



THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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# The 'WANDERING ISLANDS' A.D. HOPE Centenary Conference

17-20 July 2007

Venue: Old Canberra House, ANU

## ABSTRACTS and BIOGRAPHIES

**Emma Carmody**  
*Université Michel de Montaigne*

## HOPE, PSYCHOANALYSIS AND SURREALISM

In his 1979 essay entitled *Surrealism and Hope's 'Unashamed Materialism'*, Humphrey McQueen describes the poet as 'a Freudian who detested Freud'. While Hope's views regarding the inadequacies of psychoanalysis are well documented (our starting point being *The Return to the Freudian Islands*), relatively little scholarship has been dedicated to the synergies between his oeuvre and psychoanalytic theory. This paper will explore some of those synergies, with a view to highlighting the tacit connection between aspects of Hope's poetry and the surrealist movement.

While it is common practice to limit the tenets of surrealism to André Breton's 1924 *Manifeste de Surréalisme*, it is arguable that Breton's manifesto was aspirational, as opposed to exhaustive, and that the movement came to define and redefine itself over time through its creative output. Moreover, to the extent that it sought to destabilise bourgeois morality, its goal was social reform, as opposed to artistic revolution.

It is clear that Hope was avowedly anti-surrealist. It is also clear that obvious disparities exist between his poetry and ideological convictions, and those of the surrealists. However, in light of the more liberal definition offered above, it is arguable that his use of imagery, evocation of dreamscapes and most importantly his acerbic satirical bent are to a certain extent in harmony with the surrealist movement.

### **Biography:**

Emma Carmody is completing her PhD in creative writing and French under an Internationale Cotutelle de Thèse between the University of Adelaide and L'Université Michel de Montaigne, Bordeaux III. Emma's poetry and fiction have appeared in a number of Australian and international journals, including *The Australian Book Review* and *Scrivener's Pen Literary Journal*. Forthcoming publications include a translation of Apollinaire's 'Le Musicien de Saint Merry' in the November edition of *New Translations* (City University, New York) and two essays exploring the poetry of Peter Porter in the *Companion to Twentieth Century British Poetry* (Facts on File, 2007). She is also a qualified lawyer specialising in environmental law.

Anne Collett  
*University of Wollongong*

## NATIVE COMPANIONS, UNEASY BEDFELLOWS: ALEC HOPE AND JUDITH WRIGHT

Taking their respective commentaries on each other's work, the Australian Writers series on Judith Wright by Hope (1975) and 'A.D. Hope' by Wright published in *Preoccupations in Australian Poetry* in 1965, as a starting point, this paper seeks to illuminate the poets' understanding of each other – their differences and their common ground – with particular focus on their understanding of the craft of poetry, the role of the poet in society and the function of literary criticism. Of particular interest to me is the part they played in the creation of a modern Australian poetics – the influence of Romanticism and the battle with Modernism [the attitude toward modernity and the significance given nature] and the difference sex [and gender] makes [in their poetry, in the critical reception of their work, and in the place accorded them and the place they accord others in the Australian literary canon].

### **Biography:**

Anne Collett teaches in the English Literatures program at the University of Wollongong and is editor of *Kunapipi: journal of postcolonial writing*. She has published widely on 20th century english-language poetry and is currently working (with Dorothy Jones) on a comparative study of Judith Wright and Canadian painter, Emily Carr.

**Didier Coste**  
*Université Michel de Montaigne*

## THE WORLD DIMENSION OF INWARDNESS, OR 'THERE IS NOTHING MYSTERIOUS ABOUT POETRY'

'Poetry is not mysterious and yet it is a mystery,' retorts Hope to himself in the last essay of his *New Cratylus*.

Many years ago a young woman very dear to my heart had left open a first edition of *The Wandering Islands* where she should have stood in our lovers' nest in Chippendale, Sydney, for me to read 'Pygmalion' and try to make sense of her missing our afternoon rendezvous. I did understand something, which soon took the shape of fear and the sense of always imminent loss. Ever since I have tried to understand more and seek the special form that would suit and produce such comprehension in progress of the real. The scene was not only absolutely intimate and motivated, as I was told a day later, by a most private story line, it was also entirely *local*: its meaning and meaninglessness, its tragic beauty and the desperate joy of sharing all of it, belonged to a unique here and now. And yet, the uniqueness of this scene, just as the singularity of the poem that was read there by a hurt and bewildered stranger instantly turned him into a no-longer-stranger, into someone who would from now on belong to that place and time as a necessary part of the whole world, and belong to the whole world insofar as it included this place and time from where my beloved had gone missing and the poem was sitting instead, not being her but saying the world which had made both her existence and her absence possible and actual.

There is nothing contradictory or paradoxical in that perception any more than in the two statements quoted above. Let us rewrite them as follows: 'There is nothing cosmic about poetry. Poetry is not cosmic and yet it is a world.'

The Australianness or un-Australianness of A.D. Hope has been much debated, on the very same superficial basis as his supposed male chauvinist, conservative and anti-modern attitudes, by critics who have never bothered to look seriously into either the texture of his poetry or the deeper claims of his own essays, his poetics and his mimetics, his theory of action and his theory of (worded) perception. This is why it would be misleading to invoke another last essay, 'How it looks to an Australian' to either defend him against accusations of alien metaphysical and egotistic pretensions or accuse him of some ingrained parochialism. What Hope blames the author of *Kangaroo* for is his lack of observation of Australian people and the sloppiness of his craft in this novel, what he marvels at is his sensitivity to the landscape and the presence effect of his dreamlike rendering of this landscape. Hope's implicit and explicit *artes poeticae* (in his poetry itself and in the essays in poetics) as well as many of his critical pieces dedicated to modern and pre-modern writers, are full of converging clues that point at the remarkable coherence and consistency, without rigidity, of his art and his philosophy of art. Similarly his many alternately erudite and popular references to baroque musicians, neo-classical critics and *poètes maudits* can all be brought under a 'one world' umbrella to which the uniqueness of historically and geographically located experience is central.

Through a new reading of some of Hope's most famous poems, informed by his own highly conscious investigation of the genesis of the poem and its dialogical power, I shall thus attempt to show how the world dimension of Hope's poetry, his world stature as a poet results not from some sort of 'magic' but from a self-reflexive inwardness which harnesses the craft of poetry along with the not so random labour of the poet's 'dream-workers', as he calls them. This inwardness is not the abstract gesture of a great wanderer of the imaginary, but one deeply rooted in the realistic perception of the world sample that it was given to the poet to know first hand. It is also this empirical and self-conscious historicity that makes A.D. Hope a modern materialist poet for the next century, away from the regressive

complacency in mysterious workings of the mind and the world that he denounced in surrealism or the imagists alike.

### **Biography:**

Didier Coste, currently Professor of Comparative Literature at Michel de Montaigne University, Bordeaux, and Professor of French and Comparative Literature at the University of Sfax (Tunisia), is a French-born Australian citizen. Best known as an academic for his work in narrative theory (*Narrative as Communication*, 1989), his main field of research for the last ten years has been aesthetic responses to cultural globalization, with special dedication to modern and contemporary India (*Conversations with Hanuman*, forthcoming). As a practicing poet, novelist and literary translator, and as an editor and publisher, he has nevertheless been constantly involved in the poetics of poetry, especially through his militant reflection on poetic formalism. His literary work, from 1973 onwards, has been deeply marked by his Australian sojourn and continued commitment to the mental and physical landscape of the great island: *Vita Australis* (1977 and 1981) and the bilingual novel *Days in Sydney* (published in France, 2005) are two of the books that bear witness to it. At present, he is preparing, among other things, the first bilingual French anthology of A.D. Hope's poetry; the final state of some of his verse translations of the major poems was pre-published in 2006 in Michel Deguy's journal *Poésie*.

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**Kevin Hart**

*University of Virginia*

## **SUSANNAH WITHOUT THE CHERUB**

This paper proposes a close reading of A. D. Hope's poem 'The Double Looking Glass.' What role does the biblical narrative of Susannah and the elders play in the poem? In what sense is the poem a 'religious poem'? These are the questions chiefly to be discussed.

### **Biography:**

Kevin Hart is Edwin B. Kyle Professor of Christian Studies at the University of Virginia, where he teaches in the Department of Religious Studies and the Department of English. He is the author of *The Trespass of the Sign* (Cambridge UP), *A. D. Hope* (Oxford UP), *Samuel Johnson and the Culture of Property* (Cambridge UP), *Postmodernism* (Oneworld) and *The Dark Gaze: Maurice Blanchot and the Sacred* (Chicago UP). He is the editor of *The Oxford Book of Australian Religious Verse* (Oxford UP) and *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion* (Notre Dame UP). With Geoffrey Hartman, he has edited *The Power of Contestation: Perspectives on Maurice Blanchot* (Johns Hopkins UP); with Barbara Wall, *The Experience of God* (Fordham UP); with Yvonne Sherwood, *Derrida and Religion* (Routledge); and with Michael Signer, *The Exorbitant: Emmanuel Levinas between Jews and Christians* (Fordham UP, forthcoming). He is currently editing *Clandestine Companions: Philosophy in the Narratives of Maurice Blanchot* for Notre Dame UP, and writing a new study on the phenomenology of Christianity. Kevin Hart is co-editor of the book series "Theology and Continental Philosophy" (Notre Dame UP), editor of the book series "Literature and Theology," and he sits on the boards of several journals, including *Faith and Philosophy*. He has published five volumes of poetry and two editions of selected poems, the most recent being *Flame Tree* (Bloodaxe Books). A new collection of poems, *Young Rain*, is forthcoming from Giramondo Press in Australia, and is now working on a new collection of poems, *Morning Knowledge*.

**John Hawke**  
*Monash University*

**Biography:**

John Hawke's historical survey of the Brennan tradition, 'Towards the Source: The Symbolist Movement in Australian Poetry', will be published by University of Wollongong Press in 2008. He is a Senior Lecturer in poetry at Monash University.

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**John Kinsella**

*Research fellow, Univ. of Western Australia and fellow, Churchill College, Cambridge*

**'THE DEATH OF THE BIRD': AN UNCANNY READING**

I should say now that my papers are not so much 'scholarly' papers as 'creative' papers. I am exploring from a poet's perspective. I will take it as given that people understand the Freudian interpretations of neurosis and the uncanny, as in the time allotted I don't have time to explain them.

Concerning the death of the bird - I went out (not to the hazel wood) but to the koolanooka ranges near Morawa in the north-central west oz wheat belt, up to the old iron ore mine/dig and read the poem aloud, commenting on it stanza by stanza in my notebook with the local birds about. Really, it's about how one poem influences the potential (not written yet) writing of another - it's about place, notebooks, and misprision (as valid reading - uncanny). an uncanny place (because of its relative isolation, its history as an iron ore mine and other factors I will mention during my piece) to MAKE an uncanny reading that devolves and dissolves the movement (migrations) of the hope poem, and implants place as ongoing (although damaged/mined) against or rather in relation to the fixedness of the bird's death. Interestingly, the iron ore also moves from hemisphere to hemisphere, returning as cars etc! the earth will take it back as well.

In my uncanny reading (by location and intimation) of the death of the bird I argue that the poem is also a veiling of intent - that the instinctive complexity and compulsion of the migratory bird as opposed to the nothingness of its (fixed) death is also a veil. Symbolist? Informed by symbolism, certainly, but not literally symbolism in itself.

**Biography:**

John Kinsella is the author of more than thirty books and winner of numerous literary prizes and awards. He is the editor of the international literary journal *Salt*, a Consultant Editor to *Westerly*, a correspondent for *Overland*, and International Editor of *The Kenyon Review*. He has co-edited a double issue of Australian poetry for the American journal *Poetry* with Joseph Parisi, a special pastoral issue of *TriQuarterly* with Susan Stewart, and numerous other special issues of international literary journals. He is a Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge University, and was appointed the Richard L Thomas Professor of Creative Writing at Kenyon College in the United States for 2001, where he became subsequently Professor of English. His work has been or is being translated into many languages, including French, German, Chinese, Dutch, Spanish, and Russian. His *Peripheral Light: New and Selected Poems* (selected and introduced by Harold Bloom), was published in 2003 by WW Norton.

## Ann McCulloch

Deakin University

### A D. HOPE: THE LIFE & THE ART

This paper will access some moments in the life of A. D. Hope and their interplay with his art. It will view Hope's work as a voice of the twentieth century and identify its uniqueness – its capacity to represent ruptures whether between aesthetics and politics, love and sex; semblance and the 'real' and its insistence on the continuing value of poetic language.

#### Biography:

Associate Professor Ann McCulloch is an Associate Head of Research of the School of Communication and Creative Arts at Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia.. Her most recent book was *Dance of the Nomad: A Study of the Selected Notebooks of A. D. Hope*. She is the director and writer of a documentary series on Hope and many articles on his life and work. Her book on the works of Patrick White and Nietzsche heralded her original interest in tragedy and is not disconnected from her interest in theatre and her more recent research on the representation of depression and trauma in the Arts. She has written and produced twelve theatrical productions including two plays, *The Odyssey Enflamed* and *Let Gypsies Lie*. She is Executive Editor of the journal *Double Dialogues* and co-ordinator of the annual national and international conferences of the same name which are focused on arts discourse .She has recently completed a book titled *Art, Pain and Subjectivity*.

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## Philip Mead

University of Tasmania

### HOPE ISLAND

Recently there have appeared two important reappraisals of A.D. Hope: Clive James's review article in the *TLS* (May 19, 2006) that raises the question, why Hope 'didn't conquer the world,' and Chris Wallace-Crabbe's essay 'True Tales and False Alike Work by Suggestion,' in *Read It Again* (2005) that argued that 'attempts to characterize A.D. Hope's poetry fail very frequently because of a common tendency to see his oeuvre holistically.' For these two critics (and poets), from different perspectives and hemispheres, Hope remains somehow unknown, a poet whose work isn't easily assimilable to literary or cultural history, but who it is still important to try to understand. As a kind of footnote to James and Wallace-Crabbe, this paper speculates on the puzzle of Hope by looking at some early poems, specifically 'The Wandering Islands' and 'Ascent into Hell,' and the big picture of Australian conservative modernism, with its deep anxieties about a young art.

#### Biography:

Philip Mead teaches English and Australian literature at the University of Tasmania. He co-ordinates the Literature of Tasmania dataset for the AustLit database and has recently completed a monograph study of Australian poetry, *Networked Language: Culture and History in Australian Poetry*, to be published early in 2008.

Ruth Morse  
*University of Paris VII*

## ELEGIES FOR ODYSSEUS: MIMICRY, PASTICHE, POETRY

The five elements of this paper focus a series of interconnected questions: about the twentieth-century's experience of the centuries-longing for Epic; about a concomitant discursive style which was traditionally characteristic of Epic; about shared attitudes to the Western European classical heritage; and to the *translatio studii*, the passage from one location, one language, to another. I compare the voices and choices of A. D. Hope and Derek Walcott in order to test some of our literary-critical, and perhaps also social, assumptions about those longings, those locations, and those attitudes. I conclude with what one might, for the sake of convenience, as two solutions to one problem, on the one hand the boy's own adventure, and, on the other, internal exploration. Both turn on a voyage through the inheritance of poetry and history.

## THE LAST OF ENGLAND

In the celebratory collection of Australian essays on A. D. Hope, a brief entry in the biographical chronology reads '1986 Last trip to England cut short by fatigue'. This paper recounts the reasons for the Hopes' journey and stay, Alec's election to fellowships in both Cambridge and Oxford, and the appearance of the first new Selected Poems of his work in over a decade.

### **Biography:**

Ruth Morse is a trans-national migrant who grew up in the United States, studied medieval and renaissance English literature there and in England, where she taught at the universities of London, Sussex, Leeds, and Cambridge, then became *professeur des universités* at the University of Paris-7 ([morse@paris7.jussieu.fr](mailto:morse@paris7.jussieu.fr)). In the course of the 1980s she became interested in 'Commonwealth Literature', and has written about Australian and Indian poetry and novels. Her books include *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages: Rhetoric, Reality, and Representation* (Cambridge, 1991), and *A. D. Hope, Selected Poems* (Manchester, 1986). She is a frequent contributor to the *Times Literary Supplement*.

## Mark O'Connor

*Poet, Canberra*

### A D HOPE, HIS FRIENDS, AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER WRITERS

Hope was a shy man, yet a man of many friendships. For at least the second half of his life he was as genial in person as he was sometimes sharp in print. In the years I knew him (from 1967 to shortly before his death in 2000) he talked to me about many of his relationships with other writers: C S Lewis, Patrick White, Clem Christiansen, David Campbell, James McAuley, Patrick White, Judah Waten, Manning Clark, Michael Dransfield, Dorothy Green, Judith Wright, Anne Edgeworth, Rosemary Dobson, Les Murray... He also saw a great deal of younger writers and beginning poets, at least locally, and used to keep a folder in his study at the ANU labelled 'First Aid Post for Poets'. Especially in the last decade of his life, when I took him out to lunch fortnightly, his conversation would often turn to people he had known. Certain themes ran through these relationships. There was a tension between his desire to maintain standards in literature (which might mean castigating nonsense) and his natural gentleness and reluctance to wound. There was an expectation from some of his more religious friends that in the end his early close relationship to Christianity would win out and result in some kind of conversion, versus his scientific interests and his increasing conviction that 'This life ends and that's that'. There was also a tension between memories of the 'crude sort of fellow' he had once been in his sexual attitudes and his increasing acceptance of feminist points of view.

#### **Biography:**

Mark O'Connor (b. 1945) is a professional poet. In 1967 he became a tutor in English at ANU, where he met A D Hope. He has published 16 books of verse, and is the editor of OUP's *Two Centuries of Australian Poetry*. He was the Australian National University's H C Coombs Fellow in 1999, and thereafter a Visiting Scholar in Archaeology and Natural History. He has also published books on environment and literary criticism. His website is at <http://www.australianpoet.com>

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## Santosh Sareen

*Jawaharlal Nehru University*

### THE CRAFT OF MAKING AND BREAKING: RESPONSES TO TRADITION/S IN A.D. HOPE AND AGHA SHAHID ALI

What could possibly be common between A.D. Hope and Agha Shahid Ali, the former an icon and institution by himself in Australian literature and academics, and Ali a Kashmiri poet settled in the U.S., whom not even the curriculum-setters of IWE (Indian Writing in English) always take seriously? This could look like a slightly intriguing quiz question but is the quest of this article. Apparently both poets are formalists. While A.D. Hope staunchly sticks to iambic pentameter in scripting the neo(Australian)-myth/history of 'Botany Bay,' Agha Shahid Ali uses the ghazal and villanelle to chant the trauma of a burning Srinagar or chart alternative maps of love and longing for a non-exclusive, partly-mythicised-partly-fantasized Kashmir. However, this engagement with forms in both the poets could be metonymic of a tinkering with traditions, even as they forge an autonomous idiom and myth/s for the nation. The article explores how the self-assurance of traditional forms provides a fresh space for coining alternative notions of the nation with its individual tradition of forgotten or nascent mythic isotopes, which always already exceed conventions of representation or 'nationalist' imagining/s. Their poems are thus virtual -scape/s which begin with the norm/forms of real national/poetic space but become the magi for imaginary homelands rooted in, yet challenging, tradition.

## Chris Wallace-Crabbe

University of Melbourne

### 'THE WICKED LITTLE POEMS'

In Hope's poetry Nietzschean rebellion is constantly beating against moral, cultural and psychological constraints. His rational self praises 'The Discursive Mode' and rejoices in the logical, leisurely development of a poem. But something beats against all this, whether in the original conception of a piece, in single moments, or in little poems that defy that inner censor. Some of the latter attract my particular attention. The soul's 'Rawhead and Bloody Bones' keeps on struggling to get out, even by way of wit and grotesquery.

#### Biography:

Chris Wallace-Crabbe is a poet and essayist, also Professor Emeritus in the Australian Centre, University of Melbourne. His latest Carcanet collection of verse is *By and Large* (2001). He has recently published critical essays on poetry as *Read It Again* (Salt) as well as the late-modern epic, *The Universe Looks Down* (Brandl & Schlesinger). He brought the prose poem to Australia, and has just taken part in the thirtieth anniversary of the Festival franco-anglais de Poesie, in Paris. A new collection will appear from Carcanet in 2008.

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## Henry Weinfield

University of Notre Dame

### A. D. HOPE'S 'DEATH OF THE BIRD': BETWEEN ROMANTIC SYMBOL AND MODERNIST ANTI-SYMBOL

A. D. Hope's elegy, 'The Death of the Bird,' is one of the great lyric poems of the twentieth century, a masterpiece not only of Australian but of English literature. The analysis that I offer in this paper attempts to show how and why this poem is not only a powerful and a deeply moving work of art but a profoundly original one as well. I discuss how the extraordinary pathos the poem evokes is generated by its technical virtuosity, and I argue that because Hope's bird is neither a Romantic symbol nor a Modernist anti-symbol, the poem charts a middle course between the Romantic and Modernist tendencies toward alienation.

#### Biography:

Henry Weinfield is professor of Liberal Studies at the University of Notre Dame. His translation of and commentary on Mallarmé's *Collected Poems* was published in 1995. His collections of poetry include *The Sorrows of Eros* (1999) and the forthcoming *Without Mythologies: New And Selected Poems*. He is also the author (in collaboration with Catherine Schlegel) of a translation of Hesiod's *Theogony and Works and Days* (2006) and of a critical study, *The Poet Without a Name: Gray's Elegy and the Problem of History* (1991). He is working on a study of the English blank-verse tradition and on a book on the American poets George Oppen and William Bronk.