UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

‘DEATH CHARGED MISSIVES’: AUSTRALIAN LITERARY RESPONSES TO THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

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ABSTRACT

‘Spanish Civil War’ is an important, absent signifier in Australian history, letters, writing and cultural politics of the 1930s. I argue that despite the glossing over of the importance of Spain’s war in the period, events in Spain had a pervasive influence on Australian society, and writers in particular – on their political re-alignments, on their nationalist and internationalist cultural outlooks, and on their common acceptance that they lived in an essentially tragic age. Consequently, the critical neglect of Spain and its impact on Australian cultural affairs in the 30s is unwarranted.

My thesis research has covered a very wide range of texts: the ephemeral pamphlet, the small circulation journal, poetry, agitprop, the mainstream novel, the ‘mass declamation’ and the associated ‘new media’ of the 30s – photography and film. It has also looked at different groups or cultural networks in the period, all of which (despite their disparate politics) saw Spain as a central cause: the Catholic Church, the Communist Party, anti-fascist and peace movements amongst others.

The theoretical dimension of my work is driven by Raymond Williams’ concept of ‘structure of feeling’, first formulated in his study *The Long Revolution* then developed in a series of subsequent works. The generous range of texts I study conforms to Williams’ theory of ‘structure of feeling’, arguing that to understand the ‘field’ of a period, one should survey the interconnectivity of all its texts. Also drawing on Williams’ theory, I read the structured feeling of the 30s as essentially tragic: revealing exactly how Spain focalised fears and apparently symbolised the impasse of ‘modernity’ itself – Spain was a spectacle that graphically demonstrated how the inner destructiveness of technological modernity had tragically cancelled the possibility of progress and the arrival of variously imagined utopias.

CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

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Signature of Candidate Date

ENDORSEMENT

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Signature of Primary Supervisor Date

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Signature of Associate Supervisor Date

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Introduction: The Spanish Tragedy

The lexicon of the Spanish Civil War era has had a political renaissance in recent years. During the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, the second Bush presidency redeployed terms such as 'united front', 'axis', 'appeasement', 'terrorism', 'insurgency' and 'fifth columnist'. Likewise, the Iraqi resistance claimed to possess an Islamic 'International Brigade'. The monster 'Totalitarianism', first named by Franz Borkenau in *The Totalitarian Enemy* (1940) after his experiences of the Spanish war, formed a foundational concept in Cold War aggression, and has been resurrected by the Bush administration. As US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said in the prelude to the Iraq invasion, 'Saddam Hussein is now taking his rightful place… in the pantheon of failed brutal dictators' (qtd Rampton and Stauber 2).

As the first modern technological exercise in targeting civilians, the Spanish Civil War haunts White House claims to have removed tragedy from warfare – only 'bad guys' will suffer. The terror bombing of Guernica, a process now known as 'shock and awe', remains a memorial to the fascist powers' major military innovation in Spain. American bad conscience was no better exemplified than when the tapestry reproduction of Pablo Picasso's painting *Guernica* (1937), hanging in the foyer of the United Nations Security Council, was hidden behind a blue screen as US Secretary of State Colin Powell made announcements concerning impending 'military action' on Iraq (*Sydney Morning Herald* 8-9 February 2003); as if obscuring the painting served to erase an historical memory or a

continuity between the Spanish war and contemporary events. Likewise, revisionist historians have diminished the importance of the Spanish war, arguing that it mattered only to Left-wing, middle-class elites. Adrian Caesar, for example, claims the war was merely 'a crucial event for some intellectuals' (14). It is as if pronouncements on Spain such as that by Christopher Isherwood – 'We had a greater need of going to Spain than the Spanish Republic had need of us' (qtd Carpenter 206) – were read as proof that the experience was more about narcissistic self-fashioning than politics.

In an Australian context, historians broadly concur with Diane Menghetti's declaration that the Spanish Civil War 'had little impact on most Australians who were uninterested in and ill-informed about foreign affairs' (1982: 64). After assessing the comparatively small number of volunteers and sums of money donated, Amirah Inglis similarly concludes that despite the magnificent example of a few, the conflict was too far away for most Australians to care (1987: 215). E.M. Andrews also believes that in Australia 'the common reaction was indifference and the desire not to be involved' (Andrews 94-5). Again, it is as if writers and commentators of the time, such as Nettie Palmer, have been simplistically taken at their word: 'Those of us who knew the desperate urgency of the situation were few and not powerful: we seemed to be shouting against the wind: we were choked by the disbelief and mockery of those around us' (1948: 3).

This thesis argues against the critical orthodoxy that the Spanish Civil War was a minority intellectual concern and a marginal consideration in Australian political consciousness in the 1930s. It attempts to survey Australian culture in the period as a complex totality; and to read the body of Australian writing on Spain as a 'field', rather

than a series of individually produced texts. It argues that this textual field reveals the Spanish war as the locus of a structure of feeling: a material condition, marked by a sense of tragic modernity.

The thesis also attempts to redress the scholarly imbalance between the international and the Australian remembrances of the Spanish Civil War. By the 1980s, in countries other than Australia, the Spanish war was the subject of over 20,000 publications; in the 1990s, films like Ken Loach's *Land and Freedom* (1995) and television documentaries also proliferated. In Australia, however, where 74 men and women volunteered to serve the Republic, the topic has been relatively neglected by academics, as has the later 1930s as a whole. Only Amirah Inglis's *Australians in Spain* (1987) and Judith Keene's introduction to Agnes Hodgson's diary in *Last Mile to Huesca* (1988) have directly addressed Australian responses to the Spanish Civil War. The primary concern of both, however, was the activities of the International Brigades and the volunteer support of the Spanish Relief Committees. Carolyn Rasmussen's *The Lesser Evil* (1992) addressed the position of the late 30s Peace Movement on the question of Spain; Stuart Macintyre's *The Reds* (1998) and Diane Menghetti's *The Red North* (1981) briefly covered communist responses to Spain; and E.M. Andrews' *Isolation and Appeasement in Australia* (1970) summarised Australian community reactions to European crises of 1935–9, including Spain.

Beside the critical diminishment of Spain's generational importance, a 'Thirties myth' has arisen in literary studies, cued by early assessments of the decade: particularly Malcolm Muggeridge's satirical assault *The Thirties* (1939) and, in a tone of Tory distemper, Virginia Woolf's essay *The Leaning Tower* (1940). Frank Kermode has

summarised this literary myth: the best writers of the time were induced by 'unfamiliar political pressures to write against their own bents.' Having 'professed a fatal interest in unemployment, the Spanish Civil War [and] the death throes of capitalism' they realised they were out of their depth, and recanted (5-6).

But works like Samuel Hynes' superb *The Auden Generation* have soundly discredited the 30s literary myth, showing the richness and complexity of the era. Even the conservative historian A.J.P. Taylor acknowledges that 'It has been rightly said that no foreign question since the French revolution has so divided intelligent British opinion or, one may add, so excited it' (1979: 395). Jim Fyrth argues the cause of Republican Spain was 'the most widespread and representative mass movement in Britain since the mid-nineteenth-century days of Chartism and the Anti-Corn Law Leagues, and the most outstanding example of international solidarity in British history' (21).

In Australia, there have been tentative attempts by a handful of literary critics to revisit the political experience of the late 30s, and to assess the significance of Spain: Carole Ferrier's biography of Jean Devanny (1999) and Humphrey McQueen's *Black Swan of Trespass* (1979) note it in passing, as do certain chapters of Tim Rowse's *Liberalism and National Character* (1978). David Carter and Drusilla Modjeska alone have attempted a theoretical appraisal of the decade's literatures. They do so, however, unencumbered by the concept of history. Modjeska's *Exiles at Home* (1981) homogenises the complexities of the era into a respectably middle-class shade of beige; and the temptation to find the hidden bourgeois subject within every Australian writer also informs Carter's work. His study *Judah Waten: A Career in Writing* (1997) re-characterises the Stalinist thug Waten as an equally obnoxious, career-savvy literary

professional: expressly disregarding ‘questions of motivation or intentionality except in so far as these can be understood as structural effects and as signs within the institutions of literature’ (xii). Typical of the mainstream of Australian cultural studies of the 30s, Carter’s work ignores the historical location and the explicit political activism of its subject. Carter’s clinical gaze labels and catalogues writers as species of author: literary product, intention, conviction and politics become radically disconnected from cultural history.

This study reads Australian responses to the Spanish Civil War in a radically different way, through the lens of Cultural Materialism, to recuperate a forgotten but tangible history. It argues that Australian responses to Spain must be discerned within a complex social totality, reconnecting event, experience, idea and text to reveal what Raymond Williams terms a ‘structure of feeling’.

Structure of feeling refers to the social content of an historical period, the ‘practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and inter-relating continuity’. Structures of feeling are inalienable elements of social, material processes; they are ‘social experiences *in solution*, as distinct from other social semantic formations which have been *precipitated* and are more evident and more immediately available’ (Williams 1977: 132). Williams explained that structures of feeling take various forms including ‘emergent’ formations: a dispersed, collective experience which comes into being when received ideas cease to respond to the pressures of new social realities. Certainties and ‘traditions’ are residualised, and in the anxious flux of contemporary life a transitional space appears, in which a developing world-view takes shape but is not conclusively incorporated into a dominant social order. Thus, structure of feeling describes an

historical situation in which beliefs, allegiances, ideals, and social practices are changing and volatile: often contradictory, unsatisfactory, self-negating and highly visible in the dynamic and unstable modes of public expression.

Events in Spain came to symbolise a key moment in modernity, when what it meant to live in a community was more uncertain, difficult and violent: change was rapid and inescapable; history was horrifically visible. Spain was a 'screen' in two important senses: catholic, fascist and socialist utopian desires were projected upon it; and it was shown to the world, represented textually and visually, in its immediate gruesome detail. New communications media (especially film) and the graphic spectacle of new military technologies in action provoked a disturbing, emergent structure of feeling: 'experiences' and 'self-definitions', as Williams wrote, detectable in 'almost every imagination' (Williams 1970: 12). Writing from within the political confusions of the time, Walter Benjamin pronounced that historical consciousness had dramatically shifted: 'the "state of emergency" in which we live is not the exception but the rule' (1969: 257).

The change in society which an event like the Spanish War creates is not of a simple kind – some sections of Australian society maintained their old perceptions of the world whilst others made important adjustments or unconsciously assimilated to the new environment or in some cases presented outright resistance. Structure of feeling attempts to span these various responses, as Williams theorised:

> Cultural history must be more than the sum of the particular histories, for it is with the relations between them, the particular forms of the whole organisation, that it is especially concerned. I would then define the theory

> of culture as the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life. (1965: 63)

Central to this idea of history is the identification of patterns that reveal correspondences in seemingly disparate activities, and analysing the impact of an event like the Spanish War yields many such correspondences across a culture. It must be stressed that structure of feeling does not necessarily refer to the official consciousness of an epoch, nor is it reducible to political hegemony. Rather, it exists in 'the area of interaction between the official consciousness of an epoch – codified in its doctrines and legislation – and the whole process of actually living its consequences' (Williams 1979: 159). Williams argued that there is a 'common element' that is neither the 'character' nor the 'pattern' in an historical moment but 'the actual experience through which these were lived' (1961: 64). And in his classic exposition of the concept of structure of feeling, *The Long Revolution* (originally published 1961), he observed that 'It can happen that when we have measured these against the external characteristics of the period, and allowed for individual variations, there is still some important common element that we cannot easily place' (64). To account for this, structure of feeling refers to a definite organization but also

> operates in the most delicate and least tangible parts of our activity. In one sense, this structure of feeling is the culture of a period: it is the particular living result of all the elements in the general organisation. And it is in this respect that the arts of a period, taking these to include characteristic

> approaches and tone in argument, are of major importance. For here, if anywhere, this characteristic is likely to be expressed; often not consciously, but by the fact that here, in the only examples we have of recorded communication that outlives its bearers, the actual living sense, the deep community that makes communication possible, is naturally drawn upon. (1965: 65)

A study conceptually guided by structure of feeling must therefore encompass all aspects of documentary culture: from literature to art to mass media, film, architecture, factory design and so forth (Williams 1965: 65). Accordingly, this thesis gathers a wide array of lost literary fragments locked within diaries, novels, unpublished manuscripts, poetry, journalism, pamphlets, essays, speeches, movies, advertisements and newsreels, to produce an account of the age's emergent structure of feeling. It is a structure in the sense it could be witnessed at work, and learnt, yet made up of feeling more than of thought; 'a pattern of impulses, restraints, tones, for which the best evidence was often actual conventions of literary or dramatic writing' (159). Therefore, particular emphasis is placed on the forms and conventions of literature as a particularly rich source of evidence for structure of feeling – a sense of crisis is one such pattern in the culture of late 30s which does reveal a complex set of connections back to events in Spain, but which is rarely named or declared directly in the dominant culture. Though Spain was officially ignored by government and business, it was still profoundly influential in Australian culture. We must also allow for the fact of vast areas of silence in which through lack of resources or means of expression whole structures of feeling remain hidden from

academic view, unarticulated but nonetheless acutely felt. In some cases these gaps and silences are inadequately filled with borrowings from others' works (1979: 165). However, Williams continued,

> There are cases where the structure of feeling which is tangible in a particular set of works is undoubtedly an articulation of an area of experience which lies beyond them. This is especially evident at those specific and historically definable moments when very new work produces a sudden shock of *recognition*. What must be happening on these occasions is that an experience which is really very wide suddenly finds a semantic figure which articulates it. (1979: 164)

Williams asserted that 'Structure of feeling can be specifically related to the evidence of forms and conventions – semantic figures – which, in art and literature, are often among the very first indications that such a new structure is forming' (1977: 133). Tragedy, particularly modern tragedy, was a semantic figure that recurred throughout the 30s with alarming regularity in art, literature and the media to articulate the decade's eschatological anxiety. Frequently, it was attached to the plight of Spain in the sense that Spain had assumed the tragic contradictions of the modern age – for the Right as much as for the Left. The linkage of historical tragedy and Spain formed a literary field which included prominent names in Australian letters – Patrick White, Martin Boyd, Jack and Lionel Lindsay, Leonard Mann, Mary Gilmore and many others.

According to Hynes, English writers responded to the decade's end with 'a sense of apocalypse – the conviction of approaching terror that everyone seemed to share'; the sense of a 'lost past and apocalyptic future' (1979: 370, 373). Spain was constructed precisely as an apocalyptic, transitional space where traditional class alliances and political values were residualised; where utopian hopes were both minted and shattered, and where the very idea of modernity seemed to have reached a tragic impasse or a crisis of self-negation. Spain also summoned near-absurd inversions, or the destabilisation of ideological expectation. Eleanor Dark's novel *Waterway* (1938) remarked that 'The strange times we live in… has become a catch-word – a kind of slogan' (78): and George Orwell accurately recounted the 'ideological mix-up of the Spanish war, Communists waving Union Jacks, Conservative MPs cheering the news that British ships have been bombed, the Pope blessing Franco, Anglican dignitaries beaming at the wrecked churches of Barcelona' (1940: 543). An Australian trade union paper wryly observed that the Spanish war meant 'Loyalist' and 'communist' became synonymous, and 'conservatives' were now 'rebels' (*The Advocate* 15 August 1936).

It was a matter of historical determination, not aesthetic convenience or choice, that the fundamental mode of viewing the Spanish war and the decade in general was tragedy. The Spanish emergency conformed precisely to the historical conditions which, Raymond Williams explained in *Modern Tragedy*, generate the most deeply felt sense of tragedy as social and collective. Williams wrote:

> The ages of comparatively stable belief, and of comparatively close correspondence between beliefs and actual experience, do not seem to

> produce tragedy of any intensity… Important tragedy seems to occur, neither in periods of real stability, nor in periods of open and decisive conflict. Its most common historical setting is the period preceding the substantial breakdown and transformation of an important culture. Its condition is the real tension between old and new: between received beliefs, embodied in institutions and responses, and newly and vividly experienced contradictions and possibilities. If the received beliefs have widely or wholly collapsed, this tension is obviously absent; to the extent their real presence is necessary. But beliefs can be both active and deeply questioned, not so much by other beliefs as by insistent and immediate experience. In such situations, the common process of dramatising and resolving disorder and suffering is intensified to the level which can be most readily recognised as tragedy. (1969: 54)

Williams long argued against the idea, shared by 'traditional' literary scholars and postmodernists, that tragedy is no longer comprehensible in western post-industrial society; an idea that misrecognises the tragic as 'mere suffering'. He maintained that to distinguish between tragedy and accident depends upon an ability to 'connect the event with some more general body of facts' (1969: 47). The fact that particular varieties of suffering are critically excluded from the category 'tragedy' implies that such forms of misery are devoid of any ethical content and are not caused by rational human action. So, Williams wrote,

> events which are not seen as tragic are deep in the pattern of our own culture: war, famine, work, traffic, politics. To see no ethical content or human agency in such events, or to say that we cannot connect them with general meanings, and especially with permanent universal meanings, is to admit a strange and particular bankruptcy, which no rhetoric of tragedy can finally hide. (1969: 49)

In Williams' analysis, the appalling consequences of humanly-initiated political actions deserved to be culturally recognised as 'high tragedy'; the personal 'misfortune' could be read as metonymic of 'general meanings', and an academic 'rhetoric of tragedy' must encompass the notion of the tragic as an everyday condition. Indeed, he argued that an important form of modern tragedy exists in the human struggle against oppression. Because social revolution originates in the suffering of a class and the attendant social evils of degradation and fear, and because degradation and fear breed callousness, ethical vulgarisation and violence, revolution can be 'equally tragic in its action, in that it is not against gods or inanimate things that its impulse struggles, nor against mere institutions and social forms, but against other men' (1969: 77). Williams maintained that revolutionary thinking refused to deal with this issue, and that utopianism and revolutionary romanticism actively suppressed it. When the ideological convulsions of history turn political certainties to matchsticks, tragedy potentially 'saturates all social activity' (Williams 1977: 37). Amplifying this point in terms of twentieth-century politics, Terry Eagleton concludes that because a 'stalled dialectic between an impotent

idealism and the degraded actuality is inherent to the bourgeois social order, and incapable of being resolved by it, it might well be termed tragic' (Eagleton 2003: 208).

Eagleton concludes that in the twentieth century, social movements masquerading as liberationist, like Bolshevism, were often tragically self-negating: carried out 'at gun point, with criminal consequences' (2003: 240). For this reason, a politics of tragedy 'sometimes detects a kind a skewedness or brute dissonance at the heart of things' (146). Eagleton argues that 'One would not describe fascism as tragic in itself, whatever the destruction to which it gave birth.' But the violent self-destruction of Left utopianism in the USSR had a tragic character: 'Stalinism was tragedy of a classical kind, as the noble intentions of socialism were deflected into their opposites in that fatal inversion which Aristotle calls *peripeteia*.' Indeed, Eagleton writes, one of the abiding tragedies of the twentieth century was that

> socialism proved least possible where it was most necessary. A vision of human emancipation which presupposed for its success all the precious fruits of modernity – material wealth, liberal traditions, a flourishing civic society, a skilled, educated populace – became instead the lodestar by which wretchedly impoverished nations bereft of such benefits sought to throw off their chains. (2003: 240)

The period awareness of Spain's situation as 'tragic' was immediate, concrete and international. For many writers of the time, it was cast in Eagleton's terms: Spain was a tragedy of modernity's contradictions, and a people's tragedy in which the human

struggle for emancipation brought unmitigated disaster. Stephen Spender declared that Spain simultaneously symbolised hope and hopes dashed, as non-interventionist western powers looked on: 'wherever the Republic has sustained defeat, its cause represents pure tragedy'. The principle of liberation from the past, 'clothed in flesh and blood is continually being destroyed, and therefore as continually and as purely reborn in the mind of a world which remains a spectator.' And, Spender insisted, 'Whenever History provides such heroic and tragic spectacle, it has been the subject of poetry' (1939: 9-10). At an everyday level, Arthur Koestler considered Spain 'a succession of tragedies' (1937: 18). Koestler concluded that his generation's interest in Communism ended with the communist betrayal in Spain and the concurrent Soviet purges. Spain signified the final, tragic corruption of leftist idealism: 'In the nineteen-thirties conversion to the Communist faith was not a fashion or craze – it was a sincere and spontaneous expression of an optimism born of despair: an abortive revolution of the spirit, a misfired Renaissance, a false dawn of history… We were wrong for the right reasons' (1961: 274). Of the same generational experience, Albert Camus wrote:

> It is now nine years that men of my generation have had Spain within their hearts… like an evil wound. It was in Spain that men learned that one can be right and yet be beaten, that force can vanquish spirit, that there are times when courage is not its own recompense. It is this, doubtless, which explains who so many men, the world over, feel the Spanish drama as a personal tragedy. (qtd Guttmann x)

But Camus' idea of the internalisation of the Spanish tragedy as 'personal' was mitigated by his broader observation that 'Today tragedy is collective' (qtd Williams 1969: 174). His point about Spain was that it represented a structure of feeling: the larger historical sense of the tragic lodged into individual consciousnesses 'the world over'.

Australians readily recognised the Spanish war's tragic dimensions, and the Spanish situation as symbolic of a destructive modernity; and Left-wing Oriel Gray typically averred that 'Spain was an awakening and a challenge to many people of my generation' (Gray 34). A short history of the Second Republic appeared in Australia in 1936, titled *The Spanish Tragedy*; and in 1937, political observer F. White described Spain's 'tragic importance' in the context of the use of new bombing planes (White 1937: v, 37). To Amirah Inglis, the Spanish Civil War 'was an apocalyptic event', and its loss to fascism a 'tragedy' (1987: xiv, xv). Aileen Palmer, herself a Spanish veteran, recalled that 'the brightest minds of my own generation volunteered for Spain… In my early twenties (this is a terrible thing) I got so horribly used to the death of heroes' (Box 5 folder 36, 37 NLA MS6759). The invocation of 'heroism' led others to romanticise the Spanish war: Len Fox, anti-fascist campaigner and pamphleteer, claimed that every Australian who worked in Spanish relief remembered it 'as a romantic and inspiring period' (Fox 1988: 103); in a subtle spatial inversion, Jack Lindsay claimed Spain was an 'epic conflict… to be above the battle… is to be sub-human' (1937: 19). Even statements such as these were informed by a tragic sense: an attempt to recuperate human triumph from despair.

Spain prompted many prominent Australian authors into statements of political conviction: Eleanor Dark, Rex Ingamells, Vance and Nettie Palmer, Jack and Lionel

Lindsay, Eric Lowe, Jean Devanny, Max Harris, Christina Stead, Mary Gilmore, C.E.W. Bean, Marjorie Barnard and Flora Eldershaw, Leonard Mann, Martin Boyd and Patrick White. This front-rank of Australian letters constituted a community of opinion and response: often marked by political difference, but always regarding Spain as tragic.

Significantly, as in Britain, there was very little Australian pro-Franco art or writing. Alwyn Lee, an anti-fascist who wrote the regular column 'Knockabout' for the Australian Labor Party's *Daily News*, scornfully evaluated the quality of the meagre pro-fascist, pro-Franco sub-literature in papers such as *The Publicist*: 'It is seldom that political illiteracy and moral squalor are so perfectly fused with metrical devices so astonishing. It gives the lie to the old proverb that the devil wrote all the good poems' (*Daily News* 2 February 1937).

As Lee's critique suggests, writing about Spain was not an exalted business undertaken by a few specialist or well-established authors. Indeed, replaying the experience of the Great War, the Spanish Civil War gave rise to a distinctive culture of writing. Paul Fussell's characterisation of the 1914–18 conflict could readily be applied to Spain: 'Oh What a Literary War', in which a 'belief in the educative powers… of literature' and 'the appeal of popular education and "self improvement"' were still crucially evident (Fussell 157).

The embattled Spanish Republic overtly identified itself with both progressive and traditional standards of taste and aesthetic value; and a plethora of popular pamphlets advertised to the world that the Republicans were defending Spain's art and heritage from Franco's bombers. The civilising forces of 'Culture' and cultural freedom were articles of

faith for anti-fascist politics, as one well-known Republican poster declared: ‘Culture is Liberty… Art is the target of Fascist aviation’ (Carr 1).

Republican Spain’s new-found freedom was frequently judged by its appetite for literature. Visiting Australians reported Barcelona was awash with books and bookstalls, and any sort of literature could be purchased: from illustrated weeklies, through bibles to Left-wing political tracts (Howells 1939: 20). The Republic’s Cultura Popular opened libraries across Spain. As a mark of the secularisation of public education and self-improving modernisation, the Spanish people developed an enormous appetite for reading; so, that in a supposedly ‘illiterate’ country, the per capita number of readers fast equalled the highest in the world (Estampa 39). This national literary phenomenon was reflected in struggles over writing, and strange literary sideshows, throughout the war: communists hijacked the Second International Writers’ Congress for the Defence of Culture in Valencia (1937), turning it into a propaganda ‘circus’ (Hopkins 199) ; and in 1939, A.V. Phillips witnessed a poet being tried before a Francoist tribunal for writing ‘bad’ verse (Phillips 12).

Many men and women who travelled to Spain to fight carried literary inspirations in their heads and, just as often, in their rucksacks. Among the major literary influences on British volunteers were Robert Tressell’s *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist*, Jack London’s *People of the Abyss*, the *Manchester Guardian*, innumerable Left Book Club editions, Penguin paperbacks and *Spain in Revolt* – the only book to offer an historical account of events leading up to the war, which became a *vade mecum* for international volunteers, selling tens of thousands of copies (Hopkins 80, 119). James Hopkins stresses the number of self-educated, organic intellectuals among the British volunteers; and

Australian volunteer Salvador Torrents is considered by Judith Keene to be an exemplary Catalan anarchist autodidact: he wrote columns for Australian-Spanish papers, novellas and 'anarchist parables' (2001: 311, 325). Many other Australian volunteers were educated through socialist Sunday schools, the labour press and Workers Educational Associations.

Australians also enjoyed literary fraternisations with international writers. The self-educated, itinerant Australian Dick Whateley fought with Esmond Romilly – Winston Churchill's rebellious nephew and minor man of letters – who memorialised Whateley in *Boadilla* (1937). Melbourne ex-teacher Lloyd Edmonds, who had progressed to study with Harold Laski at the London School of Economics, shared oranges, drinks, cigarettes and limericks with Ernest Hemingway on a number of occasions (Edmonds 1980: 34). The Australian Trotskyist and poster artist Hervey Buttonshaw's unit lieutenant in Spain was George Orwell (Buttonshaw; Orwell 2000: 266). Orwell's wife, Eileen Blair, delivered sketch pads to Buttonshaw; and when Orwell was shot through the neck Buttonshaw was beside him – moments earlier he had warned Orwell to keep his head down (Buttonshaw to Inglis, 26 July 1985).

The Spanish war's literary dimensions collided with its tragic sense in one outstanding anecdote from the conflict, which has the flavour of allegory. Historian James Hopkins retells the tale of 500 men of the British Battalion who, with some Australians, climbed toward a key battle front in the Jarama valley: a site which would be the most violent battle of the war. As they climbed, the soldiers discarded superfluous personal effects from their kits – heavy Marxist textbooks were the first to go; further up the incline, poetry editions, language primers and copies of Nietzsche, Spinoza and

‘poetry of all kinds’ were jettisoned. At dusk, over half the battalion lay dead and abandoned books were strewn over the battlefield (Hopkins 187-8, 190).

This anecdote – or allegory – illustrates important tensions, or tragic negations, in the Spanish war. The volunteer soldiers, unprepared for the ferocity of the battle, march to it armed with their ideological arsenal: Marxism, poetry, philosophy. In the face of real experience, the shock of modern war, the trappings of ‘Culture’ are discarded as a dreadful encumbrance – worse than useless. The Republican belief that ‘Culture’ and ‘values’ can defeat fascism is tragically mocked by modernity; as is the ideal that cultural history has a certain teleology, progressing ‘upward’ to a just end. As these International Brigaders move literally and symbolically ‘upward’ in hope of victory, it is a tragic reversal that the trappings of Culture, the very ideal being fought for, were necessarily discarded as an act of self-preservation. The story allegorised the tragic impasse of the modern condition: the custodians of Culture were ultimately weighed down by its artefacts, finding no use or value in them when faced with the pressures of contemporary events. The specific disposal of heavy Marxist textbooks can be read according to Eagleton’s pronouncements on the twentieth century’s political tragedy: that socialism proved impossible to hold onto where it was needed most.

The Spanish war was ‘literary’, and a cultural struggle, in another important sense. It was fought under the weight of centuries of literary mythology; a readily-available archive of images and stereotypes which over-determined foreign perceptions of the conflict. Until Spain was associated with a new kind of technological warfare, the old stereotypes prevailed, vacillating between two competing myths: the ‘Black Legend’ dating from the seventeenth century, in which the Spanish character was defined by

cruelty, bigotry and vanity; and the 'Romantic Myth', in which the Spaniard was brave, proud, and individualistic (Moradiellos 6). Though commentators resorted to these stereotypes throughout the war, foreign intervention and military technology residualised them. Both of these myths, or stereotypes, assumed Spain to be a feudal society. But as Karl Marx noted in the nineteenth century, the belief that a Spanish feudal order had withstood the march of modernisation, restructuring and industrialisation was itself outmoded: 'Don Quixote long ago paid the penalty for wrongly imagining that knight errantry was compatible with all economic forms of society' (Marx 1996: 93n1).

The Catholic Church clung more tenaciously to outmoded myths of clerical, agrarian Spain than any other major player in the conflict. The Church mobilised international support for Franco's fascist rebellion against the 'progressive' Republic; casting Franco as 'defender of the Faith', 'Old Spain' and aristocratic order. The world-wide barrage of Catholic propaganda consistently represented Franco's soldiery as men of god who observed traditional rites. The image was dutifully reiterated by many who reported from Spain. The Australian Catholic Noel Monks, for example, remembered that prior to the final assault on Malaga, the fascist war machine halted on the battlefield for a twenty-minute mass before resuming the full-scale slaughter (Monks 74). Monks stressed that this was an everyday occurrence; a ritual that testified to the splendid Francoist practice of archaic forms of worship.

The Church's praise of Franco, as both religious traditionalist and champion of agrarianism, wilfully ignored the fact that the Generalissimo's power was expressed through the latest in military hardware. And what was originally characterised as Franco's crusade to return Spain to stability and order was gradually exposed as

monstrous excess. The battering of Church mythology by the realities of technological modernity was obvious to many Catholics; as was the fact that fascist ideology meant oppression, not liberation, for the Spanish people. As Vincent Buckley recalled, his household was anti-authoritarian first and Catholic second, supporting 'the government of the workers' against fascist Generals (Buckley 26-7).

Myths of Spanish agrarianism were a utopian resource for all sides – not just the Catholic Church. Franz Borkenau produced a highly influential, polemical view mobilising time-worn stereotypes to reposition Spain in the European imagination. In 1937, having twice visited revolutionary Spain and decisively broken with Communism, Borkenau's *The Spanish Cockpit* (1937) suggested a way of revaluing the particular significance of Spain. He reshaped his direct experience of the war according to the lineaments of the literary past, implying that the answer to Spanish tragedy lay not in progressive struggle but, rather, in historical and cultural continuities:

> In one word, it is the lure of a civilisation near to ourselves, closely connected with the historical past of Europe, but which has not participated in our later developments towards mechanism, the adoration of quantity, and of the utilitarian aspect of things. In this lure exerted by Spain upon so many foreigners – and the author of this book is emphatically among those who have been deeply attracted – is implied the concession, unconscious very often, it is true, that after all something seems to be wrong with our own European civilisation and that the 'backward', stagnant, and inefficient Spaniard can well compete, in the

> field of human values, with the efficient, practical, and progressive European. The one seems predestined to last, unmoving, throughout the cataclysms of the surrounding world, and to outlive national usurpers and foreign conquerors; the other, progressive, may progress toward his own destruction. (1963: 300)

Borkenau's text was governed by the rhetoric of Romantic primitivism: a rejection of the 'mechanical' and embrace of the 'organic'. In this context, 'archaism' – the 'backward, stagnant, and inefficient' Spanish character – was revealed as essentially virtuous. Stagnancy was elided into 'stability', and the contradiction of technical modernity was that its future lay in utopian pastoral. 'Spain' was a by-word for political desires which escaped the clutches of a modernity consisting of fakery ('usurpers'), the false religious consciousness of commodity culture ('the adoration of quantity'), 'cataclysms' and the oxymoronic 'progress toward destruction.'

Borkenau determined not to relinquish socialist evangelism altogether: in his view, Spain was a potentially organic, pre-modern community, standing against the false usurping prophets of modern politics and the age's cataclysms. Spain's agony crystallised the nightmare of modernity in which all Europe was enveloped.

Historian Enrique Moradiellos considers the use of the 'metaphor of Spain as a mirror of Europe' to be 'very frequent during that period in Great Britain and in the Continent in general' (Moradiellos 5); and in August 1936, *The Times*' leading editorial had intoned that the war 'may be regarded as a distorting mirror in which Europe can see an exaggerated reflection of her own divisions.' Crucially, Spain provoked an awareness

of the power of modern technologies, and the political and military ends which they could be harnessed to serve. Above all, international military experts became obsessed with the technology of flight and looked upon its military applications with foreboding; taking the view that the 'advent of air warfare was nothing less than an apocalyptic event' (Smith 425). The bomber plane and the terror-bombing in Spain were fitting emblems in which to anchor the age's nervous state of mind. Eric Hobsbawm recollected that 'a new world war was not only predictable, but routinely predicted. Those who became adults in the 1930s expected it. The image of fleets or airplanes dropping bombs on cities and of nightmare figures in gasmasks… haunted my generation' (35).

Michael Alpert observes that 'The war began with biplanes of the late 1920s. It ended with state-of-the-art, low-wing, monoplanes, which reached speeds of several hundred km per hour, at heights of up to 8000 m' (Alpert 7). By 1936, when the Spanish Civil War erupted, the airplane was conclusively identified with the ultra-modernity of fascism. As Joseph Goebbels said, fascism was 'never boring'; and the aerial cult of speed matched the fascination with other technologies which defined the totalitarian states of middle-Europe: 'Radio and film played an indispensable role in the consolidation of the Third Reich' and, to a lesser extent, Benito Mussolini's Italy (Eksteins 323). The aerial cult of speed meshed with the aura of instantaneousness around radio and cinema; promising the immediate thrill of living in the moment. The developing mass media of the 30s both made and tainted the reputation of flight. The media were obsessed with the dual-image of endlessly novel aircraft designs and the ruins of bombed cities. The romance of flight, aeronautical technology, and the heroic long-distance flyer were iconic creations of the inter-war era's merging of mass media,

the manufacture of celebrity and the cult of progress. During the Spanish Civil War, this fascination was inescapably shadowed by horror.

As Orwell and Arthur Koestler understood, the cult of speed in the 30s embodied the nightmarish quality of a gathering war. In its drive to sustain novelty, the decade's mass media relentlessly peddled the concepts of mobility and innovation; and mobility and innovation were joined with the coverage of threshold events ('record-breaking') and conflicts. A.J.McKenzie, a commentator of the period, observed that 'Fighting, speed and sport', often packaged in a single narrative, accounted for the bulk of newsreel content (McKenzie 336). His contemporary, Theodor Adorno, compared this perpetual mass-media output to a form of 'shock', resembling war neurosis (Adorno 236).

Orwell reflected on the frenzy surrounding the cult of the new and novel: 'Mixed up with the buzz of conferences and the crash of guns are the day-to-day imbecilities of the gutter press. Astrology, trunk murders… spiritualism, the Modern Girl, nudism, dog racing, Shirley Temple, BO, halitosis, night starvation, should a doctor tell?' (1940: 534) Koestler recalled the 30s as an era of attempts to split the atom, hydrogen cars, the crisis of causality, brain physiology, the dissection of Lenin's brain, eugenics, the exploding universe, life rays and death rays (Koestler 1961: 301).

Australia participated in this international obsession with novelty and the continually moving spectacle of a troubled modernity, as Hal Porter's 'new words' for 1936 indicated: the young writer's acquisitions that year included 'Führer, perspex, bomb-load, Bren gun, and appeasement' (Porter 66). Australia was connected to the world by cinema, telephone and radio. Like 'the giant movie theatres [that] rose like dream palaces in the grey cities of mass unemployment' with cheap tickets (Hobsbawm

102), radio also revolutionised popular perceptions of the world. By 1940, there were 100 commercial and national stations, and one radio-set for every 15 Australians (Carroll 78). Though the radio format required a standardisation of art and music, the voices of foreign diplomats and politicians became familiar to Australian listeners, bringing them immediately into the midst of the press conference or the unfolding public event. The effect was to create more uniform reactions and opinions to events, radically breaking down Australian isolationism (Marquis 404, 410-11); incorporating the Australian people into an international structure of feeling.

The international fashion for Art Deco was eagerly adapted: a style of architecture and interior design that worshipped the aesthetic of streamlined elegance and the illusion of mobility (Dicksteon 239). The nation produced local variants of a global vogue in heroic aviators like Charles Kingsford Smith and Bert Hinkler; embraced the motor car and mass advertising; industrialised, built suburbia, watched migrants transform its metropolitan centres, and erected monuments to progress such as the Sydney Harbour Bridge, opened in 1932. A salient period symbol of Australian modernity was the nation's fastest express train, *The Spirit of Progress*, launched in 1937 to signify the end of the Great Depression.

The Australian public's delight in the cults of speed and progress, an apparent false consciousness scorned by the likes of Orwell and Koestler, actually exposed Australian audiences to the spectacle of technological warfare. Stuart Macintyre points out the desperation of many ordinary Australians, who felt the impact of the nation's careering from one international economic crisis to another, from the early 1920s to the 1940s, whilst the 1890s depression and First World War were still in living memory

(1998: 203-4). In the summer of 1936–7, 1,000 people were living in Melbourne's Flinders Street shanty town (Lowenstein 447-8); military hospitals remained crowded and mutilated veterans were conspicuous on the streets (Barcan 79). One quarter of a million men were out of work; whilst industrial disputes reached a new high in 1938 and wages remained at a pre-Depression low (Macintyre 1993: 204, 291, 330-31) – making the United Australia Party (UAP) election campaign slogan for 1937, 'Hold Prosperity', callously empty. For a generation of Australians, politicised by the crises of the inter-war years, the 'tragedy' of Spain was thus a screen on which their own unabated oppression was projected. Tragedy was an available mode, a structure of feeling, by which the oppressed of both nations could immediately establish human solidarities. The horror visited upon Spain was perhaps more extreme than, but utterly consistent with, the contradictory processes and fortunes suffered by Australians under the regime of industrial modernity.

Australians could identify with the alienations of totalitarian modernity by personal encounter: refugees from fascism created more cosmopolitan Australian cities and their presence was fundamental to both anti-fascist politics and urban modernism. When the Spanish war broke out, Greeks and Italians strongly supported the Spanish Relief Committee, or SRC (Gibson 1980: 42). The UAP, recognising the political bias of refugees, insisted on a £200 landing fee for immigrants escaping Mussolini and Hitler – and £1,000 if they were Jewish (Macintyre 1993: 309). Joseph Lyons even objected to an SRC cable, sent to Generalissimo Francisco Franco, condemning 'the ruthless bombardment of refugees' (*Herald* 7 February 1939).

The UAP government's treatment of refugees was matched by its draconian censorship measures. The UAP response to dissenting art and literature was to ban it: 5,000 texts were embargoed by 1936; and, more pointedly, classic First World War texts – including Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* and Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* – were prohibited, along with Orwell's *oeuvre*. The UAP ban explicitly acknowledged that such works were influential overseas amongst returned men and the younger inter-war, anti-war generation, whilst official war histories were generally unread by the public; and that the work of Hemingway and Remarque reassessed the Great War as tragic folly. To perceive the Great War as an absurdist tragedy threatened post-war conservatism: if the war was absurd, then a post-war cultural Renaissance based on vacated traditions was also absurd. As Eksteins writes, 'the whole social purpose of the war – the content of duty and *devoir* – began to ring hollow' (292).

Spain was the issue that galvanised a response to this; the cause that stimulated an alternative culture of letters, and different modes and sites of artistic association. Although access to international currents in art and political thinking relied upon a handful of libraries (there were only two free libraries in NSW at the time), enterprising independent book sellers, WEA meetings, specific advocacy groups like the SRC and the labour press, ALP branches and clubs, such organisations were stung into action and public expression on the subject of Spain (Rawling 1938: 5). Key meeting-places like the Café Petrushka, organisations like the Writers League, newspaper opinion pieces and public lectures in town halls were embattled by censorship. They prevailed, however; and pamphlets, stump oratory and film documentaries screened in community venues also slipped the censor's net.

At all these sites, a common understanding of what was at stake in Spain emerged, growing out of an international structure of feeling which had ceased to believe that industrial modernity would usher in an age of prosperity, peace and social justice. The global tendency toward totalitarianism, locally exemplified in the smugness of Australia's ruling class and its friendly engagements with European fascisms, seemed to be conclusive evidence that the nation could no longer be isolationist. 'Spain' signified Australia's entry into the troubled international disorder of 'the modern': the age of beliefs and allegiances in crisis, of traditions overturned, and of lived history as almost inescapably tragic. In this sense, Australian commentators on Spain wrote in-step with their peers elsewhere: they were interpreters of dreadful symptoms, readers of omens and signs, critical anatomists of a stricken body politic and the melancholy poets of a civilisation at war with itself.

Overall, this thesis is governed by the Williamsite concept of structure of feeling; a keystone of Cultural Materialism, employed here to suggest the critical necessity of reading texts within the complex totalities of culture and the historical moment. The thesis is also guided by the view that tragedy can be political and historical; anchored in and generated by the contradictions of lived experience – not simply derived from the prescriptions of aesthetic theory.

Consequently, Chapter One surveys the historical background to and unfolding of the war in Spain, considering the breakdown of traditional ideas of a Left-Right division in the political spectrum. The Australian domestic response is analysed to reveal the critical conflicts on the Left, challenging the academic orthodoxy that the anti-fascist front was communist dominated. A number of Australian socialisms and Left aspirations

were simultaneously sunk in the 30s. In this regard, Spain was the screen on which the failed hopes of Australian Leftism were projected: the example *in extremis* of progress thwarted, justice denied, and modern history as hostile to meaningful human endeavour. The chapter also suggests the poor fit of political 'traditions' to the confusions and challenges of Spain: the potentially tragic realisation that the crises of modernity could not be comprehended by ossified intellectual norms.

Continuing this theme, Chapter Two expands the field of enquiry to explore fatal contradictions in the generational promise of Communism. As the Spanish Republic faced tragedy and defeat, Communism found its political aesthetic increasingly incapable of negotiating the fact that Spain was in a tragic impasse.

Chapter Three is concerned with struggles in the Australian Peace Movement which, like Communism in the 30s, found its ideological assumptions and principles of civility confounded by political and military realities. Spain compounded existing tensions within peace organisations around the world, demanding urgent action: the Spanish situation seemed to require people to take sides and take up arms. Again, this was a tragic impasse for those committed to an ideology of international accord and harmony: a reckoning with the modern world as a sphere of conflict, violence and fragmentation.

Chapter Four examines a major Australian social institution, the Catholic Church, and its political responses to Spain. The Church's vain attempts to align faith with politics are explored, as is its cynical seduction of the faithful. The Church's pro-Franco propaganda and anti-communist hysteria exploited the conflict in Spain as a means of reviving the faith. Catholic views of Spain characterised the conflict as a titanic clash of

immoral, secular modernity and a theocratic pastoral ideal; views which reactivated cultural stereotypes of Spain and its people, and also connected clerical thinking with reactionary modes of Modernism itself.

Chapter Five explores the work of a range of Australian literary identities, from diverse political backgrounds, who found in Spain an idealised locale on which their deepest political ideals, fears and anxieties could be projected. The chapter revalues this long-forgotten literary record as a unique field, engaged with an international structure of feeling.

Chapter Six explores some urban intellectual subcultures which subsisted on the margins of Australian public life: bound together by a mix of modernism and international politics; embracing the cause of Spain as a rallying point in the late 30s. The chapter argues that the emergent structure of feeling, informed by eschatological anxiety, relied upon nascent artistic and literary modernism for its most direct expression; and that the public's engagement with that modernism happened in civic spaces such as the town hall, university campus and street corner.

Chapter Seven brings several threads of the thesis together: examining the relationship between new technology, Spain and spoiled dreams of Australian isolationism. It proposes a final rebuke to the accusation of Amirah Inglis and others that Australians were indifferent to the fate of Spain and ill-informed about international affairs.

This thesis explores these complex responses to the Spanish Civil War in Australian letters of the 30s; tracing the ways that international currents of thought and an

essentially tragic structure of feeling marked an important, but neglected, phase of national cultural history.

Chapter One: Spain's War and Australian Responses

From the beginning of the Generals' Rebellion against Spain's Republic in July 1936, Generalissimo Francisco Franco behaved as if the country was foreign to him and he was an occupying power. He never trusted his own people; he disseminated a personally-constructed version of Spanish history, heritage and character, legitimised only by reference to the cult of personality he created around himself. Even today, revisionist historians continue to approve this behavior, claiming that Franco's repressions saved Spain from the greater misfortune of becoming a Soviet satellite state. But Spanish history in the 30s was never a simple choice between fascism and Communism; and the Spanish Civil War was a complex working through of Spain's modernisation, fought among many ideological contenders.

Since 1808, Spanish society had suffered a political order which resisted the necessary modernisation demanded by developing capitalist social relations. This created a series of revolutionary convulsions in which the metropolitan bourgeoisie never secured hegemony over the traditional interests of the latifundio. The masses of working poor, landless peasants and emergent industrial proletariat became increasingly organised, seriously challenging the regime from 1917 onwards. The 1923 coup d'état, establishing General Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, could not hold the sympathies of these new classes, and a Second Republic was declared in 1931. As King Alfonso XIII fled into exile, elections swept an alliance of reformist Socialists and Liberal Republicans to

office. The Spanish ruling class never accepted democracy, nor did the Anarchist Federación Anarquista Ibérica (FAI) or those it influenced in the Anarcho-Syndicalist National Labour Confederation (CNT), which was expanding its influence in rural trades unions. Parliament began limiting the influence of the Church, the army, and the latifundio on the Spanish state, granting regional autonomy and full rights to labour. Though property ownership remained unchallenged, capital took fright, instability prevailed, and plots were hatched against the parliament as the Civil Guard and private militias prepared for insurrection.

In the 1933 elections, the Right-wing authoritarian Catholic Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas (CEDA) took power: the result of a fear campaign directed at the middle class, the abstention of anarchists at the ballot-box and, decisively, a split between Socialists and Republicans. CEDA ruled through an opportunistic, corrupt Radical Party coalition; presiding over the 'black two years' in which democratic reform was wound back and unions were ruthlessly crushed. An ensuing general strike in 1934 was thwarted – except in Asturias, where Franco shelled the miners into submission and terrorised the community with atrocities. Fresh elections in 1936 restored the 1931 Left-liberal coalition, under the Popular Front, with a clear majority. This new administration was liberal-Republican because the dominant Socialist Workers' Party of Spain (PSOE) and its trade union base, the General Workers' Union (UGT), held out for a fully Left-wing cabinet. The most lucid account of these intricate, unfolding events is Paul Preston's *Concise History of the Spanish Civil War* (10-87).

Fascist 'catastrophists', like the monarchist Carlists and the extremist Falange, inspired revolt and fermented unrest in this period of democratic expansion. Their ranks

swelled when CEDA began financing a military uprising and manufacturing the chaos in the streets that precipitated the highly co-ordinated coup of 17-18 July 1936 – involving most of the army and many in the Civil Guard. Spain's tiny fascist party, the Falange, stood for something new, distinct from pre-existing conservative ideology. Its already growing ranks were swelled by middle-class Catholic Actionists after the Generals' Rebellion, leading Franco to make the Falange the state party of Nationalist Spain (Payne 1961: 98-178).

The PSOE argued for arming the people, which would have crushed the rebellion in its infancy; but Manuel Azaña, the liberal prime minister, refused until it was too late. By this time Franco had persuaded Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler to support him (following England's tacit approval for them to do so), and the insurrection established itself in Catholic heart-lands and areas where the military barracks or the Civil Guard gained early strategic advantages. In these zones, Falangist Black Squads enforced brutal reprisals and voting Republican was sufficient basis for execution. In Republican territory, the PSOE joined the government: the wealthy fled, big estates were collectivised; militias were formed with stolen weapons and where the Assault Guards remained loyal (in bigger town and city centres) Rebel troops were repelled. Indeed, without the backing of the Axis powers the insurgency would have been decisively defeated by Republican forces.

At this point of foreign intervention, Spain became a truly international event and concern. Around the world, Spain's war began to acquire higher rhetorical dimensions: perceptions of the conflict distorted political realities into an over-simplified set of binaries – a Manichean struggle between forces of darkness and light, good and evil.

Obviously, which side was dark or evil was relative – dependent upon on the pre-conditioned politics of the observer.

From the day of Franco's rebellion, British conservatives were the driving force in gaining international acceptance for his regime: the doctrine of 'non-intervention' prevailed in Whitehall. Non-intervention was an adjunct to Britain's general policy of appeasement toward fascist powers, designed as a means of discouraging the need for strong alliances between Axis countries (Little 303): but it paved the way to Munich and ultimately guaranteed Franco's victory. The doctrine also effectively ensured Soviet dominance in Spain's Republican zone: by starving the Republic of food and arms, non-intervention forced it into a Faustian pact with the USSR. The Republic was further undermined by hostile international finance, which obstructed its foreign financial and commercial transactions. Spain's Right, in contrast, began the war at considerable economic disadvantage but soon found credit and goodwill easy to obtain (Viñas 266).

Hitler and Mussolini would have ceased support for Franco if western democracies demanded, but Britain preferred a fascist Spain to a socialist Republic (Taylor 421). Despite its excesses, fascism was considered by Britain to be, at least, an ideology of private property, order and commerce – existing within the ambit of British values. In Manichean contradistinction, there was the ideological spectre of Communism; and to deal with fascism in Germany, Italy or Spain was unproblematic compared to unthinkable dealings with the Red Devil.

To Neville Chamberlain and his cabinet, Hitler was a moderate among Nazi ideologues and Mussolini a 'secret' moderate; and the flamboyance and bellicosity of their regimes was read as merely an expression of pre-existing national character (Wark

548; Lammers 72). In the 30s, Britain was still the pre-eminent international power, and the 'British genius' was reified upon the terrain of international commerce; where commerce went English civilising values were believed to follow. As the *Times* argued, through trade and investment Germany would bring stability to underdeveloped Eastern Europe (Gannon 21-2); so 'when Chamberlain was resisting arms expenditure at home he was unprofitably increasing imports from Italy and surreptitiously giving more foreign credits to Germany in effort to promote appeasement by economic means' and to buy diplomatic time from the Axis (Brendon 535; Wark 553).

In the opinion of Douglas Little, 'Britain's "malevolent neutrality" in the Spanish Civil War stemmed more from ideological than from strategic considerations': a pervasive terror at the shibboleth 'Communism' (Little 306-7). The Nazis courted Tory Britain's irrational fear of Communism in Spain, and Hitler used the Civil War to manufacture the perception of an international Red conspiracy to encourage England and other states into his Axis (Whealey 1, 6; Smyth 246-7). The British Foreign Office view of Spain was shaped by the opinions of businessmen and arch-conservative diplomats, who relayed rumours of Soviet subversion, conflated Socialism with Stalinism and anarchy, and even referred to paranoid tales of Communist-Jewish conspiracy (Little 297; Taylor 394). Britain was annoyed by the Republican administration's socialist reforms, which directly threatened Britain's substantial economic interests in Spain. But even this pragmatic issue was eclipsed by 'Red scare' rhetoric: the Foreign Office, and even the anti-fascist Winston Churchill, feared the 'Spanish horror' would spread to France and precipitate Communist revolution (Little 304, 299-300); and many Tories were alarmed that the Spanish crisis would generate a British Popular Front (Whealey 9). In Whitehall,

Laurence Collier, a specialist on Communism, was alone in believing Britain's main threat lay with Germany and Italy, and he was the only man in the British Foreign Office to deny the Spanish Civil War had resulted from Communist intrigue (Lammers 71, 76).

In 1936, the Australian Department of External Affairs' *Annual Report* identified the 'Straits of Gibraltar and the western Mediterranean' as significant 'Empire highways' (qtd Andrews 75). Australia relied on an open, secure Gibraltar and Suez Canal both for British naval access to Singapore and as a trade route. A fascist Spain might upset the balance of power in the Mediterranean, Mussolini's so-called 'mare nostrum', but the bogey 'Communism' again over-rode official policy. In fact, the British Admiralty was keen to fight Franco and his fascist allies, but was denied by politicians because such action might bolster Communism in Spain (Little 301). Whitehall and the Australian government believed Italy was an essentially unallied friendly power, and the security of Anglo-Australian interests was believed to be finally safer with an Italian Mediterranean and a fascist Spain (AA.A981cont symSPA3 part 3).

For the conservative Australian Prime Ministers, Joseph Lyons and Robert Menzies, appeasement of fascism and Franco was neither a tactic to buy negotiating time nor a simple strategic consideration. Both men found much to admire in fascism. Lyons visited Mussolini twice, to assure the dictator of Britain's friendship at a time when the League of Nations imposed sanctions on Italy for its Abyssinian invasion (Carroll 131). Menzies supported Nazi rearmament and insisted German territorial demands must be heard (*SMH* 12 December 1938; Hazelhurst 138). In contrast, both men regarded Communism as anathema: a through-the-looking-glass world of everything wrong with modernity, a tyranny of classless mediocrity, mass production, obsessive efficiency and

standardisation (Lammers 78). Senior diplomat D'arcy Osborne typically considered Communism a 'tragic and impossible utopia', more dangerous than fascism (Lammers 78).

Despite unofficial Australian sympathies for Franco, the conservative government joined with media opinion, factions in the Peace Movement, and the parliamentary Australian Labor Party (ALP) to advocate non-intervention and neutrality. But Australian public opinion became more divergent from this dominant line. The Catholic Church and ultraconservatives supported Franco; some liberals, most trade unionists, a large proportion of ALP branch members (as opposed to Labor MPs), and the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) rallied to the Republic. A number of Australians volunteered to fight for the Republic, joining an estimated 70,000 men and women from fifty countries. Although Communists were always a substantial minority of the volunteer force, Moscow contrived to give Communist soldiers and apparatchiks undue influence: commissars organised and ran the International Brigade to which most volunteers belonged.

The International Brigade saw action in most of the war's major engagements, and was a front-line force: 20 per cent of Brigaders were killed, and 15 per cent seriously wounded. Among them were European anti-fascists, who were hunted by German, Italian, and Austrian secret polices, and when the Republic and then France fell, many were trapped, captured and gassed by the SS (Preston 124). Others were purged by Soviet factions in Spain itself; and fascism and Russian Communism formed a pincer movement in Spain to rid themselves of an inconvenient generation of Left-radicalised young men and women. For the ruling conservative parties of the western democracies,

temperamentally inclined to fascism anyway, the policy of non-intervention was tacit approval of this slaughter.

As Franco attacked the Republic from without, an increasing Soviet presence destroyed it from within, by a counter-revolution directed at Spain's major Leftist parties. The rise of Stalin had already been welcomed in the western press as a conservative influence on revolutionary Russia (Foster 444). Therefore, the Republic was gradually Stalinised in order for it not to appear socialist. Stalin exploited this, explaining that it was 'necessary to prevent the enemies of Spain considering her a Communist republic' (Fraser 233). Spain's tiny, irrelevant Communist Party, the PCE, which had been rejected at the elections, turned into a major force in Republican Spain, through Moscow holding the country to ransom because of Spain's desperation for weapons and materials.

The largest political party in Spain, the PSOE, had been the engineer and leader of the Socialist-Republican Popular Front and architect of its electoral victory (Juliá 151). The Soviet's central objective was to take power from this administration by purging it. That meant ending the popular mobilisation of the revolution. Sócrates Gómez, a junior Left-Socialist member of the government, observed that the Spanish PCE

> tried to absorb, monopolize everything, acting with the wildest sectarianism. Instead of unity, there was the opposite. The war was being fought for the freedom of Spain, not to win a victory which would hand the country over to the Communists who, in turn, served the interests of another nation. But from the propaganda, the large posters of Stalin, etc., the impression was gained that Spain was in the Soviets' hands. That only

> alienated large sectors of the population on our side and helped the enemy. (qtd Fraser 1984: 232)

The newly strengthened Spanish Communists took their directions from Soviet advisors of the GRU (the Soviet Military intelligence agency) and the Russian NKVD, (the Peoples Commissariate for Internal Affairs), skilled in the arts of tyranny. The PCE attracted new members, swelling its ranks with enthusiastic Spaniards lured by promises of careers and status (Bolloten 353). Through alliances with some Right-wing socialists and the liberal Republicans, the Communists divided the Popular Front and halted the popular revolution. For the mass of anarcho-syndicalist CNT, most Socialists, and the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification (POUM), losing the revolution meant losing the war. Ronald Fraser has argued that the Republic needed a hybrid of revolutionary strategies, to nurture popular enthusiasm rather than to crush it – as the PCE was determined to do: 'The revolution's most significant failure was thus its inability to fuse into a centralized power that would mobilize popular energies and resources for the revolutionary task of winning the war' (Fraser 1984: 229).

The PSOE realised Spanish sovereignty was under threat, redoubling its efforts to resist Soviet political interference; but the PCE continued to purge Socialists and Anarchists from key positions at the front and behind the lines (Bolloten 350-1, 596). Soviet influence reached everywhere within Republican Spain, aided by the despised system of Political Commissars in the army and police force. The increasing popularity of the Anarchists and the POUM posed new problems for Moscow. Andre Marty, the Comintern's chief representative in Spain – immortalised by Hemingway in *For Whom*

the Bell Tolls – admitted this in a secret report (Radosh 122). The GRU and NKVD saw conspiracy everywhere, particularly among the 'counter-revolutionary Trotskyists' and anarchists; and *Pravda* zealously announced that the 'cleaning up of Trotskyist and anarcho-syndicalist elements will be carried out with the same energy as in the USSR' (qtd Radosh 107). The treason trials had tremendous scope, and Spaniards were held in private prisons, tortured and executed by the NKVD, which was abetted by the terror apparatus of Spain's own Servicio de Investigación Militar (SIM) (Bolloten 504, 510-12; Radosh 373).

The fall of Málaga to the fascists became the pretext for the PCE's complete conquest of the government in Valencia, its total control of the Republican military and purges of Spain's talented and capable officer class. In Fraser's estimation, 'Indubitably, the Popular army represented the people in arms, but it failed to develop a strategy of people's war. The reasons were as much political as military' (232). Politically undermined by Moscow, the Republican government and military came to be widely despised by Spaniards who regarded Stalinist influences as a new form of class oppression (Bolloten 506).

By May 1937, the proletarian culture of the initial stages of the War was disintegrating. Fighting broke out between Spanish Leftists and Communist troops in Barcelona, where anarchists and the POUM resisted Moscow's encroaching power. Despite their victory in Barcelona, Communist elements remained nervous about their power. A March 1937 report by Marty to Kliment Voroshilov, the Commissar of Defence of the USSR, revealed that the Soviets knew their unpopularity among the Spanish and still feared the unions, workers' councils and local party centres which they correctly

believed to be a threat (Radosh 152; Marty 160). When the most popular Leftist, Largo Cabellero, was charged with conspiring against the Soviets, and when public opinion had been 'prepared' (Marty 165), the USSR installed Dr Juan Negrín as Spain's Republican leader. In the opinion of Fernando Claudén, a prominent member of the PCE, by following Moscow's orders and eliminating Cabellero the PCE had 'greatly weakened the Republic's ability to fight' (qtd Bolloten 515).

Under Negrín, genuine Republican achievements would be brutally dismantled and resistance utterly destroyed (Preston 186). Negrín is celebrated by many liberal historians for being 'above ideology', but in Burnett Bolloten's estimation he was Soviet Communism's greatest asset: it was non-Party men and fellow travellers like Negrín 'upon whose innocence, ignorance, connivance, or plain good will the PCE was able to build its immense power' (Bolloten 587-8). Had anti-Franco loyalists won the war, Negrín was in agreement with Moscow that there would be a one-party Communist dictatorship in Spain (Radosh 497). Communist official Enrique Castro agreed, and relished the idea of destroying the Republic: what amused Castro most was that the Spanish Left was too foolish to see the true nature of the Communist Party or to recognise its intentions, clearly enumerated in the works of Lenin and Stalin (Bolloten 353).

There was an international Leftist outcry over the tragic hijacking of Spanish Republicanism by Moscow; and Victor Serge lamented 'the tragedies of Russia once more cast their stupor over the world. The incessant massacre of an entire revolutionary generation moved scarcely anybody' (340). F.C.Hutley, in an *Australian Quarterly* article, proclaimed with bitter irony that the Spanish Communist Party defended all

factions in Republican Spain except the working class; and that democratic socialism in its various forms was compromised by association with dictatorial Communism (1940: 94, 98-90). George Orwell, who narrowly escaped the SIM, told of 'wholesale arrests, wounded men dragged out of hospitals and thrown into jail, people crammed together in filthy dens… prisoners beaten and half starved' (Orwell July 1937: 279).

In the International Brigade's British Battalion, Communists kept a four-hundred name black list of 'bad elements' – meaning those uncowed by Stalinist dogma (Hopkins 254-5). The Soviets also kept dossiers on Australians in Spain which, according to Stuart Macintyre, were quite detailed and contained notes regarding political reliability (1998: n16, 301). In Australian volunteer ranks four Australians served as pro-Soviet political commissars, but most were victims of surveillance and repression. Agnes Hodgson was the first Australian in Spain to sense the Communist paranoia. Hodgson, who was 'liberal, anti-fascist and chary of Communism' (Keene 1988: 5-6), joined a group of nurses whom the Spanish Relief Committee (SRC) sponsored to go to Spain. She was repelled by Communist rallies and felt threatened when she refused to participate in them (Hodgson 91), and was consequently accused of fascist sympathies by the conscientious Australian Communist Mary Lowson. After questioning and being seperated from her always loyal fellow Australian nurses, Hodgson experienced a perpetual and strong 'atmosphere of suspicion' (95), which eventually led to her departure from Spain. Hodgson's fellow Australian, May Macfarlane, reported that by 1938 everybody was regarded with suspicion and even nurses felt the danger of being 'bumped off' (Inglis 146).

To date, no Australian historian has produced a full account of the ways in which Australian volunteers in Spain were subjected to Soviet harassment and wilfully exposed to death. But there are many untold stories of how Communist apparatchiks dictated the fate of Australian combatants. Wilfred Burchett and Bluey Howells believed the CPA prevented them from joining the International Brigades because they were 'not good party material' (Howells 34). William Belcher, a Cambridge-educated Australian Engineer, held a commission in the 'Battalion of Death' – an Anarchist militia, eventually integrated into Republican army (Palmer 1948: 56). Belcher's unit was starved of arms by the Communists – one rifle between five men – and when his battalion protested its vulnerability he and most of his comrades were arrested (Hodgson 149-50). Australian journalist Noel Monks witnessed the disillusionment of International Brigaders after the Communists had imposed their 'soulless creed on men who had come to "fight for democracy"' (Monks 75). At great personal risk, Monks helped several British and American brigaders who had revolted against their commissars to escape from Spain.

The story of Australian volunteer Harvey Buttonshaw was an outstanding case of both Communist repression and the interaction of pro-Republican Australians with the international dimensions of the war. Buttonshaw joined a Sydney radical group based at a Kings Cross bookshop (Buttonshaw); working as a poster artist he lived a bohemian life in Paris and London, joined Britain's Independent Labour Party (ILP), then went to Spain and fought in an ILP affiliated POUM militia. Again, Communist authorities denied his militia weapons and Buttonshaw went to the front without a rifle (Inglis 138). At

Saragossa, Buttonshaw's unit was intentionally and sacrificially left behind by the Communist command in a general withdrawal and suffered the brunt of Francoist fire.

Buttonshaw's unit lieutenant was George Orwell (Buttonshaw; Orwell 2000: 266). Eileen Blair, Orwell's wife, sent Buttonshaw sketch pads on which he drew battle scenes, and when Orwell was shot through the neck Buttonshaw was beside him – moments earlier he had warned Orwell to keep his head down (Buttonshaw to Inglis). Like Orwell, Buttonshaw was an avowed anti-Communist. He told Amirah Inglis 'We fought the Commies in the streets of Barcelona' in the 'May Days' to 'halt the commie take over.' But Buttonshaw quickly recognised that the euphoric time of the Spanish Republic was over: 'This was the end of the revolution; once more force reigned'. The Spanish struggle was traduced, and 'a free revolution' became 'a junta of [Communist] officers and guards' (qtd Inglis 154; Buttonshaw). Buttonshaw, who had fought on the Aragon front, at Heusca and from Lérida, was finally arrested in a Barcelona cafe and interrogated at the notorious *Prefectura di Policía*. In many respects, his personal story typified the plight of non-Communist soldiers in Spain: volunteers, including many Australians, who offered their lives for the Republic but found themselves wedged between fascism and Soviet subversion.

Amirah Inglis has identified 68 Australian Spanish volunteers, but it is difficult to ascertain a true figure as most Australians travelled there against the express wishes of the Australian government, leaving with minimal fanfare or in secret (Inglis 1997: 7). Research for this thesis has discovered a further six Australian volunteers. Jack Atkinson, who was commemorated in Jack Lindsay's 'Requiem Mass For Fallen International Brigaders'; Warrant Officer C. Kennard, recorded by the Australian War Memorial as

fighting with the French in World War One and then in Spain. The *Sydney Morning Herald* (11 June 1937) reported the return of K. Maxwell, who fought for the Republic. Nancy Wills recalled that her friend Winnie Sandford was in Spain during the war (Wills 5); and Rhodes Scholar Richard Thomas Latham, the son of John Latham, a conservative politician and Chief Justice, drove a Republican ambulance (Edmonds 1980: 38). Portia Holman, later a distinguished psychiatrist, was studying medicine at Cambridge when she joined a British medical unit going to Spain. Her father had been Premier of NSW; her mother was a prominent feminist, author, and founding member of Sydney's SRC.

But the backgrounds of Latham and Holman were not representative of the majority of Australian volunteers. Contrary to the prevalent myth that the International Brigade was made up of idealistic middle-class intellectuals, 27 of the Australian combatants were manual workers: drovers, shearers, farmers, a boiler maker, seamen, miners, a bootmaker and general labourers, and several were Great War veterans.

Inglis rightly observes that the politics of these volunteers were often based on hard-bitten experience: they had fought industrial battles, participated in anti-eviction actions in the Great Depression or fought fascist paramilitaries like the New Guard. They were often self-educated: a number were schooled in the culture of the socialist movements of the 1920s; all were alarmed at the rise of European totalitarianism. Charlie Riley, once a seaman, was inspired to fight for Spain when reading about the evils of Nazism in Tennant Creek where he worked as a gold miner (Palmer 1948: 53); Elizabeth Burchill was aiding Abyssinian resistance to Italian invasion when she decided to go to Spain (Inglis 118); Charles Walters, a prominent Communist, was a rabbit trapper and secretary of the Unemployed Movement of Tasmania (121); Nurse May Macfarlane had a

Labor background; whilst Communist Ron Hurd had been a boxer, seaman, and a member of the Workers' Defence Corps. He was an avowed internationalist, joining Jack Newman (a Great War returnee) to travel the world and participate in industrial conflicts (Palmer 1948: 22; Devanny 1945: 170).

Australians saw action, fought and died in key battles: Madrid, Jarama, Brunete, Belchite, Teruel and the Ebro, and in the chaos of the Spanish Front several Australians encountered international identities. Esmond Romilly, Winston Churchill's rebellious nephew, fought alongside the ramshackle Australian tramp Dick Whateley – memorialising Whately in the memoir *Boadilla* (1937). In fact, Whateley was self-educated, had driven sheep across much of Australia, worked as a seaman, a miner in South America, a cow puncher in Mexico and decided to fight in Spain out of independent socialist principle (Romilly 41; Fox 1982: 42). Australian Lloyd Edmonds, a schoolteacher, shared oranges, drinks, cigarettes and limericks with Ernest Hemingway on a number of occasions (Edmonds 1980: 34); and Lou Elliot – a labourer – was with English writer Ralph Fox when he was killed (Palmer 1938: 20).

Although Australian volunteers were overwhelmingly pro-Republican in their sympathies, there were isolated examples of pro-fascist, pro-Catholic activism. Nugent Bull was the only Australian to fight in Franco's army. As a boarder at St Joseph's College, Sydney, he was influenced by the literary work of Hilaire Belloc and G.K. Chesterton and joined the Campion Society. Bull enlisted with Catholic-Fascist French volunteers in 1937, joining a company connected to *Action Française* (Keene 1985: 255). Furneaux Mann was another zealous Australian Catholic in Spain: a Jesuit student at Riverview, he studied at Sydney University and Oxford and served in the Great War.

Mann was controversially employed as chief observer by Britiain's Non-Intervention Commission – a body that monitored the extent of Italian and German aid to Franco. His politics were clear: earlier, he had been an outspoken defender of Italy's Abyssinian campaign, accusing Britain's opposition to it as a treasonable assault on Catholic civilisation (Bygott 284, 50). The Spanish exploits of Bull and Mann were framed by the politics of international Catholicism – the Church used Spain as a rallying-point to promote a world-wide institutional revival.

Likewise, pro-Republican Australian volunteers had solid organisational backing. The SRC was the primary purpose-built organisation for the support of the Spanish Republic: its stated aim was to render 'moral and material aid to the anti-fascist people of Spain' (Thorne 14 October 1936). The SRC was a registered charity, and by October 1936 it had sent four nurses to Spain with £100 worth of medical equipment; by 1938 it had sent over £2,250 worth of food and medical aid, and £14,028 had passed through its National Committee (Thorne 1937: 1). Altogether, the SRC raised £17,115 (Thorne 1944), bought seven ambulances, paid for nurses to work in Spain and also funded propaganda (Inglis 214).

The SRC's National Committee was established in Sydney, and reflecting the organisation's broad membership base it was made up of liberals, unionists, humanitarians, socialists and Communists. SRC secretary Phil Thorne was a Communist and an employee of the International Labour Defence; A.S.McAlpine, assistant secretary of Sydney Labour Council, was President; former federal Senator A. Rae was treasurer. Lloyd Ross was among the trustees, and the Committee included identities such as the editor of the *Church Standard* – G. Stuart Watts – Miss E. Findlay of the Christian

Socialist Movement, Miss Lambert of the Writers' League for Culture, R.A.King (secretary of the Sydney Labour Council), H.E. Boot (editor of the *Australian Worker*), Bill Orr (secretary of the Miners' Federation), trades union representatives, solicitors and clergymen (Thorne 14 October 1936). State Committees were set up in Perth, Adelaide, Hobart, Darwin, Brisbane and a further sixteen regionally in North Queensland.

SRC activism was centred in the capital cities – primarily Melbourne. The Melbourne SRC was established during a large rally in the Imperial Theatre to farewell four Australian nurses sailing for Spain. Demonstrating the SRC's eclectic composition, trade unionist and secretary of the Labor College Bert Payne, Dr S.J.Cantor from the Department of Mental Hygiene, Brian Fitzpatrick of the Civil Liberties Council, Reverend Farnham Maynard and Presbyterian minister Ashby Swan shared the platform.

The Imperial Theatre rally was also addressed by Nettie Palmer, who would become a key figure in the SRC and President of the Melbourne branch. Vance and Nettie Palmer worked tirelessly for the cause of Spanish aid using their long-standing relationship with socialist politics and their literary reputations. In early 1939, Nettie wrote 'The case for Republican Spain has all along been so sound that instinctively one looks for a flaw in it. Could any cause have only right on its side? Yes. Republican Spain is such a cause' (Howells 1939: 2).

Whilst Communists held important SRC posts – Nettie Palmer lamented the presence of too many of 'the faithful' at Melbourne SRC meetings (qtd Inglis 73) – what made the SRC function was not Communist ideology but, rather, a far older British-Australian 'Progressive Tradition' of liberal-socialist co-operation. Nevertheless, as a Popular Front organisation, the SRC was weakened and undermined by the Australian

Labor Party. The ALP banned members from involvement with any Communist Front organisation: it accused the SRC of such clandestine affiliations, and the raising of Spanish aid suffered as a result. By late 1938, the SRC was in terminal decline. Although Inglis wrongly asserts that the SRC *was* guided by Communist doctrine (59, 73), in reality the body was a 'broad church', accommodating political and class diversity and properly representing the varied interests of Australian volunteers in Spain.

The SRC's sister organisation, The Movement Against War and Fascism (MAWF), was also at pains to avoid the public perception that it was a Communist lobby – but it was (Rose 77). The MAWF was an international organisation, founded in 1932 and sponsored by Henri Barbusse and Romain Rolland. Its high-profile membership included George Bernard Shaw, Maxim Gorky, Albert Einstien, Upton Sinclair, Thomas Mann and John Dos Passos. The MAWF was brought to public attention in Australia by Joseph Lyon's attempt to ban Egon Kisch from attending its 1934 Second National Anti-War Congress in Melbourne. The Kisch story is now folklore – the ineptitude of the Attorney General Robert Menzies generated immense publicity for the MAWF as Kisch, on bail, eluded authorities and addressed large audiences across the country.

Before the Kisch fiasco, the MAWF was a dying organisation. But after Kisch, and with the Spanish Civil War, the MAWF found a new, highly energised cause. The MAWF staged large rallies Australia-wide: on 15 October 1936 it gathered over 1,000 people in Brisbane to support the Spanish Republic (*WW* 20 October 1936); on 18 July, 4,000 people packed Sydney Town Hall for an MAWF-sponsored anti-fascist event (*WW* 24 July 1936). However, like the SRC, the MAWF could not secure ALP acceptance, and

the MAWF languished (Macintyre 1998: 295-6). By 1937, the MAWF was again in decline.

As the Spanish War progressed, another relief organisation emerged: Nettie Palmer initiated the Joint Spanish Aid Council (JSAC), modelled on a British counterpart founded by the Duchess of Atholl. Although consciously pro-Republican, the JSAC was designed to appeal to the full political spectrum, and its apparently neutral humanitarianism aimed 'To relieve distress and suffering among non-combatants in Spain, especially children, irrespective of race, creed and politics' (Inglis 68). The JSAC consequently attracted a long list of establishment identities as patrons.

However, the SRC out-performed all other organisations dedicated to Spanish relief. It accomplished this through its politics of insurrection and firmness of message – fascists were fascists and aggressors were aggressors – and, most significantly, by its skilled management of public spectacles and 'dissent events'. Learning from the Kisch affair, the SRC experimented with fund-raising and propaganda activities. In its first fifteen months, the SRC attracted big crowds to nine meetings in Sydney, two further rallies in the Domain and fifteen suburban gatherings. In the first half of 1937 alone, the SRC held thirty public lectures (Inglis 73). 'Spanish Week' was the central feature of SRC fund-raising: an intensive week of displays, demonstrations and appeals for food and aid. 'Spanish Week' was marked by 50 meetings around Australia, and up to 10,000 leaflets were printed to promote a single rally (Melbourne SRC Report; *Information* April 1937: 9).

'Spain Week', 1938, was the high point of SRC history and activity. In Sydney, a large conference was staged at Transport House on the theme 'Aid to Spain'. It received

support from branches of the ALP, writers' associations and sporting clubs (*WW* 11 February 1938). It was also patronised by the Workers' Education Association, the Rationalist Association, New Theatre, The Left Book Club, the MAWF, the International Peace Campaign and the new Spanish Consul General Ricardo Baeza (Inglis 72). In total, 131 delegates, representing 86 national organisations, attended 'Aid to Spain' (Report of the International Coordinating Committee, 26).

Volunteers leaving for, or returning from, Spain were always a feature of Spanish Week events. Ron Hurd, permanently disabled in Spain and sporting a plaster jacket, was a particular favourite. He addressed the audience in his typically lurid style, describing the Rebel-occupied streets of Madrid literally flowing with Spanish blood (Fox 1982: 40; *WW* 22 February 1938).

The SRC experimented with numerous techniques to evangelise the Republican cause: plays and musical events, a Spanish theme ball, art exhibitions. It secured a place in May Day processions with floats and petitions: Maurice Blackburn presented one to the Federal government, calling for an end to arms embargoes on Spain, with 6,000 signatures (Inglis 75).

The SRC's most original dissent experiment was launched during a weekend test match in Melbourne, before a record MCG crowd. A large banner reading 'Help Spain' was unfurled from the roof of the new grandstand during lunch, then lowered and carried across the pitch in front of the cheering audience. Two more banners were displayed on the centre stand, and 20,000 leaflets showered down on the crowds in the stadium (*WW* 5 March 1937). The crowd of 79,000 clambered for the leaflets, which read:

THE FINAL TEST

What is Bodyline compared with this?

Hundreds of women and children killed and maimed by Nazi bombs over Madrid.

Thousands of defenceless civilians slaughtered by German aeroplanes.

IT IS THE FIRST STAGE OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

OUTLAW BODYLINE IN WORLD AFFAIRS.

HELP SPAIN!

On a score-sheet on the back of the flier, readers were encouraged to 'Write your score and help Spanish people settle theirs.' This truly original spectacle, initiated by Melbourne Communists, was unreported in mainstream newspapers.

Despite ingenious public spectacles, however, speaking tours remained the staple of SRC and MAWF activism. Working for the MAWF, Ralph Gibson addressed 90 meetings in around three months, ranging from the Christian Women's Temperance Union to the Methodist Synod (*Information* April 1937: 9). Many returned soldiers and nurses also took up the job: Mary Lowson, a highly motivated and energetic individual, had left with the nursing unit in Spain in October 1936. She was recalled by the SRC in late 1937 for a propaganda fund-raising tour (Palmer 1938: 4). Lowson became an adept promoter of Spanish Aid, and her speaking tour reached thousands – both live and in its print versions. She addressed meetings of the Women's Service Guild and lumpers at Fremantle pick-up, suggesting the wide and varied constituency for SRC activities. Ron

Hurd traded on his experience as a political commissar and orator in Spain: in North Queensland alone, he spoke at Dimbulah, Mareeba, Mt Mulligan, Topaz, Kairi, Herberton, Gainder, Hotsprings, Mt Malley, Mossman, Cairns, Edmonton, Gordonvale, Babinda (*North Queensland Guardian* September 1938). Despite International Brigader Dick Whateley's poor oratory, he tackled a speaking tour for the SRC and became, in Len Fox's estimation, one of its most effective speakers (Fox 1989: 42). Fox recalled his 'quiet sincerity' on stage, punctuated by involuntary movements resulting from shell shock (40).

Another indispensable weapon of Spanish Relief was the political pamphlet. The British Communist Party claimed to distribute one million pamphlets a year, in addition to its other literature (Mackenzie 1938: 143). As bare coverage of Peace Movement activities disappeared from the establishment media after 1936 (Rasmussen 1992: 55), dissenting groups were forced to generate their own publicity. From Douglas Credit to the Roman Catholic Church to the Womens' Guild of Empire, every organisation relied upon the pamphlet, poster and flier. The pamphlet was manufactured in bulk, distributed free or cheaply on the street-corner, and always compact and direct: W.H. Auden's poem 'Spain' – a 'flat ephemeral pamphlet' (Auden 104) – was written for this mode of distribution.

The pamphlet wars of the 30s were a distinctive literary phenomenon, and Walter Benjamin argued that the pamphlet became legitimate literature in its own right. Pamphlets, Benjamin concluded, were more capable than the book of responding to the emergency, crises and tragedies of the age:

> Significant literary work can only come into being in a strict alternation between action and writing; it must nurture the inconspicuous forms that better fit its influence in active communities than does the pretentious, universal gesture of the book – in leaflets, brochures, articles, and placards. Only this prompt language shows itself actively equal to the moment. (Benjamin 1986: 61)

Pamphlets were conspicuous in Jean Devanny's contemporary novel *Paradise Flow* (1937), in which the Right-wing dogma infiltrating Australian communities was countered by the local transmission of Communist hand-outs. In the novel, the pamphlet was emblematic of the ties and currents of class-consciousness: circulating within the community, passed from hand to hand, reappearing at key moments of conflict to beat back the sophism of employers and the capitalist press. Devanny's comrade Katharine Susannah Prichard joined the pamphlet wars eagerly: in 1938, 10,000 copies of Prichard's 'The Crime Against the Spanish People' were printed (Prichard 1938).

Australian pamphlets were often copied or extracted from the massive number of pamphlets issued by the Spanish Embassy or the British SRC. The International Committee of Co-ordination of Aid to Spain published the bi-monthly *Information Service*, original pamphlets, and reruns of official Spanish government literature, distributing them through Relief Committees world-wide (Report of the Committee 18 July 1936: 17, 23). The Australian SRC circulated a four page newsletter, *Information Service*, via Phil Thorne's ILD office, reaching 400 supporters (Inglis 81). In its first fifteen months, the SRC distributed 5,000 copies of *Humanity and Spain*, 7,000 of *Spain!*,

5,000 of *For Humanity and Spain*, and *From the Battlefields of Spain* sold 8,000 units (Inglis 81).

The struggle over the importation and free circulation of literature became integral to the anti-fascist cause in Australia, and trade unions placed a great deal of importance on free access to literature. The Australian Railways Union's newspaper, *The Advocate*, established a library of pamphlets and other publications and ran an anti-fascist reading group. *The Advocate* itself contained extensive coverage of the conflict in Spain, and its semi-regular educational supplement reprinted articles such as Arthur Koestler's *Spanish Testament* (15 October 1937: 15 March 1938).

As Franco progressively subdued Republican Spain, and as international volunteers returned home, other events in Europe eclipsed the Civil War. Spanish Relief turned to focus on the plight of refugees, rather than armed struggle and anti-fascism. An SRC pamphlet, citing the British SRC secretary, intoned that 'Dulled as our consciences are becoming by recurrent horrors, the British people have been shocked' by the refugee crisis (Exiled 3).

Australia's SRC attempted to bring in Spanish child refugees trapped in French border camps, but remained afraid of creating hostility in trades unions by advocating for adult, working-age refugees (Inglis 189). The SRC joined the League of Nations Union to launch an appeal for Spanish refugee aid – a move that provoked hostility from the Australian government (*WW* 9 June 1939).

Australian Communist aid worker Esme Odgers ran one of the first children's colonies for evacuees from bombed cities, setting-up in a border town. Odgers performed the roles of nurse, mother, house keeper and co-ordinator to 700 of the 3,000 evacuee

children accommodated there – many of whom were financially supported by the Australian JSAC (Palmer 1948: 36). The 'War Victims Relief Committee Spain and China', an off-shoot of the SRC, established a Foster Parents Group to sponsor refugee children. Nineteen children were sponsored by groups in Victoria and at least four groups were established in Queensland. Organisations such as The Queensland Women's Peace Movement and the Operative Painters' and Decorators' Union each supported a refugee child (War Victims Relief Committee, 2).

As Franco's total victory became imminent and obvious, the Australian public's attention was diverted elsewhere: to the invasion and partition of Poland and the on-going Japanese aggression in China. Australian volunteers drifted home from Spain, ingloriously trudging across the French border ahead of Franco's army; several were interned under guard in French refugee camps, sick and wounded. All those returning from Spain were penniless and desperately fatigued. Some received major receptions: six returned International Brigaders were spontaneously greeted by a crowd of 3,000 Sydney-siders (*WW* 21 February 1939); early in 1939, a memorial service of 600 people was held in Sydney for the 28 Australians who died in Spain, followed by a ceremonial march (Palmer 1948: 54; Inglis 187-8; *WW* 3 February 1939). Though they were tainted with the red tones of Soviet Communism by the mainstream media at the time, and retrospectively by historians, these Australian Spanish volunteers were generally politically non-aligned. In James Hopkins' opinion, the International Brigaders were ideologically undisposed to Soviet Communism or Stalinism, regarding themselves as combatants in a struggle for democratic institutions (360).

The massive quantities of SRC and Communist propaganda provoked sympathy, but only rare concerted actions, in the Australian Labour movement. The Communist tactic of using sympathy for Spain to bring Australian and British labour parties into a United Front forced pro and anti-Communist factions to take more hard-line positions on Spain. The vast majority of the labour movement was sufficiently aware of the nature of Stalinism to reject CPA overtures. However, sections of the labour movement's Left considered Spain too important an issue to ignore. An obstreperous minority in Britain and Australia continued to argue for a United Front, most of them believing a strategic alliance with Communists and other peace groups was a lesser evil than the advance of fascism. These political divisions over Spain, as Buchanan points out, offered insights into the true nature of labour politics and its identity crises in the 30s (1991: 2).

The complex of interests which made up the ALP threatened to come apart over the issue of Spain, just as it had over every military conflict since the Party's formation. The ALP's overall position on Spain was determined foremost by the need to appease an increasingly powerful and politically organised pro-Francoist Roman Catholic Church: the Church used the pulpit to court support from conservative labour factions such as the Australian Workers' Union. Consequently, although the ALP's federal leader, John Curtin, and several of his colleagues privately supported the Spanish Republic, they remained silent on the issue: as Curtin explained to Lloyd Ross, if he uttered a word on Spain the Party would be 'torn to pieces' by factionalism (Andrews 92; McMullin 197; Day 1999: 365).

Curtin maintained his policy of isolationism to sustain Party unity: its anti-militarism was purposely ill-defined to appeal to all ALP interest groups – and, crucially,

Labor Catholics (Day 1999: 379; Hagan 50; McMullin 199; Blackburn 12). Consequently, as veteran socialist Jock Garden complained, the ALP was the only Labour Party in the world not to declare its support for the Republic (Inglis 37).

The evasive position of the ALP's executive did not reflect the sentiments of the non-Catholic rank and file. The Australian Council of Trades Unions (ACTU) Special Congress of July 1937 voted to abandon isolationist foreign policy, and to support Spain's Republic. The ACTU declared that 'The most immediate threat to world peace at the present time comes from German and Italian aggression in Spain', and Australia should 'be playing our part in stopping wars' by building union with all anti-war organisations internationally (22). The Congress unanimously supported the motion, expressing outrage at the fascist bombing of civilians and political solidarity with Spain: 'That this Congress enter its protest against the inhuman and unjustifiable bombing of Madrid and Bilboa… We extend fraternal greetings and pledge our solidarity with the Government and the masses of Spain and assure them that we recognise that their fight is part of our struggle for peace, democracy and prosperity' (ACTU Special Congress papers 1937: 28). At the March 1939 ACTU Special Congress, a motion was carried condemning Australia, France and Britain's non-intervention and their recognition of Franco; and the ACTU also affirmed Spain's right to purchase arms abroad (ACTU Special Congress papers 1939: 3, 4).

However, ACTU support was more sentiment than politics, and the resolutions were never translated into co-ordinated action. The Victorian ALP Anti-War committee collapsed, divided on the question of the ACTU resolution (Andrews 91); the Labor Committee Against War was nationally ineffective, and the ACTU received only meagre

financial donations for Spanish Relief – exposing Australian unionists as the least generous in the world (ACTU Special Congress papers 1937: 28; Ross 1977: 89).

For the duration of the conflict, Spain functioned as a factional flash-point in ALP branches and made battle-grounds of Trades and Labour Councils. Isolationist Jack Lang's factional enemies, the industrialists, rallied around the belief that Australia should officially support the Spanish Republic (Andrews 91; Macintyre 1998: 296); Victorian ALP branches and their renegade federal members fought the Catholic-dominated state executive on the need for an anti-fascist United Front and action on Spain: the draconian executive responded with restrictions on Party democracy (Rasmussen 1988: 47, 59).

British and Australian labour parties resolutely rejected Front activity with the Communists, banning their members from any such alliances (Macintyre 1998: 341-2; Davidson 68, 72; Weller 203). However, some unions, branches and individual ALP members broke the ban – the move of several unions into the Popular Front International Peace Congress in 1937, for example, was openly defiant (Ross 1977: 165; Rasmussen 1988: 48; 1992: 106). Consequently, Communist Ralph Gibson reported that the issue of Spain catalysed the most significant form of ALP involvement with the Popular Front (Gibson October 1938: 50-4; White 14).

In Lloyd Ross' terms, this grass-roots support for the Spanish Republic was 'working-class internationalism in action', and he explained 'there was intense activity, especially amongst the rank-and-file members of the Labor movement' (Ross 1977: 163). But this pro-Republican activism was not simply a result of spontaneous acts of individual conscience or the moral appeal of the CPA. In the British context, Blaazer maintains that broad-based support for anti-fascism, and Spain in particular, was the

result of a longstanding tradition of progressive unity built during anti-militarist and anti-imperialist campaigns, during the Boer War and the Great War, involving the Left of British Labour, the Independent Labour Party and certain factionalised liberals. In turn, this produced a tradition of Leftist and Left-liberal co-operation and cross fertilisation known as the 'British Progressive Tradition' of 1860-1939 (Blaazer 1, 152).

Those same key alliances and political outlooks emerged in Australia to forge the Australian political Left: as in the British Progressive Tradition, leading Australian Leftists viewed capitalism and democracy as antithetical, but also rejected Communism, Utopianism, Catastrophism and Fabianism in preference to 'gradualism' and the theory of 'under-consumption': a theory that sought to explain the inevitability of perpetual imperialist war under capitalism. Adherents of the Progressive Tradition also understood that class sympathy was always international in its opposition to global capital, and this analysis was confirmed in the cause of Spain – where workers were for the Republic and the ruling-class fought against it (Pimlott 150; Love 118; Blaazer 159).

Blaazer observes that 'Unlike the young literati of the 1930s who have attracted so much historical attention, the established leaders of progressivism had thought about and rejected Bolshevism even before it took its Stalinist form' (143). In Australia, the International Workers of the World, the Victorian Socialist Party, the Y Club, the early CPA and organic labour intellectuals such as Robert Ross, Frank Anstey, Maurice Blackburn MP, Jock Garden, Don Cameron, Vere Gordon Childe, Curtin, Percy Laidler and Vance and Nettie Palmer immediately grasped the nature of the Soviet purges in the 30s and the importance of the survival of democratic Spain (Flyer Rawling collection N57/503; Farrell 203; Wright 1935: 29; Blackburn 6-7, 14-15). By contrast, as Alastair

Davidson observes, the CPA had purposely placed itself outside Australian empiricist socialist traditions, including that heritage of united fronts – thus making Communist ideology 'inappropriate in Australia' (Davidson xi).

Progressivism was sustained internationally by mass-circulation literary outlets like the Left Book Club. In Australia, it was also nourished by key labour papers – most prominently, those under the editorship of Labor journalist H.E. Boote. Boote's under-consumptionist politics led naturally to his support of the Spanish revolution. As he wrote: 'The war in Spain was not a civil war in any real sense'; the shared interests in Spain's natural resources were at the heart of British non-intervention and Nazi support for Franco, meaning Spain's War was a global conflict because 'Capitalism, in the final test has no nationality' (*AW* 6 June 1937). He maintained the Civil War was a class war *and* a tragedy: in the 'Spanish struggle, the hellish attempt to destroy the supremacy of the people by bloody violence is a lesson for us all' (*AW* 10 February 1937; 26 August 1936).

The Australian Worker remained the only Labor paper, at least in the critical years, to take a principled stand in support of what it insisted was non-Communist Spanish democracy (5 and 19 August; 14 October 1936). ACTU resolutions and branch activity showed progressivism to be alive, but the centralising bureaucratisation of the Australian (and British) labour movements disempowered branches and local organic intellectuals. Consequently, progressivism lost its early initiative to a disabling isolationism (Farrell 162, 165): labour movements looked on idly as Spanish democracy perished. In Britain and Australia, the Progressive Tradition was fatally tied to the fortunes of the Spanish Republic: Pimlott writes 'Franco's victory, long expected, was a

bitter and stunning blow when it came.' This, more than any bureaucratic repression, broke 'the spirit of the Left' (Pimlott 179).

But there are indications that an internationalist sentiment was widely felt in the Australian community. As popular pro-Republican activism implied, official governmental or party-political neutrality on the Spanish War was countered at street-level. H.E. Boote's view of Spain's War voiced a widespread, populist lament: that what happened in Spain would have consequences, ultimately, in the lives of ordinary Australians. Boote recognised the era's emergent structure of feeling: that the modern age was defined by the international interconnectedness of embattled citizens and their struggles; and that in Spain, modernity was being defined as a tragedy of perpetual war:

> Over twenty years ago we were told that a mighty war was being 'waged to make the world safe for democracy.' It was a noble ideal. It thrilled the hearts of multitudes. Ten million men gave their lives for it. Twice that number suffered in body and mind for it. Women sacrificed their happiness for it. Nations subjected themselves to heavy burdens for it. And today, despite the fact that the war was won, democracy has been violently destroyed in large portions of the earth, and some who were then its champions are now conniving with its enemies! (*AW* 23 September 1936)

A studied examination of Australian responses to the Spanish Civil War reveals the extent to which the conflict mattered to ordinary Australians with democratic impulses and desires. Those who volunteered to fight, or serve in medical or humanitarian roles,

were supported by networks and organisations that raised public awareness of the war's tragic potentialities, and those networks and groups reached out to the street-level community. Through Spanish Relief activities, pamphleteering, innovative public spectacles and 'dissent events', the cause of Spain was articulated nationally.

Chapter Two: Spain, Internationalism, Stalinism and the Australian Left

The role of Soviet Communism in Spain was pivotal to how Australians responded to both the Civil War and the cause of anti-fascism in general. Whilst the Australian public was sympathetic to the plight of the Spanish Republic, it remained suspicious of Communism and its political tactics. The 1935 Seventh Congress of the Communist International (Comintern) identified fascism as the most dangerous and imperialistic form of capital. Because fascism threatened the peace and freedom of all, Communist parties were directed to form strategic alliances across class lines to confront this imminent threat (Macintyre 1998: 288); but this masked the hidden agenda of promoting Soviet influence abroad.

In practice, anti-fascist politics relied upon many Left-wing and liberal parties co-operating to oppose a common threat, as they had in earlier political crises. But the aura of the Communist Popular Front has fed 'Red Decade' mythology, wherein Communists supposedly 'managed' Left-liberal opinion. This has been a convenient myth for Communists and Right-wing anti-Communists alike, who exaggerate the influence of Communism in the period. Communist historians claim that anti-fascist alliances were happy arrangements conducted under Communist tutelage, whilst the Right considers the Fronts as dangerous acts of Communist subterfuge aided by naive fellow-travellers and compliant labour movements. As David Blaazer pointed out,

> While all the different breeds of anti- and pro-Communist historians have advanced a wealth of different accounts of this state of affairs (as well as a considerable number of moral judgements), almost all have shared the premise that the non-Communist Left's history in this period can be largely, or even completely, understood as a function of the activities and propaganda of [Communism]. Too many studies of the non-Communist Left in the 1930s seem to focus on the Communists themselves. The non-Communist Left itself is written about as though possessed of neither volition, reason, nor history. (4)

Blaazer's observation can be readily applied to Australian Left history in the 30s. It was a complex history of competing interests; and Communism never had a constructive impact on the anti-fascist cause in Australia. The Communist Party of Australia (CPA) failed to understand or engage with the community's structured feeling of tragic pessimism regarding the fate of democratic countries in general, and the Spanish Republic in particular. The CPA's brand of marxism did not predispose it to understanding such shifting formations in Australian culture. The CPA arrogantly believed it was the privileged embodiment of historical forces; the arbiter of morality disclosed as a 'science' to which all must submit. Through 'democratic centralism' the Party executive enforced an iron discipline on its members: as the prominent Czechoslovakian Communist Egon Kisch was often heard to say, 'I don't think. Stalin thinks for me' (qtd Watson 64; Macintyre 1998: 221).

To capture public sympathy, the Twelfth Party Congress (1935) recommended reinventing Communism's international public image in more socially conservative terms. It intended to use anti-war Popular Front organisations – the International Peace Campaign, the Movement Against War and Fascism (MAWF) and the Spanish Relief Committee (SRC) – to recruit new members from labour movements, labour parties, and the ranks of petit-bourgeoisie: civil servants and small businessmen (Macintyre 1998: 313). But the preceding 'Third Period' policies of 'Class against class' – in which most of these people were derided as 'social fascists' – was never forgotten. The international Communist 'new line' was to be micro-managed: personal grooming and clean living was encouraged amongst members; women were withdrawn from frontline work such as street demonstrations and returned to more conventional social roles; bohemians with 'pseudo-advanced ideas' were expelled (Macintyre 1998: 261-2, 264, 347); and Communist Ralph Gibson noted the British Party's attempt to purge itself of 'freakism' by banning beards, khaki shirts and red ties (Gibson Diary).

Despite these populist manoeuvres, in Australia CPA membership fell in 1936 to a meagre 2,700, peaking at 4,124 in 1937, then stagnating until the Second World War. The CPA had a high membership turn-over, and only a handful of members was ever politically active (Macintyre 1998: 351). However, the CPA's capacity for discursive interventions into the public sphere was outstanding for an organisation of its size. As Party historian Stuart Macintyre observes, 'there had never been a political movement' in Australia 'so committed to the printed word':

> By the 1930s it sustained a national newspaper, published twice a week, four state newspapers, and a score of magazines and periodicals. Its presses issued a constant flow of books and pamphlets; its bookshops distributed as many more foreign publications; local branches and auxiliary units produced hundreds of their renowned bulletins. (1998: 9)

But this zeal was undermined by the discursive limitations of Communist ideology and its literary rules. Stalinism was obsessed with 'purity of language', and 'Communese' became a source of frustration to non-Communists in Popular Fronts. In Macintyre's terms, 'Communist rhetoric codified an understanding of politics that enclosed its practitioners within the certainties of language. It fired their enthusiasm and validated their heroic zeal, but it also separated them from non-initiates' (350): creating a gulf of alienation between hard-core Stalinist-Communists and the general public. This alienation was exacerbated by narrow-cast Stalinist aesthetics: a set of artistic regulations that repetitively represented the world according to standard triumphalist narratives and metaphors. This prescriptive system could not accommodate nuance, uncertainty, introspection or tragic complexity.

The possibility of a 'modern tragedy' was unthinkable to the aesthetic of Soviet Communism, which was discursively shaped by martial triumphalism: a military lexicon of 'vanguards,' 'Party cadres', 'fronts' and narratives derived from Great War propaganda cast with absolutely virtuous heroes and thoroughly evil villains. Stalin succeeded in making the USSR a spectacle of menacing militarism – a fact which world media and the Communist press both publicised extensively. Thus, in western democratic

populations the USSR was generally associated with threatening parade-ground displays of finely regimented mass militarism (Aldgate 136). Russia boasted of its expanding military capability, and in 1937 Moscow announced it was militarily strong enough to meet any threat (*SMH* 1 January).

Committed Communists could reread this mass militarism differently, intoxicated by the spectacle of massed legions and the cult of the Soviet soldier-worker. In her 1935 May Day speech, for example, Jean Devanny, described the Red Army as consisting of the 'handsomest men on earth… I never before thought a bayonet a beautiful weapon': but only if they were Soviet bayonets (qtd Ferrier 1999: 127-8).

But the Communist cult of the soldier-worker was at odds with the attempt to build international Popular Fronts which aimed to enlist pacifist organisations and promote the USSR as a force for peace. Likewise, Moscow's support of the Spanish people's desire for peace and liberty was cynicism of the highest order. To enhance its credentials as international peace-broker, the USSR constantly cited its presence in Spain; but the Soviet undermining of the Republic precisely exposed Spain to the deadliness of modern military technology: a technology of mass destruction which was so central to the triumphal image of Stalin's new state.

Stalinism's triumphalist rhetoric generated an unreality among Party members. According to Carole Ferrier 'In the mid-1930s most on the far Left in Australia believed the revolution was imminent' (Ferrier 1999: 127). In reality, the crises of the 30s yielded only continuing defeats for Communism, and conspicuously so in Spain. Negotiating this contradiction between the ideal and the real ultimately became a problem of aesthetics for

Communists, as they attempted to resolve it in countless poems, novels, memoirs and historical accounts.

The author and founding CPA member Katharine Susannah Prichard set her 1950 novel *Winged Seeds* in the 1930s West Australian gold-fields in an attempt to explain why the CPA's ambitions for the late 30s collapsed. *Winged Seeds* drew on Prichard's experience of local Popular Front organisations such as the SRC, the IPC and the MAWF. She had been dedicated to these organisations with committee work, public speaking, writing agit-prop and pamphlets and sparring in public debates with Francoist supporters (Throssell 77; Prichard 1968: 241).

In the novel, Prichard's Communist hero, Bill, fought the good fights of the 30s – battles that by 1950 were emerging as Communist folk lore: the attempted ban on Von Luckner, the appeals for aid to Spain, the pig iron dispute and the boycott on Japanese goods. Bill's struggles were routinely ignored by an indifferent Australian public, but Australia's refusal to rally in support of Spain was seen as a germinal moment squandered by the foolishness of working people, inadvertently opening the doors to the Second World War. As Prichard's 1939 address 'Peace and War' explained, international affairs were defined by a simple struggle between 'the people' and 'antidemocratic' forces (Prichard 1982: 49). This theme was elaborated in her 1938 pamphlet 'The Crime Against the Spanish People': 'Never in history has there been so great a need for the common sense of the common people to assert itself: to defend all our conceptions of justice and humanitarian obligations' (Prichard 1938: 3). In her subsequent writing, Prichard returned to the pivotal moment of the Spanish War time and again: indeed, Jack Lindsay observed that in Prichard's work as a whole 'Each war is shown as the

culmination of factors which the working-class, if sufficiently militant, could have controlled and defeated' – as it might have in Spain (Lindsay 1976: 324).

In *Winged Seeds*, Bill proclaimed 'The tragedy looming for humanity, in the growing power of fascism and its drive to war, is obvious' and it began with Spain where defeat would mean 'doom hanging over us' (47, 84). Public indifference cast Bill's role as a kind of religious martyr into sharp relief: 'a legendary hero' sustained by 'The fire of his faith'. His absurd puritanism was a prerequisite for eventual martyrdom – 'He had no right to forget even for an instant the bitterness of the class struggle: the suffering of the Spanish people: the menace of fascism and war looming on the not very distant horizon' (44, 79). Bill moved through the narrative preaching doomsday scenarios – history's divine retribution unless the people of Kalgoorlie repent. His struggle culminated in a rally for Spain, unintentionally depicted by Prichard as a religious revivalist meeting of the few faithful: old men and women, two or three miners and a group of Yugoslavs – the youth of the town having deserted in preference for the pictures and the local dance (48, 42). Bill's haranguing of his tiny audience was a familiar event for Australian Communists. Les Barnes recalled a typical CPA meeting of fifty members at Party headquarters in 1934:

> Hitler was secure in power and the Western countries had just begun to prepare for war. Every one of the fifty knew this. Yet Donald spoke to us in such a way that he thought, and so did we, that outside that door were 50,000 residents of Brunswick waiting for us to go out and take them to the citadels of capitalism once and for all. He finished at 10:30p.m. We opened the door expecting to be swamped. Alas, there wasn't a single

> person in the street… In spite of the revolutionary masses and their looking to me, I rushed home to put on the radio and see whether Bradman would reach the 300. That was the atmosphere. We were dreamers in a dream world. (qtd Sendy 1988: 65)

Dorothy Hewett observed that in Prichard's novels the 'idealised Rousseau-like Australian proletariat' are heroic in their romantic past and fated to be triumphant in the future, but presently they infuriatingly shirk their historic task (Hewett 1969: 27). In *Winged Seeds* the Communist ideal was forever thwarted by public apathy or the treachery of middle-class fellow-travellers, who had been briefly radicalised by fashionable causes like the Spanish War (Prichard 1984: 65). But Prichard attempted to symbolically bridge the gap between the Communist ideal and reality through a pseudo-religious vitalism of tragic sacrifice; an idea originating in her early enthusiasm for D.H. Lawrence. Bill was made to bear a 'life force' (a virtually secret knowledge) which 'strives towards perfection' in the long-term interests of 'human deliverance' – his death in the Second World War, along with the deaths of various Australian Communists in the Spanish War, would notionally restore the Party and its message to the centre of a triumphant grand historical narrative (354).

According to Raymond Williams, narratives featuring sacrificial heroes have a disabling contradiction: the attention is shifted 'from the objective conflict, which is present in the whole action, to the single heroic personality, whom it does not seem necessary to regard as tragic if he in fact embodies "the will of the world-spirit" or of history' (Williams 1969: 35). Prichard, who had predilections for Stalin-like heroes, allowed her ideal of a unity of mankind and nature to settle into a disenfranchised

individualism resentful of the masses (Prichard 1950: 252), demonstrating her always negative identifications with an idealised Australian working-class. Bill concluded that Australian workers are 'Doped, duped and demoralised by the press, radio and cinema' (106). To make such conclusions, Prichard claimed to have studied the people of Kalgoorlie: in fact she falsified much of the working-class activism that actually took place in Kalgoorlie (Throssell 131; Gregson 115). In Boulder and Kalgoorlie, Spanish Relief reported 'big enthusiastic audiences' and support for Spain as strong or stronger than anywhere in Australia (*WW* 14 and 17 December 1937; 26 November 1937).

Tragic-heroic figures like Bill were, however, an essential construct for a marginalised political Party struggling with community rejection. As such, Bill was a familiar presence in Communist literature and propaganda: a character type that could, paradoxically, embrace the immense impersonal forces of history *and* represent a romantic idea of the heroic individual. Macintyre observes that in CPA history the Communist is 'resolute, capable, fearless, indefatigable, purged of all weakness and doubt… The Party constructed this model comrade in instructions and reports, as well as in fiction and in graphic art; and veterans employed the same imagery when they recounted their experiences or memorialised others' (1998: 5).

The propaganda surrounding the International Brigade was emblematic of these contradictions, since its members quickly achieved mythic status in the popular imagination: in James Hopkins' terms, they were 'our century's most conspicuous example of disinterested idealism' (Hopkins ix). This was due to the tragedy of their sacrifice: of the more than 2,000 British volunteers of the XVth brigade for instance, 85 percent were killed or wounded, many having fought in every major campaign of the

Spanish War (x). Communist parties in Britain and Australia constructed the myth of the tragic, sacrificial brigader from this statistical reality.

In seeking to naturalise the CPA to Australian politics, Party officials ordered the manufacture of a democratic, anti-militarist, populist Australian national tradition in which Communism would be the fulfilment of its underlying trends. Australian International Brigaders were immediately conscripted into this grand narrative (Macintyre 1998: 317). As the flyer *The Spanish People are Fighting for You!!* explained, the defence of Spain's Republic was a natural cause for Australians, because they and the Spanish people were involved in parallel struggles for democracy – and the sacrifice of the International Brigader was the highest expression of that cause.

Poetry was the preferred medium for invoking the metaphysics that converted loss and defeat into final victory. In the Communist press, the Spanish Civil War attracted far more amateur poetic interest than any other issue of the late 30s. Grasping for an appropriate model, this poetry drew heavily on the patriotic English verse of the Great War, particularly the pastoral imagery exemplified by Rupert Brooke and Canadian John McCrae, combined with Australian bush balladry to redirect into Australian national traditions.

Using Great War verse conventions, the CPA repeatedly invoked the story of the most famous Australian International Brigader Ted Dickinson, whose proud background in the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) was conveniently forgotten during the Communist repression of syndicalism in Spain. Dickinson's status was proportional to the spectacular nature of the story of his martyrdom: after having been jailed for editing *Direct Action*, he moved to London where he helped found the anti-Mosley International

Freedom League before leaving for Spain (Fox 1989: 76, 77). As second in command of No.2 Company of the Anglo-Irish Battalion based in the Jarama Valley, a defiant Dickinson was taken prisoner and in the process was heard to say 'If we had ten thousand Australian bushmen here, we'd drive these dogs into the sea.' As a result he was immediately put before a firing squad – but momentarily before execution he clenched his fist and calmly said 'Salud, boys, keep your chins up!' (Palmer 1938: 19; Macintyre 1998: 299; Fox 1989: 79; Alexander 98; *WW* 4 February, 1938). Communist balladist James O'Sincerity used the format of a traditional IWW song, but purged of its political content, to memorialise Dickinson:

> Bolshie, a rebel –
>
> They dubbed him so –
>
> Out on a soap box
>
> Years ago!…
>
> There flashes the news
>
> Of him again –
>
> Now for the toiler
>
> In Bloody Spain. (O'Sincerity)

Dickinson's story was so resonant that even the Returned Servicemen's League celebrated him as an avatar of the ANZAC spirit (Inglis 91). Australian Brigader Bill Young received similar tributes that likewise made an honorary Communist of a non-

believer. In ‘Salute to a Comrade’, the Communist poet ‘F.R.’ made Young a hero of Communist internationalism and radical Australian nationalism:

> We who are foreigners in our own land,
> We who are strangers to our toil,
> Glad did we spend our dust
> On Spanish soil.
>
> Now ’neath some olive tree
> The scent of wattle blows,
> And into the bloody Ebro
> The River Murray flows. (*WW* 17 February 1939)

In many conventional tragedies, though the hero is destroyed the action continues as certain vital forces – physical or spiritual – succeed death and redistribute their power (Williams 1969: 55). In Communist poetry, this took the form of a well-worn convention of Great War poetry: merging the dead soldier with the immortal Australian landscape, remaking tragedy as triumph. Poetically, the Communist martyr’s death was a victory assured by primordial forces, as ‘F.R.’ concluded:

> And now in grief
> He fell; yet coming in the rear
> Are massed battalions

Knowing naught of fear.

Ebbing, flowing,

Even like the sea,

Restless angry,

Striving to be free. (F.R.)

This elegiac style, of which Communist poets were particularly fond, located each individual death into a wider, fated plan: the hero's death was of instrumental value of Communism's greater victory. 'S.J.' employed this trope in 'To A Fallen Comrade', written in memory of Bill Morcom, a CPA organiser killed during an offensive on the Ebro (Palmer 1948: 17): 'In struggle steeled, the purpose in his eyes/ Reflecting strength and steadfastness within,/ Led him where his mangled body lies/ To fall for freedom midst the battle's din' (*WW* 20 December 1938). Bette McArthur likewise elevated the soldier's death to a necessary sacrifice in her poem 'To One Just Fallen In Spain': 'For his death is born/ A greater need to live –/ To raise the banner, stained/ A deeper red with blood' (*WW* 13 September 1938).

Len Fox was the most prolific of Australia's Communist poets. His verse was another expression of the hard work he put into the Popular Front – particularly relating to aid for Spain. His poems, such as 'Australians in Spain', were the most extreme examples of the CPA rhetorically turning defeat into victory. Fox employed many conventions of Edwardian and Georgian imperial doggerel: 'Madrid was saved by a miracle/ And the pluck of men like Hurd…/ They died on those foreign hills/ With

gladness firm on their faces,/ Knowing they died for Spain,/ Knowing they died for us, too/ But to-day the fight goes on./ And you – does it matter to you?' (Fox August 1938)

Fox's poetic heroes, and those of Communist literary responses to Spain in general, were characterised according to basic conventions of tragedy that had appeared in popular Great War elegies. Terry Eagleton observes that the suffering of the hero in traditional tragedy 'must be expiatory, must be conscious rather than blind, and must be accepted by both him and ourselves as necessary' (Eagleton 2001: 76). The conscious decision by the International Brigaders to join the Spanish War was significant in this regard; and that conscious, heroic choice was in step with an historic calling. In 30s Communist thinking, the historical trend to socialism had been subverted by fascist aggression and could only be redeemed at a human cost. Thus, the portrait of the International Brigader – representing humanity as a whole but existing at a higher level than his fellows – served a crucial function in Communist ideology. The brigader was a tragic hero who bore responsibility for human history at its Spanish crisis-point, and his personal agony was therefore justified and explicable. As Eagleton writes: 'What may seem brutal and unjust by human standards, then, makes complete sense by cosmic ones… In this way, tragedy reaffirms the supremacy of the moral order and the dignity of the human spirit, as propitiatory suffering plus redemptive knowledge reinforces the moral law' (2003: 76). In countless poems, the tragic hero's *commitment* made the blood and destruction of civil war intelligible and reconcilable with the moral law disclosed in Communism: 'the toiling masses' will avenge him ('S.J.'); his comrades will march on the 'full-bellied corpses' of Francoist tyrants (P. Drew); the red flag will fly over Spain, Australia and the world ('F.R.'). But as Eagleton also observes, this conception of

tragedy is perverse: 'a square-jawed, masculinist ideal of tragedy, replete with pugnacious, public spirited heroes who take their punishment like a man even when they are not guilty' (76).

As the Spanish Civil War progressed, and the Left's defeat became imminent, Communist poetry became progressively mystical and abstract in its representation of the soldier-hero. L. Harry Gould averred in 'Madrid' that '"They shall not pass!" each defender calls,/ While round him see the hurricanes of fire'; and that 'Valour has drawn/ upon your streets and squares, now blackly hid,/ The auspices that mark the stirring dawn!' (*WW* 8 January 1937); and Anne Hollingsworth's 'Spain' proclaimed that 'the sharp beauty of humanity… persists through all horror,/ And overlays blood-spilt-to-no-purpose./ These words are writ deeper in history/ Than all others' (Hollingsworth 23).

This process reached its apotheosis in references to crucifixion and resurrection. Again, this drew heavily on First World War poetry which cast the individual soldier as a crucified Christ (Fussell 119); and it became a regular theme in Communist poetry to present International Brigaders and the Spanish people as Christ-like deliverers. In this regard, Carole Ferrier cited a Devanny speech on Spain for its imagistic extremity:

> Over in Barcelona Spanish mothers are seeking *their* babies, crazed, babbling with terror; mothers are clinging to husbands as crazy, seeking tiny tots in the ruins of school buildings, beneath wreckage in the streets.
>
> And when they have found their little ones – *if* they find them – then there is no food, no warmth. Mothers even then have to hug half-

> skeleton frames to their breasts, trying with sheer love to satisfy hunger, striving to warm tiny bodies with the ashes of their grief.
>
> Only the workers can feel the deep wrongs of others. Only the workers are loving and compassionate. Only the workers will take the Christ from his Cross. The mothers and babes of Spain are *Christ on the Cross*! Lend a hand to take the nails from little limbs, the thorns from the childish brows. (qtd Ferrier 1999: 153)

Devanny's son-in-law, Ron Hurd, wrote the regular column 'For Humanity and Spain' in the *Workers' Weekly* and frequently drew from the same image-bank: 'The Spanish people are being crucified on the cross of non-intervention, the most vile transgression against civilisation the world has ever known' (qtd Ferrier 1999: 153). And in 'Madrid', A.M. Stephen described the death and resurrection of 'Our Spain, a castle of delight,/ We build of visions wrought on air./ We did not feel the hunger grim/ Or ancient burden of despair…/ Though on the twisted Nazi cross/ They nail those hands that were so brave,/ The flower of liberty will spring/ Triumphant from the martyr's grave!' (Stephen 18).

Spain confounded the Stalinist aesthetic of triumphal socialist realism, which had no means of representing tragedy in modern terms. Instead, Communist literary hacks pillaged the spent traditions of the recent past, compulsively appropriating clichéd crucifixion-resurrection imagery. The less than subtle 'Stop that Bomb', for instance, claimed that Spaniards, like Christ, died for the world's salvation: 'bleeding/ In the Worker's cause,/ The People's Front stands ever undefeated/ Before the Fascist hordes'

(*Worker's Voice* 17 April 1937); and this thematic religiosity was typically, and obediently, repeated in William P. Smith's 'We Rise From Ruins' (1939):

> Here is my wife,
>
> This mound of dirt,
>
> This broken cross.
>
> This blood stained shirt
>
> You see is my heart's loss.
>
>
> Is this the end?
>
> This heap of rust?
>
> This trampled grain?
>
> This greed-born lust?
>
> You'll see
>
> Me rise from ruins again!
>
>
> I am the people of Spain! (*WW* 17 January 1939)

Crucifixion analogies made easy propaganda, arguing the justice of the war at a symbolic level rather than in the ugly details of combat and, indeed, the squalid intrigues of Communist politics. As the famous fellow-traveller and Communist evangelist Ralph Bates declared in his propaganda piece *Companeros In Action*: 'It is the legendary heroic quality of this struggle that I am trying to make clear, not its violence' (Bates 40, 42).

Reflecting on a photograph of six militia men 'crucified like Christ' by the invading Moors, Bates minimised real Republican street violence by juxtaposing it with a mystical narrative: 'There is a sense of Fate or of the inevitable about Spain at all times, and it is that which makes this war so grim, it is something which reason cannot modify or ameliorate. Would you sigh for an aspidistra when the pine forest is ablaze?' (40-1) As Bates' sophistry testified, pseudo-religious sentiment consoled Communists who doubted that their cause was assured by destiny or justified by their subversive anti-Republicanism. It was a practical demonstration of George Orwell's observation that Spain confounded accepted categories of 'Right-Left' thinking: Communists embraced religiosity and imperialist jingoism to authorise and validate their moral claim of support for Spain's Republic. Communist propagandists dabbled in religious symbolism – the cult of blood-sacrifice – and remobilised Great War propaganda techniques.

This reversion to moribund literary forms also led to an invocation of imperialist racism: the dreadful imagery of 'foreign fascist hordes'. Although Franco recruited Moorish mercenaries and received troops and munitions from Portugal, Italy, Germany and the Spanish Foreign Legion, his army consisted primarily of Spaniards who had either volunteered, or, finding themselves in the Nationalist zone, were conscripted. The 'enemy' is inevitably a problematic concept in a civil war: through political conviction or accident of geography, he may be brother or neighbour. Writing from the Spanish front, Sam Aarons revealed to *Workers' Weekly* the difficulty of defection – after talking to twenty-five deserters Aarons learnt that although possibly half of Franco's army were anti-fascist, they were held down by fear of being reported and shot on suspicion alone (*WW* 26 October 1937). Returned brigader Ken McPhee confirmed this in an interview

with the *North Queensland Guardian*, citing instances of fascist revenge on the families of deserters (6 August 1938). McPhee also reported surprising acts of solidarity from the enemy: dud German shells, for example, filled with cigarettes or greetings from Italian and German munitions workers. Nevertheless, for many Communist writers and propagandists 'the enemy' in Spain was clearly identifiable and racially typed as a barbarian Other. When a CPA member cited the image of barbarian 'fascist hordes' as a prime example of the lurid jargon that disabled Communist discourse, he was reprimanded on the basis that 'Advanced politics cannot be adequately voiced by conservative language' (qtd Macintyre 1998: 350). Despite this, the Party drew on deeply conservative views of racial menace in its portraits of Franco's forces. Consequently, hack Party poets like J. Graham were licensed to write self-styled 'progressive' verse such as 'Struth! A country wrecked and ravaged', in the time-worn mode of mock Robbie Burns:

> See yon Bishop bless the reevers –
> Man, but it wad mak' ye sick –
> Riffs and Moors, they unbelievers.
> Hang wee bairnies Catholic.
> Could hypocrisy gang further? (*Common Cause* 9 April 1938)

The Stalinist aesthetic drew 'the enemy' as a simple, secure concept. Communist poets such as J. Menin attacked the 'fascist hordes' who trampled the 'Flower of democracy' (*Workers' Star* 17 June 1938); miner and poet J. Gradain proclaimed 'A Fascist is an

atrocious beast/ In the shape of a man', noting also the 'fascist boar's' 'lust' for 'carnage and rape' (*Common Cause* 3 March 1938). Ian Cameron's poem 'Madrid' promoted romantic death and collective sacrifice against the 'heathen Moors unleashed by Fascist hands' and the 'Hun and Roman' who 'desecrate our lands' (Cameron). The *Communist Review* of January 1937 printed a cartoon (originally appearing in London's *Daily Herald*) titled 'Civilization – with Fascist Guidance' depicting a 'gollywog' Moor and an Italian in a gasmask who announced 'I'm spreading civilisation in Africa'. The Moor replied: 'Dat's all right – I'm spreading it in Europe' (4.1: 42). And although the poet Len Fox was at pains to point out the racial mix of the International Brigade – 'Bulgars, Chinese and Negroes/ Men of a myriad hues/… Spitting the fascist theories/ Back into Hitler's face' – he was still captive to the belief that the Moors were fighting in Spain for 'loot and rape' (Fox, February 1937).

In addition to the old imperialist vocabulary of race and barbarianism, the Stalinist aesthetic encompassed the exhausted language of nineteenth-century jingoism: the voice of Sir Henry Newbolt and his legion of literary imitators. This voice had dominated the early phase of British Great War propaganda, but by the mid 30s it was comprehensively discredited. In that respect, Len Fox's 'Got Any More Franco' was a literary anachronism, recalling the patriotic tub-thumping of Edwardian schoolboys:

> Your officer crew
>
> Fought remarkably well –
>
> For a fortnight or two –
>
> Then we whipped them to hell…

Your boss in Berlin

And your master in Rome

Sent their best fighters in,

But we sent them back home.

Sent them back home

With a cock in the jaw –

Got any more, Franco?

Got any more? (*Worker's Voice* 14 April 1937)

This triumphalist rhetoric flourished as the fortunes of the Republic declined and its political complexities deepened. In 'They Shall not Pass', 'B.B.' declared 'With arms of iron, arms of/ steel,/ We'll smash them on the/ world's wide wheel (*WW* 4 December 1936); whilst P. Drew exhorted 'Defeat, some say./ No!.../ Let our battle-colours stream in the wind!/ Valmy, Paris, Petrograd, Dublin, Madrid./ These holy names mean strife, not gain, not loss' (Drew 9). In a landscape of political subtlety and complexity, Communist writers set their compasses to plot an intellectually facile path ahead. Stalinist aesthetics intentionally re-inscribed the dead language of empire and the early Great War, deliberately recalling an age where loyalties were uncomplicated and a young man's duty was sacred and clear. To clarify their own ideological position in the cacophony of confused and fluid political discourses in the mid 30s, Communist writers reverted to outmoded, simplistic binaries: civilisation against barbarism, triumph against defeatism, the reflex delineation of friend from foe.

Prolonged trench warfare on the Western Front had sustained a kind of paranoid melodrama: ‘the enemy’ was positioned in a specific space, on the borders of awareness, making ambiguity – along with truth – a war casualty. Although the Spanish Civil War is routinely depicted as a moment of clear choices and sharp social divisions, the experience was to the contrary. In broad historical terms, the 30s – the era of appeasement – saw nations looking on each other as both potential friend and enemy; and the very policy of appeasement continually muddied the distinction. Furthermore, in the modern ‘total’ war in Spain, the ‘front line’ did not run down the middle of the battlefield: Franco’s aerial technology created a no-man’s land across the country, and the airborne ‘enemy’ could appear anywhere at anytime. This anxiety was further escalated with General Mola’s famous announcement, made prior to Franco’s first attempt to take Madrid, that a ‘fifth column’ would rise up inside the city and join the offensive. Mola had minted a new term in the political lexicon, transforming the idea of ‘the enemy’. The fifth columnist wore no uniform, fought using subterfuge and ‘terrorism’ from the wrong side of the lines; he was outwardly one of ‘us’ yet bore all the hallmarks of the enemy: nameless, incomprehensible, irrational. In Spain, ‘the enemy’ was an uncertain concept.

This conceptual instability posed a major problem for Communist ideology and its maintenance of a simplistic binarism. Moscow’s show trials and the ensuing purges were an official effort to reinforce these binaries, and to sort ally from enemy. The purges were the culmination of the Soviet state’s obsession with fifth-columnist infiltration: its vastly strengthened NKVD executed over 750,000 citizens and imprisoned four million as slave labourers (Brendon 412). Contrary to historian Carolyn Rasmussen’s assertion that Spain ‘deflected’ the attention of Australian ‘intellectuals’ and media away from the

purges (1992: 38), the purges were inexorably linked to Spanish politics and Popular Fronts internationally. In fact, the Soviets believed their domestic 'fifth column' was modelled on its Spanish counterpart (Arnot 8): Lev Kamenev and Grigori Zinoviev, the star defendants in the first of the major show trials, were prosecuted for attempting a Trotskyite version of Franco's coup (Brendon 403). Fifth-columnism was alleged to be an international network and consequently, at his trial Karl Radek warned 'Trotskyists in Spain, France and other countries that they will pay with their heads unless they learn from our example' (qtd Segal 373).

Spain's own 'Trotskyite Spy Trial' opened in Barcelona in October 1938, where over 200 men faced charges of 'espionage, wrecking and provocation' (*WW* 28 October 1938). The trial established that the Spanish Trotskyists were the same as those working in the USSR, and in league with the Gestapo and the Spanish Falange (*WW* 8 November 1938). The USSR's hunt for Trotskyists had a dramatic impact on the public perception of the USSR and the nature of its role in Spain. Macintyre maintains that the purges were 'a subject that most Australians found deeply disturbing, one that confirmed their worst fears of Communist dictatorship' (1998: 379). Purges dominated the news from Russia, and most diplomats and reporters concluded the incredible confessions of the tried had been extracted by torture: as Australian social commentator E.J.B. Foxcroft observed in 1938, the purges left 'a very dark stain on the Soviet democracy' (Brendon 406; Foxcroft 72).

The purges ultimately destroyed anti-fascist fronts in Australia and undermined support for the USSR in Spain (Davidson 84). Many on the Left were convinced Soviet Communism had come to resemble Nazism; but most Communists unerringly defended

the democratic nature of the USSR and its mission abroad in Spain. Communist actions against other, competing Left-wing interests in Spain were an explicit extension of Soviet paranoid melodrama within Russia itself: the Party's simplistic binarism demanded a rejection of the conceptually difficult notion of 'the enemy' and return to Great War certainties. Under Stalin, Trotskyists – 'the enemy within' – were alleged to have perpetrated an implausible variety of terrorist acts against the state. Seeking logical explanations for Stalin's terror, Western newspapers turned to exiled anti-Stalinist Trotskyists and Mensheviks, publishing articles by Leon Trotsky, W.H. Chamberlain and Eugene Lyons. Former Communists Boris Souvarine, Franz Borkenau and Victor Serge added to the protest with their respective books. Serge warned the labour movement that between them the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany were eradicating an entire generation of revolutionaries (Serge 342), and that exiled socialists and Communists were being viciously persecuted in the USSR and Spain.

Communism was comfortable with tragedy of a cathartic or redemptive kind; but a modern tragedy of doubt, irony and pessimism – and the uncertainty of who was hero or villain, friend or foe – was ideological anathema. Milan Kundera observed this characteristic in totalitarian regimes generally: tragedy, doubt or irony are inherently repellent to the glossy triumphalist *kitsch* of totalitarianism, which it must expel to the gulags (Eagleton 2003: 258; 1998: 95). Stalinist aesthetics, the gulag and support for the Spanish Republic were linked in this way: Stalinism's formal use of the term 'tragedy' beckoned the revolutionary scalpel.

In Communist literature, the word 'tragedy' appeared only in relation to the 'nefarious' Leon Trotsky and his 'agents' who, Stalin claimed, aimed to destroy the

Soviet Union because they were driven by a ‘pessimism’ over the capacity for the first workers’ state to survive in one country. Trotsky’s fifth columnist agents were guilty of a ‘defeatist attitude’ – and Radek and Bukharin confessed as much at their trials (Gould 1, 8, 43). The show trials claimed to expose these fifth-columnist ‘mad dogs’ who were sinister, irrational, and tragic: possessed of destructive, primeval drives emanating from within ‘the suffocating underworld of Trotskyism’ (qtd Brendon 406). The Australian Communist Guido Baracchi famously characterised Radek as a modern ‘Richard the Third’: tragic, misguided, out of step with the Russian people and ideologically deformed (Baracchi 48-50).

Tragic pessimism thus acquired a political dimension, and the Soviets made their rejection of tragic sensibility the pretext for dismantling Spain’s Revolution. When Moscow forced the anti-Stalinist Socialist Largo Caballero from the Premiership the *Workers’ Weekly* published Colonel Larcia Moreno’s report of Caballero’s demise: ‘The curtain has rung down on an act of a great and tragic drama in Spain. Largo Caballero, the old and battle-scarred leader of the Spanish trade unions, has been pushed aside by fate and his own blindness from the path of history’ (12 November 1937). In Spain, the Soviets designed a new officer caste – Political Commissars – to enforce political conformity on those who resisted the Stalinisation of the Spanish Republic: ‘politically contentious’ individuals, ‘Trotskyists’ and ‘pessimistic elements’ were dealt with through a system of labour camps and jails (Hopkins 263-4). As in the USSR, an accident, a misprint or a rumour could activate an inquisition: free discussion was so circumscribed that the expression of ‘pessimism’ was itself a punishable offence (258). According to

Serge, ‘The leadership of the Communist International classified as a moral lapse, or as a crime, the slightest doubt as to the triumphal future of their organisation’ (Serge 376).

Stalinist language carried strict, official meanings, and no unapproved word or expression escaped censure. In Eagleton’s terms, ‘Once the political state extends its empire over the whole of civil society, social reality becomes so densely systematised and rigorously coded that one is always being caught out in a kind of pathological “overreading”, a compulsive semiosis which eradicates all contingency’ (1998: 90). In Spain, as in the USSR, dissonant plebeian views and the concept of ‘tragic irony’ were expressed in dissident black humour: forms like jokes, verse, songs and rumours – a ‘shadow culture’ that obstructed Communist ideology’s monopoly of political discourse (Brendon 411, 418). The Stalinists enforcement of a triumphalist language on Spain’s beleaguered population was popularly resisted by the community’s shadow culture, which powerfully mobilised the very un-Stalinist idea of tragedy and readily recognised Communist propaganda’s falsehoods.

By the 30s, international publics were cynical about propaganda: they had already heard the systematic lying of governments during the Great War. In 1914, mass literacy enabled the mass circulation of lies and the Great War saw propaganda ‘scientifically’ organised on a mass scale for the first time: states bombarded their own citizens with ‘bogus statistics, inaccurate news reports, and, most contentiously, false atrocity stories’ (Tate 41). But these official representations were demotically exposed: the truth about the Great War was disclosed by returned men, their literary memoirs, and the haunted street-spectacle of the disabled (Grant 11).

Many critical studies of propaganda were published in the 20s and 30s, invariably concluding that it was a malign force (Tate 49). Wilfred Trotter's *The Instinct of the Herd in Peace and War* (1922) and Leonard Woolf's *After the Deluge* (1931) analysed communal psychology and contained long sections on mass deception and the way in which the narrative of state power perverted individual citizenship. Arthur Ponsonby's *Falsehood in Wartime* (1928) documented the institutionalised lies of the War and reached its ninth impression by 1940; and in *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930) Sigmund Freud suggested that Europe's disillusionment sprang from the realisation that the state, which demanded responsibility and truth from its citizens, had now monopolised the right to dissemble. As Freud further observed, the structure of feeling that was so antithetical to propaganda was based on public distrust of the claims of authority, such as the USSR's assertion that it was a democracy – not a regime of 'persecution' (43).

After 1918, Europeans understood that war was neither heroic nor noble, and the fact that it had become indiscriminate industrialised slaughter was a comprehensive cultural shock. Words like heroism, glory, and honour made no sense; and any subsequent propaganda which assumed that such abstractions were still stable in their meanings was doomed to failure.

But Soviet propaganda rehashed the discursive conventions of 1914: its hysterical triumphalism and 'brutal language of exposure, liquidation and annihilation' (Macintyre 1998: 379) appealed to a lost, pre-war moral universe of chauvinistic certainties. It had no nuance, no ambiguity and no place for defeatism. Australian Communists like Iris Brissenden dutifully followed Party orthodoxy, and her *Manana, Spain!* repositioned the

Great War hero at the Spanish front: 'It seems that even common, hackneyed/ Words/ Lose all their triteness when applied/ to Spain:/ In nineteen fourteen hero was a word/ Applied to fighters for a master's gain –/ To brave, deluded, working men./ But now/ The heroes are behind the barricades!' (45).

Communist authorities serially denied the war in Spain was going badly: eighteen days prior to the crucial fall of Bilboa to Franco, *Workers' Weekly* applauded ongoing Republican successes (1 June 1937); Francoist gains were commonly attributed to the subversive activities of 'anarchist "uncontrollables"' and Trotskyist POUM agents (*WW* 3 May 1938; Gould 22; Aarons December 1938: 42). In contrast, Republican troops exemplified the 'heroic type of new man' coming to maturity under Communism (*WW* 13 November 1937): a typical headline in the *Workers' Weekly* read 'Brave defenders of Madrid, we salute you! Heroes of the struggle against fascism, we are proud of you!' (13 November 1936). To the wider Australian community, Soviet propaganda's preposterous claims meant it acted as its own prophylaxis. To maintain faith in the Soviet cause, Australian Communists were asked to deliberately turn against a whole structure of feeling that was suspicious of propaganda. Scepticism would be countered by wilful ignorance: as Audrey Blake reflected, 'We didn't read the critics of the USSR… the Comintern were our infallible authorities' (Blake 24).

Albert Camus considered Communists brutal dupes: they supposed history had a glorious end that justified all suffering, whereas Camus considered the tragedy of Republican Spain as proof that history was unconcerned with justice and determined by force or chance (Golsan 5). Camus recognised the structure of feeling surrounding Spain which Communists ignored: Spain represented tragedy of a peculiarly modern kind, in

which all certainties could be lost. And with the advent of total war, the Spanish conflict confounded post-Enlightenment dreams of historical progress: following the Great War, it was also proof modernity was defined by perpetual catastrophe.

The most effective, partisan Civil War coverage faced the new kind of collective tragedy symbolised by Spain, taking cues from Ernest Hemingway. In *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), Hemingway had declared that 'abstract words such as glory, honour, courage… were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates' (191). Ramon Sender's *War in Spain* (1937), Koestler's *Spanish Testament* (1937), Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) and Gerald Brennan's *The Spanish Labyrinth* (1943) all employed new semantic figures to express the tragic sense. In books such as these, buzzwords like 'Madrid', 'Jarama', 'Badajoz', 'Ebro', 'Guernica' and 'Aragon offensive' became synonymous with tragedy. When these names were dramatically recited in Jack Lindsay's mass declamations for Spain, audiences were invariably deeply moved (Cunningham 1980: 46). The micro-detail, the everyday account and local knowledge were important to pro-Republican propaganda's best forms. In the sceptical public climate of the mid 30s, propaganda had to assume more subtle forms and adopt new technologies to manufacture 'the folded lie'. To combat public incredulity, newspapers and propaganda placed huge significance on eyewitness accounts, the semblance of political non-alignment, corroboration of evidence, photographs, and on-the-spot reportage.

The operation and propaganda of Australia's SRC was consciously distanced from Stalinist language and ideology. Soviet Communism's abstract, triumphalist rhetoric was rejected in SRC literature. Rather, SRC propaganda carried eyewitness

accounts of hardship, loss, destruction and defeat; reinforced with pictures of bombed cities, the dead and maimed, refugees, and embattled Republican forces. Typical of this kind of propaganda was the SRC's *From the BattleFields of Spain* which focused on the experiences of front-line medical staff, including accounts from the diary of the liberal-humanitarian Australian nurse Una Wilson (Thorne 1937: 13). To a public suspicious of propaganda, Wilson's accounts of misery and fatigue – of wading 'about in a river of blood', of the accruing dead and dying filling hospitals – had directness and authenticity.

Most SRC publications conformed to house-style: *We Went to Spain*, by Arthur and Margaret Howells; the anonymous *Ashes of Franco's Victory*, and the most famous Australian pamphlet of the era, *Australians in Spain*, penned by Nettie Palmer and Len Fox. The SRC's *Spain! The Spanish People Present their Case* emphatically invoked the trope of tragedy: the introduction announced 'The tragedy that is taking place in Spain is a matter of life and death to the people of the whole world – the people of Australia included. And yet there is an appalling lack of knowledge of the facts and their meaning, and of what we can do to help.' Imported English pamphlets such as A. Ramos' *On the Eve of the Civil War in Spain*, English journalist A.V. Phillips' *Spain Under Franco* and H.R.G. Greaves and David Thompson's *The Truth About Spain* distinguished the Spanish revolution from the catastrophism of Soviet Bolshevism, describing the conflict as inherently tragic and citing the opinions of Borkenau and Koestler. Australia's SRC studiously avoided the sensationalism of atrocity stories: to the SRC, the war itself was the principal tragedy.

The SRC was not alone in rejecting Stalinist dogma and its literary constraints. A few independently-minded Communist poets also refused Stalinist vitriol and atrocity

propaganda. Jack Franklyn, a prominent activist in the Seamen's Union, veteran of the Great War and many city street-battles for the rights of the unemployed, was unintentionally helped on his way to the International Brigade when he was deported by authorities from Darwin to Fremantle (Palmer 1948: 37-8). He took a decidedly different view on war, avoiding the usual fatalism, sentimentality and triumphalism of the other poets – instead, he emphasised loss. His ballad 'Spain' opened: 'A rough and ragged country,/ Red poppies growing wild/ An emblem there in splendour/ Where proletarian died' (*WW* 6 December 1938). In Spain, Franklyn also composed the unglamorous but now famous 'Song of the International Brigades' in collaboration with the American brigader Joe Frankel, a piece beloved by volunteers at the time:

> We have come here from far away
>
> countries,
>
> Bringing nothing with us but our hate: …
>
> To hell with the Fascist Bourgeoisie.
>
>
> How they longed to parade thru' our
>
> city!
>
> But we were prepared; they came late!
>
> Then go forward, you soldiers of Freedom:
>
> Our rifles are speaking our hate. (*North Queensland Guardian* 4 June 1938)

Another Communist poet, Alex Humphris, embraced tragic vision and sentiment with alacrity. His poem 'For Spain' evoked the magisterial indifference of 'history', echoing Auden's 'Spain' and reasoning that though history's metaphysical calls reached the 'remote peninsulas' and the 'sleepy plains' only agency could change its course and create the conditions for a humanitarian, rather than doctrinally political, future:

> Where I look across the rivers and the plain;
> And wherever that I wander, wherever I may go –
> I hear those awful sounds of stricken Spain…
> I have listened to the nighthawk as it calls its mournful cry –
> Like a child that's wounded, calling out in pain
> As the Nazis and the Fascists brutally pass by –
> On those awful battlefields of stricken Spain.
> Why should we 'midst our beauty of the mountains and the
> Plain
> Contented stand, while others show the way. (*Worker's Voice* 16 March 1938)

Writers like Humphris were at odds with their own Party, but in tune with the Spanish Ministry of Propaganda's own designs for representing the Republic. As the 1937 Paris Exhibition show-cased, Republican Spain's Ministry of Propaganda produced innovative, original and influential work that engaged with leading forms of a tragic modernism: Juan Miró's paintings, John Heartfield's photomontages, Picasso's *Guernica* – certainly not the aesthetic dogma of Soviet socialist realism.

The taint of Stalinist dogma has led to an undeserving neglect of Australian Communist writing in contemporary literary criticism: in Australian studies, academics generally consider any fusion of art and party politics a failure. Katharine Susannah Prichard's *Winged Seeds* is often picked as a prime example of the intrusion into literature of what Delys Bird calls 'sentimental' politics: Drusilla Modjeska even claims Prichard's *Winged Seeds* exaggerated the empirical evidence of politics on the gold-fields: 'gold mining was controlled by international capital, the war which claimed Bill had little to do with life as it was lived in Kalgoorlie; the Spanish Civil War even less' (Bird 186; Modjeska 1984: xiii). In fact, Modjeska claims that amongst Australian female writers in general 'anti-fascism and women's issues remained separate in their fiction'; they discriminated masculine militarism from 'commonsense and intuitive notions of humanity, femaleness, nurturance and freedom of expression' (1981: 256, 13-14). But for a number of prominent female writers this was simply untrue; writers who explicitly linked Spain and women's liberational struggles in dramatic form.

In Spain, the New Republican Woman made significant gains under the Republic, achieving suffrage, cabinet positions and a role in militias. The spectacle of Spanish militia women fascinated the world's media, bringing the new Spanish woman to international prominence. Photographs and stories of militia women at the barricades, at drill or at leisure captioned 'The Spanish Amazon' or 'Spain's Red Carmens' were reported in glowing terms and the newsreels were especially enamoured with the spectacle of young Spanish women carrying arms (Aldgate 105,107; Brothers 79, 82, 89). The *Age* observed they were now 'One of the features of the Spanish civil war' (29 August 1936). Franco's insurgency vowed to save Spain from the Republican Woman

(Keene 248), and militia women became the stuff of scandal for the insurgent press – they were accused of torture, sacrilege and murdering priests (Communist Atrocities 1936: 37).

The Soviet Union's counter-revolution in Spain drove women from the armed forces and confined them to non-combatant roles; and Communist propagandists explained that women had returned to civilian positions when 'They learnt they were not so well equipped for physical warfare' (Sharkey 1936: 4; Joseph 18). Consequently, in Republican propaganda, Spanish women ceased to be fascinating Amazons and re-assumed the conventional roles of passive victims – for example, in countless images of distraught women in city ruins looking skyward and 'suffering tragically' (*Women's Meeting*). Meanwhile, the Communist orator La Pasionaria was elevated to the position of spokeswoman, cutting a martyred figure whilst appealing 'As a Spaniard and Mother' for humanitarian aid (*Age* 20 September 1936; *WW* 22 November 1938). Australian Communists venerated Pasionaria in yet another Stalinist cult of personality, and Party poets contributed to it with reams of hackneyed verse:

> You are good. You have stood
> Always in the vanguard, leading,
> Hands held out to uphold
> Children and women above this sea
> Of hatred and blood. (Charlotte Haldane 24)

For the better Communist writers, the political transformation of Spanish womanhood posed yet another ideological contradiction to be negotiated. Prichard wrote the play 'Women of Spain' for Spanish Relief functions, cast with Communist agitprop stereotypes: the 'domesticated' Nina, a grandmother with a tragic story of woe; and Chica, a pugilistic 'clean cut, militant worker' in blue overalls who was inexplicably no longer a combatant (Prichard 'Women'). Chica, the Communist – whose monologues read like CPA pamphlets – was charged with the task of preventing the play's other characters from sliding into the crime of tragic, Trotskyist despair.

Prichard's Party comrade, Jean Devanny, also attempted to negotiate the many problems of Stalinist aesthetics and gender politics in *Paradise Flow* (1937): a major Communist novel and a unique survey of the crises of the 30s. The narrative of *Paradise Flow* was strained by Communist ideology's multiple contradictions; but Devanny's attempted negotiation of them gave the book a significance symptomatic of its moment.

Devanny's abilities as an activist were legendary – particularly her oratory, judged amongst the best in an era when speaking from the soap box was an art form. Devanny was at the peak of her powers as an activist and writer during the years of anti-fascist struggle in the 30s, and she worked particularly hard as a speaker and fund-raiser for Spanish Relief. She was a tremendous asset for the CPA as an organiser and recruiter, though prone to frequent conflicts with Party chiefs (Ferrier 1998: 125, 2-3).

Devanny had none of the financial or familial resources of other writers and was never out of poverty, but she believed experience was crucial to the development of the artist and essential to the unity of art and politics (Ferrier 1985: 115). Her own class background, bitter life experience and immersion in political activism at the level of the

work place – particularly in the Red North – created a respect for the inflections of political activism and resistance in daily life and its complexities. Where Prichard's *Winged Seeds* falsified the nature of community support for Spain, imagining a self-sacrificing political vanguard pitted against an indifferent community, Devanny saw an organic connection between Party and people. There were none of Prichard's 'Doped, duped and demoralised' workers in *Paradise Flow*: indeed, Devanny found Prichard's working-class heroes and heroines of the Goldfields trilogy unconvincing, concluding that Prichard 'is fundamentally petty bourgeois' (qtd Ferrier 1985: 106).

Devanny appreciated the role of ethnic minorities as sources of political activism in Australian communities. An anonymous, passive 'group of Yugoslavs' received only token mention in Prichard's novel as they appeared at a rally for Spain 'hungry' to be harangued by Bill, the Communist. In reality, the non-Communist but pro-Left Yugoslav community was the most active in Spanish Relief on the West Australian gold-fields (Prichard 1984: 43, 48). Devanny's *Paradise Flow*, set in the Red North during the Spanish War, had ethnic communities firmly at the centre of political life. Anton Muranivich, a Yugoslav 'gun' cane-cutter and newly-hired manager of the farm at Paradise Flow, was the lead character.

Devanny chose the romance novel form as a vehicle for her socialist ideas, because of its familiarity to working-class readers as a popular-fictional staple. *Paradise Flow*'s narrative resembled *Lady Chatterley's Lover*: the wife of Big Mac, the farm's proprietor, was erotically attracted to the manager Muranivich; but Devanny adhered to the romance form, ensuring that Laurel remained chaste and the book had the comfortable reassurance of romantic closure and moral purity. Muranivich, a kind of

sexual athlete, set out to seduce Laurel as revenge against his boss. But Laurel's chastity and precious demeanour gradually tamed his self-destructive ways with women and drink. The secret romance was discovered by Big Mac in the final chapters, which were preoccupied by Big Mac's encroaching madness and Laurel's hysterics: indecisiveness, tantrums and melodramatics.

Anti-fascism had the crucial function of laying out the fault-lines along which the relationships within the novel were formed and broken. In Muranivich's cutting gang, the Italians loathed the fascists and their Australian supporters; the Yugoslavs were equally resentful of the Italian fascist occupation of Yugoslavia. All looked to Spain as the primary symbol of their political frustrations and hopes, and several characters left to fight in Spain for the Republic (104, 190, 275). In the novel, the material relations between rural workers and landowners in the Queensland cane-fields were intended to parallel contemporary conflicts over the same essential questions of land and political representation in Spain. To Devanny's characters, Spain and the Soviet Union represented the exclusive and all-important examples of landless workers successfully organising against the large landholders and their fascist supporters. Locally, this same basic struggle on the Queensland cane-fields framed the novel: the small and lease-holding farmers struggled against the capitalist cane growers, who owned large tracts of the best land and the mills – and of whom Big Mac was the most powerful (80). The major landholders manoeuvred to remove the slim profitability of the smaller farmers and force them from their land (48-9). Big Mac compared these leaseholders to 'serfs' living in squalor, and promised that modernisation would bring regular wages and security, whilst secretly speculating about putting redundant workers into fascist-style labour

camps once they were replaced by mechanisation (148, 187). Small and middle-scale producers began to mobilise politically, spurred on by CPA propaganda and agitation, whilst the Italians turned to political firebrands like the fascist Vittioni (49).

Devanny introduced Browning, the Communist, into the novel to represent revolutionary discipline and reason. He appeared as a prophet: foretelling events, omnipresent at moments of crisis, but ultimately an enigmatic and marginal character aloof from the irrational, internecine conflicts and bravado of the other socialists. Like prophetic wisdom, Browning's pamphlets circulated around the cane-fields, surfacing at fortuitous moments to encourage solidarity amongst small producers and to beat back the sophistry of Big Mac. Browning's words concluded the novel, highlighting the central messages and directly linking the struggle on the fields with the international anti-fascist struggle.

Muranivich intended to fight in Spain, but was diverted by Laurel and chided by his friends for the short-term whim of pursuing her and losing sight sight of his politics (122, 149). Laurel, repeating Big Mac, maintained that anti-fascist and fascist zealotry was a peculiarity of overwrought ethnics, and that she could not feel for Spain because it is 'too far away' (182, 134). Muranivich retorted that she lacks depth of feeling: 'You live on the surface of life. Never been hungry. Never been hurt. Never been religious, even. You too far away!' He mocked her. 'Yes, too far from suffering' (182). Laurel's gradual recognition of this fact, and her change of heart about Spain, provided the basis for Devanny's construction of a political allegory in *Paradise Flow*: an allegory of cross-class alliances in the interests of cosmopolitan anti-fascism.

The novel aimed to naturalise or organicise Communist politics. Devanny linked Communist politics with romantic images of the restoration of lost agrarian origins, in which all would work once more in the fields in socialist equality. Laurel eventually decided she was 'too far above the earth' and vowed to become a humble farmer's wife 'working with my hands', rather than being an instrument of Big Mac's 'empire' (187). This meant embracing Muranivich's ideal of 'social living' which, as Devanny wrote, was achieved in an integrated organic, society such as in Spain – free of mechanisation and modernity's other flaws (180, 237). It was an ideal intended to appeal to the middle-class propertied producers, which was why the character of Reverend Verst gave his religious blessing to this agrarian project, claiming that the Communist is actually doing God's work in bringing about social equity and returning humanity to a new harmony with nature (237, 193, 197).

In *Paradise Flow*, each character's full politicisation came through a reconnection with a cosmic natural order, sensual being and the sacred bond of fellowship. Muranivich was Devanny's most carefully constructed character, and in him she intentionally merged the many tensions of emotion and discipline of this metaphysic. As an idealised combination of working-class roughness and petit-bourgeois sensitivity, Muranivich would 'win his way to singleness of thought and purity of action. Because he was *human*. Because he would take all men as brothers' (237). Part of this metaphysic was a respect for 'battle', and Muranivich longed to fight Big Mac and 'crack his skull' (208, 201). As events compounded and Muranivich's dreams were 'filled with images of men slain', he finally decided to direct his energies into the more authentic fight for 'social living' against Franco, and left for Spain (208). By contrast, Muranivich's nemesis Big Mac had

a new and alien morality, with no place for 'sentiment' or emotion; he possessed 'the mind of the emotional aristocrat who could not, without contempt, accord to another man the human right of struggling for his love' (187, 237). Big Mac believed he mastered not only emotion but nature as a whole through agriculture; and according to Devanny's Lawrencean-derived mysticism, Big Mac's self-alienation from these two crucial sources of moral energy meant that he and his industry went on 'destroying' – creating political chaos and a nightmare of modernity beyond his control (81, 188).

Although Devanny set up the logical and political expectations of a tragic scenario, with a confrontation between fascist and anti-fascist, by the end of the novel she relented – pulling the narrative back into the safety of the romance and sparing her protagonists from the agonies of tragic action. Big Mac, deciding to release Laurel from their failing marriage, willingly eliminates himself from her life by getting shot in an act of 'passion' by the leading local fascist Vittioni – a character who Big Mac had determined to dispossess from his land in an act of capitalistic obstinacy (287-8). Having killed Big Mac, Vittioni experienced a kind of socialist epiphany, denouncing his fascist convictions and turning the gun on himself. Thus, both the capitalist and the fascist, driven by moral shame, conveniently destroyed one another. Muranivich, who at this point was en route for Spain, could now look forward to bucolic bliss with Laurel. Thus Devanny's hero and heroine outlived the ravages of capital and fascism. In a judgement that might be applied to Devanny, Terry Eagleton summarises Devanny's literary model, D.H. Lawrence, as 'a resounding anti-tragic thinker for all the most discreditable of reasons' (2003: 89).

The tragic implications of Devanny's moral life – the 'sacrifice', conflict and guilt necessary to achieve 'social living', so revered in the battle against fascism in Spain – were never faced in the novel. The conventions of the book's romantic narrative were at odds with its political message: tragedy is displaced by hackneyed 'poetic justice' – the providential schema implicit in the romantic form. Perhaps this was why *Paradise Flow* received high praise from reviewers in the mainstream media, in one case announcing Devanny part of 'the front rank of fiction' (Ferrier 1999: 152). Devanny was proud of what she termed her 'incorrigible romanticism' (qtd Ferrier 1999: 317). But revolutionary romanticism, an expression used by Zhdanov in his 1934 address to the Congress of the All Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, had an essentially negative relationship to history – unwilling to look its tragedy in the face. As Raymond Williams insisted, the idea of redemption which the romantic revolutionary advances, projects resolution and order on the essentially tragic process of radically changing a society. The need for change originates in the tragic suffering of a class and the attendant social evils of degeneration and fear – if its origin is tragic, change must be equally tragic, 'in that it is not against gods or inanimate things… but against other men.… What is properly called utopianism, or revolutionary romanticism, is the suppression or dilution of this quite inevitable fact' (Williams 1969: 76-7).

For Devanny and many of her ilk in the 30s, revolutionary romanticism ended in sickening Stalinist dogma; an idea of providence that was diametrically opposed to the emergent tragic structure of feeling; and the war in Spain made plain that social change in modernity was inescapably tragic. Stalinism's denial of this, in preference for romantic

triumphalism, poisoned not only its own community relations but the broader anti-fascist cause with which it sought to associate itself, or infiltrate.

As the Stalinist aesthetic discredited itself, continually demonstrating its inflexibility and unreality, some Communists, the broader Left and the Australian community at large turned to alternative Leftist analyses of international events. In particular, Trotskyism won increasing public interest. Trotskyists were given coverage in the mainstream press because they offered a systematic explanation of Spain's dilemmas from an anti-Stalinist position. When the fiercely anti-Communist *Labor Daily* or *Century* commented on Spain or Soviet purges, for example, they drew on Trotskyite sources (18 May 1937); and as Boote became increasingly pessimistic about Spain's fortunes, he gave Trotsky's views on Spain more column space (*AW* 27 January 1937; 15 June 1937). Australian journalists like Alwyn Lee of the *Daily News* and Eric Baume, on the *Sunday Sun*, made pilgrimages to Mexico to interview Trotsky in person (Pearl 42). Baume's meeting was a pivotal experience, leading him to proclaim the folly of appeasement and the 'tragedy' of 'a decadent England' and the 'extinction' by totalitarianism 'she had almost wilfully earned' (Baume 10): by failing to act in support of Spain's Republic, Baume thought Britain had sealed its own near-future break-up by the competing, destructive forces of fascism, Nazism and Stalinism.

Trotskyism's inclination to tragic predictiveness gained credibility in these new, unlikely quarters of Australian life (Greenhall 57). Trotskyists described the 30s as 'midnight in the century', but were still secure in their knowledge of a coming dawn (Greenhall 89). As Peter Beilharz puts it, Trotsky's concept of history resembled 'Sophoclean tragedy with its catharsis and clear moral lessons. Right wins out; tragedy

befalls those whose acts are false' (1987: 44). Tiny Trotskyist cells, such as the Workers Party of Australia (or 'Left Opposition'), and the Independent Communist League (ICL) received considerable local support in working-class centres; however, their unfettered talk of revolution undermined their popularity in labour organisations (Davidson 186-7; Gillies 11; *M* 1.3; 1938, 3; Markey 93-4).

Australian Trotskyists focused on international events in their small journals, *Militant* and *Permanent Revolution*, which drew on international Trotskyist opinion (*Militant* 1.1 Sept 1938; Greenland 70; Davidson 186). They drew attention to the violent persecution of the POUM, whose rapidly expanding influence was a threat to Moscow – though the POUM was not a Trotyskist Party (Bolloten 405, 411). The widespread torture and liquidation of members of the POUM began with their internationally renowned leader, Andres Nin, who after resisting torture was transported to Moscow in a crate (Bolloten 503, 506-8). *Permanent Revolution* considered this 'The Tragedy of the people's front' (1.3: 12). The November issue of *Militant* carried a poem on the subject by Australian star Trotskyist convert Gil Roper:

> This is a good war, Comrade:
>
> The Comintern says so…
>
> So when the hot iron sears your guts
>
> And I twist it, so,
>
> Excuse me, Comrade:
>
> That's for Democracy! (Sandwick 1)

Once again, Roper's poem summarised Orwell's bizarre, tragic inversions of political orientation in the 30s Left. At the hands of Stalin, 'the Surrealist of *Realpolitik*' (Brendon 419), Soviet power turned precisely against those it claimed to represent and liberate. Stalinism became identical with the fascisms it supposedly fought, which in Spain were encroaching on a people's democracy with the most brutal, industrial-military might. As the pre-eminent Trotskyist and hero of Russia's 1917 revolution, Victor Serge, gloomily wrote from his French exile about the Spanish Republic's collapse:

> There followed a dream of the confused hopes: the Europe of the Popular Fronts and Moscow Trials seemed convalescent in those very moments when it was doomed. It became increasingly difficult to distinguish between revolution and reaction, between democracy with Fascist trends and Fascism in disguise, between submerged civil war and the rule of democracy, between open civil war and war between States, between intervention and non-intervention, between brands of totalitarianism in opposition but momentarily allied, between the most criminal impostures and the simple truth. This confusion sprang from the impotence of men caught up in the drift towards cataclysm, and impotence fed in its turn upon confusion. (Serge 381)

Stalin never really valued Western Communists: as a popular Russian epigram in the 30s went, 'One tractor is worth more than ten foreign Communists' (Carley 575). But the political interventions of Moscow-oriented Communists in countries like Australia

caused waves of unintended trouble for existing political organisations. When the Finns resisted the 1939 Red Army invasion of their country, their plight was compared to that of the Spanish, arousing tremendous support amongst the public and the labour movement in Australia and Britain: it was an episode that demonstrated finally how little grasp Communism had on the public imagination concerning Spain, or how tenuous its claim on the anti-fascist movement actually was (Buchanan 2001: 298; Edgar Ross 75). Stalinist cant about Spain, in particular, had exposed the hollowness of ‘Communese’ and its inability to describe history and human aspiration with any sense of gravity.

Chapter Three: Spain and the Rhetoric of Peace

On 19 May 1938, the *Daily Telegraph* reported that a Sydney man was fined two pounds for offensive behaviour when he shouted 'Down with Fascism – Spain Today, Australia Tomorrow!' The *Telegraph* thought the penalty excessive as this was 'a slogan all Australians hear in some form or other every day'. This small incident, and the comment it attracted, contained essential elements of the Australian response to the Spanish Civil War: a quixotic gesture of pro-Republicanism, defiance of government silence on the issue, public sympathy for the act of dissidence and its message. The incident also suggested the ingredients of a structure of feeling: the spontaneous and mobile consciousness of a community, living in an historical moment, colliding with an official mindset that was unmoving in its attitudes and determined to preserve its power by legal enforcement (Williams 1979: 159). In Australia, as Stuart Macintyre notes, there was a 'perceptible quickening of cultural life in the second half of the 1930s that was apparent both in new levels of activity and a restless impatience with older forms' (1998: 399).

The historical record shows that many Australians were fearful about the course of events in Spain and the slide towards another global war; but Australian governments continually insisted that the turbulence of the 30s and even the eventual outbreak of the Second World War would not interrupt 'business as usual' – as Robert Menzies famously put it, borrowing the catchphrase of British officialdom from 1914. But for many ordinary Australians, history seemed to be regressing into a new Dark Age. The battle for democracy in Spain came at a pivotal moment, when historical trends tipped perceptibly

toward totalitarianism. However, the widespread concern this raised in the public was dismissed by governments and even charged with stupidity and treachery. In 1938, replying to Australians who thought the country should play a more active role in international affairs, the Minister of Defence declared:

> We, the Government, have vital information which we cannot disclose. It is upon this knowledge that we make our decisions. You, who are merely private citizens, have no access to this information. Any criticism you make of our policy, any controversy about it in which you may indulge will therefore be uninformed and valueless. If, in spite of your ignorance, you persist in questioning our policy, we can only conclude that you are disloyal. (qtd McQueen 1978: 154)

Throughout the inter-war years, Australia's 'ruling class was culturally on the defensive. Its power rested less on consent and more on force than it had done before, or was to do later' (Connell 286). But its guiding ideals of providential progress, faith in economic growth, moderation, the rule of law, the almost 'mystical belief' in Empire and its 'ennobling values and traditions' seemed increasingly tenuous (Moore 1995: 18). The war in Spain, in which ordinary people were subjected to the ravages of a destructive modernity, suggested the emptiness of this conservative catechism. Contravening ruling-class myths that history was steady, ordered and moderate, Spain's situation seemed to expose a very modern tendency: a tragic sense of history that 'detects a kind of skewedness or brute dissonance at the heart of things' (Eagleton 2003: 146).

Consequently, Spain's tragedy remained a pariah issue in official Australian political discourse: discussion of Spain was repressed, censored, misrepresented and frequently ignored altogether. The UAP and ALP leadership both aimed to suppress debate on foreign affairs; fearing that this would undermine public faith in national leadership, and that criticism of Australia's 'peaceful' foreign policy would itself threaten peace and stability.

The attempt to manufacture public indifference meant arguing the Spanish War was of no consequence to Australia – Joseph Lyons insisted on 'strict neutrality' and non-intervention: 'if the utmost discretion is not observed by the governments and peoples of other countries, a dangerous international situation is likely to arise. It is not the policy of the Commonwealth Government to interfere in the internal disputes of any foreign country' (*SMH* 12 September 1936). He urged Australians to refrain from becoming active in support of either side, or from donating funds to relief organisations (Lyons October 1936). Lyons' successor, Robert Menzies, agreed that the outcome of the Spanish Civil War was of little interest to a 'British' community – whatever form of government prevailed in Spain, socialist or fascist, was antithetical to British values (*Argus* 23 September 1936).

The Minister for External Affairs, Sir George Pearce, urged public indifference toward Spain, stating that the government considered the war a conflict between Communism and fascism, and that Australia would therefore remain strictly neutral (Pearce 1936). However, his newly created Department of External Affairs advised government against allowing fascist reign in Spain: indeed, it advised against the policy of appeasement. At times cautiously pro-Republican, the Department's widely circulated

Current Notes judged that the Republic's socialism was moderate, but due to its desperate situation was now in danger of radicalisation by Communists and anarchists (Andrews 94, 121). Despite this advice, Lyons recognised Franco as legitimate head of the Spanish state on 1 October 1936, three weeks before Hitler and Mussolini did so.

The Australian government's response to each worsening crisis in the 30s was to further muzzle public discussion, either by direct censorship or by starving the population of vital facts – even when world war was imminent (Andrews 25). In the *Australian Quarterly*, A.G. Colley lamented that government statements on foreign affairs were 'not only rare but they are thin; far too thin to act as an effective smokescreen to the confusion which inspires them' (49). In the rare moments international issues were discussed in parliament, the standard was low: indeed, Lyons had no experience in foreign or defence policy, and the fact that he and Menzies harboured fascist sympathies was well known.

In this climate, peace groups and humanitarians who advocated internationalist ideals came under 'intense suspicion' (Cain 222) – in spite of their liberal-conservatism and often obstreperous political non-alignment. These groups and organisations had positioned themselves as moral leaders in the community, attracting great public respect. Consequently, many Australians looked to the Peace Movement and humanitarian agencies to provide public resistance to the disastrous policies of appeasement and the government's indulgence of fascist regimes. Although the Peace Movement recognised that since the Great War democracy had become an embattled minority system of government, it struggled to come to terms with the primary issue of how to act in response to this state of affairs. But regardless of the ineffectual activity and apolitical character of Australian peace and humanitarian groups, they still provoked official

paranoia. This, in turn, was part of a broader ideological tendency in the nation's ruling class: its persistent, reactionary 'uncertainty about democracy and the fitness of the masses to govern' (Rowse 252) – a mob that could easily be swayed by anti-fascist or Leftist propaganda.

In the 30s, the Federal Investigation Branch's first priority was to curb the alleged 'Communist propaganda' of peace groups (Darby 6). The government of the day believed it faced a 'battle' against the 'disease' of propaganda which appealed to a collective, irrational human nature that had to be 'managed' – a belief backed-up by the new social sciences (Grant 13, 15). Between the wars, explains Mariel Grant, the perception of highly effective propaganda in the Great War, and the effectiveness of commercial advertising

> reinforced existing theories and anxieties regarding the irrationality and malleability of man in the mass and/or mass man, at a time when near universal suffrage, improvements in literacy, and the growth and development of new means of communication were increasing the power and importance of the average citizen in a democracy. (Grant 12)

Even the more liberal held grave concerns for the survival of civil society under such malign influences as propaganda. In *Propaganda Boom* (1938), A.J. Mackenzie observed that in democracies citizens endured commercial and government propaganda, and were not so much not convinced as overwhelmed by it: 'Thundering from the printing presses, flashing across the screens of cinemas, surging over the ether from the radio stations,

come the ceaseless streams of propaganda, all uniting into one vast torrent that threatens to engulf the world in the maelstrom of war' (12).

Consequently, censorship was actively demanded by a range of paternalistic organisations: the Father and Son Welfare Movement, the Women's National League, the CPA and the Catholic Church. In January 1939, the Catholic *Freeman's Journal* urged press censorship in the interests of 'peace' (O'Farrell 1977: 390); whilst Archbishop Daniel Mannix attacked press sensationalism and propaganda for creating a 'war fever' (Murphy 168). Meanwhile the CPA attempted to re-enact the Kisch affair in reverse by having the Nazi publicist Von Luckner banned from speaking in Australia. Lloyd Ross explained in his pamphlet *Why We Will Stop Count Von Luckner!* (1937) that 'After the propagandist ship came the battleship in Spain' and that the Nazi propagandist can destroy civic institutions in Australia with his 'foreign' ideas as effectively as Nazi bombs have destroyed cities in Spain (3, 6). After all, 'No One Believes in Full Freedom' and Australia is at particular risk because 'Australian people are apathetic to social problems' (6, 11, 19, 28). It was an argument Menzies agreed with in principle, averring that there were limits to freedom of speech where revolutionary propaganda was concerned and that, as he later explained, democracy was not an end in itself (qtd Gollan 46; Loveday 129).

Governments feared groundswells of public opinion on foreign affairs policy: the Hoare-Laval pact was effectively defeated by public opposition, and according to Wesley Wark 'Another, and more powerful outburst of popular feeling would make itself felt in 1939 in opposition to further acts of appeasement' (Wark 557-8). Baldwin's failure to support collective security, which the Tories had promised to do, threatened his

government's survival (Taylor 389). Foreign affairs occupied the British parliament on an unprecedented peace-time scale and the press was obsessed with the issue. The British peace ballot of 1935 revealed overwhelming support for the League of Nations and of the 11.5 million who voted, seven million favoured the use of collective military action against an aggressor nation, whilst a majority also favoured disarmament (Heinemann 1973: 328–32). In Whitehall, the advisor Laurence Collier warned that public opinion was adamant in its opposition to an anti-Communist crusade, and that between Communism and fascism it would choose anti-fascism (Lammers 72). Indeed, up to 75% of Americans polled in 1937 supported the provision of military aid to the Spanish Republic (Shapiro 122). In Australia, despite years of appeasement, when war did arrive public opinion was largely united in support of War with Germany (Andrews 175, 189).

Because of the strength of public opinion the British foreign office studied the means of controlling it with new propaganda. The UAP, by contrast, preferred the blunt instrument of censorship which it broadened under the Crimes Act, the Transport Workers Act, and the Immigration and Customs Acts. These laws gave the government the means to drastically restrict civil liberties, freedom of speech, the right to strike and freedom of assembly (The Council 5). Laws pertaining to sedition were particularly outrageous, nothing less than fascist according to Don Watson (Watson 63). The government had a free hand in banning any work of literature or politics, and not until 1937, when book censorship was relaxed due to public pressure, could Australians read for the first time books like *A Farewell to Arms* (Council 24, 20-1; Watson 68).

Anti-fascism and peace activism had a tough time under such conditions. Radio was generally more receptive to Peace Movement activities than the commercial press

(Rasmussen 1992: 55), but Post Masters General were ever-willing to use their power to silence criticism: in an extreme moment, Post Master General Archie Cameron argued that *all* public broadcasting should cease (Thomas 1978: 288; Andrews 160). Lyons ratified a convention in Geneva restricting Australian radio to broadcasts exclusively in the interests of peace (Thomas 1978: 86). Under this authority, the UAP censored any opinion on foreign affairs that opposed the government line: commercial stations were threatened with non-renewal of their transmitting licenses; B class stations were forced to submit transcripts on discussions before broadcast; and Station 2KY, owned by the ALP, was cut off the air until it undertook to refrain from criticism of government foreign policy (Thomas 1978: 91; Andrews 160; Council 16).

The ABC was generally relied upon to self-censor; but broadcasts 'not of a definitely National character' were directly circumscribed: the regular 'Letters from Paris' by Mrs Osborne O'Reilly had favourable comments toward the French Popular Front, criticisms of appeasement or fascist intervention in Spain removed (Thomas 1978: 83, 91; O'Reilly 1-3). The highly popular ABC radio commentator 'The Watchman' (A.E. Mann), respected for his independence from syndicated news sources, was a target of government pressure for his consistent opposition to appeasement and Franco's Rebellion in Spain (Thomas 1978: 84-5). Mann's broadcasts eventually prompted Lyons to move to 'prevent the broadcast of any matter which is inimical to the State or unduly disturbing to the peace of mind of listeners.' Mann subsequently resigned from the ABC in protest, with a vast number of listeners supporting his free-speech stand (Thomas 1978: 88; K. Inglis 64).

But there were no restrictions on fascist opinion in Australia: Italian radio propaganda was broadcast with impunity, and Australia's demand for fascist propaganda in the form of newspaper articles was amongst the highest in the world (Cresciani 1980: 154, 145-6; Perkins 118, 112-3). The Australian press could always be relied upon to toe the government line – in Andrews' words, 'Whatever policy the government chose to follow, the "gentlemen of the press" could be counted on to support it' (200). In Mac Ball's estimation, this amounted to an establishment bias generating 'Misleading and confused reports of military operations in Spain, China, and Abyssinia' (1938: 30). Most Australian papers sourced foreign news from a small pool of British reportage; thus, most early cabled accounts of events in Spain were inaccurate and biased to British non-interventionist sentiments.

In the print media, all major Australian papers favoured the government's policy of non-intervention in Spain, but this was often an uncritical, default position. As Andrews maintains, 'Most of the newspapers did not know what to make of the war' (98). Despite this caution, the Australian media did, however, demonstrate a sympathy for the Republican side by describing the Spanish conflict as a totalitarian 'Rebel insurgency' against a constitutional government and its 'Loyalist' forces. The indecision of the *Sydney Morning Herald* was the most dramatic in the Australian press, vacillating tremendously over which side to support – backing the Republic and then Franco at different times.

But news outlets that offered a dissenting opinion suffered restrictions: foreign language journals were banned; the MAWF journal *World Peace* – reaching a circulation of 25,000 – had a postal embargo placed on it, destroying its readership base (Cain 251;

WP 2: 4 April 1937: 61). Media censorship also took other more subtle and pernicious forms; certain newspaper proprietors, such as Frank Packer, forced avowedly anti-fascist journalists off their staff. H.E. Boote was driven from the editorship of *The Australian Worker* because of his strong defence of the Republic (Cameron 205). The Returned Servicemen's League stopped further comment on foreign policy following some very substantial contributions to the debate on appeasement in their state-based journals (Andrews 56-7); it fell to independent organisations such as the Returned Sailors and Soldiers' Labour League Club and their organ *The Movement* to be firmly anti-fascist and supportive of the International Brigade (10 February 1939, 2.5). Meanwhile, the Old Guard, a nation-wide conspiratorial organisation with establishment connections, circulated its ideas within the army through semi-official organs such as *Militia Monthly*, arguing the Australian army was obliged to follow the example of Franco should it encounter a similar political environment to that of Spain (*World Peace* 2.10 1937: 149).

At the petty-bureaucratic level, peace and anti-fascist organisations suffered a range of restrictions imposed by civil authorities, resulting in the closure of increasing numbers of arenas designed for community activity (Watson 85). Will Dyson was moved to comment that such restrictions on free speech 'made Australia appear as a narrow, parochial and rigid society, grimly determined to uphold its dull respectability' (qtd McMullin 1984: 307). For anti-fascists (if not the Peace Movement), civil liberties became integral to their cause; and where the broader liberal-Left was united in its defence of free speech, support for the constitutional Spanish Republic was also prevalent. Don Watson notes that in progressive circles 'Resistance became the dominant activity – the ideal, the language in which the activity was carried out' (Watson 60). 'No

Passaran' – the slogan of the Republic's resistance against autocracy – became the clarion call of local civil libertarian struggles.

The newly formed Australian Council for Civil Liberties (ACCL) was a prime example of the convergence of these agendas. As a nation-wide community coalition, its branch membership often overlapped with that of SRC branches; indeed, its founder, Brian Fitzpatrick, had been politicised by the Spanish War (Coleman 26-7, 115; Watson 78, 82). The ACCL's analysis of social trends was heavily influenced by the politics of anti-fascism – it believed it was fighting a nascent fascism in Australia. Its early political pamphlet, *The Case Against the Crimes Act*, stated that the government had replaced reason with force and the psychology of fear (18).

Despite government obstructions, the Peace Movement reached its height in 1935, and as a broad-based community movement it was too influential to ignore (Mowat 537). The prospect of world war, prefigured in Spain, concerned people on an unprecedented scale: 'More pamphlets and books on foreign affairs poured from the press than at any previous time in English history' (Taylor 408). 'Peace' therefore carried a political premium and all sides of politics claimed to be its truer defender. The Spanish Civil War, however, presented a new, difficult problem for 'defenders of peace' because it posed the tragic question of 'Peace at What Price?' Rasmussen suggests that 'Under the impact of the Spanish civil war in particular, the balance of sentiment in the broad Peace Movement tipped perceptibly towards accepting the possibility that war might be a lesser evil than rampant fascism' (1992: 54, 59).

The deeply-felt urgency to respond to fascist aggression, in Spain and elsewhere, ensured two influential elements into Australia's Peace Movement – the League of

Nations Union (LNU) and Protestant churches. The international LNU formed societies across Australia filled with establishment figures. The LNU had such public stature that the governments of Britain and Australia had to be seen to respect it (Rasmussen 1992: 11). But Britain's abandonment of the LNU's parent body, the League of Nations, saw the international LNU diminished and its British and Australian branches were marginalised (Andrews 101; Hudson 1980: 89).

Protestant churches felt the political pressures of the Spanish War in a different way. They were divided over how to respond to fascism and consequently gained little community support for their peace work. Old sectarian divides were revived when Catholic bishops and clergy hailed Franco as a deliverer (Andrews 78). Of the churches, the Anglican hierarchy was the most vocal in support of Republican Spain, more so than its high-church British seniors (Buchanan 1997: 171). It issued a memorandum taking the fight to the Catholic Church, signed by all the Australian Anglican bishops, which among other things objected to Roman Catholic allegiance to foreign powers, Catholic endorsement of Mussolini's seizure of Ethiopia and Franco's brutality in Spain (Gilchrist 159). The Sydney based Anglican *Church Standard* asserted that events in Spain were the product of an historic struggle, with 'the workers and liberals on the one hand, and the monarchists and wealthy landowners, supported by the hierarchy on the other' (qtd Palmer 1936: 6; *Standard* 13 December 1938). Another editorial lambasted Prime Minister Lyons' neutrality on the Spanish crisis:

> As we have frequently pointed out, the British Conservative government's denial of Spain's right to purchase arms means that her hands are tied in

> the face of the attack. Mr. Lyons thus takes his stand on the German-Italian-Vatican policy of wiping out the elected government of Spain by foreign invasion. His facile statements impress no one, as we may see from the criticisms of the press. The main trouble is that, while he is so easily satisfied, the public is not. The refusal to allow a debate upon the subject in parliament is in keeping with the government's general attitude, but is most regrettable. (qtd *World Peace* 3.9 1 September 1938: 123).

The Australian Christian World (a non-denominational Protestant magazine) took a pro-democratic, anti-clerical stand on the Spanish War, and Methodist and Congregationalists were prominent supporters of the Republic. Like many Protestants, they conceptualised Spanish Republican resistance to papal autocracy according to church history, projecting their own interests onto the Civil War. As the heroes of the Reformation had fought Rome, so the democratic Spanish resisted the Vatican and continued the proud traditions of Protestant libertarianism.

Of the plethora of small peace organisations jockeying for Australian public support, the International Peace Campaign (IPC) emerged as the activist leader in 30s, and brought many other groups together. But Spain confounded the IPC's fine sentiments about peace, harmony and international co-operation: the Civil War demanded direct, armed action against fascism. The IPC was the creation of establishment identities including Lord Cecil, co-founder of the British LNU, and was designed to internationally co-ordinate the activities of the Peace Movement. In Australia, the IPC executive included many Protestant churches, the CPA, the United Association of Women, the local

LNU, Australian Natives Association, and it boasted various high-profile patrons (Macintyre 1998: 296; Gibson 1966: 63). The IPC was dedicated to the sanctity of treaties, general arms reduction, suppression of private profit from arms manufacture, collective security and the remedying of international conditions leading to war (IPC Program). It avowed that the world could 'put aside differences of opinion in religion or politics' and show that war was 'not inevitable' (Flyer for Peace Congress 1937). In 1937, the IPC convened an International Peace Campaign congress in Melbourne with over 850 delegates, and public sessions attracted up to 8,000 people – all told, and despite the infantile paralysis scare at the time, 8,000 people attended. The congress was hailed as the landmark event in making the Peace Movement mainstream: the *Age* called it a watershed in the 'intellectual and moral history of the community' (qtd Rasmussen 1992: 90).

Spain, however, repeatedly intruded on the IPC's effective operation. Internationally and in Australia, the IPC could never engage with the Civil War in any meaningful way, perpetually avoiding public statements on the subject. Spain threatened to splinter the IPC and upset its sentimental co-operative spirit. At the IPC's 1936 World Peace Congress in Brussels, for example, Australian delegate Ralph Gibson recalled the Spanish Republican delegation had not been permitted to speak or have its plight considered – even though the Spaniards had arrived in the gallery to spontaneous applause from the floor (Gibson 1966: 57; Sendy 1988: 75). Organisers of the 1937 Australian congress likewise decided not to mention the war.

As an indicator of pacificism's unsustainable, internal contradictions in the 30s, some IPC elements – the Peace Society, the Women's International League for Peace and

Freedom and the Society of Friends – even believed that sanctions were an act of aggression. The IPC actually followed the Australian government line, supporting non-intervention in Spain, and some IPC pacifists would argue that the reported slaughter in Spain was a media fabrication (IPC Statement; Gibson 1980: 54). As Ralph Gibson discovered, the IPC was internally incoherent and out of step with general public opinion: oddly, he discovered many members in the Australian Peace Movement supported rearmament in preparation for a war against fascism (November 1937: 9). By 1938, due to the betrayal of 'peace in our time' at Munich, the IPC was in international decline. Nevertheless, some historians including Carolyn Rasmussen still believe the IPC provided community direction where the government had failed by upholding 'civilised' and 'progressive values' (1992: 55, 129).

The distinctive language and sentiment of the Peace Movement – of conciliation, harmony, international order, tranquility and universalised humanity – was readily co-opted by proponents of fascist appeasement, or fascist sympathisers. Indeed, the rhetoric of peace was hijacked to mask implicit acquiescence to fascist aggressors.

This was manifest in a peace rally organised by the Central Catholic Peace Committee at the instigation of the pro-Franco Secretariat of Catholic Action. It was backed by the new Menzies government and intended as a major Right-wing propaganda event (Fitzgerald 44-5), and broadcast nationally on radio. The rally was designed as the Australian climax to the Crusade of Prayer for world peace directed by Pope Pius XII. The attendance of 60,000 people at the Melbourne Exhibition Building, on Sunday 28 May 1939, made it the biggest peace rally Australia had hosted (Ormonde 2000: 97; 1972: 7). Prime Minister Menzies shared the platform with the Victorian Premier, the

city's Lord Mayor, the ubiquitous Daniel Mannix, and Catholic Action's Denys Jackson and Bob Santamaria (Ormonde 7; Griffin 26). Santamaria later claimed it was the 'most extraordinary single event with which I have ever been personally connected' (Santamaria 1981: 41). The rally's dominant theme was set in Santamaria's opening speech: 'the one factor which gives courage… the certainty that there is no nation sufficiently criminal in its mentality to desire war' (Ormonde 1972: 8). He added: 'The greatest enemy to the cause of peace is the distrust and suspicion which exists between the nations. We are not here tonight to lay the blame on any one nation or set of nations. The crisis has gone beyond that stage' (qtd Ormonde 1972: 9). This appeal to blamelessness was a barely concealed apology for fascism, wrapped in the hollow rhetoric of peace.

Raymond Williams observed that the belief 'we must avoid war at all costs' actually meant 'we will avoid war at any cost but our own' (Williams 1969: 80). It was the undeclared logic behind appeasement, non-intervention and pacifism – the wilful denial of the reality of daily conflict elevated to the status of a moral virtue, called 'law and order' or 'peacemaking'. This amounted to acquiescence to a disorder that was then relabelled 'order' (80). 'In these ways,' writes Williams, 'we have identified war and revolution as the tragic dangers, when the real danger, underlying war and revolution, is a disorder which we continually re-enact' (80-81). In this way Pacifism, and the soft-pacifist rhetoric of high virtue used to justify appeasement were the means by which the Australian population's passive consent was manufactured, thus abetting fascism's inexorable and tragic eclipse of free nations like Spain.

The writing collaboration of Marjorie Barnard and Flora Eldershaw revealed the absurdities of absolute pacifism, as they attempted to tackle the problem of the Spanish War in 'Liberty and Violence' – an essay intended for publication in the shelved Fellowship of Australian Writers' project 'Writers in Defence of Freedom' (1939). In 'Liberty and Violence', violence appeared as an almost numinous force, superfluous to the evolution of civilisation and recurring out of an irrational, primeval 'habit' (Barnard 1995: 252-3). They reasoned that the inordinate power of 'finance', allied with mechanisms like propaganda, distorted civilisation, creating class conflict, which relied on violence and ultimately became fascist (254). 'Violence creates violence', Barnard-Eldershaw wrote, and fascism must be thus defeated with the moral integrity of a 'union of steadfast minds', a 'moral victory' through 'passive resistance' exemplified by Gandhi: 'The test question is Spain.… Franco… could not have governed against the mass resistance of the people, the steady unarmed refusal to obey a government it neither willed nor trusted' (255-6). However, Barnard recognised the futility of this position: indeed, the essay contained a strong sense of civilised progress being at an end, and for Barnard pacifism was to become her 'lost cause' (qtd Palmer 1988: 243).

Pacifism has many characteristics in common with the related ideology of humanitarianism, which was another major influence on the way in which the public perceived the Spanish War. Humanitarianism uses a modern ideology of the tragic to dictate which events in Williams' underlying, on-going disorder are accidental or 'mere suffering' and those which legitimately solicit 'pity'. The key to this distinction 'is the separation of ethical control and more critically, human agency, from our understanding of social life' (1969: 49). In this often 'unconscious and habitual' view of the world,

events which fall outside the category of tragedy frequently include the suffering of war and famine – they are considered outside the orbit of general meanings and actions and incomprehensible as tragedies. At worst, humanitarianism represents a loss of dimension or of connection by reducing everything to the personal level: 'It expresses sympathy and pity between private persons, but tacitly excludes any positive conception of society, and thence any clear view of order or justice' (Williams 1969: 92). Any suffering experienced within the 'normal' functioning of economic relations, such as sweated labour or warfare, are consequently undeserving of human pity and not tragic.

Humanitarianism respects a hierarchy of need based on degrees of innocence: only the innocent experience tragedy because, as accepted notions of the tragic insist, it is the prerequisite to pity. The authentic victim in humanitarian ideology is one who has had no role in the making of his or her calamity – women, children, the non-combatant. Too often, a suffering adult is in some obscure way believed to be responsible for his or her own misery. If suffering of the innocent occurs, then this is *not* because misery is socially systemic: it results from a perversion of 'the system' by an outside force or accident – civil war, flood or fire – which must be arbitrarily corrected with one-off, personal donations of unwanted clothing and condensed milk. In Spain, emergency aid was sometimes selectively distributed, to preserve humanitarianism's ethic of 'self-help'; and the decision by certain humanitarian organisations to feed only Spanish children, in order to appear neutral, resulted in particular cruelties (Mendlesohn 195, 187, 191).

Racial stereotypes also intruded to shape Australian humanitarian discourse on Spain. Robin Gollan pointed out that in the initial coverage of the war, newspapers considered Spain to be an irrationally violent country (Gollan 53). Civil wars and

revolutions were part of Spain's fate, and the war could be effectively trivialised by characterising it as either 'natural' or 'accidental' – but not historically determined

Spanish relief agencies were also trapped within the logic of humanitarianism. The images and stories of 'refugees' and 'indiscriminate bombing' of 'defenceless victims' in SRC appeals were underwritten with an appeal to the humanitarian ethic. The Duchess of Atholl's Joint Spanish Aid Council and its Australian division was an expressly humanitarian organisation. Its charity work, which involved formal dinners and balls, kept optimism close to hand, and its feel-good pathos promised that little acts of individual generosity would alleviate Spain's suffering.

The vying discourses of humanitarianism, pacifism, anti-fascism and their relationship to Spain intersected in the now forgotten Australian novel *Salute to Freedom* (1938). Its author, Eric Lowe, left Australia for Europe in 1937 to pursue a writing career and possibly to fight for the Republic. The nearest he got to either objective was his work on a political novel about an Australian who died in the Spanish Civil War, under the working title 'Left Turn to Spain' (Brooks 197). In his travels across the continent, Lowe followed international events closely; a letter to his friends Eric and Eleanor Dark revealed his sense of a tragic decline in Europe: 'The "situation" strikes me as about as bad as it could be and quite incomprehensible to the average man. The tension is almost unbearable' (qtd Brooks 228). 'Left Turn to Spain' was never published, but the novel to emerge from this period was his semi-autobiographical *Salute to Freedom* (1938), which worked through Lowe's enthusiasm for fighting in Spain and the tragedy of Europe: a book dismissed by Barnard as 'a pumped up novelette' masquerading as 'The Great Australian Novel' (2 December 1938: NLA MS1174/1/5468).

But for Lowe's hero, Robin Stewart, history was merely a stage and backdrop as the precocious protagonist suffered various tests of character, emerging morally victorious; and the obnoxious Robin discovered the meaning of life just prior to his execution by Spanish fascists. *Salute* adhered to the form of 'liberal tragedy', containing the key element that Williams saw as defining that form: 'the thrust of living energy, in individual men, against limits which had once been composed into a confident order but which now, though still present and active, are questioned, fragmented, newly known and named' (Williams 1969: 90).

Lowe's experiences in the Great War, and as a horseman and rock climber, informed the profile of Robin as grazier, bushman, soldier, writer and belated humanitarian. Robin's experiences in the Great War convinced him of war's futility and waste, and it 'had started a process of disintegration, a breaking up of the order that he had believed indestructible' (439, 579). Robin's connections to the land had dissolved in bankruptcy, and he forsook the colonial legacy of his squatocratic forebears, their truculent family ethos and his personal soft-fascist mysticism of 'Harmony with Nature' (637). He underwent a crisis of meaning, but was eventually inspired by an 'instructing will' to venture to Spain. Robin's perpetual struggle is characteristic of liberal tragedy – 'the aspiration for a meaning, at the very limits of a man's strength' (Williams 1969: 90).

Throughout *Salute*, Robin's ordeals and tribulations resulted from mass civilisation – the enemy of his individual desire. In response, he placed himself within a hagiographic tradition of 'world-losers and world forsakers', frontiersmen who tried to escape from sprawling industrial 'Civilisation' (Lowe 498). In his quest, Robin became a frontiersman of the political terrain: joining Sydney's literary-Left, which aimed to build

a democratic national culture by creating a small literary magazine called 'Freedom' (590-1). The group featured a bushman-Communist, writers – evidently based on Eric and Eleanor Dark – and the improbable Helen Clive: a marxist-pacifist and novelist who wrote on 'sociological issues' (589). The group foresaw a future fascist-provoked war and feared the new means of mechanised military annihilation (574).

Under these influences, the formerly proto-fascist mystic Robin was stung to action by the example of his daughter who, having witnessed the departure rally for a Medical Aid Unit, decided to nurse in Republican Spain (653). The novel never strayed from the individual liberator acting alone and for his own reasons: it was always expected that through his self-fulfilment a general liberation would be realised, according to the liberal-tragic mode (Williams 1969: 95). Thus, knowing nothing of Spaniards and caring little for Spanish politics, Robin still found himself attracted to their 'struggle for freedom'; but this was primarily a means of escape from his existential craving for fulfilment and spiritual completeness (654-5, 650-1).

The novel closed in a Spanish Nationalist jail, where the fascists obliged Robin with a suitably theatrical death by firing squad. He realised 'fate… had caught him so suddenly in an inescapable net' (661). Just as the convention demands, in a heroic act of will Robin resolved to face some truths and die 'unafraid' and 'undefeated'. He concluded that he was temperamentally neither a Communist nor a fascist, and must die sacrificially yet politically unaligned (662).

Importantly, Robin mentally struggled with the competing claims of pacifism and militarism: a dilemma which shaped the book's overall narrative. He considered the dominant outlook of militarism as 'tragic', and 'Tragedy was a morbid condition of the

human mind. It had no objective existence' (664). Accepting the tragedy of violence, he decided, was an absolute evil; the weak option that bred a false and sick society and contaminated all political creeds (663, 670). So he simply chose 'happiness' and 'life' over tragedy – there was no power equal to thought, and as in the example of Jesus, 'the greatest socialist', 'all change could be brought about by the pacific influence of thought alone'. And for this to happen, 'the exploited must be given knowledge, taught to hope' (670-1). Having philosophically rejected the tragic view, Robin's rebellion against false society was complete and he faced death joyously (664). Through his individual act of self-fulfilment, to a kind of absolutist pacifism, he offered himself as a liberator challenging a false society – and he died listening to 'The feet of a free people moving forward through time – marching – forward – ' (Lowe 672).

According to conventions of liberal tragedy, the nature of the hero's death bears a symbolic relationship to the cause he dies for, but the liberal hero's aspiration to transcendence remains always general – 'the liberation of human spirit and energy' is always abstract (Williams 1969: 97), and *Salute* revealed the abstractions of Lowe's final view on Spain. It was a false and instinctively violent society that had become actively destructive and evil – killing priest and pacifist alike – causing both sides to suffer, as if by providence, for their guilty complicity in violence itself. The social changes Lowe envisaged, in which all war would end because fascists read the right kind of civilising books, could never be left to democracies of common people: the people must be managed and cajoled by the pacifist example of martyrs like Robin (Williams 1969: 101). Such grand individual gestures meant Lowe never translated his pacific ideal into particulars: to do so would have been a self-negating act, reminding him that the non-

violent education and freedom of expression he cherished were not politically guaranteed in the 30s, and that such values and ideals were exactly what the Spanish Republicans had taken up arms to defend. Lowe's central ideal of leading by symbolic example, to produce a spontaneous change of heart among aggressors, was shared by many Australian humanitarians and pacifists. However, this was a complacent gesture that avoided engaging the complexities of real politics and direct action.

In the 30s, many politically educated writers doubted the wisdom of making accommodations with humanitarianism: accommodations that seemed necessary to sustain a Popular Front. George Orwell called the Popular Front 'an unholy alliance between the robbers and the robbed'; and though the Front was never much more than an ideal in Britain and Australia, Orwell thought it 'produced the nauseous spectacle of bishops, Communists, cocoa-magnates, publishers, duchesses and Labour MPs marching arm in arm to the tune of "Rule Britannia"' (2000: 305). The same dilemma was replayed in Australia, and Esmonde Higgins, James Normington Rawling and Lloyd Ross were part of a generation of labour activists who also faced the failures of the Front. Ross, Higgins and Rawling, like Orwell, were initially encouraged by the 'catalytic effect' Spain had upon public opinion and the new alliances it created (Orwell 2000: 346); as Orwell concluded 'there is considerable possibility of producing an effective anti-war movement in England. It is a question of mobilising the dislike of war that undoubtedly exists in ordinary decent people, as opposed to the hack-journalists and the pansy Left' (2001: 332). But this initial enthusiasm quickly evaporated: it was difficult to find impressionable, 'decent people', as the Popular Front and Peace Movement were composed of politically-naïve idealists.

Higgins' and Rawling's experiences in the trenches of France drove them to join the Peace Movement and embrace socialism as the best means of preventing another war. Rawling, son of a Yorkshire miner, was Party research officer, secretary of the MAWF and editor of *World Peace* (Holt 1989: 60). Lloyd Ross had excellent anti-war credentials as the son of R.S.Ross. He eagerly embraced the causes of anti-fascism and the Spanish Republic (Hearn 31); as secretary of the NSW Australian Railways Union (ARU), he found ready support in union ranks. Ross featured material on Spain in the union paper *Railroad* and on radio station 2KY, becoming 'an assiduous SRC speaker' (Holt 51; Hearn 28). Ross fought the ire of Catholics in the ARU, and helped secure the ACTU's backing for Spanish democracy in 1937 (Holt 52).

Esmonde Higgins left a remarkable archive of letters from the 30s, detailing his personal political transformations but also capturing the spirit of an activist generation's increasing loss of faith. Higgins' disillusionment with the possibilities of the Popular Front exemplified the mood of those in the SRC, the MAWF and Workers' Educational Association who struggled against both humanitarianism and hard-line Stalinism. Higgins found himself in conflict with organised factions of liberals, pacifists and even Communists. It became 'painfully clear' to him that it would not be possible to 'corral all kinds of earnest people into a general anti-fascist camp', regardless of their understanding of 'peace'. It was a case of 'Everyone so darned "busy" and well-intentioned and not daring to raise fundamental issues' (Higgins 1937). In another letter, Higgins wrote:

> The parsons, most of the school teachers, most of the women and others were more concerned as pacifists with weakening institutions which foster

> 'war-spirit' – war being considered some rather abstract manifestation of the devil; the trade union commission on the other hand, was obsessed with the immediate danger from fascist aggressors. Each group is certain to feel that the other has let it down in a crisis. (qtd Roe 1977: 25)

Higgins observed that although there were 'a surprisingly large number of politically restless people', Australian anti-fascism always ran up against 'a blind faith' in the British Empire's civilising values and the Tory dream of 'peace in our time' (qtd Roe 1977: 14-15). To Higgins, Australians supinely accepted the idea that Britain stood for a peaceful, conciliatory and humanitarian approach to international affairs – and that British policies of appeasement and non-intervention were the most 'reasonable' response to fascism.

Higgins' disillusionment was generational: he had joined the CPA in the 20s, but the crisis in Spain was a key factor in his break with the Party – as it was for Rawling and Ross. Communism was discredited by the Moscow trials, Andersonian Trotskyism, the repression in Spain, and the Russian incapacity 'even to prevent fascism' (Roe 1977: 16, 18-20, 23). This sentiment was also international. After distinguished service in Spain with the British Battalion of the International Brigade, Tom Winteringham abandoned Communism in 1938, summing up the attitude of many who had fought there:

> Spain woke me up. Politically I rediscovered democracy, realising the enormous potentialities in a real alliance of workers and other classes… I was disgusted by the sectarian intrigues… Two bullets and typhoid gave

> me time to think. I came out of Spain believing… in a more radical democracy, and in a revolution of some sort as necessary to give the ordinary people a chance to beat Fascism. Marxism makes sense to me, but the 'Party Line' doesn't. (qtd Hopkins 319)

The collapse of Communism's promises in Spain precipitated a tragic sense well beyond Leftist circles. This tragic structure of feeling was deepened by the vacuousness of 'humanitarian' and 'peace' rhetoric, and the widespread and naïve conviction that Anglo-Australian moderation would hold fascism in check. Walter Crocker, an Australian who worked for the League of Nations, recalled that in the period 1936-9 the dominant intellectual climate for peace actually aided fascist expansionism; and whenever he voiced his pessimism in diplomatic circles during these 'years of nightmare', 'Britain, they would retort, always won in the end' (Crocker 108-9). Consequently he became 'More and more… haunted with foreboding of catastrophe':

> All the beauty and hope seemed doomed. The anguish became the worse because my friends and I believed that if those wielding power in Britain and France would show more realism and more courage the catastrophe could be averted… My friends and I came to live with rage and despair. I got insomnia. For a while I tried what was called the gay life… The only effect after a couple of years… was to develop in me a loathing for nightclubs and saxophones which has never gone away. I became almost

> entirely political. I read little except political news and commentary. I became a member of the Left Book Club. (Crocker 107-8)

In early 1938, the ARU's *The Advocate*, under Ross's editorship, cited a passage from G.D.H. Cole's *The People's Front* (1938), summarising the mounting frustration of many activists with public apathy over the events in Spain:

> As I go about England I am endlessly astonished at the nonchalance with which men proceed about their ordinary pursuits. They live and love, spend and save, work and play, just as they would if the state of the world were quite normal, and no threat of early damnation were hanging over their heads. They read their newspapers and hear on the wireless the latest news of German military preparations, or of Franco's aeroplanes bombing women and children in Madrid or in Bascays. They even discuss the probable date of the next world war. But their everyday life remains untouched by these things; their everyday thoughts and feelings, hopes and fears, remain for the most part unaffected. They talk about the coming war; but they do not really believe in it – at any rate, in such a way that the belief touches their imaginations or penetrates beneath the merest surface of their minds. (*Advocate* 15 January 1938).

For many intellectuals, pro-Republican activists and volunteer brigaders, the perception of public apathy to Spain's emergency created their tragic sensibility. And they could

point to bare facts, as historians have subsequently done, to confirm the belief that 'ordinary decent people' were indifferent to Spain's suffering. For example, they compare the £262,476 raised in Melbourne in 28 weeks for the Lord Mayors' Black Friday Bushfire Appeal of 1938 to the SRC's £21,150, raised over four years, for Spanish Relief. But regardless of perceptions of public indifference, there were many other indicators that Australians worried about the course of events in Spain.

When the anti-fascist evangelist Egon Kisch jumped from the *Strathaird* onto a dock in Melbourne, defying a government ban on his landing on Australian territory, this 'dissent event' became the focal point for the discussion of already-existing community interests in international affairs: it 'connected Australia with the world' (Scalmer 4) – as Kisch himself boasted in his book *Australian Landfall* (1936). Kisch's stunt engaged the public: 8,000 people went to the West Melbourne Stadium to protest Kisch's treatment, 20,000 rallied in Sydney's Domain. Peace and anti-fascist activists learnt that a broad front of people could be rapidly mobilised by working through a managed spectacle in the mass media. Sean Scalmer estimates the Kisch affair as a unique moment in Australian political activism:

> Public interest was not won through a series of small, local actions but through a spectacular activity and a blaze of subsequent media coverage. Organisation, the traditional tool of the labour movement, was less important than the public communication through the conduit of the press. The tools of celebrity and theatre were being used to promote a radical movement. (Scalmer 3)

But this assessment that media 'dissent events' were critical to a 'radical movement' is not entirely correct, for two important reasons. First, mass-media spectacles, such as the Catholic Peace Rally, favoured establishment politics whilst anti-fascist, pro-Republican political opinion never made the front page or the airwaves. Second, bodies such as the SRC found that despite the high-profile Kisch affair, in the end anti-fascist politics really depended upon the hard slog of organisation at root and branch: unless people were clear about what they were involved in, and not just participating in a spectacle, their commitment could not be sustained over time.

The SRC recognised the effectiveness of the 'small local actions' that Scalmer dismisses: political rallies, gruelling speaking tours, multicultural celebrations and documentary film nights – activities which had popular, and particular working-class, appeal. Although these events were sometimes unoriginal, New Theatre performed the hackneyed *Bury the Dead*, the Bankstown Party Women's Bureau knitted socks for Spanish soldiers, Ron Hurd berated his audiences for more money, and the Women's Committee gave a free facial with every donation to the IPC for Spanish refugee children (Fete). Apparent apathy and the depression not withstanding, individual participants nevertheless responded with remarkable generosity where they could. Oriel Gray noted it was not unusual to find jewellery in the collection plate at an SRC rally (Gray 34); without money for even a fare home, union organiser Topsy Small donated her wedding ring to the SRC (Johnson 91). Innisfail Sugar Workers adopted a voluntary wage levy for Spanish Relief (Menghetti 1981: 73), whilst Barrier miners raised £4,000 for Spain through their union (Inglis 215). And such actions showed an understanding of how to reach some of those 'ordinary decent people' of whom intellectuals so often despaired.

There were also moments of mass pro-Republican euphoria to rival the Kisch affair, but they were deliberately ignored in the national media – like the SRC's MCG 'Body Line' event. Another incident that witnessed an upsurge in public concern was the visit by the crew of the Italian cruiser *Raimondo Monteccuccoli*, direct from shelling refugees off the Spanish coast. The crew visited a number of Australian ports in 1938 and beat up an Italian taxi driver suspected of distributing anti-fascist propaganda. And when the crew brawled with Melbourne demonstrators, and despite its scale, only the front page of the *Daily Telegraph* reported it accurately – a crowd of 30,000 looked on, with many protestors chanting 'Hands off Spain'.

The 'pig-iron dispute' was the most significant and effective event to capture public attention; and, crucially, the dispute was the product of work-place action, anti-fascist feeling and the belief that Spain *should* matter to ordinary Australians. Importantly, too, the dispute was an explicit rejection of the dominant rhetoric of humanitarian and pacifist diffidence – a rhetoric that encouraged political inertia in the public, and colluded with the government's demand that foreign policy was not an appropriate matter for ordinary people to comment upon.

In 1938, the Waterside Workers' Federation (WWF) – with the support of the New South Wales Labor Council and the ACTU – refused to load scrap iron destined for Japan on the wharves of Port Kembla. This refusal was motivated not only by the spectacle of Japanese bombardment of open Chinese cities but the destruction in Spain: the WWF's paper, *Maritime Worker*, carried an extensive discussion of the Spanish War in its first issue (1938), identifying the conflict's urgent anti-fascist and international dimensions. Consequently, when the pugilistic Menzies invoked the draconian Transport

Workers Act against the strike and visited Port Kembla's docks, WWF secretary Ted Roach told him 'This pig iron will be used to slaughter our own women and children, and raze our own cities to the ground in Australia' (Mallory 309). This was an explicit restatement of the anti-fascist movement's central and most resonant message – total war would reach Australia, and humanitarianism and pacifism were no protection.

The Trades Hall Council, the ACTU and the League of Nations Union backed the WWF, agreeing that the fascist bombings of Guernica, Nanking and Canton confirmed the righteousness of the union's stand (*Labour Call* 6 May 1937; McDougall 46). When the Federated Ironworkers' Association and eventually the ACTU took strike action against BHP, the Port Kembla dispute became a national cause and a turning point for the political consciousness of workers' movements in Australia (Mallory 1). In Frank Farrell's terms, it 'illustrated the power and potential of the anti-fascist movement that had developed in Australia throughout the 1930s' (qtd Mallory 223). The Port Kembla dispute finally suggested a connection between industrial modernity and war, and that this connection was readily recognised by ordinary Australians. This explained why the dispute resonated with the public.

Although the Australian public seemed disinclined to join political parties or causes, donate money to groups like the SRC, to march in numbers or embrace the orthodox Left – the complaint of the intelligentsia – it was still profoundly concerned by news of fascist atrocities. Perhaps the community did buy the rhetoric of peace, seduced by the idea that governments could be trusted to secure it; or, perhaps, it responded to peace rhetoric out of self-interest – as Williams wrote, avoiding war at all costs really meant 'we will avoid war at any cost but our own'. And if the inner logic of pacifist

doctrine elevated 'law and order' and 'peacemaking' to the status of moral virtues, as Williams theorised, this might also explain why ordinary, decent folk did not involve themselves in vocal or dissident – 'disorderly' – action. Paradoxically, if people did implicitly subscribe to pacifism they did not join the formally-constituted Peace Movements – which in any case were fatally divided over the most fundamental political tactics.

However, there may be a further compelling reason for the widely-perceived political inertia in the Australian community: the contrary nature of industrial modernity itself. In the 30s, Australia's modernising economy created the conditions that weakened older community impulses to collective action and organisation: an atomising process, in which earlier forms of progressive political alliance – the Great War anti-conscription campaigns, for example – were disabled. With Australia's economic transformation, new and widespread modes of consumption had created new desires, use values, and habits: a culture of increasing commercial self-interest that was not conducive to political participation or civic commitment. But this phase of modernity also ensured that Australians were more informed, better educated and cosmopolitan than at any time before – though such social benefits were also accompanied by a new awareness of foreign terrors. Indeed, the Spanish War became more real through new mass-produced media images, new cable, cinema and newsreel technology: capital was tearing down the barriers which isolated Australia from the world, whilst at the same time disassembling the primary civil structures for the expression of community concerns.

Australians were intensely aware of the War in Spain, but they were unable to take the necessary steps to act on those concerns at a community level. Australians perceived

themselves to be separated from the massive objective forms of society, whilst paradoxically the simultaneous emergence of total war and mass media had produced a rediscovery of collective destiny – everyone was potentially exposed to the wrath of indiscriminate, industrialised warfare. It was this alienation that produced a tragic structure of feeling: a structure of feeling felt at a deep community level, in which Spain was one of the most potent symbols.

Chapter Four: Australian Catholics and the Spanish War

For those involved in the anti-fascist movement, Spain was the indicator of a looming global catastrophe. Conservative opinion believed this also, but with a distinctly different interpretation of events. For those on the Right, Spain signposted the titanic clash of modernity (Communism being its extremist form) and the organic values and structures of national traditions. The Catholic Church was the most powerful proponent of this anti-modernist, anti-Communist view, but there were many others who thought that the Spanish War was a symbolic site where the destructive tendencies of modernity should be resisted.

By 1937, author-publisher P.R. Stephensen had undergone the transition from marxist-Leninism to fascism: a conversion driven by an apocalyptic vision of European collapse. In Stephensen's view, the Spanish Civil War was a 'dress rehearsal' of full-scale calamity (Munro 189, 170; *Publicist* 1 January 1937: 3), but in his twisted reasoning Spain heralded a tragic collapse in Europe that would provoke a flowering of Australian culture (Munro 187, 153). Through his pro-Nazi Australia First Party and its organ, *The Publicist*, Stephensen urged Australians to stay out of the fight and conserve their energies for the project of national resurgence: the *Publicist*'s mantra was 'Don't go! Your country needs you. Australia will be here!'

The prominent intellectual Alan R. Chisholm also believed 'there is something rotten in the state of – Europe' (Chisholm 1935: 44). Chisholm was professor of French

at Melbourne University, and this cultural affinity led him to develop a strong admiration for the popular French Catholic-fascist Charles Maurras and his Action Française: an organisation that fantasised the end of modern democracy and a return to theocratic feudalism. Chisholm supplemented this with Oswald Spengler's idea that tragedy was the condition of modernity: 'he extols tragedy in an age when people like happy endings, and their leaders offer them the comfort of facile optimism' (Chisholm 1935: 35). For Chisholm, Spain symbolised the beginning of Communist modernity's assault on European culture and tradition. As he wrote in the infamous *Australian Quarterly* article 'Thunder on the Boulevards', Europe's fate was written in Spain 'when churches were burnt and blood flowed freely in the streets' (1936: 38-9, 48).

Chisholm's fears were shared by the elite of the Roman Catholic Church in Australia – the country's most consistent and influential supporter of Franco's insurrection and the fascist regimes of Portugal, Austria, and Italy. As historian Colin H. Jory wrote: 'The effect of the Spanish War and of its local ramifications upon Australian Catholic opinion was cataclysmic. All the predictions of previous years of a possible breakdown of Western civilisation seemed to be in the process of being realised' (Jory 81). With the Spanish Civil War, the Catholic Church believed it could rehabilitate the concept of individual martyrdom, making it relevant to modern times, and retell an epic Manichean narrative of the world as an eternal struggle between good and evil. Catholic propaganda was geared entirely to mythologising the Spanish conflict in these terms, with no reference to the details or facts of modern warfare.

The Catholic Church's hierarchy, itself a feudal remnant, was averse to the foundational ideas of modern democracy. In E.M. Andrews' assessment, 'Historically

and temperamentally [the Church] has favoured autocracy, and been very critical of liberal theories of freedom' (Andrews 11). Consequently, Pope Pius XI was quick to support Franco's anti-socialist rebellion. Despite the view of Jesuit historian Bruce Duncan that Pius XI was 'cautious and moderate' in his response to the Spanish Civil War (Duncan 27), as early as 1933 Pius attacked the Republic (Guttman 31); and in September 1936, he broadcast his announcement that 'The tragic happenings in Spain speak to Europe and the whole world, and proclaim, once more, to what extent the foundations of all order, of all culture, of all civilisation are being menaced' (qtd Blacam 30). The Vatican officially recognised Franco's regime in August 1937, and the new Pope, Pius XII, greeted Franco's victory 'with immense joy' (Preston 1996: 159-60).

Spain had long suffered clerical interference in every branch of public life, and after democratic reforms under the Second Republic and a failed Right-wing coup in 1932, conservative forces formed CEDA, which directly connected the Church with fascist reaction. Strongly influenced by Pius XI's encyclicals, and led by the radical Catholic Gil Robles, CEDA demonstrated its authoritarian nature in government. The Church's obstruction of democracy and social reform and its open class alignments inspired popular hatred; and the majority of Spanish intellectuals, industrial workers and landless peasants turned against it. With Franco's Rebellion, the Church rhetorically converted the 'enthusiastic baptism of the Generals' rising into a religious crusade' (Lannon 48). The Vatican endorsed Spanish Catholic support for Franco, and cued the political reaction of Catholics world-wide.

According to Duncan 'Australian Catholic leaders responded in dramatic fashion to the civil war in Spain, fearing that the bloodbath there presaged the fate of Catholics in

Australia' (Duncan 25). In November 1936, Australian bishops sent a message of sympathy to Pius XI, deploring 'the destruction that has been wrought by the enemies of God and of religion' in Spain (*The Catholic Advocate* 19 November 1936). Archbishop Kelly circulated a pastoral letter of support to be read in all churches in September 1936, and the *Freeman's Journal* printed a statement in 1938, declaring that on ecclesiastical authority Catholics everywhere must support Franco (Andrews 78). Archbishop Duhig was adamant that this was 'a fight to the death between Catholicism and Communism', declaring his 'admiration for the men fighting for their nation and for their faith which had for centuries been their country's glory' (*The Catholic Advocate* 24 December 1936). Archbishop Daniel Mannix, who in 1935 denounced all wars, described the Spanish War in 1936 as 'a stand up fight between God and Satan' and feared for Europe if Spain fell to the satanic Communists (O'Farrell 1969: 437-8).

To historian Ursula Bygott, this reaction to the Spanish War in Australia mirrored the overseas reaction of passion and bitterness: it was 'an ideological tumult' (Bygott 288). The Fourth Plenary Council of the Australian Catholic hierarchy (1937) issued a 'Joint Pastoral Letter' on Spain: declaring international Communism the ultimate evil, affirming that the Catholic Church stood alone in defending Christian civilisation against it. The Church argued that Communism in Australia would follow the same evil path as it had in Spain, destroying the economic interests of the middle-class and the Church (O'Farrell 1969: 440-1). The Church's realisation that it had a special role in the struggle with the Communist threat to civilisation began with Spain, and obsessed Australian Catholicism for the next twenty years (Henderson 1982: 17).

Australian Catholic in-house history has been evasive and revisionist on the uncomfortable issue of the Church's relationship with fascism. Even so, the Catholic Church's long-standing support for Spanish fascism has proven less difficult to rationalise than the Vatican's concordats with Mussolini and Hitler. As Paul Preston has pointed out, despite Franco's fascist pedigree and his track record as one of the cruellest dictators of the century, he always enjoyed good press (Preston 1983: 4). A new wave of revisionist historians has recently resurrected the argument of Franco's hagiographers: that Spain was better-off under Franco than a Communist dictatorship – as if these were the only two options available (Richards 121). Catholic historians, such as Michael Gilchrist in his re-issued biography of Daniel Mannix, avoid making even the elementary connection between Franco and fascism. For Niall Brennan, the Church's involvement with fascism in the 30s was like an undergraduate lark, as the knock-about Australian-Irish character 'cannot be serious for too long about anything' (Brennan 1972: 14-15).

The anti-Communist struggle in Spain was an opportunity for the Right to harness the energies of Catholicism as part of a reinvigoration of conservative politics, in both Britain and Australia (Buchanan 1997: 90). Andrew Moore has evidence of sufficient interconnections between the many small fascist and Nazi organisations to suggest an embryonic Australian 'Fascintern' existing in the late 30s, with the Church actively involved (Moore 1995: 48). The Spanish War became the catalyst for many sympathetic exchanges between the Catholic press, Stephensen's Australia First Party, the Women's Guild of Empire (its leader, Adela Pankhurst Walsh, was a open supporter of Franco), and the German Consul Dr Asmis. Even the anti-Catholic New Guard could bury religious differences to forge political links with influential Catholics on the same issue

of Spain (Castle 305; Stephensen 1939: 4; Perkins 114-5). Australia's Italian fascist organisation, working through a network of clubs and cultural groups and the Italian Consulate-General, had direct connections with the Church (Cresciani 1990: 310, 313, 314). Meanwhile, the Commonwealth Investigation Branch was 'far from unsympathetic towards' such groups, and co-operated with Mussolini's officials to keep surveillance on anti-fascist Italians in Australia (Cain 208; Cresciani 1990: 76).

Historians on the whole have been reluctant to make a direct connection between anti-democratic Catholic social teaching, the Catholic faith, the Catholic corporate state and fascism. In an effort to redeem Catholicism from its unsavoury political entanglements, revisionist historians routinely separate 'Faith' from class, capital, culture and even the institution of the Church. Strangely, the political Left has also made similar ideological abstractions. Amirah Inglis' insistence that many Catholic workers and trade unionists were workers first and Catholics second, responding 'instinctively' in support of the Spanish Republic (Inglis 48), assumes that 'class consciousness' is a discrete consciousness: an objective fixed state wherein religion ends and 'worker' begins. In contrast, E.P. Thompson valuably insisted that class consciousness is the way in which the experience of productive relations over time 'are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms' (Thompson 1975: 10). As Thompson suggests in his mention of value systems and institutional forms, religion and the experience of church-going should be reconsidered an implicitly political element of class consciousness. And in similar terms, Humphrey McQueen considers the disregard of theology as common among Australian historians: 'Australia's cultural elites and intellectual traditions will never be understood until theology is granted its due and the

view of an undivided Catholicism abandoned utterly' (1984: 75). As McQueen has observed, although the Church had immense ideological purchase, working-class Catholics were capable of holding dissenting positions whilst maintaining their faith.

However, the revitalised Catholic Church had immense influence on working-class Catholics – turning the ALP's initial widespread support for the Spanish Republic around to an isolationist position. The ALP party paper, *Labour Call*, was initially pro-Republican but recanted after the Catholic hierarchy had responded swiftly through its various publications, reminding Catholics of where their loyalties lay (Andrews 87-8). The Church represented a large constituency: in the late 30s, 22 percent of Australians were Catholic and most voted Labor, whilst Catholics represented 49 per cent of Labor MPs (Andrews 10-11; Hogan 40). Andrews argues that the ALP was immediately aware that the Catholic Church would split the labour movement rather than compromise on the question of Spain or Communism: the Civil War caused an uproar at the 1937 annual Labor Conference; and in the ALP federal executive Catholic opposition to sanctions against fascist regimes was resolute (Weller 225). The eminent Catholic historian Patrick O'Farrell's observation was basically correct: 'Australian Catholic opinion was largely pro-Franco; Australian feeling generally was pro-republican' (O'Farrell 389).

The strong Catholic support for Franco was driven by the international Catholic revival of the 30s, directed from the Vatican, which aimed to mobilise the laity in the militant pursuit of a new society organised around Catholic social teachings. Spain represented the front line of that battle, and as a country which had long occupied a key place in the Catholic imagination, it was again a place of high tragedy, glory and

martyrdom – in spectacular contrast to the monotony of modern class society. According to O'Farrell

> The Australian Catholic imagination in regard to Spain had been conditioned by English Catholic literary images – particularly Belloc and Chesterton who had offset the bogey of the Inquisition with images of high romance and holy chivalry. Holy Spain was the champion of Catholic Europe… Added to this was the ambivalent representation of Spain in many English boy's books – exotic, dark, powerful, courageous, honourable – it was easy for the Catholic boy to identify with Drake's defeated opponents, brave, splendid, doomed: Catholic boys were conditioned to admire losers… Spain was special in the Catholic mind – tough, hard, unyielding, a splendid Catholicism. (O'Farrell undated letter)

The arch-reactionaries and men of letters G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc were two of Catholicism's leading evangelists, and their Spanish pastorals occupied an important place in Catholic thinking: O'Farrell identifies Chesterton's 'Lepanto' as a cult poem for Catholics. Spain was their religious preserve, and it was now under attack by the forces of modernity in an epic historical conflict that Chesterton expected would end in Armageddon. Belloc likewise placed the Civil War within a deep history of Catholic struggle against paganism – part of a 'universal' struggle between the forces of Christ and the anti-Christ in which Christian civilisation was being eroded by usury and economic

competition, producing the servile state and the ravages of the revolutionary proletariat (Belloc 150, 188).

For the Catholic Church and Franco, Old Spain was the embodiment of a social ideal. The 1891 papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* had been 'a clarion call that reasserted the rejuvenated magisterium of the Catholic Church as the great teaching body of Christendom' (Fitzgerald 3). The powerful social theory of Catholicism which flowed from the *Rerum* centred on distributivism, later reaffirmed and expanded in Pius XI's encyclical *Quadregesimo Anno* (1931). These encyclicals maintained that materialism was the main threat to the Church and held both laissez-faire capitalism and Communism to be materialist philosophies without spiritual basis – destructive legacies of the Reformation and Enlightenment.

The proletarianisation of the work force in industrial modernity had resulted in the Church haemorrhaging members, dramatically weakening its hegemony (Gramsci 1992: 100; Bygott 237; Murphy 164). The Church feared an international rupture between shepherd and flock, already experienced acutely in Spain. The problem, as Antonio Gramsci argued, was that in modern bourgeois society the Church 'lost the autonomy of movement and initiative, it is no longer an ideological world power but only a subaltern force' (Gramsci 1992: 224). To address this dilemma, the Church invented Catholic Action to mobilise popular support: a populist political movement which Gramsci described as 'arms stolen from the arsenal of its adversaries (the organisation of the masses)' (100).

Catholic Action was an international plan to organise the laity *en masse*, to realise the political objectives of Catholic teaching. Pius XI called for the world-wide crusade of

Catholic Action to save Church and civilisation from the crisis engulfing the secular capitalist order. Pius XI told Catholics 'they should abandon a purely passive or defensive attitude to their religion, they should advance on all fronts and extend Christ's Kingdom not only to individuals, but to all the institutions of the society in which they lived' (qtd Truman 29). Catholic Action was thus no mere theology: it aimed to inspire the political rejuvenation of nation-states.

The corporate state, based on distributive principles recalling organic mediaeval theocracy (Fitzgerald 16), was the ideological heart of Catholic Action's crusade. Distributivism held that private property was a right and a part of man's very nature (Jory 3), and under the corporate state property would be distributed as widely as possible: 'neither concentrated as in capitalism, nor destroyed, as Communism suggested' (Beilharz 1994: 68). A co-operative commonwealth of small holders would replace the industrial city – the province of modern evil (68). Corporatism, therefore, appealed to both middle- and working-class Catholics by advancing the co-operation of labour and capital in the service of the greater social good, and managed through commutative justice and arbitration (69). As Mannix stated: 'It is the big financial experts of the world who control the money. These are the people to whom the Pope has addressed his most caustic remarks, and these are the people who will have to release their grip of the world' (Murphy 166). Salazar's Portugal and the Dollfuss regime in Austria were hailed by the Vatican as leading examples of renewed Catholic civilisations – Pius XI declared Dollfuss' Austria the '*Quadragesimo Anno* State' (Fitzgerald 28-9).

Though Catholic Action was formally accepted in Australia in 1934, it took the Spanish Civil War and the related structure of feeling – the perception that Spain

represented crisis and tragedy – to give the movement momentum (Jory 69). Catholic Action was focused on the new inter-war generation; a generation whose world view pivoted on the depression and the Spanish Civil War. This generation would shape Catholic life for decades, particularly through the Campion Society: a nation-wide organisation consisting of young, middle-class, university educated men, created by the bishops to cultivate a vanguard for Catholic Action, and B.A. Santamaria became its most famous activist. The Campions were heavily influenced by the Encyclicals, the distributionist Catholicism of Belloc, Chesterton and Christopher Dawson, the Jesuits (who were mostly pro-Franco), and by their mentor D.M.G. (Denys) Jackson.

Colin Thornton-Smith considers Jackson's influence on Catholic opinion 'enormous', whilst fellow Campion Niall Brennan describes him as the 'man most responsible for moulding the current ways of Catholic thought' (Thornton-Smith 61; Brennan 1972: 18). Jackson was an 'enthusiast' of *Action Française* (Duncan 13), a radical organisation struggling for the restoration of the French monarchy and emplacing the Catholic Church at the centre of French life. It was anti-Semitic and fiercely pro-Franco. *Action Française* and its organ *L'Action francais*, and the associated publication *Je suis partout*, became *the* formative influences on the Campions (Andrews 12; Thornton-Smith 62).

By the outbreak of the Spanish War Jackson's personal influence had already grown exponentially in Catholic circles. He was a teacher at Xavier College, journalist and editor of the Catholic weeklies the *Tribune* and the *Advocate* and lead writer for the latter as 'Sulla'; a columnist for *News Weekly* and a contributor to many more publications under a variety of pseudonyms (Andrews 12). Under Jackson's direction, the

Advocate was the leading Catholic paper in Victoria. To E.M. Andrews, the *Advocate* was 'outstanding in its interest in, and knowledge of, foreign events' (12), though frequently its analysis was drawn from crude *Action Française* propaganda for Catholic corporatist, fascist regimes (Thornton-Smith 61-2, 75, 65).

In Thornton-Smith's terms, Santamaria had a 'lifelong friend and collaborator' in Jackson (Thornton-Smith 60). Santamaria shared Jackson's exaltation of the anti-democratic elements of Italian and Spanish fascism – as Santamaria's honours thesis coyly observed, 'There is something holy in the idea of authority' (qtd Duncan 16). Although Santamaria acclaimed 'totalitarian Catholicism' rather than just any form of fascism (qtd Duncan 17), Thornton-Smith's evidence of what he calls Santamaria's 'commitment to Fascism' is undeniable: indeed, Santamaria is condemned by his own words (Thornton-Smith 71).

As Santamaria recalled: 'It was the outbreak and course of the Spanish Civil War which reshaped my own priorities and those of most of my colleagues in the Campion Society' – if it were not for the passion of the Spanish struggle, Santamaria added, the Campions would have remained a merely academic venture (Santamaria 1981: 33-4, 38). The war in Spain brought the Campion society to national prominence as the engine room of Catholic Action. Jory explains that 'In Sydney as in Melbourne, the sense of crisis among Catholics occasioned by the Spanish War resulted in an unprecedented surge of interest in the Campion Society' (99); and the Society's evangelical efforts in schools and seminaries were rewarded with a massive influx of new members.

By 1937, the new National Secretariat for Catholic Action (ANSCA), of which Santamaria was appointed deputy director in 1938, was co-ordinating its many branches

in seeking to impose a Catholic position on every aspect of modern life. It had a plethora of organisations, confraternities, sporting bodies, dramatic societies, and film clubs including the Young Christian Workers, the Young Christian Student's Movement and the Clitherow Society (O'Farrell 387; Jory 87, 89). This sectarianism earned the label 'ghetto Catholicism' (Campion 6): as James Griffin observed, 'one must remember the firm control that the clergy had over the parochial structure of the Australian Church and the conformity of Catholics of that time' (Griffin 53). ANSCA produced a new breed of Australian Catholic lay elite, 'aggressive confident, emboldened with a triumphant surety of the Church's eventual victory' in moving Australian society towards agrarian theocracy (Fitzgerald 25).

To Ross Fitzgerald, 'The ideological battleground represented by the conflict in Spain forged a more militant anti-Communist consciousness among the Australian Catholic elite, forming the basis of Catholic anti-Communist activity in the 1940s and beyond' (Fitzgerald 35). And the anti-Communist hysteria that drove this elite movement in the years after World War Two was sparked by memories of anti-Catholic atrocities in Spain. Santamaria insisted the fight over Spain had hardened Catholics, and that 'Without the passionate commitment derived from the issues fought over during the Spanish Civil War, the long fight against Communist influences within Australian Labour, the formation of the Movement and, later, of the Industrial Groups, are alike incomprehensible' (1981: 36). The Movement referred to here was the finest creation of Catholic Action: a secretive cell which had consciously adopted Leninist tactics to subvert socialism in all its forms. In Santamaria's view, The Movement was actually born in 1938, when his Catholic 'anti-Communist' cells began to organise inside such unions

as the Australian Railways Union, which had led in the campaign to support Republican Spain (Fitzgerald 57).

With international Communism at large in Spain, Catholicism thought it had found a pretext to speak universally; to act as both spiritual and political guide rather than to subsist as an ideology of personal piety. Catholic Action was underpinned by the Catholic intellectual-literary revival, sustained by the education of laity and priests through study groups, touring publicists and writing (*CW* 6 February 1937). In his 1937 Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* ('On Atheistic Communism'), Pius XI urged Catholic Action to 'fight the battles of the Lord' through programs of study to combat Communism, to use study to engage in spiritual aid for the labouring classes, and to organise propaganda on a large scale: in this way 'a Christian Social Order must be built' (*Divini Redemptoris* 32-3). Catholics believed their libraries and journals were 'carrying the Fight to the People' (Bygott 262); the Central Catholic Library was considered 'the centre of Catholic life in Melbourne' (*CW* 6 February 1937; Brennan 1964: 258).

Sydney-sider Frank Sheed and his Catholic publishing firm, Sheed and Ward, based in London and New York, were at the helm of this international Catholic literary revival influencing 'vast numbers of Catholics' (Sheed 110). Sheed was inspired by the anti-capitalist encyclicals of Pius XI, and became part of the progressive but soft-fascist group which formed around Christopher Dawson's *Order*. But two things in particular changed Sheed from being a spectator into a crusader: 'One was the contrast between the apostolic fervour of the Communists and the apostolic unconcern of Catholics. The other was the Spanish Civil War' (Sheed 197). Sheed and Ward published translations of

international Catholic writers who would, in cases, transform Catholicism – Jacques Maritain, François Mauriac, Karl Adam, Rudolf Allers and Paul Claudel (Campion 117).

The tragedies of the 30s caused a flood of English authors to convert to Catholicism in a move that Orwell called their 'false dawn'; a retreat into the discipline, power and prestige of Catholic institutional orthodoxy, a 'patriotism of the deracinated' (2000: 515). Sheed and Ward published most of these authors including Christopher Dawson, Belloc, Roy Campbell, Wyndham Lewis, Graham Greene, C.S. Lewis and Evelyn Waugh (Sheed 97; Deane 365). But these celebrity converts had a fraught relationship with Catholic orthodoxy. Catholic writing was on the whole dogmatically directed and produced little of merit and almost no poetry – in sharp contrast to the rich literary work that sustained the Republican cause (Sheed 103; Santamaria 1981: 36). As Gramsci explained, the problem for an intellectual or artist in Catholicism was that

> one is expected to embrace a whole slew of notions on encyclicals, counter-encyclicals, papal briefs… Sincere religious sentiment has been desiccated: one must be doctrinaire to write 'orthodoxy.' Therefore, religion is no longer a sentiment in art, it is merely a motif, a cue… It can be 'militancy,' propaganda, agitation; it can no longer be a candid effusion of sentiments. Otherwise it is not Catholic. (Gramsci 1992: 178-9)

Thus, using the available armoury, 'A vast propaganda effort was unleashed by the Catholic press to galvanise working-class Catholic opinion firmly against the Republican struggle' (Fitzgerald 35). The Catholic Truth Society was the Church's propaganda arm,

producing the digest of Catholic Action; and from his position as organising secretary Sheed oversaw Catholic reportage on Spain, which became copy for thousands of pamphlets, leaflets, and newspaper reports – the English Catholic Truth Society alone sold 1,000,000 pamphlets annually (Sheed 1974: 115; *CW* 6 February 1937).

Franco had the clear advantage in the Australian pamphlet war. The Advocate Press and the Australian Catholic Truth Society (ACTS) were vastly expanded to deal with the demand for pro-Francoist literature (Murphy 162-3). In 1936, 308,968 ACTS pamphlets on the Spanish war were sold and 2,252 people regularly subscribed. Pamphlets were also procured from any church porch for a penny or for free (Inglis 47; Campion 129). ACTS received a steady stream of new publications by American, European or Australian clergy, but the Society specialised in international affairs commentary particularly from Anglo-Irish Jesuits who aggressively supported Franco (Inglis 47; Bygott 306).

Best-sellers included *For God and Spain* by Aodh de Blacam (30,000 copies) and *The Red Menace in Australia* by Leo Dalton (43,000 copies), which advised Catholics to form anti-Communist cells in their unions. Pius XI's encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* had a major impact in Australia, outselling all other ACTS pamphlets of the 30s, with 87,000 copies in two years and another 100,000 in leaflet form (Jory 81). Compounding the sense of heightened crisis over the Civil War, *Divini Redemptoris* railed against the 'satanic scourge' of Communism (singling out the Peace Movement for particular scorn) and claimed that in Spain 'Every vestige of the Christian religion was eradicated' (Pope Pius 1937: 4, 10). In 1936, ACTS issued the pamphlets *Propaganda* by the Jesuit H.A. Johnston, *Red Spain* by G.M. Godden, Denys Jackson's *World Peace* and the Rev.

Thomas J. Feeney's *The Church in Spain: Rich or Poor?* A further nine pamphlets directly related to Spain were issued in 1937 including *The Pope and the Spanish Terror*, *Martyrdom of Spain*, *Chaos in Spain*, and *Spain in Flames*.

Catholic leaders were obsessed with the pro-Republican bias they perceived in the commercial press – the belief persists amongst commentators, such as Jory and Gilchrist, who claim Australian press coverage was unerringly pro-Republican with a proclivity for sensationalism. Catholic leaders imagined that media coverage of Spain was shaped by a vast conspiracy, and Mannix regularly condemned the press for lying in its reporting. In the coverage of Spain, Pius XI saw a 'propaganda so truly diabolical' and a 'conspiracy of silence' aided by 'occult forces' (Freemasonry) working for the overthrow of Christian society (Pope Pius 1937: 9-10). The ACTS was more direct, claiming the whole of the capitalist press was controlled by Jewish international financiers in league with Freemasons (*The Truth About Freemasons* 86). Despite attempts to curb anti-semitism in the late 30s, it was an entrenched feature of Church culture (Passelecq xix-xxiv). Father Curran, leader of the International Catholic Truth Society, was typical in his belief: 'As a further example of the alliance of the soviets with world Jewry… the famous Mr Einstein, originator of the stupid theory of relativity, is another prominent Jew who is openly supporting the Reds in Spain' (*Freeman's Journal* 14 July 1937).

According to O'Farrell, 'Spain tended to crowd out all other world events from Catholic newspapers between 1936 and 1939' (389). In Sydney, the firmly pro-Franco *Catholic Freeman's Journal* explained to readers that it relied on independent, comprehensive sources of information on Spain through the network of the Catholic Church, and news was often syndicated through the Vatican information service

Osservatore Romano (Inglis 43; Keene 2001: 106 n29). Whilst the NSW Catholic papers were pro-Franco, under Jackson's command the nationally-syndicated Victorian Catholic papers, the *Advocate* and the *Tribune*, were packed with news on Spain and reports from leading pro-Franco correspondents: luminaries such as Gil Robles, or the enthusiastic Adelaide-based Australian journalist Paul McGuire. McGuire was considered Australia's leading Catholic lay intellectual, and his articles were syndicated internationally in the Catholic press (Fitzgerald 39; Keene 2001: 51). On arriving in Nationalist Spain, McGuire announced Christian civilisation had been reborn. He was confident of the *Nuevo Estado*'s fidelity to the encyclicals and Franco's commitment to forgiveness, and this was his report to the Duke of Wellington's committee of inquiry into conditions in nationalist territory (Guttman 35; Bygott 290-1). Another favourite was Hilaire Belloc. As a 'kept correspondent' during the Great War, Belloc was the butt of jokes in the trenches for his jingoistic delusions about the conduct of warfare – the *Wipers Times* satirised him as 'Belary Helloc' (Fussell 87). From his vantage point in orderly Nationalist areas in Spain, Belloc reported to Catholics internationally on the 'Red Horrors' inside the Republican zone with the same arrogant detachment that characterised his First War reporting.

The Catholic cause adopted the technologies of modern mass communication to access a broader audience. Sydney radio 2SM, dedicated to Catholic apologetics, introduced Catholic Action to its large audiences (O'Farrell 374); but the biggest initiative in this regard was the mass-circulation *Catholic Worker*, intended to stem the loss of Catholic influence in working-class areas, and to combat Communism and materialism in 'the popular press' (qtd Fitzgerald 21). The *Catholic Worker* called for 'a

new crusade' or 'holy war' to accelerate the death of liberalism and capitalism (qtd Duncan 19-21). In the populist rhetoric of the Spanish Falange, its first edition declared that capitalism and Communism had 'de-christianised the world' (qtd Fitzgerald 33): 'Public Enemy No.1', however, was 'Capitalism' (qtd O'Farrell 1969: 381). A subsequent editorial of Santamaria's declared: 'We are the Catholic social revolutionaries' who 'wish to restore direct ownership to each and every working man' (qtd 376-7). The *Catholic Worker* maintained the Church was the only true vanguard and must be at the helm of this revolution to install distributionism: in the mean time, it argued for the nationalisation of banking, full employment and social welfare programs, slum demolition, and workers' control of industry (O'Brien 135; *CW* 6 February 1937).

The *Catholic Worker* was saturated with apocalyptic and crusading symbolism, and laced with jewish-marxist-capitalist-masonic conspiracy theories derived from *Action Française*. Correspondents included the English Jesuit Woodlock, whose accounts of atrocities in Spain were highly sensational; and Paul McGuire, who was its most frequent contributor (Bygott 290-1). By the close of 1938, the *Catholic Worker* had the highest circulation amongst Catholics proportionally in English speaking countries (Jory 79), and it later received apostolic benediction as a mark of the Vatican's approval (O'Brien 132).

The Campions, who created and ran *Catholic Worker*, were cautioned by Kevin Kelly (an important intellectual influence) against appearing fascist, and that attacks on parliamentarianism in Australia would actually alienate workers (Duncan 13). Recognising the unpopularity of Franco amongst its intended working-class readership, the *Catholic Worker* was overall cautious in its handling of the Spanish Civil War – at times omitting all reference to specific military events, though it did exalt Franco's plans

for social justice. But the *Catholic Worker*'s sense of frustration at its limited public influence on the issue of Spain was blamed on the major papers being soft on Communism (6 February 1937).

The *Bulletin* was the only commercial paper which came close to the Catholic media's praise of Franco and even exceeded it in pro-Nazism. Andrews suggests the owners of the *Bulletin*, the Prior family, and possibly the editorial board, were subject to Catholic influence. As the *Bulletin* moved to the Right 'the Spanish Civil War revealed more clearly the characteristics of its policy' (Andrews 55, 129). The *Bulletin*'s coverage of Spain relied on a news relay from London *Times* correspondents in Spain – 'this beautiful but tragic land' (24 August 1938) – the ravings of pro-fascist English travellers (3 November 1937), and Norman Lindsay's anti-Republican full-page cartoons (19 August 1936).

The institutional power of the Catholic Church was substantial with its several newspapers, a radio station, printeries, libraries, the pulpit, and considerable influence in the labour movement. Spain mobilised Catholic Action within these institutions. According to O'Farrell 'the Spanish Civil War was working a change in the Catholic social movement's attitudes towards Communism, and in Catholic awareness generally, in relation to world affairs' (O'Farrell 1977: 388). The Catholic response to the war in Spain bore a complex relationship to the emergent tragic structure of feeling of the age, combined with a particularly rarefied concept of millennial tragedy. Spain was a 'symbol become reality' of tragic modernity for Catholics as much as it was for supporters of the Republic.

The manufactured consent for Franco relied on simple binaries. In Fitzgerald's estimation, 'The Australian Catholic community was fed a diet that depicted the conflict in terms of a battle between good and evil' (36). Accordingly, most pro-Franco correspondents freely conflated 'Red' with every form of anti-fascist Leftism and liberalism. Though Santamaria claimed that Catholics had a more complex view of the conflict and were not concerned with what kind of government Franco would institute (1981: 34), the historical record shows that the Church made clear that Franco was a 'deliverer', another Salazaar, a dictator who would build a Catholic corporate state (Blacam 21, 24). Furthermore, Franco himself was clear about his intentions, announcing 'Our Government will be authoritarian' (*Advocate* 19 November 1936). And as Gil Robles announced in the Catholic press, Franco would institute an 'organic (national-social) structure' (*The Catholic Advocate* 16 September 1937). According to Preston 'Franco rarely missed an opportunity to boast that he had eliminated the legacy of the Enlightenment, the French Revolution and other symbols of modernity' (Preston 1996: 218-9); statements that were consistent with Pius IX's celebrated encyclical *Syllabus of Errors* (1864).

Australian Catholics struggled with the fact that Catholic Spain had elected an anti-Church party to government; Catholic thinking also associated the Republican administration with the forces of destructive modernity: an image which challenged Catholic preconceptions of Spain's pastoral spirituality. According to O'Farrell, Communism in Spain was

> peculiarly disturbing to Australian Catholics. Spain had been traditionally regarded, with a romantic fervour blind to unpleasant realities, as one of the glories of Catholic Europe, a symbol of Catholicism somewhat on a par with Ireland in its steadfast faith, simple religiosity and centuries-old confrontation with Protestantism. (1977: 389)

Australian Catholics could not believe that the Spanish people would betray their heritage and elect a government that stood for modernity and socialism. Consequently, they reasoned that the only explanation for this was that Spain's Catholic population had been brain-washed by Communist propaganda. As *Divini Redemptoris* made clear, propaganda was the primary mechanism of Communist influence, and bourgeois liberalism prepared the way for Leftist extremism by condemning working people to 'religious and moral destitution' (8-9). Reverend Dr Norton Bishop of Ballarat proclaimed that the Spanish Republicans were 'dupes' in the control of 'denationalised Jewish Communists who have nothing worth dying for.' Furthermore, 'The murdered Bishops and Priests and Nuns and Brothers of Spain are a warning to Catholics in the political and similar movements in Australia'. Catholics should be on their guard against insidious Communist propaganda, and make the same choice as Spaniards did between 'Christ and anti-Christ' (*The Catholic Advocate* 12 November 1936).

The next crucial component in the manufacture of consent for Franco's rebellion was the invocation of the 'religious tragedy', as it became known – the fight of Christian tradition against the anarchy of 'Red Terror' and international anti-Catholic conspiracy, driven by Freemasons and Moscow. Accounts of Red terror were necessary in

perpetuating the idea that Communists in Spain had been about to stage a coup against the Republic, thereby justifying the Generals' pre-emptive rebellion (Cardozo 4). Nationalist propaganda, including that circulated through the CTS, offered evidence of anti-clerical atrocity and Red conspiracy prior to the 1936 elections.

In reality, the power of Spanish Communism was negligible and civil political violence was in decline, even absent, until the Generals' uprising (Payne 1990: 269, 279). The notorious killings of clergy and church burnings occurred in the first month and a half of the war, and cannot be attributed to any one group; and crucially, it was Franco's Rebellion that actually triggered the clerical killings (la Cueva 360). Preston places the number of murdered clergy at 6,832 and with the exception of the Basque region, churches were burnt throughout the Republican zone (Preston 1996: 169). The crimes committed during the 'black two years' of conservative and Catholic authoritarian rule under Lerroux and CEDA, such as the ruthless crushing of the 1934 Asturian miners' strike, were a contributing pay-back factor in these killings. But the violence was historically produced by the conflict between clericalism and popular anti-clericalism. It had found full and revolutionary expression in 1936 as a revenge on the most powerful in the community – priests were believed by many to be the cause of much of Spain's suffering and backwardness (la Cueva 360, 361-2, 364). As an eye-witness, Aileen Palmer considered the church burnings 'a strange last pageant' for Catholic Spain (Box 5 folder 36 NLA MS 6759).

The Church relied on Franco's Nationalist propaganda as a ready information source for CTS pamphlets. Joseph Goebbels sent Franco a German propaganda attaché to help further shape the Nationalist's propaganda department, which was instrumental in

courting international opinion (Whealey 3). But the results were relatively ineffective except among Catholics and arch-conservatives. When it was disconnected from religious contexts, Spanish fascist propaganda fell flat outside its Catholic readership. But for Irish Catholic Australians especially, who had been subject to so much Great War propaganda, it was easy to believe that the truth about foreign events appeared outside official news channels. Furthermore, Irish Catholic persecution and the persecution of the Church in Spain had a ready parallelism. Thus, Nationalist propaganda retold the familiar story of an embattled spiritualised minority fighting the oppressive monolith of modern secularism.

The atrocity story and horror tales of massacres were major factors in enlisting Australian Catholic opinion behind Franco (O'Farrell 389). They were highly visible in the Catholic literary revival – in fact, atrocity pamphlets were the only reading matter left after the ritual book burnings in Spain's Nationalist zone (Preston 1996: 163). The *Catholic Worker* wrote of Spain's agony as 'the most ferocious persecution since the days of Diocletian' (3 October 1936), typically discussing the razing of churches and the slaughter of priests. In a joint letter, the Spanish bishops put the figure at 20,000 churches destroyed and 60,000 clergy murdered (*The Catholic Advocate* 14 October 1937). This led Mannix to predict, apocalyptically, that the Church in Spain would be eradicated by murder (4 February 1937).

Franco's Rebels remobilised the forms and conventions of Great War propaganda. As such, Nationalist agitprop constituted the last gasp of a residual structure of feeling under pressure in a new age which was deeply sceptical of propaganda. From his position in the Nationalist army, Nugent Bull observed that because Spain had not been through

the Great War the Spanish had never witnessed the 'super' propaganda to which other countries had now become immune: the Spaniard was therefore able to be captivated by Communist propaganda (Keene 1985: 262).

Stories of atrocities were the most successful and contentious propaganda devices of the Great War. All atrocity stories share a resemblance, and certain stories of the Great War were directly sourced from the records of earlier wars, popular horror fiction, and sometimes from pornography (Tate 41, 45). Though the Spanish bishops proclaimed the Spanish Revolution was unique in history for its atrocities, atrocity narratives and pamphlets were simply recycled as a staple of pro-Nationalist discourse (*The Catholic Advocate* 14 October 1937).

A key element of the atrocity report was authenticity: a concern with sourcing the story and converging fact, rumour and eyewitnessing. Typically, an atrocity pamphlet such as *Red Spain* cited one 'witness', and the authority of the witness was reflected on a sliding scale of race, gender and class: a Spaniard without title being the least credible, an 'English businessman' the most reliable. Rarely, however, did a witness admit to seeing the worst atrocities first hand; and thus *Red Spain* cited *The Times* – a newspaper notorious for its dubious Great War atrocity tales. Trudi Tate describes *The Times* coverage of German atrocity stories during the Great War as 'a many layered rumour, supported by evidence which is at once vague and… highly specific… It is rumour, presented as a fact' (44). The paper's tactics changed little in its coverage of the Spanish conflict. Judith Keene argues that the multitude of repetitious, amateur reports from foreign visitors to the Nationalist zone resulted from the fact that visitors spoke no Spanish: they were compelled to rely on the books of their countrymen and the stock

atrocity stories of the Spanish Nationalist press officers (2001: 56). Keene also notes the extent to which these amateur reports quoted and cross-referenced each other: comparing the 'narrative process in many of the atrocity stories' related by foreigners to fixed blocks of existing information, rearranged into new narrative configurations, but always fundamentally unaltered in their meanings (58). Franco's propagandists issued their own atrocity pamphlets, dressed up as 'Official Reports on Communist Atrocities in Southern Spain', complete with accompanying photos. Some of the atrocities they recounted were known to have actually been perpetrated by the Francoist forces who later wrote them up.

Bizarrely, a central emphasis of the atrocity pamphlet was not the attrition of human life but, rather, the destruction of Spain's aesthetic glamour and heritage. The war was repeatedly described as a 'tragedy' in pro-Nationalist pamphlets, mainly because of its destruction of the romantic peasant lifestyle and the loss of art, architecture, official records and private property (*Communist Atrocities* 1936: 13, 16). The Church embraced these reports with enthusiasm (*Advocate* 24 December 1936) and recycled the stories through the Catholic press, constantly relocating the grand narrative of cultural cataclysm in different towns and villages, attributing its veracity to different eye-witnesses, and customising each report with distinctive gory details.

Crucifixion atrocities, a staple of Great War propaganda, resurfaced in Spanish fascist propaganda – with the added touch of having clergy as the victims. Patrick O'Brien has observed that from a young age 'The martyr syndrome was deeply embedded in Catholic consciousness' (O'Brien 133), so crucifixion atrocities were easily marketed to a predisposed audience; and the Pope made those who had been murdered by the Reds officially martyrs (Preston 1996: 159). In Church propaganda, photographs of

current atrocities and tales of rape and murder appeared alongside accounts of the Spanish Catholic imperial glory of St Dominic, St Ignatius of Loyola, St Teresa of Avila and St John of God. In his atrocity pamphlet, Aodh de Blacam wrote: 'The Spanish Church is a Church of martyrs, sublime in this age of indifference', and outrages against the church were 'the new crucifixion' (27, 29). Martyrdom fulfilled the key expectations of traditional tragic sacrifice: 'the pure spirit of tragedy as the traditionalists conceive it', Terry Eagleton noted, 'ascetic, elitist, sacrificial, hierarchical, anti-rationalist, spiritually absolutist, hostile to modernity' (2003: 272).

The Catholic obsession with individual acts of martyrdom in the context of the mass slaughter of modern mechanised war had its basis in the centrality of Christ's suffering to Catholic liturgy. As the 'suffering servant', Christ paid the 'ransom' that would 'free man from the slavery of [original] sin' (Catechism 155). In his suffering, the Spanish martyr was united with Christ by bearing supreme witness to the faith – which is death (593, 600). The martyred priests of Spain, therefore, were atoning for human folly just as Christ, who with his blood, 'bears the sin of the multitudes' (Catechism 158). Consequently, Eoin O'Duffy wrote in 1938 that 'The Government, like Pilate, yielded to the demand of the mob and delivered the priests to them to suffer like their Master the tortures and pains of Calvary, including, in many cases, actual crucifixion. Men… sunk to the lowest depths of human passion and degradation, cried out once more for the blood of Christ and His priests' in the streets of Spain (qtd Guttmann 38).

The Augustinian legacy held that humanity could do nothing for its own salvation, including social reform – it was completely reliant on God and the Church, and to ignore this always led to tragedy. Consequently, Catholic accounts of barbarity in

Republican Spain were intended as a lesson in the consequences of estrangement from God and the folly of humanity's secular, bestial desire to control its own destiny. According to Catholic theology, the concept of original sin has a gravitational effect on humanity, pulling it downward into a state of raw biology and anarchy with the beasts. Sacrificial blood-atonement is necessary to redeem humanity from this 'fallen' state, and Spanish atrocity stories emphasised the individual suffering of the martyr at the hands of an always zealous, barbaric, and irrational mob: a mob signifying the spiritual anarchy of a fallen species. In this context, the politics of atheistic socialism and the vision of human spirituality as debased and bestialised were fused. As the *Divini Redemptoris* stated, Communism 'removes all the moral restraints that check the eruptions of blind impulse' (5-6). In this way, Catholic theology provided a meta-narrative for Nationalist and Catholic propaganda, and for this reason it did not resonate with uninitiated non-Catholic audiences. Martyrdom and atrocity tales were religiously coded, telling a story that was not simply about Spain but, universally, about the redemption of humankind as specifically understood by Catholic readers.

Spain symbolised a spiritual fall that was so great and wretched that only the most extreme forms of suffering could redeem it. Hence the Church exaggerated the numbers of the martyred: 'thousands' according to Blacam (29). In terms of extremity, G.M. Godden relayed the account of an English woman staying in Barcelona. She saw '"a church burnt by the Reds, who killed a priest, cut off his arms and legs, and hung the corpse from a statue of the Virgin."' Another English woman gave an account of a priest impaled with his own crucifix and then hanged (Godden 31). Other witnesses told of crucified priests: 'Their bodies, hanging on the crosses, were exhibited in a public square'

(Godden 38). Thirty-eight prisoners, men women and children, were 'crucified' and then burnt by reds (Godden 26). Even nuns were burnt alive or made to run through the city naked (Blacam 4).

This terror always had a clear class dimension; the 'well-to-do citizens and prominent Catholics' were invariably at the mercy of the terrorising mob as it swept the cities (Blacam 3; Godden 22, 42). Franco's official atrocity pamphlets described an 'orgy of lust and cruelty' wherein ruled 'the worst of all despotisms – that of the mob' (Bryant ix, xi). The armed mob was imagined as indiscriminate, shooting its class enemies, and the menace was intensified by the 'purification squads' who reputedly kidnapped and liquidated entire families. Godden claims the Soviet Chekha killed the citizens of Madrid at a rate of 200 per day, and Popular tribunals supposedly ended in executions where the masses swarmed on Catholic bodies like 'buzzing flies' (Godden 38, 41). Many comparisons were made with the French Revolution, with frequent accounts of beheading and obscene inversions of hierarchy: 'the masses in Barcelona copied very faithfully the model of the French Revolution; the mob paraded the streets of the city "attired in the robes of the ecclesiastical authorities"' – a ghastly carnivalesque spectacle (Godden 29). In Blacam's estimation, the sacrilege and arson were 'on the greatest scale [in] Western history'; and 'these horrible streams of outrages poured over the land' (Blacam 4, 16). According to the Pontiff, every institution – human and divine – was under threat in Spain (Godden 36).

Like Germany's reputed commission of crucifixion in the Great War, Spanish atrocity stories suggested a primitive regression: in an age when war could be waged clinically and technologically, the spectacle of bodies crucified or dismembered by hand

seemed backward and needlessly callous (Tate 45). But pro-Nationalist, pro-Catholic propaganda traded on this primitivism: visceral atrocity stories often had a profoundly seductive, sado-masochistic charge. Harold Lasswell's 1927 study on the psychology of propaganda claimed that accounts of the enemy wounding women, children, priests and nuns provoked indignation in the reader, but also satisfied 'certain powerful, hidden impulses' (qtd Tate 49); and a classic example could be found in the writings of Eleonora Tennant – the product of a prominent Australian Catholic family, married to the English industrialist Ernest Tennant, founder of the Anglo-German Fellowship.

In 1936, Eleonora toured Nationalist Spain and wrote about her experiences in *Spanish Journey*, which was unerring in its support for Franco and the idyllic life under the Burgos government (Keene 2001: 252-3). Appealing to every high-bourgeois prejudice, Tennant relayed extraordinary atrocity tales containing all the conventions of rape and pillage, starring respectable aristocratic families accosted by looting Reds led by women and, in one case, sexually-degenerate men in drag who danced around a pile of burning furniture (253-254). Judith Keene observes that 'many of the stories are highly salacious, with a sharp scatological edge and a leaven of sexual transgression which serves to underline the abnormality of the whole situation' (254). Inevitably, then, Tennant's book received enthusiastic reviews in the Catholic press (*The Catholic Advocate* 11 February 1937).

The crux of such salacious stories was that excesses of desire, resulting from the human estrangement from God, produced tragic acts of violence that were then depicted with considerable narrative excitement and the frisson of perversion. For the Catholic reader, the cautionary tragic narrative paradoxically conferred a dignified form to the

thrill of glimpsing a transgression of religious authority. The lascivious nature of atrocity stories was embellished with a classically carnivalesque atmosphere in which outrages and desecrations took place: four hundred priests were 'murdered in this festival of hate' (Blacam 4). In one report the head of a statue of the Virgin Mary was used as a football (28), and during the desecration of a church 'The crowd found the incident amusing, and laughed' (Godden 30). Men and young women danced around exhumed nuns, propped up outside their church, the womenfolk 'howling and screaming' (Godden 31; *The Catholic Advocate* 15 October 1936). *The Catholic Advocate* reported that children were armed and taught to kill, and 'Crowds flock to see' a statue of the infant Jesus in a Madrid church dressed in militia uniform carrying the placard 'I was betrayed by the Fascists because I became a Communist' (15 October 1936). Group laughter, dancing, parades, and festivals were integral to accounts of mob violence because they were egregious displays of free-reigning desire.

Divini Redemptoris maintained that Communism produced these atrocities because, as a system, it lacked 'all inner restraints': something 'Even the barbaric peoples had' (11). Macabre pagan rituals appeared in atrocity stories as a sign of the mob's heathen degeneracy and its 'savagery' (Blacam 4). The *Catholic Freeman's Journal* had already suggested that the Republican constitution was 'almost pagan' (8 October 1931); and the Anglican Bishop of Petersborough compared Republican supporters to the 'wild tribes of Central Africa' (*Advocate* 14 January 1937). Head-hunters and French revolutionaries melded in Godden's claim that 'On July 23, came the accounts of the beheading of three Jesuit priests at Barcelona, and of the carrying of their heads on salvers through the streets' (Godden 29). He told of a tortured, murdered priest, 'his head

brought out by a youth and stuck on the railing in front of his church' (Godden 36); and of the body of a child exhumed and carried through a village on a tray (27), and of people whose eyes were gouged out before they were shot (28). The elaborate nature of such ritual brutality enhanced the sense of irrationalism associated with it: it disturbed because it had no practical purpose. Consequently, the Pope described 'forces so savage and cruel' they were seemingly 'impossible for human dignity, let alone human nature' run amok in Spain (qtd Godden 35).

Spanish bishops peddled the falsehood that with access to the technology of modern warfare, Communism could enact new types of atrocity (*Advocate* 21 October 1937). Contradictorily, however, most Catholic propaganda defined the Reds by their excessive use of primitive weaponry, casting them as inefficiently untechnical, as well as barbaric. In Spain, priests were killed by marauders – often adolescent – who carried pistols, axes and truncheons (Godden 32). In a common motif, both priests and Christian icons were hacked to pieces with axes and burnt – the extensive use of fire for the purposes of destruction signifying a primitive and ruthless force at large (Godden 28). As in Great War propaganda, defilement stories disturbed at a deep level because they involved the already dead: the mutilations, the burning of churches, and the desecration or disinterment of corpses fulfilled no military objective, thus appearing more sinister for their purposelessness (Tate 45). In a revealing article, Captain Francis McCullagh, a career soldier-journalist of forty years, found the Reds in Spain had ruined warfare which was once 'gentlemanly contests for something tangible'. The Red Army had made war 'topsy-turvey, original, strange, savage, unexpected, disquieting'. After this 'Last Great Crusade' McCullagh would retire because war was now too disturbing, and Europe was

becoming accustomed to unprecedented cruelty (*The Catholic Advocate* 4 November 1937).

Nevertheless, in fascist propaganda war remained noble: the Nationalist army was presented as gallant, heroic and disciplined; and Franco was a pre-Napoleonic General of traditional means, unaided by modern weaponry. His embrace of the latest German-Italian military technologies was simply never mentioned, and the Spanish struggle remained a medieval pageant. Spanish fascism fostered a cult of the soldier-monk: 'a compound of austerity, spirit of sacrifice, and impassiveness when faced with bloodshed' (Aya 138). This cult also expressed a tragic vitalism; a millenarian fetishism of death and violence (Mangan 3, 7). Its iconography was powerfully supplemented by the Bishops of Spain's declamation that in the current crisis 'war is the heroic and only remedy' (*Advocate* 7 October 1937), and the fantasy that Franco and his Nationalist forces embodied divine wrath. In this view, Franco brought law and order to Spain not merely as a political liberator but as a deliverer from evil. For the average Catholic, the violence of Franco's conquest was thus acceptable: it had the quality of Old Testament vengeance.

From the perspective of the secular public, it could be argued that Franco's violent insurrection was a revenge tragedy. In that genre, the revenger frequently comes to resemble the image of those he seeks to punish, sinking into the disorder he is determined to eradicate. As Eagleton notes, 'The revenger is both criminal and law-enforcer, custodian of order and violator of it' (2003: 151). Franco fits this description perfectly, and even in Nationalist propaganda his campaign appeared arbitrary and compassionless. Franco constructed the much-loathed Communists as having perpetrated the original atrocity that provoked his revenge: their propaganda, which 'defiled',

‘contaminated’ and ‘desecrated’ the mind and soul of the Spanish people beyond redemption. Franco came to resemble his imagined enemy: developing his own extremist propaganda machine, persecuting the devout Basques, and cruelly laying waste Spain’s cities with aerial bombardment.

According to Duncan, overseas Catholic debates about the morality of the Spanish War were not heard in Australia because ‘Most Australian Catholic commentators strongly supported the Nationalist revolt’ (Duncan 25). This is patently untrue: like their pro-Republican counterparts, Australian Catholics were clearly exposed to international debates within the Church. As a result, Australian Catholicism did not express a united pro-Franco position: dissenting Catholic voices from European and American Catholic intellectuals were available to Church members through the Central Catholic Library, which housed a significant overseas collection (Andrews 124-5; Fitzgerald 36); the lower clergy were more critical of fascism than the hierarchy. Spain highlighted the struggle between these competing forms of Catholicism; French theologian Jacques Maritain’s liberal Catholicism represented the main Catholic opposition to both Franco and the philosophy of Catholic Action, eventually gaining a following among some Melbourne Catholics (Coffey 7; Duncan 12).

This dissent among Catholics caused lynch-pin campaigner Frank Sheed to campaign harder: ‘It was not our work as teachers of the Faith to campaign against Communism. But with our crowds strongly against Franco, particularly after the “bombing” of the “sacred oak” at Guernica, one had to know Communism better. As a social system it was not our topic, but as atheism it certainly was’ (Sheed 1974: 200). Frustration with unsophisticated Catholic propaganda prompted Sheed to call for a new

evangelism of vision rather than reaction (Sheed 1937: 372). This led him to write his highly influential *Communism and Man* (1938). It was exemplary doublethink – the Church, Sheed claimed, was the true inheritor of Marx and it had and would emancipate workers through its connection with capital, but only as an ancillary activity to the saving of souls (Sheed 1938: 365-371). George Orwell slammed the book in a review for failing to see exploitation as a problem *of* class rather than unimproved class relations (Orwell 2000: 384).

Publishers like Sheed and Ward, whose firm did much for Franco's cause, did not concern themselves with the details of Spanish fascism (Guttman 37). Sheed regarded support for Franco 'a reflex action' and 'It was only slowly that I came to see that we had oversimplified in making the killing of priests and nuns the only matter to be considered… The killing of non-priests and non-nuns is also evil' (Sheed 1974: 199, 200). He added that on balance, though Franco was no worse than the other side 'I am saying that we hadn't the evidence to enable us to judge' (200). This was utterly false, and there were sufficent contemporary committed Catholics and independent commentators willing to refute Sheed's statement. The Australian Catholic journalist Noel Monks, who eye-witnessed the infamous Captain Luis Bolin's habit of spitting on the heaped up bodies of freshly executed Republicans, discovered to his amazement that Mass was openly practised in the Republican zone: Franco did not have a monopoly on faith. With members of the government, Monks could attend mass anywhere in Republican Spain. As he later wrote: 'then I knew just what propaganda can do' (Monks 74, 92). But the charade that there were no grounds for judgement did not hinder Sheed and Ward's copious production of pro-Franco polemic.

As Monks attested, the indirect power of Catholic propaganda should not be underestimated – it was a major factor in encouraging international non-intervention in Spain. Lloyd Ross estimated that in the space of two weeks Australian unions, initially united in opposition to the Spanish Nationalists, could be seen weakening as Catholic propaganda re-imaged the political fight between Left and Right as a spiritual struggle of atheism and Catholicism (Andrews 89). Catholic opinion split British labour unions, and as an electoral lobby and an influence in the American State Department it was Catholics, more than isolationists, who prevented Franklin Roosevelt from assisting the Spanish Republic (Guttman 116, 119). Australian Catholics continued to object to the SRC's collection of food and aid, accusing it of Communist corruption (*Age* 3 March 1937). The ACTS pamphlet *The People's Front* cautioned Catholics against the siren song of Communist Front organisations, pointing to the Communist's treatment of their comrades in the Spanish Popular Front (Parable 41).

Julio de la Cueva writes that 'In Spain, from 1936 to 1939, both sides thought they were fighting their own Armageddon… The anticlerical violence of 1936 was prophetical violence unleashed amidst a situation laden with eschatological signs' (369). In his later years, Santamaria attempted to exonerate the Church from its participation in zealous over-reading of the signs: 'we did not equate the cause of the Spanish Right with absolute Good and that of the Spanish Left with absolute Evil… Nor were we ignorant of the barbarities committed by the Nationalists' (Santamaria 1981: 34). In an attempt to muddy the water further, he misquoted Orwell to prove that it was 'an untidy war which refused to order itself by neat Left-Right formulae' (34-5).

In reality, Santamaria, Catholic Action and the Church Hierarchy did mobilise the discourses of theological good and evil to willfully mask the fact that Franco conducted a war of attrition, more horrible than his fictional propaganda depicted. With the ethos of their thanatic cult encapsulated in the battle cry 'Long live death!', Franco's elite Foreign Legion and Moroccan mercenaries perpetrated some of the worst atrocities of the war, including the massacre at Badajoz. Fear of the Legion's terror was one of Franco's best weapons against Republican soldiers and civilians (Preston 1996: 89). Under the Nationalist army, an open terror policy was used to subjugate the population, particularly through executions, rape, and torture – and the Church merely required that confession be available to those about to be executed (Thomas 1961: 166). After Franco's final victory, the Gestapo assisted him in establishing a repressive state apparatus in the 1940s which consolidated his power through terror: over one million political prisoners were sent to labour camps, there were more than 200,000 executions (Preston 1985: 8). Franco's political hegemony was also crucially abetted by the re-establishment of direct Catholic power in everyday Spanish life: the ideological state apparatus aided Franco's repressive apparatuses to secure his long-term rule.

Even after the Second World War, the Vatican still could not directly endorse democracy or reject totalitarianism, maintaining that a meaningful political system must have the Church at the centre of its public life (Truman 49). As a residual subaltern force, the Church only abandoned its totalitarian political allegiances along with its radical anti-capitalism and anti-materialism to remain in league with the American post-war anti-Communist crusade. However, this did not mean that it recanted its position of support for Franco. It was a stain on Australian Catholicism that men in positions of influence,

like Sheed and Santamaria, and in-house Church historians, could eagerly repeat the view that Spain was a theological battlefield whilst declaring their disinterest in inconvenient military and humanitarian realities.

Chapter Five: The Australian Literati in Spain

Australian concerns for the Spanish Republic's survival did not follow conventional political Left-Right divides, which collapse as an effective means of reading culture under any circumstance. It was not just those with established Leftist sympathies who were attracted to the Republican cause: cultural conservatives supported the embattled Republic because of their mythic and aesthetic ideals of 'Spain'. The disparate literary response to Spain must be read as a field organised around a structure of feeling, which recognised that in Spain tragic modernity had become horrifically visible, and received ideas could not adequately explain why this was so.

Australian writers responding to the Spanish War – regardless of political, generational and religious differences – discovered not only a lost pastoral heritage but a vision of apocalyptic futures. The Spanish Republic represented a model society for many intellectuals the world over; as Tom Buchanan notes: 'the Republic was worth fighting for not because it was the equal of British democracy, but because in many respects it seemed to be superior to it' (1997: 4). Vance and Nettie Palmer, Mary Gilmore, Jack and Lionel Lindsay, Brian Penton, Christina Stead, Patrick White and Martin Boyd had in their own ways been entranced with Spain before the war. With the war's outbreak each now projected their new political fears and utopian desires onto Spain.

Inspired by friend Marcel Aurousseau's *Highway into Spain* (1931) and Basil Burdett's Spanish adventures, Vance, Nettie and Aileen Palmer arrived in Spain in May 1936 to discover the country for themselves. Their European tour, commencing in March 1935, allowed the Palmers to absorb the available modernisms of Paris and London. They attended W.H. Auden's *Dance of Death*, T.S. Eliot's *Sweeney Agonistes* and various lectures; met literary identities (F.R. and Q.D. Leavis, Rebecca West) and attended the International Congress of Writers for the Defence of Culture in Paris, where Nettie was Australia's representative. In Spain, Nettie planned to attend the Madrid Writers' Conference (Palmer 1988: 185, 204-5). They rented a house on the Mediterranean in Mongat, near Barcelona, planning a full year of literary endeavour. Following the Generals' Rebellion, increasing food shortages, concern for their safety and a request from the English Consulate, the Palmers left Spain – with profound feelings of guilt (227). Vance went to London to publicise events in Spain and reported his experiences for the *New Statesman* (Palmer 1977: 137). Nettie's journal and the Palmer correspondence reveal a deep fascination with Spain, its culture and politics, which they discovered matched many of their long-held political ideals.

Their strong support for Spain's revolution was shaped by close erstwhile involvement with the Victorian Socialist Party and Vance's ongoing commitment to Guild Socialism. Nettie's politics existed within the framework of the Anglo–Australian Progressive Tradition, and her commitment to Spain was consistent with principles of democratic freedom emanating from within that tradition, in which the relationship of class conflict to social progress was central.

Despite this, Drusilla Modjeska attempts to recast Nettie Palmer's socialism using nebulous political terms such as 'humanitarianism', 'harmonious social evolution' and 'democratic idealism rooted in liberalism' (Modjeska 1981: 44, 48). Modjeska claims Nettie rejected socialism because 'She was unable to accept the inevitability of class struggle and repeatedly reconfirmed her confidence in "reason", "love" and liberal education as solutions to social conflict.' And this remained so 'throughout her life despite the shifts in her politics during the late thirties when she aligned herself, if ambiguously, with the left in the struggle against fascism' (44, 48). To suggest Nettie's support for Spain's Republic was an inexplicable and slightly grotesque hiatus in a life-time of sentimental liberalism is a gross misrepresentation of her most fundamental convictions. Modjeska mistakes Nettie's remarks against the October Revolution in Russia as a rejection of socialism, whereas Nettie herself specifically targeted the philosophy of Bolshevism. As syndicalists, the Palmers were very conscious of the distinction, and ever suspicious of Leninism and its Stalinist spawn. That distinction, and a belief in guild socialism, informed their view of the Spanish conflict. In 'Who are the Spanish People', Nettie argued an anti-Stalinist case, whilst regarding the Spanish War as a class struggle:

> There is such determination and courage in the working class as I have never seen before, and without distinction between men and women, all are morally and spiritually enlisted in the anti-fascist militias. 'All of us, from the republicans to anarchists are determined to destroy the false old Spain with its crimes and pillage and to build a state of liberty and justice.'

> I suggest that these are not phrases dictated from Moscow: they might even make a marxist wince. They are written by an average and not very literate Spanish worker. (undated: Palmer papers NLA, MS 1174/22/2)

This passage closely resembles the words of Catalan Anarchist Salvador Torrents, from whom Nettie received a letter via his brother in Queensland (NLA MS1174/1/5028). It also confounds Modjeska's claim that 'None of [Nettie's] articles about Spain spoke in terms of class war' (Modjeska 1981: 67). The ethos of the Popular Front was to modify extreme class rhetoric in the interests of effective propaganda, and Nettie followed this practice in public: in a key SRC pamphlet, for example, she declared Catalonia was becoming 'a people's state', and industry was organised 'according to the fine principles of decentralisation' (1936: 4). In private, however, Nettie was unequivocal on her position: 'The rebels, the military, may even win but they couldn't rule Spain for more than a week. None of the workers are with them' (MS 1174/1/5069). Writing to her mother in August 1936, Nettie presented the conflict as between the 'Generals and the higher officers' and the 'government and the workers', and gave a glowing report of workers' control in Barcelona and workers' militias (MS 1174/1/5067). Again, in her journal entry of 25 July 1936, she reported the effectiveness of syndicalism in managing the Spanish economy after the Rebellion (Palmer 1988: 226).

The Palmers' enthusiasm for Guild Socialism placed them firmly within the British Progressive Tradition, and in 1936 Nettie continued to show strong support for an icon of British Guild Socialism, G.D.H. Cole (Palmer 1977: 124). The Palmers' pre-existing politics thus disposed them to embrace the syndicalism of the Spanish Popular

Front. Vance's Australian 'pastoral radicalism' was only a prototype socialist culture (Rowse 117): in Spain it had been realised. Spain was largely free of the suburbanisation which was corrupting and eroding what he believed to be the 'essential' Australia through alienation, the mass consumption of trinkets and cultural mediocrity. Spain promised to be a working example of Vance and Nettie's socialist ideals, as Vance wrote to Leslie Rees from Barcelona in June 1936:

> I like the Spanish immensely… There's a wonderful feeling of youth and vitality about the country. These people never surrendered to the capitalist industrialists that depleted the rest of Europe, and now that age is beginning I believe they'll be one of the leaders of civilisation again. Nearly all I've read of Spain (which is very little) seems to me hopelessly wrong in atmosphere: writers have come here and, mistaking Spain's detachment from the capitalist-industrialist world, have written of it in terms of a museum-piece. But I mustn't dogmatise: I can only say I feel happy and at home. (Palmer 1977: 131)

In their encounter with Spanish life, the Palmers found the kind of vibrant national culture they envisaged for Australia: communal, democratic and liberated from commercial pressures. Nettie was especially impressed by the seriousness with which the Spanish took national and international politics (1988: 221). Her atmospheric pieces on pre-Revolutionary Spanish life for the *Argus* fed into her *SMH* reports following the insurgency: tales of courteous militiamen, organic community organisation against the

Rebels, the absence of vindictiveness, and the efficiency of the union-run services in the towns and cities (1988: 523-6). The Palmers' admiration for the poor but happy Spanish (214-16), Spanish folk culture and national traditions, had elements of the romanticisation of working people, and the politics of George Bernard Shaw and H.G. Wells, which David Walker considers amongst the most important influences upon them (Walker 5-7). Tim Rowse likewise maintains Vance's politics 'took more from guild socialism and William Morris's medievalism than from Marx' (Rowse 116). But the most abiding influence on Vance and Nettie's politics was the internationalist dimension of the Progressive Tradition.

The Palmers' nationalism is often seen as isolationist, when in reality, they argued for political internationalism and a substantive national culture as the basis of Australia's effective participation in international affairs. As Nettie wrote, we 'must grow in association with the rest of mankind, and this can only be by creating culture as well as by enjoying it' (qtd Smith 1988: xxvi). Again, contrary to the evidence, Modjeska claims Nettie only ever regarded literature as a purely aesthetic phenomenon, and mass culture as its wholly destructive antithesis (1981: 72). However, for the Palmers, the function of literature was to serve a non-commercial socialist ideal which would transform mass Australian culture and contribute to the processes of socio-economic change. As Nettie wrote in her journal of August 1939: 'But is there, I wonder, any such thing as "pure" literature? Isn't it just a conception of people who look on writing as an escape from the living world? Perhaps a painter or musician can cut himself off, in his work, from what's going on around him, but a writer can't' (1988: 250). The Palmers' fascination with Spain echoed this belief: they admired the way in which the rich national folk culture,

literature and art of the Spanish had helped to establish and sustain the Republic. In this regard, Spain served as an international model of socialist culture. Consequently they viewed the eclipse of the Republic by Franco's Rebellion as a global crisis. On 19 July 1936, the day of the uprising, Nettie wrote:

> Yet into the bright morning some evil seemed to have suddenly entered, violently shattering the quiet, threatening all the future. The big, empty houses up toward Tiana appeared in league with it, as if they had been waiting all summer for the attack, harbouring conspirators behind their handsome stone walls. I found myself thinking: 'This feeling of liberation here was an illusion. The dark forces have struck back; there'll be war all over the world.' (1988: 224)

Nettie's literary reputation was consolidated with the publication of *Talking it Over* (1932), *Henry Bournes Higgins* (1931), and five hundred pieces of literary journalism published between 1925 and 1935 (Smith 1988: xxxv). She used her status to advocate the Spanish Republican cause: indeed, she was consumed by it, feeling like 'Kipling's footslogger' that "'there's no discharge in the war'" (1988: 250). Marjorie Tipping notes that 'Nettie's writing of that period was confined to the Spanish question' (Tipping 17); and her diary revealed a gruelling schedule of meetings (Palmer Diary: 5 June, 5 March 1937). She wrote to Vance in October 1936, 'It's the labour groups and generally Left people who ask me to speak [on Spain], and I find it hard to refuse them, while I could have refused the *salons bourgeois*' (Palmer papers MS 1174/1/5142-5). Vance also

campaigned for the SRC, trading on his reputation as an important Australian writer and war veteran, but few other big name writers followed suit publicly.

Nettie wishfully thought that Australian writers would support Republican Spain: 'lately all I know have had this sense of the ground quaking beneath them as acutely as I have' (1988: 250). But she was soon disillusioned by the apathy of her fellow writers and the conservatism of the FAW. Consequently, Tipping argues that the Spanish War left Nettie Palmer with 'scars that would never entirely heal. She would think of those dreadful days for the rest of her life' (17). Critics have suggested that these 'scars' were the result of personal betrayals and a frustrated idealism, common to Nettie and Vance: Rowse is dismissive of the 'despair of Vance Palmer' (120), and Smith points to the couple's 'defeatism' (1988: xxx). More importantly, however, Smith identifies this defeatism in the context of the late 30s, suggesting that their disillusion was not a personal matter. It was structured by the feeling of the time that civilisation itself was under threat, and that Spain was a tragic signpost to catastrophe. As Vance wrote to Leslie Rees in September 1936:

> It's a pathetic spectacle, this England, and this Europe. I'd be glad to get out of it if I didn't believe that the world was growing more and more one and indivisible, and that a tragedy for one country was a tragedy for all. I can't forget Spain and its friendly, heroic people. There was something about those early days at Barcelona that changed the look of the world for me. (Palmer 1977: 141)

Aileen, the eldest of the Palmer daughters, was working as a translator with the athletes of the Olympiad Popular in Barcelona when the insurgency broke out (Palmer 1988: 525). She left Spain, but quickly returned with the first Medical Aid Unit as an administrator and translator. This famous British unit had been farewelled by a crowd of 10,000 in Hyde Park (Palmer papers NLA MS 1174/1/5083 and MS 1174/1/5157). Aileen was constantly on the move, taking part in the Brunete offensive and the subsequent retreats, handling huge numbers of wounded (Keene 1987: 82). Despite this, she recalled that 'Spain was the springtime of my life' ('Pilgrims Way', Aileen Palmer papers NLA MS 6759 box 5 folder 36).

Aileen had joined the CPA in 1934, the year she graduated from Melbourne University with first-class honours in French Language and Literature. She networked in Communist circles in Spain, and her CPA background forged her perception of the conflict. Whilst on leave Aileen and Angela Guest, the daughter of a conservative MP who had also served in Spain, were arrested for dousing red paint over 10 Downing Street in protest against non-intervention – an event reported in both the English and Australian press (Aileen Palmer: 21 February 1938, NLA MS 6759 folder 1 box 1). During periods of leave in 1937 and 1938, Vance and Nettie encouraged Aileen to stay in London and write a novel about the Spanish War – a task Vance had wanted to undertake himself (Palmer papers NLA MS 1174/1/5124).

Aileen began writing 'Last Mile to Huesca' in Spain at the front, and finished it after a number of redrafts in London in 1938 ('Pilgrim's Way' NLA MS 6759 box 5 folder 36-7). The title was borrowed from John Cornford's famous 'Poem' with which she was fascinated, following her meeting with him on the Huesca front. She also met

several literary identities committed to the Republican cause – Stephen Spender, Ralph and Winifred Bates (box 7 folder 4 'Poets of liberation'). The manuscript novel Aileen produced was rejected by all potential publishers including Gollancz and Curtis Brown (box 1, folder1). Judith Keene considers it 'at least as good as a number of similar works based on personal recollections of Spain that appeared at this time' (1988: 187). But 'Last Mile to Huesca' has little literary significance beyond its semi-autobiographical content. The early draft concerns people serving in a medical unit with the International Brigades; the subsequent drafts, following Vance's recommendation, centre on a single character (Keene 1988: 187). The novel was improved with a more elaborate plot and experiments with tragic action, but her International Brigader, with his secret knowledge of the truth about fascism and pitted against a false and hypocritical society, is an overwrought character and an implausible creation (box 6, folders 4–19). Aileen showed 'Last Mile' to Eric Lowe who was in England getting *Salute to Freedom* published – he criticised it for its formlessness (Aileen Palmer: 12 October 1938, box 1, folder 1).

Dame Mary Gilmore, scandalised by events in Spain, made the increasingly well-known Aileen the subject of one of her anti-fascist poems. Gilmore announced Spain to be her own cause but feared for the survival of the Republic. She characterised the conflict as a struggle between a time-honoured culture and the new cult of technical modernity, echoing the language used to describe the phenomenon of aerial bombing: 'The strength of battle is in their bones. But mechanics have taken battle from the hand bound by the rule of chivalry, & has made it a mass monster' (Strauss 140). Writing to Vance Palmer, Gilmore declared: 'What a world of schemers eating up the small!', adding, 'Death itself is not so bad; it is the time-serving and the hypocrisy that is so

degrading' (134). And to Nettie: 'What a fertility of evil there will be after these wars!' (1980: 146)

Gilmore was highly mystical in her reverence for Spanish language and culture (Strauss 161), frequently comparing Spanish racial strength and the country's history of persecution to her own Scottish heritage. In Gilmore's view, a great abomination in the Spanish War was the presence of Moorish troops, who she regarded as mercenaries of Spain's fascist inclined aristocracy and the Catholic Church (125). Gilmore told Hugh McCrae that the racially threatening Moors in Spain were an example of modern 'evil' (Gilmore 1980: 123-4).

Gilmore's *Battlefields* (completed 1937, published 1939) intended 'to help, in its small way, put the gulf wider between man and war' (Gilmore 1980: 138, 168). The volume was a generalised reflection on social conflicts between the powerful and the dispossessed: 'There was no hunted one/ With whom I did not run' (1939: 73). The verses covered a range of social issues and types: 'Widow's Pensions', 'The Sempstress', 'Unskilled', and in 'Sic Transit' the revenge of colonials on their British overlords – 'When, frustrate, in its very vitals lurk/ Great starved communities to ravage there… In massed battalions, armies of despair' (1939: 69). *Battlefields* also included 'Barcelona', inspired by Gilmore's concern for Aileen Palmer in Spain:

How could I tell how much you meant –
That dear, that eager head,
The look that carried life's intent,
The words that broke half-said!

The world has moved since then; the dust
Is deep on many a face;
Yet once again war's dreadful thrust
Mocks each familiar place.

You had no fear of death, and so,
In one far, bloodied street,
I see your darling head laid low,
I see your shattered feet.

Shot-torn and still, the pulse grown thick
That once leapt fountain high,
Life's candle out, only the wick
To show how you could die! (1939: 52)

When 'Barcelona' was first published in the *SMH*, in March 1938, Gilmore reassured Nettie Palmer that the poem did not refer specifically to Aileen 'but it was thinking of Aileen made me write it' (February 1939; March 1939). The poem may have been derived from a specific concern, but its tone was abstracted and ahistorical; it resented the brigader's death as more brazen folly than tragedy. Nevertheless, it was Gilmore's only public statement on Spain, and despite private declarations that Spain was her current cause, in print she remained equivocal and even evasive on the issue.

In private, Gilmore used Spain as a pretext to establish literary friendships. Lionel Lindsay's letters to the *SMH* defending the Spanish Republic prompted Gilmore to relay her private support: 'we are one with Spain & because of the Spaniard somewhere in both of us' (Strauss 145). Lindsay shared Gilmore's view that 'the thought of the Moors in Spain is a heart break' (Gilmore 1980: 124), and saw their co-operation with Franco as a modern betrayal of their extraordinary cultural legacy. Lindsay's love of Spain was crucially founded on the belief that Arab culture had bestowed the greatest achievements of civilisation there, which led him to construct a medievalist, pre-modern fantasy of Spain as a model society (Mendelssohn 98).

Georges Bizet's operatic dramatisation of the tragedy and majesty of the Spanish people sparked Lindsay's life-long fascination with Spain – he considered '*Carmen* as the determining factor of my life' (Lindsay 1967: 119-20). He was particularly interested in the culture of the South and its Islamic influences, and visited the region four times between 1902 and 1934. In 1926, he toured Spain for three months travelling mainly by train, and his work there formed a major part of his 1927 London exhibition of sixty-four prints which was 'an immediate, even phenomenal, success' (Wright 1949: 5). Lindsay proudly retold the compliment that a Spaniard made of his work: 'He sees Spain with our eyes' (Lindsay 1949: 16).

Contrary to the claim of Lindsay's biographer, Joanna Mendelssohn, that his art displayed 'a secret vision of Spain caught out of time, away from politics and conflict' (167), Lindsay's representation of Spain was explicitly political. In the Spain of 1902 he believed he had found a pre-capitalist society which still had 'all good traditional things that today have suffered the invasion of mass-produced rubbish' (Lindsay 1967: 174). In

a book of sketches made in Málaga in 1934, Lindsay wrote: 'Man is becoming a mechanised toy – Stalin, *Mussolini* and Hitler have standardised everything – the individual is no more – wings clipped and voice extinguished – his thought and act made to order' (qtd Holden 29). In Lindsay's mind, 'The machine destroys all culture' and Franco, not least through his bombing of Spanish cities, was bringing a modern fascist-clerical oppression that was inimical to Spain's character (Lindsay 1967: 175; 1946: 7). In stark contrast, Spain and its people stood in exemplary defiance of mass modernity and conformism: 'For the Spaniard is grave, he has the tragic sense of life, and is the most confident individualist in Europe' (Lindsay 1949: 11). With these qualities, Lindsay proclaimed, the Spaniard would never submit to either Communism or fascism (*SMH* 24 September 1936).

Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy of radical individualism and politics of selfhood were of central importance to Lindsay: Nietzsche was exemplary 'as artist, as stimulus, as supreme critic of decadence' (Lindsay 1967: 122) and advocate of the values Lindsay believed modernity endangered through totalitarianism, mass production and the destruction of tradition (Holden 29). Nietzsche offered a revolutionary impulse against modernity: an alternative form of revolution to socialism which relied on wilful individualism to effect change against the soulless standardisation of the modern order (Aschheim 152). Lindsay mapped these philosophical precepts onto his view of the Spanish character. 'Between the peasant and the machine stretch an abyss', Lindsay wrote (1967: 175), and Spain's pre-capitalist culture signified an individualist protest against modern decadence inflected through Nietzscheanism.

Lindsay's final 1934 tour of Spain took him into remote regions by mule, exposing him to poverty and administrative corruption. Living with a working-class family in Seville and roaming Toledo's back streets he saw urban destitution (Lindsay 1946: 7; 1949: 10, 13), and his visit coincided with Anarchist uprisings and the country's slide towards conflict (Thomas 1961: 74). Lindsay's interactions with ordinary Spaniards provoked a political revelation: 'I see a great change in the Spanish people, they are greatly suffering but Russia has dug deeply here and the daily "bomb outrage" is the only way the poor fools can get back at the times' (qtd Mendelssohn 183). His former distaste for the democratisation of Spain was reversed, and he came to support the liberal Republican president Azana (Mendelssohn 187).

After the 1936 Rebellion, Lindsay turned to poetry to express his specific anger toward Franco, the Catholic Church – 'The Church of Spain is a traitor to the Spanish People' (1959: 44) – and the collaboration of his much-admired Moors with the Fascist insurrection. In a single verse of 'Spain 1938', Lindsay compressed his rage at the Church, German and Italian intervention, the Moorish betrayal and the spectacle of air raids:

And haste thee to the cry of stricken Spain,
The crow shall give thee passage o'er the plain
And from the height the vulture point the way.
The Pope hath won the Moslem to his pay,
Roman and Hun that bear the brand of Cain,
From the clear skies black death and ruin rain

> On guiltless girls and children at their play. (1959: 45)

Lindsay continued the attack in poems such as 'Alfonso XIII', 'Education in Spain' and 'Resurrection' (1938), in which he linked the tyranny of the Church, usury and the Axis powers aiding Franco: 'Spain it was time – the Jesus Company,/ For the fat treasury that owns its heart,/ Forges with alien help a heavier chain' (1959: 47).

Lindsay returned to Australia in 1935, becoming a voice for liberal-conservative opinion in support of the Republic. In letters to the *SMH* he slammed the Catholic Church for its debilitating influence on Spanish life – at a time when many Australian Leftists were trying to appease Catholic opinion (*SMH* 18 September 1936). P.S. Cleary and other Catholics replied in numerous letters, but Lindsay countered them with well presented facts backed-up by his Spanish experience (*SMH* 8 and 24 September 1936). He also gave interviews to a number of papers in which he stressed the political complexity of the war and the oppression of the Church, prompting Robert Menzies to suppose he was 'a bit of a Red' (Mendelssohn 188). H.V. Evatt and C.E.W. Bean declared their support for Lindsay's position on the Spanish conflict; and Bean was stung into further action by Winston Churchill's diatribe against the Spanish 'Reds', printed in the *SMH* on 19 April 1937. In his reply, Bean castigated Churchill's call for British neutrality on the issue of Spain, linking it to Churchill's well-known praise of Mussolini:

> Churchill – in S.M.H. – typically supports the fascist rule in Spain where the [railways] run well, the traffic is ordered, production is steady, people are summarily executed if they revolt, and the main part of them are

> discontented and miserable – not agreeable to stay in the condition in which feudalism has put them and which looks so beautiful to the unsympathetic eye of Winston Churchill. He never has understood the people, never will. (Bean April 1937)

The Spanish situation allowed Bean to indulge himself in a romanticisation of 'people power'. The romance ended when he realised that propaganda, 'the most poisonous of modern weapons' (Bean 1937: 12), could gull the idealised masses to support fascist expansionism as they did in Hitler's Germany.

The idea of the unique and resistant character of the Spanish people remained a valuable imaginative resource for the pro-Republican cause, but this stereotype was sometimes viewed as stressed and undermined by unfolding political events. Jack Lindsay, for example, found his propensity to revere the Spanish people confounded by the War:

> There was a peculiarly tragic quality in the struggle, with the Spanish people doomed from the outset through the help given by Mussolini and Hitler and the betrayal of the 'democracies', and with the anarchist spontaneities and confusions of the people themselves. (Lindsay 1962: 264)

Thus Lindsay wrote of *the* political event that proved decisive in his life and work. The Spanish War coincided exactly with his political re-awakening of earlier adolescent

flirtations with Bolshevism. But in 1936, after re-reading Marx and Lenin, Lindsay finally believed he had found a true basis for world unity in equality, brotherhood, justice and a unitary consciousness that could overcome the old contradictions of thought and feeling (1962: 252; 1982: 133). The Soviet Union and the Communist Party of Great Britain represented a 'new form of authority to which I could yield a pure allegiance' (254). Brandishing his 'Bolshie beard', his vegetarianism, his teetotalling, and his sugary Keatsian verse, Lindsay might have been one of the socialist caricatures Orwell had in mind when describing the 'bearded fruit-juice drinkers who come flocking towards the smell of "progress" like bluebottles to a dead cat' (Orwell 1937: 195). No progressive cause was more pungent than Spain, and Lindsay wrote: 'The Civil War had itself affected me as no other event in my whole life. Coming just at the moment when I had discovered my new allegiance, it represented the new life with the immediate threat and attack it aroused from all the forces of evil, of power and property' (1962: 264).

Lindsay's political engagement with Spain was pre-ordained. He shared his father's fascinations with Nietzsche and classicism, and his uncle Lionel's obsession with Spain – predating the Civil War and evident in Jack's early poetry. Lindsay's obsession was also influenced by his father Norman: they shared the hope for a classical renaissance and an overturning of philistine materialism – potentialities which the younger Lindsay located in his imagined Spain. And his view of the Spanish War was also conditioned by his belief that tragedy was the aesthetic form most appropriate to an understanding of the human condition and the modern age:

> I still felt that the tragic pattern was the deepest revelation of the human condition, that consciousness was developed by a process which ensured that it arrived too late to affect things, that the flaw in life was discovered at the point where consciousness had decisively broken through, and that the peculiar struggle in tragedy was this tension between the doomed and the liberated consciousness (1962: 234).

This view of tragedy was conditioned by a fusion of Nietzscheanism and marxism: a common intellectual accommodation in Europe between 1890 and 1933, when many on the Left blended Nietzschean philosophy with revolutionary socialism (Aschheim 147). Uniquely, as Lindsay's mention of doomed and liberated consciousnesses indicated, he added psychoanalysis to an aesthetic theory that insisted: 'Whereas before the hero-artist struggled to make manifest life's wholeness, now it is the proletariat who struggle to make manifest humanity's consciousness of its lost tribal origins' (Mackie 93). And as the term 'tribal origins' suggested, Lindsay added elements of anthropology: forming a total world-view in which politics, psychology, history, and social structures coalesced.

Spain was a testing ground for Lindsay's new, multi-sourced philosophy; and his idealisation of the Spanish proletariat was central to this new philosophy's attempt to provoke a full-scale revolution in human consciousness and society. Consequently, individuality was subsumed in the dionysian, chaotic flux of history; and 'the people' become merely instrumental, as they were in Lindsay's 'mass declamation' *On Guard for Spain*:

> Workers of the world, unite for us
>
> That bear the burden of all.
>
> You shall not hear us complain
>
> That the wolves of death are ravening in our streets,
>
> If you but understand, if your bodies flow
>
> Into this steel of resistance, this welded mass,
>
> Making you one with us, and making us
>
> Unconquerable. (1981: 313)

This passage was the proof for critics, like Stephen Spender, that Lindsay spoke for Spain out of theoretical abstraction, not experience. Implicitly replying, Lindsay maintained throughout his life that until the Republican defeat he believed his 'own aspirations were indistinguishable from what I felt of the Spanish people' (1962: 264).

Lindsay's visionary proclivities were anomalous to – but not unprecedented in – British intellectual life: Robert Mackie rightly describes Lindsay as a kind of marxist polymath, a variety of plant least likely to survive in the 'pragmatic empiricist soil of English culture' (Mackie 13). And Lindsay's openly political writing attracted the accusation that it was subliterary: F.R. Leavis, for example, thought Lindsay used his novels for vulgar propaganda (Croft 38, 40). Australian critic Randolph Hughes was more balanced in his assessment that Lindsay was masterful in his descriptive powers in his historical novels, but that his other work was degraded by politics (Hughes 1939: 36).

More supportively, D.H. Lawrence had earlier berated Lindsay to 'Give up writing all this muck about love. Leave it to the Sashy Sitwells. You're right in what you

hate. Stick to that and you'll get somewhere' (qtd Lindsay 1962: 154). In the pivotal year 1936, Lindsay implemented Lawrence's advice and forcefully pursued a writing practice in which politics and poetry were equal partners, although his early marxist poetry still contained 'muck':

> Will you take me workers? Will you take me as one
> of yourselves? I have stripped time's rags and stand naked.
> I have thrown away the past, all that I've wastefully done;
> that's ended now, I have no reason to shun
> your eyes. I offer my hand. Will you take it?…
> Manhood is yours, you workers. Yours alone.
> You are life's ceaseless pattern mocking despair.
> (Lindsay 1981: 'First Fears and Misapprehensions').

As the attentions of Spender, Leavis and Lawrence testified, Lindsay was not considered a minor writer, and the 30s proved to be a highly productive decade for him. Of the more than 150 books he published, 29 date from this period: the majority were novels, followed by translations and classical and British histories. Lindsay was also a celebrity in the CPGB, intending to join the International Brigade, but the Party discouraged him. After the deaths of Ralph Fox, John Cornford and Christopher Caudwell, the party was worried that its most capable and persuasive literary minds were being needlessly sacrificed in Spain. As a compensatory fantasy, Lindsay imagined writing for the party

was ‘tantamount to going into the International Brigade’ (264). To that end, he produced an impressive number of poems for the Republican cause.

‘Warning of the End’ was Lindsay’s first Spanish Civil War poem – believed to be the first verse written on the subject in England – and was a direct expression of his ‘new stirring loyalty’ (1962: 263). The poem was blemished by its false comparison of the Spanish and Russian revolutions; but in ‘Looking at a Map of Spain on the Devon Coast’, written in August 1937 and published in *Poems for Spain*, Lindsay captured a genuine generational sensibility about the conflict:

> The waves that break and rumble on the sands
> gleaming outside my window, break on Spain.
> Southward I look and only the quick waves stretch
> between my eyes and ravaged Santander moaning
> with many winds of death, great blackening blasts
> of devastation and little alley-whispers
> when forgotten children die. (1981: 290)

‘Looking at a Map of Spain’ resembled Matthew Arnold’s ‘Dover Beach’: a reaction to the 1848 revolutions – ‘Swept with confused alarms of struggles and flight/ Where ignorant armies clash by night’ (Arnold 1961: 212). Like ‘Dover Beach’, Lindsay’s poem was situated at an historic point where universal crisis was unresolved, and Spain was indeed Lindsay’s ‘darkling plain’. From the vantage of Devon, Lindsay saw the Arnoldian clash of ‘ignorant armies’:

> The printed words black on the small white page
> waver like mountains on the expanse of day.
> They ring me round, sierras of history
> granite above time's stream with human meanings
> that make the stars a tinsel and the thundering
> waves on the rattled beach a trivial echo
> of their tremendous wars.
> I lean towards Spain over the sundering waters. (1981: 290)

What saved Lindsay from the depths of Arnold's despair was his faith in the revolutionary proletariat. 'Looking at a Map of Spain' damned capitalist oppression and countered it with hopeful images of the Spanish people:

> The map of Spain
> seethes with the truth of things, no longer closed
> in greed's geography, an abstract space
> of imports, exports, capitalist statistics,
> the jargon record of a tyrannous bargain.
> The scroll of injustice, the sheet of paper is torn,
> and behind the demolished surface of the lie
> the Spanish people are seen with resolute faces. (1981: 290-1)

In many ways, the considerable literary qualities of the poem were off-set by this reversion to Lindsay's new philosophy, in which the 'people' figured so conspicuously. The poem was also compromised by a collapse into the dogmatic imagery of Soviet propaganda at its close: 'You militiaman/ …your hands/ speak of the sickle and hammer, and the rifle/ you hold in such a way' (291). Even industrial labour was ennobled by association with good Soviet example:

And louder too than all the hell of war
clanging over the tiles or the hilltops hoarse
with raiding planes, there sounds the pulse of work,
the hum of factories in communal day.
The girl with the cap of liberty at the loom
weaves the fate of Spain,
the web of brotherhood on the warp of courage (1981: 292)

Hugh D. Ford, generally dismissive of Lindsay's achievements, identified Lindsay of all the 30s English poets as the most zealous in celebrating the 'new life' of Spain's masses (Ford 139). But he also observed that 'Looking at a Map of Spain' obscured the necessary action of 'today' by substituting an idealised vision for the unpleasant reality of war (140): the present was tinged by a personal melancholy removed from collective struggle, derived from Lionel, Jack and Norman's fascination with Spain as exotic pre-modern spectacle. To them, Spain was an organic agrarian fantasy world; and in 'Looking at a Map of Spain' this myth still persisted – albeit in the vision of the joyful,

organic unity of labour acting according to the regimentation of a Soviet five-year plan. And despite Lindsay's rhapsody to efficient industry and the building of the future, he foreshadowed the Republic's tragic end at a time when many other Communists were still exaggerating its military gains:

> Oh, Map of Spain creviced with countless graves,
> even now, even now, the storm of murder comes.
> The burning face of day is blind with tears.
> I stand at the Atlantic edge and look
> southwards and raise my hand to Spain. Salute. (292)

Lindsay's most famous and critically-acclaimed contribution to Spain's antifascist resistance was the mass declamation *On Guard for Spain* (1937). The influential and popular organisation, Unity Theatre, asked Lindsay to compose a poem for mass declamation for the Spanish Aid Committee. Unity had found mass declamation to be a popular and effective form; and the mass recitation had already established its place in the repertoire of socialist theatre groups through the influence of German workers' choirs of the Weimar era (Watson 1984: 63; Cunningham 1980: 44). *On Guard*, first published in *Left Review* and subsequently as a penny pamphlet featuring a theoretical commentary on its production, was first performed as a declamation at a rally in Trafalgar Square in 1937. Later it was staged by Amateur Unity, the Left Book Club and other theatre groups, enjoying success on many occasions throughout Britain (Watson 1984: 63, 67).

The ‘mass’ in the declamation was the audience, whilst six actors worked to a script for solo or small-group voices maintaining the rhythmic quality of the verse (Lindsay qtd Cunningham 45). Lindsay believed the choreography to be distinctive and different from Bertolt Brecht’s theatre: *On Guard* was designed to include marching, manoeuvres with flags, and a cast arrayed in International Brigade uniforms (Lindsay qtd Cunningham 45; Watson 1984: 67). The Communist Edgell Rickword, a comrade of Lindsay’s, considered the anti-fascist value of this ‘breakthrough by Jack Lindsay in verse declamations’ to reside in its collectivist nature. It was

> a thing that could have come off only in a time of exceptional emotional intensity. The real triumph was the drawing into the cultural ambit of a significant number of men and women who were barricaded out from participation in what was regarded as a middle-class preserve. Our aim was a political one, to eradicate fascism, and this could only be done by the fullest co-operation of the masses. (qtd Tolley 320)

However, most critics are baffled at the success of *On Guard*; even at the time of its performance many regarded it as forced and naïve (Gillen 1993: 73). Ford regards the poem as ‘tedious’, populated with generalisations and moral reprobation, pointing to laughable lines like ‘workers, going to battle,/ went as to a fiesta’ (Ford 142). There are many such lines to choose from; ‘With some old pistols and our bare hands/ we charged/ we charged’ (1981: 300); and ‘Unbreakfasted, the people/ put the fascists to rout’ (301). Other lines were incredibly presumptuous; ‘I speak for the Spanish people,/ I speak for

the Spanish people to the workers of the world' (304). In other instances, Lindsay's enthusiasm produced symbolism worthy of the fascist-Futurist F.T. Marinetti:

> Yet we cry louder than the winds of darkness,
> Louder than all fields of frenzy
> Gashed with flame-flowers of grenades.
> Hammer of industry, strike down those who would steal from us.
> Sickle of plenty, cut down those who would starve us. (311)

On Guard moved against the current of Republican propaganda which sought to avoid Soviet triumphalism. Ford doubts the effectiveness of such dramatic statements as propaganda, citing Lindsay's description of fascist warfare as 'gouged and scourged and maimed and lamed and murdered,/ blew up with grenades the wounded in hospital wards.' But it is not the repetition of such horrors which numb the listener, as Ford suggests (Ford 142), but its indefatigable anti-tragic romanticism.

On Guard's popularity was undeniable: it played to countless rallies with audiences at times numbering in the thousands. Members of Unity Theatre recall seeing people moved to tears at the mere mention of bombed Spanish towns during the performance – Harry Pollitt and Ellen Wilkinson had rarely seen such an emotional impact from a performance (Watson 1984: 69). The Left Book Club considered 'our most valuable contribution to the theatre and to the movement during the past year is our success in popularising mass declamations' (qtd Watson 1984: 70). Secretary of the Left Book Club Theatre Guild, John Allen, viewed *On Guard* as appropriately demanding for

a working-class audience, commenting that it would be wrong to spoon feed working-class audiences and actors – begging the question what spoon feeding might actually be (Lindsay 1956: 55).

Ford sees the popular acclaim of *On Guard* as reducible to its preaching to the converted; Tolley regards *On Guard* as 'an object lesson in how inanity of feeling goes along with inanity of rhetoric' (319). And according to Lindsay, intellectuals like Spender did not approve of its persuasive effect on audiences. Even the CPGB was coy, avoiding any mention of Lindsay's name in the credits, apparently not wanting to be associated with the author (Lindsay qtd Cunningham 45). Its success lay with its defiance of the uncertainty of the structure of feeling associated with Spain. People seemed to need a defiant and unequivocal statement of the justice of the Republican cause – even if it was part military tattoo and part Protestant revival meeting.

Based on the success of the mass declamations, Lindsay set about studying the public nature of poetic performance and its impact as a spoken form. He unearthed the lost oral traditions which were erased as the development of capitalism forced a division between poetry and the speaking voice, poet and audience. Lindsay believed this organic relationship had ensured social realism and broad accessibility – qualities he considered to be in short supply in modern poetry. Like Spender and Caudwell, Lindsay believed times of social crisis could restore the organic relationship between poet and public. The Romantics had failed to restore this unity; however, in the crises of the 30s mass recitation would form the basis of a new peoples' poetry.

Some movements within the avant garde had also attempted to critique the dominant culture through a popular revival of repressed native culture, theoretically

representing a ‘broader human tradition’ of untamed and innate creativity (Willams 1989: 10). Lindsay, however, had a clearer historical grounding for his lament of the decay of English proletarian culture, seeing seven thousand years of minstrelsy wiped out in two generations of commodity capitalism. Lindsay believed that in Spain, however, these traditions had survived intact. In Spain, ‘an unbroken tradition’ endured:

> from the days of the minstrels of ancient Egypt to (in England) the balladist of Victorian days, who petered out in a welter of sentiment and bawdry. In Spain the tradition has never been broken… our working-class movement is so far on the lowest stage of poetic impoverishment. (March 1938)

To Lindsay’s thinking, the Broadside or Broadsheet (as he termed it) was the answer to the problems of political literature in the modern era: it will ‘organise popular emotion’ laying the basis of future art – ‘Poetry on account of its rhythmic compression is the spearhead of culture’. Lindsay was chairman of the Left Book Club’s Poetry Group, co-editing their monthly journal *Poetry and the People* and the more pedestrian *Left Poets News Sheet*. His Writers and Readers group had 200 members including Cecil Day-Lewis, John Lehmann and Rebecca West across some twenty-five branches (Samuel 74; Caesar 211). An ‘astonishing number’ of Australians attended meetings and contributed to the publications, including Aileen Palmer and John Manifold, whose verse was clearly shaped by Lindsay’s literary ambitions (qtd Caesar 211; Malouf 52). At a time when Spanish Relief Committees were embracing new technologies such as film,

Lindsay appealed through the *Left Poets News Sheet* for the revival of the English Broadsheet. Lindsay's Broadsheet idea followed Vladimir Mayakovsky's example of exposing workers to art in newspapers, at meetings, and on posters during the early years of the Bolshevik revolution. It was one of the 'new developments' Lindsay expected to emerge from the revival of the mass declamation which shared the same tradition. Lindsay contended that the Broadsheet was a key expression of popular culture and struggle over the last three centuries. All art had its basis in struggle, he claimed; originally that struggle was with the seasons and death, now it would find its 'rebirth' through participation in class struggle (Lindsay January 1938).

Lindsay's quest to revive English proletarian culture continued in 1938, when the Left Book Club printed his *Five Thousand Years of Poetry*: an anthology of ballads and lyrics that proved popular at Unity Theatre and Left Book Club cultural weeks (Watson 1984: 70). He also established and co-edited *Poetry and the People*. This small, inexpensive monthly journal aimed to reconnect people with a poetry that was based in daily reality: tapping the poetic rhythms of life and exposing the contradictions of modernity (Lindsay September 1938). In Tolley's estimation, it was the only periodical of the 30s which could claim to publish proletarian poems – however, few contributing poets could genuinely claim that class status (328).

Lindsay's stature as a poet earned him a place in the famous booklet *Poems for Spain* (1939), edited by Stephen Spender and John Lehmann, which featured some of the great poets of the decade: Auden, Read, Cornford, Warner, Day Lewis, and MacNeice. Lindsay's poem 'Looking at a Map of Spain on the Devon Coast' was anthologised alongside Auden's 'Spain'; his position in the anthology confirmed his place within the

Auden generation and its political, artistic and psychoanalytic interests. Spender's introduction to *Poems for Spain* was a statement defining the Auden generation:

> Poets and poetry have played a considerable part in the Spanish War, because to many people the struggle of the Republicans [exemplifies] the [political] conditions without which the writing and reading of poetry are almost impossible in modern society (1939: 7).

Spender placed his generation's soldier-poet in a tradition of English liberal letters – following Wordsworth, who wrote in defence of Spain when it was occupied by Napoleon. The poet would preserve the moral forces of liberty, justice and freedom, defending them against their 'prostitution to public interests'. By late 1938, however, Spender's soldier-poets would also be doomed to record the Republic's tragedy:

> At Guernica, at Irun, wherever the Republic has sustained defeat, its cause represents pure tragedy, because these defeats are the real and entire destruction of a life and a principle by the death-bearing force that opposes them. In the rest of Europe one sees principle confused, betrayed, compromised: but in Spain the idea clothed in flesh and blood is continually being destroyed, and therefore as continually and as purely reborn in the mind of a world which remains a spectator. (1939: 9)

Spender shared Lindsay's ambition for a national resurgence of English poetic traditions through political action. But he and Lindsay would have a serious and revealing disagreement over the function of tragedy, arguing how art could formulate political action from modernity's emergent structure of tragic feeling.

In *After the Thirties*, Lindsay settled old scores with the Auden generation, and especially with Spender. According to Lindsay, Spender could not see that the 'objective' nature of class struggle required submission to Stalinism (Lindsay 1956: 31–2). In an extraordinary statement, Lindsay claimed that it was easy to be progressive during the years of the Spanish Civil War; and that because so much attention was directed to foreign fascists such as Franco, the roots of domestic social conflict remained unrecognised, and middle-class interlopers swelled the ranks of anti-fascist organisations instead of attending to class struggles at home (53). In contrast, the success of the Popular Front, as Communist historians such as Margot Heinemann pointed out, was its ability to link domestic and foreign conflict to a *system* in perpetual crisis, often through the example of Spain. As the first verse of *On Guard* pronounced:

> What you shall hear is the tale of the Spanish people.
>
> It is also your own life.
>
> On guard, we cry!
>
> It is the pattern of the world to-day. (1981: 295)

Lindsay was piqued by Spender's article 'Poetry', written after his return from Spain and published in the July 1937 edition of *Fact*. The article announced Spender's break from

Communism and Party orthodoxy. He would henceforth support what he termed the 'socialist movement': a united front free from Soviet Communism, in the vein of the British Progressive Tradition (Spender 1937: 19). Spender's new philosophy was firmly within the empiricism of English socialism where, by Raymond Williams' reckoning, social reform was as much an issue of feeling and imagination as fact and organisation (1989: 76).

Hynes suggests that there was a struggle in Spender who, as a complex man, envied the 'life and death of simple commitment' but was unable to reduce poetry and poetic value to such strictures (1979: 361). Spender despised what Cyril Connolly has called the 'Rupert Brooke period' of Spanish Civil War poetry: the environment in which English writers like Day-Lewis pronounced Spain a conflict of 'light against darkness' (qtd Hynes 1979: 242; Carpenter 206). Spender found this metaphysic repellent: a remnant of Great War cant.

Consequently, Spender offered Lindsay's work as an example of Great War propaganda masquerading as great poetry in the service of Spain: 'What Owen meant when he said that English poetry is not yet fit to speak of heroes becomes doubly clear if one considers the kind of poetry which endeavours to serve the purposes of heroic war propaganda' (Spender 1937: 27). Spender continued, quoting lines from *On Guard*,

> I rose from the bed of my wife's young body
> at the call of liberty.
> O feed with my body our flag's red flame,
> Comrades, remember me.

‘So sings Jack Lindsay,’ Spender wrote, ‘putting the sentiments into the mouth of a young militia lad in Barcelona… Such writing is simply a record of hysteria which the poet shares with his audience and himself and does not see at all from the outside’ (27).

For Spender, socialism was the pressing issue of the age, but it was not a religion: it was fallible and contingent, and the poet’s loyalty ought to be with key human needs – moral concern above politics. Poets ‘are certainly more inclined to be the critics of reality than the hidden legislators of mankind’ (20). Opposing Lindsay, Spender theorised that poetry was not concerned with provoking political action ‘but with the vital sources from which the necessary action springs’ (20-1). To be a poet ‘is not to give out the propagandist word of order… it is to understand and interpret the need for justice’: a need prior to materialist philosophy and activism (21). That need was identified and articulated through an idiom which was loyal to experience and cognisant of a larger view of life: ‘Poetry, like science does not dogmatically restate accepted theories, it always goes back to the evidence’ (22). To Spender, propaganda had its uses but poetry must be true to lived experience and free to warn (26).

Spender slammed Lindsay for glorifying the fate of ‘heroes’; adding that for most soldiers war was ‘a short way to a beastly death’ – ‘If that’s what you think dying at the barricades is like, why not try it?’ (27). In response to Lindsay’s blinkered verse, Spender envisaged a poetic that synthesised a consideration of the ideas for which men fought (as in Auden’s ‘Spain’) with a concern for human experience: a poetic that explored ‘the tragic and terrible results of… ideas’ (29). In this ideal synthesis, ‘those who without forgetting the horrible reality’ would ‘fulfil in their lives the idea for which they are willing to die’ (29). Lindsay’s belated self-defence perversely alleged that Spender had

really argued ‘the death of a young fascist and the death of a young militiaman would be equally pathetic’: implying that Spender’s human concerns were politically non-aligned abstractions (1956: 56-7).

After Spender’s assault, Lindsay continued to compose many occasional declamations, confirming Spender’s original charge that he simply revived forms and idioms of Great War propaganda. Possibly written with John Fould’s 1923 *World Requiem* in mind, Lindsay’s ‘Requiem Mass for Englishmen Fallen in the International Brigade’ exemplified this later work:

> Call out the rollcall of the dead, that we,
> the living, may answer, under the arch of peace
> assembled where the lark’s cry is the only shrapnel,
> a dew of song, a skywreath laid on earth
> out of the blue silence of teeming light
> in this spring-hour of truce prefiguring
> the final triumph, call upon them proudly
> *the men whose bones now lie on the earth of freedom.* (1981: 316)

As words like ‘justice’ and ‘freedom’ were increasingly detached from the reality of war in Spain, as they had been in 1914, most writers of the 30s were confounded. In response, Lindsay deliberately harked back to an era of stable values when people believed in heroism, honour and the raised diction of traditional moral action. Lindsay idealised the war and sanitised the heroic death, which in Spender’s mind was the central lie of the war

propagandist (Hynes 1979: 285). And as his 'Requiem Mass' showed, Lindsay consciously reverted to the predominantly pastoral forms and idioms of Great War poetry: a mode in which a dionysian life force typically infused the natural imagery, and each individual death was mourned by an English provincial community. Jon Silkin refers to this characteristic of Great War poetry as the 'sad shires' syndrome – a peculiarly English tendency to 'elevate compassion into a religiose sentiment' (Silkin 62). That mode reappeared in Lindsay's work:

> Where now is he, that leader of London busmen,
> in ragged olivegroves on the Jarama sector,
> a company-commander? Wiping grit from his eye,
> he laughed, and swung the machinegun on the ledge
> of toppling Fascists, then to the higher ground
> ordered his men…
> *Where is Bill Briskey of Dalston?* (1981: 318)

Lindsay emphasised sacrifice, reverting to cultic notions of the fertilising power of sacrificial blood atonement. The hero was the suffering servant of others: 'Where the shells splash enormous flowers of destruction…/ And after the agony you will pluck fruits in the garden…/ for we are they in whom love becomes justice' (317):

> with marshgold smouldering in the hollows of sunset,
> and sweetness plaited in the hazel-catkins.

> Here in this green hawthorn-moment of England,
>
> we conjure them, brief as an azure drift of windflowers,
>
> *and lasting as the earth of unity*. (319)

After Franco's victory Lindsay retreated further into Stalinism, remaining committed to the USSR until his death. Croft observes that most of Lindsay's novels dealt with tragic defeats of freedom (Croft 44) and this was ultimately how Lindsay came to view his troubled relationship with all politics, particularly the 'dogmatisms' of the CPGB. His more open marxism marginalised him within the Communist Party, marking him out for liquidation in the event of a revolution in Britain (Lindsay 1982: 804). But Lindsay retained a unique capacity to engage with the tragic structure of feeling that shook his generation's idealism, even if it was inflected with Stalinist doggerel. Indeed, Lindsay always sought to overcome the age's tragic sense with an irrational affirmation of faith; and three cheers for the Soviet miracle were frequently appended to his verse:

> Having felt for Spain, what further can we feel?
>
> Acted out is the tragedy of our day.
>
> Staled and dull gesturing of the old evil
>
> only remain, a hollow world, sordidly grey.
>
> Find even agony a boredom ticking
>
> mindless as a clock. Face on to bleakness,
>
> the foregone struggle accepted, but something lacking,
>
> the sweet light quencht, while madmen fight in darkness.

> So I said, but forgot how the earth's daffodil-spear
> splits winter's iron mail, and thrushsong wakes
> out of black frost of silence. Listen now.
> Across war's thickening storm the life-beat breaks:
> Red Army march or budpulse on the bough?
> unconquerable Spring or the Soviet Star? (1956: 65)

In verse like this, father Norman's social vision was still evident. Jack never fully escaped it, and his ruminations on Spain's tragedy encompassed both classicism and the orthodox family view of Spanish pastoralism and cultural organicism. In the 30s, as Jack was politically radicalised by the Spanish War, these earlier Arcadian fantasies were transferred to Soviet Communism: as his verse often demonstrated, Stalin's Russia and the vitalism of natural forces were indivisible.

In 1937, the 'scandalous' Brian Penton launched a scathing attack on the 'stucco Hollywood temple of Lindsayism' and its obliviousness to the march of history: 'always preferring to "fly to Arcady by way of the Spanish Main" than to face immediate historical problems' (qtd Buckridge 185). The previous year, Penton had pursued the life of a novelist on extended Spanish holiday in the fishing village of Torremolinos: picturesque despite 'the smell of pig shit. Dead fish and Andalusian peasants' (162-3).

His stay was inconvenienced by political unrest following the 1936 election of the Popular Front, but when Penton met Nettie Palmer in London on his way home he relayed nothing of any political strife – oddly, in Nettie's opinion (Palmer 1988: 202). Returning to Sydney, Penton wrote a piece for the new *Daily Telegraph* describing a

series of bloody incidents in Torremolinos: the murder of three corrupt officials – the tax collector, the priest and the landlord – by a Red mob (21 July 1936). Penton's tale of Spanish tragic-comic chaos and bloodlust was tailored to the conventions of a flood of racist tales of Spanish anarchy and incompetence that appeared in Australian papers throughout 1936. As Patrick Buckridge concludes: 'If Penton's Civil War anecdote is largely a concoction of exaggerations and fantasies, as it probably is, it is not the less interesting for that. In particular, the unresolved ambivalence of his political stance in the piece marks a genuine rejection of the orthodoxies of Left and Right which helped isolate him for rest of his career' (165). In contrast to Jack and Lionel Lindsay – in whom the Spanish experience provoked self-questioning and political realignments – Penton's invention of 'news' demonstrated intellectual cowardice and craven conformity to Australia's mainstream media editorial line.

Penton attempted to appease public opinion, wishing a plague on both houses of the Republic and the Rebel insurgency. But as Jack Lindsay anticipated in his popular mass declamations, the Republic fast attracted broad public sympathy, and a key aspect of it was the fascination with the mythic figure of the International Brigader as the era's most conspicuous example of self-sacrifice. The tragic-heroic Brigader, who loomed large in Lindsay's writings, also featured in the works of Christina Stead, Patrick White and Martin Boyd in the late 30s and 40s.

Christina Stead had an ambivalent response to Spain: a Penton-like, patrician disdain for the Spanish people possibly reinforced her soft-Nietzschean idealisation of International Brigaders. Stead travelled to Spain on the eve of the Rebellion in June 1936, with her partner Bill Blake (Wilhelm Blech) – the author of numerous works on marxist

political economy who intended to invest in an olive estate. In the Sierra mountain village of Ronda, Stead thought she had found her 'ideal habitat' and completed much of *House of All Nations* until the Generals' Rebellion interrupted her (211-12). Stead's diary recorded stark class divides in the village, which seethed with political rivalry as a variety of revolutionary slogans went up on the walls each night and were white-washed away by day (NLA MS 4967 Box 14, folder 108). She and Blake headed north to Madrid where they found the air raid precautions, and their stay in a hotel run by monarchist conspirators inhibited their vacation activities to the extent that they cut short their holiday (Rowley 214-15).

Stead was too lazy for direct political involvement. Whilst secretary of the British Section of the International Association of Writers for the Defence of Culture, for example, her most visible act was to issue a questionnaire on politics and art to various British writers who, like Catherine Carswell, considered the exercise 'wholly useless save, perhaps as a parlour game for winter evenings' (Stead Box 7, folder 52). The Spanish Civil War, however, was highly significant for Stead primarily because the focus of her life-long obsession, Ralph Fox, died in Spain in January 1937 (Rowley 225; Hynes 1979: 245). As Stead expressed it, Fox's 'sacrifice' was 'unspeakably tragic' but 'not vain' (Box 7, folder 57). Stead's biographer, Hazel Rowley, claims Fox was 'the passion of her life' and 'Over the next decade, she portrayed him, always in shadowy form, in three novels and a short story. His fictional counterparts, paradigms of the Nietzschean '"free spirit", are figures of exceptional physical magnetism' (225, 227).

Fox was a pioneering novelist, literary critic (author of *The Novel and the People*), Communist and co-founder of *Left Review*. With Christopher Caudwell and

John Cornford, Fox was regarded as the one of the most promising young critics of the time – and all died in Spain (Hynes 1979: 256). Fox advocated a new socialist realism, but not in conventional Stalinist terms: a mode that would reinvent the hero and the great villain and forge a modern epic literature (Fox 1937: 100, 105). According to Hynes, Fox believed 'the historical events of the 'thirties restored action, violence, melodrama, heroism, tragedy, the conflict of good and evil – all those traditional elements that were despaired of in the literature of the 'twenties' (1979: 257). Like many of his generation, Fox looked for heroes where the Great War had left none, and in the ranks of the International Brigade real models for heroic literature could be found.

Although Fox was only ever a distant friend to Stead and Blake, he featured as both a character and a stylistic influence on Stead's semi-autobiographical novel *For Love Alone* (1944). Stead contrived the concluding chapters of the novel around the Spanish Civil War, raising the book to the register of Fox's epic theory (Rowley 80). Teresa (Stead's alter-ego) became bored with her adequate but ordinary marriage, turning to a passionate interlude with the heroic Harry Girton – writer, revolutionary and man of action based on Fox:

> He was alert and restless for all his slothful ways and at the back of his mind was the firm intention of getting away, wandering out, and amusing the soul of his soul by picking his way through a very alien land, like Hudson, like Lawrence, like Burton, an Englishman of Englishmen, happy to be away from England for ever, one of those firm, ironic patriots that have been formed by England's sea-story and the brilliant pages of

> imperial and dangerous history, bursting with men of fibre; like a pictured Englishman in all ways he was, though in all ways dissident, a revolutionary because such a patriot. (Stead 1969: 466)

Prior to Girton's departure for Spain, he told Teresa: 'If I don't come back, remember me. Do my work for me, fill my place, be me' (1969: 498-9). In reality, Stead herself did likewise to dutifully sustain Fox's passionate idealism. Her statement in *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish Civil War*, for example, upheld the faith in Republican triumph when almost all the other contributors plainly recognised Franco's imminent victory (*Authors* 26).

After her Spanish sojourn, Stead appointed herself guardian of Fox's memory: a stewardship which acquired an absurd mysticism. Fox inspired in the self-described marxist Stead a 'passion' which she universalised as the source of redemption for all things; and she elevated Fox to the realm of the supernatural (Rowley 493-4, 231). Drawing on her feelings for Fox in *For Love Alone*, Stead made the International Brigader Harry a symbol of resistance to a degenerate modernity – an image she shared with Jack Lindsay, Patrick White and Martin Boyd. The Brigader became a symbol of spiritual renewal: a figure assuaging the literati's bourgeois guilt, excusing political inaction and leading the way to a moral future. The mythic International Brigader enacted the recognisable rhythm of classical tragedy. Suffering in the most extreme circumstances, the Brigader became a symbol of the age's inhumanity: a scapegoat whose suffering pointed towards general redemption.

Importantly, the Brigader was the antithesis of the cultish, glamorous aviator, fascist warrior or new Soviet Man. The Brigader was distinguished by ordinariness, and his or her proletarian origins – as bricklayer, navvy or nurse – were celebrated. As the Spanish War progressed, becoming more technologised, the sense of individual martyrdom associated with the Brigader was eclipsed by the tragic recognition of mass slaughter. At that point, the tragic suffering of the heroic Brigader was converted into a concern beyond the personal: a depersonalised yet epic assumption that the very ordinariness of the self-sacrificed combatant indicated a higher redemptive purpose in the Republican cause. Ironically, it was the abjection of the 'ordinary' Brigader's death at the hands of a war machine, the Brigader's reduction to nothing, that raised this symbolic figure to tragic heights and released redeeming potential. As Eagleton writes of the scapegoat's abjection, 'when humanity reaches its nadir it becomes a symbol of everything that cries out for transformation' (2003: 282). Significantly, Hynes suggests that the death of Ralph Fox closed the conventionally 'heroic' phase of the Spanish Civil War (1979: 257). After that event, the mass slaughter of International Brigaders signified the nadir of common life and, paradoxically, the possible final victory of a transforming redemptive power.

Patrick White was enamoured of the tragedy and spiritual character of the International Brigader. In fact, the Spanish Civil War and the Republic's fate moved White to a more overt interest in politics than any other event in his life and career. Like Stead, White felt the Spanish War at close hand. In August 1937, White travelled to the French port of St Jean-de-Luz in the Basque country – a holiday resort frequented by the English upper-class – to finish the manuscript of his first novel, *Happy Valley* (Marr

1991: 159). The frontline of the War was a mere half an hour to the south of St Jean, as White's biographer David Marr explains:

> the railway junction at Hendaye on the edge of St Jean was a principal point of supply to the Republican forces. St Jean was Red Cross headquarters and it was from here that ships ran the Fascist blockade of Spain's northern coast. Bilbao, the nearest major Spanish city, had fallen to Franco's forces in June 1937. Early in the fighting the diplomatic corps had retreated from Madrid to St Jean… The war proved a great boost to the local society of St Jean. (Marr 1991: 159-60)

According to Marr, White saw St Jean as 'another domestic Eden in which to write', and the summer was spent 'writing, eating, travelling through the Basque country, watching bullfights in Bayonne, shopping for antiques and making love' (160-1). In St Jean, White met José Ruiz de Arana y Bauer, Viscount Mamblas, 'a Francoist, an aristocrat and a Jew', who ran errands for Franco into Fascist Spain (1994: 9, 162). Mamblas swung White's political sympathies to Francoism, and in Marr's terms 'White's interest in the Spanish Civil War was personal and perverse: for the sake of his affair he wanted it over':

> White barely grasped the politics of Fascism and blamed the Civil War on the vileness of the human race. 'I have no head for international or indeed any variety of politics,' he remarked to Mamblas. 'One is either born with

> it or else one isn't.' He simply wished the fighting to end, and sided against the left. (172)

White later claimed that 'the real reason for my no more than theoretical involvement with the Spanish Civil War was a relationship with somebody "on the wrong side". The ranklings of guilt perhaps intensified my sexual passion' (White 1983: 63). However, his letters of the time suggest no such flippancy. Initially, White merely complained to Mamblas that the bombing in Spain 'ain't amusing', but as the war progressed he recognised, as many others did, that the events in Spain had a foreboding global significance:

> I must say the bombardment of Barcelona was a horrible business, Pepe. I can't see that any end can justify such a means. For the first time in the whole war I think I have been really conscious of what it signifies – I suppose really the events of the last few weeks have brought us much closer to it – one sees what may be in store for all of us. (qtd Marr 1991: 172)

In early 1938, Mamblas ended the relationship and White's politics moved Left-ward. He was increasingly politicised by the plays of Auden and Isherwood, and encountered for the first time the 'earthly hell in the rotten tenements' of London as he accompanied his relative, Communist Tom Garland, on his round as a medical officer for the Carrera

cigarette factory. White explained only ‘my own egotism and my father’s allowance’ prevented an actual conversion to Communism (White 1983: 68).

In London, White wrote the light comedy *Return to Abyssinia*: a play set in the Spanish Civil War, in which an idealistic, wealthy young woman who was strongly supportive of the Spanish Republic and, frustrated by her father’s political indifference, was seduced away from her convictions by a predatory character based on Mamblas. By play’s end, however, her moral integrity was restored (Marr 1991: 174-5). On several occasions prior to the Second World War, the play was almost staged in the West End; it finally premiered in 1947, attracting some praise. Though nothing of the script survives, it is believed the play was based on White’s own flirtation with fascism and contained a message which Marr suggests was one of White’s key beliefs: ‘that he must be what he was, not toy with enthusiasms that were foreign to himself’ (147, 175). But as the Spanish episode testified, exactly what was authentically ‘him’ was less than clear.

Marr maintains that White never identified with the politics of anti-fascism – he supported Chamberlain and ‘kept his faith in appeasement and hoped to the very end that peace was possible. He was, in this, a true member of his generation’ (174-5). Alan Lawson claims the opposite: that White’s politics were the product of the London literary circles of the time, Left-wing and pro-Republican (Lawson 210). White himself later wrote: ‘I would have to admit I was not interested in politics, while paying lipservice to the fashionable radical views’ (1983: 63). Yet the novel to emerge from what White called his ‘period of the Spanish Civil War and a certain amount of social conscience’ (White 1983: 63) was *The Living and the Dead* (1941), which revealed a more serious commitment to politics than White’s posture of flippant indifference suggested.

Begun in 1939, White described *The Living and the Dead* as 'a novel that has been fermenting for the last three years' (qtd Marr 1991: 188). Marr identifies many events and London identities in the novel – indeed, London itself was intended as the chief character: 'White imagined he was embarking on something to match the scale of Joyce's portrait of Dublin in *Ulysses*' (188). By 1940, his commitment to the war effort forced him to scale down the book and according to White a 'portrait of London city, finished up as the dissection of a group living in it. The war forced out prematurely a book which should have remained several more years in my head… I have never liked *The Living and the Dead*. Perhaps it should not have been written' (White 1983: 77). It remained White's least favourite of his novels, as if to imply a denial of his political commitment at the time. In Marr's view, the novel was frustrated by White's attempt to tackle two issues on which he lacked clarity – homosexuality and the Spanish War (194). But in *The Living and the Dead*, White firmly embraced the central concerns of the Auden generation, despite having only fleeting contact with its main identities.

The novel centred on the middle-class Standish family, the matriarch Catherine and her children Eden and Elyot – the latter a literary biographer resembling White. Elyot, like many of the Auden generation, had his Edwardian childhood shattered by the Great War in which his father was killed. The Great War governed the novel's atmosphere of alienation and indifference, endemic to inter-war English society, and in White's acerbic view of social corrosion the city of London was already dead. When deaths occurred (traffic accidents for example) there was casual indifference. The physical environment of London was rendered in terms reminiscent of Dickens and T.S. Eliot, particularly in the recurrent motif of the dense city fog: symbol of an indifferent

and unnatural society. White attempted to present the city as animated, monstrous and violent. The fog obscured the citizen from others, himself and his actions: each was sequestered in varying states of mental impoverishment, physical decay and unfeeling. The inner lives of the novel's characters were explored in detailed vignettes of fear and irrationality, and the environmental fog became a mental 'fog', blinding the book's protagonists to the meaningful connections between things:

> Outside, fog had released the building from any dependence on the land… You took the evidence of a finite world on trust, from newspapers read in public houses, the apparent fact of Spain or China. Fog and the floating banks of mud denied such evidence. (White 1967: 270)

In *The Living and the Dead*, physical and mental fogs clouded together to create a nightmare of lassitude and indifference. In the novel, a Francoist diplomat told the ever-aloof Elyot that the life of the English upper class 'is like an unpleasant dream. The dream language, hinting at things. Sometimes I think, not hinting. It is an elaborate charade that meant something once, a long time ago. When the figures, the gestures were related to enthusiasms' (214). In 1940, White wrote about London to Mamblas: 'I'm more and more conscious, anyway in this country, of people being divided into two categories – the people who are aware and the people who are – well, just dead. That's something the political labellers will never take into account. To-night I could go out cheerfully and kill off all the dead' (1994: 29). As a response, White came to favour commitment over the cynicism, disgust and deadness of urban modernity.

White identified *indifference* as the outward manifestation of modernity's cultural breakdowns. Indifference was life denying, and the indifferent were 'the destroyers', the 'fatally diseased' (254). The question of who was dead and who was striving to live took on a definite socio-political complexion in the novel, and the idealised figure of the International Brigader represented the fulfilment of the scapegoat-like paradox that the life-force was affirmed through self-sacrifice. As Marr notes, the working-class carpenter, socialist and Brigader Joe Barnett emerges as the only hero of the novel (194). He was one of the living: a vital man of few but powerful words and epic deeds. Joe embraced marxism and fought and died in the Spanish Civil War because 'he believed in the living as opposed to the dead' (White 1967: 270); and what distinguished the living from the dead was political awareness plus 'a sickness in the stomach', or 'the sick, stinking world that sits in the stomach like a conscience' (278, 307). In this regard, the romanticised Brigader Joe represented White's own reluctant admission that 'conscience' in the 30s meant socialism: the remedy for indifference was to unite passion and action in service of a common cause.

Joe's political commitments and his *actual* suffering were sources of renewal for the precociously decrepit Eden and Elyot and their drab bourgeois existence. Eden established a physical relationship with Joe, though Joe was more politically realistic than the utopian Eden, who supposed that the living could be united without political parties or class consciousness:

> Walking over dead grass, she talked about right and wrong, glibly, as abstract concepts. But this was the expression of rightness, the southward

> face, the beginning in an end, rather than the end of a beginning. If you could accept the personal end. She had to, had to cultivate acceptance. There is no Eden Standish, just as there is no Joe Barnett, you said. There is more than this, there is the stock of positive acts and convictions that two people infuse into the dying body of the world, their more than blood. Then she closed her eyes. She could not accept the blood, the torn face of Guernica. (312)

But Eden eventually disowned such vacuous abstraction, and following Joe's example left to fight in Spain. In a classically tragic paradox, as White intended, the most alive – those who overcame the death of indifference – were those who in this evil world must sacrifice themselves to bring others back from the dead.

Throughout the novel, Spain's Civil War was a reference point against which the affliction of English middle-class life was measured. The *Living and the Dead* was populated with vacuous nonentities whose responses to the Spanish crisis revealed England's spiritual malaise. The struggle in Spain repeatedly intruded upon polite society, representing a more vital reality beyond England's 'dead' culture. The charmless social climber Connie Tiarks was tormented to anger by the anti-fascist graffiti outside her window because its 'quick moment of passion' was something she could never experience (227); the genteel, 'passionless' Mrs Standish withdrew from any mention of conflict into a private world of paintings, jewellery and interior decorations; Lady Adelaide indifferently dismissed the idea of commitment – 'everyone with a mind has Communist tendencies. But one must draw the line' – and to her 'Seriousness of purpose,

anyway, was of bad taste': indeed, any conviction in other people 'frightened' her (184, 205, 211).

Initially, Elyot Standish shared this 'dead' and indifferent mind-set. But the centre-piece of the *Living and the Dead* was Elyot's social awakening, and the narrative of his personal transformation became a story of political conversion – a story drawn from White's own life. Early on, Elyot experienced a classic modernist recoil from mass politics, situating himself above and apart from 'that wash of distant events that instinctively affected' others, the 'mass emotion, that was too abstract, impersonal, you couldn't identify yourself with this. Just as you hung back on the edge of crowds. You remained intact. You could not speak the language of their emotions, share the mass sympathies and fears' (302). Elyot feared destruction by politicised mass emotion, believing 'You can feel the waiting. For a cataclysm perhaps' (220, 303). But slowly, Elyot found his conscience running 'in syncopated undertone, behind the personal aspiration, beneath the unrelated events in evening papers, slaughter in Guernica' and faced 'the choice of the two ways, of the living or the dead' (305). Elyot learned from Joe, the International Brigader and political muse, that the significance of Spain must be deeply internalised if one was to inhabit the ranks of the 'living':

> There was a time, said Joe, when I could read the papers and keep things in their place. That's where they belonged, in the papers. It was other people's business. It was foreign names. Then it got to being part of yourself. You couldn't keep out your feelings no more. It got mixed up with what you did. (307)

As the *Living and the Dead* progressed, White continued to fuse the suggestive power of quotidian events with the horrors of the Spanish War. Spain was deeply internalised in the consciousness of characters who aspired to 'live', and commonplace spectacles triggered immediate thought associations. Brigader Joe, for example, encountered a dead terrier on the road and instantly recognised its meaning:

> The festoon of helpless guts torn out like the last existing privacy. The dog disgusted him, but he had to look, as if it had a bearing on himself… To lie on the ground with your guts hanging out. Man was born to this, no other dignity, announced the map of Spain… This was what made him tremble when he read about the killings in Spain or saw the body of the dead dog. (272)

This passage was a premonition of Joe's fate in Spain – a death presented as martyrdom. In this regard, Joe stood for one side of a conflict in White himself: a personal crisis that was more apparent as the novel proceeded. The readily available romantic figure of the International Brigader allowed White to propel the book to the political conclusion that this was an age in which commitment and selfless sacrifice were moral imperatives. On the other side of the conflict, Elyot embodied White's personal terror and aversion to a life governed by politics. Elyot deplored the hypocritical crocodile tears of 'Connie Tiarks dabbing her eyes over the political state of Spain' (175), and even dreamed that he was inside an El Greco painting, in 'a personal Spain', and then considered joining the International Brigade (302). However, reflecting White's own final position, Elyot

rejected the practical value of tragic gestures – 'the protest of self-destruction' – and convinced himself that 'there was some other way' to be morally upright on momentous political issues (354). Like White, Elyot concluded that an 'intense form of living' that re-engages with others was the appropriate response to the age: an age in which the fundamental enemy was not fascism but, rather, the more abstract malady of indifference (220).

The Spanish Civil War and its meanings, debated so centrally in *The Living and the Dead*, could be regarded as a turning point in White's life and career. In *The Aunt's Story* (1948), which had an enduring significance for White, he revisited the unresolved conflicts and confusions of the late 30s in an essentially tragic manner: indicating, perhaps, the long shadow that Spain cast on his work. Spain catalysed a series of political and moral shifts in White which finally led to his return to Britain, from the USA, to fight global fascism in 1939 – when many of the more committed of the Auden generation were headed in the opposite direction across the Atlantic to safety in America.

Martin Boyd had a great deal in common with White, including a background of Australian provincial aristocracy, a struggle with sexual identity and an ambiguous class position: actively despising the British ruling class yet unable to form a positive identification with the working or lower middle classes. For both, the Spanish Civil War was a point of clarity, with each writer endorsing political action in their art. Unlike White, however, Boyd's response to Spain was inflected by his experience of the Great War: he had been a soldier and pilot, and was the only man in his battalion neither killed nor wounded (Boyd 1939: ix; 1974: 90).

With his established reputation as a serious novelist and regular reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement* (Niall 1988: 109), Boyd began to tackle increasingly political issues. The central event of his novel *The Picnic* (1937) involved a group of expatriate Australians arguing through the problems of fascism in Europe and the Abyssinian invasion (Niall 1988: 118). *A Single Flame* (1938) was a more forthright memoir and political diary, printed despite the fact that his publishers frowned upon this new direction in his work (Boyd 1939: ix). *A Single Flame* was divided into three sections: 'White Sky at Morning' concerning Boyd's childhood; 'Black Sky at Noon', a frank account of his experiences as a subaltern in the Great War; and 'Red Sky in the Afternoon' concerned Neville Chamberlain's betrayal of Czechoslovakia, Boyd's experience of Nazism in Austria, his emphatic defence of the justice of the Spanish Republican struggle and the conspicuous sacrifice of International Brigader Roger Hone (Niall 1988: 109).

In *Single Flame*, Roger was eulogised with the kind of sympathetic imagination of Wilfred Owen, particularly in the high virtues of male fellowship and self-sacrifice unique to soldiers. Boyd merged the young Roger's identity with nature: whilst sailing together Roger's 'spirit, stirred by the wind and waves, was a pure flame of love for the created world, he was touched by the heroic mood' (1939: 219); and Roger's poetry was full of an 'intense love for the natural world, particularly for our salt marsh and harbour, and of a genuine compassion for suffering' (215). Roger was young, educated, a worker, and animated with ideas of high adventure and exploration. Roger became a doctrinaire Communist, but Boyd insisted that Roger's anger about Spain existed 'not only because he was "Left," but because he had a sense of national dishonour' over Britain's moral refusal to intervene on the side of the Republic and the appeasement of Hitler (229, 237).

According to Boyd, Roger was doubtful about his Communism – his real motive for joining the International Brigade lay in shame at his country's inactivity (240): 'it was not Stalin who lured Roger to Spain, but Baldwin and Chamberlain who sent him there' (256). Roger had simply applied the traditional moral teaching he received as a boy to his situation, and Boyd maintained it was due to Roger's education in Arnold, Tennyson and Wordsworth that he also moved to the Left. Boyd wrote that given the threat to democracy in Spain, 'If there was any cause which one would have expected the English people, having regard to their own history and heroes, to support, it was that of Republican Spain' (257). As a response to the destructive forces of modernity, Boyd and Roger mobilised a Classical morality that demanded a stand against the 'major evil' of fascism and militarism. Even if the British ruling class had lost its moral compass, Boyd believed that the British people would remain faithful to these ancient principles (252).

Inspired by that high moral sense, Boyd testified that fascist acts of aggression, beginning with Abyssinia, 'produced an almost chemical change in me, as they did in thousands of other British subjects' (218):

> I felt as if some abrupt halt had been called to humanity and progress, and that I lived in a country of traitors and cowards. I also felt that the old men who had muddled and prolonged the War and had bungled the peace, who had dishonoured the country over Abyssinia, had dealt a further blow at my generation, half of whom they had already butchered. (225)

Britain's refusal to break the fascist blockade or prevent the bombing of Spanish food ships, conveying vital supplies to starving Spanish cities, became a major issue in the national press. Boyd's outrage at this, shared by the public at large, was again informed by his belief that Britain was abandoning its proud history and moral traditions:

> It was bewildering to any one who had been brought up to believe that Tennyson's ballad represented the British attitude to the seas, to find the whole British Navy standing-by, while a few pirates destroyed the ships which were taking food to a starving people, and a people who were doing what, we were told at school, was the noblest activity of man, fighting against odds for the liberty which they had been denied through centuries of atrocious oppression. (238)

Boyd placed the blame for this debacle squarely at the feet of a political class which had abandoned classical morality, placing its aggressive class interests ahead of all else, particularly the defence of oppressed foreign peoples (251). This anger informed his portrayal of Roger Hone in *Single Flame*: a sympathetic portrait of a young man educated in the best of British traditions to do his duty, whose selflessness and sacrifice were callously disregarded by the establishment. Boyd viewed the disdain which the British ruling class showed toward the International Brigader, British volunteer soldiers performing their moral obligation to the down-trodden, as an extension of the bourgeois indifference felt by the common soldiery of the Great War (240). The common soldier

was a tool of officialdom, and his sacrifice was diminished by the platitude that the war dead 'had not died in vain' (255).

Boyd would always struggle with the contradictions between the majesty of the aesthetics of British culture, the refinement of its ruling class, and the 'selfish and brutal' opinions it held (258). The Great War had revealed to Boyd the blood lust and barbarity of the upper class; the Spanish War further revealed its willingness to attack anything that challenged upper-class interests or questioned its support of Hitler and Franco as 'anti-God' or 'Red' (241, 244). To Boyd, the hateful establishment was an 'upper middle class'; an 'artificial class' of the Tory and the 'Etonian business man' based on money and conformity (1974: 157). As a counter-value, he imagined the inherent worth of disinterested aristocracy: aristocratic privilege, he believed, continued intact from pre-industrial England, untouched by commercial concerns, and could foster independence and individualism to resist the culturally destructive forces of modernity (188).

The Spanish Civil War provoked a series of ethical and ideological about-faces in Boyd, as it had in Patrick White. Initially, he called for a decisive anti-fascist war which avoided civilian casualties and confronted Nazism (253). This call had a tragic tone, as Boyd was a committed pacifist. Later, he changed his position, aligning himself with Clive Bell's view that any armed action could only be an act of barbarism (Gloversmith 22, 24). He came to believe that the sacrifice exemplified by men like Roger Hone, Boyd's archetypical International Brigader, was meaningless when society had abandoned its moral basis (1974: 265).

These ideas were explored in *Lucinda Brayford* (1946), which documented Boyd's changing responses to the crises of the 30s. *Lucinda Brayford*'s pivotal character

was Stephen Brayford, the last of a family line: 'uncommercial and honourable' and the bearer of aristocratic English values. Stephen's closest friend, Roland Roberts, an inoffensive middle-class Communist, joined the International Brigade. Roland escaped Spain after Barcelona fell, wounded, bitter and disillusioned, having learned to hate the Communists as much as the fascists, and considering both to be forces of barbarism and enemies of culture (1971: 499). The novel pronounced that in Spain 'We're witnessing the suicide of civilisation' and that the 'tragedy of our age is the martyrdom of the faithless, who risk their lives in atrocious crimes which they themselves repudiate' (491, 542). In the Spanish tragedy, Stephen Brayford found that any complexion of political modernity was a direct threat to the enduring and civilising heritage of aristocracy. Stephen concluded that the only form of personal integrity in such diabolical times was absolute pacifism. An ensuing epiphany in a military jail led Stephen to a deeper affirmation of life and a withdrawal to a higher spiritual plane expressed in music and poetry. Tortured by prison guards in an attempt to expunge his sublime defiance, he was finally martyred (524-5). Thus, Boyd's heroic International Brigader became a passive aesthete, rather than a warrior. Nevertheless, the historic implications of Stephen's death were remarked upon by his mother, Lucinda:

> I did not know the world was going to be so bloody. I should have, I suppose, as if we look back at history, we can see that it's been hell all the time. The masses of the people have always been tortured and wretched. We've only lived in a little oasis of bogus civilisation, and now that it's thought immoral for people of our sort to live in our oases, and we're all to

> be shoved down into the masses, there won't be any civilisation at all, and it will be unrelieved hell. I hate the past and I hate the future. (528)

The idea that Spain's tragedy signified the collapse of civilisation itself was widely shared by a generation. And for all the Australian writers who responded in print to Spain's plight, the themes of universal modern tragedy, sacrifice and the hope for spiritual and cultural renewal were literary currency. Regardless of their divergent and often shifting politics, the Lindsays, the Palmers, Stead, White, Boyd and many others wrote within a field of common concerns: a field mapped by moral urgency, cultural internationalism, and the belief that writers were obliged to occupy a frontline position in the period's struggles.

Chapter Six: Modernism in the Streets

In 1922, the staunch anti-modernist Norman Lindsay predicted another world war would ensue driven by 'commercialism' – 'To-morrow [man] will throw battalions across the air, and drive armies underneath the sea. He will use radio activity to harness the sun's rays and generate a power that will wipe out cities at a flash' (Lindsay 1922: 22). In 1936, the Spanish Civil began to fulfil these prophecies, and Lindsay's attitude was shared by modernists like W.H. Auden – who also believed that war had its origins in commercial capitalism. In 'Spain' (1937), Auden wrote: 'For the fears which made us respond/ To the medicine ad. and the brochure of winter cruises/ Have become invading battalions' (1979: 53-4). Essentially, Auden saw the war in Spain 'as an eruption of the sickness of modern society: in Spain the enemy is *us* – our fears and greeds' (Hynes 1979: 253).

Symptomatic of a world order that was self-destructing, the Spanish Civil War appeared as 'a catastrophe that could happen right here… it was the Apocalypse that would destroy culture' (Hynes 1979: 292); and the *Left Review* of April 1938 declared the Spanish people were fighting not only for their own defence but 'for universal culture and liberty' (qtd Deane 110). In *Poems for Spain*, Stephen Spender argued in Arnoldian terms that the poet and soldier were fighting for the preservation of democratic culture against the new barbarians. The democratic principle had witnessed a 'long, crushing, and confused process of defeat', but victory in Spain offered a future hope which would

sustain great popular poetry: ‘In a world where poetry seems to have been abandoned, become the exalted medium of a few specialists… this awakening of a sense of the richness of a to-morrow *with* poetry, is as remarkable as the struggle for liberty itself’ (1939: 9).

The Auden generation believed the best of Culture was both what was most under threat from fascism and the primary resource for fighting it. Literature would be a weapon against fascism – but British modernist responses to Spain were haunted by fear: ‘one finds visions of the next war as the Apocalypse in all kinds of writing of the time’ (Hynes 1979: 293). Modernism was well equipped to engage with the age’s emergent tragic structure of feeling, and represented its leading expression in art and letters: as Eagleton argues, ‘What happens to tragedy in the twentieth century is not that it dies, but that it mutates into modernism’ (2003: 206), and Spain was a major aesthetic mutation point: ‘writing in hope and fear’ were simultaneous acts.

Australia’s tiny band of modernists similarly responded to Spain as a dark premonition of future destruction and tragedy. Novelist Leonard Mann, a supporter of the Republic and the SRC (Mann February 1938), explained to Nettie Palmer that history was developing to a crisis which could only be resolved through ‘a drastic social and economic reorganisation’ (June 1939). Mann wrote of the need for art to reply to this tragic disorder, but later reflected ‘Statements we hoped were bombs/ Explode like crackers in the futile tombs’ (Mann 1941: 27). Such creeping disillusion conditioned British and Australian writers to perceive themselves as melancholy, Hamlet-like commentators on a stricken age – a self-portrait epitomised by Max Harris in his poem ‘Progress of Defeat’, which was a direct dialogue with Auden’s ‘Spain’.

The pivotal site of modernism is the metropolis, with its 'attraction-repulsion' effect. As Malcolm Bradbury observes, the cities of modernism boasted 'the essential literary institutions: publishers, patrons, libraries, museums, bookshops, theatres, magazines' (96). But the city was also conceptualised as a symbol of modernity's 'vice', 'pace', and other corruptions that provoked 'profound cultural dissent' (96-7). After the air raids on Spanish cities, modernism's imaginary geography was further re-imaged as a symbol of mass destruction – potentially, the city was the tomb of modernity itself.

Australian modernists embraced this view, and were frequently politicised by it. Commentators such as Tony Moore have misread Australian inter-war avant-gardism as bohemian: a form of apolitical bourgeois individualism (1998: 176), echoing Cecil Day Lewis' point that the English writer has a long tradition of individualism and rejection of formal political organisation (Day Lewis 277). In the 30s, however, anti-fascism was a peculiarly street-level political community which could itself be considered a modernist breakthrough, as profound as the art and literature that emanated from it – an example of what Lionel Trilling has called 'Modernism in the Streets' (qtd Berman 12). That Australian modernists shirked party membership does not detract from their part in sustaining the vital, tragic structure of feeling which linked Australian writers into politically-engaged literary currents locally and internationally. In this regard, Australia's modernist culture in the 30s needs to be understood by Raymond Williams' terms: 'within the sociology of metropolitan encounters and associations between immigrants who share no common language but that of the metropolis' (qtd Pinkney 14).

The cause of Spain was a meeting point for artists and anti-fascist activists, providing an interchange between art practitioners and popular radicalism. The SRC

hosted a range of cultural events, from Spanish music recitals in Sydney to displays of poster art and poetry readings in Perth, and concerts and film nights in Melbourne. Small political theatre companies, such as Unity Theatre, found audiences in work-sites and at Popular Front events (Healy 99). Among the popular one-act plays foretelling apocalyptic future conflicts, Unity performed Bertolt Brecht's *Señora Carrar's Rifles* and other lesser plays set in Spain (Cullen 119, 128). A revue was staged in the Princess Theatre in 1937, with operatic arias and solo performances, Spanish folk tunes by Catalonian singers, and short plays including Irwin Shaw's ever-green *Bury the Dead* – in which a group of dead men on the Western Front mutinied in protest at the continuing threat of war and refused to stay in their graves (Rawlings collection Noel Butlin N57/ 484).

Beyond formal political events, the public space of the street itself was also the domain of anti-fascist politics: a domain of newspapers, conversation and soap-box oratory. Francis Broadhurst's remarkable George Grosz-influenced depiction of a Kings Cross crowd in 1938 pointedly included a *Herald* newspaper with the headline 'War in China' in the centre of the picture, signifying the centrality of anti-fascism to his carnival of bohemians and libertines (*Home* 1 December 1938).

Leonard Mann's novels *A Murder in Sydney* (1937) and *The Go-Getter* (1942) recorded this unique street-level culture, responding to contemporary international crises and social decay from the perspective of working-class men – invariably damaged veterans of the Great War who struggled with tragic resignation. They subsisted within a political malaise, written across an urban geography which they traversed like nineteenth-century flâneurs: encountering fascists, New Guardsmen, derided Communists, Langites and socialists, corrupt union officials, the hired thugs of the business fraternity and

pathetic clergymen. The spectre of war, future and past, was ever-present in flashbacks of mutilated bodies and shell fire, in daily conversation, and in the many monuments and murals celebrating militarism in the city's civic spaces. Mann's characters were perpetually divided over how to politically respond to this environment, indicating an emergent structure of feeling manifest in everyday political dialogue.

Mann's central characters, such as Chris in *The Go-Getter*, were highly responsive to this public dialogue. In Mann's novels, discussions flowed around a series of public places, becoming one long political conversation: university campuses, cafes, clubs, city halls, public parks, galleries, meeting rooms, pubs, museums, trades halls, bookshops, factory floors, libraries and cinemas – sites where opinion on impending war and fascism was generated. Mann's novels were obsessed with chatter: 'News, news, was what they all cried. There were people who lamented there were only two morning and two evening papers' and 'What was important was opinion' (95). At a time when 'public opinion' was conventionally regarded as the interpretation of public sentiment by opinion-formers (Buchanan 1997: 22), Mann understood that structures of feeling found their vitality in a mobile popular municipality that had no voice in the officially sanctioned 'public sphere'.

Anti-fascists were adept at street-level politics, congregating in municipal spaces where ethnic cafes, bookshops and clubs had a special function. As centres of public discussion they occupy a cherished place in the memoirs of the era. The most renowned was Café Petrushka, a Russian restaurant in Little Collins Street that capitalised on a Russophilia craze (Porter 1966: 93). The Petrushka hosted Colonel De Basil's Monte Carlo Ballet Company, which had settled in Melbourne – their star ballerina having

performed a programme of Spanish dances for Spanish Relief (Kershaw 1991: viii; Inglis 94). Hal Porter, a 'born reactionary', frequented the Petrushka whilst slumming as a novelist in 1937. He observed 'The Cavalcade of Humanity which flows in and out of the door… Melbourne's 1937 intelligentsia'. It was popular 'because the food is authentic, cheap, and good' (Porter 40, 93). Disconcerted by the number of Leftists among Australian writers at the Café, Porter encountered 'members of the Writers' League, Gorki fans and Lorca-lovers… they are *dernier cri* leftists – their dogma-inlaid opera glasses are directed at the world's latest blood-and-thunder production, the Spanish Civil War' (Porter 94-5). The 'romantic, humourless – skulduggery in Spain… the Civil War is as remote and romantic as any remote and romantic war'. '"Fascist!" snarl the columnists to Leftist magazines with restaurant *borsch*-stains on the beer-stains on their crimson ties. "You are a fascist!"' (130, 97).

Auden, Scott Fitzgerald, Hemingway, New Theatre, Joyce, and Lawrence were key features of Porter's memory of table-talk in the 'succulent mugginess of Café Petrushka' amongst the famous and soon to be famous bohemians, journalists and intellectuals (102, 98-9). Porter ate with writers Bob Close and Alan Marshall. Close recalls 'After Friday-night [Writers'] League meetings some of us invariably climbed Little Collins Street to the Café Petrushka' for Russian tea or a bowl of borsch (Close 211). He recalls Petrushka was 'a meeting-place for Melbourne's painters, cartoonists, actresses, journalists, models, decadents… and they all added to an ambience that to me was fascinating and vital' (212).

Bitter factionalisms were fought out in such inner-urban centres: the Mitre Tavern for example, a pub near the bohemian quarter, was divided up into warring art pushes

who glowered at each other over drinks (Kershaw 1991: 31; Clark 118; Haese 25). The Melbourne SRC and MAWF workers frequented cheap eating houses also favoured by artists and writers, creating an intersection of political subcultures at venues like the Latin Café in Melbourne, Ristie's coffee shop, the Chung Wah, Dooey Din, the Eastern and Oriental cafes and various Jazz clubs (Howells 1983: 85; Lord 75; Haese 16; Tipping 13; Moore 1998: 180).

Alister Kershaw considered pre-war Australia to be politically and culturally 'insufferably tranquil, easygoing to the point of listlessness' (Kershaw 1986: 1). The slightest deviation was frowned upon, however 'there were about fifty square yards at the top of Melbourne's Little Collins Street where you could wear corduroy trousers without being taken for a poofter and where the sight of a beard didn't provoke a display of popular indignation' (1991: vii-viii). Lionel Lindsay's poem 'Cubism *et hoc genus omne*' (1938) indicated the popular bohemian ethos 'That slavers to obey where fashion rules…/ Their Paradise the Café, and for shrine/ The bistro' (1959: 54): it was, Kershaw recalled 'our own antipodean Chelsea, our Greenwich Village' (1991: 2).

Gino Nibbi's Leonardo Bookshop, an '*avant-garde* literary and art shop' in Little Collins Street, was at the epicentre of Melbourne bohemia (Sendy 1983: 95). Bernard Smith recalled it as 'a rendezvous of artists and laymen interested in European contemporary art and literature' (Smith 2001: 195). Kershaw recalled that 'about the only thing we didn't go there for was to buy books' (1991: 3).

Nibbi was an anti-fascist activist and democrat, who emigrated to escape fascist Italy (O'Grady 1988: 76). He attracted modernists, political radicals and anti-fascists to his shop: Arthur Boyd, Sydney Nolan, Albert Tucker, Lionel Lindsay, James Gleeson,

Basil Burdett, Vance and Nettie Palmer, Judah Waten, Max Harris, Bernard Smith, H.V. Evatt, and John Reed – a who's who of the politically conscious cultural workers (O'Grady 1988: 82). Nibbi imported Picasso prints, socialist literature, modernist periodicals from Europe and banned books, and he wrote for various international art publications including *Goya* in Spain (Sendy 1983: 96; O'Grady 1988: 4). Nibbi, along with Cyril Pearl and Alwyn Lee, had published the socialist-modernist *Stream* in 1931, and in 1937 Nibbi wrote *The Face of the Emigrants* based on his travels across Australia selling Spanish, Italian, and French literature to migrant communities (O'Grady 1988: 79, 81). In stores like Nibbi's Bookshop, Rawson's Bookshop (the headquarters of the Australian Council for Civil Liberties and the Victorian section of the Left Book Club) and Polish Pen Palley's Bookshop (where Sydney Trotskyists met), the issue of Spain was ritually fought out (Short 33).

The bookstore network had a distinctive function at a time when restrictions on foreign news were severe, and works of modernism and political tracts were difficult to obtain. Bird's second-hand bookshop in Melbourne catered for this demand, (Sendy 1983: 81). In the later 30s, the CPA also established a number of 'Workers' Bookshops' around the country stacked with Stalinist tracts (Short 128). Other key bookshops around the country included E.W. Preece in Adelaide, the bookstall of the Victorian Labor College, Perth's Andrade's bookshop, and in Sydney and Melbourne Charlie Reeve's IWW bookshop and the Hill of Content store respectively (Sendy 1983: 42, 71, 77-8; Haese 24). At the same time Penguin Books began producing a series of Left commentaries on political and international affairs, and by 1935-6 many books on

international peace were imported from England. Brian Penton felt the market was saturated with what he called ‘European havoc books’ (Buckridge 188).

Official restrictions on news and political opinion were compounded by the dearth of public libraries. Getting reliable news on Spain became a struggle, consequently ‘unofficial institutions’ like the cafes and bookstores became essential information conduits. As a youngster, Alan Barcan recalled the difficulty of keeping informed about Spanish affairs. He attended ‘cottage lectures’ on Spain and listened to EAQ, ‘the Voice of Republican Spain’, on short wave radio most mornings; and ‘With some effort one could obtain Trotskyist literature from a certain bookshop near the Capitol Theatre – but this was an ‘under-the-counter’ exercise’ (Barcan 6, 8-9).

The Left Book Club (LBC), according to Jack Lindsay, was the primary intellectual expression of the Popular Front which had emerged out of defence of the Spanish people (Lindsay 1956: 62). The founder, Victor Gollancz, wrote ‘That we launched the Left Book Club within weeks of Franco’s arrival on the mainland was by no means accidental’ (qtd Pimlott 155). The LBC responded to the colossal demand for knowledge about the Civil War and linked it with the fight against fascism world-wide (156). Volunteers in Spain, when surveyed, cited LBC publications as a strong political and cultural influence (Hopkins 53). The monthly LBC publication, which invariably included either a book on the popular front, Spain, or the Soviet Union, was assured of a circulation of 50,000; and the LBC reached a readership of a quarter of a million people (Samuels 67). By September 1939, more than two and a half million orange LBC editions were in circulation (Samuel 70-1).

The Australian LBC was the largest outside Britain though its membership only peaked at 4,000 (Gollan 66, 68). The LBC launched *Australian Left News* late in 1938, in response to Government restrictions on news (Gollan 68). The LBC was considered the most influential organisation in forming opinion in the Australian Peace Movement (Rasmussen 1992: 57). The LBC was sustained by a network of auxiliary organisations: discussion groups in small urban cafes, bookshops, and living rooms, perhaps reflecting its predominantly middle-class membership – over 1,000 such groups existed in Britain (Samuel 72, 75). The CPA felt it necessary to try to participate in these groups to give them 'political direction', though in fact it had little sway in either the selection of books or the orientation of study groups (Macintyre 1998: 324; Hopkins 11).

The alternative political culture of cafes, bookstores, book clubs and parlour discussion groups was supplemented by a rise in recreational workers' clubs in the 30s, often with an ethnic base. The Innisfail Spanish Club, for example, was a focus for pro-Republican Spaniards, raising substantial sums of aid money (Menghetti 1981: 67). The Italian socialist, anti-fascist (but non-Communist) organisation Gruppo Italiano, opened the Casa d'Italia in Carlton in 1938. Its statute identified the club's primary role as a gathering point for liberal Italians 'in a social, cultural and welfare' ethos. It boasted a library, a theatrical company, and a hall for hosting dance nights, lectures and political rallies – including a large reception for International Brigader Ernesto Baratto (Cresciani 1980: 128-9).

Such organisations raised the ire of the strongly fascist Italian Consulate. The consulate had a deliberate policy of dominating Italian educational and recreational associations, clubs, and cultural institutions to bolster fascism (1981: 24, 27). Australia's

fascio was sustained through an elaborate social network (1990: 314). In Sydney and Melbourne, restaurants and cafes owned by fascists such as Dungowan Café, Florentino, Arminini's, Romano's, Luigi's Spaghetti Bar and various boarding houses functioned as fascist meeting places; and the exclusive Dante Alighieri Society in Sydney was physically housed in the Italian Consulate, encouraging the merging of cultural activity and fascist propaganda (314-15; 1981: 37-8).

The significance of Spain was the common thread in political discussions which took place in these various unofficial sites: from the modernist bookshop to the ethnic club. In all these venues, the discourses of culture and politics converged around an organising structure of feeling – in the assumption that it was incumbent on ordinary people to be informed and committed in response to Spain's unfolding tragedy. The café, the bookshop, the neighbourhood discussion group, and the ethnic club talked back to authority on the issue of Spain: despite the fact that such meeting places were disliked by governments, they refused to be silenced or policed. It was in such places that a genuine democratic radicalism persisted.

However, these populist venues were politically different from that other unique civic space – the university campus. In the 30s, Australian campuses were secluded, privileged and apolitical worlds: in 1932, for example, the Students Representative Council was able to resolve that 'Communism shall not be discussed in Melbourne University' (Lowenstein 1989: 6); then student Geoffrey Hutton recalled 'Before the rise of Mussolini, Hitler and Franco we were an oddly non-political group' (Hutton 21). With the depression, politics made an unwelcome intrusion and official efforts were made to

stifle it (191); but as Russel Ward found, it was Spain in particular that 'forced thoughtful people to think intensely about national and international politics' (Ward 87).

Melbourne University led the way. Ward recalled that after a few days in Melbourne 'we heard more about politics and history than in the whole of the preceding year in Adelaide [University]' (87). Alan Nicholls, a Left-wing Christian at Melbourne University, identified Spain, the depression and 'a general uncertainty about values' as the characteristics of life in the 30s:

> For students of the thirties, much of the frustration built up by the depression was released by the Spanish war. In the beginning, feelings about this war were spontaneous and sincere. For Catholics and their fellow travellers it was a crusade… For those left of centre it was Voltaire's 'Ecrasez l'infame'… for a while the air was fresher. People had a cause to give themselves to. (Nicholls 19)

The 'moral battlefield' made his generation 'moralists ever since', and as a testament to student modernist internationalism Nicholls wrote that the 'siren song of [T.S.] Eliot began to be heard, supported on lower and harsher levels by Huxley and Waugh, with Wyndham Lewis' tuneless descant in the background' (Nicholls 20-22). Likewise, Manning Clark recalled his momentous 1938 encounter with 'The Jeremiahs of the left in Melbourne, the self-appointed prophets of doom [who] plastered their slogan of the year on the walls of Melbourne University: "Fascism means War"' (Clark 48). Later that year, sailing in the Bay of Biscay, close to the Spanish War, Clark experienced radical doubts

about this dismissive position: 'I wondered for a moment why the powers of progress, the powers of Enlightenment seem to be losing this ghastly civil war in Spain, why had Moscow walked out on the Spanish government? Nothing I have read or heard in Melbourne has prepared me for this. It was all so bewildering' (58). Social reality, he was discovering, was tragic – and because of this Clark came to formulate his overarching idea that human redemption must lie outside history.

A minority liberal-Left block of Melbourne's academic staff, supportive of Spain and the Peace Movement, influenced a generation of undergraduates. This staff included Herbert Burton, Molly Bayne, Professor Woodruff (Medicine), George Paul (Philosophy), Dr. Georgina Sweet (Zoology), Professor G.S. Brown (Education) and Mac Ball, whose classes on Modern Political Institutions in the Department of Political Philosophy examined the nature of Soviet Communism and Nazism (Ball 1936: 136, 177, 139; Rasmussen 1992: 61). Returning from Oxford in 1930, Max Crawford began a research project on democratic change in Spain, and gained Melbourne's History Chair in 1937 – a position which enabled him to publicise the struggle of the Republic. No such 'block' existed in any other Australian university.

The Labor Club was the biggest club at Melbourne University, representing a diversity of Left opinion (Lowenstein 1989: 190). It evangelised the cause of loyalist Spain and raised aid funds: scooter races were launched in which a tin of milk for Spain was the entry fee (Mathews 59). Rivkah Mathews, who was active in the Labor Club with Helen Palmer, recalled that Spain 'was a permanent lump in the throat, an ache in the marrow, the myth of our time' (Mathews 56). A University Peace Group spun-off the Labor Club in 1936, attracting a large membership.

Despite this, there is no evidence of the 'intellectual hegemony of the Left establishment' on campus which Patrick O'Brien and others allege (O'Brien 80). In reality, the campus was a highly conservative place. The Campion Society consciously positioned itself opposite the Labour Club (Santamaria 1981: 12), and Newman College superceded the Melbourne University Rifles as the centre of anti-Leftist activism (Jory 82). Right-wing agitation was so strong that the Students' Representative Council expressed its concern the campus was publicly perceived as pro-Franco (Jory 82). When the Nazi Count von Luckner was welcomed to the University, speaking to a large and appreciative student audience, his endorsements of Franco and defences of German actions in Spain were widely reported (Mathews 58).

The student paper *Farrago* reflected these competing pressures (Lowenstein 1989: 195). Its pages indicated a growing division over Spain which would not be easily silenced. Eric H.S. Burhop, of the Department of Natural Philosophy, defended on-campus support for the Republic and the Spanish government's liberal and democratic credentials on the same page as a photograph of disinterred Carmelite nuns, captioned 'The work of a government whose condemnation was not approved by a large number of the Melbourne University students!' (22 October 1936). The Labor Club's public forums, midday meetings and study circles were used to discuss the nature of the Republic and the direction of Spanish aid (17 May 1937). In one such forum, on 'The Situation in Spain', the pro-Republican speaker was drowned out by a 'vocal barrage put by a [Catholic] section of the audience.' Dubbed the 'Spanish Bull Fight', this incident caused the editors of *Farrago* to take fright, cravenly expressing fears for the survival of free speech (23 March 1937; 5 April 1937), but they could not avoid the conclusion that

‘Whether it is palatable or not, the fact that there is in the University a sharp division of opinion of the Spanish question is one that has to be faced’ (23 March 1937).

On 22 March 1937, the University Debating Society met to contest the topic ‘That the Spanish Government is the Ruin of Spain’. The debate ‘was to become a highly significant event in the life of that institution and in the lives of many who attended it’ (Thornton-Smith 81). Speaking for the affirmative was K.T. Kelly, Stan Ingwerson and B.A. Santamaria – once acknowledged by *Farrago* as the university’s resident fascist theoretician (Fitzgerald 25). They were all members of the Campion Society and trained in rhetoric – though Mac Ball described Santamaria’s debating style as ‘hysterical haranguing’ (qtd Thornton-Smith 76). Nettie Palmer, Communist Gerald O’Day and the Labor Club’s Jack Legge opposed the motion. The hall was purposely stacked with members of the Catholic Young Men’s Society (Macintyre 1998: 303), believed to be two-thirds of an audience of between 1,000 and 1,500 people. The doorways and aisles were crammed (Jory 83), and according to Manning Clark ‘the only way to get in was to be lifted over the heads of those standing near the two lower floor entrances’ (Clark 44).

Nettie Palmer argued that many Catholics were defending the Republic, and with ‘cool reason’ insisted it was a ‘class war’ (Lowenstein 1989: 196; Clark 45). Legge spoke on Franco’s allies and their bombing of Guernica – but O’Day ‘brought the house down.’ (Lowenstein 1989: 196), claiming ‘no country had ever been ruined by refusing to support Catholicism’, outraging the assembled Catholics (*Farrago* 5 April 1937). In a moment of identity confusion, Santamaria bizarrely announced ‘You must be a Spaniard to understand. The heart of my race has been torn’ (*Argus* 23 March). But the arguments stood for little – the chair was too weak and had no control over the situation (Clark 45).

Clark compared the experience of the 'two howling mobs' to 'being in the outer at a game between Carlton and Collingwood' (44). Supporters of the affirmative drowned out the negative case whilst men tramped across the roof (Tipping 17), and the police foiled Niall Brennan and his friends attempting to turn the fire hoses on the audience (Inglis 98). The affirmative speakers and the Catholics in the audience concluded with the cry '*Viva Cristo Rey*' – the chant of the Spanish Carlists, a leading catastrophist faction of Spanish conservatism.

Nettie Palmer was disgusted with the experience, remarking 'To think this could happen in Australia.' Marjorie Tipping considered it 'one of the most appalling nights in the history of the University of Melbourne' (Tipping 17). It received negative coverage in the *Argus* and the *Age*, but the *Catholic Worker* claimed victory (*CW* 3 April 1937). All three of the affirmative debaters were members of the *Catholic Worker*'s editorial committee, and Santamaria reported in the paper that Catholics 'will remember it as a night on which the historic Faith of Christendom received its public vindication in halls from which so much heresy has been preached.' The applause for Catholic battle was proof 'that our own Catholics, if their religion were similarly attacked, would not hesitate to make the supreme sacrifice in defence of the Faith' (qtd Thornton-Smith 86). Colin Thornton-Smith suggests that 'In retrospect, the whole of Santamaria's future courses of action may be seen as foreshadowed in the Spanish Civil War debate and his subsequent writing about it' (95).

The ferocity of the debate terrified the editors of *Farrago*, and whilst they recognised that 'many University people are taking an active interest in international politics. To-day their eyes are on Spain' in such 'sharply divided' opinion: 'Sincerity is

nearly always present, but tolerance often is lacking' (5 April 1937). Consequently, for the next two years *Farrago* refused to print anything on the Spanish War (Jory 84). University authorities effectively silenced Campus discussion of Spain (4 May 1937; *Argus* 20 April 1937); but as C.H. Jory observed, the University debate had 'revealed the strength of the Catholic case; it gave a foretaste of the ability of Victoria's Catholics to mobilise *en masse* when they felt that their fundamental values and interests were seriously threatened' (Jory 82).

Catholic activists, distinguished by a black and white badge with a holy cross, became prominent at public meetings around Melbourne, using a range of disruptive means from flour bomb to fists to break up meetings (Macintyre 1998: 304; Lowenstein 1989: 188); it seemed 'There were speakers about Spain every week on some platform or other' (Brennan 1962: 36). On 21 April 1937, Ballarat City Hall's Spanish War debate was stacked with 800 bussed-in students from St Patrick's College, some carrying weapons like bike chains (Fitzgerald 38; Woodhouse 98). The debate concluded with three cheers for 'General Franco and the crusaders of Spain' (Jory 84). Again, in April 1937, a large Spanish aid meeting in Geelong was disrupted by Catholic groups connected with the Campion Society (Jory 84). Campion students were at the forefront of these and many other public disruptions, though some participants like Niall Brennan have attempted to down play their zealotry claiming their 'devotion to General Franco, which was nine-tenths emotion and one-tenth knowledge, was an interesting result of undergraduate confusion' (1962: 38). Nevertheless, Australian Army Intelligence reported with satisfaction that Catholic opposition was successfully breaking up pro-Soviet and pro-Spanish Republican meetings (Cain 253).

At Sydney University, the Sydney Archdiocese's less effective style of Catholic Action meant Catholics had little influence, but Communists faired no better. Although pro-Republican lectures and meetings were features of the Student Christian Movement, the Freethought Society and the Socialist Club, when a debate was staged soon after the Melbourne University debate only twenty people turned up (86). According to Alan Barcan, student apathy in Sydney around the time of the Civil War was 'a matter of frequent comment' – in 1936 the campus paper *Honi Soit* asked where had the radicals gone? (94-5) There was no Catholic intellectual presence on campus, and the struggling Labour Club (renamed the Socialist Club), having fallen into Communists hands, soon folded, as did the Public Questions Society with the League of Nations Union University Group not far behind (Jory 98; Barcan 68, 70, 86, 95).

But the mid to late 30s also marked the beginning of the 'Golden Age' of Andersonianism, in which Professor John Anderson gained a national profile, attracted many followers on Sydney University campus, and held control of the Freethought Society which established a library, published pamphlets, held public lectures and controlled the secretariat of the Joint Committee for Peace (Barcan 58, 60). The 'bewitching Anderson' (Inglis 26) and his Trotskyist iconoclasm apparently had the mythical power to destroy the political and religious faiths of impressionable undergraduates, though Spain proved to be destructive of his own Trotskyism.

The Andersonian Freethought Society held lectures and discussion groups on 'The Spanish Situation' and the Russian purges (Barcan 76). According to Anderson's biographer, the Moscow treason trials had put any Trotskyist hope of redeeming the USSR beyond the pale, but Anderson remained 'keenly interested' in the fortunes of the

Spanish Republic and was 'most impressed by the "heroic" resistance of the anarchists and Trotskyist P.O.U.M. of Catalonia' (Kennedy 1995: 112, 109). But although it rekindled Anderson's interest in Anarchism and Georges Sorel's theory of 'permanent opposition', Spain 'appealed to the Nietzschean romantic in Anderson more than the democratic liberal' (109; Baker 123). Anderson saw Spain as an intellectual resource, a cause which clarified his personal politics, but the Republic's demise was a turning point in his rejection of Trotskyism (Anderson 69).

Like the 'respectable' university campuses, exclusive literary societies were also uninterested in anti-fascism. The nation-wide Bread and Cheese Club was established in 1938 to foster Australian literature, and with the Australian Literary Society it published the monthly journal *Bohemia* to campaign against modernism and the erosion of civilised values by mass media (No.1, April 1939: 6). When Leonard Mann and J. McKellar, President and Secretary of the P.E.N. Club, circulated a letter among writers asking for financial support for three artists, three writers, and three professors of the 5,000 Spanish writers and intellectuals exiled in refugee camps in France, *Bohemia*'s response was typically aloof. The journal's answer to this 'graphic and unpleasant account' of the Spanish situation was to insist that Australian intellectuals should be supplied with such funds first (No. 8, November 1939: 3).

Australia's pre-eminent writers' organisation, the FAW, was more charitable (Devanny 1986: 218) but ultimately remained split over the issue of anti-fascism. Egon Kisch's visit inspired an alliance of Leftists, including Flora Eldershaw, Marjorie Barnard, Frank Dalby Davison, Bartlett Adamson, Frank Clune and Jean Devanny, to win control of the executive from the reigning conservatives, and for a time the FAW

flourished as a union for writers and a voice for anti-fascism. But apathy prevailed. Barnard relayed to Nettie Palmer the disappointing results of Vance Palmer's address to the Sydney FAW in January 1937 on the subject of 'Europe Today', which included a great deal on the Spanish war:

> It was a bumper, crowded out, standing room only. He spoke for a bare half-hour – then the discussion. A terribly revealing discussion. The meeting as a whole had no attitude whatever – applauded every shade of opinion with equal fervour, swallowed some amazing cant with bland equanimity. (NLA MS 1174/1/5218-9)

The FAW's sole publication from this era, *Australian Writers Annual* (1936), edited by Eldershaw, retreated into 'aesthetic isolation' (Modjeska 1981: 103). Conflict arose in 1938 when the FAW compiled another book, 'Writers in Defence of Freedom', edited by Devanny, Dalby Davison, Barnard and Eldershaw, with twenty six contributors including Dymphna Cusack, Eleanor Dark, Kylie Tennant, Miles Franklin, Leonard Mann, Brian Penton, Brian Fitzpatrick and identities like A.B. Piddington and Sir Isaac Isaacs. The project was stricken by argument and contradiction. Devanny's 'broad' approach in her essay on the Popular Front put her in conflict with Barnard who wanted a more aggressive stand (Ferrier 1999: 159); Norman Lindsay and Dora Wilcox Moore contributed work which had little or no bearing on the book's anti-fascist themes; Dulcie Deamer was even confused over what democracy or fascism meant. 'Writers in Defence' was never published.

The best organised and most conscientious support for Spain came from poorer, more marginal community-orientated organisations, such as the Writers' League. Whilst the FAW was restricted to 'writers of definite standing' (Modjeska 1981: 104), the League was open to everyone. There was a strict class divide between the two: the League socialised at the Café Petrushka; FAW members relished the Fellowship's 'gloriously bohemian' parties and classy lunches (Palmer papers NLA MS117/1/5019). Indeed, the League was 'shunned with bourgeois dread' by respectable literary organisations for its attitudes to art, politics and world affairs (White 1987: 29). Robert Close recalled that 'The league headquarters was an upstairs room in Little Bourke Street, where the walls were covered with Left-wing posters, press-cuttings, and scathing comments on their veracity' (Close 210). Its small library kept many items concerning the Spanish War, including Spanish posters and prints.

The Writers' League was formed in Sydney and Melbourne at the suggestion of Egon Kisch, who recommended the League affiliate with the Writers' International which was associated with the Comintern (Wells 532). Many involved in Kisch's reception committee constituted the League's nucleus: the Palmers, Prichard, Louis Esson, E.J. Brady, Max Meldrum, Bernard Cronin, Devanny and journalists John Fisher, Gavin Greenlees and Edgar Holt (White 1987: 12). Julie Wells summarises the League's two main aims: 'to mobilise Australian writers behind anti-fascist and working-class causes, and to encourage creative writing which would reflect and promote those ideals' (Wells 530). Its Statement of Principles recognised that people were experiencing social change and a crisis of ideas and should 'look to the writer to make articulate the growing spirit of the age… and oppose all injustice and oppression' (Howells 1977: 31-2).

In practice, the League was of a 'broad and non-sectarian nature' and defied Communist control (Macintyre 1998: 219); it was motivated by a democratic ethos and a cautious modernism (White 30). Spain was the League's central political concern, and one-time member John White recalled that new members were attracted primarily by its political solidarity with Republican Spain, and only secondarily for its vocational support (14-16). Close likewise nominated the issue of Spain as his key motivation for joining the League; 'After my hunger to find the companionship of minds akin to my own, the Writers' League was a revelation. There I had my first introduction to modern literature' (qtd White 18).

Whilst reporting from Spain and Nazi Germany, League member and Communist John Fisher attended the 1937 Second Congress of the International Association of Writers held in Barcelona, Valencia and Madrid. The Congress sought to link the defence of cultural freedom with the defence of the Republic. Dismissed by Stephen Spender as a grotesque 'circus of intellectuals', it attracted identities like André Malraux, Hemingway and many British authors (qtd Cunningham 1980: 48). In this sense, the League was networked internationally and sought to make contact with like-minded writers overseas. The League aimed to promote 'a mature proletarian literature, out of the mines, the factories and the workshops' of the world (qtd Wells 531), and it drew on the cosmopolitan influences of modern realism found in America's *New Masses* magazine – a 'literature of facts' in the style of Hemingway, Gorky and especially John Dos Passos, whom the League regarded highly (White 28). Crucially, these influences stemmed from non-Communist sources: they saved the League from crude Zhdanovite Socialist Realism and connected it with currents of international modernism.

The League produced its own small magazine, *Point*, which took its place in a genealogy of inter-war militant magazines such as *Yesterday and Most of Today* (1932-34) and Mervyn Skipper's irreverent *Pandemonium* (1934-5). These magazines, writes John Tregenza, were 'products of an age of anxiety' and shared a concern with the horror of mechanised modern warfare and the imperialism that drove it (Tregenza 2, 28). Furthermore, they were international and modernist in focus. Mainstream journals gave scant mention of Spain and frequently dismissed books on the Spanish War or the menace of fascism, but Alan Marshall's editorial for *Point*'s first issue was unequivocal about what mattered:

> 'Point' appears at a moment when all the peace-loving people of the world bear a responsibility of unprecedented urgency and magnitude. The situation, both in Australia and abroad, is so perilous that we who have interested ourselves in this magazine – a group of writers of various political tendencies, agreeing only in our opposition to Fascism – feel compelled to use our first words for a plain statement which, as far as we know neither could nor would be published by any other existing Australian journal. (Marshall April 1938: 1)

Marshall's quixotic charge continued: 'The rulers of both Britain and Australia are aiming directly at the establishment of Fascism' through the threat of war, but '"Point" holds high the great democratic tradition of Australia' (2). Such statements drove the

FAW's Majorie Barnard to dismiss *Point* as 'a party paper full of propaganda trying not to look like propaganda' (Palmer papers NLA MS 1174/1/5380).

Point's contents covered international relations, short stories set in Spain, poetry, and political commentary, including a critique of Wyndham Lewis and Aldous Huxley's pacifism, a long piece defending Catholic medievalism, a critique of the *Bulletin*'s support of Spanish fascism, and Vance Palmer's article 'The Genius of Will Dyson'. As David Carter notes, in *Point* proletarianism dropped from view and its realism needed no foregrounding as literature; it was presented as straightforward human expression (Carter 1997: 49-50).

Despite Marshall's editorial directions (Marshall October 1938: 1), *Point* contained an over-riding pessimism about world events. Spain permeated the magazine with contributions ranging from Aileen Palmer's 'Battalion Thaelmann' – 'Watch us marching in serried ranks to the death that is our homage/ To the unbroken spirit of our dishonoured country' (4) – to short stories, and political satire on the same topic. *Point* featured the poetry of Lorca and a poem on the subject of his death: 'struck down,/ Crumpled and lacking life', in addition to Len Fox's conversation with Mary Lowson retelling her experience of terror bombing (26), and an essay on Munich from a Communist position. A.R. McClintock's poem 'Militiaman' set the tone:

Fighting alone

In a world of cautious friends and reckless enemies,

Rearguard of our defence.

Sleet-smarted face and snow-filled eye,

Vigilant in the dark before the dawn…

His bombs plough deep.

Then rise again to your full height, fist clenched and cry

"United Front"

That frightens the bastards,

Till they sweat bullets…

Militia-man, you are our eyes

You are our ears,

You are our hope.

Shoot straight. (McClintock 9)

Despite this defiant, heroic rhetoric, *Point* lasted only two issues; and in 1940, fearing direct government censure, the Writers' League voted itself out of existence. In its relatively short life, however, it nurtured the early careers of several important figures with its diet of pro-Republican politics, proletarianism and anti-fascism.

The Melbourne Writers' League had many members who went on to public acclaim: Frank Hardy, Albert Tucker, A.F. Howells, A.R. 'Rem' McClintock, Bill Wannan, Robert Close, Dick Diamond, Len Fox, Alan Marshall, Judah Waten and Catherine Duncan (Close 210-11; White 21-3, 29). The League also attracted a substantial number of journalists. They were part of a generation of journalists who were inspired by both Egon Kisch's personal audacity and literary style. These included Gavin

Greenlees, Edgar Holt, John Fisher, Douglas Wilkie, Wilfred Burchett, Stewart Brown and Alwyn Lee.

The 30s was the golden age of the intrepid foreign correspondent for whom editorial independence, 'eyewitnessing' and the personalising of the story were paramount (Gannon 3-4). This romantic ideal was almost custom made for the Writers' League's ethos of bravura street-level anti-fascism, mistrust of the mainstream media apparatus and its proletarianism. These inspirations led a generation of Australian journalists into the dangerous adventurism of Spain's War, often with little regard for personal safety – Sydney journalist Leslie White for instance died from shrapnel wounds in the Republican zone whilst reporting from Valdimoro (Palmer 1948: 62)

The Melbourne *Herald* sourced Spanish stories from Rupert Lockwood, who had reported on the Japanese military in South-east Asia, then travelled via Germany, Italy, and central Europe to work on Republican frontlines (Cahill 3-4). According to Rowan Cahill, it was in Spain whilst broadcasting for Republican radio EAQ that Lockwood was politically radicalised, witnessing the aerial and naval bombing and the spectacle of the 'mangled and gutted' corpses of children in Madrid (4). Lockwood was particularly impressed with the Spanish Communists, and joined the CPA in 1939. Because of his growing profile in Spain Lockwood was recalled by Keith Murdoch, but not before giving speeches on Spain in the USA on his way home. His activism would eventually see him forced off the paper (4-5).

Alan Moorehead exemplified this Australian interwar literary generation in many ways, indeed, he was concsious of being part of that generation as a child of the Great War. He was a marxist and an antifascist, he aspired to being a novelist and felt at least

passionately enough about Spain to want to fight for the Republic (Moorehead 28, 39, 61, 63). He was eventually engaged as a correspondent for the *Daily Express* and his reports were syndicated to Australian papers. Stationed in Gibraltar in 1937, he broke news of Italian intervention, then engaged in a highly dangerous venture by running the fascist shipping embargo on Republican ports in a tanker – when shipping in the Straits was an on-going diplomatic crisis (63). In Spain, Moorehead discovered a genuine community: 'one of those brief moments of ardent Communism which overtake all cities in the early days of war' (105). In the early 50s, Moorehead produced a manuscript novel about English adventurers aiding a Spanish woman during the Civil War – and though it worked to a formula, it did reflect the sense of tragedy accompanying the loss of the Republic, felt so keenly by his generation of committed leftist writers (MS NLA 5654).

The mass circulation *Smith's Weekly* sent nineteen-year-old Warren McIlwraith to Spain with ten pounds and a typewriter, where he delighted in the revolutionary atmosphere of Barcelona and met Australian volunteers (31 October 1936; Inglis 23; 9 January 1937). *Smith's*, 'the digger's bible', was strongly anti-fascist, carrying the best of Britain's independent Left commentators such as H.N. Brailsford, syndicated from pro-Republican papers: the *Manchester Guardian* and *The New Statesman and Nation* (12 September 1936). *Smith's* proprietor, Joynton Smith, considered the preservation of democratic Spain and its right to buy arms not only a just cause but 'of vital import to Australia' to secure sea routes through Gibraltar, which were vital for Anglo-Australian strategic interests (8 April 1937; 12 June 1937). Edited by Kenneth Slessor, who was also chief satirist, leader and feature writer, *Smith's* produced 'news' from Spain which amalgamated conspiracy theory, rumour, sensation, racist slur and anti-censorship

invective (Dutton 138; 5 November 1938). *Smith's* interest in Spain was its tragic sensation, reflected in formulaic short stories like 'Flight over Spain' and 'Tomorrow We Die' which ended in tragedy – but never for the Australian characters who invariably escaped the fascist bombing raids and execution squads (17 September 1938; 18 February 1939). *Smith's* was the only popular Australian paper to carry regular and supportive updates on the activities of Australians in Republican Spain; and it boasted that Ron Hurd, *Smith's* favourite International Brigader, requested copies be sent to him at the front (30 October 1936).

Frank L. McIlwraith, *Smith's* 'Special London Representative' (31 July 1938), relayed the real-life accounts of two South Australians, H.M. Seppelt and B.R. Gee, who were caught in the Rebellion whilst in Spain studying the European wine industry. In Badajoz, they witnessed the aftermath of the infamous massacre of civilians in the local bull-ring, the ensuing purge and a priest presiding over the piles of corpses (3 October 1936). McIlwraith argued that Spain's Republic stood for 'all the things Englishmen and Australians are supposed to believe in' – democracy and liberty – and if only the facts were known, Australians 'would utter a wild cry of protest' (5 September 1936).

Smith's editorial line on Spain was shaped by an essentially tragic vision. The paper consistently argued that Australians did not 'cry in protest' because of a culture of indifference, encouraged by government and the media. Ironically, the mass-circulation *Smith's* peddled a basic modernist tenet: that the death of Republican Spain was made possible by the atomisation and alienation of the public, which preferred the comfort of blissful ignorance and self-interest to historical awareness. Slessor's personal editorial touch was the key factor in propagating this argument, and *Smith's* modernist take on

Spain saw public indifference to the War as symptomatic of modernity's fundamental crisis: that people were culturally and intellectually numbed. Consequently, *Smith's* popular view was derived from and shared by major, progressive literary figures. As Vance Palmer wrote to Leslie Rees in February 1939:

> I'm afraid we're in for a bad period – brutality in the saddle and going strong, and people trying to cover themselves with a thick skin of insensitiveness for their own protection; and this doesn't make for the success of anything intellectual or creative. But one has to keep oneself spiritually alive by asserting values. The downfall of Spain seems to me more tragically important than most people here realise: it isn't merely what's happened there, but the moral rottenness in France and England (here, too) that's allowed it. (Palmer 1977: 162)

'Here too' was a telling phrase, declaring that the tragedy of Spain was created by an international mind-set of alienation and materialist self-interest: a rottenness at the very heart of modernity. The eclipse of Republican Spain by fascism was thus regarded as a sombre history lesson; a sign that societies needed to reconnect with deeply felt communal impulses and democratic cultural values. Nettie Palmer asked the vital question following a disappointing meeting of the Spanish Medical Aid committee in 1937, which consisted of three people: she wondered 'if there isn't some essential lack in us, something missing that keeps our life from having meaning and depth… It must be because we have no sense of ourselves as a people, with a yesterday and a to-morrow'

(1988: 241). The Palmers essentially believed that a strong communalist, national culture was the basis for functional democracy and a nation's capacity to resist the onslaught of modernity's twin evils: baseless mass consumerism, undermining communal values from within, and fascist imperialism from without – the later spectacularly symbolised by the bombing raids in Spain. In their view, the urgent and necessary lesson to be learned from Spain was that Australia should build a vigorous national culture to withstand modernity's destructive forces. If this culture did not emerge, Australia would replay the Spanish tragedy.

Leonard Mann saw an impending tragedy written across Australia's busy, militarily exposed industrial cities. Driven by the manufactured desires of American consumerism and threatened by fascist imperialism, Australian society was unconsciously charging toward crisis. Mann, like the Palmers, realised that to be modern was to live in an environment of power and growth that threatened to destroy itself. Mann particularly feared the feckless bourgeoisie, which with a little material prosperity became 'confirmed barbarians' (1937: 36), indifferent to the world around them. Answering this crisis, Mann's *A Murder in Sydney* idealised street-level political thought, regarding the common-man's critique of modernity as an embryonic communalism that subsisted within the historical chaos of the 30s: '"What makes me sick," says Leon, "is still people in this country can't believe anything bad can come to them. Even the depression… They can't understand it"' (102). Hughie, a catastrophist mouthpiece, declared that 'A society with all values in the money equation's got to be smashed. From that point of view it doesn't matter much whether Fascism or Communism smashes it' (105).

Mann's novel surveyed the Sydney Domain on a Saturday afternoon: a kaleidoscope of political creeds including the ubiquitous evangelicals preaching imminent apocalypse. An audience of twenty heard a Great War veteran whose politics suggested the pre-fascist P.R. Stephensen. The speaker declaimed that unless we reinvent our 'largely second hand civilisation' we are doomed to 'extinction like our indigenous forerunners' (220, 224). Australia was witnessing 'the steady vulgarisation of our life', that threatened to descend into American anti-cultural, commercial 'barbarism' (220). He asserted 'our danger is written on the earth by this city. Mammon is its God and vulgarity and barbarism its rite of worship' (224). In this hiatus in the narrative, the unnamed speaker continued at length, defining the structure of feeling that saturated the novel:

> 'There are two sorts of tragedy. There is the personal one in which man is in conflict with his own soul. There is another sort which can be found in the writings of the modern Americans, the Faulkners, the Hemingways, Lewises and others, practically all in the United States who have claim to be real writers. It is a kind of race tragedy. It is the tragedy of men and women whose destruction is caused by the times and circumstances of their life, by the ignorance, misery and brutality, the barbarism in which they live, against which effort is futile, which imposes itself on them, drowns them and destroys them.
>
> 'We have not yet reached that condition but we are likely to reach it unless we are saved from it; unless we save ourselves… While we in our

> vulgar ignorance imagine nothing can happen to us we will be destroyed and we will leave no reason for anyone to lament us.' (220-1)

The speaker warned that full-scale imperialist war was imminent, and an authentic national culture was the nation's main guarantee of survival (221-3) – a view derived directly from anti-fascist responses to the Spanish Civil War. Importantly, the unnamed speaker in Mann's novel was clearly based on P.R. Stephensen: an advocate of cultural nationalism whose lurch to fascism did not discourage others from adapting his key ideas. Ironically, Stephensen's far-Right turn had no effect on writers like the Jindyworobaks, who were deeply convinced that the collapse of the Spanish Republic was immediately concurrent with Australia's potential ruin. They appropriated elements of Stephensen's cultural nationalist ideology, laid out in *Foundations of Culture in Australia* (1937), to forge an intellectual tendency which would rescue Australia from the crises of modernity that were tragically evident in Spain.

The Jindyworobak movement was a small group of poets who subsisted within the hostile territory of the University of Adelaide; where all discussion of 'politics' was prohibited, where the campus Peace Group was perpetually attacked, and the University Union refused to comment on foreign affairs because 'we are inadequately informed on these matters' (qtd Finnis 150). The group was founded by Rex Ingamells, who entered university life as an outsider from a desperately poor background (Ward 85). Adapting Stephensen's ideas, the Jindyworobaks fulminated against imported English culture, celebrated the Australian landscape and indigenous arts, and mobilised their vision of an authentic Australian culture in response to the political menaces of modernity.

Ingamells encapsulated this important political dimension of the movement in his poem 'Earth-Colours'. When he compiled the school poetry anthology *The Spoils of Time* in 1948, he set 'Earth-Colours' beside poems by Tennyson, Arnold, Pound, Owen, Sassoon and MacNeice: a clear indication of the stature he accorded it in Jindyworobak history. First published in 1938, 'Earth-Colours' was distinguished for its concern with international fascism – not the pastoral themes which critics like John Dally have insisted exclusively defined the Jindyworobaks (Dally 400):

Earth-colours, rich-primaeval, blaze and smoulder
On claypan-flat and river-cliff and cuesta-boulder.
My heart should burn to praise yet fear-grips, cold and colder.

Blood blinds the world: in war-zones blood is running.
Where Ethiopian lizards scuttled, sunning,
all the air is filled with the smoke of gunning.

Death's keen minstrels
ping like rain
through the pleasant
land of Spain.

Death's engined angels
range the sky

where China's smouldering

temples lie.

I watch the streaks of sunset metafusing:

my heart should burn to praise but it rebels, refusing…

I see the wake-waves of dark carnage-squadrons cruising.

Dare you now behold the new day dawning?

There comes no radiant goddess to your fawning –

Smoke-clouded Mars, blood-hungry, cavernously yawning. (Ingamells 1938: 47)

'Earth-Colours' was saturated with Spanish references: the modernist nightmare of air raids, invoked as 'dark carnage-squadrons'; the fusion of Australian and Spanish landscapes in the second line, linking the 'claypan-flat' and 'cuesta-boulder' as a unified cultural topography. Indeed, the 'rich-primaeval colours' distinct to Australia existed within a global vision: a world in which the 'blaze and smoulder' of nature had grim parallels in the blood of war-zones, the smoke of battle and the smouldering ruins of civilisation. And the suggestion that Australia was a part of this world of chaos and destruction was an anti-pastoral nightmare, moving Ingamells to 'fear-grips'. According to Ingamells' doctrine, nature and poetic feeling were an alternative order standing against industry and war, aiming at 'cultural unanimity' and opposing the demands of fascist-financial imperialism, the 'London-to-Tokio Money Mind' (Ingamells 1940: 24; October 1939). The theme of international modernity's destructive tendencies, and the

associated fear of Australian vulnerability, was elaborated again in Ingamells' poem 'Man' – a poem that directly invoked the terror of Spanish air raids:

> And so I send my squadrons out
> With screens of smoke and belching flames;
> And Conflict-maker, without doubt,
> Is the greatest of my names. (Ingamells 1938: 46)

The Jindyworobaks were distinguished from earlier nationalist cultural movements because the technology of war meant isolationism was no longer practical – Spain and China were suffering the same tragedy that might befall Australia. *Venture*, the Jindyworobak journal, constantly expressed its solidarity with Republican Spain: in John M. Opie's 'Andalusian Revolt', for example, which consciously echoed the parallels between religious rites and modern military technology in Wilfred Owen's 'Anthem for Doomed Youth':

> I found you, the weary of men…
> the bullet's singing
> was your ringing
> requiem. (Opie)

The tragic events of the Spanish Civil War stimulated the Jindyworobak search for the roots of a national culture: a set of myths to live by anchored in 'Environmental Values',

the 'Place Spirit', aboriginality and anti-capitalism. From Stephensen's *Foundations of Culture in Australia*, Ingamells and others understood the importance of a strong national mythology as a guarantee that Australia might spiritually withstand the ravages of modernity. Taking up this argument in a 'crisis number' of *Meanjin*, Vance Palmer used Spain as the explicit reference point for this urgent national identity project: Australians, he wrote, 'have no monuments to speak of, no dreams in stone, no Guernicas, no sacred places. We could vanish and leave singularly few signs' (qtd Tregenza 56).

Post-Guernica, to 'vanish' was suddenly an alarmingly literal possibility. The Jindyworobaks offered a romanticist solution to this peculiarly modern reality of urban annihilation. Ingamell's nationalism, a peculiar amalgam assembled from Stephensen, D.H. Lawrence and James Devaney's *Vanished Tribes* (Elliott xxxiii), aimed to manufacture a distinct identity through national culture, establishing tangible, explicit values through cultural roots in the Australian environment. The term 'Jindyworobak' literally meant 'to join', and the movement attempted to fuse a sense of place in the form of Aboriginal culture, 'sublimated through our thought', with the best of British ideals (Ingamells *Conditional* 1938: 16-18; Kennedy 1939: 5). Jindyworobaks aimed to recover an imagined lost pastoral heritage. And this was deeply connected to the decade's structure of feeling: as Eagleton notes, in many tragic schemas 'What impels us forward, perversely, is an instinct to travel backward to Eden' (2003: 248). Guided by Stephensen's example, the Jindyworobaks believed that modernity was disjunct from the past and charging forward at such a dizzying pace that it was unable to even remember its origins. Paradoxically, however, Jindyworobaks aspired to recover lost origins but *also* saw the possibility of moral renewal in the era's cultural free-fall and destruction. As

Flexmore Hudson wrote in 1941: ‘Empire may tumble; generations poisoned by hatred, fall;/ whole nations slip back into darkness./ Here now we need not despair. That noble act, that plain-vast thought, that song – they are/ not lost’ (1979: 50).

At the University of Adelaide, lecturer in English J.I.M. Stewart and classicist Charles Stewart championed European modernism (Miles 16-17). They were a particular influence on Max Harris, Donald B. Kerr, and Paul Pfeiffer, who would lead in the introduction of the political and poetic innovations of Auden’s generation to Australia. A group including Ingamells, Harris, Kerr, Hudson, Mudie, Geoffrey Dutton and Colin Thiele, met in Pfeiffer’s college rooms, united through their interest in new writing, art, international politics and the fascist assault on Spain (Thiele viii). As Spender had put it, Spain’s struggle was over fundamental values and therefore *the* subject for poetry, and the young Adelaide clique agreed (Spender 1939: 11).

Harris was the son of a commercial traveller, whose education relied upon a boarding scholarship and work as a copy-boy for the *Adelaide News* (Brissenden 1996: ix). At the same college, the bourgeois Kerr was being educated at family expense (Miles 62). Pfeiffer was the product of a rural conservative Germanic Lutheran household, and his education was partly paid for by his sister working as a kitchen hand and his own part-time teaching (127, 137, 131, 140). Consistent with Auden’s generation, the Great War had shaped the friends’ childhoods: Kerr’s father fought on the Somme, Pfieffer’s family suffered anti-German xenophobia (62, 134).

Pfieffer, Kerr and Harris were precocious, prolific workers of tremendous energy and academic ability – each received multiple academic prizes. Their favoured poets were Donne, Vaughan, Marvell, Eliot and Auden (29). Under Auden’s influence, Harris

became a proponent of marxism and Freudian psychoanalysis, and read Geoffrey Grigson's *New Verse*, *New Apocalypse* and Herbert Read's *Poetry and Anarchy* (1938). Ingamells also read Herbert Read's *Collected Essays in Literary Criticism* and Louis MacNeice's *Modern Poetry* (McQueen 1979: 128-9).

In 1939, Kerr edited the single issue of the radical student literary magazine *Phoenix*, which quickly had its funding withdrawn by the University (Miles 26, 89). After a considerable bureaucratic struggle, the pioneering journal *Angry Penguins* succeeded *Phoenix* – with Harris as editor, Kerr as co-editor and Pfeiffer and Dutton as sub-editors (Thiele ix; Miles 27, 90). The now famous *Angry Penguins* was a purpose-built vehicle for Left-wing ideas – though Richard Haese refuses to recognise this, arguing that modernism in itself possesses an apolitical 'liberalising and humanising capacity' (viii), which naturally expedites the telos of bourgeois liberalism. In the case of *Angry Penguins*, however, politics was a prime consideration, catalysed principally by the Spanish Civil War.

In April 1939, Max Harris, first secretary of the Jindyworobak club, wrote to Ted Turner of his defection from the nationalist Jindyworobaks in favour of internationalism: 'I want to come into real contact with the essential nature of a world wide movement intellectually. Each moment of isolationism is a nail in the coffin of [Australian] culture' (qtd Haese 106). In the July 1939 edition of *Bohemia*, Harris announced 'I am an Anarchist – so what?' Citing Herbert Read, he claimed the artist could subscribe to no fixed policy, only to the shifting processes of reality:

> For the artist, if he is a true artist, must be free to be revolutionary, reactionary, traditional, innovator, all in turn: depending only of course on his momentary relation to his environment… As the anarchist, he owns but one authority – his character as artist… (Harris July 1939: 12)

Harris claimed that Australian poetry was trapped in a decomposing Romanticism, and argued for a new form responsive to European poetry and feeling (12). Like his mentor Michael Roberts, Harris announced the decadent period of Romantic humanism at an end, and advocated a change in poetry leading to 'a feeling away from man to abstract religious values – heroic values' (12). Harris' new image as 'enfant terrible' was actively cultivated to goad Australian culture out of its apathy, and he identified himself with 'the present *attitude* to poetry as expounded by T.E. Hulme, elaborated by Michael Roberts and carried into effect both in painting and poetry by Herbert Read' (qtd Heyward 16). Harris was influenced by Roberts' ground-breaking work *T.E. Hulme* (1938). Roberts was in tune with the changing ambitions and loyalties of the Auden generation; as editor of *New Writing*, he supported writers of Auden's stature and was the first to attempt to define the 'Auden Generation' in *New Signatures* (Hynes 1979: 315). In the concluding chapter of *T.E. Hulme*, 'The Tragic View', Roberts made an assessment of the late 30s which considered the tragic view that had succeeded unsustainable liberal pacifism and the 'utopian faith in automatic progress' (Roberts 1938: 231).

Drawing from Hulme – and from Auden's dictum that modernity's crisis is 'us' – Roberts argued that the present interest in tragedy stemmed from the collapse of Romantic trust in the essential goodness of humanity: 'Tragedy starts by recognising the

existence of evil, not only in the outside world but in ourselves… It recognises our limitations and makes them acceptable' (236). Thus, public indifference and political inertia were the result of antiquated 'romantic preconceptions' which could not accommodate the tragic realities of modernity (242); and Roberts asserted that 'In the tragic view, all doctrines of perfectibility are seen to be dangerous, whether in politics, philosophy or aesthetics… this failure is intrinsic to our nature… we must find that any ultimate objective that we set ourselves is unattainable or unsatisfactory' (251-2).

Roberts' theory of tragedy and the weltanschauung of Read's *New Apocalypse* was the basis of Harris' 1940 anthology *The Gift of Blood*, published when Harris was only nineteen. And the 'enfant terrible' fully expected the book to 'cause hostility, criticism, dislike' (qtd Heyward 20). *Gift of Blood* contained Harris's major poetic work 'Progress of Defeat', written soon after the surrender of the Spanish Republic. This poem cycle traced the experiences of an International Brigade soldier-poet journeying to the front, in battle, in defeat, and finally in exile in the bohemian margins of his native city.

Spender had declared Spain to be a 'poet's war' (qtd Buchanan 1997: 126), and concurred with Auden and a host of poets and volunteers that should they fail to fight and write they would end up 'spiritually dead' (Spender 9). 'Progress of Defeat' was a dialogue with Auden's 'Spain', wherein some of Auden's more confident assertions were juxtaposed in the margins. But Harris, writing in the last days of the Republic, was primarily concerned with the nature of Spender's 'spiritual death' and the historical tragedy that Auden forecast should fascism win in Spain and spread. For Harris, Spain's tragedy was not in the Auden generation's willingness to die but, rather, in surviving the

aftermath to experience a kind of suspended spiritual animation. This was invoked by the repeated concept of 'awaiting', as Harris wrote:

> Still we are here, undead, awaiting
> the summons to the dread analyst whose words will loose
> the present on us like a prison arclight and from the
> shadows…
> we shall see the dead in Madrid, sweet children of Anda-
> lusia dying
> and dead in a continual future. We awaiting… (53)

Whereas Auden's 'Spain' was published as a pamphlet for mass circulation, 'Progress of Defeat' was self-conscious and esoteric. Its imaginative setting was a grotesque inversion of Auden's poem; Harris' Spain was a place drained of promise, expectation and hope: the train, an image of power and escape in the poetry of Auden and Spender, signified an intractable fate for Harris and soldiers in carriages were 'moonmad creatures whose destiny/ is in the wheels of the galloping train' (57). In 'Progress', history was set on a fixed course; 'heave fate its china coin – 'tis for the blind… Know not the meaning of destined' (56). Harris quoted Auden's famous refrain, history 'cannot help nor pardon', alongside the lines

> Now we say the long prepared
> downfall of Priam is in each moment,

in each responsive heart in a thousand Troys:

now the Aeneas who all has dared

must raise the picket. With reserves spent

the bosses have the day. (59)

In Harris' poem, the aftermath of struggle left international fascism in charge – once again – of Spain's future; sacrifice and the 'Romantic death' were meaningless, and the tragedy of modernity's heroes was to endure a spiritual death-in-life and metropolitan exile. In this regard, Harris' images of the returned, defeated Spanish volunteer were fused with a portrait of the lamp-lit, garret-dwelling bohemian vagrant:

We know no mithridatum of despair

as drunks, the angry penguins of the night,

straddling the cobbles of the square,

tying shoelace by fogged lamplight.

We know no astringent pain,

no flecking of thought's dull eternal sea

in garret image, of Spain

and love … now love's parody.

See – chaos spark, struck from flint,

and plunging distemper, flare in the dawn's dull seep…

convulsions endure

from nine to five,

all life immure.

and still alive (60)

Hynes observes that writers of the late 30s frequently conveyed this oppressive sense of a futureless world: 'the world they imagine is a world without history', and after Spain they could believe that 'beyond fascism there was no imaginable future' (1979: 314). It was a view that contrasted darkly with what Humphrey Carpenter called Auden's historically certain, 'hawk-like, Hardyesque views from a great height', so evident and compelling in his poem 'Spain' (61). For Auden, Spain's War could be understood as a switch-point in history, and his 'Spain' was located in a long process of social evolution: from 'the bustling world of the navigators' to 'the installation of dynamos and turbines,/ The construction of railways in the colonial desert' (51-2). In Harris' mind, however, Spain and its aftermath were a nightmare in which time stood still:

(came Franco soldiered with the age's hate)

and moving o'er the soldiers marches hears

the hounds of big guns bark away…

the familiarity of crystalline day

seen in a dream and dreaded

Harris' 'Progress' closed with 'the rattle of guns and throb of planes' as a child slept in an air raid shelter and 'Death woos the child to peace in soft song in Spain' (62). But this

melodrama of soft resignation was there from the poem's opening lines. 'Progress of Defeat' had begun with a deathly whispering, and a narcissistic self-portrait of Harris himself lulled by morbid song:

> I HAVE watched this Hamlet sea so long;
> so long
> pacing the ramparts of my mind with echoing tread;
> I still can hear its whisper bemoaning wrong,
> and pain,
> and the empty time-song of the dead. (53)

Auden and Spender consciously placed themselves in a radical, oppositional tradition of English letters which championed common culture; and for Spender, Auden's 'Spain' was the direct inheritor of English poetic values (1939: 11). They were seeking the tone, style and arguments which would bring a citizenry into common discourse, which involved exploiting and articulating the emergent tragic structure of feeling of the 30s. Harris merely floundered in the tragic sense: his creative experiment collapsing into disabling, almost adolescent, deracination. Harris palpably thought, and wrote, in an opposite defeatist direction. Hynes insists that future war was widely envisaged by modernists as apocalyptic (297): a forecast based on fascist 'total war' in Spain. But modernism was divided over whether such apocalyptic moments cleared away the past to yield a better world, or generated deeper human depravities in chaos (Eagleton 2003:

252). In ‘Progress of Defeat’, Harris ultimately chose the latter, in his Hamlet-like surrender to torpor, ‘death songs’ and dandyish marginalisation.

Harris’ aesthetic embraced the idea of the individual lost in modernity’s chaos, whereas Spender believed it was the poet’s vision that initiated an idea of the future. Spender felt that Spain was one of those rare moments in history in which ‘events make the individual feel that he counts.’ His action or failure to act could change the course of history (qtd Hopkins 10). In a world ‘accustomed to confusion and obscurity’, Spender wrote, the International Brigade represented a certain poetic synthesis of word and action, and in the soldier-poets of the Republican army action itself was poetry (1939: 8). The rebelling poets and International Brigades were warning that ‘it is necessary for civilisation to defend and renew itself’ (Spender 1939: 8). As Albert Camus also thought, sacrifice was an act of clarity and order in the name of common values made against irrationality and self-alienation: ‘The most elementary rebellion, paradoxically, expresses an aspiration to order’ (1969: 181).

In contrast to Harris, the more determined and politicised Pfeiffer, dubbed one of ‘the lost Angry Penguins’, was firmly in the mould of the Auden generation. C.R. Jury praised Pfeiffer’s poetry because of its intense ‘Simonides-like’ tragedy, which found poetic clarity in politics and the issue of Spain (32). According to Colin Thiele, the destruction of Guernica and Picasso’s memorial canvas moved Pfeiffer to write his version ‘Spain’ (Thiele viii). ‘Spain’ was part of his Masters thesis, and was awarded the Bundy prize for English Verse in 1940, then published in *Hymeneal to a Star* (Miles 147). As Thiele recalled:

> I sensed that [Pfeiffer] felt very deeply – as we all did – about the direction the world was taking. The rise of fascism in Germany and Italy, and the power of Communism in [Russia], were clearly creating two vast power-blocks heading hell-bent toward catastrophe. In this context the Spanish Civil War was just the beginning. No doubt Paul's poem 'Spain' was a product of that conviction. Yet to my knowledge he was never outwardly declamatory… As with most writers, his was obviously an inner passion. (qtd Miles 145-6)

Again affirming the Adelaide University group's internationalism, Pfeiffer's 'Spain' was yet another poem clearly cued by Auden. Pfeiffer juxtaposed Australia's emptiness with Spain's heritage, suggesting that in contrast to Australian apathy the Spanish fighting spirit was based in a rich culture: 'Here in this unjostled transmarine land/ Denuded of a Timon-heritage of privacy/ Where there has been no blood shed/ For general good or ill…/ I think of Spain, foreleg of senile Europe,/ Where man, too, still must seek integrity' (244). Pfeiffer used Auden's panoramic, historical method to place Spain in an unbroken teleology, from Cervantes, Goya and El Greco to the present. It was a dramatic land of sierras and night fires, and religious monuments to revolution and human hope: 'Land of reverence for the arts and love,/ Land of the ardent struggle,/ Out of a plenitude of grace you speak' (245).

Spanish stereotypes like these were balanced, however, by a very acute political reading of Spain's plight – a dimension unthinkable in Harris' work. Pfeiffer pictured a peasantry 'Cajoled into submission by promise of bliss/ they too remain mute' (246); and

his Auden-like pastoral imagery of 'Love under groves of oaks' was graphically off-set by an account of Spain's induction into the order of global modernity:

> Now you are almost abreast of Europe
>
> In inventiveness…
>
> Men are now not men but hands,
>
> Manipulators who canalise production
>
> Into chain stores, and augment some private till.
>
> Gone is the modest workman and his shop,
>
> The cadenced noise of treadles:
>
> But the looms of eternity
>
> With predetermined pattern no man stayed; (247)

Pfeiffer was in no doubt that capitalist modernity, modernisation and industrialisation had fractured traditional Spanish society and paved the way to war. Pfeiffer's 'Spain' also refused Auden's pastoral and disingenuous portrayal of Spanish democracy secured and defended by 'the flat ephemeral pamphlet and the boring meeting' – a struggle without explicit violence (Auden 54). Pfeiffer's 'Spain' recognised that the 'legitimate' peoples' struggle and 'anger' involved ugly realities – the desecrations and summary executions of the Republic's 'counter-attack'. And he observed that the most urgent missives, or messages, to the world from the Spanish front came in the form of fascist bombs:

> Stern against betrayal of a nation, a people welded

Under pressure, resist upstanding the Duce's bombs.

Death-charged missives from the German gentleman
Straddled across the frontiers; this newest aerial
  torpedo…

And there is counter-attack, purging of churches,
  Murder of the Christian millionaire;
Some newer defacement of Christ's image, but also
  the juster anger…

And is the upshot of it all final defeat?
The 'gift of blood' regarded mean or romantic?
Is it no more than the prelude to the newer, the
  Legitimate struggle?
Or our cue perhaps for taking leave of hope? (248-9)

For Harris, Spain was an event that inspired 'taking leave' of hope; for Pfeiffer, it was less clear what the Civil War's aftermath portended. In an article from December 1936, Pfeiffer predicted that technology, which determined labour and leisure, would also drive future suicidal wars – if only as a release of energies repressed under the new technological order of modernity (Miles 252-3). In the Second World War, Harris avoided conscription; Pfeiffer's political outrage over Spain persisted, and he enlisted

early in the anti-fascist war, joining the RAAF and dying. Pfeiffer preferred a committed death to a life reproached for putting his art before real struggle (Miles 175).

Internationally, and in Australia, officially-constituted political parties, both Left and Right, could never understand that modernists were fellow travellers. Modernism was tainted with both the culturally reactionary views of Eliot or Ezra Pound, and the self-interest and disengagement of the Harris-like bohemian garret-dweller. Communists agreed: modernism was high-bourgeois individualism and potentially fascist. 'Mussolini's Art in Spain', for example, a cartoon in the *Communist Review*, depicted a fascist artist dynamiting a Spanish town to rubble and declaring it modern abstract art (March 1937: 4.3, p10). However, Picasso and other Spanish modernists made a formal linkage between anti-fascism, artistic freedom and modernism at the 1937 Paris Expo: Picasso's *Guernica* proved a highly-popular painting for the public, suggesting modernity's 'apocalypse'. Jean Paul Sartre wrote: 'I cannot laugh at the nausea of the Communist boa constrictor, unable either to keep down or vomit up the enormous Picasso. In the CP's indigestion, I see the symptoms of an infection which contaminates our entire era' (Sartre 1965: 206). The profile of art in Spain gained further momentum with concerns for the fate of antiquities and Spanish art in the Republican zone: images of museums and galleries sacked and destroyed at the hands of Franco's bombers were internationally broadcast. Inspecting the ruins of Spain's heritage, the former head of the British Museum catalogued missing and salvaged art, whilst the Republic publicised its efforts to protect Spanish art treasures (*Spain at War Illustrated* No. 2: May 1938). As Stephen Spender and many others argued, Spain's Civil War was nothing short of a war for culture: its preservation, its freedom to thrive and to be publicly available.

Visual, artistic modernism presented another essential layer of evidence for the omnipresence of a tragic structure of feeling in Australian community life in the 30s. Visual artists shared the inner-urban haunts of poetic modernists, and many of their theoretical and political obsessions. In Australia, artistic modernism, freedom of expression and anti-fascism were linked. The Melbourne Contemporary Art Society (CAS), the leading modernist school in Australia, believed that 'To be modern was to be anti-fascist' (Haese 29). The CAS maintained that modern art was a political, proselytising medium: a fighting body for the defence of culture at home and internationally. This ideal was practiced when Joyce Hammond and Mary Wren, working for the Joint Spanish Aid Council, assembled local collections to create Melbourne's first display of modern art. Their controversial show was opened by a proponent of modernism, Sir Henry Gullett MHR, in the Robertson and Mullens Gallery in July 1937 – suggesting that artistic modernism went beyond minority tastes: modernism was indeed accepted in the salons, as it was in the streets. Despite a forceful, concerted rear-guard action by Menzies and his clique of traditionalists, the Australian public readily embraced modernism. Humphrey McQueen argues that 'Faced by the depression, by fascism and by the likelihood of a new world war fewer Australians could rally to the golden hues of the ageing Streeton' (1979: 123): a defunct visual mode, impressionist and unresponsive to contemporary history.

In 1938, 'The Laughing Bandicoot', the regular columnist for the Returned Servicemen's Labour League Magazine *The Movement*, considered not modernism but the official art of the military-industrial complex to be the truly abstract art for which 'millions will believe, fight and die, or perish of hunger and disease': art which actively

suppressed the truth of a ‘dark international’ of imperialism, expanding its reach in China, Czechoslovakia and Spain (Bandicoot).

Sir Keith Murdoch, managing director of the *Herald* and *Weekly Times*, promoted modernism through his newspapers, and appointed Basil Burdett to curate the famous *Herald* exhibition of modern art in 1939, attracting 45,000 visitors (McQueen 1979: 36-7; Burke 120). Burdett consciously designed the exhibition according to the political climate, making it a protest against militarism and fascism and an answer to Hitler’s Munich exhibitions of decadent art (Haese 62). With modern art exhibitions visiting annually, and European refugees escaping fascism and bringing new aesthetic practices with them, Australian art circles were greatly developed in the late 30s. These developments had profound effects on a generation of urban, often working-class, modernist avant-gardes in Sydney, Adelaide, and Melbourne: they became politically conscious, independent, street-wise products of the ‘angry decade’ (Hughes 1979). This generation, including Arthur Boyd, Albert Tucker, James Cant and John Percival, was profoundly influenced by the new mass media, internationalism, urban poverty, the Spanish Civil War and the sense of an indifferent world headed for catastrophe. In Robert Hughes’ terms, these influences formed the basis of the ‘lyrical violence’ and innovative expressionism which defined their art (Hughes 1962: 370-1).

James Cant was typical of this generation. Having moved to London in 1934, Cant became a close friend of Herbert Read and exhibited with the pioneering British Surrealist Group. For six months during the Spanish Civil War, he lived in Paris and Barcelona, meeting many cutting-edge Surrealists, including Miro and Georges Braque. They convinced Cant to join the anti-fascist Artists’ International Association in 1938

(Mereweather 1983: 89). In response, Cant painted *Merchants of Death* – under the influence of the hallucinogenic drug mescaline and Picasso's *Guernica*. Mimicking Picasso's style, *Merchants of Death* depicted armament traders clambering over one another, greedy for war profit, in an obscene visual parody of Picasso's portrayal of Guernica's victims.

In 1938, Cant produced his painting *Returning Volunteer*, depicting an International Brigader with fist raised in a salute of tragic defiance. But the Brigader was withered, missing a lower leg and propped on a crutch – a clear visual reference to Salvador Dali's *Sleep* (1937). In *Sleep*, Dali used the crutch to comment on the decrepitude of European social order (Ades 56); in Cant's painting, the crutch was an emblem of ruined socialist ambitions. In a further visual allusion to Dali, Cant's volunteer stood alone in a grey desert-scape, flanked by a bombed building, and the desert wasteland was heavily symbolic. Traditionally, the desert is the habitat of the hermit mystic and his spiritual tests, and of temptation and tragedy.

Cant's *Returning Volunteer* and his next painting of Sydney, *The Deserted City* (1939), were politically connected to the many images of malignant cities produced by his contemporaries: John Percival's *Exodus From a Bombed City* (1942), Bernard Smith's *Pompeii* (1940), Yosl Bergner's 1938 series on urban poverty and Albert Tucker's *The Futile City* (1940). Tucker's *Futile City* traded on Daliesque iconography: the grey desert, a giant key, and a skeleton posing a question in front of a Spanish walled city. In the 30s, Tucker's marxism coloured innovations in his painting, and *Futile City* was a studied comment on the significance of aerial bombardment in Spain for the rest of the world: blood rained on the city's battlements from a clear desert sky.

According to Charles Merewether, painters like Cant and Tucker belonged to a 'generation of voices of protest [and] despair' in the Australian arts that turned to modernist urban imagery as a means of allegorising the urgency and tragedy of contemporary events (1983: 9-10). Their break with Australian visual traditions was fuelled by internationalist inclinations, and they identified with an artistic movement in which Spain was the key symbol. This identification was fostered through imported periodicals and picture magazines, including *Spain Illustrated*, published by Spanish Relief. And they absorbed the ideas and fears of artists overseas: 'images of political apocalypse and war' (Mellor 200). In this international context, Tucker's *Futile City* was painted according to the prescriptions of the prominent British war artist Paul Nash, who was alarmed by the spectacle of Spanish air raids: 'suddenly the sky was upon us all, like a huge hawk, hovering, threatening… I hunted the sky for what I dreaded in my imaginings' (qtd Mellor 203).

Chapter 7: The Technologies of Modern Tragedy

'Spanish Civil War' is an important, absent signifier in Australian history. The scholarly forgetting of Spain and its significance to Australians in the 1930s and the decades after also obscures the fact that the conflict left a final legacy to Australian culture and politics. The last lesson drawn from the Spanish War in Australia was that the idea of isolationism, or protection by an over-extended British navy, was no longer tenable, and 'the sky' was a primary source of this fearful realisation.

The Spanish Civil War has generally been considered marginal to the primary concerns of Australians in the late 30s: even Spanish War scholars like Judith Keene and Amirah Inglis believe Australians as a whole were not moved by events abroad. But Spain did have profound meanings for Australians. In the mid-late 30s, a structure of feeling had emerged underpinned by the anxious belief that civilisation was moving to a tragic crisis – grounded in the spectacle of Spain's destruction by German and Italian air raids. The sight of Spanish society at the mercy of such a technology, broadcast internationally, was a grim premonition of the potential fate of not only European but Australian cities in a future war. As B.A. Santamaria warned the massive May 1939 peace rally, 'the holocaust we face today is greater by far. The world today faces a new factor – it is the factor of aerial bombardment. In its infancy during the last war, it has grown to manhood in twenty years, and the new creation is as hideous as any invented by the perverted genius of fallen men' (qtd Ormonde 1972: 8).

In *Civilisation and Its Discontents* (1930), Sigmund Freud famously pronounced that the technological conquest of nature had transformed the modern human subject into a prosthetic God: 'Motor power places gigantic forces at his disposal… thanks to ships and aircraft neither water nor air can hinder his movements' (90). By the late 30s, after the aerial bombing of Madrid and Barcelona and the annihilation of Guernica by the Luftwaffe, the inner destructiveness in the technological promise of overcoming time and space was internationally evident.

As Samuel Hynes notes, before the Spanish War the air was one of the few domains of heroism left, after the Great War's technological slaughter in the trenches had destroyed the idealisation of the warrior and battle (1979: 189). With the aerial bombing of Spanish cities, however, there was a discernible shift in attitudes to the air: the emergent structure of feeling, in the years 1936–9, projected broader fears of a systemic crisis in industrial modernity onto the specific symbol of the bomber.

Throughout the 1930s, the mass public appetite for news was voracious. In 1934, every 100 British families bought 95 morning newspapers and 57.5 evening tabloids daily, and 130 Sunday papers; in 1937 the British press produced 1,577 different newspapers and 3,119 magazines. Australia likewise had one of the highest per capita rates of newspaper consumption in the world (Hobsbawm 194). The coverage of the Spanish War in the mainstream Australian press was extensive. For the duration of the war, in frequency and consistency, the coverage of Spain eclipsed all other foreign news: several stories a week appeared; there were regular commentary and opinion pieces and, often, accompanying photographs. Reports of Japanese attacks on open Chinese cities featured prominently alongside news on Spain (except in the pro-Japanese *SMH*), revealing a relentless and seemingly unstoppable sweep of the Japanese army bringing death to thousands in Canton and

Shanghai. But only such outrages or crucial shifts in the Sino-Japanese War, and events such as the betrayal of Czechoslovakia at Munich in 1938 or reports of Stalin's purges, pushed Spain from the top of Australian foreign news pages.

At first, local news-analysis was rarely insightful: it was argued either that Spain was unsuited to democracy or that the fight would spread ideologically – and perhaps physically – across a class-conscious, unstable Europe (Kaeppel 8-9). Judith Keene observed that the initial war coverage was determined by a contradictory vision: Spain was viewed as a place of tradition, aristocracy and high culture, yet inhabited by the irrationally-violent, proud and barbaric (but martially-ineffective) character of the contemporary Spaniard (1988: 44-6). Keene saw this racial stereotype encapsulated in an early *Sydney Morning Herald* editorial, which likened the war to the inscriptions on two Spanish headstones that explained the deceased had fought to the death over a melon (47).

However, Keene did not go on to account for a dramatic change in the coverage when the technically-advanced Italian and German war-machines arrived in Spain, and when Madrid was bombed from the air in August–September 1936. After that point, Spain was not seen as tragi-comedy or an internecine Latino squabble, to be commented upon by inconvenienced English tourists. Rather, it became something distinctly modern and profoundly tragic. Racially-typed stories of mob-inspired Spanish blood-lust seemed foolish when set beside documented reports of atrocities visited upon civilians by 'modern', 'civilised' Germany and Italy. Defenceless under nightly air raids, 'Madrid' became a by-word for the Inferno-like quality of technological warfare: in the words of an American correspondent, the city was 'a nightmare of slaughter and living horror. A seething hell which makes Dante's masterpiece a tame thing by comparison' (qtd Brendon 327). As Hugh Thomas noted,

the ‘terrible flames caused the capital to appear like some elemental place of torture’; and ‘commentators in Madrid at the time eloquently prophesied’ this as the future of war and human suffering (1961: 329).

Throughout the Spanish War, Australian print journalism stressed the atrocity and tragedy of the Spanish people’s exposure to modern aerial warfare, and its resistant spirit: ‘Franco bombs Women and Children’ (*SMH* 20 January 1937); the population of San Sebastian ‘terrified at the prospect of incendiarism and massacre’ (*SMH* 7 September 1936); the exodus from a destroyed Malága ‘was a human cataclysm such as had never before been seen in Europe… exhausted crowds were bombed from the sky and fired upon’ by Italian and German planes (*Argus* 18 February 1937); in Madrid, though ‘Tragedy is around the corner’ large audiences attend cinemas and theatres (*Argus* 21 September 1937); during air raids Madrid appeared ‘as if a plague had swept the streets’ (*SMH* 15 January 1938); the town of Nules, completely demolished, had bodies dug out of ‘huge piles of debris’ (*Argus* 15 July 1938); in Barcelona crowds defied the fascist aggressors, and ‘Women in half-dug trenches screamed with pain from the incendiary bullets of raiding Messerschmitt planes’ (*SMH* 24 January 1939).

Allusions to a terrified humanity fixed in the bomb-sights of technological modernity made a deeper impact than the pro-appeasement editorial line which sought to isolate the conflict from civilised concern. E.M. Andrews agrees that despite the editorials, it was descriptive images and photographs from Spain that made a considerable impression on the most casual reader (Andrews 113). B.L. Jacot, a flying-officer in the Great War, alluded to this point. He explained that Spain was a ‘proving ground’ for new weapons, with many foreign observers on the ground taking notes. And though he marvelled at the ‘perfectly organised raids’ of bombers in ‘neat

geometric formations', he also commented on human vulnerability in relation to technical modernity: 'the only protection civilisation knows against such swooping death is surely aircraft equally swift and equally numerous. Man alone has no chance against the machine' (SMH 26 February 1938). In Jacot's view, the lesson of Spain was that the human face had no place or chance in a militarised industrial order.

In the Spanish War, the bomber came to symbolise the spectre of fascist-industrial menace – marking a considerable transition from the romance of individual flying heroics surrounding the 'knights of the air' of the First World War. In 1915, Parisian aesthetes could thrill at the sight of Zeppelins over Paris, thinking of them as sharks, whales or the Wagnerian 'monster Fafner' (Eksteins 210). So, too, the public embraced the aesthetic casting of the airman as chivalrous, dashing and devil-may-care. The benchmark poem on the subject was W.B. Yeats's 'An Irish Airman Foresees His Death': a celebration of the aviator as aristocrat-warrior, lord-of-the-manor and benefactor, product of a pastoral, pre-industrial world, and adventurer driven to the skies by 'A lonely impulse of delight' (Yeats 152). This aesthetic was even reinforced in the British Parliament. Martin Boyd, who flew bombing raids and reconnaissance missions in the Great War, recalled David Lloyd George's vote of thanks to the Royal Flying Corps in the House of Commons: 'They are cavalry of the clouds, the modern chivalry. High up and low down they fight at the eternal principles of right and wrong' (Boyd 1939: 108).

Boyd was aware of both the piffle and perversity of this mythologisation of aerial combat: 'in the Flying Corps we used to quote with ribaldry this comic nonsense about ourselves. It hardly described our morning bomb-raids on Belgian railway stations' (108). Boyd gave an account of the strange dual life of an airman – the ritual of pink cocktails and fine food following a raid over Belgium – and

disclosed that the bombing of civilians was a decisive issue in his support for the Spanish Republic. Boyd also understood the callous reality of the Spanish War concealed by the myth of the jaunty aviator, moved by lonely impulses of delight: 'In aerial bombing one is detached from the suffering of one's victims, and probably the attitude of the German pilots, machine-gunning the women of Guernica as they ran in terror across the fields, could be expressed in terms of sport' (131).

Regimes commonly fetishised the 'sport' of military aviation, regardless of ideological persuasion. Whilst the Soviet Union condemned the death-dealing technology of the Luftwaffe in Spain, by 1936 the Soviets proudly declared their air-fleet rivalled the biggest in the world (*SMH* 24 August 1936). In the USSR, pilots exemplified New Soviet Man. Russian airmen were pastorally romanticised as 'falcons' and their planes were 'steel birds' (Bergman 138, 341). The Communist Party of Australia hailed Soviet pilots like Valerii Chkalov as near-superhuman, as numerous articles in the *Workers' Weekly* testified (29 June 1937; 19 April 1938; 15 July 1938; 13 July 1937).

In Germany, the Condor Legion of the Luftwaffe was a celebrated and elite unit. Its commander, Colonel Wolfram Von Richthofen, was a ruthless professional and consummate Nazi dedicated to efficiency; 'a flute-playing fitness fanatic' revered for his aristocratic demeanour (Brendon 333). The Italian Fascist obsession with aeronautics was personally promoted by Mussolini and discursively framed by the language of Futurism. In F.T. Marinetti's terms, flight was symbolic of the transcendent character of political revolution and arch-modernity: 'A conquering people like ours wants to make its own revolution, just as the pilot of an airplane throws ballast overboard in order to climb higher' (1920: 152); 'Speed = synthesis of every courage in action. Aggressive and warlike' (1916: 95).

In the complex case of Charles Lindbergh, an enraptured world found its ultimate young God of the Air. Lindbergh's appeal encompassed a multiplicity of ideological positions. He could be shaped as a representative of the brash new order of modernity, which 'used technology to conquer nature, in which means were subordinate to ends'; and, just as easily, traditional values, 'family, religion, nature and the good and moral life' (Eksteins 250). Lindbergh was a cipher for American capitalist values, too: pioneering, individualist, self-reliant, unrestrained energy. He was particularly honoured in Germany, visiting there in the years 1936–8, and his Nazi sympathies were well known. The Lindbergh Legend thus suggested an aesthetic correspondence between the ethos of totalitarianism and the liberal democracies; and it was the highest, and last, untainted expression of faith in the heroism of aviation. After Lindbergh, the image of the hero-aviator was increasingly residualised by the events in Spain, though it did forcefully reappear in the Battle of Britain and the cult of Winston Churchill's valiant 'few'.

In the 30s – the decade of Qantas, the Flying Doctor Service and the commencement of regular air-mail deliveries from London – Australia developed its own cult of aviation celebrity, with nationalist inflections: Charles Kingsford Smith, Bert Hinkler, and Ray Parer – an ex-fighter pilot made famous by his flights in the London–Sydney air races in 1919 and 1934. Parer and co-pilot John McIntosh were lionised in print in Britain: in Cecil Day Lewis's epic poem 'A Time to Dance'(1934), based on their daring 1919 flight, and Christopher Caudwell's *Great Flights* (1935). On 2 October 1937, *Smith's Weekly* announced Ray Parer's intention to fly for the Spanish Republic. The *Catholic Advocate* believed Parer would fly for Franco (7 October 1937); and though such an adventure fitted Parer's knockabout profile, he never got to Spain.

As the British literary praise of the aviator-hero Parer suggested, Australia had been inducted into an international order of representation and, indeed, the order of aerial technology. Australian papers of the inter-war years were filled with articles on rapidly changing aeronautics, and a fascination with ever-shorter records for flights to Australia. Long-distance flight brought Australia within closer range of the world's major powers – and aggressors, like Japan. In a flight that might have been a dark premonition, Britain's Royal Air Force made a much-publicised attempt on the London–Sydney record in 1937 in a heavy bomber (Argus 27 November 1937). The implication of this was not lost on Australia's media: just as Australia was inducted into the developing international order of aeronautical technology, it was also introduced to the climate of fear and the idea of a potential apocalypse from the skies which preoccupied European militaries and governments.

The seeds of this fear were sown in Spain, with the aerial bombing of cities and – more specifically – the advent of long-range air raids. The most dramatic example was in the Italian bombing of Barcelona, launched from airfields in Italy (Alpert 7). Mussolini was delighted that the Italians 'should be horrifying the world by their aggressiveness' (Brendon 524). Hitler quipped that what won the war for Franco was not divine 'intervention from Heaven' but the bombs of the Luftwaffe 'rained from the heavens' (qtd Smyth 244). In Spain, Germany's crack Condor Legion perfected the 'techniques of co-ordinated ground and air attacks, dive bombing and saturation bombing, which were later incorporated into the Second World War Blitzkrieg' (Preston 191-2). In the battle for Madrid, the Legion tactically bombed civilians: a calculated laboratory experiment, designed to gauge the effect of the practice on the population. A carefully-planned assault on Madrid was conducted in November 1936: the city was set fire, quarter by quarter, with a concentration on

hospitals and other significant infrastructure, again designed for maximum terror (Thomas 1961: 329). Without axis air-power Franco would not have prevailed.

The concept of terror-bombing, and the related idea of the 'knockout blow' delivered to an enemy from the air, was formulated by Mussolini's ex-General Giulio Douhet. He maintained aircraft could win a war by terror: a 'Merciless pounding' of cities with flying armadas (Brendon 334). In Brendon's view, the Spanish War gave credibility to Douhet's belief in the invincibility of the bomber – and consolidated the opinion in both Britain and Germany that he was correct. The British became particularly concerned with their vulnerability to a knockout blow from the air. Consequently, a great number of British experts and commentators were willing to assert that the 'advent of air warfare was nothing less than an apocalyptic event' (Smith 425). Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin proclaimed 'The technique of the next war will be to try to kill more women and children more quickly than the enemy' (qtd Ball 1936: 161).

A remarkable finding in Spain was that terror-bombing often failed to break civilian resolve: rather, it deepened it and provoked anger. Australian journalist Noel Monks, employed by the British *Daily Express*, wrote many articles on the Spanish air raids. With his good Catholic credentials, Monks initially reported from Rebel territory, stationed with General Emilio Mola and his besieging forces outside Madrid, reporting Mola's famous boast: 'Senior Monks… Just stay here a few days and we will have coffee on the Puerte del Sol' (Monks 72). And Monks had the distinction of being the first reporter at ground-zero in the Spanish War's most symbolic event.

On 26 April 1937, the Nationalist high command ordered the Condor Legion's terror raid on the non-strategic market-town of Guernica. The attack on Guernica was

the first European exercise in carpet-bombing, and many other civilian targets would suffer the same fate. Monks witnessed the entire raid as it happened, and on re-entering the town he assisted in the collection of bodies and interviewed witnesses (Monks 95, 97). He reported: 'I saw 600 bodies. Nurses, children, farmers, old women, girls, old men, babies. All dead, torn and mutilated… I came to what had been an air-raid shelter. In it were the remains of 50 women and children' (qtd Palmer 1938: 61). For his coverage, Monks attracted the wrath of Franco, the Church, conservative MPs and the Gestapo, who denied the event took place (Monks 71). The *Catholic Worker* blamed the atrocity on Republicans for some years, printing testaments such as that from Paul McGuire in Spain: 'This is posted from Guernica, obviously dynamited by the Reds' (8 January 1938).

As Brendon put it, 'the news from Guernica burned itself into the contemporary psyche' (337). The attack rapidly became global news and Australian papers in every state covered the story. In a statement circulated internationally, the parish Priest of Guernica testified to the bombing and defended the Republic, spinning the Catholic Church into damage control (De Arronategui 6; Preston 159). Guernica also undermined the Catholic Church's support for the Nationalist forces: as a technological carnage, it confounded the language and imagery of chivalry which had frequently constructed the Church's view of Franco's army. Though the *Catholic Worker* tried to ignore it, Guernica was important to Catholics. Frank Sheed found that Catholics were turning against Franco after Guernica (Sheed 1974: 200). In more general terms, 'Guernica was the first total destruction of an undefended civilian target by aerial bombardment. Accordingly, the Spanish Civil War is burned into the European consciousness not simply as a rehearsal for the bigger world war to come,

but because it presaged the opening of the flood-gates to a new and horrific form of modern warfare that was universally dreaded' (Preston 1996: 4-5).

The writing and commentary of the Spanish War era indicated a struggle to find an adequate means to express the magnitude of the threat of terror bombing. H.E. Boote, in the *Australian Worker*, wrote on the subject extensively, always in the same terms: 'The aeroplane, the product of civilisation, has added a new terror to life – a more ghastly terror than the malignity of barbarians ever conceived' (25 August 1937). Bombing involved the reversal of moral or chivalric codes: according to Boote, the fascist air attacks meant 'women and children first' in a horrific new way (AW 27 January 1937). His observation that the 'product of civilisation' brought mayhem and death was also consistent with the concept of modernity as regression: a new barbarism. Will Dyson, who pictured the bomber as a vulture, regarded it as a product of capitalist civilisation and its lust for profit. In his cartoons of the period, Dyson habitually drew fat-bellied, apolitical international arms manufacturers, conspiring to push the world into war. Echoing Dyson, W.H. Auden saw the calculated, humanly disinterested, nature of modern air warfare as having its parallel in the politically indifferent culture of 'the very rich'. As Auden wrote in his poem 'In Time of War':

> Engines bear them through the sky: they're free
> And isolated like the very rich;
> Remote like savants, they can only see
> The breathing city as a target. (Auden 72)

These lines about military aviators sat on a cusp between two conceptions of flight: a point at which both residual and emergent structures of feeling concerning the air

were evident. First, in terms of a residual structure, Auden invoked a waning myth of the heroic flier: aristocratic, all-seeing, and – 'like the very rich' – transcendentally removed from the woes of terrestrial life. But this was a troubled stereotype: it acknowledged that the individualism and remoteness of a soaring Lindbergh – 'free of civilization and its constraints, in communion with the oceans and the stars' (Eksteins 251) – had become the freedom to destroy at will. Auden also suggested the idea of modernity at war with itself: the arch-modern hero, the pilot, was set to ruin that other great symbol of the modern industrial age, the city. Crucially, too, the aviator here was not in free communion with the sky: he was virtually a bird of prey (a Nazi 'Condor', perhaps) locked into a deathly relationship with his 'target'. And although the city was 'breathing', there was little recognition that it had a human face.

As a hideous extension of mass-modernity's threat to erase individual identity, the age of total war cast the aggressor and victim as anonymous to one another. As Mac Ball warned, the next war would entail the killing of men, women and children, whom the soldier never saw, with 'scientific implements' (1936: 161).

The pro-fascist *Bulletin* attempted to deny the power of the modern bomber, arguing that Spain was an example of war becoming more humane (13 October 1937; 9 September 1936). Confusingly, the *Bulletin* also concurred with Denzil Batchelor that air raids were Franco's sole atrocity and had to be accepted as a fact of modern life (12 January 1938).

Australian writers immediately understood that the air raid signified the industrial nightmare that shadowed modernity's false promise of historical progress. On the ground in Spain, Aileen Palmer's hospital unit worked through frequent air raids which appeared without warning: they came anonymously, 'steel-grey, in marked formation, across the sunlight'. Whilst trapped with her ambulance crew by

strafing aircraft, 'One of the nurses exclaimed in astonishment "look! There are men in those things!"… It was weird to imagine that those mechanical monsters that zoomed overhead contained human beings like us, [directing] them on their murder' (Aileen Palmer Collection NLA MS6759 Box 5, folder 36). For this reason, Nettie Palmer wrote, 'The Republicans no longer fought against other men: it was a war against the most powerful machines' (qtd Howells 1939: 2).

Comments and images such as these were not unique to Australian sensibility: they constituted the discourse of an international literary brigade. To the British Nancy Cunard, the bombers 'Come unbelievably – abstract – beyond human vision' (qtd Cunningham 169); the Frenchman Jacques Roumain wrote that in 'a storm of iron… The age of fire and steel is born, the season of apocalyptic locusts' (164). Allen Guttman identified the same motif in American writing on Spain's War: 'there is no sense of human agency behind the weapons of the Fascists; there is only the sense of impotent humanity beneath omnipotent machines' (176). Guttman argued for the 'importance of this image as a metaphor for our times' (177); not originating in but, rather, hardened by the Spanish experience.

The pervasive sense of apocalypse associated with Spain put conventional literary forms for rendering or understanding the situation under pressure. Auden's 'In Time of War', for example, showed how the contemporary discourse of the hero-aviator stressed and fractured. Another poetic discourse for imaging war, the pastoral, was also problematised by the conflict. When civilians were being technologically slaughtered from the air, the pastoral or pastoral elegy seemed superfluous. The English tradition of pastoral war poetry, in Thomas Hardy's 'Drummer Hodge' or Rupert Brooke's 'The Soldier', saw death as redemptive, with the soldier sacrificially

returned to the grand order of Nature. Spain confounded this rhetorical convention, making it unlikely that a poem like Yeats's 'Irish Airman' would be written.

Franz Borkenau identified the significance of a pastoral image of Spain in the European imagination; concluding that the country's pastoral history and character would help it survive the 'cataclysms of the surrounding world' (1963: 300). To the Palmers, and Jack and Lionel Lindsay, Franco's destruction of Spain marked the loss of both a pre-industrial order unique in Europe and an aesthetic resource that had been so valuable to Australian artists and writers. As total war affected the material loss of Spain's traditional life, it also closed off the imaginative possibilities of the pastoral. As Terry Eagleton writes in *Sweet Violence*, the Spanish tragedy was a case of the sharing of 'the precious fruits of modernity' which amounted to a people being marched 'into modernity at gunpoint, with criminal consequences' (2003: 240).

As a literary mode, pastoral is always outside the modern present: spatially (it is 'elsewhere') or temporally (it is 'pre-modern'). Pastoral offers the hope of an imaginative escape from modernity: if a pastoral space can be conceived, there exists the imaginative possibility that there can be an alternative to the complex or turbulent present of modern times. Thus, pastoral has within it the concept of movement: even dying, in pastoral elegy, is to move forward into a rejuvenated union with nature; and if pastoral is not 'here', to imagine it is to think outside 'now' – a mental movement.

In the Spanish War, the traditional conception of Spain's pastoralism looked more like a history of one of Eagleton's 'wretchedly impoverished nations'; a nation whose tragedy resembled that of Stalinist Russia: 'the fact that socialism proved least possible where it was most necessary' (2003: 240). Under the spectre of the bomber, poets often pictured Spain's situation as a tragic entrapment in a conflicted present. The pastoral mode itself was invoked not as an imaginative hope for Spain's future,

but to describe the monstrous irony of the country's encounter with modernity. Visualising the bomber plane in terms of blighted pastoral, the Australian poet A.M. Stephen's 'Madrid' threw a sinister pall over natural imagery: 'Dark shadows on the harvest moon,/ The airships toss their deadly wings,/ And, through the scented garden air,/ The drone of murder throbs and/ sings' (Stephen 18). In 'Lament For Catalunya', published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Ella McFadyen described brave peasant soldiers confronting a technology which respected neither physical nor moral limits, nor ancient methods of resistance:

My sorrow for the man-made thing
  Levels the hill away!
For the highlands and the lowlands
  Are all one to-day.
The hills were Freedom's cradle
  Until the Devil saith:
'Breed ye a swarm of pestful flies
   To drop the flaming death!'
Death on the goodman at the plough,
   The maiden at the byre.
Death in the cradled infant's sleep.
The Calvary where the widows weep,
   And the lone wife by the fire.

The storm-won peaks of Montserrat
    And the high dark woods of pine,

Cry of old days our own wild ways,

Beyond the Highland Line.

Holding the passes by the sword,

Giving the strong foe nay—

But the highlands and the lowlands

Are all one today. (*SMH* 30 April 1938)

Spanish peasants referred to fascist warplanes as 'pájaros negros': 'black birds' (Cunningham 48). Lionel Lindsay absorbed this expression in his poem 'Birds of Prey' (1938): intensely visual verse, composed in equal parts from the ethos of blighted pastoral and the imagery of Goya's *Disasters of War*. Lindsay spoke directly to the anonymous Italian long-range bombers, the 'Black crows that darken all the ways of Earth':

Now have you swollen to the vulture's girth,

With Moorish kites, the wolf and eagle force

That murders noble Spain – your croaking hoarse

Borne on the winds tells all the world your worth.

Black brood of evil to your nests at Rome

Where the fat Pontiff counts his fisher pence

Wet with the blood of babes but newly cold,

And swell the death choir under Peter's dome. (Lindsay 1959: 46)

In poems such as these, pastoral soured to a vision of Spain as a place where black birds and vultures preyed on humanity and waited to feed on its corpse. To many intellectuals around the world, this vision also portended Europe's near future.

On 21 January 1938, the *Daily Telegraph* ran Will Dyson's last cartoon, titled 'Vultures'. It depicted two vultures watching an air raid on Barcelona and remarking: 'Once WE were the most loathsome things that flew!' (McMullin 1984: 310). Dyson had been an official Australian war artist in France, and one of his most famous 'Kultur' cartoons of the Great War, entitled the 'Wonders of Science!', anticipated 'Vultures' in depicting Germans as gorillas hurling bombs on London from a plane. Dyson was internationally famous and an 'instinctive radical' who attacked fascism relentlessly in his work for the English press, prompting Lord Halifax to suppress his anti-Nazi cartoons (Brendon 526). He particularly scorned the conspiracy of science and high finance in the manufacture of sophisticated weapons. When the Versailles Treaty was signed, Dyson immediately predicted that a world war would break out in 1940. His cartoon 'Nightmare of a Cartoonist returning to take up his duties, A.D. 1936', is described by Ross McMullin as a 'drawing of the planet earth cracking up, with the crack in the "Social System" being caused by the Spanish Civil War; emerging from the crack were "The Savageries of the Stone Age" and "The Cavemen", while "The Scientists" were shown blissfully unaware of these developments… as they discussed the evolution of the solar system' (308). It was clear to Dyson that civilisation would retrogress after the Spanish War – a view shared by many who sensed the closeness of a new barbarism. Ironically, history moved backwards as it moved forward; and as history moved back the people of Spain moved underground.

Visual and literary responses to the Spanish War involved multiple ironies and discursive reversals. Among them was the aesthetic value of the sky, 'the heavens', which had been so important to Great War writing. The air raid, often reported as a barbarian incursion, conclusively reversed the symbolic value of the sky. In *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell used the phrase 'Troglodyte World' to describe the almost pre-modern life of the common soldier: huddling in trenches, burrowing into the earth for cover, sheltering in the gloom of tunnels and underground bunkers. In this environment, Fussell noted, the sky became all-important: 'It was the sight of the sky, almost alone, that had the power to persuade man that he was not already lost in a common grave' (51). Fussell pointed out the significance of the sky in Romantic art and literature, and First World War poetry, as a symbol 'of hope and peace and rural charm' (52): an infinity in which an escape from the troglodyte world could be contemplated. In Spain, under the air raids, the sky became a domain of terror. Just as pastoral had been blackened and emptied of any redemptive possibility by the Spanish War, the symbolic sky was no longer a screen onto which hopes for the future could be projected. Photographs of Spain's modern cities exposed to air raids revealed a living city going underground, and the dead lying on the surface – children hiding in drains, women cowering in cellars and even caves (*Argus* 17 June 1937). Mary Finnin's poem 'Troglodyte', in *The Australian National Review*, embraced these reversals. The poem was written in response to the irony that 'Europe, having mastered the art of flying, is now concerned with the problem of excavating refuges against the terror of modern bombing planes'. The poem read:

And if with lean hope you did greet the sun,

Yearning for light to keep the beast at bay –

Were you aware that other such had need
Of flying flints, of surging, shattering creed
To strangle fear, to light
The cave, old troglodyte?

You are our master, for you entered light.
We burrow bleakly, go uncrowned to dark,
Having made peace with fears,
Bridged endless years,
Forsaken all belief, to rave
Within the dark of Europe's cave. (*ANR* 1 February 1938: 42)

The power of these images cannot be overstated. Dick Hughes, recalling his Catholic boyhood, noted the shock effect of 'a newspaper photo of a Spanish train being bombed from a plane', even though 'I didn't know what the war was about'. This was coupled with his shock over a speech by Mannix, evoking the troglodyte world as humanity's future: 'His speech brought home the mysterious horrors of war to me as much as had the photograph of the Spanish train bombed from the air… the time could soon be coming, he said, when the English people would have to live underground like "rabbits in their warrens"' (Hughes 59, 82).

It was a further irony that technology – a concept so tarnished by the prosecution of the Spanish War – was also a crucial means of humanising the consequences of ruin from the skies. Developments in the technology of photography visually rescued the otherwise anonymous victims of the air raid. As a genre, modern war photography emerged during the Spanish Civil War due to the invention of faster

shutters, improved film-stock and the light-weight 35mm camera: the device which allowed Robert Capa to capture one of the war's most emblematic images – 'Falling Militiaman'. The appearance of hand-held, wind-up 16mm movie-cameras also meant the Spanish War became the subject of many independent documentaries which included unique footage of frontline action (Vernon 4).

It was the era of the picture magazine, photojournalism, the newsreel, and the documentary. *Life* magazine brought the Spanish War to Americans in dramatic, glossy, photographic detail – the editors consciously decided to make it a continuing lesson to Americans in the effects of modern technological warfare, especially saturation bombing (Hayes 65). In Australia, sensationalist papers such as the *Argus* often carried additional photographs of the day's destruction in the pictorial pages, alongside photos of society events. Such media images became progressively more graphic: by 1938, shrouded bodies recovered from rubble in Barcelona appeared in the *Argus* (21 January 1938). Other reports simply told of 'carts and lorries used to pick up the shattered remains of the victims' (*Argus* 21 January 1938). Photographs habitually accompanied the daily reports giving the gruesome body count: Franco's air raid on Lerida killing 200 and burying 60 children under their school, for example (*Argus* 25 November 1937; 9 July 1937).

In the newsreels, documentaries, and Republican propaganda, the horror of the air raid was disclosed through the uniquely rendered image of the child corpse. The *Catholic Advocate* vainly claimed that the 'millions' of copies of photographs of children killed in Franco's air raids, circulated internationally, were fakes (13 January 1938). The Francoist Hilaire Belloc was outraged that Republican propaganda 'deluges the world with the horrors of bombardment especially emphasising of course the deaths of children' (*CA* 24 March 1938).

Despite such denials, the child-victim image registered as a theme in contemporary poetry. English poet George Barker dedicated his 'Elegy on Spain' to 'the photograph of a child killed in an air raid on Barcelona' by the 'Junker angels in the sky'. Stephen Spender wrote of 'The Bombed Happiness' of the children, 'Their harlequin-striped flesh,/ Their blood twisted in rivers of song', whilst Herbert Read described their 'dead faces/ Wasps' nests are not so wanly waxen'. F.L. Lucas considered the spectacle of child victimhood in 'Proud Motherhood (Madrid, A.D. 1937)': 'Her darling's portrait thrills/ The foreign press./ Though that's no wreath of bay/ About his hair:/ That's just the curious way/ Bomb-splinters tear' (Cunningham 1980: 157, 163, 166).

Australian writers, too, embraced the theme. Kathleen Watson's 'Children in Spain' lamented that this was an age when 'play may suddenly cease,/ in the roar of a bombing plane/ as the children died in Spain' (Watson 12). Julian Smith's 'To a Spanish Girl Killed by Hitler' implored tragic defiance: 'clench your white hand, Senorita,/ When Hitler sends death from the air' (*Women Today* November 1936). And in Gary Lyle's 'Doom', written in August 1939, the fate of Spanish children became a universal predicament:

> Let them glide bravely while the night-time lingers,
> Boys and girls dancing down the blue-lit room.
> Let them not see the pale, destroying fingers
> That hover overhead to write their doom…
>
> Over smashed streets where lie the young, young dead.
> Death rides unchallenged down this August sky,

> O God… and they shall die, and they shall die. (Lyle 23)

This imagery had its precedent in an English propaganda campaign following the German Zeppelin raids on a smug wartime London. The propaganda showed women and children being slaughtered by aerial bombardment: 'Baby Killers' became the by-word for the Zeppelin in what was a massive public outrage and a publicity coup for the British war effort. Consequently, Bernd Hüppauf accuses the 30s 'intelligentsia' of aestheticising the situation of Republican Spain in film and photography, with simple binaries drawn from Great War propaganda that are inappropriate to a modern technological war (101). He argues Republican propaganda was determined by 'a moral opposition that had become obsolete': the fascist as an amoral killer, represented through 'modern armour, war planes', juxtaposed against simplistic images of the 'human faces' of peasants and soldiers (113). He concludes that this 'representation of modern wars aims at maintaining a dichotomy between war and civilisation. It is based on a concept of humanity and nature that is being eroded by the very condition of modern civilization' (96). However, Hüppauf fails to consider the fact that mass-circulated images of the faces of dead children and ruined cities achieved precisely what he demands of an accurate anti-war art: a collapse of 'the distance between here and there, the front and home, war and peace' (118).

John Heartfield, the era's leading photomontagist, created his famous image of a dead Spanish child with mortuary identification numbers around her neck and a geometric pattern of Junkers 52s in flight across a cloudy sky above her corpse. It was one of the iconic images of the Spanish war, recurrent in international Republican propaganda, based on a still image from Ivor Montague's 1936 silent documentary

film *Defence of Madrid*. Auden found Heartfield's montage the most disturbing and repellent visual of the war (Cunningham 1980: 69).

The power of this image, and child victim pictures in general, moved the Australian Commonwealth censor to restrict their circulation: removing the key footage of child corpses lying in open coffins from *Defence of Madrid*. The SRC, which had imported the film, accepted the changes in order to get it shown; later printing the censored pictures as stills in its print publication *For Humanity and Spain* (Inglis 89). Since the British public saw the film uncut, Frank McIlwraith warned from the front page of *Smith's Weekly* that this was a test of the censor not to interfere lest Australia look 'ridiculous' (3 April 1937). But the censor cut equivalent scenes in *They Shall Not Pass* and sequences in *Non-Intervention*. In 1938, the censor successfully banned the documentary *Mankind Captured* and severely cut *Canton Bombed* – another film containing dramatic footage of air raids and citizens running for cover under falling bombs and collapsing buildings (*WW* 21 October 1938).

By the mid 30s, film was emerging internationally as a crucial political weapon with mass publics. In 1934, for example, 18.5 million Britons attended the cinema weekly, rising to 21 million by 1940, and Spanish War documentaries screened to huge audiences and had a great effect at the local level (Aldgate x-xi; Hopkins 145). In Italy, Mussolini's regime ran a highly effective international system of film distribution, reaching as far as Sydney, where fascist documentaries (mainly in Italian) were screened weekly (Cresciani 1981: 150). The Australian Nazi Party premiered *Triumph of the Will* at Sydney's Capitol Theatre in 1936, and Australian Catholics also felt duty bound to experiment with the power of film – prompted by the Church's belief that the Spanish people had been indoctrinated with revolutionary

mania by the Soviet films displayed in Spanish cinemas which ran non-stop during the revolution (Jory 100; Godden 39, 45).

The Spanish Civil War coincided with the 'golden age' of the newsreel, when five separate companies each produced two newsreels per week (Aldgate xi, 26). Australians could see newsreels on Spain such as 'Four Nurses from a New South Wales Hospital go to Spain' (1936) and 'Adventures of the Newsreel Cameraman: A Daily Diet of Danger' (1938). Fox Movietone news gave tremendous coverage to its many action sequences from Spain, all marketed on the spectacle of genuine violence. New technology such as sound was put to greater use in the coverage of Spain, with Gaumont staging the world's first live interview from the Spanish trenches. American film producer Emanuel Cohen quipped the most popular pictures were those that contained 'Soldiers, airplanes, battleships and babies' (qtd Aldgate 64).

Anthony Aldgate has studied the relationship between the British newsreels and the Spanish War in detail. He maintains that the unwritten newsreel policy on reporting Spain was to scrupulously avoid controversy and to 'endorse the Government's tacit approval of Franco' (190). Indeed, the newsreel companies freely admitted to aiding government in the way foreign affairs were portrayed: to the extent of faking historic events such as Franco's conquest of Madrid two and a half years before it happened (192-3, 40, 43). Reluctantly, however, the newsreels recognised that aerial warfare was a new and dangerous force at the disposal of fascism, as Aldgate wrote: 'only when aerial bombing of Republican cities came to play a large part in the war is there any hint of criticism in the British newsreels of Nationalist infamy' (152). Guernica marked a further change in the coverage: the first of many Gaumont accounts, with commentary from the typically anti-Republican Ted Emmett, told of 'a hell that raged unchecked for five murderous hours. This was a city and

these were homes, like yours' (qtd Aldgate 158). According to Aldgate, 'After Guernica such reports proliferated and took on ominous overtones' (160), extending the signifying power of the Spanish air raid into the anxious domestic consciousness of other nations.

Movietone issued a story on the 'moral of air-raid danger' making direct connections between Madrid and London, and employing Sir Malcom Campbell to educate the public about air raids in a series of editorials – in one, Campbell constructed a personal bombshelter. Broadcasts were made of RAF mock air raids over London, with one commentary announcing: 'Overhead, squadron after squadron of bombers darkened the sky playing a duet of death with defending anti-aircraft guns' (Aldgate 143-4, 162). Writing from Spain, Australian Sam Aarons told of his fear of the bombing raid, imagining Sydney under the same threat (qtd Palmer 1938: 15-16).

The Australian SRC's public talks were often supplemented with lantern shows, which quickly mutated into moving film screenings. Asking only a donation to the SRC for admission (Sydney charged 1/-), the films were shown in Protestant church halls, trades halls, town and city halls, open-air park venues, and on 7 December 1937 the *Workers' Weekly* reported that the East St Kilda Congregational Church had replaced its Sunday sermon with a screening of *They Shall Not Pass*. SRC screenings were accompanied by speakers such as Brian Fitzpatrick, the Palmers, Maurice Blackburn and Percy Laidler (Inglis 'Films for Spain' 2). A high impact attraction of Spanish War documentaries was the dynamics of aerial photography coupled with an innovative soundtrack. According to Thomas Waugh, these documentaries 'were crafted with all the auditory sophistication that synthetic sound

recording technology was capable of in 1937 – shattered glass, whining shells, screams, and, above all, eerie silences' (19).

Based in Melbourne, Ken Coldicutt began the SRC's highly successful relationship with documentary film. Coldicutt was an avid reader of international film magazines and considered film 'a supreme form of expression' (Coldicutt 1935: 11), publishing on the topic in 1935 whilst a student editor of *Proletariat* and president of Melbourne University's Labor Club. When Coldicutt was considering joining the International Brigade he learnt of the huge overseas success of *Defence of Madrid* – particularly the unique footage of air raids – and decided immediately that raising public consciousness through the technology of film was a more important contribution to the Republican cause than travelling to Spain. Importing the film in April 1937 through John Fisher, Coldicutt and the SRC issued fliers advertising the opening night of *Defence* and circularised unions through Melbourne Trades Hall (Inglis 88). The public response was so strong that 400 were refused entry to filled-to-capacity Kelvin Hall (Inglis 'Films for Spain' 2), inspiring Coldicutt to import more films and tour them for the Melbourne SRC.

Coldicutt secured the British Kino films *They Shall Not Pass*, *News From Spain* (professionally produced, featuring front-line action and bombing raids), *Behind Spanish Lines*, *No Pasaran*, *Health of Spain* and *Children of Spain*. The London *Times* declared the air-raid sequences of *They Shall Not Pass* 'the most dreadful things that have ever been shown' (flyer, Rawling collection N52/503), and Melbourne's *Argus* considered them amongst the most important documentary images shown in Australia. The sound films *They Shall Not Pass* and *News From Spain* were screened after extensive advertising in 1937, at Melbourne's Assembly Hall and the Railway and Tramway Institute – hundreds were turned away from each full venue.

Four-thousand people attended Coldicutt's twelve Melbourne screenings of films which he then took around the suburbs and provincial Victoria (Inglis 90).

Coldicutt persuaded the SRC to bring one of the first 16mm sound projectors into Australia. He used it to travel interstate to Sydney, where thousands viewed two new films. In two Sydney screenings at the Railway and Tramway Institute 1,100 people viewed them, and 900 could not be housed (Inglis 91; WW 18 February 1938). Country showings as far west as Broken Hill followed. Coldicutt travelled to Mossman in Queensland's Red North, mounting 28 shows for over 25,000 people (Inglis 92). He went south to Hobart where the city hall was made available; then equipped an old car as a mobile projection unit, and departed with Ron Hurd around the south coast of Victoria (Coldicutt 1980: 61, 8).

Publicity for SRC films exploited censorship controversies and traded on the drama of their cinematic action content – particularly air raids. Like commercial newsreel companies in the period, the SRC discovered something that publishing houses already knew from their experience with alarmist 'next war' fiction: there was a market for representations of war and 'real' atrocity.

According to John B. Romeiser 'The Spanish Civil War was America's first movie theatre war' (Romeiser 71); and the newsreel appearance of Spain's war alongside feature films stuck in the memory. Dorothy Hewett recalled that as a teenager the cinema experience was something of a ceremony, but the things she remembered were Fred Astaire, the abdication, Hitler and Mussolini saluting on Fox Movietone news, and 'something called the Spanish War but I don't know much about it' (Hewett 1990: 65). Spain entrenched the cinematic bomber in the public imagination: 'The bomber quickly became a part of the sound effects, of the backdrop, for scenes of conflict' in general (Guttmann 177). The rapid surprise attack

was given an iconic sound by Madrid's newly invented air raid warning siren; and a visual shorthand emerged, where a concerned woman had only to look skyward to signify terror. These elements were used in many mainstream films: Alexander Korda's film adaptation of H.G. Wells' *The Shape of Things to Come* (1936), depicting a futuristic air-war on London; Alfred Hitchcock's *Sabotage* (1937), based on Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, with its image of Piccadilly Circus collapsing to rubble.

Hollywood attempted to directly cash-in on the thrill of the Spanish War, but rarely with any political gravity. Walter Wagner's *Blockade* (1938) was the only Hollywood film to take the war seriously, surviving against the odds to attract huge audiences. *Blockade* starred the bankable Henry Fonda as a peasant turned militiaman, battling fifth-columnist saboteurs and spies to get a food ship through to a starving township. *Blockade* avoided touchy political issues such as foreign intervention: the words 'fascist', 'loyalist' and even 'Spain' were bizarrely absent from its script (*New Masses* 20 June 1938). But it did feature Rebel air raids, the context of which was easily determined with reference to contemporary newsreels; and Fonda made a familiar, impassioned plea at the film's end for action from the international community to end the Rebel slaughter of civilians from the air: 'This is not war, it is murder' (Wagner 1938). More typically, Hollywood exploited the public interest in Spain to supply an exotic backdrop for formulaic storylines: in *Love Under Fire* (1937) for example, a comedy featuring a detective chasing a female jewel thief in war-torn Madrid; or *The Last Train From Madrid* (1937) – a tale of dashing, close-shave escapes, nominated by Graham Greene as 'probably the worst film of the decade'.

Features like *Love Under Fire* and *Last Train* suggested the propensity of mass cinema to convert historic events into empty spectacle: assuming the viewer to be a detached consumer of simple sensations, rather than complex ideas. Commentators and critics noted that the same tendency could also afflict the newsreel depiction of contemporary events, as war reports were packaged with a galaxy of trivia on single-reel cinema entertainments in which all 'news items' were given the same emphasis. Film-maker Sir Arthur Elton, considering the content of newsreels, concluded 'There are miles of men biting dogs, but much less of the stuff of history, dogs biting men' (qtd Aldgate 8). The newsreel had the effect of creating indifference – which is finally a retreat back into what is stable and familiar. Thus, in Leonard Mann's novel *The Go-Getter*, Chris's encounter with the American newsreels showing 'the British fleet… Fascists in Rome… Japanese cruisers… the fattest baby in the world, the champion long-time marathon dancing couple' generated in him 'a feeling of fatality' and 'cynical hardness' towards a world that was 'immense, swarming, chaotic, nonsensical and hopeless' (Mann 1942: 72-3). These snapshots of an absurd world 'made his individuality hard and compact toward it, while they softened and sensitised him towards that other more personal world of which his thoughts were mostly dreams' (74): effectively turning him away from history into a realm of domestic self-absorption.

There was increasing international intellectual concern that the suffering of Spain was being reduced not only to indifference but to debased entertainment and a perverse, destructive aesthetic. Karl Kraus, who had long struggled against the fleeting topicality of the illusory news headline, responded that he lived in 'grave times that have laughed themselves to death at the possibility of growing serious and, overtaken by their own tragedy, long for distraction' (qtd Benjamin 1969: 242). In a

similar vein, Walter Benjamin concluded that society's self-alienation had reached such a degree that 'it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order' (Benjamin 1986: 242). The French novelist-biographer André Maurois reflected on the destruction of Granollers in 1938. His essay, reprinted in *Smith's Weekly*, brooded on the increasingly passive acceptance of the bombing of civilians, normalised through the mass circulation of photographs and films (20 August 1938). K.L. Milne argued that although civilisation was in a state of unprecedented unrest and moving towards destruction, Australia appeared unconcerned. Newspapers, he intoned, 'seldom give an impressive account of war' – Australians responded with indifference to the 'Journalistic language' which rendered accounts of air raids and casualty statistics 'shallow' (Milne 11). Once again, the internal contradiction of technological modernity was evident: mass media simultaneously brought events closer to home and emotionally distanced them.

In Madrid, the relationship between cinema technology and war was very real: lacking proper defences against air raids, Republican troops mounted cinema projectors as searchlights beside rooftop machine-guns around the city (Brendon 328). But for many foreign fighters, habituated to the experience of cinema, filmic ways of framing the world induced a kind of remoteness. James Hopkins cites numerous incidents in which International Brigaders compared the midst of battle to the film experience, finding the spectacle of war itself 'well-staged', or 'unbelievable'. British Brigader T.C. Worsley watched thousands of refugees fleeing Málaga: 'We had viewed the procession as one views a film unrolling itself in front of one, so that the stream of people was outside us, performing with the unrealism of actors' (qtd Hopkins 193).

Many politically-committed writers observed this potentially foolish indifference, bordering on callousness, in complete disbelief: apparently troubled by the thought that powerful visual technologies could engage and alienate the viewer in equal measure. This attitude came from a pervasive unease with modernity itself: an historical process which threatened to disrupt the 'natural' sympathies of collective humanity, producing emotional atomisation; and this general intellectual reaction to mass modernity was frequently applied to the specific case of Spain.

Noel Monks commented that 'it took a week to readjust yourself to the tragic tempo of a country and a people at war', after coming to Spain from Britain: a country parochial enough to pretend that nothing was happening on the Continent (Monks 108). In his sentimental travelogue *The Incredible Year: An Australian Sees Europe in 'Adolf Hitler Weather'*, written in 1938, Alec Chisholm remarked

> we shall do well not to set limits to what may be accomplished by resourceful and determined men in bombers… 'outsiders' taking part in the Spanish War are… committing wholesale murder in Spain, through the medium of planes and tanks, in order to gain experience for the application of new methods of shock attack... Meanwhile, England is playing cricket (Chisholm 1944: 45).

George Orwell, returning from Spain, also remarked on England's tranquillity and orderliness: 'all sleeping the deep, deep sleep of England, from which I sometimes fear that we shall never wake till we are jerked out of it by the roar of bombs' (1975: 221). Katharine Prichard linked this indifference directly to the mass media, asking 'Are we all mad to sit quietly and listen to explanations of how populations will be

wiped out by aerial warfare – and do nothing to prevent it?' (qtd Throssell 93). As Prichard suggested, the paradox of mass-media modernity was that its enormous capacity to inform was cancelled by the counter tendency to alienate and numb the individual through serial repetitions.

As Eagleton observed in *Sweet Violence*, we 'find an epistemophiliac satisfaction, however morose, in learning the truth and knowing the worst' (169): a satisfaction that can move from self-satisfied pleasure through indifference to a kind of torpor. James Neugass produced a textbook illustration of Eagleton's point in his poem 'Headlines From Spain' (1936), published in *The Trade Union Leader*. Relaxing on a Sydney beach, 'fretfully' listening for the weekend 'headlines from Spain', the poet took a perverse pleasure from his sensory experience of the natural world and the epistemophiliac awareness of Spain's agony. Although headlines from Spain recognised that knowledge of the war haunted the tranquillity of everyday Australian life, there was nothing to be done but reflect with mixed emotions – anxiety and lassitude:

> And this same flaming summer sun
> And this immaculately pure blue sky,
>
> This is the sky over the pass at Guaderrama…
> Headlines: what newspapers lie? what truth can
> be read?…
> This moon lights and defiles Sommo Sierra.
> These many stars illuminate the meadows at Sommo
> Sierra,

Where shirt-sleeved young men
lie awake in the unmown mountain hay
waiting for the drone of night bombers…

The heart of the people
of all cities and plains;
our heart and the Spanish heart. (22)

As Neugass's poem testified, the rhetorical gesture identifying the fate of the Spanish with that of people 'of all cities and plains' was countered by a feeling of torpor shading into helplessness. The fellowship of 'our heart and the Spanish heart' could be flimsily imagined but never politically realised. Ultimately, the distance between the Australian beach and the pastures and meadows of Spain could not be meaningfully bridged.

The spectacle of the Spanish War – particularly the drama of air raids – fed a public craving for headlines. But what often creates pleasure in a tragic spectacle is indifference, and what creates indifference is the idea of necessity in tragedy: the knowledge that the tragic hero must die in order to maintain order in the universe. Australians could have felt this tragic jouissance at the spectacle of Spanish carnage, but only in the knowledge that the grand narratives of Empire and Home were secure. One could imagine, as Neugass did, the tragic-heroic 'shirt-sleeved young men' awaiting their destruction by 'night bombers', whilst basking in the 'flaming summer sun' under the immaculate sky at Bondi.

Nevertheless, despite the comforting fantasies of safety and distance in Neugass' 'Headlines From Spain', a symptomatic anxiety persisted. It was an anxiety

common to the structure of feeling surrounding Spain in the 30s: that this was a tragedy in which the deaths of heroes would not return order to the universe. In contrast to the formal requirements of necessary sacrifice and redemption in 'conventional tragedy', Spain epitomised a 'modern tragedy': it was secular and technological rather than metaphysical; it was open-ended with no possibility of resolution – signposting a greater future chaos. In this context, an understanding of Spain could not be accommodated within the traditional tragic teleology of fate, linear time and cathartic resolutions, where tragic actors performed the rituals of sacrifice for an 'indifferent' audience. Crucially, the phenomenon of aerial bombing in Spain – arch symbol of modernity's technical inhumanity – produced a deep identification between viewer and victim based on a common material reality. Despite what might have been the self-preservational pretences of indifference and distance from Spain, writers of the period frequently observed a paradox that originated in what Eagleton termed 'the Pity-and-Fear' of modern tragedy: the 'desire to merge with the world [pity], and the terror of being taken over by alien forces which this brings with it [fear]' (2003: 161).

Stephen Spender's period observations on modern mass media and Picasso's *Guernica* explicitly revealed this feeling. Spender regarded the high art of *Guernica* as a comment on and an extension of modern media's capacity to intensify political sympathies (evoking pity) and to engulf the viewer with its genuine portrayal of horror (fear). In Spender's estimation, the distanciation effect of modern media was less significant than the potentiality it shared with high art to engage and to disturb:

> This kind of second-hand experience, from the newspapers, the news-reel, the wireless, is one of the dominating realities of our time. The

> many people who are not in direct contact with the disasters falling on civilization live in a waking nightmare of second-hand experiences which in a way are more terrible than real experiences because the person overtaken by a disaster has at least a more limited vision than the camera's wide, cold, recording eye, and at least has no opportunity to imagine horrors worse than what he is seeing and experiencing. The flickering black, white and grey lights of Picasso's picture suggest a moving picture stretched across an elongated screen; the flatness of the shapes again suggests the photographic image, even the reported paper words. (1938: 221)

The politically-partisan earnestness of Spender's comments could easily have been mocked. His implication that the viewer experienced tragedy more acutely than its military victims could have been derided as a utopian reclamation of modernity's energies for socialist humanism. However, Spender proposed a far less saturnine vision of media-modernity than the sanctimonious and bilious Prichard or the world-weary Orwell. Referring to the specific example of Spain, Spender implied two important points. First, that low culture and high art participated in a tragic structure of feeling from which there was no escape. Second, that the heightening of outraged feeling was a legitimate political end in itself in dire times – whether inspired by newsreels or Picasso.

In a personal narrative, translated and published in 1937, activist and publicist for the Republican cause Ramón Sender had a more immediate recognition of the way in which the Spanish tragedy could be redeemed. Like Spender, Sender appealed to the combined resources of high art (Cervantes's *Don Quixote*) and the engaged

conscience of contemporary cinema newsreel audiences, calling for a recognition of the universal symbolic value of Spain's suffering:

> When Don Quijote said to Sancho that he did not wish arquebuses or pistols as these were vile weapons which in the hands of a weakling could kill a strong man at a distance, he spoke a truth which often afflicted us in the early months of the war. The machine sought us from the white clouds and discharged its metal with impunity. The body could reinforce itself with another courage, that of the spirit; but it served us only to die… A dim voice tells us that we may conquer even by dying. The Spanish people, shedding its blood drop by drop, is constructing a gigantic truth. For some consciences slow in perception a truth of that nature may be necessary. All this monstrous sacrifice, so speaks the voice of the millennium, is necessary to save men and societies whose imagination has not yet been awakened! (Sender 141)

This complex passage can be understood in terms of Eagleton's comments on the processes of modern tragedy: making sense of Sender's ostensibly preposterous claim that the annihilation of the Spanish people, and its stereotypical willingness to shed 'blood drop by drop', would teach 'a gigantic truth… to save men and societies whose imagination has not yet been awakened.' Eagleton noted that 'fruitless rebellion is a way of squaring up to death which the modern age has much admired. There is a gloomy existential allure about the idea of going down fighting… the aesthetic beauty of an act performed entirely for its own sake, a mutinous expression of value which will get you precisely nowhere.' But as Eagleton continued, he argued that such acts

of fatalistic 'self-affirmation' do not actually end nowhere. He concluded: 'If you have to go out, you might as well do so with a grandiloquently rebellious gesture, demonstrating your patrician contempt for the forces which have brought you to nothing, and thus wresting value from the very jaws of ruin' (2003: 103-4).

In these terms, then, Sender's assertion that the misery delivered by 'the machine… from the white clouds' discharging its deadly 'metal' would teach the world a 'gigantic truth' can be understood as an affirmation of tragedy's universal value. And in one of those ideological reversals which marked the Spanish War, Sender saw 'the Spanish people' politically ennobled in its suffering: becoming, in Eagleton's word, 'patrician' in its rebellious contempt. In this sense, Sender characterised the struggle in Spain as something other than a war between competing political systems: it was a fundamentally ethical struggle for human value against the new spiritual terror of a 'machine'. This fatal machine had its highest expression in the readily recognised shape of the bomber: 'On the burning sky they left their trail of steel and their infamous words: "We are Might, and Might acknowledges only its own laws… We came imposing the new morality, with the aid of the god Violence"' (Sender 217).

In Spain, the bomber emerged as the principal symbol of technological modernity, though it was not always viewed as a remote, autonomous force as it was, for example, in Sender's text: a machine 'from the white clouds' standing in crude opposition to the bleeding people. The bomber could also symbolise the plight of men caught in a Faustian pact with technological modernity, as it did for Leslie Mitchell. In a remarkable commentary written for Movietone news, Mitchell reminded cinema audiences that the bomber was neither autonomous nor the servant of a 'god of violence'. As Mitchell importantly observed, the bomber's terror resulted from the

ethical weakness of men. It was not so much that technology made men monsters but, rather, that men could perform monstrous acts given the right machines – as Don Quixote had cautioned Sancho Panza about weaklings and arquebuses. For Mitchell, Spain's tragedy involved the human self-deception that destruction could be explained away as 'duty':

> The problem of the bombing aeroplane remains. That problem extends beyond the boundaries of Spain and affects the whole of mankind. Franco's bombers raiding Barcelona territory have become a familiar terror to the people of Republican Spain which the rest of us, who have had no experience of air-raids, can only draw in our imagination, stimulated by pictures such as these.
>
> As you sit in the theatre, you are visualising the scenes of havoc and heroism below.
>
> Just for once put yourself in the place of the airman. He is an ordinary man doing his job, like the pilots of our own bombing squadrons. He is no monster of brutality; he regards his work coldly, as duty. It is just that which makes the bombing aeroplane so terrible a weapon. (qtd Aldgate 181)

As Mitchell suggested, the image of the bomber high above its suffering target paralleled the moral distance of technological man from human community: a problem extending 'beyond the boundaries of Spain' and affecting 'the whole of mankind'. The bomber thus represented profound contradictions: it provoked morbid fascination whilst it revealed the monstrousness of a modernity destroying itself.

Perhaps it was because of these ethical and ideological confusions that official governmental responses to Spanish air-raids were at best evasive: in Britain, Neville Chamberlain belatedly declared his outrage over the bombings two years after they commenced; in Australia, Joseph Lyons' response was complete silence (Inglis 33).

Nevertheless, according to Thomas Waugh, 'It is hard to overestimate the impact the new imagery of aerial bombardment of civilians had upon virgin audiences of 1938' (Waugh 19). In the popular imagination, the imagery of air-raids was ubiquitous, sometimes troubling the memory for years afterwards. Don Charlwood identified the most profound moments of his childhood as ANZAC parades and veterans in degrading circumstances hawking buttons, the Spanish War and the cinematic spectacle of bombed cities (Charlwood 187-8). The anxiety that air raid imagery produced could be profound: K.L. Milne recounted his astonishment at a friend's remark that viewing dramatic newsreel footage of a Spanish city being bombed was a 'terrible' experience – an almost perfect simulation of the real thing (Milne 14).

The prolific genre of 'next war' fiction in the inter-war years added to this fear of the sky. Topically linked to war memoirs, these fictions were frequently set in a future apocalyptic World War Two, occurring in the late 1930s or 40s; and aerial bombardment was central to the genre (Ceadel 161). In the 20s, the air raid was linked to revolution (invoking the Civil War in Russia): in the early 30s, air raid terror tales were supplemented by the bogey of uncontrollable science – death rays and poison gas. By the mid 30s, with the advent of the Spanish War, the pre-emptive knockout blow on the modern city became the pivotal subject of next-war fiction – and its mode became coldly realistic.

Australian contributions to the genre began with E.F. Spanner's The Navigators (1926), in which Australia was saved from Japanese invasion by the British navy air force. *The Awakening* (1937) – written by an original ANZAC, G.D. Mitchell, and introduced by W.M. Hughes – drew directly on the tragic events in Spain. The book was set in 1939 in a Europe 'trembling beneath the engine-beat of terrific bomb and gas laden air fleets – out to destroy the helpless civil populace… Armageddon is at hand. And we in Australia are caught unprepared' (Mitchell 2). European conflict spread to the antipodes, and Australia's cities were destroyed by planes from aircraft carriers. The United States remained neutral and other great powers were paralysed and could not help. Civilian militias were belatedly formed and armed by the Australian Government, but to no avail. *The Awakening*'s hero, a Great War veteran, was thus overwhelmed fighting to his death in an act of splendid futility.

Erle Cox's *Fool's Harvest*, serialised in the *Argus* in 1938 and subsequently novelised in 1939, dramatised an invasion scenario in which Australia suffered the tragic fate of Spain. Major powers chose non-intervention as Australian cities were shelled by the battleships of an unnamed fascist power and devastated by air raids launched from aircraft carriers, causing mass panic. Thoroughly routed, Australian citizens were forced to use guerrilla tactics, having found themselves unprepared for war due to their unhealthy attachments to Leftism, pacifism, sport, high wages and the White Australia policy (Cox 17, 24).

The cinematic ubiquity of the air-raid was thus supplemented with the sensation of 'next-war' fiction and 'a substantial literature in the technology of air-raids [that] grew up in the mid and late 'thirties, as the British government began to plan for air-raid defence' (Hynes 1979: 293). Langton Davies' *Air Raid* for instance,

claimed that the strikes on Barcelona were practice manoeuvres for attacks on London, whilst the Left Book Club's offer for November 1938 was Professor J.B. Haldane's influential *How to be Safe from Air Raids* (Samuels 81). Regardless of official refusal to condemn Spanish air raids as atrocities, it was clear that British and Australian governments were alert to their significance. Indeed, it could not have been otherwise. The air raid, brought to international attention through the mechanisms of modern mass media, was a key referent in the structure of feeling of the age: the widespread anxiety that no nation was safe from modernity's lethal power, and that unresolved crisis was the central principle of human experience and history.

In this connection, the final proof that Spain did matter to Australians was revealed through the recognition that a deep consciousness of the War infiltrated many aspects of 30s culture, including the dominant political discourse. The fate of Spain prompted doubts, fears, and serious questions about the ability of Australia to cope with an increasingly likely modern conflict. The symbolic function of the modern long-range aircraft, tested in Spain as both bomber and transport (achieving the first air-lift in history when Italy moved 15,000 Francoist troops), finally shattered Australian isolationism. It brought Australians into far-away disputes, and moved their thinking into line with international fears of cataclysm.

Feature articles in the press questioned Australian security from air raids: 'Have not events in Spain in the last 12 months taught other-wise?' (*Argus* 14 May 1938). Professor A.H. Charteris, who commented on the Spanish War for *Smith's Weekly*, saw a message to Britain in the destruction of Barcelona (26 March 1938), and pointed to the Spanish Republican resistance to total war as an example for Australians (16 July 1938). The Governor-General Lord Gowrie wondered if civilisation was now drifting back into barbarism because of its new weaponry (*Mufti*

1 May 1937). The RSL's *Mufti* called for rearmament, declaring that because of new aircraft technology and the new rules of warfare Australia 'no longer finds herself isolated… What is happening at the present moment in China and Spain might some day happen here. Let us pray that Australian cities and their populations will never have to suffer such destruction and carnage as have the cities and citizens of China and Spain' (1 July 1938).

The Cambridge Scientist's Anti-war Group produced a booklet, circulated in Australia, exposing the woeful inadequacy of official air raid precautions (Branson 285); federal plans for defence against air raids began in 1935 (Saunders 14), and by 1938 anti-aircraft searchlights were installed in Melbourne, Sydney, and Darwin (*Argus* 23 August 1938). The fashion in Australia for Spanish architecture, particularly bungalows in the suburbs, assumed an alarmist dimension when bomb shelters were built into some new dwellings. And when Franco's forces threatened to use poison gas on the Spanish front, the *SMH* reported that the immediate Australian response was that suburban air raid shelters should also be gas proof (8 September 1936). The British Home Office's intelligence branch of its Air Raids Precautions Department sent teams to Barcelona and Shanghai, observing the effects of air raids on urban infrastructure – information they shared with the Australian Government. From Barcelona, Home Office official Cyril Helsby reported on the nature and construction of air raid shelters, the targets for bombers, the effects on various structures and kinds of injuries suffered (Helsby).

Japan was an acknowledged threat to Australian security – a widely circulated pamphlet predicted that in the likely event of war with Japan, Australia would have to 'rely solely and finally on her own resources and preparations' (qtd Fairbanks 246). The pamphlet therefore recommended rearmament, particularly with aircraft. The

aged Billy Hughes, still a cabinet minister, agreed. Though he had insisted on neutrality in Spain, and as Attorney General did everything legal to prevent Australian nurses from going to Spain (Inglis 32), his book *Australia and War Today* (1935) opposed appeasement and called for rearmament, arguing that another world war was inevitable (Hughes 9, 11, 14). Since the Great War, he wrote, 'there is neither peace nor justice nor economic stability. This tragic and unhappy state of affairs is to be deplored' (15).

Spain's destruction helped to build the case for rearmament. British Labour had used Spain to push through a rearmament program, and John Curtin (who like Hughes had a longstanding fear of Japanese invasion) also proposed building up Australian defences – especially air defences. Not since the end of the Great War had external affairs been such an election issue as it was in 1937 (Fairbanks 245). Curtin fought the election on rearmament, arguing the British imperial fleet was no longer an adequate protection for Australia. Lyons insisted on the need for imperial defence because 'We are determined not to wait until the enemy is at our gates before we attack him. An isolationist policy must expose Australia to the frightful danger of having her coastal cities and towns destroyed ruthlessly, as is happening in other parts of the world' (qtd Fairbanks 251). The UAP ad campaign for the 1937 election featured an illustrated air raid, claiming that if Curtin instituted his policy of isolation 'it would leave the seas open to an enemy and make it possible for foreign aircraft carriers to approach our shores and for enemy planes to bomb our cities' (Argus 22 October 1937). Spain, and the associated fear of the air raid, was the determining yet absent factor in both the ALP and UAP election campaigns: although the word 'Spain' was not uttered, the Spanish War and the fears it catalysed shadowed Australian politics at the time. And the tragic structure of feeling which underpinned

these upheavals in Australian society threaded depression, fascism and future apocalyptic war into a concept of modernity: a conception that was sceptical about myths of progress, and anchored in the reality of a people's tragedy.

Conclusion: Spain Weeps in the Gutters of Footscray

Most Australian historians accept the orthodoxy that the Spanish Civil War did not produce serious concerns or expressions of allegiance in Australia in the 30s. Amirah Inglis is foremost among the historical crowd that makes this claim; asserting that the dearth of Australian literary responses to Spain's war is evidence of national indifference to a conflict which internationally attracted the best minds of a generation: Hemingway, Auden, Orwell and the rest (Inglis 24). But as this thesis reveals, there was barely an Australian writer of the 'front-rank' of letters in the period who did not comment on Spain: the Lindsay and Palmer families, Mary Gilmore, Patrick White, Max Harris, Christina Stead, Martin Boyd, Barnard-Eldershaw and Leonard Mann. Supplementing this literary 'A-List', there was a vibrant culture of amateur poets, emerging artists, young journalists and pamphleteer activists who were educated into political awareness by the issue of Spain: B.A. Santamaria, Frank Sheed, Ralph Gibson, Lloyd Ross and Len Fox, amongst the many others. The generational recognition of Spain in Australian letters was expressed in a variety of literary and media forms: novels, poems, occasional essays, broadsides, hand-outs, inflammatory speeches, paintings and dissent events.

Orthodox Australian historical opinion has failed to recognise the range and depth of comment on Spain in the national literary archive: a textual field that attests to the important political consciousness and confusion provoked in Australian cultural thinking by the Spanish War. Historians and literary critics have often been reductive in their

appraisals of the 30s: assuming that the idea of 'commitment' in the period was defined by crude alignments to pro-fascist doctrines or pro-Communist dogma. But support for Franco, for example, was not only driven by pro-fascist sympathy: it was historically shaped by an aesthetic idealisation of 'ancient' agrarian Spain, promoted by the Vatican and sustained in the period's literary stereotyping. Likewise, popular reluctance or refusal to support the Spanish Relief Committee was connected to public anxieties that dictatorial Stalinist oppressions within the USSR were being exported to and amplified in Spain. Ex-Communist historians like Inglis and Robin Gollan claim that Australian responses to Spain were passionately unproblematic; but Spain's war was not a pure cause to which most Australians could lend their unconditional support. The tragic, internecine unfolding of the Spanish War confounded normative 'Right-Left' political categorisations. As this thesis has argued, Spain threw smug political delineations into crisis: fascist establishmentarians could be swashbuckling 'rebels', and the USSR – supposed champion of world revolution – was the main agent that destroyed a genuine peoples' democracy.

When Australian journalist Alan Moorehead asserted that the outbreak of war in Spain made it 'impossible to remain neutral' (Moorehead 61), he was explicitly referring to a community outrage that could not be automatically reduced to simple political oppositions or clichés: many Australians felt the urgency of the situation at a level deeper than party-political catch-cries or affiliations. They felt the full force of a seemingly unstoppable historical trend, which existing ideological formations could not adequately describe. Spain occupied the public imagination as a cipher for the sense of 'modernity' as a slide into perpetual, unresolved crisis. And though both the ALP and the ruling UAP

argued for disinterest and neutrality, 'Spain' signified Australia's conclusive induction into an order of international modernity: the newspaper photo, the cinema newsreel, the eyewitness report, the politically suggestive novel, the experimental poem and the broadsheet all confirmed the belief that isolationism was no longer a viable national political or cultural position. The technological spectacle of everyday Spain bombed into oblivion by fascist air forces reinforced the point: to be modern was to be international, with all the vulnerabilities and tragic potentialities that internationalism implied.

'Tragedy' pervaded discourses on the 30s and Spain. The idea or sense of 'tragedy' is empirically evident in texts and public utterances; and according to Raymond Williams' concept of 'structure of feeling', tragedy and history's tragic impasses defined the era. 'Tragedy' is not a critical back-projection or partisan re-reading of the 30s and the Spanish Civil War: it is absolutely inscribed in the decade's various records. As Williams theorised, structure of feeling describes the 'practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and inter-relating continuity'; elements of social and material processes. Structure of feeling is profoundly internalised, often deeper than formalised discourse; and 'feeling' emphasises 'a distinction from more formal concepts of "world view" or ideology. It is not only that we must go beyond formally held and systematic beliefs, though of course we have always to include them. It is that we are concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt' – the elusive but historically traceable imprints of an age that are revealed in a detailed study of popular sentiment, response and belief (Williams 1977: 132).

As a means of defining the anxiety of an age, 'tragedy' is a potent and already-available cultural mode. According to Williams, 'tragic experience, because of its central

importance, commonly attracts the fundamental beliefs and tensions of a period' (1969: 45), and this potentiality made the tragedy of Spain's war a screen onto which many sections of Australian society projected their anxieties, fears, hopes of renewal and political commitments in the 30s.

Modernists conveniently adopted the Spanish Republic as a symbolic 'world martyr' in their essentially tragic oeuvre, and Spain also brought a new and tragic gravity to the burgeoning corpus of popular literature, broadsheets, pamphlets, newsreels and film. For conservatives who backed Franco, Spain's tragic plight resulted from the meddling bogey of international Communism and its obscene social consequences. Spain was a catalyst for the Catholic revival of the 30s, which would influence Australian politics for decades. The Catholic Church revelled in the spectacle of tragic folly, the 'Fall of Man' in Spain, regaling parishioners with tales of communist murder and destruction that merged with time-worn mythologies of Holy Spain's battle against heathenism.

The vulnerability of Spanish democracy to the newly revealed military power of international fascism raised serious questions about what it meant to live in a community. Spain also raised questions about the nature of contemporary history, but these questions could not be effectively answered by the compromised, conflicted ideologies of the Peace Movement, the Labor Party, Communism, pacifism and humanitarianism. In certain cases, such as humanitarianism, the unfolding catastrophe in Spain and the response to it came to be considered not a matter of historical forces, but the responsibility of individuals. Collective tragedy was reconfigured as a matter of personal integrity – if you are the architect of your own disaster it raises fewer uncomfortable questions about the

injustice of the world in general. But such ideological manoeuvres failed to negotiate the fact that Spain was part of a succession of events which fitted no recognisable telos: the war offered no sense of historical closure and sustained only doubt and irresolution, causing inflexible political formations to run up against their own ideological limits. As Julian Symons reflected, 'The deepest tragedy for the intelligentsia involved in the Spanish struggle was that truths and lies were inextricably tangled, that the deceivers were also the deceived' (Symons 134). Maintaining faith with discredited systems of thought, particularly in the case of Communism, was itself a kind of classical tragedy – a refusal to give up on desire, keeping faith in a death-dealing end. Jack Lindsay and Katharine Prichard were perhaps the apotheosis of such a condition. They, with many committed intellectuals, became angry with an apparently indifferent public. Communist poet 'F.C.' hoped the fascist bombs that would soon fall on Australian cities would shake the public out of its complacency and silence the din of mass media spectacles:

> In far Australia,
> We feel not intensely the Red Spaniard
> Angularly propped; His dry blood, teeth
> To the Whistling wind;
> Inertia freely dribbles and the wireless
> Blares its noisy gills.
>
> Who stand on 'bonzer' days
> With 'bonzer' fellers

At smiling leisure leaning;

Shamble storeward to the ferocious

Neons blinking profit (F.C.)

But these mass media 'distractions' did far more than Communist oratory and spin to convince Australians of the significance of the Spanish War. The new communicative technologies at the disposal of film makers, radio stations and newspapers were a source of revelation: the terrors endured by the Spanish people confronted Australian audiences on a daily basis. And although the editorial policies of major newspapers and broadcasting networks were unsympathetic to the Republic, it is clear from the historical record that people read against the grain: time and again, the high impact of the images of Spain's destruction eclipsed the feeble non-interventionist line.

The fears Spain represented in the public imagination were rarely overt in the mainstream media or in statements by Australia's government. However, they were ever-present and deeply implicit in pronouncements pertaining to foreign policy, defence, trade or Empire: federal election campaigns, for example, raised the spectre of Spanish-style fascist air raids without specifically mentioning Spain. This was an official recognition that a deep structure of feeling existed, and that its primarily street-level expressions could be harnessed to the campaigning of major political parties. In the Australian street, 'Spain' was a by-word for impending apocalypse. Vital civic forums were held in community halls, ethnic cafes, trades halls, bookshops, art galleries and public spaces where soapbox orators propagandised. Australia's literary community (if reluctantly in some quarters) took its place in this milieu: speaking out in support of the

Spanish Republic, attempting to capture the spirit of the age; whilst Australia's small modernist clique was inspired by W.H. Auden's 'Spain' to imagine a 'tomorrow' of 'poets exploding like bombs' in the street. Public spaces were sites of struggle and contest: the government considered anti-fascist activism as seditious, and Catholic Action attempted to undermine debates over Spain or shut down rival rallies. Freedom of speech and civil liberties became issues intertwined with anti-fascist politics, and the survival of Spanish democracy was the pre-eminent cause that catalysed libertarian agitation.

In this climate of strife, tragedy became the most viable mode of making sense of events in the late 30s: at the level of experience, tragedy seemed more historically relevant and – strangely – more stable than the increasingly hollowed discourse of 'progress'. As Victor Serge wrote, fascist triumphs provoked a 'new sense which modern man is so painfully developing: the sense of history' as modern tragedy – 'The folk who are fleeing with us along the highways… and on the last trains as defeat sets in, realise all the same that "it had to happen"' (Serge 358). At the very least, this tragic certainty – 'it had to happen' – gave some comprehensible shape to the War's chaos.

The Spanish Civil War accurately foretold the nature of future wars in its 'unity of military and civilian mobilisation and social change' (Hobsbawm 169). Camus grasped this when he wrote in 1937 that it is in Spain 'that the struggle [of humanity at large] reaches its tragic height' (Camus 1967: 192). 'Spain' was suddenly invested with a tragic significance as the last leg in the black odyssey of the 30s and the birth of modern total war. And Noam Chomsky suggests that Spain's relationship to the great powers anticipated the tragic relationship between First and Third Worlds, marked by rapid industrialisation and counter-revolution (1987: 85). In the Second World War, British

and Australian governments – which officially ignored Spain's plight in the 30s – showed that they *had* indeed paid attention to the Spanish Civil War: wartime administrations turned to the Spanish Republic as a model of civilian mobilisation, and 'total war' was rechristened 'peoples' war' in Anglo-Australian propaganda, borrowing the language of Republican Spain (Hobsbawm 169, 49-50; Piette 185).

But whilst 'peoples' war' propaganda was governmentally adopted, the tragic pessimism associated with this language in Spain in the late 30s had to be annulled. Consequently, the 'war' in Spain continued as a battle over language and representation – a battle fought in the media, and by Australian modernists who had been inspired by the Spanish Republic's aesthetic renaissance and aspired to launch their own project of national renewal.

By the 1940s, these modernists had gathered around the small magazine *Angry Penguins* – target of the Ern Malley hoax. The hoax was opportunistically used by the Catholic Church, the Australian government and the establishment media: to puncture the politics of Australian modernism but – more importantly – to deflate the associated tragic structure of feeling of the late 30s. The mock tragedy in the Malley poems was intentionally over-wrought and narcissistic; a satire directed at the Australian modernist generation who had rallied behind Spain's Republic. The Malley poems clearly and bitterly recognised, and lampooned, the Spanish War as a central attraction for Australia's avant garde:

> I have heard them shout in the streets
>
> The chiliasms of the Socialist Reich

And in the magazines I have read

The Popular Front-to-Back.

But where I have lived

Spain weeps in the gutters of Footscray

Guernica is the ticking of the clock

The nightmare has become real… (Heyward 262)

The Ern Malley affair expedited the Australian variant of Britain's '30s myth': that poets who were out of their depth dabbled in political matters they did not understand – a myth inextricably linked to Spain and the tragic sense of the decade recorded in its artefacts. The Malley hoaxers parroted a prevailing attitude in Australia's cultural establishment: that art should be disinterested, and free of partisan politics.

But it was precisely the lack of opportunity for political expression that created the era's emergent sense of modern tragedy. The Australian public's knowledge of what was really happening in Spain was pieced from fragments of information that eluded officialdom's censorship, 'double speak' and insistence that ordinary people had no right to discuss or challenge the government line on international affairs. Australians could witness the destructions caused by industrial, militarised modernity in Spain, even in the most fragmentary way, yet be unable to speak of it in the mainstream public sphere. This seemed to heighten Australian feelings of helplessness, and to cement public identification with the Spanish people's oppression and dispossession. This structure of feeling involved, to borrow Eagleton's terms, 'confronting the worst yet hoping for the

best' (2003: 40). At the very least, terming this condition 'tragic' partly transfigured raw suffering and anxiety.

As this thesis has argued, officialdom's relative silence on the matter of the Spanish Civil War did not reflect the true nature of the Australian public attitude to world events – and, indeed, the crucial events in Spain between 1936 and 1939 actually created a public appetite for international news. The official archive of the period might aspire, in Williams' terms, to represent a dominant and 'congenial' public mood shared 'by the majority of the members of the society' (1961: 99). But following Williams' principle that culture is an interconnected field, a patterning, which must be interpreted as a complex totality, this thesis has examined a range of 'uncongenial', non-conformist texts: arguing that in novels, poetry, minority press publications, diaries, letters, memoirs, union records, visual art, film and accounts of 'dissent events' in public spaces there is genuine and irrefutable evidence of the era's deeply felt structure of feeling. And the significance of this structure of feeling resonated in subsequent decades. As the eminent Left historian Ian Turner wrote, frustration and the tragic sense of liberties curtailed and idealistic hopes dashed galvanised his generation; giving a more universal meaning to the valorous, if vanquished, Spanish Republican spirit and its battle-cry 'They Shall Not Pass':

> [My] generation was born in the 1920s, into a world where those who had survived the shambles of World War [One] had resurrected the ability to hope. But hope died many deaths – in 1929, with the Wall Street crash; in 1933, with Hitler; in 1935, in Abyssinia; in 1937, at Shanghai; in

1938, at Munich; in 1939 in Spain. These were the social and political impressions of our childhood and early adulthood, and they shaped our lives. An end to poverty amid plenty. Down with capitalism. The united front against war and fascism. *No pasaran!* (Turner 1970: 3)

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