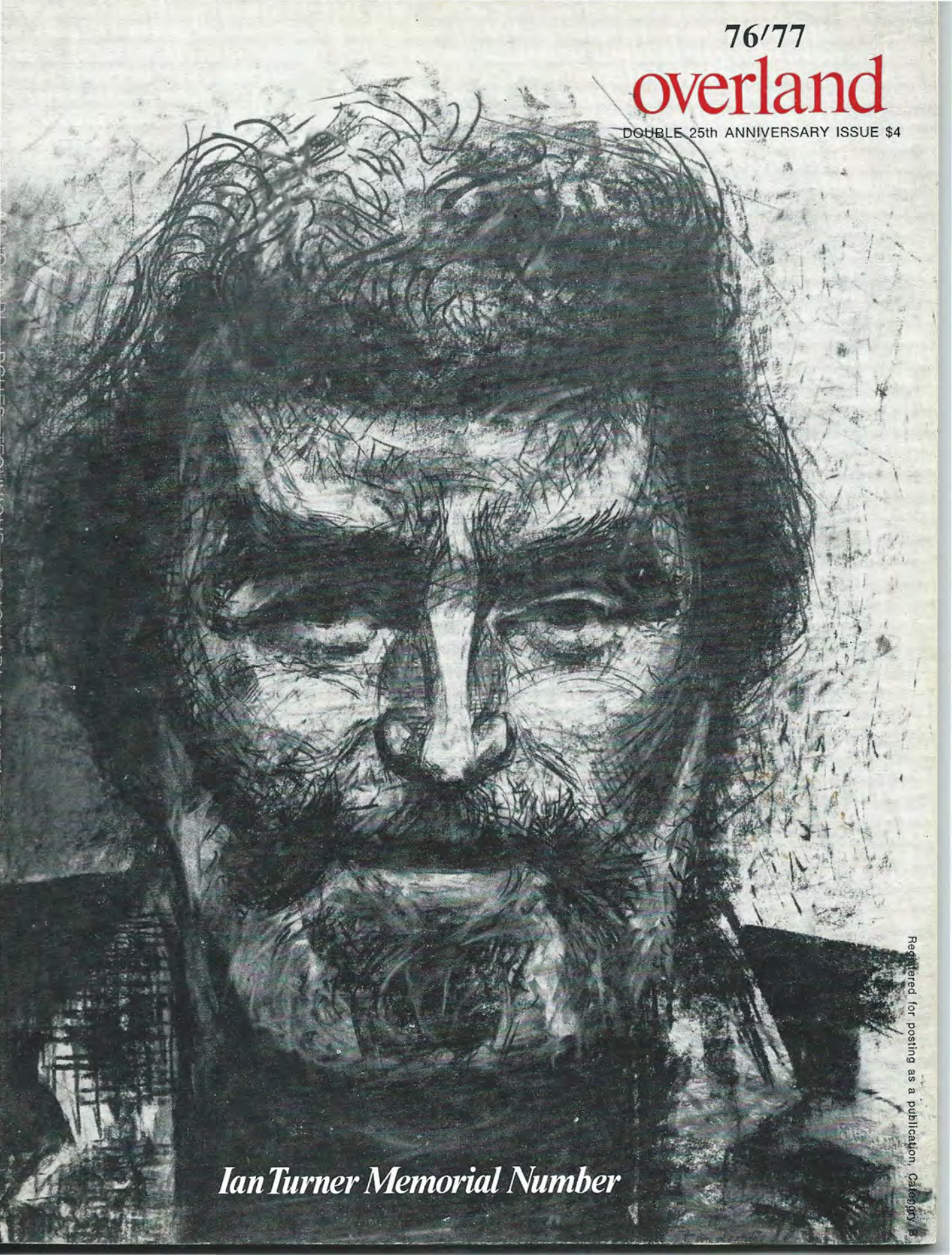


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Temper democratic, bias Australian

overland

October 1979

STEPHEN MURRAY-SMITH

Ian Turner

*A speech at the funeral,
29 December 1978*

We have come here to say goodbye to an unimportant part of Ian Turner, though some of us will shortly have to say goodbye again, for Leonie tells me that we shall scatter his ashes on the waters of Bass Strait, on a lovely day, from the back of our dinghy. That same dinghy which he was crewing with me two mornings ago, with Ken Gott as the enthusiastic fisherman supernumerary, as we circled Nautilus Bay in the stiff westerly, deciding not to pick up that pot after all, too much surge, marvelling as ever in that wonderful cove at the primitive glories around us, and at the sea eagle that nonchalantly circled overhead and settled on a tree on the cliffside above our heads. Filled with a rush of affection, I leant forward and touched him on the knee. "Are you happy?" I asked, though it was an unnecessary question. "Very," Ian said, in that way of his that left you satisfied, because you knew — or thought you knew — that he was saying other things too.

We have come to say goodbye to Ian, but this is only a brief goodbye, for in some weeks time, probably early in February, we shall have a commemoration of Ian. He asked for a party with a Jellyroll Morton song, but it will be more than that. Then we shall thank whatever gods there be for his existence, for the existence of a man who has influenced more lives for the better, and left a greater gap, than any person I have ever known or expect to know. Yes, we will talk about this in our time, and we will rejoice in Ian as we mourn for him, but that too will be relatively unimportant, for we all know what Ian meant to us, as a fount and symbol of tolerance and wisdom, humanity and concern, involvement and the long view, and because of Ian we are all changed. As a good wine needs no bush, Ian needs no commemoration: to most of us here, and

to many who are not, his life was all the commemoration we need.

Perhaps you would like to know a little of Ian's last days. In any case, you should. He had had a busy year, under the usual pressures, to which we all contributed, with a few added: his football columns in the Australian, for a start. A few weeks ago he had a medical checkup; I understand it was generally satisfactory, but with some warning about high blood-pressure, for which he started taking tablets, which may or may not have contributed to a lassitude which seemed to advance on him towards the end of the year. For the first time he and Leonie made a decision to spend a full five weeks on Erith Island; an immense joy to Nita and me. Nita says, probably with truth, that we have never anticipated anything with more pleasure. With Joanna the five of us operated as a single combined little segment of the island scene, with our own territory, our own mess, our own confidences and our own sense of community within a larger community. We could potter about and read to our heart's desire, as well as keep a quizzical eye on the wider world, from our armchairs above the beach and outside the hut. We had been delayed at Port Albert for two days by bad weather, and Ian and Leonie like the rest of us benefitted by the delay and the very rare experience of being able to wrest time from time.

There were no traumas associated with the voyage to the Kent Group or the unloading, for twenty-two hands, mainly experienced, were available. Ian and Leonie had their comfortable tent and its contents up within an hour or two: Ian was very proud of his home from home, his table, chairs, lamp and bed, and indeed it was an enviable nook of the woods. Ian had just six days left. He slept long hours, ten hours on Sunday

night, for instance. We neither ate nor drank heavily. There were no cray-potting expeditions by Ian or me, no laying of linoleum, no strenuous walks. He asked once or twice if we should not be getting stuck into things, and I replied "Let the younger ones keep going for a while at their present pace. Later on you and I will step in, when we have our land legs, and show them what stamina really is." The night before he died Ian got much pleasure from improvising a window from an old mirror. He then put fly-wire over it very religiously and seemed nonplussed when I pointed out that the hut he was making it for had no door in any case. But I am still not sure who was having whom on. What he did say eventually was: "Well, at least it stops the glass falling out."

On Wednesday morning he was up late, perhaps 9.30 — I had in fact been noting that he seemed to be sleeping very soundly for long hours. After breakfast I suggested we might run Ken Gott over to Deal Island to show him the lighthouse station and the museum and to introduce him to a fellow CB enthusiast. On the way over I thought that it would be a pity to drown Ian in Murray Pass (and myself and Ken for that matter) and we turned back. Then we spent an hour or two reading in the pleasant sun and caressing wind in our armchairs.

We had had, incidentally, a very happy night the night before. In fact it was a happy day. At breakfast time we placed a bottle of champagne in the frig to celebrate to what Ian called his "twelfth re-birthday", the anniversary of his revival from clinical death in St. Vincent's hospital. So Ian *was* counting. We were pleased for him but agreed that the time for anxiety had clearly passed. That evening we had one of our happiest *tête-a-tête* dinners on Erith, ever; a couple of fish in sweet-and-sour sauce, a bottle of wine which Ian went out into the dark to find, and two or three hours of agreeable talk. In the course of this he agreed to write for Overland on John le Carré if I wrote on John Masters: we thought it might be fun to try and wake up something new in the literary world.

But back to Wednesday, the day before yesterday. At two someone suggested a game of beach cricket. With twenty-two on the island it seemed flouting providence to deny the suggestion; in any case the odd game, played on a short pitch and with a tennis ball and improvised bats, has always been part of our island culture. After some twenty minutes Ian came in with Nita, and made a few stylish strokes off some very indifferent

bowling; fielding at point I was not paying attention and received one drive on the thigh. Then Ian ran his ten or fifteen paces. He paused at the bowler's end, and fell forward as though over a patch of uneven sand. Many of us laughed at another antic. Then cries of alarm went up.

As Ian lay on his back on the sand desperate resuscitation measures were taken, especially by Max Marginson and myself. Cardiac massage started within seconds, and mouth-to-mouth breathing also. A small resuscitation machine was produced and used in an attempt to induce breathing. An intravenous injection of the appropriate drug was given. Ian collapsed at 2.30, and resuscitation attempts concluded about 45 minutes later. The four or five adults around the body at that stage agreed that at no time had Ian shown the faintest sign of life. It is my belief, and I think it is the belief of all my companions on Erith, that Ian was dead as he hit the sand.

The post-mortem report, received since the above was written, states that Ian had a complete coronary occlusion, that there was evidence of a large previous heart attack and much damaged muscle, and that death was instantaneous and that Ian would have experienced no pain. The doctor conducting the post-mortem at Sale also stated that he was surprised at Ian's length of survival since his previous attack, and that but for mild exercise of the kind he was taking when he died he might not have survived as long as he did.

If death has to come, who would not wish it to come as it did to Ian? Death came amid the splash of waves at his feet, the cries of gulls, sunshine and wind, the laughter of children and the clapping of hands. As he fell he was cradled in the arms of those who loved him and whom he loved. His flame was extinguished instantaneously, as by a mighty wind. His death, said Hugh Stretton, was a triumph. It may be hard to see it that way, but few of us will have his luck.

The body was placed on an old hatch-cover, carried off the beach, and placed on boxes on a small, grassy shelf above the beach. A tarpaulin was rigged above it and the flag, above that again, lowered to half mast. And then we waited for the helicopter. Everyone there, I am sure, felt they were actors in a terrible dream. But this did not prevent, of course, immediate action by every member of the party in the fight to save Ian's life. Each member adopted an appropriate role. Robert and Hilary Newton crossed to Deal Island in unpleasant seas to set up a communications centre there. Ken Gott and David Hughes manned

the transceiver on Erith and dealt with a frantic flow of messages and queries flowing in and out of the island. Others prepared the helicopter pad. Ships, fishermen and the lighthouse station at Wilson's Promontory kept their radios open for hours. The full story of how many helped us, and how, has not yet been pieced together, but it will be. It was as though the world was rushing to save the life of a man it could not afford to lose, and that Ian's spirit was reaching out, as it so often did, to touch those who did not even know him.

This is not the time or place for me to speak at any length of what Ian meant to me personally. He was a very dear brother, a *wantok tru*, a man who never scolded, always sympathised, never humbugged, always consoled; but a man you knew you were not kidding, either. As well we were bound together politically by many things, past, present and future, but above all by the hard-won realisation that without maintaining a feeling for people, all people, and not just the people who agree with you or with whom you agree, without maintaining this feeling all parties and all policies are fraudulent. Which is of course not the same thing as saying that all parties and all policies *are* fraudulent. If I had died instead of him he would have spoken for me with an understanding and compassion that no-one else could have or would have. A whole part of me is wrenched bodily away, and only scar tissue will remain.

Today we think of many. We think of Ian and his struggles: and all that he went through to become the man we know. Above all, I think of him as he thought of himself, as a man tormented by the difficulties of receiving love from others and of expressing it to them.

Apart from Ian, I think especially of some others. I think of the people of Erith Island, among whom he died, and who — including the children — have twice seen death strike in their midst. They would all wish to be here today, and Nita and I, and indeed Leonie, represent them. We think of Ian's sister and mother. We think of course of Deborah, July and John Henry — Ian never remembered their birthdays, but he showed his children a rare respect and tolerance, he was proud of them, and saw them as a large part of his contribution to life. But above all we think of the three great women who loved him and did everything in their power to protect him. If fate played Ian some scurvy tricks, fortune visited him in overwhelming measure thrice. Amirah is here. So too is Ann. We will know the truth of her remark to me yesterday: "I worked for the best part of ten years to save Ian from this." And there is Leonie, who brought him happiness, companionship and love in his last years, and who was by his side as he died, and by whose side he will always be.

Ian, the world is a better place because you lived in it. We are better people because you touched our lives. We loved you.

STEPHEN MURRAY-SMITH

Ian Turner

*A speech made at the
commemorative gathering,
18 February 1979.*

The most important thing about Ian's loss for Nita and for me is simply that we will never joke with him again, and never again see his beaming face as we push open the back door. Beside that nothing is of much importance; and I take it that there are many here who will feel the same way. Principalities, power, policies, potentates: what do they matter compared to the loss of Ian? Ian was not the administrative committee of the ALP, he was not the Richmond Football Club, the history school at Monash; Ian was Ian. Those of us who loved Ian loved him because he was a rich and rare human being. *Why* he was a rich and rare human being seems too much like a seminar paper, hardly worth going into. "Madame," as the bishop of Norwich told a parishioner, overconcerned about the verities, "it is almost impossible to exaggerate the unimportance of everything."

Ian was of a reflective turn of mind, and he would not have disagreed. Of course he would, while he agreed, have gone out and helped any number of lame dogs over stiles; he would have said to many, as did the Giraffe, "Excuse me for troublin' yer; I'm always troublin' yer; but there's that there poor woman . . ."; he would have composed a reference for Tom and written to Dick at the Rotary Club at Tumbarumba and said that yes, he would come up and talk to them next October (and he would have forgotten to ask for his petrol money), and then he would have taken Harriet out to lunch and told her that things might be going crook at the moment but to take the long view about her husband or her lecturing or her problems with the vice chancellor. Then he would have come back to his desk and would have written, as he did write, that socialism is not about being mates, as Billy Lane said it was; socialism is not about putting two chickens in

every pot or two teachers in every classroom or two doctors in every ward; the human function of socialism — Ian suggested we might use the word 'progress' instead, if we liked — the human function of socialism is to raise mankind to a higher level of suffering, to get us all to a position where we are free to recognise our emptiness, examine our spiritual needs, think about happiness in the only way it can be thought about, in a world from which oppression and degradation have been banished. In saying this he would have pointed to (and did point to) the fact that the way forward was not helped by the fact that the self-appointed critics of the existing order were often self-deceivers and liars, resting as comfortably on their ignorance as ever Fat rested on his moneybags. But, being Ian, he would have been kind even about that. Geoff Serle has pointed out something worth remembering about Ian: "he had excellent manners — he argued essentials and even under provocation scorned to make petty points".

So, all in all, it is not hard to see why Ian felt so strongly attracted to the historical philosophy of Manning Clark; and why Manning felt that in Ian he had, not only an outspoken defender, but one of the few who saw where he was going. And I think we should look too to Ian's early championship of Sid Nolan and Patrick White (in the days when Ian was praising Nolan and White on the Left, it was equivalent to denouncing pot at a pop festival today): men who, because of the quality of their art, were going to change the way all Australians looked at themselves and their country, and hence were eventually going to be part of that 'common culture' which was part of Ian's life-long quest and perhaps his one millenarian vision.

I spoke at the funeral about Ian's last days,

but Ian's last days really started about twelve years ago, when he had that massive heart attack from which he was so lucky to recover. It was from then that Ian started to think seriously about death, and hence about his place in life. He once again started on that quest for lasting personal happiness which so often eluded him like a will-o'-the-wisp on marshy quest — a phrase from Bernard O'Dowd, of course, which reminds me of Ian's immense affection for the writing of his own country and his immense knowledge of it. Like Bunyip Bluegum, he was a very well-bred fellow, polite in his manners, graceful in his attitudes, and able to converse on a great variety of subjects, having read all the best Australian poets. And hence Ian admitted very sensibly and cheerfully to double standards: that some art could, and should, because of its very propinquity, mean more to Australians than to others.

As I said, Ian started on that quest for personal happiness. He also decided to enjoy himself more: I think one of the most touching and marvellous things in these last years was to see Ian's joy at the discovery of Europe in general and Italy in particular; he himself was a kind of renaissance humanist and one of the great sadnesses is that Ian's personal quest of discovery for his roots has been so brutally cut short. They talk about sabbaticals — but this country did well out of the time off it allowed Ian abroad. Even Ian's awakening interest in majolica ware, his careful and intelligent excursions into the collecting of Staffordshire, showed a constantly expanding sensitivity and sensibility. And I wish I had more time to talk about Ian as a collector. Ian didn't want to sit on the top of a pillar in the desert reflecting on the turpitude of mankind. He wanted to surround himself with amusing and beautiful and desirable objects — mineral and vegetable and occasionally animal — and in so doing he revealed that sympathy for human achievement which made him so satisfactory a human being himself.

In these last twelve years, and certainly as far as his writing and teaching was concerned, he clearly wanted to do fewer things but things of more lasting importance. He virtually stopped reviewing, but he wrote a series of extremely important chapters and articles: his chapter on the first world war; his major article on Manning Clark; his important autobiographical piece in *Overland* 59, his article on his innovatory course at Monash on 20th century history; a major political statement on the fall of the Whitlam

government; most recently, in *Overland* 72, a summary of the ideological position and philosophy of democratic socialism in Australia, which he called "Temper democratic, bias Australian" — a motto of course which stems from Joe Furphy (I think that the issue which set Ian and me most firmly apart from our respective wives was that he and I revered *Such is Life*).

(Incidentally, copies of that issue are available here at \$2 each, and a subscription to *Overland* at \$8 a year. Ian helped to create *Overland*, and certainly he and I saved it from the Stalinists. And we both spent a large part of our lives collecting for what we saw as good causes. It seems to be not only proper but positively necessary to mention such matters at a celebration of Ian.)

And in those last twelve years, too, he maintained his participation in what his critics have called 'piss politics' but which showed Ian's determination to be a front-line soldier as well as a staff officer: he remembered the old song:

Now Marx and Engels always taught that
undue concentration
On abstract intellectual thought without its
application
Is very bad and always is a source of great
confusion
Which only helps the bourgeoisie and not the
revolution . . .

So he worked hard but often despairingly with the ALP, and his contribution was of considerable importance to this country; and he also played a role of great significance in the Australia Council where, as deputy chairman and head of the administrative committee, he untangled many involved political, bureaucratic and financial problems. Extraordinary, someone has said, that a man who couldn't fill in a taxation form could successfully sort out for other people a budget of twenty million dollars.

Since we are on this vulgar subject of money — Ian was very fond of Joe Hill, and of course Joe Hill's own epitaph was "Don't mourn for me — organize!" — let me say that there will be an Ian Turner Commemorative Trust Fund. Many people have asked if there is some way they can pay tribute to Ian. Trustees will be appointed in due course by the executors to Ian's will, who are Leonie Sandercock and Peter Redlich. The object or objects to which such a fund may be applied have not even been discussed — your own views would be welcome — except that Laurie Clancy has suggested that we should raise enough money

to buy a player every year for Richmond, and Peter Redlich has given it as his opinion that this wouldn't make any difference.

What did Ian think of death? *Timor mortis conturbat me*. Ian was distressed at the thought of death, but the point is that he *thought* of it, because he knew that death was likely to tap him on the shoulder before he reached the next cross-roads. "I have been much preoccupied with death," he wrote me in 1976.

Not with a personal sorrow, like Nita's, or with your impatience at the meaningless ceremonies with which we like to assuage the sorrow, or to purge our sins of omission and commission. "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done and have done those things which we ought not to have done." It would be good to believe that you could unload all that onto Christ. I return to that thought each time I go to evensong in the King's College chapel, which I've done whenever I've been in Cambridge, because the chapel is so beautiful — the hounds and griffins looking down on you in a dozen different aspects are out of this world — and the singing is so good. [No, I am concerned with death] in a more general, though still a personal, way. I cannot weep at the prospect of my own death (though I still have moments of blind panic when I confront it) . . . how like the break-up of an intense personal relationship is being bereaved. The nature of the trauma, and the defences one sets up, are almost identical. It's like a coronary infarction (if I've got the term right — it always seemed to me that the less I knew about it technically, the more likely it was to go away). The scar tissue forms, but the heart never works as well again.

I must finish, but want to finish with another thought of Ian's, that of himself as a non-achiever. How preposterous! is our first reaction. But Ian genuinely did think of himself as a non-achiever, and he would want us to consider the proposition. He was a very intelligent, warm, human, generous man, with a pronounced interest in and knowledge of politics, history, intellectual matters, and a capacity to generalize on his understandings. There would, one likes to think, be many like him in the great metropolitan centres of America, England, Europe. There was *no-one* quite like Ian on the Australian front. But he wasn't prime

minister though it has been suggested that, if he had had the kind of cutting edge that takes people into politics, we might have had a successful Labor government in Australia today. He was quite well known as the "footy professor", but a significant section of the Labor Party thought him a bad influence; the academics never invited him so far as I know to become a vice-chancellor or even a professor of history, god help us; the magazine for which he chiefly wrote still has a national circulation of less than two thousand.

Ian once wrote about this country:

Most men of intellectual training reflected pale glimpses of European models; they left serious discussion and creation to their elders and betters, and concentrated on hitting practical targets and building pious monuments to the old-world civilisation, whilst the egalitarianism of those who rejected the old world models created no new place for the independent intellect . . . The "conservative" half of society is prepared to tolerate elites as long as they are tame. The "radical" half distrusts elites. Both halves . . . are willing to hire the services of intellectuals, provided that they can establish the limits . . . Society no longer isolates its intellectuals; but it still fears and disapproves their intellectuality. How much room for manoeuvre still remains?

If those of us in this hall really honor and love Ian's memory, if we feel we understand what he was trying to do for us and feel grateful for this, then we might ponder the question here raised: can we build a better Australia which will have lots of Ians, not just one? Which will have people to whom mercy is a greater virtue than killing? Which will breed men and women who have the courage to base their political stance on a feeling for all people and an examination of Australian reality, rather than the reality of Moscow, Peking, Trotsky, or that of the State Department and the Pentagon? Which will examine how we can expand wisdom even if it involves re-thinking what at the moment we call 'education'? Ian's life was significant to us all, otherwise we wouldn't be here. But we have to get beyond the pious thoughts and meaningless ceremonies which Ian himself dismissed, and do what Ian did: think hard and creatively about what his life meant, and can and should mean, for our country and our people.

CLYDE HOLDING:

We have come here as friends, comrades and neighbors to pay tribute to the work and life of Ian Turner.

In Turner's life and work we have the history of a great intellect and captivating personality drawn large upon the canvas of post-war Australia, a community involved in enormous social, political and economic changes.

Turner was gifted with a kaleidoscopic intellect, which shed light and gave purpose and joy to a myriad of causes and interests in which he was involved. For many of us it is still difficult to comprehend that he is no longer with us, that we cannot go to him, seek his advice, gather strength from his insights and serenity from his compassion.

Turner's membership of the Labor Party was a logical extension of his lifelong commitment to a socialist, humanist and egalitarian Australian society. Having left the Communist Party after Hungary, he carried none of the personal bitterness that so often affects the political judgement of the ex-communist. A gifted historian and writer, his wide range of interests made him a leading spokesman within the Labor Party and community on a wide range of causes.

He could have easily adopted the garb of the guru and sought simply to influence the course of events by the strength of his own intellect. But he always personally accepted, at every level, the hackwork of politics. His was one of the great influences that made for unity and sanity when the Victorian branch of the Labor Party could have split, following Federal intervention in this State in the early 1970s.

When those of us, less patient, less insightful, often made malevolent by the events that weighed in upon us, needed the spirit of compromise, Turner was always there. He was inevitably the figure that provided consensus, and the formula that always worked.

Ian never sought major political office, although on two occasions I was present when that course was urged on him by those who could deliver. In all the years I worked with him he never sought for himself any personal gain or benefit.

Ian was — a matter of pride for him, and a matter of joy to our local community — very much a Richmond man. This was not just in the sense of being a fierce, one-eyed protagonist for the Richmond Football Club. (Turner almost made football barracking a new art form.) It was much deeper than that. It was for Turner and one of Melbourne's oldest suburbs a commitment

to a local community which possesses all the anguish, all the unarticulated problems, of an inner industrial suburb in this community. Whether it was as president of the Richmond Historical Society, or of his local A.L.P. Branch, or as spokesman for local citizens on problems of town planning, his ever-generous spirit and open door made him our man for all seasons. Turner was loved in Richmond and he loved it in return — it was as simple as that, for those who may wonder why we choose this venue today.

Turner's death came at a time when, to quote his friend and fellow historian Manning Clark, "The money changers are still in charge of the temple." In that sense, we need Turner now more than ever before. But to have known him, to have loved him, to have shared his vision, is to know that, despite our loss, this is not the end.

NOEL COUNIHAN:

We are in Tiger country and Turner was notoriously partisan, while for sixty years I've borne a millstone round my neck called South Melbourne and every single time I've been with Ian to see South play Richmond he left the ground wearing a triumphant grin, until last year at the M.C.G. when, after an even first half and Ian's "quietly confident, mate", for some inexplicable reason every member of the South team decided to kick himself a goal or two and back at Lennox Street, a lone Swan in a pack of mortified Tigers, I was able to turn to my beer and smile.

My feelings for Ian are I think best expressed in a portrait study I have drawn posthumously for Leonie.

One of his most attractive aspects was the range of his cultural interests, his love of the fine arts, combining a discriminating appreciation of what is called today 'high art' with a lively appreciation of the popular arts.

I discovered his serious concern for the arts over thirty years ago when I was a Communist Party spokesman on the arts and Turner a keen young Marxist student in the University Branch of the Party where, backed up by Amirah, he often challenged my judgement of contemporary painters he admired. Those were days of rather black-and-white judgements, I am afraid, and I suppose, looking back, that we were both only partially right.

Last year, over dinner, he confided somewhat wryly while we were talking about painters, "I

no longer argue with painters. I found out you just can't win."

In fact he loved the company of artists of all kinds, musicians, poets, novelists, people of the theatre, painters, and the walls of the Lennox Street house are covered with originals by Fred Williams, Clif Pugh, Vic O'Connor, Erica McGilchrist, Dave Armfield, George Bell, Frank Werther, myself and others, while Ian's vast library contains a fine collection of art books and monographs on artists.

Ian was fascinated by satire and the ribald, cartoons, caricature, comic art, the poster and graffiti, the art of walls and public places. It was Ian and the artist Udo Sellbach and myself who founded that unique satirical series of the later sixties, *Broadsheet*. Printed in the main from the original blocks and etched plates of its contributing artists, accompanied by poems, in editions of about a thousand at 50 cents a copy, *Broadsheet* dealt with themes like the Vietnam war, the monster Bolte, ockerism and the Great Australian Summer, and Aussie Rules. I have vivid memories of those Sunday working lunches at Lennox Street with Ian, Ann, Udo, Barrie Reid, Glen Tomasetti and others where we merrily planned each issue, some I believe destined to become collectors' pieces.

Ian's manysided love of the arts endeared him to me, especially in his later years with Leonie when we came closer together and I was able to understand better that amiable unpretentious admixture of the partisan man of the Left, and the man tolerant of the quirks of human behavior, reluctant to moralise. He never slid into the embittered anti-communism of so many ex-communists and, influential figure in the A.L.P. that he became, he maintained reasonable relations with areas further to the Left, speaking, for example, at the launching last year of John Senty's memoirs at the Communist Party headquarters, and where he chose to describe the communists as "the conscience of the Left".

The women who shared his life shared in different ways his artistic interests and pleasures, and I am hoping that Leonie's many warm memories of such pleasures shared in her brief but extremely happy relationship with Ian will help to sustain her in her grief, in her most untimely loss.

KEN GOTT:

In the beginning Ian was only a name on a piece of bureaucratic paper — a transfer form which was

used in the Communist Party when a member in good standing changed his place of living and accordingly had to be transferred to a different Party branch. Ian had been in the army, and on entering Melbourne University was transferred to the Communist Party branch there, of which I was chairman.

Ian very rapidly emerged as one of the most effective and best-loved student leaders of his generation. First, within the very active Labor Club, and then in the broader ambit of general student life through the Students' Representative Council, on which he served both as secretary and president. Ian was known as a communist, and to win election to these positions meant that his abilities, his energy and his sincerity won him support, not only from many who did not share his political convictions, but even from a few who actively opposed them.

Ian displayed in those days the same wide range of interests which characterised him throughout his life — painting and art in all its forms, past and contemporary; jazz, literature, current affairs — local and international — and their treatment in the newspapers, and of course, political activities. The two of us worked closely together on many student political campaigns, in the party branch, in the Labor Club and through the Students' Representative Council. But, while politics may have been very central to our lives, they were not everything. We found the time and energy to help set up a student co-operative bookshop and a student hostel. The latter was located in a derelict, delicensed hotel in what was then a rather seamy part of Fitzroy. Ian and I shared a particularly close relationship in the days when we both lived there.

Looking back, it is not easy to separate Ian the communist student leader and hyperactivist from Ian the mate. At the hostel several of us cooked our meals together, shared our money for beer, stood in queues to get grog from Jimmy Watson's when it opened its doors for a few hours on Saturday morning, and in other queues to buy tobacco — also scarce in those days. There were walks together in the morning to Melbourne University Union to shower and shave, because our hostel didn't run to hot water and neither Ian nor I wore beards.

Life-style is rather an overworked word these days, but Ian displayed a very distinctive one long before the word came into currency. He had a huge zest for life and the many excitements and discoveries it offered. People and conversation, eat-



Ian Turner as schoolboy, parliamentary candidate (1948), bushwalker (1961) and on Erith Island (1978).



ing and drinking, music (particularly jazz and folk music, but not overlooking either bawdy Army songs or the classic tradition), literature, painting, history and scholarship. Ian seemed able to integrate all these things and many more into the fabric of his life. It seemed that not a minute of his day was without its particular interest or excitement. Late nights spent drinking Jimmy Watson's port or madeira, and rolling cigarettes from tobacco eked out with Bushell's Blue Label tea, seemed just as much a part of it all as drafting that pamphlet or article explaining how those new People's Democracies in Eastern Europe differed in nature from the USSR.

I cannot finish without saying something of the great kindness and generosity of Ian — he was generous with his energy, his time and his resources. What he gave most freely to those who sought his help, and they were many in those days, was sympathy and an ability to understand other people's problems. Ian didn't have all the answers, either to the problems of individual people or of the world, and he never pretended that he did. He knew, too, that there are problems to which there may be no solutions, and this sometimes tinged his fundamental optimism and overt cheerfulness with a slight, very slight, undertone of pessimism. But even his occasional gloom was cheerfully expressed. Like Mozart.

After university days our paths crossed many times in distant places — in London, Eastern Europe and Hong Kong. I could always, in recent years, rely on a letter from Ian when a state or federal election was in the offing: "Got any good ideas to help the Labor Party win?" Ian was one of the many good mates who were among the reasons for Beth and me returning to Australia last year after so long abroad.

I don't think that the essential personality of Ian changed all that much over the years. Right up to his death he was still showing many of the enthusiasms that were apparent in his youth. He had not grown tired or cynical. He had acquired, no doubt from his experience in adult as distinct from student politics, a better understanding of what was possible and what was impossible politically in this imperfect world — but without lapsing into attitudes of defeat and pessimism about the prospects of changing the world for the better.

Today we celebrate Ian's life. That life is over, but its influence, the generosity with which it was lived, and its fruitfulness, will affect our society for many years to come.

DAVID WILLIAMSON:

I knew Ian for a lot less time than the others who have spoken today, but when I was asked to speak I thought I'd like to say a few words.

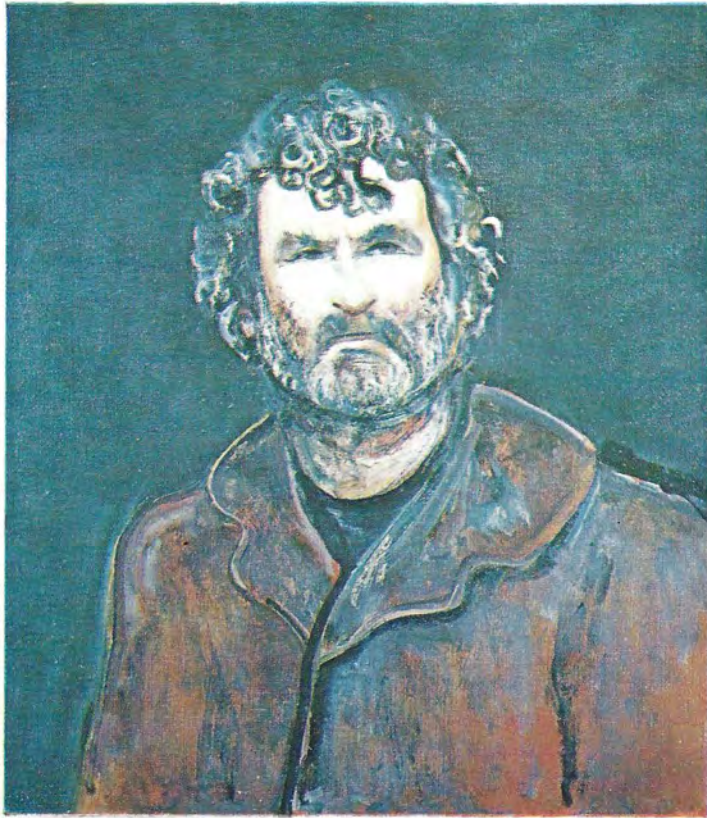
Coming over in the car, I asked my wife: "What is the word that can sum up a man who has come to terms with his weaknesses and his strengths and who is totally balanced and non-neurotic in the face of the world?"

We thought for a while and decided there wasn't a word and perhaps it is good that there's no such word because Ian was a very complex man and, as other speakers have pointed out, he spread his talents over many fields.

I first got to know Ian when I was serving on the Australia Council. He came to the council about a year after the new Australia Council was set up by the Whitlam government. At that time the council was in great turmoil and there was a confused battle of competing and rather hysterical egos — including my own. Ian brought to that council a sense of sanity, a sense of calm, dispassionate analysis, and set in motion important structural reforms which enabled the council to function more successfully from that moment on. He was the sort of man whom you knew was saying the same things to you as he was saying to your political opponents out of your hearing — and that's a rare quality these days.

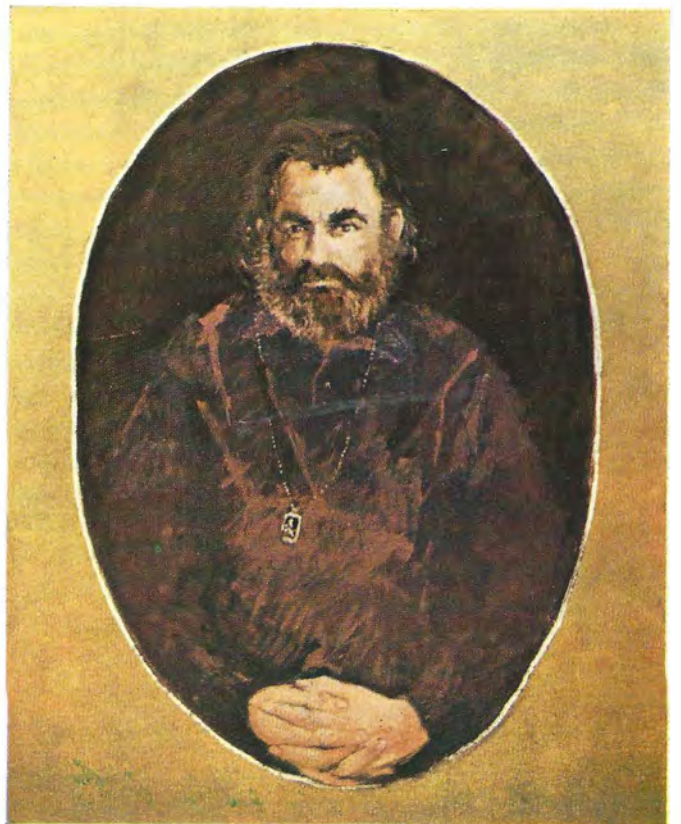
As a dramatist I search for instances that illustrate the crucial aspects of personality. The one I remember best in Ian's case is getting a phone call from Ian one night asking me if I would join him in setting up a joint defence fund being formed to fight the libel actions that were being waged against the playwright and poet Dorothy Hewett. I can remember being a little nonplussed, for Ian himself hadn't been treated very kindly in some of Dorothy's works.

I pointed this out to him and he said: "Look, I entered into a relationship with Dorothy knowing she was a writer. I entered that relationship with my eyes open, knowing that I might be used. That's part of the price you have to pay for a relationship with an artist, and I accept it gladly and I'll do anything I can to help her in her present trouble." I thought the incident said a lot of things about Ian — not the least of them being his passionate concern for freedom of artistic expression.



Above: Ian Turner by Fred Williams, posthumous portrait

Right: Ian Turner by Clif. Pugh, 1968



FIFE-TUNE IAN TURNER

The root end was happiness.
That's one faith we kept
alike inside us, nurtured
from birth almost,
close to our skin as a
face-tic, or a blush of blood.

But suddenly we'd run past
happiness, into that obscure
age-valley some call hope.
Nothing to do but live life out
in the set tempi, broad-swept,
quiet, but *vivace*.

With trust, too, if possible;
your head turning in answer,
the cigarette's bent flash, music
burdening the brown snuffed air,
people's arms conducting their
company of sound: your world of talkers.

Time, and the tune goes on;
it will not stop, nor soften
music's unbeaten chain,
the piping, the cockcrowing
of fiddles, *piobaireachd*, the running
of savor from door to door,

the bedspringing, the trees
settling down in the rain.
S/an, then; *s/an leat*. Always
we were country boys; in the long
summer grass of the roads,
we could tell the time by shadow.

VINCENT BUCKLEY

IAN TURNER BLUES

Ian, old buddy, nobody could deny
You were an expert on the twelve bar booze.
The time came when your well ran dry.
That's when you miss Joe Turner, know what you lose,
When the man's been and gone and said his last goodbye.

Ian, old buddy, we were Red;
Better than dead we said. And raised merry hell
At tables, factions, you in bed
From what I can gather. And, mate, just as well
The Oz disease, dehydration of the head

Passed us by. So why should I grieve
That it's you who've gone to the Storyville in the sky
Instead of overweight pompous puffing Steve.
Or me. You see, it's impossible for stereotypes to die.
A sabbatical, yes. But you can't just leave.

At least that's what I thought I heard Buddy Bolden say,
But Joe Turner knew better. That rotten well
Sprang a leak; your creaking pump gave it away.
So what's new! As an impenitent from Dimboola, Nhill,
Or wherever you knew all machinery is plain hell
To maintain. Oh well, send her down Hughie. Let us pray.

MAX HARRIS

Note: Readers are referred to the text of that fine poem "Joe Turner Blues"
to follow up the allusions in this elegy.

ISLAND AND FOREST

For Ian Turner

Islands rise out of the sea
ceremonial, round,
Illyria has two weeping palaces
and a shipwrecked shore.

Crouched under a rock,
your lost child at your side,
eyes dark with dolphins and fishes,
your nets come dripping from the tide.

The island is full of noise,
the boy girdles the earth
with a circling rod of fishes,
but the man stands still in the surf,
the pearls moist in his eyes,
Caliban-Ferdinand-Prospero,
the beast is exorcised,
and the maimed Fisher King by the wreck,
casting his net in the sea,
brings the albatross out by the neck.

Islands are magical rings,
round green circles of fire,
lions roar in the Forest of Arden,
asses bray in the midsummer woods.
We stand deprived in the dark,
to the receding wash of the wave,
Miranda and Ferdinand move
chess pieces in a luminous cave.

Before we break the staff,
and sink into the sea,
here by the southern ocean
I pray for you
on your island
— pray for me.

DOROTHY HEWETT

From the collection *Rapunzel in Suburbia*.

MORRIS LURIE **A Finger for Annie**

I remember him mostly when he was down, the glory behind him, his wiry hair in fast retreat, also his teeth, reduced to the guzzling of Coca Cola — always two bottles on the table, the largest size — and from time to time extending an index finger in the direction of a darling daughter. “Pull the finger, Annie,” he would say, and when she did, he would give vent to a backside explosion much as to start or stop a stampede. It was a performance they did together, a routine, the finger, the pulling, followed by each time right on tap the jubilant bang. He had two other daughters, plus of course a wife, all of whom would have certainly obliged, deemed it an honor even, such was his towering charisma, even in decline, but they were never called, the finger was for Annie alone.

From my father, a laugh.

My mother found it disgusting.

“Some people,” she would say, crossing her arms like swords, at the same time suddenly finding something of engrossing interest in a distant corner of the ceiling.

But don't leap to the idea that it was the finger pulling that nettled her. She held in similar scorn nice Uncle David, he who said “Excuse me” each time he blew his nose, both before and after, and not because he was a trumpeter either, like Uncle Moishe, who blew with a vigor to turn back the Messiah, no, Uncle David's nose blows squeaked out like the meekest mice. Conversely, Uncle Debnik, whose meanness extended to keeping a goat, also a lock on the kitchen cupboards to which even his wife didn't have a key, for Uncle Debnik my mother had nothing but praise. Because Uncle Debnik, you see, was one of us, us being my mother and her two sisters and her two brothers, everyone else, the necessary husbands and wives, held forever outside, strangers.

Including my father.

But the subject is Sol, not my provincial mother, the great Uncle Sol, legendary family bigshot and gambler, blower of fifty thousand down the drain in five or six freewheeling years just after the war, a fortune then, not bad even now, and though I knew him, as I've said, mostly in decline, I saw some of the other Sol too, I was afforded a small peep. He gave us a lift, for instance, once, in his car. That car! This was ten years and more before anyone even *thought* of having a car, in the immediate post-war years, austerity, struggling, terrible days, and look, Uncle Sol had not only a car but a Buick, a Chevrolet, a Packard, I don't know what it was exactly, except it was luxurious, massive, mammoth, a celebratory flaunting of wild wealth that my mother tried somehow not to touch with her hands as she climbed awkwardly in. We all climbed in. Uncle Sol was taking us into the hills, to the kosher guest house where we went every year for our holidays, the attraction of this place being its proximity to mineral waters, which my father claimed his kidney stones screamed out for all year long, in particular the waters of the fourth spring. We sat in the back, my parents and my sister and me, upright on the wide real leather bench seat, Uncle Sol bouncing like a jockey behind the wheel, his wife Auntie Doris beside him, round and proud, but in less than two minutes pulled over as far as she could go against the door on her side, clutching her handbag and the door handle, her intention, or so said the expression on her pale face under the rouge, to leap out at the first pause and run for Poland as fast as her short legs would permit.

But there were no pauses, not with the crazy Uncle Sol in charge, Uncle Sol was a goer, a racer, a man of speed and movement, and even when my sister began to vomit, and my mother started to gulp in air like a windsock in a gale and even I

experienced definite sensations of queasiness, not even then would he slow down. In fact, the opposite, he went even faster, as though to rid himself of these complainers riding on his back. "A nice lift, thank you very much," said my mother, when we finally staggered out, and before we'd even unpacked, arranged for us a lift back with *der alte* Mr Zmood, who drove in such a gentle fashion as to never employ top gear. A pity, a shame. Because Uncle Sol didn't have the car after that. Gone, like so much else. First the car, then his hair, finally the teeth. The debt he was in must have been considerable.

"Serves him right," said my mother. "I don't feel sorry one bit."

But I did. Ushered into his presence, a family visit, Uncle Sol reduced to toothlessness and a sweaty singlet and the races on the radio and his river of endless Coke, I didn't exactly feel tears jumping to my eyes, but I was aware, certainly aware, that I was in the domain of a fallen giant. And acted accordingly. Kept my mouth shut. Sat down nicely. Paid attention. Looked. And when the finger was pulled, smiled my thanks for the privilege of witnessing the fireworks of a former king.

Because a king he was, certainly and no doubt. And befittingly, his sport was the sport of kings. Horses! Uncle Sol at the races! He went four times a week, sometimes more, speeding by cab to farflung meetings, a horse didn't run without Uncle Sol's money on its nose, also telephone calls to nail down nags where he couldn't be in person, two races running at the same time, no matter, wherever hooves thundered there was Uncle Sol's wallet, his interest, his excitement, his sweat, and as though that wasn't enough, and how could it be for a man of his speed, his appetite, his need, he jammed into the spaces between, the nooks and crannies of his twenty-four-hours-a-day wildness, the nights, the early dawns, the cold pre-race mornings, these he stuffed with roulette and poker and blackjack and dice and every other tumble devised by man to test his omnipotence.

His uniform in those days of glitter and rush was a striped suit with massive shoulders, silk shirts, banner headline neckties. A pearl on a pin. A chain of gold. Rings with stones all over the place. The soles of his shiny shoes never with even a scratch.

Fifty thousand.

Gone with the wind.

I asked my father once where Uncle Sol had got his money from. I was ten or twelve at the

time, Uncle Sol still in orbit, the last of his flashy years. We were in the kitchen. I asked my question politely, genuinely interested, a nice boy in all things. "Who cares!" shouted my father, slamming the table with a frustrated fist. "Black," whispered my mother, rushing to close the kitchen door so no one should hear.

I have a photograph, Uncle Sol standing with my father, I don't know when it was taken or why or by whom, but here it is, here he is, and look — I have said towering, and I still say it, but the cold evidence is different: Uncle Sol was a shortie. Five feet four at the most, and that's in his special shoes. A dwarf! A midget! A nothing at all! I look and look, and my eyes tell me one thing, but inside it's another story, because Uncle Sol, to me, cannot be small. Impossible! Not so! But I am a rational person, so I put it down to movement, the speed he operated at, the turbulence of his existence. Even when he was asleep Uncle Sol was in ceaseless tumult. I recall a dinner, a dinner at our house, halfway through which, Uncle Sol being, of course, a fast eater, finished with the chicken while we were still in the soup, he pushed back his chair, simultaneously undoing his trousers, opening them in the front, and in two seconds, maybe at the most three, he was on the sofa, deep in sleep, down like a chopped tree. But look, look, look how his stomach rises and falls, his legs braced for running, his arms flung every way, his mouth snatching up endless air and translating it out in raucous snoring . . . even his hair trembles and jumps like a fire. He is asleep for twenty minutes, then leaps up, fully restored, to the telephone, to the cake, to a cup and then another of tea which he pours inside him with a noise impossible to put into words.

Ah, but the decline, down and down he went, down to pulling the finger with Annie, the last bit of tumult in his depleted bag, and even that, after a while, a few years, that thing that had started out so jubilant, with each passing year became more and more sad. All routines lose their sparkle, of course, and maybe that's what was happening there, the dullness of familiarity creeping in, a lacklustre quality, a blunting of edge, though Annie never once said, "Oh, dad, I'm not in the *mood*," no, never once, no matter what she was doing, when the digit was extended in her direction she leapt straight up, gave a hearty pull, and out popped that volcanic proclamation. Which, right up to the end, no matter that everything else was in such decline, retained

the bounce to shake walls and rattle the wedding photograph in its silver frame on the mantle.

Uncle Sol.

Fifty thousand shed like water.

Buried in his grave.

All right, all right, a gambler, a foolishness, a disaster, a defeat, his life lived, here and gone, the fate of us all, so where's the specialness, why do I have the esteem for Uncle Sol that I do? I'll tell you, with no apologies for being perhaps not nice. Because one day I called in there, taking a cake my mother had baked to give to Auntie Doris, and who should be there but no one at all, everyone gone out, except the door was open, the way it always was, so I went in, and put down the cake, and then I saw, on the little table next to Uncle Sol's chair where he always sat, a page of pictures, of photographs, and because I am that sort of person, I took a look. Now, how can I tell you this, how can it be decently expressed? Because there were eight photographs altogether, the biggest one in the middle, and in each and every one a fuss was being made over Uncle Sol, he was the centre of interest, a star. Bigger than

Clark Gable. Bigger than Errol Flynn. The amount of hair, also the teeth smiling, showed that this was the period of his top flashiness, the days of the races and the roulette and the blackjack and the dice, and what must have happened, why the page of pictures was lying where it was, was that Uncle Sol, now only inches from the bottom of his decline, had experienced doubts. Fifty thousand. Not a penny saved. Nothing for the children. Nothing for the wife. All burnt away like a rocket in the sky, and what's the message? Was I a fool? Uncle Sol must have asked himself, toothless and hairless and all alone in his chair, so he looked at the pictures, the way a rich man must count his money when similar doubts come flocking in, and I hope Uncle Sol got from these pictures a cheer, because I certainly did. In particular from the one in the middle, the biggest. For here was Uncle Sol, wearing his wild hair and his smiling teeth and not one thing more, and poised above him, his investment, a wonderful lady, and do you know what she was doing, this wonderful lady, to my great Uncle Sol? She was giving, yes, let me say it, a good pull, a nice tug to my Uncle Sol's, um, to his finger.

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In putting this issue of *Overland* together I have naturally been thinking of Ian Turner a lot. I don't want to add to what I have to say in the magazine already, except to make two points, both of them related to the problem of bringing out a commemorative issue of a magazine for a man only recently dead.

The first point is that there is, perhaps, a danger of making Ian out as too much of a hero, of 'mythologizing' him. I don't really think we have fallen into this trap, and insofar as we have it is because Ian *was* a figure of quite remarkable charisma to a great many people while he lived. I'm tempted to say that the further away from him that people were, the more the hero image they created; but even that isn't quite right, for many of us who were very close to Ian regarded him with some kind of very special affection and a kind of respect that almost amounted to hero-worship. (Some did *not*!) Anyway, the point is that Ian had no hero image of himself, very much the reverse; and while he was interested in myths and mythologizing and would have been amused if someone had told him he was a myth himself, he wouldn't have believed it and he would have tried to disabuse his informant. A young acquaintance of Ian's has said to me, "The Ian I see is the debauched Ian with a tinny in his hand, standing in the Outer arguing with Peter Clarke whether Allan Edwards played well at centre half forward or whether he should be arseholed." Come to think of it, that's a form of mythologizing too!

Linked with this is my second point. All the material we publish here that is by Ian's hand, including the letters, shows the public Ian only. Perhaps something of the private man comes through in the letter to Alan McBriar, but only a

little. Ian was a man who was for much of his life unhappy and disturbed, who regarded himself as a deeply flawed human being, and who saw his life as a tragic one. He wrote about this too, but what he had to say is not for the eyes of our generation; or, at any rate, certainly not now. Eventually the significance of Ian's life and work will have to be seen in terms of the relationship between the two Ians. Today we can only offer some insights into one of those men.

Speeches made at the commemoration or 'wake' for Ian Turner, in the Richmond Town Hall on 18 February, are printed in this issue of *Overland*, with the exception of Geoff Serle's, which appeared in the Monash University *Reporter*. Many hundreds attended the ceremony, and I suspect that few of those who did will forget the minutes when Frank Trainor's jazz band played the New Orleans funeral march, which Ian had asked be performed.

Ian wrote a kind of autobiography in *Overland* 59—the only issue in recent times to have gone out of print almost immediately. It was suggested that we should reprint that autobiography in this issue, but on second thoughts we decided not to. For a start, it is already available to those who need it. Secondly, there seems a good prospect that a collection of Ian's occasional writings will be published as a memorial to him before very long; and, of course, the autobiography would certainly be included. Would readers please note that donations are needed to the Ian Turner commemorative fund, which will support the publication of such a book, and may be sent care of this magazine? Incidentally, an Ian Turner prize in Australian History has been established at Monash University, after a generous response from staff there to an appeal.

Two of Ian's most recent articles, which are not printed in this issue of *Overland*, will be of especial interest to our readers, I should think. In these articles Ian discusses his political philosophy at some length, and mounts a counter-attack against the Evangelical Left who, from time to time, called him "a sell-out, a revisionist, a reactionary, a trendy, a trilateralizer, a lackey of the Labor Party's centre and (most damning epithet of all) an opportunist"—the quote is from Don Watson's introduction to one of these articles, the one in the journal *Intervention*. (Don Watson is not calling Ian these names—he is defending him. Incidentally, Don Watson's *Brian Fitzpatrick* we hope to be reviewing in our next issue.) Ian in these articles is in some ways paralleling the arguments of E. P. Thompson in his new book *The Poverty of Theory* (Merlin Press, London), a vigorous, swingeing attack on petit-bourgeois radicalism masquerading as ideological rectitude. We've seen a lot of it around in the last ten years—interestingly enough, years in which the forces of conservatism have strengthened their grip on the country!

Ian, of course, is much politer about his critics than they have been about him. For a start, he didn't need to rely on catch-cries and abuse to persuade people that what he had to say was worth while listening to. It was precisely because philosophically he *was* a materialist rather than an idealist that he was prepared to let facts and reasoned discourse govern.

Ian's two articles are "On *Industrial Labour and Politics*", in *Intervention* no. 12, \$2 plus 35c

postage from International Bookshop, 17 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne 3000; and "Australian Nationalism and Australian History" in the *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 4, June 1979, \$5 from the Victorian Historical Association, 85 Howard Street, North Melbourne 3051. The first of these is actually Ian's revised introduction to what was possibly his most important book, *Industrial Labour and Politics*, shortly to be reissued.

We print a transcript of one of Ian Turner's broadcasts (that on 11 November in Australian history) in this issue. Someone may be interested to know that we also hold a tape of an interview with Ian broadcast over the ABC "Variations" program on 12 March 1977, dealing with his book *In Union is Strength*. If anyone would like to transcribe this for us we might print it in a future issue.

The books that haven't been written, and should have been, would make an impressive bibliography. So, perhaps as a kind of appendix to the bibliography of Ian Turner we print elsewhere in this issue, it may be worth mentioning that Ian, in recent times, was turning more and more towards the view that a person's private politics, his personal life, present challenges no less demanding—and, in the long run, no less socially relevant—than public politics. And he had in particular the desire to write three books before he died. They were a major history of the Australian working class, an autobiography and a discussion of public policies directed towards the encouragement and funding of the arts.

It was a time of both hope and despair, a time when the believers in the capacity of human beings for better things, and the prophets of an age of ruins, were listened to avidly by those who were tormented by doubt about everything. The peoples of the world, shouted the future of humanity men and women, had just won a great victory over the forces of darkness: Nazism in Germany had been destroyed, and militarism in Japan had been overthrown. The peoples of the world, replied the prophets of doom, have just witnessed the use of a weapon with the capacity to wipe humanity off the face of the earth: in August 1945 atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. There was some madness in men's hearts which drove them to deeds of evil and folly.

It was a time when students underwent sudden changes of heart: indeed it was a time when it did not seem odd that a student of talent, and inwardly great of heart, should be a student of theology, a member of the Communist Party, a leader of the Conservative Club at the University of Melbourne all within the space of a month. For it was a time of confusion, a time of uproar and chaos. It was a time when a philosopher told the fourth year students of history, and members of staff of both departments, that historians were parasites: no one demurred openly, though at least one person present was bewildered and saddened by what was going on.

That was the time I first saw Ian Turner. I had heard that he was in the Communist Party. I had also heard Edith Cameron, a nurse during the first World War, and by 1945 Secretary of the University Union (quite a character, and very skilful at conveying a whole world of meaning by dropping scraps into a conversation), say over a polite cup of tea in a professor's house, one Sunday afternoon, "I must say this for Mr Turner: he speaks well." Meaningful pause, and long drawn

out sigh, followed by: "And he's also very good looking, and I must say that surprised me too." She went on to tell us that she wrote down everything he said at meetings of the Students' Representative Council even though she was not sure whether she understood what he was saying.

I too was surprised when I first saw him. It was in the corridor outside the Philosophy Lecture Theatre in the Old Arts Building early in 1946, after a talk by a member of the University Labor Club on the future of mankind. I saw one well-known member of that Club holding out a printed form to a young woman who had been enthused by what she had heard, and said she wanted to know more, because she wanted to help "to get humanity there quicker". To which the young man who then knew all the answers held out the form and said, "Would you like to apply for membership now?"

I remember the scene because as he put this question to her my eyes caught the eyes of another young man who was viewing what was going on not with cynicism or disdain, but rather with the air of someone who had often put to himself the question: "How can anyone ever know whether it is true or false?" That drew me to him. I remember he also laughed out loud, not in derision, or mockery, but possibly from some inner uncertainty. He took the other man by the arm, and said with great charm to the seeker: "We must not rush her into things." By then her eyes had moved away from the first man to the second man. There they remained. He was Ian Turner.

I am aware of the warning that there is no art which can read the mind's construction in the face. But at the risk of seeming to subscribe to the simplistic doctrine that the eyes mirror what is likely to come up from inside a person, I am going to say that everything I came to know and indeed feel deeply to in Ian Turner was fore-

shadowed in that first encounter. Within a year or so he was to be a student of Australian History in Melbourne. For a whole tumultuous year Ian Turner and Noel Ebbels sat in a small room upstairs in the Old Arts Building and told me with much merriment in the eyes when I was right and when I was wrong about the history of our ancient continent. Why was it that these very different young men were so close? Why was it that these two who knew the answers were able to communicate with someone who was so tormented by inability to ask them the question in Job: "What knowest thou which is not in us?"

In Ebbels' case the answer became clear: he was a Billy Budd among the student members of the Communist Party, an innocent, in the sense of someone incapable of causing harm to, or hurting any human being, or beast, because he was free from malice, free from envy, from all those madnesses which cause most of us to consume our days in plots of revenge for some imagined evil done to us. In Turner's case it was probably just two Merlins recognising, or saluting each other, he from behind the mask of political doctrine, and I from behind a different sort of mask.

At that time Ian seemed troubled by the incongruities nature had blended in his clay. He knew both the Dionysian frenzy, and the Apollonian quest for beauty, restraint and self-control. He knew all about those passions drawing him along the primrose path of pleasure, and travelled on that track not fearing it might lead him to the eternal bonfire, because he had no interest in any hell for transgressors. What he did know was

that all those who could not get off that track would taste deep damnation here on earth. He also knew that no matter what changes occurred in the foundations of society, no matter how wealth was owned and distributed, there would always be those contradictions inside some human beings, causing them dark, undying pain.

The real test for a person is whether, once having had the honesty to face the truth about himself, he gives way to vulgar despair, takes evasive action and drugs himself to make life bearable, or finds the strength to endure with dignity, and indeed much gaiety. Ian had that strength in abundance. He also knew much about love, with a due recognition of the limits of what love, or art or music could do to answer the longing for what could never be.

I felt sympathy with his answer. Perhaps that was why I was to remember so clearly that first encounter outside the Philosophy Lecture Theatre in 1946. Perhaps that was why his death, like the death of Noel Ebbels, was so painful, because in both cases it meant Australia was poorer by one of the persons to whom one could really talk. There was one fewer who would know what you were talking about when you took the risk of saying out loud that now perhaps all that was left was to wait for the barbarians. Perhaps the great thing about Ian Turner was that having faced that possibility he did not become consumed with self-pity, or whine. The gaiety and the sadness lived on in him to the very end. Not even the dullness which descended on our country after the plebiscite of 1975 could snuff the light in his eye.

BETTY ROLAND **Moscow, 1933**

STEPHEN MURRAY-SMITH writes: *Although not as widely known as some of her contemporaries, Betty Roland is one of the most remarkable of the older generation of Australian writers, both as a personality and as a literary figure. (She is probably best known for her play, A Touch of Silk, written in the 1920s and recently published by Currency Press.) She now lives at Montsalvat, Eltham, Victoria. Overland is fortunate to have the opportunity to publish extracts from a diary kept by Betty Roland in 1933, when she visited the Soviet Union in company with Guido Barrachi, himself a legendary figure in Australian radical history. (We shall shortly be publishing an interview with Guido Barrachi by David Walker.) Betty Roland's diary will be published as a book, Caviare for Breakfast, by Hyland House, later this year. It is remarkable as one of the very few objective accounts of the Soviet Union of this period, seen from inside, as it were, ever to be published. Readers may care to refer also to Betty Roland's "Requiem for K.S.P." published in Overland no. 44.*

A Few Words of Introduction

In February 1933 my marriage to Ellis Harvey Davies came to an end, an end which came suddenly, though it had been a possibility for quite some time. The deciding factor was a certain picturesque figure, Guido Carlo Luigi Baracchi, with whom I had fallen deeply in love and eloped with, without much thought about the consequences. He was a dedicated Communist, therefore the devil incarnate to all right-thinking people, and he was taking me to the Soviet Union which, in those days, was synonymous with Hell. In addition to which he already had a wife, who had preceded him to London and expected to accompany him to Moscow.

This material is based on articles I kept at the time.

5 May 1933

Guido has made some progress in the matter of getting a job. He went to see the head of the Co-operative Publishing Society for Foreign Workers, to give it its full and cumbersome title, and has been asked to do some translating for them, on a sort of free-lance basis at so many roubles a page. The Co-op. Pub., as it is generally known, is an amazing organization which is responsible for the translation and publication of literally millions of books a year, and in all the major languages; it is under the direct aegis of the Comintern, though its publications are not confined to political subjects but include *belles lettres* and even some modern novels as well; all of which are distributed through an elaborate network that covers a large proportion of the literate world but, especially, the USSR where the thirst for knowledge and for books seems to be insatiable. Books are not published in thousands, but in millions of copies.

While Guido has been busy with his translation, I have been busy on my own account. On the day of our arrival a reporter from the Moscow Daily News wandered into our hotel in search of interesting visitors who might supply her with a story. The fact that we were Australians immediately roused her interest, and we made the headlines on the inner pages next day.

Since then, Gertrude seems to have attached herself to Guido and myself, especially myself as she does not appear to have too high an opinion of him. She is an odd soul, Jewish, stridently American, with an outer shell of toughness which probably conceals a lost and lonely self inside. She has graduated to the Communist Party by way of the anarchistic I.W.W., and would be more at home on the barricades than involved in the spiteful little skirmishes that take place among the staff of the M.D.N., details of which she has

described at length. Nevertheless, it was she who arranged for me to see the editor and, incidentally, to become a temporary member of his staff. Temporary because I have still to apply for the necessary permit that entitles me to work, and that is not a simple matter to obtain as even Freda admits.

"Can you write good English?" he asked me. "English?"

"Yes, English. I can't stand this American jargon."

I assured him on that point, showed him a few articles I had written during my brief career in journalism on the Melbourne Sun Pictorial, and he seemed satisfied. I am to be paid space rates with a minimum of 300 roubles a month, be supplied with an interpreter and, no doubt, get an insight into many aspects of Soviet life that would otherwise not be possible.

Eager to announce the good news, I hurried back to the hotel but was somewhat chastened by Guido's rather cool response. Why was this? Did he resent the fact that I had scored a success while he was still merely on probation with the Co-op Pub? That seemed unbelievable, yet why the chilling lack of enthusiasm? He showed a spark of interest when I mentioned the editor's name.

"Borodin! You can't mean *Michael* Borodin!" I said I thought that was his name. "But he is an old Bolshevik, one of the great figures of the Revolution. I met him in England in the 1920s when he was there to assist the Party and he was afterwards sent to Canton where he became the driving force in the Communist Kuomintang alliance. What on earth is a man like that doing in a wretched little rag like the Moscow Daily News? Though I did hear that he had fallen into disfavour and been given the job of managing a bread factory. I suppose being editor of the Moscow Daily News is better than that."

He got up from his desk and paced about the room, plainly disturbed at the idea of one of the great men of the Revolution being reduced to such a humiliating level, and I remembered how Borodin had also paced around the room in an uneasy fashion, tugging the end of his thick moustache, a melancholy look in his heavy-lidded eyes. [Borodin was arrested and charged with treason during the purges of 1937. Condemned to a prison camp in Siberia, he did not long survive.]

17 May 1933

My first days on the M.D.N., and I find it

fascinating. Inadequate, biased, badly printed though it is, by reason of its being the only paper published in the English language it has a large circulation among the many Americans at present living here, but principally among the Russians who are struggling to master this complicated language. So I now see why Borodin asked me could I write in 'English'. We see very little of him, he remains hidden in his office, and the paper is largely run by Charles Ashley, the assistant editor who, besides myself and a pretty woman called Rose Cohen, is the only other member of the staff who can claim British origin, the others are pure American. Rose is another of Guido's old associates.

"Red Rose Cohen!" he exclaimed when I first mentioned her. "What on earth is she doing on the Moscow Daily News? She was Harry Pollitt's girl-friend when I saw her last." Freda was able to enlighten him. Red Rose is now the wife of a prominent Party official, has a little son, a luxurious apartment and all the privileges of a member of the Soviet élite, though Freda did not enlarge on that. [Rose and her husband were also arrested during the Moscow trials.] The day starts with a discussion of the day's routine, the stories to be covered, the special articles and the assignments made. Charles Ashley chairs the meeting and we sit around on chairs or tables, Gertrude chewing at her gum (she has recently received a fresh consignment from home) while the others smoke the rank Russian cigarettes that are three parts cardboard cylinder and one part bad tobacco. Next to Charles sits a massive woman with grey hair. She is Anna Louise Strong. No love is lost between the pair, they are barely civil to each other, and she obviously resents the fact that he is in a position of authority which she feels should be hers.

She is cordially disliked by everyone, especially by Gertrude, who loses no opportunity to mutter unflattering comments in my ear. Anna Louise remains unmoved, though I fancy she is fully aware of what is being said. She is the very pattern of a bitch, arrogant and insolent, lording it over everyone, claiming special privileges such as a car to take her on assignments when we underlings must take a tram or walk. Gertrude tells me that she once demanded a plane to take her to Central Asia and got it! She is barely civil to the lower orders of the staff, and ignores me entirely.

She was a bit taken aback a few nights ago when she saw me with Guido. She had known him in Berlin in the twenties when he and Neura

were at the zenith of their passion, so was understandably surprised to meet him again in Moscow with an entirely different woman.

The 'encounter' took place in the drawing-room of the Kamerny Theatre. The Kamerny is one of the four leading theatres in Moscow, and was founded by Taierov at much the same time as Stanislavsky and Nerimovich-Danchenko established the Moscow Art Theatre. Like them, he practised law before dedicating himself to the theatre and, like them, he has survived the revolution and bears the title Honored Artist.

His theatre is small and elegant, its performances impeccable and his drawing-room reminiscent of the salons of pre-1917. We were bidden there to celebrate the presentation of a new play called "The Optimistic Tragedy," in which Taierov's wife Alice Koonen played the principal role. Regardless of location or political climate, first nights are always nervy occasions, but in the Soviet Union they are subjected to additional strains as every member of the cast, the director, the manager, even the humblest usher and stage-hand, is conscious of certain ominous figures seated in a box and on whose yea or nay the future of the play depends. In them is invested the power to approve or condemn, to demand drastic changes in the text and to suppress it altogether. Taierov is an old man now and lives in retirement, having handed the management of his theatre to the care of an aristocratic looking person by the name of Rubenstein. He has a lean sardonic face and a somewhat chilly air, but unbent sufficiently to invite us to the premiere of the new play and to the soiree afterwards. This was a piece of rare good fortune.

In addition to ourselves there were perhaps twenty or thirty people assembled in the drawing-room, none of whom we knew, with the exception of Anna Louise. Rubenstein moved uneasily between the guests and party officials who stood apart from the rest of us. Taierov made a brief appearance, spoke to them and one or two of his friends and then withdrew, and Anna Louise sat in a chair and stuffed herself with the goodies on the table: cakes, caviar, both red and black, pastries, chocolates, ham, pate — all from the foreign-currency shop, Torgsin — phlegmatically chomping away with an occasional remark to Guido, whom she had greeted with neither pleasure nor surprise, while I stood in the background marvelling at her aplomb. No one else in the room did more than nibble a morsel of cake,

a trifle of caviar, but Anna L. was not one to miss her opportunities, and later I saw her put a handful of chocolates into her bag and go serenely on her way.

The première of a new play at the Kamerny, followed by a soiree in Taierov's drawing-room, was a rare experience, but watching a rehearsal in a shabby hall somewhere on the outskirts of Moscow paled that into insignificance. The dark, dynamic man who directed the proceedings was none other than the celebrated Ilya Sudakov, successor to Stanislavsky at the First Art. I had already seen a number of his productions which, to me, had seemed sublime. Now I had the unique experience of watching him at work. I sat in the darkened auditorium watching the play take shape, marvelling at the skill with which he transformed a raw group of amateurs into a tolerable example of actors and actresses.

They were a group of youngsters drawn from a factory, similar to the ones that we had seen in Leningrad, only these had high ambitions and hoped by the performance of this play, which one of them had written, to win official recognition and receive a subsidy that would enable them to become professional. The fact that Ilya Sudakov, one of the 'greats' of the Moscow theatre, had been assigned to the task of directing them, is an indication of the importance the Soviet state attaches to such aspirations.

Theatre in the USSR is, of course, a propaganda machine of extreme importance, as illiteracy is widespread still and films are scarce and costly to make. These burgeoning theatre groups, of which there are many thousands, are put to good use and are often referred to as living newspapers. Sent to tour the provinces, writing short topical plays as they go, they perform in barns and village halls, on railway platforms or street corners, wherever there is a crowd of half-a-dozen or so, who gather round to see and hear.

Sudakov is, of course, a disciplinarian of the first order, and the instructions that were fired at the eager youngsters were direct and to the point, but it was plain that they adored him and found a word of praise the highest form of happiness. Following the rehearsal, he talked to me for quite some time, interested, as is usual, in the fact that I was from Australia and asking me about the theatre there. There was not much to say about that. I asked a few questions to which he replied at length, gravely courteous. He could not have been more so had I been Max Reinhart himself.

19 May 1933

Gertrude lives at Government House, which is quite an achievement, as Government House, Moscow version, is the most exclusive residence, short of the Kremlin, in the USSR, reserved for the very highest officials and way beyond the reach of a rather down-graded American journalist. She tells an amusing story of how the miracle occurred. She was banging away at her typewriter in the M.D.N. late one afternoon when a small man in a neat uniform appeared in front of her and rather diffidently asked if she knew anyone who would be prepared to give English lessons to himself and his two children in return for the use of a room in Government House.

Gertrude described how she took a quick look round to make sure nobody had overheard the astounding proposition, then led him aside and asked him to repeat his words. When he did so, telling her his name, she stared at him as though he was an apparition from another world, as indeed he was. The bashful little man was called Tarjaeff and was a member of the S.C.C.I., in other words, the Executive Committee of the Communist International, the most powerful body in the Soviet hierarchy, headed by Stalin himself. Gertrude, who had been sharing a damp little basement room with two others, almost fainted with delight at the prospect of a room in Government House, and she hustled him out of the building for fear that someone with a higher priority than herself should get wind of the situation and elbow her aside.

She is an odd soul and I like her well enough, but she makes things difficult by taking no pains to conceal the fact that she considers Guido to be unworthy of me. More than once she has asked me how I came to be involved with such a mild and uninspiring man. I do my best to convince her that he is neither, but she remains unconvinced and has taken it upon herself to amend matters by suggesting that I turn my attention to Tarjaeff, totally disregarding the fact that he already has a wife and two children. But what is that in this land of easy marriage and quick divorce?

"I told him to give her the gate and send her back to Tadjikistan where she came from," she announced quite calmly. And set about arranging a meeting between us.

It took place on neutral ground, in the Foreign Workers' Club. The place was crowded, noisy, and dense with tobacco smoke. Guido was there, of course, and half way through the evening we

were joined by Tarjaeff. He talked a little halting English, and we drank some beer and talked in a desultory fashion till it was time to go. Aware of what lay at the back of Gertrude's mind, I had been deliberately cool all evening, but when we went outside the club and saw the dimensions of the limousine waiting to take him away, it was impossible to remain indifferent. It was a Lincoln, large, impressive, and luxurious, with a uniformed driver at the wheel who sprang out at our approach, opened the door and stood to attention while we took our seats. No clearer evidence of status could be imagined. Even Guido seemed to be impressed.

We asked Tarjaeff would he like to come inside with us and have some supper but he shook his head explaining, somewhat reluctantly I thought, that it would not be wise for him to be seen in the New Moscow Hotel with foreign visitors. He expressed the hope that we would meet again.

Not long after that, no doubt through Gertrude's intervention, we were invited to visit him at Government House. We did so yesterday. Government House stands on the bank of the Moskva River, immediately opposite the Kremlin, a little world contained within itself, a city within a city. On ground level there are shops and beauty parlours, a cinema, a theatre, a restaurant. No food queues here, no lack of life's amenities. It is not far from the New Moscow, so Guido and I walked along the embankment enjoying the mild spring afternoon.

Lilies of the valley grow wild in the woods surrounding Moscow, and old ladies stand in the streets selling bunches of the pretty bell-like flowers; Guido bought a spray for me and pinned it to my coat. They also sell white lilac which is called may, because that is the month in which it blooms. We were borne upwards in a lift which actually seemed to work, and got out at the seventh floor to find ourself confronted by heavy wooden doors. We knocked and Gertrude opened them. Inside was a vast vestibule, bare and uninviting, large enough to accommodate a dozen Moscow families. Gertrude's room was small and rather stark and had obviously been designed to house a servant. We sat there for a while, talking, then she took us to see Tarjaeff. He was working in his study where there was a large writing-table, some bookshelves and one or two hard chairs; no curtains on the windows, no carpets on the parquet floor. It was chilling in its austerity and it soon became evident that, despite his high

position, Tarjaeff had nothing in the way of elegance or comfort in his home.

After some awkward attempts at conversation we were taken to what I suppose can be called the living-room. There we met his wife and two small children: a boy of eight or nine and a girl of seven or so. The wife was small and dark, with bright observant eyes, who did not speak a word the whole time we were there. There was a long wooden table in the centre of the room, two divans against the wall, a number of straight-backed chairs, pictures of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin on the walls and nothing else whatever to relieve the impression of stark unloveliness: no curtains, carpets, and no comfort, though there was central heating, but that is mandatory in this climate. We drank tea of course, endless glasses of it served from a samovar, with thick slices of coarse bread, cheese, smoked herring, pickled cucumber, a plate of biscuits, and, by way of a special treat to finish off the feast, Tarjaeff produced a block of honey in the comb which he carefully divided into little squares and distributed round the table. The children were as silent as their mother, observing us with bright, interested eyes; apart from the honey all they were given to eat was a thick slice of bread and margarine and a glass of tea. And these are the children of one of the most highly privileged men in the USSR! The frugal meal and cheerless rooms were in striking contrast to the glittering limousine.

It was dusk by the time we left and while good-bye were being said, Tarjaeff took the opportunity to ask me would I go for a drive with him one afternoon. There was only time for a hurried 'No' before Guido sensed that something irregular was taking place and, seizing me by the arm, cut the conversation short. Electricity is in short supply in the Workers' Fatherland so, even at Government House, one has to walk downstairs. One can use a lift when in the ascendent, never on the way down. It is said that even Comrade Stalin observes this rule.

So, we walked down the seven flights in silence and one look at Guido's face was enough to tell me that Tarjaeff had fallen somewhat in his estimation. But the sight of the Kremlin towers outlined against the evening sky, its golden domes and cupolas lit by floodlights, the red flag waving high above them all, soon restored him to good humor, and we walked back along the river, arm-in-arm and very happily, glad, in a way, to be free of the oppressive atmosphere of Government House.

25 May 1933

The blow has fallen. *Nakomindyel* does not consider me essential to Soviet economy, and my workers' visa has been withheld. This was something of a jolt and Borodin was very much put-out, perhaps because it was another indication of his waning influence. He apologised and said that there was nothing more that he could do, so I had no choice but to collect the few hundred roubles that were due to me and return to the hotel, very much deflated.

The realities of life were starting to close in on me; once we left the shelter of the New Moscow Hotel I would learn what it meant to be a woman in the workers' paradise. This was borne in on me when we were taken to see the room that the Co-op Pub was prepared to allot to us. A nice light-hearted woman by the name of Seriaya acted as our guide, otherwise we would never have found our way through the maze of streets that led to the house on the outskirts of the city.

It had once been a handsome villa and stood well back from the street in what had formerly been a garden with terraces and fountains but where neglect and ruin now prevailed. Seriaya led us along the broken path and opened a heavy door. A wave of foetid air swept through to greet us: a mixture of cabbage soup, old boots, kerosene stoves, damp washing, babies' nappies, stale bed-linen, cats, urine, dry rot and a seasoning of bed-bugs. Even Seriaya lost a little of her gaiety at this; silently, she led the way upstairs. The landing was cluttered with bicycles, perambulators, wooden crates and God alone knows what else. A marble bath stood outside a half-open door of what had formerly been a bath-room, now occupied by several people. I caught a glimpse of a weary-looking woman seated on a bed, a baby in her arms, a row of nappies hanging on a line above her head. She stared at us with no show of interest, no change of expression on her sallow face.

After seeing the room which was to be our future 'home', we were led downstairs to the basement to see the communal kitchen. It was vast and dark and unspeakably depressing. 'My' section consisted of an upended packing-case and two reeking kerosene stoves. On these I was expected to cook, boil up the washing and, in all probability, heat water for an occasional bath in a basin in the room above. Also having cooked the meal, I would have to carry it up three flights of stairs. There was one sink in a corner of the

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**MELBOURNE
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room, a dripping tap and nothing else in the way of amenities. Several women were already busy on their stoves; they stared at me with hostile eyes, already regarding me as an interloper. If my expression was an indication of my feelings it must have been one of horror.

Seriava regained some of her optimism as we walked away. The room was good for Moscow, she assured us. At least we would not have to share with another family, there was a large window and plenty of light, it might even be clear and free of bed-bugs, the sole drawback was that we could only have it for a limited period while the owners spent the summer in their *daicha*, once the Autumn came they would want it back.

To say that we were subdued when we returned to the hotel is to put it mildly. Guido opened his English-Dictionary and translated a few more sentences of the *Eighteenth Brumaire* while I sat and braced myself for the ordeal ahead of me. We had not discussed it but I know enough of him to realize that, however bad they were, he was prepared to accept the conditions that prevailed in this new society for which he had fought and dreamed so long. If it included bed-bugs, bad food, discomfort of whatever kind, he would not complain and, as long as I remained with him, I must do the same.

Fortunately, we had tickets for the Bolshoi theatre and escaped into another world. It was "Eugene Onegin," sung so superlatively, staged with so much splendour, that we emerged from the great Opera House still in a dream.

It was Seki Sano, a merry little Japanese who runs the International Theatre Bund, who achieved the near impossible by arranging a meeting with Olga Knipper Chekhova. How he accomplished this I shall never know, as she is indeed the Great Lady of the Russian theatre, not merely because she is one of its most illustrious actresses and the reigning queen of the Moscow Art theatre, but because she is also the widow of its greatest luminary, Anton Chekhov.

We had been to see "The Cherry Orchard" in which she had played her original role of Madame Ranevsky. That in itself was miracle enough, as one had read of her, dreamt of her but never dared to hope to see her play in that immortal role. I did remark to Seki that I would give anything to meet her, rather in the way that one might express a desire to travel to the moon, and it was not long after that that he announced with an even wider smile than usual that we had

been invited to call on her the following afternoon.

She lives in an apartment not far from the Art Theatre and, I should imagine, it had been hers for many years. It had an air of permanence and solid Russian comfort with the usual divan and piles of cushions, *bric-a-brac* on little tables, silk lampshades, crocheted mats, dozens of photographs around the walls, notably a lifesized one of Chekhov. Also, I was interested to see, two ikons with the votive oil lamps burning steadily in front of them.

Olga Knipper Chekhova was graciousness itself. A woman of middle height, grey-haired, not particularly slender, with a pair of beautiful dark eyes under heavy brows. Dressed in what would once have been called a *peignoir*, she radiated charm coupled with an impression of immense dignity. We were delighted to hear that she spoke fluent English.

She was astonished to learn that the name of Anton Chekhov was venerated in Australia, even if only by an elite few, and even more surprised when I told her that some friends of mine, the painter Justus Jorgensen and his wife Billian, had called their son Max Anton because of their regard for him.

"If only Anton Pavelovich could hear this," she exclaimed and went on to tell us how he had doubted that anyone outside Russia would be interested either in his stories or his plays. "They are so trivial, so local, why would anybody want to read them?" was his reaction when it was first suggested that they should be translated into other languages.

Then she went on to describe the first disastrous performance of "The Seagull" in which she played the leading role. It took place in St. Petersburg, not Moscow, and in winter. Greeted with derision, it had been a monumental failure and Chekhov, unable to endure the agony of listening to the hisses and the boos, had fled into the night. She told how the entire company had searched for him and how he was eventually discovered crouched on the bank of the Neva, almost frozen by the cold. For weeks after that he was ill with congestion of the lungs and this, so she believed, was the beginning of his fatal illness.

Once her reserve was broken she spoke freely, giving us a vivid description of the early days of the Moscow Art Theatre and of the man who is its greatest glory. We heard how they had all gone to Yalta, a journey of two thousand miles,

in order to pay tribute to him and put on a performance of "Uncle Vanya", he being too ill to come to Moscow. They travelled in a special train which took two days and nights to reach its destination, but never for a moment was the journey tedious because of the jokes and impromptu plays, the singing and the pranks of that gifted and high spirited company.

Even when writing his last and greatest play, "The Cherry Orchard", Chekhov was plagued by doubts and sent it, scene by scene, to Stanislavsky at the M.A.T. When the manuscript arrived word would flash through the theatre and everyone would gather on the stage where, amid laughter and tears, the immortal words were read.

"We laughed, we cried, we embraced each other," she said, her eyes luminous with recollection. And she described the premiere which took place in the Moscow Art Theatre in the winter of 1903 and how, despite his failing health, he managed to be there and hear the rapturous applause this last and greatest of his plays received. It was a gala occasion with speeches and presentations which taxed the strength of the dying man to the utmost.

"He was deathly pale," she told us. "There were times when we thought he would collapse but he insisted on remaining to the end, even refusing to accept a chair."

Soon after this, they went away together in the Black Forest and, in November 1904, he died. It was time to say good-bye. She gave me an autographed picture of herself, expressed her pleasure at having met us, and Guido, to his credit, bent and kissed her hand. I came away feeling that, after this, even bed-bugs were of no significance.

4 August 1933

For the first time in my life I belong to a trade union. There is only one trade union in the USSR and everyone here belongs to it, everyone that is except the hungry wretches begging in the street. Lack of a trade union ticket is the reason why they beg. To those of us more fortunate the trade union is our father and our mother, providing us with ration books, a place to live in, tickets to the theatre, hospitals and medical care, holidays in the Crimea or on the Gulf of Finland, all the essentials of life for which the levy is one percent of the monthly wage. As the membership numbers many millions this amounts to a considerable sum each year.

Seriava is the trade union rep. at the Publishing

House where we work. Poor Seriava! always losing things, always plagued by irritated members of the staff demanding the impossible. Immediately! Always shrieking protests at being so unmercifully harassed, yet kind and helpful, particularly to the two Australians who know practically nothing about the complexities of day to day life in the Soviet Union.

A few days ago the panic was worse than usual as she had mislaid some dozen pages of manuscript that had just been translated and not yet typed. High and low she searched and the entire English section was soon in an uproar; Seriava was reduced to tears as she knew she would be severely rebuked for being careless, and everyone was sorry for her as a rebuke from the higher echelons is a serious matter here. Then, O joy! the missing pages were discovered under the cushion of her chair where she had put them for safety. In addition to her job she has a husband and children to look after. Small wonder she is always out of breath and has a wild, distracted look in her eyes.

Yesterday, as I was numbly hammering away at the typewriter, someone told me that I was wanted in the corridor outside the room. Who should be standing there but Katharine Susannah Prichard. It was a complete surprise though we had known vaguely that she was planning to visit the USSR this year. Only those who have spent a considerable time in an alien land can fully understand what it means to see somebody from 'home'. She is Guido's friend not mine, but I threw myself into her arms with a loud cry of joy and came close to shedding tears. She was almost as emotional as I was and when Guido came hurrying out to join us we practically danced a *carmagnole* in the dingy corridor.

She has just arrived in Moscow and is staying at the Lux Hotel, a place reserved for Party members, trade union officials and delegates from abroad. It is crowded and expensive and she does not like the atmosphere which strikes her as rather depressing. We had heard about the Lux from Freda, who said it was full of political gogetters, so have suggested to Katharine that she move in with us in true Moscow fashion. She hesitates, feeling that it will inconvenience us, as sleeping three in a room could easily do, but we have reassured her and she moves in tomorrow. There is only one bed but by great good fortune it has two mattresses, one reasonably thick, the other little more than a pallet, a relic of Freda's sojourn in Japan. We have decided to draw lots,

the winner to have the bed, the loser to have the mattress and sleep on the floor.

6 August 1933

Katharine lost and now sleeps in a corner of the room while Guido and I share the bed. A strange *ménage à trois!* I hope she is not aware that the situation acts like an aphrodisiac on Guido. He still works till after midnight but K.S.P. and I retire at a more reasonable hour. We must present a strange sight, each with an open umbrella over our heads to shield us from the light and Guido at the table poring over his books. I trust that she is sound asleep by the time he comes to bed.

She is a serene person with a soft voice and gentle smile; even in this short time I have grown to like her very much. She has been the first to notice that I have grown very thin, and small wonder. For the first time in my life, I have known real hunger. To be sure, we have an ample ration, by Soviet standards, but there is very little meat, few eggs, and the diet of rye bread, potatoes, cheese and caviar does not seem to satisfy me. Twice when I have been out by myself I have stolen into Torgsin and, with the guiltiest feeling possible, ordered a plate of ham and eggs with coffee and delicious little cakes. Guido would be furious if he knew as he is determined to live on what we earn and eat within the limits of our ration books.

I think that he has never been so happy in his life, not because of me, of course, but because he is now a *robotnik*, a genuine worker helping to build new society. He, who has never had to work in his whole life, now slaves for fifteen hours a day — and loves it! He hurries off to work each morning, his heavy dictionaries under his arm, toils up hill, across the Red Square and arrives at the office red-faced and breathless and is completely satisfied with life.

8 August 1933

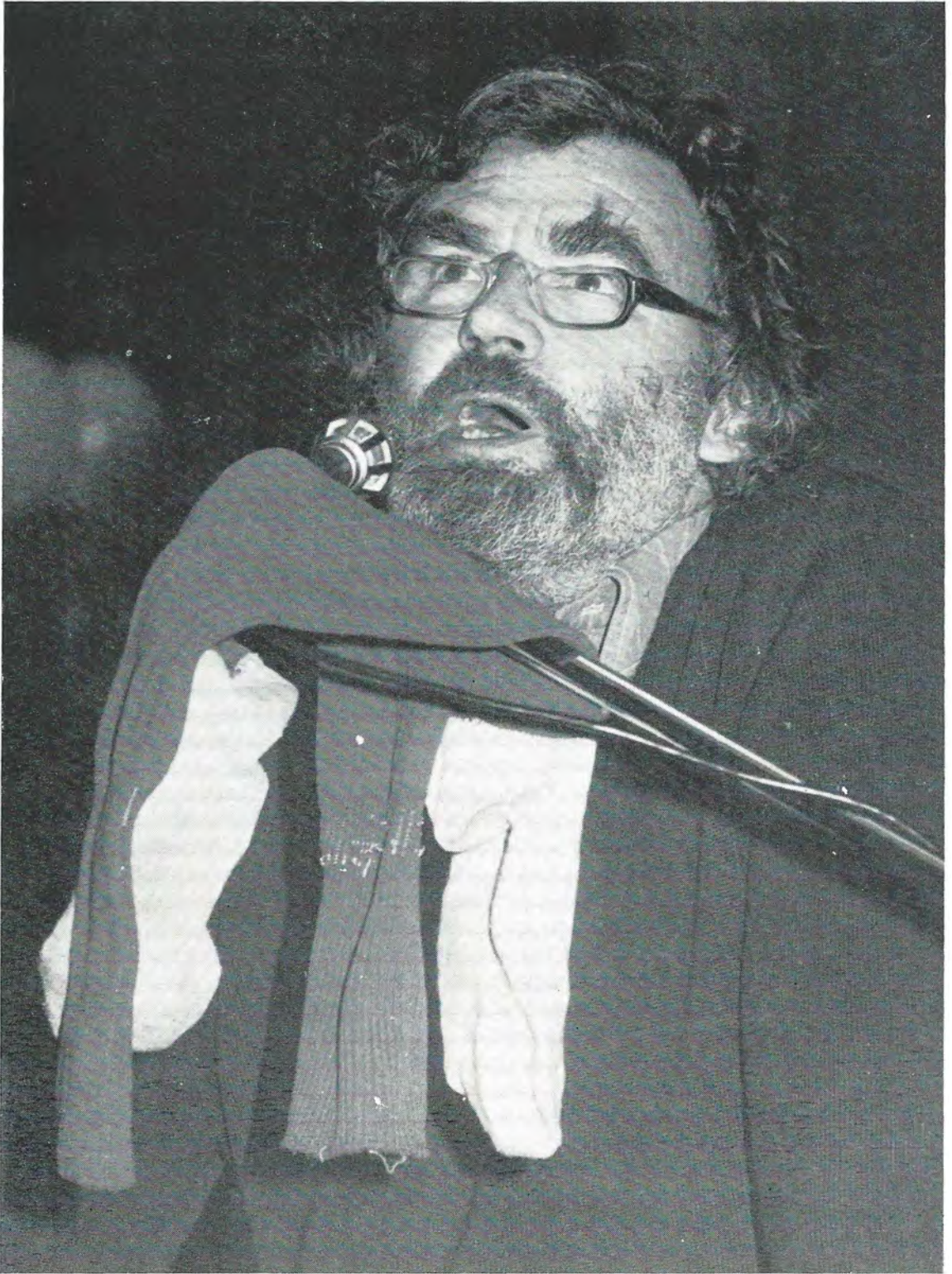
A lot of indignation is generated on the part of tourists by the sight of women working alongside men at road building, digging ditches, and carting bricks. This is not an example of Bolshevik brutality but a custom as old as Russian history.

These women are as strong as any man and would be amazed if anyone suggested that they are not fit to carry heavy loads. I once saw a woman waiting at a tram stop. She had a sack of potatoes lying at her feet. When the tram arrived she heaved it onto her shoulder and climbed aboard. How she managed to do so, considering the already over-crowded condition of the tram, is a mystery, but by dint of a great deal of pushing and shoving she accomplished it, stoically ignoring the chorus of abuse the displaced passengers hurled at her.

There is an iron rule about boarding trams. One gets in at the back and steadily fights one's way between the intervening bodies until within reasonable distance of the front which is the sole means of exit permitted. The ticket collector — always a woman — sits complacently near the door and waits for the kopeks to arrive. Ten kopeks is the standard fare, regardless of the length of the journey. The money is passed from hand to hand, generally overhead, and the ticket, together with the change, returns by the same route. No one ever attempts to evade payment of the fare and never, under any circumstances, does a single kopek fail to return to its owner.

Ignorance of the system landed Guido and me in trouble the second day we were in Leningrad. He wanted to see the famous statue of Lenin that stands outside the Finlandski Voxal (Finland station). Unsure of the way to get there, we took a taxi and, after paying our respects to the 'architect of the October revolution', decided to return by tram. There was the usual wild stampede when one arrived so, very sensibly we thought, we decided to enter by the forward door where there was no crush at all. The effect was instantaneous. A chorus of indignant voices indicated that we were unwelcome; the driver turned to glare at us, the ticket-collector rose to her feet and blew shrilly on a whistle, at which a militiaman appeared and hauled us off the tram.

There was a good deal of explaining, much waving of hands, with a crowd of interested spectators looking on, then Guido had the wit to produce his passport and all was well. We were foreigners, so what else could be expected? We parted with mutual expressions of fraternity — and never made the same mistake again.



Ian Turner raffles Ron Barassi's socks at the final Barassi Memorial Lecture 1978.

IAN TURNER

The Greatest Game

The Barassi Memorial Lecture

Ian Turner first delivered his Barassi Memorial Lecture at Monash University in 1965. It was normally repeated annually thereafter, with increasing fame, until 1978, when the final lecture was given at the Prahran College of Advanced Education. Overland is indebted to Ken Gott, who painstakingly made this transcription from the final tape, checking references against Ian's notes and against the authorities quoted.

Those who watched several years ago a TV show called "The Big Game" in which costumed footballers — costumed in uniform, that is, and not in drag — were asked to answer quiz questions for the honor of their clubs (and some slight material rewards such as a see-through Whitmont shirt and a slightly-used Holden by courtesy of Kevin Dennis's Autorama) would have observed the following exchange:

"What team does Graham Kennedy barrack for?" "St Kilda." "Correct."

(Whereupon a scantily clad go-go girl danced onto the screen, waving a pair of flags and leaving it open to some doubt as to whether she was the prize for this segment of the show.)

"John Peck has four children. Are they all daughters or all sons?" "Daughters." "Correct."

"What famous scientist produced the theory of relativity?" "Don't know."

Those who observed this might well wonder whether there is sufficient intellectual content in the great Australian game to justify its inclusion in serious academic discourse.

However there is already a fair body of academic studies worthy of note. For example, Professor Dunn's pioneering work, *The Incidence of Brain Hernia Among Reserve Eighteens*; Professor Waller's definitive text, *The Brownlow Medal and the Rule of Law*; Professor Bradley's penetrating analysis, *Barassi and Hamlet — a Comparative Study in the Tragic Hero*; Professor Davis's distinguished monograph, *Informal Voting for the Collingwood Committee*; Profes-

sor Andrews' piledriving paper on *Minor Surgery of the Back Pocket*; and my own modest contribution, *The Tigers, the Blues and the Class Struggle*.

It is evident that academic exploration of this highly significant social phenomenon already provides a substantial proportion of the intellectual output of this university. And that is as it should be, because we are the inheritors of a long and distinguished tradition of intellectual enquiry, beginning with Joseph Strutt, the first historian of British sport, who published his *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* in 1801. In it he said: "In order to form a just estimation of the character of any particular people, it is absolutely necessary to investigate the sports and pastimes most generally prevalent among them. When we follow them into their retirements, where no disguise is necessary, we are most likely to see them in their true state and may best judge of their natural disposition."

Here Strutt is urging the claim of recreation and leisure activities as keys to the national character. The claim is given respectability by some historians, not only those who might be thought to have a vested interest — as does Dr Percy Young, the distinguished author of a history of British football, who says that when one is writing a history of football "one is in effect constructing a history of the nation" — but also from general historians, especially the Americans. Let me quote two examples.

In 1944 Dr Dixon Wecter, an American, found

that cricket was a game of "leisured boredom and sudden crises met with cool mastery to the ripple of applause", characteristic of the British national character. Whereas, "football with its rugged individualism, and baseball with its equality of opportunity" were seen as "valid American symbols". And in 1951, two other Americans, David Reisman and Reuel Denny, contrasted the democratic ideology prevailing in the United States with the class-ridden atmosphere of the United Kingdom. In Britain, they wrote, working-class audiences watched "gentlemen in action" and were looking particularly for good form and a respect for the law. For them, "legality was more important than power". By contrast, American audiences were on a level with the players and were power-oriented, while the American competitive spirit was reflected as much in the desire to win as in high production goals in industry.

But at an even more profound level, football illuminates not only character but life itself. Thus the Chinese poet Li Yu who wrote between A.D. 50 and 130 said: "A round ball and a square goal suggests the shape of the Ying and the Yang. The ball is like the full moon and the two teams stand opposed. Captains are appointed and take their place. In the game, make no allowance for relationship, and let there be no partiality. Determination and coolness are essential and there must not be the slightest irritation for failure. Such is the game. Let its principles apply to life."

Australian historians haven't gone so far, but other commentators have edged into the field. Thus, Donald Horne, writing in 1967:

It is only in sport (and as soldiers) that most Australians confidently see themselves as being of 'world class'. *Only* in sport? What else is there that matters as much as sport? The qualification would seem meaningless to many Australians. What else is there that matters as much as sport? It is only in sport that many Australians express those approaches to life that are non-Australian if expressed in any other connection. Here it is good to be unashamedly expert, ambitious and competitive, to proclaim faith, dedication and difference. It was almost as if the nation had been built on sport; had acquired international significance from sport; sport seemed to be what Australia was 'about'. Playing games or watching them was to play one's role as an Australian.

The comment is not altogether unjust.

The movement from sport to national character

rests on a Rousseau "man was born free but everywhere is in chains" kind of assumption. Social life forces men to play roles which do not represent their true selves. Only in relaxation, freed from the demands of society, are their true selves revealed. But it's difficult to assert that football, in particular, is the key to Australian character—if there is any such thing. Firstly, because it replaced cricket only about thirty years ago as the most popular spectator sport; and secondly, because all spectator sports are now giving way to participant sports such as golf, yachting, surfing and skiing; and finally, because Australia is divided by a deep cultural rift between the north and the south known as the Barassi line. It runs between Canberra, Broken Hill, Birdsville and Manangrita and it divides Australia between Rugby and Rules.

I'd prefer to argue more empirically. Melbourne has a population of around about 2.5 million people. The major competition is that of the Victorian Football League. In the 1975 season, 12 clubs played 22 rounds of home-and-home and five finals matches to a total attendance of around three million. In my estimate, that means in terms of man-hours per week, somewhere between two and six million.

For those of you who are interested in the discipline of sociometrics, I should perhaps explain my method of calculation. I have taken myself at an average of eight hours per week. I have multiplied myself by about one-fifth of the population, equalling half a million people, and arrived at the figure of four million man-hours, and then I've allowed plus or minus two million man-hours just in case I've got the coefficients wrong. This could be made more precise by a survey, but unfortunately the VFL won't play ball. It is, however, supported by some independent investigations.

For example, the late George Johnston captured the atmosphere thus:

In Melbourne, football is a fever disease like recurrent malaria, and apparently incurable. 'Aussie rules' in the austere southern capital probably has a bigger and undeniably a more frenetic following than all the other codes in Australia put together. For six or seven months of the year, a mad contagion runs through press, television, radio, and everyday life. An acidulous Sydney man, himself a Rugby Union addict, put it to me that "Melbourne has no summer, only a period of hibernation between football seasons".

I had forgotten until I went back to a grand

final on the Melbourne Cricket Ground what it was really like—that unbelievable roar of over 100,000 screaming zealots, baying for blood and bruises, the toss and tumult of partisan colors, the streamers, the hats, the emblems, the banners, frenzy, hysteria. No other sporting event in Australia draws a crowd as big or committed as this. For a time men become gods and heroes.

In Melbourne, the mythical conflict between winter and summer is institutionalized in the struggle between cricket and football clubs for the Saturdays of the spring and autumn—and winter is winning.

Indeed, Melbourne football has taken on something of the character of a primitive religion. Thus, on one occasion the distinguished Methodist divine, Rev. Alan Walker, addressed a Mission to the Nation at the VFL grand final on the Melbourne Cricket Ground, "Ladies and gentlemen, gathered on this great occasion, whichever team we may support, whether it be the Saints or the Demons, we can surely all agree that we are joined together in this, that we are brothers and sisters in Christ." Whereupon there came a mighty voice from the southern stand: "What about the bloody umpire?"

And indeed football is already invading the territory of the sacred texts. Thus, Father Gerard Dowling, the historian of the North Melbourne Football Club, advised North supporters that they should place his book on their bedside tables alongside the family Bible—and further, they should consult it more often.

In historical terms the problem which interests me is the transition from football as a popular pastime, a folk game, to football as a recreation for gentlemen, and then to football as the most popular spectator sport, a major sector of mass entertainment. The questions which arise include these: What has caused this change in the character of the game? How has this change affected the game itself? Its organization, its rules, its style of play? How has it affected the players and spectators? What is the function of football in modern society?

In 1969 I visited a small town called Ashbourne in Derbyshire in the United Kingdom. Izaak Walton had fished near Ashbourne and George Eliot had lived there whilst writing her last novels. (I didn't know that at the time—I'd gone there to watch a football match.)

An interesting game, an all-in-game. The town of Ashbourne was divided between the uppards

and the downards, depending on which side of the river the people lived, and they all played. The game began at 2 p.m. on Shrove Tuesday and ran through until 10 p.m. on that night, with intervals for tea and other refreshments. It resumed at 2 p.m. on Ash Wednesday and ran through to 10 p.m. that night. The aim of the game was to score a goal by striking the ball against one or other of two mill wheels which were each at one-and-a-half mile's distance from the centre of the town. The method was to convey the ball to one of the mill wheels by any method bar motorization, which was regarded as being un-sporting.

At one point of the evening the ball disappeared for an hour-and-a-half. It later emerged that a devoted supporter of the uppards had taken the ball to the local public dike, placed it in a cistern, and sat on it, re-emerging in time to score a goal at 9.55 p.m. At 10 p.m. on Ash Wednesday the game ended, after the players had ploughed for two days through snow and ice, with a characteristic British football score—drawn game, one-all.

Folklorists have often thought of games, not as conscious inventions, but as survivals from primitive conditions under which they originated in magical rites. And so it was at Ashbourne, and so it was with the kind of game that first came to Australia.

The early immigrants to this country brought with them the traditional English outdoor recreations of their time. They played these on Christmas and New Year holidays. Thus the first Melbourne sporting paper, *Bell's Life*, reported that at Christmas 1857 Bendigo miners engaged themselves in running, jumping, climbing greasy poles and "grinning through horse-collars in the manner of their ancestors". At the Duke of York in Prahran at Christmas 1858, the patrons were "climbing the greasy pole, the pig with the greasy tail, playing football and all the usual Christmas sports".

Unfortunately no details of these games survive and in any case they are not particularly relevant, except to confute those romantics who still persist in believing that Australian football grew out of the bucolic amusements of Irish-born miners on the goldfields of Bendigo and Ballarat.

In between these two Christmases, one Thomas Wentworth Wills, a leading member of the Melbourne Cricket Club, wrote to *Bell's Life* deploring the absence of a suitable winter recreation and

suggesting the formation of a football club. Wills was a man of impeccable Australian nationalist connections. His grandfather, Edward, had been transported for life for highway robbery, after which he did well in sealing and shipping; his grandmother married (for the second time) George Howe, a convict and the first printer of the Sydney Gazette. His uncle Tom, for whom he was named, married a daughter of Thomas Reiby, a convict, landowner and a director of the Bank of New South Wales. One aunt married a Dr Redfern, who had been transported for sympathising with the naval mutineers at the Spithead and the Nore, while another aunt married the aide-de-camp to Governor Lachlan Macquarie. Tom was also named for William Charles Wentworth, the great Australian patriot whose father Darcy had narrowly escaped transportation for highway robbery, being allowed instead to leave his country for his country's good. Tom's father, Horatio, was a successful pastoralist who overlanded the family and his stock to Australia Felix, now western Victoria, in 1836. Horatio was killed in the most famous of all Aboriginal massacres, that at Cullinaringo in 1861, when pioneering a new property in central Queensland. Tom was with him, but happily escaped. Indeed, Tom's ancestry was impeccable.

But unfortunately for radical Australian nationalists such as myself, the sins of the grandfather were not, in this case, visited upon the grandson. Horatio, having been freed of the convict stain, determined to make his son a gentleman and sent him "home" for education to Rugby. So what Tom Wills knew of football came from what he had learned of the game as it developed under Dr Arnold in the decades following "The exploit of William Webb Ellis, who, with a fine disregard for the rules of football as played in his time, first took the ball in his arms and ran with it, thus originating the distinctive features of the Rugby Game. A.D. 1828." But Wills didn't propose the introduction of the Rugby game. This was thought to be, in the words of his cousin and brother-in-law, Henry Colden Antill Harrison, unsuitable for grown men making a livelihood; something with which one might concur, having read the description of the game in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*: "It's no joke, I can tell you. Why, there's been two collar-bones broken this half, and a dozen fellows lamed. And last year a fellow had his leg broken."

Australian football began with the Melbourne Football Club in 1858. Over the next few years new clubs formed and, as with soccer, the needs

of interclub matches demanded a code of rules. The Melbourne code was adopted. By 1860 the fundamentals of Australian rules had been accepted — the mark, limited running with the ball, no throwing, the beginnings of the holding and dropping the ball law, no tripping, holding or hacking. Then it was closest to the Harrow game. Now the only similar game is Gaelic football, but the rules as evolved were a distinctive Australian creation.

It proved attractive to spectators right from the beginning. By the mid-1860s crowds of 1,500 were attending, by the mid-seventies 10,000, and by the mid-eighties 20,000. From the outset, many among them were women. The first admission charges were imposed in the mid-seventies — sixpence a head.

Admission charges were to be devoted to the improvement of facilities, but the entrance fees soon created temptations of professionalism among top players and officials alike. This was at the same time as the question of professionalism in soccer came up in the United Kingdom. It also arose in Rugby Union, where it caused a split and the formation of Rugby League. That was scarcely coincidental.

It arose out of the growing leisure and the desire of the urban masses for popular entertainment, the growth of the potential audience, the desire of working class men to have an entré into sport in something like equal terms with gentlemen. By the 1880s the game had developed in Australia, as in the U.K., along two lines — the professional game, which men played at least partly for reward, and the amateur game, which men played, as gentlemen had always played, for recreation.

It was the professional game which drew the crowds. Until the 1930s, cricket remained pre-eminent. Those were the heady years of the dramatic conflict between Bradman and McCabe of Australia and Mr Jardine and Larwood of England — the bodyline series during which notes were exchanged between the Australian and U.K. Governments, and when Australia nearly left the Empire.

The turn came during the war years. Cricket never recovered from the break, except perhaps for the West Indian tours, and football is now many lengths ahead. The Grand Final crowd of 120,000 which will fill the MCG later this year continues to establish new records for any sporting event in Australia.

So the mass demand for entertainment was there in the late nineteenth century, there was money

to pay for it, and none to gainsay it. The Anglican Church was non-established, and in any case it inclined towards muscular Christianity; the non-conformists formed the social base for a peculiar Australian variety of moralism known as wowsers-ism which objected to sex, drink, gambling, smoking and most other pleasures. But they were caught between the Anglicans and the Catholics, the latter being an Irish-based church which inveighed against unlicensed sex, but approved of drink and sport — provided they didn't interfere with Sunday mass. So given the climate — which, no matter what present-day Melburnians might think about it, seemed to new arrivals from semi-arctic England suitable for outdoor sport all the year round — open air recreations were inevitable developments. Cricket, racing, hunting, athletics, cycling and aquatics were, along with football, soon on the scene. Among them, football finally came to reign supreme.

I want to move from that brief historical survey to some comments on the game today.

Firstly, to players. It is generally believed that professionalism is a turning point in the attitude of players to their games. Thus, it is assumed that amateurs would play by the code enunciated in what an historian of American gridiron described as "the imperishable words" of Grantland Rice:

For when the One Great Scorer comes to mark
against your name,
He writes not that you won or lost, but how
you played the game.

Whereas it is generally thought that professional players tend to react rather like Fitzroy's Ian McCulloch, who was reported last year as saying: "Most players are in it for the money. I know I am — I'm not in Victoria because I like the bloody place."

That's clearly much too simple. We must ask what is the nature of the pleasure that footballers of any sort get from their game; and is it really true that the cash nexus has obliterated pleasure for professionals? David Reisman shares this last doubt of mine. Of gridiron he says: "Yet it would be too simple to say that football has ceased to be a game for its players and has become an industry." Consider, also, this statement of that distinguished psychologist, Ron Barassi, a leading and most articulate Australian footballer: "I think retirement from football is just like death. You can't avoid it, no matter what you do. And just the same, it's hard to face when it comes. Luckily

I've got the coaching which I enjoy very much. It's very fulfilling. I'm still in football. The game itself is not really enjoyable. I don't see how a sporting contest with a lot hanging on it can be enjoyable during the actual contest. The enjoyment comes afterwards. You're proud, you can remember all the good things you did. I reckon the Australian footballer is the greatest all-round athlete in the world. There's no question, our game's a great game."

Several things seem to follow from this. Firstly, pleasure probably needs to be defined in terms of power, domination, the mastery of one's physical talents in the situation within the game, and domination over the spectators. In both of these you have, of course, a strong element of sexuality, homo- as well as hetero-.

Part of it is the desire to win. I don't think it is ever true that players are indifferent to the outcome of the game, but if that *is* so, then sportsmanship is a code of behavior designed to regulate competition, rather than an ethic of indifference to the result. Barassi's point about the game not being pleasurable while the fight is on is well taken. But it applies equally to such amateur events as the old Davis Cup and the Olympic Games. A professional may well get the same sort of pleasure out of the game as an amateur: not the pleasure of a man at play, but the pleasure of a craftsman who takes pride in his skill and achievements.

One side benefit for the players is social mobility. Not only for the sons of New Australian players whose names are written in gold in the annals of Australian football, if not always pronounced terribly accurately by football commentators, but also for those whom the white supremacists of our society like to call "our Aborigines". Thus when Doug Nichols remonstrated with "Captain Blood" Jack Dyer for saying "Get out of the bloody way, yer black bastard", Dyer explained that he was not responsible for anything he said during the game and certainly didn't mean it. "Nichols was quite welcome to play."

At a Richmond-Carlton game I observed the following exchange:

Richmond supporter shouts to Aboriginal Sid Jackson of Carlton, "Leave him alone, you black bludger."

Carlton supporter to the Richmond man: "You can't say that to Sid Jackson! Come on Sunshine."

Mobility also has a spill off into politics. Traditionally ex-footballers became policemen. Today

they tend to become publicists, publicans or politicians. Thus, three weeks ago I was scrutineering for my local, friendly councillor in Richmond and the opponent's scrutineer was sitting beside me. Kevin Sheedy came in, and I opened the electoral roll and ruled off his name. My opponent's scrutineer said, "Who's that?" and I said, "Kevin Sheedy." And he said, "Who's Kevin Sheedy?" At that moment, I knew we had taken Richmond.

Beyond this there is a consequence of professionalism in the growing involvement of the game and the players with the mass communications media. The players become pop stars. John Gould designs gear and Don Scott used to model it. Royce Hart and Neil Balme look more and more like [the international soccer players] Charlie George and Georgie Best, who in turn look more and more like the Beatles and the Stones.

The players themselves become charismatic heroes. A couple of years ago, outside a church in Hawthorn, the vicar had posted a notice saying: "What would you do if God came to Hawthorn today?" A graffitist had written underneath it: "Move Peter Hudson to centre half-forward."

The colleague who reported that to me said: "When I tell the story outside Hawthorn, they say, 'Who's Peter Hudson?', but when I tell the story in Hawthorn they say, 'Who's God?'"

Now this is half-time and at that point I usually have the RAAF Band playing selections from "Mary Poppins", but unfortunately today they had a prior engagement to play "Mack the Knife" and "Money Won't Buy You Love" at the annual general meeting of the Victorian Association of Surgeons.

Now let's look at the ideology of the game—apart from the attitudes of the players and the fans.

There are all the usual rationalisations — *Mens Sana in Corpore Sano*—which happens to be the motto of the Carlton Football Club. Muscular Christianity? But that's no longer terribly fashionable. The playing fields of Eton? Affable Alf Deakin said that when Australians were called upon to defend their country on the field of battle, the battles would already have been won on the Australian rules playing fields. Thirty years later 'Honest' Joe Lyons said that the battle of Gallipoli had indeed been won on those same playing fields. (Note that Australians habitually count Gallipoli as a victory.)

As with American football and baseball, of which Cozens and Stumpf wrote in 1952 "The bleachers are equally cordial to coalminers, poli-

ticians and bank presidents", and with soccer, about whose basically democratic character Dr Young has written, the adherents of Australian football proclaim it to be a democratic game. The VFL's motto is "*Populo Ludis Populi*"—"the game of the people for the people".

I don't believe this. The game's no more democratic than the society in which it is played. It's true that it's largely open to the talents, but it's not true that Snowy on the trams is as good as the chairman of BHP. The latter has a considerably better chance of making the club committee than Snowy, and can usually buy himself a better seat to watch the finals.

What the statement probably means is that these mass spectator sports have a broad cross-class appeal—and that certainly is true. As a New Zealand friend once commented to me: Australia is the only country he had visited anywhere in the world where the conversation in the gent's pissoir at the university staff club was the same as that at the local pub—football and racing.

Class differences, however, still find their expression in the vent between the outer and the stand at the MCG, and in the extra edge to matches from such factors as the differences between high-toned Melbourne and democratic Collingwood—as they were described as long ago as the 1870s.

The barrackers. Almost the only thing known about Australian football fans is how many of them pay to go in. And since they do pay to go and it's not yet compulsory, it's reasonable to assume they go because they get pleasure out of it. What the source of that pleasure is, nobody knows. When Ron Barassi was asked what pleasure spectators got out of football, he answered: "You'd have to be a psychiatrist to answer that." The usual psychological explanation has a historical basis in the view once widely held by anthropologists that games are a kind of imitative warfare. Thus, Dr Gilbert Slater, in an article called "Concerning Golf (and Other) Balls" in the *Sociological Review*, 1911, thought of those participating in ball games as responding to "the very stimulus which maddened uncounted generations of your ancestors through ages of palaeolithic savagery in tribal warfare". The spectators, of course, shared in this by identifying with the players.

The argument is familiar. It was clearly stated by the psychoanalyst A. S. Brill in the *North American Review* in 1929. All men, he said, have "an aggressive component" in their psyche. This is one of the primary weapons in the fight for

survival. However, this aggressiveness is potentially socially destructive. Therefore it needs to be socially manageable and to have socially approved outlets. One such outlet is spectator sport.

Roll says sports are a greatly necessary social catharsis, indispensable to civilised man, a salutary purgation of the combative instinct which, if dammed up within him, would break out in disastrous ways. To this I might add a couple of observations, one of them psychological: perhaps it is not merely a matter of securing a release for an existing tension, but also of a human need to *create* tension in order to obtain the pleasure of release, on the analogy of copulation. The other is sociological, suggested by Elias and Dunning in a paper at the British Sociological Association Conference in 1967—in a culture which disapproves of the public expression of emotion, and which offers progressively fewer occasions for excitement, the need for this release is increasingly concentrated in leisure activities. Indeed, that view has been confirmed by my own field work in this area. Catharsis is achieved, not only by players but by spectators.

Thus, at a moment during the final quarter of a St Kilda and Richmond match at Moorabbin, when the Tigers, having been down five goals, were now drawing ahead, a St Kilda supporter—thirtyish, short-back-and-sides, running to fat, white shirt, and clasping a can of Carlton Draught—addressed himself to the umpire: “You rotten, bloody, commo, poofter, mongrel, bastard.” He had thus given vent to all the Australian political, social, racial, sexual and male chauvinist prejudices. Moreover, he had projected them onto a representative of bourgeois, imperialist, fascist repression, and one hopes he had received a satisfactory purgation and didn’t beat his wife that night.

Now for the meaning of the game. It has been a long-time lament of Australian socialists that if only the Australian workers transferred the thought they invest in picking winners and the passion they devote to football into politics, we would have had the revolution long ago.

The catharsis view of psychology perhaps lends weight to this belief, and there is some reason to think that Cozens and Stumpf are right when they say that “sport is an integrating factor in American democracy”, that is, it cuts across class barriers and thus tends to dampen class hostility. Some support for this view comes from the Victorian football official, L. H. McBrien, who, in the American Rotarian of 1940, wrote: “As an emo-

tional safety valve, football has tonic properties. Young people must have some outlet for their nervous energy. In other parts of the world, the outlet is politics. In Australia it is football.”

I think we can probably dismiss such attributed meanings as “*Mens Sana . . .*”, “training for leadership”, learning how to play according to the rules (that is, the game of life in the guise of football), and the voice of the schoolboy rallying the ranks, as moralistic rationalisations. However, I would not like to omit from this discussion Dr Gilbert Slater’s claim that “other things being equal, the boy brought up on Rugby will make a better man and a better citizen” than the boy brought up on soccer.

Consider the manner in which individual combatants meet one another in the two games. In soccer, the defense meets the attacker by the shoulder charge. In Rugby, the defender clasps his arms lovingly around the attacker. If he knows how to collar properly, he puts his whole energy into that embrace and sinks gently to the ground with his opponents. The difference in psychic reaction is considerable. I am convinced the schoolboy feels just one degree more friendly to a schoolfellow when he has collared him, just one degree less friendly when he has charged him.

In modern anthropological terms, this is a structural functional explanation of the game. It needs to be rounded off by the dimension added by the Badminton Book of Football (1888), speaking of a game between bachelors and married men. The object of the married men was to ‘hang the ball’, that is to put it three times into a small hole in the moor. The aim of the bachelors was to drown it, that is, to dip it three times in a deep place in the river. The party which could first affect either of these objects won the game and the ball. If neither won, the ball was cut in equal parts at sunset. If my symbolism is correct, that’s a very threatening concept.

Adrian Stokes, in an article called “Psycho-analytical Reflections on the Development of Ball Games” (1956), observed that for a fieldsman to catch a batsman out in cricket is an act of symbolic castration. I am attracted by these and other psychological explanations. Some have seen the ball itself as a symbol of perfection. Thus, Cicero in his “On the Nature of the Gods” says: “What can be more beautiful than the figure that encircles and encloses in itself all other figures and that can possess no roughness or point of collision on its surface, no indentation or concavity, no pro-

tubercle or depression?" Again, the Dutch philosopher F. J. J. Buytendijk, in a book called *Football: a Philosophical Study* published in 1954, says of the ball that it is the most simple and perfect of all forms, the qualities of which one can enter into by touching and fondling. The sphere also has an archetypal, magical significance; as sun and moon it is both ritual symbol and object of worship. (There is perhaps some support for this in the action of the Brazilian football fan who, in despair that his team was doing so badly, took out his revolver and shot the ball.)

When one considers that the ball in a football game spends much more of its time being kicked, punched, thrown and headed than being fondled, it seems that the explanation cannot stand. Perhaps R. W. Pickford comes closer to the truth in an article in the *British Journal of Psychology* in 1940 in which he discusses the difference between Rugby and soccer. He says that in Rugby the ball is lovingly caught and caressed, that the image is maternal. Whereas, in soccer the ball is kicked away, treated as a dangerous or unclean object, a symbol of paternal potency. My objection to this as a follower of Australian football might perhaps be dismissed as emotional. In Australian football, the ball is both caught and fondled, as well as being kicked and punched. Therefore Pickford's theory leaves me quite uncertain about my own sexual identity.

Personally it is the Freudian interpretation of the great Australian game that most strongly attracts me. We are dealing here with one of the four greatest minds of our era, and it is inconceivable that such an intelligence should not have been brought to bear on such a significant contemporary social phenomenon as the great Australian game. And indeed such was the case.

One of the elementary propositions of Freudian psychology is that nothing happens by chance. Thus, in the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, which has specific application to language and its use, Freud discusses the names that we give to everyday objects. Consider the vocabulary of Australian football — words, phrases and injunctions such as "Ruck", "Punt", "Forward Flank", "Ball Up" and "Put it Through the Big Sticks". These are indicative of, though not central to, the point I want to make.

The next significant revelation comes from Freud's theory of the personality which he developed in his *Introductory Lectures to Psychoanalysis*. Freud suggested a triple-tier personality, in appearance not unlike the outer stand at the

MCG. There is a deeply submerged Id, situated at ground level, in which reside the instinctual drives towards aggression and sexuality. There is a Superego soaring high above, like a psychic scoreboard, on which we record the successes and failures of our repression or sex drives, depending on the criteria with which we start. Then there is the Ego, that part of the persona which we care to expose — or which we are allowed by the Superego to expose — to the public gaze. And if we think of the personality of Australian football, of course it fits the Freudian model.

Because, there, beyond the palings which represent the boundary between the conscious and the unconscious mind, stands the 100,000-headed Id, straining at the leash of its repressions, howling to its Ego for violent and erotic release. And there, strategically distributed over the green sward which represents the conscious mind, stand the five, chaste, white-clad figures of the Superego with their whistles and flags poised to warn at any moment, "Down, Id, Down." There, also within the realm of the conscious mind, stand the thirty-six multicolored particles of the Ego, representing all that the Superego wishes the Id to aspire to, revealing all the characteristics which the Australian football personality it represents is proud to profess — stoic endurance, heroic endeavor, a beauty akin to that of the Greek warriors, and in which the instinctual drives of aggression and sexuality are sublimated in the elaborate mime of the great Australian game.

But there are more insights to come. In his *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud demonstrates that even the most innocent of objects conceal an elaborate erotic symbolism — and indeed, since everything appears visually as either a straight line or a curve it is difficult to see how it could be otherwise.

What then, is the symbolism of Australian football? I suggest that from the moment when the heroic figures of the rival teams burst through the thin membrane stretched by the Vestal Virgins across the entrance to the oval, to the accompaniment of the ritual waving of multicolored be-ribboned phallic objects in an act of symbolic defloration, and the release of inflated spheres which bear mute witness to the potency of the celebrants, to that climactic moment when the acolytes carry the victorious high priest, still triumphantly erect, out of the oval and down the dark passage to the undressing rooms, that the game is one long playing out of the sex act. For those who have got the football message, its

purpose and function are clear — Australian football is nothing more than an elaborate and arcane fertility rite.

A female-oriented liberationist interpretation might take a more complex form. Thus the ground, which is invaded by large numbers of men, is taken to be the symbolic body of the woman — which highlights an interesting difference between Australian and American characters. In American gridiron, men are required to capture one erogenous zone after another until they “score a try”, while in Australian football the men, in an undisciplined and anti-authoritarian way, roam virtually at will across the field, acting out the Australian national fantasy of “Sydney or the bush”.

But there are those who focus on the ball rather than on the ground and who see the ball as a symbolic womb. What, then, are the roles of those who contend for this symbolic womb?

They clutch the womb-symbol to them, they double up over it, they roll on it, they seek to transfer it to their fellow celebrants by striking it with legs or arms, which are themselves only thinly-disguised phallic objects. To the Freudian scholar there is only one mystery in the symbolism of Australian football — why is it that the victory goes to those who succeed most often in placing the womb-symbol between the central two of four upright poles? I was mystified by this myself and this is my principal original contribution to research in this area. My researches uncovered the fact that originally there were not four poles, but two. And once I had uncovered the truth of the early and essential reality of the great Australian game, it became clear that the poles were structural or dialectical polarities and that the real object of this weekly ritual, which has now been deeply repressed or perhaps overlaid by later cultural accretions, was not to place the womb-symbol between the two poles, but rather to impale it on one or other pole. Once we have grasped the true structural reality of the two poles — and not four — the hidden meaning of the ritual at last becomes evident.

The ball represents the wife and mother, Jocasta,

and the real purpose of the celebrants is to determine the outcome of that oldest of all sexual battles — whether the ball should be impaled on the post representing Laius, the father, or on that of Oedipus, the son.

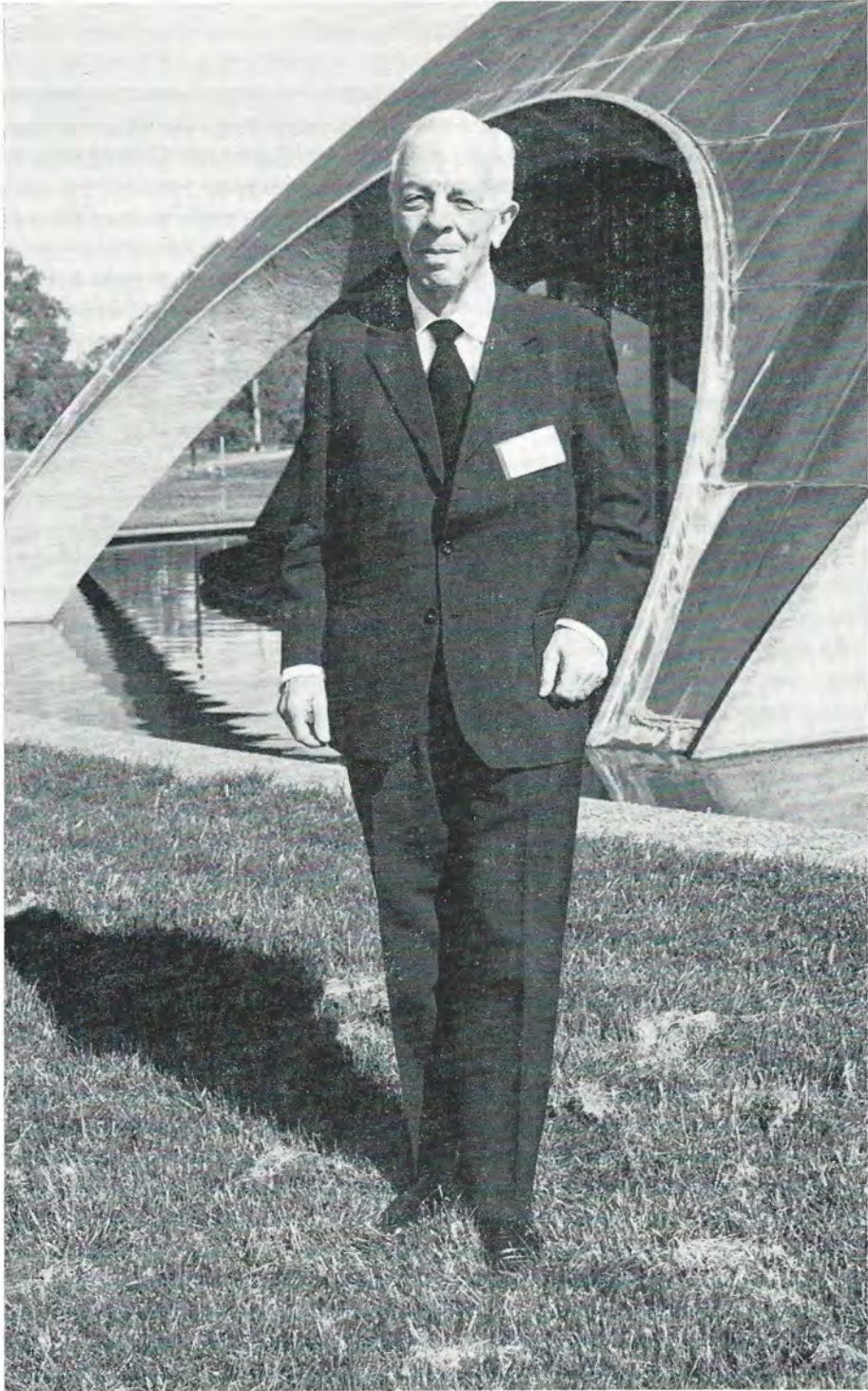
Finally a word on the totemic significance of Australian football. In his *Totem and Taboo*, Freud says: “Among the Australians, the system of totemism takes the place of all religious and social institutions” — an aphorism clearly derived from his observations of the great Australian game. Freud’s analysis was also based on field work by some distinguished Australian anthropologists, including Lou Richards, who once said: “I was born in a Magpie family and reared in a Magpie nest.”

Freud’s message is all too clear: It is of fundamental importance — indeed, it is a totemic sin to do otherwise — for the Tiger man to mate *not* with a Tiger woman, but with a woman of some other totem. For otherwise, how can one’s own totem increase? It is clear, however, that there are some special problems associated with Swans. Those who take the Swan totem unconsciously identify themselves with Zeus, who in the guise of this noble bird conducted an exhilarating affair with the delectable Leda. But I hope that those present who are of the Swan totem will not forget the solemn warning of the porter of St John’s Oxford, that: “Them swans is reserved for the dons.”

Finally, Freud draws attention to the prohibition against the adherents of a totem eating their ancestral father — except on those ritual occasions when the totemites, regaling themselves in symbolic representations of the fur or feathers of their totem, ceremonially consume a portion of the totemic creature, thereby taking unto themselves its potency and strength.

This is the final proof of the validity of the Freudian hypotheses in their application to the ritual life of Australian football adherents. For does not this sacred totemic practice survive in attenuated, but clearly apparent form, in that greatest of all Australian tribal chants: “CARN THE TIGERS! EAT ‘EM ALIVE!”





JOHN PHILIP

The Prison Poems of Jean Bernard

In the plate opposite you see a handsome elderly Frenchman standing slightly astonished outside the Academy of Science in Canberra. He is Professor Jean Bernard, and he was there last March to take part in the Academy's 25th anniversary celebrations. In the course of the celebrations he gave a talk on the rôle of the academies in the national life of France. He was well-fitted for the task. He is one of the two men who is not only an *académicien* of the 130-strong Académie des Sciences but also an *immortel* of the 40-strong Académie Française. The other is Prince Louis de Broglie, founder of wave mechanics and Nobel laureate, who is now eighty-seven.

The ambiance of Canberra is very different from Jean Bernard's natural setting in the rue d'Assas in Paris. The rue d'Assas is a long narrow street, cutting right across, and through the heart of, the 6th Arrondissement. It starts near its northern boundary at the rue du Cherche-Midi; and it ends close to the Arrondissement's southern limit, near the Port Royal RER station, on the edge of Montparnasse. For two-thirds of its length the rue d'Assas is a very ordinary Parisian street, bounded by slightly worn grey apartments, punctuated by modest shops. Then it cuts off a corner of the Jardin du Luxembourg, and it opens up briefly to a vista of greenery. This gives way to the masonry walls of the Lycée Montaigne, and the rue d'Assas closes in on itself again.

Jean Bernard has lived the greater part of his life in the small segment of rue d'Assas which enjoys the Jardin. Twice while in Paris I have visited him in his elegant fifth-floor apartment, sipped Moët et Chandon, talked of many things, and watched through the huge windows as late afternoon turned to evening in the Jardin opposite. This corner of the Jardin was the first orderly green place in Paris. In 1257 the Carthusians

established here the nursery of their monastery. It remained as a much admired sight of Paris right up to the Revolution, when it was absorbed into the Jardin.

Jean Bernard was born in 1907, a true Parisian. The family lived in the rue d'Assas, almost next door to his present abode. His father was an engineer. The young Jean attended the Lycée Louis-le-Grand on the other side of the Jardin, a pleasant half-mile walk from home. He then became a student at the École de Médecine (also across the Jardin, just a few steps past his Lycée), taking his degree in 1929. He has had a distinguished career in medical research. His experimental studies of leukemia and other blood disorders are known and admired around the world.

But it is not his career in medicine that concerns us here primarily; nor that he is a Parisian television personality; nor that he is an *éminence grise* in the French art world. These are all aspects of the total Jean Bernard, and they are important to appreciation of him as polymath; a rare species indeed in this last quarter of the twentieth century, when so few are able and willing to turn their intelligence and creativity to whatever comes to hand.

During my last visit to the apartment overlooking the Jardin, I happened to bring the conversation around to poetry; and, in due course, Jean Bernard discovered and gave me a copy of his book *Survivance*. The centre-piece of this collection of his verse is a group of fifteen poems collectively entitled "La Prison". Much of what is required in further explanation is given in the translation of extracts from his introduction to *Survivance* which follows below; but first a word about how the young medical researcher came to be incarcerated at Fresnes.

In the October after the fall of France, Jean Bernard joined the select band of four hundred who made up the Resistance of 1940. In 1941 this first network was dismantled by the Gestapo. Many were arrested and killed, but Jean Bernard escaped to the country. He was hidden for seven months in a small room at a farmhouse, and he spent the time writing a treatise on haematology. A new network was set up in 1942, and Jean Bernard became commandant for the Marseille region. Early in 1943 the Gestapo moved in on this second network. Again Jean Bernard escaped. He went back to Paris and lay hidden in a Dominican monastery on the outskirts for two months. He was arrested a few weeks after he emerged from hiding. But none of his comrades had betrayed his role in the Resistance and so, for want of evidence, the Germans released him from Fresnes after six months.

Here is Jean Bernard on his time at Fresnes:

The torpor of an August Sunday fills the prison-yard. A light wind disturbs it now and then, bringing from the nearby Croix-de-Berny stadium the nostalgic sounds of a dance-band. The yard extends between two grey buildings, each pierced by 500 windows, one hundred per floor. A grill of twelve bars is in front of each window. The windows are shut, their glass frosted. Behind the windows are the captives. Some of the captives have an attic window and are content with the meagre ventilation from it; others break a window pane or cunningly cut an opening. They are thus able to communicate with their neighbors. Some of them specialize in the collection of information; that is to say in the interrogation of newcomers, arrested that same day or the night before, men who, just hours ago, walked in the street, spoke

to their friends, turned the knobs of their radios.

Such was the time at Fresnes. Prison is not merely prison, but also the threat of death, calls in the small hours, misery, lice, fleas, bed-bugs, ticks. It is also free time. Whence the poems.

There are two classes of prison: those where you can write, and those where you are without pen or pencil. Fresnes was of the second class. Sometimes a nail from a floor-board could be used to scratch a few verses on the wall. More often the verses were held in the memory, lost if you died, written down after the Liberation if you survived. These poems from Cell 359 are the poems of a survivor.

Survivance was published in 1945, just as soon as it could be put together in the confused times that followed the Liberation. I have no information on the critical reception accorded *Survivance*. It is clear, however, that the demand for Jean Bernard's poems over the years has been unusually great, at least by Anglo-Saxon standards. The second edition was printed in 1958 and the third edition in 1977.

On my way home in the Métro, I opened *Survivance* and started to read. The combination of lyricism and immediacy in the Fresnes poems struck me at once. I wondered how much would come through in translation. One could find out only by trying. So I translated all fifteen of the poems. The translations evade the discipline of Jean Bernard's metrics and rhyme; and even so, I have been unable to maintain a literal word-for-word translation everywhere. I am grateful to Overland for publishing this selection of Jean Bernard's prison poems.

New Year 1943

The world is contorted by furtive street-fighting,
bombs, deaths by the million, exiles and imprisonments.
The boyards of Passy draw on their cigars
and smugly watch their guests waltz.

The music blares forth, and not for
thoughtless young people. The guests must enjoy themselves,
such soirées being these days very rare.
Well-washed ladies glance sideways at the little cakes,
gobble them down, stuff themselves, and ask the address
of the blackmarket cakeshop that helps you get fat.

Boyards, you are wrong to dance at these festivities,
these parties of yours.
We shall be obliged to cut off your heads,
to cut you very short.

To Captives in all the World's Camps

I think of our seniors, the prisoners of '40,
entombed away from daylight and the sun,
lads from Marche and Anjou, Ariège and Charente,
rotting in stalags these three years.

I see them: they are tired of adult education,
of camp theatres and exercise yards
and sports and games and other charades
pretending to sweeten their bitter captivity.

Humming a refrain to be sung to the moon,
they think of the child who will call them 'daddy',
son of some draft-dodger they didn't know,
and for whom, despite all, they hold no rancour.

I think of you, captives in all the world's camps,
and each day as I pace from wall to wall
I hear my jailer doing his rounds
and I mirror in my verses your deaths and your low voices.

En Route to Fresnes

I have crossed the Champs-Élysées
with rainbows in its fountains
and breezes like trade winds.

I have recognized the Invalides
with its ancient cannons,
my heart in panic.

I have seen the Porte d'Orléans,
so often our gateway to
holidays no longer available.

The iron grill slams shut
and I think of my beloved.

Through a Crack in the Door

Through a crack in the door
I discover another world,
the corridor for the guards,
the stair with its own set
of bars and its own cage
(always bars and cages).

Beyond an orange abyss
other cells are ranged
with terrible precision,
with terrible proximity;
with that painful rigour
one sees in dreams and old american films.

A sergeant passes, opens a sudden Judas.
I glimpse the captive opposite
with his worn cheeks and grey face,
holding himself respectful as required.

O brother captive, what misery is yours.
What nocturnal voyage have you made
to return with eyes so weary and wan?
To what beasts with dry hearts
have you played Orpheus,
Orpheus without lyre or rebeck?
How many long nights, how many defeated hopes
have slowly created your air of not existing,
the air that is perhaps mine also.

Suggestion

In the toolbox of metaphors
of well-equipped poets
there has been, for some time now,
a pretty game, a lyric word-game
drawn from the verbiage
of prisons and prisoners.

The most light-hearted of rimers,
even one we respect,
if he feels low in spirit,
or if he's obsessed with some girl,
straightway says he's hobbled in irons.
Walls against flying, steel doors against dancing,
padlocks on all rhythm,
and everywhere the garotte that none escape.
That written, the prisoner lights a cigarette
(for he has cigarettes),
goes out the open door
(for he has an open door).
He goes to check the weather,
to have a drink at the café;
and now his mood is better
he goes back to his girl-friend.

And we real captives
behind real iron bars,
we who know all about handcuffs,
we unresentful chaps,
we reckon modestly
that the poets, without much trouble,
would do well to change the record.

I Should Like to See my Children Again

I should like to see my children again,
to touch their young animal cheeks,
to hear their boisterous games.

And I should tell them the story
of the man who lost his memory
on the banks of the Loire.

His memory floats along the water,
then the pole of a punt
throws it up on a small island.

On this island of time past
his memory lies in a ditch,
and since that crazy day
all the flowers in the ditch,
all the flowers are pansies.

I should like to see my children again
to touch their young animal cheeks,
to hear their boisterous games.

For I have kept my memory
and I remember the Loire
and all the songs and all the stories.

Hundredth Day

How many hundreds yet?
How many hand to hand struggles
with the angel of my miseries,
the angel lurking in the corner of each hour?
Every evening it begins again.
Jacob, at least, had finished by dawn.
Swaggering, victorious, and blessed,
he walked off; but I must stay
and I am weary of the battle.

My beloved fears that I am dead,
and I don't know if she's alive.
At Fresne, in France, where I'm held,
I am more remote than in Erewhon,
I am in the land of no one,
in the land of secret life.
The secret is the nub of comedy,
but there is never any denouement
in this land of doom.

One hundred days, nine million seconds,
one hundred times this dawn like no other,
when the food-cart comes to dissipate
the dream where peace eludes the dreamer.
One hundred times the shouts, the groans,
one hundred times the mortal combat;
and the cry for mercy
from a poor heart at the end of its tether.
O my poor heart, how many hundreds yet?

Daybreak

From all the holes in the prison walls
like an accumulating flock of swallows
the murmurs of the captives grow
as daybreak reaches more and more cells.

Out of the dungeons fly the greetings:
'Good morning Gaspard, Guillaume, Albert, Paul, Charles',
furtive at first, then swelling like the wind at Arles,
spreading warmth from one solitary to the next.

The same question to all new arrivals:
'What did you say? What did you do? Why are you here?'
'Who, me? I don't know. Nothing, like everyone else.'
The same answer to the old inmates.

Back then to silence in this dismal place,
To the burden of facts not to be disclosed,
to these four walls and death behind the door,
and it is a quarter past six and a new day.

Destitution

I have neither knife nor fork
and ever since I've been here
I use teeth and fingers
to cut up the poor ration they throw me.

I have neither tie nor belt,
no noose to hang myself,
no rope to escape;
my neck is free and takes its chance.

I have neither notes nor coins,
no silver, no aluminium.
The paper and metal beloved of man
are not legal tender here.

I have neither clock nor watch
and I cannot tell the time from the sky;
I see only grimy flowers,
the roses of Saint Gudule.

I have neither pen nor pencil;
I scratch on worn plaster
these poor verses of mine,
these verses empty of moonlight.

I have neither lamp nor lantern.
I have neither bed nor book.
I scarcely need that lamp or lantern
since I cannot read in bed.

I have neither letters nor news.
Who knows if my loved ones are still alive.
Since I was first here
I have heard nothing.

IAN TURNER **The Whitlam Years**

So far as we know what follows was Ian Turner's last public address, and his last political statement. It is a lecture delivered to second and third year Australian History students at the University of Melbourne on 10 October 1978. It was recorded by Lorna Spink and transcribed and first-edited by her for Overland. It was second-edited by the editor. With some minor deletions of repetitions and of some of the conventions of spoken as opposed to written English, the lecture is printed as delivered.

The chairman has mentioned my *Cinderella Dressed in Yella*. Those of you who really want to be critical can think of this talk as an exercise in children's folklore too.

It would be idle of me to pretend I am in any sense objective in what I'm saying, because I had a personal part to play in many of the events that I'm talking about on the Labor side — so you can make whatever necessary adjustments you think as I go.

The twenty-three years of Liberal rule, associated of course largely with the name of Sir Robert Menzies, ended in December 1972. The first question to ask is, "Why, after nearly a quarter of a century, did the Liberals lose office?"

It's a cliché of political commentary that it's not oppositions that win elections but governments that lose them, but in the case of the 1972 election those two propositions shouldn't be posed one against the other. On that occasion, at least, they were both true. It is certainly true to say that in December 1972 the coalition government had done a great deal to lose that election in the years running up to it.

In 1972 the coalition government was in desperate trouble. They had a prolonged leadership crisis which had never really been resolved after the retirement of Sir Robert Menzies in 1966. Menzies had of course groomed Harold Holt to succeed him. But Holt did not have the command in parliament or in the electorate or in his own party that Sir Robert Menzies had had — and in any event Holt did not live long to enjoy the fruits of office. He was, unhappily,

drowned off Portsea — the back beach. At the time the news came through I was at an Australian Labor Party barbecue in Jim Cairns' backyard — and of course the immediate suspicion was that either the K.G.B. or the C.I.A. had knocked him off in a submarine.

Holt was succeeded by John Gorton, who in many respects I think endeared himself to the Australian electorate by bringing to the office of Prime Minister a quality of larrikinism which hadn't been seen since the days of William Morris Hughes; but who left his flanks and his back exposed within his own party, who dealt with him rather savagely and rather quickly. The main wielder of the knife, or perhaps more properly the axe, on that occasion (it wasn't all that delicate) was Malcolm Fraser.

Gorton acted in an unprecedentedly gentlemanly fashion in Australian politics. Having called his party together to see how they felt about the leadership, and having discovered that they divided exactly fifty-fifty on whether he should continue, he then voted against himself and retired from office. He was succeeded by McMahon, who had shown *some* quality as a treasurer but showed very little capacity to control either parliament *or* his party *or* his coalition *or* indeed the media, with which he was most unhappy in his relatively short term in office as Prime Minister.

And again McMahon was endangered from his back — on this occasion by the public declaration of the then leader of the Country Party, Sir John McEwen, that he would not serve with

McMahon because of their differences in relation to the tariff. And of course, as always, leadership crises such as this create a continuing factionalism within the party which is grist to the mill of the investigative reporters of Australian journalism, and the Financial Review, the Age and popular papers like the Sun had a field day with the leadership crisis. The factionalism operating within the government parties of that time caused them to run down further in the estimation of the electorate.

In itself this was only a symptom of a whole series of economic difficulties and political difficulties with which the coalition government was confronted with in its declining years: economic difficulties relating to the impact on Australia of the international inflation caused by the Vietnam war, the political impact of the 1972 horror budget introduced by McMahon in an attempt to beat back the waves of inflation, and an international financial crisis involving Australia's exchange rate which caused further pressures within the coalition government. And politically, despite the fact that in the wake of America the coalition government had already announced its intention of pulling out of Vietnam, nevertheless it carried the heavy burden that it was *that* government that had committed Australia to the disastrous intervention in Vietnam which was ending in what was already an apparent defeat. And it still had a number of young men in gaol on account of their refusal to serve in the Australian forces in Vietnam and that too had put the government in an unfavorable and often ludicrous light.

At the same time as the government was losing the elections, in my opinion the Opposition was beginning to win them, and was going through a period of protracted re-birth. The Opposition had been in complete disarray in the years immediately following the split in 1955 and the formation of the Democratic Labor Party — whose preferences of course had been decisively important in keeping the coalition in power on several occasions. Whitlam had become deputy leader of the Opposition party in 1960. In 1966 Arthur Calwell who had succeeded Dr Evatt as leader of the Labor Party, *lost* an election. Calwell was actually a very unlucky parliamentary leader — he was always around just a bit too late. Had he been running in 1963 maybe he would have won, but in 1966, the time when he got his big chance to become Prime Minister, Australia had just engaged itself in Vietnam commitment, and there

was one of those waves of patriotic fervor which is guaranteed to win any incumbent government an election. Calwell duly lost and was too old to run again. He was succeeded as leader in a rather bitter inner-party conflict in 1967 by Whitlam.

Whitlam set about moving the Opposition towards office with a two-pronged strategy. Firstly he set himself the task of cleaning up his own party, and especially the Victorian branch of the party, and this was one of the events in which I was personally quite deeply involved. Since the split in Victoria in 1955 a rather narrow cabal of trade unions had effectively run the Victorian branch of the Australian Labor Party. They were generally speaking — in political terms — part of the traditional Left of the A.L.P.; but by virtue of the bitterness of the 1955 split there was a strong element of religious sectarianism involved, a sectarianism which was made perfectly visible by the intervention of the Victorian Branch in a series of State election campaigns. Here the A.L.P. nationally had committed itself to a policy of state aid to church schools on the basis of needs — which of course meant state aid to working-class Catholic schools. This was the policy which was followed by the Victorian political leadership of the party. The national party and the Victorian political leadership found itself disavowed by pronouncements emanating from the Victorian central executive, announcing that it was the policy of the Victorian party, no matter what the political leaders said, to oppose State aid, and to end immediately what had already been granted. And of course it was the Victorian central executive of the party which had been most prominent within the Labor Party in the enunciation of a campaign against Australian involvement in the war against Vietnam.

Whitlam, then, saw the Victorian party, which had had since 1955 a disastrous record in both State and Federal elections, as being a major obstacle to his move towards power. And after his success in the 1969 election campaign, in which he moved the votes within the Australian electorate as a whole towards the Opposition by something over 7 per cent and reduced the Coalition's majority in the lower house from 39 to 7, he felt that he had sufficient power within the party to move into Victoria. This he did following the 1970 State election campaign, in which the Victorian central executive broke the national policy and disavowed state aid, in the course of which, of course, they humiliated the then State leader, Clyde Holding, who had announced a

policy in line with the national party policy in the course of his opening address in the election campaign.

The Victorians stupidly compounded their offence, so far as the national leaders of the party were concerned, by walking out of a 1970 federal executive meeting of the A.L.P. called in part to discuss the affairs of the Victorian branch. The then chairman of the Victorian branch, George Crawford, declared the Broken Hill meeting of the federal executive a mad-hatter's tea party, which of course did not endear him to the then Federal leaders. The federal executive resolved in favor of intervention, dismissed the Victorian central executive, and appointed a committee, of which I was a member, to draft a new constitution for the Victorian branch.

It was a period of very great bitterness in the Victorian party. The dispossessed executive felt that the leadership was in fact trying to turn the Victorian party decisively to the Right politically, to make it more electorally acceptable. There was a running war between the two major factions at the time, which the faction of which I was a part finally won by about a 55:45 vote at the various conferences that were convened in quite rapid succession during that period.

The net consequence of the intervention in the Victorian branch of the party was primarily to restructure the party in Victoria to provide for a system of proportional representation in the *leading* committees of the party, a system which once and for all decisively ended the 'winner-take-all' situation which had prevailed in the party before that. If you've got a 'first past the post' voting system for your party executives and your party policy committee, obviously anybody who has 51 per cent of the votes takes all — sweeps the board clean. In pre-selections too, if you've got 51 per cent of the vote you win everything. Proportional representation effectively prevents that position occurring, particularly where you have, as we had in Victoria at that time, three factions operating, none of them having an absolute majority at any of the conferences or on any of the committees. Thus it was always a matter of maintaining some kind of factional balance, and the back rooms were even more smoke-filled than usual, and the wheeling and dealing was even more vigorous, because no one had the numbers to get up in their own right.

The important part about intervention was that it did in fact destroy the old power basis of the Victorian branch of the party, and reconstructed

the party in a way which did ensure a broader representation in leading committees of various trends of thinking in the Labor party in Victoria, and a broader representation of the various trends among the pre-selection candidates of the 1972 elections. In that sense the 1970 intervention by the federal executive in the affairs of the Victorian branch was a very significant ingredient in the Whitlam victory of December 1972, for Victoria did better than did most other states in terms of the swing.

The second prong of Whitlam's move was to secure a major re-writing of the party's policy. Most of this work was done before the 1969 election — the broad outlines with which he won '72 had already been canvassed with the electorate. For the first time Whitlam used very widely a lot of expert advice on the reconstructing and the re-writing of A.L.P. policy, and in November 1972, all that came together — the reconstruction of the party, the re-writing of the policy, in what was perhaps to that time the most successful public media campaign yet run in an Australian election, the "It's Time" campaign. The slogan didn't come out of the Labor Party but from our advertising agents in Sydney, but it was a brilliant slogan, exploited on badges, on T-shirts, on a record which was widely played over radio, in the television spots and so on; it all came together in that "It's Time" campaign, and it worked. I don't believe that election campaigns decisively affect the outcome of elections—I accept the conventional wisdom that elections are decided three or even six months before the actual polling day — but nevertheless the "It's Time" campaign gave a lot of fervor and a lot of heat and a lot of optimism and confidence to the Whitlam campaign in November-December 1972.

In his policy speech Whitlam made clear his own view as to the kind of government that he proposed to form:

We are determined that the Australian people shall be restored to their rightful place in their own country, as participants and partners in government, as the owners and keepers of the national estate and the nation's resources, as fair and equal sharers in the wealth of opportunities that this nation should offer in abundance to all its people. We will put Australians back into the business of running Australia and owning Australia. We will revive in this nation a spirit of national co-operation and national self-respect, mutual respect between

government and people. Our programme has three great aims. They are one, to promote equality, two, to *involve* the people of Australia in the decision-making processes of our land and three, to liberate the talents and uplift the horizons of the Australian people. We want a new life and a new meaning in this new nation to the touchstone of modern democracy, to liberty, equality, fraternity.

It's a very interesting appeal because very heavy on the traditional radical appeal emanating from the French Revolution, liberty, equality, fraternity; very heavy on nationalism, which was an important emotive issue in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, the whole argument about buying back the farm; very light *indeed* on the traditional Labor objective of socialism or nationalisation, which in my view have always been objective or ideal rather than real, in terms of practical politics.

In that policy speech Whitlam promised the infusion of more money into all levels of Australian education, including a promise to make available for the first time universal pre-school education. Secondly, he promised the development of a national health policy, which later came to be called Medibank, based not on a flat-rate individual contribution but funded from taxation, which meant of course that the effects of this were redistributed so far as the community as a whole were concerned. Thirdly, for the first time, he promised a major Federal concern with what was happening in the major Australian cities, including the provision *via* the states of federal funds for the purchase of 'broad acres', so that low cost land and low cost housing could be made available to low income earners. That of course is the origin of the kind of argument that has been about land policy in Victoria over the last about two or three years, with immense windfall profits accruing to shady speculators, if what are virtually guaranteed profits — \$2m. in ten days in one case — can be called speculation.

The Whitlam government proposed to State governments that they should each establish an Urban Land Commission, to be financed by the Federal government, to buy land at rural prices for later re-development. The Hamer government in Victoria rejected this concept and instructed the Housing Commission instead to buy land, which is of course the source of those extraordinary profits. The Whitlam policy was for intervention in the cities, partly to provide low cost land and low cost housing, partly also to re-distribute

goods and services throughout the city in order to bring about a degree of what was called urban justice, which was not noticeable in either Sydney or Melbourne, where notoriously the western suburbs in both cities were grossly underprivileged.

Fourthly, through the Australian Industries Development Corporation the Whitlam government proposed a process of government finance entering into what had traditionally been regarded as the private sector of the economy, in order 'to buy back the farm', as the phrase went at that time.

There were lots of other things of course — detailed pledges in respect of various minority groups like Aboriginals and artists and various others; important moves in international affairs, such as the shifting of the Australian embassy from Taiwan to Peking. It really is extraordinary to think that, only six years ago, the Australian Embassy to China was in Taiwan. The Whitlam government was concerned to give some support to the emergence of a neutral zone in the south-west Pacific/south-east Asian area, while at the same time pledging itself to retain the American alliance, including the American bases on Australian soil. The Whitlam policy also pledged ratification of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, and so on.

But perhaps the most emotive of *all* promises made by Whitlam in the course of that campaign, the one that from my personal experience at a number of these meetings drew the strongest response from the audience, was the promise to end conscription and to release from gaol all those young men who were serving terms of imprisonment because of their refusal to serve in the Vietnam war.

When asked how it was going to fund his program, Whitlam replied that there would be an adequate increase in Federal revenue as a consequence of the normal process of economic growth to provide the funding needed. When asked how he was going to ensure that his program was carried out, considering the constitutional difficulties, he said that he would make use of that section of the constitution which enabled the federal government to make to the States grants tied to specific projects. (This of course drew on Whitlam the criticism that he stood for a degree of centralisation in Australian life which had not previously been known; to which of course Whitlam replied: "That's exactly what we want to do, we're not really worried about State governments

at all and if we could do away with them completely we would be very happy indeed".)

The Whitlam government did quite consciously go about its affairs in such a way as to maximise central power. His government was committed to a degree of intervention in the economy and to indicative planning which went far beyond anything that had been done by the coalition governments over the last twenty-three years, but still fell a considerable way short of either nationalisation or the development of a significant state sector.

If one asks why the A.L.P., which had had a socialist objective in its platform from 1921, was doing nothing about socialism in 1972, the answer, I think, is very simple. It's an argument that goes on in the Labor Party all the time. The A.L.P. is a mass party, and it is a party which is committed to the processes of parliamentary democracy, and as Australia is a country in which there is no mass socialist consciousness, therefore the mass party is not a socialist party. The A.L.P. was therefore in favour of planning and social control rather than the extension of social ownership. Later on, within the Labor movement itself, this was the occasion for the development of a left-wing critique against the Whitlam government, in which it was suggested that as between Labor and the coalition parties it was only a sort of Tweedle-dum, Tweedle-dee situation, and that what Whitlam was all about was something called "technocratic Laborism" — making the capitalist system work more efficiently and having it run by more skilled technocrats who came from the Labor side of politics. That's an argument I can see some basis for but it's not an argument that I can accept. If that's a fair description of what Labor was all about in '72-'75, why did November 11th happen? Why was it necessary for conservative forces in Australian politics to get rid of the Whitlam government in the kind of way they did, if there was no effective difference between the Labor government and the coalition parties? The allegations of inefficiency against the Labor government simply were not themselves enough — I would have thought — to justify the kind of action which was taken in November 1975.

If I were to summarise what seems to me to be the essential differences between the principles followed by the Labor government and those followed by its predecessors, I would nominate three areas. Firstly, the Whitlam government did, in part intentional, in part by default, witness a sig-

nificant shift of money from profits to wages and salaries. Secondly, the Whitlam government shifted large sums of money from the private sector to the public sector. Thirdly, through its policies of 'buying back the farm' the Whitlam government did mount a significant challenge to the interests of multi-national capital in the Australian economy. In all those respects, I think, there was a significant difference, and I think that if one wants a political explanation of November 11th 1975, rather than a conspiratorial one, it is to be found in those kinds of factors. The conservative forces in Australian politics never really recognized the *legitimacy* of Labor in power, but beyond that it seems to me that they had clear objections in principle to the course of legislation which was being introduced and implemented by the Labor government.

On the second of December 1972 Whitlam won. Not a very big swing this time — he picked most of it up in '69, and only copped another 2.7 percent., or so. He won, especially in New South Wales and Victoria, and especially in the outer suburban seats which were on that occasion and have remained since the 'swingers'. In Victoria, Labor picked up Diamond Valley, Latrobe, Henty and Holt, though Labor lost in Bendigo because the campaign in Bendigo was waged with an exceptional degree of sectarian bitterness. Labor won from both the coalition parties and from the D.L.P.; the 1972 election was the beginning of the slide out of politics for the Democratic Labor Party.

Immediately after his victory, Whitlam formed his notorious two-man government — he and Lance Barnard dividing all the twenty odd portfolios between them — and went into rapid action. When Caucus finally elected the ministry early in the new year ministers moved immediately to implement the policies which had concerned them in those long years in opposition. It's often been said that the Whitlam government tried to do too much too fast. Certainly it did seem at the time that much of the innovatory legislation which the government was introducing was almost tumbling over its own heels.

It is fairly clear that the Opposition and the conservative forces generally never really accepted the legitimacy of the Labor government. As early as 1973 Sneddon, who had succeeded McMahon as leader of the Liberal party after December '72, was engaged in discussion with the Democratic Labor Party senators about the pos-

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sibility of forcing a double dissolution by the refusal of supply. And by the beginning of 1974 much of the Whitlam government program was held up in the Senate, and that chamber was running slow on passing supply. Under those circumstances Whitlam asked for a double dissolution, which he was granted. He held the Representatives, but he emerged from that election of May '74 with a hung Senate, 29/29 with 2 independents; so that again the government was under siege. And then came the economic downturn which followed the 1973 boom — the 'stagflation' which confronted all governments in similar societies of all political complexions, none of which came up with an answer: a combination of inflation and unemployment which the traditional Keynesian remedies were simply not adequate to deal with. In that situation the Whitlam government moved into a series of rather difficult budgets with a sequence of different treasurers, Frank Crean, Jim Cairns and Bill Hayden. One of the things that *did* come out of that period was a degree of eclipse of the powers of treasury. Treasury is by far the strongest single part of the Australian bureaucracy and they have had a way, over a long period, of convincing governments that the ultimate economic wisdom resides with them.

I personally find them quite terrifying. I once went to an inter-departmental committee in Canberra as a representative of the Australia Council, and it was a long sort of rectangular table, and up *that* end of the table there were one, two, three, four Treasury people. Nobody got introduced to anybody else, and down the two sides of the table were representatives of the other departments concerned. And down the bottom was *us*, supplicants; so we put our case, and there was a quick colloquy up the other end of the table, and one of these anonymous gentlemen up the other end of the table says, "The Treasury thinks that . . .". And that ended the discussion and of course we didn't get our money. But it was a clear statement of a *decision made* in a department of government from a position of complete confidence in both the correctness of their decision and the power they had to see that their decision was made effective, and I could understand the kind of conflicts and confrontations that emerged between the government and Treasury during the Whitlam years.

And then the government ran into a series of crises. First of all the Gair affair. This was like something out of the Marx brothers. There's poor

old Vin Gair who was former Labor Premier of Queensland, broken with the Labor Party over an argument between the government and the trade unions in Queensland, gone over to the D.L.P., been elected a senator for the D.L.P. from Queensland, and not getting what he reckons is a fair deal from his party in the Senate because they hadn't appointed him leader of the party in the Senate. He talked late one evening to a Labor senator about his dissatisfaction with his senate colleagues. This was promptly relayed to Whitlam, who decided that it could be nice to appoint Vin Gair as Ambassador to Dublin. It seemed somehow appropriate. So the offer was held out to Gair and Gair accepted the offer. But he had not been a Queensland politician for all those years for nothing. He didn't give Whitlam his resignation in writing, which enabled Joh Bjelke-Petersen, before Whitlam could get his hands on a resignation in writing, to issue the writs for Senate elections in Queensland, which were due; thus the elections would be held for five Senators rather than for six, as they would have been held if Gair's resignation had been in hand. Now if there's been an election for six senators in Queensland at that time, they would have split 3/3, which means that the hung Senate would have been overcome, the A.L.P. would have had a majority in the Senate and so on. As it turned out, there was an election for only five senators, which split 3/2 against the government, which left the government still lacking a majority in the Senate.

The loans affair — second crisis. In line with the policy of 'buying back the farm', Rex Connor was authorised, as the responsible minister, to raise four thousand million dollars, a sum later reduced to two thousand million, somewhere on the international money market, to provide a financial backing for the acquisition of equity in Australian resources and the provision for capital for the development of those resources, particularly mineral resources.

Extraordinarily that was all done in secret. There was some quite Utopian delusion that you could have people going round the international money market trying to borrow four thousand million dollars and nobody would know about it back home. Really, there's no way in the world that you could go to Saudi Arabia or Iran let alone Berlin or Zurich or Tokyo or New York saying "Do you happen to have a spare four thousand million dollars?", and the message is not going to get through some way or another. So it

leaked. It was unprecedented and it sounds an extraordinary amount of money, except when you come to think that over the last eighteen months or so the Fraser government has borrowed 2.7 billion dollars — I mean it's like buying league footballers, one hundred thousand dollars used to be a shut out price a few years ago, today it's just a stage in the negotiations.

It seems to me that there was no objection at all to the principle of borrowing four thousand million dollars or two thousand million dollars or whatever, for those purposes, provided the money was borrowed on reasonable terms and provided that it wasn't *all* flooded into the economy at the same time so as to cause a gross inflationary pressure on the economy. What was wrong with it was the way in which the government went about it or, more precisely the way in which Rex Connor went about it, by using as his intermediary this mysterious Pakistani trader who had a walk-up-two-room office in a rather unfavored part of London and who claimed he had access to unlimited OPEC funds from the oil countries.

The Treasury of course was against any dealings at all with what was described as 'funny money', but above all the Treasury was furious that the government was seeking to by-pass Treasury, because the government believed, not without reason, that if they had put this proposition up to Treasury, Treasury would simply have refused to go along with it. At the same time as Connor was trying to use Khemlani to raise four thousand million dollars Jim Cairns, who in January of 1974 had become Acting Prime Minister while Whitlam was overseas, was using as *his* intermediary to borrow money in the international money market George Harris, who might be a very good chairman of the Carlton Football Club but certainly is not one that I could regard as a significant intermediary for borrowing several thousand millions of dollars on the international money market.

Of course the operation could not be kept secret. First Cairns and then later Connor were sacked, in both cases the reason being given that they had misled parliament about the nature of their dealings. The exposure of an air of conspiracy did much to shake the credibility of the government in the second half of 1975. And indeed of course that formed the rationale for the supply crisis of October-November, which was "High-Noon" eye-ball to eye-ball stuff.

There were important constitutional questions involved. Did the Senate have the right to refuse

Supply? Literally, under the constitution, it seems that the Senate *does* have that right. But Westminster precedent suggested that it was improper for an upper House to refuse supply to a government which enjoyed the confidence of the lower House.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the constitutional question, the culmination was the sacking of the Whitlam government by Governor General Sir John Kerr on 11 November 1975. Which again raised the other constitutional question. Did the Governor General have the power to sack a government which enjoyed the majority of the lower House? And again it appeared that on a literal reading of the constitution that power *d:d* reside in the Governor General, although, again, it was a power which had not been used and which the Westminster precedent suggested *should* not be used.

It would be wearisome to go through the details of that event, but there are important questions involved. The most important question, in my mind, is: Was there a conspiracy involved in the sacking of the Whitlam government in November 1975? Did the Opposition have prior knowledge that that was the course of action that Sir John Kerr would finally take? It is certainly true that the Chief Justice of the High Court, Sir Garfield Barwick, had at least two days prior knowledge that Sir John Kerr proposed to move in that regard, because Kerr rang him up on 9 November asking him for his opinion as to the constitutional propriety of his action, an opinion which Barwick gave which subsequently brought him some considerable criticism, on the grounds that it is not the province of any Justice of the High Court to give *ex cathedra* pronouncements on the rights and wrongs of constitutional affairs, but to pronounce on matters that are before them in the course of a properly constituted legal case.

On the evidence of the late James McAuley — a close friend of Kerr's — it appears that Kerr had made up his mind at least a week in advance of the events of 11 November 1975. Not only had he decided that he was going to sack the Whitlam government if Whitlam did not agree to a double dissolution, but on the advice of his wife, Lady Kerr, he had decided not to tell Whitlam that this was the course that he proposed, in case Whitlam anticipated him by ringing up the Queen and saying that he no longer wanted Sir John Kerr for his Governor General. In which case Whitlam would have sacked Kerr rather than the other way round.

We'll never of course know one way or the other. Maybe Sir John Kerr's reminiscences will reveal all; I'm not a betting man, but I'll take 10-1 against that it does. Maybe Malcolm Fraser's reminiscences will tell all after *he* retires. The one thing that I am certain of is that there'll be no document, because nobody in his right mind would minute a decision of that kind if in fact it were made before November 11th.

Were the C.I.A. involved? Well, Richard Hall, in his book just published, *Secret State*, discusses this question and comes up with a 'No' answer. Certainly he says, the C.I.A. were concerned about the Labor Government in Australia, because the government had blown the cover of Stallings (a C.I.A. head of one of the American bases) and a number of other C.I.A. agents in Australia; but there is no hard evidence to suggest that the C.I.A. put pressure on Kerr or on anyone else to produce the events of November 11th.

Interestingly the polls were overwhelmingly *against* the dismissal of the Whitlam government by the Governor General, and *against* the need to hold a new election at the end of 1975. Then, of course, when it came to the election, the voting was overwhelmingly in favour of the Caretaker Fraser Government. The consequence of that election was a reversal of the central thrust of the Whitlam policies: a movement of money back from the public sector to the private sector, a movement of money back from wages and salaries towards profits, and the re-opening of opportunities for multi-national corporations in the field of exploitation of Australian mineral resources; towards a return towards private enterprise, self-help, laissez-faire.

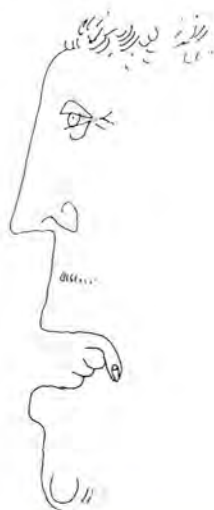
The central question that was posed by these events was the question of power. Can a social-democratic government survive in a political system like the Australian political system, or is the state machine stacked against it? What would have happened for example, had a general strike been called in support of Whitlam in November 1975, remembering that Sir John Kerr was the *first* Australian Governor General to give any indication of taking seriously his constitutional office as commander-in-chief of the Australian forces? Is the strength of private capital outside parliament sufficient to block the implementation of policy for a reforming government of a social democratic kind, such as the Whitlam government was? I'll leave that question open because I don't know the answer to that, but I think the question of power is central to those events.

And may I conclude by quoting myself — something I wrote about those events in 1976. The survey edited by Gordon Greenwood, *Australia: A Social and Political History*, was published in 1955. That edited by Frank Crowley, *A New History of Australia*, followed twenty years later. What will the historian who contributes the chapter on the 1970s to the 1995 survey have to say about the Labor government, 72/75? If past patterns continue, he or she is likely to be between forty and fifty years old when he/she writes the chapter, born sometime in the post-war decade; between twenty and thirty when the government was brought to its untimely end, probably sympathetic to the government and bitterly hostile to the action of the Governor General. This is not likely to be a self-fulfilling prophecy, so I'm prepared to chance my hand at the last few sentences of the 1995 chapter.

The quarter century of conservative rule during which foreign relations and the economy had been dominated by foreign, notably American, power and interests was brought to an end by the debacle of Vietnam. The Labor government which came precariously to power in 1972 sought to establish a new independence in international affairs and a new economic and social priorities which it enshrined in a new symbolism. It confronted the unprecedented hostility of Australian capital and other special interests, and of powerful multi-national corporations whose dominant position in the Australian economy it threatened, and it suffered grievously from internal division and deficiency of performance. An aggrieved and frightened Establishment, a bitterly hostile Opposition which controlled the Senate, the

upper House in the *then* bicameral legislature, and a compliant head of state combined to remove the Labor government from office in 1975. Without being fully aware of it the Whitlam government was pursuing policies which anticipated the shift in the international balance of power soon to eventuate, and the new priorities which were set by the growing awareness of environmental imperatives. The novel and, for their time, radical policies of the 1972-1975 Labor governments created new expectations in the Australian electorate. At the same time the policies of the conservative coalition, which came to power in 1975, proved unable to cope with new international and domestic social and environmental exigencies. Acting in an untypically volatile manner the Australian electorate swept the conservatives out of office *in* [and here my courage failed me]. The return of Labor to power and the subsequent reform of the Australian political system, which included Australia's becoming a republic within the British Commonwealth on the Indian pattern, created a new political consensus. It resulted in the disappearance of conservatism as an effective alternative to social democratic government and the emergence of a lively opposition on the government's Left which enjoyed a growing popular support.

And my own comment on my forecast for 1995 is this: that paragraph may of course turn out to be evidence not so much of my prescience as of the likelihood that the only characteristic which *all* socialists share is a residual and irrepressible optimism. But I hope not. And anyway I'm not likely to be around to check it out.



Jiri Tibor

Colon-ized

Having brushed his teeth with **Sparkl-Eez** until every
 sidelong glance in the mirror dazzled,
Having shaved with **Scherezade**, the shave-cream that guarantees
 One Thousand and One Arabian Nights,
Having patted in **Cool Customer**, the after-shave that freshens
 as it soothes as it smooths,
Having liberally applied **Macho**, the Masculine Body Lotion that puts
 Her Hair on **Your** Chest,
And slipped into his two-tone suedes, **Toot-Sweet**, the Omnivorous
 Odor-Eaters for Frowsy Feet
— He walked out into the all-embracing, verbena-scented day,
And women with hair like waterfalls cried out in pain
 when he shone his teeth,
And their eyes clung like honey-burdened bees
 to his shaved curving jawline,
And their fingers tingled to stroke his after-shave
And get close to his **Macho**, and unlace his two-tone suedes, and
 take out his **Toot-Sweet**
Oh why was it then,
with the world at his feet,
that he farted?

BRUCE DAWE

Scene at Surfers Paradise

If ants weren't so small they could never survive. Have you thought of yourself as an ant? One holiday I spent with Phil Lynch on the Gold Coast, I flinched: "God, does he see me as an ant on the Esplanade?" Phil is no tout politician chasing prices round Randwick, Flemington — even descending to Eagle Farm. He flats where eagles fly — at least where nankeen kestrels (to most — the small sparrowhawks) nest on multi-storeys at Surfers P. He sees you as an ant from his unit at (C-L-A-S-S-I-F-I-E-D) level — termites, more probably: white and teeming on the milliondollar sands below his eyrie.

This is the stuff for Odysseys on the Convict Continent where vanquished leaders, Leanders, lean on their elbows sometimes during the hassle. You don't look up to see Phil as an ant. Best bite yourself, or pinch if that's your action. (Not rhymed with Lynch!)

Ants swarm over the Continent without casting a shadow. Have you observed an ant's shadow? You haven't one, yourself, in the shade of the Corporate Body's units that blanket the Esplanade soon after midday. But you survive with the tourist— pensioners dodging death duties, thoughtless concerning the duties of death, swarming the malls, the boutiques, the arcades. Any hordes Homer could muster — elephants, all — assuredly would have been overwhelmed by the chiaroscuro of ants swarming here!

JOHN BLIGHT

Letter from Wellington, New Zealand

- 1 The Pushkin's *Mardi Gras* depicts two clowns:
A harlequin, proud, outstaring his audience, filling the frame,
A pierrot, bowing, conciliatory, stooped.
Neither clown smiles. A conflict of planes
Holds them suspended, their half-world a mirror.
"Your servant and master," they murmur.
"All we permit you to see
Springs out of absence, from life, from the past.
There is no sight but hindsight;
From the looking-glass nothing returns."
- 2 Unreal the academic setting, chalky walls
And single tables with their rude inscribed
Devices, chairs for stacking, colleagues
Hunched, detached, attentive — the speaker
Treating of remote evasions,
Self-deceptions, self-distrust —
Plate-glass windows, plastic chairs.

Unreal the close-cropped headland, bushy tops
And scattered houses, ragged, green,
Not to be quite securely settled,
Not to be civilized;
Unreal the bay, the breakwater, the square-cut
Mole, the freighters, dredges loading sand,
Wind whipping the glass, the slopes as steep
As compromises, crazy stairways.
- 3 The bay once slipped and tilted,
Altered the map;
The pattern of settlement changed.
What decades of labor were lost?
The crisis is history, the grief forgotten.
- 4 We are speaking of self-immolation,
Samoan self-assertion,
Samoan self-distrust,
A novelist's revolt,
The pen's betrayals.

Warships and merchant vessels,
Warehouses, offices, quays —
We are high on the brow of a hill;
A wind we cannot feel
Is tossing the distant trees.

The classroom is dusty and cramped;
A tape-recorder whirs.
Our gestures are self-deprecations,
Our ritual courtesies strict.
We are speaking of self-assertion, self-distrust.
- 5 The *Mardi Gras* of Paul Cezanne
Depicts two clowns:
A harlequin, proud, outstaring his audience,
Filling the frame,
A pierrot, bowing, conciliatory, stooped.
Neither clown smiles.

DENNIS DOUGLAS

With the Gypsy Fortune Teller

She said push
the feather make it crush
she said push
forget your vows of sweet & tender
she said push
What falls away is just the abiding
she said push
among the seasons until a satisfaction is laid to rest
she said push
until trees are no faster than we are
she said push
we've just begun to get sticky
she said push
with your longest leg you can eat standing up
she said push
the blue stripe further it's not the whole sky yet
she said push
past the smother to the mother
she said push
your fools until they suffer children
she said push
your sailor home from the sea
she said push
my waves make them win
she said push
my tide make it full
she said push
with the kind of equipment you'd need for Ophelia
she said push
never mind that the instructions say to squirm here
she said push
what you've gained past what you've said
she said push
a whole word for a book of them
she said push
let the audience in on the secret
she said push
low down & dirty like a slow show in two pockets
she said push
each rise for each occasion
she said push
crowd my pony with your horse
she said push
your lily through my rose
she said push
the razzle-dazzle through the mumbo-jumbo
she said push
I want your head as nude as possible
she said push
I want you close-up until you're gone
she said push
my options open while you close yours
she said push
you've earned your keep but you haven't earned your safety
she said push
the decoy to its death let it announce itself in its best gender
she said push
make this a way we can't retreat
she said push
the run of this mill to perfection
she said push
let the wheel congratulate itself for the seventh time
she said push
to the limit let the body simmer in its own broth
she said push
between the crisis & the cup there's a carnival
she said push
both lips to extreme unction
she said push
heaven aside let hell blow the trumpet.

PHILIP HAMMIAL

The Pushbike and the Parish

(Being a True Tale of Technological Triumph)

Sin was invented in the Garden of Eden,
the safety bicycle in 1885.
The pushbike was available in Australia by 1890,
sin (in other forms), much earlier.

The clergy took their cue from Heaven — and London:
"It is scarcely the office of a Bishop to be roving
about his Diocese on his cycle . . ."
The unerring conveyance into immorality was unquestioned:
"A fallen woman riding promiscuously about the city and
suburbs on a wheel is capable of doing a great deal of
harm not only to uncontaminated boys who ride wheels
but innocent girls as well";
a matter "too painfully apparent in our own city of Perth".

In 1892 Bayley plucked golden seeds of dreams
from the skin of the Yilgarn.

Many rushed unhesitatingly into that
hot
arid
expansive
sandy
Western Australian land.

Horses were scarce (and fodder dear).
Water was uncommon (and death even dearer).

Into the breach plodded the camel, whose pad (cleaned and tamped by
the shuffling feet of up to 50 beasts in a string)
provided a readymade ribbon of rolling ease for the cyclist.
Surprisingly, the two-wheeled device proved faster than any
other mode of transport — much faster.
Not surprisingly, it did not drop dead from eating poisonous
plants.

The Reverend Thomas Trestrail (a mere minister) saw.
And it was good.

And he inquired as to wherein lay the evil of something so efficient
at delivering the message of God to the parishioners — and
the bush parishioners to church?

He judged God to be a practical deity.
"Mothers and sisters of WA. Your sons and brothers are
surrounded by very strong influences. Send me a bicycle
and I will go to them."

They did.
And he did.
And so did
other examples of 'muscular christianity'.

Did God, in His infinite wisdom, see fit to forbid Bishops
from the bush?

JIM FITZPATRICK

The Big Men Fly

The Leopard tanks
their turrets poke
from the swamp
pubic hairs curl & are thick
the Swiss Army knife
edge of the critical faculty
those who did Arts
courses at Duntroon
they know
the lay of the land
they live the simulation
on the hexagonal grid

The Leopard tanks
ruck-rover Nuggets
they leap like startled gazelles
knock 'em down like 9 pins
it's stacks on the mill
it's Guts & Determination

The Leopard tanks
The Big Men Fly
leap from swamps
flash the turret
down 'em like 9 pins
stacks on the mill
Guts & Determination
the critical edge
Arts courses at Duntroon
the lay of the land
they are the simulation
they are the grid.

LARRY BUTTROSE

Egypt

The dam was my
Mediterranean —
it was the source of
all history for me,
a vast, landlocked sea
into which drained
all the excess waters
of the farm, the manures
and superphosphates.
That trickle, of course,

was the Nile.
When at a loose end
I'd retreat to its shores
and there walk
from Italy to Africa

hoping, at least, to
catch one glimpse
of the untouchable eels
amidst
that eutrophication.

Sometimes I'd see them
muzzling the pipe,
their long thin bodies
trailing off
into the darker

colder deep. Once,
struck by the soft, fine
mud at the delta
I lay down,
imagining that this

is what a
woman should be.
After
I felt it
quake and receive me

I leapt
into that sea.
My body
craves again
that desperate tug

on air
when water
broke around me,
it craves again
that perfumed mud.

GARY CATALANO

gone

footsteps in the dark, someone disappearing without saying goodbye,
more than one person disappearing without saying goodbye,
something is missing,
some people are missing,
I can feel in my throat the place where they left,
I can feel in my stomach the butchers at work on what's left.
So you're alone, because you can stand it alone,
and you refuse to hurry after disappearing footsteps,
refuse to stumble and shout in the darkness.
You let them leave the gap here,
where you can barely breathe.

KEVIN BROPHY

You, Already There

The idea clocks on ready for work, but
Form slept in, missing the bus. As I grow
older you are there before me.

Brought up to be Franz or Stan he
turned out a Johnny approaching year thirty
— less women about & what is this — a
pillow to suck me in. Aha — tradition
for love of so little money I can
love thee. Notice they change the sirens
so children playing find them hard
to imitate. But they do.
Writers get older they lose integrity
but are honester & drink more. They adapt.
Just look them up in the phone book, ring &
ask. They may even tell you.

STEPHEN K. KELEN

waiting

Like a lover waiting I am waiting,
selecting attitudes and words for you
from the edge of this chair/soul
. . . pink, scented words of acceptance
tough sweaty singled words of stale fact
candles and dinner words of passing this and that
and late ear near dancing words that spin,
the words that spill with the blankets and sheets
the ad talk beach talk confession repetition
. . . every attempt ends with revenge

because you will consort with victim foolishly

KEVIN BROPHY

Castaway

Orchid Beach was enticing to swimmers
clean sand, good surf, no rocks;
it seems, though, a resort must have a
swimming pool, so they built one.
Perhaps the competition annoyed the ocean
or perhaps it just liked to play with the
beach balls and bikini girls who
no longer came down the sand cliff.
Anyway, the tail of a cyclone flicked
the beach, took away twenty yards of sand,
left the pool stuck out like a pandanus root.
But concrete pools can't cantilever, so
its back broke, one half plunged thirty feet
to the beach, the other stays wedged in
the cliff like a broken tooth. Orchid
Beach remains, enticing to swimmers.

R. G. HAY

Family Portraits

the film maker came today
took a photo of me for five kina
said you must frame it up on the wall
there, between two others

the murals are no longer tame
weeds & creepers & random beasts
ferns & moss & thick undergrowth
look over the lonely bed

there are no more picture frames
besides exile

R. SOABA

Landscapes

The small self reaches out to vastness
filling with mountains and with skies,
making its own the scent of pines,
the wind's arpeggios in the grass.

Wanderer of the moments' world,
how many landscapes do you walk,
adding the lyrebird to your hoard,
the stringybarks and the damp earth?

All times may live in this time's globe,
turning, turning in one beginning,
as gently as the morning mists
through trees beside the mountain road.

The grey log hut must never die,
the slip-rails and the rain-wet ferns.
Gather them where your landscapes turn,
and store them in the globe of time.

R. H. MORRISON

I'm in love with the lady in the Big M Ad.

I'm in love with the lady in the Big M ad,
When she comes on with her cartons I just about go mad.
Her skin's so white and lactic, it damn near sends me spastic;
Oh I'm crazy 'bout that milk-maid with the juicy big Big M's.

I go ape when I see her with her shaven pubes,
As she carries in her selling points in all those cardboard cubes.
She looks just like a nymph, like Venus or like Helen
And the milk of human kindness flows through her by the gallon.

As I watch her on the telly I cannot bear to leave 'er,
I'd get my milk-teeth in her, I must've caught milk fever.
I'm nuts about her body in her skimpy two-piece bathers;
Oh how I love that dairy lass and all her many flavors.

But she's just an image on the flickering T.V. tube,
I hate myself for loving her, I'd have to be a boob.
But when I see her smile at me I'm in the milky way,
So thanks for the mammary, I'll drink a pint a day.

W. N. MARSHALL

Lights, No Camera

Here at Papunya, Bob Bailey has never been in fashion;
no-one has been crowned "Queen for a Day".
The hard-luck stories are told in whispers,
near the fire's edge, without make-up
or applause meters.

What comes down on the head
is nulla-nulla
after the shop one day,
buying meat and eggs.
Here at Papunya, Bob Bailey's moustache
hasn't raised its eyebrow;
the nights are cold, without commercial break.
On Saturdays, the spotlights fall off drunks.
Poor Bob Bailey would walk through
talking the wrong language: 'Mrs. Nampitjinpa,
how would you like to be Queen for a Day?'

BILLY MARSHALL-STONEKING

Dog into the Future

Through a break in the fence, alley and away.
To the park or vacant lot. The dog of the city's luck
proud of his sleekness, blackness. His coat shines, tail
points to the sky whence he came. Has a mind & memory,
though they don't bother him much. The past compressed
into yesterday and tonight is the future. First things
first. There's a smell in the air. Getting stronger.
Goodbye memory! Up there before the alley turns a
corner: a dog party drunk on a smell.

The dog of the city's luck, of fine coat & tail,
known in different streets by different names but is the
one & true black dog. Who sends alleys of cats screaming
home, chases motorbikes, appears when you're least
expecting — one of life's true mystics.

Watches people into the local cemetery to see a bone buried.

But dogs disappear

before it happens & reappear when you think they're gone.

STEPHEN K. KELEN

Port of Melbourne Song

Flash rooms of noise and stars
with mirrors on the wall —
and Port of Melbourne's bars
are whirling ports of call

where mirrors on the wall
reflecting heads that come
from sundry ports of call
in one delirium

are merely heads that come
and smile and are removed
caught by delirium
to leave what was most loved,

and choose to be removed
from every point of rest
and pitch what most was loved
into the sea's unrest

which is a kind of rest —
vast room of noise and stars;
drink, for the sea's unrest
dissolves all Melbourne's bars.

ALAN GOULD

Last Hours

(To a lusman dying)*

from the ridges
echoes are distant strangers
in the harbor

not even poembridges
fly midnight wings
of escape

my songs are shattered evenings
day-tattered emblems
and hope in ruins
smoking the hour

R. SOABA

* *Pidgin for one on the losing side,
outsider or loner.*

"Something about Ian"

DENNIS DOUGLAS:

Whenever Richmond was playing at home I used to ring Ian about 11.30 and see if it was all right to go to the match from his place. It usually was. The party could be Ian and Peter Clarke. It could consist of any number of historians, journalists, political people, friends of all kinds, artists. You could never anticipate who might be there. I doubt if Ian planned the gatherings.

Ian's place was about half a mile from the M.C.G. A small procession or a large one would leave his front gate around 12.30 and reassemble in one of the northern stands towards the beginning of the last quarter of the reserves' game. There would often be a number of Ian's friends already installed in the area he and his party habitually occupied. Latecomers knew where to find him.

He watched the game closely, bringing to it his leading obvious trait, the tendency to disregard the outer surface of events and look for the significant underlying patterns. That frame of mind made him a persuasive speaker at political meetings and on committees. Whenever he spoke publicly he appeared good-humored and conciliatory, because he always had some new, and clear, perspective to offer, that placed contested issues in a new light.

His freshness of outlook and intellectual energy were linked with a willingness to see the amusing side of things rather than take minor matters too seriously; but his celebrated sense of humor was entirely free of personal malice.

He had a complete lack of self-importance. Although he commanded immense and widespread respect, the affectations, the complacency, and the contempt for others that occasionally disfigure academic personalities never gained the slightest hold on his character. I do not believe it ever occurred to him that he was Ian Turner.

His natural modesty was the key to many paradoxes in his make-up. He was hospitable, but he did not put on any kind of performance to entertain his guests. He left his engaging public manner for the lecture-room. He was sociable, but not extroverted in company. He was an excellent and valued political adviser to State and Federal Labor leaders, but he did not seek party office. He was laconic and could appear elusive, but he was neither evasive nor aloof. He was unassertive but loyal. Two words from him meant a good deal more than the most elaborate courtesies of some of his colleagues.

I once learned, from somebody much closer to him than most of us, that he worried a good deal when alone about courses of action he had taken and commitments he had made. Without the natural safety-valve of a certain degree of hedonism he would have been completely at the mercy of a puritan drive to pour every ounce of himself into his work — and only into such work as seemed good in the eyes of an unsleeping inner moral censor. As it was, he divided his time between rest and work, and his energy went into work: into teaching, into writing, and into political activities. People who saw him socially saw the man at rest.

There are a number of figures in Australian academic life whose work I know and whom I respect highly. Ian was, of them all, the person I really honored. I am glad to have the chance to say as much in cold print. His death leaves a void; it does not call into question the values he symbolized and served. In that sense, as an influence, he will be with us still for many years to come.

BERT VICKERS:

I have never yet heard or read a full account of the in-fighting that went on before the Australian Book Society published my first novel, *The*

Mirage. But I am very sure that I owe it to Ian Turner that the book was published — and for that I am eternally grateful to him and now his memory.

I recall my first meeting with Ian. I knocked at the door of his dingy little office on an upper floor of a millionaire's building in Collins Street.

"Come in!"

I open the door and show myself to the man at a desk. "My name is Bert Vickers."

"Jesus Christ!" exclaimed Ian. "You're the first bloody musterer's cook I've ever seen in a homburg."

When the book came out he sent me a telegram shortly afterwards. It was to the point. "Good on you, mate. You've made the Red Page of the Bulletin for us for the first time."

He was a good bloke with a fine brain and a burning feeling for the rights of the little people who need such as he to speak for them.

CLIFF GREEN:

I first met Ian Turner in a Dickensian rats' nest of a printery in Corr's Lane, off Little Bourke Street, Ian was running the Australasian Book Society at the time. It was shortly after he had returned from the Siberia of the Jolimont railway yards, whither he had been banished by the Communist Party to sweep out train carriages for the good of his proletarian soul. Stained by experience, those hard-bitten, foul-mouthed printers regarded anyone who came through that door as either a political opportunist or a confidence trickster, or both. But not Ian. His boyish charm, humility and capacity for technical detail won them all. I was a cheeky, skinny little apprentice compositor, and Ian and I worked together on a number of books, including Eric Lambert's *The Five Bright Stars*, a scissors-and-paste novel commissioned to mark the centenary of Eureka Stockade, replete with Ned Kelly's father! Not much of a text, but Ian's production was quite handsome, considering the circumstances. I have to admit that my regard for this friendly young intellectual was close to hero-worship. Ian's publishing career was short-lived. After the Soviet invasion of Hungary Ian was expelled from the Communist Party and the A.B.S. was moved to Sydney.

DAVID MARTIN:

Sometime in 1959 — I don't remember exactly when — our friends, Cécile and Aaron Mushin,

gave a launching party for a book of my poems in their house in Malvern.

I was expected to read a poem or two and say a few words. It was going to be difficult. I had suffered a breakdown, my mind was in a turbulated state, and I was afraid I would make a fool of myself in public . . . perhaps I would even cry.

The guests were already seating themselves when, to hide my panic, I went into another room. There Ian found me. I told him I did not think I could go through with it and asked him to read the poems for me.

He refused. He said something like this:

"This is your work, David; these are your poems. You must stand by them whatever happens. That's what you have to do now, simply stand by your work. Let's go in. They are your poems and these are your friends."

It went off all right. He had said the right words; he had given me back some courage — for that night, and for the months which followed — and for this I have always been grateful to him.

RUSSEL WARD:

I first met Ian Turner in 1953 — before he was expelled from the Communist Party for refusing to condone Stalin's crimes and the Soviet invasion of socialist Hungary. At that first meeting in a lower Bourke Street coffee-shop, I was immediately captivated by the immense *mana* of the man. Such a person I had never met before and was never to meet again. He gave off an aura of tremendous mental and physical energy, allied with goodness, integrity and sheer guts.

Perhaps those who knew him not will be helped towards understanding by reading of the following incident. In the immediate post-war years the Rev. Hewlett Johnson, the 'Red Dean' of Canterbury, made a speaking tour of Australia. George Pittendrigh at that time was a student radical leader in Sydney, as Ian was in Melbourne. Pittendrigh remembers vividly an occasion when he and Turner were both on the platform chairing one of the Dean's meetings. A venerable and impressive figure in his eighties, Johnson was nevertheless unable to make himself heard above the cat-calls, booing and abuse unleashed by knots of reactionary students who had packed the meeting. "Come on, George," said Ian. "We'll have to do something about this." With Pittendrigh at his back, Turner jumped off the platform and walked through the crowd, singling out for attention the largest and loudest louts on the floor.

By sheer force of personality and without actually striking a blow, in a few minutes he had reduced the meeting to order and the Dean's speech proceeded. "No one else in the world could have done it," Pittendrigh still says.

All-round geniuses have been scarce for hundreds of years. Ian Turner was the nearest approach to a universal Renaissance man we have had in twentieth century Australia, a great radical, nationalist, humanist, historian and critic of art and literature, a great parent and a great lover of life and people. To me though he was, though only potentially, first and foremost the greatest statesman in our annals.

Inspired by idealistic altruism he devoted his first thirty years to working for the Australian Communist Party and to preserving his faith in its essential virtue — despite the massively accumulating evidence to the contrary. If he had been born without this bump of altruism and with just a little more self-regard or vulgar ambition, I believe he would have led the A.L.P. and Australia, in the 1970s, further into the twentieth century than Gough Whitlam was allowed to do.

JACK BLAKE:

Selecting from many experiences I recall the occasion when Ian Turner came to have breakfast with us at our flat in Bondi. If the time of day seems strange, bear in mind that the times were out of joint. It was a crucial turning point in Ian Turner's political life.

He wanted to talk in friendly company about what had happened in Hungary and to him, and what might be done about it. He was going through the traumatic experience of fundamentally reassessing the political values which were of central importance to him. A thought of Matthew Arnold seems appropriate:

... On mankind in the mass, a movement, once started, is apt to impose itself by routine; it is through the insight, the independence, the self-confidence of powerful single minds that its yoke is shaken off . . . Masses make movements, individualities explode them.

Ian Turner was one of those individualities who, with others like Helen Palmer, exploded the Stalinism which had taken hold in part of the Australian Labor movement. Perhaps this seems a purely negative thing to do. It was not. It opened the way to the positive, fresh, Australian orientation in the progressive, democratic movement which is going on now.

BRUCE CLUNIES ROSS:

In the heyday of six o'clock closing, around 1957 or 1958, Ian Turner appeared at the flat in North Adelaide which I shared with Neil Lovett and Bessie Mills. He was delivered by Max Harris, and though unexpected, welcome, like others who had arrived before, equally unheralded, under the same auspices, for the flat had become a kind of staging post for writers and intellectuals visiting Adelaide who happened, around drinking-time, to find their way to the Mary Martin Bookshop (then a unique establishment with a staff of three, one of whom was the real Mary Martin). It was long after closing-time and I remember trying to explain to Max, but conceal from our guest, the disgraceful fact that on this occasion only there was not enough drink in the house to see us through the night. Something must be done. Ian, who soon grasped the problem, agreed. What did he drink? Well, this was Adelaide, home of Cooper's and in the prime of Henschke and Reynella . . . but anything. . . . Most things, at least.

I vaguely remember the next stage of the evening — one of those desperate quests for booze after hours — during which we lost Max Harris but acquired a large, square bottle of Swiss Kirschwasser. It looked about a quart. I doubt if Ian had ever before contemplated drinking such stuff. I had remembered seeing it in the apartment of Jenny Beck, the third member of the Mary Martin establishment. It had been standing there for years, apparently, awaiting the appropriate moment, and Jenny parted with it generously when the moment came.

Back at the flat I had the bottle, and the prospect of entertaining on my own a guest whose distinction rather over-awed me. Usually, on such occasions, I had been the one in the corner, putting in the laughs and pouring the drinks, leaving the witty conversation to Harris and Lovett, both now unaccountably absent. But Ian soon overcame my awkwardness with his unassuming candor. He asked a few questions and quickly struck a rapport between us. I doubt whether I have ever met anyone who could do it so easily and directly, and for this reason I always felt drawn to Ian, even though we did not meet very frequently after that. He did not pretend that Kirschwasser would be his chosen drink in any situation, but nor did he treat it with undue suspicion, and as the evening wore on visibly acquired a tolerant appreciation of its marzipan-in-methylated taste.

We were soon talking about jazz. Most of my jazz friends tended to be verbally inarticulate

on principle; my literary friends often had a real appreciation but it was peripheral to their main interests and they did not know much about it. When jazz came up, I was accustomed to taking a dominant role in the conversation. Ian let me talk, but it was soon evident that there was nothing I could tell him. I brought out my record collection, still mostly 78s, and we sipped Kirschwasser and listened. Ian knew it all intimately, which surprised me, because jazz records were still hard to get and most enthusiasts had discovered at least one or two discs which no one else had. But familiarity did not diminish his pleasure in the music. He gave himself up to it physically, like a true aficionado, and when we got around to Bessie Smith revealed a knowledge of all the words I had never bothered to get right on records I had played hundreds of times.

I cannot remember much of what we talked about as we lowered the Kirschwasser. We disagreed about the major bands in the twenties, Ian upholding Armstrong against my preference for Morton; I probably tried out on him an idea which I know I entertained at the time: that the jazz of musicians like the Bells, Monsborough, and especially Dave Dallwitz, succeeded in evoking authentically a distinctly Australian atmosphere while the insipid impressionism of 'classical' composers failed to get it at all.

Towards morning we exhausted the jazz and emptied the bottle. Ian looked only slightly dazed. Was this the first time two people had drunk themselves through a year's supply of Kirschwasser in one night? We were inclined to think so. It could only happen in the peculiar circumstances of six o'clock closing. In more civilized surroundings, Kirschwasser stayed in its rightful place. But we staggered to our beds grateful for it.

It took me twenty years to get around to writing up my idea about Australian jazz, and when I did, Ian's 'My Long March' became one of the main sources. It was only then that I discovered that Ian was lecturing to soldiers about jazz when I was running around in rompers; that he was one of those who introduced jazz to Australia, a decade or more before the international revival. He was himself part of the cultural history I wanted to write about.

When I read it, I hoped 'My Long March' would be the prelude to a book. I am sad that Ian has gone, and it will not.

BARRY OAKLEY:

In May 1976 Ian and I both happened to go to a conference organised by Peter Quartermaine at

the University of Exeter, where he gave a paper in Australian popular culture. Though we'd known one another for some years—we both lived in Richmond—it was only after this conference, when he invited my wife Carmel and myself to accompany him on what the English would call a motoring tour, that I got to know him well.

We did a circuit of the West Country. We took tea in the Pump Room at Bath while a somnolent trio rendered selections from "My Fair Lady". We went down into the depths of Brunel's iron ship Great Britain, lying half-renovated in a Bristol dry dock—the fore portion fresh-painted red and gold, the aft section still sludged with Falkland Islands grime, whence it had been towed. We went to Stonehenge, which Ian found numinous and I did not, surrounded as it was by gravel and wire fencing. We drove on, through a perfect English springtime, in bubble-delicate blue sunshine, down a side road overleafed by gold and green trees, to the village of Broadchalke, where we paid our respects to a sprightlier monument—William Golding, yet another of Ian's battalion of friends.

We had lunch at Golding's pink-bricked farmhouse, and I still have the photo Ian took of him—white-bearded, weathered and genial—in his garden—pure pastoral, a world away from the demonic undercurrents of *Lord of the Flies*.

Hence to a tiny pub at another tiny village, Rusper, where Ian had yet another good friend—the folksinger Martin Wyndham, who dined us in a tiny house stuffed—he's an antique dealer—with old country things of wood, leather, pewter and brass.

Next to Brighton, where we lost ourselves in that aristocratic Giggle Palace of chinoiserie, the Brighton Pavilion. On past Arundel Castle, where the West Indians were playing cricket, the Petworth, one of the Great English country houses, where the sun stood at every window, giving the rich paintings by Ian's namesake within an added, almost surreal fire.

And finally, in a thunderstorm, back to the greyness of South London. It was a memorable excursion, which we, careless as we were at the time, would otherwise not have been able to make. The weather had been perfect, Ian's company had been relaxing throughout, and he capped it with a typically generous gesture: having bought in an Exeter bookshop an earlier and even more valuable set of Balzac, he gave the volumes he already had to my daughter Made-

leine, once he saw her interest in *La Comédie Humaine*.

Though I saw him frequently afterwards at Monash University, where I was for a time writer in residence, my memories of Ian remain fused with five idyllic English days where the sun always shone and we always had another interesting friend and place to go to.

LES LOUIS:

Essential to the core of Ian's greatness was his humanity, and that marked him off. I recall an incident, seemingly trivial. We were working feverishly at Ian's home at Lennox Street on the manuscript of *The Depression of the 1930s*. Facing a publisher's deadline that meant minutes were precious, we had pieces of the final draft strewn over tables and the floor. Then the doorbell rang. My response was irritation; but Ian politely opened the door to an elderly migrant woman, obviously lost, who proffered a slip of paper bearing a name. With ineffable patience, Ian consulted the electoral roll, then a street directory, and guided her on her way.

Then he was back to the paper-strewn room, with a penetrating contribution to the book.

NIALL BRENNAN:

Ian and I had a curious love-hate relationship over many years. When we were both younger, he was very Left, and I was very Right. We must have looked like a marching team. I did not have much to do with him personally as we both regarded each other as The Enemy. As part of his identification with the working class he affected a kind of scruffiness which he never really threw off. I could never imagine him, right to the last, in a suit and tie; and facially he seemed to get more and more like Marx. Once in Queen Street, I saw this guy coming along and I said to my companion: that guy is scruffy enough to be Ian Turner — my god! It is Ian Turner.

I drifted away from Bob Santamaria in the 60s, returned like a prodigal to the A.L.P., and found Ian there. I suppose his views mellowed. I understand that a number of hardcore comrades were mellowed by the events of the Fifties. For me, what was something of an ideal in Catholic Action became more and more political reaction and opposed to my religious beliefs rather than an expression of it. I summed up my experiences in *The Politics of Catholics*. In the divisions within the A.L.P. leading up to and after the federal takeover, I found myself on the same side as

Ian. I admired his political dedication, for it was obvious that he was an A.L.P. activist for the purest of motives. I was never sure myself how my political activism was dictated by self-interest; but his could not be, as it was an additional and burdensome activity on top of his already successful career.

After his first heart attack he told me how he felt being nursed by the nuns, and incarcerated in the John Wren wing of St Vincent's Hospital. He saw some wry humor in the situation and I warned him that the claws of Rome were subtle indeed. I never had the opportunity to talk seriously with him about the big issues of life and death. I wish I had. May he, as we micks are wont to say, rest in peace.

LANCE LOUGHREY:

I was associated with Ian, to a small degree, in the late Forties and early Fifties. But I never got to know him all that well, due probably to those frightfully inadequate snatched conversations between meetings and whatnots. However, in one tiny incident I daresay I learnt all I'd ever want to know about any man or woman. Enough certainly to establish him forever in my mind as one with a rare and lovely touch of human kindness and understanding.

There was some sort of political meeting in one of the city halls where something happened which moved me to make one of my rare, impulsive contributions. It seemed I was, as usual, shockingly out of line with the thrust of the meeting's political purpose. No one supported me and I was crushed by an angry, seething silence.

I sat down, heated, nervous and one out. Maybe I deserved it. And maybe it was only a trifling, momentary thing. But a little later Ian, who was either an organiser or a speaker that night, strolled up the aisle on his way out somewhere. I was sitting on an outside seat and as he went by he paused for a fleeting moment.

Without saying a word or affecting the slightest ceremony he put his hand on my shoulder and gave it a friendly squeeze. And by Christ, silly bastard that I may have been, right then I needed that comfort.

UDO SELLBACH:

Through Ian I have become an Australian. Meeting him has opened my eyes to the real Australian, the warm, casual, intelligent, committed, broad-minded, informed and active struggler. His inquisitive mind knew enough of the European back-

ground for me to find an appreciative partner in our talks. But beyond all this his qualities and nature as a human being became an inspiration. Knowing Ian and through him others of a kindred kind has turned me into an Australian. This is my best and lasting memory of him.

JOHN McLAREN:

I find it difficult to recall any particular incidents that I would associate with Ian. Certainly, there were many major episodes which I shared with him from a distance, most notably the reconstruction of the Victorian branch of the A.L.P., in which he played a leading role and which led to the triumphs of 1972 and 1974. Although I had no part in the detailed negotiations of this time, I did have the chance of talking with him about them while the struggle was still on, and of seeing the insight not only into issues but into the intricate relations between strategy and tactics which made him such a formidable yet principled operator. Yet perhaps the most fascinating element of Ian's political involvement at this time was his stance. Although deeply committed and constantly active, his style was that of the on-looker, summing up prospects and issues with academic detachment. His warmth he kept for friends, or the Richmond Football Club, or the platform. He was possibly the last of the great orators, with the ability not only to gather and enthuse an audience, without any of the gimmicks demanded by a television age, but also to clarify their minds. His emotion was at the service of

reason, and his reason governed by a radical commitment to humanity.

Yet it is not so much with episode or incident as with place that I most associate Ian. There is of course the old Melbourne University Public Lecture Theatre in the grim days of the cold war, where Ian's golden tongue kept alive some sparks of idealism even in the icy structures of competing ideologies. But even more, and much later, it is Ian privately, sitting back, glass in hand, and unflinchingly accepting the heaviest commitments to work he believed important, to the danger of his own health and of the sanity of those who relied on him to keep to his deadlines. There is Ian at the table at Lennox Street, surrounded by newspapers, newspaper cuttings, books and other writings, and watching *World of Sport*. There is Ian returned triumphant with his mates from a football match, the lot looking like a bunch of demonstrators in search of a cause, or Ian in the outer at a Test match, connoisseur of both players and spectators.

There is of course Ian as my colleague on *Overland*, not only taking on such rough tasks as seeing it through the press but also providing so much of the key writing which kept us open to our times. "Yeah, of course, I'll do that." Thus was "Temper democratic, bias Australian", one of his last and most important review articles, generated. But most of all I think of Ian as the person who would be there to turn to when I wanted help, political, professional or personal. I shall keep turning for a long time yet.



Jiri Tibor

ROBIN GOLLAN

Ian Turner as Historian

I didn't really get to know Turner until he came to Canberra in 1959. I had met him in London when I was a post-graduate student there and he turned up as a member of a peace delegation. I had heard of the history class presided over by Manning Clark and of which he and Noel Ebbels had been distinguished members. I had met him infrequently in Melbourne. In 1959 he applied for an ANU post-graduate scholarship and was asked to come for an interview.

Because Turner had been outside the academic world for ten years, Sir Keith Hancock — who had recently taken up the Chair of History and the Directorship of the Research School — wanted to talk to this man who had abandoned a potentially brilliant academic career for the life of a Communist activist. Hancock came immediately to the point: "Why," he said, "have you decided after ten years as a politician that you want to enter the academy?" Ian's reply was equally direct and to the effect that his previous life was no longer possible and that he needed time to work and think. Hancock was satisfied but decided to continue the testing, after the scholarship was awarded. He asked Ian to write a number of essays on various theoretical and historical problems — one of which, I remember, was the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The testing did not last long because, as Ian remarked with a laugh, "I can write faster than he can read." Not strictly true, but he had established his credentials.

Industrial Labour and Politics, a revised version of his Ph.D. thesis, remains as his major published historical work, although his historical writing ranged far beyond its limits. It is important to remember that *Industrial Labour and Politics* was written in 1959-63. Labor history was just beginning to be seen, mainly as a result of influences from Britain, as a specific kind of historical study. The formation of the Society for

the Study of Labour History in 1961 was a direct consequence of the English example and the presence in Australia of Asa Briggs, who had played a leading part in the establishment of the British Society. Ian was a foundation member.

The interest in Labor history was a result of two main factors. Firstly, Marxists had always been dissatisfied with fact-grubbing, unguided by any coherent theory of historical explanation. Secondly, the re-thinking of Marxism, which still goes on, was just beginning. Not that the Labour History Society was composed exclusively of Marxists — it was, and is still, eclectic, but there was plenty of room in it for Marxists who were attempting to throw off the dogmatic and schematic ideology which they had inherited. In an important sense Turner's *Industrial Labour and Politics* was his first attempt to apply a more flexible Marxism to an historical problem.

It was an important work at the time of its publication, but the question which needs to be asked is how has it stood up to criticism over the last fifteen years. Historical writing which has focused on the working class has always attracted at best, polite condescension, and at worst angry denunciation, from conservatives and pedants. During the last decade, however, the critique of Labor history as such has been most firmly pressed from the Left.

In a new introduction to *Industrial Labour and Politics* (just republished by Hale and Ironmonger), written a few months before his death, Turner surveyed the criticisms of his own book and of Labor history generally.

He quotes from his first introduction a passage on the nature of Labor history. "Labour history is a history of a new kind: it introduces the concept of masses rather than elites as the moving force in the historical process . . . The labour movement is the institutional method by which

the masses transform themselves from passive to active elements in society, from weights to be pushed around to social levers in their own right.” His second proposition was about the role of elites within the labor movement. He considered that they were different from other elites in that they were under constant pressure from the rank and file pushing them in the direction of socialist policies — a “continual tendency towards purification, towards the restoration, perhaps in new forms, of the original values”.

In retrospect, in the light of criticism and experience, Turner was less confident about rank and file action pushing the labor movement in a socialist direction. He made these points: that economic needs felt by the working class don't necessarily lead to socialist consciousness; that labor elites, who are seen in his book as betraying the interests of the working class when they achieve positions of power and influence, can also be seen not as 'betrayers' but as people responding to the political realities they confront; and thirdly, that his book was too much about institutions and leaders and not sufficiently about actual workers. In other words he accepted a part of the contemporary Left criticism that his kind of writing was insufficiently concerned with the people who constitute 'the mass'.

Turner also accepted the kind of criticism, most cogently put by Stuart Macintyre (Intervention no. 2, 1972), that the working class in his book was isolated from the system of class relationships. This, so the argument goes, leads to a kind of determinism, a belief in the inevitable progress of society towards a communist classless society. This assumption of an inevitable working class victory led those who accepted it to reduce the problem of class relations and class consciousness to a study simply of a vanguard and the class.

Two other points need to be mentioned. Following Gramsci much of recent Left thinking has focused on the cultural hegemony of the bourgeoisie, a hegemony which stands between the working class and its understanding of the actual social relations within a capitalist society. Capitalism survives not merely because of the state apparatus which the ruling class can utilise if its power is threatened, but also by its ideological dominance. The problem for socialists is to break that domination. The question is, how is it to be done. Turner agreed in part with this view, but considered that in it lay the danger of isolating the debate about hegemony from other political and social realities.

Then there is the thorny question of radical

nationalism. Turner's summary of the criticism goes this way:

The assertion of a continuity of radical tradition imprisons the 'Left Australians' within the dominant ideology, the bourgeois-liberal hegemony, which at the same time rationalises the power of the ruling class and works within the confines of a reformist programme and strategy which legitimises that power.

He conceded that this argument must be taken seriously but was not convinced by it. As he did in his review of Tim Rowse's book, he maintained that there was value in the radical nationalist tradition, including the element of myth in it. His words:

Radical nationalism — which is both a way of looking at the past and a programme for the future — does seem to me to be useful. It leads towards a political strategy which is based on present realities, and to an attempt to re-define socialist means and ends in terms of a tradition which incorporates whatever is valuable in Australia's past — including a political democracy and intellectual freedom — and which carries a specific Australian resonance.

One of Ian's great strengths was his ability to confront new ideas and to either incorporate them into his own thinking or to reject them. This led him, I think, to see his own work in retrospect too harshly. *Industrial Labour and Politics* was a book of the early sixties and as such it stands as a profoundly important work. It was an important break from dogmatic Marxism, even though it retained the seeds of his earlier Stalinism. The theoretical and historical work, which has either been done or become available, and on which contemporary criticism rests, was still in the future. And it has not so far produced anything of the quality of *Industrial Labour*.

Sydney's Burning (1969) was an offshoot of the first book. It carries a strong story line as well as close analysis of difficult and scrappy evidence. It is not so important in a general sense as *Industrial Labour*, but it is a fine example of investigative writing. His book, in collaboration with Les Louis, on the 1930s depression is invaluable in the teaching of modern Australian history. *In Union is Strength* (1976) is a modest work, intended as an introduction to the study of trade unionism. It fulfils its purpose admirably.

In the last ten years of his life Ian's major intellectual concern was the study of culture in its

broadest sense — both popular and high culture, but with the emphasis on the former. *The Australian Dream* (1968), in the comment and selection of documents, is an exploration at some depth of the Australian tradition. *Cinderella Dressed in Yella* is both a delightful book and a path-breaking work in the field of popular culture. This interest had not, at the time of his death, produced any major analytical works, but there were plenty of articles and chapters of books to demonstrate the lines along which he was working and thinking.

It is perhaps worth commenting — or speculating — on the direction of his work over the last decade. Despite the criticism that his first book was insufficiently concerned with cultural hegemony, the fact is that throughout his life Turner was chiefly involved in the attempt to

understand, and expound, the nature of Australian culture. The ideas of Gramsci and other Marxists undoubtedly influenced him in the direction he took. This was part of a political commitment.

He was an eminently political person. Some people have suggested that his writing was limited by his political involvement. He certainly had less time for research and writing than do those who close themselves in the academy. The remarkable thing, however, is the amount of writing he did. Furthermore, the creativity of his writing cannot be separated from his role as a political person — his life provided a continuing test of theory and practice.

Last time I spent an evening with Ian he wondered whether he had spread himself too widely. In my opinion he didn't. He was one of the truly creative intellectuals of our time.

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Here is everybody's favorite city. In the midst of petrol shortages, job shortages and worsening relations between black and white and rich and poor, there's an overpowering impression that the most important on-going struggle is not the class struggle, but the pursuit of pleasure and individual well-being.

You hear it said that in San Francisco hedonism has been elevated to an art form. Its people *work* at having fun. It's a city of self-indulgence. Weavers, astrologists, Zen Buddhist followers, self-actualizers, macramé specialists, tarot card readers, organic food freaks. And a plethora of liberationists for every conceivable personal cause. But while the latest trends in life-style are embraced with unabashed commitment by the natives, to the outsider there's an underlying edge of desperation. You feel you're in the midst of an over-ripe society.

San Francisco is, as post-industrial-revolution cities go, one of the most physically attractive. Its bright sunny days set off with a low fog that rolls in from the Pacific Ocean; its distinctive housing style of three- and four-storey apartments fronting onto the sidewalk; bay windows full of hanging plants and ferns and flowers; outdoor cafes offering lingering lunches in the sun, with views of the bay, and delicious avocado and crab sandwiches on light rye.

Tourists take trips up and down the hilly streets in the old cable cars (locals use the buses, which don't break down as often); visit Alcatraz to be told how terrible the penal system *used* to be; tour the wineries; eat sweet and sour hamburgers in Chinatown and Polish hotdogs and French fries at baseball matches; and spend lots of money at Fisherman's Wharf and The Cannery and Ghirardelli Square in very fashionable shops in superbly renovated old warehouses and factories which

attract the tourist dollar but have displaced the local fishing and canning industries.

But the beautiful streets of San Francisco — known to all the world through the cops and robbers and murderers series of the same name — those streets aren't all that safe to walk in, day or night in some parts of town. Everyone I've met is intense on the subject of house security systems. Nobody wants to live near public housing. Most people will talk at length on the merits of this or that security system or the relative safety of neighborhoods. Most people, in fact, seem to have been broken into at least once. Nobody wants to live in ground-floor apartments, because they're too easily broken into. . . .

Motel neons invite you to "Try Our Water Beds Tonite". Icecream parlors offer you a choice of 81 delicious flavors. Coffee houses have coffee menus that run for several pages. (How many ways are there of combining steamed milk with a coffee roast?) And breakfast cereal now comes with chocolate chips in it.

So the streets are full of overweight joggers and roller skaters — all wanting to "get fit" and all elevating that desire into a religion. The joggers seemed *all* to be in bad physical condition. Their unbecoming shapes clogged downtown sidewalks at lunchtimes and their expensive (\$200) jogging outfits didn't compensate for the unaesthetic puffing, panting and flopping. But the addicts talk to you about being "blissed out" by running, and they go to running classes, just like last year they went to meditation classes or yoga classes or holistic health and nutrition classes. Over-ripe people, trying to sweat off years of business lunches and cocktail parties, TV snacks and junk food, and rat-race pace.

The hills of San Francisco are also alive with the sound of the second great Trend of the

moment—the sound of the polyurethane wheels of roller skaters. Skates are currently selling at the rate of 300,000 pairs a month, bringing boundless joy to those who invested in skate futures. The skate wheels are variously colored. Red wheels usually denote pliable wheels good for absorbing the shocks or bounces of rough or pebbly surfaces. Blue wheels, for skating on smooth surfaces, are the hardest. Yellow falls somewhere in between. Superhard wheels in day-glow greens and oranges are usually for indoor rink skating. A pair of these skates sells for around \$100. Skate rental businesses, operating out of curbside vans and campers outside public parks, have proliferated. TV commercials already feature attractive young skaters singing the praises of soft drinks and depilatories.

On a Sunday afternoon in Golden Gate Park I saw at least five thousand people of all shapes and sizes zipping about on their polyurethane wheels, with their knee pads, elbow pads and ear pads. The latter, on close inspection, turned out to be transistor radios, made to be worn as headphones so that joggers and roller skaters can listen to disco music as they plod or wheel through the streets. The skating addicts, like the joggers, talk about the activity in similes—“It’s just like flying”, or “just like being stoned”—suggestive of a spiritual need and spiritual escapism that is more desperate than the simple pursuit of pleasure.

That’s also true of the third great popular pastime—hot-tubbing. If you have a lot of body fears washing over you, if you’re not feeling in a space where you can work, if you need to mellow out and get your head into a new place, then you need a hot-tub experience.

A few years ago it was the fashion to attend champagne brunches at apartments with fabulous views owned by male interior designers. This year good San Francisco hosts and hostesses are carting their guests off to any number of the new hot-tub establishments flourishing in the Bay area. That is, if they don’t own a hot tub of their own. Several dozen companies are selling tubs—redwood tubs, fibreglass tubs, plastic ones, ceramic ones, plywood-coated-with-resin hot tubs, square ones, round ones, big ones and small—ranging in price from \$1,500 to \$15,000.

The public tubberies do everything they can to make hot-tubbing a blissful experience. They employ people of a “friendly and healthy nature” and provide juice bars, vitamin counselling, saunas, showers, beds and quiet music. Everyone

knows that San Francisco is the city of The Shared Experience. (Part of the bliss is supposed to be in the sharing.) A popular joke about town asks how many Bay Area people it takes to change a light bulb. The answer is five. One person to change the bulb and four to share the experience. Needless to say, hot tubs are seldom taken alone.

Hot tub purists says that soakers inevitably leave the hot tub more attuned to each other than when they entered it. There are some who claim that the hot tub can change your life. In the hot tub, they say, there is no need for facades or pretences. You can let your true self bubble up to the surface. Whoever you are it will really be *you*. And aficionados who have hot tubbed for a long time talk about its virtues in terms puzzling to the Aussie ear. “Throwing out to the universe”, and “letting the energy flow” or “being born again”.

Californians do not keep their new-found pleasures to themselves. They talk endlessly and religiously about them. They talk about the benefits of morning-tubbing, late-at-night tubbing, tubbing under the stars and tubbing with a view of the sea, a garden, a mountain valley. Tubbing in the city as a break from work. Tubbing by candle-light; tubbing by moonlight; tubbing in the dark. Rhapsodies on The Hot Tub Experience can be heard on the Berkeley campus or at McDonald’s counter.

Meanwhile, the man who shot the Mayor and a City Supervisor in cold blood last year has been sentenced to six years jail. His defence was temporary insanity due to eating too much junk food. And two black youths shot a bus driver because he asked them to turn down their radios. And the petrol queues get longer and more ill-tempered and associated with knifings and shootings.

Now California may be an exaggerated version of this over-ripe species of advanced capitalism. And not everyone is desperately pursuing the ultimate blissful experience. A glance through the list of meetings and seminars in any one week in the Bay Guardian (the Nation Review of San Francisco) produces the following picture of political activities: The Bay Area Committee for Alternative Psychiatry; San Franciscans for Affordable Housing; the People’s Law School; Bay Area Energy Action Inc.; Lesbian School-workers; Zimbabwe Material Aid Campaign; Berkely Women’s Music Collective; Frente San-

dinista de Liberacion Nacional de Nicaragua; National Organisation for Women; Abalone Alliance (against nuclear power). A mere sample of the multitude of political action groups covering everything from alternative health to anti-freeway groups, environmentalists and revolutionaries and anti-taxers. The anti-nuclear movement has clearly inherited the mantle of Most Important Cause since Vietnam. Twenty-five thousand people demonstrated last weekend at Diablo Canyon (midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco) against the building of a nuclear power station there. (The proposed site is on an earthquake fault line.) A second demonstration, since I've been here, attracted 100,000 marchers. It was the Gay Street Parade, a basically joyful affirmation of their existence by the very large gay community that lives in this city.

And this state is still the spiritual and physical home of the counter culture. But the competing nirvanas displaying themselves at the New Age Awareness Fair at the Cow Palace one weekend in June were all very well integrated into the cash nexus society — the meditationists, holistic health and nutritionists, Emissaries of Divine Light, tarot-readers, I Ching experts, palmists, and alternative technologists and masseurs. They all wanted your money as well as your soul. Not a socialist among them, this assorted bunch each claiming some mortgage on the New Age.

Surely some good can be found. Or, perhaps, California just isn't representative. Back East, they say, it's different. Well, maybe. But California is what the rest of the country seems to aspire to. If the internal migration figures are any indication, they're moving to California in large numbers. Soon we may see them being turned away at the border, like the Okies in the thirties. For the natives (of California) are getting restless. They're becoming increasingly xenophobic about the competition for jobs and housing, and politics accordingly is increasingly preoccupied with defence of privilege.

You can't *buy* a house in San Francisco unless you're a middle income couple (*both* earning middle incomes). And local politics is increasingly exclusive. The way in which American suburbs persistently excluded the poor and minorities during the 1950s and 60s has been well documented in urban research. But it's now clear that the new environmental rhetoric of the 1970s has achieved the same thing and more. Its goal of

"freezing growth" effectively excludes all those who aren't already homeowners. The goal of the seventies' urban environmental politics, stripped of its rhetoric, amounts to keeping out everybody in order to hold on to what you have. Thus a variety of arguments against growth are employed, as the circumstances demand. In the distant suburbs it is argued that more housing produces long commuter trips that waste energy and pollute the environment. In the inner suburbs, the environmentalists say new housing "bleeds the cities". In the middle suburbs, it uses open space. So the drawbridges are being raised and the established middle-classes are digging in for the duration.

But there is some reluctance about paying the costs connected with their own version of environmental protection. Usually they are able to persuade a state or federal agency to pick up the charges for preserving open space, or arrange elaborate tax exemptions which place the burden on larger pools of state and national taxpayers.

In Marin County, for example, where residents decided to "stop growth" after only 7 per cent of the land had been developed, the languid suburbanites persuaded the federal government into buying large tracts of sea shore as a "recreation area". Then, when it came time to develop the area, they decided that the "fragile ecosystem" could not tolerate visitors, and succeeded in closing it off to almost everyone but themselves. (This ideology of elitism in urban politics is well-documented in a recent book by Bernard Frieden, *The Environmental Protection Hustle*, M.I.T., 1979.)

Yet in the midst of all this self-indulgence and selfishness and over-ripeness and protection of privilege, there still emerge thinkers, about the nature of man and the directions of modern society, who produce works of imagination that redeem in some way the brute facts of American capitalism. *Ecotopia* by Ernest Callenbach is such a work. Part of the literary genre that includes *1984*, *Brave New World*, *Earth Abides*, *Memoirs of a Survivor* and the like, *Ecotopia* portrays an ecological utopia established in California after it secedes from the USA in 1980. It is a fantasy of a stable state, humanitarian society. Similarly the recent film "The China Syndrome" is a devastating critique of the nuclear industry.

That kind of work is not, as far as I know, being produced in Russia or China.

Verse by Ian Turner

S.F.A. Expedition: 1966

(Written by Ian Turner to announce the annual Easter walk he and friends made annually for a number of years.)

There is movement in the nation, for the word is going round
That Eastertide's not very far away,
And it's time for noble bushmen to get themselves ungowned
And rally round the banner, "S.F.A."
To all tried and noted riders from the bedsteads near and far
The call goes out to sacrifice the nest—
Remembering Jesus' passion, and the moaning at the bar,
And the year our bullocks perished Way Out West.

The muster's set for Thursday,¹ at the old Tawonga Inn—
All starters now must notify the clerk,
Who will warn the landlord's lady to procure a case of gin,
Two firkins, and a dozen Cooper's Dark.
With the liquor hanging over where the mountains overhang,
We will stagger out to crucify the Lord,
And commute one Timor pony to await the footsore gang
When they reach the bottom of the Bon Accord.

Next we'll saddle up our packhorse and we'll face into the gale
Leaving wine and women (sadly) far behind
(But we'll take some rum and brandy and a can or two of ale²
To soothe our weary muscles when we've dined.)
And we'll hobble then our packhorse in the stockyard on the spur
Two miles or so due west of Junction Dam
And partake of light refreshment, with never a demur—
Salami, vintage bully beef and spam.³

Then the order "Shoulder Crosses" will resound from Spion Kop—
No man must carry less than eighty pound—
And we'll set our compass bravely for the nearest mountain top,
Passing over Bogong Jack's all-hallowed ground;
Skirting Niggerheads and Fainter, climbing, panting, cursing (but
The order is reversed or it won't scan)
We should reach our first night's bedding in the warm Tawonga Hut
Where we'll stew the steak in brandy in the pan.

Then to edge of Bogong High Plains, where we'll pause to take a breath
And drink a toast to Feather's proud extent,
And we'll plunge into the valley, facing instant, painful death
As we slither down that terrible descent.
Along Snake Valley River, over Dungey's timbered track,
To Dibbin's (resting place of I.R.A.),
Our farthest point from comfort, but there can be no turning back,
For Hotham's just two thousand feet away.⁴

On Sunday, up to Hotham, where the beer's flowing fresh
 And the chef will take a quid to cook a meal,
 And the beds are made of rubber and the waitresses of flesh
 And noble bushmen have great sex appeal.⁵
 One night of gay carousing ought to leave us sick and slack,
 But the mountain air soon blows away the scunge.
 So we'll sadly drink a nobbler and turn west off Razorback
 And down the deadly Bon Accord we'll plunge.
 A long day, never-ending, through to Lazy Harry's town⁶
 Where the new-built pub awaits with open arms
 The bona fide walkers, wearing beards and great renown.
 And so to bed — and so to other charms.

— "The Twelve-String Banjo."

NOTES:

1. I.e., April 7. Memo to N.S.W. contingent.: there's no need to hurry — Tawonga has ten o'clock closing now.
 2. Each man to provide his own hard rations.
 3. Murray-Smith can't come, so the bully is doubtful. Will we do all the rationing from here (in Steve's absence, I'm not sure of quantities)? Or will Sydney provide dry stuff and Melbourne bring steak?
 4. All up.
 5. Puritans may be excused this stop — they can walk on to the hut at St Bernard.
 6. I.e. Harrierville, but I can't make it scan.
- Quick reply to 205 Lennox Street, Richmond, Vic.?

Distribution:

- Fowler, four copies for re-distribution in Sydney.
- Waters, one copy to Sydney in case he's gone to Canberra.
- Gollan, three copies in case Waters is in Sydney.
- Noel McLachlan } two new Melb. starters, to substitute for SMS.
- John Ritchie { (Captain, art tha dreamin dahn below?)

28 March 1966.

I.T.

Suddenly, it's Spring in London

It's March, the month when birds refurbish nests,
 when trees hang curtains, flowers lay carpets, when
 the house-proud thousands take the tube to town,
 their credit ratings poised to buy the best
 of mixer, washer, fridge, the Ideal Home.
 "Your easy purchase plan — just five pounds down,
 a pound a week for life, with Masterloan."
 And, in a plastic rubbish bin, a bomb.

The cost? Dead, no one; injured, sixty-four.
 There's Alan Richards, seven, small and black,
 and Rachel Cohen, eighty, Jewish mum —
 time payment on Old Ireland's wrongs. A broad
 and bitter brogue returns to the attack:
 "You fucking Brits, there's more where that came from."

From Overland no. 64

County Clare

For Clifton Pugh

The landscape's printers set their type in stone.
Men beat the barren boundaries of pain;
they turn and harvest rock-strewn earth, build cairn
and fence, praying "there's this at least I own —
God's little acre, surveyed for my sin."
They plough up granite, plant the sterile grain,
trusting in labored sacrament to earn
forgiveness for the primal fall of man.

A stone's a dead weight, binding man to earth.
Put stone on stone, that builds a cross of faith —
ascension prised from granulated death,
a sculpted prayer to God for fertile birth.

Stones have their season, whether cairn or cross;
when stones score profits, then I mark my loss.

August 1976.

Luncheon A Go-Go

"The Cock and Crumpet. Fulham Broadway. Noon."
The posters smear the walls for miles around.
"Luncheon a go-go. Get that midday sound,
The Holy Rocking Rollers. Coming soon.
Two topless twisters. See those sisters strip.
No cover charge. No tips. We take L.Vs."
Some horny nosh? My mates and me? Yes please.
No score at home, no score at work — let's flip.

The tinted windows spray the promised dish,
the ceiling drips with globule butterflies.
We scan the **a la carte**. When do we come?
The barmaid breasts the counter, asks our wish.
"What's it to be?" "The mixed grill, love — a slice
of boobs, a touch of twot, a pinch of bum."

1976

No Man's Island

No man's an isle: the bomb blast tolls;
the splinter shrills there's room for all
inside the whale; when some men kill,
all reckon by the norms of steel.

No man's an isle: each heart fires off
its harpoon line of tautened love
seeking with well-honed dart to prove
that no man's isle is quite enough.

No man's an isle: and yet,
when all is done,
when, over man's estate,
the bell is rung,
each listener turns to meet
himself alone.

1976

Swashway Sandblow

For Rhys Jones and Ron Lampert

The meal is done. The hunt will soon begin.
The hunter sits crosslegged, striking stone
on stone. Shrewdly he studies angle, plane,
sees through the surface to the knife within,
ten thousand years of craft behind his eye:
technique prised loose from nature, hardly won,
a ritual passed from father down to son.
Fire first of all. Beside him, ashes lie.

That hunter's gone these twenty thousand years.
New hunters come with trowel and sieve and tape,
from now to Pleistocene they stretch their span.
Their tools are few: the windswept stratum clears
some crumbs of charcoal, bones, a minute flake.
In that one stone, the history of man.

Erith Island, 22 January 1978.

IAN TURNER **Letters**

No doubt one day much of Ian Turner's correspondence will be collected and published. Here we are content to publish four of Ian's letters, widely placed in time and topic. This first letter appeared in Angry Penguins, No. 6, 1944. The others are from private files.

LETTER TO JOHN REED

[1944]

Dear John,

To-day is one of those perfect tropic days; it only needs Dorothy Lamour to make it seem finally unreal. But even the tropic weather carries "the seeds of its own destruction" inside of it. By to-night it will be raining. The sun is too hot to last; the breeze which provides temporary relief always brings up stormclouds; the rain is too violent so that in an hour it is over. But just now the scene is conventionally perfect — my tent is on the brow of a hill, overlooking a stretch of jungle, and then a mathematical coconut plantation leading right onto the sea. The regularity of the plantation looks out of place; it's only a superficial one. Without squads of men to keep it in order, underneath the healthy spaced rows of palm-tops, the bushes, creepers and kunai, in a matter of weeks or even days, destroy what little order the planters could create. It seems as if only by physical detachment is it possible to discipline the jungle. Living in and with it, the only feeling is of its hostility; by looking down on it from a distance, you can dominate it mentally in a way as compensation for the inability to conquer it physically.

Gauguin seems almost photographic after seeing the real thing in tropical landscape and atmosphere. There is that same blinding vividness

of colour, the sense of enclosure, even that curious flat, or, rather, stereoscopic perspective that he has. It is a trick of the atmosphere, especially noticeable just before an electric storm, when the whole vision is of a dull but pervasive yellow, that makes the trees, the mountains and the tents seem artificially imposed on one another, as if seen through a stereoscope. Rousseau, I think was wrong, if he was trying to prove a thesis — there is no order in his country, but only a tangled mass of growth and conflict, and a hostility to any attempt to control it.

Reading is very scarce in New Guinea, and what there is, is all solid, conservative stuff — mostly of the Marie Corelli type and era. Music is even rarer. The Army Education Service seems to take a deliberate delight in mangling what few musical memories I have, by playing one movement of this, and half a part of that, interspersed with Gallicurci singing "Your Tiny Hand is Frozen", and a wealth of redundant comments.

Occasionally I read inadequate reports in the dailies or futile and biased reviews by Norman Lindsay in the Bulletin that remind me that there is still plenty going on in Melbourne. And, strangely, it still seems important that it should continue. I expected that after so long in the Army my evaluations would gradually change until they reversed themselves, but it just hasn't happened.

IAN TURNER.

LETTER TO BILL BROWN

3 Rix Street,
Glen Iris, Vic.
Oct. 25, 1956.

W. J. Brown
c/ Tribune
40 Market St
Sydney, NSW.

Dear Bill:

You may be now convinced, as you say in your statement in Trib. of October 24, that the decision of the C.C. on the cult of the individual was correct and that the position you took up was wrong. Personally, I am not so convinced.

Just what were these views of yours that were erroneous? Or, rather, that the C.C. considers erroneous?

I've read your three articles in the "Review", in August, September and October. With some of what you said in these articles, I agreed; with some, I disagreed. But until I know precisely what it was in these articles that the C.C. thought was wrong, I just don't know whether I agree with you or with the C.C. And I imagine there are a lot of other party members who are in the same predicament—I can't see how they could fail to be in a similar dilemma to mine, unless they accept the position, which I do not, that the C.C. is automatically right about everything.

Or perhaps the reference to "erroneous" views is to some other set of ideas of yours which haven't found expression in any of your articles, or elsewhere in the party press. In that case, I'd like to have some idea of what these ideas were before I make up my mind.

Let's assume for the moment that it is your articles which are in question.

Your first article suggested that it was one-man rule, taking the place of collective leadership, which caused the disruption of state and party democracy in the Soviet Union. You went on to say that this sort of thing was not something new to Australians, and recalled the "Lang is Right" myth.

I didn't agree with this—but I don't imagine that this was what the C.C. objected to. My own idea, for what it's worth, is that this is only part of the truth. One-man rule is certainly more likely to be wrong, and arbitrary, than a collective leadership. But a collective can make mistakes too; and in any case the most important collective for us Communists is the collective of the whole of our party. I believe that the most important single step taken by the C.P.S.U. to ensure that there is

full democracy inside the party is the recently reported change in their rules to provide that comrades on a leading committee who disagree with the majority view of the committee have the right to put their views, as a minority viewpoint, to the party organisation to which they are responsible. And I cannot help being impressed by the decision of the recent Chinese party congress to appoint a permanent commission to supervise the work of the central committee between congresses.

Your second article was about criticism, and I agreed with practically the lot of it. Particularly the part where you say: "Throughout our Party today a lot of new thinking is going on."

There certainly is a lot of hard thinking going on among our comrades today; how could it be otherwise? But I doubt whether the full extent of this is yet reflected in the party press. Personally, I'd like to see a lot more attempts being made by a lot more party members to work out, creatively and without being worried too much about "correctness" of formulation, the implication for us here in Australia of what has been and is happening in the Soviet Union, People's China, Yugoslavia, Poland.

My only disagreement with you about these questions was a feeling that you didn't go far enough—that you only dealt with one side of the question.

Criticism is an essential part of a living, vigorous party like ours. But often it comes to mean only criticism of the means of fulfilling an already-decided policy—and that carries with it a danger that criticism will become a substitute for serious discussion of basic questions of our policy and our theory.

True, in such a discussion, differences of opinion will be revealed, and argued out. And that will be a good thing—because understanding, conviction and unity all grow in the course of hammering out the best policy to be followed in any particular situation, or in working out the most accurate generalisations to be made from past experience.

I was reading a while ago a speech made by Stalin in 1924, in the middle of the big argument with Trotsky. He was talking about the Russian party in the period May-August, 1917, and he said: "There were differences of opinion at that time in our party. . . . But . . . they were differences of opinion of a kind without which no active party life and no real party work can exist."

I think that in our party there's too much accepting what comes down to us from the leading committees, and not enough discussing — and arguing out, if necessary — the really big problems that are in front of us. I'm all in favour of a few more differences of opinion in our party — not for the sake of the differences themselves, but for the sake of the more profound, more deeply felt agreement that would come out of the discussion.

And that's probably the main reason why I was disturbed by your statement in Trib. You might agree with what I've just said; equally, you might think I'm completely haywire. I don't know. But I do think, strongly, that these things ought to be discussed by the whole of the party, and not just by the leading committees. Because we've all got a stake in our party, and the sort of future it's trying to build in Australia.

In your third article, I reckon you're a bit inclined to fall over backwards in an attempt to present a balanced view of our attitude towards theories put forward by the Soviet party. I think we have tried hard to work out just how the experiences of the winning of working-class power and the building of socialism in the Soviet Union apply to Australia.

But we have taken for granted that the main lines of development of the Soviet socialist revolution do in fact apply to Australia, or can be so applied. Recent developments suggest pretty strongly that there is more than one way of reaching socialism — that in every country of the world Communists have to chart their own course, taking into consideration the economic, political and social levels of their country, and its national tradition. There are plenty of unresolved problems for us here — and it will take the whole of the party, with the help of large sections of the people, to work them out. Once more, that's why we want more, not less, uninhibited discussion of the recent experiences and conclusions of our comrades in Europe and in China.

Those are only a few of the multitude of ideas — many of them new — which are tumbling over one another inside me. I haven't worked them out very well, and undoubtedly you and others will be able to shoot plenty of holes in them.

But still I think that my ideas, and yours, and those of all our other comrades, including the comrades we have elected to the C.C., should be out in the open, so they can be argued over, and eventually resolved. I'm one of those comrades that Comrade Sharkey was talking about when

he referred to "a fear on the part of the membership to offer criticism of . . . the higher organs of the party." Maybe I'm wrong, but I've got a criticism, and, as we used to say, it's better out than in.

Yours fraternally,
IAN TURNER

LETTER TO ALAN McBRIAR

73 Gloucester Rd,
London, S.W.7.
20 May, 1969.

Dear Alan:

From time to time I have a flatulence of guilt, thinking that perhaps I should at least make a terminal report. (Is 'terminal' the right word? It sounds so final.) But I gather from those items which catch my eye in the Australian in between the reports of the League football that you have other matters on your mind. Parking barricades, conscription, and discipline statutes I have seen; together with Mungo McCallum on Albert the Good. (Words fail me when I contemplate the high-campery of that Memorial; it is a convenient restingpoint on my daily walk, and I estimate that I will have circumnavigated it, from Praxiteles to Les Darcy, 300 times before I get back to Melbourne. What's the point of acid when it's all happening in Hyde Park?)

In London, it seems to me, by far the most important area of investigation for an Australian academic is the student scene. You may think that I am overpoliticising for nostalgia's sake. But Bill Kellaway agrees with me — he was fervent (I don't think the word is too strong) about the need for Australians to assimilate what is happening here while it is still of more than historical relevance — i.e. while lessons can still be learnt and applied. So that first.

You'll have read about the bare facts. LSE is the centre, currently. The issue has shifted from the original one of government, curricula, discipline etc., to solidarity with discharged staff (Blackburn, Bateson) and prosecuted students. Tactics: disruption of lectures, and of H. of C. select committee come to inquire into the troubles; rolling strike, picketing, demos. This is the most spectacular area. Essex had some trouble recently — Essex staff said overpublicised — when the select committee was disrupted. At Warwick, Edward Thompson was confronted by a refusal of students to sit exams — his post-grad. class in one (justifiably unpopular) subject; undergrads, generally threatening strike. (Thompson, by the

way, had a hair-raising story from somewhere in the USA: Eugene Genovese, best of the younger American Marxist historians (slavery) and usually regarded as a solid left-wing activist in the A.H.A., pro-student, etc., issued a statement deploring the burning of some computer at some university. Next day a poster with his photo and the slogan "Wanted: C.I.A. agent" appeared around the town, and he began to get threatening phone calls.) Quote from a letter in the current OZ from the publishers of a Hull student underground paper, Worm: "The mag is also a good revolutionary and active political unit. Issue number three carried instructions on how to make a molotov with diagram and said where in the university to strike with same. No student took the hint but the Authorities certainly tried every form of secret pressure to stop circulation." Utopian letter from Cambridge radicals in current Black Dwarf (the most revolutionary of the London underground papers): "... last term's events in Manchester where . . . a motion to occupy until the three-hour written paper was abolished was defeated by 2400 to 1600 . . . A large and politically led boycott against *assessment* would not give the authorities the opportunity to compromise with committees on continuous assessment, and thus drive the left to start all over again, but leave them with two 'impossible' alternatives: to accept our demands or to send 1000 students out into the world without degrees, either of which would mean a considerable defeat of ruling class education . . . such a boycott is clearly on the cards even for next year." Oxford radicals have rejected the reformist proposals of the Hart committee. And so on.

Clearly there are diverse groups of widely different strengths and degrees of influence involved in this. The essential tendencies, for the purposes of political analysis, seem to me to be: a large grouping of students — for many purposes a considerable majority — in the humanities and social sciences who feel an acute frustration and dissatisfaction with the character of the university, the training they are getting, and the society they are going to be moved into (the passive is deliberate); a militant vanguard who want to mobilise and lead this discontent so as to secure significant structural reforms — i.e. to government, teaching, curricula, and perhaps to secure ulterior political advantage, although that is not the most important aspect of the question. It's useless looking for conspiracies, of course, though it might be hard to persuade Bolte and Thompson of that; and a revolutionary vanguard who regard the universi-

ties as the transmitters of the ideology of a corrupt society and who therefore want either to destroy them or to transform them into "revolutionary bases".

Politics — at least the day to day course of the struggle, if not its final outcome, is a matter of initiative. At the moment, the initiative has passed beyond the establishment forces — even the liberal establishment like Hart at Oxford. The only way they can get it back is, in my opinion, by the most determined effort to "restore discipline" — which might range anywhere between the "whiff of grapeshot" which some government sources have already hinted at (presumably exclusion, expulsion or cutting off grants) to police occupation and screening of students on campus (Amis would probably settle for this — he supported the police heaving a whole carriage full of football supporters off a train and making them walk 25 miles home recently) to — if such attempts produced further confrontation, as they almost certainly would — closing the universities down altogether for a period, and starting again. I can't see the first course doing anything other than exacerbating the situation; and the two further escalations would be as surely destructive of universities as we know them and prefer them to be as would be the revolutionary project.

The core of the British problem, as I see it, and why I am writing (deliberately) in what might seem rather an alarmist way — that is, why I am trying to project rather than to describe things as they are right now — is that *almost every step the university authorities have so far taken, and especially those in the L.S.E., seems to me to have resulted in a further polarisation, in moving the initiative towards the revolutionary alternative*. Which increases, and will increase, the confrontation. Which will produce a further backlash. Which will increase the confrontation.

What I ask myself is: why? The essential answer is that, from the side of the university authorities and the academics, what has emerged is a cautious, limited, grudging response to a sudden upsurge of pressure, arising from quite legitimate grievances, which the university establishment didn't foresee and hasn't understood — a classical case of too little, too late.

I think there are two reasons for this. First and most important: the failure of the left and the liberals who believe that the universities should be maintained as centres of free inquiry to re-examine their beliefs and to try to translate them (in terms of university structure and curricula) into terms which the critical students would re-

gard as relevant. We should have realised the size of the challenge — and met it willingly — and we didn't. (Bill K. thinks it's now too late to take this sort of initiative in England; maybe it's not in Australia.) I wonder whether we ducked this problem because this would have involved us in our own confrontation with the establishment which sits on top of the universities?

Second: we've allowed ourselves to be hamstrung by our colleagues in the technological faculties. This is essentially an arts-social sciences problem. All over, it's from the students in these 'disciplines' that the initiatives are coming; sometimes the engineers, meds, &c. are carried along; more often, as in Sydney recently, they're in there fighting on the other side. The Eng., Med., &c. staff, just because they are career-training, can swing more weight around among the students than we can in the humanities, etc.; and their students do tend to think differently. If there's any reality in the Two Cultures argument, this is where it is. It's not bloody well good enough for us to allow ourselves to be outvoted by those of our technologically-minded colleagues who believe that the whole matter can be resolved with a show of strength, because their solution will merely make things worse, and will lead to the destruction of their university as well as ours. I don't know how we get that through their heads, but it's essential that we do.

I haven't talked to anyone here yet who thinks things are going to get better. Maybe that merely reflects the limited circles in which I've moved — but I don't think so, because they're not as limited as that. (I haven't talked to any students at any length yet; I hope to make a start with one of the LSE leaders tomorrow.) And I can't see any reason why, given the normal culture lag and a natural spirit of socialist emulation, things should not move the same way in Australia. There is only one way to short circuit this, and that is for the lefts and liberals among the academics to come up with a self-critique and a program of change which is fast, meaningful and credible. And to persuade the gunboat diplomatists among our colleagues that you can't sail gunboats through treacle.

Not, mind you, that I feel very hopeful about it. Disciplinarians are not given to thinking ahead; they won't really know what's happening among the students until it's all over and they're left with an institution that might as well be (if it has not become) a part of the Education Dept. Meanwhile, we'll be over the barrel — caught between our knowledge that much of what the students

want is reasonable and ought to be given to them and our desire to preserve the integrity of the institutions (even if we are the only ones who believe that they have, or can have, any integrity). The students — and especially the revolutionary minority — aren't dopes; they know that we are confronted by this dilemma, and are therefore susceptible to pressure; we are the orifice up which the thin edge of the wedge can be most easily pushed, and we are going to get it — as Edward Thompson is already getting it. That will be the consequence of our failure of initiative — and which way will we polarise then?

Mention of Thompson brings me to Part II of this report. (Please file so that I won't have to write another one for Council when I get back.) If anyone has a chance of escaping, it's probably Thompson (and Richard Hoggart in Birmingham, of whom I've also been seeing a bit). Reason: they have at least part of the initiative; they have developed courses which their students do regard as relevant, and have a corresponding measure of respect. (The fact that they're both very bright, and engaging personalities, helps.) I know the argument about intellectual discipline and so on; but I think that one of the student's strongest points is this question of relevance. Why shouldn't they demand this? If the university is supposed to train them to become useful members of society, or some such crap, as well as giving them a mind-using technology, then it might as well develop some disciplined studies about those aspects of society which are relevant. Why I've been most interested in Thompson and Hoggart, of the people with whom I've so far talked, is that they — and, increasingly, Eric Hobsbawm — are concerned with the problems of culture as a determinant of consciousness. From the left, this of course tends to become an attempt to find answers to the questions why the workers think like they do — or perhaps why they don't think like they ought to. Thompson's own work is pushing further and further back — from the 19th into the 18th century — using literary and folkloristic sources as well as the more conventional ones, still probing the making of the working class, with tremendous energy, penetration, and generosity of spirit. He is, I think, impatient with administration, although the last time I was in Warwick he was saying it was just as well that he was head of some committee as this enabled him to block some particularly bastardly piece of stupidity (anti-student type) which the administration was trying to execute. I've seen his post-grad. seminar at work, and talked at length with him and others on his

staff. Their work is directed towards a comparative study of labour movements; but the emphasis is on the people and their culture rather than on their institutions and ideologies.

Hoggart works from the opposite end, as it were. His post-grad. seminar, which is stage-managed by a brilliant West Indian called Stuart Hall, starts with theories of society, culture and personality formation and moves into various case studies, mainly in the field of popular culture of the 19th and 20th centuries. It's a delight to see Hoggart and Hall working together; they're a formidable pair, intellectually; they differ sharply—Hall tends towards empiricism (phenomenology seems to be the in-word; I think it means about the same thing), Hoggart feels it in his guts, believes in understanding a culture by empathy; they argue with one another and educate the post-grads. in the process (and sometimes mangle visiting seminar-givers). The post-grads. are working on things like popular reading, pop music, t.v., lit. and society; as a group they are doing a depth study of the press treatment of last year's Birmingham student sit-in — trying to unravel the assumptions of the press and their relation with the culture. I find it fascinating. Fair warning—I'm going to be arguing for this sort of treatment of history when I get back (I had been moving this way, of course, over the last three years — what I'm doing now is picking up the techniques, the jargon, and the rationalisations).

Otherwise? I've been reading mainly the 'theories of culture' stuff, and some sociology. Going to seminars as they seemed interesting. Visiting Birmingham, Warwick, Cambridge, Oxford. Strictly for professional reasons, going to the football — and off to Ireland next month to catch the last of the Gaelic game. Lots of lovely time in the Tate and the Courtauld. Walking around London — for health as well as pleasure. Promising myself that I'll never touch another drop of bitter. Reading many too many newspapers, weeklies, monthlies, quarterlies — how does anyone have time to do anything else? Enjoying London, and, hopefully, learning a bit on the side.

All the best to you, to Marilyn, and to the department.

IAN

LETTER TO CLYDE HOLDING AND BOB HOGG

205 Lennox St
Richmond, 3121.
11 Nov. 1978.

Clyde Holding, Pres.
Bob Hogg, Sec. Vic. Branch, A.L.P.

Dear Clyde and Bob:

I am filled with anger and despair at the decisions which were reported tonight to have been carried by conference. If we put together the decision to recommend to Federal Conference the reaffirmation of the 1921 objective and the rejection of the Administrative Committee decision to condemn violations of civil liberties in the USSR, it adds up to historical illiteracy and political imbecility. That combination of decisions has probably cost us whatever chance we had of winning the 1979 state elections and may well have seriously jeopardised our federal prospects.

As I read it, we have gone back to a situation in which the Victorian branch of the party is determined to demonstrate that it is more concerned with ideological "purity" — including endorsement of the authoritarian dictatorship which has run the USSR for the last fifty years and which has disfigured the very ideal of socialism — than it is with returning a government which will work effectively to ameliorate the condition of the unemployed, to restore the many initiatives of the Whitlam government which contributed to social justice, and to move Australia in the direction of socialism.

I assume that that combination of decisions was initiated by the Socialist Left, as it describes itself. I had hoped that we were moving to a situation in Victoria in which we were trying to find a consensus on a policy which was at the same time radical and realistic. The decisions taken by conference have destroyed that hope. It seems to me that the probability is that we are moving back to a position in which the war within the party will once again become more important than the war against the common enemy.

To make my position quite clear, I will say that, while I regard the argument about the party objective as important and necessary to any party which professes democratic socialism, I do not want to be associated with anything which lends credibility to what the USSR describes as socialism. Accordingly, I have already told Jock

Reeves that I am not prepared to take part in a publishing programme which appears to endorse the position of the Victorian branch as expressed by today's decisions.

Nor am I prepared any more to initiate financial support within my working environment for the Victorian branch. Whatever influence I can exert, and whatever financial support I can muster, will be directed towards the federal executive of the party, and towards improving the position of the party locally.

It is with great sadness that I write this letter, but today's decisions, as reported, leave me with

no other option. I should say that it is my intention to send copies of this letter to such other members of the party as I think may be interested to read it.

Yours fraternally,

IAN TURNER

You will, I hope, understand that, as I am not party to any caucus or faction, this is a personal letter.

[The decision not to condemn violations of civil liberties in the USSR was rescinded before the end of the conference.— Editor.]

Turner Trust Fund

As previously announced, a Trust Fund has been established in the name of Ian Turner, the trustees being Leonie Sandercock, Clyde Holding, Ken Gott and Stephen Murray-Smith. Letters have been sent to all those who, at Ian's wake in February at the Richmond Town Hall, expressed interest in contributing to such a fund. So far some \$1100 has been received, but the trustees are aware that many others would wish to contribute to the fund.

Two main ideas have emerged as to the application of the trust fund. If say \$5000 could be raised, \$500 might be available annually to purchase a work of art from a final-year art students' exhibition for donation to an institution, probably a different institution (university, college, trade union, youth club?) each year. This was an area in which Ian Turner was especially interested.

Alternatively, money raised could go towards the publication of Ian's collected articles — much of his most important work appeared in journals and chapters of books.

Contributions (cheques to Turner Trust Fund) and suggestions may be addressed to Overland or to Leonie Sandercock at 205 Lennox Street, Richmond, Vic. 3121.

IAN TURNER
AND GARRY STURGESS

Australia, The Myth and November 11

Three events in Australian history happened on 11 November. These are the execution of Ned Kelly in 1880, the armistice which ended the Great War in 1918, and the dismissal by the Governor General, Sir John Kerr, of the Whitlam Government in 1975. The following discussion on these events was recorded and produced by Garry Sturgess, for broadcast on the Australian Broadcasting Commission's 'Broadband' program of 14 November 1978. It is reprinted here with Garry Sturgess's permission. In transcription some editing has been carried out, mainly to reduce the oral to the printed mode, and to obviate repetitions and redundancies. Transcription by Joanna and Stephen Murray-Smith and Ken Gott.

STURGESS: Ian, there seems to be a tradition in Australian history almost of heroic failure, a tradition which is characterised by these three events. It's something I have spoken to Ian Jones about, and to Mungo McCallum, and they see some kind of parallel thread between the three events.

TURNER: Unhappily, November 11 is Armistice Day and not Anzac Day. Anzac Day is the real celebration of the heroic failure, because we lost the battle at Gallipoli. Armistice Day celebrates the major European war, which our side won. Perhaps we might as well incorporate Anzac Day into Armistice Day for the purpose of this argument, but they're not really the same thing. I don't think the Diggers would think of themselves as being a failure, would they? Anzac Day . . . Well, the Gallipoli campaign was a masterstroke of Churchill's genius which in fact dropped off the edge of Sari Bair into the Aegean Sea, and didn't work all that well. But after all, we did win the war. But the Diggers are remembered more for Gallipoli, which *was* a tragic failure, than they are for the battles in France. If you think of the Anzacs, failure is fair enough — or perhaps the tragic hero is the better metaphor. I'm quite sure that Whitlam and Kelly, and the Diggers of world war one, are all in some sense tragic heroes.

STURGESS: Do they really make it to that? I mean people talk of Australian history more in terms of tragic comedy than tragedy.

TURNER: I think so. I don't think tragic comedy is the right way of looking at Australians. Australians use comedy in a particular kind of way, as a means of compensating for the natural and social disasters by which they're continually surrounded. But Kelly is not a comic figure, Whitlam is not a comic figure, and the Anzacs are not comic figures. They are tragic figures. And in many ways they are classic figures of tragedy because, like the heroes of the great Shakespearean or Greek tragedies, in a sense they are defeated by divisions within themselves. Kelly was defeated at the end because he could no longer live outside human society, he had to come back in: the bushranger coming in from the cold, if you like. He wanted to fight it out at Glenrowan and settle it in the only way in which it could be settled. Whitlam was a man of giant stature, who was brought down by a secondary man whom he himself had created, had appointed to the position of Governor-General. The Anzacs were divided heroes because they bought their heroism at the cost of defeat on the Gallipoli Peninsula and the terrible slaughter of those three long battles on the Somme. So, I think we are really talking about classic tragedy rather than tragic comedy.

STURGESS: Do you think that the idea of tragic comedy is built up because these three figures, within themselves, had a great amount of humor through which they viewed their own situations? Are we mistaking that part of their character for tragic comedy, rather than seeing them as tragic

figures with a certain amount of humor which was revealing of their own situation?

TURNER: No, I don't think that is quite on target. I think the centre of the target is that European Australians (though you may want to extend this to Aboriginal Australians as well) have lived with harshness, defeat, failure, all the old rhetoric about drought and flood and fire — it's a hard country and so on. Their way of reconciling themselves to impossible circumstance has been to treat it with a sardonic humor, and that is why it appears to be comedy. But underlying that it is not funny, it is not a farce, it is not slapstick, it is a tragedy. But it is a tragedy which in terms of the Australian tradition is treated with sardonic humor, because that's the only way that you can live with tragedy in our tradition.

STURGESS: It seems to me that within all of these conflicts there's an element of divisiveness. The Kelly gang was supported by large sections of the community. The conscription debates of the first world war split the Australian Labor movement. November 11th is obviously a question of division. Can you look at these three events in terms of the massive splits which they introduced to Australian society?

TURNER: I certainly think that you can do that, but I would think of it in slightly different terms. I would think of the execution of Ned Kelly and the sacking of Gough Whitlam in 1975 as being in a sense both victories for the establishment. Here were the establishment forces coming out on top in an acutely divided social situation, the popular forces losing on both occasions. The Anzac thing and the whole Digger tradition is rather different. I'm quite sure the Diggers were not only pleased on November 11th, 1918 at eleven a.m. when finally that bloody slaughter was finished, but also that they took pride in the victory. I'm quite sure also that for very many of those Diggers, the ones on the non-establishment side, the private soldiers and non-commissioned officers, rather than the officer class, the victory itself later on turned bitter in their mouths. But of course the social divisions are always there, and that's inescapable, we don't live in a unified society, a monolithic society, we live in a divided society. People have different intellectual allegiances, people have different values, material interests and so on, and those differences are reflected in the way people think of major events. Kelly was a major event, Whitlam

was a major event, and indeed I would guess that Whitlam has some of the mythic qualities that Kelly had. I'm not saying that Whitlam was a bushranger, but Whitlam has already some of the stature of a folk hero in wide sections of the Australian community. Quite apart from the way Whitlam is judged by the historians in ten, twenty, thirty years time, there is going to be in wide sections of Australian society, the same sections which have a degree of admiration or reverence or whatever for Kelly and folk heroes of that kind, a similar kind of folk reverence for a figure like Whitlam.

STURGESS: Well, can we go into the mythic qualities which you think Whitlam possesses in common with Ned Kelly?

TURNER: I think essentially that I would have to say something like stature, though that's not a very good word, perhaps you'd prefer charisma. It's a capacity to capture the imagination of people. They were both big men, not physically — Kelly was quite a short man, Whitlam was a very big man, but big men in the type of psychological impact they made on their community at their time. They were men who could command allegiance, they were men who when they spoke, even when they spoke wrongly, could nevertheless command respect, and even command following. They were men who in a way were forgiven their mistakes, if you like, because of some kind of greatness that was in them. When I'm saying that, of course I don't want to suggest for a moment that they're men in the same kind of social situation, they weren't. Kelly was an individual kind of anarchist rebel, and Whitlam was a consummately skilled politician in a mass democracy, but they do both have a legendary quality of greatness, the capacity to inspire affection, respect, the capacity to command allegiance and respect.

STURGESS: If we look at the way Kelly approached his own death, it was with resignation, a kind of 'such is life' attitude. Whitlam was quite the reverse, he was raging against established authority right to the end, but after that point he seems to have developed a certain amount of affability.

TURNER: I think that's true. If you look at the Anzacs, they approached their situation with a kind of sardonic resignation. That's implicit in all the writing, the letters Bill Gammage and

Patsy Adam-Smith worked over, the kind of humor that comes through in the *Anzac Book* and things like that. There is a sardonic resignation towards circumstances imposed on them from outside. Kelly had anger, there's a lot of anger in the Jerilderie Letter, but after his capture and after he had lost, as he inevitably had to lose, the battle of Glenrowan, his final words were "Such is life", resignation. Whitlam went out fighting. That last speech on Parliament House steps, which is one of the most vivid images in all Australian politics, is a speech of anger. Whitlam maintains anger about those events, although he now sees them in terms of resignation, because that's in the past, that's water under the bridge, and you can't rewrite history.

STURGESS: It nevertheless marks an extraordinary drift of mind in his own circumstance. With most so-called 'tragic figures' the so-called 'rage' lasts until their death, but Whitlam's more or less made a clear division, and has started out on a new life.

TURNER: But the great tragic figures were in fact destroyed physically by their tragedy. Hamlet dies in the last act of "Hamlet", doesn't he? And Lear dies, doesn't he? And so with the Greek tragedies, Whitlam doesn't die. Whitlam is assassinated politically, but Whitlam continues and Whitlam is a man of extraordinary intelligence and subtlety of mind who, I believe, is in exactly the right job at the moment. Whitlam is going to write his own history, and I hope he himself is going to be a central figure in the history that he writes, as he was a central figure in creating history in this country. So in a sense you don't have that neat dramatic resolution of the tragedy, as you get with Sophocles or Shakespeare. Whitlam lives as a man to write his own history.

STURGESS: We're really taking this to a high plane when you're invoking people like Sophocles and Shakespeare.

TURNER: I don't see any reason to think the drama of Whitlam is different in kind to the kind of drama Shakespeare created in his Roman plays, "Julius Caesar" and so on. Those Roman plays are all about politics, and people are killed for politics. We are rather kinder, we no longer knife people to death, these days in politics, we only knife them in the metaphorical sense. But the kind of politics in Shakespeare's Roman

dramas, the nights of the long knives, Brutus and Caesar and so on, that's not in kind unlike what was happening in Canberra, and the issues were no greater in Shakespeare's Rome than they were in Canberra in 1975. I don't think that is an unfair comparison at all, nor do I think it is an unfair comparison to suggest that Whitlam is a genuinely tragic hero.

STURGESS: Throughout the three circumstances that we're dealing with tonight there also seems to be an incredible amount of naivety. Fighting for King and country, Whitlam's own appraisal that the establishment weren't as bad as they turned out to be.

TURNER: I think that is in a sense true, but almost all actors in significant historical events have to be in a sense optimistic, and to be optimistic is in a sense to be naive, because, if you count them in numerical terms, the great majority of people involved in historical events lose. Obviously history is written more about the winners than about the losers, but the majority of the people are losers, not winners. Yet people who are involved in historical events are almost always optimistic; very few people enter onto the historical stage believing they are going to lose, otherwise why go into it, you think you are going to win — and that of course is part of the tragedy. Optimism is in fact defeated by circumstance.

STURGESS: Does the fact that history is mostly written about winners, and the fact that most of Australian history really is about losers, suggest a new way of looking at Australian history? Almost folkloric figures, who did in the end fail?

TURNER: There's something very curious about the Australian character, or psyche, or whatever you like to call it. In a sense there is a deeply inbuilt belief implicit in most of what's regarded as the classical Australian literature. If you think of writers like Lawson and Joseph Furphy and Xavier Herbert, they are talking about losing, and they're trying to reconcile people to the inevitability of loss. It is odd that we don't make heroes of the people who've been successful. Not even Monash. The exploring heroes are Burke and Wills, and they lost. Eyre, Sturt, Stuart, the ones who looked like being winners at some stage or other, are not the heroes. There's something in our tradition which suggests to our people that — given the country we inhabit — we just have to live with the knowledge that we are losers.

STURGESS: Is it tied up with the geography of the country? A parched land that doesn't really belong to modern civilization?

TURNER: Yes, I think it's very tied up with the physical environment, and that is the message that comes through most of the writers of the 1880s and the 1890s, running through to Herbert and others. I also think it's true to say that the kind of social structure we have created in Australia, and the kind of aware community that we have in Australia, suggests to most people that really the old idea of a field marshal's baton in everybody's knapsack, Log Cabin to White House and that kind of thing, is not on in our society. People don't expect to win in this environment.

STURGESS: And the tradition that Australia is a levelling, cut down the tall poppies place, is that also rooted there?

TURNER: Very likely, yes, though when you say "Cut down the tall poppies", what are we cutting down? We don't cut down our sporting heroes, Jeff Thomson or Ron Barassi, or the great racehorses, Phar Lap, Bernborough, Gungahlin and so on. That's almost the only area of Australian endeavor in which people may be expected to succeed. Perhaps it's in the sporting arena that we best celebrate ourselves and our national pride. Here success can come to people from down the bottom of the social ladder, if you like: it's the way in which individual excellence can best be fulfilled. Intellectual endeavor, I think, has always been suspect in Australia. Both politically and socially, the general climate has been anti-intellectual, and that is one of the things that ran against Whitlam. He was a man of significant intellectual quality who was head and shoulders, in that sense as well as physically, over most of the people who surrounded him, and they disliked him for that too.

STURGESS: The Kellys with their dash and style signified a political division. They were great riders, great marksmen. There was something that was immediately identifiable about them, that people could rally towards in their mind. In the case of the Anzacs again you have the physical qualities: they could shoot and ride, and they were heroic. But Whitlam's different: the shots come from his mouth and mind, verbal ammunition.

TURNER: You can't really think only about the Kellys. You've got to go back to Ben Hall and Darcy Gardiner and even back beyond them to Jack Dowling, the wild colonial boy, and Bold Jack Donohue and so on, back to the 1820s. There's a constant stream of social protest of an individual rather than a collective kind that runs through public awareness and sympathy. So it must be said that—as you say—it's a social phenomenon. They are seen essentially as men of action, as bushmen, as men who are incomparably able to deal with the natural environment, to survive in it and turn it to their own purposes. It's true that Whitlam's ammunition is verbal in a way that that of others wasn't, though Kelly verbalized a great deal—the Jerilderie Letter is a very long letter. Maybe Whitlam's shots came out through the mouth, but his magazine is knowledge and intelligence, and some of the bullets were pretty hot—and he didn't make many friends when he fired those bullets.

STURGESS: And yet people are warming to him as a man of action, in the same way as they warmed to the Kellys and the Anzacs?

TURNER: I think that's true. Where people on his side of politics almost revered him in leadership, they warm to him and make a retrospective hero of him in defeat. That says something about the Australian temperament and the Australian culture.

STURGESS: You've talked about the Kellys, the Anzacs, the downfall of Gough Whitlam—there's an element of tragedy that works its way through all of these things. Writers, poets, artists like Sidney Nolan have been attracted to these events in certain circumstances. Is there tragic, heroic substance here for transference to art?

TURNER: I would think so. Perhaps the best literary expression of the Kelly gang is Douglas Stewart's verse drama, which really is a very acute view of his divided character. Interestingly, the intellectual in the drama is not Kelly but Joe Byrne, who makes the psychological appreciation of Kelly the essential man of action, the leader. Oddly, there isn't anything else in literature as striking: one good novel by Leonard Mann, and a few good poems about the Diggers of the first world war, but they haven't yet found the apotheosis in literature that Stewart creates for Kelly. But in painting, certainly. Nolan, who is

a great mythologist, created a mythology first of Kelly, later of the Anzacs, later again of some of the explorers. And all of Nolan's paintings of these significant, dominating, dramatic historic characters have a quality of mythmaking about them. Give it another four or five years and it wouldn't surprise me in the least if, as the Whitlam character acquires a patina, as it were, important playwrights, novelists, painters, begin to look at the Whitlam government as a kind of mythic turning point in Australian history.

STURGESS: I am struck with the image of Whitlam being a kind of Huck Finn in all this — having the opportunity to stay around to watch his own funeral.

TURNER: I would very much hope that that happens. The most delightful circumstance that I could think of in that connection would be for the painters to paint the mythology of the Whitlam years, for the dramatists to write the mythology of the Whitlam years, and in both cases for Gough Whitlam to be there at the launchings, writing the reviews.

STURGESS: A rare opposition, then, because Whitlam throughout his career has been known for spiking imagery.

TURNER: [Laughs.] One of the reasons that Whitlam is graceful in defeat is that he has that blessed sense of irony in history. Perhaps in reflecting on his own mythology he would create a new mythology. Gough is not only a man about whom myths can be made; he's also a great myth-maker, in the sense that mythic heroes are created out of great figures. Of course the myth means that they are writ larger than in real life, but that's because that's the way that people *want* to see them. People create myths because they want heroic figures with whom they can identify; and of course the figures come through enlarged and aggrandized.

STURGESS: Did Ned Kelly cast back through history to find people on whom he could model himself?

TURNER: Of course. Kelly casts back to the heroes of the Irish rebellion against the British, and one of the legends about the last night in the pub at Glenrowan, before the shoot-out, was that they were singing "The Wild Colonial Boy". That's a straight attachment to legend — Jack

Dowling beginning his wild career twenty years before the Kellys are in the business, and of course Kelly has a sense of historic continuity. He has — as did Whitlam — a sense of himself as an actor in an historic situation. Kelly knew that he was going to be a figure of history. Whitlam knew that he was a figure of history. You can only make myths about people who have that kind of self-consciousness, who understand themselves as historic actors.

STURGESS: In fact if we look back to the Jerilderie Letter we see a paraphrasing of some of the rebellious history that was written beforehand, and Kelly taking on in direct identification.

TURNER: Kelly goes back in the Jerilderie Letter, his major public statement, to two closely connected prime sources. One is to the wrongs of Ireland, the small Irish peasant against the big English landlord and the English establishment; and the other is straight through to ballads like "Moreton Bay", which sing about the experiences of Irish convicts under the English colonial establishment in convict Australia. There is that sense of historical continuity in Kelly — he knew he was a man who belonged to a particular part of history, and his part of history was the dispossessed Irish peasant, struggling to become a small landholder in the Greta-Glenrowan area. If you look at research into the close network of Kelly sympathisers, and there's some of that just recently published, it's quite clear that the Kelly sympathisers also belonged to that milieu. The world of Kelly is the world of the Irish rebel, of the individual hero, of what the English historian Eric Hobsbawm would call the primitive rebel, the pre-industrial rebel, like Guiliano the Sicilian bandit, or Taras Bulba, the Ukrainian bandit, who comes out of a small-holding, peasant community, and who sees the answer to social problems in individual terms, who sees the social fight as being an individual fight rather than a collective fight. As John Manifold once put it in a ballad, "It's a thousand like Ned Kelly who will raise the flag of stars".

STURGESS: Jumping forward, Whitlam of course saw himself as part of a consensus leadership. Does Whitlam have any of that feeling about himself, that he's an individual rebel?

TURNER: No, that's not open to people who are involved in that kind of politics in Australia at the moment. You do get individual rebels in

Australian politics, but they're not in the parliaments but underground somewhere in the counter-culture, or living up at Nimbin, Tweed Heads or on the Atherton Tablelands. I don't really believe these people have dropped out of society. They just have a different set of social values, which they express in their own kind of way. But individual rebellion is not open to anybody who like Whitlam was involved in the mainstream of politics, and very good at it.

STURGESS: This sense you were talking about, of Kelly and Whitlam being historical actors, self-consciously pursuing a historical stance. This is true of some of the anti-heroes too; and I'm thinking for instance of Sir John Kerr, who obviously saw himself in the heroic tradition of stepping into history and ordering it to his own circumstances. He saw himself as an actor in a particular historical situation—and yet we don't regard him in the same light as Whitlam.

TURNER: I think that's true. I think Kerr saw himself as a person who was playing out an historic role, who was intervening in the historic process and making his mark on that process—and, in a sense, that's fair enough, because the action that he took (with whatever help from his friends, to borrow from the Beatles) did in fact very significantly change the course of Australian history. But I would be very doubtful indeed if Kerr will be seen by the people who mythologise our history as a hero figure. (I'm rather less certain about the people who write our history.) Of the three main actors—Sir John Kerr, Malcolm Fraser and Gough Whitlam—the one who will emerge as the hero figure for the mythologizers will undoubtedly be Whitlam.

STURGESS: Why do we characterise one in heroic terms, as striding out into history, taking on all before him and gloriously failing, and the other more or less as a comic knockabout figure who stepped into history but buried himself doing so.

TURNER: I think because Sir John Kerr emerges from that whole episode as the man with the dagger behind the arras. He's the Byzantine conspirator; he's the classic assassinator of the pattern of Medici Florence, rather than the man who stands in the public eye. He's Brutus if you like. He's the behind-the-scenes man who prepares his weapons, who sharpens his sword, who barbs his arrows or mixes his poisons in secrecy, and who then constructs a situation in which he

can use them. And that's not a heroic role. I think the hero under those circumstances is the victim. In a way it's back to the old theme of the hero in defeat.

STURGESS: I don't know if this fits in with the Anzacs and I suppose it doesn't, but certainly with regard to Kelly and with regard to Whitlam we see very clearly the influence of conservative judges on our history, people who have changed historical circumstances, who are involved with the legal process. In Kelly's case, of course, it was Judge Barry, in Whitlam's case it was the Governor-General.

TURNER: It's very hard for a conservative to be a hero, because what conservatism is all about is preserving existing circumstances, and that's not a very daring nor a very heroic stance to adopt. The heroes are always the people who want to change things. And very often the heroes who want to change things are the people who are defeated in seeking those changes. If you think back through the long tradition of the Labor movement—right back to peasant rebellions, Jack Cade and so on—you see what I mean. You might have to make exceptions in the radical movement in terms of people who headed successful revolutions like Lenin and Mao Tse-tung, but that raises another question of whether their revolutions were later on betrayed, but I don't think we want to get into that area. The conservative movement doesn't have many great heroes except military figures who are fighting for the Empire. Sir Francis Drake, Lord Nelson, the Duke of Wellington and people like that became heroes of conservatism. The radical movement's heroes are the people who sought change, or who headed movements for change and who very often were destroyed—or partly destroyed themselves.

STURGESS: Do you think there's some kind of danger in this—that through the process of mythologizing, we build up these people into an importance that they simply don't have? Is a figure like John Kerr or Redmond Barry far more influential across the broad spread of history than somebody like Whitlam?

TURNER: Barry sent Kelly to the noose after he'd been found guilty by the jury. Kerr sent Whitlam to the parliamentary noose after he'd not been found guilty by anybody—except, of course, the Opposition in Parliament, and perhaps

the public opinion polls at that moment. So if you're looking at what actually happened at that time, yes. What the mythology is about is *not* what happened at the time but what people *want* to believe in; and what they want to believe in, in a sense, conditions the way in which they are going to act. So therefore what becomes important is not so much the historical reality of the past, but the present consequences of the myth which is created about those past events. It's not the past events which determine what is going to happen today, it's the myths about those past events, the beliefs about the past events, the kind of hero figures who've been plucked out of the past so that people may find a guide for their actions in the present. That's what's important about the myths. The relationship between the past reality and the present myth is of course interesting to historians, but also equally interesting to those of us who are concerned with contemporary events are the present consequences of what people believe to be the case about the past.

STURGESS: Isn't there a danger that in ordering their lives around myth people will overstate, over-react, be let down because of their casting back to the past?

TURNER: No, it's not a danger. It could only become a danger if the myths of the past led people to believe that they were in some way or other invincible. I don't think there's any real danger of Australian mythology leading people to believe they are invincible, or that they are going to be carried to victory. If you believe in the kinds of value embodied in the mythology of Whitlam, for example, this comes out as saying "Here was an heroic figure who was trying to do his best for the common man but who was defeated by the forces of the establishment." That myth, then, is used in contemporary circumstances as a basis on which people can build a new movement directed towards the goals and ambitions of the common man, so the myth is not bad at all if you're on that side of politics — as I am. As an historian I have an intellectual interest in the relationship between the reality and the myth, but as a political activist I support that kind of myth because it contributes to values that I personally share.

STURGESS: So when Ned Kelly said in the court room that he would come back to claim justice, when Whitlam on the steps of the Parliament

said that no one would save the Governor-General, could both have been right?

TURNER: I don't know — history will judge that. But they both felt themselves to be parts of an historical process which asserted the rights of the common man against the rights of wealth, property, prestige, political power and the establishment. If you ask me to judge whether the rights of the common man will ever prevail against the rights of the establishment, I can only reply "Let's suck it and see." But I know which side I'm on. I don't have any magic prescription for success, and I certainly don't have any guarantee that my side of politics is going to win in the long run. I don't know.

STURGESS: We've talked about Whitlam as an heroic failure, somebody who's striving against impossible odds, but if we're to judge the Whitlam Government as a whole, as we did with the Anzacs, there are a lot who emerged with less heroism than Whitlam, people who in the normal course of events should have been revered as folk heroes. One of those people, of course, is Jim Cairns.

TURNER: I don't think of Whitlam as an heroic failure, I think of Whitlam as being heroic in defeat. I don't think of his being a failure at all. He had enormous successes and enormous achievements and in part his defeat was caused by the magnitude of his own successes and his own achievements because they threatened all sorts of established positions in Australian society. Cairns is a quite different kind of character, and also a figure around which I think mythologies will be built. Cairns grew to enormous stature in the 1969-72 period because he was almost the only man in Australia who could bring together the whole of the anti-Vietnam movement, sections as diverse as disaffected Liberals who were moving towards the Australia Party on the right wing of the anti-Vietnam movement, and as Maoists who really wanted to turn the anti-Vietnam movement into a revolutionary movement against Australian capitalism, on the far left. Jim could pull all those things together and could stand as the symbol of a coherent and united movement, despite the diversities contained within that movement. Jim emerged as a person of tremendous stature, but quite different from Whitlam. Jim's stature came from his capacity to clarify issues — if you like, to simplify issues, to make the single issue of the Vietnam involve-

ment alive in the minds of a very wide section of the Australian public, and to get them out on the streets and into action on that one issue. His thinking didn't have the kind of subtlety that Whitlam's thinking had, and in a sense it didn't have the multi-faceted quality that Whitlam's had. In my judgement, when Jim was in leading positions in Cabinet as Treasurer and Acting Prime Minister he was in a sense a victim of his own kindness. He trusted people too easily. He was not critical enough of the people around him, or of the people who submitted ideas to him. He didn't think in complex ways, he was a much more simple man than Whitlam. Whitlam is a very complex character indeed. But they both have a heroic quality. One of the things that's very interesting about Cairns is that in his dropping out of parliamentary activity, the growth of his belief that parliamentary politics is not a real way of solving society's problems, his movement back to personalist-individualist solutions, these lead him back to the kind of individual protest that the bushrangers were all about. Perhaps in the long term the kind of ideology that Jim now professes will be seen as prefiguring something very important in the kind of future towards which we are moving, as technology changes the whole fabric of society, our attitudes to work, to leisure and to individual self-fulfillment as against fulfillment in a work process or in a power structure. I've got a guess that Jim will seem to be very important in the future in that respect too. But his immediate heroism is certainly the heroism of the man who could crystallize and bring into action one simple, central, overwhelmingly important issue, like the issue of Vietnam. That makes him a different sort of hero, though I think he's a hero too.

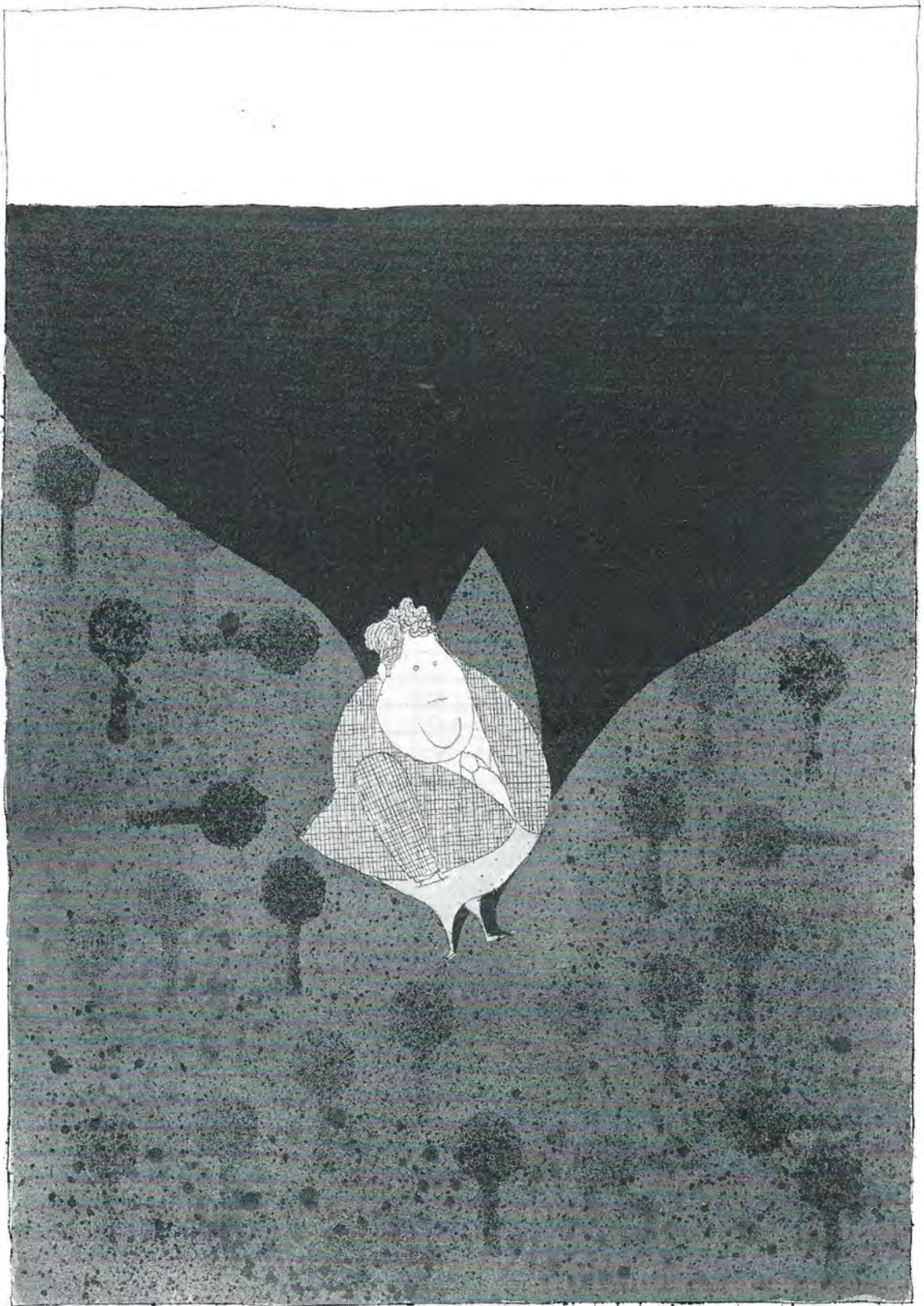
STURGESS: You don't think that, where Cairns is concerned, the concept of hero is beaten down to a far greater extent than in the case of Whitlam — Cairns emerged bruised and bloodied from the years of the Whitlam government, to an extent that Whitlam didn't.

TURNER: Both Cairns and Whitlam have a very deep conviction that what they were doing was right. Cairns as the leader of a mass movement,

Whitlam as the supremely confident, for a time successful and imaginative, politician working through the parliamentary process — both had the capacity to convince a large number of Australians that they were right, and to capture their imagination for the movements they were heading, each in their own ways. They're parallel rather than competing figures: both are contributing towards the same kind of end in terms of the political process, but each is operating in a different kind of political environment, with a different view of what the political process is all about. But both are heroic figures.

STURGESS: Kelly, Whitlam, Cairns — with these we are talking about individuals. But the Anzac tradition is lumped together. Are there any individuals within this tradition that can be singled out for special treatment?

TURNER: I think no. I think the Anzacs were probably fighting in the wrong war at the wrong time, they were conned into fighting the most bloody of all wars in terms of the individual soldier, by people whose motives the men in the trenches had no way of knowing about: I think that we have a collective hero here. The heroic figure there is the Digger who comes through in the cartoons of the time: Lance Mattinson, Cec Hart, Will Dyson, the black-and-white artists who were actually drawing the Diggers in the trenches at the time. They're not drawing officers, or even NCOs — they're drawing the private soldier, and he's the heroic figure, the undifferentiated figure, with his own attitude to the war, his own attitude to life and his own attitude to death. "Next thing you'll be wanting flowers on your grave!" — it's that kind of attitude. A sardonic acceptance of awful reality. The generals aren't the heroes, not even the VC winners are the heroes, though I suppose in a sense Albert Jacka emerges as something of a hero figure. But the real heroic figure is the common soldier of the first AIF. And of course that is different. Whitlam and Cairns are both heroes in that they symbolise a big popular movement, and that places them closer to the Diggers than it does to say the bushrangers.



FRED WILLIAMS

RICK AMOR '78

It has been said, and supporting evidence is easily found, that the most difficult character for a novelist or a dramatist to create, and sustain, is that of a morally and socially good man or woman. Such fictional people, meant to be kindly and reliable, turn sour under the pen and become infuriating prigs, while truth and decency make nausea rise in the reader's throat, to be cleared only by a draught of good sharp villainy. So also, in writing of 'real' people, we are often aware of the cynic whispering over our shoulder that nobody can be so boringly good as that, and that if we can add just a modicum of vice or bastardry then the portrait will leap more readily and interestingly from the page. It is easier to write about Wagner as a man than to make Schubert more than a chubby, short-lived angel. The failure to finish one symphony (if it was even meant to be finished) can hardly be made into a gripping drama of human fallibility.

Given all that, I am now to write about a man who is not only one of Australia's finest living painters, but who would be treated with respect and admiration if he were not. The envious and destructive, who keep in training by daily workouts in pubs or on paper, have found few areas in his achievement or behavior upon which to practise their skills, although he has not reached middle-age without scars, for what are a few lies among enemies? All of which is a little unnerving. So why not settle for a few jokey remarks about his figure, balanced by some routine observations on his rediscovery of the gum tree, and call it a day? The reason why I will not do this is perhaps perverse, but I find myself, for the first time in this series, irritated by, and in disagreement with, my brilliant colleague on the opposite page. He has given us not a man, but a cleverly designed captive balloon floating above a grey and bumpy terrain rather curiously scattered with balls of

wool stuck on knitting needles as if abandoned by a routed and retreating army of maiden aunts. So he has spurred me to correct his portrait, knowing full well of the risk of making another which is just as distorted, if in a different way.

It seems highly probable that our subject would be the first to describe his build as bulky, but the last to realise the considerable dignity and undeniable presence which sets him apart in a room full of handsome and active self-stylists. Seen from behind, or at the first undemanding glance in a tram, his profession would not announce itself. Perhaps an engineer, a woodwork instructor or a tuba player, for he has the build of a man able to handle difficult and complex tools cleanly and with authority. This may be a legacy of the years during which he sustained himself as a maker of excellent picture-frames.

Like many who came to maturity in the 1950s, and who do not wish to chase a generation which they can never catch, he is clean-shaven. In any case, the face is not one which would sit comfortably under a beard or moustache. The crisp hair is cut short, and conspicuously fails to meet the collar of the white shirt or that of the unfashionable tweed sports jacket.

But it is the face which matters. This has obviously presided over the making of innumerable delicate decisions, and knows the pain when a touch of paint or an etched line will not coincide exactly with the image lying behind the eyes. It has nothing of the release which masks those who work on the wilder shores of expressionism. At times it is glazed with the strain of success or ill-health, and then it folds itself around the eyes as though to escape from one or other of these burdens. Success has demanded a heavy repayment in social appearances and service on committees, and these have perhaps been made too readily and at too high a rate of interest. And

yet on a committee decisions are made firmly after proper consideration, and the reasons spelled out in the light and unexpectedly high voice. As a judge or buyer of art objects his choice is often unfashionable, but seen in the light of his own work sometimes inevitable.

His own output has been large, with a high ratio of success to failure. Perhaps he destroys a great deal. In considering the work it is important to recognise certain events in his background. After a period at the National Gallery Art School, he worked with George Bell, who might be said, like the now almost forgotten Englishman Glyn Philpot, R.A., to have been frightened out of the mediocre by the shade of Cézanne. If this was so he passed on the fear of this god to the best of his students. After Bell it was London for six years from 1950. These were the years of the Euston Road Group and the re-discovery of Walter Sickert, for which, in large part, they were responsible. Sickert is obviously present in the etchings of tawdry and grotesque performers and street 'characters' which were made in London from about 1954. The old wanderer travelled also as a painter in the aesthetic baggage of the young one on the return to Melbourne. But Sickert had to wait in the wings as he had done so often before while Cézanne was worked out of the system (e.g. "The Charcoal Burner" in the National Gallery of Victoria) in a group of paintings which are now probably underrated. It might be noted here that in Bernard Smith's *Australian Painting*, first published in 1962, and reprinted in 1965, the artist is included with Charles Bush, Ronald Greenaway and Ellen Rubbo on the last-but-one page as having "produced noteworthy work". None of this work is illustrated.

But the You-yangs are not the Montagne Ste Victoire, and Sickert was on hand to help with the new material. Always helpful, he brought as part of the team his own mentors, Whistler and the Japanese. A delicious sense of unified surface punctuated with superbly placed accents now drove out the broken planes of Cézanne, if they retained as a bonus the almost agonized touch of

the later water colors. Whistler provided a new economy in the etchings and, with the Japanese, a sense of spacing, which had been lost in Australian landscape painting since the Heidelberg School. These influences, absorbed almost unconsciously, produced landscapes the truth and integrity of which have been measured on the one hand by the Sunday driver who points them out to his wife, and on the other in the exhibition in which (to initial screams of protest) the National Gallery of Victoria mixed them with early Streetons. Here was not only the evidence of a continuing landscape tradition, but an acknowledgement of the common debt to Asia through Whistler. At times the extreme reduction of content in the landscapes may have resurrected the old jibe of "less and less being shown more and more beautifully — soon nothing will be shown superbly", but always when the edge had been reached the richness came back. In more recent works the limitation of color which paralleled the reduction of forms has been rejected in favor of an almost ferocious blaze, which excitingly is still to be resolved.

It was perhaps inevitable that after so long a pictorial, hermit-like existence, in a place where no human being or animal intruded, that either the artist or his admirers should suggest that he should paint a portrait. There are now several of these, and it seems that portraits will continue to form a part — if a limited one — of the output. It must be said that they are very curious objects. The abrupt, capricious and even perverse drawing of early etchings has come back often in the form of strangely reduced and twisted limbs. The paint has a new density which, alongside the nervous yet inevitable touch of the best landscapes, looks almost overworked. With their strange solemnity these portraits have a perception which makes many other Australian 'face pictures' look skittish and trivial. It is too early to make large claims for what is at present a small group of works, but it is just possible that, as the artist comes up to the magic age of sixty, these images will be seen to be at least junior members of Goya's family.

Unavoidably, the list of Ian Turner's published works below does not include many of his newspaper articles and reviews and his anonymous or 'ghosted' works. To cite just one example, a biographer would have to consult the publications of the Victorian ALP for much of Turner's political writing since the late 1960s. It is likely that in compiling this bibliography we have overlooked some major articles, and readers are invited to correct any oversights and errors. Of course, no bibliography could do credit to the help Ian Turner gave students and other writers; but while it is no measure of his influence, it testifies as eloquently as most other records could to the uncommon range of Ian Turner's interests and to the extent of his contribution to Australian letters and Australian intellectual life. Items by Ian Turner published in this issue of *Overland* are not included in this bibliography, in the construction of which Leonie Sandercock gave valuable assistance.

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An addendum to this bibliography will be published in Overland 79.

Meanjin

SINCE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR is the theme of the Spring *Meanjin*: a look at various facets of the women's movement four years on. What emerges is a great diversity, not least in the six statements by women artists collected by Janine Burke. Susan Higgins and Jill Matthews describe the wide range of feminist publications now available in Australia, Anna Gibbs demonstrates the growing nexus between structuralism and feminism in France (endorsed by an interview with Michel Tournier, later in the issue) while Jennifer Strauss considers androgyny in relation to the poetry of Wright, Harwood and Dobson, and Dorothy Hewett talks illuminatingly about herself. And lots more, including a moving story by the late Anne Elder. Plus a splendid piece by Brian Matthews on what it's like to visit Ulster. All in the Spring *Meanjin*, out now.

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books

FERVENT AUSTRALIAN NATIONALIST

Ian Turner

Colm Kiernan: *Calwell: A Personal and Political Biography* (Nelson, 1978).

Arthur Calwell was the last of the depression generation to play a leading part in Australian Labor politics. He had all the strengths and weaknesses, all the passions and prejudices of the men of his time, and in him they were writ large.

Calwell was a fervent Australian nationalist. With Australia's first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, he believed in "a nation for a continent and a continent for a nation".

"To no other nation in the world has the opportunity been granted for the sole possession and development of a sea-girt land-mass by a single people", he wrote. "To no other nation has it been given to write their will and destiny upon an empty land of such vast extent as it has been to us."

Yet it was Calwell who, as Minister for Immigration in the post-war Chifley government, created and administered the policy which has moved Australia towards becoming a multicultural society. Not that he saw it that way — he believed that, within a generation, the sons and daughters of European migrants would be "absorbed into the Australian society", would become part of a homogeneous culture.

He did not believe that non-white migrants could be absorbed and he found the idea of miscegenation, the mixture of races, repulsive. So he remained a firm defender of White Australia, even after his party had left it behind.

Calwell described himself as a socialist of the Fabian persuasion. Like many Melbournians of his generation, his first acquaintance with social-

ism came through the Victorian Socialist Party. One of the rising young stars of the V.S.P. was John Curtin, in whose wartime government Calwell served as Minister for Information.

Before Caucus elected him to the ministry, Calwell was one of Curtin's most bitter critics. Curtin's biographer, Lloyd Ross, attributes this to frustrated ambition — the Prime Minister had opposed Calwell's election to Cabinet. Associate Professor Colm Kiernan, in his biography of Calwell, takes a more charitable view. The differences were ideological, he suggests. Curtin was willing to subordinate socialism to the war effort. Calwell wanted to press on regardless. Beyond that, Calwell led the campaign in Caucus and in the Labor Party in 1942 against the Prime Minister's move to extend the deployment of Australian conscripts to the South West Pacific. He had misread the feeling of the party and the nation, and he lost. Later, after Curtin's death, Calwell declared him to have been Australia's greatest Prime Minister.

Calwell's anti-conscriptionism, and his devout Catholicism, came from his Irish ancestry. On his own account, he was under security surveillance during the First World War because of his support for the Irish cause. He made a hero of his new archbishop, Dr. Daniel Mannix. In 1945, he broke all the precedents of his church to issue a public statement condemning Rome's appointment of Sydney's Archbishop Gilroy as Cardinal over the head of Mannix.

It was this devotion to his church and his archbishop which made the Labor split of 1955 so painful to him. He had resisted the attempts of the Santamaria organisation to control the labor movement from outside, and he was suspicious of their obsession with the Communist menace. When the split came, he stayed with his party.

Most of his fellow Catholics in the Victorian Labor Party, and the dominant forces in his church, went with the D.L.P. To them, Calwell was a traitor. "All Celts are bitter people," he wrote in his autobiography. "When they become divided on issues where both sides feel deeply, anything is possible." Calwell was made to suffer for his sins.

His faith was unshaken. When Mannix was living his last hours, Calwell went to make his peace. He wept at the archbishop's death. And when, ten years later, Calwell died, it was Cardinal Knox who celebrated the requiem mass for the repose of his soul.

If Robert Menzies was Australia's luckiest political leader, Arthur Calwell was the unluckiest. For him, everything happened too late. For nearly twenty years, he was heir apparent to the seat of Melbourne, which Dr. Maloney held until his death in 1940 at the age of 85. Calwell was 63 when he succeeded Dr. Evatt as Federal Labor leader in 1960. In 1961, he ran Menzies down to a two-seat majority. In 1963, Menzies upstaged him on state aid to church schools and romped home. Then came Vietnam. The 1966 election was a disaster for Calwell and for Labor. By now he was 70, and his day was past.

Would he have made a good Prime Minister, given his fair share of luck? Professor Kiernan believes that he would have — because he represented the old "grass roots populist" Labor tradition and a style of leadership which repudiated the "intellectual vanguardism" of his predecessor, Evatt, and his successor, Whitlam. I think not. Despite Kiernan's claims, his understanding of economic affairs was not deep. He drew no conclusions from the social changes created by the new technology. His fear of the "permissive society" set him apart from many significant contemporary movements. He was not at ease with today's communications media. He made enemies easily and kept them for a long time.

Professor Kiernan's picture of Arthur Calwell is written from long-standing affection, but it accepts the man on his own terms. There is little in it of the ambition which drove him through his political life, the bitterness of his frustration, the anguish of his divided loyalties — little of the contradictions in the man which brought him so near to greatness, but in the end tore greatness from his grasp.

TIME RUNS OUT

Dorothy Hewett

Jack Beasley: *Red Letter Days* (Australasian Book Society, \$12.95 and \$5.95).

"Only the rear guard of the traditionalists valiantly holds on, and for them time is running out." — Jack Beasley.

Red Letter Days is a highly subjective and at times bitchy and bigoted book. It is written, for the most part, in an easy conversational style marred by that odd clumsiness and overwriting inevitable in the self-taught litterateur, but it does have genuine insights, a real interest in literature and writers, and the kind of personal commitment only possible when the writer has lived closely inside the skin of the events and personalities discussed.

The sub-title, *Notes from inside an era*, does much to explain the kind of book this is: a bit of biography, a bit of literary criticism, a bit of recent social history.

Beasley attempts to cover some of the problems in his preface: "this book doesn't quite fit into any of the accepted categories . . . nor is it written from a plane of dispassionate and academic impartiality as indeed it could not be."

It is hard to write social history when your prejudices are showing, and Beasley's attitudes here are synonomous with much of the thinking of the simplistic Old Left.

I first met Jack Beasley in Redfern during the 1949 coal strike, when he was Communist Party organizer for the powerful South Sydney area (still known then as the Red Belt) in those far off palmy days when we dreamed and worked for revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

A stocky, sandy-headed Newcastle working class boy out of the steelworks and the waterfront, he was impatient, nervously aggressive and highly intelligent, never suffered fools gladly, and was always in trouble with the Communist Party leadership in Marx House. He led a yo-yo existence, now elevated to the hierarchy, then back to the ranks to rehabilitate himself among the Bunnerong Powerhouse workers.

He was a type sometimes met up with in the old Communist Party days. We called them worker intellectuals. Sensitive, touchy, great readers and political theoreticians, there were great gaps in their knowledge and understanding.

Their lack of any real critical discipline tended to create a one-eyed bigotry, and the Communist Party itself both helped and hindered their development. It gave them a philosophical language and standpoint to argue from, introduced them to ideas and polemic, increased their narrowness and bigotry, and encouraged a mean-minded, destructive wowsersism and self-righteousness.

Struggling to distance himself from the events described in his book Beasley discusses all these shortcomings, and then falls into many of the same traps himself.

In the most interesting and perceptive section of the book Beasley introduces the artist as public figure, and the chapter titles here are instructive: *Writer versus Cult Figure (Alan Marshall)*, *The Hero of my own Life (Frank Hardy)*, and *A Conflict of the Mind (Judah Waten)*.

Beasley has taken three left-wing literary cult figures (in Marshall's case it could be argued that the cult was wider), and has tried to build up composite portraits of them, based on his own observations and knowledge, plus the evidence he finds in their work. Each of these writers is presented as politically engaged on the Left, and (with the possible exception of the later, apostate Frank Hardy) are exponents of the humanist values in literature that Beasley admires.

Yet there is a basic contradiction in his argument. Politics he claims never harmed the writer, and yet each of the writers he has chosen illustrate the theory of victim of his own public image. Left-wing writers in particular were regarded with a weird mixture of adulation, jealousy and distrust, probably as a spin-off from the crime, praise and punishment syndrome existing in the Soviet Union.

So they were also particularly prone to this type of schizoid problem. The *Doppelgänger* set-up tended to destroy the writer himself, as he struggled to live up or down to the image demanded by his public. 'At least he has a public,' was the argument used, but at what cost to his creative integrity?

About this particular schism Beasley shows considerable insight, but it is a basic weakness of his book that the man who illustrated this problem most clearly, and was more aware of it than any of the other writers discussed, is given no understanding and very little perception.

For there is a villain in *Red Letter Days*, and that

villain is Frank Hardy. An objective discussion of the problems of Frank Hardy as artist and man, plus a true record of his very considerable later achievements, would have given Beasley's book the focus and polemic it needed for a real discussion of the problems of the writer as public figure. And a sympathetic study of Hardy's later work, particularly *But the Dead are Many*, would have revealed an artist struggling to come to terms with his own schizophrenia, a schizophrenia shared by many who didn't have the guts for an autopsy of their own.

I believe that the violent reaction of many of the old left to *But the Dead are Many* was precisely because Hardy brought out the old spectres from the cupboard under the stairs and set them jangling.

I remember him telling me, in a greasy little café near the Sydney Communist Party headquarters at 40 Market Street, in the middle 1960s, of the book he was going to write, the true story of what it had been like to be a Communist for his generation and mine. And he had no sooner stopped telling me with great seriousness what he was going to do that he looked up gloomily; "Look at that, Toddy, look at those people passing out there. If I went up to them and said 'Who's Billy Borker?' every second bastard'd know, but nobody knows Frank Hardy". It was during the unprecedented popularity of the 'ocker' figure he created on TV, a caricature of a character he often played himself. The problem was that he was proud of Billy Borker but . . . ah! yes Frank Hardy knew a great deal about the divided self.

Beasley then is at his worst discussing Frank Hardy, at his best discussing Alan Marshall, who he obviously deeply admires as both man and writer. But he does see clearly that Marshall too became victim of his public and himself. "The person who had most to do with creating the mythical cult figure who publicly represents Alan Marshall nowadays is Marshall himself." The last section on Marshall, "Laying the Cult", is one of the most human and evocative sections in the book. Marshall in hospital, rich in years and honors, sat up uncomfortably in bed, the hired television set too close for viewing.

"I've always said that you have to live before you can write, and you do, and I did," he tells Beasley. "So you live and then you write, and when you've written it all out you're finished. Writing fucks you."

Judah Waten, with half a century in the Communist movement behind him, speaks of "a recurring crisis in my mind . . . the choice between politics and literature. I would always try to fit them together," and Beasley admits that "the conflict between his two obsessions has been harmful to Waten the writer in some way", but claims that it has also been of great benefit "by enriching his understanding of life and people."

Beasley sees Alan Marshall as "one of the last great exponents of the Australian democratic literary tradition, the genuinely humanist expression of our national scene," and discusses his close association with John Morrison and Waten, "the two men who, with him, are the only notable surviving writers in the Lawson-Furphy tradition."

For him *I Can Jump Puddles* has all the old-fashioned virtues because "it is concerned with the warmth and splendor of human relationships, rather than the modern clichés of self obsession and calculated cruelty to others."

"Humanism is in eclipse and the writers being encouraged today in the era ushered in by Patrick White have no respect at all for the motive sources of Alan Marshall's writing."

In one fell swoop Beasley eliminates from his canon Patrick White, Australia's greatest humanist writer, Frank Moorhouse, David Ireland, Barry Oakley, Michael Wilding, Peter Mathers and a host of others, including Christina Stead.

He does not seem to realize that time and writers cannot stand still, and a more sophisticated public and a different time needs a literature related to modern life, which includes the obsessive self and calculated cruelty, because life includes these things.

The tragic limitations of his point of view reflect the reasons why the left-wing writers who once made such an impact in Australia have lost much of their readership, and the Australasian Book Society, which published so many of them when publishers were difficult to find, has fallen into the doldrums with a shrinking membership, internal bickering, and mothball novels.

Writers and Writing, Scenes from Literary Life, is the sub-sub title on *Red Letter Days*. It has an odd museum flavor about it, but it is one of the most lively and interesting books published by the A. B. S. in a long time. (The other was Max Brown's *Black Eureka*.) We have so little contemporary literary history (particularly of the Left) that we should be cautiously grateful for it.

SPECULATIVE GAINS

Frank Stilwell

Leonie Sandercock: *The Land Racket: the Real Costs of Property Speculation* (Silverfish Books, Canberra, \$4.50 and \$10.)

During the last three years there has been a spate of land scandals in Victoria. Allegations of corrupt practices have been rife. No government has toppled as a consequence, but the scandals have generated widespread debate on the complex of economic, social and political issues associated with speculation in land. Is it ethical to derive speculative gains from merely holding property? Is the quest for such speculative gain an important source of inflation? Is it inimical to systematic urban and regional planning? Does the direct involvement of state instrumentalities in the process mean that it is the government rather than private speculators who are ultimately responsible for the problems associated with property speculation?

Leonie Sandercock's previous book *Cities for Sale* provided a general analysis of class-bias in urban planning with particular reference to Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. Her new book takes up the related but more specific set of questions concerned with land scandals and speculation. It demonstrates how the "national hobby" of speculating in real property has fuelled the inflationary problem and made systematic urban planning all but impossible. Herein lies the problem (and the link with her previous book), because it is the urban planning process itself which aids the ability of some sections of the population to profit from such speculation. By changing the zoning regulations concerning any given area of land, the planners have a major impact on its price and hence on the potential for speculative gains. When combined with corrupt practices, such as leaking of information about forthcoming zoning changes, this situation leads to particularly scandalous outcomes. More generally, Sandercock argues that the system is inequitable even in the absence of corruption.

The book contains a brief review of the speculative booms of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and a more detailed examination of recent Victorian land scandals, particularly at Mt Ridley, Mt Dandenong and Geelong. The contrasting situation in South Australia is examined, and the activities of the SA Land Commission presented as some sort of model. (At this stage it is useful to read the book in conjunction with

the more detailed analysis of Labor's Land Commission programme at the Federal level presented in Pat Troy's book, *A Fair Price*.) Finally, the book examines implications for ALP policy and argues the case for "doing away with speculative activities (in land and office space) once and for all by introducing legislation to remove the element of private gain from land transactions".

The immediate political objective of the book — presumably to contribute to the removal of the Hamer government from office — has proved unsuccessful. It may be that significant sections of the electorate are not particularly concerned with the "land scandals" issue and not particularly moved to learn that public officials are corrupt. However, the book clearly has a more long-run objective — to contribute to an understanding of, and a reform of, the whole system which makes possible the speculative gains and the associated corrupt practices.

There is an interesting similarity between Sandercock's argument and some debates which took place nearly one hundred years ago. Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* was published in 1879, and he came to Australia in 1890 to publicise his view that society should take over the land on behalf of the people. He argued that rent should be subject to a special tax, since it does not represent a return to personal effort. Such a tax on land could replace all other taxes. Other writers at the time went further and advocated direct nationalisation of land. Such views never commanded majority support and, though Sandercock's analysis is more sophisticated, it is interesting to explore some of the parallels. Two will suffice.

First, there is the effect of home ownership. Compared to other countries with comparable material prosperity, Australia has a very high rate of home ownership, though it has fallen significantly in recent years. As homeowners many people see themselves as benefiting from accelerating inflation of property values, and therefore oppose any government controls. In fact, as Sandercock points out, there are no gains to the owner-occupier, since any realised capital gains must be used in obtaining replacement housing. We are not a nation of petit-bourgeois property owners: we simply act like it. Thus, just as George's visionary policies proved politically ineffective, so too there is great difficulty in marshalling political action around these sorts of programs today.

Second, there is the paradox associated with

government intervention. The solution advocated by Sandercock — and previously by George — involves the increased involvement of the state in land policy. However, it is the very involvement of State instrumentalities like the Victorian Housing Commission which has been closely associated with the recent scandals. The state is simultaneously part of the problem and the solution. Sandercock sees a way out of this dilemma through a more systematic and radical approach to land policy by the ALP. Ultimately, like the interrelated problem of environment degradation, it requires a transformation in social values. The ALP seems most reluctant to take the lead in this respect, preferring the conservative route of catering to, rather than leading, public opinion. Nevertheless, by helping to raise these issues for public debate, Sandercock's book makes an important contribution. The book shows the marks of a hurried preparation, but it is an interesting and important study in contemporary political economy.

HELEN HODGMAN'S NOVELS

Jenny McColl

Helen Hodgman: *Blue Skies* (Duckworth, \$8.95); *Jack and Jill* (Duckworth, \$11.95).

Helen Hodgman's first novel, *Blue Skies*, was set in her native Tasmania and told a simple and savage tale of desperation in the suburbs. Her second, *Jack and Jill*, is less single-minded and more ambitious, a bitter mix of black comedy and bizarre send-up which sometimes over-reaches itself, but is always wickedly funny and perceptive.

It is set in New South Wales back country and spans the period from the twenties to the present day. Anyone who, in childhood or adolescence, fantasised their way through all those glorious outback and 'little bush maid' sagas will recognise many of the ingredients of this gleefully unreal plot, all of them neatly and nastily overdone.

Jill loses her mother on the opening page (with Ms Hodgman definitely beginning as she intends to continue), is reared by her inarticulate but loving dad, Dougie, is fascinated by Jack, the wandering swagman who stays and becomes equally fascinated by her, and triumphs over arid environment by winning her way to university and then off on the inevitable pilgrimage to London and finer things. But she's an Aussie at heart and, lured by dreams of steak for breakfast

and the good and simple life, she returns to marry Jack, now appropriately crippled and a war hero.

Two important ingredients of the novel which I feel exponents of the school of Mary Grant Bruce may have omitted are Jack's untimely rape of the adolescent Jill, and her resultant trauma-laden dreams, and the way in which the author and Jill — surely the sourest and crossiest heroine you could ever meet — calculatedly use and abuse the much vaunted ethics of that school — “the pioneering ideal, the spirit of Anzac, the bond of mateship and the grand old willingness to give-it-a-go”.

Barnaby, the tousled, golden-haired little chap and his world of brave Dad, homely Mum and little furry friends comes to Jill as the embodiment of those ideals. His perfect world of childhood is an infinitely more acceptable version of the truth than the reality with which she and her sweaty, turgid dreams are involved. He is conceived in a London garrett, put down on paper and taken home to become her means of escape and her *raison d'être*. In marrying Jack, she presents a suitably noble face to the world, acquires a 'cross' to bear and simultaneously punishes him by insisting on a marriage in name only, restoring her upper hand.

We meet Jill next in the sixties. Barnaby and his books have done well for Jack and Jill. Duggie's old property is adorned with a swimming pool and two hundred yards of electric fence. Jill is the “treacly” and famous head of a well-marketed Barnaby empire, standing for all that is essentially decent in Australian life. Ms Hodgman describes this cynically maintained homespun enterprise with relish and skill. Clad in possum-patterned nighties and tartan alicebands, Jill supervises her fan mail and diversifies Barnaby promotions with ill-tempered zeal from a director's chair with her name emblazoned in gold on the back. Jack, only vaguely aware of his role as her 'cross' in life, exists under a true Australian matriarchy, and helps the marketing drive by whittling away at little wooden Barnabys and relevant marsupials.

With the arrival of Raelene, arch fan of Jill, Tolkien and full experience, the author extends her attack to the naiveties of the market which sustains Jill and her like.

To outline the rest of this maliciously implausible plot would be to pre-empt Ms Hodgman's punch lines for those who have not read this highly entertaining novel, save to say that Jack finally wins his Jill with his bushman's courage, Jill finds her own solution to Vietnam

and arranges her own immaculate conception. The author has sensibly kept the story to 111 pages, as the effect of any more might be lethal, both to the reader and to the novel itself. Punch she does and jab, with devastating aim, but one can become a little punch drunk on this flow of ruthless mockery. As a succinct satire on human absurdities and the cult of the simplistic in Australia, the author's masterly and ironic manipulation of clichés and unnerving use of the unexpected works well.

But I suspect Ms Hodgman is after something more. A sense of horror, loss and outrage at what has become of us pervades this novel, as it does her first, *Blue Skies*. In that, the central character, definitely an alien to the values of suburbia, masochistically dumps herself within that deodorised world and listlessly waits to die. The implication is that nowhere else is much better anyway. Her desperate little escapades are fragile and easily shattered by the forces which are seen to control out modern society; the forces whose ancestors brutally eliminated the Tasmanian Aboriginals and substituted them with garden gnomes. The tragedy of this extinct tribe is used throughout to define the instinct of the majority to wipe out or domesticate the natural in order to preserve its safe, non-messy values.

The central character's final breaking-point revenge is nicely apt. Her next door neighbor has stolen from her sight the last remaining patch of wild scrub in the suburban street, built on it and is torturing her front piece of earth in an attempt to turn it into the easy-care equivalent of her living room carpet. Her pride and joy is her electric lawnmower, and it is with this nifty household appliance that the central character casually dispenses with her. Despite this revenge, she is essentially still a victim, kept as she is within a primarily realistic framework. The author makes Jill of sterner stuff and allows her escape more positive success, providing her with a sardonic “extravagantly happy ending”.

Blue Skies is the better balanced work, more explicit, but less exhilarating. A little more involvement with the central character is allowed and consequently, the tragi-comic intent is more fully realised. In *Jack and Jill*, without this incentive, it is possible, while appreciating the accuracy of the barbs, to become as dispassionate as Ms Hodgman appears to be. Jill is wonderfully idiosyncratic, but a little too skeletal to carry the author's burden. Jack attempts it, but retreats into caricature. Under her constant, witty on-

slaughter, Jack and Jill do come tumbling down and lose the fight to Ms Hodgman.

Despite this, the novel has a mesmerising effect and an uncompromising quality which stems from the author's considerable ability to spotlight the essence of an absurdity and to define a set of delusions, current 'alternative' escape routes, for which Australia (where that "grand old willingness to give-it-a-go" has all but lost its way) provides a fertile breeding ground.

It is a great pity that the present distribution of Helen Hodgman's two novels is so limited in this country.

NEW GUINEA BIG MAN

Ulli Beier

Andrew Strathern (translator): *Ongka: A self account by a New Guinea Big Man* (Duckworth, \$24.95).

Eleven years after *Kiki: Ten Thousand Years in a Life Time*, here is another vigorous autobiography by a Papua New Guinea leader. The books invite comparison, not only because both were transcribed from spoken tapes, but because both authors are born story tellers who come across as powerful personalities and natural leaders of men. The books are valuable, not only through what they tell us of the authors' lives and characters, but also because of the insight they afford us into the cultures from which they have sprung.

Their backgrounds, however, and their manner of telling their stories are very different. Kiki suffered his first uprooting at the age of five, when he was taken from his mother's small hill tribe, the Parevavo, to the large coastal village of Orokolo. He went on to the white man's school, to medical college in Fiji, and to an administrative post in Port Moresby. He became a leading politician and a fighter for independence. Ongka hardly ever left his people's tribal land, except for occasional trips to visit his friends and allies in the Jimmi valley, and for one trip to Port Moresby. He never went to school, and all his ambitions were lived out within the narrower confines of his Kawelka tribe; but that does not make him any less sophisticated than Kiki. In his own way, he experienced changes as dramatic as those that shaped Kiki's life.

Kiki gives us a chronological account of his life; he writes a structured autobiography, beginning with his first visual memory and ending with

the 1968 elections, which took place just before his book went to press. Ongka's account is more sporadic, more impetuous; he picks a theme ("Games and Tricks" or "War" or "My Personal Enemies") and then allows his mind to roam. The result is a less-structured but a delightfully spontaneous book.

Both men are fighters. But Kiki is essentially romantic; Ongka is thoroughly down to earth. Kiki is romantic about his traditional culture; warmly he describes the Kovave festival and its excitement, which are now gone forever. Ongka soberly praises the advantages of what he calls the "real spades, knives and axes" that were introduced by James L. Taylor; he remembers only too well the tedium of using wooden digging sticks and stone axes.

Kiki knows nostalgia: "Thinking back now, I think that we were healthier then, and happier." He feels "cheated", when he remembers that there were certain initiations and festivals he was born too late to experience.

Ongka is completely pragmatic: "Oh, before we had to cut down trees and build fires, heat stones to build our ovens. If it was wet, the food was spoiled, we would have to throw the greens away. The stones had to be heated properly, otherwise the oven wouldn't work. But now this saucepan is here, and all we have to do is fill it with water, build a small fire and the water will boil to cook our food quickly."

Kiki is idealistic, and full of faith about independence and what it will bring. Towards the end of his book he derives courage and inspiration from his old uncle, whose name "Haure" means: "I don't like." The last paragraph of Kiki's book reads:

I can feel the strength of the old man right in my blood, and I shall go right to the end of the road. And to those who will stand between us and independence I will say: Haure!

Ongka is more skeptical. In his ceremonial speech during his big Moka feast he said:

You Members talk of Self-Government,
You talk of the house of Assembly.
Will your work go straight
Or will it go crooked?

And again he wonders: "So if we hurry all these things along and later we find we can't manage them, I wonder if we will be a little embarrassed or not?"

But Ongka does not question Independence because he is conservative. On the contrary, he is a very open minded character, willing to test out any new idea at once. Ongka questions Independence because he questions *everything*; he takes nothing at face value and is as sceptical about traditions as about new fangled ideas. He has a very original mind; he always remains himself and is never swayed by others. When his first wife died, the ritual experts told him that he must stay away from the corpse and abandon his house and build a new one — to keep her ghost from returning. “So the men told me to follow the custom now or the ghost would kill me, but I wouldn’t listen to them. ‘She was my first wife that my father got for me. I was fond of her and I’m upset that she’s dead, I won’t listen to that kind of nonsense, don’t speak about it to me!’ ”

When the “red box” money cult swept through the Kawelka villages and everybody rushed to make contributions to the cultists, Ongka told them: “Be careful not to tell lies; I’ve slept outside in cemetery places, to see if spirits could come there, but I didn’t see any. People think they hear spirits talking, but it’s birds whistling or marsupials scuffling about. So don’t lie about it.”

Ongka was always ready to try anything new. When the white men arrived he made use of them:

I worked alongside the white men.
They helped me and I helped myself.

He became a *tutul* and *luluai* and a local government councillor.

He has plenty of charisma, a great ability to make friends, to win followers and to lead. He is also a stubborn man who has — at different times in his life — made lots of enemies.

His integrity shows even in the manner of telling the story: without fuss, without embellishments, never trying to justify himself; a wonderfully direct account. His language — beautifully translated by Andrew Strathern — is precise and vivid. The first plane he ever saw appeared to him like “a thunderclap gone mad”. Frightened men “recoil like snails do in their shells, when someone touches them with a burning stick”, and hungry warriors besieged by enemies “pushed leaves into their bark belts, to fill out the space between their stomachs and their belts.” Men being too busy with warfare were like “a red bird of paradise, which argues that it will outlast the tree in which it displays . . .”

With wonderful economy Ongka can evoke an

image of peace and plenty, simply by describing in one short paragraph a sow and her successive litters:

When the sows came on heat they swiftly put them to the boar and so they bred successive litters and the numbers built up. The first litters grew big and old and their teeth showed through and curled up; the next generation were big and fat too, with ‘water on their skins’, as we say; the next ones were tied with rope and able to hold down their sweet potatoes with their feet to eat them; and the last litters were now weaned and able to smell at their sweet potato and eat it too. About three years would have gone by.

Much of the book is devoted to a description of fighting and warfare, of payback killings and poisonings. Even though the white man’s administration was established when Ongka was still a very young man, much of his life was spent in such conflicts. He makes no attempt to play down the harshness of those times:

When we fought in earnest, with lethal weapons, we went to help our friends also. We burnt houses, slashed banana trees, tore the aprons off women and raped them, axed big pigs, broke down fences, we did everything. We carried on until the place was emptied of resources.

But these tales of war and fighting are not only tales of hatred. For these were times when friends and allies could demonstrate their loyalty. They would come to the rescue and protect the fighting clan’s women and children and pigs, if they could. Later the fighters would make a feast for them to thank them and to cement the friendship; and in their speeches they would say:

You held the ropes of my pigs,
You cared for my netbags and flasks,
With the palms of your hands
You protected my women’s genitals
While I was fighting.
Now I am making this thing clean from myself.
Take this pork and eat it,
Now the debt between us is over.

The death of a warrior was hard to accept and impossible to forget. People could not live with death unless they could swear to take revenge: “it would be the only way to ease their feelings.”

Ongka is able to tell of his own escapes from

deadly enemies with a tremendous sense of humor. Once a group of men had surrounded his lavatory house, waiting for him to come out, ". . . but they must have thought I was a cloud or some mist, or else a fog really did come down and obscure the view, anyhow, I passed through . . . Eventually they thought I must have hidden down the lavatory hole. One of them rushed into it and plunged his spear into the hole, expecting to hear me yell. Instead all he heard was a plop and a splash, and he withdrew his spear covered with muck."

But even the Kawelkas and the Tipukas and the Minembi and all the other Hagen tribes eventually grew tired of fighting. And they would come together and say: "Let us not fight, war is a rubbish way of doing things . . ." and a man who had escaped a payback for a long time would send a message to his enemies, saying: "Your man died a long time ago, — but you are still upset . . . I want to give you something . . ." Then they would perform a ritual play, in which war would be driven out formally and they could all settle down to raise pigs and make pig exchanges and build up towards a big Moka.

Ongka's description of his own big Moka is the climax of the book, as it was — undoubtedly — the climax of his life. Ongka had come to realise that he might be the last of a long line of 'big men'. He saw the young men drifting to Hagen or Moresby: "Our young men wear long trousers and sun glasses, drink beer. They go to market, to town, to white men's places as labourers, and there they become headstrong and feckless."

But Ongka is not the kind of man who sits and weeps for the good old days. "Well, if the old ways must go, let's at any rate do something as our last big show."

Self Government and Independence are here, and the old ways will disappear, but let us do one thing before that happens, so that all the groups around and all the white men too will say "The Kawelka put on a little show, we saw it." Now the old ways will be shaken off, as we shake clods of earth from the stump of a tree, and we will take the new ways. Everything's crazy now, so let's just do this one thing before it all happens.

And what a show he put on! His group gave forty cassowaries, twenty cattle as extra gifts, and purchased twenty commercially raised pigs. And "as for our own pigs, how could you possibly

count them?" And to top it all, they added a gift that had never been given before in a Moka: a motor car!

We must be grateful to Andrew Strathern for giving us a beautiful translation of Ongka's magnificent ceremonial speech at the Moka; for it introduces to us a whole New Guinean art form, about which we have known little before: oratory.

This is our last dance.
I finish with all our old ways
With feathers of the eagle
With decorated girdles,
With bright cordilyne leaves,
With oil rubbed on the skin.
Now the old netbag
Is thrown into the fire,
Tipped into a hole in the ground
The netbag of the mothers.

All my strong things from the past,
Here at Mbukl, my home,
I bury them in the ground.
The things of the women,
Of their mothers and grandmothers,
The things of the men,
Of their fathers and grandfathers,
I finish them all.

I finish with a car,
I finish them with cattle,
I finish them with purchased pigs,
I finish them with cassowaries,
I finish them with our own pigs,
I finish them with decorating oil . . .

Now these gifts I make to you,
Wrapped as for a funeral.
Take them to the House of Assembly,
Where you are a Member.
If you are strong,
Later you will make returns to me,
And I shall eat the returns and become old.

What you will do I do not know.
Eat my gifts and go.

THREE PRESSES, FOUR POETS

Graham Rowlands

V. Glen Washburn: *Near the End of my Sorrows* (Angus and Robertson Poets of the Month, Series 4 subscription).

Lee Cataldi: *Invitation to a Marxist Lesbian Party* (Wild and Woolley, \$4.95.)

Geoff Page: *Collecting the Weather* (Makar Press, Gargoyles Poets' subscription.)

Billy Jones: *Cup Full of River* (Makar Press, Gargoyles Poets' subscription.)

On the strength of Washburn's book it would be impossible for him to write a pompous or pre-

tentious line. Despite the usual casual tone and use of American slang, this expatriate American poet succeeds with carefully controlled climaxes. For instance, the first poem opens:

I mean
don't give us that philosophical shit
about life is a preparation for death

and proceeds through a Whitmanesque or Ginsbergian list of inadequate responses to what turns out to be the task of telling a twelve year old that the boy will soon die. What appears to be a sprawling rave pulls the reader up with a jolt. "If America is so Goddamned Good" is the poet's response to the assassination of the Kennedy brothers. The funeral of "Poor Little Rich Boy Roger" expresses sentiment that is always on the verge of smiling, and starts with the fantastic assertion that there is a special race of creatures whose sole function is to attend funerals.

Two excellent poems that appear very different in form illustrate Washburn's control of climax and revelation. "Life's Like That" is one and a half pages of some comparatively long lines; the title poem consists of only nine lines with no line longer than seven words. The reader is not told the subject of the longer poem until the last line. This is the impressive last stanza—lines that send the reader back to the earlier stanzas:

Three months pregnant to the very instant
and inside her belly bulge
still warm and wet from this morning's jostle
the embryo got joggled just right
a few million cells were re-ordered
and as she fell an almost visible flashing
sudden warping of the world
the universe shrugged
whole fabrics for just a cat's blink shuffled
and exactly 4,321 hours later
when he was born
they called him Michaelangelo

The opening lines of the book give no hint of this kind of poem; nor of the restrained dramatic tale of the superb title poem:

Fourteen manuscripts
of Buddha were discovered
last year in Ceylon

A blind one armed monk
found them hidden away there
in a mountain cave

Because of the cold
he used them to build a fire
He slept warm that night

It is a pity, however, that Washburn also writes "clever" poems—forced and artificial. "Marlborough" has Ern Malley forcing women into oral rape. An easy laugh! "Conversation Piece" is an unmotivated cannibalistic fantasy. "Somebody" is a silly poem intentionally about nothing. Although "A Holiday Tour" is well constructed, it is a dramatic monologue by an unnamed monster acting as tourguide—a sort of poetic ghost train ride and about as frightening. Washburn can do without these "clever" poems; he has plenty of others.

Cataldi's book is twice as long as the average local collection of the past five years. Half its length, it would have been a good first work. Unfortunately, it never regains the strengths of its first and title section.

Appeal lies in the poet's humor, intelligence, bitter-sweet lyricism and mixture of the political and the personal in treatment of lesbianism. Most of the good poems contain rhyme, singing like Dylan's songs. Usually the words are simple and easy to read, while the opening poem, "History", which is about younger and older lesbians, is amusing because the poet refuses to take the seriousness too seriously.

Cataldi excels at love-loss lyrics. "Remembering Hobart" combines loss of a woman with loss of landscape. Another relationship is recreated through evocative images of New Orleans in "Pictures". There are other poems where the specifically lesbian nature of the relationship is stressed from the first line. While the lyrics are mercifully unclogged with jaw-breaking ideological abstractions, it must be said nevertheless that there is more dope at Cataldi's party than Marxism. (Henry Lawson said nearly a century ago that alcohol was stronger than trade unionism.) While Dransfield's genius makes it difficult for anyone else to be extravagantly acclaimed for drug poems, the "Kingsdown" section of "Three Pieces for Patriots" and "Oblivion" are effective half-nostalgic, half-critical accounts of dope.

It is regrettable that most of the rest of Cataldi's book is characterized by the opposite of the above—long poems where ponderous climatic metaphysics alternate with banalities posing as insights. The lines lack rhyme and rhythm, being almost as tedious and formless as the lists of items in the interlarded prose. Her "Fairy Tales"

are trite and easy inversions of fairy tales that would have been more effective in the original. "The Poem in the Classroom" should have quoted "Jerusalem" and the rest should have been silence. This book could have gained from a more conscientious editor.

Page perfected the art of the well-made, insightful poem in his earlier volumes that mainly dealt with Australian subjects. Here he continues the same art with European subjects. Perhaps he has started to tire of the chosen constraints of his art. Perhaps the New Writing has made inroads into his sense of the possible. Whatever the cause, it is regrettable that the poet's new direction into mood pieces based on Apollinaire's and Henri Rousseau's art lack the drive of his other writing.

The accomplished quality of Page's well-made poems is clear in "Olive Trees" where only the victors win the right to remember their dead, in "Inscription at Villers-Bretonneux" where a Melbourne clerk must have allowed through an unpatriotic headstone inscription, and in "Closed Circle" where the closed circle of the guided tour through Versailles' Hall of Victory is ironic commentary on the celebrated (and omitted) battles, and in "The Catacomb":

From the moment
of impact
the liner will be

a cathedral of
iron forever.

These poems display vivid imagery that works through to apt endings.

The first two Apollinaire-Rousseau poems are

mildly amusing in an urbane eighteenth century English mode. Regrettably the rest of them show Page working beyond his range. His *forté* has always been the significant detail, the ironic juxtaposition. At his best he is nothing if not tough-minded. In the second half of his latest collection, however, he becomes insipid with his repetitive, picturesque and largely rural nostalgia. Moreover his poetic impulse has always stemmed from life; not from art. Only cultivated souls well versed in French art and literature could possibly be interested in these poems — even if they were masterpieces. Is not the audience for poetry sufficiently limited already?

Jones' book deserves attention because of the stance of the poet. Despite echoes of Keats, Wordsworth and Whitman, Jones nevertheless commands respect for his honest expression of ecstasy and Hindu/Buddhist metaphysic when he merges with the universe. And that tends to be all the time. It is easy to accuse him of a lack of any sense of human history. But apparently history has only managed to dismiss him as a bum, a loner, a nothing. It is a poignant and, as will be seen, ironic admission — a final proof of his integrity. One comes away from this volume unconvinced by the guru-poet's *beliefs* but totally believing in the *poet*.

There are three poems in the book that are eminently successful literary works of art. In the long "Riverbank . . . Extracts" where the poet carefully observes and becomes a blade of grass, a frog, a mud turtle and so on, and in "Zero to Infinity" and "Mu Tea" the poet wants to take the universe into himself; he ends by losing himself in the universe.

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