

Writing the Irish-Australian Self: Life-Writers and Irish Stereotypes, 1870-2000

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THE story of Irish-Australia has been told, at least since the 1970s, mainly by historians. This benign ‘capture’ of the field by a particular discipline has been fruitful in many ways: the value of the ground-breaking work of scholars such as Patrick O’Farrell, Oliver MacDonagh, Chris McConville and Elizabeth Malcolm has been inestimable. But their dominance of the field might nonetheless have helped to maintain a certain orthodoxy about the Irish diaspora in Australia, namely that, for better and worse, their story has been of a prolonged struggle against prejudice, suspicion, exclusion, even a kind of racism, together with the various demeaning and ‘othering’ stereotypes that usually accompany such attitudes (Malcolm and Hall 24–43). This view is particularly strong in the work of O’Farrell who saw their struggle as empowering the Irish in Australia, making them ‘the galvanising force at the centre of the evolution of our national character’ (O’Farrell 10). Elizabeth Malcolm and Diane Hall extend this sense of the Irish as the bearers of ‘a distinctive cultural tradition [and] world view . . . not only different from, but fundamentally “hostile” to the traditions and values of the English- and Scottish-born majority in colonial society’ (Malcolm and Hall 10), by documenting the pervasive and long-lived negative stereotypes of the Irish current in Australia even to the present day (105–200, 258–61).

The ‘conflict model’ of Irish Australia is persuasive, mainly because there is abundant evidence for the truth of it – Malcolm’s examples are numerous and powerful – but partly also because it lends itself to the ‘activist’ interpretations of social and political history generally favoured by recent Australian historians, for whom the indomitable resistance of oppressed minorities is almost an

article of faith, something to be revealed and celebrated wherever and whenever it can be shown to occur. What it can sometimes fail to recognise fully, however, is the importance – not to mention the legitimacy and authenticity – of positively assimilative impulses among minority communities. In the case of Irish-Australia it tends to give more weight to those traditions, organisations, cultural representations and individuals that nurture a sense of separation and difference from, and sometimes opposition to, the dominant Anglo-Australian culture than to those that seek common cause with that dominant culture, emphasising the close connections, similarities and shared interests between the two. It may be that a more literary-critical perspective on the phenomenon of Irish-Australia would tend to highlight the uncertainties and ambivalences felt, and the accommodations made, by Irish Australian individuals. It might bring into sharper focus the attitudes of those who were simply grateful – to God and Australia – for a new start, and who wanted a quiet and, if possible, happy and prosperous life with some recreational Irish culture – or not – at the weekend.

Both impulses – the separatist and the assimilationist – can readily be found in older Australian literature, and some examples of the latter are discussed in my chapter on ‘reading Ireland in Australia’ in the *Oxford History of the Irish Book* (Buckridge 448–53). One need only mention, by way of illustration, *Around the Boree Log and Other Verses* (1921), one of the most popular books in Australian publishing history, to appreciate what the politicised view of the historians tends to overlook. Its author, pen named ‘John O’Brien’, was Fr. Patrick Hartigan, an Australian-born Catholic priest with Irish immigrant parents who himself never set foot in Ireland, but whose poems evoke the world of the rural Irish-Catholic family with humour, nostalgia, and moderate technical facility. The Irish-ness of this world comprises the Catholic family ethos and the lightly ‘Irish-ed’ language (the more conspicuously Irish locutions are lovingly enclosed in quotation marks); but Hartigan evinces no interest at all in Irish politics, history or national life. His national loyalties, landscapes and milieux are proudly and unambiguously Australian (Buckridge 450).

Other authors and institutions tell a similar story of seamless fusion rather than separation and conflict between Irish- and Anglo-Scottish Australia, whether it be the poems of Alice Guérin Crist (‘the John O’Brien of Queensland’) (Dorran) or the Queensland Irish Association (QIA), of which it was said that the possession of an Irish terrier was sufficient qualification for membership. Founded in 1898, the QIA, like most of its interstate counterparts, sought mainly to foster professional and business contacts for its members within the wider Brisbane community, while at the same time providing opportunities and a venue for traditional Irish cultural activities.

My purpose is not to diminish the real prejudice and conflict to which the perceived Irish ‘difference’ has given rise in Australia. It is rather to point to the coexisting reality of an Irishness aligned with, invested in, and in many respects inseparable from, mainstream Australian society and culture. It is probably the case that the two tendencies – the separatist and the assimilationist – have varied in their relative strength and appeal in response to historical events in both Ireland and Australia. It is probably also true that for much of Australia’s history they have shown an uneven geographical distribution, with separatist sentiment concentrated in Victoria and assimilationist sentiment in Queensland, and with Sydney and New South Wales somewhere in between (a spectrum which is precisely mirrored in the politics and personalities of the most famous and influential Catholic prelates in the three states: respectively Daniel Mannix, Sir James Duhig and Norman Thomas Gilroy).

These generalisations do not form the central subject of the present essay, but because they indicate that Irish-Australia is more politically complex and historically variable than it has sometimes been taken to be, they also suggest that the lived experience of Irish Australian individuals and the ways they made sense of it, are likely to be complex and variable as well. And that, essentially, is the focus of this essay: it is a study of how some individuals made sense of their own lives as Irish Australians.

If there is an abiding tension in the Irish Australian identity, it may arise in part from the contradiction between the separatist and assimilationist impulses; and life-writing, whether casual memoir or formal autobiography, might be expected to register that tension fairly directly, exploring the pressures, ambivalences, negotiations and resolutions of the Irish-Australian identity from the perspective of individual life experience. In this article, several examples of Irish-Australian life-writing, from early colonial times to the late twentieth century, are examined and compared, and I try to show that many of these works do indeed both manifest and ‘manage’ a relation between the two national components of the Irish-Australian selves they narrate, a relation that may be virtually seamless, or heavily conflicted, or a work-in-progress. In ‘writing the self’, I argue, Australian memoirists and autobiographers of Irish origin or descent – bushrangers, bishops, and barmaids, poets, novelists, academics and politicians – have explored and constructed their hybrid identity in various ways and for different purposes: as a mode of psychological introspection and moral self-scrutiny; as an occasion and focus for political engagement; or as an instrument for staging a life-narrative of wandering, nostalgia and homecoming.

There are several kinds of source material potentially available for such a study, for example, unpublished letters and diaries in which people communi-

cate to others, or record for their own interest and satisfaction, their relatively unmediated experience and understanding of the lives they have lived. There are also, of course, published memoirs and autobiographies, and these more mediated sources provide most of my examples, not only because they are more easily accessible, but also because, in being placed in the public domain, they present a selection of the experiential content of the author's life in ways that give it a public meaning, shareable with a general readership not usually envisaged by the letter-writer or private diarist. The self of the published autobiography or memoir, in other words, is likely to be somewhat more consciously and deliberately constructed than their genuinely private counterparts, and constructed with reference to the cultural codes, literary touchstones, historical myths and ethnic and racial stereotypes currently in circulation at the time of writing. For this reason, the published memoir might even be regarded as the preferred genre for the present purpose, though particular groups, notably women, may tend to be under-represented as authors.

There can hardly be said to be a 'canon' of Irish-Australian memoirs, and since neither Irishness (let alone Irish-Australian-ness) nor *genre* necessarily announce themselves in the names of authors or books, a systematic method had to be adopted in order to discover older works by lesser-known writers in sufficient numbers to make even modest generalisations defensible. Here, the Australian Dictionary of Biography Online (ADB) assisted with the advanced search function, which allows for combinations of existing categories like 'cultural heritage' (Irish) and 'occupation' (autobiographer, memoirist). It was possible to produce, quite quickly, a list of about thirty authors and book titles.

There are some unavoidable limitations to any ADB-derived list. First, only deceased persons are included in the ADB and this means that because of the editing backlog no writer still alive in 1996 or later will be found in the database (thus, at the time of writing, Vincent Buckley (d. 1988) is there, but not Thomas Keneally). Also excluded are all those persons – some of them perhaps autobiographers – who, though deceased, were not deemed prominent enough to have been selected for inclusion in the first place, of which there are undoubtedly a great many. Just what constitutes 'prominence' in this context has been a matter of ongoing debate since the first volume appeared in 1966. The debate has intensified since the 1990s and the criteria have evolved accordingly, resulting in a separate 'missing persons' volume in 2005 (while the ADB was still in hard-copy only), and an ongoing revision process, initiated some ten years ago, to improve the representation of women and minorities in the early periods, and to rewrite, in whole or part, entries now judged to be

outdated, inaccurate, insensitive or offensive (Nolan and Fernon 30–3).¹

But for all its imperfections, the ADB was the most useful instrument for my purpose, and after some culling of the initial list and the addition of some well-known living writers, a working list of about twenty published autobiographies or memoirs emerged. These included writings by convicts, bushrangers, women, politicians, an archbishop, a poet and some novelists. This list, which can be found in the Appendix, includes some which have not been mentioned in this article. Moreover, the authors I do discuss are not all Irish-born immigrants. In recognition of the widely observed fact that people's emotional attachment to a place of origin can change and sometimes even intensify in the following generations, I have extended my working definition to include 'first-generation' and 'second generation' Irish Australians.²

As suggested above, Catholic prelates can provide useful exemplars of the variation in the nature and degree of attachment to Ireland to be found in the larger Irish-Catholic population; nor does this represent an arbitrary narrowing of the field, since prominent and long-serving archbishops like Mannix in Melbourne and Duhig in Brisbane were to some extent attitudinal models for their respective congregations. It would thus be convenient, even if somewhat artificial, to compare the two men directly, as marking opposing possibilities. Sadly, however, if Mannix ever wrote a memoir or drafted an autobiography, it would – on his instructions – have been destroyed at his death along with the rest of his personal papers (Niall 5–6).

With Archbishop Sir James Duhig, we are more fortunate. His autobiography, *Crowded Years*, was published in 1947 when he was 76, and it does indeed exhibit a fairly assimilationist view of Irish Australian identity. Duhig's long career in the public eye testifies to his refusal – steadfast but non-combative – to acknowledge any significant tensions between being Irish and being Australian. His efforts over many decades in creating new parishes, building churches and schools, and establishing a viable and comprehensive Catholic school system, were a means of weaving the Church into the very fabric of Australian society while preserving and developing a distinctive Catholic culture, one that was mainly articulated in terms of popular Irish traditions (Boland, 'Duhig, Sir James').

Crammed with short, mainly humorous anecdotes, public events and important people, *Crowded Years* presents Ireland not as his long-lost home but as

¹See also "Decolonisation" project underway for Australian Dictionary of Biography' in *Books and Publishing*.

²There is apparently no international consensus regarding the numbering of generations. I adopt here what seems to me to be the common-sense conventions according to which 'first generation' designates the children of the immigrant generation, not the immigrants themselves.

a historic nation occupying a particular place in the Church and the world. Irishness, by the same token, is not a quality that defines him as an individual self but rather a storehouse of funny stories, whimsical characters and endearing turns of phrase. We read, for example, of the ‘good old Irish mayor’ who assured the visiting cricketer ‘Mr Trumpeter’ that his name was a household word in Rockhampton (Duhig 65) and of two parish priests, Fathers Paterson and Byrne, whose ‘good, clean Irish wit, like the knife of the skilled surgeon, cut deep without leaving any jagged edges’ (Duhig 11). He even comes close to approving rebellious Irish solidarity against the English law in citing the case of an Irish policeman up before the Irish-born Colonial Administrator Sir Arthur Palmer for being intoxicated while on duty. Palmer noticed the offence was committed on St. Patrick’s Day:³

‘What countryman is this’, he asked.

‘An Irishman’, said [his superior].

‘Then’, said he, ‘take these papers out of my sight. What the d— else would he do?’ (Duhig 30)

What we never find in the book is a sense of personal homecoming, let alone homesickness or regret, in the accounts Duhig gives of his two visits to Ireland, in 1909 and 1922. Yet he may well have felt these things: his biographer, Fr. Thomas Boland, reveals that he spent several months of his first visit in the rural South-West renewing old acquaintances, staying with his old parish priest in Broadford, his birthplace, and arranging for a large monument to be erected over the grave of his father, who died before the family left Ireland (Boland, *James Duhig* 105–6). None of these things are mentioned in Duhig’s book, nor the fact that he met Daniel Mannix for the first time at Maynooth (Boland, *James Duhig* 3). As far as his readers are concerned, the highlight of his first trip to Ireland was a visit to Parnell’s house at Avondale (Duhig 80), and of the second trip, in 1922, his attendance at the funerals of Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins (Duhig 89). Appointed C. M. G. in 1954, he willingly became, in 1959, the first Roman Catholic archbishop in Australia to accept a knighthood (KCMG).

Unlike Mannix, a die-hard Irish republican, Duhig was a conciliator (Niall 188). As Boland puts it, ‘His Irish attitudes were markedly different from those

³Palmer was administrator of the colony of Queensland from 9 Oct. 1888 to 1 May 1889 in the absence of the Governor (Jobson).

of Mannix. His Ireland was the subject of the British Crown, if not of the parliament of Westminster' (Boland, 'Duhig, Sir James'). Conciliation and accommodation were deeply ingrained in Duhig's Irish-Australianism; perhaps not assimilationism, quite: his 'preservationist' impulse towards traditional Irish culture was strong, but it was never of a kind to constitute a separate pole of loyalty or interest to Australia.

His autobiography ends, accordingly, with a sentence that combines justified self-congratulation for his service to Australia with gratitude for the opportunity to perform it:

It has been my privilege to bring this blessing [Christian education] to the most remote townships in Queensland, as well as to multiply it in the cities, and I do not think I could have done a better service to Australia that took me to its arms as a child, that became my adopted country, and that afforded me opportunities which I might have looked for in vain elsewhere. (Duhig 138)

There could be no greater contrast to Archbishop Duhig's complaisant Irish-Australianism than the separatist Irish fury of the famous Australian-born bushranger Ned Kelly (1855–1880), in what could fairly be regarded as his memoir, the famous 'Jerilderie Letter', a self-justifying narrative diatribe – remarkably eloquent and moving in its way – about the events of the last ten years of his life, leading up to his capture, trial and execution in 1880 at the age of 25. The first part of the Letter is a densely detailed account of these events, much of it closely foreshadowed in another letter (at nearly 4,000 words, about half the length of the Jerilderie Letter) which was written by him and sent – but never acknowledged – about a year earlier, to Donald Cameron, a member of the Victorian Parliament. It has come to be known as the Cameron Letter (Barry). Both letters fulminate against police corruption and defend his own criminal actions as a response to the cruel and unjust treatment suffered by himself and his family at the hands of police and government officials (Buckridge and Harte 340). Some of the worst offenders in Kelly's eyes (Fitzpatrick, Lonigan, Kennedy and Scanlon, for example) were themselves Irish, and probably Catholic, a fact not mentioned in the Cameron Letter, but highlighted in the Jerilderie Letter which – despite being written in a less conventional, 'proto-modernist style' (Gelder) – is not, like the Cameron Letter, a personal communication addressed to a named individual seeking redress for specific grievances, but an 'open letter', addressed to everyone and no one in protest against oppression and corruption.

The purpose of the ethnic identification is not only – though it is partly – to

shame or condemn these Irish-Australian functionaries of a corrupt and cruel system for their disloyalty or treachery to their fellow Irish. Rather, it is to invoke their potential as revolutionary cadres, in Australia as in America:

What would England do if America declared war and hoisted a green flag as its all Irishmen that has got command of her armies forts and batteries even her very life guards and beef tasters are Irish would they not slew around and fight her with their own arms for the sake of the colour they dare not wear for years (Kelly 48–9)⁴

What Kelly does in the last several pages of the *Jerilderie Letter*, I suggest, is to work his way, rhetorically, out of the role of indignant victim and loud complainer – themselves conventional types of the ‘put-upon’ lower-class Irish man of the English stage tradition – through the more robust and intimidating (but also conventional) roles of ‘wild Irishman’ and ‘mad Irishman’,⁵ raging half-humorously at the ‘ugly fat-necked wombat-headed big-bellied magpie-legged narrow-hipped splaw-footed sons of Irish bailiffs or English landlords which is better known as Officers of Justice or Victorian police’ (Kelly 43), to the Fenian apotheosis in the passage quoted above, in which rather than complaining or even ranting at injustice he solemnly intones a vision of violence and revolution on a grand scale, a worldwide Irish insurrection, in fact, ‘to reinstate [the wearing of the green] and rise old Erin’s isle once more from the pressure and tyrannism of the English yoke’ (Kelly 49).

The senior Irish police officer at the siege of Glenrowan where Kelly was wounded and captured was Superintendent John Sadleir (1833–1919). He was also one of the intended recipients of Kelly’s ‘Cameron Letter’ a year earlier, and was the author, some years later, of a rather more conventional memoir, *Recollections of a Victorian Police Officer* (1913). It is a modest and dispassionate narrative, of which some sixty pages are devoted to the Kelly Gang (182–242), compared with a mere two pages on Sadleir’s own life in Ireland before emigrating to Melbourne, at the age of 19.

Sadleir, one suspects, would have been neither pleased nor surprised to know that his countrymen were disproportionately represented in the ranks of notorious Australian bushrangers in the ADB (Buckridge and Harte 341). But not all of them were firebrands like Jack Donohoe, ‘Captain Moonlite’ (Andrew

⁴The pagination, spelling, punctuation and solecisms are those of the manuscript held in the State Library of Victoria. A transcription is available on the National Museum of Australia website, at http://www.nma.gov.au/collections/collection_interactives/jerilderie_letter.

⁵Elizabeth Malcolm has investigated the social and statistical basis in nineteenth-century Australia for the ‘mad Irish’ stereotype (Malcolm ch. 8), but both the ‘wild’ and the ‘mad’ typifications have long traditions in English literature and popular culture since at least the sixteenth century.

Scott) and Ned Kelly; and only one of them wrote an autobiography. Martin Cash (1808–77), a Wexford boy, published his *Martin Cash, the Bushranger of Van Diemen's Land in 1843-4: A Personal Narrative of his Exploits in the Bush and his Experiences at Port Arthur and Norfolk Island* in 1870, probably with assistance from another Irish emancipist called James Burke (Robson and Ward).

Cash was transported for seven years, aged 19, for attempted manslaughter. The crime was motivated by jealous rage, and in his repentant reflections he blames the passionate recklessness of his temperament and the dissipation of his way of life at the time, attributing the latter, at least in part, to the irresponsible indulgence and lax discipline of his wealthy parents. While he does not explicitly identify these tendencies with Irish-ness as such, it becomes increasingly clear as the book proceeds that a certain wild impulsiveness and lack of self-discipline – an absence of prudence, in a word – are indeed, in his view, ‘national peculiarities’ (Cash 130) of his people. In order to survive, first as a convict in Van Diemen’s Land, then as bushranger at large, and again, after his recapture, as a convict on Norfolk Island, he needs to regulate his own Irish temperament, suppressing the urge to speak out of turn, take unnecessary risks, or act without careful calculation and forethought.

Resistance is a struggle, however, and he sometimes loses, especially during the bushranging phase of his career when he is in the prime of manhood, well fed and clothed, and with frequent access to ‘my companion’, his wife; he is keenly appreciative of the pleasures and passions of existence, and the likelier to surrender. In this respect, the book bears a strong resemblance to *Robinson Crusoe*, one of the few books Cash mentions in his narrative (Cash 93). Like Defoe’s *Crusoe*, Cash portrays his life as a sporadic battle, not just with a hostile external environment, but between a ‘higher’ and a ‘lower’ self; Cash’s narrative might almost be seen as transposing *Crusoe*’s spiritual struggle between the sinful soul and the workings of Grace into a ‘national’ struggle between the enlightened and prudent rationality of the English and the feckless, impulsive emotionalism of the Irish.

This opposition is made explicit only rarely. Cash describes a few occasions on which he invites an Irish fiddler of his acquaintance, Kreigan Hill, to help him and his friends celebrate recent successful crimes and escapes. He contrasts him with ‘a staunch old Englishman, [who] was on all occasions as jovial and hearty as any of us, forming a striking contrast to old Vinegar Hill [the fiddler], who joined us on this occasion, both belonging to different countries, and each possessing a very large share of their national peculiarities’ (Cash 130). The Irish peculiarity in question here would appear to be melancholy, but on another

occasion:

He taught us . . . to dance the Bolero, which he represented as a Spanish dance, at the same time expressing his opinion that it was of Irish origin, as he never did hear of anything that was useful or ornamental that did not come from Ireland. I have rarely met a man who had more of his national characteristics than our musician. (Cash 134)

Here, the characteristic in Cash's mind seems to be inordinate national boastfulness, perhaps verging on self-deception, very similar, in fact, to the touchy, ridiculous Captain Macmorris in Shakespeare's *Henry V*. On his first appearance, however, Hill's association with the then recent history of Ireland's 'physical force' nationalism is foregrounded:

The old fiddler proved to be a most amusing character, and quite a wit in his way. He related a number of stories and anecdotes whenever his bow hand was idle. I recollect him telling us that he was one of the party who had sworn-in Samuel Lover (the author of *Irish Legends*), on the night of the burning of Wild Goose Lodge. He had been a noted riband man while in Ireland, and participated in the troubles of 1798. He had also been at the burning of Scullabogue Barn, and carried the colours at the battle of Vinegar Hill; in fact, he was the real prototype of Darby the Blast, and although not deriving much benefit from our party, yet would sooner die than betray us. (Cash 112)

The historical references are mainly to the United Irishmen Rebellion of 1798: Scullabogue Barn was the site of a notorious massacre committed by elements of the fleeing rebel army, and Vinegar Hill, the site of their final defeat (Foster 262).⁶ 'Darby-the Blast' is Darby M'Keown, a character from Charles Lever's 1844 novel *Tom Burke of 'Ours'*, an Irish piper, a poet, a veteran of the 1798 Rebellion, a secret 'Ribbonman', and a clever, mocking *provocateur* of stupid English soldiers (Lever 68–83).⁷ To the extent that the fictional musician resembles his real prototype, then, the latter seems to represent the heroic violence at one extremity of the separatist mindset, plainly a possibility that attracts and even excites Cash at times, but that he usually manages to suppress.

⁶The name was later also given to the battle that ended a convict uprising at Castle Hill, near Sydney, in 1804.

⁷The burning of Wildgoose Lodge in 1816, killing its owners, the Lynch family and others, was a later act of violence officially blamed on Ribbonmen.

The other main way in which Irish-ness is manifested in the book is through the figure of Kavanagh (we never learn his first name), an Irish man who, together with George Jones, is Cash's constant companion – his 'mate', as he often calls him – from the time when the three of them escape from Port Arthur, through their bushranging escapades (at the end of which Jones is executed), to their imprisonment on Norfolk Island, where Kavanagh is also executed. Throughout the narrative Kavanagh's character and conduct present endless occasions for Cash to moralise reproachfully and regretfully on the dangers he poses to himself and his mates (the words 'mate' or 'mates', incidentally, is used 111 times in the book, perhaps an indication of Cash's determination to 'Australianise' himself in words as well as deeds and attitudes).⁸ There is, though, a growing warmth of mutual affection between them, and Cash is by no means always immune to Kavanagh's risk-taking 'joie de vivre'. He is hanged after being falsely accused of involvement in a convict uprising:

My old friend Kavanagh . . . had taken no part in this outrage, being down at a creek in the rear of the lumber yard at the time of the occurrence. He was accused by a prisoner known on the Island as 'Dog Kelly,' from whose cap Kavanagh had snatched a shamrock on St. Patrick's Day, at the same time saying he was a murderer and a disgrace to his country, and therefore unfitted to wear the national emblem. (Cash 161)

Cash is genuinely saddened but cannot resist observing that it was Kavanagh's Irish pride that was the cause of Kelly's animus, that he 'brought the punishment upon himself by his overbearing manner, which eventually was the cause of his untimely death' (Cash 162). Losing Kavanagh seems almost to represent a final excision of Irishness – at least of the dangerous, rebellious kind – from Martin Cash's consciousness, and marks the beginning of what is then presented as a steady progress (never fully explained) to a life of peace and serenity on a small Tasmanian farm.

Martin Cash was not the only convict to use his Irish affiliations as an instrument of conscious autobiographical self-fashioning. It occurs in a simpler form many years later in a quaintly titled autobiography, *Leg Irons on Wings* (1949) by James Dwyer, aged 75. Dwyer was born in New South Wales of Irish parents (Stewart). In his later years he was a quite successful writer of popular magazine fiction, but as a young man, convicted of counterfeiting, he served three years in the notorious Goulburn Jail, an ordeal which (like Cash) he claims to

⁸Whether 'mate' had developed its nationalist associations by the time Cash wrote is uncertain, but its currency among convicts and miners by mid-century suggest that it had. See Dyrenfurth.

have survived by recognising and restraining his Irish inheritance: ‘I determined to put a clutch on the rebellious traits that came from an Irish-bred Australian and see the days through with patience’ (Dwyer 61). That constructive ‘departure’ was followed, however (unlike Cash), by a late-life return to his Irish roots, manifest in his proud embrace of both his father’s descent ‘from a race of wandering harpers who tramped round Ireland telling stories for their food and lodging’ and his mother’s reputation for second sight (Dwyer 29).

Not all Irish-Australian memoirs exhibit the same complex tension as we see in Cash and Dwyer. For one of Australia’s most famous Irishmen, Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, imprisoned for his participation in the Young Irelander Uprising of 1848, negotiating the two national identities was more straightforward. A member of the British House of Commons and later Premier of Victoria, Duffy presents himself in his two-volume autobiography, *My Life in Two Hemispheres* (1898) almost entirely in terms of his political roles and public achievements in the two countries:

For a generation I was a factor in whatever was done or projected in the public affairs of Ireland, and . . . For nearly another generation I lived in a new country, whose marvellous development is destined to take a permanent place in the annals of mankind, and I was not an idle witness to its progress. (Duffy I.1)

Accordingly, Duffy ‘desire[s] to make the story as impersonal as such a narrative can ever become, and I shall rarely pause upon any event merely because it concerns the narrator’ (I.2). He is as good as his word. The conflicts he describes in the book involve his Irish nationality, but they are political, rather than moral or psychological: in the British parliament his battle for land reform in Ireland met with such entrenched obstruction that in despair he emigrated to Melbourne with his family in 1856. In 1880, after serving as Premier for two years, he retired from the Speakership of the Victorian Parliament, wearied by the ‘task of answering again and again the insensate inventions of religious bigotry’, namely sectarian accusations by ‘Orangemen and Covenanters’ of a loyalty divided between the public interest and the Pope (II.384).

At the end of the book, he hints that he may yet write a more personal account of ‘how my last decades were employed . . . for posthumous publication’ (Duffy II 384), but this never happened, and it may be that, although he lived for another five years, he felt that the role of public combatant in two different and largely unrelated political spheres was after all his most authentic self.

Arthur Lynch’s lives in Australia and Ireland were in one obvious respect the obverse of Duffy’s: both left their respective home countries and became

members of parliament in the countries to which they emigrated; but in other respects, they were very different individuals. Born in rural Victoria of Irish-Scottish parentage in 1861, Lynch left Australia, never to return, at the age of 26, and devoted several years of his life promoting Irish independence as a Nationalist Member of the British House of Commons, and even briefly as the commander of an Irish Brigade fighting against Britain in the Boer War, an enterprise for which he was duly sentenced to death on his return to Britain, but subsequently pardoned (Serle).

But for all his passionate support – even to the point of mortal jeopardy – for an independent Irish republic, Lynch retained an indelible sense of identity with Australia as ‘my native land’. His autobiography, *My Life Story* (1924), begins by evoking an idyllic Australian scene, in which the author himself is placed as a ‘small boy . . . slight of figure, thin and pale’ who, having ‘walked far from home’ is sitting on a log, resting his head in his hands, and allowing his mind ‘to wander in dreams, and to indulge in strange reasonings’ (Lynch 1).

A warm Spring day in Australia; – I wonder what these words mean to those who have never felt their sense! But to me and to all Australians they speak of that glory of the vitalising season – of the blue sky where the heavens have no circumscribed dome, but the ethereal haze rises higher and higher until it seems to fade away into the infinite; where the sun is genially warm and light fresh breezes come to temper the air; where even in the full reality, not needing the mist of dreamland, we cry: ‘This day is perfect!’ (Lynch 1)

The remainder of the book rarely reaches for such lyricism, but there are other, more mundane aspects of Australian life as he remembered it, that he continued to admire, including standard meal prices (74), drinking in company, free theatre programs, free bath towels (75), and in general the ‘practical ingenuity of its people’ and their impatience with ‘cloudy principles and shibboleths’ (70) of which the most pernicious, he believed, was the idea of royalty. ‘Fair play for all; favour for none’ was the phrase that defined his own and Australia’s republicanism (70). He regarded the rejection of royalty as a distinctly Australian impulse and believed that at the time of writing (1924), this attitude was becoming more generally accepted, especially in the Dominions, which were ‘evolving’ towards republicanism (311). Entertaining similar hopes for an Irish republic and a Boer republic in South Africa, he had made his early political commitments accordingly.

The Arthur Lynch of *My Life Story*, then, is no conflicted Irish-Australian

hybrid. He is on the one hand a cosmopolitan Australian intellectual with a soft spot for his birthplace, and on the other a supporter of democratic republican tendencies wherever they appear, including Ireland and Australia. The emotional attachment to place and the political commitment to an idea are only tenuously connected in his narrative.

Another version of the Irish-Australian self is constructed in the writings of Edwin James Brady who was, like Lynch, a somewhat larger-than-life personality for whom the idea of Ireland itself existed in two very different modes. Brady was born in Carcoar in the Blue Mountains in 1869. His Irish parents migrated first to America, where his father fought for the Union in the Civil War, and then finally settled in New South Wales (Webb). Unlike Arthur Lynch, a highly educated polymath, Ted Brady left school after the tenth grade, but was a naturally gifted jack-of-all-trades who could, and did, turn his hand to almost anything: stevedoring, construction work, farming, journalism, politics and a variety of business ventures and philanthropic projects. But above all he was a writer, publishing many volumes of poetry, travel books, biographies, short stories and reviews throughout his long life, and encouraging other writers by publishing and reviewing their work and by providing a congenial retreat for many of them in the seaside community of Mallacoota in East Gippsland, where he lived with his family for most of his life. He also wrote an autobiography of sorts – more a fragmentary memoir – that was published in seven parts in the journal *Southerly* immediately after his death in 1952.

The word most people used about Brady was ‘optimistic’. Indeed, it was a word he frequently used about himself. He was an optimist about many different things, such as life in general, the economic and political future of Australia as a nation and the development of Australian literature. Optimism by that name may not have been a received Irish stereotype in Brady’s time. Indeed, Martin Cash seems to have regarded pessimistic melancholy as one of his people’s ‘national characteristics’ (see above). Stereotypes can be contradictory, however, and the traditional Irish proverb ‘There’s nothing so bad that it couldn’t be worse’ somehow manages to reconcile the two.⁹ And in any case, Brady’s brand of optimism is essentially a belief in his own irrepressible good fortune and Australia’s, the ‘luck of the Irish’ (O’Grady).

Brady seems to have had little interest in the political and social history of Ireland, and never visited the country. His obsession was Australia, and his *magnum opus*, fittingly, was *Australia Unlimited*, a five kilogram, 1,100-page, quarto-sized door-stopper, six years in the preparation, filled with first-hand

⁹It may also be of interest that a study published in the *Journal of Personality* in 2013 suggested that the Irish were the most optimistic people in the world (Irish Central).

descriptions of Australia's contemporary way of life: its urban and rural environments, its industries, occupations and recreations, packed with statistical information, and enlivened by about a thousand photographs, most of which he took himself. The burden of this massive production was that Australia was on the right track and destined for great things.

The 'real' Ireland from which his parents escaped in 1849 – squalid, poor, famine-cursed and despondent – is evoked in the opening chapters of his biography of his adventurous father *Two Frontiers* (1944), and there is a touch of projected Irish nostalgia and mysticism in his account of his father's deathbed:

At midnight on the 16th October, 1914, Women Shades gathered unseen around him; Shades of his clan Mothers from Saidhaba to Ann. Far away at Tuam Grenie on the road to Killaloe, Aiobheal, wrapped in a dark mantle, stood waiting at the threshold of her dun; Aiobheal, who had keened over fifty generations of their sons, Aiobheal, the Ageless One. (Brady, *Two Frontiers* 315)

In the first instalment of *Life's Highway*, his slight, lyrical and meandering memoir – 'not an autobiography, in the accepted sense, but a book of reminiscence and personal experience' – Ireland has become entirely a folkloric land of fairies, white witchcraft and green-coated leprechauns (Brady, 'Life's Highway' vol. 13; 192–3). In a later instalment, he expresses his lifelong admiration for the 'Celtic Twilight' poetry of Victor Daley and Roderic Quinn, an eccentric-looking preference by 1954 (Brady, 'Life's Highway' vol. 15; 284)! It is almost as if Ireland existed for Brady not as a home to return to, even in imagination, but as a strain of lyrical melancholy into which, in his own poetry and others', he could sometimes retreat when even his determined optimism wavered in the face of humiliation, disappointment and bereavement.

From Lynch's and Brady's somewhat masculine versions of the Irish-Australian identity, it would be pleasing to effect a transition to a feminine alternative, and it is possible to do so, though published autobiographies by Irish Australian women are disappointingly few; some, like that of Nellie Stewart, *My Life's Story* (1923) – an autobiography by the famous actress and singer of the late nineteenth century, whose mother was Irish-born (Cooper) – make no mention of their Irish connection (Stewart). Three twentieth century women who do engage explicitly – and differently – with their Irish-Australian identity in telling their life-stories do so in part by way of that most pervasive of all markers of Irish difference, the brogue, which thus affords a useful point of comparison.

Ada Kidgell, or Ada Holman as she became after her marriage in 1901 to

William Holman, the first Labor Premier of New South Wales, was a journalist of pronounced radical-liberal and feminist views, a prolific contributor of articles and stories, under her own name and various pen names, to several Sydney newspapers and magazines on a range of political, social and literary questions. Her knowledge of Australian history and politics was probably superior to that of Brady or Lynch, and she shared their passionate republicanism. In deference to respectable convention, she stopped writing after her marriage, a restriction that irked her at the time and which she resented even more in retrospect, though she continued to advocate for liberal causes in more limited ways (Radi). Holman attributed her interest in politics and social justice to her journalist father and Irish-born mother, Agnes Martin: ‘the descendant of a brave rebel Irish family, [and] an even keener politician than my father, who was also a rebel of a milder hue’ (Holman 1).

Her autobiography, however, *Memoirs of a Premier’s Wife* (1947), written when she was in her late 70s, is fairly devoid of political substance. It consists of anecdotes about the famous people she met during her travels with her husband, and even the nod to her rebellious Irish ancestry seems mainly gestural, the kind of ornament an Australian Labor politician, or his widow, might well wish to claim, and is of a piece with her later comment on the brogue. Her visit to Ireland with her husband included meetings – perhaps first meetings – with her Irish cousins, also descendants of the rebel family, but what she reports on is her meetings with famous Irish men, like the parliamentarian and journalist T. P. O’Connor, who addresses her ‘in a rich voice with just the right touch of brogue’ (Holman 68). Holman’s comment renders the Irish accent as an object of detached appreciation – almost of connoisseurship – which separates it from her own family connections in Ireland. The brogue is thus a part of the self she constructs in her memoir but – at least by this late stage in her life – an external part.

Irishness has a similarly dual effect in the life-narrative of an Irish Australian woman at the other end of the social spectrum: as at once an acknowledged component of her family background and an objectified general signifier, epitomised by the brogue. In Caroline (‘Caddie’) Edmonds’s *Caddie: Autobiography of a Sydney Barmaid* (1953) – produced as a film, starring Helen Morse, in 1976 (Wilde et al. 199) – the brogue functions as a token of personal deliverance. Born in 1900 in Penrith, New South Wales, the fifth of eleven children of an Irish-born railway fettle (Ritchie), Caddie was raised in poverty and regularly abused by her drunken father, of whom, nonetheless, she had some pleasant memories, specifically the ‘sad Irish airs’ he would occasionally sing for her before his mood changed (Edmonds ch. 2). *Caddie* is a story of independence and survival, but Caddie sometimes receives unexpected support, notably on two

occasions by Irish people: Mrs Sweeney looks after her children while she works in the bar, and again when she is offered a job as an SP bookie by one Paddy Maher. Mrs Sweeney's brogue thickens as she reminisces, coming to signify the parental love and security Caddie had been denied by her own (Irish) parents (Edmonds ch. 19–20). As with Ada Holman and Ted Brady, Irishness stands apart as a thing-in-itself distinct from her own Irish connections.

In Kathleen Fitzpatrick's *Solid Bluestone Foundations* (1983), the brogue also fleetingly appears, not, however, as a source of sentimental pleasure or of comfort and deliverance, but on the contrary, as a Victorian-era patriarch's medium of 'withering scorn' for his daughter's social lapses (K. Fitzpatrick 38). Kathleen Fitzpatrick, née Pitt (1905–1990), an academic historian at the University of Melbourne from the 1930s to the 1960s, was a second-generation Irish Australian, with Irish Catholic grandparents on both sides of her upper-middle class Australian family. Her memoir tells the story of her first twenty-five years, from a vantage point fifty years later, ending just a few years before her brief marriage to the radical historian Brian Fitzpatrick in 1932. The very different emotional weighting of the brogue here is an index of the different positioning of Irish-ness in Fitzpatrick's life-narrative, one in which there is no duality as between the familial connections on the one hand and the objectified signifier on the other. Its meaning is subordinate to the specific tensions within the chronologically extended family.

Something similar happens with her use of other Irish stereotypes. Her closeness to both her maternal grandmother's family, the O'Briens, and her paternal grandfather's, the Pitts, – and her vivid, highly individuated memories of them – made the two families' different styles of both Irish-ness and Catholicism surprisingly central to her sense of her own individual formation. In writing her much later account of those early years in Melbourne and Oxford, Fitzpatrick is constantly drawn to what might be called 'Irish indices' – of which the brogue is one – as keys to understanding herself and the other people in her life. Thus, for example, 'Mary O.', a cousin of her mother's, an itinerant dressmaker, and 'the first middle-class woman I ever met who . . . earned her own living' (and thus an implicit role-model for Fitzpatrick herself), is described as 'tall and thin and bony, very Irish-looking, with dark hair and dark blue eyes' (K. Fitzpatrick 12–4); her grandparents' strained relations ('Grandpa was English, frank and transparent . . . but Grandma was Irish, opaque and reticent' (42)); her father's 'enjoyment of verbal play, and . . . dry, stinging Irish wit' (57); her own 'gift of the gab, very common among people with Irish blood'(140); and the 'black Irish pride' that enabled her to cope with academic setbacks with dignity (188). It is as if, in seeking to make sense of her youthful experiences, Fitzpatrick has done something like what her favourite author Henry James had done in his

novels, adopting received national stereotypes (Irish rather than American in her case) and using them as tools to investigate the complexities in her own and her family's past lives (Buckridge and Harte 343–4). The multiple psychological and behavioural stereotypes that form the basis for this mode of analysis are the starting point, not the end point for understanding, and like the brogue they are themselves modified in the process. Even so, it is a mode which might well invite criticism today for its accommodating acceptance of the essential validity of at least the more neutral stereotypes, and of their integral place in Australian society.

Vincent Buckley, well-known poet, literary critic and intellectual, wrote two books of memoirs, the first of which, *Cutting Green Hay* (1983), is dominated by his vigorous engagement in the political and religious struggles of the liberal-Catholic 'Apostolate' movement during the Cold War decades of the 1950s and 1960s in Melbourne. As the Irish part of his Irish Catholicism gradually came to the fore in his thinking, he made several extended visits there, and *Memory, Ireland* (1985), his second memoir, develops a deeply pessimistic analysis of the state of Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s as 'a nation that had lost its memory'. For 'Vin', as his friend Chris Wallace-Crabbe put it, 'the actual Republic distorts or effaces the Australian dream of Gaeltacht and benign ancestral voices' (Wallace-Crabbe).

As Wallace-Crabbe implies, Buckley did not share (and indeed disparaged) the fascination for Celtic myth and mystique he found in the writings of E. J. Brady, Victor Daley, David McKee Wright and others. Ireland was what he called his 'source country', and that in itself gave it a unique moral importance in his life. But his visits to Ireland, far from reinforcing any such dreams, were disheartening as he grappled with its contemporary realities.

Nonetheless, like Kathleen Fitzpatrick, he invokes a rich Irish typology in *Cutting Green Hay*, the first of his two books of memoirs: a particular friend, for example, 'approximated one basic type of Irish personality' ['the bubbling enthusiast'], while another (a male!) 'approximated an Irish type of the strong woman, or the frank woman, or the woman of initiative' (Buckley 103, 307). Like Fitzpatrick, he also modifies the stereotypes to suit his own circumstances. Unlike her, however, Buckley makes no attempt to analyse himself in these terms. Like Charles Gavan Duffy, he believed 'the self of the narrator does not need stressing, for it can be deduced, or seen in silhouette, as the light falls on the places where he lived with others' (Buckley xii).

One such place was what Buckley called his 'home country', around Romsey in Victoria, to which most of his forebears had come from Tipperary and Cork during the Famine years. Once here, he insists, though they built a strong and

durable sense of Irish Catholic identity in the new country, ‘there was little sense of connected history . . . little keeping of a lifeline to Ireland by direct tapping of an historical or mythopoeic memory’ (10–2). Buckley’s complex critique of ‘the famous, fabled long memory of the Celt’ is persuasive for his own Australian context: at least for the working class Catholic majority of the nineteenth and early twentieth century immigration, Irishness was an empty badge of affiliation with others in the same situation rather than a substantive inheritance from another time and place. And though homesickness was surely a sad reality for many of the migrants themselves, as David Fitzpatrick has shown in his moving collection of migrant letters between Ireland and Australia (D. Fitzpatrick), the overriding imperative was to keep the past in its place and get on with the job of becoming Australians (Buckridge and Harte 345).

Buckley’s strong political connections to the Melbourne Catholic archdiocese might lead one to expect that his brand of Australian Irish-ness would be separatist rather than assimilationist in tendency. He was a pugnacious political warrior, but his fight was more for the cause of Catholic social justice in the present and future, than for the recognition of Irish injustice in the past. If he was not actually advocating the virtual erasure of Irish memory in Australia, he was certainly accepting it as a historic given, at least for him, and not especially devoted to reviving it.

Thomas Keneally is one of the most familiarly Irish of Australians. He has published two memoirs, *Homebush Boy* (1995), which deals with his childhood and in which Ireland and the Irish are hardly mentioned, and another, four years earlier, *Now and in Time to Be* (1991) the title of which (from Yeats’s ‘Easter 1916’) reflects the intense interest in Ireland and its history that has characterised his later years. The book is structured as a composite ‘tour’ of Ireland and is packed with physical descriptions and place-specific historical anecdotes. It is also permeated by an awareness – notwithstanding the pathos of his emigrating grandparents’ imagined last sight of the cliffs of Cobh – that ‘sentiment is the malaise of the returning pilgrim of Irish connection. The sensible native Irish are offended by it’ (Keneally, *Now and in Time to Be* 3). So far from wishing to pronounce on contemporary Irish politics, as Buckley did, Keneally is even wary (wisely, as it turns out) of photographing peat-diggers in Galway in the name of ancestral rediscovery (*Now and in Time to Be* 60–1). Throughout his travels, wrong assumptions and misrecognitions threaten the possibility of acceptance for the eager-to-learn Irish Australian:

The experience of Australians in Ireland, particularly in the West, is that first they are presumed to be English . . . Then it’s discovered that you are Australian, and then that you have Irish connections.

This is the daily estrangement and homecoming which an Australian experiences in Ireland. Suspicion replaced by regard, replaced then by warmth. (Keneally, *Now and in Time to Be* 44)

Neither Buckley nor Keneally know or say much about their grandparents' experiences of emigration; indeed, both seem to accept their determination to start life afresh in a country where 'Britishness prevailed, and even the Irish-Australian working class were part of that Britishness' (Keneally *Homebush Boy* 25). Catholicism rather than Irish-ness was the group identity that commanded their loyalties.

Gerard Windsor, by contrast, knew two of his grandparents well: his Irish paternal grandfather and Irish Australian maternal grandmother. In his first volume of memoirs, he is able to imagine and portray them, both with and against simplistic Irish stereotypes, as complex individuals – respectively a much-loved Brisbane general practitioner and a prosperous shopkeeper in country New South Wales – at the same time seeing the process of adjusting expectations and building a career as exemplary of the professional and business opportunities available to ambitious middle-class Irish Catholics in early twentieth century Australia, parts of a larger narrative of rising social status and fading superstition and tribalism in religion. Both are instances of Irish-Australian assimilation; interestingly, an instance of failure to assimilate is also presented in the slightly unsettling story of his grandfather's father, who joined his only son in Australia after twelve years of separation, then returned to Ireland almost immediately, ostensibly because he saw horses being treated 'disrespectfully' at a thoroughbred saleyard in Sydney (Windsor, *I'll Just Tell You This* 91–4).¹⁰

In the third book of the trilogy, *I Asked Cathleen to Dance* (1999), the 'Cathleen' of the title is Ireland herself, and the book is devoted to Windsor's own experience of the country. The metaphor of 'entering' Ireland as an act of sexual penetration is explicit – 'By now I have entered Ireland perhaps twelve times . . . The suggestiveness of the term is unavoidable' (Windsor, *I Asked Cathleen to Dance* 32).

Windsor's confrontations with the 'real' Ireland, nonetheless, are explicitly personal, indeed *self-shaping*, to a degree that neither Buckley's nor Keneally's seem to be, though all three suffer some form of disenchantment in their encounters. There is a pleasing irony in the fact that the 'outsider' status imposed, as O'Farrell, MacDonagh and Malcolm insist, on many of the earliest Irish im-

¹⁰This first book of the trilogy, *I'll Just Tell You This* (a phrase of his loquacious grandfather's), was first published as a collection of stories and sketches called *Family Lore* in 1990 and was then revised and retitled to coincide with the appearance of the third book in 1999.

migrants to Australia is here experienced, in a somewhat milder form, by more recent Irish Australian ‘homecomers’ such as Buckley, Keneally and Windsor.

In the absence of a comparative dimension to this study, it is difficult to do more than muse impressionistically about what, if anything, might be distinctive in Irish-Australian life-writing as distinct from the many other traditions of ethnic life-writing that have flourished in Australia over the last two centuries – Scottish, Greek, Italian, Hungarian, German, Chinese, Vietnamese and others. Is the written self of the Irish-Australian subject exceptional in any way? MacDonagh and Malcolm both point to the sheer size of the early Irish migration relative to total population as its most strikingly distinctive feature compared with other parts of the global Irish diaspora, but also to the high percentage of convicts and emancipists among them, and the social exclusions and cultural disparagements to which this gave rise (MacDonagh 155; Malcolm 207–9). It is particularly true of Malcolm’s account, I believe, that the relationship between the Irish and British immigrant cultures was, and is, mainly characterised by mutual disrespect, resentment and antagonism.¹¹

It is of interest, then, that with the notable exception of Ned Kelly’s ‘Jerilderie Letter’, the memoirs and autobiographies discussed in this article are all – in different ways and to differing degrees – expressive more of a harmonious than a hostile relationship between the two colonising Australian cultures; at worst ‘live and let live’, but often enough a more positive impulse towards social and cultural integration and assimilation, or even (as with Duhig, for example) towards a celebration of its achievement. It may well be that individual life-writing, especially in published (public) form, has something of an inbuilt bias towards narratives of individual self-realisation and, if so, that might help to account for the integrationist tendency noted here. It remains the case, however, that that perspective seems to have been as familiar to Irish Australians as its separatist opposite.

One of the common features of the various memoirs discussed in this article is surely the degree to which these writers do not so much *inhabit* their Irish ethnicity as objectify, even *instrumentalise* it, freely acknowledging the existence in Australian society and culture of an array of Irish ‘stereotypes’, and embracing, and sometimes rejecting or adapting, one or more of them as recognisable patterns in their experience and consciousness, and as factors in their ongoing formation as individuals. It is a relation to Irish identity that might be termed ‘ironic’ – embracing as real what is known to be artificial – and it

¹¹Malcolm and Hall do acknowledge, in passing, that some Irish cartoonists (Tom Durkin), and stage-actors (G. V. Brooke) were happy to reproduce demeaning Irish stereotypes in their work (162), but it is not a phenomenon whose implications and ramifications they explore.

is one of the more ambivalent and interesting legacies of the internal tensions within, and as old as, Australia's predominantly English colonial culture after 1788.

APPENDIX

Irish-Australian Autobiographies and Memoirs: A Select Chronology

- Ned Kelly, 'The Jerilderie letter.' 1880.
- John Sadleir, *Recollections of a Victorian Police Officer*. Melbourne: George Robertson & Co., 1913.
- Martin Cash, *Martin Cash, the Bushranger of Van Diemen's Land in 1843-4: A Personal Narrative of his Exploits in the Bush and his Experiences at Port Arthur and Norfolk Island*. 1870.
- William Ievers, Sr., *Fifty Years After, or Old Scenes Revisited. Being a Diary of Travels Round the World*. 1890.
- Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, *My Life in Two Hemispheres*. 1898.
- Nellie Stewart, *My Life's Story*. 1923.
- Arthur Lynch, *My Life Story*. 1924.
- James F. Dwyer, *Leg-Irons on Wings*. 1949.
- George Cockerill, *Scribblers and Statesmen*. 1944.
- Dale Collins, *Bright Vista*. 1946.
- James Duhig, *Crowded Years*. 1947.
- Ada Holman, *Memoirs of a Premier's Wife*. 1948.
- Simon Hickey, *Travelled Roads*. 1951
- Edwin J. Brady, 'Life's Highway,' *Southerly* vols 13.4 (1952) – 15.4 (1954).
- Caroline Edmunds, *Caddie: Autobiography of a Sydney Barmaid*. 1953.
- Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *Solid Bluestone Foundations and other memories of a Melbourne girlhood, 1908-1928*. 1983.
- Edmund Campion, *Rockchoppers: Growing Up Catholic in Australia*. 1982.
- Vincent Buckley, *Cutting Green Hay: Friendships, movements and cultural conflicts in Australia's great decades*. 1983.

- Vincent Buckley, *Memory, Ireland*. 1985.
- Thomas Keneally, *Now and in Time to Be*. 1991.
- Tom [sic] Keneally, *Homebush Boy: A Memoir*. (Melbourne: Minerva, 1995).
- Gerard Windsor, *I'll Just Tell You This*. 1999.
- Gerard Windsor, *I Asked Cathleen To Dance*. 1999.

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