

16th Jan. 1989.

Replied 4/2/89

Dear John McLaren,

You are an optimist, saying that I 'can place (my rejected story) elsewhere'. There are so few outlets - I am only glad that OVERLAND is continuing; thank goodness for that. I will continue to send you stories - I enclose a poem for now. I am re-writing → the story that just came back - I quite agree that the point of view goes askew, and am re-writing it now from Julie's point of view alone; it reads much better. This is a story in which Dr. Murray-Smith was interested; he had me working at it through most of last year! So, - when I finish this session with it, I may → inflict it on you yet again: you do say it has an 'engaging quality'. (Would it be all right to send it again?)

~~I also enclose \$5.00 for the Stephen Murray-Smith Memorial Trust Fund. I wish it could be more.~~ Stephen Murray-Smith, in the short time I was sending stories to OVERLAND, was just so helpful to me, not only in his actual advice, but in the boost it gave my frail self-confidence that he apparently thought my work 'promising' enough to take time to write to me about it (2 pages one letter: how I treasure that one!).

Which brings me back to the Memorial Fund, and its objectives: Please, do not forget the older 'new' writers, like me! Many of us are women returning to writing efforts (or dreams of writing) abandoned in our younger days, for various reasons. I come in the former category; I was supposed to have a 'promising future' as a writer - so I was told BY other writers. But I never believed in that, or in myself, I guess; especially after 'doing English Literature' at Queensland University (no Australian literature recognised there, at that time, and who was I to try to scribble when Shakespeare e.g. had said it all?) I think, looking back, that marriage, a family, work/teaching were all just the excuses for opting out of writing.

Anyway, here I am again, trying to fulfil the supposed 'promise' of my youth, but hearing times winged Chariot hovering very near. That is why I ask: please do not forget ^{in the} operation of the Memorial Fund. The younger writers have time, at least, on their side - and doesn't it take time! [e.g. a novel, six months with Penguin, recommended for publication by their readers, rewritten as suggested by those readers, and then after all that rejected with a brief suggestion that I find 'a local publisher'. More work on it, over months (when once recovered from deep despair); its submission to U.Q.Press who find it 'interesting', and have given it to their readers; seven months they have had it, and I do not dare to enquire]. Believe me, you need to start y-o-u-n-g, to survive the time barrier alone! So please, give worthy 'oldies' a go in your planned new-writers' supplements: there must be more Masters, Jolleys, and Olsens out there, silenced. I don't compare myself to these three, but feel I have some talent and something to say - and it is really hard to break through into publication. I have read that both Masters and Jolley were often on the point of despair over this same issue.

Anyway - best of luck. Oh, I nearly forgot: I will also enclose copies of reviews I have written. I have written quite a few of these for SCOPE, the Queensland paper of the FAW(Q); will enclose just two or three as an example. Do you think that I could do reviewing for OVERLAND, on the strength of this work? I enclose ^{two} S.A.E.s for your reply ^{return of poem}

Yours sincerely,

Betty Birsks

BETTY BIRSKYS.

~~It does~~
matter about
and
copies of
reviews.
had.

Have sent separately to address in Overland.

* Enquiry always seems to entail fatal results - death of hopes of publication!

Please excuse (blotchy) typing. I am not the best operator - one day will buy a W.P.

It would be better if you found it.