

‘An Editor Regrets’ R. G. Campbell’s *Australian Journal*, 1926–1955

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Despite having been published continuously from 1865–1961, the *Australian Journal* is mainly regarded by literary historians as a nineteenth-century periodical. By concentrating on nineteenth-century authors such as Marcus Clarke, Charles Harpur, Ada Cambridge and “Rolf” Boldrewood, the brief entry in the *Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* mentions nothing beyond 1875. Vane Lindesay’s *The Way We Were: Australian Popular Magazines 1856 to 1967* gives the magazine a few short pages,¹ as do Frank Greenop’s passing references in his *History of Magazine Publishing in Australia*,² pushing further into the twentieth century, but with little detail. R. G. Campbell’s *The First Ninety Years: The Printing House of Massina Melbourne 1859 to 1949* provides the fullest account to date with an accomplished history of the printer and publisher of the *Australian Journal*, and more than passing references to the magazine that ran off its presses.³ But Campbell’s story ends before the final decade of the magazine’s production. To date, a comprehensive account of the twentieth-century *Australian Journal* has not been assembled.

This paper aims to fill the gap by examining R. G. Campbell’s thirty-year tenure as editor of the *Australian Journal* (1926–1955), and by drawing attention to the role that Campbell and his magazine played in the Australian freelance story writing market, especially the magazine’s role as a testing ground and source of income for both professional and amateur story writers. Campbell’s respect for some of his most prolific writers is clearly expressed in an unpublished anthology, “The Australian Journal Story Book,”⁴ providing a conceptual lens through which the field of freelance story writing can be explored during the decades in which Campbell was most active. This anthology and the files of the *Australian Journal* provide important evidence for the ongoing study of Australian magazine culture and freelance story writing in the middle decades of the twentieth century, and so the second half of this paper examines Campbell’s choices for the anthology as a starting point for more comprehensive studies in the future. Much more than a

Research for this article was supported by a University of Queensland Fryer Library Fellowship.

¹ Vane Lindesay, *The Way We Were: Australian Popular Magazines* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983), 19–20.

² Frank S. Greenop, *History of Magazine Publishing in Australia* (Sydney: K. G. Murray, 1947).

³ Ronald G. Campbell, *The First Ninety Years: The Printing House of Massina Melbourne 1859 to 1949* (Melbourne: A. H. Massina, 1949).

⁴ Ronald G. Campbell, “The Australian Journal Story Book.” ca. 1954, University of Queensland Fryer Library UQFL120.



nineteenth-century periodical, R. G. Campbell's *Australian Journal* was a widely-read twentieth-century magazine, and a significant destination in the busy network of freelance story writers, providing one of few avenues for popular Australian short stories to be published in the middle decades of the twentieth century.

The nineteenth-century issues of the *Australian Journal* cast a long shadow over our knowledge of the twentieth-century issues. Begun as a weekly in 1865, it had become a monthly magazine by 1869, aiming to continue the claims of its first issue: "the ablest COLONIAL pens of the day will be engaged on our staff. Historical Romances and Legendary Narratives of the old country will be mingled with tales of Venture and Daring in the new."⁵ In its early years some of these pens were Adam Lindsay Gordon, Henry Kendall, Marcus Clarke and the writer of detective stories (and first editor of the "Detective's Album"), Mary Fortune ("Waif Wander"). The magazine remained profitable among many other short-lived magazines published by A. H. Massina, but by the turn of the century it had lost much of its earlier editorial motivation. It was not until 1905 that the journal attempted to refresh its Australian focus, again inviting "writings of Australian character, especially in narrative form."⁶ According to Campbell, some of the writers captured during this period were Marie Pitt, Miles Franklin, Mabel Forrest, and Vance Palmer, a claim yet to be tested by bibliography. An increase in original content, fostered by Stanley L. Massina and his aging assistant, W. E. Adcock, enabled the magazine to "lose its scissor-and-paste appearance"⁷ of previous years and assert an Australian character that had not appeared in the magazine for decades. While this provided some opportunities for Australian writers, however small in financial return, attention to Australian writers and writing increased further again under the editorship of R. G. Campbell.

R. G. Campbell was born at Sydney on 3 April 1896. His uncle, Norman Campbell, was a freelance journalist who wrote under a number of pseudonyms in Sydney and Melbourne, and the actress and writer Jean Campbell was a cousin. Little is known of his early life, but Campbell was working as a teacher in the early 1920s when he began to submit short stories to newspapers such as the *Bulletin*, *Aussie*, the *Australasian* and *Smith's Weekly*.⁸ In the winter of 1922 he submitted a clutch of stories to the *Australian Journal*, initiating the association that would last for more than thirty years. Stanley Massina was impressed with Campbell's writing, and, after Campbell made good on a request to deliver a competent detective story, he was hired to write the "Detective Album," a feature of the *Australian Journal* since 1865. Campbell produced his monthly quota of detective fiction for the next four years, and in 1926 he was offered the role of assistant

⁵ Campbell, *First Ninety Years*, 50.

⁶ Campbell, *First Ninety Years*, 135.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁸ R. G. Campbell, "An Editor Regrets," University of Queensland Fryer Library UQFL120/2.

editor. After a successful four-year probation, and the retirement of W. E. Adcock, he was appointed editor in 1930. As editor of the *Australian Journal* during the next three decades, he guided the magazine through a busy yet unstable field of freelance writers and writing, occupying a prominent position in the print culture of this time, particularly in Melbourne.

The *Australian Journal*, 1926–1955

Under Campbell's editorial control, the *Australian Journal* maintained a healthy circulation for more than two decades, entertaining a wide variety of readers—men, women, and children. Circulation rose from the good sales of 30,000 when Campbell began his editorship, maintaining a healthy 54,000 copies per issue during the 1930s, and reaching a peak of 120,000 in 1945, a result, Campbell speculated, “of so many overseas troops in the Commonwealth.”⁹ The departmental nature of the magazine was important to its success at a time when reading was one of the most prominent leisure activities within Australian homes; there was something in it for everyone, and so was shared widely within households when issues arrived each month—and even more widely during the war. These issues were planned and assembled in Melbourne on the second floor of Massina's Swanston Street building, the presses pounding downstairs while Campbell edited the work of others or completed one of his many “Rex Grayson” stories for the *Detective Album*. For a rare description of this workspace, it is worth quoting Campbell's assistant, Moira Skinner, at length:

Proof sheets were brought to me for checking. With corrections made, layouts prepared, dinkuses and illustrations positioned, they were formed into matrices for locking into the magazine rotary press, acquired in 1934 and capable of printing in two colours. On the ground floor behind the administrative offices, the rotary reverberated as the *Journal* went to press each month. In such a confined space, it took on the proportions of a dinosaur, drowning the sounds of the typesetters and other operators as it was activated, first slowly, and then swelling to a Bach fugue. The crescendo of sound eclipsed the gentler orchestration of flat-beds in their unhurried ssh-soosh-sigh of a punkah stirring the air as each ruled ledger page or poster slid down-up in rhythmic, hypnotic regularity. In our two “berths” on the top deck, the throbbing of the big press through the planks beneath our feet set us off on journeys with writers and artists for the next edition.¹⁰

From the Massina building on Swanston Street in Melbourne, the *Australian Journal* was delivered widely to city and country in Australia and New Zealand,

⁹ Campbell, *First Ninety Years*, 163.

¹⁰ Moira Skinner to Louise Campbell, ca. 1985, Louise Campbell private collection.

and, eventually, to subscribers across the world, reaching readers in the UK, Canada, USA, South Africa, India and Malaya.¹¹

<i>Australian Journal</i> 1 October 1929	<i>Australian Journal</i> 1 February 1951
Stories (* = Non-Australian Author)	Stories (* = Non-Australian Author)
<i>Young Company</i> by Roy Bridges (serial instalment)	<i>Little Boy Lost</i> by Marganita Laski (serial instalment)*
“According to Noonan” by J. P. McKinney	<i>The White South</i> by Hammond Innes (serial instalment)*
“The Triumph of Peter” by Rann Daly	“Come Dance With Me” by Lia Nash*
“Macpherson’s Legacy” by Osmar E. White	“Hootchi’s Whale” by F. J. Turnbull*
“Cash and Carrie” by Bess Skene	“Anxious Night” by David Lamson*
“The Man with a Hundred Names” by Rex Grayson	“Killer by Profession” by W. B. Ready*
<i>The Strange Case of William Cook</i> by Richard Keverne (serial instalment)*	“Two of Those Women” by Stacy Aumonier*
“Three Blind Mice” by Myra Morris	“The Hooper and the Lady” by Stella Gibbons*
“Horace’s Cure” by Curtis Ramsay	“A Map in the Red Desert” by Louis Kaye
“The Drums of Piligo” by Mark Temple	“King of the Night” by Chet Schwarzkopf*
“Dawn at Kiljarring” by J. Veldt	“Shipmates” by Don Seton
“Flanagan” by Norman Morrell	“Saturday Sage” by Sid Chaplin*
Features	“Midnight in Floridana” by Rex Grayson
“Phases of Fashion” by Madelon	“The Body on the Canoe” by Howard Jones
“Our Three Meals” by Graduate	Features
“On the Air” by Spark Gap	“Among the Critics”
“My Ladye Fayre” by Ladye Jane	“In Passing”

¹¹ Campbell, *First Ninety Years*, 165.

“Youth”	“J. B. Priestly Calling”*
“Smoke Drift”	“Patterns”
“In Passing”	“The Australian Journal Junior Magazine”
	“Mainly for Contributors”

Table 1. Australian Journal Comparative Tables of Contents,
1 October 1929 and 1 February 1951.

By comparing a 1929 issue with a 1951 issue, the following section provides an idea of the way Campbell maintained the departments throughout his time with magazine. As a magazine for every member of the family, the *Australian Journal* offered a broad mixture of editorial and advertising content. The primary content of stories and serials remained constant throughout the decades, but the provenance of stories shows a clear shift by the 1950s towards foreign syndicated fiction. Roy Bridges, “Rann Daly” (Vance Palmer), J. P. McKinney, Osmar E. White and Myra Morris were frequent contributors to the *Australian Journal* in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, and several of these featured on the cover of the 1 October 1929 issue. But Australian contributors were overwhelmed by imported fiction two decades later, “Louis Kaye,” Done Seton and Howard Jones were the only Australian contributors besides the ubiquitous “Rex Grayson,” R. G. Campbell’s *nom de plume*. It is worth noting here that the work of Tasmanian Noel Norman (“Louis Kaye”) was published first in the US in magazines such as the *Saturday Evening Post* before being before appearing in the *Australian Journal*, adding further to the amount of “syndicated” fiction, despite its Australian origin.¹² Departments devoted to fashion and the home remained constant, but a flirtation with radio in the 1920s had disappeared a decade later. Campbell’s long-running “In Passing” page was joined by “Among the Critics,” publishing letters from readers and regularly celebrating the writers who appeared in the *Australian Journal*. Any payments for short story writers were collected from pages and pages of advertisements, promoting a wide variety of home products, remedies, and personal improvement schemes, including drawing and short story writing courses. Ranging between one hundred and two hundred pages throughout Campbell’s editorship, the magazine necessarily responded to the economic realities of the publishing business.

By the 1950s, the cover-pages of the *Australian Journal* boldly asserted that it was the “world’s best story magazine,” a claim that might not have stood up to scrutiny against most imported American and British imported magazines, but

¹² Roger Osborne, “Noel Norman, Trans-National Magazinish from Lindisfarne, Tasmania,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 32.1 (2008): 91–102.

a claim that held some merit for the position it occupied in the Australian scene. During his editorship, Campbell developed strong relationships with many of Australia's most active freelance short story writers of the 1930s, including Myra Morris, Georgia Rivers, Vance Palmer, Xavier Herbert, Roy Bridges, J. H. M. Abbot, J. P. McKinney, and Arthur Upfield. By the 1940s, the *Australian Journal* was one of few Australian periodicals that paid its contributors a competitive rate for their fiction, and Campbell continued to encourage younger authors such as Jon Cleary and Robert Close. At the same time, he wrote hundreds of stories under various pseudonyms. As "Rex Grayson" he was the most prolific author of detective fiction in the journal's history, churning out hundreds of stories and serials during his thirty-year association with the *Australian Journal*, and contributing other material under an undetermined number of pseudonyms.

In the 1950s, with Australian-sourced stories and serials difficult to acquire, the *Australian Journal* returned to a stronger reliance on syndicated fiction from overseas. As the editor of a monthly story magazine, Campbell publicly bemoaned the shrinking pool of story writers available to magazine editors: "the fact remains that of late years the number of writers who can turn out the well-constructed and characterised yarn of between 5,000 and 6,000 words seems to be diminishing."¹³ Difficulty obtaining content was exacerbated by a drop in sales, a reduced number of pages, and changes to magazine departments, all indicating a decline in popularity.¹⁴ The value of the magazine was eventually subordinate to the increasing value of the printer's address at Swanston Street, which was put on the market sometime in the middle of the 1950s. Ron Campbell's career with the *Australian Journal* came to an abrupt end in March 1955 when A. H. Massina and Company Pty Ltd sold their building to the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, and the century-old magazine to Keith Murdoch's Southdown Press. In a letter expressing "deep regret that circumstances beyond our control force the severance of an association ... which has extended 29 years," the proprietors made the following assertion about Campbell's contributions:

We want to place on record our full appreciation of the fact that the successes which have attended the publication of The Australian Journal in recent years, have been almost entirely due to your efforts and ability and that during the 25 years that you have been Editor, you have maintained a consistently high standard, so that today the literary reputation of The Australian Journal is undoubted.¹⁵

¹³ R. G. Campbell, *Australian Writers and Artists Market, including New Zealand* (Melbourne: Australian School of Journalism and Art Training Institute, [1946]).

¹⁴ Lindesay, *The Way We Were*, 20.

¹⁵ A. H. Massina to R. G. Campbell, University of Queensland Fryer Library, UQFL120.



Fig. 1. R. G. Campbell, editor of the *Australian Journal*, 1926–1955.
Louise Campbell Private Collection.

The *Australian Journal* lasted only three more years under its new management, subsequently appearing in name only as a one-sheet newsletter until December 1961. It is worth noting the way the new editors looked both backward and forward by reprinting a number of J. P. McKinney’s “Noonan” stories from the 1920s and 1930s, and publishing the first television script in Australian history, “Elisha and the Long Knives” by Dale Wasserman and Jack Balch, within an issue that announced “Television! It’s On The Way.” Southdown Press’s embrace of television here might have been an early attempt at cross-media control by Keith Murdoch. If so, Murdoch would not see it succeed. The last substantial issues of the *Australian Journal* were published in 1958. Noting the demise of the *Australian Journal* in the *Bulletin* on 3 September 1958 under the heading “Exit Another Magazine,” a correspondent saw this as a sign that the market for freelance writers would become more restricted:

Unfortunately it seems that today there isn’t a big enough demand by readers for magazines devoted to short-stories, serial-stories and similar stuff of a fairly high standard. One by one such publications have gone; their places on the bookstalls taken by productions emphasising pictures, sex and sensationalism. . . . The freelance, anxious to market his work, may, in a few years’ time, wonder whether

it's worth while freelancing, but he can hardly blame publishers for preferring not to back losing propositions. The new writer, including the adaptable freelance, may find outlets for his talent in writing for radio and TV.¹⁶

This demise matched trends overseas, with prominent magazines such as the *Saturday Evening Post* heading towards similar fates in the 1960s, meaning the formerly lucrative market for story writers, across the world, was quickly drying up. Campbell's departure marked the end of an era in more ways than one.

After parting ways with the *Australian Journal*, Campbell followed his partner, Louise Bateson, to England.¹⁷ Not burning any bridges, he wrote a series of travel stories for the new proprietors of the *Australian Journal*. The couple made a living in England as writers and magazine editors, bringing finely honed skills with them. Campbell was a regular contributor to boys' magazines through the Edinburgh media company, D. C. Thompson, and with the experience of "Rex Grayson" behind him, he was soon writing up to six stories every week for a number of periodicals. After the couple returned to Australia in 1960, Campbell continued to make a living as a freelance writer, writing for a number of publications, including a regular historical feature for the Sydney *Daily Mirror* from 1961–1967. Many of these features drew on his love of the opera and the theatre, building a reputation that attracted the attention of American academic Barbara Mackenzie, who commissioned Campbell to help her complete *Singers of Australia: From Melba to Sutherland*. This volume was published in 1967. With writing in his blood, Campbell continued to undertake freelance journalism, and had begun work on a memoir of his life in magazines when he died suddenly on 18 April 1970. His passing received little public attention, but those his life had touched expressed their sadness privately. Upon hearing of Campbell's death, S. H. Courtier wrote to Louise Campbell,

if I have gained some success in the writing game, the responsibility and the incentive was largely his. He guided and coached me, and he did the same thing with many other writers who got their start in *The Australian Journal*, some of them great names in Australian Literature.¹⁸

R. G. Campbell's "Australian Journal Story Book"

S. H. Courtier's testimony affirms the important position that R. G. Campbell occupied in the field of freelance short story writing during the middle decades of the twentieth century, and suggests that Campbell's opinion had a significant influence over the popular short story as it was written and published in Australia.

¹⁶ *The Bulletin*, 3 September 1958, 48.

¹⁷ Private Correspondence with Louise Campbell.

¹⁸ S. H. Courtier to Louise Campbell, April 1971, University of Queensland Fryer Library, UQFL120/13.

As Courtier's letter suggests, he coached many prospective and accomplished writers in the craft of popular story writing and, in the *Australian Journal*, provided a testing-ground for emerging writers. Almost 750 writers contributed more than two thousand stories to the *Australian Journal* between 1926 and 1955. But twenty of those writers contributed close to one quarter of the stories, some becoming so-called experts by contributing to freelance story writing courses as did Ron Campbell. Campbell selected the work of a number of these writers for inclusion in his unpublished "Australian Journal Story Book,"¹⁹ a testament to his regard for them as practitioners of the popular story form. As an artefact, "The Australian Journal Story Book" captures Campbell in a reflective mood, drawing attention to the writers and writing that he valued as a long-term editor of an Australian popular story magazine, and the dynamic print culture within which he was a prominent figure. The following section examines Campbell's anthology project as a defining, perhaps summative, event in the history of the Australian popular short story during the closing years of Campbell's editorship.

The strong position taken by the *Australian Journal* within the field of Australian print culture can be clearly seen in raw numerical terms. The *Australian Journal* is positioned below the *Bulletin* as the main publisher of short stories during Campbell's editorship, but far above other competitors within the field. (See Fig. 2) For most popular short story writers active during the middle decades of the twentieth century, the editorial requirements of the *Australian Journal* and the *Bulletin* provided some of the most significant influences on Australian writers, both popular and literary. That meant the contributors to the *Bulletin* adhered to the requirements of a 2,000–3,000 word sketch that the editors of the weekly newspaper valued, while contributors to the *Australian Journal* filled more pages with around 6,000 words of popular romance, adventure, crime and detective fiction. Those, like Vance Palmer and Myra Morris, who could write for both markets were rare, indicating the exclusiveness of writers and styles within certain sectors of Australia's print culture, most writers being associated with a particular periodical.

Periodical	Number of Short Stories
<i>The Bulletin</i>	4570
<i>Australian Journal</i>	2133
<i>Australian Women's Mirror</i>	443
<i>Queenslander</i>	341
<i>Herald</i>	164

¹⁹ R. G. Campbell, "The Australian Journal Story Book," ca. 1954, University of Queensland Fryer Library UQFL120.

<i>The Australasian</i>	134
<i>The Home</i>	129
<i>The North Queensland Register</i>	123
<i>The Daily Mail</i>	114
<i>Bill Bowyang's Magazine</i>	108

Table 2. Short stories in Australian periodicals publishing the most fiction, 1926–1955.

Source: Austlit, July 2016.

When Campbell looked back over the history of the *Australian Journal* and his place in it, he offered a much more positive account than most literary histories provide. The *Australian Journal* is often portrayed by critics and literary historians as a publisher of “pot-boilers” and maudlin romances. In many cases this might be so. But, the *Australian Journal* also provided a space for many Australian writers to hone their skills and to earn a living in a marketplace where such opportunities were few and far between. The importance of the *Australian Journal* to emerging writers is seen in several dedications to Campbell in novels by such authors as Robert S. Close and S. H. Courtier, along with Courtier’s more private sentiments noted above. With a recommendation from Campbell and a selection of *Australian Journal* stories, Jon Cleary first broke into the American short story market in the mid-1940s, initiating his forty-year career as a transnational novelist with a lucrative association with the *Saturday Evening Post*. Perhaps unexpectedly, several *Australian Journal* stories were selected in the annual *Coast to Coast* anthologies during the 1940s, a publication that was known for choosing the best writing of the year. Campbell welcomed such recognition, but in his introduction to the stories collected in “The Australian Journal Story Book,” he made his editorial criteria clear:

As they were written for the entertainment of magazine readers, these stories have invariably a beginning, a middle and an end, though not necessarily the conventional “happy” end. In fact, few of them are conventional stories at all, from the standpoint of the ordinary “popular” magazine. But they are all good yarns, selected because they deserve a better fate than burial in the dusty files of a monthly periodical, and they all pleased a great many readers when they were first published. It is hoped that, in this new setting, they will please a new audience.²⁰

Unfortunately, this was not to be. “The Australian Story Book” was, until recently, lost to a “new audience” within the “dusty files of a monthly periodical,” as the editor feared.²¹ Nevertheless, “The Australian Journal Story Book” exists as an

²⁰ Campbell, “Australian Journal Story Book.”

²¹ Many of these stories have been published in an online exhibition of *The Australian Journal Story Book*: <https://tomcollinsandcompany.github.io/annotate/texts/storybook/> and discussed in more detail at <https://ajstorybook.wordpress.com/>.

artefact from a time when popular storytelling occupied a much different position in the cultural field, supporting an alternative history to the more conventional literary histories of recent times that concentrate only on literary storytelling.

- i. "Foreword" by R. G. Campbell
- ii. "Van Dieman's Land, 1830" by Marcus Clarke (1870)
- iii. "The Diggings in 1855" by "Waif Wander" (1882)
- iv. "Art and Artifice" by J. P. McKinney (1930)
- v. "The Main Road" by Roy Bridges (1930)
- vi. "The Early Victorian" by J. H. M. Abbott (1931)
- vii. "Mulligan Taubada" by Osmar E. White (1931)
- viii. "The King of Luggertown" by Vance Palmer (1933)
- ix. "Collecting the Evidence" by Gavin Casey (1934)
- x. "Reunion" by Margaret Fane and Hilary Lofting (1936)
- xi. "The First White Man" by William Hatfield (1937)
- xii. "We'll All Go to See the Sea" by Frances J. Moon (1940)
- xiii. "Seven Emus" by Xavier Herbert (1942)
- xiv. "Why Did They Look At Mr Smith" by J. B. Warren (1942)
- xv. "Safe Horizon" by Jon Cleary (1943)
- xvi. "The Book" by Robert Close (1943)
- xvii. "The Sky Stone" by Sidney Hobson Courtier (1947)
- xviii. "The Night I Poisoned Grandpa" by Melva Lester (1947)
- xix. "Miss Tarleton" by Rex Grayson (1948)
- xx. "A Visit to the Dead Heart" by Frederick Howard (1953)

Table 3. Campbell's proposed table of contents for "The Australian Journal Story Book," ca. 1954. The anthology was prepared for submission to Angus and Robertson with a letter to Beatrice Davis.

Campbell's anthology was designed to celebrate the work of some of his most prolific writers, but it also includes some writers completely lost to history. After briefly acknowledging the nineteenth-century heritage with selections from Marcus Clarke and "Waif Wander," Campbell honed in on the period during which he was editor. Writers of popular historical fiction are represented by J. H. M. Abbott and Roy Bridges. Journalists Osmar E. White and Frederick Howard accompany other prolific career freelance writers such as Vance Palmer and Xavier Herbert. William Hatfield and S. H. Courtier wrote stories of the bush and beyond, joining Frederick Howard and Xavier Herbert with stories that sympathise with the plight of indigenous Australians, particularly with their stories of artefacts stolen by unscrupulous whites. Offering a different perspective,

Margaret Fane and Hilary Lofting's stories of the Australian middle-class were well known in magazines and newspapers, and Jon Cleary and Robert Close achieved early recognition with *Australian Journal* stories before going on to international careers, Cleary cutting his teeth with war stories, and Close attracting attention with a controversial story called "The Book". J. P. McKinney and J. B. Warren represented the humourists of the *Australian Journal*. Warren paid his way through university with his stories, and McKinney's "Noonan Family" was one of the most popular series of the 1930s, eventually being adapted as a radio serial. Frances J. Moon's derogatory portraits of indigenous Australians provides an uncomfortable alternative to the sympathetic stories of Herbert, Hatfield and Courtier, and Melva Lester was the sole representative of the hundreds of authors who published only one story in the *Australian Journal*.

Campbell fostered and celebrated writers who could regularly and efficiently contribute the formula stories he required, just as he had done for Stanley Massina in the 1920s. As he put it in *The First Ninety Years*, "from a compilation of stories by amateurs or semi-amateurs the magazine developed into a vehicle for almost every Australian whose work was worth reading."²² But some authors bristled at their association with the magazine, clearly concerned about its status in the broader literary field. Xavier Herbert loved the attention *Australian Journal* readers brought to him, but that did not stop him from referring to his readers as "mutton-heads." In a letter to P. R. Stephensen during the 1930s, he wrote:

The best magazine in Aust. today is the Australian Journal. It is in fact the Real Magazine. And it is a very comfortable concern, eighty years old and getting older and more comfortable. Doubtless you know nothing about it. Few literate people do. It is a journal for illiterates. It could claim the patronage of literates too if properly run. The editor has often told me not to waste my time on what he calls Pretty Writing, because the class of reader he caters for realises nothing but plot.²³

In his autobiographical fragments, Campbell points the finger at "academics and highbrows" as the ones with such opinions, opinions that suggest that the *Australian Journal* "was a trivial publication, suitable only for the less knowledgeable type of housewife."²⁴ Nevertheless, those writers Campbell singled out for special attention in his anthology and elsewhere enjoyed much stronger reputations in their day than they do now, and, in 1946, in advertisements scattered throughout the Australian School of Journalism's *Australian Writers and Artists Market, including New Zealand*, were considered "experts" of the popular short story form.


²² Campbell, *First Ninety Years*, 159.

²³ Xavier Herbert, *Xavier Herbert Letters*, edied by F. De Groen and L. Hergenhan (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2002), 12–13.

²⁴ Campbell, "An Editor Regrets."

SHOW YOUR SHORT-CUTS TO SUCCESS

WORLD FAMOUS WRITERS



Journalism—Radio—Story-writing

★ THESE ARE THE EXPERTS

who bring you literally priceless knowledge garnered through many years of successful writing.

Vance Palmer - - Novelist, Short Story Writer, Poet, Playwright, Critic and Broadcaster.

Wm. Hatfield - - Master of modern English and leading Novelist and Short Story Writer.

Myra Morris - - Brilliant Short Story Writer who has earned wide recognition for novels, stories and poetry.

Xavier Herbert - - Author of internationally famous "Capricornia" and powerful short stories.

Alan Marshall - - Versatile Freelance Journalist and Story Writer; winner of 10 Short Story Contests.

Frank Wilmott - - (Furnley Maurice), leading Australian Poet, also Printer, Publisher, Author and Lecturer.

Max Afford - - Successful Playwright, author of thrillers, plays, serials and radio adaptations.

Vyvyan Smith - - Ex-Editor of Argus Week-end Magazine, 10 years Advertising Manager Anthony Hordern's, Sydney.

AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL
80 SWANSTON STREET,

Fig. 2. Advertisement from Australian Writers and Artists Market, including New Zealand. Melbourne: Australian School of Journalism, [1946].

Never a complete dumping ground of disposable popular stories for authors with literary aspirations, the *Australian Journal* was also used as a testing-ground or workshop by a number of authors who used their *Australian Journal* stories in other publications. I have shown elsewhere how Vance Palmer's commercial and literary fiction have significant inter-textual relationships,²⁵ and there is no doubt that other connections can be found between the ephemeral *Australian Journal* short stories of others and the fiction that built their reputation. For instance, Xavier Herbert's "Seven Emus," published in the *Australian Journal* in 1942 was significantly revised for its 1959 book publication, but the core of the story remains intact. Other authors had long-lived careers with the *Australian Journal* that subsequent writing has obscured. Unknown and understudied, J. P. McKinney's "According to Noonan" series places him firmly within the tradition of Steele Rudd's comic portrayal of life in the Queensland back blocks. Better known for his philosophical writing and a prize-winning war novel, McKinney is revealed here as someone who made a living with commercial fiction in the 1920s and 1930s, before turning his hand to radio serials based on characters from his Noonan series.²⁶ Writers like McKinney were not writing in isolation, producing works of art disconnected from the culture that surrounded them. Their relationships with editors, publishers, and other writers activate the dynamic network of writing and print cultures that operated during the middle decades of the twentieth century. Many of Campbell's major contributors were also participants in this network, but were not selected for inclusion in "The Australian Journal Story Book."

Author or Pseudonym	Number of <i>Australian Journal</i> Stories
"Rex Grayson" (1924–1955)	205
S. H. Courtier and "Rui Chestor" (1932–1946)	82
J. P. McKinney (1926–1939)	46
Jean E. Turnley (1948–1955)	39
"Louis Kaye" (1924–1954)	27
Dale Collins (1951–1955)	27
Xavier Herbert (1925–1943)	24
Vance Palmer and "Rann Daly" (1912–1946)	24

²⁵ Roger Osborne, "Vance Palmer, Short Fiction and Australian Magazine Culture in the 1920s," *Journal of the Association of Australian Literature* 6 (2007). <https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au/index.php/JASAL/article/view/10224/10123>.

²⁶ Roger Osborne, "Dairy Farm Philosopher: J. P. McKinney's 'According to Noonan' Stories and R. G. Campbell's *Australian Journal*," *Queensland Review* 24.2 (2017): 293–304.

William Hatfield (1934–1944)	23
Frank Walford (1936–1955)	22
R. G. Perry (1945–1950)	22
G. Hermon Gill (1932–1954)	21
Osmar E. White (1931–1949)	21
Georgia Rivers (1931–1951)	21
J. U. Prell (1946–1950)	18
Harriette Gordon (1937–1946)	17
Eric North (1932–1956)	16
Myra Morris (1924–1937)	16
Stephen Fennimore (1951–1955)	15
J. H. M. Abbott (1931–1937)	14
Arthur W. Upfield (1936–1938)	14
Arthur J. Palk (1923–1944)	14
Muriel Milkins (1943–1952)	14
Bernard Cronin (1923 – 1956)	14
Gertrude Hart (1931–1936)	13
Margaret Fane and Hilary Lofting (1931–1938)	13
Jon Cleary (1943–1948)	13

Table 4. Prolific Australian Journal contributors and their years of activity,
Source AustLit, August 2018.²⁷

Writers who were not selected for inclusion in “The Australian Journal Story Book” still maintained a prominent position in the culture that radiated from the *Australian Journal* through their status as major contributors to the magazine over many years (Table 4). A closer look at these networks can contribute to alternative literary histories that avoid the restricted views that focus on literary reputation alone. The *Australian Journal* was central to the world of the freelance writer and so other writers come to the fore. Myra Morris, Georgia Rivers, Jean Campbell, Dale Collins, Arthur Upfield, and Bernard Cronin were all prolific *Australian Journal* authors with significant reputations in their time. All were included in the various lists of “experts” in story writing, and Bernard Cronin ran his own story

²⁷ This is a conservative estimate from *AustLit* data. A number of issues from 1928 and 1929 have not yet been indexed. For example, J. P. McKinney contributed at least 45 “According to Noonan” stories between 1926 and 1939. See Osborne, “Dairy Farm Philosopher.”

writing course. In addition to a dozen or so stories, Upfield serialised two novels in the *Australian Journal* before international recognition made it less necessary to publish magazine stories. In an opposite trajectory, Dale Collins published most of his *Australian Journal* stories in the 1950s, providing a welcome income after he returned to Australia with little money after decades of occasionally successful work overseas. Gavin de Lacy has already directed attention to “Three Neglected Women Writers of the 1930s,” including “Georgia Rivers” and Jean Campbell, the latter a cousin of Ron Campbell with a reputation in writing and acting that stretched across the decades under discussion here. “Georgia Rivers,” the pen-name of Marjorie Clark, was seen as a writer of promise in the 1930s, and she was frequently a topic of Nettie Palmer’s literary journalism.²⁸ Myra Morris (1893–1966), received widespread praise from critics in her own time for her collection of stories, *The Township* (1947). As Deb Jordan points out,

Her clear pictures of life in country and town contain a wide range of characters and reveal her tolerance and understanding of humanity in its struggles. Like her novels, her stories combine earthy realism, poetic imagery and a broad humour. Sometimes her plots are marred by the demands of the popular market, but her often beaten-down and defeated people always contrast with her lyrical evocation of landscapes.²⁹

Despite stories being “marred by the demands of the popular market,” there is still scope for innovative biographical, bibliographical and cultural research to be conducted on these and other authors published by the *Australian Journal*. Their reputations have suffered from the stigma of their association with popular magazines and middlebrow writing, but much of this great pool of creative activity lies just below the more visible surface that literary history has provided for us. Mike Ashley’s comprehensive study of popular magazines and “magazinists,” *The Age of the Storytellers*,³⁰ closes in 1950, the same year that Ron Campbell was confronting the decline in Australian popular storytelling.

R. G. Campbell’s “Australian Journal Story Book,” his memoir “An Editor Regrets,” and the files of the *Australian Journal*, which Campbell would declare the “World’s Best Story Magazine” in 1951, provide a major source for studies of magazine culture and freelance writing in the middle decades of the twentieth century. With a circulation in the hundreds of thousands, a readership far greater than that, and a stable of writers that crosses and intersects with fields within both

²⁸ Gavin de Lacy, “Three Neglected Women Writers,” *The La Trobe Journal* 83 (2009): 26–37 (<http://latrobejournal.slv.vic.gov.au/latrobejournal/issue/latrobe-83/t1-g-t4.html>).

²⁹ D. J. Jordan, “Myra Evelyn Morris (1893–1966).” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/morris-myra-evelyn-7660>.

³⁰ Mike Ashley, *The Age of Storytellers: British Popular Fiction Magazines, 1880–1950* (London: British Library; New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2005).

national and transnational print culture, there will be significant reward in asking the appropriate questions. There are many questions about Australia's creative and cultural production in the middle of the twentieth century that have not yet been pursued in a systematic fashion. This lack of scrutiny creates a significant gap in our knowledge of biography and bibliography as it relates to the popular short fiction market in Australia and the careers of freelance writers in a period where radio and television are beginning to create new opportunities; and magazines are beginning to lose their former prominence as purveyors of stories.³¹ Future research on this transitional period in Australian cultural production will benefit from closer scrutiny of R. G. Campbell's *Australian Journal*.

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³¹ For instance, a new study on the twentieth-century *Australian Journal* to accompany *Travelling Home*, *Walkabout Magazine* and *Mid-Twentieth-Century Australia* would provide additional insights into the dynamic networks that joined Australian writers, publishers, and readers during the middle decades of the twentieth century. Such enquiry could also identify the emerging networks that intersect with the careers of screenwriters in the 1950s. See "The Writer in Television History": <https://www.austlit.edu.au/austlit/page/6003648>.