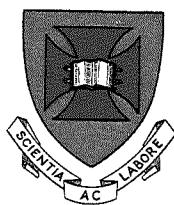


ADMITTED 4th MAY, 1976

UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND



DOCTOR OF LETTERS 'HONORIS CAUSA'

FRANCIS XAVIER HERBERT

The Vice-Chancellor says:

"MR. CHANCELLOR,

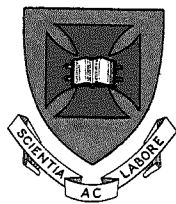
IN THE COURSE OF A LIFE WITH ENOUGH VARIETY AND ADVENTURE TO SATISFY A DOZEN ORDINARY MORTALS, XAVIER HERBERT HAS SOUGHT TO EXPLAIN HIMSELF AND HIS COUNTRY IN THREE MAJOR NOVELS, AN EXPERIMENTAL NOVELLA, A VOLUME OF SHORT STORIES, AND AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

HIS FIRST NOVEL, *CAPRICORNIA* (1938), WON THE SESQUICENTENARY PRIZE NOVEL AWARD AND THE MEDAL OF THE AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE SOCIETY. AT THE TIME IT WAS READ CHIEFLY AS A GREAT COMIC NOVEL IN THE DICKENSIAN TRADITION, MERCILESSLY BUT REALISTICALLY EXPOSING THE SELF-SEEKING CUPIDITY OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF EUROPEAN CULTURE IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY AND LAMENTING THEIR DISASTROUS INTERFERENCE WITH THE ABORIGINES.

IT IS MUCH MORE THAN A SOCIAL DOCUMENT OR A MORAL TRACT. IN IT THE RACIAL QUESTION IS SEEN AS PART OF A BASIC HUMAN PROBLEM, THE TRAGI-COMIC PLIGHT OF MAN'S MISUSED POWER OVER HIS DESTINY AND OF LACK OF CONCERN FOR HIS FELLOWS. ITS VISION HAS BEEN DESCRIBED BY VINCENT BUCKLEY AS 'THAT OF A THWARTED POET LOOKING ON THE WORLD AND SEEING THAT, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, IT IS THE REVERSE OF GOOD'.

THE DEEP TRAGEDY OF VISION OF POOR FELLOW MY COUNTRY IS ONLY LIGHTLY SKETCHED IN *CAPRICORNIA*. DESPITE ITS SATIRE IT IS A CELEBRATION OF LIFE AND OF THE LAND. TWO BRIEF QUOTATIONS FROM XAVIER HERBERT'S LATER WRITING ENCAPSULATE THE ATTITUDE

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FRANCIS XAVIER HERBERT (cont.)

THAT GENERATED *CAPRICORNIA*: 'THE MAIN THING IN LIFE IS LIVING!' AND 'I HAVE BECOME INBUED WITH A MEASURELESS SPIRITUAL LOVE FOR THE LIVING LAND THAT BORE ME.'

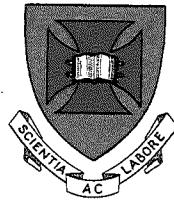
CAPRICORNIA HAS REMAINED ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR AND BELOVED OF ALL AUSTRALIAN NOVELS, BOTH HERE AND ABROAD. IT HAS BEEN TRANSLATED INTO OVER A DOZEN LANGUAGES; IT WAS PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED STATES WITH A PREFACE BY THE NOTED CRITIC, CARL VAN DOREN, AND BECAME A BOOK SOCIETY CHOICE. H.G. WELLS DESCRIBED IT AS 'THE BEST WRITTEN AND FINEST SPIRITED NOVEL THAT HAS EVER COME OUT OF AUSTRALIA' AND ITS AUTHOR AS 'A MASTER WRITER'.

SEVEN EMUS (1959), COMIC NOVELLA WITH SOME EXPERIMENTATION IN THE MODE OF NARRATION, AGAIN DEALS WITH THE UNHAPPY RELATIONS BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE. AS IN *CAPRICORNIA* A PERSON OF MIXED BLOOD IS USED AS THE FOCUS FOR A CONDEMNATION OF THE EUROPEAN'S EXPLOITATION OF TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL CULTURE.

HERBERT'S NEXT BIG NOVEL, *SOLDIERS' WOMEN* (1961), TURNS TO A QUITE DIFFERENT SETTING, BUT AGAIN DEALS WITH THE CLASH OF VALUES AND 'CULTURES'. IT IS SET IN SYDNEY DURING ITS WARTIME 'OCCUPATION' BY AMERICAN TROOPS. THE VIVIDNESS, RAWNESS, COMIC EXUBERANCE, AND VIOLENCE OF ITS FIFTY OR SO MAJOR CHARACTERS ARE CAREFULLY CONTROLLED BY AN INGENIOUS AND ORGANIC STRUCTURE MAKING USE OF THE DAYS OF THE WEEK AND THE PHASES OF THE MOON.

SOLDIERS' WOMEN WAS ANOTHER BESTSELLER, BEING PUBLISHED AS A PAPERBACK BY PANTHER.

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FRANCIS XAVIER HERBERT (cont.)

"THE NEXT VOLUME WAS *LARGER THAN LIFE* (1963), A SELECTION FROM HERBERT'S MANY STORIES. IN THEM THE DELIGHT IN TELLING A GOOD YARN IS OFTEN DIRECTED TO THE EXPOSURE OF PRETENSION OR SPURIOUSNESS.

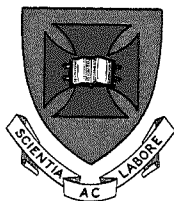
IN THE SAME YEAR, THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, *DISTURBING ELEMENT*, APPEARED. IT RELATES, SOMETIMES WITH BRAVADO, MORE OFTEN WITH HUMILITY, BUT ALWAYS IN BRILLIANTLY RECALLED DETAIL, HERBERT'S LIFE FROM CHILDHOOD TO EARLY MANHOOD: HIS CHILDHOOD IN GERALDTON, BOYHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE IN THE RUMBUSTIOUS PORT TOWN, FREMANTLE, THE SOCIAL DISTURBANCE OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR, HIS APPRENTICESHIP AS A PHARMACIST, HIS BEGINNINGS AS A WRITER, HIS STUDENT DAYS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, AND FINALLY HIS SETTING OFF, ON BOARD THE "S.S. DIMBULAH", 'TO MAKE THE WIDE WORLD MINE IN EXPERIENCE OF IT AND UNDERSTANDING'.

XAVIER HERBERT'S LAST NOVEL, *POOR FELLOW MY COUNTRY*, WAS OVER NINE YEARS IN THE WRITING. SO EAGERLY WAS HIS CULMINATION OF HIS WRITING CAREER AWAITED AND SO ENTHUSIASTICALLY WAS IT RECEIVED THAT THE FIRST IMPRESSION OF 14,000 COPIES SOLD OUT IN TWO DAYS LAST SEPTEMBER.

IN IT HE RETURNS TO THE CAPRICORNIA COUNTRY AND TO THE CITIES, BUT THIS TIME THE PANORAMA IS SUFFUSED BY A DEEPLY FELT SENSE OF TRAGIC WASTE.

THE TRAGEDY AFFECTS INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERS (REPRESENTING MANY NATIONALITIES) AND THE HISTORY OF EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT IN AUSTRALIA. THE DREAM OF AUSTRALIA FELIX, THE GLORIOUS POSSIBILITY OF TERRA AUSTRALIS DEL ESPIRITU SANTO, HAS FOR HERBERT BEEN

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FRANCIS XAVIER HERBERT (cont.)

VIOLATED, PERHAPS IRREVOCABLY. THE NOVEL DEPICTS THE PERSONAL, TRIBAL AND NATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF BOTH BLACK AND WHITE AS BEING ABORTED BY STUPIDITY, GREED, CUNNING AND MISUNDERSTANDING. IT CHRONICLES AND DRAMATIZES THE FAILURE OF AUSTRALIA TO REALIZE ITS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES, AND IT DOES SO WITH INTENSE PASSION AND ANGUISH.

XAVIER HERBERT AGREED TO COME TO THIS UNIVERSITY AS A WRITER-IN-RESIDENCE TO DISCUSS HIS NOVEL, HIS VISION OF AUSTRALIA, AND HIS CRAFTSMANSHIP. IN DOING SO HE HAS REVEALED ANOTHER OF HIS MANIFOLD GIFTS, THE GIFT OF TEACHING AND INSPIRING. IT IS APPROPRIATE THAT WHILE HE IS HERE THE UNIVERSITY SHOULD ACKNOWLEDGE HIS MASTERY OF THE CRAFT OF LETTERS BY CONFERRING ON HIM THE HONORARY DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF LETTERS.

MR. CHANCELLOR, I PRESENT TO YOU FRANCIS XAVIER HERBERT, MEMBER OF THE PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY, HONORARY DOCTOR OF LETTERS (UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE) FOR ADMISSION TO THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF LETTERS 'HONORIS CAUSA'."

When the Vice-Chancellor concludes, the Chancellor says -

"BY THE AUTHORITY VESTED IN ME AND UPON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, I ADMIT FRANCIS XAVIER HERBERT TO THE RANK AND PRIVILEGES OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF LETTERS 'HONORIS CAUSA' IN THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND."