

## Editors' Note

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Joseph Furphy, the author of the classic Australian novel *Such is Life*, died on 13 September 1912. In 2012, two conferences honoured his memory: a travelling conference through the Riverina in March, and a more formal seminar at Shepparton, the town where Furphy wrote his novel during the 1890s. While ASAL organised the first conference, La Trobe University, regional grants, and members of the Furphy family sponsored the second. Most of the papers from both conferences appear in this issue of *JASAL*. Delys Bird, Julian Croft, Frances Devlin-Glass and Susan Lever gave papers at Lake Mungo during the Riverina tour, and Damien Barlow, Frances Devlin-Glass, Susan Lever, Brigid Magner and Sue Martin presented papers at the Shepparton seminar. John Derum presented a scene from his adaptation of *Rigby's Romance* in the evening of the seminar. John Barnes, Furphy's biographer, delivered the John Furphy lecture to initiate the Shepparton event, and his lecture is published here as an introduction to the *JASAL* issue.

All this activity and discussion of Furphy's life and work has stimulated further contributions from John Barnes and Frances Devlin-Glass, and an article by Roger Osborne on his proposed electronic edition of *Such is Life*. Altogether, this issue of *JASAL* covers aspects of Furphy's life and the public memory of it, his publication history, his writing for journals, speculation about the reading experience of the original manuscript of *Such is Life*, and some new readings of his novels. In recent years, there has been sparse Furphy criticism, perhaps because of an assumption that his work has already been thoroughly examined with the publication of an annotated edition of *Such is Life*, Barnes's biography and collection with Lois Hoffman of surviving Furphy letters, and Julian Croft's exhaustive study of the novels. All these were completed more than 15 years ago.

Yet the conferences generated a new level of interest in Furphy's place in Australian history, literature, and culture, and revealed some new perspectives on his writing. We are particularly pleased to be able to include new work about Furphy from John Barnes, Julian Croft, and Furphy's editor and annotator, Frances Devlin-Glass. Devlin-Glass also published an annotated edition of *The Buln-buln and the Brolga* (2001) and, with Robert E. Glass, is working on an annotated edition of Furphy's *Bulletin* pars—two of her recent discoveries about Furphy's reading are included in a note for *JASAL*'s Notes & Furphies section. As the article citations reveal, all other contributors are deeply in debt to the earlier work of these critics.

One of the things enabled by *JASAL* online is additional access to related images, and the publication and dissemination of Furphy-related texts. Some important images are included and discussed here—the 'lost' Nolan Furphy paintings (Bird); *The Secret of England's*

*Greatness*, an Imperial reference whose significance is elaborated by Barnes, and other relevant images, such as A. G. Stephens's letter and cartoon sent to Furphy in 1903, imagining the pilgrims to Shepparton on the centenary of *Such is Life's* publication. Our cover image, Thomas Tyrwhitt Balcombe's 1853 painting of a kangaroo dog has some of the undoubted appeal of Pup (The Eton Boy) though we suspect the sex is wrong, in keeping with the tradition of Tom Collins's horse, Cleopatra. In addition to these images and the new critical material, this issue publishes online for the first time two *Bulletin* pars by Furphy, and a story first published in *Steele Rudd's Magazine*. Images of the original pages are included with a transcription for ease of reading.

This collection begins with John Barnes's masterly survey of Furphy's life and work, followed by two other essays with biographical contexts—Susan Lever's reading of Furphy's attitudes to marriage in terms of his life and writing, and Delys Bird account of Furphy's last years in Perth and Western Australian memorials to him. It then publishes Furphy's first *Bulletin* appearance, 'The Mythical Sundowner', and Frances Devlin-Glass's reading of it, followed by his *Bulletin* par, 'Black Australia', and Devlin-Glass's consideration of Furphy's 'ethnographical' work on Aboriginal people. The original text of 'A Vignette of Port Phillip', first published in *Steele Rudd's Magazine* in 1906 follows this.

Julian Croft speculates about reading the original manuscript of *Such is Life* (before the excision and rewriting of two chapters), and Roger Osborne provides a history of the text, in preparation for an electronic edition of it. Three essays on the novels provide a closer focus on Furphy's literary achievement and the literary and political influences on his work: Susan Martin's discussion of *Such is Life* in terms of the diary form, Damien Barlow's account of Tom Collins's relationship to his dog, and Susan Lever's reconsideration of Riverina politics and *Such is Life*.

John Barnes describes the relevance of a painting referenced by Furphy in *Such is Life*, and its iconic status in British imperial lore, and Brigid Magner follows the Furphy tourist trail around the Riverina and Shepparton.

Finally, John Derum's adaptation of *Rigby's Romance* demonstrates some of the neglected theatrical possibilities of Furphy's seemingly undramatic writing; it is published here in the hope that students and theatre groups might take the opportunity to perform it. John Furphy's great-grandson, Andrew Furphy, has also instigated and produced a short film based on the Lost Child story from Chapters II and V of *Such is Life*, and he also has commissioned John Derum to record an audiobook version of the novel. Audiobook versions of *The Buln-buln and the Brolga* and *Rigby's Romance* are also in preparation. These initiatives should give more opportunity to readers to enjoy and understand Furphy's wonderful novels.

We thank Bruce Moore for help obtaining images and the National Library of Australia, the State Library of New South Wales and the British National Portrait Gallery for permission for them, and La Trobe University and the City of Shepparton for assistance with the Shepparton seminar. We are also grateful to the peer reviewers for this issue—including Bernadette Brennan, Patrick Buckridge, Philip Butterss, Julian Croft, Robert Dixon, Frances Devlin-

Glass, Peter Kirkpatrick, Chris Lee, Elizabeth McMahon, Kylie Mirmohamadi, Peter Pierce, Paul Salzman, Hannah Schuerholz, Susan Sheridan, Meg Tasker, Cheryl Taylor, Elizabeth Webby, and Robert Zeller.



The editors with a Furphy water cart in the grounds of the current Furphy Foundry in Shepparton, September 2012