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Both Marie Stopes in England and Margaret Sanger in America felt that he did not always sufficiently acknowledge their contribution, while Ellis seemed to accord his younger colleague only a grudging respect, and there was a whiff of anti-Semitism to his description of Haire as being 'a little too Jewish' (did he mean pushy?). Wyndham does her best to give us Haire's side of these sometimes petty rivalries, but occasionally there is some strain evident in her determined defence of Haire's reputation. His practice of what was called 'rejuvenation', which was particularly profitable, is a case in point. 'Juvenescence' had been pioneered by Eugen Steinach, who believed that vasectomy, in stopping the reproductive function, would allow hormones to be redirected to reducing or reversing senility. Haire adopted Steinach's method, and among his well-known patients was the Irish poet W.B. Yeats, who was obsessed with the link he perceived between sexual potency and creativity. Bearing in mind that Haire later conceded that the procedures used in rejuvenation were 'of little practical value', Wyndham devotes some fifteen laborious pages to the Yeats case, struggling to argue that the operation and treatment nevertheless benefited Yeats, if only through Haire's advice on diet and, more generally, the placebo effect. This might be relevant to a biography of Yeats, but it does not really help Haire: one is left with the suspicion that he might have been a bit too eager to seize the financial rewards which rejuvenation offered.

So, too, Wyndham seems uncertain how to deal with Haire's eugenicist views, which persisted through World War II and were evident in the 1944 population debate, when he said that it was the 'quality' not the 'quantity' of children produced that counted. In his trail-blazing *The Sex Lives of Australians: A History* (2012), Frank Bongiorno points out that in 1927 Haire argued that, if contraception and abortion failed to prevent the unfit from reproducing, 'defective babies' should be examined by a board of medical experts to determine whether the infant lived or died. Wyndham does not make this kind of chilling detail available to us.

*Norman Haire and the Study of Sex* is one of those books – increasingly common these days – which could have done with a good editor. Wyndham has Norman's father applying for Australian citizenship in 1870, when 'Australia', let alone Australian citizenship, did not exist. Haire's 'partner', Willem van de Hagt, is casually mentioned on page 228, but only on page 297 do we learn that he was administrator of the Rotterdam Zoo and also Haire's 'contraceptive supplier'. Any attempt to explain their apparently secretive relationship is saved up for the conclusion. These and other examples of carelessness or inconsistency left me with the feeling that the text was still in need of a final edit.

Wyndham does, however, show us Haire at his best in bringing scientific understanding and, indeed, common sense to a range of sexual issues. He insisted that birth control should be discussed openly. Similarly, the taboo against sex education had to be broken. Women had a right to the sexual satisfaction men took for granted; Haire did not shrink from stressing the importance of the female orgasm. He dismissed the widespread belief among medicos that masturbation was somehow unhealthy as lacking any scientific basis. He was an eloquent proponent of a new sexual morality which would see the old disabling myths about sexuality consigned to the past.

Wyndham also highlights the suspicion with which Australian authorities treated Haire during the war. British sources had made the unlikely suggestion that he was a secret member of the Communist Party. An Australian detective, pursuing Haire, thought he looked Jewish and 'decidedly foreign'. Politicians were appalled that the ABC had invited him to participate in the population debate. To his credit, Charles Moses, the ABC general manager, fended off the demands that Haire be banned from the national broadcaster.

Diana Wyndham has done well to bring Norman Haire, our own celebrity sexologist, to our attention. ■

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## Life Cycle of the Eel

A flash like silver cufflinks  
ribbons off into river grass:  
a fluid lick of nickel,  
the sidle and slather of eel.  
Eyes flat as dishpans  
and night-sweat slick,  
it flutters out of its den  
in slow ouroboros,  
a struggling lasso  
of almost human skin.  
No beauty is quite  
like the fan and fluting of glass  
it spawns in the reeds,  
a trail of clear jelly streamers  
riding the gulf stream  
to the Sargasso Sea.  
Its accent is Scots: elves,  
corruption of eel-fair.  
Sexless, according to Aristotle,  
born of the slime of sea rocks  
or the guts of wet soil.  
Tonight I thought I saw  
a silvering eel climb  
out of a country stream  
and snake its visible heart  
through the soaked grass:  
migrant of the seas,  
line and vector stretching  
in a single direction,  
its head turned from me  
like an omen,  
unknowable, knowing.

Sarah Holland-Batt