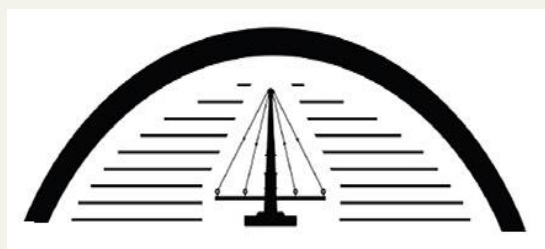


MIDNITE – THE STORY OF A WILD COLONIAL BOY

First published by Cheshire (Melbourne) 1967.

Midnite: the story of a wild colonial boy is set in Australia in the mid-nineteenth century and recounts the adventures of a “rather stupid,” good natured seventeen year old boy, who orphaned with the death of his father, takes the advice of Khat, a talking Siamese cat, who suggests that he become a famous bushranger, by stealing horses and cattle and robbing coaches. The boy calls himself Captain Midnite and forms a gang consisting of the animals about the house; Khat, who is “the brains”; Dora, “a rather silly cow, who was not nearly so young as she thought she was”; Red Ned, a noble horse; Gyp, a sheepdog; and Major, an irritable crafty cockatoo. The book is made up of Midnite’s adventures, which land him in jail numerous times and involve him in romance, exploration, a discovery of gold, even an audience with Queen Victoria.

Like so many good children’s books, *Midnite* also offers a satirical, humorous read for adults as Stow laughs at many aspects of Australian life which he has elsewhere treated very seriously.



MIDNITE

Review by Ray Willbanks

Perhaps the biggest surprise in the body of Stow's writing is *Midnite* (1967). It is a surprise because while most of Stow's writing, with the exception of a brief scene or a few satirical poems is serious, *Midnite* is whimsical and delightfully funny. It is not the first of Stow's books about children: there are Keithy Farnham in *The Bystander* and Rob Coram in *The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea*, but it is the first of his books in which the child's encounter with the world is a continuously funny one; and it is the first of Stow's works written for children.

For children, *Midnite* is an adventure story of the best sort as the animals plot and scheme and rescue Midnite. And as in most children's books, the escapades of the hero each him morals, in Midnite's case, the dangers of lying, card playing, alcohol and stealing. For children and adults alike, *Midnite* is a charming book full of grace and wit and laughter.

Source: Ray Willbanks "Randolph Stow" pg 134



MIDNITE

Abridged comments from Anthony J. Hassall

Midnite remains one of Stow's own favourites amongst his novels. He has described it as "an experience in Victorian structure as against the cinematic structure of the earlier books", and the narrative is certainly linear, moving straightforwardly to an expected ending in familiar, fairytale manner. The reader is drawn in by the lively invention and the sense of fun, and attacked by the pseudo-naïve tone which is alternatively funny and cynical. As the *Merry-go-Round in the Sea*, is sardonically up-ended in *Midnite*, which demonstrates instead a very Australian skepticism about national myths. And the elegiac note is replaced by a light-hearted acceptance of the turnings of fate's wheel. "Such is Life" cries *Midnite* on the last page, and so it is in the fictional world of childhood.

Source: Anthony J. Hassall from "*Strange Country: a study of Randolph Stow*", p. 123.

