

## THESES: DOCTORATES AND MASTERS

In the space behind his eyes : Donald R. Stuart :  
a biography[Sally Clarke](#), *Edith Cowan University***Date of Award**

1-1-2004

**Degree Type**

Thesis

**Degree Name**

Doctor of Philosophy

**School**

School of International, Community and Cultural Studies

**Faculty**

Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences

**Abstract**

The major part of this thesis, *In the Space Behind His Eyes*, is a biography of Western Australian author, Donald Robert Stuart (1913-1983), a colourful life story woven around accepted and persistent myths found in the Australian psyche. In his childhood, Donald Stuart listened to stories about his Scottish immigrant grandfather finding gold on the Victorian fields and his father's part in the 1891 Queensland Shearers strike. His poverty-stricken, but peaceful, upbringing in suburban Perth, Western Australia, was overtaken by the 1930s Depression and, as a rebellious fourteen-year old, he left home and took to the road. In the next decade or so, as he adopted the north-west outback life, he was exposed further to Australia's traditional yarns and philosophies. He emerged from this period as the outrageous 'Scorp' Stuart, who drank too much and took advantage of the freedoms on offer. At the start of World War II, Scorp volunteered for the 2nd AIF. He served in the Middle East and somehow survived three-and-a-half years as a Prisoner of the Japanese, including a time on the infamous Burma-Thailand railway. On his return to Australia, he began to tread the writer's path, supplementing his memories with renewed visits to the outback of his youth and working on yet another railway. Encouraged by his sister and her friends, supported by two of his wives and recognised by the Western Australian writing community, Donald R. Stuart played the role of noted author, a construct only possible because of Scorp Stuart's adventures. Calling on these experiences, in eleven novels and many short stories, he set down his record of a particular Australian life. The varying facets of his complex character come together in his writing, notably through his deep love of the land and in his sympathetic examination of the north-west Aborigines' position since white settlement. This biography of a writer sets out to trace the life of Donald Stuart, examine the disparity between Stuart the bushman and Stuart the noted author, and to shed light on the man behind the writing. In the essay following *In the Space Behind His Eyes*, I explore the biographical form, consider directions the genre has taken in recent years, discuss aspects of biography generally and support choices made in the writing of this biography.

**Related Publications**

This thesis has been published as

Clarke, Sally (2006). *In the space behind his eyes: Donald R. Stuart: a biography*. Western Australia: Claverton House. ISBN 0977537609 & 9780977537600

**LCSH Subject Headings**

Edith Cowan University. Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences - Dissertations

Biography as a literary form

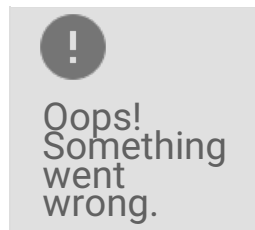
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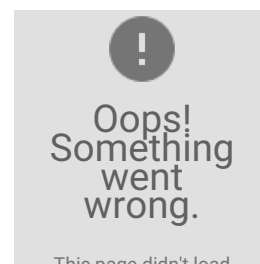
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^ Clarke, Sally, *In the Space Behind His Eyes, A Biography of Donald. R. Stuart, 1913 - 1983*, Claverton House, Lesmurdie, Western Australia, 2006. ^ Wilde, H. W., et al., *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature*, Oxford University Press, 1994. Persondata. Max Braithwaite — John Victor Maxwell Braithwaite (7 December 1911 – 19 March 1995) was a Canadian novelist and non fiction author. Braithwaite was born in Nokomis, Saskatchewan and spent his youth in a number of communities in that province. As an adult he moved... ...  
Wikipedia. Max Catto — Maxwell Jeffrey Catto (July 29, 1907 March 12, 1992) was born Mark Finkell in Manchester, England and was an English playwright and novelist. Donald Robert Stuart (1913-1983), author, was born on 13 September 1913 at Cottesloe, Perth, fifth of six surviving children of New South Wales-born John (Julian) Alexander Salmon Stuart, journalist, and his English-born wife Rhoda Florence, née Collings. J. S. Collings was his uncle. The family became impoverished after his father was severely disabled in a logging accident in 1923. Donald was educated at James Street, Gosnells and Mount Hawthorn primary schools and Perth Modern School, which he left after less than two years. Aged 14, he went 'on the track'. S. Clarke, In *The Space Behind His Eyes* (2006). *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 9 May 1981, p 4. *Artlook*, October 1983, p 3.