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# Overland

Temper democratic, bias Australian

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

All correspondence should be addressed:  
Editor, Overland, G.P.O. Box 98a, Melbourne, 3001.

Editor: S. Murray-Smith (on leave)

Advisory Editors:

Ian Turner, John McLaren, Barrie Reid, Vane Lindesay (Melbourne), Tom Errey (Hobart), Rodney Hall (Brisbane), Dorothy Hewett (Perth), Laurence Collinson (Britain).

Spring 1971

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## TO THE TRUE HEROES OF VIETNAM

this issue of **OVERLAND** is respectfully dedicated

The true heroes of the 26-year old, still unfinished war in Vietnam are the people of Vietnam.

The facts of the war in Vietnam are too well known to rehearse again here. It is sufficient to remember that every American profession of idealism, every assertion that they are fighting only to ensure the freedom of South Vietnam from Communism, is contradicted by the facts that the countryside of Vietnam has been devastated by American chemicals, tens of thousands of its people have been uprooted from their homes and turned into hopeless refugees, its economy has been wrecked and its present government is sustained in office only by force of arms and American money.

The Americans have claimed that they are resisting external aggression, but even if we grant the absurd claim that North Vietnam is a foreign country we are faced by the fact that some of the strongest support for the National Liberation Front has been in the part of the country furthest from the North and the possibility of infiltration, the Mekong Delta.

The Americans have claimed that they are fighting for peace, yet they have spread war throughout South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

The Americans have claimed they are fighting for democracy, yet we have the spectacle of a one-man race for President and election rules which forbid any discussion of the only real choice before Vietnam, that between the military regime, a neutralist government, and the National Liberation Front.

There is no need to pretend that an NLF regime would be ideal, or even to deny the possibility that, once secure in power, it might betray the people of Vietnam. In human affairs, there is rarely a choice between absolute right and absolute wrong. In a war, however, one must choose. Those who oppose the involvement of America and its allies in Vietnam must acknowledge that American withdrawal will almost certainly lead to an NLF victory. That decision will, however, be made by the Vietnamese, by the force of their arms and the strength of their commitment. We must respect their decision.

The Australian involvement in Vietnam has been, if anything, even more disgraceful than the American. It was motivated by largely domestic political considerations, for it provided the government with an issue which would split the community, maintain irrational fears of external aggression and internal subversion, and distract attention from governmental incompetence in social, economic and environmental matters. Its military effect has been negligible.

Our troops have, not surprisingly, had no success in winning the hearts and minds of the people. Military spokesmen quoted in the Australian press on the announcement of the withdrawal of Australian troops were unanimous that on their departure the control of the countryside would pass back into the hands of the National Liberation Front. In other

words, the presence of Australian troops had merely prevented authority being exercised by those whom the peasants recognised as their proper government. They have been neither bribed nor scared from this loyalty.

The question remains of how the Australian and American people were tricked into supporting this disastrous commitment. Part of the answer lies with cynical politicians desperate to do anything to maintain their power, and with paranoid personalities whose fear of the unknown and the different is so great as to obscure any view of reason or reality. But, as Noam Chomsky demonstrates in his books "At War with Asia" (Fontana/Collins, \$1.60) and "American Power and the New Mandarins" (Penguin Books, \$1.35), the front men have been backed by a perversion of scholarship and a corruption of language which have created a world of fantasy immune to moral and human reality.

The people who, from the start of our involvement, have demonstrated against the war and the conscription by which our military participation has been maintained, have dramatised the truth which language and scholarship have combined to obscure. They have reminded us that the language of diplomacy and politics, the appeals to democracy and freedom, the bristling polysyllables like escalation and pacification, urbanisation and resettlement, have been used to mask the truth of human misery and death.

Among the demonstrators a few have gone further to total resistance, not only to the war but to the whole system which makes it possible. Some of these resisters are in gaol, some are still on the run. These are the Australian heroes of Vietnam.

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

### ROLL OF HONOUR

"... to be 22 and in gaol is what it means to be free in Australia today" (Michael Matteson)

In gaol: Geoff Mullen

Released: Brian Ross  
Charles Martin

Not yet arrested: John Adams  
Paul Fox  
Peter Hornby  
Keith Langford  
Michael Hamel-Green  
Ron Wickes  
Michael Matteson  
Jo Erftemeyer

This roll has been compiled from "Downdraft", issued by the Draft Resisters' Union, P.O. Box 50, Highett, Victoria. It is not complete, as it is not practical to publish the names of all who remain in defiance of the provisions of the law on conscription.

## DOROTHY HEWETT

"Who's the old doll reading her poems under the lamp?"

The winter's coming on,  
the air swarms with leaves.  
Driven in,  
they gather in our house.  
Outside the massacre begins.

The unsheathed razor,  
footprints marked in blood,  
pills spilt from a pack:  
I have known the terror.  
I gather them in  
to the light's ambience.  
It bathes a faint small round.

The shelter falls apart,  
the light wavers in water,  
a round skull on a pole  
I turn and turn,  
a weathercock, a totem out of time,  
who cannot catch the moment.

I have visited the crematorium three times.

She rose unsteadily from the night,  
Took two of orange and one of white.

Old women wet their beds, cry softly,  
rummage in each other's lockers, scavenge for life.  
But the young lie like stone,  
shrouded to the chin in a white sheet,  
tubes draining the sleeping pills from every aperture.

She sits on the balcony in the private nursing home  
in a white dress, skinny as a bone:  
her head, on a stalk, nods from side to side,  
a green creeper engulfs her from the world outside.  
Her eyes stare, she is still . . . listening . . . queer,  
remembering the young husband who gassed himself last year  
in the park, before the commuters came;  
fixed the exhaust, wound up the windows, insane  
people kill themselves: she locked the doors  
and ate and ate, had food delivered from stores  
in bulk, until they found her at last  
and propped her on a balcony, a girl with a past,  
and no future, sitting up here alone  
in a see-through dress, in a private nursing home.

"She looks like Whistler's Mother!"

## sanctuary

They grappled him out of the river; it was on T.V.  
His parents watched, gripping the edge of their chairs:  
His hair turned white, his skin gone soggy,  
"It can't be him," they said. "He used to run along the foreshore  
In jockey shorts, shining and scrubbed like . . . Colgates!"  
They'd been searching for him the sandhills for days before,  
Falling over the homosexuals with their togs pulled down.

Someone had seen him running alone in the dunes.  
It was cold that week-end, he kept his head well down  
And went on running when they called.  
Somebody thought they heard him moving in the hills,  
Crying for sanctuary among the thorn and rocks.  
The parson found him and led him into the nave,  
Under the stained glass windows he laid him down,  
On his black chin the lozenges played, scarlet and blue.  
While the parson phoned in the vestry he slipped away.  
They called and called and got out the dogs,  
And all the time he was lying dead in his boat-bay,  
With three anchor chains wrapped round his body; like Christ  
Hauled out of the river, glittering wet in the arc-lamps, a spearing marlin!  
And somebody else still crashing about through the hills,  
Unwashed, sleepless, a revolver cool on his ribcage.  
This nervous hollow city is built on sand,  
looped with wires, circled with shaven trees.  
The bleeding pigeons tumble outside the windows,  
the children wring their necks.  
The exchange is jammed with outward calls,  
the T.V. screen, jagged with light, crackles and goes out.  
The filthy children of Christ lie on mattresses in the sun,  
the pavement scrawled with graffiti in excrement and blood.

Bare-footed children, driven out over the plain,  
thorny the mallee and spinifex, thumbing a ride interstate,  
do not call me again and reverse the charges.

Winter is coming on.

I have dialed three times,  
the whole city is engaged in a kind of slaughter.

I am only an old doll reading my poems in the lamplight,  
waiting for a fourth cremation.

REG TAYLOR

# short story

"I have come."  
"Yes darlink. Where you work?"  
"My work."  
"—You train for church? Oh, you good boy. Come and see room."  
There was nearly a garden in the window.  
"My name Patricia. Who you darlink?"  
"Thomas."  
"I think you good boy. 10 dollars."  
So he unpacked his possessions, and rested a moment.  
In the darkness.  
"Darlink!"  
"Patricia!"  
"Some mens to see you."  
"What's he doing—sleeping—tonight?" Two men wearing badges and suits stood there. "Aha. Ah. Dave Greyland Ron Frazer—pleased to meet you. We heard you moved in. We thought you might like to look in on the club."  
"This is an honour."  
"Well let's get going then."  
Down the stairs and into the night.  
"Here's the wagon. The club's just up the road. What's it like to be back?"  
"What do you think it would be like," Mr. Frazer said.  
"He can't come in here," the Commissionaire said.  
"Forget that for once"—they went onto the crowded floor where a girl sang.  
"Get this into you."  
"Thankyou, thankyou." The M.C.  
"Ladies and gentlemen and members. Ladies and gentlemen—tonight is a rather special night as you all know—and it's made more so—I'd say—by the presence of some special guests. But I'll leave that to the President—Mr. Jack Harbinger—to make the introductions."  
"Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, this is as you've heard a special time of year. But I think

it's made more so—and rightly so I'd say—by the presence of some special guests . . . Ah, without more ado I'd like to welcome—one who needs no introduction—if we can find him. Is he there? Have you got him—"

There was a round of applause. "Take a bow."  
"Is that him."  
"Well done son, well done," old Jack said.  
"See what he can do with this then."  
"Good to see. But we do have a **couple** of returned men. Two men, they're they . . ."  
"All the best love," the lady at the change counter.  
". . . two men down from Wilcannia—all the way—they're Maurice—is this right—they've brought their cows—and

(Oranges

"knocker!"

**in a row . . . on row**

"—two real men—who saw their job and did it. Well, I'm told Allan and Morrie do a bit of country and western singing in their own way, so we're going to impose on them—"

"On us."

"No on them—"

"No on us."

"—to do us a bloody number"

**the colours spilling**

With the guitar in fresh fields . . .

"There's a track winding back

to an old fashioned shack

along the road to—join in . . .

Where my mammy and pappy, are waiting for me  
all the

(pieces

friends of my childhood

once more I will—Come on—

never more will I roam

cause I'm headed straight—for home!"

**And the hail bouncing and glittering.**

"Once more—  
**once**

More will I roam—"

"Jesus look."

"—CAUSE I'M"

"Thankyou thankyou."

"DED STRAIGHT FOR—"

"Something seems to be. I don't—"

"Along the"

"Is the secretary  
**the storm**

"Christ." "Harry."

"Our guest—would the stewards—"

**see**

"Look would you ask him to stop—would you stop."

**See.**

"—Stop the bugger. Oh the bloody bugger."

In darkness.

. . . fifteen people were treated for bruising.

And one man had the hair burnt from his head.

At this moment the whereabouts of the two real ex-national servicemen is unknown. They may have been kidnapped.

"We've been playing so far. Tear gas at Young Lib 21sts. Now we're getting heavy . . . We can sit this country on its arse!"

"—Are you **with** us."

"Of course!"

Late last night the Darlinghurst Police Station and two Junior Constables were painted blue.

The vandalism took place between the hours of midnight and four a.m. and by the time Constables Dwyer and Hensforth raised the alarm all but the inner portico was finished.

As Constable Dwyer put it; "It was too dark to see."

Soon after the attack the assailants fled—leaving behind a quantity of scaffolding, and a primus stove.

The waters of the harbour have never been bluer this morning.

"Dr. Parsley will be here shortly. Don't you think you should begin your practice."

Door shut.

There are the white houses falling below the sky. There is F sharp major.

Here is Dr. Parsley with his parsley moustache. "Ha ha—how are we getting on—got yourself settled? Run through a few scales to warm up. Yes—your hands . . ."

Or deeper.

"A jolly sudden storm!"

"Ah, we struck a lot of it in the States."

"Is there someone to take my things and my wife's."

"Of course. The young chap over there will take care of them."

It is the first night, following an overseas tour. The audience claps till they're tired.

The hubbub in the foyer. The momentary hold up.

"Are you sure this is mine?"

The competent young man: "Of course sir."

"I'd have sworn mine was red. I must have—"

"I believe you might have my umbrella there."

"No, no. This is my ticket. He told me."

The lights are swishing by.

"The pas de deux."

"No where the balls—"

"Sorry to squeeze in the queue. But my party and I are in a bit of a rush. I wonder could you take care of these almost at once."

"Certainly sir."

"And here's something for your trouble."

"And here's something for yours."

A little restlessness outside. "We'll be here all night."

"Dalby-Jones has suffered some sort of an attack."

"I only . . ."

"Look give me these as quick as you can will you."

"Right. Three top hats isn't it."

"Nothing of the sort."

"It's all we've got just now."

"Three . . ."

"I think you'll find one of them is mine."

"Well ask him."

"I'm **telling** you."

"I wanted a coat and—"

"And I want that hat. Be good enough to let me have it."

"Let **you** have it."

"Yes let me have it!"

"I'll let you have it, alright."

"Then **let** me have it. Now!"

"I've been waiting—"

"I know madam . . ."

"—and all these people—"

squeezing "Now! **There!**"

"—it's awful . . ."

Amethysts.

"But the crowd are pushing and shoving."

"I was first."

"I was—"

"I want my mackintosh—I want my stole—I want to go home."

"Make way ladies and gentlemen. We're going to close."

"Hold on there."

"Now stand back."

"What does this ticket say?"

"I'll rest these on top."

"What does this ticket" under his nose.

"Now . . ."

"This bloody ticket!"

"—there."

Ripping and chewing.

"Well . . ."

Hands reaching tentatively, and with growing confidence. "I think this is mine."

But "No—no."

"It is."

"Isn't."

"That's mine . . ."

"—I'm taking it."

"You'll take this you blighter!"

"You take that you bastard."

The streets are darkening.

The last notes.

"I think we've almost got that — ha —"

At nine o'clock this morning this paper received a communication from the so-called "Society for Creating overall Unrest and National Dread of Revolutionary scandals"; stating their intention of taking any further measures they deem necessary to destroy the country's stability. Accordingly the Commissioner of Police has declared that he will take any measures he considers necessary to stamp out the vermin.

A house to house

Ho ho . . .

The people in the plaza.

"Look Mum." "—Stay here."

Bells chiming—the great sack coming to rest.

"Toys!"

"What are you gunna give us Father Christmas?"

"Is that all . . ." a blue ball on a gold thread.

"Me too Santa. I want one."

There is no bottom—the place starts to look pretty.

And on to collect the Christmas mail.

Oh ho at the entrance. A flock in attendance.

Oh ho.

"Jesus haven't we got enough."

"The T.V.—"

"I'll have to see Fred. The kids can't come . . ."

"Here he comes again—didn't collect too—"

Ho ho.

"Yeah see ye later. All you kids get going."

Onto the steps without sunshine. Santa disappearing as screams and crackling.

At last the anarchists have shown their true colours. The detonation of Christmas mail—how much of it children's—was a shameless

—this paper

"Your father and I are going out now. You will work hard while we're gone."

In the shadowed room the late sun on dappled waters.

"You are the captain of this vessel."

"I'm the ferry master."

"Would you put us down over there."

"I've got other passengers—"

"They can swim."

"He has!"

"I can't—"

"Oh please"

—this paper demands that the vile mongrels

The tall white house.

"You—go up then."

Silently.

Just a lamp. Now the dining room laid for none. One flight of stairs.

"What's that Morrie?"

"What mate."

"Shut up."

"Who are you?"

"What the bloody hell's that—"

The scuffling approaching faintly, and clattering. Without haste or hesitation.

"I'll be buggered Morrie."

The captain taking his hat off to see.

"Opening a retrospective."

The cows in their way up the drive.

"Look at them. The cows are in the rhododendrons."

"Have you got him?"

"What does he want?"

"Have you got him—"

It is the Mounties. Urging their horses into the throngs. And into the cattle; and toppling off both sides, and frontwards and backwards.

"They cannot keep on can they."

"No they can't."

Allan and Maurice are mounting.

"Get the girl—"

"What's he . . ."

"The girl—" he is hoisted on. "No! no!" but there is adhesion. "I—" in the mooing and flight

"I—" the tears over his teeth

as they pass.

As for the rhododendrons . . .

The captain cautiously settled his hat.

IRIS MILUTINOVIC

## one summer sunday

The old cottage sits half way up the climbing hills, with the green paddocks, the red-roofed houses, and, beyond, the sea stretching away like a carpet under its feet.

The storm is over, and early summer sunshine again gilds the willows, and shines on the waters of the small leaping creek at the bottom of the hill. It is a steep hill, with thirty-seven steps cut into its grassy sides. Cousin Dessie remembers when there was only a grassy path, so steep and slippery that one of the Aunts broke a leg on it. Grandfather cut and bricked the steps, later covering them with the ugly pallor of concrete.

Blackberries grow right up to the sides of the steps, and sometimes in summer snakes sunbathe on their sheltered warmth. One summer there were so many that a pile of stout sticks was left each end of the steps, and one carried a weapon, in transit, just in case. Perhaps the snakes knew this for only rarely did they afterwards lie asleep in the sun.

Grandfather says that most wild things know more than we guess. Certainly it is true that lizards and skinks, cold blooded and wary-looking, can sometimes be quite different.

Today is my sister Marcia's twelfth birthday, and, with our cousin Dessie, who is quite old, almost forty, we are going to walk along the beach to the Cam River. It is true that we have tried to do this many times. Usually, when we reach the Simpson's place, a little more than half way, we go in for a cup of tea, and afterwards it is too late to reach the Cam and get back home by one o'clock, our Sunday dinner-time. Both Mother and Grandma are very fussy about meals being served right on time, and there aren't many acceptable excuses for being late, either.

Now it is not quite nine o'clock and I am sitting on the front verandah waiting for Dessie and Marcia. Just in front of the verandah are two small beds of zinnias bisected by a small concrete

path. Although the flowers have been rather battered by the storm, they are still bright, and I watch them with pleasure. It is still, and rather warm, and suddenly the tall flowers began to shake with the passing of some small body. Out onto the narrow path waddled a bob-tailed lizard, surely one of the ugliest of all reptiles. The zinnias moved again, and out came a second one. Evidently a male, it held in its jaws a large winged insect which it appeared to offer to the female. Daintily the love gift, if it was that, was accepted.

While the ugly little reptile ate it, the male put his head beside hers and commenced the most beguiling courtship imaginable. As she ate, he gently stroked her, at times nuzzling her head. When she had eaten, he made love to her, gallantly and competently. I had seen animals mate before, of course. In the country such things are common, but this was different and strangely touching. Gentleness and passion seem odd qualities for a lizard, yet seeing them together, it was impossible to doubt either quality. The male's small, human-looking hands continually stroked his mate while he embraced her. The climax was fierce and ardent, and afterwards they lay together for a little while, content in the sun.

I was glad I had seen the lizards mating, glad they had not been disturbed. Soon Marcia and Cousin Dessie came, ready to start our walk. I told them about the lizards and they didn't seem the slightest bit impressed. But, of course, they didn't see it happen and I am not very good at telling things.

At the bottom of the thirty-seven steps an old grey bridge spans the swift little creek. In the creek fat mountain trout swim lazily against the current warily keeping an eye on their predatory brothers, the fierce rainbows and brown trout. The steep stone-walled sides of the creek are

festooned with blackberry vines, and here grow the biggest berries of all. Often, on warm summer evenings, we wade slowly along the creek, gathering the juicy fruit into billy-cans tied round our waists. From the berries, Grandmother makes the best jam I have tasted.

We walk along the bottom road which is cut out of the side of a great hill, and is still muddy from the heavy rain. The top road, cut from the same hill, but much higher up, is never muddy, though sometimes the water runs from the steep slopes above it, washing across like a small river. Where the two roads join, the creek, which is on our left as we walk towards the sea, gets deep and rather wild. There is a small swift waterfall just below a beautiful rickety old bridge. On the hottest days a cold wind blows persistently around the rocks at the bottom of this miniature ravine, and a great, aged willow plops its old branches into a deep dark-looking pool. Today, the water is tumbling fast, and Mrs. Collins' white ducks are not, as usual, swimming near the centre, but timidly pecking round the edges.

When we reach the beach the tide, still angry, is low, and the familiar sand, over which we swim or walk almost every day, is tumbled and gouged into strange shapes. In some places unremembered rocks are exposed and along the high tide mark great heaps of brown seaweed form a slippery, smelly wall. The water from the creek, muddy and yellow, has stained the sea, and it is only far out that the blueness shows.

We walk along the firm, wet sand, and sometimes there is a good shell, though most of the delicate ones have been broken by the storm. A little farther along and there is not much sand at all, just small, half-moons of gravelly beach bordered by rocks.

Said Cousin Dessie, "We'd better get on the road now," so we climbed up the steep stone wall which curbs the beach.

In the next curve lies the harbour, a small broad finger of water pushing against the land. Here, not so long ago, fishing boats anchored and small cottages clustered close to the water. On a calm foggy night a Bass Strait ferry captain mistook the cottage lights for those of the two-mile distant port, and put his ship neatly aground right in the mouth of the harbour. On either side of the narrow entrance jagged rocks wait to tear through anything which touches them. Miraculously, the steamer slid gently between them, damaging nothing and nobody. The passengers were able to walk ashore at low tide, and on the next big tide, the ship floated gently off into safety. Grandfather has a faded old picture he took of the ferry sitting high and almost dry amongst the rocks.

Often, with Grandfather, we come over to fish for mullet and garfish in the harbor, and in late Spring, when the tides rise and fall much more than usual, we walk along the uncovered reefs looking for unusual shells and seaweed. Once we found a rock under which were small, very lively grey-blue octopuses. Another time I touched a rock covered with jelly-like substance which shrivelled up under my shuddering fingers and slid into the water.

Around the point, the rocks are rough and hard to climb, so we walk along the railway line, which hugs the shore. Now we are on Whitsitt's Beach, which is not nearly so pleasant to walk on. Here the sand is soft and one sinks down almost to knee-level in some places. Cousin Dessie, who is rather fat, hates walking along here, and wants to go up on the railway line again, but Marcia and I want to stop on the beach. For one thing, we might get some really good shells, and for another, we didn't ask Cousin Dessie to come so she must just put up with the difficult walking.

The beach is shaped like a cupid's bow, and the second part is even harder to walk along than the first. Poor Dessie is red in the face, and she says she must rest, but we persuade her to keep going until we reach Cowrie Beach, which is not far from the Simpsons.

Cowrie Beach is another of those small shelving half-moon shaped strips of gravelly sand between high reefs; there are always plenty of scallop and cowrie shells there. Today there are lots—small brown ones, tiny pink and cream ones barely as big as a baby's finger nail, and quantities of yellow and greyish dull-looking shells which we like least of all. The scallop shells are mostly damaged after the storm, so we set to work to gather cowries. Why, I don't quite know, for we don't, truly speaking, collect them, nor do we use them for anything. Even Cousin Dessie, who is middle-aged, collects several dozen of the pretty things. Presently Marcia says she is getting cold, so we stand up and think what a long way it still is to the Cam. "You know," says my sister, "This must be the tenth time we've started to walk to the

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Cam, and we never have got there. Today we just MUST," and Marcia's big, violet coloured eyes look quite dark with determination.

What she says is true, for walking to the Cam always seems very easy when we start out, but not at all a nice prospect from half way. Mostly the Simpsons, who live on a hill above Cowrie Beach, see us, and ask us in for a drink. Afterwards there is never enough time to get out and back before lunch. Rather reluctantly we start walking towards the next curve in the beach, when we hear Les Simpson's voice.

"Hello," he says, "Mum says to come in and have a cup of tea. She's just pouring it."

Marcia, who has a strong sense of duty, tells Les we can't come because we are half way to the Cam, but he just smiles and says, "What, again?" and we thankfully follow him up the beach, over the railway line, and up the steep path to the Simpson's house.

Mrs. Simpson has our tea poured, so we sit down at the big kitchen table and gratefully sip the hot drink and eat Devonshire Splits, which are a kind of scone, short and buttery, and triangle shaped instead of round or square.

Cousin Dessie, who is a pretty good cook herself, compliments Mrs. Simpson on the splits, which creates a pleasant atmosphere. Like most women our hostess is very proud of her cooking. She is a very nice little woman, kind of short and dumpy. She has very bad teeth which sometimes makes being too near her rather unpleasant. Otherwise we like her very much. Grandfather says she is a complaining kind of woman and that he reserves judgment on her. Mother says that if he had all those children and not much money, he might complain too.

"Maybe," he agreed, "But I bet I wouldn't make such a fuss about everything. I've never heard that woman say one single thing was good. The weather's either too hot or too cold; the children are poorly and her husband is either getting something or getting over something. And no wonder," he ended darkly, "She probably makes him sick with her whining and moaning."

I have thought about all this and have decided Grandfather is not fair to Mrs. Simpson. She certainly does complain a lot but she is awfully kind to the children. Any children for that matter, though she cools off as they get older. I can remember she was very nice to me but now I am in my teens she seems to be cooling off. She

is quite polite to Dessie, but her voice never sounds warm and kind like it does to the little ones. Perhaps she just doesn't like grown-ups. She must be a good housekeeper, for the home is always clean. Big square high rooms, with not too much furniture and everything looking comfortable and not too grand.

After we had drunk the tea and eaten most of the splits we get up to go. Marcia still wants to walk to the Cam, but of course now it is too late, which makes Cousin Dessie very happy.

Marcia is truly conscientious and likes to finish everything she starts, but our Cousin says that half the pleasure in life comes from relaxing. "And how," she asked, "is it possible to relax when you're doing something you dislike?"

Grandfather laughed when he heard that and said, "Well Dessie, I expect that's why you are so fat and Marcia's so slim," which made Dessie so furious that for at least a week she ate scarcely anything. We decide to walk back over the hills, which are very steep just here. Once the top ridge is reached it is flat all the way home. Even Cousin Dessie does not mind the steep climb up, for afterwards it is so beautiful.

Because it has been a wet summer, everything is bright emerald green, except for a clump of blue-grey tea trees down at the school. The houses are mostly red-roofed, and lie close to the foot of the hills, and the contrast in colour is wonderful. The road, which is really grey, looks white from here, and the sand is very yellow. Except for one big jutting red rock, the reefs are black, and shiny where they are wet. From so high the sea looks yellow and green and blue, and there are white caps on the waves.

"I wish someone would paint it now, this very minute," says Cousin Dessie, but there is no-one here, and if an artist ever does come it will be different, for nothing stays the same. Even now, the bright sun is clouding over, the sea turning dark greenish-grey, and the road looks like lead.

So we go home, and Grandmother has Sunday dinner ready; lamb and green peas fresh from the garden, and roast potatoes, young carrots to give colour to the plates, and tangy mint sauce for extra flavour. It is all very good, and we are happy, even Marcia despite her conscience, for she says, "Do you know, I don't care if we never walk to the Cam."

As for me what I remembered most and forever was the two lizards, ugly, cold-blooded, passionately mating in the sun.

three  
sanitized  
sonnets

PETER  
PORTER

Hello old liberal, old equivocator, old conscience-holder,  
what a world the playful young have made!  
I'm trying to be fair—to get yourself laid  
when I was young wasn't easy—the old were older

and the young were scared. That's the past  
and heart-attacks today are closer neighbours  
than party-giving teens. On Parnassus, Faber's  
have lashed the lonely makers to the mast!

Do your drill beside the bed. Three press-ups  
for prosody, aloft with the dumb-bells and expanders  
for modernism; and last night in your cups

you told a hot-tailed poetess the only lay  
she could manage was on a mattress. Menander's  
works are lost: god rested on the seventh day.

A great fright like Jesus risen! Jesus, I cried  
to the Greek air, the metastases are showing.  
If you come to Emmaus, we must soon be going,  
not quarantine, my love, just natty pride.

Praise, my darling, sun on our Sanctuary!  
The devil ants chop through this little grin—  
I come from nowhere. I am very thin,  
I have the honey learning of the bee.

We sponsored Jesus: he basked here in us.  
This next line moults for man whose seasons change,  
a messy business settled with small fuss.

Clear canticle, time slippery as a ball—  
O is for osculation, love is strange,  
it dives for death in something very small.

As the allied tanks trod Germany to shard  
and no man had seen a fresh-pressed uniform  
for six months, as the fire storm  
bit out the core of Dresden yard by yard,

as farmers hid turnips for the after-war,  
as cadets going to die passed Waffen SS  
tearing identifications from their battledress,  
the Russians only three days from the Brandenburger Tor—

In the very hell of sticks and blood and brick dust  
as Germany the phoenix burned, the wraith  
of History pursed its lips and spoke thus:

To go with teeth and toes and human soap,  
the radio will broadcast Bruckner's Eighth  
so that good and evil may die in equal hope.

---

*Peter Porter*

THE LAST OF ENGLAND

*Poetry Book Society Autumn Choice 1970*

Peter Porter, an Australian, is widely regarded as one of the best 'social' poets in England today. In this new collection he writes of the English, and of what it means to be living in England, with extraordinary perception; but the book also includes a group of personal poems whose directness should appeal to a wide range of people. Readers will find that, long after these poems have been read, they continue to turn in the mind.

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OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

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### THREE POEMS

John Anderson

You first know you are going to sleep  
when uninvited people start talking to you.

“Dago dryglo diablo  
broccoli broлга imbroglio  
crocus—locust”

A frog has discovered sibilants.

Over there

A cricket building backbones in the air.

The bottom of a dam in North Queensland  
Is squeezed and stretched by rain and drought into pillars  
Each fertile girth of pond scum, clay and snails  
Appears one brown white under the glare  
For . . .  
The sun fits the concavity  
The consternation altering the course of airfaring  
tumblewood

I dance on the spangled exclamation mark of light  
The straws of rain  
Camouflage my pretzel figure  
Cleft by a million reactions  
I divide like pick up sticks  
And camouflage the rain

#### FLOATING FUNDS

As usual, we have received donations from numbers of friends of OVERLAND to bridge the growing gap between our expenditure and our income. Without this assistance we could not survive. Because of our tight publishing schedule, we have not been able to compile the list of donors in time for this issue, but we shall publish a full list in our next number.

#### CORRECTION

The couplet from Keats at the end of John Morrison's memoir in the last OVERLAND should have read, as it did at the beginning of the article,

The moving waters at their priest-like  
task  
Of pure abluion round Earth's human  
shores.

We apologise to both the author and the poet for the misquotation.

---

## GODS

(They are legion still)

If I were compelled to accept one  
I would choose LUG:  
For LUG is the god of workmanship  
He doesn't bullshit  
Nor cackle about,  
Plagiarise,  
Tell lies,  
Make ridiculous promises,  
Nor create flies.

Lug himself has no god.  
He uses his hands,  
And his loaf,  
He's wise:  
He needs neither piss-poor followers  
Preachers  
No!  
Not even spies.

Lug is too sane to be a god really  
He is not worshipped now.

EDWIN TANNER

## ANUBIS

(The black sculptured Jackal-God-Dog in the  
National Museum, Cairo.)

When Anubis was finished  
So was the model.  
It was eaten.  
Artists often eat their models.

The man who made Anubis  
Won a prize.  
The King of Egypt  
Commissioned him  
To make a crocodile.

Within the Cairo Museum  
There is a mummy  
Crocodile  
With a prize-winning artist  
Inside its tummy.

EDWIN TANNER

Peter Harney

## THAT

the term is alone  
this is it  
you are where

the landscape is that  
of empty chairs

it is here you address  
the vacant rows

,imagination  
is the thing

each has it,

with a name inscribed  
like a bullet

thats been fired  
in the air  
for a moment

lost

## Letters from Grenfell

From a New South Wales  
Goldminer in the 1870s

Gilbert J. Butland

In the 1870s the Grenfell goldfield was the most productive in New South Wales, and miners flocked to the diggings. One of these was Tom Cottome, a Yorkshireman, who tried in vain to make his fortune. These letters, written to his sister in Bermuda, tell of his family, his hopes and struggles and, supplemented by contemporary accounts, give an intensely personal view of the birth and evolution of an Australian rural town. Professor Butland's skilful editing makes this book a valuable addition to the growing number of regional histories.

144 pp., 4 maps, 4 pp. plates, \$5.00



**SYDNEY**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

GEORGIA ASSAVACH

## the face of God

When he arrived, the girls, perfect as zinnias behind the reception desk, dropped me like a hot potato. I was left to study the hotel register—upside down to my eyes—then that too was scooped away from me. He was so important the situation hummed around his New Jersey voice. To shut it out of my ears I told myself: "They aren't all bastards. Some are okay. Think of Mailer."

Some tangled thread of association led me then to think of Brendan Behan, that alter ego of Mailer's who lived on the other side of the Atlantic, and when I heard a voice say beside me, "What's the water like today?" I smiled down at the desk and murmured with Celtic humility, "Why don't you put a little bourbon with it and find out?"

Like shrapnel, the American's amusement exploded over me. "Say, that's good," he said, "Will you help me if I do?"

I turned then to look at him as he stood, key in hand, beaming at me. His face was the face of God—whisky-pitted, round as a doughnut and rendered inhuman by big dark glasses. He was showing his teeth, all five hundred of them. They were grey, oval and as thin as petals. On his chest, Plimsoll straight was a pair of wings.

Looking blindly into his eyeshades, I said, "No, thanks, I prefer the tartan variety," and hoped like hell that my voice was sardonic and worldly like say, Noel Coward's.

When I turned back to the desk, he stayed where he was. Gave a big blank laugh and rattled his key once. I think he was trying to work out why the opening he'd seen had suddenly been closed. His indecision wove around me like a tentacle, but I ignored it and finally, he said, "Well, what about that bourbon?"

I didn't have to answer. One of the desk girls did it for me. Pointing, she said, "Through that door, you'll find buckets of it."

Still he hesitated, jiggled his key for a while, then walked away. I turned and let my eyes be blatant on his back. He was short and muscular with slightly bandy legs and white hair, crew cut like God's. His uniform was desert-bleached bone.

After he'd gone the girls lost no time in disposing of me, and soon, with my key like a coin in the palm of my hand, I was able to go outside to look at the beach. The midday light showed me no glimmer of the childhood memory I'd cherished for years. All I saw was a stretch of grey water and a huddle of Mediterranean houses, all dirty. I went back inside, past the foyer's empty suit of armour and towards the elevator. There, the heat rose as I rose. It was as if the geographic positions of heaven and hell had been reversed and I was on my way to meet the devil in an elevator.

On the fourth floor, the heat was blinding. I groped my way around corridors until I found my room. Then as I fumbled my key in the lock, I heard a big American voice call from the other side of the door, "Hey, wait a minute . . ."

As if it had been electrified, I let go of the key. At the same moment the door swung inwards to show me the American Colonel I'd spoken to downstairs. He was dressed in a suit of long white cotton underwear, and all of him—his hair, the underwear, his feet—was dripping wet.

"Hey, it's you," he said, and because he'd stepped out of every American movie I'd seen, I found myself wanting to stick my head past him to see if John Wayne was in the bathroom washing off a little of the grit.

He was saying, "What d'y'know," when I found my tongue, and having matched my key number with the number on the door, said softly, "Yank, go home."

My voice should have warned him that I meant the words, but he was too busy being overjoyed to notice and I was able to watch with fly-like detachment as he let himself fall a little in love with me.

"That's good," he said, "I like that." But the surety had gone from his voice and he was no longer the master. And I, wishing to dig the lance deeper, took a step into the room and found I'd stepped also into the kind of homely intimacy marriage wraps around you. Hypnotised, I stared at his wet cotton chest with its decoration of dog tags, and when he said, "What's your name?" I found myself telling him. But I was saved, because above my eyes, the upper register of my mind whispered to me: "He's wearing sunglasses with his underwear and looks like a bull-ant."

He was asking what part of the country I came from, but I'd had my moment of folly and was safely back on the other side of the barricade. I remained silent with my eyes locked on his dog tags.

Taking my silence, rightly, as censure, he plummeted through another ring of involvement.

"Don't you like Americans?" he said, and his voice was so gentle, I could feel my hair whipping into pigtails.

Clutching at the top of the barricade, I said, "No, do you?"

The galloping entry of a housemaid got **him** off the hook. She was past her youth and had a bunch of horsey ringlets over each ear. Breathlessly she let fly with apologies for having broken the house-law by letting the Colonel shower and rest in my room while she prepared his. Then, within seconds, it seemed, she'd swept him out on a wave of words and I was alone with the heat.

To escape it, I went outside again, but the beach, so blue and white in memory was as grey and two-dimensional as a photograph. I couldn't have stepped onto it if I'd wanted to, so I left it and took a bus to the chess tournament in the city. There, at least it was cool and as I stepped through the mirror into the Nabokov world on the other side, I forgot the American, the war and the hot hotel room.

Late at night I walked alone on the beach (the night was kinder to it than day) and then I stood for a while at the hotel steps talking to two fags. One of them, as fruity as Richard Burton, kept telling me the hotel wasn't fit to stay in, that it was famous for inducing heat exhaustion in tourists. By then I was too tired to care, and wondering if they were denied the bar, I left them and finally fell asleep to the sound of raspberry-syrup music drifting up the lift well.

It was still hot at breakfast time. The dining room covered the top floor of the hotel and boasted of having the best view in the Pacific, but every mile of its glass was carefully shut against the breeze. The houses below were still Mediterranean and huddled, so I looked out to sea and was pleased

by the biblical fishing boats pasted near the horizon on water as grey and glassy as the ones I'd seen on Sunday school tracts in childhood.

The Gallilean atmosphere must have got to me because when the Colonel shot out of the floor beside my elbow and said, "Hi, Laura. Mind if I sit with you?" I gave him my top-o'-the-morning smile, and what's more, at the moment I meant it.

He was dressed in a fresh outfit of bleached bone. No wings this time, but his martial status was advertised by the grin of a white-tee shirt at the neck.

As he sat down, he said, "Where were you last night, Laura?" And brought out my name with a bang to let me know he'd gone to the trouble of remembering it.

When I didn't answer, he said, "I looked for you in the cocktail bar. I wanted to take you to dinner." His face was stretched in a big buddy smile, but his shades were as uncommunicative as the eye-sockets of a skeleton.

"Where were you?" he prompted.

I told him I'd eaten a bag of bananas under the pines then walked along the beach.

"Alone?"

"Well, I set out to be alone, simply because I like being alone." (I emphasised the word the way he'd emphasised my name.) "But an Italian with two young children followed me. He walked behind me right around the beach—about five feet away from me—and kept asking me questions."

Buddy was still grinning, "And did you answer him?"

"Well, I had to, didn't I? Or make a fool of him in front of his kids."

"And what happened?"

"Nothing. He finally sent his kids to his car and asked me to kiss him. I told him he was being cheeky, and he said he had a good reason for asking. I said what was it and he said he'd always wanted to kiss a woman who smelt of cigar. I was smoking, y'see."

The Colonel didn't know what to make of that story. He was silent for a while, then he said, "Did he get his kiss?"

"No. I felt he deserved it, but I thought of his wife at home wearing a St. Christopher and yesterday's underwear and I told him to piss off."

"Did he go?"

"Yes. No trouble. Went off laughing."

There was another silence. Then, like a bull still puzzled by the cape, he lowered his head and said, "Well, what about dinner tonight?"

"I'm sorry," I said, "I'm going to the chess tournament."

"Chest tournament?"

But I'd heard that joke too often to be bothered smiling at it. "Chess!" I said through closed teeth

as the waitress put his ham and eggs and fried potatoes in front of him.

For a while he gave his attention to chopping the food into a sort of east-coast goulash. When he'd finished chopping, I said, "Are you going to pour your coffee over it?"

Holding his knife and fork the way they hold them in hill-billy movies, he said, "I think you're a bit of a kidder."

"Yes, and I wear National Liberation Front garters, too."

He laughed at that, showing me the goulash around his molars, and his breath, rank as gasoline, hit me across the table.

"Now I know you're putting me on," he said. "So what about dinner?"

I said to him, "What you need is a little book called 'The Bachelor's Guide to Sydney'. It's quite cheap and it tells where the girls are and how much."

He stopped chewing. Carefully he put his knife and fork down and focussed his glasses on me. (The pores on his face were so big I could have put my head inside one.) I'd shocked him. And his shock was as complete as the shock of God. He'd come to Australia for the express purpose of screwing a one hundred per cent. white woman with a fascist emblem tattooed inside her thigh, and my suggestion that he should pay for the privilege wasn't merely inhospitable, it was un-American as well. Hadn't it been laid down in the Dream expounded at Gettysburg that you got your sex for free? Wasn't that what it was all about? You might have to kill the lady afterwards, but she did the paying, not you.

"That's why you came here, wasn't it?" I prodded.

He looked away from me. Out the window at the huddle of pink and blue houses. "No, I came because I was here in the war. I spent all my leave in this town. I had a flat a few blocks from the beach. They were the best times of my life. It's only natural I should come back."

"It was a mistake. We don't love you any more."

"You don't mean that."

"Yes, I do. Some of us at least, have grown up. Look, see out there past those fishermen—that's the Pacific. My brother went down into that. He was flying a Catalina. It's a trite thing to say but his death didn't change a thing; the hungry are still hungry and the poor still poor. And he really **believed** he was fighting for liberty. He was the great love of my life, by the way. I still wear a bandage on my heart. When he died I quit on war forever."

"They've gotta be stopped somewhere, honey," he said and his voice was gentle, carrying a load of sympathy for my dead brother.

"What kind of plane do **you** fly?" I asked.

"I don't fly much now," he said, "sometimes I ride along with the boys for kicks. Then I go in a gun plane."

"A what plane?"

"A gun plane. It's got four machine guns and is used for strafing. Do you know what strafing is?"

"Yes, it means you have your own private cocoanut shy, but instead of cocoanuts you use old peasant ladies, and the game kills them."

He repeated what he'd said earlier, "They've gotta be stopped somewhere."

"Why? Communism's just a step in political evolution. It comes and passes like everything else."

"It's not that simple, honey."

"Of course, it is. Everything's simple if you use your loaf. Communism's . . ."

He interrupted me, putting his hand over mine so that I could feel the warm dryness of his skin. "You don't want to go around talking that way, Laura. You could get yourself into a heap of bother. You should start realising how lucky you are to have this beautiful country." With his head he indicated the scene outside the windows. "In some ways you've got it better than us in the States. You've got no race problem here."

"I was getting around to that," I said, "You didn't give me time. I like black men." I heard my voice saying the last four words in the punctuated way people talk in television dramas, but it didn't matter, his hand had already been removed from mine. I knew that if a tap had been close, he'd have washed his. The word black had achieved what insults and bullets couldn't do.

We finished our breakfasts with small talk that was colder than silence, yet, in the elevator on the way downstairs, when I fainted, he was the one who looked after me. Got me to my room and insisted that the hotel staff call a doctor. He hung around to hear the verdict of heat exhaustion, and then made them book me into an air-conditioned hotel in the city.

He helped me into the taxi, too, and as it drove away I heard his voice call, "Take care, now," and I could tell that he meant the words. They came again as the taxi turned, and I thought, Yes, and when you go back to fight the peasants with four machine guns and halitosis, the maimed little children will have to take care too. Then we were around the corner and the hotel and the beach were gone.

I didn't see him again, but the crazy thing is, in a way, I wish I had.

# laurence collinson:

PAULINE M. KIRK

## a poet in development

It is fourteen years now since the publication by Overland of a collection of poems, **The Moods of Love**, by the Australian poet, Laurence Collinson, and the controversy which resulted has no doubt been forgotten. Despite the mixed reception of this, his first volume (apart from a privately published pamphlet, **Poet's Dozen** which appeared in 1952), Collinson has gone on to consolidate his reputation. Besides frequently appearing in Australian literary magazines, his work has been included in a number of anthologies, as well as in the collection **Eight by Eight** (Jacaranda, 1963), and a second volume, **Who is Wheeling Grandma?** published by Overland in 1967. During these years, the image Collinson has presented to the Australian readers has changed from that of an ardent, socially concerned young man giving free expression in his poetry to his political concerns, to that of a maturer, if somewhat embittered, self-conscious artist, striving to perfect his craft and suspicious of the direct statement of personal emotion. The poems which he has published in recent years seem to indicate that this process of development is continuing, for they suggest a movement towards an elliptical, compressed style, in which concern for the meaning and value of each word has led to the appearance of an ironic wit, almost metaphysical in quality. More than many poets, Laurence Collinson has been constantly developing, constantly maturing, and it is interesting to consider this development in some detail.

In a speech made in 1957 to celebrate the publication of **The Moods of Love**, Laurence Collinson made his basic concerns at that date clear. After discussing the great many people whose lives seemed completely irrelevant in terms of the communal good, he went on:

And I reflected that a first book of poems . . . according to my sense of values, comes fairly

high on the scale of honor because, in a world duped and doped by commercialism, dulled by education (such as we know it), broken by war and oppression, a world made sad by millions of unnecessary deaths and the prospect of terrible destruction, even a minor act of creation is important because it is, to use a well-worn but accurate phrase, an affirmation of life. And if all creative acts, minor and major, were so honoured, it would indicate that a change is coming about in men.

In keeping with this concern, the title "The Moods of Love" was chosen since he felt "any act which denotes sympathy with, understanding of, compassion for other human beings, comes under the heading of 'love'." In its subject matter, therefore, **The Moods of Love** tends to great diversity, including a sonnet cycle written at white heat over the years 1953/4 and not greatly revised, a little very early work, and a number of poems dealing with political and social themes, some of which were included for personal rather than artistic reasons. The latter are now felt by the poet himself to have grave weaknesses, but they were the outcome of a strong desire to combine the two conflicting loyalties he was then feeling; between the need to write poetry and thus give fulfilment to a deeply felt personal urge, and the need to further the collective good of society. In order to resolve this conflict, poetry, he felt, must be socially committed, a view which he still holds to some extent, as is witnessed by his association with the anthology, **Doves for the Seventies** (London, 1969), in which his poems "Definition" and "The Lover, On Returning from the Wars" have appeared.

As a result of this diversity, the poetic quality of **The Moods of Love** is extremely variable, the best poems having a freshness and directness which is immediately pleasing.

The concise pleasure of the bed,  
 the curtailed zone of your embrace,  
 the circumscribed seconds when  
 my cheek may fuss against your face  
 are brief bright fragments of the week,  
 and all the rest, and all the rest  
 must be endured; without you I  
 am by my loneliness obsessed.

("A Thought for St. Valentine's Day,  
 1956', p. 55)

Modern in atmosphere, with their stress on urban settings and the unidealised portrayal of human relationships, these poems avoid clichéd romantic diction and imagery, and are written in the rhythms of ordinary speech, the expression of personal feeling being in general disciplined by the use of rhyme and traditional verse patterns.

But love in this volume also includes sympathy for the lonely and the apparently unattractive, the guests at a suburban party (p. 12), or the old maid on a late tram (p. 13), and it is in the further widening of the term to include social injustice and oppression that weaknesses become most obvious. As indignation gains control, the verse becomes slack and too obviously polemical.

O see these puppets as they are, my  
 brothers—  
 playing for gain on strings of circumstance:  
 their antics futile, the struggle left to others,  
 screaming "Advance!" The rest of us ad-  
 vance.

("After a 'Protest' Meeting called by  
 certain Official Gentlemen", p. 19)

The workings of social conscience seen in such poems to have led to a relaxation of poetic control, at its most obvious in the use of rhetorical questions and overstatement, and it is surely significant that in his second volume, Laurence Collinson moved away from direct social criticism, and in particular, from the longer narrative style.

The title of the collection, "Who is Wheeling Grandma?" itself suggests the change in tone which can be detected, and is taken from the lines which Collinson put at the beginning of the volume, lines which, though supposedly a quotation from a poem called "The Living", were actually composed by the poet as a kind of practical joke on the unwary critic:

Mummy is wheeling the pram;  
 old Dad is wheeling poor soldier Bill;  
 Death is wheeling Grandma.

Altogether darker in atmosphere than **The Moods of Love, Who is Wheeling Grandma?** is again a somewhat uneven collection, the sonnets included under the heading "The moods of love: addendum" being less impelling than those of the original collection, and a few poems (like "Being and non-being" and "Four epigrams", pp. 33 and 35), still seeming too overtly propagandist in intent. Despite such failings, however, this volume contains a number of very fine lyrics expressing

personal emotion with a most satisfying control and avoidance of sentimentality. In general there is a greater compression and tightness of structure, together with an increase in the concern for the meaning of individual words which Collinson had expressed in an earlier poem, "On the Anniversary of Jane Austen's Birth" (p. 17, **Moods**):

Your startling apparatus is the **word**,  
 so how can I presume to praise and such  
 same means employ? My own machine's  
 absurd—  
 it limps and screeches, it'll never clutch  
 at that precise and soul-dishevelling thought  
 with which you still amaze . . .

In the best poems in this collection, his machine by no means limps and screeches; it works neatly and economically, the interplay of structure and sense, and the development of startling and outrageous imagery, as in "The Boat" (p. 16) or "Hand in Hand" (p. 19), giving a most satisfying intellectual strenuousness. Probably the finest poem, "A small elegy for my father" (p. 11), is most moving in its controlled grief, conveying concisely and quietly the courage and horror of physical decay:

Courage his only bread as he grew thin,  
 but how his spirit fattened! I took hold,  
 wept at such weight. My yellow hero, cold  
 in victory that all and none must win.

Like the "elegy," most of the poems give evidence of a change in attitude to life, the joy in love found in the first volume having gone; here the major preoccupations are the passage of time and the transitory nature of human happiness. In an interview granted to the author in September of 1970, Laurence Collinson accounted for this change in terms of the effects of personal suffering and of a growing sense of frustration. As a young man, he never doubted that he would be able to earn a living by writing; now, since 1964 when he moved to London in the hope of furthering this ambition, he has found the prospect receding, and bitterly resents his inability to devote sufficient time to his craft. For personal as well as philosophical reasons, he has come increasingly to feel that life has no meaning, and poetry has therefore taken on very great importance to him, since it both flows from a deep urge towards self-expression, and gives validity to his existence.

This increased concern with his art is evident in the poetry which Collinson has written since the publication of **Who is Wheeling Grandma?** The effect of emigration seems slight; he has never been a markedly nationalistic poet, having always been more concerned with expressing human emotion than describing the Australian scene. Indeed, in an address to the Unesco Conference on play-writing (Adelaide 24th to 30th March, 1962), he stated, "No serious work can be written for a specific audience. To do so would deny a fundamental of artistic creation—the unity that the

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artist's temperament creates in his work". Though born in Yorkshire, he was brought to Australia when very young, and has always identified himself with that country, but he says he feels no necessity to assert himself against English standards, or to follow them blindly. The stimulus of friendship with other working poets he knew in Melbourne, and the more intimate society possible with a smaller population are losses, however, inevitable with such a move. Nevertheless, since it is in England that he is now living, it is there that he is seeking recognition, in prose and drama as well as poetry.

Recently, Collinson has said in a statement published in **Contemporary Poets of the English Language** (Chicago, London, 1970), "I write poems only when compelled to by some kind of 'inner necessity'. The impulse may derive from a subjective emotion or an external situation; my two primary subjects in twenty-five years of writing have been physical love and the self-deception

that pervades our personal and social lives. Once the 'poetic' idea comes into my consciousness, I try my best to shape the poem according to the needs of the subject and my desire to communicate pleasurable . . . I believe with other Marxists that 'freedom is the recognition of necessity', and the limitations imposed on the subject by the use of even the simplest of traditional forms create an infinitely more complex, gratifying, and precious object than the wildest expressionist verses."

Elaborating this view, he explains that to him shape and form are as important as content, for artistic pleasure is given to the reader as much by enjoyment of form as by sharing the poet's emotion. In addition, the discipline of form is necessary to him to help control the expression of personal emotion, which, after the harsh criticism of his earlier poetry, he has come to distrust. One finds, therefore, that his work now has a more finished appearance, particularly in poems like "Bedmanship" and "Fifth Anniversary", where very deep emotion is conveyed through the interplay of a tightly controlled traditional form, and an intricate argument.

This shrivelled mountebank, this love,  
 who juggles me and me and me,  
 wielding with his wilting glove  
 my lost and frequent liberty,

would, if he knew, implore his palm  
 to break my balanced impotence,  
 negotiating, calm by calm,  
 the orbit of my eloquence.

We have no silence to convert  
 our love, and must embrace aloud:  
 I in my transitory shirt,  
 my father in his fraying shroud.

(From "Fifth Anniversary")

Thus, Laurence Collinson is today a more self-conscious artist, revising his work harshly, constantly criticising his own expression of emotion. He is very aware of the inadequacies of his earlier work. Although in recent poems like "Reflections on Walking to Work Through Covent Garden" and "Barbican 09.00 Hours" one finds a new sense of place and an appreciation of the unique atmosphere of London, the basic themes which concern him remain the same—love and its disappointments, the loneliness and pointlessness of urban life and the complexity of human emotion. It will be interesting to see whether his new environment becomes in itself a source of further development.

## GURINDJI BLUES

Poor bugger me  
Gurindji  
Me bin sit down this country  
Long time before Lord Vestey  
Allabout land belongin' to me  
Poor bugger me Gurindji.

Poor bugger blackfellow this country  
Long time work no wages we  
Work for good old Lord Vestey  
Little bit plour, chugar and tea  
For Gurindji  
From Lord Vestey  
O poor bugger me.

Poor bugger me  
Gurindji  
My name Vincent Lingiari  
Me talk allabout Gurindji  
Daguragu<sup>1</sup> place for we  
Home for we  
Gurindji.

But poor bugger blackfella this country  
Gov'ment boss him talk long we  
Build you 'ouse with 'lectricity  
But at Wave Hill for can't you see  
Wattie Creek belong to Lord Vestey  
O poor bugger me.

Poor bugger me  
Lingiari  
Still me talk long Gurindji  
Daguragu place for we  
Home for we  
Gurindji.

Poor bugger me  
Gurindji  
Up come Mr. Frank Hardy  
ABSCHOL too and talk long we  
Givit hand long Gurindji  
Buildim 'ouse and plantim tree  
Long Wattie Creek  
For Gurindji.

But poor bugger blackfella this country  
Gov'ment law him talk long we  
Can't givit land long blackfella see,  
Only spoilim Gurindji  
O poor bugger me Gurindji.

Poor bugger me  
Gurindji  
Peter Nixon talk long we  
Buy you own land Gurindji  
Buyim back from Lord Vestey  
O poor bugger me Gurindji.

Poor bugger blackfella Gurindji  
Spose we buyim back country  
What you reckon proper fee?  
Might be plour, chugar and tea  
From the Gurindji  
To Lord Vestey.  
O poor bugger me,  
O Wiyaripa,<sup>2</sup> Marndiala,<sup>3</sup>  
Poor bugger me fella,  
Poor bugger GURINDJI.

—Written by Ted Egan for  
Galarrawy Yunupingu and Vincent Lingiari.

<sup>1</sup> Gurindji word for Wattie Creek.

<sup>2</sup> Sorry.

<sup>3</sup> Literally, poor fellow (bugger).

“Gurindji Blues” has been issued on a 45 r.p.m. Single by R.C.A. Victor,  
with whose kind permission the text is here reprinted.

JAN MARTIN

## Wattie Creek

Sketches and notes by Melbourne architect, Jan Martin, who, with other technical helpers, visited Wattie Creek last June.

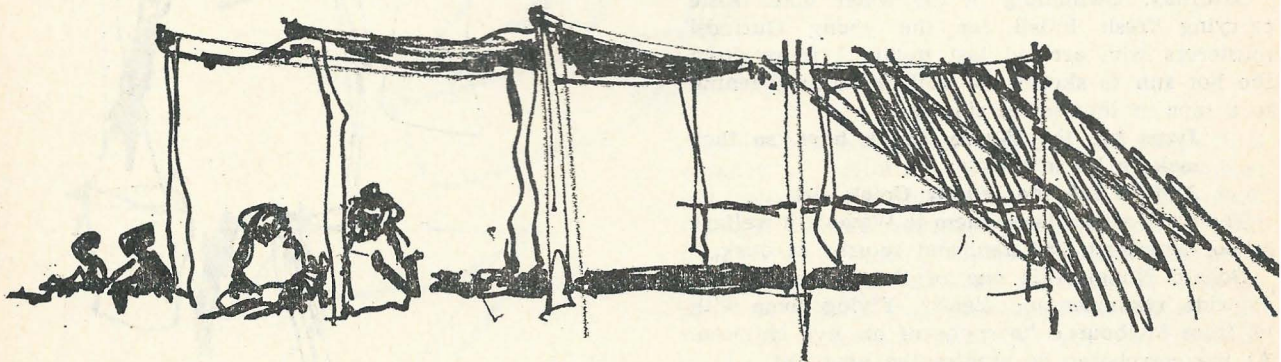


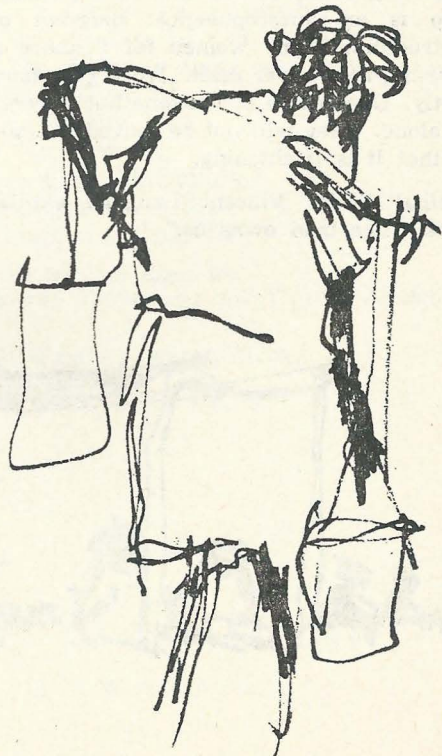
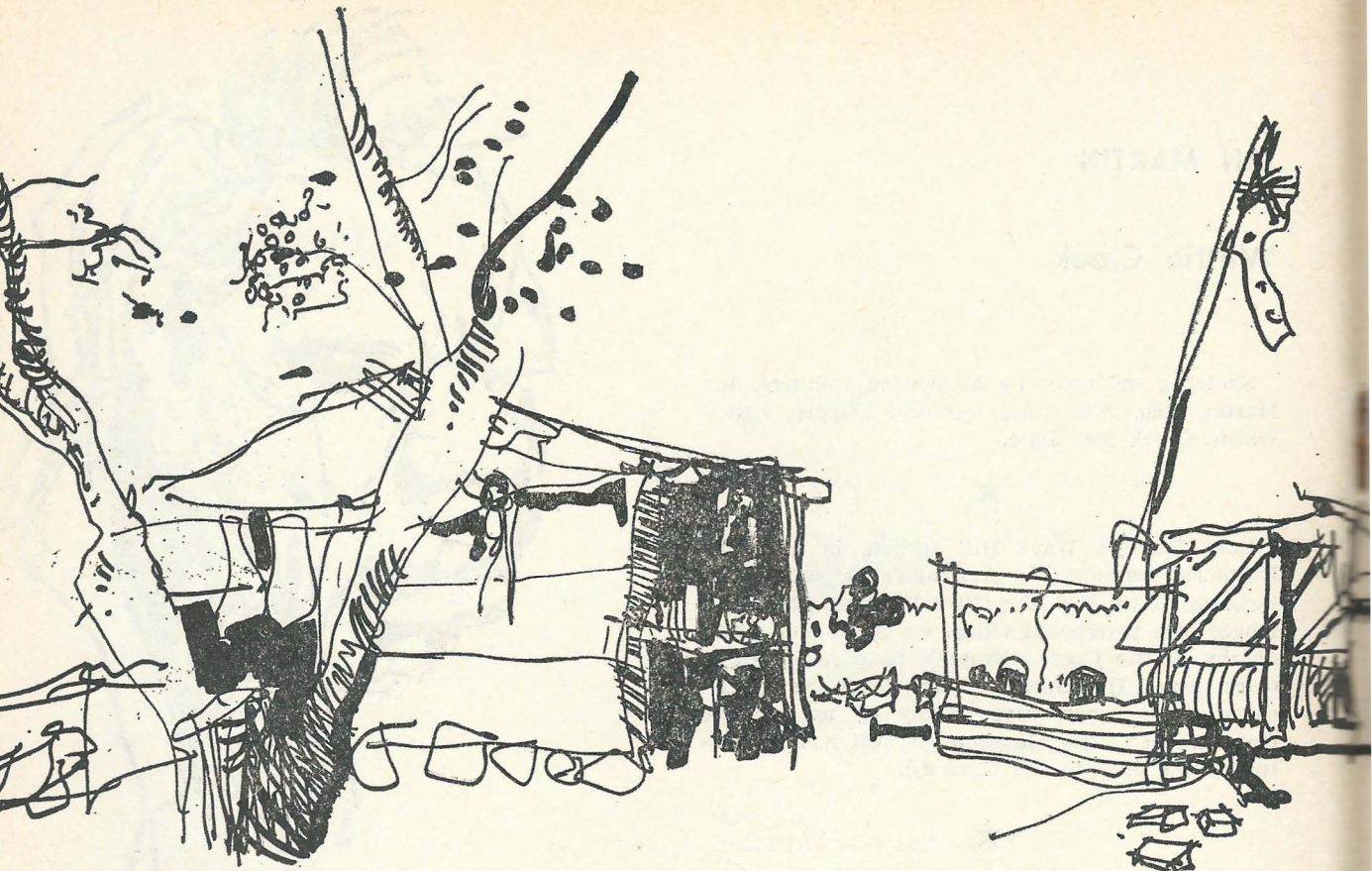
Lord Vestey's Wave Hill station, in mid-west Northern Territory, is Australia's largest. Since walking off in 1966, the Gurindji Aborigines have fenced in a permanent village on tribal land along nearby Wattie Creek. Vestey's have not tried to evict them. The Gurindji want 500 miles to run cattle. Vestey now says: "Okay by us, ask the Government." The Government still has not returned the land to the Gurindji.



Long horizons, unpolluted moonlight, peace. I wake to the sun and barking dogs. At first the camp looks chaotic, but my city eyes adjust. Those scrap-heap humpies can handle the climate. The camp is an anthropological diagram of tribal substructure. Many women for instance are **mali** to others; they never meet. Work gets done solidly, quietly. Our advice is welcome but they will manage alone. They will not be moved . . . so unmoving that it is frightening.

Tribal leader Vincent Langiari explains land rights: "The land owns us."





Saturday. Swimming in the water hole. Elsie carrying fresh bread for the young Gurindji musters who arrived last night. I move from the hot sun to sketch the bell-like kids listening to a tape of themselves singing:

**Jezus lub the Wuddy Creek boys, so they make a lot of noise**

**And he lub the Wuddy Creek girls . . .**

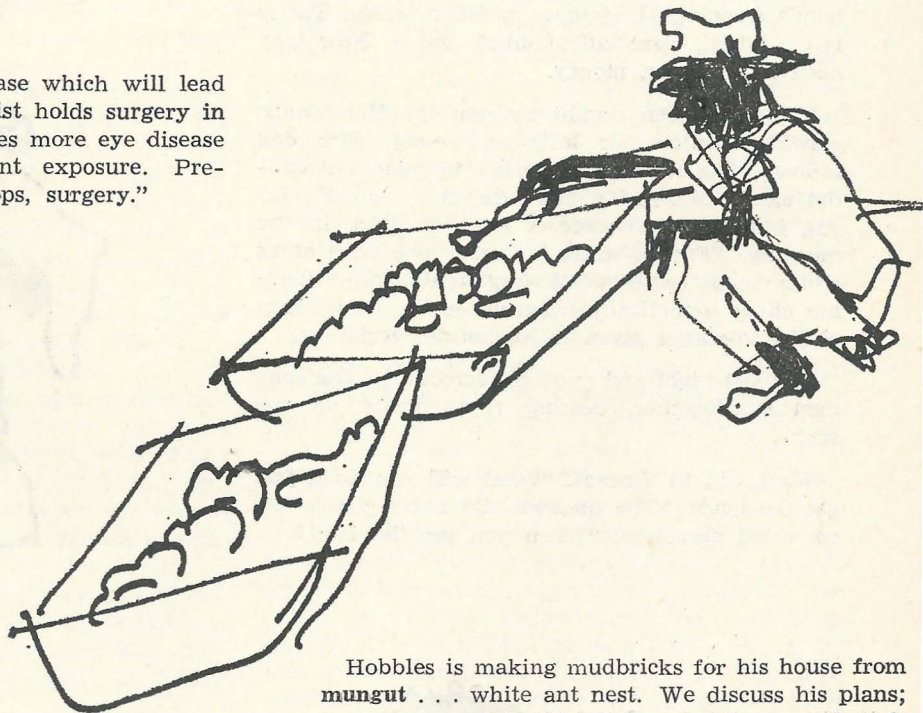
The truck which takes them to Wave Hill welfare school leaves at 6.30 a.m. and returns at dusk.

Donald Nungiari is one of the elders; a man of pride, resilience and dignity. Flying home with us from Melbourne he spoke of his five children. At the corroboree he cradles the youngest.

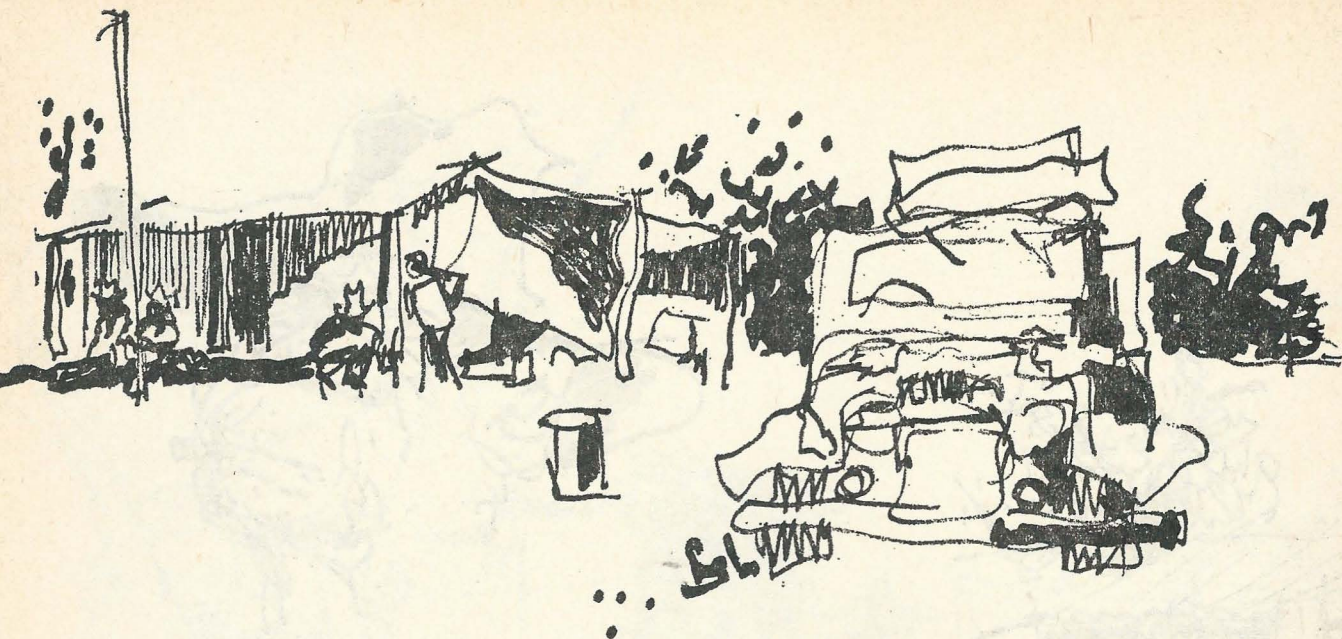
The dogs squabble noisily over their land rights, but we remark how rarely the babies cry.



Konkerman has an eye disease which will lead to blindness. Our ophthalmologist holds surgery in the store. He says: "Many times more eye disease and blindness. Cause: constant exposure. Prevention: Dark glasses, eye drops, surgery."



Hobbles is making mudbricks for his house from **mungut** . . . white ant nest. We discuss his plans; two rooms within thick heavy bricks as cool dark retreats. A wide verandah living space all round to catch the breezes. Following Hobbles' lead more new houses are intended, requiring a "master plan" to ensure that tribal patterns remain. In the dust Hobbles draws his plan for planting. Gardens have transformed the village. Leaves cool the wind and lay the dust. The kids eat fresh vegetables.

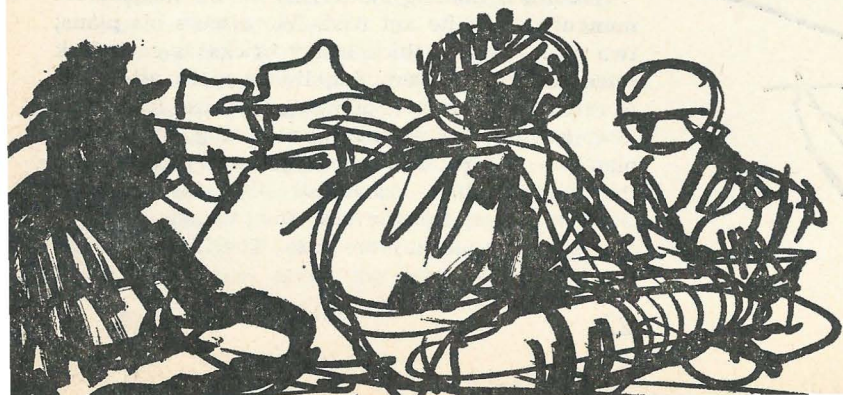


The Gurindji are taking survival into their own hands, showing Aborigines a possible future. Theirs is the initial, essentially political move. Now they need help, water, money.

Ruby has been caught by senility. Her hands, clawlike, clutch her billy and swag. Her dog follows. She moves from camp to camp but cannot sleep. She had a fine face, and a good voice yet, but her corroboree is sung at three in the morning. "Puckin' white buttered" she cries at us white mob (with what forgotten justification?) but clings pathetically when we leave. One thinks of the tolerance given to Melbourne geriatrics.

Our last night and another corroboree. The song men sit together, beating rhythmically on the sticks.

We'd said to Vincent: "What will you do if you get the land?" The question did not register. We corrected ourselves; "When you get the land."



# A PASSAGE THROUGH INDIA

Kenneth Orr

The colour-washed walls of buildings and compounds in Trivandrum were daubed with signs, most in Malayalam, the language of Kerala. But their import was unmistakably political—the hammer and sickle of the Communist Party of India, the hammer, sickle and star of the C.P.I. (Marxist), amid a host of other party symbols. There had recently been a state election in Kerala, “Vote for M. T. George and please remember our Party” read one for the English educated.

All quite unremarkable? After nine months in other parts of Asia, I was amazed. In Indonesia, the Communist Party was outlawed, surviving remnants fled the country or, maybe, into hiding. In Kuala Lumpur, the Alliance government, ruling still under emergency powers, goes on blaming the long-banned Communist Party for all the frustrated opposition which its education and language policies arouse in the very large community of Chinese Malaysians. India not only tolerates her two Communist Parties, but allows them all the benefits of the electoral contest. How could she afford this degree of liberal toleration? Would she possibly survive if this continued?

It would take a much more sophisticated observer of the political scene to answer that question with any semblance of authority. What I can offer are some impressions of the political and social situation as they impinged upon the awareness of one Westerner, returning to India after an absence of five years.

The cities are not India; as they surely are Australia. Yet the traveller inevitably arrives in them, and probably sees rather more of them than of the villages where eighty per cent. of India's people live.

They are growing, and experiencing the pains which accompany the urban spread in other places. At either end of the order-chaos continuum, one might place New Delhi and Calcutta.

West Bengal was at the turn of the century a breeding ground for some of the most creative

minds India has of late given the world—Devananda Roy, the Tagores, Vivekananda and a host of others. It is today not throwing up enough creative intelligence to cope with even its own problems. The daily diminution of personal security in Calcutta is only a symbol of the breakdown of economic order and administrative capacity and political skill. It is rare to see a bus in Calcutta which is not, even by Indian standards, grossly overcrowded. It is rare to travel in one which is in moderately good order. Even the airlines bus which takes passengers from the airport to the city rattles excruciatingly at every second window. Padding on the seats has degenerated into ill-fitting lumps. The ten-mile journey (except perhaps late at night) takes an hour, or even longer, to weave its way through the confused disorder of Calcutta traffic.

These would deserve no mention if they were a tourist's complaints about minor discomforts. They are recorded here because they seem to reflect what at less fortunate economic levels of the same society become intolerable ills. One of the few Indian political groups which does not pay even lip-service to constitutional democracy are the Naxalites, an underground organisation which registers its protests against an unjust social order by sporadic violence, directed especially at landowners, and instruments of government, like police. Its following is largely limited to Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal; and it is in the last that its activities are most constantly evident and least effectively apprehended. If I had to live in the social chaos which is Calcutta today as an industrial laborer or a jobless refugee from East Pakistan, I might well cover the activities of my Naxalite acquaintances, and lend them what aid I could.

Instead, I was able to get into an I.A.C. Caravelle and be transferred in two and a half hours of air-conditioned and pressurised comfort to Delhi. The contrast was staggering, even in this land of diversity. The airport lounge has been extended and re-furnished in the approved international style, with a discreet use of Indian motifs and illustrations on pillars and murals. The Airlines bus is new, its seats well-padded and its windows impeccably silent. Our journey to the city is along wide avenues where no traffic clogs and indulges in mutual braying and barking. At nearly every roundabout sparkles an illuminated fountain, each of different design. These twinkling delights culminate in the great soaring water in the centre of Connaught Circus, surrounded at intervals with the contributory magic of lesser fountains and lights.

Nor was the spell to be broken in the common light of tomorrow. The streets are clean, almost

as clean as Singapore's, and in most places better than Sydney's. The stink of urine, ubiquitous scourge of the pedestrian in India's cities, is absent from the air. There are street lights at major crossings, and pedestrian zebras, and (what is much more remarkable) most people obey them most of the time. Taxis and motorised autocabs are all metered, and I was not once conscious of an attempt to do what was a daily occurrence during my 1965 visit—fiddle the final sum to be paid.

There are no doubt a number of reasons for this contrast. Both Calcutta and New Delhi are creations of the British raj. The one was built as a place of commercial benefit for the ruling power, the other as a place to display its imperial splendour. Even in England itself, the priorities for spending on the Black Country and on Whitehall varied considerably. And the independent government of the Republic of India has had a conscious desire to have a national capital of which it need not be ashamed. Even so, the New Delhi I saw in 1970 was a considerable improvement on the New Delhi of five and a half years ago. Part at least of the credit must be due not to the benevolence of the Central Government, but to the energy of one of its political opponents, the Jan Sangh, a right-wing party which has governed the municipality of Delhi for the past two years or so.

But the Jan Sangh are not the only Indians who can promote administrative efficiency in government agencies. Indian Airlines Corporation is a government-owned body with a monopoly of internal air services. I had eight flights with them this visit, on both major and minor routes, and I found their service both efficient and courteous, with just about as many lapses as has been my experience of T.A.A. and Ansett. I had a lot of mail following me around India. I had occasion to send a lot of telegrams. To date I have no evidence of a single loss or non-delivery, though the postal service which achieved this has to cope with the incredible complexities of fifteen officially recognised languages, **most of them in differing scripts.**

Air travel and postal services are government monopolies. In other areas of the economy there is much competition between public and private sectors. I travelled by bus services under both auspices while in the south, and found them efficient. When I protested to my hosts in Kottayam about the uncivilised hour of 6.00 a.m. at which the state-owned express bus left for Cochin, they hastened to assure me that it would arrive on time; but that if I waited for the 7.00 a.m. privately-owned bus, I would have to allow for at least an hour's leeway, and therefore possibly miss my plane. At the very beginning of my tour, I

was billeted by airline companies at hotels in order to make flight connections the following day. B.O.A.C. put me into one of Colombo's most highly-reputed relics of the grand colonial days, where I had poor food served in a run-down dining room, and room service of passing indifference. The next night I.A.C. put me into a hotel (built I would guess about the same date) which the Kerala State government operates in Trivandrum. They paid the management, I noted, a little more than half the sum I had cost B.O.A.C. the previous night. For it I received excellent food in a pleasantly furnished dining room, and room service of moderate efficiency.

Meantime, what is Congress socialism, Indira Gandhi style, doing for the villager? The revolution of rising expectations is seeping down the social ladder, rung by rung. The small landowners are now demanding education for their sons of the kind which they know people who dwell in the towns have had for a couple of decades. This demand they are able to press at election times, and many a candidate has been returned on the basis of a promise made (or fulfilled) to see that government opens a high school here or an Arts-Science college there within the electorate. With the policy of encouraging education in the vernacular Indian languages, this has become much more possible than it was when English was regarded as the only practicable medium of higher education. Many of these languages have a classical tradition of splendid sophistication behind them; but their vocabulary in the technical terms of the contemporary world is very limited, and most Indians who have needed such a vocabulary hitherto have had English. So there is a dearth of textbooks, and virtually no alternative sources of reading. The lecturer, who reads English, has therefore to mediate the entire body of knowledge to his students, who do not. There is endless notetaking, enormous diligence in verbal memorisation and a flourishing bazaar trade in standard answers to likely exam. questions. Now and then some merchant makes a sudden scoop on questions which have actually been set, and faces the academic authorities with the uncomfortable necessity of cancelling an examination and setting another.

A regimen of this order is hardly likely to appeal to the best intellects. They hie themselves off to the well established metropolitan universities, or (if they can) overseas. There is an academic caste system, and within it posts as teachers in (and degrees as graduates from) the newer rural Arts-Science colleges rank with the sweepers, the existence of which scarcely deserves to be noticed by the academic Brahmins of Madras-and-Oxford or Calcutta-and-Columbia. Yet, in official terms, a country committed to social demo-

cracy cannot afford to recognise such distinctions when its Universities Grants Commission makes allocations. The trend is therefore towards a leveling down, by the continuing dilution of the soup as it were.

The Commission on Indian Education of 1964-66 said some trenchant things about this state of affairs, and recommended the selection of a number of "major" universities to be up-graded as centres of scholarship, places whose standards would be a national example. There would be more generous staffing ratios, adequate libraries and laboratories for research—conditions which would attract and hold staff of high calibre, and allow them in turn to influence the brightest and best of the student generation. Now, four years after its publication, the recommendation remains a dead letter. And the quality of Indian higher education continues to decrease as its quantity increases.

The most disarming problems on the educational scene are those of younger age-groups. Those concerned with the provision of primary education in India have to reckon with a present enrolment of some seventy million pupils. The magnitude of the task is liable to provoke a paralysis of the imagination. The best of India's educational leaders appear to be realistically aware of the problem, but undaunted. And the quality of their leadership is one of the few really cheering things in this field. The same can only rarely be said of the middle level of administrative officials, men of small minds who are much more constantly concerned for their security within the bureaucracy than for the stimulus of the teachers below them to become educators of imagination or drive.

This is of course a problem endemic to large school systems, as thoughtful Australians are well aware. But it is compounded in India's case by widespread poverty, so that few teachers or school managers earn sufficient to live as members of the middle class. The temptations are there to falsify returns in ways which permit of a larger grant than the school justifies, and they have been resorted to often enough for the elaboration of regulations which will make the repetition of such offences impracticable. But when this process goes on long enough, the entire machinery of administration takes on a life of its own, and multiplies itself with stultifying effect.

A bishop of the Church of South India told me of his responsibility, as diocesan, to sign the annual submission from one of the Christian high schools which is generously state-aided. One year he had to append his signature, for this one school, some four hundred times. "The entire system," he commented trenchantly, "is postulated upon the assumption that everybody is a crook, and must

be checked at every turn. And the system of checking is done by a vast army of half-educated clerks who for the most part know and care nothing for the educative process itself."

These comments may seem like cheap jibes from the side-lines. They are, however, confirmed at the highest national levels. Indira Gandhi, on one of her recent trips to Europe, addressed a gathering of Indian students and expatriates in one of the capital cities. She warmly and ably defended India's record since independence in the fields of political reform, economic development and social uplift. But, she admitted, there were two important sections of national life in which the achievement had been very modest indeed; these were administration and education.

I am inclined to wonder if she ought not to have added a third, that of rural development. It is true that there have been roads built and maintained and bus services introduced, so that few villages are inaccessible in the sense that they were thirty years ago. It is true that there are medical clinics in an enormous number of rural centres, and trained and equipped midwives in a still greater number, so that the infant mortality rate has plummeted. It is true that there are schools in nearly every village, so that the brightest and most able youngsters may escape via their education to a job as a government clerk and life in the town. There is available to the farmer a variety of expert advice and material aids to the improvement of his agricultural practice and the increase of his productivity.

Yet it may still be questioned whether the quality of life of the average villager, with little or no land of his own, is in any way improved. It was this which was at the core of Tagore's scheme of village uplift at Sriniketan, with its mixture of village sanitation and cultural stimulus, which became the progenitor of the Community Development movement, taken up by government and given Cabinet status, and extended through the country with such optimistic vigour in the 1950's. It was this which was to be the outcome of Gandhi's scheme of Basic Education worked out at Sevagram, with a syllabus of teaching through the crafts and the social and physical environment of the village. This became the accepted pattern of primary education after independence, and was promulgated in diluted form on a vast scale.

Today Community Development seems to have lost its impetus. Too many of its officers are career-minded clerks with little enthusiasm for village life or inspiration for its improvement. Basic Education continues to be practised in only a few independent institutions maintained by disciples of the Mahatma. It did not rate more than a brief mention, of obituary flavour, in the **Report**

of the Indian Education Commission which was published four years ago. And the best that most villagers can hope for is that one or two of their children may be able to go to secondary school, and thence make their escape from the grind of village labour and poverty.

Perhaps one is expecting too much, and in too short a time. There are changes for the better, and some of these are likely to have notable effects. In particular, there has been a remarkably wide propagation of the ideal of the planned, limited family. A half-page advertisement in a national daily shows a young father tossing his baby daughter into the air to their mutual delight. "But are you sure you can afford to clothe and care for her adequately if you have another child immediately?" It goes on to recommend a contraceptive device, obtainable at government-subsidised price. That for the urban middle class. For the villager, the ubiquitous posters of the happy Indian family of father, mother and two only healthy smiling children, over a pithy slogan in the vernacular. And, my Indian friends inform me, clinics at the major railway stations where men may have a simple sterilisation operation performed on the way home from work; and samples of contraceptive devices as free gifts inside packets of tea and other household commodities. Five years ago I had felt depressed by the lack of concern for the propagation of birth control even by the devoted development workers, who could nevertheless see that their best achievements were being swallowed up by the uncontrolled increase of population.

Nor should one discount the effect of the extension of political awareness downwards from the middle class. A prime example was offered recently in Andhra Pradesh, the state formed in 1956 of the Telugu-speaking section of the Deccan. This incorporated both the Andhra districts of British India, where a modicum of education and social services had provided an impetus to social betterment, and the Telengana districts of the Nizam of Hyderabad's principedom, where His Exalted Highness' parsimony had denied these services to all except his privileged Muslim ruling class. When the two areas were merged into one state, it was the young men from the Andhra district who had a head start for posts in government services; and now, when these men make decisions about who shall follow them up the promotional ladder, they do not have to yield to the regional nepotism which is rife to see that the educational quality of Andhra applicants is much superior to that of boys from Telengana, and to choose the former.

This became such a glaring injustice that in 1969 secondary schools in the Telegana area went on strike, and stayed out for months. The situation became serious enough to warrant consulta-

tion between the ruling Congress Party in the State and its counterpart at the Centre. Promises of rectification were made, commissions of enquiry set up and boards of reference promised. The body which had been in the organisational leadership of the agitation said that it was less than satisfied with the results, and was accordingly registering itself as a political party to take the fight into the legislature. Many observers who sympathised keenly with the plight of Telengana residents expressed their reservations. The Samithi would now, they assured me, lose the moral strength of its position, and would be most unlikely to win a wide enough support from the electorate, most of whom were in firm fealty to one of the established parties.

The first trial of strength came when a by-election was held in one of the Telangana electorates the week before I left India. The Samithi put up their candidate against representatives of the Ruling Congress and the Communist Party—both thought to stand excellent chances of gaining the seat. The result gave the seat to the Samithi by a substantial absolute majority.

This appreciation of the strength of the power of the ballot augurs well for the health of Indian political life. It has been fashionable in recent years for Western observers to greet every decline of the monolithic power of Congress as a sign of fundamental rot in the body politic. After Nehru went, we were assured, there would be chaos. Yet the transition to Shastri was made with a respect for constitutional proprieties which many Western countries could afford to envy. When Shastri died, warned the soothsayers, then would come the real test. Indira Gandhi assumed leadership after a close political tussle, which clearly reduced her freedom for manoeuvre. But when the would-be king makers tried a palace revolt, they were sent packing.

Still the gloomy comments follow. Mrs. Gandhi cannot hope to survive, with such powerful vested interests as Hindu communalism and private capital and the growing urban middle class against her. I am no political pundit, and I venture no prophecy. But I am inclined to put a fair bit of weight on the comment of the Delhi taxi-driver who one morning pointed out to me that we were passing the Prime Minister's residence:

"Do you think she is a good Prime Minister?"

"Yes, Sir, she is a good leader."

"When I read the newspapers, I find that many people say she just wants power for herself and not for the good of India."

"Yes, Sir, that is said in newspapers. But the newspapers are owned by rich men. And the rich men do not like the Prime Minister. But there are many more poor men in India than rich men."

When one stands back from the immediate scene just sufficiently to take in a span of twenty-five years, India's achievements and failures fall into some perspective. During that time she has assumed responsibility for her own affairs, integrated the vast princely dominions which were not part of British India, and achieved much in bringing their people into the twentieth century. She has embarked on the vast complexities of industrial development, and meantime sought to raise the standard of living of the rural masses. In that time her population has almost doubled. Yet she has continued **without once calling in the colonels**. There are of course all kinds of flaws in the democratic process. Members of political parties change sides according to the price offered them—though it is doubtful if as high a porportion of parliamentarians accept this situation happily as in eighteenth century England. The ruling Congress Party is occasionally tempted to use its power at the centre to support its members in strife in the states. But when it yields to the temptation (as in Uttar Pradesh recently, where President's Rule was imposed without inviting Opposition leaders to try to form an alternative government), there is an outcry through the country (ranging up to an infuriated suggestion from some right-wing politicians that the President should be impeached), and the situation is righted (in this case within days).

As I look around Asian societies with similar problems, I can see only two which have grown out of a colonial inheritance and have succeeded, to a similar degree, in showing that constitutional democracy is not a quaint Western institution of no relevance to the developing world: Singapore and Ceylon.

So, though I cannot blot from my memory the sight of the Calcutta babus, clad in immaculate white, picking their way unseeing through the scum of starving humanity on the streets, I leave India cheered, with much less of the gloomy reservations I have had in my mind on each previous departure.

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## ALMOST COMMITTED

Who can say what it's like anyway? Given the guts and a way of saying I'd sharpen my words to points for pricking all the indifferent arses of the world. I'd crumple poems to corpse-shapes and hang them slant-eyed from suburban lamp-posts labelled: THIS WAS A CHILD. I'd make them bullets to be fired in jungles, bullets to blossom into flags saying PEACE, soft bullets. If I cared enough I'd make my poems petitions and trudge the world for signatures begging FIGHT DEATH. I'd scribble WAR on every strip of lavatory paper in government buildings everywhere, to put it in its proper place. Ah, I could shout them all down if I had the guts . . .

DISREGARD THE ABOVE.

B. A. BREEN

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As I sit in the insulated cocoon of a VC-10 on the way to Tel Aviv, an American matron of the slightly overfed variety is sitting next to me, writing up her diary and therein giving her particular impressions of the Indian scene:

“. . . the bus stopped at a place where they sell handloom silks, and the girls all had a right good time picking and choosing. I bought myself a deep red saree. Then we were in Agra for the night. The next day, Leon and I had a car to ourselves, which was nice. We went to see the Taj. Now that was quite an experience. Then after a good lunch, Leon had a snooze while I caught up on some letters to the folks . . .”

W. G. BUICK

# niugini's "national" library

A thousand working days ago, there were neither books, bodies nor buildings. That was the challenge when I took up the position of Librarian, University of Papua and New Guinea on 1st June, 1966. Since then many people have remarked, in the popular cliché of the times, what a challenging job you have. What is that challenge and how have we met it?

It is easy to point to the 100,000 volumes now on the library shelves, the fine building in Waigani eight miles from Port Moresby itself, the library staff working day and night seven days each week and the high rate of borrowing by students. But these are the end products of four years of planning and responding to situations which are different from those encountered in Australian libraries. Yet, superficially, the library looks like most other libraries—better than some—and most people used to conventional libraries would have little difficulty in adjusting to our minor idiosyncrasies.

The environment is, of course, the first challenge. The tropics are not hospitable towards books. So great was the speed with which the University was got under way (the first Interim Council was not appointed until late 1965 and our first students were being taught in the beginning of 1966) that the library, as everything else, had to suffer a continual series of moves until January 1969 when the first permanent buildings were occupied.

Altogether, the library was housed in eight locations in those early years—the showgrounds, temporary houses, unceiled sheds, lecture rooms, a ward at the hospital—and we suffered from most of the pests of the tropics. It was not uncommon to find wasps-nests and thick coatings of cream, spongy fungus inexorably infiltrating the fibres of our precious books. Now we have one of the most beautiful buildings in Papua and New Guinea. It is fully air-conditioned and, though it lacks paint and other finishes entirely, it is by no means uninviting or unattractive. Indeed, most people,

even hardened readers say that they feel led into it and that was exactly our aim. New Guinean students had, and still have, very little acquaintance with libraries and we wanted them to feel that this library was open and free with no hindrances and prohibitions.

Apart from the very open planning and conscious effort on the part of the staff, the decor of the building helps. The grey, untreated concrete walls are off-set by pure white shelving throughout and peacock green carpet (installed to lessen cleaning costs, dull noise and extend the seating area). We have been lent some magnificently complementary paintings by Georgina Beier and throughout the building there are interesting and beautiful art objects and reproductions from many cultures including New Guinea itself. It is not surprising that we are part of the regular tourist itinerary and, in fact, there is a notice on the door welcoming visitors. All this has its own educative value for never was there a society more innocent of outside culture than that of New Guinea. From this same set of factors stems our practice of lending framed prints to students. Friends have given us these or the funds to buy them and a small collection of fifty or so prints works overtime. One day we would like to see a worthwhile print in every dormitory room but our own funds are far too limited for this to be possible.

During the first six months, the University librarian remained in Canberra in a warehouse lent by the National Library of Australia. There was at that time no place to go in Port Moresby and the time was spent in planning the building, ordering books, soliciting gifts, appointing staff, establishing policies and devising routines.

Policies did have to be decided. It was obvious that the usual routines would, in some cases at least, not be workable in New Guinea. We knew that money would be scarce, that a large part of the staff would be untrained, undereducated local officers, that there would be a bias in teaching towards the problems and needs of developing

countries, particularly New Guinea. We knew that students would enter the university ill-prepared by Australian standards. We also knew that there would be very little in the way of supporting or auxiliary libraries in the Territory and that there was very little in the way of bibliographical and other aids.

Into this environment we moved in January 1967. We brought with us the elements of a staff which met together for the first time in the basement of a car-dealer's premises. We had five enormous crates, each the size of a room, filled with books and periodicals which had been given by well-wishers in Australia. None of us knew really what was ahead of us.

It would be wearisome to recount all that happened from then on. Some things were planned and others were expected. We certainly did not expect to be packing our quickly growing collection of books, records and other library paraphernalia as though we were on a route-march through the wilds of New Guinea and we certainly did not expect the suspicion, even hostility, we met from the community, even, in some quarters, from our own professional colleagues. The university was a new thing, it was absorbing what seemed like vast sums of money, it was going to disturb the even tenor of the locals' ways. The university library quickly showed that it was doing things and, in a gentle way, we did show our disbelief that library service in the community had to be as backward as it was.

We met the shortage of funds by begging and soliciting gifts until all false pride had been exorcised. Learned societies, embassies, graduates' associations, libraries, universities and hundreds of private individuals responded to our pleas and letters. Today, with 100,000 books, the library, despite some unsuitable and redundant material, is twice as big and at least twice as useful as it would otherwise have been had we not had these gifts. It was a shattering experience to be informed by those above the university who exercise power over our budget that we did not need so much money as we had received so many gifts. It should have been unnecessary to have to point out that gifts, however useful, are not often those which one would give first priority to in purchasing nor are they usually selected from the current output of the world's presses. As the library's budget for books is smaller than that of any other Australian university library, the recommendation that it be cut from about \$90,000 to about \$30,000 (the amount we spend on current periodicals) left a very bitter taste.

The university, less concerned with entrance standards than with those of exit, met the low level of secondary schooling by instituting a pre-

liminary year of studies before degree studies proper. To meet this need, the library built into its collection what amounted to a high school library and by placing in a prominent place a special collection of novels and other books which we hoped would extend the reading habit and thus introduce students to some of the books which they would not have encountered but which provide many of the allusions in other books. The collection is not as stuffy as that sounds but covers a range of ancient and modern, from *Alice in Wonderland* to *Portnoy's Complaint*. We hoped, too, that it would help to improve reading speeds which were very low even by Australian standards. This is hardly surprising when it is remembered that students are reading in a foreign language and in a culture which is not their own. The students' task is by no means an easy one.

Literary studies at the university have from the beginning emphasised, for good reason, the literature in English of other developing countries. The worlds of Shakespeare, Miss Austen and Dickens are far removed from our world. The reasons for studying English literature are as valid in Boroko as in Birmingham, but if it is to have much impact, if its relevance is to be appreciated, the models and thoughts of other emerging countries can be expected to be more understandable than those of Barchester.

As a result of this emphasis, our library now has at least as good a collection of the English literature of the newly independent countries of Africa, the West Indies and India as can be found anywhere in Australia. This created a difficulty as none of the library classification schemes in use, including the one we adopted, made any satisfactory provision for what might be called daughter literatures. We had to devise our own. The same thing happened with the schedules for the geographic divisions of Melanesia and the subject headings in the catalogues for New Guinean topics.

Fortunately, English is the language of instruction and usage throughout the campus (though plays in Pidgin indicative of interesting things to come are appearing) and the dreadful night when I dreamed of translating the whole of the library into Pidgin never materialised.

Throughout the university's courses there is, as should be expected, continual reference to New Guinea and the Pacific. To meet the need for documentary material, we established a special New Guinea collection. For printed materials this is now unexcelled by any library anywhere. It includes most of the printed books, pamphlets and journals relating to Papua, the Trust Territory of New Guinea and West Irian and, in addition, it houses much ephemeral material such as an almost complete collection of handbills and leaflets issued

for the 1968 House of Assembly elections, which has already been used by research workers. We were rather late into the field to collect many of the early manuscripts which make the National Library of Australia and the Mitchell Library in Sydney so strong; nevertheless, important series of papers are now accumulating and we have the tremendously important archives of the Anglican and United Churches as well as many private papers and photographs. As funds permit, we are obtaining microfilms of papers in other repositories and already we have in this form copies of almost every university thesis written on a New Guinea topic, a large part of the German archives relating to German New Guinea and various other papers.

Our policy from the beginning has been to regard all forms of documentation as legitimate library material and in the general part of the library slides, pictures, film strips, film loops, wall charts, gramophone records, tape-recordings, motion picture films, maps and manuscripts are on an equal footing with traditional library materials. In the area of New Guinea materials these forms assume considerable significance and our tape-recordings of music, oral history and several hundreds of the 700 indigenous languages are unique and irreplaceable.

After so short a history users of the library are surprised to find that we have a collection of about 6,000 maps. Our collection of West Irian maps is very good indeed as is that of our own part of the island. Almost all of our other maps have come by gift and there is a story, already assuming the status of the apocryphal but with more than a germ of truth, that many of them were obtained by following a truck through London from the War Office to a rubbish dump.

As a by-product of the work in the New Guinea collection and our need to make good the lack of bibliographies in satisfying day to day enquiries we are compiling an annual **New Guinea Bibliography** and a quarterly, with annual cumulations, **New Guinea Periodical Index**. Now that the New Guinea collection has reached a state of relative stability we hope before too long to publish a catalogue of its holdings which, if we augment it with items on our desiderata list, should constitute a retrospective bibliography of New Guinea.

These bibliographies together with other university publications are used to extend our limited budget by a vigorously pursued policy of exchange with other institutions. In this way, we have been able to obtain material from Indonesia and other countries which we would not otherwise have been able to acquire.

In many ways, it will be seen that the university library is discharging some of the functions of a national library. Anyone in the Territory may borrow books from the library and some hundreds of residents do. Many international agencies, e.g. U.N., U.N.E.S.C.O., F.A.O., South Pacific Commission, have declared us a depository library for their publications, but we are not yet a depository library for Territory publications and the Australian government has recently declined to include us among depository libraries for Australian government publications. The general lack of book resources in the Territory has prompted us to establish a union catalogue of the holdings of other libraries and through this facility what resources there are, are made more readily available throughout the country. We are also acting as a clearing centre for duplicate and unwanted books and in this way have been able to place many thousands of books in high schools, teachers' colleges and government department libraries. Joint university and national libraries are not uncommon in unaffluent developing countries—Israel and Kenya are examples—and perhaps one day this will be the pattern to be followed here.

The work is by no means finished. The development of a library school to educate indigenous librarians must come. An Indonesian collection, now not much more than nominal but in some respects significant, must be developed if there is to be real understanding of New Guinea's nearest neighbour. Microfilms of all important records held in other libraries must be obtained. Although interesting things have been done to encourage our students' facility in using the library, more and different approaches need to be developed. Next year the Papuan Medical College will join the faculties of Arts, Science, Law and Education as a Medical faculty and this will involve the incorporation and development of a medical branch library four miles away from the central library. Large amounts of money need to be found for our most serious lack, back runs of periodicals. Many, many more of the important books of world culture, art and literature need to be provided. The absence of avenues for contact with world opinion, culture and science through radio and television makes the use of commercially produced video tape, if it lives up to the promise and the possibilities, exciting and I hope we shall be able to make full use of it. Four years is not long enough to create a major library, but with a co-operative academic body and a sympathetic university administration, we have come a long way since 1966.

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Mr. Buick has been librarian at the University of Papua and New Guinea since its foundation.

MAURICE VINTNER

peter  
gladwin

It is sixteen years since Peter Gladwin's last novel, "The Long Beat Home", was published. There has been silence since. Sixteen years is a long time for a writer to be silent, long enough for his work to be neglected and forgotten. This is a pity when the work is as good as Peter Gladwin's; there are a few enough good Australian novelists, and certainly none to spare. Between the boy at Singleton and the London editor for *The News* (Australia) is a long stretch, and who knows how many novels lie by the wayside?

Rather like Leonard Mann's "A Murder in Sydney" this novel seems to have appeared before the reading public was ready for it. By this I do not mean that there is anything new and startling about its construction and techniques: it is, rather, its attitude to life, its unexpected sophistication, which seem to have limited its appeal. That, and its pervasive pessimism. Peter Gladwin's characters are profoundly pessimistic: not so much in the everyday sense of the word, but rather as stoics, who expect no great good or lasting joy, but make the best of what there is.

The pivot upon which the novel turns is murder. Probably accidental, certainly panic-driven, but murder just the same, with all its destructive and spreading consequences. It is not a detective story, there is nothing hidden from the reader. Peter Gladwin uses this catastrophic event mainly to show how the characters in his novel change and develop under its stresses.

There are elements of coincidence which stretch credibility a little, but given the author's purpose, they seem of small significance. Chris Hamelin, the central figure, works with an advertising agency owned by a complex old character with the unlikely name of Shugmuster, who has a crippled wife, is blackmailed by a tough predatory animal of the local underworld for his association with plump Rosie—whom Chris has also patronised at times. Shugmuster kills the blackmailer,

Blackie Roberts. Ironically, Roberts has seduced Shugmuster's lonely plain daughter at the agency Christmas party, though Shugmuster does not know of this, and neither he nor Roberts know that she is pregnant as a result of that squalid and despairing festive fling.

Shugmuster calls on Chris Hamelin for help in getting rid of the evidence, which is all that the cocky Blackie Roberts has now become. Chris recognises the standover man, whom he has met earlier in the novel. He agrees to help Shugmuster—only because of his crippled and gallant wife—and so the effects of this sordid happening begin to spread. The evidence is disposed of, but then come the doubts. Who might have seen them? The owner of the boatyard where Chris keeps his boats seems to be hinting at a secret. Shugmuster offers Chris a partnership, which he refuses, but then Chris finds that he is allowing himself to be corrupted—using the situation, almost unconsciously, to come in late, treating his work casually, despising Shugmuster.

A secondary story concerns Johnny Peters—who appeared prominently in Gladwin's first novel, "The Desert in the Heart"—who also works in the agency, and who falls in love with lovely Celia, one of the girls there. Like a minor theme, this lyrical and sad little tale, with loss of innocence, the introduction to disillusionment, the infection of self-pity, runs beneath the greater crime and greater corruption like an echo.

Peter Gladwin handles his many characters with skill, letting them grow and change where we can follow, and in a world we can understand. Most are very real people. Oddly enough, the only stock figure, ringing hollow, is the young newspaper man Broglie—as was Lambert, the newspaper man in "The Desert in the Heart". Chris Hamelin reads Montaigne to the lonely sea: "Our good and our ill depend on ourselves alone. Let us make our offerings and vows to ourselves, not

to Fortune . . ." This is what the novel is about, as so many good novels are.

This impression of stoicism is heightened to an extraordinary degree by the character of Chris Hamelin's grandfather, Sailor, who is an uncomplaining, fine old man, with few needs and with the Roman virtues of simplicity, fortitude, courage and honour.

Against this principle of stoicism—expressed with contemporary flippancy as "The chief thing isn't swapping pools but accepting tadpolism"—Gladwin then cuts in as required an extraordinary atmosphere of *dolce vita*. Tired parties, the watchful prowling of the predatory stand-over man, the desperate drinking; the cold-blooded flirting of the beautiful heartless girl with whom Chris Hamelin is in love; the loss of innocence of young Johnny Peters, dreaming his poetry. These are interspersed with scenes on Harbourside and open sea which have a contrasting lyricism and freshness. This

author has an almost poetic capacity to evoke physical things, sounds, fleeting impressions, with a sensuous clearness. The smell of tar and rope, the coldness of water—and beer—the feel of a fresh wind, the rage of a storm. He says more about Sailor, the old one, when he has him bring out onto the breakfast terrace "an egg and a baked apple" than a page of description might do.

A re-reading of this novel after several years—a good test—confirms its worth. It is pessimistic, true, but that is the kind of world we have made for ourselves. Peter Gladwin makes his point clearly; that, whether it be in Rome or London, Paris or New York or Sydney, man makes his own heaven or hell, his own good or evil; the theme is one of the oldest in literature and one of the most universal. The book should be revived if only for the magnificently achieved ending, one of the finest and most moving in the Australian novel.

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## THE PLASTIC-PICKER

Along the street there are no growing things:  
Lamp-posts, traffic lights and parking signs are bare;  
Nothing's growing, nothing yields up anything.

But the brick-tanned hero in the suit  
At the pavement record stand can live off  
Asphalt as a farmer lives off earth. He's happy

Picking records, in cardboard covers glossy as apples,  
Off a metal tree.

KENNETH ELLIS

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# S W A G

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In a country like Australia, with its population scattered around seven capital cities, a number of smaller urban centres, and a vast rural area, communication of ideas is vital. For this reason, if for no other, the Post Office should be operated as a public service for the good of the nation, not as a business enterprise making a profit from its immediate users.

Every change made in postal rates, however, acts in the opposite direction. The increases in basic postal charges in the last two years are only a fraction of the total increase which has been brought about by changing categories and conditions for mailing.

Big businesses and publications can pass these increases on to their customers, thus adding to the inflation about which the government professes such concern. However, small magazines like **Overland** are doubly affected. We have to pay increased costs to prepare our postings to meet Post Office requirements, and we have to pay increased postage on each issue.

Postal charges have been raised in a number of devious ways. Where once there was a single charge for the total weight of a bulk mailing, there is now a rate per item. This rate was once reduced after the first ounce, but now there is a flat rate. Overseas charges have increased out of all proportion.

Meanwhile, it is reported that a new telephone which will enable busy business men to get their number by push-button instead of by dialling, and which costs five times as much as the ordinary phone, will be available for only a "nominal" extra charge.

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In England, Lord Longford and his mates are stepping up their campaign against the permissive society. The fury of their remarks would suggest that they have been stirred by the pornography they have collected, even if the rest of the populace has remained unaffected. Certainly, the offer of a whip to Lord Longford during a Copenhagen "live-show" should work wonders for the Danish tourist industry, even if the other members of the British party came back with reports that the Danes themselves were far more excited by the titled tourist than by the shows he was visiting.

The critics of pornography do have a valid argument when they claim that literature or theatre which portrays sex as purely mechanical is de-

basing. The question of whether any particular portrayal of sex is purely debasing is, however, one for criticism rather than law. It is not a matter of fact but of opinion, and nothing could be less adequate to its examination than a court of law. In the trials of "Portnoy's Complaint" the only real obscenity established was the lip-smacking lasciviousness with which one prosecutor read out the passage which he considered filthy.

The real protection against the effects of pornography, or any other bad art, is an educated community and high critical standards. In these circumstances, poor art, from the crudities of the girlie magazines and some student publications to the sentimentality of the "Women's Weekly", will be laughed to shame by most of the community, while still being available as a release for those who need it to compensate for deficiencies in their emotional lives.

In Australia today, however, the problem is not too much permissiveness but too much protection. With our obsession with cleanliness we would still seem to be in a national anal-erotic stage. A good dose of filth might help to break down the walls of our insularity and help us live in the world as it is.

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Among the new publications to come to hand recently is "The Australasian Dance", from Mount Green Publishing Company, 61 Willoughby Road, Crow's Nest, N.S.W., 80 cents an issue. Dance, in the form of ballet, and opera have been the most successful arts in Australia in obtaining public money, but they have received little critical and intellectual attention. This magazine, with an interest in folk and national, ballroom, ethnic, tap, jazz and modern as well as ballet dancing, promises to redress the balance. It may even help to restore ballet as a serious art form instead of it being treated as a glamorous diversion for the rich.

Meanwhile, among the older publications, "Wildlife in Australia", published by the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (Judith Wright, president, Vincent Serventy, editor, Box 2030, G.P.O., Brisbane—45 cents an issue), continues to do battle in the cause of conservation and remind us of the natural heritage we are putting in jeopardy by our indifference.

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With our next issue, **OVERLAND** celebrates its half-century. To mark the occasion, we have commissioned a number of distinguished Australian writers, both older and younger, to provide special material, and we have applied to the Commonwealth Literary Fund for assistance to publish an enlarged issue. At present we have had no reply to our request, but we shall certainly publish the special material.

—J.M.

BERNARD RECHTER

# the melbourne film festival 1971

The annual Melbourne film festival is now long over, its demise followed by an almost unanimous acclaim from the media as "the best ever". What that over-worked phrase actually means is a moot point. I have a much-festivalled friend who judges the films by the proportion of running time he spends asleep. His verdict was that he slept through most of the pre-interval shorts he attended, but that the major screenings, including those at intermediate and day-time sessions, were singularly free of the need for such relief.

It was certainly a more interesting festival than many I can remember and the argument about whether it was the "best" is better left to the metaphysicians and critics. Despite the programme's proud announcement of the festival's "Distinguished Patronage" by Major-General Sir Rohan Delacombe, there was a notable absence of the State's vice-regal and political officialdom. Even the pomp and speeches at the two openings were brief and in one case (Bruce Grant) pointed. The introduction of the guest of honour who arrived (Jerzy Skolimowski) took almost as little time as the apology for the one who didn't (Akira Kurosawa).

A familiar short on Melbourne's National Gallery made for a homely opening; then disaster struck in the form of a short film showing the destruction of wildlife as a marsh is drained in the name, presumably, of progress. The film's glowing evocation of the incineration of the marsh's inhabitants left a nasty taste in the mouth. It was a portent, in that throughout the festival, the shorts—once a most attractive and exciting feature of the festival—turned out this year's great disappointment.

The major feature films were indeed an exhilarating lot. After the peripheral nature of many of the 1970 offerings one felt that this year we were nearer to the centre of things cinematic—a feeling supported by the fact that many of the

films are scheduled for commercial release. (Indeed several have already been screened in Melbourne, notably at the Dendy Theatre.)

Perhaps I might be allowed a few quibbles before commenting on some of the finer offerings. The programming was on several occasions quite beyond comprehension. Several of the most interesting films, and, more importantly films which could have been predicted to be so, were allotted an intermediate (5 p.m.) showing—a time not readily accessible to those with a steady job. Watkins' "Punishment Park" and Fellini's "The Clowns" are two films which received this treatment. My annoyance is of course due to the fact that I missed both, only to be regaled for the remainder of the festival with reports of their outstanding merits. While yielding to few in my devotion to Kurosawa, it is hard to understand why some of the master's early films were not screened at 5 p.m. allowing the Watkins and Fellini berths on a Saturday and the Queen's Birthday.

It is understandable that the programming must be a consensus based on conflicting interests and assessments, but I have yet to hear a rational argument in support of the 1971 arrangements.

The poor quality of many of the shorts has already been referred to. Both the shorts and the programming bring to mind the supper-time murmurings of a "coterie" even narrower than the festival committee which makes the decisions. Eager as one might be to reject such unfair suggestions, the fact remains that someone must have chosen the "Cry of the Marsh" for the opening night and someone must have approved.

While the opening nights were free of the usual petulant admonishings of the audience (remember some who were so ill-mannered as to hiss the State's Chief Secretary?), the record was spoilt when we were roundly ticked off for hissing the award of an honourable mention to a film on boxing (It's All in the Game, I'n it?). This film won

several prizes overseas (the halo effect at work?) but many of those who saw it in Melbourne commented on it adversely as a film. We were told however that "one shouldn't pan a film because one doesn't like its subject matter". Well, for that matter, I didn't like "Joe" either, but I clapped. I have no doubt that the festival's very experienced audience can make the same subtle distinctions as its director and should be given the benefit of the doubt. If it hisses a film, it hisses the film, not the subject.

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"Ramparts of Clay", a Franco/Algerian production directed by Jean-Louis Bertuccelli, a film of great integrity and simplicity, remains for me one of the highlights of a memorable festival. Its slow, almost imperceptible development, parallels and mirrors the growing consciousness of the people it depicts. We see a Tunisian village, with its one water well, wakened to life and work by the call of the muezzin. The work is breaking stones for a city building contractor. There is a dispute over wages, the men cluster together and stop work. Soldiers arrive and circle the small band of strikers, and a battle of attrition begins—nothing happens as the soldiers stand guard and the men sit, huddling together at night for a little shelter and warmth.

The women of the village appear on the clay parapets, wailing and chanting hypnotically—an eastern Greek chorus. An animal is slain and its blood passed round to cement a bond. There is almost no dialogue and hardly a sound as the tension tightens. One young girl (the only professional in the cast) is undergoing her own unique process of development; she is, one feels, on the verge of some understanding of the forces which drive her and her compatriots. She steals the rope tethering the bucket in the well—very truly the village's lifeline.

The soldiers hunt for the rope in the warren of village rooms, but find nothing. The siege ends with one villager dead (how?) and the soldiers mount their rickety trucks and depart. For an ironic final twist, the girl Rina is cast out by the villagers. The last eloquent shot is of Rina—a vanishing speck in an endless baked and parched desert.

This film has caught a tiny fragment of humanity at a turning in its history and it is of such turning points that history is as surely made as of the vaster revolutions which are so much more often the subjects of films.

The festival organisers and particularly those who choose the films to be shown must be congratulated for the breadth of topics and treatments which they make available to us every June. One is reminded of the analysis of "This Day Tonight"

earlier this year by a social scientist from Sydney purporting to prove its left-liberal bias and partiality. The tool used was "content analysis". Thankfully no such measuring stick is used to dissect the film festival offerings. Where are the films from the Pentagon showing its side of the Vietnam war? Where are the films depicting happy natives and contented imperialists?

Overall the festival leaves one with a sense of compassion for the ills and sufferings mankind is heir to—a reminder that for many people the world is a place of hunger and strife and a battle for survival. Perhaps it is in the nature of the medium, but certainly there is no attempt at white-wash and no feeling of complacency as the films explore both private and public torment.

"Dodes'ka-Den", Kurosawa's first essay in colour, is a case in point. This major film from Japan is not a mirror of its recent economic miracle and growing strength; it is concerned rather with the detritus of society. A peripheral encampment close to a large city holds an assortment of untouchables—the kind that any dynamic society spits out as it grinds on to greater heights of productivity and plastic comfort.

What Kurosawa has done is to sketch out and draw together a series of relatively unrelated biographies. There is a mentally retarded boy who spends his days acting out a role as the conductor-driver of an imaginary tram (the name of the film echoes the noise of the tram in motion). There are two drunken couples swapping wives and booze; there is a small haunted boy fossicking in the city's kitchens for himself and his father. These last two live in an old motor car and dream of a mansion the father will build. There are many more in this episodic "lower depths" film, the total effect of which is to leave one with a feeling of the indestructibility of the human species under even the most unlikely circumstances.

Kurosawa's genius is to make one care and wonder. The brush maker whose wife is continually pregnant by men other than himself is shown with his/her children, comforting them against the sallies of their neighbours with love and devotion. Briefly noted, the plot sounds like the epitome of the Romance novel; the film works because the director never allows it to spread into sentimentality. It is a film of feeling not of wet handkerchiefs. "Dodes'ka-Den" lacks the intensity of the exploration of one human fate which we saw in *Living*, it lacks the drama and violence of the *Seven Samurai* and *Toshiro Mifune* is nowhere in sight. What emerges and is evident when one sees the early Kurosawas is a passion for the detailed and precise observation of human beings almost as if they were under the lens of a microscope.

Two old men in the prison yard,  
One eye between the pair of them,  
Coughing coffee-coloured phelgm.

I write this down because it's true.

At twelve that abo called the screw.  
"Wait till the bloody morning," he said.  
"Shut your black mouth or you're on a charge."  
By twelve next day the prisoner was dead.

Truth is not Eternal, Universal, One.  
It all depends what side of the bars you're on.

BRIAN MEDLIN

Jorn Donner's "Anna" has the ubiquitous Harriet Anderson playing the name part—a lonely divorced doctor facing the fact that she cannot re-make her life as she wills it—her life with a momentum of its own takes directions which she neither wills nor controls. Her lover wants a wife, not a woman with a career, and she cannot comply. Donner cruelly juxtaposes a young unconcerned couple (the nursemaid for the doctor's young daughter and the son of a neighbour on the island where they are all on holiday) whose approach to living is no longer possible for Anna. This film is not a round, complete work. It is rather a short sketch of an unhappy woman trying to come to terms with herself. The acting is exactly right, the direction quite unobtrusive and its point very effectively made.

"The Conformist", Bernardo Bertolucci's revised version of the Moravia novel of the same name, invites comparison with Luchino Visconti's "The Damned"—both dealing with the corrupt centre of fascist societies. Bertolucci, a strayed and damned ex-disciple of Godard, was represented at a previous festival by "Before the Revolution", made at the age of 22. The promise of that earlier film is more than fulfilled, and comparisons with Visconti turn out to be quite inappropriate. Visconti's film explored some of the political and social aspects of the rise of Nazism in Germany. His protagonists are central to that rise—and their psychological quirks are symbolic of the fascism he is condemning.

"The Conformist" is a far subtler essay, and its protagonist is a minor cog in the fascist scheme of things. His psychology is, however, the central interest. This is a portrait in depth of a man with a need, a passion indeed, to conform and who serves the fascist state because in that way alone can this passion be assuaged. The director's feel-

ing for the period is uncanny—one becomes immersed in Mussolini territory and time. This is not so much a matter of clothes and cars and physical appurtenances, but rather a function of the way people talk and move and gesture. The photography by Vittorio Storrario heightens the total immersion effect.

I have never seen Jean Louis Trintignant (star of "My Night with Maud") in a positive role, one demanding a definiteness in portrayal from him. In "The Conformist" he is again a man more acted upon than acting—pressures engulf him and push him inevitably to a preordained end. The women in his life, however (his wife and the wife of the anti-fascist professor whom he is assigned to kill), are superbly played by Stefania Sandrelli and Dominique Sanda. The performance by Dominique Sanda was a particularly striking contrast to her role as the heroine in Brewson's "Une Femme Douce" seen earlier at the festival.

"Joe", the film chosen for general viewing to close the festival, concentrated once again on the clash of generations and added one more to the increasing list of sagas on the American Outsider.

Joe, a "hard-hat" foul-mouthed loud-mouth obsessed by the menace of hippies and commies, links up with a rich business executive who has in a rage killed his daughter's drug-addicted drug-peddling lover. The daughter and her boy friend are painted in dull dark colours and Joe is given all the best lines. Throughout its running time, the film equivocates, rushing headlong to an over-melodramatic denouement in which Joe finally goes beserk, killing a commune full of young people, some of whom robbed him in the course of a meandering orgy. Presumably the message intended at the end is one of sympathy for the young, but if it is, after what has gone before, one is not convinced.

The script is crisp and engaging: Joe with a bland open unmurderous face is a guy you can like despite his John Birch opinions. As a symptom of the violence at the centre of the American generation gap it is excellent but it offers little illumination for anyone trying to come to terms with what is happening in this war.

The festival's guests, Jerzy Skolimowski and Jorn Donner, contributed their mite in public and no doubt in private. Donner, for one, let off a blast at the pusillanimity of the organisers in their relationship with the censoring authority, going so far as to claim (as reported in "The Australian") that the film he would have preferred to be represented by at the festival, "Portraits of Women", was not accepted because the festival directors (Sydney and Melbourne) did not want to risk a knock back from Mr. Chipp.

The Director of the Sydney festival countered with the claim that "Anna" was selected because it was the better film. One might well ask why not **both** films, particularly in view of Mr. Donner's own preference for "Portraits of Women". And more particularly in view of the fact that unless "Portraits of Women" gets a festival guernsey those interested in Donner's work will almost certainly not have a chance to see this film. It's hard to know whom to believe, but the whole episode could do with a little more public airing. It's an interesting point as to what rights film festival patrons have anyway. Donner was quoted in "The Australian" as saying "The director of the Melbourne festival, Mr. Rado, showed the film secretly to Mr. Chipp just to get his opinion. Mr. Chipp should not be deciding the fate of a film." Poor, naive Mr. Donner.

Jerzy Skolimowski impressed by the brevity of his words at the opening and by the terseness of his message in "Deep End". The fragility and earnestness of a boy's sexual awakening is contrasted with an older girl's playfulness. For her his intense involvement is simply a welcome diversion in a too-long day. For the boy, his interest becomes an obsession which in the end results in tragedy. I felt a lack of meshing between the growing love of the boy and the final "ex cathedra" death of the girl in the pool; it was almost as if there were two films here each trying to surface separately. The seedy swimming pool and equally seedy bathers, the sad customers, blustering and eager, are beautifully drawn. There is also a nasty vignette by a spreading Diana Dors.

Pier Paolo Pasolini's "Teorema"—a sermon blending Freud and Marx—needs more than one viewing to absorb. Despite the programme notes (incidentally often quite misleading, sometimes ludicrously so) this is not an essay in erotica—far from it. Here is a cry of anguish at the wilder-

ness in which industrial man finds himself. Solutions are clutched at, but none offers any satisfaction. Pasolini is apparently dramatising a facet of his own groping towards a philosophy by which to live and he sees no easy solutions to hand. The film is obscure—where does the young man who creates so much havoc come from? Who is he? Is he Jesus? What exactly are we to make of the maid levitating like a suspended puppet? A puzzle it remains, but irritating and asking for another look.

The Czechoslovak/Italian triptych "The Deserter and the Nomads" hits out at man-the-destroyer. A vague connecting link runs through the three richly embroidered episodes. The world of Bohemia during two world wars is not like ours and we need to make a shift in our perceptions to respond to a culture so different from our own—bizarre, violent and bloody.

The young director has taken a very large canvas and the sheer amount of material is occasionally overwhelming—episode piled quickly upon episode until the mind reels. It is as if Jakubisko has been terrified to leave anything of interest out. His is a talent to watch when he brings it under some control. Unfortunately the new Czechoslovakia might not be the ideal place for such a talent—controlled or otherwise.

A number of the festival's best films have been commercially released, and for those who missed "Kes", it's worth making a very big effort to catch it. One can only make brief reference to other impressive films—"Love Film" is a nostalgic look—again at childhood by a young Hungarian director; overlong, often tedious, it is nevertheless charming and honest particularly in the scenes when the protagonist and his girl friend relive their early 1956 childhood.

"Tristana" is Bunuel mellow—masterly in technique, yet lacking the sting one has come to expect. It is no doubt allegorical, but more in sorrow than in anger. Why has there not yet been a release in Australia of "Viridiana"?

"Metello" offers a sympathetic look at the rise of socialistic and trade union ideas in industrial Italy. Taken from a novel by socialist author Vasco Pratolini, this film aims not to startle, not to surprise, not even to excite. It is filmed as social narrative—faithful in detail, moving and with its heart in the right place. As a friend unkindly put it—"social realism with a touch of sex".

As one glances at the program of the features shown at main screenings, not one real failure is evident. "Harry Munter" and "Love Film" were subject to a great deal of criticism, but I suspect the former suffered by being near the end of a very full, rich menu. Come to think of it, best ever or not, it **was** a damned good festival.

# BOOKS

## NIUGINI TOK TOK

T. BARNETT

Peter Hastings: "New Guinea: Problems and Prospects" (Cheshire, \$4.95, \$3.50 p/b.).  
Albert Maori Kiki: "Ten Thousand Years in a Lifetime" (Cheshire, \$3.50).  
Robin Smith and Keith Willey: "New Guinea" (Lansdowne, \$8.95).  
Maslyn Williams: "In One Lifetime" (Cheshire, \$4.95).

Peter Hastings has written a very readable and well researched book on Papua and New Guinea. After completing the inevitable "brief history" he examines the Territory economy and though he reviews the background to present policy with some sympathy, it becomes clear that, as an interested outsider, he is appalled by the potential political consequences. In an effort to stimulate large scale economic activities the present lending and investment policies must favour the expatriate entrepreneurs, thus dangerously widening the gap between them and the struggling indigenous farmers. From this point on Mr. Hastings conveys the sense of urgency and the imminence of independence as time runs out for the Australian colonial government. Is the new nation to remain economically dependent on Australian-run banks, plantations and businesses while political power is held by a small and probably corrupt local elite?

Mr. Hastings knows the Australians, the old "befores", the young educated, the artisans and, journalistically, all their wives. He presents them with sympathy and understanding and his description of their reactions to the native population and the latter's reaction to them is quite masterly. He captures the anger and frustration of the old timers who realise they have made no impression on apparently unmotivated and conservative peasants. As he says, it is the anger of unrewarded effort. It makes a man arid and bitter and this attitude reduces his Papuan employees or acquaintances to nervous inefficiency in his presence or to sullen hatred. After each encounter the expatriate, further confirmed in his opinion, goes to the club to gain support from his cronies. The book does not sufficiently emphasise the new relationships between tertiary students of the same age, intelligence and academic background. This is an important new development, as although these young future leaders often carry bitter "racial scars" their new inter-racial friendships must help them to see the actions of older uglier Australians in more balanced perspective. Today young students of all races are thrown out of pubs together for not ensuring that their dress is "neat and tidy", as required by one notice. They sometimes share the same girl friends and other interests.

I doubt if Mr. Hastings succeeds quite so well in drawing an accurate picture of the native population, but it is a thoughtful attempt, possibly the best possible from an Australian writer.

Cargo cults are topical at the moment. Currently a potentially dangerous cult in the Sepik involves at least one member of the House of Assembly who appeared to think, perhaps without justification, that he could convert other members by producing magically created money in the Chamber. After reviewing similar movements in Indonesia, Mr. Hastings suggests that there may be a widespread underlying predisposition to seek remedies for perceived deprivations by chiliastic means, that this approach is essentially revolutionary rather than remedial and may have implications for the politics of the future. Quoting an Indonesian authority he says that such a view of life in Java led towards "paternalistic authoritarianism, the inclination to seek employment in the civil service, the pre-occupation with prestige and status rather than function and performance, the unquestioning obedience of authority, the almost exclusive concentration of politics in the capital and the emphasis on strengthening the national will through indoctrination and revolutionary fervour rather than solving the practical problems".

Rather than comment on those thoughts, I prefer to relate a story of a very recent, small and friendly cargo cult from the Western Highlands where for once the cargo arrived. For some weeks the men of the hamlet had been sleeping on the road at night as they had concluded that the shiny new cars which periodically appeared in the Mt. Hagen Show Rooms must surely be driven there by their dead ancestors. The Australians must be waylaying the cars and diverting them from their intended destination. Wearily returning late at night from another unsuccessful attempt to contact the ancestral drivers on the highway, they discovered a brand new car just beside the village. The car had been stolen by two Mt. Hagen youths, but it had run out of petrol during their joy-ride. The two boys were in the act of pushing the car off the road to conceal it in the track to the village cemetery. Frightened by the new arrivals, the boys ran off in the moonlight. To the delight of the men their car had come and they even glimpsed two ancestors running back to the cemetery. Once they had pushed the car into the village it took the police two weeks to persuade them that it belonged to the manager of the local cinema, and meanwhile pilgrims were coming from afar to see the magic car.

My justifications for padding this review with such a story is primarily because I like it, but also because it confirms another of Mr. Hastings' prophecies regarding the danger of educating too many

school children over and above the country's capacity to employ them. It is only now that we are becoming fully aware that a substantial social problem has been created by basing the education system on Australian models rather than by training children in skills suited for rural occupations. The two car thieves were part of a growing army of young delinquents in Hagen and other centres. Instead of training them in ways which would help their elders to earn cash to buy cars and in the skills needed to repair them, we have merely encouraged their aspirations to drive cars. Seventy per cent. of children have their education summarily stopped on completion of Primary School when, even if there were jobs, they are legally too young to be employed. Known as "drop-outs", increasing numbers of these children are finding trouble in the towns. A liberal minded Director of Education is now causing his department's basic policies to be re-thought, encouraging more emphasis for technical education. For the drop-outs, however, reformatories are being planned. Mr. Hastings would see the whole problem as just another instance of the general assumption behind Australian policies; that the local inhabitants should be trained to become "Brown Australians". He regrets that few opportunities have been created to allow them to adapt to new circumstances in their own way.

The description of political development in the Territory is inevitably out of date as much has happened in the two years since publication. Recent events largely support Mr. Hastings' early analysis however. There is no greater reason now, than when he wrote, to believe that the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy is successfully taking root. There is still reason to think that if the Australian government does not do it first, the independent government will have to modify it after Independence. His suggestions for a modified presidential system seem sound and have long been discussed by educated politicians, though I recall the day in 1965 when the present Pangu Pati leaders, as students at the Administrative College, had to ask whether it was permitted to discuss Independence at all. What Mr. Hastings did not foresee perhaps was that a potentially powerful alliance between conservative Highland members and expatriate business interests would form the United Party, accept executive positions and loom large as likely contenders for effective power after the next elections.

Mr. Hastings' rather agonised predictions of separatist movements have also dramatically been confirmed in recent months by the political eruptions on the Gazelle Peninsula involving the Mataungan Association and its refusal to recognise the legitimacy of the central government. This

## 2 New Guinea titles

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does not seem to have developed as yet into a strong movement for secession by the New Guinea Islands as a whole. Hastings suggests that such a grouping might prove a viable state and that perhaps the Australian government should encourage its formation now to avoid trouble later. The Mataungans' movement involves only part of the island of New Britain. More serious signs of separatism have appeared at recent meetings of the present House of Assembly which have exploded in angry outbursts between Papuans and mainland New Guineans. These culminated in a demand for some form of plebiscite to determine whether Papua should develop separately from New Guinea. Mr. Hastings may need to write a supplement at about this stage.

The sections on West Irian and the "sell-out" to Indonesia are most informative, showing the Australian government to be surprisingly meek when not supported by her powerful friends. Australia's failure to even speak out against Indonesia's take-over of West Irian is convincingly shown as being in her own and West Irian's long term best interests. But her dramatic silence then and during the subsequent Act of Free Choice was noted in the Territory's House of Assembly and Territory institutions where it was attributed variously as perfidy, cynical pragmatism or impotence. The "Big-Papa bilong ol" image crashed.

Having scathingly attacked Mr. Barnes and his department for failing to come out clearly in favour of Independence, Hastings puts the Seventh State notion to rest for all time and urges speedy Independence. He is presumably now aware of the cataclysmic effect of Mr. Whitlam's "1972 deadline" speech which has finally convinced die-hards in the Territory that it really will happen. Even in Canberra the imminent demise of their own Department appears to have finally brought home to the public servants something of the sense of urgency long felt by others closer to the scene.

Independence will happen and there will be no one but the existing native elite to run the country. There is an almost indecent haste to create new laws and new institutions, and to train men to fill them. If the sense of urgency is now appreciated, can we hope there will be less insistence on reproducing Australian models and Australian standards and a greater willingness to allow the natives to do their own thing?

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Mr. Kiki has been doing his own thing for years and this is apparent in his autobiography "Kiki: Ten Thousand Years in a Lifetime". Brought up in two tribal groups, a primitive hunting and gathering mountain group and a more sophisticated coastal tribe, he absorbed and has retained many of the cultural values of both. Dragged protesting vigorously into an inadequate education system after the war, he attained a sufficient knowledge of English to attain a job with the white man on about the lowest possible rung for the "educated" —teaboy for a kiap. A few years earlier he could have hoped to eventually attain the position of clerical assistant but nothing higher, or he could have branched out into field work as an interpreter or medical assistant (which he did for a time). The offices in Konedobu and other centres are still lulled by the shuffling bare feet of grown, sometimes aged, men who were lured into this backwater of assisting the white man: removing his tea cup, disturbing his papers, delivering let-

ters and, after twenty years, perhaps trusted to enter up the inwards and outwards mail register.

Being remarkably inefficient, servile and unmotivated, this army of shufflers is shouted at by the impatient and overhung, and ignored by their more tolerant superiors during office hours. After work, at exactly six minutes past four, they straighten their backs, cease shuffling, cease smiling and get about the serious business of life. They become powerful deacons of their church, presidents of co-operative societies, savings and loans societies, members of clubs, trade unions and welfare societies. They address public meetings or perhaps they go fishing, not just to supplement their meagre pay, but because fishing is "men's work". A determined minority fought the system in an endeavour to find fulfillment somehow in the public service. They saw education as the magic key and for years and years and years they attended classes after work. They attempted course after course with little idea where they were going: English and Mathematics by rote learning in dismal surroundings. Afterwards some did not know what grade they achieved and it didn't matter much anyway, because their English remained appalling and even in the unlikely event of there being promotion opportunities, their achieved grades were probably never noted on their files. The handful of men who survived this process to attain responsible middle level jobs must be numbered amongst the truly great.

Mr. Kiki avoided this fate because he was lucky in two ways. He met a sympathetic white man, Albert Speer, who is still around and still sympathetic, and he was one of the first to benefit from the government's slowly awakening policy of training an elite to manage the country. There being no suitable institutions in Papua-New Guinea at the time, he was sent to Suva where he failed medicine but learned about trade unions and self-help and mixed with dependent peoples who discussed the possibility of Independence. He gained a qualification in pathology and returned to his own country resentful of being treated as a "Boi". He learned to reject and to resist. He says he learned to hate too but I doubt that, or if it is true it was hatred of particular attitudes, of particular people even, but selective, not blind hatred of everything white.

With a growing sense of vision he worked first for his own people, the Keremas, and then for workers and now for "the people". He took further advantage of the now more liberal opportunities for training being provided by the Administration he was beginning to oppose. He joined the first stage course at the new Administrative College. That course was intended to salvage the shufflers. To reach down to the few older men of ability who had continued to strive, and to help them up over the education barrier into the second division of the Public Service, where responsibility and fulfillment awaited them. Those that attended those classes were the cream of the old brigade, men in their thirties and forties who realised that at last they were to be given a go. While they studied for their Junior Certificate they mixed with the new men, the young graduates from the greatly improved secondary schools who were studying for the equivalent of the Victorian Leaving Certificate. The lecturers included a few prominent public servants but mainly younger contract officers and one old ex-missionary with a young mind, Cecil Abel.

Nobody at the College had any doubt that the future leaders of Papua-New Guinea were there cramming themselves with knowledge and skills to run their country. The mixture of the best of the older, experienced local public servants and the younger, well educated twenty year olds was dynamic. Kiki spent two years there working hard to absorb new concepts of law, government and sociology and continuing his long struggle with the English language. It was here that the Pangu Pati was planned and that racial discrimination in Public Service wage scales was fought. The future magistrates, administrators and politicians met and interacted in these years—Kiki, Kaputin, Tomot, Rumet, Langro, Nombri, Somare and all. Those who stayed on in the Public Service have come back for successive courses after further field experience and are now receiving rapid promotion, at least in the Departments whose heads have observed the new facts of political life.

On leaving the College, however, Kiki, Kaputin and some others found there were still clogs in the machinery. Their newly-found sense of national purpose and ambition came solidly up against a wall of apathy, even hostility from some of their superiors. Explosions followed. Kiki was charged with disobedience, he felt he was shelved and sought transfer to work with the Hahalis society on Buka. Finally he resigned from the Administration to devote himself to politics and trade unions. Kaputin, Rumet and Tomot left the service and were soon famous as the Mataungan leaders. Others remained in and are waiting to fill the top Administrative positions and will themselves no doubt be faced with the "Mataungan problem".

It was a major piece of good fortune that Ulli Beier and Kiki should have met and entered into the literary partnership that produced this book. It remains Kiki's book for it is definitely his story as he tells it, and he is a marvellous story teller. With Ulli Beier's unobtrusive editing and slight restructuring, it becomes a literary work and a pleasure to read. In the latter part of the book, Mr. Kiki is naturally drawn into the fray of contemporary struggles and the balanced over-view is sometimes smothered in details of minor importance, his current resentments and attempts at self-justification show. So what? If you want to know Albert Maori Kiki there he is, as he is.

The earlier chapters dealing with his life in the villages of his childhood are truly beautiful and the major achievement of the book is that it allows the reader to perceive the blending of the two cultures that have supported Maori Kiki. We see and marvel at the source of his sense of humour, tolerance and vision.

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Robin Smith and Keith Willey have produced a large coffee table photograph album. It is for the city dweller who wants to dream of far away places where the Australian myth of fairness and endurance is being perpetuated by outdoor Aussies.

There are some magnificent pictures mostly of the naked painted savage or broad mountain vista type. The pictures are not placed in any noticeable order and bear little relationship to the text. They should be studied with care and enjoyed because they are technically excellent reproductions of the scenes, faces and breasts at which the camera aimed. The overall impression is, of course, thrown out of balance by the scenes at which the

camera was not aimed. Mr. Smith was not seeking to portray a social survey of Papua-New Guinea but to capture scenes which, though still common, are disappearing. He captured them well.

The text by Mr. Willey is best ignored completely. Where he did his research is not stated, but he has produced a parody of bar room and club house tales heard with deadening repetition throughout expatriate New Guinea. Many subjects are sketched, none with depth or perception. As an illustration of his style Sir William MacGregor, who could perhaps claim to be one of the great colonial governors and who, during his ten years rule, set the pattern of future development for the next 50 years, is disposed of in the following single sentence:

The first Administrator of British New Guinea was Sir William MacGregor, who climbed Mt. Victoria, the 13,150 peak in the Owen Stanley Ranges; and led an expedition to the Fly River where he personally shot the chief of the Tugeri headhunters.

The reader is recommended to read the early part of Mr. Kiki's book when looking at Smith's photographs of the naked and painted and to read Mr. Hastings' text on race relations when looking at the pictures of men with white skin or European dress.

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Maslyn Williams has also produced a coffee table picture book on New Guinea, but how very different. Looking at the photographs that Mr. Williams presents it is hard to believe that they were photographed in the same country as Robin Smith's. And that of course is the point. Mr. Williams' New Guinea is a different place because he has sought and found humans—the people who live there. His text too does far more than merely fill the space between the pictures. He writes a sensitive but brief description of the life and background of six people and their families. The book is the text, filled out and balanced by excellent photographic portrait studies and background and atmosphere pictures. This book is a masterpiece in its way.

Mr. Williams chose a narrow scope to examine in depth "to show how a number of Papua and New Guinea families and individuals, making use of opportunity, have achieved for themselves new knowledge, dignity and skills which have allowed them to contribute to the general advancement of their people." He is not concerned to criticise or pass judgment on the colonial government but makes it quite clear that he realises that the extent to which his chosen subjects have been able to advance has been "limited by the flexibility of the cultural framework within which they have lived, and the opportunities and facilities that have been available". Without further comment he examines each family: an Administration clerk and his wife, a Tolai cocoa planter, a nurse, a pastor, a graduate agricultural officer, and a Highlands politician. Each is a success story.

Granted Mr. Williams' right to avoid political criticism, for me the validity of the pictures he draws is seriously damaged by his silence on all matters of political controversy. By failing to mention for instance the inter-race hostility his subjects have overcome, he does them less than justice. It is indeed remarkable for Mr. Keredo, his first subject, to have achieved the position

of station clerk under the old system, but it is hard to evaluate that achievement without knowing of the humiliations he suffered in the process. It is perhaps significant that it was his wife, free of direct supervision by white superiors, who started the schools and organisations and was awarded the M.B.E. It was an achievement for them both to have gained acceptance for themselves amongst the local Kokoda mountain people, but they have also produced children who are eminently acceptable to the Australians, two of whom studied at the Administrative College and are now, on the surface at least, hardly distinguishable from Australians.

The contrast between this book and those of Kiki and Hastings is that Mr. Williams has not tried to show us what those children think or what are the personal views even of their parents. Maslyn Williams is a man of religious conviction who seeks and finds the best in his fellow men. He also, rightly, admires the achievements of the Australian administration of Papua-New Guinea as he perceives them. It may be that he shares the underlying assumption, criticised by Mr. Hastings, that the aim should be the production of brown, though possibly more Christian, Australians. Certainly the people he has chosen as representatives of achievement are all examples of those who have followed the government and mission line with admirable perseverance. It is regrettable that the book will consequently look like government and mission propaganda to some. This it is not. These are real people sensitively portrayed.

## MEN AND BIRDS

CHESTER EAGLE

Donald Horne: "But What If There Are No Pelicans?" (Angus & Robertson, \$4.25).

John Gilders: "Man Alone" (Australasian Book Society, \$5.00).

Donald Horne has always been very prolific of ideas. *The Lucky Country* was full of them, so much so that it seemed as if he enjoyed setting them loose for other people to chase. And in *The Education of Young Donald* he described himself in his university years; glib, quick-thinking, often superficial, highly astute, perhaps something of an intellectual opportunist.

The thinking behind this book is far more mature. His commitment is greater, and he is genuinely concerned with one problem, though he opens out many of its ramifications. The problem is posed in the lines from which the book takes its title:

It has been said that a great statesman must be a lion in boldness, a fox in cunning, and a pelican in selflessness and wisdom. But what if there are no pelicans, only lions and foxes—and eagles, vultures, snakes, mice, bears and rats?

The story, if this is the word to apply, begins with a young soldier taking part in what appears to be the Gallipoli landing. He is shot and carried back to the shore, where, presumably, he dies. We follow him into an afterlife, sometimes observing various communities, sometimes reporting to computer talk-back machines. He hears of, and later meets, a mysterious prince; this figure is described at one stage as Lucifer, or Satan, and

the name seems also to make a reference to Machiavelli's famous work on statecraft. He is sent back to earth, where he meets an old comrade, his illegitimate son, and his grandson. This last is very much a youth of his period, an anti-war protester living in hippy-style, and sleeping on beaches. The protagonist, who took his leave of life on a beach, enters into the mind and body of his grandson as he lies on the sand, and the story ends.

The dust-jacket refers to this ending by asking us "whether today's pacifists are not in fact the truest spiritual heirs of yesterday's heroes of war."

Horne may be saying this, although it wasn't the idea uppermost in my mind on putting down the book. He's ranged far too widely for this action to be any more than the best available token or gesture for a man who faces up to the problems humanity has created for itself.

These problems, as Horne discusses them, are all related to the use of power. In the young man's wanderings (real? illusory?) he has conversations with many people against a background of events reminiscent of famous events in the twentieth century's power struggles. We see a Red square-type parade of military hardware, the conference room infighting of big business, something rather like the September 30 1965 coup in Indonesia, and so on. Always there is conversation. The people, however, have little reality; they are heads full of ideas, often about the possibility of being reconciled to the warring, power-seeking nature of man. Horne is in his element here. He discusses many ideas; Freedom through Pride seems to be his Anzac theme, though it fades during the book, to be replaced by the need for a new rhetoric of honour, the need for a new morality to be based on the reality of human nature. The Prince is credited with the idea "that one could... speak of a morality of violence. If this were not possible, one could never speak of the history of humanity without loathing", and later we hear of the Prince's expectation that "we should have a universal pride in our species".

How we are to have this pride in ourselves when much of what we do is loathsome, is one of the book's themes—but I am getting lost in the tangle of Horne's ideas, and will leave the reader to follow these through for himself.

The book can hardly be called a novel in any ordinary sense. It is more like a many-sided panel discussion on the soundtrack with the screen showing flickering, half-real footage from world history in the twentieth century. The range of reference is wide; if there's no finality we can hardly blame Mr. Horne.

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When I discovered that *Man Alone* was published by the A.B.S. and that it concerned the struggle of a man to rehabilitate himself after three years in a psychiatric hospital, I expected a simplistic condemnation of society. Well, although the book isn't very sophisticated in its style or its demands on the reader, it isn't *that*.

The central figure is Paul Stamford, formerly a senior chartered accountant who suffered delusions of wealth and noble lineage. We meet him as he leaves hospital and goes home. He is rejected outright by his wife (though much later she sends him \$100 just when Paul and the plot need a helping hand). Mum-in-law is very nasty. Paul's son runs after him and gives him \$2, his weekly allowance.

Paul gravitates to King's Cross. He lives with Judy, whose most notable features are that she likes "it" three times a day and that she says everything twice. She is a good-time girl living on Yankee R & R boys. Later, Paul sinks lower, entering the flagon plonk and metho tribe, living in derelict buildings and tearing up floorboards for firewood. This gives John Gilders a chance to introduce some of the Cross's more bizarre and entertaining characters.

The anxious reader will be pleased to know that Paul rises again from these depths and that he ends the book with a job, a woman (not Judy) and good prospects of stability.

The book could hardly be called an indictment of society, though John Gilders makes his points well at the beginning. The ex-mental patient is turfed into the world with singularly little help or support; if it's really like this, something badly needs to be done. There is, however, too much coincidence in the story. John Gilders lacks the necessary power as a novelist to compel our indignation. It's a hard-luck story, and it engages our sympathies for the unfortunate Paul, but one doesn't feel that events are inevitable.

The most interesting part is near the end, where Paul Stamford is at one and the same time getting on top of his accountancy work again, but also having delusions of being followed. John Gilders conveys the delicate balance of his existence at this stage without having to state it baldly, and this is the best writing in the book.

## THE POETRY OF FACES

DONALD MAYNARD

Paul Cox and Ulli Beier: "Home of Man: The People of New Guinea" (Thomas Nelson, \$5.95).

Firstly, the authors: Paul Cox is a freelance photographer and film-maker, whose work has been exhibited in Holland, Germany, India and Australia, and in group shows and major professional journals all over the world. Many Port Moresby residents were lucky enough to see his exhibition last year, at the University of Papua and New Guinea, of juxtaposed photo-portraits of Niuginians and Balinese.

Ulli Beier—until recently Senior Lecturer in English at the University here—also has an international reputation, as an authority on the literature of emerging countries, and was founder and editor of the journal of New Guinea literature, **Kovave**.

As the publisher's blurb says, this book practically defies description—it is unique.

It contains 65 large full-page and often double-spread black and white portraits of Niuginians.

Paul Cox has sought to record a way of life which is fast disappearing from Niugini—in fact, from the earth! As the book's title indicates, it is the face of man in Niugini that really attracts him. With gentle care he sets down, for us now, and for future generations, the infinite variety of skin textures, facial expressions, the happy, serious and melancholy dignity of the Niuginian people.

In a sensitive and understated introduction, Ulli Beier notes: "One might say that this book is

about the poetry of faces—that is why New Guinean poetry seems the only suitable text to accompany the pictures".

Hence, the commentary, which supplements the pictures, consists of traditional songs translated from different Niuginian languages by U.P.N.G. students, as well as three evocative original poems by Kumalau Tawali.

The portraits unfold in a natural sequence, from youth to old age. There are pictures of children, from Hanuabada, Trobriands, Sepik, Mt. Hagen and Goroka; studies of adolescent girls and boys from the highlands, the coast and the islands; women with babies; close-ups of torsos, such as the back of an old man from Maprik; village elders with broken and betel-stained teeth. And, most superb of all, the cover photo of a wrinkled Goroka patriarch.

Possibly the most perceptive, "pure art" photographic studies in this book are those of highland warriors and **singsing** dancers, on pages 62 to 75, photographed by Paul Cox at the biennial Mount Hagen Show (the Mecca of tourists seeking "instant" Niugini).

On the physical aspects of the book, in terms of format and production, I don't think it could be bettered. It is what book-buyers have come to expect of Australia's top commercial publishing designer, Alison Forbes. And, most appropriately, a typical drawing by the famous Chimbu artist Kauage is reproduced on the case of the book, inside the front cover.

One final note: Ulli Beier has departed from Niugini, to take up a Professorship at the Institute of African Studies, at the University of Ife in Nigeria. He will be sorely missed, by all the writers and readers of this country—just as the emerging Niuginian painters and designers will have lost, at least temporarily, the devoted guidance of his artist wife, Georgina.

## BONDED TO THE BUSH . . .

LORNA HANNAN

Chester Eagle: "Hail and Farewell" (Heinemann, \$7.95).

I used to think of the society of any country town as a pyramid, with the doctor and lawyer at the apex and the hoi-polloi forming the base while the itinerants described some sort of random loci about no point in particular. Later I came to see that the simple pyramid did not even recognise the intricacies of the relationships of the people, that the delicate tracery of their gossip lines were as strong and intricate as the iron lace on a city terrace house, and that they had to be known and admired if the life of the town was to be plumbed at all.

Now I have Chester Eagle's **Evocation of Gippsland** to help me worry and wonder about the people and the bush. I do not know Bairnsdale; but Chester's description is true of many towns which I have known, and is faithful to more Victorian towns than Gippsland itself. He explains that he went to Gippsland not as an admirer, but as a conscript, a young teacher under bond who had to serve his three years or pay up. He outstayed his time so long that when he left there were gasps of surprise. When the time came for

him to go, he recalled in the school magazine that there had been a time when he too had asked "How could any sane man stay here ten years?" His book explains by the accretion of detail how Chester came to admire the people and the place. Yet he, like many other teachers, found that no matter how fond of the town he may be, he did not belong. It did not contain him, and so he left though to my taste about fifty or sixty pages too late.

The book sounds a note of nostalgia not for his own ten years, but for the ten times ten years that have seen the settlement of the hills and forests of Gippsland. The great surge of energy which sent men and their families out to subdue the bush, to farm it, to fence it, to build their towns, and the houses that have now crumbled away. This great surge of energy demanded qualities in people which are not needed any more. Chester probes the people he knew in whom these qualities linger on, Lochy and his friends, hard drinking, hard living, men's men living by a code that is not needed. Chester's admiration comes at the twilight, and as the light has faded, it has not shown him any new style of man to walk in the world that the gods have left.

Yet the years taught Chester what many who had less stamina have never learned. That the life of a country town can still be very much a live thing. Its traditions of talk and beer and more talk are not simple time fillers, or empty imitations, but are part of a strong, active world which many grow into and are deeply satisfied by.

He writes with real economy and warmth of the men he met, of the blacksmith whose endless profanity deceives no one, because he is the softest touch in Gippsland; of the now nearly legendary madman de Courcey who longed to fly; of the funeral of one of the great old men of Briagalong. No other account but his will do and I must therefore recommend that it be read.

## MAMMA DON'T 'LOW NO SLOGAN SHOUTERS HERE

MICHAEL DUGAN

Marcia Kirsten (ed.): "Youth Writes 1971" (A. H. & A. W. Reed, \$2.50 bound, \$1.10 p/b.).

This is the third volume of Marcia Kirsten's biennial publication. A change of publisher has resulted in simultaneous publication of a paperback edition which will make the book more easily available to the teenagers for whom it is primarily designed. The title page describes the book as "a collection of verse and prose by young writers of secondary school age in Australia and the T.P.N.G."

It would be ridiculous to criticise individual writers in this collection. The object of the book is worthy and it contains some excellent writing which should interest readers of any age. However, as this publication appears to have become fairly well established there are some points that need to be raised in connection with its role as encourager of teenage writers.

The previous edition of Youth Writes was dated 1969. It seems reasonable to expect that this issue should cover the years 1969-71. In this case it seems unfair to younger writers to include four

poems by Jamie Grant who left school in 1967, has contributed regularly to university publications and been represented in the Sun Books anthology "Australian Poetry Now". Grant can hardly need publication of this sort and, even though his poems are among the best in the book, a new writer should have been allotted the space his work occupies. The same applies to Philip McIntosh who has also been published on the "open market".

Although Miss Kirsten is acknowledged as editor of the collection, she is assisted by a committee of six. Most of these are teachers and the editorial reads like a classroom lecture in the more authoritarian type of school: "Youth Writes will not provide a platform for the slogan shouters . . ." "No Australian schoolboy or schoolgirl is any more competent to write convincingly of war, Negro riots or the virtues of Mao-Tse-Tung than to write convincingly of international finance or the laws of divorce". These and other statements which completely ignore the emotional involvements of teenagers must surely discourage some potential contributors.

Youth Writes is a worthwhile publication and obviously a considerable amount of work has gone into the preparation of this latest volume. It seems unfortunate, however, that after three issues its performance is still so much shorter than its potential.

## THE NEOPHOBE

ROBERT ROLLISON

Christopher Booker: "The Neophiliacs; a Study of the Revolution in English Life in the Fifties and Sixties" (Fontana, \$1.25).

It is no mere coincidence that Christopher Booker is on such warm personal terms with Malcolm Muggeridge. Nor is it simply accidental that they indulge in mutually complimentary remarks in the columns of *The Spectator*, nor that their respective lists of 'The-People-I-Hate-Most-in-My-Time' would be almost identical. Both men have made it their business, in all senses of that word, to pour scorn on every person or group supporting 'radical', 'reformist', 'progressive' or 'humanist' causes. For both men profess a type of Christian belief which rejects any attempt to effect serious change in human conditions through social or political engineering, for both believe that there exists a metaphysically real force of evil within men, which is the basic cause of all mental and physical malfunctioning in the world. Thus it is futile to attempt changes in man, other than those of individual 'religious' orientation, allowing for the narrow restrictions both would place on the meaning of that word. Lastly, both would proffer a programme of acceptance of the 'eternal' laws of 'God', though it should be noted that neither has anything like a coherent notion of what this God consists in or of.

Without any prior knowledge of the kind above about the author, one might open *The Neophiliacs* with the expectation of finding here an interesting sequel to Ronald Blythe's fascinatingly anecdotal but analytical treatment of the English Twenties and Thirties, *The Age of Illusion*. But no; Mr. Booker, while he relies heavily on his own selective anecdotes, makes little show of serious historical analysis. Rather, Mr. Booker chooses those aspects

of his period which best support his strange, unwieldy and finally anti-humanist thesis. The thesis, such as it is, can be summarised thus: the Nineteen-Fifties, and especially the 'Sixties, in English life, were afflicted with a dangerous 'psychic epidemic' which had its origin in a frenetic search for and love of the 'new'—neophilia—the cause of which was an obsession with 'fantasy', as opposed to 'reality'. 'Fantasy', in Mr. Booker's coined meaning, involves clinging to the illusion that anything can be changed by human action or volition, and that it is the most 'evil' form of vanity to imagine that it can:

In fact what I have been describing as fantasy or neurosis is what was known to former ages as evil. Nowadays we have more or less an exact sense of what we mean by the term evil . . . But the idea that evil is actually some kind of contagious psychic force in the world, that is omnipresent both in society at large and in every one of us individually, . . . is one that has all but been abandoned as a relic of that superstitious and primitive past from which we have so painfully emerged.

Who then, in Mr. Booker's terms, are those who have purveyed this 'fantasy'? It is easier to ask, who is not? Lennon and Macartney, Mick Jagger, Harold Wilson, Mary Quant, Twiggy, David Frost, P. J. Proby, Bishop Robinson, Ian Fleming and Kenneth Tynan all seem to have had a hand in peddling to the English public the idea that "the continuing assault of change" was a good thing. So it is not without some obvious delight that Mr. Booker sees April 1967 as the time when "bubble after bubble of fantasy had subsided". He observes with even more relish the signs of danger (or so he sees them) from increasing waves of vandalism, the Moors Murders, the Rhodesian crisis, the Seamen's Strike, etc., and in his peculiarly journalistic way interprets these as signs that "for Harold Wilson, these two weeks were the first serious foretaste of that collapse of all the dreams which his recent career had embodied". It ought to be noted here that anything which Mr. Booker chooses to interpret as 'signs', is chosen on the sort of historical criteria which one might expect to find in any page of the **News of the World**, a journal with which he would undoubtedly have no truck whatever.

It is impossible to escape the tone in which these and many other observations in the book are couched. They are the whoops of joy of a Jeremiah who has been proved right, or so he imagines, by the events which he selects as evidence. Reading his last chapter, in which he elaborates the theme

of the book, one realises what he has been about throughout this nasty book. Now he throws at us his peculiar amalgam of Jansenistic-Pietistic Christianity, Life-Force ideas of 'God', and thoroughly callous social theory.

His basic premises is that "on the material level of this world, because of their fantasies, men will find perpetual tribulation". Despite this forbidding prospect, man can find a "level of reality" and thereby "the drug of appearances may be overcome". Man ought to be discouraged from taking refuge in "the fretting of pointless speculation as to how things might have been different, or might still be". In other words, political action to improve the lot of the starving or victimised is futile, because that would be indulging in how things might "still be". He quotes with approval a statement by Ronald Arbuthnot Knox (whose contribution to English social welfare consisted in being Church of England Chaplain to Oxford students, and after his conversion to Rome, popular theologian and chaplain to a posh girls' school):

We have to accustom men's minds to the notion that it does not matter what the politicians do, does not matter even if our bishops seem to betray us, we belong to a spiritual kingdom complete in itself owing nothing to worldly allegiances.

So it doesn't really matter if the politicians defraud us of our earnings, if they never give a cent to the poor in social services, if they lock up anyone who is rash enough to protest, because each one of these people can feel safe with his "spiritual kingdom", which is "complete in itself". He concludes this paragraph, turning predictably to the past in preference to anything abhorrently present, with a reference to the motto inscribed over Beethoven's Quartet Op. 135, which demands "Must it be? Must it be?" and is answered with the ringing note: "It must be, it must be, it must be so!" Why bother, then, to do anything to change the world, even a small portion of it, because "it must be so!" Mr. Booker's use of Beethoven is interesting and significant, for as Beethoven's biographer, J. W. N. Sullivan, says of him: ". . . one of Beethoven's most lasting characteristics (was) a profound contempt for the great bulk of his fellow men".

Such certainly seems to be true of Mr. Booker. Having dismissed every one of his contemporaries with a snarl, with unrelieved rancour, having revelled in the violent murders and suicides which he associates with the lives of the popular and celebrated, and which he counts as 'proof' of his 'fantasy' thesis, he turns to his own, twisted, anti-human 'God', preferring this repulsive construct to the "whole damned lot" of his fellow men.

