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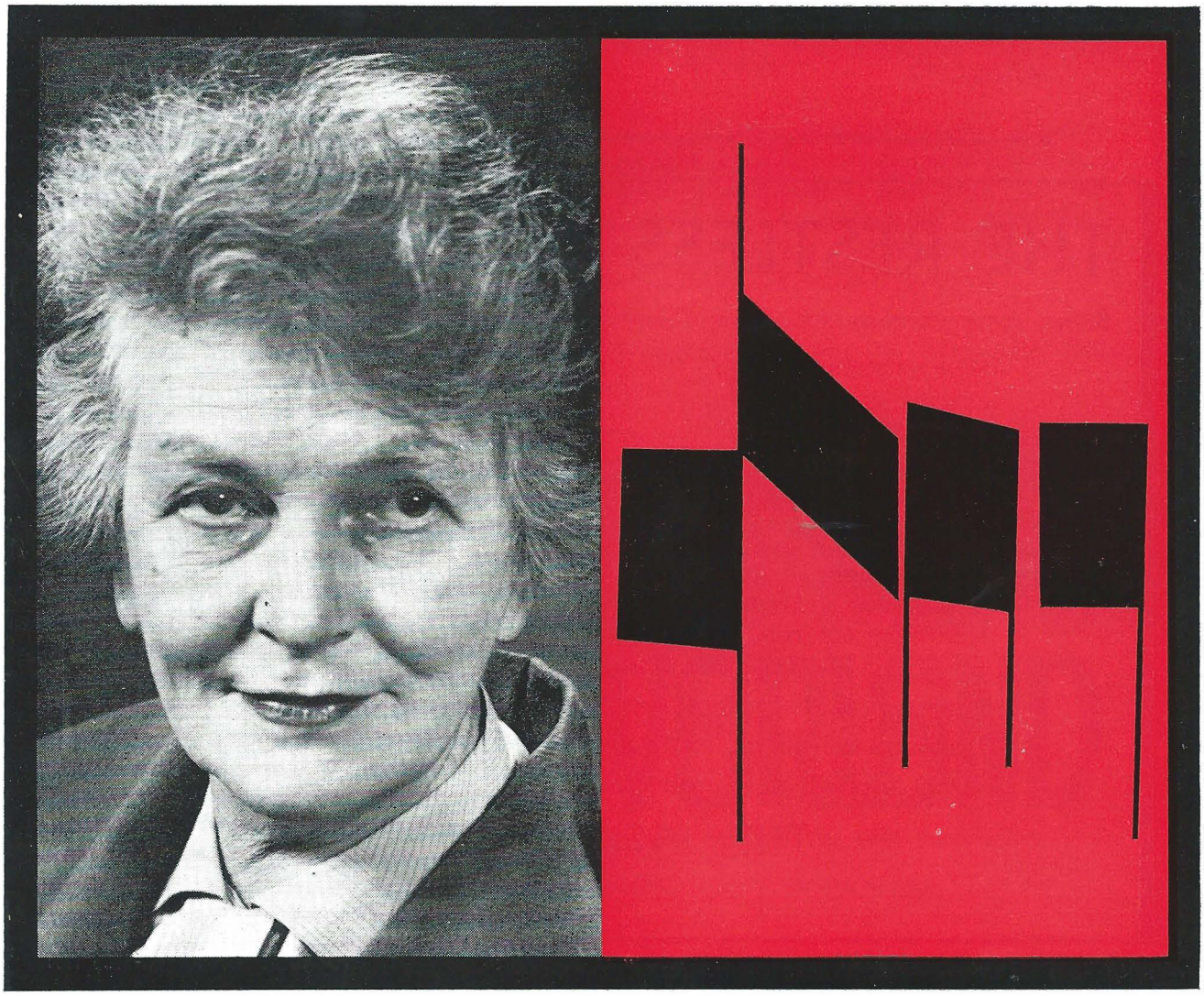

Margaret Sutherland

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stories

poetry

features

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OVERLAND

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SCHNEC

Kay Brown

DAD and our boys sometimes fetched home mates they had who worked in their 'team' as they called the group in their contracts underground. One they called 'Schnec' —and no one ever mentioned his other name. He was a Finn, and a great big fair fellow, not as tall as our boys, but broader. His eyes were very large and blue, and his voice deep and soft, and he laughed a lot. He would have a meal with us and then get up and help Mumma clear up. The men tried to tell him that wasn't the way out here; it made them uncomfortable to see women's work done by men; but he just laughed and said: "Yo-hey—that iss very fonny!" and went on doing it. Mumma said he was a good fellow and she always made him welcome, though he didn't come over home often. He and his mates spent most of their time over Town, drinking. The Finn workers loved their beer.

Just a bit over a mile up the river from where Dad built our place the Mullenses had a small selection. They milked cows and sold bits of stuff, like eggs and cabbages. Old Man Mullens was as dry as a dead sapling, and cared for nothing but free drink. His wife was a thin sad creature with headaches, and they had a girl, Ellie. She was big-boned and fair, a silent, good creature with a plait of very clean-looking hair in a bun on her neck, and she just seemed to work and work, for old man Mullens. Mumma liked her, and said she was a good woman, and encouraged her to stop in at our place as she passed and have a cuppa. Mumma took pride in encouraging worth.

Schnec was there a few times when Ellie called, and he'd try to get her to talk, or smile, but Ellie never smiled about anything. She was slow to talk, too, but then I don't suppose there was overmuch fun or conversation in or around old man Mullens.

Schnec liked Ellie, and he would always try to make her smile. She was slow to do that or to be comfortable with strangers, but after a few times she got used to him and seemed to like him, too. When we wanted to buy cabbage or stuff from their bit of a garden, Schnec would walk out with us and help pull the stuff and carry it back in a bag across his great shoulders. So we got the habit of waiting until he was off-shift to get stuff from Mullens—then later on we even stopped going, and Schnec just walked out every Sunday he was off-shift and visited with Ellie, and after a bit everyone accepted them liking each other and Schnec being Ellie's bloke. Even old man Mullens stopped taking any notice of Schnec after a bit, which was the closest he ever came to a welcome to anyone.

Schnec stopped drinking over town with the men, and made a few mid-week trips out to see Ellie when he was off-shift. They didn't seem to act very sweet on each other, like most couples, but Schnec, who was handy with his hands, used to fix up all sorts of bits of things that needed doing about their place and he still helped with the woman's work, clearing up, when he visited.

Old Mullens tried, the same as Dad, to tell him different, but Schnec didn't seem to want to learn about that particular thing from our men. He just went on doing it. It upset Mrs. Mullens a bit. She told Mumma she just didn't feel right having a man poking round her in the kitchen, so after a bit she used to go and lie down with her headache when Schnec came out to visit, and then he and Ellie went on clearing up alone.

Those must have been the times they got to know each other, for they never went over town to movies or out walking at night like other couples. Once or twice the boys were going to tell Schnec that he should take Ellie over town Satur-

day nights if she was his girl, just to show everyone. But they never did, somehow. Dad said Schnec wasn't a boy to be told those sort of things.

*

The two of them went along like that for over a year, and even old man Mullens got to accepting Schnec as Ellie's bloke. Sometimes he let them have the sulky on Sunday, and Schnec did enjoy that. They would drive out a bit, or over our way and stop and have drinks of tea, and Schnec seemed to bubble with silent laughing inside while he sat with us, and all the time he would remark on things to Ellie, and say: "That was awful fonny, eh?" and try to make her laugh, too; but though she learned to smile sometimes when she looked at him, none of us ever heard Ellie Mullens really laugh.

That Christmas, Mumma worked a nice tray-cloth and gave it to Ellie, and then one day Schnec was there talking to Mumma when we came in from school, and Mumma was telling him he'd have to see Father Pat and get things "fixed up". Clem, with his mouth full of bread and jam, said, "What things?" and Mumma told him not to interrupt. Clem came outside, and told me old Schnec was going to marry Ellie, and I said, "Who told you?" and he said, "Oh, no one—but I know", and it wasn't long before we did hear they were going to get married.

Schnec bought a little place down river from ours, but not as far out as Mullens'; just a couple of rooms with dirt floors but with river water handy.

After tea of a night when the men were off-shift and sitting round, they used to wonder how old Mullens would make out without Ellie to do the work, but Dad said ten to one Schnec would do a fair amount of graft for the old people—he was that sort of a bloke, and he knew a lot about land work, too—a lot of foreigners were better farmers than us—Schnec might improve Mullens' place even.

Ellie spent a lot more time at our place, and she and Mumma sewed a lot on the machine, and sometimes when he was off-shift Schnec would call there and walk Ellie home, carrying the parcels of stuff she and Mumma had sewed. Schnec was funny that way—he just liked to see all sorts of little things that our men didn't bother about. Mumma said sometimes he had more to say about how to make material up than Ellie did. He liked the fancy work Mumma did, and told Ellie she must get some and do it. He even went over town and bought a large supper cloth with a design stamped on it and a lot of coloured cotton. Ellie said she didn't have time for doing that work, but Schnec said, "Put it by then—you will have such time later," and he smiled at her and leaned over and chucked her under the chin with his fingers. "You **will** have time and you **will** learn how to laugh—soon—my Ellie," Schnec said to her. Ellie looked down confused. She was uncomfortable when Schnec promised things like that. He was always doing it, as if he was planning all sorts of things for her all the time.

One morning after that Mumma told Clem to get up a bit earlier and kill a chook for her; "and be careful to be tidy when you come in at dinner-time," she told us, "Father Pat will be here." Clem said: "I'm going to be a priest when I grow up and go and see people every day for dinner and have chook."

"Be off with you," Mumma said. "The things you're going to be when you grow up would fill volumes." But she smiled at him as she said it, and you knew how she loved to hear these words from a son, even teasingly. Clem was cheeky, but he was clever, too, we knew, and everyone sort of half-expected he would do some of the things he said he would—someday.

*

Father Pat was finished his dinner when we got in, even though we hurried. Clem said Mumma would start him before us, and he made me race home with him, but we were still too late to see the chook carved. Trust Mumma for that; but she told us our dinners were in the oven, and we said "Good day" to Father Pat, and went quickly to get our plates and see what pieces we had got. Clem had a leg, and I had a wing and some back. We set to eating, and Mumma and Father Pat sat outside on the deck chairs. We could hear them talking about plans for the wedding. Schnec was on day-shift and was coming over after, and Ellie had been in that morning and gone back to get the milking over early, Mumma told Father Pat.

We got our hats and went to say goodbye to Mumma. Father Pat said: "Wait a few seconds now, and I'll drive you over." He and Mumma made a few more plans, and then we climbed aboard his flivver and drove off round the mine road. As we came to the junction, where the five car tracks joined before going off in the different directions of the South Side, Community, River Camps, and Main two roads, we saw a group of women carrying their stores home stop suddenly and stare upwards towards the main shaft. They had heard the Knocks. Father Pat slowed down and looked that way, too. There seemed to be a lot of movement and then Doc Londy's car shot past us and went tearing right to the shaft head. Father Pat shut the engine off and we sat watching.

People were coming down the road from all the tracks, and either waiting near us or keeping going towards the shaft—men off-shift mostly. The women stopped not far from us, just looking. Not many spoke; just a few murmurs, and then we all looked towards the mine in silence until Mrs. Whelan who'd been leaning against the side of the car, suddenly screamed out, "**No**—it's the Crescent! It's the Crescent! **Mick**! Oh Holy Mother of God," and she started to run forward.

Shrieking, Mrs. Haynes and Milly and some of the other women ran and stopped her, and Father Pat got out quickly and put his hand on her shoulder and said: "There now—there—take it easy, Mary. It's not only Mick—you think of the little one. Go along home now," he commanded, and some of the women went with her, glad of something to do. For no one could do much or even find out much until some of the shift workers came up to the surface. If it was a bad accident all the shifts would come up and stay out for a whole round of shifts, if anyone was killed. We all knew that. So we kept watching for men returning who should be on till four.

Clem said: "Let's go back, eh, and tell Mumma?" But Father Pat stepped up briskly behind us, and said: "Nothing of the sort. You two be off to school and tell Sister I'll explain why you were a bit late." Clem grumbled and kicked stones all the way over. Sister just said "Oh" very gently when we told her, and then she turned and told us all to kneel and say three Hail Marys for anyone who might be in danger.

The children were all restless and whispered together. Those whose fathers or brothers were on shift couldn't work much, and Sister did not

Losing Me

you're losing me humanity
losing me
from your gross fold

as much as i need your warmth
i'm choosing
the cold
spectrum
of our isolation
that runs in colorless bars
from the earth
through the sky
to the stars

i take leave of your hatred
and violence

i take flight from morality's
one-eyed stare

i take leave of your communications'
silence

and you know
it's because i care.

SHELTON LEA

seem to hear the whispers the way she usually did. She understood well. She altered the afternoon work and gave us drawing instead.

Marge Meagher was the worst — she kept wriggling and talking, and at last she went up to Sister, swinging herself the bold way she had, and asked could she go home "because she had an **awful** headache."

Sister seemed to hesitate, then she said very quietly, "Yes, Margaret, you may go," and we all envied Marge her bold ways that got her things.

Sister asked Kathy and Mary if Marge would have been worried very much about her father being down the mine. You could see Sister hoping they would say "Yes," so she could treasure up that as something good about Marge (even she hadn't found anything. to date). Kathy and Mary didn't know what to say, but they "thought so," and Sister beamed.

Kathy said after, "How could I tell Sister that Marge had said she hoped her old man got skittled? Sister would think that a terrible sin."

We all knew Marge wasn't worrying about any accidents—she just couldn't bear to sit there in the classroom while there was any big excitement, like a mine fall, and miss the chance of racing round among the men. That was all she did, too, we were told after. Made a real nuisance of herself like she always did, and had Father Pat and the Police Inspector, Mr. Hollis, tell her to "get home". Old Meagher was home drunk anyway, and she had no one to be worried about, but she skited to us after that a fellow that was mad on her might have been hurt, and that was why she went up to the crowd. She said just to see her would comfort him. All Marge did was think about herself and boys.

*

We got let out early. Sister was kind that way, and she did not give us much homework that night either. Clem and I raced back the short cut. None of our men was underground that shift, but when we got home Mumma was hurriedly cutting cribs for Big Dan and Kevin—they had volunteered in a gang to dig out the fall, and Mumma knew she herself might get a call to the hospital. She mostly went to "special" bad accident cases for either doctor.

Clem ran along beside our men when they left for the mine, and then they chased him back, and he came in moody and flung things round until Mumma spoke sharply to him and said: "Get to your books, son; that way you'll manage to keep from underground, please God."

Dad was out talking to the other men from round about us. He had all the news there was about the fall. Now and again some man would come along who had just passed the poppet head or been over town and would add a bit. Two chaps had been taken to the hospital; Doc Londy was with them "working like hell". It had been a Finn gang working under the fall. Londy was giving two of them transfusions, and two others were still buried.

The men squatted under Haverson's verandah, because it was right at the junction and you could see every car and everyone who left the shaft head. Dad would walk back now and then and tell a bit more news to Mumma. She went on getting the cooking done for night tea, and giving jobs to me, coaxing Clem to do his lessons and preparing to be away from home in case either hospital called her on duty.

Then the dogs barked, and we saw Mullens' sulky coming down the river track. It was Ellie back after finishing the early evening milking. She tied the horse under a clump of trees and stared at the group of men as she came in to Mumma.

Ellie brought in a sugar bag. "Some new tomatoes," she said, and Mumma said: "Put them in the cooler safe, Lee," and turned to get Ellie a cuppa. Ellie sat inside the door on a low box and fanned herself with her big hat. She was flushed and told Mumma: "My word, I bustled through that milking."

Mumma said: "I bet you did," and they drank tea and sat quiet a while. Ellie said, "What's all the trouble?" and nodded towards the group of men.

I was watching Mumma, and I saw her face go stiff and scared a minute. She was trying to think—and I was too—where Schnec was working, and on what shift.

"Some trouble in the Crescent, I heard," she said, looking down at her cup instead of at Ellie. Mumma looked very uncomfortable.

Ellie's face did not change, but she drank her tea very quickly and then got up and put the cup carefully on the table. She took her hat up and turned to the door. "I'll walk along a bit and see where Schnec is," she said. "He's a bit late, eh?"

Mumma looked scared and half went to go with her; then she turned back and went on making gravy for the chops. I heard her sigh and saw her bless herself quickly, and I knew our Mumma was saying a prayer for Ellie and for Schnec. I went out to Clem. and he was sitting with his pencil in his mouth.

I said: "Ellie came an' . . ."

"I know," he said. "Schnec!"

"Yes, I wonder?"

"It's right."

"How do you know?"

"He's in the Finn shift, and there's only one at the Crescent, isn't there?"

"But he mightn't be hurt."

"He'd be here if he wasn't. He never misses coming when he says he will."

"Oh, what will Ellie do? Mumma is saying a prayer," I said.

"Mmmmmm". He went on chewing his pencil and making faces and I sat on the step and tried not to think about if Ellie heard anything bad happened to Schnec.

Then we heard Father Pat's flivver coming back. He'd have been at the mine and at the hospital, too, we knew, and Clem went through the house quickly and out to wait for him. Clem was always so sure that Father Pat liked his company. He opened the car door and closed it carefully behind Father Pat as the priest walked in to see Mumma. Father sat down heavily in the chair Mumma pushed forward. His face was tired-looking and he wiped the moisture off his forehead and cheeks with a big khaki hankie. Mumma waited patiently, standing beside him, showing the feeling of friendship there always was between those two.

"It was pretty bad, Mary Ellen," he said to her. She did not answer, just waited while he took another breath and went on. "Five under the fall —not a hope for them they say; they are digging them out now. Tommy Young and . . . and Schnec are in hospital. Londy's with them now . . ."

Mumma put a cup of tea into his hand, that she had poured quietly while he was speaking. He took a good swallow, and went on again. "Londy told me that Schnec . . . one leg will have to come off . . . and the back . . . helpless, he thinks . . ." He sat bowed in the chair and drank the rest of the tea. Clem and I had stayed by the door and kept still.

Mumma put her clean apron up to her mouth as if she wanted to choke a scream. Then she blessed herself, "God have mercy," and turned to the stove a minute, to swallow what tears had come to her eyes so as not to embarrass her friend. Father Pat used his hankie again, blowing his nose loudly. "E-e-r . . . Ellie?" he questioned.

"Just gone up the road to try and get some news," Mumma replied.

Father Pat got up quickly, glad, you could see, of some action to perform. "I'll run along and take her over then," he said, and hurried out.

Clem had the door open and the flivver cranked when he got to it, and Father Pat nodded his thanks and said: "God bless you" to us all as he left.

Mumma said: "You two get to your lessons quietly now. The men will be in soon."

"Oh, can't I go?" Clem whined. "Oh, PLEASE, Mumma?"

Mumma looked at him understandingly. "There's nowhere to go, lad, where the men are, except hotel bars, and you're too young for that."

Clem turned grunting, knowing she was right. He just ached to be with men, instead of stopping in the house with just women, we knew, but Mumma was right about him not being able to find them if he had gone. Children don't go in pub bars.

*

We both worked quietly and Mumma dished our tea up and put the men's to keep warm. None of them came back before we went to sleep that night. Father Pat's flivver passed, taking Ellie back to Mullens' place, and he called over the gate to tell Mumma she seemed all right and he was coming back next day to take her to the hospital again. "She didn't want to stop on the way back," he explained, and Mumma nodded to herself about that.

They got the other men out late that night— all the men had waited till that happened before coming home. The funeral was next day. The Sisters had us form a Guard of Honor out on the road in front of the school as the procession passed, with five coffins on five trucks, the miners walking along behind them four abreast, as far as Townside, where they would all pile on trucks to the cemetery two miles out.

We went back into school, but nobody did much work. All the men would be out off-shift that day and the next. Men in the house made a difference to women's work, and most of them went over town to the bars. They made more difference that way, for homes where the man drank a lot mostly only had the bother at week-ends to worry about. After a big accident there was often uproar in town as well from drunks' fights.

Dad went over town the first day and had a few drinks with his old mates; the next he stopped home, sitting with his feet up on the verandah chair and chatting to those who passed. He and Mumma talked about Ellie and Schnec, and Ellie came herself after her hospital visit next day and sat with Mumma awhile. She didn't say much. When Mumma asked "How is he?" Ellie just said vaguely "Okay, I think," and sat silent. Old Mullens drove her in to hospital in the sulky and came back and waited at our place for her to come, but after her visit every day he told Dad he didn't know what'd happen to the cows if she left them like she did the day before, not stripped for hours.

Dad grunted and said "H'mm!" He didn't cotton on to old Mullens. Ellie brought some things in parcels when she came back; she went off in the sulky without saying anything much, just "he seemed okay," when Mumma asked after Schnec.

Ellie fixed her trips to the hospital for the day time, so the cows could be milked of an evening. She drove the sulky in herself after that. Then men who were Schnec's mates went to see him of a night. Clarry Hewitt, one of Little Joseph's pals, came over one night. He told Mumma that Schnec was taking it real badly; Londy was worried stiff about him. Clarry said a nurse he took to the movies had told him they were bothered about that patient's mind, but that when you called to see Schnec himself you couldn't tell a bit.

Mumma worried about that all day, we could see, and on the Sunday she told Ellie she would go over with her. Ellie nodded, without showing if she was pleased or not at having Mumma too.

We all waited anxiously to hear what Mumma thought; even Father Pat, whom she'd told she was going, came and waited so he would know what her opinion was. I do believe Londy might even have liked to find it out, for Doc Londy had a great "alley" for Mumma as a nurse, everyone knew. It was unusual for her not to be nursing so bad a case. The hospital just happened to be fully-staffed just then. Ellie dropped Mumma off and drove straight home. We had tea ready and Mumma sat and drank some with Father Pat before she ever said a word. Then she turned and answered the priest's unspoken query. Her voice was tired and very, very sad. "He isn't right by a long way," Mumma said, "and . . . he's lost all his laugh. It's not our Schnec at all. I wish . . . I wish I'd the nursing of him. He wants watching care, if anyone did," Mumma said.

"I wish you had it, too," Father Pat replied, and they all sat a while just drinking tea. Clem hung on the doorpost watching Father Pat's face as if he could read something there that he wanted to find out. I went over to play with Mary Parker.

*

Tommy Young got out of hospital in three weeks, with plaster on his leg and some stiff plates supporting his neck. He took his holidays and went to the coast. Londy told Schnec he would have a fair bit of time to spend in hospital, that the nerves in the spine were hurt some way, and he might have to manage in a wheelchair for awhile. They got him one at the end of the month and he was up and being wheeled round in it when Ellie called one afternoon. She came in to tell Mumma and her eyes shone almost like Schnec's own used to do, and that was the first time we ever saw Ellie really excited. Mumma told Father Pat after, that she heard her laugh that day too. So did we. but if Mumma had been pleased with Ellie Mullens' laugh we children weren't. It had been a gasping, breathless, rasping sort of sound that blew out of her lips and came from her throat more like jabs of pain I thought.

But no one said that Schnec laughed now. I don't suppose it was much to laugh about, not to be able to walk. Mumma called over to see him now and again. She did not say much, only that Londy was as good a doctor as you'd find anywhere, and Schnec had always been a real man anyhow.

There would be a court case about the accident soon. The regular "enquiry" that always followed "Knock Ten". The Mines' Inspector and all the company heads would make statements and they would all explain how the accident happened and how it was no one's fault at all—that the ground just fell. Schnec would be paid compensation while he was in hospital and if he could not walk properly after, they would give him something to make up for that too. So everything about the accident was pretty well over and people had stopped thinking about it at all much. It was only one of many in mine lives.

*

Then, one day at lunch hour when we got home Mumma wasn't there. Little Joseph was off-shift and he just said: "Poor Schnec died this morning. You two eat your dinner and get back. Mumma is over town."

Marge Meagher met us on the way over and told us more. "He cut his wrists," she said, all excited. "Whewh! are those nurses goin' to cop it, eh?" Marge hated all nurses—they typified the glamor living that she craved.

"Why?" asked Clem.

"Why? Don't be a nanny. Cos they aren't supposed to let men have razors when they're sick. You gotta shave 'em yourself; and he had a case with two in it in his locker all the time. Serves them right," she said venomously, "rotten bitches."

"Oh shut up, you," Clem told her. He ran on ahead, dragging my hand. He hated Marge and I didn't like her either. Everyone had the same story, though. Some kids had even seen the police going to the hospital earlier, they said.

Mrs. Carter met us on the way home and said she had told Mumma she would give us our tea as the men were on shift and Mumma was with Ellie. We wondered where.

Mumma had gone with the scared and trembling Ellie to the Police Station. The inquiry amongst the nurses had elicited the fact that no razor had been in Schnec's possession as far as any nurse or Sister knew—so they thought of Ellie. Two constables had gone out to Mullens' place to question her, when she had just been rocked with the news of her man's death. Father Pat, who mostly kept one jump ahead of the authorities where his flock was concerned, just missed getting there before the police, but he did the next best thing, to his way of thinking, and called and collected Mumma to go over and stand by the shivering, stunned girl.

Ellie's answer to the question whether or not she had given Schnec the razors was "Yes". But it was more complicated than that, of course, in the way of police affairs and Mumma was spent and agonised herself by the time Father Pat had driven her, with Ellie a slumping wreck beside her, back out to Mullens' again. Mumma wanted to keep Ellie the night but she said she had to go home to strip the cows.

In the morning there was the official inquiry to face in court. In the afternoon Schnec was quietly buried. You could not wait in those affairs in that climate and, as he had not actually died of accident injuries, public interest was not the same at his passing as it would have been had he passed away from injuries due to the fall. There was no time taken off work in honor of "old Schnec".

From the school grounds we could see the people assembling at the Police Court, for the inquest. The S.M. was old George Harris, a good honest officer of the C.P.S.. who could count the mine accident inquests he had held on the fields in round numbers. He was bluff and tough, too, with his witnesses, and he always let his personal feelings sway him, without shame.

I was too young and too uninterested really to care about the proceedings. But Clem was older, and his quicker, keener brain was alive with curiosity. That day he wagged it from school after morning break. I missed him and wondered. He told me later he had seen me go inside school and then skipped back along the short cut and hid until the court sat, then hung around and slipped inside and listened to it all. It was from things Clem told me that I could look back afterwards and picture all that happened to poor Ellie.

Mumma, in her black voile dress and straight black Sunday hat, sat with Ellie, pressing her hand and watching like the good nurse she was for any signs of collapse. But Ellie was as stony as she always used to be, before Schnec had tried to teach her talk and laughter. She just sat as immobile as one of her own cows and waited her ordeal. The Clerk and officers on duty arrived and the Magistrate sat on the Bench. Dr. Londy was called to give his statement; the Clerk typed busily and re-read it to him. The nurse who found Schnec in his pool of blood said how she did so, and cried prettily, and her friends clustered round and led her from the stand, clucking sympathetically. Those nurses and sisters on duty the previous day had to state that they had not noticed any unusual symptoms or any extra melancholy in the patient. Then Ellie was called, and Mumma led her carefully to the witness box and reluctantly left her.

She repeated her oath in a low voice and Mr. Harris asked her when she had met Schnec? What had he meant to her? Were they engaged to be married? When? What she thought of his

accident? How she felt he was feeling about it? . . . He was a just man and wanted to arrive at the facts. His own opinion seemed to be that it was a sort of "mercy killing" with which most miners and outbackers would sympathise. He thought Ellie had agreed to do what she did, for love of Schnec.

I don't think he could have known much about women's love. Not that of Ellie's sort of woman anyway. For with Schnec gone, what had she left? His being a hopeless cripple would never have worried Ellie. She was a toiler born, and to toil for him would have just been paid work as against what she did for old Mullens for no reward at all.

Mr. Harris said: "How did you come to take the razors to the deceased?"

Ellie hesitated and looked towards Mumma, who nodded at her encouragingly. She had told Ellie all morning to say just what had happened. So she stumbled a little for breath, and then said, in sort of hurried jerks, "He got along fine in the wheel chair—he said he'd like . . . like . . . some shirts instead of pyjamas to wear now he was sitting up. I got them for him next day . . ."

"Where?"

"At the place—at our place. The one he bought for . . . for us to git married in." She began to tremble a little.

"How did you get in? Was the place locked up?"

"Yes."

"When was it locked up? Who did that?"

"He . . . he must've before . . . before he went on shift that . . . that day."

"He gave you the key—when?"

"Yes-ter-dee . . . no, two, three days ago."

"How long?"

"I dunno exactly—two, three days . . ."

"What else did you take to him?"

"Oh, cake, biscuits, fruit . . ."

"When did you think of taking the razors?"

"He asked me—day before."

"What day?"

"Day before . . . Oh I dunno . . . a bit back."

"Then the deceased had these razors for more than a day?"

"Yes."

"The hospital nurses say he did not."

"That's wrong—he did."

"What did the deceased say to you when he asked you to bring them?"

"He said . . . Ellie—get my razors—next—time you go—by—the place. Man—wants to shave—hisself—now. Sick of—women—doing me. They don't make a —job—of—it—at all."

Clem said she sort of sang this, and something in that sound made everyone stir and look uncomfortable, and Mumma sat up sharply and looked at the policeman near her as if to ask could she go and put a stop to this. Then Mr. Harris snapped: "Didn't you know that this man was melancholy and liable to do himself injury? That the doctor was taking special care of him so that he would **not** have any chance to? Answer me!"—sharply, as Ellie seemed not to be listening, but staring out over all their heads at something up on the wall somewhere. She bent down low over the rail of the witness box and Clem said you could see her shoulders shaking. Mumma got up and ran forward quickly, and the police officer went too. He had a glass of water in his hand and let Mumma raise Ellie's shoulders and head. Then there was a sort of gasp from everyone in the court, for Ellie Mullens was sitting there shaking—with laughter!

She sat there and laughed it out. Everyone sick and uncomfortable at such awfulness. She looked at Mr. Harris, and choked back the last of her joke, and said: "Fancy . . . fancy what a joke old Schnec beating them all like that, eh? That WAS fonny!" She went off into regular peals of laughter then. The Courthouse rang with it.

Londy was by her side in an instant; he turned to the Bench. "Your Honor, this woman has been under strain. She is hysterical."

Mr. Harris nodded and they led Ellie away, Mumma and Londy together. Ellie burst into little laughs as they moved along.

Mr. Harris went ahead and made a judgment. Clem said he didn't wait. Londy kept Ellie at the hospital for a few hours and gave her needles, but she said she had to go back and get the poor cows stripped, so he let Mumma take her back. Old man Mullens hadn't bothered to go in. He had the cows yarded. He ignored Mumma and said to Ellie, "Yer late agen!" and then he drove off over town in the sulky to booze. No one liked him but he knew he'd get a lot of free drinks while the men wanted to talk about Ellie and poor old Schnec—for a day or two anyway.

Mumma stayed a while. Of course Mrs. Mullens had one of her headaches, and just lay down with a wet vinegar cloth on her eyes. Ellie went to the milking as if she was all right and Mumma came home, sick at heart and hugged me to her when I met her at the gate and said to pray for the soul of poor old Schnec. I did, too, often. We had been fond of our kind, laughing big friend.

*

Ellie never called in home any more after. The Police sold up the iron off Schnec's place and that wet season the river came down high and swept the place clear of what the white ants had left of the uprights. So nothing was left at all of our Finn friend's Australian home.

Each year more and more workers came out to the Mount and sometimes mums who never knew about old Schnec would warn children going down the river-bed to play in dry season: "Now don't you go up river near that mad old woman mind you; she might be dangerous—your hear me?"

People said Ellie acted queer. She would stop very suddenly in front of anyone and laugh out loud and then say in a silly sing-song like Clem had told about in Court that day: "Did ja ever hear what a fonny feller Schnec was?" and laugh out loud some more.

I heard Ellie's laugh myself once when I'd started to walk out to their place for some tomatoes Mumma wanted. The sound of it burst out suddenly in the bush ahead of me and rang up through the tops of the tall carbeen trees by the river there. Seeming to bounce, shaking, against the deep cutting of the water hole. and making a hurt in my ears. To me it sounded like some horrid rusty old machinery cutting something and I felt sick with that and ran back home. I never went out to Mullens' again ever.

SAMUEL GREENBERG :: T. F. KLINE

Samuel Greenberg lives alone
in a suburban flat.
Today he takes his washing down
to the new laundromat.

He was the author, years ago,
of "Short Cuts to Good Grammar".
But now his pupils find him slow,
and mock his gentle stammer.

He puts his suitcase down beside
a bank of plastic greenery,
and gapes around him, terrified
by all the strange machinery.

Housewives in curlers, with an air
of indolent precision
feed tokens in, then take a chair
and watch the television.

A tough girl with a cigarette
says, "Feeling strange in here?
Don't worry, Dad, we'll learn you yet.
Gimme your washing, dear."

However ungrammatical,
her words are kindly spoken.
He lets her take his case, and call
him "Dad", and use his token.

The hoarseness of her voice invokes
some long-forgotten fire.
"Hey Dad, watch where you move," she jokes,
"Don't fall into the drier."

A whiff of gas—the downmost pit
of memory is burning.
"Hey Dad, what's wrong, don't have a fit!"
The huge gas driers are turning

a quarter of a century
away. He beats the air
with desperate hands. "You lean on me."
She guides him to a chair.

The housewives fuss and prop him up.
"His heart. He's had a turn."
Someone from somewhere brings a cup
of tea. A plastic fern

nods idly as they fan his face.
Time's smoking ruins wreathe
to cloud, to nothing in this place.
He stands, restored, to breathe

safety, the freedom still to go
home with his washing through
the ordinary streets below
a sky of flawless blue.

BESTED

Desk-tied, I found it difficult to believe
that days of masters' strictures, red-brick structures
leaning on me, days when my fellow sufferers
lashed out in hate at me or shouted some obscenity
to slice some adult-made taboo, could be,
as we were often told, the best. But worse,
I found it difficult to doubt.

And when I see my schoolboy son, too much
his father's son for his own good, crabbing home
deep with thoughts that pennies cannot buy,
I find it difficult not to shout, "Don't worry, don't worry."

LEON SLADE

IF I AM FOND OF YOU

If I am fond of you, ignore
What complicates a simple matter.
What we have done well before,
With luck we shall do even better.

When you are naked under me
I can forget the coming loss,
For then you are absolutely
The best lay I've come across.

There is no corner of my heart
From which I shall not drive you out.
Meanwhile, let us not forget
What our business is about:

Lust prolonged incredibly
Throughout the fading afternoon.
Before the poinciana tree
Sheds her blossom, I'll be gone.

If you are fond of me, then count it
Only as a mild misfortune:
Whatever I have said, I meant it;
Though lecherous, I am not wanton.

When I am naked over you
I'd have you think of nothing but
My body and your own and how,
Defective as they are, they fit.

And when the poinciana tree
Is bare, then may I be forgotten.
The trust between yourself and me
Is of a kind that can't be broken

Between us, dear, the matter's simple:
For what we have done well together,
When all is done can leave no ripple.
Remember only to do better.

BRIAN MEDLIN

BACKWARDS

This is a poem
that goes
backwards
stepping away
from the reader
like a word
spoken retreating
until
it is shouting
invisibly.

B. A. BREEN

ALL THE BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE

All the beautiful people
Whiz by beautifully
In beaut cars.
I know.
All the ugly mugs
Stare ugh out of
The uglily strugglin tram.
At all them beaut boundin cars
Burblin up and whizzin
Back down by our stand-still struggle.

We are standin still
Because
Them beaut cars
Are more beautiful
Because we stand still
Starin at them beaut cars
Burblin, unstrugglin
And because
We were born this way
Unburblin, uguglin, in a Melbourne tram.

RON GRAY

MANNERS

Someone in the States builds a self-propelled juggernaut
bigger than the world has seen before, thank God,
and boy is it going places! Plenty!
But as it goes by I happen to see
a little feller's coat in the cogs.
I'm going to say, "Stop this thing!
there's a feller in the works,
get him out of there,
stand him up again;
now apologise."

Some Great Creature set out to roll a snowball
clear across Russia every acre of the place,
and the ball gets bigger every rev.
But as it comes around I happen to see
a little feller's boot sticking out.
I'm going to say, "Stop this thing,
there's a feller in the works,
get him out of there,
stand him up again;
now apologise."

ROGER McKNIGHT

SPRING

The sun thrusts down like knives;
Buds burst, tearing the sky
With a savage battle
Of pollen; and birds hurl

Death songs at each other
From the rim of their nests:
All crazy in a mad
Passion of begetting.

Even in this tight house
The heart, with its murderous
Intent on loving, rides
Our bent-over bodies

Like a devil possessed;
Rocketing about the night
In a blazing shower
Of seeds, sparks, stars falling,

Till we subside, and meet
Again with a shy smile,
And wonder where the fury
Came from, and where it went.

PETER STANSFIELD

QUESTION AND ANSWER: IMPERIAL STYLE

The fat pink God says "Come right in."
To your surprise he knows your name,
recounts your every offence
with tact and, almost, deference.

He points to how his interests
have suffered by (to put it kindly)
your unwillingness to smother
doubts and trust him altogether.

He recalls how hard your life has been
and even offers to concede
that he might have planned a kinder fate
than leave you grow articulate.

Yes, yes, he holds himself to blame
hence the invitation sent
for you to call and talk it over,
he loves to save a disbeliever.

You trust, you ask enlightenment;
his answer to your single question
is shapely as an anecdote—
a knife, politely, in your throat.

RODNEY HALL

THE DARKNESS

Dorothy Butler

"WHAT is dead?" he asked timidly from his too low chair at the breakfast table. "You tell me, Betty. My daddy is too big to be dead like Cuddles, all stiff."

"It's the same for people," Betty said. "Where's the difference? You can't miaow or say boo any more and they put you under the ground and write your name on a piece of wood or something like we did for Cuddles, so people don't forget you."

"Someone gave Cuddles a poisoned bait," he said. "Daddy said so."

"Cuddles had it coming to him," Betty said, sipping tea. "Mucking round in the garden like he did, half the night."

The child's mother, Mrs. Load, stood weeping by the window as she had been doing ever since she came back from the hospital. To Betty, sitting in the widow's chair and eating her breakfast with the child, she seemed temporarily removed from ordinary life; so muffled in her emotions that she was no longer aware of her surroundings.

"Not a hole in the garden?" the child asked presently in a small chilly voice, laying aside his spoon.

"Don't be a dill," said Betty briskly. She buttered a finger of toast for him and pushed the plate across the table. "It'll be in the graveyard. And there'll be lots of beaut flowers and what they call a funeral with all people."

"Why?" The child's mouth trembled and his eyes filled with tears as he glanced fearfully at his mother by the window.

"Oh, I don't know why. It's nothing to cry about, anyrate. It's what they always do when someone dies—they have to be buried or all burned up."

Mrs. Load, aware after all, turned her face into the room swiftly—unbeautiful in its middle-aged grief, the eyelids swollen, the nose mottled. "Don't," she said, commanding yet quavering. "Don't dare say another word to my child. Go back to the kitchen."

"Righto, Mrs. Load," Betty said with a shrug. She pushed back her chair and leaned over to pinch the little boy's cheek, so that his tears spilled over. "Don't cry now, and we might have a game of ball in the garden when I've done the dishes."

She took her own plates out to the kitchen, stacked them in the sink, and began to tidy up, humming to dispel the uneasy emptiness of the house. No fried eggs sizzling in the pan for Dr. Load this morning. Two days ago he had been taken to hospital with terrible pains in the stomach. Oh he had really been sick! The thought had come into her head that she would never see him again, that after all she would never have to pluck up the courage to tell him. She had been right, too. Well, no use crying over spilt milk, there was the work to be done, the little boy to be looked after. Humming softly in the kitchen, she determinedly thought of more pleasant things.

*

He had been a silent powerful lover; his body big, warm, muscular, his kiss gritty and thorough. The stealthy sound of the door as it opened—she always heard it. And his big bare feet making subtle sucking noises as he crossed the sticky linoleum. The crack of the bedsprings as he eased himself into the narrow bed beside her. He never said anything. Not a word. What did he think? Did he ever wonder what **she** thought—or whether she minded—as he hurried through what he had come for in the darkness? Betty knew well enough why it was that he came to her. In spite of her looks. One child in her middle age was enough for his wife; she wouldn't have him in **her** bed.

Once in the morning before Mrs. Load had come out to breakfast, he had asked her over the top of the newspaper, "Well, what have you got for me this morning?" And he had used her name, Betty, which he never did.

"Two fried eggs and a rasher of bacon, Dr. Load," she had said, feeling cocky and what you might call three dimensional. His eyes were dark brown and they stared at her through his thick spectacles. Just for a moment. They had an owlish look. But they had disappeared behind the paper again before she could discover what they thought of her. "You big ugly bugger," her father used to call her. Then one day she just decided she wasn't going to put up with that any more. Mrs. Load, being mad on church and religion and all that, regarded her as one of her good works. Because she came from an unhappy home.

The next time he came to her room, she had imagined him saying as she shifted over near the wall, "Well, what have you got for me tonight, Betty?" and herself replying, "Two fried eggs and a rasher of bacon, Dr. Load." He was kissing her ear quickly and noisily and her suppressed giggles nearly suffocated her. What a laugh if he was thinking the same thing at the same moment! But how could you know what other people were thinking? She never had the foggiest idea what went on in his mind.

And now I never will know, thought Betty, leaning on the sink and staring out at the sunny back yard, where a great pair of striped pyjamas flapped its legs and arms on the clothes line. Those pyjamas had smelt horribly of the hospital when she had washed them yesterday, and she had left them out all night to be freshened by the dew. She sometimes did that with his shirts. Although he was called Dr. Load, he had something to do with chemistry really, he didn't know what, and all sorts of smells got on his clothes. She stared at the pyjama top which, upside down, waved to her with a mad familiarity against a background of blossoming orange trees and the hectic green of willow fronds. The legs were the right way up and seemed to pedal eagerly towards her. She had never actually seen him in pyjamas, and to distract herself tried to picture him in them now—head hanging down towards the cropped grass, arm jigging, glasses magnifying his eyes so they looked real weird. She imagined him in two parts, as if he'd been sawn across the middle by a magician's trick.

The legs for me, she thought, the top for Mrs. L.!

Mrs. Load wouldn't want those pyjamas any more. Would give them to the needy. She was always giving clothes to the needy, who sometimes included Betty. Betty hurried outside to fetch the pyjamas in. They were warm and soft and fresh-smelling. She bundled them up as if to make them invisible—over and over in her arms. And ran silently to her bedroom with them. She wrapped them in newspaper and pushed them into the bottom of the narrow wardrobe and shut the door on them. Her keepsake. Dr. Load shut up in the dark.

"It's dark under the ground, isn't it?" said the little boy forlornly from the doorway.

"It doesn't matter if you're dead," Betty said. "Anyrate, don't you worry about it. Grown-up people don't mind the dark."

"I don't like the dark," said the child. "There are bad men in the dark."

"Ar that's silly," Betty said. "I reckon some men are real nice in the dark." She pushed her fingers through her thick brown hair so that it stood out around her face, and looked at herself in the mirror. Her cheeks were red. This morning when she got up and was sick in the bathroom they had been yellow and sweaty. Mrs. Load hadn't been there to hear her vomiting this morning, but she could have heard her other days. So could he. But neither of them had ever said a word. They had left it all to her.

She picked up a lipstick and colored her mouth, dabbed scent from a small bottle on her eyebrows and sniffed. The smell of men. It was gone—for good. She found cigarettes and lit one. The child had slithered on his stomach across the linoleum and she nearly fell over him as she turned around.

"Mind! These heels could puncture your liver and kill you!"

"Nothing will kill me. I shan't ever be dead. Shall I?"

"Of course you will," Betty said, stepping over him. "When you're old, anyrate. We all will. I suppose. Now come on out of here, I'm going to clear the table."

He came trotting behind her to the breakfast room, but Mrs. Load, emerging pink-nosed from her bedroom, told him in an adenoidal voice to run off to his room and play.

Betty mashed her cigarette in a saucer and began to gather up the dishes.

"You had no right to talk to him like that," said Mrs. Load from the window, her back to Betty. "It's not what I've taught him."

"What?"

"About death—about dying. As though people were—no more than animals. I've taught him about God—Jesus—about Heaven—"

"I don't believe in heaven and all that crap," said Betty to her back. "I'm sorry," she added, as Mrs. Load began to weep again and to pinch her nose with a small white handkerchief.

"I thought when I took you from that dreadful background I could make a good Christian girl of you—help you—teach you nice ways—"

BINDING

This issue of Overland completes our fifth volume, numbers 33-40. Subscribers who wish their own copies bound should send them to the Editor by 15th February, 1969 (no binding orders can be accepted after this date). The cost will be $4.00, including return postage. We can complete subscribers' sets if necessary at 50 cents a copy.

Complete bound volumes of the fifth volume of Overland may be obtained by ordering before the above date. The cost is $8.00. Title pages will be available and will be supplied gratis on application.

Complete bound volumes of volume three (numbers 17-24) and volume four (numbers 25-32) are also available on order for $8.00 each.

Betty stood beside the table with a pile of dirty dishes held against her chest. "It's not **your** fault. I'm not complaining."

The widow looked frightened, squinting at Betty over her shoulder. "You're not to tell my child any more ugly lies."

Betty shrugged and prepared to go to the kitchen. "I never meant to tell him any lies. It was just what I thought. He keeps asking me. **You** remind him about heaven and that."

Mrs. Load was silent and turned back to the window.

*

During the morning people called to offer sympathy. They brought scones, cakes, flowers. Betty made tea constantly, shoved flowers into vases. The Loads' daughter, Faith, arrived from the country where she was a school-teacher to find, distractedly, that she was too late.

"He was a wonderful man and we all loved him," Betty heard, as she wheeled the rattling traymobile down the hall. "He'll never be forgotten."

"But **what** is dead?" asked the little boy, helping Betty over-willingly so that the traymobile nearly collided with Faith, busy composing herself outside the sitting-room door.

"He was a wonderful husband, Freda," Mrs. Load's sister said—as though he had been hers. She glanced briefly at Betty and the child. "You can always be comforted by the thought that you did everything in your power to make him happy." She stopped to lift the child, held him against her bosom and told him cheerily, "Your daddy's gone to join the angels, sweetheart, so we mustn't be too sad." The widow gave an anguished look at Betty, and quickly covered her lips with her handkerchief. Faith, coming to take charge of the teapot, swallowed a last sob audibly.

"It's lovely that you have Faith, Freda," said one of the comforters. Her voice followed Betty as she went back down the hall.

"Well," she said, staring at her reflection in the seclusion of her calcomined room. "All that jazz about heaven and the angels!" It occurred to her that with a few words she, Betty Pye, could send Dr. Load straight to hell. Imagine that! Imagine Mrs. Load's face if she went in there now and told them all. What a laugh! A knowing smile appeared on the big plain red-cheeked face in the mirror; then faded. "They're likely to believe you, aren't they, you great ugly bugger?"

With a sigh, she opened the wardrobe door and took out the newspaper parcel. This afternoon she would iron those pyjamas and put them with the rest of his things. She would remain one of the widow's good works.

I'll say I don't know who it was, she thought. It happened in the dark, I'll say. I never saw him. And she would look straight into the widow's guilty eyes.

HOBOES

Coming from somewhere else,
Going nowhere at their own speed.

Straightfaced liars who rarely laugh aloud,
Slow to anger, deadly in anger,
They do what has to be done.

They cut the cane, shovel the clay.
They fill the empty holds of trochus boats
With bags of stinking shell.
On horseback, near Cloncurry, stop a tourist
To bite a cigarette, a match, two bob.

Marriage a comma in their sentence,
Death a full stop.
Wait for me, brothers. Don't think I've deserted.
I've reached a semi-colon. See you later.

W. N. SCOTT

BLUE AND YELLOW MACAW

John Morrison

SOME of my earliest memories are of Mowbray Park, about a mile away from where I lived in Sunderland, an industrial town on the north-east coast of England. Memories which provide a background of childish fantasy for the beginning of responsible life—my first job.

Most of Mowbray Park, with its formal flowerbeds, its colorless shrubberies, and its virginal lawns liberally dotted with "Keep off the grass" notices, was of little interest to us children. But there was one place where we were permitted a fair amount of freedom, a long wide terrace bounded on one side by an artificial lake known as "the duck-pond", and on the other by a Winter Garden cozily snuggled against the back of the grey sandstone building which housed Sunderland's Public Library, Museum, and Art Gallery. Possibilities for mischief existed on both sides, but as long as we didn't try to sneak into the Winter Garden unaccompanied by an adult, or frighten the ducks on the lake, we could do pretty much as we liked. Which meant that we could run about and make plenty of noise. We were even allowed to ride the crouching lions set at intervals in the flaking stone balustrade that divided the terrace from a grassed slope that ran down to the water's edge.

All of which is not to deny that there were times when we did sneak into the Winter Garden, and when we did frighten the ducks.

Greatest temptation was the Winter Garden, an all-glass structure rather like a miniature of our own (Melbourne) Exhibition Building. The capped and corduroyed gardener who was in charge couldn't always be on the watch for trespassing juveniles, and one of the first 'dares' I can remember was to push open the heavy glazed door and steal in to look at the goldfishes gliding among the weeds in a pool just inside. That pool was the first shrine at which I seriously worshipped. In the centre of it was a great rock pile full of secret crevices, covered with bright mosses, and streaming with water from a fountain that leaped almost to the roof. The number of times I was chased out of the Winter Garden must have been a Sunderland record. The whole atmosphere of the place bewitched me, with its warmth, its outlandish smells, and the peaceful crooning of doves.

On both sides of the pool iron-gridded paths led away through jungles of tropical plants. On my own I never ventured along those paths, for fear of having my escape cut off by 'the man', but there were times when I did go in with father. The fernery at one end didn't particularly interest me, the exotic birds at the other end did. There was an aviary with Indian turtle-doves and some small birds I can't name. There were also three large cages, a wide one containing a South American macaw, and two narrower ones beneath it containing Australian birds, a great palm cockatoo and a sulphur-crested cockatoo. The macaw was my favorite. I never wearied of looking at it. A huge bird in gorgeous blue and yellow, it spent most of its time clinging to the rear bars of its cage, staring downwards through a window set in the bleak Museum wall. A window which, clean or dusty, was always feebly lighted, but which revealed nothing more than an expanse of white

ceiling. I used to wonder what went on in that room, what it was that held the rapt attention of the bird. Most of the time it kept up a kind of confidential little chatter, but sometimes it would get excited, as if something had happened in the room, and break into a series of piercing screeches.

Between aviary and cages there was a short flight of stone steps leading down to a dungeon-like door. One day I happened to be there when 'the man' came out. In the moment or two while the door was open I heard voices, and could imagine nothing else but that he had been down feeding some prisoners.

Outside in the park, at the Museum end of the main building, there was a deep shrubbery penetrated by a narrow path. A notice said "Private", but I'd been down that path as far as daylight reached, and found that it went on and on, straight into the foundations. I'd seen policemen going in and out there, and wondered if they were looking for escaped convicts.

*

Sometimes we played on the spacious, semi-circular flight of steps in Borough Road, steps that led up to two imposing doors lettered in gilt: "Central Public Library", and "Museum and Art Gallery". I was attracted only by the Museum, but I don't think I ever succeeded in entering unattended. The custodian there was even more intimidating than his counterpart in the Winter Garden. He wore a military moustache and a braided uniform with a gilt-edged cap, and used to pace back and forth in rubber-soled boots, hands clasped behind his back, whistling softly through his teeth. One day he caught me almost inside. The push he gave me was quite playful, but I was shocked by his hissed: "Go on, hop it! Go and pelt shit at the ducks in the park."

However, as with the Winter Garden, I got in with my father, and at an early age knew where everything was. Even the entrance hall had its wonders: a stuffed walrus in a recess under the stairs leading up to the Art Gallery; a large showcase containing a Malayan set-piece, "Leopard killing a deer. Kindly presented by the Earl of Durham"; several beautiful rosewood cases, inscribed "Backhouse Bequest", and displaying native weapons from Zululand and other fabulous countries.

The Geological Gallery, like the Art Gallery and Model Room, was a dead world to me. It was the ground floor I always wanted. It was old-fashioned even for those days, with cases of absurdly-posed birds and animals stacked all around the walls as tightly and symmetrically as biscuit tins in a grocer's shop. From end to end of the brown lino-ed floor there ran three rows of desk cases containing butterflies and moths, sea shells, and birds' eggs. All very orderly and comprehensible. Two things, however, never ceased to baffle me: a certain door just inside the entrance, and a trap-door set in the floor in a far corner.

The door, deep in a recess flanked by a moth-eaten lion and an equally moth-eaten tiger, was unusually wide, gleaming with a thousand polishings, and edged with green baize. One day while we were passing it opened, and a weird old man came out and went into the hall. He was frock-coated, black-bearded, and bespectacled, and gave us a sharp glance out of fierce little eyes as he hurried past. I thought there was something demonic about him, and regarded that door with suspicion for a long time afterwards.

The trap-door merely aroused my curiosity. I didn't know it was there until a day when my father and I were standing on it looking into a case of sea shells below one of the tall windows. A youth came along, asked us politely to move aside, lifted up a portion of the floor, erected a simple barrier, and vanished down a flight of wooden steps. "They keep stores and books down there", said my father in answer to my question, but I felt he was hiding something from me.

*

Dungeon, dusty window, dark path, and green-baize door—sweet mysteries of childhood. Menace and gamor gradually left them as I grew older, but final solution didn't come until I was fourteen.

I had by then become an enthusiastic naturalist, and it just happened that almost on the day I finished school the one job in town which was ideally suited to my inclinations fell vacant: boy assistant to the Museum Deputy-Curator. I wrote the required letter of application and received a reply instructing me to present myself for an interview. By that time I was aware that the little bearded man was Deputy-Curator, and naturally imagined it was him I would see. Instead I was shown by a girl librarian into an office the opulence of which scared half the wits out of me. The other half almost followed during the interview, which must have lasted twenty minutes.

After fifty years I still look back on Charlton Deas, Director of Sunderland Public Libraries, Museum, and Art Gallery, as one of the biggest and most daunting men I ever met. Beyond a glass-topped desk on which an assortment of papers and writing materials was laid out with shop-window precision, he looked immense, god-like. Immaculately tailored, and giving off a faint odor of shaving lotion or hair-dressing, he sat as straight as a rush, shoulders squared and head up, like a man having his photograph taken. He had the head of an outsize doll, the smooth, perfectly formed features of which were fixed in a faint smile, a smile which chilled because it reached everywhere except the eyes. Two pale hands, with fingers lightly intertwined, rested absolutely motionless on the blotting-pad in front of him. His voice was low and soft, but the excessively careful articulation of every word robbed it of

FLOATING FUND

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any warmth. I don't think he took his cold grey eyes off mine once during the whole twenty minutes.

It was like being processed by a machine.

After a few simple questions I knew the job was going to be mine, but the knowledge brought me no immediate joy. There was a chair right alongside me, but he kept me standing while he went on to deliver a lecture which sounded impressive, but which I know now was a classic exposition of Establishment morality. The kind of pedantic, platitudinous, sanctimonious rigmarole that one can't be expected to see through at fourteen years of age: unremitting diligence, unquestioning obedience to those placed in authority over us, total dedication to one's chosen occupation.

"That's all," he said at last. "Go through and introduce yourself to Mr. Kitts. He'll be your superior officer. The janitor in the hall will show you where to find him."

I came out dazed, partly with fright, partly with exultation. But as I emerged into the familiar entrance hall exultation began to take over. I belonged! I saw everything through different eyes: the dark bulk of the walrus under the stairs, the leopard-killing-a-deer, the Backhouse assegais and spotted shields. Everything took on a new dimension—me! The whistling attendant, to whom I presented myself, growled something about cemeteries and dead-end jobs, followed the remark with a smile that showed he didn't really mean it, and led the way into the Museum—straight to the green-baize door. A whiff of old paper and methylated spirits met me as he pushed it open.

"Here's your new boy, Mr. Kitts."

I went in, and there—tableau!—was my blue and yellow macaw.

It was dramatic, theatrical. I was going to write that it was like a blow in the face. It wasn't. It was as if a friendly and steadying hand had suddenly laid itself over a heart still galloping from the shock of my encounter with Charlton Deas. I was on the other side of the dusty window, but it had just received one of its periodical cleanings, and the bird was stuck on it like a great flamboyant color transparency. Behind it the golden beams of a wintry sun lit up the furred bole and listless fronds of a tree-fern. The bars of the cage meant nothing to me. I was looking at a dream, at a picture straight out of jungle and tropic isle.

I must have cut a stupid figure, standing open-mouthed just within the doorway, for the next thing I knew was a testy voice saying: "What's the matter, boy? Come in and let me have a look at you."

I stepped forward, and as I did so the macaw let off a great screech.

Kitts, bearded and forbidding, was crouched over a table littered with books and papers and —of all things—crabs. He was holding one of them upside down in one hand, the pale dead claws looking like grotesque extensions of his fingers. But even as I became aware of him the sharp little eyes which had once glared at me so fiercely began to twinkle . . . .

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A warm beginning for a boy taking his first step out of childhood into responsible life. It was to be just a stop-gap job, something to keep me occupied while I awaited a call from a marine engineering firm to which I had been apprenticed. The call came a few months later, but I didn't answer it, despite all the pressures brought to bear on me by my father. I was happy, and I stayed at the Museum for two years.

However, all that remains to be said here is that in the first few days several other mysteries were cleared up: the dungeon door in the Winter Garden, the dark tunnel in the park shrubbery, and the trap-door in the corner of the Museum ground-floor. I found that they all led into a complex of cellars and dusty passages. The dungeon was the stokehold, and the voices of my 'prisoners' were the voices of policemen off neighboring beats who sneaked in through the shrubbery for a surreptitious smoke. As for the trap-door, it gave access to the Museum cellar, which itself had a door opening on to a black passage half-way between stokehold and daylight.

That underworld became my new playground and my new school, the place to which I also escaped from authority. Conspiring with Dick, the braided janitor, to outwit Charlton Deas and dear old Kitts, I spent many happy hours there: listening to the earthy talk of policemen; palling up with Joe, 'the man', so that he allowed me, in the early mornings, to fish for sticklebacks in the sacred pool; poring over musty leather-bound files of The Graphic and Illustrated London News; making my own entomological setting-boards at the carpenter's bench; raising the caterpillars of rare butterflies and moths in biscuit tins hidden behind stacks of discarded library books; coughing over my first cigarettes.

Two happy years, of which a blue and yellow macaw has always remained the colorful symbol.

MISCELLANY

ARTS VIETNAM

Guy Morrison

AUSTRALIA is justified in feeling a little pride. It has produced what no other country has attempted: an almost-unanimous demonstration of protest by artists against a futile and barbarous war. This was Arts Vietnam, a season of drama, music, poetry and painting, which was presented in Sydney from October 3 to 12.

Was it a success? Considering the amount of creative energy it released and the enthusiastic effort devoted to its staff work, the question is worth asking.

If names and numbers provide a criterion, Arts Vietnam was an outstanding success. Glance, for example, at the catalog of the painting and sculpture exhibition held at Gallery A in Paddington: Drysdale, Fairweather, Pugh, Perceval, Boyd (Arthur, David and Hermia), Olsen, Dickerson, Herman, Klippel, Cassab, Blackman, Wakelin, Rees, Gleeson, Coburn, Crowley, Orban and nearly thirty others. Of the fifty painters and sculptors invited to exhibit, only one declined for political reasons. Had the gallery's wall space allowed it, the show could have been twice as big. Anybody familiar with the fierce rivalry of Sydney gallery directors must have been astonished to find so many exhibitors under one roof. Only the determination of artists to be in it made the show possible.

No other cause could have brought them together. No other cause, surely, could have attracted so many distinguished poets to the Teachers' Federation Auditorium, where most of Arts Vietnam was presented on consecutive nights. A. D. Hope, David Campbell, Rodney Hall and Dorothy Auchterlonie travelled from Canberra to read their work. Geoffrey Dutton came from Adelaide. Dorothy Hewett flew from Perth, and flew back next day, because she could not bear to be absent. R. D. FitzGerald, one of the principal organisers of Arts Vietnam, read a recent and powerful poem, "The Lawbreakers".

The list of contributors, present and absent, ran on impressively: Judith Wright, Nancy Keesing, Thomas Shapcott, Denis Kevans, Roland Robinson, Bruce Beaver, John Blight, David Rowbotham, Colin Thiele, Gwen Harwood, Max Harris, John Manifold, W. Hart-Smith, Craig Powell, J. M. Couper, Robert Clark, Elizabeth Riddell, R. A. Simpson, Vivian Smith, Rosemary Dobson, Chris Wallace-Crabbe . . .

It was moving to witness such a gesture, as it was to see some of Australia's leading composers mount the stage on the following evening to declare their concern at the slaughter in Vietnam and to introduce their music. Richard Meale, unable to complete a piece for string quartet and voice undertaken specifically for the occasion, presented an early composition not previously performed. Peter Sculthorpe, in Japan for a UNESCO conference, sent a piece written for Arts Vietnam. Nigel Butterley introduced his string quartet. Colin Brumby and his wife, Marissa, flew from Brisbane to present Brumby's "Three Songs for High Voice and String Quartet". Three young composers made up the program: Anne Boyd (whose String Quartet No. 1 was written for Arts Vietnam) Barry Conyngham and Alison Bauld.

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Sydney's folk singers, who have consistently supported the peace movement, had an evening to themselves, for which Marian Henderson, Don Henderson and others composed new songs. There was an evening of first-rate jazz. The most successful recital, in terms of turn-away business, was a dramatic anthology entitled "Unhappy the Land that is in Need of Heroes" and devised by Michael Boddy and Aarne Neeme. The cast included Peter O'Shaughnessy, Doreen Warburton, John Derum, Gillian Hunter, Max Meldrum, Lois Ramsey, John Unicomb, Anne Lucas, Alan Edwards, John Gray, John Armstrong, Mark McManus and Lyn Murphy.

Certainly Arts Vietnam was successful in the scope of its appeal and the breadth of its support. It was gratifying to have the art exhibition opened by such a distinguished scholar as Professor Bernard Smith, gratifying to identify Professor Donald Peart sitting in as a humble member of the Renaissance Players. It was no less gratifying to have eight hundred enthusiastic listeners roll up to a rhythm-and-blues concert at the Paddington Town Hall on the opening night of the season. It was heartening to receive messages of support from a score of Australia's best-known prose writers.

Yes, this was success in terms of names and numbers—and it ensured financial success. The season raised a thousand dollars, which will be devoted to bringing a distinguished overseas visitor to Australia. But what did Arts Vietnam achieve in the long run?

It's the old question that people always ask on such occasions, and it's not hard to answer.

Arts Vietnam expressed the nation's conscience in a forceful and memorable way—a way that could not be entirely ignored by the newspapers and that achieved considerable publicity on radio and television. It showed beyond doubt that Australian artists, like those of America and Europe, have abandoned their traditional stance of non-partisanship. It proved that dissenters from government policy are not, as the Prime Minister would have us believe, just a bunch of nuts—a point that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Barnard, brought home in the House of Representatives.

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An ABC 'Survey' report on Arts Vietnam concluded with a flippant remark, all the more surprising because it came from Ray Taylor, who had made a valuable contribution to the season. "The war in Vietnam didn't miss a beat," he said. This was not entirely true. The war was missing several beats, and three weeks later the bombing stopped. Arts Vietnam did not ground the B52s, of course, but any intelligent observer must concede that world opinion, as much Vietnamese resistance and American economic troubles, forced President Johnson's hand. Insofar as Arts Vietnam contributed, however marginally, to influencing opinion in Australia, it was worthwhile.

ALL THOSE INITIALS

Audrey Blake

ARE you coping with all the new abbreviations? I mean S.D.S., S.D.A., C.U.F., A.L.F., Abschol, Comschol, A.I.C.D., V.A.C. and lots more.

I was thinking of all the arguments in the thirties about jargon and the use of initials for the proper names of organisations and how it went on just the same and what they all meant.

It was in the early thirties and there was this meeting of YCL-ers (members of the Young Communist League) and someone reporting that we should "give more support to the Inclawopas". Being a fervent revolutionary I agreed, but being also 15 years old, I would not then have disclosed the bitter truth—the Inclawopas was a hermetic mystery to me. Only much later did the International Class War Prisoners' Aid Society light up that dark Inclawopas landscape of my mind.

The I.L.D. was a less exotic bloom, International Labour Defence being constantly on the agendas of progressives' meetings throughout those years. If it wasn't, then the matter came up in the discussion under the item 'The Insit'—The International Situation.

W.I.R. was another cause that had to be supported—it was the Workers' International Relief. Later, the Spanish Relief Committee took precedence over all other solidarity organisations. Internationalism was a big thing for the Left of the thirties.

The U.W.M. in South Melbourne wanted a speaker for a Friday night. It happened to be the evening of the day I got married, but the Y.C.L. insisted I'd have to go anyway—all the other speakers were already booked for Friday night street meetings and it was "important to support the Unemployed Workers' Movement". And Jack Blake was booked to speak in Albert Park's Red Square on Jim Coull's platform for the same night anyhow.

The M.M. (Minority Movement) got some attention too, because we thought we should build a youth section of it "to work amongst young workers in the reformist trade unions". At one time we included the M.M.M. in our discussions—the Militant Minority Movement (clearly in those days we felt a need to be explicit and to carve 'the line' with a rigid stroke).

The Fosu was of outstanding importance to us: to be one of the Friends of the Soviet Union was as natural as breathing. If you needed all those UWMs, Inclawopas, ILDs, WIRs and MMs, then the Sunday nights at the Fosu to hear about workers' power and to sing Bandiera Rossa were exhilarating experiences for young workers.

Today a lot of the magic initials of interest to progressives denote students—Students for a Democratic Society, Students for Democratic Action, Action for Love and Freedom, et al. And as students are manifestly providing a few vital clues to the future—about the relationship between intellectuals and workers, about the role of the young generation in today's social movement—we will have to know their signs.

Another interesting feature of today's nomenclature is 'the Trots'. This seems to be the friendly with-it designation given to the Fourth Internationalists of both trends. In my time amongst the youth, we wouldn't have dreamt of calling them the Trots—it would have been like calling the Devil 'Dev' or 'Devvie'. They were original sin, the agents of the imperialists, the splitters: in fact a bit like the 'monsters and ghosts' in China now. But here they are today—the Trots, a trend in the socialist movement. Interesting, isn't it?

'Social origin' doesn't seem so painfully important now either. But it was when the Y.C.L. Examination Commission interviewed me on my application for membership. I was nervous and tried hard to answer all the questions well, including 'What is your social origin?' We were all workers in our family, but I was a bit hazy about my 'social origin'. The discovery that I was of proletarian social origin and that this gave great satisfaction to the members of the Examination Commission bucked me up: I was very anxious to become a YCL-er.

Later I discovered that 'petty-bourgeois' was the worst thing you could say about anyone (well, after Trotskist anyway) and 'bloody intellectual' was pretty damning. But a couple of years ago, at the first Arena symposium in Sydney, Helen Palmer said: "It is interesting that in this gathering of workers and intellectuals, no intellectual has felt the need to preface his remarks with, "Although I am an intellectual, my father was a coalminer". We all laughed, but everyone felt that something new had been expressed. Some things had changed and a good thing too.

ON LABELS

C. Hodges

Unless I am completely mistaken Don Crick's contribution on literary criticism in Australia (Overland No. 38) makes the following point: A coterie of a particular view, taking Patrick White as their ideal, has built up a criterion of literary worth on the basis of its understanding of White's work. This group of critics sees, in White's work, the interior life, shorn of its social environment, as the key to literary worth

The first question to ask is: Is the coterie correct in their analysis of White? In "The Tree of Man" White's central character is not only a man acting on his environment but a man who changes his own social setting in his own life span. But this man has an interior life, is conscious of his own isolation and inability to communicate at depth with others, and particularly his own wife. A common enough man this, having similar problems to contemporary Australian men whether in Gladesville, Balwyn, Colonel Light Gardens or wherever. In fact a universal figure.

But certainly—looking at other more mature literary articles—it is commonplace for coteries to develop. Who would want to stop them even if it were possible to do so?

My only comment here is let us not take ourselves too seriously. Particularly, those of us who do.

But an oversight in Crick's contribution, at any rate to me, is his lack of an historical approach

to literature in Australia, a too ready grasping of the heady stuff of ideology, however defined.

In order to place White in perspective, and thus to evaluate criticism of his work, surely it is necessary to take the long view.

Blast the "Socialist Realist category". What I'm interested in literature for is whether, in fact, an author makes me think, feel, or sense some aspect of life in a deeper manner than I did before picking up his work.

In Lessing's words, "literature is analysis after the event". What interests me is whether the analysis can expand my humanity in all directions.

So for me the historical perspective. And, to me, it is glaringly obvious that Patrick White owes a considerable amount to Christina Stead. Anyone who has read "The Seven Wise Men of Sydney" and "For Love Alone" and cannot see a similarity in sensibility and in attitudes (in relation to both Australia and human beings) between Stead and White (particularly his "Riders in the Chariot") has only read the words without reading the meaning.

Stead's Australia shows a cramped Australia—cramped individual lives due to economic poverty. White's Australia shows a cramped Australia—that is cramped and twisted lives (and I am specifically referring to "The Chariot" here), but the place where they are cramped is in the spirit. Materialism, in the crude sense, has overpowered them. Surely both insights are correct of their respective periods?

This is the first time I have encountered the category of the "new order" of writers—let me repeat, blast the label, after all only applied to dispose of something else—and I refuse to have individual writers wrapped up and disposed of so easily long before they are dead, and consequently decades before they can be evaluated in any objective manner. Who knows what Keneally may yet write?

ODE FOR THE "VISTA VISION KID"

In that certain
time of morning,
when
Rain is Pollock
upon the windows,
Academy
is nothing more
than folded paper
and empty
envelopes.

SWEENEY REED

At the age of 70, composer Margaret Sutherland is the undisputed first lady of Australian music. Her influence on the nature and character of Australian music of her Australian generation is of tremendous significance, not only in her leadership in the formulation of an indigenous local style but even more in the way she has championed her younger and less successful contemporaries.

—FELIX WERDER, The Age, November 1967.

YOUNG DAYS IN MUSIC

Margaret Sutherland

THE first memorable jolt in my young life came when we moved, as a family, from Adelaide to Melbourne. This was in 1901. My father, George Sutherland, had been writing for the Register in Adelaide, and he came over to take up a position as leader-writer on the Melbourne Age.

Prior to this event, life had been placid enough during my first four years of existence. I remember clearly each morning sitting perched on our front gate post, waving good-bye to my two older brothers as they crossed the parklands on their way to school. The next thing was to go inside and strum on the piano, often trying to piece together bits of the music my two older sisters practised. Sometimes also my father, who spent his mornings at home, would play to me—short movements from some of the early Beethoven sonatas. Those were gala days. My mother, who had a sweet, rather plaintive voice, often sang in the evenings when I was in bed, such songs as Grieg's Solveig's Song. One of my brothers complained, "Please don't sing that song. It makes me **sorry**." Little did I guess that the migration to Victoria was to bring such an exciting new dimension into life. There were first the hectic preparations for departure, then the reserved compartment in the express (into which no stranger could enter) and finally the arrival in what seemed an entirely foreign country.

The family, divided up into groups, each to stay with related families until a house was found; and, as youngest of the brood, it fell to my lot to go with my parents to the house in Kew where lived my three aunts, Jane (an artist), Julia (a pianist), and Jessie (a lieder singer), together with their bachelor brothers William (a physicist, whose biography was later to be written by the late Professor W. A. Osborne) and James (a teacher of science). I remember so well the new experience of being in a house of grown-ups. But these were not the kind of grown-ups of whom I had previously felt rather frightened. They were not distant, or forbidding, but great fun. I felt immediately at home, and tremendously intrigued, if still rather shy.

Out of those few days spent at Stawell Street, Kew, came, for me, two big impressions. First, there was the exquisite scent of a large, vigorously sprawling woodbine which grew at the front gate, out of which floated the most fragrant and heady aroma I had ever so far met. The second and startling impression was the strange sight of a chair-lift, which, by means of pulley and rope, nightly carried my Aunt Jane up over the stairway and bannisters when she went up to her bed. This unusual contraption had been the work of my Uncle Willie (William) to save her the strain of the stairs, for she had, much earlier, through her joy and excitement in painting with her admired artist-friends (McCubbin, Roberts, Withers of the noted Heidelberg Group) unhappily brought on a heart illness which made her an invalid for the rest of her life.

This chair-lift was by no means an amateurish affair. It appeared to me to resemble a kind of squarish throne on which she sat, slight and dignified, for her nightly journey. It made her in my eyes a kind of queen.

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I HAD barely become used to the many strange and arresting things there (including a large horizontal grand Bluthner piano) when my sister Dorothy and I were sent off to stay at the house of Uncle Alex (Alexander) at the university. He

was at that time registrar of the university as well as acting professor of English, and his house was the one now known as University House. He had formerly been headmaster of Carlton College, where not only his four brothers, but also his father, had taught. The family consisted of Sheila (the eldest), Lucy, Brenda and Dallas, the only son, who was killed in France during World War I. Impressions of this visit, which I greatly enjoyed, were curious. The one that stands out plainly was the skeleton of a whale which faced our bedroom and alarmed me greatly when I drew up the blind in the morning. Another concerned floor coverings, for the new fashion of covering the whole floor with plain felt had just come in, and this house had different colors in each room. I remember that these gave me great pleasure. I also recall the occasion of a small dinner-party given by my aunt, and of my being put into a cream delaine frock to come down after dinner and play a part of a Schubert piece which I had audaciously learned by ear from having heard my sister Dorothy practising it. She, of course, played 'real' pieces. She was then aged about thirteen and quite advanced.

My uncle Alex had earlier bought a very lovely property, Heronswood, at Arthur's Seat, Dromana, for family holidays and also for his ultimate retirement, when he planned to write again. Tragically, however, a congenital heart weakness, which was shared by all five brothers, brought his life to an end not long after our coming to Melbourne. I do not recollect having seen him later than during our stay at the university.

Such an unusually strong bond existed between the brothers and sisters in the Sutherland family that inevitably we sought, and found, a home in Kew, actually just a short walk from Stawell Street. This meant that I (not yet at school) seemed to invite myself there a great deal, often with my father in the mornings. I also well remember the number of times I sat as a model for Aunt Jane, who, though she had had to give up painting in oils, often would use pastel, and/or water color, sitting with a box on her knee.

Another favorite activity had an original slant. My pianist aunt would play the accompaniments of some of the Schubert songs that I knew, and let me, with two hands an octave apart, play the vocal line. This gave me great joy, for it sounded so rich and grown-up. (Quite a novel way, as it seems to me now, to embark on the study of music.) Both my sisters profited too by the understanding, encouragement and kindly judgments of the aunts, as Ruth, the eldest of the family, was already starting at the National Gallery Art School, and Dorothy, eight years older than I, was studying seriously with Aunt Julia to be a pianist.

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LIFE seemed to run on with a pleasant uneventfulness during those first years in Melbourne. I had been sent to school at the age of seven, a nearby girls' grammar school, and was having music lessons from my Aunt Julia. Then, suddenly, out of a blue sky, the family was struck a devastating blow.

My sister Ruth, who was at that time nearing the end of her period of study at the Gallery Art School, and in the middle of painting her 'subject' picture to compete for the travelling scholarship which was awarded every three years, became desperately ill with a burst appendix leading to peritonitis. While her life was still in the balance, and all the family were waiting with chill in their hearts for the next news from the hospital, my father, who had returned from the office as usual round about midnight, without any apparent warning died suddenly just after reaching home.

The world seemed to black out for us.

Slowly, eventually, my sister recovered. Slowly and painfully the family re-adjusted.

It was a nightmare period during which I was allowed only on to the fringe. I was frightened, and lonely, mostly at the grief of my mother, for she was stricken, and tragically bereft. She was quite unlike what I had known before—a person I scarcely recognised.

Not one of the family was at that time earning. It meant a whole new pattern of life, and with no time to lose. Ruth, as soon as she was strong enough, started holding art classes. My elder brother got a job on the Ballarat Star as a junior reporter. I do not recollect what my younger brother did: but Dorothy, at sixteen, began looking for piano pupils.

It was after I had been about two years at school that Dorothy, who was working hard at piano, giving lessons, and attending classes in Interpretation held by Marshall Hall at the Conservatorum, had a serious break-down, due apparently to overwork and anxiety. She was a lovely looking girl, with soft nut-brown hair and large grey-blue eyes, and I recall that she was altogether very ill. I cannot recollect details of the illness, but know that she was out of action for a long time, as many things seemed to go wrong as well. Indeed she never did return to robust health at any time afterwards, but remained delicate and vulnerable to all kinds of upsets. She passionately longed to be physically strong, for mentally she had tremendous vigor. Eventually she returned to teaching and had a great talent for it. Her general reading too covered a wide field, and she had also the kind of gift for friendship which brought her friends rallying round. Her couch was a kind of focal point in the house. Dorothy spent a great deal of time with the aunts. She was much beloved, especially by Aunt Jane, the artist, who painted her a great deal. There is a beautiful head of her in the Melbourne Art Gallery.

Jane Sutherland's style, particularly in landscape, resembled the work of McCubbin and Withers. She often captured an atmosphere of the utmost serenity. Sometimes she added figures, mostly children. I remember so clearly how she never failed to light up and grow animated when she talked of her active painting days. The feeling of painting in a group seemed to have a particular significance, for there was so much discussion, comparing-of-notes, and tireless experiment. One could feel the long-ago excitement in her manner as she vividly described it all. There are some lovely examples of her work, privately owned, in Adelaide. Miss Brenda Sutherland, of Altona, Melbourne, has some others, particularly fine. There is a head of her brother, William, in the La Trobe Library, a self portrait and a landscape, "The Pool", in our Gallery. And I own a portrait of her younger sister, Jessie, the head of an old farmer, a young girl, "Annie", and one small landscape (these are oil paintings).

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ONE has to be about eleven or twelve years of age, I believe, to begin to see for oneself the significance of ideals and principles, their activating forces, and the philosophy of life that stems from them. A gradual, undefined realisation came to me then which has stayed with me through all the endless ups and downs of a fairly choppy existence. It was the concept that true greatness is simplicity, and that simplicity is the essence of all greatness. And I know positively that it came

to me through the opportunity that was mine to hear much lively discussion and see life lived in the fullest sense. There was no sign of awe-inspiring intellectualism in the Sutherland family. You might have called theirs a down-to-earth idealism. They were not in the clouds. But there was a spiritual quality about their agnosticism. The parents had been, naturally, Presbyterians: and the family went to church dutifully to begin with, in Carlton, where they then lived. But irritating inconsistencies and glaringly outworn dogma soon alienated the lively and critical minds of the older ones, whereupon (I believe incited by Aunt Jane) they left the church in a body.

Like so many people who are profoundly contented in their chosen fields of work they enjoyed life as it came, and with the modesty of the sincere agnostic pegged out no claim, one way or the other, for a future life. I well remember that Aunt Jane told me that she revered Christ for what he was as a man. Yet each and every one of them was actually more 'Christian' in their lives than many a noted cleric.

The garden at Stawell Street was Uncle Willie's special province. I remember a bank of flowers, balsam, nicotiana, leading up to higher cannas, delphiniums and foxgloves, and then climbing up to festooning roses—in the small secluded back garden.

There were also occasional chop picnics in the hills, for his long years of tramping through the bush had given Willie a good knowledge of the choicest spots—and the birds, and all the wild life that haunted the areas. A few children trailing after him seemed always welcome: he appeared to be pretty well the same age as we, and always on for an adventure. We felt no awe—only spontaneous comradeship.

The younger bachelor brother James (Uncle Jimmie as we knew him) seemed shy and withdrawn, as I remember. He had no talent for children, and rather crept into his shell. He was teaching at Camberwell Grammar School about this time. In later years he seemed rather different. He would then come down and see us at home; so that he gradually became more familiar and at ease. He was tremendously attached to Dorothy, and would seek her out, wherever she was, for a talk. She had a way of drawing him out: and a new warmth came into him with her interest and friendliness.

The smallish grammar school which I attended was not very stimulating, but it was fortunately fairly tolerant and easy-going. I never seemed to feel any intense interest in the subject under discussion in any of the teachers excepting the French mademoiselle (who adored her country and its language) and, happily, for me, the class-singing mistress, who was a friend and colleague of my playing and singing aunts. She was Miss Mona McBurney. And with her I studied harmony and counterpoint (interspersed with a little composition) which I carried on with a few senior subjects at school, after passing the Junior Public examination. She gave me the basic grounding, but without grinding it in: and I look back with gratitude and affection to her friendship and interest which lasted till her death. She was one of the most sensitive, gentle, yet vital persons I ever knew.

It was during this same year that a third, and most devastating misfortune befell the Sutherland family. Uncle Willie, the deservedly beloved head of the family at Stawell Street, the man to whom every one of us turned in moments of strain or indecision, died, just as suddenly as had his two elder brothers. He had been that day for a bush walk, by himself, as far as Kangaroo Ground, visiting his friend and biographer-to-be, Professor W. A. Osborne, and had called in to see my mother, Dorothy and me who were holidaying in a little cottage at Warrandyte. At about 7 p.m., I remember, he left us, looking just as usual, full of good cheer, to walk home to Kew. He died that night, and was found by his sister in the morning. The pattern of the brothers' life-tenure was continuing on, relentlessly.

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FINDING a foothold for some kind of career in music was a hazardous affair at the time I am trying to describe. There were a good many don'ts. My aunts were kind and always understanding with advice, but they had all led secluded lives. I knew that I must strike out somehow, either to sink or swim. Also I had to start earning a livelihood as soon as I possibly could. The chief warning that had been given to me (which I think proved invaluable) was not to submit myself to an institution just to be turned out as one of the standardised products.

It so happened that, at the end of 1913, a scholarship was offered to study with Edward Goll, a Czech pianist who had toured Australia, married here, and was prepared to stay on and make his home here. He was then joining the staff of what was called the Marshall Hall Conservatorium (which was temporarily under the guidance of Fritz Hart while Marshall Hall was abroad) as a first-study teacher. I discussed this with my Aunt Julia, and she encouraged me to try for the scholarship. This I did at the beginning of 1914, and was given one for piano under Goll, and also another for composition (as I had played something of my own on my program) with Fritz Hart.

The course at the Conservatorium then was fairly sketchy. But I have always been grateful that I made the acquaintance of the "St. Matthew Passion", which we studied; "Dido and Aeneas", which was produced, fairly well, during the year, and also for my introduction to the works of Gustav Holst (much admired by Fritz Hart) and of Fritz Hart himself. My lessons—in a class of five—with Goll were stimulating. They opened new windows, and brought a wider field into view.

But, alas, 1914 was a fateful year. By August we were at war. Then, during September, and over October, there somehow grew up a completely false, unjust and ignorant enmity towards Goll, whom the then-hierarchy described and denounced as an enemy alien. As we students knew perfectly well (for he had told us earlier in the year quite a bit of his background), the Czechs were actually anti-German in their feelings. Goll's family were Czech to the back-bone. His uncle was the Prefect of Prague University. There was not a shred of reason in the whole affair. But—believe it or not—he was denounced as an enemy alien and dismissed at the end of the year.

The effect of all this outrageous nonsense on me, at seventeen, was to make me stonily defiant. When the university Conservatorium offered Goll an appointment at the beginning of 1915, and he gave me a scholarship, I went over there with him. Nothing would have induced me not to. To him I owe a great deal. He offered me the guidance I needed in many different ways.

By a strange stroke of fortune, Marshall Hall, who had been approached by the university Council while abroad the year before, returned to Melbourne to take up again the position of Ormond Professor (director of the Conservatorium) from which he had been banished sixteen years pre-

viously. His dismissal at that time had been brought about through his having committed the indiscretion of writing and publishing a very small and very silly, provocative book of verses called "Hymns Ancient and Modern". There had been a disgraceful storm-in-a-teacup upheaval due mainly to the vindictiveness of one man, which meant that all Marshall Hall's very great gifts as a lecturer, his infectious enthusiasms, his wide knowledge, his catholicity of taste, his special talent for real communication of the sort that is all too rare, had been denied the students at the Conservatorium for sixteen years. Now he was being 'pardoned' . . . The effect of such clashes on a young mind can be quite profound.

The re-appointment of Marshall Hall we students felt to be unexpected good luck. He was a big man in every sense of the word, and an inspiring one. But alas, it was all too short. In June of that year he died, very suddenly, of an appendical abscess.

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AGAIN, another aching void—an end to something so splendid and so promising. It seemed always to be happening . . . I sought advice about the future.

At that time the full course (i.e. first study, second study, harmony, counterpoint, history and aesthetics, form and analysis) had been allowed to develop into what was rapidly becoming an out-moded curriculum, a kind of routine going-through-the-mill that each student (except singers) was submitted to, and that never deviated. What was known abroad as "English Counterpoint" was taught throughout the degree course (of four to five years). Europe had dispensed with this dreary long-drawn-out process much earlier, for it had been proved that any spark of genuine creativity dried up because of rigidity and lack of spontaneity. There is a great deal of difference between coming to a conservatorium with a background of music since early childhood, and having to make up for lost time when music has not always been a part of life. One naturally seeks out information if one has lived in an atmosphere of music, reads on these lines, goes to important rehearsals, listens with experience in one's ears. The pieces of the puzzle seem to come together by means of a kind of magnetic attraction, rather than their having to be put into place laboriously. Whereas the student who has to start from scratch (even if fairly musical) and who has not had an opportunity to hear much music is at a distant disadvantage, and requires much instruction to make up for a late start. This very often applies to singers, who are required to do only comparatively little theoretical work, and are generally eased through the course. It always seems to me a little strange.

I had attended, and often played at, the deservedly popular Interpretation classes of Marshall Hall, before he left his own conservatorium to go abroad, and also after he returned to the university. They were always vital, instinctive, stimulating. And it was bitterly disappointing to find that his successor did not mean to carry on this important activity in the course. The classes turned into 'Concert Practice'. There was never any musical comment made, but a voice would say "That took exactly seven minutes", or whatever the time was. By this time my teaching practice was beginning to grow, and, as most of the pupils had to be visited in their houses, a lot of my time was cut into. This in itself began to make a full course impracticable, so there was all the more reason for thinking along other lines. Goll definitely was very much against my doing any but chosen single subjects.

During 1914 the youngest Sutherland uncle—John—died at the age of forty-five, leaving two teenage boys, Keith and Leigh. Uncle John had been an actuary; the cardiac weakness which ran through the family so relentlessly caught up with him slightly earlier than with the other brothers. During the following year my two brothers enlisted. How the elder one, Douglas, ever got himself accepted we never understood, as he was asthmatic. The younger one was at the Gallipoli landing—badly injured—blown up by a shell. Douglas was wounded on Hill 60 in France. He later became a sub-editor on the West Australian in Perth.

Then during 1916 James, the last of the brothers, died without warning. My three aunts were entirely alone, and they moved to another house —still in Kew—in Highfield Grove, which had no stairs. To them came, as housekeeper, later to be a dear and trusted friend, Miss Ethel Nightingale. This charming, very shy, golden-haired young woman played a vital part in the remaining course of their lives. She had lacked educational opportunities in her earlier life, having come from a large family in the country. But she had the most genuine feeling for knowledge and awareness of things of the mind, and over the years developed remarkably and became utterly devoted to the aunts. It seemed an extraordinary compensatory happening, that this so much younger person filled in and cherished them so much.

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THE next year, 1916, brought Henri Vergbrugghen, the Belgian conductor and violinist, to the State Conservatorium in Sydney. He brought with him also his string quartet—all of them in the first rank. At once, all sorts of things began to happen. In no time he was frequently in Melbourne, playing many duo-recitals for violin and piano with Edward Goll; bringing his quartet over for many different series of concerts; taking his orchestra interstate; establishing, building. It was exciting—and so different. He asked me (I think I was nineteen then) to go over and play a concerto with his orchestra, and I went and played the Beethoven G major. One went up—most often on a Sunday—to hear the quartet rehearsing at his home at Wahroonga. It was a regular Sunday happening. He always stayed, when in Melbourne, with the Golls. They lived then at Hampton. And I could go down and listen—and listen—and drink in—and turn the leaves.

Teaching people to play the piano I found a most exacting job. I was appointed (I thing in 1918) to the music staff at P.L.C. (East Melbourne). And the relentlessness of those half-hour lessons, one after the other, was, to me, trying beyond description. Relief came sometimes, when the pupil failed to turn up, and I could spend the time practising for myself. We gave twenty-six lessons each term and received £2/10/0 for each pupil. The school profited by £1/10/0 per pupil. Even in those days it was sweated labor. On the credit side, however, there was the occasional interesting and promising student, some of whom have been my valued friends ever since. I was also doing, at that time, some understudy work for Goll at the Conservatorium, when he went on tour or for any other reasons could not be there. Occasionally I would give a piano recital, and at times I would go on a country tour for the conservatorium.

The presence of Verbrugghen in this country, the interest he brought in new works for orchestra, or any of his other ensembles, the liveliness of

his approach to all things musical, were an enormously stimulating force, even to us Melbournians. There were always the comings and goings, for concerts and recitals; the discussions, the fun, the pranks that he got up to. This was really living. But, alas, the State Conservatorium of New South Wales was politically controlled. Verbrugghen was every inch an artist. He tried valiantly to convince the politicians of his need for expansion, his great plans for the betterment of the conservatorium, his visions of a new era for music in Australia. After five years of trying to improve things, he had reluctantly to admit failure, and left with his family and members of his fine quartet for Minneapolis.

Edward Goll had been doing splendid work in Melbourne, giving many recitals of little-known music, and altogether covering an enormous field of piano literature. This was of inestimable value to students as well as being stimulating to music-lovers, as most of the programs at that time were conservative and unimaginative. But the loss of Verbrugghen and the other fine players, after such an excitingly fertile period, left me unconsolable.

I had always been conscious that, apart from my many limitations as a pianist, piano-playing could never satisfy me. The constant repetition of music in practising was a nerve-strain that worried me incessantly. One's ears seem to be battered: and the effort to keep the music fresh, after acquiring the necessary technical control, beyond me. I have never been able to understand how famous concert-pianists can bear to play the same program, year in, year out, and continue to remain sane.

On the other hand to pluck music from the air, and fashion it according to one's own whim, is quite another thing. That was what made my heart beat faster. And that was what I longed passionately to have time and opportunity to do. But the means were lacking.

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HOWEVER, the break did eventually come. The Golls had decided to spend 1923 abroad. He asked me to take over all his teaching at the Conservatorium, and generously insisted that I received full fees for all the time he was away. This made it possible for me to escape. That year proved a fairly titanic effort, as I continued my own teaching as well, and also went for some country tours arranged by the Conservatorium. I remember feeling lonely and trapped, yet, underneath, excited.

Creative music in Australia at that time had never developed beyond being a pale reflection of the merest fringe of music abroad. Alfred Hill, our most sincere and professional composer, had been sent as a youth to Leipzig, an unfortunate choice when the life-urge in music was coming to an end in Germany, but showing signs of enormous vigor and change in France.

No real impact had come our way. We had never even heard any Stravinsky. Goll had brought some Bartok with him. But there was nothing very challenging otherwise, and I had a great longing for challenge.

In the meantime, another blow awaited my family. Dorothy, who had had many ups and downs in health, but was still struggling to keep on with her teaching, became suddenly seriously ill. My mother looked after her (my eldest sister had by then married) and slept downstairs to be near her. One morning in September I came downstairs to prepare to leave for school and found my mother lying unconscious on her bed. She died the same morning, a little later. We learnt that her doctor had told her two years before that she had Bright's disease, but she had never disclosed the fact to us.

Dorothy was terribly shocked. She had immediately to go to hospital. My sister Ruth with her husband and small son came and took over the house, while I boarded elsewhere. The feeling of desolation we had, I remember, was crippling; there seemed no purpose in life. It was first blank, and terribly hard to carry on with work. I had pencilled a passage already to go abroad. The family urged me to go on with my plans, though I felt apathetic about it. However, I did set off in December of that year, still a bit dazed and uncertain, and drained of energy.

The actual tale of my time abroad does not belong here. Suffice it to say that I listened avidly, followed all clues that seemed to have relevance, and separately studied composition, orchestration and conducting. Most English music of that period did not move or hold me. I actively disliked dressed-up folk song (preferring it undressed) and the kind of musical inbreeding that was rife. London and Vienna were my main centres and Paris for a shorter time. In fact I learned a great deal of a great many things, but I think that Australia haunted me all the time. I also knew that composition mattered above everything. Living fairly frugally, I made my savings last for two years, so it was the end of 1925 when I returned home.

After having thought in terms of the **writing** of music all this time, the barrenness, the absolute vacuum at home, hit and hurt me. I could not think where to turn, how to think, what to do. Some warm friends came to my rescue and helped to arrange a recital of things that I had brought home. The largest of these was a sonata for violin and piano which I wrote after leaving Arnold Box, and of which he wrote, when he read it through to give his opinion on publishing it: "This is the best work I know by a woman". In another letter he described it as being "full of remarkable ideas". I admired him enormously, and found him understanding.

The recital was well attended. But no-one appeared to know what I was driving at. A frequent comment was "straight from the subconscious you know" and I began to feel I was some sort of Freudian freak. I knew then that it was going to be a desperately heart-breaking uphill journey, and I felt cold and dismayed.

THIS LETTER IS ADDRESSED TO OKSANA KRUGERSKAYA, AN OFFICIAL OF THE UNION OF SOVIET WRITERS, MOSCOW

DEAR OKSANA...

AMONG the many people from all over the world whom you have entertained and looked after I hope you haven't quite forgotten us. Do you remember David and Richenda Martin from Melbourne, Australia, whom you so kindly and competently cared for during April and May of this year? We often think of you and speak of you and I am writing an early New Year letter now instead of a greeting card.

It is a beautiful, warm, sunny, calm morning in this lovely old town in northern Italy. The ancient buildings are mellow and golden, the hills are green and gentle and civilised—people, dwellings, farm-buildings, churches, vineyards abound. The mountains beyond are breathtakingly majestic and beautiful; the sky is such an intense and clear blue you can't believe it. I am sitting in a garden brilliant with a profusion of flowers—scarlet, pink, orange, purple, crimson. What a paradise! How lucky I am! Wouldn't anyone be happy to be here?

Perhaps you would not be happy here. Perhaps you would prefer to be doing your work. Your life's work. Your life's work that has been shattered—ruined by one night's foul, senseless, inhuman act by Soviet soldiers, by one fatal, blundering decision taken by the Soviet government. Why did they take that decision? Why?

I am not happy here. I can hardly bear to be here. I can hardly bear the sun and the warmth and the beauty and the peacefulness. When we first decided to stay for a few weeks in this quiet little town—that was four weeks after August 21—I ran into the garden and wept bitter tears. The bitterest tears of my life. (August 21, you know, was the day we woke to find that men from all over the Soviet lands had come uninvited and in tanks, during the night, to Prague. Why do men from a brother socialist country have to come like this? Why?)

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It is now seven weeks since that day—August 21—and still everything I see and hear reminds me of Czechoslovakia and of the men and women and children we left behind there. I see a mother and child in the street but my mind sees the mother playing with her toddler on the corner of our street in Prague, and weeping as she watched us leave her country to safety. I look at a clock tower in an Italian square—but my mind sees the clock tower in Prague which the Nazis partly burned and which still stands damaged, as a memento. I look at a castle on a hill—but my mind sees the Prague castle where, on August 21, I saw Prague citizens asking the Soviet soldiers what on earth they were doing guarding their castle with tanks, and why? Yes, why? (Many tankmen didn't know why. One, for example, was told he was going to Poland to fight West Germans.)

I stop and look at an Italian square—a piazza—but my mind sees the square in Prague where, on August 21, I saw a Soviet tank (one of many in the square) scatter a crowd of citizens to stop them talking and arguing with the tank crews, still asking them why they had come. Tanks, Oksana, to stop people talking and asking questions! Why?

I saw the tanks on May Day in the Red Square. I actually said to someone that I was pleased to see them there, although I hate such things. I believed **then** that they would never be used aggressively, and I was so pleased to think of you and your fellow-countrymen secure and protected by such military strength against aggressors.

You are no longer secure, are you? You will never be secure now until those whom the Soviet government has silenced can speak again. Oh yes, you are safe enough for the time being, I suppose—as safe as the tankmen are in their tanks and with a gun for protection. Is this really the security you want, you and your fellow countrymen and women? Security gained through cruel, senseless suppression of a small defenceless brother socialist country, through the stifling of ideas, opinions, thoughts?

In the end words **are** stronger than tanks. "Truth prevails" is the Czechoslovak motto. Czech and

Slovak journalists, radio and TV people have been scrupulously careful to tell the truth. This is one reason why the whole nation is so united. They trust their press and their government. This is a united country. This is real, **socialist** unity. The people are still united behind their leaders—the same leaders that the Soviet government tried so shamefully to discredit. The same leaders who pronounced in their Action Program of January this year:

> The Czechoslovak Communist Party is trying to show that it is capable of a different political leadership and management than discredited bureaucratic police methods. 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 order but by the work of its members and the truth of its ideals. The right to experiment is a right to the future of our nations—to their revolutionary existence.

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Perhaps you think your country is also united. I don't think so. A life-long communist party member, a journalist on the London Morning Star, wrote to us: "The only public justification of the invasion that has been made will simply **increase** the tensions between the dogmatists and the thinking part of the Soviet people. This **must** exist. You cannot spend such billions, such care, on education and enlightenment without bringing into existence the living forces that will replace the men of the formula, of the power-machine, of the fear reaction instead of the thought reaction."

What a pity your government is afraid to let people talk about new ideas. What are they afraid of? Why can't they trust the people? Are Russians inferior to Czechs and Slovaks? When the press censorship was lifted in Czechoslovakia the journalists did **not** abuse their freedom. Would your Russian journalists not also refrain from abusing it? Or are they inferior to Czechs and Slovaks? Mr. Dubcek had the complete confidence of the people and the press. Would Mr. Brezhnev not also have it? Or is he inferior to Mr. Dubcek? Why does your press and radio have to lie so much?

David and I go for walks here sometimes—all is lovely—the green hills, the olive and cypress trees, the winding rivers, the wild flowers. And again my mind sees the Czech countryside. (We were there in the summer after leaving the Soviet Union.) The summer of the wild flowers we called it. Now the wild flowers symbolise for us the Czechoslovak 'spring'—the political spring that made the hearts of millions of people all over the world leap with joy, the same people who had once taken so much pride in the wonderful achievements of the Soviet Union; the same people who felt so much love and trust in the great land of the Soviet Union; the same people who felt that in Czechoslovakia there was a new moving forward that would do credit to communism all over the world. Now, millions all over the world are puzzled, bewildered, grieved and shocked and are asking—why?

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This one foolish (or was it imperialist?) act, Oksana, is the greatest blow to thousands of devoted communists and socialists all over the world and the greatest blow to communism itself. It is incomprehensible. It doesn't make sense. We were told over and over of the love felt for the Soviet Union. We were told that if Czechoslovakia was invaded it would destroy everything they had worked for, for so long. A head of the Czechoslovak TV under Mr. Dubcek said: "All my life Russia has been the ally of progressive Czechs. She is the big Slav nation—our big brother country . . . The Russian invasion was worse than Munich because it was the crushing of brothers by protectors."

Dr. Hromadka, a Lenin peace prize-winner, wrote to the Soviet ambassador in Prague: "There has been no greater tragedy in my life than this event. .. . I fear that in the consciousness of our people something has taken place that cannot be undone . . . The damage done is immeasurable. The moral authority of socialism and of communism has been shaken for a long time to come . . . The process of renewal of our socialist society, which began in January 1968, was an impressive attempt to strengthen the authority of the Communist Party, to awaken responsibility in our people for the building of socialism and to give dynamic power internationally to the cause of socialism."

Can you imagine what glee there must be now in the USA and the West German governments? The Soviet government has done their dirty work for them. The Soviet government has smashed the new forces in a brother socialist country simply because it cannot understand the new forces—the new forces that Lenin said becomes a material force when an idea takes hold of the masses.

Yes, what glee in the capitalist governments of the world! But what despair among the people of the world. The Soviet government stands before us now as a government which has abused its power, betrayed communism and taken over the role of the anti-communist governments. In the place of love and trust and pride, there is now mistrust and shame and sometimes even hate. The reactionaries of the world need no longer be afraid of the power of the idea of communism because it is completely discredited everywhere.

No, not quite everywhere. In the six short months of the Czechoslovak 'spring' there was such confidence, such hope, such optimism that it will never be forgotten. Our communist friend on the Morning Star describes it thus: "Forces a hundred times more powerful than those which won at Stalingrad await release. We are in a position of socialism close to triumph but under a leadership capable of spoiling everything."

People everywhere will never forget August 21, 1968. And they will never forget the promise of the Czechoslovak Communist Party: "The Communist Party cannot enforce its line by order, but by the work of its members and the truth of its ideals. The right to experiment is a right to the future of our nations—to their revoluntionary existence."

What a Party! What people! What courage! What teachers of us all! There is still hope for us all.

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We do, indeed, Oksana, wish you the very best for 1969, for you and your daughter and your colleagues, a year of true happiness and true progress and true peace.

Sincerely,

RICHENDA MARTIN

IRELAND AND VIETNAM: THE SAME OLD STORY

Niall Brennan

THERE is a sinister similarity between the war in Vietnam and another war, now almost forgotten but which occupied the minds of the English-speaking people as fully as Vietnam does today. This previous war, which now seems little more than a bloody skirmish on an imperial frontier, may have some lessons for today.

From 1916 to 1923, the Irish people (vast numbers of whose descendants are at present in Australia) were engaged in the agonising task of sorting out their desires for independence. For centuries they had been united on the goal of freedom from English rule; but by 1916 they had become angrily divided, both on the method of achieving it and the nature of the independence they wanted. Ireland's tragedy was that the intensity of feeling built up in resisting her overlords was transferred to the factions of Irishmen themselves and this produced one of the most savage periods of Irish history.

Ireland had been occupied by British troops much longer than Indo-China had been occupied by the French; but it was not until 1916 that this occupation erupted in continual guerrilla warfare. The impact of World War I. on the Irish was not unlike the impact of World War II. on the colonial empires of the East. Ireland was more fortunate than Vietnam in one way. She had only one occupying force to get rid of, the English: the convolution in Vietnam from a French imperial occupation to an American occupation is a product of the more complicated international policies of the mid-century. The Irish had to cope with the more simple world of colonial relationships that existed at the turn of the century.

Militarily the situation offers appalling comparisons. A small nation, divided within itself, finds itself occupied by a great power in the interests of one of its factions. The great power is concerned, so it says, with 'pacification', with good order and government against what it terms 'terrorists', 'a pack of rebels'. Almost everything that President Johnson has called the Viet Cong, the English Prime Minister Lloyd George called the Irish Republican Army. With the memory of the Russian Revolution too close for comfort, the I.R.A. was even called 'Bolshevik'.

The I.R.A. on the other hand said that it stood for a free and independent Irish Republic, and it treated the English forces as invaders. The only response of the English—and Winston Churchill was the most belligerent—was to pile more and more troops into the sorrowing little country. Churchill at one stage demanded 50,000 more troops and blockhouses every ten miles. But the hand of the English was neutralised by world opinion. They could not use the full force at their command because if they did they would destroy the entire country. Like the Americans in Vietnam, who mutter about more troops, more tanks, more napalm and finally the H-bomb, the English force was held back to the point where they were vulnerable to the attacks of the I.R.A. Strangely enough, most of the world opinion hostile to England came from U.S.A., where the great expatriate Irish population worked up congressional sympathy for the cause of Ireland. The paradox of such a situation is that the occupying power, though it has overwhelming strength, cannot use it. It has the same problem as a strong man fighting an angry child. If too many critical people are watching, the child has a fair chance.

Such a military situation plays into the hands of the 'terrorists' which the Great Power is trying to 'pacify'. The so-called terrorists can hold such a Power at bay, and the I.R.A. was able to hold the Black and Tans at bay in much the same way as the Viet Cong can hold the Americans. Nor do they only hold them at bay; the Viet Cong offensive into Saigon was shockingly reminiscent of Bloody Sunday in Dublin. The only time 'pacification' seems to work is when you use the methods of the Duke of Cumberland ('Sweet William' to one side, 'Butcher Bill' to the other) in the Scottish Highlands; but world opinion is more restraining today than it was 200 years ago.

A further point of similarity is the identification of one side, the 'terrorists', with a godless, pagan, or Communist crusade. Without qualifying the nature of Hanoi's Communism, it is possible to point out the tragic identification of the Church with some reactionary elements in the south. In the charged atmosphere of war it becomes only too easy for a belligerent anti-Church policy to emerge. The Irish Church, seeking the kind of social equilibrium in which it could best survive, drew the fire of the I.R.A. The I.R.A. was then condemned outright by many of the Irish bishops as a godless force, tainted with Bolshevism; and the I.R.A. did nothing to disabuse them of this notion by such violent acts as the killing of a Catholic policeman on the porch of a church, the killing of a group of English soldiers at a Wesleyan Chapel and the breaking out of the Red Flag over the Dublin Rotunda. In retrospect it is easy to see these events and hundreds of others like them as the acts of wild men, becoming wilder in the heat of war. It was not easy to see them that way at that time.

The conduct of both wars is strikingly similar. The English troops had no way of knowing who was their enemy. They were harassed, ambushed, killed in great numbers by men with whom they might be rubbing shoulders in the daylight. For many months Michael Collins conducted his war program in a hotel bar frequented by English officers. The English became edgy and trigger-happy; they reacted against this unorthodox form of warfare by acts of violence which they regretted. Atrocity piled upon atrocity, as both sides continued to regard the war from fundamentally different viewpoints. The major casualties were among the innocent civilian population, caught between the clamps of the English soldiers and their own fighting men.

In the long run, an armistice was called not by any appeal to justice but because both sides were appalled by the bloodletting. Six months of intractable negotiation followed in which the irreconcilable interests of both sides were laid nakedly clear on the conference table. Eventually the British forces were withdrawn and the parting jibe of the Black and Tans was "We'll soon be back to separate you".

It was a fair comment. They never went back but the Irish did have a civil war, one of the most traumatic periods of her history. Brother fought brother and father fought son, and wives and mothers wept at the folly of men who thought a constitutional issue was worth so much shooting. The government which emerged from the civil war was the result, not of the war, but of the exhaustion produced by the war. It took the best part of twenty years for Ireland to achieve the political and economic stability she has today.

If the English had pulled out of Ireland, almost anytime before 1921, everybody would have benefitted. The lesson that Ireland offers for the problem of Vietnam is that the longer the big occupying power stays with its policy of 'pacification' the greater are the hatreds built up. The greater the hatreds, the greater the ensuing insanities. The longer the Americans stay in Vietnam, the worse will be the civil war that will follow their departure. When Lloyd George said that he would not confer with a 'pack of rebels' he hurt the conscience of England as much as he hurt the Irish.

BERNARD CRONIN

Paul Carroll

THE recent death of Bernard Cronin, at 84 years of age, marks the passing of a writer who was not only one of the leading figures of Australian literary life in the twenties and thirties, but was also a man who guided and encouraged aspiring writers until the day he died.

A man of remarkable literary energy and versatility, Bernard Cronin was a novelist, short story writer, playwright, poet, magazine and radio writer, and journalist. He had the ability and the desire to write for the widest range of readers without compromising on literary standards. He wrote just as vigorously for those who wanted entertainment as he did for those who wanted enlightenment.

Two of his many novels, "Bracken" and "The Sow's Ear", made uneasy reading in the thirties, when he uncovered cruelty to unprotected individuals while the popular conception of bush life was rugged mateship and shortling bell-birds. Yet his pen could also turn out entertaining detective yarns and science fiction.

A prolific magazine writer, he was a master of the short story. One of his short stories is in an Oxford World's Classics volume. As a playwright he was represented in "Best Australian One-Act Plays", 1937.

Much of Cronin's success was no doubt based on his warm and generous regard for people: those he wrote about, those he wrote to as readers, and those with whom he had personal contact or concern.

Consequently Bernard Cronin was revered in his later years as a teacher and mentor for young writers. He had the gentlest way of diverting the unsuitable student toward some other occupation, but a convincing way of impressing on the acceptable student that hard work had no substitute in the writing game.

I was fortunate to learn from him and to know him as a good friend.

LETTER FROM GREECE

Barry Hill

"Greece is godlike or devilish—I am not sure which, and in either case, absolutely out of our suburban focus."—E. M. Forster.

GODS: Athens, August 1968

Just behind the House of Parliament, to the West, is the Palace where white stockinged guards register the quarter hour with stiff, high knees. It is as if the King were there. On the south, there is a parade of flower stalls to delight any mini-skirt, and a sequence of vendors to delight in them. Along this boulevard is the most conspicuous display of criss-crossed Greek and American flags. Away to the other side, a park walks through as far as the Stadium, past concert stands, open-air theatres, the inevitable pavement for pastries, coffee, and unlimited cold waters; a mile of perfectly sited divertissements.

It is even more charming on Syntagma Square, the centre piece of Athenian tourism, where the peacocks of the garden are completely discredited. In the morning, one takes things en passant; after twelve, the empty chairs patiently hide the siesta. By evening, the waiters and the parade have the right momentum. One tunes somewhere between nonchalance and frivolity. The armrests sigh beautifully, the ice creams are tantalising, for fifteen strides and a certain price, there could be The Times, New Statesman, or Ramparts to rouse one's consciousness. If one cared to gaze directly across the square, the blank and firmly closed facade of Parliament House would just as passively gaze back. As impenetrable, and as seemingly unnoticed, as a cold pasta, it hardly rates a second look. The night has crept out from the land, met the sea, and turned to an evening spilling herbs and raw scent. And fresh deodorant. On the flat roofs and the higher balconies, behind the square, the air is flatteringly new. Down on the tables, among the things that matter in the evening, it is at last sufficiently cool to think of coffee instead of lemon juice. Is it possible to imagine anyone caring at all?

Our business associate of the afternoon has become the Boyer of the evening. Squat, sulky eloquence in dark blue silk. And pink aromatic cheeks, white teeth, and whisps of just-washed hair about the ears. His wife, needless to say, is at home, and our conversation idly proceeds as action, reaction to the remark he had made earlier in the day: "It is better," he said, "not to ask why Parliament is closed."

He speaks as a person acutely aware of his social position. On the telephone, which is handled as a petty officer uses the tube, his profession hyphenates his name. At table, in the easy chair, it is enveloped by the full bloom of a bourgeois manner. The gesture is plump but firm, the phrase neat but hackneyed. Our host speaks as one thoroughly versed in the European and democratic tradition. It is quite difficult, sitting there, to conceive that he has two friends "dangerous" enough to be in gaol.

The friend who is a communist is apparently not among the twenty well-behaved that the Minister of Public Order said were released today. In any case, that is also the sort of thing one does not talk about any more. Once he did not hesitate to talk politics with acquaintances. But it is known that people are taken from their homes, sometimes to return in a week committed to silence, sometimes not to be seen again at all. Between friends, there is quite a deal spoken of torture; it is not known for sure. Nothing is as certain, he adds, injecting levity into a too depressing conversation, as the eventual return of the King and his confinement within the terms of the new Constitution.

*

Our host's resignation is a nice compliment to the Government's latest stage management. For it is an absurd spectacle to observe the regime's invidious attempt at reconciling an absent monarch with the legality of a Constitution designed to check Royal power. The official line is that the new provisions merely ratify precedented practice. Thus, with the power to appoint and dismiss the ministers which the King could only do in conjunction with Parliament's approval, it matters little that a "new advisory body" is to be established. It is of less consequence that the right to veto is to become a suspensive veto over Parliament. And the third major modification, relating to the right of pardon, merely formalises the advisory function of the Minister of Justice. All in all, the icing is perfectly plain and applied in a very straight-forward fashion; palatable to the most discriminating democrat. Digestion only baulks at the fourth amendment, which relates to that part of the Constitution which says: "The King rules the Armed Forces." "In practice, however," the Foreign Minister, Mr. Pipinelis, has explained, "real command of the Armed Forces was entrusted to Chiefs of Staff." The new draft says: "The King rules with Armed Forces whose command is exercised by the Government."

Valiantly, the Government strives for political sophistication. If the Constitution is meant to really put QED to April 21, the rationale is designed to display maximum continuity and intelligence. It is said that the changes in the Constitution were mooted as early as 1964. "It came," says Mr. Pipinelis, "out of Mr. Karamanlis' reform plan of 1963." (Our host suggests that Mr. Karamanlis might be situated in Athens rather than in Paris, were his plan to be implemented.)

For all this, the saving grace is the regime's insistence that history will absolve: Castro, pace Edmund Burke. The great political thinker is actually quoted: "To make a government requires no great prudence; to give it freedom is still more easy. But to form a full government that is to temper together these opposite elements of liberty and restraint, in one consistent work, requires much thought, deep reflection, a sagacious, powerful and combining mind."

"It is not," adds Mr. Pipinelis, "an easy problem to solve."

Indeed, the precedent is definitely there. In 500 B.C., after Anarcharsis attended the Assembly, he told Solon that he was amazed to find that in Greece were men who spoke on public affairs, but fools decided them. In 1968, fools seem to do both. Our host actually reserves his thickest contempt for the style of the new leaders. It is not only readers of foreign newspapers who are appalled at the Government's silly puritanism, sillier anti-communism, its general simple-mindedness. He is convinced that the aristocratic fibre which constituted pre-April affairs made political manners like the present quite inconceivable. Today's parvenu are really the Praetorian aides of the old regime. The wrangles, inefficiency, the confusion of April, made a situation which led to their sudden self-promotion. Since then, they have desperately looked for furnishing, but because of the real gap in the staircase behind them, they are even more uncertain as to their own taste in fittings. So they simply stand around, hammer in hand, idiotic but dangerous, with a grim determination eventually to look properly respectable.

There is a matchbox to prove it. It has a solemn yellow phoenix with a regular wingspan. Against it is the silhouette of a man with a gun. Together, they make a static, stereotyped image without any promise of D. H. Lawrence's vitality. "Greece" is arched in capitals at the top, and "21st April" below. No matter how often I look at the box on our table (Boyer has left his lighter at home), it is never clear whether the man with the gun is a victorious soldier or a watchful sentry. Even the billboard size does not solve the problem, and we saw enough of those on the Pelloponese. The melodramatic red, blue, yellow and black towered over "Shell" and "Uni-Royal". It also announced road junctions, or, back in Athens, popped up the size of postage stamps. The Government, of course, would have it as sentry and soldier, guardian and saviour. A serious interpretation is certainly intended. That is clear from the frequent companion to the image—those gild-edged, maxi-sized photographs of Papadopolous. Our hotel clerk said that shopkeepers were "given" them. If they wanted to, they put them up. "If not," he said, with even more amusement to himself, "they might hang one of Constantine." Then, as an afterthought, he pointed to his partner at the desk: "George does not like Papadopolous." The politely loaded question put to George after that introduction made him more shy than ever. After looking directly at us, then at the floor for a few moments, allowing the silence to cancel levity, he replied with sullen, cool deliberation: "Greece has always been the home of democracy."

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Around Syntagma, the King actually predominates. It is impossible, of course, to know whether it is by chance or design, or, even if the latter, whether it is simply that the tourist shops decoratively prefer the braid and grooming of a twenty-five-year-old to the back alley scowl of a middle-aged politician. Certainly, Papadopolous would be a grubby addition to gay windows and arcades. Too many of him could make the goat bells among the merchandise tinkle differently. Even our host is flat at this point, disconcerted between sips of strongly sweetened coffee. He is able to state, with a full sag of nonchalance, that Papadopolous and crew will be fixtures for the next ten or twenty years.

We persist in asking why. The answer is composed of those loose threads from the lycee, occasionally knotted by his few pre-war years at the Sorbonne. Greece lacks a proletariat, or is still primarily an agricultural country, and the efficiency of governments is incidental to the concerns of most people. Consequently, the trade unions are not sufficiently organised to be a significant counter to the regime. The death knell, though, to effective opposition is the nineteenth century outlook of the bourgeoisie. That, he languidly insists, is the decisive thing. With the exception of the present expatriate politicians, the middle class have no social conscience. Their souls still turn upon their own fortunes, and outwards only insofar as they can exploit their neighbour. And, as an aside, he adds that perhaps his own profession is no exception. The reward, for that rare moment of self-perception, is to notice immediately that his cup is empty and the ice-cream is melted.

Our moments are constantly easy. My idle thought is to Solon's maxim for good government. It is nobly declared that such a state is one where those who have not been wronged show themselves just as ready to punish the offenders as those who have been. Solon's regulation, a stricture against apathy, is perhaps an even greater slight to Syntagma hospitality. For it declared the disenfranchisement of any citizen who did not clearly take conscious and active sides in a revolution. Our consolation is that nothing presses for a crisis of conscience. Embalmed in Syntagma, the House of Parliament is not our tomb. Within a week—London. Thereafter, the greatest dangers are those that threaten every tourist—of becoming an ignoramus, and suffering a disintegrating sense of responsibility. If one avoids that there might be courage enough to muster a letter to The Times on the situation in Greece.

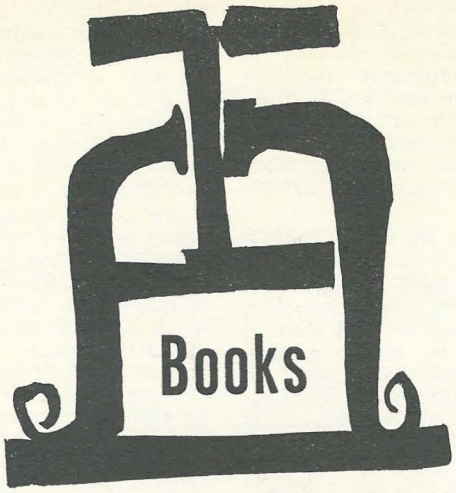
*

DEVILS: London, August 1968

The first bomb has exploded. Before it, and since, every journalist implies that the Underground is merely biding its time. The expatriates in Paris and Scandinavia proclaim this to be so, while denying complicity in the plot. Papadopolous is reported to be unruffled. When his jowls begin to twitch continuously, it will be apparent that the latent energy of opposition has manifested itself.

What is clear is that it is fools with iron heels who have full reign. The suspect's identity is proclaimed and counterclaimed: he is "interrogated" for twenty-four hours. Anyone with an intelligent eye on the arena is rounded up. Meanwhile, in Salonika, a long way from Mr. Papadopolous' holiday home, army officers are fired for lacking sympathy with the government, and a mass trial of thirty similarly offensive civilians is pending.

The events telescope our categories into focus. Is it possible that the regulation of Solon is not so relevant after all?



Eros Malevolent

OWEN WEBSTER

Frank Dalby Davison: "The White Thorntree" (National Press, Melbourne, $10, subscription only)

Write about yourself truthfully enough and deeply enough and you will touch upon the experience of everyone else. Frank Dalby Davison is old and wise enough to know this to be a truism, and in respectfully dedicating "The White Thorntree" to the reader he plays a mischievous paterfamilias for whom there are no surprises left and who with tender irony can observe his juniors flailing and toiling under the yoke of an omnipresent and far from benign Eros.

Unquestionably, his magnum opus is true; honest to the point of agony for anyone who has not fully faced himself. But is it a masterpiece, sub specie aeternitatis? The book makes the question so much worth asking that the ensuing debate should enrich our present literary life as once did the question of whether or not Ern Malley wrote poetry.

The answer, one might say, lies in the soil—the depth of the soil in which "The White Thorntree" has grown. If the author has not dug deeply enough, it may be firstly because he has chosen to write a traditional novel. But if that is a fault, all fiction must answer the indictment. And the fictional device by which the author diffuses himself into his handiwork may account for the fact that the novel tends to make up in length for what it lacks in depth. There is no sense of an autobiographical consciousness: the author remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, but not quite invisible, refined not quite out of existence, certainly not indifferent, and neither paring his fingernails nor doing anything else to himself. In short, he has the detachment of Joyce with much more compassion.

The half-million words he has taken to tell this story of a marriage are an integral part of its form and his purpose. The grounds for complaint here are in the vagaries of modern publishing which have so far confined the work to five hundred copies, not in the author's self-indulgence. A dedicated editor working for several more years might reduce the work by fifty thousand words without damage to its integrity, that is all. Negligible. In any case, with such a demand for concentrated reading, some allowance by repetition must be made for reader fatigue.

The author's humility towards his creation demands that his characters establish themselves at a pace resonant with that of life, by the slow accumulation of detail about every sexually engendered thought and action, as meticulous as Proust but without the preciousness. In fact, one is reminded most of Musil, not only for the wit and the refined prose but also for the existential case histories. Roger Tesdale the impotent and David Munster the fetishist have as much in common with Moosbrugger as with each other though, unlike Moosbrugger, their psychopathology does not invade the consciousness of the other characters, who are all too self-absorbed for empathy. There are fewer boring longueurs than in "The Man Without Qualities", but Davison, too, reports on his characters from an omniscient viewpoint, restricting their revelation through speech or self-discovery. One sometimes longs for a sight of the letter, the poem, the diary entry; for an ear to the malicious gossip, the bedroom duologue. But invention can reach only so far. The author exercises such bondage over his creations at the outset that he needs space for them to break free and determine their own futile destinies.

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The prose has the intricate tracery of Sydney's wrought ironwork, picked out here and there with passages of exquisite lyricism. Much of its prolixity is due to circumlocutions consistent with the setting of middle-class Sydney between the wars:

> In three single-syllable words—a verb, a pronoun, and another verb—Kevin enquired whether it was the young woman's habit to copulate.

We are in the beastly world of the mealy-mouthed bourgeois over whom Lawrence coughed blood, and if we are prevented from knowing the characters better than they know themselves, perhaps that is because there is nothing more of them to know. Events beyond them are rightly omitted, for they mean no more than "that man with the funny little moustache who was drilling a private army in Germany". There could have been torture in Long Bay for all they were capable of caring, and Holsworthy might have been an extermination camp.

"My story," writes the author in a foreword, "deals with the predicament of a number of persons in a social culture . . . in which, notwithstanding the urgency of nature, there is no generally approved and openly arranged outlet for sexuality between the cradle and the marriage altar, and no endorsed and socially viable outlet for romantic proclivities between the marriage altar and the cemetery, notwithstanding the known fact that the long time taken by children in growing up may easily outrun the currency of the springtime fancy to which their existence is owing." But even if there were, it would take more than that to make any difference, as we may see by looking around us today.

This bunch of beautiful people in their twenties and thirties during the Twenties and Thirties who lie and equivocate in timid compromise between the social pattern and their own desires lead us into areas of iconoclasm where no single work of modern literature that I know has ventured. But a thesis would be needed to argue the true nature of the sexual drives of such people, all devoid sooner or later of something as simple as **kindliness**; and to discuss the apparent shortcomings in the author's psychological knowledge which lead to inconsistencies of personality and behavior. No character, not even a minor one, appears without an antecedent history, mainly sexual; yet still one wants to know more. It is inconceivable to me that the sexuality of such people would not be, in fact, more impaired than even their narrow obsessions suggest . . . but at least, significantly, no couple experiences a shared, as distinct from a simultaneous, orgasm.

*

Book 1 begins with the wedding of Jeff and Norma Mitchell and flashes back to the sexual involvements of each of them with other people from childhood onwards. Book 2 pursues the viewpoints and antecedents of those other people, by which time one of the major themes has been established: the cosmic irony that men and women want different things from one another.

By Book 3, which occupies three-quarters of the whole, Jeff and Norma, married some years, have four children and a circle of acquaintances. Within this circle, la ronde begins to turn, and nodding marriages are inevitably re-awakened by the extra-marital stimuli until, through the complete gamut of inference and accident, the skeletons all start rattling in the bare cupboards. "Another dream had turned to poison."

For these are ordinary people with what Stanley Kauffmann would call a broad streak of tinsel down their souls; so harrowingly ordinary that they are incapable of solving the problems created by the pursuit of their own desires.

Through their passions, jealousies and obsessions, their exploitation of one another, their unrequited projections of their own misdirected search for themselves, and the repeating patterns which demonstrate their incapacity to learn from experience, glorying in one another's defeats, they change. Or rather, they gradually decay while their fantasies change: "casualties of the sex war" taught from birth to compete, who never really **know** each other because their censored and overprotected environment prevents them from knowing themselves, they at last destroy each other, and doubtless their children, unto the third and fourth generation. As most people do. A sequel into our own times would be welcome, showing that the Pill and disposable tissues are not as crucial as one might hope.

The Editor, Overland.

In Overland No. 38, Mr. Noel McLachlan, reviewing my book, Morrison of Peking, wrote of me: "One has the uneasy feeling (no doubt unjustified) that he is ashamed of admitting the degree to which he has relied on one goldmine—the Morrison papers."

Mr. McLachlan would have been spared his uneasy feeling if he had read the Preface to my book in which I said that my biography was "largely based" on these papers. Far from being ashamed, I am rather proud that I had the fortitude to spend two years going through them. Reviewers really should do their home work. —Cyril Pearl

Book 4, the briefest, completes the destruction leaving the white thorntree still blossoming high on its glassy obsidian cliffs, unattainable by even the left-hand path, but beckoning with its musky scent anyone whose inner resources are so impoverished that courage means scaling the cliffs and trying to grasp the thorns. The author points to no transcendence of this most potent symbol of romantic love. The obvious alternative—free, lusty, undemanding—is justly found wanting because of its antipathy to the creative imagination.

By the end there have been three suicides, three murders, and a hanging of a young voluntary castrate who **then** committed rape. Another character is serving a life sentence, another is detained in a criminal lunatic asylum, and a third is an alcoholic. The list reads melodramatically, but because one's disbelief has been so skilfully suspended the resolution is acceptable, if in part as a metaphor of the destruction people wreak upon one another. Scratch the surface of almost any life and you will find a denizen of Cannibal Street (Kenneth Slessor's poem provides the book's epigraph); you will find an instance of thought, word or deed in which tragedy has been deflected only by the grace of God.

*

And at this point, for me, is the flaw. Is it fair to remark that the compassion with which the author embarked has become, during the twenty years he worked on the book, overlaid with anger and fused with bitterness? One senses an old progressive humanist of the Thirties unable to accommodate the jeers contemporary life hurls at his ideals. The resolution he offers is hopelessness: without redemption or rebirth.

What is missing is a religious consciousness. "Contrary to common belief," one character reflects, "the flesh and the spirit were one." Indeed. So much for the flesh in the spirit, which is tangible, but what of the spirit in the flesh? At several points someone almost reaches it, but all are bourgeois, "full of seething, wormy, hollow feelings," so the work's greatness can hardly be more than the sum of its characters.

"Desire of the creature," writes Suzanne Lilar, "may be, basically, desire for God and capable of leading us to God."

Only that can vitiate the cannibalism. Hence one needs to know more about the society— 'tempora' in addition to 'mores'—which produces the obsidian on which these cliff hangers lose their footholds.

So "The White Thorntree" may not quite stand under the aspect of eternity. Yet by its flaw, its very spiritual aridity, it remains disturbingly and distinctively Australian.

Hawks and Doves

FRANK KELLAWAY

David Campbell: "Collected Poems" (Angus and Robertson, $3.75).

Dorothy Hewett: "Windmill Country" (Overland, $1.95).

David Campbell, in the preface to his selected poems, refers to critics as hawks and doves. One would like to avoid either category but it hardly seems possible. Hal Porter's word, "shithawkery" applies to most criticism, and even when it is made, the attempt to achieve honesty is almost always a dreary failure. Nevertheless, it is necessary to try.

There is much admirable writing in Campbell's collection.

> The cruel girls we loved
> Are over forty.
> Their subtle daughters
> Have stolen their beauty;
>
> And with a blue stare
> Of cool surprise,
> They mock their anxious mothers
> With their mothers' eyes.

Here and often there are wit, craft and compassion. Campbell aims at a moving simplicity ("When in doubt a poet should write nursery rhymes," he says) and often achieves it. Galatea's poem, which starts "I am no man's woman," is a fine example and there are a score of things as good. He is at his best in love poems like "Windy Nights", "Talking to Strangers", and "Sheila's Song" from which this is a verse:

> What if I soil a dress?
> I'll take the earth's bliss
> Before I lie within it—
> No more by night to see
> The delicate honey tree
> Spring from the granite.

So much for dove words.

Some of the early poems have a pretentious literary quality disguised in jocular Oz habit.

> And Time took up his solar swag.

Unfortunately, although the poems move towards much greater sophistication, a similar literary streak continues to distract attention from the poetry.

Campbell has a fine but not very original ear. There seems to be too great a reliance on the music of poets like Marvell, Herrick, Campion, who created cadences appropriate to their own day which hardly reflect the spirit of our times. Most poets draw something from the cadences of the past but unless these are transmuted or set in a new context they seldom seem relevant today. In Campbell's case these Elizabethan tunes have been changed too little, either by the speech rhythms of his Australia in the 50s and 60s, or by the particular chemistry of his own personality. Occasionally he does grapple with rhythms heard direct—

> Hey Jack, give the grog and the women a rest

but even then he has to call the songs "Chansons Populaires".

But forgive the hawkery. One is still grateful for "Fisherman's Song", "Town Planning", "Windy Gap" and many others.

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Dorothy Hewett's first book of poems, "Windmill Country", is much more vigorous and original, though there are occasional faults which are not unlike Campbell's:

> And the immortal swagman goes
> Singing down the centuries.

This is less pretentious but more cliche and even more 19th century than "Time" and his "solar swag". There are other places in which tendentious jargon spoils a fine poem.

"For the voice of the workers is thundering loud" sounds on its own like a quote from the Guardian, and isn't much better in the context of her best known poem, "Clancy and Dooley and Don McLeod". But nevertheless this poem demonstrates one of her greatest gifts—an ability to handle muscular rhythms, to take a traditional form and make it entirely new.

> Clancy and Dooley and Don McLeod
> Walked by the wurlies when the wind was loud,
> And their voice was new as the fresh sap running.
> And we keep on fighting and we keep on coming.
>
> Don McLeod beat at a mulga bush,
> And a lot of queer things came out in a rush.
> Like mongrel dogs with their flattened tail,
> They sneaked him off to the Hedland jail.
>
> In the big black jail where the moonlight fell
> Clancy and Dooley sat in a cell.
> In the big white court crammed full with hate,
> They said: "We wouldn't scab on a mate."

It is this same rhythmic power, harnessed to a fluctuating, but predominently eight-stressed line, which almost sustains her longest, and from some points of view, her best poem, "Legend of the Green Country". The opening lines are a good example of this big, controlled, swinging rhythm.

> September is the spring month bringing tides,
> swilling green in the harbour mouth,
> Turnabout dolphins rolling-backed in the rip
> and run, the king waves
> Swinging the coast, snatching at fishermen
> from Leeuwin to Norah's Head.

It is true that sometimes the rhythmic tension does slacken, particularly in sections II and III, but most of the way it is well sustained.

Unlike the "immortal swagman" this poem is an impressive series of images of Australia's past and Dorothy Hewett's legend. It tells of a number of her ancestors but is haunted by the image of her father.

> My father was a black-browed man who rode
> like an Abo.
> The neighbours gossiped, "A touch of the
> tarbrush there."

He has dreams of trees which will save the dying land.

> Only he loved the soil,
> Running it through his fingers he sensed its
> dying,
> Its blowing away on the winds of time and
> cut timber,
> He saw the salt of its death riding.

She writes movingly too of her father's approaching death. His dream

> Is locked away in grief and salt.
> Maybe, in death, his lips will whisper it,
> And the green vision that gave sap to all his
> days
> Will rise again and give him back his country.

"Once I rode with Clancy" has a rhythm suggestive of Banjo Paterson's "Clancy of the Overflow", but, transformed and powered by reflection, it becomes an entirely new music.

> From this seed I spring—the dour and sardonic Quaker men,
> The women with hooked noses, baking bread,
> Breeding, hymning, sowing, fencing off the stony earth,
> That salts their bones for thanksgiving when they're dead.

Many of the poems are autobiographical and show the poet struggling to come to terms with her own nature. "The Puritans" is one of the best of these. She rejects her puritan ancestry at the beginning:

> Beckon me not for I am rid of you, you canting brethren;

but they fascinate her and she wrestles with this past to realise her own present reality.

> Shrive me then for I go to spread my word, even as they
> Through tilting windmills and the little flowers . . .

It is a similar quality of honesty, of a strenuous effort to understand, which distinguishes her best political poetry. "The Hidden Journey" is about her visits to Russia and about her subterranean journey from doctrinaire acceptance ("I went back to mouth my commonplaces on street corners") to doubt and a realisation of the human implications of Russian totalitarianism.

> Eyes, it was always eyes that gave me trouble,
> Eyes cannot be denied . . .
>
> A doubt surfaced, bumping like a stone, and would not be pushed under,
> And I would see the prison train pulled into Moscow Station.
> Who are those paper faces pressed to the bars, behind the fixed bayonets?

Unfortunately in spite of this honesty, in spite of some marvellously vivid writing, and in spite of some wit, this poem fails because her great gift fails her and the rhythms become slack and prosy. The few lines quoted above suggest this. The uncertainty of the rhythm is reinforced by an unusual (for her) uncertainty of image. One wonders why the surfacing doubt should be like a stone, for stones usually sink.

But when passion and rhythm flow together she can be as moving and exciting as any poet writing in Australia today. "Here in the Hurricane", "Go down Red Roses", "There is anguish in knowing", "So many girls are in my arms tonight", are enriching experiences.

Criticism in the Sixties

DENNIS DOUGLAS

A. Alvarez: "Beyond All This Fiddle, Essays 1955-1967" (Penguin Press, $8.35).

Bernard Bergonzi (ed.): "Innovations" (Macmillan, $6.10).

After a public lecture in Melbourne earlier this year Alvarez went off to the pub with Aubrey Essery, an English expatriate living in Parkville. There had been some unpleasantness at the lecture, and Alvarez confessed, so Aubrey tells me, to a certain bewilderment as regards the ruling mores of academic life in Australia. In Sydney he had remarked to a group of professors at a formal dinner that the reviews of Frank Knopfelmacher's book on intellectuals in politics were curiously self-contradictory in that their assessment of the book was usually at variance with their account of what the book appeared to contain. As far as he could see the book was a very bad one, but every reviewer seemed to be neurotically anxious to justify its existence. The professors explained that Knopfelmacher was a friend of theirs, an active member of the Association for Cultural Freedom, and that they really thought rather well of the book. Although he found being ignored in Melbourne preferable to keeping company with the ACF in Sydney, Alvarez's general impression of Australia was a disquieting one, possibly more disquieting than his view of New York:

> By the time the boat is finally docked or the bus has emerged from the Midtown Tunnel, all those elegant, seductive towers have disappeared utterly. They are so big you can no longer see them; only their weight presses in on you, their vast shadows and stoniness. The rest is chaos: noise, diesel fumes, filth, restlessness. The future seems more harsh and unforgiving than you would ever have expected, and also very much more tatty. It is like marrying some great beauty and finding yourself bedded down with a madwoman. From then on, every time you see New York shimmering away through its haze in the distance, your pleasure is qualified by a curious sense of loss.

About the time he returned to Oxford with a Fellowship Alvarez went on record as believing that the literary journalist is in a better position to know what is going on, and to influence what is going on, than the academic critic. It seems odd now that the remark aroused as much controversy as it did at the time—not that Alvarez has ever shrunk from arousing controversy—but his collection of essays offers a great deal to support what he said then. He is an ideal literary journalist, well-informed, willing to consult the latest material in a particular field or on a particular author, able to draw writers out in conversation, responsive, and flexible in his responses, and capable of seeing literature in the wider perspective of the life of a nation, or a decade, or in the light of an individual writer's complex personal commitments. There can be no doubt that he has done more than anybody else to raise the standard of literary journalism in England, and that from the uncomfortable base of a position as poetry reviewer with a weekly in a period when poetry is the least-noticed area of publishing.

There is no doubt, either, about his proficiency as a writer, although it is interesting to see the sudden advance he made in this respect between 1958, when he looked over the Lockwood Library at the University of Buffalo, and 1962, when he selected and introduced the Penguin anthology of New Poets. He has a remarkable gift for fluent exposition; he keeps up an interesting texture of argument, and he is delightfully quotable. The quality of his writing is the quality he finds in the cinema of Bunuel and Godard, and misses in Mailer, coolness, coolness not as a neurotic form of bravado—his essays on mountain-climbing are refreshingly frank about how it feels to face a new and difficult climb—but as a combination of detachment and reserve. There is, for example, not a great deal in his introduction to the New

Poets anthology to suggest that he actively disliked the poets who formed what was then known as the Movement, but by constructing a sonnet out of lines drawn from the work of fourteen different writers he managed to suggest that the new lines they had drawn for the writing of poetry (they had an anthology out entitled "New Lines") were both mandatory and stifling. His concluding remarks on Larkin, a poet who represented all that the Movement stood for, are a beautiful example of assessment-by-implication:

> In order to write well Larkin has deliberately turned his back on what he calls "unfenced existence; facing the sun, untalkative, out of reach". He has chosen instead a kind of suburban hermitage, with plenty of books and records, bottled beer in the cupboard and all mod. con. On the wall is a poker-work motto which reads: "You'll never have it any better".

But the main fascination of "Beyond All This Fiddle", and that notwithstanding Marianne Moore's having dropped the line from the poem it came out of, is that Alvarez has expressed the taste of the sixties so well, the sense of a rediscovery of contemporary poetry, the delight in nervy tensions, the poetry of "Extremism", the awareness of just how far English poetry and criticism had fallen behind American, the lowering of barriers in Eastern Europe that enabled Holub and Herbert to be so well received in translation. One of the reasons why this book is more significant than anything else likely to appear this year is that Alvarez was the representative voice of the Age of Brinkmanship, the age initiated, as Robert Lowell pointed out in an interview not included in this selection, by the shooting of President Kennedy.

Whether he will fare as well in the next ten years as he has done in the last ten is difficult to say. The age of brinkmanship was an age of international detente. Both in West and East now the trend is towards totalitarianism, the pressure to conform is stronger, and the avantgarde are being forced further and further out. With a Republican in the White House and a belligerently defensive Russia encircling Europe, with over half the world going hungry, and the figure rising every day, with border countries like Greece and Czechoslovakia turned into garrison states, one suspects that the individual situation is going to mean less in the next few years than the collective situation. The flowering of literature Alvarez celebrated was a response to conditions that may change soon, and were not felt much in Australia anyway. Movements towards liberalisation rarely reach the front lines, military or economic, and perhaps the encounter with the ACF over Knopfelmacher was more significant than it looked. Alvarez may have been closer to the "harsh and unforgiving" future here than he realised.

*

The crisis in the arts has been with us for some time now, and if there is more of a tendency to worry about it in certain sections of the academic community it may be because quite suddenly artistic revolutions seem to be linked with revolutions in other spheres of life, an upsurge of drugtaking, outbreaks of student activism, hippie movements, the trend towards self-conscious Pop-styles in certain forms of popular entertainment.

Reading Bernard Bergonzi's symposium on the avantgarde one is awfully conscious of the role non-aesthetic determinants play in considered critical judgments. Leslie Fiedler stars prominently with an article that was originally delivered as a talk at Rutgers University under the joint sponsorship of Partisan Review and the Congress for Cultural Freedom, in which he expresses considerable distress about the use of slogans like "Freedom Under Clark Kerr" during the Berkeley demonstrations. It appears that Clark Kerr's supporters hoisted a banner during the demonstrations that could have been misconstrued, since it only employed initials, and that later on a similar banner was hoisted by a group eager to establish their right to use four-letter words in public. When these banners were confiscated by the authorities the students ran up blank ones in their place, a proceeding which incites Fiedler to further awful rage. Such activities, he feels, represent a betrayal of the Humanist tradition. Rabelais, we are given to understand, would have disapproved. Indeed, the whole modern experimental movement, with its rejection of normal criteria of literary form, would have been anathema to the writer who conceived the high ideal of the Abbey of Theleme.

Not everything in this volume is as blatantly propagandistic as Leslie Fiedler's outburst. In fact the only thing that comes anywhere near it as an expression of the viewpoint of an entrenched conservative is a curiously Anglo-Indian contribution—I mean Anglo-Indian in its rhythm—by a lecturer at Wesleyan College, Connecticut, which probably helps to explain Hans Magnus Enzensberger's eagerness to escape that institution (see Overland No. 39). To the learned Ihab Hassan, author of "The Literature of Silence", authors like Miller, Beckett, Sarraute, Burroughs, Mailer, Butor, and Robbe-Grillet are involved in an insidious conspiracy to reduce Western literature to silence, a proceeding of which Mr. Hassan sternly and in detail disapproves.

Of course the discovery that writers do things that we weren't let do at school is apt to shake any academic's confidence in the foundations of his upbringing, but a number of the writers in this collection survive the shock remarkably well, and the authors discussed are probably important enough to warrant discussion in a way that sometimes seems awfully heavy-handed, although it is a delight to watch Frank Kermode annihilating Cyril Connolly's latest effort and the contributions by and about McLuhan are both worth reading.

One is left with an uncomfortable feeling that avantgarde theorists do not write for academic consumption, and that the conception of the avantgarde has been widened to include many things that are customary features of the intellectual landscape, or else oldhat.

Recent Novels

JOHN McLAREN

Geoff Baker: "Montgomery and I" (Georgian House, $1.00).

Thomas Keneally: "Three Cheers for the Paraclete" (Angus and Robertson, $3.50).

Thea Astley: "A Boat Load of Home Folk" (Angus and Robertson, $3.25).

Kenneth Cook: "The Wine of God's Anger" (Cheshire-Lansdowne, $1.95).

John Rowe: "Count Your Dead" (Angus and Robertson, $3.75).

David Ireland: "The Chantic Bird" (Heinemann, $3.50).

Dal Stivens: "Three Persons Make a Tiger" (Cheshire, $3.75).

Kylie Tennant: "Tell Morning This" (Angus and Robertson, $3.25).

Although in sheer bulk the novel has tended to be the major literary form of the last two centuries, it is not in itself an independent genre. It bears the same relationship to other forms of narrative as does, for example, the sonnet to other forms of poetry. Its essential element is the story, and its distinguishing characteristic is the disguisal of its patterned nature in a similitude of reality.

The traditional concerns of literary criticism have tended to obscure these truths. Novels have been considered for their realisation of the ebb and flow of life, for their depth of characterisation, for their elegance of style or for their approximation to social reality. All of these qualities are virtues which may be found in any particular novel, but they are not of its essence, which is to give, in chronological form, an image in which we can recognise a life which, potentially, we might live.

The image of life presented in the English novel today is about as relevant as an old drawing room comedy to life in the sixties. This does not mean that there are not good novels being written, or that they are unconcerned with the problems of contemporary life. The problem is neither the goodwill nor the competence of the authors, but their inability to find a form which will reflect contemporary experience. The English novelists may have changed their heroes, but they still approach life in the same old spirit.

It is to America that we must look for the experiments in both prose and poetry which are trying to make sense from the mad world of the sixties. A writer like Saul Bellow approaches the problem of our contemporary insanity by absorbing the whole world within the cranium of his bewildered protagonist. Like a crazy Berkeley, Herzog finds that the only reality is what happens within his own consciousness, where he conducts endless dialogues with his peers of all generations in his efforts to find a way out of the maze. But although his world is bounded by his own senses and memories, he lives in it not as monarch of all he surveys but as the merest puppet constrained by the intractibility of things.

If Herzog is the suffering hero, Mailer is the active. His suffering has driven him, like Allen Ginsberg or Albert Camus, into a violent rejection of things as they are and a program of activism aimed at re-building the world in the image of man. But, unlike the propagandist, his prose is not an instrument at the service of his vision, but a medium through which, by apprehending reality, he is already starting to change it. This is as true of his polemical works, such as "The White Negro", as of his more ostensibly literary. By finding his true self through his writing he is taking the first step towards liberating the true self of the world. His policies therefore are not programmatic but instant, and depend on finding the correct attitudes rather than the correct plans. This style has led him in his novels not to turn inward towards the only knowledge he can really possess, but to turn his consciousness outwards into the world in which he is himself an actor, and onto his own actions in that world. Like Bellow, he would deny a distinction between self and reality, but he is finding both himself and reality out there rather than in here. This has led him, as an artist, to follow the path of the great innovators of the past in making another assault on the notion of art as artifice. His latest work claims to give us not art but life. The fact that it does not succeed, for completed art is static, finished, and therefore the polar opposite of life, does not detract from the importance of the attempt.

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To turn from America to Australia is to understand the meaning of the word provincial. Although the latest novels are by authors perhaps as talented as have ever practised in this country, most of them seem so terribly familiar. The only writer who seems to be making any real attempt to assault our sensibilities is Peter Mathers, but he has yet to find the opportunity to complete a successor to his great, sprawling, untidy, uneven, immature and vastly impressive "Trap". If his recent CLF Fellowship enables him to do so the achievement alone will justify the whole history of the fund.

The only book in the latest batch which appears to attempt anything new is "Montgomery and I", by Geoff Baker. This is part of the undergrowth of literature which will be needed before the major works emerge. It is not in itself a major work, and I suspect that it was written as an undergraduate spoof and submitted to the publishers as a prank. All the more credit to Georgian House for recognising a real talent underneath its sometimes facile precocity. The book has flashes of genuine wit and insight, and its flippancy is not so much an avoidance of genuine issues as an expression of a serious rejection of solemnity. Unfortunately the seriousness tends to degenerate into mere cleverness, and the author has hesitated to probe the sore spots too far.

*

This could not be said of Thomas Keneally, whose latest novel, "Three Cheers for the Paraclete", appears to be an autobiographical expiation. The book is a finely organised, if traditional, account of the personal crises of faith and conscience suffered by a priest who has been immolated in a particularly illiberal seminary for his assumed sin of liberality. It derives its extrinsic interest from its treatment of contemporary issues within the Catholic Church, and may be considered rather precious by stauncher independents. However, the most militant atheist is unlikely to deny Keneally's insight into a range of characters and his increased mastery of narrative.

It would, however, be unfortunate if the book were dismissed as being merely of sectional interest. The central character, Maitland, is a man whose doubts are greater precisely because he understands his faith so much better than the cheerfully dedicated and essentially cynical figures around him. The men who are most shocked at Maitland's doubts are the machine men who serve an institution rather than a god, and the followers who need an absolute assurance of their own

salvation and righteousness in order to be able to devote themselves single-mindedly to the amoral and often inhuman activities of their everyday lives. It is Keneally's understanding of the links which exist between any institution and its members which give this book its importance. He has chosen to look within the context of the Catholic Church, but his understanding would be equally applicable to the mentality of the RSL-cum-Rotary establishment on one level or the reasons for the invasion of Czechoslovakia on another.

A part of the originality of Keneally on the Australian scene has been his recognition of a realm of good and evil beyond the surface realities. In this, he is partly following in the footsteps of Patrick White, but whereas White seems to be groping to find a truth beyond the known, an apocalyptic vision to redeem the ugliness of the ordinary, Keneally sees the ordinary world as the battleground for his forces of good and evil. In his latest work he has come a long way from the gothic nature of the contest which raged in his first two works. The struggle now seems more subdued because it takes place as much within the individual as between opposing characters and locales. Nevertheless, the struggle is as intense, for it involves now the whole existence of the individuals concerned. The lack of more melodramatic questions of physical life and death in some ways reveals the central question of responsibility more clearly.

There is also evident in the book an increased ability to portray simple human relationsihps. This is clearest in the almost unspoken relationship which grows in the seminary between Maitland and a similarly aware student, and in the short holiday which Maitland spends with the only other priest with whom he has formed a friendship. This humanity in the book, the sense of a possible relationship between suffering individuals, helps the book bridge the gap between the internal and individual and the external and public. It is finally of more importance that Maitland and Quinn have enjoyed sharing a drink together than that the archbishop continues to rule his diocese untroubled by human problems.

*

Problems of guilt and conscience also lie at the centre of Thea Astley's "A Boat Load of Home Folk," and she too suggests that there may be a chance of the sufferers finding strength in each other. However the suggestion is only fleeting, as most of the time the author seems intent on being a fine novelist rather than on exploring the situation with which she presents us. She is too ready to make the imposing gesture and leave it to the reader to work out its import. She dwells her important instant on the inquisitor's underwear, as if to imply that he too is human, or on the physical repulsion of tropical disease, presumably to emphasise the lesser nature of the sufferings of conscience, but the presumption is ours, and at any rate makes no difference to our reading of the book.

Similarly, the story is carefully arranged in sequences labelled with the appropriate time and date, but the chronology has no apparent relevance beyond its confusion. The setting is exploited not for any moral relevance but rather as a convenient device for assembling a tiny group of rather pitiful, rather distasteful, individuals, who are then assaulted progressively by guilt, heat and hurricane. The one missed opportunity is the volcano, which for some obscure reason does not erupt. Perhaps it has been satisfied with the sacrifice of the one person in the novel who seems innocent, if not content. Finally, however, "the Mass is ended", whatever that may mean, and we leave behind this lovely tawdry island with its cargo of suffering humanity, who go on suffering in much the same way they were doing before Miss Astley and her hurricane intruded.

*

The twin problems of the individual conscience and a world of human cruelty are brought much more closely together in Kenneth Cook's very fine novel, set in Vietnam, "The Wine of God's Anger". This is not really a war novel, but an attempt to come to grips with the affront which war offers to human values. It is organised around two conflicting sets of symbols. Humanity is represented by the prostitute whose husband will serve you breakfast in bed, the man who gently brushes the stinging ants from his body in case he should kill one of them, and the host who omits to change into his indoor slippers in case he should embarrass his terribly drunk guest. The war is represented by the smoke of napalm burns, Lieutenant Roberts playing the part of the perfect officer into his radio, and Lieutenant Roberts' balls lying wrapped in their underpants at the narrator's feet. Although various arguments about the war are paraded in conversation, the writer does not intrude opinions on the reader. The book speaks for itself, and if it has any message it is the words of Karl, just after they have seen a mother blown to pieces by a Communist booby-trap, ". . . if we're to make the world safe for people, we must try to eliminate deep senses of conviction."

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"Count Your Dead" is far more impressive as a documentary of Vietnam. Its author, John Rowe, is a serving army officer with direct experience, and his book has military and historical conviction. As a novel, it is probably limited to its actual subject matter. Unlike Kenneth Cook's work, it raises the question of this particular war rather than of war in general. On the other hand, Cook's novel is of immediate relevance in that its questions, although about any war, are such as could only have been asked as a result of our common experience of this particular war.

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In "The Chantic Bird" David Ireland localises the problems of our violent century in the person of an individual psychopath. The book purports to start as an account dictated by its principal character and narrator to a rather shadowy writer who appears to be making a case study of a delinquent. Eventually this writer pays the price of his curiosity by being murdered, dissected, partly burnt, and partly fed to the lions by the object of his interest. The book is gripping if only for the cool detachment with which the most horrifying incidents are described, but it is rather too self-absorbed to make anything out of its subject-matter. Certainly we see other people and events than those which immediately concern the narrator, but we see them all through his eyes, and his comments seem rather banal, rather excuses than reasons for his actions, and learnt excuses at that. The book is technically excellent, but without any frame of reference whereby we could place its events it remains a tour-de-force rather than a piece of literature.

*

Dal Stivens attacks our crazy century from an altogether different angle. "Three Persons Make a Tiger" is a social spoof in the ancient Chinese style. The Monkey King is given a further chance

to atone for his disrespect towards the holy ones by journeying to the Southern Continent to pick up a trio of saints for the heavenly courts. The land he visits is strangely like our own, but seen with the clear eyes of one who has not been indoctrinated with its assumptions from birth. The adventures of Monkey and his companions are told with spirit and gusto, and range in style from Rabelais to Swift, and the humor varies from salacious to scatologic. The trips to Aphartheid and Euphemoria, to Lubberland, Sund and Bund, extend the range of the satire but are less skilfully handled than the adventures on the author's home ground, although even here there are times when his desire to tell a good yarn gets control over his social purpose.

The book is, however, an interesting exercise in handling social reality. By rejecting the realistic mode in favor of the fantastic, the author is able to select his targets without being hampered by any need for verisimilitude. On the other hand his uncertainty of purpose leaves his work wavering between satire, entertainment and wish-fulfilment.

*

The publication of the complete version of "The Joyful Condemned" as "Tell Morning This" is a welcome addition to the available range of Kylie Tennant's work. It will, however, make little difference to her reputation as a novelist. It has the same lively story-telling, the same picaresque characters, and the same irreverent and high spirited female lead that we are familiar with from her other books. It could be translated excellently into a television series, but as a novel it is rather dated. Everything is just a little too cheerful and easy.

The real importance of "The Joyful Condemned" is in giving us a standard by which we can measure what today's writers are achieving. If their work still remains largely in the form of the traditional novel, with all its implications about order which are being challenged overseas, at least most of these authors are attempting to come to terms with the new world. Passion, violence and cruelty are not merely social problems to be overcome, or gay spices to the sauce of life, but challenges out of which we have to construct any values we may hold.

TICK, TOCK

This way
that way
watch her come
beating like
a pendulum.
First the woman
then the child
moves in her
unreconciled.
Extricated
from my thumb
independent
tum ta tum
and again
my arms are wide
circling round
the child inside.

ANNE HOLMAN

Art and Accessibility

BRUCE DAWE

Douglas Stewart: "Collected Poems, 1936-1967" (Angus & Robertson, $6.25)

It is a pleasure to be able to review a book of poetry as substantial in every sense of the word as Stewart's collection. Not that a book of such scope can be adequately reviewed within the compass of a few paragraphs, but what is immediately striking about Stewart's poetry is that it is life-affirming, even when most delicate and evanescent, and in its response to the natural world it avoids, for the most part, that coyness which clings like mistletoe to many a potentially sturdy nature-image in our poetry.

At the same time, Stewart's wry sense of humor plays like light across his images, placing them, and, by implication, himself in perspective. The selections from "Sun Orchids", "The Birdsville Track" and "Rutherford" afford many instances of this deft, loving observation. "Silkworms", since I first read it in hospital five years ago, has remained in my mind as one of the most moving poems in this genre. It is, to my mind, a perfect expression of man's aspirations and sense of the limitations imposed upon them:

> There is no word to tell them that they are free,
> And they are not; ancestral voices bind them
> In dream too deep for wind or word to find
> them . . .

The range of Stewart's poetry becomes especially evident in a definitive edition such as this. From the successful evocation of the Glencoe Massacre in the selection from the ballad sequence "Glencoe", to the discursive mode as exemplified particularly in "Rutherford" in the title-poem, and on through the many delightful lyrics of "Sun Orchids" and "The Birdsville Track" to the light humorous statements on the nature of things—Stewart shows his mastery of the forms he uses.

Vivian Smith's recent reference to Stewart's "evasive scepticism" is very much to the point. Against his concern for the heroic which is shown at its fullest extent in his verse dramas stand his incidental lyrics which celebrate and embody the transience of the beautiful—that which passes and remains. It is this marriage in lyrics such as "Silkworms" of the meditative and natural elements of his sensibility that often gives Stewart's work such balance, the maker subsumed in his work.

It is the poetry of people like Douglas Stewart which is the best argument for the proposition that art and accessibility are not only not sworn enemies, but, on one level at least, the best of friends.

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