Poets versus novelists in Australia, 1949-1960 : Frank Hardy and James McAuley

Legislators of Reaction - poets versus novelists in Australia, 1949-1960: Frank Hardy and James McAuley

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On St. Patrick's Day, 1946, in the Supreme Court of Victoria, the Crown Prosecutor, Leo Little KC, rose to his feet before the presiding judge, Sir Edmund Herring, Chief Justice. It had been a long case, counsel and justice had delivered their final addresses, and the jury had retired to consider their verdict, which most observers anticipated would be favourable to the accused, a hitherto obscure novelist named Robert Close.

The trial had hinged on whether the term 'rutting' in fact meant 'fucking', and if so what a rutting gesture might be. It was also revealed that the Melbourne booksellers Robertson and Mullens had returned the entire consignment of Close's novel, Love Me Sailor, but considered James Joyce's Ulysses, then still banned by Australian customs, quite suitable for major display in their shop window. At this point His Honour mildly enquired: "James Joyce's Ulysses? I do not know the book - it is a translation?" Within an hour Robertson and Mullens had removed Joyce from their window and restacked the books under the counter, thus combining morality with continuing profitability.

So far, things had not gone well for the prosecution, but they were about to change this situation. "On Monday last ..." intoned the prosecutor, "a man ... left the court in company with the foreman of the jury". The man, he explained, was a literary critic known to both the author and the publisher.

The man was Ian Mair, who as a public servant had found time light on his hands since finishing a wartime history of the Navy Department, and had filled the wanton hours listening to the trial of his old mate Bob Close. He soon afterwards ceased to be a public servant. On the first day of the trial, however, he had recognised the foreman of the jury as someone he had had business with, and had had a beer with him on the strength of it. The Crown had known of this encounter for four days, but had said nothing until they had heard the entire case for the defence. On the prosecutor raising the matter, Sir Edmund Herring decided that he had no option but to discharge the jury and order a new trial. At the second trial the Crown avoided the pits into which they had fallen during the first. Close was convicted and sentenced to a fine of £500 and imprisonment for three months. The Victorian Inspector-General of Prisons, Mr. A.R. Whatmore, responded to criticism of the way Close was led away from the courts in handcuffs by proclaiming that he would be treated exactly the same as any other prisoner. This meant, he explained, that he would be allowed two visitors a week and would be

allowed to write only letters of a personal or domestic kind. Asked for the regulations which justified this regime, he replied: "What regulations stipulate it? I say it. I am the authority." [1]

In sentencing Close, the trial judge asserted that "The morals of the community, especially the youth of the community, are to be safeguarded at least as strictly as its property ..." The judge for this second trial was Mr. Justice Martin, who five years later was to preside over another notable case, the trial of Frank Hardy on a charge of obscene libel, the same charge of which Close had been found guilty. These were the only alleged two cases of this offence which had come before judge and jury in Victoria in this century.[2]

The importance of the Love Me Sailor Case, apart from its effect on Close, whom it drove into "Self-imposed exile"[3] for 25 years, was to provide a precedent for arraigning Hardy on a charge of obscene libel in his novel Power Without Glory, and to show the lengths to which the establishment would use legal processes to prevent any challenge to accepted ideas. Yet both Close's and Hardy's novels are in fact extremely conservative, certainly by the standards of Ulysses. The location of close's novel on a windjammer, albeit on a weatherbeaten relic plying the guano trade from South America in the interwar years, is

in itself an appeal to nostalgia through the invocation of a way of life now dead. As realist fiction, particularly in its description of the storm and of the skills men bring into play to resist the extreme trials brought on them by the forces of nature, the book is good. Insofar as it is a study of how character arises from this situation it convinces, but the central theme of the plot, the challenge of a femme fatale to this enclosed male society, is shallow romance. It reinforces the myths of destructive female sexuality, but it does also convey some of the variety of male secuality, and combats the myth of the sexless male hero of the working class. It is presumably this element of the novel, rather than its particular vocabulary, which so affronted the prosecutors and jurymen.

Similarly, the true offence given by Power Without Glory was not the alleged legal offence committed by Frank Hardy, that he "did maliciously publish of and concerning the informant [Mrs. Ellen Wren] a defamatory libel", to wit, that the character Nellie West, who could be identified with Mrs. Wren, had seduced a married man and had a child by him. The real offence of Hardy was that he showed government not as a contest between differing views settled by the periodic arbitration of a democratic electorate, but as an interlocking series of conspiracies by powerful men maintaining their interests. The full weight of the law had therefore to be

brought to bear lest this distorted view corrupted the populace and destroyed their confidence in democracy and their chosen leaders.

Yet in fact Close and Hardy occupied the same mental world as their accusers, a world dominated by the mythology of nineteenth century colonial capitalism society inwhich the individual who understands his world can change it. Close's ship of individuals seeking to achieve their separate ambitions through collective endeavour is for a time corrupted by the irrationality of passion, but the agent of corruption is finally drowned and the men can go their own ways. Hardy's novel chronicles the evolution of a society rather than the voyage of a single ship, and consequently his invididuals content with the forces of production rather than those of nature. The only collectivity that he explores, the Labor movement, is shown to be as corrupt and as susceptible to manipulation by the strong man as are the adirect victims of capitalism, whether in its form of rentier, of industrialist, or of financier. Given the form of the work as a nineteenth century realist novel of fortune it could scarcely show anything else. Its view of reality must be that of John West, and it can differ from him, and from its legal opponents, only in its distribution of praise and blame among the characters.

The real challenge to this realist fiction was to come neither from lawyers nor from politicians, but from writers who were able to accept its limitations, its view of reality. From one direction the challenge came from writers like Judith Wright, whose concern for the springs of human sexuality led them to what might be termed an environmental understanding of the individual and history. The writers whose challenge I am presently concerned with are those who rejected the realist belief in the individual as master of his own fortune in favour of a feeling towards the way he finds himself through the acceptance of order and tradition. Representative of these is James McAuley, yet his earliest work is characterized by a profound sense of disorder.

In his first collection, 'Under Aldebaran' (1946) we find both an ambivalence about the relationship of the speaker to his community and a recurring dizziness in which the environment threatens to dissolve. Steadiness is achieved only in love, art, or religion, all seen as an escape from the burden of self. Thus, in 'Envoi', the speaker regrets his inability to escape his lodgement in a land whose "people are hard-eyed, kindly, with nothing inside them", and finds that "Beauty" is "order and good chance" which humans merely "impede", yet at the same time admits that the triumphs of the land are "hard-won", presumably by the human labour which brings together the "gush of waters, the lean plough, the fretful seed" of the closing line.[4]

A similar contradiction is found in 'The Blue Horses', where the hooves of the horses threatened to destroy not only "a world gone bad", in which "the garbage-plot, / The refuse and the greasy tins / Of this slum-culture" are set against "The area where love begins", but also " . . . the spiritual mills / That weave a universe from our decay". Certainly, this last phrase is itself ambivalent, its meaning changing according to whether we regard the mills as causing the decay or as creating their universe in the face of decay. The suggestion that the "spiritual mills" cause the decay is reinforced in the dream as

> The specious outline crumbles at the shock
> Of visionary hooves, and in dismay
> Men hide among the tumbled images.

The ambivalence however returns as day dawns and men wake to the world of work:

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

This suggestion of a beauty created through work is however destroyed by the purpose to which the work is directed, "To furnish the supplies of war", and by man's vain desire to possess.

> He that possesses is possessed
> And falsifies perception lest
> The visionary hooves break through
> The simple seeming world he knew.

The vision of the horses becomes a wishful dream of the dissolution of the concrete world and its problems.

A similar vision appears in the 'The Incarnation of Sirius' and even in 'Chorale', ostensibly a poem celebrating the parallel orders of nature and art, whose patterns only precariously hold chaos in check, as order itself comes close to delirium.

The universe becomes an algebraic
Choir of symbols, dance and counterdance,
Colours and forms in shimmering mosaic:
Man enters it as an inheritance.

Entering on this inheritance, man is able to see the world "as the sun beheld it on creation", but the sense of dizziness remains, the very act of praise distorts the truth

as maps do in projection:
The centre gives a perfect azimuth
But other bearings have a false direction.

The poem closes on an image of the artist as witness of prophet, but while he maintains his stability all else is chaos.

When the delirium swirls within the gyre,
And comets die, and iron voices wake,
Be witness to the sun; and mounting higher
Hold the lamp steady, though creation shake.

McAuley's image of the poet is not that of a creator or maker, but of a visionary and discoverer, a solitary who

leaves behind the mess of this world to find true order outside and beyond. This cast of mind was to lead to his artistic commitment to a formal prosody and his personal commitment to a religion which imposed order on his chaos of feelings.

'Philoctetes', the final poem in his selection from Under Aldebaran, dramatizes such a commitment in Philoctetes' refusal of the demand that he quit the island on which he has been marooned and join Ulysses and Neoptelemus in prosecuting the seige of Troy. McAuley varies the legend by making the wound self-inflicted, although the hero does not understand why he has so acted. At the opening of the poem he is shown as experiencing, despite his pain and bewilderment, a devine patterning of order.

Alone on the echoing island, I see the spring
Move through the matter of being like a wave,
A pattern of the mind, the body of Venus dancing.

At the end of the poem McAuley again changes the myth by having Philoctetes defy the gods as well as men, and choose to remain in his solitude and true to himself rather than to involve himself again in history.

Hard choice, between this barren pain upon a rock,
And fellowship of kind and hope of home.
. . .- The myths are lies.
. . .
Men must either bear their guilt and weakness

Or be a servile instrument to powers
That darken knowledge and corrupt the heart.
I shall not go:
Let them resolve the legend as they will.

The ending is secular, submission to one's true nature rather than, as in McAuley's later work, to that true nature which is revealed in God. Yet, as we have seen in the opening lines, the gods are at least implicit on Philoctetes' island, and in choosing to remain in this order the speaker rejects not only purposive action but also, explicitly, fellowship.

This puts McAuley in direct opposition to the faith in collective action and purposive work which sustained the realist writers in the post-war years. As explained in the first issue of The Realist Writer in 1952, these writers sought their inspiration in folk lore and ballads, and in "the image of an Australian tradition of mateship, of standing together against the exploitation of tyrants."[5] Believing that "capitalism, with American and British warmongers at the head", was entering "the last phase of its existance", they set themselves against poets "obsessed with the ideas of death and corruption" and novelists who "consistently spread a defeatist philosophy about life or else turn hopelessly to the loneliness of their ivory towers". Against this defeatism they set the realists who painted "word pictures of life as it was lived". In the modern age however even this realism was not sufficient. The article continues:

"Proust and James Joyce and Virginia Woolf may at first impress us as realists in the sense that they endeavour to analyse the flow of conscious thoughts of their characters. But their detailed probing has no more important purpose than to show indecision, futility, boredom, escape. It does not help us to a clearer view of the society in which these men and women are supposed to move. We are not made aware of the significant struggles that are continually shaping man's destiny. We do not see the ordinary people engaged in these struggles . . ." The anonymous author goes on to argue that the only realism valid "today under capitalism is social realism." Its works "are not marked by pessimism and despair because their authors have an understanding of the processes of history and they know that the future is with the people." He concludes that the social realist writer will identify with the people's struggles and "write as a partisan, a spokesman" for working men and women, and against the "black reaction and ruthless corruption of day to day issues like the imposition of the Crimes Act and the treachery of strike breakers". This sudden slide from the universal to the contingent is characteristic, and was no doubt one reason for the split in consciousness between the writer and the activist which Hardy was later to complain characterised his life at this time. As examination of his first novel, Power Without Glory[6] shows however that this divided consciousness afflicts the writing itself, preventing it from embodying either its author's faith in the common man or a consciousness of the struggles and conflicts in which he was involved.

Hardy had become involved in writing while he was in the army, apparently at the prompting of Ambrose Dyson. After he was demobbed, he conceived the idea of syndicating his tales about the working man to the journals of the working man's unions. He was advised to see George Seelaf, then Victorian Secretary of the Butchers' Union, so he took himself along to the union offices in the Trades Hall, and after waiting a while there entered the room "an affable, thickset and -- it must be admitted -- extremely ugly-looking man of doubtful age." Hardy put his idea to Seelaf, who "screwed up his wrinkled face in what passed for a smile but made him look even more like an ape and said: 'I've been trying to din the idea into their heads around here for years: writing for the working class. If you can supply the stories I can supply the journals." Thus Hardy began his major writing career committed both to a subject and an audience. Shortly afterwards, Seelaf, whom Hardy was later to immortalize as the 'Fellow Slave", arranged to pay him £5 a week as advertising salesman for the Butchers' Journal to sustain him while he was working on Power Without Glory.[7]

Hardy claimed that the model for Power Without Glory came from Balzac's 'Human Comedy', although he dissents from Balzac's belief in Religion and Monarchy and his view of "the depraved tendencies in man". Rather, Hardy explains, Power Without Glory is the first of a series of novels "planned to give a picture of the mainstream of Australian

life in the twentieth century", and written "in the light of the fundamental historical fact of our times -- that the social order of capitalism, having served its historical purpose, is convulsively passing, to be replaced by a higher social order, Socialism, under which the "depraved tendencies of man" will slowly disappear and his unlimited worth and grandeur will be fully realised." His series will not, he adds, "advocate class struggle: it will recognise its existence."[8]

The opening chapter of Power Without Glory gives promise of fulfilling this ambition. The sovereign spinning between John West and Constable Brogan provides exactly the right symbol for the theme of the book, but the scene is also socially and psychologically authentic. The conflict within the policeman between greed and duty is fully dramatised as his eyes follow the coin, and as West flips it away and the policeman grabs it we sense West's feeling of vindicating power. As the author shows us John West walking briskly off down Jackson Street, he deftly enlarges the focus of this story to set this particular incident in its physical and social context. West runs alongside one of the recently installed cable trams, leaps on board the dummy, and, as he is born through a Carringbush carrying the signs both of the interrupted boom of the 1880s and of the depression which has succeeded it, he naturally reflects on his own origins and his career up to this turning point in his fortunes.

> Life in Carringbush and heredity had imposed on John West the humble, the furtive and the sordid aspects of life.
>
> His family was among the poorest in the squalid, poverty-stricken suburb. His friends were the workers, the workless, and the larrikins.
>
> When he and his two brothers were boys, the police often found cause to call at the house . . .

The historical materialism and sense of class in the passage are impeccable, but they belong absolutely within the unfolding narrative. They lay the basis for the hopeless sense of being trapped which Hardy develops first through his brief history of the West family and then in the scene where the West brothers and their mates in despair play a desultory game of poker in the back shed. This game provides the occasion for West's disclosure of his plan to break out of the trap by running an illegal and crooked book, and for Eddie Corrigan's challenge to it. Corrigan, the unionist, points out correctly that West offers hope only at the expense of their equally desperate mates. As an alternative, the union offers the hope of collective resistance to the bosses. In the conflict between these alternatives lies the germ of a novel which could have fulfilled Hardy's purpose of revealing the underlying pattern of social history and "the clash of wills resulting in events that none willed".[9] In fact, however, Hardy shirks the conflict, choosing instead to follow the events of West's career. In so doing, he succeeds in showing us how circumstances affect feelings of happiness or despair but he fails to show how anything could have been otherwise.

The dangers are already indicated even in the opening paragraph of the novel, where we are told that the policeman's "small, unintelligent eyes followed the flight of the coin". The constable is thus characterised, filed in his allotted place, before he is allowed to have a character. The characters of most of the other people who make a choice in this chapter are similarly already formed. Their choice will affect their future way of life, but it will not change them as people. Again, the politicians and policemen and businessmen who appear later in the novel are each given only the one choice, to bend to West's schemes or to be broken. Even Nelly West's infamous adultery, although presented as an act of rebellion, seems more like the filling of a void than the choice of a different pattern of life.[10]

Hardy's problem is that his underlying ideology is so absolute that it will allow literally no action of human value to succeed before the revolution has come. In the meantime, the individual can obtain material advantage only at the expense of his fellows. This is essentially the world of the nineteenth century realists, of Dickens or Balzac, except that in Hardy's case no benevolent can offset the effects of avarice or order temper it. It is not just that Hardy cannot imagine an alternative to the power of money; his structure will not allow him even to entertain such a possibility. Thus, once he has made his first choice, all that remains for West through the rest of the novel is

to learn the joys and limitations of financial power over the others - his first choice made, he is thenceforth a victim of necessity. Although Corrigan appears incidentally from time to time as a kind of counter-point to West's scheming, we do not follow him through his career as a unionist, which could have provided a possibly tragic theme. The unionists involved in the later action of the novel have already failed and become mere venal trades hall operatives. Only at the end of the novel does Hardy try to show a real alternative in Mary West's defiance of her father to join the communists in the struggles for peace and against fascism, but these are presented in such an idealised and generalised fashion that we can believe in them no more than we believe in Dickens' visions of domestic bliss in rose-covered cottages.

The power of the novel rests on the way that power takes hold of John West once he has made his initial choice. Through West this power takes over the reader, so that we perforce admire the steely determination with which West sweeps aside every obstacle, enmiring himself ever more deeply in a slough of deceit, corruption and violence as he does so. It is easy to see why the book, read as an historical document, so upset the establishment. Yet this historicity is one of its problems. It is not only that Hardy finds it necessary to impose his judgement on people so that we will not forget the historical pattern as when he

introduces the Premier, Thomas Bond, with the explanation that "as leader of the Conservative Government [he] was concerned only to advance the interests of business men, bankers and squatters" (pp.178-9). More seriously we find ourselves reading scenes with an eye to their factual rather than their imaginative truth, wondering whether the historial Archbishop Mannix played this part in this conspiracy or whether it belongs only to his fictional counterpart.[11] The interest ilicited thus becomes that appropriate to gossip rather than to a fictional discovery of the underlying structures of society. Instead of discovery, we are given an assertion that these superficial acts of violence or intrigue are all that matter, and that the only thing hidden is the line of command.

The success of Hardy's novel is to show us how the power of money can, below the apparently random sequence of events that constitute history, weave its own patterns of control. Particular episodes, such as the physical intimidation of the sporting journalist Clive Parker, carry a conviction which takes us beyond questions of whether they are literal fact or imaginative fiction - whether or not this particular journalist was treated in this way. Hardy creates a situation in which any individual journalist must be defeated, but because the episode is located so specifically in a particular context it can neither operate as a metaphor for the wider society nor help the reader to understand the function of sport within that society.

Although, both at his trial and, vehemently, in Voices Off, Hardy was to deny that Power Without Glory was a roman à clef, this remains its most important quality. Yet paradoxically this insistence on literal fact removes it from imaginative truth. Apart from West himself, the characters who might offer us hope are condemned by their history to be presented to us either as utterly weak, like Frank Ashton, or as impossibly idealistic, like Ben Worth. Hardy's schema is essentially apocalyptic, so that those who continue to work in the system must thereby have betrayed their ideals, and those who seek change outside it have not had to encounter a revolution that betrays them. His characters thus lack the tragic dimension of those whose authors have known a revolution, such as Paskernak or Nadezdhda Mandelstam, or who have accepted bourgeois society as offering the hope of fulfilment, as did Henry Handel Richardson. Even in But the Dead Are Many,[12] probably the best account in English of how a man of integrity could accept the dictates of Stalinism, the absence of this dimension of possibility denies the work its aspiration to tragic status. It remains a documentary.

Power Without Glory must be seen as a part of the problem it describes as much as a response to it. Its limitations can be seen if we compare it with the work of one of Hardy's fellow members of the Realist Writers' Group, John Morrison. To take just two of Morrisons stories:

'Going Through' is primarily a tribute to the power of union solidarity, which it realizes more effectively than anywhere in Hardy's writing. Its effectiveness however depends to a great extent on the way Morrison also creates the terrifying and totalitarian force of mob violence embodied in the union when it turns against the individual who has defied it. Similarly, 'Battle of the Flowers' derives its force from the loving care with which Morrison describes the human creativity whose perversion leads to an epic of destruction. The domestic wasteland which results can be seen as a symbol of the consequences of the way in which urban industrial society frustrates human creativity.

Because Morrison's stories contain their own opposites they transcend the immediate circumstances they describe and stand alone as works which go beyond the description of reality to the establishment of patterns which reveal the forces shaping reality. This occurs not despite but because Morrison uses the most traditional narrative form. This form enables him to move from the experience of his characters - often as seen by an observer or a participant who is slighly aside from the central action - into the apprehended consciousness of the main actors and thence into the forces which shape this consciousness. His work is based on a trust in experience which is completely lacking in either Hardy, who must explain experience in terms of conspiracy, or in his political and artistic opposite, McAuley, who flies it into the pattern of imposed artistic form.

The 'Ballade of Lost Phrases' in McAuley's earliest collection, with its Envoi

Comrades, we argued, fought and swore:
We might as well have stick to beer.
The Japanese are in Johore
- Where are the phrases of yesteryear?

shows his then distrust for those who would impose the glib patterns of political slogans on the unfolding processes of history, but his later work can be seen as a search, not indeed for a mere phrase, but for a pattern which would make tolerable his experience of history. He is not prepared to risk the vertigo of events.

Yet to turn from Hardy, or even Morrison, to McAuley is to enter a recognizably modern world in which, because there are no certainties, the stakes are higher. Hardy's characters create their own history, whereas McAuley's, explorers rather than makers, must discover theirs in order to possess it, and through it, themselves. Yet the order they discover is static, their history not so much arising from the past as trapped within it. The only option he allows to the human is to re-enact the eternal. As he has explained, this emphasis on the cyclic is in part a reflection of his deliberate rejection of "the myth of revolution", but with that rejection goes a refusal of all meaningful action.[12] His heroes do not act; from Prometheus to Quiros they endure events and wait on time to reveal its own purposes. In this they have much in common with the leading characters of the novels Patrick White was writing at this time.

This pattern appears most clearly in McAuley's 'Celebration of Divine Love'. Many of the poems in the volume in which appeared, A Vision of Ceremony [1956], leave the human world for the world of plants and birds, from which McAuley constructs an antipodean version of traditional Christian symbology, in which the palm comes to stand for the Tree of Life, and the fortunately named and splendidly plumaged Bird of Paradise for the Holy Spirit. In the 'Celebration' he uses a similar pattern of symbols as a framework against which he traces the course of a life which is at once individual and universal, the life of one man and the story of the human race.

The early stanzas enact the progress of the individual from his first awakening to the joy of creation around him and discovery of the fruitfulness of the earth. Then in the fourth stanza the growing unease overwhelms him as "in the sexual night the waters rave, / Drowned earth is mingled with a sky of mud". From this he escapes into the false hopes of Babylon, where he "learns to live, as the enlightened should, / The desecrated life" and to "enjoy the sweet fruition of all earthly good." Yet, if his earlier joy was destroyed first by apprehensions of division and loneliness, and then by the violence of sexuality, this later false peace is dissipated not by any failing of its own, but by a voice singing of another world, symbolized by Jerusalem. The later part of the poem celebrates the wakening of the individual in his inner life

to the sense of this transcendental world. The poem thus anticipates the closing vision of 'Captain Quiros', where McAuley has the explorer foresee an Australia where men see "their Mother . . . holding in her lap / The head of Antichrist", and redeemed only by the incense and devotion of the just who

> . . . shall live by faith without the aid
> Of custom that bound man to heaven and earth,
> Estranged within the city man has made . . .

In both poems, as indeed throughout his work, the theme is the abandonment of effort in the outer world in favour of a private life in which the old pieties are kept alive by order and sacrifice.

If however we examine the imagery of 'Celebration' we find that the pattern of redemption is curiously static. The child in 'surprised by joy' as he "names the creatures in his father's bower" or watches

> Where creaking carts, lurching beneath the grain,
> Deepen the winding ruts as the slow wheels turn;
> And chatter rises round the grinding quern;
> And bees within their murmuring temples hive
> Merit . . .

The imagery is embodied in a rhythm which animates the life it captures. Similarly, the fierce energy of adolescent sexuality, when "cresting the abyssal wave / Leviathan uprears a hundred heads / to bellow over the destructive tide", is full of the violence of destruction. But redemption

is portrayed like a mediaeval figure painting, in which the discrete colours and static images form a pattern but do not interact either with each other or with the observer. They are to be contempleted only.

> The figure on Eternity's gold ground,
> Behold Christ's reigning on the cosmic tree,
> His blood its sap, his breath its respiration.
> In him are all things in perfection found.

In mediaeval paintings, as in mediaeval poetry, hell always gapes at the base or in the borders; the pattern, while static, embraces all. In McAuley it is removed from its context, becomes a private retreat from the terros of public life.

We can of course follow Vivian Smith in explaining this quality of McAuley's poetry in terms of his unhappy childhood, just as we can explain Hardy's work in terms of his deprived youth. This explanation in terms of personal history can explain motive, but it is not sufficient to explain the forms in which the writer gives expression to his feelings and beliefs. In the case of Hardy, I would suggest that the form available to him, the fictitious chronicle of an individual life, did not correspond to his ideology and was inadequate to express the realities of corporate capitalism, and therefore limited him to the superficial details of peripheral elements of cultural and political life. McAuley similarly could find neither form

nor belief to contain the sense of vertigo he felt in contemplating the modern work, and so retreated into static forms and a personal religion. Both these responses, I suggest, represent the collapse of individual confidence and hope in a postwar world characterised by triumphal scientism underpinning global states on which the individual could get no toehold. The cold war abroad and sterile ideological conflict at home were among the political counterparts of these literary responses.