

澳大利亚文学论集

A Chinese Perspective on Australian Literature

胡 文 仲

Hu Wenzhong

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前言

1979—1981 年我在悉尼大学读了两年澳大利亚文学 ,从此我就和它结下了不解之缘 ,从 1980 年到 1994 年我在文学杂志和学术会议上陆续发表了一些文章 ,大部分发表在国内 ,有一部分刊载于国外的杂志。从内容上看 ,可以分为四类 :一类是对于澳大利亚文学的评论 ,一类是对作家的访问记 ,一类是书评 ,最后一类是对于澳大利亚文学教学的探讨和对于澳大利亚文学翻译的初步调查。由于我的偏爱 ,主要部分是对于小说和戏剧的评论 ,对于诗歌评论甚少 ,实际上 ,澳大利亚颇有一些优秀的诗人和作品值得介绍。

在评论中涉及到众多的作家 ,有些只是三言两语 ,简单提及 ,但关于帕特里克·怀特本人及其作品的却占了大约一半的篇幅 ,这固然是因为我对于怀特的作品有较多的兴趣 ,和他又有过一段交往 ,但更重要的是怀特在澳大利亚文学发展中占据着举足轻重的地位。他在小说和戏剧创作中将现代派的手法和澳大利亚的特殊环境结合起来 ,开创了一个新的时代。这就是人们所说的“怀特时代”。正是由于怀特和其他一些作家的努力 ,澳大利亚的文坛出现了生机勃勃的局面。

在将文章收入集子时 ,没有作实质性的改动 ,只是个别文字作了一些修正 ,译名予以统一。有的事实虽已与今天有出入(例如某个作家的作品数量) ,但为了忠实于写文章时的情况并未作更改。由于文章写作时间前后相隔十几年 ,因此对于同一作家或作品我在看法上也有些变化 ,在结集时原则上予以保留。

国内澳大利亚文学研究进展很快 ,成果累累 ,除了翻译作品 ,评论集亦开始出现 ,我愿以拙著就教于同行。

胡文仲
于北京外国语大学

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悉尼来信^①

× × 同志：

来信收到了。您要我介绍一下澳大利亚文学的情况，可惜我所知有限，只能为您画一个轮廓而已。

澳大利亚文学通常划分为三个发展时期：

1) 殖民地时期(1788—1880)。这个时期的作品多出自英国移民中的作家之手，以英国文学的模式套澳大利亚的现实。作品表现的是英国人眼中的澳大利亚，往往投合英国人的喜好。

2) 民族主义时期(1880—1920)。这是澳大利亚政治上从殖民地转变为一个独立国家的时期。在十九世纪“九十年代”这一时期，环绕着《公报》杂志(The Bulletin) 有一批具有强烈民族主义情绪的作家和诗人，包括亨利·劳森(Henry Lawson, 1867—1922)、约瑟夫·弗菲(Joseph Furphy, 1843—1912)、安德鲁·巴顿·帕特逊(Andrew Barton Paterson, 1864—1941)等。他们主张澳文学应有自己的特点，并应在创作中加以体现。

3) 现代时期(1920—)。两次大战之间文学精品较少，五十年代以后文学创作趋向活跃。六十年代至七十年代初期有进一步发展，涌现出一批青年作家。

澳大利亚的诗歌

以成就而论，澳大利亚文学中的诗歌、小说胜过戏剧。诗人中

① 原载《外国文学》1980 年第 4 期。

当首推霍普 (A. D. Hope , 1907—)。他很早就开始写诗 ,但他的第一本诗集直到 1955 年才出版。霍普早期的作品属讽刺诗 ,有讽刺诗人之称。实际上 ,他诗作的题材范围宽广。布鲁斯·金 (Bruce King) 在 1979 年最后一期《西旺尼评论》 (Sewanee Review) 上专门介绍了霍普的诗 ,称霍普为当代一位主要诗人 ,很可能是最近二三十年来英语国家中最优秀的诗人。从四十年代起 ,霍普和澳大利亚另一位诗人詹姆士·麦考利 (James McAuley , 1917—1976) 一起力主在诗歌方面做一番改革 ,排除狭隘的民族主义情绪 ,摆脱时髦流派的影响 ,将澳诗人的想象力和欧洲文艺传统结合起来。这两个人既是诗人 ,又是评论家 ,在大学里亦占有重要位置 ,因此对澳大利亚诗歌的发展方向有相当大的影响。澳诗在形式和语言方面近似英诗。当代诗人中朱迪丝·赖特 (Judith Wright , 1915—)、肯尼思·斯莱瑟 (Kenneth Slessor , 1901—1971)、道格拉斯·斯图尔特 (Douglas Stewart , 1913—1985) 虽然风格各不相同 ,在诗的形式方面却都属于传统派。莱斯·莫瑞 (Les Murray , 1938—) 则有所不同。澳评论界以往对于“九十年代”的帕特逊评价甚高 ,实际上他主要是搜集和创作民歌、歌谣。与其同时代的克里斯托夫·布里南 (Christopher Brennan , 1870—1932) 过去似乎不受评论家重视 ,当前则有一些学者专门研究他的诗 ,对他重新评价 ,指出他是澳大利亚诗人中欧洲传统根底最深的一位 ,他的诗达到很高的境界。澳诗的趋于保守 ,从澳文学史上一段小故事可以看出。麦克斯·哈里斯 (Max Harris , 1921—) 于 1941 年在阿得雷德市创办诗刊《愤怒的企鹅》 (Angry Penguins) ,自任主编 ,提倡先锋派诗歌。1944 年麦考利和另一位年青诗人合写了一首“新诗” ,诡称系二十五岁的汽车修理工厄恩·迈利 (Ern Malley) 遗作 ,投寄该刊。哈里斯喜出望外 ,热情赞颂 ,在该刊秋季号上予以发表。几周之后 ,麦考利将真相在报上披露 ,原来他们为了抗议澳诗在内容和形式方面日益堕落 ,反对以《愤怒的企鹅》为代表的文学风尚 ,故意用了一个下午拼凑此

诗,以揭露这派诗人缺乏起码的判断能力。此事不仅在澳文艺界掀起轩然大波,国际上也引起强烈反响。一夜之间,厄恩·迈利成为最著名的澳大利亚诗人,而哈里斯却处于狼狈的境地。此后不久,法院以该刊物中有“不正当的内容”为由传讯哈里斯,并课以五镑罚金。麦考利此举客观上影响了文艺上的探索,使得澳年轻诗人视文学尝试为畏途,而澳诗则更加拘于传统了。

澳大利亚的小说

澳大利亚小说家中最著名者为帕特里克·怀特(Patrick White, 1912—1990)。他生于伦敦,长在悉尼,受教育则主要在英国。1935年他自剑桥大学毕业后,辗转在国外十四年之久。1937年发表第一篇短篇小说,1939年出版第一部小说《幸福谷》(Happy Valley),此后陆续出版9部小说,2本短篇小说集,4个剧本。1973年获得诺贝尔文学奖金,成为当今国际上著名的小说家。怀特作品的主题多是描述个人与社会格格不入,人的孤独与痛苦等。风格上则独树一帜,一反澳文学现实主义与自然主义的传统。他批评澳小说是“新闻体现现实主义平淡无奇的产物”。但是,诗人、评论家霍普对怀特也很看不惯。他在1956年6月16日发表在《悉尼先驱晨报》上的一篇书评中写道:“怀特先生作为一位小说家有三个灾难性的缺点:他知道的太多,讲述的太多,议论的太多……(“He knows too much, he tells too much, he talks too much...”)不管开始读时多么有趣,读下去总会厌烦,感到痛苦,以致最后头脑麻木。”对于怀特的风格他也大加抨击,称之为“没有文化的词汇垃圾”。这样说自然未免有些尖刻,但由此也可看出怀特风格确非一般,小说家中受怀特影响较深的是伦道夫·斯托(Randolph Stow, 1935—),他出版过六部小说,四本诗集。他的小说多以澳大利亚西部为背景。他目前侨居英国,去年曾获得怀特文学奖金。与斯托同年的托马斯·基尼利(Thomas Kene-

ally)是一位多产作家,写过十四部小说,三个剧本。小说情节不少取自历史题材,例如最近出版的《南军》(Confederates)取材于美国南北战争,被英国《新小说》(New Fiction)杂志列为1979年最优秀小说之一,予以推荐。基尼利出书虽快,但写作态度严肃。他所写的《杰米的歌声》(The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith)讲述十九世纪末叶一个混血土著青年杰米的悲惨遭遇。此书前年拍成电影,上座率远远超过其它澳大利亚影片。大卫·爱尔兰(David Ireland, 1927—)的第五部小说《玻璃舟》(The Glass Canoe), 1976年出版后,引起评论界的注意,因为它写法奇特,内容也不同寻常。每一两页或两三页即成一章,故事似断似续,头绪繁多,可却是以出没于悉尼一家酒馆的一群流氓为中心而展开。此外,弗兰克·穆尔豪斯(Frank Moorhouse, 1938—)和大卫·马鲁夫(David Malouf, 1934—)也都是享有一定声誉的作家。总的来说五十年代以来不少小说无论在题材或形式上都与十九世纪澳大利亚还处于殖民地时期的小说迥然不同。当时的小说写法多属现实主义或自然主义,题材限于流放囚徒的遭遇、绿林好汉行劫、淘金热潮等等。本世纪初的女作家亨·汉·理查逊(H. H. Richardson, 1870—1946)写过几部长篇小说,个别评论家认为她的地位仅次于怀特。

澳长篇小说在十九世纪杰出作品甚少,但短篇小说却颇有建树。劳森的短篇小说具有鲜明的特色,多数取材于远离城市,人烟稀少,条件艰苦的农村。作品生活气息浓郁,而且充满幽默。如《牧人的妻子》(The Drover's Wife)刻画出一个在丈夫离家后生活极其孤独的农村妇女的形象。为了怕蛇咬伤孩子,她手握木棒,整夜守候在旁。小说通过倒叙将这位妇女坚韧、机智、勇敢的品质展现在读者面前。生活虽然艰辛,但人物却不颓丧。全篇读来生气盎然,幽默情节引人发笑。劳森本人在农村时间虽然短暂,但能抓住澳大利亚景色和人物的特点,有的评论家将劳森誉为“澳大利亚的良心”。他二十五岁时已经为人所知,之后的十年是他创作

的全盛时期,再往后他的作品菁芜夹杂,就远不如前了。晚年酗酒,家庭生活不幸,自己又坐过牢。1916年经朋友多方设法,才在灌溉区谋了一个差事,糊口度日,于1922年逝世。在悉尼市中心附近有劳森的铜像,许多城市有“劳森公园”、“劳森大街”、“劳森饭店”、“劳森书店”等等。最近还上映了根据劳森短篇小说改编的电视片。澳人民对劳森本人及其作品的喜爱由此可见。

当代短篇小说家除怀特外,要数哈尔·波特(Hal Porter, 1911—1984)。波特出版过三部小说,也写过不少诗。他对语言的运用十分精辟。早期作品辞藻过于花哨,斧凿之痕比比皆是。但总的说来,他的作品,尤其是成熟作品,用词方面是有别于其他人而自成一体的。此外,早期的万斯·帕尔默(Vance Palmer, 1885—1959)不仅是五部短篇小说集的作者,而且是一位评论家,一位在澳文艺界中曾经很有影响的人物。彼得·考恩(Peter Cowan, 1914—)除了写短篇小说外,也写过长篇作品。

六十年代后期到七十年代初在澳文艺界是一个活跃时期。反对越南战争的声浪冲破了南大陆的平静,文学创作上也有强烈的反响。这个时期的短篇小说家象穆尔豪斯,迈克尔·威尔丁(Michael Wilding, 1942—),默里·贝尔(Murray Bail, 1941—),彼得·凯里(Peter Carey, 1943—),莫里斯·卢瑞(Morris Lurie, 1938—)等都在创作中探索新的形式,表现新的内容。除卢瑞外,这些作家都住在悉尼近郊巴尔曼区(Balmain),因此又有“巴尔曼派”之称。这派作家的一个共同特点是突破澳短篇小说的传统,对于人物刻画和社会环境不十分重视,而把故事的形式和文体风格放在首位。在内容方面,主要表现城市生活。贝尔的一篇短篇小说题目与劳森半个多世纪以前所写的一篇相同,也是《牧人的妻子》(The Drover's Wife),但内容不仅两样,形式也迥异。故事以谈澳著名画家拉赛尔·德赖兹德尔(Russell Drysdale)的一幅画《牧人的妻子》开始:这幅画的标题可能是弄错了,不过这也无关紧要。画上的那位妇女不是‘牧人

的妻子’ ,她是我的妻子。我们如今已不见面。……总有三十年了吧。”然后讲述他妻子海赛尔 (Hazel) 怎样离家出走与一个牧人结合等等。另一篇的题目是 A , B , C , D , E , F , G , H , I , J , K , L , M , N , O , P , Q , R , S , T , U , V , W , X , Y , Z , 讲的却是一个英国女人和一个巴基斯坦画家的恋爱经过。巴尔曼派作家目前虽都还在继续写作 , 但象七十年代初期那样的作品已不多见。

澳大利亚的戏剧和电影

戏剧是五十年代中期以后才发展起来的 , 历史较短。主要剧作家有大卫·威廉逊 (David Williamson) , 所作《北游》轰动一时 , 此外还有亚历克斯·布佐 (Alex Buzo , 1944—) , 杰克·希伯德 (Jack Hibberd , 1940—) 等。剧院上演的澳大利亚戏剧近十年来不断增加。“澳大利亚演出组” (the Australian Performing Group) 是六十年代中期以墨尔本大学为基地发展起来的。悉尼有两个主要剧团 , 一是尼姆罗德剧院 (Nimrod Theatre) , 演出澳剧已有十年历史。另一个是悉尼剧团 (Sydney Theatre Company) , 不久前改组 , 明确提出演出节目“应反映我们目前所处的社会”。

电影的发展可分为两个时期。在 1901 至 1920 年间 , 澳电影发展迅速 , 共发行近二百部影片。之后进入萧条时期。二次大战后 , 美、英电影公司通过所谓与澳合拍影片的方式控制了澳电影业。六十年代以来 , 澳电影又渐有起色。1975 到 1977 年共拍故事片 45 部 , 但质量大都低劣 , 有的影评家认为三分之二以上的影片都是失败的。1978 年拍摄的故事片《新闻战线》 (Newsfront) 描述五十年代两家新闻制片厂之间的激烈竞争。影片中穿插了许多珍贵的新闻资料 , 导演手法有新颖独到之处 , 不仅在国内获得多项头等奖 , 票房收入甚丰 , 在国外也获了奖。去年下半年已在美国放映。

澳大利亚的文艺评论

文艺评论刊物最早出现的是《公报》,创办人是阿奇博尔德(J. H. Archibald, 1856—1919)。文艺评论家斯梯芬思(A. G. Stephens, 1865—1933)曾任该刊文学评论专栏“红页”(the Red Page)主编,发表过不少精辟的评论文章,为推动民族文化的发展进行了广泛的组织工作,起了相当大的作用。当时文艺界无人不知 A. G. S. 这位活动家。《公报》目前仍在出版,但内容编排已有很大变化,类似美国的《新闻周刊》。主要内容是新闻、政治评论等。今年是该刊创刊一百周年,目前正在举行各种庆祝活动。1939年创刊的《南风》(Southerly)和1940年开始出版的《密安津》(Meanjin)在评论界影响较大。《南风》以悉尼为中心,评论限于澳大利亚作品,而《密安津》原创办于布里斯班(Meanjin一词在土著语言中即指布里斯班),1959年迁到墨尔本,无论作品或评论文章都不限于本国,但近年来也着力于发展澳大利亚文学,对欧美文学评论相对减少。1954年创办的《陆路》(Overland)政治上偏左,1958年与澳共“现实主义作家小组”脱离关系之后,在编辑方针上愈益接近《密安津》。1965年创立的《四分仪》(Quadrant)主编是诗人麦考利,政治倾向属于右翼。1963年开始在布里斯班出版的《澳大利亚文学研究》(Australian Literary Studies),双季刊,专门刊登评论澳文学的文章,不登诗歌、短篇小说等作品。此外,几家大报在周末一期也登载一些新书介绍,书评、剧评、影评等。

澳文学评论界经常争论的一个问题是以什么标准来衡量作品。早在1856年就有评论家提出作品中不应过分突出所谓“澳大利亚性”。随后就出现所谓“民族主义派”(Nationalists)与“国际主义派”(Internationalists)之分;“地方派”(Localists)与“普遍派”(Universalists)之分。与此相联系又有“绝对标准”与

“相对标准”以及所谓“双重标准”问题。从理论上说,所有评论家都认为作品应有普遍意义,但在评价一部作品时则往往涉及有无澳大利亚特点的问题。一方认为反映澳大利亚特点者为上乘,另一方则认为摆脱开所谓澳大利亚特点的作品才是优秀作品。有的评论家认为对澳作家的作品与对英、美作家作品应一律看待,不应使用双重标准。但有的评论家认为,澳大利亚人对于澳自己的作品的感受肯定与其它国家的读者不同,不可能真正运用绝对标准。有的强调作品应具有民族特点,反映民族感情;有的则认为过于强调民族特点会使作家眼界狭隘。这些问题在评论界翻来覆去已经争论过多次,直到今天也还未能真正解决。但已经不象上个世纪那样引人注目了。有的评论家提出,作品应由各民族按自己特点来创作,然后由所有民族共同欣赏,企图以此公式统一民族特点和共同标准。霍普则认为关键在于澳目前尚缺乏真正杰出的作品,因此不易衡量其它作品;有了主峰,次峰的高度才能估计。有人提出独立的澳大利亚文学传统的问题,但一经提出就遭到批评,理由是澳大利亚传统是整个欧洲传统,尤其是英国文化传统的延伸和发展,独立于欧洲传统之外的“澳大利亚传统”既无可能,也不必要。

这类争论并非只见于澳大利亚。当年美国出现过类似的问题,今天在加拿大、新西兰也存在同样的争论。好在这类争论并未影响文艺创作在这些国家的发展。

从第一条囚犯船开进杰克逊港距今不过一百九十年,澳建国则还不足八十个春秋。论人口,建国时不足三百五十万,今年统计也只剩有一千四百万。以此为出发点考虑、衡量澳文艺,评论家一般都认为已经取得了可喜的成就,展望前景,是令人鼓舞的。

介绍怀特——一位有特色 的澳大利亚作家^①

帕特里克·怀特于1912年出生在英国。父亲是澳大利亚农场主,母亲也出身于富有的农场主家庭。怀特出生时他的父母正在欧洲旅行。年底,当怀特满半岁时,被带回到了澳大利亚。他在悉尼郊区度过了童年。怀特自幼喜爱文学,九岁时阅读了莎士比亚的戏剧,深深为其中生动的情节所吸引。他从小就抑制不住创作欲望的冲动,凭着幼稚的想象力,写出了剧本《墨西哥大盗》(Mexican Bandits)。

怀特十三岁时被他的母亲送到英国去读中学。她和当时大部分澳大利亚人一样,认为英国的一切都是优越的,只有在英国中学才能受到最好的教育。怀特十七岁时再次回到澳洲,在牧场度过了两年,但是人们始终把他看作是一个“外国人”。在此期间他写了三本小说,都被出版商退了回来,年轻的怀特那时在精神上受到多么沉重的打击是可想而知的。

怀特1932年再次去英国。他在剑桥大学皇家学院读现代语言,广泛接触德国和法国文学。假期,他经常到欧洲大陆旅行。他喜爱文学,尤其喜爱戏剧,他一度曾经希望成为演员。怀特的大学教育和在欧洲的旅行无疑对他后来的文艺创作产生了巨大的影响。

大学毕业后,怀特决定留在英国正式开始他的写作生涯。他依靠父亲的接济得以维持生活。他结识了抽象派画家德迈斯特,

① 原载《世界文学》1982年第3期。

在艺术观上受到他强烈的影响。怀特不止一次说过他是通过绘画和音乐学会写作的。他的小说《活体解剖者》(The Vivisector) 讲述的是一个有才华的画家的创作道路 , 其中有许多章节具体地描写了画家构思、绘画的过程 , 情景真切 , 怀特本人当画家的夙愿在小说中得到表现。

怀特在 1939 年发表了第一部小说《幸福谷》(Happy Valley) , 两年后又出版《生者与死者》(The Living and the Dead) 。后者是一部描写兄妹二人在动荡的三十年代走上不同道路的小说 , 从写法上深受乔伊斯意识流的影响。题材具有明显的时代特点。结尾是妹妹在闻知他的爱人琼·巴纳特在西班牙反法西斯战争中牺牲后 , 立即决定去前线接替他的工作。

第二次世界大战爆发后 , 怀特在英国皇家空军情报部工作 , 被派到中东 , 负责检查军人往来信件。在此期间 , 他结识了希腊军官曼诺力·拉司卡瑞斯。曼诺力自此之后四十年一直是怀特最亲密的朋友。怀特认为是曼诺力使得他在生活中找到了方向。

北非的荒凉沙漠使他回忆起祖国——澳大利亚。1948 年 , 他的第三部小说《姨母的故事》(The Aunt's Story) 出版的那一年 , 他回到悉尼郊区定居下来。他和曼诺力买下一个小农场 , 开始经营农牧业。《姨母的故事》虽然在美国得到好评 , 在澳大利亚却反应冷淡。怀特十分沮丧 , 他几乎没有勇气再拿起笔来 , 但是 , 不写作生活岂不就失去了意义 ? 他终于又开始了创作。

从五十到六十年代是怀特创作的高潮时期。1955 年出版《人树》(The Tree of Man) 、1957 年《沃斯》(Voss) 、1961 年《乘战车的人们》(Riders in the Chariot) 、1964 年短篇小说集《烧伤的人》(The Burnt Ones) 、1965 年《四个剧本》(Four Plays) 、1966 年《坚实的曼陀罗》(The Solid Mandala) 。七十年代又发表了三部小说、一部短篇小说集。1980 年出版小说《特莱庞的爱情》(The Twyborn Affairs) , 去年出版自传《镜中疵斑》。在近半个世纪的创作生活中 , 他的创作记录应该说是十分可观的 : 共著有十一部小说、

两部短篇小说集、五个剧本、一个电影剧本和一部自传。

1973年——他的小说《暴风眼》(The Eye of the Storm)出版的那年——怀特获得了诺贝尔文学奖。对澳大利亚来说这是破天荒第一遭。怀特讨厌排场,不愿意去斯德歌尔摩受奖。他委托他的好友,画家诺兰去瑞典代为领奖。他把拿到的八万美金全部捐献出来,设立了“怀特文学奖金”,以鼓励和资助正在成长的澳大利亚作家。

怀特无疑是澳大利亚人的骄傲,也是迄今世界上最著名的澳大利亚作家。他的小说被译成为法、德、俄、日、西、捷克、波兰、瑞典、芬兰等许多文字。在我国也开始出现他的作品的翻译。在美国、英国、法国、瑞典都有学者专门研究怀特的著作。美国得克萨斯大学不久前还专门出版过怀特文学评论专号。但是对怀特的评价,几十年来一直存在着争论,人们不仅对于具体作品的理解与评价不同,即使在总的评价上,也都往往观点迥异。在澳大利亚文坛上,怀特是唯一如此引起争论的作家。我们在澳大利亚朋友家做客的时候,朋友们谈起怀特来,往往也是各执一词,莫衷一是。

英国文艺评论家威廉·沃尔士(William Walsh)将怀特小说的特色概括为三点:规模宏大,充满信心,想象丰富。他的小说一般篇幅长,题目展得开,但这还不是关键。怀特常常选一些重大的主题,例如《沃斯》讲的是德国探险家在十九世纪中叶率领探险队试图横跨澳洲大陆的壮举,《人树》描述了斯坦·帕克独自开荒,直到成家立业,生儿育女,最后死去的整个过程,象征着澳大利亚的开拓史,斯坦周围从荒无一人发展成为繁忙的城镇。怀特的人物在有的小说中(如《姨母的故事》、《特莱庞的爱情》)来往于澳洲、美洲、欧洲之间,可以说怀特把世界当作了自己的舞台。怀特的短篇小说也常有长篇巨著的气势,尽管作家极力约束自己,总还给人以未能充分施展的感觉。

怀特很自信,不是一个轻易改变自己观点的人。他的自信首

先表现在他在艺术上的独创。他在自传中说,在他所写的小说中,他最喜欢的三部是《姨母的故事》、《坚实的曼陀罗》和《特莱庞的爱情》。这是他的著作中最独特的三部,也是最有争论的三部。《特莱庞的爱情》写的是一个两性人——一个具有女性心理的男人。第一部分写他在欧洲做一个希腊人的情妇的经历,第二部分写他回到澳洲,几乎恢复了男性,但在关键时又是他的女性占了上风。在第三部分,他到伦敦做了妓院的女老板,最后在空袭中被炸死。这部小说1980年出版,出版后虽也有好评,但遭到了更多的批评。怀特并不因此而改变看法,他在1981年出版的自传《镜中疵斑》中,公开承认自己是同性恋者。出版商事前劝他在自传中回避这一点,警告他这样会影响他的声誉。然而,怀特却把这一切置之度外。他深信,他的创作与他在这方面的特殊心理状态是分不开的。怀特虽然喜爱艺术,毕竟不是画家,但是,他却在《活体解剖者》一书中把画家的思想、感情、创作的冲动以至作画的过程描绘得淋漓尽致。他充满着自信,相信自己有能力处理这一主题。任何作家、艺术家都需要自信心,没有自信心就谈不上创作,但是,他有时显得近乎固执。

怀特想象力之丰富在他的所有著作中都充分表现出来。在短篇小说《一杯茶》中,马里亚卡斯是一个善于想象,又最珍视想象的人。怀特在这里也说到了自己。他的想象力既表现于大的布局安排,也见于细节的处理。《姨母的故事》中的姨母在欧洲的某旅馆的经历可说是想象丰富大胆。《沃斯》中关于沃斯和劳拉爱情的处理完全是精神上的结合,远隔千里,在书信断绝的情况下,双方感情上的交流一如既往。在人物刻画上,怀特总是别具匠心。每一个人物都有丰富的精神生活,有独自的性格。即便是次要的角色,也有一定的深度。相比之下,早期作品中人物的刻画不及中期、后期那样丰满。

除了沃尔士所概括的三点,我想还有两点应该提到。其一是

怀特小说的故事性不强 ,因此一般读者往往觉得不容易读下去。怀特自己也注意到这个情况 ,他在公共图书馆的书架上发现 ,他的书常常是前半本已经翻旧了而后半本还崭新。他在和我谈话中 ,曾经说过 ,他不是善于描述生动情节的人 ,他往往把人物放在一起 ,然后让故事自然发展下去。怀特的小说中没有曲折离奇的情节 ,耸人听闻的故事。现代西方社会的人生活节奏快 ,翻翻报纸 ,看看畅销的书已属不易 ,要坐下来认真阅读怀特这类作品几乎是不可能的。在怀特的祖国——澳大利亚 ,也还有不少人并没有读过他的小说。

怀特小说的再一个特点是 ,主要人物多是与世道不合 ,与现代社会格格不入的人们。闭上眼睛一想 ,这些人物似乎都有怪异之处 ,如《姨母的故事》中的希奥多拉、《人树》中的斯坦、《沃斯》中的主人公沃斯、《坚实的曼陀罗》中的亚瑟、《活体解剖者》中的画家赫特尔、《特莱庞的爱情》中的两性人特莱庞等等。《乘战车的人们》描述的四个人都有其“ 疯癫 ”之处 ,疯婆子黑尔小姐 ,受尽迫害的犹太人希墨勒法伯 ,私下里作画的土著人德博 ,以及生活十分不幸、整日操劳的高德博尔德太太 ,他们每个人都从自己的角度经过一番苦难的经历逐步悟出了人生的真谛。在小说《幸福谷》的开头 ,怀特引了印度苦行主义者甘地的一段话 :

“ 要取消受苦的法则是不可可能的 ,这是我们存在的一个必不可少的条件。进步以受苦多少为衡量标准……苦难愈纯粹 ,进步就愈大。”

看来怀特是相信这个道理的。只有经历大苦大难 ,才能大彻大悟。怀特书中的中心人物正因有其“ 疯癫 ”之处 ,层次很多。例如《人树》中的斯坦是个老实纯朴、沉默寡言的农民 ,但是这只是他最表面的一层 ,他的内心世界十分丰富 ,经过水灾、救火、家庭中的不幸等环节 ,逐步发掘出来。最重要的一个场面——也是评论家不断

探讨其意义的一个场面——是在他临死前不久，一位年轻的传道士向他布道，最后问道：“你难道不相信上帝吗？”他听完之后在地上吐了一口唾沫，然后指着唾沫说：“那就是上帝。”有的评论家认为这是亵渎上帝，有的认为这句话的意思是上帝无所不在，有的认为这标志着他对人生的意义的领悟。

究竟应该如何理解怀特和他的著作？至今在评论界还没有定论。一小部分评论家对怀特持彻底否定的态度，称他的小说是“骇人听闻的”；“异常地富有敌意”；“歇斯底里式的厌世之作”等等。大部分评论家承认怀特是一位卓有成就的作家，问题在于对他的作品如何去理解，如何在他所叙述的纷繁的甚至往往是相互矛盾的各种现象中理出一个头绪。

一些评论家强调从宗教的、神秘主义的角度来研究怀特的著作。加拿大的帕特里夏·毛雷（Patricia Morley）博士是其中之一。她所依据的是当代西方著名文艺批评理论家诺斯若蒲·弗莱的理论。怀特信奉上帝，但又不属于任何教会。在他的小说中确有一些地方提到上帝，但是，纵观他的全部著作，无论上帝或是宗教，所占地位都很不突出。怀特在小说中喜欢加进一些神秘主义的色彩，例如《乘战车的人们》里面的四个人物都心有灵犀，被某种神秘的力量联系在一起，《坚实的曼陀罗》中亚瑟手里的玻璃球也似乎具有某种魔力等等。但是，如果读深些，就会发现神秘主义只不过是怀特所使用的一种文学手段，绝不是他的写作意图。怀特在他的著作中极力探求人生的秘密，寻找人生的真谛，但是，往往又流露出惶惑和茫然。评论家阿兰·劳森（Alan Lawson）认为，所有怀特的小说都具有探索的形式。这话有一定的道理。我以为，怀特对于最终要发现什么样的真理并不清楚，但是，由于他对现实社会不满，总希冀在自己的创作中找到或接近某种正确的答案。正因为这个缘故，他的犹豫、疑问经常带有虚无、神秘的色彩。

也有的评论家主张从心理学家卡尔·容格 (Carl Jung) 的观点解释怀特。容格认为某些人具有心理上的超脱功能 ,这些人在观察、思想、感觉和预见方面具有非凡的能力 ,而怀特小说中的许多主要人物都是达到这种境界的人。怀特早年研究过容格的学说 ,受到一些影响 ,也在早期的小说中有所反映 ,但是 ,怀特很快就超出了容格的范围。

怀特的早期著作受乔伊斯、劳伦斯、詹姆斯的影响 ,在《幸福谷》和《生者与死者》两本小说中 ,他大量使用了乔伊斯的意识流手法。当时的评论认为他的第二部书“ 在主题上是自然主义的 ,在方法上是‘ 超现代派 ’的 ”。今天看来这本书算不上什么“ 超现代派 ”。但是 ,有一点是清楚的 ,怀特从出版第一部小说起 ,已经表明他不属于现实主义作家的范畴。对于现实主义 ,他曾经这样评论过 : “ 艺术并不是把人们已经知道的事情告诉人们 ,而应该高于生活。 ” 从这里我们可以看出他在文学流派上明确地表示了自己的归属。对于绘画艺术 ,他抱有相同的观点。有一次 ,我们谈到当时在悉尼州艺术馆的欧洲十八、十九世纪名画展览 ,他说他没有去看 ,又说 : “ 这不是我所欣赏的那种绘画。 ” 他喜欢的是抽象派、印象派绘画。他的书房和走廊里挂着的画几乎都是抽象派的。他经常购买青年画家的作品 ,收藏起来 ,过一段时间就捐赠给州艺术馆。

怀特对于现实社会的批评可以分为在政治生活中的直接批评和在作品中的暗含的批评。怀特不爱在公开场合露面 ,但是 ,在重大政治问题上 ,他从不闪烁其词。尤其在近年来 ,怀特在报纸和电视上多次公开摆明自己的政治观点。在有些人看来 ,他这种举动与一个作家的身份不符 ,是很不明智的 ,怀特原来接受过澳大利亚勋章 ,但是 ,在保守党掌权以后 ,他立即将勋章退了回去。他认为 , “ 整个西方文明已经是日暮途穷了 ” ; “ 生活的节奏太快。周围环境的压力以及我们虚假文化的某些方面使得我们没有时间提高思考能力 ”。他对于青年一代尤为忧虑 ,认为这些在电视机旁长大

的一代只知道暴力和踢球,缺乏文化教养。他向图书馆工作人员大声疾呼,要他们把人类知识的结晶介绍给青年人,使他们具有严肃思考问题的能力。怀特在今年年初给我的一封信中写道:“如今的世界是一塌糊涂,我真没有心思再写什么了。防止战争是最关紧要的。”怀特不仅公开表态,在1972年为了抗议政府打算把市内公园变为体育场的计划,还参加游行队伍,走上了街头。

怀特并没有把他的政治观点移植到他的作品中去。剧本以及一些短篇小说和现实生活有比较明显的联系,例如剧本《大玩具》(Big Toys)提到在澳大利亚反对开采铀矿的问题。怀特的长篇小说比较隐晦,不涉及当前的政治问题。但是,他对于现实的不满、对于腐败现象的憎恶仍多有流露。例如,在《沃斯》中对于上层社会的虚伪作了辛辣的讽刺、《活体解剖者》中对于舆论和评论界的厌恶跃然纸上、《特莱庞的爱情》淋漓尽致地揭露了道貌岸然、腐败透顶的政府官员、贵族在妓院的所作所为。

怀特对现实社会的批评还曲折地表现在他的悲观主义情调方面。在他的笔下,社会几乎总是充满敌意的。短篇小说《信》中的查尔斯经常感受到现代社会对他的威胁,最后终于精神失常。在他的眼中,连刈草机都是那样残酷,那样吓人。怀特的消极悲观情绪在有的小说中表现得明显些,有的小说中不那么突出。但是,总的来说,怀特是个悲观主义者。他自己也承认这一点。正由于他对社会抱有悲观的看法,他的中心人物必然是与社会格格不入的特殊人物。在一般人看来,这些特殊的“明眼人”总带有某种“疯癫”的成分。但是,没有理由就此认为怀特仇恨人类,绝望厌世,实际上,在怀特的所有小说中,我们都强烈地感觉到他对于理想境界的企求,对于自由的渴望。

怀特在写作风格方面独树一帜。他很喜欢英国诗人布莱克的诗。布莱克的特点之一是把互不关联的两个概念捏在一起,以取得特殊的效果。怀特不仅善于把不同的概念糅在一起,还善于把具体的事物和抽象的概念联系起来。例如,

“他从未象现在这样满足过。孩子们和椅子在和他亲密地交谈。”（《乘战车的人们》）

“他们迎着傍晚的潮水游过去，他们的动作受到焦虑和草丛的无情的阻拦。”（同上书）

怀特在句法结构上作了大胆的尝试，有时甚至用不完整的句子作一个段落，有时把语法规则抛在一边。在这点上，怀特受到了不少批评，但是，他似乎并不放在心上，仍旧我行我素。语言运用方面怀特可说是得心应手，驾驭自如，表现力很强，不拘泥于死的规则，怀特对自己的作品总是一改再改，直到自己认为满意为止。而一旦装印成书，他就连看也不再看。阅读怀特的作品并不容易，翻译带来的问题就更多。

怀特的小说不仅以他个人经历为基础，而且时常把自己也写到书中去。他在1979年6月与《大玩具》的导演吉姆·沙门谈话中有这么一段对话：

沙门：您写作的时候和您平常有很大区别吗？

怀特：写作的时候你自然要内向得多，成为你所写的人物。我想，这些人物大部分都包含着我个人的局部和片断，有时再加些别的材料。

对于熟悉怀特的读者，从他的书中找出这些“局部和片断”并不困难。前面已经提到，在《活体解剖者》一书中，我们可以体验到怀特对绘画艺术的无限向往和强烈的创作欲望，在《坚实的曼陀罗》和《特莱庞的爱情》中我们可以窥测到怀特的某些心理状态，直接取材于怀特的生活的细节的描写则更是比比皆是。但是，我们不能由此认为这些小说是自传体的，或者把书中某个人物与怀特等

同起来。

在《树叶裙》(A Fringe of Leaves)一书问世时 ,一些评论家曾经作过这样的预言 :怀特以这本历史题材的小说为契机将转向写实。然而 ,三年后 ,《特莱庞的爱情》出版 ,使这些评论家困惑不解。怀特接受的影响是多方面的 ,思想和性格都不能用一个简单的公式来概括。对于他的著作也很难用一两句话就概括清楚。不论评论界如何争论不休 ,应该承认 ,怀特是现代派中具有特色的、颇有造诣的一位作家。不论你喜欢或不喜欢怀特 ,读了他的作品总会留下比较深的印象 ,总会迫使你思考一些问题。

怀特与其他澳大利亚作家相比 ,无论在题材、风格、技巧等方面都大相径庭 ,以至于评论家至今还觉得很难将他归类。怀特不同意在澳大利亚文坛深有影响的亨利·劳森的创作方法。在怀特身上 ,我们清楚地看到欧洲文化传统的影响 ,同时 ,我们又嗅到强烈的乡土气味。这乡土气味不表现在一两句澳大利亚土语的使用 ,也不表现在几个澳大利亚地名的出现。怀特甚至根本不提劳森作品中占据突出地位的、一般人都认为是澳大利亚人特点的“伙伴情谊”。怀特把欧洲文化和澳大利亚的现实以微妙的方式糅合在一起 ,使澳大利亚人看了觉得亲切 ,使世界上其他民族、其他国家的读者也能感受其艺术的力量。怀特之成为诺贝尔文学奖获得者绝非偶然。他的艺术造诣方面高出其他澳大利亚作家一筹 ,在澳文化界的确是一位举足轻重的人物。他不仅创作小说 ,在戏剧方面也颇有建树 ,还写过电影剧本。他建立“怀特文学奖金”推动文艺创作 ,以购买作品的方式赞助年轻画家。有的评论家认为澳大利亚文坛近二三十年的活跃局面与怀特是分不开的。澳大利亚文坛许多争论与怀特有关 ,促使人们更深地思考 ,更积极地去创作。怀特始终认为 ,1948年回到澳大利亚这一决定对他来说是关键性的 ,他认为 :“艺术家必须紧靠着他们赖以生长的土壤 ,即便这是墨尔本人行道上的尘埃或是悉尼阴沟里的垃圾。”他为获

得诺贝尔奖而写的小传是这样结尾的：“我希望在这里继续生活，希望在我有生之年以我力所能及的方式填补澳大利亚这块空白。”怀特在一定的程度上实现了自己的诺言。

初访怀特^①

九月下旬是澳大利亚的早春。在一个晴朗的上午,我们来到了澳大利亚作家帕特里克·怀特的住宅。这是一幢老式的两层建筑,建于1912年,正巧与主人同龄。住宅对面是市区附近最大的百年纪念公园,绿草如茵,古树参天,环境幽静,确实是作家创作的理想处所。

关于怀特,我们已经听说了不少截然相反的议论。有人说他过着隐士生活,深居简出,不参加任何协会,也很少会见外人。就在我们去拜访他之前,还听到介绍我们同他认识的戴维斯教授说,南朝鲜一个专门研究澳大利亚文学的教授通过文化部求见,遭到了拒绝,据说理由是年事已高、工作繁忙。联想到报上历年来发表的怀特的照片,确实没有一张是面带笑容的,两只眼睛尤其令人望而生畏。等待着我们的是什么呢?是拒之门外,还是中途被轰出来?

院子里静悄悄的,透过玻璃门可以看到屋里一排排琳琅满目的书架。我们绕到房子的左侧,转动了一下相当古老的门铃。过了一会儿,门轻轻地打开了,一个看起来要比照片和蔼的怀特站在了我们面前。内心的紧张马上就消除了一半。我们做了自我介绍和经过一番寒暄之后,被带到了客厅。虽然今年由于奇旱外面的阳光已经有些灼人,但室内却很阴凉。

客厅的四面墙上挂着的大幅油画,几乎全是抽象派作品,色彩绚丽,结构奇特。怀特早年受画家罗伊·德迈斯特影响很深。他

① 原题为《怀特印象记》,载《外国文学》1982年第4期。

本人不止一次说过,他是通过绘画和音乐学会写作的。他曾经幻想过当画家。小说《活体解剖者》记述了他的这些想法。后来他通过买画方式来支持年轻画家的创作,而且不定期地把自己的收藏赠送给州美术馆。

我们刚坐下没过一会儿就端来了茶。怀特特别说明这是中国的茉莉花茶。随后又上了一盘杏仁饼。看来主人做了细心的准备,因为杏仁饼只在悉尼唐人街的几个店铺里才能买到。二十五年前他的一位亲戚曾经到过中国,并把带回来的艺术品送给了他几件。他把那些东西一一拿出来给我们看。他说,要想游历象中国这样一个历史悠久、幅员辽阔的国家,两、三个星期的时间是绝对不够的。“我要是去中国就要多呆一些时间,”他不无伤感地说,“我曾经有过这种想法,但是现在再开始已经太晚了。”

在开始谈到正题之前,我问他可以不可以录音。他马上挥了挥手说:“不要录音,我痛恨录音机。”幸好他对于记笔记没有反感,于是我们就边谈,边记下一些要点。

怀特是在英国读的中学和大学,二次大战期间在英国皇家空军中做情报官,直到1948年才回到澳大利亚。他的十一部小说中有十部是以澳大利亚为背景的。他认为战后回澳大利亚而不是在欧洲定居,对他来说是一个有重要意义的决定。因为艺术家“绝对不能离开哺育他们生长的故土,哪怕是墨尔本人行道上的灰尘或是悉尼阴沟里的垃圾。”尽管如此,怀特的作品中明显地可以看出欧洲文化的影响。他自己坦率地承认,在刚开始写作的时候,曾经受到英国作家乔伊斯和劳伦斯的影响,同时他也很喜爱法国文学。有趣的是,他对德国文学虽然兴趣不大,可是德国人似乎很推崇他的作品,而法国人虽然翻译了他的不少作品,却对他不很理解。他说,美国人对他早期作品还能理解,近年来越来越不能理解了。1948年他出版了《姨母的故事》以后,国内反映冷淡,但在美国获得比较好的评价。他曾经说过:“若不是美国人,我当时真想把脑袋伸进煤气灶里自杀。”在谈到近年来对他的作品的评论

时,怀特说,从他读的报刊杂志来看,苏格兰人很能理解他,而且觉得越是往北人们越是能理解他,很可能北方人的时间更多,更爱看书。这真是一个很有趣的论点。

怀特的作品已经译成德、法、西、日、瑞典、挪威、捷克、波兰等国的文字。怀特告诉我们,他听说苏联也在翻译他的作品,并且已经有三位女士神经出了问题,垮了下来。

“是因为翻译你的作品吗?”

“很可能。”

他的话把我们全都逗笑了。

怀特自幼酷爱文学,成名之后,更是抱负不凡。他为诺贝尔文学奖金委员会写的自传是这样结尾的:“我希望在这里(指澳大利亚——笔者注)生活下去,在我有生之年,以我唯一可能的方式,填补澳大利亚这个真空。”他在一篇文章中还说过:“最重要的是,我决心证明,澳大利亚小说并不一定非是平淡无奇的新闻体现现实主义的产物不可。”他这样说,也是这样做的。他的作品从来都不是现实主义的。大多包含着象征主义、神秘主义的成分,他从不以情节取胜,而着重于人物心理的描写和分析。他喜欢写得含蓄,只把话讲到六七分,余下的部分留给读者去想象和揣摩。

在谈话中,怀特进一步阐述他多年来的文学主张。他说,有人认为《沃斯》和《树叶裙》是历史小说;其实不是的,如果我只把莱克哈特和伊丽莎白·弗雷泽的故事记录下来,就很没有意思。”这两本书都有一定的历史事实为依据,但是怀特没有拘泥于细节,而是进行了艺术的再创造。

怀特的一个剧本被拍成了电视片。我们问他效果如何。他说还不错,不过接下去他又说道:“电视是本世纪最危险的一件发明。我自己没有电视机。租过一次,由于节目实在糟糕,就又立刻退了回去。电视本来应该是给那些老得走不动的人和残疾人看的,可是现在,孩子们全是在电视机前长大的。读书的人越来越少,影响了教育水平的提高。”就在和我们见面的前几天,怀特曾

在州图书馆工作人员会议上大声疾呼,希望他们与作家合作,改变目前这种局面。他说:“如果不养成在图书馆看书的习惯,如果不去思索和过滤——锻炼思维能力,我觉得我们就不会有希望。”

怀特是一位严肃认真的作家。每写一本书都经过反复修改。通常第一稿——用他自己的话说——全靠本能,充满了痛苦和混乱。第二稿仍然是手写的,着重于整体结构的安排。第三稿才用打字机,边打边修改细节,直到完全满意才交给出版商。他至今仍然坚持着这一程序。他当时正在写的自传《镜中疵斑》已经完成了第二稿。想找一位打字员把稿子誊清后再进行修改,他说自己视力已经不行,经常打错。

“我希望临死之前能把这本书写完,”他说。

“你太悲观了,”我插了一句。

“我是一个悲观主义者。年纪大了,不能不想到这一点。很可能书未写完就死去。”过了一会儿之后,他又说道:

“改稿子是一件很累人的工作。很少有人能够理解写作会把一个活人变成一具躯壳。”

怀特的悲观情绪在作品中多有流露,尤其是近十几年来,对老年人的描写往往带有浓厚的伤感情调。平时也常把风烛残年作为自己的话题。虽然如此,他还表示准备再写一部长篇、一部中篇和一个电影剧本。

那一次,怀特还请我们参观了他的后花园。园里种了不少果树和花草,葡萄架下放着一把椅子。三条狗一看见主人,立即活蹦乱跳地扑了过来,不仅和怀特亲热一番,也跑过来嗅了嗅我的裤管。看来,这是怀特在写作之暇休息的地方。

最后,怀特把我们从后院一直送到前门,倚靠着栅栏又和我们闲聊了一会儿。他建议我们去看看塔斯美尼亚州的优美风光,然后详详细细地向我们指点回城的路怎么走、搭什么车。

澳大利亚文艺评论家马克斯·哈里斯十几年前曾写过一篇怀特访问记,题目是《怀特在公众场合的严峻和在私下里的真诚》,

精辟地概括了怀特的为人。一个半小时确实不能算长,但他的坦率、真挚和热诚却给我们留下了很深的印象。

此后,我又两次见到过怀特,最后一次是在我离开澳大利亚前四天。这一次是他请我们去做客。他在电话里告诉我还请了澳著名史学家曼宁·柯拉克的儿子阿克塞尔及夫人,短篇小说家穆瑞·贝尔及妻子玛加丽特。他还特别关照我们在谈话中最好不要提癌症之类的事情,因为阿克塞尔刚刚摘除了一个肿瘤,尽管是良性的,也是避开这个话题为好。

悉尼的一月正是盛夏,傍晚突然下起了滂沱大雨。我们刚过七点半就赶到了怀特的家。他的希腊朋友曼诺力接待了我们,请在会客室里坐下。怀特从楼上走下来笑着说:“我们一直在叨念着你们的名字,可不能在这上面出错。”不知怀特怎么样了解到,中国人姓在名之前这个规矩,并认为直呼我们的姓是不礼貌的,坚持要把我们的名字读准确。果然,阿克塞尔·柯拉克夫妇和贝尔夫妇来到时,怀特准确无误地介绍了我们,而且整个晚上坚持按照习惯以名相称。这事虽小,但却可以看出,他虽是名作家但对别人十分尊重。联想到他提醒我们在阿克塞尔面前不要提癌症一事,更使人感到他在待人方面的细心。

在谈话过程中,怀特对某些评论家在分析他的作品时表现出来的武断态度感到无可奈何。他说,尽管他极力反对,还是有人坚持以心理学家卡尔·容格的观点来解释他的作品。有些东西本来是信手拈来,只取其象征意义并没有过多考虑就写到书里,然而到了评论家的笔下却变得玄而又玄。

怀特一面同我们谈话,一面不断地跑到厨房里去照看烤炉中的肉。他的菜做得不错,西红柿茄子味道尤好。整个晚餐安排得井井有条,纹丝不乱,显示出他做家务的本领。

饭后又回到会客室里,我们才注意到墙上有一个十分别致的具有现代派风格的拼合装饰,即不是画,也不是雕塑,而是在一排火柴盒上面挂着一只肉色手套。曼诺力见我们大惑不解地站在那

个艺术品前面出神 ,就解释说 :“有些写博士论文的学生来访 ,一开口就问某本书某页上的某一段话是什么意思 ,于是我们就把这个指给他们看。”听到这里 ,大家全都笑了 ,原来手套上的手指清楚地指着房门。由此看来 ,怀特对学究们是丝毫不讲客气的。

我们告别时已经十一点多了。怀特把我们送到门外 ,并一再说明 ,如果再到澳大利亚来 ,一定要去看他。阿克塞尔坚持要绕道把我们送回住地 ,在路上 ,他说 :“怀特是个严厉的人 ,不易相处。他对你们这样好是破例的。”阿克塞尔的话是意味深长的。我一直认为怀特对我们的热情款待并非是对我们个人 ,而是饱含着对中国人民的友好感情。

再访怀特^①

1984年夏天,我应邀再次访问了澳大利亚。临行前,我给怀特写了一封短信,告诉他我即将去澳一事。

到达悉尼,安排停当之后,我给怀特挂了个电话。他说他接到了我的信,估计写回信我也收不到了,索性就没有写。接着,他就约我星期三到他家里吃饭。我告诉他已经有了安排,这样就推迟一周,决定7月11日见面。

帕特里克·怀特对我国读者已经不是生疏的名字了。他的短篇小说陆续翻译介绍了一些,有关他的报道和访问记也偶见报端。怀特从1939年开始发表创作,到目前总计出版了十一部长篇小说、两部短篇小说集、七个剧本、一个电影剧本和一部自传。在几十年的文学生涯中,怀特始终是澳洲文坛的风云人物,多次引起激烈的争论,褒者有之,贬者亦不乏其人。1973年怀特获得诺贝尔文学奖之后,更成为引人注目的重要文人。评论家基尔南认为,怀特的一大贡献在于他的著作和言论使澳大利亚文坛始终充满活力。

我是1980年认识怀特的,拜访过他两次,以后一直有些书信往还。这次见到怀特,第一个印象是他似乎没有什么变化,但是仔细看,他走路,脚步比以前显得沉重;说话时,四五米之外能清楚地听到他气喘的声音。他见到我自然十分高兴,也并没有讲很多寒暄的话。进了客厅,他把我介绍给他的朋友乌德尔夫妇。接着我

^① 原以《不倦的探求》为题,载《世界文学》1985年第3期。

们就谈起这几年澳大利亚的一些变化。不一会儿,怀特兴致勃勃地走进里屋,把不久前《光明日报》代表团张常海等同志送给他的不锈钢健身球拿出来给大家看。他一只手拿一个球晃动起来。我告诉他应该是一只手握两只,才能活动手指的关节。闲聊了一会儿之后,怀特说今天晚上他请我们到他常去的一家意大利饭馆吃饭。

这家饭馆分楼上、楼下两层,楼下卖啤酒,楼上吃饭,地方很小,只摆着八九张桌子。饭馆老板弗兰克和怀特很熟,一见面就拉家常。怀特问他的妻子、孩子怎么样,孩子是不是还缠着他妈,生意好不好等等。应该说,怀特的这一面我过去从未注意到。我没有想到怀特还能这么婆婆妈妈地和人聊天。记得他以前曾经对我说过,一位好作家应该是一个会聊闲天的人。看来他是身体力行这一条的。

楼上的桌子都占满了,只有靠壁炉的一张桌子给我们留着。我们的到来引起了周围人们的注意,有的人会意地交换一下眼色,有的低声告诉同伴进来的人是怀特。在我们吃饭的时候,还不断有人向我们投来好奇的眼光。怀特看来也对这种情形习惯了,并不介意。

在饭桌上,大家很自然地谈起在堪培拉召开的工党全国代表大会。怀特一直是工党的拥护者,但是,他对于工党代表大会通过的开采铀矿出口铀的决定十分不满,认为工党背弃了它的诺言。他认为在当今的世界上没有任何事比防止战争更重要。大部分作家对这类政治问题不表态,他认为这可能是由于作家在集中精力创作的时期不愿意卷入政治,而他自己年事已高,不再理会人们怎样看待他,也不管是否影响写作了。

其实对于怀特来说,不是卷入政治,而是主动投身于政治。这次会面之后,我和怀特在电话上长谈过两三次,临离澳前又在一起吃了一顿中国饭。每次谈话都离不开当前的一些政治问题。

在七八月份,怀特与他的朋友发起成立了“核裁军党”,政纲

是：一、关闭所有外国在澳大利亚的军事基地；二、禁止在澳大利亚设置核武器，禁止在其领空领海通过核武器；三、立即停止开采和出口铀，不承认前几届政府在开采、加工、出口铀方面承担的义务。有的人认为这算不上一个党派，顶多算是个运动，但是，怀特却全力以赴，动员他那些同意这一主张的朋友们入党。

四年前怀特曾经告诉我，他准备在有生之年再写一部长篇小说。在一次谈话中，我问起这件事，他回答说：“这年头谁还读长篇小说呀！我现在有许多别的事要做。”他所说的“别的事”就是保卫和平的活动。他给内阁成员和工党领袖每个人写了一封信，各寄了一本《被遗忘的条约》，这是怀特十分赞赏的一本书，但是没有任何人写了回信或者对寄书表示感谢。怀特还给美、英、法的政府首脑里根、撒切尔夫人和密特朗分别写了信寄了书，同样也没有得到任何答复。苏联不久前邀请怀特访苏，他提出的条件是，只有允许他和葛罗米柯见面谈话，他才肯接受邀请。从这些行动来看，他与人们心目中超脱政治、落落寡合、孤僻执拗的怀特已相去甚远。

种族问题是澳大利亚的一个敏感问题。在历史上，澳政府采取过欢迎和优待白人移民、排斥和歧视有色人种的政策。战后，政府的政策有了很大的变化。八十年代初，澳政府接受了一批越南难民。今年年初，墨尔本大学的一位有影响的历史学教授布雷尼在公开场合批评了澳政府的移民政策，反对政府提倡的“多元文化主义”。一时之间，这方面的消息和评论充斥了大报、小报和杂志。怀特在八月份于墨尔本拉特伯大学发表的讲话中，对这个问题明确表态。他说：“二次大战后我回到国内定居，当时我们拚命地反对中欧来的犹太难民，之后矛头就转向了波罗的海国家的移民，直到现在对于作出了巨大贡献的意大利移民还不时地旁敲侧击，今天反对新到的亚洲移民的浪潮自然是超过以往任何一次的。不过，随着时间的推移，所有这些抵触情绪都将或多或少有所减弱，而我们当中比较有思想的人都会承认这些民族对我们的生活

以及文化所作的贡献。”他还说 ,战后移民问题推动他写了《战车上的乘客》这部小说。小说中有四个主要人物 ,其中一个犹太移民 ,一个是澳洲土著人。现在看来怀特是有意这样安排的。

有一次在电话上聊天时 ,怀特告诉我 ,他给布雷尼教授写了信 ,要求他从怀特文学奖评选委员会(共计三人)中退出来。他告诉布雷尼 ,他不能同意布雷尼就移民问题发表的观点。我问他布雷尼是怎样答复的。他说 ,布雷尼同意从评选委员会中撤出来 ,但是他认为怀特是个“ 愚蠢的老家伙 ”。怀特和布雷尼原本是好朋友 ,多年以来一直合作得很好 ,但是 ,在原则问题上 ,怀特是不肯让步、不顾情面的。

八月份的那次演讲主要是动员人们起来反对核军备。这是他迄今为止发表的政治性最强的一篇演说 ,同时又是对他后期创作和生活的一个最好注解。怀特讲到他自己常为世界的现状忧虑 ,对于政客们的虚伪十分不满 ,但是 ,又常常感到无能为力。他说 :“ 在我晚年的大部分时间里 ,我每天都在探求出路 ,但始终找不到令人满意的答案。”这句话可以说是理解怀特全部著作的一把钥匙。他通过自己的经历认识到 ,个人的力量是微薄的 ,只有普通人民团结起来才能有所作为。他认为 ;生活属于真心生活的人们 ,这些人常常并未受过很好的教育 ,然而却富有直感和本能 ,我本人也是其中的一员。当我想到千百万这样的人时 ,我才能得以摆脱我有时感到的极度的绝望。”他在作品中确实常常流露出悲观情绪 ,但是 ,有人由此认为他悲观厌世 ,仇恨人类 ,这是没有根据的。事实恰恰相反 ,怀特愿意和普通人在一起 ,喜欢和出租汽车司机、公共汽车上的乘客、饭馆老板等各种各样的人交谈 ,他感到这些人给了他信心和力量。

除了政治活动 ,怀特最感兴趣的是戏剧创作。怀特从少年时期起就一直喜爱戏剧 ,在英国大学读书期间还曾想当个演员。近年来 ,怀特的精力和时间不容许他再写长篇小说 ,因此 ,他更加热衷于戏剧创作。1982 年上演了他的新剧《 请向司机示意 》,以后他

又写了《低洼地》一剧。在剧作家中,怀特可以说是独辟蹊径,无论在题材或表现手法上都与众不同,对于导演和演员提出了很高的要求。有的导演明确表示不愿意导演怀特的剧。但是,也有的导演(如杰姆·沙门、约翰·色姆纳)与怀特合作得很好,让他看演员排练,有时他根据排练情况对台词作些修改。他知道我想看他的剧,就专门去打听了—番,在我离开悉尼前把珀思的九月份上演剧目表交给了我。遗憾的是我在珀思逗留的时间很短,错过了《请向司机示意》一剧的演出。

怀特知道我对于澳文学的兴趣,在谈话中常谈到他对一些作家和作品的看法。他向我推荐大卫·马鲁夫的作品。马鲁夫原本是诗人,他的第一本小说《章诺》引起了人们的普遍注意。近几年又发表了《幻想中的旅行》、《飞去吧,彼得》、《儿戏》等几部小说,成为人们公认的当前最优秀的澳大利亚小说家之一。由于怀特帮助联系,九月份我在麦考里大学见到了马鲁夫,随后,他请我吃了一顿饭,在饭桌上长谈了一次。怀特对于新派作家穆尔豪斯、威尔丁的作品持批评态度,说穆尔豪斯使用间断叙述法是因为他不会连续叙述,威尔丁的作品“令人无法忍受”。

在诗人中,怀特最欣赏罗伯特·格瑞的作品。格瑞的大部分诗都是政治性很强的,因此,怀特喜欢他的作品很可能是观点的一致。几年前怀特送给我一册格瑞的诗集《草之书》,这次他把格瑞的新作又推荐给我。对于女诗人道布森的诗集《三种命运》怀特也十分推崇,认为她写得细腻动人。他在电话上问我,是否看到过这个诗集,我告诉他在堪培拉时,道布森曾送给我一本,我翻了一下,觉得道布森现在的风格与她早期的诗已经有了很大变化,显得更加朴素,更为有力。在评论家中,怀特很欣赏道若瑟·格林。道若瑟·格林是著名文学史家 H. M. 格林的夫人,不久前修订了她丈夫的多卷本《澳大利亚文学史》,此书即将出版。她本人也写过许多评论,观点鲜明,分析透辟。她与一些左派作家过从甚密,也是怀特的一个朋友,在反对核军备等问题上,与怀特持有相同的观

点。

这次在澳访问期间,我还从侧面听到一些有关怀特的评论。怀特的一位邻居和朋友凯瑟琳告诉我,在反对把他们的居住区改成体育场的斗争中,怀特最为卖力,他四出活动,大造舆论,而有的住户却坐享其成。斗争胜利后,请律师打官司的钱分摊下去,有些人连二百块钱也不愿意付,而怀特一个人就拿出五千元。另一件给凯瑟琳印象很深的事说起来是件小事,但却说明怀特待人真诚。凯瑟琳有四个孩子,她的朋友多半都记不清他们的名字。去年圣诞节时,怀特给孩子送来了礼物,不仅名字一个未弄错,而且排列顺序也完全正确,使凯瑟琳十分感动。

我在墨尔本访问了短篇小说家裘达·华登和约翰·莫里逊,他们都和我谈起怀特。华登认为澳文学可以大致分为两个时期,十九世纪末至二次大战前是劳森—帕默尔时代,战后是怀特时代。华登和莫里逊在文学主张上不同于怀特,但是,对于怀特的为人他们都十分钦佩。莫里逊对怀特敢于抨击社会上的一些腐败现象很赞赏,一再说:“只有怀特有那样的胆量,怀特真了不起!”

我曾经和专门研究怀特的阿兰·劳森谈过对怀特的看法。我问他,近年来怀特的政治立场愈来愈鲜明,愈来愈关心世界局势和政治大事,这是不是一个新的趋向?阿兰说,这几年怀特态度愈来愈明朗,这是事实,但是,要仔细研究他的作品和他的过去,也可以看出他一步一步走过来的脚印。二次大战后,他决定回到澳大利亚定居,这本身就是一个重要的抉择,当时大部分作家都想到欧洲成名。回国以后,他资助土著人的教育,扶持青年画家,公开拥护惠特勒姆工党政府,把诺贝尔文学奖金八万元全部捐出来,建立文学基金鼓励澳大利亚年轻作家创作,所有这一切都说明了今天他采取的立场并非偶然。

在创作和生活中,怀特始终在探求,探求生命的真谛。对于怀特,这是一个漫长而痛苦的历程。去年八月在拉特伯大学的演说标志着这一历程的一个转折点:怀特从一般表态转向公开宣传自

己的观点 ,从主要是在创作中探索和批评现实到采取公开的政治举动——给大国首脑写信和组织政党。从怀特的过去 ,我们可以推断他还会沿着这条道路走下去 ,至于他会找到什么样的答案 ,目前还难以预测。

忆怀特^①

1990年10月3日,我抵达悉尼。出租车把我拉到克莱尔的家时,她恰巧外出开会。在门上留了条子告诉我到哪里取钥匙。我开门进屋,把箱子放好,烧了水,沏上茶,坐在客厅里慢慢品茶的时候,才发现老太太在桌子上还留了另一个条子。上面只写了两句话:“这是我给你留下的报纸。我想你可能还不知道。”不知道什么?我十分诧异,赶快拿起报纸。映入眼帘的是大字标题:Patrick White, author and stirrer, dies at 78. 报导说:“澳大利亚最著名的作家帕特里克·怀特昨晨在百年纪念公园旁他的家中去世,享年78岁……”难道我们的朋友怀特已经不在人间了吗?这令人难以置信。我每次访澳都和怀特见面,免不了聊聊澳文学界的家常,而这次迎接我的却是一纸讣闻。我不禁想起1989年3月5日拜访结束,临告别时他对我说的一句话:“你下次再来的时候,我可能已经不在。”我当时吃了一惊,赶紧安慰他:“不要这么悲观,不会那样的。”想不到这话不幸竟被他说中了。我没有预料到那会是最后一次见面,告别竟成了诀别。但细想起来,那次会面与以往几次已经显得两样。

三月在澳大利亚是初秋,气候相当暖和。帕特里克和我见面寒暄后引我到屋后花园藤架下面去坐。他拄着一根拐杖,走起来很吃力,而曼诺力和他虽同年,患有风湿病,行动却还轻快。藤椅已经放好,不一会儿又来了一位中年女客人,帕特里克介绍我们认识。我问他最近在写些什么,他幽默地说:“只写些支票。”他问我

① 原载《外国文学》1992年第4期。

祯福的眼睛怎么样 ,我告诉他情况稳定 ,没有什么不好的感觉。自从八、九年前他得知我妻子回国后视力一度下降后 ,每次见面总要问候她 ,有时还问得十分具体。

帕特里克告诉我 ,他请了一位护士住在家里照顾他 ,免得经常跑医院。他很喜欢这位叫吉妮的护士 ,说她帮了大忙 ,还说她喜欢文学和戏剧。帕特里克和曼诺力因为行动不便 ,已经不再去剧院 ,吉妮告诉他们最近看了什么剧 ,有什么印象等 ,使他们间接地知道个梗概。接着 ,话题转到了澳大利亚的现状 ,帕特里克显出忧虑的样子 ,不无感慨地说 :“看来澳大利亚出了麻烦了。”他对于工党的领导人颇有不满 ,评论时用了很强烈的字眼儿。他对于前总理惠特拉姆一直怀有极大的敬意。对于惠氏 1975 年被迫下台始终耿耿于怀 ,为了表示抗议他退回了授予他的澳大利亚勋章。但他对惠特拉姆最近在广告节目中出现感到不可理解 :“他既不需要钱也不需要名 ,那究竟是为了什么呢 ?”他告诉我他的新剧《岩上的牧羊人》在外地公演了。我问他一个新出版的集子为什么叫《不安的三篇》 ,他答道 :“因为它们就是三个不安的篇子。”他还告诉我他的政治言论集即将问世 ,还特别提到戴维·马(David Marr)在写他的自传^① ,他说 :“我很喜欢他 ,但不知道他是否喜欢我。我和他无所不谈。等我读到这本书时可能会不喜欢。”他问我愿意不愿意见戴维 ,我说 :“当然愿意。”他随即把戴维·马的电话号码给了我 ,并且答应给戴维打个电话。事后 ,由于怀特的介绍 ,我访问了戴维和他谈了半个上午。帕特里克告诉我 ,小说家彼得·凯里的一部新作最近拍了电影 ,效果很好。我问他 ,他的小说中有没有准备拍片的 ?他说 :“可能会不合适 ,不过考虑过《探险家沃斯》、《人树》和《树叶裙》。《树叶裙》里他们最感兴趣的就是裸体

① 戴维·马著《怀特传》(Patrick White A Life)已于 1991 年夏出版。

那一点。①”

不知不觉地已经谈了两个半小时。我起身告辞，帕特里克和曼诺力送我到后门，帕特里克对我讲的最后一句话就是上面我引的那句令人心酸的话。这句话使我以后两天一直心情沉重。回想以往四、五次见面，他从未说过类似的话。难道他真的已经有了预感和先知？往事一幕幕地浮现在眼前。

记得 1980 年 9 月 16 日接到他的第一封信：

“来信迟迟未复，十分抱歉。最近几周我十分繁忙。

“你和你妻子愿意在星期三（9 月 24 日）到我这里来吗？我可以在十一点至十二点之间见你们。

帕特里克·怀特”

我和祯福听说过人们的议论，知道怀特性情孤僻，脾气不好，因此初次见他时，心情十分紧张，明明地址是“马丁路 20 号”，却跑到了“马丁街”，等我们发现地址有误时，距离约定的时间只有 12 分钟了，我们跳上了一部出租车，飞也似地奔向马丁路，幸好相距不远，十一点正按时赶到了怀特的住宅。这次访问实际上进行了一个半小时，倒不是我们故意超过时限，而是因为怀特当时谈兴正浓，一时停不下来。② 在我即将结束进修准备回国时，曾经邀请怀特和曼诺力吃过一次中国饭，席间谈到他新近出版的小说《特莱庞的爱情》。过了两天，怀特寄来了一张卡片，上面是一幅触目惊心的图画，两只巨大无比的袋鼠已经把悉尼的摩天大楼全部推倒，海湾大桥断为两截，悉尼歌剧院已成为瓦砾一片，画虽非怀特所作，但却生动地表现出他对于世界前途的忧虑。另一面上写着：

“再次感谢你们两人做的精彩的饭菜。你谈到《特莱庞》的平装本，我后来想到，你是否没有这本书的精装本。如果你

① 《树叶裙》讲的是埃伦·罗森伯格遇难流落孤岛后被土著人掳获又最终逃走的故事，埃伦的衣服被土著人抢走后，不得不赤身裸体在腰间系些树枝树叶遮羞。

② 见《初访怀特》。

愿意的话 ,我可以送给你一本美国版的精装本。

P. W. ”

回国以后 ,我翻译了怀特的中篇小说《一杯茶》,译后曾给他写过一封信 ,在信中谈了我对于他的中、短篇的看法 ,还问了他几个问题。1982 年 3 月 13 日他写了一封相当长的信 ,作为回复 :

“ 收到了你 2 月 26 日问我写作动机的信。天哪 ,我真不知道是什么‘ 驱使 ’我写短篇或长篇小说。它就那么蹦出来了 ,因为它非得蹦出来不可。(另一方面 ,我写我的自画相《镜中疵斑》是为了告诉人们我是怎样的一个人。)我的大部分短篇小说大约都是在我旅行时写的 ,因为我这时无法安顿下来写些更长的作品。.....在两部短篇小说集出版以后 ,我之所以没有再写短篇 ,我想原因在于我失去了这种欲望 ,也可以说是因为我没有再旅行。

“ 我不知道我的短篇是不是如你所说具有我的长篇的结构和涵盖面。许多澳大利亚‘ 专家 ’已经断言我没有写短篇的本事 ,这就取决于怎么来看短篇小说了。欧·亨利是短篇小说家 ,契诃夫也是短篇小说家。对于我来说 ,契诃夫的两个最了不起的短篇《农民》和《在峡谷里》可以视为短的长篇小说。假设我写了象契诃夫《亲爱的》那样的短篇小说 ,澳大利亚的评论家们就会斥之为格式化。

“ 英国作家 V. S. 普里切特被许多人视为最有权威的短篇小说家 ,最近他出版了一部短篇小说选集 ,他收了我写的《五点二十分》,有些澳大利亚‘ 专家 ’对他的选择感到惊讶 ,更不用说恼怒了 ,因为我不属于澳大利亚短篇小说家精英之流。

“ 我刚从阿得雷德归来 ,那里正在排演我的新剧《请向司机示意》。这是激动人心却又令人疲惫不堪的几周。

“ 谨向你们夫妇致以最良好的祝愿。

帕特里克 ”

《外国文学》1982年第4期发表了我写的《怀特印象记》和我翻译的《镜中疵斑》的片段,还附有初访怀特时我妻子给他拍的一张照片。我给他寄去后,收到了他1982年5月25日的一封回信:

“谢谢你寄来了杂志。看到我自己脸上那副深奥莫测的表情,我很高兴。我不知道你译了《镜中疵斑》中的哪些部分。不管哪一部分中国人都会感到费解。

“《请向司机示意》在阿得雷德大获成功,但我还没有一个能寄给你的本子。在演出中作了部分改动,与其说是台词的改动,倒不如说是布景的变化。原来的布景确实太花哨,后来在演出过程中他们回过头来接受了我对结尾部分比较朴素的视觉形象的主意。导演下次来悉尼时,我一定要和他见面,我们要把剧本的最后一稿写出来,最终我想会由土生出版社出版。随着世界上核威胁的情况的变化,我必须承认,我每周对剧的结尾都有不同的看法。对于我来说,与核战争相比,今天其它的一切都无关重要……

“多年以来我一直使用滴眼剂控制青光眼的发展,但几周以前,两位专家决定,假如我不想让右眼失明的话,必须做手术。所以我定于6月28日进医院。手术我倒不在乎,但是手术后几个星期不能行动确使我十分担忧。这意味着我们得请一位管家务的,我不知道这个办法会怎么样。不管怎么说,假如我们还活些年头的话,势必要请人照顾,如果经济能力许可请人在家里照顾,否则就得进养老院。无论哪个办法都令人沮丧。我希望我不要拖得太久,我敢肯定这种希望中国人听起来会觉得骇人听闻。长寿对我毫无吸引力,特别是世界处于目前这种境况之中。

“我时常愉快地回想起祯福和你,希望孩子能给你们带来欢乐。

帕特里克”

1982、1983年的几封信谈的主要是他和曼诺力的身体状况以

及他的戏剧的演出,还流露出他对于世界前途的忧虑。1983年12月27日信的结尾有这样一段话很能说明他当时的心境。

“我感到我的生命正在接近终点。我现在只对防止核战争有兴趣,其它一切都无关紧要。骗人有术的维瑞特和贝尔^①也好,甚至象托尔斯泰、契诃夫、陀思妥耶夫斯基那样的最伟大的艺术家也好,都是如此。让我们大家在这一事业中团结起来。十分遗憾,我永远也看不到你们美好的国家了。我真想去看一看,而不愿意看到我们这里的那些骗子。

帕特里克”

1984年7月至9月,我应邀再次访问澳大利亚。在这期间,我和怀特见过两次面^②。他的心思几乎全部集中于防止核战争,无论见面谈话或是电话里聊天,总也离不开这个题目。他正在积极组织“核裁军党”,主张关闭在澳大利亚的全部外国军事基地,在澳大利亚天空、陆地、海洋全部禁止核武器,停止铀矿开采。为组织这个新的政党,怀特还捐献出自己的钱。怀特是个有明确信念的人,从最早他给《澳大利亚文学》杂志写的《浪子》(1958年4月)一文即可清楚看出。七十年代以来,他的政治性言论明显增加,在集会上发表演说也愈益频繁,抨击政治腐败,揭露道德堕落,反对战争,主张和平,但是,他从未参与过政党活动,因此,发起组织解除核武装党对怀特来说是又一个转折点。

我告诉他历史学家曼宁·柯拉克(Manning Clark)准备不久去中国访问,他听了以后带着微笑说:“他总是出毛病。不久前他做了手术,后来又在石头上摔倒了,血流不止。恐怕你们得准备好在中国埋葬他。”怀特讲话常常有点“语不惊人死不休”的味道,他讲的时候平平常常,但用词生动形象,不乏幽默,因此和他谈话总是趣味盎然。

① 指澳大利亚导演 Richard Wherrett 和 John Bell。

② 见《再访怀特》。

在1985年12月12日的来信中,帕特里克告诉我,他即将出版一本新小说:

“谢谢你的圣诞卡。这一年来,我们时起时伏。我又进了医院,这次时间很短。曼诺力的脚跛得很厉害,十分痛苦。他的视力也恶化了,白内障在发展。要下很大的努力才能坐着看完一场戏和电影,出去吃饭坐的椅子不合适也很痛苦。

“复活节前后我有一本小说要出版,采取了一个过早地老迈的女人写回忆录的形式,假设是在她死后,由她的家属委托我把回忆录编辑成书。我还在缓慢地写一个剧本,有时间的时候就写几行。人上了年纪,家务活极为费力。我不能象过去那样在书桌和厨房之间跑来跑去。我们试过雇一位厨师,结果一塌糊涂。无法找到一个毋需事事作交待的人。

“我很高兴在翻译《人树》的过程中,你没有要我帮忙。

“我被邀请到各个地方出席会议,讨论世界和平的种种可能。真看不出来我出席会有什么效果。有些人误以为任何人只需获得了诺贝尔奖就会具有一种魔力。

“向你和你家人致以最良好的祝愿。

帕特里克”

1986年我访问埃及的旅途中曾给他去过一封信,我知道北非和中东对于怀特和曼诺力具有特别的意义。他在11月19日回信写道:

“未能及早复你旅途中的来信,十分抱歉。我还是那些借口:年事已高,疾病缠身,做事缓慢,种种压力等等。访问中东那些国家一定令人大开眼界。我们对这些国家十分熟悉。我们想象不出来是什么原因促使你访问曼苏拉。我们两个都想再访埃及,但我敢肯定我们会发现它破旧不堪令人沮丧。亚历山大在过去曾是个富有活力、同时——这似乎有些自身矛盾——又是个很没有意思的城市。我不知道你是否有我最近的一本小说《格雷夫人回忆录》,如果没有的话,我会寄给

你一本。这部小说假设是由在亚历山大的一位嫁给澳大利亚人的希腊女人所写 ,由我编辑而成。

“ 内蒙一定是个有趣的地方^① ,我不能想象那地方是个什么样子。我希望我能看到《人树》的中译本。我听谣传中国参加了伯尔尼协定 ,也许是真的。前些日子我收到《镜中疵斑》俄译本三册。几年前我听说《探险家沃斯》和《人树》也有俄译本 ,但一直未看到书。”

“ 几周前 ,一位在西方呆过很久的中国人来访 ,有一段时间他还在剑桥大学国王学院度过。他写过不少东西 ,是中国笔会主席 ,还主编刊载外国文学译文的杂志。也许有些事实我搞错了 ,我记不清楚他的名字。我发现记中国名字很困难 ,除非把它们敲到我脑袋里头去。他的姓是不是有点象 Pee ?^②

“ 最近几周 ,气管哮喘病折磨着我 ,我象只半死不活的绿头苍蝇拖来拖去。上周我不得不飞去堪培拉 ,在铀时代作家研讨会上发表演说。在表演过程中我设法控制了哮喘 ,但花了很大的力气。我尽可能不再旅行 ,不过我四月份还要去阿德雷德看我的一个剧的排演。

“ 曼诺力和我向你们夫妇致意。

帕特里克 ”

怀特给我的最后一封信写于 1987 年 12 月 10 日。这时我的妻子已去英国访问。他虽然写的还象以前那样洋洋洒洒 ,但有些字显然写得很费力 ,与一年前的书法已相差很多。他在信中说 :

“ 我将在另一包中给你寄去一些磁带^③ ,此外还有理查德·密尔的歌剧《探险家沃斯》以及一个篇幅不长的短篇小

① 我在给怀特的信中曾经告诉他 ,翻译《人树》的合作者李尧先生是内蒙的一位作家 ,因此这里提到内蒙。

② 实际上是 Ye ,指叶君健先生。

③ 指澳大利亚广播公司为他录制的一套磁带《怀特的生平与创作》。

说集《不安的三篇》,卷首曼诺力和我的照片是威廉·杨所拍。

“你会思念祯福的。曼诺力若是不在我不知道我会怎么办。澳大利亚变成了一个极坏的国家,到处都是恶人,而1988年眼看着向我们袭来。

“二百周年^①的活动我决不参加。今年早些时候,一个新剧《岩上的牧羊人》——在阿得雷德上演成功,但还未印出。悉尼、佩思和布里斯班都要求演出这个剧,作为二百周年庆祝活动的一部分,但是,我已经拒绝他们在1989年以前上演此剧。

“冬天我进医院作了疝气手术,并且作肺部治疗。曼诺力仍旧接受姜大夫的针灸治疗,他的脚和一个肩膀使他很痛苦。

“我希望我寄去的这些东西能让你高兴。

“曼诺力和我向你致以最良好的祝愿。

帕特里克”

这些年间,总计收到过怀特十四封信,另外还有一封曼诺力的信。随着时间的推移,了解的加深,信件的内容发生了变化,口气也愈来愈亲切。尽管他自己的身体日益羸弱,受着多种疾病的折磨,他却总忘记不了询问我们的健康情况。有时澳大利亚朋友问我们,怀特到底是个什么样的人,我们总是说:“帕特里克待人真挚,爱憎分明。”尽管我们知道有些人对怀特持批评态度。

怀特逝世一周年时,举行了《人树》和《探险家沃斯》中译本首发式,我在发言中提到怀特对于中国怀有友好的感情。事后,澳大利亚广播公司的记者追问我为什么这样说。我举了一些例子,我

① 指澳大利亚1988年举行的建国200周年庆祝活动。1788年英国第一批载着囚犯的船只驶抵澳大利亚,使澳正式成为英国的殖民地,但对于土著人来说却是一场灾难。怀特出于对土著人的同情,拒绝参加200周年庆祝活动。

说,怀特通常不愿接待来访者,可是他见过许多中国作家、学者、新闻记者,包括叶君健、宗璞、李尧、张常海、朱炯强以及我们夫妇。他十分珍视亲友送给他的中国礼物,他表妹贝基·加蓝德在五十年代赠给他一块从中国带回来的织锦茶垫,他一直作为珍品保存着。他不止一次表示过希望来中国,只是年事已高,未能成行。记者采访之后,我又想到一些事例,他曾经给各大国领袖写信呼吁和平,包括里根、撒切尔、密特朗等,信里充满批评指责,有时几近粗鲁,例如,在给英国首相的信中有这样的句子:“撒切尔夫人,我敦促你搜集一下你的良心,假如在珍珠项链后面确实有颗心的话。”中国是个大国,对于世界和平也担负着不容推卸的责任,怀特却从未把中国领导人和西方首脑同等看待。具体的事例还能列出若干条,但最重要的还是我们的亲身感受。在他在世时,我每次访问澳洲,他不管身体好坏,忙闲与否,总要抽出时间款待我。每次见面都热情饱满,侃侃而谈,谈不完时在电话上继续聊。身体条件容许时,他亲自下厨。最后一次见面时,他脊柱已经变形,步履维艰,从屋里到藤架短短一二十米路,他走起来都极为费力,但是,他还是和我谈了两个小时。没有对朋友的真挚感情,他怎可能忍受着病痛做出这样的牺牲呢?而我从来也没有认为,怀特对我的友情只是对于我个人或者对于我和祯福两人,这友情包含着他对中国人的友好情感,包含着对这个“美好的国家”的向往。

非凡的历程^①

——评怀特长篇小说《探险家沃斯》

《探险家沃斯》原名《沃斯》(Voss),是1973年诺贝尔文学奖获得者,澳大利亚作家帕特里克·怀特(Patrick White)的第五部长篇小说,出版于1957年。本书与1955年出版的《人树》均为作者的成名作。尽管澳洲文学评论界对于怀特的作品有过争论,人们对《探险家沃斯》的评价却是一致的。1986年3月,经澳大利亚诗人与小说家马鲁夫改编的歌剧《沃斯》在阿得雷德艺术节上演出,深受好评,被誉为澳大利亚第一出真正的民族歌剧。

怀特是澳大利亚最杰出的作家,也是英语国家最优秀的作家之一。他生于1912年,自幼喜爱文学。13岁时被送到英国一所中学受教育,在怀特看来,这无异于四年的监狱生活。回到澳大利亚后,怀特在他父亲的农场里过了两年,写了三部小说,但都被出版商退回。19岁时他再次赴英,在剑桥大学攻读现代语言,接触到德国和法国文学。假期中他经常到欧洲大陆旅行。他喜爱喜剧,曾向一个剧团申请做演员,导演认为他顶多能在后台干些杂务,从此他打消了做演员的想法。他父亲希望他大学毕业后回到澳洲,继承家业,做一个农场主。但是怀特却立志创作,在伦敦逗留下来。他结识了抽象派画家德迈斯特,在艺术观上受到后者强烈的影响。怀特不止一次说过,他是通过绘画和音乐学会写作的。1939年,怀特发表了《幸福谷》,这是他的第一部小说,也是他成名后最不满意的一部书,他一直不同意出版商再版,因此成为绝版

① 原载《文艺报》1990年11月24日。

书。1941年,他的一部在内容上具有时代特点,在艺术手法上深受意识流影响的新作《生者与死者》问世。然而第二次世界大战的爆发使他那刚刚开始写作生涯中断。

战争期间,怀特参加了英国皇家空军情报部的工作,被派往中东负责检查军人的信件。北非的荒凉沙漠使他联想起他的祖国——澳大利亚。1948年,他毅然回到悉尼郊区定居下来。同年出版了他的第三部小说《姨母的故事》。这是他最得意的一部作品,但评论界反应冷淡,使他十分沮丧,此后几年,他埋头农牧,不事写作。

1955年,描述拓荒者斯坦·帕克一家三代人的巨著《人树》问世,得到普遍好评。两年后《探险家沃斯》出版,至此怀特在文学界的地位得以确立。1973年,也就是他的小说《风暴眼》发表的那一年,怀特获得了诺贝尔文学奖。对澳大利亚来说这是破天荒第一遭,是文学界的一件大事。但是怀特却不愿去斯德哥尔摩受奖,他委托他的好友、画家诺兰代他领奖,并把拿到的八万美金全部捐献出来,建立了“怀特文学奖金”,以鼓励澳洲作家的文学创作。

在半个多世纪中,怀特的创作数量十分可观,他共发表了十二部长篇小说、三部短篇小说集、七个剧本、一个电影剧本、一部言论集和一部自传。怀特是迄今最著名的澳大利亚作家。他的小说已被译成中、法、德、俄、西、葡、瑞典、挪威、捷克、保加利亚、塞尔维亚、希伯莱等十几个国家的文字在世界各地出版。

怀特对澳洲文坛的影响广泛而深远。有的评论家认为,澳洲文坛的活跃局面与怀特密不可分。这样说是根据的。他是最早把欧洲现代派写作手法运用于小说、戏剧创作并造成影响的澳大利亚作家,从而给澳洲文学打开了一个新局面,使澳洲文学开始呈现出它的多样性与复杂性。怀特是一个诚实而执着的艺术家,他几十年如一日坚持他的艺术观和创作手法,为澳洲文坛贡献了风格独特的一批文学精品。

尽管在怀特的作品中不乏对现实社会的冷嘲热讽,但总的来

说,他在创作中仍与现实保持着一定的距离。新闻界常常把怀特描绘成性格孤僻、与世隔绝、不易接近的怪人,实际上怀特对于澳大利亚的前途十分关注,对于文化、教育水准的下降极为忧虑。近年来,他越来越多地参与政治活动,对于如何防止战争发表了许多看法,甚至写信给美、法、苏等国首脑,呼吁和平。1984年8月他在拉特伯大学的演讲中说:“在我晚年的大部分时间里,我每天都在探求出路,但始终找不到令人满意的答案。”他认为:“生活属于真心生活的人们,这些人常常并未受过很好的教育,然而却富有直感和本能,我本人也是其中的一员。当我想到千百万这样的人们时,我才得以摆脱我有时感到的极度绝望。”

怀特早在二次大战期间即已开始酝酿《探险家沃斯》的创作。他在德国轰炸伦敦期间阅读了澳大利亚探险家爱德华·艾尔的日记,之后又阅读了A. H. 齐斯姆所著描写莱克哈特最后一次探险的故事《奇异的新世界》。在二次大战中他对于战争狂人、法西斯头目希特勒把自己的意志强加于人类既感到愤怒,又感到困惑。《探险家沃斯》就是以出生在德国的科学家和探险家莱克哈特(1813—1848)的探险活动为素材创作的。在这部书里,他着重刻画了人与严峻的自然的搏斗,以不同的方式从不同的角度探讨了他在战争中苦苦思索的人的意志这个问题。

澳洲是世界上最古老的一块大陆,同时又是“发现”最晚的一片土地。19世纪40年代,几支探险队曾从澳洲的东南部向北向西进发,探索大陆的奥秘。1842年2月莱克哈特抵达悉尼,1844年10月率领一支探险队出发,沿海岸深入北部,于1845年12月17日抵达艾新敦港,旅程5 000公里,历时15个月。1846年他计划由东海岸出发横跨大陆到达西海岸珀思,由于饥饿及疾病,不得不中途返回。1848年,他再次组织跨越澳大陆的探险,探险队员中有四个白人和两个土著人。探险队员深入内陆后不久即全部失踪,未留下任何痕迹,有关方面虽多次派人搜寻,但毫无结果,至今仍是澳洲史上的一个谜。

《探险家沃斯》的情节分为三个部分。第一部分描述探险的准备活动,从沃斯访问他的资助者波恩纳先生讲起,一直到各界人士在海港为沃斯等送行,其中着重写了沃斯结识波恩纳的外甥女罗拉和他们几次见面的情形。第二部分叙述了探险队从出发到覆灭的过程,包括途中经历的艰难险阻以及探险队内部的分裂反叛。叙述中穿插了波恩纳一家的活动以及沃斯和罗拉的感情交流。第三部分写搜寻活动始末,幸存者嘉德的出现以及纪念沃斯的活动。

怀特的小说向来不以情节取胜。他曾说,他所做的只是把人物放在一起,让故事自然发展下去,不在情节上大作文章。在怀特的小说中《探险家沃斯》是故事性比较强的一部,但依旧算不上是娓娓动听。他的故事更多地是为人物服务的。

《探险家沃斯》中出现的有名有姓的人物近七十个,他们分别属于不同的社会阶层。探险队由九人组成,除两个土著人外,余下的七个白人分属两个阵营,一边以流放犯嘉德为首,还有讲求实际的农场主,他们出于各自的目的参加探险,一旦遇到困难,个人利益可能受到危害,便决心背弃沃斯,离开探险队。另一边以沃斯为首,包括鸟类学家波尔费雷曼、诗人勒·墨舒尔以及四肢发达头脑简单的年轻人哈利·罗巴茨,他们与嘉德等恰恰相反,是一批幻想家,他们参加探险并不是从实际利益出发,而是抱有高尚的目标。不论是属于哪一边,每个探险队员都具有鲜明的性格。自然,怀特着力刻画的是沃斯,他落落寡合,超然物外。对于他来说,探险主要不是为了跨越沙漠去发现什么,而是为了向大自然挑战,与恶劣的自然条件决一胜负,也可以说是为了磨炼自己意志。沃斯的坚韧和忍耐力是常人不可企及的。他的举动有时也为其他队员所不解。例如,在给养日益匮乏时,他决心处死心爱的狗,尽管所有的人都出面为狗求情,他还是我行我素。他在勒·墨舒尔生病时对他照顾备至,甚至为他洗脚、清理粪便,这反映出沃斯性格的又一侧面。他把这一切也看作是对自己性格的锤炼。有的评论家认为这部分有浓重的宗教色彩,从这里可以看到基督的成份。怀特相

信上帝是存在的,但他并不笃信基督教或天主教,他对宗教问题不感兴趣,他要阐发的是他自己的哲理,而不是宗教教义。在小说临近结尾处有罗拉的这样一段话:“我相信沃斯和其他人一样身上有基督的影子。假如他身上善恶并存的话,他是和恶作斗争的,但是他失败了。”怀特在作品的主要部分中着意刻画作为“超人”的沃斯形象,但是在这里他通过罗拉的话承认沃斯最终并不是“超人”,他和平常人一样集善恶于一身,在他身上既可以看到基督的影子,也可以看到魔鬼的影子。

怀特在小说中反复说明一个道理:真正能认识世界的并不是学者、教授、上层阶级中受过教育的人,而是一些不谙世故甚至怪诞不经的人们,例如《姨母的故事》中的希奥多拉、《人树》中的斯坦、《坚实的曼陀罗》中的亚瑟、《活体解剖者》中的画家赫特尔、《特莱庞的爱情》中的两性人特莱庞等。《探险家沃斯》中人物众多,但在怀特笔下真正能领会人生真谛的只有性格孤僻的“超人”沃斯。终生未嫁、与世格格不入的女主人公罗拉,在探险途中经常在日记中记一些奇特印象的勒·墨舒尔,头脑简单近于白痴的哈利·罗巴茨,波尔费德曼和杰基在一定程度上也是这种人。这些人(特别是前四人)是怀特心目中的“明眼人”。他们经过一番苦难的磨炼终于逐步悟出人生的真谛。《探险家沃斯》中的探险是作为苦难的历程来描绘的,探险与其说是为了了解内陆的秘密,倒不如说是为了探索人们心灵的奥妙、人生的意义。如果一定要找出怀特小说中的主题思想,那就是普遍存在于怀特小说中的探索性。他在写作中也象他在生活中那样不断地探索人生的道理。他思索,他苦恼,他沮丧,他失望,但是他没有停止探索。这在一定意义上反映了今天资本主义国家许多人的惶惑不安。

《探险家沃斯》另一个值得注意的方面,是小说展示了一幅宏伟的历史画卷,选择了重大的历史主题。尽管怀特不是在写历史小说,但不能否认在《探险家沃斯》中他选择的是澳大利亚历史上一个重要的题材——19世纪上、中叶澳洲的探险活动。澳洲的开

发与探险活动密不可分,因此选择这一题材必然会触及澳洲历史的许多方面,例如当时的社会结构、价值观念、风俗习惯等等。19世纪中叶的澳洲仍是英国的殖民地,从1788年以来英国政府不断把犯人流放到澳洲,当地政府是英国派出的政权机构。这个社会等级森严,探险家沃斯和流放犯嘉得之间的紧张关系即由此而来。怀特在描述中十分注重历史细节的真实性,创造了可信的历史氛围。从城市街道到房舍屋宇,从衣裳服饰到家俱摆设,从举止仪容到言谈话语,在怀特笔下都具有19世纪中叶的澳洲特色。作者在描绘上层社会时不乏嘲讽之词,有时使人联想到英国小说家奥斯汀。此外,我们还不能不为怀特对澳洲内地的勾勒所折服,空旷荒凉的沙漠和恶劣的自然条件都写得极为逼真,令人读来不寒而栗。

怀特的文字表现能力极强,他不但掌握了丰富的语汇,句式的安排有时也一反常规,往往一句话甚至半句话就是一段。在本书第13章之前,故事的两条线一直分开写,交待了一头之后再叙述另一头,但在第13章中却用一种特殊的写法把沃斯的临终受难与罗拉的重病中的苦痛和梦呓联系起来,造成心灵感应的效果。心灵感应发生在两人精神恍惚之际,作者的语言也朦朦胧胧,使人难以说清到底是真事还是虚幻。怀特有时使用诗一般的语言,其中自然不乏诗歌中所允许的违反语言常规的现象。为此怀特曾受到评论家的批评和告诫,甚至有人攻击怀特说,他的写作风格是一种掩饰手段。事实上,怀特既不是想写诗,更不是企图掩盖什么,他的文字风格是他整个创作风格的一部分。对他的文字的这类批评早在四、五十年代即已出现,但是怀特置批评于不顾,执着地追求自己的风格,一直沿着自己确定的道路走下去。尽管人们对于怀特的文字有过争论,但是任何人都不怀疑他是一位严肃的作家。他的小说从来不是急就之作,通常他都要三易其稿。初稿用手写,写完之后“冷处理”一段时间再修改,修改后再打字,打字后再放一段时间,然后再加修改,才最后定稿。

澳大利亚文学评论界对于《探险家沃斯》中的个别细节也有

所批评 ,例如有的人认为 ,嘉德最后出现时讲的一段回忆沃斯的话 ,特别是把波尔费雷曼的死与沃斯的死混淆起来 ,似乎有斧凿之痕 ,读来不那么自然。有的评论家认为对罗拉的描写也有不尽妥当之处 ,特别是她和她的养女墨西的关系有些牵强。尽管如此 ,人们仍然认为《探险家沃斯》不失为一部优秀的长篇小说。

文苑一瞥^①

谈起澳大利亚文学,无论在澳洲或是在海外,人们首先想到的仍然是诺贝尔文学奖获得者——帕特里克·怀特。怀特虽已是七十二岁的老作家,但在文坛仍很活跃。三年前和他见面时,他曾经向我透露准备再写一部长篇小说和一部中篇小说。但是,在去年记者采访他时,他宣布不再写小说,而要转向戏剧创作。怀特自幼喜爱戏剧,在英国读大学期间,曾幻想当一名演员。自六十年代以来,他先后写过五个剧本和一个电影剧本。有的评论家认为他的剧作远不及他的小说。马克斯·哈里斯甚至认为有的根本算不上是戏剧,但是《快乐的人们》一九七九年在悉尼演出时,上座率确也高达百分之八十四。怀特在一九八二年创作了《请向司机示意》,于同年在南部港口城市阿德莱德公演。这个剧通过一对夫妇在汽车站等车回顾了他们的一生。在手法上与贝克特的《等待戈多》有不少相似之处。去年又写了《低洼地》,也是由阿德莱德剧团演出。怀特与当地的导演吉姆·夏门等一直关系密切,合作较好,而和悉尼的几位导演则似乎难以共事。

怀特历来不喜欢出头露面。尤其害怕在公众场合讲话,但是,近年来似乎情形稍有变化。去年,他接受邀请访问了希腊——他的第二故乡,在堪培拉国立大学一次科学家的会议上发表了反对核战争的演说,年底不仅接见了记者访问,而且谈得十分畅快。今年年初,澳大利亚国庆时,怀特在《悉尼先驱晨报》上发表了论爱国主义的长篇文章。他认为不能以为在运动场上组织啦啦队拼命

① 原载《外国文学》1984年第5期。

为自己的球队呐喊助威就是爱国主义。“如果我们的爱国主义有任何价值的话，”他写道，“它应该具有两个方面，反映出既忠于澳大利亚，又忠于世界。”他认为应该联合各种力量控制超级大国，使核战争得以避免。去年年底他在给我的一封信中很悲观地说：“我感到我的生命正在接近它的尽头。我现在唯一关心的是努力避免核战争。其他的一切都无所谓。”

除怀特以外，当今澳大利亚最有影响又最多产的作家要算托马斯·基尼利了。基尼利截至一九八一年共发表了十四部小说和三个剧本。（有的评论家认为他写作的速度太快，影响了质量。）一九八二年他的新作《辛德勒的方舟》荣获英国布克奖。这是一部历史小说，取材于第二次世界大战期间纳粹统治波兰时发生的一件真实的事情。辛德勒是一个德国企业家，在纳粹占领克拉科夫后，成为一家搪瓷厂的厂长。他在厂内雇用了几百名犹太工人。在犹太人被大批无辜杀害的阴森的日子里，辛德勒迂回而巧妙地保护了不少犹太人免于灾难，一直到苏联红军解放波兰和捷克。基尼利写小说确是得心应手，尽管材料来自于各方面的调查，难免使他受到局限，但书中主要人物都鲜明生动，有特点，有性格，场面和情节的再创造也十分逼真，气氛之沉重使人几乎感到有些窒息。正如基尼利的其他小说一样，他在这部书中也表现了他的明确的是非观，对于德国法西斯的惨无人性的野蛮行为揭露得淋漓尽致。这本书出版以后受到各方好评，著名英国作家格林誉之为“非凡的成就”。

基尼利又是一位令人不可捉摸的作家。在《辛德勒的方舟》之后，他深入澳大利亚北部腹地，在荒芜的草原游历了一番，写了一本游记——《内地》。目前他正在写一部以澳大利亚早期历史为背景的小说，暂定名是《大南海马戏团》，预定今年出版。

以写《不光荣的权力》一书闻名的弗兰克·哈代去年出版了又一部小说，名叫《奥斯卡·奥斯涅尔德的痴想》，在书中抨击了唯利是图的放债者。老作家阿兰·马歇尔发表了长篇小说《爱斗

者》。

在短篇小说方面,最引人注目的是两部选集。一部是凯伦·高尔滋华绥编的《澳大利亚短篇小说集》,另一部是弗兰克·穆尔豪斯编选的《短篇小说巡礼》。十年前,穆尔豪斯曾为安格斯——罗伯森出版公司编选过短篇小说集,他当时收到来稿共二百五十份,而十年后他再次编集子时却收到了两千七百篇。由此可见,短篇小说这个文学形式在澳大利亚仍然充满了活力。两个选集的路子大相径庭,高尔滋华绥的选集中都是知名作家的作品,以时间先后为序,而穆尔豪斯所选的作家许多是不见经传的。只有为数很少的几位作家在两个集子里都出现。穆尔豪斯在去年访华时曾到北京外国语学院演讲,谈到过他的这个选集。他说当代澳大利亚的短篇小说大致上可以分为三类:一类是讲男女关系,一类是文字游戏,在形式上做文章,一类是游记。这个说法是否准确全面,仍可商榷。穆尔豪斯本人的短篇小说确有不少是涉及男女关系的。在小说形式方面,他也作过不少尝试,尤其是所谓“间断叙述法”更是他十分拿手的。他在选集中很自然地流露出他个人的喜爱和倾向。

今年年初发生的另一件有意思的事情是悉尼《太阳报》请八位有名望的作家、评论家推荐他们认为澳大利亚“最伟大的十本书”。怀特拒绝参加这次活动——这也是人们意料之中的。在七位被征求意见的作家、评论家中,怀特得全票,理查森(《理查德·马霍尼的命运》三部曲的作者)得六票,劳森得五票,曼宁·克拉克(《澳大利亚历史》多卷本作者)得四票,哈尔·波特(短篇小说家《铸铁阳台上的观望者》的作者)得三票。尽管仲裁者政治倾向和文学主张各不相同,但在对于怀特、理查森和劳森的评价方面却能大体一致。另一个值得注意的现象是人们一般认为穆尔豪斯是新派作家,对于传统的现实主义作家可能会予以排斥。而事实上他在十本书中除了推荐怀特和斯戴德以外,其他都是现实主义小说或历史、自传。由此看来,新派和老派在文艺评价方面似乎也

并不是相隔千里。自然 ,文坛上有些现象错综复杂 ,也并不那么容易解释。

澳洲文坛巡礼^①

去年暑期中我应邀去澳大利亚访问,除了去图书馆查阅资料和做几个报告,还花了不少时间访问作家、诗人和评论家。形形色色的看法和错综复杂、矛盾交织的印象一齐涌进脑海,几个月也整理不出个头绪。这固然说明我不善于透过纷繁的现象抓住事物的本质,但也反映出今天的澳洲文坛是何等的充满活力和变化万千。

除了在巴腊拉特召开的澳大利亚文学研究会年会上和七八位作家、诗人见面交谈外,我在悉尼、墨尔本、布里斯班、堪培拉、阿得雷德、珀思等地还走访了二十几位作家、诗人和评论家。其中有久负盛名的小说家怀特、诗人道布森、剧作家布佐;有现实主义作家华登、莫里逊、杰西卡·安德森等;有声名四振多次获奖的作家马鲁夫、贝瓦利·法姆;还有包括克拉默、基尔南、德顿、黑格汗在内的一批评论家。综合他们的看法企图引出人人皆可接受的结论是不切实际的,所能做的无非是记录下来从旁观察得出的点滴看法。

我的一个突出印象是澳大利亚老一代的作家正在逐渐让位给一批颇有才华的中年作家。在我到达澳洲前,三四十年代蜚声文坛的克里斯梯纳·斯泰德已经去世。斯泰德生于一九〇二年,一九二八年离澳赴英,在一九三四至一九七六年间共计创作出版了十二部小说,其中包括著名的《悉尼七穷汉》、《完全是为了爱》等。一九七四年她回澳定居。一九八三年三月三十一日逝世。在一九八四年故去的作家中还有短篇小说家阿兰·马歇尔和哈尔·波特。阿兰·马歇尔幼年患小儿麻痹,终身残废,但他创作了许多动

① 原载《外国文学》1985年第6期。

人的描写儿童心理的短篇小说,他的自传《我能跳过水坑》被认为是他的最优秀的作品之一、曾拍成电影。五十年代时,阿兰·马歇尔应邀访华,受到周总理的接见。哈尔·波特的短篇小说独具一格。他对细节的描绘、人物的塑造以及文字的运用(尤其是这最后一点)都胜人一筹。我听说他遭车祸,直到逝去前再也未省人事,心里充满了惋惜之情。他的有些短篇我是十分喜爱的。我与怀特见了两次面,在电话上长谈过几次,比起四年前他显得有些龙钟。说话时有些气喘,动作也迟缓了,但是思想依旧敏捷,话锋锐利。和他谈起创作,他表示不准备再写长篇小说了,有可能再写几个剧本,其他时间都用在新建“核裁军党”的活动上。看他的体力,再写象《人树》、《暴风眼》之类的巨著确已不可能。在墨尔本拜访了“现实主义作家小组”的成员华登和莫里逊,华登虽年逾古稀,精力却依旧充沛,仍在断断续续地发表些短篇和书评,而莫里逊由于风湿性关节炎、身体羸弱,早已不再创作。

象怀特这样一些老作家依然在文学界享有很高的威望,有着广泛的影响,但是,他们创作的黄金时代已经过去。取代他们的是一批精力旺盛、颇有水平的中年作家。这里面有前面提到的诗人、小说家马鲁夫,有出版了十五、六部小说的多产作家基尼利,有侨居英国的诗人、小说家斯托,还有刻意创新、运用“间断叙述法”的短篇小说家、澳作协主席穆尔豪斯。这些作家在澳洲文坛已经站稳了脚跟,影响日增。穆尔豪斯是在六十年代反越战中成长起来的青年作家,在最初的几年由于他在题材和写法上奇特突兀独树一帜,遭到不少人的指责,在出版方面也曾遭遇到困难,然而今天他的小说不仅出版毫无问题,在一九八三年他还被邀主编一个短篇小说集。同年率领澳作家代表团访华。他的写法也已为人熟悉,不再成为人们议论的题目了。

中年作家中呼声最高者莫过于马鲁夫。我接触到的观点迥异的一些朋友在对马鲁夫的看法上惊人地一致。怀特在电话上告诉我,说马鲁夫已经抵达悉尼,我应该去见见他,接着,他把马鲁夫夸

奖了一番。与怀特持截然相反观点的评论家、悉尼大学教授克拉默也对我说要注意的是马鲁夫的作品,并认为他是写得最好的一位作家。

马鲁夫的父亲是黎巴嫩人,母亲是英国人,本人出生在布里斯班市。他原本是个诗人,出版过数册诗集。他于一九七五年出版第一部小说《章诺》,立即得到了广泛的好评。之后,接二连三地发表长篇小说《幻想中的旅行》、《儿戏》和《飞去吧,彼得》。每本书都获得了评论界的称赞,而且评价愈来愈高。他的作品情节通常都并不复杂,但他着力于人物内心世界的开掘。故事中常寓以哲理,往往需要多层次的理解。

我第一次见到马鲁夫是在麦夸瑞大学的一个招待会上。当时他是麦夸瑞大学的“住校作家”。这是西方一些国家资助作家的一种办法,政府给“住校作家”一笔津贴,师生也借此机会和作家接触。道布森的诗集《三种命运》刚刚出版,马鲁夫在招待会上作了热情洋溢的介绍。这不是一次即席发言,而是每个字都事先写好的讲话稿。在这次会上,我们约定了见面的时间。

大约十天后,我按约定的时间去看马鲁夫时,他刚刚从墨尔本飞回悉尼,从机场赶到学校。他患感冒,急着要去校医院看病。他要我陪他一起去,在路上,他对我说:“我发现校园里有一片树林至少有十种鸟。你看……”顺着他指的方向看去,只见一只羽毛翠绿的鸟直插到树丛中去。他带着我蹑手蹑脚地走近这片桉树林。顷刻间,他几乎完全变了个人,象个十来岁的调皮的男孩在树丛中钻来钻去。“瞧,这是长尾鸬鹚……快看!这种鸟象是鸽子,却不是鸽子,它有个粉红色的冠子。”此情此景立即使我想起了《飞去吧,彼得》一书中的吉姆。吉姆是土生土长的昆士兰州人,熟悉那里的一草一木,尤其喜欢出没在田间的各类鸟。他受雇于克罗瑟,整天俯卧在草地观察和记录各种鸟的特征。由于澳洲是年代最古老的一个洲,又长期与其他大陆隔绝,它的花草树木和鸟兽中有许多都是独特的,有些鸟确实使人叹为观止。我忍不住

问马鲁夫：“你在昆士兰州的时候是不是也经常和田间观察鸟的行踪？”确是如此。”书中的吉姆是一个沉默寡言性格内向的人，但是却很善于与大自然交往，与花草鸟兽有共同语言。马鲁夫对人热情，但并不外露，也不善于交际和辞令，和吉姆似乎有许多共同点。“我在书里想要说明的是这样一点，”马鲁夫接着说：“既看到大自然又看到战场，这样才能形成完整的对世界的看法。”书的第一部分是描写吉姆在田间观察鸟，第二部分写的是在第一次世界大战爆发后吉姆去欧洲打仗负伤的故事。情节简单明了，但是马鲁夫要表达的却是一个有哲学意味的主题。在其他小说中马鲁夫着重表现的则是现代世界中人的孤独。

马鲁夫的文字受到他的诗作的影响，遣词造句都颇具匠心，值得玩味。读他的小说永远不可能象读畅销小说那样一掠而过，需要的是细心的品尝和揣度。这和读怀特的小说有共同之处。

类似马鲁夫这样的中年作家在澳大利亚为数不少。事实上，他们已经成为今天创作队伍的主力。基尼利的小说一本接着一本地出版，虽然质量参差不齐，但总的来说是受人欢迎的。奥运会期间，基尼利作为《悉尼先驱晨报》的特派记者去洛杉矶作专题采访，成为人们注目的人物。斯托、穆尔豪斯、贝尔、卢瑞等都处于创作的旺盛期，据报载卢瑞已经发表了十六部著作，人们一般认为他是颇有才华的一位作家。在剧作家中则更是中年人在撑台面。威廉逊、布佐、布莱尔、苏渥尔都深受群众喜爱，他们的剧作主题紧扣人们关心的一些社会问题，充满活力，对话精辟诙谐。近年来，威廉逊从戏剧界又进入了电影界，既写脚本，又参加导演，踌躇满志，摆出了大干一场的架式。

我的另一点感受是，澳洲的文学批评愈来愈成熟。这首先表现在人们不再争论什么是澳大利亚文学。克拉默主编的《牛津澳大利亚文学史》已经基本上摆脱开这一争议的羁绊。在巴腊拉特市召开的澳大利亚文学研究会年会上宣读的几十篇论文中没有一篇涉及这一问题。这说明人们对此已经不感兴趣，也说明人们在

认识上的成熟。

侨居海外多年的中年作家雪莱·哈泽德八月份被邀回国在电台作专题演讲。她先后发表过《假日的夜晚》、《玻璃房子里的人们》、《正午的海湾》、《维纳斯的短暂逗留》等长篇小说以及许多短篇。她是传统的现实主义作家,笔触细腻,文字清新,叙述娓娓动人,是不可多得的一位优秀作家。她在回顾自己的创作道路时说,对她影响最深的是诗歌,这是她的主要文学源泉。哺育她的是狄更斯、哈代、康拉德这些大作家。当她被问到如何看待澳大利亚作家这个问题时,她说:“我认为作品的质量是首要的,而不是作家的国籍问题。我写作的时候并不先想到我是澳大利亚作家。你们首先是读者,而不是澳大利亚读者。”这从一个角度也反映出作家态度的变化。小说家基尼利多年来一直企图这样做。他的主题早已突破澳洲,他既写欧洲,也写美洲,最近还模仿乔治·奥威尔的《一九八四年》在报上发表了一篇政治性的科幻小说。

读者和评论家对不同流派采取了兼收并蓄的态度。怀特已经不再是个怪物,穆尔豪斯的新写法被视为常规。华登和杰西卡·安德逊这样的现实主义作家与现代派作家并存,人们也觉得很正常。著名评论家德顿认为,澳大利亚文学有着深厚的现实主义传统,怀特、波特、霍普改变了这一方向,而目前两者又溶合在一起,出现了更为成熟的现实主义。这种看法不一定能为各种流派所接受。但确实反映了一部分评论家的看法。基尔南认为,作品质量的好坏不取决于作家属于哪一流派。事实上,在哪一个流派中都有质量高低之分。

几年前人们对于运用新的文学批评理论来评论澳洲文学尚且不能接受,甚至对于这些新的理论有反感,而在今年的文学研究会年会上不少人运用法国新的批评理论以及符号学等语言学理论分析澳洲一些作品,人们不仅没有提出异议,相反却欢迎这一动向。

再一点印象是,图书馆为研究作家作品提供了十分优越的条件。澳洲文学的资料集中在堪培拉的国立图书馆、昆士兰大学的

弗莱尔图书馆和悉尼的密瑟尔图书馆。作家的手稿收集工作受到图书馆的高度重视。有些作家自动捐献出来交给图书馆保存,例如,左翼作家凯瑟琳·苏姗娜·普里恰德的全部手稿、书信都藏在国立图书馆,这是她儿子遵照母亲的遗愿捐出来的。长篇小说家荷伯特的全部手稿捐给了弗莱尔图书馆。更多的手稿则是图书馆出高价收买的。自然,也有的作家既不捐赠,也不出卖手稿。怀特即是这样的人。他不仅自己不愿意把手稿公之于众,还告诉他的朋友们把他的信烧掉。对于手稿的使用图书馆作了明确的规定,作者故去五十年以上的材料才可以公开出版,否则只能作为研究参考。有些作者自己又作了某些特殊的规定。

阅读作者手稿、书信是件饶有兴味的工作。人们都知道,优秀长篇小说《马霍尼的命运》的作者理查森为了核实小说中的细节曾于一九一二年从英国返回澳大利亚,这说明了作者的严肃的创作态度,但是,她回到澳大利亚后究竟做了些什么,很少人提及。看了她的厚厚的几本笔记,才体会到作者观察多么细心,工作多么勤奋。这里是随手摘下的她的笔记中的两段:

“夜间从舷窗向外望:船渐渐驶入黎明。前方珍珠般的灰白色,后方漆黑。”在拍卖行:两个人,声音交织在一起。拍卖人不断重复:六先令十九便士,六先令十九便士,六先令十九便士。嘴皮子很利落。”

理查森于九月二十七日抵达当年的淘金城市巴腊拉特。《马霍尼的命运》中有相当多的故事情节发生在巴市。为了忠实于历史,理查森翻出了一八五六年巴市商号地址簿,把一些酒店和商店所在的街道的名称记录下来,还画了一张巴市草图,在上面标明市政厅等主要地方。从这里可以看出理查森属于讲究细节、态度严谨的一类作家,这对于研究她的作品很有帮助,对于理解她此后通过研究史料写《科西马》一书也有启发。

读作家之间的书信更有意思。朋友间通信大约是作家最没有戒备、最自然地表述自己的时候,喜怒之情跃然纸上。波特写短篇小说喜爱雕琢文字,用词上煞费苦心,很有一点语不惊人死不休的劲头。但是,从他写给普里恰德的许多信件来看,他能写得极其朴实。怀特也是如此,尽管在他的小说写作中文字有时颇为艰涩,有时故意模棱两可,但是,他的信件(他的朋友并没有按他的意思烧掉他的信件)却写得简单明了,除了个别地方有些怀特式的挖苦的口吻,几乎看不出怀特的写作特点。

从图书馆的资料还可以看出,劳森确实是澳大利亚人民热爱的作家。自劳森在世时一直到现在,近一个世纪来报章杂志上有关劳森的报导和文章始终不断。直到前两年评论家还不断发现一些新的材料,其中最珍贵的是迄今尚未发表的一些短篇小说和资料,主要部分已被基尔南收入他的新作《劳森精粹集锦》。华登认为,澳大利亚文学可以概括为两大时期:劳森——帕默时期和怀特时期。怀特的出现标志着一批作家已经逐渐离开劳森传统。尽管如此,我们在文字材料中并没有看到新作家攻击或诋毁劳森的言论。我和专门研究怀特和劳森的基尔南先生议论过这件事。据他说,怀特虽不赞成劳森的写法,在创作中独辟蹊径,但从没有对劳森本人略表微词。我和基尔南商议,在和怀特吃饭时,一定要问问他对劳森有什么看法。但是,席间谈话都是关于澳大利亚当前的一些政治事件和怀特新近组织的“核裁军党”,实在和劳森扯不在一起,宴会前的“密谋”就此破产。我猜想,怀特在这个问题上谨慎的,尽管他和劳森属于不同流派,但怀特深知劳森在普通澳大利亚人民心目中占据着重要位置,因此,他不愿在这个问题上冒天下之大不韪。

最后值得一提的一点是澳洲作家对于中国都怀有十分友好的感情。基尼利、威廉逊、考什、道布森、穆尔豪斯等作家、诗人访问过我国,回国后都写了热情洋溢的报导或诗作。有些作家虽未访问过中国,但是只要在电话上或在信上说是来自中国的客人求见,

他们总是殷勤接待。怀特通常不接见新闻记者 ,有些国外学者来访 ,他也借故推辞 ,但是 ,对于中国记者却另眼相待 ,而且常常能谈得很投机。我想这并不是因为中国记者具有什么特殊的魅力 ,而主要是因为怀特对中国怀有深厚的友好感情。

澳大利亚短篇小说琐谈^①

提起澳大利亚短篇小说,我国的读者往往想到丛林传统,特别是想到亨利·劳森,因为劳森是最早介绍到我国的澳大利亚短篇小说家,他又是我国读者最喜爱的澳洲作家之一。他的故事多以乡村为背景,以下层劳动人民为主要人物,描述他们的喜怒哀乐,颂扬他们之间的“丛林情谊”。表现手法基本上是写实,语言朴实无华,字里行间充满了幽默。劳森的短篇既不象坡的作品以情节取胜,又没有杰姆士的心理分析,也看不到马克·吐温式的辛辣讽刺,然而他的精品却能拨动千百万读者的心弦,给人们留下极深的印象。

劳森的生活和创作时间虽然短暂,但却在澳洲文学史上开创了写丛林人的传统、写实的传统。后继者不乏其人,早期有万斯·帕默、普里恰德,后期有阿伦·马歇尔等。五十年代的一批左翼现实主义作家如华登、莫里逊、弗兰克·哈代等尽管在创作方法上仍属写实,但背景已从乡村转向城市。

现代派作家怀特战后从欧洲回到澳大利亚,一反根基颇深的丛林传统,将欧洲的现代主义创作方法介绍到澳洲,同时,以他自己的小说和戏剧一次又一次地打破原来的格局,在文坛掀起阵阵波涛。有的评论家认为,怀特在澳文学界起了开路先锋的作用。正由于他的大胆的反传统的创作实践,打开了局面,后来的新派作家遇到的阻力才大为减少。

六十年代成长起来的一批新派作家如穆尔豪斯、凯里、怀尔

① 原载《外国文学》1990年第4期。

丁、贝尔、卢瑞等，以文学界的叛逆自居，有的露骨地描写两性关系，有的在表现方法上着力探索和试验。初期在出版方面遇到颇多困难，使他们中的有些人不得不创办自己的杂志。

新派作家将视线转向城市，转向中产阶级的生活，不再对丛林人感兴趣。在他们的小说中，不仅人物不同，情节也完全两样。他们的创作方法与劳森相去甚远，受到美国战后小说的明显影响。穆尔豪斯做过各种试验，其中之一是所谓“间断叙述法”，若干短篇的主要人物相同，但故事情节若断若连，单篇都是独立的故事，连起来又似乎能构成松散的长篇。

二十几年前的反主流派今天似乎已经成了主流的一部分，他们当初的“轰动效应”已为人们所淡忘，当初的叛逆首领已经成为作家协会的主席，他们的作品有一些进入了畅销的市场，有的作品还屡屡得奖。

今天又涌现出了一批新移民作家、土著人作家和妇女作家，他们以自己清新的笔触，深入到以往作家不甚涉及的领域，展现了多元文化的灿烂画面。

这一辑选译的七篇短篇大致属于三类。怀特的《叫喊着的土豆》取之于他1987年出版的《三个不安的篇子》，反映了怀特不安的心情。（1989年初，我再次与怀特会面时，谈起这个集子，他特别强调这不是短篇小说，而是“不安的篇子”。）与其说是叙述故事，倒不如说是夹叙夹议，挥发人生的哲理，至于如何体会，则是每位读者自己的事。怀特对他的作品从不作注解，并且拒绝与人讨论他的作品的含义。怀特虽近八十高龄，但他的近作——无论是小说或戏剧——仍不断使读者发出惊异的反应。这三篇似乎又在起开路的作用，将短篇引入另一领域。

凯里和穆尔豪斯仍不失当年的特色。凯里喜爱怪诞的情节和人物，《关于“幻影工业”的报导》是又一篇颇为离奇的故事，似乎讲的是彩票，但情节却又纯属虚构，给人的印象是似象不象，虚虚实实。穆尔豪斯在《文化代表》一篇中以戏谑的笔调从两个角度

描述了布莱希在访华中的所作所为。情节自然是作者的编造 ,但他对于澳大利亚和中国在文化上的差异以及澳大利亚人的特点 (或者说据信是他们的特点)极为敏锐 ,许多幽默亦源于此。

其他四篇总的来说采用了现实主义写法 ,每篇都具有自己的特点 ,尤其是叙述角度的变化更值得玩味。德雷克的《牢笼》描写细腻 ,显示了女作家的特点。从内容上看 ,确实反映了今日澳大利亚社会的一些问题 :家庭关系的不稳定、犯罪等等。

短篇小说创作在澳大利亚文学中占据着一个相当突出的地位 ,一百多年间确也涌现出一些优秀作家和作品 ,我们不仅需要介绍与翻译其中一些较好的作品 ,还应该跟踪其最新的 ,了解发展动向。

访墨尔本作家华登与莫里逊^①

这是我第三次访问墨尔本。第一次是一九七九年受中国教育学会邀请访问莫那士大学 ,和教育系座谈中国教育。第二次是应邀参加国际社会教育大会。前两次来墨尔本 ,天气都阴霾霾的 ,不时还滴着细雨 ,很象我国江浙一带的梅雨天气。这一次虽也下点小雨 ,但大部分时间却天气晴朗。

墨尔本是五十年代活跃于澳洲文坛的“现实主义作家小组”的基地。这个小组的成员 ,有因出版《不光荣的权力》揭露工党政客而受到法庭审判的弗兰克·哈代(Frank Hardy) ,有工人作家约翰·莫里逊(John Morrison) ,有第一位写有关移民的小说的裘达·华登(Judah Waten) ,有短篇小说家阿兰·马歇尔(Alan Marshall)和进步作家艾瑞克·兰贝特(Eric Lambert)等。早在三、四十年前 ,这几位作家在澳洲文坛已经有着相当的影响。近年来 ,影响虽有所减弱 ,但他们的作品仍在不断出版。弗兰克·哈代、莫里逊、华登、兰贝特对于我国读者来说并不陌生 ,他们的著作从五、六十年代起就陆续介绍到我国来。我早就希望能拜访这几位作家 ,但是 ,不幸的是兰贝特多年前穷困潦倒 ,死于伦敦街头。马歇尔几个月以前也已去世。弗兰克·哈代行踪不定 ,未能联系上。只有裘达·华登和约翰·莫里逊还在墨尔本。

我在悉尼的朋友、文学评论家布莱恩·基尔南事先给裘达·华登挂了长途 ,告诉他我到墨尔本的日期。我到达墨尔本后和裘达通了电话 ,约定见面的时间。裘达在电话上告诉我 ,他和他妻子

① 原载《外国文学》1984 年第 12 期。

想约我星期六晚上在家里吃饭 ,可以边吃边谈。

裘达的住宅位于墨尔本远郊区。周围十分幽静。房子前面是一小片草地 ,屋内屋外的灯光把门厅照得通亮 ,显然是等待着客人的样子。我轻轻地叩了一下门 ,门随即开了。门开处 ,只见一位身材魁梧、有着斯拉夫族特点的中年人笑容满面地伸出了手。握手问候之后 ,进了屋 ,我还未开口 ,裘达就滔滔不绝地谈了起来。裘达生于一九一一年 ,今年该是七十三岁高龄了 ,然而无论是听力、视力、反应、动作都不象是七十岁的人。他告诉我 ,阿兰·马歇尔访问过中国 ,和周总理一起照过相 ,又讲起年轻时读过赛珍珠翻译的《水浒》,以后还读过丁玲的《太阳照在桑乾河上》。他认为丁玲的这本书写得很好。裘达认识中国笔会副主席叶君健 ,熟悉叶君健同志四十年代在英国留学以后回到国内这段经历。我们还谈起澳洲文学在中国翻译介绍的情况 ,谈起他的小说是最早介绍到中国的一批作品。这时 ,他起身走进书房拿出两本书 ,一本是《没有祖国的儿子》,另一本是《不屈服的人们》,分别翻译出版于一九五九和一九六〇年。纸张原本就不好 ,经过多年的翻阅 ,已经十分陈旧 ,有些装订线已经磨断 ,裘达在上面贴满了胶纸。看得出来 ,主人十分珍爱这两本书。我告诉他 ,最近几年又有一些他的短篇小说在我国翻译出版。

裘达的夫人希瑞尔招呼我们到餐厅吃饭。这是一顿典型的澳大利亚正餐。先是一盘浓汤 ,然后是烤羊肉、土豆、南瓜和煮豆角。甜食比较特别 ,既不是甜点心 ,也不是煮水果 ,而是烤苹果。果核挖出来 ,填进蜜饯李子和香料 ,然后在烤炉里烤熟。裘达的食欲很好 ,只是因为有糖尿病不能吃最后这一道甜食。希瑞尔和裘达一样 ,待人热情 ,又随便自然 ,使人觉得象在自己家里一样。

饭后又回到客厅继续谈话。裘达告诉我“现实主义作家小组”从五十年代初开始活动 ,作家常到工人当中去读作品 ,和工人聊天 ,从工会得到有力的支持。以后改为“澳洲书会” ,出版过不少进步书籍 ,一直活动到一九七八年才算告一段落。

裘达对于澳大利亚文学的看法是 ,从十九世纪九十年代到本世纪四十年代 ,这半个世纪可以称为劳森——帕默时代。“现实主义作家小组”的成员都受到劳森和帕默的影响。裘达认为 ,劳森所歌颂的“伙伴情谊”在现实社会中就是工会的团结 ,就是大家要联合在一起。帕默和劳森有所不同 ,他受过比较多的教育 ,更接近知识分子。从五十年代以后的一段时间可以说是怀特时代。裘达认为 ,怀特的作品中有几条主线 ,一条在寻求上帝 ,一条是对现实社会不满 ,追求产业革命以前的纯真 ,另一条是书中主人公不再是生活中的英雄 ,而是“反英雄。”澳作家中颇有一些受到怀特的影响 ,例如 ,基尼利 (Thomas Keneally)、斯托 (Randolph Stow)、西娅·阿斯特莱 (Thea Astley) 等。裘达认为 ,怀特后期有变化 ,更倾向于现实主义 ,作品中宗教色彩、神秘色彩减少 ,文字也更为简练。对于现实社会的批评愈来愈多。

裘达说 ,澳作家中大部分都反对当权者 ,同情受压迫者 ,这在澳大利亚是有历史渊源的。现实主义在澳文学中仍是主流 ,尽管象华登、莫里逊这些老一代的作家已不多见。

裘达出生于沙皇俄国 ,幼年时为了逃避沙俄对犹太人的迫害跟随父母来到澳洲定居。他对于乍到澳洲的移民的生活经历、思想感情、心理状态十分熟悉 ,据此创作了许多感人至深的短篇小说。《没有祖国的儿子》、《爱情与反叛》等短篇小说集都是以移民生活为内容。裘达说 ,现在已经产生了一批出生于异国的作家 ,例如 ,大卫·马鲁夫、莫里斯·卢瑞、金传豪等。我问他为什么这些作家的作品引起如此广泛的兴趣 ,他认为 ,移民的生活具有其独特性 ,很自然地吸引人们的注意。

最后 ,谈到创作过程时 ,他强调地对我说 :“你知道吗?我那些小说并不是自传体的。”他的小说常用第一人称自述的方式 ,又多取材于他熟悉的移民生活 ,因此不少人认为是自传体的小说。我也曾这样想过 ,经他这样提醒 ,我才警觉起来。“可是 ,我发现 ,你的小说中母亲总是个性很强、不易适应环境的人 ,而父亲则是缺

乏主见、随遇而安的人，这是不是以你家里的情况为依据的？”确是如此，不过你要知道，生活中的真实不一定是小说中的真实。在写作中需要重新创造生活，使故事有个头尾。”你通常是怎么进行创作的？”我常常回忆起一件事，然后从这件事扩展开去。”

时间已经很晚，连吃带谈约摸有四个多小时了。我起身告辞，裘达夫妇执意要开车把我送到住处。送到了住处附近，又一直目送我过了街，他们才驱车回家。

访问裘达的第二天，在临上火车去巴拉腊特之前，我去看望了他的好友、“现实主义作家小组”的又一位成员、短篇小说家约翰·莫里逊。

莫里逊今年八十岁。一九二三年由英国迁居澳洲。在码头上当过十年工人，以后做过多年的花匠。应该说，莫里逊是训练有素的职业花匠，这一点在《花之战》以及其他短篇小说中看得很清楚。和其他工人一样，莫里逊也尝过失业的滋味。

许多年以来，莫里逊一直是澳共党员，直到最近几年，因为年事已高，身体欠佳，不便外出才停止参加活动。几十年来，他一直积极从事政治活动和文学创作。

约翰·莫里逊住的是公寓房子。公寓有着严密的保安设施。楼门只能从里面开，外来的人要通过传话装置和主人通话，主人确认是自己的客人以后按一开关，楼门才开。莫里逊住在二层，从崭新的墙纸、家具、地毯来看，可以断定这是他的新居。

莫里逊看上去比裘达苍老，身材修长，一头银发。他告诉我说，他心脏不算好，行动要放慢，风湿性关节炎使他无法握笔，即使签个字也疼痛难忍，不久前进行了针灸治疗才稍好些。现在已经不再写小说。有时口授信件，由莫里逊夫人记下来，但十分缓慢。

谈到澳文学传统时，莫里逊说：“澳大利亚是一个具有民主传统的国家。不能忘记最早移民是流放犯，这些人天不怕地不怕，从这些人开始就是反当权者的。这种反当权者的传统在劳森的血液里有，在裘达的血液里也有。以后的移民为什么到澳洲来？无非

是寻找新出路,试验新办法。”这大概就是裘达所说的澳作家反当权者的历史渊源吧。

约翰·莫里逊明确表示他不喜欢读怀特的小说,但是,他对于怀特的为人深有敬意。怀特敢于批评现实社会中一些黑暗、腐败的现象,对此约翰赞不绝口,一再说:“怀特真了不起!真了不起!只有他有那样的胆量。”他对于一些年轻作家一味追求新奇的写法而不注重小说的内容表示不满,他说:“作为作家,应该写些好的东西,应该维护正义、抨击邪恶。而现在有些年轻作家写的东西我简直读不懂。有时候我也反问自己,是不是年龄大了,对年轻人不理解,指责过多?应该说也存在这种危险。不过他们的东西确实难懂。我的作品译成了十二种语言,不仅在社会主义国家里出版,还译成了意大利文、丹麦文、日文、马来文。而这些年轻的作家在国外又是什么情况呢?”说到这里,他站起来带我进了他的书房。书架上有三排书是译成各种文字的莫里逊的作品,其中也包括中文译本。

我因为要赶着去车站,只得告辞。莫里逊给我算了一下时间,告诉我只有乘出租汽车才能赶到车站。他陪着我出楼过街,和我一起站在路边等出租汽车,一直等到我坐上车。我坐在车里,回头望去,只见伫立在路边的莫里逊那高大的身材在暮色中逐渐模糊起来。我心里不禁有些凄然。在一九二九——一九三三年资本主义世界经济萧条、大批工人失业的背景下成长起来的这一代老作家即将成为过去,在可以预见的一段时间内不可能再产生象他们那样把做工、创作和政治信仰紧密地结合在一起的作家。对人类前途固然不必悲观,但是,这老一代作家的消失在澳洲文学史上肯定将留下一段不易弥补的空白。

剧坛三代人^①

今年上半年,我在访问澳大利亚期间,除了钻图书馆查查资料,特意花了点时间了解澳洲戏剧方面的情况。原因是希伯德的《想入非非》由上海人艺演出后,国内有的剧团也表示了对于澳大利亚戏剧的兴趣,希望我和我的同行能够再翻译和介绍一些澳洲剧。

在剧作家中我拜会了怀特(Patrick White)、希伯德(Jack Hibberd)和麦克尔·高(Michael Gow)。他们恰好是老、中、青三代人。怀特是久负盛名的小说家,诺贝尔文学奖获得者,同时又是一位独辟蹊径的剧作家,先后写过八个剧本。他的现代主义写法强烈地影响他的剧作,他的剧不易导,不易演,也不易看。迄今为止,只有吉姆·沙门(Jim Sharman)和尼尔·阿姆费尔德(Neil Armfield)等两三位导演为怀特所认可,别的导演要求导他的剧,往往遭到他的拒绝。怀特的信条是:没有合适的导演和演员,宁肯不演。正因为如此,没有任何业余剧团演出过怀特的剧。怀特今年77岁,体弱多病,比以前更少见人。我和他认识已近十年,中间断断续续有些书信往来,他知道我到悉尼,就约我去他家谈谈。看样子他比前几年苍老了许多,走路有些艰难,但眼光还是那样犀利,思维也很敏捷。他告诉我,由于行动不便,已经很少去剧院看剧,幸好他的护士喜爱戏剧,常去剧院,通过和她聊天,还能了解一

① 原以《澳大利亚剧坛印象记》为题载《文艺报》1989年8月12日。

二。我听说 ,他的小说《沃斯》由著名诗人、小说家马鲁夫改编为歌剧 ,公演时怀特应邀前往 ,听到动人的地方 ,一向不露感情的怀特竟然老泪纵横。我问他是否认为歌剧《沃斯》改编得成功 ,他说他相当喜欢。后来又转而谈到他最近写的剧《山岩上的牧羊人》,他说在阿得雷德演出过 ,但是在悉尼一直没有人演。对此他似乎颇有意见。前几个剧差不多都是在阿得雷德先演 ,之后才到悉尼和墨尔本 ,一个重要原因是吉姆·沙门长年在阿市执导。

在墨尔本的一个小咖啡馆(据说这个咖啡馆文化人无人不知) ,我会见了希伯德。他要了一杯黑咖啡 ,我要了一杯卡普奇诺 ,接着就坐下谈起来。他低声却严肃地说 :“你救了我 ,我应该感谢你。”我不禁愕然 ,问道 :“此话怎讲?”我的剧正走下坡路 ,在剧院慢慢不吃香了 ,这时候却突然在中国上演了。若不是你翻译介绍 ,能在上海、北京演出吗?这不是救我么?要知道 ,我们这里重视年轻人。年轻人一出名大家就都演他的剧。”希伯德在澳洲剧坛颇有些名气 ,尤其是在七十年代 ,写过一些很有特色的剧本 ,其中包括《想入非非》。想不到他境遇竟然如此。他告诉我这两年他转入了小说创作 ,准备写一个三部曲 ,第一部《一个老混帐的回忆》已经出版。我回到悉尼以后听说评论界对这个小说的反应并不热烈 ,认为还是他的剧写得好些。还听说希伯德为了维持生活不得不重操旧业——当起医生来。这样一位有才华的剧作家竟然会变得如此六神无主 ,我感到怅然。

无论在墨尔本、悉尼、或是在堪培拉 ,呼声最高的年轻剧作家是麦克尔·高。他自幼喜爱戏剧 ,在悉尼大学读书时参加了学生剧团。据当时与他同台演出的人回忆 ,麦克尔不大吭声 ,演些小角色也不怎么起眼儿。1982 年他写的第一个剧《小家伙》在悉尼上演。之后又写过《宇航员之妻》、《外出》、《世界之巅》、《欧洲》及《1841》等剧。人们认为最成功的是《外出》和《欧洲》两剧。《外出》讲的是属于不同社会阶层的三批人外出度假 ,在整个活动过程中表现出不同的心态和人际关系。故事的主线很清楚 ,但有

趣的是戏中有戏 ,以莎剧《仲夏夜之梦》开始 ,以鱼美人的演出结束。这出戏上演后 ,受到普遍好评 ,在英、美的演出效果也相当不错。剧本被列为 1989 年中学考试必读书目 ,因此首次印刷竟然达到一万册。《欧洲》剧情简单 ,讲述一个澳大利亚年轻人追随一位女演员来到欧洲 ,由迷恋到失望 ,直至最后与女演员分手回澳洲。剧的主题是澳大利亚与欧洲的微妙关系 :几十年来澳洲在文学、艺术、学术等各方面以欧洲的标准为标准 ,以欧洲的好恶为好恶 ,作家、艺术家必须先在欧洲成名而后国内才承认 ,但是二次大战后 ,尤其是六十年代后期以来 ,澳洲的民族觉醒已经发展 ,人们开始怀疑以往的价值取向。《欧洲》一剧反映了这一觉醒过程 ,抓住了这一重大主题的核心 ,这至少是此剧成功的原因之一。

如果说我对怀特和希伯德的剧作一直比较注意的话 ,对于麦克尔·高我几乎完全忽略了。正因为如此 ,我特别想和麦克尔见见面。临离开澳大利亚前几天 ,我给他挂了个电话 ,他也挺干脆 ,接受了我请他吃午饭的邀请。我们多少还算是悉尼大学的校友 ,于是在大学外厅找了个角落边吃边聊起来。麦克尔个头儿不高 ,话不多 ,显得有些腼腆 ,在形象上和我心目中一个成功的剧作家形成了巨大的反差。我问他有哪些澳洲剧他认为可以介绍给中国的观众 ,他提了六七个剧 ,对他自己的剧只字未提。后来 ,我故意把话题引到他写的《外出》一剧。他说 ,剧的第三部分把观众引入一个虚幻的境界。他之所以安排剧中有剧是为了说明生活中的企求往往只有在戏剧中得到实现。他们想在度假中获得的 ,实际上他们并未得到 ,于是制造了一个戏剧场面 ,在一定意义上解决——或者说企图解决这个矛盾。“如果有人问这个剧是关于什么的 ,我会说这个剧写的就是戏剧本身。”我问他最近还写了些什么。他说他给电视台、电台写过些东西 ;无非是为了糊口 ,但是 ,要写个有意思的剧本 ,得花两三年酝酿 ,我不是那种高产作家 ,能一本接一本地写。”

除了会见剧作家 ,我还和剧评家凯瑟琳·布里斯班 (Kathar-

ine Brisbane)、菲利浦·帕森司(Philip Parsons)、布莱恩·基尔南(Brian Kiernan)以及伊丽莎白·韦比(Elizabeth Webby)不止一次交谈过澳洲剧坛的情况。凯瑟琳·布里斯班是澳洲最著名的戏剧评论家之一,论资格可能仅次于吉帕克斯(H. G. Kippax)。早年她担任《澳大利亚人》报戏剧专栏作家,1971 年与她丈夫菲利浦合办土生出版社(Currency Press),专门出版澳大利亚剧本。开初他们只以此为业余嗜好,但这时恰恰是反侵越战争风起云涌,民族意识高涨的时期,出现了一批以澳洲的人和事为创作题材的剧作家。原来他们计划每年出版六个剧本,但很快就突破了这一设想。但出版剧本赚不了多少钱,在头七年布里斯班夫妇全靠其他方面收入贴补剧本出版,只是以后由于学校文学课程开始使用一些剧本,才逐渐提高了印数。截至今年,土生出版社已经出版了一百六十多个剧本,使澳大利亚戏剧在短短二十年内站稳了脚跟。畅销的几个剧本如雷·劳勒(Ray Lawler)的《第十七个布因因的夏天》、大卫·威廉逊(David Williamson)的《搬迁工》和《俱乐部》都已超过十万的印数。在全国的话剧演出中,澳洲剧平均占百分之四十以上,有的剧院(如格里芬和拉玛玛剧院)上演的剧目全部是澳洲“土生土长”的。

在悉尼皇家剧院我看了布佐(Alex Buzo)根据马克·吐温的著名小说《哈克贝里·费恩历险记》改编的音乐剧《大河》。扮演黑奴吉姆的是专门从美国招聘的一位黑人演员,他的表演和歌唱赢得了观众一阵又一阵掌声。扮演费恩的年轻演员也很出色。演出结束后谢幕长达十分钟,着实感人,没有一个夺路先走、不耐烦的观众。在墨尔本艺术中心我看了与《大河》迥异的反映同性恋的一个剧——《只有天知道》。演技也很精彩,只是我们看起来不太习惯。这两个剧都是当时卖座率很高的,然而空座位仍然不少。著名导演和演员约翰·贝尔(John Bell)向我透露了一些真情。他说,眼前戏剧正经历着十分困难的时期,经济不景气,而票价很高,一般的票都在四、五十澳元左右,一家人来看一场戏就是一百

多块 ,如果加上喝饮料、交通费、节目单就要高达二百元。谁来看戏都要琢磨一下这笔开销。另一方面 ,戏少演员多 ,不少演员——特别是青年演员——都要干些其他零活才能维持生计。如果不是出于对艺术的追求和爱好 ,谁也不会干演戏这一行。

剧作家的处境也相差无几 ,大部分人都必须有另外一个职业 ,完全靠写剧挣饭吃不太容易。例外情况自然也存在 ,最突出的是威廉逊。他原来在大学教热力学 ,后来对戏剧产生了浓厚的兴趣。1971 年 ,他的两个剧——《搬迁工》和《唐家聚会》首次公演 ,获得惊人的成功。之后又陆续抛出《假如你明天死去》、《肯的子孙》、《南下》、《十全十美》、《大学某系》、《俱乐部》等。不仅票房收入甚丰 ,而且还在国外得过奖。威廉逊改编和创作的一些电影剧本 ,也几乎是大获全胜。人们开玩笑说 ,威廉逊掌握了点金术 ,不论什么只要经他一加工就光彩夺目。他成了剧作界的“富人” ,人们开始数他在各处的房产。自然他也成了一个大忙人 ,很不容易见到。1980 年曾在剧场见过一面 ,当时正在上演他的《赛璐珞英雄》。他身高两米多 ,和他谈话不得不仰着头 ,时间长了挺累人。只记得当时谈了谈他的中国之行 ,并未涉及他的剧作 ,之后一直未再见过面。这次在约翰·贝尔家里 ,和他的夫人一起吃了顿晚餐。据夫人讲 ,威廉逊前一天去了美国 ,有一笔生意要和好莱坞做 ,这次是谈条款。人们一般以为作家书呆子气重 ,未必会讨价还价 ,实则不然 ,威廉逊是个不容易对付的谈判对手。

威廉逊的剧有着强烈的自然主义色彩 ,紧扣当前人们关心的主题 ,剧情曲折 ,语言幽默俏皮 ,很能抓住观众。我觉得他的剧若在我国上演 ,肯定会叫座。但人们对于应该推荐他的哪一个剧本还有些不同的看法。

在墨尔本期间 ,前任澳大利亚驻华文化参赞 ,现任剧匣剧团 (Playbox Theatre) 艺术导演甘德瑞 (Carrillo Gantner) 特意让我参观了正在建造的新剧院。原剧院在几年前一场大火中化为灰烬 ,此后 ,剧匣剧团只得四海为家。甘德瑞从中国归来后 ,一头扎进了

剧院的重建。新剧院在墨尔本艺术中心附近 ,利用了卡尔顿啤酒厂捐献的旧厂房 ,加以扩建改建。厂房十九世纪末的外墙基本上保留下来 ,看上去还古色古香。内部彻底翻修。最有意思的是剧场的设计。舞台和座位可以根据剧的要求灵活地作多种安排 :既可以摆成传统剧院的样子 ,也可以把舞台放在观众当中 ,所有的座位都可以移动。甘德瑞踌躇满志地说 :“ 等剧院建成 ,要在这儿上演一批澳大利亚剧 ,振一振剧匣的雄威。”他的另一个雄伟计划则是在中国再导一个澳洲剧。我想只要剧本选得合适 ,要在中国找些好演员并不困难 ,这个计划也不难实现。

一部“澳味”浓郁的新派剧作^①

——《想入非非》译后记

著名澳洲剧评家玛格丽特·威廉斯把杰克·希伯德(Jack Hibberd)的《想入非非》一剧称作是“澳大利亚的第一部经典剧作”。从说这话到现在已经过去十五年,《想》剧在澳由不同的演员演出过许多次,但能否说剧的全部寓意已经挖掘出来了呢?尚且不能。还没有一个演员的演出被认为是尽善尽美。由此看来,这是一部表面上简单而实际上多层次的剧本。

希伯德是新派剧作家,《想》剧是他的颇为独特的一部力作。从结构上看,似乎是一幕多场。在很单调的场景中要创造出奥尼尔一生的许多生动场面。在时间上故意安排了从清晨到深夜一整天,这是奥尼尔在世上的最后一天,但又是无限的时间链条中的一环,暗示生活周而复始,接续不断。剧中人物七八个,但出场演员却只有一个。希伯德在介绍该剧时特别说明,这不是一个人的独白,而是需要由演员演出的剧。这无疑对演员提出了很高的要求。可以说,成败在于一人。由单人演员演一出戏,非自《想》剧始。我有幸看过一位新西兰演员演出的《凯瑟琳·曼斯菲尔德》一剧,讲的是女作家的一生,演员只需要演女作家一个角色,牵涉到其他人物时,由叙述填补。然而《想》剧却与此不同,一个演员不仅要把奥尼尔演活,而且还要通过对话、动作、表情等把其他人物也都立在台上,演得成功时应该满台皆是戏。

《想》剧使人们忆起贝克特的《等待戈多》,但在主题的处理与挖掘上又迥然不同。《等待戈多》着重刻画了西方社会人们生活

① 原载《外国文学》1987年第8期。

空虚精神无所寄托的心境。他们希冀有某种奇迹出现,使自己得以摆脱困境,然而又不能道出这“奇迹”究为何物。全剧给人以十分沉重的压抑感。《想》剧围绕着奥尼尔之死,并以他的死告终。作者通过奥尼尔之死表达了他对西方社会的忧虑,对人类的前途的担心,其中包括对人类破坏生态平衡的批评。尽管如此,全剧并不是始终调子低沉,中间穿插了许多充满生气的场景。即使对于死,奥尼尔也颇为达观。他从未表示出对死的恐惧。就在他临死前的一刹那,奥尼尔爬进屋子之前,他还不无幽默地说:“我得记住把门梁降下来一点。”

希伯德在剧中十分含蓄地——有时则是在开玩笑时——批评了西方社会,特别是澳大利亚社会。在民族问题上,希伯德明显地同情当地的土著人,而批评了掠夺土著人的白人。奥尼尔唱的那几句打油诗更集中地反映了作者对于他生活在其中的社会的批判态度。这是一幅环境严重污染、生态遭到破坏的图画:“死鸚鵡纷纷从天空落”;“煤焦油灌满了世界的海洋”;“肥胖的白色动物把大地上的森林砍个精光。”

剧的名字——《想入非非》——值得玩味。这里真中有假,假中有真,所谓“真中有假”,指的是奥尼尔的许多经历是臆造的,他不可能和澳大利亚最优秀的拳击手莱斯·达塞是打拳伙伴,他也不可能有那么多的桃色经历(作者在这方面渲染也是为了迎合一部分西方观众的情趣),他更不可能在法国和那些著名的作家、诗人会面,这一切都是“想入非非”。另一方面,在这些臆造的经历中,又透露出不少社会的现实,这也就是“假中有真”。

《想》剧处理的是具有普遍意义的主题,但同时又是一出典型的澳大利亚戏剧。环境是典型的澳大利亚农村(或者说丛林),其最突出的特点是幅员辽阔,人烟稀少,到处是一片荒凉孤寂的景象。早在十九世纪,著名小说家克拉克就曾用“奇特的悲凉”这样的字眼概括过澳洲农村,诗人、画家无不以此为题。著名画家德累斯迪尔画过一幅画,标题是《牧人之妻》,背景是荒凉的农村。剧

中人物奥尼尔具有澳大利亚人的许多特点。他是一个拓荒者，他热情好客，喜爱运动，诙谐幽默，有时还玩世不恭。有些情节则是作者故意拿澳大利亚人开玩笑，例如，把馅饼泡在西红柿酱里，吃烤鸭肉，把女人藏在储水罐里等等。至于希伯德所用的语言，澳大利亚的特色更为突出，鲜明生动，有些地方一语双关，十分俏皮，可惜的是译成中文以后很难看出来哪些是道地的澳大利亚词语。

选择这个剧并将它介绍给中国观众，首先是剧院一位导演的主意。我在翻译时，一方面尽量贴近原文，另一方面力图做到观众能听了就懂。剧本翻译与小说翻译不同，不可能加进许多注解。在个别过于直露的部分，为了照顾中国观众的感情，我故意译得含蓄一些。极个别的句子作了删节。有的地方牵涉到生疏的背景，或加了几个字聊作说明，或稍许改动。纵观全剧，这类改动只占极少部分，不会损害原作。

如果翻译是再创造，演出则应该是更深刻的再创造。希望通过演员的演出把剧本的译文再雕琢整治一番，更妥贴地传达剧作的原意。

《牛津澳大利亚文学史》评介^①

1981年4月份出版了一部对研究澳大利亚文学有重要参考价值的新书,这就是克拉默教授主编的长达五百页的《牛津澳大利亚文学史》(The Oxford History of Australian Literature)。

澳大利亚是一个年轻的国家,从英国开拓为殖民地还不足二百年,建国则只有八十多年。澳大利亚的文学在各国文学中自然是比较年轻的一支。无论在欧洲、在美国或是在我国,对澳洲文学产生兴趣和开展研究大致都是近年来的事情。在目前出版这样一本有一定权威性的澳洲文学史不仅对于澳大利亚文学界具有重要意义,对于国外研究澳洲文学的人们也是很大的帮助。

在澳大利亚,对于文学史的系统研究始于格林的1930年出版的《澳大利亚文学史纲》(H. M. Green, An Outline of Australian Literature, 1930)。十年后,莫里斯·密勒(Morris Miller)出版了更为详尽的《澳大利亚文学》(Australian Literature, 1940)。1961年出版的格林的两卷集《澳大利亚文学史》(A History of Australian Literature)是迄今最详尽、篇幅最长的澳洲文学史。1964年,杰弗里·德顿(Geoffrey Dutton)主编出版了《澳大利亚文学》(The Literature of Australia),1976年修订再版。这实际上是一个论文汇编,汇集了二十位评论家和作家的文章。1969年维尔克斯(W. A. Wilkes)发表了《澳大利亚文学纲要》(Australian Literature A Conspectus)。除此之外的著述则大多限于某个时期或某个侧面,算不上文学史的专著。

① 原载《外国文学研究》1982年第3期。

《牛津澳大利亚文学史》主编列奥尼·克拉默(Leonie Kramer)是澳大利亚文学教授,现在悉尼大学执教,同时又是一位颇负盛名的评论家,1980年5月曾随澳大利亚人文科学代表团访华。访华期间,在北京、武汉等地作过学术演讲。她主编全书,并写了《概述》部分。小说、戏剧、诗歌分别由埃德伦·密瑟尔(Adrian Mitchell)、泰瑞·斯特姆(Terry Sturm)和维维恩·史密斯(Vivian Smith)撰写。书目部分由乔伊·胡顿(Joy Hooton)整理编纂。密瑟尔和史密斯都是悉尼大学高级讲师,也是评论家。史密斯还发表过不少诗作。斯特姆原也在悉尼大学任教,现为新西兰奥克兰大学英语系教授。

从上个世纪一直到最近若干年间,在澳大利亚文学评论界有些问题始终构成争论的焦点,例如,评论澳大利亚文学作品的标准究竟应该是什么,作品中的澳大利亚特色应占什么位置,如何看待文学上的模仿,如何评价“九十年代”等等。《牛津澳大利亚文学史》在评介作家作品中避免概念上的探讨,摆脱开一个世纪以来许多争论的羁绊,尽力就作家和作品本身作出评价。在“概述”部分,克拉默教授进一步发挥了她多年来在文学评论方面所持有的观点。她认为,模仿本身无可指责,事实上欧洲各国的文化历来相互渗透,十九世纪澳洲许多作品并非上乘,原因不是由于作家诗人模仿了英国的文学风尚,也并非由于作品缺乏澳大利亚特点,而首先是由于作家诗人本身缺乏首创精神,他们本身不具备一流作家和诗人的条件。

十九世纪九十年代是澳大利亚历史上的一个重要时期,民族民主浪潮席卷整个大陆。文坛也呈现一派活跃的景象,激进的《公报》杂志支持和团结了一批具有民主精神的作家和诗人,劳森和帕特逊是这个时期涌现的有代表性的短篇小说家和诗人,声名日振,民歌民谣和短篇小说迅速发展。这就是历来文学史上大书特书的“九十年代”。近年来,对于“九十年代”的文学创作进行了更多系统深入的研究,对于《公报》的编辑方针和刊用的作品作了

更准确的调查和描述,学者们发现一般人对于“九十年代”的理解有不少以讹传讹之处,提出对于“九十年代”需要作更全面的估量。《牛津澳大利亚文学史》在处理这个问题上反映了近年来研究的成果和一些新的观点,在分析“九十年代”民族主义文学主流的同时,指出了与此并存的和欧洲文化密切相联的另一个方面的文学发展,这包括写作《马奥尼的命运》三部曲的小说家理查森和深受法国象征主义影响的诗人布里南等人。就是对于主流中的小说家弗菲的评论也比过去的文学史进了一步,除了论述他作品中的民主精神,还指出他在小说结构上层次复杂、“书中有书”的特点。

在评论作家上,观点是鲜明的,一般说来都直截了当地摆出了作家或诗人的长处和短处。有些论点未必能为别的评论家所接受,但是明确地毫不含糊地提出来至少也为开展讨论创造了条件。帕默是澳文坛上一位有影响的作家和评论家,在两次大战之间更是个举足轻重的风云人物。《牛津澳大利亚文学史》对帕默作出了自己的评价,认为他的小说单调勉强,人物和情节都只是为了说明某一主题。对于帕默的文学理论,作者也不无批评,认为他受传统的影响过深,眼界偏窄,对于一百多年来澳大利亚文学的成就也作了比较客观的评价。诺贝尔文学奖获得者怀特是当今澳洲文艺界执牛耳者,自然得到比其他作家更多的篇幅,在“概述”、“小说”、“戏剧”三部分都对怀特详加评介。对于近年来小说创作,密瑟尔认为主要成就在于短篇小说,而长篇小说方面建树不多。关于诗歌,史密斯认为尽管澳大利亚不乏有才华有创新精神的诗人,迄今为止还没有出现足以影响西方诗歌发展方向的里程碑式的人物。这些看法无疑都是符合实际的,以此对比格林的《澳大利亚文学史》中的某些过分的赞扬和不适当的评价,可以看出二十年来澳洲文学评论的进步和成熟。

在小说、戏剧、诗歌三个部分,作者们不仅都介绍了作家和作品,而且对于各个时期的文学运动、文学风尚、重大事件予以述评,

使读者得其概貌。除了“九十年代”占了较多篇幅以外,主张汲取土著民族文化的津弟沃罗巴克运动、三十——四十年代的新戏剧运动、倡导先锋派诗歌的《愤怒的企鹅》以及受欧洲诗歌影响的“幻影派”诗人等等都在书中有所评介。在谈论作家和诗人时,既分析各自的特点,又注意到相互的联系。例如,在论斯托的特色时,先讲到他受怀特的影响,分析了他的小说《走向岛屿》与怀特的小说《沃斯》在风格上的近似,继而又指出斯托在《走向岛屿》之后的作品显示他逐渐离开了怀特的写法。在诗歌部分,史密斯着意勾划出澳大利亚诗歌和欧洲诗歌传统的联系,在评论布里南、斯莱塞、赖特、霍普、麦考莱等主要诗人时都指出了他们受到欧洲哪些诗人的影响,使读者具体地看到澳大利亚文化在很大程度上是欧洲文化的延伸。

这部文学史的又一特点是夹叙夹议,行文流畅,易于阅读。书中没有大段大段的引文,也没有象某些教科书那样切割成许多互不关连的小段文字,因此,读来顺畅。尤其是“概述”和“诗歌”两个部分更具特色。史密斯常用一种轻松的个人口吻发表议论,使人读了感到格外亲切。

书的最后一部分远非一般的参考书目,只要看一看它的丰富内容和精心编排就可以得出结论:书目出自行家之手。这部分不仅列举了一般工具书、参考书、专门研究的书目、文学杂志,甚至有关的手稿和论文如何查阅也都作了介绍。对于七十多位诗人、作家则不仅介绍生平、著作,还有选择地列出了主要评论文章及其出处。对于评论书籍和文章,作者加了简短的评语,起了画龙点睛的作用。这个附录对于国外的澳洲文学研究者尤有帮助,为这部文学史增色不少。无怪乎文学史刚刚问世,出版社就决定不久将把这部分单独出版。

这部文学史虽然出自五人之手,但却十分协调,在观点上一致(例如,对“九十年代”的看法,书的前四个部分基本上相同),在比例取舍上得当,并未出现“内哄”,或各执一端,互不通气。这当然

是由于四位主要作者长期合作共事,观点接近,才得以有此默契。

主编克拉默教授在对悉尼大学学报记者谈话时说:“这部书会引起争论,其目的在于开始而不是结束讨论。”学术争论只会有益于研究的深入。几乎可以肯定有些评论家会不同意书中的某些观点。例如,澳大利亚文学的现实主义、民主传统在书中未予应有的强调,对于两次大战之间一些作家(如对左翼作家普里恰德和弗兰克·哈代以及帕默)的评价也可能会引起争论,例如认为普里恰德和帕默“与其说是有创作才华倒不如说是有热情”,认为弗兰克·哈代“在很多方面算不上一个小说家”,这些评判看来过于苛刻,以此对比德顿主编的《澳大利亚文学》中对于这几个作家的提法,就更可以看出这本书在某些问题上观点有所偏颇。

由于这部书的主要部分是四个人执笔,尽管观点上并无矛盾,仍然使人感到是四个独立的部分,例如讲到“九十年代”,每部分都讲一遍,如果糅在一起,依时间顺序来评述,就可以避免重复。另外,诗歌、小说、戏剧也不能截然分开,有的作家如怀特、斯图尔特、波特、基尼利都没有囿于一种文学体裁,分在几个部分介绍显然有重复之处。作为一部文学史,给读者总的感觉是观点清楚一贯,而史料似嫌不足。

书的印刷水平总的来说是高的,但仍有一些错误。例如:诗人吉尔摩尔的出生年在311页是1862年,而在455页附录中是1865年,从别的资料来看后者似乎更为准确。除了封面用了澳大利亚著名画家诺兰的一幅画之外,全书没有一张插图,这也是一个遗憾。

《怀特传》的成就与不足^①

David Marr , Patrick White A Life , Random House , 1991.

最近两年 ,在澳大利亚文学界发生了两件大事 ,一是澳大利亚唯一的诺贝尔文学奖获得者帕特里克·怀特 1990 年 9 月去世 ,一是 1991 年夏戴维·马著长达 727 页的《怀特传》在澳出版。

前几年 ,短篇小说家阿兰·马歇尔、哈尔·波特、裘达·华登和长篇小说家克利斯梯纳·斯泰德、奥尔加·玛思特斯相继谢世 ,前年七十八岁高龄的怀特又与世长辞。这标志着二次大战前后成长起来的一代作家即将成为过去 ,这意味着一个时代的结束。

戴维·马写怀特的传记是一件引人注目的事 ,因为怀特曾为《澳大利亚文学》杂志写过著名的小传《浪子》,澳大利亚文学评论家德顿和瑞典新闻记者毕尧克斯坦也都写过他的传记和评论 ,怀特自己还写了自传《镜中疵斑》,此外至少还有五、六本有关怀特的专著^②以及数量可观的访问记 ,怀特生平的梗概和性格的特点已为人们所熟悉 ,因此 ,要写出一部有新意的怀特传记确实不是一

① 原载《外国文学》1992 年第 2 期。

② Barry Argyle , Patrick White , Edinburgh : Oliver and Boyd , 1967.

Geoffrey Dutton , Patrick White , Oxford University Press , 1971.

Ingmar Bjorksten , Patrick White : An Introduction , University of Queensland Press , 1976.

Brian Kiernan , Patrick White , London : Macmillan , 1980.

John A. Weigel , Patrick White , Twayne Publishers , 1983.

John Colmer , Patrick White , Methuen & Co. , 1984.

件容易的事。

戴维·马原定用三年的时间写完,实际上,用了六年才完稿。他走访了怀特的众多的亲戚和朋友以及认识他的人,向他们了解怀特的各个侧面。在调查访问的过程中他意外地发现怀特写的大量信件仍然保存完好,他先后搜集到一千五百多封怀特给亲友和出版商写的信。我们知道,怀特多年来一直要他的亲友把他的信毁掉,人们不曾想到竟然还会有这么多的信保存至今。这是怀特研究中的一大发现。戴维·马在写《怀特传》时大量引用了这些信件,使传记具有更大的权威性。更为难得的是他在写传记的过程中一直和怀特保持联系,不断从怀特那里得到第一手的材料。有时怀特突然打电话来,要戴维·马立即去和他谈,对戴维来说这自然是求之不得的。怀特要他在写传记时不要有任何保留,戴维·马向他询问时也总是刨根问底,毫无顾忌,力求得到最真实的材料。在怀特去世前两个月,戴维·马的传记终于完稿。怀特要求看原稿,戴维·马深知怀特的性格,有所防范,在去他家前经过邮局时寄了一份给出版社,带了另一份到怀特家。怀特和戴维·马一起读原稿,前后化了九天时间,怀特纠正了几个细节上的错误和拼写、标点错误,其他一概未动。怀特看完后说:“我认为这本书应该叫做《世间怪物》,因为我是个怪物。”

《怀特传》出版后,引起了强烈的反响。人们普遍认为这是一本基于大量研究、写得客观全面的传记,既没有夸大怀特的成就和优点,也没有掩盖他的错误和缺点。有一段时间,不论是文学界或是普通读者,几乎人人议论戴维·马的《怀特传》,形成了“《怀特传》热”。但是也有个别评论家对《怀特传》提出了极为严厉的批评,例如,戴维·台西认为传记冗长,将艺术与生活等同,将怀特的同性恋放在了不适当的地位等等。甚至说戴维·马所做的至多和大学本科生经常做的文学猜谜游戏差不多。^① 刹时间,众说纷纭,

① David Tacey, "Patrick White Marred", Quadrant, October 1991.

莫衷一是 ,这部传记究竟是好是坏 ,似乎成了问题。本文着重研究《怀特传》有哪些特点 ,在哪些方面超过了以前的同类著作 ,还有哪些不足 ,以就正于同行。

首先 ,戴维·马在研究怀特如何成为作家这方面提供了一些鲜为人知的材料。人们都知道怀特出身于农场主家庭 ,他自己在《镜中疵斑》中也说 ,他是“含着银汤匙诞生的”。但是他家庭究竟有多富 ,过去没有人做过调查 ,他本人也从不愿意谈及。戴维·马对于怀特的家史做了极为深入的研究 ,从怀特的曾祖父杰姆士 1826 年移民到澳大利亚写起 ,他当时拥有五百镑资金和不大的羊群 ,还只是一般的农场主。在三十年代末期他移到了亨特山谷区 ,这是一个自然条件非常利于放牧的区域 ,当时他已经有了 35 ,000 英亩土地 ,2 ,000 只羊和 300 头牛。在五、六十年代不景气的时期 ,怀特的祖父大量购入土地 ,又善于经营 ,财产迅速扩大。之后 ,他的叔祖父福兰克进入议会。这时怀特家族已经具有很大的势力。到他父亲这一代 ,铃树农场在伯父 H. L. 怀特的主持下进一步扩大 ,土地积累到 150 ,000 英亩 ,雇佣 250 名工人。当地的学校、教堂、商店、邮局都是 H. L. 怀特所建造。有一次 ,一位过路的牧师问学校的孩子 :“是谁创造了世界 ?”小学生回答道 :“是 H. L. 怀特先生。”在第一次世界大战期间 ,他们兄弟几个已有足够财力捐献一架飞机。在当年的澳大利亚 ,只要提到铃树农场怀特一家几乎无人不知。怀特父亲狄克不善经营 ,但只靠分红 ,他已经能过十分富裕的生活。他的母亲露丝在悉尼社交界是个活跃人物 ,她的活动经常在《悉尼先驱晨报》上报道。有一年 ,狄克和露丝去欧洲旅行 ,临行前告别晚餐请了三百多客人 ,都是悉尼上层社会人物 ,由此可见怀特家族的阔绰程度。

怀特受过很好的教育。在他十三岁时 ,他被送到英国齐尔特俄姆中学住读 ,毕业后回到澳大利亚 ,在农场干了几年活后 ,又进了剑桥大学学习现代语言。他学习了德语和法语 ,使他能够广泛接触德国和法国文学 ,在假期中他在欧洲大陆旅行 ,其他时间在伦

敦的文化氛围中生活。他对于戏剧特别感兴趣，经常去剧场看剧，在此期间，他和画家德迈斯特有着十分密切的接触，通过他了解了绘画艺术，接触了其他画家。他不止一次说过，他是通过绘画和音乐进行创作的。他在英国读了乔伊斯、杰姆士、劳伦斯等作家的作品，受到很大的影响，这在他早期的作品中看得很清楚。可以说，他在欧洲的经历对于他最后成为有世界影响的作家具有决定的意义。怀特之所以能去英国上中学，之后又在剑桥大学读书，长期住在伦敦从事写作，没有他家族的财力是根本不可能的。将近二十年中，他几乎全靠他父母的资助得以生活和写作，即使在他有了较多的稿费收入以后，他也无法以自己的收入维持他在悉尼的生活。戴维·马给他做过一个统计，在他获得诺贝尔奖金前的十年，他的稿费总收入大约十五万元，根本不够他的开支。与此相对照，绝大部分澳大利亚作家只能一边工作一边写作，以便维持生活。有些作家偶尔能够得到文学委员会的资助得以集中精力创作。真正能以稿费维持生计的为数很少。经济上的压力对于他们的创作不可能没有影响。怀特的处境在澳大利亚作家中可以说是得天独厚。

对于怀特和他母亲露丝的关系戴维·马也披露了不少饶有兴味的材料。怀特在他的自传《镜中疵斑》中对于露丝几乎没有一句好话，他对露丝把他送到英国中学一事耿耿于怀，认为决不能饶恕她，因为他一直把这四年视为监狱生活。戴维·马为露丝翻了案，他以大量事实说明是露丝支持他写作，他的第一本诗集是露丝在悉尼帮助他出版的，他的第一个剧本是露丝组织演出的，她一直以他儿子在文学上的成就而自豪。甚至曼诺力的进入澳大利亚都是露丝出面帮忙的结果。怀特和露丝的关系实际上十分密切，他在欧洲时每周写信给露丝。露丝在伦敦定居后也经常给他写信。他到英国旅行时，每天都到露丝的住处去看望她。这些都是人们所不知道的。应该说露丝在怀特成为作家的过程中做了一般母亲都做不到的事，但在怀特笔下露丝完全是另一个形象。

家庭条件和教育程度并不能决定怀特成为作家，他个人的天

资、勤奋和其他条件对于他走上创作的道路是最重要的。戴维·马突出了两点,一是怀特的同性恋,再就是他的叛逆性格。怀特认为由于他是同性恋者,使他既能了解男人,又能了解女人。有的评论家认为怀特善于描写女人,写得活灵活现,《姨母的故事》中的古德曼小姐、《人树》中的艾米·帕克、《树叶裙》中的罗克斯贝格夫人、《风暴眼》中的伊利莎白·亨特夫人、《探险家沃斯》中的劳拉等都给人留下令人难忘的印象,这可能得益于他的同性恋。戴维·马对于怀特的同性恋问题做了非常深入的调查,找到了他所有的同性恋朋友或是当时的信件,深信他的这一特点极大地影响了他的性格,使他长期生活在正常人的圈子之外,比较容易同情受歧视的少数人,理解他们的痛苦和矛盾。在此之前的评论大都回避这个问题,即使提到也相当隐讳。这自然与时代背景有关,在社会上公开讨论同性恋问题或者说同性恋的公开化是近二十年的事。另外,作者戴维·马自己是同性恋者,这一事实也可能影响他写传记的角度。台西对于戴维·马在这个问题上的观点提出了批评。他说:“马要我们把怀特的脱离世俗的态度归之于他的同性恋,要我们对他小说中的人物也这样看。传统的观点是怀特和他的人物对于追逐物质享受的澳大利亚社会来说过于‘超脱’。现在这种观点要被基于性政治的一种新的模式所替代。但是,老式的看法未必荒诞不经。在小说中主要人物所具有的特殊品质总是和他们不隶属于普通的现实有关,而性几乎与他们的特点的构成毫无关系。”台西的这一看法是有道理的。同性恋对于怀特的创作肯定具有影响,在《坚实的曼陀拉》和《特莱庞的爱情》等小说中这一点十分明显,但怀特在他的整个创作中并未突出同性恋或者性的问题,相反,他在处理有关性的问题时总是极为谨慎。在现实生活中,怀特也是如此,他既不愿意谈论同性恋,更不参加同性恋者组织的各种活动。在评论怀特和他的作品时,应该把这一问题放在恰当的位置,既不回避,更不应该夸大。

戴维·马分析了怀特的叛逆性格。在许多重大的问题上怀特

都表现了他的执拗。他的父亲希望他成为继承人 ,做一名农场主 ;母亲则希望他成为外交家 ,但他完全违背了他们的意志 ,下决心要当作家。在开始写作以后 ,他又选择了一条与其他澳大利亚作家不同的道路 ,成为一个现代派作家。初期出版的困难自不必说 ,就是在他的《姨母的故事》在美国得到好评以后 ,他的《人树》在英国仍然难以出版 ,二十多家出版社回绝了他 ,但他义无反顾地走下去。他的剧本的命运比小说更坏 ,每个剧本的演出都是一场斗争 ,但他决心要在戏剧方面也有所作为。在得到社会承认后 ,他宣布不再参加任何获奖活动 ,大英百科文学奖委员会决定颁奖给他 ,但他坚持不接受。在他获得诺贝尔文学奖后面面对的是另一种考验。他清楚地知道这一荣誉可能会毁掉一个作家。他拒绝了无数的邀请 ,甚至议会邀请他讲话 ,也被他回绝。戴维·马认为怀特之所以成为一个伟大的作家正是因为他“摆脱了怀特家族 ,摆脱了土地庄园 ,摆脱了许多朋友和恋人 ,摆脱了财产 ,摆脱了义务 ,摆脱了与当作家不符的一切联系”。

对于澳大利亚评论界对怀特早期作品究竟是支持还是泼了冷水历来有争论 ,怀特本人认为澳大利亚评论家——特别是大学教授——对他不公正 ,他始终耿耿于怀 ,甚至把他们称为“嚎叫的澳大利亚野狗”。有些评论家为此替怀特抱不平 ,但也有的评论家(例如阿伦·劳森)持反对意见 ,举出许多例子和材料说明澳大利亚评论界待怀特不薄 ,对怀特给予了支持。究竟当时情况如何一般人并不清楚。戴维·马详细叙述了每本书的出版经过和主要评论 ,可以看出 ,怀特当时的活动中心在欧美 ,他的经纪人和出版商都在伦敦和纽约 ,除了第一本小说《幸福谷》首先在英国出版外 ,后面的五本小说都是先在美国出版 ,然后在英国出版。美国的维金出版社是怀特最信赖的出版社 ,他的全部小说、两部短篇小说集、自传和四个剧本在北美都是维金出版社一家所出。这与主编休波斯克从一开始就大力支持怀特有关 ,怀特的《姨母的故事》在写法上相当奇特 ,一般读者不易接受 ,出版商也望而却步 ,但休波

斯克毅然决定出版。他还邀请当时美国著名评论家杰姆士·斯特恩为《人树》写评论,为怀特在英美的声誉打下了基础。戴维·马的追踪研究解决了上面所说的争论。

通过怀特大量的书信和他亲友提供的情况,戴维·马对于怀特作品的酝酿、产生作了细致的研究。在整个怀特研究中,这方面的材料最缺乏。怀特在他的自传中提到过《探险家沃斯》是如何在二次大战期间酝酿的,但总的来说他对自己的作品不愿多谈,评论家也曾做过一些推测,但缺乏可靠性。《怀特传》发掘了大量的材料,说明怀特的小说和人物是怎样酝酿产生的。这对于我们研究怀特的创作过程很有帮助。

从戴维·马提供的材料来看,怀特小说中的人物在生活中既有原型,又是他自己的创造。《风暴眼》的主人公亨特夫人以怀特的母亲露丝为原型,这是毫无疑问的,但这个人物的经历和内心世界却是怀特的创造。《人树》中的斯坦和艾米都是怀特童年生活中熟悉的人物,同时又是以他父母为原型。《姨母的故事》中的姨母是以怀特教母格尔楚德为基础的,而沃斯则是探险家莱克哈特、爱尔和怀特本人的综合体。《探险家沃斯》中的劳拉和贝尔是怀特家的律师埃波思威斯几个女儿的化身。《探险家沃斯》和《树叶裙》都基于历史真实,但并不是历史小说,怀特只用了原故事的梗概,人物和细节则都是怀特的再创造。有的小说具有更多的个人色彩,例如《坚实的曼陀拉》和《特莱庞的爱情》,刻画了怀特的矛盾心情。即使在有些表面上看来与怀特个人经历无关的小说中,也常常可以看到他的影子。《活体解剖者》写的是画家得非尔德的故事,似乎与怀特无关,但实际上他通过这本书抒发了他想做画家的宿愿。

怀特有的小说是被一句话或一幅画所触发,例如,战后他回到悉尼,有一次,他和一个出租汽车司机因为收费问题争执起来,他不肯多付钱,司机为此大发雷霆,对他喊:“滚回德国去!”他从这一句话看出在澳大利亚当难民的处境,给了他写《战车上的乘客》

的启示。有一次,他去墨尔本,在维多利亚国家美术馆看到一幅画,上面画的是一组人物。陪着他的工党议员巴利·琼斯指着这幅画对他说,这幅画有一段故事,画中一个穿着白色连衣裙打着阳伞的瘦弱女子原来是一个叫做赫伯特·戴斯—默费的男人。他和他母亲的一段话特别引起了怀特的注意:

“你是我的儿子吗,赫伯特?”默费太太对这个穿着裙子的熟悉的人影问道。

“不,我是您的女儿,伊迪丝。”

“我真高兴,我一直想要个女儿。”

这段话给了怀特写《特莱庞的爱情》一书的最初的想法。在写这本书的时候,怀特不仅用了母亲伊迪丝这个名字(英文拼法稍有不同),而且这段话也基本上未动。

台西批评戴维·马把艺术与生活等同起来,认为他在生活中找怀特小说的人物原型是简单化,是文学猜谜游戏,否认了作家的想象力。我以为这一批评并不十分公正,因为戴维·马虽然找出了某些人物的原型,但他并未暗示怀特是按着原型写人物,并未否认他的创作过程。作家从生活中得到启示和灵感,从周围的人们中选出小说人物的原型,这是任何作家都不能也不必回避的创作过程。承认这一点并不会贬低作家的创造性劳动。关键在于作家的艺术水平。怀特的人物尽管有生活中的原型,但又都是他的独特创造。每个人物都具有各自的特点,无论是普普通通的斯坦或者是十分奇特的特莱庞都给人留下深刻的印象。怀特长于人物刻画,他的小说中的人物大有呼之欲出之感,人物刻画的成功是怀特作品的突出优点。

怀特很少提到他为了写作如何搜集材料,似乎一切得来全不费功夫。戴维·马对这个方面做了特别深入的研究。实际上,怀特对细节的真实十分注意,他在写《战车上的乘客》一书时,为了了解犹太人和与犹太人有关的一切,他读了不少犹太哲学家的著作,读了罗素尔所著《灾难的纳粹》,对于纳粹在二次大战的暴行

有了相当的了解。在写《战车上的乘客》一书时,他几乎每天都和他的犹太朋友丹尼尔通电话,向她了解有关犹太人的生活和习俗。为了了解犹太教,他不仅通过朋友认识了希伯莱文的权威鲁伟斯,还专门去犹太教堂做礼拜,观察犹太人做礼拜前后的表现。在写《树叶裙》时,怀特去弗雷泽岛作了实地考察,还拜访了当地人,了解有关弗雷泽夫人的种种传说,这一切都为怀特提供了素材,使他能把握地写主人公埃伦流落孤岛这段故事。在写《探险家沃斯》前,他专门又到他的老家铃树农场走了一遭。书中波纳家的描写就是基于他家的农场和他父亲在悉尼的府邸。在处理如何让亨特夫人死去这一细节上,怀特有过各种设想,他曾经想让她把她桌上的安眠药吃掉,他的医生告诉他,她当时的病如此之重,她不可能吃得下那么多的安眠药,也喝不了那么多的水,另外,如果在桌上放这么多的安眠药,让病人吃掉,护士要负法律责任。怀特不愿再加进打官司这一节,只好对亨特夫人的死另作安排。他还向总督夫人了解有关风暴的细节,他写信问她:“我对于风暴能达到多高以及是否影响飞行特别有兴趣,还有风暴眼——船只能否在风暴眼中航行,而不受到风暴的影响。”

怀特搜集材料几乎是随时随地。一个重要的来源是闲聊。与人们对他的看法相反,他不是一个索然寡居的隐士,实际上,他喜欢和各种各样的人闲聊,他经常在家里请客,在饭桌上无所不谈,他请的客人来自各个方面,因此他得到的材料也是各种各样。他从不记笔记,全靠记忆。他对于细节的记忆十分惊人。多少年前的事他常常能记得清清楚楚。怀特曾说自己是一个杂食的园丁鸟。

对于怀特的为人在澳大利亚是争论颇多的,在怀特死后,有的作家还写了挖苦的文章和诗,主要的批评是他脾气暴躁,对人苛求,报复心重,和许多朋友都最后闹翻,对有些人甚至公开攻击。戴维·马在写怀特时基本上是客观公正的,对于他在为人方面的缺点并未掩饰,另一方面,对于怀特在艺术上执著追求,对于年轻

画家、年老作家支持,对于土著人同情,仇恨腐败、反对核战,憎恨市俗,在原则问题上不妥协,戴维·马也作了生动的描绘。怀特去世后,著名评论家多拉西·格林说:“许多不认识他的人都感到他们失去了表达澳大利亚良心的声音。”^①

《怀特传》的不足除了以上提到的以外,就我看来还有以下几点:

首先,怀特不是一个孤立的作家,他是欧洲文学传统和文学运动的产物。戴维·马提到了怀特受乔伊斯等作家的影响,但究竟现代派对于他具有多大的影响戴维·马并未作深入的探讨。他之所以成为现代派作家不仅是因为他喜爱抽象派绘画,还有更深刻的文学方面的原因。怀特的小说具有欧洲小说的特点,这与他深受欧洲传统的影响不无关系。怀特阅读了大量的英、法、德国文学作品,看过许多戏剧,这一切对于怀特都产生了极大的影响。戴维·马虽然也提到他读过的一些书,但大都浮光掠影,谈得很不深入。另外,怀特对于澳大利亚文学的影响戴维·马在传记中也基本上未涉及。

戴维·马把怀特的经历和小说的创作穿插起来写,可以使读者看到小说中的人物与怀特经历的关系,但对于不熟悉怀特小说和剧本的读者来说,有的地方可能费解。这种写法还容易使人得到错误的印象,以为生活和艺术是直接联系在一起的。

人们都知道,怀特在戏剧方面的成就远远不如小说,尤其是长篇小说,但戴维·马在处理这个问题时,似乎拘泥于纯客观叙述,对于怀特的戏剧为什么会遭到各方的批评等问题,戴维·马没有作深入的探讨。

怀特已经去世一年多了,有关他创作、生平的文章屡见报端,环绕怀特的争论可能还会继续下去,从这件事上也可以看出怀特

^① Dorothy Green, in Patrick White: A Tribute, compiled by Clayton Joyce, Angus and Robertsen, 1991.

在澳大利亚文学界的影响。戴维·马的《怀特传》尽管还有一些缺点,但是瑕不掩瑜,它为怀特研究提供了大量宝贵的材料,也为正确认识怀特提供了很有说服力的例证。

COMING TO TERMS WITH THE AUSTRALIAN ENVIRONMENT*

While discussing the forerunners of Australian literature , Professor Manning Clark points out :

The spirit of the place became both the prime mover of a literature about life in Australia , and a primary theme in all the major literature of Australia from the first explorers by sea to the present day.¹

Writers concern with the environment took various forms in different periods of Australian literature. Their initial sense of horror was later replaced by stoic acceptance , which in time gave way to enthusiastic embracing among some writers and sophisticated representation among others. As this occurred , the scene gradually shifted from the country to the city and bush tales yielded to stories of urban and suburban areas. Writers general approach has also become more international and pluralistic.

More than a century and a half elapsed from the time when the first European sailors sighted Australia s west coast to the day when James Cook discovered the east. The first navigators did not find in this new continent anything that could be a valuable commodity in Europe , which explains why for such a long time the Dutch did not claim it as part of their territory. After the first fleet arrived , the officers did

* 曾在 1990 年召开的第二届澳大利亚研究国际研讨会上发表。

not find the extensive meadows Cook had reported. Instead they found the place unsuitable for settlement. Captain Tench was milder than some others in his judgment , but he also had doubts about whether Australia could really become a fertile and prosperous land.

Barron Field , the first Australian poet , wrote in 1822 :“ The winter nights are too cold , and the summer days too hot. In the autumn the flowers are not in bloom. ”²

In Charles Harpur s much anthologized poem *The Creek of the Four Graves* , we frequently come across such words as “ wild ” , “ strange ” , “ gloom ” , “ horror ” and “ savageness ”. In fact the whole poem is permeated with a sense of horror and sadness.

Marcus Clarke sums it up like this :

What is the dominant note of Australian scenery ? That which is the dominant note of Edgar Allan Poe’s poetry—Weird Melancholy. . . . The Australian mountain forests are funereal , secret , stern. Their solitude is desolation. . . . The animal life of these frowning hills is either grotesque or ghostly. ³

It would be unfair to Clarke if we did not explain why he said all this which seemed so damning. While he admitted that Australia was characterized by a quality of weird melancholy , he argued that writers would become familiar with the beauty of loneliness and learn the language of the barren and the uncouth. Clarke refuted what people like Sir James Smith said of Australia —a place not likely to inspire a poet or even to excite hope.

However , not all poems and novels written in the 19th century bemoan the strangeness and loneliness of the country. Romanticism coloured the writing of the period as much as it did painting. The element of Romanticism is as strong in Henry Kingsleys *Recollec-*

tions of Geoffrey Hamlyn as in James Wallis painting " Corroboree at Newcastle ".

In the 1890 s there existed two views of the Australian bush , represented respectively by Lawson and A. B. Paterson. The debate between them in The Bulletin may have been set up for purposes of attracting more readers , but it did show considerable difference in their perceptions.

Lawson s view of the bush was basically a gloomy and pessimistic one. In " The Drover s Wife " Lawson portrays a desolate country scene :

Bush all round—bush with no horizon , for the country is flat. No ranges in the distance. The bush consists of stunted , rotten native apple trees. No undergrowth. Nothing to relieve the eye save the dark green of a few sheoaks which are sighing above the narrow , almost waterless creek. ⁴

The landscape serves as an extension of the character of the drover s wife , but it also reveals the depth and persistence of Lawson s melancholy. There are many passages in his short stories which describe the desolation of the land , but nowhere do we find the sense of horror shown by earlier writers.

In contrast to Lawson , Paterson was determined to show in his verses that the man from the outback and the life he lived were better than the city man and his life. He projected the man from the outback as independent , anti-authoritarian and courageous , which soon became the image of the Australian male.

The difference between Lawson and Paterson is best summed up by Harry Heseltine when he says , " Paterson had something of the cavalier view of the man on horseback , while Lawson employed the

harsher perspective of the traveller humping his swag. ”⁵

The Jindyworobak Movement , which started in the 30 s and lasted into late 40 s , was an extreme expression of nationalism in Australian literary history. Reg Ingamells believed that a truly Australian culture depended on the fulfilment and sublimation of three conditions , the first of which is “ a clear recognition of environmental values ”. By this he meant the relationship , subjective or objective , between a man and the world about him. “ In poetry this mostly comes to mean the relationship between personal or individual sensibility and the physical or social landscape. ”⁶

Jindyworobaks in their poetry often eulogize the landscape as they find it. There is not the slightest trace of earlier poets discomfort and difficulty in accepting the unfamiliar environment ; nor do we witness any of the Lawsonian melancholy of the 1890 s. Instead nationalist sentiments are apparent in their writings :

I am proud to be Australian and I love
all trees Australian , birds and beasts ,
all ranges and their rivers , yearn for them
as the stars that reach their hands
to our still lagoons must yearn. ⁷

Such change of attitude is also discernible in Dorothea Mackellar s poem *My Country* although she admits there is still an element of terror in the landscape :

I love a sunburnt country ,
A land of sweeping plains ,
Of ragged mountain ranges ,
Of droughts and flooding rains.
I love her far horizons ,
I love her jewel-sea ,

Her beauty and her terror –

The wide brown land for me !

Writers like Katharine Susannah Prichard used the Australian landscape as the backdrop to their stories , but there was growing impatience with stereotype descriptions , which was sometimes coupled with a rebellion against the deeply-entrenched bush tradition. A popular magazine had this to say in 1945 :

it is half a century old . . . Nobody says , ‘ We have cities as well as country , and even so , all our country is not red sand and broken fences and hopeless teeth-grinding women. ’⁹

Books about Australia published in the 1950 s gradually shifted the scene from what was considered typical outback to the cities , especially Sydney. Photographs of Sydneys beaches and varied cityscape were challenging ‘ the familiar iconography of outback Australia—the homestead , the sheep , the lonely gum and the proud Aborigine ’ .¹⁰

With writers like Patrick White and Randolph Stow the environment is handled with much more sophistication although it still retains its importance.

Patrick White s modernistic approach marked a departure from the bush tradition. But in both *The Tree of Man* and *Voss* , published respectively in 1955 and 1957 , the environment still looms large. It is often used to its advantage either to emphasize the isolation of the human condition or as a means to explore the country of the mind. The desolate and hostile inland desert described in *Voss* seems to possess an ominous quality , which foretells the hero s tragic fate. White s chief concern is spiritual exploration and his description of the land only serves his quest motif. Randolph Stow s *To the Islands* is also a spiritual quest , and the country Heriot traversed is not only wild and deso-

late but mysterious. The environment is still harsh under the writers pen , but it mainly serves to bring out the anguish of the hero and his spiritual journey.

The way White and Stow treat the environment marks a degree of literary maturity never seen before. They feel at home with the environment. They neither exhibit wonder , horror or disbelief , nor do they swing to the other extreme of nationalistic eulogizing. The Australian environment comes so natural to them that they portray it the way they sculpt their characters.

In the sixties Australia , like other Western countries , experienced a shake-up which affected the writing of fiction , poetry , and plays to a significant degree.

Writers like Frank Moorhouse , Murray Bail , Peter Carey and Morris Lurie distinguished themselves not only by experimenting with literary forms but also by using the city mostly as the scene of their stories. The parodies of Lawson's " The Drover's Wife " serve as a good example of the changes in both theme and manner. Fewer writers concern themselves with the bush and its ethos.

Novelists tend to have their stories happen in the cities. There are David Ireland's Sydney novels , *The Unknown Industrial Prisoner* , *The Glass Canoe* and *City of Women*. Helen Garner's novels are often based in Melbourne , like *Monkey Grip* , *Honour* and *Other Peoples Children* and *The Childrens Back*. Then there is Robert Drewe's Perth in *The Savage Crows* , and David Malouf's Brisbane in *Johnno* and *12 Edmondstone Street*.¹¹

Another trend since the late 60s is feminists , Aborigines and recent immigrants have become much more visible and articulate as writers and poets. New immigrant writers include Walter Adamson (Germany) , Sylvana Gardner (Dalmatia) , Lolo Houbein (Holland) ,

Don o Kim (Korea) , Manfred Jurgensen (Germany-Denmark). Some novelists now take the world as their stage. Thomas Keneally shifts from the convict days in *Bring Larks and Heroes* to Nazi-occupied Poland in *Schindler's Ark* and more recently to famine and civil war in Ethiopia. David Malouf deals with Italian terrorists in his *Child's Play*. Christopher Koch wrote about what happened in the coup in Indonesia in *The Year of Living Dangerously*. Then we have Nicholas Jose's recent novel *Avenue of Eternal Peace* , which is set in China.

The sophisticated approach White and Stow adopt in describing Australia's vast and desolate country , the shift of locale from the out-back to urban and suburban areas and the increasingly pluralistic tendency in creative writings all point to the fact that as writers come to terms with the environment the literature they produce is coming of age.

Notes :

1. Manning Clark , " The Forerunners " , in *Review of National Literatures : Australia* , ed. by L. A. C. Dobrez , Griffon House Publications , 1982 , p. 17.
2. *The Oxford Anthology of Australian Literature* , ed. by Leonie Kramer and Adrian Mitchell , OUP , 1985 , pp. 12-13.
3. *Ibid.* , p. 60.
4. *The Essential Henry Lawson* , ed. by Brian Kiernan , Currey O'Neil Publishers , 1982 , p. 85.
5. *The Oxford History of Australian Literature* , ed. by Leonie Kramer , OUP , 1981. p. 303.
6. *The Jindyworobaks* , ed. by Brian Elliott , University of Queensland Press , 1979 , xxvii.
7. *Ibid.* , p. 46.
8. *My Country : Australian Poetry and Short Stories Two Hundred Years* , ed. by

Leonie Kramer , Lansdowne Press , 1985 , p. 472.

9. The Penguin New Literary History of Australia , ed. by Laurie Hargenhan , Penguin Books , 1988 , p. 278.

10. Ibid. , p. 280.

11. Ibid. , p. 450.

On Patrick White's Style

Patrick White was born in 1912 to Australian parents , who were then on an extended tour in England. He was brought up in Sydney but was taken back to England when he was thirteen. He spent four unpleasant years in an English public school , at the end of which he returned to Australia to work as a jackeroo with the prospect of becoming a farmer. However , he did not take up farming. Instead he went back to England and studied Modern Languages at King s College , Cambridge. This brought him in touch with European culture which was to be an immense influence on his writing later. After graduating in 1935 , he began his career as a writer. He published his first novel Happy Valley in 1939 and his second , The Living and the Dead , in 1941. During the Second World War , he spent most of his time as an Intelligence Officer in the Middle East. After the war he returned to Australia and bought a farm near Sydney. He established his fame with the publication of The Tree of Man in 1955. Altogether he has to his credit eleven novels , two collections of short fiction , five plays and a film script.

White won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1973 and is the best known Australian writer overseas. His works have been translated into French , German , Russian , Spanish , Swedish , Norwegian , Polish , Japanese and a few other languages.

White is also the most controversial writer in Australia. At one

time arguments raged back and forth over his critical reception at home. ① Then there have been wide differences over the interpretation of some of his works. Some argue that the critical criteria applied to White are inappropriate and “ based on premises White sets out to question ” ② while others are skeptical about his achievement in relation to his intention. There has also been consistent and perhaps growing concern among critics with White’s language and style. Ron Shepherd , speaking at the CRNLE Patrick White Seminar in 1978 , noted that the most interesting directions in White studies in recent years were those which point to the literary implications of White’s language and style. ③

I

As early as 1956 , A. D. Hope wrote in his comment on *The Tree of Man* :

A great deal of the book is written in what I believe was once called ‘experimental prose’. The sentence is a-

① Alan Lawson , “ Patrick White’s Critical Reception ” , *Canberra Times* , Oct. 27 , 1973 , p. 2 ; Maurice Dunlevy , “ Patrick White and the Critics ” , *Canberra Times* , Oct. 30 , 1973 , p. 2 ; Geoffrey Sawyer , “ Patrick White Arouses Just a Minor Spat ” , *Canberra Times* , Oct. 31 , 1973 , p. 2 ; Alan Lawson , “ Patrick White and the Critics ” , *Canberra Times* , Nov. 5 , 1973 , p. 2 and “ Unmerciful Dingoes ? —The Critical Reception of Patrick White ” , *Meanjin Quarterly* , Dec. , 1973 , pp. 379-392.

② Veronica Brady , “ Why Myth Matters ” , *Westerly* , No. 2 , 1973 , p. 63.

③ Alan Lawson , “ Meaning and Experience : A Review-Essay on Some Recurrent Problems in Patrick White Criticism ” , *TSL* , vol. 21 , No. 2 , Summer 1979 , p. 280.

bandoned as a unit : instead we have detached phrases masquerading as sentences or even as paragraphs. ①

At the end of that article he made another devastating criticism of White's style by calling it illiterate verbal sludge . Since then many have touched on his style in their criticisms. David Martin , for instance , calls it “ an interest-whipping device ” which is designed to cover a hole. ② R. F. Brissenden , while acknowledging “ in all the novels there are passages of great power and beauty ” , thinks “ much of his writing seems crabbed , awkward , and unnecessarily mannered. ” But he points out at the same time that “ White's style is individual : he has developed it because he felt himself unable to say what he wanted to say within the restrictions of the customary modes of expression. ” ③ Harry Heseltine's is perhaps the only essay written so far to expound White's style exclusively. His contention is embodied in the concluding remarks of his essay :

Gifted with an unusually rich sensibility , he has explicated its materials , stage by stage and through a responsive syntax , into a powerful set of images , a vocabulary of judging metaphor , a range of abstractions articulating belief. Every element of White's style works to explore and elucidate his themes. Like it or lump it , his style is the very linchpin of what he has to say. ④

① A. D. Hope , “ The Bunyip Stages a Comeback ” , The Sydney Morning Herald , June 16 , 1956 , p. 15.

② David Martin , “ Among the Bones : What are our Novelists looking for ? ” , Meanjin , April 1959 , p. 55.

③ R. F. Brissenden , “ Patrick White ” Meanjin , December 1959 , p. 411.

④ Harry Heseltine , “ Patrick White's Style ” , Quadrant , vol. VIII , No. 3 , 1963 , p. 74.

In this essay Harry Heseltine makes a most sensitive study of images used in White's novels, but only touches on his syntax. While the use of images forms an important part of White's style, most criticism is directed against his idiosyncratic use of syntax and vocabulary. It seems necessary, therefore, to analyse his style in its essential details, assess its individual components and finally explore how far he is justified in adopting the style he does.

II

One outstanding feature of White's syntax is his use of the stream of consciousness. In his first two novels, *Happy Valley* and *The Living and the Dead*, he makes extensive use of this method. Kunitz and Haycraft made the comment in 1942 that White "carries the stream of consciousness method to almost its ultimate extreme" and thought that his second novel was "naturalistic in theme and ultra-modern in method".^① Here are two specimens from *The Living and the Dead*:

On Sunday you'll come to tea, he said. Sooner or later. Father's all right, he said, it's Mother. Mrs. Standish, she composed already in her head, Mrs. Standish, I hope you don't mind, I hope you don't mind if Willy, you see it is like this, it is like this, it is like.^②

You could have cried the gramophone it sank down and stroked the carpet it surged upward through the warm throat faces were bluish a gin bluish and the words the bubbles in gin the gold tassel the bobble bobble on a cap

① Kunitz and Haycraft, *Twentieth Century Authors*, 1942, p. 1510.

② Patrick White, *The Living and the Dead*, Penguin Books, 1967, P. 27.

he had been waiting said to make your acquaintance without a chin to dance to push against a body she said a soul she said it was not a quiver of refusal you accepted a phrase you accepted anything after a point your own abject collapse. ①

Speeches in *The Living and the Dead* are all presented without quotation marks , which makes it possible for the conversation to blend naturally and almost imperceptibly with the comments on the speeches or the description of a thought process. The edge of actuality is made blunt by the nebulous thought process , which helps create a dream-like quality.

If White was experimenting with method while writing the first two novels , he came into his own with *The Aunt s Story*. In his later novels White still uses the stream of consciousness , but he does so only sparingly and often in a case that would benefit by the use of such a device. In *The Solid Mandala* we find a few examples in which the thought processes are recorded. In the following instance we get a vivid impression of how Waldos mind works :

Waldo Brown dragged quicker , if not to effect , to think. He would do how was it he would blow everythin the first editions of Thomas Hardy the whole Everyman Library quite a curiosity nowadays Mother ´s spoons with crests on them the emerald ring the Hon Cousin Molly Thourault left in fact one big bonfire the land the developers were after if Anglesey Estate then why not Browns ´ place Terminus Road see an alderman no alderman was so dishonest . . . ②

① Ibid. ; p. 322.

② *The Solid Mandala* , Penguin Books , 1975 , p. 115.

In *The Vivisector* the stream of consciousness is again used —this time to describe Hurtle Duffield's thoughts after his stroke :

Of course—he remembered now why he had set out , not to wallow , but to buy the heart. Rhoda saying : Poor Ruffles my beloved my affectionate cat Hurtle is sick not a tooth in his head but likes to mumble on something tasty not if you don't want to but would you when you go out look and buy us a nice heart sheep's if I cut it up fine I think Ruffles might fancy it. ①

The method is used to advantage here in that it gives the reader a clear idea of the thoughts that tumbled through Hurtle's mind when he had just regained consciousness. It is at once impressionistic and realistic.

If White's use of the stream of consciousness has not elicited criticisms from his detractors , his fondness for the incomplete sentence is a source of constant annoyance. That those unfinished sentences are deliberate is borne out by the frequency with which they occur

She stood above the bed , it was still the child , it was also that thin body , that you didn't want to look , because. ②

There were too many questions. There were too many eyes. There were the eyes of. ③

She had only to look at Bill and would have melted if he had wanted. But. ④

Waldo frowned. He wished he could remember what

① *The Vivisector* , Penguin Books , 1974 , p. 544

② *The Living and the Dead* , p. 350.

③ *The Living and the Dead* , p. 266.

④ *The Solid Mandala* , p. 297.

Mrs. Feinsteins nose. ①

From the context we can work out roughly what White means , but we can never be sure what exactly the answer should be. In the first sentence , for instance , we are not too clear what the reason was for her not wanting to look. We may of course think up various possible answers , but we are not sure of any one of them. White may want to create a feeling of mystery in his reader. Peter Wood , in commenting on what some critics term moral complexities , cites examples from Voss , *The Tree of Man* and *Riders in the Chariot* to show “ the absence . . . of issues that we can take seriously at an adult level. ” He doubts whether “ the imponderables could amount to a fully realized moral complexity , ” and holds that this is one of White s mannerisms which can only sustain “ an external profundity and impressiveness ”. ② Wood s examples and reasoning carry a fair amount of conviction and perhaps explain why people sometimes feel uncomfortable with White s writings.

White s peculiar use of relative clauses is also a subject of much criticism. R. F. Brissenden cites the following examples :

He lazily pressed his hands over his relaxed body , of which the strength had created nothing. ③

There were certain books for instance. He would interrupt his study of which , and sit in the silence of his square room. ④

① *The Solid Mandala* , p. 135.

② Peter Wood , “ Moral Complexity in Patrick White s Novels ” , *Meanjin Quarterly* , March , 1962 , pp. 21_28.

③ *The Tree of Man* , Penguin Books , 1973 , p. 151.

④ *Voss* , Penguin Books , 1966 , p. 16.

and considers the last sentence “ not only awkward but also un-English ”. ①

Then there are dense , involved sentences like :

It was a brave sight , and suddenly also moving , For all those figures of cloth and linen , of worthy British flesh and blood , and the souls tied to them , temporarily , like tentative balloons , by the precious grace of life , might , of that sudden , have been cardboard or little wooden things , as their importance in the scene receded , and these predominated the great tongue of blue water , the brooding , indigenous trees , and sky clutching at all. ②

Perhaps it was sentences like these , among other things , that prompted A. D. Hope to say “ he knows too much , he tells too much and he talks too much. ”③

Quite a number of sentences contain paradoxes which engender reactions ranging from annoyance to heightened interest , depending on one's literary taste

Oh yes , I believe ! I believe in what I see , and what I cannot see. ④

The nostalgia of permanence and the fiend of motion fought inside the boy , right there at the moment when his life was ending and beginning. ⑤

This kind of paradoxical sentence is typical of White , who likes to in-

① R. F. Brissenden , p. 411.

② Voss , p. 113.

③ The Sydney Morning Herald , June 16 , 1956 , p. 15.

④ Riders in the Chariot , p. 58.

⑤ The Tree of Man , p. 14.

introduce an element of mystery or at least ambiguity into his writing. Illusion goes hand in hand with reality. For those who prefer straightforward writing, this could become exasperating. But those who like to explore for significances beyond the linguistic framework may find this challenging and interesting.

The scene in which Stan Parker points to his gob of spittle and says, "That is God." has drawn the attention of many a critic and the comments are diverse. The language there is plain enough, but this unorthodox interpretation of God requires a careful examination. According to some critics, this may mean God is immanent. But Professor Kramer, in commenting on a similar instance in *Riders in the Chariot*, points out that "there are not two levels of reality, but one." There is not a reality beyond the world of appearances. "The world of appearances is that reality." ①

White's idea of identification with objects is particularly obvious in *Mary Hare* in *Riders in the Chariot*. When Mary is on her way to a paddock in the company of her father, she suddenly throws herself on the ground and begins to hollow out a nest in the grass "with little feverish jerks of her body and foolish grunts." When her father demands an explanation, Mary says simply, "Now I know what it feels like to be a dog." ② Here it is the idea, though clothed in simple language, that is challenging. Another example is:

"But that is not the experience of which I wish to speak. Take water, for instance. If you are alone with it

① Leonie Kramer, "Patrick White's *Godterd!*?" *Quadrant*, June 1973, p. 15.

② *Riders in the Chariot*, p. 22

long enough you become like water. You enter into it. ①
Similarly this quotation from Himmelfarb , the persecuted Jew , looks simple enough linguistically but the idea expressed is very abstruse

I have been called by a great variety of names. Many of them in the heat of the moment. But in the end , no name is necessary ,'he said. 'Not even the rightful ones.

②

This cannot be understood except in the context of the Jews previous experience and his attitude after he emigrated to Australia.

It is also typical of White to yoke together the concrete and the abstract , or the animate and the inanimate , thus revealing the duality of the universe. To White , the matter and the spirit , seemingly apart , are capable of being fused into one

He was as content by now as he would ever have allowed himself to be in life. Children and chairs conversed with him intimately. ③

He branched and flamed , glowed and increased , and was suddenly extinguished in the little puffs of smoke and tired thoughts. ④

Yet , along with his shortcomings and his acquaintances , many of them men of similar mould , smelling of prosperity and cigars . . . Moshe continued to attend the synagogue of the Schillerstrasse. ⑤

① Riders in the Chariot , p. 81.

② Riders in the chariot , p. 93.

③ Riders in the Chariot , p. 432.

④ The Tree of Man , p. 10.

⑤ Riders in the Chariot , p. 98.

Sometimes White manipulates the concrete and the abstract cunningly to produce an ironical effect as is seen in the following :

Then she heard it was amusing , and perhaps it was , the live fur of dead monkeys , that strayed down from hats , and into conversation , until forcibly ejected. ①

White can be very matter-of-fact when he wants to. In relating the stories of the Jew , the Aboriginal painter and Mrs. Goldbold , for instance , White seems to be eager to reach the converging point of the four illuminates and does not want to be diverted. So we find a simple narrative like this :

Mordecai Himmelfarb was born in the North German town of Holunderthal , to a family of well_to_do merchants , some time during the eighteen_eighties. Moshe , the father , was a dealer in furs , through Germany while Mordecai was still a child. ②

But this is not typical of White. Geoffrey Dutton s argument is “ he (White) clearly thinks that the novel , or his sort of novel , needs something more than plain prose , something that will give the novel the range of reference with which poetry is acquainted. ”③

III

In his first two novels White is self_consciously literary. Later he is much less so , but he still craves for what some call poetical prose. Some of the passages are beautifully written and evoke vivid images :

① Ibid. , p. 246.

② Ibid. , p. 96.

③ Geoffrey Dutton , Patrick White , p. 9.

Many children were running about , in clothes that caught on twigs. Bright_coloured laughter hung from the undergrowth. ①

Bobbing and thrashing , they swam against the tide of evening , their movements cruelly hampered by anxiety and grass.

Rocks that might have contracted physically had grown in hostility during the night. The air drank at the warm bodies of birds to swallow them in flight.

But no bird fell. ②

But it sometimes happens that the flow of the prose is slowed down or even hindered by some of these poetical passages. To a less patient reader this might present a problem. A. D. Hope thinks “ it is one of the delusions of our time that novels can be written in this way. ”③

Although White s characters—mostly belonging to the “ elect ”—are delineated with sharpness , their dialogues are not always highly individualized. Without the indicators one might sometimes have trouble pinning down who said what. However , this is not the case with *A Fringe of Leaves* in which Ellen plays the double role of a Cornish country girl and a lady with cultivated speech. After her marriage , she assumes the role of a lady and with her husband s help , gradually acquires the speech of the educated. But when she is off guard under unusual circumstances , she slips back into her Cornish

For her part , she was reduced to childhood by the boy’s logic . . .

① *A Fringe of Leaves* , Penguin Books , 1977 , p. 146.

② *The Tree of Man* , p. 15.

③ A. D. Hope , p. 15.

Lapsing spontaneously into her first language , she begged , 'Cusnt I stay with `ee ? '

It was too strange : a lady who could speak ordinary . . .

What's tha name ? ' she asked respectfully.

'Oswald Dignam , ' the boy answered and brightened ; to own a label seemed to lend him courage.

At the same time Ellen Roxburgh remembered her position and the wisdom and dignity she ought to possess. ` Why did you come to sea , Oswald ? ' she asked , not unkindly , but correctly. ①

When Ellen , at the end of her journey , becomes delirious and talks in her dream , she is again in Cornish , which is natural enough. The switch from one speech level to another in Ellen puts one in mind of Eliza in *Pygmalion* before she is fully converted.

In the same book when Jack Chance speaks , we hear the language of a rough convict :

He said , ' We didn't go without our little luxuries and pleasures. Some of the coves at the lumber yard—that is where the " better class " , mostly short_sentence men—is put to makin' various articles . . . some of these beggars might bake a pumpkin and pertater loaf , and smuggle a lump to our mob if we was in good with `em. '

White records with ingenuity the smooth talk of the travelling salesman in *The Tree of Man* :

This is a nice line , ' he said. ' It's sort of quiet. That appeals sometimes to ladies of quiet tastes. But mind you ,

① *A Fringe of Leaves* , Penguin Books , 1977 , p. 146.

distinguished. This is a nice one. Something to stand out. Bright but not flash. Or this. It'll wear for years. But because it don't hit you in the eye, you won't hold that against it . . . '

White does not, on the whole, make an effort to introduce particularly Australian idioms into the speech of his characters although all but one of his eleven novels are set in Australia. Perhaps he wants to reach a wider audience and spare his overseas readers the trouble of grappling with Australianisms. But when describing in *Riders in the Chariot* how the Rosetrees try to get away from their Jewish background and bring up their children as "fair dinkum Aussies", White introduces a specimen of Australian English

Then Haꝓm Rosenbaum might ask :

Why you don't eat your meat, Steve ? '

Mum said it was gunna be chops. '

Shoot some of this tomato sauce on to the Beinfleisc .

Then you can pretend it chops, 'advised the father.

But Steve Rosetree hated deviation.

Who wants bloody foreign food ! '

I will not have you swear, Steve, 'said the mother, with pride.

In this extract the father's name is given as Haꝓm Rosenbaum while the son is called Steve Rosetree. The Jewish father is set against the naturalized Australian son. Haꝓm Rosenbaum himself changes into Harry Rosetree to his employees at the bicycle lamp factory. The use of different proper names to signify a transformation of roles is a favourite device White has used in *The Living and the Dead*, *The Tree of Man*, *Riders in the Chariot*, *A Fringe of Leaves* and especially in *The Twyborn Affair*.

Surviving somehow , Kitty Goose became Catherine Standish about the middle of the following spring. It happened very tastefully , quietly , with a minimum of Standishes. Now I am Catherine Standish , she said. She began to wear larger , droopy hats , because she felt changed with the changed name. ①

There in the dark of their texture_brick shell , surrounded by the mechanical objects of value , Shirl and Harry Rosetree were changed mercilessly back in Shulamith and Haïm Rosenbaum. ②

The restraint she had been taught to cultivate made it difficult for Mrs Roxburgh to cry , when Ellen Gluyas would probably have blubbered out loud. ③

In *The Twyborn Affair* Eudoxia Vatatzes , the Greek mistress , changes into the Australian jackeroo Eddie Twyborn , who then is transformed into Mrs Eadith Trist , the whore_mistress. The name Vatatzes is used here to imply a reference to Byzantine affairs , including the Bogomils and their heresy. ④ Twyborn and Trist are constructed in such a way as to leave no one in doubt as to what they mean. When a different name is used , a different trait of character is intended. At the same time , however , the letter E shared by Eudoxia , Eddie and Eadith seems to offer an indication that they are names of one and the same person.

Although he is critical of the realist tradition in Australian writ-

① *The Living and the Dead* , p. 86.

② *Riders in the Chariot* , p. 209.

③ *A Fringe of Leaves* , p. 168.

④ A. P. Riemer , " Eddie and the Bogomils—Some Observations on *The Twyborn Affair* " , *Southerly* , No. 1 , March , 1980 , p. 13.

ings , White , ironically , is meticulous in recording chronological details. The Tree of Man is claimed by some as the genesis of Australia. In this book we read how Stan Parker reclaims bushland and builds the first house. Then the ODowds , the Quigleys move in to be followed by others until it becomes a suburb of Sydney. We learn in White's works , for example , when the first car came to a country town , what model of car was first imported after the war , when the first fridge was used in the kitchen , and many such details. They are interesting and significant in that they render an historical dimension to the novels , yet they are nearly always presented in a most unobtrusive manner. When Sarsaparilla was developing into a suburb , what was a track was becoming a " road ". This bit of information is tucked away in a sentence like this :

So there was Miss Hare , on the track which the Council had begun to call a road , sometimes even avenue , which led down from Sarsaparilla to Xanadu. ①

The country scene at the turn of the century is captured in :

As the wheels of the cart moved over the melting ruts and screaming fowls made way , only a face or two , released from the beating of a mat or the kneading of dough , remarked that young Stan was on the move. ②

Even the pen in a small post_office does not escape White's notice :

Miss Hare's voice trailed off. She took up the second , and equally horrid post_office pen. ③

Sometimes the details help flesh out the characters , or simply imply i-

① Riders in the Chariot , p. 13.

② The Tree of Man , p. 15.

③ Riders in the Chariot , p. 10.

rony , or both , as is seen in the following :

Harry Rosetree was very proud of his own setting. Sundays he would stand outside his apricot brick house , amongst all the advanced shrubs he had planted , the labels still round them so as you could read the fancy names if a neighbour should inquire . . . Then there were the kids . . . they had learnt to speak worse Australian than any of the Australian kids , they had learnt to crave for ice _ cream , and potato_chips , and could shoot tomato sauce out of the bottle even when the old black sauce was blocking the hole. ①

Then there are some details which White seems to take a fancy to. These include “ whorls of hair on the neck ” , “ pores in the skin ” , “ a face pared to the bones ” , “ sensuous hands ”. William Walsh thinks that White's work “ is composed of detail which is both authentic in its own right and quick at every point with the highly individual quality of the author's mind. ”② His description of a shrunken face is imaginative and consistent : “ whose face was shrunk to an extent that it resembled a yellow skull ” , “ they had pared the flesh from her face ” , “ his face had dwindled to the bone ” , “ you could see the bones of their faces as if the flesh had shrunk ”.

“ Hand ” in White's writings is an image often used to show the qualities of its possessor or the state in which he finds himself

Looking at her hands , Mrs Roxburgh noticed that she

① Riders in the Chariot , pp. 207_208.

② William Walsh , A Manifold Voice : Studies in Commonwealth Literature , London : Chatto & Windus , 1970.

was returning , and not by slow degrees , to nature. ①

She got up and moved vaguely to touch a flower in a vase . . . He watched the hand as it moved a lily. It was white , and it smelt as white as lilies. ②

She loved a handsome man , and never looked at another. It was his teeth , it was his hands , yes , above all it was his hands that she could never stop looking at. ③

In *The Tree of Man* the tree is constantly used as an emblem of man and his vicissitudes while roses recur at different points of the story—from the time they were grown until they became old rosebush. The silver nutmeg-grater is another interesting instance. Amy lost this wedding present of hers shortly after she married Stan and did not recover it until nearly the end of the story when Stan was about to die. It is these emblems and details , among other things , that contribute to the cohesion of the story. White is one of those talented writers who have an eye for detail. He observes and takes in details lost to most people. “ In consequence , he is able , when he writes , to establish a wholly credible and yet completely created world of characters and spiritual undertones. ”④

White once said he would have wanted to become a painter if he could. He loves and collects modern paintings. This love for visual art is reflected in quite a few of his novels. We find the aspiring artist Willy in *The Living and the Dead* , the genius Mr Page in *The Tree of Man* and the aboriginal painter Dubbo in *Riders in the Chariot*. Hurtle

① *A Fringe of Leaves* , p. 173.

② *The Living and the Dead* , p. 75.

③ *The Solid Mandala* , p. 297.

④ William Walsh , p. 87

Duffield in *The Vivisector* is believed to contain more than a little of White. With the exception of Willy's, the artists' paintings are all in some ways striking and very modern in tendency. The use of colour, in particular, arrests one's attention

This skelton Doppelganger, with his armature in greys and blacks, would no doubt have survived outside pressure if it hadn't been for a conspiracy taking place between the necessary and the unknown: reckless purples began to stain the premediated; pools of virulent green brooded. ①

Even when he is not dealing with paintings, White still employs colours to evoke a visual response:

The sighs were white as moonlight that the wardrobe released. ②

She pushed back a lock of hair, which was grey too. She had reached that time of grey. ③

But at that hour the light was gold. Or red. So splendid that even she, a red girl, had no need to feel ashamed of the correspondence. ④

Harry Heseltine notices the range of colours in different novels:

White is dominant in *Happy Valley*; yellow in *The Aunts' Story*; green in much of *The Tree of Man*; red and black in *Riders in the Chariot*. Generally speaking, grey is the colour of listlessness and mediocrity. Yellow occurs when life is

① *The Vivisector*, p. 242.

② *The Living and the Dead*, p. 98.

③ *The Tree of Man*, p. 320.

④ *Riders in the Chariot*, p. 23.

stripped down to its essentials. In *Riders in the Chariot* mauve is peculiarly the colour of the nasty bourgeoisie ; red , black , and gold the colours which flash before those privileged to see , by glimpses , a vision of the chariot. ①

White is particularly fond of using adjectives formed by adding -y to a noun such as gritty. Some of these are recognized usage : glossy Bibles , lumpy bag , steamy potatoes , velvety night , watery eyes , etc. Others are less usual or , in the case of the last two examples , simply White's own coinage—often very expressive and economical

She listened to the spidery motion of leaves moving against the wooden wall. ②

The cold , boring , or the hot and equally boring , tennisy weekends in Norfolk. ③

Love had its puddingy moments. ④

Waldo bit into the black , tobacco_y cake. ⑤

One of the reasons why White makes his own adjectives out of nouns is perhaps that he feels constricted by the existing range of adjectives and is eager to experiment with new ones.

White also coins other words. When she was translating *The Solid Mandala* , Ingeborg Martinell asked him about the word *prestiferous*. White uses it in a scene where the *Moonlight Sonata* is being played and talks of “ Beethoven's *prestiferous* night. ” White replied that it was a word he coined “ by uniting *presto* and *pestiferous* (because the

① Harry Heseltine , p. 70.

② *The Tree of Man* , p. 57.

③ *The Living and the Dead* , p. 129.

④ *The Vivisector* , p. 349.

⑤ *The Solid Mandala* , p. 103.

presto of that sonata is fiendishly difficult). ”^①

White not only uses sentences as paragraphs , but sometimes even turns phrases into paragraphs. By this means he intends to create a special effect. Voss , for instance , begins with this :

‘There is a man here , miss , asking for your uncle ,’
said Rose.

And stood breathing. ^②

The second paragraph “ And stood breathing ” is very effective in emphasizing Rose s physical presence and producing an atmosphere in which the impending meeting between Voss and Laura was to assume a special significance.

The short sentence _ paragraph or phrase _ paragraph is often used to arrest the attention of the reader either for its own significance or to imply irony. Typographically the sentence _ paragraph possesses a prominence otherwise unattainable

You and yer scribbles , Hurtle ! A big boy like you ! I’ll
have Pa take the belt to yer if it ever happens again. ’

As if Pa would. ^③

‘Oh , dear ,’ groaned Mrs Pringle , as if she were suffering internally.

And waited.

Mrs Bonner caught the shawl.

‘I’m in honour bound , Mrs Pringle , not to go into details. ’

① Ingmar Björkstén , Patrick White A General Introduction , University of Queensland , 1976 , p. 121.

② Voss , p. 7.

③ The Vivisector , p. 15.

But she would , of course. ①

White uses typographical devices in other ways than this. In *The Twyborn Affair* , for instance , he introduces dialogues in a form such as we would find in a play or a film script. (cf. p. 62 , p. 142 , pp. 144 _145)

IV

People tend to associate Patrick White s style with ambiguity , density or unconventionality. These no doubt are conspicuously present in his works , but they are not everything. He is first of all a painstaking writer of a very high order. Like any good creative writer he takes great delight in the printed word and manipulates it with great skill. An examination of the linguistic devices he uses shows him to be a very careful and resourceful writer. While he often imbues his writings with a poetic quality , he also writes good straightforward prose when he chooses to. He makes a sharp distinction between different speech levels and suits the level to the character. He pays attention to regional and local peculiarities and records details with artistic ingenuity. He likes to use images , symbols and emblems and does so effectively. Because of his painstaking manner of writing , White s works stand the close scrutiny of any critic. No matter whether one likes White s style or not , one cannot accuse him of being careless.

White is a highly imaginative and individual writer. He subscribes to the Modernist approach in writing and is constantly engaged in experimenting. His earlier novels are clearly stamped with the influence of James Joyce , Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence , and he

① Voss , p. 70

has never quite given up the use of the stream of consciousness. He has been consistent in rejecting what he calls “ the dreary , dun_coloured offspring of journalistic realism ” and is bent upon creating “ completely fresh forms out of the rocks and sticks of words. ”^①It is interesting to note how his literary taste coincides with his bias for modern paintings.

In a letter of 1973 , he writes ,

I only know I do what I do when I feel that has to be done ; I tend to break up language trying to get past what is stubborn and unyielding , to convey the essence of meaning. ^②

When he bends syntax and coins new modes of expression , he is liked by some and rejected by others. The irregularity and unconventionality in the use of words and structures create a sense of mystery or at least uncertainty which seems to suit his general quest for the meaning of man's existence and his attempt to “ discover the extraordinary behind the ordinary ”. ^③ At their best his unconventional devices make his novels more interesting than naturalistic writings and offer potentiality for exploration. Often one would find oneself intrigued by the puzzles and uncertainties in the books. One often has to stop to think and sort out the complexities or work out the intended meaning. This in itself could be a source of much delight. But at times White goes too far and sets up too many traps or throws too many obstacles in the reader's way so that he soon exhausts the latter's patience. One sometimes has the

① Patrick White , “ The Prodigal Son ” , Australian Letters , Vol. 1 , 3 , April , 1958 , p. 39.

② Ingmar Björkstén , p. 121.

③ The Prodigal Son , p. 39.

feeling that White is indulgent in his experiments—so much so that he loses some of his readers.

Most people agree that White is not easy to read , but the difficulty is not entirely attributable to his style. The mystery in much of his writings , the delineation of his often eccentric characters , the many literary and religious references and his style combine to make his novels dense and difficult.

Reading White s works in a chronological order , one would find an obvious but gradual shift from a more mannered to a more natural and mature style. Such devices as the incomplete sentence , the use of paradoxes , the coining of new words and the stream of consciousness method are much more subtly handled and occur more sparingly in his later novels. David Blamires comment on White s *The Twyborn Affair* throws some light on this :

The Twyborn Affair is less fraught with purple writing than some of his earlier work , perhaps as a counter_balance to what some readers may find an eccentric subject. The symbolism , too , is less obtrusive than in , say , *Voss* or *Riders in the Chariot* . It has become more subtle , more thoroughly integrated with the whole verbal texture of the novel. ①

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Patrick White's Art and Politics*

When the Nazis had seized power in Germany and the threat of a new world war was looming large, Patrick White declared that he had "no head for international, or indeed any variety of politics."¹ In fact, even when he was staying in fascist Germany, he was only vaguely aware of the persecution of the Jews. After the war he returned to Australia and led a fairly quiet life at Castle Hill. At the time he was inclined to "ignore politics".²

However, since the late 1960s, White became increasingly visible and vocal on political issues. On December 9, 1969, along with a group of about 40 writers, actors, politicians and academics he signed a declaration to urge young men not to enlist for the war in Vietnam. This was his first open political action that might lead to his imprisonment. He told reporters: "I am ready to go to jail because it is useless saying the same things over and over about a war I believe to be futile and immoral."³ The dust had hardly settled when another storm broke out. The government planned to turn the Centennial and Moore Parks into a sporting complex, which meant not only the obliteration of the parks but the uprooting of the inhabitants in their vicinity. On June 18, 1972 he made a public speech at a family picnic rally held in Centennial Park. He said:

A park is a living living-room, in which to do anything

* 曾在 1992 年澳大利亚研究国际研讨会上发表。

and nothing—rest your fallen arches , or roam through the wilder parts exercising your imagination , or simply breathing—most important the breathing. And it will become increasingly important as this reckless anti-civilization gathers momentum. ⁴

He called on people to “ Hang on to your breathing spaces in this developing and already over-congested city. Protect your parks from the pressure of political concrete. ”⁵

White shifted his allegiance in national elections because of Liberal Party's stand on the Vietnam War. Since 1969 he had been voting Labor and when Gough Whitlam won the election in 1972 he was bubbling over with enthusiasm. He went all out to support Whitlam. A year later he was still full of praise for the Labor Prime Minister. He told his audience at a gathering that he supported Whitlam because of the government's “ recognition of creative endeavour and its practical encouragement of our artists to a degree no previous Australian Government has dared , because the Whitlam Government “ recognizes and respects the rights of the defenceless to a degree that the Opposition , with its subservience to monied interests , cannot pretend to emulate. ”⁶

When Whitlam was sacked by Sir John Kerr , White was shocked and became so furious that he returned his Order of Australia. He believed that no one could be truly apolitical in the world today because many of the issues concerned everyone. He seemed to have made a U-turn in his attitude towards politics. In the following years he urged constitutional reform and on many occasions espoused his republican views.

Starting from the eighties , White became more and more involved in anti-nuclear issues. He led in marches against nuclear armament

and uranium mining. In his many speeches he reminded people of the horrors of nuclear warfare and alerted them against the threat of a nuclear war. In a letter he wrote me on December 27 , 1983 , he said ,

I feel my life is nearing its end. I am now only interested in trying to avert nuclear warfare. Nothing else matters. None of the fiddling Wherrets and Bells , or even the greatest artists like Tolstoy , Chekov , and Dostoevsky. Let us all unite in this. ⁷

In 1984 he became very active in the forming of a new single issue party—the Nuclear Disarmament Party. He not only spoke on public occasions but donated money for the cause. Sometimes at social gatherings he would spend time explaining the objectives of the new party. I remember when I visited him in the winter of 1984 , he could not talk of anything but anti-nuclear issues. At a dinner we had at a friend s house at Hunter s Hill he explained to all those present what the Nuclear Disarmament Party was for and hoped that it would get seats in the House of Representatives. I had the feeling that he was soliciting votes and he looked like a changed person to me.

In 1986 White was involved in fighting the Sydney monorail project , which he called “ monsterrail ”. As 1988 approached , he declared that he would have nothing to do with the bi-centenary celebrations to express his sympathy for the aboriginals. He wrote on December 10 , 1987 :

I am taking no part in the Bicentenary. Earlier this year a new play was done successfully in Adelaide—Shepherd on the Rocks—not yet printed. Sydney , Perth , and Brisbane wanted it for the Bi , but I have refused to have it done till 198 . ⁸

From the above brief account we can see that White was not only

a concerned citizen , he was actively involved in fights over a number of contemporary issues. If we compare the White of the thirties and forties with the White of the seventies and eighties , we would find White had changed drastically in the last twenty years. In the beginning the public was not prepared. Nor were his friends—they took some time to get accustomed to his new image.

The question many have is : what brought about this change ? How did all this come about ? We might explore this from two angles.

First , we have to look at Patrick White , the man. As is well known , he was a man of integrity , a man who held tenaciously to what he believed was right. In answer to the Swedish journalist Ingmar Björkstens questions , White admitted that the dominating trait in his character was stubbornness and that the trait he preferred in a man was consistency.⁹ He positively hated hypocrisy and dishonesty and in many of his speeches he criticized politicians who he believed were dishonest. For the sake of principles sometimes he was ready to sacrifice friendship of long standing. He was a good friend of Sidney and Cynthia Nolan for many years and he took a particular liking to Sidney's paintings. When it was announced that he was to be awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1973 , he asked Sidney Nolan to attend the ceremony in Stockholm on his behalf. But some years later when he learned that Sidney married not long after Cynthia's death , his wrath knew no bounds. In his autobiography *Flaws in the Glass* he made a stinging attack on Sidney for what he thought was a hasty marriage and lack of devotion. Ever since then Nolan and White became enemies and their feuds were brought into the open. When he bought the film rights of *Voss* , Nolan was thinking of repairing their strained relations by offering the rights to White. But the latter flatly refused. Geoffrey Blainey , the historian , was for some time also a good friend of White

s , but when in his public speeches he expressed his views on immigration which White considered racist-oriented , he wrote Blainey a letter criticizing him and asking him to resign from the Patrick White Literary Award Committee.¹⁰ Naturally their friendship came to an end.

Although he made his decision to return to Australia after WWII , he was critical of many of the things he saw after he settled with Manoly at Castle Hill. He was particularly upset by the blatant materialism in evidence everywhere and the lack of intellectual interest and achievement. Here I quote the now famous remarks he made in an article he wrote in response to Alister Kershaw :

In all directions stretched the Great Australian Emptiness , in which the mind is the least of possessions , in which the rich man is the important man , in which the schoolmaster and the journalist rule what intellectual roost there is , in which beautiful youths and girls stare at life through blind blue eyes , in which human teeth fall like autumn leaves , the buttocks of cars grow hourly glassier , food means cake and steak , muscles prevail , and the march of material ugliness does not raise a quiver from the average nerves.¹¹

It is my view that White was always a person of moral principles and that his political fervour since the 70s was but a confirmation and extension of his beliefs in earlier years.

Next we should examine how the events of the 70s-80s influenced his thinking. At the beginning of the war in Vietnam , White was hardly aware of what was really going on. But after he read a book written by an American sergeant on the brutalities committed , his views were radically transformed. Geoffrey Dutton records what happened at the time :

At the other , intellectual , extreme , I think I can claim the perhaps doubtful credit of helping to politicise White , at least on the subject of the Vietnam war and Australian republicanism. I had various arguments with him over our involvement in Vietnam. His line was that of fervid anticommunist , based mainly on what Manoly and he knew had happened in Greece. In November , 1966 , I sent him a book published in the US by Ramparts , called **A Vietnam Primer** The photo on the front cover was of a sergeant who had won the Congressional Medal of Honor , and who wrote courageously in one of the chapters of his disgust with the war. At first White mistrusted the clean-cut face of the sergeant , and then realised that it was what he was that gave his testimony such strength. White immediately sent to the US for supplies to send to people he thought should read it. ¹²

Here we have a classic example of how the circumstances moulded the man. White s , of course , was not an isolated case. In fact , the war in Vietnam changed a whole generation. However , for White this not only meant a change of attitude towards the war , but a radical departure from his previous stand in domestic politics. He swung from Liberal Party to Labor not because of their differences over domestic issues but because of the former's stand on the Vietnam war. His conversion meant he had forsaken the party of his class and that he was to embark on a road from which there was no return.

White did not become a conscious environmentalist until the government made known its plan of wiping out Centennial and Moore Parks for the sake of a sporting complex. He helped found the Friends of the Green Bans Movement and was invited to speak on environmen-

tal issues in Sydney and elsewhere. His environmental concern grew more and more extensive until he embraced issues affecting the whole of mankind. He was not only distressed at the pollution of the environment, but was worried about the future of mankind if nuclear weaponry should further develop. In his later years how to forestall a nuclear war became his chief concern.

It is evident that what happened in the 60s and 70s greatly affected White. It forced him to take a stand and participate in activities that he normally would hate to have anything to do with. White explained his own predicament thus :

As I'm grabbed by old age with its various geriatric ailments, it worries me that I can't get on with my work as a writer. What I see as creative writing has been my life. Political issues have entered into it only in recent years. I've always resented this while going along with it when I've seen it to be necessary. As one who isn't essentially a political animal I grew particularly resentful when the great nuclear debate started nudging my conscience.¹³

This passage shows us with exceeding clarity that White was not interested in political issues for their own sake. It was only matters nudging his conscience that propelled him into action.

One of the marvels about White is although he was deeply involved in the politics of the day—environmental issues, antinuclear demonstrations, support for the aboriginals, republicanism, etc.—he did not allow his own political ideas to be transplanted into his novels or plays. "He worried that politics were a threat to art, and maintained that those races like the Greeks who could not detach themselves from politics could not be artists. 'Art is art, and politics is politics—I'm afraid,' he told Peggy Garland."¹⁴

There is no lack of social satire or criticism in White's novels although that is never his objective in writing. In *The Tree of Man*, for instance, we find White criticizing the world of snobs through Thelma. She was successful in the sense that she had climbed up the social ladder and had left her humble origin behind, but the world she moved in was so vain and their values so brittle that we start to have doubts about the actual worth of her success. In the leave-taking scene of Voss's party, we find White's satirical tone at work again:

When a space had been cleared, [Colonel Featherstonhaugh] made a speech, about God, and soil, and flag, and Our Young, Illustrious Queen, as had been prepared for him. The numerous grave and appreciative persons who were surrounding the Colonel lent weight to his appropriate words. There were, for instance, at least three members of the Legislative Council, a Bishop, a Judge, officers in the Army, besides patrons of the expedition, and citizens whose wealth had begun to make them acceptable, in spite of their unfortunate past and persistent clumsiness with knife and fork. Important heads were bared, stiff necks were bent into attitudes that suggested humble attention. It was a brave sight, and suddenly also moving. For all those figures of cloth and linen, of worthy British flesh and blood, and the souls tied to them, temporarily, like tentative balloons, by the precious grace of life, might, of that sudden, have been cardboard or little wooden things, as their importance in the scene receded.¹⁵

Nineteen sixty-nine was a year of decisive importance for White in terms of his politics, but hardly any of his political ideas got into

The Vivisector , the novel he was writing at the time. His works published since 1970 include The Vivisector , The Eye of the Storm , The Cockatoos , A Fringe of Leaves , The Twyborn Affair , Memoirs of Many in One , Big Toys , Signal Driver , Netherwood and Three Uneasy Pieces. Reviewing this impressive list side by side with what he published before 1970 , we do not find any rupture in his writing. Instead throughout his career he adhered to his principle that art is art and politics is politics. Of all his plays Big Toys is perhaps the most poignant , yet it is markedly different in tone and theme from what he conveyed in his political speeches. John Colmer has this to say about the contrast :

In the first , Big Toys (1977) , White uses the artificial conventions of high comedy for a serious political purpose : he exposes the shallowness and moral irresponsibility of the ' Beautiful People ' who rose to positions of power and influence in the late 1970 s. The play presents a remarkably inclusive criticism of society but its methods are often unexpectedly oblique. For example , it only emerges late in the play and somewhat indirectly that uranium mining is the real issue over which the union leader Terry has compromised his integrity. Here the approach is in strong contrast with White's passionately direct condemnation of uranium mining in ' The Role of the Australian Citizen in a Nuclear War ' , a speech given at a Canberra symposium. ¹⁶

Colmer pointed out rightly that White used an oblique method in criticizing the corruption in high places instead of mounting a direct attack as he often did in his political speeches. White declared : " I don't want to be a moralist. I don't think I have preached sermons in any of

my books. I say what I have to say through the juxtaposition of images and situations and the emotional exchanges of human beings. ”¹⁷

Throughout his life as a creative writer White was on a quest for the meaning of life , the meaning of God and probably the meaning of art. He tried to discover the extraordinary behind the ordinary , the mystery and the poetry in the life of ordinary folks. It is exactly because of his strict adherence to his avowed principles of artistic creation that he was able to leave with us such remarkable works of art.

Notes :

1. David Marr , Patrick White A Life , Random House , 1991 , p. 172.
2. Patrick White Speaks , Primavera Press , 1989 , p. 69.
3. David Marr , p. 493.
4. Patrick White Speaks , p. 28.
5. Ibid. , p. 28.
6. Patrick White Speaks , pp. 51-2.
7. PWs letter to me.
8. PWs letter to me.
9. Ingmar Bjorksten , “ A day with Patrick White ” , Nation Review , June 21-27 , 1974.
10. Personal communication to me , August 1984.
11. White , “ The Prodigal Son ” , Patrick White Speaks , p. 15.
12. Geoffrey Dutton , “ A Prism's Light Shining in Flawed Glass ” , The Bulletin , June 1 , 1982 , p. 64.
13. White , “ And if a Button is Pressed ” (1981) , Patrick White Speaks , p. 99.
14. David Marr , p. 491.
15. White , Voss , Penguin edition , p. 113.
16. John Colmer , Patrick White , Methuen & Co. , 1984 , p. 61.
17. Thelma Herring and G. A. Wilkes , “ A conversation with Patrick White ” ,

Southerly , No. 2 , 1973 , p. 138.

The White I Know*

I had talked with Manoly a couple of times while working at the National Library in the summer of 1993 , but it was not until I was about to leave Australia when I finally went to see him. After we had lunch , Brian drove me to Martin Road. As he pulled up in front of the familiar big house , I noticed Manoly was waiting on the slope with an umbrella in his hand to shield himself from the fine rain. This was the only time when I visited the house and saw Manoly alone.

I remember clearly the first visit I paid to the house. That was 13 years ago when I was studying Australian literature at Sydney University. Professor Arthur Davies , Head of the Department of Oriental Studies , somehow learned that I had read most of Patrick White s novels , so one day he asked me if I wanted to see the writer. I said of course I did. So a meeting was arranged. It was on Wednesday , September 24 , 1980. My wife Zhenfu went with me. I was armed with a small recorder and a camera. We went up the steps , walked past the large window of his sitting room and turned the bell in his side door. When the door opened , I found a tall man in a brown woolen jumper standing before me. He looked less severe than the photos I saw so often in the newspapers. He led us to his sitting room and we sat down. I looked round and saw several abstract paintings on the wall. A small modernist painting of Mao on the side table caught my attention and I

* 原载 Voices 1994 年第 1 期。

wondered what he thought of Mao. Manoly came in with the tea and he was introduced to us. Patrick explained that both the jasmine tea and the almond biscuits were bought in Chinatown. Then he showed us two pieces of Chinese embroidery his cousin Peggy Garland had brought back for him. He asked us what they were. I said ,“ They could be mats . . . but they could also be part of a sleeve from an old robe. ” He said he would have liked to go and stay in China for a period of time. “ Visiting a big country like China for two or three weeks as a tourist is very depressing ,” he commented. Before the interview began , I asked if I could use a recorder. He said ,“ Oh , no . . . I hate recorders. ” So I took out my pen and writing pad.

When asked what writers influenced him most , he said ,“ When I started writing I was influenced by James Joyce , D. H. Lawrence and Henry James. Later people told me they found Faulkner's influence in my novels. I did read two or three of Faulkner's novels. But after I heard what people said , I stopped reading Faulkner. I don't want to be influenced by others. ”

White said he liked French literature , but not so much German literature. What he regretted to find was Germans seemed to like his writing more. The French did not seem to understand him although they translated a lot of his novels. Americans showed understanding of his writing earlier on , but in recent years seemed to understand him less and less. He said he had read some critical articles in a Scottish magazine and found that the further north they were , the better they could understand his writing. People in the north had more time and relied more on books , he said.

When I asked him which of his novels he liked best , he said he had special affection for *The Aunt's Story*. Then he said ,“ It's really hard to say. Perhaps I should also include *The Solid Mandala* and *The*

Twyborn Affair. Every writer likes the last book he wrote. ”

He told me he was writing another novel. “ I hope I can finish it before I die , ” he said.

“ You re too pessimistic , ” I ventured.

“ I am a pessimist. When one gets old , one has to think of this. You may die before you finish your book. ”

“ When you revise , do you revise language or do you change its structure and content too ? ”

“ I change everything. Its a very exhausting job. Few realize that writing leaves one a wreck. ”

I asked him whether he had seen Big Toys on television. It was shown a few weeks before. He said he was pleased with its production , but he added , “ Television is one of the most dangerous inventions in this century. We dont have a television. We rented one once , but found the programme very bad. We returned it at once. Through television and jet travel we have brought over a lot of the corrupt things from America. They thought I should write something for John Wayne , but I wrote The Twyborn Affair. ”

Then we talked about Chinese food and Chinese restaurants in Sydney. It was well past twelve oclock and we rose to go. But Patrick said he wanted us to have a look at his dogs. He led us to the back garden where he kept his dogs. As he pushed open the door , three dogs came rushing at us. One of them was extremely friendly to Zhen-fu , which frightened her a bit. Patrick noticed this and tried to control the dogs. He told us one of his dogs was called Eureka because he found him in the park.

Patrick walked with us to the back entrance and told us which bus to take. Then he added , “ You should go to Tasmania while you re here. ”

After that first visit there were a few other meetings. Zhenfu and I invited Patrick and Manoly to a meal in our friends house at Hunter s Hill. There were a couple of our friends there , including Brian Kiernan , Laurie and Dorothy Brown. Patrick was very appreciative of our cooking and wrote us a thankyou note in which he asked me if I wanted to have a hardback copy of the American edition The Twyborn Affair. A couple of weeks later he wrote me a short letter inviting Zhenfu and myself to a dinner at his house. Before we went , he told me on the phone that one of his guests had tumour and he wanted us not to mention cancer or anything like that in our conversation.

When we arrived , Patrick came down from the stairs saying ,“ I ve been singing your names the whole afternoon. I must get the pronunciation right. ” Many of our Australian friends address us by our surnames because of unfamiliarity with the Chinese practice of putting the surname first. And we didn t mind. But Patrick insisted on the proper form , which happens to be longer and much more difficult to pronounce. That afternoon when he finally introduced us to his other friends , Patrick was very accurate in reproducing not only our surnames but also our given names , which impressed us a great deal. We were likewise impressed by his cooking and the eggplant dish he cooked was very much to our taste.

There was some correspondence between Patrick and myself over the years. He answered every letter of mine and when he was late in responding , he would explain and apologize. In his letters he would tell me about his new plays , his health and Manoly s rheumatism and make comments on the world situation and the situation in Australia. In a letter he wrote on May 25 , 1982 , he said ,

Thank you for the magazine. It pleased me to see myself wearing such an esoteric face. I have been wondering

which bits of **FLAWS IN THE GLAS** you translated. Any of it might well puzzle the Chinese.

was a great success in Adelaide , but I don't yet have a script I can send you. Parts of it were changed during the run , not the words so much as the set. The set was really far too elaborate , then during the run they came back to my simpler visual ideas for the ending. Now I must get together with the director next time he comes to Sydney and we shall write the final version of the script , which will be published eventually , I expect , by the Currency Press.

From his letters I learned how his health deteriorated.

October 26 , 1982 :

I forget whether I wrote to thank you for the article and the translations. This has been a very disjointed year : the middle months were taken up with an eye operation , together with heart and chest complications which kept me in hospital longer than I should have been. An operation on the other eye has still to come , but at least I've got my strength back by now and am more resigned to my own shortcomings.

January 29 , 1985 :

Last year ended dramatically for us. I spent five weeks in hospital with collapsed lumbar vertebrae. This had been building up for some time and became very painful as my aged bones crumbled. I am home again , able to do various jobs , such as cooking , but really much less active than before. I can't go about the town and see and do the things which stimulate me. I have started an-

other phase of life to which it is difficult to adapt. It is difficult to see how things will work out.

In his letters he also told me about the increasing demand on him as a public figure.

December 12 , 1985 :

I am asked to go here , there and everywhere to conferences to discuss the possibilities of world peace. Can't see what effect my presence would have. Some people are deluded into thinking that anyone who has won the Nobel Prize has a kind of magic in them.

November 19 , 1986 :

Last week I had to fly to Canberra to speak at a symposium for writers in the uranium age. I managed to keep the asthma at bay while I was performing , but it was a great strain. I shan't travel any more if I can help it , though I must go to Adelaide in April for rehearsals of a play.

On my subsequent visits to Australia in 1984 and 1986 I was able to see him a few more times. In 1984 we again had dinner at Hunter's Hill. He was at the time preoccupied with organizing the Party for Nuclear Disarmament and as soon as he arrived he started talking about it. He kept saying , " Stopping the holocaust is all that matters. " He was full of enthusiasm when he talked about the new party and what it set out to do. In fact I had never seen him so excited before.

He invited me to come to his house on September 2. In addition to anti-nuclear issues we also talked about creative writing in Australia. He recommended Rosemary Dobson's *The Three Fates* to me. I told him I had attended the launching of her book and Rosemary had given me a copy. He liked Robert Gray's poetry *The Skylight* and said that it was the only one he believed in. He asked me if I had read any of Da-

vid Malouf's novels and I told him that I had. He then said that David was in town and asked if I wanted to meet him. But he quickly added , " I don't know how public he'd want to be. I'll ask him. " A couple of days later he gave me David's telephone number and contact address at Macquarie University , where he was writer-in-residence. Patrick didn't like Frank Moorhouse's writing and on one occasion said mirthfully , " He uses discontinuous narrative because he can't continue. " Commenting on Randolph Stow's writing , he said that *The Visitants* was his best.

Talking about his own plays , he told me he used to read his play to the actors because " they can't get it right. " He told me he sometimes watched rehearsals and suggested changes , but later the directors would not let him see the actors until the final rehearsal. He thought I should meet Jim Sharman and gave me his telephone number , but I never had the chance to use it. In one of our meetings he told me he had received invitation for the opening night of *King Lear*. " But we won't go to those trendy things. "

One evening he and Manoly took me and two other friends to a restaurant not far from Centennial Park. As we passed a pub , he pointed to it and said , " That's the poofers' haunt. " I was very surprised to hear him talk of homosexuals so disparagingly. As we entered the restaurant , Patrick met the owner and quickly introduced him to us. Then he fell to asking the owner about his wife , his children and his business. Evidently Patrick knew him very well. This bore out very well what he said about creative writing : a good novelist must be a good gossip. Our table was on the second floor. As we threaded our way to our table by the fireplace , I noticed some of the diners had recognized Patrick. They whispered quietly to their friends. When we sat down , I could still feel glances thrown in our di-

rection. Patrick did not seem to mind and kept on talking with us. The food there was very good , but at one point we felt the fire was scorching us. The waiter brought an iron shield and placed it behind the chair closest to the fireplace.

On March 5 , 1989 we met the last time. Patrick looked visibly older and much more frail. He wore a wooden cross around his neck , which I had never seen before. His movements were slower , but his mind remained alert. After the greetings I asked him what he was writing. He said , “ Oh , I only write cheques. ” Then he told me , “ Your friend Li Yao gave me a scroll. We must hang it up. ” He knew I had come to Australia from the United States where I was giving guest lectures. Bluntly he said , “ You're wrapped up with America. I don't like it. ” I wanted to tell him this was my first trip to America and I wasn't in any way “ wrapped up ” , but then I thought there was not much point in explaining. He told me they had a medical nurse with them. “ We cook , Jinny helps with the laundry. Manoly still does the shopping. Jinny takes an interest in literature and theatre. It's an enormous help. ” We had tea in the back garden of his house. Manoly brought the tea things and had no trouble moving around , but Patrick walked slowly and with the help of a stick—again something I had never seen him use. In our conversation he criticized Neville Wran and Bob Hawke and said , “ Australia is in trouble. ” Then he told me a Melbourne director wanted to direct Big Toys but he didn't agree. We talked about people we both knew , and he seemed very well informed. He told me David Marr was writing his biography and asked me if I was interested in meeting him. I said of course I was. Then he gave me David's telephone number. He said , “ I like him a lot and talked to him freely. Perhaps when I read the book I will not like it. ” He told me the film based on Peter Carey's Bliss was

very good. I asked him if any of his novels were being considered for filming. " Perhaps they're not suitable. " I knew Voss had been considered before for film-making , so I named *The Tree of Man* and *A Fringe of Leaves*. " If *A Fringe of Leaves* is made into a film , it's only the naked bit they're interested in. " We had talked for more than an hour and a half and I thought I should leave. Again he and Manoly saw me off at the back entrance just like after the first meeting ten years ago. Manoly said goodbye to me and was as warm as ever. Patrick said , " Next time you come , perhaps I won't be around. " He had often mentioned death to me and said the Chinese concept of longevity never appealed to him. But this was the only time he spoke so specifically about his death. I was taken aback and for a moment did not know how to respond. I guess I mumbled something like " Nonsense. How can you be so pessimistic. " It never occurred to me that these were the last words he would say to me.

The Myth and the Facts

—A Reconsideration of Australia's Critical Reception of Patrick White*

How It Started

In the spring of 1958 *Australian Letters* published a special number on Patrick White. There were two articles on the status of expatriate Australian writers, one on Voss and one on the critical reception of White. Of the four articles two have since become classic pieces: White's "The Prodigal Son" (The title he gave it originally was "Why This Expatriate Returned"¹) and John Thompson's "Australia's White Policy". One has been much quoted from and the other hotly debated. Thompson's basic argument is that White has been grossly underrated by Australian critics while he is acclaimed overseas. In his article White mounted a fierce attack against critics in Australia because he believed they had treated him unfairly. In 1961 Geoffrey Dutton published the first book-length study of Patrick White, in which he says: "Australian critics had never approved of White, and their reactions were mostly hostile."² At the time there was no one openly disputing Thompson, White or Dutton. But when Maurice Dunlevy again brought up this issue in *Canberra Times* in 1973, the year White won

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the Nobel Prize for Literature , Alan Lawson fought back. From October 20 to December 12 the Canberra Times published two articles and six letters unfolding this debate on whether White had been given fair treatment or not in his home country. After Lawson gave his documented evidence in his letters and later in his essay published in *Meanjin Quarterly* ,³ the debate seems to have died down. But it is far from over.

Overseas academics , following the debate , appear to have different assessments. Joseph and Johanna Jones , writing in 1983 , assert that “ scholars (in Australia) are now inclined to deny , or at least play down , some of the impression of a massive Australian hostility to White s work. ”⁴ Others seem to think the debate is virtually over. Robert Ross , editor of *Antipodes* , believes , “ At the moment , it would seem that the Australian reception of Patrick White has been pretty well settled , the quality of the criticism extensively debated , and his dominance accepted , if at times reluctantly. ”⁵

The fact that the debate has erupted time and again and continued for so long and that it has involved so many people of consequence⁶ shows that this is not a minor literary matter of fleeting importance. Rather , it is a critical debate with extensive ramifications , a debate which deserves our close scrutiny.

Summary of the main arguments

The arguments advanced by Thompson and others are basically these : White s works are acclaimed overseas while they are given a hostile reception in Australia. Thompson , after examining 31 reviews of White s five novels , concludes that more than half of the reviews are hostile. Maurice Dunlevy says ,

The *Aunt s Stor* was published in 194 . It was ill-

The *Tree of Man* (1955) , *Voss* (1957) , and *Rid-*

ers in the Chariot (1961) were all praised extravagantly in Britain and the United States but their reception in Australia was mixed , to put it mildly. A few critics recognised their merits but most judged the books by traditional parochial Australian standards. ⁷

John Rorke claims that Australian critics simply cannot cope with White. There is what he calls a “ critical collapse ” in dealing with White and “ there was virtually no attempt made to explore White’s obvious differences from the general tradition of Australian novel writing. ”⁸ Vincent Buckley analyzes the problem in a similar fashion apropos of *The Tree of Man* :

Only in this country could the achievement of Patrick White be a subject of such ill-focused controversy. But , in this country , it was inevitable. For what White has apparently done is to take one of the conventional subjects of Australian fiction—pioneering man , the bushman hero , the emerging primitive community—and treat it in a completely unconventional way. ⁹

Geoffrey Sawyer observes that White’s winning the Nobel Prize did not seem to have changed the critical scene in Australia at all.

Keith Dunstan explains this phenomenon in terms of the Australians natural tendency towards cutting down the tall poppies. He says , “ Australians have always had a dislike , even a fear , of the super star. It is interesting that the greatest of our artists have suffered the greatest knocks. No writer consistently has received such savage reviews as Patrick White. ”¹⁰

The gist of the above arguments is that Australia has not accorded White the kind of critical attention he deserves and that this is because Australian critics are parochial and average Australians do not like su-

per stars.

On the other hand , Alan Lawson , R. F. Brissenden , Leonie Kramer and others believe that this is a falsified picture of what really happened. Lawson surveyed British , American and Australian criticism of White extensively and published an essay on it. He says ,

White's Australian reception has been very much better , the overseas reviews often less favourable , and the general critical standard of the response higher , than the accepted account would suggest.¹¹

He then cited examples and made comparisons between White criticism in Britain and America and his critical reception at home. Brissenden also disagreed with Dunlevy. He thought Dunlevy's was a good journalistic story , but it was not true. Although his earlier work was not given favourable reception , argued Brissenden , there were some people " who recognised White's quality from the beginning , and who paid him the tribute of treating his work with the same respect , seriousness and admiration as they bring to the study of any major writer. "¹²

It should be mentioned that while Thompson , Dutton and others asserted that White was not given fair treatment in Australia , there was another group of critics , the critics of the Left , who thought too much attention and praise had been lavished on White. This aspect of White criticism has for years fallen into oblivion. Nor can we find any mention of this in White's letters. (Considering the severity of the criticism and White's interest in his critical reception , this seems to be very odd.) Although we cannot discuss their critical standards at length here , it is worthwhile reviewing some of their statements , for they do throw light on the critical debate under discussion. The Realist Writers Group was still active in the early 1960s and Jack Beasley , one of

its chief critics , published in the journal *The Realist Writer* in 1962 an article with an eye-catching title :“ The Great Hatred—Patrick White as a Novelist ”. It opens with an overall estimate of White criticism in Australia :

Literary criticism in Australia today , so far as it is concerned with the novels of Patrick White , has become a very simple thing. Apart from a very few unheeded warning voices , the criticism is largely concerned with finding new superlatives with which to bedeck White's work. Untinted official endorsement has been accorded the author and conforming reviewers may only achieve distinction by the use of more and more opulent terms , by tapping the Hollywood fount of super-colossal adjectives.¹³

He then warns that “ the real danger is that he is virtually the only Australian novelist studied in our schools and universities. A whole generation of intellectuals is being trained on White and their influence will be felt more and more right through our educational system.”¹⁴ A year later , Mona Brand published an article in the same journal :“ Another Look at Patrick White ” , openly disagreeing with Beasley. But the editorial board of the journal reaffirmed its stand in “ The Patrick White Controversy ” , claiming that “ whatever merits may be found in White's work , we believe that it represents a trend alien to the best traditions and interests of Australian literature.”¹⁵ It is clear that Beasley's opposition to White stemmed largely from ideological reasons. Although the Realist Writers Group's influence gradually declined and their journal folded up after the mid-1960s , the influence of those individuals who originally belonged to the group was still felt in literary circles in the years after. And White criticism in later years was not entirely free from such an influence.

What really happened

Patrick White belonged to the generation of Australian writers who looked to Britain and America for publishing avenues. All his 12 novels , two of his short story collections and his autobiography were all first published in America and England. In the early years it often took many months before his novels arrived in Australia by sea. Air freight was prohibiting , costing about one pound per copy. His market was first and foremost in Europe (mainly Britain) and North America and he depended on American and British book reviewers and critics for the success or failure of his books. On one occasion and out of frustration he did think of having his novel first published in Australia and then in England , but was soon persuaded by his literary agent not to take such a risky step. ¹⁶ From his letters to his friends and relatives we can see how closely he had been following the publication of reviews of his books in the British and American press. He subscribed to a press-cutting service in London , which supplied him regularly with newspaper clippings. (This seems contradictory to his apparent indifference to criticisms and reviews.) Although his first novel *Happy Valley* won the Australian Literature Society Gold Medal in 1939 , not many Australians really knew anything about him or about other medalists. When in 1958 Marjorie Barnard was commissioned to write an essay about White's novels , she found " biographical silence " on him in the Mitchell Library. From this context in which he published , it is only natural to expect more reviews and critical articles to be written in the early period by British and American critics rather than by Australian critics. As a matter of fact , British and American criticism was what he really cared about at the time. After David Marr's biography of White was published , it is now widely known that the American Viking Press and its editor Ben Huebsch formed the cornerstone of White

s success in the years after the war. American critics praised White s novels highly and James Stern published a long article on *The Tree of Man* in the New York Times Book Review , in which he says :

“ *The Tree of Man* ” , it seems to me , is a timeless work of art from which no essential element of life has been omitted. a magnifying glass has been laid over a microscopic world in the centre of which loom , larger and larger , man and woman , married , bound by love , and from whom radiate the beauty and the tragedy of humanity. ¹⁷

Stern compares White to D. H. Lawrence , James Joyce and Sean O Casey and regards reading White s novels as one of the rare experiences of life. In 1958 he again reviewed White s novels in “ *Patrick White : The Country of the Mind* ” , which , though more subdued in tone , is full of praise for White s novels.

Although *The Tree of Man* sold well in the United States , it got twenty rejection slips in England before it was published. And this was through the influence of Ben Huebsch , who talked Frank Morley of Eyre & Spottiswoode into accepting it. After this the publication of White s other novels did not seem to have any further problem in Britain.

While White was still enjoying his overseas success , Sydney Morning Herald ten months later published A. D. Hope s review of the novel :“ *The Bunyip Stages a Comeback* ”. What is remembered of this highly controversial review seems to be only the last five words : “ pretentious and illiterate verbal sludge ”. In fact Hope was not only unhappy with White s style of writing and his use of language , he was also critical of White s choice of the familiar episodes of conventional Australian novels :“ the pattern is all too familiar ” but “ none of these

things is of any importance and the book is not about them."¹⁸ To be fair, Hope also said some good things about Patrick White. He said,

He has what the Australian novel largely lacks, the power to present people who are important to us in themselves, chief characters who impress us by something out of the common order—in this case, integrity. Integrity is as rare and exciting a quality as genius or beauty and Mr. White can both depict it and show its secret cause with that touch of the tragic which must always attend the depiction of what is rare and great in human life.¹⁹

The underlying tone of the whole article is certainly a negative one, and no one should deny that. This short review of less than 1,000 words must have been quoted hundreds of times. Journalists and critics alike all remember this historic review and whenever White is mentioned in terms of critical reception this essay is quoted and the most quotable phrase is, of course, the last neat phrase in it. When this review was published in the Herald, readers wrote to the editor, disagreeing with what Hope said. Two letters were published, one written in an indignant tone and the other being more satirical. A. Seitz says,

Professor A. D. Hope's skilful and biting criticism of Patrick White's *Tree of Man* in last Saturday's has saddened me—not so much for Mr. White's sake as for Professor Hope's.

Why the criticism of the novel should be used as a medium for a more or less personal attack on the author, I would not know, but I trust that its acerbity does not influence those who intend to read this fine book.²⁰

I would take exception to the remark that it was a personal attack. In fact, it was not. In principle Hope did not approve of the style White

used in writing his fiction. When we reflect on the fact that Hope had plotted his own hoax against Angry Penguins and that he had written many other acerbic reviews ,²¹ we would be less surprised at the criticism levelled against White. He has consistently shown himself to be no friend of Modernism. Reading Hope's review White was deeply hurt and for the first time started calling Australian critics " dingoes ".²² This was not only because Hope's criticism was inordinately harsh , but also because he was a literary figure of considerable influence in Australia at the time. White had waited for the big guns in Australia to speak on his much acclaimed novel , and when one of the big guns finally did , it was highly critical and very disparaging. White followed what was happening then very closely and in one of his letters to Mollie McKie , told his side of the story :

Well , *The Tree of Man* came out in Sydney with a review to end all reviews , by a " Professor " A. D. Hope , who called it " pretentious and illiterate verbal sludge ". I am told by a journalist I know on the *Herald* staff the letters of protest have been pouring in , but only two have been published , and those while the Editor was away. One man I know who wrote a stinging letter received an enraged reply from the Editor himself in which the latter said : " Professor Hope is the best critic in Australia , one of the four best poets , and a Professor of English Literature , therefore etc. etc. "²³

In his letters to various friends and relatives White must have mentioned Hope's review a dozen times and years later when interviewed he said , " It irritates me when I think of some of those academic turds , and the great Panjandrum of Canberra who described my writing as pretentious and illiterate verbal sludge. "²⁴ It seems to me that a

lot of White's hostility to critics and academics started around the time when Hope's review appeared. In White's mind, Hope seemed to stand for all critics, particularly academic critics. According to Marr, A. D. Hope "felt ambivalent about the review when he saw the piece in print, and that he rang the Herald editor, J. D. Pringle to say he regretted not taking more space to write a longer piece." He told Marr in 1985 that "The Tree of Man deserved a fairer review."²⁵ This certainly shows that Hope has mellowed later in life. But at the time and for many years afterwards Hope stuck to his principle. In 1963 he published a booklet on Australian literature in which he reiterated some of his previous views. After admitting that White is "a novelist of varied gifts", Hope points out overwriting is White's weakness. "A pretentious poetic style, a dislocated and sometimes illiterate syntax, a laboured and self-conscious vocabulary almost ruined the simple and impressive theme of *The Tree of Man*."²⁶ When *Native Companions* was published in 1974, he included his review of *The Tree of Man*. He did not change a word or cut out any of the harsh criticism.²⁷ Instead, he wrote a comment at the beginning, in which he says,

Patrick White is said to have been very angry at this review. I offer no apology and no apology for reprinting it, because I think I was right and even in greater novels like *Voss* and *The Tree of Man* his meretricious writing and slipshod sentences mar the work of a powerful and profoundly interesting writer.²⁸

When White was awarded the Nobel Prize, A. D. Hope sent him greetings: "My best wishes and hearty congratulations." On November 9, 1973 White sent back a card on which he wrote: "Thank you for your congratulations. We must meet one day and get to know each other better."²⁹ This seems to show that White was beginning to adopt

a more conciliatory attitude. There is another letter between them , to which access , unfortunately , is closed. But it is certain that White died without ever making it up with Hope.³⁰

White was not happy with Australian critics , but this does not mean he always liked critics in Britain and America. He was often terribly worried about what British and American reviewers and critics would say. In one of his letters to Mollie McKie , he said , “ I find waiting for reviews and people’s reactions generally far more disturbing and exhausting than writing the book in the first place. ”³¹ Writing in 1955 , he said , “ My book [referring to *The Tree of Man*] has had quite a success in the States . . . but there have also been some stinking reviews , notably one in *Time* , which seems to have the widest circulation of any paper in the world. ”³² In 1957 after the publication of *Voss* , he was excited to get the good reviews from England , but at the same time he was critical of some of the papers , including the *Times* and the *T. L. S.* He thought they did not give him good reviews because “ they are always afraid to commit themselves about anything that is not obvious in case they turn out to be wrong. ”³³ In the early years he was very excited about the American reception of his novels , but later he grew more and more dissatisfied. When I interviewed him in September 1980 , he told me , “ The Americans understood me at first , but not later. The French translated a lot of my novels , but they did not seem to understand me. The Scots wrote some good reviews and it seems the further north they are , the better they understand my novels. Probably this is because they have more time for reading. ”³⁴ From his letters we sense his growing dissatisfaction with American critics.

My novel *The Vivisector* has come out in the States and got the most terrible reviews , even the “ good ” ones are

bad , and all of them give one the impression that the critics haven't read the book.³⁵

My new novel *The Eye of the Storm* will be coming out in London and here in October or November ; also New York , I hope a little later : if I can get some good reviews in England the Americans may then know what to say.³⁶

To White favourable criticism was good criticism. He called bad reviews " stinkers ". No matter whether they were written by British , American or Australian critics , unfavourable reviews were " stinkers " to him. Therefore , it would not be accurate to say that White could not put up with Australian critics alone.

It is true that all writers like to read favourable reviews about themselves and their writings , and White was no exception. However , the difference might lie in the fact that White found it particularly hard to handle criticism , especially severe criticism. He tended to take it very much to heart , and once offended , would not forgive or forget.

After the publication of *The Tree of Man* and *Voss* , in spite of the few unfavourable reviews White's reputation in Australia grew. From the statistics I have compiled , we can see that more American and British critics wrote about White in the early period of his writing career while starting from the mid-fifties Australian criticism gradually increased. According to Alan Lawson's bibliography , 73 reviews and critical articles were published on his fiction in journals and newspapers from 1935-55. (I did not include short mention in books , short references , MA or PhD theses.) Of these , 36 were written by Americans , 15 by Britons and 20 by Australians. (Two cannot be identified.) This means in the first twenty years of White's writing career (with the Second World War intervening) more than seventy percent of the critical articles and reviews on his novels were written by either

American or British critics. (See Appendix 1.) But in the next ten years (1956-65) a dramatic change took place. During this period 274 articles , reviews and books were published on White and his writings. Of these 57.9% (154 items) were written by Australian critics and 42.1% by overseas writers (74 items by Britons , 36 by Americans and 2 by scholars of other nationalities). (See Appendix 2.) The sharp increase of critical articles and books in Australia on White is partly explained by the fact that from the late fifties to the early sixties the teaching of Australian literature was becoming institutionalized in Australia and Patrick White became one of the first Australian writers to be put on the university syllabus.

At about the same time his plays also began to be staged after the initial rebuttal by the Adelaide Festival Committee and he started to command attention in the theatre. The first three book-length studies of White were all written by Australians.³⁷ Three times White won the Miles Franklin Award and most of the reviews of his novels were favourable. As a matter of fact , in later years the publication of each of his novels would be followed by reviews in almost all major papers and literary journals. Particularly after White was awarded the Nobel Prize , not only did his novels become canonized , he himself was almost transformed into a kind of literary icon. It is true that not all critics shared the same views on his writings. Some like his novels more than others , and often for different reasons , but it would be quite untrue to say that there was still “ massive Australian hostility ” to White's works as asserted by Joseph and Johanna Jones. The Austlit Database on CD-ROM has listed 908 items under Patrick White as subject (including reviews , critical articles and books) dating from 1944 to 1992 though most fall between the 1970s and 1980s. Of these 158 are unsigned and therefore unidentifiable and 29 are by White himself

(White's speeches and interviews with him) and should not be used in the statistics. Of the remaining 721 items , 613 (85.02%) were written by Australians , 36 (5%) by Americans , 6 (0.83%) by Britons and 66 (9.15%) by Germans , Indians , South Africans , Italians , Chinese and the French. (See Appendix 3.) This means that in the past twenty years or so Australian criticism contributed to the bulk of White criticism in the world. Most of the critics maintained a sympathetic , or at least balanced , stance in their writings. True , newspaper reports often played up some of his eccentricities , but on the whole they were stories with journalistic flourishes and exaggerations rather than malicious reporting. As White played an increasingly active role in public affairs since the seventies , he gradually became a public figure. Newspaper and journal articles grew more and more sympathetic to him and his views and he became one of the revered men of letters in Australia. He was voted to be Australian of the Year by the Age in 1973 and awarded the Order of Australia in 1975 (which he returned subsequently when Sir John Kerr dismissed Gough Whitlam from office.) When his short story *The Night the Prowler* was made into a film , the NSW Film Corporation invested \$ A350 000. " It is the largest amount of money ever invested in a film by a government body in Australia. " ³⁸ When White died , the Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke paid tribute to him and obituaries all praised him highly. He was referred to more than once as " the conscience of Australia ". There is not a single Australian writer , except for Christina Stead perhaps , who enjoyed a reputation anywhere near White's during his life time , and certainly no one who was given such tributes upon his death.

Conclusion

To say that Patrick White was given critical acclaim overseas

while being neglected in Australia , as a general statement , would be untrue , for Australian critical reception of White over a span of fifty years has been on the whole good. This of course does not mean that all critical responses are favourable or equally so. It is in Australia that White got consistent critical attention while in Amercia though he was heralded as a significant writer in the early years his prestige did not last. And in Britain , upon his death , the Guardian said , “ He was almost a forgotten major writer as far as most Western critics were concerned. ”³⁹

On the other hand , it is also true that in the early years White's novels got more reviews in America and England than elsewhere and that many of the reviews praised him highly , ranking him with great writers like James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence. (This , however , has to be interpreted in the context of the more extravagant style British and American reviewers tended to adopt in those years.)

The fact that some Australian critics were unfavourable to his writing or the way he writes shows the literary climate of the time and the literary predilections of individual critics. The realist tradition in Australian literature was so deep-rooted that for a time anything deviant from it tended to be looked at with suspicion or disapproval and in some cases , get bashed. In White's case it is not so much “ super star bashing ” as bashing of the deviant. This type of bashing has appeared elsewhere in the literary history of Australia. A case in point is the well-known “ Ern Malley hoax ”. The difference between White and Hope is not a personal one ; rather , it is one in literary taste and/or values. Why were “ the dingoes ” howling unmercifully ? Because , White says , he wanted to write something different. However , as time went on , the critical climate gradually changed (though some of the credit should be attributed to White himself) and the aversion to

White's style of writing was reduced and his works came to be accepted by more and more critics and readers. In the meanwhile other Australian writers and poets also engaged themselves in explorations and experiments of one kind or another and together contributed to the changing of the literary scene and critical climate in Australia. We may perhaps draw a parallel between the change of taste in art and that in literature. In 1953 an exhibition of contemporary French paintings was opened at the New South Wales Art Gallery. White was very excited about it and in his letter to his cousin Peggy Garland, stressed the significance of the exhibition: "Some of the important people like Picasso and Matisse badly represented. But the great importance of the exhibition as a whole was that it gave many people the shock of their lives and liberated many more after shocking them."⁴⁰ Who would be shocked by Picasso or Matisse now? Literary criticism, like art criticism, has changed with the times and White's reception in Australia has undergone a process that is inevitable—from reluctance to accept White to acceptance, and from willing acceptance to critical acclaim. The shocking—and liberating—effect of White's fiction and plays in Australia is something we should not underestimate. Brian Kiernan points out that Patrick White contributed importantly to the development and transformation of Australian culture from the 1960s to the 1980s.⁴¹ At the present time if we still believe in prevailing critical neglect or misunderstanding of White in Australia, we would be very far from the truth.

There may be several reasons why the myth persisted for so many years. Journalists, for one thing, like a good story and tend to sensationalize in their reporting. Whenever they wrote, they would harp on the old story although times had changed and so had the critical climate. White himself could not forget the early misunderstandings and

occasionally made pronouncements to the effect that Australian critics still neglected him. (Incidentally , White was only interested in reading the reviews. He seldom , if ever , read the 200-page critical works written by academics.) As to how much longer still this myth will last , we cannot predict , for once a myth has come into being it tends to persist and no one can foretell its date of extinction.

Notes :

1. Patrick White's letter to Mollie McKie , March 5 , 1958 , NLA MS8301 /59-61.
2. Geoffrey Dutton , Patrick White , Melbourne : Lansdowne Press , 1961 , p. 8.
3. Alan Lawson , " Unmerciful dingoes ? — the Critical Reception of Patrick White " , *Meanjin Quarterly* , December , 1973.
4. Joseph and Johanna Jones , *Australian Fiction* , Twanye Publishers , 1983 , p. 114.
5. Robert Ross , " The Recurring Conflicts in Australian Literary Criticism Since 1945 " *Australian and N. Z. Studies in Canada* , No. 1 , 1989.
6. Those directly involved include Geoffrey Dutton , Max Harris , A. D. Hope , Leonie Kramer , R. F. Brissenden , Hal Porter , John Thompson , Jack Beasley , Mona Brand , Geoffrey Sawyer , Vincent Buckley , Keith Dunstan , Alan Lawson , and Patrick White himself. As to those indirectly involved , there would be too many to mention.
7. Maurice Dunlevy , " Patrick White : a writer of world stature " , *Canberra Times* , October 20 , 1973.
8. John Rorke , " Patrick White and the Critics " , *Southerly* , No. 2. 1959.
9. Vincent Buckley , " Patrick White and his epic " , *Twentieth Century* , XII , 1958.
10. Keith Dunstan , *Knockers* , Wilkinson Books , 1992 , p. 306.
11. Alan Lawson , " Unmerciful Dingoes ? —The Critical Reception of Patrick White " , *Meanjin Quarterly* , December , 1973.
12. R. F. Brissenden , " Letter to the editor " , *Canberra Times* , November 5 , 1973.
13. Jack Beasley , " The Great Hatred—Patrick White as Novelist " , *Realist Writer* , No. 9 , 1962.
14. *Ibid.*
15. " The Patrick White Controversy " , *Realist Writer* , No. 12 , 1963.
16. David Marr , *Patrick White A Life* , Random House , 1991 , p. 302.
17. James Stern , " The Quiet People of the Homestead " , *The New York Times Book Review* , August 14 , 1955.

18. A. D. Hope , " The Bunyip Stages a Comeback " , Sydney Morning Herald , June 16 , 1956.
19. Ibid.
20. A. Seitz , " Letter to the Editor " , Sydney Morning Herald , June 20 , 1956.
21. Brian Matthews , " Literature and Conflict " , New Literary History of Australia , ed. by Laurie Hergenhan , Penguin Books , 1988 , pp. 303-317.
22. In his letter to Peggy Garland on September 10 , 1956 , White wrote : " The first critics to get at The Tree of Man when it arrived in Australia behaved like a pack of dingoes. Their rage knew no bounds. " NLA MS9434/100. It is interesting to note here White used the plural " critics " although he was clearly referring to Hope.
23. PW's letter to Mollie McKie , June 27 , 1956 , NLA MS8301/41-43.
24. Craig McGregor , In the Making , Melbourne : Thomas Nelson , 1969 , p. 219.
25. David Marr , Patrick White : A Life , Random House , 1991 , p. 310.
26. A. D. Hope , Australian Literature 1950-1962 , Melbourne University Press , 1963 , p. 13.
27. Marr in his biography of White says , " In 1974 Hope republished the notice much changed in his collection Native Companions. " I have checked the article against the review which appeared in Sydney Morning Herald and found that not a word was changed.
28. A. D. Hope , Native Companions : Essays and Comments on Australian Literature 1936-1966 , Angus and Robertson , 1974 , p. 75.
29. Hope's letters , NLA MS5836 , Folder 92.
30. I confirmed this in my talk with Manoly Lascaris on February 21 , 1993.
31. PW's letter to McKie , November 6 , 1961 , NLA MS8301/93.
32. PW's letter to McKie , December 10 , 1955 , NLA MS8301/34. 32.
33. PW's letter to McKie , December 27 , 1957 , NLA MS8301/53-54.
34. PW to me , September 24 , 1980.
35. PW's letter to Garland , August 30 , 1970 , NLA MS8434/186.
36. PW's letter to McKie , February 25 , 1973 , NLA MS8301/126.
37. Geoffrey Dutton , Patrick White , Melbourne : Lansdowne Press , 1961. R. F. Brinsenden , Patrick White , London : Longman , 1966. Barry Argyle , Patrick White , Edinburgh : Oliver and Boyd , 1967.
38. " Government Puts Up \$ 350 000 for Film of Patrick White Story " , Sydney Morning Herald , July 7 , 1977.
39. " White put Australian literature on the map " , The Age , October 2 , 1990.

40. PW to Garland , May 1 , 1953 , NLA MS 8434 /72.
41. Brian Kiernan , Patrick White , Macmillan , 1980 , p. 8.

Appendix 1 : A breakdown by nationality of percentages of articles written on White's fiction from 1935-55 * :

Nationality	Australian	American	British	Total	Unknown
Number	20	36	15	71	2
Percentage	28.2%	50.7%	21.1%	100%	X

* Statistics are based on Alan Lawson's Patrick White Bibliography published in 1974. The following table is also based on the same source.

Appendix 2 : A breakdown by nationality of percentages of articles and books written on White's fiction from 1956-65 :

Nationality	Australian	American	British	Other	Total	Unknown
Number	154	36	74	2	266	8
Percentage	57.9%	13.5%	27.8%	0.8%	100%	X

Appendix 3 : A breakdown by nationality of percentages of books and articles on Patrick White from 1944-1992 * :

Nation- ality	Australian	American	British	Other	Total	Un- known	By White
Number	613	36	6	66	721	158	29
Percentage	85.02%	5%	0.83%	9.15%	100%	X	X

* Statistics are based on the 908 items listed under Patrick White in the Austlit database on CD-ROM. The items include books , critical essays and articles written on White from 1944 to 1992 though most items were published in the 1970s-80s.

A MODEST ATTEMPT : TEACHING AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE IN CHINA *

When I was studying Australian literature at Sydney University I had in mind only the vaguest possibility of offering a course in Australian writing for Chinese students after my return. After all , when I left China in 1979 , emphasis in institutions teaching foreign languages was still very much on the practical skills of speaking , understanding , reading and writing of the target language. This was quite understandable because , as the teaching of English was not of a very high standard at secondary school level , students often had to spend most of their time acquiring basic skills even after they entered universities or colleges. They could only give minimum attention to literature and history courses.

But during the two years I was away in Australia , marked changes took place in China's tertiary education , as in other fields. For one thing , students who enrolled in 1977 through examinations (examinations had been suspended for a few years during the Cultural Revolution) proved to be much more proficient in English than our earlier students at the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute had been. When they were in their third year it became apparent that they were ready for something more sophisticated than just the learning of skills. That sparked off course offerings such as English and American Literature , American Society and Culture , Linguistics , Geography of the English-speaking People , American History and other culture-related courses. So upon my return from Sydney , I offered to teach a course in Austral-

* 原载 The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs 第 8 期(1982 年)。

ian fiction , and met with immediate approval.

The course was planned at first to cover sixteen weeks. (An academic year in a Chinese university has two semesters of about eighteen weeks each.) Initially I proposed to begin with Henry Lawson and to go on to the Henry Handel Richardson , Martin Boyd and Christina Stead up to Patrick White and Thomas Keneally. As it happened , however , I had to leave out Richardson , as her trilogy would have been too heavy a reading assignment anyway , and I had nothing suitable then to replace it.

Just before the beginning of the new semester Mr. Maddock and Dr Rigby , both of the Australian Embassy in Beijing , visited our institute bringing with them a handsome gift of books from the Australia-China Council. The books were mostly novels and collections of short stories by Australian writers. There were some books on history and criticism too. It was , as the Chinese say , ' timely rain ' . We did not even have the time to get the books properly catalogued before we put them on the shelves for our students.

Forty-five students signed up for my course. This was encouraging considering the fact that there were altogether 230 students in the fourth year and that the choice of over a dozen courses was open to them. When lectures started , I was delighted to find in the audience some teachers from other institutions in the country who were on an in-service training programme. Later I came to know a woman student who was on the editorial staff of Zhongguo yuwen (Chinese Language) , a bi-monthly journal put out by the China Linguistics Institute. Her presence was an indication of China's expanding cultural interests.

Naturally I began from the beginning—as I had to. The first lecture was a brief introduction to Australia , for I had warned myself that

I must take nothing for granted. I tried to cram Australian geography , history and bits of sociology into this one lecture , and the response was good. The students listened eagerly to what I had to say about this faraway land with the wrong seasons.

Subsequent lectures were interspersed with seminars. Students took notes , some copiously. At seminars they still had their pens at the ready and seemed to expect another lecture. I told them that a seminar is different from a lecture and that they should contribute by either making their own comments or posing questions. A few gave their own views ; some , when called upon , could say a few words , but many were reluctant. Talking with an American teacher about her seminars in sociology , I learned that it was more or less the same with her students. This reflects a learning attitude long accustomed to teacher-centred education.

We were able to show some documentary films borrowed from the ever-helpful Australian Embassy. From these , students learned what Australians and the Australian outback were like , no doubt a great help in understanding Henry Lawson s stories. Altogether ten short films were shown on campus , for students at large as well as for those who were studying Australian fiction. But it has not been possible to obtain feature films pending negotiation with Australian film distributors.

While in Beijing last October , members of the Australia-China Council delegation were invited to speak to our students. A true historian , Professor Blainey started by telling our students about the historical link between Australia and China. He was followed by Mr. Kenally , who outlined the main features of Australian writing. At one point he reminded his listeners : ' Our forefathers were convicts , so when you leave this room you'd better check your pockets. ' Hilarious

laughter broke out from the audience. Dr. FitzGerald and Dr. Chey , both former Australian diplomats in China , made perceptive observations about the growing ties between Australia and China in recent years. For days afterwards my students continued to chew over the wit and humour of our guest speakers.

At the end of the course students were required to write essays of between 2000 and 3000 words. They examined writers we had dealt with during the course , except for one who wrote on the short stories of Alan Marshall , a writer I did not have time to include. Some of the essay topics were :

Henry Lawson and his Bushmen , Henry Lawson the Man , Mateship in Lawsons Stories , The Characterisation of Lucinda Brayford , The Narrative Power of Martin Boyd , White s Contribution to Australian Literature , The Tragedy of Jimmie Blacksmith , ‘ A Glass of Tea ’ : It s Pessimism and Symbolism.

More students chose Lawson because his sentiments were familiar to them. Wang Jun wrote :

The most touching scene of the story [‘ The Drover’s Wife ’] is no doubt the very end of the story , when Tommy throws his arms around his mother’s neck and exclaims , ‘ “ Mother , I won’t never go drovin’; blast my if I do ” ’ , and when ‘ she hugs him to her worn-out breast and kisses him. ’. Here the understanding and love between the mother and the son is beyond the description of words , and nothing but the mother’s hug and kiss can tell us more about her feelings.

A few tried to analyse the mateship which figures so prominently in Lawsons works :

Perhaps one may ask why Henry Lawson has always

taken mateship as the theme of his stories. There are at least two reasons for this. First , Lawson considers the ordinary Australians noble. He says through the mouth of Miss Standish , Mrs. Baker's sister , ' I like the bushmen ! They are grand men — they are noble. ' Secondly , Lawson considers that mateship is the true value or the true character of the Australian people. Being a typical Australian writer , Lawson surely expresses and eulogises this value of his people in his works.

Liu Xiaozhu's angle is slightly different :

Mateship in Henry Lawson's short stories is the direct reflection of his time. It was based on the particular conditions of Australian economic production in Lawson's time. Its content is the combination of loyalty , sympathy , equality , mutual understanding and self-sacrifice. Mateship is , as a complex historical phenomenon , closely connected with religion , unionism , democracy , liberalism and Marxism.

In her essay on *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* Li Aiwei gives her interpretation of Jimmie's tragedy :

Who should be responsible for his crimes and his death ? Jimmie certainly has his part. But the white world shares the responsibility. It is colonialism and racial discrimination that drove him to crime and destroyed him eventually.

Some analysed the structure of White's ' A Glass of Tea ' and Boyd's *A Difficult Young Man*. He Ziying had this to say about the former :

From the seeming looseness one should not , however , leap to the conclusion that the narrative lacks careful

planning. Unity is guaranteed by the permanence of the strong affection between Philipides and his wife. Balance is achieved by elaboration on only a few highlights , with the mentioning of various other details for the sake of transition. Compactness is achieved by having the whole story told over a glass of tea. His glass itself is symbolic of his life and the love between him and his wife. This symbolism is a further unifying thread which runs through the whole tale.

In retrospect I feel that the reading assignment was too heavy for most students. Their difficulty was further complicated by the fact that generally no more than seven or eight copies were available for each recommended title so that they could only read them in the reading-room. Then there was an obvious lack in that the course included none of the poetry which is so essential to even a rudimentary understanding of Australian literature. When I teach the course again in September I shall reorganise it to include some poetry and a few more short stories.

On one occasion ,I mentioned to Dr. Chey that it would facilitate the teaching of Australian literature in China if some kind of anthology were available. I would add that the anthology should have in view students doing Australian literature overseas. Apart from poetry ,short stories ,and extracts from novels ,I would hope that some essays might be included as well.

I would also welcome information about the teaching of Australian literature in other parts of the world. It would be helpful if some institution in Australia were able to co-ordinate efforts to assist such ventures and help spread such information.

The course I offered on Australian fiction at our institute was

merely a beginning. One day in the general office of the English Department I met one of the students who had taken my course. She was a recent graduate appointed as a teaching assistant. After a few preliminaries she asked me if I could recommend a list of Australian novels for her to read. She said she was very interested in Australian fiction and wanted to make a study of it. To meet this growing interest , Australian literature is now listed as a field of study , along with English and American literature , in the Institute's brochure on postgraduate courses. Many translations of Australian authors are also under way in China at the moment , and the scope for study of Australian literature is considerable.

A SURVEY OF CHINESE TRANSLATION OF AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE *

It was back in 1984 when Dr Laurie Hergenhan suggested to me that I write an article on the Chinese translation of Australian writings. I and my translator friends also felt the need as occasionally we wanted to check whether a particular novel had been translated. We had to depend on our collective memory, but as might be expected it was not always accurate. So while preparing for the first CASIC¹, I decided to make a survey of available translations and present a paper on my findings.

It should be made clear from the outset that this is not an exhaustive survey. As yet there is no bibliographical data on computer at any Chinese library which can provide a catalogue of all translations available of any literature. To my knowledge there are only two bibliographies of that nature. One deals with Chinese translations of foreign literatures published from 1949—1979,² and the other only with translations of Russian literary works. They are not of much help to me as the former was found to have many missing links and secondly, most of the translations of Australian writers have been published since the late 70s and early 80s and fall outside its range.

I used a very primitive method in collecting my data. I looked through the catalogues and collections of three major libraries. They are the National Library, the Peking University Library and our own university library. Needless to say, the National Library collection is

* 原载 Australian Literary Studies 1989 年第 2 期。

the most complete and helpful , including also translations made in Taiwan of Australian literary works. As a lot of the translations appeared in magazines , data was also collected from major literary magazines which regularly published translations of foreign literatures. These are World Literature(known as Yiwen prior to 1959) , Foreign Literatures , Foreign Literature and Art and Yilin(The Forest of Translation).³ Their circulation varies from 20 ,000 to 50 ,000 copies. In addition to these , there are numerous magazines and newspapers which occasionally published translations of short stories and poems by writers of other countries. I did not have time to comb through these. Therefore , I do not exclude the possibility that a few Australian short stories or poems which appeared in translation in these magazines fail to get mentioned in my account. The Centre for Studies of Oceanic Literature at Anhui University has done considerable work in Australian literature in recent years and has published several volumes of translations of novels , short stories and poems by writers of Australia , New Zealand and other countries in the South Pacific. But since these books are not available in the three libraries I surveyed and my own collection is far from complete , I was not able to include them in my data.

Available data show that the following Australian short story writers have appeared in Chinese translation : Mena Abdullah , James Aldridge , Jessica Anderson , Murray Bail , Barbara Baynton , David Campbell , Gavin Casey , D. E. Chalwood , Laurie Clancy , Manning Clark , Jon Cleary , Kenneth Cook , Peter Cowan , Frank Dalby Davison , Don Edwards , James Edmond , Helen Garner , E. A. Gollschewsky , James Hackston , Frank Hardy , T. A. G. Hungerford , David Ireland , Brian James , Nick Jose , Henry Lawson , Morris Lurie , Alan Marshall , Ray Mathew , Frank Moorhouse , John Morrison , Desmond

OGrady , Vance Palmer , Frank Penn-Smith , Hal Porter , Nancy Phelan , Katharine Susannah Prichard , Henry Handel Richardson , Lesley Rowlands , Steele Rudd , Dal Stivens , Ronald Tobias , Margaret Trist , Judah Waten , Patrick White , Michael Wilding and Helen Wilson.

Of all the short story writers , Henry Lawson stands out conspicuously. He is the only Australian writer who had two collections of his short stories appear in translation , one in 1960 and the other in 1978 in addition to his many other stories which appeared in magazines. The only other collection of short stories by an individual writer is Judah Waten's *Alien Son*.

Poets whose works have been translated and published include Francis Adams , Christopher Brennan , R. F. Brissenden , Lyn Brown , David Campbell , Rosemary Dobson , Mary Gilmore , William Hart-Smith , A. D. Hope , Henry Lawson , James McAuley , John Shaw Neilson , A. B. Paterson , Kenneth Slessor , Vivian Smith , Douglas Stewart , Randolph Stow and Judith Wright.

The following novels , autobiographies and children's stories by Australian writers have appeared in Chinese translation :

James Aldridge ,	The Hunter
	The Diplomat
Jessica Anderson ,	Tirra Lirra by the River
	The Impersonators (Selections)
Rolf Boldrewood ,	Robbery Under Arms
Russell Braddon ,	Nancy Wake
Marcus Clarke ,	For the Term of His Natural Life
Dymphna Cusack (ed.) ,	Caddie—A Sydney Barmaid
Frank Hardy ,	Power Without Glory
	The Four-legged Lottery
Elizabeth Kata ,	A Patch of Blue

G. Lord ,	Fortress
Alan Marshall ,	I Can Jump Puddles
David Martin ,	The Chinese Boy
Colleen McCullough ,	The Thorn Birds
Stephen Murray-Smith	The Tracks We Travel
(ed.) ,	
Ethel Pedley	Dot and the Kangaroo
Katharine Susannah Pri- chard ,	The Roaring Nineties
Colin Thiele ,	Storm Boy
	Magpie Island
Judah Waten ,	The Unbending
Morris West ,	The World is Made of Glass
	The Salamander
Patrick White ,	The Tree of Man
	The Eye of the Storm

In addition to the books above , I know of several other Australian novels that have been translated and are in print. These include White's Voss and The Tree of Man (another version) and Miles Franklin's My Brilliant Career.

Five plays have been translated. They are :

Mona Brand ,	Better a Millstone
Alexander Buzo ,	The Front Room Boys
Jack Hibberd ,	A Stretch of the Imagination
David Williamson ,	What If You Died Tomorrow ?
	Gallipoli

Only one of the five plays , Hibberd's A Stretch of the Imagination , has

been staged.

While it is true that a fair number of Australian novelists and poets have been introduced to Chinese readers , we have to bear in mind that some of them may have only one or two of their stories or poems translated. It should be admitted that the total amount of Australian literary works in Chinese translation is not very impressive when compared with translation of French , Russian or English literature. This is partly because Australian literature is relatively new to Chinese translators , the translation of Australian short stories first appearing in 1955.⁴ And the Cultural Revolution from 1966-76 literally put an end to translation of any foreign literature. It was not until the late 70s when the policy of opening to the outside world was implemented that foreign literatures began to be translated by an increasing number of people. With Australian literature this happened particularly after those who had studied in Australia returned to their own country. When we look back on this relatively short history of Chinese translation of Australian writings , we will appreciate more the work done by Chinese translators in recent years. It can be seen , too , that the selection in general is not haphazard and shows the translators discretion. Of course there are glaring gaps and important omissions. For instance , such major writers and poets as David Malouf and Les Murray have not yet been introduced.

The literary journals , particularly the first three I mentioned above , played a prominent role in introducing Australian short stories and poems. In fact , most of the short story writers and poets first appeared in those journals. Foreign Literatures published three special Australian numbers , appearing in April 1980 , May 1984 and August 1987 respectively. Yilins special Australian literary supplement was published in 1986.

When we study the dates of publication , we notice that the choice of which Australian writers to translate was strongly coloured by political considerations of the time. For a long time in the past a major consideration in literary matters was that literature should be didactic and that only works of ' progressive writers ' should be translated. Australian writers that were introduced to the Chinese readership from 1955-1963 include only Francis Adams , James Aldridge , Mona Brand , Lyn Brown , Mary Gilmore , Frank Hardy , Henry Lawson , Alan Marshall , John Morrison , Vance Palmer , Katharine Susannah Prichard , Dal Stivens and Judah Waten. It was thought that Western literature that ' exposes ' the capitalist system would be the proper kind of literature to bring to China. Literary merit was of secondary importance. It would have been unthinkable to translate a novel like *The Thorn Birds* at the time. During the Cultural Revolution all foreign literature was banned and *World Literature* , the only journal introducing foreign literature in the 1950s and 1960s , stopped publishing from 1965 to 1976.

The translation that appeared after the late 70s shows a greater diversity of taste and an intention on the part of the translators to introduce a wider spectrum of Australian writings. Writers like Patrick White , Frank Moorhouse , Murray Bail and Nick Jose caught the attention of translators and were duly introduced. This does not mean , of course , that anything and everything is translated. Generally speaking , translators still exercise caution in dealing with sensitive matters like sex . In my own translation of Hibberd's play , for instance , I had to change a bit of Monks monologue about his experience on the beach. I phrased it in a way that an average Chinese reader can accept.

' Left ' writers like Judah Waten , Alan Marshall , John Morrison

and Frank Hardy are still getting translated , but they are among dozens of other writers and do not monopolise the readers diet any more. Lawson s case is different. He seems to be a favourite writer of the Chinese in spite of fluctuations in political climate. Several of his short stories have been translated and retranslated , such as ‘ His Father s Mate ’ , ‘ Send Round the Hat ’ and ‘ Telling Mrs Baker ’. This may be attributed to his outstanding mastery of the art of short story writing , his peculiar Australian humour as well as the content of his stories.

At the height of leftist tendencies in China he was looked upon as a spokesperson of the working people and therefore passed muster. At other times people simply enjoyed reading a good story about rural Australians with whom they could in part identify. Everyone loved his humorous touches , and in terms of short story craft Lawson appears to be closer to conventional Chinese short story writing and average readers do not find it extremely challenging.

Patrick White stands out among the more recently translated Australian writers. Three of his novels , several of his short stories and part of his autobiography had been translated and published by the end of 1988. The Tree of Man has been translated in Taiwan as well as in mainland China. McCullough s The Thorn Birds is another book that has two versions—probably more for commercial reasons than otherwise.

I cannot obtain the number of copies of all the books published. But the figures I have collected may be of interest. Here is the print-run of some of the novels :

Robbery Under Arms	24 000 copies
The Eye of the Storm	28 850
Nancy Wake	32 800

The Chinese Boy	41 000
Storm Boy	50 000
A Patch of Blue	59 000
For the Term of His Natural Life	66 700
The Salamander	76 000
The Thorn Birds	185 000 (at its third printing)

If one examines the books on the shelves , one will find some of them are not only dog-eared , but almost worn. Judging by the condition of the book , *Caddie* must be among the most frequently read books , too.

Notes :

1. CASIC stands for the Conference of Australian Studies in China , held in Beijing , China , 8-11 March 1988.
2. An Annotated Bibliography of Translations of Foreign Literatures 1949-1979 , China Bibliographical Library , Jiangsu People's Publishing House , 1987.
3. Magazines checked are : *Yiwen* , quarterly , 1953-58 ; *World Literature* (formerly *Yiwen*) , quarterly , 1959-65 , 1977-87 ; *Foreign Literatures* , monthly , 1980-87 ; *Foreign Literature and Art* . quarterly , 1982-86 ; *Yilin* , quarterly , 1985-87.
4. The first Australian short stories that were translated into Chinese are Lawson's ' The Union Buries Its Dead ' , ' Arvie Aspinalls Alarm-clock ' and Katharine Susannah Prichard's ' The Christmas Tree ' .