

BOOKS

"Harland's Half Acre," by David Malouf. Knopf (New York, 1984). 230 pp., \$13.95.

Reviewed by Bett Lallof
NC News Service

Set in Australia in the 19th century, "Harland's Half Acre" begins with Frank Harland's childhood on a small farm. The death of his mother leaves his 23-year-old father, Clem, with two small boys.

A story teller — his most popular was how the Harland clan won the estate of Killarmy only to lose it all — Clem Harland is no worker; spoiled by his mother, he is a man who needs a woman to lean on. He marries again and three more boys are added to the family. However, he is widowed once more.

Frank Harland at around 6 years old discovers drawing. That he can transform paper with strokes of a pencil into all kinds of things really awes him. This is a world he can create. His dream is to restore the lost land, acre by acre, as a gift for his father and brothers.

The young Australian is to pursue his dream for the rest of his life. At 16 he leaves the farm and travels to Brisbane to learn more about being an artist. He keeps in touch with his father and brothers, writing and sending home money. Although he does various paintings he is unknown as an artist.

He meets the young Phil Vernon when the boy's father, who has befriended the artist, buys a landscape of Harland's. The artist and boy begin a friendship which lasts

a lifetime. The author shifts the story to Phil's first-person narration.

Frank becomes a frequent visitor to the Vernon home, sometimes painting family members. Unlike the artist who was a dreamer, Phil Vernon's upbringing turns him into a realist. He chooses the law for his career and also handles sales for Harland when the artist's work begins selling for as much as \$3,000 a picture.

Harland's life is not an easy one. He never marries but he keeps in touch with his brothers who have trouble coping with the real world. Throughout his life Frank keeps painting the world he sees around him. As Phil Vernon observes:

"Each new work...was a newly emergent form out of the island itself, roughly torn away like the bark from a tree; as if there

were continuity in essence, but also in the movement of a real hand over paper, between all the individual parts of this world, and each made object had to be judged first against the natural objects it rose from and among which he now set it down." Frank Harland leaves an important legacy as his work lives on.

I enjoyed this thoughtful, unhurried book — a book one will re-read and get something more from. It is filled not only with beautiful prose but with great insight into human experiences which affect one's life and shapes one's destiny.

David Malouf has had four books of poetry and four published novels. I look forward to reading more of his work.

Miss Lallof is a Washington, D.C.-area free-lance writer.

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General

Personals

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THANK YOU St. Jude, Sacred Heart of Jesus for all favors received.

THANK YOU St. Jude for favors received. E.L.B.

THANK TO St. Jude for favor rendered. G.R.

THANK YOU Almighty God for granting me the favors requested by my intercessors, St. Jude, Joseph, Little Flower, St. Anthony and Blessed Mother, Southern Tier

THANK YOU Holy Spirit for prayers answered. A.L.C.

THANK YOU St. Jude, and Sacred Heart, and St. Theresa for favors received. E.G.

THANKS TO St. Jude, Jesus, Blessed Mother For Favors Received. E.L.

THANKS TO St. Jude and Sacred Heart for favor received. R.H.W.

THANKS TO The Sacred Heart, Saint Jude for favors received. Susan Marie

THANKS St. Jude, Sacred Heart, Blessed Mother for all favors received. R.M.A.

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