'It's Enough to Drive a Bloke Mad'

Norman Lindsay's Art and Literature

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Following the publication of several of his novels in London and New York in the early 1930s and the subsequent banning of two of them in Australia, Norman Lindsay lamented that in America he was known as a writer but in Australia he was only known as an artist. Forty years later, Lindsay's observation regarding his public identity overseas was confirmed. A reviewer of his posthumously published autobiography, My Mask (1970), said in the Times Literary Supplement that if a person in the U.K. was asked, 'Who is Norman Lindsay?' then 'nine out of ten who could answer would say: 'The father of Jack and Philip Lindsay'.' The reviewer continued, rather bitchily, 'Norman Lindsay is better known in this country for his novels, which today seem outdatedly naughty, than for his drawings and paintings, which are an extension of Pre-Raphaelism into nudity with a curious mammmary overemphasis which led him during the 1920s to be assailed in puritan Australia for obscenity. It was in fact a style which forty years later was to become popular for calendars in petrol stations, butchers and turf accountants'.

These days, Lindsay's visual work is often ridiculed for its subject matter but at least he is known, partly due to publicity and controversy surrounding some of his exhibited art. Criticism of it was often clouded by moralistic concerns. Not only did this lead to attempts at censorship, but also it occasioned some critics to infer that Lindsay was mentally unhealthy. One wondered whether Lindsay's nudes were 'capable of impressing the intellectually and physically healthy man or woman'. Criticism of his visual art drove Lindsay to write — initially to defend his pictures and his role as artist — culminating in announcement of his aesthetic in Creative Effort (1920, revised edition 1924). Increasingly, he found solace in writing novels. Criticism of his work adversely affected his endeavour in picture making but the opposite seems true of his literary art. In his biography of Lindsay, John Hetherington discusses a period of

2. J.J.H., 'Nude and Crude', The Triad, 1 April 1925, p.17.
Moralising about Art

Some of Lindsay's pictures and exhibitions attracted controversy and adverse criticism but did not result in censorship by government authorities. For most of his life Lindsay's visual art was presented as prints or original pictures on private and public gallery walls. The nude is an acceptable subject for art in these venues and, in any case, a certain latitude in expression is allowed when the artist is acclaimed as a genius.

As early as 1904, A.G. Stephens commented in The Bulletin that Lindsay 'has indeed a natural genius for art and craft, and an invincible ardour of industry.' At the same time, in reviewing Pollice Verso, Lindsay's infamous pen drawing depicting a figure crucified and surrounded by a jeering crowd, Stephens summed up the problems both with Lindsay's work and its reception. Stephens interpreted the picture as a statement of Lindsay's disgust with asceticism, and said of it that both artist and audience moralised: 'Pollice Verso is a bad picture, a good drawing, and a magnificent piece of pen-work. The moralist confuses and degrades the artist. Stephens reasoned that 'the word "immoral" has no final validity. It is a convenient label to attach to the conduct of the fellow who doesn't accept our standard of conduct'. Moreover, 'aesthetics will not hold ethics ... as soon as you moralise you lose your universal appeal'.

Pollice Verso was exhibited again in the first Melbourne exhibition of the Sydney Society of Artists in 1907. It was well-received, being acquired by the National Gallery of Victoria for a record price of 150 guineas. Nonetheless, one reviewer called it a 'rebels' exhibition, drawing special attention to Lindsay: 'The

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one outstanding feature of the present exhibition is the work of Norman Lindsay, whose wayward genius has rendered him at once the most brilliant and the most disappointing artist in this line that Australia has produced. Lindsay's work was found wanting on the grounds that he 'expresses his art in a form that always repels and often disgusts'. The reviewer claimed that the 'degeneracy that has made him such an artist has at the same time given him a mentality unhealthy in the extreme' and 'some of his pictures should not be exhibited in public'.

John Hetherington, Lindsay's biographer, describes the publicity arising from several exhibitions featuring Lindsay's work. Lindsay 'clearly did not see pictures like The Crucified Venus, which showed a monk nailing a naked woman to a cross, and Politic Verso as sermons in ink, flinging their message in the face of the beholder. Others did'. According to Hetherington, both pictures were regarded by many as blasphemous and when The Crucified Venus was exhibited in Melbourne at the Exhibition Building from 13 September 1913, it took only a few days before criticism of the work caused the managing committee to stand it face to the wall before removing it to a storeroom. After Julian Ashton, President of the Society of Artists, delivered an ultimatum that the picture must be returned to the wall or else the whole New South Wales collection would be withdrawn, The Crucified Venus was duly re-hung. A suitable press statement was issued explaining that the action had been taken for fear of giving offence to 'a section of the community', whereupon it became a focal point of the exhibition.

Ten years later, in October 1923, Lindsay's work was singled out at the Australian exhibition in London, which Ure Smith, as President of the Society of Artists, had organised. Sir William Orpen was quoted in Australian newspapers as having described Lindsay's work as 'bad', showing 'no sign of art, no technique' and 'vulgar, but not in the least indecent'. Orpen also exhorted the public to 'Ignore it'. The threat of censorship dogged the show even before it was officially opened. Prior to the exhibition leaving Australia, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Feminist Club and the Business Women's Prohibition League protested at Lindsay's nudes being included as representative of Australian art: 'Art may be broad minded, but it must also be high minded.' On arrival in England, Customs were doubtful about allowing in

6. The Rebel Artists, All About Australians, 1 September, 1907, pp.569-70.
8. Sydney Morning Herald, 12 October 1923; Sun (Sydney), 12 October 1923; Norman Lindsay, Art in Australia no. 6, December 1923.
Lindsay's pictures. The ensuing publicity and the resultant crowds prompted a London journalist to ponder whether 'Norman Lindsay's pen and ink studies in the nude' were an 'advertising stunt'.10 Apparently, when the exhibition was opened on 11 October a 'large crowd blocked the approaches' to Burlington House. Even after the show had been open a fortnight crowds were still queuing up every afternoon and, at closing time, it sometimes took an hour to empty the room in which the Lindsay pictures hung.11

A year later, attempted censorship of Lindsay's pictures in the 1924 Artists Week exhibition in Adelaide backfired. The Royal South Australian Society of Arts imposed a ban on three of Lindsay's eleven works. He withdrew the lot and arranged to have them and other works exhibited at Preece's Adelaide gallery in Artists Week. When the governor of South Australia opened the official Artists Week exhibition on 29 July 1924, he recommended Lindsay's exhibition at Preece's gallery with the result that when it was opened by Ure Smith the next day the gallery was packed. Thereafter, every day a 'queue stretched down the stairs and out into the street'. The furore created wonderful publicity and sales but, according to Hetherington, the 'Adelaide affair depressed Norman for months'.12

In 1925, 'J.J.H.' in The Triad wrote of Lindsay's exhibition at Swain's Art Gallery in Sydney. Under the title 'Nude and Crude', J.J.H. complained that 'his drawings are concerned with the nude in abandoned states ... we find an ever growing number of his etchings deliberately preaching the doctrine of the supremacy of the flesh. It is interesting to find Lindsay, scornful of the moral or ethic quality in art, playing the preacher in favour of what he imagines to be paganism'.13 Lindsay's exhibition of etchings and water colours at the Leicester Galleries in London that same year was also successful as far as sales went. But, to Lindsay's dismay, he was called the 'Rubens of the Blue Mountains'. Newspaper commentators drew on publicity about the 1923 London exhibition and one, writing for the Sunday Express, inferred that Lindsay's pictures were pornographic.14

Art in Australia published a Norman Lindsay Number in December 1930, featuring eight water colours and thirty-five of his black and white works. He was called 'Australia's provocative genius' in the editorial article and the issue

10. Argus (Melbourne), 17 November 1923, p.9.
13. Triad, 1 April 1925, p.17.
sold well, 5,000 by June 1931, when police raided the Art in Australia office and seized the blocks and unsold copies. There was much newspaper publicity about the affair by the time of the adjourned court case in July; one newspaper's poster asked 'Will Norman Lindsay be arrested?' Then it was dropped by the police, reportedly for lack of evidence. Lindsay later wrote that Ure Smith, owner of Art in Australia, had influential friends and the police were told to drop the case. Shortly after this episode, Lindsay left Australia with Rose, his wife, and they had a lengthy stay in New York.

Hetherington also discusses two incidents of censorship later in Lindsay's life that resulted in national controversy. In 1959, at the Hotel Acton in Canberra, a resident guest was asked to remove a print from his bedroom wall because of complaints from the housemaids. In Melbourne in 1966, a person complained to the Vice Squad about a Lindsay painting Bacchanalian Festival, that was on show in a commercial gallery. The gallery was raided and the proprietor questioned but no other action was taken. After the newspaper coverage, the painting was quickly 'snapped up' for $700."

**Ingenious Publishing**

Not only was Lindsay infamous for the controversial subjects of his art but also he was promoted in the press as an artistic genius. Publishers consulted him, printed his pictures, short stories and essays, and articles about him. This was not simply a matter of patronage. Lindsay's pictures and writing sustained several periodicals, at least in their early years. Lindsay also used his connections to publish his and others' prose and to publish and market his limited edition art books, original art and prints.

Lindsay's work was admired and fostered by the art establishment in Sydney, which revolved around The Bulletin, Julian Ashton's Art School, the Society of Artists and Ure Smith's publishing and advertising ventures. Successive presidents of the New South Wales Society of Artists, Julian Ashton and Sydney Ure Smith, were his friends, colleagues and patrons. They were also, at different times, trustees of the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Ure Smith's

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17. Hetherington, p.239.
Art in Australia published, in several editions, Lindsay's Pen Drawings book, which was the first special number of Art in Australia. Also published was the controversial 'Norman Lindsay Number' of Art in Australia in December 1930. Lindsay had the advantage that Ure Smith appreciated pen drawing and etching, as he had studied commercial art at the Julian Ashton Art School. As well as owning and editing Art in Australia, Ure Smith was a director of Smith and Julius, a commercial art and advertising firm. Underhill, his biographer, argues that Ure Smith presented Lindsay as a genius and 'artist-hero'. His work was promoted in ingenious ways in both The Home and Art in Australia.

Clever marketing of his pictures also presented Lindsay to the public. Lindsay's pictures were reproduced in popular and limited edition publications over a long period of time. From 1901 he was a national figure as chief artist with The Bulletin. His prose and illustrations dominated The Bulletin's literary offshoot, the monthly The Lone Hand, from 1907. After that he took more interest in Ure Smith's Art in Australia magazine, from its commencement in 1916 until about 1923, when Vision, the new literary quarterly edited by his son, Jack Lindsay, Kenneth Slessor and Frank Johnson, commanded his attention. Lindsay was also an instigator of The Lone Hand and Vision and he, at least, saw himself as assisting with the inauguration of Art in Australia." Bertram Stevens, who was at one time simultaneously an editor of three periodicals to which Norman contributed material, Art in Australia, The Home and The Lone Hand, acted 'in various ways' as an agent for Norman, according to Jack. Stevens was one of the editors and later a director of Art in Australia until he died in February 1922; he was also literary editor of The Home and editor of The Lone Hand from January 1912 until June 1919.

The Home, Australia's first magazine of fashion and interior decoration, like Art in Australia, was owned by Ure Smith. The Home regularly featured articles on Norman Lindsay, as well as photographic studies of Lindsay's family, house and garden by Harold Cazneaux. For instance, a September 1920 article on Lindsay was called 'Norman Lindsay at Home'. A three-page spread included a handsome portrait of 'The most notable of Australian artists', others of the artist with his fox terriers, with his wife Rose, with garden statuary, and in his study. The December 1922 issue featured 'Norman Lindsay at Work' with three portraits by Cazneaux, one of them captioned 'The Thinker'. The captions to the other portraits likened him to Rembrandt and Dürer:

Experts state that it takes a period of twenty years for the sufficient development of the muscles necessary for fine engraving on wood. Norman Lindsay has the natural hand of the wood engraver, and the muscles already are in a perfect stage of development for this class of work. His hands are 20th century reproductions of 16th century Dürer's - tireless, flexible, accurate. Is this intention or accident?

The idea was used again the next year, in March 1923, along with a photograph by Cazneaux of Lindsay's hands: These are the hands of a modern master of engraving and appear to be a close reproduction of the hands of Dürer. Compare the relative lengths of the fingers, and the general appearance of acute sensitivity. And, in August 1931, there was 'The latest Cazneaux portrait of Mr Norman Lindsay, pen draughtsman, etcher, water-colourist, sculptor and genius. Mr. Lindsay has been the centre of so many storms that he has decided to accept attractive offers from America. He left Australia last month'. This was a reference to Lindsay's departure after the banning of his novel Redheap and the attempted suppression by the New South Wales police of the Norman Lindsay number of Art in Australia.

After Lindsay's death in 1969, the word 'genius' was invariably employed in tribute. For instance, Douglas Stewart's article in The Bulletin, was titled 'A Genius with Sex as his Religion' and Lindsay was called an 'evangelist for sex'.22 Jack Lindsay wrote in his autobiography of his father's apparent 'halo of genius', which had a 'peculiar force and attraction', despite his own later scepticism about Creative Effort with its notion that 'the earth exists only as a mud-flat for the generation of a few geniuses'.23 Hetherington concludes his biography of Lindsay with Stewart's funeral oration, which reiterated that, when all of its branches were considered, Lindsay's work amounts to nothing less than genius. This has been said before; it is almost a cliche. But it must be said again. And what a resounding cliche it is.24

Apart from his presentation in The Bulletin, Art in Australia and The Home, Lindsay's visual art became well-known because of his illustrations in books, particularly for his children's story, The Magic Pudding, and for limited edition poetry and art books. An early example of his journalistic work is The Rambler, a Melbourne penny weekly started by Norman in 1899. It contained illustrations by Norman, his brother Lionel and his friend, poet and cartoonist Hugh

24. Hetherington, p.258.
Norman Lindsay's Art and Literature

McCrae. Norman also contributed two wood block illustrations, including the title page, to what is considered to be the first art monograph published in Australia, The Art of Ernest Moffitt (1899), which was published as a tribute to a late friend. The text was supplied by Lionel Lindsay.

Early issues of Art in Australia are notable for Lindsay's contributions in prose and pictures, for articles about him and editorials that included mention of his forthcoming books. Some examples are: the first issue in 1916, featured 'A Modern Malady', Lindsay's essay on the self-defeating fashion for imposition of artistic creeds, which ended with a plea for more lightheartedness in work; issue number two in 1917 published his essay 'The Creator and the Parasite'; number three, 1917 included an article on 'Norman Lindsay's Water-Colours' by the anthropologist A. Radcliffe Brown; and Lindsay contributed 'Elliott Gruner's "Morning Light"' to number five, 1918. That edition also carried advertisements for two private galleries that boasted representation of Norman Lindsay, among other artists, as well as an advertisement for Angus & Robertson's 'New Publications', including The Magic Pudding. An article on 'Norman Lindsay's Etchings' appeared in number six, 1919. The seventh issue, 1919 contained 'Light', Norman's only short story published in Art in Australia, while the December 1923 issue presented the two-page 'Lindsay's Reply to Orpen', countering the criticism of his exhibits in London earlier that year.

Advertisers in Art in Australia also had the advantage of Ure Smith's association with Norman Lindsay. For instance, for the issue number four, 1918, May Moore, photographer, had access to a photographic portrait of Norman Lindsay, for a full page advertisement for her photographic studio, at Boomerang House in King Street, Sydney; for the same issue, Mina Moore advertised her photographic studio in Collins Street, Melbourne, with a similar advertisement that featured a portrait of 'The Lindsay's Mother'. Ure Smith's association with Lindsay was benefitting his advertisers, while at the same time, Lindsay and the Lindsays were being presented as notable characters.

Lindsay's relatives and friends sometimes helped him with copy and publicity simultaneously. The February 1910 issue of The Lone Hand published a long illustrated article on Norman Lindsay, outlining his personal and artistic career. The author was John Hall, a pseudonym for his brother Lionel. Lionel also wrote an essay on Norman's art for the Art in Australia special number, The Pen Drawings of Norman Lindsay (1918). When republished as Pen Drawings, under the imprint of the Norman Lindsay Press in 1924, the new forward was attributed to Norman's friend, Francis Crossle, but it was actually written by
Jack Lindsay.¹² The pen drawings book was republished by Art in Australia in 1931, with the 1918 introduction. Illustrations that featured in these volumes were also recycled for other publications. For instance, his drawing, The Birth of Life, appeared in various editions of his pen drawings book (1918, 1924, 1931 and 1987). It became the title page decoration for P. R. Stephensen’s volume published by the Fanfrolico Press, The Antichrist of Nietzsche (1928); it was also reproduced in Siren and Satyr (1976) but it was captioned Woman, Eagle and Monster.¹⁶ The Birth of Life was exhibited at the Society of Artists Annual Exhibition in 1919, but was listed not for sale. It appeared again in an exhibition at the Fine Art Society’s Gallery in Melbourne in October 1924, being reproduced as a full page illustration in its catalogue, which also advertised the Edition-de-Luxe, limited to 500 copies, of a ‘New Book’, The Pen and Ink Drawings by Norman Lindsay, only available in Victoria from the Fine Art Society, as Lindsay’s sole representative for its sale there. Illustrations by Lindsay for Vision magazine also appeared in his book, Hyperborea, published by Jack’s Fanfrolico Press in 1928. A decoration for Vision became the cover drawing for the journal The London Aphrodite, also published by Fanfrolico.

Sometimes an art exhibition would include the original illustrations for a work of fiction or poetry. Five illustrations for Hugh McCrae’s Colombine and twelve illustrations to M. Barnard Eldershaw’s serialised story ‘The Quartermaster’ in The Bulletin were exhibited on sale at the Fine Art Society’s Gallery in Melbourne in 1918 and 1929 respectively.¹⁷ Often an art exhibition would be accompanied by the launch or sale of a limited edition fine arts press book that featured Lindsay’s pictures, some or all of which had been previously published or exhibited. Sometimes Art in Australia, which published other limited edition books that had been illustrated by Lindsay, would also advertise their availability or sell them in advance of publication by subscription. Examples of these are two books of poetry by Leon Gellert. His Songs of a Campaign (1917, 3rd ed., Angus & Robertson) was illustrated and decorated with sixteen of Lindsay’s pen drawings. Art in Australia, number three, 1917, included a half-page article on the book and reproduced four of the pen drawings. The Fine Art Society’s Galleries in Melbourne exhibited the prints

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27. Pen and Ink Drawings and Water Colours by Norman Lindsay, catalogue, Melbourne, 1924.
28. Fine Art Society’s catalogues 1918 and 1929. ‘The Quartermaster’ was later published as the novel A House is Built.
and sold copies of the book. Leon Gellert's *Isle of San* (1919), written at Lindsay's Springwood home, was published in a limited edition of 120 copies, of which 100 were for sale and featuring five original and signed etchings by Lindsay. The Introduction to *Art in Australia*, number six, 1919, mentioned this forthcoming publication and its availability by subscription from that magazine. It also included an article on 'Norman Lindsay's Etchings' written by Sydney Ure Smith, a full page reproduction of one of the illustrations, *The Grey-Eyed Girl*, as well as an Angus & Robertson advertisement for orders for the unsubscribed copies for the price of ten pounds and ten shillings. Angus & Robertson was Ure Smith's publisher and therefore was also the distributor of *Art in Australia* at that time. Gayfield Shaw's Gallery in Elizabeth Street, Sydney, which advertised in *Art in Australia* and which had conducted the Society of Artists annual exhibition in October 1918, held an exhibition on 'The Etched Work of Norman Lindsay' in October 1919. This was the initial exhibition of Lindsay's etchings and included for sale were prints of the illustrations to *The Isle of San*, at ten pounds and ten shillings per signed etching. Norman persuaded Mr William Gill of the Fine Art Society Galleries in Melbourne to take some copies of *Isle of San*, which would 'sell because of the etchings' and Norman would undertake to send him a show of etchings as a 'means of selling the book'. Norman's persuasion was backed by a veiled threat of having Sydney's Gayfield Shaw hold an exhibition in Melbourne, where, until that time, the Fine Art Society was the sole representative of his art in Melbourne.

Writers who published short stories or serialised novels in *The Bulletin* and *The Lone Hand* often had their work published in book form by The New South Wales Bookstall Co., which often used the services of Smith and Julius, Ure Smith's advertising and art firm. Ure Smith and Harry Julius also personally illustrated a few of the Bookstall books. In fact, thirty-four writers were common to both *The Lone Hand* and The New South Wales Bookstall Co. That firm published Lindsay's first novel, *A Curate in Bohemia* (1913), and also

29. Norman Lindsay, letter to L. Gellert, ML MSS 3456/2.
31. Lindsay's wife Rose printed all 600 prints for the book publication, which was organised in order to make deposit money for a house for Gellert who was about to be married – Hetherington, p.143.
32. Norman Lindsay, letter to W. Gill, ML MSS 285/7, p.303.
produced two 'annual' volumes, *Norman Lindsay's Book: No I* (1912) and *No. II* (1915). These included short stories by Lindsay and by 'Kodak', Ed Dyson, C.J. Dennis, Henry Lawson and Louis Stone, amongst others. Lindsay's illustrations, which even included advertisements for Cobra Boot Polish and Mazda electric lamps, featured on almost every page, and each book included an advertisement for the sale of the original artwork published therein; one could apply directly to Lindsay at his Springwood address or to his agent. The title page to the 1912 volume includes an editor's note, stating: 'It is of interest, perhaps, to note that the present Book is the first publication of its kind ever attempted by an Australia-born artist.'

A lot of the artwork in the two *Norman Lindsay Books* was actually material Lindsay had either used previously or was left over from other jobs. For instance, the 1912 volume featured many pictures he made to illustrate articles about his 1909-1910 trip to England via Ceylon and Italy. The articles and some of the pictures were originally published in *The Lone Hand* during 1910 and 1911. Lindsay's 'annuals', like some of his limited edition books, were not confined to his own work. Also included in them were short stories by Australian writers, as well as Lindsay's promotion of some of his favourite writers. For example, the 1915 edition included his essay 'Three Australian Books', calling attention to the excellence of Ed Dyson's novel *Fact'ry 'Ands*, Louis Stone's *Jonah* and Henry Lawson's *While the Billy Boils*. Three full-page illustrations by Lindsay, one for each book, accompanied the article, but these were prepared specially for the article, not just to promote his own work, because *Jonah* had been published without illustrations, *While the Billy Boils* was originally illustrated by Frank P. Mahony in several Angus & Robertson editions, and *Fact'ry 'Ands* had been illustrated by Will Dyson for the NSW Bookstall editions.

Lindsay's commissioned book jacket designs and illustrations for the New South Wales Bookstall series of paperback novels would also have contributed to his artistic fame. He illustrated frontispieces and covers for about fifteen novels in the Bookstall series. Some, including his first published novel, *A Curate in Bohemia* (1913, two editions), ran to many printings. *A Curate in Bohemia* included 37 illustrations, with 28,000 copies sold by 1921. It has been reprinted by Angus & Robertson since. *The Recipe for Rubber* written by his friend Ralph Stock (1st ed. 1912) ran to 29,000 copies by its 7th edition. *Bully Hayes, Buccaneer* by Louis Becke (1st ed. 1913) ran to five editions and 25,000 copies. Many of the Bookstall authors, including Norman Lindsay, also had short stories and/or novels serialised in *The Lone Hand*. Lindsay himself, apart from
his designs for the magazine's covers, had fifteen of his own illustrated short stories and three poems published in The Lone Hand.  

Lindsay also published several limited edition volumes under his own imprints, but he used Sydney based printers: Pen Drawings (1924) and Hugh McCrae's Idyllia (1922, illustrated by Norman Lindsay) by the Norman Lindsay Press and his Watercolours (1939) by the Springwood Press. In 1933, P.R. Stephensen and Lindsay started an Australian publishing company, the Endeavour Press, which was a subsidiary of The Bulletin. Lindsay designed the colophon and twenty books were published over a period of two and a half years, including his Saturday (1933), Miles Franklin's Bring the Monkey and A.B. Paterson's The Animals Noah Forgot, for which Lindsay provided the cover designs and illustrations, another edition of Louis Stone's Jonah, again with a cover design by Lindsay, G.B. Lancaster's Pageant and Robert Tate's The Doughman.

As with Lindsay's fine art, censorship did not impede this branch of Lindsay's artistic production. The art books that featured Pollice Verso and The Crucified Venus, as well as other studies of the nude, would not have been viewed by a public audience. They were expensive, limited edition collectors' items, which were generally pre-sold on a subscription basis. As for the periodicals in which Lindsay published, they catered for public taste and declined to accept for publication anything that could be construed as controversial.

The New York Novels

Ironically, Lindsay promoted the local publication of Australian novels while the bulk of his own fictional output of the 1930s was scarcely available in his own country. In that decade, five of his novels for adults were published overseas, in New York and shortly afterwards in London. Of these, Redheap (1930) and The Cautious Amorist (1932) were banned from entry to Australia by the Commonwealth Department of Customs and Trade, which declared them as prohibited items for importation.

Censorship of Redheap and The Cautious Amorist was not seriously challenged. These books were among the first of a spate of bannings, and the anti-censorship lobby and civil rights activists had yet to be organised. Lindsay protested about the censorship of Redheap, with humorous illustrated articles in Smith's Weekly and The Guardian, but seemed resigned to the attitude that

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34. Mills, p.112.
Australia got the culture it deserved; so the authorities were able to successfully deny Lindsay an Australian readership. Only one of his other novels of the 1930s, Saturdee, was published in Australia (1932), placing that book under a different, state jurisdiction. The rest of the books first published overseas – Miracles by Arrangement (1932), Pan in the Parlour (1933), and Age of Content (1938) – had little or no distribution here. The Commonwealth government’s policy of not publicly announcing which novels were banned caused booksellers and Australian publishers to be wary of controversial novelists. Consignments of imported books could be confiscated or returned to the country of origin, resulting in loss to booksellers. It was safer, legally and financially, to avoid Norman Lindsay’s novels, especially since state authorities could also prosecute printers, booksellers and publishers for dealing with any books considered obscene by the police, who often responded to complaints by members of the public. Even Norman himself had little idea how many of his novels were banned. The Commonwealth government was so ‘furtive’ that Norman complained that he had ‘no notion which … or for that matter, if all of them’ were on the censor’s list. Censorship, both official and unofficial, may have effectively hidden Norman Lindsay’s novels between 1930 and the late 1950s when censorship was relaxed.

Although Redheap is well known and has been reprinted many times by Angus & Robertson since the first Australian edition by Ure Smith in 1959 (after the ban was lifted), some of the other novels continue to be little known. The Cautious Amorist, was a best-seller in the UK and the US for over thirty years. Some regard it as Lindsay’s most financially profitable novel, but few Australians have read it. Only two editions were published in Australia, as paperbacks by Horwitz in 1962 and 1969.

Lindsay wrote and illustrated The Cautious Amorist from about 1913. It was first published in the United States in 1932, in serialised form in Cosmopolitan magazine, and by Farrar & Rinehart of New York, following Lindsay’s visit there with a suitcase containing some of his manuscripts. Such was its popularity

37. Norman Lindsay to Collector of Customs, ML MSS 742/15, p. 25.
38. All of Lindsay’s books published overseas in the 1930s were banned in Ireland. By 1961, only three of his books were still banned there: The Cautious Amorist, Miracles by Arrangement and Pan in the Parlour. Ireland, Censorship Board, Register of Prohibited Publications on 30th April 1961.
39. Holt, ‘Wowser as Censor’. The Cautious Amorist was actually taken off the banned list in 1953.
in America that it was reprinted in hardback editions by two other New York publishers during the 1940s.\textsuperscript{41} Cheap Bantam pocket paperback editions were reprinted from at least July 1947 until well into the late 1950s.\textsuperscript{42} Hardcover editions featured Lindsay's cover and black and white illustrations. By February 1948, the Bantam paperback edition had been reprinted at least four times. In the late 1940s Bantam commissioned a well known New York illustrator, Van Kaufman, to draw illustrations in a more modern style. Bantam's new edition, in January 1955, was updated again with a different cover by yet another artist. The extent of its appearance in Canada is unknown at this date, but a Harlequin paperback edition was published in Toronto in February 1953, and yet another artist, not credited, had been commissioned to illustrate the cover.

Front cover, \textit{Pan in the Parlour} \\
(New York: Farrar & Reinhart, 1933) \\
© H.A. & C. Glad  \\
Collection of Patricia Holt

\textsuperscript{41} Grosset & Dunlap, New York, August 1940; Grayson, December 1946, reprint 1947. The Bantam edition notes that 'The low-priced Bantam edition is made possible by the large sale and effective promotion of the original edition.'

The popularity in England of The Cautious Amorist is attested to by the fact that T. Werner Laurie kept reprinting it in hardcover from 1934 until at least 1949. By 1965 three English editions and twenty-four English printings catered for the demand for this book.⁴ Three conservative estimates of sales in the United Kingdom alone is over 200,000.⁵ English film producer and novelist, Noel Langley, made a film based on the book, but with a limited budget because of the threat of censorship. It was set in Majorca in 1953, starred Joan Collins and Kenneth More, and was called 'Our Girl Friday' in England and 'The Adventures of Sadie' in America.⁴ Because Customs ensured the examination of all subsequent works of an author who had run foul of the system, and Lindsay's Redheap was banned in 1930, The Cautious Amorist came under a deal of scrutiny well before the English edition arrived in Australia. It was banned by Customs in May 1933, following Australian newspaper reports of reviews of the American edition which appeared in 1932.⁶

As for Age of Consent, thanks to Commonwealth government secrecy about its censorship decisions, Lindsay thought that the book had been banned, but in fact it was not.⁷ The literary agent for the Lindsay estate still believes it was banned. First published in New York and London in 1938, Age of Consent was detained and examined by the Commonwealth censors. They passed it, yet Age of Consent had little or no circulation in Australia until 1962 when it was published by Ure Smith. By that stage twenty-four years had elapsed since its first publication overseas.

Like The Cautious Amorist, Age of Consent was popular in England and America. Lindsay even had a readership in Denmark; a Danish translation of

44. The Cautious Amorist (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1949) (hardback); title page reads '188th thousand' [English copies of the book sold]. Paperback editions continued to sell into the 1960s.
46. Argus (Melbourne) 5 November 1932, p.23; 3 February 1933, p.5; 30 May 1932, p.5. The ban was not made known publicly until the first English edition to reach Australia was seized by Customs.
47. The cover of the second Australian edition, Angus & Robertson 1963, includes a quotation from Lindsay: 'It is a mystery to me why this novel, along with others of mine, should have incurred the wrath of the Australian censors'. Ure Smith's Humorbooks paperback editions of 1968 and 1974 state on the back covers that the book was 'banned in Australia for many years'.
The Cautious Amorist appeared there in 1936, while a Danish translation of Age of Consent appeared in 1939. In London, Werner Laurie kept issuing hardcover editions from 1938 at least to 1951. In Canada, the 1948 Pocket Books edition had six printings in that year, while the New York Pocket Books edition of 1959 had at least two printings. However, Lindsay received only belated popular recognition in Australia for Age of Consent, no doubt helped by the appearance in the late 1960s of the Columbia movie filmed in Australia by Michael Powell and starring Helen Mirren and James Mason. One can infer from the various editions of this book that it was popular in Australia during the 1960s. Two of the Ure Smith paperback editions, 1968 and 1973, featured still photographs from the movie on their covers.

Lindsay was not so fortunate with another two of his novels published overseas. Although Mr Gresham and Olympus (New York, 1932; published as Miracles by Arrangement, London, 1932) and Pan in the Parlour (New York, 1933; London, 1934) were passed by Australian Customs, there is not much evidence of their being distributed here. Copies of them are extremely rare, even in large antiquarian bookshops, and neither have been published in Australia. The author obtained her copies of Mr Gresham and Olympus and Pan in the Parlour from an antiquarian book dealer in New York State. They were published shortly after Redheap and The Cautious Amorist were detained by Customs and one could assume that Australian publishers and booksellers would either have thought that they, too, had been banned or else regarded them as being too dangerous to handle in case they attracted bans. Since both of them were banned in the Irish Free State, it would have been reasonable to suppose they would automatically have been added to the Australian prohibited list whether or not consignments of the books arrived here. Yet, Pan in the Parlour was reasonably popular at least in England, where in the first five years after English publication in 1934 it ran to eight English editions, aggregating 38,000 copies.

In summary, of Lindsay's novels of the 1930s, Redheap (published as Every Mother's Son in New York) was denied a readership in Australia until 1959. The Cautious Amorist was not published in Australia until 1962. Even though it was

49. Australian Customs authorities often automatically added to their prohibited list any item that had been banned in Ireland.
50. Mackaness, p.19.
not banned, *Age of Consent* was not accessible in Australia until after it was published by Ure Smith in 1962, followed by Angus & Robertson in 1963. *Miracles by Arrangement* and *Pan in the Parlour* did not have the chance of an Australian readership because they were not imported in any numbers and were not published here. Consequently, when Lindsay was in New York in 1931, he 'found himself widely known because of the success of *Every Mother’s Son*.' In his native country, he remains better known for *The Magic Pudding* and for his visual art.

**Moralising about Books**

While interest in his art drawings and paintings was promoted by controversy, censorship effectively closed off Lindsay’s novels from an Australian readership. The Commonwealth censorship authority for overseas published books, Customs, maintained a deliberate policy of secrecy in order to frustrate the seeking out of banned literature.³²

That Lindsay was well known as an artist but not as a novelist in Australia cannot be attributed entirely to censorship. The extent of his audience depended to a considerable extent on the different modes of production and distribution of books and magazines on the one hand and pictures on the other. Controversial nudes were not part of *The Bulletin* output. Neither were nudes present in the mass-produced Lindsay ‘annuals’ or the Bookstall series of books, although a cover drawing for the first Bookstall edition of *A Curate in Bohemia*, which featured a slightly undraped model, was modified for later editions after eyebrows were raised. In any case, a certain latitude is allowed for the artistic genius, and the nude is an acceptable subject for art.

The nude is acceptable, even valorised in paint and marble. However, the description in novels of behaviour considered unacceptable by some was not, and Customs authorities were ever on the lookout for literature containing pictures or words that unduly emphasised matters of sex, for these tended to be regarded as pornography.³³ When the Commonwealth Attorney-General, R. Garran, reported on the question of *Redheap’s* banning for Customs, he wrote, ‘Considerable latitude must be allowed to authors in their presentation of such a subject. It is sometimes said that art is not concerned with morals; but when an

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artist (literary or other) exhibits his work to the public, he is not exempt from
the law, which does concern itself with morals."

The 1953 censors' reports on The Cautious Amorist, which resulted in the
ban on it being lifted, give some idea of public taste, that is, the way Lindsay's
illustrations in novels were considered at the time of banning:

That the girl was often drawn in the nude was of no real importance.
However exciting Lindsay's rounded women were a generation ago they
simply seem fat today and are unlikely to prove provocative to a
generation reared on the standards of Esquire and Hollywood. ... There
are vulgar bits in the book but in fairness to the author it must be
admitted that he made no erotic capital at all out of the possibilities that
were at his hand. ...

The page references listed at the back [of the Customs' request for a
review], apparently allied to the reasons for the original banning of the
book, were to me quite innocent: the four had diarrhoea from eating
unripe fruit; there was a modest reference to abortion; there was a play on
the word 'periods' and so on. Compared with the freedom allowed to later
novelists all these were quite innocent. Even the stoker's disrespectful
references to Jesus ... were in character."

Another censor said:

the book cannot be regarded as obscene in a pornographic sense for in all
the writing there is his gift for satire and his irrepressible sense of
humour."

While a third censor had some doubts about the book:

The illustrations are in many cases revolting, not because of their
indecency, but because of their vulgar and even hideous distortion of the
female form. I hardly think that these mountains of bulbous flesh can
properly be classed as erotic ...

I suggest that this is a book which is likely to give fairly general and
fairly violent offence. Its blasphemy, for example, cannot always be
justified in the name of dramatic realism; its attacks on religion and

54. Memo, 5 May 1930, Australian Archives (AA), NSW, C4480/1 Item 23 Box 3.
morality are cheap and vulgar; the three deliberately offhand references to abortion are likely to be somewhat provocative."

In the case of the fine art drawing or print the threat of censorship operates differently on the audience. Public outrage over pictures in an exhibition and calls for banning actually draws in viewers. Until the Commonwealth censorship laws were liberalised in the late 1950s, the possibility that a novel might be banned caused importers and booksellers to steer clear of it, thereby precluding readers the opportunity to 'see' it.

Madness

Lindsay's philosophy and aesthetic stances influenced his pictures more than his novels, which were humorously grounded in everyday reality. It may be that his philosophic compulsion and the adverse reaction to his pictures drove him a bit mad at times. In The Roaring Twenties, Jack Lindsay recounts Lionel Lindsay's version of the quartet leading to Norman's renunciation of him after publication of Creative Effort in 1920. Lionel did not think much of that work, nor of Norman's convictions. At a meeting with others in Melbourne, Lionel was asked what Norman was driving at, and, says Lionel, one of those present 'put it about Melbourne that I had said Norman was mad. I received one of the most damnable letters possible threatening me with action for libel ... The break was inevitable. I had been so long devoted to Norman that he had reached the stage of petty tyrant, obsessed by what Renan called "the horrible mania of certitude". Jack remarks that Norman mentioned to him something of his break with Lionel but he had not pressed for details. Jack comments: 'I had always assumed that no one could possibly be bothered about statements of his nearing madness unless he was himself afraid of such a fate'. When writing of this incident, Lindsay's biographer, Hetherington, uses the word 'insane' in relation to the rumours spread around Melbourne, and he describes Lindsay's battle, at that time, against 'recurrent physical ills' and 'acute nervous discomfort', which was depressing 'his spirits'."

Unlike his visual art, Lindsay did not latch his written work to an aesthetic creed; indeed, he marked off his novels from transcendent influences. In My Mask, written around 1957 and published in 1970, the year after his death, Norman wrote:

59. Hetherington, pp.149-50.
I do seriously believe that the daemonic agency, whether internal or external, was violently opposed to my exercises in the novel. And that is one of the satisfactions I have had out of writing them. They were a conscious exercise of the will; and what else can be so gratifying to one's self-esteem? If I was thumbing my nose at my daemon or myself in writing them I do not know, but I did have the satisfaction of saying to that bitch, 'To hell with you, I'll do what I please about lolling at my ease in a comfortable chair and scribbling novels...'

In a way, this is Norman saying that he drew upon his sanity, the self-possession of his will, in his writing. The comic novel exercises all discordancies. Norman spoke of his own novels as diversions from his main artistic tasks but in an essay on 'The Delicate Art of Bawdy', he also asked: 'Will the illusion never be dissipated that humour is an inferior quality to gravity in art?' And he goes on to say that 'Humour is that supreme clarity of vision that sees mankind precisely as it is and not as false sentiment and human dissimulation assume it to be. It is aware of the incongruity of human behaviour as distinct from its pretensions.'

By way of example of making the point in Lindsay's writing, in his novel, *Halfway to Anywhere* (1947), Martha, the housekeeper, cops young Bill doing a 'bear-up' with a young female kitchen hand. Martha declares she will have to tell his Ma or she'll never have peace of mind before her Maker. Meanwhile, Bill loads his old muzzle-loading pistol and pronounces:

'You tell Ma and I'll absolutely blow me brains out.'...

'You with a pistol at your head might go off this minute and me with me plain duty to tell your Ma to save your soul from sin,' she moaned.

'All I say is, you bloomin' well tell her and I pull the bloomin' trigger.'

The results of Bill's folly were apparent in the form of parental disapproval, and the next chapter is entitled 'It's Enough to Drive a Bloke Mad'.

Interested, as they are, in consorting with girls and/or drawing images of them, Lindsay's boy characters attract a certain amount of censure from parents and other adults in authority. Like his boy characters, Lindsay himself attracted social criticism and censure arising from some of his pictures and novels. Art might formulate life, as Norman held, but really, censorship of life was enough to drive a bloke, or a sheila, mad.

60. *My Mask*, p.231.