

## INTRODUCTION.

### On the Origin and Development of Jindyworobak.

To give as thorough a report as now seems requisite upon Jindyworobak, I must indulge somewhat in the first person singular. At the same time, I must ascribe most, if not all, that is fundamental in the Movement to the influence of others. This is not to dodge, under some brand or other of self-consciousness, the responsibility of conceiving, launching and presiding over a campaign. My sole proprietorship of Jindyworobak Publications has rendered me personally responsible upon every question of what is, and what is not, acceptable for publication under the imprint of the Aborigine by the Camp-fire. If, however, abundant subtraction be made for managerial shortcomings, there must remain, I believe, real satisfaction at Jindyworobak's achievement, so that due acknowledgment of indebtedness should provide interest to students and some gratification among those to whom it is made.

The movement was founded upon a presentation of ideas taken from other people. Since its foundation, other people have spoken officially for Jindyworobak, edited for it, expounded its meaning in their own ways, developed its significance with their own thoughts, impressed their particular individualities upon it; and more than one hundred and sixty people have published with it in ten years. Regarding the Movement's performance there are, naturally, various points of view; and both participants and observers are free to establish theirs. Of the considerations which led me to start the Movement, however, I may speak with the surest authority. Beyond that, I may speak as a president, and put further considerations to be regarded by others as they will.

### The Conception.

Between 1933 and 1935, Professor L. F. Giblin, Mr. Edward Garnett and Mr. John Masefield encouraged me to write Australian nature poems, and taught me some degree of self-criticism according to standards of origin-

ality and accuracy. In his **Foreword** to my first book, **Gumtops** (1935), Professor Giblin declared:

"Some individuality of character and habit have developed in Australia in the last 150 years, and the face of nature has always had an unique distinction. But this individuality and distinction are not adequately on record in letters or any other art. It is a common experience to feel that 'this' wants painting or putting into words, and to know that it has not been done. Our reactions to these things are vague and feeble, because the appropriate language which would define and strengthen them is not ready to hand . . . Our fathers, in despair at their strange surroundings, and clutching at some pathetic shred of similarity to familiar things, peopled the bush with a dozen different oaks, ashes, myrtles, pears, cherries. A true story is impossible in these terms."

Here is expressed the idea of what, later, I labelled "Environmental Values," and stated to be "the most important" of three bases of Jindyworobak endeavour. The method of analytical criticism with which I was to demonstrate the idea had already been taught me by Professor Giblin in dealing with my own verse. In this **Foreword**, there is also the germ of an historical view of the difficulties which, from 1788, had to be overcome in the making of a distinctive Australian culture. For further education in that view I was indebted to the first instalment of **The Foundations of Culture in Australia** by P. R. Stephensen, in **The Australian Mercury** (1935). Mr. Stephensen's influence upon Jindyworobak from 1941 was considerable, but his influence before that date is soon told. I was vividly impressed by his superb rendering of the notorious commentary on Australian Literature by Professor G. H. Cowling, and I assimilated, I think, something of his vigorous spirit of campaign; but, in the first Jindyworobak Publication, **Conditional Culture** (1938), I revealed some disagreement with him as a critic, on the ground that he was not Australian enough. Incidentally, my friend, Mr. Edgar Preece, had, in 1934, sent the manuscript of **Gumtops**, together with Professor Giblin's **Foreword**, to Mr. Stephensen, who, after, some time, returned it, expressing regret that he was unable to publish it. Mr. Preece who, from 1938 until his early death, in 1946, was my continual confidant and advisor in Jindyworobak matters, saw to the publication of **Gumtops** himself.

**The Australian Mercury** induced me to turn to **Kangaroo** by D. H. Lawrence, wherefrom I gained a strong sense of the **prymaeval** in Australian nature. This sense I immediately associated with that of **uniqueness**, which

had been impressed upon me particularly by Professor Giblin and Mr. Garnett, with whom the Professor had put me into correspondence. Mr. Masfield, whose attention was drawn to my early work by the Professor, added point to the lessons of the others in his advice: "Use one adjective where now you use ten, and choose it very carefully." But on the subject of the **prymaeval**, I rejected Lawrence's view of strangeness in the Spirit of the Place: my own first-hand experience of outback life made it familiar for me. Indeed, Professor Giblin's service to me may be summed up by saying that he taught me that the Nature I took for granted was Australian, not general, and that it required Australian definition.

In 1936 and 1937, I applied the analytical method of criticism which had been directed to my own verse, to the works of past and contemporary Australian writers, particularly in verse. My essay **On Environmental values**—first published in **Venture**, 1937, and republished in **Conditional Culture**—was, I believe, although not the first raising of the problem of Australian literary idiom, the first determined scientific attack upon that problem. It seemed to me that there was need not only for criticism of the individual writer's technique, but also for some critical whip to flog Australian Letters at large, because lazy perceptions concerning the local scene were apt to evidence themselves everywhere, marring some of the effects even of our best writers. Consequently I coined an expression, intended to demand accuracy and foster individuality in local descriptive writing:

"environmental values: the distinctive qualities of an environment which cannot be satisfactorily expressed in conventional terms that suit other environments, scrupulous care being necessary for the indication of their primal essence. The whole of the English vocabulary is ours for appropriate use, but we must discriminate."

A Central Australian holiday (summer 1930-1) had begun my interest in the Aborigines. At Hermannsburg I met Mr. T. G. H. Strehlow. As an English tutor at the University of Adelaide, he was to be another critic of my early verse, particularly that dealing with the Aborigines. He told me what the **Alehera** was, and first drew my attention to native legends, those of the Aranda which he had translated. In 1936, I discovered a copy of **The Vanished Tribes** by James Devaney in Adelaide, and I have seldom felt more excitement than upon my first reading of these beautifully told stories. From the glossary I took the name "Jindyworobak" (Jindy-worabak),

because of its Aboriginality, its meaning, and its outlandishness to fashionable literary taste. My first use of this word to signify distinctive Australian quality in writing was in **Chapbook**, 1936, edited by Allan Francis and Rex Wood.

Of considerations which led me to start the Jindyworobak campaign, there is but one more which calls for reference. This is that, as I began to face the prospect of spending my life in pursuits which would leave only the fag-ends of energy for writing, the need for concerted action among writers became for me a personal necessity. I would have leapt at any opportunity to link up with a constituted body of writers, but there was none—the Fellowship of Australian Writers notwithstanding—which, in those days, offered any vital stimulus or help to youthful Australian writers. My own existence, at that time, was hardly a cloistered one; my interests were well-spread in Adelaide; I had been to Melbourne and Sydney; but I had never heard of the Fellowship at that time. This circumstance reflects, I think, not so much on my own ignorance, which it is now the fashion in some quarters to deprecate, as on the circumscribed activities of the Fellowship then, and the dinner-party and salon-like corners in which Australian literary activity variously flourished and wilted in those days. Ignorant, indeed, of these, and not having heard of the valiant struggles of the Palmers to bring about a general burgeoning, I announced Jindyworobak, in **Conditional Culture**, in mid-1938:

“‘Jindyworobak’ is an aboriginal word meaning ‘to annex, to join,’ and I propose to coin it for a particular use. The Jindyworobaks, I say, are those individuals who are endeavouring to free Australian art from whatever alien influences trammel it, that is, to bring it into proper contact with its material. They are the few who seriously realize that an Australian culture depends on the fulfilment of certain definite conditions, namely:

1. A clear recognition of environmental values.
2. The debunking of much nonsense.
3. An understanding of Australia’s history and traditions, primaevial, colonial and modern.

The most important of these is the first. Pseudo-Europeanism clogs the minds of most Australians, preventing a free appreciation of nature.”

The first of the enumerated conditions—as defined in the chapter, **Environmental Values**—amounted to a call for a vast improvement in the general level of descriptive writing about Australia, and a consequent heighten-

ing of character, individuality and immediate potential in Australian letters. This, I submit, has been the change most broadly notable in Australian letters in the past decade. A number of influences has accomplished the change, but their most effective operation dates clearly from the original Jindyworobak stimulus..

The second and third conditions did not, on literary grounds, call for such clear definition as the first. The debunking of nonsense was under way in treatment of inappropriate idiom, was carried further in reference to weaknesses in the views of H. M. Green and P. R. Stephensen on Australian Literature, and entered the historical and sociological fields on the questions of settler-attitudes and convictism. Satire, national and social, and Aboriginalizing—the aspects so far most evident in Jindyworobak writing under conditions two and three—are not the only implications of those conditions. They happen to be the implications most readily realized in the nature of the times, in a particular series of events and the reactions of some Jindyworobak writers (myself included) to such events.

#### Co-operative Action.

By 1937, there was in my mind a group of three writers—Mr. Ian Tilbrook, Mr. Flexmore Hudson and myself—who, I hoped, would work together. My notion was that we should gather around us a body of supporters, who would, in return for subscriptions that would finance our printing, receive our publications.

I had known Hudson at the University of Adelaide, as early as 1931, but it was not until 1938 that I came to know him at all well. He was helpful over **Venture**, 1937, a magazine to the cost of which several well-wishers contributed. But Hudson was a country schoolteacher, and I had better opportunities for talks with Tilbrook, at that time a suburban builder’s foreman, with a keen interest in literary matters; and it was with him that I most fully discussed the idea of forming a Club. I met him first in 1937.

**Venture**, intended as a quarterly, fell through after a single issue, to be revived, in 1939, as the Jindyworobak Quarterly Pamphlet, for issue to Club members in return for their annual subscription of 2/6d.

Throughout 1937 and most of 1938, the Club idea, although mooted, hung fire, until I announced my intention of publishing, at my own risk, an Anthology of Contempor-

ary Australian Verse, as a vindication of the arguments of **Conditional Culture**. Hudson, who in reference to those arguments had written me that "no poet should have time to write about poetry," was completely in sympathy with the practical intention of publishing, and nobody did more than he to canvas sales of the book, both before and after publication. When I told him that it would have to appear without Queensland and New South Wales representation, as my circulars to the Universities there had brought no response, he secured for me from the Secretary of the Oxley Library, Brisbane, the names and addresses of Mr. Victor Kennedy and Mr. Paul L. Grano, both of whom air-mailed verse and became active for Jindyworobak in its early days,

Mr. Brian Elliott secured verse from Perth; Professor A. B. Taylor of Hobart put me into touch with our first Tasmanian contributor; and two of the three original Victorian contributors were friends of mine, while the third responded to publicity.

Before the **Anthology** went to press, I was visited by a young poet, then in his final year at school, whose talent and personality made him a desirable member of the original Jindyworobak group. In my mind he thus made the fourth. Mr. Max Harris's development subsequently took a direction away from Jindyworobak, but, in the meantime, he, like Tilbrook and Hudson, did much to publicise the **Anthology**. When the book appeared, creating immediate interest among writers and giving hope to would-be poets in all States, the four of us struck while the iron was hot and gathered a membership list that, in a couple of years, numbered 500 names.

My notion of a financially strong Club was, however, still-born. I had no business head, and a queer idea that I ought not to press for subscriptions people who sent verse for the **Anthologies** without payment. I had discovered a friendly printer, who, out of remarkable generosity, assured me that I could run up reasonable accounts and take up to twelve months in paying them off. This was Mr. W. Temby, Manager of the Economy Press, Adelaide. Without his understanding, Jindyworobak Publications would not have lasted more than a year. For some years, therefore, I was quite content to contract debts and pay them off, month by month, as best I could. Actually, this relieved me of what was to me an unpleasant business of chasing people for money, and I accepted gratefully whatever half-crowns came to hand, together with an occasional donation of 10/6 or a pound

from people like Mr. Leonard Mann and Mr. R. Schultz, a friend of Max Harris. But total donations up until 1940 amounted to less than three pounds, and total subscriptions at 2/6 have not reached £25 at the present day. Of the 500 names on our list in 1940, all of them called themselves supporters, but most of them had subscribed for one year only, either 1939 or 1940. In all probability many of these never received renewal notices. The Club idea thus became nebulous, and of secondary importance to the loose association of writers in the yearly **Anthology**.

Contributing to the falling off of the Club was the failure of the renewed **Venture**. I lost money over every issue, and could not afford to lose on these and the **Anthologies** as well. Three numbers were printed, and then two badly roneoed, and that was the end of **Venture**. Anybody who liked to send in membership subscriptions thereafter received in return simply a 25 per cent discount on any Jindyworobak books ordered from me. When, subsequently, I succeeded in finding State Editors, I passed membership subscriptions over to them, with the idea that such would help to defray their postage expenses. For, apart from a short experiment at Broken Hill, there has been little of the regularly conducted Club about Jindyworobak. Its influence has been through continuous correspondence, the interchange of ideas, and the execution of many small publishing ventures. If the Club is anything it is these—the association of State Editors, Representatives and a few others, persons in general agreement as to what Jindyworobak is, who are keen enough to devote time and attention to its principles.

Another factor making Club integration difficult was the dispersion of the original four members and of later ones. Tilbrook, Hudson, Harris, although I knew them all, had, none of them, met either of the other two before 1940. Our efforts, like those of Kennedy in Queensland, were, each in his own way, to promulgate the Jindyworobak idea. The aspect most advanced by Hudson and Harris was that of publicising for the coming together of writers in Jindyworobak books. Tilbrook, and particularly Kennedy, were more concerned with establishing the logic of our position. **Conditional Culture** being out of print, Kennedy produced his **Flaunted Banners**, a fresh reasoned development of the earlier booklet to meet later circumstances.

With the public support of Professor Walter Murdoch, as Jindyworobak Barracker, and of Dr. Charles Fenner,

I should, no doubt, have made a better job of the Club than I did. Still, coupled with incapacities and disinclinations on my part, and my devotion of time and energy to my own writing, to editing and to correspondence, were the difficulties I have mentioned.

The Broken Hill Jindyworobak Club did, indeed, during 1939, have regular meetings and social functions; but, when the war came, Mr. E. B. Wichert, the President, and Mr. C. Jutsum, the Secretary, moved to other States on wartime work, and the Club at Broken Hill closed down. So, also, passed the first attempt to secure an All-Australian executive for Jindyworobak, with Messrs. Wichert, Jutsum, Harris, Ted Turner and myself as its members. Both Messrs. James Devaney and Victor Kennedy refused to take Jindyworobak office at that stage, on the grounds that, while they supported our campaign, their circumstances did not leave them free to undertake permanent responsibility.

Mr. Ted Turner of the Melbourne Bread and Cheese Club did much to publicise Jindyworobak in its infancy. The Club's magazine, with the un-Jindyworobak title, *Bohemia*, proved an hospitable vehicle for Jindyworobak, as for other writers; and Mr. J. K. Moir, with the un-Jindyworobak title of Knight Grand Cheese, has afforded us, on innumerable occasions, generous and unselfish assistance of the sort that has put so many Australian writers in his debt.

From the outset Jindyworobak experienced the sneers of the stuffier sort of academics; but there were more difficult years ahead, when the Movement was treated to a deluge of caustic criticism, and made the subject of whispering campaigns, in which envy, I believe, played a considerable part. We were never, however, discredited by any writer who, before our arrival on the scene, had already achieved real stature as a creative writer. It was the small fry, making their voices heard, who went for us, and it was the careerists of literary circles, resenting our forward position in the Australian literary bus, who egged them on. But, during such times, we drew encouragement from the asseverated faith in us of men whose stature and integrity were beyond question—men like Professor Walter Murdoch, Mr. James Devaney, and others. Their letters, in our files, provide unanswerable commentaries on the Little Reviews.

## The Years of Controversy.

A letter from one friend, recently, says: "I've seen so many references to Jindyworobak here and there that I thought it would be useful, or at least entertaining, for someone to collect them together." Jindyworobaks have collected scores over the years, although doubtless we have missed many, as old ones we have never before seen occasionally come our way. A thorough analysis of the mass of them, if ever attempted, should, I think, be decidedly useful and instructive as one gauge of the temper of the past decade in Australian letters. As for entertaining—there is small doubt of it, up to a point; but the repetitive small arguments of vast numbers of them, in attributing to the Movement intents it plainly repudiated, would in all probability render the study finally more tedious than some of the critics found our "endless variations upon the Australian theme." To us the apparent necessity of repeating, which we have done, every year since our inception, the liberal basis of our campaign has filled us with despair concerning the prejudicial and unenquiring processes which so frequently and boldly masquerade as literary criticism in this country. We acknowledge with gratitude the real degree of understanding and encouragement we have derived from a few exceptional newspaper and academic critics; we acknowledge also the thoughtful reserve of one or two critics, such as Mr. Clive Turnbull, whose profound differences from us have not stamped them into wholesale or subtle denigration of our minds and motives. At the same time, we have been in the position to observe the lack of any consistent standards of criticism in most Australian newspapers; the ulterior delight of some magazines in fostering chiefly the prejudicial in criticism of us—as if certain editors considered us as rivals instead of co-workers; and, combined with these two things, the large spate of downright falsifying of the Jindyworobak case in countless innuendos emanating from the least imaginative of academics and would be litterateurs.

Some genuine amusement, apart from the personal views a reader may have, is surely to be found in the contrasting of *The Courier Mail* statement (3/12/38):

"If after reading a slim volume of poems by indifferent writers one does not find a line that is likely to remain in the mind, one can justifiably question the value of the book. That is how most readers will feel after reading through *Jindyworobak Anthology, 1938.*"

—with **The Advertiser** statement (10/12/38) that

"**The Jindyworobak Anthology** contains some delightful things . . . The editor is to be congratulated on his selection."

In the present part of my **Introduction**, I shall eventually deal with some examples of uncomprehending criticism. For the rest, a few selected bits and pieces of opinion appear at the end of this book.

For those unversed in Australian literary history of the past seven years, it needs to be stated that **The Red Page's** silence upon the subject of Jindyworobak is in its seventh year, and that it started with **The Bulletin's** apparent inability to make any other satisfactory form of protest against exposure of what appeared an unseemly campaign against Jindyworobak. It is doubtful whether the course of protest adopted can, indeed, afford real satisfaction to **The Bulletin**, for Jindyworobak has progressed without its notices. By at least two indirect means, apologies were sought for **The Bulletin** or its critic from Jindyworobak, but this face-saver was withheld, although, following the representations of one intermediary, I did write a personal note of regret to the critic, which, however, was obviously considered too qualified for a reply. I mention these circumstances for the sake of record, and not for any glee in perceiving what a quandary we raised for **The Bulletin** policy. Although the paper was decidedly unfair to us in 1941, we recognise, not without sympathy, that through its cardinal blunders of policy, it is inevitably committed, probably for years yet, to its silence regarding a reproof that was ruthlessly administered. Nevertheless, we continue to forward review copies of Jindyworobak publications to **The Bulletin**. Angling for reviews? No, but less afraid of receiving them than **The Red Page** is of giving them; and, indeed, we have not been instructed not to, and it is right to send books for review to **The Bulletin**. "When the Bull mentions Jindy" is a saying in some quarters, which indicates that we could, in the unlikely event, take **The Bulletin** more seriously; and we would like to, for we recognise the famous journal of the 'nineties as Jindyworobak's real precursor in flamboyant tradition-building. But let us, not having altogether disguised some regret at circumstances, turn to other matters.

When, in 1941, Mr. Ian Mudie enquired about the current year's **Anthology**, I declared that its appearance was not certain. Costs were greater, and so was the amount of time needed for livelihood. In the previous

year, my brother, John Ingamells, had taken much of the work off my shoulders, but he was now training with the R.A.A.F. In 1941, Mudie, collecting manuscripts for consideration, threw his net over a wider field than ever I had done, and to edit was a sheer joy. He also persuaded Mr. Cyril Brown to put some money into the publication, which reduced my expenses by half. In the following year, Brown again contributed largely to the cost. Mudie, in 1941, showed me for the first time Stephensen's complete book, **The Foundations of Culture in Australia**, and induced such Australia Firsters as Messrs. Val. Crowley and S. B. Hooper to make generous cash donations to Jindyworobak. Much of the antipathy to Jindyworobak became explained for me by A.F. statistics relating to Englishmen and Austral-English occupying key-points in our educational and industrial systems. Jindyworobak satire on such questions never assumed hostility to any Englishman because he was English. That unseeing English-born professors should be all-powerful in decreeing the cultural training of thousands of Australian schoolchildren has been a scandalous state of affairs, which is not yet entirely removed. However, the true Jindyworobak attitude in these matters ought to be evident in the appointment of two Englishmen to State Editorship in the Movement. These were the best Australians I knew for the job.

The Alchera had been to me and others a subject for Australian writing. We observed that Mudie was using it as a symbol, and thereafter Jindyworobak writers developed the Alchera symbol more and more.

Jindyworobak gained from Australia First, besides a decided addition to poetic strength in Ian Mudie, financial assistance which dwarfed the little we had previously received from anywhere. Subservience it was never sought to thrust upon us; and I accepted money for Jindyworobak, as gifts, on the clear understanding that I managed the projects as I saw fit, in my own way. Desire to further the cause of Australian Literature was the motive of the generous donors. It may now be put on record that, when a friend suggested that my acceptance of money from members of a disbanded political party would surely be frowned upon by the Club's Barracker, I immediately approached Professor Murdoch—by no means Australia First in politics, declared myself determined to accept help generously offered, and expressed the sincere hope that he would not wish to dissociate himself from us; saying, however, that I would delete his name from our

letterheads should he feel such a step desirable. The Professor not only remained our Barracker, but—with the graciousness for which he is universally loved—declared himself “honoured.”

It was not to be expected that Jindyworobak, advancing political and social argument, should go spot-free of criticism, and not surprising that a Federal politician, with his nose out of joint, should, in addressing a body of students at the University of Adelaide, speak disparagingly of a “poet who used to attend this University.” But our propaganda was rigorously shaped to the forms of art, Jindyworobak’s justification. Jindyworobaks did write as poets, whereas a number of so-called literary critics jettisoned the critic’s logic to deal in cheap methods of innuendo, in lieu of argument. They ignored entirely the literary basis of Jindyworobak, although Jindyworobak nationalism and the Alchera conception emerged strictly within the environmental values condition of our writing. Stopping at nothing, some of our critics bruited it abroad that we were an isolationist force, opposed to all exotic influences in Australian Literature, and that we sought to deny Australians the right to read and write of anything outside the bush. They did their work well among undergraduates who were carefully trained in a predisposition to view us with suspicion and contempt. We were frequently judged not by our writings, as we should be, but by what others said about our writings—numbers or whom, like Mr. Bernard Smith, had obviously not even taken the trouble to read them properly.

Smith’s notice of Jindyworobak in his book, **Place Taste and Tradition**, may be taken as the very type of prejudice. He quotes from a page in Victor Kennedy’s **Flaunted Banners**. To begin with, he has not studied the page with care, for he attributes to Kennedy a quotation which Kennedy acknowledges to me. When he does quote Kennedy accurately, that Jindyworobak is an attempt to “link Australian thought with its natural background,” he quite misses the significance of the word “link,” revealing how cursory and shallow has been his consideration of the Movement, whose very name means “to annex, to join.” The Jindyworobak “position,” contrary to his assumption, is not taken up **away** from our European cultural inheritance; we have not sought to scrap this, but have set about clearing away from Australian thought, which carries it, such evidences of it as have prohibited the liberal appreciation of qualities indigenous to Australia. For the purpose of our campaign we have treated as

alien to Australia, the **Land**, but **not to us**, “everything that owes its origin directly to other cultures.” We identify ourselves with Australia, which is our Motherland, and English, which is our Mother Tongue. Our aim is synthesis, adjustment of the two, and our use of Aboriginal words is a legitimate contribution. We are the first to acknowledge that only such of our usages as both have significance in themselves and suit the genius of the English language can survive. But that is by the way.

Mr. Smith cannot prove that Jindyworobaks have asked Australians to adopt the ridiculous extremes he says we have, so he resorts to this pompous nonsense: “The Jindyworobaks have rejected such an extreme interpretation several times before, but it is, nevertheless, the only logical one.” It is not hard to mince Smith small. The **extreme interpretation** (if any Jindyworobak says, “damn,” it must be interpreted as something scorchingly unprintable) is the **only logical one!** That Jindyworobaks have rejected the extreme doesn’t matter. Not a bit. The Jindyworobaks really cannot state their own position at all. Mr. Smith must do it for them. Only he and those who agree with him truly comprehend the import of Jindyworobak—and they do not need to read Jindyworobak writings carefully to do so. Only they realize what the “Jindyworobak position” is, and it is whatever they say it is. Jindyworobaks do not, of course, agree with Mr. Smith. What is our position if not somewhat as we have chosen it, thought it out, and sought to define it? We, far from representing it as a return to “yams and witchetty grubs,” have rejected such an extreme as quite an amusing satire except when adduced with malicious seriousness. To us Alcheringa is not a return to gunyahs, which we have never used as residences, but a spiritual concept to which we should like to see white Australians advance. We have done something to show what Alchera was to the Aborigines, and, in my **Cities in Alkira** (published in **Poetry**), I made a beginning at demonstrating what it may be for white Australians.

Persons like Mr. Smith have not been rare. In haste to discredit Jindyworobak, they have done so willy-nilly, without taking any honest pains to study our work or our viewpoint. No proper critic pretends to speak with authority on a subject he has not properly investigated. Jindyworobak has withstood an incredible amount of so-called criticism drawn, like Mr. Smith’s, from charlatan limbos of prejudice, conceit, ignorance amazing in its pre-

sumption of infallible wisdom. We have, more frequently than any other literary undertaking in Australia, been slighted by fifth-raters and careerists among literary critics, who have, at every turn, left their incompetence displayed for future students to observe. At best, they have been good guessers, never assiduous critics; mostly, they have branded themselves as frauds.

It is appropriate to note, in passing, A. R. Chisholm's review of *Jindyworobak Anthology, 1947*, in *The Argus*, (Melbourne, 27/12/47). A.R. must not be confused with our friend, A. H. Chisholm, who has spoken of "the healthy publications of the Jindyworobak school." A.R.C. is a professor of French. His review is a sneer at the idea of Australian idiom as explored by Jindyworobaks. He finds it desirable to deny what would otherwise appear obvious: "This is not an attack on the anthology, in which there's quite a measure of good verse. But it's good just because it's good, not because it's under the sign of Jindyworobak." Why the jibe? Who ever said that anything which appeared under the Jindyworobak sign must necessarily be good? It seems that the Professor, like others who have used similar dubious methods of criticism, simply wants to be unpleasant to us. In his remoteness from sympathy with what is distinctive in Australian literary experiment, he appears, in his capacity of Australian literary critic, to be a prejudiced professor of French.

Mr. Brian Elliott has some degree of understanding of Jindyworobak, in the initial stages of which he was distantly concerned. Much of his criticism of the Movement's and my shortcomings, in his book, *Singing to the Cattle*, is moderately well-reasoned and honest. But not all is well-reasoned; not all is strictly honest. It is not suggested that Mr. Elliott means to be dishonest, but his course is fixed at present in the Universities, and he seems to have cast about for conclusions such as would be acceptable to entrenched die-hards, who, chagrined at the establishment of Jindyworobak, would be grateful for sops. Mr. Elliott ought to have known better than to omit from his reference to facts "always present to the Jindyworobak imagination" the most essential, namely our conception of environmental values. Accoutred with this blind spot, however, he quotes, as, "making allowances," a "prime" and "octogenarian" "example of the Jindyworobak imagination," lines from J. Sheridan Moore in which the "tribe" of coral insects are

"Grinding, kneading, weaving, spinning."

Spinning? Mr. Elliott does not, even making allowances, seem to understand. His is a refusal to see the prime point of Jindyworobak argument, which concerns the accurate use of language. He is referred to my essay *On Environmental Values*, where he will learn all over again that the kind of early bards he lists as possessing the Jindyworobak imagination possessed, if any, remarkably little of it: Their vision, however sincerely held, was too much handicapped by technical flaws in expression to be reliably Australian. There is in Mr. Elliott a strong disposition to pontificate.

The "collapse" of Jindyworobak's "ambitious gesture" and the "exotic" nature of the Alchera conception are among his sacrificial offerings to stale academism. I did not know that Jindyworobak had collapsed; and for a movement resting upon "an obsolete poetic awareness" it has had a remarkably lively effect upon contemporary Australian Letters. In 1946, I stated, "We feel that our original and chief task is already accomplished; that is to say, Jindyworobak has effectively drawn much-needed attention to the problem of presenting our unique continent in literature." This statement has been considered true by some independent critics, who do not see accomplishment and collapse as identical, and who do, in fact, recognise Jindyworobak achievement to have earned no mean place in the Australian literary tradition.

In declaring that "the Alchera is, for white Australians, an exotic fancy," Mr. Elliott makes a contention which, unless examined, is deceptive. Had he said Alchera is a matter for the imagination to Aborigines and Jindyworobaks (though necessarily with a difference), but a mere fancy or less to most Australians, he would have been indisputably right. He misuses the word "exotic," which means "foreign, introduced from abroad," and unwittingly admits another of several fog-spots in his Australian vision. Indigenous things not apprehended by most Australians are properly characterised as exotic in the opinion of this Australian critic. Assuredly, Jindyworobak is still needed, if only to reveal false bases of criticism. This is not hairsplitting, Mr. Elliott. If your authority went unquestioned, the integrity of Australian thought on Australian matters would be endangered at the very time when its hope is greatest.

So much of the outcry against Jindyworobak has been based upon our attention to the Aborigines and the Alchera conception, and such attention on our part has so often been characterised as escapist on the one hand and Nietzschean on the other, or unaccountably both escapist and



sinister at once, that a few special remarks here may not be out of place. Is all our fuss about Aboriginal art worthwhile? Has it any justification? Professor A. P. Elkin has said that "the growing interest in and appreciation of primitive art in general and Aboriginal art in particular has a very important human, as distinct from scientific, implication." But is there anything to be learnt from Aboriginal art itself? May it not be said that all primitive art is technically the same? L. Adam, in his **Primitive Art**, shows that people who make sweeping contentions on this matter do not have it all their own way: "Every people, however primitive, has developed a specific style by giving preference to certain objects and patterns or certain arrangements of lines and spaces . . . Scientifically speaking, there is no one element common to all the various branches of primitive art; but their mere foreignness in form and context serves to link them together in our mind for the purposes of criticism. The link, however, is extraneous to the works themselves. It depends upon our attitude to them." It seems very likely, in view of the work of Margaret Preston, and of the most recent development among Aboriginal artists who are working amazingly into whole landscapes new methods of landscape design, that our own art will take some definite impress from Aboriginal.

But the whole cult of the primitive! Is not Jindyworobak finding a way of escape from more pressing modern problems? This question has frequently been asked, but it is surely not very intelligent. Jindyworobak has been alive and abroad in the community, and has tackled realistically immediate problems in Australian writing. Well, then, is there not something foolish about Jindyworobak preoccupation with the Aborigines, their lowly form of life, so different from our own? Oh, Rousseau! Or something sinister Ah, Nietzsche! Some critics have implied—they can get no further than woolly implication—that Jindyworobak somehow aims at carrying out a complete social programme. We have not conceived anything so ambitious. Certainly we have criticised specific defects in Australian life, the logical remedies of which, in our own time, are obvious enough and not to be clarified through association with philosophical systems, beneficent or sinister. In the light of Aboriginal philosophy, however, Jindyworobak primitivism would appear to be beyond the scope of Nietzschean explanation. A book could be written on this by an intelligent student of Jindyworobak, provided he read, besides Nietzsche,

the anthropological works of Elkin and Spencer and Gillen.

The Jindyworobaks, whose whole campaign has rested upon the uniqueness of the Australian continent among the lands of the world, believe that this uniqueness is properly explained only by understanding of Australia's primeval story, as revealed by scientists. There are many aspects to this story, and we are interested in all of them; but our interest, like that of the scientists, is necessarily a twentieth century interest. The interests which we specifically champion have definitely been somewhat smothered in the public mind. We have concentrated our purpose upon them, believing, quite rightly, that others could shout out about other worthwhile matters, with which, in spite of obtuseness among some critics, we have frequently been as much in sympathy as they themselves.

### A Final Note For Critics.

The word "Jindyworobak" functions easily both as a noun and as an adjective, and, in straightforward discussion, titivated forms of the word are not necessary. "Jindyworobakism," "Jindyworobakery," "Jindyworobakian," "Jindyworobakite," rather than clarifying discussion, evidence the nature of attitude, perception and inventiveness in the critics who first coined them. Such words carry qualities not discernible in the simple form ready to hand, and would appear to have been created with some intent. To the Jindyworobaks themselves, the intent behind such ostensibly orderly constructions is not so acceptable as that informing with blustering good-humour a Sydney columnist's illuminating suggestion that "the Angry Seagulls and the Shindybunglejunks" should, together with Frankie Sinatra and others, contribute to a terrific educational book suitable to this age, and entitled, **What Every Girl Should Know About Atom-splitting**. We have to admit, however, that "Jindyworobakism" is a form which has found its way into the vocabulary of some of our most sympathetic and understanding critics. These have accepted, not invented, it.

### Other Considerations.

During the war period, extraordinary literary fervours found release among Australians. These wartime fervours were immeasurable, but many of them took a natural direction in accord with the Jindyworobak Movement, and, far from swamping our campaign, assisted its advance.

Throughout the war, the Jindyworobak current was the most clearly observable in Australian letters, if only by virtue of the unremitting antipathy exhibited towards it by some reviewers. But we had our friends too. Professor Murdoch, Mr. Devaney, Mr. Leonard Mann never failed us with encouragement. Mrs. Nettie Palmer, writing to me for the first time in April, 1941, said: "I don't know whether to welcome more your original writing or your more impersonal labours in the direction of a national poetry. In this second activity you have done what some of us ought to have attempted much earlier; you've brought people together, sifted them, held to a literary credo and be-damned." Again: "I'm strongly in sympathy with the credo of the Jindyworobaks." My work, as referred to by Mrs. Palmer, has, I have clearly acknowledged, depended very much upon the enthusiasm of others; nor should the less ripe conditions of Mrs. Palmer's day be overlooked. If anything, she has, in the remarks quoted, underestimated the importance of her husband's and her own agitation of the Australian literary scene. Some time after her letter of April, 1941, I received from her a whole bundle of press cuttings, which evidenced an untiring campaign carried on before Jindyworobak's campaign was thought of. This, besides many other factors, has to be taken into account in considering the timeliness and effect of the new Movement.

Among contemporary literary influences which, variously for and against Jindyworobak, have been notable are **Southerly**, **Angry Penguins**, **Meanjin**, and **Poetry**. Mr. Max Harris left Jindyworobak to found **Angry Penguins**. Mr. Flexmore Hudson founded **Poetry** without turning his back on Jindyworobak. To both of these celebrated personalities Jindyworobak, in the first place, gave a wide audience, just as they gave the Movement added significance. The name of Paul L. Grano is another which Jindyworobak is proud to have spread through all States. Both Grano and Hudson had published a first book of verse before Jindyworobak's foundation, but to them, as to some others, Ian Tilbrook applies his apt dictum that "Jindyworobak's has been a steady rise upon the rungs of assisted writers." Goodness knows, the Movement's assistance to such writers has been little apart from publicity, and their reciprocation has, in some cases, meant hard work for them.

Among writers whose first books have borne our imprint are Max Harris, William Hart-Smith, Gina Ballantyne, Roland E. Robinson, Colin Thiele, Victor Williams,

Peter Miles, all well-known. Among poems originally published in our **Anthologies** are a number whose quality has received subsequent confirmation in anthologising elsewhere. Jindyworobak has, of course, owed a considerable debt to other writers and publishers for permission to reproduce poems whose quality has appealed to Jindyworobak Editors.

Mr. William Hart-Smith was Jindyworobak's first State Editor. Before he went to New Zealand, his position in New South Wales was taken over by Mr. Roland E. Robinson. Mr. Ian Tilbrook in South Australia was the next appointed. After a brief occupancy of the office in Victoria by Mr. Kenneth H. Gifford, Mr. Victor Kennedy took up the position there. Today Jindyworobak has representation in all States except Tasmania. Messrs. Peter Miles and Jack Sorensen are the Queensland and West Australian Editors respectively. Mr. Arthur Murphy represents V.K. at Mildura, and Mr. Colin Thiele represents I.F. at Port Lincoln. The work of Jindyworobak's team of men throughout the country, and the activities of such women members of the Club as Miss Gina Ballantyne and Mrs. Winsome Latta, in advancing the Movement, and the publicising of Australian Literature in general, cannot be over-estimated in assessing the Movement's influence.

The premature death of Mr. Edgar Preece, in 1946, meant the loss of one of Jindyworobak's most helpful supporters. To us he was a valuable friend, in advice never thrust upon us, but frequently sought, and never withheld. His capacity for disentangling and appraising the elements of any situation with which we confronted him was extraordinarily keen, and his judgment no less generous for being detached. His practical advice in matters of publishing was something without which Jindyworobak could not well have got started. Such words as I am able to write about Edgar Preece limp far behind the man's real character, which abided equally in a coolness of mental stamina and a warmth of friendship, in a personality which those so fortunate as to have known him intimately rejoice to have known.

The fortunes of the Movement were considerably advanced when Mr. E. Allen, then Superintendent of High Schools in South Australia, invited me, in 1943, to prepare a book of Australian verse for class use. **New Song in an Old Land** was published by Messrs. Longmans, Green & Company Ltd., with the Jindyworobak imprint. Miss E. Moodie Heddle, Longmans' Educational Manager, who saw

the book through the press, is a well-known writer, and we are glad to welcome her as a contributor to this Review.

Jindyworobak association with Georgian House Pty Ltd. began over **Poets at War**, Ian Mudie's anthology of servicemen's verse. Mr. E. C. Harris, Managing Director of Georgian House, saw to the production of the book in association with Jindyworobak, and subsequently invited me to join the firm. This I was not slow to do. Apart from a predilection for the work offered, I recognized in E.C.H. a champion of Australian Literature, a fact which widely separated sections of the Australian literary community must assuredly attest. His encouragement of Jindyworobak has been generous and steady, for he has helped a number of our books to print; but he has assisted others equally, and none of Jindyworobak's critics can interpret his staunchness to us, amid gusty differences of literary outlook, as being in the least one-eyed.

Jindyworobak is grateful also to Sir Keith Murdoch for practical encouragement received. One of our most helpful supporters has been Mr. M. E. Gray. And we owe a special gratitude to Mrs. Margaret Preston for her generous gifts of cover-designs from time to time.

Given a desire to co-operate in the publication of Australian writers' work, and a general agreement regarding the necessity of care in presenting our unique continent in literature, there is abundant scope for individual differences of view and expression, and for differences of personal interest, in Jindyworobak. Co-operation, goodwill, and a general harmony of—rather than identical—direction become evident, however, in the observance of certain technical principles of writing and, to some extent, in ideas expressed; but, in matters of politics and religion, it is to be noted that Jindyworobak has reconciled in its ranks Imperialists, Australia Firsters, Communists, Catholics, Protestants, Atheists. Our first concern, as a Movement, is Australian Literature. Anyone, serving that, may express himself or herself reasonably in our publications.

Invitations to contribute to this **Review** were issued not only to those known to be friendly to the Movement, but to a number known to be unsympathetic and to others whose attitudes have been uncertain of definition. One article which came uninvited has been excluded, not because of its antipathetic attitude but because of its disproportionate length. Its author was advised many months ago that if he reduced its length, as he saw fit, we would

guarantee its inclusion. He has however, made no move. In four cases where contributors have not provided titles, I have taken words, I trust permissably, out of their own mouths.

REX INGAMELLS.



FROM THE FIRST CRITIQUE OF THE FIRST  
JINDYWOROBAK PUBLICATION.

"Australian art is to be 'freed from whatever alien influences trammel it,' to be brought 'into proper contact with its material.' A very laudable ambition, but itself trammelled by youthful arrogance. The attitude of Mr. Ingamells can be summed up in that lamentable modern word—he uses it himself—'debunking,' which, of course, implies, firstly, that certain venerated things are in reality worthless; and, secondly, that the writer is the one person with the wit to perceive this, and the ability to expose it. A writer who, for instance, calls Kendall 'practically valueless as an Australian poet' damages only his own reputation as a critic." —*The Advertiser*, Adelaide, on *Conditional Culture*, 16/7/38.