A. Norman Jeffares, Anna Rutherford and the Question of Colonial Inheritance

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When A. Norman Jeffares wrote in admiration of Anna Rutherford's "delight in extending experience/Not only for yourself but for others/ With whom you shared your enjoyment," (*To Anna* xix) it was a particular enjoyment in the literary life that was also his own. Writing from Fife Ness in 2001, Jeffares brought his introduction to a scholarly compendium of Oliver St John Gogarty's works to conclusion with the words: "Read him, reader, you will enjoy him" (*Poems* 28). It is this enthusiasm for, indeed, advocacy of, the pleasures of the text that marks Jeffares' life of letters. It is a life of astounding abundance, enormous vitality, and surprising variousness. In a poem titled simply "1924" he writes of "excursions into wonder" (*Brought up in Dublin* 21). Indeed, there is a sense that like Darwin, Jeffares was both entranced and tirelessly curious about the seemingly "endless [literary] forms most beautiful and most wonderful [that] have been, and are being, evolved" (Darwin 460). The will to enjoy is a governing force that leads him both to self-discovery and the desire to encourage discovery in others. To this end he was a prolific reader, writer and editor. His work within the university and publishing sectors was endlessly enterprising and entrepreneurial.

At the time of his death in June 2005, Jeffares was primarily recognized in memorial essays as "a distinguished Yeats scholar" and an "outstanding scholar of Anglo-Irish literature."[1] This is no misrepresentation, as his contribution to this area of specialization was clearly one of great breadth and depth, but as an Australian, and current editor of *Kunapipi*, my interest in and appreciation of Jeffares lies with his work in Commonwealth literatures, and the impact of a colonial inheritance on his perspective. In particular, this brief essay seeks discovery of relationship between Jeffares's own interests and background (the Irish and the Commonwealth, including his editorship of *ARIEL* and foun-

dational involvement in associations of Commonwealth and Anglo-Irish studies[2]) and the similar but different work of Anna Rutherford (founding editor of *Kunapipi* and founder of the European Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies). The latter difference—between the persons and work of Jeffares and Anna—is one of politics; the former relationship—between the investment in Ireland and the Commonwealth—is also political, but one that I have found nowhere articulated in Jeffares's writing. It is a telling absence.

In a collection of essays celebrating the centenary of W. B. Yeats's birth, Jeffares and K.G.W. Cross commissioned work from scholars in Africa, America, Australia, England, India, Ireland and Scotland, but the reason given for this 'international' perspective is not a recognition of a shared colonial history but a valuation of Yeats's work that rests on what might be described as universalist principles: "The range of response to Yeats's work throughout the continents offers a fresh reminder of the power of his writings to stimulate and move an audience. . ." (Cross and Jeffares vii). The geographical phrase "throughout the continents" is a curious negation of British Commonwealth history; it is particularly curious because Jeffares would become the champion of the 'commonwealth' perspective in the study of 'English Literature.' But what kind of champion? His editorial reflection in the first issue of *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* (1970), and the full title of the journal itself, is a clear indicator of what kind. He writes,

> This new quarterly succeeds *A Review of English Literature*: its scope is larger, for the former journal dealt only with English literature, produced in the British Isles and the Commonwealth. *ARIEL*, as its sub-title—A Review of International English Literature—indicates, will include discussion not only of English Literature in the older meaning of the term but of the literature written in English throughout the world. (7)

Jeffares would himself perhaps deny the label 'universalist'. Writing of the need to assess literature "on a detached basis" he claims the criterion must be, "is it good writing?" (7). The measure of that good, however, is not a universal measure but an individual one: "Many readers will define

'good' differently, and that is excellent, for literature ought, in its inception and its reception, to emphasize the preciousness of the individual." (7) An individualist then rather than a universalist, Jeffares's belief in the power, the potential and the preciousness of the individual (rather than the social) is everywhere in evidence. His interest lies with the uncommon man rather than with common man. He writes that our "business in literary criticism" lies "largely with the uncommon man who can create lasting delight—or disturbance—both for contemporaries and for future readers" (5). And, in the last editorial of *ARIEL's* first year he writes, "given freedom of mind and intellectual curiosity . . . we can create our own particular independence" (6). Crucially, that freedom of mind might not be a given is not recognized, or at least not articulated.

Here then is the fulcrum of difference between Jeffares and Anna—it is indeed a difference of politics—perhaps as simple as the divide between 'liberal' and 'labor.' It is a difference that originates in class, religion and gender (although I do not address the issue of gender in these brief comments). Whereas A. Norman Jeffares is Dublin-born protestant Irish, heir to a propertied, if now derelict, past of gate-post and drive, of stabling, carriage house and quiet fields ("Munmore" *Brought up in Dublin* 15–16), Anna Rutherford is catholic Irish, born in working-class Newcastle, Australia. The difference of inheritance casts a different light upon the world that results in a different way of seeing something, evident even in their choice of journal title: *ARIEL* and *Kunapipi*. Where Jeffares identifies with Shakespeare's Ariel (*The Tempest)*, Anna might have chosen Caliban ("who never yields us kind answer" [1.2.310]). Both are born of the island/Ireland, both are colonized and slave to Prospero, but Ariel chooses alliance with power where Caliban chooses the path of stubborn resistance. Anna might have chosen Caliban, for such a choice would certainly fit her politics, and she might well declare in concert with Caliban:

> This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,
> Which thou tak'st from me. . .
> . . .
> . . . All the charms

> Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you!
> For I am all the subjects that you have,
> Which first was mine own King; and here you sty me
> In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
> The rest o' th' island. [*Tmp.* 1.2:333–45]

But Anna chooses the title *Kunapipi* because she recognized the complication of a colonial history in Ireland that she shared with all Calibans, and her immigrant, colonizing status in Australia that aligned her with Ariel and the power of Prospero. Ireland might be hers, but this island, this Australia, was not. And yet, affiliation lay with the colonized—the aboriginal peoples. It is their creative spirit she celebrates, and the assertion of their rightful place in a modern Australia she champions. Her editorial introduction to the new journal that would replace the *Commonwealth Newsletter* she had produced since 1971, explains the foundational principles of *Kunapipi*:

> So many people have asked 'Why Kunapipi?' that I feel I should say a few words about the Rainbow Serpent and the myths connected with it.
>
> For the aborigines the Rainbow Serpent stands out above the rest of the totemic ancestors because of its particular concern with the regeneration of nature and human fertility. . . There are alternative names and versions of the myth and links can be made with other myths and rites . . . What they all show is the concern with fertility which finds expression in the interlocking images of the Great Mother and the Rainbow Serpent. This I hope explains the choice of emblem and title.
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> To me it all seemed extremely appropriate. The regenerative spirit is stressed, a link is established between the old world and the new, between ancient cultures and those of the twentieth century. (1:1 6–8)

Kunapipi sought to make connections—to find relationship between peoples, cultures, histories—to explore a "common wealth." This was a political agenda that pointed to the lack of economic common wealth,

as much as it praised and gave place to a cultural common wealth—a creativity that was born of an imposed and often destructive relationship between colonizer and colonized. This was a violence of relationship that Jeffares does not appear to have acknowledged. The parallel shift from his editorship of *A Review of English Literature* to *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, and Jeffares's enlargement of 'the Commonwealth' to 'the World' is a generous impulse, but it is also a denial of the politics of the common weal that some, including Anna Rutherford, would see not as a wealth but a wound, one that requires not a covering bandage but further probing. Yet, despite this difference, Anna I am sure would be first to admit and express gratitude for this generosity of impulse that is evident in the many years of productive professional relationship in which Jeffares offered Anna initial opportunity and encouragement to realize her ambitions, one that gave her entré to the world of Commonwealth writing that would grow to become a position of significance and influence. It is noteworthy that Anna began the life of her new journal with a quote from her forward to *Common Wealth*, the publication of the conference proceedings from the first EACLALS conference (held at The University of Aarhus, Denmark in April, 1971) at which Jeffares gave the opening address. The conference participants are a 'who's who' of pioneering Commonwealth literary scholarship, many of whom would have come through connection with Jeffares.

Interestingly, in the fourth year of its publication, Anna, perhaps like Jeffares in the decade before, officially[3] shifted the focus of her new journal from a concern with "the new literatures written in English" whose "major concentration is on the present and former Commonwealth countries" (*Kunapipi* 4:1 1982) to a "special but not exclusive emphasis on the new literatures written in English" whose aim is "to fulfil the requirements T.S. Eliot believed a journal should have: to introduce the work of new or little known writers of talent, to provide critical evaluation of the work of living authors both famous and unknown, and to be truly international" (*Kunapipi* 4:2 1982). *Kunapipi's* forum had become global, and although an expansion from the Commonwealth to the International might be construed as a parring back of the tiger's

claws, this was not in fact the case. A survey of the next twenty years of editorial policy reveals a political drive that loses none of its dynamism over time. The imaginative drive to discover and enjoy 'the world' that Anna shared with Jeffares, never lost sight of its specific social impulse and its ties to the particular histories of violent conquest in Australia and Ireland.

If it is true, as Robert Welch declares in his introduction to a *festschrift* volume of essays and poems in honour of Jeffares (1988) that he was "An Irishman first" who became "a citizen of the world" (3), I would ask what it means to be "a citizen of the world" and whether the title might also apply to Anna. I think the answer to the latter part of my question is no—Anna was an Australian first and last. Newcastle was always her home by birth, feeling and imagination, to which she returned in the last years of her life after spending much of her life away from home. Yet I was not entirely convinced that home felt like the home she expected and longed for it to be on return, and I am not sure that despite all her claims, Anna was not also "a citizen of the world." But what might that mean? Does citizenry of the world imply a negation of politics—a shift to the apolitical? Does being a citizen of the world imply a renunciation of an inheritance that is both biological and historical? Or might citizenship of the world be understood as the refusal of boundaries, not so much a denial of histories of violence, but a refusal to be determined by them (if that is possible)? To put it this way is also to be reminded of the naïve claims made by Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, in *Portrait of the Artist as a Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, that he can free himself from the nets of language, religion and politics.

In the titles of his two books of poetry Jeffares declares himself "Brought up in Dublin" and "Brought up to Leave," and I wonder if Anna would make the same claim for herself, that is, "Brought up in Newcastle" and "Brought up to Leave." Is this the condition of the displaced colonizer—never really home away from home? Further, is this the condition of the intellectual for whom the love of learning and the dedication to 'magic' requires a dispossession of home—the abdication of the realm? Prospero's exile was forced but it was also inevitable. Perhaps Anna had more in common with Prospero, and indeed with Jeffares, than I have

allowed. But unlike Shakespeare's Prospero, neither would abjure the magic by which they procured a citizenship of the world for the lesser powers of a dukedom that would circumscribe the life of imagination. Although Yeats was Jeffares's life-work, Seamus Heaney (who takes of Yeats what he wills, and more than he wills) better speaks of Jeffares's relationship to Anna and "the world." For both, imagination was the sea that connected islands of the mind:

> The land sustaining us seemed to hold firm
> Only when we embraced it *in extremis.*
> All I believe that happened there was a vision.
> ("The Disappearing Island" 240)

Notes

1 *The Independent* and *The Guardian* respectively.

2 He was founding Chairman of both the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies and the International Association for the Study of Anglo-Irish Literature, in 1966 and 1968 respectively.

3 She had signalled this shift as early as the second issue of the first volume (see Editorial).

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