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overland

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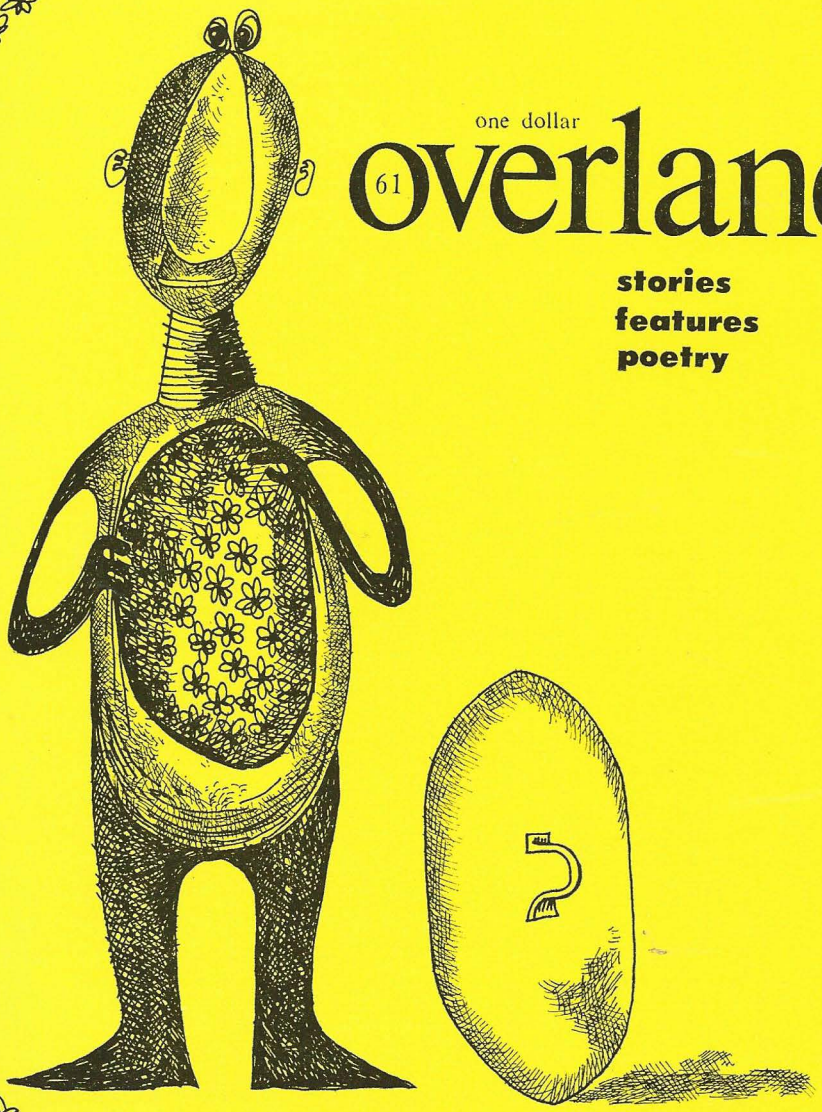

IAN BAYLY ON THE DESTRUCTION OF LAKE PEDDER

SCIENCE FICTION: AUSTRALIA AND THE WORLD CONVENTION

OWEN WEBSTER ON THE CROWN LANDS RANGER

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NENE GARE

Mutton Flaps

Very slowly, very deliberately, she climbed down off the big bus, black hand tight on the safety rail, black eyes appraising the distance between steps. She did not need to be quite so careful and slow but she could feel those white ones behind her ready to push and shove and no lot of white people was going to hurry her along if she did not wish to hurry.

Egan was there to meet her, good for him and so he had better be. He stepped forward to take her arm and at the same time to peer into the cab for her luggage.

"Not in there," Mrs Magdalen said tersely. "At the back an I told im e better see after it if e wasn't gunna let me take it inside so I could."

"Ow are ya mum?" Egan asked as they walked the length of the bus.

"I'm awright. Don't I look awright?"

"Looks don't mean much. It's how ya feel."

"I feel awright then. That do ya?"

"If it was looks ta go by ya never woulda had th tack."

"Shutup can't ya?" Mrs Magdalen shivered. 'Don't start talkin tacks the minute I get back. I'm trying ta forget the damn things."

The old Fordite case was dragged out and placed alongside an elegant neighbor in dark blue plastic with zips. Egan hefted it then groaned. Pathetically: "What ya got in ere, mum, Gawd, it weighs like lead. Come on then. Sooner we start sooner we get there."

"Ta-ta mate," Mrs Magdalen spoke softly to the driver, and ignoring all other passengers, marched from the station, Egan lopsidedly after her.

"You sure ya feel awright?" Egan began again.

"Once I get a cuppa scald an something ta eat. All I had ta eat all day a bagga apples."

"That bus call in ta places. Why didn't ya get yaself something?"

"Wasn't goin in any shop with all that lot steppin aside case ya get too close."

"Whatcha wanta worry bout them for? Shoulda got yaself a samwich an some tea."

"Mutton flaps. That's all I been thinkin bout. Gawd I could do with a plate a stewed flap."

"Flaps not what you sposed ta eat didn't that doctor say? Too fat e said. No more bread an drippin neither."

"I know what e said. What I say, gimme a plate a flap."

Egan stopped to change the case to his other hand. "Maybe we better take taxi, mum. Dunno if I can get up that hill carryin this."

"Awright then. Git a taxi. I thought you might anyway seein I'm sposed ta be sick. Maybe I don't feel like walkin up that hill neither." Mrs Magdalen sighed and panted, allowed her mouth to fall open and her eyelids to droop.

Egan looked harassed. "Awright! We get a taxi." He beckoned, with hauteur, one of the taxis parked around the corner from the bus station.

Mrs. Magdalen climed weightily into the back seat, wheeled herself around and plopped, still panting, into the hollowed seat. Egan dumped his case on the seat next the driver and followed her. 'Ya know where ta go," he said curtly, encouraging no familiarity.

"Okay chief," the driver said cheerily. To Mrs Magdalen he remarked, "How's life in the big city? Any luck with the cards?"

"None a your business," Egan said irascibly, before Mrs Magdalen could utter. 'You just get on with ya job." Mr Magdalen despised many people but especially did he despise taxi-drivers. He knew the kind of stuff they were liable to get up to after dark. "Lotta pimps."' He eyed the driver's neck with ferocity while Mrs Magdalen

looked out the window and pleasurably surveyed her kingdom.

Glancing over at her, Egan's expression changed wonderfully. "The doctor give ya something for yaself? What e say bout ya?"

Mrs Magdalen waved to a friend—royally. "Tell ya all bout that later," she said impatiently. "Don't keep remindin me bout being sick. Let me get somethin inside me is all I ask. I spose it's not so bad bein back," she added graciously, "for a while anyway."

"Ya don't hafta go back again do ya?" Mr Magdalen's face under the hat, turned up all the way round like Henry Fonda's, looked scared.

"I might." Mrs Magdalen did not even look at him. "How do I know ya gunna behave? I might have another—attack—any time with you shoutin bout the place. Bad-tempered ole bastard ya are."

"Ere mum. That want me. I want nowhere near ya."

"Doctor says I'm not sposed ta be upset." Mrs Magdalen's tone was firm.

"When I upset ya?"

Glittery dark eyes teased. "This very minute, intit?"

Egan's gaze went athwart hers, like a dog's.

Mrs Magdalen leant forward. "You just stoppit, see? Upsettin me first minute I'm back."

Mr Magdalen's outrage shot him upright in his corner, his profile sternly to his wife who chuckled comfortably. "That's better. You sit there quiet an maybe I can enjoy the scenery."

The driver kept his grin to himself.

Certainly royalty could not have received a warmer welcome home. The two kids, the family dogs, neighboring dogs, Polly Hawker and her man and her pramful of babies plus a half-dozen interested observers from nearby camps. Mrs Magdalen easily got rid of the onlookers. "Well? What you mob stickybeakin round for?" whilst shedding kids and dogs as if they were water.

"Still pickin peas with them long fingers?" she greeted giggling Polly, though ignoring Joe whom she considered to be hardly a man at all.

"Bag a peas inside for ya," Polly said shyly, "case ya didn't have nothin ta eat."

"Good on ya," Mrs Magdalen thanked her. "You keep bringing peas every time ya come visitin an ya sure of a welcome this place."

"This place" was a big old patched tent with two or three annexes growing out from it. "Tempry," Egan always said gruffly, and Mrs. Magdalen informed her friends, "Yes, I live in a camp. I can live anywhere. But my children are gunna get just a little bit further up. An if one a them gets ta be Prime Minister I wouldn't even speak ta one a yous. You could keep right away from me. Wouldn't even look at ya." Which dismayed some who listened but confused many more.

Mr Magdalen paid the taxi driver and the Magdalens and their intimates went over the rise and down into the camp. Geraniums, rooted for the moment in mud, towered from kerosene tins and clotted beneath a central wattle, studded about its outer perimeter with shining brown-glass circlets. Neither Egan nor his wife was a drinker but both had an eye for the artistic. The artistic touches did not stop at bottle tops either. White bridal creeper swung from the doorframe and blue-purple sarsaparilla crept in waves over the banks. The place looked inviting, desirable, even cloistered. It was home. Outside the main entrance stood an old-fashioned wooden washing stand with two tubs, and over from it was the wash basin on its iron pedestal. There was a towel and soap and a navy-blue snaking hose with a tap attached to its end.

"I'm the mayor," the man in the suit had said placatingly, the day the council tried to do something about the Magdalen camp.

"I don't care if ya the bloody stallion," Egan had snorted back. "We on crown land up ere an we got a right ta stay long as we want. An if we gunna live ere we need runnin water an you better see bout it." And behold, water had come from the pensioner's house across the road.

"Not a bad bloke that mare," Egan grudged, afterward. "It was just a matter of a man knowin is rights. An he knew I knew em too."

"You knew I wasn't gunna stop ere if we had ta use buckets," Mrs Magdalen crushed.

"That creeper looks real good up the side there." Mrs Magdalen went over to sniff the bridal creeper. "Oh, isn't it lovely? An growin too."

"Garden's nice, ain't it?" Polly admired. "I wisht I hadda garden."

"Wishin gets ya nowhere," Mrs Magdalen told her shrinking friend. "Get that one over there ta do some diggin for ya."

"We look after the garden good, mummy?" the girl Belle asked with pride.

"You done good an just as well ya did." Lovingly, Mrs Magdalen's hand touched the snowy flowers. "I like a bit a garden. Makes the place more civilised." She pushed aside the bag curtain. "Come in well, seein ya here." She looked at Polly's man and Polly's man said humbly "Think

I better take these childrens home, eh?" And left.

"You cleaned the place up, Belle?" Mrs Magdalen bullied.

"Yes mummy." Belle would be another Mrs Magdalen. Highlights trembled on her round cheeks and on her smooth limbs and the devil was behind her meek mouth. On this special day a pink bow sat on her head and tender curls of fresh-washed hair softened the bold round brow. Brucie was more like his father, frowning, fierce and humorless. And independent.

He said, "I helped too didn't I, Belle?"

"Hoh, yes! I know you two. Butter won't melt in ya mouths till ya get ya presents."

"Did ya get em? Didja really mummy?"

"Did ya get me dress?"

"My bow an arrers an me kite?"

Mrs Magdalen, about to be tart, softened. "Yes I did." She smiled with satisfaction. "An a lot more too. Never take nothing much down with me," she told Polly, "so as ta have room ta bring everything back. That Perth surely the place ta go fa things ya might want. That blanket thing was on again. Got two more an woulda got three only the woman said she knew me an I had one already. And I thought to meself, 'You wouldn't miss nothin you wouldn't, with them sharp eyes a yours.' Nosey bugger."

"Just as well we miles away from that Perth," Egan worried. 'Ya ain't supposed ta get blankets every damn year fa nothin. Those blankets fa people got none. We got blankets in there on the beds, ain't we?"

"It's fa the needy an who's needy if we ain't? Sides, I can always get rid of em if we got too many. Polly ere wouldn't mind a blanket half price, would ya Poll?"

Polly dared to nod, her gaze slipping uneasily past Mr Magdalen's.

"This place looks all right well," Mrs Magdalen approved, looking about the living section. On this occasion a blue vase on the big old kitchen table held bright pink geraniums and Mrs Magdalen's flowered Mother's Day cup and saucer stood ready at her place. Around the table were Mr Magdalen's chair, Mrs Magdalen's chair, and the odd boxes and stools that served children and visitors. Squares of worn linoleum kept out the damp and a kerosene refrigerator stood noble in a corner. Shelving had been made from planks of wood standing on bricks. Mrs Magdalen kept her books and precious things there and when she felt like a read she set her glasses at the end of her nose and took her ease on a sofa whose shortcomings were hidden under an assortment of cold-weather garments.

"Who did ya see down there, mummy?" asked Belle.

"Everyone I knew and some I didn't. I was up early every morning so's I'd have time ta see the lot of em."

"Every morning? What bout that doctor? Dint ya have ta see a lot a him?"

"We'll get ta that later. Belle, you got that kettle on yet? I could die on me feet an ya wouldn't think ta get that kettle on."

"I told Brucie to."

"Brucie?"

Brucie turned away sulkily.

"An take that look off ya face." Brucie took it off.

"Fire's out," he announced, rattling doors in some dark corner.

"Gawd! We'll be here all night. Egan, can't ya . . ."

"Awright! Awright!"

Egan stumped angrily outside for wood. Mrs Magdalen, her satellites trailing after, moved into the alcove where she and her husband slept. Curtained off from the main area was a three-quarter iron bed expiring under a curvaceous pink and grey eiderdown. Mrs Magdalen allowed this softness to receive her. "Sit down all of yous," she motioned tiredly, and the kids straightaway sprang up beside her whilst Polly apologetically and tenderly rested her lean flanks against a chest of drawers.

Mrs Magdalen sniffed. "You kids let them dogs sleep on this bed while I was away."

"No, mummy," from Belle. "Only once," from Brucie.

"It was that Caesar," Belle confessed. "But we belted him after didn't we Brucie?"

"Something stinks" Mrs Magdalen sighed, closing her eyes and falling back on her pillow. "Gawd, this bed's comforble after some I slep in down there. An even if the dogs do get up on the bed thank Gawd no mice. Not ta say rats. That ole man uncle of Egan's, e told me 'We ain't got no mice in this place', but late at night when I'm tryin ta sleep I hear em. Mi mi mi mi mi. A damn army sounded like. One thing I can't like it's mice an rats. They make noises lie they tryin ta get up on ya. I kep thinkin one might be on me pillow sittin there lookin at me while I'm asleep." She shuddered. "Nyu! Nother place I stayed was that Eleanora that she calls herself. She didn't want

me neither. Said their spare room was for the baby. 'Look,' I said, 'That baby ain't due fa three months. I'm here right now.' " Mrs Magdalen chuckled long and enjoyably.

"You are awful mummy," Belle giggled, her eyes lit.

"An why not? Pore ole woman like me lookin for bed an her wantin ta push me out in the cold. Soon put that one right."

"She must be awful ooman," Polly put in, awed. "Cheeky, too."

"Tell us some more," Belle said impatiently, humping her bottom. She laughed down at her comfortable mother.

"More what?" Mrs Magdalen's eyes were half-shut but her mouth curled open over her white even teeth.

"Who ya met an that."

"Met plenty." A chuckle enriched the words. "One thing I like doin is sittin on that white seat in Wellington Street. Comin round that corner ya see such sights. I think to meself, 'If only you knew how I was laughin at ya.' Pore ole niggers! Haven't got nothin much but they can laugh. Hear em coming a mile off laughin. Yet these buggers — ya know what they remind me of? Cats! A lotta cats! Just got that expression on their faces. 'I'm goin somewhere an no one ain't gunna stop me. No one else's business neither.' " She sat up to enquire, "Any of you ever see a cat snoopin along with that expression on its face?" She sank back and closed her eyes, "If ya ever see a cat by imself ya know e's up ta some mischief. They look like that well. Wicked! I see a man the other day standin up by the corner — a real ole tom cat."

"I think I seen some like that" Polly laboriously sorted her memories.

"Did ya go an see me uncle?" Egan enquired, coming in with the dainty cup and saucer. 'You others git ya own," he ordered, "an if you kids want milk you'll have ta mix it."

"Put the damn stuff down well," Mrs Magdalen bossed her husband. "Over there! An yes I did see ya uncle. Went to one of is meetings. An ya know what e said after? After all me trouble?" She mimicked, " 'I don't like takin ya to church. You either laughin or sleepin.' " A giggle. "How can I help it but? The way that woman waves her arms around. 'Jesus can save me and you.' All this me an you business. An the arms go — like this. An then she says 'All close ya eyes an anyone that wants ta be saved put ya hands up'. I don't shut my eyes. I'm peekin round ta see who's gunna be saved."

Egan tutted worriedly. "Some things gotta be taken serious. Dunno why ya go there, upsettin everyone."

Mrs Magdalen eyed him calmly. "Cos it's a night's outin, a course. Get a bit of a laugh, nice supper after with cuppa tea and ya get driven home in style, good as a taxi."

Egan shook his head. "What bout that doctor? What e say?"

The kids trailed back into the bedroom carrying their mugs of tea. A trembling of the curtain indicated that Polly was waiting to be re-admitted.

"Talk about that when we private," Mrs Magdalen rebuked her husband. "If ya don't mind! Let er in again," she motioned, to the curtain.

"We never gunna be much more private the way everyone traipse in an outa this place."

"Don't you take no notice, Polly," Mrs Magdalen told her friend.

"Awright!" Polly took a tiny sip of her tea and focused her lemming eyes on the inflammable Egan.

"Saw Milly off," Mrs Magdalen told the company.

"Where to?"

"Inside a course."

"Shouldn't have nothin ta do with that woman. Every time ya hear she's in gaol. Hardly never out."

"An always ready ta do a good turn for ya when she is."

Egan rose from the bed and straightened out his angles. "I think you jus bein purposefully aggravatin woman," he told her. "You keepin me in the dark bout something that doctor tell ya. Something ya don't want me ta hear. All yous", he faced the alcove-full of occupants, "all yous clear off. Me an mum got things ta talk bout. Go on! Out! Out!" And over Mrs Magdalen's efforts to stay them he swept the lot outside the curtain.

"Now!" he said. "You gunna tell me what that doctor said."

Mrs Magdalen re-arranged her circular hips. "Didn't see im," she flung her bolt.

"What, woman?"

"I said I didn't see im."

"But you was sent down to. Got ya bus fare —an all that money I gave ya." Mr Magdalen's mind raced ahead of his words, discovering more and worse perfidies. "An you writin back fa more —sayin ya had ta have all that medicine."

"That was after I had a bad run. Knew I'd win it back again and I did."

"An ya didn't even see im?" Egan looked back at all those empty weeks of Mrs Magdalen's absence.

"Wasn't nothin ta see im about. Soons I got down there, way fum all this lot roun here, an you, and all the rows an that, I start feeling awright again. I was down there. Mights well have a holiday, intit?"

"But ya silly woman, that specialist doctor mighta done something for ya. Them pains in ya chest—ya gotta do something. Ya might die."

"Shutup bout them pains," Mrs Magdalen said furiously. "Forever pushin em down me throat. I'm awright, see?"

"Ya not awright. Ya just think ya awright. Why ya think ya got that letter ta go south?" He dropped back on the bed and stared at his wife. "What's gunna happen to ya now?"

"That long face a yours," Mrs Magdalen accused him. "Why can't ya be a optimist fa once an look on the bright side. I'm back, ain't I? An I'm awright, ain't I? What more ya want?"

Egan groaned.

"You!" Mrs Magdalen cried wildly. 'Ya make me feel like havin a tack right here on this bed. Always said it was you brought em on. An now . . ."

"Now what mum?" Egan asked fearfully.

"Just shutup," Mrs Magdalen said sharply. "If ya don't mind."

OWEN WEBSTER

The Crown Lands Ranger

Jack Cumming and Frank Dalby Davison

Owen Webster died in March 1975, in Melbourne, and by his own hand. I had known him, I suppose, five or six years. Owen was English by origin, and much of his early background is in his moving novel So *which, with typical determination, obstinacy and egotism, he published himself in 1970 under the pen-name of 'Adam Pilgrim'. I was drawn to Owen by his acidulous weekly columns in the press (we had plans for reprinting a selection), by his perfervid faith in himself as a writer and his conviction that society must make it possible for the creative writer to create, by his love for his home and family, by his battling instincts and his strong sense of natural justice (especially as it applied to himself), by his dedication to the person and the spirit of Frank Dalby Davison, by his literary professionalism and refusal to compromise. (If Owen had still been alive I doubt if I would have been allowed to get away with the massive cuts I have made in the accompanying piece, which we print in his memory.) His massive biography of Frank Dalby Davison, only half written, is I understand likely to be published. Owen was a prickly character, antipathetic to many, but underneath the assertiveness was a warm and human person. His friends will miss him and this country needed his mind, his pen and his presence.*

STEPHEN MURRAY-SMITH

After Culloden, the last battle fought on British soil, six lads of the Cameron clan, who had lost their bonnets in the fight, escaped the Duke of Cumberland's clutches and fled into the mountains to find refuge on a farm near the head of the River Spey. They intended staying there only until the Duke's men had completed their particular final solution among the Highlanders in the glens and braes of Inverness-shire. But they married and settled in the district. As the 18th century moved into its second half, the six black bonnetless lads of the Camerons were raising children whose descendants were always to acknowledge their origins.

One of their granddaughters had a grandson named John Gibbon Cumming. He was born on St Patrick's Day, 1882, and only eleven years later, three months after leaving school to emigrate to Australia, he was working a raw selection in the Maranoa district of southern Queensland. "Notwithstanding his tender years when he left the Old Dart," he was to write fifty years later of himself and a childhood sweetheart, "he left someone behind whom he was later not game to bring out to face the hardships that she would have had to put up with."

The hardships included the big drought of 1902 and seven years of bad crops. Then, in a battle against worry and sleeplessness, the selection began to pick up. By 1906 there were over a hundred acres of wheat standing five feet tall. It looked like a eight-bag crop: four bushels to the bag and eight bags to the acre. Harvesting began on a Saturday afternoon in early November and an acre was stripped for eight bags. But on Saturday night a storm broke and raged all Sunday. By Monday morning the whole crop was lying flat and harvesting the damage took until the middle of February. Gross income that season was

£157 10s., from 350 bags of damaged wheat at 2s. 3d. per bushel.

Jack Cumming suffered what in those days was called a nervous breakdown. He was twenty-four. There was no doctor in the locality who could help him cure his insomnia, so he had to cure himself by reading. The only available books were those the family had brought out with them from the Old Country. To forget himself and his troubles he started committing yards of poetry to memory: Burns, Longfellow, Byron, Kipling, *Venus and Adonis*. "I suppose," he came to think, "subconscious imitation set in. Anyway, I cured my nerves, but still weaken under responsibility."

He dreamed of becoming a writer, but not a famous one; perhaps a reviewer of books, or a workaday versifier. He was possessed of a natural appreciation of beauty, especially that of the country that broke his heart. So he persisted in working it—for twenty-five years. That included the 1915 drought, when he took thirty-five horses on agistment to a selection of tableland country running almost to the banks of Hutton Creek. Some of the horses were almost too weak to travel up and down the horse pad worn into the cliffs of the creek banks, and Jack had to remove a lot of rocks from the track. The tablelands were furrowed by ravines. All but two of the horses were on the tablelands when Jack went out to get them in December, when the drought broke. A lad took the horses back to the settler's homestead and Jack and the settler decided to camp the night at a small rock-hole, though they had nothing with them but a little tea. They found the missing horses early the following afternoon when they were hungry and in poor spirits. Then a sharp thunderstorm drenched them to the skin.

Twenty-nine years later, Jack recounted the incident in a letter. "When we got to the top of the cliffs overlooking the creek I looked down to see the afternoon sunshine coming through the clouds and striking on the glistening leaves of the treetops. The sunshine and shadow blended to make, I think, the most beautiful scene I have ever looked at. I forgot hunger and wet to just sit on my horse and take it in."

But natural beauty is an illusory form of sustenance, and shortly after that Jack signed his own armistice with the dry land. "I found," he was to write, "that continual and constant cultivation of the land leaves little time for the cultivation of the mind and that the only thing that grows in the mind when farming is the 'grouch weed', which grows until it covers your neighbour, the Guv'ment and all and sundry including Land Rangers *sometimes*. Anyway, why sacrifice your dependants and yourself in order to keep a lot of town loafers who come around and tell you what a great heart you have to struggle on a proposition that you know will take heavy toll of the best years of all concerned?"

He became a land ranger himself. He got a job with the Queensland Government's Department of Public Lands when the soldier settlement scheme was being established. He was one of the team attached to the office of the Land Agent's District of Roma to work in country he knew well. Sixty miles to the north, a station had been resumed, subdivided, and earmarked for dairying. Part of it bordered on the selection where Jack's horses had weathered the drought.

It was called Mount Hutton, after the flat-topped mountain in its north-western corner, and at 336 square miles it was the largest of the sixteen areas in the state set aside "to meet the needs of those brave men who have given their services to the Empire in the great war which has overtaken the community". These were the words of John McEwen Hunter, of Hunter's, the Roma department store, when at the end of 1916, as elected representative of the Maranoa and Secretary for Public Lands in the Queensland Labor Government, he introduced the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Bill in the Legislative Assembly. "Provision should be made by the State," he said, "for the men who may return, whether wounded or whole, so that they may find that the country is not regardless of the services they have rendered."

Mount Hutton provided some of the largest blocks of land available to returned men—from 320 acres to two square miles—and those who dreamed big dreamed dairying. A railway line from Roma through the centre of the settlement was under construction as the first settlers were arriving. It was the only railway to be laid ahead of settlement. Hunter's could supply the settlers with all their provisions by rail, and market their produce for them. Annual rainfall was said to average 27 inches . . . but in Roma during the five years following the war it only once topped 25 inches, and on the ranges to the north it was often drier. The rainfall pattern could change over a couple of miles.

Before the war was over, an anonymous letter writer in Roma's *Western Star* was demanding:

"Will or can the present government under present conditions of tenure and area settle Mount Hutton, or will Mount Hutton settle the selectors?" Steadfastly, against the advice of many who knew the district, the government refused to increase the size of the holdings.

It was part of the job of Jack Cumming and his colleagues based in Roma to prevent the erosion of the idea by the reality; and to that end he was required to be a sort of omnicompetent factotum. Another anonymous letter, this time published in the *Echo*, the official organ of the Queenlsand Government Professional Officers' Association, bears Jack's unmistakable stamp. Signing himself "One of Them", the author wrote on the pretext that his profession had not been adequately represented before a Royal Commission inquiring into the classification of government employees, and described a land ranger's duties:

> The land ranger has or should have a thorough knowledge of resumptions, compulsory resumptions, sometimes involving thousands, valuations of freehold estates for repurchase running into a hundred thousand pounds, valuations of country, suburban and town lands, valuing securities for the Agricultural Bank, valuing properties for the Curator of Interstate Estates, owning timber reserves, valuing and estimating quantity, [prickly] pear inspections, valuating cost of clearing, opening land for closer settlement, valuing same and all improvements, valuing improvements for lease deed, etc., inspecting re residence conditions, valuing improvement on resumptions; he has also to have a thorough knowledge of carrying capacity of country, a knowledge of stock of all descriptions, farming and dairying, timber, road, dam and tank making; in fact he is or should be in land matters a walking encyclopaedia.
>
> He must be a good horseman, an expert bushman and tracker, and know the Land Acts from A to a couple of chains past Z. He must be prepared to camp out wet or dry and, when necessity demands, should be able to make four dishes from the one goanna; must be prepared at times to outpace the selector's or squatter's dog and put up a fight now and again for the honour of the profession and the Department.
>
> For this he can, by the time he goes blind, get up to £230 a year. I may say he is allowed £100 a year for feed, and a man keeping from five to ten horses with chaff at ten shillings per bag and corn at eight shillings per bushel, not counting the purchase of horses, buggy, harness and repairs, can, if he is not very careful, get into debt lively. . . .
>
> How would you like to see the missus and kids quarterly?

For Jack there were no missus and kids. He was assigned, in the main, to the north-western portion of the new settlement, where the profile of the mountain thrust itself nightly into the rich and tedious sunsets, visible from the ridges by anyone with the poetry in him, or the heart left from a day's labor, to notice. To the east stood the new railhead, named after the creek that bounded the township designed there at the foot of Old Man Plain, the creek that supplied some of the smallest of the settlement's subdivisions clustered around the township reserve with a few permanent waterholes.

Injune Creek was said by some to have been named after the Aboriginal word for a flying fox indigenous to those parts; others, probably erroneously, held that it hailed from an explorer who left his name carved on a tree: LEICHHARDT IN JUNE.

In June 1920 the railway was completed and, since most of the settlers were already either in residence or trying to convince the rangers that they were in residence, the township named the railhead. By then, everyone was calling it Injune. Fifty years later, the sixty-one miles of rails and most of the sleepers were gone. The "up-one-day-and-down-the-next" service had never paid its way.

A few yards south of its sixty-mile post, the railway crossed another creek, a tributary that joined Injune Creek about a mile to the east. Its usually dry course could be traced to the ranges below Mount Hutton, whence it meandered generally eastwards to fill three semi-permanent waterholes and—by 1921—a few tanks. It was "up the Bluey" that Jack Cumming came to know a couple who lived in a two-roomed humpy tucked into a nook of belah and brigalow scrub. She was English, with two babies, and her husband, a returned soldier, had selected Portion 84, Injune, at the age of twenty-six. Single handed, with no farming experience beyond a few months in Gippsland during his early teens, he was trying to wrest a living from two square miles of good soil and no water. His name was Frank Davison.

Every daylight hour, seven days a week if he could, Davison would spend fencing, milking, ring

barking, improving the humpy or the cowsheds, trying to grow cotton, damming Bluey Creek in the hope of filling his ill-sited tank, damning the droughts, the dingoes, the government, the poverty, driving himself till he blacked out, and dreaming of the day when his farm would give him a living and enough leisure to become a writer. He must have welcomed the sight of "Scot", that other writer *manqué*, leading his horse through the sliprails, or riding down the slope from the humpy where he was trying to burn off a big gum tree before the tank sinkers started work. It was an excuse for a spell, a mug of billy tea and a rolled cigarette, a yarn about problems: of life and love and literature and digging and dairying. Jack was always welcome there: years later he recalled that "his wife and children and himself in the house in the nook of belah were an oasis, I need not say to whom".

But by April 1923 the young settler was beaten, "broken," Jack wrote, "by our crude system of land settlement, but you can't keep a good man down". Jack was witness to his signature when he surrendered the title to his perpetual lease selection, and thereafter Portion 84, Injune, became a prickly pear selection. In May, Jack valued the improvements on the block the selector had named "Sandalwood". The result of nearly four years of blood, sweat and tears soaked up by the reddish-brown crust was a trace worth £304 11s. 3d. and £55 worth of moveables. The fencing, 276 chains of it, or nearly three and a half miles, plus 52 more chains of posts at three shillings per chain, was valued at £105. The three cultivated acres were worth £2 per acre. The 200 acres of ringbarked forest were worth a shilling per acre. House and tank, £21. Six cows at £2 and a black mare at £7. Jack's valuation was probably generous, a token of friendship, because fourteen months later, Hunter, the other ranger, reported: "These improvements are all generally of a very poor class, and in a very bad state of repair." Total value, July 1924: £84 1s. 4d.

But by then the era of "closer settlement" was over, and the government had acquiesced in what had been a ranger's advice before the Mount Hutton adventure was designed: they permitted blocks of four square miles. Jack remained in the district for another decade. When the surviving locals founded the Injune School of Arts, he became one of its trustees. Then he was transferred to the Lands Office at Dalby, where he had more time and opportunity to compose verse.

His fellow poetaster Davison had returned to Sydney and become advertising manager of the magazine which was publishing some of his stories based on the life of the settlement: romance in the bush, new chums on the land. They had been a sideline for the laboring cocky, something to exercise his mind by lamplight before bedtime. It was his verse that really mattered to him; and in 1920 a short-lived magazine called the *Australian Post* accepted it and published it.

Jack remembered how the Davison stories appeared under pen names such as T. Bone, Scott McGarvie, Francis Daly. Best of all he remembered his friend writing about the scrub cattle that lived in the ranges to the north of Mount Hutton Settlement and came down to drink at its waterholes before the selectors had finished their fencing. One of them especially became a heroine: a red heifer. When these stories made their author famous, Jack learned that the friend he never saw again had adopted the name of the town on the Darling Downs where the Crown Lands Ranger worked until he retired: Frank *Dalby* Davison.

Seventeen years and a broken marriage after Davison had caught the train out of Injune for the last time, his first collection of stories was published by Angus and Robertson. *The Woman at the Mill* contained fifteen tales, twelve of which were set in mid-western Queensland and told not of the wild cattle but of the incoming settlers who built the fences between them and the waterholes. "These are all works of imagination," wrote the author in a prefatory note, "stories of things that have never happened and of people who never lived—except that I have been studious to avoid doing violence to the probabilities. There is no allusion to any person living or dead, and even the narrator is not to be identified with the author."

The book had been out three years when, in October 1943, Jack Cumming re-entered Davison's ken. He had received a note asking for his formal notice of resignation from the Injune school of arts, and the request started a chain of thoughts which resulted in some verses a copy of which Jack sent down to the author of *Man-shy* "in remembrance of your kindly welcome to the ranger":

> A lot of milk has been put through the separator since the Injune School of Arts was built and I suppose the old spring carts, sulkies, buggies, grey horses we used to travel in and on have all gone to rest.
> Where the wiry, bearded stockman clad in

shirt and snowy moles chased the scrubbers through the wattle with the trapyards for their goals. Where there were not any fences and the run was wide and free, they are feeding dairy poddies where the scrubbers used to be.

Where the shearers at the Washpool made
their tallies with their blades
(In the moonlight in our fancy we can see
their ghostly shades)
And the ration carriers travelled on the rough
unbeaten tracks,
In the huts they'd find the shepherds mur-
dered by the Dawson blacks.

When the squatters in their anger at their
loss of sheep and fleece
Made their raids upon the niggers with the
savage black police,
When the rifle matched in killing spears and
tomahawks of stone
Slew the home defenders fighting for the land
they called their own.

Where you still can see the traces of the old
Rockhampton road
And the bullock-drays went dancing down
the Dawson with their load,
Round the camp-fire in the evening hardy
bullockies would boast
Of the yearly trips they travelled with the
wool bales to the coast.

But the squatter, keen, resourceful in his
fight with drought and flood
Now gave way unto selectors who took up
their "bit o' mud",
Where corroborees were gathered too beneath
the silvery moon
There is music, mirth and laughter near the
"Old Man Plain" lagoon.

And so, dear Jack, you've gathered that we
don't improve with age,
Here is flight of foolish fancy, not the wis-
dom of the sage,
But it cheers us to remember all the bright
and hopeful hearts
Who assisted in the building of the Injune
School of Arts.

With his accustomed generosity Davison replied, and started a short exchange of letters. Jack's first full letter in May 1944 reported that he had eventually married a Miss Penhallurick "from over the range, you will remember Tooloombilla. Her father died recently at the age of 94. He had been well looked after for his latter years and still took an interest in things to the last."

Davison had promised to send Jack a copy of *The Woman at the Mill*, and he replied that he would be more than glad of it, careful of it and as to its return. But he had not lost touch with his old friend's progress in the thirteen years since *Man-shy* was published.

> Your writing has been a source of enjoyment to more than one poor beggar when he has been longing for the smell of the gum trees and, in the case of the cattleman, the odour of cattle.
>
> I happened to read a story of yours about your tanksinkers. Old Don, as we called him, died a while ago. Peter Ries is still going strong — overseer on a wonderful citrus orchard and vineyard cut out of the tiger scrub at Orallo. Peter was quite famous for a while after your story came out. As you say, all of 'em like to be in a story whether praiseworthy or otherwise.

Jack's typewriter continued reminiscing, "riding down Bluey Creek to see an old cow unconsciously making literary history while gingerly stepping over the roots on the pad leading to the water"

> . . . and arriving home at my hut after dark to hear my spare horses whinny as I put the bell on my saddlehorse, going to bed to ponder on how to fix a report in order to overcome an obligation as shown in Clause 99 of Sec. 1550 of the Land Acts of 1910-1919, but still having the report correct, getting up next morning to find my horses at the Blue Lagoon, minus hobbles and bell, coming back to Injune and going to Charlie Johnson's camp to borrow hobbles, to be handed hobbles that Charlie had removed from my horse about a month previously. *Them* were the days.

Six weeks later, his copy of *The Woman at the Mill* arrived, and the same day Jack acknowledged it in a postscript to another long letter begun on the previous day. Davison had apparently recovered from an illness, and must have told Jack of a tale he had been writing about a crown lands ranger entitled "The Level Road". Jack's reappearance in his life seems to have interrupted it and he was thinking of abandoning it. Jack wrote:

You refer to the fact that no settlement is complete without the Crown Lands Ranger. The old type is dying out. The present system is to bring in lads who have just passed their Senior Exam, train them for a while in Head Office, then put them out with a Surveyor and afterwards bring them into H.O. for another term there. This training takes from two or three years when the lads (cadets) are sent to country centres and to accompany old rangers on inspections. Some of the cadets, when not showing adaptability to bush conditions, are kept in H.O. We have had a few of them here and they are all keen on their job and smart with it. Reports and sketches are no trouble to them, but there is no putting the telescope to the blind eye, not even in the smallest detail. I do not say that the old hands faked reports but I know of a good few settlers who were put a year or two ahead of things by being allowed to carry out necessary work that was not regarded as fulfilling the conditions of selection.

To put the matter clearly, our discretionary powers are curtailed. Most of the cadets have enlisted and are doing well, good lads.

Gone are the days when you heard around the camp fire as one of the main topics, "What sort of a Ranger have you got?" when the reply was that he was either a b — d or a good cove according to the point of view. Perhaps some cockie who was behind in his pear clearing had a good excuse when we would state that he was working under adverse conditions and get him an extension of time for clearing the pear, but when his case became absolutely hopeless, and we had him up at Show Cause proceedings at a Commissioner's Court (which was generally a matter of him being relieved of a great deal of pear clearing) he would turn dog on us and state that he had done a great deal more than we reported. . . .

In regard to pear clearing or non-pear clearing:

> No need to state the reason why
> "Perhaps too wet, perhaps too dry"
> To carry him in our report,
> And then at last when in the court
> Selector Smith was bound to state
> He'd spent ten times our estimate. . .

I am not quite clear as to why you should give up writing "The Level Road" because I have turned up. I understand you when you write that although you may have some particular person in mind, you bring your imagination into play when you give them fictional characters.

Jack's last surviving letter to Davison concluded:

> If I can give you the same spirit of the bush in my letters as you say I have in person, I am content. Again I write you to treat my letters as a recreation from more serious work. That is the spirit in which I would like you to be in.
>
> You never know — Heaven may be an afterworld from where we can see or feel friends still alive and thinking of us in a kind way. Hell may be where from where we are cut off friends and we see either no one thinking of us or our old acquaintances thinking the worst of us. I think, however, there is always the knowledge that someone will now and then add "a stane tae our cairn". A custom that I think originated when covenanters in Scotland were buried on the moors with just a pile of stones to mark their grave. Friends in passing the grave would add a stone to the pile as a tribute. A kindly thought will represent another stone.

It seems likely that Davison did not reply, and the correspondence closed. But he preserved Jack's three long letters. And he finished "The Level Road".

> . . . The grey-green heads of the brigalow clumps, now turned to clouds of ashen silver under a white high-riding moon who needs all the sky to hold her brightness. The whole world a miracle of light and shadow and quiet —an unbreathing quiet, a quiet scarcely of this earth—like a bubble blown in glass, so large and fine a word might shatter it to tinkling shards.
>
> Phil Macfarlane, standing by the buckboard, tall, broad, gaunt, stooping, large of hand, foot, and feature, came out of an entranced silence with a deep sigh. He had caught himself enjoying the beauty of an old familiar love as naturally as a hungered man enjoys bread.

"The Level Road" underwent two title changes: "Moonlight" and finally "Crown Lands Ranger". Then the finished typescript was withdrawn, unpublished. Its six thousand words had led Davison into a larger theme of love—unrequited, forbidden, tragic—which had obsessed him since some of his earliest stories had been conceived while sinking sandalwood fenceposts. He needed descriptive material from the story for a new book.

But by 1945, only a few months after his

correspondence with Jack Cumming, he had realised that the country setting was too narrow for his vast theme. So he began again, setting it among city folk in Sydney. But the country material was not wasted. He used it once more in a book written rapidly during that year, about a sheepdog called Dusty.

Thereafter he had no need to write of country settings for he was soon to be living in one again, and farming successfully at last. The decks were now clear to treat his other theme expansively—an expansion that took another twenty years.

While he worked in the Lands Office at Dalby, Jack Cumming planted a row of roadside trees to be seen from the office windows. He also lovingly collected an exhaustive range of local grasses and, labelled with descriptions of their habitat and uses, they made a proud and permanent display in the office vestibule for the guidance of selectors and others coming to the district. Then one day for a prank, shortly before Jack's retirement, some of the young cadets in the office set fire to it. They couldn't have known how such a loss would sadden and disappoint the silly old bugger.

He was a widower of eighty-nine when he died of cancer in the Freemasons' Homes at Sandgate near Brisbane. It was one of his sisters' daughters who visited him regularly to the last, and inherited all he left: a muddled bundle of papers, folded and tattered. They contained a government report on prickly pear, some handwritten notes and typewritten drafts of poems. No letters from anyone.

His file at the Dalby Lands Office held only routine office material, applications for leave, and so on. Some time before his death, traffic lights were installed at the main crossroads in Dalby and, in the resultant road widening, Jack's trees were removed.

John Gibbon Cumming died on St Valentine's Day, 1971, nine months after his author friend whose daily life and battles against nature he must have known, during those four rugged, vital years, better than any man or woman. I, a biographer tracing the steps of Davison, reached Brisbane in September and learned I had missed him by seven months.

What Arrogance

We lay on the sand one night, and watched
the steadiness of an upside-down Orion, above
a sea flecked with starlight. I was saying
how, if you ran a straight line to move
from the tip of the sword through the middle of the belt,
you got a pointer near enough to north,
when across the darkness blinked a satellite,
orbiting under the Hunter. What arrogance,
I thought, what supreme cheek, a slight
on-off stare of humming metal.

Possibly its pop-art clumsy form
was full of flashing buttons, bleeps to send
classified observations of arms, of vulgar
silent ranks of missiles on borders that lend
fear, to the real few that fear, data
like this collecting on its diurnal round.
Not that this worries me unduly.
I was more annoyed to think that craft
saw two unpolitical, truly
unpolitical figures alone on a beach.

I. V. HANSEN

Strip Tease

for a moment
she has discarded
the snake
skin of her sex
which has hung
limbless as a goddess
of fire places

& has removed
the tiger
skin of his sex
which has hung
fixed over entrances
& always creating
optical confusions
over exits

now for the moment
comes easy
it has taken
all of her
life so far
to scrub the walls
speechless as buddha's dreams
& whiter than flesh
which is not so
white

& so disarmed
she runs
tracks
into her body
with her nails
to show how far
she's come

CAROL NOVACK

The Canal

So there the road ended, cut by the new canal
Brimming with pale blue water. Should we turn back?
"We can drive on, and since we can, we shall."
For there is still that flat rough sandy track
Beside the canal, far back into the hills;
And though, miraculously rising, that strange blue water
Is three feet higher than its banks, no drop of it spills;
Though further on, where the shore is steeper and wilder,
It breaks on the sand, so it seems, in fine white surf.
How can we drive through that? Then high in the air
Dazzling like hail it flies against the cliff.
Watching it half in wonder, half in fear,
We drove towards it. Softly a woman screamed.
I dreamed all this, but what was it I dreamed?

DOUGLAS STEWART

Yellow

This is a yellow poem written on a grey afternoon
by a red-faced woman. My Chinese friend Pong-a-dong,
my Indonesian friend Fuck-a-duck, my English friend Kick-a-dick,
my Australian friend Come-off-it, are no help.

Still and again and forever I waited for the knight
in the rubbish truck, VW, Land Rover, aeroplane,
on the yacht, dinghy, tub, spacecraft, foot, to come
in on a wing, a cloud of exhaust, the exhalation of breath
over a telephone wire, and save me, release me from the tower
where, imprisoned as a maiden, I am still. I thought I'd left
but they keep putting me back to be released again.

"The rescue will not take place," says Alec Hope.
In the fairy story it always takes place.
"From those to whom much is given, much
will be required," said the Headmaster.

This is the end of the yellow poem written on a red-faced
woman by a grey afternoon. It is not the end of the red-
faced woman written by a grey afternoon on a yellow poem.

GLEN TOMASETTI

The Counter-Weight

When I hear about the latest research in laser rays
about Igloo White and the electronic warfare programmes
to which we are all locked in
about a cloud of a certain shape that can bring the young people
into the streets and make the nations tremble
about the 6,000 sheep lying dead in Nevada
about the names that are symphonies of despair
like Dachau and Treblinka
And when I think of this little globe racketing on its way
along the shores of space like a beach-buggy on mixed fuel
I know that only an equal and opposite good
can keep us from hurtling off into darkness
at an accelerating pace
That only the extreme gravity of the possibilities
can pin the hands to the desks long enough
to make them reach for the red telephone
instead of the starter button
That only the thunderous surge of our listening hearts
and the prayers darkening their swell like seaweed
Can give us hope that the morning sunrise flood not with its foolish pitiful light
the whole world at once.

BRUCE DAWE

Sailor

Pull it back / pull hard /
the slow arm draws the bow
of its own arrow —

longships shot from wave-broken targets
anchor inside circle

water closes — years widen eyes —

women ripple our minds to edge-driven oars /
putting our backs into it

love / your keel haul heavy treasure
sore in cold sea cave /

I come back, cured with salt, grief-stricken
in the sailing of my locked chest.

The sun on the broad blade /
brooding strokes, mood drained to this world's end.

The world round / we row the heart's sinking.

ERIC BEACH

Poem

Red blue green — reflecting all the way from Sydney to Hong Kong
Unspoilt

I once caught a flash of windscreen and white collar
From mid ocean
As one might catch a glimpse of the Alps

Then, when I climbed a fence in Tangiers
I released a kind of Australian slang from inside each wire:
'slack' 'bang' 'You Yang' 'gang gang'

Next, reeled quickly on the duco
Saw branches tire
Eccentrically describe a mountain loop in Iraq.

JOHN ANDERSON

Lady Inertia

like a statue, y struggle to yr knees
& th graspin' dead, they condemn a smoke
with their mouths, th red beats
through th nameless earth, & out
of th emptied drum, all th restless
forsaken, always th wind
in a landscape, birth in a fatal flaw

in evenin' dress th beggars come
in shelled boats of electricity
though they move no shadow
across th face of th sun
YOU ARE TH WEAPON
OF WHAT Y WANT

target sex arrow weave bull's eye
always th wind & a violence in rooms
th nameless ones / th blue deceived
& narcissus who runs from th tap
to th sink full of faces

always th wind in a landscape
th face left on th wall
th obelisk & odalisque quarrel
in th sky of bitten leaves
through th streets of grindin'
music, always th wind

she's not th one
y say good-bye every day
to / through th streets
    of grindin' music.
th overtaken,
always th wind
in a landscape
th face
left on
th wall

ERIC BEACH

Elwood

What to make of it, boarding the tram?
To make of the treaded sill the
lacquered timbers,
what do you make of one red shirt

bowling up a windy hill?
And prying at the jukebox of ideas
(notice your finger
nestle
into the indentation)

how is it that always the wrong tune plays out
jackhammering rhythms for shelter
and for shade
the hydra-headed Christmas tree of isms,
say Mr. Death instead of
Madam Life?
Scaffoldings swim the afternoon,
surreal frailties on its rump. Or lyk depiction
in the grate
Art of the Union of Soviets —
up the muscled dresses of landmarks
wrecking teams find
serrated grins

whose teeth are hills, distraction, wind —
in that
illusive percussion to motion they go sideways.
Shirt at hillcrest/ swallowed/ as we move

I thank you not for
laughter sufficient for memory
sour weeks, jubilant congress,
the weightless silver
flesh near the centre of sonorous nights

as much as for moments
I have completely forgotten / as much as for having
got me this far

where a buttress of sunlight writes on a wall.
A conductress has come down to take the fares
that change every day with her mood and your face.
Compendium of guesswork! is she sure

of the pause after lovemaking sometimes
and of the way

hot baths are purest pleasure
how new clothes

conceding no wrinkles manage to comb
optimism up from surly skin.

At the stops the tram's an island, wet
clatter and breath of rained-on hair.
How do I get to Elwood from here?
The small distress has a dignity:

they ask her as if she knew

ROBERT HARRIS

Heritage

Rise. Address the day like an envelope,
slip out the house like a wasted word
over breakfast, dressed like a carefully
phrased apology. Catch the 7.22 on time
& sit jammed between newspapers & smoke/
jostled like packed atoms until the station
looms into sight: surreal & everyday grey.

5 p.m. Seal, then post another day —
midnight collection. The night hangs outside
like a recurring dream/ folds us in
aesthetics of suburbia while all around lives
drop asleep like mud from lifted boots.

KEVIN HART

Finale

Two men folded up a forest,
put it on the back of their truck
and turned to receive the sky.

The sky was full of dust
and had to be shaken.
People were standing nearby
but it was shaken nonetheless.
They waited for water.

Water came in a packing case
made of pine. They looked
at their clip boards and at
each other; nobody wanted
any mistakes, not with water.

Someone shouted at them from above
which they took to be a sign
that this was water; they made
no further fuss and bundled it on.

They asked for a desert
and that was handed down
with some stunted trees and a strip
of silver foil representing dawn.

That was the end of it all.
Even the billboards by the entrance
were prised loose and broken up.
God knows whether they cleared
the total debt. It's used for
indoor bowling now.

NICHOLAS HASLUCK

Jiri Tibor

"I wouldn't mind, except for all his insane accusations!"

BRUCE GILLESPIE

The World Science Fiction Convention: Australia's Turn

That people should form an active interest in a specific literary form is unusual; that these people should hold elaborate conventions is remarkable; that their world conference should be held in Australia is unique.

Science fiction is a literary form whose readers and writers form an active interest group throughout the world. They have been corresponding with each other, publishing magazines for each other, and meeting regularly at conventions since the late 1930s. The first world convention was held in New York in 1938, with about 200 people attending. More than 4000 people attended last year's world convention in Washington, DC.

1975 is Australia's turn. The 33rd World Science Fiction Convention will be held at the Southern Cross Hotel, Melbourne, from 14-17 August 1975. All readers of this magazine are invited to attend.

Australia's world convention is the result of more than six years of intensive, unpaid work by a small group of science fiction readers and writers from all states. To gain this privilege, our bid had to face threatened challenges from Los Angeles and San Francisco, and from Sweden. For more than four years, Australia's amateur science fiction magazines (the 'fanzines' by which science fiction readers communicate among themselves) carried our message "Australia in 75!" overseas. The readers took up the message and passed it on. The slogan became a reality when the members of the 1973 World Convention, held in Toronto, voted Australia as the host for 1975. The dream had come true: for the first time the World Convention would be held in the southern hemisphere, and it would leave the American continent for the first time in five years.

Why does the prospect of holding the world convention cause so much enthusiasm among Australian and overseas readers and writers?

More than anything else, we wanted to stage the convention so that we could meet our overseas friends and make new friends among the science fiction readers of Australia.

Many Australian readers and writers have been sending letters and magazines to overseas acquaintances for some years. Since we cannot all travel overseas to meet them, now they have a chance to meet us and travel around Australia.

There are a large number of people scattered around Australia who buy large numbers of science fiction books and magazines. Often they do not know that anybody else at all shares their interest. The convention can provide a way for these people to meet each other.

Some of the world's best science fiction writers will be attending the convention. Robert Silverberg, Larry Niven, and Jack Williamson are a few of the writers who have already made plans to visit Australia for the occasion.

Most famous of all, Ursula Le Guin will be here as our professional guest of honor (representing the writers). Ursula Le Guin is famous for her Earthsea trilogy of fantasy books (the final volume, *The Farthest Shore,* won the US National Book Award for Children's Literature in 1974). Her latest novel, *The Dispossessed,* is a thoughtful and moving drama about the prospects for anarchism and a truly free society.

Ursula Le Guin's trip has been supported by a $2000 grant from the Literature Board. During the fortnight preceding the convention, she will conduct a writers' workshop for previously unpublished writers in the field.

Our Fan guests of honor (representing the readers) are Susan Wood and Michael Glicksohn from Canada. They are famous for re-creating interest in science fiction in Canada through their

award-winning magazine, *Energumen*. Susan Wood is an associate professor of English at the University of British Columbia, and Glicksohn a high school teacher of science.

The Australian guest of honor is Don Tuck from Tasmania. He is a bibliographer who has become famous for his *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, the first volume of which has just been published.

The program of the world convention is a second reason for our enthusiasm. Overseas and Australian science fiction readers, writers, critics, publishers, and editors will talk with each other and members of the convention during panel discussions, lectures, and group discussions. We expect that the film program will include many films which have never been seen before in Australia. The art show and art auction will feature work from some of the world's best science fiction and fantasy artists, and will also give a first opportunity for Australian artists to exhibit in the field. For the masquerade party, people construct elaborate costumes. The publishers will display their latest books. The Hugo Awards (science fiction's equivalent of the Hollywood Oscars) will be awarded during the convention banquet. And, most importantly, the room parties begin when the rest of the program ends and fade out as the program begins again the next day. In this way, meeting people remains the primary object.

The organising committee of the world convention has a third aim, which goes beyond the serious discussion and lighthearted banter of the event itself. We want to use the convention to put science fiction on the map—to bring the whole field to the attention of Australians.

Traditionally, science fiction has been ignored in this country. Its readers have been derided for their interest in that "crazy Buck Rogers stuff". (Perhaps this is why readers feel such a bond with each other.) Australian writers have usually preferred social-realist styles to experiments in extrapolation and fantasy. Australian universities and colleges have ignored the existence of science fiction, whereas more than 400 universities teach courses in the subject overseas.

But, unobtrusively and often without being paid, critics such as John Foyster and George Turner, editors such as John Bangsund and Bruce Gillespie and writers like Lee Harding and A. Bertram Chandler have been establishing Australia's reputation as a place where science fiction is respected and understood. Now we want to convey our message to Australian readers in general. After all, "science fiction" now includes a wide variety of writing, from the traditional extrapolative thriller to books like Brian Aldiss' *Barefoot in the Head* and *Report on Probability A*, which owe more to James Joyce than to Jules Verne. The discussions, lectures, and exhibitions at the world convention will demonstrate this variety to a new audience.

For further information readers of *Overland* may write to the membership secretary, Aussiecon 75, GPO Box 4039, Melbourne, Victoria 3001.

Australian Writers and Science Fiction

FRANK BRYNING

In 1919 a serial, "Out of the Silence", by Erle Cox, appeared in the Melbourne *Argus*. It told of a superwoman from a long-lost yet technically advanced civilisation in outback Australia who essayed to remake the world. Republished several times—in Australia, Britain, USA, and Russia—this work has become accepted as a science fiction classic and collector's item within Sf 'fandom', world wide.

Cox, with his contemporaries Bernard Cronin and J. M. Walsh, might be said to have placed Australian writers in the vanguard of the modern era of science fiction.

"Out of the Silence" appeared seven years before the late Hugo Gernsback, in New York, published the first issue of *Amazing Stories* (April 1926), and thus initiated 'pulp' magazines devoted to scientifiction. Sf pulps caught on quickly in America. Through the 1930s they presented fiction in the tradition of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells, with overtones of Edgar Allen Poe. Science fiction became a distinct genre—sensational, self-aware, conscious of its special nature and purpose.

Magazine and book publication of Sf proliferated post-war throughout the English-speaking world, including a seeding in Australia. It took root in Europe. (An independent, less commercialised Sf was also developing in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.)

A few Australian writers have been publishing Sf in Australia, USA, and Britain since the early 1920s. Their achievements at home and abroad might be assessed as from 'fair average quality' to 'meritorious in the circumstances'. The circumstances have not been very easy.

Erle Cox had two lesser novels published in Australia: *Fools' Harvest* (1939), warning of invasion, Sydney's harbor bridge the first bombing casualty, and *The Missing Angel* (1957), a deal-with-Satan fantasy.

Bernard Cronin, who has his place alongside Vance Palmer and others in Australian literature, was, like Cox, a literary journalist. His "The Green Flame" (about a chemical pellet rendering water combustible) was serialised in the Melbourne *Herald* (1924) retitled *Toad* and published in Britain (1929), and serialised twice in the USA. "The Satyr", again from the Melbourne *Herald* (1924), was also republished twice in the USA. Later, under the pseudonym 'Eric North', Cronin published *The Ant Men* (1955), and some borderline Sf/fantasy in the *Australian Journal* and elsewhere.

J. M. Walsh, a crime, mystery and adventure novelist living in England, was probably the first Australian to be published in Gernsback's *Amazing* and other Sf pulps. Under the pen name 'H. Haverstock Hill' he published "Vandals of the Void" (1931), "Vanguard to Neptune" (1932), "The Terror out of Space" (1934), "The Secret of the Crater" (1939) and other scientific adventure stories.

With these three Australian writers can claim to have been represented at the beginning of what we can now discern as a distinct modern literary genre.

By publishing Sf as a separate body of fiction devoted to presenting "as accurate a prophecy of the future as is consistent with the present marvellous growth of science", in stories where "there may be extremely strange and improbable devices and scenes" but are not "outside of the reach of science", Hugo Gernsback earned himself the title of 'Father of Science Fiction'. It was a school of writing that had to come into existence early in this century, with tremendous industrial growth

and revolutionary technical innovation forcing revolutionary changes in the economic base of society, in the social superstructure, in the relations of people to the production process—and to one another. Gernsback's science fiction took a close look at the mechanics of this and found it exciting.

According to Gernsback's tenets, science fiction should speculate upon the immediate and long-term probabilities of human existence as they might be logically extrapolated from existing data, verified experience, economic, technological, sociological, biological, archaeological, psychological, or other knowledge, and current trends. It would present its anticipations in fiction. It would point forward to where we might be going. Occasionally it would extrapolate back and show us the way we had come.

The best and most satisfying science fiction, Australian or overseas, is that which comes nearest to this 'hard-core' definition, which contrasts with non-scientific, supernatural, or "sword and sorcery" fantasy at the other. There is, of course, a middle ground.

The Sf writer, then, examines some established fact of life, some technical achievement, some plausible theory, and proceeds to argue that "if this be so then this, or that, will happen". With high regard to cause and effect he will construct a ladder of speculation and human behavior which he climbs to a logical yet apparently fantastic outcome. For example, Philip Latham's "The Aphrodite Project", a story presented in the guise of an abstract from a scientific report, tells of an unmanned instrumented satellite launched from Earth into an orbit about Venus. It enables astronomers to measure accurately the mass of the planet and collect other data not otherwise procurable.

Published in June 1949 this was 'unbelievable' fiction. (Sputnik One, October 1957, was more than eight years in the future.) Published today, no one could think that story fantastic. It would not be the astonishing feat of imagination it was in 1949. Then it was typical science fiction—exciting, 'way-out' in its speculations, yet a deeply satisfying piece of reading for mature-minded Sf addicts whose beckoning interest and pleasure were to speculate on reasoned and plausible glimpses of probable futures. It was also a tale of sheer wonder for any reader.

Latham had a very special advantage, of course. He knew his science. 'Philip Latham' is, in fact, the pen name of America's leading astronomer, Dr R. S. Richardson, of Mount Palomar and Mount Wilson Observatories. He knew what thinking was going on in astronomy and in the related space research. He extrapolated from that knowledge and dreamed of what some future generation of astronomers might hope for, if . . .

Australia's Sf authors include a few with academic degrees or high-level technical expertise. But in the much larger and (generally) more advanced scientific and industrial 'establishment' of the United States, Britain, and Europe, Gernsback and his rival Sf publishers found many—some of world eminence.

Those scientists, with a supporting group of highly qualified technical experts in the rapidly developing engineering, aviation, electronics and other industries, became writers of much Sf in the 1930s and 1940s. Doctors of medicine, research biologists and professionals in the humanities were also encouraged to speculate in fiction beyond the advanced fringes of their specialities. Then a third group appeared, who may be described by Wells's term—"camp followers of science". Writers, primarily, some already established in journalism or popular fiction, they were *prepared to research the science they used,* and to keep up with scientific reading to find Sf ideas.

These three groups of writers made their 'fantastic' science fiction plausible and thought-provoking. They forged their chains of cause and effect, eschewing the supernatural, the occult, or magic. Many of their tales of wonder could not be entirely disbelieved. They built up a mass of what hard-core Sf devotees regard as the genuine, path-finding Sf, around which the 'scientific romance', and the still less valid 'science fantasy', have accreted. Much of this romance and fantasy is splendidly done and is fully enjoyed by the hard-core puritans. But they remain sensitive about *la difference* and don't like fantasy to be classified as true science fiction.

A proportion of Australian writers can be called camp followers of science. Their work identifies them. More belong to romance and fantasy. Not really dedicated to the scientific, they may justly argue that a good story is a good story, that all fiction is fantasy and need not be burdened by a too-rigid devotion to known fact. Indeed, with so many of science fiction's favorite speculations now converted to historical fact, the power of hard-core to astound and astonish has languished. Little can be asserted now that will be *dis*believed, and less scientific Sf is the trend.

Arthur C. Clarke, Isaac Asimov and a few others can still present the scientific concept as the exciting protagonist, but the scientist-technician-camp-follower authors are less significant than they were.

Which gives the writer pure and simple a better chance!

The rationale is appealing. The proper study of mankind is Man. Real literature has always been about people, their struggles, victories, defeats. Science fiction has merely provided its own distinctive contexts and environments. Within these the only genuine protagonist, Man, must act and react according to his nature.

One cannot but agree. Besides, it is easier that way. Not least for us Australians.

We have Woomera, but the rocketry and the missiles come from overseas. Australia's science, advanced technology and professional expertise are still colonial. They originate, mainly, abroad. They have yielded few Australian writers of Sf who extrapolate from original discoveries or new trends within their own specialties.

There is no body of truly indigenous Australian Sf, even if there may be a handful of stories. Our agriculture has produced revolutionary strains of desert wheats, of sheep — and the stump-jump plough. Our Aboriginals provide data for anthropology and sociology, our marsupials for zoology, our fossils for palaeontology, our eucalypts for botany and pharmacology, our Barrier Reef to marine biology. We can name hardly more than the Aboriginals, the desert, Ayers Rock and Woomera as essential ingredients in Australian Sf stories.

Yet, derivative as Australian Sf has necessarily been, Australian writers have proved adept at catching on to imported ideas and ingenious in exploiting them. They have published competently written science fiction and fantasy in the most sophisticated markets of America and Britain. They have placed their work in the commercial public prints and popular periodicals at home. They have entered the fringe of Australian literature. Altogether, in the circumstances, their achievement can be called meritorious.

Note

The following Australian writers have published science fiction/fantasy in commercial publications in Australia or overseas, or in book form (writers published only in the non-commercial "fan" publications—"fanzines"—are not included): John Baxter, Louis Becke, W. R. Bennett, Harvey Blanks (radio: "Captain Miracle", "Space our Destiny"), Damien Broderick, Frank Bryning, A. Bertram Chandler (English master mariner with Sf reputation well established before settling in Australia in 1956), Jon Cleary, Alan Connell, Stephen Cook, Erle Cox, Bernard Cronin ('Eric North'), Kit Denton, M. Barnard Eldershaw, Trevor Finch, Colin Free, Gerald Glaskin, Leslie Greener, David Grigg, Eric Gunton, Lee Harding, Dominic Healy, J. W. Heming, Norma K. Hemming, Fred Hoinville, Fergus Hume, J. M. Iggulden, Vernon Knowles, Winifred Law, Martin Loran, William le Queux, Cedric Mentiplay, Ron Miller, Bill Moloney, Tony Morphett, R. Douglas Nicholson, Mary E. Patchett, Frank Roberts, John Rowe, Olaf Ruhen, Guy Saunders, Alan Seymour, Ron Smith, Ivan Southall, Dal Stivens, Dennis Stocks, Maurice Tindall, John A. Vile, J. M. Walsh, Wynne Whiteford, Laurel Whiteford, Jack Wodhams, B. J. Young.

Science Fiction and Education

GEORGE TURNER

What the attitude of Australian educationists may be towards science fiction I do not know—or if indeed they have a considered attitude—but would be interested to discover. I know that some of our primary school teachers look favorably on some science fiction (as with any genre the spectrum ranges from excellent to abominable) and that many school librarians buy considerable quantities for the student shelves. Some Victorian teachers of English tell me that they actively use science fiction in their classes, so it seems that what is becoming a commonplace overseas is not altogether ignored here.

Some preliminary notes may serve to explain why American teachers of English have developed interest in this radical and rambunctious genre.

Science fiction—or 'sf', as it is more usually written—has become a major publishing phenomenon in America, England and continental Europe; with something of the order of 1000 new titles annually, the sales figures are breathtaking. The upsurge is not purely commercial in its origins; behind it is the change of attitudes and redirection of interests of people forced by events to realise that science is no longer a mystical preserve of scientists, and that the man in the street needs at least a nodding acquaintance with the major technologies and disciplines — notably physics, biology and ecology — if he is to understand the forces acting even on his tiny personal sector of the habitat. I have discussed this aspect of mental orientation elsewhere[1] and feel it requires no enlargement here.

This man in the street (grant his existence in some form of human averageness) can gain an initial apprehension of his not so brave new world from such specialised works as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring,* Gordon Rattray Taylor's *The Biological Time Bomb* and other reputable accounts of the current planetary scene. His difficulty will be to separate the reputable from the suspect, such as *The Jupiter Effect* with its spectacular but doubtfully applicable data concerning earthquakes and San Francisco, and the inspirationally lunatic, such as *Chariots Of The Gods.*

Though he may read the soberly factual books with mounting uneasiness, and rightly so, he will gain little guidance from them; he will learn what change, decay and threats of doom mean to humanity, but not what they mean and will mean to him as an individual or as a member of a family or social group. They tell him what may come to pass but offer no information on his useful reactions to new conditions or how his evolutionary adaptability—remembering that 'survival of the fittest' does not mean 'of the nicest, strongest and cleverest'—will preserve or desert him.

For such hints and musings he must turn elsewhere and, if one excepts the flow of works of potted psychology, it is the novel which traditionally has examined man in relation to his environment in lay terms, and still does so.

But the educational requirement, if the human race is to exist as more than a cliff-hanging incident on the ecological precipice, is not only for examination of man in relation to a changing environment but also in relation to those possible environments which science and industry are preparing with little understanding of, and sometimes little apparent concern for, just what it is they prepare. Too often in the past the common man has allowed political and philosophical change to roll over him, adjusted in agonies of blood and terror and continued living as though pogrom and disaster made an occasional, intellectually-bracing shower. Perhaps they do, but he cannot afford to wait on environmental change, because this is something to which he is not physically equipped

to adjust. If he is to beat the future his thinking must be done now. The chances are that it is not too late.

In America the 'literary establishment' — if that vague and disreputable phrase be admitted for want of a better — long ago recognised that sf contained the seeds of better things than bug-eyed monsters and nubile star-maidens. It is more than a decade since sf was tentatively welcomed into the field of educational literature in that country, not at the primary level but in the colleges and universities. At the time of writing more than 300 sf courses are listed in the prospectuses of American centres of higher education.

What the courses are like heaven only knows; after hearing peculiar reports of strange courses reputedly available in some minor establishments, one fears the worst. There are certainly some, however, which appear to operate on useful lines. For brief consideration I select one relatively minor establishment which publishes a magazine which allows some assessment of the style of the work done and which also covers, through its contributors, the teaching situation in high schools across the country.

The English Department of the College of Wooster, Ohio, publishes semi-annually an attractive 'little' magazine entitled *Extrapolation* devoted to sf literary studies and edited by Professor Thomas Clareson. Recent issues have contained an original and persuasive essay on Mark Twain's attitudes towards technology and sociology as displayed in the *Connecticut Yankee*, a short study of Cordwainer Smith (better known in non-sf circles by his proper name of Paul Linebarger) as an ironist, and a reasoned consideration of practical roles to be played by sf in a changing society.

The first two of these are fairly conventional, more or less what one might expect of a literary magazine devoted to a narrow aspect of literature, neither better nor worse than critical essays published in the 'little' magazines of Australia. What matters is that they talk sense and are not trying to prove that sf is a superior brand of literature, as too many misguided editors and novelists have done, but only that it is an interesting and rewarding one.

The third article, concerning sf as a useful social tool—a means of spreading ideas and the explanations of ideas, i.e. paradigmatic representations of theories and abstractions as impacts on society—shows a less consciously literary approach and is presented not by a literary student or graduate but by a social scientist. With him we bridge the gap between the academic and the student because Dennis Livingston teaches not at a college or university but at a high school. It is perhaps here that the educational usefulness of the magazine begins because this is not a solitary essay from a solitary correspondent, but one of five such informative articles in the four copies of the magazine in my possession.

The interest of these articles lies in the fact that though all the courses taught by their writers are the preserve of the English departments of their schools, none are taught as conventional literary courses. The emphasis is always on non-literary uses of the genre; they are using literature as a springboard to the contemplation of change, evolution and decision.

I quote from one of these articles[2] which indicates the line of study very clearly: '. . . in this course science fiction will be studied as a medium for: Forecast of the future, Social Criticism, Dramatic presentation of scientific theory'. The first of these items is admitted by most sf writers to be of value only if the word 'forecast' is given very flexible interpretation, but the techniques of extrapolation involved can be useful. This is an aspect of sf whose value lies in encouraging the student to use disciplined imagination as opposed to fantasising and wish fulfilment. Any ass can ask: "What if we all turned green overnight?" and make a tale of it, but it requires research and respect for the probabilities to examine a social attitude — say, respect for the sanctity of human life or inbuilt resistance to change — to observe the real as opposed to the stated attitudes of social and national groups, to consider the legal, physical, psychological and technological pressures on their thinking and so to propose the real question: "What next, if this goes on?" The answers will not be right answers, if only because history does not proceed in the linear manner of deduction, but at least the question will have been considered and the shocks of change possibly reduced. If the tutorial guidance is intelligent the student will have been encouraged to think in terms wider than those needful for the narrow objectives of degree or career.

The third item, "Dramatic presentation of scientific theory", has value in that scientific theory is becoming increasingly difficult to present to persons who have not at least a grounding in the relevant subject and often a considerable mathematical facility; yet some understanding of such

subjects as molecular biology or transactional psychology is becoming essential for people who are not prepared to be led by the nose simply because they cannot comprehend the technical basis of the world developing too rapidly round them. SF writers (particularly those with post-graduate training in the sciences, and there is a surprising number of them) have developed techniques for the dramatisation of the results of practical and theoretical research. They do not seek to teach science through fiction (which would result in over-simplified science and bad fiction) but they do pass on, in easily assimilable form, an understanding of basic aspects of the new knowledge, a familiarity with the necessary language of science and some reasonable guidance to the directions which new research is taking. They inject life into what in the textbook must remain lifeless and some clarity into what in newspaper 'popular' accounts is apt to be turgid, biassed and misleading.

But the second item, 'Social criticism', the core and strength of responsible sf, is the one on which the correspondent teachers appear to concentrate. (One must hope that the reader of this article has by now discarded any preconception of sf as 'space opera' and horror stories. These are the popular dregs of sf as pornographic novels are the popular dregs of realistic fiction.)

The role of sf in social criticism began long ago with suggested answers to the 'if this goes on' type of question cited above, and made its points by satirical exaggeration, as in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and Pohl and Kornbluth's *The Space Merchants*, which achieved appreciation and notoriety in their day and are still in print. These hit such obvious targets as genetic irresponsibility, the psychologically-levelling effects of saturation advertising and the power of huge cartels. Others, less well known to the general reader, forsook satire for genuine consideration of specific questions, as in James Blish's sharp querying of the effect of some current biological research on religious dogma in *A Case of Conscience*. More recently Ursula Le Guin has examined the difficulties of complete communication between individuals in *The Left Hand of Darkness* and the contrasted problems of authoritarian and non-authoritarian societies in *The Dispossessed*.

All these considerations are samples of sf areas of interest which must concern the educated man in the present age. But how can an educational system deal with such urgencies at high school level save by explanation and discussion, risking boredom and hoping for no more than partial success? For a possible answer, I continue quoting from the same article as previously:

> . . . a class activity requiring a sharing of information . . . the game promotes co-operation between world area teams trying to save the world from four causes of doom — overpopulation, shortage of resources, alien invasion and technology mania. The game's dynamic force is the conflict between such co-operation and the real competition between teams protecting their areas from solutions which may help save the world but would hurt the area's vital self-interests.

The conflict between necessity and expediency, between the race and the individual. Most neatly dramatised. Here, I think, we have politics, philosophy and ethics with a vengeance. I would dearly like to sit in as a spectator of such a game between youngsters whose ideas are not yet too thoroughly corrupted by two-edged semantics and the divisive tensions of too many theoretical moral and social systems. I feel there might be some basic truths exposing themselves without shame.

There is nothing new in learning from games; even animals do it, without prompting from us, but the implications of social thinking and moral decision required in the game offered here are immense, and the tensions generated could be very great as the murderous efforts of genuinely well-meaning solutions are borne in on the players. If 'alien invasion' seems less than urgent as a problem, the same cannot be said of the other examples, and this combination of social, scientific and ethical operations arising from a minor literary genre is surely a fresh conception of the expendable uses of the English department. I wish to God someone had dreamed up such a game while I maundered over "When I consider how my life was spent", or "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" in those years when the mind raged for use instead of simple stuffing.

The article concludes, "High school students seem to like their expanded sense of what science fiction really is, enjoying the provocative aspects of the genre, not just its entertainment value." I wonder how many teachers of English or social studies in Australia can say as much for what they teach today. "Provocative." Should not education be infinitely, endlessly provocative? Any student who has to fight out such problems as the above

with his peers, observing the dangers and difficulties of actions that he may one day be committed to taking, can only emerge with a deeper vision of his world.

It would be naive to suggest that fictional solutions are intended to do more than highlight the nature and ramification of world problems, but it is precisely this highlighting in terms of action and character which lends a reality too often set at an intellectual distance by the precise scientific statement. That a few teachers should have grasped the possibility of using predictive fiction as a springboard for the discussion of present reality is hearteningly imaginative.

That sf takes the attention of youth is fully recognised by the publishing trade; a large proportion of the sf market is slanted towards the 10 to 15 age group, though not with educational values in mind. One local publisher, however, pressed the sense of wonder into service for the purpose of remedial reading and commissioned Melbourne author Lee Harding to rehandle one of his sf stories into suitable form.[3] I understand the venture is considered successful.

This attractiveness of a particular literary genre for the young, including those who show some resistance to reading as a voluntary activity, has been recognised by a number of teachers in this country, as I said earlier, but what use they have found for it as a teaching tool is not easily discerned. Therefore the Melbourne Science Fiction Club is taking up the subject of the educational uses of sf at the World Science Fiction Convention to be held in Melbourne in August by scheduling special sessions for teachers of English and librarians.

Since the guest of honor of the convention is to be Ursula Le Guin, winner of prizes in the field of children's literature, wife of an academician and daughter of another, one may reasonably hope for information on the educational scene in America. Also attending will be Peter Nicholls, who will be remembered in Australian academic circles as a teacher of English at Melbourne and Sydney universities, and who presently edits an English sf 'little' magazine, *Foundation,* of a type similar to Professor Clareson's *Extrapolation;* his experience in two countries may also produce relevant information.

This interest by a non-professional organisation is to be welcomed if it can bring professionals to discuss their needs and problems. Fans and club members are notoriously over-enthusiastic and much of their pressure can be discounted, but that game played at St Louis Pack High School in Minneapolis stays in my mind.

Notes:

[1] "SF: Death and Transfiguration of a Genre"; *Meanjin Quarterly,* Spring, 1973.

[2] "SF in the Classroom: Science Fiction in High School", by Martha Pine and Ginger Petrafaso, *Extrapolation,* May 1973.

[3] "The Fallen Spaceman", by Lee Harding (Cassell Australia Ltd.).

Old Dingo's Story

as told to ELISABETH WILLIAMS

Old Dingo is a Taland'i man ("with a little bit of Paiungu"), and his country was the stretch of Western Australian coastline from Carnarvon to North West Cape. For a time at a mission school, Old Dingo dived for pearl-shell and was a notable horseman. He now lives in a hovel on the Carnarvon Native Reserve.

This is about a fight in Ningaloo country, near Point Cloates, or back from Point Cloates in them ranges there. And about what happened after the fighting.

Taland'i and Paiungu, they meet close together and talk to each other in that Ningaloo country. That's their run and that's where they stop you know, in their own lingo mob. Yes, they home in their own country.

That's a long, long time ago. I think more than fifty people all right—might be a hundred. Oh crikey, that was a big mob.

I'm eighty-two now. I remember that murdering business and that chasing business. I was there. I never go into it you know, my Mum wouldn't let me go in. We'd be right back behind, all us kids. We can hear the fight and row, and hear the meanings and everything, but we're not allowed to see em.

Well then, there's a couple of white fellers just come into Yardie Creek, and they wouldn't let all this Ningaloo mob come in. Well, Yardie Creek their country, just like Ningaloo, so they had a fight.

Soon as they started this fight these blackfellers speared the two white man, both of em. They kill em all right, and they put em into the cave in the big range. That's the big Vlaming Head range you know, Norwest Cape lighthouse to Learmonth on Exmouth Gulf.

Well they put em in a cave the other side of Yardie Creek, the North side. They put these two fellers there, and then they go into this Yardie Creek country.

That's not the finish. Some more white fellers come in on a boat, and they followed this Ningaloo mob, and one of them shot two of the blackfellers. Then they took their womans away because they want to take them back to the boat.

Another yamadji speared one of these whitefellers, and then they all ran away up into the ranges.

One of the whitefellers went back and got this dead man's rifle, and he chased the Ningaloo mob, and shot two more blokes. And then they put the two yamadji blokes in the cave.

Left em there then, while they got the womans to take em back to the boat.

They go back to the boat you see, and they leave the two womans tied up there, and they ask the captain,

"Well look" they says "we got a two black womans there. Could we fetch em into this boat. We want permission to fetch em into the boat."

And the captain says "No, you can't fetch em into the boat."

Well they have to go back and take the rope off and let the womans go.

And these two fellers tried to go with em you see, like run away from the boat. So the other whitefellers shot at them. They got away though.

Oh crikey, there's been a lot of shootin along that coast.

They tried to get across to Giralia country then, and they come to Exmouth Gulf.

There was a big mob of Japanese campin there, like in the luggers. They were campin there pearlin.

When they seen em there pearlin they thought, "Oh well, this is right. We joint these fellers."

These two whitefellers they joint these Japanese fellers. They got these two womans with em.

All right.

Then the big blow come, that willie-willie.

Oh, and it washed the boats ashore and everything, and tipped the boats over and everything, and some of em thought what if they dive under the dinghy.

They tipped the dinghy half over like a sort of a house. And these fellers all get in there, about six of em.

But all the other Japanese fellers they just died, about—oh, about fifteen of em I think, dead. Couldn't do anything with em—they laying out in the flood.

But this other lot—when the big wave come it just tipped the boat right over. That's where the two woman and these whitefellers is.

They got killed. They got smothered and they got killed.

That's where they were, under the boat—couldn't get out. Big blow, and they couldn't lift the boat you know. The boat was a little bit too heavy and wet, and they were too weak to do anything. They couldn't come out, otherwise they get blown right to this Giralia coast from Exmouth Gulf.

All right.

Then they come into Giralia country, because they got washed away in the flood, like high tide.

I could just about show you the bones now. I think it's still there in Giralia country. This is all the skeleton now and the carcase. All the carcase all along that coast now alongside of the mangroves.

You might see everything here and there where the bones are. I don't think the bones quite rotten yet. You know I think you could see something of it there.

That's in the good old days you know. Hardly any people take any notice of all that killin. It was just about when white people just coming into Australia from the other country, Dutchies and all them fellers. No police about. Couldn't do anything. Nobody knew anything about it.

That's all I can tell you now. That's the finish, yes.

The Destruction of Lake Pedder

IAN A. E. BAYLY

Getting to know the H.E.C.

When I was walking through the Square
I met a man who wasn't there
He wasn't there again today
Oh how I wish he'd go away.

Lake Pedder and its environs were scintillatingly beautiful. Most people who experienced this beauty found their lives changed and haunted by the event; in terms of aesthetic experience they felt significantly richer, and in their appreciation of natural scenery they considered themselves equipped with a new criterion.

In 1955 official recognition of this outstanding beauty and recreational excellence was granted when Lake Pedder and a considerable area of surrounding land was proclaimed a scenic reserve under the Tasmanian Scenery Preservation Act of 1915. This reserve was officially named the Lake Pedder National Park.

The Scenery Preservation Act dealt with land that should be "permanently reserved" and, naturally enough, the 1955 proclamation led many people to believe that Lake Pedder, and the magnificent sandy beach on its eastern shore, would be preserved as part of our national heritage for all time. On this central issue the following exchange, taken from the transcript of evidence presented to the Lake Pedder Committee of Enquiry (hereafter LPCE)[1], is illuminating:

Payne [Associate Commissioner of the Tasmanian Forestry Department, and this department's representative on the Scenery Preservation Board at the time of proclamation of the Lake Pedder National Park]: ". . . My concern was as a forestry administrator. I didn't want the concept of dedication to be lessened in any way."

St John [a member of the Committee of Enquiry]: "No, but you did feel that the dedication meant what it said; it was dedicated once and for all."

Payne: "Right. It was not something to be done lightly."

St John: "Right. And perhaps if that was your impression, you could expect the public to think the same thing, couldn't you?"

Payne: "Right."

Public expectation notwithstanding, Lake Pedder has now been destroyed beneath the Huon-Serpentine Reservoir constructed by the Tasmanian Hydro-Electric Commission (hereafter HEC).

As was so aptly pointed out[2], the Christian-ethic charity "Father forgive them for they know not what they do", which some would invoke to excuse many of the environmental excesses perpetrated by Australian pioneers, cannot be used to defend the men responsible for Lake Pedder's destruction; these men were made aware, fully and repeatedly, of the exact nature of their proposed action.

During the battle for Pedder the HEC employed half-truths, untruths, the concealment and distortion of alternatives, and the use of smoke-screen tactics. Full documentation of these may be found elsewhere;[1,3,4] a few examples will suffice for present purposes.

In an endeavor to convince the public that the decision to destroy Lake Pedder for a power scheme was arrived at by fully democratic processes the HEC stated[5], "When the [Gordon River Power Development] Bill was tabled in the Legislative Council, it was decided to appoint a Select Committee to enquire into the Commission's proposals." This falsified the sequence of events; incredible as it may sound, the Lower House passed the Power Bill on 29 June 1967 with full knowledge of the fact that, although a

select committee of enquiry into the Gordon River proposal (which involved Pedder's destruction) had already been appointed on 14 June, it had not yet reported. In fact, the select committee did not present its report to the Upper House until 22 August 1967. In the words of the LPCE[3], "The Tasmanian Government . . . used its majority to force the enabling legislation through the Lower House, regardless of the public outcry and despite the knowledge that a Select Committee of Enquiry had been appointed by the Upper House. . . . The Select Committee was undoubtedly embarrassed in its task by the fact that the Lower House proceeded to pass the authorisation Bill without waiting to hear the results of the Committee's deliberations."

The official statement[5] released by the HEC in 1972 also claimed that "The only way to preserve Lake Pedder in its natural state would have been to abandon the Huon and Serpentine diversions completely". The deliberative nature of this statement is clear from its repetition in the following form: "The only way of achieving the retention of Lake Pedder in its present form would be to abandon the diversion of the Huon and Serpentine River altogether." These statements were untrue and doubtless the HEC knew it; an alternative existed which would have allowed not only the survival of Lake Pedder in a natural state but also the use of much of the Serpentine water for power generation. This alternative, which would have involved only about twelve per cent loss of water for power production, together with other alternative layouts, was concealed from the public and the select committee of the Tasmanian Upper House until the dying stages of their enquiries. Clearly the HEC thought that it was more important to use all of the water potential for power generation than to save Lake Pedder and respect the dedication of a national park.

On 21 April 1972, the day before a Tasmanian State election, the HEC placed an advertisement[6] headed "Important notice to electricity consumers" in the three main Tasmanian newspapers. This advertisement advised consumers that the modification of the Gordon River Scheme to avoid the destruction of Lake Pedder, as advocated by the Lake Pedder Action Committee (LPAC), would involve great cost which would have to be met by "a considerable increase in tariff charges for electricity". This was done with the obvious intention of influencing the election result (the United Tasmania Group, a political party, had a save-Pedder platform) and despite the fact that the LPAC had clearly indicated that the cost of saving Pedder would have to be borne by all Australians, not Tasmanian electricity consumers.

In October and November 1973, following the attempt of the Australian Government to save Pedder by offering finance for the implementation of a three-year moratorium on flooding, the HEC mounted a deceptive publicity campaign the focal point of which was two contrasted photographs; a view of a portion of the recently formed Huon-Serpentine Reservoir (labelled "now") was compared not with Lake Pedder but with a button-grass-dominated valley before inundation (labelled "then")[7]. The contrast was said to show the scenic superiority of the HEC reservoir to the lake but, in fact, merely illustrated the point that land plus reflecting waters almost invariably makes a more attractive landscape than does land alone. A fair comparison would have shown *inter alia* that an essential ingredient of the peerless beauty of Lake Pedder and its environs was a scale small enough for one to behold the entire scene from a vantage point (it is impossible to see the entirety of the Huon-Serpentine Reservoir from any point on land). Quite apart from the bogus aesthetic 'comparison' there was the obvious inference that the end justified the means—that the fact that much of the new storage contributes to an attractive landscape justified the destruction of much greater scenic beauty and the violation of a national park.

In the end (late 1973) Lake Pedder was destroyed by men who declined to accept an offer of Australian Government monies for its salvation; they apparently valued their paltry pride and prestige above that of one of Australia's outstanding scenic gems and the principle of inviolability of national parks.

It is a tragic irony that in a few decades when all those who, in a very real sense, lived for the lake, are dead, the beauty of Pedder may be commemorated only by the ugly word "pedderisation". My own definition of this word[8], which closely follows that originally proposed by Sir Garfield Barwick[9], is "Unnecessary damage to landscapes and ecosystems by a development as a result of inadequate preliminary study, scant consideration of the various values involved and insufficient disclosure to the public of the proposed change in land use."

Has the enormous public outcry against the destruction of Lake Pedder and the severe criticism contained in the reports of the LPCE re-

sulted in any mellowing of the HEC attitude towards environmental matters? I think not, and the LPCE noted[3] "It became apparent in the early stages of the Enquiry [1973] that the attitudes of the Tasmanian Government and the Hydro Electric Commission had changed very little since 1967 . . ." In fact there is evidence of a renewed arrogance on the part of the HEC. Perhaps they reason that if they can 'triumph' in the greatest environmental controversy this country has known they are now totally unassailable.

A. P. Montgomery[10] (an HEC engineer) attempted to ridicule the whole-page, paid advertisement placed in the *Australian* on 15 October 1973 by a large number of Australian conservation organisations, calling for the Australian Government to implement the moratorium recommended by the LPCE to allow at least a stay of execution for the lake. "Whatever happened to the Wup-Wup Garden Lovers Society?" he asked. A week later Richard Olive[11] (another HEC engineer) wrote, "We [the HEC] will conserve the clean, non-inflating, guaranteed source with which nature has blessed this island, *and you will be thankful for the national assets we create in the process* [my emphasis]." The latter may be translated as meaning "You, the people of Australia, will accept as a national asset anything we, the HEC, do with water in Tasmania, including the destruction of one of Australia's great natural wonders within a national park, and be thankful for it!"

All the evidence indicates that the HEC is at it again; they are now proceeding with the Pieman River Power Development on the basis of an environmental impact statement which was prepared *after* the decision to go ahead with the scheme, and which has had no public debate. One very interesting aspect of this development is the relationship of the upper extremity of the Murchison Dam (part of the Upper Pieman Scheme) to the boundary of the Cradle Mountain-St Clair National Park. The HEC map dated September 1970, which accompanied the report to Parliament, showed that by very curious and suspicious circumstances the shore lines of both the Mackintosh and Murchison dams would extend exactly to the national park boundary but not into the park itself. A subsequent map (almost the same in scale as the earlier one) forming part of a public leaflet dated October 1973 showed that by some remarkable process (an over-Knight miracle?) the waters of both dams had now receded from the national park boundary; there was now a gap of about 3 mm (representing about 0.5 km) between the upper extremities of the dams and the park. The best available information is that, if present plans are proceeded with, the Murchison Dam would make a small but objectionable incursion into the national park. Presumably the Miracle of the Receding Waters was performed to conceal this situation.

Further insight into current HEC hydropathology may be obtained from the following verse (sung to the tune of Waltzing Matilda) published[12] under the heading "hydropathy":

Once a jolly Pieman camped by the Murchison
Under the shade of the HEC
And he sang as he watched and waited till his valley filled
You'll come a power producing with me.

Refrain:
Power producing, power producing,
You'll come a power producing with me,
And he sang as he watched and waited till his valley filled
You'll come a power producing with me.

Up jumped a Pedderite into his scheme of things
You'll never do this he said with glee
For our voices may be heard as we shout at that power scheme
We'll get the people to sign a decree.

Down jumped the Pieman off Dam Tullibardine,
You'll never get me in Lake Rosebery,
And his words may be heard as you walk by Lake Mackintosh
We have pollution free electricity.

Despite the obvious obsession with power production and the identification of Pedderites and the people as 'the enemy', one must, in fairness, concede that this represents a distinct advance on earlier HEC verse. The following example of school-boy lavatory humor was deemed worthy of publication[13] under the heading "power drop":

A power engineer named Hyde
Fell down a dunny and died
His unfortunate brother
Fell down another
And now they're interred side by side.

The HEC still seems incapable of honest comment on any conservation issue that is brought to its attention; distortion or bogus rationalization

can be expected as a matter of course. Consider their recent statement[14] that "The Inland Fisheries Commission was somewhat disturbed to receive a request from the Australian Conservation Foundation requesting that the water level in the Lagoon of Islands be lowered. The Foundation was evidently unaware of the fishery developed in the Lagoon." All reference to the issue motivating the ACF request is, of course, omitted. The HEC was evidently pretending to be unaware that as early as 1971 a well-documented case[15] was put to it, the Inland Fisheries Commission and international organizations, that the Lagoon of Islands possessed rare botanical features of great scientific value and interest which should be conserved by a lowering of level (the abandonment of the Lagoon as a water storage was not proposed). The HEC rejected the proposal in 1971 on *economic grounds*, stating that it would be necessary to discharge water to waste at substantial cost and that it was unwilling to do this. Subsequently the case for lowering the level of the Lagoon of Islands was taken up by the International Biological Programme and, still later, by the Australian Conservation Foundation.

By 1974, however, the HEC opposition to the proposal had shifted, presumably as a more presentable rationalization, from economic to *biological grounds*. But the HEC (and the IFC if it is correctly reported) are still on lamentably weak ground, as there can be little doubt that any independent authority or enquiry would conclude that the value of the extraordinary ecosystem (based on native plants) operating in the Lagoon of Islands would greatly exceed a fishery based on almost ubiquitous exotic species—trout. There is no doubting the aesthetic and biological superiority of a distinctive native ecosystem to another dreary hecosystem. In the words of a colleague, "a priceless asset is being squandered for a trifling economic gain".

Despite their unenviable record of pedderisation, the HEC has a very active propaganda section which in true Orwellian 1984 style vigorously attempts to indoctrinate the public into believing that one of the first and foremost aims of the HEC is conservation. Statements made by the HEC Minstry of Truth include "The Hydro-Electric Commission is deeply involved in conservation ", and "A whole new range of colour postcards, depicting the environmental benefits of hydro-electric schemes, were printed towards the end of the year [1972/1973] and widely distributed." In addition they have produced a 16 mm color film entitled "Tasmanian wild life" which "shows clearly how wild life benefits from the State's excellent water resources".[16]

Perhaps the crowning achievement of this Ministry of Truth is the production of a counter-and-dice game called "Survival". In this, one gets a bonus for helping hurt animals and picking up broken bottles, but a penalty is incurred for leaving the lid off rubbish tins, stealing birds' eggs and dropping lolly papers. Outside the squares forming the game, however, one is warned in brightly colored printing that "Modern man must retain his sense of perspective and not abandon progress entirely in favour of conservation or preservation".[17] This is the 'ministry's' way of expressing the view that "Modern man should applaud the HEC's aim to utilize every drop of water falling on Tasmania for power production and not abandon this ideal in favor of foolish concepts like conservation and the inviolability of national parks".

The HEC translates its own motto as "Abundant and never ceasing power"[18], but one wonders if it has not somehow been mistranslated in the minds of the commissioners to read "superabundant power and never ceasing conquest of the natural environment including national parks". No one would deny that the HEC possesses an enormous amount of highly-regarded engineering expertise, and has made a great contribution to the economic development of Tasmania. The trouble is that the HEC refuses to recognise its limitations and is constituted in such a way that it is unable to make adequate or balanced evaluations with respect to alternatives in land use.

It has been pointed out[3] that because of their staffing structure and the nature of their charter, organisations such as the HEC are ill equipped to handle problems which involve multiple-objective planning, environmental considerations or inter-disciplinary co-operation. In the words of the LPCE, it has been demonstrated overseas that monopolistic, single-purpose resource-development agencies such as the HEC "tend to be biassed in favour of large or unusual projects and to impute a higher value to their projects than do independent assessors".

Until such times as its existing structure and charter are reviewed and reformed, the HEC will continue to behave as a self-perpetuating[19] monster with an insatiable appetite for bigger and 'better' conquests over the environment. It will remain, as in the past, one of the most arrogant,

and unnecessarily destructive, government instrumentalities that this country has known.

Footnotes

[1] Lake Pedder Committee of Enquiry (1973). *Interim Report: The Future of Lake Pedder.* Aust. Govt. Publ. Service.

[2] Taylor, Gwynnyth (1972), Letter to the editor. *Australian*, 28 March.

[3] Lake Pedder Committee of Enquiry (1974). *Final Report: The Flooding of Lake Pedder.* Aust. Govt. Publ. Service.

[4] McKenry, K. (1972). A history and critical analysis of the controversy concerning the Gordon River Power Scheme. In *Pedder Papers, Anatomy of a Decision* (Australian Conservation Foundation, Melbourne).

[5] H.E.C. (1972). Several newspaper advertisements entitled "Why Lake Pedder is being enlarged". Reprinted in *Pedder Papers, Anatomy of a Decision.*

[6] The advertisement and a reply to it by the United Tasmania Group requesting that the Tasmanian Government establish a royal commission to examine *inter alia* the activities of the HEC during the State election are reproduced on pages 38 & 39 of the *Pedder Papers.*

[7] See, for instance, the Melbourne *Herald*, 3 November 1973, and also the first two of a set of nine color postcards distributed by the HEC and entitled "Views of the Gordon River Power Development".

[8] Bayly, I. A. E. (1973). Letter to the editor. *Age*, 18 May.

[9] Barwick, G. (1972). Conclusion. In *Pedder Papers, Anatomy of a Decision.*

[10] Montgomery, A. P. (1973). Letter to the editor. *Australian*, 23 October.

[11] Olive, R. (1973). Letter to the editor. *Australian,* 30 October.

[12] H.E.C. (1974). *Cross Currents* [A bimonthly publication of the H.E.C.], No. 34, December, p. 22.

[13] H.E.C. (1971). *Cross Currents,* No. 16, October, p. 11.

[14] H.E.C. (1974). *Cross Currents,* No. 33, October, p. 20.

[15] Subsequently published as follows: Tyler, P. A. (1971). House of Representatives Select Committee on Wildlife Conservation. *Evidence,* 3736-3753.

[16] It is believed that the film makes no mention of the fate of the several species of plant and animal that had been recorded only from Lake Pedder.

[17] This statement also comprised the opening paragraph of an article entitled "Conservation and progress" in *Cross Currents,* No. 16, October, 1971.

[18] H.E.C. (1972). *Cross Currents,* No. 23, December, p. 14.

[19] An example of the importance of the self-perpetuation syndrome is provided by the statement (*Cross Currents,* No. 25, p. 7, 1973), nominally that of the Governor of Tasmania, that the decision to proceed immediately with the Pieman Scheme was influenced by consideration of "the substantial advantages that would result from maintaining the continuity of the skilled work force and equipment that will become available as stages of the Gordon scheme near completion". A further example is the HEC Commissioner's statement (*Cross Currents,* No. 31, p. 7, 1974) that "There is not likely to be *any* [my emphasis] period in the future when such [power] development work is not required. Nevertheless, it is probably desirable for the HEC to engage in some outside work in order to utilize to the best advantage the special skills which HEC staff have acquired, and to act as a buffer against periods of limited activity."

NANCY CATO

Two Weeks in Ghana

The Hamattan is blowing in Accra, capital of Ghana, straight off the Sahara Desert to the north. A thick white pall of dust covers the sky, hiding the stars by night, turning the sun by day into a pale yellow circle of cardboard.

The flimsy-looking city, set on a dry, barren plain between the palm-fringed sea and the low hills where the cocoa-bean grows, looks as if it was put up overnight. Only a few big hotels and government buildings look really solid under the glaring sky.

Color there is in plenty in the orange-red of flame tree and magenta of climbing bougainvillea, and in the magnificent dress of the people. The colors are violent; the purple and orange and blue and yellow of traditional prints, the tartan-like effect of silken *Kente* cloth, woven in narrow, brilliant stripes on small looms and then pieced together. It is kept for chiefs and talking-chiefs (spokesmen) and is very expensive.

In the city European dress is common, though the women mostly stick to their graceful ankle-length wrap-arounds and matching turbans. They walk with stately grace, even with a basket of eggs or a pile of enamel basins on their heads. The men's toga-like robe seems to give them some trouble. It is worn over one shoulder, leaving the other bare, and has to be continually adjusted with a shrugging movement. I noticed that they wear khaki shorts underneath in which to keep a purse or a handkerchief.

If the colors are violent, there is suppressed violence too in the dances and the sound of the drums, monotonous, insistent, a compulsive rhythm which gradually quickens the pulse till the whole audience is twitching in time.

This coast was the birth-place of American jazz. It has a violent history. There are old cruelties in the air here, the savage cruelty of the slave trade to America and the West Indies, the Ashanti Wars with the British, the raids on the trading castles which still dot the shoreline; and before that the long history of fetishism and human sacrifice, when the blood of thousands was used to blacken the wood of the Royal Stool.

The witch-doctor is still a power in the land, with his charms and unorthodox medicines. The term however has been officially outlawed, and has been replaced by the respectable 'herbalist'. (One of the "mammy-buses", which form almost the only transport, resulting in queues a hundred yards long, is called "The Real Doctor". Each has a text or adjuration in large letters on the front: GOD IS KING, STILL FEAR!, BE GENTLE, or just a cryptic WHEN? One is called with simple self-approbation, SO NICE.)

They are a warm and friendly people, greeting the visitor with a smiling "Well come!" There is perhaps a little apartheid-in-reverse, a tendency to keep the white man, and especially the former lords-and-masters, the British, in their place; but at the local golf club Europeans and Ghanaians play together on the red, dusty course, and drink together in the clubhouse decorated with the colors of the Revolution, green, black and orange.

"I like them!" said a British official who, after three years in the country under two different regimes, can't wait to get out of the place. "But the truth is not in them. They are naturally devious, and would actually rather achieve their ends by bribery and manipulation than in a straightforward way. As for the shortages"—(and nearly everything is in short supply, from motor-car parts to soap-powder; there is no coffee in the coffee-shops and no sugar in the supermart, and the only butter available is one pound sterling per pound)—"God knows what is the truth. The government says 'someone' is diverting ship-

ments of goods and burying them in the swamps in order to discredit the regime. More likely they are going south to Lagos on the black market."

The statements of the President, Col. Acheampong (who took over in a military coup two years ago) on this supposed plot are not backed by any names or facts, and no one is prosecuted. Most people take such propaganda with a grain of salt (that is, if they can get any, though it is made in big evaporation lakes along the coast). Some of his speeches, which are all reported verbatim in the local press, are unconsciously funny in their headlines:

I WANT TO SEE ONE NURSE'S BODY
IN THREE WEEKS
—Says Col Acheampong

Any newspaper which gets a little out of line is warned; if the warning is not heeded, it is closed down, and the editor may face imprisonment.

I talked with the Accra correspondent of a London daily, a Ghanaian, who asked me not to mention his name or the paper he works for. He told me there is a complete military censorship on all news items.

"Three soldiers are on duty all the time at the cable office," he said. "If they don't like something I want to send, they just tear it up. They are simple soldiers, not particularly well educated, yet they decide what shall appear in overseas papers about our country. I tried using tapes, but these too were censored."

Creative writers do not face this difficulty. They can be satirical about their own society, about bureaucrats and village chiefs, because this is not for export, apparently. Some like Kofi Awoonor have gone to America; some like John Okoba live and work at Legon, the attractive hills suburb seven miles from the city. I went there in a taxi with something very wrong with its transmission, which made grinding noises under the back seat. The upholstery was smart and clean, but when I went to roll down a window, there was no handle. The driver handed me one over his shoulder; there was only one handle for all the windows. Spare parts are almost impossible to get so cars are cannibalised to provide them, and the "new" parts are no longer new.

I went up to the pleasant, green Legon Hills to see Mrs Efua Sutherland, a research fellow at Legon University, whose play *The Marriage of Anansewa* was being staged at the Drama Centre in town for the Legon Arts Festival. Her play for children, *Vulture, Vulture!* has been published in England and America. She uses old legends and fairy-stories and tells them again in modern idiom, using a chorus in the fashion of ancient Greek drama, and traditional drumming and dancing.

"I turned to plays because I wanted to get through to the people, and to the children," she said. "Where you have a big audience which is largely illiterate, you can reach them through drama; and my plays can be staged on the village common, with no prop but a shady tree."

Efua Sutherland has a wonderful smile and looks about seven feet tall in her long robe and high turban. She has her own drama group, the Kusum Agoromba.

The Legon Festival of Arts is organised by the Institute of African Studies and is to be held annually as a cultural feature of the University. In the same week the Arts Council of Ghana inaugurated the Mamprobi Cultural Troupe to keep up traditional dances of the country. Some new drums, covered in priceless *kente* cloths, were officially unveiled, and the drumming and dancing went on from early afternoon till long after a dim orange moon had replaced the pallid sun in the dust-filled sky.

My friends took me for a day's journey down the coast, a picturesque coast of straight, shallow sandy beaches thickly shaded with leaning coconut palms, and dotted with seventeenth-century forts, the trading posts of the gold and slave traders. Elmina, Kormantin, Cape Coast Castle, Fort Amsterdam, Fort Sekondi—all were headquarters of the Dutch West India Company, the British Royal African Company, and Danish and Swedish traders. Everyone in the forts, from the governor down to the soldiers and traders, led a prison-like life, and many died of yellow fever and malaria:

Beware and take care of the Bight of Benin,
One comes out for forty go in . . .

as a contemporary rhyme had it. The day we were there a film company from Accra with a French director was taking shots of 'slaves' in the great stone courtyard of Komenda. African girls in ragged shifts gathered for a crowd scene, and as we passed under a portcullis gateway into a high, dark tunnel we found it full of 'slaves' wearing nothing but G-strings, waiting for their cue. It was a strange and spine-tingling experience to walk between ranks of naked, glistening dark bodies to the dungeons beyond.

Then back to the city, to my friends' comfortable stone bungalow and an excellent meal cooked by their Ibo house-boy. Many Ibos come to Ghana to find work. The housemaid is a Ghanaian, and sleeps at home. They also have a gardener, and a watchman who patrols the walled garden all night with a bow and arrow.

The downstairs windows are covered with iron grilles. There are two padlocks on the front door, and even the upstairs windows are closed and locked at sunset. The air outside is just as hot at is was during the day, ticking with strange noises—bats, crickets, nightbirds, lizards, going about their nocturnal life—and drugged with the scent of frangipanni. The grounds are floodlit. Burglary is common and the police will come only if the householder gives them a 'dash'. The system of 'dash' is deeply ingrained in society at all levels.

The children in the street ask for "small-small dash", holding out their hands and smiling winningly. But it is more of a game, a test for the gullible foreigner's ability to resist parting with pesawars, than real begging. They are plump, healthy, happy-looking youngsters. There is poverty, especially in the villages, but between fish, bananas and coconuts and the thriving market garden, no shortage of fundamental food.

The women run the markets and rule the roost in this matrilineal society. They are shrewd businesswomen and hard bargainers, often in partnership in a small shop: "Martha and Constance" or "Bethesda and Mary", the signs proclaim. Perhaps if they had a hand in the government of the country, it would be more efficiently run.

THE NATIONAL GAME

Barry Dickins

"Write a Short Story," He Said

F. B. VICKERS

Inspired by the Alan Marshall material in Overland 57.

After close on three years in the Middle East with the Sixth Divvy—where nothing worse had happened to me than a dose of dysentry—I returned to Australia. Drafted out of my unit as one of the over-forties, I was then posted to a workshop company in my own state of Western Australia. In the workshop I met with an accident that smashed up my right leg. My reward was a long spell in a military hospital in a country town.

When my leg was at last being grateful for having its life saved by a very skilful surgeon, I began to enjoy myself with the nurses and V.A.D.s, as only a bald-headed man, happily married and over forty, can do without being a danger to either party. But then a serpent had to enter my Eden, in the shape of an Army Education officer who had the notion that I ought to be studying something to improve myself. I had no such desire. In civvy life I had a poultry farm that had given my wife and me a pleasant occupation and had returned a decent living. But this A.E. man was persistent. And one day, after I'd won several packets of cigarettes in the ward quiz which he conducted, he at last prevailed on me—despite the fact that I was addicted to the pipe and not his give-away 'gaspers'—to look at the list of courses which Army Education were offering to the troops.

Of all the subjects I might have studied, I deliberately chose the one which I knew I couldn't do, with the set intention of getting the sack at the earliest possible moment. I chose to take a course in Freelance Journalism, paid my fifteen shillings, and in due course received a little booklet on the subject, written by Stanley Brogden and published by the Bread and Cheese Club of Melbourne. I can't recall that I ever opened this book on Freelance Journalism, for with it came the first lesson. It was written (in long hand) on a pink form in red ink, and it read: "Write something about yourself and your background in 300 words." It was signed "Alan Marshall".

Being an insular pommy who had only been in Australia about eighteen years, and had only just caught up with C. J. Dennis and his Sentimental Bloke, I had never heard of an Alan Marshall, so I presumed that this chap who sent out the lessons must be a school-teacher in civvy life, as was the Army Education chap in the hospital. With that conviction fixed in my mind, I set out to win from Mr Marshall a punishment in line with the one I had won at Rood End Council School, when, on being told by the teacher to write a composition (in the King's English and not in the Black Country lingo which I spoke) on "Royalty", I started my piece with: "The King and Queen am like ornaments on the shelf", and got the cane for it. Now in doing my first lesson for Mr Marshall, I sat him down on a hollow log in the bush and started to yarn to him about Clean Collar Jack, Treacle Dick, Dobson the Tropical Frog and other characters I had run across in the years I'd been knocking around the nor'-west of W.A. in shearing teams and with my swag on my shoulder. For this effort I expected to receive a very nice letter from Mr Marshall telling me, in the nicest possible manner, that I had chosen the wrong subject.

I was dead right—but for the wrong reasons. Alan Marshall wrote back to say: "Thank God for you, Vickers. You can write. Skip the Freelance Journalism and write a short story."

"The man is mad," was the thought that came to mind. How on earth could I—who had left school at twelve, who had never been any good at spelling or grammar—write a short story? But I was also aware that this chap Alan Marshall was offering a challenge to that 'inner me'—the

chap who had always had to take a back seat to the boned and fleshed me who'd had to earn the bread and butter to put in my own and others' stomachs. It was the challenge rather than the impossibility that took hold of my mind—though I hadn't a clue as to how one set about writing a story.

I was in luck. By this time, though my leg was still in plaster from foot to groin, I was able to move about on crutches. And so it was when the ladies auxiliary in the nearby town wished to entertain real soldiers who had seen action to afternoon tea, I was one of a dozen men chosen to go along to the tea party, together with six nurses who had escaped from Singapore.

The ladies of the auxiliary had prepared to do us well. A long trestle table in the town hall was laden down with cream puffs, patty cakes, savory sandwiches and much else such as my stomach had not gloated over for a long time. But no sooner were we served with tea, in china cups with cow's milk in it, and a plate with something on it which our fancy had reached for, than a fond mother put her little girl up on stage to elocute—and I venture to say now execute—"The Daffodils of Ullswater".

Murder, bloody murder! cried the bastard from the bush. And the word was passed around among the troops. "When she finishes, give her a burst."

We gave that little girl a burst of applause that would have had a Melba or a Callas engaging us as cheer leaders. Mum must have thought we were good, for she set her little girl up again to give us an encore.

I was sitting next to a nurse who hailed from Sydney. Her plate had only crumbs on it; the tea leaves in the bottom of her cup were dry. She was groaning audibly. I, being an Englishman, was suffering in silence. But then I whispered to the nurse: "Would it help if I told you your fortune in your tea leaves?"

She nodded and passed over her cup. I took my first steps toward becoming a writer of stories—I told her a pack of lies made up out of my own head. It was very rude of me. But the little girl was still elocuting.

The next morning, back at the hospital, the sister in charge of the ward came to me and invited me to join the nurses and V.A.D.s in their rest room for morning tea. "We hear that you tell fortunes in the tea leaves," she said—in explanation of this extraordinary invitation.

Well, from that morning on to the end of my stay in that hospital I was on the best racket I've ever been on in all my life. There I was, having morning and afternoon tea with the girls, tea with milk in it served in a china cup, patty cakes and sandwiches cut triangular wise, and there were my mates in the ward drinking dish water out of tin pannikins and trying to gnaw their way through a hunk of army cook's brownie.

I never wanted it to end. It was good food and fun for jam. Knowing something of the girls' love affairs and ambitions to nurse real soldiers on the field of battle, it was both kind and easy for me to pack the odd one off to New Guinea, Broome or Darwin and have it come true. But there was one nurse in the ward who would not have her fortune told and, to make matters worse, she tried to convince the other girls that they were fools and that I was a charlatan. Fortunately for me she wasn't taken seriously and, as so often happens with the sceptical, curiosity got the better of her. One morning, to everyone's surprise, Sister Hazel put her tea cup in my hand and said: "I want you to tell my fortune."

Now Sister Hazel was a woman of around my age—a spinster, I understood. As a nurse she was as efficient as they come — too efficient for my comfort, and a tidy-upper with it. I could see the gleam in her eyes every time she approached my bed. "Look at your quilt. Why can't you keep your bed tidy? And this damned pipe! When you're not smoking the stinking thing it must be put away in your locker . . ." And into my locker would go my pipe—so that when my leg was tied up in the Heath Robinson contraption of strings, pulleys and weights that have made of it a good leg again, I just couldn't get to my pipe without calling one of the other girls. However, all that aside, I read Sister Hazel's tea leaves to the best of my ability both as a liar and a fortune teller. And when I handed her cup back to her, she said: "No romance?"—ever so nasty, she was.

"Sorry, Sister. But I can only tell you what I see in the tea leaves."

"Rubbish! You wouldn't think I could have any romance in my life—would you?"

I thought it better to keep my mouth shut. She then flounced out of the room as if she was in a rare old paddy.

Now in those days I used to play the violin—mainly for my own amusement. And at my request my wife had brought my fiddle to me. It was too much for my mates in the ward, so the head sister put me out on the verandah where I could amuse myself without disturbing other

people. It was to this bedside on the verandah that Sister Hazel came that very same night to shine a torch on my face and wake me up. Then, as soon as I was awake enough to comprehend what was going on, she stuck a tea-cup in my hands and said in a tone of command: "Tell my fortune again."

I had to do some quick thinking. I didn't want to be too unkind to Sister Hazel, yet I couldn't see how I could take her from the South Pole to Surfer's Paradise, all in a space of about twelve hours, and, at the same time, retain my integrity as a fortune teller.

"I'm sorry, Sister," I said, when the notion came to me, "but I work by the signs of the zodiac, so I can only tell your fortune once in my moon. Come to me again when the new moon comes in."

To my great surprise and relief she accepted my explanation. Indeed my stocks went up and my reputation was now on a par with that of Taurus, who read the stars in the Sunday paper.

Come the rising of the new moon, Sister Hazel again asked me to tell her fortune in the tea leaves in her cup at an afternoon tea session. This time I was ready to be kind to her. In fact I had asked some of the other nurses what they knew about her in the hope of making up some sort of a yarn that would be pleasing to her. But all told me the same: Sister Hazel kept to herself, and confided in no one. So the best I could do when I did read her tea leaves was to tell her that she would get some good news—"Probably in a letter from someone you haven't heard from for a long time," I said.

She seemed to be pleased with that, and even thanked me. Another moon rose and waned, and Sister Hazel didn't hand me her cup for another telling of her fortune. Nor did she make scathing remarks about my racket. Then again, in the middle of the night, she came to my bedside on the verandah and wakened me up by shining her torch on my face. When I was wide awake enough to see her clearly, I saw that she was crying.

"What's the matter, Sister?"

"It's happened. . . . You know . . . What you said when you told my fortune in the tea leaves . . ." I was still blank. Six or seven weeks had gone by. I didn't know what I'd told her. "Here it is." She waved a letter in front of my face. "You said I'd get a letter. It's from him! My Jimmy . . ."

Her tears were tears of joy and thankfulness. And when she calmed down she told me her story.

In 1939—just before war broke out with Hitler's Germany—she had been returning home by ship from a working holiday in England. On the ship she had met Jimmy, an engineer. It wasn't just a shipboard romance, for when the ship reached her home port Jimmy had put an engagement ring on her finger. "We were to get married when his ship came back from Sydney. I put up the banns in our church. Jimmy had to go back to England with his ship, but then he was going to resign from the company and then come back to live out here in Australia. But you know how it was when war broke out . . ." War had broken out before Jimmy's ship had reached Sydney and so, under orders from the Admiralty, Jimmy and all the ship's crew had sailed away to ports unknown.

Sister Hazel showed me letters that she had received from him. Then her own letters being returned to her. Then a message which read: "James Angus Mc— posted missing, presumed dead." His ship had been sunk—in which ocean, Sister Hazel didn't know.

But now, here was a letter from Jimmy which filled in the long agonizing hours of eighteen months of hoping against hope. He and others of the crew of his ship had got away in the open boats to land on the shores of South America.

I wrote that story—pretty much as it happened—and sent it off, in long hand on Comforts Fund note paper, to this chap Alan Marshall. "Good," he wrote back. "Get it typed and send it off to . . ." The magazine published it and paid me thirty bob for it—so making me think I was a second Somerset Maugham. It was the first of several stories I wrote and published before Alan Marshall, in the last of the twelve lessons, wrote: "Now write a novel. Good luck."

I wrote the novel while still in the army. I showed the first draft to the AWAS girl on the switchboard—asked her to try and read it. She did, and having read it, said, "It reads like the headlines of the Daily News." She was right.

I rewrote the story, this time learning to type as I got the story down on paper. I entered the finished article for the first Sydney Morning Herald novel competition—the one won by Ruth Park's *Harp in the South*. My *The Mirage* got an honorable mention and a write-up in the S.M.H., in which the story was described as powerful and dramatic. On advice I sent it off

to an agent in London. The gentleman wrote me back a very nice letter which started: "You are a second Conrad"—then, in red ink, "if only you could write." He then went on to suggest that I re-write the story, cutting out the Australian idiom. This I refused to do—and so *The Mirage* was rejected forty-two times and rewritten ten times before it was eventually published. One letter which I cherish came from a leading Australian publisher after toying with my manuscript for a little over twelve months. It was the shortest letter I've ever received. It read: "Not quite brilliant enough."

Alan Marshall didn't see the manuscript of that novel which he had told me to write. And I didn't meet Alan till it was published in Melbourne by the Australasian Book Society, then in the hands of Ian Turner.

May I, after all these years, publicly thank Alan Marshall for leading me into those strange and unknown paths which permitted me, the man, to give to that bottled-up inner me what my mother called "that bit o' sommat as lifts a body above its little self".

"My Long March" — A Comment

Ian Turner's "My Long March" in *Overland* 59 does a valuable service in pointing out the positive achievements of communist and near-communist cultural activities in the 1945-55 period, despite the negative effect of Stalinist attitudes. But one minor error of fact is worth noting.

The dogmatic *Tribune* article "Has Book Society Got Off The Right Track?", on 15 July 1953, was written not by Jack and Audrey Blake but by myself. It was followed by a long discussion in *Tribune* columns lasting till 9 September, when Jack Blake contributed a final article, "Tribune Discussion Will Keep A.B.S. On Right Track".

There is, I suggest, an important point involved here. Some accounts of the period (here I am not referring particularly to Ian Turner's) give the impression that all the leading communist party members were one hundred per cent. Stalinist, and that a few writers and other intellectuals were one hundred per cent. the other way. In fact the position was more complex. Some of those involved (and this includes Jack and Audrey Blake who have often had to take a lot of blame and no credit) had Stalinist attitudes on many issues, and yet at the same time fought hard for the exploration of the Australian tradition and the encouragement of cultural activity based on the best in this tradition. Unless this is recognised, it become impossible to explain the many positive cultural achievements of the Left in this period.

LEN FOX

SHELTON LEA

May Day, May Day

A pale ghost of an afternoon and the crowds from the city are dispersing, lurching in groups up Swanston Street or towards the station. Drunk. Drunk with the vicarious thrills of demonstrations. Voices taut and throats sore from screaming. Thoughts stretched to infinity. Images of the police bashing with axes and smiles the huge statue of Joel's that he calls the death of capitalism. An obscene pink plaster statue trundled through the streets on a tumbril.

A shadow of self. Walking with the effervescence of self bubbling in the streets, stalking my body which seems to be ahead of me somewhere, and my head is trying to catch up. God, what a night. Booze/proverbial like wine. Running, flowing, pouring through my veins, words cascading. Flashes of people's faces like the thick strokes on a thick painting. The rouge of eyes. Cobalt voices, thick and slurred, stunting the night. Feeling the world spin beneath my feet and the trees shudder. I sleep in a park. In the bushes. Hidden so I don't get pinched by a nosy cop.

As usual, in Melbourne, the dawn is grey, pallid, almost an excuse for a morning. I try to yawn but can't feel the stretch of my arms, can't feel the tightening of my flesh across my breast.

I crawl through the bushes and enter the world. I can't even feel dampness of my clothes although they are obviously wet by the patches on them.

I walk. . . It is afternoon already and I have passed the crowds and the noise and the shadows entreat me to silence. Grattan Street.

At the Swanston Street corner and opposite, diagonally, the hospital and I am half way across the street, the lights my way and, as seems usual by now, my brain half way in front of my head; the need for a sense of substance is strong. The need to relate all pervading.

What's this?

An apparition. A bloody hallucination. You've gone a bit far this time boy. A guy. All dressed in what looks like silk pyjamas with fluted sleeves. Hanging on his body like the sun.

And his face is painted white. He's calling me. Beckoning to me across the wilderness of cars, his thin body curving with his every gesture. There is no such thing as a voice, just movement.

"Julian," I yell.

Hoping that I have recognised aright a friend. His thin head bobs, the tight negroid curls of his hair unmoving and a smile splits his face wide. He dances towards me and a car almost wipes me off the road and horns fructate upon the air.

A glance to the side and faces peer from windows, insolent in the extreme, impatient to get on with the business of driving cars to destinations. As if that mattered.

Living on the extreme — and this figure approaches me like a ghost. We hug on the road.

He finally speaks with a thin reed of a voice because he is breathless from dancing in the streets, through the crowds, round poles and in and out of the halted cars, trying to raise smiles, trying to practise the age-old art of a clown. He tells me that he is going to the university to do a show in one of the lunchtime theatres and would I like to come along and read poems behind his clowning.

Yes man. It's the only thing so far that has made any sense to me all day. We continue up Swanston Street and all the time he dances with the silk of his costume being plucked by his movement. He metamorphoses into animality, back to the statehood of a creature. Like a crazy Pan, he taunts the streets with his movement, stunning

people in their cars, forcing them to stop because he is an apparition and people aren't really sure if they're going crazy or if there is actually a guy dancing down the street all in white like a dream from childhood.

He can't help himself, this guy. A natural. He keeps looking at me with a funny grin as he dances and I walk and every now and then he bows to me, his body collapsing into impossible angles, his brow almost sweeping the ground, then he ups and laughs, takes my arm and he mocks my seriousness.

We get to the university and we go straight to the theatre and sit in the dressing room for half-an-hour while the people are settling in.

Mirrors. Julian is suddenly surrounded by bloody mirrors. He practises. Narcissism elevated to art. He watches himself practise sorrow. Then glee. Sadness, hunger, pain, joy. One after the other. A kaleidoscope of humanity. Shifting hues of emotions. A curious kind of schizophrenia. We have to talk him out of the mirror because the show's about to begin. He has with him a girl who he calls his assistant and I think of a magician. The girl is in a top hat and has a face full of funny winks and expressions that she throws from her flesh.

Ah, it's a fine kind of madness, this miming.

They have darkened the theatre and there is a lone spot lighting the centre of the floor and people's chairs have been pulled around to form a circle. The show begins.

Julian literally bounds into the circle of life with a great flurry of movement, and just as suddenly he stops. Dead bloody still and he kind of hangs in the air. Suspended. He slowly awakes from this comatose state and gradually spirals to the ground with such grace and fluidity that I almost cry. I have heard voices stretch to infinity for a perfect note. I have now seen a body move to infinity. I have seen balletic perfection performed. I begin to hallucinate. Julian has that effect. A garden springs up around him in the most incredible colors, mushrooms and soft trees abound. As he passes through the various mimes, ages and civilisations slip past in a continuously moving backdrop. I am transformed by this man's skill. I begin to read a May Day poem from the top of my head and Julian begins to mime. We talk and act out flowers and joy and try to get away from the protest part of Mayday and he becomes a maypole with children swinging from him and there is joy in being a maypole. We finish. There is a pause. He lies in wait for words. Ever so still. I begin to read a poem about a cell. Soft and low at first. Gradually putting Julian inside the four walls, inside the darkness and he begins to get scared and there is so much loneliness etched on his face that it's almost unbearable to watch him.

I begin to crescendo. Still low tonally but with increasing volume and Julian starts to peak, trapped, incarcerated, imprisoned inside invisible walls. I pause and Julian sinks even further into a kind of terror. Man, this guy can feel. He's stuck. Inside the walls and we can all see that there's nothing there but we can all feel his desperation, his entrapment. There is a peculiar tension in the air and it gradually builds. I am waiting for him to mime his way out of it and of a sudden realise that he is truly imprisoned.

He has been put in there by words and such is his state of fantasy that he is really there. He can actually feel the cold of the stones, the desperation; also he can hear the soft padding of the feet of screws on the catwalk. He waits for the nightly ramp and wonders at the beatings, wonders at keys and locks and men who can turn the key on a fellow human being. He is sick of life and desperate, having lost his freedom and he is sitting in the light and silently screaming. His chest is working like a piston, his face screwed beyond belief.

So I bail him out.

I begin to ad lib a poem on bail and gradually withdraw him from the cell, ease him back into the world and joy. He goes around the room smelling people's perfume, touching clothes and feeling hair.

Bloody magnificent. Everyone is relieved. Sighs are audible and Julian finishes the show with a dance to joy.

I leave the theatre alone so that I can think of the nature of this curious creature and begin to walk towards Carlton, wrapped in the extraordinary images left in my waking brain. Of a sudden I feel a cautious tap on my shoulder and Julian is there thanking me for the poems with signs and little bows and I am in love with him so kiss him on the spot. He asks me, by signs again, if we can walk together, so we go towards Carlton, arm in arm while I recite soft poems to him.

We come to a school and there are a few children playing in the yard and when they see him they start yelling: *it's a clown, it's a clown, it's a clown,* and they are clapping their hands and yelling and dancing and turning in circles. I look

at Julian's face. Heaven. There is bliss there. Children: the secret dreamers, and he knows it. He looks at me and I nod. We go into the yard and the kids are ecstatic. I point to the door that leads to the classrooms and say: *in there*. So Julian pulls the kids out of the classrooms and the teachers are hopping mad and telling us to go away. While I argue with them, Julian starts to entertain the kids.

He grabs a kid's skipping rope and starts to clown around with it. Kids are breaking up all over the place with joy. He fumbles and he bumbles around with the rope, tripping himself up and falling, then getting up and admonishing the rope with signs. Ah god, what a pleasure to watch.

The teachers are standing around and frowning and getting generally hassled and one of them threatens to call the police so I tell him I'll break his fucking neck which pleased him immensely for some reason and about this time Julian had transformed the simple matter of skipping into a matter of hanging.

He's got the bloody rope around his neck, his head lolls to one side, one hand is raised high pulling at the rope and his body lolls at impossible angles and the teachers begin to laugh although the kids are soberly quiet, seeming to understand the sorrow of a clown, having skipped and now hanging. The flips of teachers are still laughing as they herd the kids back into the dull schoolrooms leaving an awestruck poet and a hanging mime in an empty schoolyard that now resembles a prison.

Ah Julian, Julian.

Paris waits, fly my friend, fly.

The Mating Habits of the Red-Striped Stickleback

Did you see, she said
that guy last night,
kissing the girl like a groper?

Amazing, I thought.

Her husband kisses her like a shark,
She always responds
like a goldfish;

I'm going home
to kiss my wife
like the Loch Ness MONSTER.

LYNDON WALKER

BILL GAMMAGE

The Men from Gono

The men from Gono are like any highland workers as they tramp the dusty roadsides of Port Moresby looking for work—short and solid, in tee-shirts and shorts and sometimes thongs or sandals. The hot coastal sun, the dry open grasslands and the turbulent city are nothing like the quiet green hillsides below Mount Michael in the Eastern Highlands where they were born, and they see many things wrong with Moresby. The food is strange or, if it is familiar, it is less plentiful and less tasty than their food at home, the people are not so friendly, the sun burns and there is little rain. But the city bustles with interest and variety, the shops are comparatively well stocked and prices at least no higher than at home, wages are higher, and work, although scarce, is easier to find than in the highlands. Men come from Gono to Moresby to see a new world, and because for the moment they are without traditional sources of wealth — they are young, poor, and usually unmarried, and they have enough education to give them the confidence to leave the hills of their homeland.

The first Gono man we met was James, who came early in 1972 because he had heard that our *boi* house was empty, and he had nowhere to live. The house has two small rooms, a shower, an inside toilet, and electricity. James moved in, and soon was followed by Gono *wantoks* (people who speak the same language) about town—men with mission names like Simon, Thomas, Tom, Peter, Ebon and John, or *ples* (place) names like Anibo, Waiyabe, Apu, Famuti, Mogia, Yapolo and Popiana. Six to eight men began sleeping in the *boi* house, and in time their presence influenced the houses about, so that within a year a large part of our street, which before had been dominated by workers from the Rigo area of Papua, had become the realm of Eastern Highlanders.

James, being the first arrival and therefore senior man, ruled the Gono community. He decided who could live in the *boi* house and who could not, and he acted as moral guardian for the others. He did not mind a drink or a game of cards, but he would not stand for drunkenness or excessive noise, especially on the Sabbath, for he had been to a mission school. Generally he asked permission to hold a party, and even after we assured him that parties were his business he took care to let us know when one was being planned. And several times he asked us to ring the police to remove a drunken *wantok,* even though being arrested by the police can be, for a New Guinean, a particularly unpleasant experience. Under James' leadership the residents of the *boi* house were quiet and respectable.

After James arrived word went home that Gono men had a base in Moresby, and a steady trickle of young highlanders began arriving. Most had borrowed the plane fare to come from Goroka to Moresby, and their most urgent need was to find work. They stayed in the *boi* house as *pasendia* (passengers, men looking for work) and as a rule they were accommodated until they got work. In this they were relatively lucky, for *pasendia* in Moresby are commonly given two or three weeks to find work, then they must move on to other *wantoks.* In the meantime their only income is likely to be from selling empty bottles or scrap copper.

Looking for work is a hopeless, despairing business. Port Moresby, a city in which the local languages are Motu and English, is studded with 'No Gat Wok' signs in Pidgin, suggesting how often the more menial of its occupations are filled

by migrant New Guineans and how greatly supply exceeds demand. Particularly because many expatriates are leaving there are many more workers than jobs, and day after day the new arrivals trudge about looking for work—plaguing building sites, walking miles on a rumor of employment, standing patiently outside houses until a *masta* or *missis* notices them and they can ask for work. Their need is painfully evident as they proffer forged references (my wife has typed many on request), or stand doggedly suggesting chore after chore they could do well if given a chance. When refused they try desperately to make clear that they are honest, hard working men, for surely any *masta,* with all that wealth, *could* give them a job if he really wanted to. Then resignedly they turn away, and every day mid-morning sees the searchers homeward returning, to lie out the daily heat in the shade, and wait for a chance to try again the following morning.

Most job hunting must be done between six and nine a.m., for after that the police know that a man walking the roads is unemployed, and they are likely to arrest him. If they do, they 'fine' him whatever money is in his pockets, and if it is not enough they send word to his *wantoks* to bring $5 or $10 to bail him out. John asked me for a letter to protect him from this practice, but I doubt that it will help him much.

Many jobs are 'tied' by a particular group of *wantoks.* If a man's workmates come predominantly from another area, they put pressure on him to leave, and sooner or later he does. Then they produce a *wantok* for the boss to employ, cooperative, industrious, and so soon they control the *lain* (workers on a particular job), and have persuaded the boss that their area produces the only good workers in Papua New Guinea! The Gono men apparently control few, if any, *lains*—they get casual work mainly, as builders' laborers, gardeners, cooks, plantation workers, cleaners, tea *bois* and so on—and always they find work hard to get, and constantly they are being thrown out of work. There has never been a time when everyone in the *boi* house has had a job, and there are often periods when most of them are unemployed.

Finding work does not put an end to this humiliation, for all sorts of chances can put a man back onto the streets. A wheelbarrow crushed Thomas's toe as he worked on a building site—being unable to walk properly, he was sacked. An infected knee crippled Poponetta — he was sacked. Ebon was called home, Peter was put out of work when his *masta* "went finish" to Australia, John left a job because he had to spend too long in the hot sun. Yapolo's job was six miles away; he had to walk, and was sacked for consistently arriving late. Tom was working on a Sogeri rubber plantation twenty miles from Moresby, and one weekend the boss told him Monday was a holiday. Tom thought this was excellent, and next weekend asked for the Monday holiday again. "You want to take a holiday," the boss told him, "you're sacked." That same night the boss's wife drove Tom down to Moresby, and next day he had to catch a bus back to Sogeri, fare 60c each way, to collect his week's pay—$6.00. There are no unions and no organisations which effectively care for casual workers in Port Moresby.

Not that Gono workers want *long-term* job security. Tom now works on the Moresby aerodrome extensions on a 'good' wage, $22 a week, but he will leave when it suits him. Probably no Gono man comes to Moresby intending to stay longer than two or three years, and in fact not many remain much longer than that. They are like the migrants to Australia in the gold-rush days, hoping to make their fortunes quickly so that they may return home and establish themselves. One or two have lived in Moresby for twenty years, but all or most of the young unmarried men in the *boi* house will soon go home. James went home in mid-1973 after five years in Moresby, and Simon, who succeeded him as head man of the *boi* house, left late in 1973 after two years. Tom, the present head man, has been in the city for four years, most of the others for less, and in mid-1974 Yapolo went home after only a few months in Moresby.

Their stretches of unemployment mean that most Gono men take relatively little home with them. Food and cigarettes take the main part of what wages they earn, and when they have work *wantok* demands are a constant drain on their wages—although gifts to *wantoks* are a form of investment, for the obligation thus created can be called upon later. If they still have spare cash, they first buy decent clothes—shoes, or a shirt or trousers which might cost a week's wages. Then they might send money back to their parents in Gono to pay off or create obligations, or buy a watch or a torch or a new belt. Usually the rest goes in the bank, but with actual wages varying between $10 and $20 a week (despite a minimum urban wage award of $20), and many *wantoks* out of work, it follows that large bank deposits are infrequent. A man who clears, say, $100 after

four years in Moresby has been lucky, although probably such a man would also have established extensive credit with *wantoks*. Tom has been lucky, and has invested his capital: he has bought a polaroid camera for $32, and intends to sell his *wantoks* their photos for $1.50 each. Access to their own portraits is almost impossible for New Guineans, so Tom may very well succeed. More commonly a man might go home breaking about even, richer in experience only, and sometimes he might return more heavily in debt than when he left. To do that involves much shame, and possibly some of those who have remained longest in Moresby have done so in an effort to clear their debts. Even to go home breaking even involves shame, for everyone knows that men go to Moresby to make money, and success in *bisnis* is an admired quality in the village.

Despite all this the Gono men, in common with most communities in precarious economic situations, spend money freely. Unlike many highlanders very few get drunk (although all will have a beer or two), partly because arrest by the police means another $5 or $10 'fine', but mainly because their mission training forbids it. But frequently men in debt will buy such luxuries as an ice cream or a bottle of lolly water, and gambling is always popular. Until mid-1974 gambling was illegal and cards legally unobtainable—so cards could fetch up to $5 a pack on the black market, and our departures to Australia were invariably accompanied by requests to bring back as many packs as possible. When cards were obtainable *Laki* (Lucky), *Tri Lip* (Three Cards), and *Queen*, all card games involving a high degree of luck and a rapid cash turnover, were popular—otherwise the usual game was *Massis* (Matches), a game between two players in which a box of matches was flipped into the air and odds paid according to how it landed. James and Simon frowned on excessive gambling, but under Tom, and after card playing (although not for money) was legalised in June 1974, a regular Sunday card game takes place outside the *boi* house. The stakes are high: Tom once lost $28 in an afternoon.

Gambling is one way of attempting to accumulate cash—another is *Sande* (Sunday), a custom very general among Papua New Guineans, by which a group of from four to eight men combine together and agree to give a set amount, say $10, every payday to one of their number. Every man receives his windfall in turn, so that while for many weeks he is poor, for one he is rich, and can buy clothes, pay off debts, shout beer, and so on. A huge grin always accompanies the announcement, '*Mi Sande nau.*'

Sande and unemployment lead to frequent borrowing. Between ten and twenty Gono men constantly owe us amounts ranging from twenty cents to $16—mostly this is borrowed from necessity, but occasionally it is borrowed to signify an additional depth to our relationship, for a debt brings associations and obligations to both borrower and lender. As in Western society, a degree of familiarity is necessary before a loan can be asked for: thereafter loans and other forms of assistance are asked for much more readily, and a sense of obligation beyond the amount of the loan is conveyed although not expressed.

Because of this and because free board in the *boi* house creates a debt which must somehow be repaid, the Gono men look for ways to assist us. They sweep leaves, plant shrubs and water gardens because they say dead leaves and untidy yards bring shame to them, and usually James or Simon or Tom assigned the most recent arrivals to odd tasks they considered necessary about the place. When we go away they mount guard over the house, making it apparently among the most secure in Port Moresby, and once when our house was broken into (while we slept inside) Tom gathered all his *wantoks* from the entire area, and harangued them for an hour on their responsibilities. Afterwards several told us they had got a real tongue lashing, and apologised for having been careless, explaining that the night was so cold that they had been forced to sleep inside and so had not heard the thieves.

This paternal attitude first led us to notice the importance of sorcery and magic in the lives of the Gono men. One day we noticed under our front step a long, narrow, water-worn stone, about six inches long by two inches wide, painted red on one side and gold on the other, and tied round with a length of vine. It was, James said, to protect us from thieves and evil spirits. Europeans were ignorant about New Guinea sorcery, James told us, for they might imagine that the stone and other charms about the place were unnecessary. But they were wrong: indeed at present there was a Rigo sorcerer who spent a lot of time hiding under our house waiting to kill us. We could not see him, because he worked magic which clouded our eyes, but he was there all right. If ever he gave serious trouble, James and his friends would *cut* (knife) him and dump him out at Bomana where the police could not find him, but in the

meantime it did no harm to take precautions with a bit of counter-magic.

Later Roket, Anibo, Famuti and John all asked us to bring lucky charms (*laki sitone*) from Australia for them, charms which would make sure they won at cards, or found a good job, or become irresistible to women. Once the charm was specified, an unopened carton of cigarettes, but usually it was not, so long as it was got from Australia. Australian charms were popular because *wantoks* who could read had told the Gono men that Australian papers often advertised charms which brought luck, wealth, success in love, and so on.

Requests for charms put me in a dilemma. If I got them, and they did not work sometimes, back would come a request, with a suggestion of reproach, for a better charm. If I replied that I could not guarantee that the charms would work, then opinion was that my less than wholehearted co-operation was jinxing the charms. I once suggested to Roket that if the charms worked it would be purely a matter of luck, to which he replied "That's right!" and smiled happily. Then I put it to him that Australians were not likely to sell or give away charms which *really* worked, because *if* they had such charms they would keep them themselves. Roket asked was that why Australians had so much cargo, and New Guineans so little? What happens, I next enquired, if *everyone* playing cards, for example, has a lucky charm from Australia, surely they all cannot work? Roket told me that some charms were stronger than others, and that he wanted a very strong charm. If you don't want to help you don't have to, he added, for to him all doubts and questions were more obstructionism. He got the charms, and almost immediately was arrested and given twenty-eight days gaol for being drunk and disorderly and assaulting a police officer. My present standing as a supplier of effective charms is consequently very low.

Magic affects many other aspects of Gono life in Port Moresby. Unless with Europeans, some streets and even whole sections of the city are out of bounds to Gono people because of magic or taboos put up by rivals—among other considerations, this makes finding work more difficult. Some coastal foods, including fruits such as paw-paw and mangoes which could materially improve urban diets, are considered poisonous to highlanders, although all right for coastal people. Magic can help a sporting team win, gain entrance to a picture theatre, find work, bring sickness to an enemy, attract a woman, cause a European to give you a lift in his car, or keep a man sober so that the police won't molest him.

It can also do more serious things. Late one night in 1973 James came and told me that an old Lufa man (Gono is in the Lufa sub-district) was dying, and that they needed money to put him on the morning plane to Goroka. If the man died at home it would be all right, for he was old, but if he died in Moresby it would show he had been killed by the sorcery of men from another part of the Lufa sub-district, and big trouble would break out between the two groups as a result. Even the Europeans secretly accepted this, because if the man was flown home alive the fare was just over $30, whereas if he died and was packed in ice for burial in his country, the compensation the Europeans demanded was much greater—about $200.

Why not take him to the hospital, or to see a doctor? They had been to the hospital—the men there said he was dying. There was no point seeing a doctor for they themselves could tell whether or not a man was dying. If it was true that another group was killing him, how do you know which? By the sort of sickness the man had. What happens if you do not retaliate? They will kill someone else.

The next morning there was gloom in the Gono camp. The old man had died. Not much was said to us about the consequent trouble, but a month or so later James went home, and two months after that Simon followed him. Perhaps they left simply because they could not find work or because their parents wished them to return, but possibly the sorcery of their enemies had become too powerful for them, for there were no really important Gono sorcerers in Moresby. By the end of 1974 this trouble seemed to have been settled.

The Gono men have made a selective contact with European culture. They are on a quest to answer a single question, why do Europeans have so much *cargo*, and New Guineans so little? Such a huge disparity puzzles them, and they search for ways to bridge the gap. Their purpose in this is not so that they might take up the white man's ways, though that may happen to an extent, but so they can turn their gains to advantage in traditional terms, by increasing their wealth and status at home in the village. "Where will we get shirts and shorts when self-government comes?" James asks. "Why do Europeans, who have so much wealth, come to Papua New Guinea?" Simon

wonders. "If they come to help us, why do they only talk, and refuse to give us the secret of their *cargo?*" "Why are there so many cars in Port Moresby, and none in Gono?" John asks. "What have we done wrong?" What works, how is it done, when will we have the secret, work, cards, money, *Sande,* how can the world of the white men be used to improve life at home?

But the Gono men also have a curiosity about Europeans entirely unrelated to their quest for the keys to the *cargo.* Often they despair of fathoming the wonderful illogicalities and blindnesses of the European mind, but they too see flashes of that common humanity which touches all mankind. I asked Tom and John and Anibo if I might tell something of their story to Australian readers. "All right," they said, "it is good that they should understand how we think."

floating fund

STEPHEN MURRAY-SMITH writes: It cost $6000 without counting overheads to produce the last issue of *Overland,* which means that each *copy* actually cost $3. (The actual breakdown was: printing $2600, cost of color blocks $1600, fees to authors and artists $1500 (though Clif Pugh and Fred Williams allowed us to use their work without payment).) Add overheads, i.e. mailing, labor etc., and I suppose the cost comes out nearer $4 a copy—which we supplied to our dear subscribers for $1, and to bookshops for considerably less! A commercial publisher, faced with a production cost of $3 a copy for a paperback, would probably sell it for $10 to $12! I mention all this with a certain sense of wonder; and at least it may explain why this issue is smaller and less ambitious than number 60. Many thanks to those who help to make our extravagances possible, this time a fine total of $472:

$100 Anon; $42 AB (USA); $16 MW, KS, FM; $15 EW; $12 HA; $11 JS; $10 DB, DP, JL, AMcB; $8 JB, GH; $6 IMcK, PH, AF, QH, KF, DA, TS, GD, CI, PA, IMcK, RM, ED, DD; $5 IG; $4 AEB, PMcC, DT, IS, PM, SB, PR; $3.50 LR; $3 LC; $2 GKS, BI, ER; GMcI, RD, MT, PF, MS, DG, FJ, DD, JS, JI, JL, EW, BGB; $1.50 AH; $1 MD, DG, BD, ME, JR, MD, SMcC, LK, DR, KMcE, GS, GMcK, PM, JR, EH, JA, LB, MG, AG, *WS, RO, JS, TS, MTS, KS, GM, EP, JR, LM; 75c JC, JC; 50c Anon.*

Vane Lindesay

books

THE CRITICAL POINT

John McLaren

Brian Kiernan: *Criticism* (Oxford University Press, $1.35).
A. D. Hope: *Native Companions, a collection of essays and comments on Australian Literature* (Angus and Robertson, $10.95 and $7.50).
Dorothy Green: *Ulysses Bound: Henry Handel Richardson and her fiction* (ANU Press, $10).
Patricia A. Morley: *The Mystery of Unity: Theme and technique in the novels of Patrick White* (University of Queensland Press, $6).
Brian Matthews: *The Receding Wave: Henry Lawson's Prose* (Melbourne University Press, $6.75).
W. S. Ramson (ed.): *The Australian Experience: Critical essays on Australian novels* (ANU Press, $11.05).

The publication of Brian Kiernan's excellent pamphlet on Australian literary critics provides an opportunity to review the state of the art in Australia today.

The very notion of literary criticism currently seems to be in disfavor. The amount of criticism being published might be used as evidence to rebut the sneers by suggesting an audience which is sufficiently concerned with imaginative writing to wish to explore it further through criticism. It could also be taken, however, as evidence of the truth of Professor Hope's forecast, quoted by Kiernan, that today the researchers outnumber the writers. Yet the critics in these books do show a continuing concern for the issues which Kiernan traces in his historical account, thus providing some evidence for a continuing critical tradition.

Kiernan shows how the debate over what is distinctively national about Australian literature, and over the relevance of this question to related issues of standards and tradition, has characterized literary criticism in Australia from its earliest emergence. He divides the critics into the locals, who seek to evaluate work in terms of its contribution to an Australian identity, and the universalists, who maintain that a work is either literature or not, regardless of its milieu. In making the distinction, however, Kiernan also shows that it can be an oversimplification. While critics like Stephens were concerned with what was Australian, they were also able to see that national qualities could well be limiting qualities from a literary point of view. Kiernan correctly points out that the weakness of the nationalist tradition is in assuming that literature is a statement of values held in the country from which it emanates. He illustrates his own thesis by relating the development of nationalist attitudes among our critics, and the later changes in these attitudes towards international movements of thought.

The issue of nationalism is implicit in the title of Ramson's collection of essays. In this book, however, we find the other issue which Kiernan sees emerging in more recent years—the opposition of academics and journalists. Despite the inclusion of one journalist among the contributors to this volume, the essays are overwhelmingly academic in style and concern, and reflect particularly a highly rationalist type of criticism which has recently been dominant. There is no representation of the younger critics who look at literature not as an expression of social patterns so much as an emanation of social relationships, nor is there any contribution from the more overtly nationalist critics. Yet the title of the book does suggest a thesis, which is not argued at length, about the relation of literature and a particular society.

The writing in this volume does enable us to

distinguish two distinctive styles in academic criticisms. One is of the kind which leads into the work, essentially to a judgemental conclusion, and is exemplified by the essays of Leonie Kramer and A. D. Hope. The other is demonstrated in the monumental literary biography of Henry Handel Richardson by Dorothy Green, herself a contributor to the Ramson collection. Dorothy Green's essay in *The Australian Experience* is concerned with *Voss*. In this essay she widens a sensitive reading of the novel by bringing to it a scholarly understanding of both the Germanic tradition and of music, and shows how these both play their part in enriching the novel. This is the same technique she uses in *Ulysses Bound*, where her scholarly research into Richardson's life and into the background of her work supports her reading of the novels themselves. At times her commitment to Richardson the writer, and to her own methods, leads her to an excessive irritation with critics with whom disagrees, and at other times her interest in philosophic and musical sources causes her to attach greater value to them than the text alone would warrant. Despite these blemishes, however, Green has produced what is likely to remain the definitive account of the writer and her work, and a book which leads us out from the novels into a fresh consideration of the issues they raise about the world with which they deal.

Similar qualities illuminate her essay in Ransom on Christina Stead's *The Man Who Loved Children*. Again, she is concerned with the world depicted in the novel, but is concerned with it as an image of the wider world which generates the pressures demonstrated in the writing. This is the reverse of the method adopted by Leonie Kramer, whose essay on Patrick White's *Tree of Man*, a development of the ideas she published in *Quadrant* in 1973, tends to treat the novel as if it were a doctoral thesis. Kramer is guilty also of some critical sleight of hand, as when she refers to White's authorial intrusion that 'One, and no other figure, is the answer to all sums'. A reading of the context leaves it at least open to question whether this is White's remark or a report of Stan's discovery. Similarly, despite the writer's insistence, her analysis does not establish that Stan's discovery is of a world without either immanence or transcendence. I believe that the whole pressure of White's writing, in this as in other novels, is towards seeing a world both through and beyond the immediate, a world which is glimpsed by Stan because he does accept and trust the immediate. The weakness of White's writing, I believe, is that at this crucial point he requires assent from the reader, rather than demonstrating the otherness to him. This weakness, however, if it does exist, is no warrant for claiming that the writing unambiguously points to a world with no beyond.

A. D. Hope suggests of Kramer's work that, while almost everything she says is correct, there is still something more to be said. What I find disappointing in her account of White is that she allows her intelligence to get in the way of her awareness. While illuminating on structure, she misses on final significance, and although her essay can further our understanding of the work it does not lead us beyond it. A similar, if opposite, weakness mars Patricia Morley's analysis of White's novels. While her writing on each novel is aware, her final thesis is unconvincing, because she demands assent to White's mysticism as a condition of understanding or appreciating his work. Writers who disagree, including myself, she dismisses in a footnote as unworthy to comment. By thus dodging the critical issues she allows herself to become a disciple rather than a fellow-seeker for truth.

A quite different approach to criticism, and to the author criticised, is taken in Brian Matthews' study of Henry Lawson. The substance of Matthews' book is an account of the stories themselves, and he shows how the imaginative weakness of the later work, with its sentimentality and loss of contact with the actual, its dwelling on eccentricity for its own sake, can be accounted for in terms of the power of the earlier stories rather than in extrinsic autobiographical detail. The success of Lawson's earlier work, Matthews argues, derives from the grip of particularly limited experience on the writer's imagination. Once exhausted, there was nothing more for him to say. This book demonstrates how a sensitive reading of the work itself leads us out into the world of the author, and by implication warns against the dangers of the reverse proceeding, dangers which, for all her other virtues, Dorothy Green does not altogether avoid. The merit of both these books, however, derives ultimately from the commitment of the critics to the importance of the values which concerned the writers whom they analyse.

A. D. Hope is a continuing influence on contemporary Australian criticism, yet it is impossible to characterize him as journalist or aca-

demic, nationalist or universalist. His essay on Randolph Stow is a warm and personally committed account of the pleasure he found in Stow's work, and an analysis of the reasons. Its standards are universal. Yet his essay on D. H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo,* in the same volume, could be written by the most nationalist of the critics, even if it makes a gesture to universal standards at the end. Its passion is the passion of the affronted Australian, rightly contemptuous of the English tourist judging his country after a quick flip through.

These changing qualities mark the essays collected together in *Native Companions.* This book brings together his literary journalism, including the historically important, if unjustifiably vitriolic, attack on *The Tree of Man.* His considered essays in the same volume deal with a variety of Australian authors, to some of whom, such as Martin Boyd, he brings a just meed of universalist judgement, and to others, such as three early Australian poets, a nationalist puff. The common quality of his writing, apart from intelligence, seems a quirky individuality, sometimes marred by personal animus, but always entertaining and never predictable.

BERT VICKERS' STORY

John Morrison

F. B. Vickers: *Without Map or Compass* (Australasian Book Society, $4.95).

I once read a definition of a good autobiography as one which traces the development of character while adequately filling in the nature of the forces which mould it. On these terms F. B. Vickers's *Without Map or Compass* is very good autobiography indeed.

As a small-canvas picture of English industrial working-class life early in the century the book would be hard to beat. Vickers gets the very texture of it in one particularly well-written chapter where, a boy of only twelve, and after recurring nightmares of anticipation, he sets out one bleak morning to look for his first job: "I felt that I was living that nightmare again in reality as I walked down the middle of Bank Road on this cold, dark April Monday morning with me striking sparks off the cobblestones with my hobnails to keep my courage up, for I was as frightened as hell. Frightened of what I was going into, and even more frightened of what I was running away from—that 'ommer shop which would turn me into a man of iron like my father."

He got an immediate start first time of asking, greasing bayonet scabbards at 5s. 3d. for a 60 hour week, and was sacked—with a kicked backside for good measure—only a few hours later for demanding a pay rise of 6d. a week.

A promising start for a twelve year old, and a pace which he kept up in the following six years by getting knocked down by his father for sticking up for mother in a domestic quarrel; by losing another job for refusing to work overtime without the prescribed break for a meal; by having his dole suspended for being unrepentant over that issue at the Labour Exchange; by being refused membership of the Labour Party because of his connection with 'agitators'; and by being ordered out of a meeting of the Communist Party for—for gorsake!—being a disruptive element. Soon afterwards, eighteen years old, rejected on all sides, and sulking over a kiss refused by a girl because (so he thought) she regarded herself as too good for him, he left England for Australia as a government-assisted migrant, "without map or compass".

A tough childhood and youth, but recaptured without self-pity, without lingering bitterness. This was early life as Vickers found it, and he brings to it a relaxed narrative style progressively adapted to the expanding perceptions of a boy with guts enough, but of more than average sensitivity.

Early in the book there is an industrial dispute which follows classic lines: a demand by railwaymen for a desperately needed increase in pay; a refusal by the companies; a decision to strike; the usual secondary struggle behind the lines of militants versus faint-hearts; hardship and hunger; a rallying of the wives; a settlement in which both sides give some ground; a resumption of work; and, predictable finale in those days, victimisation of strike leaders.

Vickers sets it all down with a sure hand, and with none of the excessive proselytising which so oftens mars stories of industrial conflict. Author of several successful novels, he understands that the sympathies of the reader are more readily engaged, and the argument more sharply driven home, through the interplay of personal relationships than through the actions and emotions of people in the mass. In this case we learn more about a strike from what takes place within the intimacy of the Jukes's home than we do from the description, good as it is, of the clash between

unionists and scabs at the railway gates.

Therein, I believe, lies the real strength of the book. The needy, hard-working mother anxious to see that her children "better themselves" is a familiar one in literature; in our own contemporary writing one thinks of Judah Waten's "Mother" in his short story of that name, and again as the real head of the family in his novel *The Unbending*. Vickers' Mrs Jukes is of coarser clay but the same longings and indomitable spirit are there, and the observer's task of interpretation is made the more difficult because of a conservative, unimaginative, bullying husband. Jukes senior has to be dragged into the strike; Mrs Jukes, in the face of his sulky opposition, promptly throws herself into organising support among the women.

A further complication is the deep-rooted English consciousness of 'class' with which both parents are perversely afflicted, and which involves the mother in a bewildering conflict of loyalties between husband and son. Vickers's handling of the changing currents flowing among this threesome does credit not only to his retrospective insight, but to his fidelity to truth.

A SOUTH SEAS SHLIMAZL

Stephen Murray-Smith

Greg Dening (ed.): *The Marquesan Journal of Edward Robarts 1797-1824* (ANU Press, $9.95).

A *schlimazl* is a splendid word for, as Leo Rosten tells us in *The Joys of Yiddish*, a chronically unlucky person: "When a schlimazl winds a clock, it stops". The Pacific in the early years of last century was full of men down on their luck, adventurers, castaways, rascals, ne'er-do-wells — and some of more heroic stature. Together they comprised the men who stayed when the explorers and the whalers moved on. Thanks to the Australian National University's Pacific History series of little-known journals illustrating the chequered lives of these men, we are beginning to learn a lot about the native peoples of the Pacific in the period between the era of their undisturbed innocence and the era of the anthropologist.

The Marquesas lie north-east of Tahiti. Mendana found them in 1595. Cook visited them in 1774. There are ten islands in two groups of five, separated by 140 miles of sea. In 1800 they were populated by fifty to eighty thousand handsome, heavily tattooed people, leading a hard and savage life in which valley battled against valley, island against island, and there was little pity. Today there are about 5000 inhabitants.

Edward Robarts was a sailor who deserted from a whaler in 1798, at the age of 27 years, and spent eight years in the Marquesas, travelling widely and often miserably, marrying a chief's daughter, fighting in island battles and witnessing cannibal feasts. The islands got too hot for Robarts in 1806 and he slipped away with his wife and daughter, and spent the rest of his days in not-too-genteel poverty, bumming his way around south-east Asia. On one notable occasion he visited Botany Bay, endeavoring to get permission from Governor Macquarie to immigrate thither. Macquarie gave him short shrift, viewing Robarts "with the eye of a hawke" and dismissing him with the words: "this country is only fitt for thieves and Rich men".

This is a book that works on many levels. As Professor Dening tells us, its prime importance is for the insights it offers on Marquesan society before it had been radically changed by European contact. Robarts was a perceptive but not necessarily an accurate observer but, as Dening says, "He had the supreme advantage of having been there". It is also a story of great intrinsic appeal, a real-life Crusoe story told racily and with some literary flair, and all the more interesting as an example of what may be called 'uncultured' writing of its time. Lastly, it is a work that has been admirably edited and introduced, by a scholar who is able to present his material for the general reader as well as his colleagues. In all the inflated mass of contemporary Australian publishing the gems are getting rarer, but this is one of them.

LAGGERS OF VAN DIEMEN'S LAND

Tom Errey

J. N. D. Harrison (ed.): *Court in the Colony* (Law Society of Tasmania, no price given).

A Supreme Court for Van Diemen's Land—to unhook the colony from dependence on the Court of New South Wales — was one of the reforms which emerged from Commissioner Bigge's report on the colonial judicial establishments. John Lewes Pedder, first Chief Justice, was sworn in on 7 May 1824 by Lieutenant Governor Sorell, and three days later the first sitting took place. His Honor, only thirty years old at the time of

his appointment, was to occupy the bench for his next thirty years. Even longer was the service of the first Registrar to take up duty, William Sorell, son of His Excellency, who held the post for 36 years. To make a trio of long-serving principal legal officers, Joseph Hone was Master of the Supreme Court, with a four-year intermission when he held other appointments, from 1824 to 1857.

Mr Harrison's little book, the compilation of short articles by a variety of hands identified with the Tasmanian Bench and Bar, tends to lay its chief accent on those epochal early years, before Van Diemen's Land got self-government and with it the change of name to Tasmania.

Pedder has become a household word far beyond Tasmania for reasons incidental to modern times. But far fewer would know that it derives from this colonial judge whose name was first conferred on a Tasmanian landscape feature by the "Conciliator", G. A. Robinson, in 1831. Robinson's "Mount Pedder", in the far North-East, was not officially accepted, but four years later Surveyor Wedge saw and named "Lake Pedder" in the south-west, where it lay undisturbed and little known for another century and a quarter.

To the Man behind the Lake, then. Observe Chief (and only) Judge Pedder, a product of Charterhouse, the Middle Temple, and Cambridge, handing down his very first sentence on 5 July, 1824. A convict, Tibbs, said to be otherwise a man of good reputation in the colony, was charged with the manslaughter of a black man, and the jury had found him guilty. His Honor sentenced Tibbs to three years transportation. Chief Justice Pedder is not recorded as having used the occasion to address the wider public on the Court's intolerance of cruelty to the native people.

Five years on, during a sitting of the Supreme Court in Launceston, His Honor sentenced no fewer than 21 offenders to death. The condemned were described as bushrangers (4), sheepstealers (8), bullock-stealers (2), highway robber (1), house-breakers (3), arsonist (1), and two who broke into their employer's store. "Previous to passing sentence upon the unhappy men," wrote the *Launceston Advertizer*, "His Honour, who appeared deeply affected, addressed them in a most feeling and impressive manner".

Commutation having apparently saved a number of the condemned, ultimately only thirteen were "launched into eternity" (to quote the same paper's words) "within twentyfour hours". Several days later the *Advertizer's* leading article advocated abolition of the death penalty except for murder.

While there are interesting glimpses of the first buildings occupied by the Supreme Court, it seems a pity that more is not revealed of other premises used during the one and a half centuries. One of the cover drawings depicts the brick-built Penitentiary Chapel (Old Trinity Church) in Brisbane Street, designed by John Lee Archer in 1830, and figuring in Morton Herman's *Georgian Architecture in Australia*. In 1860 this building became the venue of the Supreme Court's criminal sittings, being neighbor for most of the next hundred years to the Campbell Street gaol, since demolished. It receives no mention in the text.

Now it has ceased to have this function, for a new Supreme Court structure has risen in Salamanca Place, opposite the Parliament Square. The facilities of the new complex are briefly outlined by the present Master, Mr. G. Brettingham-Moore — they include courts "in the round", such as already exist in Burnie, Tasmania, on the advocacy of the last Chief Justice and present Governor, Sir Stanley Burbury.

Court in the Colony will have most use as an appetiser rather than as a square meal. Many of its contributors are busy public men, and, although they have granted us a peep at some fascinating ingredients, there must be more in the pantries of their minds. Perhaps they could commit more to tape, and pass it on the archives as data for the bicentenary volume.

They're a foolish lot in East Barkoo

The Annual East Barkoo Footrace. A tradition that goes back to our founding days, today it's a little known event. The eldest sons of all the families bowl a 4 ft. hoop from Barkoo to East Barkoo. The first to startle one of the Barkoo tigers from their burrows (or 'hides' as the locals call them) and herd him to the finishing line wins. As the Barkoo tigers have been extinct since 1912, there have been few winners in recent times. A move to have the hoops made from aluminium, a sensible and obvious scheme, was rejected unanimously in 1968. They're a foolish lot in East Barkoo.

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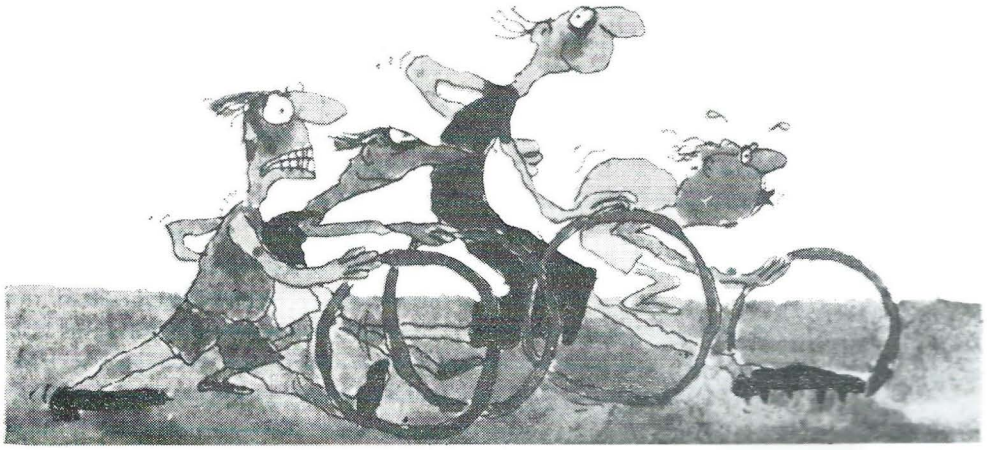

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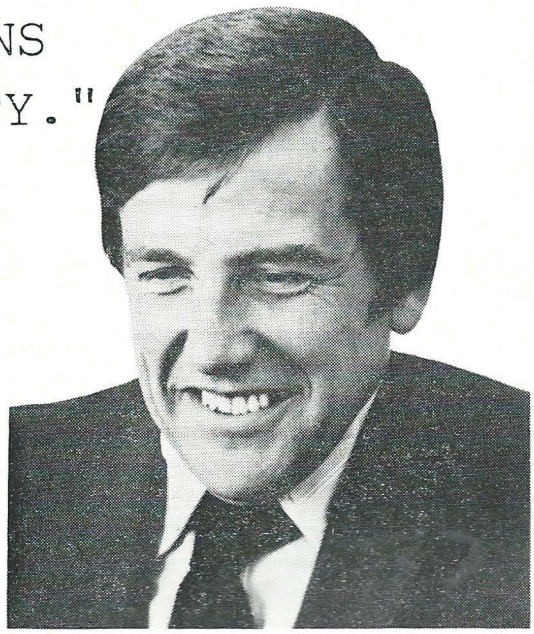

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