

Jocoserious ‘Ignorance Shifting’ or ‘Aestho-Psycho-Eugenics’?: Interrogating Joseph Furphy’s *Bulletin* ‘apprenticeship’

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Furphy spent a period of ten years before publishing *Such is Life* (1903) writing short paragraphs (‘pars’) and occasionally essays for the *Bulletin* (Hoffmann 1984). Indeed, one might assume that the short articles he wrote for the *Bulletin* constituted his apprenticeship as a writer. Collaborative participation in the vivid reading and writing community that was the *Bulletin* certainly fed the larger fictional projects which eventually became *Such is Life* (1903), *Rigby’s Romance* (1906 and 1946) and *The Buln-buln and the Brolga* (1948), but there is a striking disjunction between the rather abject and pliable writer of letters to J. F. Archibald and A. G. Stephens and the rather more swashbuckling writer who was concurrently being published in the *Bulletin*. This essay argues that from his very first venture into the *Bulletin*, the defining characteristics of Furphy’s idiosyncratic writing style are firmly in place: the inventive allusiveness, the Tom Collins manner but not the character, the jocoserious thematics, and the orientation to ‘ignorance shifting’ (*Letters* xiv, 15, 23) as a mode of being for the writer. Indeed, Furphy, like Trellis’s characters Furriskey and Orlick in Flann O’Brien’s *At Swim-Two-Birds*, seems to have been a case of aestho-psycho-autogamy, born fully formed as a writer: ‘already matured, teathed, reared, educated’ (40-1, 144), rather than one who was evolving into a mature style. Indeed, his first par, ‘The Mythical Sundowner’ (as ‘Warrigal Jack’, *Bulletin*, 5 Oct. 1889, 8) could, just as appropriately as his novel, have been titled, ‘Unemployed at Last’.

One can be seriously misled by the abject tone of Furphy’s letters to A. G. Stephens (hereafter referred to as AGS) in Barnes and Hoffmann’s edition of letters, *Bookman and Bookworm*, and could be forgiven for thinking he was a passive writer, malleable in the hands of the editor, the ‘three initialled terror’ (*Letters* 107) of the *Bulletin*. On first sending the uncut manuscript to Archibald, and later to his agent, AGS, Furphy’s tone is modest and undemanding:

I cannot even myself look over the MS. without noticing countless opportunities for correction, interpolation, and elimination (to Archibald, 2 May 1897, *Letters* 28)

And:

If you *can* find a victim, I would suggest that you re-read MS., ruthlessly drawing your blue pencil across every sentence, par. or page which offends your literary judgment, and re-mail to me. (to AGS, 30 May 1897 *Letters* 30)

Even when it was clear that publication would probably happen, Furphy nonetheless continued to express self-doubt, and complied readily with AGS's directives. Most dramatically, he caved in, apparently with no resistance, to the major (and undoubtedly necessary) overhaul and shortening of the manuscript. This entailed removing two large chapters which he would later expand into *Rigby's Romance* and *The Buln-buln and the Brolga*. He was very pliable in the matter of delays, agreeing *carte blanche* and sight-unseen to be guided editorially in the matter of changes. Although generally compliant with AGS, Furphy offered flashes of resistance as he attempted to teach AGS how to read his complex novel. There is not a lot of evidence, then or subsequently, that AGS had a very competent handle on the intricacies and subtleties of *Such is Life*, and one can only be grateful that he deferred to Furphy on the centrality of the Molly/Alf story, a matter of some debate between them (*Letters* 53). But the content and disposition of the pars tell a curiously different story.

Furphy was 46 when he first published 'The Mythical Sundowner' under the pseudonym, Warrigal Jack. It was probably his first publication.¹ Lois Hoffmann's invaluable checklist identifies 35 pars.² Among these, there are five debate threads, comprising 13 pars, and almost all of them are in one way or another a response to a *Bulletin* or *Argus* offering, sometimes an editorial piece, but more often they are responses to other contributors, both celebrated and anonymous. On three subjects—a learned debate about the social uses of moral fibre, on whether Christ was a democrat, and another about creating fire by friction—Furphy entered the intellectual battle no less than three times. 'Tom Collins' was fond of 'return[ing] to the charge' and 'div[ing] in again' (*Bulletin*, 23 June 1894, 7), as were many of his writing peers. On occasions, an issue could simmer on a variety of front or back-burners for several years, no doubt stirred from time to time by AGS or other sub-editors who were not averse to adjudicating between participants, and announcing a round closed and then re-opening it if a lively debate might be further fanned. Rather than view Furphy as a lone hand, it is useful to view him as a member of an intentional writing community, and a particularly fervent one.

Furphy was a fitful par-writer. After his first par in 1889, there was a long silence, and some rejections, until the next series in 1893 when the *warrigal* and the mirage controversies had him engaging in matters of bushmanship again, and in lexicographical matters. The high points of his par-writing were in 1894, and in 1896, when Christian and moral questions were on his mind, and these no doubt fed the writing of *Such is Life*, and again, in 1901-2, after the revisions had been completed, the pace picked up, and the contributions show him turning to Aboriginal ethnological matters, some of which might have been tangentially related to the work he was doing in revising *Buln-buln*. This of course does not take into account what he wrote that the *Bulletin* may not have published, but there is little evidence of unpublished pars in his papers and much evidence of typescripts of published pars.

Furphy himself changed his pseudonym from 'Warrigal Jack' to 'Tom Collins' for his second contribution, probably in response to the 'Warrigal Controversy'. This transformation may mark his desire to be taken a little more seriously than *warrigal* might have permitted. The 'Tom Collins' pseudonym offered a certain freedom to take intellectual risks, and to engage in a variety of play-acting personae. There are many Toms in the pars, playing different roles for different kinds of readers. Barnes suggests (*OT* 201-2) that the Tom Collins persona allowed him to be a different kind of creature from the diffident Joe Furphy of the foundry—a bit of a reprobate, *déclassé*, more extravagantly exuberant, 'irresponsible', 'pedantic'.

The *Bulletin* brought together an intellectual community of scholars and citizens, putting different classes and occupations into colloquy about the emerging nation. Although never overtly the subject of discussion in Furphy's writings, the New Nation is frequently and consistently the implicit subtext, and in particular its political shape and orientations. As a casual contributor, Furphy got the opportunity to interact with some 'celebrity' columnists. The subject of Lane's failed New Australian Utopia in Paraguay had Furphy engaging with one of the *Bulletin* 'big guns', 'Titus Salt', the pen-name of James Edmond, a professional journalist, a formidable debater, a humorist, and one with whom Furphy seems to have delighted in intellectually jousting.

It is difficult to convey the flavour of this spirited exchange, which ran from mid-June until mid-August 1894. It began as a riposte to 'Schwartzkoff'; then 'Titus Salt' responded in a vigorous style to Furphy's long contribution, occasioning another exchange between 'Titus Salt' and 'Tom Collins'. The Lane expedition had set out in mid-1893, but it had disintegrated by May of the next year. The *Bulletin* had been hostile from the start, labelling

it as the 'New Australia Madness', and the 'most feather-headed expedition ever conceived since Ponce de Leon started out to find the fountain of eternal youth or Sir Galahad pursued the Holy Grail' (10 June 1893, 6). It published many articles on the subject before and after Furphy weighed in. The *Bulletin* took Lane to be a dictator, and blamed him for over-government, anarchy and rifts within the community. It editorialised, 'back[ing] the immoral lot for all its worth' on the grounds that:

The constitution of New Australia was based on the assumption that it is possible to create a community where every person is sober, moral, religious, and full of a holy yearning for self-sacrifice, and the collapse came about because there is no such community outside heaven and never will be. (2 June 1894, 6)

Against their cynical world-weariness, Furphy took a dissident stance, that of the optimistic idealist, and wrote as 'an offensively virtuous man,' arguing that the 'moral tone' party would in the end be victorious: 'the higher the "moral tone" of a community, the better that community will fight for freedom'. He defined moral tone as 'temperance, fidelity to purpose, and continence' (*Bulletin*, 16 June 1894, 6). He adduced examples from ancient and early modern history to excess. His instances of virtue being rewarded included counter-statements to 'Schwartzkoff's' examples, such as the Spartans, the Huguenots, Cromwell, the Vaudois (or Waldensians) and the Pilgrim Fathers, among others. Despite the heavy artillery and adversarialism on display here, Furphy's tone is light and provisional: 'Schwartzkoff's' claim that the high moral tone party is on the whole averse to fighting (he concedes a few exceptions) is, according to Furphy, puffing not *evil* but 'naughtiness'. Schwartzkoff had proffered only one rather insignificant example of his claim, a German company of South Sea traders who avoided hiring moral men. Furphy's piece concludes:

...if the 'moral tone' of the Laneites proves to consist in parsonical cant and Social Purity snuffle, I throw up my brief, and may the LORD have mercy on their souls.

The playful wit, sport, and impulse to read the best in people in Furphy's response to 'Schwartzkoff' becomes something different in the hands of the *Bulletin* sub-editor, 'Titus Salt.' He took adversarialism to a new level, accusing Furphy of errors and ignorance and introducing many more examples of moral armies defeated by less moral or immoral ones, and offered diametrically opposed readings to Furphy's more genial ones. For example, to

counter Furphy's claims in support of Cromwell, he cites the even more moral Scots under Leslie whom Cromwell defeated; as well, he described how the Huguenots declined under Henry of Navarre 'who had almost every good quality except morality'. Further, he contested the singularity of Sparta's not needing to defend itself for 400 years by citing Constantinople, Peking, Nineveh and London, as well as the 'dismally immoral cities of the Persian empire'. He ended with a quotable (and for us topical) flourish:

The most moral country in Europe, in the ordinary conventional meaning of 'morality' is Greece, which is a grovelling, bankrupt, burst-up place; and next to it comes Ireland which has been a conquered province for seven centuries past. Also, Ireland, judging by the criminal records, has about the best all round moral tone in Europe. (*Bulletin*, 23 June 1894, 7)

On a per capita basis, Ireland was perhaps less prone to crime than Britain, but it is a claim that Irish historians may find unusual in this period. Perhaps 'Titus Salt' was making free with crime statistics in order to be provocative?

'Tom Collins' rushed back into the fray to defend himself from the charge of ignorance by blaming the *Bulletin* 'which knows everything and allows no one else to know anything, [and] pruned the passage not wisely, but too severely. The LORD reward it according to its works' (*Bulletin*, 7 July 1894, 15). His point-by-point defence of his version of reality, that social survival depends on moral form, is firm, but equally pugnacious. He is not shy of accusing 'Titus Salt' of mixing two eras and claiming his own qualification to be 'strictly relative, and historically correct'. Furphy's rebuttal is impressive, especially given the quality and self-assurance of his adversary: Dunbar was a generals' battle and defeat (and so the morality of the troops ought not to be the issue); he casuistically perhaps conflates historical periods to advantage when he claims the sons and grandsons of the Ironsides (Cromwell) defeated the household troops of Louis XIV; and he enjoys scoring points and informing 'Titus Salt' that Sparta had no walls to defend. His final flourish equals anything 'Titus Salt' had dealt out as he masterfully enrols him in his own party, using the curious Biblical story of Balaam the prophet who was hired to celebrate Jericho but could not fulfil his brief:

Clad in impassioned rhetoric, and armed with a peculiar two-edged logic, this champion came—like BALAAM on his Soudan—to curse, and remained to bless. And to a noxiously and perhaps suspiciously moral man like myself, this is eminently satisfactory.

There is evidence in Schwartzkoff's piece that he freely plagiarised (something Furphy himself was not above doing in relation to just one of his several points of erudition) from the ninth edition of the *Britannica*, volume I, but one is struck by the range of the scholarship on show here in the contributions of all three correspondents and, in Furphy's case, the lightness and flexibility of its deployment. 'Titus Salt' would see out another round in this stoush, but Furphy could probably register some satisfaction at his conclusion:

I am perfectly willing to admit that the moral men and the moral races of this world have left a splendid record behind them. But the immoral races and the immoral men have done likewise, and the results, so far as I can see are about equal. (*Bulletin*, 21 July 1894, 16)

I mention this thread in such detail mainly to establish that 'Tom Collins', pedant, light or heavy of touch according to circumstance, is very much in place by 1894, early in the writing of *Such is Life*. This thread comprises his ninth, tenth and eleventh pars. However, Furphy had not yet developed the character of Tom Collins of *Such is Life*, except in his tendency to flaunt his learning. There is no ironic distance between Furphy and Collins in the pars: Collins is Furphy.

Furphy was able to take issue with a range of prominent intellectuals in the *Bulletin*. More than once, he had the opportunity to engage with Archibald Meston on Aboriginal ethnography, and this time the dialogue is not mere sport or ritual showing off. 'Unashamedly' self-promoting as an authority on Aboriginal contact and largely accepted as one (Lergessner 19, 71), Meston had travelled extensively in Queensland in the 1870s and 1880s and was commissioned in 1894 by Horace Tozer, then colonial secretary, to prepare plans for improving the lot of Queensland Aborigines. His ideas underpinned the Aborigines Protection Act of 1897, and he became Protector of Aborigines for southern Queensland from January 1898 to December 1903. Further, his *Geographic History of Queensland*, which incorporated observations of Aboriginal customs and languages across Queensland, was published in 1895 (Stephens, *ADB* 243). Furphy used the public space of the *Bulletin* to exchange information, to engage in 'ignorance shifting' about how Port Phillip Aboriginal customs differed from Queensland ones. He also had the intention of adding moral force to claims Meston made about an unjust judicial execution in Queensland by asking his reading public for information about the Faithfull massacre near Benalla, on the grounds that he was having trouble reconciling three different versions of it.

Another 'authority' to whom the *Bulletin* gave Furphy and other par-writers access was Professor Edward E. Morris, an Oxford-educated don, who in 1884 had been appointed to the first chair in English, French and Germanic languages and literature at the University of Melbourne. In 1896, Morris was gathering material for despatch to lexicographers in London working on the first edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), then known as *The New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*. In 1898, he would publish his own *Austral English*, the first etymological dictionary of Australian words, expressions and usages, following the etymological protocols of the English work.

The *Bulletin* commented with typical braggadocio on the report in the *Argus* of a lecture Morris had given in Melbourne:

Prof. Morris, in a recent ARGUS article on Australian slang, showed that he had got much of his matter from recent BULLETIN correspondence on the subject. His screed was very incomplete, and did not touch on several interesting problems. For instance, how are 'fossick' and 'tucker' derived? 'Billycan' which obviously puzzles the Prof., is obviously a corruption of 'boiling can'. (11 January 1896, 11)

Morris's talk ranged rather more widely than slang (this was AGS's own bailiwick and if he wrote this comment, he may have been guilty of professional jealousy and not a little animus towards the British interloper), but the *Bulletin* was no doubt keen to claim credit for its debate on *warrigal*, to which Furphy had contributed (18 Feb. 1893, 15 and 6 May 1893, 1). As well as promoting his lexicographical projects, Morris also 'puffed' *The National Dictionary of Biography* (the first volume was published in 1885), as challenging French hegemony in documenting national culture, and as a belated British response to Arnold's twitting the nation with the jibe that 'the journeyman work of literature' was 'so much better done in France'. He spoke with patriotic zeal of contributing to this enterprise and also of doing scholarly work on Australian English. In his own *Dictionary of Austral English*, he was particularly careful to distinguish imported from local usages and he enlisted local assistance through such public talks as that reported.

There was much in the talk of forensic lexicography to fire up Furphy, and many other readers around Australia. Furphy would go on to pronounce on such controversies as *morpork/mopoke* and *billabong* throughout his par-writing period, and to have his ear

sharpened for local usages, an orientation which would deliver a heavy payload for the annotated *Such is Life*.

Despite AGS's later vehemently critical *ad hominem* attack on Morris's project (*Bulletin* 12 December 1897, Red Page), the linguist, on the evidence of his lecture, was an engaging speaker, full of instances of sleuthing into origins, and also open to local informants. On the subject of *morepork*, he confessed himself 'no great bushman' and as content to 'quote the observant D. Macdonald' on the subject. He was a hands-on lexicographer, willing to lay out the problems:

In a recent number of Notes and Queries (August 3) the opinion is recorded that an educated Australian colonist must feel annoyed whenever he hears a casuarina called a she-oak. Do you? Or has that feeling passed?

...Why is a certain fish called trevally? ...What bird is the echu?...

(*Argus*, 28 Dec. 1895, 11)

Furphy was clearly himself in agreement with the view, propounded at the end of the lecture, that 'the study of Australasian words is not uninteresting, and that it is rich in problems calling for investigation'. In his professional bushman/lexicographer role, he was all too ready to be enlisted in this quest for unique Australianisms, and of course, the novels are rich fields for Australian words recorded in writing for the first time (see annotated *SL* and *BB* and many contributions to *Oxford English Dictionary* and *Australian National Dictionary*).

Furphy can perhaps be thought of as Australia's first eco-fictionist (Devlin-Glass 1991), not only on the basis of the novels; the same impulse animates the pars. Many of them negotiate the nature of the country he knew so intimately. Discussions of language became mired in the real and material: what bird is the referent for *morepork/mopork/mopoke*? (different birds had the same referent in New Zealand and Australia), and whether one heard the 'r' sound in its call. Furphy would add to the sum of human knowledge of *mopokes* (the term he preferred) and how its sound differed in the near-, middle- and far-distance. Furphy placed a premium on what in literary-historical terms might be called *naturalism*, documenting the real with precision and exactitude. This fetishisation of the real was in part prompted by *émigré* tales of the *Geoffry Hamlyn* variety, but that is to take too narrow a view of the national debate at the time. It was also a debate about identity, conceived by Furphy in terms that were much

broader than the city/bush contretemps. It was also about class and socialism, and pre-eminently for him about morality, 'ignorance-shifting', and knowing the country well enough to be worthy of living in it (Devlin-Glass 1991).

Furphy's pars urgently take up issues of class, democracy and justice, of land-custodianship, and they are often about race and particularly Aborigines. He did not automatically toe the *Bulletin* line, as is evident in the Laneite controversy. He was a socialist, but his Christian socialism meant that a certain liberalism and sympathy towards the ideals of Christianity were bruited by Tom Collins. This flew to some extent in the face of the *Bulletin*'s fierce anti-clericalism and Socialism. It also meant that he could write in an open and questioning way about spiritualism when his prospective illustrator for *Such is Life* suddenly suicided (*Bulletin*, 8 July 1899). He advocated scientific enquiry into the claims of the movement. And when writing literary criticism, he certainly did not promulgate the *Bulletin* line on Robert Burns or Adam Lindsay Gordon, arguing provocatively that Gordon was 'not, in the strict sense of the term, an Australian poet. He is Anglo-Australian' (*Bulletin*, 9 Feb. 1895, 5). Probably his most important dissidence from the *Bulletin* ethos was his approach to Aboriginal issues, the subject of a separate paper in this issue.

A return to Furphy's first par, 'The Mythical Sundowner' provides some indicative answers to the question with which this paper began, the degree to which Furphy was a product of the *Bulletin*. The essay, his longest at 1600 words, was written in response to an unsigned and untitled article in the *Bulletin* of 14 September (8) and was published on 5 October. It probably took no more than two weeks to write, because mail deliveries would have taken at least four days in total between Sydney and Shepparton. The piece which drove Furphy to respond at what seems to be white heat was an idealising, pro-worker and pro-Australian defence of colonial work practices which contested the existence of a freeloading class of sundowners. It instead proposed that itinerant workers and the practice of ration-distribution by squatters in return for work was in fact a convenient system for the ruling class in that it saved on recruitment costs, minimised incompetence in the workforce, and offered a system of coercion for capital to keep labour under control. Moreover, it was much cheaper for the squatter, keeping costs down by increasing competition between workers at the station gate. The original writer (pitching to a British readership) lauded the hard work involved in tramping from one job to the next through inhospitable country, and the endemic poverty involved in such a life, and claimed that the 'sundowner' and 'Murrumbidgee whaler' were mythical creatures of the same order of reality as the bunyip. It is a strident piece, serious in

tone, and it takes up a self-conscious anti-imperial and nationalist, anti-class and pro-socialist set of postures.

Furphy's stance is no less socialist or anti-class, but there are important differences: its whimsical semi-jocularity (I like to use the Joycean word *jocoseriousness*, in relation to Furphy) is utterly different from that of his interlocutor: what we find in this par prefigures the mature fiction in quite revealing ways. As Barnes argues, although the pars are gems in themselves, they were not at all the form that best showed what he could do (*OT* 195). The wonder is that he had the courage to produce the novels. A second wonder is that the *Bulletin* published *Such is Life* at all, given that the artefact is different in every way, both ideologically and in genre terms, from its 'boil-it-down' methods of writing.

Many of the stylistic and ideological features of *Such is Life* make their appearance in this first public foray into writing. It is startling to realise how fully grown a writer it is who emerges in this early foray into print, reminding one of the case of 'aestho-psycho-eugenics' in Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* (144), where Orlick springs fully grown from his mother's womb, without the assistance of a father and without a palpable babyhood. What astonishes is how many of the verbal quirks, strategies and dispositions of *Such is Life* and the other novels are already in place in 'The Mythical Sundowner': the inversion of norms for the sake of humour but also to make a point; the apparently casual deployment of quotation, which is then subtly altered and indigenised; the lordly polysyllabic tendentiousness which suggests a quotation but disappoints long searching; the use of lists of synonyms, sometimes with elegant variations over several paragraphs or pages; and the commitment to telling rural life in Australia as it is, and to puncturing class-ist, imperial and foreign assumptions in the process.

First, it is worth noting the signature elegant and telling re-workings of three quotations from Shakespeare. These are never simple borrowings, but always add value or slyly ring changes, often in the direction of Australianising and indigenising the quotation for a new antipodean purpose. Two of these allusions demand attention:

Shakespeare

Furphy

Varro's Servant: What is a whoremaster, fool?

Fool: A fool in good clothes, and something like thee.

'Tis a spirit: sometime't appears like a lord; sometime like a lawyer; sometime like a philosopher, with two stones more than's artificial one: he is very often like a knight; and, generally, in all shapes that man goes up and down in from fourscore to thirteen, this spirit walks in. (Shakespeare *Timon of Athens*, II, ii, 113-21)

'Tis a spirit: sometimes it appears like a lord, sometimes like a lawyer, sometimes like a philosopher; he is very often like a knight, and generally walks in all the shapes that man goes up and down in from fourscore to thirteen.

As is often the case in Furphy, he silences a significant element in Shakespeare's text, in this case, the sparring question posed by Varro's servant and answered scathingly by the Fool, is the key: 'What is a whoremaster, Fool?' To which, "'Tis a spirit...'", the definition-style answer, is the reply. In Furphy, the quotation actually sweetens the humour of the passage, and at the same time, it glorifies the avocation of the sundowner by gentrifying his spiritual and mental life. The sundowner is distanced from the whoremaster and allied with the lord (who enjoys leisure), the philosopher (who uses his time to think), and the knight (whose job is to do good). He is dignified by these multifarious manifestations. Even the varieties in his age (13 to 80) suggest a permanent state in nature, like being born into the upper class, rather than an unfortunate accident in life.

The second quotation from Shakespeare also relies for its richest meaning on a strategic silencing of context:

Shakespeare

Furphy

Cymbeline IV, i, 5-6. Cloten, in the same speech, talks of 'play[ing] the workman' (l.7):

I am near to the place where they should meet, if Pisanio have mapped it truly. How fit his garments serve me! Why should his mistress, who was made by him that made the tailor, not be fit too? the rather—saving reverence of the word—for 'tis said a woman's

saving reverence of the word

fitness comes by fits. Therein I must **play the workman**. I dare speak it to myself—for it is not vain-glory for a man and his glass to confer in his own chamber—I mean, the lines of my body are as well drawn as his; no less young, more strong, not beneath him in fortunes, beyond him in the advantage of the time, above him in birth, alike conversant in general services, and more remarkable in single oppositions: yet this imperceivable thing loves him in my despite. What mortality is!

Cloten, the evil queen's oafish son who will not take 'no' as an answer from Imogen, disguises himself as a peasant and in the same speech from which Furphy's quotation comes talks of '**play[ing]** the workman' (current writer's emphasis)—precisely what the sundowner Furphy describes disdains to do. He rather 'plays the nobleman', stretching his legs only metaphorically under 'Ulysses' mahogany' and trades stories in the manner of Baron Munchausen, the seasoned and skilful liar and story-teller.

Readers who recognise the originals are empowered to enjoy the (apparently) casual updating and indigenising of Furphy's narrative style: if you know your Burns, and many readers of Furphy did (judging from the sheer volume of essays and parts on Burns in the *Bulletin*), then you will appreciate the idea that Poosie Nancy's Mauchline tavern frequented by 'randie, gangrel bodies' can be replicated in a Riverina shanty, with its 'splore' and activities like drinking their 'orra duddies' (trading spare clothes for grog). Furphy here uses the Burns reference to construct the Murrumbidgee waler as having an international genealogy, a central part of his project, as is his likening of the waler to opportunistic adventurers like Ulysses or Baron Munchausen. Furphy's argument is that such indolence is not uniquely Australian and has existed in every culture at all times—'men may come and men may go, but he goes on forever'. And when the sundowner is constructed as being 'like Patience on a monument, smiling at his unearned increment', indigenised in this case as his pannikin of flour, the allusion to *Twelfth Night* (II, iv, 113-6) perhaps hints at the sorrows that might turn a sundowner into a wanderer. It was perhaps an autobiographical fantasy moment in this piece. However, it is Furphy, the democrat, tilting at the idleness of the upper classes and of royalty that gives most bite to his deliberate inversion of the everyday status of this class of person.

Furphy's project as a chronicler has perhaps a mild element of the prophetic in it, but if so, it operates as a subtle subtext and I may be over-reading the allusions to suggest this. 'Ask history what follows' is too general a comment to warrant annotation. But the collocation with 'canaille' (French for *rabble*) suggests, of course, the French revolution. As a socialist writing on the edge of the shearers' strike, is it possible he is hinting at revolutionary action by workers against the ruling class? I say this because of what is silenced in the quotation in the next paragraph: in talking of the class of skilled honest shearers who converge in spring 'like lions form the swelling of Jordan', Furphy, well-versed in the Bible, would have known the full verse:

Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan unto the habitation of the strong: but I will make them suddenly run away from her (Jeremiah 49:19 and 50:44). (See *SL* 240:38 and note 437)

In *Such is Life*, he will reuse the quotation, and the context is definitely revolutionary France and the horrors of subservience which turns into murderous and regime-changing rage. If so, the implications are certainly understated.

There is too in this par an allusion, mainly hostile, to named squatters. Later in the pars, in 1894, he would write a generous piece on William Stanbridge, a generous rich landowner near Daylesford, who bears some resemblance to Stewart, but this piece lacks nuance on this subject. The use of the word *feoffee* may pack a political punch in alluding not only to the system of free selection before survey pertaining in New South Wales after 1861 and in Victoria between 1860-5, but also to the obligations in a feudal system owed by a lord to those whom he displaced, in this case, Aborigines. Again, this may be an over-reading, but one that has a great deal of resonance in the pars (see Devlin-Glass, this issue). Furphy knew of Aboriginal disadvantage and was critical of the imperial imperatives that drove it ('Black Australia,' *Bulletin*, 30 Oct. 1902, Red Page).

I need also, in bringing up the notion of Furphy as a prophet of sorts, to gesture to another pungent moment at the end of the par when he imagines the 'Mantchoorian boundary man' as 'superced[ing] the Indo-Germanic'. To entertain this notion is again to fly in the face of *Bulletin* hostility to the Chinese.

The pars offer insights into Furphy's writing practices and into his independence of the *Bulletin* ethos. They enact from their earliest manifestation many of the writing techniques

that we think of as the signature markers of the mature and idiosyncratic Furphy style: the relativistic nuanced thinker, the redoubtable debater with what passed as normative assumptions about the nature of Australia, and the critical patriot, as well as the observant environmentalist and ethnographer.

NOTES

¹ The fact that he usually used pseudonyms means we cannot be certain of this, despite Lois Hoffmann's exemplary forensic work on the pars (1984).

² This tally does not include his advertisement for *Such is Life* and includes one par that, according to Hoffmann, Barnes contests was written by Furphy, though it is signed 'Tom Collins'. By the time of its publication, 'Tom Collins' was a working and well-known avatar of the bush *littérateur*, Joe Furphy, so a competitor with an identical name seems unlikely.

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