

Harold Love: A Personal Memoir

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For a mature-age student in 1968, attendance at Monash University was both an exciting and a worrying prospect. It was over twenty-five years since I had left school, glad to be free of petty restrictions and out in the workforce. Now, with my children practically grown up, one at Melbourne University, the other planning to go to Monash, I had decided that I needed more education. No longer a reluctant student, but one with a latent urge to learn, I chose to study English, thinking I would probably enjoy the subject and determined to work hard so that I could reassure myself about the likelihood of completing the year.

It was not until the second year of English that I met Harold Love as my tutor. I was rather in awe of him. He seemed so scholarly, so far ahead in his thinking and his understanding of the literature with which we students were sometimes struggling. The department was more formal in those days, and Christian names were not usually used between staff and students, making the division more noticeable. However, as the year went on, I found Harold was far more accessible than I had imagined and that his careful and often inspirational teaching made the class a rewarding one.

After this I moved away from English for a while, completing minor sequences in the Classics department. Then it was back to third-year English and the realisation that this wasn't going to be the end of my academic studies. I wanted to go on, and, since I had done a pass degree, rather than attempting honours first up, I found that I would have to spend a year doing a preliminary master's, a course that included a minor thesis. Having become really interested in Australian literature in my final undergraduate year, I thought I would look at a contemporary writer for the thesis subject. But a trip to Tasmania and visits to Port Arthur and Macquarie Harbour brought about a change.

I had heard about Marcus Clarke's convict novel, *For the Term of His Natural Life*, and it was one of those books that I was going to read some day. When I saw it in the bookshop at Port Arthur, I picked it up, thinking it would be a good holiday read while travelling around. There I was, reading this powerful story of crime and punishment, injustice and deceit, seeing some of the places of the setting and becoming more and more interested in the author and the writing of the novel. When I returned home I went into the English department and told Dennis Davison, then co-ordinator of the honours year, that I now wanted to concentrate on Clarke's work.

I had to find a supervisor, and Dennis asked around without much success. Then Harold said that he would like to do it. Although his main focus was Restoration and Augustan, he had a growing interest in Australian colonial literature. So, after preliminary discussions I set to work, faced with Harold's insistence on careful

research, the need for organisation of the source material, and, overall, the importance of making the resulting thesis interesting as well as informative. I remember Dennis saying that a minor thesis wasn't much more work than a long essay. Perhaps not, but it would have been daunting without such an enthusiastic supervisor.

The next thing was to choose a subject for the more substantial master's thesis. While working on Marcus Clarke I had cause to look at several colonial periodicals, particularly those with some literary content. At that time I had no idea how many there were, but I thought it might be worth further investigation. Harold thought so too, and I began a couple of years' research, moving around libraries in Victoria and interstate, looking at over five hundred different periodicals, choosing some as fitting the criteria and discarding others. The thesis grew so large that it eventually became two volumes, one of identification and description, the other a detailed bibliographical list, much improved from its beginnings because of Harold's insistence on exact and clear detail.

At around this time Harold had begun working on his book about W. S. Lyster and the opera companies that made memorable and often very successful tours in Australia between 1861 and 1880. A fine musician himself and always a devotee of opera performance, Harold undertook the writing and research partly for his own pleasure but, more importantly, for the spreading of wider knowledge about the richness of nineteenth-century colonial culture, especially during those years. *The Golden Age of Australian Opera* was published in 1981.

By now addicted to study and having finished my master's, I began looking around for a PhD topic. One of the names I had found coming up frequently while working on the periodicals was that of James Smith, a colonial journalist who was also involved in the formation of many of the cultural movements of the time. I thought he might act as the central figure in an account of the development of literary culture in colonial Melbourne and talked to Harold about this. Although the topic, like that of the periodicals, was a little outside the usual choice for an English thesis, he agreed to be my supervisor once again.

Harold was especially interested because he had been doing some research on Dr J. E. Neild, forensic pathologist and theatre critic, who was a contemporary and also an associate of James Smith. Neild was an important literary figure in nineteenth-century Melbourne, better known than Smith, though each was a complementary subject. Since Smith was a journalist on the *Argus*, writing leading articles and acting as its literary and drama critic, I made frequent visits to the newspaper room at the State Library of Victoria, poring over the pages to find whatever I could about this man. Both here and in the periodicals there were also frequent references to Neild as well as instances of his work as a freelance critic.

Harold's biography of Neild, *James Edward Neild: Victorian Virtuoso*, was published in 1989, as was mine of Smith.¹ By this time, I had left Monash in so far as

¹ Lurline Stuart, *James Smith: The Making of a Colonial Culture* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989).

regular studies were concerned and had been busy preparing the thesis for publication as well as doing some tutoring in external studies for both Deakin and Monash. I was also involved with what was then the Friends of the La Trobe Library (later the Friends of the State Library, eventually absorbed into the Library Foundation). This took up some of my time; the rest was filled with writing occasional articles, attending academic and library functions, and, for some years, frequent travel.

Then I heard that the Academy of the Humanities in Canberra was seeking applications for editors of classic Australian texts. I had some editing experience, having collaborated on an edition of wartime letters,² but this was going to be a much more stringent job, and I was unsure whether or not to apply. Of course I consulted Harold, prepared to take his advice regardless of my own interest. He suggested that I send him a well-prepared application, which he would look at with a view to the value of sending it on to the Academy. Since he was one of the members of the Advisory Committee on this project, he was well placed to know what I should do. When I was told that my application to edit *His Natural Life* (the original title) had been accepted, I felt rather nervous at what I was taking on, but, reassured by Harold's confidence, I began what was to become several years' work, with the resulting Academy edition being published in 2001.³

Harold had launched the first edition of my Australian periodicals bibliography in 1979.⁴ He also launched *A Very Busy Smith*, an annotated checklist of James Smith's work, in 1992, its publication helped to printing readiness through his computer skills.⁵ All those years later, I asked him to launch *His Natural Life* at Monash in 2001, following its joint launch with *The Getting of Wisdom*, edited by Clive Probyn and Bruce Steele, in Canberra.⁶ Then, in 2002, he launched the second updated and extended edition of the periodicals bibliography.⁷ Always a witty and interesting speaker and, again, always willing to promote and encourage the work of his students, he spoke to an appreciative audience on each occasion.

While still maintaining his interest in colonial literature and its accompanying culture, Harold was writing and researching books on non-Australian themes,

² *Letters Home 1939–1945*, collected and edited by Lurline Stuart and Josie Arnold (Sydney: William Collins, 1987).

³ Marcus Clarke, *His Natural Life*, ed. Lurline Stuart, with historical background by Michael Roe and adaptations by Elizabeth Webby, The Academy Editions of Australian Literature (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2001).

⁴ Lurline Stuart, *Nineteenth Century Australian Periodicals: An Annotated Bibliography* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1979).

⁵ Lurline Stuart, comp., *A Very Busy Smith: An Annotated Checklist of the Works of James Smith, Nineteenth-Century Melbourne Journalist and Critic* (Melbourne: Centre for Bibliographical and Textual Studies in association with the National Centre for Australian Studies, Monash University, 1992).

⁶ Henry Handel Richardson, *The Getting of Wisdom*, ed. Clive Probyn and Bruce Steele, The Academy Editions of Australian Literature (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2001).

⁷ Lurline Stuart, comp., *Australian Periodicals with Literary Content, 1821–1925: An Annotated Bibliography* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2003).

in particular *The Works of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, published in 1999. He contributed many thoughtful articles to various scholarly magazines, worked on literary and other committees, and continued in his usual way, making important contributions to scholarship right up to and through his illness. The last of his books that I read was *Attributing Authorship: An Introduction*, published in 2002, which provoked further discussion and which would have been expanded if there had been time.

I didn't see as much of Harold in these later years, but I used to meet him for lunch at Monash sometimes to catch up with family and academic news. The last time I saw him he had lost a lot of weight, also his defining beard, but he was still as interesting and agreeable as he had always been. After he died I planted a rose in my garden as a tribute. It was Golden Celebration, a strong and vigorous grower, many-petalled as appropriate to Harold's many interests, and a striking reminder of an outstanding scholar and friend.

Melbourne