the Ern Malley exercise in which, not only did he and fellow hoaxer Harold Stewart imitate the target surrealist style so superbly that they become its unwilling paragons, but that they also strongly rejected what was to them, after the experiment was over, parody, in the pursuit of a new direction. This is where McAuley showed his revisionary originality, in his deliberate, intuitive rejection of what both poets evidently found an easy style to replicate but found lacking in terms of content, in what was described by McAuley, as "symbols confronting us with blank faces."[4] While it may have been difficult to distance themselves, the Malley authors could have lightly dismissed the experiment in the spirit of an Aristophanic jest. Matters occurred otherwise. Such response, its absorption, the virtuosity of execution, but final rejection, represented a pattern of an active dialectic, not merely a passive receptivity but a wilful dynamic of self-differentiation, evident, if in lesser degrees, throughout McAuley's work, reflecting a constant push for originality and re-invention.

The initial impetus towards differentiation, had already been foreshadowed and sustained in the recurring trope of quest as the young McAuley admitted to Manning Clark in 1943. It gave momentum to his work, most particularly in the representation of the dilemmas surrounding modern, "disinherited, defrauded" (*CP*, 88) man's search for a more spiritual element in society in the increasingly secular mid-twentieth-century. McAuley constantly used the lexicon of quest such as "pathway," "*voie*," "main road," "voyage," "detour" and "maze" to describe his own, and, literature's trajectory. In the mid-1960s that ontological quest transformed from an external perspective and a cultural vision to the journey within, the impulse to self-discovery, in the autobiographical poems of the mid-to-late 1960s and the more inward short poems of the 1970s, where the wanderer-become-prodigal revisits his early forms and preoccupations though with the insight of experience as the stoic. The poems tip between a vision of disorder, belatedness and despair and of an orderly "world of sense and use,"[5]reflecting man's task of "holding a world in care" ("Prometheus," *CP*, 51).[6]

[3] T.S. Eliot. *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture.* 1962, 114.
[4] McAuley. SEP, II, 43- 44. Cf. 2.4 (43).
[5] McAuley. "At Rushy Lagoon." (*CP*, 223).
[6] Cf 5.4 (119).

These concerns emerge from a continuing insistence that his poetics reflect the "whole man" not just his interests as a poet.[7]

James McAuley's evolving literary production and poetics reflect a dialogue with the important local and international literary trends of his age, the tension between late romantic-symbolist and modernist impulses emerging in Australia in the early 1930s and 1940s. They offered models for appropriation, differentiation and growth in his early work, notably Christopher Brennan, T.S. Eliot, and R. M. Rilke and, much later, Georg Trakl.

As a counter to influence, McAuley resolved to write "against the grain of his society" ("The Grinning Mirror," *EM*, 65) in reaction against what he saw as excesses in subjectivity in the surrealist avant-garde. This was evident in his intuitive search for an antidote, during the 1950s, in a traditional exercise in the forms, universal diction and symbolism of his neo-classical and Christian poems of praise in *A Vision of Ceremony* (1956) which he saw as introducing rationality and impersonality. At a technical or formal level, going against the then prevalent short lyric poem, McAuley experimented with forms out-of-favour in Australia's late modernist phase, what he called "old poetic kinds" ("Notes and Speculations," *EM*, 174.) He constructed a robust poetics of impersonality expressed in "An Art of Poetry," scorning "individual, arbitrary / And self-expressive art" (*CP*,70) which guided him for at least a decade. The poet also experimented in the narrative or discursive poem, notably in the neo-classical epic *Captain Quiros (1958-60)*. He also consistently adhered to closed forms and prosody in his own work which he promulgated in his scholarly *A Primer of English Versification* (1966).

When McAuley shifted unexpectedly away from these "Traditional" styles to the autobiographical poems of the mid-1960s his work became less divergent, moving back "with the grain" of a realist colloquial, pseudo-informal style of that decade namely in the short poems about childhood in *Surprises of the Sun* (1969). His unexpected shift in the early 1970s, aided by an intense re-encounter with Trakl saw a return to the inward voice of his early poems with traces of Rilke and Baudelaire, the latter a major influence on Trakl. Rilke and Trakl were the strong precursors who haunted and occupied the work of the Australian poet. Trakl recalls Bloom's *apophrades*, the work of a strong dead poet returning in McAuley's later work as reincarnation of the early master Rilke and, arguably, the symbolist influence on his own youth. At the same time, McAuley produced, as if by another hand, the

[7] McAuley. "Tradition, Society and the Arts." *EM*, 5.

ekphrastic poems of a nature observer, celebrating the Coles Bay region in a last collaborative exercise, with painter Patricia Giles.

McAuley's was not merely a personal journey but, as evident in his essays on ideas and poetics, also occasionally that of a polemic poet, dialectically constructed out of what Michael Hamburger has called "conflicts and tensions" (285), measuring and diagnosing the condition of his times and suggesting a poetics for himself and his fellow poets. The "complex of non-aesthetic factors in his art," as in his critique of society in "A Letter to John Dryden," *Captain Quiros* and the *EM* essays, his work on New Guinea and his language of belief, he considered an "insurance against sterility and aimlessness" which conserved "creative vitality."[8]

Dialogic elements are threaded through McAuley's work. As we have seen, the poet's evolution was accompanied by successive voices, *personae* or, occasionally, masks associated with each new poetic form and style. They included the more obvious "personae" of the earlier modernist phase – the masks[9] and pen-names of his *juvenilia*, the naïve nature observer linked to Clare, the urban wanderer of Eliot and Rilke and the elusive surrealist trickster of Ern Malley. In his middle anti-modernist phase, he created a monologue for the neo-classical writer of the epistle to John Dryden and the dialogues for the epic narrator and main characters of *Captain Quiros*. These experiments with traditional form might be seen as attempts to make up for generic absences in the local tradition. In a different degree, distinctive voices emerged in the first-person autobiographical poems of the 1960s, and in the 1970s in the variant first-person lyric, to enhance the unpoetic utterance of the private self. The objective descriptions of the field-naturalist of the Coles Bay poems was another distinctive utterance. Such voices were not randomly or self-consciously assumed but developed from the different forms the poet was using. The emergence of variant utterances through McAuley's early period was often linked with the presence of poetic ancestors. These presences reflected a process of imitation, appropriation, recognition and transformation, as in his later encounter with Neilson and, more powerfully, with Trakl. In his other late monologue as nature-observer he showed his realist affinities with Wordsworth, John Clare and George Crabbe. The critic and theorist remained present throughout his work. Such a pattern of absorption was a counterpart to the often adversarial meetings McAuley

---

[8] McAuley. "Tradition, Society and the Arts." *EM*, 5.
[9] Such "masks," McAuley argued, assisted in obtaining a necessary "distance," in keeping with his initial creative theory of impersonality (Thompson 99).

experienced in other phases of his work, in what became a process and cycle of rejections, and revisions to shape his own differentiated voices and style. As a poet he wanted to be unique, and not to repeat himself. As observed, McAuley's process of revision produced a succession of voices rather than a non-linear multiplicity, though there was a return full-circle to the original symbolist nature lyricist in the late poems. The only significant overlaps of voice occurred with the playful fabrication of the parodic Malley *persona* and, arguably, with the coinciding voices of the late symbolist and Coles Bay nature-observer subjects.

Despite the significant pattern of innovation and modulation, the poetic work was bound together by continuities, in recurring themes and motifs. Most notable are the journey and quest, and its wanderer archetypes (the youthful *flâneur*, explorers, including Quiros, the prodigal and aged poet of the late poems), the related themes of growth and wholeness and their opposite (failure, deadness and sterility), philosophical questions associated with the real, tropes of home and place and its variants (belatedness, absence, loss, disinheritance, displacement). Other recurring themes were a preoccupation with the human dimension associated with the heart, reason, thirst and hunger, nature and civilisation (the beehive), crisis about poetic vocation and poetics, including the symbols of transformation, and *aporia*. Such thematics and motifs rise regularly to the surface, sometimes from seemingly forgotten depths. A notable constant was his adherence to a range of closed forms, ranging from lyric short poems to more open forms in the later poems.

The question of authorship is inescapable in McAuley's work, notwithstanding his initial creative theory of impersonality. It arises in the question of intention, as put to the test in the Ern Malley experiment and in the poet's subsequent essays on literary tradition and contemporary literary practice, and in the overtly questing nature of his work until the 1960s. It is most apparent in the unity of themes through the work despite the shifts in form and voice. Far from rejecting the subjective, as in the poetics of the early 1950s, McAuley later admitted to his own diversity: "There's another way in which it's the job of a life-time to write entirely out of yourself […]" observing how "[…] in every decade I've changed and I think I've grown […]" (Santamaria 56).

Much earlier than kindred critic Harold Bloom, McAuley had defended an antithetical approach, arguing more generally: "[…] the poet must render justice to all the voices within him. The way of refusals and exclusions is not the only way that must be followed" ("The Magian Heresy," *EM*, 176) This explains the romantic strain that surfaces notwithstanding

the professions of this often anti-romantic poet, who regularly admitted to ambivalence, to "the contest of rival poetics in himself […]." ("Culture and Counter-Culture," 1976, 16). He understood "very well all the impulses within oneself that might make one, as it were, accept the neo-romantic formula […]" (De Berg, 11, 344) including the "siren voices" of surrealism (Thompson 97). The methodology of responding to the different voices within underlay the trajectory of McAuley's developing work and his quest for growth and "wholeness," and at times brought a resolution of the varying competing strains emerging throughout the work. An important part of his later literary development came from experience and an incipient realism: "No, it's out of the whole person that poetry must be written. If you look at the great poetry, that's what it comes out of, it does not come out of spasmodic and irrational inspirations, however glittering or possibly part of raw material […]." (De Berg 11, 344)

A comment in McAuley's 1968 essay on Judith Wright suggests he had come to understand personally a general theory of poetic transformation, in which experiment, followed by reassessment, activated the impulse to modification:

> At a certain point in the career of most poets the first *élan* ceases. There is a time of reassessment: a need to deepen or widen one's range, a change in values or emphasis. The passage from one state to another is often through darkness and bafflement. Sometimes the poetic solution lies precisely in including this experience of defeat within a new victory. ("Some Poems of Judith Wright," 1968, *GR*, 38).

Such dynamic explains the pervasive sense of belatedness in McAuley's earlier work. The will to self-differentiation was largely driven by the poet's sense that he did not belong to the time in which he lived: as seen in his ongoing dispute with modernity, his experiment with and proficiency in traditional forms, and in the thematics of homelessness, apparent in *Captain Quiros* and in the late lyrics. Conversely, it was associated with his sense of being ahead of his time, apparent in the prophetic elements of his work, and the contemporary tone of his later work including its occasionally biting rhetoric. It elucidates his orientation towards influences outside his time, towards the literary other, his looking-back in time or to other geographies, not only European. McAuley's use in 1957 of the term "post-modern" ("The Magian Heresy," *EM*, 159) does not conform with later understandings of that term, however, aspects of his work show a recognition of some of what have been agreed to be its core element. This can be seen in the rejected Ern Malley parody, in the encounter with post-modern themes in his *EM* essays (with nihilism against a favoured ceremony), and his increasing turn in his later poems to the ironic, to the sense that a fragmented, modest vision was the most the poet could achieve. It is evident in his continuing impetus for change and renewal, less out of a post-

modern sense of "play" than of deep seriousness. His eclecticism[10] is arguably a feature both of modernism and of post-modernism, as are the motifs of failure, gaps[11]or *aporia* recurring through his work, linked with his reassessments between his different phases. McAuley's eclecticism and sense of belatedness are often associated with the cosmopolitanism which still prompts resistance in his Australian reception.

His recurring reference to Dürer's exhortation to artists regarding the "collected treasure of the heart,"[12] also throws light on his own long process of modulation throughout his work, as if in the end, his different forms, and voices, were all necessary to a final artistic meaning and purpose. In his writing about Dürer's life and art in the last phase of his work, McAuley tried to explain the dynamic of his ongoing struggle:

> Two observations, one from Dürer and one from myself. […] Dürer remarked, as Melanchthon recalled: "When I was young I craved variety and novelty; now in my old age, I have begun to see the native countenance of Nature and come to understand that this simplicity is the ultimate goal of art." This is a line of development paralleled in the experience of many great artists—the vision of an ultimate simplicity which somehow contains everything. But there is no short-cut to it: everything must be undergone before the "ultimate goal" becomes visible or possible. ("Albrecht Dürer," *JM*, 58)

That "vision of ultimate simplicity," the desired, if difficult resolution, of his rival poetics, recalls what the poet-essayist had advocated 20 years earlier in "The Magian Heresy" (1956), about "lowering the transcendental pretensions of poetry [in order to] come out of the Romantic-modernist cavern into the broad and high world of Virgil and Chaucer and Dante and Shakespeare […]." It links with the postures of openness, selflessness, receptivity, humility advocated and demonstrated in the poetics of his late realist "painter poems" in *WO*, that enable seeing, looking and learning, submission to and celebration of Wordsworthian "spots in time" and less heightened, meditative observations. Thus, after the "variety and novelty" of their experiments the mature poet McAuley, like Dürer, returned to the "ultimate simplicity" of his short, paratactic nature-lyrics of his youth: "the kind of poem I began with, but with a greater depth of experience […]." (*MAV*, 204) Experience, thus contributed its alchemy to the process of transformation.

The poet-essayist's 1957 treatise concerning desired literary transformations ("The Magian Heresy") was continued and developed in his 1976 essay on Dürer, targeting

[10] Seen in his reference to esoteric sources from Ambrose, to Aquinas, to Coomaraswamy.
[11] McCredden identifies the "gap" motif in both in his early and late poems. *JM*, 50-51.
[12] McAuley. "Notes and Speculations." *EM*, 167. Cf. 11.9 (311).

contemporary confessional tendencies but reflecting rather on the process of his own surprising maturation, not merely change but transformation.

> […] One doesn't grow into anything significant by self-concern and self-scrutiny. It is *by looking outwards*,[13] […] committing oneself, that one at the same time discovers one's nature and resources, which grow and generate unexpected powers, so that one becomes a person one might hardly have conceived at the outset. […] It is not by self-regard and self-absorption that advance occurs, but by increasing absorption in that which lies beyond and above […] that the inner self responds and moves towards its spiritual goal. ("Albrecht Dürer," *JM*, 59)

In this restatement of his caution about excessive subjectivity, the poet argues that "looking outwards" also offered a means of self-knowledge. In speaking of the inner self, McAuley thus reworks his earlier fable (1958) of the cicada,[14] as allegory for the orphic, "skin-shedding," transformative nature of the poet. McAuley's pronounced ongoing, impulse to growth and self-discovery can be explained by three forces – looking back to precursor poets and artists, looking out to the world and looking inwards to experience, as in the completion of a circle. His citation of his first forebear, Brennan, in his 1973 monograph still resonated for the older McAuley: "Man the paradox, who is at once less and more than himself, the wanderer seeking for a home, is on a way, but not an endless one: he is on the way to himself."[15] Such looking both "outwards" and "inward" explains the increasing importance of place in the later work.

Themes of unbelonging through McAuley's work became increasingly diluted by a celebration of the present, especially after his move to Tasmania in 1961. His 1963 poem "St John's Park, New Town" showed a growing ambivalence about such themes: "Tradition is held there / Such as a land can own / […] I care but do I care? / […] The past is not my law […]" (*CP*, 180). McAuley was initially drawn to the cosmopolitan, an internationalist in terms of influence and forms. While he rejected "the disease of cultural nationalism" ("The Grinning Mirror," *EM*, 67) beneath the shifts in poetic form and diction was a consistent, if unself-conscious, searching, away from his earlier universal language and mythological and historical symbolism, towards the *topoi* of a minutely, more colloquially described and modernist, regional Australian landscape, the Sydney suburbs of his youth, the Bungendore countryside, New Guinea, rural and suburban Tasmania. McAuley remained conscious that his work gained vitality, and respite for its dislocated wanderer *personae*, in being firmly located in place rediscovered out of space. McAuley's mix of cosmopolitanism and localism,

[13] Writer's italics.
[14] Cf. 8.16 (224).
[15] McAuley. *Christopher Brennan*. 1973, 13.

his recognition of the importance of traditions from other "homes" or originary places, may be better understood today by the culturally diverse local and international reader. As a mature poet advising writers about the many tempting voices available, knowledge of place and its people, as represented in the early poem "Envoi," was closely linked to knowledge of self: "Discover what you *really* are. And poetry can be *only* written out of what you *really* are and where you really live." (Thompson 105) As in his later "Sister Arts," the Australian poet might find "this land […] still a work for many years and lives."(*CP*94, 309) His work prepared the ground for a cosmopolitan contemporaneity in Australian literary culture, including the figure of Ern Malley, and for the exploration of a local relationship with place, tradition and culture, as carried forward by successive Australian poets including Gwen Harwood, Les Murray and David Malouf, like McAuley keen guardians of the craft of poetry.

This analysis has shown how McAuley's poetry, poetics and criticism constantly engaged with diverse literary theory and poetics, from his early interest in the French symbolists and English mystics, the *imagisme* of T.E. Hulme and Eliot's modernist poetics, with surrealism in the Malley poems, in cultural theory with Lionel Trilling, in a more personal poetics in the 1960s, including later with Wordsworth and his own American poetic contemporaries, such as Yvor Winters, on the short poem. Even the ingenious Ern Malley poems, would be promoted in the early 1960s in a post-modernist revival. His later critical and theoretical writing was marked by a more tolerant, less prescriptive tone including on Ern Malley.

James McAuley is not a poet to be ignored. From his juvenile work until his death in 1976, this gifted poet bridged important phases of twentieth-century Australian poetry. This extended from Brennan's symbolism and decadentism, Slessor's early modernism, expressionism, to nascent post-colonial elements in *Quiros,* through the confessional trends of the 1960s to the poetics of place, of newness and difference in the 1960s and early 1970s. McAuley's work, through its constant modulations, and differentiations, made fertile connections with a range of literary traditions, contemporary and otherwise, and ongoing theoretical concerns that locate his work in and beyond the time in which it was written. Residual critical resistance still arises because of failures to recognise that his work evolved beyond its neoclassical phase. McAuley's diverse work has ensured Australian poetry in the mid-to-late twentieth century has remained in healthy dialogue with its counterparts in English and other literatures during its forty-year span, though was given vitality and

difference through its strong appreciation of the regional. His work opens opportunities for further investigation in many fields.[16]

In his final phase the facet of a desired naïvité coexists with realist and confessional impulses, suggesting that romantic and modernist strains remain unreconciled. McAuley confessed to such ambivalence even to the end:

> I cannot pretend that the tension between the modern and the traditional has ceased within myself. I know I have to live in ambiguities and dilemmas, not letting go one end in order to cling with both hands to the other in false simplification. One has to "carry it all within" as honestly and loyally as possible […]"[17]

McAuley expresses here an essentially modernist sense of ambivalence, but, as with much criticism, he perhaps overstates the extent of paradox in his later work. This systematic analysis has shown how the poet evolved towards a meditative realism, in which the quarrelling had mostly died down. McAuley's out-of-print collected poems and his diverse critical essays need to be collected and re-issued in order to represent the work of this restless, representative mid-twentieth century Australian poet. They are windows into the poetics, and the many facets of the sensitive respondent to the "many voices urging."

[16] Such fields may include narratology, genre, stylistics, literary history, and also phenomenological, ontological, spatial, inter-arts, comparative and ecocritical studies.
[17] McAuley. "Culture and Counter-Culture." 1976, 19.

Bibliography

BOOKS OF POETRY _ JAMES McAULEY

Under Aldebaran. Carlton: Melbourne UP, 1946.

A Vision of Ceremony. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1956.

"The Six Days of Creation." illus. Leonard French. Melbourne: Australian Artists and Poets, Booklet No 12, 1963.

James McAuley. ed. James McAuley, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, Australian Poets Series, 1963.

Captain Quiros. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1964.

Surprises of the Sun. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1969.

James McAuley Reads from his Own Work. Poets on Record Series, St Lucia: U Queensland Press, 1970.

Collected Poems: 1936-1970. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1971.

Music Late at Night: Poems 1970-1973. Poets of the Month Series, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, [1974], 1976.

Time Given: Poems 1970-1976 by James McAuley. Canberra: Brindabella Press, 1976.

(and Patricia Giles) *A World of its Own*: *Poems by James McAuley, Paintings by Patricia Giles*. Introd. A.D. Hope, Canberra: ANU Press, 1977.

Music in the Mirabell Garden. *Translations from Georg Trakl*. ed. John Winter, illus. John Olsen, Musical Score Larry Sitsky, Introd. Gwen Harwood, Hobart: New Albion Press, 1982.

Collected Poems. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1994.

McAULEY'S UNCOLLECTED POETRY

The following published poems have never appeared in books of McAuley's verse or have appeared in significantly different versions. This list does not include hymns or poems that exist only in manuscript. Unless otherwise indicated, all these poems appeared under his name.

--- "The Mountain." *Fortian*, 27.2, 1929, 32.

--- "Shadows." *Fortian*, 28.2, 1930, 38.

--- "The Wind." *Fortian,* 28.2, 1930, 35.

--- "Beauty." *Fortian,* 30.1, 1932, 10.

--- "Longing." *Fortian,* 30.1, 1932, 24.

--- "Madness." *Fortian* 30.2, 1932, 18.

--- "Song For Youth." *Fortian* 30.2, 1932, 30.

--- "Song." *Fortian* 31.1, 1933, 8.

--- "Epigrams. I -- On a Mere Mortal." *Fortian,* 31.2, 1933, 14.

--- "Epigrams. II --To Baudelaire: A Fragment." *Fortian,* 31.2, 1933, 14.

--- "God in the Garden." *Fortian*, 31.2, 1933, 17.

--- "The White Giant Comes..." *Fortian,* 31.2, 1933, 16.

--- "Homage to T.S. Eliot." *Hermes,* 41.3, 1935, 23.

--- "Communion." *Arts Journal,* 1935, 26.

--- "Quia concupiuit rex speciem tuam." *Hermes,* 42.1, 1936, 15.

--- "Prolegomena to the New State." *Hermes*, 42.1, 1936, 15.

--- "Absolution." *Hermes,* 42.2, 1936, 21.

--- "Elegy." *Hermes,* 42.2, 1936, 12.

--- "Poem." *Hermes,* 42.2, 1936, 24.

--- "Preludes." *Hermes,* 42.3, 1936, 25.

--- "Broken Incantations." *Arts Journal,* 1936, 20.

--- "Dark Backward." *Arts Journal,* 1936, 20.

--- “For John Webster.” *Hermes,* 43.1, 1937, 30.

--- (Glaucon). “Nicodemus.” *Hermes,* 43.1, 1937, 29-30.

--- “When Shall the Fair.” *Hermes,* 43.1, 1937, 30. (last stanza altered in *UA*)

--- “Reflections.” *Hermes,* 43.2, 1937, 8-9.

--- “Departure.” *Candide,* 1937, 36.

--- “Lines Written in Anxiety.” *Candide,* 1937, 20.

--- “Possessed.” *Hermes,* 43.3, 1937, 11.

--- (Glaucon) “Sonnet for Summer.” *Hermes,* 43.3, 1937, 20.

--- “Ange Plein de Gaîté…” *Hermes,* 44.1, 1938, 16.

--- “In Honour of Chris. Brennan.” *Hermes,* 44.1, 1938, 19.

--- “Four Poems from a Series.” *Hermes,* 44.2, 1938, 10-11.

--- “Aspects of the Moon.” *Hermes,* 44.3, 1938, 29.

--- “At Bungendore.” *Southerly,* 1.1, 1939, 36. (last stanza altered in *UA*)

--- “Dawn.” *Hermes,* 45.2, 1939, 6.

--- “Chorale.” *Southerly,* 1.3, 1940, 10. (altered in *UA*)

--- (Glaucon) “Of Passing.” *Hermes,* 46, 1940, n. p.

--- (Glaucon) “Actaeon.” *Hermes,* 46, 1940, n. p.

--- “Envoi for a Book of Poems.” *Jindyworobak Anthology 1940,* Adelaide: Jindyworobak Publications, 1940, 32.

--- “The Dowagers of Darling Point.” *I’d Rather be Left*, 1940, Attributed to McAuley by Alan Crawford.

--- “Father Christmas’s Song.” *I’d Rather be Left*, 1940, Attributed to McAuley by Alan Crawford.

--- “Intelligence Man.” *I’d Rather be Left*, 1940, The first six stanzas by McAuley, the last two by Alan Crawford.

--- “Landscape.” *Arna*, 1941.

--- "Stanzas." *Australian Poetry, 1941*, ed. Douglas Stewart, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1941, 68.

--- "On a Dream." *Meanjin Papers* 2.1, 1943, 45.

--- ("Malley, Ern") (with Harold Stewart). "The Darkening Ecliptic." in *Angry Penguins*, 6, Autumn, June 1944, 7-33.

--- "German Chorale." *Modern Australian Poetry*, ed. H.M. Green, Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1946, 27.

--- "The First Joyful Mystery." *Twentieth Century*, 7. 2, 1953, 32.

--- "Salve Regina." *Twentieth Century*, 7.3, 1953, 32.

--- "Morning Song." *Bulletin,* 1 February, 1956, 2.

--- "The Vintage." *Bulletin,* 18 April, 1956, 22.

--- "In a Troubled Time." *Twentieth Century,* 10.3, 1956, 230.

--- "To a Young Lady Wearing a Picture-map Dress." *Quadrant,* 2.1, 1957, 8.

--- "Retreat." *Twentieth Century,* 12.2, 1957, 132.

--- "Silver Jubilee." *Catholic Weekly,* 17 April, 1958, 14.

--- "An Old Song." *Quadrant,* 2.3, 1958, 8.

--- "The Players." *Prism,* 5.4, 1958, 11.

--- "Listening to the Magic Flute." *Poetry Australia,* 3, 1965, 23.

--- "Variation on a Theme of Claudel." *Poetry Australia,* 3, 1965, 23.

--- "Postlude." *Sydney Morning Herald,* 15 January, 1966, 16.

McAULEY'S PROSE

The following chronological list includes books of prose that McAuley wrote or edited, his articles and book reviews, his published letters, his broadcasts, interviews with him, reports with substantial and some important manuscript material. Because his work is extensive it does not include all work of a political, anthropological or religious nature. For those items published under his name his name does not appear as author. His name appears in brackets when the article has been attributed to him. Items written under a pseudonym appear in brackets with the pseudonym, and those in collaboration with the name of the other author.

1929
--- "Birdwood Gully." *Fortian*, 27.1, 1929, 19. Rep. in *Quadrant*, 21.3,1977, 63.

1932
--- "The Optimist and the Pessimist." *Fortian*, 30.1,1932, 4-5. Rep. in *Quadrant*, 21.3,1977, 63.

1933
--- "Hans Vogler." *Fortian*, 31.1, 1933, 7-8. Rep. in *Quadrant*, 21.3,1977, 64-5.

1934
--- "Some Aspects of Modern Poetry." *Fortian*, 32.1, June 1934, 24-26. Rep. in *Quadrant*, 21.3, 1977, 61-63.

--- "Our Headmaster." *Fortian*, 32.2, 1934. Rep. in *Quadrant*, 21.3, 1977, 63.

1935
--- (Glaucus). "The Tree of Knowledge." *Hermes*, 40.3, 1935, 24-25.

1936
--- (James McAuley). "Psychology and Psychoanalysis." *Hermes*, 42.2,1936, 25.

--- "Literary Society." Report of Address on metaphysical poetry. *Union Recorder*, 2 July 1936, 126.

--- "Realist Aesthetics." Report. *Union Recorder*, 1 October, 1936, 200.

1937
--- (Glaucon). "The Journey of the Magus." *Hermes*, 43.1, 1937, 12-17.

--- (James McAuley). "Less of It." Editorial, *Hermes*, 43.1, 1937, 37-38.

--- "Literary Society." Discussion Group. "'Blake.' Report." *Union Recorder*, 6 May, 1937, 70-71.

--- (James McAuley). "After All." Editorial, *Hermes*, 43,2, 1937, 30-31.

--- (Glaucon) "The Head." *Hermes*, 43.2, 1937, 15-17.

--- (James McAuley). "Reading Time, Six Minutes." Editorial. *Hermes*, 43.3, 1937, 26-28.

--- "Lecture System." Letter, *Honi Soit*, 29 September, 1937, 2.

--- "William Blake." *Union Recorder*, 18 October, 1937, 245-246.

1938
--- Letters to Dorothy Auchterlonie. Dorothy Green Papers, Ms 5678, Sub-series 1.4, Folder 146, 1938-1974, NLA.

--- (Glaucon) "The Book of Ezra." *Hermes*, 44.1, 1938, 10-12.

--- "American Satirics." Rev. of *Poems in Praise of Practically Nothing,* by Samuel Hoffenstein, *Honi Soit*, 5 May, 1938, 2.

--- (Glaucon) "Two Till Six." *Hermes*, 44.2, 1938, 8-9.

1939
--- (Proteus) "Work in Protex." *Hermes*, 45.1, 1939, 13.

--- (Glaucon) "Under Aldebaran." *Hermes*, 45.2, 1939, 15-17.

1940
--- "Symbolism: An Essay in Poetics." Unpublished Master's Dissertation, U of Sydney, February 1940.

--- Letters to Donald Horne. Horne Papers, Ms 3525, SLNSW.

1941
--- "Lileth and Chris. Brennan." Report. *Honi Soit*, 8 May 1941, 3.

--- "Literary Society." Report of address on Brennan. *Union Recorder*, 15 May 1941, 66.

--- (Dulcie Renshaw) "'Southerly' Busted." *Honi Soit*, 22 May 1941.

--- "Where is the Revue Going?" *Honi Soit*, 20 June 1941, 1.

--- "New Themes in the Revue." *Honi Soit*, 27 June 1941, 3.

--- "Danger for Revue of Professionalism." *Honi Soit,* 3 July 1941, 3.

--- "'My Hermes is Bad.'– Says its Editor," *Honi Soit*, 14 August 1941, 1.

--- "Tropical Ballads." *Honi Soit*, 10 October 1941, 3.

1942
--- Letters to George Mackaness, Mackaness Papers, Ms 534, NLA.

--- (Dulcie Renshaw). "Literature, Labour & the Locals." *Honi Soit*, 2 July 1942, 1.

--- "Propaganda 'Forges' Unity." *Honi Soit*, 3 September 1942, 1.

1943
--- “Hooton Slaps the Mat.” *Honi Soit*, 5 August 1943, 2.

--- (Dulcie Renshaw). “The lady’s back again.” Letter. *Honi Soit*, 14 October 1943, 2.

--- (Dulcie Renshaw). “Chances of Education Pretty Slim in Australia.” *Honi Soit,* 21 October 1943, 2.

1944
--- (and Harold Stewart). “Ern Malley, Poet of Debunk: full story from the two authors.” Report. *Fact* Supplement to *Sunday Sun and Guardian*, 25 June 1944, 4. Rep. in *JM*, 147-148.

1946
--- “On the eve of trusteeship.” *Monthly Notes,* 1.2, 1946, 1-3.

--- “Colonial Development and Welfare. – I” *Monthly Notes,* 1.4, 1946, 1-3.

1947
--- “Colonial Development and Welfare –II.” *Monthly Notes,* 1.4, 1947, 1-3.

--- “Colonial Development and Welfare –III: Planning in Fiji,” *Monthly Notes,* 1.6, 1947, 6-8.

--- Rev. of *From a South Seas Diary*, by Sir Harry Luke. *Pacific Affairs,* 20, 1947, 99.

--- Rev. of *Strangers in India*, by Penderel Moon. *Monthly Notes,* 1.7, 1947, 7-8.

--- “Some Constitutional Questions – I.” *South Pacific,* 2.1, 1947, 8-10.

--- “Some Constitutional Questions – II: Trusteeship in Western Samoa.” *South Pacific,* 2.4, 1947, 78-80.

1948
--- “The Portuguese in Brazil.” Rev. of *The Masters and the Slaves*, by Gilberto Freyre. *South Pacific,* 3.1, 1948, 17-20.

--- Rev. of *Labour in South-east Asia*, ed. P.P. Pillai and *Labour Problems in South-east Asia*, by Virginia Thompson. *Australian Outlook,* 2.2, 126-27.

--- “Agricultural Production in New Guinea.” *South Pacific,* 3.4, 1948, 73-81.

--- McAuley, James and H. Ian Hogbin, “Development in New Guinea.” *American Institute of Pacific Relations,* 17.4, 1948, 48-51.

1949
--- “Stocktaking in the British Colonial Empire.” *South Pacific* 3.5, 1949, 97-107.

--- Journals 1-14. (From 12 Feb 1949-3 Nov 1973). Norma McAuley Papers, Ms 7920, SLNSW.

--- “Trusteeship in Practice. New Guinea.” *Trusteeship in the Pacific*, ed. A.H. McDonald, Angus and Robertson, 1949, 33-41.

1950
--- Rev. of *Island Adminstration in the South West Pacific*, by Cyril S. Belshaw. *Pacific Affairs*, 23, 1950, 323-26.

--- "Defence and Development in Australian New Guinea." *Pacific Affairs*, 23, 1950, 371-80.

1951
--- "The Implications of World Economic Development." *Australian Outlook*, 5, 1951, 48-54.

--- "Australian School of Pacific Administration. Long Course in Government. No.123. Introduction." TS. Camilla Wedgwood Collection, Box 6, NLA, c. 1951, 4pp.

--- "Lecture no. 118. Sociological background of Labour Problems." TS. Camilla Wedgwood Collection, Box 6. NLA, c.1951, 14pp.

--- *Colonial Administration Lectures: Long Course: 1951-1*. TS. Camilla Wedgwood Collection, Box 6. NLA, c.1951, 3 vols.

--- "In Defence of Native Art." *South Pacific,* 5, 6, 1951, 99 -100.

--- "Changes in Native Administration in New Guinea." *South Pacific,* 5.9, 1951, 178-82.

--- "Papua and New Guinea." *Corona,* 3.1, 1951, 418-20.

--- "The Traditional View of Art." *Australian Quarterly,* 23. 4, 1951, 57-66. Rep. in *EM* as "Beauty, Use and Meaning," 73-85, and in part in *JM.*

1952
--- "White Settlement in Papua and New Guinea." *South Pacific,* 5.12, 1952, 250-55.

--- "Mechanization, Collectives and Native Agriculture." *South Pacific,* 6.1, 1952, 276-81.

--- "Black Africa." *Current Affairs Bulletin*, 7 April 1952, 195-207.

--- "Letter. Reply to letter of Judith Wright." *Australian Quarterly,* 24. 2, 1952, 76-78. Rep. in *EM* as "The Loss of Intellectuality," 86-89.

--- "Tradition, Society and the Arts." *Meanjin,* 9.4, 1952, 328-41. Rep. (revised) *EM*, 3-21.

--- "What are Co-operatives?" *South Pacific,* 6.9, 1952, 499-503.

1953
--- "Anthropologists and Administrators." *South Pacific,* 6.10, 1953, 518-22.

--- "Australia's Future in New Guinea." *Pacific Affairs,* 26. 1953, 56-59.

--- (James McAuley), "The South Sea Islands." *Current Affairs Bulletin*, 13 April 1953, 195-208.

--- "Reflections on Poetry." *Meanjin,* 12.4, 1953, 431-41. Rep. in *EM* as "The Perennial Poetry," 131-143.

1954
--- "The Distance Between the Government and the Governed." *South Pacific,* 7.8, 1954, 815-20.

--- Rev. of *Adam with Arrows: inside New Guinea*, by Colin Simpson. *Meanjin,* 13, 1954, 147-49.

--- "Mr J Macaulay's [sic] Address. Catholicism and Modern Literature." Report. *Union Recorder*, 13 May 1954, 78.

--- "Paradoxes of Development in the South Pacific." *Pacific Affairs,* 27, 1954, 138-49.

--- "Sacred Art in the Modern World." *Twentieth Century*, 8.2, 1954, 35-48. Rep. in *EM,* 90-110.

--- "Australian Poetry." Rev. of *With a Hawk's Quill*, by James Picot and *The Old Ladies at Newington*, by Peter Bladen. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 July 1954, 16.

--- "Literature and Christianity." Rev. of *The Creative Element*, by Stephen Spender, *Sydney Morning Herald,* 24 July 1954, 10.

--- "The Invisible Man." Rev. of *The Emperor's Clothes*, by Kathleen Nott. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 July 1954, 16.

--- "What Must be Developed." *United Asia*, 6, 1954, 183-86. *in EM*, 22-29.

--- Rev. of *The Penguin Book of Modern American Verse*, ed. Geoffrey Moore. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 August 1954, 17.

--- "Sterility of Humanism." Rev. of *Lonely Pleasures*, by David George and *Literature and Science*, by B. Ifor Evans. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 September 1954, 13.

1955
--- McAuley, James. ed. *Australian Poetry, 1955*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1955.

--- "Poet with Two Voices." Rev. of *Ploughman and Poet*, by David Rowbotham and *Candelight* by Marjorie Quinn. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 January 1955, 8.

--- (and Hugh Philip). "Race Relations – What does Science say about race." ABC Ts. Australian Archives, NSW, SP 478, Box 10, 14 February 1955.

--- (and Hugh Philip). "Race Relations – How have racial feelings developed." ABC Ts. Australian Archives, NSW, SP 478, Box 10, 21 February 1955.

--- (and Hugh Philip). "Race Relations – What can be done about the problem." ABC Ts. Australian Archives, NSW, SP 478, Box 10, 28 February 1955.

--- Rev. of *Adam in Plumes*, by Colin Simpson. *Australian Quarterly,* 27.1, 1955, 117-19.

--- "Out of the Mire." Rev. of The World's Flesh, by Vincent Buckley. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 12 March 1955, 11.

--- (and A.D. Hope and C. B. Christesen). “What is the Place of the Creative Artist in Society” No. 1.” ABC ts. 28 March 1955. Australian Archives NSW SP 478/1.

--- (and A.D. Hope and C. B. Christesen). “What is the Place of the Creative Artist in Society” No. 2.” ABC ts. 4 April 1955. Australian Archives NSW SP 478/1.

--- “New Volume by Melbourne Poet.” Rev. of *The World’s Flesh*, by Vincent Buckley, *Catholic Weekly,* 26 May 1955, 14.

--- “Poetry and Australian Culture.” Commonwealth Literary Fund Lecture, Canberra, Canberra University College, 1955.

--- “Seminars I and II: Harold Stewart.” Commonwealth Literary Fund Lectures, U of Queensland. TS. A.D. Hope Papers, Australian National U, 1955.

--- “Seminars III and IV: A.D. Hope.” Commonwealth Literary Fund Lectures, U of Queensland. TS. A.D. Hope Papers, Australian National U, 1955.

--- “Seminars IV and V: C.J. Brennan.” Commonwealth Literary Fund Lectures, U of Queensland. TS. A.D. Hope Papers, Australian National U, 1955.

--- (and Donovan Clarke and Roland Robinson). “Some Problems of the Australian Poet Today.” ABC ts. 18 July 1955. Australian Archives NSW SP 478/1.

--- “New Publication has Interest.” Review of *The Newman* 1955. *Catholic Weekly,* 21 July 1955, 14.

--- “Christian Missions.” *South Pacific,* 8.7, 1955, 138-47.

--- “Peron and the Catholics.” *Free Spirit,* 1.12, 1955, 5.7.

--- “Local Poetess Impresses.” Rev. of *Child with a Cockatoo and Other Poems*, by Rosemary Dobson. *Catholic Weekly,* 18 August 1955, 4.

--- “Who’s Doing the Retreating?” Rev. of *Retreat from Reason*, by Peter Nathan. *Sydney Morning Herald*, November 12, 1955, 9.

--- Rev. of *The Usurpers*, by Czeslaw Milosz. *Free Spirit,* 2. 3-4, 1955, 18.

<u>1956</u>

--- “Discussion Course E. 192. An Approach to Poetry.” Department of Adult Education, U. of Sydney, 1956. 8 lectures.

--- “James McAuley. March 8.th” Report. *Prism,* 3.4, 1956, 4.

--- “Economic Development among the Mekeo.” *South Pacific,* 8.10, 1956, 217-20.

--- “Interview with Bishop Otto Dibelius.” *Free Spirit,* 2.6, 1956, 1-2.

--- Rev. of *French Girls are Vicious*, by James T. Farrell. *Free Spirit,* 2.8, 1956, 11.

--- "Ned Kelly." Letter. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 17 May 1956, 2.

--- "The Clash of Cultures." *Twentieth Century,* 11.1, 1956, 24-37.

--- "The Grinning Mirror." *Twentieth Century,* 10.4, 1956, 302-14. Rep. in *EM*, 55-69.

--- "Reflection on Poznan." *Free Spirit,* 2.11, 1956, 1-2.

--- "The Function of Poetry." *A.B.C. Weekly*, 6 October 1956, 6.

--- "Quadrant is Out." *Free Spirit,* 3.3, 1956, 1-2.

--- (James McAuley). "By Way of Prologue." Comment. *Quadrant,* 1.1, 1956-7, 3-5. Rep. in *JM*

--- (James McAuley). "Around the Australian Periodicals." Reviews. "Clark versus Coombs," *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*; "Preservation of Wild Life," *Yarrawonda*; "Shaw Neilson's Poetry," Southerly; "Peaceful Co-existence," *Meanjin*; "Will Science Explain the Nature of Life?", *The Australian Journal of Science*; and "Performance of Mozart's Concertos," *The Canon. Quadrant,* 1.1, 1956-57, 83-85.

1957

--- (James McAuley). "Right and Left." Comment. *Quadrant,* 1.2, 1957, 3.

--- (James McAuley). "Around the Australian Periodicals." (unsigned) Reviews. "Arrivals and Departures," *The Edge et al.;* "How Respectable were our Convict Ancestors?" *Historical Studies*; "The Hungarian Revolution," *New Country*; "Australian Trade Unionism," *Australian Quarterly*; and "Louis Becke," *The Pacific Islands Monthly*. *Quadrant,* 1.2, 1957, 89-90.

--- Rev. of *The Third Eye*, by Lobsang Rampa. *Quadrant,* 1-2, 1957, 95.

--- "Activity of National Associations." Letter. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 20 March 1957, 2.

--- (James McAuley). "Two Ways of Thought. University Problems." (unsigned) Comment. *Quadrant,* 1.3, 1957, 3-5.

--- Rev. of *Passion and Society*, by Denis de Rougemont and *Letters from a Portuguese Nun* by Mariana Alcoforado. *Quadrant,* 1.3, 1957, 89-91.

--- (James McAuley). "Books No." (unsigned) Rev. of *Out of the Gun*, by Denis Warner; *Architecture, Nature and Magic*, by W.R. Lethaby; *Australian Signpost*, ed. T.A.G. Hungerford*; Paradise of Dissent-South Australia 1829-1857*, by Douglas Pike; *The Penguin Book of French Verse: 3; the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Anthony Hartley; *Selected Poems of William Blake*, ed. F.W Bateson; *The Radiance of the King*, by Camara Laye; and *Sometime, Never*, by William Golding *et al*. *Quadrant,* 1.3, 1957, 99.

--- (James McAuley). "Around the Australian Periodicals." (unsigned) Rev. of "The Communist 'Unity' Manoeuvre," *Communist Review*; "A Neutralist Pamphlet," *Current Affairs Bulletin*; "Sex and Games Among the Magpies," *The Emu*; "England v. The Continent

in Philosophy," *Twentieth Century*; and "Australian Political Novels," *Historical Studies*. *Quadrant,* 1.3, 1957, 86-87.

--- "Homage to Chris Brennan." *Southerly*, 18.3 1957, 135-42.

--- (James McAuley). "Liberalism Today." Comment. *Quadrant,* 1.4, 1957, 3-4.

--- "The Magian Heresy." *Quadrant,* 1.4, 1957, 65-71, Rep. in *EM*, 144-159.

--- (James McAuley). Books Noted. Rev. of *Union Street*, by Charles Causley; *English People in the Eighteenth Century*, by Dorothy Marshall; *Occult Phenomena in the Light of Theology*, by Alois Wiesinger; *Reason and Energy*, by Michael Hamburger; and *The American Woman*, by Eric John Dingwall, *Quadrant,* 1.4, 1957, 99.

--- "True and False Unity." *Twentieth Century,* 12.2, 1957, 108-17.

--- Rev. of *New Lives for Old: Cultural Transformation – Manus 1928-1953*. *Pacific Affairs,* 30, 1957, 392-93.

--- Rev. of *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, by Peter Worsley. *South Pacific,* 9.9, 1957, 392-93.

--- (James McAuley). "How to Destroy the Monarchy. 'The Fine Italian Hand." How Many Flowers Shall Bloom?" Comment. *Quadrant,* 2.1, 1957-8, 3-5.

--- (James McAuley) "Books Noted." Rev. of *Outbreak of Love*, by Martin Boyd; *The Mandarins*, by Simone de Beauvoir; *Introduction to Mistral*, by Richard Aldington; *The Friends*, by Godfrey Smith; *Selected Poems of Henry Kendall*; *The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect*, by Theodor H. Gaster; *Solovyev: Prophet of Russian-Western Unity*, by Egbert Munzer; *Studies in Rebellion*, by E. Lampert; and *The Man of Letters in the Modern World*, by Allen Tate. *Quadrant,* 2.1, 1957-58, 98-99.

1958

--- (James McAuley). "A Publishing Event. Trips to Red China." Comment. *Quadrant,* 2.2, 1958, 3-5.

--- "A Precious Collection." Rev. of *Australian Poetry. 1957*, ed. Hal Porter. *Observer,* 8 March 1958, 54.

--- "Back to Ern Malley." Rev. of *The Tenth Muse*, by Herbert Read. *Observer,* 22 March 1958, 88.

--- Rev. of *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, by Peter Worsley. *Observer,* 22 March 1958, 90-91.

--- (James McAuley). "Books Noted." Rev. of *Tenants of the House* by Danny Abse; *Nostromo*, by Joseph Conrad; *The Kingdom of Free Men*, by G. Kitson Clark; *Sources of Australian History*, by Manning Clark; *Not by Bread Alone*, by Vladimir Dudintsev; *May Morning*, by Rémy; *Poems of Many Years*, by Edmund Blunden; and *In the Rose of Time*, by Robert Fitzgerald. *Quadrant,* 2.2, 1958, 102-03.

--- Rev. of *Romantic Image* by Frank Kermode. *Quadrant*, 2.2, 1958, 94-98.

--- Rev. of *Springtime in Shanghai* by Mabel Wain Smith. *Quadrant,* 2.2, 1958, 101-02.

--- "Power Vacuum to our North." *Observer*, 5 April 1958, 109-10.

--- "Liberals and anti-colonialism." *Observer,* 3 May 1958, 69-70.

--- "No Biopartisanship." Rev. of *Australia's Outlook on Asia*, by Werner Levi. *Observer,* 3 May 1958, 187.

--- (James McAuley). "Day of Reckoning for the Educators. Literary Commitment. An Award for *Quadrant* Contributors." Comment. *Quadrant,* 2.3, 1958, 3-4.

--- "Problems Affecting the Native Local Government Policy." *South Pacific,* 9.12, 1958, 569-75, 587.

--- Rev. of *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. *Quadrant,* 2.3, 1958, 86-87.

--- "Australia's Muffled Crisis." *Modern Age*, 2, 1958, 307-14.

--- "In the Last Age: a meditation on the Apocalypse." Unpublished lecture at Newman College, August 1958. Box 10, McAuley papers.

--- "The Community and the Mystical Body." *Newman College Magazine,* 40, 1958, 13-19.

--- (James McAuley). "A New Springtime of History? Voss and the Novel. *Quadrant* in Fashion." Comment. *Quadrant,* 2.4, 1958, 3-5.

--- "From a Poet's Notebook." *Quadrant,* 2.4, 1958, 47-55. Rep. in *EM* as "Notes and Speculations." 160-180.

--- Rev. of *The Australian Tradition*, by A.A. Phillips. *Quadrant,* 2.4, 1958, 96.

--- "A.L.P. Crisis and Roman Catholic Church." *Sydney Morning Herald,* 1 September 1958, 2. Rep. and abridged from *Modern Age,* 2, 1958, 307-15.

--- (James McAuley). Rev. of *Rimbaud*, by C.A. Hackett and of *Days of Great Peace*, by Mouni Sadhu. *Quadrant,* 2.4, 1958, 100.

--- Rev. of *The New Cambridge Modern History*, *Vols.1 and II*. *Quadrant* 2.4, 1958, 93-94.

1959

--- *The End of Modernity: Essays on Literature, Art and Culture*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1959.

--- (James McAuley)."'Progress' in China." "'Progress' in Tibet. The Inner Battlefield." Comment. *Quadrant,* 3.2, 1959, 3-5.

--- Rev. of *The Court and the Castle*, by Rebecca West. *Quadrant,* 3.2, 1959, 111.

--- “Here Betjeman displays in full variety...” Rev. of *Collected Poems*, by John Betjeman. *Quadrant,* 3.4, 1959, 86.

--- “Catholicism in the Western World Today.” Rev. of *The Catholic Church in the Modern World*, by E.E.Y. Hales and *Australia: The Catholic Chapter*, by James G. Murtagh. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 25 April 1959, 16.

--- “Programmes of Extermination.” Rev. of *The Pursuit of the Millenium*, by Norman Cohn. *Observer,* 16 May 1959, 313-14.

--- “Yeats: The Imaginative Tradition.” Rev. of *Mythologies*, by W.B. Yeats. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 30 May 1959, 13.

--- “Literature and Morality.” *Manna: An Australian Quarterly*. 1959, 8-12. Rep. in *EM*, 48-54.

--- Rev. of *The Industrial Muse*, ed. Jeremy Warburg; *The Worst English Poets*, ed. Christopher Adams; *English Critical Essays, Twentieth Century, Second Series*. *Quadrant,* 3.3, 1959, 94-95.

--- (James McAuley). Books Noted. Rev. of *The Suffrage of Elvira*, by V.S. Naipaul; *Man and Time*, ed. Joseph Campbell; *The Adventures of Tintin*, by Hergé; and *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, by Erwin Panofsky. *Quadrant,* 3.3, 1959, 95-96.

--- “Education and Literature.” Rev. of *The Use of Imagination*, by William Walsh. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 11 July 1959, 14.

--- “Hungarian Martyr.” Rev. of *The Undefeated*, by George Paloczi-Horveth. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 15 August 1959, 14.

--- (James McAuley). Books Noted. Rev. of *The Arts, Artists and Thinkers*, by John M. Todd; *Thomas Telford*, by L.T.C. Rolt; and *The Rabelesian Marriage*, by M.A. Screech. *Quadrant,* 3.4, 1959, 95-96.

--- Rev. of *The Aunt’s Story,* by Patrick White. *Quadrant*, 3.4, 1959, 91-93.

--- “Intricacies of Love.” Rev. of *On Love*, By Ortega Y Gasset. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 19 September 1959, 15.

--- “Voices From Poland.” Rev. of *The Broken Mirror*, ed. Pawel Mayewski. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 3 October 1959, 15.

--- “John Masters Finds Crisis, Love in Spain.” Rev. of *Fandango Rock*, by John Masters. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 21 November 1959, 20.

--- “On Being an Intellectual.” *Quadrant,* 4.1, 1959-60, 23-31. Rep. in *GR,*145-153.

--- (James McAuley). Rev. of *Happiness and Contemplation*, by Joseph Pieper; *First Years at Port Phillip*, by Robert Douglass Boys; and *The Late Augustans,* ed. Donald Davie. *Quadrant,* 4.1, 1959-60, 95-96.

--- "Morris West's New Novel." Rev. of *The Devil's Advocate*, by Morris West. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 12 December 1959, 19.

1960
--- Interview with Hazel de Berg. NLA, Oral History Section.

--- "Ghandi's Writings." Rev. of *All Men are Brothers*, by Mahatma Ghandi. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 23 January 1960, 17.

--- "Life of St Paul." Rev. of *The Sacred Sword*, by Jan Dobraczynski. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 20 February 1960, 15.

--- "The End of Modernity." Letter. *Prospect,* 1, 1960, 25.

--- Rev. of *Conversations with Igor Stravinsky*, ed. Robert Craft; *Quadrantus Rex*, by Norbert Coulehan; *Cooking for Bachelors* by Ted Moloney and George Molnar and *Insubstantial Pageant*; *Redheap*, by Norman Lindsay; *Judgements on History and Historians*, by Jacob Burckhardt. *Quadrant*, 4.2, 1960, 94-95.

--- Rev. of *The Earthbound and Other Poems*, by Chris Wallace-Crabbe; and *The Wind at Your Door*, by Robert D. Fitzgerald. *Quadrant*, 4.2, 1960, 90-92.

--- "The Poetry of Harold Stewart." *Prism,* 7.4, 1960, 20-23.

--- "Pessimistic Verdict on Life Today." Rev. of *The Wayward Life*, by Alberto Moravia. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 16 April 1960, 14.

--- "'Life' of Newman." Rev. of *Shadows and Images*, by Meriol Trevor. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 30 April 1960. 15.

--- "New Catholic Left." Letter. *Observer,* 14 May 1960, 28.

--- "Waiting for the End." Rev. of *Literature and Western Man*, by J.B. Priestley. *Observer,* 14 May 1960, 22.

--- (James McAuley). "The Critic's Task." Comment. *Quadrant,* 4.3, 1960, 3-4. Rep. in *JM*.155-56.

--- "We are Men – What are You?" *Quadrant*, 4.3, 1960, 73-79. Rep. in *GR*.

--- Rev. of *Meeting Soviet Man*, by Manning Clark. *Quadrant,* 4.3, 1960, 91-92.

--- "Gilbert Murray Recalls His Canberra Youth." Rev. of *An Unfinished Autobiography*, by Gilbert Murray. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 16 July 1960, 16.

--- "Solve your Problems!" *Observer,* 6 August 1960, 6.

--- "The Higher Fornication." Rev. of *Chretien Troyes: Inventor of the Modern Novel*, by Foster Erwin Guyer. *Observer,* 6 August 1960, 24-25.

--- “18th Century Tom Truman?” Rev. of *Poems of John Oldham*. *Observer,* 20 August 1960, 25.

--- “Whiffs of the Past.” Rev. of *The Buried Day*, by C. Day Lewis. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 20 August 1960, 18.

--- “‘Poet’s Choice.’ Recent Australian Verse.” ABC ts. September 1960 AA (Sydney), SP 1297/2/017.

--- “The Moabit Sonnets of Albrecht Haushofer.” *Quadrant,* 4.4, 1960, 64-65.

--- Rev. of *Shelley: His Thought and Work*, by Desmond King-Hele, *Quadrant*, 4.4, 1960, 87-89.

--- “Art at The Antipodes.” *New Statesman,* 10 September 1960, 349-50.

--- “The Pound Barrier.” Rev. of *The Verse of Christopher Brennan,* ed. A.R. Chisholm. *Observer,* 17 September 1960. 27-28.

--- “Are the English Imaginative?” Rev. of *The British Imagination*, special number of TLS. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 24 September 1960, 16.

--- “Good-Humoured Saint.” Rev. of *The Great Teresa*, by Elizabeth Hamilton. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 8 October 1960, 17.

--- “Poets and Witchcraft.” Rev. of *In Defence of Reason*, by Yvor Winters. *Observer,* 15 October 1960, 32.

--- “Australian Writers III. James McAuley.” Interview with Desmond O’Grady. *Observer,* 29 October 1960, 13-15.

--- (James McAuley). “Only One Thing Left to Do. Rigby’s Centenary Competition.” Comment. *Quadrant,* 5.1, 1960-61, 3-4.

--- (James McAuley). Rev. of *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, by Rudolph Wittowker; *The Hundred Flowers*, by Roderick MacFarquar and *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals, By Theodore H.E. Chen. Quadrant,* 5.1, 1960-61, 95-96.

--- “A Poet at Large in India. India Seeks a ‘Third’ Way of Life for its Peoples.” *Sydney Morning Herald,* 19 December 1960, 2.

--- “Byronism.” Rev. of *Byron and the Spoiler’s Art,* by Paul West. *Observer,* 24 December, 1960, 25.

1961

--- Inscription for Tom Bass Sculpture. St Mary’s Cathedral, Hobart,1961.

--- (James McAuley). Rev. of *The Poetry of W.B. Yeats*, by Yvor Winters and *Essays and Introductions*, by W.B. Yeats; *Some Graver Subject*, by J.B. Broadbent and *A Critique of Paradise Lost*, by John Peters; *Bertolt Brecht: Selected Poems*; *The Parlement of Foulys*, ed. D.S. Brewer; *The Truth About the Nagy Affair*; Protracted Conflict, by Robert Strauss-Hupé *et al*. *Quadrant,* 5.2, 1961, 95-96.

--- “A Poet at Large in India.” Where Women are Lovely but Faith is Dead.” *Sydney Morning Herald,* 1 March 1961, 2.

--- “Co-operatives in India.” Reply to letter of M.J. Homes. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 6 March 1961, 2.

--- “Inquiries into the Functions of Sacred Art.” Rev. of *The Metamorphosis of the Gods*, by André Malraux and *Men and ideas*, by Johan Huizinga, *Sydney Morning Herald,* 29 April 1961, 16.

--- “Christ in a Maudlin Novel.” Rev. of *The Last Temptation*, by Nikos Kazantzakis. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 20 May 1961, 13.

--- “Roman Catholicism in Australia.” Rev. of *Catholics and the Free Society*, ed. Henry Mayer. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 17 June 1961, 13.

--- “My New Guinea.” *Quadrant,* 5.3, 1961, 15-27. Rep. in *GR*, *JM,* 21-33.

--- “‘New’ U.S. Literature.” Rev. of *The Great Experiment in American Literature*, ed. Carl Bode. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 August 1961, 12.

--- “The Pyramid in the Waste: An Introduction to A.D. Hope’s Poetry.” *Quadrant,* 5.4, 1961, 61-70.

--- “Writings of Tagore.” Rev. of *A Tagore Reader*, ed. Amiya Chakravarty. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 September 1961, 13.

--- “Learning the Mother Tongue.” Rev. of *Images and Symbols*, by Mircea Eliade. *Bulletin,* 14 October 1961, 35.

--- “Six Books of Verse.” Rev. of *Socrates*, Francis Webb; *Masters in Israel*, by Vincent Buckley; *The Ballad of Bloodthirsty Bessie*, by Ronald McCuaig; Forbears, by Elizabeth Riddell; *Selected Poems*, by Frederick T. Macartney; and *South of the Equator*, by Ray Matthew. *Quadrant*, 6.1, 1961-62, 93-96.

--- (James McAuley). Rev. of *Zeitgenössische Australische Lyrik*, trans. Curt and Maria Prerauer. *Quadrant*, 6.1, 1961, 96.

--- “Screaming on a Hilltop.” Rev. of *Milton’s God*, by William Empson. *Bulletin,* 9 December 1961, 39-40.

1962

--- “Literature and Arts.” in *Australian Civilisation*, ed. Peter Coleman. Melbourne/ Canberra/Sydney: F.W. Cheshire, 1962, 122-33.

--- Rev. of *Riders in the Chariot*, by Patrick White. *Quadrant,* 6.2, 1962. 79-81.

--- “Shelley Unbound.” *Bulletin,* 12 May 1962, 57-58.

--- "Tainted Meat." Rev. of *The Common Pursuit*, by F.R. Leavis and *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, by William Empson. *Bulletin,* 19 May 1962, 60.

--- "Some Andersonians and others, on John Anderson. James McAuley (1935-37)." *Bulletin,* 30 June 1962, 29.

--- "Xians - Unite" report by T. Clarke. *Togatus* [U Tasmania], 13 July 1962, 9.

--- McAuley, James, *et al*. "Overland." Letter. *Nation,* 11 August 1962, 16.

--- "Ivory Towers or Bridges of Counsel: The Role of the Little Magazines." *Forum Service,* [London] 20 October 1962.

--- "Today's Books." Rev. of *The Matter with Ireland*, by Bernard Shaw; *The Life of Thomas Hardy*, by Florence Emily Hardy; *English in Education*, ed. Brian Jackson and Denys Thompson; and *The Children of Sanchez*, by Oscar Lewis. ABC ts. 16 September 1962, Australian Archives (NSW) SP 677/1.

--- "Humanism or Obscurantism?" *Purpose,* [U of Tasmania] 1, 1962,12-14.

--- Rev. of *On the Lips of Living Men*, by John Thompson. *Quadrant,* 6.4, 1962, 95.

--- "Today's Books." Rev. of *Obscenity, Blasphemy, Sedition*, by Peter Coleman; *The Men at the Gate*, by Otterio Otteiri; *Fanfare for Elizabeth* by Edith Sitwell; and *On the Contrary,* by Mary McCarthy. ABC ts. 9 December 1962. Australian Archives (NSW) SP677.

--- "Commonwealth Exchange." Letter. *Times Literary Supplement,* 28 December 1962, 1005.

1963

--- *James McAuley*. ed. with introduction by McAuley. Sydney: Australian Poets Series. Angus and Robertson, 1963.

--- *C.J. Brennan*. Australian Writers and their Work, ed. Geoffrey Dutton. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1963. Revised 1973.

--- "Today's Books." Rev. of *Useless Memoirs*, by Carlos Gozzi; *The Church of England*, by Paul Ferris; *A Trip to Texas*, by Kenneth Hopkins; *Two Ways in the World*, by Alaric Jacob; *Gone Fishin'* by Nino Culotta; *Coast to Coast*, ed. Hal Porter. ABC ts. 24 February 1963. Australian Archives (NSW) SP 860/1.

--- "The Biblical Vision of History." *Catholic Worker,* March 1963, 10-14.

--- "Brennan's Prose: Poet as Philosopher." Rev. of *The Prose of Christopher Brennan*, ed. A.R. Chisholm and J.J. Quinn. *Bulletin,* 2 March 1963, 36.

--- *Edmund Spenser and George Eliot: a critical excursion*. Hobart: U Tasmania Press, 1963. Rep. in *GR*, 69-85.

--- "Great Modernists v. Little Contemporaries." Rev. of *The Struggle of the Modern*, by Stephen Spender. *Bulletin,* 18 May 1963, 35-36.

--- “Today’s Books.” Rev. of *The Eyes of Damien Parer*, by Frank Legg; *William of Orange*, by Nesca A. Robb; *Pericles the Athenian,* by Rex Warner; and *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, by Alexander Solzhenitsyn. ABC ts. 19 May 1963. Australian Archives (NSW) SP 860/1.

--- James McAuley *et al.* “Literary Magazines: An Open Letter to the Commonwealth Literary Fund.” *Meanjin Quarterly,* 22.2, 1963, 243-44. Also published in *Overland,* 27-28, 15.

--- “Professor James McAuley,” *Alfred Conlon: A Memorial by some of His Friends*, ed. John Thompson. Benevolent Society of New South Wales, 1963. 24-25.

--- Rev. of *George Herbert*, by T.S. Eliot. *Quadrant,* 7.3, 1963, 94.

--- “The Past Made Present.” Rev. of *Sydney Cove 1788*, ed. John Cobley; *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales*, by John White; *Remarks on a Passage to Botany Bay*, by James Scott; and *John Knatchbull*, by Colin Roderick. *Quadrant*, 7.3, 1963, 95-96.

--- “Newman: liberal and anti-liberal.” *Purpose,* [Hobart] July 1963, 11-12.

--- “Today’s Books.” Rev. of *The North-Bound Rider*, by Ian Mudie; *Australia in World Affairs, 1956-1960*; *Living with Asia: A Discussion of Australia’s Future*; *The Greek Stones Speak*, by Paul MacKendrick; and *Unity’s Children*, by Thomas Sterling. ABC ts. 21 July 1963. Australian Archives (NSW) SP 869/1.

1964
--- “Douglas Stewart.” *The Literature of Australia*. ed. Geoffrey Dutton. Penguin, 1964, 362-76.

--- “The Bugbear of Scansion.” *Opinion,* 8.1, 1964, 21-22.

--- (James McAuley). “Hobart,” *Current Affairs Bulletin*, 33, 11, 1964, 162-76.

--- “The Languages of Poetry.” *Quadrant* 8.2, 1964, 19-26. Rep. abbrev. in *GR*, 56-68.

--- “A Survey of Political Thinking about the Territory, 1894-1964.” Australian Association for Cultural Freedom Seminar. Mitchell Library Ms, 18 October 1964.

--- (and V.B. Smith). “Poetry Today – A Dialogue.” *Diogenes*, Literary Annual, University of Tasmania, 10, 1964, 9-17.

--- “Last Colony, Lost Causes. The years Australia wasted in New Guinea.” *Bulletin,* 31 October 1964, 44-45.

--- Rev. of *Australian Little Magazines. 1923-1954* by John Tregenza. *Australian Literary Studies*, 1, 1964, 281-283.

--- “The wild king of the gifted ratbags.” Rev. of *Poet in Exile: Ezra Pound*, by Noel Stock. *Australian,* 7 November 1964.

--- “A Man for all seasons.” Rev. of *The Shepherd’s Calendar*, by John Clare. *Australian,* 21 November 1964, 13.

1965
--- “Language in Hymns and Psalms.” *Purpose,* [Hobart] March 1965, 10-11.

--- “Literature and the Academics.” *An Introduction to Australian Literature*. ed. C.D. Narasimhaiah, Brisbane: Jacarandah Press, 1965, 107-112.

--- “The Gothic Splendours: Patrick White’s ‘Voss.’” *Southerly*, 25, 1, 1965, 34-44.

--- (James McAuley). “Their goal is music for all.” Report. *Standard,* [Hobart] 26 March 1965, 1.

--- “Death in bush township.” Rev. of *The Reckoning*, by Hugh Atkinson. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 3 July 1965, 19.

--- “The Moon and Sixpence.” Rev. of *F.R. Leavis-The Modern Mind*. *Bulletin,* 10 July 1965, 52-53.

--- “Baylebridge.” Rev. of *Salvage. (Collected Works of William Baylebridge, Vol.IV)*. *Bulletin,* 7 August 1965, 57.

--- “The Poetry of R.D. Fitzgerald.” Rev. of *Forty Years’ Poems*. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 7 August 1965, 13.

--- “Task of the reviewer.” Letter. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 19 August 1965, 2.

--- “On Literary Humanism.” *Opinion,* 9.3, 1965, 17-19.

--- “Rev. of *Cock-Crow*, by Rosemary Dobson. *Twentieth Century,* 20, 1965, 185-86.

--- “Singing should be normal at Mass.” *Standard,* [Hobart] 17 September 1965, 10.

--- “Something Personal. Poet’s Corner at Cardiff.” *Sydney Morning Herald,* 9 October 1965, 18.

--- “Testament of a Novelist.” Rev. of *Day of My Delight*, by Martin Boyd. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 18 December 1965, 16.

--- “Rev. of *High Valley*, by Kenneth E. Read; *Marcel Proust, a Biography*, by George Painter; and *Cock Crow*, by Rosemary Dobson. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 18 December 1965, 16.

1966
--- *A Primer of English Versification*, Sydney: U Sydney Press, 1966. Published in USA as *Versification, A Short Introduction,* Michigan State UP, 1966.

--- “Both Sides of the Curtain.” Rev. of *Under Pressure*, by A. Alvarez. *Bulletin,* 22 January 1966, 30-31.

--- “The Ugly Duckling.” Rev. of *The Wild Swan*, by Monica Stirling. *Bulletin,* 19 February 1966, 46.

--- “The Australian Tragedy. Rev of *Hierarchy and Democracy in Australia, 1788-1870*, by T.L. Suttor. *Bulletin,* 21 May 1966, 40.

--- “Three Kinds of Trouble.” *Quadrant,* 10.2, 1966, 3-14.

--- “Moving Pictures.” Rev. of *Noonday Country*, by Charles Higham. *Bulletin,* 30 July 1966, 44.

--- “James McAuley on Commitment.” Interview with Tony Morphett. ABC ts. 25 September 1966. Ms 1511, SLNSW.

--- “Judith Wright’s Development.” Rev. of *The Other Half*, by Judith Wright. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 8 October 1966, 20.

--- “Shaw Neilson’s Poetry.” *Australian Literary Studies*, 2, 1966, 235-53, Rep. in *GR*, *JM*

1967

--- “C.I.A.” *Quadrant,* 11.3, 1967, 4-6.

--- Introduction, *Don Juan in Melanesia,* by Peter Lawrence. St Lucia: U Queensland Press, 1967, v-ix.

--- “Poetry in Australia: James McAuley.” Interview with John Thompson. *Southerly,* 27.2, 1967, 96-106.

--- “The McAuley Affair.” *Quadrant,* 11.5, 1967, 17-20.

--- “Hobart poet snubbed by Reds.” Report. *Mercury,* 13 October 1967, 1.

--- “Professor says students ‘political pawns.’” Report. *Examiner,* [Launceston] 21 October 1967, 3.

--- “‘Criminal’ writers.” Rev. of *On Trial*, ed. Max Hayward and Leopold Labedz. *Quadrant,* 11.6, 1967, 78-81.

1968

--- “Candidate 1984, or the English Answers Guide.” *Quadrant,* 12.1, 1968, 39-40.

--- “The rape of Czechoslovakia.” *Quadrant,* 12.4, 1968, 55-56.

--- “Evaluation or Interpretation.” *English in Australia*, 7, 1968, 17-25.

--- “Some Poems of Judith Wright.” *Australian Literary Studies*, 3, 1968, 201-13, Rep. in *GR,* 28-39.

--- Rev. of *An Eye for a Tooth*, by Bruce Dawe. *Twentieth Century,* 23, 1968, 84-85.

--- Rev. of *The Poetical Works of Henry Kendall*, ed. T.T. Reed and *The Landscape of Australian Poetry*, by Brian Elliott. *Australian Literary Studies,* 3.4, 1968, 314-15.

--- “The Erotic Theme in Brennan.” *Quadrant,* 12.6, 1968, 8-15.

1969

--- ed. *Generations: Poetry from Chaucer to the Present Day*. Melbourne: Nelson, 1969.

--- "Time to call a halt in liturgy changes." *Standard,* [Hobart] 31 January 1969, 3.

--- "Admirable Jeunesse?" *Quadrant,* 13.1, 1969, 47-51.

--- "Conditions and Positions: thoughts on present student discontents." *Pacific Community,* 1, 1969, 24-33.

--- "Student radicalism, revolutions, socialism, democracy, poets and politics: an interview with James McAuley." *Togatus,* [U of Tasmania] 40.9, 1969, 7.

1970

--- *The Personal Element in Australian Poetry*. Townsville: Foundation for Australian Literary Studies, Monograph 3, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1970, lectures delivered 1968.

--- *Poets on Record 3: James McAuley reads from his own work*. St Lucia: U Queensland Press, 1970.

--- "Is a sociology of Commonwealth literatures possible?" *National Identity: Literature and Language in the Commonwealth*, ed. K.L. Goodwin, Heinemann, 1970, 33-36.

--- "A friend of the permanent things." *Quadrant,* 14.2, 1970, 40-43.

--- "Five reports on the first Indian-Australian Literary Seminar. The First of Many Sidelights." *Hemisphere,* 14.4, 1970, 30.

--- "Scholar and poet talks and reflects and reflects." Interview with Geoff Wilkinson. *Mercury,* 29 July 1970, 7.

1971

--- "English Teaching and its Discontents." *Opinion,* 15.2, 1971, 8-12.

--- "The first 15 years." *Quadrant,* 15.5, 1971, 13-16.

1972

--- "Politics and 'The Counter-Culture.'" *Twentieth Century,* 26, 1972, 259-64.

--- *Sex and love in literature*. Winter series lectures. U Tasmania, 1972. Rep. in *Quadrant,* 16.4, 1972, 15-23, and *GR*.

--- "Hope Against Hope." Rev. of *Hope Against Hope*, by Nadezhda Mandelstam. *Quadrant,* 16.2, 1972, 14-16.

--- (Piggott, Wood and Baker [McAuley's solicitors]) "Professor McAuley." *Review,* 20 May 1972, 858.

--- "Romanticism and Utopianism." English Department Series, 1. Hobart, U of Tasmania, 1972.

--- “Gemstones in Literature and History, notably in the Bible.” Address to the Lapidary Club, July 1972, Box 9, McAuley Papers.

--- “Peace with Freedom.” Letter. *Nation Review*, 9 September, 1972, 1358-59.

--- “Silly Campaign.” Letter. *Nation Review,* 16 September 1972, 1391.

--- “Campaigns against the Rule of Law.” *Sydney Morning Herald,* 23 September 1972, 6.

--- “A Proper Polity: On campus and in the nation. 1. James McAuley” *Togatus*, [U of Tasmania] 43.21, 1972, 4-5.

<u>1973</u>
--- *Christopher Brennan*. Rev. ed. Australian Writers and Their Work series, ed. Graeme Johnston, Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1973.

--- “Textbooks and Morals.” *English in Australia,* 23, 1973, 5-11.

--- “An Imprint of Slessor.” *Quadrant*, 8, 17.1, 1973, 5-10. in *GR*, 18-27.

--- “Indonesian Novel translated.” Rev. of *Atheis*, by Achidiat K. Mihardja. *Hemisphere,* 17.4, 1973, 40.

--- “The poetry of Rosemary Dobson.” *Australian Literary Studies,* 6, 1973, 3-10. Rep. in, *GR,* as “‘This Fabled Grace:’ The Poetry of Rosemary Dobson,” 40-47.

--- “An occasional Address.” Rep. from *Canberra Times*. *ACES Review,* 1.2, 1973, 2-3, 15.

--- “The Poetry of Georg Trakl.” ABC ts. 8 July 1973. Australian Archives (Sydney) SP1297/2, F8. Rep. in *GR*, 202-223, and in *JM*.

--- “On Some of Slessor’s Discarded Poems.” *Southerly,* 33.2, 1973, 118-28.

--- “Schools Used for the Wrong Reason.” *Catholic Weekly,* 9 August 1973, 14.

--- “The World of Edmund Spenser.” ABC ts. 21 October 1973. Australian Archives (Sydney) SP 1297/2/175.

--- Unpublished lecture notes on Wordsworth. Box 16, McAuley Papers, Ms 7920, SLNSW. c. 1973.

--- Unpublished note on Dryden’s 1695 translation of *The Art of Painting*, by C.A. de Fresnoy. Box 16, McAuley Papers, Ms 7920, SLNSW, c. 1973.

<u>1974</u>
--- “Notes and Topics.” Rev. of *Improving on the Blank Page*, by Deborah Cook and Keith Gallasch. *ACES Review,* 1.5, 1974, 2, 10.

--- Unpublished notes “The Hazards: Dove, Amos, Mayson,” Box 9, McAuley Papers, Ms7290, SLNSW, c. 1974-75.

--- Unpublished lecture notes on Wordsworth, Box 16, McAuley Papers, Ms7290, SLNSW, 1974.

--- "Coles Bay Sketchbook." undated, handwritten manuscript, Box 9, McAuley Papers, Ms 7920, SLNSW, c. 1974-5.

--- "The Hazards: Dove, Amos, Mayson." Undated, unpublished notes, Box 9, McAuley papers, Ms 7920, SLNSW, c. 1974-5.

1975
--- *The Grammar of the Real: Selected Prose 1959-1974.* Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1975.

--- ed. *A Map of Australian Verse*. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1975.

--- "Commentary: In the Wheelwright's shop; reading Charles Greville." *Quadrant,* 19.4, 1975, 58-60.

--- "Academics honoured in the new awards list." Interview, *University of Tasmania News,* 4 July 1975, 1-2.

--- "A Blueprint for Ockers." *ACES Review,* 2.7, 1975, 3-4,8.

--- "Arts in Progress; A modest proposal; Waiting for the green light; Students in academic government." Commentary. *Quadrant,* 19.5, 1975. 17-19.

--- "Education in Decline." *Sydney Morning Herald,* 18 August 1975, 6.

--- "Further comments from Professor McAuley." *University of Tasmania News,* 22 August 1975, 2.

--- "Is World War III nearly over? News from the Centre; Ocker was Here." Commentary. *Quadrant,* 19.6, 1975, 16-17.

--- Interview with Hazel De Berg. Oral History TRC 856-57 and transcript, NLA. 18 September 1975.

--- "Nature Notes; Reds and Whites; The Art of Compliment; Protecting Hereditary Privilege." Commentary. *Quadrant,* 19.7, 1975, 25-26.

--- "The Clichés of Alienation." Rev. of *Genius, an Ideology in Literature*, by Robert Currie. *Quadrant,* 19.7, 1975, 95-96.

--- "A Record of Greatness, Principles of Taste; Closing Down Subjects?" Commentary. *Quadrant,* 19.8, 1975, 12-14.

--- "De Mortuis; Music as Rhetoric; Light from the West; More about Kendall's Bell-Birds." Commentary. *Quadrant,* 19.9, 1975, 68-69.

1976
--- "Douglas Stewart." *The Literature of Australia.* ed. Geoffrey Dutton, (rev. ed.) Ringwood: Penguin, 1976. 427-42.

--- “John Kerr’s Judgment.” Commentary. *Quadrant*, 20.1, 1976, 25-28.

--- “We are not a Democracy; Powell’s Music of Time; Poussin’s Music of Time.” Commentary. *Quadrant,* 20.2, 1976, 13-14.

--- “Born That Way; Annus Mirabilis 1776.” Commentary. *Quadrant,* 20.3, 1976, 13-14.

--- “Memoirs and Memories; Seagulls as Spectators.” Commentary. *Quadrant,* 20.4, 1976, 9-11. “Memoirs” rep. in *JM.*

--- “The Rhetoric of Australian Poetry.” *Southerly,* 36.1, 1976, 3-23. (Herbert Blaiklock Memorial Lecture**,** 1975), Rep. in *JM*, 98-116.

--- Interview with Catherine Santamaria. Oral History TRC 576 and transcript, NLA. 5 May 1976.

--- “History by Quickies. “Commentary. *Quadrant,* 20.6, 1976, 9-10.

--- “Wordsworth Once More.” *Quadrant,* 20.6, 1976, 40-49.

--- “Poets Anonymous.” Commentary. *Quadrant,* 20.7, 1976, 12-14, Rep in *JM.*

--- “Culture and Counter-Culture: A personal view.” *Quadrant*, 20.9, 1976, 12-21.

--- “Albrecht Dürer: Self and World,” *Quadrant* 20.11, 1976, 8-16. Rep. in *JM*, 46 – 59.

--- “A Small Testament,” *Quadrant*, 20.12, 1976, 6-12; Rep. *JM,* 126-139.

1977

--- “Boredom.” *Quadrant,* 21.3, 1977, 41.

--- “The Mysterious Mr Marvell.” *Quadrant,* 21.3, 1977, 6-12.

--- “The Public Domain.” *Quadrant*, 21.3, 1977, 44.

1978

--- “The Young Mr Milton.” ABC ts. 9 July 1978, Australian Archives (Sydney) C1573/T2, F17.

--- “Milton Agonistes.” ABC ts. 13 August 1978, Australian Archives (Sydney) C1573/T2, F20.

1980

--- “James McAuley 1917-76.” Interview. *Australian Writers*. ed. Graeme Kinross Smith. Melbourne: Nelson, 1980, 314-321.

1988

--- *James McAuley: Poetry, essays and personal commentary*. ed. Leonie Kramer. St Lucia: U Queensland Press, 1988.

WORKS CONSULTED

Abrams, M.H. *The Mirror and the Lamp*: *Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1953.

Abrams, M.H. and Geoffrey Harpham. eds. *A Glossary of Literary Terms.* Ninth Edition, Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009.

Achebe, Chinua. "Named for Victoria, Queen of England." (1973) *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (*PCSR*), ed. B. Ashcroft. G. Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, 2nd ed., London/New York: Routledge, 2006, 143-145.

Ackland, Michael. *Damaged Men: The Precarious Lives of James McAuley and Harold Stewart*. Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2001.

---"James McAuley and the Communist Menace." *Quadrant*, 45.3, March 2001, 58-62.
Adorno, Theodor. "Cultural Criticism and Society." in *Prisms*, trans. S. and S. Weber, MIT Press, 1951, 198.
Anderson, Don. "The Intellectual Environment: Conservation v Conservatism." *Island Magazine,* 1988, 34-35, 89-96.

Anderson, Peter. "Ern Malley: The Greatest Australian Poet That (N)ever Lived." *Southern Review,* 24.2, 1991,121-31.

Anon. "Australian Affirmation." Rev. of *EM*, *Times Literary Supplement,* 11 March 1960, 162.

Aristotle. *Poetics*. trans. Stephen Halliwell, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard/Loeb, 1995.

Ashcroft, Bill. "The Sacred in Australian Culture." in *Sacred Australia: Post-Secular Considerations*, ed. Makarand R. Paranjape, New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 2010, 21-43.

Ashcroft, Bill. Frances Devlin-Glass and Lyn McCredden. "Displaced: James McAuley's Haunted Poetics." *Intimate Horizons: The Post-Colonial Sacred in Australian Literature,* Adelaide: Australian Theological Forum (ATF) Press, 2009.

Ashcroft, Bill. and John Salter. "Australia: A Rhizomic Text." in *Identifying Australia in Post Modern Times*, ed. Livio Dobrez, Canberra: Bibliotech, 1994, 16-23.

Ashcroft, Bill. Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. eds., *The Empire Writes Back.*1989, 2nd ed., London/ New York: Routledge, 2002.

--- *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. ed., 2nd ed., London/New York: Routledge, 2006.

Atkin, Evelyn. "*Locus Solus*: The New York School Poets' Missing *Manifesto.*" *T.S. Tijdschaft voor Tijdschaft Studies*, 35, July, 2014, 23-36.

Auchterlonie, Dorothy (see also Dorothy Green). "Under Aldebaran." Review of *UA*. *Hermes,* 48.2, 1946, 66-68.

--- "Under Aldebaran." Rev.*UA*. *Meanjin,* 6.1, 1947, 55-57.

Auden, W.H. *Selected Poems*. ed. Edward Mendelson, London: Faber, 1979.

Austin, Timothy. *Poetic Voices: Discourse Linguistics and the Poetic Text.* Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama Press, 1994.

Azurara, Eannes de, Gil. *Conquests and Discoveries of Henry the Navigator. (1453)*, ed. Virginia de Castro e Almeida, trans. Bernard Miall, London: Allen & Unwin, 1936.

--- (and Charles R. Beazley). *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea. V2,* Introd. and trans. by Charles Raymond Beazley and Edgar Preston, London: Hakluyt Society, 1899.

Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space.* (1958) trans. Maria Jolas, Boston: Beacon, 1994.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imaginations: Four Essays*. ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

Bal, Mieke. *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities*. Toronto: U Toronto Press, 2002.

Baldizis, Despina. "James McAuley's Radical Ingredients." *Meanjin*, 39. 3, 1980, 374-82.
Baldwin, C.S. *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic (to 1400) interpreted from representative works*. New York: Macmillan, 1928
Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." trans Stephen Heath, *Image, Music, Text*, London: Fontana, 1977, 142-148.

Bartholomeusz, Dennis. "James McAuley: "Terra Australis." *Australian Poems in Perspective.* ed. P.K. Elkin, St Lucia: U Queensland Press, 1978, 161 -169.

Belmonte y de Bermúdez, Luis, Basil Soulsby and Pedro Fernandes de Queirós. *The Voyages of Pedro Fernandez de Quiros, 1596-1606: Introduction. Comparative List of Maps of the New Hebrides, 1570-1904 [By B.H. Soulsby] Bibliography. Narrative of the Second Voyage of the Adelantado Alvaro de Mendana, by the Chief Pilot. Pedro*, London: Hakluyt, 1904.

Blake, William. Letter to Thomas Butt, 22 November 1802. in Geoffrey Keynes, ed. *The Letters of William Blake*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1956.

--- "Vision of the Last Judgment." *Complete Writings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1969, 604-617.

Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*. (1973), 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997.

Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Chicago: U Chicago Press, 1961.

Bradley, David. "James McAuley: The Landscape of the Heart." *The Literature of Australia,* ed. Geoffrey Dutton, Ringwood: Penguin, 1976, 443-460.

Brennan, Christopher. *Poems, 1913.* Sydney: G.B. Philip, 1913.

Brissenden, R.F. “The Wounded Hero: James McAuley’s *Collected Poems, 1936-1970*.” *Southerly*, 32. 4, 1972. 267-278.

Brooks, David. *The Sons of Clovis*: *Ern Malley, Adoré Floupette and a Secret History of Australian Poetry*. St Lucia: U Queensland Press, 2011.

Buckley, Brian. “Facts or Theory?” *Prospect*, 2.4, 1959, 20-21.

Buckley, Vincent. Papers, Australian Defence Force Academy, Ms 229.

--- “James McAuley. Poet-Critic of the Modern World.” *Advocate*, 1 October, 1953.

--- “The Poetry of James McAuley.” Commonweath Literary Fund lecture, 1954, Box 11, McAuley papers.

--- “Classicism and Grace: James McAuley.” *Essays in Poetry: Mainly Australian*, Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1957, 177-195.

--- “Poetry and the ‘New Christians.’” *Essays in Poetry: Mainly Australian*, Freeport New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1957.

--- “James McAuley: The Man and The Poet.” *Westerly,* 3, 1960, 13-15.

--- “Poets at Large.” *Prospect,* 3, 1964, 28, 3.

--- *Cutting Green Hay*: *Friendships, Movements and Cultural Conflicts in Australia’s Great Decades.* Ringwood: Penguin, 1983.

Burckhardt, Jakob. *Force and Freedom: Reflections on History*. trans M.D.H Burckhardt, New York, Pantheon, 1943.

Burns, Arthur. “Theology and the Arts.” *Meanjin*, 11.4, 1952, 342 -347.

Bushell, Gerald. “Captain Quirós: James McAuley and Celsus Kelly: O.F.M.” *Quadrant,* 21.3, 1977, 24- 29.

Calinescu, Matei. *The Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*. Durham: Duke UP, 1987.

Carter, Paul. *The Road to Botany Bay*: *An Exploration of Landscape and History*. London: Faber, 1987.

--- “The Spatial History.” from *The Road to Botany Bay,* in *PCSR*, 2006, 333-335.

---“Naming Places.” in *PCSR*, 2006, 351-354.

Catalano, Gary. “The Language of Sight: The Late Poems of James McAuley.” *Imago: New Writing*, 8. 1, Autumn, 1996, 135-144.

Cattaneo, Angelo. “Venice, Florence and Lisbon, Commercial Routes and Networks of Knowledge, 1300 – 1550,” *Encompassing the Globe: Portugal and the World in the 16th and 17th Centuries*. Catalogue of exhibition, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon, 15/7 -11/10 2009.

--- *Fra Mauro’s Mappa Mundi and Fifteenth Century Venice.* Turnhout: Brepols, 2011.

Challis, John. “Recollections of a Perth Movement Chaplain.” *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 35, 2014.

Chisholm, A.R. “The Case of Ern Malley.” *Angry Penguins* 7, Summer 1944, 8-9.

Clare, John. *Selected Poems and Prose*. ed. Eric Robinson and Geoffrey Summerfield, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1966.

Clark, Manning. *The Quest for Grace*. Ringwood: Penguin, 1991.

Clarke, Donovan. Papers. NLA, MS 950.

Cirlot, J.E. *A Dictionary of Symbols*. trans. Jack Sage, London: Routledge, 1962.

Coleman, Peter. *The Heart of James McAuley: Life and Work of the Australian Poet.* Sydney: Wildcat Press, 1980.

--- “Remembering James McAuley.” *Quadrant,* 43.10, 1999, 57-59.

--- *The Last Intellectuals: Essays on writers and politics.* Sydney: Quadrant Books, 2010.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Biographia Literaria*. 1817, Chapter XIV.

Collingridge de Tourcey, George. *The First Discovery of Australia and New Guinea*: *Being the Narrative of Portuguese and Spanish Discoveries in the Australasian Regions, between the Years 1492-1606, with Descriptions of their Old Charts*. Sydney: William Brooks, 1906.

Conway, Ronald. “Culture and Counter-culture: A Response to James McAuley.” *Quadrant,* 20.10, 1976, 10-13.

--- “James McAuley, Catholic.” *Quadrant,* 25.5, 1981, 26-29.

Conway, W.M. trans. *The Literary Remains of Albrecht Durer*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1889.

Cook, Michael. “James McAuley’s Encounter with Modernism.” Unpublished PhD dissertation, Department of English, U Sydney, August 1993.

Coomaraswamy, A.K. “Art, Man and Manufacture.” in R.N. Anshen, ed. *Our Emergent Civilization*, Science of Culture Series, Vol. IV, New York/London: Harper, 1947, 152-174.

--- “Beauty and Truth.” *The Essential Ananda K. Coomaraswamy*, (*Essential AKC*) ed. Rama P. Coomaraswamy, Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2004, 97-102.

--- "The Bugbear of Literacy." *Essential AKC*, 53-65.

--- "A Figure of Speech or a Figure of Thought?" *Essential AKC*, 2004, 21-53.

--- "The Christian and Oriental, or True, Philosophy of Art." *Essential AKC,* 2004*,* 123 -151.

Crabbe, George. Preface. *Tales* (1812), New York: Cowell, 1887.

Croft, Julian. "Responses to Modernism." *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*. ed. L. Hergenhan, Ringwood: Penguin, 1988. 409-29.

Cronin, Michael. *Across the Lines: Travel, Language, Translation.* Cork: Cork UP, 2000.

cummings, e.e. *Complete Poems: 1913-1962.* New York: Harcourt, 1963.

Deleuze, Gilles & Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: U Minnesota Press, 1987.

Dickey, James and Hubert Shuptrine. *Jericho: The South Beheld*. Birmingham: Oxmoor House, 1974.

Dixon, Robert. "James McAuley's New Guinea: colonialism, modernity, suburbia." *Prosthetic Gods: Travel, Representation and Colonial Governance*, St Lucia: U Queensland Press, 2001, 149-75.

--- Scenes of Reading: Is Australia a World Literature?" *Republic of Letters: Literary Communities in Australia*, ed. Peter Kirkpatrick and Robert Dixon, Sydney: U Sydney Press, 2012, 71-79.

Dobrez, Livio. "The Three McAuleys." *Southern Review*, 9.3, 1976, 171-184.

Dobson, Rosemary. "Poets in Three Countries." Rev. of *UA, Australasian Book News and Library Journal,* 1.8, 1947, 355-56.

--- "A World of Difference: Australian Poetry and Painting in the 1940s." *Southerly*, 33. 4, 1973, 365 -383.

Docker, John. "James McAuley: The Poetry and the Attitude." *Arena,* 26, 1971, 73-86.

--- "In August 1999, John Docker launched *The Devil and James McAuley* by Cassandra Pybus." *Australian Humanities Review*, 14, July to September 1999, 1-4.

Dryden, John. "The Art of Painting." Prose trans. from French from original Latin poem, "De Arte Graphicâ," (1653-1656) by Charles-Alphonse du Fresnoy, with Parallel between Painting and Poetry, 1695. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Charles-Alphonse-Du-Fresnoy#ref951748, accessed 28 September 2017.

Dunleavy, Maurice. "Vis-à-vis McAuley." *Canberra Times*, 5 August 1967, 8.

Dunlop, Ronald. "'Amphion or the Shepherd?' T.S. Eliot: 1888-1965." *Poetry Australia,* ed., Grace Perry, 2, February 1965, 23-24.

Dutton, Geoffrey. "The Classic Pose." *Australian Letters,* 2.3, 1959, 49-53.

--- *Snow on the Salt Bush*: *The Australian Literary Experience*. Ringwood: Penguin, 1984.

Edwards, Jonathon. "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Enfield, Connecticut, 1741. https://digitalcommons.unl.edu

Eliot. T. S. "Tradition and the Individual Talent." (1919) *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode, New York: Harcourt, 1975, 47-59.

--- "Ulysses, Order and Myth." *The Dial*, November 1923.

--- *Notes towards the Definition of Culture.* (1948) London: Faber, 1962.

--- "The Metaphysical Poets." *Selected Essays*, New edition, New York: Harcourt,1960, 241-250.

--- *Collected Poems, 1909-1962*. London: Faber, 1963.

Elliott, Brian. "A Summing-Up." *Meanjin*, 3.2, 1944, 116-120.

Ellman, Richard and Charles Feidelson. eds., *The Modern Tradition*. New York: Oxford UP, 1965.

Evans, Geoffrey. "A Prophet against Modernity." Rev. of *EM*. *Australian Highway,* 40.7, 1957, 173-74.

Fee, Margery. "Who can write as Other?" *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, 2006, 169-171.

Franklin, James, Gerard O. Nolan, Michael Gilchrist. *The Real Archbishop Mannix; From the Sources*. Ballarat: Connor Court, 2015.

Foucault, Michel. "What Is an Author?" *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*. trans. Donald Bouchard and Sherry Simon. ed. Donald Bouchard. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1977, 113-138.

Fry, Roger. *Vision and Design*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1920.

Frye, Northrop. *An Anatomy of Criticism.* (1957) London: Penguin, 1990.

Gaffney, Carmel. "Music Out of Decay: McAuley's late poetry and Georg Trakl." *Southerly*, 36.4, 1976, 407-19.

Gelder, Ken and Jacobs, Jane. *Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Post-Colonial Nation*. Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1998.

Genette, Gérard. *Introdução ao Arquitexto*. (1979) Introd. Maria Alziro Seixo, trad. Cabril Martins, Lisboa: Vega, 1987.

Gifford, Terry. *Pastoral*. London/New York: Routledge, 1999.

Giles, Patricia. "Tribute to James McAuley." unpublished text, Patricia Giles papers, December 1976.

Gilson, Étienne. *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy.* (1936) New York: U Notre Dame Press, 1991.

--- *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*. (1937) San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1964.

Goodwin, Ken. "James McAuley as Hymn-Writer." *Australian Catholic Record*, 80. 2, April 2003, 131-144.

Gray, Robert. and Geoffrey Lehmann. eds. *Australian Poetry Since 1788*. Sydney: U of NSW Press, 2011.

Green, Dorothy. (see also Dorothy Auchterlonie) Papers. NLA, MS 5678.

--- "Letters From a Young Poet." *Quadrant*, 21. 3, 1977, 18-21.

Green, H.M. Papers. NLA, Ms 3925.

--- ed. *Modern Australian Poetry*. Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1946.

--- *A History of Australian Literature: Pure and Applied*. Revised Dorothy Green, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1985.

Graves, Robert. and Laura Riding. *A Survey of Modernist Poetry*. London: Heinemann, 1929.

Griffin, John. "Alain Marie Guynot de Boismenu (1870-1953)." *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 7, Melbourne UP, 1979.

---"Marie Thérèse Augustine Noblet (1889-1930)." *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 11, Melbourne UP, 1988.

Guénon, René. *East and West*. (1924) trans William Massey, London: Luzac, 1941.

Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich. *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004.

Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere.* (1962) trans. Thomas Burger, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991.

Hackett, Earle. Interview with Sidney Nolan. (1975) in Barry Pearce, *Sidney Nolan*, Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2007.

Haese, Richard. *Rebels and Precursors: The Revolutionary Years of Australian Art*. (1981) Ringwood. Penguin, 1988.

Haley, Martin. "James McAuley's latest Book: 'End of Modernity.'" Rev. of *EM*. *Advocate* [Melbourne] 23 July 1959, 11.

Hamburger, Michael. *The Truth of Poetry: Tensions in Modernist Poetry Since Baudelaire*. (1969) Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972.

Hardy, Thomas. *Jude the Obscure*. (1895), Ware, UK: Wordsworth Classics, 1993.

Harris, Max. "I am an Anarchist, So What!" *Bohemia*, July 1939.

--- *The Vegetative Eye*. Melbourne: Reed and Harris, 1943.

--- Introduction. *The Darkening Ecliptic,* Melbourne: Reed & Harris, 1944, 9-14.

--- "Commentary on Australian Poetry." *Voices*, *A Quarterly of Poetry*, 118, Summer 1944, 44-48.

--- "The Faded Years." *Direction: New Literature in Australia*, 1.1, 1952, 5-12.

--- Introduction. *Ern Malley's Poems*, Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1961, 5-20.

--- "Angry Penguins and After." *Quadrant,* 7.1, 1963, 5-10.

--- "Dance Little Wombat." in *The Writer in Australia: A Collection of Literary Documents, 1856-1964*, ed. Brian Elliott, Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1969, 249.

--- "The Hoax." *Ern Malley Collected Poems*, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1993.

--- (with John Reed and Barrett Reid). eds. *Ern Malley's Journal.* 4 Editions, 1952-1955.

--- (with Joanna Murray-Smith). Commentaries. *The Poems of Ern Malley*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988.

Harrison, Keith. "The Geist in the Mirror: Harold Stewart, James McAuley and the Art of Translation." *Australian Book Review,* 272, June-July 2005, 53-57.

Hartman, Geoffrey. "Romanticism and 'Anti-Self-Consciousness.'" *The Centennial Review*, 6, 4, 1962, 553-565.

Hart-Smith, W. "The Banjo and the Bards." Rev. of *James McAuley* by Vivian Smith, *Bulletin*, 5 February 1966, 54.

Harwood, Gwen. Introduction, *Georg Trakl, Music in the Mirabell Garden*: *Translations, Images and Songs, with James McAuley, Larry Sitsky, John Olsen,* ed. John Winter, Hobart: New Albion Press, 1982.

Haskell, Dennis. Introduction. *Kenneth Slessor: Selected Poems*, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1993.

Hassan, Ihab. *The Post-modern Turn: Essays in Post-modern Theory and Culture*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1987.

Hatlen, Burton. "Zukowsky, Wittgenstein and the Poetics of Presence." *Sagetries*, 1.1, 1982, 63-93.

Hayes, Deborah. "Visions of the Great South Land" in Peter Sculthorpe's Opera *Quiros*." in *The Soundscapes of Australia: Music, Place and Spirituality*, ed. Fiona Richards, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, 148-164.

Head, Ivan. "'Worth the Lifting and Stacking:' Further Thoughts on James McAuley." *Quadrant*, 47. 5, May 2003, 54-59.

Heath, Richard Ford. A*lbrecht Dure*r. New York/London: Scribner, 1894.

Heidegger, Martin. "Language." *Poetry, Language, Thought,* 1971, trans. Albert Hofstadter, New York: Harper 2001, 187-208.

--- "What are Poets For." in *Poetry, Language, Thought,* 1971, 87-139.

Heller, Eric. *The Disinherited Mind: Essays in Modern German Literature and Thought.* (1952) New York: Farrar, 1957.

Hergenhan, Laurie. "Starting a Journal: *Australian Literary Studies*, Hobart 1963: James McAuley, A. D. Hope and Geoffrey Dutton." *Australian Literary Studies*, 19.4, October 2000, 433-437.

Hetherington, Graeme. "For James McAuley." *Antipodes,* 26.1, 2012, 85.

--- "Prologue to an Inherited Epic of Gilgamesh (for James McAuley)." *Southerly*, 59.3-4, 144-45.

--- Unpublished interview with writer. Hobart, 15 August 2014.

Heyward, Michael. *The Ern Malley Affair.*1993, North Sydney: Vintage, 2003.

--- Papers. PA/ 96/159, Box 9, SLV.

Hodge, Bob and Vijay Mishra. *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Post-Colonial Mind*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1990.

Hooker, Jeremy. *The Presence of the Past*: *Essays on Modern British and American Poetry* Bridgend. Poetry Wales Press. 1987.

--- *Writers in a Landscape*. Cardiff: U Wales Press, 1996.

Hope, A.D. Papers. Ms 5836, NLA.

--- Papers. Menzies Library, Australian National University.

--- “McAuley.” Commonwealth Literary Fund lecture, 17 October 1948, Ms A.D. Hope papers, Menzies Library.

--- “McAuley (2).” Commonwealth Literary Fund lecture, 20 October 1949, Ms A.D. Hope papers, Menzies library.

--- “Seminar V: James McAuley.” University of Queensland, Commonwealth Literary Fund Seminars in Australian Poetry for 1954, Box 11, McAuley papers, Ms 7920, SLNSW.

--- “The Discursive Mode: Reflections on the Ecology of Poetry.” *Quadrant*, 1, I, December 1956. 27-33.

--- “Captain Quiros.” *Twentieth Century*, 19, Spring 1964, 107-116.

--- “Free Verse: A Post Mortem.” *Quadrant*, 4.2, 1960, 49-58.

--- *Collected Poems*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1977.

--- Introduction & “In Memorium J.P.M, 1976.” in ‘*A World of its Own:’ Poems by James McAuley: Paintings by Patricia Giles*, Canberra: Australian National U Press, 1977, 7-10, 53.

--- “Poetry and the Art of Archery.” *Quadrant*, 23.12, 1979, 4-7.

--- *Chance Encounters*. Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1992.

Horne, Donald. Papers. Ms 3525, SLNSW.

--- *The Education of Young Donald*. Ringwood: Penguin, 1975.

--- “Dysfunctional Exorcism.” Rev. of *The Devil and James McAuley*, by Cassandra Pybus, *The Australian Review of Books,* 23 November 1999, 4-6.

Hudson, Wayne. *Australian Religious Thought.* Clayton: Monash UP, 2016.

Huggan, Graham. “Decolonising the Map.” in *PCSR*, 1989, 354-358.

Hughes, Robert. “The Wrong End of Modernity.” Rev. of *EM*, *Australian Letters,* 2.3, 1959, 45-47.

Hulse, Michael. “Winter at the Heart of Praise.” Rev. of *James McAuley*, ed. Leonie Kramer, *P.N. Review,* 16.1, 1989, 52-53.

Hunt, Peter. Letter. *Quadrant*, 25-7, 1981, 79.

---“Some Perspective in Order.” *Quadrant,* 45.5, 2001, 5-6.

Indyk, Ivor. “The Pastoral Poets.” *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*, ed. Laurie Hergenhan, Ringwood: Penguin, 1988, 368-369.

Ingamells, Rex. *The Great South Land*. Melbourne: Georgian House, 1951.

Inge, W.R. *The End of an Age*. London: Putnam, 1948.

Iser, Wolfgang. *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetics*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U Press, 1978.

Isherwood, Christopher. ed. *Vedanta for the Western World*. 1949, New Delhi: Isha Books, 2013.

James, Clive. "There You Come Home." *Quadrant*, 55.4, 2011, 12-14.

--- "On Auden's Death." *Cultural Cohesion: The Essential Essays, 1968-2002*, London/New York: Norton 2013, 3-18.

Jameson, Fredrich. "The Antinomies of Utopia." *Imagining the Future: Utopia and Dystopia*, ed. Andrew Milner, Matthew Ryan and Robert Savage, *Arena Journal*, 25/26, 2006, 15-36.

Johnston, G.K.W. "Blood and Darkness." Rev. of *EM*, *Observer,* 25 July 1959, 470.

Jones, Evan. "Australian Poetry Since 1920." in *The Literature of Australia*, ed. Geoffrey Dutton, Ringwood: Penguin, 1964, 101-133.

Jones, David. *The Anathemata*. London: Faber, 1952.

Jose, Nicholas. ed. *The Literature of Australia*. New York/London: Norton, 2009.

Joske, W.D. "Orr, Sydney S.," Australian Dictionary of Biography http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/orr-sydney-sparkes-11314

Kane, Paul. *Australian Poetry: Romanticism and Negativity.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996.

Kelly, Celsus, ed. *Australia del Espiritu Santo*. 2 Vols. Cambridge: Hakluyt Society and Cambridge UP, 1966.

Kelly, T.J. "James McAuley (born 1917)." *The Focal Word*, Brisbane: The Jacarandah Press, 1966, 307-309.

Kendall, Henry. "The Beautiful Manning." (1881) *Poetical Works of Henry Kendall*, Adelaide: Thomas Thornton Reed, 1966, 453-454.

Kermode, Frank. "The European View of Christopher Brennan." *Australian Letters*, 3, 3, 1961, 57-61.

Kirkpatrick, Peter. "Patience and Despair: James McAuley's Pessimism." *Southerly,* 44.2, 1984, 191-205.

--- (and David Musgrave). "Friction as a Social Process: Reading Ern Malley." *Southerly*, 60.1, 2000, 131-145.

Kramer, Leonie. "James McAuley's 'Captain Quiros.'" *Southerly*, 25.3, 1965, 147-61.

--- "James McAuley – Tradition in Australian Poetry." Commonwealth Literary Fund Lecture, 11 September, 1957.

--- "James McAuley." *Quadrant*, 20.11, 1976, 1976, 5.

--- "What Did James McAuley Do with his Life?" *Quadrant*, 29.10, 1985, 34-40.

--- *A World Unsimplified*. Hobart: U of Tasmania Occasional Paper 47, 1988, 1-14.

--- "The Real James McAuley." *Quadrant*, 43.10, 1999, 55-56.

Lawrence, D. H. *Kangaroo*. (1923) Sydney: Collins, 1989.

---"The Spirit of Place." *Studies in Classic American Literature*, 1923.

Lehmann, Geoffrey. "James McAuley: Literary Criticism in the Form of a Memoir." *Quadrant*, 46.12, 2002, 54-58.

Levinson, Michael. *Cambridge Companion to Modernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.

Lluede, Elizabeth Maire. "The 'new' Australian poetry: modernist and postmodernist poetics and twentieth-century Australian poetry." Unpublished PhD dissertation, Macquarie University, 1994.

McLaren, John. "Poets Against Novelists – Cold War Courts and Crusades." *Journal of Australian Studies*, 22, 1988, 93.

--- *Writing in Hope and Fear: Literature as Politics in Postwar Australia*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996.

McCredden, Lyn. "James McAuley's Captain Quiros." *Australian Literary Studies,* 13.1, 1987, 54-64.

--- "Language and Belief: The Poetry of James McAuley." Unpublished PhD thesis, U of Melbourne, 1987.

--- "Any Hope of Self-Construction? McAuley's poems about Autobiography." *Southern Review*, 22, March 1989, 61-74.

--- "Between Position and Desire: The Love Poetry of James McAuley." *Southerly,* 1, 1991, 35-54.

--- *James McAuley: Australian Writers.* Melbourne: Oxford UP 1992.

--- "Mastering Romanticism: The Struggle for Vocation in the Texts of James McAuley." *Imagining Romanticism: Essays in English and Australian Romanticism*; ed. Deidre Coleman and Peter Otto, West Cornwall, Connecticut: Locust Hill Press, 1992, 265 – 273.

McCulloch, Ann. ed. *Dance of the Nomad: A Study of the Selected Notebooks of A. D. Hope*. Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2005.

McInerney, Stephen. "James McAuley: Strength in Weakness." *Quadrant*, 59.12, 2015, 96.

McIntyre, Kenneth. in *Proceedings of the Second Australian Symposium on the Mahogany Ship.* Warrnambool: Warrnambool Institute Press, 1987, 181.

McKernan, Susan. *A Question of Commitment: Australian Literature in the Twenty Years after the War*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989.

McQueen, Humphrey. *The Black Swan of Trespass*: *The Emergence of Modernist Painting in Australia to 1944*. Sydney: Alternative Publishing Cooperative Limited, 1979.

Macainsh, Noel. "Music in Mirabell." *Quadrant,* 28.9, 1984, 18-23.

--- "The Late Poems of James McAuley." *The Pathos of Distance*, Bern: Peter Lang, 1992, 215-228.

Macedo, Helder. *Camões e a Viagem Iniciática*. Lisboa: Moraes, 1980.

Mackaness, George. Papers. NLA, Ms 534.

Magalhães, Joaquim Manuel. *Dylan Thomas: Consequência da Literatura e do Real na sua Poesia*. Lisboa: Assírio & Alvim, 1981.

Magee, Louis. Unpublished interview with writer. Canberra, 26-27 March 2015.

Malouf, David. *A Spirit of Play: The Making of Australian Consciousness*. Sydney: Boyer Lectures, ABC Books, 1998.

Malraux, André. "La Création Artistique, III." in *Les Voix du Silence,* Paris: La Galerie de la Pléiade, 1951.

Martin, Sylvia. *Ida Leeson: A Life: Not A Blue-Stocking Lady*. Crows Nest: Allen &Unwin, 2006.

Massey, Doreen. *Of Space.* London: Sage, 2005.

Maver, Igor. "The Mirabell Garden Revisited: Poets of the Ghostly – Pale Moon and Leaden Sky – James McAuley and Georg Trakl." *Outrider: A Year of Australian Literature, 1990*, ed. Manfred Jurgensen, Brisbane: Phoenix, 106-121. Rep in Igor Maver, *Readings in Australian Literature*, Bern: Peter Lang, 1997.

Maxwell, Sarah. interview with Keith Harrison. (apps.campus.edu/now/stories/story—id=4032) 4/12/2002.

Mead, Philip. Rev. of *James McAuley*, ed. Leonie Kramer. *Australian Literary Studies*, 14.4, 1990, 518-22.

--- *Networked Language: Cultural History in Australian Poetry*. Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008.

Melleuish, Gregory. “James McAuley and the End of Modernity.” Colloquium “The Christian View of History and the Revival of the Liberal Arts,” *Connor Court Quarterly*, 5/6, December 2012.

Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. (1667) London/New York: Norton, 2005.

Mitchell, Adrian. “McAuley’s Choice.” Rev. of *A Map of Australian Verse* by James McAuley. *Quadrant*, 20.3,1976, 55-57.

Mitchell, Lt Col. Sir Thomas Livingston. trans. *The Lusiad of Luis de Camoens*. London: T.W. Boone 1854.

Morgan, Patrick, ed. *B. A. Santamaria: Your Most Obedient Servant: Selected Letters, 1938-1996*. Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2007.

Mudie, Ian. “My Land.” *The New Book of Australian Verse*, ed. Les Murray, Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1996, 167.

Murray, Les. “James McAuley – A Personal Appreciation.” *The Peasant Mandarin*, St Lucia: U of Queensland Press, 1978, 185-190.

--- *Collected Poems,* Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1991.

Naragarajah, S. “The Personal Element in James McAuley’s Poetry.” *EACLACS*, 4, 1976.

Neilson, John Shaw. “The Orange Tree.” *The Poems of John Shaw Neilson,* ed. A.R. Chisholm, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1973, 63.

Nerval, Gerard de. “Sylvie.” *Aurelia.* trans. Richard Aldington, London: Chatto and Windus, 1932.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spake Zarathustra: A Book for All and None.* (1993-1891) trans. Thomas Common, New York: Macmillan, 1916.

---*Beyond Good and Evil*. (1886) trans. Helen Zimmern, Gutenberg: Ebook #4363, 2013.

O’Connell, Lucy. “The Liturgy in James McAuley’s Poetry.” *Quadrant*, 47.1-2, 2003, 91- 93.

Ogburn, John. “The End of Modernity.” *Westerly*, 2, 1960, 37-8.

Ortega y Gasset, José. *The Revolt of the Masses*. (*Le Rebelión de las Masas,* 1930) New York: Norton, 1932.

Page, Jean. “Writing from the periphery: the haunted landscapes of James McAuley.” *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, 14. 1, 2014.

---“‘Land of Apocalypse:’ James McAuley’s Encounter with the Spirit: the French Catholic Missions of the Sacred Heart, Kubuna and Yule Island, New Guinea.” *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society (ACHS),* 37-1, 2016, 18-31.

Pallis, Marco. Prologue to "A Fateful Meeting of Minds: A.K Coomaraswamy and R. Guénon." *The Essential Ananda K. Coomaraswamy*, ed. Rama P. Coomaraswamy, Bloomington: World Wisdom 2004.

Panofsky, Erwin. *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1954.

Passmore, John. *A Hundred Years of Philosophy*. London: Duckworth, 1957.

Pasternak, Boris. *Poems 1955-1959.* (1960) trans. Michael Harari, republished as *Late Poems*, Warwick: Greville Press Pamphlets, 2006.

Pearce, A.E. "Modernist Poetry: the Case Contra." *The Australian Mercury*, 1.1, 1935, 77.

Perkins, David. *A History of Modern Poetry: Modernism and After*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1987.

Pessoa, Fernando. "Primeiro: O dos Castellos." in *Message*, trans. Richard Zenith, Cruz Quebrada: Oficina do Livro, 2008.

--- "Towards Explaining Heteronymy." Letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro of 13 January 1935. in Reginald Gibbons, ed. *The Poets Work: 29 Poets on the Origin and Practice of their Art*, Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1979, 5-15.

Pierce, Peter. "Full of Returns." Review of *Collected Poems*, by James McAuley, Angus and Robertson, 1994, *Quadrant*, 39.4, 1995, 88-89.

--- "McAuley, James Philip (1917-1976)." *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 15, Melbourne UP, 2000.

Pineau, A. *Marie Thérèse Noblet*. Paris: Issoudoun, 1938.

Plato. *The Republic*. Book III, trans Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy, Cambridge Mass: Harvard/Loeb, 2013.

Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturations*. London: Routledge 1992.

--- "Mapping Ideology: Gide, Camus and Algeria." *College Literature,*1981.

Pybus, Cassandra. *Gross Moral Turpitude: The Orr Case Reconsidered.* Port Melbourne: Heinemann, 1993.

--- "The Devil and James McAuley: The Making of a Cold War Warrior." *Australian Literature and the Public Sphere*: ed. Alison Bartlett, Robert Dixon and Christopher Lee, Refereed Proceedings of the 1998 Conference of the Association for the Studies of Australian Literature, St Lucia: U Queensland, Toowoomba, 3-7 July 1998. 111-123.

--- *The Devil and James McAuley*. St Lucia: U Queensland Press, 1999.

Queirós, Eça. “Prefácio dos Azulejos do Conde Arnoso.” *Notas Contemporâneas*, Lisboa: Livros do Brasil, 1886, 95-113.

Rabasa, José. “Allegories of Atlas.” (1985) *PCSR,* second edition*,* 2006, 319-324.

Ravenscroft, Alison. *The Post-Colonial Eye, White Australian Desire and the Visual Field of Race*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012

Read, Herbert. *Herbert Read: Selected Writings, Poetry and Criticism*. Foreward by Allen Tate, London: Faber, 1963.

Rhodes, F.W.W. “Simplicity and complication.” Rev. of *UA*. *Southerly,* 3, 1947, 170-75.

Ricoeur, Paul. *Oneself as Another*. trans. Kathleen Blamey, Chicago: U Chicago Press, 1992.

--- *On Translation: Thinking in Action*. introd. Richard Kearney, trans. Eileen Brennan London: Routledge, 2006.

Ridland, John. “‘Kindness and Courage:” Eight Letters from James McAuley.” *Quadrant*, 38. 7-8, 67-75.

Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Lettres à Un Jeune Poète.* (1929) trans. Bernard Grasset, Paris: Éditions Grasset,1937.

--- *Selected Poems*. trans. Susan Ranson and Marielle Sutherland, ed. Robert Vilain, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011.

Robinson, Dennis. “The Traditionalism of James McAuley.” *Australian Literary Studies*, 11. 2, 1983, 205-215.

Rosalie, Sister Mary. “Culture without Anarchy.” *Australian Letters*, 2. 3, 1959, 54-57.

Rowe, Noel. “The Catholic Element in James McAuley’s Poetry.” *Quadrant*, 28. 5, May 1984, 45-48.

--- “The Will of the Poem: Religio-Imaginative Variations in the Poetry of James McAuley, Francis Webb and Vincent Buckley.” unpublished PhD dissertation, U of Sydney, 1989.

--- “James McAuley: The Possibility of Despair.” *Southerly*, 60. 2, 2000, 26-38.

Ryan, J.S. “‘Under Aldebaran:’ Edmund Spenser and the Early McAuley.” *Notes and Furphies*, 18, April May 1987, 15-16.

Ryan, Peter. *Brief Lives*. Sydney: Duffy and Snellgrove, 2004.

Ruthven, K.K. *Faking Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001.

Said, Edward. “Orientalism.” (1978) in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, 2006, 24 – 27.

--- "Resistance, Oppression and Representation." (1993) in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, 2006, 95-98.

--- *On Late Style. Music, Literature Against the Grain*. London: Bloomsbury, 2006.

Sanders, Scott Russell. "Speaking a Word for Nature." in *The Ecocriticism Reader*, Athens: U of Georgia Press, 1996.

Santamaria, B.A. *Against the Tide*. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1981.

--- "So Clean A Spirit." *Quadrant*, 21.3, 1977, 51-54.

Scheps, Leo. "Unkellying Quiros: A Gloss on Part II of James McAuley's 'Captain Quiros.'" *Journal of Australian Studies*, 42, September 1994, 18-31.

Semmler, Clement. Rev. of *Collected Poems 1936-1970*, by James McAuley. *Hemisphere* 15.12, 1971, 41.

Sena, Jorge de, and João Gaspar Simões. "The Man Who Never Was." Address to the First International Symposium on Fernando Pessoa, Brown University, Providence, USA, 7-8 October 1977.

Sewell, Elizabeth. *The Orphic Voice*: *Poetry and Natural History*. London: Kegan Paul, 1960.

Shapcott, Tom. "Australian Poetry Since 1920." *The Literature of Australia*, ed. Geoffrey Dutton, Ringwood: Penguin, 1976, 103-148.

Sharp, Geoff. "An Artful Theory or a Theory of Art." *Meanjin*, 12.1. 1953, 114 – 116.

Sidney, Sir Philip. "An Apology for Poetry." *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch, New York: Norton, 2001, 326-362.

Silberer, Herbert. *Problems of Mysticism and its Symbolism*. trans. Smith Ely Jelliffe. New York: Moffat, Yard, 1917.

Simpson. Colin. "Ern Malley, Poet of Debunk: Full story from the two authors." *Fact* [Supplement to the *Sydney Sun*] 25 June 1944.

Slessor, Kenneth. *Selected Poems.* Sydney. Angus and Robertson, 1993.

Smith, Vivian. "James McAuley's Recent Poetry." Commonwealth Literary Fund Lectures 1962, ANU, August 1964, 7-26.

--- *James McAuley: Australian Writers and their Work*. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1965. Rev. ed., 1970.

--- "Poetry." *The Oxford History of Australian Literature*, ed. L. Kramer, Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1981, 371-391.

--- "Tasmania and Australian Poetry." *Quadrant*, 27.10, 1983, 28-36.

Snow, C.P. Quoted in *Angry Penguins and Realist Painting in Melbourne in the 1940s*. Hayward Gallery. Catalogue. London: South Bank, 1988.

Spate, O.H.K. "Luso-Australia: In Maps and Verse." *Revista da Universidade de Coimbra* (separata), 27, 1979, 219-237.

Spengler, Oscar. *The Decline of the West*. (*Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, 1922), trans. Charles. F. Atkinson, New York: Alfred Kopf, 1926.

Steele, Peter. "Recent Poetry." Rev. of *Captain Quiros*, by James McAuley, *Meanjin Quarterly,* 23.4, 1964, 439-441.

Stegner, Wallace. "The Sense of Place." *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs*, New York: Penguin, 1993.

Stewart, Douglas. "Poetry and Polysyllables." Rev. of *UA*, *Bulletin*, 1 January 1947, 2.

Stewart, Harold. Papers. Ms 8973, NLA.

--- "T.S. Eliot and the New World." *Hermes*, 40. 2, 1934, 9-11.

--- "A Personal Reconciliation of Science and Poetry." *Union Recorder,* 20 October 1938, 251.

--- Letter to Harry Hooton. "Dionysus Ad Lib." *Arna,* 3, 1942, 1-32.

--- "Harris Harrassed. [sic]" Rev. of *Dramas from the Sky*, by Max Harris, *Honi Soit,* 21 May 1942, 2.

--- *Phoenix Wings. Poems 1946-1948*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1948.

--- trans. *A Net of Fireflies: Japanese Haiku and Haiku Painting*. Rutland, Vermont/Tokyo: C.E. Tuttle, 1960.

--- trans. *A Chime of Windbells: A Year of Japanese Haiku in English Verse.* Rutland, Vermont/Tokyo: C.E. Tuttle, 1969.

Strauss, Jennifer. "Holding the Lamp Steady." Rev. of *James McAuley*, ed. Leonie Kramer. *Phoenix Review,* 3, 1988, 109-114.

--- "From Heroism to Pietàs." *Meanjin*, 48. 3, 1989, 597-610.

Talbot, Norman. "Reasonable, Decorous and Epic." *Quadrant*, 8.4, 1964, 69-75.

Taylor, Andrew. *Reading Australian Poetry*. St Lucia: U Queensland Press, 1987.

Thoene, Peter. *Modern German Art*. trans. Charles Fullman, Introd. Herbert Read, London: Pelican, 1938.

Thompson, John. "The Ern Malley Story: An Australian Broadcasting Commission feature." (1960) Appendix. *For the Uncanny Man: Essays Mainly Literary*, by Clement Semmler,

Melbourne/ Canberra/Sydney: Cheshire, 1963, 160-183. Rep. as 'Ern Malley Statement' in *JM*, 147-148.

--- "Poetry in Australia: James McAuley." *Southerly*, 27. 2, 1967, 96-106.

Thompson, Laura and Alice Joseph. *Culture in Crisis: A Study of the Hopi Indians*. New York: Harper, 1947.

Thoreau, H.D. *Walden. Life in the Woods.* 1854, Chapter XVIII, Conclusion, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/205/205-h/205-h.htm, accessed 14 October 2107.

Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Conquest of America. (1982)* trans. Richard Howard, New York: Harper 1984.

Toohey, John. *Quiros*. Sydney: Duffy and Snellgrove, 2002.

Tranter, John. ed. *The New Australian Poetry*. St Lucia: Makar, 1979.

--- "Australian Poetry 1940-1980: A Personal View." *Poetry Foundation*, 169.1, October 1996, 86-93.

Tranter, John and Philip Mead. eds. and introd. *The Penguin Book of Modern Australian Poetry*. Ringwood: Penguin, 1991.

Treece, Henry. *How I see Apocalypse*. London: Lindsay Drummond, 1946.

Trilling, Lionel. *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1951.

Tulip, James. Rev. of *Surprises of the Sun. Southerly,* 29, 1969, 309-15.

Turner, Frederick. "Cultivating the American Garden." *The Ecocriticism Reader*, eds. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, Athens: The U of Georgia Press, 1996.

Van den Berg, J.H. *A Different Existence: Principles of Phenomenological Psychotherapy*. (1972) trans. anon., Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2005.

Venuti, Laurence. ed. *The Translation Studies Reader*. 2nd ed., New York: Routledge, 2004.

Vassilieff, Elizabeth. "The Temple and the People's Palace." *Meanjin,* 12.2, 1953, 209 – 216.

Voegelin, Eric. *The New Science of Politics*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1952.

Wagner, Luke. "New Paintings by Luke Wagner: 'In His Sleep.' Based on Poems by James McAuley." Coleville Gallery, Hobart, 12 October-1 November 2017.

Waldock. A.J.A. *Paradise Lost and its Critics*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1947.

Walcott, Derek. "The Muse of History." (1974) *PCSR*, 2006, 329.

Wallace-Crabbe, Chris. “Two Explorations.” Rev. of *EM*, *Overland,* 16, 1959, 39-40.

--- “‘Beware of the Past:’ James McAuley’s Early Poetry.” *Meanjin*, 30. 3, 1971, 323-30.

--- *Three Absences in Australian Writing*. Townsville: Foundation for Australian Literary Studies, 1983, 16-17.

Wellek, René. *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950. Vol. I.* New Haven: Yale, 1955.

Wellek, René and Austin Warren. *The Theory of Literature*. (1949) Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963.

West, Simon. “Oracles and the Intellect: James McAuley in the Centenary of his Birth.” *Sydney Review of Books*, 6 October, 2017, 1-15.

White, Patrick. *Voss*. (1957) Ringwood: Penguin, 1960.

Wilde, Oscar. *The Decay of Lying, and Other Essays*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2010.

Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City.* 1973, London: Hogarth Press, 1993.

Wilkes, G. A. *Australian Literature: A Conspectus.* Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1969.

Wimsatt, W.K. *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*. (1954) London: Methuen, 1970.

Winter, John. Unpublished interview with writer. Hobart, 14 August 2014, writer’s papers.

Winters, Yvor. *Forms of Discovery: Critical and Historical Essays on the Form of the Short Poem*. Athens: Ohio UP, 1967.

Witting, Amy. *I for Isabel*. Ringwood: Penguin, 1989.

--- interview with Michael Heyward. 11 July 1989. Michael Heyward Papers, PA/ 96/ 159, Box 9, SLV.

--- “Brotherly Affection.” *The Australian*, 14-15 August 1999.

--- “Posthumous Dialogue Concerning Certain Errors in Michael Ackland’s *Damaged Men.*” *Quadrant*, 45.11, 2001, 37-39.

Wordsworth, William. “Essays Upon Epitaphs.” *Selected Prose,* ed. John O. Hayden, London: Penguin Classics, 1988, 322-370.

--- “The Prelude.” 12.208-218. *Wordsworth, New Oxford English Series, Selected Prose and Poetry*, ed. John Butt, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1964, 70.

--- Preface *to Lyrical Ballads.* (*1800) Wordsworth*, ed. John Butt, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1964, 210-213.

--- *The Waggoner*. ed. Paul F. Betz, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981.

Wright, Judith. "Art and Tradition – A Rejoinder." *Australian Quarterly*, 24.1, 1952, 73-76.

--- *Preoccupations in Australian Poetry*. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1965.

Yeats, W.B. *W.B. Yeats: The Poems*. ed. Richard J. Finneran, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983.

Albrecht Dürer. *Innsbruck 1494-1497*
Albertine Museum, Vienna

Franz Marc. *Tower of Blue Horses*
Location unknown

Patricia Giles. Watercolour “Courting Swans” facing
McAuley’s “Swans on Moulting Lagoon”
A World of its Own, 1977, 37.

SWANS ON MOULTING LAGOON

The green weed bordering the lake turns red,
As autumn brings the duck-shoot season in.
Thatched with brush, the hunters' hides are ranged
Like small square boxes over the wide lagoon.
And later for a few days there will be
The swan-shoot. Thus for all the year
The swans retain a nervous dread of man:
At even the most distant approach they move
Far out and keep in readiness to fly,
With anxious calls, and wing-beats flashing white.

James McAuley. Calligraphy "Swans on Moulting Lagoon"
facing Patricia Giles "Courting Swans"
A World of its Own, 1977, 36.