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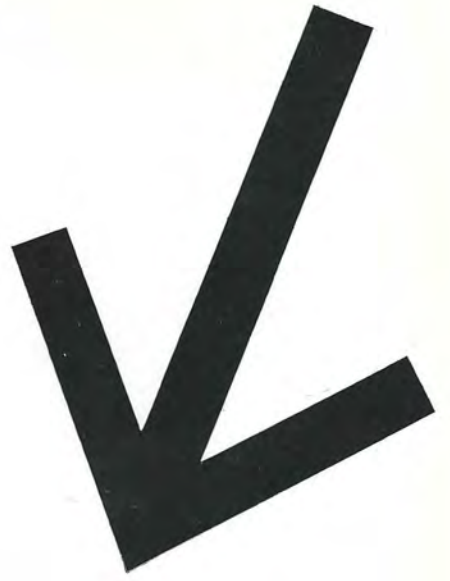
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Overland

Temper democratic, bias Australian

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autumn 1972

50/51

stories

- PLASTER, CULTURE, RAPE AND DEPRIVATION *Peter Mathers* 17
THE CORNER *Peter Cowan* 20
THE LEGACY *Nancy Phelan* 22
NEIGHBOURS *David Martin* 25
EVERYONE WOULD KNOW *Ian Mudie* 40
THE GAULLE FACE *Dorothy Hewett* 59
THIS WAS THE WAY THE WORLD WOULD GO *Peter Kay* 69
SANCTUARY *Leon Slade* 73

poetry

- THE FIRST-COMERS *Hal Porter* 11
MEMORIALS *Noel Macainsh* 29
TWO POEMS *Barrie Reid* 30
TWO POEMS *Peter Harney* 31
FOUR POEMS *Peter Stansfield* 32
TWO POEMS *John Hooker* 34
PASSING THROUGH EXPERIENCES *Robert Adamson* 35
PICASSO'S GIRL WITH DOVE *Dorothy Hewett* 36
TWO POEMS *Julian Deane-Johns* 36
THE WORLD IS EXPLORED *Peter Porter* 37
SHASTA DAISY *Andrew Burke* 37
TWO POEMS *Frank Kellaway* 38
KINDA TO APPOLINAIRE *Mal Morgan* 38
WEATHERCOCKS *Dorothy Hewett* 39
INVESTITURE OF PREFECTS *Katherine Gallagher* 39
UNTIL RED SHALL BE THE COLOR *Mal Morgan* 39
ALIVE *Judith Wright* 43

features

- TRIBUTE TO THE EDITOR *Geoffrey Serle* 3
DE GUSTIBUS *Martin Boyd* 5
GREER ON REVOLUTION; GERMAINE ON LOVE — *A Discussion* 44
THE AGONY — AND THE JOY *Xavier Herbert* 65
SWAG 75
TRANSPLANT *Manning Clark* 76
REPLY TO HUMPHREY McQUEEN *Russel Ward* 79
RACE DAY IN THE '20s *Kathleen Barlow* 81
IN THE APPALACHIANS *Linda Voigt* 83
HOW FRANK? *Cyril Pearl* 87
THE COLLECTED POEMS OF JUDITH WRIGHT *Frank Kellaway* 90
A HURTLE DUFFIELD RETROSPECTIVE *George Turner* 93
BOOKS 96

illustrations

The cover is taken from a book to be published later this year by artist *Ken Reinhardt* and poet *Russell Deeble*.

- STEPHEN MURRAY SMITH AT BOOK FAIR *Felix Topolski* 2
Fred Williams 10, 13, 14
Les Kossatz 28
Clifton Pugh 43
THE DIARY OF H. MUSCH *David Hodson* 56
Jiri Tibor and Wladek 68, 72, 95



Feliks Dzierżyński at Book Fair

GEOFFREY SERLE

a tribute to the editor

One evening near Port Moresby in March or April 1943 I was peacefully spine-bashing, when a burly figure appeared in the tent-opening. "Got room for one more here, mate?" Private Murray-Smith was on his way south after a gruelling stint up in the mountains with the 2/5 Independent ("Commando") Company, for which he had of course volunteered. As I remember it, we yarned for most of the next twenty-four hours before he moved on. Oddly, although we had done first-year Arts together at the University of Melbourne in 1941, we had never met. At one stage, I tossed him C. H. Grattan's **Introducing Australia**. "You must read it, it's tremendous," I said. "Pity a bloody Yank had to write it." (Hartley Grattan delights in this story.) That book had much to do with starting us both on our Australiana jags.

We have been drinking-mates—and more—ever since, with a fair mutual share of political-historical-literary vagabondage.

Steve came from a mercantile family with a long interest in the Indian horse-trade and appeared to be the typical Geelong Grammar product with proper accent and authoritative manner. J. R. Darling had left his mark, but Steve was one of the very few Geelong Grammarians of his generation who actually did "go left" (to lend credence to that misleading generalisation, from too few instances, about "Geelong Grammar radicals").

We both returned to University before the end of the war and completed Honours history together under R. M. Crawford, arguing the toss about Machiavelli, the Putney Debates, Macaulay, the **Eighteenth Brumaire** and **Such is Life**. We were among Manning Clark's students, the first year he took Australian history. As pipe-smoking, ex-public-school ex-servicemen (put up as impressive front men) we succeeded each other as president of the Labour Club. We absorbed, via Vance and Nettie Palmer and Brian Fitzpatrick especially, the Melbourne intellectual tradition of moral earnestness and political radicalism. We

got to know Clem Christesen soon after he arrived in Melbourne from Brisbane.

Steve's loft, in Grattan Street opposite the main University gates, was a notorious centre for plotting and parties in those years. And Murray-Smith, the great scrounger, was then—almost alone among our friends—the owner of a car, a Baby Austin of the 'twenties, an incongruous vehicle for a man, or for a woman like Nita, of such bearing.

Steve joined the Communist Party in 1945, I think. He once told me (and I believe him) that within twelve months he was a genuine member in turn of the Liberal, Labor and Communist parties—is this a record? He had a couple of years in Prague around 1950 and returned to work for several years as secretary of the Australian Peace Council. It was one of the worst periods of all to be a Communist; he was under great strain. He remained reasonable in argument, but in public the need to shout those Stalinist clichés at hostile audiences, with increasing doubt about what he was mouthing, sometimes left him grey-faced. His humanity, however, would keep breaking through, and the foundation of Overland in 1954 gave him a pleasurable sideline. The rehabilitation of Slansky in Czechoslovakia, the Khrushchev speech, and then Hungary and the murder of Nagy finally drove him out.

Those ex-communists who are strong enough to re-build their shattered selves sometimes reappear as intellectually far more formidable than before. The agony of having to rethink one's whole position may be an immensely profitable exercise. The experience of public speaking, the acquired skills of argument, the techniques of organisation and administration all remain as powerful assets. There are worse cramming houses for intellect. Steve reckons he was a late developer. Certainly he emerged from the late 1950s both as a man of intellectual stature and as a mighty operator in his various capacities over the years as teacher, editor (for a time also of the Teachers' Journal),

general man of letters, minor radio and T.V. celebrity, research student and university lecturer. The scatter and impact of his partisan activities on behalf of a score of reforming causes has been wide indeed.

Overland of course—so much his personal creation—will probably be Steve's greatest memorial. It bears his mark through and through—serious and humorous and chatty, friendly and fresh, good-natured larrikin, always combining literature and life. Not least, it has kept "the Australian tradition" alive, while removing the sentimental bulldust from it. As a spare-time creation it is remarkable. Many of us could ill spare loss of the pleasure of anticipation when it arrives in the post.

In pursuing bread and butter by constant reviewing in *Australian Book Review* and elsewhere, he by the way turned himself into a rare example of the kind of urbane literary gent who writes in the *English Sundays* and weeklies with polish and style—but there was always some guts in his argument. Similarly, his radio and T.V. performances as critic and quiz-kid, while they made him the darling of Camberwell grannies for his gentlemanly omniscience, also revealed a worthy spokesman for Australian literary men.

His Ph.D. thesis (only a handful of people have looked at it) on the history of technical education in Australia is about the best I have ever read. Like a fool, with his obliviousness to "getting on" and his determination to get on with the next job, he has not revised it yet for publication. His booklet on Henry Lawson and his *Introduction to His Natural Life* are admirable for the purpose and outstanding in their fields.

In a queer way, I think many of us respect the old bastard so greatly, mainly because he so frequently acts as our conscience. He writes those letters to the editor we think of but don't write.

I suspect there are dozens like me who, from time to time, have suggested that something ought to be done about something—whereupon Steve whips out his notebook, jots down a note, and later that day has converted a vague sentiment into practical action and brought pressure to bear on someone via telephone or typewriter. We accept the touch of managerial authoritarianism, because we're lazy.

It largely boils down to concentrated energy. No commuter can possibly rival the amount of work he has got through on the Frankston train. His bushwalking friends have to restrain him by force. He puts himself under continual strain by having too many things on the go and having to summon up ferocious bursts of activity—but this is one of his great strengths.

But it is the man himself who has created such a vast circle of affectionate friends who cherish his combination of the shouting laugh, the elemental rage, the humility, the generosity, and the integrity.

Of course, he was born out of his age. He should have been one of Arthur's knights, or sailed a Viking ship, or been an early Australian or Antarctic explorer, or set out to relieve General Gordon in Khartoum. The mad mountaineer in him finds mild release in his annual occupation of the Bass Strait Islands, which he sees as a reconstructive spell from the insanity of urban life. His articles in the *Victorian Naturalist* are not just the products of a whimsical hobby.

He is a man for whom a big job is waiting. He could write really major works in cultural history or biography. He could be a mighty head of an institute of technology. If ever there is a Labor government he ought to be chairman of a royal commission on pollution or head of an environmental agency. So long as it wouldn't mean his dropping Overland.

MARTIN BOYD *de gustibus*

"The World of the Spirit to which Art is so close"¹

The world of the spirit is the matrix of all true art. Turgenev said that in the great work of art the heart and the head must be equal partners. The intellect lies in the head, the spirit in the heart. The poet Cowper "set a supreme value on the emotional exaltation in which the greatest art is produced".² Its conception must be by the spirit, and this is true not only of the great work, but of that which has any merit, however slight, the *jeu d'esprit*.

The spirit of no man, his essential self, is identical with that of another. so that a work of art which is his original creation cannot usefully be compared with that of one whose inspiration is of a different order. We cannot compare Rubens with Giotto, nor Mozart with Wagner.

There is also the spirit of a period which informs the work of most of its artists and writers, but the best is individual, conceived by the Holy Ghost, which D. H. Lawrence defined as the deepest part of our consciousness.

Today many critics assume that there is as exact a rule by which one can judge the design of a novel as there is for the design of a motor engine. One wrote of "scientific literary criticism". This can only apply to technique, and even there the standards are not constant. Of all that gives greatness to a poem or a novel, its wisdom, its humanity and moral depth, only the man who has in himself the same apprehensions as the writer is a competent judge. One's response to a book is of the same nature as one's response to a human being. He may be entirely different in his tastes and his activities from oneself, but this does not necessarily mean that one of us is not a good man.

These truisms were brought into my conscious mind when I received a batch of reviews of my four novels treating of the Langton family, which were recently re-published in Melbourne. About two-thirds of these reviews were favorable, and one-third disparaging, or frankly abusive.

Criticism is the only form of literature which itself escapes criticism. I shall try to fill this gap, as far as my own work is concerned, not so much by pointing out the mutual contradictions of the reviewers' ex-cathedra pronouncements, as by indicating the spirit which informs my work.

Two red herrings were drawn across their track, Galsworthy and Henry James, the former by the publishers. It is about fifty-five years since I read Galsworthy; that is thirty-six years before I began to write the Langton novels, and by then the Forsytes had completely faded from my mind, to which the great Russian and French novelists were more sympathetic. Recently I glanced through a Forsyte novel to see how much excuse there was for this comparison. I found none at all, except that it was about a family. The characters are solid business men, "the upper middle class", a term which could only be applied to the Langtons by someone who judged class arithmetically, by a man's bank balance. The world of the Forsytes was stable and secure. The world of the Langtons was divided not only by the hemispheres. They had by-passed the industrial revolution, which evolved the middle-class. Only one of them married a business man, who was rich and strange to them. This was the beginning of a phase which was to divide not only the Langtons but the world, and they and their kind were to be submerged. Their story, even if much of it is lightly told, is a parable of our civilisation. Especially in the life of Dominic there is a deep religious symbolism, which a hurried newspaper reviewer might easily fail to detect.

Other reviewers have applied the touchstone of Henry James to my work, to which it is even more irrelevant than to Galsworthy. James came to Europe from a different civilisation. In my own family, which in this respect is identical with the Langtons, the umbilical cord had been stretched, but not cut. Every one of my forebears, since and including my great grand-parents, spent some

part of his life both in England and Australia. My brother Penleigh and myself were born in Europe. Every Australian up to 1914 when he was going to England, said that he was "going home". Henry James wanted to be something other than his natural self. I simply wanted to remain what I was.

Also Henry James is antipathetic to me as lacking in color, spontaneity and moral quality. The absence of the last is evident in such books as "The Turn of the Screw" and "Washington Square". Only the corrupt read of evil for entertainment. In "English Hours", James describes the spectacle of a "pretty lad of twenty" drunk at a race meeting. "He was a mere bag of liquor, too ponderous and too flaccid to be lifted . . . he was pulled and shoved and fumbled". His friends, still eating, "were unable to bestow upon the incident the whole of that consideration which its high comicality deserved".

Any one who could write in this way, in prose as pretentious as late Victorian furniture, of what was basically the tragedy of a fellow human being, had never entered the world of the spirit.

In a number of the reviews of my books there was an implication that technique is of more importance than the content of a book, which is rather like judging wine by the shape of the glass. Also a critic should know that words, as well as having a literal meaning, have widespread subtleties of association, a sort of emanation, the bouquet of the wine. To make use of this duality is the essence of poetry and of the best prose. To apply the word "saga", which suggests savage battles between mediaeval Norsemen in Arctic seas, either to Galsworthy's business men or to my county families in decline, shows insensibility to the quality of words.

Of the packet of reviews which instigated this essay, about two-thirds, except for the Galsworthy-James obsession, were good criticism. I hope that what I write here will not give the impression that I am ungrateful for this, or for what is outside the scope of this article, the deeply perceptive academic criticism which I have received in Australian universities.

The facetious and abusive third of my reviews had one thing in common with the favorable, the accusation of snobbery. It is odd that those who make this charge did not take in a paragraph in the first chapter of "The Cardboard Crown", which presumably they had just read, and in which I anticipate it. The narrator, a travesty of myself, explains why it is made. For him the social division is not horizontal but vertical, dividing those on the Right of the Pale, whose work is primarily creative or sacrificial, the farmer, the artist, the

priest, from those on the Left, whose sole concern is to make money, and who in recent years have become, along with certain scientists, the greatest menace to human well-being.

I think the charge of snobbery is partly due to my critics seeing my characters against the background of modern Australia, which may no longer be snobbish, though snobbishness is endemic. A school boy will be proud to be seen walking with the captain of the cricket XI. Between the wars, an intellectual leftist who had met Aldous Huxley or Maynard Keynes would go soaring up that particular social scale. In Russia the grades and privileges in official circles are more rigid than at the Court of Louis XIV; and this is becoming true of England, where recently a clerk in a government office was rebuked for going out to luncheon with one junior to himself. Yet an archbishop may lunch with a curate, or a general with a lieutenant. Christ washed the feet of fishermen.

One reviewer said that the Langtons "modelled themselves on the English". They did not "model themselves". They simply continued the domestic habits which they had always known. The only alternative was to model themselves on the Aborigines.

Even against the background of modern Australia, the Langtons could not be called snobbish. They are vaguely aware that they are the victims of heredity, but this does not make them either insolent or toadying, the two marks of the snob. Aunt Baba, the repellent snob who marries into the family to improve her own position, is disgusted at the way in which they put their simple pleasures and human kindness before social advantage. They nearly all have impulses towards artistic creation, and in spite of their many failings, unconsciously they live in the world of the spirit. Alice allows her favorite daughter Diana, for whom she nurtured ambitions which might be called social, to marry Wolfie, the penniless musician, because she believed their love to be true. Dominic, in one way the most arrogant of the family, was the most indifferent to social distinctions. He drove in a cart with a butcher's boy, and turned angrily against Sylvia, his fiancee, when she snubbed someone of humbler origins.

What exclusiveness the Langtons had was not conscious. Seventeen years ago I wrote in "A Difficult Young Man": "There was a sense in which our whole family, and even our whole group, those who lived by the land, were becoming divorced from the world." Since then the decree has been made absolute. The Langtons did not consciously say: "We shall not know business men". Their spirit was of a different order, and they could only breathe freely in the creative world. If they

had known of them, they would instinctively have accepted the grades of respect observed by the ancient Chinese. The spiritual order of men, from the highest to the lowest, was as follows:

- i. The scholar and philosopher.
- ii. The peasant and cultivator of the land.
- iii. The artist and craftsman.
- iv. The trader or "business man".
- v. The soldier, the professional murderer.

Florence Nightingale wrote of Monckton Milnes, the first Lord Houghton: "He had the same voice and manner for a dirty brat as he had for a duchess". So had the Langtons and the family from which I drew them. I wrote of Dominic: "If there was anything he detested, it was rudeness towards the unimportant and the humble."

The Duc de Beauvilliers, the friend of Fenelon, would apologise to his coachman if he kept him waiting. Dominic and any Langton would have done the same.

Even the Twins, Cynthia and Anthea, who in some ways deserved the epithet of "snob", were courteous to simple people, whatever they said to their own kind. Cynthia, when Wolfie, the poor German, on the outbreak of war has his face slapped in public by a patriotic prostitute, takes him by the arm, calls him cousin, and leads him to a cab.

Yet these are the people whom Mr. Maurice Dunlevy calls a "family of preposterous snobs."

Mr. Dunlevy, in his review of my books in the Canberra Times, writes that it is absurd that I should be put in the front rank of Australian novelists. Why should I be put in any rank? This is more deathly snobbery than fussing whether someone lives in Toorak or Moonee Ponds. It is regimenting the spirit. In fact his review reads rather like a temperamental reaction to a mathematical problem. He also states that I have "been wrestling with the conflict between writing a family saga in a form that might be called a schematic fable—the Jamesian novel of total relevance". I am not versed in this idiom, but if it means what I think it does, I have been doing nothing of the kind. Each of the novels was a separate conception.

Mr. Dunlevy also states that my work "is in no way innovative [sic] and very often out of touch with contemporary problems and concerns". All of my post-War II novels, for which alone I ask serious consideration, were directly or indirectly concerned with the greatest problem of our time, the scientific indifference to moral values which has led to the possibility of the complete extinction of all life on this planet. It is possible at the same time to be a brilliant technician and a moral

imbecile, though simple people find this difficult to grasp, as it is out of scale with their conception of sanity.

However, Mr. Dunlevy admits that "When Blackbirds Sing" does face the war issue squarely, that I have set out to appeal to the minds of my readers, "but have also appealed successfully to their glands"—only the mind and the glands. The world of the spirit does not exist.

The most curious statement in this review is that in my work "the moral virtues are confused with things less admirable, the upper middle class idea of decency, breeding, taste, and 'civilisation'" —the last word is in inverted commas. Does this mean that Mr. Dunlevy does not consider decency and good manners admirable? Let us glance at the "civilisation" (it is my turn to use inverted commas) which has supplanted that of my youth.

In America nine times as much is spent on weapons of destruction, both of man and of nature, as is spent on human welfare.³

In Russia, supposed to be America's ideological opposite, the proportion must be much the same. Millions are spent on sending machines into space, while the standard of living is the lowest in Europe.

In England, now sunk to an abysmal moral level, is an institution where thousands of animals are tortured yearly. In experiments to discover the most effective way of destroying human beings. Many of the young people are doped and sodden with sex. Since the permissive bill was passed, 84,000 abortions have been performed, one on a twelve-year-old child who died as a result. "No woman can ever mentally forget that a live child, carried by her, is now dead."⁴

Educationists have claimed that children should have a complete sex life from their twelfth year. Another doctor wrote that they did not want to stop boys abusing their bodies, but to enable them to do so without a sense of guilt. Children debauched in this way, instead of learning to control their appetites so that ultimately they may fuse with the spirit, and "transform desire into devotion,"⁵ are being deprived in advance of the greatest delights of life, that of the young bridegroom who "sees his true love on her naked bed," and that of the father who hears the first cry of his new-born child, a delight which Wagner transmuted into the loveliness of the Siegfried Idyll.

In Vietnam the American generals estimate their success by the number of dead enemies' bodies. One general has made a forcible protest against the torture of women and the killing of children by thrusting their faces down into the sand.⁶ His fellow officers said he was "soft". And over this suicidal chaos rules the power of money without conscience. If a thing pays, it is right.

How the controversial British publishers Orbach and Chambers acquired the rights to Angela Davis's book: IF THEY COME IN THE MORNING

In March 1971 Michael Chambers wrote to Angela suggesting that she collect together her writings and some of the appeals and statements of support from different people and organisations throughout the world into the form of a book which could be published as a mass paperback. At that time she had been in prison for about five months in solitary confinement awaiting trial. The campaign for her freedom had just begun and had already gathered support in the U.S. and the rest of the world. The proposed paperback could make a great contribution to her campaign and would provide money for her defence fund. Michael Chambers suggested that it be called "If They Come in the Morning" after the closing paragraph in James Baldwin's open letter to Angela. The phrase seemed to capture the political significance of the case.

Angela agreed to the idea and started work on it immediately. She was still in solitary confinement but in spite of extremely difficult circumstances managed to write the book with remarkable speed. Her friend Bettina Aptheker helped her enormously on "the outside," and they would have sessions together almost daily in a small visitors' cell with a wire screen separ-

ating them. All the material that Angela needed to do her writing had to be smuggled in to her, and all her manuscripts—which were hand-written; she had no typewriter—had to be smuggled out.

During April and May Orbach and Chambers received the manuscript in instalments for editing in London. Letters full of comments and suggestions passed back and forth across the Atlantic daily. The general scheme of the book was evolving all the time, with Angela constantly writing new pieces for it and welding it into a powerful statement centering on the American Prison Movement. She was very keen that it should not be concerned with her case only but it should put forward the views of all militant political prisoners.

By the end of May the book was ready! Just two and a half months after it was first thought of. And it was with the printers on June 15. Events very soon bore out everything that the book was saying. In August George Jackson, one of the contributors to the book, was shot dead in San Quentin prison. In September the prisoners in Attica prison, New York, seized control until they were brutally massacred by guards and State troops.

IF THEY COME IN THE MORNING, Angela Davis, \$1.80 (recom. price)

*Orbach and Chambers are now represented in Australia by
Angus & Robertson*

Mr. Dunlevy obviously does not support these evils, but he regards the "civilisation" in which they exist as superior to that in which the majority of people subscribed to absolute values, and in which I passed my formative years. Undoubtedly there was hypocrisy, but at least it was the tribute that vice paid to virtue. There were many bad things existing at that time, the evil growth that was to burst and poison the whole body in the 1914 war. But we believed, alas, without justification, that they were on the way out. In the reformers of that time the heart and the head were equal partners. They were not mere ideologists who would consider the "liquidation" of a million peasants as "social engineering".

In Australia there was then probably less social injustice and more happiness than in any other country in the world, so that a negative resentment of evil did not cloud the vision of the good.

At my school all our education was of the past. It was the age-long growth of the human spirit to which the current generation has contributed a mere fragment. A healthy boy is mostly concerned with his immediate life, but glimpses of wisdom and beauty, briefly apprehended, may lie in the corners of his mind, and illuminate an experience in later years. Every morning there was a short service—a reading, some prayers, a hymn, a psalm: "Who shall dwell upon thy holy hill? Even he that leads an uncorrupt life, and does the thing that is right, and speaks the truth from his heart."⁸

Would not a boy who daily sang something like this, even if he did not give it full attention, have more chance of a good life than one who was taught by his doctor to abuse his body without a feeling of shame?

The sex life of my school fellows, as far as I know, was practically non-existent. All the boys' energy went into their work and their games, and they were led to believe that "there is a certain godly power, unknown, everlasting, uncomprehensible, inexplicable, far above the capacity and reach of man's wit, dispersed throughout all the world, not in bigness but in virtue and power."⁹

The sexual impulse is the creative impulse on the physical plane. When this is controlled it can be transmuted into creation in the world of the spirit, and beget marvellous beauty in painting, in wisdom, in poetry. The pagan legend of Daphnis and Chloe has an obvious sexual impulse behind it, but it is sublimated into an enchanting idyll of young love. Puritanism does not touch it, nor the evil offspring of Puritanism, pornography.

The Spartan boys and girls were made to dance naked together, not to stimulate their desires, but so that they might learn self-control, and achieve

complete chastity, accepting their natures, yet retaining their innocence.

And so my school fellows, brought up in their good and happy country, and imbued, those who could absorb them, with the finest ideals of our inheritance, when the time came, went as they believed, to defend their values, and a higher percentage of them were killed than of any other school in Australia. The evil of their times used the goodness of these young men to destroy them. Here, perhaps, I approach agreement with Mr. Dunlevy.

Action and reaction are equal and opposite. Ten years after Cromwell's puritan tyranny, King Charles II with his wife, his mistress, and his son by a former mistress drove through Oxford, and the crowd cheered. This may not be admirable, but it shows how quickly change can come. There is probably at this moment in some school room a child learning to read, who in 20 years' time will tell Mr. Dunlevy that he is not contemporary.

The reaction against today's "civilisation" has already begun, particularly in England, where even football clubs are supporting the campaign against pornography. In Rome recently 100,000 young people marched through the streets bearing banners inscribed "Every man is my brother", the basic doctrine of Christianity. There have been other meetings and camps in France and elsewhere, of thousands of young people, of different or of no churches, whose purpose is to affirm it in the face of the world.

This basic doctrine was the impulse behind most of the seeming aberrations of Dominic, from when he walked naked in the moonlight, until he threw his war medals into the pond. In the last chapter of these four novels is answered the question that was posed in the first of them. The good and the evil in his nature had been revealed to him in a tragic moment; and after that he knew himself, and was at peace with the deepest part of his consciousness, if not with the outside world. Yet he could enter "the world of the spirit, to which art is so close."

1. Dallas Kenmare: "An End to Darkness".
2. Lord David Cecil: "The Stricken Deer".
3. Daily Telegraph, London.
4. Dr. Rhodes Boyson.
5. Hugh I.A. Fausset.
6. Daily Telegraph, London.
7. Trinity Grammar School, Kew, Victoria.
8. Psalm XV.
9. Sir Thomas More: "Utopia".



HAL PORTER

the first-comers

drawings by

Fred Williams

We were the first-comers.
Mad Megs in glens, rag-tag gipsy sybils
or leery back-stairs daemons of our own
wheedling at loop-holes in sagacity
tricked us magnanimous or talked us rabid
to sell our granite crofts to Lowland sharks,
to sell and sail for this excessive South.
We sold.

We sailed.

Tools sealed-up in the hold
like arms of anarchy—axe sickle scythe
(and plough-shares coulter harrows bill-hooks hoes)—
were whetted sanities to weigh against
rashness,

grief that our act unmade
steel lochs and iron crags to less than air.

All the rest were relics fillip comfort:
griddles and warming-pans and candle-moulds,
tureens decanters lanterns stools and such,
God in a book, solace and maxim pressed
like exile's heather between psalm and psalm,
our legendary furies heroes clans
and hey-days pickled down in doggerel.

Sea-weary all too soon, mewed cheek by jowl
in the ship's pallid hearse, we trespassed through
extravagant sea-realms whose green-faced czars
in black-hole halls of kelp reigned out of sight.
We wandered out of touch with clarity
dimension certitudes

(our being's clock,
for God and greed afloat, too fast by far)
and sharp-set for the gravities we sought
grew sick with ennui at what we saw:
the seamen spry as apes among the shrouds,
the daily sea-gulls carping on the boom,
the hare-lipped sea-cook with three fingers lopped,
the sea-bat skipping on the sea,

the sea,
the sea on which the boundaries conjoined
of bondage boredom spleen to leave no space
except the pinpoint madness balanced on.

Sudden on some infernal longitude
wind held its breath so long the wake dissolved.
Midway between the glass of sky and sea,
jailed as a bottle ship, the hearse stuck still.

All still:

the sherry level in the glass,
the skilly in the bowl, the figure-head
dry as a temple joss, three masts glued plumb
as fixtures in the shale of Calvary,
the incandescent deck, each stuck-fast fact
by contrast fostered sham lucidity;
penned in Time's air-lock we seemed safe and sane.
Poor fools!

for after many white-hot days
the ship-bell's harsh **Today is yesterday**
told us that, like the water in the casks,
this boredom too stank of its rotting self.
From stem to stern the cancelled hulk gave out
**Anchored in nowhere I am not my own—
and nor are you.**

A lubber ran amuck.
A screeching woman bore a thing and died.
The ship-boy hanged himself—not told we knew,
not hearing heard the sea-fox slash his shroud.
One mind from mind to mind like poisoned oil
slid vile with omens.

Rats like tabbies basked
on poop and hatch.

The wind still held its breath.
A hoodless moon scored minds too deep with light:
had winds, had waters ever stirred at all?
One, turning Tom o' Bedlam, screamed to stroll
like Christ the sea.

We bound him, though perplexed,
his quirk appearing near to likelihood
(sea-fires night-prowled the ocean's metal floor,
a rink of blazing brass outstared each sun).
By tedium half-crazed we came to crave
relief in fleshed-out fables:

spectre-ship,
scant ribs and cobwebs, fleeing silent swift,
heeled sharply, wakeless, through the windless noon . . .
sea-serpent's plated head hoicked mainmast over,
monstrous mindless sightless, spewing down
sea-snakes, gobbets, pirate shin-bones, slime . . .
albino mermaids' white unwinking eyes,
unslaked magnetic, ogling from the brine . . .
No old wives' tale took life—but fact gave in:
horizon's fellow warped and cracked apart;
the sea-quake heaved; the sky's tense lining tore;
a zoo of winds and storms stampeded out.

On their invisible and tuneless muscles
we came at last to port,
but later,
much.





First, liquid alps sheered up, steep tons to crash
on the abyss-bound, lightning-skewered ship
whose mirrored image we saw slew aghast
on the black glass water-precipice,
on depth now fearful height whose inner depths
were streaked with curds of drowned men, torn flakes torn
from sea-ground's seething vortex, their mouths ours,
ripped gaping, trailing screams too black to hear
past us, flesh-rags of rockets fleeing up
and up . . .

then down from zenith, lethal, swift
as Lucifers and blades of guillotines,
to mash about us

—toys trapped on a toy—
volcanic spools of white and bitter blood
slopped and spoke in memory's dark bilge
long after, even when on harbour swell
the ship burst to swan,
and we,

salt-steeped white-fleshed
and blue-bruised as sea-dead,
with flat drowned eyes
glittered at nerves of chimney-smoke ashore.

Too truculent and turbulent a land
for tragedy to seed, galvanic earth
volting its wild-eyed crowds to mill and mock,
their native language Uproar.

Time for fear
and pity none, or sleep, except in jail,
the stocks, the church whose raw bell's throat coughed out
its flint-lock sparks above the Redcoat drums,
the tavern fiddles, brothel brawls, the dicker
of cannibals with stinking wives to swap
for rum or shag.

Each act roared out the lie:
"See! I am I, yet part of what must be!"
More force than truth gave blew all cards face down.
Now who was knave?

Who king?

The harpsichords
of *nouveau*-ladies fingering sweet were tart:
a whaling port's no place for farming men.
"Bunyips and bushrangers!" they warned.

We left.

With ploughs, dogs, old-lag sawyer, nails and sheep,
an Irish shepherd, sugar, window-panes
we tabernacled through the raging grass—
"We are ourselves yet part of greater things."

It was a fierce conflict, a violent time,
yet cored with peace though muskets cutlasses
and monstrous prophecies inflamed our tongues.
When, killing axe in hand, we sometimes froze
at nitric outcries from the inner land,
the boiling air we slaved in

—our own slaves—
thawed us: we lent such shrillings homely cause,
unfearful names.

We christened to chasten.
Trees were anonymous antique extreme
(each trunk a shack, a fence, a hundred fires),
zodiac-scrappers flashing scalpel leaves
until we named,
and felled.

All things were strange,
same, not the same. Huge boulders levered out
imprisoned nothing, not a nothing known.
We smashed them.

Birds, like shrieks in multi-flames,
spattered the claustrophobia of twigs.
We shot them.

One must massacre to live.
Insects of molten-metal beads, and moths
with meek-lamb masks streamed to new acrid deaths
upon our lantern's civilising flame.

If lanterns, weapon-tools, our bare-faced selves
were doom-charged, older dooms undid the deeds
geometrised from chaos:

Tartar hordes
of gales with ice-sharp grape-shot, scimitars;
lean streams (once stumbling goat-light on their stones)
bloated to flood-tides; the vast Form of fire,
insane and mythological, let loose
to bray, "I am Alpha and Omega!"

Our precious scab-worn rams, our drays and huts,
shepherd watch-boxes, girlish wheat and vines
were muck.

Seeing the sky-line burn and march,
the window strain and shudder to come in,
the fences swim away, we could have crashed
face down, like hamstrung Nebuchadnezzars,
to grind our teeth on grass. Instead we stood
insistent, irked that water fire air
all want for nothing, yet besiege and gorge.
We were not faint:

our gluttony matched theirs.
We clawed at wrack and rubble; there we knew
lay our inviolate Arcadia.

PETER MATHERS

plaster, culture, rape and deprivation

There were Red, Fred, Honni, Suzi 2, Trumper, The Cat, Through, Bess and others at Joe's Burgers enjoying the quietest night since we sent The Pig away, that sad occasional. But what an occasional he was! I suppose every group has its impeded occasional. The first time we saw him he had his fingers in splints, the next time, a month later, it was his ankle in plaster, then he arrived with a skull cap of plaster painted and decorated to look like a helmet. We accepted him, though he never rode with us, because he wore his plasters proudly. Yet when we sent him away he was plasterless. The poignancy of our send-off! With each of us tossing a piece of plaster after him! Every bone in the body broken, according to the hospital. Our wreckest ever, commented The Cat sadly when he told us of his unsuccessful attempt to persuade our deceased's parents to have him encased in plaster like a mummy. "Like a mummy, you ask?" said his father. "Like an ancient Egyptian, and the seven-day war still warm to us?" "And why did you boys call him The Pig?" wept his mother. "He named himself," said The Cat, defensively.

Such is the way of it.

Our thirty bikes at the cemetery. Press photographers, television cameramen, reporters—aloof, antagonistic, and with us. Our slow procession! Choppers, pigs, beards, sideburns, shaven skulls, denim, leather, tattoos, helmets, goggles, gauntlets and sunglasses. Such sad splendor! That Monday.

Those of us who gathered in the evening at Fred's were subdued and those who were not and therefore not there were away waking roisterously. So we were few at Fred's but his business did not suffer because strangers came to gawk. They entered with diffidence or obvious fear: would we, the Slurch, turn on them and outdo Hell's Angels? With the exception of Through we maintained our reserve. We were rather ashamed of him when he took a girl for a ride, raped her and brought her back fluffy with thistle-

down. "I went through her," he remarked casually, buying her a coke, "I'm the only positive raper." She blushed. We were saddened.

The next night, Tuesday, there were more strangers and two rapes. Wednesday we sat quietly, ignoring the crowd, I let Molly pillion me to her place where she raped me.

And on the Thursday night there we were, Red, Fred, Honni, Suzi 2, Trumper, The Cat, Through, Bess and others at Fred's enjoying the quietest night since we sent The Pig away. I had a disagreement with Molly and Red over their recent naked free-forni parachute jump. Suzi 2 claimed that Leonardo had prophesied such a conjunction. I left them, bought a can of beer and took it to the end cubicle. Murmurs of Leonardo, free forni, grass, wet-suiting, war, the bank rate, and with songs, the last-named I realised we were all wallowing in esoterica. What had happened to our spirit of ruffianship? We were nothing but a pack of ruffian analysts! Even the rapes. What had gone wrong? Life had become as flat as our dreary western suburbs—what the use of a dreary one hundred and ten past a dreary STOP sign at a dreary intersection if the adrenalin stays in its gland? The fatal way of The Pig was the only answer, but then, he was a Jew, and saw it differently. The Pig had been with but never of us. Outside Joe's are two telephone boxes, one of which is always left intact, not always the same one, but there is always one wrecked and one operable—why? I thought of several reasons and slipped deeper into gloom. Motivation, mining, ministers and the broken bridge. Conversations dragged on. The Slurch had become a club of professionals, skilled workers and a few show-piece deviates. Even I—I!—had seriously thought of leaving the latter! I realised that the only honorable action would be for me to leave everything. Splat. Ezo, the sage, had come to the same conclusion—but he had taught it for sixty years. I therefore resolved not to hurry things.

Someone left the good phone and entered Joe's. A tall man, thirty or so, somewhat aloof in shabby expensive casual clothes. Another rate-payer observing the rougher side. Should I rape Peggy, catch a load, spread it and . . . The stranger had brought his coke to my cubicle. Yes, it's free, I nodded. I guessed he would be a married man—I was sure I had seen his face in the paper—I then knew I had also seen him and his wife in a fashion magazine—in Vogue—at Geraldine's flat—I met her in a university/bike/bloodhouse pub from where we had gone to her place where she had discoursed on the phallic power of bikes, sibling rivalries, the dominance of my mum and the political rootlessness of my kind before raping me to a background of taped sitar—yes, the stranger was that kind of person—I knew I would like to rape his wife—I wondered if I should give her a load—according to reasonable reports there is an epidemic of pox sweeping the country—the stranger's wife would, in all probability already be loaded—in which case the union of spirocetes would, perhaps, produce a strain of unparalleled virulence—I am not the sort of man too who sears humanity—I felt sorry for this stranger with such a wife.

We exchanged civilities.

"I like to get among it," he said, "I've got a trail bike on a country place of mine. Terrific, goes anywhere and makes me want to know all there is to know about bikes and riders. To me it's not a fad, it's a way of life." "Shit, yeah, shit man, it's way of life, yeah," I replied, working my hands as though operating throttle and clutch. "Ah". His disappointment because I had turned out to be a bike-ape. To reassure him a little I referred to the motor cycle as a mechanical projection of free-will. "Ye-sss". I mentioned Lawrence of Arabia and his Brough-Superior, Boanerges, and compared that machine's performance with mine, Joe. "Named after Joe of the hamburgers?" Yes. "Is it that when you ride your machine you are one with Joe?" I quelled my irritation. "Your bike," he said, "is powerful and able to better the ton—is it death you ride—ride against, rather?" He is another poor sick man I told myself. I removed my jacket and displayed my right forearm. Although astounded he skilfully concealed his feelings. Trumper, at the door, shouted that I should show him my short arm. My companion blushed. I assured him I was not tattooed all over. "You mean you soon grew out of your tattoo phase?" "No, I am left-handed and pencilled my own design on my right arm and that was enough. There is also pain, you understand, though the needle man is regarded as the most humane in the business". "The pain—you!" he gasped. "Not the pain of the operation

so much as the effect of the design on my psyche. It has been likened to the work of Hieronymous Bosch". "I'd have thought Breughal. Still, you do surprise me". "Everyone knows H. Bosch since he appeared in those ads," I reminded him. "Is it the idea of the peasants, the general design, or the over-all symbolism that interests you?"

I yawned. I soon tire of the talk of intellectuals roughing it in cafts. I wondered how far down the road he had parked his Mercedes. He persisted. I allowed a small, bitter smile-crease to connect my mouth and right cheek. "Who cares? Plague took the peasants, the design is basic and the symbolism is a bit corny." "But surely you have a choice?" "Peasants, then." "That's it, you're a rural harmonist agin industrialisation—so why are you mad on bikes?" "I'm mad on the bike and I'm mad off it," I riposted sardonically. "I have a fine arm, a beautiful tattoo and am not ashamed. See—it isn't simply an after-Bosch representation of roistering peasants—see how the peasants stream in the one direction, towards the hand?—see the device, here, rolling out from under the edge of my stylish black crimpolene T-shirt—recognise it?—it's me on my Trump and we're all aimed at the representational sun on the back of the hand." "In pursuit of death," he murmured. "If you like," I laughed with a modicum of harshness. "Your right arm, is it because you are by nature conservative?" "You mean fascist?" "Gosh, no." "It is a right arm decoration because I am left-handed." "Not because it's the throttle hand?" "Throttle?" (with menace). "I'm finding all this fascinating."

He went to the counter and returned with two cans of beer. He pulled his tab with his teeth. I was so disgusted I excused myself and went outside. These intellectuals! Their long hair, inquisitiveness, profit seeking in the guise of social research, their rampant immorality expressed as so-long-as-it's-reasonable-ness, their pursuit of us as subjects fit for reclamation or objects of lust. They drop into places like Joe's for a burger that puts a layer of grease from lips to arsehole so as to be able afterwards to cut the grease with lemon sorbet and fine, sharp wine. Yes, all the time they're dropping in, alone or in huddles, though this week is a bit different because of The Pig's funeral. We are generally a polite crowd and allow our visitors a little conversation and an unhindered departure. Not that we do not engage in the occasional rape for we know that if we tried to totally contain ourselves we would slip into gross perversion, alcoholism and drug addiction. We are graced with a blunt good humor, and now and then wit puts in an appearance. Snarling rapists we cannot abide. The world smiles at cheerful grunting sodomists and the

bugger who can stroke the nose and ears of his beast is not to be condemned.

From the doorway I surveyed the rank of beautiful machines. Nowadays we are free of the visits by the traffic squad. Their last raid three months ago. What a debacle! They surrounded us and went over the bikes checking registrations, engine and frame numbers, silencers, brakes, panniers and beer bags . . . oh, dismal evening, though their thoroughness had to be admired. However, they went too far when they booked Sir Andrew for pillioning Charlotte without a full licence. I then phoned their chief, Rogers, who rushed out and called them off. I can do this because being an honorably discharged policeman confers tremendous benefits. I have advised innumerable acquaintances to join the force, do the right thing and resign after a few years. The fire brigade, ambulance service and customs service, also. Of the four I favor the brigade because of involvement (atop a waving ladder!), uniforms and useful pickings.

The stranger waited patiently in the end cubicle. What was he after? He was a Vogue man, yes . . . but was he a once-only feature or was he management? Holy piston! He was probably a writer and he wanted to do one of those smart-arse pieces on the underprivileged and their choppers, with photos of skinny, pop-eyed models frigging themselves on rear vision mirrors, with impotent hairy-chested leather jerkined bike apes sauntering, with a model man prominently positioned looking very cool in his tight or loose clothes, bandit moustache and clean fingernails. Maybe the stranger was a disguised cool-moustachio! Perhaps we should ride over his head?

But I am a man of peace, rapes notwithstanding. There is more to life than rape. Ezo the sage knew that.

The Third Helen has lately been insisting that my total experience be added to the general fund of community endeavour; also, she holds that I

cannot go on much longer living my sort of life; that I need a marketable skill. So, to please her, and to extend my vision I have allowed a university to enrol me as a highly regarded adult entrant. The sub-dean could scarcely contain himself: you left school at fourteen? Your mother a wh— er, streetwalker? Your father a failed greengrocer? and your sister a communist nurse? My God, on the strength of this I can get you a couple of unheard-of scholarships.

I was pleased to see him so happy.

Though I had no strong desire to make the stranger happy, I did fancy, somewhat, the prospect of raping a few of his models—but they are thin, God they're thin—maybe they're thin because they don't get any males?—or is it because they're screwed thin—by all those male models, editors, photographers and dressmakers? I should like to indulge in post-graduate research into the psychology of models. Model Motivation, Mobility and Motor-Cycles.

I returned to the cubicle.

Between us were four empty and two full beer cans. He talked of the vigor of motocycling, nationalism, public image, pox, pushrods and overhead cams. Suddenly he asked if I knew who he was. No, man—and does it matter? Not at the moment, but sooner or later I would know. He was interested, indeed deeply involved in, army affairs and felt, indeed knew, that the day of the Don-R, the despatch rider or motor cycle despatch rider was not done. I reminded him of flags and radio. He wanted to create a new army from the best of the old. I excused myself for a piss, went outside and set about immobilising his Mercedes so that he would be stranded. I would then be able to ride to his home—the car was littered with his address—and rape his wife.

Someone found me. I hadn't a bruise or a cut. The stranger had gone. Plaster, culture, rape and deprivation?

PETER COWAN **the corner**

Ever since he came in he had been aware of the bareness of the police station, the almost complete absence of possessions, even of books and papers, the impression obscured by his own preoccupation, yet persistent, so that it seemed quite natural he should suddenly recognise it, and wonder if the homes of these men were as spare, as uncluttered. Here, only the few grey steel cabinets. The sergeant's words seemed no more than an echo of what had been said before.

The visibility was good?

Yes.

In both directions?

Yes.

In fact, that is a clear stretch of road?

Yes. I know.

The school on one corner. A vacant lot on the left. There was nothing to distract you? No other vehicle?

No. No, I didn't see any other vehicle. Look, I'm upset over this. I've given you a statement. I needn't have done that—but I wanted to help. Do you think I could go now?

Yes, the sergeant said without any emphasis.

For a moment he hesitated, seeing the face that was still firmly fleshed, the thin, closely cut grey hair, a face from which everything was taken, like the room. And he thought tiredly it could not be like that, the man would have a family, grown children. He pushed the chair back. He must be close to a state of hallucination. The sergeant said suddenly::

You're all right?

Yes, he said. Shocked—I don't suppose I believe it, really. I'll be all right.

He wanted to talk, to let the words come as a child or a woman might have allowed tears. He turned away from the table, to walk across the bare room to the glass doors.

He had been afraid to drink, as if they might still come into the house to question him, and see in his action some guilt. But as she did not return, and he could not eat, he had forced himself to the first glass, and after that it did not matter. The heater warmed the room, though the air seemed dry, stale. He knew he should open the window.

The room was darkening, the cones of the heater deepening to hold a balance with the light from the long window, effecting a rich twilight that enhanced the heavy curtains, the thick floor coverings, the small pieces and curios she had for a time been possessed to collect. The small cast of a Greek runner, thrusting forward to some never-to-be-gained victory. The slanting Italian vase. Odd, unrelated things, lingering in the room, forgotten until, as now, they seemed to materialise for some particular occasion.

He did not know when she would be back. She would not have expected him to return so early, though this would not have affected her plans. Whatever plans she had. And as he watched the light fading from the room, he was aware that after a certain time this need for words, for speaking, might pass. He went to the phone, and the official voices passed him from one section of the hospital to another as if he were an intruder to be endlessly misdirected. But from the caution of those who answered, the care with which they insisted he identify himself, he knew what their voices would offer before finally he gained the reply. He looked at the phone on the small table. He crossed to the lounge, aware of the warmth of the room. He could not have said how long it was before he heard her key in the door.

She came across the hall. She was humming some song, he did not know the words, or the name, only the melody which she held curiously true.

From the doorway she said: You are there?

Yes.

She felt for the light switch, and entered the room, taking off her coat carefully. She stepped towards the heater, her hands held towards the warmth, her fingers spread, crooked slightly. Beautiful, he thought, she was proud of her hands. He was surprised he should be so clearly aware. She said:

What did you do to the car?

You noticed?

As I walked past it. Did you hope I wouldn't notice? If I'd done that, I can imagine the remarks.

I hit a cyclist.

Hit a cyclist?

Yes.
Was he hurt?
Yes.
Not seriously?
I'm afraid so.
But—how did you manage to do that?
At the corner of George Street—coming down the hill. I was coming home. To get my golfing things, he said, as if he had just remembered.
But that's—just down the road. You come past there every day. Surely you know that corner?
I thought so. Yes.
Cyclists do wander about all over the road—I've come pretty close to one or two myself.
He saw her hands spread against the red arc of the heater. She said:
At the corner—you don't mean he was crossing?
Yes. Past the school.
Which way?
He was going along Henry Avenue. I know. He was on my right. I should have given way.
Then—then you're responsible. Didn't you see him?
No.
But the road's clear there. It's an open corner. I know that.
And you didn't see him?
I didn't see him. I told you.
But how could you have done it? There, of all places.
I don't know.
Her hands lifted briefly in sudden impatience.
You weren't travelling too fast? But then, you never do. You're so careful, aren't you.
I can't see that sarcasm is going to help.
You tell me how careful you are. So many times. I don't think I was travelling fast.
You simply hit him?
I know.
You—have seen the police?
I've seen them.
You didn't tell them—this?
That it was my fault?
Well, the way you've put it to me.
I told them what happened. It did happen like that.
Sometimes you're remarkably childish, she said. I hope your faith in the police is not misplaced. But you travel past that corner every day.
Look—I didn't do it deliberately.
You seem to have been pretty careless.
You would think that, of course.
It's what you've said. You simply drove straight into some cyclist on the corner.
I didn't look.
You were looking at something else?

Yes, he said. His body moved suddenly, jerkily, as if without his control, shifting to the edge of the lounge. He looked at her quickly. Yes, he said. If you will have it—yes.

She drew her hands back slowly, and he watched them come to rest, lightly, tentatively, on her bare upper arms, the fingers moving gently on her flesh. The crimson nails, lifting, reminded him with a strange irrelevance of the small rock crabs scuttling slowly. As perhaps, while he waited here, some man's hands had clawed about her body. Strange. the rocks, and the sea, where they had once gone for holidays, and she had been fascinated by the things that moved in the wash of the tide, the kelp, the anemonies, the rock crabs.

What were you looking at? she said. Something, I hope, that gives you some excuse with the police.

Not really.

Then what was it? Another car?

It doesn't matter.

That's quite the stupidest thing you've said. It doesn't matter . . .

She turned slowly, facing him and he looked down at the deep carpet, the plain discreet design of its soft pile. She said carefully:

That's the school playground, there. The girl's corner. The youngsters.

He moved his lips and before he could speak she said: The playground. The little devils climbing all over things. Hanging upside down on the horizontal bars. Falling . . .

There's no point in this, he said.

Suddenly her hands moved to her face, closing about her cheeks, and she began to laugh, a dry, resigned sound.

You were—oh no—it's too absurd. But of course.

You think it's funny.

It's not been funny. For so long. Whatever we may have pretended. But—it's so ridiculous.

Yes, he said. Except that he died.

For a moment she looked at him, her hands still cupping her face.

He died?

I rang the hospital while I was waiting for you.

You killed him.

It was an accident.

Her hands moved slowly till they were at her sides, her fingers motionless, yet still tensed. He looked at them, not seeing her face.

Oh—what kind of a creature does this make you?

You're glad, aren't you?

She was staring at the red core of the heater, the image held in the shining wing-like sides.

I don't know, she said. There's a kind of rightness in it. Perhaps I should be. Now. I don't know.

NANCY PHELAN *the legacy*

Despite the occasion, an instinct in Julia responded to the old house as she entered the gates. The lawns sloped to the harbor, camellia trees flowered and a red gravel drive swept grandly away to the white columns of the porch.

"But how awful! How could I?" She should be suffering more. She saw again a picture of a Greek woman led screaming from a grave. "If I really felt it, I wouldn't even realise where I was."

Nervous, faintly resentful, she anticipated a trap, a situation from which decency barred escape, like funerals with coffins left open. Now it was nurses she dreaded, those businesslike women so steeped in horrors they took one's detachment for granted. What would they expect? Suppose something happened while she was there? Suppose she were left alone with the patient? Suppose the patient **died** in her presence? Intolerable! Yet how could you withdraw? Oh, the blackmail of public approval.

From the doorstep she noted the high cool hall, the curving staircase. Shutters admitted bright bars of light, the illusion was peace and elegance. Pain, fear, death were concealed behind panelled doors; dark oak, zinnias, methylated spirits might not have existed. In the drawingroom, white hands might still be pouring from Rockingham, ladies in peignoirs resting on sofas upstairs.

"Here we are," said the nurse. "Number Ten." She put her hand on the door. "But only a minute. She asked for you; otherwise . . ."

But surely the nurse was going to stay? Unprepared, Julia drew breath to ask baldly if . . .? She recovered and entered the shaded room.

The thin figure moved in the bed, the shadowed eyes smiled. "You've come!" All so normal. Had she dreamt the hospital summons, her mother's tears, the doctor . . . "**Twenty-four hours at the most. Both lungs are gone.**"

There was nothing frightening here; only Helen, familiar, dear, weakened by illness. Reassured,

love came out of hiding, timidly banishing self; then alien aspects intruded: oxygen cylinders, rubber mask, frowning deliberate breathing, miserly speech. Fear revived and the need to escape, resentment against the helpless form that so suddenly might become terror. Shamed and relieved, she accepted the nurse's dismissal; but Helen clung to her hand.

". . . tomorrow?"

"If I can." Then quickly, ashamed again, "Of course."

"Come and stay," said the sick woman. "Needn't talk. Just sit. Bring knitting."

Would the nurse forbid it? Tomorrow was twenty-four hours; but the woman said heartily, "That's right. You come and sit with your auntie. She likes a bit of company, don't you, dear? Cheers her up."

How dare she talk like that? Did she not realise Helen was **dying**? Agitated, angry, Julia said protectively, "I'll be here in the morning."

In the morning she found the family in possession. During the night, as the patient continued to sink, telephone calls had gone out from the eldest aunt, summoning, instructing, arranging. Blood was now the sole passport to the sickroom; love, friendship, sympathy must defer to Family. There was also the new exclusiveness of death. A competitive wave had surged up among the sisters and brothers and nephews and nieces, and those who normally would not have gone out of their way to see Helen now argued and pressed their claims.

They sat in the hospital waiting-room.

"After all, I'm the eldest niece," Irma was saying. "It's my right to see her."

"She was always fond of Elsie," said Elsie's mother. "Elsie should go in."

The aunts murmured. Elsie flushed.

"I don't want to go in," she said. "You make me sick, like a lot of vultures gathering round."

Shocked, they dismissed her as heartless, to

cry her eyes out in the garden. She loved the young aunt who had led such an enviable life, who was now going to die and be buried or burned. Those old hags, fighting to be in at the death just because they were Family, had not understood her. They had basked in her reflected glory but been shamed by her lack of convention.

They all agreed about Julia.

"She was always Helen's favorite," said Grace. "They were so close. Helen thought of her as a daughter, a younger sister. If she'd had anything she'd have left it to Julia. Julia must go in."

"Of course." Maud's magnanimity was not convincing. "Helen asks for her all the time." She would not say so, of course, but she thought it all rather unfair. Julia had never shown her much affection; and Helen's extravagance . . . not that legacies mattered, but **debts!** "She can sit in there. It's as well to have somebody on the spot."

By eleven o'clock the room was quite crowded. On the arms of sofas and chairs the family waited while Grace allocated farewells. At first silent, oppressed, they presently slid into conversation. Some had not met for years and had much news to exchange. Their chatter was careful, subdued, but as familiar topics raised a screen against death, native gusto revived. Irma, returning from the bedside, professed disgust.

"Margaret and Mary, talking about **clothes!** I can't understand it!"

In the sickroom, Julia sat with her knitting. Earlier, she had talked but thank God that was over. Nerves had brought on a brightness more shocking than the nurse's cheery indifference. Compulsively she had prattled till Helen's lids descended on tired disappointment. Now she lay with eyes shut, a rubber pipe in her nose. It was too late for explanations. Bewildered, desolate, impotent, Julia watched her sink into sleep.

But how should you act? You could not express your real thoughts; the truth was not for the sick. They must be sheltered and told all was well. Yet for Helen it seemed that would not do. Struggling for breath, with the oxygen tube in her nose she had laboriously said, "It takes a serious situation to stop **me** talking!"; had started a laugh which turned to a bubbly cough. Julia wished . . . she wished . . . she didn't know, but she wished it were possible just to be natural, to say what she felt: **Oh Helen, I love you, I love you. Please don't die. How does it feel to be dying so young? Are you frightened? What can I say to help you?** But of course it was out of the question. People only talked like that in books.

As for the family, saying goodbye . . . the relief of those who found the patient asleep, kissed her quickly, sighed and escaped. In them Julia recognised and hated herself. Others said heartily,

"Well, how **are** you?" "Well, you're a fine one!" or even, "We'll soon have you up and about again!" Then the sick eyes expressed irritation: **I'm an intelligent woman. Why do you assume I've become half-witted just because I'm dying?**; and Julia, stricken, cried silently, "Oh, be natural! Be natural! Say what's in your heart and if you have nothing there, keep quiet!"

At midday the beautiful Clare came, carrying flowers. In her elegant dress she knelt by the bed and touched Helen's cheek.

"Wake up," she said gently. "It's me. I've come to see you."

The patient's eyes opened. She stared, grasped her friend's hand.

"Oh, thank goodness you got here," she said, and Julia understood. **At least there'll be somebody honest here when I die.**

Clare's soft soothing voice was her only concession to death.

"I nearly couldn't get in. All your family are out there, you know, eating sandwiches. Grace has a thermos, my dear. It's just like the cricket."

Gratitude, faint humour flickered behind Helen's eyes.

Oh, how blind you could be! **She just wants to die naturally, as she lived. She doesn't want people to put on acts.**

"I brought some champagne. I suppose you can't eat." Clare stroked Helen's hand. "Is there anyone you'd like to see? Anything I can get you . . . do for you?"

"Rex."

"I'll telephone."

"Come back soon," Helen said.

She smiled wanly at Julia and carefully said, "Don't be frightened. It's nothing." Then her face went blank and she sagged.

"Wait outside," said the nurse.

Down the corridor the family sat. Uncomfortable, nervous, the uncles and cousins were eating their sandwiches. Grace handed round tea. They lacked only rugs and binoculars. Julia hated them all.

They looked up as she came in, noting her pallour.

"Is she . . .? Has she . . .?" No one could utter the word.

"They sent me out. I think she's . . ." Julia turned suddenly. "I'm going back."

Irma stood up, bosomy, kind, sentimental.

"No," she said. "No, dear. Don't go back. **Not now.**"

There was a frightening hint in the motherly voice. Julia moved to shrug off the embrace. She spoke sharply.

"Why not?"

"No, dear. Don't go. You'll be sorry!"

"I'm not frightened!" (**Don't be frightened. It's nothing.**) But it came out too quickly. Irma's maternal wisdom bore down. Julia felt smothered.

"Of course you're not, dear. That's not the point. But it's . . . My dear, I've seen it. **I know.** I advise you—**don't go!**"

The allusion leapt out with its nightmare horror, routing compassion and dawning maturity. Shaken and sick, Julia clung to the shoulder, the comforting arms.

Awed, the family suspended their picnic and sat, tea-cups in hand; then a nurse came hastily down the hall.

"Mrs. Matthews . . . You'd better . . . She's going."

Grace stood up and glanced at her sisters. The moment had given them dignity.

The uncles, shuffled, depressed, ill-at-ease.

Fleetingly, gratefully, Julia enjoyed her honor-

able discharge; then she abruptly rejected the protecting shoulder.

"I must go. I must go!" She hurried after the aunts.

They were all round the bed, but where was Helen? Far away in a dream, pale, young, peaceful, with dark lashes spread and long plaits neatly lying. At the door Julia marvelled. How beautiful; and how young. How **young!**

The tearful aunts filed past. She went forward and stood by the faraway Helen. A curious happiness came, a sense of liberation. The oxygen tube lay unheeded, all paraphernalia discarded for other adventures. Off on her travels again.

"But it isn't . . ." Julia said. "It isn't like that at all. It's beautiful. Beautiful. And I'm not frightened. I'm happy. I'm happy for Helen." And walking away down the passage, "It's nothing. She said it was nothing. Love does cast out fear, after all. How simple it is."

alan marshall's autobiographical trilogy



Alan Marshall O.B.E., by Noel Counihan. Coll. B Hadlow, Esq

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GRASS

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Cheshire

DAVID MARTIN neighbours

They had, let us say, twenty words of English between them, and of these Selma had five. Michael, her father, had worked in Holland for a few months and knew some Dutch phrases, just enough for him and me to make ourselves understood by each other, like two frontier barbarians. We were the only ones living near who could help them fill in a form or write down an address, and so we became friendly with them—the Turkish family.

But it began with Selma. She is about fourteen now, an alert, pretty, vivacious child, and lively as a starling. Her eyes are lovely; large and dark. The others, too, are handsome. Some would say that Fatima, Selma's elder sister, who, like her mother, works in a factory, is a real beauty. She is a soft, full-bosomed, gentle creature, but very shy. Michael, who was once a boxer, has the dark good looks of the true Ottoman type, and when you look at his wife you understand to whom her daughters owe their grace and womanly appeal. The boys, Levent and Turul, are, or were, as nuggety and athletic as they are lithe. Levent is twelve and Turul, had he lived, would today be seven. We used to say that he promised to become the brightest of the clan; a cheeky little devil, but extremely fetching, and happy like a well-fed puppy.

Selma, we noticed, always seemed to be around the house. It was, at that time, the most crowded of the neighbourhood, overflowing with babies and toddlers, only some of whom belonged to a second Turkish family, living at the back. There was, too, a pair of twins, named Melbourne and Victoria. Selma was usually in the small front garden, playing with her charges or rescuing them from the nature strip which, directly outside her abode, was turning into a jungle patch. Perhaps as curious about us as we were about her, her eyes would follow us as we walked by, on the way to the letter-box or the tram.

One evening we went round to find out why she did not go to school. Michael was not exactly pleased that we should ask him, but by and by he told us that Selma's job was to prepare the meals, clean the house and take care of the infants while the others were out, earning a living. Oh, yes, at home, in Adana, she had been a good

scholar. She had finished her primary education, could read and write fluently, even had her certificate, but here, in Australia . . . Someone simply had to stay in. Did he know that it was against the law? Could he not see that she had it in her to do well in almost any calling, that it was a shame to deprive a youngster like that?

He smiled, shrugged his shoulders. Next year, perhaps. But at present it was impossible.

My threat to report him to the truancy officer was only half in earnest, for to do this to a neighbour is not something one undertakes lightly. They had enough problems to cope with, harassed and isolated as they were! Richenda and I discussed it, and finally proposed a temporary solution. She would teach Selma in our own home, an hour or so each day, so that eventually she could take her place in the local High School. Our Turks were pleased to agree to this. As to Levent and Turul, they were already enrolled in their proper grades.

From then on Selma arrived punctually each afternoon, armed with a pen and her exercise book. As I worked in my study I could hear her repeating the names of objects in the kitchen, or of birds and trees in the garden. "This is a spoon. This is one flower, two flowers . . . three flowers?" She was an intelligent pupil and her concentration was good, though at first progress seemed slow. She was happiest when she could combine learning with doing chores, and as she dried the dishes, or showed Richenda how to bake a new kind of cake, she would point at a towel or a bowl and say the words that described them with a sort of eager pleasure. We enjoyed having her about the place. It was rather like acquiring a daughter.

It tickled her to accompany Richenda to the library. There she soon discovered a book about an ancient, legendary compatriot, a wise old village saint famous for his humorous adventures. It was an English translation, and it encouraged her to search for more.

We came to look forward to the hour when she presented herself at our door. "Good afternoon, Mrs. Martin. How are **you**?"

Now and then we would call on her people, or they on us. Conversation was never easy, but Michael is a born mime. I shall long remember

him standing in our sitting room, re-enacting, down to the smallest detail, how he laid out two louts who, in Sydney Road, had been molesting a Greek migrant. The police had collared them all, but it ended with the station sergeant shaking Michael's hand. Of all his household, excepting Selma, he is the one least intimidated by the strangeness of the world they have landed up in. When the women say, as they often do, that they long to go back to Turkey, he replies that Australia suits him.

Sometimes we wonder why. Michael is always in trouble. At work he nearly severs his thumb. His beloved Volkswagen, one week after he takes possession of it, has its bonnet stove in, and Michael is lucky to sustain only minor injuries. (He managed to get a licence when he was up the country, picking fruit. A local woman, taken by his swarthy masculinity, intervened on his behalf with the police.) The intricacies of life here bewilder him so much that he appears helpless, but this is not so. He gets by, even though he cannot tell you the name of the firm that employs him. You have to be careful how you offer help—there is a risk that one may become too deeply involved. He is aware of it too and, though friendly, will not allow himself to grow dependent.

They all loved Turul, their youngest. And not only they . . . he was popular with everybody, including the magpie lady, who resented the racket that at the beginning, came from the Turkish house, where the radio blared Anatolian songs full blast at all hours. Turul, she said, was the only kid her magpie wouldn't peck at. It was hard not to be fond of Turul, who seemed so fond of everyone he met. One of his favorite tricks was to post himself in the middle of the footpath, his little mit outstretched, inviting all passers-by to shake it. (According to his headmaster, he also insisted on this courtesy with all his teachers, who, he was pleased to say, responded cheerfully to this peculiarity of his.) His perfectly oval face bore a perpetual grin. He was a great wanderer, and there was the time when I had to phone the police to find out whether they had sighted him, he having vanished for several hours. They had not, but it did not matter, since a call had just come in from an Australian lady of these parts in whose lounge he was lying peacefully asleep, oblivious to the panic his disappearance had caused.

And so the Turks battled on as best they could. Michael toiled—or drank coffee with his mates. Levent and Turul went to school, and Selma came to us for her lessons. Her sister and her mother were out all day. They made some money, furnished the house and bought a television set. On summer evenings the women and girls could be

seen wearing their traditional baggy trousers; it did not worry them that it made them look outlandish. I observed, nevertheless, that after a while their shoes were no longer left on the verandah, which does not mean that they did not take them off indoors.

One hot Saturday the entire family and their house-sharers packed themselves into two cars and set off for a picnic. We watched them drive away, the girls decked out in new kerchiefs. Turul's little skull had been freshly shaved, which made him look more piratical than ever.

Our first inkling that something bad could be in store came at seven in the evening. We had switched on the news, but only half-way through the bulletin, and did not manage to pick up the whole item. It seemed that a Turkish boy had been nearly drowned somewhere near Melbourne and that, at the Royal Children's Hospital, doctors were now fighting to save his life. Somehow we did not connect the news with Turul. After all, there are hundreds of Turkish boys in this vicinity alone.

Then, towards eleven, we could hear someone crying on our porch. It was Selma. A desperate banging, and there they all were, distraught beyond words. Michael was wringing his hands, his wife was flinging herself into Richenda's arms, weeping hopelessly. Selma was in mine, pouring out her anguish and misery.

"What's the matter, girl?"

"Turul dead. Mr. Martin . . ."

"No, dear, that can't be. He is in hospital. I remember . . . we heard it on the radio."

"He is dead!"

"He is not, Michael, is he?"

He was weeping too. "Dead. Soon. Turul, Turul . . ."

We rang the hospital. He was not dead, but they did not think he would live until the morning. He had been under water for too long, and too much time had passed before he had been taken to where oxygen equipment was available. He had been clinically dead on arrival at the hospital, but they had succeeded in re-stimulating his heart. Now he was unconscious. Dying peacefully, as the nurse said.

We went to our friends' house and tried to convince them that there was still hope. Selma was the most stricken. "Mrs. Martin. My brother, little brother . . ." They called on Allah. I spoke of other miracles, those of science and medicine, but with a hobbled tongue. Michael sat stiffly on a stiff chair, gazing at the floor and sighing. His wife, her yashmak pulled over her face, was rocking to and fro.

At six in the morning we had a call from the hospital. Turul had just died.

When we returned to their house they could read it in our faces. Some things are not meant to be described, but have you ever seen a mother beating her breast? Such wailing and lamentation, such unassuageable grief so openly shown . . . Writhing bodies, screams rending the air. From room to room they walked, utterly beyond comfort.

A little later the parents and I drove down to Flemington, to the hospital. We had to wait an hour before an official turned up, a member of their community, to assist with the formalities. There would be an inquest. The young doctor, an Englishman, was almost unprofessionally moved.

"We had no chance at all. And these poor people—completely cut off. Some of the Turkish cases we get here . . . unbelievable. So sick, they should never have been allowed to embark. Babies almost dehydrated after the flight from Europe; children with malnutrition. Social diseases which have practically been wiped out in Australia. Cruel, cruel, the whole thing."

The administrator confirmed it, but refused to give details.

In the next two days the house of mourning was never empty. On the verandah they stood and sat, men mostly in their work-day clothes, in the garden, occasionally on the kerb. Fatima, pale as alabaster and constantly trembling, was nearing collapse. I found her some sedatives—what else could I do?—and rum for Michael. The bottle went round the room, from man to man. Everywhere children were dozing in corners. The magpie lady arrived with a large bowl of soup.

"All right to collect for some flowers?" another neighbour inquired. "Is it their custom?"

Then the funeral.

A service was held in the makeshift mosque, not far from Bell Street. It was a windy day, no longer hot. The building, used also as a club, is surrounded by a large, bare garden. It was there we assembled. At one end an incinerator and an outdoor lavatory. Brown grass, a few trees. Four or five women sit apart, huddled against a wall. The hearse arrives and the men—there are about thirty altogether—take the coffin out and place it on a trestle table. They form three straggly lines, with the *immam*, the priest, out in front. I am motioned to stand with them.

The *immam*, his face thin and bony under his white, red-topped fez, says a few words. They are translated for me in whispers: he is saying that even in a strange land believers must keep the faith, must be good to each other. The men, still in their ordinary clothes, which are probably the best they have, pray in unison, palms upturned in supplication.

Selma has deliberately moved away from the women, has come close and, leaning on the bonnet

of a car which has entered the ground, is listening intently. But that's Selma; everything that goes on interests her, and no one can keep her back. She is different from the others. She accepts her duties, but she already belongs to this, the new world.

The coffin is carried out to the hearse, each man striving to touch it. In a long caravan we drive across to Fawkner, and if I am sure of anything it is that many of these cars are not registered. At the entrance to the cemetery there is some confusion, but finally we reach the Muslim section, where the grave has been prepared. Michael stumbles along like a blind man, or like one going to his crucifixion.

Again Selma has joined the men, who now lower the coffin into the hole. It proves difficult to slide it in, but at last, with shoving and pushing, it is done. As soon as the ropes are pulled up they set to and fill in the slit, grabbing lumps of earth with their naked hands, or loosening it with their shoes and kicking it down. A little way off Turul's mother, is hunched on the ground. She is groaning as in labor, with Fatima and Richenda keeping her from falling.

The *immam* sits on what remains of the heap of soil, and intones a few more prayers, supported in this by a younger companion. Faster and faster they recite, bodies swaying in rhythm. Levent smooths and pats the earth on his brother's grave. I look up at the sky, at the gum trees which seem to grow taller the fewer there are.

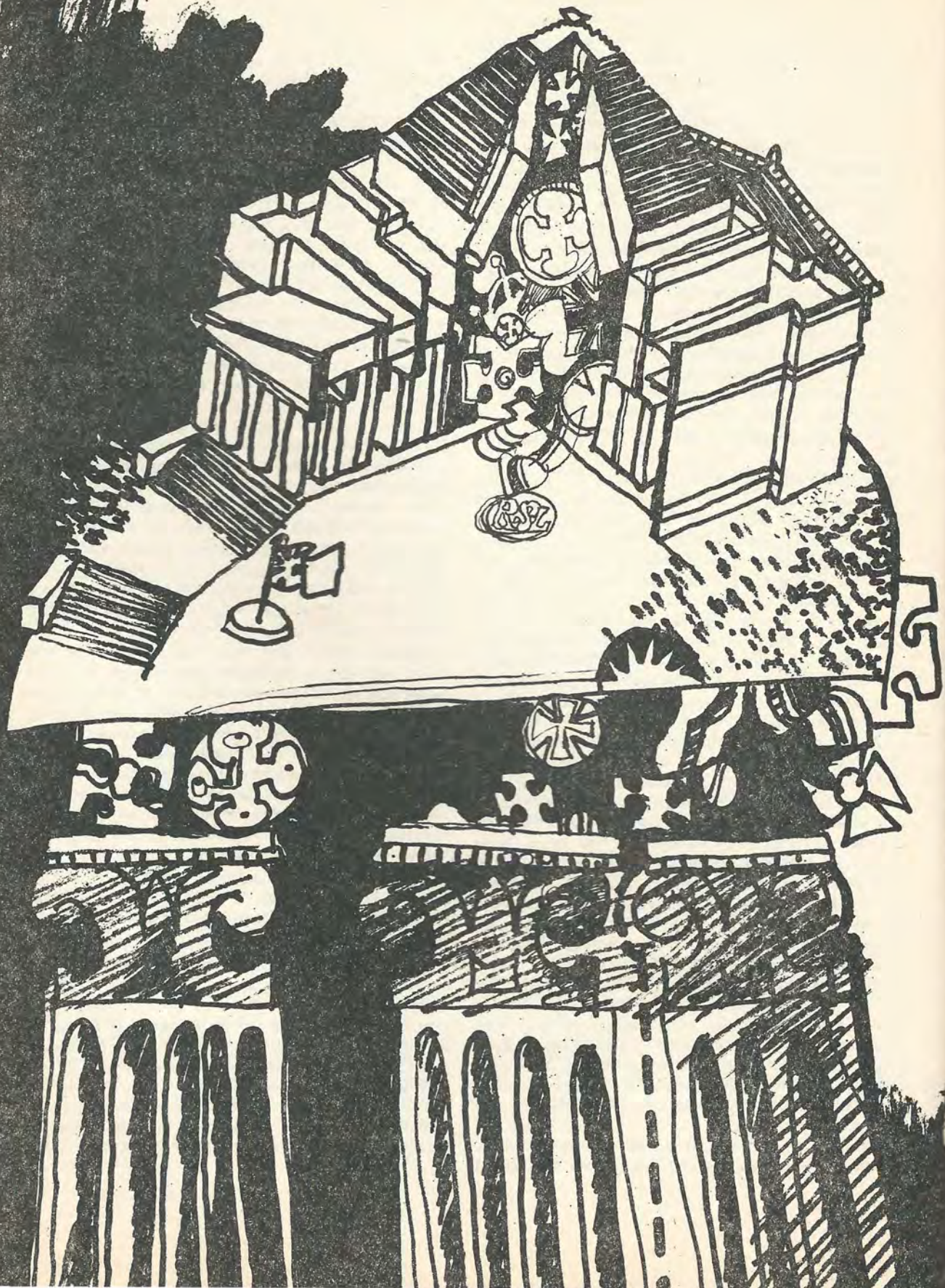
Evening again, and now the wake. We are seated on the floor, sheets are spread, and the women, who will not eat until the men have had their fill, serve plates of rice and lamb's meat. Large chunks of bread wipe up the gravy. Toddlers walk in and out, goggling at us. The half dozen words of Turkish I have collected over the months are of little use to me. When we feel that the time has come for them to be left alone, we shake hands all round. They are workers' hands, each and every one.

A week later, Michael and his brood come to pay us a visit. Selma is smiling her best smile. "Mrs. Martin, Mr. Martin . . . for you." She hands over a big box done up as a parcel.

We open it, their present, and out comes a mantelpiece clock, made in Japan. One of those shiny, gilded things that can play a tune. The ornamental surrounds are in the shape of a chariot drawn by two rearing horses with streaming manes, a chariot without a charioteer.

"For Turul," she says.

The clock did not go for long, but it still plays its tinkly music. "Around the World in 80 Days". When we have guests they stare at it, wondering how it got there.



NOEL
MACAINSH **memorials**

Drawing by Les Kossatz

I

A letter from Alan
20 yrs old
soon to be called
for National Service.
In his town, he writes
there are four memorials:
 Queen Victoria
 The Unknown Soldier
 King George V
 A Cenotaph
It's a pity he tells
nothing about himself
He does
He tells about himself.

II

Descending on the skull
of the young man in the park
the shaft of stone settles
eyes spread
jaw breaks
neck grows thicker
feet sink
chest bursts into fragments
the base of the stone
drives him into the ground
the names of young men are
engraved on its side

III

"THEIR NAMES SHALL LIVE FOR EVER MORE"

...
Jones B. J.
Jones C. K.
Jones C. L.
Jones C. M.
Jones D. A.
Jones D. B.
Jones D. C.
Jones D. D.
Jones D. E.

... etc.

Letters of the Artist

The years and fame are between
as deep in the quiet night
I read what you wrote to her.
It seemed a trick of the light,
a changing light, a sunlight,
and your voice then to her:

"We walked here.
Remember.
Somewhere near
the creek began to run,
its scent like your caress
warm in the sun.
Somewhere here the bush began.
The leaves close to us,
only the birds
saw us walking,
only the creek
ran with us,
only the bush, warm,
caressing, knew our caress.

The sunlight
on the creek shines on me,
your scent touches me,
and the years of parting
part the years for me."

The light fades and the sunlight.
The years and fame are between.
That voice with its lover's poise,
that warm murmuring,
I hear late in the night
changed to a public noise.

Headland

All day by the wordless sea
words have noted and named
man's world: fragile vocabulary
outlining our lopsided, tamed,
mind-stoned, mankind mimicry.

Take the sentence from the stone
the proper noun from the sea
translate the white sea-eagle's bone,
the piled, the stubborn sandstone imagery.
Wordless, walk this ancient poetry.

Turn back, translator, from this song
man hears but does not hear.
Rephrase the sandstone. Tear along
the dotted horizon line. There will appear
words you know, man to man and clear.
Then, wordless, give the Bronze-wing back to the air.

BARRIE REID

T.V. Riots (vintage 68)

the world is watching,
but quickly forgetting
what once it thought
important.

love is not what
drives the bullet
suicides the bomb,
you cannot argue
energy/force
it is
therefore it is.

instant replay
will not maintain
a memory
of screaming shouting clubbing
gas tears & chemicals
that glide in the air
like predatory birds.

you give the impression
of field mice
waiting to be slain
woken unexpectedly
at harvesting time
too late.

force is equal to itself
— the only law.

x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x

& the experts say
the age of infantry
is dead

but doves unzip their wings
& begin to walk

Plague

the packet is empty,
but i have yet
to ride down marlboro hill
to the sea
where music is in waves
loud and soft
with voices.

my mouth is a miracle
sometimes
that lets out words
balloons
that float about
waiting to be caught
& called down.

& in the evening
sometime
between the sun
& the pavements of neon
birds fly out of my eyes,
fluttering awhile,
searching for nets

PETER HARNEY

Autumn 1972

J.V. White
(88 3961016)

four poems

PETER STANSFIELD

Big Pink

Hold me hardest where it gets you
Most, Lover; you and I, we are
Off for a pleasure trip on a
Most be-you-ti-full big pink ship.

With a whipping white crew and the
Captain painted an upright blue,
We're casting off, you and I, in
Our be-you-ti-full she-shaped boat.

South from the head, hard by the horn,
You and I, we're sailing away
To soft hairy islands floating
On oceans and oceans.

Of be-you-ti-full pink. So hold
Me hardest where it gets you
Most, Lover: we're off on a trip and
Perhaps it might last forever.

Love to a Lady Aircraft Carrier

Eyes bruised as lanterns
Looking out of caverns
Vacantly but afraid
As the next lover planes
Down on the fleet of your
Accommodating smile . . .
I limp across your decks
Like a bird even more
Wounded while you're busy
Flagging down another
Just in case I'll leave you
With eyes bruised as lanterns
Looking out of caverns
Across the fleet of your
Accommodating smile.

Why I Try

I am ugly as I grow old.
Now that I cannot affect youth's
Green stint, I find I'm as ugly
As a terminal disease on
A patient clean bed: my mouth
Suppurating like a sore from
Hell and my eyes rimmed red with it,
Stop me up in every small
Pore from the fresh morning of things.
And now I've no new days to be
Alive in . . .

No, but I can still
Remember the first time we kissed
And the first time you hung frightened
On the edge of everything,
Hoping my lips were stepping stones
To some kind of centre you wanted
To be in . . .

And that's why I try.

Dolly Blue

Old singlets, frayed girdles,
A scarecrow of tattered
Underwear on a wet day
Drying inside, they seem
To decay like petals
Dropping from the flowers
Of a dead love affair.

And yet sometimes I can . . .
As we lie down on these
Rags of marriage, I still
Can find sometimes the shy
Fragrance of first loving
Has lingered to sweeten
This pungent autumn bed.

The Australian Natives on the Maroondah Highway

The Australian natives on the Maroondah Highway
have a hard time of it,
officially bound to rectangular posts.

Tiny tender shoots,
where is your Shell Stamina?
Stand up, stand up
to those big Kenworth freighters
as they invade
the vast suburban hinterland
of Dormobile Trailerparks,
Granny's Icecream Parlours
and lonesome women
in drycleaning depots.

Hold on, Australian natives,
hold on,
the nature strip is yours;
your fragile limbs have
20 years
of the Going Thing
before they get
the axe.

It was the Fireplaces they had gone for first

It was the fireplaces they had gone for first:
no more warming the toes
and poking hot coals on dark windy evenings;
but black, gaping obscenities,
huge (once loving) eyes
blinded by crowbars and meat axes
swung casually
and quite
at random.

Not even a child's ghost
drifting through
the sad, immobile walls:
glass, domestic bodywork,
splinters,
and a small sign
stuck to the kitchen plaster
saying:
DO NOT COUNT.

JOHN HOOKER

Passing through Experiences

I lived on drugs and understood the pushers
As the crackup came on
There was nobody to blame and I confessed for hours
Until the police were in tears

The prison had a few prophets but they
Understood themselves
During the night the lucky ones burnt their tobacco
Each morning I feigned silence

The experience of prison remained behind bars
I dwelt on the idea of freedom
And folding "The Prince" away when afternoon appeared
Went after pain

The ideas crowded around like pushers
And fed on my doings
I discovered thought as powerful as cocaine in winter
As a screw off duty I tapped my foot

All the experience pointed to Saint Theresa
"The Prince" reassured me
I escaped from the books but the names kept coming up
Pain alone said nothing great

I ask her **why you know it all though say nothing**
Believe me pain replies you don't falter
You move

ROBERT ADAMSON

Picasso's Girl with Dove

The girl in the blue dress with the dove in her arms
is standing forever in the curve of the hall.
Nobody notices her there:
she has merged into the curtain's shadow,
or the strange blue light that comes
from the pine tree outside the open window.
But I am always conscious of her,
her cropped head bent tenderly over the dove,
her milky eyes fixed on me with gentle accusation.

DOROTHY HEWETT

Two Poems

A little girl whom I know vaguely
used to wave as she passed
and pick the white daffodils that stood like trees
about my solitary life

Old birds cry to lonely desire
wheeling across deep and mindless stars of heaven
and loveless winds

A silent wind scatters the leaves
Powerful men walk nimbly in this room
of threadbare grief and knowledge.

Contemplate

Men look down saying to us
(my love and I): this is eternity,
now be silent in pure love
there are pilgrims too wanting to speak.

Shapes of green leaves in windows,
patterns of the heart, spirit abounding.
These women are wonderful
these students are lovers.

And silence looks at
my face and at my unknowing tears
which hold flowers of hope, masturbating sadness,
and grandfather's shirt smelling highly of wine.

Pricked scars and tempestuous incisions
friends live a thousand miles away
destined, anyway, to return drunk and dreaming
faltering somewhat closer to paradise.

JULIAN DEANE-JOHN

The World is Explored

I used to have all over my kitchen walls
 naval survey maps of
 The Gulf of Bothnia, the Talinn Roads,
 The Kattegat and Rodriguez Island—
 very handsome wallpaper
by which my predecessor showed prescience
 of decorative fashion.
It must seem like this in Heaven
where every aberration has its fathom marked:
 when I sail round my mind I know
 I'm a little landlocked
bay—the shoals are welcome and the tug of tide
 is like an old acquaintance;
 but as my pilot Emily would say
the horror of simply foundering in regatta waters
 is no less dreadful than
 the overwhelming steeps of ocean.
 Chat, chat, go the oystercatchers,
 he was a dear friend says the pummice—
outward bound, the liner and the cable layer and the trawler
 agree on the important sea.
I am washed to the bank of madness, I am derelict.
Those are piers that were his eyes. Adjust your charts,
 mark there a little wreck in red.

PETER PORTER

Shasta Daisy

white face of morning
with bright pollen in its mouth.
i pluckt it on my way to the station
st kilda to melbourne
by daisychain.
got out in melbourne
bought an oakleigh ticket to see my girl
drank a large pineapple for breakfast
read about hell's angels with glee—
 TRAIN
 jumped on
clinging to
 shasta daisy—
alighted delighted from the train
gave my girl a big frontdoor kiss, handed her—
 ! MY OAKLEIGH TICKET !
my god
some confused railways boy is goofing off with my
 shasta daisy!
 "she loves me
 she loves me not
 she loves . . ."

ANDREW BURKE

Autumn 1972

The Teacher

The teacher with his watering-can
of formulae and words
of theories, theorems, epigrammes,
hypotheses and surds,
with cunning, wisdom, wit and stealth
pretends to rear the perfect man
exactly like himself.

But what he's really looking for
are funnels stuck in ears
down which he hopefully may pour
(to boost his ego, calm his fears)
his facts and figures, data, dates,
the knowledge he anticipates
will cancel all arrears.

FRANK KELLAWAY

Advice to Myself

If you have no place to wear your heart
except upon your sleeve,
then wear it well with ribaldry and art,
play loose with makebelieve.

This model isn't one to break
in clashes on the street;
it's the toughest plastic that men make
proofed against cold and heat.

Don't be alarmed by its infernal knock,
these never shake apart;
get with the swingers playing solid rock—
the up-beat
in-beat
down-beat
out-beat

of the poet's heart.

FRANK KELLAWAY

Kinda to Apollinaire

gods gardens
mythsfit fig
leaves
leave
an eden of sur
reality

in my adam
imagination

/
freud

sd.
motherscrewing
is the in
thing
he made sex fiends
of all rousseaus
nacheral guys

/
jung

sd.
man
is the peripheral phony
only
the dream
is the symbol
of the unconscious
flesh sandwich
reality
(but i really dig you
apollinaire

/
i can't scrape

the marrow
from the bones of the matter
like chagall
i fiddle my cow
and have my own roof
to dance upon

(but i really dig you
apollinaire

MAL MORGAN

Weathercocks

(Beneath a bronze weathervane)

Beneath the pinions of the swan
we sat, and let our bodies turn
against a wintry sky and wan,
a convex touch to melt, to burn.

Beneath the bird, north south and east,
or westering in a sudden squall,
two Ledas all that winter sat,
a twinned and female principle;
a cold beak nuzzling at our napes,
a talon probing at our will,
gripped fast beneath the darkening beast,
before the giddy fall . . .

and still the swan whirls in my head,
a paradox that cannot fly,
and staked upon our marriage bed,
two naked weathercocks we lie.

DOROTHY HEWETT

Investiture of Prefects or Faces For a Life-style

In the garrulous-asphalt-yard
another New Year breathes.

Each voice alerts old pledges.

Parents smile most
as Chosen Ones are clapped.

Ceremony wrings tight ritual
but Air's a heavy quilt.

Finally

Led Ones exit—

(no cues for mass-poetics.)

More hierarchies settling.

KATHERINE GALLAGHER

Until Red shall be the Color

we gnaw at love
i tell you we
have jaws of innocence

we know our opposites
too well
they will never
blend

/

oh
love then tear at our love
if there is to be blood
let it flow
freely

/

until red shall be the color
of my loves eyes

MAL MORGAN

Autumn 1972

IAN MUDIE

everyone would know

The old chap, from whom I had gathered that he had no use for new-fangled ideas, put down the scoop with which he had been tipping sugar into brown-paper bags. Spreading one veined and wrinkled hand on the counter, which was almost white from years of scrubbing, and lifting his other hand to his forehead to brush away a wisp of white hair, he looked towards the two oblongs of sunlight that fell on the uneven boards of the floor through the panes in the door of the shop.

He gave me a bit of a smile. "Looks like another customer."

We watched a tall chap, with that sort of swaggering look I'd noticed before on men from the country, come in from the glare outside. As he opened the door, the bell above it gave a sharp ping. When he had shut it behind him the fly-marked sheet of cardboard, roughly lettered **back in half an hour**, which was turned inward towards the shop, swung to and fro on its inverted vee of string.

"Day, Les," the old shopkeeper greeted him.

"Day, Charley." As the newcomer pushed his dusty, sweat-stained hat towards the back of his head I noticed he had a bleached-looking inch or so of skin below his hairline. He looked at me. "Day."

"How do you do!" I said.

"What brings you in, Les?" Charley asked him. "Tomorrow's your day. Haven't lost the calendar I give you last Christmas, have you?"

Les picked up the round-backed chair with the cane seat. When he had turned it back-to-front and sat down astride it, he said:

"Well, like Doris told you when she rang last week's order, I decided to go slow on the smokes. She's been at me for months—what with all the talk on the wireless and everything—so I says 'Well, then, cut the order in half.'"

"And you didn't make it . . . hey, Les?"

Les grinned. "Lasted till last night. When I ran out of weed I even re-rolled some old butts. Tried to last till tomorrow. But this morning I started to get real snitchetty with myself. Cutting top feed's no easy yakker, even if you've got a smoke."

The old boy nodded. "I bet!" He paused. "Long way to come for one. Horseback, too—these days." As he spoke I realised the purpose of the rail just beyond the warped boards of the store verandah; I recalled that there had still been a few like it in the outer suburbs of the city when I was a boy.

Les pushed the toes of his elastic-sided boots against the foot of the front of the counter. Then he tilted the chair on its back legs. "Yeah—quite a way. Didn't start out for here in the first place, though. Rode the bay up the back paddock, where I was cutting. When I found I couldn't last I came as far as Perce's for a start, to borrow some weed off him. But there was no one home, not even the dogs. So what with Stoeckel and Gregory having sworn off it—though you might say Stoeck's missus swore off it for him—this was the nearest. Bit of a rest, anyway, riding in here."

Charley took a two-ounce tin and a packet of cigarette-papers from the crowded shelf just above his shoulder-level. He didn't ask Les what kind he wanted; I don't suppose he needed to.

As Les reached out his hand the chair hit the bare boards with a thump. He winked, at nobody in particular. "Will this be good!"

While he opened the tin and rolled himself a cigarette he rested his arms on the back of the chair. No one spoke. In the silence, a crow cawed somewhere in the distance. Then a blow-fly came rocketting out of the smell of saddles, kerosene, and something I thought might be superphosphate, at the back of the shop. While it butted the dusty glass of the store-window, Charley and I watched Les's fingers.

When Les had struck a match, Charley said: "No wonder you didn't find Perce home. Heard his truck go through just before breakfast. Would have been a few minutes either side of half-past six. He'd be taking his missus down to the city with the lad. Something about his eyes."

"Yes, of course," Les said. "I was thinking that wasn't till tomorrow." He watched a cloud of tobacco-smoke drift up among the tin kettles and the saucepans, the hurricane-lanterns, the water-bags, the billies, and the other things that hung from hooks in the ceiling. "He wouldn't be back till at least midnight."

"Round then, or later. I won't hear him." Charley looked at Les over his glasses. "What you think of Larry's missus?"

"Not bad at it, is she, Charley! That makes four boys in a row. Ought to help with the football-team later on."

Charley chuckled. "Doc Crowder was through yesterday afternoon, right after the mail-truck. Monthly visit to Granny O'Donnell. Reckons she'll see the hundred all right. Told me what Larry said when he heard how much the kid weighed."

"Bet it was good, coming from Larry."

"Not bad." Charley looked at me, then at Les. "Well, Doc says to him, 'Larry, I'm afraid he only weighs five-and-a-half pounds'. And what does Larry say! He says 'Only! Cripes, Doc, a season like this a man's lucky to get his seed back'."

Les's cigarette was shortening rapidly. "Not bad. It's an oldie; but not bad all the same. Trust the old Larry."

"Yes; trust the old Larry."

There was a silence. Although I felt they had almost forgotten I was there, I somehow regretted that my glass was nearly empty.

Then Charley said, "Wet your whistle, Les?"

Les hesitated. "Well . . ."

Charley again looked over his spectacles. "On the house . . ."

Les stubbed his smoke in the big white ashtray—which carried an advertisement for some brand of whisky I seemed to remember having heard mentioned when I was a boy—that stood on the counter. "Ta," he said.

Charley turned to me. "Drink up. You better join us. Got a few miles to go yet, remember. Do another bottle, couldn't you?"

"Thanks very much," I said. "I don't mind if I do."

"Where you making?" Les asked me.

Charley didn't give me a chance to answer. "The mine," he said. "They been having some trouble with the new plant. This bloke's an engineer. Stopped for juice." Again he chuckled. "Couldn't make out why I didn't have one of those electrical petrol-pumps, could you?"

Although their grins seemed friendly, I felt myself blush at this reporting of my ignorance. "I imagined everyone had mains-electricity nowadays," I said.

"We don't do too bad," Charley said, without, as far as I could see, much point. "We don't do too bad round here, despite the Government."

"We do all right," Les said, "but they do better. Heard on the news where some of the Government ministers moved to a new building—some flash glass box. Couldn't take their old office-furniture with them. Had to have new stuff."

Charley cackled. "What you grizzling about? You usually get yourself a new car at least every other year."

"Not this time," Les said. "Not this flaming time; that's for sure."

Charley took two more glasses from where they had been standing upside down on a shelf. When he had opened three lukewarm bottles of orange-ade he handed one each to Les and me. As I refilled my glass I realised that this was a service plenty of the smaller delicatessens in the city didn't give. Not even thick glasses like these. Better than sucking it through a straw or out of the top of a bottle. And I hadn't seen glasses of this type for years; not since we persuaded my mother to sell up the old house and move into a modern senior-citizen unit. I'd have to tell Marianna about it when I got home in a couple of days. She probably wouldn't be interested; but I'd tell her all the same.

I looked at the others. "Your very good health!"

Charley lifted his glass. "Mud in your eye!"

Les did the same. "The real stuff, too."

"Real stuff?" I said.

"Yes." He laughed. "Read mud, hey, Charley? Real mud."

Charley wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "I'll say!" He put his glass on the counter. "How about dropping a letter in at Stoeck's on your way, Les? Typewritten, but it doesn't look like a bill—otherwise it could wait till tomorrow, when Bill goes out your way with the truck."

Les now had the chair balanced on its front legs. "Sure; I'll take it. Have to see Stoeck some time, anyway. About letting a few wethers in on that top dam of his. Our fences meet a couple of chains south of the fork tree."

"I'll get it." Charley looked thoughtful. "It's addressed to Alice."

Les gave a wry grin. "She wouldn't be getting anything on mail-order at present. Not if she could help it."

"No," Charley agreed, "she certainly wouldn't. It's probably from that sister of hers that married the pubkeeper. She uses a typewriter. She's always writing. They've almost talked Stoeck into

selling up for what he can get, and taking a job down there."

He took another swig of orangeade. Then he went into the part of the store, closed off with wire-netting, that was labelled **Post Office**.

Les turned to me. "How's things down in the city?"

"Good," I told him. "Retail sales are up; stock-exchange is booming; and the latest figures show that the H.P. debt is higher than ever. A good sign that; indicates real prosperity."

"Hire purchase! **Never-never system**, my old man called it." Again the chair-legs thumped to the floor. "Had much rain?"

"Come to think of it," I said, "I don't think we have. I've an idea it's well below average."

Les swung his glass in small horizontal circles. "Doesn't sound as if you've started carting water yet."

Just then Charley rejoined us. He handed Les a letter. "Pity it isn't from the lottery."

Les took the letter. Without looking at it, he folded it and put it in the breast-pocket of his shirt. "Wish it could be, for Stoeck's sake. His missus and kids, too."

After he had buttoned his pocket he rolled himself another cigarette. As he lit it he nodded towards me. Then he grinned at Charley. "Seems they're a bit short of rain down in the city. Not carting water yet, though."

Once more Charley looked over his glasses. "Don't say! And don't suppose they've had to cut down the number of salesmen they're carrying to the acre . . ."

Les chuckled. "No; nor politicians, neither. As for cutting top-feed, they won't even have started thinking about it." He paused. "Where do you reckon they'd begin? Government House gardens?"

Charley poked a finger under his glasses to wipe a tear of mirth from the corner of one eye. "You know, Les, at times you're almost as good as Larry."

Les gave a self-disparaging grimace. "Go on with you!" He stood up. "Talking about top-feed, I'd better get back to serving those poor bloody merinos their dinner."

"Well, Les," Charley said, "been good to see you. Made a bit of a break. See you at the hop Saturday night?"

Les moved towards the door. "Couldn't keep Doris away unless she broke a leg, or was in hospital having another. Reckons dancing's her only entertainment apart from 'Blue Hills' and the party-line. Besides, it's her turn on the suppers."

"What about the weed and the papers?" Charley asked him. "Take them off the order?"

"No; let it ride. Add them on."

Charley nodded. "Right you are, Les."

"See you," Les said.

"See you," Charley and I answered, almost together.

As Les went out, the doorbell jangled. Charley, putting a fresh paper-bag on the scales, again dug his scroop into the sugar.

I drained the last of my orangeade. "Drought round here, is there?"

"Sort of."

"I thought things looked pretty dry."

Charley slowly pencilled "Doz. Sug." on the side of the bag. Then he lined it up with the others. "Been worse," he said. "Though not much."

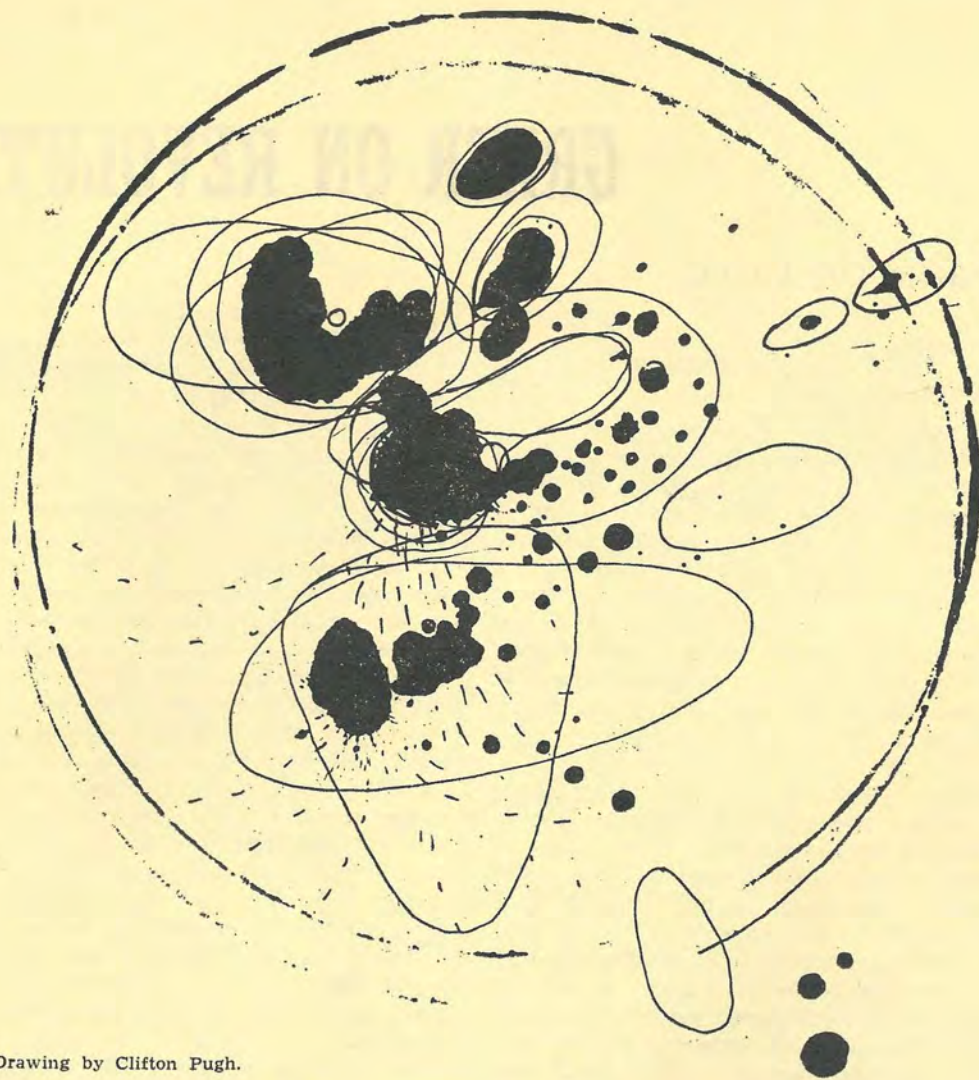
"See you later," I said.

"Yes; see you later."

As the doorbell clanged behind me I looked back. He had begun tipping sugar into yet another bag. Still wondering why he preferred going to that trouble rather than buying it already packaged, I went across to where I had left the car in the thin shade of the single pepper-tree. From there I looked up the bare road that branched off the narrow bitumen at right angles. A dog trotted beside the trail of dust that drifted back from the hoofs of Les's horse. Nothing else moved.

I slipped the key into the ignition. Apart from the store and an old schoolhouse, which looked as if it had been closed for years, there was only one building in sight. Several of the sugar-gums round it were dead. Once whitewashed, it bore the words **Soldiers Memorial Hall 1921**. A length of guttering near one corner trailed wearily towards the ground. A board outside the front doors was faintly headed **Pictures Wednesday**. Garish posters, pasted crookedly on it, announced two films I had an idea I had seen advertised in the city some years before. There didn't seem to be any notice about Saturday night's dance . . .

Then it struck me. There wouldn't need to be. Everyone would know about it. Especially if they called at Charley's store.



Drawing by Clifton Pugh.

Clifton

JUDITH WRIGHT **alive**

Light; and water. One drop.
Under the microscope
an outline. Slight
as a rim of glass;
barely and sparsely there,
a scarcely-occupied shape.

What's more, the thing's alive.
How do I recognise
in a fleck so small
no human term applies—
no word's so minimal—
life's squirming throb and wave?

Locked in the focused stare
of the lens, my sight
flinches: a tiny kick.
The life in me replies
signalling back
"you there, I here".
What matters isn't size.

What matters is . . . form. Form
concentrated, exact,
proof of a theorem
whose lines are lines of force
marking a limit. Trim,
somehow matter-of-fact,
even matter-of-course;
but alive. Like my eyes. Alive.

GREER ON REVOLUTION

Germaine on Love

A discussion between
Germaine Greer, Ian Turner
and Chris Hector recorded in
Melbourne, February 1972.

IAN Germaine, it has usually been assumed by people who've talked about Australian cultural and intellectual life that there are two quite distinct styles of life—one Sydney, Andersonian, libertarian, not especially politically oriented, or politically cynical; the other Melbourne, the Protestant ethic, socialist oriented, do-gooding, more actively involved in politics. Does it look to you that that is a valid distinction between the styles of Melbourne and Sydney now that you're back after eight years away?

GERMAINE Well, it certainly must have been true when I was here before, because I ran away to Sydney because of this. I got tired of the incessant argumentum ad hominem that was the only kind of argument one could have in the Melbourne "drift". I had been taken up by the Melbourne intelligentsia, but it wasn't particularly socialist; I mean, David Armstrong was a vociferous member, and if David Armstrong was a socialist then I'm a tortoise. It seemed to me to be conspicuously apolitical, and to be full of bullshit specially about the value of art and the incapacity of the average human being to protect artistic values. There was a sort of anti-censorship attitude, but it was firmly convinced that literary merit was the thing with which to confront censorship. I don't ever recall anybody arguing that censorship was wrong in any form, that the less elegantly expressed art forms of the working class or the illiterate or the poor should have equal representation to the art forms of the Eltham inhabitants. I got very tired of that because I was very much a rationalist and very much atheistic and not given to romanticism. I ran away to Sydney because it was about the only place that I thought some reasonable criticism of life was being offered, where these spurious oceans of special privilege for special classes of people were just not contemplated.

I am much more political now than I was then—I'm an anarchist still, but I'd say now I am an

anarchist communist which I wasn't then—and since I've come back I've done things like go to a meeting of . . . I can never remember all the different warring initials . . . I expected it to be a public meeting of 500 or 600 people talking about strategies for adoption in highly developed capitalist countries. In fact it consisted of about forty people, many of who kept walking in and out of the room and were obviously not paying much attention to the discourse. We were being addressed by some man who was taking an extremely optimistic line about reformist action leading to commitment to a revolutionary programme, which I think cannot be argued. Anti-apartheid movements have not necessarily got any connection with socialism unless the radicalisation of people in them is taken up quite conscientiously by the people who are working in the movement. But there too the argument was ad hominem, factional argument. I was very distressed by this.

The libertarians may have a good deal of intellectual prestige in Sydney, but seeing that they speak in self-evident truths and tautologies most of the time it's not difficult for them to get intellectual recognition. What disappoints me most about all the radical groups in Australia is that they have not yet managed to make the Marxist dialogue a part of the cultural life of the country as a whole, which it is say for example in India—it's something you expect to see discussed in the daily papers. Here it's still going on in groups of forty or fifty people meeting in Surry Hills or Footscray or somewhere.

IAN But is it part of the general cultural dialogue of any advanced nation, or is it a minority factional argument in all of them?

GERMAINE I don't know. Socialism is understood as an ideology in England, although it would be quite false to say that it was discussed in a poised or confident way in the columns of the daily press. India is special in this regard,



but I think in other Asian nations, and certainly in Italy and France, the Marxist dialogue is understood. It is publicly conducted and isn't outlawed a priori before Marxists have even made a single criticism of the status quo. The interesting thing to me, speaking in terms of culture, is that Marxism has been incorporated as one of the basic philosophies of the 20th century. It's at least as important as Freudianism or Wittgensteinianism. But I don't think this is true in Australia at all.

It may be in the universities, but universities themselves occupy such a curious position in Australia. I mean, there is almost no class more loathed than the class of students, of educated larrikirs, and therefore by association their long-haired bearded gurus who are giving them the means for subversion.

IAN Is it conceivable though that the dialogue of Marxism, of the class struggle, of revolution can become part of a general culture in a society as prosperous as Australia, where there is no overall political awareness, consciousness, depth of political feeling at a mass level? How can Marxism be anything else but a battle-ground for the minority factions?

GERMAINE Well, you see, I wouldn't put it down to affluence, this failure to take proper cognizance of the most important ideology of the 20th century. If you look at India, the apologists of Marxism are not the poor, who've never heard of it, they are the Indian middle-class intellectuals, and the same thing goes for Pakistan. The millionaire socialist is not a rare phenomenon in the sub-continent. Tariq Ali comes from a well-established, rich, cultured, socialist family, and this may in some way compromise his Marxism; except that, as a Marxist, he can see perfectly well why redistributing his family's wealth among the poor will not make a blind bit of difference. It's much more important to radicalise the working class than to conduct a sort of Jesus campaign giving away your riches and climbing through the eye of a needle.

IAN But nevertheless they are talking in a society in which, whether or not the mass of Indian workers or peasants are aware of the subtleties of Marxist dialogue, they at least provide a social climate which makes revolutionary dialogue meaningful. Is revolutionary dialogue meaningful in Australia in your terms?

GERMAINE Look, I wouldn't take that, because the population in India is mostly peasant, and I think Engels' pronouncements about peasants

are fairly exact. They are interested in land ownership; they're greedy, security-oriented, and it seems to me that one of the most important facts about Maoism is that it was able to develop a version of communism which appealed to the peasant mentality. Mind you, it also communicated with a peasantry who were more than usually deprived even for peasantry.

In Australia I think the problem is not that we have affluence but that we are brainwashed by an image of affluence, which doesn't really reflect the conditions of life of the majority of the people. Women and pensioners outnumber skilled laborers, for example, and yet all pensioners and many women live below the poverty level. They earn an income which cannot enable them to live a dignified human life. You might even argue that workers' wages are not sufficient to support a family, that the phenomenon of the two-income family is something which Australia has had to contemplate. The fact that one in three married women of child-bearing age is at work says something about the adequacy of the average Australian wage when confronted with the cost of living.

What is much more insidious is that the Australian worker has accepted an image of affluence which does not actually apply to his way of life, but which he thinks will apply if he obeys the rules. So he's in a double bind. He is not so affluent that he can play ducks and drakes with his job—this is evident because strikes are easily broken in this country. So his affluence is largely bullshit. Yet he even has a moralistic attitude towards the poor, the losers on the scale of values. He has fallen for the big confidence trick that under capitalism we can all get rich, which is not really true and has never been true, because capitalism is the most unstable economic existence for the workers.

IAN Yes, but when I speak of affluence I think of Australian society in comparison with, say, British or American society, comparable cultures and economies. It seems to me that the general spread of wealth through this community represents a higher level of material standards than either the U.K. or the U.S. So I would press the argument that it's just because of this that revolutionary dialogue is a matter of minority groups.

GERMAINE Yes; but there is another problem, that when your working class is involved in a struggle for survival they have very little energy left for political struggle. The most militant unions, from my observation at any rate, are the richest, not the poorest. The poorest unions

are often the ones made up largely of women, the reactionary, inert unions. The Waterside Workers' Federation is a militant union, but comparative to the rest of Australian labour the wharfies are very well paid. This is interesting because I would argue that you don't get militancy and concern with politics and ideology until the immediate anxiety about surviving from day to day has been relieved. So I don't think the argument about affluence is the one to make, because the affluence itself is spurious, and extreme poverty is also a way of incapacitating the masses, as happens in India.

This may seem very cynical and very strange for you to take, but I think it's much more a matter of the media, of the means of day-to-day public education. There is absolutely no question in my mind that in Australia these are controlled in the most cynical and devastating way, that working-class culture is produced on the lowest possible level with tits and arse on every page, with editorials by reactionaries which are expressed in hard-hitting, corny, pseudo-working-class language. I really think that the problem is much more that the Australian working class is being systematically miseducated into not understanding its own aims, its own interests.

IAN Well, it's quite apparent that the mass of the Australian labour movement works on the assumption that a revolutionary situation does not exist in Australia at this time and is not likely to exist in the immediate future. Do you challenge that assumption? What do you see as a meaningful radical strategy?

GERMAINE I think that is true. But it's also true that a revolutionary situation does not exist in India, for the opposite reason, that people are too poor. In Australia it seems to me quite clear that the notion of revolution to most workers implies more losses than it does gains. This is partly because of the wealth of propaganda about Russia which they are fed with, as if Russia were somehow synonymous with revolution, which neither you nor I would believe. In Australia there is probably less information than anywhere else in the world about Chinese Communism, Cuban Communism, Chile and all the other places where people are experimenting with new ways of administrating social justice, some relatively reformist like Chile, some pseudo-revolutionary like Cuba, others genuinely mysterious like China. This is one of the penalties one pays for the absence of an open, reverberant Marxist dialogue. The word "communist" for Australians doesn't mean ownership of the means of production being

in the hands of the people, it means OGPU and KGB and totalitarianism, that big, terrifying word. I'd put it down really to that.

This isn't a strictly Marxist viewpoint that I'm taking, because I would have to argue that ideology comes after economic factors. But I think that Marx never had anything in mind like the mass media. He couldn't have foreseen and he didn't foresee them. The power of television, which brainwashes the people night after weary night, is something which he had no way of reckoning with but which we must absolutely reckon with.

I would be much happier, for example, about Australia if there was, as there is in America, a free network alongside all the commercial networks. The way it works in the U.S. is that people get so sick of Dr. Kildare and the Saint and so on that eventually they turn on to Channel K or Z or whatever, just because they want to hear a discussion about a real issue. It may happen here eventually. The only reason that I allow myself to be soiled by constant contact with the media is because I really have great respect for their power. It is something quite unimaginable.

IAN If I try to talk in terms of a relevant strategy for Australian socialists at the present time, I say that the only sensible strategy for relatively rapid social change is one which accepts that reformist kinds of activities are the only ones that are really possible at the macro-political level, and therefore we must go for them; but also that things are changing at a base level, at a cultural level, that the challenge of the counter culture is finally what is going to produce the decisive change in society; and that it's a combination of these two elements which seems to me to be the best available way of producing change. Is that a strategy that you would accept?

GERMAINE Yes, but I would agree on other grounds. I think the justification of reformist policies is that they just might have the unlooked-for effect of freeing more people for genuinely revolutionary activity. I don't really feel very uplifted at the thought of government-subsidised day care, because I've seen too much of government-subsidised schooling and it makes me vomit. I taught in N.S.W. state schools for two years and I really spent most of that time in a state of acute depression because of the extraordinary perversion of education I saw being enacted. You give them even more power when you give them the day care of our infants. But on the other hand you free so many women for other activities. I'm only interested in reformism in so far as it gives us more armaments to use for revolution.

IAN The counter culture seems to me to be as significant a cultural phenomenon as, say, the Renaissance, to involve a shift of the order of the Renaissance in the sense that it's challenging the Puritan ethic . . .

GERMAINE You might well be right, but the point about the Renaissance is that it didn't change the quality of life for 95% of the people. Like most cultural phenomena, it concerned the elite. All our cultural history is the history of the elite; we have almost no cultural history of the poor, of the peasantry or the artisan classes or the yeomanry. We have only the cultural history of the Medici family and their hangers on. I would say yes, but in saying that I wouldn't be saying any great thing.

I am interested in the counter culture, in many of its values, and I've gone out to bat for them more times than I can mention. But I'm deeply convinced, from my experience as a teacher and as a groupie and as all sort of things, that the counter-culture has not made any significant difference to the way of life of the working class. The so-called sexual revolution, permissiveness, cunnilingus being practised in middle-class homes and so on, hasn't touched the working class at all . . . "At all" is a bit wrong—very much, maybe. They are still sexually deprived, they're deeply romantic about the family and about monogamy, and they're still deeply sadistic in their expressions of overt sexuality. When you consider things like the prevalence of pack rape and low level rape, the misuse of women in every possible way, then you just have to say, oh yeah, the permissive society doesn't really exist. The permissive society hasn't included the poor or the ugly or the old, and they are still the majority.

IAN But aren't you caught in a logical contradiction here? If what you're saying is that the new values which are being expressed by the counter-culture are being expressed primarily within an intellectual elite, and if you're also saying that it's the intellectual elite which in one sense or other determines the tone and the kind of values which finally seep through in the media and the educational apparatus, then won't these values work themselves through to the mass of society? And if they have a liberating character and direction, won't this finally result in some kind of liberation for society as a whole? I'm talking in terms of decades rather than revolution tomorrow.

GERMAINE Oh look, Ian, hopefully—or otherwise what hope is there for me. I'm a middle-class revolutionary, a member of the alternative

society. I f— all over the place, I have abortions, I don't get married, I do all those things. I don't wish to make myself completely irrelevant, but what I do want to do is to tell myself that if there is a revolutionary change in the working class, it's not along with me. It's for its own motives—because it seized power in its own way, because it commandeered the media for itself.

Even when people write to me and say that they read "The Female Eunuch" and it changed their lives, they left their husbands, blah blah blah, I always write back to say it was not because of "The Female Eunuch" at all, it was the state you were in when the book appeared and catalysed it. The book is the least significant thing about that. So I don't think that I'm entirely irrelevant, and I don't think the counter culture is entirely irrelevant, but woe betide it if it thinks it's the vanguard of a revolution. In any genuine revolution the counter culture would be shot first; and so it must be because it has certain values that are inimical to the establishment of the new order.

I don't think that the counter culture ought not to exist—we have to use whatever weapons we have. A girl came up to me last night and said, should I continue with my education when we have so little time. I said, you owe it to other women and to your mother and to her sisters who couldn't get an education to get the best education you can and use it to clobber the people who oppressed your people. She said but there's so little time—because she was in some kind of hippie state about the imminent destruction of the world. I said, look, if the world is going to be destroyed soon you can't help a tinkers' damn. You have to go on living as if it wasn't going to be, just in case it isn't.

I would hope that the middle classes lose their strangle-hold on culture. In the meantime, I am really glad that the A.B.C., and much, much more the B.B.C., are far to the left of the average viewer or listener. There's really a whole scene going on in England, because so many of the young media freaks are communist or socialist or Maoist, and they're trying to purge the information services of these young radicals. But it's part of the phenomenon that we all observe as teachers, that our best students happen to be left wing. There's no accident in that, because only a communist solution, whether it be libertarian or anarchist or Maoist or Trotskyist or whatever, only a communist solution of some sort can give us the wherewithal to solve the problems that face the world. It seems to me to be an intelligent decision on the part of these students.

IAN I think the point that I'm putting is that your political revolution, which has pre-



occupied Marxists for so long, probably has the end result of substituting one sort of bureaucratic elite for another, even if they have different motivations; but the genuine revolution must occur at the level of life style, of ways of thought and patterns of behavior. Maybe the new ideas—the rejection of the Christian hostility to sex, of the Protestant work ethic—which appear to me to be the fundamentals of the counter culture are going to have a more liberating effect on society over four or five decades than political revolution.

GERMAINE Look, I would agree with that by and large. It has occurred to me as a feminist that Marx and Engels did not give adequate descriptions of sexual politics, that it is not enough to say that women must be incorporated in the productive process, because I can think of twenty countries where they have been essential to the productive process and they're still not given any kind of rights. One might as well argue that because oxen are necessary to the productive process, they ought to be given the vote. It doesn't follow. Sexual politics is something upon which traditional Marxists seem to me to be deficient. Perhaps cultural politics, too, given the extraordinary power that the cultural media have now got.

Nevertheless I have never expected very much of the counter culture. I was not surprised when the Jesus revolution appeared. I never expected anything of the heads, the LSD takers and the drug takers, and Timothy Leary will never be a significant political figure because he really thinks LSD liberates people. The only thing LSD does that might be of value in my terms is that it might make people aware of how oppressed they are, but it certainly won't liberate them.

The trouble is of course that there are red herrings all over the place. The drug thing was one red herring. Perhaps sexual politics may be a red herring if it's not properly expounded, and gay power may disappear up its own bum—but I must say about gay power in particular that its politics seem to be rather more sophisticated than the politics of many other movements. What worries me most and will probably worry me all my life is that with all of these left wing groups, each with their own interest and understanding, it's always much easier to bitch the movement next to you than to attack the common enemy, because the common enemy inspires awe. There's always that problem of identifying with the oppressor which occurs among oppressed people and therefore bitching your next-door revolutionary because he's got one clause wrong in his manifesto. The counter culture itself doesn't touch the working class.

CHRIS But that's because the working class is a reactionary force in society, because they're the ones who are conned into believing that the society can offer them something. There's a myth about them. Okay, they're not affluent, but they believe that affluence is worth getting. It's the people who have had the affluence and who are rejecting it, like you and me, who will become the revolutionary force in society, because they've got all the benefits it offers.

GERMAINE But of course, as a Marxist, you would have to argue that they're not materialists, and therefore they cannot be expected to accomplish anything.

CHRIS That's crude, that's really crude.

GERMAINE So is two and two is four crude, but it's true.

CHRIS Marxism isn't like that. It doesn't say that the material base means that people must act for material motives, but merely that the material base determines the culture, not that the material base is the culture.

IAN Look, Mailer says . . . maybe he's a dirty word . . .

GERMAINE No, he's not a dirty word, he's an intelligent man. I'm not altogether sure how serious he is. There's nothing more significant in the world to Mailer than Mailer's own self. But he's not a dirty word.

IAN Well, in "Barbary Shore" he makes a point which seems to me to be very important. The only reason for socialism to fill men's bellies is so that they'll know then how empty their souls are. What he is saying is that you can't expect the values of a new culture—the rejection of the work ethic and the rejection of the Christian hostility towards pleasure in sex—you can't expect that kind of transformation of the total culture to take place until wealth is spread sufficiently through the community to enable people to think above the level of their bellies.

GERMAINE I would agree with that, but all I'm saying is that if you look to the counter culture for an economic revolution, you're simply looking in the wrong place.

IAN I'm not looking to it for an economic revolution, I'm looking to it for the fundamental shift in values which I think it represents.

GERMAINE What is historically more likely is that if there was an economic revolution, without which most of the values of the counter culture could never be recognised, then the first reaction would be to reject this counter culture.

CHRIS The economic revolution exists anyway. There's this whole capitalist framework which demands ideas and thinking people for its continued existence. The major part of society is no longer productive labour, it's ideas, it's sort of McLuhanist thought; but these people are offering a new class as well as a new culture. It's not that the counter culture is in a vacuum; but in a Marxist sense, it does have an economic base. The demand for creative thinkers is persistent, and that's where the system is f—ing itself.

GERMAINE I can see a point in this too, because what's happening in England and America is that the intelligentsia is becoming proletarianised. One of the classes best represented in current unemployment in England would be the intelligentsia, the university teachers, the high school teachers and so on, many of whom were trained for positions that didn't exist because there was an extreme retrenchment. So there were a great many intellectuals who found that there was no niche prepared for them in society. The discontent of the educated classes will be a revolutionary force in itself, but it won't itself control the revolutionary situation.

IAN Don't you have to separate the economic revolution, which is a product of industrialisation, automation, computers, from the political revolution which is a question of power? I think that the economic revolution is taking place in all industrialised societies, the U.S.S.R. as well as the U.S.

GERMAINE Monopoly capitalism and state capitalism don't look very different. I mean, General Motors employs more people than the population of many European states. Totalitarianism has many forms and monopoly capitalism seems to be one of them, especially when you look at the kind of ideological conformity demanded of the American employee. For a long time I've believed that the leviathan of capitalism is eating himself up, chewing on his own tail; but I'm also uncomfortably aware that he is in such desperate straits, this great monster, that he may eat up his own children as well. America does that too. I mean shooting children in the street. I'm very frightened about the conventions next summer because I know something is planned for San Diego, and I know that whatever is plan-

ned for San Diego is fully known to the F.B.I. and everybody else. There will be a clash on the streets of San Diego unless it's subverted by some very adroit manipulation. The National Guard in America has been equipped with M16 rifles with end-over-end tumbling bullets which don't just stop a man—they kill him, tear his limbs off.

IAN Right, you say America, and America is . . .

GERMAINE America still dictates the terms for the rest of the world.

IAN Right, but aren't you likely to have exactly the same kind of clashes on the streets of Moscow, because it is now a highly industrialised society, as on the streets of New York or San Francisco?

GERMAINE Yeah, but one of the reasons you don't get clashes of that kind, or one of the ways to prevent clashes of that kind, is to provoke a situation of hostility with an imagined exterior power. This is what is being done to check the spread of socialism in Europe. They are being told that their greatest enemy is Russia and creeping socialism, and in a helpless kind of dazzled way they believe it.

IAN What do you understand by socialism? What does the word mean to you?

GERMAINE It depends in what context I'm arguing. When I talk about the dismantling of the welfare state in England, I'm simply talking about things like the health service, the welfare service, the attitude towards unemployment, all of which have changed, and the fact that we used to have very heavy taxation on the upper income bracket which is being lightened by leaps and bounds. I mean, someone like me who has earned a great deal of money in one year could expect to have been taxed 95% until Heath said you'll only be taxed 75%. It doesn't look like much, but in fact it's a great deal. They're freeing the entrepreneurial class to rescue the English economy and down the English working class, that's how it's being done. The taxation on the working class has not been lightened. They'll go back to the old reactionary European pattern of heavily taxed working class and over-rewarded entrepreneurial class. [Miaow . . . What is it, puss? Oh, blossom. Liberate the animals . . .] What worries me most about the counter culture is that it refuses to concern itself with any immediate political issues, even the ones that . . .

CHRIS The reality is that the logic of our technology is complete automation, and the only people who can handle complete automation, which requires getting rid of the Protestant work ethic, are the counter culture people who are contemptuous of material rewards. We are the only economically relevant class because we don't give a shit about money.

GERMAINE Only a socialist class knows how to manage closed loop automation, only a socialist country cares about that.

CHRIS Only those of us who don't want to work know how to handle automation.

GERMAINE Very few people want to work. They don't know how to get an income without doing it.

CHRIS Those of us who positively don't want to work . . .

IAN My proposition is that the real *raison d'être* for the existence of a socialist movement is that it is only a socialist movement that can get off the progress band wagon.

GERMAINE I would agree with that just on historical factors. Closed loop automation is more highly developed in Russia than anywhere else in the world. Closed loop automation is what will redeem us from having to work for a living.

CHRIS That's got nothing to do with the working class. It renders the working class totally irrelevant to any kind of Marxist scheme or even a revolution.

GERMAINE No, not totally irrelevant, that's not true. Everybody will have to work some of the time regardless of how much closed loop automation there is.

CHRIS It won't be work, it'll be play.

GERMAINE The distinction between work and play is wrong anyway. I mean, the natural state of human beings is to be active, and I would call that work regardless of whether they're playing hopscotch or producing boots.

IAN Hang on, the real problem seems to me to be that if you take seriously the popularisations of people like Erlich . . .

GERMAINE Unfortunately, I have come from the outer world where Erlich is not a name to

conjure with, and I know nothing about him. It's only in Australia that he's regarded as a great thinker.

IAN I'm not saying that Erlich is a great thinker. All I'm saying is that the only people who can take seriously the proposition that economic growth in terms of increased productivity, the increasing use of natural resources, is finally going to destroy us, the only people who can reverse the 19th century concept of progress, are the socialists, and the socialists are going to have to go back to William Morris.

GERMAINE I have a great admiration for William Morris, but it's not just a question of going back to him. William Morris was right in supposing that industrialisation should mean that the people of the world would have access to a greater variety of manufactured goods than ever before, that what it would mean was that we could have more beautiful things in our houses, more variety in the shapes of buttons, in the kinds of shoes, in the kinds of textiles. In fact this has not eventuated. Monopoly capitalism means that the choice of the buyer grows daily more restricted. William Morris never foresaw that, and he has given us no *modus operandi* for a revolution which will destroy the power of the producer to dictate the wishes of the consumer.

There was a very good case in the press recently, where the housewife was being upbraided for being the greatest polluter in our community. The housewife is only the greatest polluter in the community because she has to buy goods produced under monopoly conditions. She has to buy biscuits in bloody plastic containers that can't be destroyed, because they're not sold any other way. It's completely typical of the way in which the burden of guilt is constantly transferred to the consumer that there have been so many editorials about this delinquent housewife who is using non-biodegradable detergent, whereas what is in fact happening is that she's being misled by trade descriptions over which she has no control.

IAN It's only the socialist movement which can say, of course, we all need refrigerators, and refrigerators are best mass-produced; of course we all need furniture, but furniture is best hand-made by yourself or your mate—you make furniture, I make jewellery, she makes something else.

CHRIS Shouldn't we be defining a socialist man?

IAN I'm defining me.

CHRIS You're defining you, and if there's anybody else who fits into your category, it's not the socialists, it's the counter culture. All those socialists have got bloody Buckley's ties and Anthony Squires' suits and f—ing Falcons in the drive way and Venetian bloody blinds. Every single f—ing socialist in Victoria.

GERMAINE But in any case I don't think that's a typical socialist view, and I don't think that it even goes without saying. There are mass-produced chairs which are very beautiful, but there are fifty times more mass-produced chairs which are hideous, and I would put that down to the power of the mass producer to dictate to the buyer. I can buy a beautiful mass-produced chair for three hundred bucks, made in stitched leather and tubular steeling, which is itself a typical product of mass production.

You see, there's an aesthetic heresy in William Morris. He thought what mass production was going to do was to ape the hand-made goods. The interesting thing would be that, once the anxiety about where the next meal was coming from was relieved because production was established in terms of closed loop automation, then presumably one could make one's own chairs. That would be the nicest thing of all, even if they weren't terribly good chairs and they weren't going to win any prizes.

IAN Yes, that's right, because when you are making your own chairs, they don't cost anything except time . . .

GERMAINE . . . and love . . .

IAN . . . and love . . .

GERMAINE . . . and attention . . .



IAN . . . and that's not work, that's . . .

CHRIS . . . that's play . . .

IAN . . . that's play.

CHRIS Right!

GERMAINE But ever so many Australians believe that it's much nicer to have your own business as a plumber or a corner-store salesman or a salesman selling on commission for a big firm or something like that. The Australian masses cherish the idea of being self-employed, and I don't really think that is what you mean. The distinction between work and play isn't that you are self-employed or employed by another. It's that play is what you do for its own sake and not for any kind of earning. I am firmly committed to the belief, because I am an ectomorph or whatever you say, that people work naturally. It's in their nature to be doing something and they are happiest when they are doing it.

What is even more insidious than working for wages is enforced idleness in return for wages. I worked for the civil service in Sydney for three months, and I had a nervous breakdown because they wouldn't give me any f—ing thing to do. They said, what are you complaining about, you've got nothing to do. I said, it's precisely that; I've got so much energy and so much skill and you're not making use of any of it.

IAN Right, but surely you cannot define work in terms of . . .

GERMAINE Enforced idleness . . .

IAN No, of people actually doing things. I would define play in terms of people doing things that they like doing, whether they happen to be building furniture or surfing or painting.

GERMAINE But then you might argue that as a university teacher I am playing all the time, because I dearly love my work.

IAN I agree. I argue in exactly those terms.

CHRIS The thing is that if it's determined by your outside circumstances, if you have to be a university teacher because otherwise you starve, that's called work; if you happen to be a university teacher because you like being a university teacher, that's called play because it's related to your own being.

GERMAINE I really don't think we will get very far by preserving that distinction. When a

child plays with a milk bottle top, or a broken transistor radio, or anything, he is doing so much more, he is gaining so much more it's still a productive activity. I think that I would be just as happy to call it work all the time or play all the time. I think probably work all the time, because I have a sentimental attachment to the word.

IAN I think work means doing things that you have to do because you have to earn a quid and play is doing things that you like doing even if incidentally you happen to be paid for them.

CHRIS The good productive things of childhood are the things that the kids do themselves like when they go down to the creek and look in the creek and think about water and fish and the grass and things like that. And the bad things are when they have to sit in a class and learn about the life cycle of the mosquito. They do that because it's external. Okay, they're five years old, but they're working. When they are doing the good things, they are playing. Work is an oppressive word.



GERMAINE I reckon that D. H. Lawrence is not altogether a contemptible thinker although his particular sort of socialism led him hard up against the face of fascism too many times. There is a poem by D. H. Lawrence about work, which I believe, which goes: "There is no point in work unless it absorbs you like an absorbing game. If it doesn't absorb you, if it isn't any fun, don't do it. When the Hindus weave long lengths of stuff with their thin dark hands and their wide dark eyes and their still souls absorbed, they are like trees giving forth leaf. They are living, not merely working".

Autumn 1972



IAN The tape's running out. Quick answers to quick questions. Looking at Australia, is the counter culture, the youth movement any different from the U.K. or the U.S.?

GERMAINE I can't really answer in any general way because I don't know enough about it. The "Thorunka" case, for example, suggests that the counter culture is more ideologically consistent here than it is overseas, at least in that particular example. "Thorunka" is much more committed to a particular philosophical attitude than most underground productions in other parts of the world. There is also a painful feeling, at least to me, of emulation, rather tardy emulation, of overseas patterns.

IAN Are there any new themes? Is the Australian counter culture or the culture generally more concerned, perhaps without articulating them, with existential, immediate kinds of responses and behaviour?

GERMAINE Gee, I can't really say. I'm muddled about the whole thing. I don't know that it is very different from California. It's very different from England, because one can't risk the kind of spontaneist life that one can here.

IAN Why?

GERMAINE There is just not enough wealth around. Your drop-out class is always a direct mirroring of your surplus value. There's not that much in England, there's nothing extra to go round. There is a phenomenon in America and Australia of the hippie drop-out kids who are financed by their parents because of a sort of

blackmail they apply. Even the Hare Krishna Temple Choir has got money here. In England, that's a dubious thing; if you want money for a Choir you ask George Harrison, but I'm prepared to bet that George Harrison hasn't bought the Combi Van that the Choir uses around here. They bought that out of their own money, and they have very glossy publications and so on. I think that Australian nonconformism is perhaps more anarchist than elsewhere.

IAN Repression: do you feel that Australia is a more repressive society than the U.K. or the U.S.?

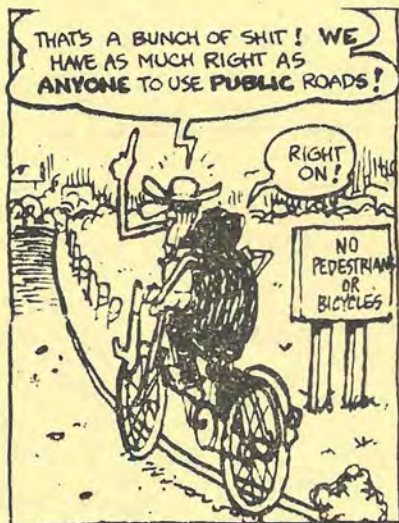
GERMAINE Yes, as a rule of thumb I would say yes.

IAN Why?

GERMAINE Well . . . Mind you, things have changed a bit in England because there have been some rather hair-raising prosecutions of underground publications. There have been repeated raids, and destruction of personal property and confiscation of files that didn't enter into the actual prosecution.

Nevertheless, just to quote a middle of the line example, I write a column for the "Sunday Times". It has never been censored so far as I know except for just one small example, where I said that where else in the world but Australia would a generous man be defined as one who would give you his arse-hole and shit through his ribs. I think that they cut that sentence, I'm not even sure, whereas in Australia it would go without saying that that line would not appear in a daily paper. Whereas, with nearly everything I have

tried to do in Australia, I've been told beforehand what I could say or do, or else it has been jiggled about with afterwards, and in the case of television interviews the tapes have been called in for review. I think that there is more censorship in Australia and I think that it's more virulent. The show-cause trials that occurred in Melbourne—I'm sure they would be objected to as unconstitutional in America and in England. People would argue that it is just not on to grab a whole lot of publications and then make a bookseller show cause why they should not be destroyed, and to give the publisher no chance of redress if the bookseller should feel that he did not particularly want to fight that case. But then on the other hand, the old breathaliser is a good example of the same thing, and that applies in England.



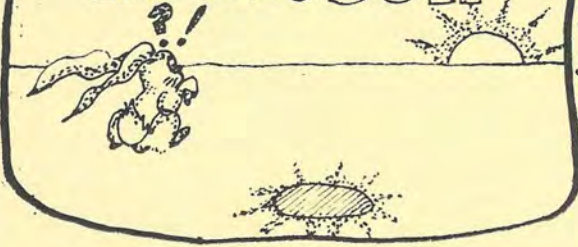
IAN Democratic, egalitarian?

GERMAINE Nowhere. Nowhere in the world is democratic and egalitarian. All democracy that I have observed is pseudo-democracy. The centres of power are always the same, the systems of patronage always the same.

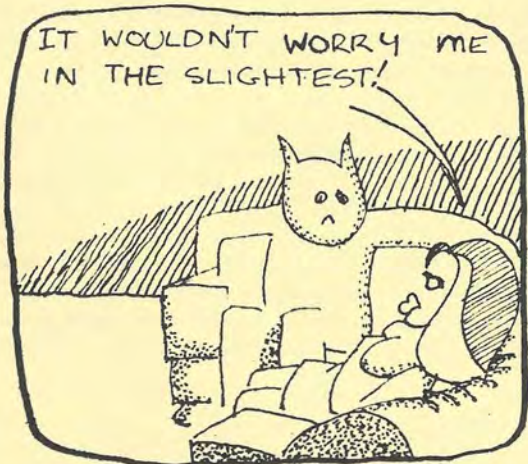
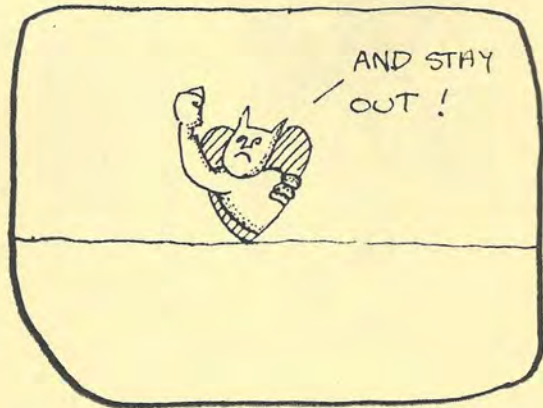
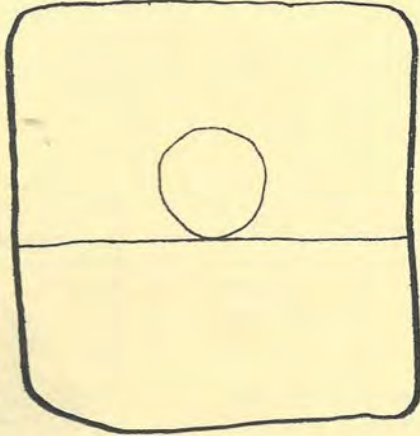
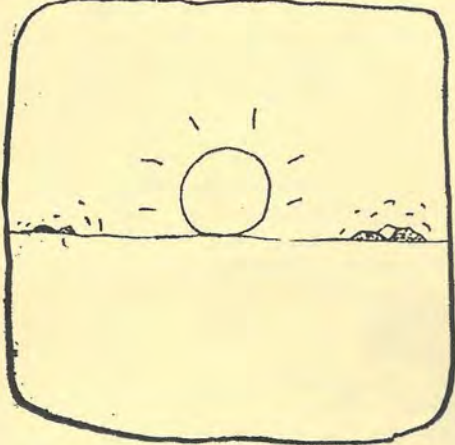
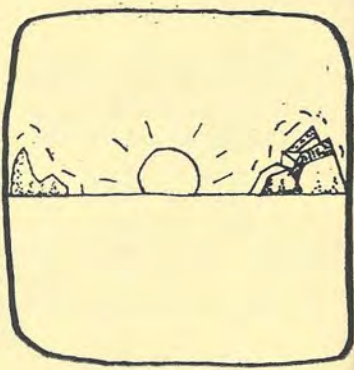
IAN What about the proposition that in Australia the intelligentsia are cut down to size, that they are not treated as an elite and that this is part of Australian egalitarianism?

GERMAINE That is bullshit in one sense because here at least the intelligentsia are highly paid. In England we are paid less than forklift truck-drivers which reduces us to size. On the

THE DIARY OF H. MUSCH



NOV 12



other hand, we have more prestige in the columns of "The Times", but what prestige in the columns of "The Times" really means is another matter.

IAN Intellectually enquiring, or derivative?

GERMAINE I think one is not entirely exclusive of the other. I think Australian culture is derivative, but then if you were to read an Australian critique of Marcuse, say, by a political scientist you might expect to find less awe. In fact there is a kind of pettishness about foreign influence, which means that you object to it. The sort of objection made to hippie jargon on the grounds that it's a misuse of the English language. The two things go side by side. There's a kind of helpless absorption of foreign culture partly because there are only twelve million people here and how much can they be expected to produce; and on the other hand there is a chauvinistic desire to retain an Australian culture even though most people won't have read "Such Is Life" and don't know who Henry Handel Richardson is and don't care that Henry Handel Richardson's house is being knocked down.*

* The reference is to the birth-place of Henry Handel Richardson, in Fitzroy, which was in danger of destruction.

IAN You've had a fresh look at the Australian intelligentsia; do you think that we are frightened or threatened by the high powered stuff that goes on overseas, or alternatively by the way in which Australian society is alleged to cut the high poppies down?

GERMAINE I can't answer that question very easily. I've been subjected to a fair amount of philistine criticism which I certainly have never encountered anywhere else, complaining of some of the words I use and so on. But then someone like David Armstrong is pursuing a quite untenable line about Vietnam but pursues it lively in all quarters just the same. I think he is just as much protected by his grey eminence as he is threatened by it. There is an odd ambivalence about the whole thing, and I can't sort it out very well. I notice that if I make a particularly stringent point on television, the interviewer, who has perfectly well understood what I've said, is likely to say, "Oh! you've lost me there I can't cope with that. You used a three syllable word there." But that's pretty much bullshit, there's a lot of posturing goes on. You see, there's always this idea that Australia has got a genuine working class culture which is all two-up and boozing and straight talking and strong man stuff. It's not really true...

[At which point the tape and the whisky ran out more or less simultaneously.—I.T.]

Illustrations: From Kathe Kollwitz (p. 45); Franz Masareel, p. 49; Gilbert Shelton, pp. 54-55; Strip Cartoon by David Hodson, p. 56.

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DOUGLAS PIKE

Australian Dictionary of Biography

Volume 4

MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY PRESS

DOROTHY HEWETT *the galle face*

The plane rose clumsily, banking over Moscow Airport, till Alice could no longer distinguish the waving arms of the Armenian interpreter, the wife of the first secretary of the Foreign Literature Bureau, or the last visiting Australian author, who had come to scrounge the balance of her roubles.

So that was the end of it, and it was more than unlikely she would ever see it again . . . the marble halls of the Hotel Sovietskaya with the lemon curtains blown against the light, and the scent of lilac on the stairs.

It would all go on . . . Natalya standing under the Victorian oil painting of opulent roses, whispering of the confiscation of Solzhenitsyn's manuscripts, the platinum crooner in the tight lame dress, like a leftover reel from an old Alice Faye movie, belting out Yevtushenko and "My Heart Belongs to Daddy", the intellectuals in their red silk London suits driving in dirty taxis amongst Stalin's brutal confectionery skyscrapers, the writers living like uneasy cats in their blue and yellow dachas in the fir forests . . . but she would not be there to see it.

The big, untidy Aeroflot hostesses had silently handed out their sticks of candy. The plane was heavy with eighteen-stone bureaucrats, dumb as ikons, carrying precious travel visas and great upholstered wives. In the back seats a group of Singhalese students struggled with guitars, string bags, paper bags, laughing and rustling, their voices rising and falling like the surf at Mount Lavinia. To Alice they seemed the only living creatures on board. She would have liked to have made contact with them, but it was too much effort. She was too tired. She smiled at them, feeling comforted by their presence, swallowed two dramamines, unfastened her seat belt, and half slept all the way to Teheran.

Teheran, the word was a legend, and when they swooped down out of the night sky she felt like a great dark hawk dropping into the heart of Persia.

In the air terminal the Russians sat in silent rows, their baggy, double-breasted suits buttoned over their bellies. Persian carpets were piled up for sale in the centre of the floor, Persian soldiers stood, wooden faced, with guns, at the doors of the terminal. Nobody was allowed to leave until the plane was ready for take off for Colombo. Even the Singhalese seemed subdued, huddled together, their olive faces paling from lack of sleep.

"I am in Persia, in Persia," Alice kept telling herself crossly, "and all I can do is listlessly pull over piles of Persian carpets, smell the dusky air, and stare into the sightless, stone eyes of the obelisk Russians."

In a gesture of romantic revolt, although she had dangerously little money, she bought a copy of "Omar Khayyam" from the curio counter. The Shah of Persia stared down at her from his portrait hanging over the entrance, Saroya embroidered somewhere behind his eyes.

When they filed back into the plane she felt suffocated by her longing to escape, to dart under the arms of the soldiers and lose herself, without money or friends, in the uneasy darkness beyond the runaway lights.

But she climbed up the gangway and once again settled herself for the dreary routine of take off, feeling her brain buzzing with a thousand superficial impressions of the world she had passed through in the last month, ephemerally as a white cabbage moth.

The Doctor of Therapy in the dirty white coat in the Moscow Writers' Polyclinic:

"I like Australian writers. We have had many of them here, suffering from tension and long standing chronic illnesses, and it seems to me you all have something in common, a simplicity which is not the same thing at all as being simple . . . a profound and wise simplicity."

A profound and wise simplicity, untouched by the guilt and complexity of Europe, or a gullible, dangerous innocence, susceptible to flattery,

bumbling into Writers' Congresses, chain-smoking endless Rothmans, with their lack of any sense of history, politics or literature?

So they had given her the keys of the kingdom. On the strength of a book of poems, and one novel, she had gone with her air fare to Moscow and back, to unlock a new Jerusalem, and had found the marble halls of scuttling parasites, the double-talking businessmen and bureaucrats, a tape recorder playing perpetually behind their lips.

She would often wonder if her subsequent illness had been more of the spirit than the body. Moscow was a claustrophobic world, and yet she had learnt a great deal in the weeks spent in her hotel bedroom, with her thrombosed knee swaddled in vodka-sodden cotton wool; much more perhaps than she could have learned from the delegation-round of art galleries, Kremlin museums, the Bolshoi, the Palace of Congresses, the Gorki Park of Culture and Rest, the editorial offices of Foreign Literature and Ogonyok.

Upstairs, in a suite lined with satin fleur-de-lis, where Robert Frost once spent a Moscow winter, the left-wing American poet was quietly drinking himself to death.

The stairwell echoed and moaned with voices demanding sauna baths, medication for migraine, and rooms with running water in Writers' Retreats.

The interpreters and translators scuttled up and down the Sovietskaya corridors with cockroach hands, pleading for the first release of foreign manuscripts.

Even in the private alcove of the Polyclinic Irena Galina had found her, pushing aside the curtains, her fingers at her lips:

"The script of your new play, quickly, quickly, before Stepanova comes back."

Or to catch her, coming pink and steaming out of her private bath, Natalya speaking rapidly under the opulent roses:

"Have you anything to give me for my Publishing House? I translated your last novel into Russian. Short stories, a novel perhaps? Are you writing much? My husband left me. I have a daughter to support. She is growing cynical. This is how we live. Don't tell Stepanova. She thinks you Australians are all her own property. She would murder me if she found me here."

Or Stepanova herself, her American eyes snapping above her earrings:

"You are not like the others, Alice. You are one of us." One of us . . . one of us . . . one of us . . . droned the plane, and the flattery and horror lay like a splinter at her heart. "You think like a Russian."

She too was guilty then, her whole life spent in an empty glittering room under the censorious

eyes of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin.

She was judged, and the meaning of her life had dissolved like spun sugar to the bitter scent of oranges, yoghurt and vodka bandages.

"Alice, Alice, you will come back next year. I know it, and we will go skiing at our dacha. I will keep your woollen underwear safe in my cupboard as a kind of hostage for your return. I will not let the moths get into it, dear Alice."

And she had judged the Russians, not for what they had done, but for their refusal to face what they had done, their refusal to accept their brutal human fallibility.

Yet what right had she to judge from her mindless child's land of "Things go better with Coke".

The engines changed tempo, the wing dipped, and they were slipping sideways over Colombo, with her ears clicking to the change of height.

Colombo was noise and customs officials, overweight baggage to be shipped to Australia, the vulnerability of a middle-aged white divorcee with no husband to protect her. The Singhalese students fell embracing into the arms of their relatives behind the barrier. Colombo was heavy with heat and sing-song voices, the airport circled with ominous crows, brown hands held out for tips and money evaporating like water.

The airport bus drove Alice to the Galle Face Hotel. The Galle Face stood side on to the inky snarling sea, its yellow stone buildings half protected by a sea wall crumbling into the water. The spacious foyer was full of the scent of frangipani, the sound of wind and the swish of the ceiling fans. Hotel servants in white tunics and long sarong skirts carried her luggage up the staircase, and into one of the dim shuttered rooms facing a narrow corridor.

When she had tipped them and was left alone, she locked the door and showered in an old fashioned bathroom, smelling of carbolic. Even the water was warm. She lay in her underclothes on one of the twin beds, listening to the hum of the fan, watching its circular swooping hypnotically through the slats of the bamboo blinds, until she fell asleep.

When she woke and looked at her watch it was late afternoon. She felt ashamed again that she was continually wasting opportunities. The nagging sense that she would never come this way again, and therefore was missing some mystery at the heart of each country, drove her out again, still unrested, into the hotel foyer, with her carefully hoarded money.

Stepanova had given her the address of Khaja Pandurin, the Singhalese left-wing politician and novelist.

"He will be delighted to see you, Alice," she had said. "He will look after you beautifully. He loves meeting writers, and a writer from Australia will be particularly interesting for him."

Alice handed the name and address to the receptionist behind the enquiry grille, and asked for a phone call to be put through. She thought the receptionist looked at her oddly as she deciphered the name, but put it down to her disordered imagination. The girl found the phone number and tried it several times but there was only a steady hum.

"The phone is cut off," she said. "It is apparently impossible to get through."

How strange it all was. Why would a well known politician have his phone disconnected? Perhaps he had a silent number for protection. Perhaps there was some political disturbance out there in the streets. Not long ago the Prime Minister had been assassinated. How could Alice know, caught in the cocoon of the Galle Face, a colonial anachronism, full of absurd mementos of British occupation.

She sank into a cane chair and was served tea graciously and soundlessly by a grizzled headed waiter in a chalk white sarong. The wind was sweeping the foyer like the sound of long palm leaves.

"Madam is tired?" the waiter said. "The heat is trying?"

"I have just come from Moscow," Alice cried wildly, teetering her fragile cup on the edge of the saucer.

"I have never been there," he said courteously. "I am interested in Peking. Has Madam perhaps visited Peking?"

"No, not Peking. You are interested in politics?"

"I am interested in politics. Madam too is interested?"

"Yes. Is the poverty bad in Ceylon?"

"It is very bad. It has grown worse since we no longer have Mrs. B. You have heard of Mrs. B? Her husband was assassinated."

Alice sipped her hot tea, the waiter smiled, the fans spun round. The receptionist paged her to the grille. Had she thought of visiting her friend by taxi? The hotel could phone a reliable driver. Alice totted up her vanishing pounds in her head, but why not? She would see something of the life. She could regain her equilibrium. It would be worth it to escape from the maddening mill of her own mind. Heartened by the friendliness, she waited in the foyer.

All the way out to the politician's address the taxi driver chattered interminably.

"You will not see much poverty, nor so much drunkenness in the streets now," he told her. "It

is much better since we got rid of that Mrs. B."

"But I thought she improved the poverty," Alice protested.

"No, no," the taxi driver cried patiently. "She was bad for the country, Mrs. B. Thank goodness we got rid of her. She is a Communist."

"And what are your politics?"

"I am not a political man. I am a religious man. I am a Catholic. Madam perhaps is also a Catholic?"

"No. I am an atheist."

"Good, good. I have not heard of that religion. There are many strange religions now. But it does not matter if you believe in God."

"I do not believe in God."

"But that is impossible Madam, not to believe in God. I misunderstand you. My English is too bad. And here we are at the house of Mr. Pandurin."

They had been running along the seafront, and now they stopped at a grey concrete house with doors and windows flung wide open to the gales. Palms brushed against the concrete steps, papers and leaves blew about the place. Alice knocked on the door for some time, the taxi driver standing respectfully at her side. At last a dark woman in a white sari came through the house.

"I have come to see Mr. Pandurin," Alice gasped. "I am a writer from Australia. I was given his address by Stepanova of the Foreign Literature Bureau in Moscow."

The woman looked at her silently.

"She does not understand English," the taxi driver said. He and the woman spoke together for a few minutes.

"Mr. Pandurin is leaving this house," he translated. "This is his wife. They are leaving today. Mr. Pandurin is now at the Houses of Parliament. He will be there until late this evening."

"Could I leave a message?" Alice asked.

She wrote a message on the back of a torn envelope on a bare gritty table. It was the only furniture left in the empty house. The woman took the envelope and thrust it into her sari. Alice despaired of it ever reaching any destination at all.

They drove away. The sky and sea had darkened to the color of grapes, the air was sticky with the scent of oleanders and frangipani from the walled gardens of rich houses. A starving dog, its hide patched with red sores, lurched as it walked, and with each step a hopeless, strangled howl burst from its throat.

"I will take Madam to see the sights," the taxi driver cried. "All English ladies love to see the sights of Colombo. You will like to buy the gemstones. All ladies love the gemstones of Ceylon. They are very famous."

He drew up with a flourish in front of the gem shop.

"But I have no money," Alice said.

"All ladies say they have no money. But this friend of mine is very cheap."

In the gem shop Alice stood miserably before the display. The shopkeeper grew increasingly less obsequious as she moved towards the cheapest glass cases. She was white, she spoke English, she was a tourist. Therefore she was rich, and, apparently, mean. Pushed into it by embarrassment and pride, she bought a five pound ring. Never mind, she thought, B.O.A.C. are paying the hotel bill.

They drove through the streets of Colombo. "I am not rich," Alice said firmly. "If you drive too far I will not be able to pay you."

"Nonsense. It is an honour to transport Madam. It will cost nothing. Here is a Buddhist temple. Madam cannot leave Colombo without visiting one Buddhist temple."

Alice removed her shoes. The saffron robed priest, smooth, hairless, deep brown, bowed her into the temple. Outside in the courtyard she could see young shaven men pacing secretly together in their yellow robes.

The huge buddha reached to the temple ceiling, its swollen golden navel luscious with paste jewellery. The priest stood close at her elbow. The smell of incense and sweat was overpowering.

All was repeated many times in a maze of cut glass mirrors. The priest's eyes reflected the blank gilt gaze of the buddha. Gravely he put out his hand for the money. His bi-sexuality assaulted her. Bare-footed, trembling, she placed some coins in his palm, and fled outside. The young men paced, head to head, unseeing, in the courtyard. She stepped into her shoes, and paid again into another outstretched palm. The taxi driver flung open the door.

"To the hotel . . . at once," she cried, weakly asserting herself at last.

"To the Galle Face," he shouted exuberantly.

In the hotel lobby she asked how much she owed him.

"It is as Madam wishes," he murmured.

"But what is the charge? There must be a standard charge," she argued from her fatal innocence.

"There is no charge," he bowed. "It is madam's wish. Whatever she considers I am worth."

The crows blew and tumbled across the wide open entrance. He stood, abject and merciless, before her. She rattled a handful of change into his hand, piling it into a toppling pyramid. He glanced at it with contempt and triumph. She knew, with despair, that it was too much. Beyond caring, she stumbled for the stairs.

"I will send Madam a parcel of Ceylon tea," he shouted after her. "I often send tea to British ladies. Ceylon tea is unsurpassed throughout the world."

She passed wearily into the dim corridors of the Galle Face.

Alice dressed for dinner in a pale blue silk organza with a floating skirt that flattered her heavy figure. The glass doors of the dining room reflected her coming many times, and when she was seated at a snowy cloth, the silver and cut glass glistening, she felt like a princess among the whirring fans. The pink shaded lights bloomed like roses in the centre of the tables. The white robed waiters, their bare feet slapping and thumping on the tiles, ran to carry for her, iced paw-paw and frosted orange juice. If she clapped her hands they would surely vanish in the mirrored doors. And then she saw herself in another mirror, sitting at the table among the paw-paw rinds, a fat, blonde, clumsy woman, unstable in her menopause, in a dress too young for her, listening to the hissing voice of the head waiter bullying his underlings.

She fled outside to the empty swimming pool separated from the sea by a broken wall. She stood for a long time looking out over the sea, watching the surf foam on the black rocks at the foot of the wall. The evening was falling with the suddenness of the tropics, and a band of sullen red ringed the courtyard. The palms swept against the hotel roof, dead palm fronds lay in heaps by the swimming pool. She looked up, conscious that somebody was watching her.

"Who are you?" she said softly and her voice echoed amongst the tiles and concrete and water. "Who are you?" she said again. She found herself outside on the Esplanade, walking amongst the strutting crows, and the women, their cinnamon, flame and peacock blue saris blown against their legs. The night had fallen completely. She could hear the sea rushing beyond the Esplanade, but she could no longer see it.

Perhaps, she thought, Khaja Pandurin might ring now, so she went obsessively back to her room. The phone was ringing as she reached the door, and she ran the last few steps to answer, faint with relief at its deliverance. But when she picked it up it was only a B.O.A.C. clerk ringing to tell her that there was no vacancy on tomorrow's plane. Faintly uneasy, she questioned him.

"I'm afraid, Miss Thompson, there may not be a plane out for you for several days."

"And what about my accommodation?"

"I'm afraid, Miss Thompson, B.O.A.C. cannot be responsible for your accommodation. You see, we

did not get any booking confirmation for your flight."

"But I telegraphed from Moscow."

"Moscow is always very unreliable."

The phone clicked and she rushed to her bag, carefully counting her traveller's cheques, five English pounds, and the hotel bill to pay in the morning. She could wire to Australia, but would the money come in time? Was there an Australian Embassy here? But what a disgrace, penniless at the Embassy like a middle aged hippy. She could camp at the airport, and drink black coffee until they found her a seat. That would improve her figure . . . she giggled . . . and embarrass B.O.A.C. And the Russians, how typical of the Russians' bumbling bloody inefficiency, or perhaps it was all part of the cold war psychosis . . . no cables from Moscow.

She could hear the feet of the night porters slapping backwards and forwards outside her door, their keys rattling at their waists. And that reminded her. She had turned off the fan, and locked the door behind her when she went down to dinner. And now the fan was whirring again, and her night dress was laid out neatly on her pillow. That meant that the night porters used their master keys to enter the bedrooms. It made her feel nervous. What was the use of locking the door then? She had her shower and noticed that the bathroom window was unlatched, lying open. She ran to her nightdress, and stood in the centre of the room naked, puffy, under the fan, so exhausted she felt neurasthenic. She could not grapple with her problems any longer. She would lie down and read a paperback, drift into sleep to the hum of the fan. She would feel calmer in the morning.

She turned off the centre light and lay in the pool of the bed lamp. It was too hot for bedclothes. The wind had been rising ever since she came into the room, and now it began to shake and bang the window shutters. Bare feet and keys and wind . . .

She fell asleep and dreamt she was in Moscow again. The Singhalese waiter with the grizzled head passed her a cup of tea on a silver tray. She said, "Look, this is Moscow, not Peking. Do you think you will find what you are looking for here?" and they both hung over the balcony and laughed and laughed at the bureaucrats jiggling and bouncing under the chandeliers to "My Heart Belongs to Daddy".

Then she was wide awake, sitting upright on the bed. She felt the hair rise from her scalp.

The room seemed to fill with the pounding of the sea like laboured, half-drowned breathing. Alice rose and put on her wrap. She unlocked

the door. The night porter was asleep at the end of the corridor, little light burning at his side.

She moved on bare feet past the bar and the library, out through the glass doors into the courtyard. When she came to the swimming pool she paused and peered with her short-sighted eyes at the sea wall. It had crumbled badly here. The air seemed full of the growl and suck of the surf not far below.

"You are one of us, Alice, one of us, one of us," screamed the gulls. "No," Alice said through her teeth, and knew she was pushing against empty air. There was nobody there. She was alone above the sea in the empty courtyard, wet with the incoming tide. The black sea hissed below her feet, the creamy froth foamed on her hair and lips.

Through a whirl of spray and palm leaves she ran back, through the lobby, down the corridor into her bedroom, locking the door behind her. The porter had not wakened. The telephone was ringing on the bedside table.

"Yes," she said.

"Miss Thompson. B.O.A.C. We've found you a seat on this morning's flight. Via Singapore to Australia. A last minute cancellation. You're lucky, Miss Thompson."

"Yes, yes," she cried. "I'm lucky, certainly. I'm lucky. I'm lucky."

The sea was running like indigo silk, innocent and benign, as Alice climbed into the Airway's bus. The Galle Face stood, yellow, four-square, its white robed porters padding backwards and forwards through its open door. The sky was full of crows. The jets from the hoses washing the courtyards rainbowed in the light.

The airport was crowded with young British soldiers en route to Malaysia. An American archaeologist in wrap-around dark glasses bought Alice a brandy and soda after take off.

Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, a night's stopover at the Raffles at Qantas' expense, and they were on their way to Perth in a plane crammed with British migrants, American tourists, and homecoming young Australians from Kangaroo Valley. Alice was content to drift with the plane. She felt like a convalescent recuperating from a long, almost fatal, illness.

When they touched down she stepped out into a drench of morning light. The airport stood, small and desolate, soaking within its circle of flat blue escarpments. She stared towards the ranges, ringing her claustrophobically in. All was absorbed into a giant vacuum flask of light and space . . . the priest under the flat, gilded, beast's eyes of the buddha, the dying dog that howled as it walked.

She had come back to the last of lands.

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XAVIER HERBERT

the agony— and the joy

That Novelists Live Lonely Lives is a truism—and like all truisms, not really true. What exactly is this Loneliness? Certainly, considering the fraternity generally, past and present, it is anything but Social, judging by what one has heard and read of the junketings, formal and informal, the sexual fun-and-games, the very fact that practically all live and have lived in the very centres of civilisation. I guess I'm the only novelist, at least in this country, who lives like a hermit, and am willing to confess that I do so probably for reasons more economic than social. I, the bushman bred, find it much easier to live remotely than most would, and even more pleasant, and certainly cheaper. If my success had been also a permanently financial one, who can say but what I might have had a crag-castle at Castlecrag or a penthouse in Paris, and but for my wife's being so quick on the draw, half a dozen spectacular wives by now?

It's no good saying the loneliness is a spiritual one, because the very nature of our calling is overcoming the crushing realities of life by re-creating it in worlds of our own. Maybe it's no good saying anything about it at all, and best to accept the old truism. I think I'll do that. Nevertheless, I shall go on with describing something of my own largely wretched existence as a novelist, by means of which, when I began this, I essayed to discover what was the truth of the matter.

As those who know something of me will be aware, I began my working life as a pharmaceutical chemist, and was going on to make myself a physician when the madness struck me down. So far I have publicised my existence only to that point. Not that I shall ever go into details about the rest of it, because it is too sordid a tale; and though I've never squibbed the unpleasant in my writing, I've dealt with it with the idea of making positive out of negative, which I fear I can do with my life as a novelist only by having that last great experience, the recording

of which is denied one and which, anyway, puts an end for good to the agony of creation.

I'll start early in my career, but by no means at the beginning.

I had already found the *metier* that perhaps had even been seeking me, stalking me, as manias do—the Australian Ethos, and knew where to find it, because I'd had my origins in such a place, in places where Australians still rub up against their enemy, Terra Australis, in all her might. I had tried a little city-dwelling, indeed tried it to the limit by working as a journalist. So I quickly learnt that Australian cities are not Australian, even much in geography, since spiritually, socially, economically, the people of them live back where their forebears came from, and that even the settled rural scene is false because of the natural compulsion of the immigrant to extirpate the alien environment. One had to go back to where things were much as they had been when our fathers turned up either dragging their leg-irons or wielding their cat-o'-nine-tails, where you had to look for snakes or black women in your bed before you got into it, could pot your dinner from the kitchen window, pot a blackfellow and cut off his ears to prove the worth of the knotches in the stock of your gun—which is to say, of course, to go back to what used to be called Our Empty North.

I was in what was generally then called Port Darwin when the population was only twelve hundred, "countin' Chows". Any others didn't count at all. Yet to serve that tiny community were two newspapers. So was it in the old days everywhere. Newspapers were not mere media for news, but for self-expression, particularly of the bold men who wrote, printed, sold them. Port Darwin's papers came out twice a week, one on Tuesdays, the other on Fridays, and were devoted largely to refuting what the other had published last. I happened to fall in with the bravo who ran Friday's paper, an oldish man of considerable

journalist experience in many parts and great general erudition, popularly known as The Dirty Bird, a name long since bestowed on him in print by his rival. I asked him for a job, simply for free board and lodging and the exercise of my "cacoethes scribendi", while I viewed the scene that was to become the backdrop to my maniacal dramas. Despite the fact that he liked me and the way I wrote, and needed me as much as I did him, I lasted only one day with him.

At the end of that first day we sat and drank the drink of the place and time, O.P. Rum and Limejuice. After telling of his rich journalistic life in other parts, he explained why he preferred to live and work here for not much more than he offered me as reward: "This is the Real Australia, boy. Everybody here's a Bastard, knows it, and glories in it. That's being Australian." I was excited, because that was my Ethos Idea. I then confessed to him what I'd been keeping dark till now, since Australians are deeply suspicious of anyone who has ideas at all, and particularly distrust writers, Australian writers, that is, since they don't have dealings with the others. I told him about the great novel I hoped to write about it. That fixed it. He fell silent. But it wasn't until next day, when I was about to settle down to work, that he tackled me: "About this idea of yours of writing a novel, son . . . have you ever known a novelist?" I had to say no. "Have you ever read the lives of famous novelists?" No. "Well," he said, "I'll give you the facts. The history of the novel is littered with the wrecks of novelists. No matter how successful any novelist ever became, he always ended up badly, hideously. The financially-unsuccessful ended in poor-houses or jails, the others in dead-houses as suicides, or in mad-houses, or at their writing desks, too tired and beaten to go on. Give it up while you've got a chance, lad . . . for once you get into it you'll never get out. It's madness. Give it up and I'll make you a first-class newspaperman . . . otherwise, get!" I got. Alternatively I became a railway navvy, inheriting a harem of young lubras from my predecessor who had died of a surfeit.

Well, **Capricornia** came out of that, of course—not a mouse out of a mountain, but a mountain out of a mouse. The history of the writing and publishing of the old book is fairly well known. However, I'd best tell that it constituted a struggle in penury of exactly ten years—which is why I've come to look on it as a Bastard Son and to run whenever anyone mentions it. The Dirty Bird, having died in the meantime, was spared seeing me go on the skids as he'd so wisely predicted.

Why didn't I return to my profession then and wax rich, or richer as a doctor, or grab one of the lucrative jobs as special writer offered me by great

dailies? Why didn't I enter politics as Member for the Northern Territory, when it was practically rigged for me? The Dirty Bird had the answer: "Once you get into it, you'll never get out. It's madness."

I'd become a novelist. I was quite famous. I was even rich for a while, owned a home with three dunnies, and none of them down the backyard, either, like all others I have had. But I reckoned I wasn't really good enough. I didn't have to be told that the technique of **Capricornia** was bad. So long a lapse was there between writing and publishing that I was able to anticipate any of the worst of my critics. **I must learn the technique of novel-writing before I could truly tell of the Ethos.** So I set to again, not to tackle the Ethos, but to write a novel for its own sake.

How long this job took in actual work I can't say, because a great war intervened, which for all my efforts to ignore it, eventually involved me, and curiously enough gave me the stuff for what I called my Experimental Piece. However, a good twenty years passed from the time I started digging for it till the day it was presented to the world as a finished thing in shiny red and gold. I called it **Of Mars, the Moon, and Destiny**. The title was supposed to be symbolic of Man, Woman, and Human Endeavor. Staid old Angus & Robertson, who first published it, changed the title to **Soldiers' Women**—"It'll sell better," they said. Although much maligned by some, I understand (I gave up reading reviews when I found out about reviewers), generally it has been acknowledged as flawless in technique. The English hailed it as classical even, and still sell it in large quantity, although they won't have a bar of me for anything else. That is the Accolade. Technique has long been the only interest the English have in books, having long since exhausted all possible ideas and styles themselves.

I had the technique—what next?

Soon after **Soldiers' Women** appeared, an interviewer, Rohan Rivett, asked me: "How comes a man of the open spaces like Xavier Herbert to write a huge treatise on Sydney wartime whores?" A very clever question. However, I never got round to answering it, because I took umbrage at the word whores. "Whores?" I demanded, "are you accusing me of having produced a work of pornography?" "Of course not," he replied. "But whore in the Greek is pornos," said I. "And pornography is a treatise on whores". Anyway, he would never have understood my Ethos. He was an Australian-city-man.

The next thing to do was to try myself out with the Ethos itself—in miniature. That was **Seven Emus**, actually published before **Soldiers' Women**, but really written afterward. I understand that

It was well and truly pissed on by a lot of critics. That didn't worry me, of course. The discovery I'd made that stopped me from reading reviews is that, for some people, pissing on things bigger than themselves is compulsive, as for puppy dogs. I was content. I saw what I could do with the spirit of the land, all-important in my dealings with the Australian Ethos. I also experimented therein with stylising, much in vogue at the time, and so got it out of my system.

Nothing left but the maximum opus itself now. But I was so scared of it that I took to aviation instead, judging that a clean and clever way of getting out of things. However, when the sub-consciously-planned crash eventuated, I "walked away from it", as they say, which convinced me that there was no getting out of it, that I had turned my brain as the Dirty Bird had warned me—and so head-down, arse-up, and the long, long haul of agony.

I had been at it for six years, with three hundred thousand words written over and over till I could not bear even to correct the final pull off the typewriter, with nothing left but to have my characters dragged to the destinies they had created for themselves through my fevered hermit's imaginings—when I became afraid! I've suffered towards the end of a big work before, as I guess everyone of us does—but never yet had been afraid. What of? It wasn't of lacking the power to end it as I'd kept it up. No—it was whether, after all, **it was worth ending**. How could I tell? No one had read it but myself, and never as a whole, never as anything but that final draft on the typewriter. I lived all the while in the bush, utterly alone, coming home only occasionally to stock up with rations. I wouldn't ask my wife for an opinion, nor she want to give it. We both once knew only too well a man whose wife told him he was a genius when she asked her; and he only missed the mad-house by having a coronary.

I had no friends to ask whose judgment I could trust. I wouldn't trust the judgment of a publisher or agent, because they're in the game only for the dough, dough, dough, and are really the natural enemies of a true novelist. I couldn't ask a fellow writer. Lunatics don't consult each other. I was pretty far gone in desperation, when probably as the result of some secret "Davvening"* on the part of my wife, Sadie, a Hand stretched forth to me in my wilderness.

Do you know Dr. L. T. Hergenhan? He was editor of "Australian Literary Studies", is now Reader in English at the University of Queensland, Brisbane. Now how did I, the bushman, the Scrub

Bull or Death Adder, as they call the types who lurk away in lonely places, come to get mixed up with a Doctor of Philosophy? I'd always reckoned the Akkoes as my most contemptuous critics.

To my great surprise I received a letter from Dr. Hergenhan, then on the staff of the University of Tasmania, pretty well three thousand miles away from me in man-measured distance and immeasurably distant otherwise, according to my bushwhacker's view. He asked if there were extant any record of the speech I had made at the Adelaide Arts Festival of 1962, on "The Writing of Capricornia". I was delighted, because very proud of that speech, the actual burden of which was to declare my love for Sadie Norden, the Jewish girl who locked me in the garret in London slums and made me write the book (you see, the madness is not necessarily all one's own) and was sad that so little notice had been taken of it. Eight years had elapsed since I'd made the speech.

But delighted though I was, I had to act the Scrub Bull. Anyone but someone who had been prayed for in Hebrew could not have stood up to my insults. Laurie Hergenhan was actually interested in them, seemed to encourage them, at last rose in my estimation to the point where I had to declare him "The One Just God in Sodom". I was the one who was spared.

Due to more secret religious rites on Sadie's part, I guess, Laurie was appointed to the University of Queensland at the beginning of this year. That knocked a couple of thousand miles off my isolation. In my state, of course, I wouldn't admit despair, wouldn't discuss my work, let alone show it. Nor would anything induce me to go down into those non-Australian parts till I've declared the Ethos and so roundly that I guess I won't be wanted there. But still Sadie was lighting her Shabbas Candles. So it happened that Laurie Hergenhan came to Townsville to attend a University Convention. Another thousand miles clipped off—and only a couple of hundred left to catch up with me. What's a couple of hundred miles in these parts? I think Laurie would have walked them, if necessary. He didn't have to. There happened to be in Townsville at the time one of the few men who has had the courage to face me for a long while. He met Laurie, hauled him into his car, whizzed him up here, dropped him at my front door. Lord!

Well, there it is. I never had time to burn or hide the script. Laurie is a big man and used to authority. He simply seized the script and sat down—for days—and read and read and read it; while I sat outside gnawing my knuckles bare. I did try getting inside a couple of times to tell him it was a waste of time. But Sadie was in league

* Form of prayer in Hebrew.

with him. She shrieked and he roared. I mumbled weakly, "Yessir," and got out.

When he'd done with it, he said, "Get on with it!" and to make sure I didn't burn the mass in hand, the Akkoes of the University made arrangements for me to get my hands on a photocopier, to my amazement and shame in my bush-bastardy.

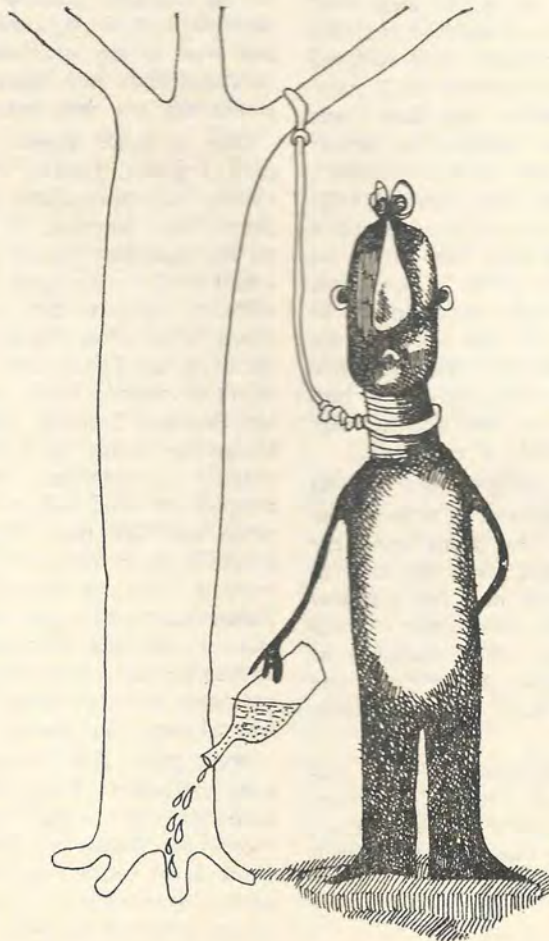
I did as told. Since then he has been snatching it from me as I do it, with Sadie his watch-dog. But there's no need for snatching or watching. I am happier in doing the job now than since I was a tyro. Why is this? I take it that as a tyro one is sustained by patronage. It is when the responsibility of kingship in your craft is thrust upon you that the agony sets in. Even those who assume divine right with the crown must have a bad time, crouched in ivory towers, justifying their botching with the plaudits of sycophants.

Hence it would seem that the secret of keeping sane to the end and then passing on happily is to **remain a tyro**. The trouble, of course, is to find a

patron as dedicated to what you're doing as yourself. Madmen are solitaires. When two loonies are found doing the same thing they're taken out of the padded cell and put to work in the garden, and become whole again. But that patron? Perhaps you can come by one like mine only through a sort of occultism such as I've suggested. Anyway, to whoever and whatever produced Laurie Hergenhan out of the hat of eternity, I am most truly thankful . . . Amen!

COMMENT BY LAURIE HERGENHAN:

As Xavier anticipated, my first impulse on reading this was to shove my head in a bag. If I stick it out briefly it is not to act the publicist, but to speak personally out of my deep regard and admiration for the man and the novelist. Having read Xavier's "The Agony—and the Joy" those who appreciate his stature as a writer will have high expectations of his final work. When the time comes others may find it thrust upon them.



PETER KAY

this was the way the world would go

A woman has to be proud to shake her head at food that is offered to her when she is hungry. My mother's sister, Rose, had that kind of pride; my mother didn't have it. I discovered this difference between them on the night that Aunt Sarah arrived at our house with the carton of groceries.

Aunt Sarah was my father's rich widowed sister. Before the Depression she had been running up frocks for working class girls at Marrickville. When the "crash" came, she abandoned them for the wives of those men whom history invariably inoculates against its most rigorous disasters.

Not being one of history's chosen, my father used to speak disparagingly to his sister of her affluent clientele. And if it was melancholy to see his sweet temper suppurating beyond all hope of healing, it was disenchanting to see Aunt Sarah temporarily soothe his pain with a few of those pound notes that the wives of the inoculated had passed on to her.

My father, however, wasn't with us on the night that Aunt Sarah brought us the carton of groceries. Indeed, it was partly his absence that prompted her to come, that and our hunger. For we were all hungry that night with that vintage '33 hunger, which meant that our stomachs were only half full and our mouths so dry and fatty that they craved the palliative of something enduringly sweet. My mother's sister, Aunt Rose, had been able to provide us with a dinner of sorts: chopped-up butcher's sausage, a spoonful of peppered mashed potatoes and a piece of bread and dripping. For those who could take it there was also a cup of sugarless tea.

Aunt Rose and my mother seemed to have an infinite capacity for taking it. After our meal they stood against the sink-bench sipping the sugarless tea. It was while they were standing there, Aunt Rose so still and troubled, my mother so utterly resigned, that I was reminded of a photograph of them taken when they were girls. But there

were so many photographs of them in the cardboard box in the low-boy that I couldn't place which one it was. My memory was straining to match them with one of those sepia prints when one of the children called out, and they each moved to the table and took up a new pose which momentarily diverted me. It wasn't a photograph that they reminded me of now, but an illustration in "Girls' Own Annual" which showed two harassed school teachers who, with their pupils, had just missed the last train. Aunt Rose, with her straight back, her chignonned hair, her high-necked blouse, supported the illusion better than my mother whose swelling figure, long dishevelled hair, and varicose feet spilling out of frayed slippers tended on reflection to make the comparison rather scandalous.

My mother was to give birth to my youngest brother in a few days and she had about her that look that insists that nine months is an eternity without benefit of that Beatific Vision that she hoped for. Aunt Rose, on the other hand, was the trim, virginal pragmatist with hands ever charged with the fierce energies that possessed her, and eyes too replete with reflections of what was in front of them to give hints of a vision sought.

I cannot guess what Aunt Rose was seeing or thinking as she moved back to the sink sipping her tea with tight lips. Paradoxically, at that moment her eyes were vague and withdrawn. It was as though she was compulsively held by a surreal of all the misery about her, and it frightened the boy that I was to see one as strong as she quailing before its spectres. I felt relieved when my mother slip-slopped across to her.

"You mustn't blame yourself, Rose," she said.

As she spoke she raised her hand to Rose's shoulder. As though she were fearful of the injection of pity that was being offered to her, Rose pulled away, and I was instantly reminded again of that photograph that had eluded my

memory just before. My efforts to recall its original now were quickly dispelled by the brusqueness of Rose's tone as she turned on my mother.

"Who else is there to blame?" she said. "It was my idea that you all come here."

My mother flinched before her sister's look of fierce candour. There had lately been a tension between them that constantly erupted in encounters like this, and always it was my mother who went down before the other's strength. A sharp word from Rose was enough to atrophy all the arguments lodged in her mind. This was the case now. She could well have insisted that, after being evicted from their cottage at Marrickville, she and my father were only too glad to accept Rose's invitation to come and live with her. She could have pointed out also that my father had done little about trying to get a job to help provide food for all of us. She could have said much more but, wounded by the barb of Rose's rhetoric, she had turned away and sat down with an ineffable weariness that commanded tenderness and pity.

Even Rose was affected by my mother's mute stillness as she sat there by the table staring at the children. Her fierce eyes blinked at her with a rare light of sympathy. Presently, she edged across and stood over her and stroked her hair.

"Don't worry," she said. "I'll get an advance on my salary tomorrow."

My mother raised her sallow face to her, and in the look she gave her was recognition of the assault that Rose was making on her pride. For Rose never sought advances, never borrowed, was opposed to cash orders and all other forms of credit devised by the chosen to relieve the distress of the poor.

"Something will turn up, you see," my mother said, unoriginally. Her voice was like a long, heaving sigh. She stood up and gazed about the room, her eyes flickering as though they were no longer able to bear what they were looking on.

"Are you all right?" Rose said.

My mother laughed wearily.

"I think I'll lie down for a while," she said.

She gently put aside Rose's outstretched hand and dragged her heavy body to the door. There, she turned suddenly.

"I went for a walk this afternoon," she said.

"Oh?" Rose said.

"I wanted to see a chap."

Rose nodded solemnly. She didn't have to ask questions, for every morning since we had come to live with her, my father had gone off mumbling that he had to see a chap. From the first night that he had come home with a few drinks in him, Aunt Rose had been sceptical of this chap's existence, by my mother, if she had doubts had remained silent about them. Now she had been up

the street and her eyes had seen something more harrowing than unfulfilled promises.

"There's no chap," she said, and, as she turned full on to Rose, the light traced the tears running down her face. For a moment, her eyes met her sister's in an embrace beyond all rational knowledge. Then she blinked and pressed her lips together to stop the foolishness of tears, and her face became hard and unyielding and bitter like her sister's. It was as though that walk up the street had suddenly qualified her for admission to that special order of bitterness of which Rose had been the superior for years.

Wearily, she turned and shuffled off into the hall. Rose didn't follow her. For some moments she stood where she was, staring at the spot that my mother had just vacated. From within came the sound of slippers dragging and flopping over the linoleum. When at last it ceased, Rose turned to the younger children and ushered them out to play. Then, with a great burst of energy, she set about cleaning up the kitchen.

It was remarkable how her mood and her whole demeanour changed in the next few minutes. From being downcast and preoccupied she proceeded to an exhilarated state of brightness and energy. It was as though my mother's admission regarding the chap, and that extraordinary embrace of her eyes, had relieved Rose of a knowledge of the world's truth which at times she did not feel strong enough to bear alone.

Happiness, however, is not permitted to people like Rose for long, for they are not prepared to pay for it at its current price. The disinterestedness of their love, their belief in such alienated virtues as loyalty and independence, their rigid adherence to absolute moral principles, make peace-dispelling conflict inevitable.

On this occasion, Aunt Rose's exhilarating illusion of happiness lasted about half an hour. It ended when she became aware of a car horn sounding outside the house.

The only person who called on us in a car was my father's sister, Aunt Sarah. A couple of minutes after the horn proclaimed her arrival, she came into the kitchen carrying the carton of groceries. In a royal purple frock and hat, with a fur flung carelessly across her shoulders, she looked like a movie star who has just dashed away from the set to visit the local orphans. And if there were no cameras to record her grand entrance, there were seven pairs of flickering eyes gathering images to store against the days when life would be seen to be mostly a matter of memories.

"Hello, everybody," she called as she came in. On the table, with an exaggerated sigh, she placed the carton of groceries. She smoothed her dress

with the most engaging grace, then slumped breathlessly into the nearest chair. For a moment she fluttered her eyes comically at the ceiling as though she were about to expire, and the children laughed shyly.

"I'm not as young as I used to be," she puffed, her blue eyes rolling this time with an invitation to someone to deny that statement.

No one did. We were a quiet, undemonstrative family, whose realism at times bordered on rudeness. It was left to Aunt Rose to be our spokesman on this occasion.

"With your weight you shouldn't be carrying heavy loads like that, Sarah," she said.

For an instant, Sarah started, then she laughed, the jolly laugh of the fat. It was as though she were proclaiming that she didn't carry all that fat around for nothing: its thickness had immuned her to insult and enabled her to survive the depredations of competitors on her exclusive flock. When she stopped laughing she presented to Aunt Rose a disarming look that she had found somewhere on the other side of malice.

"Anne sounded so desperate when she rang," she said with measured civility.

"Anne rang?" Aunt Rose said. There was just the edge of outrage glinting in her eyes and voice.

Aunt Sarah was too sharp not to perceive it. She drew herself up in an absurd parody of indignation.

"I'm naturally very concerned when my brother's children are hungry," she said.

"I have been concerned for a long time," Aunt Rose countered quickly.

This was a thrust meant to open old wounds. Aunt Sarah had always been rather indulgent of my father's weakness, and earlier she had been inclined to close her eyes to the hardships endured by my mother. At one time, there had been a suggestion of bad management on my mother's part, but since we had moved to the eastern suburbs, she had seen and heard enough of my father to realise where the truth lay. However, at the moment, the air was too charged with questioning of loyalties and duties for complete compromise. So Sarah presented to Rose a face that was composed, yet not submissive.

"I'm grateful," she said simply.

Aunt Rose, however, was beyond the lures of splinness. She stood up, her eyes glinting darkly, her face pale, her mouth tense. Gone was the illusion of happiness that she had been experiencing just a few moments before. She was back now in that moral world where she lived alone, smarting with the outrage of betrayal.

"You don't have to be grateful," she said. "I'd do anything for my sister."

Sarah smiled graciously, but in her smile there was a foreboding of triumph. Sensing Rose's discomfort and her own advantage, she too stood up and began to rummage in the carton for more tangible offerings than rent, a few scraps of food and austere affection.

"So we each have our motives," she said, placing on the table an enormous leg of ham.

Children who are hungry are blind to the subtleties of malice. At the sight of the ham we all made appropriate noises of astonishment, and Sarah, encouraged, like a magician pulling unthought of objects from a hat, rapidly placed alongside the ham tins of preserved fruit, jams, packets of breakfast food, a bottle of sweets, and such staples as flour, sugar, butter and tea. To clinch her performance, she finally took from the carton a grocer's tin of biscuits which she brought down heavily on the table. Calling for a knife, she cut the seal, and, with all the solemnity of a priest giving communion, she distributed the sweet wafers of mammon to us children.

Just then my mother came into the kitchen. She had swept back her hair and put on Rose's good dressing gown. Her face glowed from the hard washing she had given it to remove evidence of her tears. Looking across at Sarah dispensing her gifts, her eyes gleamed with an immeasurable sadness from a region of newly made compromise.

Sarah looked at her, a little apprehensively I thought. She had not yet settled into that attitude of respect that was to characterise her later relationships with her.

"I came as soon as I could," she said.

"Tomorrow would have done," my mother said.

She turned nervously to Rose who stood with her eyes downcast, as though she could not bear to look on a ceremony that so desecrated her austere world.

"Sit down, Rose," my mother said. "You must be tired."

Without looking at my mother, Rose sat. For just a moment, she raised her eyes stonily to all the food on the table.

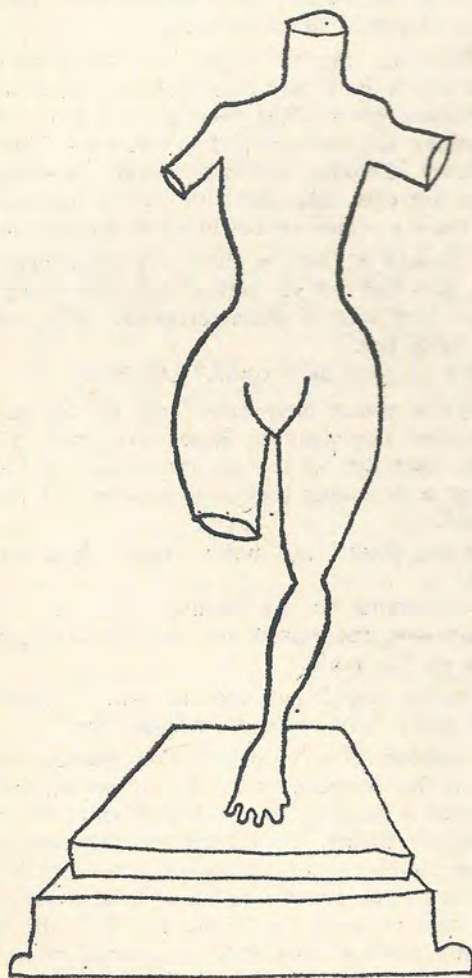
"She never stops," my mother said to Sarah. "I don't know what we'd do without her."

Sarah nodded. She could be vulgar, ostentatious, ruthless if the occasion called for it, but she was not without a capacity to see the good in others. And now, as though acknowledging the truth of what my mother said and wishing to honour it, she picked up the tin of biscuits and came around to their side of the table. First, she held the tin out to my mother who took a biscuit from it. Then she offered it to Rose who, after looking down at its contents, raised her dark eyes to Sarah and shook her head.

Sarah walked away as though there were no significance at all in Rose's rejection of her offering. Not so my mother. Who more than she knew the desolate world in which her sister lived. When Rose shook her head, she sensed its starkness and pain. Impulsively, she moved over to the side of Rose's chair and put her hand across its back so that her fingers just touched Rose's shoulder. The moment they did so, Rose started and leaned forward as though anxious to avoid her touch...

And suddenly, looking at them at that moment, I remembered that photograph of them that my

memory had been seeking earlier that night. It had been taken when they were teen-age girls, not long after their mother had died. In it Rose was sitting in a high-backed chair, and my mother was standing beside her. My mother's hand rested on the back of the chair, and Rose's shoulder came forward to the camera as though she disdained contact with anyone who was weaker than she; and, just as they were now, her eyes were wide and sombre as though she had known even then that this was the way the world would go.



LEON SLADE **sanctuary**

It was green. All trams are green in Melbourne, but the first thing I ever noticed and recall now was their greenness. Grass is green. Trees are green. But when I think of grass or trees, I don't think of green then trees or grass; the green comes last. Green is Melbourne trams. We wore black caps when we wore them. The Prefects wore green caps. We called them insects. In the mating season we always wore our caps. In the centre of the school ground a cypress, fifty feet tall or more, bred its annual crop of magpies. Angry parents made that season a daily Dunkirk. We were glad of caps, particularly when they swept close enough to send the school colors flying. Over the top of the cap a green, gold and purple ribbon. The school houses named for the local rivers and one color for each house. There were four so they run in red to make the number. Let us follow the Best, in Latin, on the crest.

It was a number nine. The tram I had to catch outside our red brick high school was a number nine. We bunched at the stop and as a green bug lurched into view about a quarter of a mile away, the contest began to see who could pick the number. Nines crossed the railway line and dropped me near the bus terminal. Tens swung west and headed in the opposite direction. My coarse suitcoat was clinging to my sweaty shirt. The trousers chafed my crotch. My school-tie grasped at my throat. I tucked my rolled cap into my pocket and hurled the heavy kitbag under the seat, slumping on top. Inside, snapped the conductor, only full fares in the smoker. So we crowded the inside compartment, thrown together in a stew. At the old Fitzroy racecourse, I'd had enough.

On the dusty road near the Healesville racecourse I pondered fallen bleeding hearts under the elms. I recognised the sound of angry wings, ducked my head. The day I left my cap off, they drew blood. I picked up a dead stick and hurried

back to breakfast with the magpie watching, keeping its distance.

Once upon a time there was a Managing Director. His Company was highly profitable and ran well. Everything he did, he did well: he worked well, ate well, slept well, he had married well. But now his son practically ran the Company and was the spirit that kept it running, day to day. What was worse, his son had built up a team of high powered executives which not only kept the Managing Director divorced from everyday activities but which spoke a language that was foreign to him: Input, throughput, feedback. He was absolutely offput. Everyday since he could remember he had driven to the office at eight o'clock, lunched in his office, dined at his nearby club, driven home about eight o'clock and gone straight to bed.

Outside the hotel, I stand in many places, watching, but not seeing, bleeding hearts and struggling insects swirl in a brown flushed gutter.

One night, instead of going to his club, on impulse he caught a tram outside his office. He stayed on until the line crossed another. He got off and caught the intersecting tram, riding until it crossed another set of tracks. Again and again. After several hours, he happened to pass his office, so he got off, drove home and, for the first time as far as he could remember, went to bed after midnight. He slept late, arriving at the office in time for morning tea. No one missed him. So what had started from an impulse became his new routine. Nightly he rode the trams without apparent purpose or destination. Soon tram drivers and conductors all over the city and suburbs knew him, spoke to him, had long conversations with him. In due course the newspapers discovered him and a reporter interviewed him, sharing part of one night's travels. When he asked him why he rode the trams, the Managing Director told him that he liked riding on trams. The interview

never made the papers. They left him riding his trams and only the tram drivers and conductors knew about him and he lived happily ever after.

I stepped into the smoker and sat near the open doorway. He didn't say a word but just sauntered up to me. Silently I handed him fivepence. He gave me a clipped pink ticket and turned away. The others stayed inside. I don't know what they thought and I couldn't hear what they said. The blood was rushing in my ears. It cost me a fifteen minute walk in the later afternoon summer sun but it cost him, too.

It was a nice red. Dinner done. Dishes done. We sipped our Hunter Valley Red (1966) and pulled some poems apart. What's this about? he asked me. It's a rape, I said. He lifted his eyebrows, overshadowed by his muttonchops and beard. I assured him that it wasn't autobiographical. But you don't mention the rape. I suggest it, I said, that's what the rough weather and the rough passage bit is all about. And the food, the total involvement of the senses. I think you should spell it out, he said. You have to consider the reader, too, you know. That's the mistake everybody makes, I said, especially you critics.

Poetry has got nothing to do with the reader. Poetry is the writer. If it's not the writer, it's no good. Don't ask what the reader gets or feels or understands, ask is this the writer and, if it is, that's all you can ask. I topped up his glass.

We drained the red. I think I'd better be off, he said. I'll drive you home. Well, actually, I have to go back to the University. I left my bike in the car park. So we drove to the University. On the way we pulled into a milk bar. I have to get breakfast, he said. I gave him forty cents. Get me some Benson's, if you don't mind. I let the motor tick over. I watched the green, amber, red cycle tick over on the corner once, twice, again and again. Cars pulled in, pulled out. He handed me my cigarettes.

He showed me the back entrance. There it is, he said. I pulled up. Kingsley aimlessly moved towards his bike. It was bolted to a long thin pole in the grass around the car park. It had a basket on the handlebars to cart his loaf of bread and breakfast ham and a book of poems by Philip Larkin. He felt in his pockets for his bicycle clips. It had three-speed gears. I drove off. It was red.

Floating Fund

Overland has always cost more to produce than we receive from sales, subscriptions and advertising. We are therefore very grateful to the contributors to our floating fund, without which we would long ago have sunk. However, this fiftieth issue is more than twice the cost of a normal issue and our receipts are less than double. The deficit occurs because, although we are not able to pay our contributors a professional fee, we have always paid them something for their work. The increased amount of original writing in this issue increases the cost, and we hope that readers will show their appreciation by giving what they can afford. Donations received for the last two numbers are shown below.

\$18: JRL; \$13: MW; \$10: KW MM NP AH; \$8.87: JC; \$8: PMC AD ML; \$6: OR; \$5: JL JMC EW JD; \$4: POB JR ER DM NS; \$3: RM BGB EJ GM KS RS JL JH JR PM MH MH GS EHF DR MM LC MM JJV GP MM MJO NN MM MW PA EGF AH RR POC HW RC JM JE MFG JEM DB RN AM; \$2: GM HF JC DB GF LB DD MF MB HVS MW JJH JG ER LF SD GEM JZ JJ AP RB DF DM MM GP HT DB EC SK NS AW JB KH DM DW LB; \$1.50: HP LF HAH; \$1: JA LC MF MB JR BH MF CB CT NN MC JS JT CP MB LM MLB JSS LL HHW JC MS JB JD RAW GG MG GS AC JG JR DA DM MC ADH; \$0.87: JC; \$0.50: LF MMcD JC MN ME JH KR CG DB; \$0.40: GA; \$0.05: BA NG. Sinking Fund Total (issue 50)—\$384.14.

This fiftieth issue of *Overland* is presented to the editor, Stephen Murray-Smith, as a tribute to the perseverance with which he has kept the journal afloat, the enthusiasm and generosity with which he has encouraged contributors, and the flair which he has brought to the task of editorship. We have approached a number of leading Australian writers, both new and established, to contribute to this issue, and we would like to express our appreciation of their willingness to co-operate. We would also like to express our gratitude to both the Commonwealth Literary Fund, which has enabled us to pool the normal grant for two issues in order to produce this celebratory edition, and to our advertisers, who make the difference between debt and bankruptcy. Most of all, of course, we would like to thank our readers and subscribers, with whose continuing help, moral and financial, we hope to go ahead to complete our second half century.

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Another little magazine celebrating an anniversary recently was *Quadrant*, which has now been appearing for fifteen years. Any publication which keeps afloat for this time deserves congratulations, and *Quadrant* over these years has served Australian literature well by providing publishing opportunities for new poetry and short stories. Its anniversary issue contains, as well as retrospective essays by its foundation editor, James McAuley, and by A. D. Hope and John Douglas Pringle, a memoir by an *Overland* contributor of long standing, David Martin. McAuley in his essay restates his editorial belief in parliamentary institutions and the common law—"than which we know no better school of freedom and civility and prudence"—and castigates those who are attempting to develop a counter-culture outside our established institutions. His magazine might have served its founders' intentions better had it been more willing to fulfil the properly conservative role of examining existing institutions critically to ascertain whether they do in fact any longer serve their original functions.

*

A letter from Mr. R. D. Piesse, the Director of the Australian Conservation Foundation, which arrived too late for inclusion in *Overland* 49, adds a footnote to Nancy Cato's article on Cooloola. Mr. Piesse explains the background to the Foundation's statement during the Mining Warden's hearing that it would no longer be interested in the area as a national park if even one mining lease were granted. Mr. Piesse explains that "if

our reply had been in the affirmative the mining company's counsel intended to follow this up by asking which of the mining leases we would agree to. In fact, the mining company's idea of a national park was that of a reserved area with eleven special mining leases within it. Our all or nothing reply reflects our view that the quality of any national park depends upon its size and the integrity of the protection afforded the whole . . ." Mr. Piesse points out that there was no difference of opinion between the Foundation and Dr. Harrold on this question. They both agreed that they would in fact fight for Cooloola as long as there was one remnant to be saved, but the prime object was to preserve the area as a whole by preventing any mining licence being granted.

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The latest award of the Grace Leven Prize for Poetry, provided under the will of the poet William Baylebridge, has been made to Bruce Beaver for his publication "Letters to Live Poets". The award, valued at \$200, is made by the Perpetual Trustee Company, assisted by the recommendation of a committee, the present members of which are Douglas Stewart and Professor Leonie Kramer. For an author to be eligible for the prize he must be either Australian born and writing as an Australian or naturalised and resident here for not less than ten years immediately preceding publication of the work. The will also provides that the works considered for the award shall be considered purely on their merits as works of art.

*

The latest episodes in Australia's long-playing censorship farce are the banning of Alexander Buzo's play, "Rooted", in Wagga Wagga, Goulburn, and now possibly Wodonga, and the prosecution in Queensland of Bill Sutton, a bookseller, for selling Phillip Roth's "Portnoy's Complaint". A campaign for funds is being conducted to meet the costs of Mr. Sutton's defence. Donations to this campaign may be sent to Mr. G. Goulet, C/o. Peoples Bookshop, 205 Brunswick Street, Valley, 4006.

*

This year will see the fifth award by the Foundation for Australian Literary Studies for the best book published during the preceding year and dealing with any aspect of Australian life. The Foundation has set aside \$500 for each of the next five years for the purpose of endowing this award, which is the only one in Australia in which all books come into competition. The editor of *Overland*, Stephen Murray-Smith, is one of the three judges for the award. J.M.

MANNING CLARK *transplant*

Whenever the European transplanted his civilisation he provided labor to lay the foundations of that new civilisation either by using the indigenous population as slaves or by importing his own slaves or semi-slaves. In Australia all attempts to use the Aborigines as workers failed. That was more disastrous for them than for the Europeans, simply because the latter deprived the Aborigines of their natural environment, while the natives either could not or would not adopt any other way of life than their own.

The Aborigines became parasites in the towns, while in the country districts they made futile attempts to stop the spread of European settlement. So the Aboriginal problem became the first fruit of European colonisation. It is still with us. Indeed no one has yet shown what way of life it is possible for the Aborigines to adopt other than imitating the Europeans. No one, that is, has answered the question: what if they do not want to dance to the white man's music?

The other fruits of European colonisation all flowed in part from the kind of labor used to lay the foundation of civilisation. The first labor force was convict or semi-slave labor. Approximately 168,000 convicts were transported to eastern Australia between 1788 and 1852. Their legacy to posterity was indelible. Their labor created the early public and private wealth in eastern Australia. They built the roads, bridges, churches, schools and the law courts.

Cheap convict labor was also the main creator of the wealth of families such as the Macarthurs, the Wentworths, the Blaxlands, the Lawsons, the McLeays, the Campbells—all those families who by the use of convicts were able to create in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania the outward and visible signs of a plantation society.

But in comparison with the plantation houses erected by Negro slave labor in the south of the United States, or the country mansions erected by

serf labor in Russia, the Macarthur mansion at Camden Park may appear almost crude and certainly lacking in grandeur.

The other legacies of civilisation were social. The least of these was the effect on English as it came to be spoken in Australia. The convicts enriched and enlivened the vocabulary. They also may have made their own contribution to the development of a distinctive Australian accent. There is probably some connection between the cockney vowels, the high proportion of convicts from the London area, and the development of Australian English. But climate and environment probably put the finishing touches to what the "old dart" had begun.

Climate and environment certainly made their own contribution to the other legacy of the convict period. That was the great excess of males over females. In 1841 in New South Wales (which then included Queensland and Victoria) the men outnumbered the women by four to one—with a much higher ratio in the country districts. That was the demographic setting, as it were, for male domination, or for the building of a man's world, where, as Henry Lawson pointed out, there was "no place for a woman".

Dispersion of settlement and the relative absence of women in country districts put a premium on the masculine qualities of physical strength and courage. They also contributed towards the creation of a society in which men seemed to reduce women to the status of kitchen slaves who bred children, but were not worthy of being admitted on a footing of equality into the man's world.

Yet paradoxically in the nineteenth century those movements which promised to liberate women and children from the tyranny of the father, or the tyranny of men, never flourished in the Australian colonies. Neither Fourierism nor Owenism had any substantial following. Industrial civilisation rather than any political or social

ideology was to create the conditions favorable to the liberation of women from domineering men and the domination of the Australian bush—or rather it was to present them with the opportunity should they wish to take it.

It is possible that this early convict period left one other permanent mark on the Australian. During that period the giants of English, Irish and Scottish puritanism and philistinism invaded the Australian bush and the Australian towns. Indeed it was this coming of Irish Jansenism and English puritanism which helps to explain the great strength of these movements, and why sabbatarianism, temperance, early closing and censorship of books had such conspicuous success.

Work, frugality, sobriety, industry and purity were held up to them as "ideals which would bring them success and happiness in this world and the prize of salvation in the life of the world to come". As happens so frequently in the transplanting of a civilisation the more extravagant manifestations of such movements were transported to the colonies and waxed very strong in such cities as Melbourne and Adelaide, casting the former into a mould of what was later aptly called "sodden rectitude" and the latter into "dry rectitude".

That probably explains why the huge concentrations of population in the capital cities submitted to the conformers, the frowners and the Mrs. Grundys in an environment which seemed designed for gaiety and light. Hence, too, the problem for posterity of how to dispense with a way of life that survived long after most men had abandoned all hope of reward in some future time and place, for practising such austerity and conformism in this world.

So while the Americans had the twin evils of slavery in the south and Calvinism in the north, the Australians had those lesser evils of convict semi-slavery and British philistinism. It is possible that it was the very mildness of these evils in Australia that helps to explain why some observers have always found Australia rather dull and unexciting, and why no major literature has emerged here.

Serfdom in Russia helped to fashion Gogol, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy; Negro slavery in America contributed towards the flowering of southern literature in this century, while that agony of a morality without a faith produced Hawthorne, Melville and James, as well as such historians as Prescott and Parkman.

One other fact influenced human behavior. They had the horse, which might have made its own contribution to the confidence and cocksureness of the "dinkum Aussie". With such limited equipment as the hoe, the plough and the mill in Aus-

tralia up to the discovery of gold, men had to create wealth by the labor of their hands and try to leave their mark on a weird and harsh country.

It is possible that the sense of man's impotence before the forces of nature matured in the Australian a sardonic view of the world—or rather the view that nothing human beings ever did could ever make any substantial difference to the lot of man. The bond and free came to man's estate at a time when belief in God was disappearing off the face of the earth.

So unlike those other nomads in the Middle East who when faced with a hostile physical environment and man's cruelty and stupidity turned to God and sought divine aid to rescue them from their great folly, in the Australian bush men rarely looked to God to relieve them from their afflictions. Nor were they any more inclined to accept that promise of the European revolutionaries that man could become like God. The early Australian in the days before the steam engine and the rail had to come to terms with man's impotence—with man's failure.

That was probably why just over half a century ago the sons and grandsons of those men who planted civilisation in the wilds of Australia were so deeply moved by the events at Gallipoli. That was something they could understand—human heroism and glory ending in defeat and failure. That was probably why, when bond and free workers and their descendants gathered at Maitland near Newcastle in New South Wales at a concert in May 1843, they really understood the singer when he sang for the first time the words of the song "Billy Barlow in Australia". He was singing their subject—the story of a man who was down on his luck. That was something they could understand.

The free workers had begun to emigrate well before that. Between 1831 and the discovery of gold in 1851 some 250,000 of them emigrated to the Australian colonies. Between 1851 and 1861 the total population increased from 437,665 to 1,168,149. This discovery of gold in 1851 has sometimes been seen as the beginning of a new era in the history of the country.

W. C. Wentworth was fond of saying that gold precipitated a colony into a nation. The radicals and cultural chauvinists, and all latter-day believers in the uniqueness of **homo Australiansis**, were fond of saying that the gold decade strengthened those two great articles in the creed of the bushman—equality and mateship.

The diggers had to come to terms with the country like their predecessors in the convict days. Most of them had to learn to live on as men who had been cheated out of great expectations—as men who had hoped for the lucky strike but had

often known only failure. They had to settle down in a hurry, and so strengthened a tendency which had begun in the pre-gold period, that tendency to improvise, that tendency of men who saw themselves as everlasting strangers and intruders in a land where barbarism seemed always at their very back door.

By an odd irony gold speeded up developments which were in time to destroy the old bush culture. It ended the transport of convicts to eastern Australia in 1852. It led to the introduction of steam communications between Britain and the Australian colonies. It led to the introduction of the railway in 1854 and the electric telegraph in 1859.

The coming of industrial civilisation was probably the most decisive event in the history of the country since the immigration of the Aborigine some 30,000 years ago, and the invasion by the white man in 1788: as Henry Lawson put it, the iron rail tethered the "mighty bush" to the world.

Industrial civilisation strengthened the tendency to urbanisation in Australia so rapidly that by the twentieth century the Australian was left with a bush culture, and a whole mythology about the virtues and skills of "simple boys" from the bush

while the believers in this mythology were in the main city dwellers. The industrialisation of Australia also coincided with the period in which the native born began to outnumber the immigrants.

Industrialism proved to be a much greater leveller than the bushman's creed of equality and mateship, simply by removing the material differences between men. Industrialism was also the last of the great European and American influences on Australia. Ironically it was another European event, the Second World War (itself possibly a product of the contradictions in capitalist society) which led to the first large-scale immigration of Europeans not from the British Isles.

Finally, it has been a European event—the withdrawal of the old European empires from East and South-East Asia—which has raised sharply the whole question of the survival of European civilisation in Australia just at a time when the over-ripeness of affluence may be rotting the will or the power to resist a third wave of invaders. One wonders whether in time they, too, would be shaped by the spirit of the place, as have their predecessors, into something like a "dinkum Aussie".

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If you have an art-loving friend or relation there is really only one present for him—the just released, new and expanded version of Bernard Smith's **Australian Painting**. The survey ranges from 1788 down to 1970: historically, it's fascinating, and the 266 plates (60 of them in full colour) are wonderfully illuminating; but for many people the most exciting part will be that given to developments during the past decade: four new chapters and 65 illustrations assess what has been happening during the 1960s. Of the first edition, **Australian Book Review** said: "It is undoubtedly the best Australian art book ever produced". Ten years—and many art books—later, we still believe this to be true. The recommended price is \$17.50

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RUSSEL WARD

reply to Humphrey McQueen

Mr. McQueen's reply (Overland 48) to my review of his book refutes convincingly none of the criticisms I made of it—as can be seen by anyone who cares to read carefully his "New Britannia" with my review and his reply in hand. It would therefore be pointless to reply to his reply and so ad infinitum, and excruciatingly boring for Overland readers. He does, however, introduce new matter by attacking the integrity of my book "The Australian Legend".

Here is my answer, but first I am sincerely sorry for one sentence in my review. I wrote, among other things, "In the McCarthyist climate of Australia during the 1950s, when the book ["The Australian Legend"] was written, no decent person would publicly identify another as a Communist. Secret police pimps and their well-wishers suffered no such inhibitions".

The last sentence was inspired purely by the memory of events in those times. It never entered my head that Mr. McQueen might take it as a personal innuendo. I now see that, in context, the sentence was capable of such an interpretation. I do not and never have entertained such a thought about him and I apologise for the unintentionally offending words.

Mr. McQueen's attack on me hinges on his second paragraph which reads in part:

"Since the publication of 'The Australian Legend' we have been confronted with a Dutch weather-clock: when someone says Australia was not like the picture painted in Ward's book out pops a little man who tells, 'That's right, it's all a legend'; but when someone praises Ward for capturing the essence of Australia's past out pops a little man who says, 'Thanks mate'. But those who have read A. A. Phillip's preface to 'The Australian Tradition' know that Ward had chosen this title for his book but had to change it when this book appeared".

This alleged change of title, McQueen asserts, proves that "The Australian Legend" really purports to be a factual account of the Australian past and the Australian "character" and not at all an analysis of the national self-image many Australians liked to have of themselves. His basic premise is, however, entirely false. The relevant passage in A. A. Phillip's preface to the **second** edition of his "Australian Tradition" reads as follows:

The book's title, too, now unhappily has a different effect from that which was originally intended. I chose it for its air of combative paradox. At that time, it was pretty generally assumed that the Australian community was too young to have any traditions. That had long seemed to me a nonsensical view. Certainly our culture lacked mellowness; but to infer that it was therefore not influenced by indigenous traditions was to ignore plain facts. I was prepared to insist that the then generally accepted view was false, to nail the skull-and-crossbones to my masthead by declaring a contrary view on the title-page of my book.

As it happened, however, my title was chosen some years before I was able to complete the assembly of the book for publication. Meanwhile most of the piratical flavour had seeped out of my title. Others sharing my conviction were beginning to declare it. Indeed, if I am rightly informed, Dr. Russel Ward had chosen the same title for a book of his own; mine was rather faster through the press, so that Dr. Ward substituted "The Australian Legend" for his original intention. That coincidence was symptomatic of a developing trend of thought amongst those interested in the Australian culture.

Mr. Phillips was, of course, wholly right in saying I "shared his conviction" that our culture was strongly "influenced by indigenous traditions", but he was not "rightly informed" about my supposed changing of the title from "The Australian Tradition" to "The Australian Legend". In fact both books were published in the same year, 1958, and my book, title and all, was in the press for many months before A. A. Phillips' book appeared.

In any case, I deliberately called it "The Australian Legend" and not "The Australian Tradition" or anything else, precisely because the former title described most accurately the subject matter. The "Oxford Dictionary" defines "legend" as a "traditional story popularly regarded as historical, myth, such literature or tradition". As I wrote on page one, the book does not seek to be a history of Australia, nor to sketch the Australian character, but it does seek "to trace and explain the development of this national *mystique*"—of the *image* many Australians liked to have of themselves, of the "legend" or "myth" of what the "typical Australian" is commonly supposed to be like. I also wrote on page one: "Nearly all legends have some basis in historical fact. We shall find that the Australian Legend has, perhaps, a more solid substratum of fact than most, but this does not mean that it comprises all, or even most, of what we need to know to understand Australia and Australian history".

Apparently Mr. McQueen's mind can grasp only one idea at a time. To him it is inconceivable that the real historical experience of a small group in Australian society should have given rise to a legendary (i.e. largely unreal) national self-image of a certain sort. For him the image must be wholly consistent with reality or it must be wholly false. Throughout the book are reminders that it is a study of the origins and growth of a *legend* and not a description of what most Australians were actually like or an account of the mainstream of Australian history—still less a claim, as McQueen has it, that Australia "is possessed by some natural socialist ethos (*mateship*)". Thus I spelt out in the original manuscript (p. 211, 1st edition):

The national "dreaming" of the 'nineties had, of course, a sufficiently humdrum issue. The Aborigines used to believe that conception was caused not by sexual intercourse, which these simple people regarded as an enjoyable pastime, but by the parents' dreaming of the child's spirit. Slight doubts began to arise with large numbers of half-caste babies. Wiser in our own conceit we tend to explain historical events largely in terms of material causation, heavily discounting the role of

dreaming; and no doubt we are in the main right. The dreaming of the 'nineties resulted, not in a republic embodying such noble practices as would have stupefied the actual bushman, but in much hard political horse-trading and in federation. The discovery of silver at Broken Hill in 1883, and the vast industrial growth that sprang therefrom, has probably had more effect on Australian history than the publication of "Sam Holt" in 1881 and of all the reams of prose and verse of which it was the prototype. Certainly the results of Broken Hill silver-lead mining are easier to measure and to demonstrate. Yet while economic and other material factors are, at least in a gross sense, the principal determinants of events, it is wrong to dismiss entirely less tangible influences. The dreams of nations, as of individuals, are important, because they not only reflect, as in a distorting mirror, the real world, but may sometimes react upon and influence it.

Mr. McQueen's other main charge is that "there is a vital omission" in my review, that I say "nothing of [his] challenge to [my] view of the Australian frontier and of its effects on the collectivist tradition".

On the contrary, because I was concerned to review his book and not to defend my own, I wrote this:

"I have said little directly about the book's specific criticisms of my own work and that of Robin Gollan and others, both because Overland's space and life itself are too short, and because it is not necessary. By referring back to the works under attack, interested readers will readily find for themselves where the balance of truth lies."

As the above quotations demonstrate, this remains true.

It is worth adding, perhaps, that I did not, as he claims, attempt to "disprove" the chapter on the pianists". On the contrary. I wrote, "It seems a long way round to demonstrate what was patently obvious to all in the first place" and that his heavy-handed essay in satire "in any case *proves* nothing". (Emphasis added in this article.)

Mr. McQueen is not the first and probably will not be the last reader to ignore what "The Australian Legend" is about, and says it is about, in order to attack it for what he imagines it to be about. The pity is that he has, I believe, something positive to add to the understanding of Australian history. It would be good if he could do his own thing and get on with it.

This discussion is now closed.—Ed.

KATHLEEN BARLOW

race day in the '20s

Going to the races means little to the average person these days, but in the early 1920's it was quite an event. I speak of the race meetings in the little country towns in the wheat belt. These were enjoyed by all the family, plus any extras that happened to be staying in the house at the time for no one ever stayed home from the races to my knowledge. As the day drew near, so the tempo of excitement and general fever increased to the utmost.

I wonder now, how we children ever got there breathing properly, and not in short gasping pants, after all the previous hustle and bustle of getting ready for this big day.

My Father kept a racehorse. To me it was far the best racehorse anyone could have, and we, that is the children, thought it should always win. Winning just meant winning those days. What the prize money was never mattered, not to us anyway, and I only remember Father's horse winning once. Most times the other horses got in the way and the jockey just couldn't manage to pass them. Father, no doubt, knew his horse's capabilities on the race track very well and seemed to place no blame on the jockey for its failures—but we always thought he should have had another jockey, not the same one after so many failures.

So it came to the day before the races. We never minded cleaning shoes or carrying in extra wood for the copper, from whence came the extra water for the baths. Those days bathing was weekly, unless it was a special day like the races; on the other six days it was feet and leg washing only, and then in a small wash tub.

The day before, all heads had to be washed, and washing heads was real torture to girls anyway. Most girls had long hair which never helped matters much, still we endured it, for was it not for the races? We girls went to bed that night with our hair in rags, as the curling method of those days was known. Whilst the boys slept com-

fortably with their freshly shampooed locks uncluttered by such things.

The previous day, too, all the clothes we laid out in their neat piles on a spare bed if there was one, otherwise on a table in the dining room. The latter was more usual in our house, as there was seldom a spare bed. Nevertheless, the great day saw most things going according to plan, except for such things as a cut toe, or maybe two, but for the races I'm sure we'd have squeezed our feet into our best shoes even if all the toes were cut off.

I must add the previous day was always a busy one for Mother. All that extra baking she had to do, for it was a picnic lunch for the family before the races commenced. Usually we had it under a tree on the race grounds which we shared with the ants, thousands of them, as they always seemed to turn up under every tree on race day. Although we shared the tree, we never shared our lunch. Mother's "pasties" and the cold "chook" were much too good, as was the billy tea. If you have never tasted billy tea, you've really missed something.

It was strong and black, tasting of gum tree and smoke, and with tea leaves floating around the tops of the mugs. But no one minded, it was lovely—still no one had ever heard of a Fanta or a Coke either. Lunch over and all that remained—which was never very much—would be packed away from the ants and their friends the flies. We were "touched up", our appearance I mean, and we were literally quite ready for the races.

It was only a little country meeting, but what a crowd of spectators and how loud the betting! I wonder now why more people never had heart attacks at the races those days. Still, no doubt the hearts were stronger.

There were no stalls for the horses, just a line, or maybe it was a rope, stretched across the track. When the gun went off, so did the horses. Once

around the course—sometimes a little more or a little less—but how everyone yelled. It was more than a match for the barracking of the football fans of today I'm sure.

It was hard to follow the horses in the dust, but all that mattered was that one horse was bound to win—and of course that one must be ours. The poor jockey rode for dear life, as it were, those days. He knew if he won he might get an extra "fiver" from the owner as well as his fee. If he didn't win, then his prestige sank to the lowest. The children showed the keenest disappointment those days, and they would start an argument with anyone who did not offer strong words of condolence for the horse not winning. Their Father's horse just should have won, it would have anyway, if the jockey had been a better rider.

And so the day would wear on. The dust and the flies increasing with each race so it seemed. Our throats would be parched from yelling—still it was hard to spare the time to run back to have a drink from the water bag. Then it would be the final race and Race Day would be over. Then we'd watch the horses depart for home. On foot of course, no such things as floats or trucks, so the horses would be led away quickly after the last race in case they caught a cold.

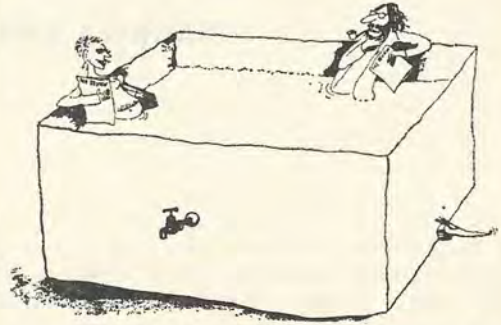
For us the day was not quite over. On Race Day in that little country town we had tea at the hotel. It was the only time I can ever remember eating in "public" as it were, and how lovely it was to sit at the table and be waited upon. I cannot remember the food very clearly, but whatever it was, it was beautiful and a grand finish to Race Day. We were tired, but content then to depart for home and almost fall into our beds.

What a contrast now to go to the races. It's still a "gala" day to be sure, but what is missing? The owner still gets the thrill when his horse comes in first. The horse still gets his nose rubbed by some satisfied "backer" as the camera snaps the photo for the paper. At least that much has not changed.

Perhaps it is the plain fact that then the horses raced just for the sport of it, though it was probably just as hard to pick the winner.

But I'm sure it was the day when everyone shared that thrill as did our ancestors when they enjoyed that ageless Sport of Kings . . .

The Sceptic's Think Tank



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LINDA VOIGT

in the Appalachians

"EMERGENCY FOOD AND MEDICAL SERVICES PROGRAMME. The purpose of the programme is to supplement Food Stamp Purchases, and to provide medical and dental services that are directly related to malnutrition. The programme caters to low-income individuals who do not receive sufficient income to provide the bare necessities of life."

This may sound as if coming from some primitive country in Asia; in fact, it is from an Annual Progress Report of the McDowell County Chapter, Welch, West Virginia, U.S.A., and is dated November 1970.

President Kennedy shocked his people when he stated in 1960 that one million of them live in squalor, ignorance and demoralisation. In my travels along the east coast of the United States, I heard so many conflicting reports on the situation of the miners and the so-called "British hillbillies" living in the Appalachian Mountains, that I decided to go and see for myself.

Months before, two well known television personalities from New York had gone to Mingo County, West Virginia, to investigate conditions under which coal miners lived, and had returned with some startling results. As a direct consequence of the publicity, some corrupt politicians had been exposed and put out of office. A stop was then put to the television series, but by whom I was unable to discover.

While visiting in Arlington, Virginia, I had the good fortune to meet the Rev. P. McDonald, who had worked closely with Mr. Harold Cooper, Director of the Council of the Southern Mountains, and because of this, on my arrival in Welch, near the Kentucky border, I was made very welcome and shown great hospitality. I learned something of the early history and present conditions of this area.

The mountaineers who settled this part of the United States in the 18th century were the sweepings of the British slums. Some who trekked to

the west in the 1860s were indented servants who contracted to work there for six years; others did scratch farming, hunting and distilling of "moonshine" whisky. West Virginia then used to be part of Virginia, one of the original thirteen colonies, but became a separate state in 1863. After the violence of the Indian wars and the end of the Civil War in 1865, this land, once a paradise of beautiful valleys, forests, and mountains teeming with wild life, was completely ravaged. Coal prospectors roamed the desolate valleys and persuaded the poverty stricken miners to sign away their mineral rights for a mere pittance; the countryside was exploited and plundered.

By the end of the 19th century, the people had lost their fighting spirit and were sunk in apathy. Then after World War I. came the prohibition era in America, and across the border in Kentucky, whisky mountain feuds developed—the "Moonshine Wars". It was not until 1964, when the Rev. McDonald and another Presbyterian minister wrote a programme calling for something to be done for the idle miners of West Virginia and Kentucky, that some action was taken in creating a society to work with people whose everyday existence placed them on the outer fringes of a prosperous economic system.

Officers of the Board of Directors of the Council of the Southern Mountains in Berea, came to Welch to set up the McDowell County Chapter. Since then, under the wise and dedicated leadership of Harold Cooper, with his helpers, steady progress in programmes has been built up of quality rather than rapidity. Mr. Cooper and his deputy, Mr. Smith, told me that they do not consider President Nixon's approach to the war on poverty workable, because of a very low funding level. They feel that federal, state and local officials fail to recognise the depth and magnitude of the problems of the poor. Because they treat the symptoms, not the causes, they do not really reach them and help solve their problems. Political

structures, in addition, do not want the people to become politically minded. The aim of the Council is to try to educate them and bring about a change in a peaceful manner.

Welch is the largest incorporated town in the County. It is set in a deep valley, and has a population of 5,300. Towns like this are elongated rather than big, because the population follows rivers and streams. This contributes vastly to the difficulties of trying to educate the poor. Due to the situation of the mountains, there are great distances to travel, and very few transport facilities.

Coal mining is the first industry in Welch, and more is done today due to mechanisation, so that skilled miners are still needed. Seventy-five percent of the people work in the mines, the rest in railroading, lumbering, offices and shops, but unemployment is 5.5 per cent. of the total work force.

A group of companies, absentee owners of the mines, possesses 95% of the total land area, and all properties. The remains of coal is gouged out by strip mining operations to feed the industrial complex of the Tennessee Valley Authority, and natives sometimes go in for coal under dangerous conditions. (While I was still in the region, thirty-eight miners were killed in a mining disaster in Hyden, Kentucky, over the border from Welch. The report stated it was believed that safety regulations were at fault.)

Greed to get the utmost of the coal causes the mountains to perish; wherever coal is deeply dug, water accumulates, and in order to get more coal, it must be pumped out. This process causes eruption, which induces mountainslides, causing, in turn, pollution; the coal element is left. The Cumberland Plateau is a wasteland of refuse, clogged streams and abandoned country towns, everywhere dump heaps of rusted machinery and slag. Sky-high prices are paid for coal shipped out of West Virginia each year, yet no severance tax is paid by other states for coal taken out, neither for gas, oil and lumber-lessor industries. Electors are put into office and make legislations, but these are promptly cancelled by the big concerns. This keeps the state one of the poorest in the country instead of one of the richest. In the last ten years West Virginia lost more of her population than any other state. It went from 100,000 down to 52,000.

Christine Walker, a white, is a widow with seven children, and has worked for the Council since its inauguration. Rosie Webster, a black, has five children. Both find time to help the underprivileged, young and old alike. They are typical of the personnel participating in Head Start Programme, one of the oldest in the nation,

operating all year round since 1965. It is unique in that everyone involved began as a non-professional. They have grown and developed to the point where they now serve as consultants and resource personnel. Among many programmes designed to improve every aspect of community life, is Operation Mainstream with sixty adult volunteers aged forty-five and over, who are given "on-the-job" type of training to prepare them for employment.

Christine and Rosie take food and medical supplies to those who need them, sell medicine bottles to give old people private welfare, provide lifts for the unemployed who are without transport to collect their government cheques, and help children to get the right care and an education.

More than half the people in McDowell County live from government food coupons whose value ranges from \$76 to \$182 per month, and are received through welfare organisations. Many young people have grown apathetic and lazy, regarding this charity as their right. Older people would mostly prefer to work than live on relief. But there are no jobs. Three thousand workers are unemployed.

I was taken by car to Jaeger close to the Kentucky border. On the way there we stopped at Browns Creek where oil was being drilled. In a community of only 913, live thirteen millionaires, giants of the coal industry, in houses like sumptuous hotels. Soon we were passing through pockets of poverty—ugly brownish hollows where mines finished up, streams that must have been clear and sparkling in days long ago, now strewn with tin cans and all kinds of rubbish, their waters darkened with coal dust. At Mohawk Village we visited a family living in a chicken coop. The father was away shovelling up the finest coal mined for bituminous fine steel, and for this he received food, but no wages. His wife and eight year old daughter sat in one small room all day and did nothing. The child Bernice was impressed to see a third visitor. I sat next to her on a large untidy bed taking up three-quarters of the room. A huge ugly black stove stood in one corner, letting out such a heat that the place was suffocatingly hot.

Bernice was not retarded, but her mental development had been stunted since she had never been to school nor mixed with other children. The welfare officers had come to check whether her mother had taken her to the doctor for injections and had collected her birth certificate. She had done both these things, but her feelings were hurt because the principal of the school at Panther nearby had refused to take her child on the grounds that the teacher could not be expected to have to concentrate on one pupil. Christine

assured her she would take the matter to a higher authority. As we talked, I saw that Bernice had thrown the ice cream we had brought her onto the floor. She had no idea of such things as toys and chocolates, her mother explained. Her plain cotton dress, hands, nails and bare feet were black, her hair uncombed, but with a little brushing and scrubbing, she could well have looked quite attractive. When taken out, she would act wildly and refuse to eat or drink. Rosie was one of five mothers who made up the personnel of Headstart Programme at Iaegar Community Active Centre. They were considering having Bernice there with younger children of low income bracket homes who were themselves learning to mix with other children.

We left this pathetic family, and Bernice showed no emotion at our going. But she came outside with us and stood in the light drizzle of rain staring after the car.

Nearby at Panther we watched mining operations—trucks loading endless coal from the tipplers. These coal trucks haul the coal many miles to the cargo trains which take it away interstate. We walked through the mining camps—decrepit wooden shacks between the mountain hollows. Miners who do work fare well enough with cheap rent and coal, and earn \$30 per day. They are mostly illiterate, their spirit of initiative gone over the years. I found their accent quaint—they have retained much of their old dialect.

There were a few fruit trees around, small vegetable plots, hens, pigs and a few cows. Some miners I spoke with said they supplement their food coupons this way, also by deer hunting (without a licence), and if no coal is around, they build wood fires.

A number of children, some of school age, were playing in the hollows. Schools are scarce in the Appalachians and often too far for the children of mountaineers to attend. A General Education Certificate with a minimum test score of 39% must be obtained in order to attend school, and a 50% minimum to go to college. Welch has a new high school, but no college, the nearest being in Bluefield thirty-six miles away.

Black communities we visited lived huddled together in similar wooden huts to whites, no better or worse off. When black people began to

drift in some years ago, the Council took the wise step of recruiting from their numbers immediately to help with their programmes. At first, their headquarters was regarded as the "integrated office of ill-repute" by that section of the white community used to gutter-type language, and there was great hostility and discord. Gradually there came a change of attitude when it was realised that more could be achieved for all with unity. Today, blacks and whites live in harmony working together in shops and offices; there is very little crime. The Council of the Southern Mountains has the first kind of activity where blacks and whites work together in almost equal numbers. In their office the percentage is 55% white and 45% black.

On the way back to Welch we made our last visit for the day to a sawmill. Lumbering is the second industry in West Virginia, and most lumber is shipped out of the state to big companies, only the plywood shavings being left. When I remarked to the foreman that I had seen no passenger trains as yet in the whole country, he said they had almost disappeared, and that Penn Central, biggest railroad of all, was bankrupt. He told of a deliberate conspiracy to push passenger trains completely out of existence by fair means or foul. Goods trains loaded to capacity with cargo bring huge profits with little effort, whereas passenger trains with all the work involved, bring few. His words were brought home to me later in my travels when I tried to plan a train journey for the experience of it. Timetables are so comprised that connections are virtually impossible, and the service (if you can get any) is extremely poor. The conditions are far below the standards of those in any other country I visited, and one indeed has the feeling that everything possible is done to discourage and frustrate the would-be train traveller.

But despite all the poverty and sub-standard conditions in the Appalachians, the people are not so utterly dispirited as I had been led to believe. Studying the Annual Progress Report for 1970 drawn up by an administration which is implementing all its policies of citizen participation, I was left with the strong conviction that by the Council's and community's own unselfish efforts, they would slowly but surely improve their own lot.

John Morrison says:

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(The Age 20/6/70)

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CYRIL PEARL **how frank?**

When Richard Smallpiece Whittington approached Sir Frank Packer about writing his biography, the knight asked with admirable modesty, "Do you think anyone will be interested in **me**?" It was a good question. Apart from a few Sydney journalists who, crouched over analgesic schooners, endlessly anatomise the splendors and miseries of their craft, and apart from his immediate friends, who **is** interested in Packer? Are there queues of eager readers crowding the bookshops of Brisbane and Booligal, of Melbourne and Mukinbuddin, of Perth and Pinjarra, clamoring fevishly for a copy of "Sir Frank"? I doubt it.

It is true, as Whittington reminds us, that Packer owns a few newspapers, magazines and television stations. It is true, as Whittington also reminds us, that Packer's favorite dish as a boy was apple pie, and one of his early pets, a ewe; that he wasn't scholastically minded (though his historic editorial about killing 500 Negroes belies this); that, in his twenties, he won the amateur heavyweight championship of New South Wales and later was briefly involved in selling roofing nails; that his horse Columnist won the Caulfield Cup in 1947, and his yacht Gretel I. didn't win the America's Cup in 1962, nor his yacht Gretel II., in 1970 . . . Fascinating material, of course, but there's scarcely enough of it for a full-length biography. Undeterred, Whittington bravely stirs all sorts of esoteric titbits into his biographical goulash. Thus we are told that Prince's restaurant in Sydney served superb Sydney rock oysters and rock lobster, that in its hallowed precincts, Sydney bookmaker Arthur Browning gave "Golden Boy" Denis Compton a bloody nose, that Barton Fairfax, an old buddy of Packer's father, was a batsman of the "adventurous variety", who scored 102 in 70 minutes, with 14 fours, for Marrickville against Northern Districts at the Waitara Oval in 1927, and that Sir Frank once amusingly poured a generous Scotch on the rocks down Adrian Quist's neck.

There are many other items of equal relevance: When Whittington was leaving the Packer mansion in Bellevue Hill ("giant casement windows . . . flowers beautifully arranged in gorgeous vases . . . a home of which Australia can be proud, of which any country in the world could be proud"), Packer's giant mastiff Jeff escorted Whittington to his car. The population of Rhode Island in 1965 was close to 900,000 and that of Newport 36,000—"exclusive of Rhode Island Reds but including Red Indians". Veteran newspaperman Claude McKay's wife likes a rough red with lunch. Whittington lent his late friend Eric Baume his flat, opposite the Christian Science Church in Liverpool Street, when Whittington went to Johannesburg in May 1958. Or, if you want to know how to write a biography, there are three pages in which Whittington quotes the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Sam Johnson and Plutarch, invokes Andre Maurois, Gene Fowler and Emil Ludwig, and, inferentially, suggests he is following in their footsteps.

Men who own or control newspapers tend to grossly overestimate their own importance. The Irish owner of the Skibereen paper with a circulation of a few hundred who wrote a famous editorial headed "We Warn the Czar" is the archetypal newspaper proprietor. Week after week our newspapers lay down the law to foreign potentates, prime ministers, trade union leaders, scientists, economists and the rest. Does anyone ever challenge the qualification of the man who determines the newspaper's policy, or of the leader-writer who puts it into readable words? And does anyone ever ask what influence the newspaper really has?

"The biggest piece of clap-trap about the Press is that it deals almost exclusively, or even mainly, with news," wrote the American journalist T. S. Mathews in "The Sugar Pill", "and the next biggest delusion is that the Press has enormous power." This latter delusion, as Mathews points

out, is cherished by the Press lords, "some of whom, at least, should know better." The Press has some power, but not much. It is a negative power.

"But of the positive power to which it pretends, and of which the Press lords dream—to make and break governments, to swing an election, to stop a war or start a revolution—there is no tangible evidence."

Australia has seen two memorable examples of the impotence of the press. During World War I, two referenda on conscription were held. The entire daily press of the country, and the then influential Sydney "Bulletin", vociferously urged the people to vote "Yes". In both referenda, the people voted "No". Similarly, in the United States, between 1932 and 1952, though at least 85 per cent. of the newspapers constantly exhorted the people to vote Republican, they continued to vote Democrat.

Whittington does not examine the influence (or impotence) of the Packer press, though he quotes approvingly from an essay Professor Ken Inglis contributed to a symposium on "Australian Culture" in 1962: "Men like William Randolph Hearst, Lord Northcliffe, Sir Keith Murdoch, Rupert Murdoch and Sir Frank Packer, want not only to be rich but to shape human destiny". Unfortunately, he doesn't quote what Inglis said of the relationship between the Australian proprietor and his editor: "The editor is likely to find himself little more than an instrument for translating the wishes of a proprietor into technical instructions for subordinates". Nor what Inglis says of the hidden forms of censorship exercised on newspapers by "employees acting on their own initiative but in accordance with what they take the wishes of the proprietor to be". In this context, however, Whittington does enunciate an important principle that might be called *The Sycophantic Interpretation of History*.

On page 12, he quotes Packer as saying: "My executives and journalists are anything but sycophants," and testifies that he (Whittington) worked for Packer for four years "without ever having to become a sycophant . . ." On page 30, he repeats that Packer's executives are not "sycophants" or "creatures of Packer", and on page 209, Editor-in-Chief David McNicoll testifies solemnly that he is neither a "sycophant", a "creature" or a "rubber stamp". With a dazzling display of logic, Mr. Whittington then proves conclusively that Packer men cannot be sycophants. "History has demonstrated, time and time again," he writes, "that sycophants do not hold an empire together—but rather lead to its disintegration; Nero and Hitler had a few"—and look what happened to

them. The Packer empire has not disintegrated, ergo, it harbors no sycophants. Q.E.D.

Whittington devotes a laborious chapter to the dreary financial in-fighting that went on in the corridors of Associated Newspapers in 1931. Who now cares a rusty roofing-nail what Fordyce Wheeler or Robert Clyde Packer or Sir Hugh Denison or Campbell Jones, or any other of the forgettable musketeers, did in those dark and conspiratorial days? But Whittington could profitably have enlarged on this passage from Eric Baume's "I Lived These Years", which he quotes:

Lang's accusation was that the £575,000 for the sale to Associated of the "Guardian" group had gone into the pockets of Sir Joynton Smith and [Robert Clyde] Packer [Frank's father], and that the preference shareholders had received no benefit whatever from the sale. He therefore planned a retrospective Bill taking from Packer not only, as the lawyers said, the value of the share, but practically everything Packer had . . . It was a horrible thing . . . Political lobbying became the most vivid I have seen . . . The Bill was certain to pass the Lower House; it had to be stopped in the Upper . . .

And stopped it was.

Another transaction that Whittington might have explained is the one mentioned in the "Reader's Digest" of August, 1970, when "Packer executed a complex \$21.3 million holding-company shuffle" that left young Murdoch with a paper loss of about \$500,000. And Whittington might profitably have interviewed Alice Jackson, for many years Editor of the "Women's Weekly", and John Theodore, former Chairman of Directors of Consolidated Press . . .

In one of his more provocative passages Whittington quotes Packer as saying, "In my view Sir Robert Menzies is the greatest Prime Minister Australia has ever had. My newspapers consistently supported him from 1949, when he resumed power, until he retired in 1966."

How consistent was this support? On 5 March, 1951, the "Daily Telegraph" said the Menzies Government was "in an almost unbelievable state of spineless indecision". On 21 February, 1952, the paper said of Menzies, "He is abusing public patience". On 15 March, 1953, it said: "His new economic policy . . . is so much hokum"; and on 8 March, 1957, "Mr. Menzies has lost touch with reality". But on 28 May, 1959, the "Daily Telegraph" announced that Menzies was "a statesman of world stature". (On 13 June 1959, Mr. Packer became Sir Frank Packer.) On 21 June 1960, the "Daily Telegraph" said: "We are one of the most

prosperous countries in the world. And we can thank the Menzies Government which has had the reins for the past seven years". And on 21 October 1960, "Mr. Menzies' carping critics—whose ranks have been thinning in recent days—are left with not even a tattered stick to beat him . . ."

These quotations, and others, were printed in young Murdoch's Sydney "Sunday Mirror" on 11 December 1960, in a symposium headed, "Is Mr. Menzies a Good Prime Minister?" One column was subheaded "Mr. Packer Says 'No,'" and the other "Sir Frank Packer says 'Yes.'" For some arcane reason, Whittington says this interesting symposium was published in the "Sydney Morning Herald" on 11 December 1960, which, of course, was a Sunday!

As an historian, Whittington has many equally unfortunate lapses. He quotes me as an authority on what took place at a farewell dinner to the "Bulletin" writer Malcolm Ellis when Packer and Ellis had a spirited debate. I was in Ireland when the dinner took place, and, had I been in Sydney, I certainly wouldn't have attended it. Whittington says A. F. D. Rodie ended his life as "director of one of Sydney's outstanding public relations companies". Rodie didn't. Whittington says Alwyn Lee was a "general reporter for Time Magazine." Lee wasn't. He tells a story of an "irritated American" who, when Packer announced that he was in a hurry to catch a plane, said, "Surely the plane will wait for you?", and says this took place in Petty's Hotel, Sydney. The incident took place in the Gotham Hotel, New York, at a hurried breakfast meeting which I had arranged between Packer and Thayer Hobson, the boss of Morrow's. Whittington refers to "the Pryor family" of the "Bulletin". The family spelled it "Prior". With

the same splendid abandon, he turns "Macleay" into "McLeay" and "Hargrave" into "Hargraves". And "Alexander Macdonald" on page 82 becomes "Alexander McDonald" on page 284.

Whittington believes in the power of repetition. On page 13, he reports that Packer lost all but ten per cent. of the sight of his right eye when he was ten years old. On page 27, he reports that Packer lost all but ten per cent. of the sight of his right eye between the ages of ten and eleven. On page 70, he reports that Packer lost about ninety per cent. of the sight of his right eye when he was ten or eleven. On page 201 he reports that Packer had lost all but ten per cent. of the sight when he was a boy and on page 269 he reports on Packer's "early loss of ninety per cent. of the sight of one eye." On page 200, he quotes Packer's reassuring words to him when he joined the staff: "Don't worry. my boy, if you work hard you could not be in a safer place." On page 292, Packer tells Whittington, "Don't worry, my boy. If you work hard, you couldn't have come to a safer place." On page 207, Alan Reid says of Packer, "There's almost a touch of demagogery about him . . ." And what does Reid say on page 274? "There is almost a touch of demagogery in him . . ." (Whittington's spelling is rather non-U. The Oxford Dictionary prefers "demagoguery".)

One of Whittington's more enigmatic statements is that "There is . . . far more than a little of the Jack Barrymore, of the Francois Villon side of that greatest of the Royal Family of Broadway, in Frank Packer". Apart from the fact that a ballade of Villon's has a refrain some journalists might find appropriate to their calling, I cannot interpret this scholarly tribute to the Knight of Bellevue Hill.

JAPAN AND AUSTRALIA

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John G. Roberts' important essay on Australian-Japanese relationships appears in the current issue of **Meanjin Quarterly**.

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ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN

A chapter from Solzhenitsyn's latest novel, **August 1914**, is bracketed with Jack Lindsay's essay, 'Alexander Solzhenitsyn and the Question of a Socialist Ethic', a note on **August 1914** by Nina Christesen, and a sketch of the author by Louis Kahan.

FRANK KELLAWAY

the collected poems of Judith Wright

Judith Wright is one of the handful of Australian poets who have a reputation overseas as well as at home. While her books have attracted increasing attention in England and America since her third volume, "The Gateway" (1953), Australian critics have often expressed a growing doubt and uneasiness about the quality of her later achievements. The following examples give some idea of this stream of opinion.

Elyne Mitchell, reviewing "The Gateway" in *Southerly* No. 1, 1955, criticised her for not giving her philosophical poems the flesh and blood of her particular Australian landscape. ". . . the language and imagery are similar to those recording the spiritual journeys of other poets."

Southerly No. 2, 1956, carried a review of "The Two Fires" signed J.T. which complained of her turning from the concrete to abstract imagery and took her to task for "leaning to grandiloquence, vague mysticism and the assumption of a bardic mantle."

Charles Higham, in *Quadrant* 19 (Winter, 1961), talking of "The Gateway" and "The Two Fires", says: "The sense of strain, of forcing poems into existence is unmistakable". His conclusion: "We have watched in the first of her books Judith Wright's struggle from fear and uncertainty into positive faith; now that she has arrived in the light, that her struggle is over, she seems to have little more to say".

The "struggle" of course, was not over then and still continues in her latest poems. Through her third, fourth and sixth books there is the continued struggle to understand experience in terms of her own philosophy and this involves a continuing effort to absorb and digest the concepts and symbolism of Jungian Psychology. In her latest books there is still the attempt to understand and reconcile the creative and destructive forces in mankind and the awareness that there can be no rest, no resolution. Even in "The Two Fires" which Higham was reviewing this struggle was expressed

with power and anguish. The concluding stanza of "Two Generations" is one example. She is talking of her daughter.

What do you learn of the world? I hold your
hand;
but even my touch is cancelled by that wind;
because the wind is my own breath,
whispering that the heart of man condemns
the world to death.

Vincent Buckley, in his contribution to "Critical Essays on Judith Wright" (selected by A. K. Thomson, Jacaranda Press, 1968) expressed a view similar to that of Elyne Mitchell and J.T. He complained of a false simplicity of accent in "The Gateway", of increasing impersonality and growing portentousness. "When you hear the theme music strike up, you know that an important spectacle is going to be presented for your edification and uplift". "Whenever Miss Wright loses sight of the object as a thing in itself, she tends to stop writing poetry and to start making vague gestures in the direction of a cosmic symbolism which does not seem to mean very much either to us or to herself".

The malice of this attack is betrayed by the impertinence of the last three words quoted.

Judith Wright obviously feels some bitterness against these critics. In "Shadow", the last book to be printed in her "Collected Poems", "Advice to a Young Poet" contains this stanza:

The city may totter around you,
the girders split;
but don't take a prophetic stance,
you'll be sorry for it.

The collection is important because it makes it possible for the reader to view Judith Wright's total development. It contains generous selections

from "The Moving Image" (1946), published when the poet was thirty-one, "Woman to Man" (1949), "The Gateway" (1953), "The Two Fires" (1955), "Five Senses" (1963). In addition it contains "Birds" (1962), "The Other Half" (1966), and "Shadow" (1970), not previously published in full.

Although few serious critics would disagree with the view that there was a slackening of poetical intensity and a failure sometimes to communicate her vision in a concrete way during the period of her third, fourth and sixth books, when she was battling to embody her sense of a Jungian universe in poetry, the notion that it is a service to literature to point this out in a way calculated to be as hurtful as possible to the poet, would be idiotic if it were not hypocritical. Reading some reviews and articles about her work one gains the impression that the writers would be happy if they could silence her altogether.

What is surely much more important than judgments of this general nature is that particular poems should be emphasised. Even during this period there are many superb achievements, some of which do manage to embody Jungian symbols in magnificent poetry and others which are as concrete and vivid in their imagery and language as any of her earlier poems. "Dark Gift" is as simple and profound as the image of the unfolding flower which is used to express the interpenetration of birth, passion and death. "The Cedars", which one critic condemned for insincerity, bursts into melody in its last lines like a Hugo Wolf song which opens in greyness and pain:

and the snake in hiding feels the sunlight's
finger.

The snake, the fang of summer, beauty's
double meaning,

shifts his slow coils and feels his springtime
hunger.

"Drought" is an excellent example of the way she uses Australian landscape as the vehicle for expressing her view of the springs of birth and energy; one exception among many to Elyne Mitchell's generalisation. "The Orange Tree" is both a concrete image and an evocation of the platonic idea of the primordial ideal existing behind reality. Her readers will continue to be grateful for "Legend" with its original rhythms and evocative qualities as newly created myth, "Waiting Ward" for its deeply felt expression of the poet's involvement in someone else's suffering, and "The Traveller and the Angel" which is probably the most successful symbolic poem in "The Gateway".

"The Two Fires" contains a number of remarkable poems. Like Yeats, she often writes at her top when she is dealing with her dead relatives. "At Cooloola" and "Request to a Year" are both splendid poems, though it is not so much the "firmness" of her great-great-grandmother's hand that impresses in the latter, as the apparent chilliness of her heart, on which the poet does not comment. "The Harp and the King", which has the story of Saul and David as its framework, referred to by one simple-minded critic as "verbiage", is one of her finest achievements, though it is spoiled a little by the very last line which has something of the resounding hollowness which critics have complained of:

For only change and distance shape for us
some new tremendous symbol for the soul.

It seems that the successful poet can't win with the critics. When she is bardic and oracular, Judith Wright is slammed for that; but when she writes a book of simple, often humorous poems about birds for her daughter, some critics complain that there is a falling off again and that the poems should never have been published.

In the poem "Birds" from "The Gateway", Judith Wright rejects an anthropomorphic approach to nature in two sharp stanzas.

Whatever the bird is, is perfect in the bird.
Weapon kestrel hard as a blade's curve,
thrush round as a mother or a full drop of
water
fruit-green parrot wise in his shrieking
swerve—
all are what bird is and do not reach beyond
bird.

Whatever the bird does is right for the bird
to do—
cruel kestrel dividing in his hunger the sky,
thrush in the trembling dew beginning to sing,
parrot clinging and quarrelling and veiling
his queer eye—
all these are as birds are and good for birds
to do.

Unfortunately this objectivity is lost quite often in the volume "Birds", and she sees The Swamp Pheasant as "that queer old woman across the street . . ." and sees the Black-shouldered Kite as having the sign of "the pride and hunger of Cain". The Winter Kestrel talks in the manner of a crow from the border ballads. In spite of these faults, many of the poems are witty, all of them have point and at least three, "Wounded Night-bird", "Night Herons" and "Dotterel" are moving and beautiful. Judith Wright's poetry,

indeed the body of Australian poetry, would be both less rich and less varied if this volume had not appeared.

Since good poems tend to be remembered and bad forgotten, it seems unimportant to notice in "Five Senses" that two poems contain the same empty, grandiose phrase "the towering universe", or that occasionally there is a funny line of inappropriate, old-fashioned language

My heart is woe to fear so.
Where found you then your treasure?

or the imitation ballad bit again

In the rain beside the graves
I heard their tears say . . .

when there are magnificent poems like "The Nautilus", "Moth" and "For My Daughter".

It seems highly unlikely that critics can claim any credit for the fact that in "The Other Half" and "Shadow" Judith Wright has come through to a new simplicity and directness of expression. As in her second and most celebrated volume, "Woman to Man", a number of the best poems tell directly of her own experience or draw on memories or tales of her relatives. "The Curtain" is as gently evocative as any of her other poems for her daughter. "Remembering an Aunt" is perhaps the best of all her poems about relatives. It is both witty and compassionate. From a negative begin-

ning telling of the Aunt's rejection of the practice of painting and music, where the verse-form is fluid, it develops unobtrusively to an insight into the aunt's reasons and the verse hardens with beautiful assurance into more regular rhymed pentameters.

"Naked Girl and Mirror" is the insight of a fifty-year-old woman looking back at a girl's adolescent feelings. Unfortunately it is written in the first person as though by the girl herself, which makes it unconvincing. This is a great pity because it is a tender and interesting concept and the writing is natural and lyrical. "Snakeskin on a Gate", "Portrait" and "Turning Fifty", which deal with compassion but without self-pity with her own situation (a very difficult stance to take in viewing oneself), are better still because they seem absolutely authentic. Of the poems of sorrow at her husband's death, "This Time Alone", "The Vision", "Eurydice in Hades", "Heloise Wakening" and "The Flame-tree Blooms" are the peak of her achievement to date.

It seems perfectly clear from the "Collected Poems" that those Jeremiahs, and worse, who predicted that Judith Wright was finished as a poet, were wrong.

Collected Poems, 1942-1970, by Judith Wright. Angus & Robertson, \$5.95.

GEORGE TURNER

a Hurtle Duffield retrospective

When a literary work of any magnitude appears, amid a flurry of critics and a fluster of reviewers, there are two courses open to the reader.

Following the first, he can stoutly refuse to notice reviews and/or insistent friends until he has read the book and experienced the pleasure of exercising a discrimination wholly his own. If later recourse to critical writing indicates that there is much he has missed or failed to grasp—well, re-reading the worthwhile is one of the major joys.

If, however, he has succumbed to the temptation to peek, to discover what X and Y and Z, his favored pundits, have to say, then he had best put the book aside for a few months, until he has forgotten what others have insisted he should think.

When Patrick White's "The Vivisector" appeared the chorus of newspaper reviewers became objectionable in its mindless servility. Most notable was that none of those I read offered the slightest idea of what the novel attempted or whether White had advanced, retreated or marked time as artist or technician. (With particular joy I recall "Bazza" Humphries' notice in "The Review"—a thousand words or so hymning his devotion and a few passing phrases about the book.)

Be it admitted that pinning down the essence of a White novel in a shortish column is no exercise for amateurs, but the attempt should be made. Mere adulation is not enough.

Exasperation was such as to cause me to file the book among "future projects" until the brouhaha had died down and to return, however regretfully, to the money-business of reviewing science fiction. (You there—the one shaking your head. Reviewing science fiction isn't so simple if you know anything about the genre.)

I took up "The Vivisector" some six months after publication and again last week to check my first impressions.

Now, although I yield place to none in respecting White's work this side idolatry (thank you, Ben Jonson, for that inimitable phrase) a simple recounting of verbal felicities and the "trip" aspects of sensual involvement does little service for the writer and none at all for the prospective reader. And, although the "little" magazines behaved with more dignity than the daily press, they also showed too little awareness of flaws in the diamond.

Bluntly, I cannot accept "The Vivisector" as a major White novel, or even as being fundamentally better than "The Tree of Man", which I will risk my prophetic neck by tipping to outlast it in the appreciation of posterity. But it contains much which makes it of great critical interest, and it may in fact represent a turning point in White's career as a novelist—the sort of turning point which was coming to Dickens in his last works, wherein a boundless creativity was giving way to a wider view of humanity and of the capacities of the novel.

In "The Vivisector" the warmth of involvement in the human condition is more immediate than in any White book since "The Tree of Man", despite the firm rejection of involvement by the central character; it springs from a gentler, less unforgiving treatment of the minor players. The clinical formalisation of "Riders in the Chariot" has given way to a less constrained play of feeling, one not so rigidly dictated by the form of the work; even the grim sympathy displayed in "The Solid Mandala" has softened in a greater pity for his creations. In reading it I have felt a closer approach to White-the-man than in any of the products of his past fifteen years.

There is some evidence that White's overall view of the human condition was undergoing change at the time of writing. Most of the previous novels left an impression of profound despair at the invincible supremacy of active evil over all human effort. In "The Solid Mandala" the oppression

lifted a little, but life proved too heavy for the resistance of protagonists basically unfitted to resist. In "The Vivisector" White at last portrays a triumph of the individual over life—a qualified triumph, but at least an affirmation of the possibility of victory which has heretofore been absent (Mrs. Godbold of "Riders in the Chariot" possibly excepted).

Yet it is not one of his greater novels and the reasons are not far to seek. They lie in the artist, Hurtle Duffield, himself.

White has chosen to recount the life of a great painter from childhood to death and to present it as a parable of the preservation of the individuality against the pressures of the herd.

A weakness at once presents itself: Hurtle Duffield does not observe life and rise above it; he shuts it out. He takes what he wants of it—not too much in his terms, far too much in the terms of the taken-from—and contents himself as an observer of all else; with paintbrush in hand he becomes the vivisector. This rings true even of personalities far less coherent and perceptive than Duffield's, but it does not properly solve the problem presented. It merely demonstrates that the problem can be ignored. At a price.

Then the portrait itself, the representation in depth of the artist as artist-and-man, turns out to be one of the more suspect literary clichés. It is beautifully rendered, enlivened with novel touches, and probably has never been done better, but in the end the bones show through the flesh and the skeleton appears as the same old one rattling in the cupboards of the literary view of genius—the inturnd, self-feeding spirit of defiance and contempt, near insane in its rejection of any values but its imperfectly comprehended own. It has been done most notably in Maugham's "Moon and Sixpence" portrait of Gauguin, and repeated too often by lesser novelists who needed a full scale egocentric to claim attention.

A cliché is not necessarily invalid or automatically rejectable, and one cannot question White's right to the character if his viewpoint is genuinely held, but our historical experience of genius must question the validity of this one. Wagner would certainly fit it, as a rejector who followed a private vision. Most other great artists have been accepters who rose above the traps of conformity thinking to also follow their private visions; their greatness was rooted in their acceptance and refusal to be influenced, not in rejection and a solitary search for individual satisfaction. Such satisfaction, requiring as it does a contempt for the world which praises and pays and provides, is in the end monstrous; one stands in awe of the creation but cannot share it; participation is placed at arm's length before the work is begun. They say

Accept my vision or be damned to you, and never question their right to contemptuous damnation.

So, though Hurtle Duffield is acceptable and believable as a type, he cannot qualify as a depiction of the artist as a species. Nor, probably, can the world's Hurtle Duffields qualify as successful mutations within the human framework. Thomas Mann was aware of this when he made his Adrian Leverkühn, in "Doctor Faustus", a soul damned from the beginning. (But Leverkühn, poor devil, recognised what he was and recoiled into the more terrible acceptance of insanity.)

But when one has said that the conception is both unoriginal and suspect as truth, a formidable wealth of wonder remains.

White has taken full advantage of "permissive-ness" (damned silly word) to present Duffield in the secret corners of his life, mostly sexual. Most specifically so. As an egotist whose only humility is before unachieved goals of expression he is, in all human relations, a vampire. He is not an evil man, wantonly seducing; he is very much aware of love and the need of it, but no sexual love can be for him other than an intrusion on the self sufficiency which eventually finds it an imposition. He can love with fire, and damp the flame the moment his tightly private art is touched upon; he is not a wanton man, simply one whose sexual drive is reduced to the primarily physical and whose deeper feelings are shrouded in impermeable reticence.

He experiences many varieties of love, narrowly escaping a sort of spiritual incest with his foster mother, giving himself in fits and starts to a heart-of-gold prostitute (another untrue cliché surprising in so perceptive a writer), playing with much self-reservation at being a rich woman's available erection and falling into the trap of middle age with a thirteen-year-old girl. With this last he comes close to fulfilment as lover-father-friend; but she also is an artist, and with her growth to success as a pianist with a view of her own he shuts her firmly into his past. If he has a genuinely deep seated affection in his life it is his non-sexual love for his humpbacked sister by adoption (an acidulous portrayal of psychic suffering muted by tenderness).

White has brought off a considerable feat in his portrayal of this basically unlikeable man, in that Duffield never loses the reader's sympathy. If one cannot feel deeply **for** him, one can at all times feel deeply **with** him. The reader is never permitted to fall into the snare of pity for this unreachable man, if only because he is lured to recognise comfortless aspects of Duffield in himself.

But as a portrait of the visionary in relation to society it begs too many questions. Mere rejection of everyday values and absorption in a personal

convention is insufficient; it is at best a withdrawal from the effort of understanding the human condition and a failure to understand the nature of one's own involvement with humanity. Humanity is permanently in a state of transition, and the artist-visionary may reasonably be asked to concern himself with the question: **Where to from here?** To ignore it in a quest for personal fulfillment can only lead to a personal dead end. Which is precisely what Hurtle Duffield is led to—a grasping at the unattainable, a final ferocity of longing and dissatisfaction.

He is, finally, another White dropout.

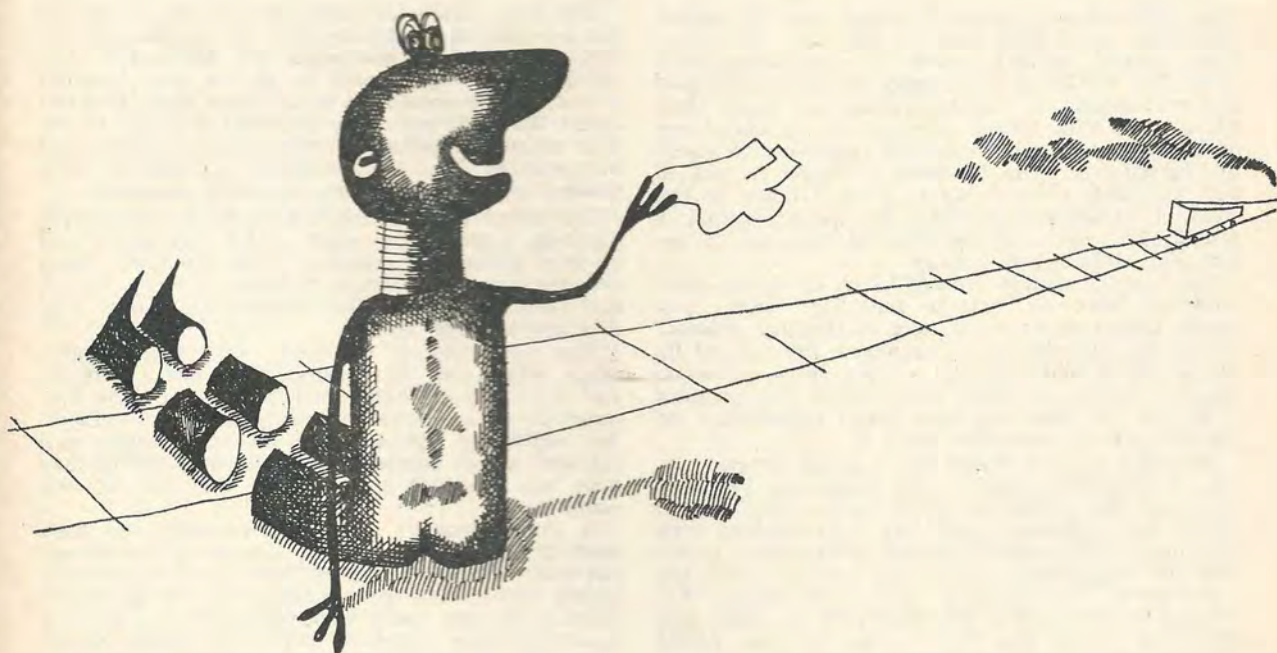
Not since "The Aunt's Story" has White concentrated his attention so thoroughly upon a single character, and this would seem to postulate an effort to wrestle powerfully with the problem inherent in such a character, the problem of his relationship to the web of life. I feel that he has separated the character from the problem, lavish-

ing his art on the one and coming to no useful conclusion about the other whereas, ideally, the complete presentation should at least indicate a point of view on the relationship.

Hurtle Duffield exists marvellously in an enclosed space of will and wish, occasionally stung by the universe, never deeply penetrated by it. The vision of a personal God, or even of Duffield merging with or becoming his own God, justifies nothing and ultimately says nothing. He remains where he began, standing to one side, silent upon every subject but himself.

But—and this a large 'but' where a writer of White's stature is concerned—Duffield's personal triumph is the first White has allowed a major character. White the self-contained artist has taken a short step in the direction of the world at large, a long step away from the inevitable victory of spite and mediocrity over finer intentions.

One can only wait for what comes next.



BOOKS

RECENT FICTION

JOHN McLAREN

- David Ireland: "The Unknown Industrial Prisoner". Angus and Robertson, \$5.25.
John Hooker: "Jacob's Season". Barrie and Jenkins, \$4.55.
George Johnston: "A Cartload of Clay". Collins.
Thomas Keneally: "A Dutiful Daughter". Angus and Robertson, \$3.95.
Kenneth Cook: "Piper in the Market-Place". Heinemann, \$5.75.

The contemporary novelist seems less concerned with the social trappings of life than with the bare, forked animal which is unaccommodated man. The workings of industry and commerce and the pretensions of society become no more than the clothes with which man covers his nakedness or the instruments by which he endeavors to assert his personality. The business of fiction is not to portray social density but to strip it down to the essential structures in which the naked animal is found. The mode of the novelist becomes therefore not realism but fantasy.

The fantasy in this present batch of novels does, however, have its roots in real life. David Ireland's achievement is to take a familiar artefact of modern industry, an oil refinery, and reveal its whole social and material edifice as a grotesque fraud, a fantasy of man's mind which has acquired a life of its own and now feeds cancer-like on the lives of the men who serve it.

Ireland's novel is based on an acute understanding of industrial reality. He diagnoses the way in which the system is self-defeating, the way in which the divisions which set man against man also destroy the efficiency and profitability which they are supposed to serve, the way in which the worship of the company as an institution has blinded its servants to the reality of the industrial processes which are the excuse for the whole operation. But his book is far more than handbook for union organisers or industrial managers, although both these groups would profit from reading it.

The true force behind "The Unknown Industrial Prisoner" is generated by a consuming anger at

the system which wastes both human lives and the product of human lives, technology, in the service of a vast and meaningless abstraction, and at the men—workmen, because they can envisage nothing else.

This common blindness unites characters otherwise as diverse as the vicious Python, the well-meaning but loyal Good Shepherd, and the futile Far Away Places. Their individual characteristics of malice or charity are equally bent to the service of the company, ironically named Paroil. Yet the company exists for nothing other than itself.

The only characters who see an alternative to the purposeless wastefulness of the system are the Samurai, who acknowledges an alternative but cannot find it in himself to give a lead towards it and is thus consumed by his own rage; and the Great White Father, who provides a Home Beautiful where his fellow-prisoners, under the benign influence of beer and women, can subvert the system by their own form of inner migration.

The Great White Father's Eden in the mangroves depends, however, too much on his own vision and his own purse, and crumbles after his death. Man does not have the strength to loosen his own chains, and respite is the closest Ireland will allow him to come towards escape.

The characters in the book, with their anonymous nicknames, have personality but no depth, and Ireland has deliberately adopted a style and structure which deny continuity and development. Yet individual episodes can be very funny, and his total image compellingly delineates the fantasy man has accepted in place of the real life he could have.

In John Hooker's novel, by contrast, the hero uses fantasy to escape the demands of the dreary but real world of one of New Zealand's South Island cities. The provinciality of the people is matched by the black weather and the crumbling boarding-house which is home for Jacob Small, and the equally decaying bookshop which is work.

Jacob is fortunate in that he is able to make his fantasy real in the form of the favors of two accommodating women who enable him to escape for a while from the constant, if well-justified, nagging of his wife. Jacob is never a man to use

SOLEDAD BROTHER

GEORGIA SAVAGE

a fact when a lie is available, and keeps harsh reality precariously at bay by the use of a fertile imagination and a refusal to take himself or anything else seriously.

Yet behind Jacob's womanising and irresponsibility is a man striving to recover the wholeness of himself and nature which he felt as a boy. The sense of man as part of the natural landscape distinguishes this novel as the work of a New Zealander rather than an Australian.

The most remarkable quality of Hooker's novel is the prose, which brings to life the gay innocence of its main character and his desperate search for a life unlimited by the quotidian. The writing is delicately balanced between poetry and prose, rising to the poetry without effort or bombast when the occasion demands while still retaining a springing vitality in the general flow of the narrative.

At first sight, George Johnston's novel, the last of the autobiographical trilogy centred on David Meredith, is firm realism. It contains, in fact, a moving but objective account of his last days, including his wife's suicide. The book was not finished in length, as perhaps only half was written before its author's death, but the half which is now published has been re-written and polished by the author and is complete as it stands.

Yet although autobiographical and factual, the novel's concern is not with the facts but with the mental universe behind them. Ostensibly the book is no more than the account of a walk down the street and back, with the people Meredith meets and his reminiscences on the way. But the walk is as symbolic as real. When he leaves home he parts from his wife, but his return is from a later walk, when his wife is dead. The walk in fact spans his life after his return to Australia, and his search for a pattern in the whole of his life before that.

In one sense, we lack nothing of Johnston's writing when we finish this unfinished book, for in it David Meredith has learnt to accept himself and the people around him, even the unpleasant but neighborly Ocker on whom he has had to rely to get home, and whom he invites in for a beer. The incomplete note on which the book ends reflects the imperfect world Meredith learns to accept.

The paradox of Johnston's book, therefore, is that a narrative largely telling of his inner life of memory and dream, a narrative in which it is sometimes impossible to distinguish one from the other, or either from the external world, concludes with an endorsement of the outer world even in its evanescence. The vanity of Meredith's vanity is that all is not vanity.

Thomas Keneally's novel, "A Dutiful Daughter", uses a fantasy on which to hang a tail of fornication, incest and rape. The fantasy is that the parents of the two central children metamorphose into part-beasts, centaur-like bull and cow, but the narrative never focusses. We are not certain whether the human beasts are fantasy or allegory, nor whether the novel is about adolescence, love, duty or sacrifice. The references to Joan of Arc merely add to the confusion.

Neither confusion nor fantasy characterises Kenneth Cook's "Piper in the Market-Place", a straightforward tear-jerking morality about the evils of abortion. Unfortunately, the relentless recital of harrowing detail does nothing to illuminate reality either.

This book is a milestone in the history of a race of people. To appreciate it, it is first necessary to force one's mind to understand the meaning of George Jackson's prison sentence—"one year to life". This isn't easy to do. It means blanking out the fictional sentence-servers who provided vicarious agonies and thrills in adolescence. One has to force the mind to come to terms with the fact that while the letters were being written, Jackson was a breathing feeling young man. That he knew, most of the time, he'd never see "the night sky" again.

It is necessary also to understand that Jackson was a man with nothing left to lose but his life, and there must have been many hours when even that seemed worthless to him. Because of this, anything he gained intellectually through mental discipline must have been a gain beyond the wildest imaginings of other men. This gave him a perspective others don't have, and to read his letters in that perspective it is necessary to understand the totality of his prison sentence.

The fact that Jackson had nothing to lose but his life, indeed had never owned anything else, doesn't mean that he held it cheaply. To me one of the most poignant things about his letters is the fact that he was a man who wanted to live very much. Wanted to live simply and kindly, and because of his color he had no hope of doing so. One sees in the letters how he kept honing in himself a viciousness foreign to his nature. He believed that without the viciousness he could not survive.

Jackson wasn't naturally vicious. No man who works out an exercise programme to keep his mother in good health while he himself is in the maximum security section of a penal institution is fundamentally vicious.

The letters in the book are a selection of those he wrote to his mother and father, his young brother, Jonathon, certain friends and today's Athena, Angela Davis. I found the letters to his mother and father the most interesting. At times I had the weird feeling that Holden Caulfield had grown up, and big and gutsy, with something to fight for, was talking to his parents. No wonder Jackson is in the process of becoming the No. 1 folk hero of America.

It's been argued backwards and forwards across the Pacific that the letters have no literary merit. They have it all right; don't doubt it for a minute. Any writing that pleases simply because the man doing it chooses his words as well as Jackson does, has literary merit. And that's leaving his intellectual achievement out of the argument.

Admittedly there are moments when you find yourself becoming bored. But the boring passages deserve inclusion because they give some glimmering of how intolerably alike Jackson's days inside the prison must have been.

Another aspect which may bore readers is Jackson's complete acceptance of Communism. But in this acceptance lies the lesson we must learn from the book. George Jackson had been pushed so far down in the can that Communism was the only thing he could see. The lesson—the American system is breeding Communism faster than a laboratory can breed B.G.W. weapons. Jackson

hadn't lived long enough and certainly hadn't lived fatly enough to learn what earlier warriors like Orwell learnt. All over the world the system is the same. Its title may change from place to place, but the system is still the system and the fight against it must never cease. When the brutes on the Right have been toppled we must be ready to turn around and fight the brutes on the Left.

Apart from anything else, these letters make a valuable social document. Perhaps one of the most valuable ever written. How often do we get a lucid account from a man of Jackson's intelligence of what it's like to spend years in solitary confinement with other people's excrement being thrown at you now and then for laughs? After reading these letters one knows without doubt that every criminal is a victim of his particular social order. One knows too that we must have penal reforms and have them damned quickly.

When George Jackson was alive his enemies kept him where he could do little harm. Now that he's dead he may become the torch that will fire his people towards a better way of life. Long live George Jackson!

CURTAIN RISE

JOHN RICKARD

Eric Irvin: "Theatre Comes To Australia" (University of Queensland Press, \$6.00).

"Here we commence! here then we make our stand,
Friends of the Drama! Lend a fostering hand!"

The scene was Sydney, 1833, and the occasion the official opening of Barnett Levey's Theatre Royal, the first permanent theatre in Australia. Some one hundred and forty years later the "Friends of Drama", be they governments, societies of North Shore/Toorak fund raisers, or even the ordinary theatre goer, are still called on from time to time to lend "a fostering hand".

The appeal of theatre, which is, as Mr. Irvin points out, the sense of participation, remains the same. But form and content change, and it is the great virtue of "Theatre Comes to Australia" that it places Barnett Levey's theatre firmly in its historical context. The theatre, both in its design and conventions, was essentially the English Georgian theatre of the eighteenth century. However, the place was a small, remote penal colony, where many of the young generation, the currency lads and lasses, had no acquaintance with theatre at all.

Barnett Levey's Theatre Royal was therefore very much a pioneer venture. Eric Irvin's book charts its development from dream to reality carefully, even painstakingly. Levey was not a prudent businessman. His irrepressible urge to show off was symbolised by the extraordinary (and unsuccessful) mill he built on top of his George Street warehouse. Such flamboyance was put to better use in the theatre, and Levey was himself a talented comic performer, though some thought his comedy a trifle low. He was, in a word, stage-struck, and it needed such an enthusiast to launch a theatre in New South Wales. There was, to begin with, the moral paternalism of Governor Darling to contend with; only when the enlightened Bourke came was it possible for Levey's theatre

to open its doors. Then there were not only the technical problems of staffing and managing a theatre, but the difficulty of gathering a company. There were no actors in the colony, and the amateurs have been a very mixed bag. The sound of applause went to their heads, and very soon there were demands for more pay, acrimonious disputes and much publicised walk-outs. Well, Levey might have shrugged, that's show business.

Mr. Irvin is at his best when he takes the Georgian theatre to pieces, explaining precisely how it worked, the conventions observed by actors and audience, and the kind of fare it offered. He knows his subject well, and writes without the gush that sometimes characterises books on theatre. Although the scope is limited—it is essentially the story of one entrepreneur and his theatre—the book is amply justified. Theatrical history hardly exists in Australia. Those accounts that have been published are very much of the scrapbook variety, with little resembling a true historical approach. Mr. Irvin does not always avoid the scrapbook pitfalls—sometimes it is difficult to sustain one's interest through the procession of plays and performances—but nevertheless "Theatre Comes to Australia" is conceived as a work of history, and is to be welcomed as such. All the more pity, therefore, that although there is an index and bibliography (and also a quite amazing list of the plays, pantomimes and ballets performed at the theatre between 1832 and 1838) the work is not fully documented. This is a gesture to the lay reader, no doubt, but is to be regretted.

BIGGE ON N.S.W.

MARGARET CORRIS

John Ritchie: "Punishment and Profit: The Reports of Commissioner John Bigge on the Colonies of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, 1822-1823; their origins, nature and significance" (Heinemann, \$10.50).

The investigation of Commissioner Bigge into the State of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land is a subject which has proved continually fascinating to students of the early colonial period in Australian history. A definitive study has always been lacking, however, until the recent publication by Dr. John Ritchie of his book on the origins, nature and significance of the Bigge Reports (1822-23).

The author has researched widely and carefully into the sources available for this period, often showing perception and originality in the use of his material. The first section of the book, "The Origins of the Inquiry", is particularly impressive. There has long been a need for a detailed examination of the pressures behind the commissioning of Bigge and Dr. Ritchie has provided us at last with a well-documented and convincing analysis. He shows a fine command of the workings of the Colonial Office and of its relationship with other government departments concerned with the Australian colonies.

The biographical chapter on John Thomas Bigge is a highlight of the book. It is fascinating and again impressively researched, providing valuable insights into the kind of man sent to investigate the Australian colonies and the "portable luggage" he brought with him. Another particularly notable section is the appendix dealing with the

influence that English and Australian woollen interests had on Bigge: the analysis here is quite brilliant.

Even so, there are several criticisms to be made. The exciting conclusions reached in this appendix on the wool question might have been more effectively yoked to the main body of the argument; some of the fine points made about the complexity of Colonial Office procedure subsequently lose their effect when Ritchie reverts to the personalisation of the process, in terms like "Bathurst wrote that . . .", "Bathurst intended that . . ." or "Bathurst decided to . . ."

Students of this period will readily recognise Manning Clark's influence on Dr. Ritchie. While Ritchie openly acknowledges his great debt to his professor, for many things, one finds disquieting his frequent imitation of Clark's literary mannerisms—unless they contribute to the process of explanation, which they rarely do. It is a pity that Dr. Ritchie did not rely more on his own considerable resources.

Yet the book must be judged not on vagaries of style or outstanding sections but on the extent to which Ritchie structures and establishes his central arguments. I find his account of the issues and events surrounding the appointment of Bigge satisfactory (with the exception of Ritchie's failure to reveal anything significantly new on the vexed question of why only one Commissioner was appointed); his detailed account of the Commissioner in the Colonies is most valuable in showing how the themes of the reports were developed; his analysis of the reports and their general significance (the reconciliation of punishment with profit) certainly seems sound enough.

Some key issues, however, remain unsatisfactorily treated. It is not made clear enough, for instance, whether Bigge was to consider economy or severity the most vital consideration if he found them to be irreconcilable. The vital issue of the extent to which the Commissioner was influenced in his investigations and "circumscribed by the attitude of the British government and his own prejudices" in his reports, is not closely enough examined. The question of Bigge's relations with John Macarthur likewise needs more precise analysis—indeed at no stage does Ritchie clearly enough elucidate the key figures who influenced Bigge.

The list of grievances cannot be continued here; and by all means let the balance be corrected by pointing to Dr. Ritchie's controlled argument, his command of a huge volume of sources and to the impeccable structure of the book. It is a valuable and scholarly work.

THE SECOND GOLDEN AGE

E. A. BEEVER

Geoffrey Serle: "The Rush to be Rich. A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1833-1889" (Melbourne University Press, \$9.90).

Nineteenth century Victoria experienced two extraordinary outbursts of prosperity: one in the 1850s, based on the colony's prolific supply of alluvial gold; another in the 1880s, based on the prolific supply of "gold" from British investors. Some time ago Dr. Geoffrey Serle masterfully detailed the earlier of these boom periods in "The Golden Age". Now with "The Rush to be Rich"

he has repeated the achievement for the later boom.

"The Rush to be Rich" is a showpiece of professional history. Serle, if conventional in his range of sources, has scoured these with impeccable thoroughness, and to the vast yield of fact and opinion has applied exemplary patience and objectivity. The end result is a balanced and restrained reconstruction of times that have seduced many an historian into polemical ways. As well as a scholarly, this is also a relaxed and readable book. Serle writes easily and fluently, with a flair for color and a gently sardonic, at times bizarre, sense of humor. Fifty well-chosen illustrations, minimal bottom-of-page footnoting and a comparatively modest price of \$9.90 further enhance the popular appeal of "The Rush to be Rich".

The book's sub-title, "A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1833-1889," is perhaps slightly misleading. The reader encounters not so much an overall narrative and explanation of events as a series of finely-drawn pictures, mostly of the early and mid 1880s, with some of the high boom years of the late 1880s and a final brief sketch of Victoria at the end of the boom in 1889. Although Serle narrates at the detailed level, he is much more concerned with re-creating the spirit, character and appearance of 1880s Victoria. His reconstructions are outstanding for their wealth of detail. They abound with previously little-known but evocative facets of life in the 1880s, ranging from the horrors of the polluted Yarra to the glories of 'Chloe' and from Melbourne's jingoistic excesses over the Sudan to its noble donation to the cause of the London dock strike, just as they abound with graphic and superbly compact portraits of Victoria's leading figures. Serle's reconstructions are also outstanding for their variety and breadth. As in "The Golden Age", he excels in discussions of domestic political and social matters, but handles with almost as much confidence and certainty the complexities of inter-colonial and international relations, religious issues, and the activities of labor. Perhaps he is somewhat ambitious. In particular his coverage of the Victorian economy at many points lacks that thoroughness of research evident in so many other aspects: business records are largely ignored, and some important trade journals as well as recent articles and theses are ignored completely. More seriously, his account of overall economic development, an unqualified and often unfootnoted synthesis of fundamentally conflicting accounts, is deceptively simple. Certainly in describing and analysing Victoria's economy of the 1880s the general historian faces acute problems—an unusually complex tangle of cause and effect, a lack of basic research and a wealth of highly speculative interpretations. Yet it is a pity that Serle has not conveyed to his readers something of these problems and limitations to knowledge.

"The Rush to be Rich" makes an invaluable contribution to the greater understanding of many important aspects of Victoria's development in the 1880s. From the more detailed sections on the economy, one may single out a vivid and sympathetic sketch of the colony's small farmers and their misfortunes; a convincing and refreshing 'anti-class' interpretation of employer-employee relations; and a detached evaluation of business morality at the peak of the boom. Special mention should be made of Serle's detailed accounts of Victoria's turbulent relations with other colon-

ies and with Britain, of the indefatigable efforts of Victoria's political leaders towards intercolonial union and towards an independent Australian foreign policy; in the latter respect the persistent James Service foreshadowed by more than a generation the impulsive Billy Hughes. To place Victoria of the 1880s still more firmly in its broader contemporary setting, Serle also makes excellent use of international comparisons; at times a little ambitiously, but for the most part highly revealing. There could hardly be more telling evidence of Victoria's absurdly high land values than The Times' devastating comparison with English values, cited by the author; the sum paid for one 500-acre block of poor soil twenty-six miles from Melbourne, The Times observed, would buy in England an estate of 1550 acres "with a really grand old mansion, built by an eminent historical personage, a deer park, walled gardens, lawns, terraces, cedars, and six park lodges, one mile and a half from a railway station, and within thirty miles of London."

Victoria of the 1880s is placed firmly in its broader contemporary context, but only very tenuously in its broader chronological context. Perhaps this is consistent with the basic orientation of the book towards themes rather than overall narrative, but is unfortunate nonetheless. As the introductory chapter Serle chooses to offer the reader a telescopic survey of events from 1861 to 1882. This apparent gesture towards keeping faith with the original plan, stated in the Preface to "The Golden Age" for two more volumes covering the years 1861 to 1900 is in itself insubstantial and unoriginal. It adds little to an understanding of the years 1883 to 1889 and leaves unexplained why 1883 rather than 1880 was selected as the starting point. Overall, it is an unpromising beginning to a distinguished book.

"The Rush to be Rich" similarly comes to a rather uneasy conclusion. By comparison with earlier years, Victoria of 1889 receives scant treatment. The general condition, especially economic condition, of the colony in that year remains unclear, and also just why this was the end of an era. However, judgment on such points is premature since "The Rush to be Rich" is only the first of two volumes on the boom and depression. Its incomplete ending should perhaps be not so much a source of dissatisfaction as one of anticipation.

MEETING THE PEOPLE

JOHN McLAREN

David Martin: "On the Road to Sydney" (Nelson, \$3.95).

Many years ago Alan Marshall set off along the Hume Highway from Melbourne and discovered himself. He told the story in the book "These Are My People". When David Martin, after a sojourn back in Europe, set off along the same highway more than twenty years later, he met

the same kind of people, and their stories and the stories of the towns they live in form the substance of this book. Yet like Alan Marshall before him, the people he meets enable the author to find himself. It was on the road to Sydney that David Martin confirmed that his long love-affair with Australia was still alive, that divorce was out of the question, and that he was in fact, for better or worse, but irrevocably, an Australian.

Yet he is by no means an ordinary Australian. As an outsider at least in origin, he perceives aspects of the Australian character which amaze him, like the endurance of Peter Larkham. Peter himself, like his fellows, is quite casual about what has happened to him and how he has coped with it. It is only the insight of a Martin which points out to us that we still have giants among us. Yet this book is the product of far more than insight, for the author has also had the tact and the concern to elicit from the people he meets the clues to the essence of their lives.

David Martin is not, however, merely the tourist who has travelled through an artificial landscape and found everything lovely. On the contrary, the sheer ugliness of modern development in towns like Wodonga moves him to justified anger. What he perhaps fails to do is to show how this ugliness stems from the same fine, but narrow, qualities that he finds in Peter.

David Martin's book is illustrated by his son Jan, whose drawing has the same accurate, ironic and ultimately loving clarity as his father's prose. The two have created a book which celebrates the human spirit far more truly than does the highway which is its occasion.

ISLAND LEGENDS

VIDA HORN

Margaret Lawrie: "Myths and Legends of Torres Strait" (University of Queensland Press, 1970, pp. 372, \$20).

This admirable book claims to preserve every traditional tale that is remembered and told in Torres Strait today. Mrs. Lawrie speaks the languages of the islands; her work was undertaken at the request of the Islanders themselves, who recorded their myths and legends on tapes, then assisted Mrs. Lawrie in her translation.

An introduction and comprehensive notes provide background knowledge, and there is also a recording of eleven songs. Production is designed to appeal to the general reader. Many of the 165 stories are illustrated with paintings and drawings by the Islanders and by maps of the area. These, and the excellent colour photographs, make clear the close link between the myths and their setting. They demonstrate to anyone who may still doubt it the truth of Yirrkala spokesman Wally Wulaynbuma's statement: "The culture of the Aboriginal people is mingled in the rocks and the trees. Once the land is defaced, their culture goes, they have lost everything".

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