

LITERARY APPRECIATION, AMERICAN-STYLE:
CHANNELS OF INFLUENCE IN EARLY TWENTIETH-
CENTURY AUSTRALIA

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The study of something as vague as ‘American influence’ upon something as nebulous as ‘literary appreciation’ would seem likely to produce broad generalities at best. But it may just be possible to give specificity and substance to the topic by circumscribing the period of special focus—in this case to the first half of the twentieth century—and by identifying some of the specific channels through which American ideas, dispositions and methods in relation to the study of literature might have impinged on certain components of an Australian context which was, for historical reasons, mainly shaped by British models and practices.

I am regarding ‘literary appreciation’ here, very simply, as ‘the liking of literature.’¹ Its slight awkwardness notwithstanding, this is a more useful definition for my present purposes than its more conceptually elaborated alternatives (as, for example, ‘the ability to read literature with pleasure, understanding and discrimination’). The simpler definition

¹ The word ‘enjoyment’ is an attractive (and idiomatic) alternative to ‘liking’, especially as it conveys something of the robust ‘fun’ quality that was often felt to be appealing in recommending literature to wider, less educated readerships in the early twentieth century; and indeed there are many books with titles like *The Enjoyment of Literature* published in Britain and America in this period that use the term in an uncomplicated way. But the term has recently acquired added complexity, especially through the work of Slavoj Žižek, and I have reluctantly decided not to use it.

more clearly highlights what I take to be its core characteristic—the experience of pleasure—and points to the obstacles to that experience, and to strategies for removing them, even if it does so without giving an account of the *kind* of pleasure that might be involved, or of other elements that might also be present.² ‘Appreciation’, thus conceived, is a less intellectually elaborated, articulated and integrative form of response than either ‘interpretation’ or ‘criticism’; and because of this, the claim can plausibly be made (*pace* the Althusserian dogmatism of ‘critical literacy’) that appreciation has no inherent ideological affiliations—though, like many other politically neutral relations and practices, it has sometimes been roped into broader ideological projects.³ Appreciation seems to become an issue—never for everyone, but sometimes, interestingly, for governments—at times when a perception is current among key political elites that for a significant part of the population literature simply does not figure (or, as often, no longer figures⁴) as a main source of enjoyment and satisfaction. Whether we are at such a moment in Australia in 2010 is not clear: there would be differing views on the question, and any answer would depend, in part, on how broadly ‘literature’ was conceived.⁴ But there was certainly a widespread conviction in the early decades of the twentieth century, throughout much of the English-speaking world, that just such a crisis existed. Leaving aside those for whom literature was (as it were) a closed book, there was a fear among progressive intellectuals (Walter

Murdoch in Australia, for example⁵)—that even those people who were fiercely determined, for whatever reasons, to *read* the great writers—the Leonard Basts and Mr Pollys of the prewar world—were finding it increasingly difficult to *enjoy* them.⁶ The nameless addressee, the embattled and belaboured ‘you’, of that utterly seminal text for this phase of British cultural life, Arnold Bennett’s *Literary Taste, and How To Form It* (1909), is the real-life counterpart to Messrs Bast and Polly.⁷

Responses to the crisis took many forms on both sides of the Atlantic as well as in Australia: reforms in school curriculum and pedagogy, expanded adult education schemes, a growth in the number of literary and part-literary societies, and a surge of ‘reader-oriented’ forms of publication such as reading-advice books, histories of readership, and a rash of anthologies, sets, and series interlarded with ‘reader-friendly’ mediating commentary and annotations. Many of these responses were not so much new initiatives as intensified continuations of late nineteenth-century developments, but some—like the large, cheap anthologies of literary classics and classic extracts—were new to the twentieth century.⁸ Their general aim, simply stated, was to get people (including children, but not only children) to read and enjoy the works of the great writers.

For various historical reasons, America responded to the perceived crisis of ‘literature-liking’ at this time more directly and prolifically than

2 These and other issues of definition and meaning are explored in my ‘Taste, Appreciation and the Study of Literature: F.D. Maurice, R.G. Moulton and the Extramural Effect’, *Australasian Journal of Victorian Studies*, 13.1 (2009): 21–34.

3 It is instructive to note Terry Eagleton’s virtual *volte-face* on this question in *How To Read a Poem* (London: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 1–8, some eighteen years after Robert Alter had arrived at substantially the same view in *The Pleasures of Reading in an Ideological Age* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989).

4 The fact that ‘appreciation’ is named in the new National English Curriculum papers as a desirable learning outcome that has been absent from recent state-based English curricula and needs to be restored, suggests that at least for the framers of the NEC and their political masters, the absence was a troubling one. For the NEC Draft Consultation version, see www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Documents/English%20curriculum.pdf [Accessed on 12 January 2010].

5 See ‘A Bookless World’ and ‘Superfluous Books’, in Walter Murdoch, *Collected Essays of Walter Murdoch* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1938), pp. 339–44, 355–58.

6 The references are to Leonard Bast, the self-educating office clerk in E.M. Forster’s novel *Howard’s End* (1910) and the eponymous hero of H.G. Wells’ novel *The History of Mr Polly* (1910), both of whom experience this difficulty.

7 This is no doubt speculative, but it is difficult to overlook the almost exact simultaneity of the three books, all convergent on that year when, according to Virginia Woolf’s whimsical assertion, ‘human character changed’.

8 For a non-exhaustive account of classics anthologies in Australia, see P. Buckridge, ‘Reading the Classics in Australia: Great Books Anthologies, 1900–1960’, *Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand Bulletin* 23.1 (1999): 38–48.

Britain did.⁹ One concrete index of this is the larger number and greater popularity of reading-advice books published in America from the 1910s through the 1930s.¹⁰ But this was just a small part of the response, which formed up over a wide cultural and educational front, and made its presence felt in Australia through a variety of publishing and educational avenues. I shall be looking at two such avenues—publishing and personal influence—using a single case study for each.

A British Conduit for American Influence: Harraps in Australia

The purpose of this section is to illustrate some of the ways in which international publishing networks were able, despite legal and informal obstacles to the direct importation of American books, to maintain a steady supply of American-authored books to Australia, mainly under British imprints. The British publishing firm of George G. Harrap & Co. provides a useful model of the triangular arrangement which made it possible for originally American works, including works of, and on, literary appreciation, to be marketed through the Australian retail book trade—over and above the relatively small number of American imprints entering the country by individual mail orders, and by Australian booksellers and American publishers flouting conventional preferences and contractual restrictions.

The firm of Harraps was founded in 1901 as a mainly educational publisher with a small but growing general list. By the 1920s they had established co-publishing arrangements with a large number of American educational publishers, notably D.C. Heath, Thomas Crowell, Frederick Stokes, Houghton Mifflin, J.B. Lippincott, David McKay, and the American Publishing Company. But it seems likely—and was

9 See, for example, Joan Shelley Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), *passim*; Janice Radway, *A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle Class Desire* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), Chapter 3; Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

10 P. Buckridge, 'How to Read Books: Reading-Advice Books in Britain and North America, 1870–1960', *Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand Bulletin* 26.2 (2002): 67–80.

certainly the proud boast of the founder of the firm, George G. Harrap in his 1935 memoir—that few other British firms entered into as many, or as robust American collaborations as Harraps did, or published as many titles in tandem with American publishers, in the first three decades of the century. In fact, though it was never more than a middle-sized company, Harraps punched well above their weight in the introduction, particularly, of American educational books, authors and ideas into Britain during these years. (To a lesser extent, they were also managing to sell British titles to some of the same American publishers.)¹¹

Harraps' contribution to the transpacific publishing relationship between Australia and America was therefore at one remove: as a British publisher marketing their books in Australia, they were able, because of their own strong transatlantic list, to source a lot of American as well as British educational content, and to supply it to Australian booksellers under the Harrap imprint. Their English subject lists in the first quarter of the twentieth century included graded readers and anthologies, several series of school and college editions, classic reprints, books of literary history and biography, and guides to the study of literature and literary appreciation. (They were even better-positioned in the Australian market as suppliers of educational resources in European languages and literature, especially French and German.)¹²

Within the same time frame, Harraps also produced several literary series in a more broadly taste-forming mode—books and booklets designed to stimulate, increase and consolidate a love of literature by insinuating it into the fabric of people's everyday lives: such things as literary calendars, diaries, commonplace books, birthday books, and other types of what might, at a pinch, be called 'habitus-forming' books, that is, that sought to make people's whole lives a little more 'bookish'.¹³ These were not targeted principally at schools or children,

11 George G. Harrap, *Some Memories 1901–1935: A Publisher's Contribution to the History of Publishing* (London: Harrap, 1935), pp. 15–19, 143–49.

12 *Some Memories*, pp. 79–82, 97–100.

13 The Bourdieu-derived term 'habitus-forming' is intended to suggest a more holistic influence on people's lives than 'habit-forming' which tends to apply to the activity of book-reading is isolation from the rest of life. For an exploration

but they were certainly intended to be available to them, and teachers were urged to adopt them as 'supplemental resources' to the main textbooks. Their primary target was the general public, and they were designed to contribute to the formation of a general environment of attitudes and activities within which formal literary education was just one part of a whole 'book-loving' way of life.

Harraps were not the only British publisher to produce books in this 'para-literary' genre, though they may have come up with more distinct subgenres than other, bigger British publishers like Oxford and Macmillan. But Harraps did not originate most of their 'habitus-forming' publishing initiatives; the ideas for nearly all of them were adopted from American publishers, some of whom had made a feature of such books since the 1890s or earlier. Thanks to their co-publishing arrangements, Harraps were able, for example, to build their Sesame Booklets, a series of 'Wayside Thoughts' from the great writers, to over fifty volumes in three years by acquiring as many as a third of them from the Boston publisher Thomas Y. Crowell, and either replacing the title page or, in a few cases, simply pasting over the Crowell imprint, a procedure that could result in Harrap imprints appearing five years before the firm came into being! (Or so it can seem.)

'Habitus-forming' books were one of several notional categories of publication by Harraps that were closely based on American exemplars, and contributed directly or indirectly to the study of literature in schools and universities in Britain and the many other countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and Australasia in which their books were marketed. Another important category comprised books that aimed at sensitising students and general readers to the aesthetic dimension of books-as-objects. Thus Harraps employed world-class illustrators—Willy Pogány, Harry Clarke, Arthur Rackham—to work on school poetry anthologies as well as *fine collectors'* editions of British and European literary classics.¹⁴

of 'bookishness' in its positive and negative senses in Australian history and literature, see P. Buckridge, 'Bookishness and Australian Literature', *Script & Print* 30.4 (2007): 223–36.

14 Examples include M.G. Edgar, ed., *A Treasury of Verses for Little Children* (illus. Pogány), 1923; Hans Christian Andersen, *Fairytales* (illus. Clarke), 1916; Washington Irving, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (illus. Rackham), 1928.

One of the remarkable things about Harraps 'beautiful' books is the range of prices: even for the larger quartos, a range from 10/6 to 42s. was common in the late 1920s; and the illustrated anthologies went as low as 3/6. George G. Harrap meant it when he claimed, in 1935, that his intention was 'to produce educational books that looked as little like text-books as possible'; but books for school prizes—sometimes custom-bound for the individual school—also constituted an important part of their list.¹⁵

Once again, the chief models for affordable beauty in books—whether for schools, colleges, or the general reader—were American. George Harrap acknowledges this in general terms in his memoirs without naming specific publishers, but it is clear that his principal model for a smaller format series such as the 'King's Treasury' was the Maine publisher and book-designer Thomas Bird Mosher, in particular his long-running Bibelot series (1895–1925), which achieved similar remarkable economies, and worked within the same 'Arts and Crafts' aesthetic as Harraps and their early illustrators.¹⁶

What I am suggesting is that Anglo-American co-publishing arrangements of the kind I have just instanced produced a stronger presence for American educational and general literary publications in the British and Australian book trade in the early twentieth century than might have been expected, given the restrictions on American publishers supplying books direct to the Empire. The restriction applied only to parallel American editions in any case, and before World War II it was a matter of contractual agreement, rather than legislation, as between British and American publishers; and such agreements were themselves not always treated with great seriousness by the Americans. For example, the manager of the American Book Company, in signing

15 Harrap, *Some Memories*, pp. 22–24.

16 Mosher in Maine and Elbert Hubbard at the Roycroft Press in New York epitomise the two extremes of the Arts and Crafts (or Craftsman) Style in American book design in the early twentieth century. George Harrap and his partner George Oliver Anderson were clearly drawn to the simpler, less flamboyant style of Mosher. See William E. Fredeman, 'Thomas Bird Mosher and the Literature of Rapture', in Philip R. Bishop, *Thomas Bird Mosher, Pirate Prince of Publishers* (London: Oak Knoll Press and the British Library, 1998), pp. 6–7.

off on a Memorandum of Agreement with George Harrap for the co-publication of a French textbook in 1902, remarked on the clause prohibiting sales of the American edition in England or the Colonies, that 'it may be difficult to keep, because we cannot follow every little transaction that goes through our merchandising accounts, and our own edition may get over there in spite of us. But we suppose your own intention is that we should protect you as far as possible, and that we will do with pleasure.'¹⁷

Just how many American-published books—let alone how many Anglo-American co-publications—found their way into Australia in this period would be quite difficult to establish: the otherwise invaluable *Australian National Bibliography, 1901–1950* (predecessor to *Australian Books in Print*) can provide little or no assistance, as it lists only books published in Australia. Other sources, such as individual publishers' wholesalers' and booksellers' sales catalogues and invoices, are of course valuable, but the archive is notoriously patchy and incomplete.

It does seem clear, however, that significant numbers of American books on the study of literature were available in Australia, since they appear on Australian textbook lists. Even under the more strictly enforced Traditional Market Agreement of the 1950s and 60s, some American publications made their way onto Australian university booklists (as anyone who studied English at an Australian university in the 1960s can attest). Under the more relaxed protocols of the earlier period, one suspects that for all the Anglophilia of the ambient culture, the American presence may have been even stronger in the earlier period. Indeed, there may well have been more interest in American textbooks for literary study in Australia than there was in Britain at the same time. For example, F.H. Pritchard's *Training in Literary Appreciation* (a British book widely used in Australian schools, and reprinted nine times from 1922 to 1946) recommends only a handful of American books as 'Further Reading', whereas the Australian teacher-educator George Mackaness' *Inspirational Teaching* (1927) recommends as many

17 Covering letter (unsigned) from American Book Company, attached to Harrap Memorandum of Agreement with George G. Harrap, 1902, in respect of H.A. Guerber, *Contes et légendes*, Book 1. Chambers-Harrap Archive, Edinburgh (under C).

American as British books: among the American publishers he refers to are Houghton Mifflin, Little Brown, Harcourt Brace, Henry Holt, E.P. Dutton, Putnam's and Scribner's.¹⁸

In the end, though, there are limits to what the perspective of publishing history can tell us about the real impact in Australia of American assumptions, values and methods as regards the study of literature. At best, it can only tell us which American sources were *probably available* at a given time to Australian teachers, students and general readers. This is useful enough as far as it goes, but it cannot tell us much about the 'uptake' of those sources, how (or indeed if) they were communicated, disseminated, put into practice in classrooms, lecture theatres, libraries and private studies. To get a little closer to those processes and experiences, I shall try to complement the publishing perspective with a biographical perspective—a 'case study', in effect—of a man who acted as an interpreter and advocate for American-style appreciation and who, for a number of reasons, may have exercised a somewhat greater influence in Australia (at least in Sydney, and later in Brisbane) than one might expect a single individual to have done.

Ernest G. Moll: Appreciation and the Sydney Context

One of several American books on appreciation published during the 1920s and 1930s was *The Appreciation of Poetry* (F.S. Crofts, 1933) by Ernest G. Moll, then a youngish Professor of English at the University of Oregon in Eugene. He was also, as it happens, an Australian. Moll was born in country Victoria, went to school in Adelaide, and moved to America in his twentieth year, where he graduated from Lawrence College, took his Masters at Harvard, married, and got an Assistant Professorship in English literature at the University of Oregon in 1928. He retired to California in 1966 where he died many years later, at the age of ninety-seven.

One of the publisher's pre-readers for Moll's book, the eminent Yale critic and poet Mark Van Doren, found the book 'surprisingly interesting'; another, Warner Taylor (English Professor at the University

18 F.H. Pritchard, *A Training in Literary Appreciation* (London: Harrap, 1922); George Mackaness, *Inspirational Teaching* (London: Dent, 1928).

of Wisconsin)—compared it with a swag of eight books of similar type and pronounced it more interesting and effective than most, striking a better balance between arousing enthusiasm and conveying information, making it all seem ‘natural and obvious,’ while ‘meeting the student on his own ignorant ground.’¹⁹ In an age of ‘student-centred learning’ Taylor’s phrase can hardly fail to offend, but it does recognise and reflect the specificity of Moll’s target audience. In his Preface he makes it plain that the book is aimed not at literature specialists, but at students taking just a few literature electives, who need to be introduced to the basic essentials of literary study. These essentials he defines not as a canon of indispensable authors or works but as the acquisition of a technique of close and imaginative observation, a growing capacity for noticing and taking pleasure in the sensuous dynamics of expression and in subtle nuances of thought and emotion.²⁰

This technique is clearly not quite the same thing as the ‘close reading’ that the New Critics began to practise and proselytise a few years later. There is not the same drive to an intellectual resolution of the ironies and ambiguities revealed by critical analysis; there is rather a ‘bringing to life’ of the experiential content of the poem, a savouring of the sensuous pleasures of patterned sound, and an ‘unpacking’ of meanings and implications. This technique or process could hardly be called ‘interpretation’ at all, or the product ‘literary criticism’; it is more in the nature of an appreciative and descriptive commentary on a series of poems, using a fairly large technical vocabulary, and invoking, but not exhaustively demonstrating, their formal coherence. ‘The reader of poetry,’ Moll says, ‘should appropriate for himself what the poet put into the poem’;²¹ and that seems to mean the poet’s life experience and the poet’s technical virtuosity in communicating it. In fact, Joseph Conrad’s famous statement of his intended effect on the reader—which Moll quotes several times—also serves to define Moll’s intended effect on his reader:

19 Warner Taylor, ‘Report,’ in Ernest G. Moll Papers, National Library of Australia, MS928, Box 2 (Publishing Correspondence).

20 Ernest G. Moll, *The Appreciation of Poetry* (New York: F.S. Crofts & Co., 1933), pp. viii–ix.

21 Moll, p. viii.

My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you see. That—and no more, and it is everything.²²

To this end, Moll makes considerable use of everyday analogies and personal anecdotes; at times the book reads like a series of rather engaging lectures; and indeed it originally was that, written up for publication as a monograph on a Carnegie Corporation fellowship in 1933, and framed in a wider scholarly context. Most of Moll’s secondary references are, not surprisingly, American: books roughly similar to his own, by older professors of English like Bliss Perry, Arthur H. Fairchild, Frederick C. Prescott, and John Livingston Lowes²³—but also by the radical Marxist Max Eastman, whose first book, *The Enjoyment of Poetry*, Moll quotes at some length.²⁴ There are also a few British references: books on poetry by Stephen J. Brown, T.E. Hulme, John Middleton Murry and Lascelles Abercrombie,²⁵ and one by another Australian, the Melbourne educational psychologist D.C. Griffiths, whose study *The Psychology of Literary Appreciation*—an eclectic blend of Coleridge,

22 Moll, p. ix. Qtd. from Joseph Conrad, *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (New York: Doubleday Doran, 1897), Preface.

23 Bliss Perry, *A Study of Poetry* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1920); Frederick C. Prescott, *The Poetic Mind* (New York: Macmillan, 1922); Arthur H. Fairchild, *The Making of Poetry* (New York: Putnam’s, 1912); John Livingston Lowes, *Convention and Revolt in Poetry* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1919); Charles M. Gayley and Benjamin P. Kurtz, *Methods and Materials of Literary Criticism* (Boston: Ginn, 1920).

24 Max Eastman, *The Enjoyment of Poetry* (New York: Scribner’s, 1913). The inclusion of Eastman, a fascinating figure in his own right, underlines the genuinely apolitical character of appreciation: on this subject a radical Trotskyist like Eastman could agree, in substance, with a genteel New England conservative like Bliss Perry.

25 Stephen J. Brown, *The World of Imagery* (London: Kegan Paul, 1927); T.E. Hulme, *Speculations* (London: Kegan Paul, 1924); John Middleton Murry, *The Problem of Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922); Lascelles Abercrombie, *The Theory of Poetry* (London: Secker, 1924).

Freud, Jung and Croce—had only just appeared. Like Moll, Griffiths also draws on Abercrombie and Prescott.²⁶

It is an interesting constellation of names, partly because—with one or two obvious exceptions—they are now so unfamiliar. In some local reviews of his book, however, a more familiar name appears, that of the great English critic and theorist I.A. Richards. Here it is reported that Moll has been requested by the education board of the Rockefeller Foundation to confer with Richards on a companion volume to be called 'The Appreciation of Prose'. It appears nothing came of this, since Richards never published a book of that name (and it would indeed have been a slightly odd collaboration).²⁷

Moll and Richards did have something in common, though, and that was an interest in empirical research on student competence. The following year, 1934, Moll published a report on the experimental course on poetry appreciation that he had conducted two years earlier. In the report, which appeared in a volume of essays on 'Appreciation and the Arts', he explained the program of carefully graduated exposure to the sensory, emotional and intellectual dimensions of poetry that he had administered to two groups of fifteen students, mostly non-English majors. He describes some of their individual backgrounds and abilities, and quotes their own verbatim testimonies as to their initial hostility or indifference to poetry, and their partial conversions at his hands. Some of the testimonies are very much in the Puritan tradition of public repentance. The following is an example:

My attitude towards poetry was one of extreme indifference. It made no impression at all upon me, and in fact I disliked the mere sound of it. I considered poetry a world outside of

26 D.C. Griffiths, *The Psychology of Literary Appreciation* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1932), Melbourne Educational Research Series 13.

27 Ernest G. Moll Papers, National Library of Australia, MS9283, Box 2 Folder 6. It is possible that Richards's hefty theoretical tome *Interpretation in Teaching* (London: Kegan Paul, 1937) was the belated by-product of an earlier intention to write such a book. His later, more popular monograph, *How to Read a Page* (London: Kegan Paul, 1943) may be another such by-product. Neither book looks much like a prose counterpart to Moll's book on poetry.

my sphere and something so foreign and undesirable that I did not even try to like it, nor did it occur to me that I might try to do so at some future time. I imagined that only very intelligent people and those who were ethereal and poetic in nature were attracted by poetry, and this increased my dislike for it. It didn't seem a thing for a normal person to like and I wouldn't even try. [Tagged 'Freshman—English major—average ability']²⁸

Jerry Moll visited Australia many times, thus maintaining close ties with his extended family throughout his seventy-five years of expatriation; and during all this time he declined (at some financial disadvantage to himself) to surrender his Australian citizenship. He was also a poet of some repute, and published seventeen volumes of poetry, mostly on Australian themes, including *Collected Poems* with Angus and Robertson in 1957. His most extended Australian visit was a year-long academic exchange in 1939–40 with the Sydney Teachers' College, arranged by George Mackaness, literary editor, scholar and bibliophile, who was then Head of English at the College, and a long-time champion of progressive literary education.

International exchanges were not common in the 1930s, and Moll's nationality may have played a part in bringing this one to fruition, since Mackaness had first contacted Moll some years before, at John Le Gay Brereton's suggestion, to ask for some of his poems for an Australian poetry anthology. But a major additional factor is likely to have been a genuine hope on the part of the college that his approach to the teaching of literature might help to reinvigorate that area of teacher-education at a time when the energies of the 'New Education,' brought to the college by its founding Principal, Alexander Mackie in 1912, were in retreat after years of conflict with reactionary ministers and hostile department Heads. Percival Cole, Acting Principal of the STC at the time, and a close ally of Mackie's, expressed his hope that 'your presence and the fresh work which you will bring into our academic community will

28 E.G. Moll, 'Appreciation of Poetry', in John H. Mueller, E.G. Moll, N.B. Zane, Kate Hevner, eds, *Studies in Appreciation of Art*, (Eugene, Oregon: University of Oregon, 1934). *Studies in College Teaching*, vol. 1.3, pp. 41–42.

be of the greatest value, and may lead to an extension of international exchanges in the near future.²⁹

Central to the thinking of both Mackie and Cole, and also to that of Peter Board, the extraordinarily able and imaginative Director of Education whose forced resignation in 1922 slowed the pace of schooling reform in New South Wales, was a 'Neo-Herbartian' philosophy of education. The term denotes the vigorous revival of interest in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the work of the German educational philosopher and psychologist Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841), whose emphasis on the formation of moral character carried important implications for curriculum and pedagogy.

Learning, for Herbart and his followers, was understood not as a training of separate mental faculties, but rather as an activation of the receptive powers of the mind by stimulating pupils' curiosity and empathy concerning the social, physical and intellectual worlds around them. History, literature, natural science and mathematics were seen as the key components of a broad but integrated curriculum, and pedagogy was focused on techniques (e.g. the 'Five Formal Steps'—preparation, presentation, association, generalisation and application) designed to arouse interest and to promote 'apperception', the process by which new knowledge was assimilated, by association, to bodies of ideas already present in the student's mind. Literature was seen as a key part of the modern curriculum by Herbart himself, and also by his disciples in Germany, the United States and Britain where the revival was strongest, because the study of it combined the affective, experiential, moral and cognitive components of the learning process.³⁰ For that reason, literary appreciation had an esteemed place in the 'New Education'—the British educationist Frank Hayward even wrote a book *The Lesson in Appreciation* (1915), which exemplified the teaching of literary and musical

appreciation on programmatically Herbartian lines³¹—and before World War I, both Mackie and Cole, Principal and Vice-Principal of the Sydney Teachers' College, paid visits to the Pedagogical Seminary at Jena in Germany, the centre of the revival, to see the Herbartian system in action; as did Peter Board, and also John Smyth, the Principal of the Melbourne Teachers' College.³²

This, then, was the context into which Moll was invited in 1939—one in which a top-down effort was being made to revive the skills of literary appreciation in the New South Wales classrooms by teaching student-teachers how it was done. During his eighteen-month stay in Sydney on this occasion, Moll and his wife made, and kept, a number of literary friendships, especially with Hugh McCrae, Mary Gilmore and A.D. Hope, all of whom admired his poetry. But above and beyond this circle of literary contacts, he was unusually well placed to exert a real influence on at least one annual cohort, perhaps two, of New South Wales English student-teachers. Their ability to convince Australian children in their own classrooms of the possibility of enjoying great literature, and of the value of studying it, may well have been strengthened and sharpened by the strategies for teaching literary appreciation Moll had developed and tested six years earlier in the United States. Judging by the large number of unsolicited and enthusiastic testimonials he received from past students at the University of Oregon, he probably made a memorable impact in the lecture rooms of the Sydney Teachers' College.³³

Such personal influences may take years, even generations, to work their way through the system. After World War II, Cecil Hadgraft, lecturer and later Reader in English at the University of Queensland, became a close friend of Moll's and visited him in Oregon several times, where he attended some of his classes. In a letter written to him in 1966, the year of Moll's retirement, Hadgraft recalled 'your comment to an unresponsive class with whom you were reading "My Last Duchess"—

29 Moll Papers, National Library of Australia, MS9283, Box 1, Folder 1.

30 The leaders of the movement in Germany were Wilhelm Rein and Tuiskon Ziller, both of whom had studied with Herbart himself. In America, where the movement was particularly strong, its earliest advocates were Charles A. McMurray and Charles De Garmo, and in Britain John Adams and Frank Hayward.

31 Frank H. Hayward, *The Lesson in Appreciation: An Essay in the Pedagogics of Beauty* (London & New York: Macmillan, 1915).

32 Alan Barcan, *A History of Australian Education* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 223ff.

33 Moll Papers, National Library of Australia, MS9283, Box 1, Folder 4.

Well, would you like the fellow for a friend? You didn't know your lightest word made an impression that would last for four years.³⁴ The anecdote is significant because what Hadgraft remembered as epitomising Moll's style of teaching is precisely that move towards appreciation by way of the student's life experience that Moll had described, tested, and reported on decades earlier, in the book he wrote, and the project he conducted, in the early 1930s.

It is worth reiterating that this kind of 'experiential' teaching, which we tend to associate with the sudden relaxation of social proprieties and academic hierarchies that occurred in Australia, as elsewhere, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and with the ascendancy of the 'personal growth' model of English-teaching in Australian schools, actually has a longer history than this, though not an uninterrupted one. Moll's contribution in 1939–40, minuscule as it must seem in the larger scheme of things, was made at a moment when it *could* have had a disproportionate impact; though whether it actually *did* or not is a question I lack the evidence to answer.

I would like to close on a personal note. I never met Jerry Moll, but I was taught by both Cecil Hadgraft and the poet and academic Val Vallis at the University of Queensland in the late 1960s. Unusually for that time, they often worked as a team, and it was apparent that they shared a number of poetic 'touchstones'—no more than a dozen or so—to which they frequently had recourse as illustrations of particular poetic qualities and effects: the last stanza of Rossetti's 'The Woodspurge', Rupert Brooke's 'These I have loved ...', Keats' 'ardent marigolds' and several others. It was arresting to find that as many, if not most, of these (to me) very familiar, yet somewhat out-of-the-way touchstones are used in Moll's 1933 book on appreciation (which was praised by Mark Van Doren for its fresh illustrations).³⁵ No doubt he had continued to use them in *his* lectures and tutorials, in Sydney and Oregon, during the intervening three decades. Of such small threads, at times, is the fabric of influence woven.

34 Moll Papers, National Library of Australia, MS9283, Box 1, Folder 3.

35 Moll Papers, National Library of Australia, MS9283, Box 1, Folder 1.