

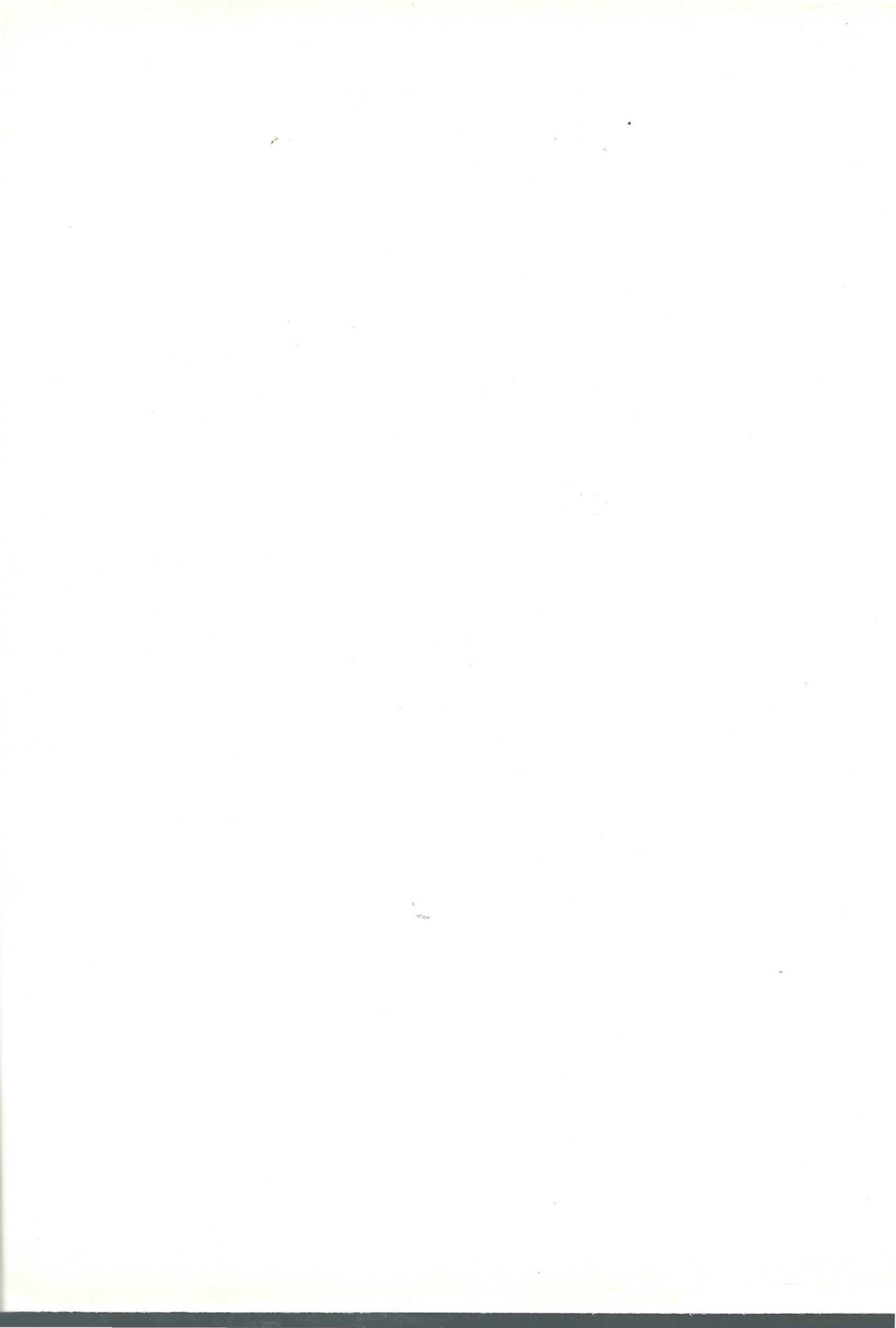
78 overland

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stories
features
poetry
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Manning
Clark
and
Jim O'Connor
on
Brian
Fitzpatrick





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December 1979

JAMES McQUEEN

The White Rainbow

I was the only one in our street who did not get a Christmas present.

But then, I was the only one at whom she ever smiled. For that matter, the only one who smiled at *her*. (I learnt only late in life to smile at those from whom I wish nothing.) Even so, it was not until six months after I moved into the street that I first smiled at Mrs Ponting. I suppose that in the beginning — like all the others — I distrusted her; a thin wispy woman, well past middle-age, stringy grey hair strained into ancient curlers or hairnet, narrow thin-lipped face and pale blue eyes deep behind wire-rimmed spectacles. I would watch her as she emerged each day from her house across the road and down the hill, the diminished armature of her cramped figure hung with baggy slacks and ragged cardigan. She would cruise the block in apparently aimless search, craning over neat suburban hedges, peering down trim driveways and past groomed lawns, pausing here and there in an unexplained quest for something which she never seemed to find.

Sometimes in the mornings, walking down the hill to the letter box, I would catch sight of her as she sat on her front verandah reading a newspaper in the sun. We had that much in common, at least; neither of us owned a car, and so shared the same necessity to pursue our errands on foot. It set us apart, of course; for, as well as the reduction of our lives to a slower pace, we were excluded, enclosed in a small unity imposed by the collective automotive obsessions of the rest of the street.

But for her part, God knows, her house was enough to isolate her. That house: large, rambling, its weatherboards grey and almost bare of their dun paint, its verandah rotted and sagging, the warped front door opening, when it did, to reveal stained and greasy walls. Behind the clumsy concrete-brick fence, collapsing slowly as

its mortar decayed, weeds and blackberries grew high and wide, ranging the canted side fencing, reaching up towards the glossy leaves of the blood-red camellia that crowned the wilderness of the garden. It was enough, the house, more than enough, in that trim and proper inner-city ghetto.

Yet even eccentricities are relative. Next door, where glum old Kowalski brooded, the garden had been completely banished; concrete, swept and bare, covered all. Even his lettuce-colored entrance was guarded by green-painted concrete cocker spaniels, fawning and miniature mockeries of Assyrian lions. A lone plastic rubber plant, plastic roots welded into plastic soil, faded slowly in its polythene pot. Inexplicably, a green garden hose hung, immaculate and neatly coiled, on the front wall. From that desert everything, even the stunted seed of Kowalski's loins, had vanished.

And on the other side of the old house stood the neat white bungalow of the Thomsons. He has something in TV; she — young, childless, brightly-kaftaned — spent hours each day watering her hanging baskets, baskets filled with real ferns and fuchsias. Even in the rain she watered them. They died, of course, regularly and predictably, sodden and rotted, and were as regularly replaced.

Kowalski and the Thomsons. They were, in their separate ways, representative of the two distinct strains in our ghetto. The one — old, retired, pensioned — to be prised from their seventy-year-old houses only by death or the terminal ward; the other — young, ambitious, mortgage-ridden — slowly infiltrating as the older ones died or withdrew to nursing homes. And, oddly, they seemed to share, the two parties, a kind of truce, almost an understanding.

But in between lay Mrs Ponting; an irritant, an omnipresent grain of grit embedded firmly in

the tender membrane of the street's eye.

True, I stood outside it all, a lone and inexplicable bachelor. But, although I was a stranger, a cipher, belonging to neither one party nor the other, I was too dull, too unremarkable, to stir offense.

I had lived there, in my ancient white house with its red iron roof, for about six months before she spoke to me. It happened one morning as I stood idly in the sun, smoking and contemplating the bulge of bindweed as it pushed its inexorable way up through the meagre asphalt of the driveway. Mrs Ponting passed the gate, paused a moment, hovered, caught my eye, stopped. I could sense a small struggling of muscles beneath the skin of her cheeks, around her thin lips, as she battled with her urge to speak, and finally surrendered. She hugged her thinness a little closer beneath the tired brown wool of her cardigan, bobbed her chiffon-covered curlers a time or two, then, hesitantly, moved back towards my gate. I'm sure she smiled then, a very faint smile.

"Have you ever seen a white rainbow?" she asked me. And there was the hint of some faint warmth below the cool timidity of her voice.

"No," I said, "I don't think I have. Well, a fogbow, perhaps . . ."

She shook her head impatiently. "No, a rainbow, a white rainbow. I saw one once . . . just once . . . at night."

White rainbow? I supposed it then not so difficult to understand the neighbor's attitude. After all, looking for white rainbows in their driveways?

She pulled her cardigan a little tighter on her bones, although the spring sunshine was warm enough. "I'd better go," she said. "I have to get back to Bruce . . . they say things about him, you know."

And she scurried off, head tucked low, her thin legs scissoring quickly inside the creased tunnels of her trousers.

She was right, they did say things about Bruce.

Stowger, the dance-band drummer on the corner, complained of howls in the night.

Mrs Thomson trod with exaggerated care, reported loudly on dog-dirt discerned at fifty paces.

The surly Kowalski muttered of the smell, sniffed his plastic rubber plant suspiciously.

Gunn, director of a hardware company, whose brother was a City Councillor, dropped sneering hints at bestiality.

Mrs Newton, widowed, pensioned, nicotine-

racked, hawked of nocturnal attacks on her terrier, Tibby.

Miss Donahue, tweeded breeder of Siamese cats, told of harrings in her overgrown garden, of narrow escapes for her sly felines.

All the way up the hill it was the same. I was the only one who made no complaints. I had none to make. In fact, I seldom saw Bruce. Occasionally I would catch a glimpse of him, a large and well-groomed Samoyed, couched on a bed of old bags on Mrs Ponting's verandah. And never unaccompanied; she was always there. It was rumored that she took him for long and perhaps illegally unleashed walks at night. But I never saw it. And during daylight hours he lived not only within Mrs Ponting's boundaries, but mostly within the walls of her decaying house. I speculated once or twice on the toilet arrangements, but after all it was her business, and Bruce's.

Weeds, it is said, are no more than plants out of place. And Mrs Ponting was a human weed. Out of place, that is the truth of it; the dog, the white rainbow, the decrepit house, her wanderings. Harmless enough, legal enough; but the way of the nonconformer is hard. Transgressions — the worst — are more often social than legal or moral; and the sanctions for them all the stricter.

I wondered sometimes, seeing her curled, be-netted head bobbing into sight from behind odd gateposts, hedges, garages, if she ever spoke to anyone else about her white rainbow. No-one had mentioned it to me, and they were seldom reticent when it came to Mrs Ponting's oddities. White rainbow? The strangeness of it intrigued me. When, where had it started? Some hazy moment, some illusion of light and shade, half a century gone? Some recollection of a girlhood fancy, romance, the long-gone Mr Ponting perhaps?

White rainbows . . . and now a white dog?

Whatever she was looking for, I was sure she would not find it in our street; nor, probably, in our world.

But her presence remained an irritant, a constant reminder of the edge upon which we are all so precariously balanced, of an equilibrium the delicacy of which we do not care to admit to ourselves.

We seem always to greet with immense surprise resolutions which we have ourselves manufactured, engineered. We wish ardently for change, but the actuality of it shocks us. The death of Mrs Orpwood's ducklings was, for our street, the catalyst which precipitated us into a

reality which — like all realities — no-one fore-saw.

The ducklings were massacred, slain maliciously, capriciously, in the night, nipped and lain in the pattern of their frantic flight; it was the beginning. Mrs Orpwood complained to Mrs Thomson, and Mrs Thomson spoke to Mr Gunn, whose brother was a Councillor. And Bruce was blamed. Personally, I fancied Mrs Newton's Tibby, a vicious and cowardly beast.

But Mr Gunn spoke to his brother, and a day later the dog ranger — humorless, gruff, but kindly man — called on Mrs Ponting.

And with his advent I scented something new in our street, something ancient, primal, something almost evil. The herd protects itself, and even fowls will peck a sick bird to death. There was, somehow, a sense of beaks reaching out, poised in anticipation.

But the dog ranger, after fifteen minutes inside the sagging walls of Mrs Ponting's house, departed, and Bruce remained. Word filtered slowly back through the Councillor, Mr Gunn, Mrs Thomson. Nothing was to be done. The dog was properly controlled and cared for, Mrs Ponting was rational, the licence was in proper order. And there was no evidence of nocturnal maraudings.

There it *should* have ended. There is *may* have ended, had it not been for the problem of Mr Gunn's self-respect. A man of purported substance, he could not let the matter lie.

He needed a pretext, of course; but some-one provided it. In our maze of staggered backyards, overgrown alleyways, private gates, neighborly easements, people came and went and no-one the wiser. And we all knew that each Wednesday, the day when the specials started at the super-marked at the bottom of the hill, Mrs Ponting left her house for her weekly shopping trip. Bruce, always, was left shut in the house.

Who it was that actually turned the knob, lifted the latch, opened the warped back door, I do not know, never will. But Bruce was released to a brief freedom in the street, and some-one called Mr Gunn at his office.

The dog ranger, looking unhappy, was on the spot within fifteen minutes. He trapped Bruce easily, leashed him, and stood by Mrs Ponting's gate waiting for her return.

When she came back, half an hour later, the three of them disappeared inside the house. The ranger did not stay long, and left looking unhappier than ever. The door closed quickly behind

him, and remained closed for the rest of the day. Silent expectancy began to fill the street like a slowly rising tide.

At watering time Mrs Thomson emerged with her long gleaming hose and began to deluge her begonias.

Mrs Newton left the gate of Emohruo and strolled to Mrs Thomson's fence for a brief chat, moved on to Miss Donahue's yard.

But no-one told *me* the news. I was still an outsider, and learned it from the man in the corner store, another neutral. He sold his bread and milk to good citizen and to pervert alike, impartially, indiscriminately. Bruce, he told me, was to go. The Council had ruled. A dog at large, a menace to traffic and children, bylaw so and so, regulation such and such. No remission possible, no appeal, no reprieve. But as a gesture of goodwill, the season of generosity, peace on earth etc., Mrs Ponting was to be permitted to keep Bruce over Christmas. Seven more days. On the eighth, Bruce would go to the pound. And everyone knew what would happen there. Perhaps a good home, the ranger had said. But we all knew differently. The Councillor, Mr Gunn, the whole street, would be satisfied only by a truly final solution. Good sense demanded it, and the law was clear.

Mrs Ponting could not, perhaps, be packed away, goaled, hospitalised (weeds are hardy), stoned (we are a civilised community); but Bruce could be reached. And in the street the air of expectation blossomed with the summer to a sullen glee.

In those last days she stopped me once, Mrs Ponting, as I passed her house. The blood-red camellias were faded, rusting, falling like old wounds into the long grass.

"Have you thought?" she asked me. "Can you remember? Have you ever seen one? A white rainbow?"

I smiled at her as well as I could. The door was firmly closed, Bruce nowhere in sight. She looked a little more hunched, a little more drawn; otherwise just as she always had been. "Well," I said, "maybe. It's hard to say. Perhaps once, when I was very young . . ."

"Yes, yes," she said, nodding decisively. "They're rare, but you do see them . . ."

I left her, edging away nervously, a little embarrassed, and went on down the hill to post my letter.

When I repassed her house she had disappeared, the door was closed and blank once

more. I did not see her again — I think that no-one did — until Christmas Eve.

And Christmas Eve is — in our street as in other Christian states — a time of preparation.

The young couple engage themselves with an orgy of window-dressing, deck their houses with tinsel and aerosol snow, pile up stacks of rosetted parcels. The oldsters make their last-minute purchases, wrap their gifts, prepare their roasts and puddings. Few of them attend — or would be welcomed at — the prolonged Christmasly rites of their upwardly-mobile offspring. They make short duty visits on Christmas Day, bearing gifts for grandchildren, then return to the street for their roast meats, cold beer, heavy puddings, port wine and strong tea.

On Christmas Eve Mrs Ponting left her house. I was reading on my verandah in the last of the sunlight, secured behind the triplet barriers of misogyny, time, and death, from the demands of conviviality. My Christmas Days are for me the same as any other idle day. I watched Mrs Ponting. She locked her door carefully behind her — as if it mattered now — and hurried away down the hill. Within half an hour she was back, bearing a small parcel, square, flat, its contents hard to guess. The green supermarket logo was clearly visible. Wrapping paper, I remember thinking. But, then, what would she have to wrap?

Clutching her small purchase, she disappeared through her doorway, already in shadow, and did not appear again that night.

I noticed, though, that her kitchen light burned late. It was still lit when, close to midnight, I took my last look at the stars.

Ours is a bastard street, a demographic anomaly, a street of youth and age, with no middle ground. Our festivals are accordingly distorted. There are no adolescents, few children beyond the toddler stage. So, for us, Christmas is essentially the adult celebration of a children's holiday. The old people retire to dim hot dining rooms; the young ones to their metal trees decked with iridescent baubles, to their fondling of expensive toys while their offspring torment the cat or dig for worms. Later come the smoky joys of patio barbecues and wine-fed, sun-sweated semicomas. The day ends with cross children packed away finally to bed, with steady conscience-free boozing, with casual vomitings in the herbaceous borders, with a little furtive and neighborly groping in the shadowy garden corners.

On Christmas morning I rose, as usual, at

seven; cooked and ate my breakfast, took my coffee out to the verandah. The sky was cloudless, and the sun, striking the length of the road, promised heat. The street was already stirring, the old ones easing their bones gently into the mood for journeys, the young ones beginning their charade, the carefully contrived game of exhibiting conspicuously expensive presents. From a few homes came the first crackling of gaudy wrappings, the thin voices of children rushed too quickly from sleep to excitement.

But it was only just beginning. Most of the activity was still indoors, and only a few tousled heads showed on verandah and patio. Mrs Ponting — knowing the festive habits of the street even better than I — chose her moment well.

The opening of her front door made a black gap in the morning, and she filled it only briefly, stooping to pick up the two carrier bags and hurry past the shining green of the camellia, opening the redundant gate in the fallen fence, slipping quickly up the slope of the street. She followed, I remember, the same route as the postman.

And at each gate she paused, reached into one of the bags, drew out a neat Christmas-wrapped parcel, darted up the path, across the lawn, deposited the package by each front door. As she drew closer, trotting uphill on the other side of the road, I could see that the packages were identically wrapped — white paper spotted with green holly leaves and red berries, tied with a red ribbon — but all of different size and shape. Some were quite large, some tiny.

Crossing the road at the top end of the street, she began her progress back down the hill. She left her gift at Miss Donahue's door, then hurried past my gate without looking up. She knew I was there, watching, she knew, she knew . . . but she hurried past, eyes fixed on the pavement, ignoring me. And leaving me no present.

Her real gift to me, of course — and later I would feel strange meltings of pain and compassion — was no present. She blessed me by her omission.

Before she had reached her own gate again the first parcel had been discovered by a small child, and borne happily indoors. Later I learned that there were no cards, no greetings. The gift was the message.

Mrs Thomson was, I think, the first to open a parcel. Hers was, anyway, the first scream in a morning punctuated, defined, by screams, by hysterics, by horrified paroxysms. Standing in her Christmas kaftan she opened her small neat packet, and stood screaming steadily in the bright

sunlight. In her hands, resting in greaseproof paper on the festive white wrapping, lay Bruce's testicles.

They each received their share of the unholy eucharist: Stowger the scalp, with ears; Kowalski the hindquarters; Mrs Newton the head; Miss Donahue the liver; Gunn the bowels; and so on, all along the street. Everyone — except for me — received their due portion of Bruce. Handily butchered, carefully dismembered, duly apportioned, Bruce was distributed in a gesture of final farewell to his late neighbors.

In all, there were twenty-three packages.

And for twenty-three families Christmas was irrefragably shattered: for them, the sight of bright gift-packages would carry always the taint of death and blood, of pain, hatred, despair; an ultimate blight, a final curse on all their Holy Days.

It was an end, of course; Christmas destroyed forever.

In the midst of pandemic hysteria, screams, rages, tears and vomitings, we were visited by unexpected Christmas guests: first, Mrs Thomson's physician, summoned hastily to administer a sedative; an ambulance for Kowalski, whose heart held a well-known weakness; more doctors, a priest, the dog ranger (to bear, I suppose, his portion of the blame), and two reporters, who beat the police by a good five minutes.

No-one entered Mrs Ponting's house until the police arrived. No-one even tried. True, the dog ranger knocked once, timidly, on the door; as did the reporters, less timidly. But there was no response, and no-one went in.

The police car pulled in to the curb, and the ruddy grizzled sergeant and his young constable pushed their way through the small crowd (of which I was one — I try to persuade myself that my presence was due to something more than mere curiosity) and approached the door. The sergeant knocked, received no answer, tried the knob. The door was unlocked. He swung it open, stepped stolidly inside, waved to the constable to keep us in check at the gate.

A minute passed, perhaps two. The house was silent.

Then the sergeant reappeared, his stolidity held together, it seemed, only by an intense effort. Under the tracing of networked veins his face was pale, waxy. With a strangely delicate tread he approached the gate, spoke to the constable.

"Don't go in," he said. "Radio for a doctor and an ambulance."

Then he retreated to the camellia tree where, crouched among the fallen and rusted blossoms, he began to vomit; retched, retched, the sound of his wrenching spasms rising above our silence like some strange and primitive liturgy, deep, ugly, rending.

Now all that had held the people of the street — rage, indignation, curiosity, horror — was replaced by some hushed apprehension, unanimous and pervasive. It was the fear, I think, the certainty almost, that now there was no-one left to blame for it all, that there lay behind the warped old door only . . . an absence.

And so it was.

We learned the facts a few at a time. From the sergeant, from the ambulance men, from the reporters. She had been waiting, Mrs Ponting, seated at the same kitchen table where she had dismembered her dream, parcelled it out; been waiting, quite dead, her throat cut with the same sharp knife, her face resting in a pool of blood as bright as the blooms of her camellia.

In the days that have followed a sullen stillness hangs over the street. Neighbors no longer chat over fences, no longer gather in the evenings for drink and gossip. Familiar eyes have developed the habit of aversion.

What will happen to the street I do not know. And I do not wish to know. I shall not, in any case, see another Christmas in this place. My house is already in the hands of the agents, and I have begun to pack.

Packing. It was while I was crating my books that the sudden fancy took me, and I picked up volume ten of my encyclopaedia — RAG to SPI — and looked up rainbows. Pages of detailed explanations; refractions, internal reflection, Descartes, optics, angles of deviation, diagrams and illustrations. Primary and secondary bows, fog bows. Then, suddenly, there it was — two lines at the very end, before the long list of references.

Lunar rainbows it said, are also seen, but as a general rule the light is so faint that, to the eye, it appears white.

That was all.

Strangely, I cannot remember now whether or not I lied when I told Mrs Ponting that I might have seen one. Perhaps, after all, when I was very young, my eyesight keener . . .

I would like to think so.

ELIZABETH SWEETING

The Piper and the Tune

Subsidy in the Performing Arts

Elizabeth Sweeting is a member of the Australia Council and for two years from 1976 was Director of the Arts Council of South Australia. She is at present course director in Business Administration (Arts) at the South Australian Institute of Technology. She has also been Visiting Professor at the Department of English, University of Adelaide. Previously Elizabeth Sweeting worked in close association with Benjamin Britten at the Aldeburgh Festival and as General Manager of the English Opera Group. She has published three books on the theatre. This article, Overland hopes, will be the first of a series on problems of subsidy in the arts in Australia. Further contributions and comment are invited.

The agonies and unresolved debates aroused by any mention of subsidy for the arts would seem to indicate that a shower of gold does not necessarily make life easier or more straightforward. It certainly does not drop as the gentle rain from heaven, blessing those who give and those who take. Yet it is equally certain that subsidy is now regarded as an established factor of cultural life, and that a threat of drastic reduction, let alone withdrawal, would have serious effects. The results would include diminished amenities for great numbers and varieties of people, a steep rise in unemployment for people in the main unqualified to do other work, a less quantifiable tarnishing of the national image — to name but a few consequences. If the principle of continuing subsidy is accepted, other dilemmas have to be faced — the criteria of need and desert, innovation, whether it is better to raise or to spread, and if both are needed, in what ratio. No decision is finite or valid for all time, and no decision can be taken in isolation from innumerable other factors and considerations.

What, then, is it that so often goes wrong, causing internecine battles in the board rooms and in the press? These battles rage far and wide, involving funding bodies, recipients of subsidy, those denied it, critics — both professional and self-styled — economic experts and outraged taxpayers.

Few, if any, adequate definitions of the nature and purpose of subsidy exist or are made public periodically, mainly because of the difficulty of crystallising them at any one time, but also, more culpably, because neither those who give it or those who receive it take time off to see where they are going. Such statements as are made usually include notions ranging from the generalised enhancing of the quality of life to the obligation to cater for minority tastes, with everything in between. The arguments are variously supported by the theories of cost-benefit analysis, the encouragement of experiment, the much-misinterpreted 'right to fail', general availability, and excellence in all appropriate forms. Custom has staled their variety and it becomes all too easy to take the clichés for granted as real statements, not only of faith but of practice. If they are to have any credibility, they must be seen to be valid in actual practice, not only now, but in a reading of the signs and portents for the future.

Those most frequently blamed are the funding bodies, their structure and their systems. Any system of distribution of largesse to so varied a collection of applicants must be fairly cumbersome. It must have regard to need, to ideals, to past achievement and future projects, to filling gaps, to recognising and creating new forms, to encouraging potential, among many other expressed purposes. These claims have somehow to be re-

conciled within bureaucratic limits by the frailty of human judgment, within the tension of cash-register success and artist achievement.

Because of the elaborate nature of the procedures which have had to be developed to try to reconcile the claims outlined above, the traditional systems are accepted with relief and we cling to them long after they have become outmoded. Having taken great pains to con them (and I intend no pun, merely a Shakespearean quote) we do not regularly assess them or compare them with new developments.

The arbiters of subsidy seek to solve the problems of stability and development by concentration on a small number of organisations likely to be permanent. The assumption is that they will thus enable such companies (and their buildings) to attract increasing audiences and to develop standards of style and excellence in presentation. The companies attract both Federal and State support, and have the requisite showcase quality to attract private sponsorship, because they are acceptable status symbols for such patrons. They often have also the security of being statutory bodies. It tends, therefore, to be taken for granted in the existing system, both by the givers and the recipients, that subsidy is not only guaranteed, but is guaranteed also to increase. Such expectations on both sides tend to become geared to arguments based on status and economics rather than on artistic consolidation and development. Too little regard is paid to the changing context within which such organisations operate and the new relationships which they should be forming. Questions are not regularly asked about audience growth, about innovation to challenge the performers' talents and the audiences' receptivity. The ability of the administrative staff to take advantage of new developments in managing and marketing methods, to accept a continuous injection of new ideas, is not extended.

The first trap in the system concerns the relative merit of safety versus risk. It is human nature to accept with relief, which soon becomes complacency, the formula which brings success, without questioning whether the success is of the right quality or should be exploited *ad infinitum*. Consequently a company in receipt of consistently high subsidy may cling to standards which become in time mediocre and repetitive. By so doing they point with pride to a safe bank balance, even to swelling profits. In terms of the commercial theatre this safety could be justifiable, where a popular property has to be exploited for as long as it will stand up. There are other factors

to be considered in a subsidised operation, which make such an exercise of questionable relevance to the high-minded expression of policy to justify the use of subsidy for general, rather than private, benefit. The aim of such policy is agreed to include the fine training of young artists, playwrights, choreographers, musicians, technicians and administrators, meeting excellence, change and challenge in an environment set up and controlled by public money, with the obligation of accountability built into the whole operation.

The second trap is the assumption that more money means bigger, and that bigger must be better. Instead of what may be loosely described as an individual style and policy, these many subsidised companies tend to overextend into production, staffing and general operations closely akin to those of the commercial theatre, without the commercial theatre's ability to cash in on long runs, international stars and big business razzamatazz.

But, and this is to be deplored, they have not in general the marketing and publicity skills to exploit their product to the full. So the well-worn dictum of the pundits Baumol and Bowen must spring to mind: the bigger you get in the arts, the more money you lose; the more you do, the wider the gap between expenses and income. In short, opulence, like patriotism, is not enough, nor is it necessarily synonymous with excellence.

Supposing that the overall allocation of subsidy for the arts is not enough now to meet the voracious appetites of the big established consumers, what of the Rest, who are not, and do not want to be, among the chosen few? The present system does not take it easy for small innovative companies to get started, let alone look forward to a span of life long enough for them to prove themselves and absorb the lessons from the inevitable early imperfections, even downright failures, which are part of the growth process. Funding bodies are too timorous about backing the occasional wrong horse, being seen to have made the occasional wrong judgment. It is time that they set these dangers against those which may be far more serious, of stifling something really good at birth or encouraging it in a short life ended prematurely by malnutrition. Failure in the big battalions may in fact be far more serious by comparison, both financially and artistically, yet is often glossed over until calamity strikes on the grand scale.

Paradoxically, therefore, it might make good financial sense to fund the promising beginners at a very high rate to begin with, and level off

the funding when the enterprise is on an even keel. This is not a prescription to throw caution to the winds, but to give discernible promise a fair go to prove itself, instead of the patronisingly small sums which, by their very inadequacy, can lead the small group into disaster not really of its own making.

Unlike the 'establishment' companies, the newer, smaller groups are unlikely to attract private sponsorship, because they have nothing to offer in the way of social status, glossy advertising, plush venues, nor indeed do they have much to offer the middle-aged, middle-class patrons of the established theatres who are sponsored privately by big business.

The smaller companies do not have back-up staff systems — administration and publicity. They are less able, for that reason, to play the system, to present accomplished applications likely to attract subsidy. This is often assumed to indicate lack of responsibility, and may be so in some cases. But it should be remembered that such organisational deficiencies may be due to concentration on the message of their work rather than the medium and the framework. While they are at present often regarded as the minority, the time may come, when, for various reasons they will be the majority, and not only in terms of numbers. It would be as well to examine this possibility early, so that funding bodies are not overtaken by events. Otherwise the Law of the Raspberry Jam will apply — the farther you spread it, the thinner it gets, which would do no-one any good.

The current situation has not come about altogether by design — it has, to use a well-worn phrase — just growed, and it is easy enough to point out its dangers and shortcomings. What is vital is that we should now make an assessment in the light of the foreseeable future. Changes in the factors of social and economic life which inextricably enmesh the arts have far outstripped our current thinking. More disaster may be round the next corner if we do not take broad and imaginative account of what is going on, and try to provide accordingly for the future to which developments are leading us.

What, then, does the future appear to hold?

Government provision for the arts will probably remain a component of public expenditure, but it is surely unlikely that it can continue to increase in the spiral now assumed to be the pattern. If and when it reaches a plateau, we shall have to review the priorities much more

closely than we have done since its inception, because it looks as if demands will continue to increase.

Many factors in economic change do not lie within with scope of the arts field at first glance, but most of them impinge in a greater or lesser degree — e.g. the possibility of a reduced labor force and consequent reduction of tax taken for government purposes; the pressure of other community needs such as health and social welfare; a possible reduction in energy sources, which may affect the general public's ability to travel about easily; possible changes in the distribution of age-groups as thrown up in demographic surveys, and affecting consumer taste overall; cost rises which may affect the provision of costly buildings needing expensive servicing; continuing advances in technology, some of which may increase entertainment available in the home rather than in specially designated public buildings as, for instance, T.V. cassette recording; more leisure by reason of shorter working hours and greater competition from a greater variety of leisure pursuits; possibly less money for the average family to spend, in which entertainment involving travel and expensive tickets might take low priority. In sum, the whole environment and the context of the arts may radically change.

There is a general move towards the dispersal of the arts, especially those capable of community development, outside the capital cities. This includes the community arts, the setting up of regional cultural centres and the encouragement of increased amateur activity. The expansion of smaller-scale activity in the arts and the provision of the means of encouragement will become priorities, involving not only state governments but local authorities for subsidy and provision, or upgrading of suitable venues and financial help to instigators and participants.

In an environment changing so rapidly, there must be a very hard, cold look at the intrinsic value of each form of the arts, and nothing must be taken for granted. For example, and overstating the case to draw attention to its importance, the established permanent drama companies are understood to be fulfilling a need by presenting their programs of classics of the past and present. The justification is that their content, their 'message', is deemed to be always relevant in terms of the human conditions.

Is this in fact true, or so nearly true as to justify their lion's share of subsidy? Will it continue to be true in the future *ad infinitum*? In their own day the classics of the past were rele-

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vant, not because they were then all acknowledged masterpieces with critical accolades, but because they interpreted to an audience largely non-literate the problem of their own past and present. Drama was the dominant form for societies not bombarded with paperbacks, films, radio, television, recorded speech and music on tap, popularised information on all topics in many forms. Through these media we now have instant news and information the minute they happen. We are not only aware of history and scientific advance in the making; we are simultaneously part of it, with experts on hand to give us a commentary. The very frameworks of our societies are in a state of horrifying change and chaos.

Professor Raymond Williams, first Professor of Drama at Cambridge, expresses something of the kind in his inaugural lecture, 1974, and the changes he speaks of have been moving swiftly ever since:

What is really new — so new that I think it is difficult to see its significance — is that it is not just a matter of audiences for particular plays. It is that drama, in quite new ways, is built into the rhythms of every day life. On television alone it is normal for viewers — the substantial majority of the population — to see anything up to three hours of drama, of course drama of several different kinds, a day. And not just one day, almost every day What we now have is drama as habitual experience; more in a week, in many cases, than most human beings would previously have seen in a lifetime. The flow of acting and action, of representation and performance, is raised to a new convention, that of basic need.

We have moved to yet another stage — the active participation in lobbying, demonstrations, debates on T.V. and radio, so that we are actors as well as spectators.

Perhaps it is not so much that we need drama to interpret life, as in earlier societies, but that life increasingly enables us to interpret drama and colors our view of what we want it to provide. It is notable that the reactions of many of the audience who attend the more conventional theatres are concerned more with the presentation than with the play itself. Having at the beginning applauded the set, they emerge at the end comparing, say, one actor's performance with that of others they have seen in the same role, not with the impact of the play. Many critics do exactly the same thing. This is the reaction of the connoisseur, the initiated, perhaps of the elitist. If

there is in fact an impact which people do not express as they do these extraneous things, why then do the audiences not increase by leaps and bounds in these troubled times when so many blind mouths are looking to be fed?

Without detailed and continuous audience research, non-existent at present, generalisations are suspect. It is probably true to say that a high proportion of audiences attending the 'establishment' theatres do not attend the small experimental groups. They represent conservative taste, either indifferent or actively hostile to change as represented in the general content and style of such groups. This ignores the inexorable fact that the experiment of today proves to be the classic of tomorrow in all the arts.

What of the actors in traditional companies? The ensembles they provide are in theory thought to be good for developing corporate style. The other side of the coin is that without constant artistic energy and evaluation they can breed complacency, and lack of challenge to the individual to develop his own style as well as the corporate one of the company. When subsidy provides too great an insulation from the consequences of failure, and weakens the need to compete or compel greater audiences, assumption of its continuing, come hell or high water, can be a weakness rather than a strength.

A similar rot can spread to the running of the theatre. If there is no compulsion to sharpen marketing methods, to embark on the expert methods of the most forward-looking business administration, the structure becomes fossilised and increasingly less susceptible to change. Subsidy should be a tool of change, not an excuse for conservatism. It should be put to work for broader purposes than more elaborate production and smarter buildings.

Small groups express the purpose of doing innovative work, often concerned with immediate contemporary issues, dramatic broadsheets, as it were, of issues which may be matters of national debate or of local interest. The practice of funding bodies is usually to relegate those groups to secondary importance, to thin slices of what is left of the financial cake when it has been carved for the more established ones. But their sheer number, the persistence with which they defy lack of money and inadequate temporary premises, their youthful audiences concerned with the matter of their work rather than the manner, are making them a force to be reckoned with. It is conceivable that the subject matter may have the relevance which the audiences they attract

does not experience in the conventional theatre. And it seems unlikely in present conditions that the audiences will merge. This does not augur well for the established monoliths, nor for the funding bodies, unless they accord more recognition to this new growth, which is so likely to increase. Soon the shift of emphasis must force all such bodies to remedy the imbalance, and divide the cake more fairly.

This matter of relevance, it will immediately be objected, has its own danger, that of being trendy and ephemeral. Sir Harold Hobson, doyen of British theatre critics, has written:

It cannot too often be said that a play is relevant if it enables us either to solve or to endure our present problems and not otherwise. Unless the imagination of the dramatist is creatively inspired, no amount of talk about unemployment, military efficiency, collective bargaining, Angola or devolution will make a play relevant.

At the same time, it is a quality of our ever-changing society that relevance and immediacy can be shortlived, but are none the less important while they meet a need. It is not, therefore, necessarily derogatory to some of the work of the self-styled alternative theatre to say that it is ephemeral. So are our cars, our clothes, our houses, our furniture. We do not expect to have them long enough to acquire the different value of an antique. Unencumbered as they are by demanding buildings or elaborate production equipment, the new-style groups have an ability to be mobile which is likely to be of ever-increasing usefulness if, as was mentioned earlier, travel in the future becomes more difficult and expensive. If audiences cannot travel to theatre centres, companies who can travel to the audiences will have the edge.

Sometimes by choice, sometimes because of limited finance, the numbers of the company are limited. Its members therefore tend to multi-skilled acting, dancing, music, stage-management, all interchangeable. One of the special needs of Australia is servicing the vast country areas which lack well-equipped venues. Moving the paraphernalia of established companies away from their highly efficient theatres, paying them the salaries to which they are accustomed, as well as travel, transport and living allowances, is being priced out of the market, both for them and for enabling organisations. The smaller, more mobile group will be in greater demand financially, and will perhaps serve more purposes.

For example, a multi-skilled group may be able to offer a greater variety of entertainment from the same resources and personnel, catering for work with and for children as well as for adults, providing a variety of workshop sessions and being pace-setters in a variety of ways. Because they can be moved around more easily and less expensively, their visits may be more regular and more frequent than those of the larger companies whose basic commitment is to their home base.

They may be better equipped to act as the instigators, the *animateurs* for activities which are then able to develop in the various communities they visit, taking their place in the very important future of community arts. They could provide a service for the regional centres which are built in to the forward planning of the South Australian Government and elsewhere.

In sum, one of the emergent principles for the future of the arts, and so for the guidance of subsidising bodies, must be the dispersal of the arts over a very much wider area. A good deal of raising has been done, both in the establishment of permanent companies and their venues. The spreading is overdue, largely because funding bodies have been slow to realise the significance of what has been happening around them.

A certain rigidity of thought, or perhaps, more kindly, a preoccupation with the live arts, has closed the minds of funding bodies to any real concern with the importance of the media. Film, television and the multitude of other technological aids are thought of, if at all, as mere adjuncts to the performing arts, supportive visual aids, useful teaching resources perhaps, but not participants in the provision of meaningful worlds of imagination. When we ruefully lament our small audiences for live entertainment in the subsidised arts, we do not consider fully enough the implications of the huge silent majority who flock to cinemas, for instance. Yet the term 'drama' is widely-embracing, as is explained by Martin Esslin:

The mechanically reproduced drama of the mass media, the cinema, television and radio, different though it may be in some of its techniques, is also fundamentally drama, and obeys the same basic principles of the psychology of perception and understanding from which all the techniques of dramatic communication derive . . . Those who regard live theatre as the only true form of drama are comparable to those contemporaries of Gutenberg who would acknowledge only a handwritten book as a true book.

It is high time that we looked around us to find out what it is which the forms of drama in the media have which we have not, and to recognise that they fulfil in actuality the needs which we have for so long fondly imagined that only live drama could meet. It is possible, for instance, that the emotional needs, which still exist in an age when religious belief has been fragmented and even rejected, still remain, the need to know whether there is any form of being outside ourselves with whom we may make contact. In which case, the underlying concept of films such as "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" cannot just be laughed at by those who believe themselves to be of higher brow.

We cannot ignore, either, the phenomenon of pop concerts and their mass appeal. It is surprising, perhaps, but significant, that in the U.K. the Labour government's plans for expenditure on the arts included more state cash for live jazz and pop music performances, as well as cash for orchestras.

In fact, one of the ruling principles of subsidy for the future would appear to be the widening of sights all round — the belated recognition that the arts are not an island entire in themselves. Then the answers may come right, or more nearly so.

GROW PARSLEY & YOU'LL HAVE MANY CHILDREN

th other women in th street would come round to my mum's
& borrow it rather than grow it
every time mum got in th family way & went into hospital
there'd be half a sheep from th maori family
brittle condensed milk cookies from th snobby lady
recycled prams & footless booties
baby things & bosom friends gawping & gossiping
only, one time, it was mum, as in silence
it was too soon, there was something wrong
keep her in bed, they said, but we couldn't
she'd be standing there washing th dishes & crying
I sat her down & she told me th story
our doctor fought, but it took him a week
to get her into th public ward, for a week
she carried th knowledge of death inside her
& when she came out of hospital, no-one came
to welcome death, this time, people referred to her
'operation', pink & blue became obscene colours
it was kind eyes & cruel silences
& th smallest hints tidied away, &
mum needed to talk, to itemise;
to tell someone that it'd been twins

ERIC BEACH

JONATHAN DAWSON

Althusser buys a House

Should a Marxist buy a house?

Does Althusser own a penthouse in Cannes?

It always seems easier to be French on such occasions. For Duncan, who's won the Age children's poetry competition at age thirteen that hadn't been a problem. Now, after a lecture to all those faces smelling, he was sure of, pineapple aftershave, that seems a long way away.

Maybe buying the house would *prove* that he was alienated from his mode of production. After all, telling students day after day that they couldn't read (in the Marxist sense) while you were pulling in fifteen thousand. Well, it was an epistemological problem of some weight.

Meanwhile: the house. There were, sort of, advantages. Like: people could crash there. No worries about landlords. The bourgeoisie.

Like, for Duncan, things can't put into categories. That's a bourgeois ploy. Well, it is.

Some categories are O.K.

Of names:

Althusser

Derrida

Greimas . . .

You sign here . . . and here . . .

Buying a house?

Buying?

a

House?

Back in Paris it had seemed a bit easier to make decisions. You were broke. Ipana was the best toothpaste to deaden the foetid scent of the local water.

On the Ph.D. grant you didn't go down the Champs Elysée. The Cinemateque was full of ladies who looked good enough to be Truffaut's script girl, or Godard's script-person.

And this year Australia is making it.

You . . . er . . . *connaissez* . . . Peter Weir?

Sort of.¹

All of which leads to a room above a book shop in the Rue du Berri. Ease from brain pain.

Actually, Elise is Greek. Legs astride, the miniature of Rhodes.

There was a skylight, the stars. Everything was as it should have been, was set up. Duncan dives, for love, for a (sort of) race memory of poet's love in Paris.

Later, it is (CHAPTER TWO) so, after a lot of dialogue, or maybe two or three carefully recalled monologues:

You touch me perfectly.

God, I . . .

Please . . . do you like that?

which could be Jacqueline Sussan, or indeed, could as well be a cricket game. Duncan is in love.

Naturally by this stage you'll be expecting some documentation.

Stray postcard:

Dear Mum. I hope you're having a nice time in Brighton.

Duncan shows special proficiency in English.

Stray diary entry (Ms. Elise):

Duncan is beautiful. He's . . . like a god. Every time I see that sharp profile, I . . .

go to

Watergate marks the end of the idyll. The grant runs out. So must Duncan. He is tall, about five eleven without the boots. Black hair, trout eyes, long arms, he goes fishing.

But from what you say, from all I read, you live in the world's most perfect bourgeois society.

Yeah. I, uh, did. But what I'm taking back will be appropriated.

¹ Signifies honesty of expression. Multiple x (i.e. must be repeated, necessarily).

To me?
Who else?
But I mean, I have to go, sometime.
Without me?
No.
You're in me.
Of me.
He remembers having difficulty with his grey socks at this stage.
Elise.
She had actually fought. Against the Junta. Paris was full of people like her. But Paris is so many cities.
And Elise is so many people. His love escapes out the du Berri skylight, no need of contraception.
Have no progress report on research. No address. Please advise. Prepaid.
We all fly back with him, cuddling our duty free stuff, our memories. What happens to Elise?
Choice: a novel, a poem, a trained tongue.
Elise becomes a poem. Two lines will do:

In a street of dark stone
the skylight opens on . . .

What happens to Elise?
Actually the poem was rewritten thus:

Athens was doubly cold that year
but down by the wharves . . .

Elise still seems left out. It should be said, she was good in bed. The rhyme obscures, as such devices will, Duncan's, well, distanciation, from the 'experience'.
Experience of her strong legs, the breasts . . . well, all that stuff that romantics do so well with.
Zero hour minus one. That is, 1970, minus, equals
soixante-neuf minus one equals:
the streets of Paris, the barricades, the Switch.
So they made the switch, Duncan dumping Elise and the central idea of his thesis.
There remains the problem. Duncan is brilliant. He will be given a lectureship. Soon. And it will be with tenure. That's a concept as much as it is an economic fact. Back in Oz, Duncan sheds the long scarves, the Tati jacket. He remembers the Cinemateque, Elise. Often he remembers Elise. Especially now. About to sign the house papers. Where Althusser intervenes. By what right?
In a tropical city, in Australia, Duncan sweats on the deal.
By now, Duncan's developing a 'style' as a lec-

turer. Honest, trying to *break through*. It's hard though. Up North for six months of the year it's sweatville. Like Castro? Maybe.
But Elise lies in wait. Writing her own verse. Was she a bitch? Dominating. Begging, urging, asking, she still wants him to make love, at the *worst* moments.

Luckily Althusser is still there. The third Horseman.

AR/23/5/79:4 MINUTES OF STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE SCHOOL OF ARTS.

. . . (extract) . . . that what was thought of as traditional lecturing was, in fact, deleterious to student individuality and that such lecturing should take a more honest form, or indeed that the hegemonic practice of lecturing should be done away with altogether.

Say no more. The lines are drawn.

The lad has done it. Or said it.

But where is Elise in all this?

Not in:

THE PUB.

Yeah, well, in a sense what he's getting at is that all production is like . . . like . . . like all texts as well as all cog wheels, they work intertextually. (and Little Mary, M.A., loves it . . .)

Elise: her father had fought in Crete. A medal or two satisfied him. He missed out on the war against the Junta. Didn't even see the film "Z". Elise saw it, seven times, ran it once with a borrowed projector, against the patched walls in the flat. They made love once, during the car chase.

Elise, Would *she* buy a house?

What rhymes with Elise?

Duncan finds himself adlibbing a lecture. Why name a Greek baby Elise? For reasons of status we suppose. It's almost a joke.

Duncan is giving a lecture. He feels no burden, though he sweats a little. Suddenly he's uncertain. Which father did he see? The guerilla, in some old, ideologically unsound war? Or the bourgeois of . . . when?

Elise is recurring. Is there a clinic for such things?

Chatting away, of Althusser, of Roland Barthes, Duncan is suddenly afraid of his audience. The lecture hall has no windows. There are double doors for the air conditioning.

His tenure is secure.

There are fifteen or so minutes to go.

Duncan is a long way from Elise.

And her father. Whom he never met, but who sells insurance in Athens and does quite well.

The Junta are gone. But Elise while she's coming can still quote Althusser. In mid-phrase it occurs to Duncan that he is better paid for such work. Much.
His hand hovers. He signs.
Duncan owns a house:
Co-incidentally, other young academics are noticing his work. He isn't doing too badly at all.
The new house seems empty. Soon it must fill, with people talking, about Althusser, Derrida

Greimas and even Kristeva and Duncan's new Lady, she knows all those names, she's read their stuff and goes sailing uneasily with Daddy each weekend.
Nobody sends Elise telegrams. Except the one when her mother died. She flew back. *Lufthansa*. Duncan, who remembers her breasts, would be down on *that*. But then, again, the trees he's planted have already transformed the backyard.



Jiri Tibor Novak

STUART MACINTYRE

Ian Turner

A Tribute and an Apology

I never got to know Ian Turner. After taking my first degree at Melbourne University, I went out to Monash shortly before the Christmas of 1968 to begin postgraduate research with him. That time was perhaps the nadir of the Melbourne History department, which had lost too many of its best teachers and writers to newer universities. Or so it seemed. Anyway, I had managed to complete four years of historical study without learning a scrap of the history of my own country. Nevertheless, I had read *Industrial Labour and Politics*, knew something about its author, and thought he might be the teacher to make good my ignorance.

Ian was due to leave Australia in the new year for sabbatical research overseas, and invited me to call on him in Richmond and discuss a topic. I did. It soon emerged that I knew almost nothing about what I wanted to do but cherished a strong animus against 'empiricism' in all its disguises. Ian sat among what seemed vast heaps of books and papers — I particularly remember noticing the plenitude of novels, poems and literary ephemera, and mentally consigning them to the dustbin of scientific Marxism, along with all other exercises in populist nostalgia. He listened patiently to my confused and inarticulate prejudices, and suggested several topics which he thought might suit me. I was less sure. We finally agreed that some aspect of the history of Broken Hill might be worth exploring, and Ian saw me out with a list of preliminary reading. I was to work on with the assistance of Geoff Serle and report progress on his return.

I skimmed in a desultory fashion for some weeks but failed to come to grips with the subject. The gap between my grandiose theoretical ambitions and the realities of historical research was too great, and I was unable to impose the slightest degree of order on what I was reading. A mem-

ber of the Monash department, reading the familiar signs of the postgraduate delinquent, suggested that perhaps I should talk to Alan McBriar. Alan listened to me repeat my epistemological manifesto with just the right combination of amusement, scepticism and sympathy. Why didn't I try out my ideas on an intellectual biography of an Old Left Marxist? Perhaps John Strachey? The suggestion appealed to me, so I changed my enrolment and set to work. Tutoring brought me down to earth with a bump shortly after, and it was two years later that I completed a thoroughly pedestrian study of John Strachey's early political writings.

I would like to think that I felt some embarrassment about this abrupt abandonment of a supervisor and topic. My memory is unclear, but I don't think I ever gave Ian an explanation: certainly I did not write to him while he was away; perhaps I mentioned the change to him after he had returned. If so, it would have been a graceless apology. By now I had abandoned my enthusiasm for the middle-European Marxists, Fromm, Lukacs and Marcuse, for the sterner attractions of Althusser. From this vantage point the work of Ian Turner's generation of historians seemed all the more unsatisfactory. And along with other founders of the journal *Intervention*, I looked to the CPA to change itself into a party of revolutionary theory and practice. Ian's attempts to explore the deficiencies of Leninist politics as practised in this country seemed not only wrong but too personal, even mawkish. Soon after, I left to study abroad and had no subsequent contact with Ian.

In company with others of his generation, Ian had a remarkable capacity to reconsider the referents of his politics. As Bob Gollan has explained in *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, those who came into the Left prior to the 1960s took their

bearings from a deeply-rooted culture of popular nationalism. Their belief in the fundamental authenticity of working-class life in all its aspects, and their faith in its radical possibilities, was carried into the Communist Party. It provided the Party with a popular orientation which, even in its weakest moments and most sectarian excesses, enabled the Left to demonstrate an affirmative vitality. This political and cultural tradition was subjected to increasingly critical reappraisal from the late 1950s. The 'Old Left' was blind to the oppression of gender, race and ethnicity; it was opportunist; its conception of liberation was too narrow; it lacked Marxist rigor; it was insensitive to the psyche. The extraordinary feature of this cacophonous onslaught is the complicity of so many of its victims. Those who left the CPA and many who stayed in it showed both an openness to criticism and a readiness to acknowledge their failures.

In this respect Ian was outstanding. Among the missiles hurled at what was called the 'Old Left' — a portmanteau term of ridiculous oversimplicity — was an article I wrote for *Intervention* on "Radical History and Bourgeois Hegemony". Here I took Brian Fitzpatrick, Ian Turner and R. M. Crawford to task for their failure to conform to the standards of scientific Marxism. It was perhaps fortunate that Brian Fitzpatrick had died years earlier: were he alive and had he bothered to read my article, he might have paid me in good measure. Fitzpatrick's achievements have in any case been defended, both in Don Watson's biography and in an earlier article in *Labour History* by Helen Bourke, who reproved me mildly for my assumption that Fitzpatrick should conform to the standards of the 1970s. Ian, on the other hand, readily embraced my criticisms of his work. In an autobiographical fragment he wrote in *Overland* 59 he agreed that his was a "pretty mechanist Marxism, as Stuart Macintyre has pointed out".

Ian displayed an unflinching generosity of intellect. It would have been easy for him to ask the obvious question: where is your alternative? Having wrestled with the problems involved in actually writing Marxist history, he would have been justified in demanding that his critics do the same before they pronounced on the work of

others. But he always accepted the authenticity and value of criticism. Characteristic is his response in *Overland* 72 to the books of Bob Connell and Tim Browse where he wrote that "I should say — though I don't think it's really necessary — that I regard the questions raised by Connell, Rowse and other New Left critics . . . as being both important and in good faith." While Ian thought such an avowal unnecessary, there were others who did not maintain the same standards (and I exclude both Connell and Rowse from this criticism). In the face of hostile, and sometimes partisan, attacks on what was, after all, a major part of his life's work, Ian maintained these high standards. His socialism possessed an ethic. The Left owed a duty to itself to welcome criticism, and its discussions had to be conducted in a spirit of common endeavor.

I now think that Ian sometimes conceded too much. Over the last decade we have allowed Marxist theory to become an obstacle to practice; our epistemological strictures paralyse action. Rather than accepting the allegation that his was "a pretty mechanical Marxism", I think that Ian might have queried the utility of constructing abstract models against which historical practice should be measured. The popular, democratic and national tradition that Ian belonged to has been abandoned too precipitately, and I think that his restatement of it in "Temper Democratic, Bias Australian" (*Overland* 72) offers a welcome return. (To digress slightly, I think that Glen Lewis's reply to Ian in *Overland* 74 may well be right about *Overland*'s content, but that it misses the crucial feature of Ian's own work. His treatment of culture is rooted in material circumstances, the way men, women and children live, and how social conceptions are inscribed in their activities.)

Most of all, I regret that his work on popular culture remains incomplete. We have *Cinderella*, we have his compilation of visions of the future, we have fragments of his ideas on football, and so on. His recent essay in *Essays in Political Economy* began, in a very preliminary fashion, to lay out the boundaries of the general field. The final task, to take these insights back to his detailed work on industrial and working-class politics, remains undone. It is a necessary project for future historians.

BARRY HILL

Headlocks

Late in the day the boy went to the front gate to look out for his father. Saturday: his father went down the road for a few drinks on Saturday, and he came home the long way; along the quarry road that gave a view of the sea two miles off, then down the hill towards the few blocks that were still paddocks. The boy met him at the same spot each week, and each week the father met the boy's expectations absolutely — listening to all that he had to say until they were indoors, were eating dinner, and drinking their tea quietly in the kitchen.

One afternoon the boy ran towards his father in the usual way, but found himself pulling up short: someone was with the old man! A stranger was with his father . . . When the boy wanted to withdraw like that, as he sometimes did when the man had a few too many drinks and was carelessly attentive, he thought of him as father rather than as the old man. But when things were good he was the old man, just as his father had called Grandpa when he was still alive; a disrespectful term thought the relatives, though the boy knew, as his father always had, that it was not.

"Hi Greg," his father said. "This is Mr Morrison, Ed Morrison."

Greg said hello and the men went on walking.

Ed was about the same age as his father except he had more hair, with more oil on it. A tattoo covered the back of one hand while others seemed about to crawl out of his rolled-up shirt sleeves. As the men strolled along the footpath Greg walked slightly behind them, veering onto the nature strip whenever he tried to keep even. At the front gate he said to his father that the stumps were already in position in the back yard. But his father touched his shoulder and led Ed into the kitchen to meet his mother.

Once Ed had washed his hands and sat down

at the table Greg brought out some of his drawings. "Did you do all these yourself?" Ed said, "That's good".

The beer was poured. Greg put his collection of sinkers and hooks on the table, and Ed fiddled with the big hooks as he went on talking. Ed was telling his father about the mussels to be got from the docks at Alexandria, and his father was telling Ed that no one could have got better mussels than they had been getting from the local piers before the Italians came.

Greg went out into the back yard and came in with his lizards. He put the wooden seed box on the floor and lifted the cellophane. The smell of the dead ones wafted up towards the steaming corn beef that his mother had just placed on the table.

"He forgets to feed them," his father informed Ed.

"I do not." Greg looked up by way of appeal.

"No," the old man added, "we have trouble with our supply of fresh insects."

"What you need to do is this," said Ed, punching the air. One by one Greg lifted the man's fingers until, wriggling in his palm, the fly appeared.

Mum had made the mayonnaise salad. On to Ed's plate she piled an eggy oniony section, then Greg was allowed to help himself. It was a hot night; the back door was open, the dog was scratching near the step, and the crickets were going silly.

Ed and the old man were still talking. Mum looked on. Now and then Ed paused to pay her special attention, but at the end of the meal she insisted on clearing the table herself and carrying the dishes to the sink while the men went into the front room. Greg followed the men and sat on the floor near the window, beside the old man's chair. From where he was he could see

ginger tufts of hair in his father's ear, and the face of Ed steadily flushing. A faint breeze came in through the venetian blinds.

The Middle East was mentioned again. Greg got up and left the room. He came back with an olive green book that had as its first picture a painting of a troop ship: on the deck dozens of wounded men sat about in the sun, or were stretched in the shade of life boats and tarpaulins. "Yes", said Ed excitedly, and Greg sat beside him while they thumbed through the pages. Presently, his mother came in waving a post card.

Two men in shorts stood on a bare stretch of sand, hands behind their back, grinning. No shirts, only their bare chests as brown or as dirty as their legs. The one with the slouch hat was Ed; the other was Uncle Allen, his mother's brother. "Bet you haven't seen that for awhile", his mother said to Ed.

While Ed was looking Greg tried to get as close to the card as possible. He almost swooped it out of Ed's hand.

"Looking at the bloody gun, are yuh", said Ed. Hanging from his Uncle's belt was a large revolver. "Stand up a tick," Ed said.

Taking up a position near the door, Ed told Greg to run towards him. "Come on, just come at me," he said, leaning forward with his arms loose, as if a dog was going to leap up at his face.

Greg took a few steps. In football the old man had taught him how to mock a run and spin off on the ball of the right foot. But here there was no room, and before he got anywhere, Ed had turned him around and was holding the edge of the post card at his throat. "You don't really need a gun, see."

"Now stand there," Ed said, once he had let go.

Greg waited within inhaling distance of the man's breath. He knew the old man was watching so there was no need to turn around. Ed tightened the roll of his sleeves and fixed the buckle of his belt. "Now I'll show you some of the crucial points. Your old man might have a bit to learn as well," he said with a wink. Just then, Greg might well have turned, but Ed was already at work with his finger.

"Here", he said, pressing a spot on Greg's

Australian Background

Drawn from the resources of the State Library of N.S.W.'s Mitchell and Dixson collections, these publications and prints reproduce some of the original manuscripts, paintings and documents that tell the story of early Australia.

- The Sheep and Wool Correspondence of Sir Joseph Banks. '... For those who care about Australia's real foundations, it is indispensable.'—review by Allan Goodall in *The Australian*. 641 pp. \$65.
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neck, "is where they go out cold". He grimaced as if he had pushed right in.

"Or, this way you don't have to worry about them either". He pressed his knuckles into the boy's Adams Apple.

"Or here!" Swinging his arm up from the floor he brought his fist just short of the boy's groin. "You might need to use some of these on the old man, one day. Never know."

"He won't need to do anything of the sort," Greg heard his mother say.

Ed laughed.

"I don't want anybody teaching him that sort of thing". His mother smoked one cigarette a night and she had stubbed it out.

"I'm just giving the kid the science of the show. So he won't have to use guns." Ed smiled and tapped his empty pockets.

"No you're not. You're putting crook ideas into his head". But Greg had never heard his mother say anything so stupid: she could lose sight of the old man completely!

A couple of chairs were shoved back and they started again. Greg threw himself at the man's belly, butted the soft part so hard that Ed fell back with a grunt against the door. Greg dived to the floor and took hold of the man's knee, tried to bend it. Ed picked him up by the middle, turned him round and locked his wrists behind his back. Greg tried to kick the man's shins but they ducked away.

"That's enough," his mother called.

"One more, Mum". He went limp until Ed let him go again.

"Now what you don't do," Ed was saying, "is run at someone like a Mallee bull. He'll have you down in no time, even if you're waving a knife as wide as your old man's wrist."

They started close together, with Greg making

a quick chop at the man's neck. Blocked. A swipe with the other arm. Blocked again. Finally he lifted his knee — but collected Ed's hip bone. "Now stand back and we'll do it again", Ed said.

"You're upsetting the boy," Greg heard his mother say.

"Let them go". It was the old man's voice.

This time, Greg thought, if he blocks my knee with his hip I'll be able to get my arm over as he bends. Then I'll have him in that head lock. When his face is down and his ears are jammed I'll get him onto the floor and before he can roll, straddle him. All I need to do is get my arm over quick enough . . . He went in with his eyes open. He saw Ed's face until the last instant, right up until they went down — down, it seemed, into the pile of the carpet.

The hot night pressed green and purple into the face and brown shot through his eyes so fast that he missed the first moves beside him. But together they pinned Ed down, one to each arm, then with the old man holding the shoulders, Greg bashed the man's skull against the floor. When the face was still he hit it a few times with the glass bottom of the ash tray.

They lifted together and carried the body outside where it went straight into a sugar bag; the old man tossed it over his shoulder and up the ladder they went to the roof of the garage where they'd piled newspapers and old boxes and wood. They watched the body burn until suddenly, when the rocket went off, you didn't see it at all, not until it was coming down again, rekindling in bits and pieces as it re-entered the atmosphere, while he and the old man were laughing and yelling.

Lying there on the carpet, Greg knew that he was not going to move until his father crossed the room to help.

TWO POEMS BY RONALD BOTTRALL

SOCCER

Thousands assemble glaring with eyes
Set in concrete at twenty-two
Footballers they have longingly
Labored to bring forth.

All action from elegant ankle-tap
To plain trip-up replaces
The frustration of spectators
Unable to satisfy their sadism,

The mayhem they wish to commit
Against fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters,
Neighbors. Accurate bottle-throwers
Are in great demand.

Whistle. At every move hysterical
Screams distort the planned spectacle
And distort it. A goal is advertised
By a yowl and a clenched fist,

Frenzied embraces, flying leaps on to
The scorer's back, lifting him high in the air,
Running, howling, prancing, sexual
Dances celebrating the event.

Women squirm in unexpected orgasms,
Men ejaculate against fences
Blasphemies they have harbored
since the cradle.

After the match converging yobs
Spit on the visiting team. Jostled
And reviled the referee escapes
Cocooned in a cordon of police.

The fans make hay towards the local
Railway station. Beer-soaked they rip up
The train's upholstery and doss down
At home to a post-coital sleep.

CRICKET

Watching cricket is watching a facet
Of life, bowler matched against batsman
Move together in a dance, now near, now far,
One fish being played by another fish.

Bowler spins batsman into a web of trouble,
Batsman knocks bowler into a cocked hat.
Ripples of eager fielders spread over
A carpet of carefully-cut grass.

They remind us to take care of ourselves,
So easily submerged by casual collision
With a wandering iceberg. Remember,
We only see the tip. Learn to evade it.

Get underneath the bumper, get underneath
The ball, a sphere shining high in the sky
Like a reflection of angels spun on a needle.
What we see is only a fraction of reality.

Batsmen just failing to hit a six are caught
In a tangle of uncertainty, as clouds
Darken our desires with shade. We blame
Impartial umpires for our frequent failures.

Failures that spring from warring wavering minds.
With faith like a rock and great mastery
Of the elusive art of equilibrium
We could walk on water for a century.

FACTORY GIRLS

Hot air blows peas from vine & pods &
sends them back into the ground
as green & brown shoot
along conveyors to
the girls

who wear glasses after too many years of
picking the dead peas from the
green frozen packs of ice
boring all cashiers
boring as they
sell

the product but not their violent dreams
swept across the all brick wall
in one vine that's wilder
when bare than
when purple
or red

& thriving as if nothing mattered
but the root torturing out
of their long hair
up & across
the wall

embedding carpet or bed or thorns
in the carpet or bedspread
with their dreams &
their nightmares
long as hair.

GRAHAM ROWLANDS

KIND FOR KIND

Beasts mourn for beasts; but, unlike us,
they cannot even begin to understand
their lack of understanding. Who has not seen
the magpie on the roadway, hopping, pecking at
its flattened mate as if to re-arrange,
at this late stage, the feathers into flight, the body
into being that bit more that makes
a world of difference?

On every grave
there sits the dog of puzzlement, thin with waiting, fed
the measly bone of time, the miserable
soup of far clouds, the scraps of bitter weather.
Beyond our skill to offer them
much else besides the pensive look that says
We know, we know the losses life sustains,
the feathers and the paws forever still: in such odd ways
our nature, hardening like unwatered soil,
is harrowed into kindness.

BRUCE DAWE

SMITH STREET

because she's still young
th young woman seems gross
gross to be carrying so much weight
all of her weight behind th slap
th slap that left red fingers
red fingers across her child's face

because th child stares straight ahead
th child has tunnel vision
th mother walks outside th tunnel
th mother's voice is muffled by concrete
th voice crumbling like concrete
like concrete mixed without water

because th child refuses to cry

ERIC BEACH

POEM

there are cabbages growing
in the gardens of Fitzroy

i can see them clearly
green/round with centres hard
like iron

at night they are harvested
not with rural tenderness
but pulled
from the ground like decision

someone fastens a wick to the
base of roots & lights it

it burns slowly & evenly
with a glow of survival

at dawn they are left
on the steps
of official buildings
at the edges of freeway junctions
they smoulder silently

people pass by

within an inch/

(of their lives

RORY HARRIS

OLD LABOR LEADERS

Old conservative leaders find some place
tucked in tight against the Harbor,
a safe nook for their *poor* backs;

Old Labor leaders always learn the truth too late,
wake up one morning in a rollercoaster wreck,
Fate's awesome gerrymander crashes on them
with a ferris wheel's panache, and charisma
is just the way you lose, sport —
and of course we're all sports here;

Allende, wouldn't get outa Denver, baby,
died with lead stones, from their gall;
Old Labor leaders get to fruit,
stones of struggle buried deep inside them
not easily passed —
bitter, puffed red in their pinstripes,
the white shock of hair
that could almost be beatnik;

And they always find out too late,
and they're always so bloody shocked,
then they learn well to hate:
Old Labor leaders don't die,
they just wither away —
unlike their State.

LARRY BUTTROSE

DINNER

They are a thin family
and their anger eats at them inwardly.
Strangely they don't keep pets,
nothing that eats
in fact,
nothing that lives
except themselves.

They appreciate photography
as a civilised form of art.
The layers of grey slide off one another,
occasionally fall softly to the carpeted floor
but their surfaces are always shiny
the juxtaposition smooth.

There is a tension
in the polite and polished air
when they sit with grace
around the table.
It's a killing of the youth beast
and an exquisite form of torture.
It's like being forced to listen
to a concert of people starving.

LYNDON WALKER

FOR MY MOTHER AT EIGHTY

A light wind fills the passing sail
and lifts the glitter of the bay.
The past glows like a fairy tale,
irrelevances burnt away.

Covered in the transparent years,
tea-tree and banksia crowd the shore;
and now the shabby town appears
sleepy and breathing at your door.

The sand is white, and the sea spray;
they shine as vivid as a dream,
for the reality of everyday
is never what our senses make it seem.

Tending the troubled and the ill,
your father jollied them along.
He loved a casual yarn and better still
a merry crowd, a tuneful song.

He smeared your shoes with aniseed
to teach his bloodhounds how to track
to follow where the scent might lead
and find your hiding place and bring you back.

When the de Dion-Bouton took the road,
roared down the track at jogging pace,
hurled round a corner, barely slowed,
you'd tumble out then brush your sandy face.

I see you in that town awake,
encapsuled in the future's bud
and the instinctive steps you take
sound in the pulsing of my blood.

FRANK KELLAWAY

**READING SOUTHERLY AND MEDITATING
ASSORTED SOUTHERNERS**

Why do reviewers always
— well, often, or mostly, or sometimes, but always
this is fiction, after all —
finish by saying, if the poet's still alive,
it's worth waiting to see what the bastard
comes up with next, and, if the poet happens
to be dead, what a pity the poor cow didn't
live to fulfil and so forth.

A poem is a poem is made is made-up
to be something made — fictive, factitious:
simply there, whatever it is.
Is not symptomatic of poetic development
nor reviewers consultants to underdeveloped muses.

Hardback publication hasn't happened to me yet, but I get
the occasional kind note from an editor:
"developing a witty sinewy style" one said
twenty years ago: developing, like big tits
only not in my case (honest, Vivian, I won't change
my sex; my style is, well, it's supposed
to develop or something — that's the polite
fiction and I'm always fictional and observe proper form)
but last month one didn't take to my
"literal occasional poems". My poems are words
that fall intermittently as the fiction dictates:
aren't everyone's? A non-literal continuum would
be a world not a poem: fiction should be
mindful of what its facts allow.

R. G. HAY

LOW SPIRITS

*"Don't get fresh with me, young man."
"Sorry, Mr Umney. But I'm not a young man. I'm old,
tired, and full of no coffee."*

— Raymond Chandler, *Payback*

Most writers want to *communicate*.
They don't want to sit at home and, as it were, masturbate.
So when the audience, collectively, turns its back
they really feel the lack.
They want to get locked in (to some public approbation)
and what they want most is a standing ovation.

It only increases the literary paranoia
if they're treated like a shrub when they feel like a sequoia.

But there are always times, that even the best have known,
when you feel like a weed, stunted, or overgrown,
or the smallest spotted toadstool in the wood,
and you think Christ! how could I ever have thought
that stuff was any good!

The only consolation, when you start feeling moody,
completely unproductive and generally broody,
is to tell yourself that bad writers seldom feel like this —
they inhabit an Eden where the snake's self-critical hiss
is never ever heard.
They wouldn't change or alter or regard with less than ecstasy
a single word.

GAVIN EWART

THE MALADY

Sometimes a strange chain of events
of which I am not conscious, has
shackled my limbs for a moment;
has ringed a plausible grip round
my ankles. That, I accept as
a tug at my leg — no clamp to
take seriously. A quirk of
my constitution — a joke to take.

Then I remember, without
alarm, knowledge of my wearing
shackles even for such brief spans
may startle my companions. They
have the courage of doves. I must
take tablets urgently. I have
forgotten my phial these last few
nights . . . Dilantin, one and one
Prominal, four times each day. Take
the capsules to bury for an
unpredictable future some
semblance of sanity.

Whom do they fear? The insane?
I'm told, the malady's only
a symptom of the disease. Some
lobotomy, society bungled,
has obscured reason why the chains
still drag shackles — why the spasms
grip the crowd with terror. After
sentence, the pain's not physical.
Shame discomforts the belabored.

JOHN BLIGHT

SUICIDE SPONSOR

Steel is harder than skin
he reflected
the crowds' gaze
the banner flapped
beneath his feet
the harbor seemed to suck
him off the bridge floating
when he hit
the crowd was still gazing at the advertisement.

GRANT CALDWELL

IN HER OWN WORDS: POEME TROUVE

*After an MS note by Miles Franklin
brought to my attention by Roy Duncan.*

In her own words:

In the days of her youth
to the carefully inhibited girl
not tho' her heart brake
would she acknowledge or accept
an illicit love;
and in this case such wholesome lore
had blinded her.

Then again, through the years,
the quality of her affection —
the chaste virtuous woman is always a mother
even to her lover;
and Kate Baker's motherly task
to Furphy had not yet been finished

the worshipping Suttee widow.

DENNIS DOUGLAS

WAFERS

Amidst the infamy of the world,
Sleeted and smirched by the cold grossness of it,
We are blessed by tiny wafers of goodness,
Trivial, almost invisible in the great downfalls,
but needing each to whom they are offered
To say, "Yes, I accept, I am thankful.
I will take this blessing softly on my tongue."

A man in the rain, carrying a dozen of stout
And a flagon of claret out to the station wagon,
Wondering how to find a hand for the door —
A slight woman across the road called
"Can I open the door for you, I was just looking,
Thinking, how is he going to open that door?"

A woman running from her car
To the newspaper office, late with her copy,
Her purse left at home, no change for the meter,
The parking attendant advancing like a black archangel —
And when she emerged, twenty nine minutes on the meter —
Later, the girl at the parking station,
Being told the story, said, "Oh yes,
When I walk through the streets in my lunch hour
And I see a parked car and an expired meter,
I always put five cents in it."

In this red-flagged world of expired meters
There seems no end to these slight people
Who have five cents in a pocket or handbag.
Click. Buzz. They set time going again,
Giving us half an hour more.

Trivial, of course, alongside Uganda.

GEOFFREY DUTTON

A FOOL & HIS MIRROR PARTING

2

look at it mirrorwise:
everyone's private parts
superimposed.

i dance before you
& aft
a fool not fooling
himself,

& stopping,
cannot move.

look: beat back
from your beckoning
finger,
grabbing slackskin tight
& letting it
slap back
onto shard of glass.

moonlight drips
through a skylight crack;
tender shoots
erect big heads
mirrorwise.

1

let it turn &
turn through
the spectrums of eyes & ears

i have passed before you
& have seen
my face try to speak
its mind;

& laughing,
finds its comic silence.

kool: the mirror drools,
this is I &
thus is I,
in this direction
in that dimension.
slap back
onto shard of glass.

i dance
to this
part
of the fool
parting.

TERRY HARRINGTON

POEM IN PRAISE OF "THE AGE"

saturday morning in reservoir, cold knackers & despair,
dad's out the back stuck into "the age" (it makes more sense out there)
"hey, ya nearly right, dad"? i yell gummy thru the flywire door,
"petty's not good this week, son, and adams' not funny anymore.

"a saturday reflection's" not worth two bob, arghh. the usual bad reviews,
that bennett bloke hates australia, arghh here's the crossword clues
13 across: "differs from wombat" what the fuck kind of clue is that?
jesus its hard to read today-whattayagottadotothebastardtermakeitflat?

nearly gotta hernia before, the tinlid jammed it right up the brick-hole,
not easy readin' it either, when its been laid out to make rissoles
flour's all over the arts page; bum, dropped it. where's me smokes?
jesus they need to smarten up the footwork, and they need better bloody jokes.

ya read the thing with respect and regard for all those pisspot journos,
(really, the only redeeming feature is the way it keeps frost off derros)
they must make millions from the crummy classifieds, what brilliant literature;
i mean the bastard's are the same as "the sun", the way they fleece the poor.

i burned a cigarette-hole in it once, asleep, that's when i took some bloody notice
at first i thought it was one of them airbrush-touched-up photos,
a rendering of a fire to burn more guilt into those frightened suburban souls
whose idea of panache and authority is to shove turds down little lawn-holes.

yes, theyre a smug lot of capitalists, are david syme and son,
still, there's no paper like it when it's good, i like to read it out in the sun,
i sorta doze out there underneath the apricot blossom i do,
the sweet light folds the pages for me, and the sweet air is blue.

its good to laugh, and by jesus that tanner makes me laugh, poor tanner
he draws so well, so simply, a lovely man, that fella,
and petty, when he's at his best, that cartoonist is the best,
his marvellous ornamental vertical bureaucrat dream machines are blessed

with lively humor, copied from kids, yes, he's got intellectual naivete in that pen,
"Gawd i wisht i could draw like that"; you hear in morning smoko dens,
i used to deliver the buggers on the old pushbike, a hundred on satdee,
wedge 'em in, stuff 'em in, shove 'em down the drain, just come back empty.

when you're tired under the caltex sun, your pants caught in the chain; jesus;
i've seen the way housing commission kids sit in the gutter as the paper freezes,
page chilled to stalactite page, or else sunny hands gashed on letterbox tins
fingers bleeding, lips bruised by flowers, trying to fit the bastard in.

oh see how the light follows the trucks, think of the subeditor, junior payclerk;
think of the numb ice-bed of theatre critics, the features editor's numb heart,
think on the machinery, the ink, the money, the casualty wards, dead artists in parks,
just so we can waddle up the back one windy night to wipe our bum in the dark.

BARRY DICKINS

K

Kafka
would leave his passion
to shave itself

& pout
a smoky-blue chin

he knew his own face
miserably well

his mind
like any other
born of another time

K would sit
on a branch & sing
as he stared into
the large lens of himself

TERRY HARRINGTON

TALKAHOLICK

"Henceforth brain, toil as well as you can" (*Cavafy*)

LIFE

wasn't meant to be
lying down the law/n/s
in green-gown godowns
of perishable goods (items of

RESPONSIBILITY

don't talk to me
re:
rows of tent-peg
double-barrelled

WORDS

the neutron bomb is
a good investment
it will kill people
without destroying

(gerry ford, 10/7/77)

PROPERTY

restore the dance
of blow/suck/blow
knife/life in
alexandria (their only aim:

TOUCHING

spunkies
in underpass gestures
abnormal incums
& bundy machines

PAPER

has 3 sides
on which to write
flux et reflux
radiance of white
(rex under the sun

DON MAYNARD

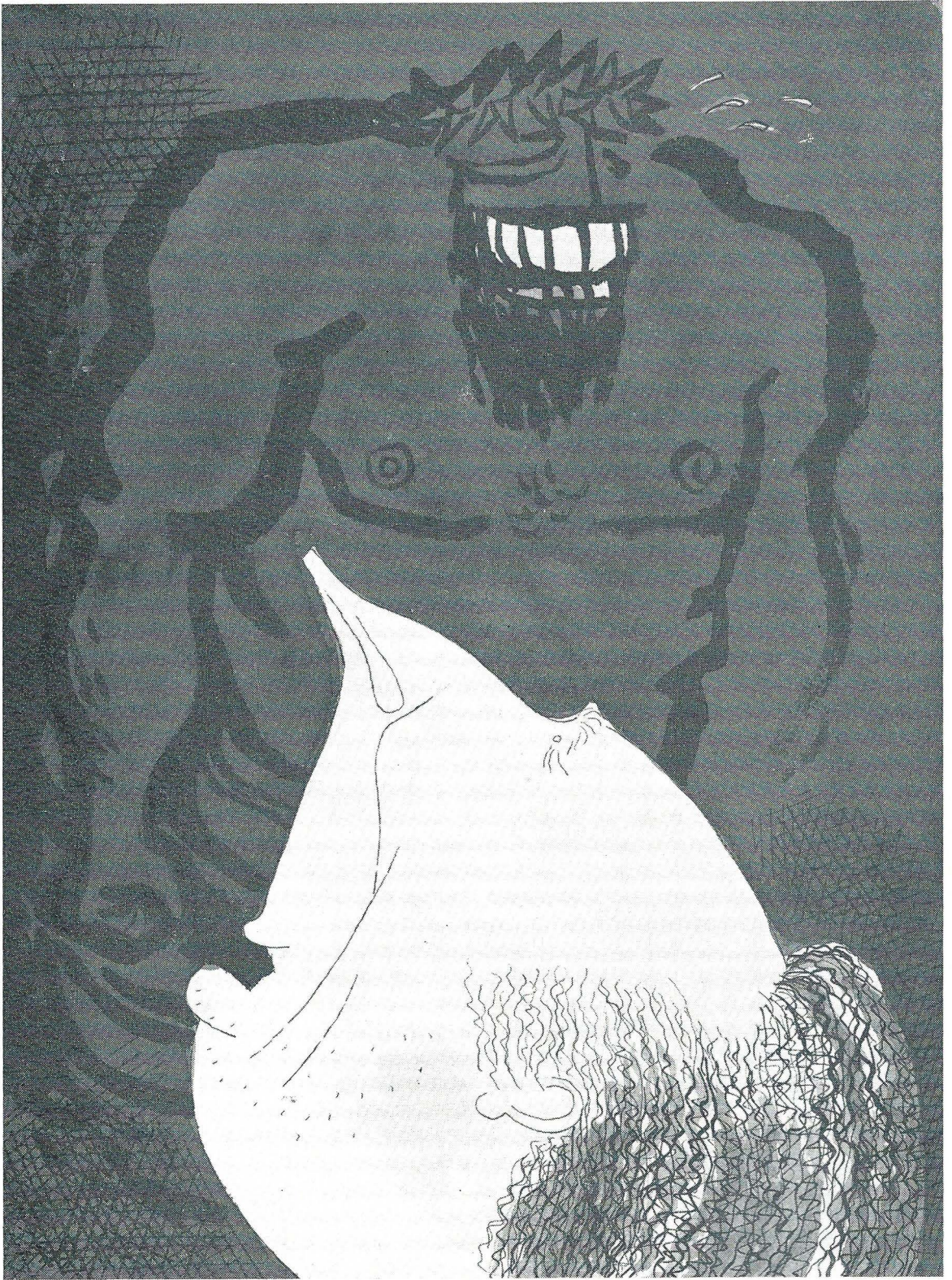
FROM THE BOTANY OF LIVING TOGETHER

now six months later
David took her to the country for a fresh start,
she shuffled the pack at the window,
avoiding foolishness and false starts, warming the motor first
on pale orange mornings, driving away from the sad roads
and subtlety, away from you, friend in your
last year, for she knew how to return, make it back
alone with stories, fast movements of the hand,
the perfume of darkness in a new country,
away from the wreck and the tyre marks, old promises,
September and better weather better love lighter traffic and
moon yes away with a last kiss a wave from the sky

you ran down the road shouting the photograph doesn't lie
the young are crass easy beauty bad luck
dumbstruck by this disappearance

park the car under the crazy starved tree
walk the twenty five steps to the front door
you can hear someone at the piano
the pump sucks at the pool six hours from now
we will sleep remember the shout and the afternoon
the botany of living together

PHILIP NEILSEN



He was once a choirboy. At sixty-five he has often a little pursed-up smile and raised and faintly apprehensive eyes as though singing unproper words to hymns in defiance of the Great Capitalist Choirmaster. Perhaps a similar feeling caused Mr Amor to show the Devil hovering over him. "Nowhere," said the great Dr Thomas Arnold of Rugby School, "is Satan's work more evidently manifest than in turning holy things to ridicule." Throughout most of his career he has been concerned to turn "holy things" — politicians (especially those of the Right), businessmen and soldiers (except those of the Left) to ridicule. For a time this activity was central to his work and provided him in Australia and England with a living as a political cartoonist. Drawing for reproduction has been one of the very few consistent traditions in Australian art, and the influence of the 'black and white men' on easel painting has yet to be properly estimated. But a close-up view of the early work of Arthur Streeton, in for example the foreground trees in "Purple Noon", shows that the character of the brush-stroke is derived from the handling of the steel drawing pen.

So in the beginning it was drawing and drawing with a message, that of compassion for the oppressed and hatred for the oppressors. That, in the course of his career as an artist, history has sometimes reversed these roles has not lessened the depths of his feelings. Then from drawings to lino-cuts with the same message, and on to the first major paintings such as "At the Start of the March". This title can be taken as appropriate to his own Long March across a bridge between two depressions, although he may not receive the Chinese implications too happily. But then Lenin's Long Ride in a sealed railway coach wearing or not wearing a blonde wig (according to one's belief or not in the gospel according to Stoppard) has hardly as powerful an impact.

The artist has never removed, or wished to remove from his mind, the black brand of that first Depression, an attitude not understood by those who were insulated from it by middle-class prejudice or property. So passionately does he live with its mark upon him that there is some danger of his becoming a professional Depressio-nist in conversation or by means of radio, that extension of conversation. No one in Australia has illuminated these dark places in paintings and drawings so well, but the means had first to be found. The direct demands of the political press laid a good ground, but the transition from cartoon and illustration to painting was a minefield through which he needed to be guided and the proper guides were hard to find in Australia — they needed to be imported. Fortunately two revolutions in Europe, one from each end of the political rainbow, brought crocks of gold in the shapes of a Communist Jew and a White Russian whose influences could mix for the young Australian and his friends in the dirty, but fertile, streets of Melbourne.

Of the two, the Jew, Josl Bergner, was perhaps the most important, in that he could provide not only the theory but the agony which sustained and explained it. But if his had been the only fuel then the flame of social realism in Australian painting might have burnt low and smokily. It needed a splash of volatile spirit to make it explode; and who was more ready to enjoy the lovely light and the dangerous heat than Danila Vassilieff? From him came a more flickering brushstroke, a less heavy impasto and a release of color to match. For the Australian color became a powerful weapon not isolated from the forms but forming part of the same assault upon the spectator. It is not color which seeks to please. It is certainly not there to provide the armchair which Matisse claimed to design for his tired

clients to sink into. It has indeed the positive virtue of being in bad taste. Very little great art has been able to be both tasteful and truthful, and it is a measure of the magnitude of a Mozart, a Jane Austen or a Watteau that they were able to carry taste and truth equally balanced. But they were all artists who died young. Rembrandt and Beethoven, as they grew older, found that taste had to be jettisoned, leaving their fingernails filthy and their chamber-pots unemptied, but their art all the healthier.

Yet the acrid color and the forms forced sometimes to the point of caricature have a unity which when seen in some bulk is deeply impressive. This was clear in the exhibition staged by the National Gallery of Victoria, an exhibition which did not mark an end to development as do some retrospective shows, but seemed to be a new take-off point, the flight-path of which was towards a greater degree of expressionism. And it is perhaps no accident that the Vietnam war, that most expressionist of all wars, ran through the work. One other activity which has been deepened and sharpened by this expressionism has been that of portraiture. The portraits were always interesting as pictures but, with a few exceptions, less penetrating in the handling of their subjects. Now they bite harder into the external appearance as well as the personality, and at the same time show a much greater range of technical response. Who could have expected the touches broken with such affection and memory as those which constructed the drawing which was the

prelude to the Ian Turner Memorial Number of *Overland*?

Now at sixty-five, the face with its sharply pointed gimlet nose, pink-skinned and clear-eyed, is framed with white whiskers like those of a nineteenth century member of the Jockey Club, a face which with the polo-necked sweaters and smart jackets give him a healthy, even jaunty, look which triumphs over the physical and spiritual pain he has suffered. Now he can exhibit with Rudy Komon with no feeling of self-betrayal, for he has stuck to his political and artistic guns even when those guns have sometimes seemed to his friends to be potentially more dangerous to the user than to the targets at which they are aimed.

For the future he will travel as he has done so often, with France often the pivot of his journeys. Perhaps it is the atmosphere of French radicalism which attracts him, perhaps because, of all the great Western countries, France is the only one which still has a real peasantry—even in the cities with all those tough virtues and vices which the artist admires. But he may also travel in his work in a way which would bring him still closer to the major European artist of recent times to whom he is most akin, the strangely and perhaps deliberately neglected Belgian painter and sculptor, Permeke. Could he then, like Permeke, find his figures bursting from paint into bronze? If this should happen, Australia's sad need for a figurative sculptor of quality may be in some way satisfied.

The New Ockerism and the New Conservatism

GLEN LEWIS

It no longer seems alarmist to think that a decisive shift to the right has taken place in Australian politics. After a time of lethargy and disarray the Australian conservatives have made a strong comeback and re-established their traditional dominance of the federal political arena. The new element this time is that as the world-wide economic and energy problems have made their effects felt Australian political life has become increasingly polarised; the hostilities aroused by Fraser's overthrow of the Whitlam government have not healed with time but grown worse. Probably and with luck Australia will not become another Chile or South Africa, but it could easily come to be more like Queensland, and Queensland is no longer a democratic state.

But how have the Australian conservatives managed to win back and retain popular support? The short answer is that they have succeeded in formulating a new and more dynamic identity for themselves. Their leaders — most obviously Malcolm Fraser himself — have been able to project a more attractive personal image of conservative identity to the electorate. Figures like Fraser, Bjelke-Petersen, Court, and Hamer have managed to appear as more dynamic and realistic alternatives than their Labor counter-parts. Of recent Labor leaders only Gough Whitlam captured the attention and imagination of the public in a comparable way. Bill Hayden, in contrast, has appeared as too earnest and prosaic a figure to counteract the force of the new conservatives. Dunstan was an important figure and Wran currently is, but Bob Hawke, the man with the most charisma in Labor's leadership ranks, is still waiting in the wings of parliamentary politics.

Although this answer seems a realistic one it only raises more questions. What, for instance, are the circumstances which have led to the present dominance of the conservatives? What's new

about the new conservatism? And what isn't sufficiently new about Labor's approach? I think these kinds of questions can best be answered in terms of cultural politics rather than conventional party-politics. One of the most crucial features of the new political styles is that through the increasing influence of the mass media personality now has become a dominant part of the Australian political process. This is a very dangerous thing, but it already has happened and it won't go away if we don't talk about it; if anything the tendency to treat complex political issues in terms of what Bob Hawke (or Phil Lynch) had for breakfast is still increasing.

The new Australian conservatism has proceeded side by side with a resurgence of the old ocker values — the new conservatism and the new ockerism, that is, are related developments. Granted, neither Fraser nor Bjelke-Petersen are ockers in the normal sense of the word (how could the ex-Father of the Year be an ocker?) but their politics and public personalities tacitly favour ockerism. Both the new conservatism and the new ockerism should be seen, at least originally, as defensive reactions to the election of a federal social-democratic government in 1972 and the emergence at the same time of a vocal Australian feminist movement. In other words, the new conservatism has created a favorable political climate for the re-statement of those sexist, racist, and xenophobic values and attitudes which historically have been an integral part of the Australian mateship tradition.

To illustrate this theme I want to briefly compare two well-known Australian public figures who are not normally thought of together — Joh Bjelke-Petersen and John Singleton. They represent two of the faces of extreme Australian conservatism in the 'seventies — while Singleton

was the model of the new ockerism, Bjelke-Petersen exemplified the new conservatism. Though there never seems to have been any direct connection between them, comparing the two is a way of outlining the dangerous political consequences which result when personality becomes a dominant factor in public life. Bjelke-Petersen and Singleton are both newsworthy because they're both entertaining; they have been two of the more notorious and sensational figures of Australian public life in the 'seventies, and to that extent they are untypical of the normal behavior of traditional Australian conservatives. On the other hand their visibility seems to be one of the elements of the new conservatism. It no longer matters if you're prejudiced or bigoted, that is, as long as you do it in public and also present yourself as a good bloke.

Though the two men are strikingly different in almost every way they share a commitment to right-wing politics. Singleton has always been first and foremost an advertising man but he also founded the Workers Party, which had an extremist commitment to free enterprise. Petersen's career has reversed those priorities; his first love always has been politics, but to a large extent his political appeal has derived from his old-fashioned, folksy world-view. He has made a stand for the value of an orderly and orthodox society in unambiguously fundamentalist terms. In other words, Singleton has been firstly a cultural force in Australian society and a political figure only secondarily, whereas Bjelke-Petersen has been a major political figure whose cultural influence has been less important. What they share as public personalities, however, is that each man has shown real originality and creativity in their own chosen fields, while at the same time strongly upholding conservative social and political values.

The two both came from quite ordinary backgrounds and worked their way up. They are self-made men and proud of it. They have a direct approach to life which simplifies the world, and this is one reason why they can successfully project so clear and uncomplicated an image — that in itself appeals to a mass audience. They both have fixed ideas about how the world should be run, and they divide it up along black-and-white lines which results in a heroes and villains — or a football team — perspective on how things work.

For Petersen the villains are the unions, socialism, and communism — which put together spells the Labor Party. Labor is also anathema for

Singleton; his first important job was with Berry Currie, then the agency which handled Federal Liberal Party advertising. His other villains are education and intellectuals: the best way to succeed in advertising, he wrote in his 1979 book *True Confessions*, is not to have any bullshit degrees. Singleton and Petersen also both dislike and probably fear feminism.

Their heroes are more dissimilar. Bjelke-Petersen has always championed the man of the land and Queensland. Like Fraser but unlike Singleton he seems to have had no close friends; instead he has placed most of his needs for personal support on his wife and family. The positive virtues for him are stereotypical rather than personal. As Hugh Lunn has pointed out, the Queensland Premier is the apotheosis of the protestant work ethic. His favorite reading when young was the Bible and success stories about Henry Ford, Ben Franklin, and Edison. Actually it is difficult to clearly identify the positive principles he supports or the individuals he admires. One of the most distinctive personal enthusiasms he has developed is flying: when asked what his happiest experience was he mentioned neither his marriage — which didn't take place till he was forty — nor his part in Whitlam's defeat, but the day when he got his first aeroplane. But he certainly does have a passion for the material development of his own state. His ego needs seem to have gone into his own political career which he has associated with the development of Queensland, especially the country. Temperamentally he is an ascetic and highly self-motivated. Like Fraser, he is a loner.

Singleton, in contrast, is apparently a highly gregarious man who enjoys the company of others, especially his mates. He also has a taste for fighting, both in private and public. Since his recent and well-publicised retirement at the age of thirty-five as a millionaire, he has put his energies into supporting a Sydney football team and sponsoring popular entertainments like circuses, rodeos, and Rocky Gattelari's ill-fated attempted comeback. In most of these activities masculinity is a dominant concern — women seem to have no place in his public world. Whereas wife and family have been very important to Petersen, Singleton's book of reminiscences is full of fond stories about his mates and barely mentions the opposite sex.

Both men have also used the media to great advantage in their careers. Singleton is quite blasé about this in his book; in a mock-humble manner he writes only one page about the media,

saying that it's very, very simple. Reading between the lines, however, it's fairly clear that he made better use of television than any of his advertising contemporaries, just as Joh — via his press secretary Alan Callaghan — so skilfully manipulated the media in Queensland.

With a series of highly creative campaigns, many of which worked, Singleton established his agency SPASM (Singleton, Palmer, Strauss, and McAllan) as one of the leading Sydney companies shortly after he had branched out on his own. In 1971 the agency was sold to the American Doyle, Dane, Bernbach group reportedly for over two million dollars. Two of his campaigns were specially memorable. In his first TV commercials for Norman Ross, the Sydney retail discount house, he broke radically with conventional good taste by having a minister testify to the genuineness of the offer. "I remember thinking," Singleton writes characteristically, "this was a job for good old God." Nothing could be more removed from Bjelke-Petersen's Sunday-school teaching past or his continued professed piety. Secondly, Singleton devised the nerve-wrenching "Where d'ya get it" campaign for supermarket products, so opening a field which till then hadn't been sold on television. The philosophy behind this ad was pure Singleton: no fancy frills, low budget graphics, and a piercing nasal ocker voice repeating the key phrase over and over. People didn't like it, but some loved to hate it, and most remembered.

Since 'retiring' Singleton has continued to use the media to promote his own public identity. While it lasted, his TV program on Channel 10 was another Singleton first. In America shows like that were appropriately called "ugly TV" — people would place themselves in ridiculous and humiliating situations just to be on television. Singleton used an array of bizarre talents and people, ranging from underworld crime figures to Queenie Paul and Billy McMahon. Sport was a central part of the show, and so was sex, but otherwise women had no place in it. Since Singleton has left TV he has turned to journalism and is currently writing for Australian Playboy and the Bulletin. The medium has changed but the message is the same. Singleton is constructing a critical ocker's view of Australian life which is as idiosyncratic, flamboyant, and plausible in its own way as the commentary of Max Harris or Phillip Adams.

Petersen's use of the media was quite different but just as effective. Through the services of his

media expert Allan Callaghan Joh pulled himself out of a situation in late 1970 when his own party had moved a no-confidence motion in his leadership, to his first big public relations breakthrough with the state of emergency regulations proclamation during the Springbok tour of 1971. He marched on next to his greatest electoral win when he decimated the state Labor Party in 1974, then capped that by his leading role in the defeat of Whitlam in 1975. Whereas Singleton's specialty in media management had been advertising, Joh's forte was his skilled manipulation of public opinion by a carefully orchestrated public relations campaign, the band leader of which was Allan Callaghan.

Callaghan's background was similar to Bjelke-Petersen's and Singleton's in that he was another ambitious self-made man. After some time in Canberra learning the trade he came back to Queensland, where after a few initial confrontations with Joh on the other side of the microphone as an ABC news roundsman, he formed a close personal and working relationship with the Premier which helped to boost Bjelke-Petersen's public image. In the early days of his premiership Bjelke-Petersen was quite inept in public situations involving the media; later, with Callaghan's tutelage, he could succeed in getting the best of David Frost on television. This media-oriented approach to politics helped Joh's party as well as Joh. When the state Country Party became reborn as the National Party the change took place American-style, with pretty girls in tight T-shirts dancing to a ragtime jazz band at the convention room of the Crest Hotel. And it helped. In 1974 the party won its first ever seat in Brisbane, and though it has since lost that particular seat it has continued to maintain an electoral base in the metropolitan area.

How then has traditional Australian political culture been changed in the seventies by the impact of public figures like Singleton and Bjelke-Petersen?

One effect has been that by steering so closely to the right-wing lunatic fringe they have made it much easier for other less outspoken conservatives to appear more plausible. Figures like Killen, for instance, seem to act and speak with some integrity compared with Bjelke-Petersen's wilder moments. But the effect goes much further than this. It is crucial not to minimise the real political and cultural power and influence that men like Bjelke-Petersen and Singleton already exert.

Whitlam made the mistake of treating Bjelke-

Australian Book Review

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Petersen as a joke, and today he sits on the sidelines while Bjelke-Petersen remains Premier of Queensland. It is probably more correct to think that visibility and eccentricity is an increasingly important ingredient of the new conservative image.

A second effect is that the new conservatism has succeeded in incorporating some anti-authoritarian values in its frame of reference and in transmitting these between different generations. That is, the differences in values and attitudes between Bjelke-Petersen and Singleton are now representative, to some extent, of real generational differences that exist among many Australians. Singleton is now in his mid-to-late thirties, whereas Bjelke-Petersen is sixty-eight. The conservative cliché that the radicals of today are the conservatives of tomorrow is relevant here: Singleton represents that great Australian character type, *larrikin*, who in the course of time becomes a populist of the Bjelke-Petersen variety.

Singleton's casual, long-haired image is admittedly the opposite of the Queensland premier's formal and correct approach, but both of them project maverick Jack the Giant Killer attitudes. Both come across with anti-authoritarian messages of a conservative kind: Singleton is anti-big government, and Joh is anti-big unions and anti-southern dominance of Queensland. Both men have appealed to the average Australian, using slogans and rhetoric referring to the dignity of ordinary people, and they have modelled their own public images on those lines.

Thirdly, at the level of formulating social ideals, figures like Bjelke-Petersen and Singleton have re-written the desirable relationships that are held to exist between Australian nationalism and materialism. Singleton's indulgent yet hard-working life-style has helped to establish a new respectability for *ocker* nationalism and patriotism which helps to reinforce conservative standards. Whereas Joh's own lifestyle is relatively ascetic and conventional, the image created around Singleton's is that it moves between the fringes of Sydney's social and show-biz elect, via his beautiful wife and sometime media personality Maggi Eckhardt, across to prawns and beer with the boys at the football club. "I might be a bit of a lad", the Singleton public image is repeatedly saying, "but I'm a dinkum Aussie. I look after my mates and that makes me all right."

Singleton is far more of a nationalist and chauvinist than the Queensland Premier. Bjelke-Petersen, contrary to many critics' claims, is not a uniquely Queensland figure, but it is true that

he is a uniquely Australian state political figure. The material development of Queensland and the preservation of its boundaries have become personal moral issues for Joh as he has defined his own public identity in those terms. Therefore no-one can convincingly accuse him of vulgar materialism or simple-minded greed, because he sees the development of his home state as a moral imperative sanctioned by Christian principles and common decency. The charges of hypocrisy against him are more plausible, but they still miss the point that Joh's own public identity is now inextricably bound up with Queensland. So to criticise Joh is to criticise Queensland, and many Queenslanders defend him against critics for that reason.

The political consequences of these new cultural orientations have mostly been regressive. Singleton's advertising know-how was behind the 1974 anti-Labor/anti-Communist TV commercials screened in NSW and Victoria. These featured "an Estonian lady" in Sydney and Ron Barassi in Melbourne making vitriolic and manipulative claims about Labor and Communism. According to Singleton Sir Robert Askin, then Premier of NSW, described the spots as the most effective political advertising he'd seen. Apart from explicit election ads like this, the Singleton style re-emerged in the mid-seventies anti-inflation commercials, which showed Australia as a cake that the terrible rats of inflation (translation: the unions, strikers, and the unemployed) were eating away at. And most recently there's been the ominous "Have a go Aussie, we can do it" commercials, which are subliminal conservative propaganda. Singleton may or may not have devised these but the style is similar — make it *ocker*, sing a song, show muscles and boobs, and you get your message through. If Singleton deserves to be remembered for just one thing, it should be that he was the man who first destroyed the line between advertising and propaganda on Australian television.

Bjelke-Petersenism, on the other hand, has boosted Queensland's material development and also achieved more independence for the state from both federal government and southern business controls, at the price of selling the farm to the American and Japanese multi-nationals. It has also fostered a social climate of paranoia and conformism in the everyday life of people living in the state. The visible expressions of this vary from the sustained cruelty of the victimisation of the conservationist John Sinclair for his part in the Fraser Island campaign, to the con-

tinuing erosion of civil liberties and the shackling of the educational system by pressure groups like the Festival of Light, CARE (Committee Against Regressive Education), and STOP (Society to Outlaw Pornography). The rejection of the MACOS and SEMP programs, the exclusion of Greg Weir as unfit to teach because of his homosexuality, and the moral screening procedures now being developed to control teacher selection in Queensland are the social corollary of the Premier's political and economic policies.

To conclude. Generally the seventies have developed as an anxiety fraught and conservative time. There has been a backlash against the strains of social permissiveness and rebellion of

the sixties, as well as a new sense of sobriety stemming from the world's growing ecological, energy, and nuclear problems. In this context the rise to prominence of eccentric figures on the extreme right has been a feature of world politics in the seventies, ranging from Enoch Powell in England and Ronald Reagan in California, to Idi Amin in Africa. In Australia figures like Singleton have helped to create a new conservative cultural climate on right-wing nationalist lines, and figures like Bjelke-Petersen can now act more freely in that setting. They have been the vanguard of the new conservatism and the new ockerism, and their actions and attitudes have been mutually reinforcing.

POLITICIAN ON THIRD- WORLD JUNKET



JAN HERSCHEL

Whyalla: Why I Don't Vote

Whyalla. Steel city of the north. Almost on the edge of the Nullabor — Adelaide, Gepps Cross, Virginia, Two Wells, Port Wakefield, Lochiel, Snowtown, Red Hill, Crystal Brook; the Port Pirie bypass, Solomontown, Port Augusta, Whyalla.

Adelaide to Port Wakefield is bleak at twilight; a black petrifying of trees and small scrub leaning away distorted while the wind blows across the stubble-plains and the sun bleeds like citrus out of the flesh of the sky. The wind blows and the land grieves for its flatness, its isolation, for not being itself, for being shorn and reduced, for not really being part of the idea that invaded it, for being the forgotten back paddock, the splintered posts and rusty barbed wire of rural Australia, the permanent Sunday night with the shops shut to the Friday night with fish and chips of everywhere else. Around Virginia and Two Wells the single hacienda-colonial-style houses sit in the middle of market-gardens, isolated and meaningless with the darkness blowing around them, verandahlessly ignoring the landscape, turning blind eyes to it, marooned, connected to the 625-line color world of detergents and terrorists by snippable, breakable, collapsible powerlines, unable to look at the trees and the plain and the rows of bubble-vegetables and keep looking, artificial, vulnerable, lonely, uneasy. The wind blows speaking to the ghosts of old trees and the houses shut it out, close their curtains and go to sleep. The land is flat, bleak, mournful, until you pass.

And then it's night, the neon and grease fantasy of road-houses, taillights, headlights and the decorations of semi-trailers. You pass Lochiel, with the Hummocks on the left and the salt-lake on the right, that looks pink by day but always photographs white, you pass Snowtown with the S-bend on the railway-line and the roadhouse where a woman used to keep two budgies in a

cage outside even when it was nearly a hundred, and they sweated and fretted and were nearly dead, and the silos there and at Red Hill; Crystal Brook and the foothills of the Flinders Ranges, a low curving line, sculptured, a perfect, perfect folding of rock merging molecularly into the air, and the short dry smile that the road-sign next to the bridge always raised, saying "Crystal Brook Creek" until it was taken down. At night you sometimes couldn't drive without killing mice as they ran across the road from wheatfield to wheatfield. Sometimes by day you killed galahs in the glittering light, because they flew into your path and when you stopped the crows stared at you objectively with their cold-faceted green-glass eyes, telling you you were carrion maturing; by night now you feel the last moisture as you pass the three big gum-trees at Mambray Creek. And there you cross the Goyder line and the seaward land is tidal flats and saltbush; you keep driving and go through Port Augusta with its metal desolation and pass the Iron Knob turnoff. If you leave Adelaide about six you get there about half-past ten.

Whyalla is lively at night, driving in from Adelaide, the columns of light from the steelmills and shipyards among the night on your left, the lights like constellations of stars.

Whyalla consists basically of a nub of settlement around a hillock on Spencer's Gulf. Around the turn of the century it was a water-hole and stopping-stage on a stock-route; the settlement that grew up there, which was already connected with mining, used to be reached by sea, by ketch from Port Pirie. In 1935 Krupp Munitions were making a bid for the mining-rights to the Middleback Ranges, which rights the South Australian government then offered BHP, who took them up. During the Second World War the shipyard built

small ships for the navy, converting to peacetime production afterwards, more or less culminating in the *Clutha Capricorn* (1974). During the 1960s the steelmills were enlarged and the pellet-plant added; the town expanded westwards and grew suburbs.

In the old-established part of the present conglomerate, which is to some extent the managerial part of town, in Essington Lewis Avenue and environs (where the oleanders are pink because white reminded him of funerals), the trees are tall; the houses have verandahs, high ceilings, thick walls. People have been there for forty years or more, gardening, remembering rolling cigarettes from butts during the war; the air is relaxed, tree-sheltered, calm, there is crystal in the cabinets and roast for lunch on Sundays.

As far as I can remember the neighboring streets are settled by the Australian equivalents of miners' cottages, wooden versions of the stone originals around Essington Lewis, without the trees, with an air of evening drawing in, uneven stone driveways, grass among the stones on the footpath.

There is a minor hillock further to the west in about the centre of the present town where there are single-level houses of split-level inspiration with large glass windows: they overlook the flat westernmost suburbs, the bare land and saltbush of Mount Young, and past the inexplicable singleness of that Mount, the knife-blade of the sea. The elevation is soothing; you can forget the suburbs on the relentlessly flat plain — the Housing Trust houses, brick-veneer and semi-detached, virtually verandahless, separated by low cyclone fences, the interior walls made of something like compressed cardboard, the small rooms, the noises from next door, the paper and bits of rubbish blown or thrown along the gutters and paths — as well as one or two private housing developments with courts and crescents and fenceless green lawns and some Housing Trust cluster-housing, flats called "villas".

At the time I am speaking of, five to seven years ago, and possibly still, the suburbs weren't solid massed rows of houses over the complete earth; the land near the coast was salty swamp so that there were areas of blown-wind desolation leading up to the road-edged houses and lying around fenced compounds of machinery and piles of tubular steel and heavy engineering sheds connected with the steelmills; areas where the houses didn't go, waste and watery with metallic weeds, alien and mortal; it was the long skirt of the other

western hill, Mount Laura, running on a line to it, gradually changing up to it, but the houses cut across the line and the swamp was cast off, bitter, acid, despairing; grim and existent, acted on, despised. It was the ultimate image of despair, always there, just beyond the houses. And the closest point to the Horseshoe Caravan Park where the poorest lived, surrounded by it, undermined by it, inhabited by it.

Among the houses on the hill and hillock entertainment could be fairly well described as going to the Aero Club or the Yacht Club perhaps; for the rest, the Single Men of the Single Men's Quarters, the teachers, the housewives, the teenagers, the men there were the pubs, football clubs, bingo, the drive-in, the Workers' Club; some went fishing and some were amateur naturalists, and so on. Whyalla was fine, the saying went, if you were married and liked sport.

At the time I am speaking of there were no public meeting-places in the western part of the town, apart from the staffroom at Stuart High School when that was built; the average annual rainfall was eight inches and the town depended on pipelines from the Murray River, so that in summer all the public grass was brown and the council-planted trees were small and struggling and couldn't give much shade; partly because of the overcrowded housing the town was liable to epidemics of gastro-enteritis and other contagious diseases — in a small 3-bedroom semi-detached there were often two adults and up to eight children.

The town contained people of eighty nationalities in explosive combinations so that on one memorable afternoon when a high school had an early staff meeting the boys took to each other with knives; one pub was known as the bikies' pub and you only ate there quickly, furtively and in a group, and got out again as fast as possible, even though you hardly saw the bikies, and then one Saturday lunchtime you would find the pizza-joint with no plate-glass window because the bikies from down the coast had been up during the night. You eventually found out that the boy who never had any pens or paper or homework and seemed to spend his spare time fighting was beaten up nearly every night by his father who was alcoholic and didn't believe in spending money on either bios or clothes for the kids, and that the boy's sister, who was younger and smaller and almost wouldn't speak was afraid of being hit if she did. Girls who were pregnant were forced to leave school, and there wasn't much employment for women; girls who were

miserable at school left as young as possible and would often get pregnant very soon after; girls who'd had enough "education" wanted to learn shorthand, leave school, get a job, have boy-friends and get married, and down the other end of town the shipyard and the steelmill sprawled and squatted with their offices and double shifts, waiting for the schools to tell them which kids went where. The boys saw it coming and their faces closed and they hated the women who would marry them and keep them there, even while they hated the notion of going to Adelaide or anywhere else, resentful, not willing to know what they knew — that if Adelaide was better than they were being victimised. Houses and factories and the necessary shops. The men were the workers and the wives and children were the anchors to hold them there and the kids were to grow up and keep each other there. Minimal houses and H.P. shops and factories, the pub, the drive-in and the dogs.

Whyalla lies on a plain, a red-dust plain that stretches from Port Augusta to Perth; the nub of the town is so small that it scarcely exists; it is a suburb adrift in the saltbush. But it lies by Spencer Gulf, the ever-surprising sea you come to at the top of the hill turning left to leave the town. You expect the saltbush but you find the sea, pale green-turquoise-blue like the sky, except that the molecules of movement are heavier, faintly darker; the colors at evening go on in the sky, color behind color. The Gulf lies like a lake, moving, quiet and changing.

The earth is bright red. On the edges of the suburbs the lawns, kerbing and burnt, blown roses face the unkerbed desert-beginning of saltbush and occasional myall-trees that turn black in the enormous sunsets; the patient land that at midday isn't beneath your feet at all but rises singing into the blazing air, transformed into heaven in the burning geometries of the ascending light, transformed, transmuted, at sunset lies open, making obeisance to the sun, a foreground to the patterns that move and whirl and change to iridescent green and yellow and purple but remain within it, enclosed by the sun's perimeter. The land recognises the fire inside and outside itself, its temporary solidity and separation from the air and the space between and the sun beyond, and holds the saltbush and myall motionless, arrested, self-sufficient; the land becomes a place where human beings aren't needed, intrude, only walk in mind — and then the sky has changed, gulf-blue in the east, madonna-blue above and

citrus-salmon in the west, the scraped flesh of itself, the womb of everything that is creating the air that it weeps.

And then the sun sets and the exhausted roses gasp themselves out from the edge of their exile among the abrupt bare red brick houses, and the surreal bitumen wanders, through a circle of nothing at all.

A thinnish strip of land grows wheat around the Middleback. But what you see or saw as you drove the last distance to the northern end of the range is the mountain of iron cut down to its heart, a huge pole of red or purple iron that pulls you towards it magnetically faster and faster until the road makes a sudden curve to the right and takes you through the town of Iron Knob — old wooden mining-cottages, dark and small-windowed under an almost visible black fog of melancholy; beyond them hang rock-falls of rubble, the mountain of Iron Monarch uprooted and spilled, smashed and featureless, tipped like stilted liquid over its slopes, crumbling. The plain can't speak to it any more. Without their mountain the distant trees are meaningless. At midday from the road on the Kimba side, among the air and cicada-hum you can see a ledge of hill step away from itself and fall, and the dust fade away upwards into the sky. All down the range the hills are visible to each other, high point to high point. Iron Knob doesn't exist any more. One by one they won't exist any more, the Pilbara, the Hammersleys, the Kimberleys, Mount Isa; like Iron Knob, and Iron Monarch, or Iron Duchess that's going to be a hole. Or, after Harry Butler, a length of f.a.q. not quite wheatland. All the shapes, the magnetism, the contours from the hills that ripple outwards in the air so that you walk in and on them from miles away, all the dreaming totemic silence will be gone.

From time to time they still say they're going to put a petrochemical plant on the gulf near Port Pirie; the quiet, subtle, vulnerable gulf.

As you look at Whyalla as you come into it from Iron Knob, you can see the tension crammed into the tiny houses, all the seething living frustration and violence and despair, and all the space whoever had the power could've used if they'd wanted to build a civilisation, and as you look you realize that instead of that they will destroy the country and the people both.

I saw a mining magnate once. Well, not so much a magnate as a representative of a mining company. I happened to see him in profile; from the front he wore a three-piece suit and was a

family man and had a house and a wife and kids and loved them and sent the kids to school and paid the fees. From the side you could see the emptiness in the visionless eyes and his soul and the enormous black hunger in him and the mountains disappearing and disappearing into it forever, because he thought all hunger was physical.

Politics in Australia has always been piecemeal, concerned with who gets what of the profits

from the wholesale destruction of the country. Deserts are places where you dump waste and test weapons, or where voters don't live, or at least, not in plague proportions.

Time passes. One of the kids I was occasionally in the same classroom with is in jail for rape. Two that I know of are dead. And the most beautiful thunder-egg I have ever seen is on sale, in the British Museum of Natural History.

**WHO SAYS I'M NOT AMBITIOUS
YOU'VE GOT TO CATCH A COLD SOMEWHERE**

sorry dad.

80 years ago the average australian was 9 foot tall. superdad of our land/heroes in the desert.

i look at my father. from a distance.
he looks at his shrinking son. sorry dad.

from a distance the rifle is a thing of grace and firing that rifle is an art. as a child i was never good at most sports but i was an expert marksman . . . odd, i had to shoot lefthanded because i couldn't close my left eye.

jim came up today and spoke of suicide his messy brains all over the table. to fire a gun at close range is nothing but defeat whether it's a target, wounded animal or yourself. i remember the blood, the thrashing around, the shot that didn't quite make it the rabbit that moved. jim and i dug around a bit. found a bottle of pills and we both felt better.

LES WICKS

JOHN SENDY

Whyalla, and some Reds

I first knew Whyalla thirty years ago in the days when the revolution was still only some distance around the corner. The recent announcement that the town sports the highest level of unemployment in the country prompted memories of the days when employment in shipyards or blast furnace was given to most who came, with often a BHP company house or a State Government Housing Trust home. Whyalla was hot, new, BHP, and union.

There were not many other places in 1949 where one could speak to lunch-hour factory-gate audiences or evening street meetings to support the coal strike without being booed, pelted or chased, for many Whyalla people had been unemployed not so long before and hadn't forgotten. They were battlers from the inland, those who had worked on the face at Iron Knob in the early days, militant nomads who drifted out within a few months after living at the BHP single men's quarters, depression casualties who had landed a job during or after the war.

Such workers were naturally sceptical about employers, thought twice before condemning the actions of unions and felt uneasy when soldiers tried to do miners work on the coalfields. This, despite their general political apathy. The town-dwellers knew Communists anyway; the portly Joe Brazel, an early resident and one of them; Eric Stead, the sun-burnt, cracked-lipped toiler who most acknowledged was "as honest as the day is long", and many others who worked, lived and drank beside them.

Over two hundred miles north of Adelaide, Whyalla is surrounded by desperately dry country. Blue bush and western myall in their millions add a smoky haze to the distance, as do the Flinders Ranges across Spencer's Gulf. The western myall, *Acacia sowdenii*, a beautiful little

silvery grey tree seen only in that part of the country, is virtually the only tree found there, and possesses tough wood similar to mulga.

In the years following the war Whyalla boasted the highest birthrate in Australia. The locals theorised about the reasons for this record. Every morning the BHP ore train clanked past the town at five o'clock on its way to Iron Knob, waking everyone. Too early to get up and too late to go back to sleep! Such was the story!

Street after street after street of identical brick Housing Trust homes were bordered by harsh, glaring soil. This soil fed the frequent winds with blinding red dust. Once or twice a year it turned into quagmires which made walking and bike riding a nightmarish ordeal.

Youth and old people were few in those years, the families were young, the worn young mothers tied to the house, the husbands to BHP. There were three hotels, two picture theatres (one open-air), an airport, a daily bus service to Port Augusta linking with the Adelaide-bound train, a night-cart service and a dairy — run by the BHP, as was practically everything else in the town. Cars were few, not yet replacing the push-bike and bus as the chief means of transport.

When in Whyalla I lived at the Robertson household at the top end of Rudall Avenue, a friendly place, as those of large families are so frequently. George and Ann Robertson hailed from the inland, from far-flung station properties. George had worked as a stockman round Tibooburra, Innaminka, Cooper's Creek, Murnpeowie. He possessed the lithe, skinny-bummed physique, and the abhorrence of walking, of the man who has spent much of his life in the saddle.

Early in the war they had come to Whyalla where George and Ann, together with their eldest

son Eddie, joined the Communist Party in 1942. Because I was a close friend of Eddie's and like him worked full-time for the Party, the Robertsons treated me as one of the family. They were warm-hearted, good-humored and generous folk.

The small, attached, Trust home was usually packed with people, married sons and daughters, their wives and husbands, friends and neighbors. Despite the fact that six people usually slept there, beds for more always could be found — and food. "There's never a shortage of meat and bread in this house."

George worked at the BHP blast furnace on shift work round the clock. He had some characteristics which could be amusing, depending on the angle from which they were viewed. All cooking was done on a wood stove in the corner of the kitchen. During the colder weather in his idle hours George would sit reading or talking on a kitchen chair at one side of the stove, with his legs stretched up across to the opposite hob. Ann busily cooked across these legs, with obvious and considerable inconvenience, while George held forth about "that bastard Menzies", the BHP, the victories of the Chinese Red Army, or else read the Advertiser or Tribune with widely-opened arms. This situation never ceased to amaze me. Only once did I ever hear Ann remonstrate with him about it. Frying chops one day she spilled a little hot fat on the outstretched legs. As George hopped about yelling "You silly clumsy bitch," Ann, agitated and apologetic, exclaimed, "Well, you *will* sit there!"

Normally a cheery soul, George was always in a foul mood before commencing the midnight shift — and who could blame him? At about eleven thirty, after everyone else in the house was nicely off to sleep, he would launch himself from the kitchen table, grab his gladstone bag, walk zombie-like to the wire door which he hit with some part of his body. The door would fly open and crash closed resoundingly. By this time he would be ten yards down the yard on his way to the bus-stop. Everyone in the house was wakened and the kitchen light was still on.

The fortnightly Communist Party branch meetings were held in the Robertson lounge room — it was used for little else. In the cold war, anti-communist atmosphere of the coal strike, the Sharpley Royal Commission and the threat of illegality, a tenseness often marked those meetings even though they were generally unremarkable affairs.

Chairman of the Whyalla branch was Joe

Brazel, the local secretary of the Ironworkers Union, the only full-time trade union official in the town. A bachelor, large, genial, gentle and shrewd, Joe was a well-liked and prominent figure. He liked his beer and after work could always be found in the bar of the Whyalla hotel or the Bay View. He was often slightly embarrassed when I found him so engaged, for he considered me a strict disciplinarian. These activities were probably responsible for his main shortcoming in conducting the meetings. Invariably Joe would doze off. Nudges, digs and bumps were freely administered to keep him abreast with proceedings.

Along with one or two other ironworkers Joe always travelled to the meetings by taxi which he arranged — shrewd fellow that he was — to return sharp at ten o'clock. You can't keep a taxi waiting, can you?

Joe Brazel's story is one of under-privilege, tenacity and principle. I rarely remember Whyalla without thinking of him.

The son of a miner, he was born at Coolgardie in 1899. By the time he was three both his parents were dead. After living with impoverished relations at Peterborough, South Australia, for a short period, Joe and his sister and two brothers were installed in a Catholic orphanage on Goodwood Road in Adelaide. Both food and education were limited; the children walked to their places for meals with hands on heads making it difficult for them to snatch, unnoticed, the food belonging to others, usually boiled eggs or bread and dripping. Nonetheless Joe considered that the orphanage did its best under great difficulties, inasmuch as it received no state assistance.

At the age of nine Joe was selected by a Catholic farmer to work on his farm. He received threepence per week and was educated and cared for, but in the process lost contact with one of his brothers for evermore.

The farm was at Baroota, out from Port Germein, in the lower Flinders Ranges. Each Sunday the family went to Mass and Joe was given threepence to put in the collection plate. However he usually feinted this action thereby achieving a weekly income which allowed him to buy a big bag of lollies.

At seventeen Joe obtained work on the construction site of the Baroota Reservoir where he remained for three years, first as a water boy and then as a driver of a horse and scoop, at a wage of four shillings a day. There Joe Brazel

experienced his first strike. The horsedriviers had to catch and harness their horses, grease their equipment and provide their own whips. They struck for an extra fourpence a day, for greasing and harnessing time. After several days on strike the men won the extra fourpence and resumed work. A further strike secured the transferring of an obnoxious, authoritarian foreman, "Paddy the Pig," who used to time the men's attendance at the toilet.

After leaving Baroota Joe worked for several years at the big Broken Hill Associated Smelters plant at Port Pirie and on the waterfront there. Then he went to Iron Knob to dig and break iron ore up on the mountain, Iron Monarch. Following this he toiled for two and a half years driving a threehorse scoop on the Todd River Reservoir Project. But once again he returned to Port Pirie to work for several years on the waterfront until 1933.

Most of the work involved shovelling huge piles of dusty and smoky ores into the ships holds. There were no toilets; the men climbed under the wharf to relieve themselves. When the wind blew from the north sulphur and lead smoke and dust scalded the eyes. The bull system operated with four pick-ups per day; workers just stood around for hours on end waiting to be picked out by foremen. With widespread unemployment and poverty existing, crushes of men developed. One day a man collapsed and Joe and a friend pulled him out of a crush of competing workers. The man died, yet the boss continued selecting labor and many of the unemployed workers proceeded to try for selection. Joe Brazel developed a hatred for the bull system and the bosses. He admired the work of Jim Healy and the Waterside Workers Federation in finally removing it.

In 1933 Joe went to Whyalla, commencing his long association with that town and the BHP. He procured employment in the loading gang working under the loading bin, opening the hatches which placed ore onto the conveyer belts taking

it to the ships. One evening a fellow worker, Tim Hunt, was trapped in the loading bin. At great personal risk Joe entered the bin and worked for twelve hours to release the man. Joe received the Kings Medal for Bravery for that act, going to South Australia's Government House for the award.

A member of the Ironworkers Union, Joe was approached by Federal Secretary, Ernie Thornton, to become Whyalla branch secretary of the union, an unpaid position at that time. It was very hard to get men to stand up to the all-powerful BHP in Whyalla in those early days. Brazel agreed and soon became involved in advising on industrial disputes.

Elected as full-time Whyalla-Port Pirie Branch Secretary of the Union in 1941, Joe spent ten years in the job before the 1951 Court-controlled ballot, and the Industrial Group challenge, ousted all the Communist officials of the Union throughout the country. With Joe's popularity and the poor calibre of his replacement it was hard to believe in his defeat, yet the anti-Communist campaign of those cold war days, following the coal strike and the Victorian Royal Commission into Communism, was considerable.

Joe had been Secretary of the Whyalla Cycling Club for eleven years and the mainstay of the social Left Hand Club, and belonged to many other local organisations. Yet so strong was the BHP hold on the town that he could not obtain employment in the town after his defeat, at a time of labour shortage. After a stint of bottle-collecting he was forced to leave Whyalla.

Eventually Joe got work elsewhere. One wonders whether the hundreds unemployed today will be as lucky.

When last I heard Joe was in Adelaide, still actively following political and industrial events, Ann Robertson lived in Broken Hill but George had died. Meanwhile a Robertson grandson keeps wickets for South Australia.



"The Troops"
April '39
W. C. Sullivan

"The Troops"

We print opposite the famous caricature of the Swanston Family group of Melbourne intellectuals and radicals as drawn by Noel Counihan in 1939.

Overland is indebted to Bill Dolphin, violin-maker, repairer and dealer, and to Noel Counihan, for notes on this drawing.

When Bill Dolphin moved his workroom from Elizabeth Street to 272 Bourke Street around 1934, it became desirable to find a suitable water-hole for a group of friends who had been meeting to talk and drink with each other for some time. After a couple of knock-backs Bill got a warm welcome from Ma Lewis, a big Irish-woman, at the Swanston Family, then on the corner of Swanston Street and Little Bourke. "Yes, me boys, we'll look after you here." Ma Lewis was prepared to accept the bargain: a lot of new trade in return for admission of women to the bar and a reasonable policy on tick for hard-up drinkers. The Swanston Family remained a meeting spot for thirty years. "It was a place," says Bill Dolphin, "where you could always find some mates after returning to Melbourne from an absence, where you could always borrow ten bob, and where you could find out what had been happening while you were away."

The first four figures from the left are Theo Moody, at that time a Herald journalist; Brian Fitzpatrick; Noel Counihan and (embracing Counihan) Judah Waten. Behind Judah Waten is Ken Bretherton, physician, in front of him Norman Porter, philosopher and linguist. The big man right at the back with the cigarette is Patrick Stanley, "the father of the tribe", writer, poet, friend of artists and a real estate agent "of a most unusual kind". In front of him is Philip Las Gouges, artist, and in the double-breasted suit, David Aronson, at that time a solicitor, now a barrister. Next is Bill Dolphin, with the sweater;

in front of him, with the pipe, is Leslie Kelly, artist.

Leaning on Dolphin's shoulder is Nutter Buzzacott, artist. Beside him is Bert Jennings, another atypical estate agent. In profile below Buzzacott is Albert Phillips, psychiatrist, and in front of him Raphael Wysokier, artist and hand-bag maker. Second from the right is John Gordon, philosopher and cosmetics manufacturer, and at the right is John Walter Sampson, artist.

Of this group those still living are Noel Counihan, Judah Waten, Norman Porter, Ken Bretherton, David Aronson and John Gordon.

The idea of the drawing was Bill Dolphin's. Judah and Noel were going off to New Zealand to try their hand at making some money on what was to be the first leg of a trip to Europe. (Previous to this they had been working as a team, travelling the country towns, with Counihan making pencil portraits and Waten organizing exhibitions of them.) In New Zealand Counihan worked on contract for the liberal New Zealand Observer, travelling the whole country doing caricatures of leading figures: "Some of the best work I ever did". These were exhibited in Wellington. Judah Waten first got a job as a chef's assistant in a mountain pub, and then went into the public service. After the outbreak of war Counihan got involved in political activity, and became the acting secretary of the anti-conscription and anti-war movement. He also met his wife Pat there, and married her. Thirteen months after his arrival in New Zealand Counihan was deported back to Australia as a political undesirable.

The caricature of the Swanston Family group, which Nutter Buzzacott had reproduced, was sold around the circle and raised £8 or £9 to help Counihan and Waten on their way. It was drawn by Counihan entirely from memory.

MANNING CLARK

Brian Fitzpatrick

A speech at the launching of Don Watson's book "Brian Fitzpatrick", February 1979.

It is my privilege to launch a book about one of Australia's great native sons, Brian Fitzpatrick. It is appropriate that it should be launched at a trade union hall in Melbourne, because for much of his life Brian saw Labor as one means of salvation for the people of Australia. I feel quite inadequate to find the words to do justice to the occasion.

Brian was born at Cudgee near Koroit on 17 November 1905, just 28 years after that wayward, vagrant spirit Dr Walter Richardson, the original of Richard Mahony, was laid to rest in the Koroit cemetery early in August 1879. Brian was nearly seventeen and already rightly sceptical about University Liberals when the band was playing "Abide With Me" at Waverley cemetery early in September 1922 for the funeral of Henry Lawson. In 1940 Brian was finishing probably the best thing he ever wrote—"The Economic Consequences of The Australian Gold Discoveries"—which was to become a chapter of his major contribution to the understanding of Australian history, *The British Empire in Australia*.

This was the flowering time of his life. There were the two major works; there was the work with the Australian Council of Civil Liberties; there was the journalism, especially the column "Brian Fitzpatrick Thinks" in Smith's Weekly—and many other activities. In the latter part of the flowering years he had the good fortune to be helped by Dorothy Davies. She was his muse: she played the role of Mrs Elvsted to Australia's Ejler Lovborg.

He was writing those works in Melbourne while Martin Boyd, also of Irish descent, was having curious experiences in the Chapel of Kings College, Cambridge, which were written into *Lucinda Brayford* and became a milestone on a pilgrimage which was to take him in the end to Rome.

I mention these connections, parallels, coincidences, call them what you will, because, as Don Watson shows so well in his book, Brian had the same problems as all Australia's gifted sons and daughters. I mean he was one of those persons through whom the gale of life blows very high. So he had to learn how not to be crushed under foot by the giant of British philistinism in Australia. He also had to learn how a person, who passionately rejects the society dominated by men with the values of the money changers, could contribute towards building a society based on different values. He knew from his wide reading that Australia, like America, Canada and New Zealand, was an immigrant society, in which middle-class affluence seemed to be within the reach of everyone. They were also societies in which most of their members worshipped the golden calf. He feared the Australian Labor Party either could not or would not build a new society. Another great Australian native son had taught him that the history of labor was a story of how a band of idealists degenerated into a vast machine for the capture of political power.

As Don Watson shows in this book, Brian searched in vain for an answer to those problems, an answer, that is, with which he could live without disquiet. I believe the frantic search explains the passion and the compassion in his works. It helps to explain why his voice, in the words of Henry Lawson, went further than college walls. He spoke to the people of Australia, because his problem was their problem. Because of this a huge variety of people was to remember him as a mighty spirit. Like Adam Lindsay Gordon, Marcus Clarke, Henry Lawson and Christopher Brennan, in time he wore the ravaged face of a man who had been deeply hurt. He became another victim of our ancient, barbaric continent. He became a victim of all those men

who come to the top in Australia, all those men who ask when they see a man like Brian or a Henry Lawson "Who is this dreamer?" and answer "We must kill him."

So you will understand why my illustration of Brian's savage pilgrimage and search probably would not even find a place in Don's most illuminating book. I remember very vividly the time in Canberra in 1954 when I had the privilege to introduce Brian to Eris O'Brien, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Canberra. You won't be surprised to hear that Brian was most courtly. He bowed, shook the Archbishop's hand, and said, "Your Grace." Eris O'Brien, responding with equal warmth, said: "How do you do, Mr Fitzpatrick?" Now, symbolically, you might see it, as I did then, as a scene in which a son of Catholic Truth confronted a son of the Enlightenment. You might also see it as a scene in which two Irish Australians gave each other that unmistakable look of recognition and sympathy.

What struck me was the look of sadness on the faces both of the man who stood on what Newman called entrenched ground, and on the face of the man who was never sure where he stood. It was the sadness of two men who knew deep down that what they wanted most in life was never likely to happen—either in this world, or any other world. They knew they had to find as best they could the strength and the dignity to endure to the end. I had the impression they both knew deep down the ancient wisdom of their own people in Australia. "Show your heart to no man . . . yes, and no woman either."

I saw Brian then, and see him now, as a person who very rarely let anyone know what was going on inside him. Behind the external courtliness, the clowning, the buffoonery, and what my head master used to call mysteriously "other things", there lived someone else, a person he revealed in part in his works. He revealed himself also in the marvellous telegram he sent to Dr Mannix in 1953 urging him to plead with Eisenhower to extend clemency to the Rosenbergs. That was the telegram in which he used the words about mercy and forgiveness.

Brian had some of Dostoevsky's Marmeladon inside him. He was searching for forgiveness at the bottom of the glass. He also carried with him, in the latter part of his life, the wound of a man who had done so much to help Australians understand themselves, and yet was never

to receive the desert he rightly believed to be due to him. The universities would not give him the outward and visible sign. So I like to entertain the fantasy that supposing—in the image of Shakespeare—that after setting out on that journey from which no traveller has returned, he did return, there would be at least three things which would give him great pleasure. He would know that his daughter Sheila had written a book on Lunacharsky, the first minister for Enlightenment (Education) in the first Soviet government. He would also be able to read a sentence in a foreword in his son David's first book—happily writing on an Irish subject—in which David acknowledged his debt to his father. The fruit does not fall far from the tree. He would also know that just as Johnson had his Boswell, Goethe his Eckermann, so he has his Don Watson. Brian was worthy of this immortality, because like other historians of the great labor movement, such as Coughlan, Childe, Ebbels and Turner, he has carved his name in the roll of honor and possibly one day of glory.

I say glory because it may occur to some of you that to ask Brian to come back to see us now would be almost a cruel joke. Once again those people who bothered and disturbed him in life look as though they are firmly back in power. Once again it looks as though we Australians are condemned to a life of greed and titillation.

I have just been to America, where I have been teaching the post-Vietnam generation. I come back full of hope that the children of this generation here too will prove to be wiser than the children of light. For this they will need both faith and inspiration and the courage to face the truth of how formidable the task will be. All these they will find in abundance in the works of Brian Fitzpatrick. They will find Don Watson's book an excellent guide to those works and the man who wrote them.

So I say now, all honor and glory to you Brian. Your death was a fitting symbol of what you were about. On that last day in Sydney you were still trying to find out about our past by working in the Mitchell Library. Now thanks to Don Watson, everyone can discover what manner of man you were. For Brian was one of the heroes of our people. We need such heroes. We need to know more and more about the faith by which they lived.

JIM O'CONNOR

Brian Fitzpatrick

Some afterthoughts

He never proclaimed doctrines inconsistent with the safety of property and the just authority of governments. He never in the most gloomy times abandoned the causes of peace, of liberty, and of toleration.

Thus wrote Lord Macaulay in his "Essay on Sir James Mackintosh", liberal political thinker, historian, philosopher and man of letters of the early nineteenth century. To me his words are a fitting summation of the work of Brian Fitzpatrick, so admirably projected by Don Watson in his book, *Brian Fitzpatrick. A Radical Life* (Hale and Iremonger, \$19.95 and \$9.95).

Neither by scholarship nor pretension could I claim to be literary critic or historian; I offer nothing in the way of a reasoned critique of the book. Yet having read it, I have a reawakened sense of loss, a new and deeper appreciation of how much we owe Brian in our not-so-very-different world of today, and I would hope to share this arousal with Watson's readers or Brian's successors.

I first met Brian late in 1948 but, well before that, I had turned from law to freelance writing, and in between classifying and cataloguing my ever-growing collection of rejection slips, I was finding solace in fostering the spread of music and the arts wherever fresh receptive eyes or ears might be found. I had become secretary of the Arts Council and of the Commonwealth Theatre Movement, president of New Theatre, and a member of the Fellowship of Australian Writers, the A.J.A. and the radio scriptwriters' section of Actors Equity. Solace indeed!

I believe I was wearing my Arts Council hat when I opened my first letter from Brian. He wrote as secretary of the Australian Council for Civil Liberties (ACCL) to invite us to a meeting on 17 December 1948 to discuss and plan a

subsequent conference to consider resistance to mounting attacks upon civil liberties. At that stage, I had had little experience in that field, but not long before Brian wrote, I and another office-bearer of the Arts Council had been subjected to a false and bitter attack in the Victorian Legislative Assembly. This had stemmed from a certain M.L.A.'s confusion as to my identity, and from the council's criticism of the Cinematograph Films Bill then before the House. My committee, still smarting, was almost unanimous in its decision to send a delegate. I was chosen.

Here, briefly, I must return to the book, and in particular to a passage on p. 228:

The Communist Party of course *was* active in the peace movement, and *did* try to manipulate it to its own ends. The Democratic Rights Council (DRC) formed in 1948 and led by the Communist artist Victor O'Connor, would seem to be a case in point. The ACCL had, on request, assisted in the establishment of the DRC but it did not take responsibility for its subsequent actions.

In that simple passage there is an extraordinary web of error, and if only Brian were here to read it, his enjoyment would be immense.

Following the attack in Parliament, one member of the Arts Council committee (in similar confusion) had begun to address me as "Vic", but as she was a woman who went through life with an eager fear that one day she would find a communist under the Arts Council bed, and since Victor happened to be my first name (though no one else ever called me by it) I did not correct her. Nor did my reticence impede the valuable work she was doing for the council. But one Saturday afternoon she somehow found out the telephone number of the newly-acquired house of a barrister friend of mine, and she rang me

there. I had gone over to help with some badly needed refurbishment of the interior, and I was hard at work when the phone rang. "I do hope I am not interrupting you," she purred. "Not at all," I said, and then added thoughtlessly, "I was just doing a bit of painting." There was an almost audible gasp at the other end of the line. "Oh dear!" she said, "Oils or watercolours?" "No," I said. "Architraves and skirtings." But this feeble effort to retrieve the situation was a dismal failure and she rang off.

When ultimately I told Brian of this small incident, his laughter was (for him) immoderate and sustained. Far better than I did, he knew the social realist painters and artists of that time — Noel Counihan, V. G. O'Connor, Josl Bergner, Roy Dalgarno, Herbert McClintock, Ambrose Dyson, Harry de Hartog and others. Unlike the others referred to above, he labored under no confusion as to my real identity, and especially as to my lack of ability as a "painter".

Months later, I happened to be sitting in a tram, reading the paper, when from behind me his cultured tones rang through a momentary silence. "How's the communist painting going? Still on architraves?" It was indeed Brian—he had got on unnoticed. "Yes," I said. "I no longer stoop to skirtings." But that is another story, like the time when he and I, on another tram, conversed in iambic pentameters for the entire journey from town to Toorak where I, like Brian, was living at the time.

The meeting, which I duly attended in December 1948, was for me an eye-opener. Present at it were many churchmen, also scientists, lawyers, trade union officials, writers, artists, housewives, students and others. An advisory committee under ACCL leadership was elected to help arrange the public conference, and I found myself on this. I began then to appreciate Brian's enormous experience and ability, for although he never seemed to intrude himself into discussions, it was clearly under his leadership and guidance that we determined what actions we should take.

Our efforts led to a very much larger conference, held during the following April, and attended by delegates from some sixty organisations and by observers from upwards of twenty others. Eighty churchmen were present, most of them members or supporters of a Peace Action Committee which a group of them had established earlier; some came as individuals, others officially representing their churches.

It was indirectly out of that conference, but not

at it, that the DRC was established. In July 1949, there was another conference, and it was decided that moneys which had been donated were to be banked in an account to be entitled "Democratic Rights Council". The name stuck. The Rev. Frank Hartley was its first secretary, but Brian was and remained a prominent member of it, as did Mrs Doris Blackburn, then president of ACCL. Frank's work in his church and as joint secretary of the Australian Peace Council forced him to give up the secretaryship before the end of that year and, diffidently but willingly, I took it on.

This is certainly not the place to attempt any detailed chronicle of, or apology for, the subsequent activities and role of the DRC, but to suggest as Dr Watson does (and as others did before him) that we were simply a front for the Communist Party is not only grossly untrue but shows scant respect for all those courageous people of varying political shades who openly identified themselves with us during those years of intense activity. Of course we made contact with the Communist Party and its members and close supporters—just as we made contact with score and scores of organisations, left right and centre, and with literally thousands of people in all walks of life. Of course there were times when Communists spoke from the floor of our meetings, sometimes from the platform, but so did churchmen, writers, union officials and others by the dozen.

Brian himself was one of our most regular speakers, and the research student will find his name linked with most if not all of our largest functions. If he attended few meetings of the DRC committee, he was always at hand if called upon for help or advice. In public, invariably, he was introduced as the secretary of ACCL, and he always spoke on behalf of that body, but he was by no means alone in this. In fact, most of our speakers took the platforms as representatives or officials of the particular organisation to which he or she belonged.

One conference deserves particular mention. It was held in the Lower Melbourne Town Hall on 22 April 1950, it endorsed an "Australian Charter of Freedom" (which Brian had helped draft) and Brian was one of the main speakers. But who of those present can forget the inspiring words of the chairman, the Rev. Alf Dickie, who declared it open? He began:

It is an honor to chair this meeting of the Democratic Rights Council. It is an honor be-

cause of the galaxy of speakers who have been chosen to address you. It is an honor because this conference represents the maturing voice of real democracy in Australia. It is an honor because of the historic manifesto that is submitted for your approval. I thank you for the honor conferred upon me . . .

I am here as a chairman because the things for which you stand are the things for which I, as a Christian, stand. The privileges and freedoms that we possess have been too dearly bought, lightly to be thrown away. Every professing Christian who contemplates the destruction of our heritage should hang his head in shame, or better still, repent and march with us.

And finally, after touching upon each of the freedoms mentioned in the Charter (the freedoms of speech, of publication, of organisation, of science and culture, of the person, and from racial or religious persecution) he concluded:

These are some of the freedoms to which you will address yourselves this morning as you consider this Charter. It is a sacred task. It calls not now at this late hour for denunciation or recrimination. At this late hour it calls for confident hearts, cogent reasoning, quiet determination and firm resolve to keep Australia free.

Such was the spirit which bound us together and kept us so active.

But quite apart from the DRC, I have other memories of Brian. Dr Watson mentions (p. 233) the denial of the Caulfield Town Hall to the Australian Peace Council; this reminds me of the Australian Broadcasting Commission's "Nation's Forum of the Air" which was held there the very next night.

Brian and I were on the panel of four speakers (the others being Miss Flora Eldershaw, the author, and Mr Eric Butler, director of the Victorian League of Rights), and our subject was "What Should be the Limits on Your Free Speech?" The following week, Brian was savagely attacked in the Bulletin by M. H. Ellis (Ek Dum) who accused him of having planned this particular forum and its venue to embarrass the ABC, the Caulfield City Council, and everybody else who stood for law and order. But Brian was entirely innocent of any such intent. It was I who, months before, had suggested this topic to the ABC, and I had also suggested that instead of holding it in their main Melbourne studio, as they had

always done before, they might consider the possibility of holding it somewhere in public. I have no idea what made them choose the Caulfield Town Hall, nor what had prompted the city fathers to refuse it to the APC, since by this stage (February 1950) the battle waged, principally by the ACCL and the DRC, for the right of such bodies as the Peace Council to use town halls for public meetings had largely been won.

I only heard of the ban when Brian told me about it shortly before we went on air, and warned me to be ready for questions from the floor of the hall. As it turned out, a question **was** asked, but it was addressed to Brian and Eric Butler.

In the same question time, Brian was asked, "Would you be prepared to grant freedom to express political views to all parties, including outstandingly fascist organisations?" He replied very simply, "My answer is yes."

The only sad consequence of that Forum was that, as far as the ABC was concerned, it proved to be the swansong for me and (I believe) for Brian, too. Perhaps that was coincidence. Perhaps not. And perhaps Brian foresaw that it would be; I don't know. In that Forum, he was at his very best. After indicating, with evident relish, the people of distinction within the ACCL, he continued as follows:

I don't know much about the organisation to which Mr Butler belongs. I gather he is campaign director for the Victorian League of Rights. I don't know of any public figures who are associated with that — there may be some. However, my organisation has had a great deal of experience in this matter, and we have definite views. Our view is that the utmost freedom of speech should be granted to people of every opinion. If somebody wants to advocate murder, I see no reason to stop him — assuming that he doesn't proceed to incite people to murder. If, for example, somebody advocates assassination as a cure for the world's ills, I am prepared to hear him. I am prepared to believe that he is entitled to give his views. After all, people in America are advocating the hydrogen or atom bomb for the cure of the world's ills, and it seems to me that the advocacy of individual murder is not, to say the least, worse than that. But if a person proceeds in his advocacy of murder to advocate the assassination of Mr Menzies, or even of Mr Butler, I would object, and whatever you may think, quite sincerely object.

And he wound up his remarks by quoting a pas-

sage from the celebrated judgment of an American judge, Justice Brandeis:

Those who won our independence believed that the final end of the State was to make them free to develop their faculties, and that in its government the deliberate forces should prevail over the arbitrary. They valued liberty both as an end and as a means. They believed liberty to be the secret of happiness, and courage to be the secret of liberty. They believed that freedom to think as you will, and to speak as you think, is a means indispensable to the discovery and spread of political truth; that without free speech and assembly, discussion would be futile; that with them, discussion affords, ordinarily, adequate protection against the dissemination of noxious doctrine; that the greatest menace to freedom is an inert people; that public discussion is a political duty; and that this should be a fundamental principle of government.

Brian did truly believe in these ideals, and when he had given his views on freedom of speech, as quoted above, he was in fact drawing upon another dictum of Justice Brandeis, who declared that advocacy of violence falling short of incitement could not justify the denial of free speech.

In his book, Dr Watson sees a persistent conflict between Fitzpatrick's commitment to civil liberties and his commitment to the Left. At p. 131, commenting upon Brian's reaction to the internment of P. R. Stephensen of the Australia First movement, he writes, "there is no doubt that he was influenced . . . by their being on the extreme right—had they been on the left he would almost certainly have acted differently." That is a judgment which I cannot share and, as I have tried to show, no such ambivalence was evident during the years I worked most closely with him. Perhaps he *was* "fundamentally a libertarian whose consistent enemy was authority" (p. xvi). Perhaps he did fail "to come to grips with the complexities of class interest" in his major written works (p. 188). Perhaps he was at once something of a Marxist and an idealist, whose politics were both pragmatic and utopian (pp. 200-1). Perhaps he *was* a cold-hearted Marxist and a soft-hearted liberal (p. 284). Categorisations such as these make good reading and may be good academic sense, but to me they miss the simple truth about Brian. Whereas we in the DRC (and for that matter, those in ACCL or the Peace Council) drew strength from our numbers, Brian

was personally content to remain an institution with a membership of one—himself. Undoubtedly, contradictions showed up in his "rank and file", but there were no splits, no doctrinaire conflicts. He was not a political radical, in my opinion, but he knew better than most radicals the forces to be invoked if political repression were to be averted or overcome.

Attacks upon the rights of individuals could be and so often had been dealt with effectively by ACCL, but the time had come when that body was still aiming to sway individual politicians when whole electorates needed to be swayed. Brian saw this, and saw the need for a body with more mass impact than ACCL could hope to give. If ever he reached the conclusion that ultimately liberty was dependent on the abolition of capitalism, as Dr Watson seems to think (p. 135), he never for a moment betrayed such a thought in any of the speeches I heard him make, nor in any of his conversations at which I was present. Nor was any such sentiment ever to be found in his Labor Newsletter to which I subscribed throughout its all-too-brief span.

Nevertheless, I believe that Dr Watson has come very close to the truth when he writes (p. 171):

It was not that Fitzpatrick equated democratic decline with the impending demise of the bourgeoisie. He took from Marx and Marxism the methodology of a historical materialist, but not a belief in the historic inevitability of capitalism's downfall. As much as anything else, this distinguished him from the revolutionaries: Marxism provided many of the answers for an analysis of history and society, but Fitzpatrick found in it neither a means of prediction nor a guarantee of revolution. His concern with the immediate and discrete exigencies from which he built an empirical 'immediate knowledge of the present' meant that he could not adopt Marxism as a total world view or as a philosophy of history. Consequently he was always more likely to quote Macaulay on the impediments to historical knowledge, than Marx on its perspicuity.

I began by quoting Macaulay myself. Perhaps I should come to an end with the words of Erskine, defending Thomas Paine (indicted for criminal libel because he had written *The Rights of Man*) in 1792:

The proposition which I mean to maintain as the basis of the liberty of the press, and without which it is an empty sound, is this; that every man, not intending to mislead, but seeking to

enlighten others with what his own reason and conscience, however erroneously, have dictated to him as truth, may address himself to the universal reason of a whole nation, either upon the subjects of governments in general, or upon that of our own particular country; that he may analyse the principles of its constitution, point out its errors and defects, examine and publish its corruptions, warn his fellow citizens against their ruinous consequences, and exert his whole faculties in pointing out the most advantageous changes in establishments which he considers to be radically defective, or sliding from their object by abuse.

Ponderous, perhaps, by standards of today (and

Brian, too, could be ponderous at times) but who among us now will find words of equal power to defend our liberty of opinion which “keeps governments themselves in due subjection to their duties”? Dr Watson’s great book is a most valuable reminder that the debt we owe Brian Fitzpatrick is still largely unpaid. Whoever reads it must surely be the more ready to make a contribution when the collector knocks at the door.

An article on Brian Fitzpatrick and his circle, which is being written by Ken Gott, will appear in Overland during 1980.

STEPHEN MURRAY-SMITH

Swag

I always find it hard to write a ‘Swag’. I can be garrulous enough when I want to be, as I suppose my friends would testify, but when it comes to pontificating about politics or literature or life, in print and in *Overland*, I feel ridiculously diffident. One of the reasons is that I have always felt that *Overland* should speak for itself, that it doesn’t need editorials or guided democracy. Another is that, as I grow older, there seems less and less I want to convince others about, whether in lectures or anywhere else. Burning spears become sparklers.

All the same, I have been told time and time again over the years that readers like to feel that they have some personal contact with their editor. Ita Buttrose’s TV appearances seem to make the point, and one interesting thing that has happened to me lately is connected with Ms Buttrose’s

Australian Women’s Weekly, that monument to Australian popular culture. (‘Popular Culture’ as a theme is now coming in so fast that I almost feel it should be spelt with capitals, to give it due dignity. When the intellectuals and academics take it over, does it cease to be Popular Culture? Certainly Ian Turner wryly commented from time to time that his collecting of children’s play rhymes had one side-effect, of influencing the rhymes that children actually sang, so that eventually the collector faced the problem of collecting himself.)

It being International Children’s Year (thank God that that and Women’s Year are now behind us, no offence meant) I was asked to give a paper recently on what it felt like to be a child as far back as human memory can now reach, and the Women’s Weekly was kind enough to give my

quest some publicity. So far I have had some hundred letters from those aged between 75 and 95, telling me what they remember about their childhood. Most of the respondents are women (because most of the men are dead), but in any case I suspect that there's some psychological reason why the women write more spontaneously and more freshly of their childhoods. The detail is fascinating, a word I would normally try to avoid using: transport, medicine, food, the kitchen, death, entertainment, with many unexpected insights. For an educational historian it was interesting to get a glimpse into the role of the school, before the telephone, as the rural information exchange and clearing house for messages. As an occasional hangover sufferer, I was appalled to discover that aspirin was virtually unknown in the homes of my respondents. And a minor historical controversy has resulted from the statement by one of my best respondents (a man, in this case) that tonsils were operated on without anaesthetic. In subsequent correspondence he has proved his point.

What interested me as much as the responses I got was the very warm and immediate response that the paper I gave received. It suggested to me strongly that the academization of historical study has left great gaps untouched, and that two social purposes of great value might be served by developing what might be called 'people-oriented' history (I avoid the term 'oral history' because it doesn't have to be 'oral'). Firstly, it helps older people to understand that their experience and wisdom has an important role to play in helping us all to understand the past as part of our present; it makes them feel wanted and useful. Secondly, with large numbers of intelligent and trained young people around in the humanities area, young people who can't get jobs or the jobs they want, what a chance for an imaginative

government to start a wide-ranging 'outreach' scheme in which old people's memories are systematically garnered and collated.

During the New Deal, of course, Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration did just this, and American society is now immeasurably the richer for the songs and reminiscences collected in the 1930s. No job creation scheme I can think of would be more useful or more desirable or more economic than the one I suggest. I don't suggest one fighter plane the less, for I think we need fighter planes; but this is an area where a few hundred thousand dollars could bring a rich, inflation-beating return.

Well, I now find that having said I have nothing to talk about I have too much—and I only left myself a page in the paste-up. The other things I'd now like to talk about are the traumas of being an author instead of an editor—I published a book on Bass Strait this year, and find that the self-indulgent moans of authors about reviews, printers and publishers are rather more firmly-based than I had imagined. The other issue is the new technological revolution: how the drive to automation and technical upgrading has a sinister life of its own, so that (for instance) we *have* to demand lighthouses or keep on building free-ways or 'fire access' roads because the technology is there and has to be used. Regardless of human 'intangibles' or even, often, of economics. Barry Jones, who is the only public figure I know talking sensibly about this, and who will send you his speeches on the subject if you write to him at Parliament House, Canberra, says that once you've started riding a bicycle you won't go back to walking, and recommends two books: E. Nesbit's children's book *The Magic City*, and Kurt Vonnegut's *Player Piano*. See you next time.

DAVID DUNSTAN

The Rise and Fall of St Patrick's Day

There was a time when—if you were white, Anglo-Saxon, respectably Protestant and comfortable—you knew who your social inferiors were. They were “the working classes”. In the great cities they lived close to industry in the inner suburbs. They were generally Roman Catholic in religion, Irish in origin and they, unlike you, supported the Labor Party. They drank and gambled collectively and their children went to Catholic and inferior schools. In the country they were the rural proletariat, shiftless and often living close to subsistence. They bred indiscriminately and their loyalty was questionable. Your view would have been a caricature, an outline that only approximated reality.

Irish-Australians were more part of a culture than a class; a culture that was held together by their church. They had their own established families, professional and commercial elites and their own humble folk. Protestant elites feared Catholic elites and, where possible, denied them commercial and social intercourse. As a good WASP you carried your badges of identity knowing that you could expect preferment from your own kind. But you were right in one respect. Their loyalty was questionable. If you saw your majority culture as owing allegiance to the throne and Greater Britain, then they saw a Greater Ireland, with strength in America, that seethed with all Ireland's old wounds.

The truth is that the British islanders have never been a culturally homogenous people. The Welsh, the Cornish and the Scots all have a strong sense of individual identity, with saints' days to match. The Welsh celebrate St David, the Scots St Andrew and even the English have St George. But the Irish have celebrated St Patrick's Day with a passion and a fervor that is quite unique.

St Patrick (390-461) brought Christianity to Ireland and is credited with the miraculous expulsion of the green isle's snakes. He remains the first in a long line of Irish national heroes that includes such names as Wolfe Tone, Robert Emmet and Daniel O'Connell. A St Patrick's Society was formed in Melbourne in 1842, with membership open to all of Irish descent irrespective of their religion. The society built a hall in Bourke Street, which for a while housed the Victorian Parliament, promoted benefit societies and was a useful secular adjunct to the Catholic Church. Annually it celebrated what a prominent member, Edmund Finn, in 1860 called “the Sabbath of the Irishman's year”, and from 1870 it staged a regular procession through the streets of Melbourne. By the turn of the century this was one of Melbourne's two great annual processions, the Eight Hours' Day, now engulfed by the brouhaha of Moomba, being the other.

The procession was an exuberant and visible celebration of an minority culture. It was tolerated, but not without tension. Within the community there were hostile forces, Protestant Orangemen from Ulster, Freemasons, rabid anti-Catholics and Empire loyalists who viewed Irish national aspirations as treason. These forces came into their own in the Great War of 1914-18. This same war deferred the question of Irish home rule at Westminster and brought on the crisis for Ireland. The abortive uprising of Easter week in 1916 added further martyrs to the Irish honor roll. In Melbourne the committed nationalist Daniel Mannix had replaced the tame home ruler Archbishop Carr and had heavily involved himself in resisting Prime Minister Hughes's attempts to introduce conscription for overseas service. He found himself naturally on the same side as Queensland's Labor Premier, T. J. Ryan. They

were both products of the same culture. The scene was well and truly set for further conflict.

Permission to stage the annual St Patrick's Day procession in Melbourne was usually granted as a matter of course by the Lord Mayor. No procession was held in 1917 as a result of the war, but Mannix did address a large rally at John Wren's Richmond racecourse on the Irish question. In 1918, after some hesitation, the Lord Mayor, Frank Stapley, granted permission, and the procession went ahead. Threatening grey skies greeted the marchers on Saturday, 16 March. They followed a route from St Patrick's Hall in Bourke Street to the Exhibition Buildings, where a sports gathering for children was held on the oval.

For the first time Catholic clergy took part in landaus and motor cars. Mannix rode with the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Cattaneo, and five thousand schoolboys paraded, dressed in white with green sashes. In addition to the familiar banners and tableaux there were a number of new and militant participants. A street seller sold Sinn Fein colors to the crowd and a hundred members of the newly formed Irish National Association carried them. Preceding the members of the Young Ireland Society was a tableau representing a celtic cross and a grave, at the head of which was a scroll bearing the names of the martyrs of Easter 1916.

The following Thursday 3,000 indignant citizens waited upon the Lord Mayor in the town hall. The city organist, Dr W. G. Price, stirred them with patriotic airs and Dr Alex Leeper, formerly Warden of the Trinity College at the University of Melbourne, read a memorial. He claimed that the Sinn Fein were an enemy organization which sought to establish an Irish republic by the overthrow of the British Empire. Herbert Brookes appealed to the gathering to "stand shoulder to shoulder against the Sinn Feiners, the Huns and other hosts of Satan". Mannix he damned an "arch-traitor". A spirited elderly woman, who defended herself with a hat-pin to which were attached the Sinn Fein colors, was ejected from the meeting.

Late in 1918 the Melbourne City Council appointed William Whyte Cabena Lord Mayor for the ensuing year. He was an irascible retired boot manufacturer who had been born in Londonderry in 1853 and he was one of the city's leading Orangemen and a hard financier of a peculiarly Protestant mold. Cabena decided on a strong stand and laid down conditions for the 1919 St Patrick's Day procession. The Union Jack and the

Australian flags would have to be carried at the head of the procession. No disloyal banners would be allowed. "God Save the King" was to be included in the music, and the procession would proceed along La Trobe Street and not Bourke Street. (La Trobe Street was—and is—a decidedly inferior street to Bourke Street.) Dissatisfied with the organizing committee's assurances, Cabena finally took great pleasure in refusing permission for the procession. He prepared for a confrontation and armed himself with legal opinions on Section 10 of the Unlawful Assemblies and Processions Act of 1915. At this the organizing committee balked and called off the procession, sheepishly claiming that influenza pandemic restrictions had hindered arrangements. On St Patrick's Day the Union Jack flew from the top of the town hall flagpole. Yet Cabena could not stop an Irish National Concert held in the town hall on the evening of 17 March. There Mannix delivered a solemn warning that the Irish people in Australia were not going to submit tamely to studied and deliberate insult. The end of the chapter, he claimed, would be written next year.

By 1920 Ireland was in turmoil. The new Lord Mayor was a fair-minded former draper, John George Aikman. He agonized over the decision, receiving deputations from both a loyalist federation headed by the indefatigable Dr Leeper and the St Patrick's Day organizing committee. Aikman was particularly impressed by Sgt Maurice Buckley who urged him, on behalf of 600 of his former schoolmates at Christian Brothers College Abbotsford, all of whom had enlisted, to grant permission for the procession. With a heavy heart and attaching conditions Aikman conceded.

The procession was thundering success. The Irish pipers played "The Wearin' of the Green" to 20,000 people, many of them returned soldiers. Indeed, the whole affair was quasi-military, and Mannix was escorted by a cordon of Victoria Cross winners led by Sgt Buckley. The stipulated Union Jack was barely noticed in the body of the procession, and Mannix had already assured his people that although the procession might not be as Irish as some of them would like it "it would not be British at all!" Soon afterwards he left on a world tour intending to visit America, Ireland and Rome. He received the freedom of the city of New York but was forcibly removed from his ship bound for Ireland by a British destroyer and landed in Cornwall. He did not return to Melbourne until August 1921.

ST. PATRICK'S SOCIETY

MELBOURNE BRANCH

St. Patrick's Hall,

Bourke St., CITY,

11th March, 1922.

ANNOUNCEMENT EXTRAORDINARY

Re St. Patrick's Day Procession, 1922.

Dear Sir and Bro.,

The attention of Members is directed to the fact that it has been definitely decided that the Procession SHALL TAKE PLACE and, as in previous years, will leave St. Patrick's Hall on Saturday afternoon, 18th March, at 1.30.

Every Member of this Society, unless incapacitated through illness, or who might be otherwise employed on the afternoon of the Procession is required to be in attendance not later than 1.15 to fall in behind the Banner of the Society.

On this particular occasion it is our earnest hope that we will not witness any SHIRKERS from the RANKS.

FOOTPATH and OTHER OBSERVATION IRISHMEN will be branded as CRAVEN and TRAITORS to their NATIONALITY if they fail on an occasion so auspicious as this to proudly take their places in the Procession, thus asserting their rights as Free Citizens in this community and at the same time dealing a staggering blow to the Sectarian Bigots who are in our midst.

Whatever Liberty this country enjoys has been largely obtained through the instrumentality of Irishmen, who have ever proved themselves veritable NATION BUILDERS. Always their motto has been: "LIBERTY or DEATH." Let it not be said of you, therefore, that in the hour when this glorious heritage is in danger that you failed to uphold it. You have heard the CALL. Let there be a ready Response. It will be an object lesson to the BUMBLES, PECKSNIFFS, and INTOLERANT SECTARIAN BIGOTS and bring home to their minds in a forcible manner that the IRISH PEOPLE will not allow themselves to be treated in such a dastardly manner. This is our Appeal to you. Should you fail in that DUTY which is clear to you, MISERABLE IN-DEED MUST BE YOUR SPIRIT.

On behalf of the Committee of Management.

T. E. DEAN, President.

J. ROBERTS, Secretary.

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY

There are NO SASHES AVAILABLE.

Members are requested to provide themselves with a Badge or other Emblem.

NO SMOKING TO TAKE PLACE in the RANKS along the line of March.

Those Members who are unable to walk the distance to the Exhibition are reminded that a Drag will be available, but to enable them to obtain a seat in it application must be made to the Secretary. No person will be permitted to enter the Drag without a ticket.

Persons not Members of the Society are invited to fall in behind our Banner.

If ever there was a chance for a real fracas it was in 1921. A state of guerrilla war existed in Ireland and the Irish Republican Army (I.R.A.) had severely dented British military prestige. In 1920 the occupying force, the Royal Irish Constabulary (R.I.C.), were augmented by the notorious and ill-disciplined Black and Tans, who began to wage a savage counter-offensive against the Irish people. In Melbourne the new mayor was the builder and Freemason John Warren Swanson. He was prepared to allow a procession but it was to be subject to certain stringently enforced conditions. A Union Jack and an Australian flag of the dimensions 6 ft. by 3 ft. would have to be carried at the head of the procession.

This time the city council met with real hostility. The "Melbourne branch" of the I.R.A. issued a statement on the day of the procession, 19 March, claiming that "any attempt to carry this flag (while the blood of our countrymen is not yet dry on the scaffolds of Mountjoy and Cork prisons) will be met with armed resistance today". The flags were carried, but not by any self-respecting Irish-Australians. According to the police who viewed the march they were "thorough vagrants, a disreputable pair". Along the whole route the Union Jack was the signal for groans, hoots and racist insults. Before the procession had even started, two men, barmen James Butler and James Riordan, attempted to burn the flag. Like Peter McKeon, who attempted to introduce a large Sinn Fein tricolor into the procession, they were arrested in scuffles.

At the Exhibition Buildings Bishop Patrick Phelan of Sale, upon whom Mannix's mantle had fallen, made a speech—and what a speech it was! Admitting that the flag bearers had been paid for their services he congratulated his audience saying: "You have spat up the spirit of loyalty today because you would not have it thrust down your throats." Today Irish-Australians had "danced on the Union Jack" for it was the flag under which atrocities were being committed in Ireland. He called the Black and Tans the "hired assassins of the British Crown" and the Herald called him "a seditious priest".

Nor were these isolated sentiments. In the Brisbane procession the theme running through all the tableaux was Ireland's claim to self-determination. Queensland's Labor Premier, E. G. Theodore, claimed that British rule in Ireland had been "a tragic failure". In Adelaide Bishop Spence said that "the domination of Ireland by the British power has been an alien domination, resting on

military force, as that of Germany in Poland, and Austria in Bohemia". In Sydney "Self-Determination" was worked in living letters on the show ground.

In Melbourne the city council determined on revenge with Alderman Cabena as chief tactician. In October it passed a by-law banning all processions except those of a military or funereal nature. The measure immediately aroused the ire of the Labor movement, fearing for the Eight Hours' Day procession. Anzac Day, of course, was sacrosanct. The obvious necessity of providing for exceptions exposed the unfairness of the measure and divided the city council. Labor councillors from wards centred on Carlton and North Melbourne began publicly to undermine the Corporation's authority.

Meanwhile the signing of a treaty between Irish representatives and the British government defused the real conflict. Permission for the 1922 procession was refused, but the St Patrick's Day organizing committee went ahead with its plans. Satisfied that the State government would not intervene it prepared for a test of strength. On the 11 March it issued the call to ranks which is reproduced here. The city council instructed the police to take the names of ringleaders at the procession should it eventuate and put all by-laws officers on full alert.

The day arrived, bringing with it a hot north wind. Mannix bravely rode in an open car and the marchers included Frank Brennan, M.H.R., George Prendergast, the leader of the State Labor Opposition, four recalcitrant city councillors and ten thousand returned soldiers. The crowd flew green flags, Sinn Fein flags and wore shamrocks. The conservative Argus called them "defiant law-breakers" and the Protestant Rev. Henry Worrall claimed that "but for the restraint of the British people there would have been a bursting up of homes and drenching of the city streets with blood".

On 3 April the city council ordered the prosecution of 25 people. The very next day Father John Barry, the administrator of the archdiocese, counter-attacked and began legal proceedings to quash the by-law. A decision was finally delivered in June by the State Full Court. The Council had exceeded their powers. They could regulate the procession but not prohibit it. Game, set and match!

But there were thousands who participated in the processions knowing little of the politics and caring as much. They were the children who

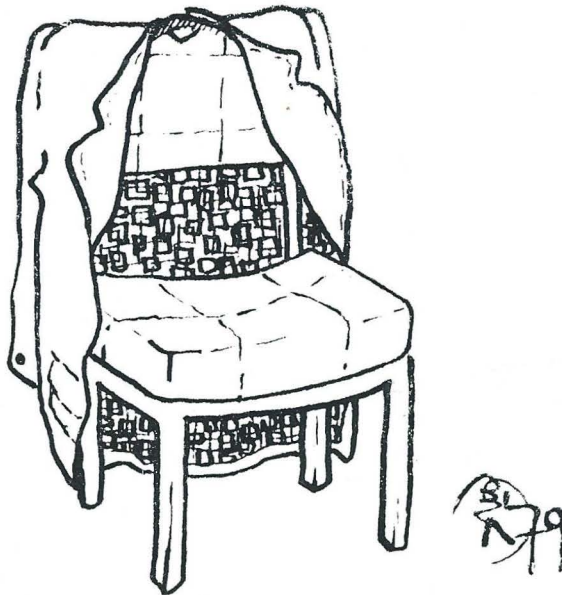
remembered their mothers pressing their white shorts and pinning shamrocks to their dresses. They remembered their teachers drilling them at school for the procession and the honor that it was to be selected to march or to compete in the gymnastics, races or displays of handiwork. Correspondingly there was the disgrace of being passed over. It was a holiday. Everyone remembered the old bloke who sold “turkey lolly”—a type of fairy floss—to the kids at the Exhibition Buildings, and “Killarney Kate” from Fitzroy who danced drunk in the streets. Only later did they hear about the fights between the Orange and the Green that were staged behind the old White Hart Hotel, which stood on the site now occupied by the Windsor annexe on the corner of Spring and Bourke Streets.

St Patrick’s Day continued to be a grand occasion in the years to come but the civil war in Ireland blurred the issues. The formation of the Irish Free State dampened sectarian and ethnic conflict, but the partition of Ireland continued to rankle diehard Nationalists, Mannix included, and the subject remained a standard for the St Patrick’s Day orator.

In 1939 40,000 people listened to the Irish pipers playing “The Minstrel Boy”. Some 75,000 watched the Melbourne procession in 1956 and the kids remained in the act. That symbol of Australian manhood Bert Newton recalls in his autobiography *Bert!* that St Patrick’s Day gave him his start in show business. A veteran of ten processions, young Newton received Mannix’s blessing every time, and even secured his first favourable press comment on one occasion for “belting hell out of a bass drum” on behalf of Marist Brothers College.

The old controversies flickered in 1961 when five people were arrested for collecting money for the I.R.A. One was a 73 year-old woman, and all gave their names in both Gaelic and English. They were later acquitted of fraudulently collecting money. Mannix watched his last procession in 1963 in his ninety-ninth year, and when he died the spirit left it. The crowds began to dwindle and girl schoolchildren had to be added as marchers to keep the numbers up. Finally in 1970 Archbishop Knox cancelled the procession.

The old conflicts and the fervor are still there, but these days you have to seek them out.





JAMES DARLING

Duck Island Days

“... a squatter with an earring . . .”

Sunday, 22nd October:

Hot Sunday sun. Scents of dead brown un-decaying leaves, brittle grass.

A morning to lie around in, spring and satiated. Reading Australian poems. No resonance. No call. Patrick White's "Fete Galante" (Meanjin, 1/1977), story of young Greek girls weighed with breasts and Orthodox saints and adolescent secrets. Notes, loves, wishes, wounds, banishments. My laundry and housework dimly present. To be done before heading off to Laffer CFS Fire Awareness Day. Will it? Already it's 11.15 and I don't want to move. Naked in the sun while flies buzz and insects bite.

Got to the Laffer CFS meeting late but in good time. The Keith Fire Truck there, plus crew. The Fire Chief, gentle proprietor of David's Deli across the road from the Keith Area School, all dressed up and looking like Dr Strangelove.

A good turn up. Agricultural cowboys and sheepboys and ungainly wives, children running everywhere or babes in arms. Old and young. In a district out of town, out amongst the scrub,

each farm at least a few thousand acres, fires are the single most unifying phenomenon. (Though talking about them, like all country meetings, never fails to drag on.) At least you see some of your neighbors and have a barbecue to look forward to. (Ladies bring a plate!) \$2 for the barbecue for each family and stumped by the fact of me, a single person.

"How much do we charge for one?" asks the Laffer CFS secretary. I managed to chew through a paper plate with the regulation-issue serrated plastic knife to the detriment of my jeans. Drank a few beers. Farm talk. Home by 8 o'clock.

Tuesday, 24th October:

Country people so slow to volunteer to do anything alone in public. Shy, almost to a man. Timid. And not only timid. Speaking in a language whose words mean almost nothing. "How ya goin'?" How ya goings all the time, repeated in a thousand ways.

Reading Balise Cendrar's *Planus*. Instantly infectious, poetic, generous. The ordinary made extraordinary, people dense with character and color.

A still night, heavy air, heavy with the flutterings of millions of insects of every shape and size. Hot. Summer's just about here. Without quick rain, spring will be over. Already Keith looks dry, at best sultry, at worst a cyclical pessimism, complaints, greedy and thwarted.

Wednesday, 25th October:

Expecting, and not really expecting, but being told that there'll be showers, thunderstorms, wishing the ground to be moist and growing once more—but nothing eventuating. It's so much less anxious to expect it hot and dry and endless. Perhaps the rains of early spring have overfed us, looking around, looking and knowing how the land would benefit from a good drenching. To prepare, I declare it summer! A long hot summer. Once again a season for the sand cocky, indomitable, screwed, dauntless!

Killed Fluffy the steer this morning. Cleanly. From three friendly yards and he knew nothing. The two bulls in the paddock bellowing and howling and curious, as if paying their tributes over a pool of blood.

Bill and I working hard, skinning, gutting, sawing. Brought a stout branch down as we tried to lift him into the air with a chain hauled by the tractor.

Not so many bugs tonight. Does the Christmas beetle defend itself with smell? It was in the Keith Fire Station that I first came across it in numbers. Bill and I had gone to learn about the fire truck—knowing that even if there was a fire out here, the fire truck wouldn't leave Keith unless there was a crew of at least four, or the possibility of picking up a crew on the way. And these shiny black beetles were scurrying everywhere. And now this house has them too. Not many, but some. In corners. Somehow sweet and pungent and sickly. They climb everywhere—even from the floor to the back of my neck while I'm typing.

Bulldozer trouble. Just when we need to get firebreaks done quickly for our burning.

Thursday, 26th October:

To watch the rain in huge black clouds flying past to the north. Just to the north, five miles, less. All day. Our neighbors tell me they've had

well over half an inch by mid-afternoon and we'd had less than 5 points. Frustration. Blessed, fucking beseeching frustration.

"You ought to be a good boy like me," says old Rexie, wry and genial and one of the first in the district. "You ought to be a good boy like me and say your prayers every night." He says it straight, laughing, meaning no more than the philosophical viewpoint of that's how things are. The luck of the draw. But watching me all the same. Watching to see whether I'd flinch. We were standing among hailstones as big as marbles.

Sunday, 29th October:

I've had three books by Cendrar on the shelves for a year. I began with *Lice*, read some, and got no further. But now, *Planus*, and I'm a convert. Vivid, detailed, story after story. As he says, stories of an adventurer, a vagabond, a man of living. Brilliant color, every possible shape of human being, ridiculous incidents, unrestricted thoughts, the range of a virtuoso. Each story clear and self-contained yet effortlessly in place in the as-if-unstructured form of the narrative. A real maturity, a vintage to be drunk, distinctly flavored and offered with the generosity of a celebrated host.

Some people had two inches of rain last Thursday or Friday. We got thirty points. Such is farming: the fortunes of thunder and storm clouds.

Installed a reconditioned generator in the bulldozer. Laundry and letters and gardening on a still blue day, the sky sprinkled with clouds, a breeze.

Monday, 30th October:

And, death to the indefatigable workers!—daylight-saving has arrived. A new time decreed. Good in the morning because the sun is still low through my bedroom window. But, as we work till dark, it also means short nights and exaggerated hours devoted to the driving of heavy machinery.

Like today.

I sat on the bulldozer dragging a heavy plough through flatlands scrub making firebreaks. Trapping the low scrub. Encasing it in a rectangle. Imagining the fire, the vast column of smoke. Thinking of prevailing winds. Of how they change. Planning the fire, the alternatives, the least possible chance of escape. An even flat. Seven hundred acres. Possibly more. It should burn

well. But if it escaped into adjoining scrub we'd never stop it on Duck Island.

Smoke to be seen for a radius of fifty miles and more.

And watching the water birds out on the drains every round (which takes just less than one and a half hours): dark brown ducks, white on the wing, who have returned each time the bulldozer reappears; long and elegant herons, slow-winged, grey and curious, who stand looking from a safe distance as the roar of the machine passes. Or slowly rise into the air.

Out there. Miles to the nearest person. Uninterruptible. A single-minded addiction, a farm mentality, a sweep of the eye, a decision, then on with the next job.

And another Cendrar by my bed.

Wednesday, 1st November:

With luck tomorrow, tomorrow we'll burn. The wind must be right. Today it was. Almost due south. Light in the morning. Moderately strong by midday. The event going over and over as I ploughed. Who does what, where, in what sequence. Four of us.

I get back at dark. The firefighter's arrived. It looks effective.

Tomorrow Duck Island's message of smoke. Trepidation and excitement in the air.

The firebreaks through the scrub look like the obsession of a minimal artist. You don't quite see the end of them. On two sides there are fences. On another, the line curves in accordance with a

large bank and drain which winds between clumps of ground which are higher and out of the flat. These island clumps are full of wattle and interesting gums and not to be burnt.

Beyond the flat the sun was setting behind the towering gums of Duck Island, the heart of this area, an oasis of river gums growing out of the sand, this Duck Island with its sense of magic into which the floodwaters flow and deepen before they continue their flat-country course. A unique place, perhaps two miles from where I stood overlooking the country to be burnt. It felt like a battlefield, the pedantic organization and sheer guesswork of battle. To clear the ground without letting the fire escape.

And how do we dare, us humans, to get in there and destroy what has existed for ever and to imprint the image of ourselves so thoroughly in the ground? Some driving urge. My rapaciousness, our rapaciousness.

I dream of the paddock in years to come. Three hundred acres of pastures, four hundred acres regrown scrub, an immense size, a balance. A sense of abundance out of the grey sand.

And in the evening light the flat shone and the small islands of high ground swam greener in their vast sea. A sense of the fantastic, like hearing the voices of the leaves, of the wind through Duck Island's majestic gums, an organ piped and throaty with sound. Hymns. Songs of praising — that's what it felt like. And that the efforts of man to emulate were tiny, insignificant, bloated with all the egotisms of effort.

Fire day. Tomorrow.



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NIGHTMARE UNCERTAINTIES

Geoffrey Tout-Smith

Patrick White: *The Twyborn Affair* (Cape, \$14.95).

Like its hero/heroine, Patrick White's latest novel offers itself to us in sumptuous drag. A purple dust-jacket embossed with gold lettering, under which is a disembodied head and trunk, the face concealed behind an aging, cynical mask of ambivalent gender. Its shoulder, neatly severed, gives forth in place of the arm to a stylized articulation of chains, pearls and ribbons trailing across the front cover and around the spine, where they reappear tenuously supporting a hand which holds either a decorative plume—or a writing quill.

Mask or face? Male or female? Human tissue or chain of pearls? Decorative plume or concealed pen? Like its cover, *The Twyborn Affair* draws us into a maze of uncertainties of sexuality, morality and artistry. Indeed, the ambivalence of the plume (art or mere ornamentation) is so unsettlingly woven into the fabric of White's prose, that one wonders if it is under control: whether the uncertainties have artistic purpose or whether we are being offered merely a display of virtuosity.

The opening section of *Affair* (it is clearly divided into three parts) plays an elaborate trick on the reader. We are landed in a small resort town in the south of France in the company of a wealthy middle-aged Australian woman, a Mrs Joan Golson. Through her we become intrigued with a reclusive couple, an old Greek who claims succession to the throne of Byzantium, and his Empress/hetaira, the beautiful Eudoxia. It is only a hundred pages later that we discover the

Empress to be a young Australian male by the name of Eddie Twyborn, renegade son of the esteemed Judge Twyborn of the N.S.W. County Court.

The trick is of course that by this time the reader has been seduced by the image of Eddie as Eudoxia. For though the fatuous Mrs Golson's responses to Eudoxia are obviously not to be wholly trusted, her image is invested with a seductive vitality—as is the tormented vivacity of her mind, presented through her diaries.

Nowhere in this section are we given a 'real' Eudoxia, rather a number of intersecting fantasies of her: her own, Joan Golson's and those of several minor characters. The result is to tempt the reader to construct from the clues his own fantasy-figure, and to allow himself to be seduced by it. To find, at the end of this section, that one has been ignoring the liberally-strewn hints that Eudoxia is not what she seems, is to find that one's sexual defences have been breached. The stock responses reserved for the theme of transsexuality have been effectively bypassed. And as well as this (perhaps more importantly) the reader has been alerted to an elusiveness which permeates the narration of this book.

"What else should our lives be but a series of beginnings, of painful settings out into the unknown . . ." In Part Two of *Affair*, the heroic recommendation of the frontispiece is observed by Eddie Twyborn almost in spite of himself. War and the death of his 'Emperor' return him to his former gender and homeland. The trauma of re-confronting his childhood pushes him off to "Bogong", a sheep station in the Monaro where, working as a jackeroo, he hopes to discover for himself a more satisfactory *modus vivendi*.

Characteristically, this endeavor is seen ambiguously from the start. Here is the passage where

he announces his suddenly-conceived intention to his father:

'I thought of taking a job, as a labourer more or less — hard physical labour — on the land — and in that way perhaps, getting to know a country I've never belonged to.'

Judge Twyborn's eyes had never looked deeper, more troubled, as though some private obsession of his own were on the point of being discovered.

In fact his son barely noticed; he was too surprised at the improbable idea which had come to him the moment before. Its morality must have appeared admirable, if stark, to the one in whom he was confiding. His more innocent confidant would not have seen it as Eddie Twyborn escaping from himself into a landscape . . .

But the landscape would respond, the brown, scurfy ridges, fat valleys opening out of them to disclose a green upholstery, the ascetic forms of dead trees, messages decipherable at last on living trunks.

Stoic? Escapist? Mystic? The elusiveness of this narration — shifting between three successive versions, each of which undercuts the other, resting on none of them — is characteristic of the book as a whole. To read it is an unsettling experience. One struggles to find a coherent, explanatory 'line' beneath the shifting narrative. Similarly, the inhabitants of the book attempt to project their own versions of order onto the world, only to find themselves enclosed in self-contained illusions.

Eddie Twyborn is most fascinating in this respect. Highly imaginative and possessed of a desperate need to create an identity and a sense of meaning in the world around him, he spins story after story, only to have each structure contradicted or collapse around him. His central fantasy — of becoming a heterosexual — founders in a humiliating relationship with the station owner's wife, and a sodomite rape by the manager. Only in landscape does he find an order in harmony with his needs — of mystery, multiplicity, innocence. A dream, to be sure, but a dream with the power to console, if not to heal.

Part Three of *Affair* deals with Eddie's final attempt to create a mask that will stick. For this purpose he metamorphoses into "Eadith Trist", madame of a fashionable London brothel. By extending a fantasy-world around her (her 'troupe' or 'Order' as she puts it), she hopes to create

an environment where her mask cannot be threatened. The anxieties of the inner life are banished to the realm of nightmare, from which they make destructive sorties. Nightmare aside, the only threat to her is the possibility of a passionate relationship with her patron, the "ignoble noble" Gravenor, "who might have wrecked the structure of life by overstepping the limits set by fantasy". The tensions between fantasy, nightmare and resisted love provide the matter of this section.

Patrick White has been criticized for a tendency to over-indulge his richness of invention — an accusation which can be seriously levelled at this part of the book. Here, for example, is Eadith Trist without her mask:

But at the hour between the false dawn and the real, the moment when past and future converge, she was as much herself as a human being can afford to be: lips stripped, though not without a vestige of enamel in the deeper of the vertical clefts; in the shadows created by a too pronounced jawbone traces of the mauve powder in which she veiled herself at other times. For the more normal perspectives of life she could not lay it on too thick: on high occasions she went so far as to stick a *grain de beauté* on her left cheekbone, a punctuation mark in the novelette she enjoyed living . . .

White is so fascinated with surface grotesquerie — the luridities of the brothel (itself not much more than a gimmick), the social decay of the British aristocracy, and the physical decay of the aging drag queen — that when the prose modulates to a deeper vein the effect is that of incongruity rather than illumination. Thus Eadith's meditation, seemingly offered as a sort of epiphany:

Yet whatever form she took, or whatever the illusion temporarily possessing her, the reality of love, which is the core of reality itself, had eluded her, and perhaps always would.

These sententious words, in context, come across as simply banal. But is the banality Eadith's or White's? "The core of reality itself": is this the authorial voice offering us the Alternative to this "heap of broken images", or is it simply Eadith offering herself another illusion?

I don't think one can finally know. In fact, a peculiarity of this book is the difficulty one has in distinguishing where the narrating voice ends and the characterized voice begins — of distin-

guishing between the fragmentary 'novelettes' of the characters, and the order of the novel proper. In creating these uncertainties of reading, White throws into question, more radically than in his previous novels, the ordering power of art itself. But is this questioning a purposive, productive one, or merely a symptom of artistic failure? I can only leave this question open.

By the end of this book it is clear that the theme of sexual uncertainty serves principally as an opening into White's greater theme of ontological uncertainty. In the context of White's oeuvre, *Affair* is striking in its unwillingness to offer with any conviction a transcendent positive, something 'beyond all this fiddle'. Although the language of religious faith flickers through the book, its effect is only to heighten an ironic sense of loss. We are left with webs of tenuous order—art is one such web—overlaying the chaos of the subconscious. Neither art nor religion, but nightmare is the reference point to which the novel's shifting discourses invariably return.

IT NEEDS MORE THAN VEGEMITE

Barry J. Blake

Patrick Hanks (ed.): *Collins Dictionary of the English Language* (Collins, \$15.95).

The new Collins English Dictionary is a very nice piece of work. It is well set out and the definitions, which are for the most part pretty clear, come complete with a full phonetic transcription in the International Phonetic Alphabet and an etymology that gives the century in which borrowed words were adopted as well as their immediate origin. With 1690 pages containing 162,000 words and over 14,000 proper names, it is good value for the money.

This Australian edition has been edited by Gerry Wilkes, Professor of English at the University of Sydney, and a certain Steve Higgs, B.Sc., Melbourne Grammar School, is listed as a special contributor on Australian English. None of the prefatory material makes it clear just how the Australian edition differs from other editions nor how Wilkes and Higgs went about making their contribution. It is difficult to judge the Australian edition against their aims; we can only judge it against our expectations.

The greatest defect of the dictionary lies in the omission of so many words and expressions that

are Australian in origin or have some peculiarly Australian sense. It is true that one can find *ocker*, *migrant*, *chook*, *utility* (the vehicle), *spider* (the drink), *pavlova*, *peach melba* and *lamington* but, as is now well known, *vegemite* has been left out. Another gastronomical delight that fails to appear is the pork sausage that is known in various parts of Australia as *pork german*, *pork fritz* and *windsor*. *Potato cake* is missing too, and one wonders if that is not connected with the fact that Wilkes is a *Sydneysider* (though that is not in the dictionary either). If one looks up *scallop* one finds that in Australia it means "a potato cake fried in batter", but my fish and chips shop sells me a marine creature if I ask for a *scallop* and if I want a potato cake I have to ask for a *potato cake*. Needless to say the two most popular varieties of fish sold in Melbourne are missing, *flake* and *couta*. One would think that they could have been included before *morrowong*. At least the Australian pronunciation of *bream* is recognized (it rhymes with *trim*).

Other features of southern culture to escape the lexicographer's eye were *runner* (sandshoe), *villa unit* (in fact even *unit* in the dwelling sense is missing though the term is used in Sydney), *OYO* (own-your-own flat), *massage parlor* and the *footy record* (program). Talking of football, *up there Cazaly* doesn't rate a mention, nor the abbreviation *up there Cazza*, even though the expression seems to have spread beyond the bounds of Victoria long ago. The expression must be known to Wilkes since it appears in his *Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms*. Can it be that he thinks it infrequent? It certainly isn't in Victoria. The dictionary isn't too strong on Australian Rules football. We are told that there are *three* in the *ruck* (apparently the rover is included) and the verb *to ruck* is not given in its Australian Rules meaning, and *ruckman* is not included.

Racing doesn't fare much better. *Quinella* is omitted (which means they can avoid tracing the interesting etymology) and *quadrella* is defined, in full, as "the full name for a quaddy"! Worse still, *quaddy* does not appear in the dictionary at all, so that one never gets to find out what *quadrella* means. This is a shocking entry. It defines a word in terms of its colloquial abbreviation and fails to include the abbreviation as a head word. All in all non-intellectual pursuits are not as well catered for as intellectual ones. This is not a criticism of the Australian Edition as such but a general comment on the dictionary, and it is a criticism that applies to other dic-

tionaries. Dictionaries intend to reflect the bias of lexicographers. The dictionary maker does not seem to be able to gauge the frequency of usage across the whole language community. Dictionaries have always been strong in philological terminology, and this dictionary has added the esoteric terminology of transformational grammar so we find terms such as *negative raising* and *lexical insertion*.

I checked the dictionary looking for *ooroo* (goodbye), but I couldn't find it. Later I came across *hooroo* under *hooray* with the meaning "Australian, goodbye; cheerio". It seems to me that *hooroo* should be a separate head word; there is no obvious synchronic connection between *hooray* and *hooroo*. And it seems that *ooroo* should be another separate head word. Checking among fellow Australians I find that some consider *ooroo* a derivative of *hooroo* (rather like 'ello from *hello*), but others like me see it as a form in its own right.

The dictionary does not recognize regional variation in Australia. *Port* is given as an Australian informal term for "a travelling bag, such as a suitcase", but this word is not used in all parts of Australia, certainly not in Victoria. *Mobs* is given as Australian informal for "great numbers or quantities; lots", and illustrated by the phrase "mobs of people". In my experience *mobs of* can be used only of humans and other animals in the south, whereas in the north of Australia it has the same distribution as *lots* and one hears *mobs of times*, *mobs of drinks* and so on. Talking of northern Australia, I would like to have seen *youi* included. It is used to express agreement, rather like *right-o*, and pronounced like 'you way'. Since fairly obscure fauna and flora are listed some consideration could be given to including *perentie* (the goanna, *Varanus giganteus*) and *carney* (the bearded dragon, *Amphibolurus barbatus*) in future additions. The little known narcotic shrub *pituri* is included but the "u" is given as hard instead of the soft "u" I am familiar with. It is unfortunate that the misleading spelling *pituri*, probably deriving from the ethnograph W. E. Roth, has become the common one. In the nineteenth century, other spellings such as *pitchery* were used.

A number of entries that are doubtless part of the overseas content have not been emended adequately for Australia. An example of an entry that has been properly emended is *migrant*. We find the Australian meaning is "an immigrant, esp. a recent one". However, *wog* appears as "British slang, derogatory, a foreigner, esp. one

who is not White". This is misleading for Australia, since the word is very common here, particularly with the meaning of "New Australian". *New Australian* is not in the dictionary, a surprising omission. *Beanie* or *beany* is listed as "chiefly U.S., a round close-fitting hat resembling a skull cap". *Beanie* is well known here for a knitted cap and, as far as I know, the *beanie* does not have an alternative name. The British use the term *bobble hat* which is not listed, though *bobble* appears, and one of its meanings is given as "a tufted ball, usually for ornament, as on a knitted hat". *Bungalow* is listed with the meaning of "a one-storey house, sometimes with an attic". This works well enough for some parts of Australia, but in Victoria at least a *bungalow* is a detached sleepout, a small building of a couple of *squares* (though that is not in the dictionary), usually in the backyard of a house and used as sleeping quarters. *Gladdie* appears (but not *Our Glad!*), tucked away under *glad* which is defined as "informal, short for *gladiolus*". Under *gladiolus*, a word I've never heard, we find that the plural is *gladiolus*, *gladioli* or *gladioluses*. In the English I'm familiar with *gladioli* appears as a singular and as a plural and some people use *gladiolis* as a plural. The verb *battle* is given three meanings, one of which is "Australian, to scrape a living, esp. by doing odd jobs". Then at the end of the entry following the etymology the noun *battler* appears. It is not made clear whether it applies as a derivative of *battle* in all the three senses listed. It seems to me that a *battler* is someone who always seems to be struggling to earn a living, i.e. it corresponds to the Australian sense. It may be that *battler* does correspond to the other senses, "to fight in or as if in military combat; contend" and "to struggle in order to achieve something or arrive somewhere: *he battled through the crowd*", but I cannot use *battler* as a noun derived from *battle* in these senses. That does not prove much, but my suspicions about there not being a non-Australian *battler* are confirmed by its failure to appear in other dictionaries.

The dictionary includes geographical and biographical names (their term not mine) and a variety of proper nouns. This is an excellent idea, although I feel that the geographical entries are rather overdone, especially since one can easily look them up in an atlas. One advantage over the atlas is that pronunciations are given, and it is undoubtedly true that place names are a great source of difficulty when it comes to pronunciation. Unfortunately the Australian edition does

not have the *Birdsville Track* nor the colloquial but widely used term, the *Top End*.

The selection of "biographical names" in the dictionary is odd. On the international level we find that film stars like *Richard Burton*, *Elizabeth Taylor*, *Marilyn Monroe*, *Sophia Loren* and *Elvis Presley* are included, with sportsmen like *Fangio*, *Mark Spitz*, *Jesse Owens*, *Gary Player* and *Lester Piggott*. Some Australians rate an entry, *Bradman*, for instance, *Hoad* and *Rosewall*. It is difficult to tell whether they are included because of their international status or whether they are part of the Australian content. Certainly there are few other Australian sportsmen included, though *Ray Lindwall* finds a place, but not *Keith Miller*. Perhaps the compilers have a thing for really fast bowlers, because *Larwood* is in there too. Australian politicians are well represented, or at least prime ministers are, but few other Australians attained the distinction of being included. *Melba* is there (along with *do a Melba*, *Melba sauce*, *Melba toast* and *peach Melba*) and so is *Joan Sutherland* (but not the title *La Stupenda*), but that's about it. One gets the impression that one had to make the international list to be included. There does not seem to have been any special Australian honor list. Perhaps this explains why those two unlucky victims of American sabotage, *Les Darcy* and *Phar Lap*, fail to appear.

One very bad feature of the proper name selection is that no Aboriginal tribe receives an entry, yet numerous American tribes are included (e.g. *Arapaho*, *Tlingit*, *Chinook* and *Nez Perce*). Not unexpectedly, where the etymology of a word borrowed from an Australian Aboriginal language is given it is simply recorded as "from a native Australian language". However with words of American Indian origin we find an etymology giving the donor language, e.g. *moccasin* "Algonquian; compare Narragansett *mocussin* shoe", *teepee* or *teepee* "from Dakota *tīpī*, from *ti* to dwell + *pi* used for", and *potlatch* "from Chinook, from Nootka *patshatl* a giving, present". However, with this last etymology the dictionary displays one of its characteristic shortcomings in that it uses a word, viz. *Nootka*, for which no head word is supplied. We never get to find out who the Nootka are.

This last point reminds me that not all the faults of the dictionary lie in the Australian content or expected Australian content. There are surprising omissions from the English vocabulary in general. *Lollypop lady* is missing, so is *Cala-thumpian* and *obstroperous* and *obstroperlous*,

probably humorous deformations of *obstreperous* and the forms from which *stropopy* derives. The dictionary gives *stropopy* as a "changed and shortened form of *obstreperous*". Missing too *rig* (the horse), *brass monkeys* (commonly referred to in cold weather), *doona* (useful in cold weather), *jakoosy* (popular in U.S.), *nugget* (used as a proper name and as a generic), *scroggin* (useful on hikes), *stiff cheese* (or *stiff cheddar*), *in like Flynn* (after a great Australian) and *out cold*. One could go on and on.

As far as I have been able to check so far, there are few errors in the text. One I found was *glory hole* which is given as "another term for *lazaretto* (sense 2)", but when one looks up *lazaretto* one finds that *glory hole* is a synonym of sense 1, a locker not a hospital.

On the whole this is a good dictionary. Almost all the faults as I see it are omissions, and it must be remembered that other dictionaries of comparable size have similar omissions in the general vocabulary of English, and make little attempt to cater for Australian English. I hope Collins keep collecting and revising. The second edition should be a *bewdy*. I look forward to it.

OLD LAGS AND NEW

L. L. Robson

John Meredith and Rex Whalan: *Frank the Poet* (Red Rooster, \$10). Russel Ward: *A Nation for a Continent: the History of Australia 1901-1975* (Heinemann Educational, \$14.95). Brian McKinlay: *A Documentary History of the Australian Labor Movement 1850-1975* (Drummond, \$29).

It looks as though at last Frank the Poet's had his cover blown. Long thought to be Francis McNamara or Goddard, an Irish convict from Dublin transported in 1820, the supposed author of "The Convict's Tour of Hell" and "Moreton Bay" is now said to be Francis McNamara per *Eliza*, 1832, to New South Wales, transported for stealing a plaid, tried at Kilkenny City, a miner by trade and a native of Wicklow.

This small book explains how the authors traced Frank through the convict records, incorporates ballads and variants supposed to have been composed by him and finally loses its man with a final possible reference in the work of Marcus Clarke, writing about an Irish drunk "poet" in the stews of Melbourne in 1868.

This is fascinating literary-historical detective work, though I am not satisfied that the authors have clinched their case that Frank was the

author of all the ballads they say he was, including "Bold Jack Donahue", "The Ballad of Martin Cash" and "The Brig *Cyprus*". The main evidence seems to be circumstantial and calligraphic, in the form of a manuscript donated to the Mitchell Library in 1958. Still, Russel Ward, in the foreword, believes that the puzzle of Frank's identity has been solved.

In *A Nation for a Continent*, Professor Ward has produced a major history of Australia in this century. Fluently and confidently written, the book pays a good deal of attention to federal politics and the preoccupations of the anti-labor forces with the English connection. It deals, I thought, with the more vicious political actions with unnecessary charity, and scarcely emphasizes enough the obsession of Australians with materialistic values.

But the things that should be in are there, and at no stage does one feel that the significant themes are left out. The book is hinged on the Depression: almost exactly half the 200,000 words concern the period up to 1933. There can be no argument with that; the period from 1949 to 1975 has three chapters, or a quarter of the whole, ending with a short account of how the anti-Labor forces unscrupulously and desperately used the anti-democratic Senate to destroy the Whitlam administration.

Here I have a slight disagreement with Ward: he does not say, as he should, "anti-democratic" or "fascist-like" or some such to describe the so-called 'Liberal' party, the names of its precursors, allies and hit-men littering the history of Australia as they do. He insists on speaking of "conservatives", which they most assuredly are not. Indeed, in an excellently comprehensive index, the author has no less than half a column of references to 'Conservatives' (with a capital C!).

Some of Professor Ward's analysis would be greatly strengthened and sharpened if he rid himself of the idea that there have ever been Conservatives of seriousness and ideological commitment in Australian politics or life in this century; they have barely enough imagination to be philistines.

It is also interesting to note that, in discussion of its origins, the author has found it unnecessary to condemn the Act of the British parliament called the "constitution". While we dignify the 1901 Free Trade Act, passed in the face of impressive indifference by the people, with the word "constitution", we will have trouble in dis-

carding it, the word "constitution" embodying as it does overtones of ringing democratic rhetoric, which of course is conspicuous by its absence in an Act brought in on the lofty principle of marking the end of the nineteenth century by a free trade pact.

There are some excellent analyses in this book: the conditions which shaped the Labor party are succinctly and shrewdly seen in terms of there being little effective opposition to it (which tells us a lot about the ideology of early labor); we learn how the Great War indirectly led to the manufacture of the ubiquitous Aspro. The book has many such intriguing and homely pieces of information: every Anzac Day a bemedalled veteran splendidly broke ranks in Martin Place during the march and shouted in Billy Hughes's face, "Hughes, you rat!"; when the English Test cricket captain, the unspeakable Jardine complained to Woodfull in the dressing room that one of the home team had called one of his bowlers "a bastard", the Australian captain was provoked into enquiring from his men, "Which one of you bastards called this bastard's bowler a bastard?"; and the author himself is his own source for newspapermen booing Arthur Fadden and his government at an A.J.A. meeting in Sydney in 1941.

There are many slightly and pleasingly acerbic Wardian judgements. Referring to the 'dog-collar' Act of 1928 and the licensing of wharf laborers, the author snaps that "as usual in such affairs, the forces of law and order used terror more effectively, not to say ruthlessly, than their opponents".

There are occasions when Ward is a bit careless, I thought, and though I quite forgive him in a work of such dimensions, it should be noted that Hughes, an inveterate liar, was born in 1862 not 1864; that fear of the Japanese was almost certainly of much greater importance in the 'No' vote of 1916 and 1917 than Professor Ward suggests; that the incidence of suicides of despairing stockbrokers in 1929 is, as they say, grossly exaggerated; that the Bodyline test series can scarcely be said really to have produced "many" broken bones; that censorship can hardly have been both lax and strict in the 1920s; and that Scullin's hair going white had nothing to do with worry (or so 'A Doctor' tells me).

The book is instructively illustrated with apt cartoons, and so is *A Documentary History of the Australian Labor Movement 1850-1975* by Brian McKinlay, currently engaged in postgradu-

ate studies at La Trobe University. He has produced a real blockbuster: there are 778 pages of documents and commentary in three sections: the Australian Labor Party; the Trade Union Movement; and Communists, Socialists and Radicals. Bill Hayden and Manning Clark bless the venture, which is basically a greatly expanded version of Noel Ebbels' *The Australian Labor Movement 1850-1907*, even to the spelling or misspelling of "Labor".

The book deals with more than the labor movement, however. Eric Campbell and the New Guard are featured under the sub-heading "The Victory over Fascism", for instance, and the book is virtually a history of Australian politics. I regret to report that the index is no good.

MALICE IS STATELESS

David Martin

Ben Zion Patkin: *The Dunera Internees* (Cassell, \$12.95).

This book has been widely reviewed in the general press, where substantial excerpts have also appeared. It is therefore unnecessary to describe it in much detail. Instead I shall concentrate on a few aspects which do not seem to have been given much attention.

Mr Patkin was Honorary Secretary of the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand when, in March 1941, he learned that a large number of Jewish refugees from Europe were in internment at Hay, having been shipped out from England on the Royal Navy's *Dunera*. As is well known, quite a few of them have since made their mark in this country.

This part of the story, involving name and fame, is what has fascinated the newspapers. But they were intrigued (if that is the word) almost as much by how these people were maltreated on the voyage out, how they were bullied and robbed, lied to and humiliated.

How, in fact, they were treated as enemies, as Germans, and not as Jews, that's to say as anti-Nazis.

The book is not very well organised; it is not the work of a professional writer. The vital fact that the ship's commander and two of his crew were court-martialled appears in a throw-away paragraph somewhere half way through the text. But there is frequent reference to the other, non-Jewish human cargo of the *Dunera*, genuine prisoners of war, who were all oppressed with equal cruelty. For instance, an Italian would-be

escapee was mercilessly flogged by his captors.

Today, can anyone be surprised that British sailors behaved so barbarously? The answer, surely, is that people of any nationality can act like this. Oddly enough, no reviewer has mentioned that at the very time this book appeared some Australian naval personnel, including the captain of a patrol boat, were court-martialled for doing to some poor Taiwanese fishermen exactly what was done to the *Dunera* internees 40 years ago.

Malice and stupidity, like decency and wisdom, are stateless. I am not seeking to provoke Mr Patkin, but I do not doubt that the conditions in which Arab refugees from Israel found and still find themselves are comparable to those which prevailed on the *Dunera*. I think, too, that I would rather be interned at Tatura than live in camps outside Beirut or Homs.

The commander of the *Dunera*, when challenged to make his men behave like men and not like animals, pleaded that they had been embittered by their experiences at Dunkirk. On this long voyage he could not afford to combat their sullenness. . . . He was a scoundrel, his argument specious. But what does it really prove? That crude, half-educated ruffians quickly revert to type.

I am reminded, for example, of how, year after year, Russian workers "spontaneously" passed fervent resolutions demanding the firing squad for one or other of Stalin's victims, whenever these were put on what claimed to be a trial.

It is easy to dupe people who either want to be duped, or who are used to being duped. In 1941 the jolly British tars could not distinguish between Nazi and anti-Nazi because they lacked the incentive. It was intellectually too complicated for them. They needed, or thought they did, a vent for their hate. And they didn't like Jews, anyway.

The *Dunera* was a hell-ship, but hell has many circles. Nobody was killed, nobody starved to death. The threat to hang a venerable Rabbi from the mast by his beard was not carried out.

What I esteem about this book is that it praises as well as blames. I am moved by what it tells of a German P.O.W., a ship's captain who was a gentile. He was one of those—there were many on the *Dunera*—whom the British had first embarked on the ill-fated *Arandora Star*. This heroic man elected to join the doomed commander of the prison ship on his bridge, and they went down together.

My heart warms to Mr Patkin's report of Captain Broughton, who was in charge of the 8th Australian Employment Company, and whom his 'troops' remember with something like love. Broughton was two-thirds a Maori.

It does not need stressing that the great bulk of the internees confronted their destiny with dignity and courage. They had the required mental and moral equipment.

There is the usual quota of amusing incidents. My favorite concerns a certain young man, a haughty assimilationist (I suppose you can assimilate without being haughty?) whom the camp doctor ordered to be circumcized, for his own bodily good. It is claimed that this changed his haughty attitude. But I wonder whether it really did, and whether the thing happened exactly as Mr Patkin's witness has put it down.

This, indeed, is a tale of witnesses. Mr Patkin relies heavily on letters and documents, a technique which accounts for the book's immediacy of impact, as well as for its disjointedness. Few items appear in proper sequence. Thus a degree of empathy is needed to get the most out of *The Dunera Internees*.

My chief criticism is that it resembles a Zionist tract. The term "Eretz Israel" is used a thousand

times if it is used once. Which the author would probably feel is as it should be. But it has been advanced that non-Jewish efforts to help the internees have not been given adequate acknowledgement. And some passages read like the intra-communal grumble snippets in the Australian Jewish News.

No attempt seems to have been made to interview any of the *Dunera's* crew.

On page four Mr Patkin comments:

Unfortunately history had not taught the German Jews, or many other Jews for that matter, that whatever else he might be, he would always be regarded as "a Jew". He could be a German Jew, a Russian Jew, or an English Jew, but he could not be a Jewish Englishman, a Jewish Russian, a Jewish Dutchman, or a Jewish German.

It's a bold and straightforward summary of an old thesis. The word "Australian" does not figure in it, yet it might still be a good idea to have it debated here, first principles and all, and not only by Jewish readers. In Overland, for example.

Old theses can develop new angles.

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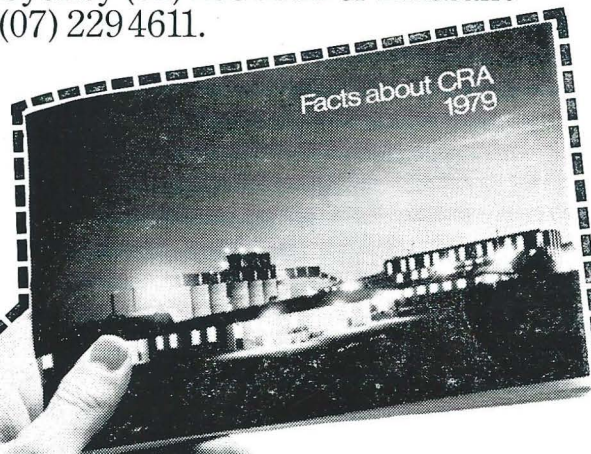
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