

Prologue

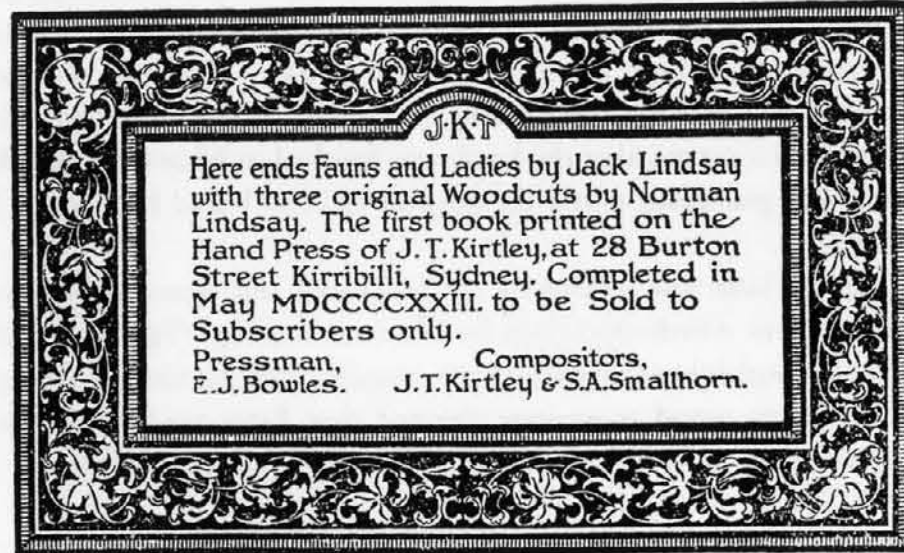
IN THE EARLY MONTHS OF 1923 two novice printers laboured over a printing press in the inner north-shore Sydney harbourside suburb of Kirribilli, close to what is now Milsons Point Station. The printers were John Kirtley and Edgar Bowles. They were working on a book of lyrics by Jack Lindsay entitled *Fauns and ladies*. The colophon (figure 2) states that the book was finished in May 1923, and the volume was published under the imprint of 'The Hand Press of J. T. Kirtley'.

Fauns and ladies was limited to 210 numbered and signed copies and included three wood-engravings by Norman Lindsay (figure 4).¹ Jack Lindsay's youthful bacchanalian verse coupled with his father's delicate and expressive wood-engravings directed that *Fauns and ladies* was for collectors only. A review in the *Sydney Morning Herald* said of it:

In England and America, of late, the cult of the hand press has been revived with interesting results. And now here in Sydney we have in the Kirtley Press one which suffers by comparison with none in point of workmanship. Mr J. T. Kirtley has just published Mr Jack Lindsay's 'Fauns and Ladies', a book which is an admirable example of the printer's art. In typography, binding, and format generally it is a thing of beauty. Mr Jack Lindsay is the most promising of our younger school of poets. His verses are vigorous and colourful, and intensely vital, although in this collection their preoccupation with sex amounts to almost an obsession ... To say that some of these poems are quite unsuitable for general circulation is not to put the matter mildly. But the edition is a strictly limited one and the volume (to which Mr Norman Lindsay has contributed several woodcuts [sic] of fauns and robust young women) will be prized by collectors.²

Whatever the merits of the verse, *Fauns and ladies* was, as the anonymous reviewer noted, an impressive piece of book production, especially given the inexperience of its printers. It was arguably the first Australian

private press book in the tradition of the arts and crafts and subsequent private press movement in England. It was also the first publication from what was to become the Fanfrolico Press.



2. The colophon of *Fauns and ladies* (1923 item 1)
(reduced from 81 × 134 mm)

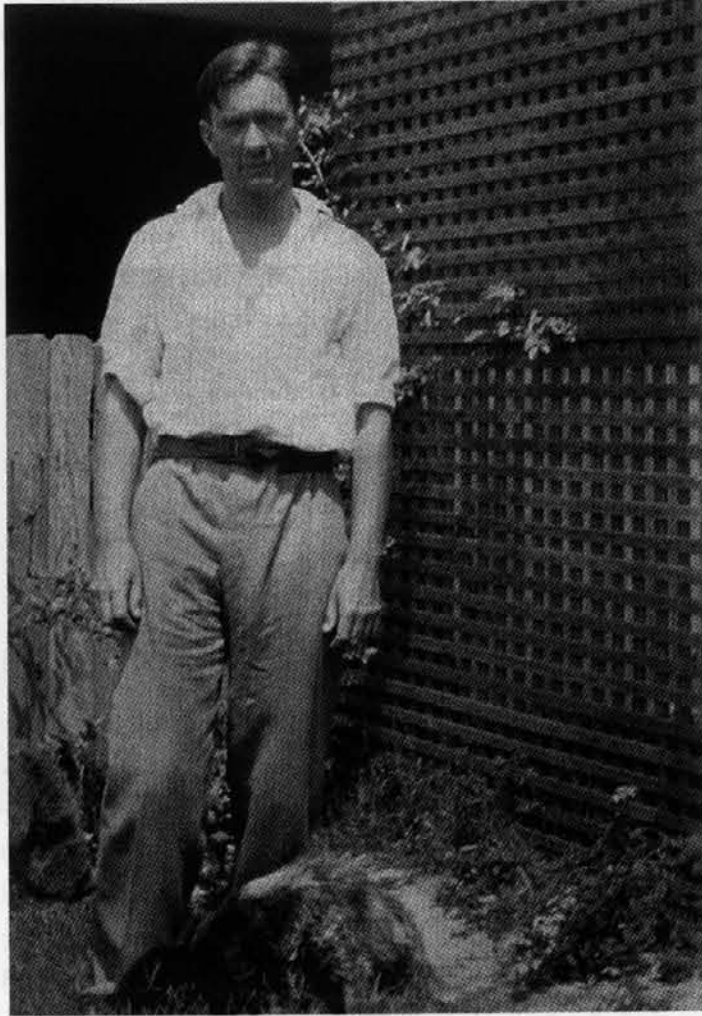
Chapter One: Beginnings and First Books, 1923–1926

AFTER GRADUATING IN 1921 with first class honours in classics from the University of Queensland, Jack Lindsay (figure 3) left Brisbane to go and live in Sydney.³ The move was prompted by two significant events in his life: reunion with his father and his missing out on the Queensland Travelling Scholarship for 1921.

Jack Lindsay was born in Melbourne on 20 October 1900,⁴ the first child of Norman and Katie Lindsay, *née* Parkinson. Shortly after his son's birth, Norman was offered a position as a cartoonist on the *Bulletin* and the family moved to Sydney. They lived in various rented cottages on the immediate north shore of the harbour in close commuting distance to the *Bulletin* office in central Sydney. While Katie was in Melbourne during July and August 1903 having her second child (Ray), Norman fell in love with Rose Soady,⁵ one of his models. Although they had another son (Phil), it was soon obvious that the marriage was doomed with Norman spending less and less time at home.

In 1909 when Norman and Rose went on an extended trip overseas, Katie Lindsay took her three sons to Brisbane to be near her sister. Except for a fleeting visit to Sydney in 1911 when Norman was thought to be dying of pleurisy,⁶ Jack Lindsay's contact with his father ceased for a decade. In Brisbane, Katie and the boys lived in various seedy boarding houses, and the three boys were left very much on their own while their mother drank too much and passed her time by telling tea-cup fortunes. Jack was an outstanding student, winning scholarships both to Brisbane Grammar School and the University of Queensland.

The University, founded in 1909, was located in the old Government House grounds in the Botanic Gardens. By the time Jack Lindsay enrolled in 1918 it had approximately 130 undergraduate students.⁷ At the University, Lindsay was a dominant figure, being a frequent contributor



3. Jack Lindsay in the garden of 'Idyllia', c. 1924 (author's collection)

of articles and verse to the *Queensland University Magazine* and also, for a time, its editor. Many of his poems appeared under the pseudonym of 'Plato', the sobriquet given to him by his fellow students because of his ability in classics.

Early in his first year at the University, Jack wrote to George Robertson⁸ of Angus and Robertson asking for a presentation copy of the about-to-be-published *Pen drawings of Norman Lindsay*.⁹ In his letter the young student wrote:

As I am Norman Lindsay's eldest son, my wish to possess the book needs no amplification; and as a first year's student at the university here, my pocket money is limited.¹⁰

Robertson replied saying that he would send the book as soon as it was available. A return letter from Jack thanked him profusely and, in addition to hinting that he would also like a copy of Leon Gellert's *Songs of a campaign*,¹¹ enclosed a photograph of himself and some fellow students in gowns and mortarboards.¹² Robertson kindly obliged, sending Jack the two books requested plus a copy of Norman's *The magic pudding*, also published by Angus and Robertson in 1918.¹³

In June 1919 Jack again accompanied his mother to Sydney, this time for negotiations over a divorce which Rose wanted to enable her and Norman to be married and have children in wedlock. Although Jack did not see his father on this visit, he did meet Bertram Stevens¹⁴ and Leon Gellert,¹⁵ mutual friends of Norman. Stevens took a liking to the young Lindsay and encouraged Norman to renew contact with his son. This he did in a letter written in late 1919 and addressed to 'My Dear Old Bunny'.¹⁶ It begins:

I have long wished and intended to write to you, but have waited till it might be easier for us to communicate without the stress that time and circumstance have forced on our relations. I am sure that these in the end will never affect our sympathy, and now that you are coming to maturity, it is much easier for us to meet in a spirit of understanding.¹⁷

The letter invited Jack to respond with details on 'what direction your interests in literature are, and if you have been moved to express your own vision of life or thought'. Jack quickly replied, his rhapsodic letter beginning:

Dear Daddy,

How can I express the absolute joy with which I found your letter awaiting me in the Men's Common Room at the University – the moth that found