Immature poets initiate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets made it into something better, or at least something different.¹

Hope’s poetry belongs within a wider frame of reference than nationalism. He turned from the supposedly mediocre, devitalized urban middle class, not towards a simplistic vision of a organic rural community, but towards desire, will, pride, cultural history, as a means of creating a universal myth process: ‘The mending of a primordial link’ during an ‘age of plastics and alloys’. He has restored to poetry the privilege of kindling a spark in everyone. Hope gives evidence of a fine poetic impulse, an un-aristocratic but rare and rich sensibility in exploiting a commonplace occurrence, which can be admired for ‘turning common clay into burning gold’. While he knows that civilization can be a curse, he is aware that the poet can look into his familiar heart and heal it.

Whereas it is usual to say that New Literatures begin in imitation, develop into assertive nationalism, and mature into an independent national tradition, Hope claims that the early stage is of isolation from the parent stock, which is followed by a provincialism as the effects of isolation continue. Maturity is reached when, as a result of increased communication and central development, writers of sufficient ability appear and the National Literature can be integrated into the parent tradition.

Besides, while his pronouncements and attitudes are cosmopolitan, he has also been one of the most influential critics of Australian Literature. He has looked carefully at what others have superficially examined, and seen a greater complexity which has had the effect of raising the value of the literary text in critical estimation.
His range of intellectual interests have extended into radio, astronomy and nuclear physics. Thus in charting his own intellectual history, he reflects many of the central preoccupations of his time. He often absorbs his private experiences into a larger design, and the enlargement of a subject far beyond its precise origin and initial meaning become a persistent habit. Hence a ‘synoptic view of man in all his aspects’ is the central subject of his poetry.

Poetry writing is a gift of genius. The gift of writing itself is not sufficient for making a good poet. For Hope, writing poetry is not a paltry affair. Although Hope started writing poems at the age of eight, he took his vocation very seriously and the cardinal justification for this is that he considered the functions of the poet as primary. The poet is a being who is, and should be, aware of universal problems and their solutions. He believes that Poetry is an act of ‘conscious dreaming’:

Our mental life in so far as it consists of thought and feelings has very much the character of controlled dreaming.²

Hope’s poetry is a solution to the problems of the present age. He does it with full candidness:

He seemed to have read and thought about everything; he could talk about anything, and his courtesy and curiosity made him a wonderful listener. “Imperial Adam”, perhaps his most anthologized poem, was only one of a number of literary causes celebres. It wasn’t that he had something new to say about our oldest
creation story that called public wrath upon his bead,
nor even perhaps that he had written about sex ....
The poem said that Nature’s power was great, and
man’s loneliness as great.³

It is this aspect of his poetry, which draws most of the attention. A wide range
of thematic concerns included majority man and woman, love, sex and death,
He is often addressed as a ‘sex obsessed’ poet. The renowned critic C.D.
Narsimmaiah says, ‘Erotica’ does please him, Erotica does not remain erotica
after he writes poetry. It is a different experience.” His corpus related to sexual
themes proves that. In a nutshell:

Images of women, “love”, and sexuality are also used
in Hope’s poetry to express dualities of time and
“eternity”. In symbolizing the seasons, woman is a
much in love with death as with new life, as much
represent winter, as much spring, time as eternity.
Women represents the cycles of life and death of the
earth; as the earth gives life, as women bring forth
men, ‘so life and men return to earth to women in the
end. In this aspect women represent the endless
recurrence of time’ and symbolize destruction as well
as creation.⁴

He is labelled as: a Romantic, a Classicist, a Satirist, a Philosophical and an
Intellectual. All are restrictedly true. The public-spiritedness/ Philanthropy of
Hope is transmissible. A Christian himself, his religion is humanity. His poetry
bears the expectation of the function of poetry. Moschus Moschiferus (1967) is
an excellent example of this. The poem is subtitled A song for St. Cecilia’s
Day. Prior to this one has to have a glance at Dryden’s *A Song for Saint Cecilia’s Day* (1687). It is written for St. Cecilia a martyr and patron saint of music, to honour at her Birth anniversary, Dryden’s wrote on the power of music. The opening stanza is all about the harmonizing power of music, as the Divine Principle that the time of Creation brought order into Chaos. It is followed by the emotional power of music, talking of ‘trumpets’ and ‘drums’ that infused martial courage into soldiers. Hope wrote *Moschus Moschiterms* for the same occasion. But their perceptions are different. Dryden’s poem ends with identifying the power of music as an ordering agent of the universe; it shall also be the future agent of cosmic destruction (Judgement Day). But in a very ironic manner Hope describes how modern man used music for accomplishing his petty selfish aims. Its about hunting ‘Kasturi’ deer for the Musk which it carries within its navel. The hunters use music to lure the deer with music only to kill them with poisoned arrows. The musical notes of the flute, “drift soaking through the gloom of the forest, spreading enticing tentacles into its depth till the deer, forgetting fear and with soul acquires with the melody, steps into clearing where the predators wait with infinite patience.” It is very pathetic that today man has used the divine power of music not as a soothing touch for the bewildered soul of man himself, but monstrously as the trumpet for destruction of mankind in future. Another aspect shows how naïve is the animal that, without the knowledge of man’s distorted aims, is attracted to it. The whole poem evokes a sense of repugnance:

He has given us ‘the tears of things and ‘spared’ us his ‘own tears’, a ‘vigilian canon’ this quality is what makes A.D. Hope such a remarkable poet of our times.
While going through his poems like Six songs for *Chloe, Chorale, Totentanz: The coquette, Observation Car, Beyond Khankoban*, one gets flashes of Bhartrihari, century poet. King of Malwa (M.P. in India). He was so attached to the Queen that he found no time for his subjects. An incident changed the concept of ‘life’. Bhartrihari procured a fruit that would increase his life span. But he didn’t eat it himself, and gave it to the queen instead who gave it to an ostler with whom she was in love. He in turn was in love with a prostitute and gave it to her. Prostitute was a pious woman and rushed with it to the king so, that he may rule the kingdom for long. Seeing the same fruit in the prostitute’s hand, the king was bewildered. The insincerity of the Queen had such an impact on him that he became disillusioned and detached from the world, and started abhorring material life. He renounced the material pleasures and went to the forest. The result of his renunciation are ‘*Treya Shataka*’ (300 verses) whatever it may be these three shatakas shall always guide mankind for ages to come: The Vairagya Shataka, Neeti Shataka and Shringara Shataka are related to spirituality, social life and personal life respectively. They encompass every sphere of life. In the same way, though Hope, did not renounce the world or face such a personal grief, but his poems *Edward Sackville* or *Chorale, The Lamp and the Jar* reflect Bhartrihari Shringava Shataka; the following few verses will explicitly give an idea:

1. Man attains the highest state of bliss eventually, out of after he initially treads on the path of beauty, understands the concept of morality and finally renounces desire, hatred sensual pleasure etc.

2. The things that destroy darkness are lamps fire constellations stars, sun and moon but despite all this if that women with eyes of a deer (Mrignayani).
3. There is no ambrosia like a beloved. There is no poison like a beloved. Dedication of the beloved gives supreme joy like ambrosia and an indifferent beloved causes great pain like poison.

He too had lofty views about 'poetry' as Hope. As:

... Sukavita Yadasti rajyena kim? "If there is good poetry, what need of a kingdom?" seems to mean that the man is learned and intelligent has no need of external things to produce ...?

If one concludes by saying that Hope's poetry deals with 'Man in all aspects' here again he resembles Bhartrihari. If Hope says learned poets are good poets. Bhartrihari avers learned poets are kings of poets: "Poetical rasas are ten: sringara, love; vira, heroism; bibhatsa, disgust, raudra, anger; hasya, misth; bhayanaka, terror; karuna, pity; adbhuta, wonder; santa, tranquility; vatsaya, paternal foundness." All these are widely covered by Hope who has transcended geographical boundaries unlike his contemporaries. He talked of 'man' in general; and irrespective of being an Australian, he talked very little about Australia.

Another aspect, which attracts attention is the Buddhist element in Hope's poetry. His *The Damnation of Byron* and *Moschus Moschiferus* are epitomes of it. The religion of Meditation and practice i.e. Buddhism somewhere crept into the psychic of the poet. In a very subtle manner, using the Myth of 'Byron', he displays the punishment in Hell (a typical Buddhist concept of Hell) due to sexual misconduct secondly, in *Moschus Moschiferus* he avers against the hunters who are 'harming living beings.' He is against killing the deer just for the 'Sport', it will surely disturb the ecology:
Then, as the victim shudders, leaps and falls,
The music soars to a delicious peak
And on and on its silvery piping calls
Fresh spoil for the rewards the hunters seek

Another striking feature of his poetry is that his imagination encompassed those Indian myths and motifs, which were rarely used by any Australian poet of modern age: The Lingam and the Yoni, Salabhanjika and The Bamboo flute. The Bamboo flute may alongwith An Epistle from Holofernes puts forth his poetic credo:

Hope says that a poet should necessarily possess both ‘day light vision’ and ‘star light’ that is to says he must have the ability to see things with crystal clarity, in total detachment and objectivity just as the sun’s harsh glare reveals all things to the eye. However, the mystery and the attraction of the dreamy, starlit landscape is what provides the learning, so to speak, to the dough of poetic thought. These two apparently antithetical qualities work in point-counterpoint and are together responsible for the rich texture of Hope’s work. .... he has managed to achieve five balance on the tight rope between two kinds of viewing the world: through the daylight vision and starlight vision as well. This is the poetic theory that he advocates in ‘The Bamboo Flute’. 9
For Hope, poetry is the only act, which has such a power, that can energize the modern degenerated man:

Only transfusion of a poem’s blood,
Can save them, bleeding from their civilization –

[Flower Poem C.P, p.14]

Poetry was in his blood and Matchles to other works of art. His poems are bit complex but his versatile nature appealed to scholars of English Literature. His poetry never moves away from life but rather ponders on it again and again as a cure for degeneration. Before Hope, no other Australian poet we saw a complete vision through the medium of poetry. He peeps and ponders on both sides of life good and evil. One of the finest and most distinctive Australian poets, A.D. Hope can no longer be considered merely provincial. He is a citizen not merely of the world but of the earth. In a nutshell:

Hope wanted Australian writers and readers to broaden their horizons; he believed that a culture that is in thrall to the present becomes insular and narrow. His best work is a constant struggle to maintain wider perspectives, to withstand the tyranny of the merely contemporary.
NOTES


6. Ibid., p. 15.


8. Ibid., p. 34.
