

## Chapter Seven

### WAR and 'the whole long, bloody history of mankind'

Any serious modern literature which leaves out the impact of war is, in Katherine Mansfield's words, 'a lie in the soul'.<sup>1</sup> Dark was not guilty of this lie, for each of her novels contained a cry of protest against the militarism, the 'senseless orgies of self-destruction' (*TLC*, p. 131), which have contributed to 'the whole long, bloody history of mankind.' (*W*, p. 238) Coping with the conditions of war, her character, Gilbert, found himself on the verge of 'a frenetic outburst of anger and despair, a sort of animal howl for the violated humanity of the human animal' (*TLC*, p. 235), and this expressed the writer's deep loathing of wars which constantly impede growth and advancement, and take all the joy out of life. As she demonstrated in her novels, human beings themselves created the divisions which generate war, and they conspired 'in the wreckage of humanity' (*PC*, p. 168) when they

... divided the world into sections and peopled each section with a different kind of man speaking a different language and seeking different ideals, so that they grew jealous and fearful and killed each other and mutilated the earth in recurring orgies of rage and hatred. (*SaS*, pp. 33-4)

The novelist's work made it clear that she considered war a greater crime against morality than any other human action, and she marvelled at the increasing imbecility of the human race which, instead of preserving life, was intent on 'flinging up terror after terror, spreading ruin and laying waste.' (*W*, p. 78)

Referring to Australia, one of Dark's contemporaries commented:

There have been no violent divisions in our history, no wars fought upon our soil, no invasions, no conquests. ... We have no bitter wrongs to keep our history alive in our memories.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C. M. Tylee, *The Great War and Women's Consciousness, Images of Militarism and Womanhood in Women's Writings, 1914-64*, Iowa City, 1990, p. 85, wherein the writer quoted from J. M. Murray (ed.), *The Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, London, 1954.

<sup>2</sup> F. Eldershaw, 'History as the Raw Material of Literature', *op. cit.*, p. 15.

Dark's rejection of this simplistic belief was made explicit in her account of the war between the Aborigines and the Europeans in the historical trilogy. It has been well said that

... to subjugate a society and destroy a civilization ... is a monstrous crime against the right to be oneself, to live in the light of one's own ideal values.<sup>3</sup>

That crime, which began to take shape when

... thousands of miles away across the sea the law of the white men, the great law of Possession, was implacably at work stretching out greedy hands towards their continent (*TTL*, p. 409),

the Europeans committed against the Australian Aborigines.

Social forces aided its implementation when seventeenth and eighteenth century Europeans decided to use their scientific discoveries, especially in astronomy, as a means of investigating new lands, and to employ their technological expertise with weapons as a means of subduing their inhabitants. The Aborigines were victims, too, of racial division propagated by white people who considered their own civilisation superior to all others, and who regarded the indigenous people's rights as less valid than their own. Thus Governor Arthur Phillip, we were told, believed,

... as all good Englishmen did, that his race was Heaven-favoured, Heaven-guided, sent to be a builder in strange lands and a leader of strange peoples. (*TTL*, p. 195)

Despite their original good intentions regarding the natives, the Europeans instigated a murderous war which was to prevent any development of the Aborigines' potential. This they did by disrupting the natives' culture - 'a tapestry of incredible brilliance and complication' (*TTL*, p. 350) - so that 'their very concept of life, their concept of themselves as human beings was threatened.' (*ST*, p. 40) As a consequence, western civilisation's journey of 'progress' had as its tragic underside the near-destruction and degeneration of an entire race.

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<sup>3</sup> I. Berlin, 'The Bent Twig', in H. Hardy (ed.), *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*, London, 1990, p. 38.

In *The Timeless Land*, Dark showed that, up to the time of the First Settlement, the Aborigines' journey through life had its direction signposted by the dictates of a complicated Law which, 'absolute and terrible' (*TTL*, p. 151) as it was, yet served well 'to shelter them and hold their actions fast and secure.' (*TTL*, p. 183) They knew no urgency, their only concept of time being the unchanging natural cycle, and the goal was the fulfilment gained through

... hunting, mating, ceremony, sleep, fierce tests of courage and endurance, tenderness towards the young, reverence for age, compassion for infirmity. (*TTL*, p. 22)

Russel Ward wrote that 'the aborigines were among the most unwarlike folk known to history'.<sup>4</sup> War was to waylay them, however, and to change their unhurried progress into a desperate struggle, with its goal their very survival.<sup>5</sup>

Dark used the historical figure, Bennilong, torn as he was between two cultures, to demonstrate the destructive effect of the clash between the Aborigines and Europeans. Long ago his fictional father, Wunbula, had told him of a ship which sailed into the bay, and of 'mysterious beings with faces pale as bones' (*TTL*, p. 17) who came ashore and, just as suddenly, departed. They came again, and the man Bennilong joined his tribe in shouting and waving spears in furious protest at this later invasion of the harbour and their own towri. The modern historian, Henry Reynolds, has reminded us that 'our being in their country at all is, so far as their ideas of right and wrong are concerned, altogether an act of intrusion and aggression', and the fact that the Aborigines 'resisted the encroachment' emphasised 'their sense of property.'<sup>6</sup>

The invaders proceeded to set up their camp at a nearby cove,

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<sup>4</sup> R. Ward, 'The Social Fabric', in A. L. McLeod (ed.), *The Pattern of Australian Culture*, Melbourne, 1963, p. 12.

Cp. W. E. H. Stanner, *After the Dreaming* (1968), Sydney, 1991, p. 42: 'The aborigines were originally a high-spirited and in their own way a militant people. They were not, however, an organized martial people, and that was why we broke them up so easily.'

<sup>5</sup> Yet see P. Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay, an Essay in Spatial History*, London, 1987, p. 161: Carter stated that 'to bring such evidence to light does not of itself constitute an accurate account of the Aboriginal experience. The evidence still stands in need of interpretation.' He argued that 'we have no grounds for presuming that Aboriginal history can be treated as a subset of white history, as a history within a history. They remain outside white history.'

<sup>6</sup> H. Reynolds, *The Law of the Land* (1987), Ringwood, 1988, pp. 77 and 54.

however, arousing especially the ire of the elder, Tirrawuul, who was enraged at these arrogant strangers who trespassed upon his land and 'trod its soil as if it were their own'.<sup>7</sup> Even though they seemed eager to be friendly, the Europeans' demeanour, reflecting as it did their 'awareness of superiority and dominion' (*TTL*, p. 102), worked against any alliance from the first. Tirrawuul distrusted them:

There was a note in the white men's voices which he did not like, a look in their eyes which was not less offensive for being puzzling. No man ... had ever before looked upon him, upon his tribe, with patronage and contempt. (*TTL*, p. 52)

His immediate reaction was one of profound resentment 'which stirred in him and said fiercely: "Resist, kill, drive out these invaders!"' (*TTL*, p. 53) This reaction was quickly checked, however, by the knowledge that the white men's weapons were capable of killing valuable warriors.

Although as yet the threat of war was only nebulous, it was to come,<sup>8</sup> with tensions building up throughout the various stages of the relationship which emerged.<sup>9</sup> The first stage was one of wary friendship, with Phillip shown to find the natives reasonably peaceable, but 'alert and resolute.' (*TTL*, p. 81) The uneasy elders moved the tribe from the cove's vicinity, and resentment mounted when the Europeans further intruded 'in unmannerly fashion' (*TTL*, p. 76) by approaching the natives' new towri. Tirrawuul was furious and made no attempt to restrain his spear-waving companions when they rushed to confront the intruders. Dismayed at the hostility of these 'dark and menacing figures' (*TTL*, p. 76), the white men withdrew.

With Tirrawuul's admission that he was afraid of their powers, 'against which no power of his own or of his countrymen could prevail' (*TTL*, p. 77), Dark proposed that, for the natives, European civilisation at the outset

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<sup>7</sup> Reynolds, *The Law of the Land*, *op. cit.*, p. 8. Discussing the British claim to possession, Reynolds wrote, 'As many as half a million people, living in several hundred tribal groupings, in occupation of even the most inhospitable corners of the continent, had in a single instant, been dispossessed. ... English witchcraft was so powerful that it had wiped out all tenure, all rights to land which had been occupied for 40,000 years, for 1600 generations and more.'

<sup>8</sup> See H. Reynolds, 'History', in D. Horton (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*, Canberra, 1994, p. 468: 'Armed Aboriginal resistance varied widely in duration and intensity but was a recurring feature of the history of frontier Australia from the 1790s to the 1930s.'

<sup>9</sup> See Stanner, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

seemed an overpowering psychological force against which their minds were impotent, and that the disintegration of the Aboriginal culture, with its 'rigid rules of conduct' (*TTL*, p. 183),<sup>10</sup> began with this realisation. Dark's view is worth considering alongside the recent opinion of Henry Reynolds:

The historical record indicates ... [that the Aborigines were] not locked into a rigid, unchanging culture. They showed themselves just as capable at adapting to altered circumstances as European pioneers ... . Yet there were aspects of Aboriginal culture which proved remarkably resistant to change. Traditional society was, therefore, both more conservative and more innovative than standard accounts have suggested with ... a culture too rigid to bend collapsing suddenly and completely under the pressure of European invasion'.<sup>11</sup>

In these circumstances, Tirrawuul could only exhort his people to patience, 'calm their anger, hold them with words of wisdom until their blood cooled.' (*TTL*, p. 77) Gradually friendly encounters tempered the Aborigines' indignation as their respect grew for Governor Phillip, and some even acted as guides for exploring parties, 'willing to be of service to those whom they liked and trusted.' (*TTL*, p. 370)<sup>12</sup> The general feeling was that 'failing evidence of hostility on the part of the new arrivals they were not to be harmed' (*TTL*, p. 57), an attitude no doubt influenced by the legend which led the natives to believe that these pale beings were possibly ghosts of 'long-departed tribesmen seeking their homes again.' (*TTL*, p. 56)<sup>13</sup>

The association reached a second stage, with the Aborigines remaining aloof from the settlement, even though during the hard winter they

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<sup>10</sup> See Barnard Eldershaw, *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, *op. cit.*, p. 193, for a similar opinion: 'Because he was perfectly adjusted, the aborigine could not resist the white man. Sealed to one way of life, a life so concrete, so definite, so circumscribed, that it could be shattered like a plate.'

<sup>11</sup> H. Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier, An interpretation of the Aboriginal response to the invasion and settlement of Australia*, Townsville, 1981, p. 49.

<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, this attitude led the fictional, escaped convict, Prentice, to condemn them as 'poor, miserable, ignorant savages' who were 'assisting with the utmost cheerfulness in their own undoing.' (*TTL*, p. 409)

<sup>13</sup> See Reynolds, *op. cit.*, p. 25: 'The belief that white men were beings returned from the dead was widespread in Aboriginal society during the early years of settlement'; and p. 27: 'White was a colour widely associated with death, pipe-clay was used extensively in mourning.' See also Reynolds, 'History', *op. cit.*, p. 467. Discussing the idea that white men were thought to be 'reincarnated kin', Reynolds added, 'It was a belief that may not have survived beyond the first generation of settlement.'

experienced a food shortage as their progressive displacement cut off access to game and fish. Knowing that they were not cowardly, Phillip was disturbed by their withdrawal. Paul Carter would write that 'attempts to inaugurate communication occurred whenever Europeans and Aborigines came face to face',<sup>14</sup> and Dark's Phillip was particularly anxious at this point to find out more about the land, 'to ask them of its rivers, its mountains, its lakes, its animals, its climate and rainfall.' (*TTL*, p. 117) The rift was shown to widen, with the Aborigines holding the understandable view that they had the right to rule themselves in their own land. Mutual animosity between the black men and the convicts exacerbated the situation. For the felons the natives had 'conceived a strong mistrust and contempt' because they pilfered their weapons and other implements, while the convicts had 'only evil looks for them, and words which sounded heavy with insult.' (*TTL*, p. 124) Violent incidents erupted. When two rushcutters stole his canoe, the furious Warrawunnah killed them, an act which the tribe enthusiastically endorsed with 'a spontaneous sound of satisfaction and approval.' (*TTL*, p. 148) That night the elders called a council:

The whole business, they agreed passionately, was becoming too serious to be ignored. This was not the first time they had been forced to assert themselves against insult and theft. (*TTL*, p. 149)

Eons of security 'had failed to breed in them the persistent aggressiveness of their brethren in other lands', so that they knew 'only the swift flaring rage which served them for their tribal battles', but this was allied to 'a deeply rooted sense of justice.' (*TTL*, p. 151) The council decided to gather in force, and to let the Governor 'know that he had warriors to deal with.' (*TTL*, p. 152)

Although Phillip suspected that the rushcutters' murder was provoked, he led a party to Botany Bay in search of the murderers. Suddenly along the way he experienced 'an icy spasm of shock' when he approached a little cove 'swarming with armed natives.' (*TTL*, p. 158) Catastrophe loomed. The Aborigines 'did not doubt ... that presently from each of the gooroobeera fire would shoot forth to destroy them.' (*TTL*, p. 159) As 'the air above their heads bristled with raised spears', for both black and white fear changed 'into a fierce hostility' and 'spread like poison gas, invisible and deadly.' (*TTL*, pp.

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<sup>14</sup> Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

159-60) Dark emphasised the Governor's courage in defusing the situation as, with 'serene and fearless humanity', he advanced toward the muttering horde and, 'in the tranced way of children' (*TTL*, p. 160), the Aborigines reacted to his confidence in them. They lowered their spears and surrounded him, their tension released in loud laughter and talk: 'How pleasant it was to have the burden of rage and hatred lifted from the heart!' (*TTL*, p. 160)

A fourth stage of the relationship was seen to evolve as Phillip made more strenuous efforts to effect a measure of co-operation between the two races, and, hoping to persuade some of the natives to live at the settlement, he sent a band of Marines to kidnap two of them. Meerung escaped but Arabanoo was bound and dragged to the boats, 'yelling with fury and defiance, fighting and struggling' desperately (*TTL*, p. 181), and Dark imagined the natives' mood at this:

Now in the hearts of the tribesmen fury took the place of fear. Treachery so black was indeed evil, but it was not magic. Rage flamed in them, a rage which dried up their dread of the gooroobera ... . They... rushed down on to the beach, snatching up scattered spears as they went, ... shouting encouragement to Arabanoo, and revilements upon the duplicity of the white men. (*TTL*, p. 182)

They flung their spears at the captors, but were forced to retreat when the white men fired over their heads. 'I tell ye', Dark had the fictional Johnny Prentice later warn Billalong, 'don't try to match white men in killin', for they'd shoot ye down till there wasn't a man left in the tribes could hold a spear':

They don't care that ye'd kill a score of soldiers - or a hundred - they can get plenty more. Sometimes ... it's come into me mind that they'll go on killin' till they destroy themselves. (*NB*, p. 333)

The convicts working in the brickfields introduced more friction when they suffered 'an emotional explosion, a psychological reaction to the slow degradation which they were suffering'. With 'a savage, blind determination to rid themselves of their own unendurable consciousness of subjection', they wanted to transfer their humiliation 'to others, still lower, still more helpless than themselves.' (*TTL*, pp. 209-10) Bred to 'a world in which the power to coerce alone was admirable' (*TTL*, p. 210),

they took up their tools as weapons and marched into the bush. To the Aborigine, Kuurinn, watching from a nearby hill, this was 'a battle party' (*TTL*, p. 210), and his rallying-cry mustered a formidable band of warriors. Faced by a ferocious horde 'grunting [the] battle-noises of their ancestors' (*TTL*, p. 211), the terrified felons fled through the flying spears, leaving one dead and seven wounded. The Governor's reaction was swift. Establishing that the convicts were the instigators of the incident, he exercised that 'power and authority which had hounded and threatened them all their lives' (*TTL*, p. 212), and had them flogged.

Dark proposed that, at this stage, the Europeans had made some advance in communicating with the natives through knowledge gained from the gentle Arabanoo. When Phillip decided to persist with the experiment, the writer showed the invaders damaging their own cause by resorting again to treachery. As Bennilong and Colbee cheerfully accepted an offering of fish from a party of white men who had landed on their beach, they were swiftly overwhelmed and 'floundering in the bottom of the boat almost before they had let out their first yells of fury and astonishment.' (*TTL*, p. 257) Taken back to the settlement, the vain Bennilong revelled in being the centre of the Europeans' attention. At the same time he remained suspicious of their geniality, for they had lost his trust, and he sensed that 'somewhere, beneath the kindness, there was treachery.' For his part, Colbee formed 'an inflexible resolve' (*TTL*, p. 265) not to collaborate with them and seized the first chance to escape, followed soon after by Bennilong who was motivated both by hunger for his people's companionship and by physical hunger as the settlement's food stores dwindled.

The European's earlier deceit had a grim result. The novelist's Phillip had grown fond of Bennilong, who seemed 'a symbol of the relationship between the white men and the natives' (*ST*, p. 69), and he initiated a fifth stage in the precarious association by trying to re-establish contact with the young warrior. On a day when several tribes gathered for a feast of stranded whale, the Governor and his party rowed across to the beach. Among the watchful Aborigines, Wileemaring of the Gweagal had vowed 'to see to it that no treacherous white man approached within arm's length of *him*!' (*TTL*, p. 331) As Phillip advanced, the warrior took fright and speared him through the

shoulder.<sup>15</sup> Slowly recovering at the settlement, Phillip was profoundly disturbed, seeing 'all the efforts which he had made in the past to win the confidence of the natives brought to nothing in a moment.' (*TTL*, p. 338). 'He did not want to fight these people' (*TTL*, p. 339), not only for humanitarian reasons, but because he believed that he must take advantage of their affinity with the land, for 'who should know its mysteries but its own strange people?' (*TTL*, p. 339) He was heartened, then, to hear that Bennilong, Colbee and the local tribesmen angrily disapproved of Wileemaring's attack.

The sixth stage of the relationship began as the continuing conflict effected a change in the texture of life for the Port Jackson natives. With Bennilong as chief interpreter, they began to visit the settlement and soon overran it. Ironically, by now the colonists were managing well enough by themselves, but Dark's Governor Phillip decided that, although the Aborigines had become a nuisance with their 'noise, confusion, hilarity, and, inevitably, quarrelling' (*TTL*, p. 358), it was better to have them friendly than hostile. The novelist showed that, imbued as he was with the acquisitive, expansionist values of his own society, in this war of cultures Phillip could find no common meeting ground with the Aborigines. Although he 'summoned all his patience and his tact to deal with them' and 'made endless efforts to understand them', he had to admit, despairingly, 'that the more one associated with them the less comprehensible they became.' (*TTL*, p. 361) As Henry Reynolds wrote,

The invaders were imposing a policy of possessive individualism, hierarchy and inequality. Aboriginal society was reciprocal and materially egalitarian.<sup>16</sup>

Yet the Governor considered that, at least, the two races had reached a stage in which 'each was confident of the good intentions of the other' (*TTL*, p. 371), and he believed that hostilities had ceased, a hope soon dashed when his unpopular gamekeeper, McEntire, was speared. By now the natives had killed or wounded seventeen white men, and Phillip triggered another move in the war by deciding that only a savage retaliation would

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<sup>15</sup> See Stanner, *op. cit.*, p. 9, where the writer suggested that Phillip's behaviour was 'rash and rather wrong-headed' and commented: 'After almost three years' experience it is obvious that he had learned nothing of aboriginal mentality or tendency.'

<sup>16</sup> Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

convince them that they 'could not be allowed to kill his men and escape unpunished.' (*TTL*, p. 371) As he confronted the problem, however, there began in the Governor an 'inward conflict, half unconscious', when he found himself 'entangled with two irreconcilable ideas':

Duty pushed him one way, and humanity the other, but it was an unequal contest ... . He had lived all his life in a world which admitted no arguing with Orders. (*TTL*, p. 372)

Admittedly, if somewhat idealistically, his Orders were to ensure that the Europeans lived 'in amity and kindness' with the Aborigines, and that they caused no 'unnecessary interruption' to their way of life. Now anger flared in Phillip 'that such impossible commands should have been laid upon him' by leaders who did not have to wrestle with the practical difficulties of carrying them out: 'Easy enough ... to sit in London and pen humanitarian words!' Because 'a man cannot plan nobly and remain narrow', Phillip was undergoing 'a new and inevitable widening of his whole mental horizon' (*TTL*, p. 372), and he felt 'his inner self threatened by division' as he considered the sufferings which the European undertaking had inflicted on the Aborigines:

Am I to convince these people that it was 'necessary' to steal their land from them? That it is 'necessary', having stolen it, to hunt their game, to haul nets in their waters? That it is 'necessary' now to send an armed force against them? (*TTL*, p. 372)

Dark had him reject compassion and opt for Duty, 'which reared itself in his thoughts like a blank brick wall and comforted him'. He put aside the temptation to act according to his own sense of fairness:

You could put your back against that wall and fight till you died, seeing no enemies but those clearly enough defined for you by Authority, no cause but that which Authority handed to you ready-made, with your Instructions. Thus was life simplified. (*TTL*, p. 373)

Pemulwy of the Bideegal was suspected of the killing, so the Governor ordered Captain Watkin Tench to take a party and capture or kill six warriors of that tribe. The novelist stressed the repugnant nature of such orders,

when, with nothing said, 'there passed between them a knowledge of the detestation with which they both regarded the task.' Admiring Tench as a man of 'indestructible good sense' (*TTL*, p. 374), Phillip felt obliged to explain his action, and invited the young officer to suggest an improved plan. So the party left with instructions to capture six warriors, of whom two would be hanged and the others sent to Norfolk Island.

Dark contrasted the Governor's inner turmoil with 'the undivided soul' of Lieutenant William Dawes, whose

... ultimate allegiance was to some inner self which would stand like granite, if occasion arose, against orders and entreaties alike. (*TTL*, p. 184)

Determined not to deny his own individual integrity, Dawes refused to go with Tench's party, and his admission of distaste for the Governor's plan led to a quarrel with Phillip, who warned him against an action which amounted to mutiny.<sup>17</sup> It was only after Dawes had consulted the Reverend Richard Johnson that he reluctantly complied with the order. The officer's protest shocked the Governor, not so much because it was mutinous but because of its implication that his order was brutal, and one 'which no humane man could obey with a quiet conscience,' an implication which 'he had not been entirely able to refute.' (*TTL*, p. 433). In the event, the mission was doomed. After two attempts, the Marines failed to capture their quarry and became bogged in a swamp, an ignominious fate, as Dark observed, for 'his Excellency's first attempt at a punitive expedition.' (*TTL*, p. 382)<sup>18</sup>

The conflict continued. A military party mortally wounded a native, Bangai, who, caught robbing a vegetable patch, tried to spear a white man, and the Aborigines 'immediately became wary and mistrustful.' (*TTL*, p. 382) With Bennilong as their aggressive mouthpiece they voiced their protest at what they considered the invaders' 'incomprehensible and indefensible

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<sup>17</sup> See V. Crittenden, *The Voyage of the First Fleet 1787-88, Taken from contemporary accounts*, Canberra, 1981, p. 88: 'Dawes was the only one who came near to understanding [the structure of the society the Europeans were invading]. His quarrel with Phillip over the Aborigines removed him from the country.' If he had stayed, more might have been accomplished in understanding the natives.

<sup>18</sup> See Stanner, *op. cit.*, p.10: 'In the whole of [Phillip's] record with the aborigines there is little that suggests wisdom or insight or even a great deal of commonsense, and half a dozen episodes reveal him as a rather eyeless, uninventive man.'

conduct' (*TTL*, p. 383), seeing 'no reason why the stealing should be all on one side' (*TTL*, p. 450):

Had they not slain Bangai ... because he took a little of their food to fill his empty belly and the empty bellies of his dyins? If, then, they were not to take the roots of the Bereewolgal, neither should the Bereewolgal take the fish. (*TTL*, p. 383)

The Port Jackson tribes began to lose direction on the life journey. There were 'certain departures from established custom' (*TTL*, p. 451), and, instead of hunting and fishing, Bennilong spent most days at the settlement, while even Colbee took fish there in exchange for bread.

While the enemy's relentless invasion of their territory somewhat eroded the natives' will to fight, many of the bolder bands carried on the war, and in the years between Phillip's departure and Captain John Hunter's return as Governor, sporadic clashes continued on outlying farms as the natives tried to force the intruders to share their stock and grain.<sup>19</sup> As Captain David Collins informed Hunter, 'the hostility of the natives has not been entirely unprovoked' (*TTL*, p. 525), for some of the settlers thwarted any chance of peaceable co-existence by treating them with monstrous brutality. The second novel in Dark's trilogy, *Storm of Time*, found the Aborigines lurking like 'troubled spectres' on the settlement's fringe, caught without refuge in the storm which civilisation had unleashed upon them. By now they regarded the white man as 'a moral outlaw' who must be dealt with by the rules of 'simple logic':

He took their hunting grounds; they would take from him in return whatever wheedling, force, guile or theft could procure. He fought his own kind; they would range themselves impartially upon any side which could promise them an advantage. (*ST*, p. 22)

The gloomy, wall-eyed Pemulwy was a born protester,

... the one man who had never wavered in his surly refusal to concede so much as a passing gesture of amity to the

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<sup>19</sup> See Reynolds, *The Law of the Land, op. cit.*, p. 76: 'Settlers often attributed Aboriginal resistance to the desire for plunder, the compulsions of savagery, revenge for insults or competition for women ... [but] land and land use were the major sources of conflict.'

invaders. (*ST*, p. 39)

To him 'a raid on one of the outlying settlements was an act of war, an expression of hostility and defiance towards the Bereewolgal', and he regularly waged guerrilla war, roaming 'to any place where there were white men to kill.' (*ST*, p. 38) The novel showed more despairing warriors joining in this armed resistance, sensing that they, too, must share in Pemulwy's implacable hatred and use it as a weapon:

They now perceived that violence was no longer the manifestation of a moment's anger. It was like the chains that the white men used; it was many angers, each complete in itself, and yet joined to the one behind it and the one before it, to form one terrible, endless expression of enmity. (*ST*, p. 40)

In 1802 two settlers shot Pemulwy, that 'stubborn, vanquished enemy' (*ST*, p. 292), and delivered the head to the Governor, who pickled it and sent it to Sir Joseph Banks, together with a tribute to the Aborigine's courage: 'Although a terrible pest to the colony, he was a brave and independent character.' (*ST*, p. 219) Eric Willmot wrote:

Pemulwuy, above anything else, was the first Australian patriot, the first Australian to defend this country against a foreign invader.<sup>20</sup>

As along the Hawkesbury the natives became increasingly daring in raiding crops, Governor King wryly acknowledged that he was 'engaged in an endless series of hostilities and conflicts on a descending scale from the heroic to the ridiculous':

It tickled his sharp humour to reflect that at the top of this scale he was officially if not actually at war with the armies of Napoleon Buonaparte, and at the bottom actually if not officially with a tribe of naked, spear-throwing savages. Between these two extremes raged his war with the officers, his war with seditious political exiles, and his war with the convicts; and of them all the only one he could not fight with a good heart was the one in which his adversaries were too feeble to be taken seriously. (*ST*, p. 341)

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<sup>20</sup> E. Willmot, 'Pemulwuy', in Horton, *op. cit.*, p. 854.

*No Barrier* took up the story of the Australian war in 1810, as the white men continued to steal more land from the tribes and battles became ever more frequent until 'the time seemed to be approaching when friendly association could no longer be continued.' (*NB*, p. 74) Many Aborigines

... were now saying that it was impossible to live at peace with white men who were not content with taking vast tracts of land, but ordered the black men off it, broke their spears and canoes, insulted them, stole and ravished their women, and fired on them with no more thought than if they had been wallabies. (*NB*, pp. 74-5)

The good-natured Governor Macquarie advocated the exercise of patience and forbearance. Johnny Prentice, however, knew that geniality counted for little in this conflict: '“They” were the possessors; and against the dispossessed, whether white or black, they would wage an implacable war.' (*NB*, p. 86) Increasingly angry at the Europeans' encroachment on their sacred places, hungry 'not only in body, but in spirit' (*NB*, p. 331), the Aborigines gathered in bands to steal pigs, corn and clothing from the settlers.

The Governor instituted a formal enquiry, but, even while it was in session, a party of Europeans shot and ferociously mutilated a sleeping Aboriginal woman and her two children, and, in 'prompt and savage retaliation' (*NB*, p. 349), the natives killed two white men. The Governor was appalled:

He glimpsed uneasily the swift, demoralising influence of fear, spreading its infection among black and white, turning his agricultural outposts into bloody frontiers, and leaving his farmers with muskets in their hands more often than hoes. (*NB*, p. 349)

The enquiry led Macquarie to the conclusion, published as a Government notice in the *Sydney Gazette*, 'that the first personal Attacks were made on the Part of the Settlers', and he pointed out that he had received assurances from several of the Cowpastures natives that 'unless they be shot at or wantonly attacked ... they [would] conduct themselves in the same peaceable Manner as they had done previous to the present Conflict.' Thus he hoped to calm the white settlers. As for the general attitude of the natives, that

... must depend on the effectiveness of his parleys with those wrinkled old men who ... had assured him that peace was no less their desire than his. (*NB*, p. 350)

Dark took leave of the Aborigines at this point, although the war was to continue for long afterwards.

Georg Lukacs observed that 'mankind's journey of progress has the tragic accompaniment of destruction',<sup>21</sup> and Dark's fictional Gilbert Massey echoed this with his vision of 'a world becoming, generation by generation, obscenely cluttered with bigger and better memorials to bigger and better wars.' (*TLC*, p. 202) As casualties in the Great War depleted Australia's sparse population and retarded her growth, Roger Blair, the reforming character in *Waterway*, argued that Australians must give themselves the chance to 'go on steadily' instead of 'slipping down a step for every two taken upward.' (*W*, p. 80) As he said, 'It had taken us a hundred and thirty years to build up a population of nearly five million', and then 'in four years sixty thousand of them were slaughtered', while the deaths of the country's 'finest sires' meant that 'at a conservative estimate, a hundred and twenty thousand more were denied their existence.' (*W*, p. 205) He was horrified at the way in which Australians were defeating their own development as a nation::

We're losing the blessed isolation that has saved us so far; we've actually, God forgive us, tried to lose it! ... Can't you see the chance we have, the glorious opportunity to build - if they leave us something to build with! Nearly seven million precious lives - give us time to breed from them as we could breed if we could feel security ahead. (*W*, p. 80)

In *Prelude to Christopher* it was the morally indefensible but socially acceptable practice of European-planned militarism - 'the brain-storm of a mad civilisation' (*PC*, p. 65) - which halted Nigel Hendon in his effort to preserve the reformed society which he had established. As the colonists of his utopian community confronted him with their belligerently enthusiastic decision to abandon the project and fight in the Great War, as a pacifist he was horrified to realise that human beings possessed 'a primaevial urge' (*PC*,

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<sup>21</sup> G. Lukacs, *The Historical Novel*, Harmondsworth, 1969, p. 63.

p. 176) to fight, 'a blood-lust, a savagery, a sadistic joy in battle.' (*PC*, p. 68)<sup>22</sup> Imbued with the imperialistic spirit of the times, sycophantic politicians with military mindsets enthusiastically committed their country's young manhood to 'an orgy of organised and nauseated killing.' (*RC*, p. 25) As T. R. Reese commented:

None of the Dominions had been consulted in the crisis diplomacy that had preceded the rupture in Europe, but all pledged themselves to contribute fully to the imperial war effort.<sup>23</sup>

Recalling the outbreak of the Great War, Gilbert remembered the 'maddening air of lunatic simplicity' which accompanied the authorities' statement that 'a great big bully of a nation was invading a gallant little neighbour, and [that] no man of British blood could stand by and see that happen'. The young Masseys asked questions:

Germany is a *country* - how can a country be a bully? Are the German people bullies? All of them? Beethoven, Goethe, Heine, the old Fraulein at Marty's school ... . Is it the rulers? Is it the Kaiser? (*TLC*, p. 124)

Officialdom must put a stop to such 'dangerous, fearless logic' (*TLC*, p. 124) when its manipulative authority depended on keeping the populace unenlightened. Therefore, if they were to be persuaded to fight in a war whose real causes left young minds confused, 'thought must be drowned, emotions must be degraded into emotionalism' and 'men must be pushed back towards their primitive origin.' (*TLC*, p. 124) Gilbert decided, 'There's no chance for the adolescent mind' (*TLC*, p. 125), indoctrinated as it was by imperialistically-minded leaders who promoted the idea that a dutiful Australian male must fight for the Empire as well as for his own country.<sup>24</sup> It was a lesson well learned throughout the nation, for, as Ronald Conway wrote,<sup>25</sup> 'The ranks of the first Australian expeditionary force swelled with little

<sup>22</sup> S. Meyer (ed.), *Dewey and Russell, An Exchange*, New York, 1985, p. 24. Dark's perceptive statement paralleled Bertrand Russell's suggestion that '[p]eople wish to fight, and they therefore persuade themselves that it is to their interest to do so.'

<sup>23</sup> T. R. Reese, *Australia in the Twentieth Century, A Political History*, Melbourne, 1964, p. 50.

<sup>24</sup> See S. Firth and J. Hoom, 'From Empire Day to Cracker Night', in P. Spearritt and D. Walker (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> R. Conway, *The Great Australian Stupor, An Interpretation of the Australian way of Life*, Melbourne, Revised Edition, 1985, p. 31.

need of propaganda'. So Gilbert enlisted, 'bemused by the patriotic legend' (*TLC*, p. 129) and with the conflict meaning for him only 'a subject for romantic reverie, a peg upon which to hang ... dreams of valor and sacrifice.' (*TLC*, p. 128)<sup>26</sup>

Conditioned to support Britain's policies, deceived by 'fine phrases spun to cover abominations' (*RC*, p. 24), and unwilling 'to probe too deeply into causes and still less into ultimate effects' (*PC*, p. 71), Australians reacted with sentimental, jingoistic enthusiasm to 'that lovely and dangerous and ill-directed flame called patriotism.' (*SaS*, p. 96) One member of the community harangued Nigel: 'There's a war, and your country's in it. Do you want to see it beaten? Haven't you any patriotism?' (*PC*, p. 163) Dark challenged the heroic ideal of patriotism when she had Nigel, trying to persuade them that the preservation of their sane and ordered world was more important than helping 'in fierce, concentrated bitterness, to wreck another' (*PC*, p. 98), insist - as Edith Cavell was to do later - 'Patriotism ... is not enough.' (*PC*, p. 163) This conception of patriotism as a hollow ideal was widespread among thinking people, with Bernard Shaw, for instance, indicting

... patriotism and all the other isms by which even those who are clever enough to be humanely disposed are persuaded to become the most destructive of all the destroyers.<sup>27</sup>

Dark rejected the false ideal of patriotism and showed her characters being true to themselves when Dr. Oliver Denning found himself in agreement with the worker, Jack, who had his priorities well sorted:

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<sup>26</sup> See E. Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), Frogmore, 1977, p. 133. Hemingway's protagonist also demolished the heroic idea: 'I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory.'

See also R. Gerster, 'War Literature, 1890-1980', in Hergenhan (ed.), *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*, *op. cit.*, pp. 337-352: 'The carnage along the Western Front in Flanders and France quickly convinced most European writers that the long tradition of heroic battle literature, stretching back almost three thousand years to Homer's epic of war and masculine virtue, the *Iliad*, was no longer valid.' Most Australian writers, however, 'ignored this revolution in war literature' as they 'soon elevated the Anzac to a supreme place in the pantheon of national heroes,' influenced by C. E. W. Bean's *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918* (1921-42). Gerster added that F. D. Davison's *The Wells of Beersheba* (1933) 'salvages the Light Horseman from a mire of cheap publicity.'

<sup>27</sup> B. Shaw, *Man and Superman, A Comedy and a Philosophy* (1903), London, 1929, pp. 108-09.

See also B. Shaw, 'Arms and the Man', in *The Complete Plays of Bernard Shaw*, London, 1934, p. 118, where Sergius cried, 'Oh, war! war! the dream of patriots and heroes!

A fraud ... . A hollow sham ...'

'Ere in me own country I'll fight if some other fellow tries to butt in. But they can shoot me before they'll ever get me out of it for one of their bloody European wars. (*W*, p. 146)

The novelist mourned all the youths of the western world who, 'captured by the war machine' (*TLC*, p. 248), marched to death in their millions. She condemned the 'revolting greed and still more revolting callousness' (*W*, pp. 147-48) of arrogant industrialists who engineered wars for their own gain, and 'the unknown powers which sent boys of eighteen to war' (*RC*, p. 166) without any consideration of what such a directive meant to the helpless individuals involved.<sup>28</sup> She had Jack vent his hostility concerning the wealthy socialite whose arrogance cost him his job: 'She and 'er sort's the kind that makes wars. We and our sort's the kind that fights them.' (*W*, p. 146) Eric Dark supported this view, writing that

... it seems justifiable to conclude that economic reasons have at all times taken a large part in causing wars, and now after some centuries of a purely acquisitive form of society have become the supreme cause.<sup>29</sup>

Bertrand Russell wrote of his great indignation at 'the spectacle of the young men of Europe being deceived and butchered in order to gratify the evil passions of their elders',<sup>30</sup> while Eric Dark was disgusted 'at a High Command which considered men's lives as so much expendable currency'.<sup>31</sup> The fictional Nigel asked bitterly:

Who was doing this thing? Weeding out the youngest, the strongest, the bravest - for what? Honour and responsibility? Work and propagation? No - just death'. (*PC*, p. 168)<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> See also J. Mulgan, *Report on Experience* (1947), Auckland, 1984, p. 145. This writer condemned 'the liberty of the Birmingham small arms manufacturers to sell Hitler millions of pounds' worth of arms in 1934.'

<sup>29</sup> E. P. Dark, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

See also H. J. Laski, *The State, In Theory and Practice* (1935), London, 1967, p. 249. The Darks apparently concurred with Laski who wrote that 'while no nation wants war, the economic system of each is so organised that many of its advantages cannot, in the long run, be secured without conflict'.

See also Barnard Eldershaw, *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, *op. cit.*, p. 78, where the 'Bloke in the pub' said, 'War's big business, a bloody swindle.'

<sup>30</sup> Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>31</sup> L. Baxter, '“Fires in the Fall”: The Story of a rational reformer, Dr. Eric Dark', *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>32</sup> See V. Palmer, *The Swayne Family*, Sydney, 1934, p. 187. Cp. Stephen's 'hatred of the old die-hards who'd landed them in such a welter of muck and blood' before he, too, was killed in the Great War.

Recognising, in this case, the demands of authority as the demands of evil, the novelist presented the cabal of 'elders' as being like 'some vast, bestial god of all homicidal lunatics driving the endless multitudes into carnage, lusting without abatement for blood and more blood.' (*PC*, p. 169)<sup>33</sup> That Dark regarded war as systematised murder was made obvious with Nigel's cynical reference to the fifth commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill' (*PC*, p. 125), as he watched the flag-waving crowd farewelling troops bound for the butchery of Gallipoli. When, on the battlefield, he saw 'endless heroism flickering out in a gasp, in a groan, in a rush of blood' (*PC*, p. 178), the practice of eugenics appeared in a more positive light compared with the slaughter of society's fittest in the Great War.

Aggression is part of the human make-up, but, in the novels Dark treated militarism as a masculine field pursuit. The character, Marty, wrote a book which affirmed women's hatred 'of man's mysterious, mischievous, destructive activities' (*TLC*, p. 131) and stressed their reluctance to go on supplying sons as victims. Commenting on the falling birth rate, she saw the progress of humanity toward higher goals blocked, and she asked what was to become of

... this world almost entirely and almost uninterruptedly governed by man, and now in such a state of chaos that woman's creative instinct - a steady light in all previous storms - is blown and shaken like a candle in the wind. (*TLC*, p. 131)

Dark had her insist that 'the principle of life... has been too often, and too brutally violated' (*TLC*, p. 132), and that, in order to save lives, women must be allowed to join men as administrators of society.

The suggestion that women held the solution to the problem of global violence recalls the influence in those years of writers like Havelock Ellis, who looked forward to a time 'when the conquest of the birth-rate has become so firmly established that human "cannon fodder" is too dear to use'.<sup>34</sup> With some irony, Dark disclosed her own conviction that women must

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<sup>33</sup>Cp. K. S. Prichard, *Intimate Strangers* (1937), Sydney, 1976, pp. 24-5: Greg, suffering 'the horror and nausea of his first day in the trenches in France, loathed the whole civilian population which had driven men like sheep to this shambles.'

<sup>34</sup>H. Ellis, *Impressions and Comments*, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

See also D. O'Reilly, *op. cit.*, p. 49: 'I shall bear no more little ones to glut your slaughter-yards of war.'

change their thinking and reject their traditional helplessness in the face of recurring, male-generated militarism, when, outside her fiction, she wrote:

If war is to be the aim, then the intelligence of womankind must, obviously, be shackled if she is to acquiesce in the part allotted to her - that of bearing sons to replenish the battlefields.<sup>35</sup>

When the Great War ended - 'Great', as Robin Gerster ironically expressed it, 'in the sense of its being a seismic historical catastrophe which transformed the literal, social, intellectual and political landscape of Europe'<sup>36</sup> - thoughtful people were left with a sense of unspeakable horror at modern warfare's brutalisation of humanity, with the resultant 'stench and lunacy and brute destruction.' (*TLC*, p. 206) Within a few years, as Dark showed in the novels, soaring unemployment and the widening gap between the working class and the wealthy made a mockery of the concept of a world 'fit for heroes to live in', an ideal which could 'never again be believed with the same wholehearted faith.' (*TLC*, p. 125) Without effective leadership, there spread worldwide an inability to regain the sense of purpose necessary for progress. Instead, there was a 'drifting of the human mind, anchorless, swinging helplessly to and fro to the pull of unscrupulous propaganda' (*TLC*, p. 128), manipulated by materialists whose interference remained, for the general public, submerged.

During the 1930s the colonial mentality still had Australia's conservative leaders in its grip, with the nation having no diplomatic missions in foreign countries and, as late as 1939, seeking guidance from England regarding the management of her armed services. This dependence contributed to the intellectual malaise and 'political inertia' (*TLC*, p. 33) which Dark saw prevailing in those years of uneasy peace, and which polemicist Brian Penton referred to as 'the economical and international cul-de-sac into which we had drifted'<sup>37</sup> on the life journey. The fictional Gilbert complained

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<sup>35</sup> Dark, draft of 'Women and Fascism', *op. cit.* p. 133.

This conviction was widely held in those times. See M. Kamester and J. Vellacott (eds.), *Militarism versus Feminism*, by Catherine Marshall, C. K. Ogden and Mary Sargent Florence (1915), London, 1987, p. 139: 'For such a purpose [woman] might well say ... "I will not bring more human life into the world" '.

<sup>36</sup> R. Gerster, *Big-noting*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> Penton, *Advance Australia - Where?*, *op. cit.*, p. 64. See also p. 19: 'Isolated partly by distance, more effectively by censorship from the impact of so many of the best minds of the great world, our own mind had lost its edge.'

that, although most people 'disapproved in theory' (*TLC*, p. 125) of the fighting in China, of Mussolini's attack on Abyssinia, and of Hitler's imperialistic 'grabbing [of] other nations' (*TLC*, p. 127), on the whole they were unwilling to take action by speaking out against it. As liberal democracy faced a confrontation with Fascism, throughout society people, instead of helping themselves, wanted to keep out of things:

... if they were on the dole they were too busy trying to keep alive to bother, and if they were in a wage job they were too busy trying to keep it, and if they were in executive positions they were too busy trying to show a profit, and if they had independent means they were too busy gardening and playing golf. (*TLC*, p. 126)

At the same time, the tiresome few who warned of looming catastrophe were seen as 'agitators, scare-merchants, war-mongers' (*TLC*, p. 18), with Gilbert himself labelled 'a dangerous radical.' (*TLC*, p. 179)

Even in 1938 the Australian government was practising a policy of appeasement toward Germany and Japan,<sup>38</sup> but Gilbert had

... no more faith in his Government's policy of appeasing the enemy to their near north than he had had three years ago in that other appeasement which led to Munich. (*TLC*, p. 66)

He frequently heard the assertion, 'I tell you we could use a Hitler here!' (*TLC*, p. 128)<sup>39</sup> Some contemporary reformers considered Germany to be an example of positive, clear-sighted government. They apparently ignored the attitude of Germany's leaders who, in deifying the nation, insisted on the obliteration of the self and the subjugation of the individual to a power group. Nor did they recognise the moral crisis inherent in a situation wherein

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<sup>38</sup> See W. Lowenstein, *Weevils in the Flour: An oral record of the 1930s depression in Australia* (1978), Melbourne, 1979, p. 449, wherein it was recorded that in 1939 the Prime Minister, Joseph Lyons, berated H. G. Wells (who was on tour in Australia) for criticising Hitler. See also p. 447: In 1936 the anti-Nazi play, 'Till the Day I Die', by Clifford Odets, was banned in Sydney.

<sup>39</sup> See A.C. Chisholm (editor-in-chief), *The Australian Encyclopaedia*, Sydney, 1958, Vol. VI, p. 275. In 1931 an organisation called 'The New Guard', headed by Eric Campbell, was formed in Sydney. Opposed to Communism, the organisation was inspired by Fascism and Nazism, and its members gave their leader the Fascist salute when he appeared at their meetings. By 1932, membership was believed to exceed 100,000, but The New Guard ceased to function after 1935.

Fascism's rejection of rationalist and humanist values and the aggressive, expansionist policy of Germany's National Socialism were endangering liberal civilisation. Dark's Gilbert feared that human beings were losing faith in themselves, that 'the power of democracy [was] running down':

This, finally, was the issue which split the world in two, split nations, split parties, split friendships and families - do you believe in human beings, or don't you? (*TLC*, p. 128)

The mood of the times was chastened, however, when the Spanish Civil War drove home the knowledge that the spread of Fascism would have to be halted.<sup>40</sup>

In *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, the socialist, Bowmaker, declared that 'war ... sows the seed of the next war'.<sup>41</sup> The allied leaders' harsh treatment of Germany after the Great War had much to do with the spread of Fascism, and the few concerned people were asking, 'Can you flatten out a whole nation and keep it flattened - and even if you can, should you?' (*TLC*, p. 127) As Dark wrote, 'The central idea of the Fascist doctrine is the inevitability, the gloriousness, the desirability of war', and she quoted from Benito Mussolini's *The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism* :

Fascism believes neither in the possibility nor the utility of perpetual peace ... . War alone brings up to the highest tension all human energy, and puts the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have the courage to meet it.<sup>42</sup>

The Second World War erupted, with 'fear run mad over the face of the earth like a pestilence.' (*W*, p. 148) This was the 'world-storm' (*TLC*, p. 318)<sup>43</sup> in which 'so much achievement [was] now to be endangered' (*TLC*, p. 136), as it forced people 'who had tasted stability and discovered a motive power

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<sup>40</sup> Vance and Nettie Palmer lived in Spain for a time and were active in alerting Australians to the evils of Fascism and its possible impact on their own society.

<sup>41</sup> Barnard Eldershaw, *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

<sup>42</sup> Dark, 'Women and Fascism', *op. cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>43</sup> Cp. Dark's awareness of the 'storm' with P. Bortome, *The Mortal Storm* (1937), Bath, 1975, a novel which was set in Germany in the 1930s as Nazism gained a firm hold, and the German-Jewish heroine, Freya, saw people 'flung, with mortal agony ... into a storm of terror.' See also Barnard Eldershaw, *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, *op. cit.*, p. 136. Knarf, talking of these years, said, 'But for the most part the people crouched down and waited for the fury to pass, as if it were a storm or some other "act of God."'

for existence' to return to 'that lunacy of danger and suffering.' (*TLC*, p. 136)  
 Dark revealed the way in which the pressures of war affected the individual as the

... whole pattern of life disintegrated, and its particles regrouped themselves - human particles, each one of which carried to his place in the major problem the multitudinous, demanding problems of his individual life. (*TLC*, p. 205)<sup>44</sup>

Considering his thoughtful daughter, Prue, Gilbert was glad that, despite the politicians' 'platitudinous phrases' and 'the stereotyped propaganda' (*TLC*, p. 130), she was more politically enlightened than he had been at her age, with 'some understanding of the forces which were tearing her world to shreds.' At the same time, he was distressed that she must bear the knowledge 'of duplicity, hypocrisy, swinish greed, inhuman brutality, endless stupidity, insatiable lusts for power.' (*TLC*, p. 64)

During the course of *The Little Company* Gilbert was made aware of the subtle ways in which war damaged the individual psyche. On the night of the Japanese submarine attack on Sydney,<sup>45</sup> when he watched the harbour's surface 'broken by the conning-tower of a hostile submarine, swept by rocking searchlights, churned and blasted by falling depth charges' (*TLC*, p. 224), he was afraid, fearing 'the destructive mechanisms of war merely because they exist'. Although he felt compassion for the Japanese submariners, 'dead or dying, trapped under the moon-cold water in a steel prison' (*TLC*, p. 221), his sense of utter helplessness induced in him a feeling which could have developed into a moral collapse, a kind of 'self-sabotage' (*TLC*, p. 223):

Suddenly he felt the true danger of war assail him in a flood of longing to stop thinking and act instead. He wanted to go and find a Jap and kill him - not for any logical reason, but merely in an explosion of resentment against a world which denied him peace. He felt an

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<sup>44</sup> Cp. T. Keneally, *The Cut-Rate Kingdom*, Sydney, 1980, in which Keneally wove domestic incidents into many of the public events referred to in Dark's novel.

<sup>45</sup> See D. Jenkins, *Battle Surface! Japan's Submarine War Against Australia 1942-44*, Sydney, 1992, pp. 201-23. On May 31, 1942, three midget submarines penetrated Sydney Harbour and sank the *HMAS Kuttabul*, killing twenty-one naval ratings. A week later, the lower North Shore and parts of the eastern suburbs were shelled by one of the parent submarines.

insane desire ... to throw his faiths overboard, to abandon his convictions, to repudiate life because it had become an intolerable nuisance. Nothing had ever frightened him so much before. (*TLC*, p. 223)

So began the grim years, but now that war was an actuality, Dark showed the Australians displaying what Clem Christesen called the 'strong, vital forces ... hidden underneath [the] social framework'.<sup>46</sup> Not only did they accept the challenge to overcome wartime restrictions as surmountable obstacles on the life journey, but they also made the intense psychological adjustments demanded, reverting 'to the conception of life as a perilous thing - precarious, insecure.' (*TLC*, p. 169) Crisis followed crisis in Europe, North Africa and 'the far East' (*TLC*, p. 170), and newspaper headlines became the 'daily blows' that hammered 'the loose-knit exploratory mind of the civilised human being into a cohesive mass, hard, solid and resistant.' (*TLC*, p. 170)

Dark promoted those Australian qualities which justified a sense of pride. Despite their former apathy, and the fact that the government failed to provide 'any guidance, or strength, or statement of purpose' (*TLC*, p. 171), the writer had Gilbert proudly admit that these folk, struggling forward out of the murk of their unprepossessing past and still clinging to 'the idea of survival and perpetuation' (*TLC*, p. 67), were by no means 'docile people.' (*TLC*, p. 66) As the Japanese poured south 'like a dark glacier' (*TLC*, p. 172), the Australians saw no reason to doubt their own courage and their ability to handle these crises, these tests on the life journey: 'Danger accumulated in the north, but the material for resistance accumulated too.' (*TLC*, p. 249) Whereas previously their immediate danger had contracted their vision to a concern for their 'own threatened existence' (*TLC*, p. 170), now 'the relentless logic' of this global conflict 'dragged even the most parochial minds away from exclusive contemplation of their own territories' (*TLC*, p. 249), and Dark had them realising that this war threatened humanity itself.

Disturbing the group of Sydney writers in *The Little Company* was the realisation that war prevented cultural advancement by immobilising the imagination and paralysing creative activity,<sup>47</sup> so that there was a 'drying up of honest writing at its source.' (*TLC*, p. 62) This left

<sup>46</sup> C. Christesen, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> Dark referred to this as 'Paralysis of the Creative Faculty'. See letter to P. R. Stephensen, April 1, 1938, Stephensen Papers, ML MSS 1284, Box Y2140.

... the creative mind staggering under the repeated hammer-blows of destructiveness, ... drawing on its own reserves till they were gone, and then finding in its environment not enough communal creative spirit to renew them. (*TLC*, p. 62)

Gilbert's writing gave him an 'impetus for living' (*TLC*, p. 113), a belief that his mission in life was to warn the less discerning of questionable social practices with the hope of effecting change, but now he was seriously hindered. Certain that he 'had never been better equipped to write than he was now' (*TLC*, p. 63), he was plagued by mental and emotional fatigue, with his brain fading 'like a radio.' Elsa Kay and Marty were writers in the same condition, and Marty, trying to account for it, decided that their brains were 'tuned-in to creativeness', while 'at present the mass-brain [was] tuned-in to destructiveness.' (*TLC*, p. 20) Gilbert realised that this writer's block was not merely 'a personal problem', that 'the immobilisation of the creative mind' was just one symptom of 'a crumbling civilization', and that 'the multiplication of his own failure all over the world was no small and unimportant matter.' (*TLC*, p. 15)<sup>48</sup>

In Germany Hitler was taking retrogressive action, destroying part of Europe's cultural heritage, a necessary procedure for Nazis who saw culture as fundamentally international and so apt to subvert nationalism. Gilbert was justifiably uneasy about 'the fate of all books in a world destruction-mad.' (*TLC*, p. 61)<sup>49</sup> Locally, the restriction of cultural exchange and literary contact was reflected in the off-loading of a consignment of overseas books ordered for Prue's bookstore - a haunt of students and the intellectually curious - because other goods had been given higher priority.<sup>50</sup> The war was retarding cultural growth, also, in that young writers who should be taking over from Gilbert's war-tired generation were, instead, 'firing tommy-guns, making

<sup>48</sup>See M. Franklin papers, ML MSS 364/26/443, letter from Dark dated 14/4/1941. It is interesting to note that Dark also suffered from writers' block. As she wrote, 'In the year - nearly - since I finished my last book [*The Timeless Land*], I must have written quite the length of another in depressing and abortive scraps. Nothing comes - perhaps it's the war, which tends to make all one's thinking restless and chaotic.'

<sup>49</sup>Cp. Bottoms, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-3, where Freya said, 'National Socialism is cruel in itself - and against thought. It leads back into the past - and not on into the future!'

<sup>50</sup>See R. Nile and D. Walker, 'Marketing the Literary Imagination: Production of Australian Literature, 1915-1965', in Hergenhan (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 291: British publishers decided that 'shipping books to Australia was poor use of wartime resources.'

munitions, driving lorries.’ (*TLC*, p. 63)

Complaining to an interviewer about paper control - monitored by what the writer, Lynne Strahan, would call ‘the Kafkaesque bureaucracy’<sup>51</sup> - Dark protested that ‘the illogical use being made of such paper as is available is stultifying the writer’s war contribution to a great extent.’<sup>52</sup> The fictional Gilbert echoed this with his anger at the waste of ‘typing lunatic Army documents in triplicate’ (*TLC*, p. 63), while the journalist, Nick, accused the government of using the paper shortage as ‘a cover-up for censorship’, so that whatever ‘the reactionaries don’t want printed won’t be printed.’ (*TLC*, p. 63) There was concern, also, that the official control of information sources<sup>53</sup> would result in a psychological acceptance of such restrictions as normal, with the people condoning their continuance after the war,<sup>54</sup> thus suppressing original thinking and eroding the desire for self-development.

When her pompous husband, Arthur, declared that Win’s book about socialism should be censored, she ‘flared out with a passion that staggered him, claiming that all censorship should be utterly abolished.’ (*W*, p. 21) With the imposition of censorship, insecure wartime bureaucrats proceeded to exercise their own opinions in order to supervise the morals of the individual, thus putting independent thought even more into bondage. As these officials applied repressive censorship to films, plays, radio-talks and books, the people played into their hands by accepting the situation with what Gilbert termed ‘every appearance of bovine incomprehension.’ (*TLC*, p. 68) Except for ‘a few intransigents’, the general public submitted to legislation which threatened ‘to deprive them of rights they had been battling to win since Magna Charta.’ (*TLC*, p. 68) They made no protest when they suffered ‘attacks upon their freedom of speech and assembly’, nor did they object to

... the framing of regulations which could condemn them to

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<sup>51</sup> See L. Strahan, *Just City and the Mirrors, Meanjin Quarterly and the Intellectual Front, 1940-1965*, Melbourne, 1984, p. 41.

<sup>52</sup> Dark, in Devanny, *Bird of Paradise*, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

<sup>53</sup> See A. Chisholm, ‘Introduction’, M. Barnard Eldershaw, *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, (Virago edition), London, 1983, p. xiii. Commenting on the censor’s cuts to the novel in 1947, Chisholm wrote: ‘The ... theme which most provoked the censor was that ... the Australian government, in order to keep the populace in line and willing to fight, manipulated the flow of information and concealed or distorted facts that would have allowed people to think for themselves about the war.’

<sup>54</sup> See Strahan, *op. cit.*, p. 41, in which the writer also expressed this concern.

secret trial and summary detention, which could expose their homes to search, their books to confiscation, and leave them totally at the mercy of any 'officer' who might choose to suspect them of being 'about to commit' an offence. (*TLC*, p. 68)

Eric Dark offered a stringent comment on the community's failure to speak out:

I can remember no public protest from [University] Senate or body of Professors when the Menzies Government was closing left-wing libraries, banning working-class papers, and raiding workmen's homes to confiscate their private books.<sup>55</sup>

In her role as occasional radio broadcaster, however, the subversive Marty, aware of 'that blind spot of officialdom which fails to realise that there is no such thing as an uncontroversial subject' (*TLC*, p. 91), adroitly managed to circumvent censorship. Dark had this intelligent woman, who knew that 'any subject must finally reveal itself as part of the whole social pattern', give her talks innocent titles covering 'unsettling ideas' which she passed on with 'small sharp comments, like pins, to prick the lethargic minds of armchair listeners.' (*TLC*, p. 91)<sup>56</sup> Gilbert, ever the rebel, helped the radical writer, Gerald Avery - who insisted that 'the first duty of a democrat is to read banned books' (*TLC*, p. 143) - to bury his leftist books, although, 'defying the mediaevalism of political persecution' (*TLC*, p. 100), he would not bury his own. When two policemen came to search Gerald's flat for leftist literature, Gilbert was perturbed at the thought 'that here, as in other lands, such authority could rise', and wondered how many police had developed 'a mentality which only awaited the sanction of authority to express itself in terms of the truncheon and the jackboot.' (*TLC*, p. 104) Dark's wry account of this encounter confirmed the opinion of H. G. Wells, who, after visiting

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<sup>55</sup> See E. P. Dark, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

See also copy of the Commonwealth Investigation Branch dossier entitled 'Dr. E. P. Dark, M. D.', Historical Library, Springwood, Folio 2, dated 7/5/1940. This includes a copy of the letter, dated 20/4/1940, which Eric Dark wrote to Sir Henry Manning, the N.S.W. Attorney-General, protesting against the proposal to ban Communist publications.

<sup>56</sup> In those years many Australian writers gave radio talks, including Dark, ('Talks & Interviews with Eleanor Dark - 1930s and 1940s', 7/10/1944, now unavailable). Several, among them the Palmers, Miles Franklin and Jean Devanny, participated in a series arranged by the Fellowship of Australian Writers. See *Australian Writers Speak, Literature and Life in Australia: A series of talks arranged by the Fellowship of Australian Writers for the Australian Broadcasting Commission*, Sydney, 1942.

Australia in 1939, wrote, 'A barrier of illiterate policemen and officials stands between the tender Australian mind and what they imagine to be subversive literature'.<sup>57</sup>

At this time Australian censors treated newspapers mercilessly. Brian Penton wrote of 'a major crisis in the relations between the Australian press and the national government' when, on April 16, 1944, the New South Wales censor suppressed the *Daily Telegraph* - which Penton edited - for publishing 'a censored story about the censorship'. In the next thirty-six hours the official did the same to all the Sydney daily newspapers, while the Victorian and South Australian censors forbade the publication of their afternoon editions. A High Court injunction released the Press from the ban but, meantime, in Sydney in the early morning of April 17,

... at the office of the *Daily Telegraph* - and again a few hours later at the *Daily Mirror* - company truck drivers were threatened at gunpoint by Commonwealth police when they attempted to deliver papers to the distributors.<sup>58</sup>

Other events exacerbated doubts about the integrity of certain powerful people overseas. When Hitler's deputy, Rudolph Hess, flew to Scotland, the British government issued a statement claiming that the flight was Hess's way of renouncing his loyalties and escaping from Germany, adding that he 'brought no messages or peace overtures with him.' (*TLC*, p. 82) The doubting Marty, however, felt 'as if she had been asked to believe that the moon was made of green cheese' (*TLC*, p. 81), and suggested that the authorities were protesting too much, that they were manipulating the news and deceiving the public, and she asked, furiously, 'How long will people put up with having their minds belted about like shuttlecocks?' (*TLC*, p. 83) She told her husband, 'I think he came to say: "We'll lay off you if you lay off us while we attack Russia" ' (*TLC*, p. 82), and offered her opinion that the Nazis

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<sup>57</sup> See H. G. Wells, *Travels of a Republican Radical in Search of Hot Water*, Harmondsworth, 1939, p. 45.

See also B. Penton, *Advance Australia - Where?*, *op. cit.*, p. 55: 'Midnight raids on libraries took place in which everything suspected of favouring the Soviet was confiscated. In one instance, every book in red binding was taken, while in others the Bible, Shakespeare and John Stuart Mill suffered a similar fate.'

Cp. F. Hardy, *The Four-legged Lottery*, London, 1958, p. 186: 'Gerry's books - they took his books when the Party was banned in 1940 and he never got them back.'

<sup>58</sup> Buckridge, *The Scandalous Penton*, *op. cit.*, pp. 258-59, who quoted from B. Penton, *Censored!*, Sydney, 1947, p. 13.

dispatched Hess because they were confident that they could persuade certain influential British groups to collaborate in this attack. Thus Dark suggested that, under the mantle of patriotism, there co-existed sinister pockets of self-interest. Eric Dark wrote:

We know that in this war, in every invaded country, there have been those (always from the privileged class) who were eager to collaborate with the Fascist conquerors - in every country except Russia. The reason seems quite obvious; they understand, or at least feel, that Fascism is the only force which can keep them secure against a rising tide of socialism. It was to such people in England that Hess flew in his attempt at a compromise which would throw all the power of Europe and Britain against Russia.<sup>59</sup>

Presented in this chapter is Dark's indictment of the 'peculiarly human activity'<sup>60</sup> of war, with its retrogressive effect on social evolution for, as one of her characters claimed,

... in the affairs of mankind, no less than in the body of the individual man, health must mean tranquillity, and disease must mean conflict and disintegration. (*W*, p. 147)

With particular emphasis on the destructive effects of the Europeans' treatment of the Australian Aborigines, the novelist protested, too, that, as well as damaging and rendering powerless the individual so that 'the sense of a purpose in life ... [was] constantly imperilled' (*W*, p. 147), war devastated world culture, disturbed the laws and customs of the whole social fabric, and undermined the human decency and compassion on which any satisfying community life depends. Accusing human beings of erecting barriers between races and nations, thus encouraging the prejudice which makes such wars possible,<sup>61</sup> she denounced compliant governments which persuaded the apathetic public to accept and react to the false ideal of unthinking patriotism as a means of bulwarking their own power.

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<sup>59</sup> E. P. Dark, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>60</sup> See Gerster, *Big-Noting*, *op. cit.*, p. 245, quoting F. Manning, *Her Privates We* (1930).

<sup>61</sup> Cp. V. Woolf, *Three Guineas* (1938), London, 1986, p.163, in which the author dreamt of 'a unity that rubs out divisions as if they were chalk marks only', and discussed 'the capacity of the human spirit to overflow boundaries and make unity out of multiplicity.'

As a practical idealist, Dark refuted the glorification of war as a romantic contest when she condemned influential warmongers who served their own interests by providing ever more diabolical technological devices for 'orgies of killing.' (*RC*, p. 199) War was no chivalrous combat between two sets of heroic warriors, she demonstrated, but a gathering of destructive forces instigated by unscrupulous human beings greedy for wealth and power.

With Marty's decision that, in the face of war, 'only the invisible defences are sound' (*TLC*, p. 169), Dark intimated that human beings must use personal and spiritual values as forces which would not only enhance life, but which would permit the interior life to shape outer circumstances. The next chapter will consider Dark's ideas of the way in which, in a world dominated by reason, and in which the most dubious products of the intellect have done so much to impede humanity's progress, the people must use as aids on the journey those forces which alone are able to foster in the individual a sense of coherence and purpose.

## Chapter Eight

### PSYCHOLOGICAL INTEGRATION - 'the creative trinity'

If they are to travel with assurance on the life journey, human beings must satisfy their innate longing for personal meaning and coherence, and this cannot be accomplished unless reason is deposed from its position of dominance and all the facets of the individual's psychic structure integrated. Dark realised that, for the rationalists, those psychic factors concerned with feeling were not relevant in determining ultimate values, and she constantly revealed her rejection of that seventeenth century mode of thought which separated reason and 'its dark enemy, emotion.' (*W*, p. 168) Although well aware that the exercise of reason was a necessary component of progress, with her romantic sensibility Dark placed great importance on the exercise of feelings, recognising that 'two functions of the human spirit' were 'intellect controlling emotion and emotion warming intellect'.<sup>1</sup>

A comment concerning the 'interdependence of man's soul and stomach'<sup>2</sup> indicated the novelist's interest in the psycho-physical relationship and her conviction that an understanding of the necessity for the integration of mental and physical forces, with body and mind forming one organic whole, must play a significant part in humanity's advancement. Her medico, Oliver, deeply admired the 'intricate, beautifully functioning' and 'exquisitely sentient' body, ready 'to meet danger' in illness and 'busy with miracles of heroic compromise and readjustment' (*SaS*, pp. 52-3), and he rebuked those who exalted the spirit and gave 'scant respect to the visible self whose ills were ugly and odoriferous, whose miseries were definite and gross.' (*SaS*, p. 54) Showing his impatience with individuals who continually thwarted their own development, he denounced the 'pernicious doctrine of dualism, always trying to divide the indivisible' and to 'rend apart that closely knitted, intricately woven, delicately adjusted entity called man.' (*W*, p. 106)

Oliver regarded the human being not as

... a spirit within a body, or a body enclosing a spirit, but a

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<sup>1</sup> See Dark, *The Peril and the Solitude*, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

complete and miraculous entity whose ultimate genius is its awareness of itself. (SaS, p. 54)

In similar vein he insisted that it was not very practical for a doctor to treat his patient's bodily afflictions 'and to leave his afflicted mind, his groping soul, his torturing emotions still chaotic and unrelieved.' (SaS, p. 86) Eric Dark agreed:

There is no more room for dualism in medicine than in religion or philosophy; each must deal with man as one entity, indivisible, or the end will be false. Unless a man is at one with himself, there will be moral conflict resulting in psychological disease, and the physical well-being will suffer in turn.<sup>3</sup>

The novelist's work implied that the development of the individual's self-knowledge, moral strength and integrity depended on the thorough meshing of the 'creative trinity, mind, body and spirit'. (RC, p. 315) This achieved the integration of the intellectual, physical, and emotional aspects of the personality into the whole entity, directed by the will, which we call the self. She accused human beings of persistently frustrating their own psychic cohesion by failing to exercise all those elements of the personality, with the result that the self's unity was prone to disintegrate under the impact of various individual and social pressures.

In investigating the 'truths of human psychology' (RC, p. 261), *Return to Coolami* focused on the personal discord of a man whose refusal to recognise the emotional aspect of his psyche threatened to warp two lives by depriving both of them of that love which, Dark insisted, was such a strengthening and encouraging agent on the life journey. In her complex psychological exploration of the character, Bret Maclean, she exposed the split between emotion and reason in the modern world, particularly in the Australian male. In that era, society conditioned males to cultivate emotional detachment - men did not cry - so that, naturally enough, like Hugh Watt in Prichard's *Coonardoo*, Bret was emotionally warped. Apparently 'an

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<sup>3</sup> E. P. Dark, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

This was a matter of great interest in those times. Cp. Bottome, *op. cit.*, p. 5. The novel's heroine, Freya, was a medical student: 'Her very blood felt the ardour of healing. She would not stop with the body either! Man was a whole creature. Mind and the spirit behind the mind were one with the flesh.'

See also S. Chase, *The Tyranny of Words* (1938), London, 1943, p. 133: 'Physicians must take into account the uniqueness of each patient ... the individual is a whole'.

ordinary and rational man' (*RC*, p. 86), his only interest seemed to be the development of his property, Coolami. When, however, he promised his dying brother, Jim, that he would take care of Jim's pregnant mistress, Susan, and decided to do this by marrying her, he did 'a strange, quixotic ... thing.' (*RC*, p. 109) This decision led, eventually, to an emotional release which proved him to be, for all his stern psychological control, a surprisingly assertive man of action who had to admit that 'one got a kick out of flirting, now and then, with danger!' (*RC*, p. 261)

The writer established credibly the stages in Bret's emotional development. A few loveless, casual relationships in his past having contributed to his cynical rejection of love as 'the giraffe among emotions - impossible, incredible!' (*RC*, p. 155) he readily assumed, after his marriage of convenience to Susan, that there was no reason 'why good companionship should not take ... the place of love.' (*RC*, p. 263) Bret's idea of the marriage was entirely reasonable, based on 'logic and rectitude and a handful of good intentions' (*RC*, p. 160), yet Dark questioned its morality when she had him admit that, even for the sake of ensuring the legitimacy of his brother's child, it was not much use 'giving marriage with one hand and years of misery with the other.' (*RC*, p. 149) Susan was forced to face 'the essential ugliness of the compact they had made' (*RC*, p. 302), and Bret, too, sensed its shoddiness when, comparing their 'mock-marriage' (*RC*, p. 258) with the fulfilling marriage of his parents, he judged it to be 'little short of sacrilege.' (*RC*, p. 216)

Susan discovered that their agreement to save their dismal union by being 'rational, honest [and] controlled' (*RC*, p. 46) was not easy to carry out when there were always 'dark undercurrents swirling beneath the surface calmness of [their] rational discussion.' (*RC*, p. 109) She found that the 'mind, soul, psyche or what you will of a human being is a fathomless wood' (*RC*, p. 46) in which repressed emotions could cause the wayfarer to stray from the path ahead, so that, as she phrased it, 'you were lost, quite confused, your nerves screaming with the panic of your utter solitude.' (*RC*, p. 47) So she and Bret went on quarrelling, imperilling any chance of happiness together. He kept 'fighting an inner hostility' (*RC*, p. 109) at the same time as he experienced 'a definite desire to hurt her' (*RC*, p. 150), while

despite her love for him, she indulged in 'fits of malice and impudence' (*RC*, p. 193), with 'her love stinging itself brutally, scorpion-wise, into strange frenzies.' (*RC*, p. 109)

Although day-to-day living with Susan did not banish his basic resentment, when he saw how the pregnancy was depleting her youthful vigour he experienced some compassion and a 'confusion of thought and sensation.' (*RC*, p. 86) Later he tried to explain his position, telling his wife, 'I don't seem to be the loving sort. I don't understand it. I don't think I want to.' (*RC*, p. 87) As he put it, 'there always seems to be - a constraint - the whole atmosphere's thick with things we're feeling and not saying.' (*RC*, p. 86) His life was becoming increasingly complicated and he found himself 'beginning to analyse his motives like some blasted be-spectacled highbrow dabbling in psychological bunk!' (*RC*, p. 270)

Bret was travelling the 'smooth road of logic and common sense' (*RC*, p. 157), and, when the baby died, he justified his admission that he did not want a divorce, by informing Susan, 'I like you, I admire you, I want you, and I want children. ... And sound enough reasons, too.' (*RC*, p. 88) Yet increasingly his reasonableness was 'upset ... by unspecified emotions whose vagueness he most bitterly resented.' (*RC*, p. 156) When Susan told him contemptuously that she intended to play-act happiness, he was disturbed by her assumption of his 'emotional deformity.' (*RC*, p. 97) He confronted the issue honestly, however, and had a small revelation that love must be some kind of sixth sense:

Which meant, seeing that your emotions came to you through your senses, that you were, lacking that sixth sense, an emotional half-wit. (*RC*, p. 96)

As he learnt to appreciate Susan's many attractive qualities, Bret grew increasingly conscious of his own limitations, admitting that he was not 'perceptive enough to be able to feel in more than passing glimmers any comprehension of this mysterious affliction called love.' (*RC*, p. 126) Strange emotions then emerged as he glimpsed his wife in the lamplight on their overnight stay at Kalangadoo and was surprised to feel 'a more nebulous, queerly satisfying emotion which utterly defied his powers of analysis.' (*RC*,

p. 186) It was as if he were 'fighting through some almost impenetrable undergrowth, unaware of the actual nature of the shrubs and creepers in [his] way.' (*RC*, p. 192)

Dark paralleled the psychological struggle with the physical one when, in rescuing the marooned Colin from the mountain and making the dangerous descent with Susan, Bret grew aware of 'the fugitive impulses of an emotion that had come like a moth out of the dark.' (*RC*, p. 269) His anxiety for her safety created 'an agony of fear he'd never conceived possible' (*RC*, p. 245), and the strain of the mountaineering episode culminated 'in an unfamiliar burst of a hitherto quite unknown emotion.' (*RC*, p. 251) His attainment of psychic integration was evident when he awoke next morning 'feeling physically, mentally and emotionally fine!' (*RC*, p. 261) and an old psychological maxim began to make sense - 'your emotions needed exercise just like your muscles.' (*RC*, p. 271) When they arrived at Coolami, the young man's gradually developing expectation of 'some undefined promise' (*RC*, p. 70) in their marriage was realised. As he recognised this feeling for his wife as love, he was astonished by the 'suddenly unimpeded torrent of his emotions', and by the shock of joy with which he experienced 'some new and infinitely precious sense of completion and fulfilment.' (*RC*, p. 309)

Thinking of his dogmatic brother, Nick, Dark's character, Gilbert Massey, suspected that 'there must always be to the creative mind something faintly comic in the spectacle of sternly detached intellect.' (*TLC*, p. 288) In *Prelude to Christopher*, however, to the anguished Linda the domination of reason in her husband's psyche became a formidable obstacle on the way as she struggled toward her goal of self-realisation. 'Science makes us barbarians of the intellect',<sup>4</sup> it has been observed, and Linda was made tragically aware of the inhumane practices of the 'over-complicated mechanism with which man learned to think.' (*PC*, p. 160) Human beings, she concluded, 'learning arduously how to think, have forgotten how to feel' (*SaS*, p. 69), developing instead 'a sophisticated intelligence at the expense of a fundamental wisdom.' (*W*, p. 121) Linda was appalled at the result:

On and on, your great brain like a parasite feeding on your

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<sup>4</sup> Huxley, *Point Counter Point*, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

joy, your elemental passions, the exquisite wonder you once possessed that you were alive at all! On till there's nothing left but the ingenious toys your brain conceived; and still on, to the ultimate darkness. Where now? Does your brain tell you that? No retreat! Only destruction. (*PC*, p. 161)

Dark demonstrated how society compounded Linda's psychological problems. Threatened with hereditary insanity, she was both a biologist who understood her eugenicist husband's condemnation of indiscriminate breeding, and a woman beset by the 'two most powerful urges of humanity - self-preservation and the reproduction of one's own kind' (*PC*, p. 104), so that she was continually torn by tension, her life 'a glorious little hell.' (*PC*, p. 79) Linda suffered from a dissociation of reason and emotion and was forever engaged in a battle in which the two were never reconciled. She brooded:

God, how you fear your brain! Then suddenly you find an ally in your body. It says 'Come back ... ; escape from your thoughts into your sensations. Feel joy, feel desire, feel growth and fulfilment. (*PC*, p. 161)

The attainment of the integrated personality which is conducive to self-realisation was beyond her. Psychic imbalance was assured as the repression of emotion grew into a habit and she resolved 'never to let her rags of happiness be seen lest they be snatched from her.' (*PC*, p. 115) Yet it was only by allowing intellect to dominate emotion in her fragile psyche in the form of extreme self-control that she was able to function at all in society. In Linda's mind, then, such control became bondage, and the abandonment of control, freedom. When Nigel's mother telephoned to announce her impending visit, Dark had the disturbed woman imagine the exhilaration to be enjoyed if, giving full play to her jealous hatred of the old lady, she could allow her self-control to 'slip a cog - and then let go altogether' (*PC*, p. 59) :

Then one could do as one liked - not be everlastingly choking back impulses, fighting ... one's lurching brain back to a precarious equilibrium. (*PC*, p. 59)

Violent hand imagery was a brilliantly effective device which Dark used to accentuate the release of Linda's emotions. Earlier, a hand movement introduced the first concrete sign of encroaching insanity when,

finding unbearable the presence of the housemaid, Nancy, and seeing a knife near the sink, she felt her hand move 'as though it had some life apart, some fierce desire of its own.' (*PC*, p. 59) Later, awakening from a deep sleep, she found her hands moving 'restlessly, like caged animals' (*PC*, p. 132) Then, when her mother-in-law arrived, there was another dramatic progression toward madness as the afflicted woman deliberately threw off all self-control: 'She knew suddenly, exultantly, the true meaning of freedom ... . She knew no restraint, no control; no laws bound her.' (*PC*, p. 192) When her fury subsided after her vicious attack on Nigel's mother, Linda's hands seemed to be 'breathing', as '[s]lowly and rhythmically they opened and shut, like the softly heaving flanks of some sleeping animal.' (*PC*, p. 195) At Kay's intervention, however, Linda's intellect took over and she regained the self-control she needed to implement her plan of committing suicide.

In those early years of the twentieth century the fresh insights into human sexuality offered by Freud and Havelock Ellis effected social change by bringing the matter increasingly into the public sphere. Dark always dealt radically with this subject, reminding her readers that understanding and exercising their sexuality was a crucial element of self-fulfilment. *Sun Across the Sky* demonstrated the disastrous effects of repressed sexuality and the resulting imbalanced psyche when the novelist examined Helen's unhappy life with her husband, Dr. Oliver Denning.

Oliver's strengths on his life quest were principally due to his integrated psyche, so that every part of him, 'and each part vigorous, worked in unison',

... for so intensely were his mental, physical and psychological processes parts of one unusually indivisible whole, that thoughts were reflected instantly in bodily movements, and bodily movements in emotional states.  
(*SaS*, p. 22)

The mismatching of this vital man and the inhibited Helen was seen to be destructive to them both. Any attempt to discuss their problems and perhaps remove the obstacles in the way of their search for fulfilment together left Oliver frustrated, trapped, and becoming, 'with every attempt to release

himself, more helplessly enmeshed by some tangle of barbed wire or thorny creeper', so that he despaired of ever finding the way out of these 'endless lanes of words, of talk, of explanation which always led you into blind alleys!' (SaS, p. 105) He was ashamed of his impatience with Helen, for, as he admitted, 'the most elementary justice demands that one should not be reviled or despised for what one cannot help.' Considering how ordinary people, by their callous treatment, dragged back the abnormal from any kind of self-development, he wondered whether he, too, were not

... as ignorant, as brutish, as devoid of imagination as medieval mobs who had persecuted cripples and hunchbacks, jeered at deformities of the body as he ... sometimes jeered, if only inwardly, at his wife. (SaS, p. 102)

Oliver felt great compassion for one

... whose only crime was that she was a little different from the average woman, ... who couldn't be blamed and shouldn't be victimised because some hormones in her differed, or some glandular secretion varied a little from the normal. (SaS, p. 121)

As a doctor he balked, however, at the idea of trying to help her. 'Tricky business', he reflected, 'this psycho-analysing of people. Might do more harm than good', and, in any case, he suspected that she would 'begin to buck and shy the minute she found any one trying to get below the surface of her mind.' (SaS, p. 104)<sup>5</sup>

Helen was no adventurous wayfarer, afflicted as she was with a 'strange shrinking from all but the most trivial aspects of her life' (SaS, p. 20), for just as Oliver 'liked to take life in armsful,' she 'could only bear to touch it with her finger-tips.' (SaS, p. 130) She was a slave to propriety, and social conventions directed her on her journey as she marshalled her 'orderly stack of ideas' and 'carefully-arranged convictions' (SaS, p. 15) and bowed to 'a little god called "The Right Thing".' (SaS, p. 36) Before her marriage, Helen had managed to know 'only people whom she could depend on to say ... and

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<sup>5</sup> Cp. the short story by Patricia O'Rane (Dark's pseudonym), 'Wheels', *The Bulletin*, 12/12/1925, p. 44, in which an amateur psycho-analyst did much damage with her 'mental vivisection'.

do the right thing and to think the right thing', so that 'life had been held at bay', its blows 'few and far between'. So 'she had gone, by going warily, comparatively scatheless' (*SaS*, p. 37) separated as far as possible from the realities of life. When she married Oliver, whose mind was like 'a windy seaside house with all its doors and windows open, all its rooms full of a rush and a clamour of rude, bracing air' (*SaS*, p. 37), she found herself

... caught in a veritable gale of disturbing thoughts and violent emotions, so that she retreated, panicky and dishevelled, into the one quiet room of her own mind, where thick doors of tradition and convention protected her from the clamours without. (*SaS*, pp. 37-8)

'While you were single', Helen reflected, 'you could, if you wanted to, sit in the grandstand' and watch life's contest from afar. Marriage, however,

... brought you out into the arena, and adversaries came against you in legions. Pain and bereavement and sickness lay in wait for you, jealousy and passion leapt at you like tigers, and all the air about you was loud with conflict, and heavy with the taint of elemental things. ... [S]he couldn't bear it. So she stood flattened against the wall and prayed for it all to pass her by. (*SaS*, p. 132)

'A great adversary, this life, knocking you about, cuffing you, flooring you, tempting you on everlastingly with the promise of another sunrise - another day' (*SaS*, p. 192), Oliver reflected. For he was another of Dark's adventurous questers, believing that only by engaging in the contest, 'by standing up and defying life to ... do its worst, could he find the the full measure of his own vitality!' (*SaS*, p. 42) Helen, however, refused to do battle. Oliver asked, 'Do you think life lets you off because you're passive?' (*SaS*, p. 36) 'I don't see why it shouldn't', she insisted. 'If you want just to live quietly not involving yourself in any one else's life, I don't see why you shouldn't be left alone to do it.' (*SaS*, p. 37) As Oliver saw it, however, 'Once you let yourself become afraid o' life, ... you're done!' (*W*, p. 366)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Dark, 'The Peril and the Solitude', *op. cit.*: '[Christ's] doctrine is one of mental and spiritual striving and alertness in every individual ... . This is a plain injunction to be incessantly curious, insistently critical, assiduous in exploring the possibilities of our life, it is a plain warning against apathetic acceptance.'

Cp. H. Ibsen, 'Hedda Gabler', in *Hedda Gabler and other plays*, London, 1975. Like Hedda, Helen had no vocation, and no desire to take on responsibility.

The novels revealed Dark's conviction that, through embracing experience, the individual learned to make responsible choices and thus nourished the self, for, as Erich Fromm expressed it, 'the self is as strong as it is active.'<sup>7</sup> Her character, Oliver, was made to believe that emotion was 'as indispensable to the health of the soul as any vital organ to the body' (*SaS*, p. 69), and that it was through contact with others that people came to know not only their own emotions but also the emotions of others, what aroused them, and their significance to the individual's own progress on the life journey. Evading emotional and physical experience as she did, Helen was devitalised, and, with 'no emotions to guide her' (*SaS*, p. 13), she lacked the motivation to take any kind of spontaneous, life-enhancing action. With no sense of purpose, she was trapped in a kind of personal stasis, so that, as she blocked her own way to any kind of personal growth, life seemed meaningless to her.

'Busy with the absorbing trifles from which, she felt, so safe and satisfactory a life could be achieved' (*SaS*, p. 14), Helen also refused to allow any outlet to her sexuality, denying those instinctual demands which lurked submerged in her subconscious mind, swaying 'darkly ... like seaweeds in some fluctuating current'. She found herself at times

... bringing these darker preoccupations momentarily to the surface of her mind, so that there was a little splash and flurry of thought (*SaS*, p. 14),<sup>8</sup>

but she soon let them slip back into the darkness.

Yet she was all too conscious of her sexual inadequacy. 'What was this power', she asked herself, 'this restriction, this dreadful tyrannical thing within her which she could not bully into submission?' (*SaS*, p. 71) Although she loved Oliver in her own detached way, in her reaction to the physical and emotional aspects of sexual activity she was 'as utterly nauseated and uncomprehending as the civilized human being in his reaction to the

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<sup>7</sup> Fromm, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

<sup>8</sup> See A. R. Chisholm and J. J. Quinn (eds.), *The Prose of Christopher Brennan*, 1962, Sydney, p. 79: Cp. this with the thought of Brennan who claimed that in the subconscious mind dwelt 'the whole energy by which we live', from which 'every now and then something swims up into the sunlit region.'

cannibal.' (SaS, p. 13) Consequently, 'she found her brain thinking clearly and dreadfully of her marriage as a mental and a physical rape.' (SaS, p. 16) Even so, she could not conceive of advancing on life by herself and the thought of divorcing Oliver found her 'faced by dark, diverging paths, each one, when she peered down it, more frightening, more hopeless than the last.' (SaS, p. 71)

Dark exposed, clinically, the connection between mental and physical states with the unfortunate results of Helen's repression. She developed a neurotic disorder,<sup>9</sup> becoming like 'one vast exposed nerve constantly palpitating with the dread of contact' (SaS, p. 36), with a phobic reaction to germs and an obsessive-compulsive need to wash her hands. Inflicted psychological stress impaired her physical health and she suffered psychosomatic illnesses such as the pain in her legs which disappeared when she spent a few weeks away from Oliver in a mountain guest-house, and recurred when the time came for her return. Helen, then, was spiritually and physically crippled by her failure to exercise her emotions and physicality, and unable to make any kind of progress on her life journey.

This chapter has revealed in the novels Dark's belief that reason alone is unable to remove the impediments which hinder humanity's advance. Her work indicated that the physical, emotional and intellectual planes of the psyche cannot be separated without creating discord, because events which occur on one level necessarily impinge on the others and must be dealt with. The novelist suggested that the development of inner sensitivity - that is, the expanded understanding of all aspects of the personality and the interrelation of them in a harmonious totality - promoted a broader field of perception and inevitably led to the growth of self-knowledge which, in turn, enhanced the courage and confidence of the individual on the life journey. Dark proposed, then, that psychic integration, by bestowing the freedom to give active, spontaneous expression to the various facets of the psyche and so to realise fully the potential which exists in every human being, was an indispensable aid in the great struggle toward self-actualisation.

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<sup>9</sup> Cp. H. H. Richardson, *Maurice Guest* (1946), London, 1981, in which Maurice's neurosis developed into insanity.

Again she emphasised the way in which human beings hinder their own progress. Bret frustrated his psychic development and endangered Susan's happiness by his determination to let reason, unrelieved by emotion, rule his actions. In the same way, Nigel's resolution to use scientific precepts, without compassion, in his effort to resolve the problems which Linda's condition had forced upon them, prevented any chance of the couple's mutual fulfilment. The discrimination which informed the public's attitude to Linda's abnormality was another factor which impeded her struggle toward normality and self-determination.

We saw the novelist's endorsed characters enthusiastically engaging with life. After his tussle with the mountain, and with his psyche operating healthily, Bret proved to be a willing contestant in the life struggle, admitting that he found the danger of that episode stimulating. We found Oliver, too, with his 'enormous and terrifying vitality' (SaS, p. 41), renewing his zest for life by indulging in 'rather undignified mental and spiritual fisticuffs with fate' (SaS, p. 42), while, for the timid, unadventurous Helen, in her marriage to Oliver, life became 'like a wild beast' which he had 'tamed ... a little for her', so that 'there was an understanding that it was to leave her alone.' (SaS, p. 37)

To love and be loved is part of life's joy, and, in *The Little Company*, Dark poignantly indicated the pain of its lack with Gilbert's muddling wife, Phyllis, who displayed 'the pathos of a human being who wanted so badly to be loved and admired - and never was' (TLC, p. 26) The next chapter will explore in the novels Dark's intimation that perhaps one of the most important elements of liberty is the freedom to love someone, and with that partner to be able to live peacefully and rewardingly in the everyday world.