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KOOKABURRAS AND SATYRS

Some Recollections of The Fanfrolico Press

by

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TALKARRA PRESS
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THAT

BURGEONING OF adolescent enthusiasms, The Fanfrolico Press, was a phenomenon of the Nineteen-Twenties. It went out of existence in the year 1930, of the Vulgar Era, and may be viewed now, in 1952, with some historical detachment, as an example of Australian striving, though its emphasis was away from Australia. In these recollections of my associations with this remarkable adventure, I am not attempting to write its complete history, but only to put on record some aspects that were within my experience. The books published by The Fanfrolico Press, both in Sydney and in London, have today become highly valued as collectors' items, and I am often asked, by bibliophiles, for elucidations. I hope that others who were concerned will supplement my reminiscences with their own, or advance alternative interpretations of the facts; and I invite them to do so.

The "causative cause" of The Fanfrolico Press, at all stages, though unavowed, was the urgent ambition of Jack Lindsay, the eldest son of Norman Lindsay, to be published and to win recognition as a poet and scholar; but the original and the persisting deeper stimulus came from Norman Lindsay's philosophy

of art and life, expressed in his book, "Creative Effort." Though Norman himself remained somewhat discreetly in the background, his art-work and philosophical ideas were to the fore in most of the Fanfrolico Press publications. He was the urger, or, more precisely, the *demiurge* of the delightful world of Fanfrolicanean ideas.

In my adolescent innocence, I believed that the Dionysian philosophy, as expounded by both Norman and Jack Lindsay, had aesthetic validity. I still believe that what they attempted to put forward, in the period of general despondency at the end of the First World War, was artistically valorous, and far superior to the miserable "Modernism," the whining cult of "The Waste Land", which led humanity into the horrors of a Second World War.

Dionysian ideas have emerged, and re-emerged, into "Western" civilization, periodically, for at least three thousand years, at times of literary and artistic Resurgence, or Renaissance, or of intense Creative Effort. Though not in the academic sense a scholar, Norman Lindsay, by means of his artistic intuition and his highly-developed intellect, felt and also perceived that an Aesthetic of Dionysos could save the "modern", mechanized, war-torn world from hate-engendered horrors. In arriving at this determination, he was influenced by the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, that "Apostle of Joy"; but Norman's general reading was wide. His ideas came from many sources, and ultimately from within himself.

The "Lindsay Aesthetic", as I may term it, a practical application of Nietzschean ideas in the Twentieth Century, was antichristian, a Crusade in reverse. As such, it was a proselytizing cult, based on "the trans-valuation of all values". By means of the Fanfrolico Press books, Norman's ideas, as elaborated by Jack, were to be propagated, and also exemplified. For this purpose, it was necessary that the books should be as enduring, as beautiful, indeed, as magnificent as typographical art and craft could make them. The aim, then, was not typography considered as an end in itself, for the production of books merely beautiful. There was also an Idea to express, and typography was to be brought into the service of that idea. The Fanfrolico Press had a policy, indeed, a "mission". This differentiated its productions from those of other Fine Presses of its period, and since.

I first met Jack Lindsay, and became very friendly with him, at the University of Queensland, where we were fellow-students, in 1919, immediately after the end of the First World War. Born in 1900, he was a year older than I, and a year ahead of me in the Arts Course, in what was then a very young University, with only a few hundred students. He and his two younger brothers, Raymond and Phillip, were the offspring of Norman's first marriage. They had spent most of their boyhood, and received their education, in Brisbane, where their mother was a member of a respected Queensland family. In this

sense, Norman's sons may be described as Queenslanders, though Jack was born in Melbourne, and the other two in Sydney. When I became acquainted with them, visiting them at their home at Kangaroo Point, Brisbane, Jack was nineteen years of age, and the other two still in short pants. Their father, living at Springwood, in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales, was to them like a faraway demigod. At this time, Norman was in the throes of formulating his philosophy of "Creative Effort". He had risen above the journalistic technique of caricature and humorous book-illustration which had made him famous, on the popular level of appreciation, and he had begun to put forth the beautiful, technically-amazing, series of etchings on which his final claim to recognition as a great artist will rest. He wrote occasionally to his sons in Brisbane, pouring out his ideas, and sending them "pulls" of his etchings. The effect upon the youngsters, particularly upon Jack, was like that of an epiphany, a magical experience. A vicarious paternal influence, of such a powerful, "daimonic" kind, acting upon the mind of a youth of extraordinary intellect and emotional sensitivity, enmeshed in yearnings, could scarcely have had any other than a disturbing, even disruptive, effect. Jack became Norman's first and best, and perhaps only true disciple, and remained so for about ten years.

I hereby venture the prediction that a complete collection of Norman Lindsay's etchings, adequately

housed and exhibited, will some day be considered one of the wonders of Australia; in the common phrase, a "tourist-attraction", as the etchings of Rembrandt are, at Amsterdam. It is lugubrious to reflect that the greatness of Rembrandt was not recognized by his compatriots, the Dutch, until 200 years after the artist's death, and even then only on the insistence of foreign critics. It is to be hoped that Australians will not be as slow as this in appreciating Norman Lindsay's artistic merits, and particularly his skill as an etcher. He has had a considerable recognition from private collectors of his work, but there has been no move, that I am aware of, by public authorities, to collect his etchings and other seriously-done productions, to put them on permanent and total exhibition as the National Treasure that they undoubtedly are. On analysis, it may be considered that Norman Lindsay reached his zenith as an artist during the 1920's, in the fifth decade of his life, when he wrote "Creative Effort", and did most of his etchings. It was in this phase that his zeal to excel, and to become philosophically self-conscious, and to find an aesthetic rectification of the hate-motif engendered in humanity by the First World War, came with a shattering impact upon his adolescent son, Jack, and to a lesser extent upon others of the younger generation of Australians, myself included. It so happened that I was in a position to observe, closely, the effects of this impact of a brilliant father upon a brilliant son, from its

beginning in 1919 until its ending in 1929. This paternalistic impact engendered, sustained, and ultimately killed, *The Fanfrolico Press*.

At Brisbane Grammar School and at the University, Jack Lindsay had shown an extraordinary aptitude for Graeco-Roman studies. His nickname among us in Queensland was "Plato", and he lived up to it, formulating, under the paternal stimulus, a Neo-Platonic philosophy which was far from conventionally academic. He had set his mind on becoming a poet. The range of his reading, and his memory for words, was prodigious. Probably no writer in the English language today has a vocabulary wider than his, although he inclines to Latinisms rather than to Teutonisms. The only man who certainly equals, and perhaps surpasses him, in philological range is now the Professor of European Archeology at the University of London, Vere Gordon Childe, also an Australian (who incidentally taught me some Latin, which I have since forgotten, at the Maryborough Grammar School in Queensland, in 1918). If there is a third to stand near these two, it may be Eric Partridge, a professional lexicographer of diligence. Strange concatenation, Eric Partridge was a fellow-student and friend of Jack Lindsay and myself at our little University of Queensland, 1919-21, which was thus the nursery, as a cynic might say, of some scholastic freaks!

I look upon Gordon Childe, Jack Lindsay and Eric Partridge as prodigies of scholarship and literary

ability, Australians who have been lost to Australia, principally because they would not endure "the lot austere that waits upon the Man of Letters here." Having emigrated, like Gilbert Murray and many other Australian scholars and writers, to Britain, they evaded the problems, which must have seemed to them too difficult, of struggling to build up an indigenous culture here. In their view, Britain, not Australia, has been "the Land of Opportunity", and that remains true for them, despite the conventional boasts of bumbles to the contrary; yet I cannot help thinking of them, and of all other literary emigrants from Australia, as shirkers of a task which was waiting for them to do here: the building-up of culture in Australia. They chose the line of least resistance, became cultural careerists or opportunists, and Australia was weakened by their dereliction. Their example could be valuable only if it led to an amelioration of the conditions which led them to emigrate.

In May, 1921, I got myself into trouble by publishing a page of erotic poems by Jack Lindsay in the University of Queensland magazine, "*Galmahra*", of which I was the editor. It was I who conferred this Aboriginal name, which it still bears, on the University Magazine. It means "messenger", and I chose it as an Australian retort to Sydney University's Europocentric "*Hermes*". That same number contained a violently-polemical prose-article by Jack

Lindsay, attacking the idea of Nationalism in Australian literature. "Satyrs or Kookaburras?" was the alternative he sarcastically posed, and he plumped for satyrs, which he regarded as possessing a universal symbolism. This was an early indication of his desire to escape from the near Australian theme into the supposedly wider world of Somewhere Else. To him, the distant fields were greenest, and Europe lured him. I didn't have the wit to point out to him, then, that "satyrs" were the local product of a very small corner of Europe, and that the Greeks, whom he devotedly admired, firmly believed in the *Genius Loci*. His rejection of kookaburras and adoption of satyrs, as symbols, was spuriously "classical". The real Ancient Greeks would have rejoiced in kookaburras, and would have incorporated them with delight into their poetry and mythology. From this beginning, Jack Lindsay's Neo-Platonism was "literary", or bookish. It never became truly animistic, as the Ancient Greek way of life was. It remained a verbalized concept.

That first number of "Galmahra" was suppressed by the University Authorities, and all except a few copies were recalled. The offending page was cut out, and a page of acceptable juvenilia pasted in, to replace it. In this way, I editorially launched Jack Lindsay on his literary career. He was then twenty-one years of age, and I was twenty. Our silly aim was to astonish the burghers. Thirty years later, I may say that the burghers have more frequently

astonished me than I have astonished them. They astonished me particularly in 1942, when they made me a scapegoat for their Japanese panic; but that's another story, which however could serve to illustrate the hazards which any writer in Australia must be prepared to face, if he dares to put forth ideas that are not mass-produced.

The desire to astonish the burghers is not a serious motive for any artist or writer, except in his blithe adolescence. It is sometimes unkindly said that Norman Lindsay has too persistently striven to be "shocking". I would find it difficult to believe this. No artist of his ability could seriously set out to achieve such a futile ambition, which would imply a lack of sincerity in his work, or a crude desire for "publicity". Assuming the sincerity of the work, it is the artist who is shocked, when he finds it described as "shocking". He may be driven to adopt some mechanism of self-defence, and that, I think, is what impelled Norman Lindsay to write "Creative Effort". In the same way, Jack Lindsay was shocked when "Galmahra" was suppressed because of his poems in it. At the outset of his literary career, he had to contend against the hostility of the conventional "mob". He was placed on the defensive, and a natural reaction was to defy "the mob", by shocking them some more. So, at the beginning of the 1920s, Jack Lindsay, like his father, was forced into a *contra-mundum* frame of mind, which caused him to spend so much time devising a defence-mechanism

for his poetry that he almost missed the point that the poetry itself was much more important than the defence of it.

About the middle of 1921, Jack, with Ray and Phil, moved from Brisbane to Sydney. There they became members of the coterie of poets and other aesthetic strivers gathered around Norman. Apart from his journalistic work, which had appeared in "The Bulletin" for twenty years, Norman was no novice at book-illustration. As early as 1912, when on a visit to Europe, he had done a series of 100 superb line-drawings to Petronius, published in the Strauss edition in London in that year. He had also done line-drawings and wash-drawings to illustrate Hugh McCrae's poems, "Satyrs and Sunlight", and etchings to illustrate Leon Gellert's "Isle of San" (1919) and McCrae's "Colombine" and "Idyllia", all these magnificently produced as Limited Editions in Sydney, and subscribed-for by book-collectors in Australia, before The Fanfrolico Press, as such, had come into existence. The typographical quality of these books was never surpassed, and seldom equalled, in the later productions of The Fanfrolico Press, either in Sydney, or London. This fact sufficiently proves that Norman, and not Jack or anybody else, was the founder of the typographic and aesthetic movement that later developed into The Fanfrolico Press.

There was a fallacy in the whole method. Poetry, being in its own nature imagic, does not require

illustrations! The artist, whose work appeals instantaneously to the eye, can take an unfair advantage of the poet, whose work must be appreciated at leisure by the reader's mind. The only satisfactory book-illustrator would be one who could altruistically subordinate his own prepossessions to those of the author whose text his drawings accompany. Norman was temperamentally quite incapable of such self-abnegation. His illustrations overpowered the poetry of Gellert and McCrae, who were thereby relegated to a secondary place in their own books, even though their poetry, in itself, was excellent. The unfortunate poets therefore saw the distillations of their souls used merely as inter-leaves in bound portfolios of Lindsay etchings. Yet I can believe that Norman sincerely thought that his illustrations were helping to make the work of Australian poets better-known and more highly appreciated than it would have been if unadorned.

Arrived in Sydney, Jack began a precarious career as a professional poet and literary critic. With the help of Frank Johnson, who was then an assistant in Dymock's bookshop, as his publisher, and with the support of the literary coterie surrounding Norman, he in 1922 and 1923 issued several numbers of a literary magazine named "Vision", a vigorous splash in the Australian Slough of Despond. Its covers and pages were decorated with reproductions of slight and chimerical pen-drawings by Norman, depicting

principally hybrids such as centaurs, satyrs, mermaids and harpies, part-beast, part-human, zoological horrors and impossibilities which sufficiently indicated that artistic imagination can transcend the limits of logical apperception. These decorations, though slight in themselves, had the bizarre quality which would distract the eye of the reader from whatever meaning may have been in the text. They emphasized that one aspect of Norman's thought was not humanistic, or even animistic, in the sense of the Ancient Greeks, and still less "super-humanistic", in the sense of Nietzsche, but chimerical and sub-humanistic. After all, the physical begetting of a satyr or a centaur would be an act of bestiality. Such figures in Classical art and literature have been symbolical of what Twentieth-Century "Freudian" psychologists would term "the fantasia of the Unconscious Mind", a chaotic set of ideas. In many of Norman's greatest black-and-white compositions, such chimeras as these are indicated as belonging to a Nether World which is trodden underfoot by the Superman. I thought it surprizing that he should have bestowed such symbolism upon the new-born "Vision" of striving adolescents in Sydney. Was this the Creative Image he had preached, or was it merely a morbid image? (At any rate, it was certainly not "photographic art".)

In 1924, as I passed through Sydney on my way to England, I spent a day with Jack Lindsay, who was

then living at Bondi. "Vision" had ceased publication, and Jack was trying something different. He had made contact with John T. Kirtley, a bright young businessman who collected Limited Editions. Jack and Philip had persuaded Kirtley to buy a small hand-press, on which the three of them were printing little items of *curiosa*, such as "Panurge's Codpiece", in extremely limited editions.

My first-hand knowledge of this phase is slight, but it was about then (towards the end of 1924) that the Fanfrolico Press had its genesis. Kirtley developed into a knowledgeable typographer. In 1925 or 1926, he printed in Sydney Jack Lindsay's verse-translation of "Lysistrata", with Norman Lindsay's fine-line illustrations tipped in, a grand and startling book. An edition of this, limited to sixty copies, was issued under the imprint of "The Fanfrolico Press," the name suggested by Norman, as a whimsical variant of Rabelais' "Fanfreluche".

Sooner or later, a comparison would be inevitably made between Norman Lindsay's illustrations to "Lysistrata" and Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations to the same work, done in London about thirty years previously. Both sets were exquisitely delicate in pen-drawing technique. Beardsley's were blatantly phallic, as the text required; Norman Lindsay's minimized this aspect, and emphasized the female dominant, which was also correct to text. I have no patience with critics who say that Norman Lindsay's art-work is merely "derivative" from Beardsley. It

is so only in the sense that every artist's work is derivative from that of every other artist who has preceded him. There is as much of Gustav Doré as of Beardsley in Norman's work, and also of Dürer and Goya and Rembrandt — and, beyond them all, his own synthesis and intuitions.

Another Fanfrolico Press book printed in Sydney about 1925 was a collection of lyrics by Jack Lindsay naively entitled "Fauns and Ladies", with some slight decorations by Norman, printed in with the text. These are among the best lyrics ever written in Australia, and will some day be recognized as such, when the mists of contemporary poetic theorizing are cleared away, and the grain is sieved from the straw. Another book printed in Sydney by Kirtley was "Thief of the Moon", poems by Kenneth Slessor, with a woodcut illustration by Norman Lindsay. This was the first publication in volume form of the work of this major Australian poet, a very creditable achievement for Kirtley as an amateur printer, and for Jack Lindsay as a critic, ready to recognize the merit of another poet's work, and for Norman as an encourager of poets.

Towards the end of 1926, Jack Lindsay and Kirtley went together to London, to set the Thames on fire. Early in 1927, they came up to Oxford to visit me. I was in my third year, having narrowly avoided being "sent down", in the previous year, for distributing, to Indian students, pamphlets written by Mahatma Gandhi, the only Political Saint of the

Twentieth Century. (I don't feel so badly about this, as the Republic of India has since become an accomplished fact, but the burghers were astonished by Gandhi's ideas in those days.)

Jack Lindsay's arrival in England rekindled my enthusiasm for his and Norman's ideas and work. Like others of that generation, I was disillusioned with the bogus ideals of "Democracy" and so on, that had been plugged in by the professional propagandists to stir up hatred against the Germans in the First World War. Being optimistic, I was hoping for a rebirth of the human spirit, to relieve the gloom of desolation that was spreading over Britain, a nation bereaved of a million men. I had explored Marxian Communism, having joined the Communist Party in Brisbane in 1921, but discarded it in 1926, when I discovered that it is only banditry disguised as a political philosophy, based on resentment and hatred, and completely lacking in human-kindliness, toleration and humour.

In Norman Lindsay's book, "Creative Effort", and his Dionysian art-work, supplemented by Jack's Neo-Platonic fervour, the satyric whimsy of Hugh McCrae's poetry, and Kenneth Slessor's rich lyrical ebullience, I thought there might be a nucleus for a European, or at least for a British Renaissance: a reaffirmation of vitality, the sunlit quality; and I thought it significant that these ideas should be projected back to Britain, after having been germinated in sunny Australia, from stock transplanted

and re-energized. It had not occurred to me that the reverse process is more usual in periods of imperial decline, when cultural decay spreads from an empire's core to its colonial periphery; and that this is what had been happening in Australia since 1901, when the Australian Nationalism of the 1890s was side-tracked by political federation of the Six Colonies on an imperial plan. Nor had it occurred to me that Norman Lindsay's Dionysianism of the 1920s had stemmed from the "Paganism" of the 1890s in England, of which it was a colonial echo, with trimmings from the "Yellow Book" reaction against late-Victorian English middle-class smug morality, the supposed necessity of artists and poets to be "Bohemian" and "shocking". These ideas, fresh during Norman's own adolescence (he was born in 1879), were not part of the *Zeitgeist* of our generation, adolescent during the First World War, nurtured in the terrible belief that it was meet and proper for young men to be sacrificed in holocausts engineered by their elders. The rebelliousness that we might feel could be directed only against those who had caused the world-wide calamities, not against late-Victorian "morality" and smugness, which were outmoded before we were born. Yet it was Norman Lindsay's peculiar achievement that in Australia, in the 1920s, he restated the doctrine of the 1890s, bringing it up to date, with Freudian furbishings, and purged of its elements of Australian political Nationalism. In this he was aided and abetted by

Jack's Neo-Platonism and dislike of kookaburras. Their aim now was to re-energise Britain, and the whole war-weary world, with Dionysian precepts, rather than to achieve something creditable merely in and for Australia.

Impatient to join in this vital movement, as I thought it, I put in my final terms at Oxford mainly reading Nietzsche, and trying to persuade my tutors to read "Creative Effort". I took Honours in Modern Greats, so-called, a ponderous course in Politics, Philosophy and Economics, but was so little interested in academic classifications that to this day I have never bothered to take out my M.A. degree.

I was closely in touch with Kirtley and Jack Lindsay from the time of their arrival in England, and spent part of my vacations in company with them in London, and on visits to Paris. They also visited me several times, during term, at Oxford. In that year, 1927, they successfully established the Fanfrolico Press in London. Kirtley was the typographer and business manager, Jack Lindsay the literary expert, the prodigious word-wielder, whose luggage consisted principally of manuscripts that he had brought with him from Australia, mostly poetry and translations of Greek and Roman classics. The big asset, apart from finance, (which Kirtley provided), was permission given by Norman Lindsay to use his illustrations almost ad. lib., a nice gesture of paternal benevolence to assist Jack Lindsay to become established on the English literary market.

Norman's name was fairly well-known in England, and the 1912 edition of *Petronius* was properly esteemed by bibliophiles. In 1923, some of his etchings had been exhibited at the Leicester Galleries in London, in a show of Australian art, and had aroused great interest, even enthusiasm. At that time, art-criticism in England had not yet been completely captured, as it was soon afterwards, by the "modernistic" schools of sneerers at "literary" values in art, the boosters of "abstract" designs, who objected, on Talmudic grounds, to "the likeness of any thing." Such critics, however, were beginning to predominate by 1927, and, among them, Norman Lindsay's name was anathema. He was too "literary" for them. They preferred even book-illustrations to be abstract, merely decorative, not illustrative. As far as poetry is concerned, as I have indicated, I can agree with this proposition; but the rest of the "modernistic" attack on Norman Lindsay, and on all other depictive artists, which continues unabated to the present day, appears to me to be out of plumb.

Kirtley had rented a pleasant, one-roomed office at 5, Bloomsbury Square, furnished it with a carpet, tables and chairs, and had arranged for the Chiswick Press to print rather extensive Limited Editions of "*Lysistrata*" and "*Petronius*", magnificent productions. These were accompanied by two smaller books, Kenneth Slessor's "*Earth Visitors*", printed at the Chiswick Press, and Jack Lindsay's "*Marino Faliero*" (a verse-drama), printed at the Curwen Press.

The illustrations to *Petronius*, 100 of them, were printed in Vienna, reproduced in collotype from the line-block illustrations of the edition of 1912. They were bound in with the letterpress, but not printed in with it, and to that extent the book was not a typographical unity, as "*Lysistrata*" was. Similarly, the letterpress of "*Earth Visitors*", most exquisitely printed in Baskerville type, was disrupted by the insertion of some woodcuts by Norman, which had little, if anything, to do with the poems, and lacked the fine calligraphic quality which the "*Lysistrata*" illustrations possessed in such high degree. "*Marino Faliero*", hand-set in the Walbaum type, was not illustrated. It was a chaste specimen of printing, and, bound in funereal black, seemed anything but an affirmation of Byronic zest, which the theme required.

With these four books, produced under Kirtley's management in about nine months during 1927, the Fanfrolico Press was established in London. When I came down from Oxford in September, that year, Kirtley told me that he was homesick, and intended to return to Australia. Jack Lindsay, however, wanted to stay in London, to continue the publishing-programme. He asked me to help him. Though I knew little about typography at that stage, and not much about business, I was confident that I could learn. Apart from my admiration for Jack's literary ability, I had a compassion for his then poetic helplessness in practical affairs. He had grown a thick

black beard, and looked like a perfect "Hobohemian". I had an altruistic belief, perhaps partly engendered at the Home of Lost Causes, that it was my duty to help such an obvious poet as this to put forth his poetry. I did not want him to die of neglect, young and unpublished, like Chatterton or Richard Middleton. To our generation, the tragedy of the poet cut down before his prime was personalized in the career of Rupert Brooke. As very few copies of "Marino Faliero" had been sold, Kirtley with his business experience and acumen privately informed me that he thought a Press based on Jack Lindsay's work could not ultimately succeed in England. He offered to pay the poet's fare back home to Australia, and, when that good offer was declined, Kirtley's responsibility for having brought him to England was at an end.

After Kirtley's departure, towards the end of 1927, I became manager of The Fanfrolico Press in London, and continued in that activity for eighteen months. Jack and I had no capital, except lively self-confidence, the office-carpet and furniture which Kirtley left to us, some unsold copies of each of the four Limited Editions which Kirtley had produced, the equity in a going concern, the right to use Norman's illustrations, Jack's cabin-trunk of unpublished manuscripts, our good health, and an unbounded zest for experiment.

We proceeded with a vigorous expansion. Between October, 1927, and March, 1929, we produced

about thirty more Fanfrolico Press books. Among them were Hugh McCrae's "Satyrs and Sunlight"; translations and adaptations by Jack Lindsay of Graeco-Roman classics, including "Propertius", "Sappho", "Theocritus", "Homer's Hymns", "The Parliament of Women"; essays by Jack Lindsay, "William Blake" and "Dionysos"; verse-plays by Jack Lindsay, "Helen Comes of Age"; editions of Herrick, Beddoes and Skelton; Nietzsche's "The Antichrist" (my translation); several Elizabethan reprints; "Hyperborea", by Norman Lindsay; and a somewhat incongruous Robert Landor, edited by Eric Partridge (which launched him on his London career). We also conjointly edited "The London Aphrodite", limited to six issues, a counterblast to J. C. Squire's "London Mercury." Every book was preceded by a prospectus with a manifesto of our Dionysian theories, usually written by Jack in turgid if not bombastic prose.

How eager we were to excel! The amount of work we did was tremendous, and we did it easily, for the youth and the zeal were in us. We employed a typist, to mind the office and the telephone, while I was out most of the day cajoling printers, book-binders and paper-makers, and Jack spent most of his time in the Reading Room at the British Museum, nearby, seeking out new items to publish. We both read the proofs, and laid out the formats together, in a happy collaboration that only men engaged in a grand adventure can achieve. The expense was no

hindrance to us, as we ordered handmade papers, special inks, bindings of vellum, full leather, or strange materials such as silk balloon-cloth and even Japanese umbrella-paper. We had faith that the subscribers would pay the costs, whatever they might be, and that revenue from one book would pay for the next; and so it did, during the whole period that I was the manager, but there was never any time to rest on our oars. Between printers' credit on one side and cash discounts offered to booksellers on the other, we bridged awkward financial gaps. We paid ourselves £5 a week each, and the typist £2 10s., and put all other revenue back into production. That was all either of us ever got out of it, except the great satisfactions of a continuing achievement.

We did not attempt to print the books ourselves, but placed them all with trade-printers, who worked to our specifications. There were some failures in our lists, but on the whole the results won recognition as typographically interesting, and sometimes as excellent. One of our best productions, "The Parlement of Pratlers", an Elizabethan reprint, was selected by the First Editions Clubs of both London and New York for special mention and exhibition. This little gem was illustrated by Hal Collins, a half-blood Maori, an Antipodean like ourselves, uneasily acclimatized in the Northern Hemisphere. He was the crony of Peter Warlock, composer of music and Elizabethan scholar, who was our principal helper in Elizabethan research.

Though we failed in our naive ambition of rescuing Britain from the despair and decadence that prevailed in that period of increasing "modernistic" disenchantment that was only an interval between the two first World-Wars, our effort to put some vitality into the doddering old Grandmotherland brought us the commendation of that percipient minority which I hope will always be at Britain's core, ready to nurture seeds of Resurgence. Among these men, Peter Warlock, Robert Graves, Liam O'Flaherty, Thomas Earp, Rhys Davies, Robert Nicholls and the artist Lionel Ellis were some who gave us help and encouragement, but all had mental reservations about the "Lindsay" aesthetic, on which the Fanfrolico Press was founded, and remained based, from beginning to end. Our principal supporters were the collectors who bought our books, placing their orders through booksellers, and consequently remaining for the most part unknown to us. We sent portions of each edition to America, where the books were quickly sold, and today fetch fantastic premiums.

We were not trying to make money or win fame; our striving was only to express an idea, to try to save Britain from slithering further into the abyss of "modernistic" despair, from becoming a "Waste Land" of grey neuters. In that ambition we necessarily failed. The rot had set in, and nothing could stop it. The Nineteenth Century conception of a

virile and ever-expanding British Empire ("wider still and wider shall Thy bounds be set") had fallen to the ground, and there was no new vision to replace it. Men of the ancestral British type, such as D. H. Lawrence, Norman Douglas, Aldous Huxley, Peter Warlock, were all trying in their various ways to re-assert the constructive individualism on which the British Empire had been founded; but the prevailing literary trend was to sentimentalize class-patterns and mob-emotions, in line with the journalistic attrition of national sensibility. Thus, the shrewdly-professional exploiters of current trends, and purveyors of "escapism", were the most successful and typical British authors. Men who had the living flame in them, such as Lawrence, Douglas and Huxley, found England intolerable and went abroad into self-imposed exile. Peter Warlock, unable to get his music performed, became utterly frustrated, lapsed into a chronic drunkenness and ultimately committed suicide: he was a typical Elizabethan Englishman, very sadly out of his period, a vestigial survival.

No wonder, then, that our little Fanfrolico Press attempt at a Dionysian Resurgence was doomed from the beginning! Cynicism prevailed, and reaped its full harvest during the Second World War, when the Order of Merit was appropriately conferred on T. S. Eliot, author of "The Waste Land". Yet, as I now view our attempt in a retrospect, after two decades, I may claim with some modesty that it was

a "successful failure": that is, an experiment which had to be made, to test the ground.

Early in 1929, Brian Penton, a journalist from Sydney, arrived in London. He too was a Queenslander, of my former slight acquaintance. With him came Philip Lindsay, determined to carve out a career for himself as a novelist. These two, younger than Jack and I, were not overburdened with mere academic learning, as we were. They were popularizers by instinct and training (Phillip later became a cinema-story writer and Penton the editor of a newspaper). They lacked the peculiar feeling for Limited Editions and Fine Printing that characterizes the true bibliophile. They had ideas to express, but certainly not Dionysian Idealism. Jack and I had almost exhausted our initial impetus.

Penton and Philip were very anxious to join The Fanfrolico Press, and easily persuaded Jack that they had a stimulus to impart. I left them to it, and stepped out in about March, 1929, Penton then becoming my successor as manager. I had other plans. In January, on a visit to the South of France, I had met D. H. Lawrence and offered to publish a book of reproductions of his paintings; but Lawrence did not want to be associated with the Fanfrolico Press, as he disagreed with the Lindsay Aesthetic.

I therefore (in partnership with a bookseller named Edward Goldston) founded The Mandrake Press, chiefly to publish Lawrence's "Paintings", and various other items outside the Lindsay orbit,

including Aleister Crowley's "Confessions", Liam O'Flaherty's "Return of the Brute", Peter Warlock's "Merry-Go-Down", W. J. Turner's "Miss America", a reprint of Boccaccio's "The Amorous Fiammetta" (illustrated in colour-gravure), and the series of "Mandrake Booklets", including stories by Rhys Davies, Thomas Burke, Jack McLaren, and my own nostalgic little sketches of life in the Australian bush, "The Bushwackers".

In the meantime, under Penton's management, The Fanfrolico Press produced a "Catullus" and a "Mimes of Herondas" (the latter with illustrations by Osman Spare and a foreword by Penton), also several small items, including "Morgan in Jamaica", a story by Phillip Lindsay with an illustration by Raymond Lindsay. The venture, however, was not prospering. Jack and Penton had bought a hand-press, and were attempting to print the books themselves, but not making a very good fist of it, as they lacked craftsmanship and patience. One of these hand-printed items, I forget which, was described, in the colophon, as "the First Book from The Fanfrolico Press", or words to that effect, a ridiculous description which would deceive some collectors, perhaps, and confuse bibliographers.

The decision to hand-print the books brought The Fanfrolico Press to collapse about nine months after Penton took over the management. It went into liquidation early in 1930. He was an able and ambitious journalist, but not seriously a publisher of

Limited Editions, or sufficiently altruistic to manage a poet. Just before the final fizzle, he and Jack compiled and published a rather silly little "History of The Fanfrolico Press", in which, with senseless malice, my name was obliterated from the record, and Kirtley's pioneer work minimized. This kind of thing does not matter in the long-run, as it is typical of journalistic, not of literary, ethics. I mention it now only to prevent bibliographers from being misled by it. Penton was a professed cynic, and an expert in malice. He died in 1951, at the comparatively early age of forty-six, and I bear him no illwill, particularly beyond the grave. Sooner or later, reputations find their true level, and every man's achievements may at last be dispassionately weighed. Although Penton performed the obsequies of The Fanfrolico Press, he did not kill it. He merely failed to keep it alive. It was already dying, from the exhaustion of Jack Lindsay's poetic verve.

Inevitable sequel, Jack became disillusioned with the Dionysian philosophy, and discarded it like an outworn garment of his youth. At the age of thirty, he began to write popular-style historical novels, emulating but never equalling his brother Phillip's better-deserved successes in this field of (let us hope) Unlimited Editions. He later turned to Marxism, that humorless netherworld of "proletarian" masochism, which had a literary vogue in Britain in the 1930s, helping to whip up popular hatreds, in preparation for the Second World Holocaust. As a

Marxist, Jack was no longer swimming against the stream; he was drifting with it.

Becoming a professional career-novelist, he ceased to be essentially a poet, and that was a pity; but a time will come, I feel sure, when the poetry that he wrote in the 1920s will be esteemed more highly than those otiose prose-works he wrote in the 1930s and 1940s. As a poet he was dynamic and prodigious. In that phase of his life he was a product of Australia, and must take rank among our best, when the evaluation is eventually made.

In 1931, I returned home, on Norman Lindsay's invitation, to establish The Endeavour Press in Sydney, during a period of Economic Depression, which was also a spiritual Depression. It functioned for a year under my management, and, like The Fanfrolico Press, is of some historical interest as a striving by Australians to get out of the colonial groove. I have never regretted returning home, even if it has meant the sacrifice of a "career". I am satisfied to be an Australian Nationalist, and I prefer kookaburras to sparrows, or even to satyrs. Eventually Australia will become an independent nation, making distinctive cultural contributions to the wider world, but nurturing its own writers first, and keeping them here; for "Home is where the heart is".

Books are the National Talismans, and therefore should be first printed where they belong. Most of the Fanfrolico Press books belonged to Australian literature, and were out of their own climate in

London. The transferring of The Fanfrolico Press from Sydney to London was a pity. It took Jack Lindsay, and indirectly Philip Lindsay, away from Australia into cosmopolitan vagueness, and there they have remained. I hope that I have indicated in this survey that, as far as Jack Lindsay was concerned, the desire to escape from Australia was in him from the beginning. A true Resurgence could occur in Australia, at any time from now on, as national self-confidence grows; but it will be made by those who stay here, or by those who go away for only a while and then return. It could never be made by unpatriots who go away, and stay away, identifying themselves with Somewhere Else.

Here ends
the first book
from the Talkarra Press
Text written by P. R. Stephensen
Bound by Allan Cross, Queenscliff, N.S.W.
Set in Monotype Baskerville
Hand-printed by Walter W. Stone
at 64 Young Street, Cremorne
1954

Walter Stone