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W. D'ARCY CRESSWELL, A.R.D. FAIRBURN,
R.A.K. MASON.

AN EXAMINATION OF CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THEIR LIVES AND WORKS.

by

WILLIAM STEVENSON BROUGHTON.

A thesis presented for examination for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, to the Department of English, the University of Auckland. November, 1966.
With his permission, this work is dedicated to

DENIS GLOVER,

a friend of the three poets, sometime their printer and publisher; in appreciation of his help, encouragement and hospitality to the writer in the course of this research.

- W.S. Broughton.
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- W.S. BROUGHTON.
INTRODUCTION.

The intention of this thesis is to examine in three separate studies the lives, the verse, and other relevant data associated with three New Zealand writers Walter D'Arcy Cresswell, (1896 - 1960), Arthur Rex Dugard Fairburn, (1904 - 1957), and Ronald Alison Kells Mason, (1905 - ). The original suggestion of the choice of these three poets came from Mr R.M. Chapman (then Senior Lecturer in the Department of History at the University of Auckland) in early 1961; the outlines of the research project were planned by me a little later, advised by Professor S. Musgrove and Drs Allen Curnow and C.K. Stead (all of the University of Auckland's English Department) and undertaken at that University and later at the Massey University of Manawatu, as a research project for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, under the supervision of Dr Curnow.

The choice of the three poets concerned as objects of study was influenced not only by personal interest in their work, but also by a belief (which I feel the thesis may vindicate) that this was an opportune time to begin research into the careers of three men who, with other poets such as Ursula Bethell, Denis Glover, Charles Brasch, and Allen Curnow, may by common consensus be seen to have had a place in the first years of a significant verse tradition in New Zealand - the years from the
early 1920s onwards. But to speak of a 'verse tradition' it is probably necessary to work with much more data than can be supplied by a study of as few men as this thesis treats of; the limitations as well as the scope of the thesis, therefore, need to be defined.

Each of the three poets treated here was a man whose personality, socio-political outlook, and poetic sensibility differed considerably from those of the other two. Yet in spite of their wide divergencies of careers, temperaments and achievements, the three are initially linked if only because each was writing poetry in the earliest years of the significant verse tradition that is peculiarly New Zealand's.

When a verse tradition begins to develop in response to the pressures apprehensible perhaps to only a few exceptional sensibilities it is unlikely to manifest a common theme or common concerns consciously in its earliest years. The awareness of problems and achievements held in common comes more slowly and is observable from the vantage point of historical distance more readily than from the closer perspective of immediate involvement. Thus Holcroft, Curnow and McCormick were able to begin, in their different ways, their examinations of New Zealand's poetic naturation in the 1940s, because the process was "under way", the verse was becoming "established", and the patterns were emerging. What this thesis seeks to do is simply to document and briefly analyse a certain amount of primary material that
has come to hand in recent years and that is intimately associated with three of the poets whose work dates from the 1920s; this material has been organised chronologically wherever this was practicable, and the fact that to a great extent it bears out the general views of earlier literary historians is attributable more to the perspicacity of those earlier historians than to any conscious superimposition of assumptions upon it on the part of the researcher.

In each case, as much biographical data as is available has been organised into a study of the poet's life. Naturally each set of data offers a different problem for reasons associated with the differences in personality of each of the three. Cresswell's entire career was devoted to the profession of the role of poet and the importance of poetry to the human spirit. His whole life, therefore, was a "poet's progress", and with his actual poetic achievements being regrettably minor, this material has been on occasions intractable, demanding that the researcher record simply the acts and opinions, regardless of the triviality of the verse to which they might be germane, in order to further the documentation of this "progress". Fairburn's life presents the opposite problem. His wide range of interests have a common focus, that of the assertion of the value of natural human experience, but the manifestations of this range from poetry through literary politics, to painting, soil conservation, national politics, religion and ideology and of
course personal experiences. The researcher is fortunate in that Fairburn's letters have been collected by Mr Glover, but within these judicious selection has been necessary for the documentation, in order to maintain a focus upon the poetry and poetic activities. Frequently my use of the letters has extended into the areas of political or religious thought, and occasionally into the areas of personal experiences when these are recorded. The guiding principle in all cases has been that of documenting the changes and developments that the lyric and humorous poetry manifests. In Mr Mason's case, there is much less primary documentation available, and the period of poetic activity was brief, if intense, and followed by a longer period of polemic and political activity. The study of his poetic career is therefore less complicated, and less detailed.

Following this literary biography, there is presented in each of the three cases a study which seeks to interpret the major achievement of each of the three poets in the light of data presented in the biographical study. Here again each poet presents a different problem. Bearing in mind that a thesis such as this one is called upon to present documentable arguments rather than subjective literary evaluation, value-judgements on the poetry, while inevitably part of the study, are not presented with any assumptions about their being final or even all-embracing. Rather a reading of the work of each of the three poets has been undertaken to see in what ways the biographical data might be best utilised, and the data has
been used accordingly.

Thus in Cresswell's case the most obvious task has been that of examining the speculative writings, especially his unpublished "Thesis" and the pamphlet *Eena Deena Dynamo* to throw more light upon the precise nature of the poetic *credos* that is constantly alluded to in the two volumes of autobiography, the play *The Forest*, and the letters and unpublished papers. This, rather than any literary evaluation of the poetry or prose, is the concern of the second part of the Cresswell study, which is followed by a brief consideration of why Cresswell might be accorded a place in the history of New Zealand poetry, given the limited stature of his actual verse achievement.

In the case of Fairburn and Mason, there is no question of the actual stature of the poetry at its best. But the letters, which are the principal source of documentation for this study of Fairburn's career, together with some unpublished MSS, throw valuable light upon the metaphysical assumptions that sustain the lyric poetry, assumptions which a couple of critics have already explored in outline, but which may here be confirmed by the evidence of primary sources. This development of the poet's thought is, observably, paralleled by a development of the poet's lyric craft, and a later movement towards "social" rather than lyric verse, the origins of which are discernable much earlier in his life.

In Mr Mason's case, the question of the "moral" beliefs
and assertions of the poetry seemed to be of prime importance, both because of the apparent confusion on the part of some earlier critics as to the interpretation of the Christ image in certain of the poems, and because of the speculation that the biographical outline offers as to why the poetry pre-dates, in the main, a movement towards active political participation. Without seeking to give final answers to this latter question, the consideration of Mr. Mason's verse eschews the finally unanswerable question of whether there was a failure of inspiration, but does seek to indicate some points that the verse and the politics have in common, thus postulating a movement from the poetic to the political that may be interpreted as a continuity rather than a change in moral direction, notwithstanding that the two forms of expression are essentially different.

For reasons that will be apparent, then, each of these studies is an individual one, and no attempt has been made to draw conclusions which might seek to relate all three within a single patterned framework of belief or technique. It is implicit in the treatment of each poet that common experience could produce a common response, and where this is quite evidently the case it has been noted. (Fairburn and Crosswell, for example, had not completely dissimilar responses to the nature of modern society and its effective alienation of man from the experiences that he might otherwise encounter in a "proper" communion with Nature.) But in general the intention of this thesis is to consider each of the three poets individually, and
to record the researcher's findings without seeking illegitimately to map the whole literary history of the forty years that their careers span from three such disparate lives and canons of poetry. Such mappings are properly the province of the literary historian observing the period as a whole, as Dr Curnow did in the *Book of New Zealand Verse* and the Introduction to the *Penguin* anthology. Alternatively, it may be undertaken by some subsequent researcher after more theses such as this one have been compiled from available data.

A point made in a letter to me from Mr Glover in 1961 is therefore well taken. He wrote,

> I don't see any tie-up between your three authors, except that Rex (Fairburn) and Mason were friends each stimulating the other. Cresswell was always the cat who walked by himself.

No "tie-up" beyond that of the accident of chronology and the importance of each of the three in the creation of a New Zealand verse tradition is postulated. Some may emerge by implication, but finally the nature of the material has confirmed my supposition, which the supervisor has supported, that individual studies, paralleling each other only so far as method and material permit, were the proper forms for the parts of this thesis to take. They are presented as such, with each study setting out its general approach and assumptions in a brief introduction, in the hope that the documentation and analysis of the primary material in each will be a small contribution to the study of New Zealand poetry, and a respectful tribute to the work of each of the three poets.
WALTER D'ARCY CRESSWELL.


Plant thou in a poet's heart
One dear word or look or deed,
As the oak excels its seed
So it will increase with art.

On that dark and holy ground
Didst thou drop one silent tear,
In the season of the year
Something mighty will be found.

- The Poet's Heart.
(from Poems, 1921 - 1927.)
The rebellion of Walter D'Arcy Cresswell against the poetic movements of his time may be seen to be paralleled by another rebellion, perhaps more remarkable in the social situation of early 20th Century New Zealand, his rebellion against the orthodoxies of the prosperous Canterbury middle class of which his family was a part. These orthodoxies of belief and social behaviour had by the early years of the century become entrenched in a community which had created out of its historical origins (the Wakefield attempt at planned settlement in the 1850s, and a Colonial economy whose prosperity and social values lay in land-holding and in allegiance to the United Kingdom) a myth of "Englishness". Cresswell's whole career, which he saw and described as a "poet's progress", involved a struggle between the affections that he felt for New Zealand, and the revulsion that he felt against what he saw as the sham of its pseudo-
"English" culture. Curnow speaks of him as a poet "who... explicitly repudiated his country in verse", yet a study of his life and works shows that this repudiation never took him to the point of rejecting his "New Zealand nationality." This odi et amo tension is a theme traceable throughout Cresswell's life; its origins would seem to be rooted in the revolt which


his sensibilities demanded against the New Zealand (or rather against that part of it that was Canterbury) which was none the less always his "home."

This study of D'Arcy Cresswell will therefore outline his biography, as well as his literary activities, in order to see the ways in which these tensions of allegiance arose, and the ways in which they manifested themselves in his life and works.

D'Arcy Cresswell was born in Christchurch on 22 January, 1896,(1.) the son of W.J. Cresswell,(2.) a barrister and solicitor. The family was well-established in Canterbury, with some members farming in the province. I have not been able to find records of Cresswell's earliest years or his early schooling, and Christ's College have no records of his education before his entry there in 1910. The first indication of his response to Nature as an "aesthetic criterion" comes from two poems which appear to refer to a holiday (? in the summer of 1905 - 1906) at Robin Hood Bay, to the south of Port Underwood in Marlborough. This region, facing north to Cook Strait with the Kaikoura Range behind, is the subject of the early poem "Robin Hood Bay - A Ballad of Boyhood."(3.) The incident is again recalled of in the Lyttelton Harbour sonnet sequence, in fairly general terms in the final published form -

(1.) Cresswell's passport, issued London, 12 February, 1959. WTu MSS 170. (36.)
(3.) WTu MSS 170. (36.)
Where first thy forests were endear'd to me
In regions of my childhood, long before
I stood, my Country, on a promont'ry
Beside Cook's stormy strait, whose current tore
Thy wilds in two. And in the ocean's road
And brightening sun I only though of ye,
Ye Works of Nature; whose command I bore,
Even as a child, your messenger to be. (1.)

but with more specific autobiographical reference in the first lines of two earlier drafts of this sonnet -

When first you forest were endear'd to me
When I was but a ten-years' child, no more,
I stood entranc'd upon a promont'ry
Beside Cook's stormy strait whose current tore
Thy wild in two. And on that lonely shore,
In sight and hearing of earth, sky & sea,
To be your prophet, Nature, then I swore,
And long have loved no universe but thee. (2)

and

Young as I was, but ten years old, no more,
The clouds, the hills, the forest and the sea
Gave I knew not that they had given before,
(To any being,) and with it the decree,
Sealed from me then, of that which I must be
In years to come. (3.)

The painstaking nature of the revisions suggests that during the preparation of the Lyttelton Harbour sonnet sequence

Cresswell recalled the incident referred to as being of peculiar importance to him, and wished to record it as his 'initiation' as a lover of Nature. The wording "the decree/sealed from me then, of that which I must be/In years to come"

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(1.) Lyttelton Harbour VI.
(2.) WTu MSS 170. (33.) MS containing drafts of eighteen of the "Lyttelton Harbour" sonnets.
A variant in the MS, line 8 of the sonnet quoted, gives "since" for "long".
(3.) MS ibid.
suggests that he was not moved to write at that time, but later dated his discipleship to Nature, and consequently his poetic vocation, back to the incident.

In 1910 Cresswell entered Christ's College, Christchurch, and remained at that school for three full years. He entered a special form (between the Fourth and the Remove) in his first year, and passed into the Remove and the Middle Fifth in the two succeeding years.\(^1\) In his four formal subjects he was an undistinguished student, being generally in the bottom third of his class except in English, where he was fifth out of twenty-four, fourth out of twenty-nine, and eighth out of twenty-eight in over-all class placings in his three forms. In \textit{Present Without Leave} he describes something of these school-days\(^2\) and speaks of his successes in essay writing. C.E. Carrington further notes his skill in acting, singing, drawing, painting,

\footnote{1}{Mr Donald Dobson, formerly of the staff of Christ's College, to Broughton n.d. (August, 1962): "English seemed to be his best subject. Middle V which he reached would be below the U.E. form which was Upper V. He would not have had a chance of gaining U.E."}

Gresswell's class places at Christ's College were as follows -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Latin</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
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<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>20/23</td>
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<td>1911</td>
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There is no work of Cresswell's published in the School Register for those three years.

\footnote{2}{Present Without Leave CXXXI-CXXXIX.}
mimory and playing the piano (1.) but says of the formal education:

D'Arcy hardly pretended to give his mind to the system of education for which his parents paid the fees and if he passed any examination I should be surprised. Christ's College was then in the doldrums after the death of a headmaster, so that there was little incentive for an unusual boy of intellectual tastes. One master only stimulated us, James Monteath, who communicated to D'Arcy and me, and no doubt to many others, his deep feeling for English poetry. (2.)

Monteath and Carrington were evidently influential in these early stages of the young Cresswell's writing career. Again from Carrington's memorial:

...he taught me something of music, and I introduced him to classical mythology. We composed verses on parallel themes and even collaborated in an act or two of a classical tragedy. (3.)

In this introduction to the classics in translation, rather than through any formal academic study of Latin (his marks, above, indicate his weakness in this subject), may be traced the beginnings of his Romantic devotion to the writings of Greece and Rome, his interest in their thought, and an anticipation of his vision of a literary and social "golden age", which dominates the thought of Bena Deena Dynamo and the "Thesis" of the 1930s, where with singular naivety and a

(2.) ibid. Cresswell dedicated a poem "Marsyas" (unpublished; WTU MSS 170. (39)

"To my English Master at Christ's College, M. E. K. J. MONTEATH because he once told the class, 'There is a vein of poetry in Cresswell II which is distinctly refreshing,' and because one good joke deserves another."

(3.) Carrington. Lf cit. p 342.
smattering of antiquities he groped for the commonplaces of the thought of the Ancient world, out of space and out of time. From his youth on the Classics in translation continued to interest Cresswell as models containing "true" poetic themes and as the literary manifestations of a society supposedly less decadent than his own. Of the verse writings of these first creative years, a few pieces are preserved in a notebook, (1.) "W.D. Cresswell / Signaller / 16th Middlesex." (therefore compiled between the outbreak of war, and Cresswell's convalescent discharge from that unit in December, 1915.)

Cresswell left Christ's College at the end of 1912 without having gained his University Entrance, and began his professional studies with Messrs Collins & Harman, (2.) a Christchurch firm of architects. In mid 1914 he went to London to further these studies, at the Architectural Association, Bedford Square, (3.) but on the outbreak of war he enlisted as a signaller-private with the Middlesex Regiment. He was wounded in France in 1915, discharged to convalescence in Kent, and after recovery joined the New Zealand Engineers, with whom he served from 1916 until the demobilization of 1919. (4.)

The war-time notebook referred to above contains copies (some evidently transcriptions) of seventeen poems and fragments. (5.)

(1.) WTu MSS 170. (20)
(2.) Who's Who in New Zealand. cit.
(3.) ibid.
(4.) Dating from papers in WTu, and from letter Dobson to Broughton, cit.
(5.) WTu MSS 170. (20)
The earliest of these is a four-line fragment with the annotations "Fragments of poems written at College 1912" and "remainder lost". The latest are "To A.A." (dated "On the march in France, December 1st 1915."), and "Sorrow." (dated "In France, Decem 6th 1915.")

I have been unable to find any record of Cresswell's writings during the later years of the First World War, with the possible exception of a booklet of poems (in typescript) dedicated to Arthur Trywern Apsimon, a soldier of the 14th Royal Welch Fusiliers, with the words "whose example I worship, and whose nobility and genius are the inspiration of anything of worth in these pages." (1.) It is not possible to determine whether some of the twenty seven poems in this booklet (all undoubtedly early) were written before Apsimon's death a few months before the Armistice, or whether their dates of composition are in all cases later and the dedication is retrospective. All that is certain is that by 1919, when The Poet's Progress begins, Cresswell had written a sufficient quantity of verse to encourage him to approach the London publisher John Murray with

(1.) WTu MSS 170 (36), and vide also the Bibliography
All that can be said with certainty is that it includes some of the poems submitted to Wells Gardner, Darton, and that the terminal date (1921) for these cannot be accepted as a completely accurate one. In view of typed format of this MS, with its dedicatory material, &c, and its containing the four poems referred to in Present Without Leave XVII, I think it possible that the "Apsimon" book was the same as that submitted to Murray and Huxley in 1923.
a view to publication. (1.) Murray replied,

I have given careful consideration to your poems, and can give you good encouragement to persevere & complete the work you have in your mind. There is not enough here to fill a Volume but if you can produce as much again of equal merit I think it would be possible to produce a little book with some reasonable chance of success.

Owing to your impending departure and to my being overwhelmed with work today, I have had to form an opinion in very adverse circumstances - but I have done my best.

If you will let me have the rest at your convenience I will give you a final decision without delay. (2.)

Cresswell was undismayed by this qualified rejection (perhaps the only occasion when this was so,) for, he says, "it encouraged me in the belief that I was already a poet." (3.)

Back in New Zealand (? in 1920) he stayed with his family for a short time but soon decided to return to England to pursue the "profession" of poetry, a decision hastened by his wish to escape the sensational publicity which resulted from his being assaulted and wounded in an attack made upon him in Wanganui. (4.)

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(1.) The Poet's Progress. I
(2.) John Murray to Cresswell, London. 13 Jan, 1919.
    #Tu MSS 170. (1.7)
(3.) The Poet's Progress. I
(4.) This occurrence, often referred to by Cresswell's friends as "the Wanganui incident" (for example, in the Landfall memorial) was, according to Hesars, Roderick Finlayson and Ormond Wilson, one in which Cresswell was attacked and shot by the then Mayor of Wanganui as the result of a private quarrel. The Mayor was later arraigned for attempted murder.
In England he had declined to return to architecture or to take up journalism after the war; while in New Zealand he spent the period of post-war recuperation in a leisurely manner, while rationalising his refusal to work. Of this period he later wrote,

when I reached home I made no secret of what my ambitions were, but surprised all who knew me; and my health being poor, and no decision as to what profession I should adopt being required of me for over a year, I visited such parts of New Zealand as I had never seen, to improve my health, and to advance my design of founding my poetry on the traditions, customs and scenery of my native land. I was already resolved on returning to England soon after, without being committed to any profession, except perhaps authorship and to this only in the vaguest terms...

But those who had known me longest thought my pretensions absurd. That I might succeed as a writer of prose they did not deny; indeed they urged me to develop this gift however I might, and write poetry in my spare time; and no doubt God created the Universe in His spare time, at least in six days, and they must have been thinking of that. Poets, at any rate, have no spare time; and idleness, that is the curse of other men, is the nurse of poets...(1.)

Cresswell sailed from New Zealand in April, 1921, and stayed with his sister in Herefordshire until the winter of that year. He then spent six months in Germany, until ill-health forced him to return to England, about June of 1922. In November of that year he went campaigning in support of Ramsay MacDonald and the Labour Party in the General

(1.) The Poet's Progress. I
Election. He worked for the Party in Aberavon, Wales, and addressed two meetings. (1.)

In the New Year of 1923, he again sought publication with John Murray. He submitted an MS volume to Murray, who conferred with Leonard Huxley, then editor of The Cornhill Magazine, but finally rejected the verse. (2.)

A bound sequence of poems in the Turnbull Library papers may be a draft or a copy of this volume submitted to Murray. (3.) The MS contains twenty-seven poems, including the four referred to in The Poet's Progress - "Jaihalm", "The Ghosts of Foam", "Leaving New Zealand", and "Words" (4.) which were written between the return to England and the winter of 1922-23 and retained in the Poems 1921 - 1927 "with all their boyish faults". (5.) The remainder of the poems in this manuscript conform generally to Cresswell's description of his poetic concerns at the end of the war -

(1) I drew all I wrote from the fancied superiority and natural wonders of my native land, and of other countries in a like condition, and of the Tropics as well, indeed of all that was the antithesis of the Old, inferior and Foolish World (as I believed) on which our ancestors had turned their backs ... (6.)

(1.) The Poet's Progress, X - XLI
(2.) ibid XIV - XVIII
(3.) NT MSS 170 (36.) Also supra p. 20.
(4.) This dating from the narrative of The Poet's Progress.
(6.) The Poet's Progress III.
The rejection of the book by Murray was followed by a break in verse writing of about a year, until the writing of three poems in the summer of 1924. In the intervening time Cresswell first lived with some acquaintances, architectural students, and then in June set out with a South African friend (unidentified) on a walking tour of the Iberian Peninsula. This journey is described in The Poet's Progress XXIV - XXXI. By the time the pair reached Seville, Cresswell was too ill to continue and had to remain in that city with consular assistance for two months. From there, he went by train to Madrid where he spent a fortnight, chiefly reading and visiting the Prado, before making an abortive attempt to join the Spanish Legion against the Riffs, and then going on to Barcelona. In that city he again sought the help of the consul, and being destitute was sent back to London via Paris. (1.)

Arriving back in England, he alternated between London, his sister's home in Hampshire, and friends in Bournemouth until March, 1924. His only literary output in these six months was "a few articles on Spain, and an essay that appeared at this time in The English Review." (2.)

From the summer of 1924 until Cresswell again returned to New Zealand in 1928 he kept up a sustained flow of writing, and the bulk of the poems in the 1921 - 1927 volume date from this period.

(1.) The Poet's Progress, XXIV - XXXI.

period. In the half-year until the end of 1924, the fourteen poems from "Christchurch, Hampshire" to "The Islands of Love" were written; by November 1924 a further sixteen, to the fragment "Written Above My Grave" had been composed. (1.)

The details of Cresswell's life in these years between the Iberian Journey and the final publication of *Poems 1921 - 1927* are meagre. The *Poet's Progress* concerns itself at times with Cresswell's philosophical speculation, at times with the composition of the verse, but is autobiographical only in general outline. Documentation in the Turnbull Library papers is also minimal: there are only twelve letters dated between 25 May, 1925 and Cresswell's leaving London for New Zealand about 13 November, 1927. Nine of these are to his parents(2.) and they throw little light upon his activities apart from the negotiations with the publishers Wells Gardner, Darton. Towards the end of 1924 he contracted an unsuccessful marriage(3.) and about this time he seems to have been living on the fringe of the London "underworld". With assistance from his parents he moved to a cottage near St Albans with an income sufficient for three months. When this ran out he took a job canvassing

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(1.) This dating from the narrative of *The Poet's Progress*.
(2.) WTu MSS 170. Correspondence files 1.8 to 2.35.
(3.) Apart from allusions in the narrative of the autobiography, the only information in the WTu files is a record of the baptism of a son in 1924 (MSS 170. 85 - 96). None of Cresswell's friends seem to know much more about this marriage or its breakup.
for the trade magazine of a London publisher in Birmingham.

After a fortnight he resigned this position, being "seized with
a longing for solitude and natural scenes", and returned to
St Albans to collect his typewriter and begin a walking tour of
Buckinghamshire. The tour lasted from the summer into the
autumn of 1925, and this was the first time that Cresswell set
out to sell his poems from door to door. He had apparently
ten poems typed for sale at sixpence each\(^1\) from the thirty-
odd poems that \textit{The Poet's Progress} dates as having been
composed by this time. The tour encompassed Buckinghamshire,
Oxford, the Cotswolds and Gloucestershire, Warwickshire and
Stratford-upon-Avon, and back to London.\(^2\) Apart from the
account of the tour in \textit{The Poet's Progress}, there is the
interesting comment by a friend with whom he shared lodgings
in Chipping Campden, Glos.:

As far as I remember the poems were not
very good, but he had a certain charm,
and people bought them to help him rather
than because they wanted them...

While he was here he went round the
villages and sold a number of his poems,
making, as I rememb(e)r, just about
enough to buy his food and pay for his
room.\(^3\)

\(^1\) \textit{The Poet's Progress} LIII. Three of these copies are in
WTu MSS 170 (42). They comprise two page leaflets, \(4\frac{3}{8}\) x
7 ins, the outer leaf carrying a centred title, the word
"Copyright", and the signature in ink, "Walter D'Arcy
Cresswell". The texts are on the inner leaf in two
of the three cases. The poems in the WTu file are "The
Pacifio", "Be Natural, My Heart", and the two epitaphs,
"Lines Laid On Shakespeare's Tomb", and "Written Above
My Grate".

\(^2\) \textit{The Poet's Progress} LII - LXI.

\(^3\) Christopher Whitfield to Broughton. Campden, 28 April, 1961.
Cresswell returned to London in the autumn of 1925. He made contact with Otto Gugenheim and Vernon Knowles, both of whom he had known before, and from the latter he secured a letter of introduction to Wells Gardner, Darton, Ltd, the London publishers. His interview with Messrs Charles and Harvey Darton is described in The Poet's Progress LXXIV. In a letter to his mother, 16 November 1925, he wrote

they were most absorbed to hear that I was selling my poems on the streets & had sold thousands since August. They are at once to supply me with printed sheets (free of charge to me) to continue selling in this manner preserving the type of each poem as they lay it down until all the poems are in type. Then they are to print & publish them in book form. The book should be out before the Spring. I am sending them four poems for a start tonight. Darton also wishes to see my collected prose which I expect he will publish at once if at all. I am preparing all I have written in the past four years; & my idea is to illustrate my own development therewith, possibly by recessing all these within inverted commas & illustrating & explaining with passages written at this present time...

I don't intend to publish my poems without a preface explaining my opinion of modern poetry & what I intend to do with my own poems. Until this preface is ready they will not be published. I am in no hurry at all. I have the rest of my life for this purpose and none other. (1.)

The eight poems eventually set up by Wells Gardner, Darton, were "Let Not Fashion", and "An Epitaph" (these two on one

(1.) WTu MSS 170 (1.9 - 12)
sheet, and the rest on single sheets) "A Song", "Stillness and "Storm", "To A Friend Who Gave Me A Flower", "Be Natural, My Heart", "In A Field Of Cats", and "Fragment Of A New Zealander's Address To His Native Scenery". (1.) Publication of the volume was delayed by the General Strike of 1926, and Cresswell, apparently rejecting the opinions which had led him to campaign for the Labour Party in the 1922 General Election, answered the Government's call for strike-breakers (there is a reference to Coriolanus on page 119 of The Poet's Progress which suggests Cresswell's attitude to the workers at the time) and became a "scab" conductor on a London transport bus. (2.) Soon after this, he began living in a lodging house in Drury Lane, described in The Poet's Progress LXXX - LXXXV, where he remained until the mid-year. In the later summer he set off on another tour selling his verse, this time on the printed leaflets. His itinerary included Guildford, Dorking, Reigate, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge, Canterbury, Tunbridge Wells, Horsham, Winchester and Bournemouth. At Tonbridge he stayed briefly with Edward Sackville-West,

a very fragile exotic young man of twenty-five, wearing a black velvet suit & . Surrounded by tapestries, books, fancy drinks & the appliances of music. I should say he is exactly what Wilde intended by 'Dorian Gray'. We talked about books (he dabbles on the 'New Statesman' when he is in town) &

(1.) Copies in MTu MSS 170 (54)
(2.) The Poet's Progress LXXV - LXXVI.
then he played some Beethoven at my request, during which his manservant came in to draw the blinds & shut out the moonlight. His enormous room had once been a guard-room of the garrison he told me, & the tapestries he had found in some distant corner of the palace. I had an inward vision of his bedroom nearby, done in violet & rose, & a bathroom of alabaster. (1.)

From Winchester, he cycled to Bournemouth where he spent three months with his friend Tim Braithwaite, before returning to London in the first week of November, 1926. The winter taxed his health again, and after a stay in the Fulham Workhouse infirmary he moved out to the St Albans' cottage where he stayed for most of the next year. He was at this time being troubled by the break-up of his marriage, alluded to above, and this appears to have found expression in the several poems entitled "To L-", but his financial position was improved by the patronage of a Miss Lyall of Kensington, whom Cresswell reported having met in early 1927, and who assisted him in raising a 2/6 subscription towards a publishing guarantee of £10 for Wells Gardner, Darton. (2.)

At this time (May, June, 1927) Cresswell wrote of an approach to the publishing house of Sidgwick and Jackson. In a letter to his parents, 15 May, 1927 he wrote "You will see from the letters that Dartons are to introduce us to Sidgwick

(1.) Cresswell to his mother and father WTu MSS 170 (1.23 - 24)
(2.) WTu MSS 170 (2.28 - 30)
& Jackson as soon as I have decided what I want to publish and have submitted them to Miss Lyall. "(1.) And to his mother, 17 June, 1927, "The manuscript has gone in to Sidgwick and Jackson's. I don't think they will take it, neither does Darton. Its [sic] hardly their style. But Darton offers to print it failing those he sends me to." (2.) Darton evidently wished to sub-contract out the types of the projected book of poems, notwithstanding Miss Lyall's offer to sponsor its publication, but the refusal of Sidgwick and Jackson (and apparently some other houses) led him to agree to the publication in the summer of 1927 - 28. (3.)

Cresswell wrote an introduction to the volume to replace his first Preface which Darton had refused to publish (4.) and the book was published in February 1928.

A day or so before Cresswell sailed for New Zealand, Poems 1921 - 1927 was given a very brief notice by The Times Literary Supplement (5.), its remarks being chiefly a precis of Cresswell's own introduction, viz:

He has purposely included in this collection some of his early work,

(1.) WTU MSS 170 (2.28 -30)
(2.) WTU MSS 170 (2.31 -32)
(3.) The Poet's Progress XCV.
(4.) ibid LXXXIX.
(5.) TLS 26 April, 1928. p 318.
upon which he sets little poetic value, for its interest in revealing to what extent a Colonial poet, with little in the first place but an empty, though magnificent environment to urge his pen may acquire this necessary inwardness." (1.)

Cresswell left England in some anger at this "brief and grudging review" and wrote to his friends before sailing from Southampton to declare "that only I was a prophet, and not The Times." (2.)

Since the latter part of 1926, Cresswell had been contributing articles to The Press in Christchurch, the payments for which were subsidised by his father "pound for pound". Twenty-two articles in all had been printed by this paper (3.) and within a month of his arrival home the first instalment of The Poet's Progress was published, again by The Press ("the same published Butler's Evrephon") (4.) Cresswell noted in the attribution on

(2.) The Poet's Progress XCVIII.
(3.) Between 16 October, 1926 and 19 November, 1927. Vide Bibliography.
(4.) Cresswell was not strictly correct in this statement. According to A. J. Hoppe, A Bibliography of the Writings of Samuel Butler and of Writings About Him (London. n.d.), The Press had printed Butler's "Darwin Among the Machines" on 13 June, 1863, and "Lucubratio Ebria" on 29 July, 1865. (Hoppe. Pt II, items (6) and (9).) The latter piece is described as a letter which contains the germ of "Life and Habit" and foreshadows "a couple of pages of Evrephon". (Hoppe. cit.)

In a jubilee issue of The Press, 25 May, 1911, these two pieces were reprinted, together with a letter from Butler to the editor of the paper, dated 7 January, 1902. (Hoppe. Pt II, item (73).) At the time of this reprint Cresswell would have been a boy at Christ's College, and it is possible that the 1911 reprint in The Press, together with its covering remarks, could have been the basis for his comment in the Faber and Faber attribution.
page ten of the Faber and Faber edition, 1930) under the title of "My Life Abroad". The "Progress" was issued in weekly instalments from Saturdays, 16 June to 21 July, and then fortnightly from 4 August to 13 October, 1928.

Cresswell remained in New Zealand for only six months on this visit, and returned to England in the S.S. Hertford in December, 1928. The next two years saw a rapid improvement of his fortunes, and some tangible promise of a literary reputation in England. Introductions to Lady Ottoline Morrell, Edward Marsh, Arnold Bennett and H.G. Wells brought him the kind of entree he had been seeking. Through Bennett he obtained an introduction to Faber and Faber, who accepted the slightly amended text of "My Life Abroad", together with three sonnets written in December, 1928 and February, 1929, for publication as The Poet's Progress. This was published early in 1930 (a pen portrait of Cresswell by William Rothenstein was included as a frontispiece) and received favourably by the English press.

One of the immediate effects of its acceptance was an enquiry from the Bodley Head, whether

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(1.) vide Bibliography.

(2.) Virtually all of these reviews were little more than notices of the book and praise in general terms. Reviewers noted the quixotic narrative and curious style, but seldom saw the book as anything more than an interesting travel narrative. WTu MSS 170 (101) contains a file of reviews, chiefly from daily papers in the United Kingdom supplied to Cresswell by a clipping Service.
Cresswell had any other publishable work that might match the success of *The Poet's Progress.* (1.) For this firm Cresswell revised and brought up to date the *Wells Gardner, Darton Poems,* selecting nineteen pieces from that earlier volume, (five of them with major revisions) and adding twelve poems written between 1928 and 1931. Of these twelve latter, one, "To V.M." dates from the stay in New Zealand in 1923, three are noted *Written at sea on returning to England,* and the remainder date after the return to England. (2.)

This second book of poems was published with a Preface which was virtually a disclaimer of the opinions set out in the Preface to the *Poems 1921 - 1927.* In this new Preface Cresswell wrote,

There shall be no apology for this book, unlike its forerunner; for the best is here which the author has done, and the worst now omitted; and did he wait for the best he might do there'd be nothing published.

I confess to have grown ashamed of that other, and take comfort to think it was printed at private expense, and was never widely for sale, nor noticed at all by the English Press. It sufficed me then, so far as my pride had need; and has done my taste much service, to find by degrees, and be told by my friends, what was fit to be published and what was not. In this way a poet, I think, should confront the public a few at a time;

(1.) *Present Without Leave CXXXI*

more especially at present, when the utmost weakness and licence is sure of the widest praise; and woe betide whom success overwhelms at first!

And so, whatever there may be of worth in this present book - a considered collection of the best of my verse - is due, how strangely! to the vices of that which was launched in a fortunate silence three years since. Moreover, the bad that contained has escaped the public unnoticed, by the narrowest shave, and need never return; while the good in this, that cannot but stand, will now appear to the most of its readers as something new, and may be excused on the grounds of a first offence. (1.)

Yet this disclaimer, for all its curiosities of style and assertiveness of tone could not divert attention from the weaknesses of Cresswell's verse, especially when this was compared with the prose of The Poet's Progress. The Times Literary Supplement reviewer expressed this feeling:

Mr Cresswell proved in his previous book, "The Poet's Progress" that he possessed unusual powers of poetic spontaneity and saliency, and if this collection of odes disappoints a little our expectations, it is doubtless because many of them are taken from a still earlier book of poems ... 

They reveal the nervous sinewy handling of words and images which distinguishes them so hopefully among modern poets.

... the idiom, particularly in his earlier verses, often betrays unduly the poetic company which he keeps. He has wisely gone to School with the Elizabethans, with Homer and with Dante, but he has not quite freed his own pen from his masters' utterance. (1.)

Given both the charity of the phrase "disappoints a little", and the reviewer's ability to paraphrase the introduction to the volume in order to avoid any sharply pointed judgements, the awareness of the poems' weaknesses and derivative nature is still evident, though not as sharply expressed as in Glover's reference to Cresswell's impact upon him in 1932, when he says

I hurried home to read again his published verses, and, puzzled, found them as flat, as mannered, as irritating as before. (2.)

or as accurately as H.H. Holcroft's assessment in *Encircling Seas;*

Cresswell always speaks of himself as a poet; but it is disconcerting to turn from The Poet's Progress to the poems which were written during the years of his vagabondage. They are interesting only because the key to them is in the robust autobiography. The creative excitement which Cresswell describes in some of the best passages of his earlier book left no afterglow in those staid and undistinguished lines. There may have been poetry in his mind; but it struggled in vain against

(1.) TLS 11 February, 1932, pp 98 - 99.
the conventional imagery, the
archaic diction and the surprisingly
quiet rhythms.\(^{(1)}\)

But though *The Poet's Progress* serves as an autobiographical
account of the years from 1919 to 1929 in which the major events
of Cresswell's life, interesting enough in themselves, are
noted, it is more than just "robust autobiography" and
certainly more than is implied by E.H. McCormick's cursory
"chronicle" or "narrative of vagrancy".\(^{(2)}\) *The Poet's
Progress* is a record of Cresswell's developing awareness of
the nature of the "vocation" of poetry rather than just the
record of his life and his growing experience as a "craftsman".
The progress is qualitative as well as quantitative, notwithstanding Holcroft's apt judgement on the accompanying verse.
A reading of *The Poet's Progress* as an autobiographical
documentation of the verses collected in the two books of
poems is of little value if it leads no further than to the
contrast of good prose with inadequate verse. More properly
the book is to be seen as the record of a New Zealander's
growing awareness of poetry as an art, however unorthodox his
definition of that art or his notion of his own relationship
to that art. It is allied, moreover, with the theme traceable
in *Present Without Leave*, his "creation of a cosmogony, of which
he was immovably the centre",\(^{(3)}\) the pursuit which occupied

\(^{(1)}\) M.H. Holcroft, *Encircling Seas*. (Discovered Isles,
1950 - p 255.)

\(^{(2)}\) E.H. McCormick, *Letters and Art in New Zealand*, p 133

\(^{(3)}\) Denis Glover *cit* p 348.
most of Cresswell's energy during the 1930s.

Cresswell returned to New Zealand on 26 January, 1932. An interview with him was published in The Press in two articles the following day. The first dealt with taste in the Christchurch city art gallery, the second was headed "Pretenders, Not Poets./ Literary Scene of the Day./ Mr D'Arcy Cresswell's Success in London."(1.)

Cresswell addressed himself to the public of Christchurch with considerable self-confidence -

several literary men interested themselves in him, and became his patrons. "For I may say that I am in the happy and somewhat old-fashioned condition of having patrons," he explained, adding that it was to please them that he had undertaken the second part of "The Poet's Progress."

"In my search for poets to succeed Byron ... I can discover almost no poem - let alone poets - to have been written since Robert Bridges, and his output yields little enough... No, I cannot say what poetry I have yet to write. I think I have not yet reached that region where poetry is freely written."

AN ARTIST'S DILEMMA.

Another difficulty with which he has to contend is the vast distance between New Zealand and England. "The base of my blood is in New Zealand; I feel that when I have been in London too long. But the base of my taste is in London; and I feel that if I am in New Zealand too long. It seems that this is a

(1.) The Press. Christchurch. 27 January, 1932.
dilemma for any colonial artist. Consequently a slump in the state of the world, the threat which it makes to one's lines of communication, and the amount of means one needs to live as if were in two worlds are causing me as much anxiety as the farmer."

But Mr Cresswell has little sympathy for the farmer. "You're complaining here of a slump," he went on, "but farmers should not expect to be rich. Farmers, like priests, should be poor for both serve a God..." (1.)

The immediate effect of this interview was not to stimulate any discussion of the crucial questions of the "colonial" artist's dilemma which Cresswell raised, but rather a personal discussion of Cresswell's opinions of poetry and his own place in it. A correspondence followed in the columns of The Press, under the heading "An Essay in Criticism." It was pursued by five readers, all attacking Cresswell's conceit in excluding himself from his general criticism of modern poetry. The general level of the correspondence, in the course of which Cresswell was offered the Poet Laureateship of the Kaiapoi Borough Council, was not particularly raised by Cresswell's replying to one of his critics with the following doggerel limerick,

(1.) The Press. Christchurch. 27 January, 1932.
There was an old lady called PROSE,
Saw a carrot in front of her nose.
She bit it, alas!
And turned into an ass —
He! Haw! Gee Up! There she goes.

This "poem" evoked a facetiously analytical reply from the same correspondent who had offered the Laureateship, couched in terms that suggest it was someone who knew of Cresswell's homosexuality and was not above making insinuations concerning this. One further letter, a limerick, was interestingly signed "De Morepork" (echoing the name of "Count" Geoffrey de Montalk who had attacked Cresswell in a broadsheet, Against Cresswell: A Lampoon.) (1.) After this letter the correspondence lapsed.

From Saturday 13 February, 1932 to Saturday 9 April, the second part of "The Poet's Progress" (later to form the first sections of Present Without Leave) was published in five fortnightly instalments in The Press. With one exception on Tuesday 15 March (2.) no correspondence was printed in the columns of the paper, but after the fifth instalment (3.) the series was terminated. Regrettably, the business and correspondence files of The Press before 1933 have been destroyed (4.) and there is no possibility of documenting Cresswell's statement that the editor, Mr. Oliver Duff, suppressed the series under pressure

(2.) A correspondent advocating a change of uniform for Christ's College, & propos of a remark made by Cresswell about the school.
(3.) Present Without Leave CLXII.
from some influential Christchurch citizens. Cresswell's version of the incident is contained in a note in his hand, adjacent to a draft of sonnet XIII of Lyttelton Harbour.

When I had published "The Poet's Progress" in London, it was very favourably received there. But when, on returning to N.Z. I began publishing its sequel, "Present Without Leave" in the literary page of the C.N.O. "Press" there was such an outcry from illiterate but influential quarters at the account of N.Z. with which it opened that the quailing Editor of that paper ceased publishing it. A month later he sought to do for the tramway-men (during a strike) what he had so conspicuously failed to do for literature. He came out on their side, & lost his job, a strange case of delayed justice. (1.)

After this episode, Cresswell retired to the family home at Barnswood, South Canterbury, to pursue the writing of his "Thesis", the project which, apart from the composition of Lyttelton Harbour and some relief work in afforestation and land clearing in the later years of the depression, occupied most of his time during this seven years' stay in New Zealand. This project had been foretold in the Preface which Darton had rejected from the Poems 1921 - 1927, and had been begun seriously after the Bodley offer to publish prose as acceptable as The Poet's Progress. In reply to this offer Cresswell records "I at length offered to make an Anthology of the best poetry since Byron, with perhaps a Thesis wherein I might throw more light

(1.) WTu MSS 170. (36)
on that view of poetry outlined in my Progress.1 A contract was drawn up in which the agreed time for the preparation of the work was to be six months. In the period between his holiday in the north of England and the Christmas of 1930 he had worked on the selection of verse for the Anthology, reading through "every poet in the period" including Emerson, Whitman, Hopkins, and "the Australians", and pursuing his research into the archives of the British Museum.2 The work continued in a desultory fashion for the next twelve months, but the letters written to him by Edward Marsh, 20, 22 April, 1932, suggest that the progress was not considerable and that his publishers were dissatisfied.3

On the voyage out to New Zealand in 1932 the work was halted at Panama by the theft of his copy of Tennyson,4 which contained his notes for the Thesis. The project was therefore put aside while Cresswell began drafting the second part of the "Progress", and was only resumed again after The Press ceased to publish the series. This second attempt Cresswell also deemed unsuccessful.5

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1. Present Without Leave CXXXI. Cf in The Poet's Progress: III. The use of nature in poetry. XXIII. The relation of women and heroes. XXXIX. The decline of contemporary poetry. XLVI. Artists, philosophers and saints. LXXV. The nature of numbers and the analogy with morals. LXXVIII. The nature of history.

2. Present Without Leave CXXXIX.

3. Ibid CLIX, CLX, CLXI. Also WTu MSS 170 (3.57 - 60.)

4. Present Without Leave CLXIV.

5. Ibid CLXIII.
In the autumn of 1933 Cresswell, again at Barnswood, began work on a third draft. The ideas were still ill-formed in his mind and refused to take the shape of a precise argument until two critical articles in the Christchurch Press by Professor F. Sinclaire of the Department of English at Canterbury University College, focussed his thought and the "speculations converged to a point."(1.) The reply that Cresswell produced was intended to be published in a pamphlet (perhaps the first of a series) entitled The Stream. R.W. Lowry set up the type for one such issue(2.) but the pamphlet was never issued. Though the material of this reply to Sinclaire differed considerably in tone and in the nature of the argument from the final draft of the "Thesis", Cresswell still saw this as the first successful draft of that project. But there is no further record of the work until Cresswell's arrival in Auckland on or about 13 July, 1933. On the recommendation of Lord Eledisloe, the Governor General, whose patronage he had sought both in Christchurch and in Auckland, he submitted the completed draft of the "Thesis" (as it was at that stage) to

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(1.) Present Without Leave CLXXXIV. Professor Sinclaire's articles "A Defence of Prose" appeared in The Press 11, 18 June, 1932.

(2.) A copy of the proofs is in WTu MSS 170 (83 - 84). For a transcription of this article and a discussion of the "Thesis" and its various stages of development in Cresswell's mind, vide Section II, and the Appendix.
The New Zealand Herald. When that paper rejected it, he submitted it to Alan Mulgan, then literary editor of The Auckland Star. Part of it was published in three episodes, Saturdays, 5, 12, 26 August, 1933, in the Magazine section of that paper. (1.)

The episodes were titled, POETRY: A POET'S THESIS. The first carried as an introductory paragraph, "The following, by the author of "The Poet's Progress" who is a New Zealander, is part of a thesis on poetry that will be published shortly by John Lane at the Bodley Head, as a preface to an Anthology of English verse called "Since Byron." These articles are copyright." The first article, subtitled "This Heavenly Harmony", set out Cresswell's belief in the glory of Ancient Greece -

In Ancient Greece all was between extremes of freedom and slavery, wherein, while a true proposition was kept, they flourished happily to the admiration and jealousy of all after times. (2.)

The argument that poets are to be the saviours of mankind is first put forward specifically by Cresswell in this essay; (if we exclude the unpublished Stream pamphlet.) The second

(1.) The Auckland Star, 5, 12, 26 August, 1933. Note also Present Without Leave CXCI - CXCIII.

(2.) The Auckland Star 5 August, 1933. The term "proposition" in this quotation may be glossed as "balance", or "relationship". (Dr Curnow suggests a misprint for "proportion.")
article, "Range Over Life", deals with the divinity of "music", a broad term for "art", referring to any art-form whereby our reasons and senses are rewed and overcome by heavenly music, that by subduing those active strong guardians whereunto we are captive and charming their watchfulness into a slumber, passes into our souls, possessing us wholely (sic) in despite of evil divisions, commanding all our attention, and bringing us heavenly refreshment and knowledge and promise of immortality. (1.)

The third, a fortnight later, entitled "Man's Equilibrium", considered the poet as a legislator for mankind (cf Shelley), the desire for harmony, and a comparison of poetry and philosophy. An editorial note at the head of this third article indicates the thought projected in the later sections of the "Thesis":

The remainder of Mr Cresswell's Thesis discovers Christendom to have been the second stabilised, or poetic, system, and speaks of Christ as "the father of poets." (2.)

A comparison of the themes of these articles with those of "Euna Deena Dynamo" and the "Thesis" itself in its final typescript draft shows that these articles contain much of the matter that was incorporated with little modification into those later works. (3.) But after this publication Cresswell became

(1.) ibid 12 August, 1933.
(2.) ibid 26 August, 1933.
(3.) vide Section II:
dissatisfied and began to revise the published sections and incorporate them into another (fourth) draft. In the later part of the winter of 1933 an "omen" prompted him to borrow a sum of money from Sir William Goodfellow (1), with whose family he had already been living for about three months, and move into Auckland city where he began another revision. When his brother Douglas came to Auckland to stay at Milford for the summer (presumably in January or February of 1934, since this post-dates the broadcast of the talk, "Modern Poetry and the Ideal", IYA, 31 December, 1933) Cresswell moved in with him and began another draft (the sixth) which, counting from the draft published by The Auckland Star, he enumerated as "the fourth" (2).

The work was halted when Cresswell began a second series of broadcasts in 1934, but begun again when he took the bachel at Castor Bay. This draft was completed by the time of a trip to Spirits Bay with Ormond Wilson (soon to be elected as Labour M.P. for Rangitikei) in November. This trip, in spite of the strain it imposed on their personal friendship served to persuade Cresswell that his arguments would not do in their present form:

All the way we discussed my newest Thesis, which Ormond, who looked philosophy in the eye at Oxford, and now had all he could do to keep his machine on the road, would by no means allow; and coming back I was

(1.) "Omens" frequently guided Cresswell, as many references in the autobiographies show. For this incident, vide Present Without Leave CXCV - CXCVI.

(2.) Present Without Leave CCI.
by now so maddened by endless contention, which Ormond clung to at my side (he was by now quoting the Germans) and by the ups and downs and sickening sideways of this landscape... that we parted in Auckland on distant terms. Nevertheless I realised the weakness of my Thesis by these discussions, and my inability to defend it; and beginning the whole once again I laboured painfully to make it perfect. (1.)

Still another draft (the seventh from 1930) based on the previous one which Wilson had criticised, was begun about the end of 1934 and was to be the final draft which Cresswell submitted to the Bodley Head in 1936. (2.)

In its final form the Thesis consisted of forty-two pages of typescript, and the Anthology of extracts of a play by Wells, thirty-seven poems and extracts by Poe, Beddoes, Tennyson, Arnold, Rossetti and Whitman, as well as three poems (signed "Anonymous") by Cresswell himself. (3.)

Cresswell's description of the Thesis in its final form and of its dispatch records

So now, all being finished, I sent it to London, one copy to my publisher and another to Gegenheim, who acts for

(1.) Present Without Leave CCVI., and of Ormond Wilson LF cit p 359.

(2.) About this time Cresswell had contacted the Bodley Head and ascertained that they were still prepared ("very properly") to receive the MS in spite of the six years' delay. (Present Without Leave, CCXXI.)

(3.) Web MSS 170. (74). vide Appendix.
me there; although I must say I nearly forgot the Anthology, which was intended to illustrate these wonders, but now looked so small and meaningless near the end, I wrote a new introduction thereto to explain what it was. I even ventured to add some verses of my own anonymously (to give Tennyson and Arnold and Rossetti some support for the journey.)(1.)

It (the Thesis) was by no means as a philosopher would have it, but clear enough to be understood, I supposed; since it was clear and corrective to myself I considered it done. It was in three parts which I called, the first part the Introduction, and second the Synopsis (not quite knowing what I mean thereby, but I could think of no better titles) and third the Conclusion. In the first part, as I said, I endeavoured to show what was and is and must be, only supposing that my terms were correct; for instance, what spirit must be, supposing Man has a spirit; and what our faculties in relation thereto, supposing our faculties to be and to move as I thought. But having laboured so long to do this, I next thought I must prove these terms, so nothing I had shown in the first part should be doubted; so in the second part, the Synopsis, I laid down a number of axioms concerning our faculties and their outcome, and proved each axiom, as I thought, in a brief passage beneath it. ....

In the Conclusion I gathered many things from the earlier rhetoric Theses which I thought worthy to be published; and if these were somewhat light and of little worth

(1.) Present Without Leave CCXXXI. For the poems included in the Anthology, see Appendix.
in themselves, yet so much laid down in those two parts before them was a broad ground on which they might show and amuse themselves, proving it to be firm. (1.)

The Thesis was rejected by the Bodley Head in early 1937, and never accepted for publication elsewhere. It is a barely readable document, tortuous and confused, illogical and capriciously eclectic: (2.) Its arguments are generally set out in the more acceptable Deena Deena Dynamo, the printed text of two lectures, the first given to the Department of English at Auckland University College in the third term of 1935, and the second to the Auckland Theosophical Society in February, 1936. The text of the lectures was prepared with the help of Roderick Finlayson (3.) and published by Denis Glover at the Caxton Press, Christchurch, in June, 1936.

Apart from a couple of contributions to small University magazines (Phoenix, Auckland, and Sirocco, Canterbury) the only other published work of this period earlier than Present Without Leave was the sequence of thirty-nine sonnets, Lyttelton Harbour, composed between the time of The Press’s suppression of the autobiography and the end of 1935, and published by R.W. Lowry at the Unicorn Press, Auckland, in a limited edition in September, 1936. The sequence, which is

(1.) Present Without Leave CCXIX - CCXX.
(2.) For a full analysis of the contents of this final draft, vide Section II.
(3.) Cresswell to Roderick Finlayson, (Castor Bay), 28 January, 1936.
Cresswell's most successful work in verse, is autobiographical and polemical in its aim, setting out in verse the writer's vision of Nature and the Poet and, in its reference to Cresswell's reception in New Zealand(1) it contains a specific rejection of the society, (though not the physical "geography") of the "Antipodean Hades" in which Cresswell was seeking to create his poetry. Its deliberate archaisms have constituted for some critics a hindrance to appreciation, and M.H. Holcroft declares, "it contains too many undigested elements of an older poetry."(2) But Allen Curnow in the Introduction to his Book of New Zealand Verse, 1923 - 1945, believes "that in the best of the sonnets these (archaisms) become a living speech...

At his best, Cresswell is as fully master of his idiom as some others who were not compelled to such extremes in discovering a place to begin."(3) These and other judgements upon Cresswell's verse are discussed in more detail in Section II of this part of this thesis.

In the last years before he left New Zealand, Cresswell contributed occasionally to the new radical periodical Tomorrow. Here he published reviews of Frank Sargeson's Conversation With My Uncle(4) and Ursula Bethell's Time and Place(5) as well as

(1.) vide Lyttelton Harbour, especially sonnets XIII, XV, XVIII.
(2.) M.H. Holcroft, Encircling Seas (Discovered Isles, 1950 p256)
two minor poems, and three commentaries signed "Vulcan." In the same periodical his _Elena Deena Dynamo_, _Lyttelton Harbour_ and _Present Without Leave_ received reviews, from A.R.D. Fairburn, John Harris and P.G. (Dr Curnow suggests Frank Cadd) respectively.

Cresswell's admiration for Sargeson's writings was as evident here as it was nearly twenty years later when he contributed to Mrs Helen Hofmann's appreciative publication _The Puritan and the Waif_. Sensing the strength and quality of Sargeson's prose, so different in tone and style to his own, and yet so important both as a contribution to prose in the new literature and as an influence upon the younger New Zealand short-story writers, Cresswell declared of the stories,

Herein is their power, like that of art itself, in proceeding from abstract to concrete, from the emotion to its object, from some instinctive understanding of Nature at large to a highly conscious and limited view of art in little. The process is that of art, it is mainly the smaller focus that makes such writing inferior to the finest poetry; for were the focus to be enlarged the style would be blurred and the vision lost.

The argument that good art proceeds "from abstract to concrete" and must involve itself with the description of the

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(1.) _ibid_ 2; 28. p 23; 2; 21. p 26; 6; 90. respectively. For correspondence on these reviews, vide J.J. Herd, Index to "Tomorrow". (Otago University. 1962.)

(2.) _1954_.

(3.) _Tomorrow "Realism and Art" cit._
particular, especially in prose, is recognisably Cresswell's own idiom. But something more than merely Cresswell's polemic is to be found here, for in this passage he points to the technical strength of Sargeson's short-story art, just as in a later part of the same review, when discussing "I've Lost My Pal" he accurately notes the indigenous quality of that piece which distinguishes it, and others of Sargeson's stories like it, from the imitative styles which bedevilled many of the writers who at that time were seeking to create in prose (or verse) a literature that belonged "uniquely to the islands of New Zealand."

In the same review Cresswell declares,

> Others may see nothing in this story. To me it is an imaginative victory of great importance in this country. It is the kind of thing that loses half its meaning when it is merely imported. And these sketches of Sargeson's are wholly native, something we can't foster with tariffs. (1.)

But if the review of Sargeson was a perceptive piece of work, the review of Ursula Bethell and the commentaries "Comments and Occasions" are more predictably polemical assertions of Cresswell's own views. In the Bethell review, for example, we find "...beauty alone has a suspicious appearance to most modern tastes, partly because of the attempt to divorce it from reason..." and in one of the commentaries (2.)

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(1.) *Tomorrow*. "Realism and Art" *cit.*
(2.) *ibid* 3; p 398.
about half the space is devoted to an attack upon Professor Arthur Sewell's speech on New Zealand writers and the projected history of New Zealand literature, given at the New Zealand Education Fellowship Conference. The nadir comes in the same issue with an open letter to Frank Sargeson, signed "Vulcan", in which Cresswell wrote bluntly and unsubtly,

You know so many interesting people up there. Do you know D'Arcy Cresswell? I should like to meet him too, after yourself. He interests me vastly. If you know him, please tell him from me, he should write more for Tomorrow... (1.)

The two small poems in Tomorrow about this time (2.) are of little interest, when compared with the achievement of Lyttelton Harbour a year earlier. They are, though, typical of the verses that Cresswell was to continue writing over the last twenty years of his life, small fragments and lyrics, imitative and archaic, seeking to capture the qualities of the Romantic and Elizabethan verse that he admired, and yet pathetically inadequate as a justification for his claim to be a major poet of the Twentieth Century.

Cresswell moved south to Wellington about this time, and did a little free-lance broadcasting for the N.Z.B.S. (3.) By mid 1938 he was ready to leave New Zealand, and wrote to Roderick Finlayson asking him to clear out all MSS from the Castor Bay

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(1.) Tomorrow 3; 398.
(2.) ibid 2; 21 p.26, and 2; 33 p 25.
(3.) Cresswell to Roderick Finlayson. (Wellington) 12 July, 1938.
bach, which was then being taken over by Jane Mander. (1.) He returned to England in the (English) summer of 1938, disheartened by his failure to find a publisher for his Thesis, and weakened by the hardships of the depression years. His health, which had never been robust since the First World War and the privations of the Iberian walking tour, was further weakened by these years of meagre resources and heavy drinking, but by his own report, his condition was evidently much improved by the sea voyage and he returned to revive in the company of the literary acquaintances whom he had left seven years before. (2.)

The draft of Present Without Leave was completed at this time and Cresswell approached both Dent (3.) and later Richard de la Mere of Faber and Faber (who had published The Poet's Progress) with a view to persuading them to accept the second volume of the autobiography. De la Mere refused, but an introduction from Sir John Rothenstein to Sir Newman Flower, a director of Cassells' publishing house, resulted in Present Without Leave being accepted by that firm in early 1939.

About the same time Cresswell re-submitted the MSS of the

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(1.) Cresswell to Roderick Finlayson. n.d. (1938).

(2.) When Cresswell returned briefly to New Zealand in February, 1950, he was interviewed by P.J.W. of the New Zealand Listener, 10 February, 1950; No 555, pp 7 - 8. Part of the projected third volume of the autobiography was printed in that journal in five instalments, 17 February to 31 March, 1950. Vide Bibliography. Most of the data on this page is drawn from this series of articles.

(3.) Cresswell to Roderick Finlayson (London) 12 Jan 1939.
Thesis and the Anthology to the Bodley Head, whose company had been re-organised in the previous year, hoping that the new firm might view the work more favourably than the old, but the work was again rejected.

In the later months of 1939 Cresswell worked briefly for the B.B.C., recording poetry with music on the model of his IYA (Auckland) talk series of 1933 - 1934, and then gained an appointment as Assistant to Gilbert McAllister, Head of the New Zealand Government Public Relations Committee in England. This Committee was dissolved at the outbreak of the second World War, and Cresswell then transferred to a job as a broadcaster, "where I worked, incidentally, under Ormond Wilson..." broadcasting New Zealand Government news to the troops in the Middle East in 1941 - 1942, after which he joined the Ministry of Information and lectured to the Army in the United Kingdom.

Cresswell made only one brief trip back to New Zealand between the outbreak of the War and his death, and it was the correspondence with a few New Zealanders, chiefly Ormond Wilson, Roderick Finlayson, Mrs. Helen Hofmann, and Basil Dowling, that provided a continuous, if tenuous link with his
home country. (1.) Present Without Leave had been published in mid-July, 1939, and received little notice compared with The Poet's Progress nine years before. Its sales were affected by the war, and though Cresswell records that it was favourably reviewed by the Times Literary Supplement and the Sunday Times, he remarked bitterly

I'm hoping someone will somewhere deal with my ideas tho'. They always take refuge in what they think is my romantic careless life, & amusing (!) poverty. (2.)

He was also disappointed to be told that his friends from the Castor Bay days had generally unfavourable reactions to the book, though it is not clear whether these were critical or personal.

(1.) I am indebted to Mr Finlayson and Mrs Hofmann for permission to inspect and use their collections of letters. The Dowling and Wilson correspondences are in the WTU collection, though the latter carries a 50-year restriction, and is therefore not available for inspection. Little of Cresswell's other correspondences of this time (with Frank Sargeson, Lindsay Fraser, Mrs Doris Mirans) have thus far come to light, though at the present time (1965-66) Mrs Hofmann is seeking further letters in the United Kingdom. All letters cited are "London" unless otherwise noted. Mr. Finlayson's file contains ninety-one letters and postcards. It is apparent that some letters were lost through the irregularities of war-time mails. There is no correspondence after 1954, with the exception of three letters, 1957-58. All letters are from London unless otherwise noted. It is the Cresswell-Finlayson which gives the most valuable data on the poet's last twenty years. The letters not only give a fairly detailed check upon Cresswell's life in London, and his vicissitudes in attempting to gain publication and recognition in the world of London publishing, but also show Finlayson's indebtedness to Cresswell for his detailed and perceptive analyses of the former's MSS drafts of his short stories and novels. Cf Antony Alpers' record of similar assistance, If 56 cit. pp 353 - 358.

(2.) Cresswell to Finlayson. 23 July, 1939.
responses. Cresswell's own retort was indicative of his growing rejection of the New Zealand literary milieu -

For my part, I think a N.Z. writer, of any mark in the World, could receive no criticism so damning as the admiration of his fellow countrymen, or more than one or two of them. (1.)

Throughout the war, Cresswell worked whenever possible on his play The Forest, which he had begun at Castor Bay. It is continually being described as "almost finished", but was apparently being amended and revised until 1949. Meanwhile, in later 1940, Cresswell made contact through his work with the Ministry of Information with John Lehmann, (2.) the editor of Penguin New Writing who about that time was publishing work by a number of New Zealanders, Curnow, Brasch, Fairburn, and Finlayson. Cresswell was at the time helping Finlayson revise one of his MSS (3.) and seems to have been instrumental in drawing Lehmann's attention to Finlayson's work.

Most of his time during the war years was occupied by the broadcasting and lecturing which he was doing, but there are brief references to a play, submitted to the B.B.C.:

It's on the earliest voyage of discovery to Russia (by Englishmen) via the newfound Archangel route & is a novelty in that it includes a fair bit of blank verse. (4.)

(1.) Cresswell to Finlayson. 17 January, 1940.
(2.) Cresswell to Finlayson. 20 Jan, 1941.
(3.) vide n. (1.) p 55. supra
(4.) Cresswell to Finlayson. 10 March, 1942. I find no copy of this play in the WTo MSS 170 collection of plays, (58 - 72)
and of a plan to revise and republish the Lyttelton Harbour sonnet sequence. (1.)

Cresswell's patriotism at this time was evidently in conflict with his poetic beliefs. Having been a soldier of the line in 1914 - 1919, he felt himself again involved in the new conflict and though he was past conscription age, and of imperfect health, the sight of his friends enlisting made him wonder whether he himself should enlist again. (2.) Finally, his work with the B.B.C. and the Ministry of Information was to become his contribution to the "war effort". Yet while Cresswell was not indifferent to Britain's plight, and reacted to the Nazi aggression of 1939, in his own words, "as most fair-minded persons do", (3.) a morbid vision of Hitler as a fulfillment of his anti-mechanistic prophesies inclined him to conceive of the war (and the prospect of German victory) as a desirable historical advance towards the destruction of the Copernican Universe. With the development of aerial bombing, the nature of war as propounded by Trenchard and Harris in England and Goering in Germany made the total destruction of civilization possible, and, to pessimistic thinkers, likely. In this context, Cresswell's desire for the annihilation of a hated civilization becomes an historicist's justification for what would otherwise

(1.) Cresswell to Finlayson, 26 December, 1943.
vide also Carrington Lf cit p 344.
(3.) Listener ibid. p 23.
be thought of as an evil. The argument echoes the anti-
heretical theses of the Reformation (and Cresswell in his
Thesis was prone to view the rise of Copernican "science" as
an heresy.) It also suggests the strength of Cresswell's
belief in his "system" that he was able to contemplate such a
pattern of history with equanimity, and it further draws
attention to the degree of unreality involved which permitted
him to take for granted his own survival from the holocaust
which he awaited.

He recorded, ten years later:

I was certain that Germany would win,
and that my own aims nevertheless
could not lose. Europe, I believed,
including Great Britain, would emerge
as a unified power under Germany,
between whom and America and Russia
that final Armageddon would be fought
until the whole world and its
scientific outlook and mechanical
apparatus had been annihilated.
Only then would a poetic, or
harmonised way of life, such as men
had achieved in Greece and Christendom,
be possible. I had (and have now)
ono other view of the future, nor any
insight into the eventual justice of
God than this.

But this terrible outcome was too far
in the future to have wholly determined
my thoughts upon current events,
towards which I reacted as most fairminded persons do.

I had been stirred, months before, by
the willingness of the Czechs to
fight for their country, and disgusted
and ashamed at the refusal of France
and England to come to their aid lest
they should incur the whole might and
fury of Germany against themselves.
I even ventured upon a sonnet in praise of the Czechs which ended

Think we by this respite
To buy the Avenger off? That hearts unsound
and drooping for the scythe can hope to stand
Where honour could not? That in the Mower's sight
We shall be left to rot into the ground
False to brave Benes and his noble band?

...But, in fact, my thoughts were
deeper and darker than this, and had
no such concern for national honour
and adherence to treaties that this
sonnet professed. Rather they were
such as I could not, or dared not,
have expressed. I saw Hitler as
the irresistible scourge of a
material and scientific World I
detested, armed of necessity with
a heavier weight of materialism and
more unscrupulous science than it,
the more surely to effect its
destruction. (1.)

This passage would confirm that the perverse and self
contradictory fantasy of a civilization destroyed to further
the ends of poetry was not merely a transitory one resulting
from a pessimistic contemplation of the world situation at the
outbreak of the war. Cresswell evidently persisted in this
belief long after the end of World War II as the passage above
shows. In the post-war situation, however, the notion is
re-phrased to accomodate the newer scientific advances, where
the development of nuclear weapons made the Armageddon idea

(1.) New Zealand Listener. 31 March, 1950. No 562.
pp 22 - 25.
if anything more plausible. (1)

Such an attitude seems indicative of Cresswell's increasing tendency in the years after World War II to move towards an intellectually untenable position in his attacks against "modern poetry" and contemporary technology. It demonstrates, too, his increasing preoccupation with these, rather than with the predicament of a literary exile from New Zealand, which had been a dominant concern in his thought in the 1920s and 1930s.

Where in those earlier decades his verse and prose had continually pointed to the tension between "blood" and "taste" in his literary endeavours, the last two decades of his life were marked by his increasing obsession with his battle against "modernism", and his denunciations of the "ignorance" of the contemporary literary world for its preference for Eliot, et al, above Cresswell himself. It would not be correct to suggest though, that all ties with New Zealand were severed. What is noted here is a change of emphasis, rather than a total break in intellectual and emotional concerns, and Cresswell continued his association by correspondence with friends in New Zealand, as well as entertaining New Zealanders in England(2) and

(1.) Lucifer in The Forest foresees the fear of war actually turning man away from this course, though this, he suggests, would give peace which would in turn permit women to do the devil's work!


(2.) vide the Landfall memorial, cit.; Denis Glover, pp 346 - 348. Anthony Alpers, pp 353 - 358, also correspondence with Basil Dowling, Roderick Finlayson, Mrs H.L. Hofmann.
seeking further publication in this country.

In 1945 he wrote to Finlayson,

I can surely do more for myself
and for N.Z. literature by being
on the spot in London than by
again submitting myself to the
very small mercies of my countrymen.

(1.)

and this feeling of isolation was evidently increased by the
death of his mother in the same year, which seemed to him to
sever the last of his intimate family connections with New
Zealand. But he continued to consider himself to be a New
Zealand poet, though in exile, and the last fifteen years of his
life saw a number of attempts to publish again in this country.
He unsuccessfully submitted a poem, "Hitler 1945" to Ian Gordon's
New Zealand New Writing, but was pleased to be published in Allen
Curnow's Book of New Zealand Verse, which publication he saw as
a recognition of his status in the emerging literature, though
he deprecated the fact that the most recent work of his contained
in that anthology was no later than 1935:

... the introduction is a sound
piece of spadework. It almost
marks the beginning of N.Z. as a
ture separate identity. As for
myself, I'm not well represented
as they knew none of my later work
which I'm keeping for my next book ...

I seem a bit old fashioned there
in that company - those clever
young sparks; but I don't expect
any of them (except Mason) will
come to much, tho' their diggings

(1.) Cresswell to Finlayson. 21 May, 1945.
are very useful & give us our first identity when all put together & published. (1.)

The "later work" which Cresswell referred to was perhaps a sonnet sequence which he had described to Finlayson a few months earlier.

.... I think they are reflecting an important change in my outlook, & a clarification of the spiritual struggle before me, & at present going on. I have about 25 written this year & last, of which about 10 to 15 would be of use. The sonnets would be led up to & explained by an autobiographical text in prose, & it entirely depends on the quality of the sonnets whether the book would be worth doing. I mean I still have to reach a higher point with the sonnets to make it worth while, & only success in the struggle, or a realisation wherein success lies, can give me the necessary poetic power. (2.)

There are also passing references in the letters of the next couple of years to major work in progress, possibly this sonnet sequence and the long poem "Sol y Sombra", (3.) but the only two publications in the immediate post-war years were two curiosities. The first of these was a small cyclostyled edition of twelve poems (so titled) done in 1947 at the Spiegel-Verlag, a

(1.) ibid. 30 Sept, 1945, and cf. the note on R.A.K. Mason's copy of Leander infra, p 85.
(2.) Cresswell to Finlayson. 28 July, 1945.
(3.) WTu MSS 170 (25).
prisoner's camp for Germans in Egypt, administered by a friend of Cresswell's named Otto Gregory. The poems were reproduced from the typescript and bound by the prisoners, and the issue was for private circulation only. (1.) The other published piece came as a result of a job which Cresswell held from mid 1946 to the end of 1947, as editorial and publicity agent to an industrial advertising company in London, E. Walter George. The correspondence of the period suggests that Cresswell held this job quite happily until he resigned it at the end of 1947 to devote all his energies to the Margaret McMillan biography which Hutchinson's had commissioned. But in 1947 there appeared a small four-page pamphlet entitled

A PIOUS ODE / Commemorating the 21st Anniversary / of the Industrious Company of / E WALTER GEORGE LTD. /

Printed and published without permission, by the Directors and Staff of/ E. Walter George, Limited, London, 1947. (2.)

The poem, signed "D'Arcy Cresswell" contains forty couplets of rhymed iambic tetrameters, satirically suggesting that the directors of the firm worked only for God, and that all within the firm were elevated in His sight accordingly –

(1.) Cresswell to Finlayson. 3 July, 1947. also WTu MSS 170 (24) & (57).

(2.) WTu MSS 170 (54). There is also a copy in GaL and in the Christchurch Public Library. For correspondence on Cresswell's employment with the firm, vide Cresswell to Finlayson, 25 May and 27 July, 1946, and 28 Jan, 1948.
Helmut Geroseim; portraiture
He maketh, wonderfully sure
That Thou, O Lord, may'st recognise
Each of our members when he dies,
And no dead nit-wit dare to forge
Connection with E. Walter George.

It is an attractively-produced little whimsy, interesting, apart from its bibliographical value as a little-known piece of Cresswell's work, as an anticipation of the satirical verse that he was to produce from the Trireme Press in the last years of his life. But a more important project at this time was his biography of the English philanthropist and humanitarian Margaret McMillan. Cresswell was possibly commissioned to do this work on the suggestion of John Lehmann; Hutchinson's were to publish the book as part of the Prime Minister's £250,000 "Margaret McMillan National Memorial" fund, and Cresswell was paid £400 for his work. He resigned from E. Walter George's in late 1947 to work full-time on the project\(^{(1)}\) and though he was predictably behind schedule, according to his letters to Finlayson, the work was completed in late April, 1948.\(^{(2)}\) The book was well received by the left-wing press and periodicals, though its stringent social criticism made it less acceptable to the more "establishment" journals. Cresswell dedicated the book to Mrs Doris Mirams of Timaru, one of his New Zealand friends who had for many years helped

\(^{(1)}\) Cresswell to Finlayson. 28 Jan, 1948.

\(^{(2)}\) ibid. 14 May, 1948. The notebooks in W Tu MSS 170 (19 and 20) appear to contain working notes on this project.
him with gifts and money, and whom he saw as a New Zealander dedicated to causes of the same importance of those of McMillan in the United Kingdom. (1.)

Cresswell appeared to see this work as a "pot-boiler", notwithstanding the fact that it is probably one of his best pieces outside of the autobiographies. He appeared to want to revise it for republication, though the book as it stands may support Ormond Wilson's impression that "he wrote best when he revised least". (2.) But he still felt that his major concern must be the publication of The Forest and his recent verse. He had toyed with the idea of submitting the play for the drama prize to be awarded for Bernard Shaw's ninetieth birthday celebrations, (3.) but the play was not completed until the end of 1948. (Its actual completion after so many years was perhaps accelerated by a wish to publish it in time to raise funds for him to travel to the Canterbury centennial celebrations in New Zealand in 1950-51. (4.) Initially, though, Cresswell sought publication in London rather than New Zealand for the play. John Lehmann was evidently informed of its existence by Sargeson, and received a copy of it from Michael Hamburger, who was attempting to help Cresswell find a publisher. Lehmann wrote to Hamburger, 19 May, 1950 —

(1.) Cresswell to Finlayson. 16 June, 1948.
(3.) Cresswell to Finlayson. 27 July, 1946.
(4.) ibid. 14 May, 1948.
It is indeed a remarkable piece of work, written with great fervour and sincerity. I cannot, however, convince myself that it comes off, or that its theme has been worked out at a deep enough level. The verse doesn't seem to have solved all its problems, and I found the humour very flat footed...

...in my opinion it is a remarkable failure. (1.)

Hamburger also submitted the play to the B.B.C., whose Talks Department rejected it (2.) and three years later (after its acceptance by the Pelorus Press in Auckland) it was also sent to The Spectator (3.) and rejected.

Cresswell's relations with all but a few of his acquaintances in New Zealand were at this time becoming more strained. Three incidents seemed to have deepened his resentment against the literary world of his home country, the refusal of Charles Brasch, Landfall's editor, to accept his verse, the refusal of the State Literary Fund Committee to aid him adequately in his work on the third part of the "Progress", and the long delays by the Pelorus Press in the publication of The Forest.

On the first of these, Cresswell wrote to Basil Dowling -

Brasch asked me to contribute to the symposium on Ursula Bethell.... (4.)
But for the subject (a friend of mine)

(2.) P.H. Newby to Hamburger. 23 May, 1950. WTu MSS 170 (11. 298).
(3.) Iain Hamilton to Cresswell. 28 July, 1953. WTu MSS 170 (11. 306).
(4.) vide Lf 8 (December, 1948.) pp 281 - 284.
I wouldn't have complied, as I had sent Brasch a sonnet... and he rejected it with the euphemistic remark that it wasn't one of my best. Perhaps not, but if he can't find room for a trifle in verse of mine, I'll certainly not oblige him with the prose he keeps asking me for. So that's the end of any collaboration with Landfall so far as I'm concerned, tho' I shall follow its development with interest. I'm sorry for I have much new verse I should like to have seen the light in Landfall before I publish it in book form here, not comments on my own "Progress" like the sonnet, but impersonal objective stuff. But my reputation (in verse) is very low in N.Z. I scarcely see an article on N.Z. literature without some slighting reference to myself - like Winston Rhodes memoir in the Libraries Journal which Sargeson has sent to me. My forthcoming verse will, I hope, make it pitifully inept - Rhodes' estimation, I mean. "Call no man happy till he is dead" - nor no poet's Progress futile either until he has ended it either - that's my answer to Rhodes. (1.)

It is interesting to note that here, and throughout the last years of his life, Cresswell continued to value publication in New Zealand, perhaps because he felt it easier to obtain than publication in England, but also possibly because of his sincere feeling that he remained always a "New Zealand poet". The Landfall rejection evidently deeply offended him, and Antony Alpers records him saying, "They won't have my poetry, you see! Fools! If they didn't repudiate my poetry like that they could

(1.) Cresswell to Basil Dowling. 5 December, 1948. W Tu MSS 170 (104).
have as much of my prose as they want..." (1.) In fairness to Brasch, though, it is perhaps easier to accept Alpers' comment upon this incident -

Since, if I had been the editor of Landfall, I might easily have fallen into the same error, I kept rather quiet about this, and allowed him to assume that I admired his verse as much as I admire certain of his prose. I imagine others, too, have committed the same minor dishonesty in order to retain his friendship. (2.)

than to consider Brasch's judgement to have been at fault. (3.)

In the matter of the actions of the State Literary Fund Committee, Cresswell had perhaps greater cause for anger. Folio 11.292 of the Turnbull papers (the draft of a letter to P. Lawlor, then Secretary to the Committee) suggests that Cresswell had requested a grant of £600 to keep him while he was drafting part III of the autobiography. Being deeply in debt, and requiring money for his passage, he sought the grant in a lump sum, but the Committee decided to pay only £300, and that in weekly instalments of £6. Cresswell had committed

(1.) Lf 56 cit Antony Alpers. p 356.
(2.) ibid pp 356 - 357.
(3.) Cresswell's only other contributions to Landfall were a reply to Keith Sinclair's review of The Forest, Lf 24 (December, 1952) pp 328 - 330, and a letter on M.K. Joseph's commentary (passim) on homosexuality, Lf 52 (December, 1959) pp 384 - 385.

He submitted a poem sequence "Something for Miranda" to the Landfall poetry competition in 1953 (correspondence to Dowling 21 March, 1953; to Finlayson 24 March, 1953.) A letter concerning the review of The Puritan and the Waif was refused publication because it arrived too late for inclusion, according to a letter to Mrs Hofmann, 5 Dec, 1956. Mr Brasch says he has no correspondence "except the briefest notes" from Cresswell in his files. (Charles Brasch to Broughton. (Dunedin) 14 Nov, 1961.)
himself to paying the New Zealand Shipping Company £212 for the return fare in monthly instalments of £25, and was thus faced with the prospect of receiving only £88 for his trip. From his own calculations he declared

In the six months of my absence (sic) only £150 will have been paid, so that without further help from your Ctte I shall be for 2½ months without any means at all, and for the remaining 3¼ months shall have only the unexpended £88. (1.)

It would seem that these negotiations had originally begun in mid-1949(2.) when Cresswell saw that it would be financially impossible for him to come to New Zealand, or to work on the "Progress" or negotiate publication of _The Forest_ without financial help. He left England deeply in debt, and lived aboard the ship (M.V. "Hurunui") for the greater part of his stay in New Zealand (from 17 February to 14 (?) May, 1950) seeing only a few of his friends in the main centres. But in that time he was able to arrange with R.W. Lowry and the Pelorus Press to raise a subscription to print _The Forest_, the proofing of which was to be in the hands of Finlayson and Sargeson. Finlayson advanced £15 towards costs, and Lowry agreed to pay £50 for the rights, though shortly before Cresswell left New

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(1.) WTu MSS 170 (11.292) draft of a letter Cresswell to P. Lawlor. (14 Feb, 1950. probably written aboard the "Hurunui" while the ship was berthed in Wellington). The Committee replied in the negative on 26 February. (ibid 11.295).

(2.) Cresswell to Finlayson 1 Nov, 1949, first mentions the S.L.F. offer.
Zealand he learned that Lowry was unable to meet this commitment. (1.)

This last trip to New Zealand seems to have been a brief and unhappy one, and Cresswell arrived back in England in mid-August, 1950, ill, despondent and still deeply in debt. Hints in a letter to Finlayson soon after his return suggest that he may have been contemplating suicide. (2.) It was evidently at this time that desperation made him decide to resume his attack upon "modern poetry" in earnest, and so satirise out of existence the verse that was impeding his recognition. In the same letter to Finlayson, he recorded,

> Then one night I prayed to my Providence, & in the morning my way lay clear before, like a cold but clear dawn. I was to take my poems once more into the country & sell them from house to house. And I was at the same time to declare war on the modern poets and their publishers, who are standing in my way here, & fight them with my pen with all the scorn & bite I could muster. (3.)

The last ten years of Cresswell's life were almost entirely devoted to the projects suggested in the letter quoted above. In general they were pathetic years, with age and poverty troubling him, and little success besides the publication of

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(1.) ibid. 19 Feb (Auckland), 9 March (Auckland), n.d. (27 March, Lyttelton), 1 April (Wellington), 3 May (Kurow via Oamaru), 7 May (Lyttelton) all 1950.

(2.) ibid. (London) 27 August, 1950.

(3.) ibid. & of the letter quoted by Ormond Wilson, Lf 56 cit. pp 360 - 361.
The Forest to compensate for the hardships. But a remarkable quality of optimism and obstinate persistence sustained him, and the continuing help of well-wishers in New Zealand (especially Mrs Hofmann, Mrs Mirams, and the Finlaysons and Wilsons) eased his position a little.

He was, he told Finlayson, preparing to have his poems and satires printed and to rent out his cottage and go into Kent to sell the poems from door to door until the winter drove him back to London. Nine such pamphlets are extant in the Turnbull papers, containing three lyric poems, eight satirical pieces, and a twelve-page essay entitled "Inspiration". It is not clear how Cresswell hoped to finance this project, even with his cottage rented out, though he spoke of having some of the longer lampoons (including "The Dyliad") published if further funds came to hand from the State Literary Fund.

But about Christmas, 1950, an anonymous gift of £100 pounds arrived with the message "A Merry Xmas, & to have one you need only remember how many faithful & enthusiastic friends you have in N.Z." This enabled Cresswell to complete his long

(1.) Cresswell to Finlayson. 27 August, 1950. cit, supra
(2.) WTu MSS 170. (54, 55.) for descriptions, vide Bibliography
(3.) In WTu MSS 170 (29).
(4.) Cresswell to Finlayson. 27 August, 1950. cit.
(5.) Quoted in Cresswell to Finlayson, 13 April, 1951.
ballad The Voyage of the Hurunui which he immediately entered
in the £500 Festival of Britain Poetry Competition, though
since it describes the World & England
in particular as being the work of the
Devil, it can't possibly win. (1.)

At the same time as the poem was submitted to the Competition,
he sent it to Glover to negotiate for New Zealand publication.
A typescript copy in the Turnbull papers has the following in
Cresswell's hand:

Terms to D.C.: for N.Z. copyright.

(1.) If I win, provided he publishes
with one year of my win being
publicly announced, free of
royalty on first 250 copies sold,
but with 10% royalty on next 750
copies, & 15% on all subsequent
copies.

(2.) If I don't win, provided he
publishes within two years of
date on letter (March 20 '51),
with the same contract between
him & Dobson. (2.)

In early 1952 Cresswell told Finlayson that Glover was prepared
to accept the MS of The Voyage of the Hurunui, though on what
terms he does not say. With Glover leaving the Caxton Press
soon after, however, publication was delayed until 1956. In
the meantime Cresswell had taken up the night-watchman's job at
Somerset House which he held till his death, and having finished
The Voyage of the Hurunui he turned back to work on the long

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(1.) Cresswell to Finlayson. 13 April, 1951. cit.

(2.) WTU MSS 170 (26).
poem "Sol y Sombra" which an earlier draft called "A psychological fantasia in a Proem and two parts". (1.) The third part of the "Progress" was "moribund" (2.) at this time, however, and there is no definite evidence that Cresswell ever got beyond the stage that had been reached when the New Zealand Listener published its opening sections in the five instalments 17 February to 31 March, 1950.

After about two years' delay from the original time of acceptance, (3.) Lowry's Pelorus Press published The Forest in 1952. The play was dedicated to Roderick and Ruth Finlayson. Illustrated with wood-engravings by E. Mervyn Taylor, it was an attractive piece of typography, marred only by four mispaginations in the first gathering, which were corrected by a printed slip in all copies issued after the mistake had been noted. The play caused little real interest, and was not given a public performance until after Cresswell's death. (4.) But the correspondence shows that its author was evidently elated by its publication, though displeased at the delay in printing, and he hoped that the projected Caxton publication of The Voyage of the Hurunui would further enhance his reputation, at

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(1.) WTU MSS 170 (23).
(2.) Cresswell to Finlayson. 13 April, 1951. cit supra.
(3.) "That Pelorus certainly is the slowest fish in the oceans of the World" - Cresswell to Finlayson. 24 January, 1952.
(4.) The Forest was first produced in New Zealand by Christopher Catheart for the New Independent Theatre, Auckland, 4 to 8 June, 1963. For a sympathetic review, vidi J.C. Reid, New Zealand Listener, 28 June, 1963.
least in New Zealand.

Apart from the belated publication of *The Voyage of the Hurunui* in 1956, Cresswell had no other contacts with publishing in New Zealand apart from his contribution to *The Puritan and the Waif* and two whimsical poems in the periodical *Here and Now*. *The Puritan and the Waif* was a proposed tribute to Frank Sargeson, organised and edited by Mrs Helen Hofmann, but difficulties over publication forced its editor to have it cyclostyled instead of printed. Cresswell's contribution was a short essay entitled "The First Wasp" expressing his admiration of Sargeson's work in terms similar to those in his *Tomorrow* review of Sargeson in 1936, but attacking the view that a positive assessment would be made on the work of a writer who was still working -

Happily we are all his admirers here, otherwise I should recoil from the prejudice of pronouncing a positive judgement on a man whose life's work, I believe, has yet to be finished, and who alone knows the value and purpose of what has been so far published. Such premature, drum-head pronouncements have been made in New Zealand upon my own aims and work, and, although I ignore them, I don't like them. (1.)

Finlayson had apparently at this time been seeking P.E.N. support for a pension to aid Cresswell in London, but none was forthcoming. Cresswell therefore continued to support himself

by his night-watchman's job, supplementing his income with money from lodgers. He continued to write satires and lampoons against "modern poetry" and in May, 1954, noted to Basil Dowling that he was working on an attack against Edith Sitwell. (1.) There is also a hint about six months later that he was thinking of beginning work again on part III of the "Progress", but there are only two references in any of the later letters of this work actually being done. (2.)

Meanwhile, in spite of Here and Now not having printed his two satires to his satisfaction, he recorded his gratitude to that journal since

Here and Now is the only paper in which I can publish verse in N.Z. Landfall is closed to me. Brasch often asked me for prose, & I was prepared to send him some, but only if he would print a certain amount of my very unfashionable verse too. As a beginning I sent him a rather good, but old style sonnet, & had he published this I wd have sent him the prose he wanted, but he declined it and his pages have been closed to me since, as much to his loss as to mine I think. Of course I didn't tell him, when I sent the sonnet, that the prose was conditional on the verse being now & then endured, but so it was. I have felt the need since for an opening for my verse in N.Z. & that is why H & N is more valuable to me than the prestige of the paper might seem to warrant. I'm hoping they'll take a quantity of my satires, wh. of course in the present state of the fashions, are not acceptable to any paper here, tho' I think I may get a publisher for them in book form & their pre-publication in H & N will help that. (3.)

(1.) Cresswell to Basil Dowling. 31 May, 1954. W Tu MSS 170 (105)
(2.) Cresswell to Elaine Goodfellow. 13 Oct, 1954; to Mrs Helen Hofmann, 1 April, 1955, and 2 July, 1959.
(3.) Cresswell to Mrs Hofmann, 11 May, 1954.
But before publication of the satires was achieved in the two volumes of *Poems For Poppycock*, Cresswell was moved to write a series of sonnets on the current crisis in Cyprus, which briefly gained him some notice. It is suggested in Section II of this study that at least some of the motivation of this book may be seen as philosophical, rather than political, with Cresswell's support of the Greek Cypriots being in part a rather Byronic gesture of devotion to their Hellenic tradition, and in part a manifestation of his belief in the "priestly" role of the poet, declaring publicly an inspired view of proper behaviour. Yet mingled with these motives there is also a trace of Cresswell's liberal sympathies (which he maintained, though often eccentrically, from his youth onwards - for example, in his biography of Margaret McMillan.) There is, too, a sense of humanitarian outrage at the actions of the British occupation of the island, expressed in his description of the writing of the sonnets -

It all came about in an inevitable way, owing to the unhappiness and rage I felt at the hangings in Cyprus last year. I wrote a sonnet about it, & this so relieved my feelings that, almost in self protection, I went on writing them till I had a dozen. I showed them to a Cypriot ex-priest who has a small Greek bookshop in the West End, who in turn showed them to a young Greek printer & publisher, who next showed them to the Greek Embassy & the London office of the Cyprus Ethnarchy, & the upshot was that the Greek Embassy & the Greek printer put up the money between them (£50) for me to get them
tolerably well printed - considering that printer after printer was frightened to print them, & I was driven in the end to a hopelessly (sic) incompetent one-man business with whom I had months of worry & delay before they were done early this year. It was out of the question that any bookshop would handle them, & so I circulated them to every member of Parliament, the Cabinet, heads of Govt. offices, Ambassadors, newspapers, & prominent persons all over England, & to Harding & the Chief Justice & the Public Prosecutor in Cyprus; while the Greek Embassy sent them round to their Embassies abroad & to Greece. And of course Makarios got copies, & wrote me a nice note of thanks (as did also the King of Greece ... (1.)

Letters to Basil Dowling and to Elaine Goodfellow (2.) confirm the delays and difficulties in finding a printer for Poetry and Cyprus, but the issue evidently came out in the last week of January, 1956, and was circulated as Cresswell described. The long introduction to the book attacks both the British actions in the island and the weakness of modern poets for their silence -

That now poetless body, the mere Public, might have supposed (and how naively!) that here are matters too appropriate to poetry, and too irresistible to the feelings of English poets, for these to have remained utterly silent upon them: ...

(1.) Cresswell to Finlayson. 21 October, 1957.

(2.) Cresswell to Dowling. 1 October, 1956; to Elaine Goodfellow, 19 December 1956, and 23 January, 1957.
...these are most richly poetic and public matters, a conjunction whose Providence was wont to be Inspiration and its speech music. (1.)

The righteous indignation of the inspiration did not fully compensate for the lack of "music" in the sonnets, which did not rise above the level of versified polemic, as for example in the final sonnet, "In Reply to Mr Mehmet Ali Pamir" -

Byzantine Asia
You Turks are welcome to, for your long trek, (sic)
It's land-locked and it's out of Europe's way.
Eastward we'll help you hold the Bear in check.
But lay off western Cyprus, sir, whose neck
Has bowed too long, since great Cambyses' day.

The response, too, was varied. Cresswell told Elaine Goodfellow,

Lord Radcliffe (2.) returned his copy with an angry note, & so did some M.Ps. But others have thanked me and wished me luck. (3.)

Part of the delay in publishing the sonnets was, it seems, due to Cresswell's unorthodox business methods when dealing with the jobbing printers, the Classic Press, S. John's Wood, London. The project was originally to involve a sixteen page booklet, containing the Preface and the twelve sonnets, at a maximum cost of £50 - the amount guaranteed by Cresswell's sponsors. But apparently Cresswell amended the copy during

(1.) Poetry and Cyprus: A Manifesto for Moderns. Introduction. (no pagination, p 6.)

(2.) Radcliffe was the subject of one of the sonnets. For his note of reply to Cresswell, WTu MSS 170. (13.317) London, 7 April, 1957.

(3.) Cresswell to Elaine Goodfellow. 25 April, 1957.
printing, and insisted upon a more elaborate cover and an expanded format, which the printer found it difficult to provide within the agreed cost. (1.) Notwithstanding the obloquy of Cresswell's remarks in the letter (cit) to Finlayson, 21 October, 1957, the Classic Press produced a pleasant piece of typography under what must have been difficult conditions.

All distribution of the volume outside of the United Kingdom was undertaken, as agreed, by the Greek Embassy. (2.) It is not known how many copies were put on sale (some were stocked in New Zealand) but the commitments of complementary copies outlined in the letter to Finlayson would suggest that the bulk of the edition was disposed of in this way.

Only a few of the notes of reply have been preserved in Cresswell's papers, among them the following -

Dear Mr Cresswell,

Thank you very much for the copy of your book "Poetry and Cyprus", which you were kind enough to send to me and which I have read with deep interest.

Please accept my cordial congratulations for the pure lyric tone in which you have expressed not only the present pain but also the strong will of the people of Cyprus for self determination and freedom.

Wisher to God,

Archbishop Makarios of Cyprus. (3.)

(3.) WTu MSS 170 (14.337) Archbishop Makarios of Cyprus (Athens) to Cresswell. 5 August, 1957. For other replies, see folios 13 and 14 of the Turnbull papers.
But if the publication of *Poetry* and *Cyprus* was a qualified success, Cresswell was still unable to find a publisher for his satires against "modern poetry". They had been submitted to Andre Deutsch in 1955, to *Punch* and Faber and Faber in the following year, and to McGibbon & Kee in 1957. (1.) In desperation Cresswell decided to publish them himself, under the imprint of the Trireme Press, his own establishment. This imprint he used for all his publications from 1957 to 1959.

Two small booklets of the satires were brought out, entitled *Poems For Poppycock* (1957) and *More Poems For Poppycock* (1959). An advertisement on the back cover of *Leander* (1958) records *The Dylaid* as being "in preparation", but there is no evidence in the letters of papers of this having reached the printing stage before Cresswell's death. The satires are clumsy jests (recalling Lehmann's description of the humour in *The Forest* as "flat footed") with little pungency or wit. But Cresswell was apparently sure that they would be able to laugh "modern poetry" out of existence, and he proposed to sell them where-ever possible to achieve this end. Thus he wrote to Elaine Goodfellow in 1957, that he intended to print 500 copies.

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About half of the 500 I shall distribute in this way, & the other 250 I must either sell in the bookshops at 2/6 each, or visit the theatre cues (sic) where the intellectuals line up for the better cheap plays of an evening (when I'm not on night duty) & sell them myself. I've been describing that this will be like to Doris Mirams in Timaru (Miranda) & how I shall pass down the line, wearing black glasses as a disguise & muffled up to the ears, saying quietly 'Poems for Poppycock - Dirty work in the New Statesman! Poems for Poppycock - Half a Crown - Who killed John Keats? - Poems for Poppycock !! etc. Which was fun to do when I was young, but won't be so amusing now I'm over sixty! But it must be done if I am to bring out the big satire against Dylan Thomas, say, about 32 pages, which I want to print & distribute next, as no publisher will at present dare to publish anything so fiercely against the prevailing bad fashion, & if I am not to wind up in the workhouse soon I must fight them. (1.)

Two months later, he wrote

I haven't started selling Poppycock the way I plan to do yet, but I hope I can pluck up the courage to. I've bought dark glasses for a disguise. But otherwise it is going well & I've had numbers of letters & orders for it - several orders from N.Z. bookshops, & one from N.York. (2.)

It is not clear whether Cresswell was in fact ever reduced to the pathetic sales-attempt that he spoke of in these letters

(1.) Cresswell to Elaine Goodfellow. WTu MSS 170 (106) 2 October, 1957.
(2.) ibid (106) 17 December, 1957.
He continued to work as a night watchman and produce verse and satires for the Trirene Press, though money remained a constant worry. His Voyage of the Hurunui had earned him only £10 in 1953, when the Caxton Press paid him for the rights, and its publication in New Zealand was not successful, the work receiving far less charitable treatment than had The Forest four years before.

The poem has been efficiently analysed, and its weakness of cliché and archaism noted, by Alistair Campbell in his review in Landfall 40. Cresswell, however, preferred to ignore the New Zealand criticisms of the poem on the grounds that the text was an unrevised one, and would, when published in London, be much improved. The outline of this rejoinder is found in a holograph "Foreword" evidently intended for the first London edition.

An earlier version of the poem has already been published in New Zealand, without prejudicing my right to publish a revised version elsewhere. I was never satisfied with the New Zealand version tho' it was the best I could do at that time; & was far from being done with it.

Nor were the critics out there satisfied. They hated it, without bothering to say why. One said that the Publisher had done New Zealand a disservice by publishing it. Another said I had cut my throat as a poet, by permitting it to be published.

(1.) ibid (104) 18 December, 1953.
This was simply their crude Antipodean manner of saying it wouldn't do, with which opinion I agreed, & set about shortening & revising it & as soon as copies reached me in England where I am glad to say it has neither been offered to the public nor by arrangement between myself & the New Zealand publisher been sent for review, I set about shortening & revising it (and am now satisfied) & I now send it into the larger World to fend for itself, & glad to be rid of it. It is bound, in the present critical climate, to have a hard time, but it may be found harder to kill than its enemies would suppose. (1.)

Apart from the adroitness with which Cresswell repudiated the edition that had earned so much critical contempt, it is interesting to note that this was the only recorded occasion in his later life on which Cresswell was prepared to acknowledge (to even a limited degree) the justice of any critical disapproval of his work. But the revised MS, which was never printed, shows little improvement on the original, and in no significant way overcomes the difficulties of what Campbell described as "a sermon...dressed up in the paraphernalia of a supernatural ballad". (2.) Indeed Cresswell's own description to Basil Dowling suggests that he himself lacked the full confidence in symbolism which he sought to employ to

(1.) WTu MSS 170 (26) The above transcript of Cresswell's note has been regularised, and deleted readings (of which there are many, though none substantially alter the sense) omitted.

(2.) Lf 40 cit. Alistair Campbell. p 356.
didactic ends -

...it's an allegory, & that's about all I know. I do know tho' that the land & its various aspects are symbols of the physical world, & the sea a symbol of the spiritual world, or unconscious. And I do know that the 'harmless fly' is the desire for Wordly Fame, & that the man in the craft is the writer's 'higher' or spiritual self. You can puzzle out the other things, the black men & the lion etc. as well or better than I can, if they interest you.

Of course the illiterate writer of the 'deposition' is a skit on the present critics & poets, who would pronounce my 'pomes' to be 'rot!!'...

the Tropics are of course the Wordly life in its urban setting, & the jungle very London! That's all I am sure of.

(1.)

The theme is the familiar one of ideal "nature" versus degenerate "civilisation", yet the very weakness of its poetic declaration is confessed in this letter, as much as it is revealed in an examination of the poem itself. In seeking to proselytise, Cresswell failed to infuse his 'message' into his imagery, partly because he was unsure of what the precise intellectual relationship between the two should be. The Voyage of the Hurunui as much as any of Cresswell's verse shows up the poet's inability to use verse as a means of didactic (as opposed to emotional) persuasion, though Cresswell seemed to be sure that this ballad, like The

(1.) WTu MSS 170. (106) Cresswell to Dowling. 28 November, 1957.
Forest before it, would not merely please, but also convert. (1.)

Cresswell published two other pieces, both serious (as opposed to satirical), on the Trireme Press before his death. The earlier of these, Leander, an elegy was "Occasioned by the derelict and disgraceful state of St Nicholas' Church, Deptford, the burial place of Christopher Marlowe." R.M. Chapman suggests that this poem is the nearest to successful of Cresswell's last work; (2.) it is true that it avoids the worst archaisms that bedevil most of his verse, and it seeks an uncharacteristic simplicity of vocabulary and quietness of tone, as in the lines

Then will I, as best I may
To dear Leander's dust a tribute pay
Though but a stranger here, and at the best
Only less faithless to him than the rest.

But the whole impression of the elegy is one of flatness, relieved only by the unintentional humour of occasional forced rhymes -

Mend what they broke, make words again be granite
To raise his monument so all may scan it.

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(1.) e.g. Cresswell to Finlayson, 27 August, 1950.
"No wonder Lehmann refused to publish my 'Forest' here. When it comes in, a lot like him will go out."


Note. a copy of Leander shown me by Mr R.A.K. Mason has the interesting note on the fly-leaf -

London, May 21 '59

Dear Mason,

I have been rereading your poetry, in the Anthologies mostly, with growing admiration & understanding.

Yrs - D'Arcy Cresswell.

Cf Cresswell's reference to Mason after the publication of A Book of New Zealand Verse, correspondence with Finlayson, 30 September, 1945. quoted supra p 62.
- and more than usual triteness, the result of unsuccessful "poeticising"

    A god that bellows made. Leander merely blew.

The other piece, one of a projected series, was the first Zandvoorter Prelude (1959). In contrast to Leander it is less rigid in its forms, and especially in its rhythms, thus allowing a certain timbre to its rather declamatory tones. Whether Cresswell would have developed this greater freedom of form and diction (which is hinted at rather than fulfilled in the Zandvoorter Prelude) can only be a matter of conjecture.

The poem was accompanied by a card advertising the Trireme Press, and seeking funds for the venture, which, as the card pointed out "exists to rescue English Poetry from the state of intellectual (and often nonsensical) profanity into which it fell in the second and third decades of this Century" but which was "a one-man endeavour financed wholly from the weekly wages of a solitary night-watchman, and urgently in need of even the smallest assistance." (1.)

Cresswell described the events which inspired the Prelude in his last letter to Elaine Goodfellow -

    ...I went for my yearly 3 week's holiday three months ago, in the most marvellous weather, as you will guess by the poem. I didn't tell him (Erik) I was coming, but I wrote to the Dutch Boy Scouts (Padvinders - pathfinders) to ask if they would hire me a tent, etc (as I can't afford hotels & can't

(1.) The significance of this card is discussed in Section II
endure boarding-houses) to camp in the sand-dunes by the sea near the town of Haarlem where Erik is. They wrote back to say they would gladly lend me their empty camp in the sand-dunes for nothing, & they met my train on arrival & waited on me & entertained me for three weeks, the three young men who run the scouts there that is - most charming fellows - University students.

...the Zandvoorter Preludes are to thank my friends the scouts. I hope to dedicate one to each of the three who looked after me there... (1.)

But Cresswell did not live to complete his trilogy of thanks for the scouts' kindness. Nor indeed did he live to vindicate the faith that he had in the conversion of man by poetry, and to poetry as he dreamed of it, nor to write the poems which he believed himself to be capable of. A month after the letter (above) to Elaine Goodfellow, and before he had written the second of the Preludes, he died in his sleep in the Cottage at Abercorn Place, in February, 1960. (2.)

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(2.) I have been unable to ascertain the exact date of the death from New Zealand sources thus far.
II.

The previous section of this thesis outlined Crosswell's biography with particular reference to his literary career. It clearly emerges from that study that Crosswell's professions concerning poetry are of much greater importance to the literary historian than is the poetry itself. This section will briefly consider the critical consensus of the poetry, and then examine in detail one unpublished MSS which is central to Crosswell's professions. This MSS is the unpublished "Thesis" which Crosswell prepared for The Bodley Head in the years prior to 1936. It is in a consideration of this work, rather than any other part of his oeuvre, that the critic can see the interrelationships between Crosswell's published biographical volumes, his minor prose writings, the little durable verse that he wrote, and his one play, most clearly revealed.

Having outlined the current consensus of his verse, then, from which this writer would not generally choose to differ, the study will examine the "Thesis" MSS and the related prose, and proceed in the final section to assess Crosswell's place in the history of New Zealand writing as a result of this and his achievement as a whole.
It is a general assumption of commentators upon New Zealand literature that Cresswell was one of the "pioneers" in the literary movement that came to dominate New Zealand verse in the 1930s after its beginnings about 1923–24. Recognition of this has been the result of the work of Curnow and Holcroft (1.) looking retrospectively at this period in their respective essays, rather than the result of Cresswell's own poetic (as opposed to personal) impact upon other writers of the same time. Certainly the fact that Cresswell was writing verse would not in itself justify his being considered a significant figure in the new literature, since the literary pages of the newspapers of the 1920s and 1930s, as well as such publications as the Artists' Annual and Marris's Best Poems are replete with the work of versifiers whose prestige was inevitably transitory, and whose work has been passed over by Curnow and Chapman and Bennett in later anthologising. Yet even Cresswell's most sympathetic critics admit that he wrote little verse of durable interest. The importance of his "pioneering" derived rather from the force of his personality (a theme which is continually emphasised by the writers in the Landfall memorial.)

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obituary a few months after Cresswell's death, *Landfall* said:

TO DECLARE one's faith and to stand by it, that and no more, may for the exceptional man be a sufficient life's work; a work that justifies the faith. Everything depends on the object of that faith and its power to dignify the man who professes it.

D'Arcy Cresswell believed in the wisdom and sanity of poetry and its power to redeem a world pursuing false ends, and he believed in himself as an inspired poet. This dual faith lent him a nobility not impaired in the many strange shifts imposed on him by a self-reliant enquiring nature. It was a faith which did not depend on any proof of his gifts acceptable to other people... *(1.)*

That writer, and most others in the *Landfall* memorial two issues later, are not prepared to acknowledge for Cresswell any permanent achievement as a poet, though they see his declaration of the primacy of poetry as important in the development of a climate of opinion favourable to the arts.

Earlier, in *A Book of New Zealand Verse*, Curnow had suggested a similar indebtedness to Cresswell on the part of New Zealand poets, and had also attempted (he is perhaps the only critic to have done so) to vindicate at least the "Lyttelton Harbour" sonnet sequence as having some (admittedly limited) poetic merit. On the question of Cresswell's historical importance, Curnow wrote that he, with R.A.K. M.Lson,

seen(ed) to have discovered in verse an object worthy of a life's devotion. That might not have been so remarkable in this country, if they had not insisted that, as poets and because they were poets, they

remained responsible adult New Zealanders; more responsible, because set apart for a special task. That was new; it was 'taking poetry seriously', and it marked the end of the undisputed reign of whimsy in New Zealand verse. The early work of both was of a new kind among New Zealanders because, in whatever else it fell short, it was not sentimental and committed the whole man to the poetry. (1.)

At this point the contrast between the two men (Mason and Cresswell) will be evident. The credo of 'taking poetry seriously' is in Mason's case contained in his verse; little enough comment exists in his letters or prose to confirm it, and of course none is needed. Cresswell, in contrast, made his declaration in his whole way of life, and in his prose writings, quite as potently as he did in his verse. There is no question of his concern not being wholly serious, but what is of critical concern is the question of the quality of these gestures of poetic concern, and the degree to which the critic must move into the realm of literary history (and away from formal evaluation) in order to sustain Cresswell's claim to importance.

In his Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse Curnow does not explain his view of Cresswell's significance to New Zealand literature, as he did in A Book of New Zealand Verse, (2.) and has thus left himself more easily open by default to the

(2.) except for two comments in the "Notes on the Poets", Penguin pp 316 - 317. "... Cresswell is the one New Zealand poet who has specifically repudiated his country in verse..." and "Cresswell wears the true mask of a poet at odds with his country and his time."
criticism of A.W. Stockwell, who wrote when reviewing the
Penguin anthology for Landfall.

I do not think, myself, that in this sort of popular anthology the aim of comprehensivezza, or the desire to illustrate a theory about what New Zealand poetry is already, or ought to be in the future, should be allowed to excuse the inclusion of any bad poetry. I think that in addition to (Donett, Bowen, Tregear, Adams), D'Arcy Cresswell could have been left out entirely. The editor refers in his useful section 'Notes on the Poets' to the 'period costume' of Cresswell's style, but this is a very kind description. His obsolete poses and inflated self-importance, so reminiscent of Childe Harold, make him a third-rate poet, however interesting he was as a person and however good his prose may be. (1.)

Ignoring the question of whether Stockwell is correct or not in his assumption of an editorial "desire to illustrate a theory..." &c, there are two issues here which he confuses. The first is the one concerning the justification of including 'lesser verse' in an anthology that seeks to sketch out a literary period or tradition. Here one may say that Curnow has included Cresswell as part of the evidence to support the arguments of his Introduction, without commenting upon that evidence in the Introduction itself. For such comments the reader must refer back to the Introduction to A Book of New Zealand Verse, 1923 - 1945. But Stockwell's commentary also ignores the necessity of a positive evaluation of Cresswell's

verse; his suggestion that Cresswell was "a third-rate poet" is unsubstantiated in his review, while, more seriously, he makes a fallacious connection between the personality of Cresswell ("... his obsolete poses and inflated self-importance...") the verse forms ("'period costume'... is a very kind description.") and the actual merit of the verse itself. The use of a form of rhyme, rhythm or diction which is either archaic or associated with an earlier period of verse rather than the present one, is no necessary proof of poetic inferiority, while the personality of the poet himself is quite irrelevant to the worth of his verse.

Curnow indicates in both the Book of New Zealand Verse and the Penguin anthology by his selection of poems and his commentary notes (1.) that he considers the "Lyttelton Harbour" sonnet sequence to be the most important part of Cresswell's poetic oeuvre; of the sequence he wrote,

The 'archaisms' of the poem offend McCormick, but I believe that in the best of the sonnets these become a living speech. There is an innocence of rhetoric that seems - I

(1.) In A Book of New Zealand Verse Curnow prints "O England", "Summer's End" and "Time Lags Abed" (the first two in Poems 1921 - 1927, the third in Poems 1924 - 1931, though the text of "O England" contains the minor alterations of the second book) and eighteen of the "Lyttelton Harbour" sonnets, viz. I, III, VII, VIII, X, XII, XIII, XV, XVIII, XIX, XXI, XXVII, XXIX, XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXVIII, XXXVIII, XXXIX. See also the Appendix to A Book of New Zealand Verse (both edns) which prints the Note to the poem. In the Penguin anthology the selection is the same, except for the omissions of "Time Lags Abed" and sonnets VII, XIX, XXI, XXVI, XXXVII. Cf. Chapman & Bennett, An Anthology of New Zealand Verse who print "The Impatient Poet", "To l --" (If ever I suspect thee of a lie") and "Time Lags Abed" and sonnets VIII, XXXIII, XXXVIII.
venture only a suggestion - to have affinity with Blake. At his best, Cresswell is as fully master of his idiom as some others who were not compelled to such extremes in discovering a place to begin.(1.)

McCormick's opinion of the sequence, referred to in the above quotation, underwent a change from harshness to greater sympathy between his Letters and Art in New Zealand (1940) and New Zealand Literature: A Survey (1957), and in the latter his reference to "a voice of Blake-like simplicity and directness" seems to be indebted to Curnow's earlier suggestion. A comparison of the two McCormick quotations will illustrate these points:

Cf.

Lyttelton Harbour (1936), it is true, cannot be disregarded: it has a nice turn of invective, a rotundity of phrase, and, when the poet muses on the fabled Greece of his imagination, a fine serenity. But the archaisms are an insuperable obstruction, and, on the evidence of his published work, it seems that D'Arcy Cresswell has been less successful as a poet than as a prose-writer in coming to terms with his models and his particular talent. (2.)

and

...amongst much that was too ambitious or weakly derivative, there was sometimes audible a voice of Blake-like simplicity and directness:

(Here McCormick quotes the poem "The Poet's Heart" from Poems 1921 - 1927.)

They are modest lines, their dress is unfashionable, and they falter; but they are genuine poetry, expressing - without preaching - a conception of the poetic office that is dignified and true. Here... the antique forms come to be accepted as essential elements in Cresswell's style, witnesses to a resolute habit of retrospection. The archaisms, then, cease to obstruct; not so, alas, the views they present with monotonous iteration. The views began to invade the verse in Lyttelton Harbour (1936) without, however, seriously marring that sequence which contains Cresswell's naturest and most accomplished poetry...

(1.)

Notwithstanding McCormick is being correct in his assumption that the didactic elements in Cresswell's verse can be found "beginning to invade" in the Lyttelton Harbour sequence, Cresswell's Romantic views of the role of the poet, and the heresy of mechanism in the modern (post-Renaissance) world are themes that can be traced from his earliest work, though the force of the assertions is increasing by the 1930s, to culminate in the didacticism of The Voyage of the Hurunui and the satirical Pollycock pamphlets of the 1950s. Furthermore, McCormick rightly notes an element of "genuine poetry" in Cresswell, in his latter quotation. It is this element that vindicates, however humbly, Cresswell's place as a poet (and not just as a poetic "professor") in New Zealand's literary history. But the archaism of the verse, the rigid formal structure exploited often at the expense of organic

form, and the rhetorical diction and syntax so seldom capture the lyric simplicity that is evidently sought, that the "innocence of rhetoric" that Curnow noted is elusive, and seldom to be noted sustained throughout the whole of even one of the Lyttelton Harbour sonnets. Poem after poem in the two books, Poems 1921 - 1927, and Poems 1924 - 1931, reveal the same irregularities of tone, diction and rhetoric. It is perhaps inevitable then that Cresswell's readers should have turned to his prose for greater pleasure, for there the self-conscious archaism that infuses so much of the style becomes an appropriate vehicle for the argument and criticism, sardonic, frequently verging on the satirical, that is implicit in the professions of a poet's progress which he made in spite of the miscreant of midnight and bad dreams

         Thou I miscall'd my Country (1,)

and in the belief that

         He only is not blind
         Whose conscience keeps one course, nor needs he to despair.(2,)

This single minded course of the conscience was for Cresswell the messianic profession of poetry, expressed most concisely in Eena Deena Dynamo and more fully, if no more lucidly, in the "Thesis", a consideration of which forms the remainder of this section.

(1,) Lyttelton Harbour X,

(2,) ibid XXXIX,
The two extant copies of the final draft of the Thesis are those of the Turnbull Library collection, \(^{(1)}\) and a copy in the possession of Mr Roderick Finlayson. Each is a manuscript in typescript of forty-two pages, each annotated in red ink with marginalia indicating irregularities of punctuation and noting the typographical layout desired by the author. The Finlayson copy is evidently a less perfect one, since corrections indicated in ink and pencil in the author's hand in this copy are largely corrected in the text of the Turnbull copy. The Turnbull copy also has appended the anthology, suggesting that it was one of the two copies despatched to London in 1936. \(^{(2)}\)

The MSS of the Thesis in each case is set out as follows:

p. p. (1) title page. SINCE BYRON / An Anthology with a Thesis by/ D'Arcy Cresswell

(3.) 1935/ THE BODLEY/ READ.

(2) dedication to Sir William Rothenstein.

(5) quotation.

THE THESIS/ On The Mechanism of Spirit/ in Man

I. Induction/

II. Synopsis/

III. Conclusion/

(5-15) Induction

(16-29) Synopsis

(30-42) Conclusion.

\(^{(1)}\) W. Tu MSS 170 (74)

\(^{(2)}\) Present Without Leave. CCXXXI.

\(^{(3)}\) That the title pages of both copies bear the date 1935 can be explained by the suggestion that pp 1-4 of each draft were typed first (when the Thesis was being prepared for submission in 1935) the bulk of the text not being concluded until the New Year of 1936, but still being collated with the previously typed pages. This in no way invalidates the dating of the despatch.
In the manner of many editions of Classical texts in translation Cresswell headed each section with a phrase summarising the argument of the section. This style was also used in the text of "Enea Deena Dynamo". The headings of both the Thesis and Enea Deena Dynamo are tabled here for comparison:

**INDUCTION.**

1. Man's Creation and Providence.
3. How Poets and Artists Provide us with Symbols and Words.
4. Wherein Man is Unstable and Falls.
5. Wherein Matter is idle and Mischievous to be Known.
7. How Man's Faculties are Divided, Whereby the Abstract or Copernican Universe is thought to Arise.
8. The Perversion of Words to these Errors.
9. By what further means the Copernican Universe is Mistaken for Truth.
10. How our Senses sink to be only Sensation, Whereby our Divided Faculties are still more Estranged.
12. How our Divided Faculties now meet Unconsciously.
13. How Machines are Begotten, and how they Further Divide our Faculties.
14. The Enchantment of Reason that first led Man Astray.
15. The Copernican Universe known to the Ancients in its Proper Nature as Abstract and Private.
16. How the Downfall of Christendom was the Downfall of Reason as Well.
17. The Copernican Universe a Public Illusion, or Mirror of Man's fallen Condition.
18. The Present Mischievous traffic in Symbols and Words.
19. And the Folly of Trusting to Material Science.
20. Only Artists and Poets can Heal Mankind.
21. To Prepare for their Coming.
SYNOPSIS.

1. Axiom: That which has neither Limit nor Parts includes that which has Limit and Parts, as the Greater the Less.
2. Spirit is that which has neither Limit nor Parts. Matter is that which has Limit and Parts.
3. Sense is the Action of Parts with our Senses and is Knowledge of Parts.
4. Sensation is Sense without Mind.
5. Memory or Mind is the Reaction of Sense on Parts.
6. Abstract or Understanding is the Relation of Parts.
7. Concrete is parts in Relation.
8. Spirit in Man, or Identity.
10. Symbols and Words are Parts as Public.
11. Reason is Relation of Words.
12. Poetry and Art are Concrete Hypothesis (sic).
13. Poetry and Art include all things but incline to Nothing.
14. Music is Eternity audible, or perfect Time.
15. What is Form.
16. Nature is all Concrete Parts as Spirit & Whole.
17. Mathematics and Number are abstract Hypothesis.
18. Science is Intrinsic and Extrinsic Reason in Harmony.
19. Religion is the Worship of Spirit.
20. Personal Morals are no Proper Concern of True Law.
21. True History cannot be Rational.

DEENA DEENA DYNAMO.

1. Showing to whom this speech is addressed, and who make a fit audience.
2. In what particular way these present times (being different) are found contrary to former times.
3. What is culture and being civilised, and wherein we at present have neither.
4. In what particular the Greek and the Gothic cultures (being different) are found contrary.
5. Why profane and disorderly times must intervene between cultures, and wherein (being different) these also are found contrary.
6. Why Christendom was contented with the same Universe as the Ancients, and why modern times have departed from Christendom in this particular.
7. How the present false or Copernican Universe came to arise, and why we honour its founders.
8. Clearly showing how Man's senses are perverted and misled by modern appliances, and wherein these last are fallacious.
9. By what selfish errors we would saddle the future with our sins of the present.
10. How our accredited follies must nevertheless overtake and destroy us, or else who alone shall reform Mankind.
11. Why only poets and artists shall reform Mankind in our case, and why only teachers and philosophers reformed it under Christendom before.
12. By what means and what weapon poets shall reform us, and which modern poets have possessed these means or made any trial of this weapon, and which have not.
13. The present false teaching of history, in deference to dissolve reason and science.

Cresswell records,

It was by no means as a philosopher would have it, but clear enough to be understood, I supposed; and since it was clear and corrective to myself I considered it done. It was in three parts which I called, the first part the Induction, and second the Synopsis (not quite knowing what I meant thereby, but I could think of no better titles) and third the Conclusion. In the first part, as I said, I endeavoured to show what was and is and must be, only supposing that my terms were correct; for instance, what spirit must be, supposing man has a spirit; and what our faculties in relation thereto, supposing our faculties to be and to move as I thought. But having laboured so long to do this, I next thought I must prove these terms, that nothing I had shown in the first part should be doubted; so in the second part, the Synopsis, I laid down a number of axioms concerning our faculties and their outcome, and proved each axiom, as I thought, in a
brief passage beneath it. (1.)

In the Conclusion I gathered many things from the earlier rhetorical Theses which I thought worthy to be published: and if these were somewhat light and of little worth in themselves, yet so much laid down in those two parts before them was a broad ground on which they might show and amuse themselves, proving it to be firm. (2.)

As will be seen from the classifications above, and from the quotations from "Present Without Leave" the choice of titles for the two first chapters of the Thesis is faulty, the Induction being in the nature of a synthesis, and the so-called Synopsis containing the axioms and definitions of terms necessary for the argument developed within the Induction (I retain Cresswell's terminology here) to help substantiate the meanings of the terms which he is defining in the Synopsis. His terms, therefore, though defined according to their use within the argument, must be at one time taken to be a priori assumptions, and at another to be terms the truth of which will be demonstrated from other a priori assumptions. This, when considered with the frequent non sequiturs of the argument, the"begged questions", and the tendency to rely upon assertions which suit the course of the argument but which remain unproven or couched in emotive language which weakens their usefulness in the argument, makes the Thesis inadequate as a logical exposition. Its significance lies in the fact that it is the

(1.) Present Without Leave CCXIX
(2.) Ibid CCXX
most complete statement extant of Cresswell's belief, regardless of the weaknesses of the method used to arrive at the conclusions. These, it seems, were formulations of Cresswell's intuitive thought substantiated by an eclectic ability to utilise his reading to "prove" his beliefs, rather than as a system logically evolved in consequence of any first principles.

The titles of the sections, and Cresswell's own remarks (supra) to explain his terminology show that the Synopsis is intended as an analysis of the axioms (a term somewhat loosely used by Cresswell to include corollaries, and deductions consequent upon his axioms) as expounded in the Induction. Both sections are in their way developed arguments, the Synopsis being concerned with the establishment of principles and the Induction with the historical argument construed from the application of these principles to the history of mankind as Cresswell saw it. In the interests of clarity, though, the reader must reverse Cresswell's order to find an abstract system which will lead to a concrete interpretation of the processes of history.

It is evident from the lists of section titles supra that the two texts, the "Thesis" and Eena Deena Dynamo are generally similar. But it would be incorrect to assume that all of Cresswell's speculative thinking necessary to a full understanding of his work is contained in the latter publication, as is implied by Sargeson's statement -

At the time of our meeting he was engaged upon the task of elaborating his views about
the nature of poetry and embodying them in
the long thesis (afterwards published in
shortened form as Eena Deena Dynamo)(1.)

A more accurate impression is given by R.M. Chapman's
description of Eena Deena Dynamo as the "clearest prose
exposition" of this thought,(2.) thus summing up the value of
the published work without making claims of comprehensiveness
for it that it does not deserve.

The significance of the Thesis lies not only in its
collation and greater amplification of the views set out in
parts of The Poet's Progress, Present Without Leave, the three
articles in The Auckland Star (cit), Modern Poetry and the
Ideal, and Eena Deena Dynamo, but also in the establishing of
the supposition upon which the ideas in these texts were
based.(3.) Though the beliefs can be well enough comprehended
from the texts referred to above, the sources of the system
and its motivation, and hence the explanation not only of the
themes of the poems based upon it, but also of the poet
himself (and in the case of Cresswell the two are inextricably
linked) can be found only in the Thesis as a whole.

(1.) Lf 56 cit. Frank Sargeson. p 349.
(3.) In the collation on this and the following pages the
abbreviations below designate the following texts.
Numerals following the abbreviations refer to the sections
of the book or typescript.
PP - The Poet's Progress
PWL - Present Without Leave
BDD - Eena Deena Dynamo
MPI - Modern Poetry and the Ideal.

References to Induction, Synopsis and Conclusion, refer
in all cases to the Thesis with the sections enumerated
according to the WTU copy.
To bring together the material of the first two sections of the Thesis with that of the other texts:

From the section headings it will be seen that EDD 1 is a general introduction, touching upon the themes of homosexuality not specifically considered in either the Induction or the Synopsis; EDD 2 is a précis of the whole lecture, noting the omission of the axioms on which its argument is based; ibid 3 advances the argument of 2; 6, 7, 8, précis the argument of the Induction 4 - 18; EDD 9 is a digression to a criticism of contemporary political ideology of the 1930s, based upon the Induction 17 and 19; EDD 10 is found in the Induction 11; and EDD 11, 12 are based on the Induction 19, 20, 21. Thus only the arguments of EDD 4 and 5 are not found specifically within the Induction. These, which establish the nature of the two Golden Ages of Ancient Greece and Gothic Christendom, and the pattern of the fall of the former and the rise of the latter during the Roman imperium and the reversal of this pattern during the post-Copernican period, are based on the principles of the Induction 1. They are however more specifically set out in EDD (1.) and are more clearly explained there as a cyclic process which serves to justify Cresswell's belief that the next Golden Age would involve a return to Hellenism. The

(1.) EDD 4, 5, 6. Insofar as Enea Deena Dynamo is an explanation of the course of history, the explanation of the cyclic nature of transitional stages between the Golden Ages is more to be expected there than in the Thesis, whose concern is essentially with the state of poetry in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, and its explanation. of Present Without Leave CXXXI.
sections of The Poet's Progress listed here -

III. The use of nature in poetry.
XXXII. The relation of women to men and heroes.
XXXIX. The decline of contemporary poetry.
XLVI. Artists, philosophers, and saints.
LXV. The nature of numbers and the analogy with morals.
LXXVIII. The nature of history.

collate as follows: PP III is embodied in the Induction 2 and 20, and the Synopsis 2, 8, 16 and 19; PP XXIII, like EDD 1, is not considered in either the Induction or the Synopsis but is dealt with in the Conclusion; PP XXXIX, like Modern Poetry and the Ideal is a general statement of the main theme of the poetic decline of the Copernican Universe (vide Induction throughout, and especially 10 and 19;) PP XLVI is found in the Induction 20 and 21, and the Synopsis 12; PP LXV is found in the Synopsis 20, and PP LXXVIII, like EDD 13, is found in the Synopsis 21.

The relationship between Present Without Leave and the Thesis will be noted in further consideration of the Thesis' argument. At this juncture it is sufficient to recall that in Present Without Leave the narrative comments on the Thesis are influenced by the fact that many of the arguments are direct transcriptions from the Thesis text. This is in contrast to all the other works cited (except Eena Deena Dynamo) where the Thesis marked a later synthesis and "rationalisation" of earlier recorded ideas.

In essence the argument of Cresswell's philosophy, using the above collations, is as follows:

The realities of the World are Spirit and Nature. The
former may be thought of as the 'life-force' and its sense of identity. In the case of Man, this is the awareness which the soul possesses; in the case of Nature it is variously seen as God, and as a pantheistic manifestation of God to be found in all aspects of Nature. Nature itself is not precisely defined, but is seen to be the external world of truth, with which Man ought to strive to be in harmony, in order to discover Spirit.

Nature is only Man's nurse and governess, or that mortal condition whereon he is born, whereby Man is reared in the knowledge and love of Spirit, his heavenly parent. For as Man honours Nature his earthly parent, so Nature provides him with certain means whereby to know Spirit his heavenly parent. Not to know Spirit itself, which we cannot know; but to know therein Spirit appears and is present in her. Which is not knowing Spirit, but knowing Spirit to be. And the means wherewith Nature provides us to this end are but parts, that provide us wherewith to know Spirit and whole, which we cannot know for ourselves. (1.)

Spirit and Nature are without "limit or parts" in contrast to Matter which is finite. Through Sense, Matter is discerned, and this is the first stage in the realisation of Nature and Spirit.

Sense is the constant machinery of our faculties and involuntary action that moves all above, having repair when we sleep. In Sense is reality, which is when all our senses agree and none contradicts another. (2.)

From these definitions and from the concept of "harmony"

(1.) Induction 1.
(2.) Synopsis 3.
implied in the last sentence of the above quotation, it is argued that there are three possible courses open to Man.

Either (1.) he can advance through the right use of his Sense to a harmony with Nature and an apprehension with Spirit:

In Sense is reality, which is when all our senses agree and none contradicts another. So that when all these abilities (of our senses) conform to our reasons, this is the height of our natures and whole being of Man, as know we must labour to find. (sic) (1.)

Or (2.) he can fail to rise to the heights at which he uses his apprehension of Matter to achieve a harmony with Nature. This state of awareness without striving Cresswell calls Sensation:

... all coming from matter to Spirit, we shall find is by means of relation: and our several senses are whereby all relation is begun. (2.)

But sensation being quite without power of conscious relation, this is wherein we are nearest to matter and furthest from Spirit, and is but the inmost or private of our physical selves. Yet even sensation has its rightful place in our natures, being the ground or conviction of sense, as sense is of all higher. (3.)

(1.) Synopsis 3.
(2.) Cf Synopsis 7 - "Concrete is parts in Relation."
(3.) This has certain essential similarities to Coleridge's distinction between the primary and secondary imaginations. (Biographia Literaria Chapter XIII.)

It is possible that Cresswell was introduced to this distinction between Sense and Sensation by Ormond Wilson in the discussion on the trip to Spirit's Bay when as Cresswell recalls, Wilson was "quoting the Germans." But there can be no certainty of either of these conjectures.

Another possible source, within the likely scope of Cresswell's classical reading is Tertullian's De Anima 17:

Whence arises sensation if not from the soul?
For if the soul had no body, it would have no sensation. Accordingly, sensation comes from the soul, and opinion from sensation, and the whole (process) is the soul.

Cf also Synopsis 2, 3, 8.
Or (3.) he may take up an heretical position, and in his ignorance pursue this heresy to its ultimate disastrous conclusion. This, Cresswell maintained, was the explanation for the course of Western history from the time of Copernicus. The heresy is considered in two ways. The simpler of these two states that Man permitted logic and reason (which had formerly been subservient to Sense, i.e. had been utilised only to prove what Sense had already shown to be true,) now to establish as true those phenomena which Sense could not confirm and which it would otherwise reject as fallacious. A more complex expression of this heresy is found in Cresswell's use of the terms "public" and "private". These terms are used in both Ena Deena Dynamo and the Thesis as they were defined in Present Without Leave CV - CIX, where Cresswell set out his argument in what Holcroft called "twelve pages of cloudy reasoning in the Socratic manner." (1.)

The argument progresses as follows;

"Public is whatever is of greatest moment to the greatest number, and private is whatever is of greatest moment to only one... What is that which is (of greatest moment) in its nature, and always?"

"That which is common."

"(So) the soul is that which is common?"

This being agreed, then from the definitions of public and private above, and from the definition of the soul - "... the soul is public and whereby we

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apprehend what is public; and of the two kinds of all matters, public and private, those are public which, of their nature and always, are in accordance with the soul; and conversely those are private which, of their nature and always, are contrary to the soul."

The argument then progresses with a deal of repetition to show that, in spite of certain indications to the contrary - "public matters, being open, evoke only and always credit and belief; while private matters, being open, evoke only always discredit and doubt." (1.)

In these terms, logic and reason when they become "public" affect the soul which Cresswell has defined as the faculty by which Man desires God, in whom there is "onesness." (2.) This effect on the soul constitutes a temptation to error, since reason, when made "public" and given ascendancy over Sense, will appear to disprove Sense (3.) and, being "public", will evoke "only and always credit and belief".

Thus Cresswell was able to argue that the fact that the Greeks could prove by logical processes that the world was not flat but round, and that the earth orbited the sun and not vice versa, was not in itself bad, since logic was kept subservient to Sense (which indicated to the contrary) and the speculations remained "private", thus evoking when open (discolosed) only "discredit and doubt". (4.) To the objection that apparent untruths can be verified by observation - e.g.

(1.) Present Without Leave CV - CIX
(2.) paraphrase ibid CVI, p 100, 11 13 - 18
(3.) Cf Induction 6, 7, 9.
(4.) Induction 15.
the heliocentric universe of Copernicus could be verified with the aid of Galileo's telescope, Cresswell replied that "the eye in this case does no more than agree with something under compulsion, in a situation that is unnatural to it and not of its own choosing."  

The Fall of Man, then, occurred when the theses of Galileo, Kepler and Copernicus became "public" and reason gained ascendency. The Universe from this point in time onwards is referred to as "abstract" - based on logic - as opposed to the previous "concrete" Universe which was verifiable through the agency of the senses. From the false knowledge thus made "public", the Machine developed to further subvert Man from harmony and truth. The first record of this attitude to the Machine is to be found in Present Without Leave LIX, the description of Cresswell's work as a greaser on the voyage from New Zealand to England in 1929. It seems that this part of his thought was the

(1.) Bena Deena Dynamo 7.
(3.) Synopsis 6, 7, 11, 18. The ideal of a logic subservient to what is readily apprehensible to the senses is that of the Eighteenth Century empiricist, epitomised by Samuel Johnson kicking the stone in disproof of the speculations of Berkeley: "I refute it thus." (Boswell in the Life of Johnson, Saturday, 6 August, 1763.) Though it is tempting to see Johnson as a possible source for Cresswell it must be remembered that Cresswell took issue with him over his scorn of the Ancient World, Nature and omens, and used him as the antagonist in the dialogue, Present Without Leave CI - CII.
last to be formulated, apart from the axioms upon which he sought to substantiate to entire Thesis. At the time of the voyage, the idea had progressed only as far as the theory enunciated in Present Without Leave cit., that combustion within the machine, being a process of disintegration, is contrary to the design of Nature which seeks to establish harmony. The association of the Machine and "heretical logic" was probably made during the writing of the earlier drafts of the Thesis.\(^1\)

Thus the Universe as apprehended by Man after the Church had failed to suppress the heresies of Galileo and Copernicus, was no longer one in which Man knew himself to have an established relationship to Nature, but one in which the heliocentric theories of Astronomy (which Cresswell saw as the beginnings of all later heresies) had led to a belittling of Man's personal importance within the Universe. This Fall, he felt, culminated in the nuclear theories of Eddington, Jeans, Hogben, Rutherford and Einstein.\(^2\) The ultimate result of this heretical trend of thought, Cresswell argued, would be the destruction of the Copernican Universe (intellectually if not physically) and its replacement by a

\(^{1}\) It is not to be found in The Auckland Star articles of 1933, but is touched upon in Modern Poetry and the Ideal six months later. For Butler as a possible source for this part of the Thesis vide pp 120 ff.

new Golden Age. Here the nature of the second Golden Age, that of Gothic Christendom, becomes of importance not only because its collapse marked the ascendancy of the Copernican concepts, but also because in its Fall the cyclic pattern of decline and fall could be detected, thus foretelling the next stage of the cycle. The concept of the perfection of Gothic Christendom is based on the idealised vision of the ordered society of medieval Europe, common enough in Romantic thought. Cresswell is not concerned with its poetic achievement, in contrast to his concern with the achievement of Greece and Rome. But his interpretation of the fall of Greece and the transition through the Roman imperium to the rise of Christianity after the time of Charlemagne (sic), was that the downfall of Paganism was marked by a degeneration from Sense to Sensation. (1.) In Grecian Paganism the Sense had been supreme; under Gothic Christendom reason, as used by the Schoolmen, was predominant but the aim of the society was still to seek harmony. In the second transition or Fall, Cresswell declared the order had been reversed, and the degeneration involved the publication of reason and the loss of harmony. Cresswell assumed that there were only two types of Golden Age, the Pagan and the Gothic, and that therefore the third such Age would be similar to the first;

its "inspired impulsive extreme must needs be the concrete and
physical once more." (1.) Apparently the relapse into error
in post-Copernican times was to be seen as more drastic than
that which took place between the previous two Ages, since
the unifying features which were never totally lost previously
were concepts of the Ptolemaic Universe, the desire for
harmony, and the subservience of reason to Sense, all of which
were now dying or dead. (2.)

But in the case of Copernican Universe, its destruction
would come about only by drastic means:

... for not poets and artists shall bring the
abstract Universe to the ground, as their
nature is not to destroy but to make; but the
dissolute reason shall certainly fail of
itself, by its injurious aims and the dereliction
of its mechanical patents, as we saw; and the
Copernican Universe it thinks to establish
disappear like the dying faith it supplanted,
and the Earth be the centre as in fact it is,
and the Sun travel round, and the Heavens be
established again and the depths beneath, and
all in the wonder and watchful business of
artists and poets. (3.)

No one man will (overthrow reason and annul
its results;) but dire and fearful events will
do so, wherein Man shall have nowhere to turn
for comfort and guidance but to certain gifted
beings called poets. (4.)

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(1.) Eena Deena Dynamo 5.
(2.) Cf. ibid. 5 and 7.
(3.) Indiction 21.
(4.) Eena Deena Dynamo 10. Apart from the evident apocalyptic
tone of this section, there is an echo here of the
emotional but rather moving peroration to Cresswell's
unpublished essay The Stream (1933-34) a.v. It would
seem no exaggeration to suggest that in these years,
and when dealing with this subject, Cresswell was able
to produce (if only spasmodically) some of his finest
emotive and rhetorical prose.
The Gods, therefore, have used fallacious reason to bring about the state of imbalance that has followed the collapse of Gothic Christendom in order to bridge the gap between it and the next Age of Hellenism. In this situation of degeneration the role of the poet, as indicated in the quotations above, is that of a messianic figure, pointing to the errors of the fallen state, warning against the ultimate collapse, and foretelling the new state of grace.

Normally in the case of a philosophical system such as this one it would be desirable to trace the history of the sources and forms of the component ideas, on the assumption that the author had derived them in whole or in part from other speculative and esoteric sources. But in the case of Cresswell's *credo* it is difficult to argue plausibly for many such sources. Cresswell admitted that he was not widely read in philosophy, and there is no evidence of him having approached any of the hermetic writers who might be seen as sources, at least for his patterning of history in a series of cycles and Falls. In default of much evidence, then, it seems best to see the Thesis as a series of eclectic thoughts and intuitions, deriving as much from his own personal responses to the authors he read as from any specific statements on their part. In this way he was able to construct what Glover called "a horrid mixture of pantheism, rosicrucianism, superstition of a classical variety, and a proud subservience to a Greece that never was",\(^1\) frequently

\(^1\) *Lp* 56. Denis Glover. p 348.
misreading his sources and distorting his Milton, Blake, Wordsworth, Arnold and Butler into arguments and justifications in support of his own beliefs.

Both because of its style, and because of the metaphors of prophecy in which the Thesis is couched, it invites recognition as a work influenced much by orthodox Christian thought. To say this is not to imply more than that the metaphors parallel those of Biblical prophecy; the thought is not "Christian", any more than is the thought of most mystic or hermetic writers, yet the parallels which will be outlined may validly suggest a Christian influence, and indeed a quasi-Christian patterning of the thought, which may be partially explained by Cresswell's own education, and partially by the currency of these images and patterns in Western thought generally.

Cresswell was by upbringing and education a Christian. His Christ's College education was one of Anglican orthodoxy, and there is evidence of at least spasmodic involvement with this faith throughout the remainder of his life, in spite of his tendencies towards unorthodox interpretations and a type
of pagan pantheism in his philosophies. (1.) Given this, his familiarity with the Bible may be assumed. Its influence upon his "thought" has been dealt with in passing by M. H. Holcroft; it is sufficient here to note its rhetoric frequently echoed in sections of the Thesis which, in tone, become virtually stylistic paraphrases. (2.) But more germane in any argument that the Thesis is couched in a Biblical metaphor, and echoes more orthodox prophetic patterns, is an examination of Cresswell's views of the Fall of the evil Copernican Universe, and his vision of the role of the poet.

Much of Cresswell's thought was influenced by his idealised view of Classical Greece, in which the beauty of the poetry was for him an expression of the harmony of the age.

But in the state of Fall that Cresswell saw the Copernican

(1.) W7r MSS 170 (85 - 86) contain the records of the baptism of Cresswell's son in 1924, and of his own confirmation at St Paul's Cathedral in 1942. (cf Lf 56, cit. Denis Glover, p 347 - the "instruction" referred to was evidently to this end.)

Note also - Canterbury "a place which has excited me more than any other in England, excepting Shelley's memorial in Oxford" - letter to his parents, 4 Nov, 1936. (W7r MSS 170, (1.23-27)) though it is not certain in the context whether the enthusiasm was the result of Anglican piety or the architecture and antiquity of the town in general. The religious attitude of his mother may be deduced from Cresswell's postscript to the letter where he asks for forgiveness for a joking allusion to "the child...who... in order to purchase Heaven, goes to find God in the orchard & to steal sugar lumps" (to his mother, 14 Feb, 1918. W7r MSS 170 (1.2-6)) Evidently Cresswell's mother was sufficiently devout to consider the reference impious and to be offended by it.

(2.) of Induction 1, second par. with Romans VIII, 14-15;
Conclusion p 42 with I Corinthians, XIII. 1-13.
Universe, the poet has a role akin to that of the Biblical prophet, the _vates furiosus_, who, through his sense of vision is able to see both the Fall and the way to salvation. The poet is a messianic figure - Daniel, John the Baptist, Christ(1.) or in secular terms Blake, Lawrence, even Cresswell himself(2.) He is the portender of an upheaval that would be followed by the re-establishment of ideal values. The visionary tone that pervades the Thesis is reminiscent of the Apocalyptic writings, but differs from most of the mystic theses that have derived in whole or in part from that work, in that Cresswell's New Universe is not postulated in terms that can only be understood by the initiate who is aware of their symbolic significance. Symbols and words were to Cresswell terms by which the reality of Spirit could be apprehended, merely through the revelations of poets and artists who understood it and expressed it in verbal form.(3.) The poet was therefore a transcendental seer, capable of apprehending total reality, with "total" here implying a harmony with Spirit. But the realities were readily translatable into

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(1.) Cf Eena Deena Dynamo 9; also the editorial heading to the final _Auckland Star_ article, _MAN'S EQUILIBRIUM_. 26 Aug, 1933.
(2.) Vide _Modern Poetry and the Ideal_, and this section, _supra_ pp 113.
(3.) Frank Sargeson recalled to me (interview) that Cresswell often said that "when he wrote his perfect poem he would be able to cross the Auckland harbour, get on a tram at the foot of Queen Street, and recite his poem to the tram conductor who would immediately fall at his feet and kiss his hand with thanks for having revealed the truth to him."
words without the need for a mystic key or esoteric structure; the only prerequisite to comprehension was the wish to achieve harmony with Nature.

For poets and artists are beings to whom a mountain is more mountainous, a flower more flower-like, a man more man-like, a god more god-like than to other men, and in all things more sensible, that by all their fine faculties they alone give their burden of meaning to all things in Nature that deliver us words and symbols. Whereby each thing is pregnant with the import to be Spirit and whole, whether Spirit as mountain, or Spirit as flower, or Spirit as man. And this way all things become words; first that one word which is Spirit ("In the beginning was the Word") and thereafter each sensible having import as poets perceive. (1.)

In this Wordsworthian pronouncement, the elements of Christianity, pantheism and Platonism appear to fuse. Whether it is theologically sound or not, the "one word which is Spirit" becomes the god-ideal, the logos of St. John, which passes through "incarnation" into matter that is apprehensible to man. And if the concept of materialisation is substituted for that of incarnation here, as would follow from Cresswell's argument, Christ becomes the prophet of truth, rather than the manifestation of that truth, a poet fulfilling the same prophetetic role as the Baptist. This squares with the role of the poet referred to above and leads to a consideration of the ethical relationship between goodness, truth and the

(1.) Induction 3.
false prophetic or heretic. Here Cresswell invokes his definition of "public" and "private" cited earlier, asserting that insofar as the heretic is entitled to believe in what he considers to be true, he must be admired for his faith, and, if persecuted, honoured. "Such men we rightly regard as noble men and martyrs",(1) but they are liable to censure if their heresies are made "public". It must from this be presumed that Cresswell essentially supported the repression of heresy by the Church at the time of Copernicus, for, having avoided the issue by praising the martyr as "noble" and by distinguishing between "public" and "private", he then makes no mention of the ethical problems of such suppression at the human level, though the logical consequences of his argument must uphold it.

This is further supported by the argument that moral values must exist prior to any idea of what is true -

The dissolute and licentious reason asserts that only what is true is wholesome to beneficent to Man; the poetic and harmonised faculties of Man assert that only what is wholesome are beneficent to man is true.(2)

In these terms all the postulants of "public" ("dissolute and licentious") reason can be dismissed, since Reason, being "public" in the Copernican Universe, demonstrates "truths" that are demonstrably untrue. Thus there can be no harmful or unpleasant truths (nothing not good but still true) in

(1.) Euna Deena Dynamo 7.
(2.) Euna Deena Dynamo 8.
Cresswell's World. Even the concept of non-qualitative truth is rejected, and not only are those results of post-Copernican science which appear to be good insofar as they seem to benefit mankind rejected, but also an Ideal world is postulated, in which the state of harmony would exclude all evil. The idea is a Romantic one, yet in all the ways outlined above it is as much a paraphrase of Christian thought and systematisation as of Romantic value-judgements based on aesthetic principles.

If it is possible to see the general patterns of the Thesis as having similarities to Christian thought, and also to note the eclectic way in which Cresswell drew upon older sources for details of his argument, it is still important to explain the source of the specifically anti-mechanist theme in his thought. A probable source that no commentator upon Cresswell has seriously examined up to the present time is Samuel Butler. (1) Only three references to Butler appear in Cresswell's prose; one passing reference to the former's admiration of Mount Cook, (2) one considered below, and the significant introductory note on page eleven of The Poet's

(1) R.M. Chapman, cit. cites Butler as one of the "endless parallels" to Cresswell's anti-mechanist position. The examples that he gives, though, do not commit him to declaring that a "parallel" was necessarily an "influence". Rather the contrary is suggested in the words, "What I wish to stress here, though, is that D'Arcy Cresswell fought his own way to this picture of the right relation within and between individuals, poetry, and society." In the light of the evidence of this whole Section, this suggestion of sole endeavour cannot be fully accepted.

(2) Present Without Leave XXXV.
Progress:

Part One of *The Poet's Progress* was published in a leading New Zealand daily newspaper, the Christchurch *Press* (the same published Butler's *Erewhon*) in the year 1928.

In view of Cresswell's habitual coolness towards authors whose work he did not approve, it would be highly improbable that Butler would have been mentioned as he was (with the implication that the Christchurch *Press* had been "twice honoured") if he had not intended that a favourable comparison should be made between the two works. Technically the note was misleading; *The Press* had printed Butler's letter, signed "Cellarius", (13 June, 1863) entitled "Darwin Among the Machines" which was to be the germ of the chapter "Book of the Machines" in *Erewhon*. Cresswell's attributing the publication of *Erewhon* itself to *The Press* is therefore something of an exaggeration. It is also interesting to note that this fact may first have come to Cresswell's notice when he was at School, since in 1911 *The Press* reprinted much of its Butler material in the form of feature articles to celebrate that writer's association with the paper.

Apart from this gesture of approval on Cresswell's part, the evidence to suggest Butler as an influence is both stylistic and thematic. In the matter of style, Cresswell


(2.) vide p 31 supra for details of Hoppe's bibliographical citations.
shows an unwonted simplicity of vocabulary and cadence in his
description of the Rangitata Gorge in Present Without Leave(1.)
which culminates with a reference to the fact that the family
stations lay in the same valley as Erewon was set. This
style, formal yet direct, with its descriptions of the
bleakness and grandeur of the Mesopotamia area is markedly
similar to Butler’s description of the same area. These
similarities of theme and style, together with the references
in Present Without Leave(2.) are initially sufficient to
point to Cresswell’s having been impressed and influenced by
Butler’s descriptive prose.

Further, Butler’s Erewon, like Cresswell’s Thesis, is
written in criticism of a scientific view-point that the
author held to be erroneous. Though the earlier work is a
satire, as opposed to an exposition, both are concerned to
demonstrate the falseness of the conclusions of a scientific
rationalism. An examination of Butler’s Chapter 21 on The
Colleges of Unreason and the section beginning “After supper
Mr Thims told me a good deal about the system of education
which is here practised” and concluding “I can only say that
all I heard in defence of the system was insufficient to make
me think very highly of its advantages” will show that the

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(1.) Present Without Leave XXXVII - XXXVIII. also ibid
CLVII, (the dream).

(2.) Present Without Leave ibid. The ideas adumbrated in
Present Without Leave LX and Modern Poetry and the
Ideal were apparently written about the same time as
those sections of Present Without Leave which allude
to Butler.
Erewhonian system of Hypothetics and Cresswell's idea of the system of abstract logic are essentially the same. In both Erewhon and the Copernican Universe they fulfil the same function, postulating "strange and impossible contingencies" that eventually become accepted as truths within the society, diverting the minds of the youth from true language and attaining a position of ascendancy and importance in the community (i.e. becoming "public") instead of being "confined to the few whose instincts led them naturally to pursue it," (i.e. remaining "private" and thus not influencing the entire beliefs of the community towards an attitude that remained in reality only hypothetical.)\(^{(1)}\)

The next chapters of *Erewhon* (23 - 25) which contain the "Book of the Machines" that The Press first published, contain references that the preceding analysis of the Thesis shows Cresswell was to echo; the satire on evolutionary theories, eugenics, and mechanization, and man's continual blindness to the dangers of these, are themes that were taken up in the Thesis and in the published prose, though in contrast to Butler they were phrased not as satire but as polemic and as prophecy.

As Peter Viereck notes\(^{(2)}\) the attacks upon mechanism by poets and moralists increased in fervour in the Nineteenth and

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\(^{(1)}\) Butler, *Erewhon* chapter 21, and *Eena Deena Dynamo* 7, 8.

Twentieth Centuries in response to the Industrial Revolution and the increasing influence of technology in every-day life. Somewhat sarcastically, he offers four classifications for the anti-mechanists:

(1.) the esthetic whiners - "mechanisation offends then not so much morally as esthetically, because of its "dirt" and "vulgarity", the two words most frequently used in their reproaches"

(2.) the pious scorers - one such "imagines himself a simple medieval peasant, full of touching rural piety and unmechanized handcraft"

(3.) the back-to-nature prophets - "the latter defend the natural primitive instincts of the human heart against the "artificiality", "rationalism" and alleged "corruption" of modern life which is damned as sordid and commercial. Here the escape is ... to Mother Nature"

and (4.) the trapped individualists - who "are mainly concerned with the dignity of man. They struggle to save the human personality from mass-standardization."

Viereck correctly notes that "many writers fall into several of these groups at the same time", a fair statement if applied to Cresswell who in this classification may be seen to partake of attitudes in any or all of the last three points. Though we may desire a more sympathetic attitude towards the poet than Viereck displays, his classification still offers a useful guide-line to Cresswell's general position in the analysis of this Section.
A lesser influence on Cresswell's formal thought (as opposed to his rationalisations of intuition) was that of Matthew Arnold. One of the few whom he included in the Anthology which accompanied the Thesis, Cresswell saw Arnold as worthy because of his emphasis on the value of the models of Classicism, the importance of a socially-minded critical faculty, and the need to mark off the spheres which should be the concern of true poetry "by condemning the modern World in his prose and pursuing no popular nor sensational aim in his verse." Arnold's anti-Philistinism and Cresswell's anti-Copernicanism, however, though kindred forms of protest, were not as nearly identical as the above quotation(1.) would imply.

Arnold acknowledged the essential goodness and worth of Hellenism(2.) and this Cresswell was prepared to accept. But it is improbable that Cresswell would have accepted Arnold's contention that what was lacking in Hellenism was the Hebraic (and Puritan) ideal of "conduct and obedience" the way in which man will pursue his "desire....for reason and the will of God, "(...) the feeling after the universal order."(3.) For in Cresswell's concept of Hellenism, the moral principles involved are not supplied by external dicta

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(1.) Eona Deena Dynamo 12.
(2.) vide Arnold, Culture and Anarchy. "Hebraism and Hellenism." "Porro Unum Est Necessarium."
(3.) ibid. "Hebraism and Hellenism."
as was the Hebraic Law, but were evident to men, in that any action was either good or bad according to whether it aided the seeker after Spirit. (1.) "These systems (Greek Paganism and Gothic Christendom) were virtuous and good, because harmony is virtuous and good, and therefore true..." (2.) But Arnold's appeal to Cresswell is as much in his seeking (in "Culture and Anarchy") to reconstitute the social as well as the personal order of Man.

The latter-day expressions of the personality of the poet as vates Cresswell saw in Blake, Byron, Whitman, Tennyson, Arnold, D.H. Lawrence, and himself. This theme underlies the broadcast transcript of "Modern Poetry and the Ideal." Modern Poetry as Cresswell uses the term in this case is not the pejorative which is found in the correspondence, and the satirical poems, referring to those writers whom Cresswell denounced for being subservient to the false thinking of science and Reason. Here it is used in reference to those few poets whom he felt to be expressing the Ideal in one or another form. But apart from the passing references in "Modern Poetry and the Ideal" there is little recorded statement to explain precisely Cresswell's attitude to these writers. Blake he saw as the Bard, the

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(1.) of page 118, supra.
(2.) Eena Deena Dynamo 8.
(3.) e.g., "Victoria Sackville-West, the well-known modern poet" (Cresswell to Miss Muggeridge, Winchester, 3 August, 1926. WTu MSS 170 (1. 16 - 22))
prophet deploring the "vast Satanic mills;" Byron was linked in his mind with the Greek War of Independence, and was thus a hero-figure in Cresswell's "proud subservience to a Greece that never was" (Glover); Tennyson he saw as the poet destroyed by the mechanism of the Industrial Revolution, a poet lamenting the loss of the Ideal through the allegory of "The Lady of Shallott" and the images of escapism in "Ulysses". Arnold has been considered, above; Whitman and the pre-Raphaelites are not dealt with in sufficient detail for the reader to assume how Cresswell approved their efforts.

D.H. Lawrence he saw as a novelist proclaiming the essential individualism of Man in a decadent, mechanistic society. His perception of Lawrence's intention stands as perhaps his best recorded piece of criticism, in which he saw the essential weakness of Lawrence's position:

So the poetic Ideal, the human Ideal, throughout all these years since Byron has come down to this, the dark personal gods of D.H. Lawrence. These are like the germ of the personal Ideal; but there's no hint of the social Ideal in Lawrence. The dark gods of Lawrence are only the other extreme of the Great Organisation he hated. The Great Organisation is the social Ideal grown malignant; the dark gods are the personal Ideal grown malignant, or gone native, if you prefer. Both manifest an utter division between personal and social man. The one is diseased for lack of a pure bloodstream of the personal Ideal; the other for lack of essential outlet of the social Ideal. The future for poetry and man lies in the guidance of that mysterious potent force, the personal Ideal, to its proper outlet in society....(1.)

(1.) Modern Poetry and the Ideal. pp 16 - 17.
Cresswell's poetic credo was an attempt to show a way of "guiding the personal ideal to its proper outlet in society". Conceiving of himself as a poet in this role, he set about "ordering the feelings of Man and this always to the end that Man should comprehend the Ideal." (1.) Of the Thesis he wrote, "I hold that to apply and correct these discoveries is the great task before us, without which no art of any public account will be done". (2.) And in these terms his lesser work, though frequently failing aesthetically to satisfy the requirements even of competence, can be understood. The satires (3.) sought to ridicule the heretical verse which he considered to be a distortion of true poetry in that it did not seek the Ideal, while the apparently political verse of Poetry and Cyprus is, in the light of the Thesis (4.) not political but philosophical, a poetic expression of the views put forward in the prose:

The following twelve sonnets were written to lend a New Zealand voice in aid of the Greek patriots of Cyprus, no English voice having so far been heard on this matter; a discrepancy astonishing to the author, considering, too, that the brutal dragooning of Cyprus is a wholly British affair. That now poetless body, the mere Public, might have supposed (and how naively!) that here were matters too appropriate for poetry, and too irresistible to the feelings of English

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(1.) Induction 3.
(2.) Present Without Leave CCVIII.
"English Satires!" (MSS includes "The Dyliad") c.1956 WTu MSS 170 (29)
(4.) vide especially Enea Deena Dynamo 10 and collations.
poets, for these to have remained utterly silent upon them... these are most richly poetic and public matters, a conjunction whose Providence was wont to be inspiration and its speech music. (1.)

The poetry of that publication is of little consequence; it is based on the Romantic idealism of Cresswell's Hellenism and his devotion to a Byronic cause. But the operative word in that judgment remains 'idealism.' Cresswell's last published poem, Zandvoorter Prelude -1, printed at the end of 1959 about three months before his death, was sent to his closest friends in New Zealand, with a card attached to each copy. Somewhat pathetically, this card was the last declaration of Cresswell's faith in himself as a poet.

WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF / THE TRIREME PRESS

THE TRIREME PRESS exists to rescue English Poetry from the state of intellectual (and often nonsensical) profanity into which it fell in the second and third decades of this Century, in imitation of the World's capital of artifice and chicanery, Paris. From the nonsensical profanity Poetry can rescue itself, and nearly has. From the intellectual profanity it can be rescued, like a debased currency, only by a return to the gold standard of inspiration, or 

enthusiasm (being divinity (sic) possessed) as the Greeks rightly called the true creative illumination. This THE TRIREME PRESS seeks to effect, sometimes by satirising the Intellectual Fallacy and its supporters, and sometimes by circulating what it hopes has at least some faint colour and small feeble ingredient of the timeless true gold. But it is a one-man endeavour financed wholly from the weekly wages of a

solitary night-watchman, and urgently in need
of even the smallest assistance.

THE COTTAGE, 8 ABERCORN PLACE, ST. JOHN'S
WOOD, LONDON N.W. 8. (1.)

For Cresswell to write in terms of an Ideal, that Ideal
had first to be formulated. "Almost every poet in the main
English tradition", wrote J. M. Cohen in 1960, (2.)

since the time of Baudelaire had complained
that there was no framework of thought common
to himself and his potential reader. Hence
the elaboration by many - Yeats, Blok, Rilke,
George, and Lorca among the chief - of entirely
new symptoms, based on their own private
experience, but advanced as if they possessed
a universal validity.

Holcroft in 1950 saw Cresswell as a poet in such a dilemma,
and interpreted this as a symptom of a deeper national seeking:

Cresswell is a poet who takes his ideas from
an environment in which the formal influences
of religion and philosophy are either weakened
or non-existent. His emotional response,
which is more sensitive than that of other
men, and which cannot be received and modified
within a literary tradition native to the
country, carries him towards extravagances of
thought and behaviour. When he turns in his
work towards the classic era, trembling always
on the verge of superstition, he illustrates
the unconscious search for spiritual security -
a search which, although emphasized or
distorted in the life of an individual, belongs
to the submerged life of the nation. (3.)

Given certain reservations concerning the influences of
formal religious and philosophical thought on Cresswell, and

(1.) Copy by courtesy of Mrs. H. L. Hofmann, Auckland.
(2.) J. M. Cohen, Robert Graves. (Oliver & Boyd, 1960)
pp 91 - 92.
(3.) Holcroft, op cit p 259.
withholding any comment on the "national" aspect of such a search in this chapter, the critic of Cresswell must still acknowledge that in any search such as the one Holcroft sees, the seeker after a System and a framework within which to communicate must take up a position which is emotionally tenable for him. At one extreme lies the néant, the recognition of solipsism and of the utter insignificance of human existence in such a Universe - the horror and despair of Sartre's Antoine Roquentin in *La Nausée*, or of the Theatre of the Absurd. At the other lies the absolute System, all-embracing and all-explaining, in which the significance of Man, and the nature of Man's relationship to his Ideal is firmly stated in the type of cosmic theory that can declare of the truth of its first principles,

If anything seems to be proved by astronomer, or geologist, or chronologist, or antiquarian, or ethnologist, in contradiction to the dogmas of faith, that point will eventually turn out, first, not to be proved; or secondly, not contradictory to anything really revealed, but to something that has been confused with revelation. (1.)

Cresswell sought this latter position, one in which faith could invalidate the despair that seemed to him the necessary corollary of scientific rationalism. He did not seek this faith within any already-established belief or System, either orthodox or heretical, since subservience to a faith that would ask him to moderate his beliefs or abase

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himself was for him an emotional impossibility. His faith had to justify his innate homosexuality, confirm it against social and ethical prohibitions and elevate it to the level of a "noble" and "natural" passion. It had to establish as true and valid his emotional reactions to the poetry of the Greeks and of the Nineteenth Century English Romantics; to support his instinctive rejection of the findings of scientific rationalism; and to confirm his feeling that the present state of Mankind, if far from satisfactory, need not therefore be accepted with despair. And above all, it had to establish the supreme importance of the man who sought to lead Mankind back to a state of happiness through the criticism of error and the practice of the art of poetry, the vates poetaque furiosus. In short, it had to apply completely to Cresswell himself, explaining, justifying and glorifying every aspect of his character.

And in the practice of poetry, in imitation of the models whose beauty lay for him in his emotional reaction to them, the System had to establish the validity of his own verse. His prose was generally held to be superior to his verse in quality, yet to attain to his ideal Cresswell had to produce poetry equal in stature to that of his models; and that he admitted he could not easily do. But to admit himself as a poete manqué would have been to destroy his belief in his self-appointed task, which, by the time The Poet's Progress was published in 1930, had become his whole raison d'etre. The System propounded by the Thesis had
therefore to support his efforts, even though these might be
failures, justifying them by virtue of the intention that lay
behind them. Cresswell's "system" was created to prove its
creator right in his attempts as well as in his successes, for
the latter were few enough as even he himself admitted. (1.)
To count only then would have been to discount the greater
part of his endeavours - thinkable perhaps for a more phlegmatic
person, but, one suspects, too much to countenance for one
such as Cresswell, whose self-possession and self-confidence
seemed to conceal an introverted and basically insecure
personality. (2.)

But in Cresswell's System, the messiah was as important,
so if not more, than his messianic mission. The Thesis puts
forward a philosophy that has some perceptive and valid parts,
inter alia, but as a statement on aesthetic practice it is
unworkable, except for the person for whom it was designed.

(1.) vide Ormond Wilson, Lf. 56, p 360, quoted in the next
note.
(2.) The essential introversion, the lack of confidence in his
position, and the need for recognition which seemed to
underlie Cresswell's urbanity are frequently noted in the
Landfall memorials:

For example,
Here was a rare instance of a man's choosing to wear
without self-consciousness a mask which was virtually
transparent. - Frank Sargeson, p 348.

...he craved for recognition and admiration, and
never ceased to hope that at last fame was just
around the corner.
- Ormond Wilson p 360.

also C.E. Carrington, ibid pp 341-344. Oliver Duff,
ibid pp 345-346.

Cf. Holcroft, Encircling Seas p 245 - "A sensitive mind
sometimes takes refuge in an arrogance that shields a
creative uncertainty."
It brooks no opposition, and it explains the man who created it. In Denis Glover's words,

Cresswell did create a cosmogony, and he was immovably its centre. So much so that everything in orbit was inevitably driven out.

(1.)
Part II of this study examined the current critical consensus of opinion of Cresswell's verse, and drew the conclusion that in terms of simple poetic merit his reputation cannot be a high one. It would seem to be similarly true in the light of the analysis of his Thesis that Cresswell as a philosopher or aesthetitician could not be taken very seriously and should be seen as an eccentric, whose views of poetry and modern thought were hopelessly anachronistic and at variance with common sense. Yet this view, though tempting in the light of the eccentricities of Lena Deana Dynamo and the Thesis would be less than totally accurate.

Two areas of Cresswell's thought ought properly to be distinguished. The first of these is the one which concerns Cresswell's awareness of the dilemma of the New Zealand poet of his time. Here his influence has been considerable, notwithstanding that in the 1950s and after many younger poets have asserted (rightly or wrongly) that the dilemma has been resolved, that there is no longer a problem of coming to terms with the New Zealand environment, for this was resolved both by the poets and by the society at large, in the post-war period. In the Introduction to the Anthology of New Zealand Verse, Robert Chapman writes.

The very success of the generation of the 'thirties - their fusing of New Zealand patterns of life and thought with their poetry - has enabled poets here to feel so at ease in their environment that they can simply assume it and find themselves freed to deal directly with the concerns
of poetry everywhere. (1.)

and a similar position, more subtly argued, is to be found in his essay "No Man Is An Island", in Distance Looks Our Way, when he says passim that

We felt at home here, at ease in our environment and we were certain that the real message of our poets and short story writers was the same. The writing of the generation of Glover and Sargeson, Fairburn and Curnow proved what we felt in our bones: there was a national consciousness, and a national life very much worth living. (2.)

C.K. Stead later rebuked Chapman, calling the first of the two opinions quoted above "a heresy in our criticism." (3.)

But the critic who turns to Cresswell and the other writers of the 1920s and 30s is likely to be less concerned with whether the dilemmas commonly referred to as "alienation" have been resolved by the post-World War II generation, than with the fact that these dilemmas seemed to be foremost in the minds of the writers of that earlier period. In other words, whether the dilemmas are still of concern at the present time cannot alter the fact that they were seen to be of consequence then. Chapman recalled in his essay "No Man Is An Island" the "mystification" and disagreement of a group


of younger Auckland writers in the post-war years with M.H. Holorooff's thesis:

His conception of New Zealanders was that they were doubly alien: cut off out here from valid participation in the high culture of Europe and alien to the forbidding landscape and to a mysterious otherness which he found in the New Zealand scene. (1.)

But such a conception was obviously not "mysterious" to the writers of a decade earlier, though not every writer would necessarily have concurred totally with both of Holorooff's explanations. Curnow has summarised the sense of the New Zealand poet's response to his environment in the statement,

The idea that we are confronted by a natural time, a natural order, to which our presence in these islands is accidental, irrelevant; that we are interlopers on an indifferent or hostile scene; that idea, or misgiving, occurs so variously and so often, and in the work of New Zealand poets otherwise so different, that it suggests some common problem of the imagination. (2.)

and, earlier in the same essay,

Those points at which imagination presses most insistently - there, is to be inferred the existence of some hunger of the spirit to which the poet is as the nerve to the body of his race, feeling and declaring the need or sickness which all suffer. (3.)

(1.) Chapman. _op cit._ p 43.


(3.) _ibid._ p 40.
For Cresswell "those points at which the imagination pressed most insistently" were the points that Holcroft later divined as the crux of the New Zealander's dilemma. The biographical study which was traced in the first part of this thesis offers these two points again and again; a sensibility developing in the awareness that the cultural milieu of New Zealand in the earlier decades of this century could not sustain it, if poetry were to be its chosen profession; and in conflict with this, a realisation that the roots of that sensibility were grounded in New Zealand, and especially in the landscape which Cresswell sought to celebrate in the language of Wordsworth and Shelley. The pattern here is a classic one. Of that world of New Zealand entre deux guerres Bill Pearson wrote recently

It needs little imagination to reconstruct the uniform crudity of popular sensibility which ran through all classes of pakeha New Zealanders from the beginning of the century to the thirties. A spiritual insensitivity disturbed not at all by the first world war but only by the depression; a crudity incarnated in the solid unimaginative flesh of Bill Massey, Prime Minister from 1912 to 1925, and continued in the solemn bumbling figure of George Forbes, Prime Minister from 1931 to 1935. It was the ethos of the hard-working small farmer impatient of all behaviour that did not evidently contribute to material gain or public decorum. Visitors like George Ball, an American consul, commented on the complacency, Andre'Siegfried'son the distrust of the intellect, Sidney Webb on the vulgarity. In 1929, J.B. Conliffe could note that 'the middle-class conception of cultural education for children rarely goes beyond lessons on the pianoforte'. It was
a cultural climate in which reading was a waste of time, imagination an impractical self-indulgence, morality a programme of self-denial and the masking of personal passions except, perhaps, those of righteous envy and anger. (1.)

In such a world Cresswell's sensibility was indeed alien, for the materialism and grossness that Pearson writes of, and that Sargeson adumbrated in his short story characters, were to be found equally in the world of Canterbury squires as in the worlds of the small farmers and merchants of other New Zealand provinces and towns. There seem to be subtle characteristics which distinguish the world of Cresswell's Canterbury from the generalisations which Pearson makes about New Zealand society as a whole, but these seem to be characteristics of degree, rather than of kind; the excessive vigour in that province of the myth of "Englishness" and "gentility." To create his poetry, Cresswell believed that he needed a world where both Nature and Society were more amenable to him, the one for inspiration, the other for acceptance and recognition.

Both these necessities are recognised in the Preface to Poems 1921 - 1927: where Cresswell speaks of the "Colonial poet" having "little in the first place but an empty though magnificent environment to urge his pen", and, in the subsequent paragraphs:

There is good reason to be found for the monotonous immaturity of Colonial poets

in the provocative yet overpowering nature of their native scenery. They feel called upon, by the example of the art of all ages, to become artists themselves in proportion as their surroundings are novel and grand and their energies enormous, while they remain blind to the fact that the poet is properly concerned with nature – that is, with its visible processes and admired appearances – only in so far as it provides a medium or language for the expression of an inward spiritual state, a state induced by a deeper consciousness of the tragic and unalterable nature of life than any new country, including the United States, can yet teach. (1.)

In this paragraph Cresswell sensed the emptiness of much of the poetising of New Zealand writers in the first decades of this century. Something more than an "urging of the pen" at the behest of an "empty though magnificent environment" was needed to produce poetry from the inspiration of the landscape. For Cresswell, this "something more" was the relationship that he felt ought to exist between man and Nature; a harmony that he imagined had existed before "abstraction" came to dominate man's thinking, in the eras prior to the postulation of the Copernican theses. His conception of Nature ("a term which he never...precisely defined, but which he most usually spelt with a capital N") as an animate and vital force which man must needs reckon with, has strong undertones of Wordsworthian pantheism, and

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(1.) Poems 1921 - 1927. The Preface.
(2.) Ip 58 cit. Frank Sargeson. p 350.
was a more extreme conception than that of Glover, Brasch, or Dowling. But in his declaration that the roots of New Zealand poetry needed to be planted in the landscape, and in a serious intellectual attempt to define the New Zealander's relation to that landscape, he is chronologically one of the first poets who can be properly associated with the group that Curnow collected together in the *Book of New Zealand Verse, 1923 – 1945*. So too he was, as Curnow notes, one of the first to manifest his awareness of the dilemmas facing the New Zealander isolated from the origins and sources of his Western European culture. The awareness of this dilemma is shown throughout the two books of autobiography, and nowhere more markedly than in the last sections of *The Poet's Progress* and the opening descriptions in *Present Without Leave*. Here the reality of the gambit of the young pedlar of his verse, "Good morning, I am a New Zealand poet selling my poems..." is seen in the questioning way in which Cresswell confronted his country after seven years' absence, in 1928; seven years in which he was virtually a settler in England, with the beginnings of a literary reputation already made there.

...not I who had left New Zealand seven years before, but another had now returned. And any doubt I had had on this point had yet been removed when we landed at last, when I found I was strange to all that I saw, though I knew in advance just what I should see. But because of this, because my memory existed by which to compare what I saw, the strangeness of all that I saw was something whereof I knew the
true depth and extent, by measuring this in my mind with that. And what was strange to my eye was as nothing by all that was strange to my heart, which remembered to have beat wildly and ached and swelled for love of this place in a former life. But now, when I arose at daybreak as the Ferry was nearing the Lyttelton Heads, and saw the summits of the Southern Alps above a long bank of mist, arrayed in that ancient light which the Titans took from Jove, I looked with awe and delight on that dazzling chain of rocks, but my heart inquired, What country is this? (1.)

The uncertainty of the final question of that extract is partially resolved by the comment made in the Christchurch interview four years later - "The base of my blood is in New Zealand; I feel that when I have been in London too long. But the base of my taste is in London; and I feel that if I am in New Zealand too long. It seems that this is a dilemma for any colonial artist." (2.) This must be considered to be only a partial answer to the concluding question of The Poet's Progress, partial because, as Cresswell saw, no final solution could be reached that would permit him to remain "an artist." Either "blood" or "taste" would need to be sacrificed if the artist were to settle permanently in one of the two countries, and both "blood" and "taste" he saw to be necessary components of the artistic sensibility. Hence Cresswell's long sojourns in England, and his literary activity there, yet also his constant assertions that he was

(1.) The Poet's Progress. XCIX. (the conclusion of the narrative.)

a New Zealander, and his wish to publish and be recognised here. As R.M. Chapman's remarks, quoted earlier, would suggest, a younger generation of New Zealand writers were not so conscious of these tensions of alienation as were their immediate forebears; Cresswell's testimony is therefore the more important for the light it sheds on a dilemma perhaps more strongly felt before World War II than after it, though not perhaps as fully resolved yet as Chapman's comments might suggest.

But as was noted earlier, this literary dilemma was only one of the two that Cresswell saw to be of importance to the New Zealand writer. If there was a conflict between "blood" and "taste", with "taste" centred upon England (and the biographical data of this thesis demonstrates that Cresswell found the establishment of his own "taste" a continuing battle against "modern" forces in England) then the response of his "blood" to the poetic problems of New Zealand was equally a problem. The "Nature" which he saw as the source of his "inspiration" and "blood" was to Cresswell a force with which man should come to terms in humility, rather than something that he should seek to control by his scientific or technological ability, with his "chemical farmers.../Miners, not husbandmen". Yet man's rapport had to be more than merely one of verbal effusion or word-painting. Cresswell's view of poetry implies not merely this effusion, but a form of religious celebration. The best expositions of this view
are to be found in his depictions of the poet George and his friend Clive converting Salter and helping the angel Gabriel in the comedy The Forest\(^{(1.)}\) and in the unpublished proofs of The Stream\(^{(2.)}\). Crosswell’s reply to Professor Sinclair’s defence of prose as a form superior to poetry. It is true that all of Crosswell’s verse and much of his polemic prose declares this position, but these examples, due to their comparative superiority to the bulk of his work, represent his ideas most adequately. In different ways this religious attitude is evoked in the dialogue between George and Salter –

\[\text{(George)}\]
\[\text{So is your love for Nature, at its source,}\]
\[\text{A little spring, whose purpose, faint and shy,}\]
\[\text{Wells up in you but has no history more,}\]
\[\text{And knows not why it is nor where it goes,}\]
\[\text{And finds itself unwanted in the World,}\]
\[\text{Nothing but shade and silence, like this scene}\]
\[\text{Of wildness whence it comes.}\]

\[\text{Salter (aside)}\]
\[\text{This boy's not mad!}\]
\[\text{If poets think like this they are our masters,}\]
\[\text{Or who else have we then?} (3.)\]

and the peroration to The Stream pamphlet –

\[\text{All things are the province of poetry, by reason alone of its altitude. It gives light and motion and meaning to the stones as to the stars. Its supers (sic) while it mingles with, all other inventions of man. It raises the dead as it robes the flower, and makes all things, even the stately mountains to dance and delight in its presence. It seduces all things from their earthly allegiance to worship before it. It bewilders all science, robs}\]


\(^{(2.)}\) vide Appendix. for a transcript of this MSS (WTu MSS 170. (84.))

\(^{(3.)}\) The Forest. Act three. (p 86.)
wisdom of reason, and religion of faith. Its station is absolute, its dominion unbounded. It clothes all things in a virtue its own; it robs them of all but their station and name. All dimensions alone is its exercise, as content alone is of science; yet it empties science of content and leaves it nothing. It has no possessions, yet it robs man and things of theirs. It is nothing yet everything. It is liberation and life. It is university whereof poets alone are professors. It is the very pride and glory of poets that their spirits preside over and illuminate matters so vast and diverse. Like the sun in its greatest splendour and height poetry beautifies and makes clearly visible all things beneath it. In this way does Dante, or any great poet, honour the masters of prose, when the ray of his spirit rests upon what they wrote. (1)

Both are special pleadings, arguing not only for the proper role of poetry, but also for a recognition of the poet's visionary and vatic function. In that sense they exemplify the ego-centric nature of Cresswell's vision, remarked upon in Part II's study of the Thesis. But these statements require that the reader not only accept the celebrant nature of poetry, but also the thesis that poetry is a quintessential use of language ("It clothes all things in a virtue its own; it robs them of all but their station and name."), a visionary "naming" superior to the prose which Cresswell castigated Professor Sinclair for preferring. As always in Cresswell's arguments, this quintessential quality is alluded to rather than defined. It may, however, throw light upon his

(1.) The Stream, final paragraph.
preference for Wordsworth, because of that poet's theories of diction as much as because of his themes, and his dislike of "modern poetry" which he felt lacked a verbal purity and elevation,\(^{(1)}\). just as he believed that it was a tool of diabolical science, and not directed to 'proper' concerns. Hence also, perhaps, his strict use of rhyme and syllabic rhythm, often at the expense of vitality, and his use of archaism combined with the style that Glover found "flat and mannered",\(^{(2)}\) when he sought to avoid "poetic diction" and yet imitate a poetic form natural to the poetry of 120 years earlier. It is seldom that this idiom succeeds - Curnow argues for its occasional success in *Lyttelton Harbour* and Chapman is perhaps right in seeing some such quality in *Leander*\(^{(3)}\). But generally his old-fashioned style is more appropriate to the rhetoric of his expository prose, where the stylistic curiosities can be accommodated more easily than in the rigid forms of classical verse. The style that is readable and pleasurable in the autobiographies is, by general consent, less than successful in the verse. Part of the reason, of course, is that Crosswell did not feel himself to be slavishly bound to a concept of 'proper form' in prose; the mannerisms and rhetorical forms are less arbitrary there, and

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\(^{(1)}\) For example, "T.S. Eliot is, I think, a man without the slightest creative spark..." *New Zealand Listener*. Interview with Crosswell, 10 February, 1950.

\(^{(2)}\) *Lé 58 cit.* Denis Glover. p 346.

\(^{(3)}\) *vide* Section II. pp 88 *supra*, and R.M. Chapman, *Image 7 cit.*
are usually more assimilable because of the immediacy of the arguments or themes that they convey.

In this connection, it may be permissible to digress to consider another side of Crosswell's talent, which could be relevant. The significance of his studies as an architect may lie less in pure biographical data than in the attention they draw to his craftsmanship. The only record known of this is in the line drawings in *The Poet's Progress*, and when these are compared with the verse, similar characteristics emerge. Both are attempts to inscribe and crystallise the emotional results of visual (pictorial) contemplation, whether in a simplicity of line or of word.

Similarly, there is his devotion to music, especially that of Beethoven and Chopin. The common factor shared by this and his verse would seem to be the search for an aural (whether abstract or verbal) statement of a "valid" emotion, while the common factor of the verse and the line-drawings would be the attempt to seize upon that emotion as it derives from a visual object. But whereas in music the value exists within the formal qualities and patterns of the sound itself, in the case of poetry and the graphic arts the 'objective correlative' which produces meaning (and therefore value) is not necessarily a factor in the object depicted, and must usually be added, or more probably created, in the process of artistic formulation. It could be suggested that it was Crosswell's misfortune to be intuitively aware of the
need for all these factors in his art, and to be responsive to their existence both in Nature and in the art which he admired, yet to be incapable of fusing these factors into his own verse effectively.

Crosswell was by temperament a Romantic, nostalgic for an Age of supposed perfection, and inordinately egocentric in his wish to find fame and recognition, yet at the same time sensitive, and prepared to suffer hardship in order to fulfil what he believed was his poetic destiny. The study of the Thesis (vide Part II) noted the degree to which the System he created vindicated his own career with its particular interpretations of the function of poetry and the nature of the Hellenic Golden Age. But a consideration of the System's egocentricity should not obscure the fact that it also sought to champion the literature to which Crosswell was devoted, though, as The Times Literary Supplement reviewer of The Poet's Progress observed,

... the author is temperamentally blind to all poetry but the greatest, and the art of a transitional age, exquisite though it may be at moments, means nothing to him. It is a curious limitation of sympathy.'

Still, one of the abiding impressions which this researcher feels, derived from the letters, the autobiographies, the Landfall memorials, and conversations with those who knew

(1.) Cf especially the Lf 58 memorials of Oliver Duff and Ormond Wilson.

(2.) TLS. 24 April, 1930. p 348.
Cresswell, is of a personality often socially unorthodox, but utterly devoted to a cause which required more than usual hardships to follow it -- distance from his family and background, the loneliness of his homosexuality, frequent poverty which aggravated his ill-health, lack of recognition, and frequent contempt from those who despised what he was or who were out of sympathy with what he did.

It is not surprising that his personality was often a "difficult" one, nor that he should seek to vindicate himself with a view of the universe that gave him more status and recognition than society did. More devotion to his profession, "taking poetry seriously", was unusual enough for a New Zealander of that period, and it is that gesture (or pose) with its encouragement to those writers a little younger than himself, as well as the occasional insights into the dilemmas confronting the New Zealand poet, that constitute his importance to New Zealand poetry, rather than the curiosities of his personality or the achievements of his verse or his messianic theses.

Yet it is rather too sweeping a generalisation to dismiss his theses as totally irrelevant to contemporary thought. Cresswell's love of a Greece that never was is in essence little different from that of many romanticising readers of the Classics, who have felt moved by the beauties of the literature in such a way that they have assumed that these beauties permeated the whole of Hellenic society. Their
vision of a Golden Age of literary achievement widens into a vision of a Golden Age in the whole of a society or culture, and this is nostalgically contrasted with contemporary society, where the relationship between the artist and his culture is certainly less than fully harmonious. Two major views of the artist's relationship to his society could be adumbrated here—the one would assume an artist creating in advance of his age, with taste, acceptance and recognition only following later; the other would require a harmony between artist and audience, and an immediate response to good art by all who were aesthetically "healthy". Cresswell's desire was for the latter state, as Sargeson's anecdote (1) confirms. Cresswell was aware that he had not achieved the heights of poetry in his writings, (2) yet he had still sufficient self-confidence.

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(1.) *vide* Section II, p 117 n (3.) *supra.*

(2.) *Note, from the Lf memorials,*

Then we would disagree hotly on his views about women, or about his family, or about his verses. "You are no judge, Charlic," he would say... "You are a bourgeois intellectual, the sort of man who killed Keats with his criticisms." Too true, too true. But I waited in vain for D'Arcy's wonder-year, his 1819 when his *Lania, Isabella* and *Eve of Saint Agnes* would prove me wrong.

— C. E. Carrington, p 344.

As far as he himself was concerned, he had no doubts about what he was still to do... He was going to live to be eighty, and the best was yet to be. Then even I, who had been blind all these years, would see for myself that I had been wrong. In this conviction about himself he never faltered or allowed himself to falter.

— Ormond Wilson, p 360.
to see the lack of response of the public as evidence, not so much of his own weakness as a poet, as of the decadence of the age and of the dissociated sensibility of a community blind to the cultural values which his art celebrated.

And yet a curious point emerges from his theses. It was remarkable enough that his comparatively "untutored" mind, largely self-educated and certainly having little stimulation from his native country, worked out a cosmogony with its propositions of anti-mechanism and prophesy which has many parallels in more "respectable" writing; it is also remarkable that for all its eccentricities it arrives at certain moral conclusions which seem disturbingly apposite to the atomic era.

If Cresswell's view of himself as a priest-poet, called to a high function in an age when that function is held in contempt, is reminiscent of Blake, Shelley, or particularly Arnold's Empedocles, it is nevertheless a thesis which, when combined with his anti-mechanist arguments, finds a measure of support in the Twentieth Century as well as in the Romantic literature of the Nineteenth. Notwithstanding the eccentricities and nostalgia of his arguments, the underlying assumptions of a rift between the poet and his audience, and of a discrepancy between man's material achievements and his moral capabilities, are paralleled in/of the "modern poets" whom he so bitterly execrated in his later small satires. Eliot's proposition of a "dissociation of sensibility", Graves' arguments in the final chapter of The White Goddess,
Yeats' mystic propositions of the imminent end of the Christian "cycle", Kermode's arguments in *The Romantic Image*, all come to mind as statements with which Cresswell might have been reasonably expected to sympathise to some degree, though a "limitation of sympathy", a "temperamental blindness", prevented this.

Cresswell's thesis of a diabolical seduction of man from Truth by the scientific expansion of knowledge in the last five hundred years is crudely argued, and lacking in both subtlety of thought and breadth of reference. Its appeal is to the temperament which wishes to "put back the clock", and to the Romantic who dreams of theocracy of poets, rather than to the temperament which wishes to harmonise the present dissociated elements without sacrificing the benefits which science since the Renaissance has conferred upon western civilisation. Yet by its tortuous argument, with its concepts of the "concrete" and the "abstract" in a state of moral imbalance, and its vision of a scientific ascendancy in which morality and *humanitas* are subordinated to expediency, Cresswell's thesis arrives at a conclusion quite similar to those of more orthodox thinkers who see in the Twentieth Century a situation where man's scientific knowledge has apparently outstripped his moral ability to use it (one thinks of *cyclon B* gas and the nuclear warhead) -- a world where many see mankind as having the ability to control the universe but not himself.
Such a view of Cresswell is contained most sympathetically in the concluding paragraph of Sargeson's *Landfall* memorial. Sargeson's general agreement with Cresswell's anti-mechanism, and his pessimism stemming from it, has not obscured his awareness of Cresswell's poetic weaknesses, but he summarises (perhaps sentimentally) his view of Cresswell's life-long profession in a tone of strong conviction -

> It goes without saying that neither his work nor anyone else's has discouraged mankind from taking the path which leads to the termination of the human experiment. We have with us the neurotic phenomenon of the supermarket: a fabulously expensive pamphlet stuffed with pernicious nonsense finds its way into every letter box; octane gets higher, but the fume and diesel-soot poison we breathe in our city streets gets denser; in Nigeria they have television. It all ties in with the four minute warning. For those of us who had ears for D'Arcy Cresswell's warnings, it is all as though the gods have admitted their own defeat; but before abdicating they may perhaps have decided to gather to themselves that slight figure of a man who conceived of himself as a poet wholly dedicated to their service. (1.)

The intuitively valid ideas within Cresswell's thesis should not obscure the fact that there are also eccentricities which produce bizarre touches of unreality -- for example, his assumption that the ultimate destruction of the present technological civilisation would clear the way for a new poetic ascendancy, of which he would be a part, or the seeking to reject technology entirely and go back in time, rather than come to terms with the present imperfect society, and so modify

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(1.) *Iff* 58. cit. Frank Sargeson. p 351.
it and improve it morally. Sargeson points towards the unworldliness of Cresswell's views when he notes

It was easy to recognise him as a man of spirit, and not seriously disagree when he insisted that the world would remain unregenerate while it continued to disregard spiritual matters as he conceived them. But it was not so easy to accept him in his messianic character, nor to accept that the kind of poetry he wrote, and that kind only, was to be the means of effecting the deliverance of mankind. It must of course be remembered that those were days when Hopkins had at last been fully discovered, and those of us who had already been jolted by T.S. Eliot, were much engaged with the revelations we found in Auden Spender and Day Lewis: and it was no doubt on this account that I would sometimes irritate D'Arcy Cresswell by refusing to admit that his claims for the kind of language and idiom which he employed could be taken seriously. (1.)

Sargeson's remarks above reinforced the points made earlier about the anachronistic nature of his style. Yet just as his thoughts on moral and intellectual alienation can be seen to have parallels in contemporary writers whom he rejected as benighted, so it is possible to discern a verbal response to a philosophical situation which echoes (paradoxically, because of its complete antithesis and opposition) the response of those poets who sought to revitalise and make new the language of poetry in the second decade of this century. It would be ludicrous to suggest that the achievements of Cresswell and the Imagists were at all comparable in terms of merit and historical importance;

(1.) If 58 cit. Frank Sargeson, pp 349 - 350.
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(1.) If 58 cit. Frank Sargeson, pp 349 - 350.
confronted questions of immediate concern to him as a New Zealander that he wrote his most direct, and therefore most telling, work.

His achievement in verse was small, yet he must be respected as a personality who was forthright and sensitive enough to signpost for the writers of his time some of the directions that they would need to explore in order to write of the growth of the country's "national awareness." With the possible exception of Basil Dowling, he did not influence the younger poets with his theories of diction or form, for he was not a considerable enough poet to be worthy of imitation. But his thought left its mark on the speculations of Holcroft and Curnow, in the fiction of Sargeson and Finlayson, and in the awareness of the problems that he brought forward that manifested itself in the work of most of the poets whom Curnow included in his Book of New Zealand Verse, 1923 - 1945.

In a memorial note in Landfall 54 the editor of that journal wrote,

New Zealand literature in the thirties began in a real sense under his banner. By his open stand, he did more than anyone else to prepare here a place for the life of the imagination, for the independent spirit. That writers today can live and work in New Zealand without being stifled is due in part to him. (1)

To have shown forth the possibility of poetry and to have helped foster the "life of imagination" in a country where neither were much entertained before, seems a rather considerable achievement.

(1.) [Rf. 54 June, 1960. "Notes" (editorial - unsigned.) pp 116 - 117.]
Appendix.

SINCE BYRON, AN ANTHOLOGY WITH A THESIS.
(With MSS 170 (74) copy forwarded to Gugenheim.)

Contents of the proposed anthology.

PREFACE

FOE

To Helen

WELLS (Unidentified) Play (untitled)

BEDDOES

The Sailor's Song
Island Speaks
Love (deleted)
Nature's Polluted
Crime and Punishment
A Sweet Place
Men and Wine
Something Brewing
Suppose a Pig
Nature and Science
Farewell
Death
Sleeping Boy

TENNYSON

Lady of Shallott
Break, Break, Break
In the Valley of Cauteretz
Burial (deleted)
I Arose
The Shining Stars

ARNOLD

Shakespeare
The Scholar Gipsy
Sing of Callicles
Thyris

SWINBURNE

(delated)

D.G. ROSSETTI

The Blessed Damozel
Sister Helen

WHITMAN

O Love!
The Bitterest Envy
Pioneers! O Pioneers!
The Man-of-War Bird
Beat! Beat! Drums!
Dirge for Two Vet(e)rans!
Ethiopia Saluting the Colours
When Lilacs Last at the
Dooryard Bloom'd (six lines)
Come Lovely and Soothing Death.
O Captain! My Captain!
Hush'd Be the Camps
At the Last
Spirit that F urn'd this
Scene (deleted)
The Dead
The Bravest Soldiers

ANONYMOUS (W. D'U. C.)
Hymn to Apollo (deleted)
Thou, beauteous Phoibos! thou
Since Christ arose,
In Spring
(Winter now is done)
Hymn to Hyperion
(Thou, faint Hyperion, to thee
I pray)
Appendix.

The WTu MSS of The Stream.
(transcription of the galley proofs).

This issue of The Stream consists of one hundred copies, none of which is for sale. There is also a New Zealand issue of fifty copies, none of which is for sale.

This copy is for Professor F. Sinclair, of Canterbury College in the University of New Zealand, recently contributed two essays to the literary supplement of a New Zealand newspaper, the Christchurch Press, wherein he contended (if he contended at all) for the higher spirituality and pre-eminence of prose as compared to poetry, coming in a cloud of witnesses, Fathers and Prophets whose presence might well appal an unlearned opponent.

The heresies, not to say the sedition, of a gentleman admitted to be an authority on writers and literature, called, in my view (the compiler of THE STREAM is here speaking), for an energetic and uncompromising reply; the more so as the Professor dared to predict, not with grief, not even with indifference, but with a solemn joy, that there was no deponent of poetic art wherein poetry would not, before long, be superseded by prose. He even ventured to show how this process had already begun. Indeed poetry, as he understands it, is an entirely premeditated thing; and there is even a sense in which he is right. The Compiler of THE STREAM wrote his reply therefore to recall his readers if necessary, to that sense in which he is wrong. This reply was refused publication by the Christchurch Press, after a long and mysterious delay respecting which its author was told the typescript had been lost; an experience he had never not with from the newspaper before. But then he had never before in its pages trod so closely on the heels of a Professor of the University of New Zealand, a sight which had perhaps horrified its earnest and decorous readers. His reply therefore appears here in print for the first time.

Reply to Professor Sinclair.

Dear Professor Sinclair. It is deplorable that you cannot defend prose without disparaging poetry, nor even disparage poetry without the assistance of De Quincey, Hazlitt, Coleridge and Arnold, literary critics of which two had almost ceased to be poets when they came to be critical hacks. It is no use your going to Coleridge, or to any critic, to determine the status of poetry. It were best, in fact, to avoid such advisers, as they lead us away from the poems themselves and flatter our taste with opinions and extracts. This is
the danger of critics and of popular literary papers, and indeed of professors. For poetry is not to be defined elsewhere than in its works, nor defended but in the lives and devotion of poets. I have yet to learn that prose has anywhere merited such a defence, and been, in itself, and not on account of that which it furthered, an object for which a man would offer his life, something inseparable indeed from his existence. And if there be none now living worthy to be compared with those, yet the uninstructed opinion of man has everywhere held artists, that is, poets, to be spirits and supernatural beings that dwelt unrecognised among them, distinct, not in degrees, as those who write bad prose are distinct from those who write it well, but distinct in mind. I do not defend poets or poetry; I point out that whereby they are impregnable defended forever. Nor, in the face of your innocent preference for prose, would a poet, or any who love poetry, deign to consider the sayings of any great man of letters whatever, no, nor even of poets, to determine if poetry, like painting and every art, is divine and unparalleled and the vehicle of a spirit so essential, it is indifferent whether its earthly form be of marble or metal or music or colour or line or words understood, or indeed any form or sound or symbol or synonym that has access to the understanding. What form of moral teaching, which you say is descended from Heaven, is that which were as persuasive in marble as in the words of Aquinas, St Augustine or Aristotle; what philosophy were as life-like expressed in music as in the writings of Bacon or Berkeley; what eloquence of Burke or Demosthenes had been expressed in painting and yet been an identical matter with that they delivered? None; for these things, philosophy, eloquence and the like, however noble and great, are not free and essential in spirit; they expound and teach freedom; they do not exhibit it as poetry does. They are not free from pain however they teach fortitude, from doubt howsoever devoutly they pursue freedom, from partiality however they profess openness. They have, as I mean to say, no passage of access to all plastic matter. Shall the genuine spirit of prose appear apparelled in any substance or fashion but that of words? I think not. Our idea of divinestness allows metempsychosis to the Gods alone; to all mundane and prosodical elements are given one nature and station to keep and be patient therewith. I pray you to keep to and be patient with yours. The common man, that know nothing of art, yet has enough honesty to hold it in awe, and to distinguish its manifestations from all else. It cannot be allowed to critics and schoolmen to corrupt this.

Let us, dear sir, consider the relation of poetry to prose, a relation that is in grave danger nowadays of being misunderstood. If poetry be dependent on prose, upon what are its sister arts in dependence? For I will not attribute to you this absurdity, that of all arts poetry alone is in subjection and servitude. What is that upon which sculpture
and statuary in fact do depend? Surely all hewing and quarrying of stone and moulding of metal; and associated with sculpture in its dependence thereon are all makings in stone and metal pursued for comfort, adornment and social advancement and safety. But would any assert that sculpture is something less in nobility than quarrying and moulding for being dependent thereon. To presume to measure the height whereby it exceeds its useful associates in idealism and beauty? You may reply that architecture which relies on just those resources, is the equal of sculpture, and stands in the same relation thereto as you say prose does to poetry. But while I admit the equal grandeur of architecture to sculpture, I say it stands in no such relation to sculpture, or to any art, as you would have it that prose stands to poetry; for no work of architecture is, or could be, the work of one man, but of several, and in its noblest examples of many. And painting? This is likewise, sculpture it has its lower associates, in all practical, pleasant, improving, delightful uses for which paint is needful. But the capable house-painter or decorator will not bring his place in the world into ridicule by comparing himself with Titian or Turner to the disadvantage of those, on no other ground but that they use the same colours and apply them alike. And music? Likewise this requires the provision of instruments and the use of pitch and a kind of grammar; but is this most celestial language thereby brought into subjection to or even comparison with, every occasion of happy bawling, harmonious moonshine and pious pealing of bells and blowing of trumpets all over the earth? Indeed no; no more than those others has this divinity any equal or peer where she shines like the sun in Heaven, the source of all we enjoy. As these arts then are dependent, sculpture on quarrying and moulding, painting on making of canvas and paint, music on making of instruments and a grammar of pitch, so is poetry dependent, not on prose, but on language and lately on print, on which prose likewise depends. And as these other arts stand in an altogether superior and distant relation to certain useful, beneficent, liberal and pleasant activities that use the same means as they do themselves, as sculpture to metal-working and masonry, painting to all lover users of paint, music to all other festive and solacing sounds that use the same grammar and instruments, so does poetry stand, has always stood, and will ever stand, in an altogether superior relation to all philosophies, teachings, devotions, histories, ethics, novels, stories, essays, and to any and all works, projects and preachings in prose whatsoever.

You, Professor are a Democrat in your views or literature, rather I should say a Communist and Republican; and in your essay A Defence of Prose, or the Other Harmony there is more than enough mischief and treason to hang a more regicide. For however Communism may be sound politics, it is no less than treason and blasphemy in respect of those higher Estates which distinguish things of the spirit. And although I said
before, that I find you innocent in your preference for prose; I say here that I find you guilty in your defence of it. You foresee, you are ready to welcome a time when poetry will be driven out of the world by the superior practice of prose. In this event you shall pray for the state of prose, which might as well hope to flourish among us without the splendours and favours of poetry uphold it as a flower might hope to flourish from which the rays of the sun were forever withdrawn. So much hope have you of a novel to equal The Iliad and a drama, the equal of Shakespeare, in prose. You are even the deadliest enemy of that you defend.

You find, I should say, so much of the sun in every direction wherever you read, you are like a man who, walking on earth on a sunny day, thinks that the sun must derive its light from the fields and the trees. Thus you imagine that the loftiest poetry derives its "heavenly truth" from philosophies and religious writings in prose. From Aquinas, St. John, St. Augustine, St. Bernard, Aristotle, "Dante found the heavenly truth which in his great poem he embodied in the imagery of sense." So then, Dante borrowed the spirit of his poem, the "heavenly truth", of which the body was his. But can a body, I ask, borrow a spirit: It is spirit that borrows, that does everything. That which, so blindly, you think is a borrowing of spirit, of heavenly truth, is a borrowing and illuminating of matter, whereby Dante clothed his great spirit and created his poem. Indeed in that paraphrase of The Lord's Prayer with which the eleventh canto of the Purgatory begins, which you give as an example of Dante's dependence, we see, on the contrary, most clearly how all that he borrows is used to a new purpose, and made to serve another, the poetical insight, to become part of a new universe, that of poetry. It is here no longer a part of religion or teaching; it has now no connection therewith, nor with ethics as such, whatever. The New Testament ethic is indeed still there; but will any venture to say that the poetic spirit which determines this passage is subject to that; or that the ethic as such is not herein changed into something else, and addressed to an altogether different faculty of our being? Moreover there is nothing borrowed by Dante, nor by any poet, but it no longer expounds freedom to man as philosophies do; but now, as in Dante, it exhibits freedom, in unity, in being one with the energy and address of his spirit, whereby it is raised above that ground of logic and reason whence it came. It is seen in a new light, that proceeds from one source and no other, the spirit of epic in Dante.

Professor, you clearly have no idea what is meant by spirit and "heavenly truth"; you have certainly never imagined nor met with the Spirit of Poetry (a shortening for which you may be excused) however much you may care for its matter and style. The spirit of every man is original; did not the philosophers teach you that? What is borrowed
on earth is a body and means of expression, of an extent and
nature to suit its purpose and power. By that in, or upon
which, the spirit of poetry is manifest is its amplitude and
magnificence made known to mankind. It is heavenly and alien
upon earth; and is yet, at its highest, possessed of all
earthly matters. It is subject to no law of cause and effect
that governs nature and man. This is the weakness and theft
by reason of which you find it is second to prose; that is its
guilt, to be unsubstantial, essential, metamorphic, pervasive,
lawless and free. In all this you have not found it nearly
guilty enough. You should have found poetry guilty of an
utter dependence on everything, as the sun depends upon objects
of matter that its warmth may be felt and enjoyed. The very
light of day were like darkness had it no objects to shine
upon. You should have pointed out how Dante's reliance on
prose excludes almost nothing in nature or science or thought
from the earliest times to his day; you should have remarked
how Dante not only borrows the benign and wholesome ethics and
visions of Christian writers, but their rabid conviction of
vengeance and horror as well; and thus allowed me to ask you
whether it was by learning to lean on the writings of others
that he acquired the supreme power to turn such matter into
magnificent searching scenes of truth and amazement. You
should have done this, and thereby convinced us that there is
no power in the universe to be compared to the spirit of poetry.
Moreover, is not this great poem a sustained whole, more
sustained than any other great epic we have? And where its
matter derived from what is greater than itself, would the
poem not fall where the source was paltry and soar where the
source is inspired?

When we walk in the fields and find all things, the
flowers and the grass and all objects near at hand, and those
at a distance, as the hill-tops and the clouds, clothed and
shining in the uninterrupted light of the sun, we feel that we
and all nature are united and one in those heavenly beams, and
we and all creatures feel then to be an invitation from Heaven
to rest in enjoyment and peace. But when the sky is overcast,
and the air cold, all creatures know and pursue their diversity
and complain in themselves, and fall into mischief and strive
after amendment by counsel and wakefulness. So is this world;
and so is the spirit of poetry like the sun that shines on all
things alike, and makes of nature and man a precious and sweet
university; but otherwise, when that sun is hid, though its
light is about us, we do what we can in our want and discomfort,
not to fall into error and doubt and division, and in the night
of our minds we study ourselves and we study nature, about us
with not other aim but to find, if we can, wherein lies that
miraculous friendliness, that university, which befell us before,
and so make provision against the inclemency. This manful
wisdom and exercise we call philosophy, ethic and science.
But when once again the sun is shining above us, there are
some now in doubt if their pleasure be less or more, and from
the fringe of that wisdom and exercise they complain that
Heaven has robbed them of authority.
All things are the province of poetry, by reason alone
of its altitude. It gives light and motion and meaning to
the stones as the stars. Its supers, while it mingleth with,
all other inventions of man. It raises the dead as it robes
the flower, and makes all things, even the stately mountains,
to dance and delight in its presence. It seduces all things
from their earthly allegiance to worship before it. It
bewilders all science, robs wisdom of reason, and religion of
faith. Its station is absolute, its dominion unbounded. It
clothes all things in a virtue its own; it robs them of all
but their station and name. All dimensions alone is its
exercise, as content alone is of science; yet it empties
science of content and leaves it nothing. It has no
possessions, yet it robs man and things of theirs. It is
nothing yet everything. It is liberation and life. It is
university, whereas poets alone are professors. It is the
very pride and glory of poets that their spirits preside over
and illuminate matters so vast and diverse. Like the sun
in its greatest splendour and height, poetry beautifies and
makes clearly visible all things beneath it. In this way
does Dante, or any great poet, honour the masters of prose,
when the ray of his spirit rests upon what they wrote.

Corrigendum.

Page 161, lines 17 - 19 should read

This is likewise dependent on makers of pigment and weavers
of canvas, and like sculpture it has its lower associates,
in all practical, pleasant, improving, delightful uses for
which paint is needful.
I speak of walls and chains; of the vials of wrath; of limitations, denials, derelictions, fallings from grace, making them yours to save my face:

- Terms of Appointment

(from the Additional Poems in *Strange Rendezvous*, 1952)
The following study of A.R.D. Fairburn is presented in two parts. The first of these is an outlined literary biography, which, like the biography of Crosswell, makes no claims to completeness, but rather draws a picture of the poet's life insofar as such a picture may show more clearly the circumstances in which the verse was written, and the apparent pressures of external circumstances and internal personality that may have contributed to the final achievement. Fairburn's range of interests was extraordinarily wide, and a full consideration of his political activities, social criticism and aesthetic interests (painting, and fabric-printing in the graphic arts as well as reviewing in the field of literature) would be beyond the scope of this thesis. The material presented is then necessarily selective. It must also be noted that much of the material is drawn from Fairburn's letters, collected after his death by Mr Glover, and here it has been necessary to treat with discretion the personal information that is naturally to be found in such correspondence, though on occasions the researcher may feel that in some personal remarks the "background" or germinal circumstances of a poem are being described. With this proviso, the letters form an invaluable source of information previously unexamined (except for one M.A. thesis on Dominion, cited), and generally give more detailed insights into Fairburn's thought than do the reviews and articles which
he wrote, where the comments, though by no means superficial, are less useful to a study of this kind.

The second part considers the lyric nature of Fairburn's verse and its changes and developments, in an essentially chronological form, paralleling as far as is practicable the history outlined in the first section. Fairburn's central core of lyric vision has already been studied in Mac D.P. Jackson's study, the findings of which are often reinforced by the letters of Fairburn himself. But the poetry itself, as opposed to the argument which it manifests, has not received much detailed study to date, and the arguments of the second part of this section of this thesis may to some extent supply this, at the same time as they seek to indicate the way in which one of the most impressive of New Zealand's lyric poets to date spanned a range of Romantic styles in the course of his writing from the 1920s to the 1950s, thus mirroring if not the whole development of New Zealand verse in that period, then at least one considerable aspect of it.

(In transcribing the letters, no alterations to spelling or punctuation have been made, with the exception of a regularising of the use of the apostrophe, Fairburn's use of which was irregular. Citations prefixed with the letter J refer in every case to the relevant items in Miss Olive Johnson's A.R.D. Fairburn: A bibliography of his published work (University of Auckland Monograph Series No. 3.) 1958. Two unpublished MSS from the later 1940s are given as an Appendix,
both because of their intrinsic interest and because of their usefulness as complementary material to much of the data cited in the main studies here.)

Arthur Rex Dugard Fairburn was born on 2 February, 1904, in Auckland. (1.) He was educated at Parnell Primary School in that city, and from 1918 to 1920 at the Auckland Grammar School. At this time he first became friendly with R.A.K. Mason who was in Form 5A with him in Fairburn’s last year at the school. (2.)

Fairburn was apparently a student of some sporting ability and middling capacity academically. He was in the top academic form in each of his three years at Auckland Grammar School, and the school register (3.) shows him to have been well-placed in


(2.) Mr Mason recalls their school-boy associations in some general reminiscences in the early minutes of his memorial tape made at the Auckland University College Literary Society, April 1957, AU, 891.91 Fl6v.

(3.) The following are Fairburn’s marks, as recorded in the Auckland Grammar School register:

1918 Form 3A.
English. 104/150
Latin. 105/125
French. 63/75
Mathematics. 99/150
Science. 63/100.

1919 Form 4A.
English. 98/150, 91/150. av. 179/300. 368/600.
Latin. 70/125, 86/125. av. 166/250. 333/500.
French. 42/75, 52/75. av. 90/150. 184/300.
Mathematics. 47/150, 40/150. 87/300. 174/600.
Science. 63/100, 56/100. 129/200. 248/400.

1920 Form 5A.
English. 77/125, 72/125. 129/250.
Latin. Absent. 90/150. 103/300.
French. 25/75, 40/75. 95/150.
Mathematics. 24/150, 42/150. 68/300.
Science. 53/125, 54/125. 77/250.
English, somewhat lower in French, Latin and Science, and often near the bottom of the class in Mathematics. He did not matriculate from the School, and on leaving went to work as a clerk in the Auckland office of the New Zealand Insurance Company, where he remained until his departure for Norfolk Island in 1926. (1.)

From reminiscences, especially those of Mr Mason and Mr Clifton Firth, (2.) an impression is gained of a strong personality, a questing intellect and an active interest in sport, all essentially ill-suited to the confinements of a clerical job. It is not possible to say just when Fairburn began writing verse; his continued association with R.A.K. Mason may have meant that Mason's first publications in 1923 and 1924 were something of a stimulus to him, but this is conjectural. The first of his poems published was the octave of the sonnet "There are no flowers upon the Ocean's mead" in Geoffrey de Montalk's booklet, *Wild Oats* (3.) (1927) where the piece is attributed to his trip to Norfolk Island in November, 1926, but de Montalk's letters from mid-1926 onwards indicate

(1.) Fairburn apparently did some teaching at Mr David Faigan's coaching college in the later 1920s, at the same time as Mason.

(2.) I am indebted to both Mr Mason and Mr Firth for interviews and conversations which have helped put together an impression of those early years, otherwise largely undocumented. Mr Mason's memorial tape made for the Auckland University College Literary Society in April, 1957, has already been noted. Mr Firth too made a tape of recollections which he played for me in April, 1961. The material in the next two pages is, when otherwise undocumented, taken from these tapes. Mr Firth's has not to my knowledge been transcribed or lodged with a library to date.

(3.) J 16 P. The book is "dedicated to my friend and fellow-poet, Rex Fairburn."
that Fairburn had shown him poems before the latter left Auckland for Christchurch in that year.

In those years of the later 1920s, Fairburn seems to have been concerned with two areas of intellectual interest above all others, those of politics and poetry. In the former his mentors were Mason and Clifton Firth, and from the latter especially he was to derive much of his knowledge of Marxism which remained as an undercurrent discernible in his later political thought, notwithstanding his rejection of Communism as a political ideology within a few years. (1.)

In a tape recording made after Fairburn’s death, Clifton Firth recalled a "confusion" and lack of faith in Fairburn’s thought as he saw it in these years. The reading of Spengler’s Decline of the West in 1929 was, according to Mr Firth, "the great turning point of his life", though the evidence of the letters might suggest that it was more the impact of his trip to England in 1930 that was to move Fairburn from his youthful idealism to his more mature thought. Mr Firth also recalls a distrust of Newtonian mechanics that was to lead, through debate, to the Romantic idealism and animism that was strong in the later work, and that Mr Firth sees as essentially Goethian.

Neither Mr Firth nor Mr Mason was in full accord either with Fairburn’s political progress that led him from professions of socialism in the later 1920s to Douglas Social Credit by the

(1.) Vide also Fairburn to Denis Glover. 8 October, 1936. quoted pp 195 - 6 infra
mid 1930s, nor with the general credo of Romanticism that was the concomitant of this. Nevertheless each one sympathetically records an impression of the personality and the intellectual fervour that evidently marked the youthful Fairburn of the days before He Shall Not Rise.

Fairburn was actively contributing political, aesthetic and poetic MSS to a variety of periodicals and newspapers from 1926 onwards. (1.) In the period up to the departure for England, Johnson records sixty poems printed, some of them more than once, and it was at this time that the strongest poetic influence on Fairburn, apart from perhaps R.A.K. Mason, was Geoffrey de Montalk.

de Montalk (born 1903) studied at Canterbury University College and attended St. John's Anglican Theological College in Auckland briefly before returning to Christchurch about 1926, where he remained until November, 1927. His correspondence with Fairburn began in August 1926 and continued at least until 1929. (2.) Mr C.R.H. Taylor of the Alexander Turnbull Library, with whom de Montalk still corresponded until recently, tells me that de Montalk claims still to have Fairburn's replies, though this has not been confirmed. Thus, with a correspondence file that is one-sided, as this one is, it is not possible to assess precisely what Fairburn's reactions to de Montalk's views were at the time. (3.) Even

(1.) vide Johnson, pp. 13 - ff.
(2.) WTu Micro MSS 131.
(3.) For Fairburn's later opinions, vide Fairburn to Muriel Bradshaw. 30 June, 1934.
with this limitation, nevertheless, it may be assumed that
the recipient must have showed a degree of interest in the
ideas that de Montalk expressed. de Montalk was too much
an egotist to plead his case, writing eighteen and twenty
page letters every few weeks for a number of years, to a
wholly unsympathetic listener.

de Montalk in these years held to the belief that a small
group of New Zealand poets, Fairburn, Mason, Maxwell Rudd and
himself, formed the nucleus of an aristocrat group of poets
who in their vitality would rejuvenate the now-decadent
tradition of English poetry.\(^1\) de Montalk himself was
undoubtedly eccentric in his views, and there is no reason
to suppose that Fairburn or the others took his views as
seriously as did he himself, but again, the apparent sympathy
of Fairburn implied in the letters must be noted.

For de Montalk, his claim to the throne of Poland
constituted one half of an aristocratic pretension - the
other half being that of his aristocracy as a poet. Poet
and king were the two roles that he played (each
spectacularly later in England\(^2\)) and his letters reflect

\(^1\) Possible similarities between the views of de Montalk,
Fairburn and D'Arcy Cresswell in this nationalistic
conception of the role of the New Zealand poet in the
1920s are discussed in my paper, Problems and Responses
of Three New Zealand Poets in the 1920s, given at the
Tenth Biennial A.U.L.L.A. Congress, Auckland, 1966, and
published in the proceedings of that Congress, pp 202-213.

\(^2\) Vide C.R.H. Taylor's article on de Montalk in The Evening
Post, (Wellington) 21 November, 1959, W.S. Broughton.
Problems and Responses of Three New Zealand Poets in the
1920s, \(\text{cit}\) also de Montalk's own pamphlets published
under the Right Review imprint.
his belief in Fairburn's involvement in this destiny.

In a letter of 2 August, 1926, rebuking Fairburn for a profession of Socialism, he wrote

... I believe in the Divine Right of Kings (to rule rightly). I believe in the sacredness of an aristocracy; and I believe in the rottenness and ingratitude of the plebs. Surely you don't cast yourself with the latter? Surely you are at least a bourgeois? Anyway, it isn't the plebs or the bourgeois who keep poetry and art alive, but the haute bourgeoisie, the nobility and royalty.
... The spiritually elect should hang together, for, bad as we are, the people (so-called) are worse, infinitely.\(^{(1)}\)

A few weeks later, when Fairburn was in Norfolk Island, de Montalk wrote to him of a plan to publicise the work of the spiritually elect.

... I intend to go to a farm within reach of the Holy City\(^{(2)}\) and, like you, write immortal lines. I shall also save up and print a little book, larger however than Mason's. Then I intend to start a campaign to boost my own poetry in the land where it is made, New Zealand.
... If it succeeds I shall try the same with yours and Mason's and Maxwell (Rudd's), if you will let me. I have a reprehensible ambition to father the New Zealand school of poets, in my opinion a very great school. W.B. Yeats is our only rival. However, of this anon, when I have saved up a little cash.\(^{(3)}\)

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(1.) de Montalk to Fairburn. 2 August, 1926.

(2.) This seems to be a sarcastic reference to Christchurch. The farm was probably in the suburb of Hoon Hay.

(3.) de Montalk to Fairburn. 28 August, 1926.
In the same vein he wrote later that year,

But you must write. We all must write.
For we, the New Zealand group of poets,
bid fair to rival that of pre-war Europe.
Of our proud rank among the masters I
have less and less doubt as time goes on.
- I mean you, R.A.K., myself, and Maxwell.

(1.)

and later, in the same letter, presumably replying to some
anti-Royalist remark of Fairburn's,

I don't admit the mere harmlessness of
our King and Prince, nor the accident
of their birth. I solemnly believe
that they were trained and chosen by the
Masters of Fate for that peculiar role,
even as you and I and R.A.K. are anointed
to the ways of poetry. Our own
endeavours... are united to the blessings
of the Gods, to make us poets.

(2.)

The quotations show de Montalk's belief in the aristocracy
of poetry (3.) and in the potential of a few New Zealanders,
including himself, to assume the title of Poet. There is a
strident, if egotistical nationalism in the references to the
"New Zealand school" which is the anathema of the obeisance
to current English practice and opinion reflected in Alexander
and Currie twenty years before.

Fairburn must have been sympathetic to the elements of
this view of his part in an Antipodean Renaissance, though it
cannot be assumed that he took the whole idea as seriously as

(1.) de Montalk to Fairburn. 14 October, 1926.
(2.) de Montalk to Fairburn. 14 October, 1926.
(3.) Mr Firth in his tape suggests that Fairburn was quite
conscious of the "regal" implications of his Christian
name, though it is a moot point how this anecdote ought
to be interpreted.
did de Montalk. The letters continued for several years, de Montalk revealing in them a strange consonogony and *credo*, usually asserting directly or obliquely his aristocratic nature, as he came closer to formulating his claim to be Wladislaw I, claimant to the then and still vacant throne of Poland. At a more practical level, it was apparently he who first recommended Fairburn to approach the late Ian Donnelly of the *Sun*, (1.) in whose columns Fairburn was to print many of his early poems. (2.) Fairburn meantime made a trip to Norfolk Island, which it seems was to some extent an attempt to escape from the drudgery of his employment in the insurance office and the limitations of Auckland life. He recalled eight years later, however, that

Norfolk Island turned out to be full of painted jades and picture shows and other mod inconvs. So I came back home... (3.)

The most crucial experience in these early years though was undoubtedly the trip which Fairburn made to England in later 1930. This may be interpreted as a romantic escape from the limitations of New Zealand life, similar to the trip to Norfolk Island, though on a grander scale. There may also have been the influence of de Montalk suggesting that Fairburn's

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(1.) do Montalk to Fairburn. 2 March, 1927.
(2.) Vide *J31P* and subsequent items. Ross's thesis (*cit infra*) lists a number of *Sun* pieces and reprintings that supplement Johnson's listing about this time.
(3.) Fairburn to Muriel Innes. 15 June, 1934.
poetic achievement and vitality would put England at his feet, (1.) and there seems to have been a personal matter involving a love affair, the hope of which made him make the trip. (2.)

But whatever the motive or complex of motives, the sojourn in England was marked by a change of mood from exhilaration to despondency, and a realisation of the innaturity of much of his earlier verse and the postures that had accompanied it.

Fairburn's first impressions of England were exhilarating, and his letters record the exuberance of the Colonial's "discovery" of London and its cosmopolitan feeling.

Life here is utterly different from NZ... the architecture alone would give you the illusion you were in Paradiso. The Victorian stuff is getting pulled down as fast as they can do it, and the new Georgian stuff is really great...

The literal truth is that you can do any damn thing you like in London, and nobody cares a damn. They all mind their own business. (3.)

Speaking of the homosexuality that he felt to be rife among the intelligentsia and writers, he declared,

At the same time it is impossible to be depressed by it. Life here is so different from Auckland. There's none

(1.) W.S. Broughton, Problems and Responses of Three New Zealand Poets in the 1920s, passim.

(2.) This has been suggested to me by several of Fairburn's friends, but understandably there is little explicit information available.

(3.) Fairburn to Clifton Firth. 21 October, 1930.
of that seriousness and sombre
Puritanism. The atmosphere of
London is one of Carnival. Everything
goes trippingly, and one is constantly
on the crest of a wave. It's pretty
much what the Restoration period
must have been - only worse - I mean
better - if anything. (1.)

This, to Fairburn, was the world of Cunningham Grahame,
 Epstein, D.H. Lawrence, and the lesser figures with whom he
came in personal contact, especially Charles Lahr of the Red
Lion Press, and Humbert Wolfe. (2.)

Lahr was associated with the Columbia Press, which had
published de Montalk's *Surprising Songs* in mid-1930, and *He
Shall Not Rise* was accepted and published at the end of the same
year. (3.) The book contains fifty-six poems, forty-five of
them selected from the sixty pieces that Fairburn had
published in New Zealand up to the time of his departure for
England, and eleven previously unpublished pieces. The
nature of the lyricism is discussed in more detail in the
next section of this thesis; at this point it is enough to
note that even within its contents the book indicates
Fairburn's own growing dissatisfaction with the effusion (and
the assumptions that lay behind that effusion); while too
much stress should not be laid upon the significance of the
title-poem, the book appears to have been consciously seen as
a record of a period and style that had consciously been ended.

(1.) Fairburn to Clifton Firth. 8 January, 1931.
(2.) In the letter to Firth, 8 January, 1931, Fairburn records
that he met Wolfe that day, and was presented with an
inscribed copy of *The Uncelestial City*.
(3.) Fairburn to Clifton Firth. 21 October, 1930, records the
acceptance of the MSS.
The poem from which the title He Shall Not Rise is taken ("Rhyme of the Dead Self") is one of the most variously interpretable of Fairburn's lyrics. Depending on which aspect of the biographical data outlined above the reader is emphasising, the poem may be approached literally or allegorically, and may be read as a record of the break from an inconclusive love-affair, if it was that that originally provoked the trip to England, as a rejection of the idyllic in love, or a rejection of the Georgian poeticising that is associated with the previous five or so years. Insofar as the poem is amenable to "autobiographical" interpretation, it may be inferred to be about any or all of these - the most that can usefully be said here is that in the course of Fairburn's trip to and sojourn in England, a growing sense of pessimistic realism and a consequent rejection of the idealism of the previous years can be seen in the letters. The circumstances of this were personal; "Rhyme of the Dead Self" is a poetic record of this.

A long letter to Clifton Firth at the end of 1931 records Fairburn's views of this rejection about a year after the publication of He Shall Not Rise. The poetry here is seen as the poetry of youth, work of which Fairburn was not ashamed but nevertheless work in a vein in which he no longer felt himself impelled to write. It had become to him the poetry of his juvenilia, and he never sought to reprint it in his lifetime.
You complain of my poetry. Yes, it has no senen in it. But remember it belongs to my youth — and I was late in losing that youth. The things of youth, when the senen is not fully realised, have yet a place. I am not such a prig as to have been born at 23 or 24. The book I've published is not good — not really willed. But it is good of its sort, and the sort has a place. I should be very pleased if I heard that young men of 17 or 18 liked my stuff. I should be very cynical if I heard that men of 50 & 60 liked it, or thought it really good.

You really mustn't say Monty's Polish stuff is better than mine. Monty is an example of the dissipation of self, not the concentration or refinement of self. His medieval, sentimental, Chopin, droit du seigneur, priz-obsessed Polish love-stuff is not as good as mine. I had the sentimentality natural to youth, and have since lost most of it. Monty hasn't.

My previous stuff has a reality — a minor one. My only fear is dictated by pure patriotism — that the reality of it may put up the masturbation rate in N.Z. It need not, but in the absence of anything complementary in the way of really good poetry, I fear it may. Yet if I sent out any of my later stuff it would simply not be read....

I rely on you, Clifton, to do anything you are able to do (without inconvenience) in the way of bolstering up my bourgeois reputation in N.Z. Only when I have that sort of reputation will I have a chance of being listened to when I begin to suggest to our dumb friends that "H.S.N.R." does not cover all my spiritual existence. Sooner or later they will wake up to the fact that I am not what I was and what they no doubt think I still am. The conjuring leopard must get his spots into full public view before he begins changing them in words of more than two syllables.

I shall never write just as I did in "HSNR."
Naturally. I'm not in a refrigerating chamber...(1.)

(1.) Fairburn to Clifton Firth. 23 December, 1931.
The sense of growing pessimism about English politics and culture moved Fairburn over the two years that he was in England to turn more to an ethic of individualism as a spiritual answer to the problems that he saw confronting mankind, while at the same time reluctantly acknowledging Communism as a necessary economic and political answer to the concomitant social problems. His first exuberance at the spectacle of London was rapidly diminished. Artists, he found, struggled for a living, and the literary world seemed to him to be controlled by homosexuals.(1.) Five months after arriving, he wrote to Guy Mountain,

Things are in a frightful state, and the artists, of course, are suffering first and worst. I don't know a single artist (and I have a lot of friends who paint) who isn't absolutely up against it. Even a man like Epstein is hard up, I am told.(2.)

Perhaps inevitably as a New Zealander, bred in the Puritan culture of the first decades of this century, he felt England to be decadent, and its sophistication to be a prelude to collapse.

I like England enormously. But it's not for me. I know I can never live here forever. There's too much sophistication and decay. It positively smells, Europe is obviously gone in the hocks. It can't last long. The atmosphere here in London is one of utter and hopeless decadence.(3.)

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(1.) Vide Fairburn to Clifton Firth, 8 February, 1931, and to Mrs Patricia Firth, 28 March, 1932. Fairburn takes up the same theme in "The Woman Problem", passim, speaking of literary influences on assumptions about equality between the sexes.

(2.) Fairburn to Guy Mountain. 1 March, 1931.

(3.) Ibid.
This sense of decay made Fairburn cynical of the desire of New Zealanders, himself included, to go overseas in search of happiness. Again to Guy Mountain he wrote,

Not that I am unhappy. I have learnt a great number of things and lost a lot of illusions. I know that life is pretty much the same wherever you are, and that you're not much better off when you shift from one side of the world to the other: except that you meet a lot of new and fine people. But even that is not as important as it sounds. After you've met them, you're still you, with much the same problems to face, and the same devils and angels to deal with. (1.)

At this time the reluctant (as opposed to willing) acceptance of Communism is first noted. But significantly, Fairburn pointed to its religious importance within the Soviet Union as he saw it, and argued from there to the thesis of a religious or metaphysical answer to human ills, an answer that was to attain its fullest poetic expression in Dominion a few years later. The same letter to Mountain continues,

Coming to Europe doesn't mean you're in a Van Gogh atmosphere. It means you're in a mortuary - atmosphere of Picasso, Wyndham Lewis, André Gide, & so on.

Another thing I have learnt is that one really must not talk a lot of bollocks about Russia, and the need for following in her footsteps. We very decidedly must not do any such thing. Sovietism is a damn good thing - in Russia. But it's a religious movement there - and we mustn't pinch their gods. If we do, it simply means we're too lazy and lacking in vitality to conceive gods of our own. D.H. Lawrence is the big man of this century as far as we are concerned. Shaw, Wells, Bertrand Russell - pouff!! They're all dead mutton. And Aldous Huxley smells.

(1.) Fairburn to Guy Mountain. 26 September, 1931.
The letter to Firth in which Fairburn spoke of the poetry of *He Shall Not Rise* takes up these themes in its later stages.

Developing the argument proposed to Mountain that "Lawrence is a better rallying point for us than Lenin", he wrote,

I am in two minds about returning. If I do, it will not be as a New Zealander, but as a nasty "sex-obsessed" prophet, or something even worse.

Events will get ahead of us. Very soon this lovely world will be in ruins. Make no error about that. Then, perhaps, something may be done, Not now. Except for one or two tiny patches, Europe is in stagnation.

Read Nietzsche, Thoreau, Lawrence...not these false machine gods, which, outside Russia are only a Punch & Judy show in the mind. Forget your false Tartar Gods.

Nietzsche, Lawrence, & Blake - and the greatest of these is Blake. Blake is the rock on which English culture will build in the future, when Christianity dies on an inward rot. And remember you are part of an English culture, however fond you are of foreign travel.\(^1\)

Rejecting the scientific dialect, Fairburn argued further towards the Romantic position that his lyric poetry in one way, and a document such as "What Life Means To Me" in another, were later to declare:

The only reality you know is yourself. So don't talk about "mass" expressions of energy in Art or Religion. Communism kills the self - cuts out religion & art, that is to say. But religion and art are the only realities.

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\(^1\) Fairburn to Clifton Firth. 23 December, 1931.
... One attains the macrocosm of existence through contact with any one of the microcosms, if one knows the ropes. Tea-tree - kauris - seafloor - all these are microcosms "when one has one's shoes off." Breasts and thighs - this is the best way of all.

... Why steal slav gods? Why not get some mud out of a creek and make your own?(1.)

Life, in this thesis, is denied by scientific or rational approaches that exalt the reason as superior to the emotions. This is not precisely the anti-mechanism and anti-rationalism of Crosswell's Eena Deena Dynamo, though it is tending in the same Romantic direction in its belief that pragmaticism and the intellect will lead to conclusions that deny what the individual should apprehend as "truth". Condemning the abstraction of "the intellectual element in Reality and (its exaltation) as a separate end", Fairburn declared,

As soon as you abstract, you falsify, and give the lie to life. You can't ride about the streets on a bicycle pump. Hence the falseness of all abstract art, that is to say, all analytic art. Hence the death-corpse-stinking falseness of Picasso. Cezanne &c - yes, with reservations, Picasso - no. Picasso is a bearer of still-born children. And that's not a nice thing, is it now? Let them remain in vacuo, in oblivion - deny existence that way if you like - that is honest (if deplorable) nihilism. But don't drag them into the world still-born and insult Death as well as Life. Choose - but don't try to have it both ways.(2.)

(1.) Fairburn to Clifton Firth, 23 December, 1931.
(2.) ibid.
In this sequence of correspondence, there can be seen Fairburn's movement from a position that was largely pragmatic in politics to one which rejected absolutely the validity of a rationalist solution, while still pessimistically accepting that this invalid solution would probably triumph.

I don't know how anyone can expect "things to get better" at this stage. We're for it - and it was prophesied a hundred years ago by Mr Karl Marx. And God help us if we get Communism, as it seems we must.  

But intriguing as the political shift is, the movement towards a Romantic assertion of the principles of "life" and "experience" in Lawrencean terms that Fairburn posed as a counter to what seemed the inevitable political rationalism is the most important part of his thought to be noted. His political point of view was to change about the time that he returned to New Zealand, when he espoused Douglas Social Credit, and he was later to move back to a cautious leftism, tempered by his distrust of bureaucracy and the monolithic State. But his views on the primacy of experience and the lyric valuation of this are a constant in his thought from this period on through his life. If the ideas are tentative in 1931-32 and more certain in the later lyric verse and the credo of "What Life Means To Me", they are none the less identifiable here at their point of origin.

(1.) Fairburn to Mrs Patricia Firth. 28 March, 1932.
(2.) Vide infra Fairburn's correspondence after resigning from the N.Z.B.S. in 1946, and his objections to the State Literary Fund's establishment in 1947. Also passim remarks on anarchoism and authoritarianism in "What Life Means To Me".
The letters from England speak more of ideas than actual happenings, and only a few pieces of biographical data emerge, though these are sufficient to outline Fairburn's life in these two and a half years. Soon after Christmas 1930, Fairburn began a tour of southern England and the Midlands, visiting Surrey, Kent, Middlesex, Buckinghamshire, Derbyshire and Manchester. Somewhere on this journey he apparently met Mrs Lucy Werthein, with whom he negotiated the acquisition of the Werthein collection for the Auckland Art Gallery in 1947. (1.) He visited France briefly in March 1931, but the correspondence does not record any impressions of this trip. (2.)

By August, 1931, Fairburn had moved to Wiltshire and remained there painting, working as a free-lance writer, and working on two novels for the bulk of the remainder of his stay in England. A series of letters to Jasper Brett (3.) and a recollection by James Holland (4.) record the day to day life. Fairburn found the agricultural decay and the conservatism of the rural Anglican clergy equally disturbing, but was intrigued by the Celtic aura of the countryside, Avebury, Stonehenge and the White Horse Vale being close at hand. One of the two novels remained uncompleted, the other, ultimately

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(1.) Vide WTu Micro MSS 324.
(2.) This and the itinerary of the trip around England, Fairburn to Guy Mountain, 1 March, 1931.
(3.) Fairburn to Jasper Brett, 4, 30 October, 30 November, 30 December 1931, 14 February, 1932, passim.
a 35,000 word "picaresque-grotesque" novel of "the adventures of the young Australian, Lemuel Bott, in London" was submitted to Gollancz about Christmas, 1930, but not accepted for publication. (1.)

In verse, Fairburn evidently wrote most of the poems collected under the sub-heading "Country Pleasures" published in Poems 1929 - 1941 at this time, with the probable exception of the poem "Empty House," Island published "Winter Night" and Nash's Magazine published "On Entering a New Abode", both while Fairburn was still in England, while the other four poems were published within three years of his return to New Zealand. (2.) Two other poems were printed in the Star while Fairburn was still in England, and Poetry, Chicago, which had already taken four of the He Shall Not Rise poems in 1929, printed one more in 1931. (3.) The folio pamphlet "The County" (4.) was the only result of his hope that Lahr would publish a booklet of verse in January, 1931, (5.) and a sardonic paragraph in a letter to Brett records of the

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(1.) Fairburn to Jasper Brett. 30 November, 30 December, 1931.
(2.) Vide J 149P, 158P, 181P.
(3.) ibid Star 1931. 133P; 1932. 134 P.; Poetry. Chicago 1929. items 97 - 100 PP; 1931. 129 P.
(4.) J 133a P.
(5.) Fairburn to Jasper Brett. 30 November, 1931.
poem "On Entering the New Abode" (1.)

I'll get a quid for it - or 3/6 - at the
nast. The "artist" who does the
decoration gets a fiver. "By nothing
is England so glorious as by her
poetry." etc. (2.)

Fairburn had married Miss Jocelyn Mays on 19 November,
1931 (3.) and the couple moved into Fairburn's cottage where
James Holland recalls then both painting while Jocelyn was
awaiting the birth of their first child. The couple returned
to New Zealand in mid 1932, to be confronted by the depression
which was producing peak unemployment and poverty just at this
time. Fairburn wrote to Muriel Bradshaw (nee Innes) in mid
1934 that he had returned "to avoid impending volcanic
disturbance in Europe" and had found himself on relief work
until the time of writing, in which week he gained "sustenance." (4.)

This employment was as assistant Secretary to the Auckland
Farmer's Union, which post he held until he was drafted in the
new year of 1943.

It was in the years of the depression that Fairburn
became established as one of the small number of New Zealand
poets whose work, anthologised in Allen Curnow's Book of New
Zealand Verse 1923 - 1945, led to their being recognised as

(1.) J 135 P.
(2.) Fairburn to Jasper Brett. 14 February, 1932.
(4.) Fairburn to Muriel Innes. 15 June, 1934.
the first significant "generation" of New Zealand poets. Their significance lies in a variety of factors, chiefly the obvious quality of their verse, which taken collectively distinguishes their work above the occasional good poems of isolated figures in the previous century, and their awareness of a sense of national identity. It is this latter feature that Curnow noted in his Introduction to the 1923 - 1945 volume - a feature which manifested itself not in the crude assertiveness of the 1890s nor in the complacency of unquestioning acceptance of social or poetic norms. Rather it was typified by a radical questioning of the assumptions that seemed to underpin society (in all its manifestations) and poetry here; it was a radicalism that questioned and explored the relationships of man to the natural environment, of man to his fellows within the social structure, and of man the poet to the language and cultural heritage that as artificer he was called upon to rework and renew. The awareness of national identity for this first generation of poets brought with it the responsibilities of questioning, exploration and reformulation. The early work of Cresswell, Mason and Bethell, and the youthful assertions of Fairburn and de Montalk in the decade previous were the first stage; it was in the 1930s that the more mature Fairburn, together with Denis Glover and, later, Allen Curnow and Charles Brasch, to name the most important, went to build and develop this sense of national identity in their poetic work. Phoenix, the
establishment of the Caxton Press, and Tomorrow were manifestations of this development, as much as were the two autobiographies of Cresswell, the first books and the polemics of the other poets, the tentative history attempted by McCormick in 1940(1) and the more searching first essays of M.H. Holcroft. It is in this context that Fairburn's work assumes its full importance.

The sense of radicalism in these years manifested itself in various ways. It was not merely a youthful defiance of the precepts of an older generation, nor was it simply a parallel to the radical idealism of political thought of the time. Radicalism in a literature is often difficult to define precisely because it involves a complex of factors, often apparently mutually contradictory. If at this time the work of Pound and Eliot in the second decade of the century appeared to mark a radical break from the Romantic-Victorian tradition, making the Georgian poets seem an anachronistic backwater, then it was understandable that Fairburn (to speak of no others here) was contemptuous of Georgianism and its local manifestations. Yet Eliot and Pound, though they fascinated Fairburn, had comparatively little effect on his successful prosody, though he did experiment with the forms that they used, and it is to the Romantic-Victorian-Georgian line that later critics have

(1.) E.H. McCormick. Letters and Art in New Zealand. 1940.
properly turned for analogues for his verse forms. If Fairburn was radical when confronted with the conservatism of New Zealand Georgianism, epitomised for him by Quentin Pope, C.A. Marris, John Mulgan and those whom he classed generally as "the menstrual school", it was not in form or prosody that his radicalism lay. Rather it was in his assertions that meaningful poetry could not be written by New Zealanders who slavishly imitated the forms and thought of a culture with which they could claim only a vicarious association. The positive alternative that Fairburn was able to postulate was in his own lyric verse, and that of a few other poets whose work is now associated with Phoenix, the Caxton Club Press, and the work in Tomorrow and Verse Alive. These, to Fairburn, were attempting something positive and vital in verse, and not merely seeking to produce nebulous and imitative rhyme without substance.

The feeling that local Georgianism lacked substance was heightened by Fairburn's awareness that it seemed divorced from the realities of modern life, and so was an unpardonable form of escapism. The poet who had written the letters to Firth and Mountain from England, who was now on relief work, and who was soon to begin the composition of Dominion, was understandably unsympathetic to such a position. After reading Mulgan's Golden Wedding he wrote to Jasper Brett,

Thumb-thwiddling may be an excellent sport
i'faith, but not on the edge of a volcano. (1.)

(1.) Fairburn to Jasper Brett. (New Lynn - one of the first letters after the return from England) 8 November, 1932.
Though Fairburn's work shows as much his indebtedness to the Georgian tradition in which he had begun writing as it does any assimilation of new forms that break from that tradition, it is the rejection of Georgianism for its lack of importance', of 'things needing to be said' that dominated his attitude (and, of course, manifested itself in his verse) at this time. The view that Georgian editors and critics dominated the local scene was well enough confirmed by Kowhai Gold, Marris' anthologising, and Mulgan's reviewing. What was especially irritating to Fairburn was the assumption of these critics that the "tradition" to which they subscribed was the main tradition of English poetry, when others might see it as merely a later Victorian off-shoot of that tradition. The critical response to New Poems (1934)\(^1\) in which Fairburn had six pieces was a case in point. He wrote to Glover,

I feel that we've established a sort of Criterion ("We" is good from a fat passenger - with you and Ian (Milner) sweating on the oars). A measuring-rod for other people to use. The book will become an influence! - a sinister spectre at the junketings of the Menstrual School of Poets, who include some thousands of citizens, many of them virgins.\(^2\)

and less flippantly, a month later, speaking of Mulgan's

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(1.) J 158 P.

(2.) Fairburn to Denis Glover. 27 August, 1934.
review of the book in The Auckland Star,

I sometimes wonder if literary critics ever read anything previous to the Georgians. Mulgan, for instance (rolls) out such phrases as, "... although breaking with tradition..." in reviewing "New Poems". Good God, the English tradition of poetry isn't rooted in Tennyson! Can he have read Chaucer, or Pope, or Dryden, or Swift, or the metaphysical poets. (I am) astonished that the Georgian weekend notion of poetry should still linger. The Georgians have their bright spots, but I don't see why they should be permitted to supplant the whole of the English tradition of poetry.

(1.)

The same response to the current "establishment" attitude is more vehemently expressed in another letter to Glover in the following year:

There's a gross lack of criticism in New Zealand. It's all a sort of gang-warfare conducted with pea-shooters. They either over-praise or over-condemn, and invariably use the occasion to exhibit their neuroses - sort of exhibitionism really. Bad criticism, as Pound says, always begins with the artist and then drags in his work as a sort of semi-irrelevance. It's the "John O'London's" attitude - which thrives in newspaper offices and is as lousy as lousy (sic) as anything could be. Personally I have strong objections to being pawed over by the bastards, but there's no means of direct protest that is both convenient & effective. (2.)

The awareness that the work of this period was breaking away from the current Georgian practice but at the same time

(1.) Fairburn to Denis Glover. 22 September, 1934.
(2.) Fairburn to Denis Glover. 6 April, 1935.
asserting its affinities with a more important line of English verse was implicit in the references to "the whole of the English tradition of poetry" in the letter to Glover of 22 September, 1934, but there is only one reference in the letters that spells this out explicitly. After some thoughts about C.A. Marris in a letter to Denis Glover, 15 April, 1935, Fairburn wrote,

You know, I think we ought to start a new line of attack (Not exactly new, for Eliot and Pound have worked it out to a fine art). Don't emphasise the New Poems aspect of the business, but claim the Tradition (organic growth, not fossil) for our own.

(1.)

The degree to which this sense of a tradition other than that of the Georgians is discernible in Fairburn's own work is discussed in the latter section of this thesis which considers the nature of his poetry in more detail. In the extract quoted above the point is made more as a suggestion of strategy than as a statement which ought to be read as a poetic credo. It is nevertheless an indication of Fairburn's awareness of his own part, and that of a few of his contemporaries, in the activity that Allen Curnow described as "taking poetry seriously".

The imprint of the depression which Fairburn knew marked Dominion is in fact to be seen in almost all his work in these years. As Johnson's Bibliography shows, Fairburn was a regular contributor to Tomorrow from its first issue (11 July, 1935).
1935) till 1939, and though a number of these contributions are verses with a socio-political flavour, the dominant impression of Fairburn in this periodical is of the political commentator, arguing social and economic questions in the great liberal debate that that periodical fostered. R.A.K. Mason recalls Fairburn's associations with the Social Credit movement in that period, and there is evidence of a continuing interest in Douglas policies in many of the articles, especially about 1935, as well as of course in *Dominion* where the "philosophy" behind the polemic verse of "Utopia" is as well interpreted as that of a Social Crediter as of a Marxist. Yet Fairburn himself suggested to Denis Glover in several letters that his suspicion of all the current theories of political action was growing at this time. He was, he felt "temperamentally inclined" towards Marxism still, and if Social Credit as he defended it in *Tomorrow* (and perhaps during his editorship of *Farming First*) meant anything, it was as an acceptable expedient method of political action, rather than as a

(1.) For example "Circus Parade" (*Tomorrow* I 3: 3, 25 July, 1934) J 172 P. and "Counter Lunch" *ibid* II 26: 14-15. 8 July, 1936. J 235 P. Some of these contributions were reprinted in the two *Verse Alive* booklets, 1936, 1937. (J 215 P & 259 P.)


(4.) Fairburn to Denis Glover. 16 October, 1934.
deeply-held conviction of political truth. Yet equally he was becoming more certain that some ethic or belief must be postulated to sustain human action. Neither political theory nor orthodox religion provided Fairburn with this belief, and the end product seems to have been an eclectic type of romantic anarchism, sympathetic to many of the beliefs of both Christianity and political liberalism, without finally subscribing to either. A long letter to Glover in mid-1936 gives an interesting description of his position at that time, while incidentally providing some additional data on his speculative thought in the later 1920s:

I've never had any brand of religion imposed upon me. When I was 21 or 22 I was a member of the Rationalist Association, & one of an educational Committee of 3 who were supposed to deal with "Truthseekers". (Non conformist earnestness drips from that name). At a later period indifference set in, & I became much more interested in politics; became a sentimental Communist & vaguely a radical. Read tons of Fabian stuff, went bald-headed for such side-lines as Revisionism. Then in 1930 became really interested in Marx, & read solidly & enthusiastically.

Since then have become gradually disillusioned with Marxism. Am now in the unfortunate position of having strong anti-humanist convictions without having seen enough hope in the Church to become interested in it; the Church being mainly humanist these days - with the exception of the Catholic Church; which is too far from my original track to be able to step into it. But I'm more & more impressed (from a logical point of view) with Xian theology - which of course in a broad sense means Catholic theology; and more and more struck by the irrational nature of Marxism, & of modernism generally....
I'm beginning to see, dimly, just what the Church means by the word heresy: how orthodox theology is like a man walking a tightrope. How a divergence between the rails of 1 inch in 1,000,000 is completely unimportant in a railway shunting yard, but becomes a life & death matter on a run from Auckland to Wellington. At the back of every action (& we live by action) there is a moral problem. And at the back of every moral problem there is a religious problem. It can be escaped of course... but it remains there to be solved. People who have refused to face it have always suffered one way or another. Had their lives deprived of meaning, or been conquered by barbarians, or been driven to drink or suicide or sodomy; or just quietly rotted in our corners, as most of us are doing now-a-days.

If you'll really give this matter serious thought, you may come to the conclusion that "the purely secular is the purely bad," (1.)

This is the middle position of a man moving away from political orthodoxy and yet not committing himself to an alternative religious orthodoxy; as such, it seems an anticipation of the position that is set out in 1949 in the MSS "What Life Means To Me". Equally it may be seen as a stage that would reasonably lead to the Romantic vitalism of "the visionary moment" that MacD. P. Jackson has shown to be at the ethical heart of the poetry itself. (2.)

Though the next paragraphs of this break from the

(1.) Fairburn to Denis Glover. 8 October, 1936. Cf also to Glover: "I'm fed up with the strong (but not silent!) and simple emphasis on the Fascist - Communist scheme of creation," (21 September, 1936) and "The real issue isn't between Fascism and Communism, but between humanism and a religious view of the world..." (8 October 1936).

chronological narrative, it is worthwhile to develop the point by relating these cited quotations from the letters to Glover in the mid-1930s to two extracts from letters to Miss E.P. Dawson in mid-1942. Here again the disaffection with political ideology is balanced against a belief that a systematised orthodoxy is a necessity. Again the debate turns around the relative merits of Communism and Christianity, with the question of heresy now being exemplified by situations appropriate to the war-time context, and again there emerges the picture of a Romantic tending towards anarchism as the best solution in a situation where he can give a sympathetic hearing, but not final subscription, to an orthodox authoritarianism:

When faced with the "isms" of order - Catholicism, Communism, Naziism (sic) & their derivatives, I think the actual need for anarchism - or rather for anarchist expression - is greater than the need to assert the claims of order. (1.)

I was ... struck with the enormous and frightening disparity between the motives and behaviour of the common sensual man and those of the State (which is supposed to be the manifestation of the c.s.n. in his collective aspect.) It's almost as if some devil came to possess the mind of men as soon as he organised himself for group action - as if something not inherent in the original situation had been introduced from the outside. I suppose that from one angle it is because group action provides an opportunity for the individual to evade his responsibilities.

(1.) Fairburn to Miss E.P. Dawson, 11 May, 1942.
If... we were all, by necessity, forced to accept responsibility in the way that a Robinson Crusoe (without Friday) is, then the world might be somewhat different. But group organisation, and the division of labour, provides ample opportunity for individuals to pass the buck to other people, to get someone else to do all the work.

Churchillism and isolationist-pacifism are two different manifestations of extreme (and perverted) romanticism. As a romantic myself, I resent such perversions; but not very hotly, because I am too strongly conscious of the ease of such descents. (1.)

On his lack of positive belief, Fairburn continued in the same letter:

... perhaps I do believe in the validity of certain natural appetites, and in Xian charity. But since I am also aware that such assertions are incomplete, and therefore false (and, in the strict sense, heretical), these beliefs do not get me very far.

... Communism is a Christian heresy... just as Mohammedanism is. A heresy is not a lie; it is a partial truth, which becomes falsified immediately it is applied in practice, if it is used on the assumption that it is the complete truth... To make it the complete, positive, and exclusive truth is to falsify what truth there is in it. (2.)

... it is starkly clear that practically every evil that men suffer from is the outcome, not of deliberate and evil intent, but of someone's passionate belief in, and fixation on a partial truth.

(1.) Fairburn to Miss E.F. Dawson. 17 July, 1942.

(2.) Of the definition of heresy in "The Woman Problem".
And if one accepts the validity of an hierarchical structure of means and ends and values, one is compelled to accept, in some sense of the word, a religious basis for that structure. Otherwise the whole system of means and ends drops to pieces, and there is a complete loss of values. Hedonist and utilitarian beliefs are really, at bottom, sceptical, or agnostic. No hedonist can postulate pleasure as a final end: he can only say that it is as far as he can see. He can't definitely assert that it is impossible for there to be any further end beyond that.

The only way in which one can, I think, be a moral being, is to accept a hierarchical scheme of means and ends as the basis of value, and to accept all the responsibilities arising out of one's particular connection with the scheme. That is where both militarist and isolationist pacifism discredit themselves.

The chief virtue I see in Communism as compared to other beliefs (Non-conformist Xtianity & Protestantism in general, e.g.) is a virtue it shares with the Catholic Church: It is not afraid to grasp the nettles of power. The problem of power is a REAL problem. We can't just shut our eyes and hold our noses and walk past it on the other side of the road. To attack the problem of power is to touch pitch - and the practical problem is how to do it without getting defiled. But it is not good enough merely to pretend there is no power problem - to avoid defilement by simply not touching pitch. The pitch is THERE, and somebody has to deal with it, and take the risk of defilement. (1.)

But in the years that the beginnings of this debate and speculation were taking place in Fairburn's mind, the immediate

(1.) Fairburn to Miss E.P. Dawson. 17 July, 1942.
problem to him was not so much one of power and ethical systems, as that of sheer survival in the depression, as he among many faced the economic misery that that depression brought both to the individual and to the community at large. The verse and the commentaries of Tomorrow have already been noted in this context, but Fairburn's most important poetic response to the disaster was his first long poem, Dominion. Written in 1935 and dedicated to his wife, the poem was wrought out of a background of experiences of misery and anger, as the poet saw the poverty and suffering that "the system" imposed upon mankind, warping personalities on its rack of poverty both economic and spiritual. C.K. Stead remarked that the assaults on New Zealand society in the poem are less pointed than those of Curnow (in Not in Narrow Seas)(1.)

the point is valid as a poetic criticism, and is further considered in an examination of the verse in the next section of this thesis, but the very vehemence and superfluity of angry emotion in parts of the poem, especially "Utopia" can to a great extent be explained and justified by reference to the conditions in which Fairburn himself was living at the time. The letters to Jasper Brett contain several moving passages which spell out the personal background to Fairburn's

 Note to the poem in the 1953 edition —

(Dominion) was written during the winter of 1935. The world was then coming out

of the worst economic depression it
could remember, and the poem bears
the imprint of that period.... (1.)

This imprint is worth recording, for though the material in
these letters is essentially personal, it makes clear not
only the reason for the dedication, but also the sense of
anger that is engendered by the essential injustice of the
situation:

I wonder how long this sort of life
we're living is going on? It's like
a perpetual winter, the semi-poverty
and constant worrying over piddling
things. Just to give you an idea of
my situation (which I know is a lot
better than yours) here is my weekly
budget.

Rent  
Heat, Light &c  
Fares  
Unemployment tax  
Girl in to help (Jocelyn absolutely needs
   this)
Tobacco (I must have one
   indulgence!)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Rent} & 16 - 0 \\
\text{Heat, Light &c} & 6 - 0 \\
\text{Fares} & 5 - 0 \\
\text{Unemployment tax} & 2 - 6 \\
\text{Girl in to help} & 6 - 0 \\
\text{Tobacco} & 3 - 2 \\
\end{array}
\]
\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Wages} & 3 - 0 - 0 \\
\text{Food, clothing, doctors, dentists, coal, &c, &c, &c.} & \text{1.} - \ 1 - 4 \\
\end{array}
\]

Just on the edge. Neither in nor out
of the cart.

Writing in the same letter of an exorbitant dentist's bill
for extractions made without permission while a member of
his family was under anaesthetic, he continued,

What can I do about it? Earn more money?
I'm doing a full-time job as it is...

\(\text{(1.) Notes to Three Poems (1952) p 67.}\)
But you know all about it. So do 40,000,000 other people in the world at the present time.

It is a pleasantly Borgian touch on the part of Authority that leads it to pay high salaries to bureaucrats at this moment of moments, and dangle their parasitic germ-cultures in front of the half-starved nob. The top twenty-five employees of the Auckland Transport Board pull down £21,000 between them. Figure that out. And I celebrate their victory every morning (almost) by standing for 8 miles in a cramped bus 6 ft high from floor to roof (and sometimes at night - 16 miles a day). (1)

Don't imagine that I'm just frothing with self-pity. The same thing happens to thousands of others. We all have a front seat in this Gargantuan poppycock show.

Bureausites... covered with sline. Crawling officialdon. £3000, £4000, £5000 a year they get, some of the fattest ones, down in Wellington. Sliny ... hireling bumboys of the megalomaniacs who run our variety show for us. (2)

The history of the writing of the poem is traced from the letters in Ross's thesis on Dominion (cit supra). Fairburn first remarked on the work in a letter to Glover in mid-1935, when he wrote,

I have a piece of (rather free) verse half-written in my mind, giving a sort of résumé of the situation of lil' ol' Enzid. (3)

(1) Fairburn stood approximately 6 feet, 2 inches high - W, S, B.
(2) Fairburn to Jasper Brett, 28 June, 1935.
(3) Fairburn to Denis Glover, 3 May, 1935.
and a few months later,

I've got... about 400 lines of that long thing (sic) I mentioned to you some time ago - sort of full-dress review of New Zealand at the A roads with lots of dirty work... The whole thing is slowly acquiring shape.
I think of calling it DOMINION. (1)

The poem was apparently sent to an English publisher for consideration when it was completed (by late 1935, early 1936?) and in mid 1936 was offered to Glover for publication at the Caxton press, if the English publisher should reject it.

Fairburn remarked when making this offer, that local publication

represents our only chance of Building Up a National Literature or whatever more modest or less Authors' Weakly (sic) term one cares to give it. (2)

English publication was not forthcoming, and Fairburn was revising the poem for the Caxton Press in June 1937. (3)

It went to press in the next few months and was published by 17 March, 1938, when Fairburn sent an advance copy to Jasper Brett. (4) Apart from Dominion Fairburn suggested that he had written little poetry around this period -

I've written very little lately. For the last 3 months I've been driven nearly crazy by money worries... If ever I hear

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(1.) Fairburn to Denis Glover. 1 September, 1935.
(2.) Fairburn to Denis Glover. 6 May, 1936.
(3.) Fairburn to Denis Glover. 23 June, 1937. Fairburn was reading the galley proofs at the time of a letter to Glover, 6 November, 1937.
(4.) Fairburn to Jasper Brett. 10 March, 18 March, 1938.
of anybody romanticising poverty I'm going to horsewhip him in the main street of the town. (1.)

and the political and satiric interests that comprise the bulk of Fairburn's work in *Tomorrow* at this time continued to be the bulk of his literary production. These years saw the production of his satirical study of the *New Zealand Herald, Who Said Red Ruin*, (2.) produced as an election pamphlet "more out of spite and deep-seated prejudice than political conviction" (3.) and the sketches that were to comprise the pamphlet *The Sky is a Limpet*. (4.)

The seeds of the style of *The Sky is a Limpet* may be found as early as the trip to England, when Fairburn forwarded to Clifton Firth a typed copy of part of the recently published Examination Round His Factification and concluded his letter with a parody of the parody. (5.) Certainly the two styles of witty word-torture are similar enough to make it reasonable to assume that the Joycean parody lies behind Fairburn's attack on Michael Joseph Savage, an attack which gained added

(1.) Fairburn to Denis Glover. 21 May, 1937.
(3.) Fairburn to Jasper Brett. 7 August, 1938, a letter possibly completed and posted during the election campaign, 18 September - 15 October of that year. Vide also Fairburn to Brett. 1 November, 1938 for an anecdote on the reaction of one of the *Herald* directors to the pamphlet.
(4.) J 292. (An undated letter (? 1937) to Glover contains an allusion that may be to the four stories in this pamphlet, but is useful only in suggesting a possible and rather imprecise dating of them.)
(5.) Fairburn to Clifton Firth. (London) 21 October, 1930.
wit from the accuracy of the satirist's reproduction of that Prime Minister's oratorical style, as much as from the sheer verbal ingenuity. According to an undated letter to Glover (1937 ?) the MSS was rejected by Tomorrow, and the work was eventually published by R.W. Lowry at Phillips Press in 1939.1.

From later 1939 Fairburn supplemented his income by writing radio reviews for the Observer2. ("1500 - 2000 wds. £1 less tax"3.) but money worries and personal troubles appeared to continue to press upon him. The letters to Jaspet Brett at this time suggest considerable personal disconsolation, and speak of much unfinished verse, but these years were apparently more productive than those immediately following the composition of Dominion.

Four poems, "To Daphnis and Chloe in the Park", "La Belle Dame Sans Merci", "Night Song" and "Full Fathom Five", were published in the Caxton Press's Recent Poems (1941),4. containing work by Allen Curnow, Fairburn, Denis Glover and R.A.K. Mason. "Age will unfasten us..." and "A Farewell" were printed in the following year, and in 1943 the collection Poems 1929 - 1941 was issued by the Caxton Press. This contained a few poems apparently written in Wiltshire.5.

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1. Vide J 292.
2. J 297. The pseudonym was "Ben Bolt". Johnson notes, "This was a weekly feature, which ran until Feb. 26, 1941. A.R.D.F. wrote all but a few of them."
3. Fairburn to Jaspet Brett. 29 April, 1940.
4. J 314 P.
5. Vide pp 186 - 7 supra.
in the "Country Pleasures" sections, and several satires from the columns of Tomorrow in "Gall", but the bulk of the work was previously unpublished. Dating is not possible in the case of most of these poems, beyond an ascription of several of the love poems to the two or three years just prior to the book's publication. Fairburn's comments to Brett after publication give a few indications of composition, and of the poet's own opinions of some of his work.

On Tapu — the poem of limited interest anyway, and lacking in any subtlety.

"Builders" — I thought it had been (deleted) on (Professor) Sewell's recommendation but it arrived back in the proofs so I let it go.

For a Georgian Lady — written 1932 — for Sackville West in particular; but as a criticism, in general, of Georgian derivativeness and sterility.

Good and Ill — written about 1930 when I was in (a) curious mood of semi-religious intensity.

Wild Love — written last year (i.e. 1942 — W.S.B.) I wanted to put what (to my direct experience) were very brutal facts in a very smooth, conventional, and gentle form in order to secure a sort of pathos and prevent the poem from being anger & social satire. (1.)

Of the love poems (unspecified, but perhaps including "The Cave", "Wild Love" and "A Farewell" at least) Fairburn told Brett,

they were written out of the fullest & most shattering experience, without any

(1.) Fairburn to Jasper Brett. 19 June, 1943.
regard for current literary fashion, and you make me very happy when you
say they are intense and passionate.(1)

Though the circumstances behind the poems may have been deeply disturbing to the poet (and these are probably best not enquired into) as the letters suggest, the poems themselves are, with the later poems of Strange Rendezvous, Fairburn's best known and most admired work, work in which a passionate intensity marks them without damage to the lyric persuasiveness that gives them their beauty.

Fairburn had continued to work for the Auckland Farmers Union until the end of 1942. He was then drafted, passed fit, and conscripted into the Army where he served for a few months, undertaking a basic six weeks of infantry training at Papakura Military Camp, followed by a posting to the A.S.C. at Gloucester Park, Onehunga.(2) His attitude to the Army was predictably sardonic, and he wrote to Brett,

My life has lacked, for so long, any true punctuation marks - only a few exclamation and question stops - that the prospect of having a dinkum semi-colon inserted, or even a full colon, with all its implications of causality and consequence is quite a welcome one. I have been in the Home Guard for six months, so the seamier side of military life doesn't hold any special dread for me. But -

At my back I always hear
Old General Puttick hurrying near,

(1) Fairburn to Jasper Brett. 19 June, 1943.
(2) Fairburn to Jasper Brett. 11 March, 1943. Fairburn gave his number and posting in this letter as "533092 Dvr A.R.D. Fairburn, 1st District Comp. Coy A.S.C. Gloucester Park, Onehunga."
And yonder all before me lie
Deserts of vast inanity.

It's the inanity I dread - the utter
boredom of the Army. The violence
of war is bad: but it takes real
heroes to endure the boredom of war.\(^{(1)}\)

By June, 1943 he had been discharged, and man-powered into an
essential job.\(^{(2)}\) He was offered a position with 2 ZB, but
decided this,\(^{(3)}\) presumably because it would have meant
moving from Auckland to Wellington, and took up the position
of script-writer with Station 1ZB which he held until his
resignation in September, 1946.

Sometime in the years immediately prior to this he first
met the exiled German poet, Karl Wolfskehl, who lived in
Auckland from 1938 to 1948.\(^{(4)}\) Wolfskehl was one of the two
dedicatees of Poems 1929 - 1941 and apparently introduced
Fairburn to the works of Kafka.\(^{(5)}\) One of the letters to
Brett gives a vivid description of the effect of this,
Describing an evening after he had been reading Kafka and
debating its religious significance with Frank Sargeson, at a
time when his wife and children were away on an extended
holiday, he recorded

... a vision the other night - waking in
the small, cold hours - of myself with

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\(^{(1)}\) Fairburn to Jasper Brett. 6 January, 1943.
\(^{(2)}\) Fairburn to Jasper Brett. 19 June, 1943.
\(^{(3)}\) Fairburn to Jasper Brett. n.d. (1943)
\(^{(4)}\) Vide Kendrick Smithyman, A Way of Saying. (1965)
  pp 112 - 113.
\(^{(5)}\) Fairburn to Jasper Brett. 6 January, 1943.
the four of them & Jocelyn, all hand in hand walking forward into the dark (illegible) and abyss of time - towards what? for what? How, and why?

And felt a sudden acute personal responsibility for them; and trying to read some meaning into the blackness around. A queer sort of directly intuitive state of mind, possible only in the complete aloneness of early morning.

... did ever children face a more certain future? I suppose they have. But not for a very long time in history. Sometimes I have a kind of blind and panicky impulse to grab the whole family and escape to some remote corner of the earth and hide them. (1.)

In the years after his discharge from the Army Fairburn worked not very happily with the N.Z.B.S., the while contributing light verses to the New Zealand Observer (2.) articles to that paper and to Action and editorials to the Conpost Magazine. (3.) These years were, according to Johnson's Bibliography, among his most prolific as a journalistic writer. His two major publications at this time were the essay We New Zealanders (4.) (1944) and the book of verse, The Rakehelly Man (5.) (1946).

(1.) Fairburn to Jasper Brett. 11 March, 1943.
(2.) Many of these pieces were collected by Denis Glover in The Disadvantages of Being Dead. (1958).
(3.) Writing of "Elements", Jackson remarks, "Fairburn's concern for his 'natal earth' is happily attested in the very practical interest he took in such matters as humus conservation, soil erosion, and so on". (Jackson, "The Visionary Moment" cit. p 25.)
(4.) J 323.
(5.) J 445 P.
We New Zealanders can hardly be described as a "sociological study"; it is rather a frank conversation on the weaknesses of New Zealand society as Fairburn saw it, expressed with "the bluntness one uses in family discussion".\(^{(1)}\) Ranging in its topics from the attitude of the New Zealander to his English origins (or those of his ancestors) through national assumptions about class, sexual morality, and "culture", to the ideals that underlie New Zealand's political institutions, the book gently but firmly attacks the national "complacency" that it notes in its first sentence and the negative puritanism that Fairburn saw as the social product of that complacency. "We must" the essay asserted, "be more interested in affirmations if we wish to live as men should live.\(^{(2)}\)

The "affirmations" of We New Zealanders are essentially those outlined in the lyric verse and in the ordo, "What Life Means To Me", that the experiences of man living in a harmonious relationship with his fellows and his environment are good, and that the negative restrictions of a puritanical social system can only limit and warp human personality. This attack upon the mean and the destructive, carried out in tones ranging from the gently satiric to the venomous, was a continuous part of Fairburn's activity, exemplified in this work as in so many others in verse and prose. It was at best of a manifestation of his humanity and warmth, and his valuing

\(^{(1)}\) We New Zealanders p 60.
\(^{(2)}\) ibid p 59.
of the good as he conceived it which led him constantly to attack the bad. (The remark of a friend, "He loved to be a jester, but he was a sad, sad clown. He saw so much." (1.) is surely opposite here,) Fairburn's satire and social criticism brings to mind Henry Miller's comment upon another more angry critic of society, the film-maker Luis Bunuel —

Perhaps, like Lawrence, Bunuel is only an inverted idealist. Perhaps it is his great tenderness, the great purity and poetry of his vision, which forces him to reveal the abominable, the malicious, the ugly and the hypocritical falsities of man ... Either you are crazy, like the rest of civilized humanity, or you are sane and healthy like Bunuel. And if you are sane and healthy you are an anarchist and throw bombs. (2.)

If the tone of Fairburn's work is generally less angry than that of Bunuel (all other criteria apart), and if We New Zealanders is a "spluttering squib" (3.) rather than an anarchist's bomb, nevertheless the essential similarity seems to remain.

Much the same may be said of most of the poems in The Rakehelly Man. At its sharpest, the tone is bitingly satirical (as in "Modern Love" and "Boarding House") and at the other extreme there is the bitter-sweetness of the walking-song "Walking On My Feet." The title-poem, however, is

(1.) quoted on the cover-blurb of the Collected Poems.
(2.) quoted by Penelope Houston, The Contemporary Cinema. (Pelican, 1963)
(3.) J.C. Reid, Creative Writing in New Zealand. (1946) p 34.
undoubtedly the finest piece in the small collection, satirising the melodramatic ideal (or anathema to the Puritan?) of the ravaging lover portrayed by Robert Brett's linocuts and the melodramatic stanzas –

A great black-hearted ruffian
one riding from the south
with spurs upon his ankles
and laughter on his mouth.

He wore two ladies' wish-bone
a-dangling from his ears,
his great black curly whisker
was wet with maidens' tears.

Where the satire is conveyed through parody and jocular humour, as here, Fairburn's humanity is seen at its jesting warmest, if not at its most profound.

The seven years following the publication of The Rakehelly Man produced forty-three new pieces of published verse according to Johnson's Bibliography. Two of these were the important long poems, The Voyage and To A Friend in the Wilderness; of the other thirty-nine, twenty-one can be considered "light" verse of the Observer type. The impression of a comparatively decreasing output of wholly serious poetry is more a numerical than a qualitative one, given the achievement of the two long poems. Nevertheless, Fairburn's energies were evidently concentrated more upon social and aesthetic questions and the satire or humour of the lighter verse in these later years of his life, the verse that he several times described in letters as his "bread and butter" verse. Though in a letter to Charles Brasch\(^{(1,)}\) a few

\(^{(1,)}\) Fairburn to Charles Brasch. 4 November, 1946.
months before the publication of the first issue of Landfall he wrote, "I have several poems almost completed", financial pressures, though less strong than those he had experienced in the depression, continued to distract him from writing poetry:

My chief problem remains what it always has been - to avoid being obsessed by the thought of money every hour of my waking life... I find I can by an effort of will concentrate on printing or on writing prose... but the completely relaxed mind, and the long-drawn-out contemplation in solitude that verse composition (in my experience) calls for, are almost impossible to find. So little or no verse gets written.'(1.)

Fairburn resigned from the New Zealand Broadcasting Service in late September, 1946, after about three years' service there. His grounds for dissatisfaction included his lack of sympathy for the whole concept of commercial broadcasting, the pressures to produce "hack" writing, and the bureaucratic control that he felt hindered the activity of producers.(2.) His experiences in broadcasting may well have reinforced the conviction with which he opposed the establishment of the State Library Fund by the first Labour Government over the next couple of years. To Fairburn the experience of bureaucratic pressure on the creative artist was a most unhappy one, and his fear that State "patronage", especially financial, would exercise an unhealthy influence

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(1.) Fairburn to Charles Brasch. 9 August, 1947.
(2.) Fairburn to P.A. Smithell, 5 & 26 October, 1946.
on the arts, was forcefully expressed. To Charles Brasch he wrote soon after leaving the N.Z.B.S. —

Those three years (b/dusting) have given me as deep a horror of officialdom as Kafka's. I can hardly call myself a socialist, when I examine my mind, A Guild Socialist, perhaps. Certainly a personalist. I agree with Connolly that "the ultimate enemy of the artist is power"; and I'm horrified at the way power is being organized today. (1.)

This view of the danger of power, which is reflected in what he himself described as his 'anarchism', may be compared with the credo that he set out briefly in "What Life Means To Me."

I approve strongly of the cooperative enterprise, but have no objection to individualist private enterprise when it is functionally the right arrangement. It leads me to distrust bureaucracy, to dislike the magnification of State power. It makes me an advocate of decentralisation, except in cases (e.g., the electric power reticulation system) where complete centralisation is obviously the right thing.

The establishment of the State Literary Fund and its Advisory Committee in 1947 was to Fairburn "bureaucracy", "the magnification of State power", and evidently not the right thing. In the later months of 1947 his letters to P.A. Smithells and Charles Brasch reflect this.

I'm more than ever persuaded that the proper way to attack the State Literary Fund is to put forward a concrete proposal, signed by an ad hoc group. Here are some of the points I think important:

(1.) Fairburn to Charles Brasch. 27 October, 1946.
(1) It is necessary to challenge the Fund at an early stage, in order to establish good precedents.

(2) There is no need to worry about making big demands on the Fund, because such a small sum as £2000 can be regarded only as a starter. If the Government's intentions are serious, it will provide more if necessary.

(3) I don't approve of Joe Hoeman's secret patronage, because it is (in strict terms) politically improper; and because it leaves the important issues unrevealed and unresolved. The public Fund can serve one useful purpose, if it serves no other - it can test the willingness of the general public to encourage the arts, and (more important) it can test the genuineness of the writer's freedom under State patronage. Our job is, I feel, not merely to get some money from the State as a handout for writers, but to ensure that the precedent of complete artistic freedom is firmly established. Taking the long view, this latter aim is much the more important.

(4) There is not much, in actual fact, that the State can do for literature (as apart from documentation). Which of the great literary works of the past century could have been done under State patronage? Would the S. African State have subsidised the works of Roy Campbell? And so on. But one most useful (and non-compromising) thing it can do is to send some of our writers abroad. (1)

The chief purpose of the Fund will be, I suppose, to see that "Tutira" and other such books are reprinted, and that all the available paper doesn't go to the newspapers and magazines and catalogues and "Best Bets". (2)

(1) Fairburn to Charles Brasch. 21 November, 1947.
(2) Fairburn to Charles Brasch. 4 December, 1947.
In these parts of the letters, Fairburn was seeking to look at the Fund's establishment charitably and with an eye to its practical advantages. But the spectre of bureaucratic pressure remained.

The qualifications for patronage at present would appear to be these: (1) Bachelorhood; (2) Poverty; (3) Neutrality on all important religious, political, and economic issues; (4) Some sort of achievement already; (5) Acceptability to Mr Fraser, Mr Heenan, Mr Lawlor, Sir James Elliott, etcetera. (all or most of the committee.)

I invite you to imagine what type of man of letters we shall evolve out of this after a few decades of "conditioning" on the standard set out. Think what a degree of romantic detachment from society - biologically, socially and in every other way - is implied. That's why, though I'm charitable and optimistic about it, I just can't see that much can be done. (1.)

Seeing Sir Joseph Heenan's private support of the Fund as a form of dangerous paternalism that could only foster the "conditioning" that he had spoken of in the letter to Brasch (supra) Fairburn wrote at the same time to P.A. Smithells,

This sort of thing represents State activity at its most dangerous (paving the way, setting the precedent, for our eventual Goebbels), and I can't see eye to eye with it.

No. Art is something that happens, like the shoot of grass bursting the concrete pavement. And stupid and dishonest politicians and bureaucrats can't do anything to help it, really. They can build galleries, and subsidise the publication of books (the wrong ones, in most cases, I have no doubt)

(1.) Fairburn to Charles Brasch. 4 December, 1947.
But they can't get me or anyone else with child. And if they take an interest in the arts, be sure they will only do so in order to further their own purposes. Soviet art is enslaved to the bureaucratic machine. The Soviet artist doesn't lead the horse - he follows it with a shovel. (1.)

And to Charles Brasch a month later he was to restate this point, when speaking of the debilitation of the "public" and "social" powers that he saw the artist as possessing.

....there are (I think) great risks involved when the State is given an option over the work and talents of a writer.

I insist that literature is a public business, not a private vice.

One of the obvious dangers in the whole business is that we may see the emergence of a literary bureaucracy - a committee of stuffed shirts who regard themselves as the real arbiters of literary tradition and development. Let us assert at all times, by implication, and directly, that it is the writers who are the initiators, and that creation and criticism work in a dialectic process. (2.)

Fairburn's distrust of the State Library Fund was most pungently recorded in the quatrain, Lines Composed in the Glover kitchen...19 Nov. 1947.

Here is a piece of wisdom
I learnt at my mother's knee:
The mushroom grows in the open,
The toadstool under the tree. (3.)

(1.) Fairburn to P.A. Smithells. 20 December, 1947.
(2.) Fairburn to Charles Brasch. 31 January, 1948.
(3.) J 518 P.
His suspicions reflect the rather unplanned and idealistic way
in which the Fund was set up in 1947; the objections that he
raised soon to have been valid in theory, though not usually
sustainable in the light of the Fund's operations in the twenty
years since the establishment. Fairburn's objections were
frequently recalled during the controversy over the Fund's
withholding of a grant to the 1964 issue of Louis Johnson's
Poetry Yearbook (1.) whether this and the earlier Numbers
controversy in 1959 vindicate Fairburn's view of the dangers is
not for this thesis to judge. Louis Johnson summarises the
reasons for greater apprehension in those early years of the
Fund's existence:

In 1946, (sic) there were more apparent
reasons for disquiet than exist today.
The Literary Fund was brought into being
largely by the pressures of New Zealand's
only authors' society, the P.E.N., then a
much more austere, venerable, and
Establishment-oriented body than it
became in the 1950s. P.E.N.'s function
at that time, was largely social; its
membership composed largely of the
literary equivalent of weekend painters
and ageing "scribblers" who had
published little things in their youth.
Few of those who could be regarded as
serious or worthwhile writers belonged.
And since P.E.N. was to provide the
writers' representatives on the
advisory committee there was some
reason to fear the worst.

To offset this, there seems to have
been quite genuine enthusiasm for the

(1.) Vide correspondence in The New Zealand Listener, March,
April, 1964, passim, and Louis Johnson, "Poetry Yearbook
and New Zealand Literary Fund", Comment 18, January
1964. pp 30 - 33.
project in official circles, and the Department of Internal Affairs, and particularly the late Sir Joseph Heenan held great hopes for their new baby. There were teething troubles of course. In the early years the advisory committee was much too unwieldy, making room for almost any group with the slightest peripheral interest in literature to have its say around the table. (1.)

At the same time that Fairburn was concerning himself with the possible consequences of the establishment of the State Literary Fund, he, like all the writers of his generation, was welcoming Charles Brasch's establishment of the periodical Landfall. His letters to Brasch after the first number show his enthusiasm, tempered by a feeling that the "tone" of the journal somehow manifested a "regional" rather than an "indigenous" or "national" point of view.

Your introductory Notes are excellent except that I think there is a hint too much here and there of what I think of as the Christchurch outlook. It was evident also in Allen's anthology. I really don't think Crosswell deserves to be taken much more seriously than a piece of very good imitation period furniture; his homosexual romanticism and somewhat spinsterish "paganism" seem to me to have little significance. Ursula Bothell deserves to be taken more seriously; yet in her best work - or most of it - I feel that she was doing something other than write (sic) poetry. When you describe her as "the profoundest intellectual influence of her time in New Zealand" I think you go a bit too far. Her particular sort of pantheism has little originality - and on the whole

(1.) Louis Johnson, cit.
she lacks the passion and tension that can turn mysticism into poetry (e.g. Blake, Crashaw). If she had such influence, where is it in any way evident? "Christchurch", or even "the South Island" in place of "New Zealand" might have held water. I just don't know. And I'm not being provincial, for I know very well that this blowzy, sprawling, butterfat city I live in has had its nose in the trough for so long that it has forgotten what the sky looks like.

On the other hand, I should hate to see the current of our tradition become a genteel trickle flowing out of the dank pond of Chock culture - a diluted and slightly stagnant Anglicanism. (1)

Fairburn's sensing attributes in New Zealand literary thought of the time that might be interpreted as regional rather than national anticipated the thinking of Kendrick Smithyman, whose recent work A Way of Saying deals in part with a later tendency in New Zealand writing which might be so described. (2) The degree to which Allen Curnow's Introduction to the Book of New Zealand Verse, or Charles Brasch's editorial approaches in Landfall do in fact reflect a regional rather than a national sense (if at all) is not the point at issue here. Nor is it of more than passing interest to note here that much of the poetry and critical thought up to that time was the work of South Islanders and might as such show the stamp of that part of New Zealand. (3)

(1) Fairburn to Charles Brasch. 8 April, 1947.
(2) Kendrick Smithyman. A Way of Saying. 1965. passion. Smithyman's concern is chiefly with the trends in New Zealand poetry after 1950, but some of his remarks in chapters 4 & 5 on the poetry before 1950 seem related to Fairburn's point of view, if often only by implication.
is next to be noted was that Fairburn felt that in some ways Brasch's editorial approach manifested a regionalism from which he felt excluded; his preference was not for any alternative regionalism, but rather for an indigenous quality that he felt was lacking. His point is never fully argued out in the letter to Brasch, and his ideas must remain of interest rather than conclusive - the tentative tone is well illustrated in his next letter to Brasch:

An intelligent Australian remarked that the thing was not indigenous enough. I think he may be right - and I suppose he meant much the same as I do when I speak of Choh influence. But for God's sake we must avoid the self-conscious "dinkum aussie" business, or its local equivalent.'(1.)

Though Fairburn did not define his feeling of regionalism very precisely, a later letter to Brasch declares his feeling that Landfall could serve a valuable function in positively defining values in an indigenous culture. This act of defining would involve an attack upon the spurious, as much as a demonstration of the good. The tone is not quite "messianic", but it does reflect Fairburn's continuing concern with polonie and the arts as factors contributing to dynamic social and culture changes.

I think that our distinctive local culture is very thin. We're 95% derivative, 5% creative.

I think some hard hitting will be necessary. The bloody awful love

(1.) Fairburn to Charles Brasch. 8 April, 1947.
of dullness this country has inherited from its chapel-going immigrants, and the almost universal respect for moral cowardice, demand kicking in the arse continually. In many ways we're a "bad" people - cynical and sentimental. I don't think, for example, that any discussion of politics can be firmly based unless it recognises that our political leaders are very nearly as leprous as the Australians. The corruption of individuals is a much more important element in NZ politics than any ideological considerations.

The social concerns that this letter alludes to are found expressed in varying forms in the last ten to fifteen years of Fairburn's life. His sizeable output of commentary, criticism, and "light verse" is all in one form or another aimed at pointing out what is wrong, suggesting what should be done, suggesting what is right and of value, and in this it continues the habit of the 1930s. The most important achievement commemorating Fairburn's social response to his society in the depression years was undoubtedly Dominion. In the post-war years no one piece is so eminent (We New Zealanders is about the nearest) yet the continual output of commentary and verse reflects Fairburn's belief that

This is my country, and I am very glad to belong to it - in spite of everything. I also claim the right to talk about it - and to talk about it with the bluntness one uses in family discussions. Flattery can be left to the visitors...

As a New Zealander I am distressed by many things that happen here. I am impatient of the dullness and mediocrity we not only tolerate but encourage. I am revolted by the falseness and
pretentiousness of many aspects of our
life... I am alarmed at our slothful
reluctance to face fundamental problems
with courage, and our refusal to treat
serious things seriously. ...  

(1.)

We New Zealanders, perhaps the unpublished MSS "The
Woman Problem", many of the two hundred odd pieces of prose,
commentary, and humorous verse of these years are the
reflection of this, as is the view on the function of Landfall
in the letter quoted above. But such a subject (or area of
concern) cannot easily be made the preserve of the lyric poet,
and it is in this area that Fairburn's declining output is
most to be noticed.

In the area of serious verse Fairburn's most important
later work was the composition of the two long poems, The
Voyage and To A Friend in the Wilderness. The Voyage was
apparently written in later 1948(2.) and may have had its
origins in a play for which Fairburn mapped out a schema about
1943. He described this to Jasper Brett as follows -

Party of people (mixed grill) decide
to get away from it all & form a colony.
The action all takes place on a ship,
which is held up in some small port.
During the hold-up all the antagonisms
and abuses & disillusion they are
trying to escape from manifest
themselves in the microcosmic society
of shipboard, busting the whole show up.
Sounds a bit bleak, perhaps, but I have
the shape of it in my mind. Comedy, of

(3.)

(1.) We New Zealanders, pp 60 - 61.
(2.) Fairburn to Charles Brasch. 20 May, 1949.
(3.) Fairburn to Jasper Brett. n.d. (1943 ?)
Sufficient elements of the setting and the allusion of *The Voyage* soon to be present in this scheme to make the connection possible, if conjectural. To *A Friend in the Wilderness* was apparently written soon after this, and both were completed by mid-1950, when Fairburn wrote to Brasch,

Apart from multitudinous bread-and-butter work, I've given my small margin of energy during the past year to writing two longish poems - 350 lines each - and I hope to publish them with "Dominion" sometime this year. (1.)

Each of the poems was broadcast, *The Voyage* with some modifications to the text which later appeared (2.) and in May, 1950 Fairburn submitted the MSS of the three long poems to the New Zealand University Press on the suggestion of Professors Musgrove and Gordon. (3.) The poems were accepted officially by the Assistant Registrar on behalf of the University in October or November of that year. When no publication had been arranged by January, 1952, Brasch apparently suggested that *Landfall* should publish one or both of the poems, but the Registrar evidently informed Fairburn that a decision on publication was then imminent, and by July 1952 the Caxton Press were setting the type for both *Three Poems* (on behalf of the N.Z.U.P.) and *Strango Rendezvous*. Denis Glover had proposed

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(1.) Fairburn to Charles Brasch. 27 June, 1950.
(2.) Vide notes to *Three Poems*, pp 67 - 68. Also Fairburn to Charles Brasch, 12 July, 1952: *The Voyage* "is being recorded for broadcast this coming Tuesday - I'm doing one of the voices myself."
(3.) The progress of publication is documented in Fairburn's correspondence with Charles Brasch, 20 December, 1951; 12 July, 22 October, 1952, passim.
the publication of a reprint of Poems 1929 - 1941 several years before, and Fairburn records having given him MSS sometime prior to March, 1950. (1.) But delays in the negotiations with the New Zealand University Press in the one case, and Glover's departure from the Caxton Press in the other, delayed the publication of each until the last months of 1952.

These works mark the climax of Fairburn's poetic career. Perceptively reviewed in Landfall by Glover himself, and well received (though sales remained small (2.)), they have stood as most important collections of Fairburn's work available until the recent publication of the Collected Poems (3.) Johnson records no further lyric verse being published between 1952 and Fairburn's death, and none was found in the papers nor included by Glover in the half-dozen previously uncollected poems. The work that Fairburn was engaged in at the same time as writing The Voyage and To A Friend in the Wilderness (possibly included among the "Additional Poems" of Strange Rendezvous) was evidently his last in serious poetry.

Fairburn had been employed as a tutor in the Department of English at Auckland University College from 1948 (after a period of working at the production of hand printed fabrics) until 1954. From then until his death he was at Elan, the School of Fine Arts at the same University College. His

(1.) Fairburn to P.A. Smithells, 24 March, 1950.
(2.) Fairburn to Charles Brasch, 27 September, 1956. By that time, only 246 copies of the 600 printed of Three Poems had been sold. The edition was later taken over by the Mermaid Press, Wellington.
interest in art dated at least from the 1920s (he attended classes at the Slade briefly while in England) and his critics and commentaries in later years frequently dealt with this area of his interest. Though it lies outside of the scope of this study, Fairburn's correspondence with Miss Lucy Worthein in 1947 - 1948 was apparently instrumental in bringing about Miss Worthein's presentation of paintings and drawings to the Auckland Art Gallery, (1.) and would warrant the attention of some historian of the visual arts in New Zealand, as would the correspondence with Anthony Alpers describing Fairburn's views of the controversies that surrounded the Elan School and the Auckland Art Gallery about 1956, (2.)

In verse, Fairburn's last collected work (other than the posthumous collection, The Disadvantages of Being Dead) was the satire upon Poetry Yearbook in which he collaborated with Denis Glover and R.W. Lowry. Three letters to Denis Glover record the progress of this light-hearted venture, from March 1956.

Bob (Lowry) and I have discussed the idea of bringing out a short anthology of sorts, since Lou (Johnson) on advice from the Family Planning Unit, is apparently not having a child this year. We think of calling it THE POETRY STOPGAP. It won't be a collection of the Best Poems of the Year - oh no, indeed. It will be the work of perhaps three or four of us, Including - may I suggest? - you? And it will be a very lovely bunch of

(1.) WTu MSS Micro 324.
(2.) Ibid 132.
coconuts, of all sorts and shapes and
sizes, some with the milk of human
kindness in them, and some just plain
rotten after lying too long on the beach. (1.)

The iconoclastic humour of the venture is further in evidence in
the next letter:

The idea was not just to do a parody, son.
Lou (or rather, metophysically speaking,
Non-Lou) was to be merely a starting-point.
To some extent, perhaps, a parody of all
the little intense publications that ever
crept out of their respective mouses' ears....

I've talked it over with Bob, and have
got this far: Title, THE POETRY STOPGAP:
Lyrics in Loop-Year by Several Hands.
Note re P. Yearbook being in recess,
recommending this as a substitute.
Editor – Dorothy Cannibal. I've written
an Introduction by her. Back cover – ABOUT
THE EDITRESS; Here I've written 200 words
on D.G., and have a most satisfying block
to accompany it.

The proposed gapstopper will not set out
to be an equivalent to the Y-B – an
anthology of nation-wide work for the year –
but rather a private indulgence on the
part of about four of us who are not
normally responsible for our actions. (2.)

In April it was decided to make the contributors only
Glover and Fairburn, and to treat the work as a "private
indulgence" since a Poetry Yearbook was now scheduled for
publication. The collaboration on copy was begun in May,
1956, and copy was apparently with the printer by September
of that year, when Fairburn wryly informed Glover that Lowry
was behind schedule:

(1.) Fairburn to Denis Glover. 14 March, 1956.
(2.) Fairburn to Denis Glover. n.d. (1956)
Bob, like all of us old warhorses, has his memories. In his case, it is a bad one. But he valiantly fights against his destiny. From time to time he mutters, in that deep entrenchment, the Delphic words, 'Thursday for sure.'

The volume contains a number of satires of other New Zealand writers, including Baxter, Curnow and Sargeson, some self-parodies, (e.g. "To A Fiend! In The Wilderness") and a variety of light and occasional pieces, of which the most pleasant are perhaps "To an American Tourist at Whakarewarewa" and the whimsical satire on Celtic Otago and anglophile Canterbury, "Deep South."

But Fairburn did not live to see the book published. His health collapsed in the summer of 1956-57, and his illness was diagnosed as a kidney disease and cancer. In December he wrote,

> The doctors tell me I must resign myself to the fact that my expectancy of life has been cut down, & that I must "live from day to day". I tell them not to talk actuarial jargon at me, & that, like everybody else, I've got to live from day to day whatever happens.

(2.)

His health did not recover. He continued to write up till shortly before his death, contributing two articles to Here & Now and engaging in a correspondence in The Listener in the last months. Fairburn died on 7 April, 1957. Memorial

(1.) Fairburn to Denis Glover, 24 September, 1956.
(2.) Fairburn to ?, 10 December, 1956. WTu Micro MSS 383.
poetry readings were given by his friends in Auckland and Wellington in order to raise funds for the family estate, and plans were made to collect reminiscences and memorials with a view to publishing a commemorative volume. Those were collected by Anthony Alpers and later by Denis Glover, but have not to date been published. R.W. Lowry and the Pilgrim Press brought out *Poetry Harbinger* in 1958, and in the same year Denis Glover edited and the Mermaid Press published *The Disadvantages*, light verse selected by Glover from the papers. The letters have since been collected and are lodged with the Alexander Turnbull Library. The *Collected Poems*, edited by Denis Glover were published in 1966, and selections of the prose and the letters are currently in preparation.
II.

The previous section of this part of the thesis has outlined Fairburn's literary career; this section will discuss the nature of the changes and developments in his poetry, with the emphasis being put upon the lyric verse. Glover's review of *Strange Rendezvous* and *Three Poems* in *Landscape* (1) and later MacD.P. Jackson's study of the poems (2) have made clear enough the nature of Fairburn's poetic vision, with its belief in the efficacy and fidelity of human experience, its almost metaphysical fusion of love and life in actions which can transcend and deny the mutability of Time. The letters and unpublished MSS cited in the previous section confirm and amplify what the poems already tell us, that they were written not only out of intense personal experience, but were also informed by personal belief which finds its most general, and yet at the same time, most wide-ranging expression in the statement,

the only satisfactory way of looking at life in general is to regard it as a search for meaning. This doesn't in the least mean that we should renounce, experience, condemn the flesh, or retire from the world. On the contrary. I believe that the meaning of life is to be realised in the tension between Time and Eternity. The more intensely we live, the more intensely we are able to realise value. It is the great negative principles—eternity, death, silence— that constitute the node of our awareness. (3)

(1) *Landscape* 27. September, 1953, pp 203 - 209.
(2) cit supra, Louis Johnson & Eric Schwinmer's commentary in Numbers 7, usefully supplements Jackson's arguments, as does Vincent O'Sullivan's review of the Collected Poems in Comment 28.
(3) From "What Life Means To Me".
With this criticism already available to the reader of Fairburn it seems most profitable for this study to parallel the brief biography of the first section here with an examination of the lyric poetry *qua* poetry, supplementing Glover and Jackson on occasions.

Fairburn's prolific youthful period up to the time of the publication of *He Shall Not Rise* produced few poems that he chose to retain in his later volumes. Only the "Disquisition on Death" can be certainly dated earlier than 1930 among the poems that appeared in *Poems 1929 - 1941*, and Fairburn's rejection of what he saw as his 'juvenilia' is clearly evidenced in the letter to Clifton Firth, 23 December, 1931, quoted at length in the previous section.

The poem from which the title of *He Shall Not Rise* is taken ("Rhyne of the Dead Self") is one of the most variously interpreted of Fairburn's lyrics. It may be approached literally or allegorically, depending on whether the reader is emphasising the poet's rejection of idyllic love, reading the poem as the record of a personal experience, or treating it as an expression of a breaking away from the self-conscious Georgian poetising that is associated with the 1920s. Insofar as the poem is amenable to "autobiographical" interpretations, it may be inferred to be about any or all of these - the most that can usefully be said is that during Fairburn's sojourn in England a growing sense of pessimism and a consequent rejection of the idealism of the previous
years can be noted. The circumstances of this were both personal and poetic. "Rhyme of the Dead Self" can be read as one explicit record of all this.

Yet the explicit rejection of 'that pale lily-white lad' made in the letters to Firth, and the later contempt for the Georgianism of Pope, Harris, Hulgan et alii expressed to Glover, as well as the more considerable achievements of Fairburn's poetry in the 1930s and after, should not lead the critic to ignore the lyric continuity that can be traced through the whole canon. Much of He Shall Not Rise is slight Georgianism, pretty and self-consciously poetical; nevertheless the evidence of a developing mastery of the craft of language shows through at least some of these poems. They are the experiments, the juvenilia that "date" both because of their slightness and because they compare unfavourably with the best of the later work, though for all that they may contain some of the best examples of 1920s Georgianism written locally. They are comparable in general with the less important verse of The Beggar and with the lyrics of de Montalk; full of echoes of Tennyson, the Yeats of the Celtic Twilight, de la Mere, and quite pointedly, in a poem such as "The Runner", R.A.K. Mason, whom Fairburn described to de Montalk in a letter about 1927 as "his Aeneas". On the question of influences, though, O'Sullivan properly remarks that, if they are mentioned, it should not be for mere academic recording..., but to

(1.) Inferred from a reply by de Montalk.
note that some of Fairburn's models were among the finest, and so the power called on to achieve something of his own, all the greater. (1.)

But the juvenile nature of the verse is to be found in more than just diction, the archaism of vocabulary and syntax, the excessive use of inversion to achieve rhythmic regularity and particularly in the predictability of much of the metaphor and simile. These technical "faults" are all indicative of the initiative nature of verse which is in itself a type of "posture". The role of Poet, on which de Montalk had laid so much stress in their correspondence, gives the impression of being the dominant concern of the verse. An uneasy impression that much of this is poetry with little to say, and with only vague, almost tritely sentimental emotions substantiating the lyricism, is perhaps confirmed by Fairburn's reaction to the Georgian verse of the 1930s, when verse comparable to his own earlier work evoked only contempt. The primary objection to it was not that it lacked proficiency so much as that it had nothing of significance to say. The question of judging significance is a vexing one, and usually brings the critic back to the point where he is forced to suggest that the poetic posture seems, in "insignificant verse", to be more in evidence than the poem's argument. At this point verbal "fancy", rather than the poetic imagination (Coleridge's criteria are

undoubtedly useful here) seems to form the motive force of the poem.

An early poem, "Tea-Tree", exemplifies this: (1.)

Along your starry ways
I used to rove;
you were my earliest love
in boyhood days.

Over the silvery pool
bending quietly,
O most despised tree,
yet loveliest of all,

you'd toss a flower down
anon, as a woman might
to her lover in the night
a rose have thrown ....

The diction is archaic, the poet "roves" along "starry ways", the "silvery" tree whose "despised" nature (why?) requires an accented third syllable to make the line scan, is "yet loveliest of all" (again why? the fifth stanza does not answer this satisfactorily), and this maligned object, having been personified and apostrophised by the appreciative poet, proceeds to toss flowers down "anon" in a simile that is both trite and syntactically and metrically awkward.

If it seems unfair to dwell on such a trivial poem for the purposes of negative analysis, it should be remembered that much of the early verse is no better than this. Nor were all the habits exemplified in these lesser poems 'sloughed like a snakeskin' in late 1930. But in "Tea-Tree" and many poems like it the ornate language is only the

(1.) J 37E. reprinted in He Shall Not Rise. First printed in the Star. 9 July, 1927.
vehicle of a superficial and trivial emotion; in the best of
the later poetry the language may exhibit equally striking
linguistic features, but these can be seen as truly lyrical,
expressions of the romantic imagination. When the
imagination does not sustain the language, the diction and the
imagery appears as weak; when there is the required sustenance,
the effect is the opposite.

The very continuity of this problem of language and the
lyric imagination through the whole range of Fairburn's verse
helps explain several fairly obvious features of it. The
first is that this type of lyricism is essentially that of
the 19th and early 20th Century Romantic tradition (and in
Fairburn's work it is often the faults of the models that are
perpetuated in the imitations.) In texture of language as
much as in the nature of the arguments, Fairburn's verse may
be connected with the tradition of 19th Century romanticism,
as Reid and Jackson have noted(1.) though later it will be
suggested that certain of the themes treated in the later
lyric poems are not purely Romantic, but may also be shown to
have Renaissance antecedents, whether intended or fortuitous.

If the weaknesses of the earlier verse are not always
completely eliminated in the later poems, or mutated by the
operation of a more elevated poetic imagination, the converse
equally applies. Certain of the qualities of the later lyricism,

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(1.) Vide J.C. Reid, Creative Writing in New Zealand pp 35 -
Cit p 29.
imaginative as well as inventive, are there in some of the
verse written before 1930. One example can point to what is
quite frequently to be found in *He Shall Not Rise*, a quality
of imagination that may not be sufficient to sustain the whole
of a poem, but which may nevertheless be discerned in parts of
that poem, perhaps only an image or two, perhaps in a whole
stanza.

The first two stanzas, and the fifth, of "All I Have
Desired"(?) are evidently enough the work of the youthful
poet making a mellifluous declaration that is as lacking in
affirmative vitality as it is couched in predictable imagery:

I have found sanctuary
under the blossoms
where the bees make music
in a white spring.

I have found rest
where the sea
unravels her foam
over the black rocks...

But the longer third stanza which takes bee and sea and
animates each to show a more sombre side of the poet's
sanctuary, in which appetite and desire destroy the possibility
of rest, cannot be so easily dismissed as trivial poeticising:

But the bee is a glutton
clamorous, bloated with honey;
a fool, an unwitting pandar
to the blossoms;
and the sea is a very restless woman,
a weeping strumpet, who in vain importunes
the race of men,
seeking a lover to her bed.

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(1.) J 112 P.
Here, as in the third stanza of the earlier-quoted "Tea-Tree" the natural subject is described in the aninistic image of a woman lover. But the difference between the two images is more than just that of the difference between simile and metaphor; in the second poem the poet has imaginatively conceived the role for bee and sea, in essentially the same way that he was later to sense that from the cliff-top the Cave might appear as

a place of defeat,
the nest of an extinct bird, or the hole where the sea
hoards its bones,
a pocket of night in the sun-faced rock. (1.)

If "The Cave" is finally better because it is incomparably finer as an organic whole, evoking from the act of love a meaning that can transcend Time "in the brief eternity of the flesh", nevertheless the imaginative lyrical powers of its author are evidenced in the earlier work with their less substantial subjects, such as "All I Have Desired". Though Geoffrey de Montalt's view that the poetry of this earlier time bade "fair to rival that of pre-war England" (2.) was obviously excessive, and though many of the strictures against Ho Shall Not Rise that Fairburn made in the letter of 23 December, 1931, to Clifton Firth were valid, the best of the verse was, as he wrote, "good of its sort, and the sort has a place." (3.)

(1.) J 314 P. Written about 1941 - 42?
(2.) Vide p 173 supra.
(3.) Fairburn to Clifton Firth, 23 December, 1931. The letter is quoted more fully on pp 179 ff supra.
The impact of the verse and thought of Eliot and Pound was apparently minimal in New Zealand in the 1920s and Fairburn seems first to have encountered these poets during the trip to England. Writing from Cambridge to Clifton Firth, he remarked "T.S. Eliot is the god of the place" and later "I've been reading T.S. Eliot... The man is too damn sophisticated. But he knows his oignons." If anything might represent a break from Georgianism for Fairburn, it is reasonable to suppose that it would have been the influence of those poets who, from about 1909 on, seemed to be initiating a new poetic that was a radical departure from the current tradition. Eliot was in fact influential on Fairburn's prosody as much as he and Pound seemed to have impressed the New Zealander as critics in the 1930s, but the influence in form, though evident enough, was more to be seen in imitation than in assimilation, and as such was seldom fully successful.

The influence of Eliot may be suspected, if not proved, in the linear irregularities of such otherwise formally diverse poems as "Yes Please, Gentlemen", "La Belle Dame Sans Merci", and "The Caw", where in each case this irregularity is justified by a rhythm imposed on the lines by the cadences of

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(1.) Mr Mason told me in an interview that he and his friends were "up to date" in the most recent publications of Owen, Sassoon, and the Georgians rather than with any other poets in the mid 1920s.

(2.) Fairburn to Clifton Firth. 1 January, 1931.

(3.) Fairburn to Clifton Firth. n.d. (Wiltshire — therefore late 1931 or 1932).
speech as much as imagery. In using this technique Fairburn was one of the first New Zealand poets to attempt the difficult task of assimilating into his verse not only the subject matter of indigenous concerns but also an indigenous "voice", the subtly-discernible cadences that the linguist may detect as differentiating New Zealand English from Received Standard. But given the quality of the latter two poems cited above, qualities that are only in a small degree dependent upon this feature, "Yes Please, Gentlemen" illustrates the difficulties that the poet could encounter when a freedom of linear form (certainly more apparent than real in Eliot) tempted the poet into the assumption that the natural cadences of a vernacular speech might be lineated according to phrasing and the organic unity of the line's statement.

The unity of parts of "Yes Please, Gentlemen"

Philosophers, sportsmen, and men who are very busy about their own or other people's business are three kinds of escapologists and there are 3,000 more and they can all take it more or less and all this perhaps may be very admirable in its way but more often it is merely folly or knavery or just a lot of stupidity, some leather-faced fool of a ship's captain going down with his ship with a stiff upper lip his mind a motto from the wall of a preparatory school is more in the movement of the statement than in the verse itself. That the lineation is deliberate, seeking to enhance the directness of the monologue, does not make the attempt much more successful as poetry.

To argue this way is of course not to argue for the
necessity of a restrictive formalism, but to note that where Fairburn experimented with comparatively free forms and the evocation of the vernacular he was less successful than when his lyricism was expressed within the stricter structure of stanzaic form, or at least linear regularity. ("The Cave" is the notable exception to this, and the "voice" of the lady in the couplets of "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" is of course satirical and not lyrical.)

With these points noted, it is proper to consider briefly the poetry of Dominion, Fairburn's most important achievement in the 1930s. The suspicion of a lack of unity apparently troubled Denis Glover when he was shown the poem before it was printed\(^{(1)}\) and its unevenness has been noted since, particularly by C.K. Stead.\(^{(2)}\)

The problem is one of cohesion, difficult in a long poem where the tone must vary as the poem's argument develops, and doubly difficult in a poem such as Dominion in which two antithetical views are placed in confrontation explicitly, rather than by implication. The unity of Dominion is essentially dependent upon an emotional assumption, namely, that mankind is faced with a choice between two forms of social living, the "natural" and the "artificial". Given that the present form of society is artificial, and has brought mankind into the crisis of the Depression, the poet expresses

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(1.) Fairburn to Denis Glover. 7 June, 1936. Apparently Fairburn debated altering the order of the last two sections of the poem.

anger at the sterile and life-denying system that gives rise to this, a system that is contrasted bitterly with the freedom that man can find in his natural estate. But this argument requires more than an all-inclusive title and the juxtaposition of sections speaking of the one or the other state to make it a poem in the fullest sense. As it stands, it is essentially a sequence of poems linked by the common theme implicit in the title.

Eliot's influence is most evident in the passages where anger or despair are the dominant moods. His influence can be detected in many of the rhythms, the ironic litotes, and often enough in the images themselves. The description of the "paper city, built / on a rock of debt" is so full of echoes from "The Burial of the Dead" and The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock as to be almost pastiche. But the subtleties of the original eva¿de the poet of Dominion and there is more imitation than "absorption" of Eliot's technique in the poem. Beyond this, the poet is faced with the problem of arguing polemically while not being overmuch prepared to employ satirical irony in his attacks on society. (Irony is to be found to a limited extent, most notably in parts of "Album Leaves" but even there the tone is more frequently that of direct polemical attack.) The anger and shock at the inhuman outrage of the depression and its causes and effects remains the dominant expression of the poem, but as the verses collected in The Disadvantages of Being Dead clearly show, Fairburn attacked more effectively when the ironic or angry tones of his pieces were not required to
carry the weight of so heavy a subject as that of *Dominion*. In those pieces the target is small, and the verse's barb could be flicked lightly and still guaranteed to penetrate. But in *Dominion* anger, irony, and the tones of the speech-based rhythms cannot fully sustain the attack against a whole debased society in *Utopia* or *Album Leaves*, any more than the lyricism of *Elements* can always convince the reader of the worth (as opposed to the poet's delight) to be found in the "fairest earth".

It is the blunt asserting of the antithetical views of man's estate without much expressed awareness of the possible resolution or harmony that makes *Dominion* a better document of human response than it is a poem. Some, but not all, of the individual sections do declare effectively their pungent contempt for the social system or their lyric enthusiasm for the lot of "natural man", and it is those parts which deserve attention both in order to observe their merits and in order to see what differentiates them from the rest of the work. Such sections are those where the poet focusses upon an individual in a sharply delineated foreground, which foreground shows the detail of the misery and squalor or joy and freedom in which the character finds himself.

From "Back Street" in *Album Leaves* -

A girl comes out of a doorway in the morning with hair uncombed, *braiding* with care on the damp bricks, picks up the milk,

The subtly-noted details of neglect in both girl and house
('hair uncombed', the 'damp bricks') record all that is necessary to imply the dinginess of the back street in the first lines, a dinginess that the description of the washerwoman's kitchen papered in 'Stars', with Jubilee pictures pasted over the mantel, spattered with fat heightens at the conclusion of the next paragraph. This back street is a social milieu where neglect is endemic; it is not just a place where someone does not comb her hair before bringing in the milk (most suburbs would qualify here!) but a place where the buildings and nature itself reflect the shabbiness, where the bricks collect damp, where the fig-tree that serves as a clothes-prop is 'barren', where the fat-bespattered decorations pasted on the wall are only newspaper clippings and those ironically of an event that proclaims "the bonds of kinship, the heritage of Empire". Near to this scene

the taxi-drivers lounging in a knot beside the ranks of shining cars discuss the speed of horses as marinors the stars in their courses.

At one level there is the reminder that transport, like society itself, has become mechanised; the steersman now sits behind the wheel of a shining car. More fundamentally, this scene condenses one of the paradoxes of the social situation. It is not only the proximity of the shining cars to the dingy back street that strikes us, but also the interest in racehorses and gambling in a situation where the taking of either taxis or bets
seems economically precluded. The horses become ironic lodestars in the simile, points of orientation that may enable the poor to find spiritual or economic bearings in a wasteful, desperate questing out of debt.

Where the poet observes and records in miniature as in this short piece, anger at the futility of the social conditions arises from the reader's awareness of an inhuman cause having produced the characters and environment in a scene of such pathos and hopelessness. It is where the poet shifts his sights to what he declares to be this inhuman cause that the reader is less easily persuaded. Poetry that declares anger takes more upon itself than poetry which evokes the same emotion. Thus the angry catalogues of Part VII of *Utopia*

promoters of companies;
eneficiency experts (uneamed excrement
of older hands, oranges sucked dry),
scourges of a kindly and credulous race;
economists, masters of dead language;
sorrows, bureausites. ...

and similar rogues* galleries, may tell us much about whom the poet holds responsible for the suffering, but any accord here is not the same as that which is given to the wrath of the later Years or the rasping contempt of Auden. The intently witty turn of a single image such as 'uneamed excrement' may divert attention from the lack of either wit or melody in the passages as a whole, and it is only after thirteen lines of the section when the poet speaks of

holders of mortgages
on slum farms where children
milk with chillblained fingers

"Conversation in the Bush". But in the next paragraph of the poem the lushness of the description increases until it begins to seem more vernal than the scene described, and by

(1.) C.K. Stead. *op. cit.*
that the children's pain evokes assent with the anger. Such evocations are scattered through *Utopia* and *Album Leaves* but they are not sustained so as to be the evocative centre of these parts of the poem. The emphasis is upon attack, and the attack is versified polimonic rather than poetry.

What C.K. Stead called "libations to the landscape"(1.) are equally uneven. The land and its inhabitants may at best be sharply delineated in language where the tendency towards animism, though recognisably Georgian, is neither excessive, nor in the context inappropriate.

In the summer we rode in the clay country, the road before us trembling in the heat and on the warm wind the scent of tea-tree, grey and windbitten in winter, odorous under summer noon, with spurs of dust under the hoofs and a crackle of gorse on the wayside farms. At dusk the sun fell down in violet hills and evening came and we turned our horses homeward through dewy air.

This is not distinguished verse; the accurate observation of 'violet hills', 'dewy air', and the road 'trembling in the heat' are not particularly original, and there is a nuance of archaism in the horses being turned 'homewards'. Nevertheless the lyric pleasure is there, for all that nothing matches the precision and freshness of a simile like that of the puna frond 'shaped and curved / like the scroll of a fiddle' in "Conversation in the Bush". But in the next paragraph of the poem the lushness of the description increases until it begins to seem more vernal than the scene described, and by

(1.) C.K. Stead. *op cit.*
the third paragraph the poet is presenting a catalogue of delights

O lovely time! when bliss was taken
as the bird takes nectar from the flower.
Happy the sunlit hour, the frost and heat.

no more convincing or celebratory than were the lists of epithets in Utopia. The parts of the poem reveal the antitheses of nature and artificiality to the reader, and the lyric tones of the one contrasted with the ironies and anger of the other make clear the poet's valuing of

- the honesty of substance,
touch of soil and wind and rock,
frost and flower and water,
the honey of the senses, the food
of love's imagining;

- the essential Elements
of man's relationship to nature, and particularly to his own
land - above

the city's heap, life's bones
licked clean, void of desire.

But the difficult fusion of belief and poetry is made only occasionally, and though it is not to be inferred that all the images of love and hate are barren of poetic quality and manifest only unpoetic assertions of belief, nevertheless the quality of the whole poem remains limited by the defects of the parts.

In four of the five sections C.K. Stead's description (the poem "alternates between assaults... and libations") holds good. But in part IV, Dialogue, there is, as the title implies, debate, confrontation to the end of resolution rather than victory, and neither argument nor verse suffer as they do in so
much of the rest of the poem. The two personae of the dialogue are not manifestations of good and evil opposites, but are rather two moods of the human response to the situation of the poem - the one (A) perceives a purgation justifying the experience of suffering and a vision promising reward for it, against which (B) can only declare despair at the present anguish. (A) begins the dialogue with a response to the situation ('Our acts and torments are made 'meaningless,' ) which establishes his fraternity with the despairing (B). But the first words of (A)'s second statement declare his visionary realisation of the purpose of struggle, a purpose which is explored with a full awareness of all its limitations, moral and practical:

But to oppose
iron with iron gives victory to steel:
and who shall hold the sword?
There is no power to end,
no purity of act, within our compass.

The justification of struggle is not its ultimate but its partial success:

We may strive, within our partial world,
to shatter the repeating pattern of events,
limiting evil, so gaining limited good.

This striving will not eliminate suffering or death from the human condition; it will nonetheless provide meaning and a vision ('the eventual light, the candle shining in the tomb') which the angry despair of (B)'s response ignores in its pessimism:

Better
to turn our faces to the world and better
doors of wood and iron, tangible evil,
limiting thought and action, because

Naked we stand on naked ground. Our minds have lost the stress of matter, our feet refuse credence to earth. Solid thought melts, thins and flows out over the world's rim.

In acknowledging that action can be validated provided that it is action justified by faith, (A) asserts that 'we are natural men' and that actions against tangible evil justified in this way guarantee our one-ness with nature and thus our immortality.

In the long final speech of (A)

something is, my brother, that may not be destroyed; faith is its vessel. We shall arise at morning, and clothe ourselves, and walk in green fields. And we shall have dominion over the earth and the forms of matter. In us the Word endures, a seed in rock; tomorrow, or next spring, or when our sons are dead, the stone will split in some earth-rending shock; or a seed lodged in a cranny, lying in silt, will take root, and shatter the rock. Life will grow from our dead thoughts, from the seed hidden in the husk of darkness. We are the sons of men, and are borne down by old mortality, yet shall outlive chaos returning and the night of death. We are cold, we cannot think or speak with passion, but past despair have found a simple wisdom that can survey the promised good, passion of others to come, men who will live when the cold has struck inwards, has pierced our bones, killing all but our hope, which shall be material only to those who follow us, yet lives in us like a taper in the mouth of a snow-man, our sole heritage of warmth and life. It is this alone that justifies our breath, joins past and future in us, makes our lives valid.

is to be found the messianic core of the poem, an assertion of faith that may be construed as animistic, mystical, perhaps Wordsworthian, and certainly unproveable. It is here that there is found the centre of belief, a belief similar to that which
sustains the best of the shorter lyrics and which anticipates the credo of The Voyage. That the elements of this credo can be described as Romantic, in an age when Romanticism might be suspect, or that the credo's anticipations and manifestations are not always effectively sustained either in the three preceding or one following sections of the poem—all these do not diminish the importance of the section itself.

In the Dialogue of Dominion it is an implicit assumption that the values of mankind must be changed at the individual level, as much as in society at large, in order that human experience may be accorded its proper recognition. This assumption, which brings to mind Fairburn's admiration of Lawrence, expressed in several of the letters to Clifton Firth, leads the reader directly to the shorter lyric poems which celebrate and declare man's proper "natural" relationships, whether to his fellow men and women, or to his environment. Such relationships may be purely those of communion with the landscape, as experienced by the riders in the opening lines of Elements or, beautifully, in parts of To A Friend in the Wilderness:

Come with me now, past the Maori grave, past the straggling fig-tree like a map of London along the track and over the wooden bridge. Once more we climb the cliff-path swathing and silent and stand at the high point, by the crumbling edge, the sea beneath us, the wind's dancing-floor deserted now and shining:

But the relationships more often involve a sense of the inter-relationship of two people, erotic or not, in such a place.
Here the natural expression of kinship or love is intensified by its natural setting. So, in "A Naked Girl Swimming", (1.) the elements "Air, earth and water meet at the sea's edge", but

One element was lacking till you came: you, lovely wife of Sol, life-giving fire, you are the flame that welds the clashing worlds of matter and desire.

In such a place, "the tension between Time and Eternity" will be most fully realised through "the great negative principles - eternity, death, silence - that constitute the node of our awareness." (2.) Poems such as "Tapu", "The Cave", the more sentimental "Night Song", and "A Farewell" are all in their different ways celebrations of relationships experienced through such nodes and containing such tensions.

Thus when the lovers see the Cave it appears,

    a place of defeat
    the nest of an extinct bird, or the hole where the sea hoards its bones,
    a pocket of night in the sun-faced rock,
    sole emblem of mystery and death

and it is here that love-making will take place, so that when the lovers leave and "return to their lives", the essence of the act will remain "entombed".

In this place, where, as in "A Naked Girl Swimming", earth, air and water meet -

    We climbed down, and crossed over the sand,
    and there were islands floating in the wind-whipped blue,
    and clouds and island-strewnling in your eyes,

(1.) J 158 P. First published in New Poems (1934).
(2.) From "What Life Means To Me", the section headed RELIGION.
Time becomes for a moment defied, because the progress of the lovers to the Cave is not only "a fatality felt and unspoken", but also an assertion of permanence, a "way... unbroken as the genealogy of man." This defiance is expressed in consummation as

all was transfigured, all was redeemed,
so that we escaped from the days
that had hunted us like wolves, and from ourselves
in the brief eternity of the flesh.

The realisations that are achieved through this human experience are those of both pain and pleasure, as a transcedental experience of mortality heightens the awareness of both Time and Eternity in the paradoxical "brief eternity of the flesh." The permanence of an experience such as that which "The Cave" records is found partly in the recurrence of that experience -

because the form of the dream is always the same,
and whatever dies or changes this will persist and recur,
will compel the means and the end, find consummation,
whether it be
silent in swansdown and darkness, or in grass moonshadow-nottled,
or in a murmuring cave of the sea.

- and partly in the heightened sense of nutability as the lovers "return to their lives". So the lock of hair and the piece of tapu skull are the momentos of love and time, in which the poet of "Tapu" "carries the world in his pocket". (1.) The same theme recurs in "Well Known and Well Loved" and "The Farewell"

(1.) J 314 P.
Said the Queen to her fancy man at break of day
Stroking her burden with soft finger-tips
'There's nothing we can say or do will outlive
  my heart's last beat, the latest breath of your lips!' (1.)

and just as the Queen's lover unmasks himself as Death, so
the poet reminds his lover in "A Farewell" that,

Time sharpens his knife,
Time smiles and whets his knife,
and something has got to come out
quickly, and be buried deep,
not spoken or thought about
or remembered, even in sleep.
You must live, get on with your life. (2.)

Even in a poem such as "The Cave" where the celebration
of the act of love becomes an assertion that time may be
conquered, time and death remain present, if only because the
act of love is so much a challenge against their powers. (3.)

(1.) J 314 P.
(2.) J 311P.
(3.) Vincent O'Sullivan, "A.R.D. Fairburn - Definitions of
  Eptiness" (Comment 28, cit) mentions the ways in which
  Fairburn's lyrics resemble and differ from the carpe diem,
  but O'Sullivan seems to underestimate the imaginative
  power of the paradox of the instant and eternity in the
  poems, and seeks to reduce it to the appearance of a
  transcendence; viz.

Here is no simple insistence on the "carpe diem" theme. Nor is the poet saying that
love endures and defeats death, but rather
this: place love in this particular, real
and imaginative relationship with time, and
the usual categories lose their stridency,
death's sting is partly drawn because the
experience of love, at best, does not seem
subservient to the conditions of time in
which love operates.

(op cit. p 33.)

This seems to allow a distinction between the "real"
and the "imaginative" which, according to my reading,
the poems themselves do not easily allow.
All the poems quoted supra treat love and life itself\(^{(1)}\) in the explicitly-stated knowledge that mankind is mortal, and that love is an instant "fore-doomed" as the lovers are "foredoomed" by their mortality. But this is nowhere truism, for the paradox of brevity and eternity

Wild love is gay
and young, and desperate, and quick with grief,
immortal as the springtime, and as brief;\(^{(2)}\)
does assert that love defeats death and time, in spite of the lovers' mortality.

Since the critical writing on Fairburn to date has generally emphasised the association of the verse with the 19th Century Romantic tradition, it is worthwhile commenting here that though this association is undeniable, the transcendental assumptions of the lyrics examined here suggest that the great Renaissance dichotomies, nature versus artifice in parts of Dominion, and the permanence of love in the face of the mutability of Time in the lyrics of love and death, are equally relevant to Fairburn's work. Such a point obviously does not exclude association with the Romantic tradition, but it does suggest that there is an older tradition than the Georgian in which Fairburn's lyrics, for all their formal differences, are at home. This suggestion may be reinforced by the several references in the letters to "the English tradition" where Fairburn often enough cited Elizabethan and 17th Century

\(^{(1)}\) Vide MacD. P. Jackson. "The Visionary Moment" Kiwi *cit. passim.*

\(^{(2)}\) "Wild Love". *J* 314 P.
metaphysical poets in his random examples. (1.)

These lyric poems are generally recognised as Fairburn's finest achievements outside of the long poems. Jackson has thoroughly considered both The Voyage and To A Friend in the Wilderness in his essay (cit) and it is not proposed to duplicate his critical work here, but only to suggest that the examination of the lyric poetry given in this section may point to a number of other poetic assertions which speak of the same "surety" and "warrant" in the vital experience of life that is the final affirmation of the second of those two poems -

We know in the instant of joy that our warrant is sure, Our faith not vain, our being not belied in death.

This affirmation, developed out of a poem of greater optimism and finer language than Dominion, arrives at essentially the same point as (A)'s conclusion in the Dialogue in the Captain's final assertions in the mutiny dialogue of The Voyage, where the voyaging itself, the assertion of life as a living "search for meaning", becomes its own justification -

Wrap your deep-sea faith
About you like a blanket. Have no fear
of the unending, blind, befriending sea,
wind or wave or the storm's blast. Here
our microcosmos flowers. Who are we
to know the complete, the illimitable pattern?
Each to his business, tending ropes and gear,
navigating or cooking, keeping log,
fulfilling in each act our sacrament
and simple story. We have the changing heaven

(1.) This is not to imply more than that Fairburn was naturally enough familiar with these poets, though the degree of familiarity may be deduced from the echoes of Donne in a poem that has many similarities of statement to "The Cave", namely "Epithalamium". (J 314 P.)
for roof-tree, and for company great whales,
and birds that nest upon uncharted rocks;
the dolphins gliding and breaking at our bows
will lead us on, and the winds filling our sails
gather us in to glory.\(^{(1.}\)

The broadcast version of *The Voyage* was introduced with
the words,

This is a poem about faith, and works. In
particular, it is about what Keats called
"Negative Capability, that is, when a man
is capable of being in uncertainties,
nysteries, doubts, without any irritable
reaching after fact and reason..."
It is a romantic poem against Romanticism.\(^{(2.}\)

It does not seem unreasonable to suggest that Fairburn's denial
of Romanticism here is to be found in the assertions of vitality
and experience being good and meaningful in themselves,
assertions which can be made in the face of doubt because of the
quasi-metaphysical beliefs that infuse the lyrics considered
supra. Again, "... the meaning of life is to be realised in
the tension between Time and Eternity. The more intensely we
live, the more intensely we are able to realise value."\(^{(3.}\)

This realisation, based according to Fairburn upon the "great
negative principles", and asserted in the paradox of permanence
and mutability in love, life and death, is the "surety", the
"warrant", known in the "moment of joy". Fairburn may have
been limiting his definition of Romanticism to imply that the
ultimate end of "negative capability" must be the renunciation

\(^{(1.)}\) J 655 P. *To a Friend in the Wilderness* XI.
\(^{(2.)}\) Note to *Three Poems* p 67.
\(^{(3.)}\) From "What Life Means To Me."
of experience in a state of uncertainty and doubt. If this
is so, and the mutiny dialogue (section XI) would to some extent
bear this out, then the poem opposes only one area of Romantic
thought, and overclaims for itself in suggesting that is
opposition is to Romanticism as a whole. But what the poet
defined as the "target" of the poem is comparatively unimportant;
of more significance is the positive assertion, and the fact
that this can be seen to be related to the affirmative core
of Dominion and the affirmations of the lyrics, and (as Jackson
has shown in his study) to To A Friend in the Wilderness. (1.)

The Voyage exhibits a wide range of tones appropriate to
the human moods and situations, speech-making, meditations on
the voyage itself and its ocean setting, dialogues of ambition,
curiosity and apprehension. Metrically and prosodically it is
as diverse in its forms as Dominion though with more cohesion,
both because the control of language is so much surer in the
later poem, and because the variety is directed towards a
single argument rather than towards the declaration of an
antithesis that requires resolution.

In its focus towards affirmative argument rather than
celebration, it has something in common with much of the
poetry published after Poems 1929 - 1941. The Additional
Poems in Strange Rendezvous (i.e., those written after the

(1.) Cf. Fairburn on Dominion: "... the main theme... emerges
in the last three sections, and... will, I hope, be
found to have a relationship to the two later poems."
(Note to Three Poems cit.)
publication of Poems 1929 - 1941) and The Rakehelly Man evidence the direction of Fairburn's poetry towards social commentary, a direction anticipated in earlier poems such as "To A Millionaire" and "Yes Please Gentlemen". The tones of some of the eleven Rakehelly poems border on the satiric flippancy of the Poetry Harbinger and "Horse Pansies" verse, but some at least, "Walking on My Feet" and "Cupid" perhaps, can be associated more closely with the nordsen verse, sometimes social, sometimes metaphysical in its argument, that is ultimately serious in its poetic language as well as in its social statement. The two extremes of this range of poetry after 1941 are easy enough to distinguish. "Terms of Appointment" and "I'm Older Than You, Please Listen" are as much metaphysical commentaries upon life, expressed in an appropriate sinewy verse that blends lyricism and a sardonic tone, as they are commentaries upon the society of human relationships that the term "life" implies:

To the young man I would say:
Get out! Look sharp, my boy,
before the roots are down,
before the equations are struck,
before a face or a landscape
has power to shape or destroy.
This land is a lump without leaven,
a body that has no nerves.

or

Though you cross the seas your heart will remain buried beneath the hearthstone;
Though you stay on one acre you will sweat with rage to see your enemies riding upon the hilltops;
Though you conquer your enemies at last, you will wish you had spent the time making summer love;
This is serious poetry, just as verses such as "We've got the 'Herald' in the morning and the 'Star' at night" or "Roll Out the Knightcart" are serious social satire couched in verse form, taking much of their wit from the pointing given them by their clever rhymes, rhythms and parodies.\(^{(1)}\) It is the poetry of the "middle ground" between these two recognisable opposites that is the hardest to describe, though it is in this area that one of Fairburn's most popular poems, "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" (first published in *Recent Poems*, 1941\(^{(2)}\)) has its place. Here the satire of the acid social commentary controls the language and verse form without ever subordinating the form to the role of an external shell. The wit of the language fuses with the nardant (and morbid) humour of the situation described —

by God who
should be there who by God's grace
but the fat spent woman with a face
bitter as a holy war

and the whole poem becomes a piece in which essentially vernacular rhythms are appropriately used, controlled by the rhymes, to carry both the woman's monologue and the observer's black-humoured commentary.

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\(^{(1)}\) On some occasions what might seem at first to be occasional poems become on further reading "pure" pieces of poetic jesting, when the occasion is seen to be of no importance, and the wit of the poem becomes its whole justification and pleasure. "Reverie in Rat Week". (J 338 P) exemplifies this well.

\(^{(2)}\) J 304 P.
even her mental picture of the gallows' action appeared to give her some (strictly biological) satisfaction but a spoil-sport Cabinet had stepped in and stopped the fun just when it really had begun. Duncher reckon they oughter put him on the end of a string the murdering bastard duncher reckon and let hin swing I'd like to do the job with me own hands the slob and by God if they'd let me so I would

But this is an earlier poem, that, if it shows the successful use to vernacular rhythms to a greater degree than the similar attempts in Poems 1929 - 1941, is still a pointer to the difficulties that confronted Fairburn in exploring this "middle ground" in later years. He was never quite so successful with the later poems that attempt a combination of vernacular and lyrical, ("Down on My Luck" is a fair example) and his energies became in later years more centred upon the satirical verse and the prose writing that could be treat these concerns. Finally, Fairburn was best either as pure lyricist or as pure humorist and satirist. (1.) His "ear" was best handling the lyric rhythms which offered them-selves as the vehicle for his imaginative diction within a fairly formal stanzaic or at least metrical pattern. In each of these fields, especially the lyric, which has been the primary concern of this section of the thesis, his best poetry is of considerable stature.

(1.) On this thought, it is salutary to recall Fairburn's remarks to Denis Glover, 30 April, 1956: "I don't agree with the view of the literary cheese-nites who infest our larder that "serious" and "comic" (or any other names they like to use) should be kept rigidly segregated, like boys and girls in a Baptist seminary."
In the light of the above considerations of Fairburn's lyricism, it is appropriate to conclude by enquiring what factors mark Fairburn's work as that of a peculiarly "New Zealand" poet. This is particularly necessary if emphasis is put upon those aspects of the poetry that associate Fairburn with an essentially Renaissance view of man's existence, those that treat such constants as love, time, death and experience.

The immediate answer comes from Fairburn's own response to the problems of poetry in the 1930s. His was a quest for immediacy, as well as that more elusive quality, "significance". This he sought in focussing his poetry upon a locale that was sensuously apprehended. The poet observed and recorded experience within settings which are often, if not invariably, recognisably those of New Zealand, and particularly those of the northern littoral around Auckland. The view of the city and its society is as bitter as the milieu of the depression made the poet's experience in the 1930s and as bitter as the tawdriness of life in general seemed later to the author of We New Zealanders and the Observer pieces. Here we return to the antithesis that is the central postulant (as opposed to the affirmation) of Dominion; an awareness of the contrast between nature and society leads directly to the lyrically exuberant response to the freedom of spirit that the former seems to offer. (1.)

(1.) Also Kendrick Smithyman, A Way of Saying especially chapter 5, pp 80-110, for a consideration of the Wordsworthianism implicit in this and similar attitudes in New Zealand poetry.
to which Fairburn was by all accounts particularly sensitive, and the Romantic association of such an environment with the forces of life and love, the contrast between this and the meanness of the Puritanical society is heightened, giving the impression of Arcadianism that Glover speaks of in his review of the 1953 volumes. (1.)

It is here that Allen Curnow's commentary upon the "common problem" of the New Zealand poetic imagination, "that we are interlopers on an indifferent or hostile scene", (2.) needs to be noted. If Fairburn viewed man's habitation of these islands as an intrusion, then it was urban man, the creator of the 'unreal city', spiritually out of touch with the verities of nature, who was the intruder. Natural man, the horseman of Elements, the lover of the lyric poems, was he who was fortunate enough to be able to relate naturally and organically to the environment. The limited and stunted relationship that led to the existence of ugly societies in ugly cities was an historical product of the spiritual meanness of the settlers

scions
of men who scaled ambition's
tottering slopes, whose desires
encompassed heaven and earth: we have prospered greatly,
we, the destined race, rulers of conquered isles,
sprouting like bulbs in warm darkness, putting out white shoots under the wet sack of Empire. (3.)

(1.) Denis Glover. *LF* 27 cit.


(3.) "Imperial". Album Leaves; Dominion.
These (whom Curnow wrote of in "The Unhistoric Story"\(^{(1.)}\)) were the men who created their colony in spite of the land, and in accordance with the life-destroying tenets of "Onan, Calvin, Automaton, black Trinity".\(^{(2.)}\) The historical sense of perspective that Fairburn used to view this was more directly sociological, and less metaphysical than that employed by Allen Curnow in *Island and Time* or *Sailing or Drowning*, and in Fairburn's verse it is underlying rather than dominant. Still the common belief is found, that if man is an intruder then it is certainly as a settler that he intrudes, creating ugliness, social evil and meanness in an environment that ought to be cherished as the "fount of life, giver of bodies", an environment that should be approached "as befits love".

The implications of Fairburn's poetry are often, if not always, that we have not appreciated the land as we ought, and have created a life-denying society upon it; in this we are intruders in an alien landscape — alien spiritually as well as just historically and culturally. Such a response makes Fairburn a New Zealand poet in the terms of Curnow's Introduction to the *Book of New Zealand Verse* as much as in his own, without in any way diminishing the other beliefs which the lyric poetry manifests and declares.

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\(^{(1.)}\) in *Sailing or Drowning*. (1941).

\(^{(2.)}\) from "Disquisition on Death" (1929) J 314 P.
A.R.D. FAIRBURN: two unpublished prose MSS.

These two MSS from Fairburn's papers were shown me by Mr Glover in 1962. Neither is listed in Johnson, and each can be dated only approximately by circumstantial evidence. *What Life Means To Me* is a five page typescript, datable c 1949 from Fairburn's reference to himself as "a man of forty-five" in the opening sentence. Its condensed form and the statements of the opening paragraph suggest that it may have been a contribution solicited, perhaps for a symposium. *The Woman Problem* is a typescript of twenty-two pages, running to about 10,000 words, marked at the head of the first page *Corrected copy* in the author's holograph, and, like *What Life Means To Me*, containing a number of holograph corrections, additions and deletions. A work of such a length would suggest a small book of a form similar to *We New Zealanders*, and the essayist's style gives some support to this, but again there is no evidence of publication, nor did Mr Glover or the late Mr Lowry recall Fairburn's ever proposing such a venture. A leaf that forms an addition to page 7 of the MSS is typed on the back of a contributor's pay voucher from News Limited, Adelaide, dated June 7, 1947 (vide J 500) and this gives a terminal date at least for the revisions that this copy contains.

The value of each MSS as supporting evidence in those parts of the thesis that speak of Fairburn's beliefs and opinions will be evident. *What Life Means To Me* is brief
and summary, and written fairly late in the poet's life when his views were to a fair extent established, in contrast to the letters and poems which record the opinions and beliefs in the flux of their creation. Nevertheless the MSS gives among other things a valuable insight into the eclectic political and economic point of view that Fairburn eventually worked out from his experience of Marxism and Douglas Social Credit crossed with his instinctive distrust of bureaucracy. The literary critic too may find as I have that his own reading of the lyric poems squares with the propositions on the meaning of life and experience contained in the second-to-last paragraph. Provided he recalls the subtle relationship that always exists between a writer's philosophy and his poetry (Fairburn's own views on the "personal heresy", the paragraph beginning "The modern conception of Shakespeare..." is instructive here) such points of general agreement are encouraging.

The Woman Problem is a controversial argument aimed at discrediting the assumption that the sexes are socially equal. Fortunately any consideration of the partial or final value of the document is argument beyond the scope of this thesis. Apart from its intrinsic interest, its justification here is that, like What Life Means To Me, it contains passim a number of thoughts and recollections that fill out points on which earlier documentation is limited. Without intruding into the area of biography, one may, for example, see the earlier
paragraphs describing Fairburn's "misconceptions about women" as an interesting commentary on the love-lyricism of the 1920s and early 1930s. Similarly the long digression on the "homosexual" forces in contemporary English writing seems at least to some extent to have its origins in Fairburn's trip to England in 1930. Such a widening of the secondary documentation, presented as it is in such an intriguing form, seems to justify the appending of this essay here.

In each essay, the holograph additions and deletions in the original MS3 have been incorporated into the text given here.
This is a very difficult proposition to put to a man of forty-five. Ask me again when I am ninety, and I may be able to give you some more definite answers than those that are floating around in my mind at the present moment. Let me try to pin some of them down. I think the best way to go about it is to be systematic, and to arrange my thoughts under various headings.

ETHICS: I am naturally of a sceptical disposition. One of the things I believe in firmly is the almost infinite capacity of human beings to believe what they want to believe. In general, we follow our desires, and then set about finding reasons to justify our behaviour. The more high-falutin these reasons are, the better we feel. This impulse may, of course, be taken as evidence of our awareness of, and respect for, the principles of order and consistency. We cannot bear having two conflicting ideas in our minds at the same time, for such a conflict seems to cast doubt on the objective order of the Universe. We can infer from this, if we like, that there is an objective order beyond our immediate experience; we have an intuition of it, and attach the highest importance to it. Out of hypocrisy, then, comes hope: the human mind cannot be completely bad and depraved while it still finds itself driven to pay lip-service to Truth and Order. (as La Rochefoucauld said, hypocrisy is "the tribute that vice pays to virtue.").

In practice, what we usually do is to push one of the conflicting ideas down below the level of consciousness, so that we shall no longer be aware of conflict. It is better, however, in my view, to drag the conflict out into the daylight, and to "solve" it by becoming aware of its cause. This involves the necessity for admitting the painful idea that we are not God - that, since we are imperfect beings, it is entirely natural that our minds should contain fragments that don't fit together.

I attach great importance to the moral implications of Freud's work. This brings me to one of the beliefs on which I have a reasonably firm hold - although, as far as I am concerned, theory outruns practice: the belief that the core of ethical behaviour is the will to objectify motive.

For example, a man who advocates capital punishment will explain his moral indignation by referring it to the abstract principle of justice. But if, as is extremely probable, his indignation is only a cloak for something of which he is secretly ashamed - namely, the oblique sexual satisfaction he
gets from thinking about hanging - then it would be much better, from an ethical point of view, if he were to examine himself and face the facts.

Again, we are all liable to suffer feelings of jealousy. The person who can bring himself to the point of saying, "Yes, I am jealous. I am jealous because my will has been crossed, and because I have been made to feel inferior..." and so on, is acting ethically, in the positive sense. He has objectified his motive, or gone some distance towards doing so. But the person who cannot admit to himself that he is jealous, and who "covers up" by persuading himself that the person of whom he is jealous is a monster, the enemy of God and man, is the victim of his own mental confusion. For this reason we must always beware of the reformer, the self-righteous man, the fanatic, however intense his moral conviction may appear to be. Look at history, and you will realise that such people have been the chief scourges of the human race.

POLITICS: By temperament I am an anarchist. But I realise that anarchism, as a political absolute, is romantic and unreal: it conflicts with the doctrine of Original Sin, which seems to be to be a very good statement of one of the primary facts about human life. At the same time, the doctrine of Original Sin (I am using Christian terminology, but the meaning could be expressed in Freudian terms) is not to be considered apart from the doctrines about Redemption and Grace.

The political problem, then, becomes the problem of making anarchism work to the fullest extent that is possible, while providing whatever second-line defences may be necessary to protect us against the results of failure. It seems to me to be better to take this realistic and commonsense attitude than to plunge into the abyss of some political absolute - be it freedom, authority, or some other. I think it is sentimental to yield to despair, and to say that since human beings are totally depraved, the only thing is to put a tyrant in charge of them; and it is equally sentimental to proceed on the assumption that human beings are naturally virtuous, and need only complete freedom from restraint in order to manifest their virtue. That, indeed, is the path to disillusionment and despair - the path to the opposite doctrine, in fact. The complete authoritarian and the complete anarchist must inevitably end up in the same bog.

This leads me to be somewhat eclectic as far as political and economic organisation goes. I approve strongly of cooperative enterprise, but have no objection to individualist private enterprise when it is functionally the right arrangement. It leads me to distrust bureaucracy, to dislike the magnification of State power. It makes me an advocate of decentralisation, except in cases (e.g., the
electric power reticulation system) where complete
centralisation is obviously the right thing. In brief, I
won't have any political absolutes. The principles that
should govern politics are derived from beyond politics; and
they are many, not one.

Most party political strife seems to me to be merely a
manifestation of greed and stupidity. The ordinary political
party, which is the instrument of sectional interests that
are the victims of power-lust, seen to me to be like cut-
throats standing on their own boot-laces. When one of them
is shrewd enough to lift his foot off his boot-lace, we get
a Hitler.

I believe that, in spite of the necessary imperfection of
all created things, mankind has sufficient capacity for
receiving Grace and perceiving Reason to survive on this
earth for a long time to come, and to enjoy the experience.
It is obvious that we are in a very bad patch at the present
time, and I suppose it is possible that our species may
destroy itself. It is, however, equally possible that it
won't: and that is a sufficient basis for faith and action.
A man who wants more than a fifty-fifty chance is asking
too much.

RELIGION: This brings me to an important point. Any
theory of human life that suggests that the end of life is to
be realised in the historical process, and not in the mind
of the individual (or his "soul") is to me a false theory.
For one thing, the consciousness of the individual is something
that has a concrete existence, whereas "history" is only an
abstraction. And for another thing, I see no reason to
suppose that the essential quality of history, or of life-in-
time, will ever change. I believe, therefore, that whatever
is possible is possible here and now. Or, as it has been
put rather more expressively, "The Kingdom of Heaven is
within you." For this reason I am sceptical of Marxism,
except as a useful tool of thought when we are analysing
economic processes. I am equally distrustful of pure
mysticism.

I consider that the only satisfactory way of looking at
life in general is to regard it as a search for meaning.
This doesn't in the least mean that we should renounce
experience, condemn the flesh, or retire from the world.
On the contrary, I believe that the meaning of life is to
be realised in the tension between Time and Eternity. The
more intensely we live, the more intensely we are able to
realise value. It is the great negative principles -
 eternity, death, silence - that constitute the mode of our
awareness.
The "sin against the Holy Ghost" is the raising of one of these abstract ideas (or any other) to the position of an absolute. For the Holy Ghost is the all-embracing spirit that binds everything together, both concrete and abstract, in Reality.

I take it that the deepest desire in the mind of any human being (unless he is distracted—in either sense of that word) is to become aware of himself as being part of something permanent. To feel that he is, somehow or other, part of a going concern. To experience continuity. To identify himself with something that exists beyond time, something that will never go out of existence...

Physically, of course, we continue after we die. Our atoms are part of indestructible matter. Genetically, we go on, if we have children. Our genes are passed on unchanged. But the soul, or the personality, or whatever term you care to give it—does that go on?

I have no desire for what I believe is called "personal immortality". I admit the attractiveness of it when one is in a certain state of mind.

"The pearly gates flew open,
An angel voice cried, 'Come!'
The heavenly choirs began to sing—
And in walked Mun."

That is a touching, most human and pathetic little verse. But if Mun had given the matter much thought she wouldn't have used her member's ticket. To spend Eternity locked up with oneself, with one's own limitations, one's own infuriating habits (from which sleep rescues us daily and gives us respite)? I sincerely hope not.

But if one becomes aware of principles, essences, things that pervade the Universe, things one doesn't invent, but somehow come to share? If one thinks of these things as eternal and unchanging—and has an intuition, at certain moments, of what that means? Then, I think, one will dispense with the ambition to survive intact—which is only the backwash of egotism. One will rest secure in the faith that one is, now and for ever, "in Abraham's bosom."
THE WOMAN PROBLEM

By A.R.D. Fairburn

As a member of the generation that came to consciousness just as the first world war was twisting and breaking the already distorted patterns of Western thought and behaviour, I have tasted many heresies. Looking back, like a man who has climbed halfway up the mountain pass and smiles to see the failing pursuit (yet has no knowledge of the possible avalanche that may carry him, bruised and helpless, to the very feet of his enemies) I am astonished at the illusions I was persuaded to believe in during my long, all too long, adolescent. They related, of course, to religion, politics and women; and it is hard for me to decide which sort has provided the most painful and interesting conflicts of mind. Those concerned with religion were probably the most interesting. And, now I come to think about it, my misconceptions about women were certainly the most painful in their effects.

I have always had to fight hard against the temptation to look upon women sentimentally. The advance guard of my generation - more especially its male members - believed strongly in free love. How could I be blamed for following them? Surely love must cease to be good the moment it ceases to be free? Any native sense of chivalry I possessed was outraged at the thought of women, bound hand and foot by economic obligations, deprived of love, and suffering the indignity of "sexual intercourse". Conventional marriage seemed to me to be, more often than not, merely rape in slow motion. The most depressing thing of all was to find a woman making a virtue of necessity; boasting that the bars of the cage were 18-carat gold; often becoming neurotic as a result of her servile efforts to square the circle. I became intensely sympathetic with women, and began to look upon them as a race of slaves in a man-made world.

I came to the view that clean sexual relations were almost impossible in marriage, since the wife was on her husband's pay-roll. I observed with sadness that even the intelligent wife seemed unable to rid herself of the idea that she was morally bound to grant favours to the man who was paying her board and lodging, even if she was mentally revolted by doing so. In many cases this enforced prostitution, as I came to regard it, led to a complacent acceptance of things as they were; in others it produced a reaction of sullen resentment that was never generalised into any effective social protest.

I began to think that the vast edifice of bourgeois
marriage was suffering from an inward rot, and must sooner or later collapse in a putrescent heap. There was almost no such thing, as far as I could observe, as honest and open dealings between the sexes. Among both the married and the unmarried there was a certain amount of promiscuity; but in this I could see little sign of any assertion of real freedom. Sexual irregularity was furtive, and unprincipled. The behaviour of some of the girls I knew, and in a priggish way tried to make love to, puzzled and irritated me. No straight proposition was at all acceptable, even after a lengthy and sometimes rather high-falutin intellectual gambit in which it was mutually agreed that women are just as rational as men, and ought to be treated as equals. One always had to be prepared to go through a certain amount of preliminary horseplay, and make some attempt to conform to the rules of the delicate art of seduction, which my respect for women had led me to renounce; to indulge in pretence and counter-pretence, and act out the little drama of clichés that ended, more often than not, in most un-Aristotelian fashion.

Eventually I came to the opinion that the long conditioning of women at the hands of feudal lords and back-parlour seducers had warped their minds. They appeared to be so used to being bullied or cajoled into doing things that they did not understand normal and gentle treatment. Like schoolchildren, and certain native races that have suffered long oppression, they seemed to regard it as a sign of weakness, of which they should take advantage.

All this was saddening. But I still clung to my vision of a better world. I smile now to think of the idealised man-woman relationship I built up in my mind, with the aid of the best-selling novelists and soothsayers (many of them homosexuals, (or impotent.).) Man and woman were to be equals. Their love was to be a union of two free beings, each holding for the other the key to the gates of the earthly paradise. The glory of the flesh was to be shared in a mutual joy that transcended the pain of living. When two free beings had so much to offer each other, all that remained was for the restraints of convention and money to be swept aside, and their lives would be filled with unfading happiness.

Of course, I was quite wrong in most of my suppositions. I had failed to realise that women really have no desire for such freedom; that the hysterical protest of feminism is due much more to the insidious influence of feminist doctrine itself than to any valid biological or social needs. I had overlooked the fact that the sexual interests of men and women tend to fall apart rather than to converge. When I say "man" and "woman" I mean, of course, the ordinary pleasure-loving man or woman. If two people are joined together in Christian marriage, with all that it implies, the area of their mutual interest can be
enlarged greatly, and in a sense even become complete. But a hedonistic union, though providing moments of paradisal bliss, and promising an eternity, can never endure for long; and its collapse is likely (so steep is the descent to hell) to lead to the most disastrous cynicism.

What does a man want? If he is young and healthy, he wants to fall in love with a beautiful girl and to get into bed with her. He wants to go to bed with her as often as energy and opportunity permit, and to go on doing this indefinitely. He wants a home, and a comfortable and habitual way of life; this is a desire that is in his mind from the beginning, overshadowed at first by the urgency of desire, but growing stronger through force of habit as it is realised. What he desires always, with greater or less intensity, is the feeling of dwelling in the earthly paradise, where physical love can be assuaged. He wants an exhilarating sleigh-ride through a glittering world, with the wolves of sexual hunger out-distanced. Later, when his mind and body are satiated with sweetness, and images of death begin to intrude, he usually begins to be aware of the need for children, "our true immortality." But the image of the earthly paradise is the one to which his mind constantly returns, as to some memory of childhood. If he has contrived to win the affection of an attractive and congenial woman, he will often be quite content to go on indefinitely in the regular rhythm of love-making, without becoming at all restless. And when, after a period of bliss that may last six months or five years, his partner begins to show signs of waning sexual desire, irritability, coquettishness and malice, he will be puzzled and hurt. He will have failed to grasp the fact that for a woman the sexual cycle is not complete until a child has been conceived, brought to birth, and weaned; and that this cycle has its own biological momentum, against which the woman has little hope of struggling. If the fulfilment of the natural cycle is frustrated, mere hedonistic love-making will sooner or later lose its delight, and indifference and restlessness, and even a feeling of antagonism for her mate, will take charge of her. She will perhaps have a subconscious contempt for the man because of his failure to get her with child - even when it is she herself who (under the influence of feminist propaganda) has protested most strongly against the acceptance of motherhood. Many a man is soured by the "failure" of his marriage - by which he often means the failure of his wife to sustain the role of concubine indefinitely. I once asked an old friend of mine, with much experience, how to keep women happy, and was shocked at his reply: "Sleep them in bed!" But it is as near to the truth as any other answer he could have given.

For the town-dweller, who has come by this time to represent the norm of civilised man, this problem exists in a painfully acute form. He is bored by the mechanical
routine of his bread-winning life. Deprived of work that provides any absorbing interest, he looks to the bedroom for the whole of his psychic satisfaction. His job is probably more or less sedentary, giving him few opportunities of working off his physical energy. There is constant stimulation of his sexual desire, through films, magazines, and the propinquity of attractive young girls. All these things combine to make a sexual hedonist of him, and to place him at the mercy of inward lust and outward circumstance - by which I mean, in particular, the emotional instability of his wife. The spiritual squalor of many marriages under modern urban conditions is not difficult to account for.

There is yet another element in the situation that contributes to the disfigurement of the male. Although sexual conventions have relaxed considerably during the past few decades, powerful social pressures still deprive many young males of a satisfactory sexual life between puberty and marriage. At sixteen both the boy and the girl find themselves suddenly swept off their feet by a strong tide of sexuality. The girl can withstand this better than the boy, for the male is not made for continence. The path of virtue will be pointed out to him by parents and mentors: he must work hard for a number of years, in order to get enough money to found a home. As a result, we have these situations that are so full of comic pathos: the young student cramming for his examination, his nose in the book, his unruly thoughts far away in the domain of illicit love; the lodging-house bachelor, singing the "Indian Love Lyrics" while the landlady's daughter accompanies him hopefully on the piano; and the predicament of many another sad soul, beating at the doors of the earthly paradise, or sometimes timidly scaling the wall to raid the apple-tree. A pattern of frustration is set up in the mind. When, after some years of stress, the young man at last marries, he may find relief and happiness, and wish for nothing more than the calm and land-locked sea of childless marriage (so soon to be disrupted by volcanic upheavals and drained dry). Or he may by this time have come secretly to like frustration - the pattern having been indelibly stamped on his mind; in which event he will be incapable of finding any degree of psychic satisfaction, even in "married love", and will play an active role in breaking up the relationship.

So complex a thing is sexual love that both these apparently opposite reactions may occur in the mind of one young man, making confusion worse confounded. Generalisations are more than usually hazardous here. But it does not seem unreasonable to think that in this convention of frustration we have the seed-bed of much of the false romanticism of the Western peoples. The huge demand for false romanticism in the arts is merely a reflection of this mental underworld of the West. Historically, of course, the matter goes a good
deal deeper, as is shown in that penetrating study by Denis de Rougemont, "Passion and Society". As for the particular social problem I have been discussing, I believe that the Chinese deal with it more successfully. I am told that it is the usual thing in China for the parents of the two partners in an "arranged" marriage to accept full economic responsibility for the first children, thus enabling the young people to marry at the proper age; after which the boy can get on with his work with an easier mind, while the girl has her babies to look after.

I began by asking, What does a man want? I have allowed myself to wander some distance away from the track, because in doing so I may have helped myself to provide some sort of answer to the next question: What does a woman want? That is a more complex matter. Let us try to attack it from a point on the periphery.

Insofar as the sciences are a true reflection of our experience, they exist in a hierarchy of importance. There are degrees and departments of reality, and the formal sciences reflect certain of them. But if the departments of knowledge and experience are not related to one another according to some organic principle, they will create anarchy in the minds of the people, and in their lives. Anything one says on this topic is bound to be a little arbitrary, but I think this much can be safely asserted— that biology is prior to sociology, and to the financial and managerial techniques that today pass under the name of "economics". It is one of the cardinal errors of the modern world to have reversed this order. At all points, therefore, we find ourselves in trouble because the sociological values we have erected (mainly on a foundation of sentimental hedonism and a shallow pragmatism) are constantly being blown down by the winds of biological necessity. Our public policies are for the most part antbiological. Social security legislation concerns itself with the care of the aged and the sick long before it looks to the health and vitality of young mothers and their children. We spend vast sums of money on hospitals, and little or nothing on gymnasia. And, as I have remarked, we discourage our children from marrying at the right age, when desire is urgent, and the pelvic structure of the female has not begun to ossify; we applaud them when they spend the first ten years of their adult lives establishing a profitable cosmetic business or a legal practice devoted to the defence of safebreathers. In all these things we are impelled by motives that are, in their immediate context, more or less virtuous and rational. It is when our standards of judgment, derived from a limited field of experience, conflict with others that are fundamental, that they cease to be valid.

In our fantasies of sexual love we are misled by the very
honesty and immediacy of our feelings. Lying in each other's
arms in the deep grass, with the sun or the moon above, and
the sea whispering below, we can have no doubts in our minds.
Morality and happiness are one. We can say with Rochester:
"And as for the same sweet sin of lechery, I would say as
the friar did: a young man and a young maid in a green arbour
on a May morning—well, if God do not forgive it, I will."
And if, next day, pricked by the words of some moralist, we
entertain a passing scruple, we can find good common-sense
"biological" reasons for having yielded to our impulses. We
were made for love: the intuition of beauty and happiness is
confirmed by the simple "facts of life".

Looking back long afterwards we perhaps begin to realise
that biology exists also in the dimension of time. With
some experience of that dimension, we have become aware of
its forceful logic.

What does a woman want? She wants to be wooed, to dance
and to listen to music with the man she has chosen, to have
poetry read to her. She wants to make love, and to know the
ecstasy of complete surrender to the flesh. If this were
all she wanted, the male hedonist might find his earthly
paradise. Sated with pleasure, and threatened with boredom
in a new guise, he might resign from it; but he would never
be driven from it. The difficulty, for the hedonist, is
that in the end woman wants a good deal more—and less—
than the pleasures of love-making. And the situation is
further complicated by the fact that she is usually unaware
of her ulterior motives, because those motives are not
entirely her own.

It is of little use asking any woman what she wants, for
her deepest needs are instinctive and not rational. Moreover,
herself ideas about them, so far as she can formulate them, are
distorted by her civilised environment. The very great
pressures that bear upon her must necessarily lead to consistent
"rationalisation" of her motives and beliefs. Even men, with
their greater detachment from the biological process, have a
great deal of difficulty in maintaining an objective and
disinterested habit of thought; for women it is almost
impossible. When we consult their wishes we are usually
betraying them. There are men who defer constantly to the
opinions and wishes of women on matters that should be subject
to masculine authority, and claim on that account to be liberal
and enlightened, and "progressive". We can only say to them,
"Lay not that flattering union to your soul." For women's
minds are not designed for the purpose of making judgments on
matters that call for objective consideration.

It may be observed here that most women have little
notion of abstract justice; and for this reason emotional
honesty is for them a weapon, not a principle. To speak quite ruthlessly, they are incapable of attaching importance to principles of any kind. Such compunction is useless, and may even prove a hindrance, in the main business of their lives - the perpetuation of the species. (The most charming women are those who have acquired certain masculine habits of mind, through their association with intelligent men; but they are usually marginal creatures in the book of genesis. It is these women who make the best courtesans, and the attraction that such civilised women hold for men accounts for the persistence of the courtesan as a type distinct from the common or bedroom prostitute). No woman will ever admit to jealousy, except when her feelings are only very lightly engaged, and when such an admission is judged to be a good tactic. Her biological responsibility is too compelling for her to be able to set ideal standards of chivalry above the necessity for upholding her prestige, on which her biological existence depends. The admission of moral guilt, the conscientious endeavour to objectify one's behaviour towards others and to measure it against certain traditional standards, is a luxury that men can afford only when their existence is not threatened; and women never, except when, for one reason or another, they have resigned or outlived their biological responsibilities. For the true woman, existence (which means the existence of the race) is always menaced. She can never relax her vigilance completely. No risks can be taken. She must, if necessary, be completely unscrupulous in fulfilling her responsibility. If the interests of society, or even of her husband, conflict with those of her children, the choice is a clear one, and the true woman will never hesitate. It would be stupid of any man to persist in not recognising the rightness and necessity of this single-mindedness in the true woman.

The unscrupulousness of women is sometimes little short of appalling, when judged by masculine standards. It applies in small as in great things. Most women, for instance, have no "sense of queue". A queue, to them, merely presents an opportunity and a challenge. It is not a particular social contract, based on the elementary rule of justice that operates even among certain communities of wild animals - "First come, first served". It is something to be barged into, or penetrated by stratagem. Even in the schoolroom, little girls will lie and cheat with much more readiness than little boys. Observe the self-centredness of the young girl who has just become aware of her destiny and is looking for a husband. All other duties and affections are trampled on ruthlessly during that critical period. For to her (and for the species) it is, in the most literal sense, a matter of life or death. I well remember what happened in this city in which I live when the American servicemen arrived on force. Denure young girls went pub-crawling with sailors; some of the betrothed deserted
their sweethearts (busy defending them overseas) and married, or almost married, Americans; the illegitimacy figures soared a little later. The girls went mad. But after all, they were only fulfilling a sound biological impulse—the impulse to grab the stranger. In this way does Nature help to prevent her species from in-breeding. (As for the Americans, they behaved as well as any troops on foreign territory may be expected to behave, and perhaps a good deal better. But that is irrelevant).

Women have little or no moral courage, because they do not understand what it means, or are not interested; just as men are, on the whole, deficient in biological courage. Moral courage in a man will be applauded by women when it is related to some practical end, but not if it concerns a matter of principle or conscience the practical implications of which are distant or obscure. A man will always be tempted to consider sensual enjoyment, or the accumulation of power, or (more rarely) self-sacrifice to an idea, as being at least as important as the pursuit of simple biological ends. The normal woman is never in any doubt about such things. It is only the abnormal woman, the blue-stocking or male impersonator of one kind or another, who (under masculine influence of some sort) can interest herself in the things of the spirit. The enormous courage and singleness of purpose of the biological woman should evoke in us the deepest feelings of wonder and admiration.

A woman can act "immorally" with much greater ease of conscience than a man; for the final test of moral, in her case, is her ability to bear and rear children. All nice moralities are thrust into the background by the unscrupulous female, the true woman, whose law is the simple one of race-survival. Men (I repeat) are foolish and sentimental if they do not recognise the objective reality of this feminine instinct, and its biological necessity. Having admitted its validity, they must curb it in the proper way, as a rider curbs a spirited horse. They must never yield to it—but on the other hand they must never try to break it by demanding masculine behaviour from women.

The use of that loose term, "the true woman," needs some justification. By it I mean simply the finest and most common type of woman, the breeder. That there are other types, formed by temperament but more often by social conditioning, is undeniable. In any highly-organised society (those of the ants and the bees as well as of civilised human beings) we find a certain amount of differentiation of sexual functions. Every human society since civilisation began has had its proportion of ascetic women and its filles de joie. There seems to be no reason to anticipate that we shall ever be able to do without that.
bulwark of marriage and the family, the pleasure-woman. And it would seem that there is always a number of women who are temperamentally more fitted to amuse men, and keep them out of worse mischief, than to undertake the responsibilities of motherhood.

The highest sexual ideal to be upheld, it may be agreed, is that enshrined in Christian marriage. "Ideals in politics are never realised," wrote Acton, "but the pursuit of them determines history." The same thing applies to the marriage ideal. In practice we shall always fall short of it, and there is no need to be hypocritical about it. Our present-day ideal of marriage is that of the Hollywood "romance" - a bastard of evangelical Christian doctrine, which denies the differentiation of sexual function and assumes that all women should either become wives and mothers or lapse into spinsterhood. The nemesis of this puritanical notion can be seen in the working-out of the Hollywood idea, which quite commonly leads to a succession of cat-narratives, none of which deepens into a really fruitful relationship, and all of which produce some degree of unhappiness. Is it not better, in an imperfect world, to give the courtesan her place in society? She will provide satisfaction for her men or men, and, under favourable conditions, gain a sort of happiness herself. And many a man will thereby be spared the horror of marriage to a woman who is unfitted for it, but would make a good nun or a charming courtesan.

It has been remarked by Thorstein Veblen and others that when women come to impose their standards on men, money values become dominant. The reason for this is not far to seek. What woman has ever, on her own initiative, refused the gift of a fur coat from her husband on the ground that the money with which he bought it was ill-gotten? The thing is inconceivable - and, on the whole, it is well that women should not try to assume such burdens of moral responsibility. It is in their business to look after themselves and their children, and they are fully entitled to use the money their men give them, without asking any questions. (Women have always been extremely efficient in getting money out of men, for that is an essential part of their job). If there is any question of moral culpability in regard to the way money is obtained, it is always properly the man's responsibility; and, moreover, it is a responsibility to which men in general should cling. A man owes it to his God if he acknowledges one, and to society, to provide for the livelihood of his family by means that are not harmful to other people. He should be in such a position of moral authority in the household - he should "dominate" his wife in such a sense - that he can always resist her demands when they are anti-social. It is clear, however, that if the woman rules, her (quite proper) lack of concern about the sources of income will have a corrupting influence on social standards of morality. Women and money are closely linked in
the scheme of values; and only if a man can govern the one
can he hope to avoid the corrupting influences of the other.

The Miltonic rule, "He for God only, she for God in him",
has much to commend it. I would go even further and say that
if a man wishes to avoid chaos he should choose to regard
woman, not as a co-partner in his business of civilisation,
but rather as the noblest and most delightful of the creatures
placed under his dominion. Nowadays, of course, such a
statement is enough to drive most women into a state of frenzy.
But then, it is surely clear that women today have less notion
than ever before of what they really want, still less of what
is good for them. The feminists, exploiting the native
chivalry of men, farming on their sense of justice (and, in
large measure, on their weakness) have so bodvilled the man-
woman situation that only the most ardent sentimentality is
likely to be applauded. Any writer who tries to import a
little common-sense into that situation is asking to be lynched
by the moustached amazons of the women's journals and the
millions who abide by their word.

It is true that women have in the past suffered from many
disabilities, some of which have been removed, and some of
which still remain. Looking at the history of the feminist
movement, however, it is a little difficult to distinguish
illusion from reality. After half-a-century or so of female
"emancipation" a survey of the results is not cheering. The
original suffragette movement has in retrospect the oddity of
a surrealist joke. It is hard to realise that women threw
themselves off public monuments, chained themselves to iron
railings, and used hatpins against embarrassed police officers,
all to get the vote. In general, the process of female
emancipation has produced dubious results. The invasion of
the factories and offices by girls and women has provided
manufacturers and business men with supplies of cheap labour.
The absorption of woman into the industrial employment system
has given them a certain degree of "independence", more
fictitious than real, but it has done little to help them in
the work for which God intended them. The feminists may feel
a sense of elation when they see an attractive young woman
clinging to some pitiful job or other, and drifting towards
spinsterhood; an emotion that would no doubt be shared by
the geo-political experts of Asia, if they were on the spot.

Feminism is one thing; and its propaganda is for the
most part aggressively frank and open. But a good deal of
our present-day attitude towards women has been given to us
by another class of person, who, seeing in the feminist attack
on masculine authority a chance to further his own ends, has
worked more insidiously. The homosexual, as a fox born
without a tail, is always looking for arguments against
tails. Being outlawed and persecuted, he has his revenge
to take on the world and on society. His attack is not always a direct one, and it is not always consciously made. It would be unfair to suggest that all homosexuals are engaged in a deliberate conspiracy against society — just as it is unfair to make a similar charge against financiers and bankers. But just as the ethics of finance-capitalism have seeped into the modern consciousness, so have the ethics of homosexuality tinged our attitude to life. There are, in all the big cities of the world, coteries of homosexuals who have a strong influence on the arts — and they represent perhaps the only definite sources of homosexual propaganda that can be pointed to. For the rest, the blame can be laid chiefly on ordinary people, who have come to accept epicene standards without quite being aware of it, and because they are thereby enabled to dodge their responsibilities.

During the period between the wars the homosexuals, if they did not take complete possession of literature and the arts in Britain, at least formed a sort of army of occupation. It is astonishing how many of the well-known literary names today are those of "Bachelors of Literature". The spiritual climate of these times has favoured the epicene artist, and given him a fictitious importance. Because of the general unwillingness to take any other view of life than a rigidly secular one, we find that there are three main attitudes towards the artist today: (1) the Marxist attitude, in which he is regarded as part of a process of "social change"; (2) the Freudian attitude, which treats him as a case-history, and (3) the "aesthetic" attitude, in which he is thought of as a specialist in art-production, without any necessary reference to his full context as a human being living in society. All of these views deny the organic nature of man.

It is the third view that is popular with the homosexuals; and it is popular with them because it suits their book. They themselves are, in a deep and tragic sense, isolated from the full human context. For that reason they encourage any tendency they may find among the people about them to detach the artist from the man. On general principles they even give some encouragement to the Marxist and Freudian views, but (in the case of the Marxists at any rate) are rudely repulsed. They will stigmatise the attempt to think in terms of the "holeness" of man as being "puritanical" — which is just what it is not. It is their own attitude that is a by-pass of puritanism; for puritanism always implies the acceptance of some deep division in experience, and a reluctance to attempt the complete integration that was always the object of traditional Christian doctrine.

The modern conception of Shakespeare that is attacked by Pearsall Smith, as "a kind of monster who turned out the sublimest poetry and the grossest ribaldry merely in the way of
business", is one that receives support from the epicene school. It implies that Shakespeare was a cynical genius who could detach himself at will from his own deepest convictions. It implies that there is no essential connection between Shakespeare the man and Shakespeare the artist. A very little introspection will make any intelligent person suspicious of such notions as these. Without carrying the "personal heresy" to romantic excess we can accept the obvious truth that any profound and genuine art must have a close connection with the beliefs and passions of the artist; and that some sort of "integration" of his experience, at all levels, must take place either before or during the act of creation if anything more than a trivial work of art is to be produced.

The homosexual often makes a good interpreting artist. But as a "creator" he always tends to be derivative, or at best very limited in his scope. His work will be sentimental; or exotic; or over-intellectualised; or superficial. In a word, it will lack the quality of wholeness. And its motivation will usually prove, on analysis, to be nihilistic.

I have turned aside a little from my main theme to touch on this question of homosexual art because it is, I am convinced, an important part of the background of the matters I have been discussing. Before leaving this twilight region I must disavow any wish to take a too rigid and mechanical view of its inhabitants. It is no bad thing that, as part of the diversity of nature, there should be homosexuals; and that, as part of the diversity of literature and art, there should be homosexual writers and artists. A genuinely organic view of either society or the arts must, I think, allow a place for such sports. But that they should come to occupy a dominating position, and set the major patterns of life and art, is intolerable.

The influence of homosexual artists is very strong, although it is nearly always heavily disguised. Half the bitter-sweet sentimental operettas, novels, plays and films have a homosexual inspiration, directly or indirectly. The ideals of sexual love promulgated by Hollywood, and by a good deal that appears on the stage in London and New York, bear no relation to any real world of men and women; but they would work well enough in a homosexual world. And the femininist world of "equal" men and women is closely analogous to a homosexual world.

For biological reasons, as well as the social reasons briefly alluded to above, any stable relationship between a normal man and a normal woman must be based on the psychological domination of the woman by her mate. It is upon this natural pattern that homosexual-feminist propaganda makes its main
attack. So far has the corruption spread that the mere mention of the word "domination" will be enough to make many of my readers throw this essay down in disgust. I must therefore try to make it clear that I don't for one moment suggest that the man should bully the woman. Bullying is the prerogative of the weakling who feels uncertain of his authority. Nor do I suggest that the woman should be merely a pale and moon-like reflection of the man. I have too much admiration and respect for the feminine character to wish to see it weakened or destroyed. Women have enormous power at their command. When they have not been corrupted, there are many matters in which they can and do influence their men strongly, for the good of all concerned. Any reader of common-sense, with some experience of the world, will know just what I mean, if he or she has not been muddled by the sort of propaganda I have referred to. If any reader should remain in doubt about the necessity, or the propriety, of masculine domination, let him close his ears to anything I may say about it and try a simple experiment. Let him pick out a dozen or so of the marriages that are within his field of observation. Among these, let him distinguish between those in which there is a marked degree of domination by the man, and on the other hand those in which the woman "wears the pants". It will be found, I think, that the dominated women are happy and contented, while the others are not - and this in spite of the fact that in many cases the masculine domination is of a kind that is not entirely admirable.

At first glance, nothing could be more rational and just than the suggestion that men and women should be "equal". In a homosexual world there would be no arguments against such a scheme. But we live in a world of men and women who are not only lovers, but breeders, compelled by their proper instincts to serve purposes that are not narrowly their own. The "one-one" (or homosexual) relationship between men and women cannot provide us with a norm, since the nature, the needs, the desires and the capabilities of men differ so greatly from those of women. Of course, what feminists usually mean when they demand "equality" is that women should be granted certain privileges enjoyed by men, without having to shoulder the responsibilities attaching to them.

I used to think that every woman with children should have an income provided by the State, so that she could be sexually free, and owe no improper obligation to any man. But - in spite of all the froth and spleen of feminist talk - do women really want such freedom? In a few instances, yes; and there is perhaps a very good case for providing for this sort of emancipation. But at best it can be only a secondary consideration. The really vital sort of freedom that women need is freedom to catch the man who is biologically suitable as a father for their children. They want the right to look over a wide
assortment of young men, and to take their pick. (If they do this efficiently they will almost certainly jilt one or two, and cause resentment and jealousy. But it will be merely a necessary part of the process, and should be applauded). Having beguiled her man as Nature intended her to do, a woman wants to have children by him. A large number of women will deny that with vigour. It is true that their minds are littered with a fantastic assortment of notions derived from homosexsual-feminist propaganda. It is true, also, that some women have a certain natural dread of procreation. But when these things have been taken into account, it remains true that the deepest and most insistent urge in the minds of women is the urge to get the right man, and to get with child by him. If they allow themselves to be persuaded otherwise, so much the worse for them, for they will probably have to endure a good deal of mental conflict, and perhaps become neurotic.

It is when his young wife gets with child that many a man, suckled on sentimentality, receives the most deadly shock of his life. His hedonist paradise was just establishing itself nicely. The weather report promised sunshine indefinitely. And now, for some cause that is completely beyond reason and common-sense, he finds he is not wanted — or at least, "not that way". He feels affronted. An then he sits down and thinks the matter over very carefully. Here was something very good — something that represented, for two people, the most intense and beautiful experience they had ever known. They had such happiness to give each other! And now, although he is burning with desire, and still has that precious gift to bestow on her, for some silly reason she doesn't want it. He sulks, and becomes embittered. The seed of discord has been sown between the pair. Many marriages, reared to consumption on a diet of films, novels and magazines, have run aground upon that shoal. And yet the matter is so very simple, really — if one's biological common-sense has not been undermined by sentimentality.

Even without the intrusion of children, the earthly paradise is likely to prove a little disappointing to the male hedonist. The sexual desire of men is fairly constantly sustained. It can generally be woken very quickly by a woman who means business — and that is as it should be. But desire in women is much more closely linked to the demands of procreation. Once or twice a month a woman will become avid, and her man (or sometimes, in default, somebody else's) will find himself transported into the seventh heaven of sexual ecstasy. If he is inexperienced, and has seen too many bad films, he will welcome this as the beginning of a new and glorious dispensation. His disappointment a week later, when he finds not only that he isn't wanted, but that his halitosis or his dirty finger-nails are the subject of some pointed comment, may be so acute as to demoralise him.
In a society in which the convention of strict monogamy has been firmly established, this man finds himself at a grave disadvantage. He pays lip-service to the rule that a husband shall not make love to anybody except his wife, and if he obeys it he will find that it gives his wife a great deal of power over him. If he revolts against it, he will find that the local branch of the Married Women's Trade Union will take militant action against him - and their methods of warfare are Asiatic in their subtlety and brutality. Not all wives belong to the Trade Union, of course - for women are not natural unionists, and combine only under great pressure. The members consist of women who for one reason or another are uncertain of their husbands. These women deal with an erring male in their unity by a highly-developed form of chemical warfare, using flame-throwers, acids, poisoned needles and lethal gases. For the erring woman they reserve more spectacular and ferocious forms of attack. The very existence of this Trade Union is a threat to the freedom and peace of mind of every man, whatever the condition of his heart may be, for its role is always a militant one. Its members are not content to sit and wait for some breach of the rules to occur. They are constantly at work maintaining their Siegfried Line of propaganda, and indoctrinating the young.

There are other men who are not hedonistic, but wish their wives to have children and find them reluctant to do so, either because they have not married young enough, or because they have absorbed the propaganda of feminism. Because of the widespread acceptance of feminist cant, these men will find some difficulty in bringing their wives to heel. Their position is morally strong, and conventionally weak.

It should be the conscientious duty of all men to attack the Trade Union and destroy it, or at least drive it underground. For it is based on a convention that is falsely established, and serves no biological purpose. The woman who attends to her proper business of bearing and rearing children need not concern herself with what her husband does during those periods when, for one good reason or another, she has no sexual demands to make of him. She wants his children, and she wants a good home for them. His romantic diversions are, or should be, of no interest to her. But if she insists on holding the dual status of wife-mother and concubine (or simply that of concubine, with all the privleges of a wife) she must be a disruptive influence in the community. The dog in the manger is probably the least admirable character in literature. Real life provides one that is even less pleasant: his female equivalent. The only thing to be said in defence of such women is that nowadays the Hollywood version of "romance" is taken so seriously that marriages are frequently broken up by love affairs. Where there are no
children this is a matter of small consequence. But that it should frequently happen when there are children involved is evidence of the extremely sentimental view of marriage that is current in our time. A marriage really becomes a marriage when children arrive; and except for most desperate reasons it should never be broken up. The basic social pattern, based on the family, should be maintained, and the extra-narital affairs of men should ordinarily be accepted with good grace. (There is no more pathetic creature than the man who has broken up his marriage for romantic reasons, and then, when the romance has faded, finds himself bearing a double burden of guilt and remorse.)

The women of the Trade Union are a disruptive crew. Yet we should not allow ourselves to think too harshly of them, for it is men, after all, who are originally to blame.

The ideal conception of absolute monogamy exists in two forms, the primitive-Christian and the romantic; the second is in a sense a derivation from the first, in that the original element of gnosticism in Christianity was re-awakened by the fresh invasion from the same source that occurred through the Catharist movement in the 12th century. The naked heresy of the Albigenses was destroyed, but, largely through the medium of the Troubadours, these doctrines were absorbed into the European tradition. Their effect was to raise the tone of European culture, Christian civilisation in its highest manifestations was always tinged with romanticism. The romantic element has provided a necessary tension, and a spiritual catharsis, for those who were temperamentally incapable of the purely religious way of life. It was with the Renaissance that the balance began to tip too far on the romantic side. Romanticism is an essential part of the structure of Western thought. It is only when it usurps the whole field (which it always tends to do, because of its potent nature) that tension is eventually lost, and collapse follows.

By allowing the original notion of courtly love to be abstracted from the whole religious-secular complex of Western thought, men (who have always been the natural guardians of the superstructure of civilised life) have paved the way to its debasement in modern times. The sentimental "one-one" relation between man and woman is the outcome of the decay of Christian faith and morals. It is the final abstraction from what was once a highly-organised and complex and fruitful conception of social life.

Having been abstracted from the full context to which it once belonged, it was at the mercy of all those to whom expediency and self-interest are the guiding principles of life; and that category includes, first and foremost, woman.
It is right and natural that women should try to make everything serve them in fulfilling their biological responsibility. It is bad and uncivilised that men should allow them to do so without check or hindrance - just as if they were to let the womenfolk use their new razor-blades for corn-paring and pattern-cutting.

Monogamy has lost both its religious and its romantic meaning. It has become merely a social convention, supported by women because it strengthens their economic position. Women, it is often remarked, are realists. All they really want (consciously or unconsciously) is to hold their place in the world, and to have children by the right man. They are prepared to accept, and if possible to make use of, any convention that serves these ends. And, since they are necessarily dependent on convention, even the most indulgent and realistic of them cannot afford to get out of step with this particular compact, for fear of the terrible retribution of the Trade Union. If men had not allowed the conception of courtly love to degenerate into an economic contract - if, as has been the case elsewhere and at other times, the differentiation of sexual functions in women were accepted and embodied in social convention - women would be free to attend to their proper business. There would then be no need for the Trade Union. For all this, men are primarily responsible. Perhaps I become sententious. It is of course unreal to judge the matter, and to allot blame, as if one were Jehovah, and mankind enjoyed absolute freedom of will. It is equally unreal to say that what has happened was "historically inevitable". Adam might just as well have offered the same defence of his conduct in the Garden of Eden. For a proper understanding of all such questions as this we must fall back on the doctrine of Original Sin, thought of not in terms of the copy-book but according to its proper dynamic significance in human affairs.

It should not be forgotten that our present-day conception of woman as wife-concubine is rather novel. Judging by the enormous increase in the number of divorces, it is proving unworkable. The European practice has generally been to keep the wife and the courtesan completely distinct from each other, while recognising the necessity for both, men being what they are. A man's wife is the woman who is going to bear his children, and her suitability from that point of view is taken to be of prime importance. On the other hand, it has usually been recognised that a woman who is busy bearing children should not be asked at the same time to provide pleasure; and that in any case the romantic ardour of the honeymoon must surely wane. The wife therefore has her world, which is in no danger of being disrupted by Eros - that proletarian who in strict monogamy is always doomed to technological unemployment,
and becomes a subversive influence. It would be as foolish to treat one's wife as a courtesan as it would be to marry one's mistress.

Whatever criticism of this arrangement may be made by the strict moralist, it at least has the merit that it recognises objectively the distinction between man and woman, and the differences in their nature and needs. It provides a stable sexual basis upon which the artifice of civilised society may be erected. Perhaps it may be remarked in passing that the courtesan is not the disreputable prostitute that evangelical divines imagine her to be. In most cases she is a charming and delightful companion, whose attraction has something more than a cruelly sexual basis.

The standard of judgment used by a woman in choosing a husband should, ideally, be first and foremost a biological one; but of course this, in Europe as elsewhere, is often entangled with or over-ridden by other considerations, mainly financial and "social". The best type of woman is the one whose instincts and feelings impel her to make a good biological marriage, and it should be one of the first objects of social policy to help her to do this. I have often noticed that when a woman, driven by a neurotic fear of insecurity, has gone against her procreative instinct in order to make a wealthy marriage, the children have been sickly. Of course, men can humbug women — with the help of padded shoulders, correspondence courses in Selling Yourself, and so forth; and women can humbug men — with cosmetics, and fashion, and the cult of the slate-pencil figure. The introduction of mixed bathing probably did something to clear the decks. But so powerful is feminism-homosexual propaganda nowadays in favour of the eunuch, and so devitalised are the foodstuffs that give us bulk without strength and resistance, that the impediments to a good biological marriage are probably more numerous today than ever before. Fashion itself, nominally justified by its effect in making men and women more desirable, has in fact worked more strongly against biological selection. Broadly speaking, fashion enables the mediocre to compete on level terms with the superior.

I referred a moment ago to "the artifice of civilised society". This artificial aspect of civilisation is something that we are being taught to ignore. We are constantly being told by the physical-culture and dietetic magazines to live "according to Nature". Their influence on the whole is healthy. But we should be cautious in dealing with such doctrines. It is vastly important that in our eating and drinking, in the tilling of the soil, and in our sexual life we should not do anything that conflicts flatly with fundamental natural principles. But it remains true that civilisation is — not a denial — but a distortion of Nature.
What is the "natural"? There has been much debate about it, and no satisfactory definition has emerged. It must be kept in mind that man is separated from the animals by several hundred thousand years of conditioning, as a result of which natural patterns have gradually been distorted. The wild animal tends to live in a state of balance between its appetites and their satisfaction. It follows its impulses freely, and lets Nature look after the species. But man has taken upon himself part of the responsibility for shaping his future, both individually and as a species. Civilisation has always implied the repression of instinctive desires in order to re-arrange them in a fresh pattern. Whenever attempts have been made to thwart these desires completely, trouble has resulted.

Civilisation, then, is impossible without the sustaining of interior tensions, set up by the deliberate repression of instincts. It is these tensions that provide the means of our self-realisation through aesthetic and religious experience; just as the stretching of a violin-gut makes music possible. (Certain misguided moralists, watching our violin being tuned and played, have drawn the conclusion — being tone-deaf — that the stretching of the gut is the real object; and have advocated that therefore it should be stretched as far as possible. We can ignore for the moment this confusion of means and ends).

Since woman is much more involved with the processes of life than is man, it is always she who has asserted most strongly and consistently the primal need for survival. The higher refinements of civilisation are the work of man, not of woman. His strongest motive has been, at all times, the finding of creative satisfaction. Woman receives this satisfaction as her birthright. Man, being all but irrelevant to the business of procreation, has had to invent other means of satisfying this creative instinct. Apart from this motive, man has built his houses and bridges and ships, waged his wars of conquest, and constructed his works of art in order to gain the love and respect of woman. These things are like flowers he has taken to her, in order to gain her good-will, and her favours. And at all times, whether indulging him or nagging at him for a more comfortable home, she has been concerned first and foremost with the protection and rearing of her brood. How could it be otherwise? And why should it be otherwise? We can well understand that the man with a normal body and a homosexually conditioned mind should find his world disrupted when he runs up against such rocky facts as these. But the masculine-minded man, to the extent that he survives today, will accept them as part of the structure of the universe, and go about his business.

It was Baudelaire who said, "Woman is natural, therefore
abominable." He may have meant that woman is completely tied up with the biological process, and has no real sympathy for the world of art-for-art's-sake which had, in his time, begun to detach itself consciously from the full context of life - just as the homosexual is detached from society. But we may suspect that Baudelaire, being a man of subtle mind, meant a good deal more than that. He was, perhaps, not merely justifying the unreal world of "pure aesthetics" and "pure sex", but asserting also, for those with ears keen enough to hear, that woman presents a constant threat to civilised life. She is part of it, part of its natural foundation, without which it could not exist. But she must not be allowed to dominate it, and to break up masculine standards, for this will destroy the tensions of civilisation and send it hurtling down into the vortex. If the natural and fundamental polar tension between male and female is destroyed, in an attempt to make an epicene race of "good comrades", we shall lose all chance of survival. And the quickest way for men to destroy that tension is to let women take control of them.

There is a general belief that men tend to be polygamous, and women monogamous. This was probably so in the early history of our species, when the fighting male had his harem of female apes. He needed them because each one came on heat only once a month. Civilization, based on the community of males, was impossible under those conditions. With the "spreading" of the female heat, the primary condition of civilised community was established. Some tendency to polygamy does probably remain. But our thousands of years of more or less "civilised" conditioning, if it has not destroyed the basic pattern, has at least so distorted it, or overlaid it with other patterns, that it has ceased to be the major factor determining behaviour. Western man has been shaped by Christianity. The Christian ideal of monogamy has so much truth in it for the normal Western man, whose psychology is largely based on the transcendent beliefs developed by Christian thought, that he must constantly tend to veer towards it. The most highly-civilised Christian-romantic type of Western man (e.g., Keats) often fares worst of all at the hands of women. He accepts monogamy, usually in the form of an idealised union recognising both the flesh and the spirit. But this ideal can be fruitful only so long as it is part of a masculine world, in which the tension between the ideal and the actual is maintained, and the ideal is not allowed to become detached from the whole context of experience, and therefore to degenerate into heresy. (A heresy is a partial truth nasquerading as the whole truth). In a society in which men have surrendered completely to women, the ideal will certainly be debased into a pragmatic rule, serving the purposes of the Women's Trade Union.
No woman, however misty-eyed with romance she may be at seventeen, ever has any wish to sustain it past the time of begetting. Since women are in truth "realists", their involvement early in life in the masculine world of "romance" is only a necessary stage in their business of procreation. Insofar as "romance" in this sense is related to romanticism, it has much greater significance for man. It is part of the system of tensions he has developed in order to give his masculine world meaning and "tone". Since it implies some degree of sexual frustration, and since women are better able to put up with sexual frustration than are men, it will be seen that in building this world with its internal tensions man has put power into the hands of women. The logic of this is that man must not resign from his difficult situation; for the power of women to put sexual pressure on men is simply the most important of the various factors that create the necessary tension in the consciousness of Western man. He must not relax, and "go native", or his civilisation will go down the drain in a squalid little vortex.

In my youth I resented the idea of asceticism, for it was fostered by the professional moralists and by those who were too old to be anything other than ascetic. But asceticism is a necessary part of the pattern of sexual life. It is the means by which man avoids falling into the power of woman, and being shorn of his strength. Man cannot afford to be spiritually dependent on sexual satisfaction. He must be capable of maintaining his morale unshaken through long periods of frustration. He must, at certain times, be willing to deny his impulses and to put wax in his ears; if necessary, he must let himself be bound to the mast by his comrades - that is to say, the sodality of men must be maintained against the assaults of feminism and the wily attacks of the Devil working through female flesh. The purpose of all this courage and resolution is not to make asceticism an end in itself, but rather to define, to contain, and to strengthen the tide of vitality. Sensuality will also have its place in the pattern; but it can only be a source of value if it is banked in by asceticism. The masculine sodality will not be a league of the defeated, a homosexual conspiracy. Its deepest bond will be, not hatred of woman, but reverence for her as the conserver of life, our link with the Creation.

Man is fully justified in clinging to his economic power over woman in order to offset her sexual power; and the most effective way in which a man can do this is to get his woman with child, so that she will seek his protection, and accept his authority. She will find in this dependence her greatest guarantee of happiness. I speak only of those women who are suitable mates for men. The demand of feminism for "equality" may well be granted, as far as is practicable,
to those women whose misfortune it is to be among the unwanted, and to those with a legitimate vocation outside of marriage. Of this latter class little need be said here and now. There are women who, though marriageable, choose to become nurses or to minister in other essential ways to the needs of their fellows. When this vocation is genuine it should of course be held in the highest honour.

There is no reason why a woman with bow legs and warts on her face, and worldly ambition in her heart, should not enter upon a business career. She will probably not be needed for the really important (and more real and satisfying) work of procreation. And there is no reason why any woman should not find satisfaction in playing the piano or painting pictures. But if there are any such women who imagine that these things can provide an adequate substitute for the bearing of children, they can only be looked upon as hopelessly deluded. The triumphs of the man-world, and even its highest aesthetic satisfactions, are only paper flowers after all. There is always a torturing sense of unreality in even the most creative forms of feminine activity. And as for "success" in business or the professional world, it will always in the end taste strongly of dust in the mouth of an intelligent man. Woman has her world ready-made for her, if she is lucky enough to be a good biological creature. Why she should ever wish to resign it in favour of a world of play-acting and make-believe is a mystery — unless one has realised just how cunning and all-pervasive is the propaganda of the feminist-homosexuals.

The natural sexual interest of men in women is not only biologically necessary; it is also part of that world of the imagination which William Blake illuminated with the light of his genius. But love at this stage, for all its delight, is always interested, always guilty. It can only become disinterested and serene when, by a logic at once natural and spiritual, the bud has flowered and fruited, the rapture of fleshy lust has been fulfilled, and woman has been seen in her aspect as mother of the race. How admirable is even the most commonplace woman when she becomes maternal! One's indifference or disgust is metamorphosed by the sight of her on top of a bus wiping her child's face with the corner of a handkerchief damped with spit. The maternal woman will extend her protective care to wastrels and scallywags. For woman-as-mother every man has an intuitive reverence — and we can well understand the temptation, for the Catholic, of excessive Mariolatry. For woman-as-wife the natural man has mixed feelings: for in this respect she stands midway between guilt and redemption. Moreover, she is extremely unreliable, from the point of view of the ordinary sensual man. Her rhythm of desire is largely beyond her control. She is subject to violent reactions, and to fits of madness. And he is
constantly aware that her notions are projected beyond him - which puts a strain on the base and egotistical part of his nature.

Women (let us not delude ourselves about it) are not interested in abstract speculation of the sort that engages the serious interest of men and provides the subject-matter for much of their conversation. Some women appear to handle such talk very well, having learnt the trick from men; and, if we are not in a completely serious mood, they will entertain us by their inconsequential sorties, and by the charm of their mock-seriousness. But the talk that is most natural to women - that is, the talk they have among themselves - is of an entirely different kind. It is either concerned with practical things (cooking, dress-making, shopping, or Trade Union business), or else it is extremely disingenuous. When two women meet, they nearly always put up an immediate barrage - a defensive rattle of small talk that helps them to hold each other at arm's length, and to disguise their real feelings. (The more animated or gushing they are, the greater the potential conflict between them).

It would, of course, be barbarous if men were to keep to themselves and never admit women into conversation. But it should be insisted that there are occasions when women should be denied admission to conversation among men; just as women should be allowed to indulge in feminine small-talk without the intrusion of men. It would not be necessary to insist on anything so obvious, if it were not for the persistent attempts by feminists to make the masculine and feminine fields co-extensive. Their arguments are plausible, but sentimental. The ideal of "equality" they preach is based on a fiction. It could be realised only in a completely epicene world.

Once again - let no reader imagine for a moment that I am in favour of waging a war of extermination against the homosexual. The law takes a hypocritically severe view of his aberration. The homosexual belongs to a small and more or less constant section of the population, amounting to about two per cent. He is a direct product of civilisation, and an essential part of it; for in times of great stress he does much to relieve dangerous pressures. Unlike the stockbroker and the politician, he does not reproduce his kind. And he provides the luxury of a belch of moral indignation for many people who are unlikely to find any other safe occasion for venting it. No Draconian law will ever abolish the homosexual; and I doubt if anything could be done to increase his numbers, even if we applied to the task the full resources of the totalitarian State. He is usually a sensitive and intelligent person, pleasant to meet in society, and often possessing some of the rarer virtues that are denied
to the troglodytes. By all means let us stop persecuting him, and treat him with tolerance and sympathy. If we are not afraid of him, he will do us no harm. And if we frankly recognise his existence in society, the force that his propaganda gains through the conspiracy of silence about the subject will be removed. (There is, of course, the other sort of homosexual - the man who, as a result of prolonged incarceration in a society of males, or his failure to deal successfully with women, is compelled to resort to second-best. But he presents no insoluble problem in a society that maintains its reserves of vitality).

My attack is not directed at the homosexuals; nor even at the frustrated women who become militant feminists. It is aimed almost exclusively at the men of the modern world. It is they who have abandoned their masculine outlook and their masculine authority, and have crept into the bitter-sweet world of epinque fantasy. It is they who have misconstrued the meaning of womanhood, and have connived at the sentimental heresies of feminist doctrine.

It is important to note that the feminist-homosexual characteristics that have crept into a good deal of our art and our social standards of behaviour have been able to do so because of the "phony war" that is waged on the other front by misguided moralists. Homosexual behaviour is one of the most serious offences against the law; but homosexuality is something that is not mentioned in polite society. In speaking earlier of the novels, plays and films that are the work of propagandists for homosexuality (some of this working deliberately, others merely following the tide of fashion) I could have provided a very full documentation. I did not dare to do so, partly because such statements are (in the present state of the law and of public opinion) libellous; and partly because I have no wish to start a crusade against homosexual artists and writers; the moralists, and the public, must develop a better nose for these things, and a greater resistance to their infection - and they will never be able to do this until they rid their minds of the feminist cant that is so rampant. The professional moralists are busy fighting what they conceive to be the real enemy - the simple and natural lust of the young, which society sets itself to frustrate, instead of recognising its biological value. While this hypocrisy (or, in many instances, mere stupidity) continues, there is no possibility of our dealing with the really corrupting influences that are at work in art, in literature, and in society.

The pattern of sexual love that is presented to the vast cinema audiences of the world is one that is appealingly simple. It has often been remarked that there are no babies in it. The ideal of domestic bliss that is either shown or
implied is based merely on an extension of the "necking" and "petting" parties of the campus. The modern home (a small flat or apartment for preference) that is left to our imagination when the lights go up becomes by irresistible inference a place where tunescence and detunescence follow each other in rapid and rhythmic succession, punctuated by meals and perhaps a little window-box gardening in the week-end. The contraceptive knowledge of five continents forms the corner-stone of this little paradise - and it is perhaps the only blot on the copybook of modern science, from the point of view of modern urban man, that it has failed to provide him with an absolutely foolproof means of not perpetuating the species.

There is no doubt that this cinema home provides the model for many and many a real-life home. And in untold thousands of these dens there are childless young women thanking God they are not having a child, or cursing because something has slipped. The radio blares incessantly, and the message borne by its crooners is also part of the pattern. These caterwaulers, male and female (the distinction grows less and less real) are always either in, or about to enter, the earthly paradise; or something has gone wrong, and they are bewailing their lost happiness. No janet number has yet come out of Tin Pan Alley with the title, "I Wanna Kid by You".

The mass effect of all this propaganda in favour of barren bliss is seen in our disillusionment and sentimental defeatism. Our vital impulses are tending to grow inwards, and to foster beneath the surface of social life. Our artists and writers seem to be afraid to challenge this tendency. Even the poets must be held suspect. It is a long time since a really robust love lyric was produced by any of our celebrity poets. Most of the love-songs that have been written during the past two decades suggest either impotence or homosexuality. The outbreak of boy-scoutery among the English poets between the wars was probably not without its significance.

This world of aimless copulation is one that fits in with the plans and the prejudices of the two special groups in society to which I have referred - the feminists and the homosexuals. The woman who, infected by feminist propaganda, is in revolt against child-bearing, gets emotional support from the cinema. Its ideal world is the same in one important particular as that which she hankers after. The homosexuals are delighted that women should be demanding a world that is in no essential respect different from their own. And so the two tides of sentiment join in one powerful flood, which carries on its broad (and flat) boson the hopes and dreams of millions of simple pleasure-seekers.
The stability of society in the future, as in the past, will depend very largely on the ability of men to uphold their distinctively masculine standards of honour, chivalry and disinterested justice against the rule of expediency that is a natural product of the uncontrolled feminine will - which ends by defeating its own deepest purpose. Only thus can the biological pressures that are incarnate in women be shepherded, guided, and rescued from frustration and demoralisation. The outlook is not cheerful. The pattern of social life becomes more intensively urban; and the tremendous demands made on men in commercial and industrial life (on the managerial class especially) tend to leave them exhausted at thirty, an easy prey for their better-preserved (and often restless and unsatisfied) wonenfolk, whose power is consolidated and made effective through the clubs they frequent.

The revival of the masculine will as the determining factor in the life of society will probably be associated with the decentralisation of the cities and the forming of a closer link with agriculture and the more stable life of the countryside. Whether this will anticipate and prevent, or follow in desperation upon, the breakdown of Western society is a matter that is yet to be decided.
it's need
enough' to have laboured and loved the labour we feign:
more, we make it our creed
that to bring our small tribute of incense leave others
to reign
is enough: yet indeed
at times we mind how we shed our best blood but to
leave not a stain
then truly our hearts bleed.

- The Lesser Stars,
  (from The Beggar, 1924.)
This study of Ronald Alison Kells Mason is somewhat shorter than those on the other two writers in this study, for reasons which bear upon the actual nature of his work and achievements in verse. Whereas in the case of Cresswell and Fairburn the concern with poetry was something that extended over a whole lifetime (about fifty years for Cresswell, at least thirty for Fairburn) and in each case was central to their intellectual concerns, in the case of Mason the critic has to deal with only a short and intensive period of activity, from the early 1920s to the mid 1930s, followed by a period when little of consequence was written. In Mason's case, too, it is only these earlier years that poetry can be said to dominate - the political interests which were the centre of his life from the mid 1930s onwards inspired a number of plays and a few poems, but nothing that can match the achievement of the period from the publication of *The Beggar* to that of *End of Day*. Cresswell, by contrast, considered poetry his whole vocation and profession throughout his life; even Fairburn, whose range of intellectual and cultural interests was wider than either of the other two, seemed to see the verse which is the concern of this study as one fairly central part of his long and active life. The contrast of these other two "careers" with the brief period of Mason's output, which he seems to have largely dissociated from the remainder of his life, is evident enough, and must be taken into account in any assessment of his work.
Moreover, the amount of primary data, other than the poems themselves, which are available for a study of Mason's work, is much smaller than for the other two. In contrast to the considerable quantities of MSS, letters, and other published writings of relevance to Cresswell and Fairburn, Mason has left us little. He was not a prolific correspondent, kept few drafts of his work, and wrote few articles (other than those of a political nature) which can be cited by the researcher. This study, therefore, will outline his literary life, as was done for the other two writers, and analyse what data there is, but will devote more attention to the analysis of themes and techniques. This in turn will make possible an assessment of Mason's poetic stature, which is in all probability greater than that of Fairburn's, perhaps as great as any of the poets whose work is associated with New Zealand verse in its first three decades after World War I.

But Mason's "place" in New Zealand literature is not easy to assess. A poet whose inheritance was that of the Nineteenth Century, whose forms were generally Georgian, and whose themes of pessimism and human isolation were peculiarly personal, he represents neither a turning point in the quest for a use of language that could be called "indigenous" (in comparison with, say, Fairburn, Brasch, or Curnow) nor a pointer towards themes that could be similarly described. He seems rather to be a poet of the "human condition" than a poet primarily concerned with questions of national identity, which makes it the more
curious that a literature so self-confessedly concerned with these questions should see in his work the origins of the native tradition. The answer to this apparent paradox lies, it seems, in the fact that though Mason's voice was not one that readily lent itself to imitation by successive poets, he was able to establish, with his verse, two salient facts which future poets could accept. These were that poetry of quality could be written in New Zealand — notwithstanding the indebtedness of Mason's forms to the models of English verse at the same time — and that it was worth "taking poetry seriously". The association here, as Curnow showed, (1.) must be between Cresswell and Mason, as the first to declare this principle, either implicitly or explicitly. It is also important to note that the term "poetry" as Curnow uses it in the phrase quoted must include both the craft (the activity of writing, with the associated idea of 'personal dedication') and the resultant verse, which was innately deserving of serious consideration by its readers.

This, it seems, was the first contribution that Mason (and with him, Cresswell) made that warrants his being seen as a "pioneer" figure. The other was his realisation, and its declaration in verse, of the existence of some form of alienation or separation troubling the human spirit. To have declared this was to have made a little easier the intellectual tasks of those poets who soon followed him, notwithstanding that these

other poets often saw this alienation in metaphysical or philosophical terms very different to those of Mason himself. Where Cresswell, Curnow and Brasch treated primarily the alienation of New Zealand man from the land which he had settled with material but perhaps not "whole-hearted" success, and where Fairburn and Glover wrote lyrically of the proper relationship between a type of "natural man" and the undoubtedly beautiful environment of these islands, Mason concerned himself primarily (though not exclusively) with the relations between one man and another in all their imperfections - "the unexpiated evil between man and man." (1.) For his imagery he drew largely upon Biblical scenes, and for his thought upon the historicist principles which were later to become explicit dogma in his professed Communism. His poems have a sense of "immediacy" but not of "regionalism", (2.) and their vision offers itself more readily to the comment of a reviewer of his work as "a poet of universal reference" (3.) than to a view which would see it, with much other New Zealand verse,

marked and moulded everywhere by peculiar pressures - pressures arising from the isolation of the country, its physical character, and its history. (4.)

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(2.) For a discussion of this concept, see Kendrick Smithyman, "Post-War New Zealand Poetry. I. The Sublime and the Romantic" _Mate_ 8, December 1961, pp 27 - 36, and especially pp 28 - 31. (Smithyman develops his thesis in the later Collins publication _A Way of Saying_, 1965.)

(3.) Quoted by Allen Curnow in the Introduction to Mason's _Collected Poems_, p 15.

The generalisations of this introduction can, I think, be proven without doing violence to Mason's reputation as an important figure in the 'earlier' years of New Zealand's poetic history. The final measure of his worth must always be the quality of his poems, and in the case of his best work he seems to vindicate C.K. Stead's suggestion that his poems "will...prove more durable than Fairburn's under close critical scrutiny."(1.)

II

Ronald Alison Kells Mason was born in Ponsonby, a suburb of Auckland, on 10 January, 1905, of parents who were themselves New Zealand-born and the children of British immigrants who first settled in New Zealand in the 1840s. Mason spent part of his early childhood at Lichfield, near Putaruru in the Waikato district, and had his first schooling there from the age of seven to eleven. He could, he asserts, read and write before he began his formal education, and he recalls that during that part of his childhood he read many of the works of Burns, Sir Walter Scott, Dickens, and Shakespeare.(2.) His primary education was completed with a period at Panmure School, Auckland, and in 1917 he enrolled at the Auckland Grammar School. The records for the school are deficient for that year,

(2.) These recollections from an interview with Mr. Mason, Auckland, 8 April, 1961.
but they show that in the following years (1) Mason took an academic course of English, Latin, French, Mathematics and Science, through Forms IV B (1918), V A (the first term of 1919 and the whole of 1920) and VI A (the first term of 1921 and the whole of 1922.) In each of these years Mason showed considerable ability in English and Latin, but less in French and little in Mathematics or Science. (2)

(1.) I am indebted to Mr. J. Bracewell, acting-headmaster of Auckland Grammar School in 1961, for permission to examine the school records for information on the careers of Mason and A.R.D. Fairburn.

(2.) The following are Mason's marks, as recorded in the Auckland Grammar School register:

1918 Form IV B.

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It seems that Mason had begun writing before he left Auckland Grammar School at the end of 1922, though there is no way of ascertaining just how much verse had been composed during those school-years. Certainly his translation of "O Fons Bandusiae" was done at school (a master, Mr. K.J. Dellow, recalled it as having been done as a translation exercise in class) and Curnow quotes A.R.D. Fairburn as the source of the information that all the poems of *The Beggar* (and therefore, of course, of *In the Manner of Men*) were written "before he turned nineteen". Only one poem, however, is known to have been published while he was at school. This was a highly mannered piece, of seven stanzas, entitled "Ad Augusta", published in the school *Chronicle* in the second term of Mason's last school-year. Its title derives from the Auckland Grammar School motto; its form, echoing the measured rhythms of a hymn by Marriot gives it an hortatory tone which is not diminished by the sententious theme -

Plunge ye in boldly, then;  
Bear ye like hardy men,  
Shun not the strife.  
Only a battered few,  
Battle the rapids through,  
Win through to life. (4.)

(2.) Traus, 1922. AGS Chronicle 10 (1) Second term 1922, pp 47-48. Signed R.M.  
(3.) Cf. A & M 360.  
(4.) The final stanza.
The poem is a piece of *juvenilia*, giving little indication of future promise. But some interest is found in the penultimate stanza, where the "river" image,

> But where the river glides
> Slowly it creeps and slides,
> Smooth, calm, and deep.
> There doth destruction lie,
> There we are like to die
> Lulled in false sleep. (1.)

suggesting an association between languid relaxation and damnation, anticipates the images of "The Beggar", where the "fine old trees" and the "lovely dale" in which the speaker finds himself "body-satisfied" are spoiled by the awareness of the beggar's deformity and suffering -

> He it is, with loathsome mien,
> Gibbers by the sweeping car,
> As, for joy, we steal between
> Fields where frail pools sleeping are. (2.)

The earliest "publication" of Mason's verse in book form was a collection of poems in manuscript, circulated with the title *In the Manner of Men*, in 1923 when Mason was in his first year out of Auckland Grammar School. It is uncertain what the complete contents of this MSS were; Curnow includes the sonnet "I strayed where sunk fleets slept" from page 18 of *The Beggar*, together with the three poems attributed to the collection in *This Dark Will Lighten*. (3.) Mason's own description of the

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(1.) "Ad Augusta". The second-last stanza.
(2.) "The Beggar". 1924 text.
(3.) vide Allen Curnow. R.A.K. Mason: Collected Poems. Introduction, p 9. Curnow, in this Introduction and in the Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse (pp 324 - 325) lists as much as is known of Mason's publications in these years. Vide also Traus. This information has not been duplicated in this study.
book is given in a letter to C.D. Doyle —

"In the Manner of Men" was published and it wasn't. I decided to publish in manuscript; remember this was a fair while ago & it wasn't such a bad idea as it now seems. I had three books of good blank paper bound up by a printer and wrote at least one out. The idea was to get two more orders, covering costs. I can't remember if one went out, but somewhere I may still have a copy. Some of the stuff has since been published. (1.)

It seems probable from these remarks that the book contained more than the four poems attributed to it by Mason's editor, but until a copy is located (if one still exists) no evidence can be offered on this point. Certainly, though, both the quantity and the quality of verse in The Beggar (1924) would suggest a fairly vigorous output in the years that saw the end of Mason's school career, and the beginnings of his outside employment. (2.)

After leaving the Auckland Grammar School at the end of 1922, Mason was employed by the University Coaching College, run by the late Mr D.W. Faigan of Auckland. His teaching there was "mainly in Latin... but also in Economics and Civics". (3.) He matriculated at Auckland University College in 1926, and attended the College for the years 1926, 1929 and 1930, having

(1.) Mason to C.D. Doyle, Auckland. 14 July, 1956. By permission of Mr Doyle.

(2.) And note also the editor's first paragraph in the Introduction to the Collected Poems, p 9. recording Fairburn's statement that the Beggar poems were all written "before he turned nineteen".

(3.) Mason to the Registrar, Auckland University College, 26 December, 1930. (Letter of application for the position of W.E.A. organiser in the Waikato.)
exemptions in 1927 and 1928. The records of the College are sometimes self-contradictory over Mason's examination successes. The Register of Undergraduates records the following "Terms, Examination Passes" -

1926 Latin, French,
1927 English, French II, Latin II
1928 exempt
1929 Latin III, Greek History, Art & Literature, French III, Political Science (1.)

and in 1930 Mason, applying to the Registrar of the College for a W.E.A. position, wrote

I have attended the Auckland University College for four years, gaining by (sic) B.A. in 1930. I took both Latin and French to third-stage; also Economics, Political Science and History. The last three subjects also count for a diploma in Social Science, for which I have passed in Sociology as well. Of late years I have tended to specialise in the social sciences, where I have done much general reading. (2.)

The degree listing under Mason's name in the Register of Undergraduates gives details -

sec: B.A. 1926 Latin French
1928 Latin II French II Econ
1929 Latin III French III Pol Sc.
1930 History, Sociology
1938 History
1939 B.A. (graduation) (3.)

- and the Auckland University

(1.) The records on this and the following pages have been inspected by permission of the Registrar, the University of Auckland.

(2.) Mason. letter cit in note (3.) p 305 supra.

(3.) Auckland University College Register of Undergraduates.
Calendars for these years confirm certain of these conflicting listings—viz—

1926 degree examinations, passes in Latin and French.
1929 degree examinations, passes in Latin III, French III, Political Science, Greek History, Art & Literature.
1939 degree examinations, pass in History I.

Mason himself explains this confusion as being due to the listing of subjects which were not in fact part of the degree course. His B.A. course, he states (1) constituted Latin and French (1926), Latin II and French II (1928, with study begun in the previous year), Latin III and French III, Greek History, Art and Literature, and Political Science (1929) and History (1930). The passes in Economics (1928) and Sociology (1930) were towards a Diploma of Social Science, and though the B.A. degree was technically completed by 1930, Mason was prevented from graduating or continuing on to an M.A. degree by a regulation which made Greek History, Art and Literature a non-qualifying subject. He therefore took History I in 1938, presumably under a new prescription, in order to be able to graduate in the following year.

If the years up to 1920 were formative both in elementary education and in the writing of poetry for Mason, the decade from 1920 to 1929 saw the bulk of his major verse written. Approximately sixty of the eighty-odd poems of which there is still some record were written in this decade, and about half

(1.) Interview
of these were published during that period in one of the three small collections or in newspapers. Of the remainder, at least the twenty-five poems of No New Thing and the seven poems of the "Poems from MSS" in the Collected Poems were also written in this period. There is, however, very little data available on Mason's actual writing career at this time. The dates of publication of the volumes offer terminal dates for composition, while the few publications of poems prior to their collection make possible the dating of a few of the individual poems, as for example in No New Thing. But unless further evidence is discovered at a later date, the historian (though not the critic) has comparatively little to record of these years.

Having completed his studies at Auckland University College, Mason began in earnest the political pursuits that had already interested him during his undergraduate days. Part of his degree course had been directed towards a Diploma of Social Science and he had taught Economics and Civics at Faigan's University Coaching College, as well as being Secretary of the Open Forum. His knowledge of politics he described at the time as being "non-partisan". In the first months of 1931 he journeyed to Tonga and Samoa to study the conditions on those islands, and specifically the causes of the Mau uprising in

(1.) In the Manner of Men, The Beggar, Penny Broadsheet.
(2.) vide the entries in Traue, 1927 and 1929.
(3.) vide p 306 supra
(4.) Mason to the Registrar, Auckland University College, letter cit supra.
Samoa. This trip he describes as "beginning his disillusionment with New Zealand nationalism" (1.) and from it evolved the interest in New Zealand's island territories in the Pacific that was to culminate in the publication of a study of those territories in 1947; Frontier Foresaken: an outline history of the Cook Islands. The movement to Communism, the disillusionment referred to, the devotion to a life of political activity, and the lessening of his poetic output, are all part of a trend which coincides with the deepening of the depression of the 1930s, but unlike A.R.D. Fairburn, Mason did not record the arguments in letters or articles which would enable his political biographer to document his personal progress to the Left in detail. Certainly by March, 1933, when Mason assumed the editorship of Phoenix for its third and fourth issues, his attitude to politics was far from "non-partisan".

The history of Phoenix has been documented by B.G. Faville (2.), partly from interviews with Mr. Mason himself. Faville says,

Phoenix came into being through the fortunate conjunction at A.U.C. of a lively group of literary-minded students, and a printing press in the hands of a student obsessed with his hobby (as it was then), R.W. Lowry, whose ability and eagerness did much to ensure success. The literary group was an amalgamation of a few student amateurs of literature with the remnants of an Aesthetic Group formed by Dr R.F. Anschutz, which had broken up after a difference of opinion.

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(1.) Interview, 8 April 1961.
between the members and the founder on the value of modern poetry. They made their first contact with Lowry when he began printing work by members for manuscript evenings. It was a short step to the formulation of plans for a regular club magazine, which quickly expanded in scope to include work by writers outside A.U.C.\(^1\)

The first editor of \textit{Phoenix} was James Bertram, aided by J.A.W. Bennett. The editorial policy of the first two issues was, as Faville notes, "inclined towards the aesthetic". The concern of the magazine was to provide a platform for the views of "intelligent people... where they can write about the things that matter." While acknowledging that the "'things that matter' will be as different with different people as the multiple aspects of the idea"\(^2\) both the editorials and the contents of the early issues suggest that the matters of concern for the contributors were literary rather than social.

In the first issue Mason published the poem "Stoic Overthrow", and in the second a short story, "His End Was Peace".\(^3\) But the real impact of his association with

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\(^1\) Faville \textit{cit}, p 27.  
\(^2\) From the editorial of \textit{Phoenix} 1, March 1932. Quoted by Faville, \textit{cit}, p 27.  
\(^3\) Traue lists four short stories by Mason published about this time:  

1931 - "Spring-time and the sick-bed". \textit{Kiwi} 26, September, 1931.  
1932 - "His end was peace". \textit{Phoenix} 2, July, 1932.  
1933 - "The meth fiend". \textit{Kiwi} 28, 1933.  
Phoenix was to be felt when he took over the editorship for the third and fourth issues, March and June, 1933. A reading of these issues confirms Faville's judgement that Mason's political beliefs caused an immediate shift of emphasis. Public affairs, with special reference to the Russian Revolution and social conditions in New Zealand, submerged (without drowning) the aesthetic-literary movement led by Bertram.

...Most of the articles (of these two issues) are sociological or semi-political ('Free Man', 'The Coming Struggle For Power'); the reviews comment more on literature with social trends. (1.)

Mason contributed the editorial notes (unsigned) to both of these issues, and was largely responsible for the change in emphasis noted above, a change which drew from New Zealand Truth an attack upon Phoenix and its sister publication at Canterbury University College, Oriflamme. (2.) Faville outlines the editorial attitude of Mason, and suggests that

According to Mason's political philosophy, literature and politics needed no reconciling, and I think it would be unfair to say, as many students did, that he was sacrificing the original worthy aims of Phoenix on a propaganda pyre. A magazine with such aspirations, Mason thought, had a responsibility to debate these problems and force their importance on those who did not care, or who placed their faith in the doctrine of a slow, inevitable recovery. (3.)

(1.) Faville. cit. p 28.

(2.) Edited by Denis Glover, with the Caxton Club Printing Press. For a description of Phoenix from Glover's point of view, and a history of the Oriflamme controversy, see Denis Glover. *Hot Water Sailor.* pp 83 - 97.

(3.) Faville. cit. p 29.
Mason's editorship of Phoenix in 1933 is evidence of the degree to which his attentions had been turned towards politics, in a comparatively few years. He had by this time written all but about twelve of the poems which constitute the canon in the Collected Poems, and the volume which was to publish the most important of these, No New Thing, was already being planned. His concerns then were less with the composition of verse, as they had been in the student days of the 1920s, and more with the world of politics. Mason had not "burnt himself out" poetically, as the poems of End of Day and Recent Poems (1.) were to prove, though his friends and some later critics, looking retrospectively at this decline in poetic activity were to see his career in these terms. (2.) His


(2.) An example is an extract from Denis Glover's A Clutch of Authors and A Clot (1960) in which the section "It Doesn't Really Matter" is usually taken to refer to Mason:

"He was a very considerable poet, once. Now his hobby is fretwork. A long time ago, when the world was still capable of hurting him, he wrote two books of verse as highly charged as a Leyden jar. It was his huge contribution to life, and few have done so well. But the world ignored him, and he turned his back on it. The rest is silence, more eloquent than verse."

Vide also

C.K. Stead, "R.A.K. Mason's Poetry: Some Random observations." Comment 16. section V; "Mason's silence since about 1940 is, if I have understood his poetry correctly, the failure of a gift for which the will could provide no substitute...&c."

Similarly

Roger Savage, review of the Collected Poems if 67, especially the section on Mason and Marxism, p 289.
literary energies, though, were not in abeyance; the editing of Phoenix being one example, the journalism and playwriting of the 1930s and 40s being another. If an explanation can be offered for this change of emphasis on Mason's part in the early 1930s, it would seem most reasonable to examine the philosophical continuity and development of Mason's thought throughout the decades of the 'twenties and 'thirties - in this, rather than in any thesis of failure "to supply the necessary fire" in old age (1), can be found an explanation in which the critic can cite changes of position and ideas, rather than a vague Romantic thesis about a poet's "dying spark." The references in note (2) p 312 are not meant to imply that Stead or Savage have completely overlooked the possibility of explaining the change in terms of intellectual development; Savage especially outlines a thesis of an inter-relationship between the verse and the Marxism, with each concerned to resolve problems which are, in essence, similar. But both critics fail to examine the work before and after 1932 in sufficient detail to be able to offer a satisfactory explanation. The remarks of Savage, who comes closest to such an attempt, are weakened by a tone near to that of condescension (which mars the whole review) as exemplified by

(1) vide Mason's Note in No New Thing on his "Odyssey" project.
the paragraph on the point under discussion -

And there is the image of a man indulging himself, reveling almost in attitudes and environments which hurt (from the 'filthy stench-soaked sewer' of the first page of his poems to the 'miasmic air/with venom noxious to poor mortals fraught' of the last), beating his head a shade melodramatically against the walls of the smug, degraded colonial church and society he has been born into. But this is Mr Mason in his twenties and early thirties, Mason before the intervention of the Marxism and trade unionism which have occupied him ever since. When Marxism intervened, it seems the poet retired. Maybe political conversion did not furnish that system of tensions which we have seen as central to his art in the way that revolt against bourgeois Christianity had. Maybe upping and doing things as a Marxist gave him an outlet for his humane energies which superseded and was more satisfying than the protesting masochism of the young poet.

1.

Savage is probably right in associating the two elements of poetic energy and political endeavour, and in noting that one largely (though not wholly) gave way to the other, and that there is presumably therefore a causal link to be found. But he overlooks, as a later Section of this study will point out, the elements in the poetry which anticipate Mason's Marxism, and which would suggest that Mason found in ethics and the historicist explanations of that political ideology a system.

of answers which the verse of the later 1920s had anticipated, and at least adumbrated. Marxism for Mason seems to have been more an active and ideological fulfillment of his humanitarian inclinations, than an alternative to a "revolt against bourgeois Christianity." Savage, who sees most of the poems as "autobiographical notes rather than free-standing creations" (1.) has failed to ascertain the humanist elements in them. (2.) Thus he dissociates the poetry from the politics, rather than seeing both as consecutive parts of the same intellectual, as well as biographical development.

The continuity that (it is suggested here) exists between the questing of the poetry of the 1920s and the political writings of the 1930s does not however alter the fact that Mason wrote only a few poems after about 1930. Essentially, then, his later life is beyond the scope of concern of this study, and needs to be sketched only briefly. The most recent edition of Who's Who in New Zealand (3.) records that he ceased to be employed as a teacher in 1932, and held the position of a company secretary from 1933 to 1935, and of a Public Works Department foreman from 1936 to 1939. In 1933 or 1934 he had established the Unicorn Press.

(1.) Roger Savage.  
(2.) ibid. p 286. For example, "... a deadening established religion of other-worldly dogma and priestcraft. (Pitless priests, black priests, mocking priests and unctious priests are frequent villains in Mr Mason's work.)" Dr Savage's review seems to over-emphasise the anti-Christian rather than the anti-clerical elements of the verse. Of the section following, on Mason's use of the Arian heresy, and the relationship that might be postulated between the poetry and the later politics.
with the late R.W. Lowry to publish under the imprint of "The Spearhead Publishers" his volume *No New Thing*. *(1.)* From this time on to about the end of the second war, Mason wrote about a dozen plays, not all now extant, all of them social realist dramas or satiric farces. Traue lists the performances of these, where known, and records two published in book form (*Squire Speaks, a Play for Radio* (1938) printed by the Unicorn Press and published by the Caxton Press, and *China Script... for a Dance Drama* by Margaret Barr (1943) reprinted with additions as *China Dances* in 1962) and three others printed in periodicals. *(2.)*

The Caxton Press published five new poems in *End of Day* in 1936, and another five in *Recent Poems* (with Allen Curnow, A.R.D. Fairburn, and Denis Glover) in 1941, but these ten, and "On a Dead Cripple" *(3.)* were Mason's only published work from the time of the completion of the poems of *No New Thing* *(circa 1929)* until the publication of his first full selection, *This Dark Will Lighten* in 1941. This volume containing thirty-seven poems from the six earlier collections, and one new poem, the "Prelude" which opens the book. Mason substantially revised many of the poems, altering *much* of the 


*(2.)* Vide Traue, cit. items, 1938. "To Save Democracy"; 1939. "Service for the fallen"; 1950. "Daddy, Paddy and Marty". Mr Mason has MSS of "This Bird May Swing", "Refugee" (1943) *(vide Traue, 1945) "Escape at All Cost" and "The Man From Vorstchagninski."

*(3.)* Printed in *The Modern Muse* (Traue, iten, 1934) and not thereafter reprinted until J.G. Brown's school anthology (1956) and then the *Collected Poems* (1962).
archaism and poetic diction that had marked the earlier work, and appropriating the "hanging indent" typographical form for all those poems that had not previously used it.  

This volume was to all intents and purposes the culmination of Mason's activity as a New Zealand poet. It drew together the best of his poetry, revised and stripped of its earlier archaism, and made available in reasonable bulk for the first time a collection of verse which exhibited, according to Allen Curnow's contemporary review, more than any other native New Zealand poetry, an awareness of the elemental immediacy of birth, life, pain, and death, with a corresponding appreciation of the problem of evil.

In some of the most "integral and mature" verse yet written locally. But the poet himself had retired; he published only two new poems in the next twenty years, a minor piece of social satire in The People's Voice in 1945 and the "Sonnet to MacArthur's Eyes" in the same paper in September, 1950, during the Korean War.

He edited the newspaper In Print which ran from the time of the suppression of The People's Voice by the war-time Labour

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(1.) The one substantial revision which affects one of the poems more than slightly is in "Judas Iscariot", where the final stanza ("He would sing like the thrush...") is omitted. Mr Glover, who was responsible for the typesetting, informs me that this was a deliberate omission of Mason's. The stanza was reinserted in the Collected Poems and in Allen Curnow's anthologies, but omitted in Chapman & Bennett, which took its text from This Dark Will Lighten. From here the omission passed into the reading on the Delta Anthology of New Zealand Poetry (NZD 1006) edited by Keith Sinclair and Kendrick Smithyman, who took their texts from Chapman & Bennett.


(3.) "The boss sent violets" - Traue item, 1945.
Government in 1941 until its restoration in June, 1943.\(^1\)

He then worked with the Auckland General Labourers' Union, editing their periodical Challenge from its establishment in August, 1944 until some time in 1945, when he became assistant secretary of the union. His research into the New Zealand administration of the Pacific Island territories was published as Frontier Forcaken. An Outline History of the Cook Islands (a "Challenge" Publication) in 1947. He remained on the secretariat of the union until 1955, when he turned to landscape gardening, at which he worked until 1962 when he was awarded the Robert Burns Fellowship at the University of Otago. Apart from the "Sonnet to MacArthur's Eyes" which attracted some admiration and was reprinted at least twice prior to the publication of the Collected Poems\(^2\) five poems, all dating from the later 1920s or early 1930s, were printed in two small periodicals\(^3\) in these years, and two minor pieces were printed by the Otago Daily Times during Mason's tenure of the Fellowship. To the time of writing, however, no major new work has been published. Mason edited the YC network programme Poetry in 1963, and later returned to Auckland where at present he is school-teaching.

\(^{1}\) The People's Voice ran its last issue before suppression, 22 July, 1941. In Print ran 10 September, 1941 to 30 June, 1943.

\(^{2}\) In Jindyworobak Anthology, 1951, and Mate 1, September, 1957. (Trace, items cit.) For an unfavourable commentary upon the sonnet, vide C.K. Stead, "A.K.K. Mason; Some random observations," Comment 16 cit.

\(^{3}\) "She Kept Cows" and "Lullaby and Neck-Verse", Nucleus 2, 1958 - reprinted in the Collected Poems, "Trià Carmína ad Miram", Review (Otago University) 1962 - not reprinted to date.
Any study of Mason's poetry that seeks to define the
themes must sooner or later face questions about the beliefs
which sustain the religious images. These images are the
expression of the intense moral feeling of the poems, and of
Mason's concern with questions of human behaviour in quasi-
religious terms, but the questions of belief themselves have
presented stumbling blocks to at least two critics who have
sought to deal with them, C.D. Doyle in his essay, A Sort of
Odyssey: An Interim Study on Some Aspects of the Verse of
R.A.K. Mason, (1.) and J.C. Reid in his Creative Writing in New
Zealand (2.): Reid, who observes the underlying concern with
religious and ethical problems in the poems' statements on
sexual love, death, and suffering, quotes with approval
Plomer's judgement that "a heavy shadow lay over them, cast,
apparently, by Protestantism." (3.) Reid expands this:

A large number of his poems appear
to be concerned with an attempt to
shake off the effects of a narrow
and tyrannical religious environment
in early life. Like James Joyce,
although he turns against formal
religion in his verse, he seems
unable to escape from religious
symbols or a religious way of
thinking, in reverse, as it were. (4.)

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(1.) I must acknowledge the permission of Mr. C.D. Doyle, Lecturer
in English at the University of Auckland, for permission to
read the drafts and text of his essay, A Sort of Odyssey: An
Since this essay has not yet (1965) been published, and may
be revised, I have felt it fairer only to summarise its
arguments and to use these sparingly as evidence. Quotations
are from the typescript dated 27.1.62.

(2.) J.C. Reid. Creative Writing in New Zealand. (1946).

Writing 17. April, June, 1943. Quoted in Reid, op. cit. p 33.

(4.) Reid, op. cit. p 34.
Doyle, although he is able to supply a correction to this view of Reid's (which derives its premises of criticism from "biographical" assumptions, rather than from the verse itself) in the light of conversations with Mason, is only able to observe that "Most. . enigmatic of all is the poet's attitude to Christianity."(1.) But in spite of two chapters devoted to questions involving the religious themes, Doyle is unable to reach conclusions or offer an exegesis any more precise than that of Reid. Such criticisms, then, worry the question of religion without much profit to the poems themselves. Both Reid and Doyle have been inclined to discuss Mason in the light of a Roman Catholic orthodoxy, with the assumption that all religious references may be explained and stripped of ambiguities by reference to doctrine and dogma. This is not to deny their remarks a kind of relevance, but only to note the limitations of an approach which must leave the last word with the critic, rather than with the poet himself.

Since the proper subject of this study is the poems, it is the critic's first business to satisfy himself about what they do say. Among those poems of Mason which may invite either religious or ethical interpretation, it is possible to separate out from the mass of the canon, those which contain specific images of Biblical origin, i.e. those which depend on an iconography which unquestionably derives from the Gospels. In the larger "mass" fall all the poems dealing with perpetuation

(1.) Doyle. MSS cit.
and mortality, with love, both carnal and "ideal", with loyalty, betrayal and fellowship in suffering, and with the praising and cursing of God. In the smaller of these two groups there are four complete poems, numbers v, vi, and vii of No New Thing, and one of the "Poems from MSS" (1.) together with a number of other poems containing images which may be related to New Testament iconography, but which do not depend exclusively upon it for exegesis. Consideration of this smaller group can cast light upon the status of Mason's central image, and explain its quasi-doctrinal significance, and thus help towards the understanding of the other religious images.

The four complete poems referred to are "Judas Iscariot", "Footnote to John II, 4", "Ecce Homunculus", and "Nails and A Cross". In the third of these the sestet contains an image of Christ's Passion which is as clearly unorthodox as it is indicative of a particular heresy, the Arian:

And so he brazened it out right to the last still wore the gallant mask still cried 'Divine am I, lo for me is heaven overcast' though that inscrutable darkness gave no sign indifferent or malignant: while he was passed by even the worst of men at least sour wine.

The heresy of Arius, which flourished in the Third Century, was suppressed by the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D., when the opposing Athanasian or Trinitarian position was established as dogma. Its chief divergence from the Athanasian position lay in seeing Christ as a subordinate figure to God — in

(1.) All references to poems in this section are to the Collected Poems (1962) unless otherwise stated.
terms which oversimplify the heresy, but which are valid for Mason's poetry, a Christ who is mortal, rather than divine; a man whose life is God-like in its manifestation of goodness.

Brinton describes the conflict of creeds as follows:

According to (the Athanasian position) the persons of the Trinity, God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are real persons, three in number, and yet they are one. Christianity remained a monotheism, its Trinity well above mathematics. The opposing doctrine of Arius... (tended) to subordinate Jesus to God, to make him later in time, an emanation of God, or -- theology is a subtle thing -- in some other way less than God the Father. The critical phrases of the struggle were the Athanasian homoeousion (of one (same) essence with the Father) and the Arian homoiousion (of like (similar) essence to the Father.)

(1.)

The nearest present-day equivalent to this belief is probably Unitarianism; certainly the Unitarian Church in New Zealand speaks of the suppression of its central belief from the Council of Nicea until the Reformation. (2.) Mason himself did not adhere to any specific form of Christian belief, but various poems show that his acquaintance with the Arian position answered his need for an image of Christ which would enable him to express at one and the same time an agnostic view of the meaning of the Passion and a statement of the duty of men to their suffering fellows. Mason's "Arianism" then is secular, humanist, rather than doctrinal and tritheistic.

(1.) Crane Brinton, Ideas and Men. The Story of Western Thought (London 1951) p 153.

(2.) From a cyclostyled sermon-tract of the Auckland Unitarian Church, 1962.
Parallels\(^{(1)}\) to the "Ecce Homunculus" depiction of Christ are found in the sonnet "Arius Prays" and in the twenty-four line poem "Nails and A Cross".\(^{(2)}\) The octave of the sonnet "Arius Prays" is a statement of the belief of the total humanity of Christ, whatever his God-like attributes might have been. A typescript of this sonnet, included in a postulated collection entitled "A Second Book of Kells"\(^{(3)}\) has a marginal emendation (pencilled in Mason's hand) on line 7, changing "they" to "we": a change that would have reinforced the impression given by the sestet that the poem could be read as a personal credo. The complete sonnet reads:

Oh do not pass them by dear Christ who think that you were compounded in the common way framed of impetuous blood and fallible clay, that your body was not made but saved but sink down to the murderous clay, therein to stink in foul corruption on that evil day by Golgotha -- and your soul they say drank with the rest annihilation's drink.

Be with us Lord, not only with our best but when we mock your name and scoff and rail: laugh with us like a man not like a god a cruel god who gives death for a jest; be with us dead man when our feet halt and fail in that hard road your clumsy feet once trod.

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\(^{(1)}\) The "Arius Prays" sonnet may in fact be an anticipation. But apart from the ascription to "Poems from MSS, 1924–1930" given by the editor of the Collected Poems there is no evidence for precise dating of this (or most of the other poems) in order to relate them to any of the poems of No New Thing.


\(^{(3)}\) An MSS collection lent to the writer by Mr. Mason. Vide Bibliography. Certain of the poems were included in the "Poems from MSS" in the Collected Poems.
It is a poem inferior in form and structure to most of Mason's sonnets. Grammatically its parentheses and clauses are awkwardly linked the one with the other; its rhythms, too, except in the first quatrain, are weak and disturb the balance which the orthodox sonnet-form requires. The significance of the poem, however, lies in its statement; that Christ was a human being, mortal, and (though the word "Prays" and the opening of the sestet ("Be with us Lord") makes for an ambiguity of intention) now dead. It is possible to see in this poem an echo of the peroration of the Ave -- Ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nunc et in hora mortis nostrae -- with Christ, not Mary, as the petitioned intercessor here. But it is of chief importance that this Christ's significance to the praying Arius is not in terms of his Incarnation, Resurrection, and Atonement, but in the example of his life. This life is seen as an example both for mankind, since it implies a model of human dedication and suffering, and, (if the idea of prayer has any precise significance) for God, who has experienced through Christ a knowledge of human weakness and frailty.

The poem "Nails and A Cross" constitutes a confession of mortality, spoken by the dying Christ, who looks sardonically on the life of dedication and its ultimate result:

here's an end to adventurings
here all great and valiant things
find so far as I'm concerned a grave.

The Christ of this poem declares his commitment to the dedicated life which has made him a model worthy of the prayer
of Arius, "Be with us dead man". This does not exclude the fact of Christ's accepting the "defeat" of his death with bitter, self-contemptuous resignation -

God, I may say that I've been brave
and it's led me -? Damned and deified
here I spurt the blood from a riven side:
blood, never revisit my heart again
but suck the wisdom out of my brain
I got in so many lonely days
bruising my feet with flinty ways.

For I left my boyhood dog and fire
my old bed and him I called my sire
my mother my village my books and all
to follow the wild and lonely call
luring me into the solitary
road that has brought me here to die.

The poem's final gesture of irony comes in the last couplet, when Christ looks down and sees that

while the troops divide up my cloak
the mob fling dung and see the joke.

The joke, Mason's Christ implies, is on him. Death being final, there can be no absolute justification for an ascetic search for goodness, with its struggle and self-denial; the burden of choosing is borne by each alone. This is an existentialist Christ, alone without God. The sardonic tone and the cynicism of Christ's monologue are then consistent with the heterodox depiction of that Christ, whose significance in the poem is not theological but secular.

The most complete expression of this image of Christ is found in the sonnet "Ecce Homo nunculus". Here the Arian view of the man-Christ receives its justification in a statement of the moral purpose which brings this Christ to suffering and
death, and this is depicted in a dramatic situation where the
gesture of the soldier becomes the model for the proper
gesture of every man who has not himself the courage to emulate
the Christ. In this sense the poem is closely allied to the
other poems which precede it in No New Thing. The image of
Christ and the Madonna is used in "Footnote to John II, 4" to
speak of man's sense of being alone, torn from the womb to
suffer with only his faith, or fatalistic will, to vindicate
his actions and to steel him against the prospect of death.
(Compare here the second and third stanzas of "Nails and A
Cross" quoted supra.) "Each one of us" the poet declares in
"Footnote to John II, 4", "must do his work of doom" and this
must be carried out with nothing but a sense of personal destiny
to sustain the protagonist:

And so he brazened it out right to the last
still wore the gallant mask still cried 'Divine
am I, lo for me is heaven overcast'
though that inscrutable darkness gave no sign
indifferent or malignant.

This sense of personal destiny, the moral basis for the Christ's
actions, is, Mason implies, probably an illusion and a self-
deception. The Christ of "Nails and A Cross" is sardonic,
self-contemptuous; in "Ecce Homo" the hint of contempt
in the title (l.) is tempered with the hint of admiration and
courage ("brazened it out", "gallant mask" &c). But the
pessimistic idea of illusion does not constitute a total denial

(1.) I am indebted to Rev. D.J. Whelan, a student at Auckland
University, for pointing out the contemptuous sense of
'hominous'. Lewis's dictionary renders the word
'mannikin'.

of the worth of Christ's action - it is more an existentialist assumption that "goodness", though commendable and necessary, is in the final analysis futile.

The Golgotha of "Ecce Homo" is the place where actions may be vindicated by the conscience of the individual, but where these vindications cannot help him to escape from cruelty and death. The Christ is forced to acknowledge that the world is a place in which good is confronted by evil and where suffering caused by inhumanity must be borne alone. Judas confronts Christ, and guffaws. Faced with this essential aloneness of men, the poet declares that the only bridge across the chasm that makes each man a lone individual must be a sense of human pity and the awareness on the part of the spectators of the community of human pangs that cannot be soothed, but only beheld and understood. It is in this sense that Mason's Christ-image is a tragic one, evoking from certain of the characters of the poems the sense of "pity" and (through an awareness that this is the common lot of man) "fear". This awareness, Mason declares, either does or should temper all emotions felt when suffering is observed —

for a space let us mourn here this tortured boy's slobbering quivers

as we laugh at the farce. (1.)

Sympathy is the gesture of pity or mercy that derives from the awareness of the "humanity" of pain, the gesture lacking in the mob who "fling dung" or form the crowd when the condemned

(1.) "Lutete O Venere". No New Thing x.
man is lustily assailed
by every righteous Hebrew cried down railed
against by all true zealots.

It forms the invocation to the cook in "On the Swag"

'Bring him in cook
from the grey level sleet
put silk on his body
slippers on his feet,
give him fire
and bread and meat.

Let the fruit be plucked
and the cake be iced,
the bed be snug
the wine be spiced
in the old cove's night-cap
for this is Christ.'

with its echoes of St Matthew XXV, 35 - 40, "Inasmuch as ye
have done it unto one of these the least of my brethren, ye
have done it unto me." - and the soldier's action at the
end of "Ecce Homoculus" when the dying man is

by even the worst of men at least sour wine.

And in a gesture that is at once assertive and humble, Mason
associates himself and his poems not with the Christ who is
prepared to "brazen it out right to the last", so much as
with the "worst of men", through the imagery of the opening
poem of No New Thing. (1.)

(1.) Though Dr Roger Savage in his review of the Collected
Poems, Lf 67, September, 1963, p. 286 suggests that
many of the personae of the poems are "masks for Mason",
including specifically "the swagman, the stoic politician,
Christ on the cross, the condemned criminal, Herostratus
the Ephesian, or Arius the heretic."
If the drink that satisfied
the son of Mary when he died
has not the right smack for you
leave it for a kindlier brew

For my bitter verses are
sponges steeped in vinegar
useless to the happy-eyed
but handy for the crucified.

The gesture of the poem "Tribute" in The Beggar has changed from an act of ritual obeisance to an act of compassion in this poem, which can be read as a poetic manifesto. The "vinegar", of the "bitter verses" is simple metaphor, the full meaning of which is in the actual "sour wine". (1.)

The third poem which draws directly upon the Gospels for image is "Judas Iscariot". In his memorial talk to the Auckland University College Literary Society in April, 1957, after the death of A.R.D. Fairburn, Mason recalled that this poem had been written after an evening conversation on the subject of political treachery with Fairburn. (2.) The metaphor of a "Judas" as a betrayer is a stock part of the language, and took on renewed force in the vocabulary of the left-wing movements of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, when applied to the man who "sold out" on his beliefs and exchanged the rigours of a messianic revolutionary movement for the security of Conservatism, denying in the process all

(1.) Denis Glover has confirmed this reading, and notes that the "sour wine" reading is actually a better translation of the Greek than "vinegar", which, he agrees, must be read primarily in its metaphorical context.

(2.) Tape in the possession of the Auckland University library.
his former ethical beliefs. The topic was one of immediate interest to all of "left" persuasion in the 1920s and 1930s. Though there is no evidence in the poem, as opposed to Mason's recollections, to offer this political interpretation as a possible level of allegory, Mason's remarks alone may permit us to class it with "Youth at the Dance" as another "poem by Mason which may be read as a direct expression of the political passions of the 'thirties'."(1.) But though the poem evidently grew out of a political conversation, its theme is applicable to all human relationships which involve loyalty. Mason has summarised his beliefs in this matter in the remark, "Politics and ethics are each one side of the same penny."(2.) If Christ and Judas are ethical figures, then they are political figures also, because the latter are only a more specific manifestation of the former, each type involving human interrelationships.

The action of Judas is done in the full knowledge of its consequences for Christ "whom he knew the morrow would roll in disaster." It is the betrayal "by friend", and removes Judas from the role of a companion of Christ to become one of the mob of "Ecce Homo" or the final line of "Nails and a Cross." Judas escapes from the number of those who know and face their doom, the minority of the dedicated, into the

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(2.) Interview with Mr Mason, Auckland, 8 April, 1961.
crowd where conformity (Conservatism as opposed to radicalism?) carries no obligations of martyrdom, but the safety expressed in the images of laughter:

At Christ's look he guffawed -
for then as thereafter
Judas was greatly
given to laughter,

The laughter here is ironic, and ambiguous in one sense. In line 9 it is the confrontation of good by inhuman callousness ("the guffaw") and so foreshadows the callous laughter and jeering of the mob at the trial. In the last three stanzas of "Judas Iscariot", which depict the laughter and happiness of the later Judas ("then as thereafter / Judas was greatly/ given to laughter" &c.) it suggests the unpunished triumph of evil:

All the days of his life
he lived gay as a cricket
and would sing like the thrush
that sings in the thicket.

and when Judas is compared to the thrush "that sings on the thorn" the image of unrepentance, even when 'the morrow rolls Christ in disaster', is completed. (The image of the thrush singing on the thorn suggests Judas' laughter at the specific "crown of thorns" worn upon the Cross.) The whole pattern of these poems which treat the Passion suggests that Christ's death is a tragic one; (1.) nevertheless the lack of punishment

(1.) As, for example, in the suggestions of hamartia in Christ's illusion of immortality and his dedication, the anagnorisis of his self-contempt, especially in "Nails and A Cross", and the katharsis of pity and fear in the minds of the beholders/readers.
upon the head of the "villian" (as in this poem) must be seen as "odious" in Aristotelian terms, and a situation suitable only to 'dark farce'. The reader may choose to detect a strong ambiguity in the final three stanzas if the poem implies that in fact Judas' laughter will turn to repentance and suicide. But this cannot be found as definite statement, and the poem's fourth stanza -

Indeed they always said
that he was the veriest
prince of good fellows
and the whitest and merriest

- implies that

whatever Judas may have lost by his denial of conscience, he has compensated for it with popularity and acceptability in they eyes of the callous mass of men.

The third image derived directly from a New Testament source is that of Christ and the Madonna. The poem "Footnote to John II, 4" is based on the verse which records Christ's answer to Mary at the marriage in Cana -

Jesus said unto her, woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.

In this sonnet Mason expresses by the images of Christ and Mary the conflict between love for the mother, with its accompanying security, and the dedicated man's recognition of the necessity of denying that love in order to be able to fulfill his single tragic destiny. The consequence of that denial is a sense of aloneness (the same "agony" that pervades the poems on the

(1.) Matthew XXVII, 3 - 5.
Passion) but the consequence of failure to make this break would be a failure to "do the work of doom" that is the lot of every man.

A.R.D. Fairburn suggested a sexual-psychological origin for this sonnet and presumed it to derive fairly directly from Mason's own personal experiences. In a letter to Muriel Bradshaw (née Innes) in 1934, he wrote

Regarding Mason, he has a curious and original mind, as full of trapdoors and secret passages as a Katzenjammer Castle. Remember that he is very masculine: his work, I have noticed, doesn't usually appeal to women. His brutality sometimes misses, I think, as in "A Dead Cripple." But he has written some things I would give five years of my life to have down (sic) "She who steals" and "Our love was a grim citadel" for example. And I find that "Footnote to John ii, 4" very moving: an extremely masculine poem again; only men-children who inhabit a world of Freudian nightmare know that agony. (1)

The last sentence of Fairburn's remarks is consistent with his earlier appraisal of Mason in the New Zealand Artists' Annual of August, 1929: "smouldering pessimism... (used) homeopathically as a drug to escape from reality." (2) Fairburn's idea of the poem's seeking to objectify a personal emotional experience in a Christ-image is quite feasible, but Fairburn in the quotations above is more concerned with a Romantic explanation.

(1) WT. Micro MSS. Fairburn to Muriel Innes. 14 June, 1934.

of the motives behind the poem than with a statement on the
poem's meaning and significance. If the Christ of the poem
is a Mason "mask" (as is implied by Fairburn, and more recently
by Dr Roger Savage\(^1\)) then the emotion so "masked" will be
autobiographical in origin. But as was seen earlier Mason's
identification of himself with a poetic persona in the poems
of No New Thing is closer with the soldier, the "worst of men"
performing his gesture of pity, than with the martyr-Christ.

In the case of this poem, the question of autobiographical
origins is complicated by matters of taste. Mason is living,
and his feelings towards his mother cannot well be enquired into
or scrutinised. It may moreover be questioned whether any
knowledge of these feelings would throw significant new light
on the poem itself. The sonnet in question does imply a
personal gesture, provided always that it is seen as being
personally relevant to every man. In fact, Mason's terms of
reference here portray Christ as an Everyman character, thus
implying that all men experience the conflicting emotions
described. Mason's creation in this sonnet then could be
described as the result of a peculiar sensitivity to a universal
experience, and no particular biographical data is needed for
elucidation.

The tension between the emotion of filial love and
demands of manhood and duty is expressed at the 'fulcrum' of

\(^1\) vide p 328 supra note \(^1\)
the sonnet - the last line of the octave and the first line of
the sestet, where the two forces are balanced by "cannot" and
"must", the verbs of necessity. Desire subservient to duty
gives the poignancy to "... woman I cannot stay." and the sense
of inescapable destiny becomes dominant in the following line.
But as this idea of duty - destiny - moral obligation to
one's self - gains ascendancy ("Each one of us must do his work
of doom") desire becomes more eloquent, and the generalisations
of lines 3 and 4

yes I suppose I loved you in my youth
as boys do love their mothers, so they say,
becomes a series of vivid memory images recalling childhood
dependance and the feeling of emotional security, permissible
in retrospect now that the awareness of duty and destiny are
acknowledged

even in despite
of her who brought me in pain from her womb
whose blood made me, who used to bring the light
and sit on the bed up in my little room
and tell me stories and tuck me up at night.

A poem that may be dated within the same general period
of composition as those of No New Thing and which involves
the same theme as the "Footnote" is the "Lullaby and Neck-
Verse". (1.) Two contrasting line-forms are used to carry

(1.) Contain in "A Second Book of Kells", vide p323 supra,
note (3.) The poem is included in the Collected Poems
under "Poems from MSS", incorrectly, since it was first
published in the periodical Nucleus 2 (Auckland, 1958)
(edited by Wystan Curnow and Philip Crooks,) together with
"She Kept Cows". (Traue, 1958.)
the two parts of the poem. The dactylic lines of the
"Lullaby" have six stresses, broken with a caesura; the "Neck-
Verse" lines are of five syllables, with the words mostly
monosyllabic and with three dominant stresses in each line.
The lines of the two parts alternate, to give a rhyme scheme
abab cdcd. Thus a balance and a contrast is achieved, not
only between the two themes but also between the two forms
with the long dactyls of the "Lullaby" "rocking" in contrast
the grimmer jerking monosyllables of the "Neck-Verse". (It
is a technique of contrasts similar to that used in "Body of
John", though thematically the "Lullaby and Neck-Verse" is a
companion to the "Footnote".) Again the theme of childhood
peace and security is contrasted with the grim fate of adult
life\(^1\), the contrast being established in the opening two
lines by the opposed images of the baby's "soft and warm"
cheek, and the "stubble beard unkempt":

Oh snuggle down, my baby, your cheek is soft and warm
A stubble beard unkempt
And sleep you now soundly safe on your mother's arm
Wild oats have threshed out hemp

Ah nestle down safe on your loving mother's knee
There is not any hope
While Jesus watches over you, who died on Calvary
A lank snake of a rope.

The "Neck-Verse"\(^2\) implies by its title a life that will end

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\(^1\) Cf stanza three of "Nails and A Cross" - "For I left my
boyhood dog and fire..." &c.

\(^2\) Originally a reference to Psalm LI, verse I, the reciting
of which could on certain occasions reprieve a criminal
from execution, by conferring on him "benefit of clergy".
in suffering and violence, and concludes with the declarations of the second stanza -

There is not any hope

A lank snake of a rope

- the latter image deriving from line 4, "Wild oats have threshed out hemp", which implies that human action, as much as "fate" or "doom", are the causes of this suffering and death. If the line "There is not any hope" is read as a cry of anguish then this poem is, as much as any, a gesture of despair.  

(1.) But the even monosyllabic rhythm and tone (and possibly comparisons with the "moods" of other poems) suggest that it is more probably to be read as a stoic affirmation: a pessimistic comment on the "fact" that hopelessness is something to be acknowledged, and not deceived about.

Once these religious images and their related themes have been clarified, the quasi-doctrinal definition of Mason's Christ-image becomes straightforward. This "Arian" Christ is a man-Christ, dedicated, mortal, and foredoomed to human failure. In his mortality and weakness he is Everyman, but in his moral dedication and sense of purpose he becomes, more restrictively, the Good Man, whose goodness in an existentialist world derives from his adherence to this sense of purpose.

At this point it is possible to consider the other images of Mason's poems which appear to have religious undertones or which are at least based upon religious metaphor. From

(1.) Cf J.C. Reid. Creative Writing in New Zealand. p 33.
the image of the man-Chist it follows that Mason's dominating themes are secular and humanist, and that the qualities attributed to any God who may be apostrophised in the poetry will be judgeable in the light of the effects of these qualities upon men. Plomer's reference (cit.) to 'the heavy shadow of Protestantism' could offer a clue to the origins of this idea of judgement according to the individual conscience of the poet. But the term 'Protestantism', though it covers a multitude of sins, cannot be extended to encompass the 'sin' of man's assuming the right to judge the actions of God according to human standards. This anthropocentric position has its roots in the secular Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century, rather than in the theological re-orientations of the Reformation. More useful than Plomer's judgement is Allen Curnow's description of 'shocked faith', (1.) in which I assume that 'shocked' carries in part the sense of 'acting in retaliation (here, eloquence) against the cause of the shock', rather than 'accepting with quiescence'. (2.) Doyle notes (3.) accurately enough that the problem is to define the 'faith'. But this requires rather more than his attempt to group the


(2.) On this point, Mr Curnow wrote to me "I think I meant faith (i.e. of childhood teaching, home traditions, etc.) shocked by the impact of contrary ideas, & moral revolt; & poems which seem like spontaneous cries of protest, or like facial expressions of pain and horror." (June, 1963).

(3.) Doyle. MSS cit p 46.
images in the poems according to "agnosticism" and "atheism" in order to arrive at a definition, (1.) which as was noted at the beginning of this section is likely to distract from the central meanings of the poems if it is couched in terms of an orthodoxy.

For the critic who seeks to "define" Mason's theology, the implications of the Arian and existentialist interpretations of the Christ-image must be that God, for the poet, is a concept of little or no ethical importance in human affairs. If there is a biblical text to summarise the position, it is probably the commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (2.) with the significant omission of the traditional preceeding verse commanding "love the Lord thy God", &c. Doyle is in part right when he notes that Mason's God, in the poems, is nearer to the Hebrew JAH than to the Christian god of love (3.) But the qualities of essential (though inscrutable) goodness and justice that pervade the Old Testament idea of God are not found in Mason's apostrophes. The Old Testament presumes God's wrath as a consequence of His justice; Mason's God, as in "On A Dead Cripple" -

God, if any god accords
pains to dead men and rewards -
  to his clay you were not just -
  judge again now he is dust.
King of Heaven, King of Hell,
  see you recompense him well.
- displays no such perfect qualities. (4.)

(1.) Doyle. cit. pp 46 ff
(2.) Matthew XXII, 37 - 39.
(3.) Doyle. MSS cit.
(4.) This poem is discussed in more detail, pp 344 - 345 infra.
"The Agnostic"(1.) is the first poem in Mason's canon that deals with the definition of good and evil. Significantly, it does not concern itself with the question of the existence of God, but with the definition of Truth; the title, implying the uncertainty that is the result of 'not knowing', refers to this concern with the knowledge and definition of truth (and hence of moral judgement) and the impossibility of getting an answer -

But what is progress - what are truth, right, wrong,
I can make out no more than you, my song.(2.)

J.C. Reid's comment that

Mason is genuinely a New Zealand poet in that the spirit of his poetry, a spirit of disillusion, of frustration of a sense of grievance, of emptiness, and the search for a stable basis of value (sic) is the dominant spirit of the New Zealand secular intellectual(3.)

is a generalisation that begs a number of large questions. It can, nonetheless be held to have some relevance to this one youthful poem at least. But it is necessary to note in any reading that seeks to deduce a search after a particularly Christian position of certainty on Mason's part, that in this poem the idea of a theocratic arbiter of values is no more than an ambiguity which stems from a narrow definition of the title-noun's meaning.

(1.) The Beggar p 4.
(2.) "The Agnostic", 1924 text.
(3.) J.C. Reid, Creative Writing in New Zealand, p 33.
The dilemma which forms the question of this poem then, concerns the problem of defining truth in the absence of a God, or in ignorance of Him. In the later poems the idea of action and its valuation in terms of its consequences to other men is seen to be the criterion of humanist ethical judgements. But this ethic becomes fully formulated in the poems of No New Thing: the poems of The Beggar some three to eight years earlier are concerned more with the problem of the individual mortal, uncertain of the meaning of death and afraid in his uncertainty. Thus in the early poems the images of death and the grave occur repeatedly, countered in some places by the beginnings of an assumption of immortality through human lineage.\(^1\) In the context of these poems God permits, if he does not actually cause death, destruction, suffering and injustice. (It is evident that the responsibility for all these happenings, except death, is judged to be a human one in the later volumes.) The ideas contained in Mason's images of death, time, and historical continuity will be considered briefly in the following pages; their importance is comparatively though they may seem to small, / bulk larger in the poems than does the present subject, the question of God's existence. When the question

\(^1\) For example "After Death", "Miracle of Life" I. These early poems foreshadow, I suspect, Mason's later Marxist-historicist position. Vida pp 346 ff
of mortality (in which the existence of God and of life after
death are implicit) is posed in *The Beggar*, it has a tone of
anguish, deriving from the sense of uncertainty that permits
neither a faith nor a stoic resignation. But insofar as no
resolution is offered, the anguish has an "adolescent" ring:
the search for an answer or an alternative was to come later.
"The Vigil" and the first (*Beggar*) version of "In Perpetuum
Vale" are cases in point. The first of these poems has a
verbal strength superior to the theme it treats. The gothic
images of the "drear, lone, bleak cliffs" and "cruel, grey
breakers" are unworthy of the powerful assonances and grim
monosyllabic rhythms that convey them. Similarly the deletion
of the dead man's song -

"How as little children call
That their vain wish may befall:
Hope and hope from day to day;
Hopelessness, that perchance it may,
If they fail not, and not doubt,
From their firm faith come about.
So do men, and so as vainly,
Fill their lives with hope inanely,
And beyond this sure world's brink
Strive an unknown world to think,
And, as men for mirage grope,
Hope a life they cannot hope." (1.)

- from the *No New Thing* reprinting

of "In Perpetuum Vale" removed a rhetorical and awkwardly
wrought expression of anguish without weakening the coherence
of the statement of the first four stanzas which remain.
Though the earlier version contains lines which can be read as

(1.) "In Perpetuum Vale". The text from *The Beggar* pp 10 - 11.
affirmations that all hope and faith (opposite here to the Christ of "Ecce Homunculus") are in fact merely self-deceptions, the revised version gains from the reader's being made aware of the compression of theme into the austere rhythms and 'stripped' syntax. The heightening of emotion achieved in

I no hint of asphodel
amaranth ambrosia moly
paradise or heaven holy
after these long pangs have found
but the cold clutch of the ground

by the choice of the esoteric herb-images, the long vowel rhymes, and the onomatopoeic sonority of the words, was dissipated in the Beggar version by the clumsy confusion of syntax in the last twelve lines. The fact that the poem was not revised by re-wording with certain minor exceptions (q.v.) but by deletion, draws attention to the quality of the first four stanzas. (1.) It offers, perhaps, another confirmation of Curnow's comment on the poems of this period, that "the poet is so much older than his years." (2.)

By the later 1920s when the poems of No New Thing were being written and the emotion of inchoate anguish was being superseded by a positive thesis of humanism, the stoic thesis of the necessity of resignation to death and suffering becomes more evident. The resignation is necessary because death is certain, and is a result less of divine cruelty or callousness than of the impersonality of Time. At the moment of Christ's

(1.) Note in contrast the discrepancy between form and theme in "The Vigil", noted supra.

death the "inscrutable darkness" gives "no sign / indifferent or malignant". The _Penny Broadsheet_ poem, "A Doubt" suggests that in fact this stoic thesis (and therefore the rejection of the earlier gestures of anguish) attracted Mason soon after the publication of _The Beggar_. The title of the poem implies no doubts concerning the truth that

> I must grow old
> and earthward go

(1.) but only doubt as to how this truth was ascertained.

But the formulation of a stoic resignation to mortality proceeded Mason's declarations that suffering was a human responsibility, and at least two poems touch upon the question of God's permitting human suffering, as opposed to man's causing it. These two poems are "On A Dead Cripple" (circa 1929) and "In Manus Tuas Domine". Neither poem should be taken to imply that Mason necessarily debated this question as part of a personal crisis of faith, since each poem is in fact a statement about faith which does not involve the poet (as distinct from the persona in whose mouth the poem is) in a gesture of acceptance.

In "On A Dead Cripple" the existence of God is questioned in the light of his refusal or inability to mollify suffering. In this poem the postulant of a god ("God, if any god accords/pains to dead man and rewards") enables the poet to contain in

(1.) Of the later "Wise At Last" - xviii _No New Thing_ and the poems in _End of Day_.

the one declamation both the rejection of him and the reprimanding of his cruelty. By postulating his god in human terms - the "king" image, implying the duty to dispense justice and the medieval burden of authority and responsibility, and echoing the Hebraic concept of the Covenant - the poet is able to offer a gesture of defiance against what he sees as an outrage. (It remains a "gesture", since the god-king remains the superior of the man who addresses him.) In this light, what Fairburn described as "brutality"(1.) in the first stanza becomes the expression of outrage, and if the accusation against the "King of Heaven, King of Hell" is deemed to be a blasphemous impertinence, though a consequence of pity for the cripple, it is also, in a pagan sense, an Heroic action.

In "In Manus Tuas Domine", the final poem of No New Thing, the statement is climaxed by the bitter curse of the disillusioned who find that faith is no protection from destruction. In the context of that volume the irony of the title, deriving from Christ's act of resignation at the point of death(2.) may be taken to confirm the sense of sardonic resignation that characterises the poet's attitude to dying in the other poems. The development of the poem's "argument" through protestations of loyalty and righteousness to the final curse against a Christ to whom is erroneously ascribed the

(1.) A.R.D. Fairburn to Muriel Innes. cit p 333. supra.
(2.) Luke XXIII, 46.
power to control human destinies, makes it possible to read
the poem as an ironic mocking (possibly Calvinist in its
sentiment) of the doctrine of justification by works, and
implicitly an attack upon the assumption held by the faithful
that the Christ of the poems does in fact exist.

Those poems, exhibiting as they do

an awareness of the elemental
immediacy of birth, life, pain,
and death, with a corresponding
appreciation of the problem of evil

provide the ethical statements that answer all critical
enquiries pertinent to the poems' beliefs. They show the
poet aware of the moral dilemma that the individual faces when
he seeks to define good and evil in a universe where God (if
such a being exists) is essentially indifferent and where one's
fellow men are likely to find self-interested action preferable
to altruism, or even to find that altruism appears to
represent a threat which must be eliminated. It seems
reasonable to conjecture that the quest for verities which can
morally validate action is traceable from the poems to the
politics in Mason's own case. It would be an over-
simplification to suggest that all the poems are questions to
which the poet was later to supply Marxism as an answer; but
chronology, which dates most of these poems a few years before
Mason's turn to politics, and the similarities between the
questions implicit in the poems and the answers implicit in

May, 1941.
the politics, both move the student of Mason's work to a conclusion not far from this.

Mason's interest in the sense of historical continuity implied in human genealogy is variously indicated in the "Sonnet of My Everlasting Hand" and the first "Miracle of Life" sonnet -

These stones that now constitute my hand
have worn the whirlwind filled the tempest's form
and long have ridden with the nightmare storm
have swept up Africa in withering sand
and smitten all the seething Spanish land
or charged on China cold and there grown warm
now in a peasant now an emperor:

and

Miraculous how my life-stream has flowed
from birth to birth down through each ancestor(.)

Especially the former of these two points for the poet not only to the continuity of humanity, but also to the sense of brotherhood and mutual involvement in the dilemmas that constitute the human condition, a sense that is specifically described in the sestet of the "Sonnet of Brotherhood" -

oh men then what
of these beleaguered victims this our race
betrayed alike by Fate's gigantic plot
here in this far-pitched perilous hostile place
this solitary hard- assualted spot
fixed at the friendless cutter edge of space.

Mankind, the poems imply, is a community in space and a continuum in time, and this assertion can be made without denial of the essential alone- ness that faces each individual in an existentialist universe. The sense of lone destiny and doon has already been considered in the poems that utilise the Arian
Christ image; a similar sense, more Gothic in tone pervades many of the earlier Beckett poems with their images of death and their expressions of horror at the grave's decay. (The most satisfying and least Gothic of them are noticeably those whose inspirations are Latin models e.g.: "The Lesser Stars" (Horace III 30) and "The Spark's Farewell To Its Clay" (Hadrian's "animula vagula blandula"). (1.)

Thus history and common humanity offer at least limited positive assurances of value in the face of "Fate's gigantic plot". It is not a far progression from these realisations, declared poetically as they are in the 1920s, to a thesis imploying historicism as a part of its argument, and stressing the community of individuals in common endeavour vindicated by this historicism. To describe Marxism in these terms is to grossly over-simplify it, and certainly to risk sentimentalising it; nevertheless the political doctrine does partake of something of this, and it is this humanist element which is noticeably common to both the poetry's assertions and the political ideology. Further, of course, the ideology supplies a moral structure to justify action, one that might be described in the same terms of morality and immorality (altruism and self-interest) as is discernible in the poems of the Passion, especially "Judas Iscariot" and "Ecce Homo nunculus". It seems fair then to conclude

(1.) I distinguish here between those poems where some portion of the Latin original is evidently the "seed" of the poem, and those poems such as "In perpetuum vale" where the Latin title does not apparently indicate any further indebtedness, but constitutes rather a "tag".
this consideration with the suggestion that the moral concerns
of the poetry of the later 1920s are not wholly put aside when
the poet turned to political activity in the next decade, but
may be found transmuted from expressions of personal lyric
urgency, poetically dramatised, into expressions of political
and moral belief, rationalised in a secular, humanist thesis.

To suggest that such a change occurred is of course to
infer that the poetry is essentially the expression of a quest
for certainty in the face of an awareness of moral problems.
This is demonstrably so, as the earlier consideration of the
poems will have shown. The strength of the best of the
poems, apart from their lyric qualities, is to be found in the
immediacy with which the problems are realised and dramatised,
and in the human terms of reference that are employed. Moral
abstractions may be inferred from them, but unlike the
political theories with which these seen to have some affinity,
they are to be found in the poems not in didactic answers, but
in the lyrically dramatised expressions of the human
circumstances that manifest then. In this achievement, R.A.K.
Mason may be seen as a poet of considerable stature whose
humanist and essentially personalist poems constitute an
important part of the canon of New Zealand's brief literary
history.

Addendum
Page 319, note (1.)
Mr Doyle has since informed me that a revised essay on
Mason has been completed for Twain Press, (N.Y.) and
should be published in 1967.

W.S.B.
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES.

This section lists the sources cited or referred to in this thesis and recorded in the footnotes. Where the sources have been extracted from larger holdings of MSS this fact is noted and a general description of the holding (with reference to its indexing where this exists) is given, indicating that this larger holding has been examined in the course of the research.

Collections of letters and poems only are listed in this section, except where published work has previously been unsighted, as in the case of certain of Cresswell's poems, or where uncatalogued MSS has been sighted, as in the case of papers shown me by Mr. Mason. Individual letters and poems cited are recorded in the footnotes. Sources consulted in the course of the research but not cited in the text are normally not listed here.

PRIMARY SOURCES.

WALTER D'ARCY CRESSWELL:

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Lyttelton Harbour: A Poem (Auckland, The Unicorn Press. 1936)
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Poems for Poppycock (London, The Trireme Press. 1957)

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"Let Not Fashion" and "An Epitaph" (one leaf)
"A Song"
"Stillness and Storm"
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In A Field of Oats"
"Fragment of A New Zealander's Address to His Native Scenery"

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Poetry Pamphlets. 1950. (no printer's ascription; presumably London.) all single leaf except where indicated; titles only recorded.

"How, And What To Read," (4 pp.)
"Advice To A Modern Poet"
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"The Forest"
"Resurrection"
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Published volumes of prose.
The Poet's Progress. (London, Faber. 1930)
Present Without Leave. (London, Cassell, 1939)
Margaret McMillan. A Memoir. (London, Hutchinson. 1948)
Verse drama.
Prose: individual articles published as booklets.

The Stream (1933, 1934?) set in type but apparently never issued.


Prose in other publications.

(i) Journalistic articles contributed to The Press, Christchurch, during Cresswell's time in England, 1921-1927. (vide p 31.)

"English Heroes and Poets". 16 October, 27 October, 1926. 22 January, 22 April, 1927.

articles on the British Museum. 9 April, 16 April, 30 April, 21 May, 28 May 6 August, 13 August, 20 August, 27 August 1927.

"The Building of Britain". 3 September, 10 September 1927.

"Scenery and Drama". 24 September, 1 October, 8 October, 15 October, 22 October, 1927.

Ludwig's "Napoleon". 19 November, 1927.

(ii) "My Life Abroad" (later published as The Poet's Progress) The Press, Christchurch

16 June, 23 June, 30 June, 7 July, 14 July, 21 July, 4 August, 18 August, 1 September, 15 September, 29 September, 13 October, 1928.

(iii) "The Poet's Progress. II" (later published as the first part of Present Without Leave) The Press, Christchurch.


The series concluded with what was later published as section CLXII of Present Without Leave. Two sonnets, each entitled "For Their Dear Sake" and signed W. D'A. C. were printed in The Press (as a placatory gesture?) 23 April, 7 May, 1932.
(iv) Three extracts from the "Thesis", in *The Auckland Star*.

5 August, 12 August, 26 August, 1933.

(v) contributions to *Tomorrow*, vide J.J. Herd. "An Index to *Tomorrow*," (Otago University, 1962) 7 items.

(vi) Five extracts from the proposed third volume of the autobiography (never published) in *The New Zealand Listener*.


Other prose cited.


reply to a review article by M.K. Joseph, in which the question of homosexuality is treated, *Landfall* 22 December, 1959, pp 384 - 385.

Published material, not printed.

edited Helen Shaw (Mrs Helen Hofmann) *The Puritan and the Wairarapa*.

cyclostyled tribute to Frank Sargason.


Unpublished material.

WTu MSS 170. All the papers found in Cresswell's home after his death, together with some from New Zealand sources, were lodged with the Alexander Turnbull Library in mid 1961. These papers have been catalogued into 106 folios, with an index compiled by the Library. All citations in the text of this thesis refer to that catalogue.

Correspondence is arranged in the first 17 folios, with sub-division by pages up to page 402, and in folios 103 (passim) and 104 - 106, these latter without pages enumerated.

Items specifically referred to in the text of this thesis (other than the correspondence) are listed below.
items (19) (20) notebooks containing the notes for Margaret McMillan.

" (33) (36) (86) drafts and variants of eighteen of the Lyttelton Harbour sonnets.

" (20) notebook containing poems apparently 1912-15.

" (36) Typescript booklet of poems, dedicated to Arthur Trywern Apsimon; possibly the MSS submitted to John Murray in 1919.

" (42) Three two page typescript leaflets, apparently part of the number Cresswell had when he began selling his poems in 1925. Described p 26, note (1.)

" (54) Seven single leaf poems, off-prints from Wells Gardner, Darton, apparently supplied to Cresswell for his itinerant sales prior to the publication of Poems 1921-1927.

" (24) (57) Two copies of "Twelve Poems". cyclostyled in the P.O.W. Spiegligl-Verlag, Egypt, 1947.

" (74) "Since Byron: an anthology with a thesis."

" (83) (84) proofs of The Stream.

" (101) (102) Newsclippings of reviews of Cresswell's work.

Other sources.

Correspondence in the possession of Mrs Helen Hofmann, and Mr Roderick Finlayson. One letter in the possession of Mr Frank Sargeson.

Typescript copy of "Since Byron: an anthology with a thesis." in the possession of Mr Roderick Finlayson. Cf WTu MSS 170 (74).

ARTHUR REX DUGARD FAIRBURN.

Published poetry and prose.

All items with the exception of the Collected Poems, edited by Denis Glover (Christchurch, The Pegasus Press, 1965.) are cited according to their listing in Olive Johnson. A.R.D. Fairburn: A Bibliography of his Published Work. (University of Auckland, monograph series No 3, 1958)

Unpublished material.

(i) Correspondence. letters of A.R.D. Fairburn, collected by Mr Denis Glover. Now lodged in the Alexander Turnbull Library Micro MSS collection.

letters of Geoffrey de Montalk to A.R.D. Fairburn, (1926-1930) ibid.

(iii) Ephemera, photographs, paintings by Fairburn, in the University of Auckland Library.

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End of Day (Christchurch, The Caxton Press. 1936)

This Dark Will Lighten, Selected Poems 1923 - 41 (Christchurch, The Caxton Press. 1941)


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all other published items are listed in J.E. Traue, "A preliminary checklist of works by and about R.A.K. Mason" (vide Secondary sources, unpublished.)

Unpublished material (see Introductory note to this section)

MSS in the possession of Mr Mason:

Poetry: the postulated collection "Second Book of Kells" -

"Lullaby and Nook-Verse"

"Nux Perpetua Dormienda"

"Arius Prays"

"Failure" (As I passed the old house just now)

"Away is flown each petty rag of cloud"

untitled - (Does not your sluggish pulse redouble)

"Nails and a Cross"

"Nows Along the Sea-Coast" (Travelled by the sea-coast way,)

"From the Greek" (Serenity as evening when the winds are still)

"Sonnet" (Come out my soul from the dark wood of thought)
"She Kept Cows"
"Ad Mariam"
"The Unperdonable Sin" (As I lay there stiff with drink) (signed P.W.D. the pseudonym occasionally used in The People's Voice.)
"Fool I've Been To Fashion"
"On A Dead Cripple"
"The Seventh Wound Protests" (2 versions)

Play scripts:

"This Bird May Swing"
"Escape At All Costs"
"They Should Be Slaves"
"The Man From Verstchagninski"

miscellaneous.

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Charles Brasch, Ormond Wilson, Kendrick Smithyman, Denis Glover, and those members of the staff of the University of Auckland whose help is acknowledged in the Preface to this thesis.