

# A Cosmopolitan Jindyworobak: Flexmore Hudson, Nationalism and World-Mindedness

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In 1948 Julian Huxley delivered his outgoing speech as the retiring Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). He emphasised that ‘UNESCO fills a vital need in the present circumstances of our planet . . . the world has become ripe for the emergence of an international organization dealing with things of the mind and spirit’ (Huxley 6). Huxley advocated a ‘One World’ mindset, believed governments should not just think of ‘national problems’ but ‘a single world problem,’ and thought that particularly gifted individuals could transcend national boundaries as ‘citizens of the world’ (9–10). In that world-minded moment during the immediate post-war years, South Australian poet, editor, and school teacher Flexmore Hudson echoed Huxley’s sentiment when he explained his desire for world peace and the ideal of a ‘world state.’ Also writing in 1948, Hudson hoped that Australians might be ‘unified by a concept of world-citizenship’ rather than a strengthening sense of nationality (‘Prophet’ 85). Interestingly, Hudson’s comments appeared in the *Jindyworobak Review 1938–1948*, a collection of reflections on the first ten years of the nationalist Jindyworobak poetry movement. Hudson’s outlook, which I will characterise as world-minded, was often at odds with the literary nationalism at the heart of Jindyworobak, yet it is his long-time association with Rex Ingamells’s poetry movement for which he is best remembered. This article will introduce some of Hudson’s little-studied literary output as an example of world-mindedness in the Australian context, and interrogate how Hudson negotiated his internationalist outlook as part of a literary community preoccupied with nationalism.

## Flexmore Hudson

Flexmore Hudson was born Wilfred Frank Flexmore Hudson in 1913 at Charters Towers, Queensland, to Baptist missionary Wilfred Flexmore Hudson and his wife Irene Maud Hudson. As a child Hudson was well-travelled within Australia and New Zealand as his father’s career moved the family frequently; he attended at least thirteen primary schools before the family settled permanently in Adelaide in 1924 (Hudson, Interview). When interviewed by Hazel de Berg in 1969 Hudson recalled that his ‘was a colourful, good kind of childhood for a poet, because it enriched the senses.’ Moreover, as a student of Mr W.R. Tynan of Thornleigh Public School in Sydney, Hudson was encouraged in his poetic pursuits, and particularly to take the Australian bush as a subject (Hudson, Interview).<sup>1</sup> Despite this early interest in poetry, when he finished his secondary education at Adelaide High School Hudson wanted to join the army but was persuaded by his disapproving father to become a teacher instead (Hudson, Interview). Hudson trained at Adelaide Teachers’ College and attended Adelaide University for a short time, but did not finish his arts degree. Between 1936 and 1945 Hudson taught in a handful of small primary schools in rural South Australia.<sup>2</sup> It was from here that he launched his literary career.

In 1937, when his first collection of poetry *Ashes and Sparks* was published at his own expense, Hudson entered a literary landscape preoccupied with the various political crises of the 1930s: Depression, the rise of fascism, and the threat of another major world conflict. As







preference for world history over racial and national histories. Despite the high-minded purpose of the comic, later in life Hudson was ambivalent about the worth of his work on 'Discovery.' He once called the comics 'serious things' (Interview) but in another instance described them as the 'hackwork' he undertook to keep *Poetry*, his high-brow poetry magazine, financially afloat (Hudson, *Flexmore Hudson Papers*).<sup>3</sup>

John Tregenza argues that an increase in the production of Australian little magazines in the 1930s and 1940s was a response to the culminating world crises that politicised many writers (27–28). Part of this glut, Hudson's *Poetry* magazine, produced primarily from rural South Australia with the help of his wife Myrle Desmond, ran for twenty five numbers between 1941 and 1947. Originally subtitled *A Quarterly of Australian and New Zealand Verse*, *Poetry* was established partly due to the guilt Hudson felt when illness prevented him from joining the Australian army during World War Two. According to Hudson, the magazine enabled him to fulfil his patriotic duty by establishing what he called a 'firstrate' place for the publication of Australian poetry (Interview). Up until number sixteen all poetic contributions to the magazine came from Australia and New Zealand, though Hudson developed more international ambitions as the magazine achieved greater success. From number seventeen the magazine underwent a change of subtitle, becoming *Poetry: The Australian International Quarterly of Verse*. In number twenty of the magazine it was advertised that *Poetry* would accept English translations of contemporary poems originally written in any language (Hudson, 'For Readers' 35). Hudson actively pursued international contributions; his personal papers indicate that he initiated contact with poets from the USA, India, England, Wales, Denmark, Israel, Ireland and Scotland (Hudson, *Flexmore Hudson Papers*). *Poetry* number twenty five, published in December 1947, was prefaced by American writer William Carlos Williams and included an extensive collection of Indonesian poetry translated into English. Additionally there were contributions from three Irish, two English, and one Israeli poet. It was with this issue, in which Hudson had achieved an impressive balance of Australian and international content, that *Poetry* ceased publication due to financial difficulties.

'Discovery' and *Poetry* are clearly quite different, and Hudson certainly valued them differently. 'Discovery' was 'hackwork,' *Poetry* was 'firstrate.' However, all Hudson's work, from the lowbrow to the highbrow, and from his own poetry to his work as an educator, was connected by his interest in world-mindedness. Hudson was even able to articulate his world-minded stance as a part of the overtly nationalist literary community of Jindyworobak poets.

### **Jindyworobak**

Hudson met Rex Ingamells during his short stint at Adelaide University in 1931 and the two became, and remained, close friends (Hudson, Interview). In 1938, assisted by poets Ian Tilbrook and Max Harris along with Hudson, Ingamells established the poetry-focused Jindyworobak Club in Adelaide and published the movement's manifesto *Conditional Culture*. Ingamells had come upon the word 'jindy-worobak' in the glossary of James Devaney's *The Vanished Tribes* where it was attributed with the meaning 'to annex, to join,' and decided that this word described a particular Australian quality in literature that he wanted to endorse (Ingamells, *Conditional Culture* 4). The Jindyworobaks claimed their aim was 'a more effective fusion between our inherited Western culture on the one hand and, on the other, the primitive culture and place values of the continent which we have made our own' ('The Jindyworobak Club' 7–8). Ingamells argued that continued cultural dependence on Britain threatened the development of a 'genuine' Australian literature. He advocated the use of 'appropriate' language to describe the unique 'environmental values' of the Australian

















