OVERLAND

Incorporating The Realist Writer

NUMBER ONE, SPRING 1954 ONE SHILLING

Off to the diggings, 1854. Drawing by N.C.

WRITING BY:

Nettie Palmer, John Morrison, Katharine Susannah Prichard, John Manifold, David Martin, Brian Fitzpatrick, Senator Donald Cameron, Elizabeth Vassilieff, Eric Lambert, Professor A. D. Hope and others.

OVERLAND

Overland is a new magazine devoted to creative writing. Its motto is: "Temper, democratic; Bias, Australian."

Overland will publish poetry and short stories, articles and criticism by new and by established writers. It will aim high, but has no exclusive or academic standards of any kind. It will make a special point of developing writing talent in people of diverse background.

We ask of our readers, however inexpert, that they write for us; that they share our love of living, our optimism, our belief in the traditional dream of a better Australia.

Send us your criticisms and suggestions, and help us to reach the public we want to serve: the useful people in every field.

SWANS IN FOOTSCRAY

Superbly indifferent to clanking machinery,
Ignoring traffic jerk by either side,
Untroubled by chemicals tainting the water
Serenely back and forth the black swans glide.

Our hearts are uplifted. The smooth dusky symbols
Evoking bush and plain, mirage, lagoon;
Re-calling how close to industrial suburbs
Are spacious acres free to sun and moon.

Time turn back. The tainted pool
Lies—a Yarra billabong
Warm, swan-haunted, clean and still.
Musky lilies clearly curved,
Gums exhaling honied breath
Pausing airs with sweetness fill.

Laughing native children come,
Pelt the swans with buttercups,
Angry swans their red bills snap,
Thrust forth black and snaky necks,
Surge toward the daring tribe,
Savage wings like weapons clap.

Children scream and run and scream,
Swans subside, their webbed feet push
Drowning yellow buds away,
Endlessly the tiny choirs
Drone among the seeding grass
Through the timeless summer day.

The generations hold the right of swans
To all the pools throughout their ancient land.
The laughing children's heirs, forlorn and few,
Exploited, outcast, walk their native strand.

NELL OLD

GREETINGS

DAME MARY GILMORE writes:

Of course I wish **Overland** every success. Australia needs her own magazines, especially those that can go into a pocket, which I hope this one will. So far most of our periodicals are of a size for the city and an easy chair. None of them are for the men still riding the boundaries, and of whom there is still a large body inland. If they think a thing worth while they carry it about, and so spread knowledge of it.

VANCE PALMER writes:

I am very glad to hear of the coming publication of **Overland**. Every new magazine directed with sincerity and intelligence is an enrichment of our life, and I am sure **Overland** will be something which we can look forward to with pleasurable excitement.

WILLIAM HATFIELD writes:

I am glad to hear of the development of the new magazine **Overland**, something that might act as a counterblast, or at least counter-kick, to the flood of imported periodicals, and the degeneration of Australian periodicals to mere vehicles for syndicated trash. Its sponsors have my heartiest congratulations on their effort, and I hope the new magazine becomes a permanency.

CLIVE TURNBULL writes:

Each "Little" magazine gives something, however short its life. I hope that **Overland** will have a long life, and that it is now economically possible—if not profitable—to publish an intelligent magazine without continual monetary transfusions from sympathisers. **Overland** will have as tough a task as the people who coined that word; I wish it well.

FRANK DALBY DAVISON writes:

I look forward to the appearance of **Overland**, especially as it will develop out of **Realist Writer**, a journal I have read with amusement and profit. There appears to be room always for a new journal of opinion provided it has character of its own, and I am sure that **Overland** will have this quality. I trust you will scour the continent for new talent, both imaginative and critical. The literary future is with the unknown. They must be sought out and encouraged.

C. B. CHRISTESEN writes:

I welcome the appearance of **Overland** with very real pleasure. It is no small achievement to be able to launch a new literary magazine today—one, moreover, which proposes to adopt a non-confor ist approach to literature and society, and to stand four-square behind genuinely democratic Australian values. Providing it honestly adheres to its progressive editorial policy, **Overland** is certain to make a significant contribution to the highest traditions of our national literature.

R. G. HOWARTH writes:

Southerly, the senior Australian literary magazine, believes in the necessity for a number of periodical publications devoted to original writing and criticism. It therefore welcomes **Overland** as a newcomer to the field and wishes it all due success.

ALAN MARSHALL writes:

So **Overland** has stepped out on the track with its swag of Australian writers and its tucker-bag full to the neck. There's good, nourishing stuff in that bag. The Australian writers who filled it know what's needed to put vigor and strength into a magazine humping a bluey along a new, untouched track, and they'll keep it full. Good luck to it! I hope it gets a hand-out from every good Australian who wants to keep our traditions alive.

THE WRITER AT BAY

by Brian Fitzpatrick

ONE way of dealing with dissident writers, in an era when the climate of opinion has turned cold, is to freeze them by silence. This treatment has been accorded the author of **Rob the Robber** (Melbourne, Joseph Waters, 5/-) by, I believe, the entire press of Australia. (It is true that the gifted biographer hides his light under the bushel of "Spinifex." But then, George Eliot and Lewis Carroll were pseudonyms, and so were Fiona Macleod and the saintly Ian Maclaren.)

Another technique is to frighten publishers away, as with Howard Fast in the United States today. Another is to do an offending author out of a job, as with the Australian Allan Clifton, author of the novel, **Time of Fallen Blossoms**, three years ago. Yet another is to stigmatise an author as a Red, "review" his book not as (say) the novel it is, a serious imaginative reconstruction of life as it was lived in a particular place, in particular historical circumstances, a generation ago, but "review" it as the projection backwards of the author's believed political opinions. Judah Waten's novel, **The Unbending** (Melbourne, Australasian Book Society, 18/6) has been accorded this treatment in for example recent issues of Melbourne **Herald** and Sydney **Telegraph**. More, Mr. Waten has been made by ill-disposed persons a sort of tarmac. From and over his devoted corpus taxis a propaganda bomber bound on a far-ranging mission. Target: Canberra. Code name of operation: CLF. But before we examine this latest sortie, let us look first at what, that is painfully relevant, preceded this flight.

Mr. Standish Michael Keon, M.P. for Yarra, and a graduate of Saint Ignatius' School, Richmond, Victoria, on August 28, 1952, used the privileges (including broadcasting) of the House of Representatives to make his contribution to the Budget debate. Supported by Mr. Gullett and Mr. Wentworth in the Government benches, and Mr. Mullens in the opposition, he offered a dissertation on the Australian National University and the Commonwealth Literary Fund. He said, e.g. that CLF grants of late years had gone almost entirely to Communists and their associates. He named Judah Waten as one of these, and in particular as the author of the "indecently blasphemous" work, "Jesus Christ in an Ash-tray." Stung by this, I protested, over the air and in the papers, that **I** was the author this poem, and that it was a poem written **in protest** at such cheap vulgarity, which I had witnessed.

Asked what-about-it, by the Melbourne **Herald**, the historian-critic from Richmond said he retracted nothing; he would deal with the matter in Parliament later. He did, too. When Hansard appeared—members having the right to correct the transcript first, for grammatical lapses and the like—it turned out that all the newspapers of Australia had misreported Mr. Keon; what he had really said was that Mr. Waten had edited a magazine that published "Jesus Christ in an Ash-tray"—and **"Another** poem in this publication is so indecently blasphemous that I shall not read it all." That handsomely let me out, and lifted some of the odium from my friend Waten. (In January this year I reminded the History Section of the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science Conference of this and learned doctors and masters present agreed that it was an interesting sidelight on the advancement of knowledge.)

Well, on that occasion Judah Waten defended himself candidly and courageously, and now two years later is doing the like again. On that earlier occasion the Prime Minister, too, stood up for the administration of the Literary Fund and against his and Dr. Evatt's Red-baiting ratbags. I trust he will do the like again when Parliament resumes and, as hitherto reliable sources inform us will happen, the same group of spiritually-minded members, grouped independently of party, return to the attack.

Now to indicate the shape of things to come. There lives and labors in Sydney a Mr. Frank Browne, who publishes a **Things I Hear** news-letter which every lover of the curious should subscribe to. In a June contribution Browne confided that the whole principle of CLF grants is wrong; most of the grantees are "either Commos or near Commos," like Judah Waten whose novel **The Unbending** is "straight-out Communist propaganda."

This bold if false opinion was quickly taken up by Sydney **Daily Mirror.** An editorial in the June 23 **Daily Mirror** stated frankly that CLF money "is being used to subsidise Communist propaganda," and proceeded to mention Mr. Waten unfavorably and Mr. Keon favorably. The taxpayers, they said, wished the whole Fund administration overhauled, so that their money wouldn't help an alien ideology to overthrow the Commonwealth. Of Judah Waten's largely unpolitical novel the **Daily Mirror** said, "Presumably, no one on the (CLF) committee thought it worth while to ask him what the novel would be about"—when they awarded him a CLF fellowship to enable him to complete it.

Pained, Mr. Waten wrote to the **Daily Mirror** (on June 25, but it must have been lost by the P.M.G.; they haven't been able to publish it):—**"The Unbending** . . . is the story of a migrant family in Western Australia in the years between 1910 and 1918. Some members of the IWW make their appearance in the novel during the war years. They are a part of a truthful picture of those years which form the background to my story."

And more to the same truthful effect. (**I** thought, as a student of history who has looked into the first-wartime story of the IWW, that in fact they cut more of a figure in 1916 than Mr. Waten allows.)

Of course Mr. Waten told the CLF, when applying for a fellowship, what his novel was about. Of course he lodged the MS of his novel with them, and they accepted it, and raised no word of exception to any part of it. The members of the CLF board are well aware there's a cold war on; but in fifteen months' possession of the MS. no member saw reason to question the good faith of the author.

Now the dogs are barking—the literary lions, rather, of **Things I Hear** and the equally erudite **Daily Mirror**—let us hope sensible men on both sides of the Federal Parliament will stand by the CLF as they did two years ago, and reject again the bogus aesthetic thought out in the gutters of Richmond and Surry Hills.

NINE O'CLOCK FINISH

JOHN MORRISON

THE trouble begins at eight o'clock, when somebody down on the wharf blows a whistle. It doesn't penetrate to all hatches, but down in Number Three everybody hears it because both winches happen to be silent at the moment.

All six men stop and look at each other, as if a gun has been fired.

"What the hell's that supposed to be?" says one big fellow aggressively.

"Smoko, Joe," replies one of his mates. "I told you it would be on."

Joe, without another word, walks out on the hatchboards covering the lower hold and looks upwards.

"On deck there!"

Nobody answers. Overhead, both runners hang slack in the blaze of light from a cluster up on the bridge, indicating that the hook is over the wharf and the hatchman at the ship's side. All work has ceased from one end of the vessel to the other. In the sudden silence angry protesting voices are raised all along deck and wharf.

The Nestor has been working, day-gangs only, for nearly three weeks, Saturdays and Sundays included. Being now Friday night, and with only a few hundred tons of cargo still to go in, the men have been looking forward to a Saturday morning finish with the rest of the week-end off. The blowing of the whistle at eight means that they are required to work the job out to a finish that night, and under compulsion to attend the pick-up next morning.

In Number Three, as in all other hatches, a babel of protest has broken out. All six men are now out in the open square, but no one has yet appeared at the coaming cut sharp and black against the sky of an autumn night.

An elderly little man, wearing a leather apron, and leather shields on the backs of his hands, deliberately walks away from his mates and sits down on a case by himself, as if to indicate that the matter is no concern of his.

"On deck there!" shouts big Joe for the third time.

Still no one comes, but hurried footsteps go along the deck close by, and the voice of the hatchman can be plainly heard as he yells out to someone on the wharf:

"You wouldn't get this crowd to work on, not for Christ himself!"

"Good on you, Ernie!" exclaims big Joe. "I'm going up," he announces, starting for the ladder.

"Stay where you are, Joe!"

"We're not taking smoko, and that's all there is to it."

"We haven't knocked off. We're still here if they send cargo in."

"Leave it to Ernie. He knows the form . . ."

Joe doesn't answer, but goes no further than the middle of the square, where he remains, with head tilted and hands in pockets, patiently watching the wharfside coaming and listening to the confused murmur drifting aft from Hatches One and Two.

His mates fall silent. An apprentice who is acting as watchman comes down from his perch on the cargo deep in the wing and walks out into the light.

"What's the matter?" His youthful voice and precise English diction sound odd after the clash of mature Australian idiom and invective. Two men begin to answer him at once.

"They want us to work on to a finish, and we ain't having any."

"If we finish tonight we'll go straight into another job in the morning . . ."

"We've worked nineteen days without a break."

"It's been nine o'clock every night since the job started. What's wrong with nine o'clock tonight?"

They both stop, just to give him a chance to say something. They'd like him to understand their complaint, but he just looks politely and vaguely from one to another of them.

"I see," he says.

They let the matter drop. They know very well that he doesn't see at all. If he really wanted to know he'd ask more questions. He's looking in at them from another world. For him the ship has merely stopped taking in cargo; for them, something has happened which touches not only tonight, but every day of their lives.

Suddenly there comes a clatter of footsteps on the companion leading down from the upper deck, then a voice they recognise as that of the foreman:

"What about this gang?"

"Ask them!" replies Ernie the hatchman, and a moment later he and the foreman appear together at the coaming.

"What's up with you blokes?" demands the foreman. "I've blown up for smoko."

"Good on you, mate!" says one of the holders. "Now go and blow your bloody self up!"

Big Joe turns on the man impatiently. "That gets us nowhere, Jim." Raising his voice, he addresses his mates in general: "Anybody here want to work on to a finish?"

"Yes, I do!" calls out the little man in the leather apron.

Nobody else does.

"There's your answer," says Joe crisply. In all groups of men working together there is always one to whom the others look for some degree of leadership. The big fellow, still standing conspicuously in the middle of the square, now goes on to put their case, addressing the foreman by name:

"You know yourself how it is, Bob. Spare me days, we've done over two hundred hours without a break . . ."

"That's all right for you, Joe. What d'you think my feelings are? My orders are to work to a finish. That means smoko at eight. I blew up five minutes ago . . ."

"What've you got to worry about? You was told to blow your whistle. All right, you've got a hundred witnesses you blew it. Now go and tell Summers we're waiting for cargo." Summers is the Supervisor in charge of the job.

"Summers isn't here; he's down at Twenty-one. I'll send for him; but I've got to be sure first where I stand. You refuse to take smoko?"

"We refuse to work after nine o'clock. Anyway, what do the other hatches say?"

The foreman vanishes without answering that, but Ernie, who has remained alongside him throughout the discussion, gives a throaty laugh: "What do the others say—didn't you hear 'em?"

"What's going on on top?"

"Nothing. You might as well come up till Summers arrives. He's down on the Merka."

One by one they head for the ladder and climb to the deck.

Other ships are working on, and the continuous rattle of winches around the Dock emphasises the silence which has settled over Berth 16. From all hatches the holders have come up to sit around in talkative little groups or hang over the side waiting for developments on the wharf. There is an atmosphere of suspense, of action precariously suspended. Occasionally lonely footfalls sound passing along steel deck or concrete wharf. In the bigness of the night, and after the long uproar of working cargo, normal voices give an illusion of being under restraint. In the entrance to the port alleyway, a shirt-sleeved officer stands smoking and listening to what is being said by the nearest men. Half a dozen or so have seated themselves on a pile of hatchboards and are being harangued by the little man in the leather apron who alone was prepared to keep on working.

". . . we could have been finished by eleven . . ."

"Nobody's crooked on that, Sam," chips in one of his audience. "If we didn't have to come in to the 'Pound in the morning . . ."

"And wasn't you one that supported compulsory attendance at pick-ups?" Sam, excited by what he sees as a good scoring point, stops in front of the man who interrupted and wags an admonishing finger. "Didn't you support the Gang System? Didn't you? And ain't this a part of it? What d'you want to do—go back to the days when every bastard could please himself if he come in or not?"

The man fumbles for a reply, but others immediately take up the issue:

"You're talking bull-dust, Sam . . ."

"This gang never squealed about being ordered in . . ."

"What we're lousy on is the fact that we weren't told sooner. They knew—why didn't they tell us last night when we knocked off? Half of us have got arrangements made for the week-end. I got friends coming up from Geelong . . ."

"Why didn't they put night-gangs into her last night? There was men sent home yesterday without a job."

"Who's they?" Sam's shrill voice rises. "God spare me days! Aint they human at the 'Pound? Who says they could have told us sooner? I wouldn't like the job they got, trying to please all you blokes. I still say this is the wrong way to go about it, even if we have got a complaint. Direct action never did do no good. Everything we ever got come out of sitting down and talking it over . . ."

Sam realises too late that he has over-stated his case, for this really gets them going. Such a chorus of derision goes up along the hatchboards that several more men stroll over from the ship's side to see what it's about. They include the apprentice who, seeing no point in remaining in an empty hold, has also come up on deck. Even the officer steps over the breakwater and unobtrusively edges nearer.

"Talk sense, Sam!"

"What about the double-dumps blue?"

"And the black buses in the transport strike?"

"And the soda ash on the Vito?"

"And the twenty-eight strike!" Sam yells above them all. "Go on—what're you stopping for? What about that one? How many of you was in that? It was nearly the death of the Federation . . ."

"Tell that to the shipowners, Buff-head! It crippled us, but we got over it . . ."

"What did we get out of it, that's what I want to know . . ."

"We got a bath, I give in. But . . ."

"We always get a bath. We never win, not by direct action . . ."

Once again Sam's voice is drowned in an outburst of ridicule. And as the noise subsides it is Joe who emerges and commands attention:

"We never got anything except by direct action, and every man here knows it, Sam. Hold on a minute—I'm entitled to my say. You don't need to go any further back than the double-dumps. There was the classic example of what you get out of just sitting down and talking it over. Keep quiet! There's other blokes listening to this. You're an old-timer, like me. You know what happened. Long before the war we was agitating for the abolition of double-dumps. Nobody ever denied they was dangerous, but year in and year out all we got was talk, and promises of more talk. They was still talking when war broke out. Remember? . . ."

By his measured tones and a few forceful gestures, Joe has gradually got them all in, even the officer and apprentice. All, that is, except the two old winch-drivers, who, withdrawn a little from the rest, have got their heads and smelly pipes together in a murmured discussion beginning with leaking roofs and moving swiftly on to a mutual enthusiasm for gardening:

"I've had three tiles off my roof for a fortnight. If we start another job tomorrow, they're liable to be off for another bloody fortnight. Every time it rains we got water running in streams down the bedroom wall. I promised the missus faithfully I'd fix it this week-end."

"And I got two hundred onions to put in. They been lying in a box since Monday night. I got 'em off Jimmy Neale. Ever seen that garden of Jimmy's?"

But for this quiet little domestic background, and occasional contentious voices from a distance, Joe goes on in an attentive silence:

"Remember the agreement we made? Remember how we was asked to sink all demands and differences till the war was over? We got what amounted to a promise, didn't we? Handle the doubles till the war was over, and they'd see what could be done about it. Save shipping space and help win the war—that was our job. All right, we did it. All through the war we stowed double-dumps without one squeal. You'd have expected that when it was over all we had to do was say "what about it?" That's all right, Sam, I'm not trying to tell you anything—I'm only reminding you. You know as well as I do what happened. We started getting more promises. One bloody conference after another. Promises, promises, promises! This week, next week, sometime, never! And all the time they was turning out double-dumps as fast as they could lick. What were we to do? A day come when some of our blokes in Sydney just put their coats on and walked off the job. It was on then for young and old. We weren't even given a chance to confine the dispute to wool ships. Ten days we was out. That's a lot of pay to working punks. Ten days'

pay lost to get a hundred promises filled. Nobody needs to tell us we never make it up—we're the ones that know all about that. But we got the double-dumps stopped. It cost us ten days' pay, but we got what we wanted. All the young blokes coming down to the waterfront for years to come will get the good of it—no ruptures for THEM in a wool hatch. And I don't remember hearing about any shippers or wool-growers going broke because of it. Now tell me it wasn't worth it! And why should we have had to lose ten days' pay getting something everybody admitted we was entitled to, and had been as good as promised times without number."

Sam, directly addressed by Joe, and under the scornful eyes of the other men, gives ground, but with a gracelessness that only completes his isolation.

"So what?" he shouts. "Direct action stopped the double-dumps—what else did it ever do? Go on, tell me. What about all the things it didn't get us, all the things we got in the last few years? What about the Rotary Gang System, smokos, transport, meal-money, consolidated pay . . ."

"You bloody nitwit!" Joe, driven to exasperation, explodes at last. His great voice booms over the quiet ship. "You trying to tell me we got all them out of the shipowners' goodness of heart? How would Healy ever have gone sitting down to a conference table with them if they didn't know he was in a position to stick their ships up? Spare me days, they'd laugh at him, like they used to laugh in the days when there wasn't a Federation. You've got to have strength behind you at any conference. The shipowners have always had it—our jobs! Do as we say, or else! That was their idea of sitting down and talking it over. Now we've got something. We're organised—we can chop their profits off. And, by Christ, don't they know it! That's when you get compromise, when both sides have a bloody gun under the table. Now tell me what we ever got without direct action."

But Sam, who has been trying for the last few seconds to shout Joe down, finally loses his temper and abandons reason altogether.

". . . drag in everything right back to the bloody Ark, like you always do. What's all this got to do with working to a finish? I've seen times when you'd fall over yourselves for week-end work. You're getting it too easy, that's what's wrong with the lot of you . . ."

He keeps going a little longer, stamping back and forth along the deck, waving his arms, and shouting at the top of his voice. But nobody is prepared to listen to him any longer, and, wilting before a barrage of laughter and abuse, he suddenly consigns them all to the devil and retreats to the ship's rail.

Joe goes off to "see what the crowds are up to."

Somebody remarks that "Summers is taking a long time to get here," but fails to start a discussion around the question.

An exhausted silence falls at Number Three Hatch. Only the two winch-drivers talk on:

". . . what they call green fingers. Everything he puts in seems to grow."

"My missus is like that. She's out at her sister's place at Oakleigh one day, and she comes home with some cuttings off a bush—I forget the name of it. Now everybody told her . . ."

Eight-fifteen, and the uproar precipitated by the blowing of the whistle has quite died down. In the pleasant night a sleepy mutter of voices goes up out of little pockets all along ship and wharf, as in a normal smoko or supper-hour. But the vicinity of the hot water boiler set in the wall of the shed remains ostentatiously deserted. Any man who were to go near that with a billy before this issue is settled would be instantly bawled out.

Summers arrives at twenty past eight. The sound of his firm purposeful steps coming through from the other side of the shed reaches clearly to the ship, and at Number Three all the men immediately get off the hatchboards and crowd to the rail. Only the two old horticulturists carry on.

Summers, tall and straight, and immaculately dressed in a grey suit, comes to a halt out on the open wharf and takes a long deliberate look, first aft then for'ard, along the whole length of the ship. In the blaze of light his angry expression can be plainly seen as he sizes up the idle derricks and lounging men. Two foremen are giving him details of the situation, but he doesn't appear to be listening to them. With his experience, he knew all about it before he left Twenty-one.

Striding over to the nearest group, four or five wharfhands sitting on a six-wheeled truck, he asks them peremptorily what their complaint is.

Several of them start talking at once:

"We're not working after nine, Skipper."

"We aren't taking smoko."

"We was given to understand the job finishes tomorrow morning . . ."

"Who gave you to understand?"

"Nobody in particular, Captain Summers." One of the men constitutes himself spokesman and stands up. Other men are now converging on the spot from all sides. Every word lifts clearly to the row of holders and deck-hands lining the rail fifteen feet above.

"Speak for the crowd, Tony!" big Joe calls down. "We're all in this."

Tony goes on with added confidence: "All the week the talk's been of nothing else but a Saturday morning finish. We're all set for a week-end off. The war's over now, we haven't had a spell for three weeks . . ."

"That's the business of the Compound officials, not mine."

Summers, standing with hands in jacket pockets, looks sternly down on the crowding faces. "I'm in charge of the loading of this ship, and my instructions are to finish tonight." Carried away with what he regards as the justice of his case, he raises his voice: "Here it is—twenty past eight, and not a ton of cargo gone in since eight o'clock . ."

"And whose bloody fault is that?" Tony begins swiftly, but another man, who has been edging his way into the centre of the group, grips him by the arm.

"Hold on, Tony. No need to get excited." From the way his mates give ground and keep silent, the newcomer is evidently one who enjoys their confidence. He isn't old, but he addresses himself to the Supervisor with all the quiet air of a seasoned job campaigner. "It's no use, Captain. We aren't working on. You'll get the same answer from one end of the ship to the other."

"Why?"

"Because we've had it. We've got two hundred and twenty-five hours in without a break . . ."

"Am I responsible for that?"

"Nobody's saying you are . . ."

"I'm concerned only with the hours you work on this job. You know the regulations as well as I do. You have the right to apply for time off in a proper manner."

"When? All that was needed was a tip from you earlier in the day that we was required to work on, and we'd have applied for the week-end off . . ."

"You can still make application . . ."

"Tomorrow morning? That means we all come in at eight o'clock. Even if we get it, the best part of the day's gone by the time we get home again, and not a cracker to show for it."

"My friend, all this is your business. I couldn't care less what you do about the week-end as long as I get this ship away. Can't you contact somebody tonight? The Compound . . ."

"The Compound's closed. See how you go trying to get anybody after hours! We've had a gutsful of it. It's time they was taught a lesson over these finishing orders. What time today were you told to work the job out? Why didn't you give us the drum then?"

"Where and when I get my instructions . . ."

"All right, we won't labour that one. What about you taking the responsibility of telling us not to come in in the morning?"

Half the men on the job have now gathered under the yardarm of Number Three. A chorus of approval has gone up at Tony's shrewd suggestion. Even Summers is embarrassed by the logic of it. Taking one hand out of his jacket pocket he rubs his chin, and rapidly scans the circle of watchful faces. He sees only eagerness, eyes lit up with the light of imminent victory.

"How the devil can I be expected to do that? Anyway, let's get down to tintacks. You all refuse to work after nine?"

"To right we do!"

"Nine o'clock finish and back in the morning!"

"Without dinner!"

"All right, get back to your hatches. The orders are: Back in the morning. I'll report all five gangs to the Port Committee for disciplinary action."

And, turning only on the spot where he stands so that he faces the gangway, he remains sulkily watching as the men break up and return to their working positions. They go in silence, not because they are awed by the threat of disciplinary action, but out of respect for Summer's restraint and forthrightness. Accustomed to facing hard facts and defeat themselves over long years, they like an adversary who can take it when it becomes their turn to dish it out.

At Number Three the old winch-drivers slide stiffly down off the hatchboards.

"That's the only language the bastards ever did understand," says one with deep satisfaction.

The other nods, but makes no reply. But a minute later, as he reaches the dark jumble of winches at the foot of the mast, he looks over at his mate:

"Now don't forget what I told you about them onions, Tom. Over at an angle, and barely cover the roots . . ."

★

CONTRAST

The Rosenbergs, though dead, are strong
To move a poet into song.
The President is still in flower,
But who would sing of Eisenhower?

ROSS TRACIE

CONTROVERSY

Reviewing **From Life**, David Martin's recent small selection of poems, Professor A. D. Hope of Canberra launched a three-column assault on "The Party Line in Poetry" (**Sydney Morning Herald**, 1st May, 1954).

Professor Hope stated that Martin's poetry showed cheerfulness and vigor, and that he had a real poetic gift. However it was, he stated, "nearly all red hot propaganda of the crudest sort."

Professor Hope stated that he did not object to writing that strives to convey a message, but that it is "the sort of thing you try to teach which is crucial." He held that "the arid doctrines of dialectical materialism" cannot stimulate the didactic impulse into acts of creative imagination.

We have received permission from the Antagonists to publish the ensuing exchange.

MARTIN TO HOPE

Sydney Morning Herald, 5th May, 1954
To A. D. Hope

You love to play God,
To toy or to praise,
To brandish your rod,
To destroy and to raise.

But the Lord took the dust,
And made it a man,
While you earn your crust
By the opposite plan.

On 7th June, Prof. Hope wrote to David Martin:—

HOPE TO MARTIN

Dear Martin, you have scored a hit
Might well suspend the wrath of God,
The tables turned, the biter bit,
The judge constrained to kiss the rod.

Hear now the message of the Lord:
"My ways, though dark to men, are just.
Poets and critics both, my Word
Created Equally from dust.

That when my poets fail to break
The bread of life to other men,
I give my critics leave to take
And grind them back to dust again!"

On 8th June, David Martin wrote back:—

MARTIN TO HOPE

What is your bread of life? Some ectoplasm,
Baked crisp on top but vacuous at the core?
Is it the loaf that fills a poet's chasm,
And leaves all mankind emptier than before?

O Lordly critic, God has need no more
Of you to be his brother judge and grinder,
Than has the hungry stranger at the door
Need of a don to be his conscience minder.

God's ways are dark, you say. Yet yours are blinder:
Who does not knead **your** dough is marked for branding.
But what men seek, I send you a reminder,
Is not the bread that passes understanding

(A reply from Prof. Hope is pending.)

SWAG

Congratulations are due to Mr. Douglas Stewart of the Sydney **Bulletin** for his long essay, "Australian Bush Ballads," in the **Bulletin** of May 5. Norman Lindsay has a Red Page devoted to Louis Stone and Ted Dyson in the **Bulletin** of April 28. Mr. Stewart refers to Ted Harrington in his article as "of post-war balladists continuing the Nineties tradition the writer who has best understood the requirements of his craft." A profile of Ted Harrington and samples of his work will appear in the next issue of **Overland.**

★

Flexmore Hudson, whose recently published story "Mr. Heine" aroused such interest, writes that early publication is expected of several of his mss. He is sending **Overland** stories based on his experiences as a teacher in his first country school, which, he says, are "distinctively Australian." Many will be looking forward to them. Mr. Hudson, rowing coach as well as Senior English Master at Adelaide's Scotch College, had the satisfaction of seeing his crew win the Head of the River recently in record time.

★

Five notable literary evenings have recently been held in Melbourne. Mr. Arthur Phillip's paper on Joseph Furphy, read to the Fellowship of Australian Writers, was a contribution of permanent value to Australian literary criticism. It has been snapped up by **Meanjin** for early publication. Three interesting evenings were sponsored by the Australian Book Society. On the occasion of the publication of **The Legend of the Nineties,** an evening of tribute was held in honor of Vance Palmer, and speeches were made by Professor A. R. Chisholm, Mr. G. F. James of the Melbourne University Press and by Mr. Eric Lambert. Late in June a similarly crowded evening was devoted to a Lawson commemoration, addressed by Mr. Frederick Macartney (whose readings from Lawson were delightful), Dr. A. G. Serle and Mr. Ian Turner, Hon. A. A. Calwell, M.H.R., also addressed the gathering. Another well-known politician, Senator Donald Cameron, together with Mr. Hirsch Munz and Mr. John Morrison, addressed a successful meeting on Judah Waten's latest book, **The Unbending**. Finally he Realist Writers' Group sponsored an affectionate "so-long" evening to Mr. Frank Hardy late in July, to mark his moving to live in Sydney. (Reports of similar activities from other States are invited.)

★

Next choice of the Australasian Book Society, we are informed, is Bill Wannan's anthology of Australian sayings, legends, songs and other illustrations of social history, named **The Australian**. Following choice is F. B. Vickers' **The Mirage**, a novel which deals with the tragedy of the mixed bloods in Western Australia. Those who have read that remarkable document, the **Annual Report** of the Commissioner for Native Affairs (W.A. Government Printer, Perth, 1954, 4/-) will appreciate this novel's timeliness. Those who have not seen this frank report should send for it. Annual subscription to the Australasian Book Society, incidentally, is £2/10/- for six books, payable to the Society at 360 Collins Street, Melbourne.

★

NOTABLE BIRTHDAYS. We all honor the birthdays of Dame Mary Gilmore (August 13) and Frank Dalby Davison (June 22). (Dates of other prominent writers' birthdays are required.) We will also remember: Henry Lawson's death (September 22, 1922); Joseph Furphy's birth (September 26, 1843) and his death (September 13, 1912); Francis Adams' birth (September 27, 1862) and his death (September 4, 1893); and A. G. Stephens' birth (August 28, 1865).

★

From Brisbane we hear that Nance Wills has recently broadcast her piece on Paterson's novels, written for the Wynnum Writers' Circle Paterson night. John Manifold has also been heard in A.B.C. programmes, singing bush ballads.

★

Fascinating and important material of literary and historical interest is being published in **The Australian Photo-Review**, in the form of chapters from the unpublished book **Gold and Silver** by Keast Burke (A.P.-R. Editor). The material is woven around the dramatic discovery recently of the thousands of negatives of the Holtermann Collection, illustrating in the richest detail the documentary story of Australian goldfields. Readers are directed to Nos. 3, 5, 7 and 9 of 1953 and No. 2 of 1954. Number 9 places in the happiest juxtaposition extracts from Lawson and contemporary photos illustrating his work. No. 2 does the same for Boldrewood's **The Miner's Right**. Copies of the A.P-R. are available from its Editor at G.P.O., Box 2700, Sydney. Price 1/- post free.

★

Admirers of the work of Mikhail Sholokov will be interested to know that a sequel, or second part, of **Virgin Soil Upturned** is now appearing in magazine instalments in the Soviet Union. It is believed that Sholokov has also finished his mammoth work, **They Fought for Their Country**, extracts from which were published as long ago as 1945.

★

Talking of Sholokov, those interested in Soviet writing and socialist realism are directed to three important and controversial articles in the **Anglo-Soviet Journal**, Spring 1954. These are "The Work of the Writer" by Ilya Ehrenburg (27 pages), "Originality and Inspiration in Music" by Aram Khachaturian and "Comedies Yet Unborn" by Grigori Alexandrov. An important theoretical article, essential to the understanding of what Russian writers are trying to do, is "On the Objective Character of the Laws of Realist Art" by V. S. Kemenov, published in **VOKS Bulletin** No. 83. This magazine is available free (6d. postage) from the Australia-Soviet Friendship Society, 330 Flinders Lane, Melbourne, C.1.

★

GUARANTEE FUND. Companies, we are told, have a "sinking" fund. Overland has a "stay-afloat" fund. How badly we need donations to keep the magazine going and to improve it you can grasp from the fact that, until circulation rises, each copy costs nearly 2/- to produce. Send a bit extra with that subscription! Donations to date: F.J.H. £7/10/-, E.L. £5.

★

Overland will normally run a "Comment" column for short comments on controversial and other issues. Contributions are invited, but will not be paid for.

★

Subscribers to the **Realist Writer** are having their subscriptions carried over to **Overland.** With **Overland** half the price of the **Realist Writer**, the unelapsed portions of subscriptions will go twice as far.

HENRY HANDEL RICHARDSON

The place of Henry Handel Richardson in Australian literature remains one of our most disputed questions. Whatever the answer, it will depend largely on assessments of her major work, **The Fortunes of Richard Mahony. Overland** is asking a number of distinguished writers to give us their view on this matter, and started with Mrs. Nettie Palmer because of her well-known critical studies in Australian literature in general and Henry Handel Richardson in particular. In these two contributions Mrs. Palmer opens the subject up for discussion, and Katharine Susannah Prichard adds her comment. Further contributions will appear.

NETTIE PALMER

ALL writers among us have asked themselves what effect the arrival and work of the author of **Richard Mahony** has had on the growth of a serious literature among ourselves. It is worth while to look back on the circumstances in which her undoubted masterpiece was produced.

When Henry Handel Richardson settled to the writing of **The Fortunes**—it proved, as we all know, to take three volumes, and fifteen years, to appear—she was already a mature woman and a practised novelist. Under her unchanging pen-name, she had published **Maurice Guest**, set in the Europe she had known in the nineties as a student of music; and the personnel of the book included an exotic woman from Australia; then **The Getting of Wisdom**, set in her own school background of Melbourne in the eighties.

She never wasted anything and in the **Fortunes** she was to use her special sort of experimental realism, tried out in the former books. But before she could begin on her prolonged and tragic task, she had to amass large note books of historical facts from newspaper files stored in English libraries. Then, in order to verify her private recollections, she returned from London to Victoria (her Australia Felix) for two crowded months in 1912. It was when she was well into grips with the first volume that the War of 1914 began; an event that for her had a peculiarly disastrous meaning, since she was conscious of an enormous debt, cultural and human, to the Germany that was now the official enemy; and it was in consciousness of this added burden that she undertook the struggle against her new and difficult material. Then it must be remembered that **The Fortunes**—volume one—when first published in the year 1917, made no impression on Australians as a part of their own heritage or output. The hero, Mahony, had left Australia by the end of the book, it seemed forever; and the author, presumably, was an Englishman having some inherited acquaintance with Australian history. When the second volume appeared, in 1925—**The Way Home**—ts predecessor was already forgotten and unobtainable. The final volume—**Ultimate Thule**—was at last to let loose the flood of curiosity and eagerness in 1929. After some hesitation, the whole trilogy was republished, first in separate volumes and then, in 1931, in an omnibus volume, which came out at various times in England, America and Australia. It is this form of the revised trilogy that is the unit and basis for all subsequent discussion of the book that has aroused the greatest discussion in our time.

Some of this questioning was merely obvious and misleading; in other directions it was refreshing and even inspiring. A few of the more or less relevant topics may be set down here:

Granted that this is the greatest novel ever to come out of Australia, was it good that the most famous book should be tragic? Those who admit that tragedy is by no means excluded have then sometimes protested that the opinions and impressions of Mahony are unjust and unhistorical. Others have said that Mahony's limitations were above all grounded on a weakness in himself that prevented him from appreciating the realities of the life around him and from its justifiable demands; and this the author would grant to be true; it was part of Mahony's tragedy, and she wanted to show it in word and act. These protests against the book may take many forms, and the answers are not to be given in a word or two; except perhaps what I have heard many a thoughtful Australian say: "You know, we had a Richard Mahony in our family!" Possibly, but they had no novelist to give his figure permanence and reality and terror and pity.

KATHARINE SUSANNAH PRICHARD

ALTHOUGH I admire other novels by Henry Handel Richardson, I cannot regard **The Fortunes of Richard Mahony** as either Australian in essence, or realism in the fullest meaning of the word.

Realism—even when it is not socialist realism—implies something more than a negative attitude to people and places. To "see the world steadily and see it whole," as Matthew Arnold says, suggests what realism ought to be.

In the first two volumes of the trilogy, H.H.R. deals with a period to which our grandparents and parents belonged. My own resembled the Mahonys in many respect; but I never heard from them so derogatory an account of their life in the early days. **Settlers and Convicts**, published in 1847, indicates the background of developing Australian characteristics.

After reading **The Fortunes of Richard Mahony** a friend of mine, a trade union secretary, exclaimed:

"Why, there's not a decent Australian character in the book. Eureka's just referred to as if it were a brawl among riotous miners. Not a word of the heroic struggle it was or its historical significance! The workers are always described as 'dirty,' 'loud-mouthed,' 'vulgar,' 'illiterate." There's no mention of the great strikes and political conflicts which affected everybody in those days."

I pointed out that H.H.R. was concerned chiefly with the reactions of Richard Mahony, an egocentric Anglo-Irishman—"a square stick in a round hole"—to conditions of life in Australia; that the

trilogy is an intimate, psychological study of Mahony, and of a contrasting type in his wife, Polly, at first lovable, practical and courageous, although later imbued wth Mahony's social snobbery.

My friend was not satisfied. She insisted that in a book about Australia there should have been some sympathetic understanding of the people and country. Particularly if the writer is considered to be an Australian writer. My friend marked explanatory passages where the author takes-up an unnecessary attitude of Mahonyish superiority. I agree that this is so, both in **The Fortunes of Richard Mahony** and **The Way Home.**

These two books, as well, seem to me lacking in literary craftsmanship. They have no word magic. But **Ultima Thule** has both. It is true, I think, that H.H.R's. power as a writer derives from her insight into, and revelation of, emotional crises. So painful and powerful is her tracing of Mahony's moral and physical decay that you wonder how it could have been written. There is in this book, too, some relaxing of an innate hostility to any but the main characters. A clergyman, bank manager and some friends, are shown capable of kindness; but still there is not a good word for any working man or woman, except perhaps Bowey, the "devoted and leech-like friend" who helped to tend Mahony in his last days. Even children are treated from the angle of Mahony prejudices. It is difficult to believe that Cuffy, at the age of eight, could have been such a chip of the old block.

And yet, in **Myself When Young,** H.H.R. tells of her childhood in Australia; how her parents impressed her with the superior gentility of her own family; would not let her play with the children of neighbours in the country towns where they lived. She left Australia when she was seventeen and returned only on a short visit. Her character developed in the musical circles of Germany, and there, I think, found its spiritual dwelling place. The world of music, shut-off from the noise and conflicts of the struggle for existence, became her solace. Bitter memories were associated with Australia.

Maurice Guest, her first book, breathes familiarity with the Leipzig of students and music. It has a freshness and vigor I admired immensely when it was published. Then came disappointment with **The Fortunes of Richard Mahony** and **The Way Home.** My respect for H.H.R., as a writer, revived with **Ultima Thule,** but in **The Young Cosima,** I pay homage to a work, mature and vital, as an imaginative recreation of Wagner's story.

When I met H.H.R., in London during 1933, I urged her to come back to Australia. I told her that I never regretted having left London to live and work among the Australian people, and that it would be a great thing for Australian literature if she would make her home among us. But she said she would never return.

It was not until I heard her broadcast during the war that I came to the conclusion that H.H.R. had no deep feeling for, or interest in, Australia. Many of us looked forward to hearing her message. What did she say to identify herself or her work with us? She read an extract from **The Fortunes of Richard Mahony,** describing Mahony's joy at seeing again the coast of England.

In my opinion, it is not enough for a writer to be born in a country, and write of it from youthful reminiscences, to be regarded as a representative of that country, or an interpreter of the character of its people. Comparing the Mahony trilogy with Eleanor Dark's **Timeless Land, Storm of Time,** and **No Barrier,** we find a much broader understanding of similar types and conditions in Eleanor Dark's work. It has a realism which sees not only ill-mannered louts among convicts and workers, but those who have finer qualities; a realism which reveals the injustices they suffer and that they are the victims of degrading circumstances. There is nothing of this in **The Fortunes of Richard Mahony.**

The difference in outlook of these two writers is that one was limited by her social experience and environment, the other stimulated by the democratic tradition of the Australian people to a vision which is humane, progressive and in tune with the realism of its time.

TIMES CHANGE

Herodotus of Halicarnassus, noble Greek,
Having travelled widely in Egypt, Mesopotamia,
Scythia and other parts of the Persian Empire,
And forseeing that clash between Europe and Asia
In which his beloved Athens was to play
So glorious a part, wrote
(To defend Athens against hostile views
Caused by Athenian imperialist deeds)
His **History of Persia**
With great and conscious art,
And showed that it was Athens who (for all her sins), was then
The better model and the hope for men.

I plebeian Australian, returned
From travels in the New Cathay of Mao Tse-tung,
Grieving that my Athens plays a game
Of indefensible stupidity and shame,
Write and speak
To tell my fellow Greek
What of Asia I have learned.
I labour with an art too weak
For all that I would passionately say:
How (while the manners of New China seem to me
As rich and strange
As the ways of ancient Persia seemed
To pious Herodotus, Father of History),
How I have seen, today,
The roles for good and evil are exchanged
That Europe and Asia play.
For it is China now that is enlightened, free
Humane, creative—the better society!

Herodotus spoke exclusively to the educated class,
Who at that season
Of history were men of reason.
I do not, for it has come to pass
As an aspect of the West's decay and fall,
That the modern western intellectual
Cannot believe in anything at all,
Save, in extremity, in the supernatural!

Herodotus gave no heed
To his effect upon the common man,
For he in those days could not read;
But now, praise History, he can!
The common man can still face fact,
Can reason, can believe, can act,
So I address myself to him, hoping that thus,
Even as did Herodotus
And even with my little art,
I may convince men to the better part.

ELIZABETH VASSILIEFF

VIEWS AND REVIEWS

"AUSTRALIA WRITES"

In recent months, three Australian anthologies have appeared. Firstly, **Sunburnt Country**, a self-conscious volume produced in London; secondly, **The Tracks We Travel**, published by the Australasian Book Society; and thirdly, **Australia Writes.**

For no reason, other than that we have been misrepresented by the "critics," Australian writing comes in for a lot of patronage at the hands of overseas book reviewers. **Australia Writes** (edited by T. Inglis Moore, Cheshires, 1953, 19/6) will help to deepen that evil, for so much of what it contains is merely imitative of what passes for "literature" in England and U.S.A. today.

I never quite got over the nauseous taste of the first piece in the collection, T. A. G. Hungerford's "The National Game." Why an anthology, purporting to be representative of our modern Australian writing, begins with a slander on the national character is something that I should like to hear Mr. Moore explain. If his reason is that it is "good writing," I can only answer that it is bad Australian, and therefore the title of the anthology is insulting and bogus. By using a swy-school, often humorously referred to as our national game, Hungerford sets out to prove that our national game is really to waylay, bash, and rob New Australians on dark nights. Another choice little sidelight implies that the Australian toiler reads his mates' mail whenever he gets the chance. It cannot be said I am reading too much into what is after all only a short story. **Mein Kampf** was after all only a book. The whole story is permeated with a solemn and morbid tone in order to convey the incidents therein as being symbolic; and the story being what it is, the title, "The Natonal Game," sounds calculatedly anti-Australian.

The collection improves but little with the second story by Darcy Niland. Niland has always struck me as a faker who apes very well a certain school of American magazine writers, equalling them in false pathos, bogus values, and sentimentalism so thick you feel you almost have to scrape the treacle off the page. Niland once again proves that a man's most blessed state is one of constant poverty and hardship. I do not quarrel with hardship; nothing worthwhile was ever done without it; but when some sort of mystic, weepy virtue is given to the sufferings of people in an unequal society, that is charlatanism.

There are some first-class short stories in the collection. This had better be said now, in case the nature of the first two stories be taken as setting the tone of the whole collection, which they don't, thankfully. But to clear the decks first. Story Number Three, "And Life Went On," by Dorothy Harrison, is another one you must recover from before you begin to find out what Australia **is** writing. Briefly, it is a trifle about immediate post-war life in a Central European country. Two girls are having a pretty miserable time; the blame, by implication, does not belong to the Nazis and traitors who ravaged the country for seven years, but the duly elected post-war government clearing up the chaos that is left, rounding up the traitors and re-building the land; which may be why the author says at the beginning: "You won't believe it." She also neglects to mention whether the life of the two girls was miserable under the Nazi occupation. Which only goes to show how dangerous realism in writing can be if you don't understand reality.

John Morrison's "Easy Money" is one of the best of his waterfront stories, which makes it good indeed; when you can say so much about a writer in so few words, you are talking about a master. Another such is Vance Palmer, with a story that, slight as it is, has vividness and power . . . Judah Waten with his shrewd, warm episode "Read Politics, Son" . . . Refreshing pieces of Australiana by Alan Marshall and Dal Stivens.

Allan Ashbolt's "Black and White" is solidly-hewn and well written, but some might not favour an Agatha Christie-ish ending. They would have to admit that he gets away with it. The story is the problem of black man oppressed by white man. It admittedly does not need a murder mystery to make poignant the plight of the black man. The murder is the exceptional or the particular rather than the typical, which is what most of us would prefer in a short story with such a social message as this. Perhaps Mr. Ashbolt's evident sense of social wrong has been sacrificed in part to the more sensational mechanics of story-value; to say any more would be carping, for the story is an eloquent one and could hold its head up anywhere.

This is too bulky a collection to discuss each story in detail, but others which make it worthwhile are war stories of Frederick Howard and Hugh Clarke; others by John Hetherington, J. K. Ewers, and F. B. Vickers. One cannot let pass F. D. Davison's "Bush Diary" with its lean lyricism, full of countryside images, that make you want to go bush and renew your acquaintance with its birds, animals and landscapes. Of the non-fiction prose, Flora Eldershaw's "The Landscape Writers," a thoughtful and valuable article, and Leon Gellert's amusing "Bacteria Background" stand out to my way of thinking.

Now to the poetry, which has quantity, but little quality. It is in the main the usual "Eliotism": the shapeless, meaningless, aimless, humorless, airless prose, full of the bizarre combinations of words that are passed off as poetic images these days, sawn up neatly into lines that don't scan half the time. I wonder just how well our "modern" Australian poets know the pale imitations that they are of the Georgian Decadents? Whether David Rowbotham, when he writes—

> When the thinning vein shall feel
> The flood die in the green leaf
> To a still well,

is aware that about twenty years ago Dylan Thomas, that highly original poet, wrote—

> The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
> Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees
> Is my destroyer.

I can never write about Judith Wright without expressing disappointment, for she has undoubted poetic power and a deep sense of imagery. But once again it is Judith Wright listening to Judith Wright, for all the lovely and sensitive images; the recoil from reality. The reader is never addressed, never praised or rebuked or appealed to. He is an eavesdropper on a sweet and morbid song. That is why the wholesome exceptions to the above remarks, poems by David Martin, Mary Gilmore and Rex Ingamells, are all too short.

Of the three anthologies mentioned at the beginning, I unhesitatingly prefer **The Tracks We Travel,** least pretentious of them, the most cheaply produced.

Why? It has character. Australian character.

—Eric Lambert.

"THE UNBENDING"

The Unbending is a splendidly told story in the form of a novel that is true of the life as I knew it in Western Australia during the 1910-16 period referred to by author Judah Waten. His leading characters and the parts they played present a well set out word picture of the men and women and their activities as I saw them in those hectic days.

And this applies particularly in 1916, when the people of Australia were divided into two bitterly hostile groups—military conscriptionists and anti-conscriptionists. This took place as the result of the then Commonwealth Government having decided to take a referendum of the people, as to whether or not they would approve of young men being conscripted for the purpose of the 1914-18 World War.

In the State of Western Australia, the State about which Judah Waten has written in **The Unbending** with such acumen and understanding in this connection, the two groups were more bitterly opposed to each other than they were in the other five States of the Commonwealth. So much so, that the infamous misrepresentation by the conscriptionist Press, by politicians, by prominent churchmen, and by other persons then occupying responsible positions, and the brutality of Press-inspired mobs to which anti-conscriptionists were subjected and to which Judah Waten has directed attention, cannot be denied. I am in a position to say so, first, because the facts as recorded speak for themselves; and, secondly, because I was the chairman of the then Perth Anti-Conscription League, and saw most of what happened in the direction indicated during the referendum campaign.

The Unbending gives readers a very good idea of the actual state of mind of highly placed and privileged men and women in Western Australia in 1916, who were prepared that young men should be compelled to risk their lives on the battlefields rather than their own should be risked in that manner. It was also a state of mind that had been created by the knowledge of the fact that military conscripts were much cheaper propositions than volunteers, where money-capital could be invested in profitable wartime loans and contracts.

To all who would demand or have the same regard for their own lives as they are expected to have for the lives of others, I would earnestly recommend that they should read and study the case for such consideraton as has been implied by the author of **The Unbending**. Also, that they should do so in the light of the fact that man is the only creature in the animal world to organise mass murder of his own species for trade and profit.

—Donald Cameron, Senator for Victoria.

★

NEW ZEALAND STORIES

Th publication of the World's Classics volume **New Zealand Short Stories** (Oxford University Press, 9/-) ought to be the signal that New Zealand writing has come of age, or, at the very least, entered adolescence. Unfortunately, a reading of the selection suggests a less optimistic verdict; it does not even bear out the statement of the editor, Mr. Dan Davin, that "New Zealand has never had more . . . promising writers than it has today." On the contrary, the conclusion that springs to mind is this: that the kind of New Zealand writing represented in this volume has passed from lusty infancy to second childhood without experiencing any middle state of maturity. (I am, of course, treating Katherine Mansfield as a brilliant exception.)

It is impossible to interpret in any other way the fact that the earlier stories in the volume—the work of writers who were born before 1903—are so much better than those written by men of forty and under. Much of the writing, early and late, is frankly reportage; but how slight and inconclusive are A. P. Gaskell's **The Big Game** (1947) and Maurice Duggan's **Race Day** (1952) compared with Lady Barker's **Christmas Day in New Zealand** (1872)! Lady Barker, in spite of her class inhibitions, writes with humour and sympathy of sheep-shearers and their economic activities; whereas Messrs. Gaskell and Duggan seek epic and romance in the national opiates of agonised sport.

The slight sketch, dealing with marginal issues and hinting obliquely (and usually unsatisfactorily) at really important questions, is handled impressively by Frank Sargeson, less skilfully by others (e.g. Janet Frame, Phillip Wilson), but there is reluctance, in the stories selected, to handle dramatic, "typical" situations which sum up in themselves the main conflicts in New Zealand life. Those ignorant of John Mulgan's novel **Man Alone**, or the poetry of R. A. K. Mason, would naturally conclude from the volume before us that New Zealand writers are the victims of constitutional timidity. Thus in 1912, B. E. Baughan publishes a pastoral sketch, **An Active Family**, which has a little of the sentimentality and most of the warmth of Burns' "Cottar's Saturday Night." It contains this interpolated comment—

> Unlike the Old-World workers, we, in this country, have no burning wrongs to awake our energies and point us to ideals—or, at any rate, if we have, there are few of us that have caught fire.

And in 1947, Anton Vogt expresses the same attitude—

> Andy was a great fellow with the men. Andy was in the bush for what he could get out of it, but he was a fair boss. In his younger days, Andy had been a crack bushman himself. He had come away from the chops with big money in his belt, but he had stuck to it. And when the chance came, he went in for his own mill. No man ever made anything on wages, so Andy paid wages and collected on footage. The little mill was Andy's creation; with no Andy there would have been no houses . . . Also there would have been no community of thirty souls packed away in the back of beyond.
>
> **(The Accident)**

Although a large number of stories deal with men at work, the characters are seen as isolated individuals working in small groups—cow-cockies, bushmen, shop assistants, etc. The only short story to deal with factory life, O. E. Middleton's **Coopers' Christmas**, is perhaps the worst in the whole book; the narrator tries to hide his contempt for the workers ("They are all talking about what's going to win on Boxing Day") behind a screen of false objectivity.

The most direct reference to economic exploitation occurs in the work of the aristocratic Lady Barker (1872). She obviously realises that N.Z. sheep-farmers and shearers are both exploited by mortgage finance. One story, G. R. Gilbert's **A Girl with Ambition**, is set in the depression, and several others make oblique reference to those years; but no story in the collection attempts to portray **any** aspect of the struggles of the New Zealand people during the slump. Incidents in New Zealand working-class history are not used as source-material, while the militant Labor Party leader and former cabinet minister, John A. Lee, is represented by a pleasant little tale about a "swagger" which celebrates anarchist values if it celebrates anything at all.

Side by side with this tendency to ignore organised labor there is a refusal to see New Zealand life as part of an international scene. The story chosen to represent the First World War, Alice E. Webb's **The Patriot,** does not advance beyond sentimental jingoism, while the two stories of the Second World War show no awareness of the real issues of the war against fascism or its connection with the deeper struggles of the New Zealand people. There are no stories about Fiji, the Cook Islands or Samoa; and the authors seem lamentably deficient in national feeling when placed beside their Australian counterparts. Some of the best stories are concerned with areas of the country which have preserved elements of English life (including class distinction)—others show nostalgia for such a life.

Perhaps the most interesting stories in the book are those which deal with Maoris. On the one hand there is the complacent pakeha attitude ("if you're soft with the Maoris, they'll cheat you"), shown in Alfred A. Grace's **Te Wiria's Potatoes** (1901), and repeated by the narrator of B. E. Baughan's **An Active Family** (1912). In contrast to such official opinions, William Baucke is full of nostalgia for the vanished glories of the Maori race in **A Quaint Friendship** (1905), while Douglas Stewart is envious of Maori spontaneity (in **The Whare**, 1944), and A. P. Gaskell exposes narrow-minded race prejudice with bitter contempt (in **The Picnic**, 1947). The editor speaks of the poetry of Sargeson's stories, but the only real poetry in the book occurs in the monologue of the old Maori woman in Baucke's story.

Although some of the later stories are technically very good, for instance, Bruce Mason's **The Glass Wig** (1947) and John Reece Cole's **It Was So Late** (1949), it is evident from the anthology that the old subject-matter, with its emphasis on personal impressions and inhibitions, is no longer able to produce good stories. A new subject-matter and a new outlook, at once national and international, are required before the New Zealand story can express the realities of the New Zealand scene. To the Australian and British reader, therefore, this anthology is primarily of documentary and historical interest; to the New Zealander, and above all to the New Zealand writer, it is both a challenge and an awful warning.

—Donald Mackenzie. (N.Z.)

★

A PATRIOTIC BOOK

In **The Legend of the Nineties** (Melbourne University Press, 25/-) Vance Palmer has given us a book that fills a real need, and which instructs even where it does not wholly succeed.

The last decade of the Nineteenth Century was an important one in Australia because it marked a turning point. The main social and political developments that shaped the Australian character had taken place earlier; in this respect the forties, fifties and sixties, the decades of the anti-transportation leagues, of the gold rushes and Eureka, were more important. The years after 1900 created the economic patterns of life that still exist; the Australia of the two-party system, of the B.H.P., of the decaying bush. It could be summed up in a slogan: from Glory without Power to Power without Glory.

In the first half of the twentieth Century the democratic, popular, militant Australian tradition has fought strongly to assert itself under conditions of full capitalist development. But in the eighteen-nineties the mould was set; in those ten year's Archibald's **Bulletin** acted as the recognised and brilliant mouthpiece of native radicalism, and the work of "Banjo" Paterson, Lawson, Furphy and many others came to maturity. They were in many ways years of decisive conflict, and they can best be understood by reference to the great shearers' strike and to William Lane's Utopian, and foredoomed, "New Australia" experiment in Paraguay. (Dame Mary Gilmore is a living link with this era, and in her many of its best qualities are embodied.)

Vance Palmer, the veteran writer, has given us a survey in which, rightly, he goes back beyond the nineties. He begins with a just warning that it is wrong to isolate the nineties as some kind of a "golden age," but himself later somewhat succumbs to the temptation. This is partly due to the fact that the period after 1900 does not make itself felt strongly enough, even indirectly. The author gives full and sympathetic weight to the democratic impulses of the time, but, wavering between the basic approach of a literary and a political history, his outlines remain vague and the whole is not greater than the parts.

But the parts are often excellent. The chapters dealing with the "Bushman's Bible," the old **Bulletin** of Archibald and Stephens, Hop and Phil May, and with Lawson, Paterson, Furphy and O'Dowd are written with authority and a keen eye for essentials. Lane and Spence also emerge plastically, but the same cannot be said for the general background against which these men worked and created: the changing bush, the union sheds and the growing, yeasty cities. The book certainly does not lack heart and insight; it lacks system and a central motive or view-point.

But the author has earned the gratitude of the public by industriously bringing together much relevant material which, until now, has remained uncoordinated. Any future writer, who would attempt the important task of revaluating this period from a fully consistent historical point of view, will find that Vance Palmer has prepared much ground. Such a writer may be able to surpass **The Legend of the Nineties** in analytical vitality, but not in genuine affection for his material.

The Legend of the Nineties is a patriotic and timely work. It has special value today when Australia's heritage is under attack and when a new generation of writers is raising Lawson's banner because it asserts creative traditions in a firm, but never aggressive spirit. Get your library to put it on its shelf.

—D.M.

THE REALIST WRITER

Since **Overland** has grown out of the **Realist Writer**, readers will be interested to know the story of that journal.

The **Realist Writer** was a roneoed quarterly journal, usually of about 20 foolscap pages. It was started in March, 1952, as the organ of the Melbourne Realist Writers' Group, but increasingly drew contributions from writers in all States. Nine issues in all were published, the final issue being that of March-April, 1954. A few back numbers of Nos. 8 and 9 only are available, price 2/6 posted on application to the Editor of **Overland**.

The following were some of the features carried: **How I Write** by Katharine Susannah Prichard, Ralph de Boissiere, Walter Kaufmann, Eric Lambert, Frank Hardy. **If I Could Paint** by Henry Lawson. **Visit to the U.S.S.R.** by Naomi Mitchison.

Original poetry appeared from David Martin, Victor Williams, Elizabeth Vassilieff, Dave Smith and others. Articles and comment came from John Manifold, John Morrison, Laurence Collinson, Jean Paul Sartre, Howard Fast and others.

The Editor of Nos. 1 and 2 was Bill Wannan, and subsequent numbers were edited by S. Murray-Smith.

"THE BANJO"

JOHN MANIFOLD

I.

IT is 90 years since A. B. Paterson was born, and 65 years since his first poem was published. He published four volumes of verse, two novels, a book of stories and essays a book of travel-notes and reportage, a collection of **The Old Bush Songs** and some smaller work.

In spite of his continuing popularity, I think he is underrated today. Carried away by his wonderful rhythmic vigour and sharp-eyed, realistic descriptions, we fail to realise that he expressed a coherent vision of life, a philosophy deeply rooted in his experience and that of his contemporaries.

Unformulated but all-pervading, this philosophy is nearer to anarchism than to anything else. We may quarrel with it, but we must recognise it. Understanding Paterson, we shall be the better equipped to understand ourselves, for what he expresses has become a part of the national temperament. The pattern of conflict that runs through his work, traceable to a common origin, is worth the study of anyone who believes in the worker-farmer alliance.

II.

Paterson's boyhood was spent on Illalong station in the Upper Murrumbidgee. While he was still a child, the station passed into the hands of an absentee capitalist. Paterson senior ceased to be the owner, but stayed on at the homestead as manager. These facts must be borne in mind; they deeply affected the poet's outlook.

The manager's son on a mountain station is no pampered aristocrat. He rides and camps with the men. It depends partly on accident, but mainly on personal temperament, whether he is accepted by the men as a companion and an equal, or rejected. The poise and confidence of nearly all Paterson's work are the marks of the man who has been accepted. You can see him sitting around the fire with the men from Snowy River, absorbing the old bush songs as they come from the lips of the singer.

The homestead, with its books and its traditional Scottish civilisation and the girls, did not contradict the world of men and balladry and bush-life, but complemented it. If there was a social dividing-line in young Paterson's cosmos, it was drawn not between the homestead and the hut, but between the homestead and the alien "city" which owned the place.

But the older Patersons drew the line elsewhere. Landless now, they could not pass on to their son the economic basis of gentility; but they could outwit misfortune by making him into a lawyer.

III.

Paterson detested not only office-work—as he shows in **Clancy** and **An Answer to Various Bards** —but lawyers. In **Gilhooley's Estate** he treats the law frankly as a racket. In **The Man Who Was Away** he shows the lawyer as hopelessly insensible to the normalities of bush life. In the novel, **An Outback Marriage**, the lawyer is a power of evil, an immoral and disruptive figure, finally overthrown by his own **hubris**. A faint echo of this rings in the poem **In Re A Gentleman, One**. Wherever Paterson shows a lawyer in action, he pits him against something typical of Illalong—a family of children, an estate, an old homestead. He sees the lawyer and his law as hostile and alien to the old idyllic up-country life; as the type and symbol of new and unwelcome property-relationships.

Part of the special character of the old pastoral economy comes from an admixture of **hunting** economy. No one owns the buffalo-herds of the Territory, the wild cattle of the Gulf, or the brumbles of Monaro:—

> It lies beyond the Western Pines
> Beneath the sinking sun,
> And not a survey mark defines
> The bounds of Brumby's Run.
> Old Brumby asks no price or fee
> O'er all his wide domains;
> The man who yards his stock is free
> To keep them for his pains.

Common stock, on unsurveyed land! It is a tribal concept, not a legal one. Paterson extracts a slightly grim amusement from the clash between lawyers' law, in this regard, and outback custom. The hero of **A Walgett Episode** sells fifty kangaroo-skins to the city slicker who has previously rooked him:

> Then he smiled a smile as he pouched the pelf,
> "I'm glad I'm quit of them, win or lose:
> You can fetch them in when it suits yourself,
> And you'll find the skins—on the kangaroos!"

And the same old joke is sprung on the Englishman who has won **The Wargeilah Handicap**. The officials tell him he may collect at any time the splendid horse which has been offered as the prize:

"He's with a wild mob somewhere round
The mountains near the Watershed;
He's honestly worth fifty pound—
A noble horse indeed to win,
But none of us can run him in."

Something of the same conflict underlies **The Gundaroo Bullock**. Morgan Donahoe is known to have beef in the cask, **ergo** it must be stolen beef. Down come squatter and troopers to haul Morgan out of bed and the beef out of the harness-butt. But "Gundaroo bullock" is native-bear-meat, as any native knows, and the law is discomforted again, for there are no property rights in wild bears! It is a comic version of **Waltzing Matilda**.

In **Waltzing Matilda** the law does triumph, for the sheep has really been stolen. But it triumphs in vain, for the swagman's suicide lays on the shoulders of the law a greater crime than the one it set out to punish. So, too, in **How Gilbert Died:** the law triumphs by corruption and treachery; Gilbert, shot as he covers the retreat of his comrades, retains the moral victory and the glory.

Saltbush Bill, too, is on the side of the outlaws. He is not a man of property; he does not own the sheep he travels; but in their defence he will dare anything—not merely once, but all the season round. He does not want to own the grass, but to use it. Grass is one of the things, like air and water, which ought to be "common." Saltbush Bill's life is one long battle against the law of private property. Not that he cannot bend the law to his own purposes when he likes; as a J.P. he earns the price of a holiday by exploiting the manifest ineptitude of the law on inquests. Tribalism, blackfellow tribalism this time, under Saltbush Bill, makes a monkey of the law yet once again.

IV.

If the law represents one threat to the old pastoral life, the banks represent another:

But droughts and losses came apace
To Kiley's Run,
Till ruin stared him in the face;
He toiled and toiled while lived the light,
He dreamed of overdrafts at night:
At length, because he could not pay,
His bankers took the stock away
From Kiley's Run.

I can think of no other poet, even among the Communists, who has been so conscious of the economic basis. Paterson, the landless man, is not personally haunted by "the overdraft;" but he can always smell the creature out, as it skulks and scratches in other people's homes, just outside the circle of lamplight. Once hauled into the light by Paterson's art, it can be laughed down to less terrifying proportions.

MacThirst, what gars ye look sae blank?
Hae all your wuts gone daft?
Has that accursed Southron bank
Called up your overdraft?
The Great Calamity.

'Tis strange how often the men outback
will take to some curious craft,
Some ruling passion, to keep their thoughts
away from the overdraft.
Saltbush Bill's Gamecock.

The overdraft would sink a ship,
but make your mind at rest;
It's all right now, the parrakeets
are flying to the West.
The Weather-Prophet.

Sometimes Paterson, like a good warlock, will raise this imp from the darkness in order to loose it against pomposity:

Stations are of all sizes, and the man who is considered quite a big squatter in the settled districts is thought small potatoes by the magnate from "out back" who shears a hundred and fifty thousand sheep, and has an overdraft like the National Debt.
An Outback Marriage, IV.

And there is one charming moment when Morgan Donahoe prides himself on having reached such social heights that he too may qualify as a victim of the banks!

The times are something awful,
as you can plainly see;
The banks have broke the squatters, and
they've broke the likes of me.
The Gundaroo Bullock.

It becomes clear that the nostalgia, so evident yet seemingly so motiveless, in **Under the Shadow of Kiley's Hill, The Wind's Message, Black Swans,** and in parts of many other poems, is no poetic affectation but a true abstract of the reality of Kiley's Run, Illalong, and a boyhood buried deep under mortgages.

V.

Is it merely a linguistic accident that links "finance" with "the city?" It seems likely that Paterson's dislike of all things citified may have originated, partly, in his distrust and resentment of the powers of capitalism, the law and the banks.

And the hurrying people daunt me, and
their pallid faces haunt me
As they shoulder one another in their rush
and nervous haste,
With their eager eyes and greedy, and
their stunted forms and weedy,
For townsfolk have no time to grow, they
have no time to waste.
Clancy of the Overflow.

He knew and pitied, rather from a distance, the town workers.

Within our streets men cry for bread,
Our willing workmen, strong and skilled,
Within our cities idle stand,
And cry aloud for leave to toil.
The stunted children come and go
In squalid lanes and alleys black;
We follow but the beaten track
Of other nations, and we grow
In wealth for some—for many, woe.
Song of the Future.

Only once does he seem to recognise that the city poor may be capable of hitting back; and that is when he describes in **Happy Dispatches** how the London clubmen blenched from the roar of demonstrators against the Boer War.

So that on the whole it is the evil force of the city that he sees, whether wreaked on the bodies of its own poor or on the men of the countryside. He celebrates and magnifies, for its symbolic value, every little skirmish-victory which the country wins against the city—as in **The Geebung Polo Club,**

The Man from Ironbark, An Idyll of Dandaloo, and **When Dacey Rode the Mule.** The same antagonism lurks in such unexpected places as **The Travelling Post Office** and **Come-by-Chance,** where he enjoys the ability of the countryside to vanquish, domesticate and humanise even the city-born mechanical efficiency of the Post Office.

Sometimes the mechanised invader wins—as in **Mulga Bill's Bicycle** and the short story of **The Cast-Iron Canvasser.** That, now, is a really horrible symbol of commercial civilisation! A machine that forcibly sells you what you do not want!

VI.

The town-versus-bush conflict takes a special form at the races.

Paterson was not mad about horses. He liked them well enough, he could pity them, but he knew them too well to idealise them:—

> Big, stupid creatures that they are, cursed with highly strung nerves, and blessed with little sense, they are pathetically anxious to do such work as they can understand.
>
> **The Bullock**

Nor was he beglamoured by the race-track or the show-ring. See **Only A Jockey** and the savage short-story **Concerning a Steeplechase Rider.** Watch the race-track morals and manners painted in **The Oracle, Sitting in Judgment, A Disqualified Jockey's Story,** and **The Shearer's Colt.** In nearly every race-course poem of Paterson's there is trickery or corruption, exploitation or death.

The influence of Gordon lies thick on Paterson's horse-poems, but it was no "hippodromania" that took Paterson to Randwick. I think it was simply that horses, even in town, reminded him of home.

> Yet when I noticed the old grey horse,
> The rough bush saddle, and single rein
> Of the bridle laid on his tangled mane,
> Straightway the crowd and the auctioneer
> Seemed on a sudden to disappear,
> Melted away in a kind of haze—
> And my heart went back to the droving days.

Rio Grande is not at bottom a poem about horses, but a poem about the pigheaded bravery of Macpherson, first cousin to the Spanish **pundonor.** Elsewhere he makes the horse into an object of local patriotism, and drapes the finagling and skullduggery with the flag of war. All's fair against the city!

> "Just think of how they'll take it when
> they hear on Snowy River
> That the country boy was plucky and the
> country horse was clever,
> You must ride for old Monaro and the
> mountain boys today."
>
> **The Open Steeplechase**

> And out on the heels of the throng I
> sprang,
> And the spurs bit deep and the whip-
> cord sang
> As I rode. For the Mooki River!
>
> **The Old-Timer's Steeplechase**

The horse is the mode of expression of the horseman. The horseman is generally a man and a brother. But horse and man alike go to ruin on the race-tracks of the big cities.

(To be concluded).

COMPETITIONS

A communication from the magazine **World Youth** announces competitions under the general heading of "The Life of Young People in the Countryside." Entries are acceptable until September 15 for Literature, Music, Folk Art and Fine Arts sections, and prizes include cameras, typewriters, etc. Short stories, stort novels, poems and plays are invited. Further particulars may be obtained from the Editor of **Overland.**

★

Another competition is announced in a letter to **Overland** from the Miners' Federation. Mr. Neilly, the General Secretary, announces that prizes of £5 each are being awarded for the best poem, short story and cartoon and also for the most interesting historical document or article based on original research. The set subjects are the Eureka Stockade or the earliest reports of union activity in the coal industry. All entries to Editor, "Common Cause," 188 George Street, Sydney, by August 9.

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Other competitions in brief: Brisbane Arts Theatre, for a one-act play, first prize £10, closing date August 21, entry forms from the Theatre at 234 Petrie Terrace, Brisbane; **Tribune** newspaper, short story under 2,000 words on problems, struggles, traditions of the Australian people, first prize £5, special prize of £3 for beginners with not more than one previously published story, closing date October 31, entries to 40 Market Street, Sydney; **Challenge** youth newspaper, depiction of aspect of life of Australian youth in the present or the past, open to those under 30 on October 8, short story under 1,500 words (10 gns.), poem (5 gns.) or feature article under 800 words (5 gns.). Closing date October 8. Further details from Editor, Challenge, 36 Pitt Street, Sydney.

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