"CLAY:" A NEW STORY BY PATRICK WHITE

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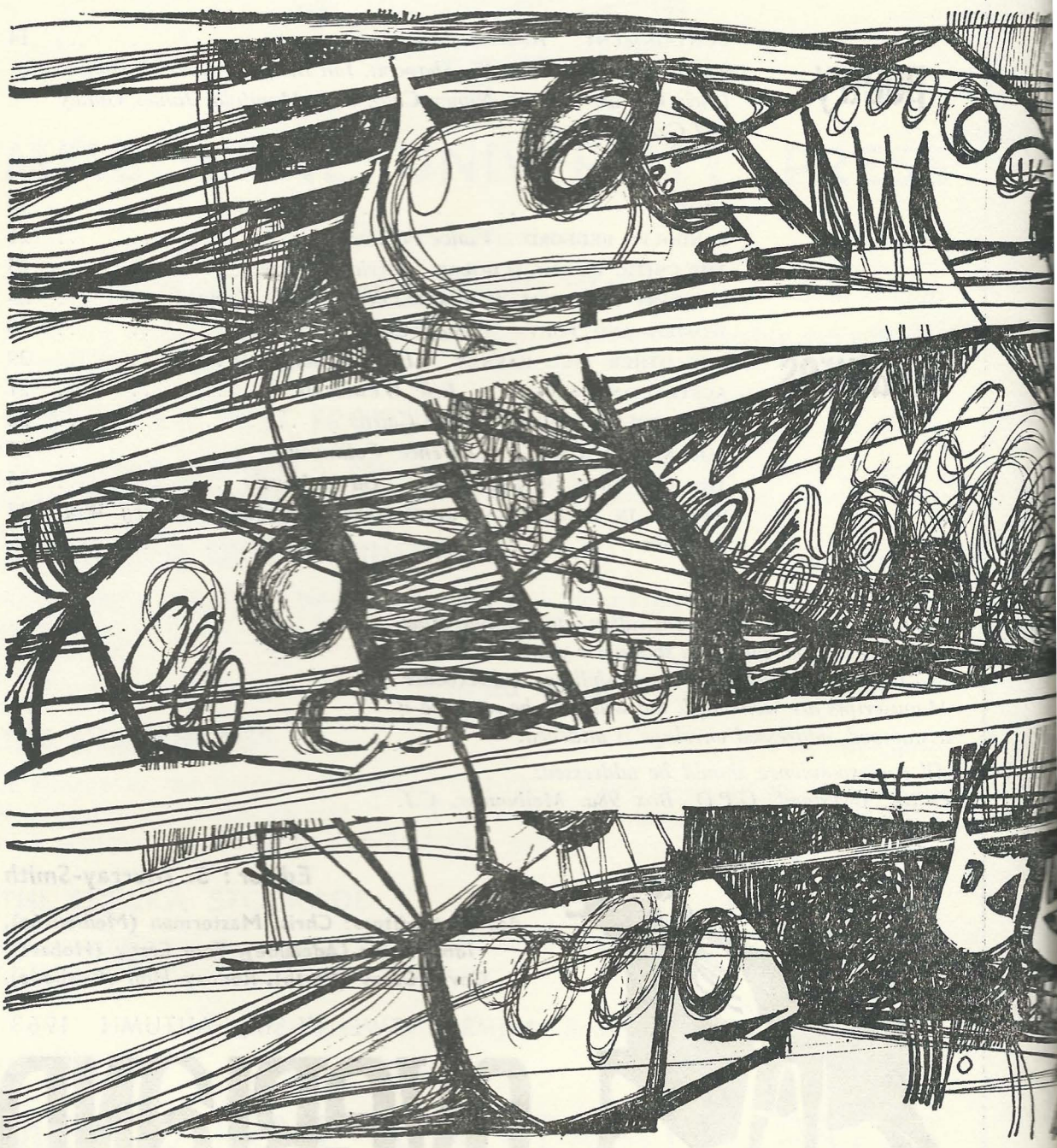

CLAY

BY PATRICK WHITE

For Barry Humphries and Zoe Caldwell

WHEN he was about five years old some kids asked Clay why his mother had called him that. And he did not know. But began to wonder. He did, in fact, wonder a great deal, particularly while picking the bark off trees, or stripping a flower down to its core of mystery. He, too, would ask questions, but more often than not failed to receive the answer because his mother could not bring herself to leave her own train of thought.

Mrs Skerrit said: "If only your father hadn't died he'd still be putting out the garbage the bin is too much for me the stooping not to mention the weight in anyone short of breath but you Clay I know will be good to your mum and help when you are older stronger only that is still a long way off."

So that it was Clay's turn not to answer. What could you say, anyway?

Mrs Skerrit said: "I wouldn't ask anything of anyone but there are certain things of course I wouldn't expect a gentleman to stand up for me in the tram while I have my own two legs only it's the sort of thing a gentleman ought to do and ladies take Mrs Pearl for instance what she expects of her husband and him with the sugar diabeties too."

Clay mooned about the house listening to his mother's voice boring additional holes in the fretwork, for fretwork had been Dadda's hobby: there was fretwork just about everywhere, brackets and things, even a lace of fretwork hanging from tabletop and doorway. Stiff. Sometimes while his mother's voice bored and sawed further Clay would break off pieces of the brown fretwork and hide it away under the house. Under the house was full of fretwork finally.

Or he would moon about the terraces of garden, amongst the collapsing lattices, flowerpot shards crackling underfoot, legs slapped by the straps of dark, leathery plants, lungs filled with suffocating bursts of asparagus fern. He would dawdle down to the harbour, with its green smell of sea-lettuce, and the stone wall, scribbled with white droppings of gulls. The house itself leaned rather far towards the harbor, but had not fallen, because some men had come and shored it up. There it hung, however.

So Clay mooned. And would return often to the photograph. It was as though his childhood were rivetted to the wedding group. There was his father, those thick thighs, rather tight about the serge crutch (unlike the Dadda he remembered lying Incurable in bed), and the influential Mr. Stutchbury, and Auntie Ada, and Nellie Watson (who died), and someone else who was killed in action. But it was to his mum that Clay was drawn, before and after all, into the torrential satin of the lap, by the face which had just begun to move out of its fixture of fretted lace. And the shoe. He was fascinated by the white shoe. Sometimes its great boat would float out from the shore of frozen time, into the waters of his imagination, rocking his cargo of almost transparent thoughts.

Once Mrs Skerritt came into the room and caught him at it though she did not exactly see Clay for looking at herself.

"Ah dear," she said, "in the end things is sad."

She would often half cry, and at such moments her hair would look more than ever like so many lengths of grey string, or on windy days, a tizz of frayed dishcloth.

On the particular day when she caught Clay looking at the photograph, his throat swelled, and he dared to ask:

"Why is my name Clay, Mum?"

Because by that time he was seven, and the kids were asking worse than ever, and bashing him up (they were afraid that he was different).

"Why," she said, "let me think your father wanted Percival that is after Mr Stutchbury but I could not bring myself I said there are so many things you don't do but want take a name a name is yours take pottery I said I've half a mind to try my hand if I can find some feller or lady you never know I may be artistic but didn't because well there isn't the time always so much to do the people who have to be told and who have to be told and then Dadda's incurable illness so I did not do that only thought and thought about it and that I believe is why you was called Clay."

Then she went out the back to empty the teapot on a bed of maidenhair which tingled perpetually with moisture.

So the kids continued to bash Clay up, and ask why he was called that, and he couldn't tell them, because how could you even when you knew.

There were times when it got extra bad, and once they chased him with a woman's old cast-off shoe. He ran like a green streak, but not fast enough in the end—they caught him at the corner of Plant Street, where he had been born and always lived, and the heel of their old shoe bored for ever into his mind.

Later, when he had let himself in, into the garden of the leaning house, lost amongst collapsing lattices and the yellow fuzz of asparagus fern, he cried a bit for the difference to which he had been born. But smeared his eyes dry at last, and his nose. The light was rising from the bay in all green peacefulness, as if the world of pointed objects did not exist alongside that of the dreamy bridal shoe.

But he did not embark. Not then. His ribs had not subsided yet.

*

Once Clay dreamed a dream, and came down into the kitchen. He had meant to keep the dream to himself. Then it was too late, he heard, he was telling it to his mum. Even though his mouth was frozen stiff he had to keep on, to tell.

"In this dream," he said, "the steps led on down."

His mum was pushing the rashers around, which went on buckling up in the pan.

"Under the sea," said Clay. "It was beautiful."

He was sorry, but he could not help it.

"Everything drawn out. Hair and things. And weeds. The knotted ones. And the lettucy kind. Some of the fish had beards, Mum, and barked, well, like dogs."

His mum had put the fried bread on a plate to one side, where the little squares were already stiffening.

"And shells, Mum," he said, "all bubbles and echoes as I went on down. It felt good. It felt soft. I didn't have to try. But just floated. Down."

He could see his mother's behind, how it had begun to quiver, and he dreaded what might happen when he told. There was no avoiding it, though, and his mum went on prodding the bacon in the pan.

"When I got to the bottom," he said, " and the steps ended, you should have seen how the sea stretched, over the sand and broken bottles. Everything sort of silvery. I don't remember much else. Except that I found, Mum," he said.

"What?" she asked.

He dreaded it.

"A cloud, Mum," he said, "and it was dead."

Then Mrs Skerritt turned round, it was dreadful, how she looked. She opened her mouth, but nothing came out at first, only Clay saw the little thing at the back. Raised. When suddenly it began to act like a clapper. She began to cry, she began to create.

"Whatever are you gunna do to me?" she cried, as she pummelled and kneaded the moist grey dough of her cheeks.

"On top of everything else I never ever thought I'd have a freak!"

But Clay could only stand, and receive the blows her voice dealt. It was as though someone had taken a stick and drawn a circle round him. Him at the centre. There was no furniture any more.

The bacon was burning in the pan.

When Mrs Skerritt had thought it over, and used a little eau-de-Cologne, she took him up to McGillivray's. It was late by then, on a Saturday morning too. All the way Clay listened to her breathing, and sometimes the sound of her corset. McGillivray was already closing, but agreed to do Mrs Skerritt's lad. McGillivray was kind.

"We want it short short Mr McGillivray please," Mrs Skerritt said.

As the barber snipped Clay could hear his mum breathing, from where she sat, behind his back, under the colored picture of the King.

City Theme

If days have no belief or meaning
streets cross into any ways
and traffic moves around us idly,
and city's neither more nor less,
city is only growth and place.

Today defines tomorrow's endings
if buildings are the sum of brick
and in the park the trees are grown
just for the slyness after dark
the terrible city hide-and-seek.

But all things act out wider meanings:
we've bought the buildings for a song,
today's not even what was taught
and in the park the trees grow strong.
City's a place we move along.

Living traffic in the city
stops and starts and we are living
wrong and right but always further:
to say that days have lost all meaning,
is to equate end with beginning.

THOMAS W. SHAPCOTT

Mr McGillivray did his usual nice job, and was preparing to design the little quiff when Mrs Skerritt choked.

"That is not short Mr McGillivray not what I mean oh no oh dear but it is difficult to explain there is too much involved and I left school when I turned fourteen."

McGillivray laughed, and said: "Short is not shorn!"

"I don't care," she said.

Clay could only look at the glass, and suck his cheeks in.

"Short is what I said and mean," Mrs Skerritt confirmed. "I was never one for not coming to the point."

McGillivray was a gentle man, but he too began to breathe, he took the clippers, and shore a path through his subject's hair. He shore, and shore. Till there Clay was. Exposed.

"That suit?" McGillivray asked.

"Thank you," she said.

So meek.

Then they went home. They crunched over the asphalt. They were that heavy, both of them.

As they went down the hill towards the turn where the milko's cart had plunged over, Mrs Skerritt said:

"There Clay a person is sometimes driven to things in defence of what we know and love I would not of done this otherwise if not to protect you from yourself because love you will suffer in life if you start talking queer remember it does'nt pay to be different and no one is different without they have something wrong with them."

Clay touched his prickly hair.

"Let it remind you," she said, 'that your mum loves you that is why."

But Clay could no longer believe in love, and the kids bashed him up worse than ever, because his no-hair made him a sort of different different.

"Wot was you in for?" the kids asked, and did windmills on his stubble. "Old Broad Arrer!" they shouted, and punched.

Actually Clay grew up narrow. He was all knuckle, all wrist. He had those drawn-out arms. He had a greenish skin from living under too many plants. He was long. And his eyes overflowed at dusk, merged with the street lights, and the oil patches on lapping water.

"Are you lonely, Clay?" Mrs Skerrit asked.

"No," he said. "Why?"

"I thought perhaps you was lonely you should get out and meet other young people of your own age you should get to know nice girls otherwise it is not normal."

Then she drew in her chin, and waited.

But Clay stroked his prickly hair. For he went to McGillivray's every so often since it was ordained. When his voice broke the others no longer bashed him up, having problems of their own. The blackheads came, the pimples and moustaches.

Sometimes Mrs Skerritt would cry, sitting on the rotten veranda overlooking the little bay in which cats so often drowned.

"Oh dear Clay," she cried, "I am your mother and have a responsibility a double one since Dadda went I will ask Mr Stutchbury but cannot rely totally do you know what you want to do?"

Clay said: "No."

"Oh dear," she moaned worse than ever, "how did I deserve a silent boy who loves what I would like to know himself perhaps himself."

In fact Clay did not know what he loved. He would have liked to think it was his mother, though it could have been Dadda. So he would try to remember, but it was only cold yellow skin, and the smell of sick sheets. When he had been forced to approach his father, lying Incurable in the bed, his heart could have tumbled down out of the belfry of his body.

Once his mother, it was evening, clutched his head against her apron, so that she must have pricked her hands.

"You are not my son," she clanged, "otherwise you would act different."

But he could not, did not want to. Sometimes, anyway, at that age, he felt too dizzy from growing.

"How?" his voice asked, or croaked.

But she did not explain. She flung his long body away.

"It's not a matter," she said, "that anybody can discuss I will ask Mr Stutchbury to see what we must do and how."

Mr Stutchbury was so influential, as well as having been a mate of Herb Skerritt's all his life. Mr Stutchbury was something, Mrs Skerritt believed, in the Department of Education, but if she did not clear the matter up, it was because she considered there was not all that necessity.

She bought a T-bone steak, and asked him round.

"What," she asked, "should we do with Clay I am a widow as you know and you was his father's friend."

Mr Stutchbury drew in his moustache.

"We will see," he said, "when the time comes."

Then he folded his moist lips over a piece of yellow fat from the not-so-tender T-bone steak.

When it was time, Mr Stutchbury thought up a letter to some fellow at the Customs and Excise.

Dear Archie (he composed),

This is to recommend the son of an old friend. Herb Skerritt, for many years in the Tramways, died in tragical circumstances—of cancer to be precise . . .

(Clay, who of course opened the letter to see, got quite a shock from a word his mother never on any account allowed to be used in the home.)

> . . . It is my duty and wish to further the interests of the above-mentioned boy. In brief, I would esteem it a favour if you could see your way to taking him "under your wing." I do not predict wonders of young Skerritt, but am of the opinion, rather, that he is a decent, average lad. In any event wonders are not all that desirable, not in the Service anyway. It is the steady hand which pushes the pen a lifetime.
>
> I will not expatiate further, but send you my Salaams!

The young lady whom Mr Stutchbury had persuaded to type the letter had barely left the room, when his superior called, with the result that he forgot to add as he intended: "Kindest regards to Mrs Archbold." Even persons of influence have to consider the ground they tread on.

*

But Clay Skerritt started at the Customs, because Mr Archbold was not the sort to refuse Mr Stutchbury the favor he asked. So Clay took the ferry, mornings, in the stiff dark suit his mother had chosen. His long thin fingers learned to deal in forms. He carried the papers from tray to tray. In time he grew used to triplicate, and moistened the indelible before writing in his long thin hand the details, and the details.

Clay Skerritt did not complain, and if he was ignored he had known worse. For he was most certainly ignored, by the gentlemen who sat amongst the trays of papers, by the young ladies of the Customs and Excise, who kept their nails so beautifully, who took their personal towels to the toilet, and giggled over private matters and cups of milky tea. If they ever laughed at the junior in particular, at his tricky frame, his pimples, and his stubble of hair, Clay Skerritt was not conscious of it. Why should he be? He was born with inwardlooking eyes.

That all was not quite in order, though, he began to gather from his mother.

"When I am gone Clay," she said—it was the evening the sink got blocked up, "you will remember how your mother was a messer but found she only scraped the dishes into the sink because her mind was otherwise engaged with you Clay your interests always some practical young lady will rectify anything your mother ever did by good intention I would not force you but only advise time is not to be ignored."

But on days when the wind blew black across the grey water Mrs Skerritt might remark, peering out from the arbors of asparagus fern:

"Some young woman clever with her needle lighter-handed at the pastry-board will make you forget your poor mum well it is the way."

Her son was bound to ignore what he could not be expected to believe. He would take a look at the wedding group. All so solidly alive, the figures appeared to announce a truth of which he alone could be the arbiter, just as the great white shoe would still put out, into the distance, for destinations of his choice.

His mother, however, continued in her mistaken attempts to celebrate the passing of reality. There was the day she called, her voice intruding amongst the objects which surrounded him:

"Take my grey costume dear up to the dry cleaner at the Junction tomato sauce is fatal when a person is on the stoutish side."

Clay acted as he had been told. Or the streets were acting round him, and the trams. It was

a bright day. Metal sang. The brick homes were no longer surreptitious, but opened up to disclose lives. In one window a woman was looking into her armpit. It made Clay laugh.

At the cleaner's a lady finished a yarn with the young girl. The lady said from alongside her cigarette:

"I'll leave you to it, Marj. I'm gunna make tracks for home and whip me shoes off. My feet are hurting like hell."

Then the bell.

Clay was still laughing.

The young girl was looking down at the sheets of fresh brown paper, through the smell of cleaning. She herself had a cleaned, pallid skin, with pores.

"What's up?" she asked, as the client continued laughing.

She spoke so very flat and polite.

"Nothing," he said, but added: "I think perhaps you are like my mother."

Which was untrue, in a sense, because the girl was flat, still, and colorless, whereas his mother was rotund, voluble, and at least several tones of grey. But Clay had been compelled to say it.

The girl did not reply. She looked down at first, as though he had overstepped the mark. Then she took the costume, and examined the spots of tomato sauce.

"Ready to-morrow," she said.

"Go on!"

"Why not?" the girl replied. "We are a One-day."

But flat and absent she sounded.

Then Clay did not know why, but asked: "You've got something on your mind."

She said: "It's only that the sink got blocked yesterday evening."

It sounded so terribly grey, and she looking out with that expression of permanence. Then at once he knew he had been right, and that the girl at the dry cleaner's had something of his mother: it was the core of permanence. Then Clay grew excited. For he did not believe in impermanence, not even when he watched the clods of earth tumble down on the coffin lid. Not while he was he.

So he said: "To-morrow."

It sounded so firm, it was almost to-day.

Clay got used to Marj just as he had got used to his mum, only differently. They swung hands together, walking over the dead grass of several parks, or staring at animals in cages. They were already living together, that is, their silences intermingled. Each had a somewhat clammy palm. And if Marj spoke there was no necessity to answer, it was so flat, her remarks had the color of masonite.

Marj said: "When I have a home of my own, I will turn out the lounge Fridays. I mean, there is a time and place for everything. There are the bedrooms too."

She said: "I do like things to be nice."

And: "Marriage should be serious."

How serious, Clay began to see, who had not told his mum.

When at last he did she was drying the apostle spoons, one of which she dropped, and he let her pick it up, on seeing that it was necessary for her to perform some therapeutic act.

"I am so glad Clay," she said, rather purple, after a pause, "I cannot wait to see this nice girl we must arrange some we must come to an agree there is no reason why a young couple should not hit it off with the mother-in-law if the home is large it is not so much temperament as the size of the home that causes friction."

Mrs Skerritt had always known herself to be reasonable.

"And Marj is so like you, Mum."

"Eh?" Mrs Skerritt said.

He could not explain that what was necessary for him, for what he had to do, was a continuum. He could not have explained what he had to do, because he did not know, not yet.

All Mrs Skerritt could say was: "The sooner we see the better we shall know."

So Clay brought Marj. Their hands were clammier that day. The plants were huge, casting a fuscous tinge on the shored-up house.

Mrs Skerritt looked out of the door.

"Is this," she said, "I am not yet not yet ready to see."

Clay told Marj she must go away, for that day at least, he would send for her, then he took his mother inside.

Mrs Skerritt did not meet Marj again, except in the mirror, in which she saw with something of a shock there is no such thing as permanence.

Shortly after she died of something. They said it was her ticker.

*

And Clay brought Marj to live in the house in which he had been born and lived. They did not go on a honeymoon, because, as Marj said, marriage should be serious. Clay hoped he would know what to do as they lay in the bed Mum and Dadda had used. Lost in that strange and lumpy acre Clay and Marj listened to each other.

But it was good. He continued going to the Customs. Once or twice he pinched the lobe of Marj's ear.

"What's got into you?" she asked.

He continued going to the Customs. He brought her a Java sparrow in a cage. It was a kind of love poem.

To which Marj replied: "I wonder if it's gunna scatter its seed on the wall-to-wall. We can always spread a newspaper, though."

And did.

Clay went to the Customs. He sat at his own desk. He used his elbows more than before, because his importance had increased.

"Take this letter away, Miss Venables," he said. "There are only two copies. When I expected five. Take it away," he said.

Miss Venables pouted, but took it away. She, like everybody, saw that something had begun to happen. They would watch Mr Skerritt, and wait for it.

But Marj, she was less expectant. She accepted the houseful of fretwork, the things the mother-in-law had put away—sets of string-colored doilies for instance, once she came across a stuffed canary in a cardboard box. She did not remark, but accepted. Only once she failed to accept. Until Clay asked:

"What has become of the photo?"

"It is in that cupboard," she said.

He went and fetched out the wedding group, and stuck it where it had been, on a fretwork table. At least he did not ask why she had put the photo away, and she was glad, because she would not have known what to answer. The bits of your husband you would never know were bad enough, but not to understand yourself was worse.

So Marj stuck to the carpet-sweeper, she was glad of the fluff under the bed, she was glad of the pattern on the lino, the cartons of Crispies that she bought—so square. Even light is solid when the paths lead inward. So she listened to the carpet-sweeper.

All this time, she realized, something had been happening to Clay. For one thing his hair had

begun to grow. Its long wisps curled like feather behind his ears. He himself. she saw, was not yet used to the silky daring of his hair, which formerly had pricked to order.

"Level with the lobes of the ears, Mr McGillivray, please," Clay would now explain.

Mc Gillivray, who was old by this, and infallably kind, always refrained from commenting.

So did the gentlemen at the Customs—it was far too strange. Even the young ladies, who had been prepared to giggle at first, got the shivers for something they did not understand.

Only when the hair had reached as far as Mr Skerritt's shoulders did Mr Archbold send for Clay.

"Is it necessary, Mr Skerritt?" his superior asked, who had the additional protection of a private office.

Clay replied: "Yes."

He stood looking.

He was allowed to go away.

His wife Marj decided there is nothing to be surprised at. It is the only solution. Even if the fretwork crackled, she would not hear. Even if the hanging basket sprouted hair instead of fern, she would not see. There were the chops she put in front of her husband always so nicely curled on the plate. Weren't there the two sides of life?

*

One evening Clay came up out of the terraced garden, where the snails wound, and the sea smells. He stood for some considerable time in front of his parents' wedding group. The great shoe, or boat, or bridge, had never appeared so structural. Looking back he seemed to remember that this was the occasion of his beginning the poem, or novel, or regurgitation, which occupied him for the rest of his life.

Marj was certain that that was the evening he closed the door.

She would lie and call: "Aren't you gunna come to bed, Clay?"

Or she would stir at the hour when the sheets are greyest, when the air trembles at the withheld threat of aluminium, Marj would ungum her mouth to remark: "But Clay, the alarm hasn't gone off yet!"

From now on it seemed as though his body never stayed there long enough to warm the impression it left on the bed. She could hardly complain, though. He made love to her twice a year, at Christmas, and at Easter, though sometimes at Easter they might decide against—there was the Royal Agricultural Show, which is so exhausting.

All this is beside the point. It was the sheets of paper which counted, on which Clay wrote, behind the door of that little room which his wife failed to remember, it was soon so long since she had been inside. One of the many things Marj Skerritt learned to respect was another person's privacy.

So Clay wrote. At first he occupied himself with objects, the mysterious life which inanimacy contains. For several years in the beginning he was occupied with this.

> . . . the table standing continues standing its legs so permanent of course you can take an axe and swing it cut into the flesh as Poles do every once in a while then the shriek murder murder but mostly nothing disturbs the maps the childhood journeys on the frozen wave of wooden water no boat whether wood or iron when you come to think satin either ever sails from A to B except in the mind of the passenger so the table standing standing under an electric bulb responds unlikely unless to determniation or desperation of a Polish kind . . .

One night Clay wrote: "I have never observed a flowerpot intimately until now its hole is fascinating the little down of green moss it is of greater significance than what is within though you can fill it if you decide to if you concentrate long enough . . .

Up till now he had not turned his attention to human beings, though he had been surrounded by them all his life. In actual fact he did not turn his attention to them now, he was intruded on. And Lova was not all that human, or not at first, a presence rather, or sensation of possession.

That night Clay got the hiccups, he was so excited, or nervous. The reverberations were so metallic he failed to hear his wife Marj, her grey voice: "Aren't you gunna come to bed, Clay?"

Lova was, by comparison, a greenish yellow, of certain fruits, and plant-flesh.

"Lova Lova Lova," he wrote at first, to try it out.

He liked it so much it surprised him it had not come to him before. He could have sat simply writing the name, but Lova grew more palpable.

> . . . her little conical breasts at times ripening into porepores detachable by sleight of hand or windy days yet so elusive fruit and shoes distributed amongst the grass . . .

In the beginning Lova would approach from behind glass, her skin had that faint hothouse moisture which tingles on the down of ferns, her eyes a ferny brown that complemented his own if he had known. But he knew no more than gestures at first, the floating entanglement of hair in mutual agreement, the slight shiver of skin passing over skin. She would ascend and descend the flights of stone steps, inhabiting for a moment the angles of landings of old moss-upholstered stone. The leaves of the monstera deliciosa sieved her at times into a dispersed light. Which he alone knew how to re-assemble. On rare occasions their mouths would almost meet, at the bottom of the garden, where the smell of rotting was, and the liquid manure used to stand, which had long since dried up. She was not yet real, and might never be. No. He would make her. But there were the deterrents. The physical discords.

Marj said: "My hands are that chapped I must ask Mr Todd's advice. You can enjoy a chat with a chemist, doctors are most of them too busy pushing you out."

And Lova got the herpes. Clay could not look at her at first. As she sat at her own little table, taking the fifteen varieties of pills, forcing them into her pig's snout, Lova would smile still, but it was sad. And soon the sore had become a scab. He could not bring himself to approach. And breath, besides.

For nights and nights Clay could not write a word. Or to be precise, he wrote over several nights: ". . . a drying and a dying . . ."

If he listened, all he could hear was the rustle of Lova's assorted pills, the ruffling of a single sterile date-palm, the sound of Marj turning in the bed.

Then it occurred to his panic the shored-up house might break open. It was so rotten, so dry. He could not get too quickly round the table, scattering the brittle sheets of paper. Motion detached itself from his feet in the shape of abrupt, leather slippers. Skittering to reach the door.

Clay did not, in fact, because Lova he now saw locking locking locked it, popping the key afterwards down between.

Lova laughed. And Clay stood. The little ripples rose up in her throat, perhaps it was the cold key,

and spilled over, out of her mouth, her wet mouth. He knew that the private parts of babies tasted as tender as Lova's mouth.

He had never tried. But suspected he must.

She came to him.

"Bum to you!" Lova said.

She sat in his lap then, and with his free hand he wrote, the first of many white nights: "At last my ryvita has turned to velveeta life is no longer a toast-rack."

"Golly," said Lova, "what it is to be an educated feller! Honest, Clay, it must be a great satisfaction to write, if only to keep one of your hands occupied."

She laughed again. When he had his doubts. Does every face wear the same expression unless it is your own? He would have liked to look at the wedding group, to verify, but there were all those stairs between, and darkness. All he could hear was the sound of Marj breaking wind. Marj certainly had said at breakfast: "It is the same. Whatever the manufacturers tell you, that is only to sell the product."

But Lova said: "It is different, Clay, as different as cumquats from pomegranates. You are the differentest of all perhaps. I could lap up the cream of your genius."

She did, in fact, look at moments like a cat crouched in his lap, but would close at once, and open, like a knife.

"I would eat you," she repeated, baring her pointed teeth, when he had thought them broad and spaced, as in Mum or Marj.

Although he was afraid, he wrote with his free right hand: "I would not trust a razor-blade to any but my own . . ."

When Lova looked it over.

"Shoot!" she said. "That is what I am!"

He forgot about her for a little, for writing down what he had to write.

> . . . Lova sat in my lap smelling of crushed carrot tops she has taken the frizz out of her hair but cannot make it smell less green I would not trust her further than without meaning to cast aspersions you can't trust even your own thoughts past midnight . . .

"Chip Chip Chip chipped off his finger," Lova said. "Anyway it begins with C."

"Oh dear," C began to cry. "Oh dear dear dear oh Lova!"

"When does D come in?" she asked.

"D isn't born," he said, "and pretty sure won't be. As for A, A is in bed. No," he corrected. "A am not."

Suddenly he wished he was.

He realised he was eye to eye with Lova their lashes grappling together in gummy agreement but melancholy to overflowing. They were poured into each other.

After that, Clay finished, for the night at least, and experienced the great trauma of his little empty room, for Lova had vanished, and there were only the inkstains on his fingers to show that she had even been there.

There was nothing for it now but to join Marj in the parental bed, where he wondered whether he would ever be able to rise again. He was cold, cold.

Actually Marj turned over and said: "Clay, I had an argument with Mr. Tesoriero over the

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CARL

It was settled by their blades that the gang meant
business,
and who'd get himself carved for a pony-tail?
We didn't stand to figure it but turned tail,
not noticing at the time that Carl wasn't with us.

Next day, his mother who was pushing ninety
and a gin-demented old witch if there ever was one
came after Johnny Shaftoe for her only son.
"He'll find his way" we said, "he's grown ain't he?"

Eileen, Carl's girl, wouldn't speak of him.
Something that was between them had happened
wrong.
As I stood there in the hallway remembering
it struck me all at once where Carl was gone.

What started as a little matter over a girl
Proceeded in the way I'll tell you about.
Four of us with bucklers and with knives went out
to nab them in the warehouse and deliver Carl.

The hottest long day of summer it was,
the roadway clogged our boots, the tar was
running.
Well one of them had eyes and seen us coming,
they had the windows bolted and the door fast.

I knocked one time and Johnny Shaftoe knocked.
We knew by the silence they were all around,
we strained to catch them whispering, but no
sound.
When they were right to settle with us they
unlocked.

"You can carry your laughing boy with you if
you'll only step in,
how do you want him, in the fire bucket
or rolled into a mattress with his legs tucked
or wrapped in his leather jacket, what's left of
him?"

The nearest of them to the doorway had turned
round
and showed us the width between his shoulder-
blades.
I watched him poise an instant with his foot raised:
his body beat it to the ground.

It was seven in the evening when I got home.
My father was about and hadn't eaten yet.
I cooked myself a meal over the gas jet
and laid it in the outer room to be alone.

My father said: "Mind how you earn your living
if you want peace of mind. The money goes further
that's got with the work of your two hands, not
given."
A thing most difficult to believe.

I sat there wondering. I could not recall
who moved the earliest, myself or Johnny.
The knife was in my hand. I stabbed continually.
Someone cried "Bury it!" I never saw Carl.

IAN BEDFORD

turnips. I told him you couldn't expect the public to buy them flabby."

But Clay slept, and in fact he did not rise, not that morning, the first in many years, when the alarm clock scattered its aluminium trays all over the house.

*

Clay Skerritt continued going to the Customs. They had got used to him by then, even to his hair, the streaks in it.

He realised it was time he went to McGillivray's again, but some young dago came out, and said:

"Nho! Nho! McGillivray gone. Dead. How many years? Five? Six?"

So Clay Skerritt went away.

It was natural enough that it should have happened to McGillivray. Less natural were the substances. The pretending houses. The asphalt which had lifted up.

Then he saw the pointed heel, caught in the crack, wrenching at it. He saw the figure. He saw. He saw.

When she turned round, she said:

"Yes. It's all very well. For you. With square heels. Bum bums."

Wrenching at her heel all the while.

"But Lova," he said, putting out his hands.

She was wearing a big-celled honeycomb sweater.

"Oh, yes!" she said.

And laughed.

"If that's how you feel," he answered.

"If that's how I **feel**!"

His hands were shaking, and might have caught in the oatmeal wool.

"I'm not gunna stand around exchanging words with any long-haired nong in the middle of Military Road. Not on yours!"

"Be reasonable," he begged.

"What is reasonable?" she asked.

He could not tell. Nor if she had asked: what is love?

"Aren't you going to know me then?" he said.

"I know you," she said, sort of flat—two boards could not have come together with greater exactitude.

"And it is time," she said, "to go."

Jerking at her stuck heel.

"I've come here for something," he remembered. "Was it birdseed?"

"Was it my Aunt Fanny!"

Then she got her heel free and all the asphalt was crackling up falling around them in scraps of torn black tinkly paper.

If he could only have explained that love cannot be explained.

All the while ladies were going in and out, strings eating into their fingers together with their rings. One lady had an alsatian, a basket suspended from its teeth, it did not even scent the trouble.

It was Saturday morning. Clay went home.

That evening, after they had finished their spaghetti on toast, because they were still paying off the Tecnico, Marj said:

"Clay, I had a dream."

"No!" he shouted.

Where could he go? There was nowhere now.

Except on the Monday there was the Customs and Excise. He could not get there quick enough. To sharpen his pencils. To move the paper-clips the other side of the ink-eraser.

When what he was afraid might happen, happened.

Lova had followed him to the Customs.

The others had not spotted it yet, for it could have been any lady passing the day at the Customs in pursuit of her unlawful goods. Only no lady would have made so straight for Mr. Skerritt's desk, nor would she have been growing from her big-celled oatmeal sweater quite so direct as Lova was.

She had those little, pointed, laughing teeth.

"Well," she opened, "you didn't reckon on this."

She was so certain of herself by now, he was afraid she might jump out of her jumper.

He sat looking down, at the letter from Dooley and Mann, Import Agents, re the Bechstein that got lost.

"Listen, Lova," he advised, "Not in here. It won't help find the piano."

"Pianner? A fat lot of pianner! You can't play that one on me."

"You may be right," he answered.

"Right!" she said. "Even if I wasn't. Even if I was flippin' wrong!"

She put her handbag on the desk.

"If anyone's gunna play, I'm the one," she said.

Sure enough the old black upright slid around the corner from behind Archbold's glassed-in office, followed by the little, leather-upholstered stool, from which the hair was bursting out. Lova seemed satisfied. She laughed, and when she had sat down, began to dish out the gay sad jazz. Playing and playing. Her little hands were jumping and frolicking on their own. The music playing out of every worm hole in the old, sea-changed piano.

Clay looked up, to see Archbold looking down. Miss Titmuss had taken her personal towel, and was having trouble with her heels as she made her way towards the toilet.

When Lova got up. She was finished. Or not quite. She began to drum with her bum on the greasy, buckled-up rashers of keys of the salt-cured old piano.

"There!" she shouted.

She came and sat on the corner of his desk. She had never been so elastic. It was her rage of breathing. He was unable to avoid the pulse of her suspender, winking at him from her thigh.

One or two other of the Customs officials had begun to notice, he observed desperately through the side-curtains of his hair.

So he said: "Look here, Lova, a scene at this stage will make it well nigh impossible for me to remain in the Service. And what will we do without the pension? Marj must be taken into account. I mean to say, it is the prestige as much as the money. Otherwise, we have learnt to do on tea and bread."

Lova laughed then.

"Ha! **Ha! HA!**"

There is no way of writing it but how it was written on the wall. For it was. It got itself printed up on the wall which ran at right angles to Archbold's office.

Clay sat straight, straight. His adam's apple might not endure it much longer.

"Scenes are so destructive," he said, or begged.

So his mum had told him.

"If that is what you want," said Lova, "you know I was never one for holding up procedure for the sake of filling in a form."

And she ripped it off the pad from under his nose. Her hands were so naked, and could get a whole lot nakeder. He was afraid he might be answerable.

"I would never suggest," she shouted, "that the pisspot was standing right end up when it wasn't."

But he had to resist, not so much for personal reasons as for the sake of public decorum, for the honor of the Department. He had to protect the paper-clips.

Because their hands were wrestling, troubling the desk. Him and Lova. At any moment the carton might burst open. At any. It happened quite quickly, breathily, ending in the sigh of scatteration.

"I will leave you for now," she said, getting off the corner of the desk, and pulling down her sweater, which had rucked up.

Almost every one of his colleagues had noticed by this, but all had the decency to avoid passing audible judgment on such a very private situation.

When it was over a little while, Miss Titmuss got down and gathered up the paper-clips, because she was sorry for Mr. Skerritt.

He did not wait to thank or explain, but took his hat, treading carefully to by-pass the eyes, and caught the ferry to the other side.

*

Marj said: "Aren't you early, Clay? Sit on the veranda a while. I'll bring you a cuppa, and a slice of that pound cake, it's still eatable I think."

So he sat on the veranda, where his mother used to sit and complain, and felt the southerly get inside his neckband, and heard the date-palm starting up. Sparrows gathered cautiously.

Marj said: "Clay, if you don't eat up, it'll be tea."

You can always disregard, though, and he went inside the room, which he did not even dread. There she was, sitting in the other chair, in the oatmeal sweater. Her back turned. Naturally.

"Lova," he began.

Then she came towards him, and he saw that she herself might sink in the waters of time she spread before him cunningly the nets of water smelling of nutmeg over junket the steamy mornings and the rather shivery afternoons.

If he did not resist.

She was just about as resistant as water not the tidal kind but a glad upward plume of water rising and falling back as he put his hands gently lapping lapping. She was so gentle.

Marj began to knock on the door.

"Tea's getting cold, Clay," she announced.

It was, too. That is the way of things.

"I made you a nice devilled toast."

She went away, but returned, and held her ear to the dry rot.

"Clay?" she asked. "Don't you mind?"

Marj did not like to listen at doors because of her regard for privacy.

"Well," she said, "I never knew you to act like this."

It could have been the first time in her life that Marj had opened a door.

Then she began to scream. She began to create. It was unlike her.

She could not see his face because of all that hair. The hair and the boards between them were keeping it a secret.

"This is something I never bargained for," she cried.

For the blood had spurted out of the leg of the table. Just a little.

And that old shoe. He lay holding a white shoe.

"I never ever saw a shoe!" she moaned. "Of all the junk she put away, just about every bit of her, and canaries and things, never a shoe!"

As Clay lay.

With that stiff shoe.

"I don't believe it!" Marj cried.

Because everyone knows that what isn't isn't, even when it is.

CONTAINMENT

Robert Clark

i.

When from a foothold in these foundling hills
I gaze across the land, beyond the plains,
to where the loose horizon moors the sky,
my throat grows tight, there's longing in my veins.
But though I plead, the land gives no reply.

The sun drips warmly down each trunk and branch,
and distant trees like emus step across
the grass. I want to run and clasp the earth,
shout loud my love, and yet I'm at a loss.
This willed aloofness fills me with dismay.

Silence lies closely over all and like
a nylon veil gives mystery to the shape
beneath. Such radiance offered out of reach
is torture, and from it there is no escape.
No answer comes to my demented cry.

The shadows of the clouds in creeping stains
spread far across the distant hills or sweep
in slow procession down the curly range
as if to some appointment they must keep.
They have their ordered place—I am the stray.

When evening comes and skies magenta flare,
a woman careful of her prime applies
the lilac talc of dusk and knows the bloom
of ripe and waiting bosom, throat and thighs.
She turns from me, but will not tell me why.

The more I strive the less attain. The motes
a child runs everywhere to grasp, will glide
beyond his reach, yet fall unwanted where
the adult sits indifferent by his side.
Love is not pursuit but willing play.

ii.

Pre-occupied one dawn in chopping wood,
lost to everything around, I knew
only the call of muscle, splashing chips
and dumb submission of the tree I slew.
I paused for breath, and day was in the sky.

Conscious of something new, more than renewal
of the morning, something waited for, I turned,
rinsed clean of thought. The land lay still and waiting.
Suddenly she was at my side, but I'd not learned.
Impulsively I grasped. She drew away.

iii.

Distance duplicates the height above,
and yet when fog comes down the world is bird
and gum. Each lies in each, concealed, implied.
My thought, confined in silence, still is heard.
Talk will not serve, the words go helplessly awry.

This towering, girthy messmate by my side
knows all I know, needs all I need, and more
of earth. It has no words, it does not yearn.
Its energies directed to its core,
it is the land in all her deep array.

A seed that falls to earth will live, not die:
true to itself, its function is to grow:
part of the living forest then, a tree,
intact, contained within itself, will know
through self the whole which all the parts imply.

Each part must be itself: from more than one
communion comes, communion makes the whole,
but still the greater is contained in less.
The segments of the side make up the bowl.
Without is found within. There lies the way.

So here I learn once more, what I must learn
until it grows in me, what every grass
knew in the seed—within myself I am
contained: beyond my boundaries I can pass
only by turning in, where all things lie.

And once within, I am with no volition
out. All things are mine and I am free.
Tortured no more, I have and keep my place,
I own the land, still more the land owns me,
both slave and lord, the whole and part of all I see.

NEW BEGINNING

David Martin

ALL this took place round about Christmas time, quite a few years ago, right here in Melbourne. But the episode remains in my mind—and always will, I suppose—as if it happened only yesterday. There are such episodes in most men's lives: not very important in themselves, perhaps, and often we don't admit that they may change our outlook. I have never really admitted it myself, come to think of it.

We were working on a migrant hostel; a rush job . . . it had to be finished before the end of December when the first boat-load of new arrivals was due. In those days we were not yet used to them, and if I could help it we were not going to get used to them either. I have nothing against foreigners, as such. I am no jingo. But we didn't fight the war to turn Australia into a refuge for every run-away Nazi for whom Europe was becoming uncomfortable. How many scabs does a country need?

The hostel (one solid house and a collection of old army huts, hastily refurbished), looked out to sea. In a way its location was pleasant enough, at least in summer. A quarter of a square-mile of unkempt grass surrounded the buildings; there were few trees to give shade but from the roof where I worked one could see the ships entering the river, and there was the scent of earth and of dandelions. February, however, would change the green to brown and then I wouldn't like to have to live in such a place.

I was the Union rep. on the job. The fellows had elected me because they knew me for a militant, that was one reason, and the second was that I was a few years older than most of the others, and well used to dealing with the boss. I must say, conditions were not bad. Almost too much overtime, but plenty to take home and a rather cheerful atmosphere. The approach of Christmas had something to do with it, you understand.

We had a few parties already, minor ones, and the thing was still building up. I am a returned man—Eighth Division—and my RSL branch had let me have a couple of kegs left over from their own do. The beer was turning flat and they didn't charge me anything. We bought a few packets of rasins which we dropped into the stuff to bring it to life again. It gives it a kick if you let it settle for a while and maybe add a little salt. The boys had put it aside to drink on the last day, when the work would cut out and the first Balts would move in.

I had prepared a few surprises for them. That is to say, we had prepared them, for most of the men were as keen as I was. They needed little persuading and there was not even the usual number of individualists who always hang back when a demonstration is coming up. There's no point in bothering you with the political ins and outs and the discussions that went forward in certain places. You are aware that men in groups never act altogether spontaneously, though this time we came as close to it as makes no difference. We were sure the papers would take notice, and that would be all to the good.

This is how it was to work. We had prepared slogans, big, bold slogans, and painted them on large sheets of brown paper and square pieces of cloth, cut from sugar bags. "Fascists Go Home!" "Houses for Aussies, not hostels for Nazis!" "Out Hitlerite Warmongers". Plenty more of the same kind, plus some posters which only showed a swastika. We had arguments about those: it's funny how after all those years we could not agree which way round you paint a swastika. Some painted it with the top bar pointing left, some with it pointing to the right.

The idea was to keep the slogans well out of sight, hidden behind the working gear or tucked under our shirts until the very last moment, until the unwelcome guests had left the buses that would bring them from Station Pier. Then, when they were about to go in, walking up the long drive that we had just finished gravelling, we would whip them out. We were planning to form two rows, like a sort of honor guard. Only you might call it dishonor. We knew that there would be a goodly proportion of Germans among these people, and most of the rest were Poles and Ukrainians—blokes who had bolted when the Red Army broke through.

We had everything ready for the great moment. The boat was due in at half-past nine in the morning and the buses were expected in time for lunch. The day was turning hot—a real black-fellow's day; a northerly was blowing and throwing up little clouds of powder from the empty cement bags which were still lying about. The fresh paint glittered on the roofs. We were tidying up round the outlying huts and the plumbers were putting a few finishing touches to the laundries. Most of us would be paid off in the afternoon, myself included. Only a couple of days to go until Christmas, and there were jobs waiting in the New Year; so we were just in the right mood. We kept gathering in small knots, chatting and laughing and ignoring the foremen who, in any case, did not feel like worrying us too much. There was a general air of excitement, as on the eve of a holiday. The beer was kept in the tool room. All the same, it seemed a long morning, somehow.

*

At a quarter past twelve, on the dot, the buses arrived, all three of them, turning in from the main road and halting by the entrance to the new drive. The first to get out were some press photographers. Then nobody, for what seemed like a long time. The hostel manager was hurrying past, wiping his head and smiling.

Casually we moved into position, forming two straggly rows, doing our best to look merely curious. The manager gave me a quick glance and a grin and I grinned back. I stood right at the head of the file, with a placard inside my shirt. I was to give the signal. When the others saw me holding up my slogan, they were to display their own—and add a few suitable remarks for emphasis.

The shirt-sleeved photographers moved up closer to us, also waiting. Then something stirred by the exit of the leading bus (they were parked so that we could not see the doors), and two women came slowly walking round the bonnet in our direction, the sun in their eyes, and stopped.

Billy Shooman, an old carpenter and a good mate of mine who stood next to me, whispered something that I did not catch. I turned to him and when next I looked there were already five or six people approaching us.

A woman was in the lead, followed by a man who was holding the hand of a boy. The woman could have been in her middle forties. The wind tangled with her hair and she put up a hand to control it. She was sweating, her clothes much too warm for this day. She walked with curiously small but fast steps; I say curiously because you would have expected her to make her way slowly. She was heavily pregnant and perhaps she was hurrying to get out of the glare and into the house.

I could feel Billy staring at me, but I shook my head. There was no need to upset her. Nor to go off half-cock . . . we had better wait until the bulk of them were coming up.

As the woman was nearly level with me one of the photographers took a picture. The bright sunlight notwithstanding, he exploded a bulb and I could clearly see her face as she turned to him. If you asked me what her face expressed most of all, I would say it was fear.

A second later she had passed and a whole procession of men, women and children were filling the drive. Now was the time to produce my slogan. I could feel it lying hot against my sweaty skin. I put my hand in and drew it out.

But I did not unfold it. I was looking at them.

And they were looking at me. They looked in a strange, quiet, searching way, as if they meant to ask some question but did not have the courage. They had no luggage but they carried parcels and bundles, hugging them close. Some had those cheap leather bags we soldiers bought in Alexandria. The most unnerving part of all was that they were silent. I could not take my eyes off them. They were like beaten men. A defeated army. No, not a defeated army. Just bedraggled people; bedraggled and bewildered. It crossed my mind that someone had sent them here against their own will.

I looked at Billy and he looked at me. From somewhere down the line a voice called feebly: "Go home!" But it was such a half-hearted shout that I doubt they really took it in. I was playing with the cloth in my hand and, by God! my arms felt heavy. I could not raise it, couldn't lift it up.

Half of the newcomers were past us now and a good few had already entered the hostel and disappeared inside. A group of young men were by now walking by. In their open shirts they seemed fit and strong, their skins tanned from the sea trip, but they, like all the rest, also stared into our faces as if they were seeking for some answer . . . or for pity. One, a tall, well set-up youngster

A CONTEMPORARY NOVELIST

UPON THE PLOT OF HIMSELF

Noel Macainsh

I, though born as other men,
Was sensitive and shy.
I studied hard and got ahead,
Until, at last, the war broke out.
I went. My nerves gave way. I fled.
I let my faithful comrades die.

Too guilty now for normal life,
To force on other men my will,
I must adopt another style—
I travelled far, disguised, withdrew—
Climbed backwards to an upper room.
Compared with what I found within,
The outer world was vile.

And there I let the matter rest
Or would have, if I had not found
That those who ruled the outer world
Were fierce. They would not let me be.
On certain things they **had** to win.
I groaned. They could not sense, as I,
The high, supernal life within.

To them, I was as nought, a fool
While they, to me, were crass and blind.
I tried so hard to live alone,
To keep their fingers off my mind.
But then I knew, as even now,
Two special demons torture me—
Both, what I am, and what I see.

I tried to keep these two apart.
The more I tried, the more they fought.
Then, growing sly, I tried reverse—
But as I opened to the World,
My raging Spirit slammed the door.
I found no easing of this curse
Until I tried the dreams of Art.

And now the World supports me well,
Applauds these features of my style:
An inner world that's strange, divine;
An outer world, degraded, vile;
A gulf between that none can span;
Their fearful clash that seals our fate—
These suit the times, communicate.

Though in my house there are no songs
Unless it be some kind of hymn,
And though I seem so cold, austere,
Please—countless readers—keep in mind
That though I loathe your stupid ways,
Insatiably I toil to win
The sweet redemption of your praise.

---

of nineteen or twenty, with the kind of face that is so unmistakably German, gave me a smile, and before I could prevent it I was smiling back, but angry with myself. Then a middle-aged chap, trailing a heavy rucksack. His neck and face were weather-beaten. A worker's face.

Suddenly I thought of something that had happened years before. It lasted only for a second or two. The depression years, 'thirty-four or 'thirty-five, and I was marching in a group of unemployed men, sustenance workers, down Punt Road. We were going to the city to take part in a demonstration, but the day was desperately hot and we had very little under our belts. We called our slogans, and here and there people were waving to us from the edge of the pavement, but there was in their waving more pity than defiance.

I never unrolled my slogan. None of us did. Like children caught in some forbidden game, we kept them hidden away. We didn't share our beer with the newcomers, though. We collected round the tool shed and drank pretty much in silence, cracking a few jokes mostly at our own expense, and the sheets of paper and the pieces of sugar bag with their welcoming messages and their swastikas we threw into the incinerator. Then we drew our pay and broke up.

Billy Shooman went back to town with me in the same bus. When we got to Flinders Street he tapped me on the shoulder and wished me Merry Christmas, and just as he was about to alight he said:

"Never mind, Jack. Don't let it get you. We just thought we knew, but we didn't, this time."

SWAG

It's interesting how many people with some kind of intellectual interests seem to be complaining these days that they haven't got time to read. Some even seem to boast of it. Talk about Joseph Heller's "Catch 22", Doris Lessing's "The Golden Notebook" or any other of a dozen important intellectual documents of the day and they nod and remark: "Ah, yes, I remember seeing a review of that." It's easy to be sanctimonious about this, and so I'll admit straight off that unfortunately I haven't yet read Lessing's novel myself. But surely the point is that people who say they have no time to read simply mean that they think that certain other things are more important, and that they give them priority? But it's harder to get them to admit this.

*

I think that there's a lot of laziness in Australian intellectual life. Despite our radical traditions, we aren't as "committed" to the big intellectual issues of the day, to the "battle of ideas", as our opposite numbers abroad. Our writers and academics produce at a much lower level and at a much slower rate, and are much more reluctant, by and large, to get involved in public discussions and arguments. The situation is improving—but slowly.

*

The malady extends beyond writers and academics, though. I notice it with some Overland readers, for instance. We often are impatient of thought-delays; influenced by the mass media, we demand quick returns when our eyes scan a story or poem. Stories like Peter Mathers' in our last issue, or Patrick White's in this, are dismissed by some because they require extra effort in the reading. Writers like these are important, because they are trying to break away from what they presumably see as a stereotyped and rather superficial dominance in the Australian short story of incident and environment. They are trying to heighten our sensibility and understanding of the interactions of mind, personality and environment. We welcome their stories in Overland, which is open to all forms of socially-relevant writing.

*

We are not interested in printing here material that is obscure for the sake of being obscure, though perhaps we have sometimes sinned.* But we make no apology for printing stories and poems which sometimes need several unhurried, thoughtful readings to get their full meaning. As the young Soviet sculptor Ernst Neizvestny said recently, the spectator as well as the artist has duties: "He must look actively, without prejudice but with maximum concentration". Neizvestny also called for contemporary artists whose world-view is equal to the complexity of the contemporary conception of the universe, praised Dostoevsky for his "acute sense of life" and for being "a bold and mericiless explorer of the psyche", and added that "When contemporary man is searching for new general concepts, it is tedious and wasteful to keep repeating what everyone already knows".

*

A delightful aspect of our community morals was brought home to me the other day. A publisher I know was telling me that a shipment of nude photographic studies by a noted English photographer had been seized recently and the books banned, though they were apparently bona fide artistic studies and not produced for the seamy pornographic trade. On making enquiries as to why this book has been banned, he was informed that it was because some of the photos showed pubic hair!

*

Puzzling over this I asked a friend what on earth was supposed to be indecent about pubic hair. One might even argue that it was more decent than a more public view. He laughed. "It's just one of those funny old Anglo-Saxon things," he said, referring me to D. H. Lawrence's poem "Innocent England" in "The Penguin Book of Contemporary Verse". This poem celebrates the suppression of Lawrence's 1928 exhibition of paintings in London: "the authorities," we are told, "feared for public morals because he painted pubic hair on his nudes." Lawrence comments:

> Oh what a pity, Oh! don't you agree
> that figs aren't found in the land of the free! . . .
>
> Virginal, pure policemen came
> and hid their faces for very shame . . .
>
> The upshot was, my pictures must burn
> that English artists might finally learn
>
> when they painted a nude, to put a cache sex on . . .
>
> A fig-leaf; or, if you cannot find it
> a wreath of mist, with nothing behind it.

There must be scores of similar cases. One particularly unsavory one, concerning the seizing from Australian bookshops of all copies of the literary magazine Evergreen Review (U.S.A.), is now being investigated by Overland. We hope to publish a report on this matter next issue.

*

David Martin's "Television Tension Programmes," which is obtainable free from the Australian Broadcasting Control Board at 373 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, is one of the most important documents in the area of mass communications to have been published in this country. An 80-page booklet, it discusses the latent psychological content of television programs, and stresses that those who want to control the more vicious aspects of the medium must pay more attention to the hidden messages of TV films; violence, for instance, is not the main enemy, but anxiety-producing programs are. What Martin has to say has profound significance for those concerned with the overhaul of Australian censorship.

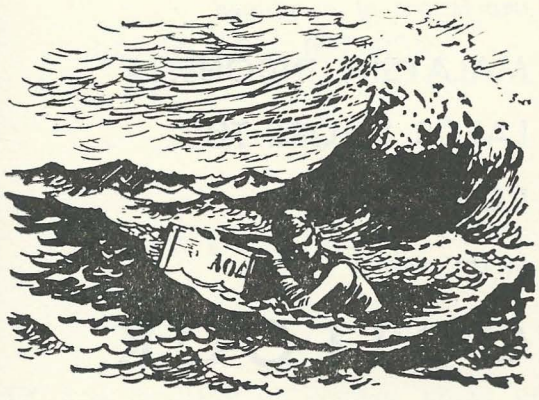
*

There is an interesting critical article on Patrick White by Margaret Walters in the latest issue of the English journal New Left Review. I can send this to anyone who sends me 5/-.

S. MURRAY-SMITH

* At this stage it might be graceful to point out (although unfair to John) that John Manifold's poem "Enigma" on page 30 is about the guitar!

The Floating Fund



Again, a long and generous donations list, amounting in all to £214/18/6, throws light on the support consistently given to this magazine over the years by its readers. But the going is tough and, on the whole, getting tougher. We still haven't got that Commonwealth Literary Fund subsidy (our case comes up again in May), which would be a help in producing a better magazine and in particular in paying contributors more. We remain Australia's only unsubsidised quarterly—an honor, but a double-edged one! All the more thanks to:

KF £14; PH, FM £9/10/0; FK £8; RS £5; RG £4/15/0; NB £4/14/0; FR £4/10/0; RH £4; MM £2/10/0; GW £2/2/0; FO, NK, PR, TB £2; JW, OR, NR, DS £1/12/0; CL, EJ, DG, EF, AW, GW, ML, WB, NB, EMcC, TC, MK-H, JH, HH, AB, LB, JP £1/10/0; DP, HS, RO'D, JP, DM, IH, JO, JD, WR, BS, BI, BB, BMcI, RJ, JB, PF, RE, IW, JP, NM, IH, MB £1.

AB, JW 15/-; LF, MM 14/-; MM 12/-; DP, FA, BR, RL, AD, RM, LV 11/-; EW 10/6. JD, RB, JL, LL, DR, PP, MM, JS, JC, JK, JS, ED, PK, LC, MB, DM, JF, MB, NS, KB, RW, EH, RC, AC, WC, CD, HT, EC, NK, CH, GP BS, JH, KP, MH, TT, KM, RD, MMcG, GM, TMcA, AS, JS, JY, TN, DK, DL, HL, LB, MR, IC, FM-S, MR, LS, JK, WF, JS, ER, AM-S, DM, NG, MF, BD, BE, LB, JB, JB, RB, WF, JB, KS, ME, TJ, FO, GMcI, BE, RS, RM, AC, DM, SP, RN, RB, AC, HA, LB, MT, DrMcM, CG, AJ, RS, DT, GP, ML, BG, PG, HG, WS, JE, MT, CH, HW, NB, RL, JD, EE, DB, RL, MM, TE, NN, TH, AK, KB, RH, JW, CH, PW, LH, BW, DG, MT, ML, NX, JM, PE, EJ, JC, RL, HW, EO, VO'C, MO'D, NK 10/-.

DH, JC 7/6; RT, BN, AVonB, EW, SP, VV, EM, JA, MR, JS, EP, MR, DA, BC, CR, EW, EW, GA, SB, JZ, JD, NG, AS, EH, RB, MZ, JS, WY 5/-; HH, BJ 3/-; VD, WG 2/6; IB 2/-.

RANDOLPH BEDFORD

by Vance Palmer

MY first landlady in London, about fifty years ago, was a gentle, homely old body, a West-country woman who kept lodgings in a small street near the British Museum. Her address had been given me by Lionel Lindsay in Sydney and I actually occupied his room on the top floor, a fact I was continually reminded of by a self-portrait of him on the wall. Reminded of him also by the little anecdotes of the landlady, Mrs. Sweeting. She spoke of him with a motherly affection: she had never had a lodger like that before, so quiet, so considerate, more like a gentleman, she hinted, than an artist. But there was a friend of his she could only speak of with something like a shudder. He was a boisterous man with a voice and laugh that shook the whole house; he tramped the floor of poor Mr. Lindsay's room all night and kept him awake; in the end he had come and carried him off to Spain. She spoke of this last outrage as if it was an outrageous piece of kidnapping.

This aggressive buccaneer, I found, was Randolph Bedford.

I could understand the timid old landlady's feelings from my own youthful memories of Bedford, though I had only seen him from a distance, breezing into the Courier office in Brisbane to take the shipping editor out for a drink—the shipping-editor, Jim Philp, a writer of short stories and father of a boy who was to become a well known judge. Or I would see these two strolling down Queen Street in a lordly way, Bedford a striking figure with his bushy moustache, his florid face, and his ten-gallon hat, talking exuberantly and perhaps endangering the ruffles of some passing lady as he made a sweeping gesture with his cigar.

He must have been still a youngish man then, not far advanced into his thirties, but he had begun life early and looked as if he had entered an assured middle-age. Already he had a varied career behind him. At twenty he had been a journalist at Broken Hill, where he had picked up some knowledge of mining, and he had followed this up by prospecting expeditions to most parts of the continent even further afield. He had been asked to report on certain indications of gold in Italy, and his descriptions of this trip were just then running through the Bulletin—those dazzling and delightful articles that were afterwards published as "Explorations in Civilisation."

It was in descriptions that Bedford excelled. "Perhaps the most brilliant journalist Australia has bred," A. G. Hales said of him—that "Smiler" Hales whom himself had won an international reputation for brilliance, whether at describing battles or prize fights. But Bedford had more creative power than Hales, and it was shown in 1903 by his first novel, "True Eyes and the Whirlwind." That novel seemed a very dashing and robust piece of work at the time. It was really a fragment of autobiography, the hero, Billy Pagan, being Bedford's conception of himself—the youthful adventurer, sowing his wild oats at Broken Hill and with a troupe of travelling actors in the Riverina, but settling down at last with his True Eyes in the conventional way.

The attractive thing about Bedford was that he was both a writer and a man of action. He had, like Kipling's Kim, two sides to his head. He was quite at home among the peasants of Italy or the picture-galleries of Florence, but he was equally at home by a western soak, with the packhorses hobbled out and something frying in the pan. Perhaps he despised writing a little as a rather tame and unadventurous craft.

"Literature," he would say, "Oh, yes, it's well enough, but give me life."

There was a touch of fallacy in the contrast that was common then. Kipling and Jack London had glorified the world of action: Teddy Roosevelt with his Roughriders and his talk about the Big Stick was making people believe that an ounce of energy was worth a pound of thought. And though Bedford was no imperialist—quite the contrary—he was inclined to the language of bigness. He aspired to be a Big Australian; he romanced about our rather arid continent as if

it was the richest territory on earth; he could even describe the Northern Territory as a land flowing with milk and honey. This kind of rhetoric sprang partly from a misdirected patriotism, and partly from his real gusto and enjoyment of life.

*

Though I had known him in the years of the first war, my first real contact with him didn't come till the early nineteen-twenties, when I was going north for a holiday. I had a month to spare and was thinking of spending some of it, at least, on the Barrier Reef. But Bedford, at the time, was excited by the opening-up of a new silver-lead field in which he had an interest.

"Why waste your time looking at coral?" he said, in that pugnacious way of his. "Coral; you can see that any time. Why not go west to the camp at Mt. Isa? That's where you'll really see a bit of life. Our little crowd there'll put you up and you'll meet prospectors from all over the continent and New Guinea as well. What's more, you'll see what Broken Hill looked like in the early days. Mt. Isa is going to be a new Broken Hill."

Even while he spoke he was writing out introductions and directions and almost before I knew it I was camping among the spinifex with some friends of his at the foot of the newly-discovered mountain of silver-lead. That was his way—carrying people along with his bouncing energy, sometimes in directions they didn't want to go.

But this particular experience was one I have been very grateful to him for since. Mt. Isa at the time was a very striking place—a couple of hundred tents and a few hessian stores grouped together in what must have been one of the most desolate places in the continent—metal country that even the wandering stock could only penetrate after the rains. But the gougers who had staked out claims there were an extremely interesting crowd, men who had come, as Bedford said, from every part of the continent and from New Guinea. From some of them I got glimpses of a part of Bedford's life that had been hidden from me.

"I believe Randolph's going to do well out of his holdings here," one of them said. "Anyway, he deserves to. Poked into this metal-country twenty-five years ago before anyone else. And grub-staked me to keep on looking for the metal while he was away abroad. We had no luck then, but it looks as if the pay-off's coming now."

*

Bedford did do reasonably well out of this field he had pioneered, and he was generous to those with whom he had been associated. He had entered the Queensland Parliament by then and entertained his friends as royally as if the place was his private club. Sitting at the head of the big table on the balcony with the light flickering through the jacarandas and playing upon his massive dome, he was a magnificent host, dressing the salad with skilled hands and pouring out his experiences one after the other. There was no finer raconteur in the country. Often his published short stories were disappointing. The descriptions were dazzling but the climax was often a bit flat.

"Bedford has told his best stories so often," said A. G. Stephens, "that he seems to resent the labor necessary to perfect them when he writes them down."

But how full of humor and vitality they were when he told them! There was one favorite story of his about a mining expert called Turn-Em-Down-Jimmy, who was sent to report on all new shows and had a reputation for looking at anything with a sour eye. No find had any prospects in his view; no shaft was likely to prove payable. He had a lugubrious nature that made him approach everything in a jaundiced way and he was notorious for turning shows down. Bedford's story, "How Turn-Em-Down-Jimmy Entered Heaven," pictured him arriving at the pearly gates. When he is being shown around by St. Peter his face assumes the familiar gloomy look. St. Peter points out one prospect after another, but he sinks deeper and deeper into silence. At last his comments come in grunted criticisms. The walls—not real jasper. The pearly gates—poor quality shell. The golden streets—new-chum gold, iron pyrites.

Bedford could tell such stories—hundreds of them—with a zest that carried his listeners away; but when they were written down they lost a good deal. Principally they lacked the bubbling life he could give them by his miming, his pauses, his changes of voice. Like most oral storytellers he was a great actor; he could create character by a look, a gesture. In the written version he was tempted to replace such living aids to reality by strained, rather flamboyant description. There is one story of his, "Fourteen Fathoms by Quetta Rock" that has often been reprinted, all over the English-speaking world. It tells of a diver being sent down to report on a ship that was sunk off Thursday Island. He goes down . . . he threads his way through the passages between the cabins . . . he makes the required observations. But just before coming up he finds a woman's body in one of the cabins, bobbing against the wires of the top bunk—it is that of his wife whom he had left at a southern port. Another body in the cabin is that of her lover. When the diver is drawn to the surface he is paralysed.

This story, Bedford affirmed, was a true one, told him by the diver's brother, a Dane. And, as written down, it was dramatic enough, quite a good magazine story. But as Bedford told it, in the broken language of the diver's brother, with feeling and gesture, it was something quite different—something that made the heart turn over.

*

And in this connection it is worth recalling what Katharine Mansfield said in one of her journals—that you should never tell a story you are going to write; that, if you do, this somehow exhausts the power necessary to give shape to what is afterwards written. So many brilliant raconteurs seem to go flat when they take up their pens. But I think the trouble with Bedford lay deeper; that it was to be found in that oft-repeated saying of his that he preferred life to literature. It is really rather a stupid saying. Literature is essentially a heightening of life, not something that can be compared with it, or opposed to it. But it meant, in practice, that Bedford's values changed and his sense of life narrowed when he started to write. He did not trust his readers fully enough to dispense with conventional plots and rather melodramatic endings. That lover of the diver's wife, you might ask him, was he in the original story?

"Oh, no," Bedford would admit. "I had to add that to give it an extra kick."

He had, in fact, a greater feeling for reality among his friends than when addressing his unknown audience.

So the full richness of his personality is not apparent in the work he has left behind, which is a pity, for he was a great, warm-hearted man and his writings only show his talent, not his touch of genius. This makes it the more incumbent on those of us who knew him to keep alive his memory.

LITERARY CRITICISM IN AUSTRALIA HAS BEEN UNDER ATTACK FOR SOME TIME. BUT THE PROBLEM IS NOT JUST A NATIONAL ONE.

HERE AN AMERICAN DISCUSSES THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE AND AN AUSTRALIAN CRITIC THE LOCAL ONE.

THE CRITIC vs. THE SCHOLAR

Vivian Mercier

THROUGHOUT the history of literature, critics and scholars have been pretty roughly handled by the poets; even the poet-turned-critic risks being branded a traitor. Alexander Pope's best-known line, "For fools rush in where angels fear to tread," was aimed at critics; William Butler Yeats wondered what the scholars—"Old, learned, respectable bald heads"—would say if they happened to meet the libertine poet Catullus whose works they had annotated. In return, critics and scholars have tended to join forces against their common "enemy", the creative writer, while grudgingly conceding that if he didn't exist they would have nothing to write about.

For these reasons, "Critic vs. Scholar" might seem as improbable and newsworthy a headline as "Man Bites Dog." Yet for a number of years past the critic and the scholar have been at loggerheads, at any rate in the fields of English and American literature. There is good reason to believe that this academic cold war is drawing to a close, but, like all civil wars, it has left deep scars on its participants, embittering almost every English Department in the United States, not to mention the Commonwealth and the British Isles. F. R. Leavis might not have spoken so harshly about C. P. Snow recently if his temper had not been soured by a lifetime of battle.

[Throughout the English-speaking world English studies and literary criticism are becoming increasingly bedevilled by ideological clashes, the impact of which was at first confined to university circles, but is now spreading further afield. This article, though dealing with the American scene, is—we are informed—of direct relevance to the same field of studies in Australia.—Ed.]

The cause of the Scholar-Critic War was simple enough, and the whole conflict seems unavoidable in retrospect. It all began soon after World War I., when contemporary literature became a subject of study in the universities, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Prior to that era, no English or American writer was studied at college until he had been dead for a decent interval and could be regarded as a part of literary history, hence a fit subject for scholarship. Literary criticism was seldom practiced by academic figures in those days. On the one hand, established creative writers and specialists in literary journalism produced a satisfying quantity, if not quality, of criticism in the form of books and long articles in the better periodicals. On the other hand, the English faculties, small at that time, were kept fully occupied in organising what was still a new field of study—traditional English literature. Much of what we now take for granted as English (and American) literature had been out of print for decades or centuries; many manuscripts by hallowed authors had never been printed at all. The history of the English language and of the growth of its various literary genres still remained to be written. Everything that had been done for Greek and Latin literature during and after the Renaissance must now be done for English.

*

EVENTUALLY, however, the British and American literary past was reduced to some sort of order, and the increasing number of Ph.D. candidates in English began to grow restive, for two reasons. First of all, much of the work now remaining to be done seemed like gleaning among the stubble after a great harvest had been reaped. A graduate student who worshipped Shakespeare felt less than happy at being advised to work on some minor, unharvested Elizabethan like Anthony Munday or Barnabe Rich. In the second place contemporary English and American literature, quite apart from its attractiveness as virgin soil, seemed to be entering a new "Elizabethan Age".

Henry James was barely cold in his grave; Bernard Shaw was still at the height of his powers; Yeats, Joyce, Pound and Eliot were producing work that not only challenged the critic by its novelty and disturbing power but also invited scholarly investigation by its breadth of cultural reference. D. H. Lawrence was posing moral problems unparalleled in fiction since the death of Dostoevsky; Gertrude Stein and a group of younger expatriates in Paris were promising surprising new developments in American letters. Is it any wonder that some young idealists refused to enrol for a Ph.D. at all if they were not allowed to work on contemporary authors?

At length the dam broke, and the "contemporary men" inundated the English faculties. But if a man's subject is contemporary literature, he finds that many of the traditional avenues of scholarship are not yet open to him. Bibliography is frustrating because of the scarcity of books, as is textual study because of the unavailability of manuscripts; biography is handicapped by natural reticence and the law of libel; the various techniques of historical scholarship which seek to re-create the spiritual, intellectual and social climate of past ages lose their point when the age in question is all around one. The potential scholar perforce becomes a critic—and the more inevitably since the most urgent task is to decide which contemporary authors deserve the attention of the academic community: nobody wants to be accused of casting swine before pearls. Having exercised his primary function of judgment, the critic can proceed to analyse and interpret the work he admires, in the hope of aiding others to see its excellence.

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OFTEN, the critic of contemporary literature comes to feel that every object of traditional literary concern which lies outside the particular new work under scrutiny is either irrelevant—in that it tends to obscure the irreducible newness and individuality of that work—or inaccessible for the reasons already stated. Hence arose the now middle-aged "New Criticism," which insisted that the proper object of study was the literary work of art in isolation—regardless of its period of origin—and that all the other concerns of traditional scholarship were extra-literary. Holding such views, the New Critics began to infiltrate other areas besides contemporary literature. Nowadays, if a graduate student's interest lies in the Elizabethan period, he can avoid the Munday-Rich trap by proclaiming himself a critic eager to put forward a new interpretation of Shakespeare based on internal evidence. If the Shakespearean on the graduate faculty is too thorough a traditionalist to accept his thesis topic, perhaps the student can persuade the entrenched New Critic on the faculty to become his supervisor instead. In the latter case, the student gains his end at the cost of reviving the hostility between two professors and, very likely, between two factions in the English Department.

The war between scholar and critic is often described, in the wording of Swift's "Battle of the Books," as a struggle between the "Ancients" and the "Moderns". To a considerable extent it is also a struggle between older men and younger ones, though of course an instructor specialising in Middle English may be lined up against a full professor whose field is contemporary literature. Nevertheless, the hostility between the two groups is not merely a matter of the established men resenting the newcomers and the newcomers resenting that resentment. Many of the Ancients have sincere doubts about the validity of literary criticism as an academic discipline and/or of contemporary literature as a fit subject for academic study. For their part, the Moderns feel that some of their opponents do not care for literature in a humanistic way at all and might have been better occupied in collecting and classifying scientific data as biologists or physicists.

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IN spite of these misgivings, the war seems to be on the wane. Many of the more uncompromising Ancients have died or retired. Many of the hotheads among the Moderns have grown cooler with increasing age. The main reason for the rapprochement, as I see it, however, is that each side has learned something from the other. Medievalists are beginning to adopt a New Critical approach to, for example, "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight." Since traditional scholarly methods, along with plenty of futile and unscholarly speculation, have failed to discover the fourteenth-century author of this undoubted masterpiece, it seems wiser to explore the richness and symmetry of the poem itself than to investigate any further the circumstances which produced it. No "circumstances" short of a poet of genius could have "produced" this jewel; it was high time that it should be examined for its own sake rather than as evidence for some scholarly hypothesis. Such hypotheses have been indispensable in creating scholarly reputations, alas; the same one will make the reputation of (a) the scholar who proposes it; (b) the one who explodes it; (c) the one who revives it on the basis of new evidence, and so on ad infinitum.

The Moderns have learned even more from the Ancients; perhaps, as the Ancients claim, because they had more to learn in the first place, but also, I hope, because they are more open-minded. At any rate, the twentieth century is now more than sixty years of age, and the new is rapidly becoming the old. Joyce has been dead for more than twenty years, Lawrence for more than thirty; Hemingway and Faulkner have just passed on to join them. More and more, the critic who yearns to say something new about these writers and their contemporaries must transform himself into a scholar. Disciples of Joyce, for instance, are now busily editing and publishing the vast quantity of manuscript and typescript drafts and notes which ultimately became "Ulysses" and "Finnegans Wake." Similar study has already begun on Faulkner. A modernist who has never had to cope with manuscripts before may suddenly find himself up to his neck in problems which the medievalists have faced throughout their careers; if he doesn't try to profit by their experience, he's a numbskull.

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EVEN the printed page conceals all sorts of pitfalls. Many critics of contemporary literature have blithely embarked upon their tasks of judgment and interpretation without stopping to ask whether they were studying the authentic words of their author. In his "Textual and Literary Criticism," Professor Fredson Bowers of the University of Virginia has urbanely pointed out a number of instances where critical comment—sometimes puzzled, sometimes blindly confident—on passages from Yeats, Eliot, Melville and other fairly recent writers has been based on faulty texts. Until a few months ago, when the Modern Library "Ulysses" was reset, an uncertain amount of American Joyce criticism was still being based on an extremely unreliable text, inadvertently copied from a pirated edition.

The scholar in contemporary literature needs to study modern printing techniques with some of the care that modern Shakespeare scholars have lavished on the printing practices of the Elizabethans. (I should explain that, since none of Shakespeare's plays exists in manuscript, the search to discover what Shakespeare "really" wrote has led scholars to identify not only the customs of particular Elizabethan printing shops, but also the habits of individual compositors, including some fairly idle apprentices.) For instance, a bad splice in the negative of an American photo-offset edition resulted in the omission of a line from T. S. Eliot's "The Rock." Lord help the critic who doesn't know that a line is missing or thinks that the belated "revision' improves the passage.

*

IT would be premature to say that the civil war in the English Departments is entirely over. In May of 1961, Michigan State University held the first session of a two-part Conference in the Study of Twentieth-Century Literature. The report of its proceedings makes stimulating and often amusing reading, for the views of the participants diverged widely. Although I share—or, at times, have borrowed—some of the ideas of Father Walter Ong, S.J., I find other views of his altogether too optimistic. For example, he claimed that "close attention to present-day literature has produced an articulateness and penetration in literary criticism such as we have never known before." Elsewhere at the conference, Professor Donald Hall said bluntly, "I think we've been living through an age of extremely poor criticism." There is plenty of room for the truth between these two extremes. Father Ong also remarked rather complacently that "the tension between the New Critics and the historical scholars has by now diminished to the point of virtual disappearance." Professor Clarence Gohdes, Chairman of the Board of Editors of "American Literature", refuted this cosy notion from the moment he began to speak. For him, "recent literature as a subject for either research or instruction is the most difficult area of study in the entire range of the literary discipline." He voiced his dismay at "the almost incredible mass of trivial comment or subjective appraisal that passes current as scholarship in the field." His hope for the future was expressed in ironic terms: "Criticism, or what has passed for criticism, has become outworn, so that we shall have to go to something else."

I think we know by now what that "something else" should be: a fruitful marriage—somewhere between a love match and a shotgun wedding—of scholarship with criticism. The distinction between scholar and critic has always been a misleading one in any case. What was Aristotle, a scholar or a critic? Plainly, he was both. Furthermore, although he wrote his "Poetics" about seventy-five years after the great age of Greek tragedy had ended, he showed no prejudice against the literature produced by his contemporaries.

LITERARY CRITICISM IN AUSTRALIA

Leonie Kramer

PEOPLE interested in literary matters in this country, and especially academics, are apt to say that there is no body of Australian criticism. And in spite of the general and particular books of criticism produced by such writers as Vance and Nettie Palmer, Vincent Buckley and A. A. Phillips, and the series of publications on Australian writers currently appearing from the Lansdowne Press, there is truth in this assertion. It must be obvious to anyone who contemplates the field of Australian literature, that criticism has not kept pace with original writing; and that what has been written in the past, and much of what is being written now, is neither thorough nor systematic. In this connection it can be of small comfort to Australians, whether they are academics or not, to know that there is considerably more interest in Australian literature in some American universities than there is in Australia.

If I were concerning myself here only with so-called "academic criticism" there would indeed be very little to say. For although university people might be thought to have special opportunities for organised research into and criticism of Australian literature, they have not in fact as yet contributed as much as have people outside university departments. The most important basic source material for criticism of Australian literature has been collected in this country by people who I hope would not be offended by being described as amateurs. Ferguson's "Bibliography," Morris Miller's "Australian Literature" and H. M. Green's "History of Australian Literature" were all compiled by men working as individuals rather than as academics. Morris Miller, for example, has spoken of the way in which his index to Australian literature grew more or less accidentally out of his work as a librarian. None of the important source books I have mentioned was the work of a team of scholars, dedicated to the systematic basic research necessary to the coherent critical study of a literature. They worked, as did some of the greatest scholars in the history of English studies, virtually in isolation; and what is perhaps surprising about this is that they worked in a period when the attack upon bibliography and history is much more the business of groups than of individuals. Had they been men of the eighteenth or even of the nineteenth century, one would not feel it necessary to remark upon this aspect of Australian scholarship..

In my view the growth of competent and vigorous criticism in this country has been discouraged

by a misunderstanding of the role of criticism in the community, and of the way in which a literature develops. Much of the confusion which still clouds our critical perspective dates back to the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of this century; to the period, in fact, when, for various reasons which cannot be discussed here, our literature found its direction in an expression of growing nationalistic sentiment. If one reads the criticism of A. G. Stephens, for example, one cannot help being struck by the validity of many of his critical insights, and by the soundness of many of his judgments. At the same time one must also notice the extent to which these insights and judgments are, if not invalidated, at least weakened by his appeal to matters outside literature altogether, in particular to assertions about the real interests of Australians, and the character of the emergent Australian nation. The same is true of some of the early arguments about Adam Lindsay Gordon, in which a grasp of the literary questions raised by his poetry is confused with arguments about the extent to which he is a genuinely Australian poet.

Now these criticisms and arguments were important in their day—just as arguments about Patrick White are important today—if for no other reason than that they encouraged and maintained a lively interest in literary matters among all kinds of people. I would go further and say that A. G. Stephens' critical bias and Furphy's offensive Australianism were entirely necessary at that moment in our literary history. They provided more than encouragement and stimulation; they enunciated a purpose for an indigenous literature, and gave it a direction. They were men for their time; just as, one might say, Samuel Johnson was a man for his time when in the preface to his dictionary he stated not only the principles which had guided him, but also the principles which should guide the users of the English language in the future.

But just as some of Johnson's principles have had to meet the pressures of a changing language and changing historical situation, so nationalistic criticism and literary practice have had to face a developing and increasingly cosmopolitan public. I say "have had to face," but it would be more accurate to say "should have had to face." For one of the troubles with Australian criticism is that it has leant too heavily on the past. It has felt bound to spend a good deal of time defending its ground, and tackling, in various ways, old nationalistic arguments, or, worse, reiterating them, instead of applying itself without embarrassment to the literature.

This problem is brought sharply into focus in the introduction to H. M. Green's "History of Australian Literature," and is summed up by Green in these words:

> Opinions as to what constitutes Australian literature sometimes extend on the one hand so widely as to admit everything whose subject is in any way connected with Australia; and on the other hand they are sometimes so narrow as to exclude all that is not the work of a native born and resident Australian, or even that is not characteristically Australian, whatever that might mean.

But let us suppose the canon of Australian literature to be established; critics have then faced the even greater problem of what standards to apply to it. Green again tackles this problem, by admitting to a double standard of judgment, and he summarises his argument by stating that he does not attempt "to make out that what is considered first rate by Australian standards is necessarily first rate by the standards of a greater literature."

This, of course, is no solution to the critical problem; though Green's method works well enough for the most part in his history. But the persistence of this double standard in the minds of many critics often prevents accurate and judicious criticism of writers. One of its worst effects can be seen in the attempt to make Australian works appear more significant by comparing them with accepted "masterpieces". These comparisons are often invalid in themselves. But more unfortunate is the fact that so far from illuminating the work under discussion, they often actually prevent the critic from analysing and expressing its particular quality; and hence he abdicates one of his most important tasks. When this happens it is the writer rather than the critic who suffers. The critic may win some admiration for name-dropping, however inappropriate, but the writer's individuality becomes lost in a throng of irrelevant grey eminences.

So my first suggestion concerning Australian criticism is that it might occupy itself more wholeheartedly with the real business of criticism—examination, interpretation where this is necessary, and assessment of a work on its own terms. After all the writer, even the fairly undistinguished writer, offers the critic a particular piece of territory; he defines his own limits, if not limitations, and the critic can do worse than begin by accepting them. I do not, however, wish it to appear that I am eschewing all discussion of "influences" and comparisons. These may often be revealing, even essential. I am simply suggesting that a too strenuous attempt to prove the international affiliations of writers, or to prove their national significance, can easily give that impression of uneasy defensiveness we can well afford to dispense with.

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The second point I wish to develop arises indirectly out of the first. It is obvious, as Green says, that there are many Australian books which are important in Australia in a way that they are not and probably never will be elsewhere. I would place the novels of Donald Stuart in this class. There are some English books of which the same might be said, though they are still compulsorily fed to students. Any critic knows that he is called upon at times to discuss books which are mediocre or worse. Many of us concerned with criticism have had to face the common objection of the person who says "If that book is as bad as you say it is, why bother to criticise it at all?" We should know the answer to that one, and I don't propose to discuss it. But I mention this because it raises a question in my mind which I believe to be particularly relevant to the function of Australian literary journals. It is only in comparatively recent years that there has been any general agreement in Australia as to who are those important writers, past and present, whose work deserves intensive critical examination. We now have sufficient perspective in time to be able to sort out with reasonable certainty some "major" writers. I'm not suggesting that our present categories will necessarily remain fixed, since it is one of the functions of criticism constantly to review and revalue. But the fact remains that at present we are in a position to say where intensive critical work ought to be carried out.

However, the very shortness of our literary tradition means that we have not a large body of critical writing. It is no accident that critical

Politician

Hell, no. It wasn't the pulsing of ideals;
No cloudy notions of perfected man
Beguiled him into playing politics.
A host of garbled impulses set going
This fruity public voice,
This poker face above the Chairman's chair,
Even this crab-walk of a freckled hand
On polished oak. Consider it this way,
What could he weave around such loneliness
But some or other fanciful cocoon?
What could he do but play a game
Tricked out with dogma, jargon, ways and means—
Lulled in procedure like an embryo?
The granite stance in which he figures here—
While fierce amendments shatter on his brow
And coarse opinions abrade to sand
Beneath his eye—seems imperturbable,
Complete, without a private cranny known
Or niche where feathered sorrows could be nesting.
How wide we dream! That monolith plays false.
His true responses move,
Dappled and latticed on a shifting ground
As wind and sun through multifarious scrub
Create their nervous world of counterpoint.

But, come now. He could never show you this;
Must rap and bark and frown and set his jaw,
Seeking to be what others, too, are not,
A public voice, a poker face, a rock.

CHRIS WALLACE-CRABBE

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activity has increased very greatly in the last ten years. This is at least partly a product of our gain in historical and chronological perspective. But there is another way in which a substantial body of critical comment can be built up —namely by a more thorough and extensive discussion of current writing. This, it seems to me, is only possible if journals pay more attention to the quality and even the length of their reviews.

Now it is generally recognised that there is a distinction between reviews and criticism. The job of the reviewer is not always considered particularly respectable. Especially is this so of course, in academic circles where reviews do not count as publications. And indeed the reviewer is often little more than a hack, who has insufficient time to read books he knows nothing about, and who merely churns out reviews because his editor tells him to. Reviews in newspapers and even in literary journals often show no realisation at all of the critic's real task. Sometimes this is unavoidable, since it is more often than not the object of newspaper reviews merely to provide a summary of the contents of a book so that readers will know whether or not to put it on their library list.

While acknowledging these facts—and, in fact, because they must be acknowledged—I would suggest that one of the aims of literary journals in this country should be to stimulate criticism of current literature at a more intelligent level, and to encourage those people who review new books to make at the same time a worthwhile critical statement. Too often reviews, even of important books, are descriptive rather than evaluative; and too often the space allotted to them is inadequate. The longer review article is partly an answer to this problem. To take a practical example; it seems to me that if Patrick White publishes a new novel, this should be an opportunity not simply for a reviewer to write a few hundred words about it, but for a substantial critical reassessment of White's work in the light of his latest book. In this way, I suggest, the quality of criticism of Australian writing could be improved; and a critical climate created for writers in which intelligent and responsible discussion of their work would be an accepted fact. In popular journalism the review is likely to remain the unsatisfactory exercise it is at present, though one might hope that the quality of its presentation will improve. But journals have an opportunity to make their current literary comment an influential contribution to serious Australian criticism.

All that I have said so far assumes some view of the function of literary criticism. Obviously I cannot tackle this general question here. But one could do worse, I think, than refer to Matthew Arnold's dictum that it is the business of criticism "simply to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas." This is by no means simple, and to be practical, all of us who are concerned in whatever way with criticism know that finding the best involves a good deal of tedious sifting through the second-rate; and this somewhat negative function of criticism cannot be overlooked, and should not be underrated. The current of true and fresh ideas of which Arnold writes is vital both to the constant review of past achievements which criticism undertakes; and to the encouragement of literary interests which is of special concern to us in this environment.

I have tried to suggest that criticism cannot fulfil its proper function if it rests on a narrow basis of nationalistic fervour or provincial self-consciousness; nor if it is subject to unnecessary proscriptions in its dealings with current writing. And I might add, neither can it flourish as a significant activity unless it resists pressures from cliques. To quote Arnold again, "Criticism must maintain its independence of the practical spirit and its aims." I see it as one of the tasks of Australian literary journals to help criticism to achieve and maintain this independence: and I hope we are not so complacent as to imagine that we have made much progress in this direction.

"TO EARTH I LEAVE MY BONES . . ." SINCE THE PUBLICATION OF OUR LAST ISSUE MARY GILMORE AND BILL HARNEY, BOTH OF WHOM WERE ASSOCIATED WITH THIS MAGAZINE, HAVE DIED.

Woman and Poet

DAME Mary Gilmore has been a part of the Australian literary scene for so long that it is hard to believe that she is gone: as though a familiar mountain on the skyline had disappeared.

Mary Gilmore, nee Cameron, was that paradox, a writer with a man's intellect and a woman's heart. All her life she was interested in labor problems and the condition of Man; at the same time she had a warm interest in men, women and children as people.

She had that reverence for human and continuing life which is the mark of a true woman. Children, Aboriginals, wild birds, young soldiers dying in battle, convicts, prostitutes, unmarried mothers—all received the sympathy of a woman's heart, and even as late as the last world war she could write feelingly of "my boys": the young airmen and soldiers she entertained in her flat at King's Cross.

She was not without feminine vanity, and accepted adulation with the dignity of a queen, though her greatest achievement was simply in living so long and remembering so much.

Dobell's portrait, painted when she was well into her nineties, caught this hint of arrogance, almost the air of a Spanish grandee, in the tilt of the head and the strong nose, in the gaze of the still-eloquent dark eyes. Rayner Hoff's bust shows the strength, the passion, and the wildness which were hidden behind the prim facade of neat grey bun and rimless glasses which she affected in middle age.

In 1936 she was created D.B.E. for her services to Australian literature. In recent years her birthdays became literary events in Sydney.

Mary Gilmore's ten books of verse vary greatly in quality. The first, "Marri'd", was simple, unpretentious, moving; but by the time "The Passionate Heart" came out in 1918 she had become an unofficial Poet Laureate, given to capital letters, rhetorical questions and vague abstractions.

With "The Wild Swan" (1930) and "Under the Wilgas" (1932) her feet are firmly back on earth again, among the birds and Aboriginals she knew so well. She was the first to make paraphrases of Aboriginal songs, long before the first Australians became fashionable subjects for art.

Some of her verses are jogtrot ballads, and some, while pursuing an involved thought, drop into prose. But at her best she produced short lyrics of compressed thought and feeling which will last as long as Australian poetry is read:

> Never admit the pain;
> Bury it deep.
> Only the weak complain—
> Complaint is cheap . . .

and the terrible poem she wrote for a son killed in the first world war:

> Out in the street
> A dead dog lies,
> Flies in his mouth
> Ants in his eyes . . .

Her last collection, "Fourteen Men", came out in 1954 when she was already 89 (she would have been a hundred years old in 1965). Far from weakening her reputation this book enhanced it. Some of these poems could only have been written by an old woman, rich in experience. Her keen memory dredged up details from the past: a dead child, the little spiders which "folded up their knees" and became like tiny painted pebbles in her hand, and the "fourteen men" hanging in their tree—the Chinese lynched by the diggers at Lambing Flat.

As well as verse Mary Gilmore must have written thousands of articles in her lifetime. Some were collected into a book of essays, "Hound of the Road"; some were published in South America, where she went in 1895 to join William Lane's New Australia movement.

Her other prose consists of two volumes of reminiscences, "Old Days, Old Ways" and "More Recollections". With her habit of total recall, she includes much that is trivial and hardly worth recording, all with a kind of solemnity as if it must be valuable **because** it is remembered.

The prose will not be read for its own sake, with its careless style and hanging participles—a prose debased perhaps by 25 years of journalism with the Sydney Worker—but we must be grateful that such a mind was turned on so much of early Australia that would otherwise have gone unrecorded. She could remember a way of life that has almost completely vanished; the main thing is that she got it down in print, even if she did not have the style of an Osbert Sitwell.

When I first met Mary Gilmore she was past ninety, but her mind was still alert and vigorous, her gaze as bright and commanding as her handwriting was firm and clear. "A marvellous woman—I wish I were thirty years older!" as one man sighed when he met her for the first time on her ninety-second birthday.

For a final word, let Mary Gilmore speak for herself ("In Testament"):

> To earth I leave my bones, to friends my name,
> To bury or to keep as they may choose,
> Uncaring what remembrance I may lose
> Where the world's hucksters scatter noise as fame.
> Slow for the good deed done, but quick to blame,
> These body-snatchers of post-mortem news,
> I see them wait—ghouls of the lesser muse—
> Poor penny-a-liners paid per inch of shame.
> . . . Ah friends, when in the narrow sheet
> Of death I lie, should one kind heart and true
> Remember me, these wolves would wait in vain!

NANCY CATO

The Other Bill Harney

ONE of the quotable platitudes I picked up in my youth was: "There must be a man behind the book." Like all generalities this does not always apply. What is more, in an age which has specialised in the denigration of the mighty, we have been told that there have been some very small men behind some very big books—a domestic tyrant behind "Anna Karenina", a keeper of mistresses on the sly behind "Our Mutual Friend".

The original proposition, however, could never have been successfully applied to Bill Harney. Bill was never behind any book he ever wrote; he was generally a day's stage ahead of it.

This makes the job of assessing Harney the writer somewhat difficult. On any page of any of his published work the footmarks of Harney, as publicist, as raconteur, as anthropologist, as "earbasher" are just fresh enough to make the reader bustle through in the hope of overtaking him. In doing so he is inclined to overlook that Bill wrote some of the most readable and significant chronicles of recent years; readable because they are unpretentious; significant because they are authentic.

Although no journalist by training or inclination, he has the high class journalist's approach. For one most of whose published work is in the form of reminiscence, it is remarkable how little use he makes of the first person singular. His reports are all of what "they" told him or of what "he" did. In his many accounts of Aboriginal lore he never insists that the legends and tribal traditions he learned were top-secret parts of ritual which no one but the Great Bilarney would ever be allowed to learn; he gives the impression that these stories have been told to him as casually as he, himself, relates them and that anyone else who happened to be around could have listened in just as freely.

Harney was one of the few competent writers who really knew the Aboriginal; he was one of the very few people who really knew the Aboriginal and also liked him. Yet he had no illusions about him. Why he was such a successful patrol officer for the old Native Affairs Branch of N.T. Administration was that he had the experience and the wisdom to sift out the reality from the chaff of unfounded complaints. This capacity is reflected in all his writing. His account of how-and-why the Japanese crew of the Kashumoto was murdered is first-class story telling, but there is no attempt made to raise the murderers to the statue of heroes, as has been done with such brutal and treacherous savages as Nimaluk or Pigeon.

There are no "Coonardoos" among the joyous little bundles of animal sexiness Harney introduces us to in his yarns; neither are there any in actuality. Primitive hedonism, as Bill knew well, is the natural philosophy of the Aboriginal. He or she spends a "little season of love and laughter" and if the "joy" is outweighed by the "sorrow" and the "pleasure" by the "pain" in the ultimate reckoning, the Aboriginal just sits down and dies. He is one of a race among whom suicide is practically unknown—there is no need for it. No other branch of the human race has ever so successfully managed to die for lack of anything to make living worth while.

Going through all Harney's books (I'll except "Taboo" which was out of print before I got out of the Army), my favourite is still "Brimming Billabongs". It is a first novel and has the faults of its kind. It also suffers—as does my own work—from being written by one whose education was mainly gained from reading—and unselective reading at that—which has left marks on style and mode of construction, which are very hard to eradicate. Yet there is something about it which rings true! "Capricornia" is a bitter story and the North, though hard, is not bitter. "Keep Him My Country"—a book not nearly so well known as it should be—is a sensitive piece of work, but the North, though it has sensibility, has not sensitivity. Yet, in his way, Harney equals Herbert in observation and shares Mary Durack's love for the scenes and people of which and whom he writes. In his accuracy in detail he is only equalled by Henry Lamond who, like Bill himself, was born and bred in North Queensland.

So much for W. E. as author. But there is yet one more Bill to whom I'd like to pay a final tribute. The battler whom I met pre-war in company with a crowd of blacks of both sexes whom these days he would not be allowed to employ; mounted in an old utility truck for which nowdays he would not get a licence; headed out to complete a road repairing contract which nowdays would be let to some International Combine for a six figure sum, but which enabled two-ton trucks with five ton loads to get through at an average cost to the taxpayer of about twenty pounds per mile. Then there was the Patrol Officer whom I met in the forties at Auvergne and in Alice Springs; competent, fair-minded, as willing to listen as most of his successors are willing to expatiate. I ran into him in Sydney in 1946 just as he was becoming a big name. He was lecturing to everybody from the feminists to the theosophists. "They aren't interested in me," he told me "they want to hear about the old people. Take my tip, Tom, and write about the blacks. That's what the public wants".

That may have been true, then. But soon the public learnt that Bill Harney in his own individual right was far more interesting than any Aboriginal who ever lived. They cast Bill in the role of uninhibited bushwhacker with a penchant for earbashing. He was sufficient of an exhibitionist to play the part with gusto—but the Harney tongue was never very far from the Harney cheek and he knew to a headline and a radio talk just what it all was worth.

Through it all he retained an almost unbelievable humility. He passed through Katherine several times during his last few years but never heralded his journey by so much as a telegram. It would not occur to Bill that I would consider it worth while to drive five miles to town to meet the bus on which he invariably travelled just for twenty minutes of a yarn. Yet he wrote me from England not about what he had done or whom he had met but to tell me that on a visit to the Lakes District—"right in the Wordsworth Country," as he put it, he had located some party who had read all of my books. And in his years at Ayers Rock he never found anyone northward bound whom he rated as good company without sending him on with messages to deliver to me personally. The latest of these, three years back, was Olaf Ruhen himself.

To conclude. There was an occasion—I think artist Eric Joliffe can verify this tale—when Bill marched in to one of Sydney's most noted literary editors to complain that his reviewer hadn't done justice to a recently published book.

One of Bill Harney's books? Of course not. One of my own.

TOM RONAN

Great-Grandma Cornelia

Great-Grandma sent her feather bed
When she was travelling, on ahead:
White madapalam, trimmed with lace,
Packed within a separate case.

Arriving at her nightly goal
Smiling gently she'd unroll
The softly bulging mattress, filled
With feathers from the birds she'd killed.

(She was fond of birds, and cows,
And little bleating lambs that browse,
But being also fond of meat
Forgot them long enough to eat.)

In Quetta, Poona, and such parts
Cornelia with her tender heart
Was shocked at seeing all around
Men sleeping on the open ground.

Not only did they have no beds,
They had no roof above their heads—
Nothing between them and the sky,
But in the street must live and die.

Poor Grandmamma was most distressed.
But after all, she had to rest,
Just as she had to eat and drink,
And soon she quite forgot to think

Of those who slumber every day
Upon a bed of stones and clay.
So Grandmamma would always be
Well cushioned from reality

Until the day she failed to rise;
Now in cold, hard clay she lies
A heavy stone above her head,
And does not miss her feather-bed.

NANCY CATO

Enigma

She's quite an aged lady now: a person
In her own right, not needing to attend
Smart evening functions, but content to be
Important in her own domestic sphere.

The offspring of her earlier alliance
With one—or was it several?—of an old
Mediterranean family, the De Lyras,
Lived out reserved aristocratic lives
Documented by old painters and by Pepys,
Aubrey, L'Estrange, diarists at Versailles,
Etcetera. This line's forgotten now.

Her second family had commercial leanings,
Clannishly formed limited companies,
And may be found mixing with impresarios,
Diplomats, prima donnas and the like
Done up in evening dress and stiff white ties
In Hollywood, Vienna or Milan.

But she, the old one with the Spanish hips,
Bids fairly to outlive this brood as well.
Quite often, to deceive their kind enquiries,
She babbles infantile or senile nonsense.

At other times, in the right company,
By lamplight with a bottle of good wine,
She will discourse so clearly about sex
Or revolution, lemon-trees or horses,
As to debar her from polite society—
This being for its protection, not for hers.

J. S. MANIFOLD

MISCELLANY

Australian Painting

Eric Westbrook

IF one thinks of the day-to-day activity in the visual arts in terms of war (one can surely be forgiven for doing so in Melbourne), then the painters and sculptors are the combat troops, the Galleries the supporting units, the critics the war correspondents and the art historians those who come after the carnage to count the gains and losses.

It will be seen that I refrain from casting anyone in the role of war profiteers. The quality of the troops varies considerably from time to time and place to place. A good fighter will sometimes tamely surrender and a tired conscript suddenly show fight. Behind the front line some Gallery men show great activity—especially if there are medals to be won—but only in support of positions which have already been captured. The others are helping with money and supplies at the point where the fight is on now, the only fight which matters. The good critics (a sadly small band) report on the situation and tell us, for example, that General "D's" front, never strong, is beginning to crumble, or that dashing young Captain "H" is in danger of extending his lines of communication too far, and these critics are consequently unpopular. The rest, the "sound" ones, cheerfully report that our troops are retiring to previously prepared positions and that morale is high. The honest ones are hated because they are prepared to discount a statement if it is untrue, however authoritative the source from which it comes.

Bernard Smith, author of "Australian Painting" (O.U.P., £5/5/0), is a good and honest historian, and "European Art and the South Pacific," he has clearly demonstrated his credentials. He also has the valuable advantage of having served his time in the other theatres of the art war as a painter, a critic and a Gallery officer, and so knows what it feels like to be in each of these situations. The present work, unlike Dr. Smith's other histories, is directed not so much at the specialist but at the senior student or the reasonably educated adult who has recently become aware that the words "Australian art" have some meaning. Inevitably he goes over much of the same ground which he covered in his earlier books and also much of that which was traversed by such predecessors as William Moore. From Moore, in fact, Dr. Smith has adopted the useful method of giving each phase of his story a biblical heading—Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus.

Following a valuable introduction covering the period 1788-1885, which should be required reading for all those who are tempted to make grand generalisations about the birth of a truly Australian art in the last few years, Dr. Smith deals under the heading "Genesis" with the Heidelberg School; and he remains admirably cool in dealing with a subject which, curiously enough, although it now belongs entirely to the past, still arouses passionate argument. To Roberts and Conder he gives their proper due, a useful exercise in view of the fact that clearly we may be in for an anti-Roberts re-action soon, and he deals firmly with the attempt on the part of Streeton, late in life, to rewrite the history of Heidelberg in his own image. The main story line is of course familiar, but Dr. Smith always illuminates it by flashes which come not so much from brilliant perception as from the hard work of really looking at the pictures he writes about, a rare accomplishment now, especially among critics.

"Exodus" traces the story further to the sudden panic desire on the part of Australians to receive the seal of approval of the Royal Academy in London or one or other of the salons in Paris. Perhaps in view of recent developments it would have been better to have called this section Exodus I., as we are now entering on a similar period, the only difference being that Whitechapel replaces Burlington House and New York is the magic city from which all benefits will come. The earlier flight to Europe is a sad part of our story and the large and wilting canvasses with their French or London accents which fill the Gallery storerooms will never come to life even under the touch of the most generous historian's fairy wand.

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Without doubt the section of this book which will be turned to with the greatest interest is that which traces the origins of the so-called modern movement. Dr. Smith picks his way with great skill, but here the wounds have not healed over and inevitably he touches some very tender spots. It is of course only too easy to accuse any art historian of dishonesty if he does not report the situation in a way a participant would like to see it. Dr. Smith will have bricks flung at him from a number of directions, but as far as it is possible to establish them he makes every effort to set down the facts as they happened, and he is most careful in checking his sources.

The final section of the book is perhaps the least satisfactory. It shows evidence of hurried writing and some sentences should never have passed even a first draft; perhaps more seriously Dr. Smith has unwisely decided (or his publishers have unwisely urged him) to bring the story up to 1960. The results are, firstly, that he has tried to cram in as many names as possible in great wads which will satisfy few of those mentioned or his readers. Secondly, he is too close to much of his material to be able to make the kind of objective judgment that one should expect. For example, his comments on Dobell and Drysdale may look very odd indeed in a few years' time, when these two basically academic artists have taken their proper places. Further, the author is led into dealing with the "Antipodean" movement in which he himself was significantly involved. Art history is best written from the outside, for the world looks very odd from the belly of the whale, and we are still little Jonahs attempting an assessment of the real value of the short-lived Antipodeans.

I hope I have made it clear that every reader will have his pet reason for disliking some of Dr. Smith's statements, and it is to the credit of the writer that he has resisted the temptation to soften these body blows. But the book as a whole is extremely valuable and anyone who professes an interest in Australian art but does not have it on his or her shelf must be suspect. Finally, credit must be given to the publishers, the printer and the much assailed Commonwealth Art Advisory Board which, with the Australian Humanities Research Council, gave a grant to assist the publication.

A.L.P. Policy Trends

J. F. Cairns, M.P.

LABOR'S foreign policy has undergone a process of consistent growth in recent years, a process which does not hold for the foreign policy of any other Parliamentary party. Foreign policy has, for some years, been intensely discussed in the Labor Party; for other patries it has been a matter of routine or of a kind of fear or hatred reflex from communism.

Recently the Australian Labor Party saw the proposed establishment of an American nuclear control base as a moral question: should Australia agree to assist the use of nuclear weapons designed to destroy millions of people and risk retaliatory destruction of her own people? Should Australia retain some control over such a base or merely allow it to be used by a foreign power, although an ally, how and when that power chose?

It was the Australian Labor Party that brought this question into the forefront of public discussion and into the context of a moral decision. It is clear that the purpose of the government was to establish this base by a form of political stealth. Not only this, but government supporters think that they can make political capital out of the fact that Labor believed that a positive decision had to be made one way or another; out of the fact that the question meant so much soul-searching for Labor; out of the fact that Labor's conference sat up until 2 a.m.; out of the fact that Labor's leaders waited outside the conference room until the decision was made. Government supporters were in bed. Never had they thought it necessary to ask a question; to disagree; never to think there were any rights and wrongs in the matter—merely to accept it as part of the routine of the "western alliance". Bases come, weapons come, missiles are fired, millions are killed . . . all is accepted with that "colossal indifference" which so much disturbed General Omar Bradley in 1957. Just how much of the Nazi system was accepted as routine in the same way by men who had lost all moral initiative yet remained convinced that they were good men?

The Australian Labor Party has decided that the establishment of a nuclear control base in Australia is not inconsistent with Labor policy if Australian sovereignty is maintained, if Australians employed there are under Australian law, if the base is under the joint control and operation of Australia and the United States, and, if the facilities are not used to involve Australia in war without the prior knowledge and consent of the Australian government. The Labor Party also states that "Labor is opposed to foreign-owned and operated bases for the supplying or holding of defence equipment in peacetime."

Whilst it cannot be said that all these conditions are clear and unambiguous—for instance, does sovereignty mean sovereignty only over the land or also over the installation that is built on the land?—American practice in other countries indicates that these conditions would not be acceptable to the American government.

The Prime Minister has said that shortly a bill will be brought down with an agreement attached and in that agreement will appear the conditions and circumstances, if any, under which the nuclear control base will be established in Australia. It will then be possible to see whether Labor's conditions appear in the agreement. What if they do not? Labor will again be faced with a moral decision. Others can escape the testing time so easily; Labor will not be able to achieve this facile, unthinking position. Having deliberately decided upon conditions, can we avoid sticking to them?

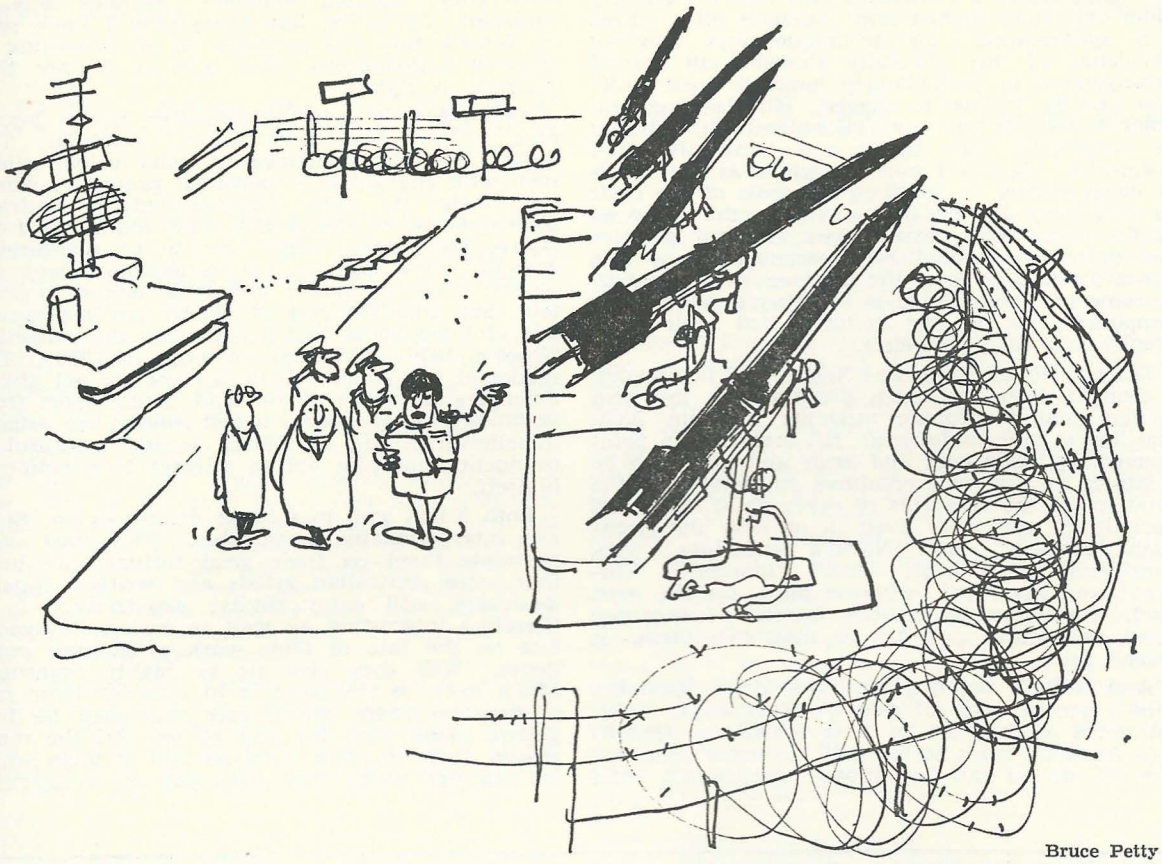
The A.L.P. Special Conference explored other ground. Since 1955, Labor has been worried about the over-militarisation of the Western contribution to economically retarded areas. In 1954 Labor supported S.E.A.T.O. In 1955 we said that S.E.A.T.O. had failed to perform its basic functions and was fast becoming an instrument for bolstering reactionary regimes and pushing nationalist movements into communist hands. In 1961 S.E.A.T.O. was to be replanned on a cultural, educational, medical and technical basis. In 1963, Labor took the logical next step of saying that S.E.A.T.O. should be replaced as soon as possible by agreements including all South East Asian countries and providing a development plan to pool resources for the provision of capital, technical and training assistance on a large scale.

When the U.S. Senate's Mansfield Committee can express concern that the same "chaos, intrigue and widespread corruption" existed in South Vietnam in 1962 as in 1955, can there be any doubt of the validity of Labor's increasingly critical view of the function of S.E.A.T.O.? Where is the virtue in stating that S.E.A.T.O. is "essential to Australian security", as Mr. Barwick has done? S.E.A.T.O. is a menace to our security; it has allowed conflict, corruption and war to spread nearer and nearer to this country. In the Labor Party, and exemplified in its policy today, will be found the viewpoint which—like the enlightened voices in America itself—want a change in the old methods because they have failed so badly.

Nolan and Stow

Laurence Collinson

BACK in 1948 I was momentarily awed by Nolan. He was about to have an exhibition in Brisbane and, because Clive Turnbull's introduction to the catalogue had failed to eventuate, the gallery proprietor, for whom I worked at the time, asked me, probably because he knew I had "artistic" friends, if I'd compose a few lines for the catalogue so that his philistine patrons wouldn't be left totally incredulous. Shepherded along the gaunt path of appreciation by my fulsome words they might even, he may have thought, buy something.



Bruce Petty

"Let's see now . . . one for the town hall, one for the railway station, one for the high school, one for the cement works, one for . . ."

I was a vain youth in those days—perhaps even vainer than I am now—and more than willing to replace the eminent Mr. Turnbull. Along with the vanity, however, went the dogma: in one's early twenties one knows everything. I had certain definite opinions about art which, if I was to introduce the artist satisfactorily, would have to be revised. I found I was quite prepared to revise them; I suddenly discovered that I was more or less in sympathy with the Angry Penguins intelligentsia which, all credit to it, had already discerned genius in Nolan's work.

My change of heart was printed in the catalogue thus: ". . . there is no evidence of any carefully thought out formal arrangement or meticulously handled brushwork. On the contrary his technique is free and spontaneous, which of course is the only technique to match his subjects: the primitive bush land and the wild and desolate sea that surrounds it. His ungainly figures, often sprawling in the centre of a painting, are primitive too; they seem surprised and bewildered to be alone with nature—a not altogether reprehensible attitude . . ."

It was, perhaps, fortunate for my moral being that at the same time as the finished catalogue containing my masterful phrases arrived at the gallery, Mr. Turnbull's belated introduction arrived too; and was printed; and my hasty foray in hazy aesthetics was suppressed, albeit apologetically, by my employer. (I naturally kept a copy—now an interesting though valueless rarity.) Intolerable as I found it at the time, this unhesitating censorship nevertheless enabled me to revert, with all the fervour of a hurt psyche, to my former opinions and to the principles that had formed them.

These principles, I willingly admit, were not original. They were derived from the books of the art critic and historian R. H. Wilenski, who influenced me greatly then, and probably still does, since mine is the sort of temperament that, despite the tenuousness of the times, demands conclusions and responsibility. Wilenski's most important theory was, as far as I could make out, that the true artist was one whose every brushstroke was planned in his mind before ever being committed to canvas; whose completed painting was the twin of its early mental image. This is obviously a rigid piece of theorising; yet I think it is not without merit, for though it might seem to go too far, it asks that the artist be at least conscious of what he is creating. Whatever unconscious virtues the painting my possess in the end are left, as I suspect they ought to be, to the Unconscious. Such a theory presumes a considerable degree of craftsmanship.

Heresy as it was then, and heresy as it is now, Nolan's paintings, though I enjoyed looking at them, and still do, seemed too much the result of the happy (and as often as not the unhappy) accident for me to take his work as seriously as

my more affected contemporaries and the slightly older and more sophisticated Adelaide elite. "Free and spontaneous" his technique was and is; "evidence of any carefully thought out formal arrangement or meticulously handled brushwork" was and is, I dare to suggest, still lacking; and what I described in my rationalised self-betrayal as "primitive bush land" and "ungainly" and "primitive" figures I now recognise as the result of incompetence in handling the tools of the craft (a deficiency lauded into a virtue, the more so as the years have passed, since constant practice has permitted a deliberate perpetuation of this "primitivism"; at least the German expressionists, to some of whom Nolan is a fifty-year-older contemporary, not to say imitator, had their philosophy and their zeitgeist).

Did not Nolan's faces and figures and landscapes, I thought, bear too much kinship with my own student and inadequate attempts to paint faces and figures and landscapes? His creatures in paint seemed, by their eyes and arms and heads, to be relatives of my own creatures in paint and the relatives of the creatures of every child artist and "primitive" who ever lived in or near the twentieth century. But Nolan's paintings were considered as "a fresh vision", "innocent", "sincere", and also "art", whereas mine, for the most part, were seen by nobody because I regarded them as failures and hid or destroyed them. It wasn't fair!

And Nolan's paintings in "Outrider", Randolph Stow's recent book of poems (Macdonald, 37/3), attractive as they are in their colour and sketch-like freedom, seem to me still no more than the decorations of an ambitious, determined, and moderately talented amateur. Perhaps this is sufficient. Certainly, like everything I have seen of Nolan's, they fail as works of art according to Wilenski's definitions. But who is to say that Wilenski is right?

As for Stow's poems, they suffer, in the beginning, at any rate, from Nolan's paintings. The latter have the brilliance of good colour slides seen with the aid of a powerful projector; words can't help but seem impoverished in contrast. Subsequently, shielding my eyes and mind from Nolan, the poems turned out to be pleasurable enough. Stow has an unquestionable talent for words, imagery, music; and it is unquestionable, too, that, like the rest of us, he has his lapses, one of them being that he subtitles the collection "Poems, 1936-1962" (he was born in 1935). The reader of this essay will forgive me for not giving examples of Stow's virtues and faults; apart from anything else, quotations out of context are usually unbelievable; and the book is too beautiful a production for him not to attempt to examine it himself.

Both Nolan and, to a lesser degree so far, Stow are internationally fashionable. (We must congratulate them on their good fortune and hope that more Australian artists and writers, equally deserving, will enjoy similar popularity.) It is therefore interesting, as well as useless, to speculate on the fate of their work a hundred years hence. Will they still be as highly regarded? Much more to the point is to consider their fate a thousand years hence: both will then be forgotten, along with the rest of us. All the more reason, then, to enjoy what we can of them while we can, and while they can enjoy our enjoyment.

THE TWO SIDES OF THE SCRUB

IN the February issue of that excellent periodical, Outlook, Dr. R. A. Gollan of Canberra describes a recent visit to a festival of arts in Birmingham, organised by six trade unions in collaboration with Arnold Wesker's "Centre 42", which is a lively body dedicated to the ideal that "we want all the people to have the chance to enjoy the beauty and riches of life in all its forms."

It was obviously a good festival. There was a new play by Bernard Kops, folk song concerts, poetry reading in pubs, ballad and jazz evenings and a trade union exhibition. Lots of fun was had by all, but "all" did not, apparently, amount to as many as had been hoped. Dr. Gollan writes that "there is little evidence that, apart from the growing interest in folk singing, the festivals have really reached the workers".

A familiar observation. Trade union interest in the arts is not altogether a new thing: it received an impetus during the war—way back in 1945 I myself was asked to submit a play to the British Miners' Federation—and organisations like the W.E.A. and the Workers' Music Association in England have done fine work in the mind's vineyard for a long time. But always they have had to struggle for audiences. I think it's right to say that even London's little Unity Theatre never found it easy to sell its seats, except possibly for some of its famous revues, and those it did sell were mainly bought by middle-class people. The situation, though probably improving, has not radically changed.

In Australia the position is similar, only rather worse. The New Theatres are always up against it, notably in Victoria. Adult education does not even reach the fringe of the factories—maybe it is not geared for that—and JORA, which in Sydney did something to bridge the gulf between painters and workers has disappeared. The Workers' College at the Melbourne Trades Hall, however fruitfully, functions more or less in low gear. On the literary wing affairs move a little more briskly. The Mary Gilmore awards are surviving, which is good. The Australasian Book Society has brought some decent books to a few hundred workers who would not otherwise know them. But these are not the types of enterprise Wesker's friends have in mind in England—their aim is not so broad and they are committed in a different sense—and, overall, the picture is fairly grim. It could be claimed with some justice that our Overland is the bravest swallow to make a spring.

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The problem is not strictly limited to the Left, though there we would expect one day to find a key to its solution, which I am beginning to think may not come from the unions as such. In our big centres creative life in general is quite active, but I am told that the Victorian Symphony Orchestra is abandoning, or is considering cancelling, its once-yearly visits to the State's two largest country towns, where one-night stands have not attracted sufficient custom. But here we see again how much depends on the initiative of an enthusiastic hard core. What Ballarat cannot do, Swan Hill and Maryborough accomplish with easy grace.

I doubt that we shall gain much by chewing over and over again the old propositions, blaming television or the inertia of the masses. People in Birmingham and in Wollongong stay away from these occasions not because they don't know of them or because they are shoddy, but because they still don't feel the need to attend: in other words because they are still satisfied with artificial roses. Could it be that Wesker feels more keenly the absence of the happiness he wants to bring than those who lack it but do not know that they do?

At a summer school in Frankston, the managing director of a commercial television station tried to draw a sharp distinction between people on the two sides of the tea-tree scrub, those in the school who argued about the poverty of programs, and those on the beach who lay glued to their transistors. Someone made the point that the transistorites were not offered a fair choice, to which answer was made that they could tune to the A.B.C. The truth, I suppose, lies in the middle. While we have commercial television, merchandised culture, we must wage our little war to see that it improves, that it caters also to the substantial minority on the beach which would welcome something better. This is not a dramatic way of tackling the dilemma, nor the only one, but it has merit since it acknowledges the importance of reaching the minority within the majority, rather than approaching it as a mythical separate identity.

If anything has been proved a thousand times it is that people enjoy each others' company in large formations: one of the very foundations of "culture". The job is to make the big gathering more worth-while. Personally, I have less faith in the factory concert—though New South Wales shows that it can be popular—than, say in a combined festival of sport, music and the other arts. It might work even in Bendigo. The Adelaide and Perth festivals could become experiments: has somebody thought of approaching the Trade Halls in these two capitals? . Many of us would be interested to see what will happen if the combined effort is given a chance. It would certainly not lower the standard of fare, but it could produce a larger plate from which to eat of the good things.

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"What to do about South Africa" is another issue Outlook has raised. It lists financial support for the fund to help Apartheid resisters, consumer boycott of South African goods, protest-letters to Canberra and anti-Verwoerd publicity. All this is most useful. But it won't topple the Sharpeville men. The naive hope that such well-mannered tactics would lead to a rift in Johannesburg or

Pretoria, between out-and-out fascists and more enlightened components of the vile regime, have proved futile. South African business, English or Boer, is doing very nicely and pulling together for the common ill.

There is but one way of striking a telling, perhaps a decisive blow from outside. Not a consumer boycott, which in any case is unenforceable, but a world wide black-ban on South Africa's export shipping. This would hurt, and immediately. It would be in line with United Nations' declared policy and have the consent of those in the Union who have time and again proclaimed the folly of the thesis that we must not attack the sjambok Baas in such a manner as incidentally to endanger the livelihood of his victims. A tight ban on the economically vital outgoing trade would make many South Africans suffer, but it would hasten the final reckoning like nothing else.

Indeed, the brunt of such a fight would not be borne by intellectuals. The maritime industry in the countries which matter is generally under militant leadership—the thing is feasible. There are many reasons why it has not yet been done, but the first step is to put it on the agenda. It would meet with violent opposition from Vernwoerd's little mates everywhere . . . a risk more physically formidable than morally significant.

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A Melbourne newspaper has lately published a modest proposal by a Sydney lady, returned from world travel with an idea to promote the Australian tourist trade. She would like to see, not too far from her native G.P.O., a well-laid-out multiple purpose camp for Aboriginals. There nature's children would be encouraged to live the good life as their fathers knew it, hunting preserved game, swinging the stone axe and dancing to the sound of the didjeridoo. Neatly and hygenically arranged, with the assistance of knowledgeable guides to take you round and point out where best to unsling the camera, Ayresrockville on the North Shore line would more than pay for itself. It would be a fine advertisement for Australia, so short of exotica, and room would be found, according to the plan, to demonstrate besides that we are progressive and not merely a tourist-hungry nation.

To this end there will be a section for the detribalised and the fully integrated, led up to, one imagines, in convenient stages, so that when you pay your dollar to the agent on the Matson liner you would know that success stories like Harold Blair's and Doug Nicholl's are included in the ticket. Artifacts and curios are not.

It's a charming ploy with many tempting possibilities. Sir Edward Hallstrom, ever on the lookout for new attractions, might be persuaded to allow entry to Taronga Park as part and parcel of the afternoon's tour. Years ago a typical Bengal village, complete with elephants, Hindu priest and snake charmer, was a real money spinner for the Berlin Zoo; there is no reason why we could not do quite as well. Naturally, the village rather rankled with the folks at home, in ungrateful Bengal, with no appreciation of tourism, but these were minor irritations. The first task now is to send scouts to the Territory, and then enquire of Mr. Blair and Pastor Nicholls what suggestions they might care to make.

*

The Australian wave is breaking hard. I hear that it has suddenly become difficult for our artists in London to find galleries, and at home the predictable reaction has set in among the critics.

The Sober Wanderer

With my rucksack on my loins
Through your lovely town I go.
Am I not a trifle strange?

All your battered silver coins
Are awaiting me, I know,
And the torn ten-shilling change.

With my bundle on my back,
With a coat that's somewhat old
And my foot-gear hardly new.

Bread that's carbonate and black
Stuff that's stale and can't be sold
Foist them on me, passing through.

When your christian eyes benign
See the amber bottle shine
Through the yawning canvas flap,

With a charity divine
They turn water into wine
Though I filled it from the tap.

JAMES GIDLEY

Whatever we may think of this development, it's a pity that Louis Kahan should have been the one to cop it. I am referring less to the controversial reception given to his Archibald Prize-winning portrait of Patrick White, than to some of the discussions, and particularly certain reviews, arising from his recent exhibition in Melbourne.

I am not going to stand forth as the Overland Ruskin, but to me Kahan's Show seemed interesting and rewarding. Central to it was a series of oils on the "Waltzing Matilda" theme, whose very subject provoked some little hostility. One reviewer described his coolibah as "a funny tree, anyway," a profound insight at which to arrive in 1963. Once or twice I could not help feeling that the artist had made a mistake: he should have signed his canvasses with another name, redolent of the funny gum tree. A few thought that the Jolly Swagman was not worth troubling with these days, others that Kahan could not really comprehend his proper symbolism . . . as if, say, Shaw could not understand the spirit of Lorraine when he created his Joan, or Schiller not that of Mary Stuart, Wilhelm Tell or Don Carlos. Maybe it's not worth saying, but there are those who believe that it is precisely painters like Kahan who can give new meaning to a myth that has become over-familiar to the home-born. On the ABC's "Critics" session John Casson commented that the Swagman and his poem was as vitally part of the Australian legend as Ned Kelly: a good point from an Englishman.

Kahan's artistic sincerity is beyond questioning. His exhibition, I am glad to say, failed by no means and, if he needs it, he has the same consolation so many artists have; namely that, down the ages, their critics have made more bloomers than any ten manufacturers of ladies' underwear.

Elizabeth Vassilieff Wolf

WOMEN IN DIALECTICAL DILEMMAS

Norman MacKenzie's "Women in Australia"

THE plight of women in the modern world is complex and difficult. It is beset by dialectical dilemmas arising from the two roles that more and more women must play —at one time wife, mother and consumer, at another citizen and social producer—and the conflicting claims of value and aspiration arising within each of these roles as well as between them.

With public policies and private attitudes to women's employment confused as they are, life tends to be a series of compromises. For too many a woman, domesticity claims enough of her attention and interest to prevent her developing abilities she may have as a worker outside the home. She is brought up to aspire to the traditional, "feminine", aim of home-making; but perforce, to achieve it, with the demands of inflation and H.P. for more income, she learns to aspire also to the "masculine" aim of success in a career, personal status and independence.

However, she has left school too early, at Intermediate or before (unlike her brother and her husband who went on to Leaving or Matriculation), to have made an informed decision as to a vocation, and without any systematic attempt having been made to discover her potential for a career or to give her the groundwork to go on to post-secondary training. She cannot hold posts that are senior, responsible, skilled, interesting and well-paid, with good conditions and prospects. She must take jobs that are routine, dead-end, ill-paid and temporary. She is scarcely sorry to retire from work when she has her first child. And her talents will be thus under-utilised for the rest of her life, because, from the beginning, her sights have been set too low.

By middle age, when children are off her hands, she begins to feel lonely and disoriented, socially isolated and restless. She may take to compulsive housework and home-gardening as an anodyne for boredom; or disperse her energies over too many diversions to give her lasting satisfaction; or enter upon charitable activities, whose fields are fast narrowing, with the expansion of welfare services and of professional fund-raising agencies. But probably, as more and more women are doing, she will seek a paid job outside the home, which her under-qualifications, her loss of the habits of study and the contacts for job opportunities, together with the widespread notion of "too old at 40", will make difficult to get; and which, if she does get, will be, again, of the order of second-class labor, under-using her talents and under-valueing her life's experience.

Another woman, highly gifted and with a strong sense of vocation, may exercise her formal right as a citizen to **choose** a lifelong career, may diligently train for it and hold with distinction a post in, say, the Public Service—and have to endure being punished for doing so, by a battery of discriminations based on the outmoded paternalistic assumption that her "type" is a freak and should be officially discouraged and handicapped—even to being denied the facilities of the nursery school for her children because it is **policy** that "these are for needy women, not for women who just want to go to work"!

Yet another, who would choose the secure world of domesticity if she could, but who **must** work to support herself or dependants, and who ably does an indispensable job in industry, may have to endure not only male prejudice but also bitchery from members of her own sex, ex-models who babble of "utter femininity". Or such as one, Thelma Forshaw, who sees fit to boast in print of life in a dirty dressing-gown cleaning up baby's messes as the summit of fulfilment, and to deride working women as "women who are erotically failed" (Nation, reviewing the book discussed here). (This would seem to mean "failed in the marriage market", if anything, which is doubtful, but is anyway false: since it is precisely from the ranks of married women that more and more workers are being drawn, and more and more of these are women of middle age with children who no longer need their close care.)

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Such dilemmas can be coped with, says Norman MacKenzie (in "Women in Australia", Cheshire, 50/-), only by grasping the full implications of that concept on which our world is based, of industralisation and democratisation as historical progress.

The chief need is to face the social, economic and technological changes of our time as they affect women, and consciously to frame public policies which take the facts properly into account. And as a corollary, to promote private attitudes seeking to **help** women in the dilemmas springing from the duality of their role, and to cater for the special needs arising from their distinctions of sex instead of penalising them on that score.

Indeed, ineluctable changes of this order are everywhere taking place. But they are happening too slowly, and the lag, which is absolutely and relatively greater in Australia than in other industrial countries, is too costly to individuals and to the community.

MacKenzie argues, from abundant evidence, that the claims of home and of outside work need not

be irreconcilable and simultaneous, but may be organised, with benefit to women, family and community, as complementary, normal, consecutive phases of life; that training for a vocation fills women's need to live fuller lives, supplies particular shortages in society and maximises the talent available to the community. It makes women more contented and more efficient as wives, mothers and citizens; and similarly improves men, making them more tolerant and more resourceful as husbands, fathers and human beings! (A point much overlooked?)

The essence of his case, however, is not the argument from social efficiency, economic progress or personal happiness, but the argument from justice. This is simply that women have the right of any citizen of a democracy to the rational, free choice of a career, and to equality of opportunity in developing and using their aptitudes, whose range is as great as men's. There is no more ground for discriminating against women in employment than against people of any particular creed or color, nor for excluding them, segregating them, "protecting" them from themselves by denying their ability to make their own decisions, or reducing them to a category of second-class laborers. Yet such discrimination persists, from a mixture of traditionalism, male job protectionism, administrative obsolescence, lack of imagination, dubious sociological sloganising and unconscious hypocrisy. And it is no more relevant to this case whether women differ from men than that men differ from each other, once the principle is accepted that all should find the place where their capacities are best used, and that each, individually, is in the end the only proper judge of that.

The core of the economic case is that modern urban industrial society could not be maintained without the work of women, in business, professional, industry and service jobs, without their tax-paying capacity and purchasing power. Women in Australia form one-fifth of the labor force, earn one-seventh of the wages, pay one-tenth of the tax on personal income and buy on their own account one-half of the consumer goods. Incidentally, only one-tenth of working women have children of school age, most having grown-up children or being childless, divorced, deserted, widowed or single—which makes nonsense of the vision of hordes of neglected offspring.

Chief factors impelling more and more women into the work force are the expansion and diversication of the economy, the growth of education, health, welfare and other professional services, especially in the public sector, the increasing demand for trained workers, the widening of the range of occupations, the creation of new jobs, the trend to specialisation, lightening of work by mechanisation, rising standards of living and the effects of mass advertising on consumer needs.

These are reinforced by women's ability to control their fertility by contraceptive means, the lower birthrate in this century, the shortening of the child-bearing phase of life, their better health and longer life-span, labor-saving devices and increased leisure making it possible to take on commitments outside the home, and to look for something more satisfying than domestic ritual, for a meaningful role with personal identity and status in the wider society of the community, for independence, a richer use of leisure and a fuller life. Women have not taken men's jobs, but new jobs created by technological progress in the affluent society.

Mount Eliza

In the gentler weather
When the sheoaks hang vertically down
And dark hair lies horizontal on the grass
The song in a grey feather
Breaks all the glass
In the nervy town.

The rufous warbler, say,
Or the teatree's white foliate symmetry,
Might serve as scientific evidence.
Though birds and flowers of day
Lack mystery
They still make sense.

GEOFFREY DUTTON

There is, however, a very great gap between the potential of women in Australia and their achievement, in large part due to the defective educational policy which allows th huge wastage, at Intermediate level, of one-third of gifted girls who drift into dead-end jobs instead of being retained at school until they reach the gates of higher education and can make an informed choice. This is reinforced by defective parental attitudes which regard higher education as unimportant for girls, and by the defective understanding of girls themselves of the importance of training for their future, as well as expecting early marriage.

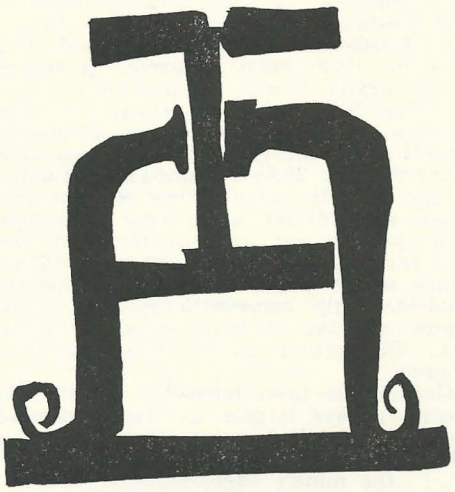
For women who do seek higher levels of training there is not enough diversity of education; especially, too few girls acquire at school the requisite grounding in mathematics and the sciences which would open up a great range of new occupations to them. It is interesting that there is no great wastage of women with higher education on marriage, but indeed a high level of occupational persistence.

MacKenzie makes imaginative suggestions for some new type of tertiary education for girls who want two or three more years of general education without yet specialising for a vocation, and, at the other end of life, towards the further education of women of middle years, for new vocations as well as in refresher courses, and towards facilitating their re-entry into the work force.

MacKenzie elucidates these and the whole field of related questions with superb impartiality and masterly skill, taking nothing for granted, examining all in the light of evidence, letting in large doses of fresh air on the old concepts of the family, men's and women's roles and all the conventional postures, including feministic sex-chauvinism, which he sees as a mechanism by which women seek, mistakenly, to secure their salvation by voluntarily segregating themselves. He is fascinating on the history of women's suffrage, and of our wage-fixing system and of our public service.

His book indeed far transcends its theme and should become a classic, as a unique anatomy of our social history, indispensible reading for all workers in cultural fields as well as sheer pleasure for the common reader. Its commissioning by the Australian Social Science Research Council puts us in their debt and makes me want to know more about them, and how many of them are women.

BOOKS



The Novel Today

In the last twelve months twenty-three Australian novels have landed on my desk for review. This, of course, would be mere ink-blot to the professional reviewer for the dailies or weeklies, but nevertheless it means that I have spent a good deal of my time in the company of our novelists. Now comes the need to take stock.

Looking back through this collection I see no reason to reverse any of my estimates. Alan Marshall achieves the greatest success with his flawless evocation of an adolescent adrift in society, although the world he creates has not the sweep and generality of his earlier book. David Forrest's strange world of animated puppets dancing to their individual tunes in the disharmonious symphony of life still hangs over every office and institution in the land, and the warm gush of humanity in "Yaralie" retains its force in the memory. Of the others, moments remain to be recalled by a passing incident, but none attains that unity of impact which shapes the consciousness into a new pattern.

One, however, still has the power to disturb. I am yet to be convinced that George Turner is a successful novelist, but his failures achieve more than the ephemera of most more polished authors. "A Stranger and Afraid" fails at the critical moment of its climax, although this failure to communicate gains in significance when we read in his new book "The Cupboard Under the Stairs" (Cassell, 22/6) that Jimmy Carlyon's fault is his inability to give himself. This is one of the things he comes to realise in the earlier work, together with the understanding that he is equally unable to be complete in himself. The author's apparent evasion of the final nature of Jimmy's self-discovery may in fact be an expression of his view of the gulf on which all our self-knowledge is built, but he has failed to give this view the reality of art.

In my opinion, the latest novel is written the wrong way around. Instead of taking a minor character from the earlier novel and exploring the man behind the personality already so convincingly sketched, a method which would reflect his personal outlook, Turner takes a new character and introduces his earlier hero as a lesser figure in the machinery of the plot. This gives an unnecessarily contrived air to the latter part of the book, but when the Treelake scheme is completed we may find that this, too, has its meaning. Until then, I would advise newcomers to Turner to begin with "The Cupboard Under the Stairs" and work back to the earlier book.

"The Cupboard Under the Stairs" is a more shapely book, and the central character's search for sanity, or rather, for the causes of his retreat into insanity, has the excitement of a detective story. Turner is a master of conversation as conflict, and his characters move in constant tension with each other. But the very fact that the theme of this book is more direct seems to deprive it of the density and variety of "A Stranger and Afraid," as the characters are, in the main, linked only by their relation to Harry White, and their relationships to each other remain sketchy and irrelevant.

Nevertheless, it stands well above others of my present crop of novels. Only the first of them can compare in the sense of a life fully created, while none of them has any similar understanding of the depths of being. All of them can be recommended for cosy reading in winter, when we do not want to be reminded too harshly of how much lies beyond our control.

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"But Still the Stream" (Heinemann, 22/6) is the last volume of Nancy Cato's trilogy of life on the Murray, and in it she completes her pattern by following her heroine's career on the lower river, where she captains her husband's paddle-steamer between Mildura and the lakes, and eventually, near the close of her life, reaches the river mouth and bathes in the open sea. Although, as is perhaps inevitable in one book of a series, there is some time devoted to tidying up loose ends from earlier books, the two major characters who belong to this book alone and give it its unity, Delie's two lovers, are both strongly and credibly sketched. But the prevailing mood of the book is not so much one of incident as of a gathering of life's strength and resources for its final run. Delie spends some time explicitly meditating and arguing over this topic, but the success of the book rests not in the particular philosophies enunciated but in the sense of roundness conveyed through her life. Towards the end, the narrative line weakens, and we have rather a succession of stages in the process of ageing; but the subdued yet controlling use of the river as both setting and symbol, and the competent professionalism of the writing, give the book the feeling of life fully realised. Yet, at least in retrospect, it is perhaps just a little too gentle, too glibly harmonised, to get under our skin with the full contrariness of reality. The stream flows a little too still.

On the other hand, "The Hive of Glass," Rigby's Centenary Prize-winning novel by J. T. and A. E. Martin (24/-), has the competence of the magazine. The story moves rapidly amid a wealth of characters in a country town at the turn of the century, there is plenty of incident, some good observation, credible setting and superficially realistic characters, and a romantic quadrilateral. But both the complications and their solutions are those of chance, and neither the tragedies nor the romances move us more than their parallels in the daily paper.

Man's difficulty in understanding women is the theme of Juliet Rolleston's "In My Lady's Chamber" (Angus & Robertson, 21/-), but the authoress seems to have difficulty in making up her mind whether she is writing a farce, a satire, or a serious study. Her hero, the poet Martin Walker, decides

that if he is to write about women he must learn to see them from their own point of view, so he takes a job as nanny to a newly-made widow. Some moments of comedy, such as his alcoholic speech at the ladies' afternoon tea, or the romantic attempts of the neighboring garden-lover, almost come off, but we are left at the end wondering what the book was all about. Too many friends of both parties wander in, are ably sketched for a few pages, and then disappear from sight, taking their undefined problems with them. Too much significance is placed on the hero's attempts to find his own destiny, and on the scribblings in which he records his discoveries about the ladies. It would have been easier if he had been just a playboy earning a bet, instead of an author reaching for his masterpiece. Altogether the idea is just too flimsy to support the structure Juliet Rolleston has erected on it, but nevertheless she carries the reader on with an ease of narrative and a lively interest in people which deserve better planning and tighter discipline.

When the problems of adolescence are mixed up in a conflict between middle-class, artistic and working-class standards, we have all the ingredients of an interesting, if unexciting, addition to that middle-brow literature which entertains us while it educates. Nancy Phelan handles her materials competently, and is wise enough to avoid any slick ending. "The River and the Brook" (Macmillan, 21/-) traces the story of two mixed-up kids to the brink of delinquency and back, and makes some neat observations on the way. But there is neither any absorption in the characters and their problems, nor any feeling of love or hate for the setting in Sydney, nor any other energy of madness or inspiration to get the whole elaborate contraption off the ground. Any reader will finish the book feeling slightly flattered, either because his tolerance is greater than that of the narrow characters, or because his standards are stricter than those of the laxer citizens.

JOHN McLAREN

New Poetry

"Southmost Twelve" by Robert D. FitzGerald, (Angus & Robertson, 17/6).
"Rutherford and Other Poems" by Douglas Stewart, (Angus & Robertson, 17/6).
"Australian Poetry 1962" ed. Geoffrey Dutton, (Angus & Robertson, 15/-).
"Four Poets" by David Malouf, Don Maynard, Judith Green and Rodney Hall, (Cheshire, 17/6).
"Masque for a Modern Minstrel" by Peter Bladen, (Edwards & Shaw, 17/6).

From time to time, reviewers grow hungry for a little more self-expression. They, too, have inner complexities and legitimate demands of soul. They seek to enunciate their principles, to master their field with a prescription. Usually, the result is minimal—the prescription is already well-known, the readers are bored by its exposition, and the poets, if affected at all, are made more restive than ever. Nor would the present reviewer dare to add his tithe to all this contradictory wisdom, were it not that the first book under review calls for brief comment on a very hackneyed old theme.

The point is that R. D. FitzGerald is a writer whose maturity and approach must dismay those who want common experience reflected in a convenient form. Despite the need for popular writers, there is also a need for the author who seeks to clarify his own experience both to himself and his equals. This may seem inegalitarian, and it may restrict the size of his audience, but it may also greatly enhance his readers in the long run. Human concerns in literature can be advanced by other means than the robust extravert simplicity so often demanded. Current second-thoughts about Patrick White are beginning to show this.

R. D. FitzGerald's "Southmost Twelve" is apparently his sixth book of verse. It contains 28 poems of varying length, ranging from a five-page poem, "The Wind at Your Door," to poems of 8 lines or so. The poems are close-knit and introspectively treat of various philosophical and historical themes. They require close attention and repay the trouble taken. They do not rush out into their subjects but as it were withdraw from them to ponder and contain them in carefully wrought forms of imagery and thought. They have a quality of knobbled stoicism, are slow-moving and painstakingly conscientious. But, above all, they give a sense of inner development and of personal integration such as is rarely found elsewhere.

FitzGerald has been termed a vitalist. Indeed, his work appears largely as the working-out of such a view. But it is not a strident vitalism. He accords the mind a high place—

> . . . the mind's edge,
> the knife-edge at the edge of darkness.
> ("Edge")

Yet the mind has its failings. Its logic may be vitiated by the "first blind leap at a premise". So the poet invokes a faith in the instincts—

> Creature of instinct, I share still the faith
> of beast and bird, and call intelligence
> knowledge of what I touch—what's bared to sense
> as real itself . . .
> ("Southmost Twelve")

From this passage, and other poems in the book, one receives various philosophical echoes and is reminded of philosophies of the type of Bergson and Nietzsche. There is the faith in instinct, a mistrust of logic, an apparent pragmatism, a belief in free-will, and an emphasis on the flux of all things—

> Life's not what bubbles and goes past
> but flow itself, through time, through me.
> (Eleven Compositions)

It is impossible here to adequately consider this aspect of FitzGerald's work. But it has significant associations with the views of other writers and, in the interests of our literary development, should be brought out further and evaluated.

FitzGerald's work raises interesting questions. He is often turgid, lacking in lyricism, seems in no way concerned to dramatise himself or make any claims on the world; his language is frequently awkward, his philosophising is wearying. There is something old-fashioned and restrictive about him. Yet he is plainly one of the best writers in Australia—and that by virtue of his imaginative honesty, by the way in which he reveals himself as a man who has sought to stabilise his world, not from outside, but from the painstaking development of his own inner resources.

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In contrast to FitzGerald, the first poem in Douglas Stewart's book takes us up with a whoosh—

> And up and up to the stratosphere,
> Always sublimely vertical,
> Ten miles above the earth he rose
> in his astounding vehicle . . .
> ("Professor Picard")

Douglas Stewart is, in a sense, more innocent than FitzGerald. Confronting nature, he reacts more directly, is more drawn to articulate the experience itself, to seek for significant particular—

. . . we, like the strider of mountains, have
gone foraging
By cliff and creek for the flower among the
the stones.
("Sarcochilus Fitzgeraldi")

He intuits the restless eagerness of nature pressing out exultantly in countless forms—

. . . it is clear
This joy in Nature does not care
Whether it breaks in bottlebrush clump
Or small bird's beak or small bird's rump
But out through feather and leaf it slips
To deck them all with crimson tips.
("Firetail Finches")

Despite these differences, it is possible to find passages in the work of both writers to indicate that their outlook has quite a deal in common.

There are many fine poems in this book; from the deft exuberance of the shorter nature lyrics to entranced larger works, such as "The Garden of Ships" and At the Entrance". Looking at his paintings in the moonlight, he writes—

These were the people high and far and
lonely;
Laughed, loved and lived indeed; and yet
were bidden
Walk outside life, care nothing so that only
They might distil from the visible world its
hidden
Order and grace and clarity . . .
("The Pictures")

It would be easy to characterise such a view as aestheticism, were it not that elsewhere we find warm respect for other forms of achievement, e.g., in poems on Professor Picard and Rutherford. Douglas Stewart's plays on Scott and Ned Kelly are well known, and he has worked hard to vivify other examples of human achievement and of the folk-hero. Yet, at the risk of seeming ungrateful, it should be mentioned that it appears to be almost a corollary of Stewart's approach that the non-heroic aspects of life, personal sufferings, the ebb-points of common experience, receive little attention. When these things are approached, there seems to be a failing of nerve. The result is a certain lack of reality, as if the exuberance were a mask. His work is already part of our literature, but hardly seems to be of the present time. The nineteenth century has a long arm.

Finally, it is noted that though both FitzGerald and Stewart have been regarded as romantics, this is not really so. One has only to contrast them with Brennan in order to see the different direction of their craft, their relative sanity and objectivity. Douglas Stewart's "Fence," for example, is essentially a witty tour-de-force on behalf of classical restraint and order. In the seemingly-romantic "Garden of Ships," an inner vision is worked upon objectively. And so on.

One wonders if Douglas Stewart has not done more for poetry in this country than all the self-concious nationalists put together. Certainly, his now-concluded editorship at the Bulletin seems to have concluded an era as well.

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"Australian Poetry 1962" has been edited by Geoffrey Dutton. It starts with three poems by Randolph Stow, as a kind of romantic introduction to the country, and then moves connectedly through various human concerns to a poem of parting-advice by John Thompson, at the end. It reads well as a sequence, though, as to be expected, some links in the chain are not as strong as others. Compared with previous years the quality is more even, but there are fewer outstanding items. Among the better examples, there is work by Randolph Stow, R. D. FitzGerald, Douglas Stewart, David Martin, Francis Webb, David Campbell and Max Harris. With some exceptions though, it is a rather staid collection, with practically no recognition of the increasingly provisional nature of our culture, and of our precarious position in the world. It tends to be middle-aged, middle-class, middle-brow, without much pressure in any direction.

"Four Poets" is a co-operative act by a group of young writers who are disturbed by the difficulties of publishing individual volumes. It is a pleasing production, and has the support of the Commonwealth Literary Fund. It also has signs of a new literary generation to whom current overseas writing seems more interesting than the local product. It is uneven in quality but can be read with a refreshing sense of discovery—by no means a common attribute. David Malouf appears as the most formally accomplished of the four, astringent and perceptive. Rodney Hall, already known to Overland readers, appears here as ironic and musical. Judith Green appears the most interesting of them all, brittle and sensitive—a writer to wait for. Don Maynard is an experimenter of the more hopeful kind whose "Wild Cats" may be a lucky omen. All in all, a welcome enterprise and portent.

Peter Bladen's "Masque for a Modern Minstrel" will doubtless find its readers. It has its felicitious moments and an honest stance. But it leans heavily on well-worn modes, without sufficient force of technique and matter to fuse them into a satisfying whole.

NOEL MACAINSH

Charles Harpur – Australian?

It was almost inevitable that the neglect of Charles Harpur (1813-1868) should produce a work that treats him in an extra-historical way. To be fair to Mr. J. Normington-Rawling, whose "Charles Harpur . . . An Australian" (Angus & Robertson, 45/-) has recently appeared, many of the problems connected with Harpur's life are intrinsically difficult. We know that he was the first native-born poet of any significance; our inadequate knowledge of colonial literature prevents us judging that significance. His prolific writings, although largely uncollected in his lifetime, could lead to an overestimation of his influence. Moreover, he was part of the mid-nineteenth century radical movement, and this in some quarters is regarded as a passport to historical prominence and a substitute for investigation.

Harpur's beliefs can be expected to quicken the pulse of anyone with a social conscience. Unlike many modern poets, he believed that poetry served a purpose. The duty of the poet was "to exalt and purify our nobler passions . . . to illustrate whatever is virtuous in **design**, and glorify all that is noble in **action**, . . . to pour the lightning of indignation upon everything that is mean and cowardly in the people, or tyrannical and corrupt in their rulers." After an early flirtation with socialism, he found nobility of action in individualism, "the very keystone of liberty." Thenceforth his political thought conformed closely to the main current of colonial radicalism. His heroes were the Rev. J. D. Lang and other opponents of the squatters, and those who fought for liberty in Italy, Poland and Hungary.

In some respects he was considered unorthodox by his contemporaries. His religious ideas were influenced by the writings of the American Unitarian, Dr. William Channing. and he developed

a "religion of humanity" which was able to embrace the discoveries of the new sciences, like geology, with enthusiasm. His sympathy for the Aboriginals, and perhaps his lack of hostility to the Chinese on the goldfields, earned him the suspicion of some of his fellow colonists.

Above all, Harpur had a strong feeling for his native country. The son of two emancipists, he grew up on the Hawkesbury, where he learnt to feel at home among the river flats and mountains, and to identify himself as a "currency lad". He exemplified a developing national sentiment, which by the 1840's owed its formulation as much to immigrant aspirations as to native-born experiences. It was mainly an urban movement (with a lacing of outback rebelliousness), which regarded the so-called "Australianism" of the Wentworth clique as a sinister deviation, bred in the aristocratic halls of Camden and Cumberland. The true colonial proto-nationalist, like Harpur, was radical and internationalist, for this was an age when, in many parts of the world, radical-national movements considered that they formed part of a greater whole: an internationalism which was an attempt to create the country of man.

Mr. Normington-Rawling's book would have been more useful as biography if it had been better as history. Less attention to the sometimes trivial details of Harpur's life, and a deeper picture of colonial society and the forces that were changing it, would have resulted in a more satisfying study of Harpur as poet and man. It seems that Normington-Rawling's interest in, and treatment of, Harpur has been determined by an old-style radical interpretation of Australian history; an impression which is confirmed by reading his previous book, "The Story of the Australian People" (1937-9). According to this view, colonists like Harpur, E. J. Hawksley, J. D. Lang, and J. P. Fawkner were the representatives of the major influence in mid-century history: working-class radicalism. Parkes, David Syme and Peter Lalor, on the other hand, were renegades, "mere politicians".

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Three points can be made briefly about this view. Firstly, recent research has revealed the strength of colonial capitalism and its role in developing a liberal and nationalist ideology in this period. The old-world slogans of the radicals were taken up by the new urban and rural bourgeoisie, who alone could give them real meaning in the colony, because they, and not the radical shopkeepers, small producers and skilled workers, had the power to change the colony's economic and social pattern. Secondly, radicalism was not a working-class movement in the modern sense of the term. Many of its adherents were wage-earners, but the movement as a whole adopted policies designed to foster small-scale capitalism. Thirdly, while Harpur and his associates drifted into a doctrinaire isolation, Parkes helped to create a society approximating to the radical dream.

By neglecting this type of analysis, Normington-Rawling presents Harpur as larger than he was in real life. But if Harpur's radicalism is overestimated, his nationalism is almost completely ignored. Was Harpur "an Australian" (as he called himself) only because he was born in the colony? The title of the book begs the question.

There is, however, a more explicit answer to the problem in Normington-Rawling's recent article in Quadrant (No. 25). Harpur's nationalism is explained here as a product of his being a "currency lad", and the role of the locally-born in political and social life is greatly exaggerated in consequence. Having limited the developing national sentiment in this way, Normington-Rawling is forced to give Harpur ("an individualist, not one of a mob") extra-historical qualities in order to explain his alleged eccentricities. Thus, his internationalism is presented as evidence of his far-sighted independence. Again, whereas reliance on British paternalism in order to prevent the squatters using self-government to entrench themselves was a mark of colonial radicalism at this time, in Harpur it is supposed to indicate indifference to the views of his contemporaries. Thirdly, Harpur, it is alleged, would have rejected "mateship", which Normington-Rawling defines as something nasty imposed on "outsiders" by "the pack". In fact, Harpur rightly rejected the cultural jejuneness of the mass of the colonists; "mateship" he could neither accept nor reject, for at this time it was largely confined to the ethos of the pastoral districts, and Harpur spent almost all his life on the eastern fertile fringe of the colony. Thus, Normington-Rawling's typically unhistorical treatment of "levelling, bedulling, soul-destroying mateship" is merely empty polemic.

Harpur's importance derives from his being a representative, but not outstanding, figure. His public activity was extensive, but mostly performed in small country towns. His writings were less significant in moulding opinion than the speeches of Daniel Deniehy or Henry Parkes. During his lifetime his lyrical verse was chiefly honored by a small band of litterateurs, outcasts in a "mammon-trapped" colonial society. Today we find in it moments of stillness and remoteness which assure us that Harpur responded to what was unique in his natural surroundings, as well as in his social environment.

Mr. Normington-Rawling's book has been called the "definitive life" of Harpur. Certainly, future scholars will be grateful for his devotion to the details of Harpur's life. Extracts from the Harpur manuscripts are copious, and there is a wide sample of the verse in the book. We still await, however, a study of Harpur's life which will help us to establish his significance as a poet and thinker.

T. H. IRVING

Stories, Now and Then

Overseas interest in Australian short stories continues. Heinemann, Macmillan and Faber are all issuing new anthologies of various kinds. For the first-named Cecil Hadgraft and Richard Wilson have edited "A Century of Australian Short Stories" (30/-), one of those handsome, solid books that attempt a representative survey, from John Lang to Patrick White.

Most of these are good stories, of course, and there is no point in quibbling about omissions. The slight sense of disappointment one gets from reading them has little to do with their individual qualities. By now the Australian public at least has a good idea of the capabilities of our story tellers, but the conviction that the short story is somehow a local speciality no longer stands up to scrutiny.

If we make a division between earlier and later pieces, and look for comparisons and lines of continuity, we do not find much by way either of contrast or development, not as much as one might expect. Neither the writers of the past nor of the present, with the exception of Lawson, seem to have regarded, or regard, the short story as an art form worthy of the highest endeavour; almost all treat it as a sketch or a fragment. This may

be due, as the editors note, to a preferance for statement as against suggestion, but there is also a quite striking absence of emotional range, symbolised in a reluctance to explore man-to-woman relationships. On the other hand we have what could be called a traditional preoccupation with the creation of a likeness of physical reality, often expressed in good dialogue. Beyond this, from early days to approaching the contemporaries, there is the power to evoke the Australian mood, a mood apparently of simple conflicts, but chiefly confined to the rural setting. The city and its life fares badly. Edward Dyson, who in all conscience was not a great writer, is typical here: "A Saturday at Spats," is a hysterical factory story with a more or less incidental locale.

The women writers represented, good as they are, hardly contribute a notable or distinct flavor. Barbara Baynton's "Squeaker's Mate" is an intense and in some ways very modern story about a bush woman who breaks her back, her useless husband and the girl he brings to their shanty, but its rawness is also artistically primitive. "And Women Must Weep," by Henry Handel Richardson, barely suggests the real power that was hers; it is a sensitive, beautifully realised but unambitious vignette without original characterisation. It is short, as are the bulk of the selected items—35 in 325 pages—and brevity, which is not necessarily the mark of greatness in the short story, extends to the recent contributors also. Dal Stivens' and Marjorie Barnard's are not stories at all in even the most liberal sense, nor is Peter Cowan's, though they are all three subtly evocative. I question the value of their inclusion.

Greatness, true enough, should not be the criterion of the anthologist, but there is something besides neat perfection this medium can achieve. Lawson and, yes, Steele Rudd, come nearest to it: surely "The Night We Watched for Wallabies" would be a classic in any language, simply because with the most economical means it sets up a long vibration. But, alas, nothing in the book remotely rivals "The Union Buries its Dead," which, while so much slighter than a novel, has the integrated drive of a novel. It is curious that, allowing for odd work here and there, Australians have not been interested in the long short story or the novella, which on the face of it should lend itself well to our background and its inherent possibilities—but then it requires a different concept of characterisation and of the emotional potentialities of stories. Gavin Casey's moving "Short Shift Saturday" is very good, but also not fully successful. In conciously seeking its drama in surface reflection, like most of the rest, it finally just fails to fill its human compass—a criticism which generally applies.

One feels that if this is a failing it stems from established habit. What lies behind it? Hard to say, but it could be a lack of trust in the sensibility of the reader, or, which may come to the same thing, too narrow an identification with him.

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Of stories lately written, Forrest's "The Barambah Mob" stands out. It handles the native material with virtuosity and finesse. Ray Mathew's "An Extraordinary Thing" has a brilliant idea but a too shallow gusto. "The Sleeping Doll," by John Morrison, always makes a fine showing in any company. Patrick White is represented by "The Letters," a little Sarsaparilla episode of some depth about the destructiveness of mother-women, but not better of its kind than several that appear each month in the world's literary journals. His best stories, among which I would number "Being Kind to Titina," are not set in Australia. The writers of the preceding generation, McCrae, Palmer, Davison, Prichard etc., well hold their own; Vance Palmer, in "The Birthday" and "The Dingo", displays many attitudes both positively and negatively typical for genre and country. That is to say they are personable stories of high standard and integrity but not memorable much beyond their boundaries in time and place. In short, I do not believe that, any more than its precursors, this anthology will tempt the intelligent foreigner to dig deeply and hopefully into Australian literature.

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"Coast to Coast 1961-1962" (Angus & Robertson, 22/6) is too limited in scope to invite generalisations on trends, to set against the Hadgraft-Wilson collection; in any case luck and editorial preferences must always count heavily in a story-harvest gathered every other year. Taken together the contributions cover a good range, though whether a critical reader will want to return to many of them more than once or twice is another matter. Again, the greater number are artistically modest: deftness is the merit one would claim for them. Amy Witting, in "The Weight of a Man," combines with it more than common understanding. This is an excellent story of a teacher's own dilemma, face to face with adolescence. Hal Porter's "First Love" is well worth re-reading because it is exceptionally well constructed and gives just the right weight to the climax, the discovery that the photo of a girl with whom a boy has fallen in love is really the photo of a disgusting elder relative out of its time. Waten's "His Only Love" is that unusual thing, an amusing tragedy, and "The Scenery Never Changes," by Thea Ashley, shows this writer at grips with her speciality problem, love relationships devoid of love. She does it extremely well. H. H. Wilson's "The White Butterfly" is too short for what it wants to achieve, a double confrontation with shyness and masculinity. "The Immortal" is a tale by Olaf Ruhen of a spaceman who accidentally lands among Earth savages. A big theme underlies it—it might have become another "How much Earth does a Man Need?" However, somewhere in the telling it defeats its own simplicity. This cannot be said of Desmond O'Grady's "Portrait of Symonds as a Middle-Aged Man," a cruelly effective study of a self-tortured Jew and demi-intellectual. "Film" is another short Peter Cowan entry, good but by no means among his best, while Nancy Cato appears with a horrible, but very acceptable, Kensington fantasy among mad-hatters. Nancy Phelan's "The Welsh Wife," thematically slightly reminiscent of a Cecil Mann story in "A Century of Australian Short Stories," suggests that we are dealing with an interesting talent. This does not exhaust the list of good material.

But, over all, the new "Coast to Coast" is more bewildering than satisfying, a bit scruffy one might say; with little to hint at a new tradition. Perhaps we are in an in-between period, half-way across to a first flowering of creative reportage. The modern reader's hunger for facts does not encourage imagination in the writer. Not even, on the evidence of Porter's selection, as far as style is concerned. Yet this is surprising, since the new criticism has become one-sidedly, not to say unhealthily, obsessed with style.

DAVID MARTIN

Three Poets

Australian Book Week late last year was marked by, among other things, the publication of three new volumes of poetry which vary markedly in interest and quality. Of the three, Bruce Dawe's "No Fixed Address" (Cheshire, 17/6) stands out clearly as the most interesting and original. As a collection, it has a freshness and vitality sadly lacking in much Australian (and English) poetry.

Too much contemporary Australian verse either takes itself too seriously (and becomes confused and immature) or too lightly (and becomes flippant and dilettante) or hovers ironically in the middle (and expresses little more than the poet's refusal to commit himself). On occasions, Dawe falls into the first two of these traps. One of his strengths is that, despite his continual irony, he rarely falls into the third.

Of the second, little can be said. His flippant poems are light and funny, but lack the substance of his better work. Of the first failing, an illuminating example is seen in "Poznan: July 1956." Here, the poet's obvious concern with the death of the Polish insurrectionists is (on the surface) seen in the light of everyday living, and the two are apparently evaluated against each other. But in fact the poet has been unable to assimilate it into a meaningful relationship with his world. Christian images stand out from their context as forced and wilful, instead of growing naturally from the wide range of attitudes and values which make any poet's response to anything:

> Strap-hanging with a crowd of Polish dead
> I make the fourteenth Station of the Cross.

The result is a poetry where the unity is only a verbal one. Instead of creating an imaginative unity of the various elements of the poem, the puns and other verbal tricks become merely persuasive, an attempt at strong argument.

This seems to point to perhaps the chief limitation of Dawe's poetry. But it is a limitation which, on the whole, he seems to recognise and keep within, and in this resides much of his strength. It is most obviously shown in his apparent refusal to deal with love, or at least love between the sexes. Not that he need deal with it; but this seems symptomatic of an inability to deal with strong emotions in their own right, any of them. Where they do appear (in poems mainly social or political) they infuse and enforce a statement of conviction or warning, rather than serve as part of the subject-matter, to be explored and clarified. At their worst, these poems lack control and coherence. In the best of them, this limitation is turned into a strength: Dawe's most personally felt poems are paradoxically public statements of social danger or injustice.

This social involvement takes another, and generally more effective, form in Dawe's strong satirical vision. Satire permeates the book, given point and strength by his mastery of colloquialisms and the rhythms of ordinary speech. These give a rare firmness and immediacy.

Ordinary man and day-to-day life is Dawe's subject. Love for his fellows, in all their foolishness, suffering or happiness, is the spring of his poetry. It is not always clearsighted; but his best poetry is keen and incisive. It is poetry essentially in a domestic setting. But his wit and vernacular strength are no mean achievement today when, as always, we are threatened with an ossification of "poetic" diction, and with strangling within too narrow a range of O.K. gestures.

If Bruce Dawe doesn't write love poetry, Geoffrey Dutton more than makes up for him. Almost all the poems in "Flowers and Fury" (Cheshire, 20/-) deal with love in one aspect or another. Yet the final result is not one of variety. The flowers have over-run the fury and, where a hard-hitting acuteness should sharpen our awareness of love's intricacies, we have instead a blurring of edges; one mood runs into another, like an ill-tended garden.

Dutton has most success in such small, tightly organised songs as "The Plum Catcher," "A Naked Ghost" and (not a love poem) "The Boat in the Paddock." These are light and deft. They well capture a comparatively minor but illuminating insight into human nature:

> But nakedness grows icy at midday,
> That dress I know so well makes you
> A stranger, foot stiff in shoe,
> Your words sewn up in what you ought
> to say.

His more ambitious poems are less successful, although they attempt a wider and deeper exploration of the nature of love and its place in life. Complete freedom, that of the dingo, the outcast, no matter how admirable, is insufficient in its loneliness. "Love is the music of imperfection." It replaces that loneliness with another; the flux of cruelty and tender union which is the substance of "Night Fishing." Love is the point of light, the eye which both illuminates and sees the wonderful and frightening variety of the psyche.

But the larger themes gain no precision from the looser forms. The poems tend to wander and lose dramatic strength; rhythmic ineptitude and clumsy syntax sabotage the tone of voice. The worst passages don't even read like good prose. And too often, an impressive gesture turns out to be saying nothing at all:

> . . . the pain and fury, they make the night
> Air rub like a madman's cheek against a
> rifle.

In my opinion, the book's best poem is "Mid Century Love," where a fusion of humor and seriousness gives a strength, urbanity and control often lacking in the other poems:

> Now lean grass flows through the electric
> summer,
> The unwashed earth rolls like a horse in
> dust,
> The hills are at the flash-point of anger.

"Poems" (Edwards & Shaw, 15/-) is the fourth book of David Campbell's to be published. It is handsomely presented but disappointing to read. Taken as a whole, the poetry seems thin and repetitive, there is a monotony and narrowness of imagery not found in the two other books reviewed, and his farm appears to suffer from a plague of hawks.

As the dust-jacket tells us, he is mainly a pastoral poet. But his attempt to make the landscape symbolise his inner states and feelings fails through lack of definition. The poetry is gently and vague, technically facile. All too often we come across lines with no meaning whatever in their context, or absurdities of imagery which betray a lack of concentration or scrutiny:

> In every grain of sand
> Stands a singer in white.

Only occasionally is there any bite and clarity:

> the snowgum tree
> Sucks its spare blossom from the stone

and also in the three "Songs for the Married Ear." "Poetry," to quote someone, "is a difficult business," and it takes far more labor than Mr. Campbell seems prepared to give it.

ANDREW TAYLOR

Journey Among Men

So many good things have been said about "Journey Among Men" (Hodder & Stoughton, 52/-), the very handsome book by Jock Marshall and Russell Drysdale, that it is a delight to join the queue of those praising it.

The book, however, puts one in the position of a sort of Critical bunny at the Literary fence—it is hard to find a way in. For this 206 large-page work is a fascinating miscellany of etceteras, the main theme being the story of a journey to the interior of Northern Australia made by the authors and several others during the spring of 1958. The main purpose was to collect reptiles, mammals and birds which live in the desert environment.

In studying the ecology of animals, the travellers soon found themselves studying man and his ecology in this frontier area.

Jock Marshall is, between you, me and the well designed endpapers, Professor A. J. Marshall, D.Phil., D.Sc., explorer, and zoologist at Victoria's Monash University. Russell Drysdale, one of the few big names in Australian art who can really draw, has had justice done to his lovely pen and wash drawings by the supreme litho-printers, Cowell Ltd. of England.

Not since Jerome's "Three Men in a Boat," or perhaps Furphy's "Such is Life" has the diversion-and-return-from-the-main-theme method of story telling been so skilfully handled. The telling has the intimacy and casual ease of cattle-camp fire yarning. Yet the book sparkles with zoological interest. There is, for instance, an account of that amazing bird, the Mallee Fowl and its method of egg hatching.

Along with the Mallee Fowl, rare night parrots and flying foxes, what superb "characters" and anecdotes were discovered. Blokes like 90-year-old Brandy John, who started his career as a theological student at one of the senior British universities, Harmonious Harry, Treacle Dick, and The Tropical Frog, of whom we recall Bill Harney's endless tales.

There are intriguing pieces about bandicoots, wrens, old-time bushmen, lung cancer, how to survive in the desert when your vehicle has "had it"—even the origin of the term "had it".

Marshall's writing is witty, intelligent, non-academic and above all responsible. He writes with humanity, and a national pride which bristles. Perhaps he is a little harsh on England—"the right little, tight little isle"—and the English "wingeing Poms." He is correctly indignant at "the English visitor to Australia who tends to be fulsome in praise of almost everything he sees. But often there are unspoken thoughts, lurking behind southern English eyes, and these are transferred to a metaphorical little black book a bit further back still. Later he tends to write the nasty little things that he failed to mention while among the people whose hospitality he accepted. This unloveable trait has led to the expression 'Kipper' to a certain type of Englishman. A Kipper by virtue of its processing, has become two faced with no guts. When Australian friends read his printed statements they are usually a little shocked." There is similar comment on the English character and attitude, Royalty, child cruelty, sport, manners and principles.

The book, entertaining, learned, witty, Drysdale's superb draftsmanship, and a screamingly satirical index, make at least one reader live in hope that Jock Marshall and Russell Drysdale make another Journey Among Men soon.

VANE LINDESAY

Book Chronicle

(Mention here does not preclude subsequent review)

NATURAL HISTORY

The present healthy and advancing interest in wild life and national parks, very much part of our culture in the wider sense, is paralleled by a number of recent books on natural history. H. J. Frith's **The Mallee-Fowl** (Angus & Robertson), though highly priced at 35/-, was immediately recognised as a minor classic on its recent publication. This is an astonishing study by an officer of C.S.I.R.O. of the habits of the world-famous "bird that builds an incubator". Also extremely readable, though on a serious scientific level, is Michael Sharland's **Tasmanian Wild Life** (M.U.P., 25/-), a "field study book giving popular and handy reference to all the mammals and snakes of Tasmania". By contrast Robin Hill's **Bushland and Seashore** (Lansdowne, 30/-) is a popular but finely-produced work by a noted nature painter, with the text linking together a versatile series of paintings—whose colors have not been done justice to by the gravure process by which the book has been printed.

Jacaranda Press of Brisbane continue their excellent series of pocket guides with two volumes on **Marine Fishes of Australia** by Gilbert Whitley, and with Basil Marlow's **Marsupials of Australia** and H. Oakman's **Some Trees of Australia.** Although not fully comprehensive, at 13/6 each these books excellently fulfil their modest purpose.

BIOGRAPHY

Autobiography, not long ago one of the conspicuous lacunae in Australian publishing, is taking its rightful and important place as a handmaiden to our history and as an indication of national maturity. While the most spectacular work of recent months is Sir Earle Page's posthumously published **Truant Surgeon** (Angus & Robertson, 63/-), covering forty years of Australian political life, the most human and convincing, in terms of a personality, is Noel Monkman's **Quest of the Curly-tailed Horses** (Angus & Robertson, 37/6). Monkman's book describes with great sensitivity and insight of his childhood in New Zealand and his personal achievement in making his own way to a scientific career, and left this reader at least with a sense of disappointment at its modest length. A third volume of Australian autobiography is J. K. Davis' **High Latitude** (M.U.P., 45/-), an account of the life of an Antarctic sailor and explorer of unrivalled experience.

From overseas comes **Fanfrolico and After** (Bodley Head, 37/3), the third volume of Jack Lindsay's highly individual autobiography, carrying his story of physical and mental travail from 1926 to 1941. Hugh Heckstall-Smith's **Doubtful Schoolmaster** (Peter Davies, 26/-) is, in modest garments, one of the most exciting books on education I have read in recent years, witty and wise. Many will find especial interest In Heckstall-Smith's "exposure" of Dr. Kurt Hahn and Gordonstoun, but the real meat of this book lies in the author's reflections on his own life and work; it is far more than just another book on "education".

Turning to biography, there are no local works of great depth. In **The Rough Rider** (Lansdowne, 28/6) Jack Pollard tells the story of Lance Skuthorpe, buckjumper and raconteur. Vic. Hall writes

briefly of **Namatjira of the Arauda** (Rigby, 32/6), a severely factual account with little attempt at insight. In **Shaw Neilson in the Wimmera**, published privately, L. J. Blake writes at pamphlet length of Neilson's wanderings. His booklet incorporates some interesting new material.

Attention needs to be drawn to the rapid progress of Oxford University Press's "Great Australians" series, now running to some 25 titles. These useful booklets, selling at 5/- each, include Griffith Taylor's **Douglas Mawson**, Zelman Cowen's **Isaac Isaacs**, Francis West's **Hubert Murray**, and David Macmillan's **John Dunmore Lang**. The series makes one sigh for the full-length biographies waiting to be written.

Leon Edel's **Henry James: The Conquest of London** carries forward to vol. two the "masterpiece"—as it has been called abroad—commenced with the publication of **The Untried Years** a decade ago. Published by Hart-Davis at 71/3, it is clearly one of the definitive literary biographies of our day, marred only by a rather heavy-handed use of the "psychological approach". Meanwhile Leon Edel has also edited **The Complete Tales of Henry James**, a magnificent publishing venture now reaching to four volumes. The latest two of these volumes, covering stories of the period 1873-1882, are published by Hart-Davis at 43/6 each.

NEW ZEALAND

Two books of considerable interest to Australian readers are Dick Scott's **Inheritors of a Dream** (Riddel, Auckland, 45/- N.Z.) and Charles Brasch's **Landfall Country** (Caxton Press, Christchurch, 45/- N.Z.). Scott's book is an absorbing pictorial history of New Zealand; the photographs, many displaying technical virtuosity as well as historical interest, have been gathered from many corners and are displayed with skill and with captions more informative than those in Cyril and Irma Pearl's Australian prototype of this work, "Our Yesterdays".

"Landfall Country" consists of work chosen from his journal by the Editor of Landfall, New Zealand's senior literary magazine, over the period 1947-61. This lengthy work maintains the high standards of production and content of its parent magazine.

AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

Works of Australian history appear to be leading all the rest in standards of writing and production. Notable works of permanent value include Marnie Bassett's **Realms and Islands** (O.U.P., 55/6), an account, lovingly related by the author of "The Hentys", of the world voyage of stowaway Rose de Freycinet in the French corvette Uranie between 1817 and 1820. A month's stay in colonial Sydney is described in the course of this book.

The Sydney Scene 1788-1960 (M.U.P., 47/6) is an anthology by two Sydney historians of extracts from a great variety of contemporary sources seeking to capture "the flavour and spirit of successive phases of Sydney development", and the editors comment that our oldest city has not yet produced its historian. Until it does, this work will serve a most useful service in giving us the "feel" of an important section of our past. It is usefully supplemented by **Sydney Cove 1788** (Hodder & Stoughton, 44/9), an ably-edited series of extracts from first-hand accounts of the original settlement. Interesting though the story is, told in this way, editor Dr. John Cobley could have improved on his work by adding some footnotes.

A work of major importance is Dr. A. Grenfell Price's **The Winning of Australian Antarctica** (Angus & Robertson, 50/-). This ably-edited work presents, for the first time, the full account of the two Mawson expeditions to Antarctica in 1929-31. Other recent works include a revised and enlarged edition of Hugh Anderson's collection **Colonial Ballads** (Cheshire, 35/-), an indispensible record which includes music; Douglas Gillison's **Royal Australian Air Force 1939-1942** (Australian War Memorial, 40/-), a comprehensive account of a vital period which starts its story in 1909, and which of course is one of the volumes of the official war history; **Australia's Little Cornwall**, Oswald Pryor's useful account of the local history of the Moonta district in South Australia (Rigby, 25/-); and Weston Bate's **A History of Brighton** (M.U.P., 45/-), an important contribution to the history of Melbourne which has been recognised as one of the most competent works of local history published in recent years.

OTHER HISTORY

Notable works of broad general interest include two of the first volumes in the new Thinker's Library: Glyn Daniel's **The Idea of Prehistory** and **The Greeks**, edited by H. Lloyd-Jones. All will welcome the revival of this useful series, which is published by Watts and distributed by Pitmans, while regretting that the modest price of the old Thinker's Library has given way to a cost of 23/9 a volume.

Outstanding works of historical interest recently published in Britain include David Knowles' **The Evolution of Medieval Thought** (Longmans, 25/-), widely acclaimed on publication; Barbara Tuchman's deserved best-seller **August 1914** (Constable, 63/6); and M. P. Crosland's detailed and interesting survey of a little-known field, **Historical Studies in the Language of Chemistry** (Heinemann, 60/9). A study of the nomenclature of chemistry, as Crosland shows, teaches us much of the history of philosophy as well as science.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Three short works of timely importance which should be on everyone's shelf are Creighton Burns' **The Tait Case** (M.U.P., 15/-), a study in the capital punishment question; the newly revised and extended version of **Immigration: Control or Colour Bar** (M.U.P., 12/6), and **The Independence of Papua-New Guinea** (Angus & Robertson, 7/6), a series of four important lectures studying the pre-requisites by D. G. Bettison, E. K. Fisk, F. J. West and J. G. Crawford.

MISCELLANEOUS

Other works which, in our view, merit special mention are Mary McCarthy's **On the Contrary** (Heinemann, 37/3), a collection of the American critic's trenchant and brilliantly-written articles; Matthew Arnold's **Democratic Education** (University of Michigan Press, 68/-), the second volume in a definitive edition of the works of the nineteenth century educator and critic whose philosophy is arousing new interest and study; and John Anderson's **Studies in Empirical Philosophy** (Angus & Robertson, 42/-), a collection of the papers of the most influential and controversial university teacher that Australia has, perhaps, ever seen.

S.M.S.

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