

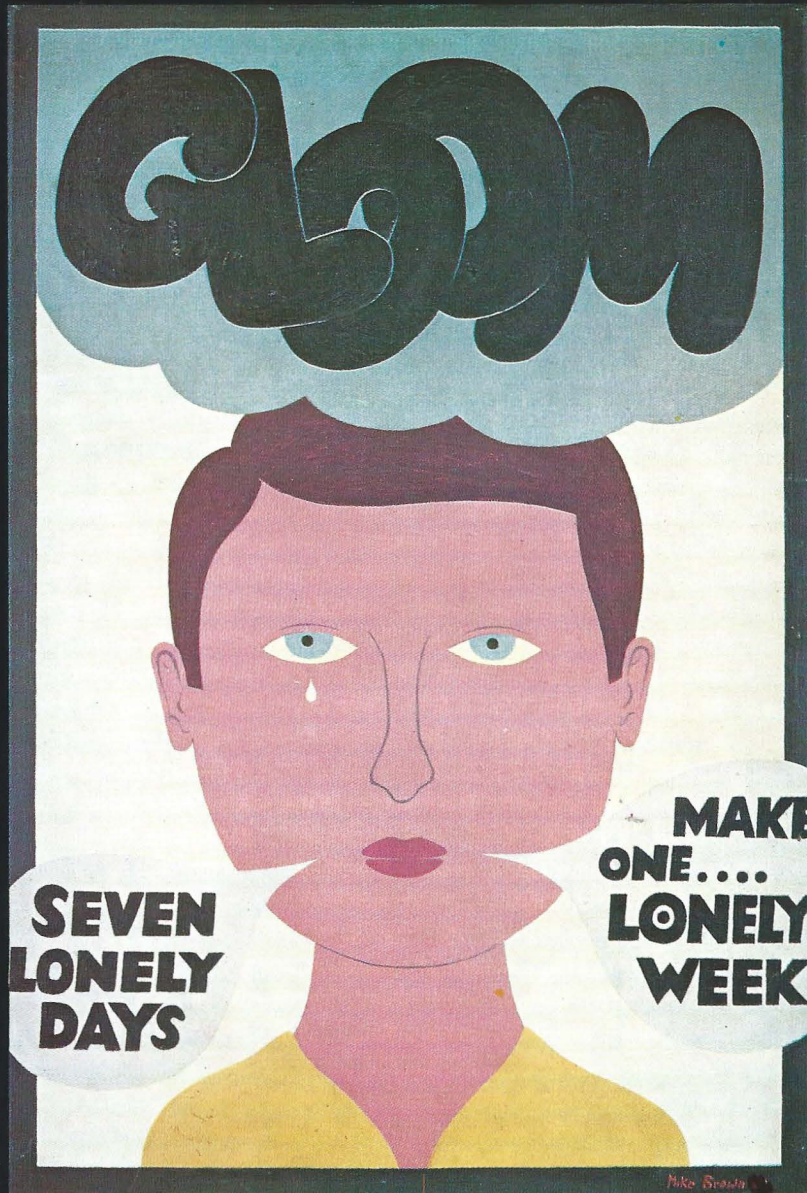
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Mike Brash

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BARRY HILL **Departures**

She slumped into the seat, scarcely acknowledging the bodies squeezed about her, least of all the old man in the skull cap in front. It was all she could do to manage the clutter of hand luggage; the knitted shoulder bag embroidered with a white amphora, the empty demijohn harnessed in cane: she felt like a tourist caravan. She jammed them as best she could about her legs, then rested. She laid her head back on the invalid napkin. Closed her eyes: she shut them tightly in defiance of the tears which were now coming too late.

All had come to see her off: her sister Nina, husband Paros, Aphrodite, Paros' unmarried sister, Dimitros, her half-brother, and his wife Christi, the three children, and Paolo, beloved Paolo — they had all assembled hours too early, encircled her, escorted her step by step to the coffee machine, kiosk, weigh-in desk, exalting her departure as if it were an ascension. Then they had, in turns, embraced her. Paolo first, his moustache, his first architectural error, brushing her top lip; Nina, taking her so firmly that together they could have withstood the backwards force of the aircraft slipstream; then Paros, unavoidably moist; Aphrodite, Christi, and, with beautiful decorum, the children. The youngest refused to let go her hand. It nonplussed her: she appealed to the others. But when she looked up she found Christi in tears. She turned to Nina, who wept also. Paros and Paolo turned away. Everyone wept — except her. Assembling all possessions in a rush, she passed at last through Departure Gate 7.

She skuttled across the tarmac towards the rear underside of the great aircraft. She fled, yet did not really want to leave Athens. She rushed away from them, even though her visit, her first since leaving Greece twelve years before, had been until then a wonderful confirmation. In her

rushing she dimly felt she might discover the key to her distress. She reached the aircraft, gained the top of the high steps without so much as looking back, let herself be ushered through by the immaculate British stewardess, reached her seat by straddling a fat man and the camera in his lap. Only then, sitting back, the tears in her head welling too late, did she realize: her shame. She had not wept.

She sat with her body remembering each separate and long lost touch that they had impressed upon her, and which she had received, welcomed, in ways which they surely must have known. Her body knew the turn and press of each hand on her shoulder, back, cheek, the long, sallow fall of her middle-aged jaw. Paros joked about their great middle age. She knew each touch so well. And she had touched them. She had spoken. She said next time she would bring the children. But she did not weep. She could not. On such occasions she no longer knew how. It was not Greek. She was no longer Greek.

A few tears at last made their way into the pouch of her handsome eyes. The man beside her, thinking that she was yet another Greek committing the elementary error of transmigration, reached into the seat pocket for the flight prospectus. The thick red line went: London, Athens, Delhi, Bangkok, Singapore, Sydney, and her tears, exhausted mid-journey, did not have to be wiped away. They died on her cheek before he could turn the page.

The aeroplane took off. They seemed to fly over the beach at Vouliagmeni, then turned, as if heading towards Albania, those terrible mountains where her father and first husband had died, but then circled once more, settled towards the south-east. At last they were flying out of Europe. They would pass over the incomprehensible East, destination Antipathies, as an amus-

ing Australian colleague called her new region. She was going there now whether her family liked it or not.

The cabin was full. Every seat as far as she could see was occupied, some doubly—children everywhere. Her own children, Maria, 12, Barbara, 15, were at home. She *would* bring them next time; in four years, perhaps, if she could make her teacher's salary keep pace with the cost of living.

A stewardess appeared. Coffee? Tea? Water, *parakalo*. A few minutes later she returned with soda. The plane shook as the stewardess disappeared behind her curtain. Were they over Lebanon already? Nothing would sit right within her. The shame continued to occupy her whole body. She felt peculiarly worn, as dry within as some old cheese. For a good while she would not look in the direction of anyone.

Then quite suddenly the man in the seat directly in front of her stood up. He was so short that his large head, face pitted brown by the sun, was barely seen above the white seat cover. He was a very old man. He wore a knitted skull cap, and his eyes, black and clear as water on dark rocks, were alive to everything around him. In Greek which she could hardly decipher, he sang:

I sowed a pepper seed on Margaro's lips.

It sprouted thickly, became a giant plant
—mown now by Greeks, carried by Turks
and threshed by Margaro astride her mount.

Then the stewardess came and gently motioned him back down into his seat.

It was one of her favourite folk songs. So familiar that she could not remember learning it: perhaps father had sung it, out of nostalgia when the family lived in Alexandria: or perhaps she had acquired it amongst her expatriate friends in Paris. Only once had she sung it in recent years. Some of the men at an Easter feast had started, and she, among the women, had been the first to join in; everyone had turned towards her at the sound of a single woman loudly singing.

Dinner was served. She ate sparingly, leaving the best part. She longed for coffee. Eventually her cup was filled with a weak brew tasting of her shame. Had they forsaken the Aegean? She wished the plane along.

During the meal the old man left his seat and walked the length of the cabin. He toured towards the front, then towards the rear, straddling the passageway as if he was navigating a hand made raft. He had found his legs. He was radiantly happy.

After dinner—it was close to midnight according to the neat watch she had purchased en route—she set the seat back, juggled the air duct, and closed her eyes. Surprisingly, she found herself falling into sound sleep. She slept better than she had during her month's holiday at Nina's.

But in the morning—was it morning? her watch said six and the plane was crawling with children—she reawoke amidst trays and fruit juices, coffee and shining new stewards—to the dreadful shame. It was part of her. It had set within like some cold solution.

They were somewhere over India. She discovered that the plane had touched down there while she slept. The old man had become an inveterate traveller. He strolled up and down the aisle with wonderful aplomb, definitely going somewhere, while having all the time in the world to stop and converse. He did not move five paces without stopping to speak to someone. He must have spent the night making friends with an army of Greeks! His eyes were riper than the best black olives. Dearly she would have loved to talk with him. But somehow, perhaps he sensed the shyness beneath her gloom, he never stopped alongside her.

She gathered that he also was bound for Australia. It was his first visit; indeed, it was his first excursion from Greece. All his life he had lived in a tiny village near Yennina, tending goats. Only the day before yesterday he must have slept with the goats, and today, in a matter of hours he would meet the son he had not seen for twenty years.

It was impossible to avoid looking at him. Every so often he burst into song. No-one now attempted to restrain him, except that at one point, when the captain came out of his cabin, it appeared likely. The captain approached the old man, and, standing over him, spoke emphatically. The old man stood up. He doffed his cap. He removed his navy blue jacket, then a navy blue sweater. Then he took off another sweater which had been under that, leaving a faded navy blue shirt. People laughed. The captain looked over the seat towards the man beside her and said: it's like peeling an onion. We don't want him to die of heat exhaustion. The man, who must have been Australian, smiled with the captain.

She longed to touch the old man. She wanted to move into the seat beside him and put her arms around him as a mother would a small child.

The plane refuelled at Bangkok. For an hour she sat alone in the humid terminal, returning to the plane to discover that her watch, which she had tucked in the seat pocket, had disappeared. Pointless complaining.

Towards the end of the day the captain announced in his very slow voice that the plane was over Australia. Everyone who could looked out of the windows, down—they saw green against a dull wash of land which must have been the gulf losing its battle with the great continent. Dusk. She thought of her vain attempts to tell Nina about the differences and similarities—the way the light in one sang in the mind, and the light in the other drove the body so hard you just had to retreat and run into the sea.

Night fell, providing her with broken reflections of her face in the window panel. So she confined her gaze to the solid preparations of those about her. She found herself helping numerous women to fill out official documents. She advised on currency, transport, the time of day. Her heart went out to them and she wished the old man would come to her as well.

But no. The plane landed, a bumpy, high pitched landing which reminded her of noise in her own street. Then they sat for half an hour out on the dark tarmac while officials combed the cabin, spraying the air above people with insecticide. By the time they shuffled into Immigration she realized she had somehow lost sight of the old man completely. As she stood in line she did her best to spot him—but she was too far back or he was too short or he had, finally, received some special sort of treatment by officials. From her many dealings with the Education Department she knew that some officials had Turkish habits.

An age getting through customs. Officials making a show of checking all things. Even children had to open bags, and she saw one encumbered mother obliged to empty three suitcases completely. Many men walked through uninspected—though perhaps that was her cranky imagination, but she waited patiently.

At last it was her turn. She opened her case; the official pulled gently at the inside pockets. She exposed the interior of her handbag; he motioned that she should shut it as soon as she liked. He smiled at the demijohn and waved her through. Then she was—out, homebound, set on getting the bus, the last train from the city, elatedly intent on catching the children awake,

almost forgetful of the shame which had somehow managed to travel with her, but which insinuated itself about her as she reached the outdoors footpath alone.

And there he was! He had cleared customs before her. He was outside and, with nose to the glass, was looking in at the last people to leave. Before she could gather the expression on his face he turned away. Briskly, people walked past him to climb aboard the bus.

She must approach him. She had to express, however unbeknown to him, the ease he had provided her.

He walked up and down along the footpath, as if he had not yet left the narrow space of the cabin, except that he wore every layer of his navy blue. As he walked he looked about, muttering. His son was nowhere to be seen. He was far too agitated to be directly approached. She stood back against the wall, a stone's throw away. He seemed not to notice her. The bus pulled out. It was the last bus. It left them standing on the footpath alone.

He heard her approaching. He turned; she looked into a wild, rigid face, a face stricken with the solitude of hard mountains. He fixed on her and sang:

I'll sing you a song as daintily as I can,
To shit, eat, fart and drink—behold
the life of man.

She smiled, as best she could; prepared herself to dance with him, if necessary. Then he began to shout. Again it was in the crudest Greek, a dialect she could hardly decipher:

Virgin. Shit. Bastard.

He waved his arms in circles, then held his hands high above his head. He shouted once more, his eyes dark rocky slits. She stepped back. Quickly she tried to retreat.

As she did so she turned, and found herself looking into the silver buttons of a formidable policeman. The policeman said: Who does he belong to? She replied: I don't know. He's just arrived, I think he's looking for his son. He came on the plane alone . . . she spoke very clearly, in English which she knew was quite good, as she used at school. The policeman stepped around her.

There was nothing she could do. She had her own home to go to; the children were waiting. She noticed that the policeman removed the source of disturbance with considerable calmness. The old man entered the van with the equanimity of a person with an Anglo-Saxon respect for the law which was the heritage of her new country.

In the morning, the policeman said, they would locate his son—if, indeed, he had one. There was nothing for her to do except hurry home, catch the children before they decided she was coming the next day and not this day: this day, or was

it yesterday, that she had assured Nina that she could come home to Greece to die. Yes, she had at least assured Nina of that. Perhaps there was nothing to regret, she thought, as she hailed a taxi.

HAMMER, NAIL & A PIECE OF WOOD

The sin eaters draw their money and make
their best brains apologise
because Lee has opened a packet of Turf
and one of her boys would like to meet God
and kill him
and the other one's uncertain face holds the moon
sunward, a crucial gift, at noon.
What a drag she doesn't feel poor,
"got a light, love" she'd say,
"got a light?"
We used to mind her kids sometimes.
One of those times
I told Hayden, the deicide
that if he didn't SHUDDUP QUICK
I'd probably nail his FOOT to the FLOOR.
Do it, he said.
Partly because he liked the idea,
partly because he was just a hard kid to threaten.
I went and got the nails
and the hammer,
Jenny held his arms by his sides
while I took off his shoe and his sock
and put the first nail between his big toe and the next
one.
Do it, said Hayden.
I am, I said.
It sure was lucky that Lee showed up —
none of us wanted to lose any face.
He would have bled and hobbled around in a circle,
we would have pretended that it was funny
or maybe we just didn't notice
and I bet Lee would have been really amused.
As it was
we got a dollar.

ROBERT HARRIS

Frank Moorhouse and The New Journalism

BRUCE BENNETT

Various attempts have been made by critics and commentators to define "literature" and "journalism". But there is a broad measure of agreement that a distinction between the two needs to be made. Writers as different in outlook and historical circumstances as T. S. Eliot and Walter Benjamin agree on this issue, though for different reasons. Eliot defines his journalist as a 'type of mind' whose best writing is done 'under the pressure of an immediate occasion'.¹

Benjamin distinguishes between 'news' or 'information' and 'literature', using the story as his epitome of literature:

The value of information does not survive the moment in which it was new. It lives only at that moment; it has to surrender itself to it completely and explain itself to it without losing any time. A story is different. It does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time.²

In spite of qualifications to their main assertion, these two writers share a common view of the inferiority of journalism to literature on the grounds that the one product is durable while the other is not.

Every assumption of this kind is subject to re-examination in the light of changes in writing techniques and intentions, reading habits and tastes, new technologies and varying concepts of literary culture in different societies. Developments in American writing since the mid-1960s have led to a questioning of the assumption that journalism is a kind of ancillary to the novel.

In Australia, grounds for further questioning of the relationship between literature and journalism, and fiction and nonfiction, are evident in the work of Frank Moorhouse, especially in his latest book, *Conference-Ville*.³ Tom Wolfe's

championing in America of 'new journalists' such as Gay Talese, Truman Capote, Joe Eszterhas, Terry Southern, Hunter S. Thompson, Norman Mailer and himself, is in part a reaction against what he sees as a retreat from realism by recent fiction writers: "Fiction writers, currently, are busy running backward, skipping and screaming, into a begonia patch that I call Neo-Fabulism."⁴ This begonia patch is becoming increasingly attractive to Australian writers of short fiction. Peter Carey and Murray Bail, for instance, enjoy its exotic colors and their experiments in it are to be applauded. But the fabulists must not have it all their own way. Frank Moorhouse's work gives hope of developments in another garden closer to the streets: his attempts to forge an alliance between reportage and the techniques of prose fiction give grounds for hope of a renovated realism.

In an age of advertising, "new" is one of the most overworked words in a limited stock of vocabulary. It is therefore perhaps necessary to remind ourselves of some forebears of Tom Wolfe's "new" journalism. They include Boswell's Johnson, Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*, Cobbett's *Rural Rides*, Dicken's *Sketches by Boz*, Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*, Mark Twain's *Innocents Abroad*. With the exception of Cobbett and Mayhew, these writers are remembered chiefly for other, more 'literary' achievements and even Cobbett's and Mayhew's works are chiefly known as accessories to literature courses on the Romantics and the Victorians.

Tom Wolfe argues that this "literary" attitude persisted into the 1960s in America: journalists typically regarded the newspaper as "a motel you checked into overnight on the road to the final triumph" (i.e. the novel). But in the last decade or so the "new journalists", according to

Wolfe, have added a dimension to American writing: artistic excitement has entered the field and the *lumpenprole* journalists now threaten the security of their literary masters, the novelists and literary critics. Some novelists have turned directly to nonfiction. Some, such as Gore Vidal, Herbert Gold, William Styron and Ronald Sukenick, have tried forms that are part fiction, part nonfiction. Others place real people with their real names into fictional situations. The boundaries are blurring. At the same time, according to Wolfe, a more cunning journalism that grows from the best traditions of social realism in the novel is becoming a worthwhile end in itself. Magazines such as the *New Yorker*, the *Herald Tribune's* Sunday magazine, *New York*, *Atlantic*, *Harper's* and *Esquire* have been leading publishers of this "new" journalism.

The value of Wolfe's essay is not so much in his enthusiastic championing of a dubiously "new" form as in the attention that he gives to the aesthetic dimension of reporting; and further, its implications, in our time and place, for an understanding and assessment of a writer such as Frank Moorhouse. Moorhouse, now in his late 30s, worked as a journalist for city and country newspapers in New South Wales before becoming a full-time writer.

The experience of day-to-day journalism is apparent in Moorhouse's first book, *Futility and Other Animals* (1969), in which close observation of manners and social setting and an ear for dialogue are allied with a clipped, carefully sub-edited style: these qualities are adapted to the more impressionistic demands of his 'discontinuous narrative'. He adapts also Australian newspapers' habitual bracketed reference to the age of persons named in news items: the precise ages of members of his urban tribe are significant in their different responses to the pressures and strains of a search for alternative life styles to those of their parents. Already apparent, too, is Moorhouse's knack of finding the catchy phrase, the right headline, that encapsulates a person's 'story'. The author seems also aware, in his first book, of the impact of changing technologies on modes of thinking and feeling. He seems aware of the need for his prose to move to different the question, what is it to live naturally?

The Americans, Baby (1972) shows a sharpened rhythm if it is to capture the often unspoken needs and desires of a generation moving towards social awareness in Australia. Lying behind the deliberately broken rhythms of the narrative is

ing of skills as the author experiments with point of view and style. Also noticeable is a growing interest in American influences on Australian life. As a whole, though, the second book does not signify a great aesthetic advance on the first. It is in the third book, *The Electrical Experience* (1974), that an artistic breakthrough occurs. In this book Moorhouse's dextrous use of material from a variety of sources coincides with an ability to recreate not only the gestures and attitudes of his central character, but also his thought processes. T. George McDowell, an apparently forgettable soft drink manufacturer from a New South Wales country town, becomes memorable to us both as a father figure and as a living exponent of free enterprise capitalism as it has grown up in Australian country towns, fostered by Rotary and the *Reader's Digest*. A clash of values and attitudes between generations, and between country and city, is suggested. A new maturity is evident in the author's ability to portray sympathetically the personality and outlook of a character whose values he rejects, creating an atmosphere in which both irony and compassion can co-exist.

T. George McDowell seems to emerge from the author's autobiographical experience as well as from research in contemporary newspapers, magazines, recipe books and other receptacles of folk wisdom. Consequently, he comes across as more than "good news"; indeed, as a human being. In spite of some technical experiments that do not wholly succeed, *The Electrical Experience* does, in Benjamin's words, 'preserve and concentrate its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time'.

The durability of *Conference-Ville* (1976), first published in serial form in *Nation Review*, is less assured. However, as Wolfe has pointed out, we should not be overwhelmed by traditional academic criteria when faced with contemporary writing that uses and extends the techniques of journalism. And anyhow, on the question of durability, who can predict the tastes and reading interests (if any) of the next generation?

Conference-Ville, as its title suggests, is about the various behaviors that come into play when a conference comes to town—or rather, when a conference creates its own community of interests, aspirations and antagonisms and becomes a microcosm of the larger society outside. It is a phenomenon of our times: the conference, otherwise known as seminar or symposium (seldom simply a "meeting" or "discussion") is now big

business, and as such is in process of creating its own rules of procedure, patterns of behavior and a mystique that is designed to impress the uninitiated. Moorhouse lifts the lid on these pretensions but, as in his earlier fiction, he is not content merely to ridicule: he is also concerned to analyse motives and the assumptions that lie behind present actions. We can best understand how he does this in relation to Tom Wolfe's account of the new journalism.

A cornerstone of Wolfe's argument is that the best American journalists in the 1960s were re-learning the techniques of realism of the sort found in Fielding, Smollett, Balzac, Dickens and Gogol. They "re-discovered" four main techniques: scene-by-scene construction, the use of realistic dialogue, third-person point of view and the recording of details symbolic of people's "status life". It is clear that Moorhouse has also worked at these aspects of his writing. *Conference-Ville*, for example, consists of twelve carefully orchestrated scenes, beginning with the narrator's in-flight encounter *en route* to the conference with the academic who is to introduce his paper and concluding with an encounter after the conference that brings the narrator's identity and loyalties into question. These sections frame a series of scenes that highlight significant behavioral or ideological aspects of the conference. For example, there is a demonstration against one of the speakers, an American who is alleged to have CIA connections, and there are moves at a breakaway meeting to set up an 'alternative' conference:

The counter-conference boy, urged by his friends, went out to the front of the auditorium and turned his back on Eric, setting up a new boundary to the meeting. He said, "A planning group should be set up . . . we should all be bound by its decisions . . ."

"Speak up," someone shouted. The noise level was high. The meeting was disintegrating.

"Sorry," the boy said, and haltingly repeated his proposal. But then he stopped as if he had seen something. I felt that what he'd seen was the hopelessness of his proposal, of arranging, executing and achieving agreement — first of all among those listening, let alone among the 900 others who had not stayed for the meeting. Cumbersome, lumbering reality was rolling over him. (p. 38.)

Moorhouse is concerned to show not only the farcical element in this scene, but also, through

the brooding reflections of his narrator, its wider ramifications. The politics of society are writ small in the micro-society of the conference hall.

The scenic approach is heavily dependent on dialogue. Realistic dialogue involves the reader more than any other single device and, effectively controlled and co-ordinated, it can define character. In *Conference-Ville*, the voice and social matrix of Eric Bottral, the ubiquitous trades union speaker and former English shop steward, are quickly and effectively revealed in conversation with the narrator:

"You know, boyoh, we're the radicals at this wank — you and me," he said, poking me playfully with his rolled up newspaper, which was, I noted, the *Financial Review*.

I laughed and said, "I seem to have only small opinions on the big issues these days." But I didn't mind being Eric's sidekick. One of the outlaws.

He took out the program. "Professor this and that," he said, "a bloody wank they are."

"It's the Parliament of Intellectuals, Eric — and you're a senator. And you like it." Parliament of Fowls. (p. 12.)

Along with the recording of characteristic phrases, rhythms and gestures, we see here an aspect of the author/narrator's shifting relationship with the political left, which becomes one of the book's sustaining interests. Later, with a clutch of academics at dinner, he subverts his alliance with the trade unionist by falling in with their condescending gossip about him:

"Oh, he's probably socially intimidated," said Mrs Henderson. "All we heavies — professors and so on — and a writer." She glanced at me, weighing me up to see if I made it.

Mr Henderson added a note and comment to his wife's thesis, "I know this is the thing we don't say — but I make it as a value-free observation — it may be simply that he can't handle table customs — the wrong fork anxiety — probably as simple as that."

I glanced to my own forks.

"Yes, yes," said Newell Smith grumpily, while showing appreciation for the table's supportive remarks, "but you can still be a revolutionary and have good form — Bevan, for instance, was great value at a dinner table."

Bevan.

"I hear Eric's got a drink problem," Julia contributed. (p. 17.)

The dialogue here, as elsewhere, almost does

away with the need for historical narrative or explanation.

Moorhouse has experimented with third person, first person and shifting points of view, but in *Conference-Ville* he achieves a degree of cohesiveness by using his first person narrator as barometer and interpreter of the conference's changing moods. He is clearly aware of different narrative methods that could be employed, as references to Dos Passos (p. 13) and Mailer (p. 39) show. But he takes his own path between the cinematic 'objectivity' of the former and the rampant egotism of the latter. There is a danger that his laconic, ironic narrator will be too colorless (his understatement certainly contrasts with the fervid verbal acrobatics of most American 'new' journalists) but his interior monologues or brief spoken comments are often pertinent and penetrating. Occasionally there is a triumph, as when a video playback gives the narrator a wounding insight into himself:

But the picture then steadied. When it was steady up came Charles and me on the screen.

It concentrated on Charles' university tie. Panned up to his expansive gestures. We were talking in the lobby of the auditorium. I don't remember being conscious of it being shot. It held on Charles' laugh.

It came in on me. I seemed nondescript, in that I had no social comment embodied in my appearance. There was no word commentary to accompany the video. The camera caught the identity tag from the conference. It roved over both of us.

But something had been caught by the video shot of me. Something about the way I was smiling with Charles. It hadn't been the intention of the video shot. It was just something that hit me about the smile. About the smile and the nodding of my head. It wasn't nice. My mind was slow to present a word to describe the smile, to describe what was worrying me about the smile. The word came to me, the word was *fawning*.

Fawning, that was what it was.

A weak ego suggested, "Maybe passive, not fawning."

No. It was *fawning*. (pp. 86-7.)

The word "fawning" implants itself in his mind, recurring in different contexts as the film proceeds, and the mind broods upon it like a toothache. Simultaneity of external stimuli and the mind's internal filtering devices is successfully suggested.

But first person narration brings its problems, especially with the ostensible reporting of a contemporary event. An autobiographical approach can encourage a trivialising curiosity about the author's actual involvement in the events described instead of focusing on the events themselves. Moorhouse seems uncertain about how much latitude to give his narrator. Typically, he allows him a laconic, self-deprecating irony (one is inclined to think this typically Australian) whereas Mailer would almost certainly have turned it into an outrageously entertaining display of ego. Where there is an excess of ego in the one, there is sometimes a thinness and uncertainty in the other.

The curiosity that can be aroused about the author/narrator in this kind of writing also spills over into a curiosity about the named persons who take part in the action. In this respect, the American "new" journalist has greater scope than his Australian counterpart, thanks to more liberal libel laws in his country. In Australia, Moorhouse can only barely characterise the named members of the literary and political intelligentsia who attend his conference. He does little more than sketch in their roles as part of the interacting "positions" taken up at his conference; as such, they are not allowed to assume the autonomous existence that the narrative elsewhere seems to move towards.

Frank Moorhouse's work is notable for its deft recording of everyday idioms, gestures, manners, habits, customs, styles of furniture and clothing, of travelling and eating. At his best, Moorhouse achieves both verisimilitude and symbolic extension. But in *Conference-Ville* he is less interested in the physical and material contexts of his characters than he was in *The Electrical Experience*: the conference is an occasion that uproots people from their normal surroundings. In this book he concentrates instead on landscapes of opinion, gossip and belief—landscapes from which the natural man seems to have fled, to be found, if at all, behind the potted plants of a motel's Hawaiian bar or, considerably diminished, in the hands of a woman from a massage parlor. Ironically, a conference which sets out to investigate "communications", "media access", and the like, becomes an ideological battleground; and although the battle imagery is at times overdone, it does serve to point up the tensions and conflict that underly the games that conference-goers play.

Crossing the borders between literature and

BARRY MITCALFE

One, Two, Three

Six days to my birthday, "One, two, three, four, five, six," he counted aloud and on each number he jumped from one flagstone to the next. If his foot went across a crack, that would be it. No birthday.

Then, overpoweringly, came the urge to go up the steps, across the verandah, into the house, climb the stairs and tiptoe along the corridor into the room under the eaves. He looked up at the window. It was going to be his room, sometime.

"You can play in the garden, but keep away from the verandah. Some of the boards are rotten." Remembering what his mother had said, he went very carefully across the grey boards, up to the door with the glass windows in it, one, two, three, four, he started to count but there were too many of them. He put his eyes to one, cupping his hands round his face so he could see inside. Dark, very dark.

He turned the iron catch and pulled lightly, then harder. The door came open. The house had the warm kind of smell that carpets get on hot days. But there was something else, a sort of mothball smell that old ladies have. She was here, she was in that little room upstairs, the old lady of the picture.

"Yes, that's the old lady," the man had said to Father; they had stopped a moment by the picture. "Meant to junk that ages ago, too big for our house." Albert, that was the man's name. "She lived here up to last year, then we had to put her in a Home," the man had said. "Got beyond it, you know. A bit too much for the wife to look after. You know how it is."

The boy gave the picture a quick, sidelong glance as he tiptoed past. The house was very quiet. He went up the stairs, "One, two, three, four, five, six," then up to six again and he was at the top. He looked down with immense satis-

faction. Six and six, and in six days he would be six.

The corridor upstairs was very narrow. "Have to widen that," he remembered his mother saying. "No point," his father had answered, "we'll have the house down in a few years and a block of modern flats up."

"No." He shook his head. They were always moving, buying houses and changing them. He wanted to stay here. He knew his mother did too. He liked this place.

Quietly, very quietly he turned the brown handle and inched the door open.

There she was, just like her picture, the old lady, looking right at him. He noticed, without surprise, that she had on the same high-necked dress, black with a gold thing on a chain round her neck. But her hair was different, it was all messy, like his in the morning.

"Have you just woke up?" he asked.

"Shut the door. Come right in and shut the door." She had a funny voice, croaky like she never used it much.

He closed the door and stood just inside, his hands still holding the knob. He wasn't frightened, he just didn't want to make a noise because the old lady seemed suddenly to be asleep, sitting up. He knew old ladies could do that from having spent Christmas with his grandmother in another big house a long way from here.

"You better make a fire, Emily, it's getting cold." The boy looked round, but it was he the old lady was talking to. A fire? He'd never made a fire in his life. It didn't seem to matter because the old lady was talking about something else. "The natives wanted to charge us ten pounds, yes, ten pounds to take me and some of our things across the river."

"No, George, I said no, I'm going across on

the waggon with you. Only it wasn't on the waggon, it was holding on to the horse's collar for dear life and swimming, dear, yes, swimming. I wasn't dry from that day on, for our first week here it rained every day. Nights we slept under the waggon. Days we worked in the wet, the bush dripping, mud, mud, everywhere. Oh, you don't know what it was like. No, I kept warm, wool next to the skin, always. No matter if it's wet, it's warm."

The boy was examining her, disbelieving, but there was a puddle of wet about her feet and she did look as if she had come through the river. Perhaps that was why she looked so messy.

Somewhere in the distance his mother was calling. Watching the old lady, impressed by the way she could just close her eyes and sleep, the boy turned the handle and slipped away, flitting like a shadow down the stairs, through the hallway, and out.

"Thought I told you not to play on that verandah."

"Yes Mum."

"Well, come on then."

Neither of them said much going home. His mother's hands were dirty from gardening. A picture of the old lady's hands, twisted like tree roots, came into his mind. There were scaly brown marks on them, as if she hadn't washed for a long time.

"Old lady's got hands like that. Dirty," he said.

"Old lady? Which old lady?"

"One in the house."

His mother glanced at him curiously. He was a strange boy. Then she remembered how, on their first visit, she had found him staring, as if hypnotised, at the picture. "Oh, the old lady in the picture."

"Yes, that's the one."

Later, when they were almost home he said, "Will she get hungry?"

"Who, dear?"

"The old lady."

His mother smiled. "I don't think so. She's been there a long time."

"I know. She came in a waggon. Across the river."

"I expect she did, dear."

"And the horses had to swim. Can horses swim?"

"Horses? I suppose so." By this time they were home and his mother was busy unloading the gardening things and getting ready for tea,

so after waiting around a while, he went out to play.

Next morning his mother said again, "Like to come to the new house?"

"It's not new, it's old."

"All right, coming to the old house then?"

"All right."

He was happy. He had been wondering about the old lady. Would she be there? Even before his mother had begun to unpack the gardening things, he'd slipped out and let himself quietly into the house. It seemed very dark inside and he was a little afraid of what he might find, so he waited outside the door at the end of the corridor until he heard a sort of snuffling cough. She was awake. He opened the door and stood there. The room smelt funny. The old lady was just sitting in her chair, not looking at him. "Emily!" Her voice had a real croaky sound, worse than yesterday. "I want a drink of water."

He went down to the kitchen where he found a glass in one of the cupboards.

"What're you doing here? I thought I told you to stay outside." It was his mother. He wiped the glass with his fingers under the tap. "Oh well, seeing you're here, you can help me. We're going to have a picnic lunch with Daddy, he's coming up from the office later, won't that be nice? Our first lunch in our new house."

"Old house," he corrected.

"What're you doing?"

"Getting a glass of water for the old lady. She's thirsty."

"Old lady? Oh, the old lady in the picture! Well, don't make a mess."

He filled the glass up to the brim and carried it very, very carefully. His mother smiled and thought, "Quaint child. Anyway he can't do much harm, it's only water."

The old lady was a noisy drinker. She held the empty glass out for him. He took it and she stared at him as if seeing him for the first time. "Where's Emily? Who are you, boy?"

"David," he said.

"Oh, David," she smiled. Her mouth sank right in among the folds of her face. "That's right, you're David. One of Albert's brood. Yes, David."

"And you're the picture lady."

"Picture lady?"

"Lady in the picture."

"That thing! That was me, I suppose, but not so colored, no, too much pretty-pretty, I said, that's not me. 'Oh, but it must be you, it is a

photograph,' said—said—whatshisname, one of Albert's friends, he's got so many—ah—er—boy, I don't know one from t'other. So they've still got that—that piece of foolishness." But she seemed pleased. Then her face changed, it became angry. "But they wouldn't have me. No. Too much trouble for your mother. Never got on with your mother, boy. Well, she got her chance to get me out and she took it. Don't blame her, I'd've done the same m'self." The old lady chuckled, just like a witch.

The boy was wondering what it would be like to be really old.

"I'll be six," he said. "In five more days."

"Albert!" The boy jumped. The old lady's voice was loud, too loud. "It is not yours to sell. Your children's. Your father's. Not yours. You cannot sell, I will not allow it, you hear me?" She was quiet a while, then her voice changed, it sounded really sad, as if she were going to cry, "Oh, Albert, how could you, Albert, how could you?" But old ladies don't cry, do they?

Her head sank down on her chest. Was she asleep? The boy thought so, but he waited a while. Nothing happened, so he went out and played in the garden, then carried weeds to make a haystack for his mother.

When his father had come and they were busy washing hands, he asked, "Who's Albert?"

"Albert?" said his father. "Albert Ackland. He was the man who owned the house. It was his house."

"No it wasn't, it belongs to Albert's father and to his children too."

"Well, you could say that, I guess."

The father and mother exchanged glances. "Is he always like this?" the man asked.

She smiled. He was quite different from the others. She'd be sorry to see him go off to school.

He sat quietly, nibbling the inside out of his sandwich as his mother and father talked. He didn't like what they were saying. His father was talking of pulling the house down. How could you pull a house down? "Put up a block of flats, then we can buy anything we like."

"Daddy," he said. "It's all-of-our-place. We can keep it, can't we."

His mother said, "See, we all like it. Even David."

"We'll see, we'll see," was all his father said.

"The old lady wouldn't like for us to sell it."

"Old lady? What old lady?"

"He means the one in the picture. He has long talks with her."

His father smiled at him. "You have long talks with her?"

"Yes, I do. Only sometimes she goes to sleep, the old lady."

His father laughed. "I bet."

"It *is* a lovely place," said his mother. "Come into the garden and see what David and I have been doing."

"You know," said his father, "I think we *might* stay here."

"We're staying, we're staying," the boy did a little dance of glee. "And soon it'll be my birthday."

"Hullo, everybody working?" It was Mr Ackland, who used to live here. "How are you finding the place?"

"It's perfect," said Mother. "Just the home we've wanted. All these years."

Mr Ackland seemed to be in a hurry. "You haven't seen the old lady, have you?" he asked.

"Old lady?"

"Yes. She's slipped out of the Home again. Second time. We thought she might have come here."

"No," said the man.

"Yes," said the boy. "Yes, I seed her."

They all turned and looked at him.

"I wonder," said the woman, a strange expression on her face. "Come on, I think we'd better have a look."

"What room was she in, David?" his father asked.

"Upstairs," said the boy. "At the end."

His mother was in a hurry to go, but his father had to hear all about the old lady first. "You mean to say she's been there since yesterday?"

"And you didn't tell anybody?" said Mr Ackland.

The boy colored. He had told his mother, but he didn't want to say so, in case she got into trouble.

"Yes, he told me, but I thought he was talking about the picture," said his mother. "Poor old thing."

"Come on, we're wasting time," said his father.

They all trooped upstairs, Mr Ackland, Father, Mother and him following, through the hallway, up the stairs, down the corridor and into the room. Nobody noticed him. They were all too busy. "Cold," said Albert, his hand across her brow. "Stone cold."

"She's dead," said his father.

Below Albert's hand, David saw her face. It looked as if she were having a good dream.

"She's asleep," he said.

"That's right," his mother said softly. "She's asleep. Come on, we'd better go downstairs."

"Better not say anything in front of the child,"

his father was saying as they left the room. "Might upset him, You never know."

"So that was what happened when you got old," the boy was thinking, "you get dead." He quietly followed his mother down the stairs. "One, two, three, four, five, six and six again."



While launching the Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought (Fontana/Collins, \$7.95), Professor Max Charlesworth commented that it seemed a last gesture towards the renaissance ideal of the universal man who could take all knowledge for his province. Certainly, the editors, Alan Bullock and Oliver Stallybrass, make no such claim for their own, albeit formidable, knowledge, and have followed the usual modern practice of assembling a team of acknowledged experts. The result of their labors has drawn some very arch reviews from experts who were not included, but is certain to be invaluable to quiz experts, and is certain to be of value to those of us who have to confess our profound ignorance of the greater part of contemporary physics, mathematics, psychology, semiology, heuristics and other arcane disciplines which shape our world and our language. We may never expect to master any of these fields, but at least this dictionary offers us a fleeting possibility of knowing what our colleagues are talking about, as well of course as the opportunity of swatting up the odd term to drop into dinner table conversations for the impression of those as ignorant as ourselves. In addition, like any good dictionary it offers also the chance of escape from the modern world into the intriguing and harmless pastime of browsing through the fascinating and quite disjointed knowledge which can be discovered by pure alphabetical chance. Unfortunately serendipity is a term which escapes the learned editors' attention.

The problem of communication of ideas and concepts is central to the modern world, and the fact of the Fontana Dictionary, like the poor man's encyclopedia which is its companion series, the Fontana Modern Masters, is a symptom of the common difficulty which unites us (see CULTURE). The findings and decisions of experts shape the possibility of our lives, yet the

experts who make the decisions may be incapable of understanding each other's work, let alone comprehending the consequences of their own acts in other people's lives. The answer to this fragmentation of society lies neither in the crankiness which denies all expert authority nor in the dilettantism which attempts to reduce every subject to a few easily digested gobbets of knowledge—faults to which some of the Modern Masters series succumb. Yet, if we can believe Albert Einstein and Leopold Infeld, "Most of the fundamental ideas of science are essentially simple, and may, as a rule, be expressed in a language comprehensible to everyone. To follow up these ideas demands the knowledge of a highly refined technique of investigation. Mathematics as a tool of reasoning is necessary if we wish to draw conclusions which may be compared with experiment . . ." If we do not have mathematics, therefore, we must take on trust the conclusions of the scientists, but unless they are prepared to explain and debate the implications of their ideas to us in common language we have no reason to trust the decisions they make on the basis of their expert knowledge. The Fontana Dictionary should make such debate easier, even although its editors allow only 17 lines to the discussion of the whole problem of communication theory, immediately after the entries on Communication, fallacy of, and Communication, heresy of. A strange lack of faith in their own endeavor.

While talking of communication, it seems a pity that the whole western world, presumably in reaction to the pretences of experts and the sense of alarm at an economic depression that no-one seems able to understand, has decided that our system of mass education has failed. Thus we have a clamor for cutbacks in higher

education and a demand that the earlier stages return to "basics" and a concern for "standards". Yet the only standards worth achieving are those that give us control of our own lives, and by this measure we need more, rather than fewer, educated people. The achievement of this standard may not require the extension of our present forms of formal education, but it will certainly require the re-education of our political and economic masters towards an understanding of people as well as of systems.

The section of *Overland* which receives the greatest criticism from our readers is the poetry. This is probably because the poet is always trying to communicate what he alone has seen and experienced, to speak to us in a way that will change our consciousness of the world we inhabit. Because the poet is constantly making language new, the judgement of his work is extremely difficult for his contemporaries. The poetry pages of *Overland* have benefitted enormously from the patient and sensitive response over the years of our poetry editor, Barrett Reid. Now Barry himself has suffered a disaster through the destruction by fire of his home and most of its contents, including rare and precious manuscripts and his entire library. Most readers of *Overland* will know that to lose a valued book is like losing a limb. To lose a library is to lose a great part of one's self. Some of Barry's friends have started a fund to assist him in rebuilding this part of his life. Donations of money or of books—particularly Australian poetry and other writing, issues of journals like *Art in Australia*, would be welcome. They can be sent to *Overland*, with any cheques made payable to the Barry Reid Trust Fund.

With regard to the two Chilean poems in this issue, Rosemary Evans writes: "I can only get poems by Chilean writers through Cuban magazines, and of course the authors have to remain anonymous. I sometimes get material from the Free Chile Committee, but we never know who the authors are."

Among the promises broken by the Fraser government is that to lessen the power of the federal bureaucracy. Although still more public servants are being moved to Canberra, the Commonwealth has exercised its options to acquire more of Melbourne's golden mile. Among the useful citizens displaced to make room for glass-houses and carparks is Bob Cugley, whose

National Press has been for its whole existence a patron of Australian literature, and for the last six years has been *Overland's* gracious patient and forgiving printer. We asked Bob if he had any pictures or documents which we could use to commemorate the old premises, but his innate modesty had prevented his accumulating such incunabula. Fortunately, however, Stewart Edwards of the National Book Council was passing at the time that Bob was moving, and to him we are indebted for the photograph reproduced in this issue. It is a small gesture of our great gratitude to Bob and his staff.

CORRECTION

An unauthorized 'our' crept into Barbara Giles' poem in the last issue. The poem should have read thus:

The Man in the Mirror (to Albrecht Dürer)

So many portraits of the best and most patient of models,
self. Frequent eyewitness of painted miracles,
massacres,
Christ's face so often your face, you suffering
no one else to enact that passion, that pain.

A face that is not humble before the mirror
whose transience serves you as record,
examiner, first of boy, unalterable in silverpoint,
too bold an essay, leaving him puzzling;
then youth, wary-eyed, newly affianced, in his hand
thorny emblem of constancy, lesson ill-learned; and
Master,
coolly aware of fine clothes and high presence,
who reckons himself ironically, yet pleased by such
elegance.
Last, bearded and robed in hieratical pose, as if
weighing
Art of like nature with Godhead, he searches still
his own eyes for answer

and is not on this canvas
but standing beside me.
Here is a man assaying himself in the mirror.

Master and friend, five centuries acclaim you.
You may have done with mirrors.

BARBARA GILES

Looking forward to the month of November 1976 I was certain it would become a life's landmark; looking back I doubt that I will ever forget it. I based the prognosis upon the plans for the *Festschrift* intended to celebrate the remarkable personality and the immeasurable generosity of the New York philanthropist and builder, David Rose, and I will record the outcome.

An honored custom amongst scholars is the commemoration of a colleague's attainment of distinction in a *Festschrift*, a volume created by their combined talents, each scholar offering "that which is most precious—a study, a formulation of some new thought, critique or theory".

When out of the blue the Berndy Library (whose creator, Bern Dibner, I quote) asked me to form one of such a group I was overwhelmed, but gave of my best.

The plan was to present the volume at a dinner in New York, to which contributors were invited (return tickets provided), the date, November 18, being David's 85th birthday.

This made me practically insufferable, giving me the chance to decline invitations with a "Well, not next month. I'm going over to New York for dinner." I raced out and bought a dinner jacket and trappings, including a dress shirt which at this date is still in its box.

And though I didn't know the listing of my co-contributors I had an idea I'd be meeting some unusually interesting people. For David had always applied his energetic dedication to a wide variety of interests that promised to advance the state and status of humanity.

In November, also, I had a couple of my own books to launch and was included in a couple of anthologies. For the first launching, *Port of Melbourne 1835-1976*, the Harbor Trust which had commissioned it enlisted the good offices of the Governor of Victoria. On the first of the

month, in the course of a junket celebrating the Trust's completion of a century of service, Sir Henry Winneke launched the book in a steel capsule down a shaft in the new wharf where it was sealed in with seven feet of concrete and capped with a bronze plaque.

The capsule also contained samples of the coinage of the realm, the periodicals of the day, a bottle of port (a barely defensible pun) and several other significant tokens of Victorian civilization.

When Sir Henry cut the ribbon and sent the package to its long rest a bottle of champagne crashed simultaneously, adding its maritime blessing to the launch, and Sir Henry jumped a foot. We sailed out on a continued inspection of the harbor and the uniformed hostesses gave expression once again in the nicest ways to the Trust's ready hospitality. (Any regret I have that the job is finished is always occasioned by thoughts of those delightful girls.)

Well, the next day was The Cup, and I stayed over for a most miserable late Spring day, lightened wonderfully by more hospitality — some of this from the cast of "The Box". I joined it in the Channel 0 studios to watch, privileged above most in Victoria, the Cup run live on TV, through the magic of technicians who somehow hooked into the Sydney landline.

I returned to Sydney at 8 p.m. feeling miserable, rang my wife, walked straight out to the airport bus where, having no luggage, I was first to sit down, and closed my eyes for no more than twenty seconds.

When I opened them again I was lying on a hospital mattress ringed by white-coated medicos who seemed to take a great interest in my well-being. Strangely enough I felt good, astonished by the weakness of my voice though, and when

I went to move, my muscles.

"Do you know what day this is?" asked one, and my answer was immediate, or sounded so to me:

"Tuesday, November second, Melbourne Cup Day."

"Do you know what you've been doing today?"

"Watching the Cup in Channel 0, on a television set in 'The Box'."

"Why were you in Melbourne?"

"Well you see, the Governor of Victoria was launching me in a time capsule under seven feet of concrete at the new wharf . . ."

I rather wondered at the speculation this seemed to cause but by this time, fortunately (three hours after my arrival at Mascot) Madeleine was at my bedside and confirmed the unlikely statement.

I spent a few days in Sydney Hospital being thoroughly spoiled by pretty nurses, including a foster-daughter, and undergoing tests which resulted finally in the diagnosis: "a cerebral episode".

One test I escaped. A fortnight before this my doctor desired me to get an X-ray of the pelvic region, where I was a bit stiff, and examining the thing, he remarked casually, "You've had these things before. Did anyone ever tell you you have only four lumbar vertebrae? It probably doesn't matter, but most people have five."

All writers carry items of mad information about with them and one of mine is that a spinal tap — next on my schedule — has to be taken between the fourth and fifth vertebrae. So I asked the young doctor who was taking me off somewhere whether my lack of a fifth lumbar vertebra would discommode him. Being probably convinced that the deficiency was the product of a fertile creative imagination he didn't answer me but, after long periods of prodding with a friend, returned me to my ward, untapped.

I got out of there with about a week to think of getting to New York, arriving at the dismal conviction that I wouldn't make it. We had a stopover planned for Hawaii for which we'd leave Sydney in the evening, get to Oahu at 10.30 the same morning and inevitably spend six hours shopping in Honolulu before taking an afternoon flight for Kailua-Kona on the Big Island where, on past performance, our good friends would fete us with sparkling entertainment the whole night through. The human frame can hardly stand it,

not to mention a skull-case that's been undergoing "episodes".

Reluctantly I posted the tickets back to New York and rang prospective hosts with my apologies.

What I missed became apparent some days later when a copy of the *Festschrift* arrived — a beautiful volume, tastefully presented, but most impressive because of the quality of my co-contributors.

Of the 36 I was the only one who, if he were not a household name — as most of them were — was not swamped with decorations. I was also the only one from southern climes, and would have travelled further than anyone else to the launching ramp. There I would have met a candidate that year for the Presidency of the United States, a Royal Society gold-medal winner of the year before, a phalanx of Nobel Prize-winners, the judge who tried Eichmann, the man who invented micro-surgery, IBM's top computer man, the inventor of the artificial kidney, the discoverer of polio vaccine, the creator of Israel's water-desalination, a city-planner or two, the inventor of television, archaeologists, architects, students of language sources, Supreme Court judges of more than one country — a galaxy.

But I could sweeten the bitter brew of my disappointment with the thought that it was probably better to be alive. Anyway, I'm bedded down with them all permanently, in a strict alphabetical sequence.

The other launchings that month went without fuss. I finished the year in a very enjoyable convalescence, acquiring the best tan on Chinaman's Beach, and with the New Year slipped paper in the typewriter and began the novel that has been waiting these eight years.

I give you my word: precisely twenty minutes later the phone rang. Melbourne informing me that 145 novels in manuscript were on their way for me to judge for the Alan Marshall award. I was back once more to the literary life's sweet abnormality.

Of the three or four others of my acquaintance who were at the *Festschrift* dinner only one was a writer of fiction. An old and valued friend, she too has awards, for advances in psychiatry in respect of one novel, and for services to the deaf in another — considerable achievements for a very distinguished fictioneer.

"The setting," she wrote me, "was marvellous, the champagne flowed like water, the water flowed like champagne, the caviar flowed like hot lava.

I was dressed to the nines as was everyone else. My fingernails were clean and I had betaken myself to a hairdresser for the occasion. What could go wrong in such a Paradise?

"The very presence of three Nobel winners, a Justice of the Israeli Supreme Court, a General of the Israeli Army, ten top scientists, a brace of doves and more Ph D's than you could shake a stick at. If the place had been bombed the average I.Q. at the City of New York would have fallen ten points.

"You know what we talked about? The garden, our kids, our bunions, the climate, the weather, the national debt, food preferences . . . They wouldn't have known what to ask me. I didn't know what to ask them. What's new in the nucleus, Doc? What's it like to be a general? All the while these incredible conversations about the price of eggs were going on I thought, with so much to learn and so much to listen to and so much to know, why can't I ask them something? Why can't I find a way of getting them

to speak about something, some quick little wisdom, some instant knowledge before it was time to go home.

"It is the way things are. I got to know Olaf Ruhen the writer. I got to talk with him lots. But the thing is if we had met at a party I would have said, 'You're from Australia, aren't you? What's it like to be an Australian? Do you have button mushrooms in Australia? I hear they don't have cats in Australia.' You see the problem.

"I am delighted that you have been put in a capsule, buried in concrete and capped with a bronze plaque. How is your brain? I know about spinal taps and am very glad you didn't have one, even though you probably should have. If God wanted you to have spinal taps He would have given you the right number of vertebrae. Tell that to the dippy doctor."

I probably wouldn't have got to New York anyway. The stopover on the Kona Coast would have finished me.

FRANK KELLAWAY

Anne Elder: Poet

A COMMENT

In the early 1960s I ran a poetry workshop in Melbourne for the Council of Adult Education. At least two of the people who turned up to see what they could get out of the sessions were very highly gifted indeed—one was Anne Elder who has since made a substantial contribution to Australian poetry and the other Margaret Kilpatrick, who is still battling. I held then and still hold that nobody can be taught to be a poet, but that one who already has a gift can learn a good deal about technique by doing exercises of various sorts to develop poetic muscle. Accordingly I got the people who attended the sessions to write Anglo-Saxon verse in modern English, vilanelles, sestinas and sonnets as well as a number of other forms and tried to encourage them to invent new verse forms of their own. One thing I did not touch on, though I might well have done, was the Spenserian (Faery Queen) stanza, nor did I *ever* at *any* stage encourage anybody to write in a particular style deriving from somebody else, as was suggested in your last issue by Graham Rowlands in his otherwise reasonable article, "Anne Elder: Poet." "Despite Frank Kellaway's influence on the poet in the direction

of formal Spenserian style and stanzas, throughout the 1960s Elder gradually broke away from the formal rhyme."

I believe it is untrue to say that I have had any influence at all on other poets in the sense suggested here. After the workshop was over I continued to keep in touch with Anne Elder and have recently caught up with Margaret Kilpatrick who is still performing impressively. Both poets favoured free forms and I did nothing to discourage them, though it is true that I continued to express a personal preference for poems with a strong sense of shape. Anne and I used to meet at the Elder's house in Eaglemont to read our poems aloud. I certainly found this stimulating and I believe we both had a good deal more to offer in the way of encouragement of the directions we had individually chosen than in the suggesting of alternatives. I hope that she enjoyed the exchange; certainly she was kind enough to read some of my poems in public for me at Strine's Gallery on one occasion. She was, as Graham Rowlands rightly says, a splendid reader as well as a most original and gifted poet.

JAMES McQUEEN

Officers' Boots

We were both hunched forward, Roy and I, hands clasped round our knees. With no great-coats, just our sodden uniforms, we were very cold. There was no water in the bottom of the ditch where we sat. Grass grew in the bed and on the steep sides, and small pockets of thawing snow clung to the bank facing us. It was deep, the ditch, so deep that we could barely see over the top when we stood up. Now and then, every ten minutes or so, one of us stood up and looked out to see if anyone was coming. But since early morning, when we had found the ditch, there had been no one; just the bare snowy plateau, and half a mile away a small coppice of trees. They were birches, with bare branches and paper-white trunks. The coppice straggled out from a narrow ravine in the range of low rocky hills. Behind us, in the other direction, there was nothing but the flat featureless plain stretching away to the sky. There was no sun. The over-cast was as thick as it had been at dawn.

There was nothing to do, nothing to say. We just sat there side by side, our rifles propped against the bank between us. We had been cut off when our unit had been forced back, and we knew we were behind enemy lines. We didn't know how far behind, maybe four or five miles. Maybe more. We had no map, no compass, and we didn't even know where the front was. There had been no gun-fire since noon the day before. We hadn't eaten for two days.

I crouched there, trying not to think too much, trying to ignore the stomach cramps and the cold. When it was dark we would start walking again. Maybe the sky would clear and we would see the stars, find the right direction. Maybe we would find something to eat. Maybe we would get somewhere, maybe we wouldn't.

I found myself looking at Roy's boots. It had

taken him two years to get them. They were officers' boots, and everyone wanted a pair — they were lighter, more comfortable, better made, better looking than regular issue. But unless you had something going with the quartermaster — and we didn't — you had no chance. Roy kept trying, but I think he'd just about given up until we had gone on our last leave and found the artillery sergeant asleep in the pub lavatory. The door of the cubicle had been half open and the sergeant fast asleep on the dike, trousers round his ankles. We had both seen his boots — officers' boots — at the same time. The sergeant was very drunk — he hadn't stirred when we took the boots off. They were too small for me, but they fitted Roy. We had put Roy's boots on the sergeant and left him there. After that Roy never let the boots out of his sight. At night he used to go to sleep with the laces tied to his wrist. I think he felt that they were the only worthwhile thing he'd got out of the whole stupid business.

It was getting slowly darker. And colder. I put my hands inside my tunic to try and warm them. I think I must have dozed a bit.

The next thing I remember is hearing a sharp metallic click, looking up and seeing the two of them standing on the top of the bank looking down at us. They seemed very big against the dark sky. The younger one, a corporal, was pointing a machine pistol at us. Behind him the other one clutched a rifle nervously; he looked middle-aged, even old. They were both shivering a little, despite their coats. The corporal said something to the old fellow, who pointed his rifle at us, and the corporal slid down the bank. He tossed our rifles up out of the ditch. Close up he looked even worse off than we were. Under the big helmet his square pale face had that unmis-

takable pinched look of too much strain and not enough food.

—Take off your boots, he said in English.

I looked down at his feet. He was wearing some kind of clogs bound on with rags and bits of rope. The one with the rifle had boots, but they were old and split, gaping at the toes; he had wrapped rags round the boots and up his legs like puttees.

I took off my boots and the corporal threw them up to the old man. He started to undo his rags. I saw the corporal looking at Roy's boots. When the old fellow was done he pulled on my boots and threw the wrecks of his own down to me. I began to put them on. Then I noticed that Roy hadn't moved, hadn't touched his boots. He just sat there with a very faint, hard grin on his face. The corporal motioned at him with the barrel of the machine pistol. Roy didn't move. I

began to get nervous. The corporal took a step back and pointed the machine pistol at Roy.

—Take them off, he said.

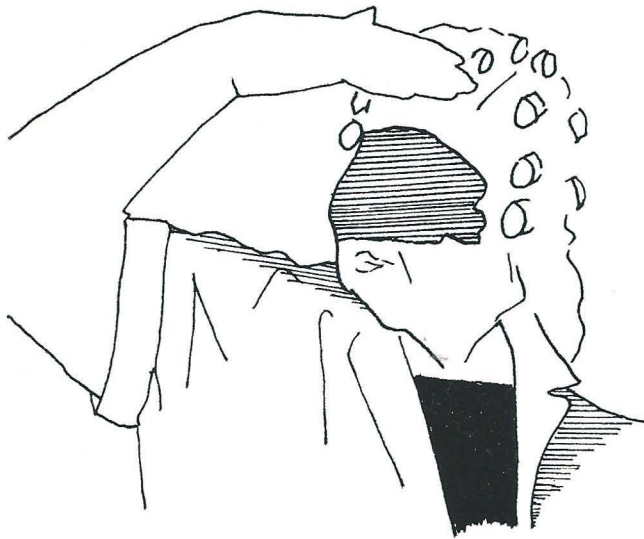
Still Roy did nothing, just sat there with that tiny, stiff smile.

—Take them off or I will shoot you, said the corporal.

—Fuck you, said Roy, I'll die with me boots on then. . .

The corporal swung the machine pistol out of the way and took out a big black automatic from his holster. He shot Roy twice in the head. Then he unlaced Roy's boots, squatted down and stripped off his clogs, put on the boots. Then he motioned me out of the ditch. He climbed up behind me and the three of us set off across the empty land towards the birch coppice.

I looked back once, when we had gone fifty yards, but it was so dark by then that I couldn't even see the ditch.



SONG OF A MISSION BOY

I son of the eaglehawk
And slave of a flash stockman
A blow from a stirrup-iron
Is all my wages

My sister a young lubra
On a greenhide lariat
Led to his bed
At the day's ending

The emu and her striped young
Have fled my country
The red kangaroo along with them
His cattle muddy my waterholes

My mother under a thortree
For three days now
Picking the bones of a lizard
Her coolamon empty

The crow and kite gather
At the death of the stockman
The beak of the eaglehawk
Tears at the stones of his eyes

Among speartrees and anthills
I wait with his rifle
For my cousin the black tracker
And a leaden bullet.

DAVID CAMPBELL

KOOKABURRA

When you're told of a Laughing Jackass
brandishing a gumbranch, thrice his size,
like a drum-major flourishing his baton,
you feel at least surprise
or incredulity. 'Tell that to the whackers.'

'A Kookaburra is a bird,' you say,
'a laughing one, we know that's true,
'but natural creatures all observe a pattern.
'Only a man can make up something new;
'like a tall story, mate. Give it away!'

But look up-hill and notice the to-do
of stirring twigs on the old hollow stump.
It hasn't sprouted dead leaves, now that's certain,
and there's John Kook manipulating the whole clump,
so once again, you see, the joke's on you.

FRANK KELLAWAY

CUPID

Zen archer, plump
with your cloudy flesh,
master of disguises and sly deceiver
of hotel detectives

— we all know your mother
was Venus. But you keep very quiet
about your father — slippery Mercury, god
of debit and credit and inventor
of double-entry book-keeping.

When you loosed that arrow
my heart is inflamed with, see how you juggled
the rate of exchange. Fat Cupid,
I jingle my fat profits and with them
buy little presents for the lady
who, wounded by you,
gave them to me in the first place.

NORMAN McCAIG

A MONTH AFTER HIS DEATH

An accordeon and a fiddle
fit nimbly together their different natures
with such bouncing wit it makes small
the darkness outside that goes straight up
for ever and ever.

Out there are the dregs of history. Out there
mindlessness lashes the sea against the sea-wall:
and a bird flies screaming over the roof.

We laugh and sing, but we all know we're thinking
of the one who isn't here.

The laughter and the singing are paper flowers
laid on a wet grave in an empty darkness.
For we all know we're thinking
of the one who can't be here,
not even as a ghost smiling through the black window.

NORMAN McCAIG

**THE ANIMALS IN
THE ADELAIDE ZOO**

The animals in the Adelaide Zoo are very comfortable.
It's a small zoo but very well organized.
The elephant stands in a small space but seems happy.
The black-backed jackals run; hunting, hunting, hunting.
A slow loris moves quiet in nocturnal lighting.
The black panther is a melanistic form of the spotted leopard.

The animals in the Adelaide Zoo are not rhetorical.
The zebras are not torn apart by lions.
The hippopotamus is in happy water.
The giraffe's sex organs are as high as your head.
The jaguars and ocelots attack nothing.
Everything is as it should be in the Adelaide Zoo.

The animals in the Adelaide Zoo are already in Heaven.
Their children are born lucky, nobody hates them.
They are surrounded by love and regular food.
Their lives are without drama, they show no fear.
Eviscerated on a path lies a tiny indigenous mouse.
In their cages, they show no concern, in the Adelaide Zoo.

GAVIN EWART

**A POEM TO A
HOSPITAL BALCONY**

IT WAS LIKE BEING FILTHY DIRTY FOR A MONTH
and then i had a shower
and felt cleansed.
i had not died.
that's how i felt in my head
after three days on that balcony,
ruminating,
smoking dope to lend weight to my dreams,
the synapses being unblocked
by visions of the no-being of death
and the earth sneezed the gentleness of breezes
through the fawkner park trees.

IT WAS LIKE BEING A SNAKE SHEDDING ITS SKIN
of fear of the dark and its stark reality:
of becoming beautiful in the self again.
colours, dripped anew
suddenly burning into soft shades of light
from that balcony,
the sky grew,
expanding like a vast balloon
and at night, the stars almost outshone the moon.
i was newly born, alive.

BUT THEN BELOW ME,
from my balcony's height
i watched a butterfly spiral down and land upon a flower
expire and die.
it was a pure and natural death to be sure.

SHELTON LEA

Two poems by Chilean poets in exile in Sweden. From the Spanish.

Translated by ROSEMARY EVANS.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Where do you honorable generals
wish to be buried?
Let us know
so that we can clean the place,
and see to it that the rats
are not poisoned by your corpses.

TWO POEMS FROM EXILE

A MILITARY ORDER

He was lying stretched out in the roadway,
leaning against a tree,
deep in thought,
his gaze far away in memories.
Didn't he know the curfew hour
had been put forward?
"Get up!" they shouted.
He didn't obey.
He was still lost in dreams,
indifferent,
staring ahead
as if their voices meant nothing to him.
The soldiers raised their rifles,
fired,
and killed him a second time.

SUNDAY NOT SPENT IN AN EXHIBITION VILLAGE

It was like
a Diane Arbus afternoon:
him wittering about at the tea;
her with eyes as big as millstones
from a lifetime of marriage.
I talked at them and the dog —
their model house of the fifties,
the nice street.

There's a vacant
block on the corner
her mouth
said, dead hopeful.

MARK MACLEOD

OO-WEE?

Mrs. Gorr, had admitted holding her hand
over the baby's mouth.

*ther' ain nuf'y
Hoot Gibson, Buck Jones
or Tom Mix*

*co/starring Clara
Bow*

*in a peppy film of the
continued-next-week kind
. . . and late in her pregnancy,
threw her down some stairs
at a house in
Frankston.*

don yoo tel mi Us-
stralia. stralia fektori!

wa dai nID meye boi iz,

too munz ov da HIT! la. tree muns ov da staLIN!
den tree munz ov da CHINa!

:wen dai sai " " (tsin/tsoo/tsa/tsin)
dai no wat "spel" em pliz iz.

wen dai poot grUS(no
bret)grUS! in de H-ot wata

(dai no iz NO bisket) but sai: "tenk yoo gut!" "tenk you"
en afta un muns . . .

dai sai: "pliz-pliz" "sorri"
"oo-wee?" "doks?"

& finally
Lady Grimwade
will open the baby show
and most popular baby contest
at Isobel Henderson's
in Alexander Parade
on Saturday May 7, at
2 p.m.

he sai :
gut! giv yoo too feetz en henz, yoos dem
 he sai :
yoos dem
 too *mi* tree!kits no peni.
(iving in Greece
mey krook-e pilo)

meye brentz
melt-et
in meye bodi.

 “Ari! lose it. lets leave.
lose it Ari!”

 shee crai meye wife,

 uderwize . . .
uderwize eye kil! him, eye make him crumbs! no woriz.
no woriz Us-tralia, eye goot enuf,
 eye got de sorz fo’ yoo.

*“even more than rabbits
is the menace of Communism”* wrote the
 Reverend Tucker,
 in the *Courier*
 (February 10,
 ’49)

ah! . . . eye don lisen too Kosta.

he tol mi :

 Ari: don go too de Ink-lish, don go
Ari! too Us-tralia,
 rUSSia
 Jermunee
 if not

 a . . . H! Kosta,

 wer?yoo.

*seagulls sometimes fly into Fitzroy . . .
Fitzroy Police are investigating.*

π. O.

ORANGEMEN

Often, her hands roughened with bransmell
she'd walk with me (aged ten) talking
books, as if I were a minister
or stand gravely
at the low fence of the verandah
with Paddy, my father, promising me
a Future
(I with low head
embarrassing a sprig of blossom
being seen but not heard)

Once, on the roads with cattle,
I looked up sideways
at a shadow it was
Jamie Spring reared up monstrous
in the sun, ploughing
his hands invisible before him
the horse
drawing him downhill, out of sight,
towards the gap where once
I found the thinshelled windblown eggs

On flat long hillsides
their farms moved in undercurrents,
uncut rock and dusty water.
Slow light was a help to
their eyes puzzling above
pullover and serge suit
decent, reserved counting bushels

Hagged by age now, she hardly speaks her walk
flowing at cattle-pace, never
the crisp rhythm of wheels.
She takes one hand from the rail,
smoothes her apron; I see her tall
washed hair profiled in the window.

I was not conscious they had accents; voices,
ways of holding the head, manners of greeting,
I think that, like ourselves,
they'll go on living
forever, finding earth
a treacherous landlord.

VINCENT BUCKLEY

FALLS

The street-corners are not
exits, but vantage-points.
The soldier, gun-faced, with his hand
extended, his whole
body shooting. The pavements
sending up splashes of fire.
Men and women crushed in their clothes.
Backyards without dogs, Robots hunting
into the stumps of cities, collapsing
room after room. Citizens, fatal as wind
or water, endlessly running
into the tunnel of the Falls.
On the tired screen these images
leap us like sparks.

VINCENT BUCKLEY

272 GLEBE POINT ROAD SYDNEY

and i watch through the windows of the car
(outside)
as the vinyl-topped roof splatters the message
of the rain across the surface of my brain
like the staccato electrics that i sometimes find
when acid
turns
from the blind corners of my throat into the passageways
of my mind.

below: in the oily rainbow of the tiny bay,
beyond the fresh, white, rough-hewn council fence,
logs,
like dead, stiff eels at grotesque play
are herded by the waters sway against the sandy edge;
(packed dense as sheep who're on the way to a slaughter yard aboard
the tray of a transport truck . . .)

at the car, by the left-hand wheels the gutter is clogged
with papers and industrial much wetted print drifts into gentle hieroglyphs.

dogs cringe as the big green bus monsters past, fast on the slope
that lends bend to the
bottom curve.

and i sit on the plastic seat like a kink that gets his kicks
from fucking in a rubber mackintosh
and omigosh i feel horny because across the road my woman
turns
a full circle
and her dress forgets to turn with her,
staying like a photograph in a fashion ad
and it makes me think of showering in a raincoat for some reason . . .

SHELTON LEA

22.10.76: RESOLUTION

(for helen)

1

what habits & presuppositions
take up a pen,
what voice & visage i
can only begin to imagine.

hold pumiced ears. control
a single agate cross-eye. how ?
my whole in parts under
goes immense metamorphoses :
marbled brain, limestone bones, shale
in the bowels, shaken out.

sometimes i am too hard on myself
& waste in tiny portions, impervious
to suggestion. then, i wash away . . .
holding precious *nothing*, nothing

the pen takes sudden shape : now
erect, now flaccid ; the mover
being moved upon itself.
what is it that momentarily
takes control, saying this & that
suggesting form, forcing tone ?

at lunch i munch crisp lettuce
leaves between soft buttered bread
between dirty work fingers, between
this morning & this afternoon.

these particles of food link me
with other territories, eyes & ears,
mouths & fingers, moods, strategies
for survival in given space.

2

i invite you to a mug of wine,
some bread. let us taste & see,
slice & swill, roll & ruminate
over such memories that arise.
let your fears surface here;
your burdens sink into dark, deep.

on this ship we share survival, join
with a frail mast mind against
the irrational bent of elements.

set a full sail for this vessel
of communication. link this with that.
make something of the wind, now
turn & tack. see the spray
lift, & the wake part
from our parting stern !

3

sometimes there is seed &
rain from the east. commensality
between affines. there are vast
intersections of space, each Janus-faced,
conversations afloat here & there.

people scurry for shelter,
turning away from & towards
relationship. bound to their many
generations, each is the host amongst hosts.

4

eating a pannikin of fresh picked peas
with you, devouring handfuls of pungent seed :
i remember this intersection best
of an entire decade. in which spaces, with
what face, do we survive each other now ?

5

having a passion for such pauses
& patterns, the window's crucifix
brings me to much pain

6

share with me, tonight, this power.
& the resolution.

TERRY HARRINGTON

POEM

*Yet when they listened to a tape-recording of fish-at-depth
they were amazed at the multiplicity of diverse,
familiar sounds*

Way's being found
to remove problem inherent in poetry: fact of
poem-as object — out there —
(To remove object
place right hand in cool air in front of
eyes. Close eyes, then
remove book with left hand.)
Small shapes found swimming
in FOUNDSPACE though they could be fish
have left
pagepond as you did
(you are NOT READING — is that

FOUNDSPACE

a good place
for a fishlike potential to swim in —
; crawly worry — of person giving up
known pond's
pisciculture-potential—
will the 'fish' be
itself enough
& able TO MOVE
in the larger room)

YOU ARE NOT READING — They wail every year when they die —
: this could be thought of as a sound occurring at
OTHER PEOPLE'S PLEASURE

In lacunae of space the ones in a dream
placed as in a cavity of bone
their recriminations —

IT BEING THEIR FAULT — what got out
to swim
dis
embodied bones or the bodied boneless amoeboid
nobody keeping — there, or there —

J. S. HARRY

Having not been to Writers' Week for six years, my first impression is that things have been rather better organised than they were in 1972.

The Grosvenor Hotel, near the Festival Centre, where most of the invited guests are staying, is large, comfortable and smoothly run. Introductions are quickly made and the overseas guests left to sleep off their jet lag.

Local writers and the more hardy of the visitors quickly discover the Festival Bar, which is open till two in the morning and where at any night in the next week the curious can observe the writers in eager or heated discussion as they quietly or noisily swill their drink. When the bar closes a number of people can be seen walking with purposeful, perhaps over-careful steps towards the Grosvenor.

On Sunday the Writers' Week pavilion is opened. It is a large tent of circus-type design. There are several speeches with Geoffrey Blainey actually opening the show. Speakers are continually interrupted by that ubiquitous Melbourne poet Pi O loudly banging on cymbals and making interjections about capitalists and the arts. One of the organisers tells me that 'a Festival would be tame without Pi O'. It is obvious that at least one of the speakers would prefer it tame.

After the opening I head off to dinner with an oddly assorted group of people. One thing that strikes me about the week is how different generations and people of widely different political and literary standpoints bury their differences in the common good of Writers' Week. Even Pi O and his cohorts are by the end of the week conversing amicably with those they profess to despise.

From dinner to a reading by local poets from Adelaide. Again continual interjections from Pi and his friends. After the programmed reading they take over the stage and certainly provide a more lively reading than the official one, although

a couple have drunk to a state of almost total inarticulacy.

During Monday there is a Review of Current Australian Writing in the Pavilion. Through the day six speakers talk on different aspects of writing. Again the hecklers are active, particularly during David Malouf's session on poetry. Malouf presents a personal selection of the recently published books of poetry that have impressed him. Pi O and his supporters attack him on the grounds that he is only discussing written poetry and ignoring what they describe as the oral tradition by which they appear to mean street readings of poetry. Malouf plays it cool and refuses to enter into discussion, merely reiterates that his report is based on his own response and is not an attempt to survey every poet or poetry form.

It is interesting that none of these interjectors brought up the subject of street theatre during Katherine Brisbane's talk on drama, which concentrates on the more formal Australian playwrights.

Tuesday I spend at the State Library looking at their fine collection of early Australian children's books. In the evening Outback Press launch two books by Colin Talbot and Morris Lurie. Helen Garner is brief and witty in launching the Talbot, Dennis O'Hearn long-winded and repetitive in launching Morris Lurie's novel.

Wednesday morning poets read and discuss their own poetry. Most impressive are the American Galway Kinnell and the Irish Richard Murphy. Murphy talks of the sense of place in poetry and about the need to name places in his poems. He reads several poems redolent with place names, inherent in which are the whole history and mythology of Ireland. I reflect that in this country, where the only real history and mythology is Aboriginal and not the legitimate province of white poets, the naming of places

calls to mind only their physical characteristics.

Oxford University Press launch a history of their firm in Australia. Speeches go on far too long and their main speaker is only semi-audible. It doesn't really matter as hardly anyone is listening.

On Thursday morning there is a program called A Celebration of Henry Handel Richardson, featuring Don Dunstan as reader. Unfortunately I wake too late to hear it. It may have helped overcome my aversion to this author caused by having to study her works at school.

In the afternoon another reading, this time of poetry and prose. Helen Garner is impressive reading from *Monkey Grip*. Jennifer Maiden reads a long poem that sounds impressive but obviously needs to be read by oneself, perhaps several times, to be fully appreciated.

The star of the afternoon, and perhaps of the whole of Writers' Week, is the Scots poet Norman McCaig. Unlike many of the poets who have read he realises that a reading needs to entertain. He has written better poetry than that he reads but has selected work that is accessible at one reading and is expressive of either genuine humor or sentiment. His reading is wildly applauded and he is only allowed to leave the stage after the chairman has promised to bring him back after the programmed reading has finished.

Friday morning and the writers visit schools.

One poet is worried because he is billed to visit a primary school and says he has written nothing that he could possibly read in front of primary school aged children. I suggest he explains how a book is made and then ask for questions.

In the afternoon a session on Publishers and the Future. Papers are read by Frank Thompson of U.Q.P. and Richard Walsh of Angus and Robertson. Both appear to feel that Australian publishing has expanded to the degree that there is danger of it overheating, with disastrous results for publishing and the book trade. They appear to envisage short term chaos but express long term optimism. Four other publishers comment on their papers and present a more cheerful outlook on the state of publishing in Australia. One of the publishers is embarrassed when questioned by an author about unpaid royalties. He fumbles over explanations and draws ribald

laughter from other authors. He would have been far more sensible and quite justified in saying that he would answer this individual question privately. Most of the audience stay on to hear Senator Bonner and Kevin Gilbert speak impressively during Penguin Books launching of Gilbert's book *Living Black*.

In the evening the Festival Theatre is crowded for a session called The Bestsellers. Here we see Barry Humphries and Richard Condon for the first time. Presumably claiming star quality they have chosen more elevated accommodation than the homely Grosvenor. Condon's talk is predictable and not particularly interesting, Humphries is witty but superficial. Chaim Potok, the only one of the trio to stay with the other writers, talks brilliantly of the opposing forces in childhood and adolescence that turned him to writing. During question time Humphries relaxes and we learn perhaps a little of the origins within his own psyche that led to the creation of the remarkable characters he portrays. However, most of the questions are to Chaim Potok who has obviously been the dominant figure of this session, the last of Writers' Week.

It has been a remarkable week, with the Pavilion crowded for all sessions and a good deal of lively discussion. Most questions to speakers have been genuine and intelligent rather than those often asked at this sort of function by superficial bores who only wish to draw attention to themselves.

There has also been an absence of the prima donna complex amongst what may be called the star guests. Amongst the public there may be a hierarchy of desirability as to whom to be seen talking to, but this does not extend to the writers themselves. The gulf between overseas guests of whom all invited here for once attended and lesser known local writers, noticeable in 1972, appears to have closed.

To a writer the full value of Writers' Week comes from listening to and talking to other writers. The formal sessions provide a structure for the week and often the subjects for further discussion. As both a public forum and a place where writers meet each other and their readers in the give and take of conversation, Writers' Week 1978 was a success.

We go to works of literature, to works of art generally, for insight and understanding organized into some coherent form, but we also, more simply, can go to them for images: images in which we can recognize some aspect of our condition. The value of a poet who finds such representative images for us is something of a challenge for literary criticism, which cannot, as far as I can judge, find much to say about such an apparently spontaneous activity. We may, indeed, feel that 'Banjo' Paterson's value to us is somehow irrelevant to what we think of as our *literary* concerns and judgements. But some at least of his poetry has crept into our subconscious life. We cannot escape his verses even if, as Harry Heseltine has suggested, Paterson hardly exists in them. If it comes to that, his personality is hard to discover anywhere. (Unlike Coleridge, though, he was a good horseman.)

There are certain works of art and literature which seem to us to characterize the Australian 1890s—the cultural nineties, not the social norms of the period. These are works which, we may say, represent the 1890s for us at the same time as they invent representative myths and figures.

One group of works which obviously does this is that sequence of five imposing bush paintings which Tom Roberts produced between 1890 and 1898: "Shearing the Rams", "The Breakaway", "The Golden Fleece", "Bailed Up" and "Bush-ranging—Thunderbolt . . . at Paradise Creek". These differ from most of the pictures Roberts had been painting on the outskirts of Melbourne and Sydney in their concern with immortalizing representative and significant action. Men at work in the bush, heroic, casual, general; tall men with shears bending over the sheep; men on horseback, whether stockmen or bushranger; another bushranger at bay among the rocks. The paintings create more deliberate and aggrandised subjects

than are to be found in Roberts' earlier 'impressions'. They derive from the painter's own explanatory statement:

It seems to me that one of the best words spoken to an artist is "Paint what you love and love what you paint" and on that I have worked; and so it came that being in the bush and feeling the delight and fascination of the great pastoral life and work, I have tried to express it.

"The bush"—this calls to my mind that rather engaging moment when J. F. Archibald of the *Bulletin* said to the young Sydney lawyer and versifier A. B. Paterson, "All right, have a go at the bush. Have a go at anything that strikes you . . . Let's see what you can do." That I am thus reminded has much to do with the fact that the world these paintings depict is very Patersonian: the men harmonize with their beasts and with the land; action is meaning; pain is excluded, and the bushrangers do not seem bloody or cruel; last but not least, this is an exclusively male world: these men could have no conceivable contact with the stylish young ladies Roberts painted in Melbourne. This is a womanless version of pastoral.

As I have said this terrain is Patersonian. And Paterson's verse is some kind of touchstone of the Australian 1890s. "The Banjo's" work in the *Bulletin* touched a sympathetic chord among his readers; and when he published *The Man from Snowy River* and other verses in 1895, he scored an immediate and resounding success. The first edition sold out in a fortnight, and with subsequent printings it sold over 100,000 copies. One contemporary observer estimated that Paterson outsold any living poet in the English language except for Kipling: I shall return to Kipling later. It is plain to me that readers found Paterson's verse accessible and comforting—and

that they have continued to find it so. This is attested by how well he goes down in junior or middle school. Rhythmically he is robust and recitable; his heroes triumph clearly; his jokes are broad; even his occasions of sorrow entail no conflict. We know where we are. As Harry Heseltine has said, "the boundaries of his antipodean pastoral realm are clearly drawn." We might add, more cruelly, a remark of W. B. Yeats: "Nobody running at full speed has either a head or a heart." For running, read riding.

Clement Semmler has commented, in turning from Gordon to Paterson, that Paterson "replaces soliloquy with action". Much of the attraction of "The Man from Snowy River" derives from the fact that it is virtually all action. There is no reflection in the poem, no movement of the mind in search for significance. The poem begins in movement, with events already in train. The rhythms—those alternating fourteeners and pentameters—would be ludicrous as a medium for the play of ideas, but they can be filled with activity; they can register the checks and rushes of the chase:

Then fast the horsemen followed, where the
gorges deep and black
Resounded to the thunder of their tread,
And the stockwhips woke the echoes, and they
fiercely answered back
From cliffs and crags that beetled overhead.
And upward, ever upward, the wild horses held
their way,
Where mountain ash and kurrajong grew
wide;
And the old man muttered fiercely, "We may
bid the mob good day,
No man can hold them down the other side."

When they reached the mountain's summit,
even Clancy took a pull—
It well might make the boldest hold their
breath;
The wild hop scrub grew thickly, and the hid-
den ground was full
Of wombat holes, and any slip was death.
But the man from Snowy River let the pony
have his head,
And he swung his stockwhip round and gave
a cheer,
And he raced him down the mountain like a
torrent down its bed,
While the others stood and watched in very
fear.

Action without reflection, the expenditure of energy without self-doubt, what could be better

judged to appeal to the psyche of a largely urban nation with a yearning for the open country that lies behind or beyond the cities? A nation for whom slump has followed boom, so that untrammelled outdoor action represents a dream of escape into an ideal Australia, perhaps colored by the anecdotes of those who had been prospectors, selectors, cow-cockies—fathers, uncles, old men remembering. Experience is transformed to Arcadia, represented as pure energy and exhilaration.

What is more, the hero of the poem is an underdog, first glimpsed as "a stripling on a small and weedy beast", but tough, courageous, proud. Everyone likes to see, or hear, the underdog triumph when all the experts have their doubts.

There are two other things to be observed about the poem. Firstly, it explicitly sets out to create a mythical status for an actual district: in this case the headwaters of the Snowy River, "Where a horse's hoofs strike firelight from the flint stones every stride". (It's the country that is still being mythologized in those beautiful wide-screen Marlboro advertisements.) Secondly, there is the curiously confident trick that Paterson performs in the last two lines of the poem, where the apparently objective speaker rounds his narrative out with, "The Man from Snowy River is a household word today, / And the stockman tell the story of his ride". Well, he *is* a household word, but it took plenty of cheek to announce the fact on his first appearance. It seems to me a sign of Paterson's extreme un-self-consciousness.

Another widely popular poem, "Clancy of the Overflow", gives us a clearer sense of the weaknesses as well as the strengths of Paterson's easy style. The first two stanzas are surely very good: the plain speech sits easily in the lolling rhythm of the lines. The "thumbnail dipped in tar" is a pleasing and unforgettable detail, while the eighth line rings engagingly true (indeed Paterson claimed that he had picked it up from a bushman's letter to him as lawyer).

In the next two stanzas the imagination floats gently outwards into a kind of escapist imagining which reaches its widest appeal to vague, dream-like stock responses in the big adjectives of

And he sees the vision splendid of the sunlit
plains extended
And at night the wondrous glory of the ever-
lasting stars.

If that is clichéd, the next few stanzas strike me as downright false. Ugliness and squalor of

the city is a familiar nineteenth century theme, but Paterson's version of it is peculiarly false and stereotyped, all the more so when we think of this being written by a socially successful young lawyer. Nothing here, except perhaps for the rhyming epithet, "gritty", persuades us that he has really looked at, or thought about, what the city around him is.

Comic narrative is one of the things for which we enjoy Paterson's verse. Paterson's comic tales are acted out in a territory where all conflict is undisturbing and external. It is also much the line of country that was alluded to by Kate Millett when she wrote, "Patriarchal myth typical posits a golden age before the arrival of women, while its social practices permit males to be relieved of female company". Droving, polo-playing, horse-racing, in these activities their challenges are simply defined and the climax of the story comes naturally.

"The Geebung Polo Club", apart from its inherently comic title, is a comic narrative that proceeds by hyperbole. Its mythical country is high Monaro, that mountain-pony territory which produced the Man from Snowy River and his equestrian talents. The mainspring of action is found in the dangers of polo-playing—dangers which loom all the larger if you are playing in mythical country. As we might expect in Paterson the deaths here do not hurt us at all: sawdust flows cheerfully out of the players' mortal wounds, as all members of both teams die on the field, townies and bushmen side by side. The symmetry of the massacre pleases any reader, and the climax has an agreeable touch of mock-melodrama:

Then the Captain of the Geebungs raised him
slowly from the ground,
Though his wounds were mostly mortal, yet he
fiercely gazed around;
There was no one to oppose him — all the rest
were in a trance,
So he scrambled on his pony for his last expiring
chance,
For he meant to make an effort to get victory
to his side;
So he struck at goal — and missed it — then
he tumbled off and died.

Everyone dies, and no-one gets hurt. We might note in passing that a polo-match is a rather posher theme than we are likely to find in folklore.

"Saltbush Bill" and "The Man from Ironbark"

are among Paterson's happiest comic pieces, and each appeals to some preconception on the reader's part, giving it a merry twist by way of plot. The former sets bushman up against new-chum jackaroo in fight and reverses traditional expectation by having Saltbush Bill lose the long battle—but strategically win another, more important battle by doing so; the other confronts country cousin with city slickers producing a slapstick uproar. These comic pieces are easy to like, and make no demands on our understanding. To say these pieces appeal to stock responses is by no means to say that they are bad verse.

In *The Man from Snowy River* volume there is, however a great deal of very bad verse, and under this I would include almost every poem in which the poet tries to appeal to tender or solemn emotions. "Lost", "Over the Range", "A Bunch of Roses", "The Wind's Message"—there are plenty enough such pieces in which all we can hear is the empty mechanical thumping of the rhythm, the banality of diction and crude gestures towards grandeur of effect or tear-jerking. Unrelieved cliché these poems are: the footsteps of will without talent. And how they do run on!

There are two Paterson poems—or ballads—or songs—which have taken the step back into folklore. One of these is, of course, "Waltzing Matilda" and the other is "A Bushman's Song", often familiarly known as "Travellin' Down to Castlereagh".

The fame of the former needs little comment, except that it does seem to relate to its cheerful and easy simplicity. That a song about a swagman, theft and suicide should have recently been considered so seriously as a possible national anthem strikes me as one of the few really radical things about the Australian self-image. Perhaps everything that the swagman does, he does so naturally and unreflectingly that we are swept into a form of pastoral where there is no right or wrong to trouble us. There is no room in "Waltzing Matilda" for doubt or sorrow.

"A Bushman's Song" shows how, at his best, Paterson could absorb and develop the idiom of the bush songs he knew so well. What is particularly attractive is the vividness and speed with which the poem presents its succession of vignettes: glimpses of riding, racing, shearing, landlordly arrogance and wanderlust, several of them touched by social dissatisfaction on the speaker's part. The middle of the poem is very sharp about Chinese non-union labor, picking up a traditional Australian version of xenophobia:

It asked a cove for shearin' once along the
Marthaguy:

"We shear non-union here," says he. "I call it
scab," says I.

I looked along the shearin' floor before I turned
to go —

There were eight or ten dashed Chinamen a-
shearin' in a row.

It was a shift, boys, shift, for there wasn't the
slightest doubt

It was time to make a shift with the leprosy
about.

So I saddled up my horses, and I whistled to
my dog,

And I left his scabby station at the old jig-jog.

Part of our pleasure also comes from the neat
way in which the refrain keeps changing to
accommodate new material.

There is one piece in *The Man from Snowy
River and other Verses* which shows no sign at
all of Paterson's characteristic garrulousness. This
is "Frying Pan's Theology", a poem which is
close-hauled and witty, despite the fact that it
deals in racial stereotypes in revealing how the
Aboriginal, Frying Pan, conceptualizes in pidgin-
English. Instead of letting his lines lollop dis-
cursively, the poet here shows a creative interest
in what can be done with two-stress lines and
tight little questions. The poem does not really
tug at our stock responses at all; rather, it finds
something fresh, attractive, whimsical in the
image that Frying Pan's theory calls to mind.
This unpretentious little poem has an inherent
life which is not diluted or spun out.

Scene: On Monaro.

Dramatis Personae

Shock-headed blackfellow,

Boy (on a pony).

Snowflakes are falling

Gentle and slow,

Youngster says, "Frying Pan

What makes it snow?"

Frying Pan, confident,

Makes the reply —

"Shake 'im big flour bag

Up in the sky!"

"What! when there's miles of it?

Surely that's brag.

Who is there strong enough

Shake such a bag?"

"What parson tellin' you,

Ole Mister Dodd,

Tell you in Sunday-school?

Big pfeller God!

"Him drive 'im bullock dray,

Then thunder go;

His shake 'im flour bag —

Tumble down snow!"

It is interesting to ask why Paterson wrote so
little else which bears any relation to "Frying
Pan's Theology". Certainly the poem has very
little in common with the bush ballads which he
knew, and collected in *Old Bush Songs*, whereas
a great part of his verse very clearly bears their
impression: the filling out of stanzas, the running
on to a predictable rhyme, these are habits we
find over and over again in sung ballads, where
the familiar music adds a pleasure that the literary
ballad cannot draw upon.

'Banjo' Paterson, then, provided Australian
culture of the 1890s with forms it could identify
with, figures of which it could say, "This is a
deep part of me, a playful ego-ideal which is
nevertheless true of me." The Man from Snowy
River, Saltbush Bill, the itinerant bushman who
is travelling down the Castlereagh, the swagman
of Waltzing Matilda, all these were taken into
our already-nostalgic sense of the typical Aus-
tralian hero: a figure whom I have elsewhere
called the Collins-Mitchell-Clancy prototype.
Active, outdoor, masculine, resourceful this
figure is, and, as Harry Heseltine has suggested,
he is stamped with the characteristic cheeriness of
Paterson's poetic world. Perhaps Australians have
rejoiced in this figure because the demands he
makes on us are so simple and external.

Kipling, who influenced Paterson and also
admired his work, is a poet we think of as having
provided similar images with a whiff of legend
about them, representative figures of the British
army and the British Raj. Like the Banjo he had
a gift for clear, memorable speech and rollicking,
unsubtle rhythms; both liked to use stanzas with
the ring of a chorus at the end.

Yet I would like to quote one of Kipling's
poems which brings out a very important differ-
ence between the two poets. The poem is entitled
"My Rival".

I go to concert, party, ball —

What profit is in these?

I sit alone against the wall

And strive to look at ease.

The incense that is mine by right

They burn before Her shrine;

And that's because I'm seventeen

And She is forty-nine.

I cannot check my girlish blush,

My colour comes and goes.

I redden to my finger-tips,
 And sometimes to my nose.
 But She is white where white should be,
 And red where red should shine.
 The blush that flies at seventeen
 Is fixed at forty-nine.
 She calls me 'darling', 'pet', and 'dear',
 And 'sweet retiring maid'.
 I'm always at the back, I know —
 She puts me in the shade.
 She introduces me to men —
 'Cast' lovers, I opine;
 For sixty takes to seventeen,
 Nineteen to forty-nine.
 But even She must older grow
 And end Her dancing days,
 She can't go on for ever so
 At concerts, balls, and plays.
 One ray of priceless hope I see
 Before my footsteps shine;
 Just think, that She'll be eighty-one
 When I am forty-nine!

A humorous situation, a neat reversal of our
 common preconceptions and a jokey resolution
 are here, and the verse is as jaunty as can be.

Yet it is a poem which brings its attention to
 bear on inner feelings: it exists to dramatize the
 speaker's immaturity and uncertainty, her admir-
 ing envy of the brash forty-nine year old belle,
 her attempts to understand the machinery of
 social and sexual behaviour. It is, to my mind,
 very good indeed, but what I want to stress is
 that it dramatizes areas of experience which do
 not even exist for Paterson.

Paterson seems to have had virtually no spirit
 of introspection and little interest in motivations;
 as A. G. Stephens remarked, his "sense of pathos
 is no more than any healthy male may possess
 without feeling his appetite one bit the worse".
 The few letters of his that I have seen shadow
 him forth as an uninteresting, perhaps childlike,
 perhaps defensive man. For all this, he had one
 of the most important gifts that a creative artist
 can possess: he sensed something that was
 potentially in the air, named it and shaped it in a
 memorable form. If he largely appeals to stock
 responses in his Australian readers, he neverthe-
 less created some of the emblems by which we
 feel our identity defined or endorsed.

ANOTHER GLASS?

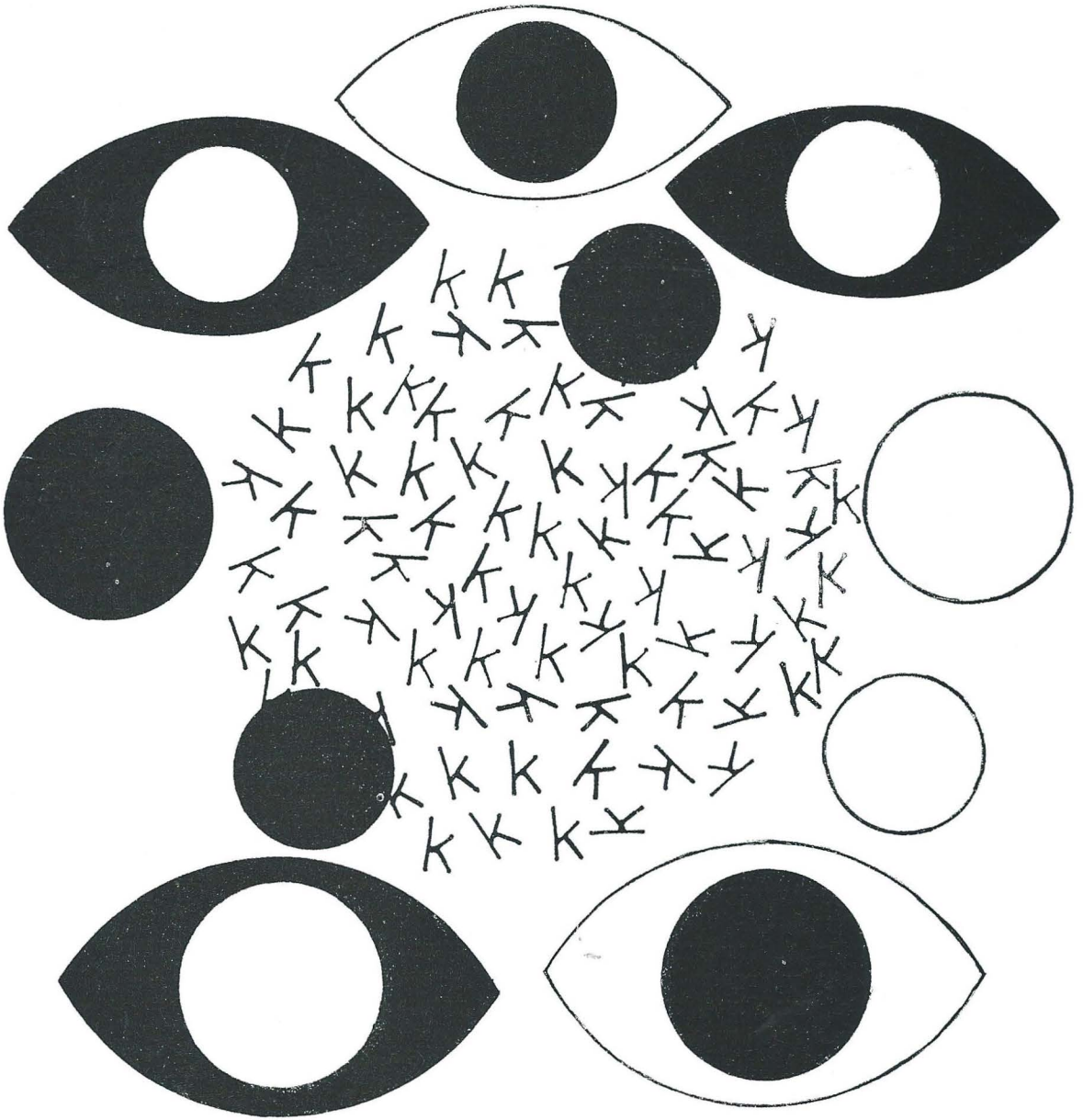
fresh morning dew
 of victory fell
 into my
 glass
 I
 drank tears

RUSSELL SOABA

SPILT-YOLK NOSTALGIA

we had a dream
 of nostalgic birthly eggs
 with changing seasons
 from a strange ricochet
 that spilt the yolk
 through weird gusts of
 hot metallic blood martyring
 spears for nude endurance
 in a dying universe

RUSSELL SOABA



Peter Murphy

When the trip wire and the shooting came on them suddenly out of the black night, Jimmy had only one idea, not to get killed. He had been with Tinogara and there'd been a light riem between his wrist and Tinogara's hand. All at once it went slack, dangled, let him go. He turned and ran, doubled up, and the nasty zing like a hornet striking close at his ear and, once, a stone in the path split suddenly and throwing up chips at him. He went on running, stumbling in the dark, keeping on. The riem caught in a bush; he crouched and managed to unknot it from his wrist. And Tinogara, had he been killed? Probably, or he wouldn't have let go. Killed. Somehow they'd got half friendly, talking a little, exchanging grins. Better if Tinogara was dead now, not caught to be hanged.

He changed direction a bit, still running. In one bit of his head he wondered what had happened to Livingston and Lucky, his vanmen, prisoners too. But there wasn't a thing he could do about it. Go on running, almost out of shot, right out of shot. Unless the shooting came nearer. So keep on running, stumbling in the dark, hurting yourself but what of it. He was running uphill now, his breath coming in gasps, catching his feet on stones and roots: keep on!—lucky they'd left him his boots! But which side of the frontier was he? Couldn't be sure. Had never known this part and they'd been more and more cautious the last two days, dodging, moving at night. If he got to the top of the kepje and lay there till it was light, maybe he would be able to see some kind of mark. He was thirsty but that was now something he was used to. He said a prayer. Funny, he and Tinogara used to say a prayer together sometimes, made him feel they weren't quite enemies. Funny. He slept fitfully, woke at full day, the sun beginning to filter through the bushes.

Where was he? He thought and thought. He could have taken a better compass direction if they had left him his watch. But of course that had been the first thing to go. Still, God had taken him out of the valley, no the Border, the Frontier of the shadow of death; it could have been for some good purpose. But he must eat. And had nothing to give in exchange. There had been that shilling in the lining of his coat, but he had given it to Chengetai, the only thing he had, and he didn't regret it. Couldn't. Not ever. The good Samaritan, the woman of Samaria, must have been the same, surely.

There looked to be some kind of small village down below. He had to chance his luck. If he was ever to get back, Mum must be worried stiff. A beer, a cool beer. No, think of something else. He started downhill cautiously, a right place for snakes. But saw none. The village was further off than it had seemed. Oh, if only it could have been *that* village. Impossible, they'd left it three marches back. At last he was greeting a couple of elderly women, and asking for water; after a long stare one of them tipped her jar for him; it was so good. And what else? Suddenly he knew he wasn't looking at this village as he had done all his working life until the last two weeks—if two weeks had been what it was. These weren't a bunch of Munts, but people, yes, people, living in homes—not mud huts the way he used to think. Where there were different kinds of welcome. Or not welcome. Cautiously he went with the two women. He did not ask for food, but when he saw a full pot of porridge he said admiring words, and when it was offered pretended to refuse out of modesty, then accepted and ate with lip-smacking pleasure and praise. They laughed and in a while the headman came; there was some roundabout speaking. Jimmy asked the way to the big road, was told, thanked his hosts, set out.

Now, he felt, he might make it.

The road, when he came to it, was very empty, but he thought, from the look of the wheel tracks, that it was used, at least daily. He sat under a bush and waited. First there was an ox-cart going the wrong way; the man did not return his greeting, only cracked his whip and hurried on his yoke of oxen. In the old days, he thought, people were friendlier. What have we done, Jesus, what have we done? For this must be us, not poor bloody them. Communists? Phooey. He'd seen them close to by now, hadn't he? He'd always chatted away when he was round the villages with his van, no bother picking up words. But during—when?—this last week maybe, there'd been real talk. Mandiwana spoke good Queen's English when he liked, had been to school. Argued, got the better of him even. And now? Zing, you're dead. Best like that.

At last there was a truck going his way; he stood up and hailed it. The driver halted, looked at him: "What the hell you doing here, man?"

"I was kidnapped, escaped, have to get to some town. Must let my old Ma know."

"You aren't by any chance Jimmy Kitson?" He nodded. "Man, you've been given up for dead. The papers'll have fits. Get in. How was it—real bad?"

He didn't answer for a moment, thought about it. Yes, it had been real bad at first when they took him and the two vanmen, Livingston and poor old Lucky, off the van, waving pistols about, threatening, taking everything off them all, and then giving away all the meat and vegetables in the van, yes giving it, not to customers, no. To skinny, battered men and women, half naked, the poor. Yes, the poor. Like it says in the Book, always with us. That first night. They'd tied his ankles and there's been this guard with a gun, glaring if he moved. They'd been hating him. Yes, he was scared stiff. But after a few days that hating stopped. He could tell them apart, began to be able to talk, most of all to Tinogara and Mandiwana. They'd even given him back the snap of his old Mum. Yes, he was guarded, sure, and they kept that riem on his wrist. And there was the day he bashed his hand with the rock slipping and it went septic. That had scared him, been bad. But it had led to Changetai. He answered at last: "Bad at first."

"I'll bet!" And then there was this pouring out of abuse. The so and so Munts! All that he'd heard a hundred times and it didn't mean anything, he could go with it. The driver looked

round, lighted a cigarette for him, shook his head: "You've had a proper doing. But you'll be looked after now, don't you worry, man. I'm taking you straight in to the police. They'll compensate you. And what's more, they'll get those black bastards. By God we'll all get them!"

Jimmy leant back, shut his eyes, forgot where he was, only woke fully at the police station. Yes, there was that cold beer! They let him phone his Mum, that was all he wanted; then the questions started, not nasty, mind you, but they had to know, above all what route the terrorists had taken before they got to the frontier. Which villages had helped or hidden them. What headmen they'd spoken to. "We'll need to take you over the ground," said the officer, "sorry, old chap, but it has to be done. We got to show those bastards it doesn't pay to help the terrorists."

"I'd like a shave," Jimmy said.

After he'd seen a reporter and answered a dozen stupid questions which somehow didn't connect with what had happened, they went off in the police trucks. He couldn't concentrate on anything they said, not even when they told him they'd found his van, empty. It didn't seem to interest him the way it should. He did ask about Livingston and Lucky. But it seemed likely that they'd been killed in the shoot-out. The army couldn't be expected to know one black from another.

Ten terrorists, the reporter had told him. Then who had got away? If it had been his vanmen they'd come back. Or maybe it was Mandiwana. Or Namozwang. Or Tinogara. He'd told the police that must be all of them; better to please the police. And that reporter. Now he was with six whites, pale hair, reddish skin, well fed, one in his teens, why did a young chap go into the police? Well, he got to understand that later on. And there was this big black corporal, hell of a big chap but not from these parts, from down beyond Gwelo.

It was making Jimmy afraid, himself, being with them. But the officer said to call him George, that was better, that opened things. But not too wide. Mostly, Jimmy was tired, he kept dropping off, riding in the police truck. Dropped off like a child. When he should have had his wits about him.

They went right back to where the van had been taken. Most of that lot there had been interrogated already. That was why they looked—well, when men and women have been scared

stiff, beaten, kicked, seen it done to their kids, it gives them a look. They were due to be taken away to one of these protected villages the Government had set up. "For their own safety," the officer said, "and ours."

But these were his customers. He just had to say something. "Look man, that means they got to leave their crops, their beasts, their little homes, what's more the graves of their old Mums and Dads, like a churchyard, kind of. Is that right?"

"Oh they'll squeal. But there's a war on, Jimmy. Remember that!"

"Yes," said Jimmy, "that's right." No use arguing. It would be done. His poor bloody customers. And they had that feed from my van: the ones that had no money to buy. A war on. He pointed the way they'd gone. Here was the first village. Naturally when they saw the police, everybody denied they'd seen any terrorists or a white man prisoner. But when they'd been beaten enough they howled and said yes, it was true. Then the handcuffs came out and matches were put to the thatch. But Jimmy didn't want to hear or look.

The second village was the same, the headman getting the worst beating. It was one of them, trying to save his own skin, pointed out the next stop. Well, he'd saved some of his skin and the thing was, it saved Jimmy from having to tell, himself. He didn't want, dear Jesus, he didn't want! The police had a bit of fun, chasing old men or girls. Oh, they behaved correctly, but these Munts had to be shown it didn't pay. In a village further along they shot a couple of dogs and chucked them into the well. Always, always, leaving pain and destruction. And Jimmy didn't want.

So, in the evening, to the village where they'd taken him with his red, swollen hand, hurting all up his arm, scaring him. And they had found for him Chengetai who was, he supposed, a doctor of some kind. Oh gentle, gentle. And that was her house, that cone of thatch beside the tree. "No," he said, and suddenly his voice had come awake, had hardened, "This isn't the place. No."

"That Munt in the last place told us—"

"You don't have to believe him, man! He got it wrong, it wasn't here, I'd have remembered, sure I would." She came to the door of her house under the fringe of thatch, but he must not see her, must not let her see him, in case some look passed—"Get this, George," he said to the officer, "we were going faster then, had got food that last

place, took off into the kopjes, making for the frontier, see? Going fast, didn't touch another place."

"You sure of that, Jimmy?" Oh, how to make it sound right!

"Look, I should have stopped you two, three miles back, we must have turned off there, hell of a scramble, big stone fell on my hand, crushed it, look, a nasty cut it gave me—" Yes, the cut was still visible, though it did not hurt, not after she—and if only I could show her I am healed—"You know, George, I must have dropped off when we passed the place. Yes, it was that kopje, they called it Spider Hill. I can show you. After that it was short marches to the frontier. Dodging around. Not a road—" He'd got to fill it in, make it sound true, got to! "But this village—definitely no!"

"Could burn just one house, show we been here?" That was the young chap, just liked burning, the way a kid would. But luckily the officer called him off. One of the trucks turned. And then the black corporal, who had been ferreting round, making out he was better at the job than the whites—and these people up here were no friends of his!—came back with a small boy gripped round the ear: "Says he saw you."

Jimmy made a great effort, said to the officer: "You know as well as I do, George, they'll say anything. Thinks he'll get out of a hiding if he says yes to what's put in his mouth." And then, as the officer hesitated: "Come on, George, who d'you believe, him or me?"

Well, that was that. The boy was let go with a good kick in the arse. They turned back. And if only I could have spoken to her. Told her it wasn't my fault. But I saved her, didn't I? But she didn't know. And she would have put her fingers onto the scar of the cut, onto my cheek, my lips. Gently, gently. And now never.

They went back and he tried again to find out about Livingston and Lucky. Ten terrorists dead. But they wouldn't have known which bodies were which. Poor old Lucky, one more black man. So how many could have got across? Did Mandiwana? Did Tinogara? That was something he'd never know. Another never. He shouldn't be thinking this way about terrorists. Stop it, Jimmy! His van was all right, a bit of paint would make it like new and he got some compensation out of the fund. They bought him a new watch, it went better than the old one, but he didn't care for it too much. And he saw his Mum and the neighbours—they'd made a kind of banner say-

ing Welcome Home Jimmy! That was nice.

He and Mum went to church and again there was something about him, a bit of thanksgiving, that was nice too. Maybe God had been looking after him. Maybe it was God's doing that they'd taken him to that village and Chengetai was there and healed him. A woman of God. If he could see her once again. And maybe God had strengthened him to lie to the police officer.

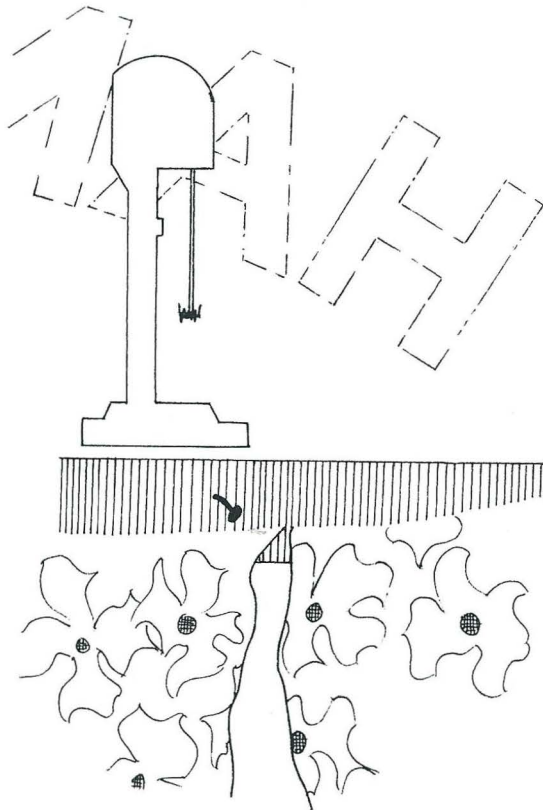
It was a few days later, and Jimmy was tinkering with his van, thinking every now and then if only old Lucky would turn up with that hat of his and his way of grinning at you. And then the police officer called, and another man, sweet-talking him: "Very useful to us you've been. Very co-operative, the kind of man we need. And you know this country. Would you like to help again?"

He got the drift. He shook his head.

"No? Why not? You know it would pay you

better than that old van! Pay you quite handsomely, we'd see to that. No danger, all you'd need to do would be to go round a bit—with the van if you like—talk and listen. You're first class at this lingo of their's. Then you'd report back." He shook his head again, refused a tot of brandy—he'd been brought up not to touch spirits. The senior officer went on, probing, cajoling: "Look, man, we'd leave it to you. All we want is information. Might be good, everything quiet, everyone happy. You see? Or you might be able to warn us, help us to save lives. Don't say no, there's a war on, Jimmy."

But Jimmy didn't want to hear any more. "Look George," he said to the police officer, "there was this chap almost two thousand years ago, got paid for this kind of job, and his name now means something bad. No, folks, I'm going back to my old van round. Not going to have to hang myself later. No."



42nd International PEN Congress

NANCY KEESING

The 42nd International Pen Congress held in Sydney from December 11-17, 1977 was an unequivocal success. One reason for that, I think, is PEN's basic concern for human dignity, freedom of expression and for social and international justice as expressed in its Charter.

The Charter, and its implications, underlay all the events of the week—from the formal Executive sessions and Literary sessions and the very enjoyable official receptions to the old friendships that were renewed and the new ones that were made. Being human no doubt few, if any, PEN members live up to the splendid ideals of their Charter all the time, but its very existence lent the Congress a sense of unity, seriousness and purpose and provided that focus often missing from the general run of writers' gatherings and seminars. For the 250 odd writers representing 31 PEN centres in 28 countries it wasn't just another self indulgent junket.

In Australia International PEN has never had a large membership—its Centres are in Sydney and Melbourne; authors in other States belong to the Sydney Centre. In many countries (and including New Zealand where PEN's initiatives were instrumental in obtaining Public Lending Right) PEN is a leading writers' organisation fulfilling the kind of function which societies like the Australian Society of Authors and Fellowship of Australian Writers assume here. There are historical reasons for this situation. I imagine many of PEN's hard core of long-standing Australian members belong, as I do, because of its active chartered opposition to oppression, racial discrimination, political and other arbitrary censorship, false and malicious reporting, etc., etc., and its proven effectual actions on behalf of writers in prison.

In 1977 many local writers joined PEN for the first time to qualify for attendance at the

Congress and to work towards its success. Those I spoke to were most impressed by the leadership and organisational qualities of the International President, Mario Vargas Llosa, Secretary Peter Elstob and their team, and by the representatives of PEN Centres generally. I'm sure it was also felt very widely that Stephen Kelen, President of International PEN Sydney Centre was an efficient and gracious host to the whole proceedings, and that his Australian team, together with ICMS the Congress organisers, had provided an inspiring (adjective deliberate) occasion.

The Congress theme was "Literature, a Bridge between Asian and European cultures", so it was appropriate that the first Executive session elected Youn Sook Moh an International Vice President. She is President and Founder of the Korean PEN Centre and the best-known poet of her country.

One of the chief preoccupations of the week was the plight of more than 600 writers who are in prison in many countries and under many different types of government. (PEN itself is strictly non-political.) Indeed the Congress programme stated inside the front cover: *We welcome in spirit to the 42nd International PEN Congress writers wherever imprisoned or persecuted in any way because of their insistence on freedom of expression without resorting or inciting others to violence.*

By resolution of PEN's Sydney Centre two imprisoned authors had been invited to the Congress and were Guests of Honour *in absentia*—they were Pramoedya Ananta Poer, the distinguished Indonesian novelist who has been in prison for some fifteen years and Guey Sneguireff, a recently imprisoned Ukrainian writer.

PEN's activities on behalf of writers in prison have, over the years, resulted in the release of

some. At this Congress it was reported that the Argentinian Antonio Bi Benedetto had been freed as a result of PEN protests and is now living in France. (The Sydney Centre had been especially active on his behalf and had sent letters to the Commonwealth Minister for Foreign Affairs, to the President of the Argentine, to the Australian Ambassador in Argentina and to the Argentinian Ambassador to Australia.)

At one session Dr Minneke Schipper of Holland made an impromptu appeal for PEN's Writers in Prison Emergency Fund which supports families of imprisoned writers. Within ten minutes \$500 was collected.

It was also reported by the International Secretary that PEN's association with UNESCO continues.

Proceedings of the Congress will eventually be published and will include all speeches and addresses and all papers submitted for the Literary Sessions. I shan't attempt any summaries here. During the Literary Sessions the Congress theme, "Literature, a Bridge between Asian and European Cultures" occupied most time, but one day, and a part of the last session, was devoted to "The Emergence of New Literatures Among the Pacific Nations" with particular emphasis on Australian Aboriginal, Maori, and New Guinea writings. A passionate discussion about oral literature took over as a major preoccupation and will probably be a central topic at a forthcoming PEN Congress to be held in Brazil.

What remains in memory four months on? I asked Stephen Kelen, President of the Sydney Centre and the driving spirit behind the whole project—his weirdest happening was during the final Executive session when Peter Elstob was describing which Centres were active and which seemed inactive and probably moribund; he mentioned the Senegal Centre as a case in point. But a representative from Senegal had booked for the Congress though he had not arrived and Renata Cochrane, Secretary of the Sydney Centre had just begun to assure the Congress of her recent contact with Senegal when, on cue, in walked MM Djibril Niane who had been delayed in Paris by an airport strike for four days. (It was a fortunate arrival for the final Literary Session because he is a distinguished expert on the collection of oral literature in all its forms, and is also concerned with fostering that tradition in present-day

Senegal. At very short notice he agreed to join the panel and give a short extempore account of his work.)

My memories are of more people than I can possibly name—of Mario Vargas Llosa, because I admire first-rate writers who devote as much time as he does to working for his disadvantaged fellows; of the Aboriginal poet who, listening to a Japanese expert describe groups who meet to write Haiku, suddenly perceived how he could adapt that procedure to his workshops for Aboriginal children; the readings of Dutch poetry; playing truant one morning with a Danish lass who wanted to visit Paddington's art galleries; an elegant Hungarian/American's account of her escape to freedom in 1956—one of the most appalling stories I've ever heard; a learned gentleman gabbling a learned paper more rapidly than the speed of light, or so it seemed (and thank goodness)—(fortunately most people agreed to speak or read slowly to their papers); the determination with which the Japanese tea ceremony team devised a counterfeit peacefulness—among them was the widow of the Nobel prize-winner Yasunari Kawabata; the splendid exhibition at the Mitchell Library of books by local and overseas PEN members and the numbers of overseas visitors who particularly admired the library building and also the Victorian splendours of the Town Hall where the Lord Mayor's reception was the last official function—the first had been a welcome reception at the Opera House with, as hosts, The Peter Stuyvesant Trust who were paramount among the many sponsors who made the whole Congress possible. In between there was an Australia Council reception at North Sydney and a State Government welcome to overseas visitors at the State Office Block. It was a hot week and it ended up with the city in a ring of tragic fires, but on all of those evenings the harbour was at its most opal-like and beautiful.

Peter Elstob in his closing address particularly mentioned the short, apt, speeches at all these receptions and I suddenly thought: it's true. Everyone did speak well and with wit and grace. Unexpectedly 'urbanity' seems the best word.

The overseas visitors went home with swags of Australian books donated by generous publishers and booksellers.

I repeat: it was an inspiring occasion.

The Mark Twain Family in Australia

E. DANIEL POTTS
AND ANNETTE POTTS

Samuel Clemens (alias Mark Twain) came to Australasia in 1895 partly because of his wife. When his publishing company went bad she vowed the creditors would receive "settlement in full, down to the last penny".¹ Rather than see him sell work "not up to standard" she encouraged him to resume the lecture circuit by undertaking a global tour, and so Samuel and Olivia Langdon Clemens and their second daughter, Clara, arrived in Sydney from Vancouver on 15 September 1895.²

In *My Father Mark Twain* Clara devotes a chapter to Australia and New Zealand. She recalled that from the time of the *Warrimo's* berthing "life started with a vengeance. Newspaper reporters, photographers, callers from all circles; and beggars of every description, slovenly and distinguished. Mother and I were kept busy answering the mail, for we could not afford a secretary". As well, they attended "horse-races, polo games, balls at Government House, and teas on the Admiral's ship".³

According to the Sydney Morning Herald on the "Arrival of Mark Twain", even before his landing journalists asked, as they still do of celebrities, what were his "ideas and impressions on coming to Australia". His facetious response was, "I don't know. I'm ready to adopt any that seem handy. I don't believe in going outside accepted views".⁴ Recognising that the secret of a good lecture tour is plenty of notice in the press, he flattered its members at his second Sydney lecture by saying, tongue in cheek no doubt, that they were "as truthful as Hansard". He generally got on well with journalists, and in Melbourne was feted at a 'smoke night' given by the Australian Institute of Journalists.⁵

Good houses were assured wherever Twain went, not just because of a favorable press. For

many years Australian colonists had known and loved his writings. In the 1860s and 1870s George Robertson of Melbourne published Australian editions of many Twain books, and Australian writers of the 1890s, especially those of the Bulletin school, were as much influenced by him and Bret Harte as they were by the works of Rudyard Kipling.⁶

Sydney weather soon proved too hot for the aging (almost 60) writer. After three appearances he cancelled plans to visit Brisbane, instead going south. At Melbourne's Spencer Street Station the American consul was among the welcoming committee.

The Age journalist who interviewed him at the Menzies Hotel on 26 September found the humorist in bed, resting and reading *For the Term of his Natural Life*, with which he was "greatly charmed".⁷ The Clemenses subsequently went to see a dramatisation of Marcus Clarke's novel; "gruesome", in 21-year-old Clara's view, but she did not regret seeing it.⁸

After five "At Home with Mark Twain" performances in Melbourne, the family went to an equally enthusiastic welcome in Adelaide, coming back through the Victorian goldfield towns, an excursion about which Clemens wrote at length in *Following the Equator*. Clara recounts a story against herself from this period. At a stop on the way to Adelaide she saw a dying sheep and got some ether from a local chemist to end its misery. Before her plan was effected, fortunately for the sheep, the owner came along and explained that the animal had fallen from the weight of its heavy coat and merely needed assistance to get to its feet.⁹

For the later part of the visit there are available in the Clemens Family Journal (deposited with the Clifton Waller Barrett Library of the

University of Virginia in Charlottesville) several of Livy's letters to her adopted sister, Susan Langdon Crane.¹⁰ These give a somewhat different views of the Clemens' travels and are worth quoting for that reason. The first was dated 3 November 1895 on board the Union Line's *Mararoa*, on which they left Melbourne for Tasmania and New Zealand on 31 October. It opens:

People are good and kind to us everywhere, and we get a most lively interest in them, and dread leaving them. We disliked extremely coming away from Melbourne. There were several people there that we had come to be really fond of. Quite a number came down to the steamer to see us off.

A week ago today we spent at a most beautiful house a little out of Melbourne. The gentleman, a Mr Wagner,¹¹ had invited us to spend a few days with him. So we went out for 24 hours. He is a very wealthy man with this superb house looking on a most beautiful view. We had a very large bedroom, with six windows in it, three of them leading onto a very extensive porch. Our bedroom was about thirty feet square — perhaps a little more. Out of it was a dressing-room with a bed in it. So when we took our afternoon naps, Mr Clemens took the dressing-room and I the big room. . . . the lower hall of the house . . . is twice the size of our Hartford Hall¹² — . . . He took us to his house and carried us away again in his carriage, so it was made very easy for us.

Monday evening we had invitations to go to a Leidertafel concert and sit with the vice-royal party. This we accepted — Clara and I. Mr Clemens went a short distance from Melbourne to lecture. We sat about two seats from Lord and Lady Brassy.¹³ It was all very interesting to see and be in. We were with a gentleman and lady who have been very kind to us since we arrived in Melbourne. . . .

'The Lidy will be down in a minute. Would you like to read the piper till she comes? It is on the tible with the kike.'

There, Sue, are some Australian pronunciations which I send for you and Susy to study out. Of course the cultivated people do not speak in this way, but the servants and the children, and sometimes people that you meet do.

Then, perhaps reminded by her reference to cultivated people and servants, she recalls a luncheon with Sir Henry Parkes¹⁴ in Sydney:

He had lost his wife about two months before.

She was his second wife and had been his mistress. So she was not received in Society. His daughters lived away from home during her life, and earned their own livings. After the stepmother's death they returned home and kept house for the father, and took care of the young children. Sir Henry is over eighty years of age. The eldest daughter I should think was fifty, and the little child that was brought into the drawing-room was, I should say, two and a half years old. I supposed it was a grand-child; but not at all, it was the old man's child. The other morning all this part of the world was startled by reading in the newspaper that Sir Henry Parkes had married his housemaid, and that the daughters had again quitted the paternal roof. He said he could have married more advantageously from a worldly point of view but he preferred to marry for love. She is twenty-two years old.

Their visit to Hobart on the way to New Zealand was "pleasant, but altogether too short":

We arrived there about 4 o'clock on Saturday morning. A little after seven a young Mr Dobson, who is a great friend of the Days¹⁵ came and invited us to their house for breakfast. In fact I had received a letter from him and his mother in Melbourne, asking us to spend what time we could do with them while in Tasmania. While we were at breakfast a Mr and Mrs Walker called. She wanted us to drive, asking us what we desired most to do during the few hours that we were to be there. We found we were of different minds, Clara and I preferring to see the country, Mr Clemens desiring to get a glimpse of any convicts that might still remain on the island, or rather in Hobart. So we divided the party, Mr Clemens going with Mr and Mrs Dobson (he has been Premier, his brother is chief justice, which means that he is also acting governor when there is no governor appointed.¹⁶ The chief justice is quite often acting governor for several months between appointments of governors), Clara and I going with Mrs Walker & young Mr Dobson. We had a most delightful drive into the bush. Up the mountain side to a little chalet where the Dobsons go for about three months during the hot weather. There is a most superb view from this of woods and sea. As we drove down we went into Mrs Walker's for a glass of wine & a piece of cake (or kike as the Australians say). Her house was a bower, it seems to me that I never saw anything more exquisite. A low one-storey house — which very many of the houses are here — with charming drawing-room & dining-room, both leading onto a porch

covered with roses, yellow and white, and looking off to the sea and mountains. The porch was very large, being wide and the full length of those two long rooms. Then it was such a perfect mass of roses.

In her letter Livy anticipated that the trip through New Zealand would not be easy, "because much of it will be taken by means of little coast steamers"—even on the *Mararoa* "our food and beds are poor". Of one of those coastal steamers Clara later wrote that it was "so small that it looked like a toy and it was overcrowded past belief. No dinner was served in the *salon* the night we boarded the little craft, because the tables and floor had to be used for beds. Fat people were selected to sleep on the tables, in the belief that they would be less likely to roll off. Curtains were strung from wall to wall, separating the men and women, who had mattresses on the floor." Her father and his manager had such quarters, and her father complained that "a woman on the other side of the curtain constantly drove her elbow into his sides and the noise and stuffy smells made him think of a cattleship". Livy and Clara shared "the tiniest

cabin" with two other women and were supplied with no towels, pillows or bed linen. Oranges were all they had to eat as no dinner was served.¹⁷ This would have been the *Flora*, on which they sailed from Lyttleton on 17 November, transferring the next day to the *Mahinapua*.¹⁸

Ever solicitous of her husband, despite her own frail health since a bad fall in childhood, Livy told Sue that the carbuncle with which he had been troubled during the trip "does not trouble him any more but I still bandage it". Her next recorded letter is from the Star Hotel, Auckland, on 24 November, three days before her fiftieth birthday. In this she worried that

Mr Clemens does not seem to have as much strength as I could wish to see him have. Yesterday he seemed to feel better, to have more spring, but today he is threatened with another carbuncle. Naturally that makes him feel very much discouraged. However, I still have faith to believe that with Dr Fitzgerald's remedies I shall be able to get it checked. Dr Fitzgerald did do wonders for the other one.

Australian Book Review

New Series

This June the National Book Council in association with Peter Isaacson Publications commences publishing a new series of the Australian Book Review. This monthly journal will provide reviews of more than a thousand newly-published Australian books each year.

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They "find very pleasant people . . . wherever we go", being overwhelmed with "gifts of one sort or another. . . . Boxes of bon-bons, flowers, pamphlets, photographs, &c. &c." At Christchurch she "felt a little burdened, there was so much". Her main preoccupation, she confides, is in wondering "if we ever shall get our debts all paid, and live once more in our own house. Today it seems to me as if we never should. However, much of the time I believe we shall, but it is a long way." She goes on:

Mr Clemens continues to have large and *very* enthusiastic houses. Here he has a large hall, and he has had a thousand people to hear him each night—in fact the two nights counted up to 2172 people who paid for their seats. That did not count the newspaper people nor me. He reads here one more night. If Australia and New Zealand had as many big cities as America has he could make his fortune; but the trouble is that there are so few cities, just a *very few* along the coast. I think there are only seven or eight in New Zealand large enough for it to make it worth his while to lecture in them.

Back in Sydney on 17 December the Clemenses found it already empty for the holidays. On the 20th they made two calls and Livy wrote "Sue Darling" that evening, "found both families just on the eve of leaving town and both of them for a long period. One of them was going to their country house and then 'home', as they all call England, for several months, perhaps years. The other was just starting for the continent for several months, and then 'home'." The next day was better, with an expedition to "the National Park" at the invitation of Sir William Windeyer, a NSW judge.

The P & O steamer *Oceana* by which they travelled from Sydney to Ceylon and India stopped in Melbourne over Christmas, and they renewed their acquaintance with John Wagner, at Stonnington in the "beautiful suburb" of Malvern. Livy's reaction (letter of 26 December) to this taste of comfort and hospitality—"an oasis in our lives"—shows she was tired of hotel life:

I wish you could see this house. I think it is one of the most superb ones that I was ever in. . . . The hall is about twice the size of ours, and is that square shape, only it is so arranged that you can sit in the square part without being seen from the front door. Yesterday we

had our four o'clock tea there. The colors in the house are all subdued and restful. . . .

As I write I am sitting on a very large, very wide and very long porch that runs on two sides of the house. It is an irregular shaped porch with bays and pillars and unevenness, so that it all gives it a most charming appearance. Then they are so kind and hospitable, and do everything for us in a large, generous, bountiful way, and yet leave us quite free and independent. Mr Wagner sat down beside me on the sofa this morning, and said, "Now, Mrs Clemens, what are your plans for today? Are you going to the Lloyds for dinner?" I answered No, that I was only asked for Xmas day. Then he said, "Well, what would you like to do? Would you like to go to the races, or take a drive, or what? I have sent some of the horses into the country, but there is a trap and a pair of horses at your disposal." I said Mrs. McCulloch (his daughter) had accepted an invitation out for tea today, and I thought that was all that I would do. I would stay quietly here until tea time.

Her husband, she said, was naturally perfectly happy, entirely in his element. "He was born for this kind of luxury." To their delight, they had even been served "Johnny cake and buckwheat cakes for breakfast."

As far as Livy was concerned, the main purpose of the globe-trotting was always to raise enough money to settle their debts and "be able once more to live at home". The lecture circuit proved profitable, netting \$2200 in the first two weeks in Australia, while the American Publishing Company in 1897 immediately sold 30,000 copies of an account of the tour.¹⁹

Widely quoted in Australia since its publication is Mark Twain's comparison (in *Following the Equator*) of the Eureka fight with Concord and Lexington, the implication being that Twain supported republicanism for Australia. This is not so. After his departure he remarked (page 335) that breaking from Britain "seems an unwise idea. They [Australian republicans] point to the United States, but it seems to me that the cases lack a good deal of being alike. Australasia governs herself wholly—there is no interference; and her commerce and manufactures are not oppressed in any way." As he had told an Age interviewer, he was "fully alive to the folly of those globe trotters who rattle through a country on a three weeks' tour and then write a book 'out of their colossal incapacity for the

job'."²⁰ He was also alive to the folly of alienating the book-buying public and so omitted to publish an observation on Australia in his notebook that "The native Australian is as vain of his unpretty country as if it were the final masterpiece of God . . . —He . . . can't bear to have critical things said about her."²¹

Part of the section relating to Australasia was reprinted in 1973 in the Penguin Colonial Facsimile series as *Mark Twain in Australia and New Zealand*, embracing chapters I to XXXV and so concluding with the entry of 12 December 1895. Not included by Penguin are chapters XXXVI and XXXVII which cover the family's return to Sydney from Wellington and subsequent departure for Ceylon via Melbourne, Adelaide (where they spent New Year's Day), and Albany. Thus readers of this edition miss out on Twain's poem 'A Sweltering Day in Australia', which plays on Australian place-names. They also miss

his final words on Australian republicanism mentioned earlier.

Following the Equator was written in London while the Clemenses were in mourning for their first daughter, Susy, who had died suddenly of meningitis instead of joining them in England as had been arranged. Not until mid-October 1900 did they return to the United States, and never again were they to live in Livy's much-loved house.²²

When Livy Clemens died in 1904 after a long illness, Samuel Clemens saw it as "the disaster of my life". As well as her love and companionship, he missed her "faithful, judicious and painstaking" editing of his manuscripts and her careful attention to family finances.²³ Clara married in October 1909 and a few weeks later their remaining daughter, Jean, died in an epileptic seizure, leaving him completely alone.²⁴

NOTES

- ¹ Justin Kaplan, *Mr Clemens and Mark Twain*, London, Jonathan Cape, p. 330.
- ² Charles Neider, ed., *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, New York, Harper & Rowe (Perennial Classics edn.) 1959, pp. 283-84, 290; Coleman O. Parsons, 'Mark Twain in Australia', *Antioch Review*, Winter 1961-62, vol. xxi, no. 4, pp. 455-68.
- ³ New York, Harper, 1931, p. 143.
- ⁴ *S.M.H.*, 16 & 23 September, 1895.
- ⁵ *Age*, 28 October, 1895.
- ⁶ See H. M. Green, *A History of Australian Literature*, Sydney, A. & R., 1961, vol. 1, pp. 353, 544; 576-7, 723.
- ⁷ *Age*, 27 September, 1895.
- ⁸ pp. 145-46.
- ⁹ pp. 147-48.
- ¹⁰ Copies were provided by Dr S. Murray-Smith, at whose suggestion this article was prepared.
- ¹¹ John Wagner, a partner in Cobb & Co. coaching service, was then the owner of 'Stonnington', 336 Glenferrie Road, Malvern, built about 1892 and now part of the State College of Victoria.
- ¹² Their Farmington Avenue house at Hartford, Connecticut.
- ¹³ Lord Brassey, governor of Victoria 1895-1900.
- ¹⁴ NSW politician and journalist (1815-1896).
- ¹⁵ A girlhood friend Alice Hooker married John Calvin Day: the Days were renting the Hartford house during this time, according to Kaplan (p. 332).
- ¹⁶ Henry Dobson (1841-1918) was premier 1892-94; Sir William Lambert Dobson (1833-98) was appointed chief justice in February 1886.
- ¹⁷ Pp. 151-52. R. S. Smythe was "manager of such 'lecturing lions' as Archibald Forbes, Max O'Rell, and Stanley of Darkest Africa", as well as of Mark Twain (Parsons, p. 455).
- ¹⁸ Mark Twain, *Following the Equator. A Journey Around the World*. Hartford, Conn., American Publishing Co., 1897, pp. 301-03.
- ¹⁹ Kaplan, pp. 334, 349-50. The English edition published by Chatto & Windus the same year was entitled *More Tramps Abroad*. Only the part on "From India to South Africa" was previously printed in magazine form, according to Merle Johnson (*A Bibliography of the Works of Mark Twain*), Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press, 1974, p. 66.
- ²⁰ 27 September, 1895.
- ²¹ Quoted in Parsons, p. 466.
- ²² Kaplan, p. 359.
- ²³ Neider, pp. 207, 253.
- ²⁴ Kaplan, p. 387.

books

THE YOUNG HASLUCK

Fred Alexander

Paul Hasluck *Mucking About*. (Melbourne University Press, \$16.90).

Sir Paul Hasluck's autobiography of his pre-parliamentary years may well have a somewhat mixed reception—less perhaps because of its form or content than because of the preconceptions which readers bring to it.

As an extremely readable, frankly written and unashamedly nostalgic memory record of life in the Western Australia of the 1920s and '30s, *Mucking About* will be welcomed by all who seek sympathetic understanding of that tolerant, easy-going, complacent and parochial community. It was in fact a strange mixture of free settlers from the 1830s, some 10,000 convicts and their guards in the 1850s and 1860s and successive waves of "t'othersider" and overseas migrants during the eastern goldfields' rushes of the '90s and after.

Some chapters of the book, such as those on "Aborigines" and "Life in the Kimberleys", are valuable additions to the limited contemporary, dispassionate, original material available to students of this largely neglected field. Critical evaluation of the rest of the W.A. picture may be left to the few Sandgroper specialists, some of whom will doubtless find in it much to deepen their admiration of those tillers of the western soil, and their contemporaries, in the days before economic depression, world war and substantial capital investment and know-how, combined with marked improvements in the means of communication, turned them or their descendants into Australians.

For the present reviewer—a mere Sandgroper by adoption since 1924, whose equally happy

memories of Perth in the 1920s and '30s are doubtless colored by his earlier Melbourne and Oxford background—it must suffice to say, for what it's worth, that the Hasluck recollections of the period seem a little simplistic, even at times subconsciously selective when they touch upon events or individuals within the common experience of both author and reviewer.

Other readers outside Western Australia—and some within it—who seek to dig deeper and use the autobiography to help explain and appraise the highly important roles to be filled by the future Commonwealth Minister may find some peculiar difficulties to overcome. Those who survive irritation at the title of the autobiography, after reading the explanation given in preface, may still find it hard to reconcile this picture of the man who spent the first half of his working life flitting aimlessly from one interest to another, apparently without purpose or guiding ambition, with his proven concentration in later years on ministerial minutiae as well as major policy.

The very decision to produce an autobiography must have come as something of a shock to close students of Hasluck's publications since 1950. Admirers of the meticulous scholarship of the 1952 and 1970 volumes of *The Government and the People* had already had to adjust their sights somewhat to the combination of informed survey and personal appraisal of the ex-Minister's 1951-63 Papua-New Guinea administration, as given in his 1976 *A Time For Building*. Some of them were doubtless preparing for similar commentary, if not disclosures, regarding different aspects of his External Affairs period in the later 1960s, when A & R announced *Mucking About*.

This 1977 publication will, however, set readers' minds at rest on one point regarding

Hasluck the writer. *Mucking About* is designed to be the first and last Hasluck volume of autobiography. It ends very deliberately with entry into governmental administration and politics, on the declared principle that once a man becomes a public figure he should "give up biography and simply proffer evidence so that others can write history".

Universal application of the sweeping dictum that "the real nature of a man does not change very much from what he was when he was a boy" may well be challenged. (It certainly does not accord with the present writer's personal experience nor with his historical assessment of some other distinguished Australians.) But no-one may deny Hasluck's right to apply this dictum to his own career nor question his sincerity in so doing.

What, then, may we learn from this frank memory record of the first 35 years of "the boy" that will help us to understand "the grown man" and to evaluate his achievement?

One useful service the autobiography certainly renders. It should correct the widespread popular misapprehension, caused perhaps by a combination of earlier publisher's blurbs and potted press biographies. The 36 year old Hasluck who in 1941 entered the Commonwealth public service (and, thereafter, following a short interlude, parliamentary and ministerial life) at Canberra came not from the ivory towers or sheltered cloisters of a university campus but from the hurly burly of practical journalism on a metropolitan daily. He had been on the payroll of W.A. Newspapers Ltd. since 1922. As a result, *Mucking About* has relatively little to say about Australian university life, except as seen during student days when its author was many years older than the average undergraduate fresh from school, and nothing at all about his own staff-student relationship in 1940 when he was seconded to the University of Western Australia as a part-time, temporary lecturer.*

The book begins with some informative chapters on early Salvation Army family background, both rural and urban, which are very revealing

*This paragraph implies no reflection on the quality of Hasluck's work during his brief periods of service on an academic campus. The present writer is in a better position than most to testify strongly to the contrary; nor would he question the author's statement in the closing pages of his autobiography that he had been approached regarding possible candidature for some significant academic posts around the time that he received Liberal nomination for the Curtin constituency. In his own words, he was then 'at the peak of my reputation and at the height of my powers'.

on its short term and long range influence, positive and negative. These are followed by a chapter on secondary schooling, from which, incidentally, "Perth Mod." emerges in rather less glowing colours than it has been painted by other distinguished alumni who were contemporaries or near-contemporaries. The reader is then given a very frank account of a young reporter's varied experiences: on the "markets round"; in and out of the Trades Hall ("another richly educational field"—what fine fellows those trade union secretaries of the 1920s were: "quiet, unaggressive and modest"; so different by implication from those of the second half of the century!); on police rounds and in the courts, including (later) both Supreme Court and Arbitration Court. This last "rich and varied experience" provided the author with "a more thorough education in some aspects of law than many persons who were professionally or academically trained".

As the young cub-reporter progressed to an A-grade journalist he also had some rewarding assignments: for two sessions as a member of the West Australian's gallery staff at Parliament House and a year as its chief; as the reporter covering the Peden royal commission on the Constitution and travelling with the Moseley commission in the Kimberleys, then for an increasingly significant period in drama criticism combined with work in the sub-editors' room.

During these years of widely varied journalistic acquaintance with different aspects of life in the Perth of the lengthening 1920s and early 1930s the unattached "young man about town" enjoyed himself. "Throughout these years I did nothing in particular but mostly joined in other people's fun". Hasluck got on easily with most of his fellows and with his seniors and was evidently popular—he remarks on this fact unselfconsciously more than once—but retained and developed some distinctively personal tastes and characteristics. Throughout his life he was to retain the love of the bush which he had acquired at the Salvation Army's No. 2 Boys' Home eleven miles out from Collie; with this went a fondness for horses and for swimming and an enjoyment of bush-walking. He became aware of a certain mystical sensitivity to nature which was to express itself in verse-making, then and later. A strongly humanitarian sympathy and a deep feeling for social justice may help to explain in part his early interest in and feeling for Aborigines. Both of these characteristics were later to be revealed in social work in the east end of London during a 1932

honeymoon year spent overseas—ostensibly ‘seeing the sights’ (cathedrals and castles included) but also studying the current international scene at Geneva and elsewhere on the Continent and reading solidly in the British Museum on the background to Australian history, with days off for the slums.

The most consistently surprising feature of *Mucking About* is its author’s emphasis on the lack of purpose or plan in this first half of his working life. All the important shifts in direction during his career, then and later, he insists, came on someone else’s initiative, not by his own affiliation in the first 35 years of one who became a senior member of the Commonwealth government and something more than a potential prime minister. Domestic party politics don’t get a mention in the book until its relatively short concluding chapter. This opens with the specific statement: “As a young man I had no political ambition and no political commitment”.

Diligent readers may detect a certain hardening of potentially political attitudes as the 1930s lengthened. What Hasluck describes as his earlier “instinctive” feeling for the unfortunate and his “humanitarian approach to politics” seemed to yield place to another early opinion that “the less government did, the better”. Reform would come more effectively through better administration than by radical change of institutions prompted by theoretical convictions: “. . . the success of democracy he came to feel,” required both respect and concern for the individual person and an acceptance of responsibility by each individual in his role as a citizen and elector”. By the eve of the world war he thought that Lyons and his colleagues were “doing something to help us out of the trouble” following the failure of Scullin and the Labor Party to “work a miracle”; but he insists that he was not then a supporter of the United Australia Party.

What additional influences were needed a decade later to lead Hasluck to accept Liberal Party sponsorship for the new seat of Curtin may only be guessed at by readers of the autobiography. It is silent on the effects of his having worked in External Affairs under the Curtin and Chifley governments and under Evatt in particular. There is a specific reference to having been affected “by the current resistance to the move towards State socialism”; one also has the conviction that the Hasluck of the 1940s felt that many on the left whom he’d known and respected in the 1920s and early 1930s had been replaced

by radical theorists. He had already detected a comparably regrettable change of the West Australian from “a club into a factory” when the leisurely, stylised editorship of the *Fellow of All Souls*, D. D. Braham, gave place to the commercial dynamism of C. P. Smith, softened a little by the home-spun H. J. Lambert. This encouraged the advent of the “new-style journalists” for whose professional standards Hasluck had little respect and with whom he found easy relations difficult in his later years as Minister for External Affairs.

It is nonetheless clear that the new MHR for Curtin in 1949 was no more a party man than S. M. Bruce had been when he entered the Commonwealth Parliament in 1918. Whether or not this had any appreciable bearing on the undoubted success yet limited political achievement of either man, Hasluck’s future biographer might gain much from comparative study of his career with that of Bruce, with whom he worked closely in London in the 1940s and whom he greatly admired—and this despite the very sharp contrast between the boyhood and social background of the two men.

Of neither Bruce nor Hasluck might it properly be said that he succeeded in life without really trying but at least one reader of *Mucking About* put the book down with a feeling of sadness that a senior minister who had brought so much quality and such varied experience to his unplanned and unexpected political and administrative career, and who had worked so hard and so effectively at it throughout its several phases, should have felt compelled to conclude the opening chapter of his autobiography with the paragraph:

So, although my inclination and my happiness were to muck about, somehow or other I ended up by working hard mostly at tasks for which I had no inclination and from which I found little happiness. I looked elsewhere for happiness and found it when doing things that were not great and making friends among people who were not important.

FIRST TRULY AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER

Kim E. Beazley

Lloyd Ross: *John Curtin*, a Biography (Macmillan, \$25.00).

This biography of John Curtin should go a long way towards being a definitive study of Australia’s

Second World War Prime Minister. I approached the publication of Lloyd Ross's book with trepidation because various articles which had appeared in the press by Lloyd Ross had seemed to get entirely out of perspective Curtin's friendship with Lloyd Ross's father and his pre-Parliamentary life.

Curtin is the first fully mature Australian Prime Minister—the others were, in decisive ways, content to click heels and follow Downing Street up to his time.

If Lloyd Ross's book appears to me to have any weakness it is in the fact that it does not fully assess Curtin as the man who received the tragedy of Australia's earlier historical role, and it was appropriate that Curtin should clash with Churchill precisely on the issue of Australia's real needs.

The British official War History, the volume *The Threat To India* by Major General Woodburn Kirby, does elucidate some issues. Winston Churchill never seems to have made a correct decision in relation to Australia. In his work "The World Crisis," Churchill is obviously hurt by the criticism of Dr Bean, the historian for Australia of the First World War. Churchill never came to Australia, imagining, I suspect, a critical attitude in the country which certainly did not exist.

Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson (later Viscount Novar), the Governor General in the First World War, saved the Australian Expeditionary Force from Churchill's inadequate escorts. The Anzacs, with Churchill's escorts, would have been destroyed on the high seas by the "Emden". Munro-Ferguson prevailed on the pathetically subordinant Australian leaders to stop the convoy in King George's Sound and await proper escorts despite the views of Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty.

It is clear now from British official history in the 2nd World War:

(1) that Lieutenant-General Hutchinson, British Commander in Burma, warned against the Orient lines carrying Australian forces from the middle East approaching Burma, as they would be destroyed by the Japanese air force;

(2) that this view was concealed from Curtin and that Churchill instructed Dorman Smith, the Governor of Burma, to appeal to Curtin to allow the diversion, already ordered by Churchill, of Australian troops to Burma;

(3) that even if they had managed to land they would have been without guns and tanks for at least a month, that equipment being in a separate convoy;

(4) that Curtin's refusal to allow the diversion is militarily vindicated. The diversion would have been wiped out.

To me this is the first native Australian statesmanship, fought out against Churchill with all his prestige and with his disregard for Australian interest shown consistently in the matters of Anzac escorts 1914, the Dardanelles, and the question of the defence of Burma.

If one studies one of Curtin's pre-war naval speeches in the House on the theme "there is nothing so inferior as an inferior fleet" I believe one can see that Curtin would also have known how totally mistaken was the use of the "Prince of Wales" and the "Repulse", going as an inferior into a frontal assault, whereas as a raiding fleet-in-being, perhaps operating out from Sydney, they would have forced the deployment of much greater Japanese forces calculating on their unknown whereabouts.

Australians, and especially Australians of the Labor tradition, are not confident in standing up to the strategic ideas of authorities, and Curtin's temerity in having a point of view different from Churchill's in 1942, and what is more being right when Churchill was wrong, is little of a miracle.

Although I believe that Lloyd Ross errs in not evaluating this fully, his biography nevertheless is new ground for most Australian readers, and is valid critical analysis of a far higher order than any other Australian political biography of which I know.

I think Lloyd Ross brings out, unobtrusively but brilliantly, the skill with which Curtin unified a Party of "hang ups"—"hang ups", not rational analysis on Langism; "hang ups," not rational analysis on conscription as far as the Party was concerned; and how he re-educated a nation of "hang ups" on what it expected of Britain, and a nation of very definite "hang ups" from ever having a mind independent of Britain on real issues of foreign policy. He does make clear the price Curtin paid in being clear sighted when men in the Party, the unions, the press, and the Parliament blindly pursued aims smaller than national survival.

MEDIA MARX McQUEEN

Andrew Bear

Humphrey McQueen: "*Australia's Media Monopolies*" (Widescope, \$5.95).

Trevor Barr: "*Reflections of Reality: The Media in Australia*" (Rigby, \$9.95).

Some months ago I heard a lecture by Paul Walton, one of the authors of *Bad News*, an important and much debated study of the coverage of industrial strikes by British television. The lecture was illustrated with video recordings of actual newscasts, screened consecutively, so that the complete media version of a protracted strike was presented in about ten minutes. I had never before experienced such a convincing demonstration of the way things are distorted by the media. The audience responded first with anger, and then with sustained laughter. It was genuinely funny. Yet these were tapes from the major bulletins of the BBC and ITN, two of the most respected television news services in the world.

Of course the tapes, which made it so convincing, were not available in the book, and not everyone was persuaded. In a general condemnation, Paul Fox of Yorkshire Television wrote that *Bad News* would 'strengthen the hostility between social scientist academics and television journalists'. The new frontier in the growing debate about the role and function of the mass media in modern society is the antagonism and distrust which exists between media professionals and an emergent group of critical, well informed non-journalists, some of whom are academics. Both groups have much to contribute and both have to deal, particularly in Australia, with a difficult, volatile political and administrative situation. The media have moved close to political centre-stage. Yet instead of serious debate, relations are characterised by acrimony, insult and distrust. The publication of *Bad News* did not break through these barricades. By concentrating on detailed, specific content analysis of the media, however, it did at least force people to respond and take notice of evidence and rational argument. In that, it raises hope for the future.

In *Australia's Media Monopolies* Humphrey McQueen is scornful of media critiques based on content analysis of this kind. Citing *Bad News* itself, he writes:

The easiest thing to show about the media is their opposition to strikes . . . Whole books can be filled with examples of anti-working class headlines, photos, interviews, cartoons and editorials. Useful as these examples can be

[they] . . . can not explain why the media are bound to behave in this way. To understand this, it is necessary . . . to show that the media are big business.

Most media analysis has focused on superstructure. McQueen's corrective is to concentrate on base. The media are seen as an integral part of 'the underlying nature of Australian society,' not detachable even for the purposes of analysis. Allied to his corrective ambition is his explicit Marxism:

Unlike almost all other studies in the field, *Australia's Media Monopolies* is grounded on a coherent approach to the functioning of society in general. The media are seen in the context of monopoly capitalism, and are analysed in terms of the requirements of a system based on class exploitation . . . Because only Marxism has produced the knowledge needed to understand the monopoly phase of capitalism, Marxist concepts are used throughout . . .

The book constitutes a sustained and uncompromising radical attack on Australian society and Australian mass media, based as they are on their 'relationship to monopoly capitalism which is the enemy of every creative, decent human possibility.' The ABC comes out no better than the commercial media. McQueen describes it as 'just another ideological apparatus of the capitalist state.'

The main virtue of *Australia's Media Monopolies* is exactly what the author claims, namely that it welds together Marxist theory and media analysis. He does not claim to offer major new insights into either, and in fact the broad outlines of his treatment of the media in Australia are fairly familiar. The matter of restrictive ownership gets the usual airing in four chapters (one to each of the main groups), and while his ideas on the ABC are less widely shared, they have certainly been heard before. McQueen places great stress on advertising—he calls it 'the key link' between monopoly capitalism and the media—but even here his main contention that '*the commercial mass media are advertisements which carry news, features and entertainment in order to capture audiences for the advertisers*' (italics original) is very similar to Henry Mayer's statement that:

The 'purpose' of commercial TV is to get advertisers to pay for audiences of a certain size and demographic composition . . . Commercial TV people have no interest of *any* inherent kind in the programs: they would show test patterns of snow if this got an audience . . .

Similarly a lot of the ideas on American dominance of the media can be found in Herbert Schiller's *Mass Communications and American Empire* (despite McQueen describing this work as 'scholarly liberalism'). None of these observations is intended to belittle his achievement, but rather to make the point that the book is less radically new than some might think. After all, there is a long tradition of media criticism from the left, particularly in Australia, and McQueen is heir to this tradition, his contemporary Marxism notwithstanding.

That *Australia's Media Monopolies* has not been widely reviewed seems to offer support to McQueen's thesis that the capitalist state will inevitably suppress socialist opinion, though there may be other reasons. Still, no-one, least of all the author, would have expected it to be well received in conservative circles. Even so, the fact that it leaves itself open to be used by conservatives for anti-left propagandist purposes is a little worrying. We have already seen Peter Samuel waving a copy around on "Monday Conference" as evidence for his contention that much university teaching is dominated by radicals, and no doubt many others for whom the term Marxist is anathema will use it for similar purposes. Therefore this is a book which needs to be judged not only for its content, but also for its unintended consequences, and on that score many people broadly in sympathy with McQueen may find him a less than comfortable ally. One such unintended consequence may be to drive a further wedge between journalists and media reformers.

The contemporary left critique of the media poses problems in general, some of which are exacerbated by the McQueen version in particular. For instance, he has a bad habit of littering his text with remarks that make him sound like a crass conspiracy theorist: "The media try to divide and demoralise the working class;" "The editorial and feature articles were designed to spare the whole of Australian capitalism . . .;" "Fraser's job is to push up profits for the big US dominated transnational corporations . . .;" "All three features were deliberately published to present People's China in an unfavourable light;" "The ABC's series, *Behind the Legend*, was especially designed to direct attention away from the subject's major work . . ." This is to confuse result with intent, and to impute a consciously willed process which is, to say the least, unprovable. It also leaves itself open to parody and

attack, as does McQueen's extraordinarily rabid anti-Americanism. He uses 'American' as the far right uses 'Russian' and 'capitalism' as they use 'communism.' Merely kicking the capitalist can doesn't advance the argument much, nor does the kind of extreme and narrow Australian nationalism into which McQueen's anti-Americanism leads him. It is one thing to press for less US content, but quite another to advocate a really massive Australianisation of our media. That way is as dangerous as it is unattractive. The impact of *Australia's Media Monopolies* can only be lessened by such excesses which will serve to encourage the enemy and frighten friends.

In more general terms, McQueen's Marxist case offers a view of the media, monopoly capitalism and US imperialism working as a completely sealed system. Such a case is not so much unanswerable as vaccinated against possible answers. Apparent alternatives are not real alternatives: the ABC is "part of the capitalist state machinery;" a programme like "*Lateline*" is "little more than a packet of intellectual after-dinner mints;" 'Perkin's *Age* captured the flotsam and jetsam of capitalist ideology." Journalists striving for objectivity are deluded pawns in a totally determined world. Frustrated, they contract a disease which McQueen diagnoses as "alcoholic cynicism." The media perforce support the capitalist *status quo* completely, and will do so unless there is a revolution: reform is pointlessly marginal tinkering. Nor is there any hope to be found in the Labor Party—that, like the L-NCP and the ABC "are all parts of the capitalist state and in their different ways, help to maintain the rule of capital."

Few people are completely happy with the way modern mass communications work, and there is fairly wide agreement that the Australian system is one of the worst in the western world. Our press is grossly oligopolistic, the ABC is far too vulnerable to political influence, and our commercial broadcasters are particularly cynical, bloody-minded and philistine. McQueen's argument adds relatively little to the core of this critique, and is dysfunctional in so far as it will alienate many potential sympathisers, particularly journalists. A leaky system is a better analogy than a sealed unit. Constraints in capitalist democracies are not total. Some dissenting views find expression, less than reactionary governments are sometimes elected, principled people including many journalists can and do strive to spread the

truth as they see it. It is significant and disappointing to see McQueen's insistence that none of the possible reforms are worth bothering about. His revolutionary romanticism apparently saves him from the alcoholic cynicism he diagnoses in others, yet if anyone is flirting with total despair, it is he. The wonder is he can write at all.

Journalists, as McQueen remarks, are "not the enemy," yet without their active support the Australian media will never change. In fact, the short section on journalism, where he writes about alienation and "censorship by osmosis," offers a cogent explanation of why they are so rarely in the forefront of movements for media reform. In other ways, however, *Australia's Media Monopolies* will serve only to strengthen the self-defensive stance which Australian journalists characteristically bring to bear against criticism of their work. The revolutionary stance of the book will strike most as wildly unrealistic. There will be no total restructuring of the media without a total restructuring of Australian society. That being so it is hard to accept McQueen's view that there is nothing to be achieved short of the eventual overthrow of capitalism. The tactical fact of the matter is that most journalists do not see themselves as the helpless pawns of McQueen's analysis, and so other forms of analysis—avenues for dialogue—are urgently necessary. *Bad News*, then, to which I referred earlier, seems to me a more useful work than McQueen's, precisely because it offers to *prove*, and to *show* journalists, that "news" is not the entity they think it is, and that the journalistic shibboleths of "impartiality," "balance," and "objectivity" are part of a professional ideology that serves to suppress and distort information and alternative world views that ought to be widely available in free societies. McQueen is a better propagandist, and a more useful ally of media reformers, when he engages in critical content analysis than when he berates capitalism. The first hurdle is the blindness and prejudice of journalists and broadcasters to the reality of the product they turn out every day.

Presumably because of the lack of interest or hope in reform, McQueen's chapter on the future is appallingly weak. In a few pages—as if these were all—he dismisses the Australian press council and the idea of a Labor daily. Positively, all he can suggest is a "revolutionary network" of "people who talk with others," utilising "roneoed newsheets . . . chalking footpaths, painting slogans on walls, speeches, leaflets and posters."

Really? Would it make *no* difference if appointments to, and the budgeting of, the ABC were depoliticised? Have not the Australian airwaves already been transformed by the coming of public radio? Is the idea of an Australian Newspaper Commission not even worth discussing? Are proposals for the reversion of one commercial television frequency to public use and the establishment of an "open" television channel total rubbish? Are there not *within capitalistic countries*—Britain, Sweden, Holland—broadcasting systems which offer democratic possibilities far beyond those of Australia? None of these is impossible or unimaginable within the present political structure, and while that is so it is hard to share McQueen's apparent contempt for all reformist schemes. In my judgement any one of these would considerably improve the present situation. Can we have nothing but gestetners and slogans until the revolution comes?

And what then? According to McQueen: "In a socialist Australia, freedom of the press would mean that for the first time, the vast majority of the people would be free to express themselves." Like so many other media critics of various political persuasions, he brings the whole issue back to the idea of "access." If that is to be the criterion, there seem many avenues and possibilities: much that is worth fighting or arguing for now rather than later.

It is probably unfair to consider Trevor Barr's *Reflections of Reality* in connection with *Australia's Media Monopolies*, and I shall do so only briefly. It is an excellent book, designed as a text for media courses in secondary schools, though it will certainly find its way into colleges and universities as well. It aims to be factual and comprehensive and succeeds in both, while adopting the useful "debating" (this side now that side) method of presentation for complex issues such as bias, freedom of the press, advertising and so on. Apart from use in schools, it could serve as a source book for basic, up to date media facts and figures, or as an introductory work for anyone wanting to catch up on the growing, and increasingly important, debate about the future of the media in Australia.

Reflections of Reality is one of the few books by a non-journalist which I can remember having seen favourably reviewed in the daily press. It is probably too generalised and too bland to serve as the basis for the major debate between journalists and media activists which I believe must soon be started in this country, but at least

we can say that it *is* a critical book, and that some journalists have read it. Even for that Trevor Barr is to be congratulated.

A KIND OF CANDOR

Bruce A. Clunies Ross

Christopher Isherwood: *Christopher and His Kind* (Eyre Methuen, £stg. 4.95).

Christopher Isherwood begins this new autobiography by reminding us that his first, *Lions and Shadows* (1938) was meant to be read as a novel. *Christopher and His Kind*, on the contrary, is "as frank and factual as I can make it, especially as far as I myself am concerned". It thus opens another intriguing perspective on the sequence of books in which a character bearing the author's name (or part of it) appears as narrator, protagonist, or sometimes both, as in this book, where the author memorialises the adventures of a younger 'Christopher' during the thirties. Although Isherwood takes off some of the guises he put on then, the technique on the book, quite properly, sets a limit to its candor and authenticity. In a recent interview in the *London Magazine* (17.1.1977) he admitted that in its extreme selectiveness, the new book is already one step, at least, along the way to fiction, and added an explanation of his concept of fiction and its function:

If *Christopher and His Kind* does in fact read like a novel, perhaps it's because I've always felt very little difference between fiction and non-fiction. What matters is what you say about a given situation. Maybe you can explain its reality better by heightening its drama, by way of comment on it. Fiction enters the garden in a serpentine way. What lies we tell our friends, after all, when we're telling 'true' stories!

This description fits the Berlin books very accurately. They have a documentary quality which goes beyond mere verisimilitude and arouses the readers' curiosity about the actuality of the narrator and the people he describes. Isherwood's friends, Stephen Spender and John Lehmann, both confirm this sense of actuality in their memoirs and stimulate further curiosity. *Christopher and His Kind* does not so much satisfy this as subvert it, by revealing how close the fiction is to truth, or how intricately the two are interwoven. The story of Sally Bowles, which has become a legend

in its own right, acquiring new twists as it is retold as play, musical comedy and film, is a case in point. In its authorised version, it contained so much of the truth about the girl upon whom Sally was modelled, Jean Ross, that Isherwood felt it necessary to ask her permission before he published it. But then the story, which for readers who knew nothing of Jean Ross was a resonant evocation of its time and place, took over Isherwood too. Jean changed as she grew older, and by the thirties was moving towards political commitment on the left. Yet when Isherwood describes, in this new book, how she introduced him to the film director Berthold Viertel in 1933, he finds that the best he can do is render the maturer Jean in the accents of Sally, aware that this is not only anachronistic, but also mingles fiction together with fact. Yet it is precisely this quality which distinguishes Isherwood's earlier books, and sets this new memoir in a direct line with them.

Christopher and His Kind begins where *Lions and Shadows* left off, with Christopher's departure for Berlin on March 14, 1929, and concludes with the Atlantic crossing with Auden in January, 1939. The two journeys are of major significance in Isherwood's career. They frame a decade during which his life and his art became intertwined as he developed a personal mythology in autobiographical novels and fictional memoirs. Among his characters — Mr. Norris, Sally Bowles, Frl Schroeder, Otto Novak — he included himself, as William Bradshaw (his middle names) or Christopher Isherwood, to create a fictive world which bore a tantalising relation to his actual experience. As Stephen Spender pointed out recently (*London Magazine*, 17.1.1977) it is "this ambiguity, the kind of hovering comparison of the real fact with the invented fiction, [which] is perhaps what gives Christopher Isherwood's work its special vibrant quality".

We know from *Lions and Shadows* that the development of his distinctive voice and narrative viewpoint (which is only inaccurately characterised by quoting the phrase *I am a camera* out of context) was connected with the process of self-discovery. Becoming an artist was a matter of coming to terms with himself and learning how to employ the identity he discovered. The new memoir makes explicit what the earlier books barely hinted, that this essentially involved coming to terms with his homosexuality and learning to live in a world where it was considered polite, as well as prudent, to keep it suppressed. The

problem of disguise and the fascination with disclosure which characterises his mode as a novelist in this period (especially in *Mr Norris Changes Trains*, 1935) is thus inherent in his personal situation.

But the preoccupation with Isherwood's distinctive narrative mode has overshadowed another aspect of his art: his mastery of the *inventio* element. This is something which he has always emphasised himself. Most of his public expressions on the art of writing, in memoirs and interviews, are concerned not with point of view, but with the shaping of a story by the cunning selection, juxtaposition and balance of incident. In *Christopher and His Kind* he discovers in his life, for a decade at least, the same kind of integrated structure he establishes in his art.

The book's formal coherence is apparent in a number of ways. Firstly—and this is the major significance of the title—the author describes his homosexual development from “the delicious nausea of initiation terror” he felt as Auden led him through the heavy leather door-curtain of *The Cosy Corner* in Zossenerstrasse 7 (at the end of his first trip to Berlin) to the evocation, as the ship approaches New York on the concluding voyage, of the full homosexual love both were to find at the end of their journey to the United States. Christopher's chief reason for going to Berlin, it appears from the latest book, was not to meet John Layard, the follower of Homer Lane's psychological theories, but because “to Christopher, Berlin meant Boys”. Yet the two motives are not really separable. Lane and Layard advocated obedience to the law of one's inner nature, and in succumbing to the lure of the homosexual purlieu of Berlin, Christopher was following just that principle. In Berlin, he discovered for the first time that he was a member of a tribe, or rather, he admitted this to himself, and life as a homosexual began to come more naturally, though he was still reluctant to adopt some of its customs. There remained, also, the reticence about it in his writing, which is something he now seems to regret, yet it was a positive factor in the process of fictionalising his experience, and thus indispensable in the creation of the Berlin books.

When he first settled in Berlin, Christopher had a room in a building attached to the famous Hirschfeld Institute for Sexual Science, founded by the man who coined the term, so redolent now of the period, *the third sex*. The Institute concerned itself with the entire range of sexual

practice, and gave an aura of respectability to an interest still generally considered scandalous. Christopher found its polite earnestness a little trying, especially the solemn tours of the museum, which contained such oddities as the bottom halves of trouser-legs, fitted with elastic bands, so that they could be held up between ankle and knee under an overcoat. When worn with nothing else but a pair of shoes they facilitated trouble-free, instantaneous flashes whenever an opportunity arose. When André Gide visited the museum, live exhibits were also displayed, with such comments as ‘Intergrade. Third division’. But Hirschfeld, for all his solemnity was, as Isherwood points out, an heroic leader in the cause of homosexual freedom at a time when it was sufficiently dangerous to get him beaten up by brownshirts. By 1933, he had become a communist, so that, already being a homosexual and a Jew, he embodied in one person the three types most ardently persecuted by the Nazi regime. His Institute and its work were, of course, utterly destroyed in Germany, though Hirschfeld escaped by being out of the country at the fateful take-over of power.

Christopher's homosexual development inevitably had a political dimension. He mentions at the beginning of this book that like others of his class, he was unable to establish a satisfactory relationship with someone of the same background; he needed a working class foreigner, a need he partly shared with E. M. Forster, who about the same time expressed a wish to be loved, and even hurt, by a strong young man of the lower classes. As Christopher learnt to admit this need and find its fulfilment in the boy bars of Berlin, he realised the necessity of getting the world to accept him as a homosexual, without ignoring him, punishing him, or imposing feelings of guilt upon him. Frank homosexuality, of the kind he was discovering in the oddly overlapping worlds of the Hirschfeld Institute, English expatriates and the Berlin slums was becoming a form of revolt. In this period he had his only heterosexual experience (so far) and found it, he says, quite satisfying. Yet he chose the more difficult path of strict homosexuality not only because he found boys more attractive than girls, but also because it was a protest against family and the institutions of a class he despised:

Even if my nature were like theirs, I should still have to fight them, in one way or another.

If boys didn't exist, I should have to invent them.

He kept so rigorously to his policy of exclusive homophilia that even when Erika Mann asked him to marry her formally, so that she could obtain the legal right to live somewhere outside Germany, he declined on the ground that it would blot his record, and arranged the marriage with W. H. Auden, who was delighted to comply. Auden himself sometimes expressed a suspicion that Christopher protested too much, and called him, banteringly, merely a "heter with good taste".

Yet Christopher could not, of course, give that purely formal right to his friend Heinz, with whom he otherwise enjoyed a full relationship. This is the major theme of the new memoir, and another source of its structural coherence. The two journeys to Berlin and the United States define a decade which was marked by constant journeying, and in which the metaphor of the *Journey to the Border* (the title of a novel by Isherwood's friend Edward Upward) was a dominant literary motif. Christopher at his outpost in Berlin, in his continual border-hopping across Europe, in his disguise as a war correspondent in China, seemed to exemplify that metaphor in life. He left Berlin, finally, on May 13, 1933, with Heinz, and from then until the day, exactly four years later (May 13, 1937) when Heinz was arrested by the Gestapo in Trier, they travelled the length and breadth of Europe, in the growing tension and alarm which led up to the war, looking for somewhere to live together in safety. Their struggle was inevitably defeated, and one is reminded that as well as the Star of David to designate Jews, Hitler decreed that a pink triangle be worn by homosexuals, who were also rounded up and sent to the concentration camps.

Christopher and His Kind has yet another source of structural unity in that it records the author's experience in a decade when his subject and approach as an artist seemed peculiarly appropriate. Of all the writers of his generation and background, with the exception of Orwell, who is a separate case, Isherwood has never felt the need to change, repudiate or suppress any of the work he produced in the thirties. It has remained at the heart of his achievement. We call it the "Auden generation", but it is Isherwood's two Berlin books which have become the classics of that circle. Though they are more subtly contrived than the "proletarian novels" idealised at

the time, their mode was entirely consistent with the cultural perspectives of the Popular Front, and they met a favorable reception from leftist or Marxist readers and critics. In 1939 John Lehmann produced a pamphlet for an American front organisation in which he claimed that Isherwood's two Berlin books, still conceived as part of a larger work, *The Lost*, were "revolutionary . . . in the most active sense of the word". Such criticism would almost certainly be repudiated now, and mocked by a new generation of ruthlessly systematic Marxists. It is a mark of Isherwood's achievement that it survived the fashionable praise, and its rejection, while growing in stature with the passage of time.

During the years he was wandering with Heinz, Isherwood completed *Mr Norris Changes Trains*, *The Nowaks*, and *Sally Bowles*, and formulated his plans for *The Lost*, the extensive treatment of Berlin during the fall of the Weimar Republic and the rise of Hitler, of which only *Mr Norris* and *Goodbye to Berlin* remain. In addition, he collaborated with Auden on two plays, *The Dog Beneath the Skin* and *The Ascent of F6*. Auden sent him a draft of the first, provisionally called *The Chase*, which had grown out of an earlier joint effort, *The Enemies of a Bishop*. The two corresponded about this, and then Auden flew to Copenhagen, where Isherwood was living, on January 10, 1935. It was, perhaps, the first use of the aeroplane by literary collaborators, and if so, appropriate that it should have been Auden who employed it at this stage of his career. It was around this time that Isherwood drafted yet another work which he never completed, *Paul is Alone*.

Just as *Lions and Shadows* contains the fossil of another book, the story of Mortmere, so the new autobiography contains the fossil of *Paul is Alone*. The novel was to follow Christopher's wanderings with Heinz, from the time they left Berlin until the end of 1934, when they arrived in Copenhagen. There, its protagonist, an ineffectual figure, was to marry a German Jewess to give her British nationality and live with her and her lover. When the lover disappears in Nazi Germany on an underground Communist mission, the ineffectual Paul becomes a victim of his own fantasies of Communist action. He volunteers to cross the border into Germany, and is never seen again. In time, he is honored on the left as one of the martyred dead.

Although *Paul is Alone* was to be based upon

Christopher's travels, the central figure was not a self-portrait, but "a sort of van der Lubbe, an embodiment of the madness and hysteria of our time". In this respect he may have reflected some aspects of the depression Christopher felt in Copenhagen. He was anxious about Heinz, and becoming aware that their venture at living together would be thwarted by circumstance. Like most of his generation, he had probably realised that the decade would see the defeat of some of their cherished ideas. He dated the retreat in his own life from the move to Copenhagen, and it is significant that he laid the final scene of this novel, an empty defeat, in the same place.

After working on the novel for some years he scrapped it, like the plans for the Berlin trilogy which he had expounded at such length to John Lehmann. Yet the synopsis which survives is fully detailed, and both the characters and situations are potentially rich in insights about the period. But by then,

Christopher and all his fellow-worriers in that war-doomed period were like patients with a terminal disease — apt to become acutely aware of their condition from time to time.

His diary for November 24, 1934, reflects this anxiety, and a sense of guilt as well;

I have failed to do my duty. My place is in England with the Communists. I am a deserter and a potential traitor.

His friend Edward Upward, novelist and party-member wrote in an attempt to reassure him;

[Though] Marx may not have said it — each of us helps the revolution best by using his own weapons. And your best weapon is obviously writing. It's my misfortune that I have to fight as a fifth-rate teacher.

Writing about this at a distance of forty years, Isherwood sees Christopher cultivating political scruples as others sometimes cultivate religious scruples, in order to put Upward in the position of political father-confessor. Here, as elsewhere, in the account of the Erika Mann-Auden marriage, on the connection between Gerald Hamilton and Mr Norris or the 'decadence' of Berlin in the last years of the Weimar Republic, on the adventures of Auden in Spain, the new autobiography demystifies, or rather, de-mythologises the Auden-Isherwood circle in the thirties. Yet

at the same time Isherwood sometimes overstates the argument against writing "with too much fiction and too little frankness", particularly for one who, at his best, sees fiction as a way of being frank. For all its candor, the new autobiography belongs with the Berlin books and *Prater Violet* and together they present the author's own experience from a variety of perspectives, so that by exploiting the fine distinction between fiction and autobiography he casts a brilliant stereoscopic light over himself and his times.

TO ITALY WITH LOVE

Ron Cullen

Bernard Hickey (ed.): *Da Slessor a Dransfield: Poesia Australiana Moderna*, translations by Giovanni Distefano, Edizioni Accademia. No price given.

Bernard Hickey, Professor of Commonwealth Literature at the University of Venice, has a manifest love of the poetry of his native Australia. For some years he has been teaching our literature to his university students, and now he has undertaken the admirable task of making Australian poetry, in translation, available to a wider Italian audience.

Translation is tricky stuff, even for the proven polyglot. We know that the unfortunate English-language Cinderella is condemned forever to wear that stupid glass slipper because of some translator's confusion of "vair" with "verre". When Charles Bovary operates on the club foot in Flaubert's great novel, some of the psychological significance of the operation is lost to the English reader because, to translate the French "officier de santé", we have no exact word and have to approximate with "doctor".

The task is even more formidable when it comes to poetry. The remark is attributed to Robert Frost that poetry is the part of a poem which cannot be paraphrased. Confronted with such a problem, what is the poor translator to do? Should he merely take the concepts expressed in the original poetry and translate them into prose? To do this is to run the risk of ending up with something like one of the standard translations of Verlaine's *Chanson d'Automne*: "The long sobbings Of the violins Of Autumn Wound my heart With monotonous Languour" — which is hardly worth having. On the other hand, should he strive and strain to retain some poeticism? The risk here is the

scholar Richard Bentley's judgment on Pope's translation of the *Iliad*: "It is a pretty poem, Mr Pope, but you must not call it Homer."

Hickey and Distefano have decided, no doubt wisely, to play it rather safe. The Italian translations which appear on the right hand page with the original on the left, look like poetry, in the sense that they follow the line-by-line versification of the English. But in fact the Italian is far closer to prose than to poetry; the translator has rendered *what* our poets have said, and has chosen, with some lovely exceptions, to prescind from any peculiarly poetic effect in the manner of rendition. On occasions the result is less than felicitous.

The volume opens with a lengthy introduction, in which Professor Hickey presents an overview of the origins and development of Australian poetry. This introduction is discursive but sound. There is the occasional assertion which could be open to debate, such as "The intellectual of Melbourne, with his social optimism (as against the pessimism of Sydney . . .)" and the statement on the alleged belated influence of Lawrence's *Kangaroo* on Australian literature—"a new, tempestuous emotion"—(translations mine)—but it must be remembered that Hickey's point of view is panoramic, and I felt that he is quite justified in providing a starting-point for Italian readers who may be making, with this volume, their first acquaintance with an alien literature.

Such readers would find some sections of the introduction more informative than others. Hickey is admirable on such uniquely Australian phenomena as the Jindyworobaks, Meanjin, and Ern Malley. He outlines with great clarity the maelstrom of the Vietnam war, and he supports his observations on Vietnam and its influence on our literature with a beautifully neat and well translated comment by Brian Matthews. On the other hand, a lengthy paragraph which introduces the reader to Kath Walker seems to digress from Aboriginal culture and ends by referring to poetry in "Strine" and to "il delizioso C. J. Dennis".

It is clear from the introduction that Hickey has a special veneration for Judith Wright, and is at pains to show the matrix significance of her poetry. But the sheer number of words on her is perhaps a little disproportionate, and I suspect it might be rather confusing to our first-time Italian reader to hear her name mentioned in the same breath as those of Wallace Stevens, Plato, and Blake.

The selection of the poets and poems themselves is no less mysterious than that found in most anthologies. Fifty-two poets are represented, which is certainly an adequate cross-section between Slessor and Dransfield, and, although the distribution of poems is surprisingly inequitable (e.g. seven by A. D. Hope, one by Kath Walker, four by Vincent Buckley, one by Rodney Hall), Hickey has largely compensated for this by giving a synopsis of the significance of each poet in turn, and a critical bibliography at the end of each poet's contribution.

Many of the translations are exceedingly good; some of them would in fact be deemed as Italian poetry in their own right. I was particularly impressed by the rendering of McAuley's "Pietà" and Kath Walker's "Understand, Old One". Rodney Hall, Chris Wallace-Crabbe, and Judith Wright (in some selections) have reason to be happy with the translations of their work. There are a few lapses which I find difficult to explain: e.g. the translation of proper names, as in Hope's Henry Clay ("Enrico Creta") and Murray's Snowy Cutmore ("Candido Spalapiu"), seems self-defeating. Judith Wright's "Woman to Man" falls somewhat short of the ideal; its very title "Una Donna Ad Un Uomo", with the addition of the indefinite articles, tends to particularise and thus lose some of the original's cosmic significance, and, in the same poem, I was sad to see the gratuitous dropping from the last line of the deeply expressive "O" and to read the far more bland "Stringimi, perché ho paura". Norman Talbot has been a victim of the dictionary machine: thus, in "Ballad Of Old Women", the word "fawn" (i.e. the color) is rendered by the Italian term for a certain small animal, and the word "twist" (i.e. the dance) is translated in terms of psychological imbalance. When we read of Buckley's "The work, the debts, the spite", I was disappointed to find the latter noun translated as the rather limping "contrarietà". Bruce Dawe's insomniacs become "sonnambuli", which is in a sense the opposite of the original, and, in the same poet's "The City: Midnight", the Italian, not having the English convenience of the apostrophe for the possessive, falls into a curious ambiguity: "On the frail Pandora's box of consciousness" becomes "Sul fragile vaso della consapevolezza di Pandora".

But there is one mistake which approaches the tragic. It is no secret that there is an appalling misprint in certain English-language publications of Gwen Harwood's *Dust to Dust*. Surely Hickey,

if not Distefano, should have picked it up. But no, the “football” for “footfall” has simply become an Italian football, “un pallone”.

Returning to Bruce Dawe (to whom I am indebted for pointing out the Harwood error), I find that it is mainly he and a few others of kindred style who have had least justice done to them in translation. Their concepts are reproduced in the Italian language, but how do you translate what one would call their “australianità”? It is as hard to capture what is special to Bruce Dawe as it is to translate, for example, a play by Synge. On that point, Synge himself said that “a translation is no translation . . . unless it will give you the music of a poem along with the words of it”.

It is for this reason that I would say that the compilers of this anthology have occasionally set themselves an impossible task, that of translating the untranslatable. Distefano is much more at home with poems which are lyrical or whose theme and style are universal rather than specifically national. Bruce Dawe and the others have written marvellous poems which lend themselves far more readily to translation; and, for that matter, it must be baffling to the Italian reader to hear of a mysterious character known as “Phar Lap” in not one poem but two, one of which also refers to such arcane figures as Bradman and Ned Kelly. These references are not explained in the brief notes at the end of the anthology.

Nonetheless, Professor Hickey and Signor Distefano have put out a brave and dignified volume. Any inadequacies I have been able to find are easily remediable in a subsequent edition—(there deserves to be one). And I am conscious of the bequest to critics by Philip Martin (happily translated in this book) when they “despatch the work of half a life in half an hour”: “Che non si sveglino in Limbo arrossendo.”

DRAWING THE LINE

Vane Lindesay

Marcie Muir: *Australian Children's Book Illustrators* (Sun-Academy series, \$7.95).

The most chilling comment an author can read about his or her work might be ‘This is a disappointing book’. Well this one is—but only in regard to its production limits, for if ever a subject cried out for the ‘grand treatment’ from a

publisher then Marcie Muir’s “Australian Children’s Book Illustrators” is such a one.

But let us be grateful for the lick and taste of what could have been a banquet. For in seventy-eight large pages we are introduced in text and pictures both black and white and color, to a fascinating aspect of Australian publishing—that of illustrated juvenile literature.

In her well researched introduction the author points out that illustrated children’s books produced in Australia only date back to around the 1890’s, that remarkable era we now recognize to have been the genesis of our national culture. In actual fact European popular illustrated children’s books are not that much older in time.

To those of us who have forgotten we had read them Marcie Muir recalls such youthful joys as “Cole’s Funny Picture Book”, which proved to be an astonishing publishing coup, being still in print nearly a hundred years after its first publication, Norman Lindsay’s “The Magic Pudding” with its racy story and wonderful illustrations appealing to children and adults alike for a span of sixty years, the May Gibbs books, and those of Pixie O’Harris, Dorothy Wall, Mary Grant Bruce, Louise Mack, Ethel Turner and Ida Rentoul Outhwaite—all recalled and discussed, together with many other titles, their authors and their illustrators.

One gathers from Marcie Muir that the first popular illustrated children’s books in Australia, although fiction, were based, or could have been, on real-life experiences with, naturally, Australian themes and settings, such as the “Dot and the Kangaroo” and the “Seven Little Australians” type of story.

Why then, the author wonders, had fairies also been such a popular subject for Australian children’s books? She believes that in some ways they seem inappropriate here, but the reason is quite logical, for the Australian children’s book developed at the same time as the popularity of the fairy book reached its zenith starting with the Grimm and the Hans Andersen stories in English translations. And, she adds, most people would associate the fairy book in Australia with Ida Rentoul Outhwaite, who was of course this theme’s leading illustrator, depicting a whimsical, pretty fairyland which dominated the imagination of mothers and daughters for several decades.

Contrasting with Outhwaite producing her European-style fairy drawings, another woman artist, May Gibbs, was creating an indigenous

fairlyland from the Australian bush, and in this setting her anthropomorphic animal and flower characters lived out their charming and often educational adventures. Her bush characters—the twin gum-nut babies “Bib and Bub” and their cousins “Snugglepot and Cuddlepie”—were an immediate and lasting success, indicating that Australians were aware of and creating a national, independent identity.

Marcie Muir discusses her subject objectively and honestly, suggesting how easy it is to give a false impression of the children’s book world of the 1920’s by singling out the excellent or memorable books, for they were the exceptions among much dross in an age of tasteless commercialism.

The real turning point for the high standards of Australian book illustration, and in some degree too for juvenile literature, was the founding of the “Book of the Year Award” in 1946. This demonstrated the industry’s concern for quality in competing with the often lavish foreign product.

Since then many fine book-illustrators have emerged, fostered initially in the raising of quality standards by publishing houses like

Georgian House and F. W. Cheshire.

Inevitably of course, as there were local illustrators of the past in thrall to Arthur Rackham and Heath Robinson, there are clear echoes of Edward Ardizzone and Maurice Sendak around the work of one or two contemporary Australian illustrators.

But plainly there are now many competent Australian talents illustrating children’s picture books which are flourishing as never before, and, as the author concludes, to consider such illustrations as appear in this book makes one realize that we have also had a surprising amount of talent in the past, which has contributed to the present flowering of the illustrated book in this country.

“Australian Children’s Book Illustrators” is an attractive, crisp and altogether pleasant production. The representative color plates are superb, the overall styling, the author’s introduction, her biographical notes on the artists and their drawings, and the choice of illustrations are very nearly faultless. And the cover designer has produced one of the most sensitive, wholly appropriate and pleasing covers seen on any Australian book for a long time.

floating fund

Readers may have noticed that the last two issues have contained no publishers’ advertisements. We have rarely had advertisements from members of the AIPA, and the multinationals have now also decided that the cultivation of Australian readers is not commercially useful. Sydney University Press, which has just published G. A. Wilkes’ *Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms*, tells us that they have published nothing this year which would interest Overland readers—other Australian university presses are apparently too concerned with their own autonomy to give any attention to their readers. We are therefore more than ever indebted to those of our subscribers who are generous enough to support their beliefs with their money, and in particular to V.I., the first of the subscribers to our life membership scheme. Latest contributors to our Floating Fund are:

\$32 KJS; \$14 PC; \$10 SD; \$9 JL; \$6 JS, LB; \$4 RBL, MM, LC, EW, DRB, AM, LM, JL, GJF; \$2 GT, EB, MF, RJH, PF, DRD. Total: \$127.00.

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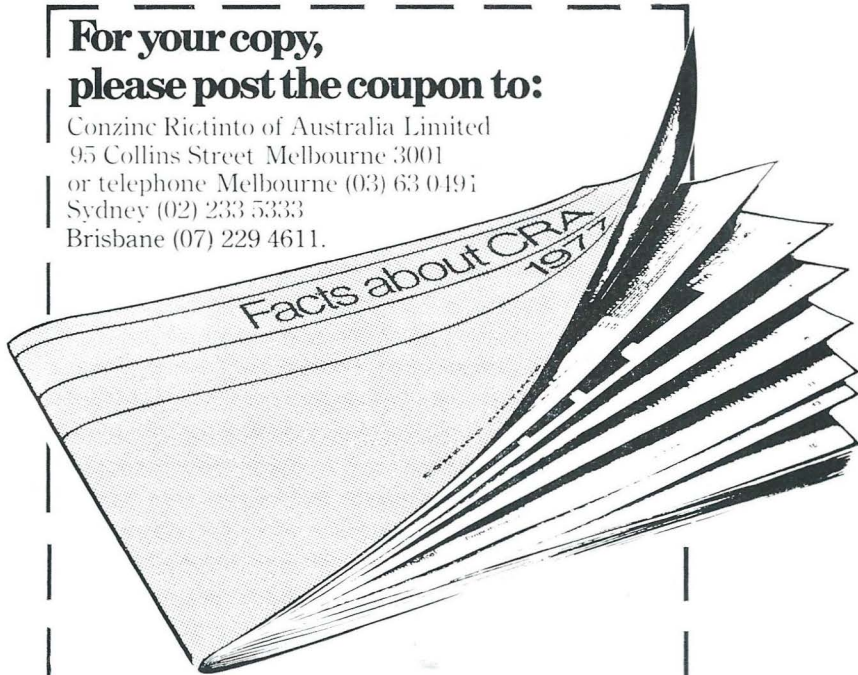
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