

A(lec) D(erwent) Hope Biography

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Contents

[A\(lec\) D\(erwent\) Hope Biography.....1](#)
[Contents.....2](#)
[Biography.....3](#)



Biography

The legacy of leading Australian poet A. D. Hope to world literature is unquestionable, comprising eleven books of poetry, seven collections of critical essays, and two plays. His writing, compelling in its originality and passion, and rigorous in its satirical edge and philosophical insights, embodies in its language both the greatness and the frailty of the human spirit. Despite the many critical works Hope wrote during his lifetime, he will be remembered best and longest as a poet.

Alec Derwent Hope was born in Cooma, New South Wales, on 21 July 1907, the first of four children of Percival (a clergyman) and Florence Ellen (Scotford) Hope. Most of his childhood was spent in rural New South Wales and in Campbell Town, Tasmania, where he was educated at home by his parents. His father began to teach him Latin (Julius Caesar's *Commentaries on the Gallic Wars* [52-51 B.C.] and passages from Livy) at the age of ten. Hope's love of Latin was cemented in his final year of high school when he studied the Latin verse of Catullus; this interest in Latin continued throughout his life. In his eighty-seventh year, in personal correspondence with Ann McCulloch, he wrote, "I am always glad that I awakened to Latin before I encountered the Romance languages and was able to 'hear' the original Latin behind them."

Hope first attended Bathurst High School, where his first poems appeared in the school literary journal, *The Burr*, in 1922-1923; it included five offerings of the then fifteen-year-old Hope--three poems and two translations of poems by Catullus. He then moved to Fort Street Boys' High School, Sydney, for his matriculation year. In 1924 Hope was awarded a scholarship to study arts at Sydney University; he accepted the scholarship after dealing with his disappointment at failing to be accepted for medicine, his first choice. Hope graduated from Sydney University in 1928 with first-class honors in English and philosophy and was awarded the university medal in both; he also studied psychology and Japanese. Since he saw poetry as engaged in a philosophical view of the world, he believed John Anderson, who arrived in the philosophy department in Hope's second year, to be "the single most important philosophical interest of my youth."

In 1928 Hope was employed by the Sydney University *Appeal* under director E. R. Holme. During this period he studied courses in Italian and Spanish. In the same year he was awarded the James King Travelling Scholarship, which allowed him to accept a place at University College, Oxford. From 1929 to 1930 Hope read English at Oxford University; his teachers for language included the novelists J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis. Hope received a third-class honors degree, which he conceded "is Oxford's kindly way of bestowing a failure on honors students though this might have been due partly to my having offered a special subject in Gothic and failed to sit for the exam" in personal correspondence with McCulloch (1989). Hope's aim at this time at Oxford was to set the foundations for becoming a scholar in the Indo-European family of languages. Although after completing his degree he was offered minor academic posts in England, they came too late, as he had already used his return ticket to Australia.



Coming home in the years of the Great Depression meant that work was impossible to find, and Hope's father sent him off to camp on a piece of land he owned near Bungan Head on the coast, paying him the equivalent of the dole. This period was an extremely happy time for Hope, who worked on the first version of a revision of Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* (1604), which after several revisions was finally published in 1982 in a form quite different from the original draft. After three months of camping, Hope was accepted as a trainee at the Sydney Teachers' College and worked as a tutor at St. Paul's College in the same university. Because of Hope's third-class degree from Oxford, Holme was unable to employ him on the English staff as he had originally planned to do, and in fact told Hope that he must give up the idea of an academic career. Holme did, though, give Hope a letter of introduction to the editor of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, where he was offered a job. Hope rejected the offer and always thought afterward that he "must have been crazy," as he said in personal correspondence with McCulloch (1989). He graduated from the Sydney Teachers' College in 1932; his graduation was followed by another six months of unemployment before he was appointed a relieving (substitute) teacher around the various schools in the Sydney area. He disliked teaching, however, and eventually took a job as a psychologist, giving aptitude tests to children about to leave school and advising them on suitable careers. Simultaneously, Hope upgraded his psychology studies to honors level and commenced a master's degree in psychology, which he abandoned in recognition that he did not have the required mathematical skills to carry it through. During this period in Sydney, Hope returned to his study of Russian. He frequented an Arabian coffee shop in King's Cross (a bohemian suburb of Sydney) run by Ursula Schwallbach, who gave him regular lessons in Russian. He eventually became a boarder at this woman's house, becoming an integral part of the Russian community in Sydney and being elected to their club of Returned Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen. His contact with his Russian teacher continued over the years, and the Hopes holidayed at Pebbly Beach in the years to come, where the Schwallbachs had made their home after giving up the coffee shop. Hope's interest in Russian continued throughout his life.

Hope was finally transferred to Canberra in 1937 to Telopea Park High School, where his main role was to discover why, in spite of the superb equipment and outstanding teachers of the four trades studied there, none of the pupils had managed to pass the exams. The students were children of itinerant workers who Hope discovered did not, until his appointment, have any of the basic skills in writing, reading, and arithmetic. In 1937 he met Penelope Robinson, whom he married on 27 May 1937. Hope took a position at Sydney Teachers' College in 1938, where for the first year he was employed to teach statistics before he finally found his way into the English department in 1939. The Hopes rented an abandoned house overlooking the harbor to Cockatoo Island. After they made rudimentary repairs of this four-roomed airy house, it became, with the outbreak of World War II, a resting place for many new friends. James McAuley stayed with the Hopes, at the time having been forced to give up his teaching and become a conscripted member of the army. He was waiting for the formation of the special section of army research that he, along with Harold Stewart, joined and whose principal gift to military science, Hope noted, appears to have been the famous Ern Malley Hoax. (As a joke, in one afternoon, as Ern Malley, McAuley and Stewart wrote a book of modernist poetry, which was taken seriously and reviewed.)



The Hopes' home was in an area that was considered a military target after Japan entered the war, and in 1940, with the birth of their first child, Emily, they moved to Castle Crag, at the northern edge of the city. Hope continued in his position at the teachers' college before being appointed as a senior lecturer, Department of English, University of Melbourne, in 1945. The Hopes' two other children, twins Andrew and Geoffrey, were born in 1944. In 1951 Hope was appointed professor of English at Canberra University College, which later became the Australian National University. During the early years of his professorship, Hope, along with Thomas Inglis Moore, introduced Australian literature as a major sequence of study. Up until this time, Australian literature was taught in a piecemeal fashion: the occasional text was included in general courses on literature. In 1953 a terrible fire raged through the buildings allocated to the English department. This occurrence proved personally devastating for Hope, as he lost valuable manuscripts, including all notebooks written over the previous ten years.

As an undergraduate, Hope had published poems in *Hermes*, *Arts Journal*, *The Pauline*, *Australian National Review*, and *The Bulletin*. Although his first collection of poems, *The Wandering Islands*, did not appear until 1955 when Hope was in his late forties and head of the Department of English at Canberra University College, he had by this stage established himself as a poet by his regular contributions to Australian literary journals as well as having works appear in several anthologies of Australian verse. By the time *The Wandering Islands* appeared, not only had he established a reputation as a poet but also as a rather brutal, albeit insightful, literary critic.

Hope saw himself, however, primarily as a poet. In an interview with McCulloch in 1987, he said, "poetry is not a thing you decide to do, or adopt a system or theory and proceed according to plan. It grows out of you and what you have in you," and again in another interview with McCulloch in May 1986, he said, "poetry gave me the feel of the world. . . . I was no longer alone in the light of time and circumstance." Although often characterized as being a Romantic poet, Hope was always eager to emphasize that he, unlike the Romantics, saw poetry as being more than a dream of the passions; in the same interview, he said he believed it was also "a waking statement of the dream and this statement is the work of the contemplative, intellectual energy, itself the most important of the passions which listens to and interprets the voices of the dream."

Hope saw the role of poetry as a means of creating new being. He saw the poet as an actor who entered a part and explored possible answers to those questions offered up by the human condition. Central to his vision is an ironic stance that teases the reader to submit to the provisional nature of knowledge though simultaneously affirming the relentless search for truth. He wrote on page 7 of his notebook in 1968, "When we embrace a system, a faith, a plausible explanation, we have learned to be ignorant of other possible worlds we have learned to ignore." Whether directed at love/ sexuality, cosmology, the beauty and terror of the landscapes of the mind and the phenomenal world, and the creative process and literary discourse, Hope reminds people that living is an act of joy and that part of the joy is to enact the humor and irony of being human.



In his lectures, interviews, and notebooks, Hope has often been quite explicit in his disbelief in the poem as a confessional of some kind and in his view that if his poetry is in any way autobiographical, the connections between the life and the art are tenuous. Ideas and interests, he concedes, lead him to writing particular kinds of poems that reflect his interests in science, travel, archaeology, literature, the Bible, society and its ironies, and boyhood and Australia. Most of his poems can be channeled into these divisions--though necessarily flavored if not, at times, determined--by his fierce opposition to free verse, a distaste for censorship, a celebration of male sexuality, the reinvention of the ancient stories included in myth and legend, and a preference for presenting a view or argument through analogy. *The Wandering Islands* includes poems that reflect some of these interests, which pervade all his books until his last, *Orpheus* (1991), in which his final selection embodies them quite deliberately. In *The Wandering Islands* these interests are signaled in such poems as "Imperial Adam" and "Lot and His Daughters" (The Bible), "Ascent into Hell" and "The House of God" (Boyhood), "Pyramis or The House of Ascent" (Archaeology), "The Brides" and "Toast for a Golden Age" (Society and Its Ironies), "Return of Persephone" and "The End of a Journey" (Reinvention of Myth), and "William Butler Yeats" (Literature). The selection of poems is introduced by Hope's "The End of a Journey," which tells the tale of Odysseus, returned to his home and looking back not only at the massacre his return brought to those who had invaded his house but back further to the adventures he had known--the sound of the sirens' songs, "the bed of Circe," and "Calypso singing in her haunted cave." The allegory is not lost to the reader. The narrator hears sweet voices mocking him and asking him

Son of Laertes, what delusive song
Turned your swift keel and brought you to this wreck,
In age and disenchantment to prolong
Stale years and chew the cud of ancient wrong,
A castaway upon so cruel a shore.

Hope was a controversial figure in the literary world. During the 1950s and 1960s he was a hero of the antipuritanical brigade for his courageous treatment of sexuality and erotica in his poetry and his stand against censorship. Some critics, however, responded negatively to the overt sexuality in his poems. Reception to *The Wandering Islands*, though overall acclamatory in its praise of the poems, included reservations with regard to Hope's treatment of sexuality. Some critics perceived a certain strange and disquieting note when Hope dealt with the subject of sex and suggested that his erotic poems were rarely love poems. They suggested that this attitude emanated from a kind of "self-repression" and Manichaeism. Nevertheless, McAuley--a fellow poet, critic, and a man whom Hope recognized (along with Robert Brissenden) as his closest friend--identified that the tensions apparent in Hope's treatment of sexuality were part of Hope's attempt to find a principle of transcendence, reconciliation, and grace in a world



that in the Nietzschean sense had lost its God. Endemic to this view is a recognition of Hope's attempts to liberate the flesh, to celebrate its sensuality, and to remove it from condemnation as being in some way evil. Critics such as Judith Wright celebrated his satirical approach that not only entailed a "half-hysterical cocktail-party wit" but one that presented a vision of the world that was compelling and highly organized. Wright drew attention to the dualistic nature of the work, the conscious awareness in the poems of the dichotomous nature of the world, with good pitted against evil, man against woman, and the spirit against the flesh. Hope, in his autobiographical notes in personal correspondence with McCulloch (1989), said of himself that he suspected he ran on repressed rage: "I imagine that the subterranean lake of suppressed fury has served as fuel for all my occupations and interests." In the same entry he vehemently rejected an alternative view: "the dreary Freudian theory that it is the libido, kept in check, which supplies all our energies."

Forever the humorist and mindful of feminist critique of the treatment of women as femmes fatales and/ or the adherence to the *vagina dentata* (the toothed vagina), he nevertheless was able to deal with the subject humorously, as with the fate of Henry Clay, the protagonist of "The Conquistador":

I sing of the decline of Henry Clay
Who loved a white girl of uncommon size.
Although a small man in a little way,
He had in him some seed of enterprise

Henry, a married man, fully aware that he is doomed before he agrees to accompany the large girl home, visualizes all that might befall him, finds perdition as he "Climbed the white mountain of unravished snow, / planted his tiny flag upon the peak." His physical impact is barely noticed by the majestic girl.

And afterwards, it may have been in play,
The enormous girl rolled over and squashed him flat;
And, as she could not send him home that way,
Used him thereafter as a bedside mat.

At the time of the publication of *The Wandering Islands*, its reception emphasized Hope's existential stance in the world balanced perhaps by an equal affirmation of being solitary:

You cannot build bridges between the wandering islands;
The Mind has no neighbours, and the unteachable heart
Announces its armistices time after time, but spends,
Its love to draw them closer and closer apart.

Alongside this response, the critique of his overt, tension-ridden sexuality seems to come more from a traditional religious context that, although not always puritanical, was nevertheless fed by a reluctance for a subversion and/or recognition of the flesh/spirit duality. The poem "Imperial Adam" was the work that drew, and continues to draw, most attention. In more-recent times, this poem, among others, has been criticized by some feminists for objectifying woman, representing her, at worst, as a mere object of desire and the cause of man's fall from grace and at best as a muse for male inspiration. The poem takes its story from the Bible, and Hope follows through the logical sequence of events as Adam is given his mate described as "man's counterpart": "He knew her by sight, he knew by heart / Her allegory of sense unsatisfied." The beauty of Eve's sensual being is unquestionable:

The pawpaw drooped its golden breasts above
Less generous than the honey of her flesh;
The innocent sunlight showed the place of love;
The dew on its dark hairs winked crisp and fresh.

Hope adds a humorous touch to this controversial poem that celebrates sexuality and dramatizes the alienation of the male when the female gives birth: "From all the beasts whose pleasant task it was / In Eden to increase and multiply / Adam had learnt the jolly deed of kind." Eve is presented as the temptress: "Sly as the snake she loosed her sinuous thighs." Not only according to the critics does the poem make woman responsible for the Fall but also within this poem presents the act of sex as "evil" as the poem ends with the line, following a description of the birth of Adam and Eve's first child, "And the first murderer lay upon the earth."

The extent to which Hope is seen as a patriarchal poet is an ongoing debate. Poems, and works such as "Advice to Young Ladies" (*Collected Poems: 1930-1965*, 1966), *A Midsummer Eve's Dream: Variations on a Theme by William Dunbar* (1970), and "Botany Bay or The Rights of Women" (*The Age of Reason*, 1985) testify to the extent that Hope explored the ontology of being female and in mostly a satirical mode dramatized his opposition to societies that have limited their range, their intellect, their passions, and their creative spirit. His erotic poetry, mostly unpublished, is essentially



male when he makes no excuses for the objectification of male lust. The euphemistic "John Thomas" finds its mark in bawdy ballads; the women in these works are seen to enjoy the sexual act as much as the males. Even these poems are rarely without a satirical purpose. In "Against Dildos" he curses the dildo:

A curse upon the Dildo
And on its naked head;
It stultifies the passion
And cheats the marriage bed.

The curse is extended to all who have made the dildo have a purpose: men overcome by alcohol, the "strumpet" who performs a service rather than real play, the proud virgins, parsons who "rail at fornication," and too hasty lovers and sodomites who "cheat women of their due."

Such poems sit beside ones that draw on researched knowledge of languages; Roman, Greek, and Nordic mythology; biblical studies; poetry; philosophy; and biography that span the history of Western civilization. In *Poems*, published in 1960, Hope's interest in enacting within the poems a tribute to the whole tradition of European culture is evident. Coupled with this focus is also one on the nature of the poet's task. One of the most satisfying responses to this work can be found in Jennifer Strauss's essay "'Vision that keeps the night and saves the day': Whose is the task defined in 'An Epistle from Holofernes'" one of seventeen essays selected by David Brooks for *The Double Looking Glass: New and Classic Essays on the Poetry of A. D. Hope* (2000). Focusing on one poem that finds its source in a biblical story, Strauss contextualizes Hope's poetry not only in terms of the most significant critics writing on Hope at that time (Brissenden, McAuley, S. L. Goldberg) but also highlights Hope's preoccupations that continued to haunt and guide his poems: the relationship between the art and the life, the strands of classicism and Romanticism, the act/ritual of love and the creation of art, the content and the form of a poem, and balancing the night (the magic and darkness of myth) and the day (contemporary culture, daily events, common tribal practices). This publication also included "Australia," which dared to define Hope's country of origin in what was largely thought to be a negative way. Australian cities were described as "five teeming sores"; the country as dry and empty, "a woman beyond her change of life"; and a land "without song, architecture, history" and populated by "monotonous tribes from Cairns to Perth." The poem ends on a positive note, however, the narrator believing that from the desert prophets might spring:



Such savage and scarlet as no green hills dare
Springs in that waste, some spirit which escapes
The learned doubts, the chatter of cultured apes
Which is called civilisation over there.

Hope regretted this poem, indicating it was the voice of a young poet returning to an Australia that offered neither employment nor means of following his vocation as a poet. He came to understand the criticism of what was termed misogynist imagery, though not agreeing with that assessment, and, more important, he came to regret the complete disregard the poem had for an indigenous culture that had existed for thousands of years prior to European invasion. *Poems* also included "The Return from the Freudian Islands," which deals with another of Hope's "prejudices," in this case his contempt for Freudian analysis, which he saw as responsible for explaining away the fears, repressions, and misguided passions reductively--bringing, in his mind, the poet to a place where there was nothing but ". . . A faint, dry sound / As first a poet buttoned on his skin." This contempt took on another guise in the poem "Private Dick" in Hope's next book of poems, *A. D. Hope* in the Australian Poets series (1963), in which the protagonist is Dick, a private investigator and/or a Freudian analyst. No one is safe from Private Dick:

Take to Art; set up your easel--landscape painting is just clean fun,
Free from the dingiest moral measles--Ah, now he's got you on the run:
Private Dick leans over your shoulder, breathes hot peppermint down your
neck:
"Call that a tree? That's a Phallic Symbol! Boy, is that psyche of yours a
wreck!"

Within the story of the poem, Dick, at death, is condemned to perdition and takes on his next client, Nick himself: "Back they go through the psychic tangles, the dreams he dreamed and the beds he wet, / The games he played with his sisters' bangles, the nice little snake he kept as a pet." Dick, however, is no match for Nick, who is able to cancel Dick's file with a simple trick--"The final triumph of mind over matter."

Also in 1963, *Dunciad Minimus: An Heroic Poem* was published privately by Australian National University Press. The poem appeared again, with additional material, in 1970 as *Dunciad Minor: An Heroick Poem*. Hope's polemical casting of literary critic A. A. Phillips as the hero of *Dunciad Minor* was dictated by his own distaste for a certain kind of literary criticism. In 1972 Hope wrote in his notebook 14:

What I ought to have said in my preface to *Dunciad Minor*, is that it is not only described as minor in deference to its great predecessors, but because that [Alexander Pope's *Dunciad* (first three books, 1728; complete poem, 1743)] was about poets and this is



about a minor sort of literary men, critics. Bad writers are a disaster, bad critics only a nuisance.

Hope's fight against exponents of free verse, against most strands of modernism, and against the "corrupters of poesy" drew opposition, created great poetry/critical prose, and drew controversy. In 1964 he became president of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English, a four-year appointment. The following year, 1965, the award-winning *The Cave and the Spring: Essays on Poetry* was published. This text characteristically stirred up debate as Hope, in a series of essays, offered new views on problems in English literature that he considered to have been wrongly or only partially solved in contemporary criticism. Most of these essays were controversial, whether his view on the purpose of satire in "The Discursive Mode" or "The Activists," which was prompted by Marxist attempts to get him to join in communist movements. The latter was pertinent at the time because of his refusal to join public demonstrations during the Vietnam War. His refusal was somewhat abated by his involvement in Arts Vietnam in 1968 when he read a poem that was against the horror of *all* wars, situating himself in a position that did not ally him with a particular political party.

The satirical edge in most of Hope's poetry is not directed at political atrocities. In keeping with his adoption of John Keats's "negative capability," he is disinterested in ideological concerns and instead reserves his critical eye for modernity, whether marriage ("The Brides"), mass culture ("Standardisation"), tourism ("A Letter from Rome"), or psychoanalysis ("Private Dick"). Nevertheless, to categorize Hope solely as a conservative and a traditionalist would be simplistic, particularly if such a view implies that he did not create new ways of seeing, new dances of language, and philosophical insights that preempted some contemporary theory. Hope cast his net widely and deeply when writing about his world. Some of the sources he drew on are the Bible; Greek, Roman, and Nordic mythology; European culture; the history of ideas across time and place; and thirteen languages other than English. *Collected Poems: 1930-1965* won three awards; the volume consists of a hundred or so poems, at least twenty-one of them not previously published. It includes "A Letter from Rome," which embodies many of Hope's interests and preoccupations: travel and how modernity brought with it the worst aspects of tourism; poetry written as if a letter with a specific recipient in mind; and the questioning of an Australian who was aware that his culture found its source in Europe, yet, when on European soil, remained an unsatisfied spectator:

. . . The roots are European but the tree
Grows to a different pattern and design;
Where the fruit gets his flavour I'm not sure,
From native soil or overseas manure.

And the uncertainty is in our bones.
Others may think us smug or insular;



The voice perhaps is brash, its undertones
Declare in us a double of what we are.
When the divided ghost within us groans
It must return to find its avatar.
Though this puts things too solemnly, of course,
Yet here am I returning to this source.

Hope has in this poem a sense of coming home. He feels somewhat like a child with a quest to find "Something once dear, long lost and left behind."

In 1969 Hope published another award-winning book, *New Poems: 1965-1969*. Having retired from his position as head of the English Department in 1967 and having been elected professor emeritus, he was now free to pursue his vocation as a poet full-time. The years ahead proved rewarding. He remained engaged in his role as educator and consultant in Australian literature. In 1970, the year that *A Midsummer Eve's Dream* and a revised edition of *Dunciad Minor* were published, Hope taught at Sweet Briar College, Virginia, in the United States.

Returning to Australia in 1972, he joined the Commonwealth Literary Fund Advisory Board, contributing his voice to the encouragement of Australian writers. *Collected Poems: 1930-1965* was reprinted in paperback edition as *Collected Poems: 1930-1970* (1972), and again in 1974 in an Angus and Robertson Classics series with the addition of poems from *New Poems: 1965-1969* and with revised notes to Book V of *Dunciad Minor*. Hope's contribution to poetry was recognized by an award of Order of the British Empire (OBE) and an honorary degree from Australian National University. His growing popularity as a poet is evident with the reprinting of *Selected Poems* of 1963 in 1974 and 1975. *Henry Kendall: A Dialogue with the Past*, including an introduction by Hope and poems and prose selected by Leonie Kramer, was published in 1971. In this year Hope became a member of the Literature Board of the Australia Council (1973-1974) and received an honorary degree from the University of New England. In 1974 a second edition of *The Cave and the Spring* was printed, and his *Native Companions: Essays and Comments on Australian Literature, 1936-1966* (1974) was published. This book is a mixture of reviews often slightly revised or augmented with later comments, three articles that Hope termed "more or less autobiographical," and revised texts of lectures he gave in the course of his academic teaching. Hope decided to give up reviewing in 1966 because it was time-consuming and poorly paid. The reviews he chose to include in this book he saw as "having some critical theory involved or some general critical attitude beyond the particular work under review."

In 1975 *Judith Wright* and *A Late Picking: Poems, 1965-1974* were published. In writing about Wright, a close friend as well as a fellow poet, Hope decided that since an abundance of material was being written about her poetry, he would focus in this study on her intellectual development and its importance as a background to her poetry rather than making the book a commentary on the poetry itself. All of the poems in *A Late Picking* first appeared in literary journals and magazines in Australia, the United States, and Canada. *A Late Picking* continues to reflect Hope's interest in the significance and



need of the ancient myths and legends ("The Sacred Way"), biblical stories ("What the Serpent Really Said"), societies and their ironies ("The Invaders"), science/cosmology ("Exercise on a Sphere," "Nu Nubile," "Palinbenesia," "O Be a Fine Girl . . ."), literature ("A Letter to David Campbell on the Birthday of W. B. Yeats, 1965" and a satirical treatment of C. P. Snow's thesis on science and the arts, "Poor Charley's Dream"), the relationship between love/sex and art ("Croesus and Lais," "Pervigilium Veneris," "Apollo and Daphne, 1"), and Australia and his boyhood ("Country Places" and "Hayfever"). Within a year of the publication of these two texts Hope received the Robert Frost Award for poetry and an honorary degree from Monash University.

In 1978 Hope again published two texts, one critical prose, *The Pack of Autolycus*, and the other a new collection of poetry, *A Book of Answers*. *The Pack of Autolycus* consists of what Hope selected as the best lectures he gave during his academic career, and *A Book of Answers* is a book of poems in which Hope "answers back" across time to poets who have affected him. The poems of his "Old Favourites" are reconsidered--John Donne; Andrew Marvell; John Milton; John Dryden; Alexander Pope; George Gordon, Lord Byron; John Keats; Alfred, Lord Tennyson; Robert Browning; and Gerard Manley Hopkins. Hope also speaks back to the poems of such Europeans as Heinrich Heine, Aleksei Konstantinovich Tolstoy, and Charles-Pierre Baudelaire. He also takes on some contemporaries--William Butler Yeats, Robert Graves, and T. S. Eliot. Finally, he plays havoc with his friends James McAuley, Judith Wright, Gwen Harwood, Rosemary Dobson, and David Campbell. In 1979 Hope's *The New Cratylus: Notes on the Craft of Poetry* was published. This book was Hope's attempt to argue his case for what he thought great poetry must entail and what he believed was wrong with contemporary criticism--in particular, New Criticism and Leavism. He attacks such poets as Eliot, extolling the charms and musical superiority of traditional forms and damning "Free Verse" as being formless and unmusical. In the same year, his only daughter, Emily--a painter, silversmith, and writer--died of cancer at the age of thirty-nine. In his notebooks Hope writes in the years after her death of experiencing her presence and of his and his wife's great loss.

Hope was often accused by his earliest critics of not really being an Australian poet, considering his dependence on European sources, stories, and culture. Hope argued against this view, noting that all his poems, no matter what the theme, are influenced by the phenomenal world around him for their nuances, their tone, and their music. His later collections of poetry do begin, however, to deal directly with his Australian experience. In *Antechinas: Poems, 1975-1980* (1981) many of the poems are of this ilk: "Beyond Khancoban," "Tasmanian Magpies," and "The Drifting Continent."

In 1981 Hope was made Companion of the Order of Australia. The following year was an important one for Hope: *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus: by Christopher Marlowe Purged and Amended by A. D. Hope*, begun fifty years earlier when he returned from Oxford, was finally published. Also in 1982 he translated a selection of his own poetry into Italian as *Tre Volti Dell'Amore*. Then in 1985 *The Age of Reason* was published--a collection of poems that Brooks in *The Double Looking Glass* explains are about "reason's contexts, about its ineluctible relations with such things. Its sometimes clearly unsovereign place amongst them." Brooks notes:



Among the most entertaining poems Hope has written, the eleven verse narratives of *The Age of Reason* are about the capricious, irrational, uncanny and mythical sides of the purportedly most rational of ages--Darwin's love life, Man Friday's suicide, Dampier's record of a Dantescan vision on the isle of Aves, George III's chasing Fanny Burney through Kew Gardens, and the supernatural explanation of Sir Herschel's recovery of the planet Uranus--all presented with a view to further levels of being and explanation, the rhythms of which erupt within and subvert those of Science and Reason.

In 1987, Hope's second adventure with playwriting was rewarded with the publication of *Ladies from the Sea: A Play in Three Acts*, an amusing and instructive play that examines how Odysseus, having returned home to his loyal wife, behaves when he is visited by the lovers he met on his twenty-year journey home (Calypso, Circe, and Nausica); the play has never been performed. In 1989 Hope was made an honorary member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. This honor was Hope's last recognition in his lifetime of his contribution to literature. The National Library of Australia holds manuscripts that outline eight further projects Hope had planned but which he thought in 1986 he would "probably never live to complete." He prepared for his death for a long time. His last book of poetry, *Orpheus*, was written consciously as his last offering. In "Intimations of Mortality" in *Orpheus* he makes a plea to his readers:

Share the carcass, spare the soul;
Leave my laurels, sense or green.
Maggot, buzzard, critic, ghoul
Pick my bones but pick them clean[.]

To a large extent the poems in this slim volume represent Hope's abiding interests and the varied poetic forms he believed in and practiced throughout his life as a poet and a philosopher. Dedicated to his wife, Penelope, who died in 1988, these poems argue by analogy his view that the poet is detached and always wears a mask, his obsession with his dream-team workers that create for him at night, his reliance on the sacred provided by mythology and biblical stories, his lifelong struggle against "modernism," his view that laughter is an essential ingredient in discursive thought and art, his fascination with science, and his love for women. Some poems of the volume also record thoughts about his death. In "Intimations of Mortality" he says,

Here's the Rubbish left behind
By careless love and reckless wit.



Burrow in and what you find
May God give you joy of it.

The humor is unmistakably Hope, even in his statement that laughter "will be my best epitaph." Hope was fascinated with the vagaries that make up a life. In "A letter to Ann McCulloch," a poem he wrote in response to a question concerning his biography, he wrote,

We are shaped by our choices, even those we did not make
Or which were made for us, sometimes against our will.
Where pathways diverge, the ones that we did not take
Mostly forgotten, serve to determine us still[.]

Hope saw living as partly composed of blind choices and noted that in looking back one sees that comparatively trivial choices have often determined one's course. In identifying persistent themes in his work, gleaned from the reading of his poems and his notebooks, one realizes that in *Orpheus*, Hope had created a collection of poems that brought to final form an overview of his life's work.

Hope's notebooks in particular are a means of identifying the sources of his poems, whether experiences from life or ideas from other works. His descriptions of the sexual behavior of insects exude unforgettable images of sensual beauty, which he draws from in many poems. His argument concerning the inevitability of the poet's mask, his necessary detachment as a creator in being a spectator of life, hints perhaps at how these views reveal a personality in the act of concealing it. Despite Hope's scholarly engagement with metaphysics, mythology, psychology, and cultural movements, and despite his antagonism toward aspects of modernism and his fierce views about the need for the poet's personal detachment when entering into an argument of a poem, he always expresses an element of play and disinterested contemplation of the world. When questioned about if and how he might write an autobiographical work, Hope said he "would write it as a travel book under the title 'A Visit to Earth.' It would involve no pose or artifice, since I have always felt that detachment travellers feel, no matter how well they know and feel at home in their countries they visit. No matter how immersed in the life of a foreign country they may become, their first impressions are always from the outside looking in--and that has been my attitude to the world I live in and still is." In "Visitant," from *Orpheus*, he writes,



Yet much that I saw became dear;
Some few were close to my heart;
Although it was perfectly clear
I was a stranger here
Standing aloof and apart.

The closest Hope came to writing any form of autobiography was in his last published work, *Chance Encounters* (1992). This work gives a brief account of his life, although its focus is on the stories of encounters and incidents in his life that retained an importance for him. These included "encounters" he had with such people as Christopher Brennan, J. R. R. Tolkien, James McAuley, jazz great Kid Orey, and F. R. Leavis, to mention but a few. Peter Ryan's "A. D. Hope: A Memoir" introduces Hope's text and is one of the finest representations of the man in his many guises as scholar, satirist, poet, innovator, and character. Hope is encapsulated in Ryan's closing line: "A great poet, a great soul and that rare bird today, 'an intellectual who is not sundered from the human race.'"

Orpheus continues to express the excitement Hope experienced throughout his life when confronted with scientific interpretations of the world. A halfhearted determinist, Hope enjoyed taking on the scientists--whether physicists, astrologists, or biologists--because of their inability to accept the provisional nature of knowledge. Scientific concepts themselves often served as a source of inspiration for his work. He writes of how he has never lost sight of the "awareness of the narrowness of the bases of knowledge of the world" and the way "that what we are aware of gets in the way of what we are totally unaware of," an idea expressed in his poem "A Swallow in the House." In this poem the swallow becomes the human being who, searching in the dark for answers, for a way out of failed systems, falls stunned to the ground after crashing against glass. He writes,

Something left out, not to be reckoned with,
Not conceived by science or adumbrated in myth;
Something of which he is totally unaware
As the swallow of its undreamt nightmare, solid air[.]

Endemic also to Hope's vision is his belief in a theory he constructed on the role dreams play in his creations. The notebooks include more entries on his theory of dreams than on any other topic. Hope's theory is an alternative to Freud's, and throughout his journals, he has recorded many dreams--delighting with how he, in his dreams, is taken over



. . . by a throng
of revellers and roisterers who proceed
To invent whole theatres of improbable dreams[.]

A. D. Hope died on 13 July 2000 in Canberra. He believed that poetry was philosophical music, and his work dramatizes the ways in which a philosophical argument is best represented by analogy. He believed that all great poems include within their music an argument of some kind. His preference for analogy is in line with his distrust of arguments based on the assumption that certain facts are fundamental, elemental, and axiomatic and that, in knowledge, no other facts have to be brought into consonance with them. Hope attributed this insight to the teaching he received (when he was an undergraduate at the University of Sydney) from John Anderson. Hope's use of analogy as his preferred form of argument followed in the wake of "the dead hand of nineteenth century rationalism," which had caused the assumed basis of his thinking to be effectively removed. His nightly entries into his notebooks (1949-1988) explore a wide gamut of his views on society--whether directed at social mores, the processes of artistic creation, or the impact of technology on humans' lives. Underpinning Hope's poetry, prose, and journal writings is the ever-present ironic vision that provided him his capacity to laugh at himself and to smile at his relentless search for meaning while he affirmed and celebrated all that being human means.

Hope identified with the mythological figures Odysseus, Faust, and Don Juan. Indeed, many of his poems played out their stories. He enjoyed that his wife was named Penelope, who, like the mythological Penelope from the *Odyssey*, must often have felt that she was weaving a vast tapestry waiting for her spouse to return from outside adventures--in Hope's case the public world of literary activities--from the attention of those fawning at his feet and from his study in their Forrest home in Canberra, in which he was ensconced for much of their life together. She gave Hope the home that made his creations possible; she took on the work of bringing up their three children, and she loved him and sustained his self-esteem. *Orpheus* is dedicated to his wife:

For Penelope
Trees

Since you left me forever, I find my eyes
See things less clearly than they used to do
All that I view lacks the hint of surprise
That once I shared with you. . . .