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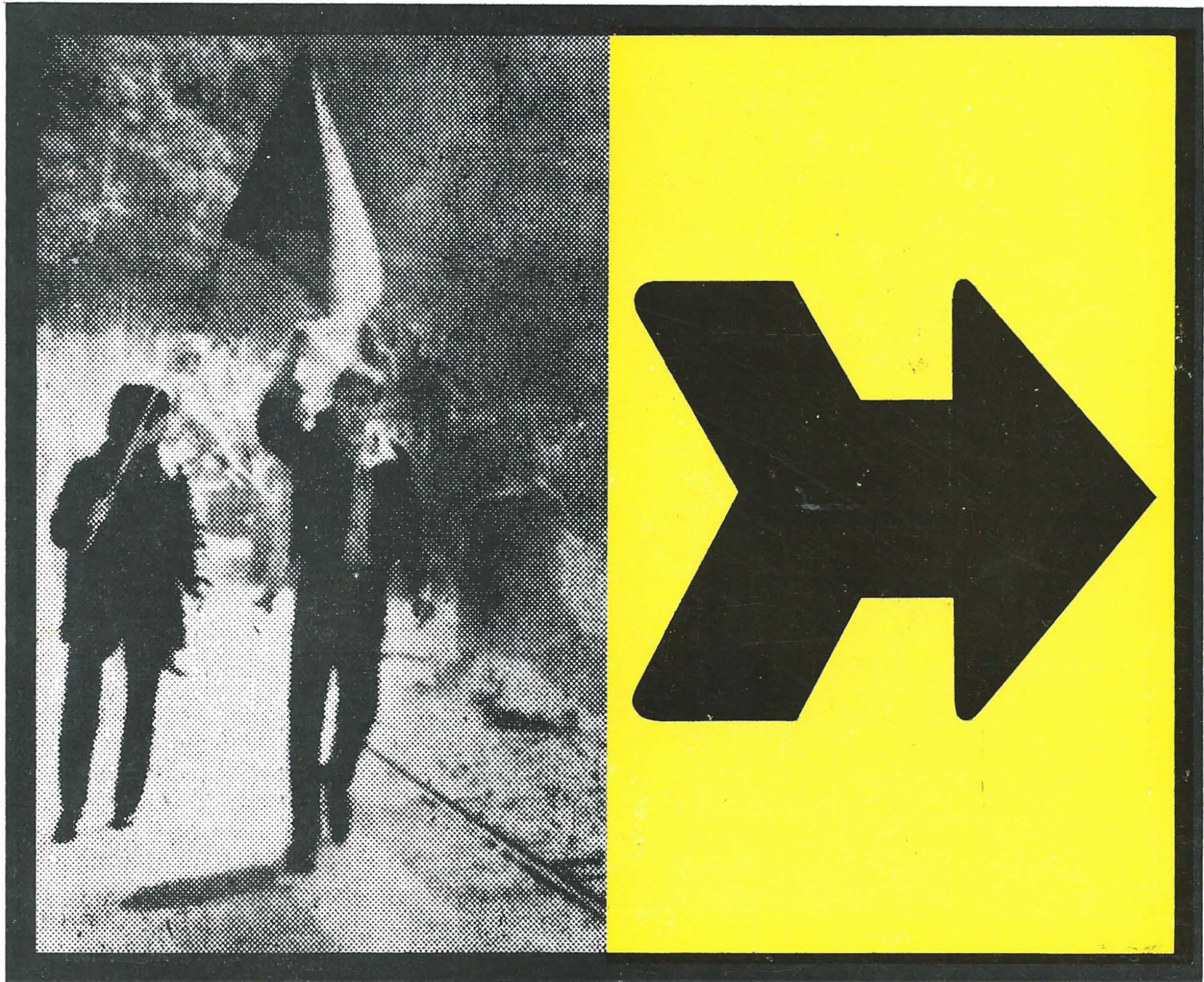

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Overland is a quarterly Australian literary magazine. The subscription rate is two dollars a year (four issues), and the price of each copy is fifty cents. The subscription rate for students is one dollar a year. Manuscripts are welcomed, but will be returned only if a stamped addressed envelope is attached.

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May and November—$1.50 a copy

ON this page we had planned to place the opening of David Martin's letter from Prague. It will now be found following this statement. The letter has been overtaken by events, and the humorous block which introduces it, taken of course from the epic of the great Schweik, is no longer humorous.

It has been a lovely summer in Prague, as David Martin tells us, but now it is autumn. We have just had a letter from a Czech literary friend, which is dated 14th August and which says: "The situation in the last few months has been very tense and dramatic. At one stage people were asking each other whether we should be occupied, but it seemed absurd as life was quite peaceful and summerlike, Prague full of tourists and nice things. This was very lucky as people here are really civilised in their behavior and there was no excuse for any intervention . . . Now all this tension has relaxed, people are starting to breathe and think about other things too . . ."

The occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union and the mercenaries at her heels is a deep tragedy for us all, and not least for those around Overland, our editors and readers, a great many of whom have always felt at least a residual sympathy for the achievements and the preoccupations of the Soviet Union, and have felt that communist ideals have at least held the promise of new and significant insights for mankind.

This new Anschluss has ended all that. There may have been the shadow of a case for the Hungarian takeover. But Czechoslovakia was trying to make socialism work. For the first time in the history of the modern world a country whose economy was firmly socialist was trying to build a good life, intellectually and morally, on that basis. It was an experiment of the greatest promise for the future of humanity. It was too imaginative for the Russians—this land, once, of the great imagination! "You have socialism—why do you want democracy?" a puzzled Russian is supposed to have said. The remark is a key to the central social tragedy of the twentieth century: the perversion of socialism. Can we not understand those cries of "Fascists" levelled at the mindless armies of invasion?

The invasion and occupation of Czechoslovakia is probably the end of the possibility of socialism in our time. Of course Australia will gradually wend its way towards its version of flatulent living; it will create a version of the good life. It will be free from the early morning knock at the door. We will not be imprisoned for calling our Prime Minister a fool. These, we know, are great achievements, and today we of the Left must prize them more than before. But, though we may have—most

of us may have—a good life, it will not be the new life that at least some of us have hoped for. We shall still be tied to the old imperialisms, the old wars, the old sell-outs, the old and tired compromises. The Russians have determined that we shall be tied to them indefinitely. For they have shown us that they no longer believe in themselves. How can we believe in them?

Out of this tragedy some good may come. The motto of Czechoslovakia is "Truth Prevails", and in due course the Russians cannot win, unless, like Goering, they plan to deport the whole Czechoslovak people. This may be a bitter lesson for the Russians, but while it is being learnt it will be a bitter time for the Czechoslovaks. Admiration for their magnificently disciplined resistance must not blind to the fact that withdrawal of the occupation forces can go only a small way towards re-establishing the dignity of life.

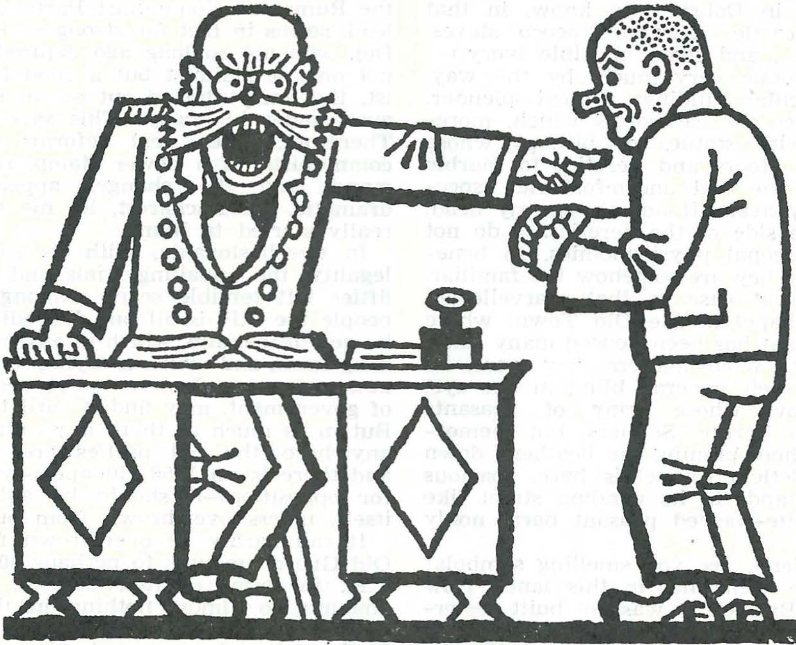
We in Australia may learn to distrust the authoritarianism of the dogmatist. In talking to the Soviet hard-liner Rurikov earlier this year, nothing in retrospect was more chilling than to realise he still believed the Soviet Union was encircled by enemies waiting to pounce. Unhappily, as David Martin points out, there are Nazi politicians in West Germany. But we must also remember that, with the sad exception of Vietnam (which war it will now be so much harder for Australians to oppose), perhaps no period this century is less internationally menacing than the present.

We must demand the withdrawal from Czechoslovakia of the Russian forces of occupation, and we must insist on the right of that country, and of its workers and its intellectuals, to determine on the basis of their own experience what road ahead they wish to take. We must ask the Russians, and in particular the Soviet writers, why they permitted this gross act of stupidity and immorality to take place. When will they realise how little they are allowed to know, how limited their understanding of the world is? Overland has more right, on its past record, to support the Czechoslovaks on the one hand, and to protest to the Russians on the other, than have most. We shall do what we can.

S. MURRAY-SMITH		RODNEY HALL
IAN TURNER	BARRIE REID	DOROTHY HEWETT
JOHN McLAREN	TOM ERREY	LAURENCE COLLINSON

"The Communist Party depends on the voluntary support of the people. It cannot enforce its authority, it must constantly acquire it by its actions. It cannot enforce its line by orders, but by the work of its members and the veracity of its ideals. The right to experiment is the right to the future life of our nations—to their revolutionary existence."

Alexander Dubcek



David Martin

LETTER FROM PRAGUE

YOU say you'd be delighted to get a letter from Czechoslovakia. I am sure you would. But it's not so simple. Some things never change, and some change so fast that when you read this even the tail of events may have slipped from our hands. This has been my problem here all along, this lovely summer.

All the same, I believe—call it a cliche—that what looks solid and permanent now will still look solid and permanent when autumn comes into the Bohemian lands. People, landscape, churches and houses, the bridges over the Moldau: you never saw anything more meant to last, more made to last. A tragic country? A little, for me, the returned wanderer to whom every stone in this too old world speaks of disasters past and calamities perhaps to come, but not for its people who walk among cemeteries and are full of hope. If I thought it interested you I would talk about those cemeteries, where, in wind-safe niches, tiny lamps are lit each dusk to glow through the night over graves tended with gentlest care. Not all are tended so, of course; not the ones, for instance, in the ancient Jewish cemetery at Dobris, ravaged by the Germans and besieged by ripening corn. (We were staying in Dobris, you know, in that amazing writers' castle. Ceramic rococo stoves, baroque facade . . . and some invisible ivory.)

I don't like baroque very much, by the way. It's all right for secular buildings, a great splendor, but it despiritualises the cathedrals which, moreover, are filled with statues of bishops whose pastoral staffs pin Moors and heretics to marble slabs. They make me feel uncomfortable, especially just now. My heart, if not always my head, tends to be on the side of the heretics. I do not care for these episcopal physiognomies, so benevolently fanatical. They are somehow too familiar.

No. I am more at ease in that marvellously restored Betlem Chapel in the Old Town, where Jan Hus lit a fire that has been doused many times but never put out. What fighters they were, he and his men, and their general, blind in one eye, Zizka of Trocknov, whose army of peasants marched almost to Berlin. Soldiers, but memorials do not show them pinning the heathens down by their necks. Betlem Chapel is bare, spacious and cool, and it stands in its winding street like a large, clean, white-washed peasant barn, nobly proportioned.

Ah, my good friend, are you smelling symbols? You cannot escape them, not in this land. How old is the Charles Bridge? It was not built yesterday, and it was not last week that the Golem, in his mouth still the piece of parchment with the "Name" that Rabbi Loew put there, staggered across to Mala Strana. But the students, who have scrawled the name of a new leader, Cisar, on the pavement of the bridge, are young. And they scrawl other messages, too. "We need money. Wir brauchen Geld." And not far from it—mockingly? — "Counter Revolution Will Come Soon". (The Prague correspondents of Neues Deutschland, Trybuna Ludu and Pravda must have strolled past there. Everyone finds what he likes to read.)

*

As to myself, dear comrade, I do not believe in this counter revolution, and in some five weeks have scarcely seen a sign of it. I say scarcely, because it depends on what one calls a sign. Oh, indeed, I've met an architect and an engineer and one or two other professional people who are so fed up with how Czech socialism has treated them —people like these have had a rather specially miserable time, these last ten years or so—that, even though they deny it, they probably wouldn't mind a change of the social system. I know of a factory manager who, in his combine, is number 23 on the salary list: I dare say he would not mind a change either. But that seems to be about as far as it goes. In the last eight months I have heard bitterer grumbles in Budapest and East Berlin. The people who are pushing the allegedly counter-revolutionary reforms in Czechoslovakia are, by and large, people like myself. They are socialists, often with a life-time spent in the radical labor movement, who don't want goulash communism but the real thing, and who can well distinguish between their true and their false friends, or between bourgeois liberalism (capitalism with pretty little egalitarian bells on) and a socialist community based on full, democratic participation.

You hoped, I guess, for a considered analysis of events here. Instead I propose to give you a few random observations, trusting that you will find some links between them, and that they will still be valid when this reaches you.

Rumania, which we recently visited, is pursuing reforms quite as far-reaching as those here. But the Rumanian Communist Party is giving a firmer lead, seems in fact far stronger. Because Georghiu Dej, who not so long ago expired peacefully, was not only a Stalinist but a good Rumanian Stalinist, the Party started out on an independent road even under his sway. This saved its mass basis. Therefore, when real reforms got under way, communists, of a newer stamp, remained in command, and the changes appeared much less dramatic. In Bucharest, let me tell you, life has really started to hum.

In Czechoslovakia, with its solid traditions of legality, the appalling trials and injustices of the fifties left terrible scars. Among many excellent people the C.P. is all but discredited, so that even its new leadership, which in any case is still organising itself, and which is trying to build up a whole new and more effective and representative machine of government, may find it hard to keep the helm. But in as much as there is no alternative in sight anywhere—the old parties are practically dead, and there is no 1956 Budapest-type rallying point for opposition—it should be able to consolidate itself, unless overthrown from outside.

It can hardly be overthrown from inside. The Old Guard amounts to perhaps 40 per cent. of the C.P., in terms of functionaries, which means it amounts to almost nothing in the country as a whole. This is what is causing all the anguish. If there is only one party, how can one get out of a situation where a powerful but in fact nationally unrepresentative minority within it can block or frustrate necessary reforms in almost every field? To that there is no answer as yet, but it's mainly a question of education and example. Older people are sometimes sceptical, or too preoccupied with moral issues, important as they are, but I sense that the young are both more optimistic and, strangely enough, more patient. They will have to be.

Do not imagine that the years since 1948 did not see great achievements. In almost all spheres much has been accomplished. Class differences have been diminished, living standards have risen in spite of all, the everything-for-a-fast-buck spirit has evaporated. Most of what we see here we like very much. But, rather as in England, there's a lot of damnable inefficiency, partly because little tinpot bureaucrats hold medium-level command posts. It is going to be tough to get rid of them. They have had it too cushy to bow out gracefully. It's going to be even tougher when the new leadership will have to ask the workers to work better, and perhaps harder.

*

There is no large gap between workers and intellectuals. But one does occasionally meet intellectuals who are too prone to blame the workers

for all that went wrong, which is naturally resented. However, wild talk about the working class having been deeply demoralised, spoiled, or infected by deliberately fostered anti-Semitism, is as much poppycock as it is to say that the intellectuals want to destroy socialism. They don't, but some of them are politically naive, as witness the famous, astonishingly stupid and untimely "Statement of 2,000 Words", which has played into the hands of those who want to turn the clock back . . . from outside. The Stalinists are supposed to have much influence in the Workers' Militia. This too cannot amount to much, for the militia kept quiet even while Soviet troops were in the country, and with Ulbricht, Gomulka, etc., beckoning it to rise. The workers of Prague and Kladno are no fools.

The Russians have a case; at least some grounds for worry. Czechoslovakia is the comparatively weak flank of their system of alliances. But the hairbrained economics of Novotny and his men are in part to blame for this. It was in their period, and not under Dubcek, that the C.S.S.R. was beginning to become a humble supplier of raw materials to West German industry. In the last analysis, Russian fears now stem more from social than from strategic roots: the Czechs are setting too lively an example, which scares the upholders of the glacial status-quo.

Up till now the Hungarians have saved the Czech bacon. Had Kadar been as keen as Ulbricht and Gomulka on intervention, the guns might have gone off by this time. Key to the problem on the international level is to help the G.D.R. to a recognised status in Europe, and to understand its fears about Bonn's new policy of "seduction of the East".

Some predictions. If armed intervention against the Czechs is still on the cards, it would lead to the socialist cause in Europe being set back a generation. It is not because of this that I think it unlikely, but because it would lay Soviet foreign policy in ruins. If it does not take place, there will be an interesting and creative if gradual coming together, to their vast mutual benefit, of the Old and the New Left. The students of the west, and many others besides, will discover again, more constructively, the valid meaning of marxism, and the traditional communist parties will at last regain their mental and moral vigor. It is as possible that we may see the emergence of two European socialist camps—with Yugoslavia, Rumania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia grouped in one—as we might see new ideas triumphing in Moscow.

Things will be extremely tense at least until the special congress of the Communist Party here in September, since much of the pressure being put on the Czechs is designed to prevent it being held, or to influence its outcome. There is also a danger that Czechoslovakia's reconstruction along federal lines could encourage centrifugal tendencies, sharpening appetites among Magyar and German minorities, and even in Moravia.

But there is a much more serious danger. Czechs and Slovaks are level-headed, but they are human. There is still enormous goodwill, even affection, for Russia, and a realisation that, for all that so much worked out badly—often because the local fellows were "plus Russe que les Russes"—without the U.S.S.R., mistakes and all, the Czechs would not have the chance to strive for a higher form of socialism. Theirs would not be a socialist country, but for the Soviet Union.

*

I have watched this goodwill being eroded. People who were ready to forget the past for the sake of the future are maddened by the spate of inspired falsehoods loosed against the republic from Berlin, Warsaw and above all Moscow. They deeply and rightly distrust Federal Germany, but unless the lie factory is dismantled they will come to fear and distrust Russia even more. Sometimes one has the impression that this is what certain people want: people who look for a pretext to intervene, and would find it in Czechoslovakia's most cautious glance in a westerly direction. Of all tragedies this would be the greatest, for her real enemies still do not live in the east. In all the recent devilment it has almost been overlooked that the number of neo-Nazi M.P's in a couple of West German State parliaments already equals the number of Nazi M.P's there in 1930. Russia may thus bring into being what it most wants to avoid, but the Czechs are fighting hard to save their friends from this suicidal folly.

Next to this, other problems pale. Last week, during a heat-wave, the water supply to half the suburbs of Prague failed for over two days. Nerves were on edge: lousy administration. Cock-eyed industrial planning, inherited wrong priorities. In Prague it is difficult to get airmail typing paper. But the shops are full of goods delightfully designed and displayed. Agriculture is progressing . . . These things will come good in the end. The new team bristles with talent.

And meanwhile the cherries are heavy on the village trees; anyone who fancies can pick a capful. What a fertile, abundant country! Bursting with a sort of domestic robustness. Full of love as well: wherever you look a boy is cuddling a girl. I am at Chocerady. Under my window the river Sazava teems with fish and sturdy children. All looks peaceful, fecund, rational, friendly. A few nights ago an army convoy rumbled over our bridge; I was the only one who thought it worth stepping out onto the balcony to watch it pass. Near Karlovy Vary we chanced to motor into the area of the Warsaw Pact manoeuvres, which were so cruelly slow in coming to an end. An Insect Play yokel was sharpening his scythe in a field. We laughed: an American spy . . . When I hear booms and bangs in the distance I prick up my ears. It's only an artillery range, I think.

Jesus, Maria and Joseph, I should be more optimistic. If what they are doing here succeeds—and, by heaven, it may—we could all learn again how to kick cynicism in the teeth. Long live the Charles Bridge, long live plum knedeliky, long live revolutionary courage! Long live the fly that shits on the Emperor's face!

Dorothy Hewett

ALICE

in a german garden

Do you remember the garden in the watery sunlight . . .
Delphiniums, striped canvas swings rocking the bald-headed writers?
We dodged the shadows of ravens swooping down out of the boughs,
Searching for eyes and hearts.
The young spies struggled manfully in the flower borders,
Clutching and cocking giant Salvador Dali ears
That pulled their bodies sideways like fleshy tape-recorders
Hung upside down in the shrubbery behind our heads.

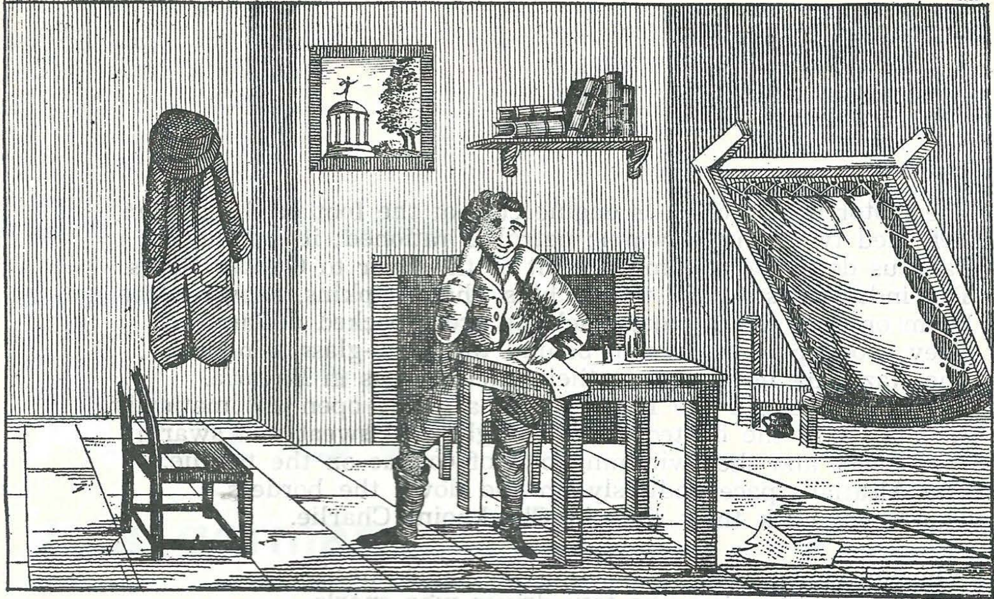
We are caught here, embedded in glass under the plastic flowers
At the foot of Heine's statue; our American voices echo
Across the borders, harsh with chain smoking and endless coughing
In misty gardens: the thirties created us, McCarthy made us immortal,
The Cold War embalmed us; we creak in the wicker chairs
Under the linden trees in a strange climate: the high falsetto
Of the huge Negro tenor, carolling his thin German lieder
Out in the provinces, caught soliciting pretty boys
Along the Unter den Linden . . . it was all hushed up
For his faded little Eva, refugees out of a Faulkner mythology tale:
The drawling Southern heat, the white dust, the plaster pillars
At the end of the long oleander avenue, the ricketty frame house
From a jerky movie, all lost, lost now, the black boy screaming
In the empty road, clutching his bloody genitals.
The exiles' voices float like a mockery in a second-rate light opera
Of peeling gilt and miniature velvet boxes . . . The Duchess is here,
The Dormouse diving his head in the priceless Sevres teapot,
The punchbowl from Macey's shatters in rainbows on the grass,
Home movies: the Hollywood Ten unwrap their celluloid bandages,
The porch flickers with light and blood; the Red Queen
Douses her screams in the pan of the new American toilet.
"Alice, Alice will you come back next year
For the International Meeting of the Veterans of the Spanish Civil War?"

The motor boat rocks—its engine cut—at the foot of the garden
Reflected twice in the water; petrol is rationed; it will never
Take us down the gleaming front of the river to Gunter Grass.
The industrialists have three chins, their napkins, snowy-white,
Foam on their waistcoats; crackling green-backed dollars
They spoon pink ice cream behind the plate-glass windows.
The Nazis are howling into their microphones in Bavaria.
The glass doors of the Hotel Berolina swing open automatically
At a footfall; the heated dome of light will sweat and swarm
With faces and the swimming bite of cognac on the tongue.
The Alsatians pace endlessly up and down the borders,
The Vopos click their rifles at Checkpoint Charlie.

Why do we all keep on meeting the same characters
Like a morality play; the taxi driver who snarls
"This country is shit", the young West German who married
The East German girl, and can't go home to mother,
The silent waiter who spits his contempt on the pavement?

"Did your books get through last month,
Or did you again receive only the dust jackets?
I have complained to the Ministry of Culture."

"My novel has been pulped, my heart beat is getting fainter,
What was the date on my last letter?" . . .
Oh! Alice, Alice, remember the beleaguered garden,
Remember the raven waiting in the linden tree.


THE DISTREST POET.
Printed and Published by W. Davison Alnwick.

PITTSBURGH IDENTITY: 000000621

Peter Mathers

STORY so far: Mathers, in need of mental stimulation and money, places himself on the research worker list at the British Museum in the hope that with a little luck some fabulously rich dilettante will commission him to carry out intriguing research into aspects of knowledge hitherto denied him. He has recently become aware of abominable green cavities in his mind and he has named these cavities Holes.

An American scholar hired me as a researcher in the British Museum. My job was to read second rate Restoration comedies, pamphlets, texts on manners, old Spectators and fencing manuals. It was good in the Reading Room under the wedgewood-blue dome. In the North Library it was dreary and the only compensation the reading of minor pornography but only under the baleful or bored eyes of officials who watched that I didn't become corrupt and begin defacing books and/or molest Lady Readers (I was a Gentleman Reader). My boss was easy-going but hard working. I began saying things like "the hiftory of Reftoration drama makef . . ." The salacious books didn't affect me. I thought there was something wrong with me.

Whenever I could I got away and went to the Plough, but even that was impossible between 3 and 5.30. I once ran through the Reading Room, the lobby, down the steps, across the yard and got into the Plough at one to three. When I got back to the Museum the attendant didn't want me as I'd broken a regulation by running. If I stayed much longer I knew I'd start shouting and dancing on the catalogue and try to rape the Lady Readers.

One day the American asked if I'd like to go to America. The American returned home. I didn't hear anything for eight months. Then a letter came from a professor who was leaving for another job, a man who'd never met me, asking if I'd like to spend a year in the department and write a play. It sounded surreal. I said yes, but please get me more money as four of us would starve on what you offer. I knew that every department had a millionaire wanting to dodge taxes by giving money to indigents. Then followed a convuluted correspondence and the Pittsburgh letters became tense and stern. It ended in victory for dollar diplomacy and my mendacity. Wife and children returned to Australia on some sort of hellship and I got a visa and a plane ticket. Everyone told me I was doing the wrong thing, sacrificing family and all for dollars, LBJ, CIA, Vietnam, Sound of Music and sophomores, take one plethora add a processed Mathers and serve.

Mathers said he would fix some of his Holes. Others said you're sick, Mathers, go and release the inner man, be liberated, smoke the finest pot, eat the best acid, see a shrink, kill a shrink, try a little political reality.

At the last moment I tried to get more money. I hinted that otherwise they'd bury me. They didn't mind, they were stylish sextons. I have been corrupted, I told myself, I am interested in money. So I went.

All I knew about Pittsburgh was iron and steel, Andrew Carnegie and Mellon, 42 storeys of university, 20,000 students, and one and a half million people 400 miles from New York. With misgivings, ill-omens, bodings of disaster and evil intentions I went.

*

One hundred and eighty passengers jammed into a Boeing chartered for economy, convenience and greatest profit. In between quasi-meals we were given biscuits plastic-wrapped for protection and ease by the Paranoia Wafer Corporation. Words to hostesses were instantly processed and produced in recipients' facial twitches sometimes known as smiles, twinkles, and etc. At 35,000 feet we flew with another Boeing and a Douglas. Hostesses migrated from craft to craft as did souls in the old days. I flew charter because of my membership of USA Ltd., God help us, University Students Abroad. It is as though CIA is Council of Innate Art. CIO : AFL : FBI, ADA, AMA—and Boeing? Mathers?

We joined the queue over NY. Overhead it was blue, below a miasma of carbon, sulphur, steam and gold, and from Newark over the river arson and murder, cordite and tear gas. Terrorists held the streets and orders and money came from the bottom of the island, Wall Street. But from the roof of the Australian Consulate Frogman waved and I knew I had nothing to fear.

I stumbled from the plane and limped through the sun into the icy air-conditioned indoor acres of JFK. Natives shivered in summer clothes. I felt easy in London cords, and a little smug. Everywhere, armed police, but no physical violence, nobody expects a coup. The American style, that's all.

*

Several days later I left for Pgh. I learnt that my sponsors were at a basement meeting. I descended, I met them, they stared at my sandals and clothes. With reservations they greeted me. What have we here, they thought. What am I doing here, I thought. I have a suitcase and a leather bag, I am tired, I have nowhere to go, so I stay. We are in a building called the Stephen Foster Memorial, cool and gothic, I do not hear gentle voices calling poor old Joe, but I wear sandals, my hair is long, I am tired, and haggard, and nearly penniless. I only have the vaguest notion of what I am supposed to do at the university. We went to a bar, the beer was so cold icy spasms wracked me so I asked them to warm it and their looks said We have got ourselves a goddam nut.

That night I was lodged in a small flat furnished with theatre props, very neat, a kind of laboratory gothic, and whenever drapes stirred I waited for untidy bodies to fall. A very clean flat free of bat dung, and if there were owls in jugs they stayed there. Next morning when I stepped into the hall a door opened, a tiny repulsive dog peered through the slit and someone behind wheezed "yougoddadegree", the dog growled, I said good morning and set off for the campus. I stopped for coffee and the waitress said she'd left college without a degree, mmmmm, I replied. "I flunked," she said brokenly. I realised she'd confessed to something terrible. "Me too," I said. She glared at me. I left my coffee. It was a balmy autumn day, the sun ripe, leaves falling, turf cracking, sandals slapping as I made my way to the university for a room, paper, pens, books, money and inspiration.

The Cathedral of Learning is 42 stories of 1930s gothic, it is somewhat overpowering, even the shadow daunts, it edges dark time over the acres of lawn. It was on the hour so I awaited the great chimes, the bats, the cherubim, the monks with skull tankards to chant And what is your degree? but there were no chimes, no chants, nothing but leaves falling. Part of the first floor and three above it are given over to the common room, flagged, with galleries, wooden chairs and refectory tables. There are also nationality rooms, eighteen of them, built and maintained by Pittsburgh's nationalities. Some are charming. The Russian had an ikon until it was stolen, the Irish has a fake Kells. I went up to the eleventh floor and met some people, and a student addressed me as doctor and solved the degree business, but I didn't get a room, books, aid or money. Term was a fortnight old and everyone was very busy. Whenever they found themselves with spare time they started to worry. I discovered, was even told, certain maxims: mix; never be a solitary for solitariness is aloofness and you've got to be very talented to afford aloofness; do not under any circumstances forget names; look people in the eye (see Dale Carnegie on Firm Gaze)—one also notices squints, cataracts, etc., but this is not the intention; aliens acquire nonstatus or even nonexistence if thought aloof, and slip quickly into despair or madness; admire dress and costume; encourage your optimism, for it is a sweet, tender God-given thing.

*

They weren't sure what they'd got in Mathers and told others that I was a writer, mad and solitary, but bound to write something exceptional. They'd say, "You wouldn't write anything nasty, would you?" and I'd look back with, No, I'm not like that. However, it was obvious that they expected this of me, they felt bad about aspects of the American Way, their salaries, and what I was getting. Now and then an Irishman would tell me, "They're using you, be Jaisus, they're squeezing you dry, it's an old Yank trick to exploit foreigners", and I'd be angered, but could never keep it up, and so things went on.

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SYDNEY UNIVERSITY PRESS

I tried to borrow from the library but couldn't because I didn't have an identity card, in fact I was ineligible for most things. I couldn't get an identity card because I was neither faculty nor student. The identity office was very firm about it, they didn't want to create a precedent. "Then I'm nobody?" I cried. "I'm not at liberty to say," said the identity man, clever and clerical, disdainful of faculty and students, contemptuous of aliens. I offered to be a lift driver and make token ascents. "The union," he said, "See the Dean". But the Dean was out, in Brazil or Alaska, and wouldn't be back awhile. Someone gave me a piece of paper declaring my fellowship, but even this was not enough for the identity man. However most people accepted it and when it disintegrated I wrote myself another and this too was passed by all but a few supervisors who sometimes made things difficult. I hated the identity man, I hated his computer. I began asking myself: what am I doing here, am I me? The daily, mechanical responses of people who knew of my existence added to the growing burden of unreality (or was it reality?). It's irrelevant, it's absurd, why fuss? Keep apart from their rituals; become a genuine Aussie, burn gum leaves, wear a mulga crucifix, a garland of Salvation Jane and a red, yellow and blue button reading GI & Digger Murder Incorporated, but I didn't dare for my nature is gentle. Also I am easily frightened. I worried about identity-crisis. One day a friendly secretary said it was time I achieved proper identity. I went to see the identity man and he presented me with a plastic identity card, punched and numbered 000000062 I.

*

Freshmen have to take gym. or join ROTC, Reserve Officer Training Corps. Rotcee drills on the grass near the Cathedral and unfriendly people watch coldly and Students for Peace carry placards and are watched by the FBI. Rotcee draftees are pushed into officership, which is well-paid and fairly safe. I sat in on lectures about Clausewitz, Ethics of War, Geneva Convention, gas, radioactivity and bayonets.

West Point came to play Pitt. Hundreds of boy officers swarmed through town. They were tall, straight-backed, short-haired people always saying Sir! and looking steely-eyed and heroic. Into me, Mathers, weak and watery-eyed. I was glad when they won, for their victory fattened their confidence and made them cocky and more prone to martial disaster.

Numerous committees offer advice on draft avoidance. Game students burn or turn-in their cards. There is an anti-war meeting in a church and an earnest patriot lights a fire in the basement. The FBI is present but not to apprehend fire-raisers, especially patriotic ones.

The scandal of the six Western Pennsylvania students blinded by LSD broke over us. Then the blind commissioner for the blind confessed his hoax. In a bar three of us heard veterans down the other end, under the television war news, urge us take acid . . . all students and professors ought to get LSD . . . draft dodgers double doses.

General Westmoreland and his wife came home to tell us of the success of pacification. Her diary had messages for folks: Amputee is just waiting to go home . . . Boy who dies. Tell his mother and daddy that the pain was bearable and not to worry . . .

The Union is in a once rather grand hotel. In the television room I watched the Tet, by satellite, and we watched them die, NLF and GI, for the people's revolution, dollars and glory. Soldiers ran across a bridge and moments later the survivors returned. They called for napalm and it burnt as many Americans as it did Vietnamese. A young marine in love with John Wayne ran across a boulevard and reached the gutter in two pieces. We watched, aghast. My companions are going to be on television themselves, soon. There's one happy student pacing to and fro, smacking hands, grimacing at us and the screen. Break for commercial. The new Chevvie go go go. We are watching the Asia Show sponsored by Power of America Inc., to alert you, the People of America, to the ubiquitous menace of Communism. Later, I met a young executive kind of man, a Lutheran theologue, who told me that television news is un-American and run by Reds, for things just aren't that bad, and even if they are newsmen have a duty to their public. I asked when did he expect to go over. He said it was lousy, but he was 4F.

*

My bank is a new glass box, with shrubs and vines, iced water, guards and drive-in window. It does not like stipend people like me, but exercises toleration for today's stipendary is tomorrow's executive. The centre of this glass box is a stupendous steel strong room (you're safe with us, we've nothing to hide, let us give you money, please give us your money). You're always on camera and there's a fair chance of a bit part (never, never try for lead) in the everyday banking drama "Fill This Bag With Money I've Got a Gun". Tellers always fill the bags, banks having decided it's cheaper this way, and whatever happens it's all on film and can be run as a telly news spot with viewers invited to play the game of I Know HIM, and, John Doe You've Got The $10,000 Jackpot.

*

Wall Street has Dow-Jones, campuses have Dow. A National Student Association survey ranks Dow as the number one cause of campus demos; next is military recruiting, then CIA et al, then race. Last November Dow recruited at Pitt and students eager for jobs broke picket lines. PR announced that napalm added a mere mite to Dow profits, and how could any sane person object to that. Napalm-B is now in production but Dow won't be satisfied until they've gone right through the alphabet. Now I want you fellers to get in there and build on that polystyrene, we've got a great product and annual production's only 600,000,000 lbs. and we just gotta do better.

It is poor taste to ask Dow to desist, for profitability is God's Will, and must be done. Question: If the Dows believe in cremation, do they use napalm, and, if so, what sort?

In January the new library opened, twelve million dollars worth of carrel, smoking room, teak, tome and tinted glass. You check out your borrowed books at one counter then cross over to another where sits a campus cop with bullet belt and .38. His presence inspires a certain respect for the written word.

*

Sylvanian the journalist drove me around Pgh. Syl is a radical, a believer in the democratic process, an optimist, but sometimes the air-conditioning fails and the optimism shrivels. Thousands of acres of hilly suburbs dissected by turnpike, throughway, expressway, decorated with flyover and cloverleaf, underpass and overpass. We toured the Nikes, but were not allowed to touch them. (My first Pgh Monday the sirens sounded, I grabbed a coat and hopped outside to see unworried people; the sirens went several Mondays and I stopped worrying about my coat; the general feeling was — we've Nike, ICBM, Polaris, DEW — what've we got to worry about?) The rich live in Charles Addams houses or keep up these houses and live in New York or Bermuda. They are very rich. The middle class is affluent but cries poverty (as do the rich): horrendous taxes, creeping socialism, commie conspiracies. The poor are poor or very poor; they are the lame, the old, the unemployed, the sick, the unskilled, the black. Little can be done for these disadvantaged (sic) people for several excellent reasons: they have not helped themselves, they are shiftless, did not make provision for twilight days or were born black.

Pgh claims a metropolis of two million people, not that those further out would call themselves Pgh-ers, but planners like scope, and claim it. Downtown runs into the Point where the Alleghany and Monongahela Rivers become the Ohio which runs a thousand miles west to the Mississippi, and despite their sewage and filth these rivers are splendid with cliffs and flats, immense barges, and bridges galore. Near the Point there's Gateway Center (Pgh by night is a wonderful sight, tra-la etc.), built since 1945, of glass, steel and plastic, 20, 40, 60 stories. At night Gateway is Alphaville. The best part of downtown is old Market Square, civilised with a Murphy's store, fruit stands, bars and a warm crowded oyster and fish sandwich bar with counter bottles of Louisiana Hot Sauce. And Gateway has its Hilton. Where, in February, George Wallace had his meeting. Us common people run this country, said he (with a nod to his rich backers). The many faithful, the curious, enemies, Wallace girls, bodyguards, cops, extra bodyguards (to let the common people know that certain conspirators want him rubbed out) all jammed into the ballroom. He wants the little people of Pgh, he loves them, he knows they love him, the policemen, clerks, steel workers, firemen. He's got nothing against Negroes but he's sure going to do something about these here troublemakers. He's no racist, he's just another stocky, middle-aged man with a mike talking to a lot of Washington/East Coast money/nigger-haters. He just loves the little People (is he a fag, a fairy-lover?). The air-conditioning sucks out the smoke and anti-sweat leaving love and hate, a smell like fear-sweat. Suddenly a group of dissenters rise and leave. The faithful glare and mutter, some of them ready to unravel socks to make lynch-ropes. The cops and gunmen are tense. George doesn't mind, it's just proof that you can't trust professors and students. He has a somewhat pleasant voice: ah say this . . . agitators and students . . . sit in front o' ma automobile they won't ever do it again . . . The gunmen are very alert. I reach for cigarettes and am watched. I then play, and search pockets, pseudo-furtively—but ease up when a gunman begins twitching.

*

I move into a ghetto hotel. They seldom have foreigners, they never have whites. I feel strange, I am strange, but my foreignness excuses a lot. In the bar I am made to wait. Ole whitey . . . hey, you see that mother there? . . . The owner comes over and fixes things for me. The comedy (the comedo?). C, from along the corridor, patronises a bar down the road. He is watching basketball on television, and during a break turns to B and asks: "You still carry a gun?" "Sure—

here," and there's a noise like a firecracker and C falls off the stool. There's a stampede to get out of the bar. The bar-owner says, "He was there on the floor with blood the size of your thumbnail on his shirt." B is taken-in half an hour later. Death by misadventure, or something.

One morning at eleven I grope for the phone and am told, "Sterminators on his way up, just wait in the hall." "Wha—!" But she's gone. I'll not wait for any sterminator, I'll fight to the end, I'll go out the third floor window. He arrives, a pale brown man with duster and squirter for the roaches I've been feeding for weeks. Sometimes they drop from the ceiling. He tells me they can absorb great amounts of radioactivity, and that they shall inherit the earth.

Chitterlings, grits and spare ribs, ghetto soul-food for whites. Hell, man, says Luther, I **got** to eat that shit. I **want** steak.

Every night one early winter week there are firebombings of ghetto business premises. Premium gas and soap flakes in a beer bottle with a Tampax wick. A few months later a bar is bombed and the customers barely escape. The boys refer to this as 'escalation'.

*

The department's boss was built like a wrestler, his handshake was strong with ideals and promotion, and he knew everything about palates, semantics and academic bureaucracy but nothing about theatre. Occasionally we met and he'd say, "Everything going well, you're happy, how's the play, you've got a play for us haven't you", and I'd say, "Well the conflict in Scene 17 is weak," and he'd say, "Well, we've every confidence in you, you must have dinner with us," and he'd go and I wouldn't see him for a month. Things were bad, I was generally broke, and often felt that I had three heads. A tall professor gave me an old overcoat. It reached down to my ankles, and students said shit, and hurried away or gave me quarters. But it was warm and sensible, and with gloves, boots and cap only my nose showed, purple and runny and the backs of my gloves were like snails' trails. Doctor K took me to one side and said, "Look, you're Australian. So you hate us, you're poor. You want us to feel guilty. Okay. You ridicule our so-called wealth—but hell, do you have to look so poor?" I said, "But I eat well enough". "Your clothes, dammit". "They are warm". "It's your unpleasant sense of satire". "You mean I'm like Lenny Bruce and that lot?" "Huh, if you were you'd have it made." "I know. I'm nothing like them". "**Them**—they're Jewish you mean?" "Of course not. In any case satire's now a Negro thing". He went away looking like he'd uncovered another anti-Semite.

Things worsened and I took to sleeping on an office couch in a book-lined room with cactus beside the windows. It was so hot that at first I opened the windows and the cactus started to die, and the next day botanists were called in and chemicals added. I got used to the room and when things got better I stayed on. During snowstorms I'd look through the cactus at the fiery glowing mills on the Monongahela. One morning at three I clawed from a nightmare, saw violet flares through swirling snow, and sang Jerusalem and raised a cleaner, but she put it down to howling wind. Whenever I could afford it I'd have a six pack of Iron City or Ballantyne and put the empties on the ledge and watch them blow off.

A visiting English economist gave a couple of off-campus lectures. His line seemed to be: love is mysticism, money is mysticism, violence is mysticism. He was always on about Fortune and Life. I said to someone that I didn't quite see what he was on about. Me neither, he said, but boy, has he got charisma.

*

The first warm spring day and dorms are on winter heat. A score or so of students object and after dusk their demonstration turns into that rite of spring, the panty raid. With considerable oafishness they chant to the women's halls, "We want silk (pink, black, blue, etc.)". Campus police turn a blind eye. The celebrants block 5th Avenue and City police chase them back. More join in, and at eleven they return to 5th. This time the cops are waiting, with sticks, boots, fists, dogs and Mace. The students are astounded, they're all middle class boys, from suburbs, with little interest in politics, and they're being treated like militants. Goddam students. The cops have had their practice run, they're getting ready for summer.

With a companion I joined a group of lunching revolutionaries. They were polite and cautious. Talk was about power and resistance and how those who wanted to do their thing would have to do it independently of the blacks. Combat will be difficult because of Mace, tear gas, Stoner rifles, armored cars, riot guns. Now and then I wonder if this is Pgh 1968. X plans to block expressway traffic, theatre al fresco, the road as Happening—tunnels as Happenings. Lux adds style to cocktails. My companion suggests that peaceful protest has not been unsuccessful. The response to this is despair, sarcasm and scorn. Two incantations to Che. In a few years' time there'll be theses on The Six-Pack in Guerrilla Warfare, The Place of the Armored Car in Contemporary Folk-Lore, Pgh's Mace the Local Product for Local Needs?

(Last year when Detroit and Newark rose Pgh remained calm, a shameful thing to local revolutionaries. This April they made up for it when they celebrated the murder of MLK.)

*

I was in a town in Tennessee. "Where you from, fella?" said the cop. "You got identity?" said his buddy. "I'm from Pgh," I said, watching them, the pistol of one, the shotgun of the other. "You don't sound Pgh, boy." "Pgh, boy?" (they were hunting a bandit, two down—one dead—just one to go). "The university." "College, huh?" "He sure don't sound like Pgh, uh-uh." I decided that I'd better show them who I was but didn't dare go for my wallet. Beyond the glass wall three buddies swayed under weaponry. I could have been Goddam Veetcong, and any moment they'd call for a napalm strike. After a while they went away, probably to shoot someone trying to escape.

*

I walked along a corridor in the New Orleans bus station. A big man stepped in front of me. "Just got in?" he asked, not at all unpleasantly but flashing a badge. "Yes." "Where you from?" "Where **you** from?" "FBI, boy." "Pgh." "You're not Pgh, boy, you don't walk American." (And as soon as you settle into NO you come across Minutemen, Cuban exiles, Garrison, people who knew Oswald, Kingfish and Tennessee Williams.)

*

I went to America to study theatre at a university. But the theatre that interested me was taking place in the streets.

RUDEL ('PAT') O'DOWD, AUTHOR OF THIS RETROSPECT, WAS BERNARD O'DOWD'S SECOND SON

O'DOWD PATERFAMILIAS

A REVIEW of Bernard O'Dowd's background, from a pre-natal state to the time of his retirement from the Australian literary scene, has been recorded by Victor Kennedy and Nettie Palmer, and phases of it by other capable biographers, and so is well known to most denizens of the literary jungle.

His role as Paterfamilias is not so well-known, nor has that of Evangeline Mina O'Dowd, his wife, received a measure of printer's ink at all commensurate with her conjugal, maternal, social, and cultural activities.

Notwithstanding derogatory rumors that oozed through some literary coteries after world war one, Evangeline O'Dowd was neither unintelligent, nor uncultured. Her role, though thoroughly eclipsed by that of her poetic spouse, was complementary to his, and was indispensable for her husband's success in the field of literature—and in the labyrinth of law, too.

Her co-operation with her spouse in his poetising days was aptly epitomised in an edition of the Sydney Bulletin early in this century, in a drawing and screed entitled:

"The poet's wife was breaking coal."

The poet was not identifiable, but the caption fitted Bernard's wife like an underwater suit. Her concern for his welfare was limitless, and her care and ministration during his serious illness early in their marriage was the main factor in preserving the life of one who later became a notable Australian.

Evangeline Mina O'Dowd's activities were wide and varied. Apart from her domestic cares and accomplishments, her interests ranged through art and literature, drama, music, politics, and social questions. For several years she held office, under Vida Goldstein's presidency, in the "Women's Political and Social Crusade", at a time when a large majority of women were content with the precept that 'a woman's place is in the home'. As to that, Eve heartily agreed, so long as the home did not submerge women's aspirations and initiative beneath a slough of irksome drudgery.

Eve's domestic duties always took precedence, and she performed them conscientiously, and efficiently—intelligently arranging them so that leisure for intellectual and social pursuits was made available. She founded, and held together, the Essendon Literary Society for several years, until its obliteration during World War One. She also contributed, on diverse social questions, to the Socialist, from its genesis in 1906 until it ceased publication in 1922, and wrote, intermittently, for the Fremantle Herald and other journals.

When Bernard was engaged in writing, her primary concern was to insulate him from all interruptions and irritations.

*

In any discourse on the family of Bernard O'Dowd, the names he gave his sons excite interest and curiosity, and sometimes bewilderment. So something in the way of a list of dramatis personae may be necessary to acquaint innocent bystanders with the people concerned.

Bernard Patrick O'Dowd, M.A., Ll.B., poet, barrister-at-law, parliamentary draftsman. Hereinafter called Bernard, "Barney", "Mate".

Evangeline Mina O'Dowd, nee Fryer—"Eve".

Montaigne Eric Whitman, eldest son of Bernard and Eve, born at Carlton, 1890—"Monty".

Rudel Arion, second son, born at Glenroy, 1894—"Ru", "Bray", later (1908) "Pat", by which name he has been called outside the family perimeter ever since.

Auster Bernard, third son, born at Glenroy, 1895—"Ocker", "Abe".

Amergin Oisin, fourth son, born at Moonee Ponds, 1900—"Merg".

Vondel Kevin, fifth son, born at Moonee Ponds, 1904—"Von", later (1930) "Neil".

Where did Bernard dig out these names?

Montaigne (1533-92)—a famed French essayist; Eric, a Norse hero; Whitman—Bernard's glorified Walt. Rudel—an early French troubadour; went in quest of Truth, and found her going walkabout in a paddock of sunflowers (mentioned in Robert Browning's "Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli"); Arion—a legendary Greek poet and singer: sailors tossed him into the drink, but he grabbed a passing porpoise and rode it ashore. Auster—the south wind; Bernard—a concession to Eve. Amergin—the herald of Milesius, who invaded Ireland in the murky era preceding recorded history. The inhabitants told Milesius it wasn't a fair go. Milesius retired to his ships, and sent Amergin ashore, to tell the inhabitants they were about to be invaded. They were. Oisin—rode out over the

Atlantic to Hy Brasil or Tirnanoge, or some such holiday resort of Irish legend, stayed a few days that turned out to be a few hundred years, rode back to Ireland with instructions to refrain from touching Irish soil, had an accident, hit the ground, and forthwith acquired advanced senility. Saint Patrick happened to be handy, baptised him, and he died, a good Christian, before the holy-water had dried. Vondel—a Dutch poet: Joost Van Den Vondel (1587-1679), let his son run his hosiery business, while he wrote and went broke; his son shot through to the Indies; Dad paid equivalent of one hundred cents in the dollar from savings, and by time-payment, when he landed a job in the public service.

*

RESEARCH into the recollections of Bernard's second son, and perusal of relevant documents, are responsible for the revelations herein recorded.

Earliest memories of Glenroy would be from 1896, by a somewhat vague recognition of people in and about the premises—Bernard, Eve, Monty, and a baby brother, grandparents, and an occasional aunt. Old mates who called Bernard "Barney", and Bernard called them "mate".

And swaggies — hundreds of them, tramping north in quest of non-existent jobs, and south into the workless wilderness of the metropolis. They got a bite of tucker at Glenroy—even if only a secondhand crust or a raw turnip could be spared. But all of them Bernard called "mate", and, to most of them, he was.

About this time Bernard rolled a little swag and found a jam-tin billy-can for Rudel, who wanted to be a swaggie when he grew up. He was.

Conditions at Glenroy, notwithstanding amputation of a considerable slice of Bernard's salary by retrenchment, seemed tranquil to the children, and Bernard found time to take them for short walks to gather mushrooms, or even catch a few yabbies, discoursing en route of myths and legends. And about fairies who became real people in his narrations.

Fairies! Not your gauzy-winged picture-book species, but work-a-day little people, like those his mother had seen in brakes of briar by the waters of Lough Neagh. He peopled every water-hole with merrows, and leprechauns were watching from every thistle-clump.

Zeus and Neptune, Thor and Wodin, with others of their kith, were not dead gods when Bernard told of them; and that bearded swaggie toiling up the hill may well have been an Ajax, looking for sheep to slaughter; perhaps for spuds to bandicoot.

Sometimes those little walks were rendered irksome by Bernard's apparent forgetfulness of the mundane world around him. He was apt to halt, gaze horizonward, and mutter unintelligible jargon, to the accompaniment of heeltaps and fist-swayings, then proceed in silence, but only to repeat the performance a little further on.

Toward the end of the Glenroy era some friction was indicated by an occasional sharp word from Jane Fryer, who was the dominant figure in the Fryer-O'Dowd menage. Jane Fryer—the mother of Eve, of nine other children, and the wife of John Fryer—was five-feet-one-millimetre of inexhaustible energy, physical and mental, and thought little of walking four miles to Moonee Ponds if occasion demanded.

She was among the early 'infidels', wedded in a Bristol Registry Office: a champion of human rights, particularly those of the female section of humanity. She refused to wear a wedding-ring, on the grounds that it symbolised servitude to her spouse.

None of her married daughters wore what she described as "the golden gyve of chattelhood" beyond the doorway of the registry offices in which they were wed.

Jane Fryer had definite leanings toward the occult, and all religions, if genuinely believed in, were approved of by her. She was generous where generosity was merited, but an uncompromising disciplinarian, and she would cede no point contrary to her own opinion. Her austerity, however, was leavened by humanity and by ready absolution.

John Fryer is remembered as a gentle fellow of Quaker inclinations, patriarchal white whiskers, and a permanent twinkle in his dark eyes: the son of an active Bristol Chartist, and a protagonist of peace. He was a competent joiner, when that craft was dependent on the deft use of manual tools. A benign chap, with tranquility, tolerance, a profound understanding of human behavior and a quiet courage in his make-up.

His ironical beliefs did not prevent him from journeying from Geelong to Ballarat to espouse the diggers' cause. En route, he was obliged to halt the bullockade in order to deliver his first-born by the do-it-yourself technique, with Jane accouched under a bullock-dray at Buninyong. Thus he missed Eureka, in his words, a "defeat that won a victory".

John pitched a tent on Ballarat, pegged a claim, and set about disinterring cubic yards of wash-dirt, not lavishly adorned with gold. He soon turned his energy and skill to the building of houses, in order to support his increasing family.

There Eve was born, some little time before Bernard squawked his first critique of this world a few miles to the north-west, at Beaufort.

John Fryer left Ballarat in the early eighties, and Bernard in 1886, to take up permanent resi-

dence in Melbourne. Soon after his arrival, Bernard first became associated with the Fryer family, and the group of militants attracted together by the cultural and rebellious atmosphere of the day. Bernard found these Carlton people congenial and stimulating company, and had acquired leadership of the group by 1889, when he and Eve were married. He retained leadership until the land-boom burst in '94, dispersing friends, associates, assets, hopes, and aspirations 'hell, west and crooked' through the land.

In 1898 Bernard, Eve and the children left Glenroy and rented a home in Pascoe Vale Road, Moonee Ponds. By that time Bernard had become "Mate" to his children, and was called so for the rest of his life and beyond. Monty picked up the title from Barney's mates at Glenroy, and Bernard encouraged its use thereafter.

Events of great magnitude occurred while the family was at Pascoe Vale Road—the boys' first introduction to the motor-car taking first precedence. It shuddered miraculously along the road at about nine or ten miles an hour. In Mate's words: "Approaching, it was like the devil's juggernaut; passing, like the screeching of tortured souls, and it left the stench of hell behind it".

Bernard explained the phenomenon less than lucidly, so Monty translated thus for the younger children: "Gas makes things like treacle tins bob up and down, and they make a rod turn round, the rod turns cog-wheels, and they make the big wheels turn round, and away she goes."

From a distance of about three-score-years-and-ten, Monty seemed more familiar with the works than was Mate.

*

ANOTHER magnitudinous event was the visitation of Ben Tillett. To the boys Ben was just another fellow; but observation of Bernard's enthusiasm, which seemed to border on reverence, led to the conclusion that Ben must be a chap of considerable importance. They found him an amiable fellow, who wore a sheep-cocky's wide-brimmed hat half-a-century before such headgear became sheep cockies' regalia.

Ben arrived on a bicycle which was destined to play an important part in Bernard's recreation for many years. When Ben returned to England he gave Bernard that bike, and it became a sanctified icon, second only to the cabinet that tabernacled the Walt Whitman relics.

The rape of the apricot-tree which bore an abundance of ripened fruits at a corner of the garden is worthy of record. Bernard decided, probably on advice from Eve, that it was time to pick them, and on Saturday he mobilised an array of containers in preparation for Sunday's harvesting. Sunday dawned, and Bernard prepared for action.

Lo! The apricots had vanished overnight, along with most of the miscellaneous receptacles.

Human tolerance then seemed to drain from Bernard's character. He raved, he pranced, he declaimed. Vituperation poured from his lips while his offspring stood open-mouthed and awe-struck before a Mate they had never seen before.

Eve wept. She had been hoarding sugar and a variety of suitable jars to contain the jam the ripening fruit had prophesised—from housekeeping funds that allowed little for extras.

Bernard now appeared to be engrossed in political affairs, in opposition to Federation and in the demands of the Tocsin, leaving little time for rambles like those of the Glenroy era. But he managed to find time for occasional expeditions along the closer reaches of the Moonee Ponds Creek, which he peopled with sundry legendary characters. His bed-time stories, when time was available, usually took the form of chanting Irish rebel-songs, passages from the classics, and he had a preference for La Carmagnole. Bernard couldn't sing a note, but his chantings were excellent as lullabies, though it's doubtful whether the younger boys knew what they were all about.

Jack Phillips of the Tocsin was a frequent visitor who had weighty questions to discuss with Barney, but Jack's stature increased a thousand-fold when the boys learnt that he drove a steam-roller for one of the suburban councils. To the boys' bewilderment Mate didn't seem interested in steam-rollers, but was tolerant toward the hero-worship extended to Jack.

By instituting drastic economies, and at the same time adequately feeding and clothing her family, Eve managed to amass a sum sufficient to acquire a family home through the Credit Foncier, and the family transferred to Robinson Street, Moonee Ponds, hereinafter to be known as "Alcheringa".

Originally the house was of four rooms and a kitchen, but within a few years Eve transformed it into a home of seven rooms, plus kitchen, laundry, and sleep-out, providing one large room for Bernard's library. Her organising ability was responsible for the change, and she needed a goodly measure of that quality in order to cope with the sartorial and alimentary demands of a finicky spouse and a growing family.

While the boys were infants, and later when they were of school age and well into their teens, Eve made all their clothing, and all Bernard's undergarments, even to the knitting of all hosiery. She made all her own clothes as well. With mending, when necessary, that was a feat of ingenuity, for Bernard was apt to bung on a turn if evidence of sewing was apparent when he returned from his work.

Monty had started at school in 1896: hence his ability to translate Mate's adult language for reception by infant minds. It was then time for Rudel, and a little later, for Auster, to go to school.

Between the writing of prose and verse, lecturing to and taking an active part in discussion at educational, cultural, and radical groups, Mate was a cornucopia of encouragement and knowledge to the boys. Eve, in a more practical capacity, gave valuable aid in the more earthy 'tables' and 'spelling'.

The two younger boys were under the tutelage of the Sisters of Charity, who made religious instruction an essential part of their teaching. On one occasion Mate asked Rudel if he had learnt anything at school, and received information that the boy had learnt a bit of a prayer.

"Oh!" said Mate "which bit?"

Rudel replied: "Suffered under punch his eyelid".

Mate forthwith recited the Apostles' Creed, underlining "Pontius Pilate", with a brace of repetitions, in a voice fortissimo, then launched himself into a precis on the Roman conquests and exhorted his son to pay more attention to his teachers.

*

After about a year with the nuns Rudel and Auster were transferred to the Essendon State School. The Boer War was in progress, and Mate's preference for the Boers, and the Mate-inspired pro-Boer attitude of his children, brought grief and pride, black-eyes, and bloody-noses to Alcheringa. If the boys didn't learn anything else they became slightly proficient at pugilistic practices—

the hard way. Mate regarded such proceedings as barbaric, but with lambent glints of approval recurrent in his eyes. Not a blackened eye nor a bloody nose did Mate bring home, though.

During the jubilation at the relief of Mafeking. Bernard kept his family behind locked doors. "For," he said, "if I had let the boys out, and some larrikin yelled—'there's the pro-Boer kids', the savage mob might have kicked them to death."

As the boys grew older Mate seemed to find more time for rambles about the countryside adjacent to the nearbush township of Essendon: Keilor, Glenroy, Tullamarine, and Maribyrnong River (Saltwater River then), during which Mate indicated and discussed the flora, fauna, and geology of the terrain. The beaches, and closer hill country were included in expeditions, along with the zoo, museum, art galleries, the Yarra Bank and Studley Park; but the latter group meant railfares that were not always available, so such trips were intermittent.

Towards the end of 1899 Bernard took the boys on their first trip to his mother's home at Beaufort, where a new world was laid before them. Mate was on familiar ground, and forgot his legendary personnel to tell of the realities of his boyhood while wandering about the abutting bushlands: of his carriage of water to the Aboriginal tribe on Camp Hill, for which he was dubbed "Yarrum-Yarrum" by the tribal chief . . . of the flats, then still cratered with crumbling alluvial shafts, and hillocked with the mullock-mounds of the later 'fifties. Mate, with a sun-burnt nose, seemed to know the mining language like he knew his legal jargon and the capers of his ancient gods.

But back to Alcheringa, and to school, until another summer brought another Beaufort holiday: a time of great events, the death of one century, and the birth of a new one: the proclamation of the Commonwealth of Australia. Bushfires rampant through the hills—the pealing of many bells, to welcome the New Year, the New Century and the New Australia—Aye, and to call the populace to fight advancing flame. Mate explained the meaning of the tumult with sundry "damns", when he came to the "New Australia" phase: "Emasculation of the sovereign States" was one of his pet phrases when Federation was mentioned.

Back again in Alcheringa, the boys found a brand-new brother, Amergin, writhing in his crib.

Beaufort was the usual Christmas holiday venue for several years, but during the later holidays Rudel and Auster were sent up there together, while Mate, Eve and Monty cycled hither and yon, the whole vacation through, with Merg left in the care of Jane Fryer.

Bernard's reaction to the epidemic of bubonic plague early in the century, though circumspect and defensible, was deemed harsh by his offspring. He placed a veto on association with any animal liable to harbor fleas. But many other kids were waxing wealthy on the bounty paid for rodent scalps. None of Bernard's boys were afflicted by the plague—but neither were the juvenile tycoons who caught rats on the local rubbish-tips.

During Tommy Bent's railway-strike Bernard pushed Ben Tillett's beautified bike into the city every day, rather than ride in a scab-manned train, though he had a season's ticket in his pocket; but he censured his children's practice of "booing", along with droves of other kids, the black-leg crews of passing trains.

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Soon after the publication of "Dawnward" (1903), strange proceedings were afoot at Alcheringa. The family was shepherded to church by Bernard and Eve, the boys were baptised, and all except Auster were given an extra name.

Auster already had a saint's name, with Bernard. Monty acquired Raphael, Rudel—Aloysius, and Amergin—Brendan. The older boys were sent to the Christian Brothers, and for some years Catholicism ruled Alcheringa.

After Bernard's enthusiasm waned he said nothing to turn the boys from the Catholic faith, and Eve, by precept and example, fostered their adherence to it, for as long as she retained control of them.

Some time after the children's christening, Mate was working on "The Silent Land" tramping the library-floor, chanting tentative stanzas punctuated with sundry "Damnits" and "That-won't-dos", until the waking sparrows indicated it was time to go to bed.

Although Eve's first concern in her conglomerate interests and cares was to insulate Bernard against interruption while he was writing, she was unable to silence the awakening birds, or the clip-clop and rumble of early milk deliveries: an inability that Bernard deemed inconsiderate. But Eve atoned for that alleged shortcoming by hawking "The Silent Land" manuscript to divers publishers, until T. C. Lothian took a chance on it.

At about this time Bernard's silk bell-topper and frock-coat vanished from his wardrobe, and thereafter, even at formal functions, he was garbed in Donegal tweed: a fabric he favored for the rest of his life.

Alcheringa seemed to be a Mecca for visitors of many varieties, comprising the whole gamut of the accepted social scale: a knighted State governor, down-and-outs, poets, artists, up-and-coming radicals, drovers, men of religion, and men without.

Among the more notable, from Rudel's point-of-view, were Mary Gilmore, Webb Gilbert ("Six-by-Eight" of the Bulletin), Donald MacDonald (artist and art critic), and Tom Brown. Tom was Bernard's cousin, who stayed a while on his way to the north, after having overlanded some store cattle from the Gulf to Wodonga, or to Adelaide.

Mate's heroes of history and legend shrunk to cockroach stature whenever Tom appeared at Alcheringa. Happily they have remained so shrunken ever since.

Bernard provided the children with literature suitable to their ages, from infancy to adolescence —beginning with "Books for the Bairns", abridged, paperbound editions of well known children's books, at one penny per copy, issued contemporaneously with "The Penny Poets", which were also made available to the children, along with most other books in Mate's extensive library.

British publications, like Funny Cuts and Komic Capers, were disallowed, but were surreptitiously scanned in other kids' backyards. However he permitted the boys to peruse the comic section of a New York Sunday paper which emulated the inanities of the British comic rags.

After the publication of "The Silent Land" Bernard's status as a poet was well established, and attracted a strange assortment of people to Alcheringa, some of whom listened in awed silence to what they deemed oracular discourses. On one occasion of this nature several lady adherents of some strange "ism" stood apparently spellbound on the front verandah, while Bernard delivered bardic orations. Rudel romped round the garden, probably showing off, tripped and turned a sugar-doodle into a rosebush. To amplify his impression on the ladies, Mate said, "Look what you have done to my poor rosebush." Rudel replied "Look what your damn rosebush has done to my poor bum."

"Bum" was deemed an obscene word among nice people, away back then. The ladies went all coy. Potential retribution bristled through Mate's ginger moustache. Rudel beat a strategic retreat over the back fence and away; returning later with the hope that Bernard had forgotten the incident. He hadn't . . .

(The older boys were growing too big for Eve to chastise effectively, and they graduated from flagellation with the back of a hair-brush to what Mate termed "flailing", with whatever weapon was nearest to his hand. But neither Eve's hair-brush nor the assorted implements of Mate's random selection were wielded with undue alacrity. Threats were usually more frequent than flailings.)

*

WITH advancing age, the boys acquired an interest in sport, which Mate tolerated but did not encourage. His disapproval of sport, particularly spectator sport, was linked with the abuses he claimed were prevalent in the later Olympic games of the ancients, and with the barbarities of the Roman gladiatorial conflicts. He showed an ephemeral interest in cycle-racing, and spoke enthusiastically of exponents then performing; but then he was "bicycle-happy" during this period.

Bernard never gambled, even to the purchase of a threepenny raffle-ticket. Dice games, including innocuous Ludo, were forbidden. And card games, along with all other games of chance, were contraband. Nevertheless, Mate took his family to Flemington to view such events as Melbourne Cups and Grand National Steeplechases, the earliest, recorded by Rudel's memory, being Clean Sweep's Cup in 1900.

After the mob murdered an alleged welsher, on the course, a number of years later, race-courses became forbidden territory. But in 1913 Rudel, as a student of veterinary science, was granted a dispensation to attend meetings.

"Football?—a reproduction of the savagery of primal man. Barrackers? The racing victims of mob hysteria." But some of Bernard's sons played football. When their team had a win Mate seemed pleased, and in defeats he condoled, with an appendage that the game is more important than the victory. Boxing he classed as a rank barbarity, though he spared an enthusiastic word or two for Sullivan, Corbett and Fitzsimmons, heavy weight champions of seventy years ago.

His opinion of blood-sports was anything but lofty, as indicated in his sonnet "Quail" (in "The Silent Land"). This poem was drafted while sitting on a lichened gibber on quail-opening day, out Braybrook way.

Bernard's knowledge of sport was theoretical and superficial, but covered a wide field, from tennis and caber-tossing to cockfighting and croquet, with almost every other sport jammed in somewhere. Many he condemned, a few he tolerated, but he participated in none, though he kept a fair standard of physical fitness by his morning 'hundred' with his skipping-rope.

His main recreation, after his recovery from acute bicycle-happiness, was bush-walking. Bernard knew his bush: that is, the narrow strip of lush country that lies between the Great Dividing Range and the coast: Kendall's bush. Not the stark and uncompromising bush that Boake and Lawson knew, nor the paradise that burgeoned

there when rains caressed the drabness, for Bernard never ventured from the beaten track, nor strayed far from urban facilities. No spinifex nor salt-bush ever brushed his trouser-cuffs.

*

With her family in the making, and the boys in the earlier processes of growth, Eve found it necessary to hire domestic help. It is worthy of recording that Eve and Bernard, greatly to the bewilderment of the women employed, insisted that they take their meals with the family, and that they be addressed as Miss or Mrs., as the case may have been.

Being daughterless, Eve allotted special tasks to her sons, according to their ages and capabilities, and they became moderately proficient at replacing missing buttons, darning their hose, and, later, at preparing a meal.

As to culinary achievements, Eve, when once absent on an errand of importance, instructed Rudel and Ocker to get Mate's dinner: dead-line, 6 p.m.; grilled chops and mashed potatoes were specified. 5.30—not a pot on the stove; 5.40, potatoes cooking; 5.50—chops grilling and table set (Mate looking concerned). 6.5—everything cooked. Potatoes to be mashed; Ocker tipped in milk and butter—then shook in—not pepper, but knife-polish. It was ten past dead-line. Mate's concern increased a hundredfold, but dinner was served before he exploded.

Ocker asked: "How did you like your dinner, Mate?" Mate said, "Very nice, boys—very nice indeed." Forty years later the episode was divulged to Mate, who forthwith developed intestinal pains.

Bernard encouraged development of the boys' ideas on most subjects, but waxed pedantic when such thinking conflicted with his own, even in matters of which he had little or no knowledge. And he had a quaint little quirk of switching discussion to lines with which he was familiar.

He was among the most belligerent advocates of peace, and his condemnation of aggression he voiced in accents of vituperative splendor. Yet he robed his warrior heroes in glamorous vesture even though many of them were ruthless aggressors, including such types as Alexander, Julius Caesar and Napoleon Bonaparte.

Bernard was generally tolerant and kindly in the home, but his behavior was unpredictable, with generosity lapsing to frugality for no apparent reason. Good humor could degenerate to petulance, at times to callousness and even to puerile tantrums over trivial annoyances.

It was difficult to reconcile Bernard, the bard at the pulpit, the rostrum, or the soap-box, with the spouse who querulously yelled: "Dammit, Eve! Where are my studs?" or "Dammit, Eve! What socks will I put on?"

"Dammit Eve" became a sotto-voice exclamation among the boys if some item of apparel was not immediately visible when they were dressing.

Bernard's attitude to alcohol was anti: relentlessly so, in his younger days. No quaffing of foaming flagons in celebration of a published poem. The only alcohol permitted at Alcheringa was a small measure for use in medical emergencies. Mate's main thirst quencher was Yan Yean water from the domestic taps, with perhaps a tumbler of lolly-water when days got really hot. As an octogenarian he enjoyed an occasional glass of ale or sherry, but would never imbibe more than one in a row.

The advent of Tom Mann to Melbourne and to Alcheringa seemed to generate, or perhaps revive, Bernard's interest in the gospel according to Marx. A picture of Karl was hung beside that of Walt Whitman—an honor conferred on no other being. Even a portrait of Maud Gonne and of the woman who knew Rafferty the Poet—Mate's favorite Irish heroines—were relegated to minor settings. And Mate strewed quotations from "Das Kapital" about the premises, from the front fence to the chook-yard.

Tom Mann's organising of the Socialist Party in Melbourne, and the launching of the weekly journal the Socialist in 1906, brought new interest and activity to Alcheringa. Bernard wielded an incisive pen in contributions to the infant journal, and as "Mina" Eve provided many articles from the women's point of view. Monty became a flinger of vitriolic phrases at anything resembling the Tory establishment, and sang the Red Flag in his bath—and out of it—with a gusto indicating that bloody revolution was just round the corner.

Rudel and Auster thoroughly enjoyed jaunts to the Yarra Bank, and the subsequent 'party teas', at threepence per juvenile head, on Sundays at the Socialist Party's headquarters in Elizabeth Street: plenty of tucker, and droves of other kids to romp with.

Bernard and Eve, with Monty, all ears, on the fringes, discoursed on the problems of the workers, during the intervals between Tom Mann's fulminations and Mrs. Mann's fine soprano singing.

During the fight for free speech on the streets of Prahran at that period many Socialist Party members, including Tom Mann, were gaoled. Mate stayed on the side-lines, with much to say and many "damns" about the injustice of prosecuting one group and permitting other groups, committing similar offences, to break the law with impunity. But he had difficulty in restraining Monty.

*

By 1908 the disintegration of the O'Dowd family had begun. Bernard's idea of scholarship was built on academic foundations, and he regarded Rudel as a hopeless candidate for such learning. Rudel, possibly a throwback to the Irish peasantry from which his father sprang, had long decided on an outdoor life in the bush. Bernard agreed, probably in disgust, to send him to an agricultural college. But Eve it was who sold her beloved piano to pay the fees.

After Rudel's graduation into the craft of the cocky, Alcheringa became for several years a suburban refuge for short periods, between the bush jobs, during which he amassed sufficient wealth to pay the fees necessary to commence a course in veterinary science at Melbourne University. (This course he relinquished to go to World War One.)

Later that year Monty secured an appointment with the Commonwealth public service, and was stationed at Perth, returning to Alcheringa only on accumulated annual leaves. He graduated in science at the University of Western Australia.

Auster, within a few years, qualified as a state school teacher, and bush schools were the venue of his pedagogy for three-score years or more. He, too, became a holiday member of the Alcheringa household, leaving only the two younger sons in permanent residence.

A number of years later Merg became an M.A. and Ll.B. of the University of Melbourne, and gave Mate the satisfaction of having one son admitted to the Bar.

Vondel, after a number of occupations, including school-teaching, abandoned them all, and spent the rest of his life at the craft of surveying—even as a soldier in World War Two.

BERNARD'S attitude to his children's literary attempts varied, according to the media they used. Monty wrote in a journalistic style that met with Mate's approval. Merg and Von became addicted to the short story, and received paternal approbation. Ocker did not write in the category of literature, so that neither bays nor blue-metal were dispersed in his direction.

Rudel tried his hand at verse, but the only real encouragement he received was from P. I. O'Leary, literary editor of the Advocate, who published several early attempts.

Mate's reaction to Rudel's verse seemed somewhat antagonistic, even satirical. Von handed Mate an unsigned sonnet. Mate read it, and remarked "Quite a good sonnet, Von. Who wrote it? Do I know him?"

Von replied, "Yes, Rudel wrote it."

According to Von, Mate picked up the manuscript again, and re-read it. Bernard forthwith blasted it, foot from iambic foot, until nothing was left but a few derelict commas writhing on the hearth-stone. (That sonnet was published in two anthologies, a little later on.)

*

The first appearance of Marie Pitt, at Alcheringa, was some time prior to the publication of her book "Horses of the Hills" in 1910.

She, with her husband, William Pitt, two young daughters and a younger son, thereafter became frequent visitors.

William Pitt seemed to have been a victim of adverse fortune. He claimed to have been a gentleman farmer, to be adept with rod-and-reel, with fowling-piece and rifle and spoke authoritatively on Izaac Walton. But his pet claim to fame lay in his direct descent from the Earl of Chatham, and he would discourse about his lineage on the least provocation.

Marie regarded that as a claim of minor import, beside her own alleged descent from Mary Queen of Scots, but by what devious detours were not revealed.

When he arrived on the mainland, after having spent some years on the West Coast of Tasmania as a miner, William was an ailing man. But he was a genial and likeable chap, who had read widely apart from "The Compleat Angler", as he demonstrated at Alcheringa, and at his home.

William was unable to find congenial work in Melbourne, but earned as much by casual labor as his ill-health permitted. Marie amplified the family income by retouching photographic plates, reading an occasional manuscript for publishers, and by funds she received for her published work.

Bernard's wife saw the necessity for assistance, which she provided by making garments for the Pitt children, unostentatiously conveying them to Marie.

Marie was reputed to have been an accomplished equestrienne. She was very slim, but an attractive woman by any standards, and her preference for black frocks accentuated her slimness to a marked degree—allegedly inciting a prominent literary figure of the time to speak of her as "the bottomless Pitt".

Her approach to people seemed to suggest an exaggerated affability, described by a juvenile acquaintance as "too nice", and her feline bearing and poise inspired a teenage girl of the Socialist Young Comrades to nickname her the "Black Panther".

Marie was no slavish disciple of fashion dictators, but always appeared to be neatly and tastefully attired, incorporating a subdued flamboyance in her ensemble. Her dark hair was unblemished by the rime of years, and the corcuscant umber eyes lent her an exotic appearance, and so diverted attention from the lines time and care scored upon her countenance.

Friendly association between the Pitt and O'Dowd family persisted over the years, with no indication from Eve that Bernard took any interest, except of a helpful advisory nature, in Marie as a poet. Eve was, doubtless, aware of clandestine trysts, but in order to preserve the Mate-image in the minds of her sons she kept that knowledge to herself, giving no indication of any threat to conjugal harmony. In this attitude she followed the course she adopted in Bernard's several previous philanderings (unknown to her sons, until Bernard finally left Alcheringa, hoping, perhaps, that the affair would fizzle out).

During the first world war, after the death of William Pitt, the Bernard-Marie association appeared to have become indissolvable, and Eve continued to hold the peace. But in 1920 Bernard transferred himself and his belongings to Marie's domicile. Legal settlements were concluded, to the satisfaction of Bernard and Eve, although in later years Bernard complained that Eve acquired a disproportionate share.

The real position was that Eve handled her portion with astute acumen, but Bernard invested most of his in a retail business, of which he had no trade knowledge, and gained nothing from it but fruitless experience.

Marie Pitt's post-defection approach to those of Bernard's sons with whom she came in contact was amiable, but embellished with ingratiating undertones that suggested an attempt to win us from loyalty to Eve.

At Marienfels, the O'Dowd-Pitt home at Northcote, the Pitt daughters have claimed that verbal strife of a high frequency and accusative nature was apparent, up to the time that Marie went into hospital, never to return. Until her death, Bernard visited her on his daily walks.

*

After the initial shock of Bernard's abdication from Alcheringa, friendly relations were resumed between him and his sons. Eve countered his desertion by association with several cultural groups. She outlived her spouse by about five years. It may be worth recording that Bernard's defection was the prime cause of the disruption of conjugal harmony for at least one of his sons.

It is significant that Bernard wrote nothing of real literary importance after the publication of "Alma Venus" in 1921. Significant, also, is the statement of an authoritative literary personality that Marie Pitt's work was a reflex of O'Dowd's.

At the age of fifty-four Bernard O'Dowd seemed content to bask on the bed of bays he had won. For it is improbable that a man of his erudition and poetic ability would have been reft of ideas, imagery, and inspiration at that comparatively youthful time of life.

His argument that his work as a parliamentary draftsman satisfied his passion for putting the right words in the right places is hardly valid, when one considers that his finest poetic work was accomplished concurrently with compiling legal documents.

And, be it noted, for a score or more years after he ceased being a parliamentary draftsman his main literary exercise was reading whodunnits —often two such volumes a night.

But—Eve was not available to forestall or parry the slightest interruption or annoyance.

MORMOR

Irene Summy

MY GRANDMOTHER died in 1944, in the winter preceding the spring of victory and peace. Her death dates the birth of my own maturity, for it was then that I first became aware of life and death as a unity, and thus inseparable.

"Mormor", as we called her, was born in Germany, in a town named Immiggrath near Koln. Here, in a local gasthaus, her father met a young Danish house painter, whom he promptly employed in his services and later, less promptly and not without misgivings, accepted as his son-in-law. The young Dane with his German bride returned to settle in Denmark, where shortly after the birth of his fifth child he inexplicably committed suicide. Mormor accepted her husband's death as a god-given challenge and worked day and night for her children, whose childhood was forever shadowed by the constant threat of encroaching poverty. But of all this I knew nothing until long after Mormor's death.

When first we met, Mormor was already old. To me her speech sounded harsh and foreign, for which reason we rarely communicated except to toss each other benevolent smiles or apprehensive glances. Apprehensive on my part, because she seemed perpetually angry as if suspecting (I thought) the shady thoughts and deeds of my private life. In this I was mistaken. But, for quite some time, Mormor considered me an alien and as such unpredictable and potentially dangerous. Having spent the early part of my childhood with relatives of the man who had conceived me (in marital sanctity, I hasten to add for the benefit of those who may wonder), I had arrived in the midst of my maternal family as a full-fledged, self-willed and seemingly self-made being, of whom little was known and from whom, consequently, all sorts of things could be expected.

The separation from my family had been caused by my parents' divorce, which was largely—I think—a product of the times. The two had met at a dance, were married because of my sister, and parted again two months before I was born. Not because of any quarrel or standing disagreement but from sheer necessity. In a burst of totally groundless optimism my father, a habitual gambler, had put the money for rent and the gas bill on a horse that was expected to win, but somehow did not. Subsequently, a few days later, he and my mother were evicted from their flat and returned separately to their respective homes. For a while they dutifully met every week-end, then I was born, and shortly afterwards, strolling through the park one Sunday afternoon with me in the pram and my sister at her heels, my mother met her husband hand in hand with an unknown woman. He courteously tipped his hat and walked on. So did my mother.

"But why? What did I do wrong?" she asked Mormor, who flung her apron over her head and wept for them both.

And that was the end of my parents' marriage. They divided what little they had, including the children, between them, and leaving my sister with Mormor, my mother went off in one direction, while my father, leaving me with his brother and wife, a childless couple in their forties, went off in another and seemed to disappear.

Where my mother went and what she did for the next ten years, no one has ever told me. At a certain time she lived in a boardinghouse, to which arrived (as if arranged by fate) a quiet, handsome man, still single in his thirties, who had recently returned from the East and whose tan emphasised the blueness of his eyes, further enhanced by the blueness of his shirt. In due time, for reasons known only to him, he married my mother, who immediately after the wedding collected her children, no doubt anticipating a joyful reunion between the two of us.

I arrived for this reunion, still dazed from the first encounter with my new, gay and youthful mother; she led me to a room, where a girl, taller than I, bigger and infinitely prettier, greeted me with a hostile glare.

ENCOUNTER AT THE GRAIN STORE

And as I came to enter the grain-store,
A man appeared with a three-bushel bag
That suddenly burst, spilling to the floor.

"It seems," I said, "that the hessian's too old,
That someone's used your bag too much before".
He grunted, wasn't in the least consoled

By words that merely aped what facts had done.
"I'm Lucifer," he said, "I'm bearing gold
To angels I've locked in a poultry run,

I'd hoped that this bag-full would suffice
To curry their favor toward someone
Who long ago fell out of paradise—

I'm laboring to get in sweet with God".
His words were singed with heat, yet crisp as ice.
But, being normal, I could only nod

And motion downward to the grain-strewn floor.
"We need," I said, ignoring thoughts of God,
"A new bag." "Yes," he sighed, "we can't ignore

The facts, for it's facts, facts that make us bleed.
I'm Lucifer. Though, from the facts, I'm more
Akin to old Onan who spilled his seed."

NOEL MACAINSH

"That's your sister," said my mother hopefully to both of us.

My sister stepped forward, extended her hand, withdrew it, and inexplicably slapped me in the face. Without a moment's hesitation I grabbed hold of her hair and pulled out as much as I could. Seconds later we were rolling on the floor, while my mother stood by, shouting encouragement (I thought) to my sister, though in fact, as she later told me, she was saying: "Stop that!" as firmly as she could and calling for Mormor, whose voice miraculously pulled us apart. To my sister it was the voice of authority, the only one that she respected. But to me who had never heard it before, nor seen its owner, it brought to mind the witch in "Snow White". I screamed in wild, senseless terror.

Mormor picked me up. "Was hat man dir, du armes Kind, getan," she said, quoting Goethe, as my sister later informed me. But that, at the time, of course, I did not know. To me it sounded like some magic witch chant and did little to abate my fears. However, in my dealings with adults I had learned from an early age to conquer terror and despair, which were self-defeating, leading as they did to unconditional surrender and further curtailment of freedom and independence. With considerable effort I managed to control myself and decided that, at the first given opportunity, I would escape from this house, where obviously no one wanted me, and everyone seemed bent on doing me in, one way or the other.

To celebrate the reunion and to introduce her second husband, my mother had invited her entire family for a party. And so it came about that my second father (whom I shall henceforth refer to as my father) and I made our appearance at the same time in my mother's family.

This man, the oldest son of a wealthy, almost aristocratic family, who till the end of his days carried a cane, hat and gloves, and was at all times correct, courteous and dignified, must surely have been as bewildered by his new relatives as I was. No doubt he arrived for this first meeting full of misgivings and apprehensions and saw perhaps in me, as I in him, an only ally. By which I do not mean to imply that my mother's family was in any sense terrifying or abnormal—eccentric perhaps, rowdy and unruly with a peculiar sense of humor—but certainly no worse than any other family. Still they had shared a lifetime together, of which my father and I had had no part, and this—their unity—became a bond between the two of us.

I had been instructed—by whom I no longer recall—to express my gratitude to this, as yet unknown, new father. Having no idea what he looked like, I dutifully walked up to every new arriving man, put out my hand, curtsied and said (without much conviction): "Thank you so much for wanting me." Each time it gave birth to frightful explosions of laughter and a multitude of jokes. By the time he finally did arrive, I had reached the peak of despair and took a tear-dimmed view of everything and everyone around me. From the look on his face, the shy, embarrassed almost painful smile that reflected exactly

what I felt, I knew at once he had to be the one and rushed towards him, long before the others noticed him.

The phrase, so carefully rehearsed, remained unspoken on my lips. I might have shouted it at him with a mixture of joy and despair, but intuition told me that this man would not appreciate a demonstrative display of emotions. So all I did was to take his hand and cling to it firmly. No-one and nothing could have persuaded me to let go of it. My father did not mind; in fact, I had the feeling at times during this dreadful afternoon that he was clinging as ardently to me as I to him.

*

Mormor regarded him as a god-given gift, an answer to her prayers. She could not ever bring herself to call him "you" but addressed him always in third person. "Would Hr. Brix like one egg or two?" "Had Hr. Brix finished his dinner?" And towards the end of her life, when she lived with us permanently, she could not be moved to share his table but hovered on her feet, passing him the salt, and pepper, anticipating his needs long before they were voiced or even probably thought of.

Though basking in her attention, my father always felt slightly embarrassed in her presence. I could see, while he was eating, how he strained to think of something suitable to say, and having thought of something brought it forth in great pain. Whatever he said, Mormor would blush like a young girl and giggle, only at her age it sounded like a cackle, and when she had finished blushing and giggling she would look at him expectantly and father would try to think of something else to say. However painful these conversations were, we all derived a great deal of pleasure from them. All three of us, I mean. For my father, due to his work, took his meals at odd hours, when my mother was busy doing her work, and my sister usually was studying or dating. So the two of us ate together with Mormor standing by, watching, assisting and almost blessing every bite we took.

On the day she died, I had been Christmas shopping and returned full of excitement with my purchases, among them a palette knife for Mormor, who always turned the pancakes in the air. My mother met me at the door, and looking like a little girl, alternately smiling (so not to frighten me) and weeping (when she could not help herself) she told me of Mormor's death. Then holding my hand or rather clinging to it, she took me to Mormor's room, where Mormor—it seemed to me at first—was sleeping peacefully in her bed. But, of course, as I realised on touching her hand, it was not Mormor at all, but her empty house where she had lived so many years, and which now had closed its doors and windows. But somehow I knew that Mormor herself was still alive and would for the rest of my life be talking to me in that language I never learned to understand, because it was neither German nor Danish, but a peculiar creation of her own. That she would forever be tossing me benevolent smiles and apprehensive glances and watching my father eat—perhaps from far away through a high-powered telescope on one of the stars, it did not really matter where. To see her house, all cold and empty, was sad, as when we left the summer-house at the end of summer; but still all through the winter we roamed through the empty rooms, remembering and laughing with joy at what we had shared during the long, endless days of blue skies and sunshine.

I did not say any of this to my mother, because I was never very good with words. I merely stood there and watched her weep, feeling very old and very young and totally inadequate.

At her funeral, once more, my father and I were united by unspoken thoughts and the feeling of being alien intruders in a world where we did not belong. We left the cemetery before the others and walking together across the snow-dusted grass, looked (at least I did) at the hoar-frosted branches of naked trees which spread across the sky and made it look like a broken mirror.

"When you die," I told my father without speaking, "I may not weep. But still I love you, though I might never tell you this."

As if he had heard, my father turned his face and smiled his shy, embarrassed painful smile.

"It's going to snow again," he said.

"Yes," I replied and knew for one brief passing moment the full significance of life and death.

OLD SUMMERS

Margaret Trist

THE HOTTEST, driest summer since 1878: or was it '58? I know it ended in eight because this was the summer of 1938, and the time which had elapsed was in some good round number. As I remember it every summer at Moolooloobooliin was the hottest and driest for seventy or eighty years. All those old summers have piled up in my head, an accumulation of summers, folded and interfolded like the roly-polys that blew over the plain, to be caught at last by the fences, where, piling one upon the other, they remained, apparently enduring for ever, their bright yellow fading to brown.

But this was a particular summer, the one in which the preceding summers of my life became enfolded, the one which remained bright yellow amongst the withered browns of summers that had no importance beyond the fact that Christmas came in the middle of them—those summers in which I had merely grown bigger and been childishly content with things as they were.

This was the summer of my escape. Escape; I was going to escape:

I am going, I told myself over and over as the slow weeks moved towards December.

I shall never see this place again, I murmured as I lingered in a spot which had once appealed and to which I had gone when I wanted a refuge:

I shall never see you again, my mind would say, as I stood face to face with a relation or friend whose only guilty action towards me was being fond of me, Never. Because I am going. No pangs of remorse, but secret joy: to part forever, to go forever, forever and ever and ever.

"What's the matter with that girl of yours, Mildred?" asked Miss Lottie.

"Which one? I have five girls you know, Aunt."

Mother said this loudly and with an attempt at playfulness; Miss Lottie forgot things, but one had to be careful not to remind her that she did. She also had an ear-trumpet, but one must not shout down it; that might lead her to suspect that one thought she was deaf.

I was lolling in a canvas chair on the side verandah, and though the french windows which gave onto the verandah from the drawing room where mother and Miss Lottie sat were closed—Miss Lottie kept the heat out of the house in summer—their voices came clearly through the weatherboard.

We had driven over to Ferny Banks for an afternoon call. During the past weeks I had submitted myself to accompanying Mother when she underwent this form of torture, devised by herself for herself in the belief that it was her duty. She liked to have one of us with her. Both Patsy and Kate had gone through a stage when they had liked paying calls, dressing carefully for the occasion, sitting quite still while the visit lasted, speaking politely when spoken to, handing plates of bread and butter and teacups very nicely. "I was so proud of her," Mother would say of whichever one it was when she came home. But now Patsy was nineteen and Kate eighteen, and had come to the conclusion that this way of frittering away an afternoon was an abomination. For once I agreed with my elder sisters, but unlike them hadn't the advantage of having enjoyed it previously. Whether or not Mother would be able to fret Amelia or Susannah into paying calls after I had left the scene had nothing to do with me. It seemed unlikely. At thirteen and eleven they hadn't grown out of the idea of preferring to be boys and had always taken such an eager interest in the place, in sheep and horses, fences and windmills, that Daddy encouraged them by saying that they were as good as boys in the paddocks. It didn't look at all hopeful that they would become callers. But as it was Mother herself who was always saying the old days were passing, if she persisted bringing the past into the present she would have to do it by herself.

*

On this November day she was unaware that my submission was in the nature of a valediction and could be endured more stoically as a 'for the last time'. Unfortunately I had already had five

last times at Miss Lottie's, and it would have been more only that I confined 'last times' to visits. It was I who rode over on my bike to deliver the Ferny Banks mail, because it was put into our mailbox tied onto our mail bag. Miss Lottie didn't like the idea of private mail bags. She felt Old Bob, the mailman, would be insulted and think that she thought he studied the handwriting and postmarks on her correspondence. So she preferred the mail left wedged into the old box-tree stump on the Reserve near where the track turns off from the main road. However, the Reserve was no longer a Reserve, the box stump had been grubbed out, and Old Bob riding through with the mail was a memory. As the mail had to be handed to Miss Lottie personally, I naturally saw her when I brought it over, but didn't count it in with the farewells, which I had started making too early, forgetting that as Ferny Banks homestead was only three miles from our own, and Miss Lottie the oldest surviving member of the family, it was to there that Mother went most. For instance, my other great-aunt, Miss Fanny, I had only looked upon for the 'last time' twice so far, Mother's duty calls to Miss Fanny taking place every six weeks.

*

Miss Lottie and Miss Fanny had both been married. But they had had some years of spinsterhood first, and then, having married elderly widowers, the marriages had been brief. Besides, they had married their deceased sisters' husbands, not only of one elder sister, but of two. The six daughters of Grandmother and Grandfather Eldrington, our great great-grandparents, had married only two men, a Mr. Barkley and a Mr. Duncan, as one sister died the next sister took over and so on. Owing to the numerous children of the first two sets of wives, by the time of my childhood a complicated family pattern had evolved, which only Mother appeared able to follow. They were Daddy's relations but he relied on her to place the younger members for him. Some people in the district didn't recognise the marriages of Miss Lottie and Miss Fanny, so, as children, we had the delightful idea that our elderly aunts had been immoral in some biblical sense at some time, and thus we took more interest in them than in the other old aunts we had.

I had made the briefest appearance possible in the darkened drawing-room, which smelt of musty genoa-velvet, varnish and mothballs, and where mosquitoes zinged in the corners of the room, then made my escape to the verandah, where I was staring at the lagoon, once reputed to have had waterlilies and wildfowl upon it—why was it that everything vanished after I was born?—but was now a muddy pool; imprints of sheep pads made an intricate pattern at the edges. The milky blue seas of the mirages stretching into distance were more impressive, as they floated ethereally above the land and under the sky, but one cannot very well farewell a mirage.

Mother spent some time shouting our names at Miss Lottie, and telling her how we looked, a process in which we all became unrecognisable. I was pleased to hear my hair was auburn instead of the light tan boot polish shade which went so badly with the deep pink of girlish blushes.

"Bothered if I know which one it is," said Miss Lottie. "I never had a head for names."

"I have Elanora with me this afternoon," shouted Mother, pronouncing my name in full. I had always been called Nora.

"Elanora! That was my own dear mother's name," pronounced Miss Lottie, her voice jubilant, as if the wells of life had sprung up again at the mention of it.

"She was named for Greatgrandmother Eldrington," cried Mother gleefully, no doubt sure that Miss Lottie's pleasure was on account of this.

But Miss Lottie's jubilance had now dropped away. "Mother named none of us for herself," she said severely, "and would not, I'm sure, have liked her name carried on by a girl who stares so."

"Stares!" exclaimed Mother. "Elanora does not stare."

"Oh, yes she does. Every time she comes here —I fear I scarcely turn about but that she's on the doorstep again—she stares me out of countenance."

"I'm sure she wouldn't stare at you." Mother's attempt at murmuring loudly disturbed a sparrow that had alighted under a water tap, and had opened its mouth widely in the hope of non-existent drops. It shut its beak, gathered its dusty feathers together and hopped off. I shall never see you again, sparrow, I murmured. "As a matter of fact," Mother's voice went on, "She's fond of you. She likes seeing you."

"She's gloomy. Says nothing, stares."

"She's not gloomy." Mother's voice was still loud, but thinner, as if she were wearing out. "She's very happy just now. As you know one of the girls goes to Vivienne each year for the school vacation. It's Elanora's turn this time."

"So they all stare at me," said Miss Lottie. And added nastily, "in turn."

"Whatever do you mean, Aunt?" asked Mother.

"I know why girls stare," said Miss Lottie. "I used to do it myself. I used to stare at someone old—older than myself," she amended, "and say to myself, 'I'll never see you again'."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mother.

I sat still. Miss Lottie of all people! Miss Lottie knew I was going away forever! Not for the vacation but forever!

"But as it happens," said Miss Lottie equably, "I am not going to die."

"No-one said you were," shouted Mother.

"Oh, I know. They think so. They stare at me."

*

Not wishing to be called to take part in this conversation I rose and sauntered off into the heat of the afternoon, keeping as far from habitation as possible. The difficulty at both Ferny Banks and St. Anna's, where Miss Fanny lived, was that succeeding generations rarely left home. Those who couldn't be accommodated in the main house set up for themselves on other parts of the property. Timber suitable for building was expensive, as it had to be hauled some distance, so it was the habit of the Barkleys and the Duncans to buy houses that fell vacant elsewhere, either dismantling them where they stood and reassembling them on their own land, or transporting them on wheels from their original site. It was not uncommon to meet one of these husks being trundled to its new location, and I disliked the look of them so much, both travelling and in position, that I kept up a steady hate towards the young male members of these families to save the mischance of marrying one of them later on, and being forced to live in such an edifice.

Then there were the tanks. The tanks came separately. Often we heard a distant rumble, and cherished hope of a needed storm, only to have the sounds die away in the direction of Ferny Banks or St. Anna's.

Whichever direction one went one came in sight of one of these houses, mostly verandahless, paint

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faded, gutterings rusted, chimneys leaning, tank tilted on a drunken stand, tattered ends of lace curtains hanging through open windows. And as I dodged out of sight of one, to have to change direction again shortly because I was now within distance of being seen from another, I said to myself, I shall never see houses like these again. Fortunately these Barkley people were what Mother called reserved and, though I was aware of watchers, no-one called to me nor hindered my progress.

When I returned to the house Mother was ready to leave. "I'll be over again soon, Aunt," she told Miss Lottie.

"Do just that," said Miss Lottie. "Company passes the time."

We left Miss Lottie in her drawing room, which grew darker moment by moment as if curtains of dusk were being rung down, gauzy preliminaries to the final curtain of total night. The artificial flowers under glass domes, which the Barkleys kept with them instead of on the graves of the departed, glimmered through the gloom.

"Nora," Mother said on the way home, "I want you to promise me something." She sat up very straight at the wheel of the Whippet, too old now to be used for anything but these cross-country trips, peering ahead for tree-stumps and logs amongst the yellow grasses that swathed the sunset burnished land. "I know I have always taught you to look everyone squarely in the eyes, but when people are old they are possessed by extraordinary ideas. So next time you see Miss Lottie —". She swerved sharply to avoid a magpie which stood in our path, staring unblinkingly, and with no intention of giving way to us.

"Yes, Mother," I said, knowing I would never see Miss Lottie again.

"Just pretend you think she'll be with us forever."

"Yes, Mother," I said. It was not Miss Lottie, but myself, who was not going to be with us forever.

*

That night I slept in the old nursery, or cot-room as it had been called in earlier days. It was probably Mother who applied the term nursery to it, as she unblushingly affixed this sort of terminology to various parts of a backblocks homestead, every section of which had come about because of particular need. If Mother had married a south-west Queensland farmer, instead of a Lord of the Manor, there was nothing in her conversation to suggest it. The room itself, which was narrow, was directly in the middle of the house. It was used now as a passage, but the wooden bunks, with the feather quilts, in which had slumbered the children of yesteryear—Miss Lottie amongst them—still lined either wall, and were used at Christmas and during school vacation for the extra children in the house. Mother herself had slept here when, as a girl, she had come for holidays from her boarding school down south, with Vivienne, Daddy's step-sister. (There is a marriage multiple habit in the Eldrington family; people dying or running away have to be compensated for fairly soon.) Mother married Daddy and became more of an Eldrington than Vivienne if that were possible. Vivienne was an Eldrington but in a wider way. Vivienne had escaped.

Someone breaks the pattern in every generation. Now it was my turn.

This central room had been devised to protect the first Mrs. Eldrington's children against forked lightning, which particularly terrified her, and to which she attributed every ill which overtook people in later life. "Struck by forked lightning as a stripling" is engraved on the tombstone of a man who worked on the place for many years. That was old Danny. His malady took the form of beheading chickens and slitting the throats of sheep for the fun of it. He was devoted to her, and she understood him and, when she suspected a turn coming on, prepared herself for a salting down of livestock, at the same time seeing to it that only those beasts due for slaughter and the oldest of the hens were in the home paddock. Her husband had to make long trips for stores in those days, but he slept easily on his journeyings, knowing that his wife and children in their isolated homestead were well protected by Danny from the blacks.

To keep out this threat of lightning, stout wooden doors were made for either end, the one in front with the verandah between itself and the outer world, and the other giving onto a lobby, which in turn had a door. This made it a dark and scary room, the sort of room Mother said she could have locked small children in if she had been the type who locked small children in dark rooms.

However, to us it was the holiday room, the room where we slept when the house was full of people, and festivity of some sort was going on: Christmases (Mother was the greatest celebrator of Christmas I have ever known); weddings (Mother persuaded as many as she could to marry from our place, hint of an engagement and she was on the trail); funerals (we knew these were solemn, but had so many distant relations we were rarely emotionally involved with the chief actor); recently she had added another reason for issuing invitations to people all over the countryside; she had decided that her home had historical interest and "opened" it regularly for fetes, woolshed-dances and bazaars. On these occasions the helpers lived-in for days and occupied our rooms.

*

"Nora is being stagey," Mother's voice came to me as I was drifting off to sleep, floating between land and sky on dreams of the glorious life ahead, dreams as ephemeral as the miraged seas I had seen from Miss Lottie's verandah that afternoon.

The bed creaked as Daddy sat on its edge: a boot went thud on the floor. "Flaming burrs in Olsen's paddock," he said.

"Don't take them out there, Patrick," Mother said. "Take your socks off and throw them through the door. I wish she'd act naturally."

"Too natural," said Daddy.

"Naturalness taken too far becomes unnatural," said Mother.

"Mmmmmm," said Daddy. He wasn't any good at this sort of conversation. "Is Boy Barkley thinking of agistment?"

"I wouldn't know, Pat," said Mother.

"Thought you went over this afternoon."

"Miss Lottie doesn't know anything of that sort of thing."

"Damned women all their damned life on a damned place and don't damnwell know how it damnwell works."

"I hope," said Mother, "that when Nora comes back she will have settled down."

"Is she old enough?"

"Old enough for what?"

"Getting married."

"Goodness me! How oddly your mind works! Settling down is in oneself."

"What unsettled her?" asked Daddy.

"Her age. Girls of her age are unsettled. Growing up one might call it."

"She doesn't look grown-up to me," said Daddy.

"That's what I mean. All this childish excitement about a few weeks away. Patsy says she has been through the schoolroom, picked out every book she owns and packed them up. Nobody wants every book they own, even if they're going to a desert island."

"Desert Island," said Daddy. "What's Vivienne bought that for?"

"I do wish you'd listen," exclaimed Mother.

"I was listening."

"I sometimes feel that you listen to the last word I say, and form your conclusion on that. Oh Pat, aren't you going to read your paragraph?"

Daddy had promised Mother that he would read a paragraph in the Digest every evening to get his mind in tune with world events. He kept talking about another war, basing his opinion on his instincts, while Mother, through her reading, knew of the Maginot Line and other preventive measures.

"Flaming eyes won't keep open," said Daddy, and gave an explosive snorting snore.

*

I was wide awake now, very irritated that Mother and Patsy had been talking me over again. I decided instantly to have it out with Patsy, and swung my bare feet to the floor, with no thought of possible death adders or scorpions. What Patsy had said rankled so much I didn't know my feet were bare, and I doubt that I would have felt the fatal sting, if so be it such a fate had lurked waiting.

As I padded along the verandah I tried to think of something cutting to say, something edged, something which, while it didn't actually say that she was an uncultured ignorant dimwit, would convey this impression.

Engrossed with this, and having at the same time to consider the night, its blackness, the myriad jabs of high white stars, so soon to be replaced forever by shining city lights, I forgot to be warned by lampshine from the kitchen, the sound of voices. Because it was the farthest-away part of the house from our parents' bedroom, Patsy and Kate entertained their boyfriends there. Not that Mother, or even Daddy, minded boys calling, but they weren't used to the idea yet that everyone didn't come to see them, and would insist on entertaining and outsitting everyone. When I realised that Patsy and Kate had Peter and Doug there again, I had half a mind to go back and call Mother, but decided not to be sneaky as they were. I walked straight into the kitchen.

"Nora!" screamed Patsy.

"Oh my hat!" Kate groaned.

"Get out!" ordered Patsy.

Peter gave me a funny sort of stare, as if he didn't want to look at me, but couldn't look away, and Dougie went terribly red. Now what have I caught them at? I wondered. Patsy came towards me.

"I'll call Mother," she cried.

"I bet you will," I began, but her hand shot out and grasped my shoulder and she turned me about, gave me such a push that I landed on my hands and knees on the landing outside the kitchen door. My pyjama pants were of cotton material

with no give in it so this kneeling position tugged the elasticised waist to below my navel. As I rose, I clutched my pants back into position. Mother would kill me if she knew I'd run round in my pyjamas, let alone displayed inches of bare flesh round my middle.

As I felt for the edge of my jacket to tuck in the waistband, it was as if the prints of Patsy's fingers suddenly burnt into my shoulder. The rest of me went cold. I had no pyjama jacket on! I turned and fled, howling loudly, as if to drown my humiliation in my own yelps. I'd have run all the way to Sydney only Mother and Daddy were already on the verandah. Fortunately Daddy was shining the light from the lamp over the verandah railings in an attempt to locate the disturbance; his fixed idea was that evil came from without, not from within. This enabled me to reach the door which led to the cot-room; I went in, closed and bolted the door behind me. Mother and Daddy went on round to the kitchen, but it wasn't long before Mother was back again: if you don't come out now, you'll never be able to face anyone. Put your jacket on, darling, and appear naturally. I'll make gem scones and we'll all have supper. You've still got a boyish frame, and I'm sure no-one noticed anything in particular . . .

I didn't answer. I wasn't coming out until the day I left forever.

*

Some time elapsed before Mother and Daddy came back to bed; I heard later that Mother made the gem scones: she has a conviction that most situations can be eased by edibles and, when one of these situations is on, Daddy aids and abets her by eating most of the preparation.

I was so disturbed I felt I should never sleep again, but I must have dozed, because the fall of Daddy's boots thudded into my head and woke me.

"Thought they'd never go," said Daddy. "Said over and over that I wanted to make an early start for the third mill."

"I've made my decision, Pat," said Mother. "She shall have HER OWN WAY. She shall go to Vivienne and stay there."

"What will Vivienne say?"

"She owes it to us. We have five girls and she has none."

"She's not married," said Daddy. The loose brass knob on the bedpost jangled as he got into bed. "A bit tough, isn't it?"

"I can manage five; she should be able to manage one."

"Not tough on Vivienne. On the kid. She's not a townie. She knows about this place and why she's here."

"What an extraordinary thing to say, Patrick. As if anyone knows why they're anywhere."

"I do," said Daddy.

"She must learn to fit in, do the things other girls do, do what is expected of her, not as she wants without thought of others."

"She only left her shimmy off," said Daddy, yawning. "Come to think of it, they usen't to be worn by the girls on the place."

"You are mistaken, surely," said Mother.

"I'm not. You ever see an Abo girl in a shimmy?"

"I wasn't talking about Abos."

There was silence, then Daddy let out one of his snort-snore explosions. On the other side of the wall I lay still and I almost felt my thoughts starting on a new track through my mind; it was as if they jumped from an accustomed groove, to make a new groove in a fresh place.

In the morning I rose early and went to the kitchen. I stirred the fire, made breakfast, put bread and meat, tea and sugar in the tucker bags. When Daddy came up from the cowyard with the milk he was surprised to find me there, and grinned disbelievingly when I said that I wanted to find out how the place worked. I didn't blame him; I wasn't sure myself whether I did want to, or whether I was making an excuse to myself for escaping from the house and the women.

That was the first day I went out with him. I went each day, even at the week-end when Sue and Melie were home from school. I was still going away, but the thing had changed in my mind. I'd nip down to Sydney, get it over, and come home again.

There was no-one more relieved than myself when Vivienne rang one evening to say this was goodbye; she was slipping over to London to find out for herself exactly what was happening. While Mother could hear Vivienne perfectly, Vivienne didn't appear able to hear one word Mother said.

"Most irritating," said Mother as she hung up. "I'm afraid, Nora, that you have to wait another year."

"That's my turn," said Susannah.

"It certainly is," said Patsy. "If I have to wait an extra year for my next turn I'll be so old it won't matter."

But as it happened there were no next turns. By the next year the war had started.

I did not go away forever and ever. If I had, if I'd changed one type of life for another, it wouldn't have made any difference. I would not have escaped the old summers . . . they are with me still, piled up in my head, an accumulation of summers, folded and interfolded like the roly-polys that blew over the plain . . .

NO ROAD

No Road, it says,
that means you've gotta swim.
I come to you of course because of that.
Each night your waters close above my head
and I dive through your deeps
to struggle there with what is not
my absence from myself
my loss of breath.

No Road, it says,
that means you've gotta climb.
I come to you as well because of that.
Each night I scale my maypole from the bed
and view your deeps
where my sleeping diver tangles in what is not
my absence from your self,
and lose my breath.

No Road, it says,
that means you've gotta fly.
I come to you once more because of that,
erect upon your flood my wings are set
watching my monsters in your depths
who strangle what is not—
and lose my death.

FRANK KELLAWAY

NOBODY CALLS HIM BACK

This is a private dusk of noon.
Nobody calls him back. He is crouched
In a cave of clay, his fishing stick
Tugged by the thresh
Of green in a mustard pool Catfish.
He'll throw the stomach-twisting flesh
Away. He hates
The smooth erupted skin.

Nobody raps his name. School
Is a flyblown buzz.
He plans for a long canoe.
One day
He'll take his horse-drawn caravan
Inside a clump of hiding trees
And lay his blanket out
And watch the stars.

He's here. He says
Ducks drop from the sun.
Trees bump against blue.

He wants . . . **wants.**

ROGER McDONALD

ARCHITECT

That one is an architect,
No great shakes, but when he goes
A house or two will be perfect.
What he does is good and shows.

What's biting him that he should be
Loud about his women and
Unable, it would seem, simply
To do his job and let that stand?

The practice of adultery
Is different and more demanding:
The best designs no-one can see,
There's no award for what's rewarding.

Here we can hurt, so what we do
Is perfect or not done at all,
And what is perfect will not show.
Rock the bed and houses fall.

BRIAN MEDLIN

FLOWERS DO NOT BLOOM ON DREAMS

hey, multi-blue-eyed baby
you know the scene outside
but what about inside
sure any hash headache quells the loudness of that place
called life
you haven't made the almighty baby
reason one you're white
if you need a shot to inject meaning man
you've freaked you don't see
the answer lies dormant in you hero
not in your beaded apron strings
quote: hipness is not a state of mind
    but a fact of life.
if you didn't reach it without fairy dreams prophet
you won't with them o great western phoney.

STANISLAV DEMIDJUK

A GROSS CONCEPTION

The whole world loves fat boys
they're useful
they make delightful squeaking
noises, squint, are handy as wickets
and look good
in strawberry patches.

Fat boys
can be used as ladders,
footballs, footbridges,
pumpkins, paperweights,
policemen, pimps,
carts, cauliflowers,
and consciences.

How many times
have you looked at your body
in the mirror
and said:
Christ
I'm as fat as
so-and-so.

R. J. DEEBLE

IMMIGRANT

He played ping-pong, abashed,
though he didn't show it,
at sniggers from his future countrymen,
immaculate in careful shipboard shorts.
Back home in Thessaly he always wore
pyjamas in the house,
work-clothes at work,
his Sunday suit on Sundays
and other holidays.
On board the ship, being neither at his work
nor home, he wore his Sunday suit
to undertake ping-pong between two worlds.

SYLVIA KANTARIZIS

RED MEN IN MELANESIA

Peter Livingston

THEIR brown eyes, yellow where others were white, looked sluggishly at the slowly receding tide on their day of rest from the Pacific Islands Regiment. They sat in the shade where melancholy scrub met the Taurama Beach, and watched the pale-skinned man in brief white swim-trunks walk barefooted gathering shells left behind by the tide. Every now and then he changed quickly from one foot to the other as his sole settled on to a sharp pebble.

"It's funny to watch these red men," said Winiwai to his two companions. "They can't walk. They have no skin on the soles of their feet—no skin to talk of."

The pale man stopped his shell-gathering for a time and stood erect feeling the tropic sun burn into his skin.

"And the way they try to color their bodies in the sun," said Koranou, his own skin a rich honey-color. He had the long slender fingers and small ears of his race. "They try to get their skins the color of ours."

"It hurts them," murmured Tevesi drowsily, and dismally flicked a pebble towards the water's edge. "The sun cooks them. They suffer to try to look like us."

The pale man made a quick movement forward, exultant at having found an unusual specimen. He picked up the shell and examined it closely before putting it into his plastic bag.

"Why does he gather those?" asked Tevesi. "They've got no fish in them. He's not going to eat them."

"They've a lot of strange magic, the red men," Winiwai told him vaguely. "They sell them to one another. They think shells are lucky. If they have a lot of them, they have a lot of luck they think."

"They're a strange lot, the red men," said Tevesi and hurled another pebble.

The sea stretched away to a grey streaky horizon, its smooth grey-green interrupted only by a line of white where the reef intercepted it and the sea tried to push the reef out of its way. The pale man gathered more shells.

When the pale men had first come to New Guinea, the grandparents of the three Melanesians on the beach had been amazed at the color of their skins and had taken them to be ghosts of ancestors.

"Look at the color of their skins," they cried. "Their skins are red, red as the earth in places." The pale men did not know this, for they had never been told they were red, and they looked upon the brown skins they came amongst as a strange deviation. The ghosts had come to settle, but had never adapted themselves to the climate or the terrain. They built themselves big houses, inserted themselves as a catalyst into the way of life of the brown-skinned men and put them to work for the pale skins.

The pale man on Taurama Beach ran eagerly forward and added a large conus to his collection.

"The red men are a queer lot," Koranou stated. "But they're clever."

The mangrove glowed green at the eastern end of the beach, the only real green left in the dried-up landscape. Each year the south-east wind burned the Port Moresby vegetation, replaced greens with browns and left only the solace of frangipanni blooms on their bare primeval twisted branches. Right at the edge of the sand an old pink frangipanni grew and gave some scant shade to the three Melanesians.

"But they keep most of their cleverness to themselves," said Winiwai.

The pale man, now along towards the mangroves, delightedly picked up a white cowrie, muttered resentfully when he discovered it was damaged and threw it down again to be carried away on the next tide and to be disintegrated in the course of the coming and going of the tides. The fragrance of the frangipanni was dissipated above the three Melanesians by the smell of drying seaweed.

Tevesi wearily flicked another pebble. It was nice to be away from the barracks where everything was arranged for their comfort but with no deference to Melanesian tastes. It was nice to sit on the beach and be themselves, for the red

THINKING OF THE FLOWER

Limpid morning by the windowful
would well against my lids and waken
mind, mind stammering on a syllable
night-new and freshly shaken
in dew from a stanza of the year's round rhyme.

Hibiscus with embellishment of birds
moved there, flaunting the very shade
of dawn in Eden. Flaming words
and flourishes of rose and jade
illumined the stanza of my summertime.

Days when an Orient vision wakes the mind
to frailty, thin silk against the wind:
and then the imperial flower, the mandarin,
twirls parasol at autumn sky,
lolls fanning in a swaying palanquin—
but listen, the stately sigh,
the glisten of the fans furling in the frost's breath.

Days when a flower from the sombre shawls of Spain
bloomed on the iron dawn that struck the pane:
and these who swept me into their dances
fold away now the flimsy ragged
ruffles, down on the off-beat, flounces
swaying down to the jagged
swoop of the violins of wind and death.

Hibiscus, knowing no cry of grief or wrath,
furls the flame and is to darkness gone;
keeping the secret word, the signless path
that I have sought, loved, feared since I was born.

ANNE CHLOE ELDER

men did not understand integration. They had come barefooted as a relief from Army uniform.

"They tell us only half the things they know, the red men," said Winiwai. "The important things they keep to themselves."

"But they've got us pretty close to independence," said Koranou.

"A lot of them don't believe that will ever come," Winiwai told him. "A lot of them just think they're talking about independence to keep us happy, that's all. They keep a great deal from us—even the missionaries do."

The pale man turned back along the beach when he reached the mangroves, and walked as he had come keeping his eyes on the margin of the water hoping to find a rare shell.

"They're funny about their food, too," Tevesi told his companions. "They won't eat the food we eat."

"That's because," said the wise Winiwai, "they're very frightened of dying. They know our food is not poisonous for us, but they think it might be poisonous for them. They're very frightened of dying."

"Do you know they believe we don't know they have secrets from us?" Tevesi asked. "They think we don't know they tell us lies."

"I know that," Koranou said. "Before I joined the Army I worked as a houseboy. I kept asking how they made the glasses they drank out of. The silly red woman told me the lie that they were made out of sand and expected me to believe it. If they're made out of anything, it must be water. That's what I'd like to be able to do—make glass out of water."

"Oh, yes," Winiwai agreed, "they keep much from us."

The red man put on shorts and shirt over his swim-trunks and thongs on his feet at the place near the cliff face where he had left them. He walked round the rocky point out of the Melanesians' sight, and the three pairs of yellow eyes looked at the spot where he had been. The red man got into his car with his bag of shells and drove away, all the time thinking he was a white man.

CANADA AND THE ARTS

Joseph Waters

NOW we have a Council for the Arts in Australia. We know who's on it, but neither we nor they know what they'll be doing, how much money they will have to spend, or how government support to the arts will be in fact applied. Most remarkable of all, the Council has been set up before any enquiry has been made as to what the position of the arts in Australia is, where money is most needed, or indeed whether a Council for the Arts is the desirable way forward in any case!

One thing is certain. Up to now our politicians and public servants have had a bargain-basement way of thinking about Australian cultural life. They could do with the kind of shock they would get if they saw the latest report of the Canada Council.

From the Canada Fund, administered by the Canada Council, flows an unending stream of gifts to Canadian cultural life. Perhaps it is not as wonderful as all that, but it's enough to make an Australian's mouth water.

Canada started, for all practical purposes, about fifty years ahead of us. Today its population is not quite twice our own, its total area half a million square miles more.

Culturally, however, one might get the impression, at least at first sight, that Canada really only started ten years ago with the setting up of the Canada Council. At the time Prime Minister Lester Pearson put the motive in these words: "We love the United States but we don't want to marry the brute."

But it was Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent who eventually took the step which gave Canada some guarantee of cultural independence when he set up a royal commission to "study national development in the arts, letters and sciences". After two years of hearings all over the country, and the study of a huge mass of material solicited from individuals and organisations, the commission came up with a massive report of 500 pages. The Massey Report was a runaway best-seller in 1951 and is the prototype of the sort of enquiry that culturally hungry Australians have been asking for these last ten years.

The main recommendation of the commission was the establishment of the body now known as the Canada Council. For those, however, who look towards surveys and reports as the way forward for the arts in Australia, there is a warning to be heeded from the Canadian experience. From the day the commission was appointed to the time when Canada got its Council and the funds to revive or defend the arts, eight whole years elapsed.

The act creating the Canada Council was not finally passed until 1957, and its most attractive feature was how it proposed to finance the council's work. The funds were to come from the succession duties on the estates of two millianaires who, fortunately for the Canadian arts, had died about that time. Between them these two wealthy Canadians left estates worth 150 million dollars, on which death duties amounted to 90 million dollars.

Only half this amount was to be a permanent fund; the other half was to be given away—capital and interest—over a ten-year period to help Canadian universities meet long overdue building needs.

Tax-free gifts could be made to the Fund and many have been made in the ten years of its operation. However, it is the interest on the invested death duties which provides the finances of the Fund.

Just how successfully the Fund operates is best discovered by studying the recent annual report of the Council for 1966-67. This is a remarkably straightforward publication of 150 pages from which nothing of any real consequence to the arts in Canada appears to be missing. Total expenditure for the year was approximately 10 million Australian dollars.

So that we might better appreciate the nature of this assistance a comparison with Australian aid to the arts would be useful. For the same twelve months the disbursement of funds from something like the equivalent body here—the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust—amounted to close upon two and three-quarter million dollars. In all fairness to Australia we should really

add something like 530,000 dollars—the extent of the Australian Broadcasting Commission subsidisation of the various State symphony orchestras and the arrangement of concerts. These two sums mean that Australia was providing, in actual assistance to the arts, less than one-third of Canada's investment.

Attendances at Canadian performances of all kinds were for the year 3.5 million against our own—music and theatre combined—1.8 million. This looks as if Australia was getting better than average value for its less than average financial outlay, but the real extent of the growth brought about by the Council's work is underlined by the attendance figures for 1957 which were only half a million. In ten years of activity, the Council has increased the attendance of Canadians at cultural performances sevenfold.

Last year the earned revenue from these attendances totalled 7.5 million dollars as against Australian earnings of just under 2.4 million dollars. Obviously Australians are getting their culture on the cheap.

When it comes to an examination of the sort of activities carried out in the two countries, comparisons are even more interesting. In both places there has been a great concentration of effort around ballet, with Canada doing even more in this direction than Australia.

In 1957 the Canadians were spending under half a million dollars to provide ballet for 270,000 balletomanes, but in ten years the figure rose to $1.3 million in subsidies for an audience of 620,000. For 1966 the Elizabethan Theatre Trust quotes an expenditure of $719,061 on ballet activities for audiences totalling 230,899.

For the National Ballet of Canada's production of "Swan Lake" alone $100,000 was spent. The combined budgets for the National Ballet, the three other main companies assisted from the Fund, a folk dance group and a modern dance group, amounted to just under three million dollars—as much as Australia at the moment is giving in assistance to all the art forms.

During the year the theatre throughout Canada was given assistance to the tune of $964,000. In Australia the Elizabethan Theatre Trust provided less than half that amount. Examples of how Canada spent its money on helping the theatres—$90,000 to the Manitoba Theatre Centre, for the National Theatre School $120,000, for the Theatre Du Nouveau Monde in Montreal about the same amount, and to find out why and why not people of Ontario go to the theatre $35,000 for a survey. In the ten years of existence the Council has seen theatre attendances rise from 392,000 to 1,055,000. Financial assistance and audiences are three times greater than Australia's.

*

Musically it is possible Canada has not yet made as much progress as Australia. In a survey made for the Council in 1960, Sir Bernard Heinze expressed the opinion that the Montreal and Toronto Symphony Orchestras might enter the ranks of the world's great orchestras if their players could be guaranteed permanent employment. In spite of an expenditure of four million dollars last year on music in Canada, the Council is not able to report that the requirements called for by Sir Bernard have yet been fulfilled. It is hoped that with the huge increase in subsidies to the orchestras, combined with a doubling of attendances at concerts during the past decade, the condition of Canadian music will be substantially improved.

Where the Canada Council parts company with our own Theatre Trust is when it comes to the other arts, for Canada's Fund also helps the visual arts. This brings it more in line with Britain's Arts Council.

Altogether last year forty-one galleries and artists' organisations were assisted financially to the extent of more than $320,000. At the same time help was given to 107 individuals either practising one or other of the visual arts, gathering materials about them or just writing about them. Thirty-eight were given awards "who have been making a significant contribution to their field over a number of years and wish to study or work freely". Their subjects embraced art criticism, printmaking, graphics, engravings, art weaving, ceramics, stained glass design as well as painting and sculpture.

Bursaries were given to thirty-five "artists of exceptional promise to work or study freely in the earlier stages of their career". With these, too, the range of subjects covered is extremely varied.

To round off the list a further thirty-four were given assistance mainly to allow them to travel, attend conferences and competitions, gather some special material, help with costs of mounting exhibitions of the artist's own work, and in some cases to allow the artist to travel to an exhibition of his work inside or outside Canada. Some were even helped with the cost of sending their art works abroad for showing in competitions or personal exhibitions.

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Writers, unfortunately, did not fare so well. Nevertheless thirty-seven writers were assisted in one way or another during the year, which is a lot more than in Australia. Eighteen established writers were granted awards, eight promising new authors were helped and another eleven were given assistance to attend seminars and conferences in various parts of the world.

It is also noticeable that the Council directly or indirectly is concerned in making a number of annual prize awards, such as the Governor-General's Literary awards of $2,200 each for the six best works of poetry, fiction and non-fiction in English and French published during the year. Four outstanding workers in the arts were given Canada Council medals, and with them cash prizes of $2,200 each. Morley Callaghan, one of the best known of Canadian writers was one, and Norman McLaren, the film maker, another.

As the Council also dispenses assistance to academic workers in the form of grants for doctoral fellowships, senior fellowships and research grants, a further 1,500 were added to the list of beneficiaries.

Thirty-nine organisations interested in the publication of magazines and books of artistic merit were also assisted to the remarkable extent of $200,000, which included $2,600 to assist Canadian Book Publishers to be represented at the Frankfurt Book Fair and $18,000 for an International Seminar of Poets at Montreal.

Although not assisted by handouts from the Fund, there is a state-aided film industry in Canada. A Film Board set up by the government for the specific purpose of developing a national film industry has grants of as much as $5-6 million a year to work with.

Let us remember that the Canadians also managed to stage the Montreal Expo. 67, spent a fortune on it and probably ended up making a profit. They did show just how civilised they are and at the time when our own administrators, elected and otherwise, were talking of growth, pleading poverty and promising a grand new world all in the very same breath.

Yet it is extremely doubtful if Canada is really a richer country than Australia. On this side of the world we spend more than they do on education—a surprising position in view of the rush of so many Australian teachers to Canada to enjoy the better conditions offering there. We appear to have a relatively higher national income; we spend less on defence than they do and at the same time we manage to starve our arts and our artists.

*

Perhaps we should look hardest at the few warnings stated bluntly in the Council's report. Even if their generosity and achievements cannot shame us, perhaps their criticisms will.

First, a rather sour note for the people who run the arts in Canada. The report suggests that qualifications for membership of boards of management should be re-examined. "Greater priority," it states, "should be given to understanding of the arts, formed either in the course of a career or through long-time interest in the subject." Less priority, it advises, should be given to what it describes as the "good works" or "soup kitchen" supporter who "allies himself to the arts for the measure of reflected glory it affords in these, the 'in' days of the arts."

It may be that Canadians are upset by the omission of the names of both the Council's chairman and director from all established international directories of the famous. Or they may just be wondering, as so many Australians are now doing, if the best qualifications for running the arts are careers in banking, finance and other sectors of the commercial world.

Considering the suggestion that the financial role of the government in the arts must dwindle, the report answers emphatically: "On the contrary, we believe it must increase substantially since we are still quite far from having brought our artistic life up to the level of a fully-integrated sector of the national economy . . . cultural activities cannot be considered fully viable commercially". "They are," concludes the report, "the public service par excellence."

A. ALVAREZ, DISTINGUISHED BRITISH CRITIC RECENTLY IN AUSTRALIA, WRITES FOR US ON AN IMPORTANT BRITISH TRIAL

(Since this article was set in type, the Court of Appeal has reversed the Old Bailey decision banning "Last Exit to Brooklyn".)

'LAST EXIT'

THE Old Bailey jury found "Last Exit to Brooklyn" to be obscene. Yet the judge seemed favorably disposed towards the book and the prosecuting counsel was mild in his strategy. Against 30 defence witnesses—with 40 more in reserve—the prosecution produced only six. Of them, only one was a serious writer; the others were a bookseller, a Fleet Street stalwart, a Maudsley psychiatrist, a cricketing parson and an American sociologist who once campaigned to destroy the statue of that dangerous subversive, Tom Paine. Yet it turned out that the cricketing parson carried both his bat and the day against the whole crowd of authors, critics, professors of literature and sociology, publishers, social workers, and even against the curate of St. Anne's, Soho.

But I wonder if the case wasn't lost before any witness went on the stand. On the first day the jury was ticked off for trying to read the book too fast and was sent back to study it closely—a grim enough task for a trained reader, and one which they seemed not to take to. I was the third defence witness to be called, but already the jury seemed depressed beyond words or hope. They sat with their heads steadily averted from the witness box, as though embarrassed. So you saw them only in quarter-face: 12 good men and true, glumly spruce, resigned to a long haul and bored, bored out of their skulls. No wonder all that expert testimony got nowhere.

I suspect that had Last Exit been more obviously what it was accused of being—more depraving, more corrupting; that is, more titillating, more pornographic—it might have stood a better chance. At least the jury might have known better where they stood and warmed to or against it. Instead, they were faced with a difficult, gloomy, undoubtedly serious work of literature. It is also a book of great power, but much of this power comes from the author's detachment from his subject-matter: he is as withdrawn and unobtrusive as a Jamesian narrator. If the book is obscene, it is so incidentally, because the people and situations in it are obscene, not because the author is deliberately out to shock or rouse. It is one of the least pornographic books I have read, and one of the most depressing.

In structure, Last Exit is a series of loosely connected stories set in the Brooklyn slums. The characters are small-time thugs, queers, prostitutes, brutalised and mostly unemployed members of an undifferentiated labor force, and the inhabitants of those vast high-rise, low-cost housing projects, like Brooklyn's Red Hook, who are the modern equivalents of cliff-dwellers. These are the people, in short, right at the bottom of the social heap. The fashionable word is 'underclasses' (when Frank Kermode referred to 'the lower depths', the Evening Standard snobbishly misheard him to say 'the lower deck'). They are also psychopaths—violent, amoral, without love—but they are so partly because the society in which they move is itself psychopathic; it allows them

only one choice: to survive or go under. And in order to survive they need to be as brutal, as narrowly self-gratifying and as unforgiving as everybody else. In 'Landsend', the 'Coda' which gives a cross-section of life on the project, even the children tread a knife-edge of violent destruction; their games prepare them for their future.

The moral of all this is clear enough, both for the characters themselves and for the society that has conditioned them. To make it doubly clear, Selby prefaces each chapter with a quotation from the Bible to underline the degree to which these lives are perverted. But if this were all he did, if his indignation, his means and the points he makes were that simple, he would be no more important a figure on the scene that Oscar Lewis or Dr. Kinsey. As I see it, however, the book has qualities and discoveries which make it a major literary event.

First, Selby has solved a problem which has troubled a number of ambitious writers, at least since the last war: how to cope with the sudden flood into our awareness of material which is beyond the reach of any conventional morality. This problem arose demandingly when writers tried to make literature out of their experiences in the concentration camps. They found that when facts were so overwhelming in themselves the slightest interference on the author's part landed the narrative in hysteria and journalism. Only those, like the Pole Tadeusz Borowski, who detached themselves by a kind of controlled schizophrenia from the horrors they had been through, managed to make compelling imaginative sense of it all. The rest finished with one brand or another of propaganda.

Selby has learned this lesson, though his acknowledged master, whose picture he carries in his wallet, is an older atrocity writer, Isaac Babel. Selby's language is bare, stripped down, brutal. apparently as deprived as the situations and people he describes. He utterly refuses to excuse his subject-matter or redeem it by fine, 'literary' writing. Even the defence could find no isolated poetic bits to show what a traditionally 'good' writer Selby is. The power of each story is cumulative and inevitable; like the author, the prose stays in the background.

This in itself implies moral correlatives which alone would make Selby an extraordinary exception. Most writing about minority in-groups—whether they are homosexuals, drug-addicts or motor-bike gangs—verges, knowingly or not, on propaganda. The 'gay' world, it is implied, is somehow more truthful and sensitive, more alive and hip, or at least more to be pitied, than the square world of heterosexuals. Not so in Last Exit. The homosexual circle in which Harry, the sad, tortured union official finds a style of satisfaction is no better or worse than the rest of his society. He gets only what he pays for, and when the strike fund dries up he is out. When in ignorance and despair he tries to seduce a young boy, he is, literally, crucified. Similarly, the romantic love the hip queen, Georgette, feels for her young hood is not only a one-sided delusion, it is also, as Gilbert Sorrentino has pointed out, irredeemably vulgar, a vision of 'only faggoty desire'. No wonder the prosecution failed to prove the book an incitement to homosexuality.

If Selby's style is never self-consciously 'literary', that is not because it is unwittingly limited but because it is, above everything else, accurate. He has, I think, the best ear of anyone now writing in our language. Within a single paragraph, and often within a single sentence, he switches from one speaker to another, from first person to third person, from speaking voice to thought; and each change is immediately discernible, each voice distinct in its own rhythm and habits and tone. Granted, the language his people use is consistently gross but it is also curiously unshocking. He makes you accept that this is simply how these rejects express themselves. Like the character in Hemingway, Selby 'does not provoke' in any sense, he merely reports.

He has inherited a long tradition of experiment in which he moves freely and with assurance. He commands a wealth of means among which he can choose for his precise purposes, and from them he has evolved a prose which is, in every way, without restrictions. For example, the story of the whore, Tralala, begins as she lives, blank, clipped and without feeling: 'Tralala was 15 the first time she was laid. There was no real passion. Just diversion'. It then gradually accelerates to a last fierce, non-stop, four-page sentence which leaves the girl gang-raped and dying. Selby's technique, in short, is wholly at the service of his curiously objective vision of this hell: 'Never apologise. Never explain'. Despite all the degradation of his subject-matter, Last Exit is a work of great artistic purity.

I said on the witness stand that I think it is a masterpiece; I stick by that. But whatever your final judgment, it is unquestionably a work of the greatest seriousness, and like nothing else that has been written before. The cause of modern literature and that of the educated reading public have, I think, suffered considerably from the Old Bailey decision.

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ON LEAVING AMERICA

Mr. Edwin D. Etherington,
President,
Wesleyan University,
Middletown, Conn.

Dear Mr. President,

I hereby ask you to accept my resignation as a Fellow of the Centre for Advanced Studies at Wesleyan University. At the same time, I wish to thank you, as best I can, for the hospitality which you have shown me during my stay here. The very least I owe to you, to the faculty, and to the students is an account of my reasons for leaving Wesleyan.

Let me begin with a few elementary considerations. I believe the class which rules the United States of America, and the government which implements its policies, to be the most dangerous body of men on earth. In one way or another, and to a different degree, this class is a threat to anybody who is not part of it. It is waging an undeclared war against more than a billion people; its weapons range from saturation bombing to the most delicate techniques of persuasion; its aim is to establish its political, economic, and military predominance over every other power in the world. Its mortal enemy is revolutionary change.

Many Americans are deeply troubled by the state of their nation. They reject the war which is being waged in their name against the people of Vietnam. They look for ways and means to end the latent civil war in the ghettos of American cities. But most of them still hold on to the idea that these crises are unfortunate accidents, due to faulty management and lack of understanding; tragical errors on the part of an otherwise peaceful, sane, and well-intentioned world power.

To this interpretation I cannot agree. The Vietnam war is not an isolated phenomenon. It is the most visible outcome and, at the same time, the bloodiest test case of a coherent international policy which applies to five continents. The ruling class of the United States has taken sides in the armed struggles of Guatemala and Indonesia, of Laos and Bolivia, of Korea and Colombia, of the Philippines and of Venezuela, of the Congo and of the Dominican Republic. This is not an exhaustive list. Many other countries are governed, with American support, by oppression, corruption, and starvation. Nobody can feel safe and secure any more, not in Europe, and not even in the United States itself.

There is nothing surprising and original about the simple truth I am stating here. I have no space to qualify and differentiate it in any scientific way. Others, many of them American scholars like Baran and Horowitz, Huberman and Sweezy, Zinn and Chomsky, have done so at great length. From what I could gather here, the academic community does not think much of their work. It has been called old-fashioned, boring, and rhetorical; the outgrowth of a paranoid imagination or simply communist propaganda. These defence mechanisms are part of the Western intellectual's standard equipment. Since I have frequently met with them here, I take the liberty of examining them more closely.

The first argument is really a matter of semantics. Our society has seen fit to be permissive about the old taboos of language. Nobody is shocked any more by the ancient and indispensable four-letter-words. At the same time, a new crop of words has been banished, by common consent, from polite society: words like exploitation and imperialism. They have acquired a touch of obscenity. Political scientists have taken to paraphrases and circumlocution which sound like the neurotic euphemisms of the Victorians. Some sociologists have gone so far as to deny the very existence of a ruling class. Obviously, it is easier to abolish the word exploitation than the thing it designates; but then, to do away with the term is not to do away wih the problem.

A second defence device is using psychology as a shield. I have been told that it is sick and paranoid to conceive of a powerful set of people who are a danger to the rest of the world. This amounts to saying that instead of listening to his arguments it is better to watch the patient. Now it is not an easy thing to defend yourself against amateur psychiatrists. I shall limit myself to a few essential points. I do not imagine a conspiracy, since there is no need for such a thing. A social class, and especially a ruling class, is not held together by secret bonds, but by common and glaringly evident self-interest. I do not fabricate monsters. Everybody knows that bank presidents, generals, and military industrialists do not look like comic-strip demons; they are well-mannered, nice gentlemen, possibly lovers of chamber music with a philanthropic bent of mind. There was no lack of such kind people even in the Germany of the Thirties. Their moral insanity does not derive from their individual character, but from their social function.

Finally, there is a political defence mechanism operating with the assertion that all of the things which I submit are just communist propaganda. I have no reason to fear this time-honored indictment. It is inaccurate, vague, and irrational. First of all, the word Communism, used as a singular, has become rather meaningless. It covers a wide variety of conflicting ideas; some of them are even mutually exclusive. Furthermore, my opinion of American foreign policy is shared by Greek liberals and Latin American archbishops, by Norwegian peasants and French industrialists: people who are not generally thought of as being in the vanguard of "Communism".

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The fact is that most Americans have no idea of what they and their country look like to the outside world. I have seen the glance that follows them: tourists in the streets of Mexico, soldiers on leave in Far Eastern cities, businessmen in Italy or Sweden. The same glance is cast on your embassies, your destroyers, your billboards all over the world. It is a terrible look, because it

makes no distinctions and no allowances. I will tell you why I recognise this look. It is because I am a German. It is because I have felt it on myself.

If you try to analyse it, you will find a blend of distrust and resentment, fear and envy, contempt and outright hate. It hits your President, for whom there is hardly any capital left in the world where he can show his face in public; but it also hits the kind old lady across the aisle on the flight from Delhi to Benares. It is an indiscriminate, a manichaean look. I do not like it. I do not share your President's belief in collective guilt. "Don't forget," he told his soldiers in Korea, "there are only 200 million of us in the world of three billion. They want what we've got, and we're not going to give it to them." Now it is perfectly true that we all take some share in the pillage of the Third World. Economists like Dobb and Bettelheim, Jalee and Robinson have shown ample evidence for the contention that the poor countries, which we are underdeveloping, subsidise our economics. But surely Mr. Johnson is overstating his case when he implies that the American people are but a single, solid corporate giant fighting for its loot. There is more to admire in America than meets Mr. Johnson's eye. I find little in Europe that could compare with the fight put up by people in SNCC, SDS, and in Resist. And I may add that I resent the air of moral superiority which many Europeans nowadays affect with respect to the United States. They seem to regard it as a personal merit that their own empires have been shattered. This, of course, is hypocritical nonsense.

However, there is such a thing as a political responsibility for what your own country is doing to the rest of the world, as the Germans found out to their cost after both World Wars. In more than one way, the state of your Union reminds me of my own country's state in the middle Thirties. Before you reject this comparison, I ask you to reflect that nobody had heard or thought of gas chambers at that time; that respectable statesmen visited Berlin and shook hands wih the Chancellor of the Reich; and that most people refused to believe that Germany had set out to dominate the world. Of course, everybody could see that there was a lot of racial discrimination and persecution going on; the armament budget went up at an alarming rate; and there was a growing involvement in the war against the Spanish revolution.

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But here my analogy breaks down. For not only do our present masters wield a destructive power of which the Nazis could never dream; they have also reached a degree of subtlety and sophistication unheard of in the crude old days. Verbal opposition is today in danger of becoming a harmless spectator sport, licensed, well-regulated and, up to a point, even encouraged by the powerful. The universities have become a favorite playground for this ambiguous game. Of course, only a dogmatic of the most abominable sort could argue that censorship and open repression would be preferable to the precarious and deceptive freedom which we are now enjoying. But, on the other hand, only a fool can ignore that this very freedom has created new alibis, pitfalls, and dilemmas for those who oppose the system. It took me three months to discover that the advantages which you gave me would end up by disarming me; that in accepting your invitation and your grant, I had lost my credibility; and that the mere fact of my being here on these terms would devalue whatever I might have to say. "To judge an intellectual it is not enough to examine his ideas: it is the relation between his ideas and his acts which counts." This piece of advice, offered by Regis Debray, has some bearing on my present situation. To make it clear that I mean what I say, I have to put an end to it.

It is a necessary, but hardly a sufficient, thing to do. For it is one thing to study imperialism in comfort, and quite another thing to confront it where it shows a less benevolent face. I have just returned from a trip to Cuba. I saw the agents of the CIA in the airport of Mexico City taking pictures of every passenger leaving for Havana; I saw the silhouettes of American warships off the Cuban coast; I saw the traces of the American invasion at the Bay of Pigs; I saw the heritage of an imperialist economy and the scars it left on the body and on the mind of a small country; I saw the daily siege which forces the Cubans to import every single spoon they use from Czechoslovakia and every single gallon of gasoline from the Soviet Union, because the United States has been trying for seven years to starve them into surrender.

I have made up my mind to go to Cuba and to work there for a substantial period of time. This is hardly a sacrifice on my part; I just feel that I can learn more from the Cuban people and be of greater use to them than I could ever be to the students of Wesleyan University.

This letter is a meagre way of thanking you for your hospitality, and I very much regret that it is all I have to offer in return for three peaceful months. I realise, of course, that my case is, by itself, of no importance or interest to the outside world. However, the questions which it raises do not concern me alone. Let me therefore try to answer them, as best I can, in public.

Yours faithfully,

Hans Magnus Enzensberger.

January 31, 1968.

HANS MAGNUS ENZENSBERGER, PERHAPS THE BEST KNOWN OF THE YOUNGER GERMAN POETS, ATTENDED THE 1968 ADELAIDE FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS

MISCELLANY

TRIBUTE TO AN EDITOR

Rivkah Mathews

TEN years ago a new socialist journal appeared on the Australian scene, the latest of many, but different. Its new quality lay partly in the circumstances in which it arose—the dissociation of many intellectuals with the two-dimensional thinking of the Communist parties, both in Australia and overseas—and partly because it was edited by Helen Palmer. It is very largely due to her personally that Outlook has survived and expanded.

It would have been hard to be a daughter of Vance and Nettie Palmer without absorbing some of their dedication and sharing some of their ideals. Yet there were problems. Just as Nettie always insisted on an identity separate from that of Vance, so Aileen and Helen Palmer have had to fight clear of an honored name, a process which has produced in them a mixture of reticence and independence. By the time she reached Melbourne University in 1936, Helen possessed a highly individual quality of austere enthusiasm, both attractive and intimidating.

Looking back on the passionately committed university Left of the thirties one feels the same sort of nostalgia that an emancipated monk might feel for the hair shirt he once wore. Helen joined the Labor Club and the Peace Group in those terribly involved days of Spain and the fight against fascism, days when we on the left of the Left believed implicity that only a tight, monolithic organisation could match the strength of the enemy. There wasn't any difficulty about suppressing differences—no radical criticisms ever occurred to us. It seemed pretty straightforward at the time, and Helen was as firm as the rest: nevertheless that peculiar tolerance and reserve of hers disturbed some of us. Commitment without dogmatism? Fie!

Our sweat and tears continued during the war years. Helen, after teaching for a while, joined the W.A.A.F. where she soon became an officer. Later she moved to Sydney, teaching, writing school text books with her close friend Jess McLeod, continuing work for peace. A visit to China incurred the wrath of the New South Wales Education authorities: highly qualified, she found it difficult to find work. Even today, as senior mistress at Fort Street, she is still 'temporary', for she will not leave her political work in Sydney to undertake the country teaching which alone would earn her 'permanence'.

Despite her radicalism, Helen Palmer might have lived a comparatively uneventful life as a teacher but for the death of Stalin and the collapse of the illusions of twenty years. Today's pragmatic young left-wingers must find it difficult to understand how hard political dogma can set, how painful it is to wrench loose, and in fact not all of Helen's generation did. While some even refused to believe Krushchev, others gave way to self-pity or retired to cultivate bush gardens. But not Helen.

Shaken as any of her contemporaries, Helen was somehow able to think clearly, quickly, effectively. While most of us were desperately trying to find our balance in a rocking boat, Helen announced her intention of establishing a socialist discussion magazine, one which would try and present all aspects of Left thinking about, primarily, Australian realities. The assumption behind this was, of course, that there were a multitude of sincere and valid theories of equal significance in the effort to find an alternative to capitalism, all in equal need of airing and testing, the issue between them to be decided not by edict but by evolution.

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The launching of Outlook was, in the eyes of those still imprisoned in monolithic concepts, betrayal, and Helen did not escape personal attack: in respect for the charity and tolerance she has always displayed to those who thought differently from herself, I refrain from comment. It is enough to say that Outlook has grown from a tentative little roneoed job to a well-established, well-printed, well-supplied and well-supported magazine, always reasoned, always refreshing. In 1967, reviewing the ten years past, Helen wryly recalled her opening words to the first Outlook editorial: "Socialism is again becoming a live issue in Australia". Well, it wasn't. But Helen's further point was well made. If the decade had seen only a snail-like momentum of political progress, at least "a pattern and machinery of dissent had been established".

The dissent she talks of has two aspects—the one directed at the capitalist establishment, the other at the establishment inside the socialist movement itself. This gets complicated: how much, how deeply, to criticise a cause under formidable attack anyway? The plight of those who believe with Helen that "a society in the process of change needs, perhaps even more than others, the free interaction of ideas" and "informed criticism . . . of central assumptions" is difficult in an Australia hardly distinguished for intellectualism.

Helen had the equipment to do some trail blazing. Her conviction, tempered by that peculiar quality of austerity, has intellectual objectivity without any loss of human warmth. Outlook under her leadership has developed a thoroughly acceptable form of dissent. It is explicitly, determinedly socialist: at the core of its discussions on local matters is the search for the best alternative to our present system. It is unfailingly principled: at a time when it was still heresy, Helen published Isaac Deutscher's "Russia in Transition", and opened up a necessary, if painful, field of investigation in printing "Documents on the Position of the Jewish People in the U.S.S.R."

It is above all in its tone that the magazine shows that at least somewhere in Australia the socialist movement is displaying maturity. Disagreements are produced for discrimination, not for rubbishing. For Helen, heads are for thinking, not for axeing. And in case we dismiss this all as self evident, a glance at the deep and acrimonious divisions in the Labor Party, or between various sections of the communist movement, should quickly convince us.

I haven't spoken of much more than Helen's political self: if I haven't mentioned her dedication to education, her rapport with young people, her love of the bush, her interest in the theatre, cooking and other maidenly arts, even her elegant handwriting, it's because, more than anything, Outlook (its erudite and competent editorial board will not be offended) is Helen Palmer. Many of us would give a great deal for a comparable measure of identity.

MELBOURNE FILM FESTIVAL 1968

An Interview with Myself

Shirley Cass

Int.: How did you find this year's festival?

Me: Terribly interesting.

Int.: I see.

Me: Go on, ask me some more.

Int.: Are you specially interested in Film?

Me: You mean films.

Int.: No. I mean Film-as-a-Medium.

Me: Oh, I see.

Int.: Can you tell us how this passion arose and how often it possesses you?

Me: I'm always terribly aware of the good films I miss. You develop a kind of judgment about this kind of thing. I'd never go and see a film I could miss without noticing it.

Int.: I've been led to believe, that you received complimentary tickets marked 'Press' to see the films, and furthermore that this was on the understanding that you would make some comment on the films.

Me: Enlightened comment.

Int.: Well, why this reluctance?

Me: I suppose because it began to dawn on me last year, from my foyer eavesdropping, that I don't know the language.

Int.: You mean, the vocabulary of the cinema.

Me: No—the vocabulary of film criticism.

Int.: Like what?

Me: Like 'two shot'.

Int.: What's that?

Me: I thought it was two shots of the same thing, but apparently it's a screen with two heads in it.

Int.: Human heads?

Me: That's confusing. I don't know what they call a shot of two animals—zoo shot?

Int.: You can't avoid saying something about the films. How did you talk about them before you discovered there was a language to describe them?

Me: I used to say, "that was beaut!" And go home. If anyone disagreed with me, I didn't talk to them.

Int.: Forever?

Me: No. Just till they apologised.

Int.: You mean, people aren't entitled to their own opinion?

Me: Oh yes, of course, but that doesn't mean you can't reject them for having stupid ones.

Int.: Then what happened?

Me: I realised I was making judgments.

Int.: What kind of judgments?

Me: Literary judgments first.

Int.: My god, films aren't books, you know.

Me: No, they are visual—that's a film criticism word!

Int.: To get back to your literary judgments. Could you give us an example?

Me: Well, you look firstly for a story, so that afterwards you can say, "It was about this man who etc. etc."

Int.: What's wrong with that? Presumably you go on to say how well done it was, or wasn't.

Me: What?

Int.: The story.

Me: But it's a film, not a story. Anyway, I'm not supposed to be interviewing you.

Int.: O.K. Tell me what to ask next.

Me: Say, "Surely the thing you are supposed to know, is **how** it's done."

Int.: All right. How was "Elvira Madigan" done?

Me: In color.

Int.: I've heard it was a most beautiful film—exquisite color, a sublime love story; technically, a masterpiece.

Me: Christ, I wish you'd review the festival.

Int.: Don't you agree?

Me: My eyes said, yes. Pale yellow hair, pale yellow dress, butterflies, pale yellow grass—very dreamy. Kiss with shaving cream close-up to climax long shot; berries in handfuls of unthickened cream in fading light—no. This Mr. Widerberg I do not believe. Wooed, I think by an ideal of simplicity, you fell into poses of simplicity and served us the camouflage of the fairy tale.

Int.: You sound to me as if you've moved to making moral judgments now. On what authority, may I ask?

Me: On the authority of my accumulated experience—and films are part of that.

Int.: Sounds pretty dangerous to me. How on earth do you justify that?

Me: I don't usually, but since you ask . . .

Int.: Cigarette?

Me: Thanks. I expect films, I suppose, to present something I recognise, even though I have never seen it that way before. It's a kind of arrogance. I won't censor this. It's something like the following propositions: All art being produced now, belongs to me. It's borrowed from this time which I share with the artists. If it doesn't reach me, then either the artist is blocked somewhere (which is a bit like saying, he is cheating) or I am blocked somewhere (which is a bit like saying I am cheating). But it's partly a question of training or exposure. You can't accept something until you 'recognise' the terms in which it is being expressed. Skolimovski's film, "Le Depart", which I think is a marvellous film and I hope you will see it, was so exciting to me because I am certain that it was conceived as a film, or as the film mags. say in purely filmic terms. And what clinched my appreciation was that I felt I instantly recognised this. Three cheers I say for Skolimovski and for the opportunity the festival gave us to see his earlier films in the two

previous years. One of the most interesting things one gets from staying with the festival is this involvement with someone's development. And your own too. Unlike New Year's Eve, which is depressing because you've changed and the party has stayed the same, as someone said.

Int.: O.K. So from now on, you don't expect to encounter any difficulty in recognising the good films. That sounds simple.

Me: No, it's a bit more complicated, I think. There are probably all sorts of reasons why people won't or can't adapt to unfamiliar forms. It's part of our training, isn't it, to look for sequences, for instance. For action and reaction. McLuhan says in "Understanding Media": "Like the print and the photo, movies assume a high level of literacy in their users and prove baffling to the nonliterate. Our literate acceptance of the mere movement of the camera eye as it follows or drops a figure from view is not acceptable to an African film audience. If somebody disappears off the side of the film, the African wants to know what happened to him. A literate audience, however, accustomed to following the printed imagery line by line without questioning the logic of lineality, will accept film sequence without protest..." McLuhan makes me think that the feeling of just not getting it, which we've all experienced in front of a film, or a painting, or a poem, is probably some variant of what a non-literate African feels in the cinema.

Int.: So you think people should be tentative about the things they dislike?

Me: No. They should be publicly definite, but privately they should sneak back for another look. I love people who confess to having a new view of something, don't you? You know, "I had a hangover the first time," or a blind date.

Int.: Presumably you made some notes on the films you saw. You don't want to reject everything you recorded do you, because the language isn't filmic.

Me: Here's a drawing of Satyajit Ray. It's a pity this isn't a tele. interview.

Int.: Were you impressed with the things he said at the workshop?

Me: Yes, but with his manner too—open and serious and terribly patient. He pointed out that normally at an international festival there would be lots of exchange between the top directors at present. He is obviously gifted as a director of children, and I was interested to learn that they just act their scene from his whispered instructions, without being told the story. "Charaluta" was the one film he has made which he would remake exactly the same. That must be a superb feeling for an artist to have, don't you think? "Kanchenjunga," Ray's first color film from his own script, was tedious I thought, but Ray seemed quite happy to own it.

Int.: It's considered more with it for directors to work from original scripts now, isn't it, than from adaptations of novels?

Me: True, but I'm a bit torn on that one. Because I can see how 'Le Depart', for instance, wouldn't turn back into a novel if you waved a literary wand, but some writers produce film scripts unintentionally. Like Chekhov. "In The Town of S", scripted and directed by the same man who made "The Lady with the Little Dog", was based on Chekhov's "Ionych". I think the film was a brilliant translation. When you read the story again, after the film, you imagine that you see exactly where Heifitz made all his decisions for the film. But it's a kind of hallucination I think, brought about by a most rare relationship between the gifts of two different kinds of artists.

Int.: So it's the film that counts. Sorry our time has run out.

Me: Just one last answer. Don't miss "Desert People".

WHAT'S OFF:

A FILM GOURMET'S GUIDE

Everyone likes to be punished with details of what they've missed. These are: Films Worth Paying a babysitter to see.

Desert People: Documentary study of the Aboriginals living in the Western desert. Directed by Ian Dunlop for the Commonwealth Film Unit.. What's the adjective from integrity? You need it to describe the presence of this film.

Mouchette: See this especially if you hated Robert Bresson's earlier "Diary of a Country Priest" and "Balthazar". You may have overcome your distaste for the Christian version of grace through agony sufficiently to see Bresson unbend. About a fourteen-year-old girl whose life is without every loveliness.

Benefit of the Doubt: The film from which I have most often found myself quoting. It's composed from excerpts of Peter Brook's ("Marat Sade") production of "U.S.", a 'play' about our involvement in Vietnam, and interviews with the director and cast, which discuss their interpretation of the script and what lies behind it. One felt somehow chastened (e.g. the segment on the stereotype of anti-Americanism) and at the same time inspired by the possibilities for experimental theatre, in terms both of presentation and content. (I keep thinking more and more that the kind of theatre we get, like the kind of schools we get, are exactly like the kind of theatre and schools we expect to get.)

In the Town of S: See interview. Produced in 1967. Russian. Like "The Lady with the Little Dog", also directed by Josif Heifitz, there is an impeccable regard here for the quality of Chekhov's preoccupation with the boredom and regrets of his own bourgeoisie. It may unnerve you if you are either a country G.P. or an unpublished lady novelist.

Pather Panchali: Aparajito: World of Apu: Satyajit Ray's trilogy based on a best selling Bengali novel. Our grandchildren will still respect these films, I'm sure.

Rebellion: Japan. Directed by Masaki Kobayashi. The script by Hashimoto who wrote the script for "Rashamon". Lovers of Japanese period dramas will find this exciting. Interesting version of the duty-love conflict. Particular scenes will provide further exhibits for your memory's collection of Japanese compositions.

HENRIETTA AS I KNEW HER

Mary Durack

FOR almost as long as I can remember Henrietta was a part of life in Western Australia and increasingly, as our interests drew us together and the age-gap narrowed between us, a part of my own life. The first time I recall seeing her was when meeting my father at Fremantle on the state steamship Bambara in 1923. Henrietta, with her engineer husband, had returned from the north on the same ship. She could not have been more than twenty-two—younger than my own daughters today—but she seemed to the awe-stricken ten-year scrap that I was the last word in peerless and unapproachable sophistication. I was dumbfounded when, looking down from her considerable height, she condescended to speak to me. My father always carried around with him a collection of my child verses and Henrietta, a captive ship-mate, would have been fair game for him. She told me she was glad to see that I was writing of the things I knew and encouraged me to go on writing.

I met her again in 1932 at her home in Peppermint Grove when I had started writing for local papers. She had been publishing stories and articles for some years under the pseudonym of "Henry Drake", but since her success in the 1929 Bulletin competition with her first novel "Blue North" had been writing under her own name. She was to me very much the big-time author and, on that occasion, dauntingly avant garde in her comments on Huxley's "Brave New World", then hot off the press. By that time the mother of two children, she insisted that I should make the most of being still unencumbered and suggested that I try writing for the Bulletin, a goal that seemed far beyond my reach. Soon afterwards, however, my stories of Kimberley station life were accepted by that paper.

Although, like Henrietta, I was a foundation member of the Fellowship of Australian Writers (W.A.), this organisation had been going for some years before she persuaded me onto the executive. She had no time for the shrinker or the shirker and was unimpressed by such excuses as lack of time and experience. I then had four children under six but she had two in their teens, an age which she claimed to be considerably more demanding.

Efficient in all her undertakings, her home was as well run as her committee and the more humdrum aspects of domesticity never much in evidence. For this she owed much to the co-operation

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Dorothy Hewett's

"Windmill Country"

in a beautiful edition by Edwards & Shaw
and subsidised-priced at **$1.95**, post free.

"If it is a poetry of affirmation and courage, it is no less a poetry of beauty. There is no contradiction."—David Martin

Of earlier publications, Laurence Collinson's "The Moods of Love" and John Manifold's "Nightmares and Sunhorses" are long out of print, and collectors' pieces.
A few copies are left of Aileen Palmer's "World without Strangers?" ($1.50) and Laurence Collinson's "Who is wheeling Grandma?" ($1.95).

From Editor, Overland, GPO Box 98a, Melbourne, 3001

of her husband, that genial prototype of the Australian digger who was the perfect foil for his intellectual wife. A mine of practical knowledge, strong on facts and figures, suspicious of 'wild notions' or anything that savored of pretension, his own autobiography, "The Turning Wheel" (1960) tells more of their background and life together than Henrietta was ever to set down.

The promotion of interest and standards in Australian literature was a cause which Henrietta encouraged Fellowship members to share like a family, chores and all. She was in the chair when it was decided that we should participate to this end in Perth's annual Arts Festival. Never will I forget the panic with which I and several other trembling novices found ourselves, with such experienced performers as Professor Walter Murdoch, J. K. Ewers and Gavin Casey, facing a packed audience in the museum. Henrietta was chief organiser and compere of this symposium and I for one was terrified of letting her down. If subsequent requests to address organisations and take part in panel discussions are any criterion we must have surpassed ourselves.

But for all her forthright view that any writer worth his salt should be able to express himself vocally at appropriate times, no-one knew better than Henrietta the wisdom of avoiding too much publicity outside the context of literature. She never sought the limelight for its own sake.

By 1960, when I followed her to the chair of the Fellowship, I had six children (including teenagers) and an unfinished book on my hands. Henrietta, however, then had grandchildren, an invalid mother, a novel and a history on her plate. I was never to have the advantage of her or, although we had long since established a happily informal relationship, ever to feel quite adult in her company. How eloquently her clear blue eyes and ironical smile could question the illogical theory or challenge the rash conclusion. How quickly, too, her eyes could flash with humor or warm to sympathy. The grand manner that some found disconcerting she owed to the accident of birth that had endowed her with a regal presence and the upbringing that had emphasised deportment and social aplomb. Actually she was anything but a snob and, if not exactly one to suffer fools gladly, could be touchingly patient with the confused ignoramus or the honest dunderhead. It was humbug and lack of integrity that truly exasperated her. She herself never betrayed a trust though her own, to her hurt and astonishment, was sometimes betrayed. "At school," she once told me, "we were taught **ethics**. It's a pity the subject is not included in every curriculum."

To those who knew and worked with her it was obvious that she herself had learned it well and applied its principles to all her activities. Not for her the careless dismissal of unfinished business. All items on an executive agenda she insisted on being talked through to a suitable conclusion—and the minutes checked. But once convinced of a point's being clearly understood and conscientiously considered no-one could defer to a majority or agree to differ more charmingly.

Anyone expecting Henrietta to follow a conservative line was liable to be surprised, for although cautious in coming to a decision she had a vigorous independence and openness of mind as well as a formidable gift of objectivity. Her cool and balanced judgments will be missed as much as her warmly spontaneous notes and calls of felicitation or sympathy.

When leaving to attend Writers' Week of the Adelaide Festival in March this year I boarded the plane with her farewell words of advise on a matter to be raised at a Federal Council meeting ringing in my ears. I was incredulous on hearing, only a few hours later, of her death as the result of a stroke. And yet her going was in some way typical. She had just completed an article on the future of the short story for the American periodical the Kenyon Review and her desk was clear for the next job. No unfinished business, no untidy ends. Upright and impeccably dressed, she had stepped out firmly on that last afternoon of her life into the city she knew and loved so well. She had always felt intensely the drama of life and she had enjoyed most of all writing for the stage. A keen follower and judge of theatre, she had criticised the end of Keneally's "O'Halloran's Little Boat", recently produced in Perth, as being an anti-climax. She could hardly have chosen for herself a more dramatically clean-cut curtain.

* Henrietta Francis York Drake-Brockman was the only child of Western Australia's first Public Service Commissioner, M. E. Jull, an Englishman, and of his wife, Roberta, who became Perth's first woman medical practitioner. Born in Perth in 1901, she went to school for some years in Scotland and later at Frensham in N.S.W. In 1921 she married civil engineer Geoffrey Drake-Brockman, then Commissioner for the North West, and travelled with him in the outback until shortly before the birth of her first child in 1925, when she came to live in Perth. Her publications from 1930 include the novels "Blue North", "Sheba Land", "Younger Sons", "Fatal Days", "The Wicked and the Fair"; plays, "Sydney or the Bush", "Men Without Wives" (winner of the 1938 Sesquicentenary Drama Prize); history, "Voyage to Disaster"; biography, "Katharine Susannah Prichard". She was co-editor with Professor Walter Murdoch of "Australian Short Stories" (Oxford), Editor of "Coast to Coast" (1957), "West Coast Stories" (1958) and "Australian Legendary Tales" by K. Langloh Parker. A foundation member of the Fellowship of Australian Writers (W.A. branch) in 1938, she was several times president of this body and played a leading role in the formation of its Federal Council. She was awarded the O.B.E. for services to literature in 1967, the same year as she had life membership of the F.A.W. bestowed on her. She died suddenly in Perth in March 1968.

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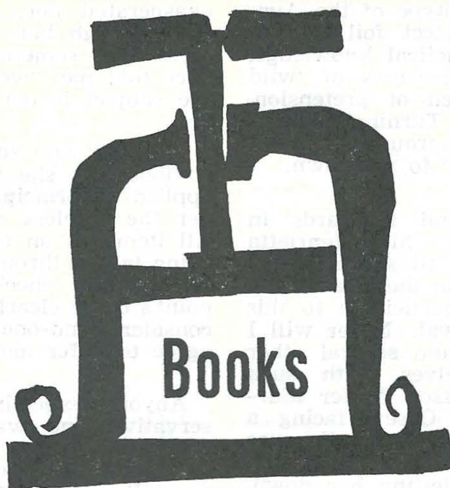

Meanjin's Quarter Century

C. HARTLEY GRATTAN

C. B. Christesen (ed.): "On Native Grounds: Australian Writing from Meanjin Quarterly" (Angus & Robertson, $6.00).

No fate is worse than to have articles which one, perhaps mistakenly, regards as very good buried in the files of a magazine, for few persons except scholars who feed professionally on the debris of history ever read back files and the best they can do for a proud originator is to refer to the material in footnotes or bibliography (which, alas, dispose very few to read the stuff to which reference is made). Hence it is all to the good if on occasion selections from the files of a magazine are anthologised as in this instance the Meanjin file has been raided for essays, stories and poems of Australian reference that have appeared in the numbers of the last twenty-five years. At least some of the people who by writing (instead of talking about what they would write if . . .) helped keep Meanjin going all these years are given a second trot around the track and the casual reader, as well as the apprentice student who has not yet begun to probe old files, can get an accurate idea of what the constant reader found in Meanjin without the bother of reading several acres of stuff Mr. Christesen has found it necessary, for one reason or another, to leave out. Here is Meanjin's best foot forward which is to say, in fact, over the quarter-century in question, Australia's best foot.

Meanjin, it will be recalled, was launched by Mr. Christesen in Brisbane in 1940 with no higher purpose than to make some aspiring Queensland poets better known. Nettie Palmer promptly sent me some of the earliest numbers and I began to maintain a file. After five years in Brisbane the paper was transferred to Melbourne under the patronage of the University. Quite promptly it achieved the position of the leading Australian journal of cultural concerns, a position it still holds, though today it has intense competition to cope with.

The years of Meanjin's publication have been a time of political, economic and cultural re-orientation in Australia, not discounting in the least the continuities in all these fields, and the question inevitably arises as to how far Mr. Christesen created the Meanjin we know in a cultural vacuum, real or imagined feverishly, and how far he did it by riding the vigorous cultural currents which had their origins in the 1930s and had been greatly heightened during the war.

My impression is that the latter is the more accurate way of putting it, but this is not to discount Mr. Christesen's great ability to discern what was creative and valuable in the flow of manuscripts through which he labored each quarter. It was, I think, a case of a man rising to the challenge of his time. I say this in full knowledge that Mr. Christesen has a wide streak of Jeremiah in him, to which he has given voice rather often in his magazine, and probably would comment that if he rode the cultural currents it was the roughest kind of ride; that there was nothing first-class about the ride; and why, after all, had he been fated to make it? Well, this world has been a vale of tears for a long, long time and if life as a process is a trial to the tender-minded, the results often justify it, as Meanjin does in this instance.

*

To my knowledge nobody has yet been moved to write a history of the successive intellectual environments in which Australian literature has been produced. It is my impression, gained during forty years of observation and study, that those environments have, since circa 1880 at least, been constantly characterised by controversy, ideological at best, about personalities at worst, and if nothing else was at hand to quarrel about the particularisms of place would do—e.g., Sydney versus Melbourne, or 'Australia' versus London. To be sure not every writer at any time has felt an obligation to take a stand on any of the issues under discussion and least of all to express himself unfailingly on the issue being agitated at the particular moment. It is not, moreover, my thesis that this disposition to quarrel is peculiar to Australia. All writers, to my observation, are disposed to quarrel and George Moore, a writer commonly read when I was young, once defined a literary movement as three or four good writers living in the same town and hating one another. Divisiveness comes quite close to being all in the world of writers, and not least in Australia.

I myself bear the scars of Australian conflicts. Back in 1938 I was invited to dinner at Alice Henry's flat to meet Bernard O'Dowd and his wife. To the disgust and horror of Miss Henry and myself O'Dowd insisted on arguing during the entire evening, over and over again, that I must avoid the error of thinking that what Sydney said was Australian literature was Australian

literature. My protestations that what I had written on the subject showed I entertained no such grotesque confusion were swept aside as irrelevant. O'Dowd was obessessed with hostility and contempt for Sydney. While he roared on, I retired into morose silence and Miss Henry was frantic with dismay and disapproval—of O'Dowd. Equally illustrative is the payoff I have received for having had the incredible brass to criticise adversely certain Australian writers who were very nice blokes, much enjoyed by their cronies, illustratively Hugh McCrae. In the McCrae case I have been extravagantly condemned in Harry Green's history and in an essay (lately reprinted in Semmler's "20th Century Australian Literary Criticism") by a distinguished poet who, of course, was a friend of McCrae.

*

The point I am coming around to making is that the climate in which Meanjin was gestated and the successive climates in which it has continued to be produced—all have been marked by controversy. Lately in another periodical, Quadrant, I read of the surfacing of at least two controversies more or less of this very moment. Every anthology of Australian literary criticism I have examined reflects quite plainly some or several controversies. Buried in the files of all Australian periodicals, even those but contingently concerned with literature, are the flotsam and jetsam of controversy. Australia is perhaps the only country in the dubiously civilised world where book reviews have led to court fights.

But the observation I want to inject here is that, with all their experience, Australians remain remarkably unsophisticated controversialists. To my sense they very uncommonly are able to recognise that in the city of literature are many mansions, divergently designed, and because a man dwells in a house very differently designed from one's own, or even in one differently decorated, he is not necessarily a mug, a bloody fool, a rogue, a conspirator, a subversive, a nincompoop. He may simply be a chap who has not taken the particular bait that has trapped your intellect. His values are different. No matter how belligerently you assert your values, you aren't, unless you are exceptionally charismatic, going to effect his supine conversion. And, anyhow, why the absurd pretence that you have received a revelation from on high which justifies belligerence toward yon heretic?

So looking over this Meanjin anthology I am less impressed by the uncontroversial aspects of it than the controversial. I do not mean the overtly controversial, like A. D. Hope on Max Harris—which seems to me like a confrontation between a prematurely-aged academic eagle and a brash young journalistic sparrow, but to a controversy here implicit but which sooner or later must become explicit. I refer to the role of Vance Palmer in Australian letters. On page x of his preface Mr. Christesen writes: "If in this respect a writer such as Vance Palmer receives more generous representation than any comparable writer of the present time, it is because he was the main influence in Australian letters for most of the period in which Meanjin grew from its initial stage to its present form, and it is proper that this fact should here be acknowledged."

What about that? Is it to be read as meaning that the twenty-five years of Meanjin anthologised here is in a way the Vance Palmer side of the sometimes cacophonous disputations that have enlivened the Australian literary scene? If so, then what was, substantively speaking and not in airy honorific generalisations, the Vance Palmer influence? On whom was it most pervasively exercised? Was it consistently to the good of Australian letters? Was it the example of his work—his fiction, his non-fiction—that captured the imagination of his contemporaries? Or was it his personality, or even in his later years, simply his seniority as a man of letters in Australia, that gave him his prestige? Were there writers of his time, his peers, who were not responsive to the Palmer mystique? Was there, indeed, any soundly founded opposition? What was Nettie's role in establishing and sustaining Vance's position? In sum, who will attempt the perhaps invidious task of defining, explaining, and mayhap justifying, what bids fair to be the Vance Palmer Legend which, like so many literary legends, seems to me to have considerable elements of myth.

New Impulses in Poetry

L. J. CLANCY

Bruce Dawe: "An Eye for a Tooth" (Cheshire, $1.95).
Geoffrey Dutton: "Poems Soft and Loud" (Cheshire, $2.25).
Rodney Hall: "Eyewitness" (South Head Press, $2.50).
Rodney Hall and Thomas W. Shapcott (eds.): "New Impulses in Australian Poetry" (University of Queensland Press, $2.75).
Gwen Harwood: "Poems/Volume Two" (Angus & Robertson, $1.95).
Evan Jones: "Understanding" (Melbourne University Press, $3.25 and $1.85).
Grace Perry: "Frozen Section" (Edwards and Shaw, $2.50).
Eric C. Rolls: "Sheaf Tosser" (Angus & Robertson, $1.75).

"The measure is either constructed on no previous system and acknowledges no justifying principle but that of the writer's convenience; or else some mechanical movement is adopted, of which one couplet or stanza is so far an adequate specimen, as that the occasional differences appear evidently to arise from accident or the qualities of the language itself, not from meditation and an intelligent purpose. And the language . . . may, notwithstanding some illustrious exceptions, be too faithfully characterised as claiming to be poetical for no better reason than that it would be intolerable in conversation or in prose."
("Biographia Literaria")

How many volumes of poetry are published in Australia each year? On my desk at the moment are some fifteen volumes; at least a third of these had no reason to be printed; a case could be made out, with some difficulty, for one or two more; and only about half can truly be called poets at all. To borrow a distinction which David Moody made in Meanjin some years ago, there are poets and there are versifiers. The versifiers in this group run a whole gamut of quality from the trite (Geoffrey Dutton) through the trivial (Eric C. Rolls) to the merely inept (Grace Perry).

An example of what I mean, and of the relevance of Coleridge's remarks to contemporary Australian poetry, can be seen from Dutton's second collection, "Poems, Soft and Loud". The great majority of Dutton's verses are concerned with observations of either natural phenomena (the landscape around South Australia and in parts of Russia which he visited) or with particular events occurring in Australia (the Beatles in Adelaide, Ky's visit). The kind of observation offered can be fairly deduced, I think, from this sample:

The Holden. 99%. According to the taxi-driver
"Everybody knows the Holden's the best bloody unit,
But look at that bloke in a Jap job. There's always got to be
Some dumb bastard who wants to be different."
There is a proposal to run a cable car for tired tourists
To the top of Ayers Rock: the album for the snapshots
Is decorated on the cover with Abos throwing boomerangs.
(The stones we throw at Alabama come from Namatjira's grave.)

In its slackness of rhythm, its loosely discursive running commentary and the platitudinous moralising of the last line, this poem is fairly characteristic of the whole collection. The attention we are invited to exhibit is of a rather meretricious kind: that is, it is not an attention to poetry at all but to a loose collection of journalistic observations which would be better suited to a travel book. There is no sense of the words being shaped and moulded into verse—they seem merely to have fallen out in the way that they did—and if only for their garrulousness these thoughts would certainly be as intolerable in prose as they are in their present form.

*

The trouble is that Dutton is by no means alone in these traits. Even a real poet, a man like Bruce Dawe, is not free from the same excesses. Many of the volumes before me seem to fall between two extremes. On the one hand they are marked by the conservatism of metrical practice which has become by now almost proverbial in Australian poetry. Rigid verse forms go hand in hand with a stiff, self-conscious posture of the poet in his verse. Or on the other hand, they rely, as Dawe's and Dutton's collections do, on a pervasive poetic **personality** making itself felt throughout the poems, a consistent idiom which attempts to compensate for the lack of any firmly felt formal control. Although immeasurably superior to the Dutton passage, much of the force of this extract from "The Not-so-good Earth" by Dawe is vitiated by the same look of carelessness:

(if I remember rightly Grandmother dies
with naturally a suspenseful break in the action
for a full symphony orchestra plug for Craven A
neat as a whistle probably damn glad
to be quit of the whole gang with their marvellous patience.)
We never did find out how it finished up . . . Dad
at this stage tripped over the main lead in the dark
hauling the whole set down smack on its inscrutable face,
wiping out in a blue flash and curlicue of smoke
600 million Chinese without a trace . . .

Despite the liveliness of the imagination at work and the witty use of colloquialisms, the poetry is still too unformed to be fully satisfying. Dawe must be tired of being told by critics how he should write. There can be no question of carelessness; he has published three volumes by now and has stubbornly persisted in the same mode, so clearly he knows what he is trying to do. But I still felt that the collection as a whole was a little disappointing and that many of the poems could have done with some more working on. There is no poem that really stands out and even the best have a slightly unfinished look about them.

Perhaps the most noticeable change from earlier volumes was not in the mode or the craftsmanship but in a changed emotional tone. Dawe clearly finds it harder to be funny and satiric about the things he most passionately detests and the humor where it appears tends more to the macabre and bitterly grotesque as in "A Victorian hangman tells his love". The collection as a whole is pessimistic even in its wit and a more tender note creeps in to only a few poems, usually among the best, like "Eternal Student" and "Marcel Marceau at the Comedy Theatre". While this gives bite to his work, it tends at the same time to narrow its range.

*

Rodney Hall's newest collection of poems, "Eyewitness", stands at the opposite extreme from Dawe's book. Where even the title, "An Eye for a Tooth", expressed the poet's indignant sense of anomaly, Hall is very much the detached observer. The opening poem "Viewpoint" indicates the poet's stance quite explicitly. The movement of the seasons is contrasted rather wistfully with the poet's own detached and static attitude ("that still I'm here/and still I sit"). Like Dawe, though, Hall relies on a very acute ear for rhythmic effects and a pervasiveness of tone to give the poems unity. He tends to abandon tight formal structures and his imagery is consistent (in particular, images of music, floods and tides, birds) but fairly limited in its range. Like many other Australian poets (Evan Jones and Thomas W. Shapcott are two that spring immediately to mind), he likes to make use of historical personages as personae in the poems.

Perhaps this fact might offer an insight into the reason why the collection, for all its technical accomplishment, is still similarly unsatisfying in part. Usually the historical figures are not employed in order to suggest contemporary parallels or some modern relevance, but rather for the sake of mere picturesqueness. In "Matador: a soliloquy", for instance, the impression is of a mere performance or exercise. What would a matador be likely to be thinking? asks the poet and proceeds to speculate. Hall, in fact, seems unable to find a subject which sufficiently engages his very considerable poetic talents and his poetry in consequence often has an air of mere aesthetic decoration about it. The poems seem to be got at from the outside; they rarely rise from within, welling up out of some inner necessity or urgency.

Masterfully as it conveys certain scenes, the poetry descends into crude moralising whenever the poet attempts to draw significance from the scenes described, or to estimate their significance upon himself. In "Feast of the Immaculate Conception", for instance, the movement of the verse conveys an almost hypnotic feeling of ebbing and surging; the rhythms effectively evoke the dignity and splendor of the procession. But the tartly ironic contrast of the "resplendently arrayed" bishop and priest and the poverty of the Italian peasants is too heavily and crudely drawn to be moving. A further failing to which Hall is sometimes prone is abstract statement. These lines from "Under the icebergs" are not untypical:

To feel as all society may feel
involves a risk of decadence.
Yet isolation breeds dishonesty.

This may be perfectly true; but it certainly doesn't need poetry to say so.

However, I don't want to sound carping. Hall is obviously very talented indeed, and against the faults I have mentioned have to be set the many successes of the collection, poems like "Clarinet quintet", "Cat in the garden" and "Four pound notes". If he can find a subject which engages his imagination intensely enough he will write very good poetry indeed.

*

Craftsmanship and discipline are the hallmarks of Evan Jones' second volume of poetry, "Understandings". In his technique he goes to the opposite extreme from both Dawe and Hall. The poems employ a variety of verse forms but all are very tightly controlled and carefully wrought. The shadow of A. D. Hope seems to lie heavily over the collection, not only in the disciplined craft of the poems, but in their heavy reliance on a speaking voice, a presence in the poem.

"Ode: the Beautiful Girls", for example, is austere, almost aloof, in tone though occasionally a more personal and quickeningly colloquial note breaks in:

> God knows what sullen or insulted past
> Was whipped into such elegance at last.

Although the ending is a little inconclusive, the poem as a whole is poised and authoritative enough to suggest the presence of a substantial poetic vision. But the danger is that this commanding, public tone can degenerate into something much more vicious. This happens especially in "Address to the Pure Scholars" where the voice goes wrong. What had been poise becomes pompousness; what had been authoritative becomes strident. This is the worst example but there are small, local failures elsewhere, even in such an engaging poem as the "Poem in November". This almost begs for comparison with Dylan Thomas (a fact which dates it as surely as its opening line—"This is my thirtieth year towards the grave") and yet its real interest has nothing at all to do with Thomas. Perhaps the most impressive element is the intricate yet highly formal tone and rhythms —remarkably poised and stilled at their best, yet suddenly collapsing into a hollow rhetoric towards the finish of the poem. It is, in fact, a poem which offers a great deal and gives rather less. The opening two lines establish a mood of expectancy in the reader but the third stanza distracts rather than satisfies these expectations by the disconcertingly sudden introduction of the terrorists and the empire and their equally unexpected removal and return to the world of decent Sunday morning calm.

On the whole, the claim made on the dust-cover of the very handsomely produced volume for its being "thoughtful, solid and consistent" has to rest largely on the thirty or so poems of the first section. The second and third sections are devoted to jeux and miniatures, witty and likeable lightweights, while the last consists wholly of the long narrative poem "A Dream of Barricades", that white elephant of Australian poetry. To paraphrase Dr. Johnson's famous remark about the lady preacher, it is done well but one is surprised that it should be thought worth doing at all.

It is a tribute to Jones' powers as a poet that, in fact, the collection does give an impression of substantiality. "At a Grave by the Mexican Roadside" is one of the best things he has done and the semi-confessional poems, tracing the growth and end of a love affair and the poet's relationship with his son, are deeply warm and compassionate, yet at the same time show a wry self-recognition of human fallibility.

Gwen Harwood's "Poems/Volume Two" stands out from the other volumes reviewed here as being in a class of its own. Miss Harwood has written under many names (here Francis Geyer and Miriam Stone besides her own) and this is only appropriate, for the poet of this volume has many voices. There are the acutely perceptive sketches of the ageing musician Professor Krote which, starting out in a manner strongly reminiscent of Eliot's "Sweeney Among the Nightingales", grow to become a moving and thoughtful study of a human being. Again, there are several sonnets (a form to which this poet is much attracted) which are elegies of the victims of suburban suffocation. In a totally different vein are the jabbing satirical portraits of pretentious academics.

But without doubt the high claims that one would want to make for this collection rest on the remarkably fine poems recalling and celebrating the rapture of friendship, love and motherhood. In poems such as the almost perfect "Nightfall", pain and joy, discovery and deprivation, are contained and merged inextricably in the one vision. The poetry constantly employs the language and imagery of music and there is a frank recognition of the inadequacy of words to contain the poet's vision of pain and ecstasy:

> Light changes, and we change and suffer.
> But for this hour I offer you,
> whose warmth and words and skill renew
> the heart, a poem, though words can never
> contain, as music does, the unsayable
> grace that cannot be defined
> yet leaps like light from mind to mind.

Music is one form of creativity, and the poetry constantly works through the symbols and terms of religious experience—words like grace, benediction, prayer, and the biblical echoes of the cock crowing and the fall of sparrows—to thoughts and feelings of joy and fruition. Most often, though, the imagery is of light and darkness. In a short "Impromptu" the poet explains the origin of their associations:

> As a young child I could not bear
> to see the sun go down, and I
> would pray for endless light; no prayer
> could keep the sun firm in the sky
> and shadows one by one would claim
> my world . . .

The last two lines are a statement of the whole endeavor of the volume: to "make of light a tool/ to shape joy from the flux of sense."

*

Space prevents me from discussing many other volumes. The passage quoted earlier from Coleridge seems to me to be uncannily apposite for many of them. It should be noted that Dutton is by no means the worst of the group and if I chose to talk about him in more detail that was only because at least the faults were there on a scale ambitious enough to bear the weight of critical discussion. For a fuller glimpse into what is going on in Australian poetry at the moment, though, readers might care to look at a new anthology edited by Rodney Hall and Thomas W. Shapcott, entitled "New Impulses in Australian Poetry". If they can get past the headily optimistic introduction, an optimism which I feel the present selection of volumes doesn't for the most part justify, and ignore the bland assumption of omniscience in the tone of the introduction to each poet, there is a good deal in the anthology that is worth reading.

Published by S. Murray-Smith, Mount Eliza, Victoria; and printed by "Richmond Chronicle," 5 Shakespeare Street, Richmond, Vic.. 3121.

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