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EXHIBITION MAP



Key

- 1 ENTRY/PROLOGUE**
- 2 CHILDHOOD PLACES**
- 3 TRAVELS 1930–1946**
- 4 HOME AT ‘DOGWOODS’**
- 5 HOME AT MARTIN ROAD**
- 6 THEATRE**

Patrick White (1912–1990)

**Letter from Patrick White to Dr G. Chandler,
Director General, National Library of Australia**
1977
ink

Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

William Yang (b. 1943)

**Portrait of Patrick White, Kings Cross,
New South Wales** 1980
gelatin silver print

Pictures Collection
National Library of Australia



**CHILDHOOD
PLACES**

General Register Office, London

Certified copy of an entry of birth

28 November 1983

typeset ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002

Manuscripts Collection

National Library of Australia

Hardy Brothers Ltd

Eggcup and spoon given to Paddy

as a christening gift 1910–1911,

inscribed 1913

sterling silver

Presented by Kerry Walker, February 2005

State Library of New South Wales

HEIR TO THE WHITE FAMILY HERITAGE

The Whites were an established, wealthy grazing family in the Hunter region of New South Wales. At the time of his birth, White was heir to half the family property, 'Belltrees', in Scone. On returning to Australia from London in 1912, White's parents decided to move to Sydney, as Ruth disliked the social scene in the Hunter and Dick had developed interests in horse racing that required him to spend more time in the city. Despite White's brief association with the property, 'Belltrees' was one of many childhood landscapes that he recreated in his writing.

A.C. Jackson

'Belltrees' house 1910s
gelatin silver print

G.M. Mathews Collection (Pictures)
National Library of Australia

A.J. Campbell

'Belltrees' homestead c. 1870–1929
sepia-toned photograph

A.J. Campbell Collection, 1832–1921 (Pictures)
National Library of Australia

Hardy Brothers Ltd

Cutlery set
sterling silver

State Library of New South Wales

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Letter to the fairies 1919
pencil

Donated by Manoly Lascaris, 1990
State Library of New South Wales

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Letter to Father Christmas 1918

ink

Donated by Manoly Lascaris, 1990
State Library of New South Wales

**Patrick White dressed as the Mad Hatter
for a charity ball 1920**

photograph

University of New England and Regional Archives
University of New England

**Suzanne White dressed as the Cheshire Cat
for a charity ball 1920**

gelatin silver print

University of New England and Regional Archives
University of New England

AN ACTOR AT 'LULWORTH'

The garden at 'Lulworth', the family home in Rushcutters Bay, Sydney, became an oasis for White, who had few friends growing up. It later became the garden of Hurtle Duffield in *The Vivisector*. Ruth, heavily involved with the Sydney theatrical community, took White to the theatre from an early age. White loved the theatre and would entertain Ruth's friends with dances and performances using saucepans, rubbish bins and gramophones as props. His love of reading also began at this time and, in letters to the fairies and to Father Christmas, which White wrote when he was five and six, he asks for books. White's letter to the fairies also refers to the terrible drought in 1918 and to the Spanish flu pandemic that killed tens of millions around the world.

Dick and Ruth White (seated) and a Melbourne friend in profile at Sisley, England 1911
gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Sidney Jackson

The White brothers

Front row, from left: James (of 'Edinglassie', Muswellbrook),
Frank (of 'Saumarez', Armidale), Henry (of 'Belltrees', Scone)
Back row, from left: Victor (Dick), Arthur, Ernest (all of 'Belltrees')
gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Ruth White in Pitt Street, Sydney 1930s
gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Paddy at 'Lulworth', Rushcutters Bay c. 1918
gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Dick White at 'Lulworth', Rushcutters Bay
gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

A WRITER IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

White's asthma improved so markedly after a visit to his cousins at Mount Wilson, in the Blue Mountains, that Ruth bought a property there in 1921 and named it 'Withycombe'. White found it a paradise. He was especially fond of Matt and Flo Davies, servants to his cousins, and local sawmill manager Sid Kirk, who later married Lizzie Clark, White's beloved nurse. Writing from Mount Wilson under the pseudonym 'Red Admiral' (his favourite butterfly), White had his first piece of writing published—a brief vignette in Sydney's *Sunday Times* about his experiences in the Blue Mountains.

**Suzanne White and Lizzie Clark in the garden,
'Withycombe', Mount Wilson c. 1924**
gelatin silver print

**Ruth, Suzanne, Paddy and Dick
at Mount Wilson c. 1920**
gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

A COLONIAL AT AN ENGLISH SCHOOL

At the age of 13, White's parents enrolled him in an English boarding school, Cheltenham College, Gloucestershire. Outside of the strict regime of Southwood House, where White boarded, he spent holidays with cousins Jack and Ellen Withycombe and their daughters Peggy, Betty and Joyce. The family were influential on his writing and his life. White experimented with poetry at this time, sending his mother poems with obligatory loving dedications. Ruth bound them for family consumption as *Thirteen Poems*. The volume on display contains a bookplate that the teenage White commissioned Australian artist Adrian Feint to design when he returned to Australia for three years after boarding school.

Debenhams, Longman Limited

Patrick White (third row from bottom, seventh left)
**at Southwood House, Cheltenham College,
England 1929–1930**
reproduction of gelatin silver print

State Library of New South Wales

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Thirteen Poems 1929 or 1930
ink and string binding

State Library of New South Wales

Adrian Feint (1894–1971)

***ex libris* bookplate of Patrick White** 1931
wood engraving

Private Collection



TRAVELS
1930-1946

JACKEROO AT 'BOLARO' AND WALGETT

In 1931 White worked as a jackaroo, or trainee grazier, at 'Bolaro', in the New South Wales high country near Cooma, a property where many English public school graduates went to learn land and stock management. A year later he transferred to his uncle Clem Withycombe's property at Walgett, in northern New South Wales. Despite realising he was no farmer, White found 'consolation in the landscape', which was to become a key feature in his later work. The 'juvenile novels' White drafted during this time evolved into *Happy Valley* (1939), his first novel.

Norris King

**Patrick White as a jackeroo with
his bulldog Soames** c. 1931
gelatin silver print

Private Collection

Patrick White (1912–1990)

First letter to Jean Scott Rogers
16 March 1931
ink

Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

**Notebook, including material for *Happy Valley*,
The Living and the Dead, *The Aunt's Story*
and *Voss*** 1939–1941
ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

CAMBRIDGE

White entered King's College, Cambridge, in 1932 to study German and French. During this period, he kept a notebook, in which he copied poems by Moreau, Hugo and other French writers. While at Cambridge, White enjoyed his first literary success, with his poem *The Ploughman* appearing in *The London Mercury* and in *The Best Poems* of 1935, published by Jonathan Cape.

White also fell in love for the first time, with a fellow student, known only as 'R', who was training to be an Anglican priest. The experience was intoxicating. The two men shared lodgings and together explored literature and wrote verse. White spent his holidays boarding with the Oertel family in Hamburg, Germany, where he witnessed the rise of Nazism.

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Notebook with handwritten French poems

c. 1932–1935

ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002

Manuscripts Collection

National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

and **L. Roy Davies**, illustrator

The Ploughman: And Other Poems

Sydney: Beacon Press, 1935

Australian Rare Books Collection

National Library of Australia

Patrick White's visiting cards and case

1928–1930

card, silver

State Library of New South Wales

Patrick White (1912–1990)

**Album of photographs from Patrick White's
Cambridge years 1930s**
gelatin silver prints in album

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

A WRITER IN LONDON— EBURY STREET

In 1935, after finishing university, White stayed in England to pursue his literary ambitions. Living first in Ebury Street, in London's expensive Belgravia district, he published short pieces of prose and also had success with the dramatic sketch *Peter Plover's Party* for the popular review *Nine Sharp*. In London, White met the modernist artist Roy de Maistre, one of the first Australians to produce abstract paintings. White fell 'hopelessly in love' with de Maistre and, although the affair was brief, their friendship remained. White was influenced by de Maistre's abandonment of traditional art practices and similarly sought to adopt a new, modernist approach in his writing.

Patrick White (1912–1990)

**Sketches from *Nine Sharp*,
including *Peter Plover's Party***
London: Samuel French Ltd, 1938

Australian Collection
National Library of Australia

Topical Press Agency

Roy de Maistre, London 1930s
gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

***The Twitching Colonel*,**
published in ***The London Mercury*** 1937

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

A WRITER IN LONDON— ECCLESTON STREET

In 1938 de Maistre acquired the lease on a building in Eccleston Street, near Ebury Street, and offered White an upstairs apartment. It was stylish, with furnishings designed by the painter Francis Bacon, a good friend of de Maistre's and still relatively unknown.

During this period, de Maistre painted portraits of White and of Ruth and Suzanne, now Mrs Geoffrey Peck, both of whom had moved to London after the death of White's father in 1937. White owned two other works by de Maistre: *The concert*, which became a scene in *The Vivisector* (1970), and *Figure in a garden (The aunt)*, which partly inspired *The Aunt's Story* (1948).

A.C. Cooper and Sons Art Photographers

**Patrick White's apartment at
13 Eccleston Street, London** c. 1936
gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Roy de Maistre (1894–1968)

Mrs Geoffrey Peck c. 1938
oil on canvas

Gift of the sitter's granddaughters Lillian Pope,
Alexandra Bishop and Frances Peck, 1972
Art Gallery of New South Wales

Roy de Maistre (1894–1968)

Patrick White 1939
oil on canvas

Gift of the sitter's niece Miss Frances Peck, 1972
Art Gallery of New South Wales

Roy de Maistre (1894–1968)

The concert c. 1943
oil on paperboard

Gift of Patrick White, 1974
Art Gallery of New South Wales

Roy de Maistre (1894–1968)

Figure in a garden (The aunt) 1945
oil on hardboard

Gift of Patrick White, 1974
Art Gallery of New South Wales

EUROPE IN THE 1930s

Between 1932 and 1935, White 'returned over and over' to stay with the Oertel family in Germany, 'until human relationships crumbled under political pressure'. In 1937 he went abroad to write, spending several months in the Basque region of France, just across the border from where the Spanish Civil War was raging. There he met and began a brief affair with the Spanish aristocrat José (Pepe) Mamblas, a supporter of Franco. The affair forced White to question his own underdeveloped and shifting political viewpoint. In 1938 he wrote to Mamblas, lamenting the bombing of Barcelona, the same week Germany annexed Austria. Their affair was brief but Mamblas continued to visit White, introducing him to members of London's high society.

Baron

Pepe Mamblas 1970s
gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Telegram from the Oertels in Hanover, Germany
c. 1932–1937
typeset ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

THE FIRST NOVELS

White's first novel *Happy Valley* was published in 1939. It received positive reviews in England and the United States but was greeted less enthusiastically in Australia.

In April of that year, White had travelled to New York to find an American publisher. Ben Huebsch, who published White's literary heroes James Joyce and D.H. Lawrence, agreed to take him on. White travelled around America by train on a pilgrimage to Lawrence's property near Taos, New Mexico, an experience he recounted in a letter to his penfriend, screenwriter Jean Scott Rogers. White returned to the US East Coast, where his second novel *The Living and the Dead* (1941) 'came pouring out'.

Patrick White (1912–1990)

The Living and the Dead

New York: Viking, 1941

Australian Rare Books Collection
National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Happy Valley

New York: Viking Press, 1940

Australian Rare Books Collection
National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

**Letter to Jean Scott Rogers
describing New York, California and
New Mexico 30 June 1939**
typescript ink and ink

Papers of Jean Scott Rogers, 1917–2000
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

A NOVELIST'S WAR

After experiencing the Blitz in London, White joined the Royal Air Force in 1940 and served as an intelligence officer until his demobilisation in 1946. His service in North Africa and Palestine 'was a pretty insignificant one ... Much of the time was spent advancing or retreating across deserts, sitting waiting in dust-ridden tents, or again in the other desert, a headquarters'. His duties included informing pilots on enemy movements and censoring letters. White did not talk much about his war experiences, although he kept his war service record, a journal from early 1941 and a target map of Gondar, Ethiopia, captured by Allied forces in November 1941.

Patrick White in uniform 1940s
gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

**Map of Gondar outlining various
fascist encampments** c. 1939–1945
diazotype copy on drafting linen

Australian War Memorial

Ministry of Defence, Royal Air Force, Gloucester
**Record of service for Flight Lieutenant Patrick
Victor Martindale White** 25 March 1987
typescript and ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

**War journal, including material for
The Aunt's Story c. 1941**

ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002

Manuscripts Collection

National Library of Australia

MEETING

MANOLY LASCARIS

At a party in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1941, White met ‘someone who gave direction and meaning to what up till now had been a pointless and often desperate existence ... this small Greek of immense moral strength ... became the central mandala in my life’s hitherto messy design’.

Manoly Lascaris, born in Cairo to a Greek father and American mother, was working for the Alexandria Water Company and waiting to join the Greek army. Lascaris’ calm demeanour countered White’s temper. White and Lascaris spent their leave together in Africa and Greece and considered staying in Greece after the war. White called Greece his ‘other country’ in a speech he was invited to give by the Greek government in 1983.

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Greece: My other country November 1983

ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

**Air information supplied by Headquarters,
Royal Air Force, Middle East**

May 1941, revised May 1942

colour offset lithography

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Manoly Lascaris 1930s

gelatin silver print

**Patrick White and Manoly Lascaris
on leave in Beirut** 1942–1944

gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

RETURN TO AUSTRALIA

White was demobilised in January 1946. Two years later, *Return to Abyssinia* (1948) was staged in London and his third novel *The Aunt's Story* was published. Despite these successes, White decided to leave Europe and return to Australia. Prior to departing in February 1948, he sold or gave away most of his possessions but kept his de Maistre paintings and his schnauzer dogs. Based in Cairo, Lascaris was keen to follow White to Australia. Ruth White sponsored Lascaris' migration and he arrived in Sydney by flying boat in March 1948.

**Patrick White walking the schnauzers—Sheba
(8 months) and Solomon (5 months)—in London
1940s**

gelatin silver print

**Patrick White and Manoly Lascaris
with schnauzers**

gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

British Overseas Airways Corporation

Manoly Lascaris' ticket to Sydney from Cairo

17 February 1948

typescript and ink

Manoly Lascaris—Papers, 1922–1996 together with papers
of Patrick White, 1940–1990
Estate of P.V.M. White and estate of E.G. Lascaris,
presented by Perpetual Trustee Co. Ltd, 2005
State Library of New South Wales

Commonwealth of Australia

Manoly Lascaris' naturalisation certificate

11 August 1950

typescript and ink

Manoly Lascaris–Papers, 1922–1996 together with papers
of Patrick White, 1940–1990

Estate of P.V.M. White and estate of E.G. Lascaris,
presented by Perpetual Trustee Co. Ltd, 2005

State Library of New South Wales



**HOME AT
'DOGWOODS'**

FARMER AND DOG BREEDER

After introducing Lascaris to his family, White wasted no time in finding a landholding where the two men could live a simple life. Within a few months, they had purchased a small house on a 2.5-hectare property, which they named 'Dogwoods'. They managed the property as a farm and bred schnauzers, a hobby they had developed together during the war. Photos from these years show White weeding the garden and milking the cow The Dream of Penrith, the only animal or venture on the farm to make a profit: 'when we found there was a market for thick cream (illicit as we had no health licence) we gave up the butter and quietly sold the cream'.

Schnauzers in a basket
gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

**Patrick White milking The Dream of Penrith,
'Dogwoods', Castle Hill 1950s**
gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Looking towards the front of 'Dogwoods' 1950s
gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

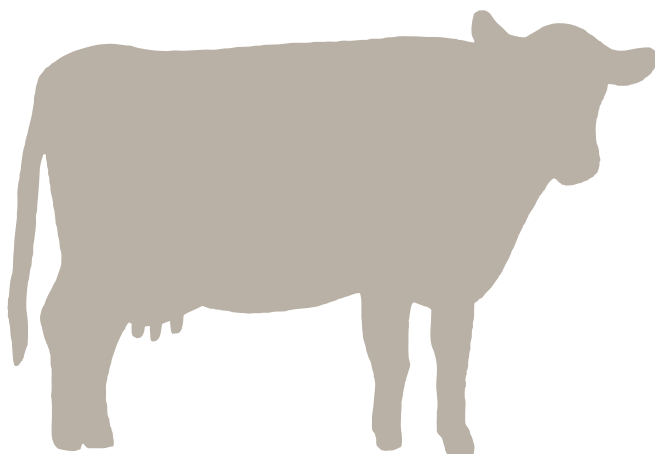
Patrick White weeding at 'Dogwoods' 1950s
gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

**Notebook containing research for *Voss*
1955–1957**

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia



THE TREE OF MAN AND VOSS

After his ‘epiphany’ White threw himself back into writing, first producing *The Tree of Man* in 1955. The novel follows three generations of the Parker family, who live on the outskirts of Sydney. The fictional town of Sarsaparilla, which appears in a number of White’s works, is based on the Castle Hill area surrounding ‘Dogwoods’.

His next and most famous novel *Voss* was the story of a nineteenth-century explorer, based loosely on Ludwig Leichhardt. A research notebook for the novel contains a map of the suburbs surrounding White’s childhood home ‘Lulworth’, which was the model for the mansion where *Voss*’ lover Laura Trevelyan lives. In a letter to an absent Lascaris, White details his delight in the novel’s success.

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Letter to Manoly Lascaris

27 May 1957

Manoly Lascaris—Papers, 1922–1996 together with papers of Patrick White, 1940–1990

Estate of P.V.M. White and estate of E.G. Lascaris, presented by Perpetual Trustee Co. Ltd, 2005

State Library of New South Wales

Patrick White writing at his desk at ‘Dogwoods’

c. 1956

gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002

Manuscripts Collection

National Library of Australia

Axel Poignant (1906–1986)

Patrick White and his cat Tom Jones 1956

gelatin silver print

Pictures Collection

National Library of Australia

FRIENDSHIP WITH THE NOLANS

After corresponding for several years, White met the Australian painter Sidney Nolan and his wife Cynthia in America in 1958. They formed a close bond and Nolan later designed the covers for *Voss*, *Riders in the Chariot* (1961) and a reprint of *The Aunt's Story*. White commented: '[Sidney's] painting gives me such a lot in my work, and he claims I do the same for him'. Nolan did not share the writer's passion for letters—White corresponded mainly with Cynthia—although he did send White handpainted cards with short messages scrawled on the back. Nolan also gave White *The Galaxy*, a large painting that hung in the living room at 'Dogwoods'. The painting, which is now held by the Art Gallery of New South Wales, was not able to travel for this exhibition.

Sidney Nolan (1917–1992)

Cover design for *Voss* c. 1957
ripolin

Pictures Collection
National Library of Australia

Sidney Nolan (1917–1992)

Cover design for *The Aunt's Story* c. 1963
oil on card

Pictures Collection
National Library of Australia

Sidney Nolan (1917–1992)

Sorry we are not here in London to pick you up
13 May 1971
oil on card

**I don't quite know how this figure arose out
of this afternoon's conversation**
19 September 1960s or 1970s
oil on card

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Axel Poignant (1906–1986)

**Portrait of Patrick White and Sidney Nolan
in front of *Galaxy* 1963**
gelatin silver print

Pictures Collection
National Library of Australia

Portrait of Patrick White in front of *The Galaxy*
1963 gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

WRITING *RIDERS IN* *THE CHARIOT*

In *Riders in the Chariot*, which follows the stories of four loosely related characters, White shifts his focus to contemporary Australia. Two of the central characters, Mordecai Himmelfarb and Alf Dubbo, take shape on the pages of a rare surviving notebook that also includes background research for the novel. The book was dedicated to Ben Huebsch, White's publisher, and Klari Daniels, one of White's closest friends during the 'Dogwood' years. A Hungarian Jew, Daniels had narrowly escaped Auschwitz during the Second World War. In White's address book from the period, 'Daniels' appears next to the name of another of White's friends, the artist and designer Desmond Digby.

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Notebook, including material for *Voss*, *Riders in the Chariot* and *A Fringe of Leaves* 1947–1976

ink and pencil

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002

Manuscripts Collection

National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Address and telephone book 1960s

ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002

Manuscripts Collection

National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Index to music recordings 1960s

ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002

Manuscripts Collection

National Library of Australia

EMERGING FROM 'DOGWOODS'

By the early 1960s, White had made his presence felt in Australia's growing cultural scene. As he wrote to his cousin Peggy Garland: 'One doesn't have to go off and live London or New York as Australian artists and intellectuals have been doing up till now'. In the same letter, he describes a dinner where he met the visiting composer Igor Stravinsky: 'He told me: "I am a professional drunkard. All the time I drink whisky, whisky, whisky!" I must say he held it very well'.

Music, like visual art, was a major influence on White's writing style and he assiduously indexed his recordings. Listed in his indexes are works by Gustav Mahler, whose compositions White found 'very helpful' when writing *Voss*.

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Letter to Peggy Garland 21 November 1961
typescript and ink

Letters and Photographs of Patrick White, 1944–1988
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Sidney Nolan (1917–1992)

Book jacket design for *Riders in the Chariot*
1961
watercolour, pastel on paper on masonite

Presented by Patrick White, 1974
State Library of New South Wales

'I WAS IN LOVE WITH THE THEATRE'

Theatrical success eluded White until the 1960s. Since moving back to Australia, he had concentrated on novels and had not written a play since *The Ham Funeral* in 1947. Set in a London boarding house in 1919, *The Ham Funeral* was passed over by London and New York producers but found a champion in White's friend Geoffrey Dutton, the Adelaide academic and writer, who submitted it to the 1962 Adelaide Festival. *The Ham Funeral*, which includes an incident where an aborted foetus is discovered in a rubbish bin, was famously rejected by the festival. The Adelaide University Theatre Guild offered to stage the production, which premiered in November 1961. White later wrote: 'It turned out just about as well as it possibly could'.

**Adelaide University Theatre Guild and
Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust**
The Griffin Press, printer

**Flyer for the world premiere of *The Ham Funeral*
presented in the Union Hall 1961**
ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Letter to Geoffrey Dutton dated 2 April 1961
type and ink

Papers of Geoffrey Dutton, 1898–1998
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Nicholas von Bujdoss (b. 1947)

Portrait of Geoffrey Dutton 1968
ink

Pictures Collection
National Library of Australia

Luciana Arrighi (b. 1940)

Letter to Patrick White 27 July c. 1961
ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

WHITE'S NEW PLAY

Hot on the heels of the interest in *The Ham Funeral*, White began writing another play, this time set in Australia in 1960. In a letter to Dutton, he writes: 'The last two days it has been pouring out in almost an alarming way'. In his inimitably blunt style, White elsewhere likened writing the play to 'the effect a bitch in season has on a certain suburban street. It has allowed me to blow off a lot of what I have been feeling about Australia'. *The Season at Sarsaparilla* (1962) was the first play White wrote after returning to Australia. His experimentation with theatrical conventions 'burst right out of the prescribed four walls of Australian Social Realism'.

Dewhurst Photography, Adelaide

**Publicity shot for *The Season at Sarsaparilla*,
directed by John Tasker 1962**
gelatin silver print

**J.C. Williamson Theatres Ltd and
Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust**
Les Tanner (1927–2001), illustrator

Program for *The Season at Sarsaparilla* 1963

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

DESMOND DIGBY AND *THE CHEERY SOUL*

White met the New Zealand-born designer and artist Desmond Digby in 1961. Theirs would be one of the few long-standing friendships in White's life that did not end acrimoniously. Digby designed sets for several of White's plays, as well as dustcovers for three of his books. In a letter to his cousin Peggy Garland, White described Digby's sets for his new play *The Cheery Soul* (1962) as 'about the best he has ever done, starting fairly naturalistically in the first act, and becoming more and more abstract and open'. In 1964 White returned to novel writing, after a four-year period in which he had written three plays, an opera libretto and several short stories.

Desmond Digby (b. 1933)

A cheery soul (Six old ladies from Sundowne Home) 1963

mixed media

Bequest of Patrick White, 1991
Art Gallery of New South Wales

Desmond Digby (b. 1933)

'A cheery soul' (Mrs Lillie Act II) 1963

mixed media

Bequest of Patrick White 1991
Art Gallery of New South Wales

Desmond Digby (b. 1933)

'Get well soon' card sent to White

oil and ink on card

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Desmond Digby (b. 1933)

Lady with dog (set for *A Cheery Soul*) c. 1966
oil on hardboard

Bequest of Patrick White, 1991
Art Gallery of New South Wales

Desmond Digby (b. 1933)

The cockatoos (book cover design)
oil on paper

Bequest of Patrick White, 1991
Art Gallery of New South Wales

Desmond Digby (b. 1933)

Patrick White 1965
oil on hardboard

Bequest of Patrick White, 1991
Art Gallery of New South Wales



**HOME AT
MARTIN ROAD**

ART COLLECTOR AND PATRON

White was a great art collector and, while he owned works by established painters, he also collected many works by relatively less well-known artists, such as Erica McGilchrist and Desmond Digby. Stanislaus Rapotec's triptych *Zeus, Poseidon, Pluton*, which provided the inspiration for Duffield's final paintings, was part of White's collection. He donated many works to Art Gallery of New South Wales, including a major gift in 1973 that formed the basis for an exhibition—*Gifts from Patrick White*. A further exhibition of works selected by White from the Gallery's collection was mounted in the summer of 1981–1982. White's bequest in 1991 was, at the time, the largest donation of works to the Gallery.

Erica McGilchrist (b. 1926)

Mandala for my mother and father 1971
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Gift of Patrick White, 1974
Art Gallery of New South Wales

Stanislaus Rapotec (1911–1997)

Zeus, Poseidon, Pluton 1969
synthetic polymer paint on hardboard

Gift of Patrick White, 1969
Art Gallery of New South Wales

Desmond Digby (b. 1933)

Visitors 2–4 1966
synthetic polymer paint on hardboard

Gift of Patrick White, 1968
Art Gallery of New South Wales

Martin Sharp (b. 1942)

Couples 1979
collage on hardboard

Bequest of Patrick White 1991
Art Gallery of New South Wales

NOTEBOOKS

The first two novels White finished after the move to Martin Road were *The Solid Mandala* (1966) and *The Vivisector* (1970). The central character of the latter work is the artist Hurtle Duffield, who White saw ‘as a composite of several I have known, welded together by the one I have in me but never became’. The cast of characters for the novel appears in the pages of the notebook on display, which was one of ten acquired by the National Library in 2006. The notebooks contain decades of research, observations, preliminary character sketches, draft paragraphs and timelines—the early traces of works that would later become masterpieces.

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Notebook, including material for *The Solid Mandala*, *The Vivisector*, *Memoirs of Many in One*, *The Eye of the Storm* and other works

c. 1964–1976

ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002

Manuscripts Collection

National Library of Australia

William Yang (b. 1943)

20 Martin Road, Centennial Park

colour photograph

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002

Manuscripts Collection

National Library of Australia

MARTIN ROAD AND THE BEANIE

In the same way that ‘Dogwoods’ featured in White’s writing, the new house at Martin Road was also ‘renovated and refurnished to accommodate fiction’. It provided the template for the house in *The Eye of the Storm* (1973), where the character of Elizabeth Hunter, based on White’s mother, is dying, and also for elements of buildings in several other novels. The significance of the house on Martin Road was confirmed by its placement on the New South Wales State Heritage list.

Far more humble but just as emblematic are White’s beret, glasses and his beanie, knitted by Lascaris. David Malouf writes that White would have been amused at the ‘translation of these ordinary objects of his poor existence into the realm of the iconic, the extraordinary’.

Desmond Digby (b. 1933)

Cover design for *The Eye of the Storm*
collage, oil on paper

Bequest of Patrick White, 1991
Art Gallery of New South Wales

William Yang (b. 1943)

**Patrick White and Manoly Lascaris,
Martin Road 1984**
gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Manoly Lascaris (1912–2003)

**Knitted beanie with pom pom belonging
to Patrick White**
wool

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Draft of *The Vivisector* 1969
typescript

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

DINNER AND LUNCH

The dinner parties and luncheons at both 'Dogwoods' and Martin Road were infamous for the food, company and White's unpredictable behaviour, which could switch from stony silence to uproarious gossiping and vicious outbursts. Photographer William Yang documented many of these gatherings. Like many keen cooks, White collected recipe cards. The 30 or so cards in the National Library's collection include dishes as diverse as 'haloumi soufflé', 'Penny's pastry' and the sculptural 'carrot mould'. The weekly menu plan reflects the orderly nature of life at Martin Road.

William Yang (b. 1943)

Lunch at Kate's 1980
inscribed gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Notebook containing weekly menu plans
ballpoint pen

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Recipe for Penny's pastry
ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Recipe for haloumi soufflé

ink on Martin Road letterhead paper

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

William Yang (b. 1943)

Patrick and Manoly, dining room,

Martin Road 1978

inkjet print

Pictures Collection
National Library of Australia

William Yang (b. 1943)

Three potatoes and two guest stars 1987

gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Shooting script from the movie *The Eye of the Storm* signed by cast and crew 2010
photocopy and ink

Private Collection

Matthew Nettheim (b. 1969)

Stills from the movie *The Eye of the Storm* 2010
reproductions from digital file

Private Collection

Clapper board from the movie *The Eye of the Storm* 2010
wood and plastic

Private Collection

One sheet poster from the movie *The Eye of the Storm* signed by Geoffrey Rush and Fred Schepisi 2010
digital print

Private Collection

WHITE AT WORK

Ian Fairweather's painting *Gethsemane* hung above White's desk at Martin Road. When working, White would first produce a handwritten draft and then typescript versions, which were corrected with red or blue biro. The two drafts on display—a novel 'The Binoculars and Helen Nell' and a novella 'Dolly Formosa and the Happy Few'—date from his first two years at Martin Road. White abandoned both works and they remain unpublished, although elements of 'Dolly Formosa and the Happy Few' would later re-emerge in White's final novel *Memoirs of Many in One* (1986).

Desmond Digby (b. 1933)

**The Misses Patricia and Ethel White
(portrait of Patrick White and pug dog)** 1964
oil on paperboard

Bequest of Patrick White, 1991
Art Gallery of New South Wales

Maie Casey (1891–1983)

Nude with gloves walking along beach
charcoal, gouache and watercolour

Bequest of Patrick White, 1991
Art Gallery of New South Wales

Ern McQuillan (b. 1926)

Patrick White's study with *Gethsemane* c. 1973
gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Writing desk c. 1946
wood, paint and linoleum

Chair c. 1946
vinyl and wood

Optima
Typewriter and case c. 1950
metal, plastic

Desk lamp
cream metal extendable lamp with tube

Presented 1993
State Library of New South Wales

HEPCO
Patrick White's briefcase
leather, brass

Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Bookcase owned by Patrick White 1901–1910
painted timber

Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection
Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales

Ian Fairweather (1891–1974)

Gethsemane 1958

gouache on four sheets of cardboard on hardboard

Collection: Philip Bacon, Brisbane

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Third draft of *A Fringe of Leaves* 1970s

ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002

Manuscripts Collection

National Library of Australia

Blue Biro in green case

pen in plastic coating with string

Presented 1993

State Library of New South Wales

Paper knife

painted wood

Presented 1993

State Library of New South Wales

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Draft of 'The Binoculars and Helen Nell' c. 1965
ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Draft of 'Dolly Formosa and the Happy Few'
c. 1965
ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Notebook, including material for *A Fringe of Leaves*, 'The Binoculars and Helen Nell', *The Twyborn Affair*, *Netherwood*, *Big Toys* and other works 1976–1983
ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Diana Panuccio

Martin Road 2003
reproductions from digital file

Art Gallery of New South Wales

Martin Coyte (b. 1953)

Figures in a landscape 1974
pencil, coloured pencil on paper

Bequest of Patrick White, 1991
Art Gallery of New South Wales

SAVING MARTIN ROAD

The Vietnam War had awakened the activist in White. In March 1972, *The Sydney Morning Herald* announced a plan to build an Olympic Stadium on Sydney's Moore Park and the lower end of Centennial Park. The plan would resume land occupied by 36 houses, including White and Lascaris'. On 18 June 1972, White gave two public speeches: the first from the back of a truck and the second at Sydney's Town Hall. He urged against 'encroach[ing] on ... one of the radiant features of our city' — Centennial Park. The plan failed.

John Wong

Protesting against the Olympic Stadium which would have wrecked Centennial Park 1972
gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Speech given at the Sydney Town Hall rally
18 June 1972
typescript

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

L'Aiglon (France)

Patrick White's beret c. 1985
wool and felt

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

William Yang (b. 1943)

Jim Sharman, Adelaide 1982
gelatin silver print and ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

THE PLAYWRIGHT AND THE SHOWMAN

Australian director Jim Sharman made his name in the 1970s with highly successful theatrical productions, including *The Rocky Horror Show*. As a young man, Sharman had seen White's plays of the 1960s and, in the late 1970s, elected to revive *The Season at Sarsaparilla* (1962). Critically successful, the play led to a fruitful collaboration. Sharman subsequently directed White's screenplay *The Night the Prowler* (1978) and a number of White's other plays, including *Big Toys* (1977). Sharman's scrapbook, or visual diary, documents their success.

William Yang (b. 1943)

Luciana Arrighi and Patrick White,
set of *The Night the Prowler* 1978
inkjet print

Pictures Collection
National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

First draft of a screenplay for
***The Night the Prowler* May 1976**
typescript and ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

NOBEL PRIZE

In 1973 White became the only Australian writer to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. He could not receive it in person and Sidney Nolan went in his place. That same year, White was also named Australian of the Year. In a letter, he quipped: 'This year I was picked on as they had run through all the swimmers, tennis players, yachtsmen etc.'. The awards cemented White's reputation as a major Australian cultural figure. Arguably just as important to his legacy was the respect of contemporaries. Salman Rushdie wrote him a fan letter in 1985 after reading *Voss*: 'I cannot think when last a book so moved me, or showed me so very much'.

Erik Lindberg

**Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to
Patrick White 1973**

medal: 23-carat gold; diploma: watercolour and ink

Presented by Patrick White, May 1974
State Library of New South Wales

Australia Day Council

**Menu for Australia Day luncheon 25 January
1974**

offset colour lithograph

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Salman Rushdie (b. 1947)

Letter to Patrick White 9 January 1985

ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Margaret Woodward (b. 1948)

Portrait of Patrick White 1993
pen and ink

Donated by Lou Klepac, 2011
Pictures Collection
National Library of Australia

BIG TOYS AND LITTLE TOYS **FOR A BIG BOY**

Big Toys, White's critique of corruption, opened in July 1977 at Sydney's Parade Theatre. Despite critical reservations, it had a good run and later toured to Melbourne and Canberra. During the production's development, White showed Brian Thomson, Sharman's production designer, the letter to Father Christmas from 1918, in which he had asked for a mouth organ, violin, butterfly net and 'a little mouse what runs across the room', among other things. After an early preview performance, the cast and crew presented White with a pillowcase containing these long-wished-for gifts.

William Yang (b. 1943)

Little toys, Martin Road 1977

inkjet print

Pictures Collection

National Library of Australia

Jim Sharman (b. 1945)

Big Toys visual diary

mixed media

Papers of Jim Sharman, c. 1940–2010

Manuscripts Collection

National Library of Australia

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Patrick White (1912–1990)

First draft of *Big Toys* showing stage plan

c. 1977

ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002

Manuscripts Collection

National Library of Australia

Old Tote Theatre Company Ltd

Program for *Big Toys* 1977

printed booklet

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002

Manuscripts Collection

National Library of Australia

William Yang (b. 1943)

Patrick White, Kate Fitzpatrick and Robert

Burton at La Rhumba Restaurant 1977

gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002

Manuscripts Collection

National Library of Australia

William Yang (b. 1943)

**Patrick and Manoly on the opening night
of *Big Toys* 1977**

gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002

Manuscripts Collection

National Library of Australia

William Yang (b. 1943)

The letter to Father Xmas 1977

inkjet print

Pictures Collection

National Library of Australia

THEATRICAL FRIENDS

By the 1980s, White was socially and professionally ensconced in Australia's theatre scene and friends with rising actors and directors. Sharman was appointed artistic director of the 1982 Adelaide Festival and called on White for a play. White delivered *Signal Driver* (1982). He described it as being 'about a couple of who spend their lives just failing to signal the driver and escape from each other and their responsibilities'. *Signal Driver* was revived at Neil Armfield's Belvoir Street Theatre in Sydney in 1985. The poster for the production was designed by Australian pop artist Martin Sharp.

**Florist cards sent by Patrick White
to Kerry Walker 1979–1989**
ballpoint pen on card

Kerry Walker papers relating to Patrick White, 1979–2004
Presented by Kerry Walker, February 2005
State Library of New South Wales

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Draft of Signal Driver 1982
ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Neil Armfield (b. 1955)

Note to Patrick 1982
colour photograph on card

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Regis Lansac (b. 1947)

**Cast members and Patrick White take a bow
at the opening night of *Signal Driver*, Adelaide
1982**

gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Regis Lansac (b. 1947)

Performance of *Signal Driver*, Adelaide 1982
gelatin silver print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Martin Sharp (b. 1942)

Theatre poster for *Signal Driver* c. 1985
two-colour screenprint

Bequest of Patrick White, 1991
Art Gallery of New South Wales

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHER

In his autobiography *Flaws in the Glass* (1981), White criticised Nolan's new relationship with Mary Percival Boyd after Cynthia's suicide. This led to a falling-out with the artist. White's relationship with the Dutton's also fell apart at this stage, after sending a letter to Geoffrey admonishing his birthday tribute to White in *The Bulletin*. Ninette Dutton's terse reply told White he was being an 'ass'.

Around this time White addressed a group of 200 librarians at the Mitchell Library. He recalled visiting the Library when he was three or four years old and being shushed by one of the librarians because people were reading: 'She seemed to imply they were in some way sick. I looked round and couldn't see any signs of sickness in the readers'.

Patrick White (1912–1990)

**Address to the librarians of Australia,
Mitchell Library, Sydney** 19 September 1980
typescript and ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Second draft of *Flaws in the Glass* c. 1981
ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Letter to Geoffrey Dutton 1 April 1982
typescript and ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Ninette Dutton (b. 1923)

Letter to Patrick White 4 June 1982

ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

THE ACTIVIST

White spoke out on issues close to his heart, from the fight against nuclear power to that against Sydney's monorail. In the speech he gave to a science symposium in May 1983 at the Australian National University, he called on Australians to develop 'moral strength' in the face of nuclear threat: 'we contain the seeds of evil and destruction as well as the seeds of divine regeneration. Time is running out. In 1983 it is up to us to choose which we are going to cultivate'.

**Fight for an independent and
nuclear free Pacific** 1980s
colour screenprint

Pictures Collection
National Library of Australia

M. Riley

No nukes for Sydney 1985
colour screenprint

Pictures Collection
National Library of Australia

Patrick White at anti-monorail protest
colour photograph

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Citizens for Democracy

For a democratic constitution 1980s
offset print

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

William Yang (b. 1943)

Nuclear demonstration, Sydney city 1984
inkjet print

Pictures Collection
National Library of Australia

Hiroshima never again! 1984
colour print on paper and metal

Ephemera Collection
National Library of Australia

Stop uranium mining
colour print on metal

Ephemera Collection
National Library of Australia

Brendan Hennessy

Patrick White 1989
gelatin silver print

Pictures Collection
National Library of Australia

VOSS, THE OPERA

‘I have a feeling that *Voss* is everybody’s albatross, including my own’. So wrote White about his novel, then being adapted as an opera. The novel’s popularity always mystified him. The opera production brought together some of Australia’s great artistic minds: with libretto by novelist David Malouf, music by Richard Meale, production design by Brian Thomson and costumes by Luciana Arrighi. It premiered at 1986 Adelaide Festival but White did not see it until it came to the Sydney Opera House later in the year. The production was a great success. Here, White writes to Meale: ‘what a stupendous evening we had at the opening performance’.

Luciana Arrighi (b. 1940)

Voss opera—Laura 1986
pen and black ink, watercolour

Bequest of Patrick White, 1991
Art Gallery of New South Wales

Luciana Arrighi (b. 1940)

Voss opera—*Nie, Nie, Niemals* 1986
pen and black ink, watercolour

Bequest of Patrick White, 1991
Art Gallery of New South Wales

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Letter to Richard Meale 24 June 1986
ink

Papers of Richard Meale, c.1890–2009
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

David Malouf (b. 1934)

Libretto for *Voss*, with inscription by the author, given to Patrick White February 1980
typescript

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Desmond Digby (b. 1933)

Notes taken during telephone conversation with Patrick White regarding the *Sun Herald's* social page about the premiere of *Voss* 1986
ink and newsprint

Papers of Desmond Digby relating to Patrick White, 1962–2000
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Designer Brian Thomson's working model for sets for *Voss* 1986
gelatin silver print

Papers of Jim Sharman, c.1940–2010
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

BICENTENARY RAGE

In his pocket diary from 1988, White has pencilled in an appointment with Channel 9 on 25 and 26 January, replacing meetings with his biographer David Marr. White read a prepared piece live for *Good Morning Australia*, explaining that he refused to have any of his work published during the Bicentenary because there ‘was too little I could feel proud of in our past’ and ‘even less in our present’. Seeing little to celebrate, White admonished: ‘circuses don’t fix serious problems’. Only short grabs of the speech were broadcast. The diary also shows scheduled reminders to take ‘PRED’, or Prednisone, the medication White had been taking to control his asthma.

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Pocket diary 1988
ballpoint pen and ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Barry Jones

Patrick White outside his house on Martin Road
1988
colour photograph

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

**Why did I refuse to have any of my own work
performed or published during the Bi? 1988**
ballpoint pen

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

MEMOIRS OF MANY IN ONE

In the early 1980s, White's health began to deteriorate, yet he managed to complete another novel *Memoirs of Many in One* (1986). It was to be his last novel and, in style and tone, it stands apart from the rest of the White oeuvre. Despite being an examination of old age and senility, the book is playful and highlights White's wit and humour. William Yang had taken photographs of White as a corpse for the cover, however Lascaris and his friends talked him out of using them. The book was dedicated to White's literary agent Barbara Mobbs.

William Yang (b. 1943)

**The folly of Patrick White,
St Vincent's Hospital** 1985
gelatin silver prints, collage and ink

Pictures Collection
National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Draft of *Memoirs of Many in One*
1984 or 1985
ball point pen

National Library of Australia and State Library of New South Wales

Manning Clark (1915–1991)

Condolence letter to Manoly Lascaris 1990
ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Letter to Peggy Garland 4 September 1985

ink

Letters and Photographs of Patrick White, 1944–1988
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

DEATH

Over nine days in July 1990, White, at this stage gravely ill, sat with David Marr to read through the biographer's account of his life. White corrected only a few details. He had wanted, as he wrote in a letter to Peggy Garland, only the truth. He died a few months later. Marr recounts: 'With iron determination, White set the terms of his own death in his attic room. He would have no oxygen, no drips, no last trips to hospital and no commode by the bed. Early on the morning of 30 September, the nurse was helping him to the lavatory when he had either a stroke or a heart attack on the landing and died at once. Lascaris and the nurse carried White back to his bed'.

While preparing for a portrait in the early 1980s, White had told Australian artist Brett Whiteley he wanted to be reincarnated as a headland. White's ashes were scattered by a favourite pond in Centennial Park, a short walk away from his Martin Road house.

More than 150 condolence cards were sent to Lascaris, including this one from Manning Clark.

Brett Whiteley (1939–1992)

Patrick White as a headland 1980
oil on canvas

on loan from the Brett Whiteley Studio Museum
Art Gallery of New South Wales

CODA—

'THE HANGING GARDEN'

Another manuscript among the National Library's papers is 'The Hanging Garden'. White began the short novel in 1981 but never finished it, keeping the details about its content a secret. It is about two children during wartime who create an imaginary world within the garden of a house in Neutral Bay, Sydney.

Marr knew a secret novel existed, as it had been referred to vaguely in White's correspondence, but everything else about the work remained a mystery. After reading it, Marr noted that it has the 'tenderness and rigour that mark this as the work of an old, wise novelist who still has large ambitions and knows exactly what he's doing'. In April 2012, *The Hanging Garden* was published by Random House Australia.

Patrick White (1912–1990)

First draft of 'The Hanging Garden' 1980s
ballpoint pen

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia



**SELECTED
TRANSCRIPTIONS**

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Letter to Geoffrey Dutton dated 2 April 1961
type and ink

Papers of Geoffrey Dutton, 1898–1998
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

DOGWOODS
SHOWGROUND ROAD
CASTLE HILL
N.S.W.

2.iv.61

Dear Geoffrey,

I am two letters in your debt. Very glad you will be coming to give the lectures in July. Of course you can always put up here if you like, and don't feel it is too far away from the lectures and the Mitchell. And there is the second bed which Nin could have if she decided to come for the weekend. But I understand Castle Hill is a long way out from things, and you may also feel you would like to remain free of obligations, not that you need harbour those. Kensington is somewhere out near

Randwick, one of those racing suburbs to which I have not been since I was a boy, when, every Sunday after lunch, I would go there with my father to visit stabled horses. (To-morrow night Manoly and I have to go there in somewhat different circumstances – to see Peer Gynt produced by John Tasker for the students of N.I.D.A.) Some time you must let me know the dates of your visit, as I also want to go to Queensland for a few days during the winter months, to have a look at part of the country which has been interesting me lately.

It would indeed be irony – but the accepted one by now – if the Theatre Guild were to produce The Ham Funeral. I hardly know what to say at the moment. First, I have to get back the copy of the play. Tasker has not yet read it, and may not think after all that it is his cup of tea. In the meantime, anyway, he has been engaged as permanent producer of N.I.D.A., and I don't know whether he will be able to accept any outside engagements. Then there is also the question of the Landlady. However hard I rack my brains, I can't think of anybody in Australia who might play the part. Wicks and Bishop suggested Nita Pannell, who is now playing the mother in The One Day of the Year, but I know just from reading the notices of that play, that she would not be able to cope with Mrs Lusty. There was an excellent English actress,

trained by Joan Littlewood, who played the mother in the Independent production of *Roots* – not a wrong note – but whether she would be able to produce the right flamboyance for the Landlady, I hardly think. For the moment, I rather feel I would like to lay off. Not very satisfactory from the Guild's point of view, as they have to consider dates.

I find, after all, I got rather a battering over *The Ham Funeral*. My final reaction has been to sit down on May Day and start a new play, the first for fourteen years. Th[e] last two days it has been pouring out of me in almost an alarming way, and will probably shock more than the *Funeral*, as this one is purely Australian, and at the same time has burst right out of the prescribed four walls of Australian social realism. If I don't get this one on, and twist the tails of all the Adelaide aldermen, Elizabethan hack producers, and old maids dabbling in the Sydney theatre, I shall just about bust. The new one, by the way, is called *The Season at Sarsaparilla*, as it becomes rather tedious always to refer to the "the play", the "book" etc.

I suggested to Max and to Wicks that I should be sent the script of the *Funeral*. When Tasker has read it, I shall perhaps know where I am.

Yours
Patrick

Somebody describing himself as a teacher rang up to-day, and asked whether anyone had written a review of my “book” (i.e. Voss); he had been given an assignment on it, and would like to read a review. I referred him to you on me, so that he could see at least that I had written “books”. I get so sick of “your book” as if the others were something to be hushed up.

Patrick White (1912–1990)

Letter to Peggy Garland 21 November 1961

typescript and ink

Letters and Photographs of Patrick White, 1944–1988

Manuscripts Collection

National Library of Australia

DOGWOODS
SHOWGROUND ROAD,
CASTLE HILL
N.S.W.

20.xi.61

Dear Peggy,

I found your two letters here when I returned from Adelaide a couple of days ago. It is distressing to hear that the plan for sending Philip to school nearby has fallen through, and that you are in such low spirits. There must be some school which will take him eventually; it is only a matter of finding it. It is a great pity you settled so close to Tom and his mistress, and have to put up with all the traffic of children to and fro. That in itself is upsetting, and leads to black thoughts. Like nembuthal [sic]. I am

sure that is no way for you to finish – you are too positive, and still have so much to give. I should think the thing at the moment is to concentrate on finding the school, and I cannot believe that in England where everything is so highly organised the right school does not exist. What about Puss Garland? Does she know of anything in her part of the world? She sounds like the kind of person who might help. Do any of the Churches interest themselves in children like Philip[?] I would never care to take up with a Church again, but I do feel that in Philip's case some connexion might be a comfort to him.

On the less – though really it is the more, practical side – for yourself – do you realise that prayer is not a dope, but as natural and necessary as breathing? Perhaps you do. I wouldn't know. This is such a personal matter it is difficult to touch on it without recoiling. There are so many intellectual barriers which stand in the way, and in any case, the whole thing is so delicate I hate to discuss it. One only knows what one knows, from experience, and everyone has to find out for himself. At one point in my life I stood and cursed God, to realise I had faith in what I was cursing.

THE HAM FUNERAL has turned out wonderfully, confounding all the detractors. I am still a bit dazed

by it all. It was the first time I had seen a whole play of mine come to life, and this one has been so controversial its success is the more exciting. The night after I returned, we went to a party the British Council gave for Betjeman, and the chief enemy, the director of the Elizabethan Trust in Sydney, who really persuaded the Governors of the Adelaide Festival to throw the play out, came up to me, as Manoly put it, like a poodle that had wet the best carpet, and asked: "Are you going to allow the Trust to do it in Sydney?" I enjoyed being cold, but he is supposed to be asking me to lunch to discuss. The annoying thing is that it is now too late to be included in the Adelaide Festival in March. Although some of the opposition have come round, the arrangements have been made, and I will only agree to be put on in the best theatre at the peak of the Festival.

Things seem to be happening in London, too. Nita Pannell, who is the leading woman in *THE ONE DAY OF THE YEAR*, and who was to have played Mrs Lusty in *THE HAM FUNERAL* in Adelaide, has been organising readings, and pushing the play under the noses of managements. (Incidentally, there have been, or will be reviews of the Adelaide performance in the *Observer* and *New Statesman*.) Also, a man at the Court Theatre called Blatchley is very enthusiastic about the other play, *THE*

SEASON AT SARSAPARILLA, and we are now waiting for Tony Richardson to make the final decision. (It is going to be done in Adelaide by the same people who put on THE HAM FUNERAL, but a year from now.) I do hope THE SEASON AT SARSAPARILLA is put on in London. There is one scene in it which came from my hearing the little Schwartz girl giving cheek to her mother in Childers Terrace.

Here it has been pouring for a whole week, and the unfortunate wretches living along the rivers have been flooded out. I am living in the middle of a swamp, and seem to spend my time just getting boggily from A to B. Everything becomes so slow. Manoly has flown to Adelaide to see the play and will not be back till later in the week, for the one concert Stravinsky is going to conduct in Sydney, and for which we succeeded in getting tickets.

To-morrow night I am actually dining with Stravinsky! It is at the home of a leading scalp-hunter, but in the circumstances I could not resist accepting. Besides, I have always felt THE HAM FUNERAL is really an opera in search of its music.

It is wonderful to think RIDERS IN THE CHARIOT made such an impression on you. I have had all kinds of praise and kicks. But already I feel it

slipping away from me, in the way that happens to anything one has hatched out. I only think of getting back to normal and a book I had started a few weeks before the Adelaide upheaval. I wish there was someone who could deal with all the correspondence, and the sordid negotiations which arise out of what one has written. I am afraid it may damage what I still have to write. I have several novels, and several plays, which I want to work on alternately; I think they will balance one another. But now there is this danger that success will turn writing into a business. One should really run right away at this point, to a mountain, or an island.

22.xi.61 Since I began, the famous dinner with Stravinsky has taken place. He was quite different from what I expected – which was something tall, cold and cerebral. In reality he is a dear old thing, but very old, tiny, and arthritic. His wife is a kind of St Bernard; one imagines her carrying him about the house in her teeth. Robert Craft, the young American conductor, who is the Boswell to Stravinsky's Johnson, and chief interpreter of his music, seemed somewhat peevish last night. Perhaps not enough attention. Stravinsky and I sat together at dinner. He told me: "I am a professional drunkard. All the time I drink whisky, whisky, whisky!" I must say he held it very well. During dessert he passed me shelled walnuts on the palm

of his very soft hand. Lots of rings.

I am relieved to say the rain has stopped after over a week of it, and Manoly returned this evening, which is another blessing. He seems to have been very impressed by the production of the play, which he saw twice. Apparently the Director of the Elizabethan Trust, who declined to see it in the beginning, has flown over incognito, and is going to it to-night.

What is so interesting is that all this can now happen in Australia. One doesn't have to go off and live in London or New York as Australian artists and intellectuals have been doing up till now. It comes to a Sydney suburb – and Stravinsky thrown in.

Still, I shall be glad to go for another trip, and we are saving up with that in view. We shall probably set out at the beginning of 1963. By then I should have saved enough money. There is no point in starting until one can afford to cover a lot of ground. Even if somebody decides to do the plays in London, it will take months of preparation and planning before they can go on, and in the meantime I hope I shall be able to finish the new novel I had started before the upheaval.

I had a note from Anthony, who was finishing

his Maori book. I thought he intended to return to Wellington to work for Sutch, but he gave a Christchurch P. O. address. Maurice Shadbolt also wrote to me after reading RIDERS IN THE CHARIOT. He sounded very depressed, as his novel had been turned down again. He was just about to leave for Samoa.

Betty sends me floods of reviews, and wrote me an elegant, literary letter from St Jean de Luz. I suppose I should write to her, but cannot make myself; I find such practised Christian behaviour as hers so oppressive.

It is about three o'clock, and I must go to bed, although this is the time when I feel I can go on for ever after drinking a whole pot of tea. Can you, please, tell me sometime about golden hamsters? Philip mentioned the possibility of his getting one when you settled in England? Are they guinea pigs, or a kind of ferret? What gave him the idea? Is there a golden hamster in some book for children? I particularly want to know about this, as I should like to introduce one into the novel I am writing, but obviously can't if there is some famous hamster character in children's literature.

Love – Patrick

Manning Clark (1915–1991)

Condolence letter to Manoly Lascaris 1990

ink

Papers of Patrick White, 1930–2002
Manuscripts Collection
National Library of Australia

11 Tasmania Circle,
Forrest, A.C.T. 2603,

3/10/90

Dear Manoli,

With this letter I am sending you a copy of the book which would have been given to Patrick had he lived on. I want you to have it as my way of telling you how much we all owe to you for your life of love and devotion. The wars, the speeches, the public statements flowered in part from what you gave so generously to Patrick. An artist needs a muse. – And you were to Patrick what Clio is to all historians, the Muse which brings out all that is inside the man. I remember you always with great affection. – I remember the beauty of your face when you and Patrick were happy together. You were more than a server. You were a lover and a source of both strength and inspiration. In Patrick's presence we should stand in awe. He made me

glad to be alive – and I always felt and feel now what a privilege it was to know a little of his love. I was and am glad that through him I met you. Coming to Castle Hill and Martin Road meant more to me than I could express in words. There were moments which were like an epiphany – moments when the fever and the fret ceased. It was like hearing music – yes, on leaving I heard music. So please accept my thanks for your kindness to me, for your love and devotion. He has a memorial in our hearts. You belong there too in our heart of hearts.

My love to you,
Ever,
Manning