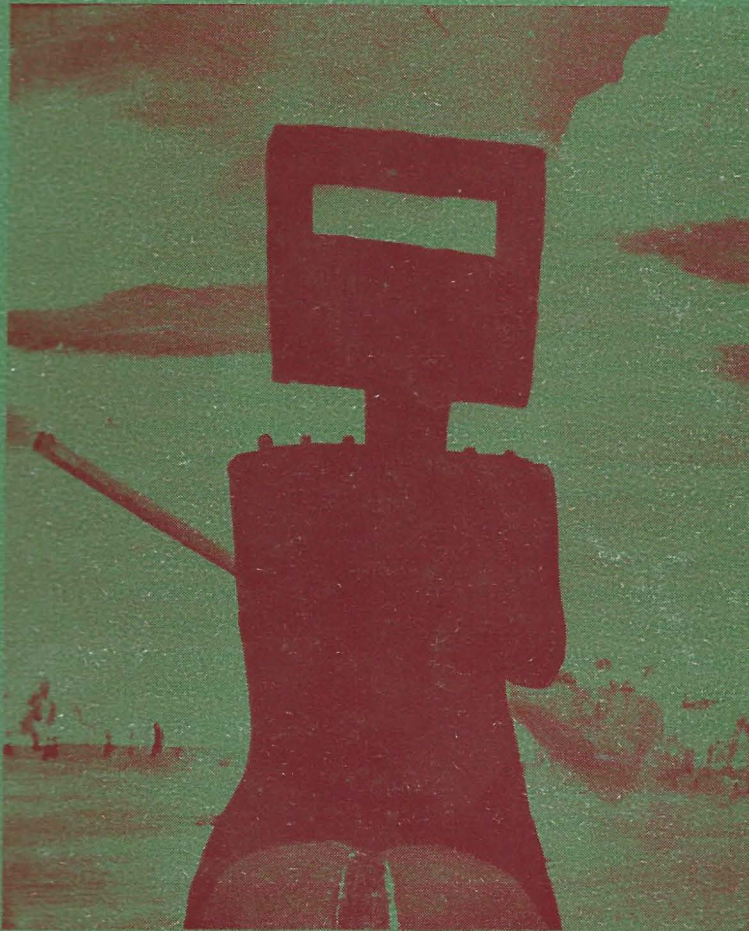


OVERLAND

Poetry Stories Reviews Features



THE LEGEND AND THE LONELINESS
A Discussion of the Australian Myth

NUMBER 23

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TWO AND SIX

OVERLAND

Temper democratic, bias Australian

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Contents

Stories

THE MAGNIFICENT BACK	<i>E. A. Gollschewsky</i>	3
APPOINTED ENDS	<i>Graeme Kinross Smith</i>	19
THE LOVE-LIFE OF A BOOZER	<i>Thelma Forshaw</i>	....	....	25

Poetry

NANKEEN NIGHT-HERONS	<i>Judith Wright</i>	....	....	7
<i>and poetry by W. N. Scott, Aileen Palmer, Ian Bedford, Thomas W. Shapcott, Len Fox, Jill Hellyer, James Gidley, Judith Green and Ian Mudie</i>				

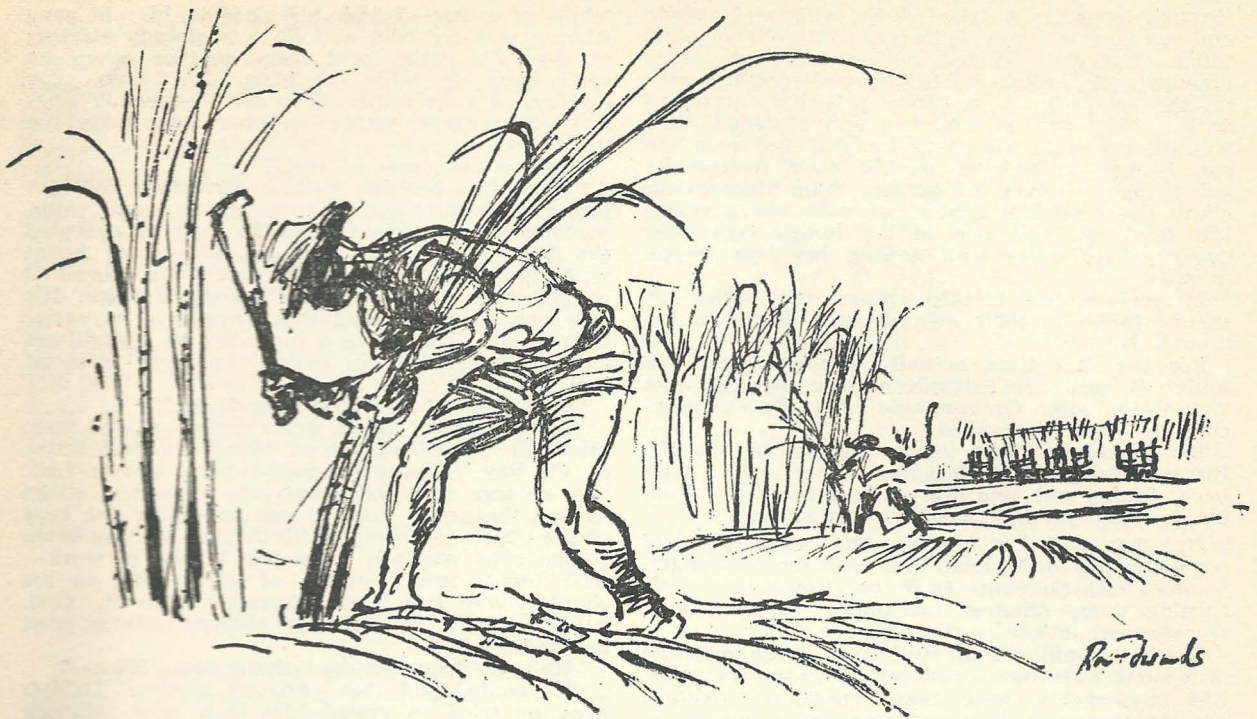
Features

O'DOWD TO WHITMAN	....	....	....	8
LETTER FROM SPAIN	<i>A. A. Phillips</i>	....	....	21
THE SPANISH WAR	<i>David Martin</i>	....	....	23
SWAG	....	....	....	27
JEAN DEVANNY, STAN WAKEFIELD, FRED BYRNE	....	....	....	31
THE LEGEND AND THE LONELINESS:	<i>A Discussion of the</i>			
	<i>Australian Myth</i>			33
LEGEND INTO MYTH	<i>Ian Turner</i>	....	....	39
AUSTRALIA THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS	<i>David Bradley</i>			41
AFTERTHOUGHTS ON THE ADELAIDE FESTIVAL	<i>Mary Durack,</i>			
	<i>Laurence Collinson</i>			46
GAVIN CASEY	<i>Ted Mayman</i>	....	....	49
MISCELLANY	<i>Adrian Rawlins, Fairlie Apperly</i>	51
COMMENT	<i>Frank Dalby Davison, Peter Samuel</i>	53

Reviews	54
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THE MAGNIFICENT BACK

E. A. Gollschewsky

SHE came from the cold south, and found the coastal sugar city—a steaming, sprawling, colorful, friendly place—everything she'd expected. After three months she wrote to her family, saying she had met the man she wanted to marry, that her chest troubles seemed completely cured, that she adored the climate and would live here after her marriage.

It was, after all, what they had hoped for. There were other sisters at home to launch.

It seems odd that, up to the time of her marriage, Linda was scarcely aware that Mike had a back. Much less did she realise what a truly magnificent back it was. When she glimpsed its brown, well-muscled, beautifully-proportioned expanse diving into mountainous breakers on one of the many beaches near the town, it was with simple pleasure in its unmistakable beauty. And when he crossed a dance-floor towards her, it seemed quite natural that his tailored shoulders should be wider, freer, more graceful than any other man's.

It didn't mean anything special. She also thought him the handsomest man in the place; the wisest; the kindest; and the catch of the year. She was in love with him. But even if he hadn't been, he was sufficiently different from the office workers, shop assistants, teachers and civil servants whom she had known at home to give him a certain

He was also much better off, financially, than any of them. That is, he had the money now, while they expected to draw theirs in the future, or inherit it, or work up to it. Mike had his here and now, ready to put on a quite impressive converted home in the best suburb; on good furniture and household conveniences (there'd be no such thing as time payment agonies for Mike's wife), and he already owned a better car than Linda's father. It gave her pleasure to make these things clear to her family.

They were married just before the start of the crushing season.

"We've still got a fortnight in which to enjoy ourselves," Mike said when they returned from their brief honeymoon spent conventionally (and expensively) on a well-known island playground. "We'll get the garden cleaned up, and I'll take you round the relations so you can get to know them better. We'll go dancing, and swimming and see all the films. Make the most of it, darling, as I start work at the end of the two weeks."

"But you have been working, all along!"

"Driving a tractor? That isn't work." He laughed at her innocence. "In the crushing everything else goes by the board—you can't cut cane and have any kind of social life at the same time, believe me."

"Oh, well, I don't want any, anyway. It's enough that we're together. I'll have you."

What more could any woman want, she wondered then, lying under the oleander bushes, watching

through branches weighed down with pink, white and red flowers, while Mike pruned the old bougainvillea they had decided not to root out. Ants crawled over the tea-things they had recently used; on the rotary hoist a calico petticoat, drenched with starch, quickly whitened and stiffened. She would wear it to the party tonight. But now the sun burned in patches on her back, danced its golden light all over the garden. Soon Mike would climb down off the ladder, sit with her a while, kiss her, and roll one of his lumpy cigarettes, every move, every look, telling her how happy he was.

Meanwhile, the prickly spears fell under his shears, to lie in their own crimson flood on the ground below.

For the first time, actually, Linda noticed his back. It really is magnificent, she thought, like wet brown silk. Or the hide of a thoroughbred chestnut—and she smiled.

Everybody said that winter had set in already. But it certainly didn't feel like winter, with Mike's back shining wet, and him shaking the drops from his forehead so they wouldn't run in his eyes.

But they called it winter. And with July had come changes to the town that even she, a stranger, couldn't help noticing. As if the sleepy town were turning over, stirring, awakening to find itself transformed into a bustling city.

For the month of June divided the year as neatly as a stone wall does a paddock. By then, everyone had painted his house, taken an annual holiday, repaired fences, seen the variety shows put on by local amateur artists, fished his fill in the river and ocean, and seen his doctor about any ills needing medical attention or surgery. Once the crushing was in full swing there'd be no time for anything outside the harvesting of sugar.

All through the slack the men of the town had stood on street corners, talking, bragging, listening, waiting for their wives to finish shopping, keeping an eye on toddlers. The growers tended to congregate in separate groups from the cutters, with their talk all of tonnage to the acre, cane diseases, Boards, the perfidy of mills and the bushranging ethics of modern cutters.

In the bars the groups tended to merge, shouting indiscriminately for each other, arranging "cuts" for the coming season. Cutters and growers, though inherent antagonists, are friendly ones.

The change in atmosphere was like a returning tide, even more noticeable after the sign-on. That day in town Mike introduced Linda to a thin, crooked little man he called Toddy McPhee.

"It was Toddy taught me all I know about the game," Mike explained, his smile for the spindly man affectionate, but hard. Linda had already learned that in the sugar industry there is no room for sentiment. "We both worked on the same plantation, just about the biggest in these parts. Toddy was rep. that year, and cutting in the gun gang. Over a hundred ton a week each man in the gang sent out that year. Cutting again this season, Toddy?"

"You bet. I've got an easy one, coupla trucks a day. Enough to keep me going." He sidled off along the footpath, legs crooked as a mud-crab's, arms hanging from an angle to his body, permanently bent in the elbow joints.

Linda stared after him, exclaiming in amazement that she'd have taken him to be much too old to cut cane.

"Whaddya mean, too old?" Mike was pretending to be insulted, but she saw that underneath the fooling he was annoyed about something. "Toddy's good for a few years yet, cutting along with the hacks. He's been out of the gun cutting for a

while, of course—I took his place in his old gang when I was eighteen and he was already starting to slip. No cutter will carry another when he can't keep up with the gang. Not even your brother, or your father. You don't expect it, anyway. You know you're on your own from the word Go."

"But an old man—at forty!"

"When he's through cutting altogether he'll get himself an easy job in one of the sugar mills, pushing empty trucks around the yard, or sweeping the floors. Remember that big, red-roofed house with the tennis court at the side? We passed it coming over town . . . that's Toddy's place. His kids are at college and will have it a lot easier than he did. His wife's a big noise on committees and charities—she's in everything there is to be in."

"Is that what he killed himself for?"

"No, it wasn't." Mike was clearly irritated now. "He had the satisfaction of being the best cutter of his day. Everybody round here knows him. His records are still used as measuring sticks against the young guns. I can remember the boss of the plantation bringing his English visitors down to the cane paddock to watch Toddy at work—he'd toss a great armful of plant cane on his shoulder and run to the tramline with it. God, he had a back, that man. A cutter's only as good as his back."

"He looks in pretty poor shape now. Mike—"

"He could fight, too. Anyone pinched Toddy's cane or tried to crowd him in a cane paddock soon found that out. Toddy taught me all I know. About cutting, that is. Toddy was a real gun." He abruptly changed the subject, as if he, too, had felt the shadow of something menacing and unavoidable reaching out for the future. His future. "Are you going to buy the curtains for the bathroom today? Condors have some pretty blue plastic stuff with starfish and things in the pattern."

"Good. That's exactly what I wanted." It was true. She liked her belongings to conform to popular taste, so that most people approved of and liked them, too. But her eagerness was too quick, and too bright. She had used it to clamp a lid down tight, on fear.

*

The following Sunday evening she saw her first fires. At first the town seemed to be ringed with an orange glow, but as she looked she saw that the glow came from a series of fiercely-burning cane-fires, flaming briefly and luridly, licking at the dusk with hungry tongues of gold, orange and crimson flame. Mike explained that the fires left the cane standing, stripped of trash, blackened but unharmed. What had been a sea of brilliant, lush-growing green was reduced in minutes to stark rows of standing cane, waving scorched top-ribbons in the smoky air.

Showers of charred fragments fell on rooftops, on roadways, choked gutterings, lay in a dulling film on trees. Briefly they swirled in the air, these black particles, like hordes of angry flies, then vanished as suddenly as they'd appeared.

"They've started burning-off" people said, brushing the black from their shoulders, even old blood quickening at thought of what the fires implied. Plenty of work, good money, faster living.

Businessmen rubbed their hands, observing the glow in the sky. A reflection of the fires, it meant brisker trading. Men of God decided forthwith that the time was ripe for opening church funds for repairs or new missions. Medical men know their many outstanding accounts would now be paid in full. The resurgence of vitality in the town could be felt by all.

White Box Honey

Athenian Butes, you far-travelled men
Who fled Colchian Aea, and the flames
Of its despoiled temple; you who pastured
Hairy flocks among the scented herbage
Of tall Hymettos; you should be here today.
All flowering time my brown gold-banded
workers
Plundered and clung among the tossing
clusters
Of silver sunwarm blossom, bringing cargoes
Of summer in its essence to their city,
The waxy hexagons of the hives' darkness,
Now it is winter. Blustering westerlies
Tumble the wattle boughs, and cassia blooms
Carpet the sleeping grasses. Now we sit
Over red coals of box-wood, tasting summer
Mingled with perfume, brightening simple
bread.

W. N. SCOTT

Monday morning saw the toy-like locomotives shunting out busily on antennae lines, delivering empty trucks. Cutters gathered on fields, wearing tough new clothing designed to stand up to hard wear, flourishing in boyish, practice swings the knives which had been issued at the sign-on and sharpened and weighted at home. Sometimes a cutter appeared on the field without shoes, his feet sure and hard.

The mills teemed with activity, like disturbed anthills. There was little order in the first days. Clerks, mill-hands, sugar chemists, department heads and laborers seethed about the huge, ramshackle buildings, the yards and the office blocks, mingling with tradesmen. The mills would not start crushing until Wednesday, when the cutters would have sent in long rakes of loaded trucks. By Wednesday this chaos of starting had to be converted into a high degree of efficiency, the mills ready for a long and arduous season of crushing.

Linda knew that her husband would be black when he came home after the first day's cutting. He'd told her, and she was prepared. But nevertheless it came as a shock to her, seeing him there behind the wheel of the still-familiar car. She hadn't expected him to look so strange and unknown to her. Which was very silly, she told herself sharply, hurrying to close the gate. Because after all he was Mike, exactly the same man she'd married, and it only stood to reason.

The stranger stepped out stiffly. Would he kiss her? Or not? She was freshly bathed and made up, as her favorite magazines were forever adjuring her to be when her husband came home from work. (Linda acquired a great many of her ideas and standards from magazines, films and radio. Up to now, such sources had served very well in helping her to meet the exigencies of daily living.)

Would the black rub off easily, if he did, or would it stain?

"Hullo, darling." His lips tasted of dust, char and sweat. She saw the white teeth flash in the black face as he laughed down at her, laughing at her uneasiness. "Christ, the first day's hard when a bloke's soft. Any chance of a cuppa before I take a bath?" Reassuringly, the voice was Mike's.

"Didn't you stop at the pub?" Yes, the square, solid teeth between lips licked clean and pink belonged to him also. But the eyes were blood-shot, flecked with black specks, heavy-lidded with fatigue. A line of black rimmed them, like the crust which outlined his lips where his lip-licking tongue had stopped.

"I never feel like beer when I'm cutting," he said, dropping the canvas bag containing lunch-tin and thermos on the draining board of the sink. "And the pub was full, anyway. I'd rather get home and have a bath and a hot cup of tea. Plenty of time for a drink before we eat." He groaned as he sat down. "You'll have to rub my back after I've had a bath. And my legs. I've got hellish cramps—always do get 'em the first week or so. Until I harden up."

But she washed his back for him, first. Standing nearby while he stepped from the clothes—stiff with sweat and sugarcane juice—he'd worn all day. They kept the shape of his body when he tossed them aside, reeking sourly in the steamy air of the bathroom.

She watched, fascinated, while the lithe, oddly exciting black man stepped into the water. He soaped himself vigorously, the water swirled black. When he passed her the soap and washer she had to force herself to lather the black back, to touch it with her hands. Then the grey suds rose over her forearms—she washed them off, sluicing water, and the back of her husband emerged clean, bulging with muscle, speckled like a bantam's egg. Both the violent attraction which had scared her, and the revulsion which had shaken her, were lost in an enveloping tenderness. When he was dry and lying face down on the bed, she rubbed his back with liniment.

As she did so she saw the thin rime of black inside his ears, his nostrils, and his eyelids. They were the signature brands of his job, and she was to notice them on many other cane-cutters.

She rubbed the corded legs, too, Mike giving little sensuous murmurs of pleasure and relief as she did so.

He put a robe over his pyjamas and sipped a glass of wine while she served the substantial dinner. Later, he ate the thick soup, roast meat and vegetables, steamed pudding and custard as if he were famished. It had seemed a much too heavy meal, to Linda, when she was cooking it, but she saw now that it was the kind he wanted and needed. Not for a canecutter the chicken salad and jelly sweet favored by office workers. But she was disappointed that he had no word of praise for her. His jaws masticated the food almost mechanically; he was obviously too exhausted to enjoy either the well-cooked food or the pleasant talk that bubbled out of her. The white strain of bone-weariness showed in his face, above the dressing-gown of finest maroon wool with its delicate leather trim.

He went immediately to the bedroom, read the morning paper propped up on pillows, smoked a reflective cigarette, and when Linda went in to tell him she was ready for bed, he was asleep.

She covered him gently, observing with pity the way his heavy breathing lifted the hands folded on his chest: hands scratched and scored and ingrained with black after only one day's work.

She rose in the dark of pre-dawn, slipped on warm top-clothing and hurried silently to the kitchen again, to prepare a hot, solid breakfast and cut an enormous lunch. Stiff, tired, sore, he came out to eat, dressing-gown again over pyjamas, because immediately after breakfast he had to change for work.

"Four trucks to do today," he groaned. "Just as well we're in decent cane to start with." In no time at all he had left the house.

The pattern for all the working days to come was set. She began to look forward to the week-end.

*

Sunday came round, and Mike gardened a little, and rested, as he'd done on Saturday. The night before they'd driven to the coast and made love in a grove of she-oaks through which the moonlight filtered coldly. It was comfort and contact once more, but Mike was plainly tired and disinclined to spend time in pleasing her. The wind in the thin leaves of the trees, the sound of the waves on a deserted shore, made the very act of love seem fraught with loss and loneliness.

The warm purr of the home-going car was much better.

Linda found herself talking compulsively, ceaselessly, over that first week-end, as if to keep at bay the coming week of near silence. She rubbed Mike's back, gave him food he liked, showed him the garden and fowls he hadn't seen for a week, and all the time she talked. Her natural vivacity had had no outlet, it seemed, for years.

Weeks slipped by. When she complained of her isolation, Mike reminded her that all his slavery was for her. He didn't mind the heat and the dirt and the unremitting toil; the lunches eaten on a canefield swept by searching westerlies or ablaze with relentless sunshine, heavy with the sour, unforgettable smell of burnt cane. He was making big money—and for her.

He was childishly proud of the money he brought home. They were incredible cheques. Laura thought of all the cane that had to be cut, topped, thrown on a heap, and finally loaded, all the cane that went to make the ton after weary ton for which he was paid, and quailed. He'd kill himself at this rate.

But he seemed to thrive instead. Now many of the great fields were bare, the ground blackened, toasted, pungent from past fires.

Summer deepened.

Mike grew more irritable as the crushing progressed and heat wrung the last ounce of energy from his body. His week-ends were now given over entirely to rest. They had no guests and paid no visits. They lost touch with the circle of friends they'd enjoyed in their engaged days. Even the regular, passionless love-making ceased, and Linda was moved to tears at a glimpse of young people strolling past the house, absorbed in each other. Even a middle-aged couple tending a garden together was enough to twist her heart painfully. She had never before felt so alone.

In Linda's imagination Mike came to symbolise a machine, whose voracious appetite must be satisfied, whose moods must be studied and allowed for, whose back must be tended with care. She knew by now the importance of a canecutter's back. On its durability depended the working life of a cutter.

"I'm done if anything buggers my back," Mike would say, as she massaged liniment and oil into it.

"There are other jobs," she'd maintain, knowing quite well that for a cutter in the prime of life—in the golden years—there was no other work worth doing.

October, November, and into the pitiless, burning humidity of December, presaging the wet season. Still no rain fell.

Mike's body was sheer whipcord. Or the piece of old rawhide he likened it to himself, gazing ruefully down its attenuated length. The muscles bulged like doorknobs under the skin, for he carried not an ounce of unnecessary flesh on his bones. There seemed to be no blood in him, no moisture of any kind. Only bones, knobby muscles and corded tendons, a face gauntly hollowed, with dark-ringed eyes. His hands were iron hard, and his feet tough and black as a kanaka's. The boundaries of the cane paddock had become his horizon, spiritually, mentally and physically.

The town continued to ride the wave of its prosperity. Night and day locos hauled long rakes of empty trucks across country, or strained under the pull of hump-backed, loaded ones creaking their groaning way to the mills. Motor lorries crawled, top-heavy with their load of cane, through the back streets. Mills clanged and roared ceaselessly, belching smoke and the stench of burning bones (used in the refineries) into air already filled with ash and smoke and the smell of fermented sugar juice. Workers swarmed on the roads at starting and knock-off times; the distillery remained lit up every night; ships waited while their holds were poured full of sugar from the bulk-loading port at the mouth of the river. And on every windless night the country was lit up by cane fires, sparks shooting to the sky.

Then suddenly it was Christmas. The crushing would extend into January, after all. Into the killing heat and steam and mud of the wet season.

"I was hoping we'd finish before now," Mike said, lying back on the garden settee, a frosty glass of beer in his hand. "It literally stinks, cutting in January. Stinks with sweat."

Linda was silent. The days of her compulsive talking on week-ends were gone. She was nearly always silent nowadays. He eased into another position, stiffly, like an old man. But he wasn't old yet, she thought on a wave of panic—he was only twenty-eight—you couldn't call a cutter an old man until he was forty—like Toddy McPhee . . .

He reached forward, feeling with his calloused, work-twisted hand for her scalp through the neat waves of her hair. "It'll soon be over, Linda. It'll all be different when the slack comes. We'll have time to be ourselves again. These will straighten out." He released his fingers from her hair and spread them out on his knee.

But someday, she thought, with a shiver, they'll not straighten out at all—nor will you. And I'll have nobody to care for—no magnificent back—you'll be another Toddy McPhee . . .

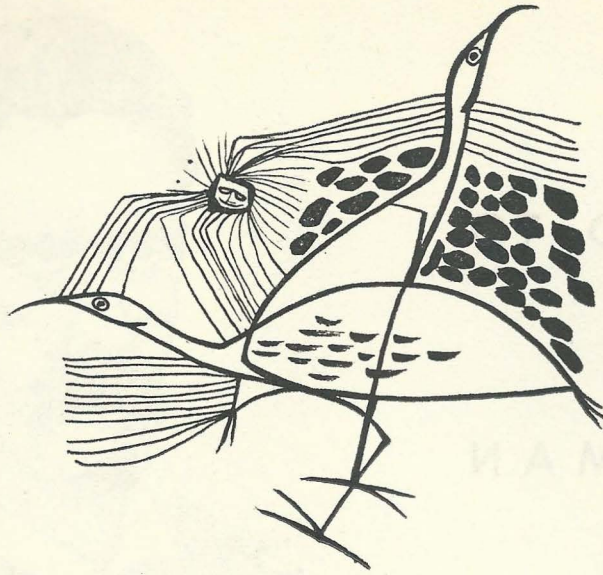
"What would you like to do, darling? When the crushing's over? Go south and see your parents?"

She sprang suddenly to her feet, upsetting the bottle of beer so that it frothed into his sandals. Her eyes glared wildly into his, and she beat him away when he tried to hold her.

"What would I like to do, Mike? Do you really want to know? I'd like to live the last six months. I'd like all the years to be whole years, not just halves. I don't want to be dead for six months of every year—I don't want to die at forty, with you, and all you stand for. I just—just—" she crumpled into his arms, sobbing.

He held her gently, tiredly, waiting for the storm of tears to subside. His back ached like the devil. He'd have to see about a new liniment—the old one must have gone stale. It wasn't having the same effect.

And a cutter, after all, was only as good as his back.



Nankeen Night-Herons

It was after a day's rain:
the street facing the west
was lit with growing yellow;
the black road gleamed.

First one child looked and saw,
and then another.
Face after face, the windows
flowered with eyes.

It was like a long fuse lighted—
the news travelling.
No one called out loudly:
everyone said Hush.

The light deepened, the wet road
answered in daffodil colors;
down the road's centre
walked the two tall herons.

Stranger than wild birds, even,
what happened on those faces—
suddenly believing in something,
they smiled and opened.

Children thought of fountains,
circuses, swans feeding;
women remembered words
spoken when they were young.

Everyone said Hush.
No one spoke loudly.
But suddenly the herons
rose and were gone. The light faded.

JUDITH WRIGHT

O'DOWD TO WHITMAN



ONE of the most remarkable events in Australian literary history was the intimate correspondence struck up suddenly in the early 1890s between the aging Walt Whitman, already coming into his own as America's greatest man of letters, and a callow, rather unhappy Melbourne law clerk named Bernard O'Dowd.

O'Dowd was 24 years old in 1890, only four years down from Ballarat where a promising career as a Catholic-school teacher had been disrupted by his growing agnosticism. At the date of the opening of this correspondence (March 1890) O'Dowd was working in the Supreme Court library and was about to graduate in Arts at Melbourne University. He was six months' married, and active in a number of social and literary groups, especially the "Australium"—a dozen or so intimates who gathered regularly in Carlton for discussions and arguments. They are referred to frequently in these letters.

While still in Ballarat O'Dowd had been given a copy of Whitman's "Drum-Taps" by his friend Tom Bury, who wrote for the local Courier under the name of "Tom Touchstone". To O'Dowd (Victor Kennedy and Nettie Palmer say in their biography) Whitman's verse came "as a clean, hot wind, blowing the cobwebs and dust of ages before it". O'Dowd's response to it is clear from these letters.

At the time of these letters Walt Whitman was at the end of his life, and in fact he died, at the age of 72, a few months after his last, pathetic note. His fame, at that time and since, has rested largely on "Leaves of Grass", a book that grew from 12 poems in its original edition of 1855 to 396 poems many years later when Whitman was striving to make it his final monument of affirmation and defiance in the face of a world that refused him his due: in his lifetime he suffered unprecedented abuse and vilification at the hands of those who could not see what he was trying to do or, if they saw, were frightened of it. The opposition he encountered was due more to the democratic content of his verse than to its innovations in style.

O'Dowd, himself one of the purest democrats Australia has seen, responded almost idolatrously to Whitman's example, and the American's lasting influence can be traced through much of O'Dowd's verse. Yet, as these letters show, the depth of intimacy between the two men of such disparate backgrounds and ages was far greater than any depth of intellectual exchange. What we may learn from the letters—apart from their intrinsic fascination—is of what has been called "Whitman's great and abiding love of humanity", as well as his genuine unaffected pleasure at the thought of admirers so young and so far away. On O'Dowd's part we are given an insight into the making of a man as well as into a period of unique importance in our cultural history.

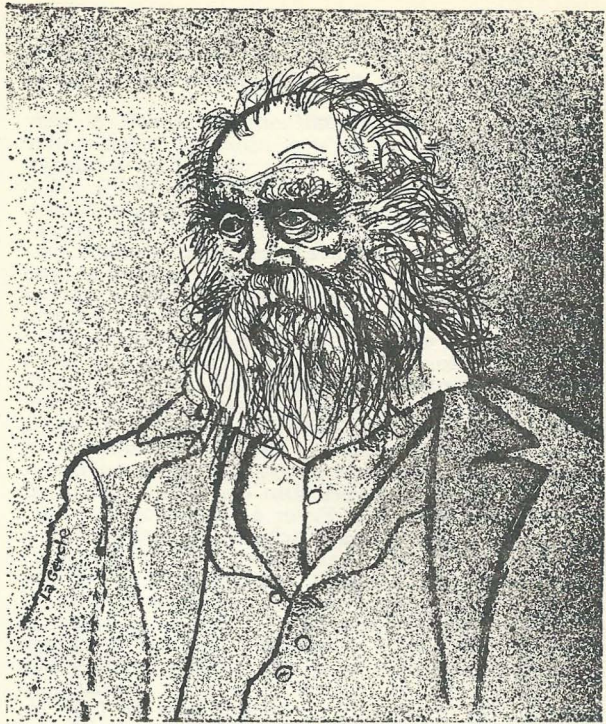
These letters have never been published in this form before, and have never been published in Australia in any form except that of scattered and piecemeal quotation, and then only ephemerally. The letters from Whitman to O'Dowd were deeded to the Melbourne Public Library after O'Dowd's death in 1954. (One, the first printed here, was missing, but a copy fortunately existed.) The letters were printed (with one exception) in Walt Whitman's Review (Wayne State University Press, U.S.A., June 1961), together with an article by A. L. McLeod on "Walt Whitman in Australia".

The exception is a recently-discovered letter from Whitman, placed at the disposal of Overland by the kindness of Mr. Neil O'Dowd. The letter is that of 15th March, 1891.

The O'Dowd letters belong to an American collector, Mr. Charles E. Feinberg, of Detroit, by whose courtesy photostats were supplied to Overland. An exception is the first, unfinished, draft

WHITMAN

TO O'DOWD



letter, which of course was never sent to Whitman and which is included here for interest. It was also recently copied from papers in the hands of Mr. Neil O'Dowd. None of the O'Dowd letters has ever been published.

It will be clear that several letters on both sides are still missing.

1

O'DOWD TO WHITMAN
(Unfinished draft)

Supreme Court Library
Melbourne
Victoria
Australia
6/8/89

My Revered Master

I have been going to write to you often but I feared being a presumptuous intruder. I am so now, I suppose, but after many unavailing searches I have at last got a complete edition of your "Leaves of Grass", & its might has impelled me to waft my sincerest thanks to you—great Scald of Demos. I wish that I could put myself into this sheet to shake hands with you, as you have put yourself into your writings and blessed me. I shall not tire you with a description of myself beyond saying that I am 23, impulsive but un-energetic, aspiring but too often resting with aspiration, studious, solitary but loving & working for the masses of men, fond of philosophy, poetry, science, comparative history (in fact all comparative studies), with not enough ambition to push myself on in the world, & passionately fond of Walt Whitman (too much, I think, sometimes, for I find myself defending your very faults) Solitary, I had said, yet with a young girl whom I love and

with three mates whom I reckon as a part of myself—otherwise solitary.

I used to write lines with the last words jingling similarly, in feeble imitation of similar jinglers, but little since I have met with you, Walt (I know you well, though you don't know me: we go out long walks together on fine Saturday afternoons and you make the leaves of grass and of the trees speak as none else can. For ages yet shall you so walk with young men out for their afternoon holiday.)

"Tom Touchstone" a Ballarat man, first introduced you to me. He is similar in some respects to yourself, with a touch of Thoreau about him. He loves you much, I think

2

O'DOWD TO WHITMAN

Supreme Court Library
Melbourne, Victoria
12/3/90

Dear Walt, my beloved master, my friend, my bard my prophet and apostle

I must write something to you now. I have tried during four years, but was not satisfied with my effort. Let my earnest will compensate for the clerk in a law library I know, & it would be presumption on my part to write to any stranger in this way, but you are not a stranger to me, you are my dearest companion: and, if you feel displeased, you have brought it on yourself for none who understandingly read you can help loving you. I am not going to praise your poetry to you (we don't usually tell the sun that he does well to shine & shines well, nor the grass do we praise for being green) & in regard to your other writings will only say that your hint re sunbaths has saved me many a day's illness & your essay on Carlyle

has told me once a wanderer in the desert scorched by a material sun, that there is a night too glowing with star-life (in a word it caused me to study Hegel).

Sometimes I take myself out of myself & gaze at what is going on in my mind. I often notice that I am defending you even when this unbiassed apart-Ego know or believe that you are a little wrong. We have great fights over you sometimes. My mates & I myself try to spread you everywhere & we find that every reverent student gets to love you while those who merely glance at you are sometimes nearly as virulent against you as those of your maligners who have never read you at all. I think we have profited morally also from your indirections. You have driven away a good deal of pessimism from us & we can now work lightheartedly in our small spheres. I was a Roman Catholic once, & had been, thus, for generations under pessimistic influence that the revelations of science could not drive away. My personal mates are Fred Woods, a draper, Jim Hartigan a plasterer, an adorer of you, Ada Fryer a boot-shop assistant (my sister-in-law) Ted Machefer (a scapegrace, a swagman only, but a true mate of 11 years standing) & my wife. I am 24, red hair, plain features, a little too backward for my own good, fond of poetry, philosophy, science & going long walks, (I have got together a philosophy class of workmen & workwomen mainly & the avidity with which the revelations are seized is a pure pleasure to witness. My mates all send their love & I do so, enclashed by my own. We have a picture of you that appeared in a late Illustrated London News. It is over the mantelpiece & you seem quite at home with us. The other night several of us had the thought that you were listening as we were reading "Piers the Plowman" & that you were sympathising with him in his despair, although pleased at hearing a poet of the "average man" of that day. It was the Walt Whitman of our souls that listened of course but the picture was suggestive of the other thought.

I wish you hadn't quite confined (in words) your "Come, I will make the continent indissoluble" to America. Most of us make America mean the world, or sometimes we put "Australia" in its place. But I mustn't criticise, I mean most to tell you that I love you, that my mates love you & that ere so very long, the whole world shall love you &, what is more, all prove their love by actions such as you would approve. [Poetically & philosophically you have solved the great equation—Spiritualism = materialism (erased in original)]

The little Camelot volume of your poems, sells well in Melbourne, a bookseller tells me.

I don't want to give you trouble, & so, as your correspondence must be extensive, will not expect an answer, honoured as I would feel by one. I sincerely hope that your physical life is happy now & that pain does not alloy your spiritual glory.

With a "handful out of my heart"

Good bye Walt,

So Long!

Bernard O'Dowd

P.S. "Tom Touchstone" (Mr. Bury) a journalist in Ballarat, & like you in many respects, first introduced you to me

3

O'DOWD TO WHITMAN

Supreme Court Library
Melbourne,
9/6/90

My dear Master

If the thought of having illuminated dull lives with a burst of heaven can give you pleasure, you

cannot regret having replied to my letter. I cannot reply properly, we have been treading air since. The occasion is so great that we must have a long space of time between us & it to see, to appreciate it truly. Heartfelt thanks, Walt, from me for your letter newspapers, proof-slips and portraits. They shall be treasured by those who love you dearly, until they become too valuable for any private person to hold them. I wish I could waft to you the looks of Fred Woods, Jim Hartigan and Ada as they heard you sending them greetings (I had concealed it till I got them together). My wife knew it was you when I came to the words "& others unnamed, if any". Jim, (a most devoted admirer of you, and one who seems to have an intuitive perception of your meaning. An idea strikes him now & then as we read & although he can't get words to clothe it I see what he means after a little, and can see that he had sounded deeper than we.) seemed thunderstruck at first and then his vivacity became thrilling. Fred, in grand spirits previously, became silent, almost sad, all evening. "His overlaid heart" almost "uttered itself in tears". Ada's intellectual face glowed, as I have never seen it before. The sight of it would have done you good. But when we read how sadly shattered you were physically, our joy was damped. I could not help reechoing in my heart the wish of Mrs. Fryer, "O the poor dear old gentleman! How I wish I was near him to nurse him!" We are all a little envious of your "nurseman" in fact, I think. Poor Ted was not here to get your greeting to him. He has gone to the stations of the interior, shearing. A strange life, station-life; a strange almost unique race, the station race. Wild and hot as the Northwind that scorches their plains, their lives are like those plains in their humdrum monotony & barrenness of result. A bush fire is the plain's only gala day and a yearly "burst" the stockrider's. Would that a fresh manhood rose from the blasted wrecks and "lambled down" cheques of the one as the young green blades hide the black of the other! They have a favourite poet, Gordon, whose strange melancholy fits in with the weirdness of Australian scenery and the vacuums (I was going to say 'raging vacuums') of their solitary world-weary hearts. Gordon had been a stockrider himself, a gold digger, bush policeman, Member of Parliament, steeplechaser and—suicide. I generally visit his grave on my birthday. Sad minor key! excuse me, Walt, thinking of Ted has led me into it.

I don't want to tire you or I would try to tell you the story of my own life as to my "confessor". I shall only give a few fragments. Parents, Irish, Catholics, father policeman. In youth, in moderate circumstances, but a rather lonely child. Studious never knew how to play "alleys" &c, was always "down" at "fly the garter", enjoyed reading & questioning re origin of ancient Irish &c, read Paradise Lost at 8, Hume at nine, Virgil at 10, passed exam. for a teacher at 11. Wasted time at school for a couple of years but read omnivorously. Shadows darkened meanwhile over family happiness. Do not remember a period of three months of home happiness since I was 9. Shifted from country into a mining city. Got on well at school, not so at home. Passed matric got exhibition for 6 years, held it for 2 or 3, passed 1st exam. for degree. Father died (I 15) thought I knew what was best to do, taught Catholic school for 3 months and then thrown on my own resources. Hadn't any, I suppose. Loafed about thinking I was trying to get something to do for 3 or 4 months. Could only teach. No one else would have me because I was a Catholic, they wouldn't have me because I was a Freethinker & so I fared badly.

Love episode of a strange nature; as usual, with badluck to me. "Shouldered bluey" with Ted & went through 5 months strange experiences in Australian wilds. Hard times, starvation, annihilation of soul almost, degradation everywhere, I touched with it as much as any I suppose. Staunch mates almost to death. I wrote a book as we wandered about, I thought it good at 18. I wrote it under the gum trees in early morning as my mates lay asleep. The somnolent whiffs from the wattle seemed to inspire me at times. I sent it afterwards to a school mistress whom I loved wildly to have her opinion of it. But as she thought fit to forget all about it when she set her school on fire to get a paltry insurance and it perished so, I haven't tried that kind of thing since, nor am likely to. Wild joys & woes of 19-21, I would need the pen of Sappho, Rousseau & Goethe (in Werter) to describe. What I thought a marble statue became very clay & woful were its last days, blasted was my life by it I fear, but O Walt, I clung to it, in duty's bonds to the last. I am now married to a dear, loving, pure, good girl, descended from French Huguenots, Dutch Van Tromps and Saxon Fryers. and am pretty happy. I look over the past & see a desert with a soul wandering aimlessly. I fear I have lost the soul for ever. Your words at times make me pulse responsive but I know it is the human "I" not the fitful, aerial marsh-fire-like "I" of the past. I am optimistic now, before, I was the reverse. I had a good school in a country town once & gave a lecture on Spiritualism & Freethought, trod honestly on the corns of the orthodox & lost all my pupils. Now, I can be more diplomatic, and gain the orthodox to my views with profit. I was foolish enough to start a movement for the separation of Australia from England. We held two meetings & I am not altogether sorry now that very few heard of it. Now I can get disciples for Marx at my will.

Look over the rubbish of this letter, I give you a few shreds of a failure. I believe Fame once intended to give birth to a child. Some accident happened & I was the abortion. Dear Walt, I love you "with all my heart and all my mind," and must unburden myself a little. Much that I have said, not even my wife knows. Read it & then blot it out. I am again in the midst of my friends conveying their good wishes and greetings to you. My word, we did keep up your birthday jollily here! It shall be a yearly affair now here, perhaps for ever. Fred & Jim & others "unnamed" before, as you guessed, the dear family whose tenderness and companionship has made my life a heaven, Mr and Mrs Fryer and Ada and Louie and Eve my wife all greet you, would, if we could, pray for you. "Tom Touchstone" (Mr Bury) is on his way to England and America and will, I am certain, try to see you. I am forwarding him your greeting. I owe him much, for I owe him you.

I believe the "Canterbury" edition of Leaves of Grass sells well here. The large edition is hard to get. I managed to get one (McKay, Philadelphia, /84) after great trouble. Jim has a later one. I have also "November Boughs" & the two small "Specimen days" & "Democratic Vistas". We have been trying to get Dr Bucke's work, but haven't as yet. Whenever there is an essay on your works we go & by rousing up a little enthusiasm managed to get many to read & a few to like you. Occasional letters & articles in the press we don't forget, although our power is small in that way. I compiled a kind of service book for the Secularists & took the liberty of taking a verse of your "Pioneers" for a motto & a quotation here & there throughout the book. I have a book

"Chants of Labour" with two of your pieces to music in it. We have tried them occasionally from it. We have great difficulty with your Adam pieces, but since our purest and holiest friends can see nothing but what is pure in them, we grow more sanguine, although these pieces will retard you longer than any others. Never mind, Walt. we will fight tooth & nail for you as long as we live & shall try to shape our lives so as to be worthy of being your soldiers.

There is a sublimity in your personal character that affects me as none other has ever done, not even Christ's. Had Carlyle added another chapter to his "Hero Worship" the "Hero as Nurse" with Walt Whitman as subject would have worthily capped his dome. The seeker does not always find, you it is, not Gawaine, who have found the San Graal. May the holy chalice of comradeship ever flow with blessings to man and commemorate thy nobleness!

Dear Walt, I hope I haven't tired you too much, I wish I could describe myself to you, but I find that I don't know what I am. I say materialist & my spiritual thirst drives me to wells of the soul, I say spiritualist and logics chop me into atoms & molecules and forces. I am retiring, yet vanity makes me proclaim myself: foolish, yet I hold myself wise: wise, yet I know how foolish. I am an enigma to myself. Your "To you" has roused me a little & I can put my foot down solid sometimes since.

Jim & I like the full length portraits best (the later one especially). Ada likes the head with the hat on and Mrs Fryer the one where you look so "very old". If it is a good likeness, my favourite is the frontispiece to "November Boughs"

I think your influence will be powerful in Australia. One of our most characteristic, perhaps our most powerful poet, is Francis Adams, and he has been called "Whitman-and-water". There are some fine things in his "Songs of the army of the Night". Others show your influence too.

Your word or two about our country was especially welcome. the external Federation &c movement being, I hope, the counterpart of an internal brotherhood movement. There are mighty problems awaiting solution here, in fact Democracy herself anxiously awaits our verdict as well as yours. I would wish to say more on this subject but have been too verbose already. With best love to you, Walt. and thanks for your kindness to us poor unknowns

I remain
your
Bernard O'Dowd

address—
Supreme Court Library
Melbourne
Victoria

4

WHITMAN TO O'DOWD

July 1890

Your good, long, varied and loving letter came yesterday and has been welcome and nourishing to me. Sure I read about that Australian 'interior' bit, and 'shearing', and about the experience and death of Gordon, the poet—and the **whole letter**, with much I will not particularize—with deepest interest, and thank you for sending it to me and hope for more; and can almost see you all there, and would wish to specifically send remembrance and love to you, Fred Woods, Jim Hartigan, Ada, Eve, Mr and Mrs Fryer, Ted, Louie, 'Tom Touchstone' (when there) and any other friends not

named. The cute and loving appreciation of my book and me by them in Australia has gone right to my heart—is far more than literary or technical fame.

Walt Whitman

5

O'DOWD TO WHITMAN

Supreme Court Library
Melbourne
1/9/90

My dear Master

Your letter has made more vivid still the thrills of gratitude your former one gave us, and if personal attachment is part of the true poet's meed, you assuredly have reward. I thank you sincerely for your kindness in forwarding the papers and criticisms, they help so much to give us clearer ideas of you and to see our Walt from other points of view. How we would have liked to have been present at that birthday "party" when Ingersoll (a hero to all of us once, to some of us still. It would do his heart good, much praised as he is & much reviled too at times to hear some of his Australian admirers "sticking up" for him, their paladin of sham-slayers.) eulogised you as the papers say. We are anxiously watching the papers to see the drift of his speech. While out in the cathedral-like gloom of an Australian "bush", the sameness of the green of the gum leaves only broken at times with the gold of the wattle bloom, the silence only varied by the eloquent warbling of our mocking bird (the lyre bird) or the faint, unbodied tinkle of the shy bell-bird, or the screech, as of lost souls, of the white cockatoos, I have often, with or without my mates thought some of Ingersoll's sculptured sentences, worthy of being uttered in those sacred glades, and if so on other subjects, how much more so would we think so when treating of you who have made those great gum trees array themselves in such new meanings for us. Our amygdaline (*Eucalyptus Amygdalina*) once was your redwoods rival, now each towering over its native forest wafts comrade-greetings to the other, joining in tree-fashion "hands across the sea". Those who have felt the awful meaning of our "bush", & our desert with its mirages and its rivers swallowed up in sand, and have been self-conscious of that "forming, intestinal agitation" in our town-life, have whirred with flywheels, and mingled with miners in drives & on mullock heaps, have been "droving" sheep to the Plains of Promise or the weird "Never Never" land, and have wandered from station to station with "sundowner" or hawker, have given a hand to the wharf-labourer lumping and helped him or resisted him in his "strikes" for justice or his violence (we have a great 'strike' on here now, the greatest that has ever taken place here: the whole community are involved. In spite of logic and political economy, my whole sympathies are with the workmen. It shows what fellowship can do, when it unites the "rouseabout" on the Tropic of Capricorn with the "sails" on an Invercargill trader, and stimulates the London "docker" to send his subscriptions & his sympathy), have been among children at school, among business people and professional, and scholars, those who have experienced such, are those who are alone competent here, to pronounce against you, and I have never met one such, who has been able to do so: most such, who read at all, find in you their natural poet. Jim agrees with me in this, & says furthermore that every action he does and every set of circum-

stances he finds himself in, call up some line of yours. Certainly, to me at least, you are a commentary on, and a unifier of the disjointed (to me previously) history of the world. I can best illustrate Ada's experience of you by saying that to her you appeared as a vast mist, which however gradually developed a nucleus, and that again a nucleolus, which last contained all worth containing in the world. Fred's opinion is best symbolised by the rush of the iron to the magnet without knowing why, exactly. You would like his way of liking you, I think. Eve is an uncompromising enemy of shams, and if I may use the expression a slave to Liberty and as she finds the same in you (as indeed everyone finds everything he wants in you), you are her inspired Book. To all of us indeed you are our "guide, philosopher & friend". I hope you won't think I am trying to flatter, I can't help telling you what we think of you, to anyone else it might be flattery, but it is no highfalutin, nothing but the honest downright truth when I say that you are the greatest who has ever lived, to us all. The tension of an ecstasy, such as a Mohammedan would feel, if privileged to write to & to receive letters from his Prophet, is on me, while I write and therefore I can't write as I would wish to. I can hardly think it is not a dream that I am writing to Walt Whitman. Take our love, we have little more to give you, we can only try to spread to others the same great boon you have given to us.

We have great difficulty in following the movements of "Tom Touchstone", but I think you will see him before he will get your greetings to him here. He was busy with John Burns and others in London, the last I heard of him. I am very sorry that Dr Buck's book has gone astray: we are prosecuting every enquiry we can in Australia, & so I hope we shall get it all right.

After a long "try", we have managed to get "Leaves of Grass" into our Public Library (a magnificent institution) ("November Boughs" is already there): this will do it good I think, for the reviewers & critics (your midwives) will be able to get it, and the general reader too.

We will do our best to try & get an order or two for you and think we can do it. It seems a pity that you should be getting no benefit of the numerous copies sold here. I am trying to get an essay read before the Australian Church Literary Society, I spoke for you there two or three years ago and managed to rouse a good deal of interest at the time in "Leaves of Grass". We are rather a quiet lot and haven't a great deal of influence, but as it spreads, you shall spread too, I warrant you.

I have a whole lot of questions to ask you about your poems but deem it better not to, you must be grown up too, and are all the better appreciated when that is the case.

We had an important event at our place on the 13th ult.—our first little one. We are going to call him Eric Whitman. His mother and he are quite well and she looks so happy.

We all send our love and sincerely hope that you are as comfortable as your sad misfortunes will allow you. It is so sad to think that your services to human beings and to nature should have brought such return from both as yours have. The joy with which we receive your letters is flecked with great pangs for your sufferings. And you bear it all like the hero you are. Again, with love

I remain, my dear, dear master
he whom you have called "comrade"
Bernard O'Dowd

"We have frequently printed the word Democracy. Yet I cannot too often repeat that it is a word the real gist of which still sleeps, quite unawaken'd, notwithstanding the resonance and the many angry tempests out of which its syllables have come, from pen or tongue. It is a great word, whose history, I suppose, remains unwritten, because that history has yet to be enacted."

Walt Whitman

6

WHITMAN TO O'DOWD

Camden New Jersey U.S. America
Oct: 3 1890

Dear Bernard O'Dowd (& all the friends)

Y'r good letter of Sept: 1 has just come and is welcomed—I like to hear every thing & anything ab't you all—& ab't the Australian bush & birds and life & toil & idiosyncrasies there—& how it looks—and all the sheep work &c: &c: you please me more than you know by giving such things fully—write often as you feel to & can—The Dr Bucke book (that I had dispatch'd by mail hence early in July) came back to me after a long interval for more post stamps wh-I put on & re-sent hence July 25 last, same address as this—and I sort o' hope & trust it has reached you safely this time—if not & will send another—Ingersoll is to come to Philadelphia & make a public address (the bills call it a 'testimonial' to me) the latter week of this month & to raise moneys for me I suppose (thank him, the true Christian of them all)—They refused to rent him the hall he wanted—but I believe he has found one yet—If reported I will send you the acc't & speech—cloudy & wet here lately but today is sunny & perfect & I shall get out this afternoon in wheel chair—I remain much the same—spirits good—sleep, appetite, digestion &c not bad—but the grip (a catarrhal, cold-in-the-head affection) and bladder trouble seem tenaciously on me—good right arm volition—mentality not seriously impair'd &c: &c: (I write to you as an elder brother might to the young bro's & sisters & doubtless repeat parrot-like)—what books of mine have you? I sh'd like to send you a little pocketbook b'd L of G as a present to be used by any of you & maybe handy, & indeed am only restrain'd by the uncertainty of the mails f'm sending many more things. But I already get enough to know I have your good will & love & that my missives have struck deep, even passionately into dear human hearts—

Walt Whitman

7

O'DOWD TO WHITMAN

Supreme Court Library
Melbourne
29/9/90

My dear Master

Your kind letter of the 22nd and 23rd July, trebly welcome for its being a surprise, has come, and with it, I am glad to say, Dr Buck's book (delayed, apparently, by the American P.O. Authorities). We had been worrying the P.O. here for the previous month. It is 12 p.m. Ada and I have been arguing about your indication that the "whole theory of the universe points unerringly" to each individual in it, for the last two hours: before, we were

saying goodbye to a member of our little literary circle, a nice young chap, a blacksmith thrown out of work here over the strike, and now going to a wild spot in the Southern Ocean to help build a lighthouse. He will be away many months, and we feel now how we have liked him, I can tell you. (We didn't do much "Data of Ethics" to-night, I fear) Before tea, I met a young Welshman, named Davis, who told me he knew Ernest Rhys & then we talked of you. He says the Welsh like you, can't help liking you. He was delighted at your letter and then told me he was on the staff of the "Age" our principal peoples' newspaper & that he would see me again & have a yarn about you. I sent several extracts about you to the papers, but somehow can't get them in. I fear you are a little "taboo" yet. I send you an "Argus" of last week with a sample of the only kind of notice you get in the "feudal" circles. I wish I had something more cheering, but as they are constantly referring to you in a similar strain, your influence is clearly being felt. Ibsen is similarly treated by this paper. From my knowledge of the 'caste' that this paper pleads for, I take its remarks as favourable indications. Your complaints re the great journals refusing you a hearing pain all who know you but we console ourselves by the knowledge that the "demons of our sires are the gods that we adore".

I read a paper on your attitude towards Democracy "the gospel of Democracy as promulgated by Walt Whitman", before the Australian Church Literary Society on last Tuesday week. The reverend chairman was decidedly unsympathetic, but the tone of the debate was altogether in your favour. Level-headed, old men, and fiery young ones fought like paladins for you, and Walt carried the day. A reverend opponent was disarmed by being driven to own that he didn't believe in the brotherhood of man. The refreshing power with which one young man urged the audience to read and absorb the Song of the Open Road and the vigour with which another insisted on your being the "great poet", did our hearts good & made us wish you had heard them. I was sorry the head of the church (Dr Strong) was not there, for he really preaches your gospel, although perhaps he would not say so. I treated your "Democracy" analytically

- I Physically (a) Physiological aspect (b) Biological aspect (as a growing organism) (c) Sociologically
 - II Intellectually with reference to (a) Science (b) Art (c) Poetry
 - III Spiritually. Its attitude towards (a) Morality (its ethical aspect) (b) Soul (c) God
- Pervading, and intertwining with these, your great tones of Comradeship, Personality and Nationality.

In accordance with your wish I give over the leaf a list of the papers &c that I have received from you

Received from you, At Supreme Court Library
Melbourne

May 29th 1890 1 Letter

2. Camden Daily Courier 2/6/83 "About Walt Whitman"
3. A backward glance on my own Road
4. Remembrance copy (2)
5. 2 Portraits full length (hat in hand). "Sundowner" we call it
 - 1 Portrait with hat on
 - 1 " " side face, hat off
 - 1 " " W.W. 1855
- (6) Camden Post 22/4/90 "W.W.'s Last Public"

August 23rd 1890 1. Letter

2. Camden Post 2/6/90 Ingersoll's speech
3. Boston Transcript 19/4/60 "W.W. Tuesday Night" (two copies)
4. What Lurks behind Shakespeare's Historical Plays
5. John Burrough's criticism in Drum Taps. "Galaxy" 1866
6. Conservator July /90. "Quaker Traits of W.W."
7. "Today" June /85. Confession of Faith". Anne Gilchrist, High-souled woman!)
8. Price list of books.

September 23rd 1890

1. Letter
1. 3 "Sturm" portraits (hat on)
- 4 "Sundowner" portraits. Fred has one & Jim another (you would like them to have them)
2. re Democratic Art
3. Camden Morning News 15/8/90. Boyle O'Reilly
4. Camden Post 12/8/90. Paragraph re Emerson.
5. Dr Bucke's book

With such ammunition and provision in the shape of sundry editions of L of J. we ought to be fit to meet all opponents. If I can ever manage to get my hand in at literary work, I shall make sturdy attempts to do you yeoman service, at any rate. People don't take much notice of a poor clerk in an obscure library, I fear. I can only try to seek out those who can fight effectively. My canvassing for pecuniary powder & shot for you is not very successful as yet, partly owing to the canvasser & partly to the strike. The shearers and rouseabouts are striking now (Ted will be among them) and a commercial and industrial deadlock of ominous character is on. You will get a 'glint' of it from the "Argus" (a little prejudiced perhaps).

I can see your influence in many of our Australian singers. One especially, Francis Adams, (whom a poet-chum of mine, Sydney Jephcott, holds greater than Shakespeare) wrote several years ago a great number of love poems of sickly sweetness: since then he has published a book called "Songs of the Army of the Night", simple, terse, sledge-hammer-like in which your influence is very apparent. They call him "Whitman & water" jokingly. He is in England now making towards "Fame".

Mr Bury was "up to the neck" in labour matters, conferences with "dockers" &c, in England the last we heard of him. I do hope he will see you. You would be regular chums. He has been through so much here in Australia, has already absorbed our Australian life so much more than anyone I know, and has withal so excellent a heart, so eclectic (in the broadest sense) a nature, that he will be a good type to you of what our democracy can

flower to. His frequent & apt quoting of obscure authors first showed me that respectability's or conventional hall marks were not essential to great merit.

I hope my 'ramblers' don't tire you. With many thanks for your kindness in sending the portraits, papers and Dr. Buck's [?] Life (Fred & Jim are at it now, I go for a week's holiday to the wildest parts of our 'ranges' tomorrow, and will try to get a suitable setting for fully enjoying it. W. O'Connor hasn't lost the Celtic blood over there, it is evident. One feels in an ancestral fair-scrimmage while reading.) Fred & Jim and Kate his sister, Ada, Eve, Mr & Mrs Fryer all join in this our love-message, to our benefactor, our comrade and our bard. Blessings on you and heartily do we pray that your afflictions may be lightened and all your remaining days bright & happy. So Long.

Bernard O'Dowd

Eric Whitman O'Dowd sends his love too, for he smiles [as?] we ask him & surely a parent's interpretation can be held the correct one.

8

O'DOWD TO WHITMAN

Supreme Court Library
Melbourne
24/11/90

My dear Master and (may I say?) Comrade

I received your letter of the 3rd ult enclosing "Osceola", "A Twilight Song" and "To the Sunset Breeze", and also a copy of September Philadelphia Press with a poem [by?] you, all right, and feel that I cannot express my thanks, (on behalf of us all) sufficiently to you for your noble kindness to us. I fear I detected a tone of weariness and affliction between the lines and can only say we are sorry from our hearts that your winter days should be so.

I am sorry that Tom Touchstone (Mr Bury) had to return from England before crossing to you. He was detained long over the strike & business connected with it. I wrote to him & told him of all your expressions of good will and greetings of love to him & us all. I enclose his letter to me.

There is much misery & pinching among us in Australia over the strike. The men lost, as was inevitable, **this time**, but I do not think it is really a loss after all.

Fred & Jim and Ada & Ted & Mr & Mrs Fryer & my wife all send their love to you, bound with every good wish for you. We are anxiously waiting to hear the result of Ingersoll's goodness.

(I believe they have a secret good word for you, for this reason. I used to bother them a lot with a series of serrated word-groups that I called poetry, but since your influence came, they have been spared, &, I have no doubt, are thankful accordingly.)

I thank you again for "To the Sunset Breeze". Somehow I feel your spirit at its best, through that; it is a kind of commentary (among other things) in the unexplainable (to me) feeling of kinship with, at times, the hot wind in the Central plains, at others, the gale from the ice-teeth of the Southern Pole. Your breeze isn't like them, but you know the language of which they are a (perhaps harsh) dialect. I thank you too for the precious

gift of a poem signed by yourself with your own name. I must finish now. With warmest Love,

my dear dear Master

I remain

Bernard O'Dowd.

P.S. Will you please send me for Jim Hartigan, Fred Woods & myself three (3) "Complete Poems & Prose" to same address as this (£5 enclosed)

P.O. order
for £5
enclosed

9

WHITMAN TO O'DOWD

Camden New Jersey U S America

Nov: 3 1890—Dear friend Bernard O'Dowd (& dear friends all) y'r good letter 29/9 & the newspaper came this m'n'g & was welcome, as always—am cheer'd to hear f'm you all, & y'r affectionate treatment of me, thro' L of G. See you must have rec'd all my letters, papers, slipd & scraps & Dr Bucke's book, (remember that Dr B gives his coloring f'm the eve of a zealous friend—I know well enough that WW is not a quarter as good as B makes him out, but is full of defects & vagaries & faults)—I have since sent you a report of R G Ingersoll's big lecture in Philadelphia here Oct. 21—I have rec'd from it (& him) \$869.45 wh- keeps me in bread & meat & shanty. Keeping a good time yet—I also send to you printed slip. "Old Poets" my latest piece—am not sure but that this internationality of p o and mails (I got a letter this m'n'g all safe f'm Nagasaki, written very fair English, f'm a young Japanese reader & absorber of L of G) is the grandest proof of modern civilization, practical brotherhood & christianity—we feel it here in the U S f'm Canada to Texas, & f'm Atlantic side to Pacific shore—and you must too in Australia—Am mainly ab't same in health but slowly dimming & the pegs coming gradually out as I call it—this grip has hold of me thoroughly & bladder trouble badly—but I keep fair spirits & I suppose mentality & (as being written) fair appetite & sleep—have a good nurse, Warren Fritzinger a strong hearty good natured young American man, has been f'm boyhood a sailor & all round the world—go out in propell'd wheel chair—was out last evn'g to a friend's & wife's to supper, (drank a bottle of first rate champagne)—when you write don't be afraid to send me ab't Australian idiosyncrasies [sic], the woods, special trees and birds, and looks, life, people, peculiarities, occupations &c. (Under the thin glaze-surface of conventionalities, as here, a vast plummetless-depth of democratic humanity is existing, thinking, acting, ebbing and flowing—there no doubt—that I would like O so like to flatter myself I am giving or trying to give voice to)—I am leisurely cooking up a little 2d annex for my L of G, & a collected appendix for Nov. Boughs. I enclose you a couple of slips of my last poem in Dec. Phila. Lippincott's Magazine. Barney you don't know how much you & all there have done me—words by pen & ink are poor perhaps but I how I wish to give you all & each a God bless you & my love to you & the dear wife and baby to Fred & Jim. & Kate, & Ada, Eve, & Mr & Mrs Fryer & Mr Bury & other friends I fear I have not specified

Walt Whitman

10

O'DOWD TO WHITMAN

Dec. 23rd 1890

Supreme Court Library
Melbourne

My Dear Master

Your letter of Nov. 3rd, enclosing two "Sunset Breeze" & "Shakespeare" from Poet Lore, slip of reply at Ingersoll's lecture, "Old Poets", two Philadelphia newspapers with reports of lecture & two "Truthseekers", have all arrived safely and increased our debt of gratitude to our bard and our friend (We have the hope that your influence will tend to make all bards and all friends. When every pick stroke is the beat of a labour-metre & every through-train an epic, in the eyes of the workers, and when the old spirit of camaraderie, fitfully shown now & then by the way men stick together, & starve for each other in strikes &c, tints men's lives like the Javan volcano tinted our Australian afterglow during the last few years, that will be "the good time coming". In mathematical formula, If man = friend = bard, then happiness = [infinity sign].)

That lecture of Ingersoll's must have been a rare one, as it comes to us, its mere shadow, is grand. Ingersoll has an illustration in his lecture on Humboldt which fits himself here. He refers to Chimborazo with Humboldt at its feet. Here was another intrepid explorer and lover of truth, clearing away prejudice from another America, and, here in this lecture, sitting nobly and ennobled at the feet of literature's Chimborazo. If this should sound highfalutin kindly remember an Irish enthusiasm pens it, and an Irish earnestness warms it.

Jim, & Fred, & "Tom Touchstone", and all of us at home, send you our love and a hearty Australian New-Year's greeting, and wish we could personally thank Ingersoll for his kindness to you. (You seemed so much better this letter than last, that we kind o' feel inclined to give Ingersoll a bit of the credit and the thanks, heartfelt, I can tell you).

I am busy studying "philosophy" for a University exam. and the result is that I haven't a decent thought to tell you. My word, the general run of it **does** want your test of the "open-air" consideration, and a pruning accordingly. That same "open air" would blow most of it to oblivion, like a hot wind a heap of pea-chaff. The stuff gives you an intellectual dry-rot & how you sift for days when you can say as our poet Gordon said

"'Twas merry in the glowing morn among the gleaming grass

To wander as we've wandered many a mile
To blow the cool tobacco clouds & watch the white wreaths pass

Sitting loosely in the saddle all the while.

'Twas merry, mid the blackwoods, to spy the station roofs,

& wheel the wild scrub-cattle at the yard,
With a running fire of stockwhips & a fiery run of hoofs—

O the hardest day was never then too hard!"

We're going to have a grand day on Christmas, about 80 children are coming to our place & we are going to do all kinds of wonderful comical & enjoyable things to please them.

I tried to get some of Ingersoll's lecture in the leading papers here, but they are a little too bigoted & so no result as yet.

You **did** interest us by referring to your Japanese correspondent. We have been studying that country, its literature & national character, and are pleased greatly that your "Leaves" have a

prospect of being able to wreathe the brows of the "Daughter of the Sun". By the way, how do you think "Leaves of Grass" will translate into other languages? We have discussed the question and vary much.

Thanks again for your great kindness to us and our need of thanks for that greater kindness to Man your publication of Leaves of Grass has been.

Our Master : our prophet : our Elder Brother:

Au revoir! Solong!
Bernard O'Dowd

11

WHITMAN TO O'DOWD

328 Mickle Street n'r Delaware river
Camden New Jersey U S America

Dec.: 26 '90—Herewith are copies of my big book "Complete Works," one for Jim Hartigan one for Fred Woods, and two for you (four altogether)—all paid for—& cannot pay for the expressage as it all uncertain here—& I sh'l only be too glad if the bundle reaches you safe—y'rs of Nov. 24th rec'd & welcomed with Mr Bury's letter with the 5 pound postal order—shall send a letter to you by mail also at once in duplicate of this—meanwhile my sympathy & love to you all dear friends men & women

Walt Whitman

12

WHITMAN TO O'DOWD

Camden New Jersey U S America

Dec: 27 '90—Dear friend B. O'D. The books, in a bundle, (four complete works) have just gone in Adams's Express, Wells, Fargo & Co: f'm San F, a bundle in brown envelope, (16 inches square, 4 inches thick, y'r address on) to Melbourne, I have paid the expressage throughout—Look out for them in due time & if worth while inquire there at the main Adams, Wells Fargo & Co Express office—of course I sh'l be a little anxious till I hear they have arrived for certain. Nothing perhaps notable or new ab't self—I sent papers with report of Ingersoll's address here (in Phila) wh- I hope have reached you before this time—It was a fine success—big hall filled full—\$869.45 clear'd above expenses & paid to me—(I will send you the printed speech in a little book now being printed in NY)—I keep fairly—appetite fair—a quite hearty breakfast at 9 today, a meat chop, some oatmeal & cup of tea—the grip on me yet & bladder trouble—am writing a little—spirits easy—heavy snow storm & cold these days all over hereabout—but I keep a stout oak wood fire—& read & write & while away the time imprisoned here in my room—hope you get the papers I send—often think of you there more than you know—(my favorite notion is to entwine the working folk of right sort all round the globe, all lands—that is the foundation of L or G, they are banded together in spirit and interest essentially all the earth) My respects and love to you & wife & Fred & Jim & Ada & Ted & Mr & Mrs Fryer & others unspecified—As I finish I hear f'm the express office—the bundle is paid thro hence to you & I sh'll wait to hear f'm it

Walt Whitman

13

WHITMAN TO O'DOWD

Camden New Jersey U S America

Jan: 1 '91—Well the New Year has come & it is a dark foggy stormy glum day here—my troubles are still from this inveterate grip & bladder affection (bad)—But I am sitting here, & blessing the powers that it is no worse—as before written I keep pretty good heart (that's the old south side phrase) & a fair appetite & strong right hand—I sent off a parcel with four books (big vols: complete works) directed to you & sent by express paid thro' in full—if you find a little note in the bundle to pay expressage there, it is wrong as I after found they required prepayment in the Ex. office—they said on Wells, Fargo & Co's (y'r Pacific side Co:) ac't—but the main thing will be, if the bundle reaches you safe, wh- is one motive of my sending now—I am putting some little licks on a little 2d. annex to be called "Good bye My Fancy" wh- I will send you when printed—& my L of G. & all will be done—I wrote to you ab't a week ago too—has it come all right?—¼ after 4 pm—half-light)—have just finished a good hearty meal roast turkey &c: (Am writing all this quite at random to depend on y'r making it out—connecting &c). Fog, wet & dark out as I look—Hope you are all jolly there & having good times today

Jan: 2d—same foggy glum weather—not cold—falls like a great wet blanket over the country everywhere—but the general inside glitter & fun & feasting go on & even increase (it is a kind of delirium)—Of course when you write tell me what has arrived of my sendings, as I am uncertain ab't the mail—do you get the papers I send?—I fancy the letters get there safe—I have rec'd three (? or four) f'm you, all welcomed—as I write I hear the great steam whistle (for noon) of a huge factory down by the river—looks sulky enough out (& I must beware lest I get sulky too)—Good will & affectionate remembrances to you & all—New Year happiness & luck to you all.

Walt Whitman

14

WHITMAN TO O'DOWD

As I sit here Jan: 13 rather late at night alone quite unwell & sleepless & thinking of you all I tho't I w'd write & commune with you & Eve & Jim Hartigan & Mr & Mrs Mrs Fryer & Ada & Fred Woods & Ted & Louis with any others I cannot name (yet wish to)—The first thing is whether the express parcel of books—the four big books—have they come to you safely? & in my mind I have had Australia & life in the bush & the gum trees, & shearing & many a mate & shadow more than once—I welcome what you have hinted ab't those things more than you know—

One of L of G's best running criticisms & comments is by a Frenchman named Sarrazin—its tone & points w'd deeply interest (perhaps please) you & I will send it if ever translated & printed here. I enclose a touch of it. Have you a foreign bookstore in Melbourne? It is named La Renaissance de la Poesie Anglaise, by Gabriel Sarrazin, Paris. (is in one moderate sized Vol:) various poets treated.

I will send Ingersoll's lecture as soon as I get the little printed book—Did you get the full report I sent in the N Y "Truth-Seeker" paper?

If you like the last photo. in the express parcel (if you got it) I can send you some more—it is the last—& perhaps the best likeness—I want to

be as much among you all as possible (or you mention any of the other pictures any of you want & I will send it)

Jan: 14 noon—Bad hours with me—bad night—feel like giving you all good word & loving message possibly for the last—But I may be better as I clear as usual to-morrow or next day—a bevy of visitors (young women & others) send me notice of calling ab't noon 15th—I mustn't forget the dear baby God bless the child, & God bless you all—It seems to be growing milder weather and the sun is out

Walt Whitman

15

WHITMAN TO O'DOWD

God bless you all—& see my words at bottom re-affirmed

Camden New Jersey U S America

Feb: 19 pm '91—Again I will reel off a few words to you & all at random—Has the express parcel come, with the four copies of the big book complete? Have the mail letters come? & the slips & papers? I wanted you all to get the quaint "Dutch traits" slip—& I want you to get March number of Lippincott's magazine (Philadelphia)—Is it on sale there? I shall send you one by mail—Have had a bad, bad month or six weeks—but am (or fancy myself) perceptibly easier last evn'g and this forenoon—am sitting here in my den alone same as told before—oftener think of you all than you have any idea of—have been fixing up the copy for 2d annex & shall send to the printers in three days, wh- will conclude L of G—retain fair spirits & appetite & get along tolerably nights (all wh-helps amazing)—wish you could see the great fresh splendid shoot of canary-yellow tulips a friend bro't in five days ago,—in a goblet on the table near me ever since & quite fine yet—

Feb: 20 noon—Dark, muggy wet day—Shall send you the earliest printed stuff that is out—send you to-day by mail the March Lippincott—am sitting here very dull & stupid seeking some canny tho'ts or intelligence to make out my letter to prevent it being irremediably dull as it doubtless will be—Send me word next time if any of you wish any special of my books or pictures, & I will send them—do not remit any money for them as I wish to present them—I am now going to give a sharp look over the copy for the little (very little) "Good-bye my Fancy" wh- goes to the printers the third day hence (Monday next)—my friend & housekeeper Mrs Davis has just been in a few minutes "for a small break", as she calls it—she is very cheery and good to me—has a good presence—is a sailor's widow—

Concluding with love & best respects to you & Eve & little Eric & to Fred Woods & Jim Hartigan & Kate & Mr & Mrs Freyer & Ada & Ted & Louis & all else Mr Bury not forgotten—what we hold to and pass each other is pure sentiment good will &c. (am not sure lest such things are the best proof of immortality)

Walt Whitman

16

WHITMAN TO O'DOWD

Camden N.J. — U.S. America '91

March 15, Evn'g—Well how are you getting along there 10,000 miles f'm here—& "how's all"? (as the black people say down south)—Did you get the package of four big books I sent Dec. 27 last by express to you? & my two letters since—& the March Lippincott's magazine?—Am now sick here & have been several weeks, & nothing promis-

ing ahead—but sit up & read & write—have just had a little stew'd rice & mutton for my supper—am busy with 2d annex to L of G. & Nov: Boughs—have just finish'd & sent off the proofs of the poetic bits (16 or 17 pages altogether) & sent the printers part of the "copy" of the rest—it will all be very brief & scrappy—(you have seen a great part of it)—Did you get Ingersoll's address in little book form I sent? intend to post you future pieces yet—if you have a chance, look for an essay on Australia in the Century magazine Feb. '91 page 607 seems to have some meat in it—Thoughtful folks here are paying much attention to you south there & Canada north—I find the advice (apparent drift) is not to be in too g't a hurry to cut loose f'm G't Britain—but you both are the best judges & deciders of all that—I am still up & interesting myself but inertia & disablement hold me powerless four fifths of the time—Again best respects & love to you & again to Eve & Mr & Mrs Fryer & Fred Woods & Jim Hartigan & Ada & Ted & Louie & the baby & Tom Touchstone, & may be other friends not named—mates of mine unspecified there whom you are authorized to give them if any my good remembrance heart word—Without any special reason I yet have felt to write you all once more—but now I shall probably give you a rest awhile.

Walt Whitman

17

WHITMAN TO O'DOWD

The Last drawn pict: "at 90" Can you get the is the truest—the London Ill. N E Magazine for News one is disagreeable, May 1891? foxy

Camden New Jersey —U S America
May 20 1891

Dear comrade B O'D

& dear friends and comrades all men & women Y'r letter (postmark'd Melb: April 18) came this forenoon & was of course welcome—so, you have safely rec'd the big books & the pictures, wh- is a g't relief to me—I send you some mail with this the 2d annex "Good-Bye my Fancy" stitched sheets, unb'd (but good copy)—Am still holding out—low condition & sick & near at the end of the rope—(but all that will manage itself without talk)—So y'r country is forging away at separate identity & independence—like marriage to grown people it is the thing to do, perhaps every way proper & indispensable—but how it will all turn out is in the mystery & fortune of the untried unknown to come. (Seems to me for a century the British gov't has upon the whole been more a loving parent, indulgent & liberal—than any querulous captious one (to her colonies all)—Good bye for this time dear B & all dear friends—& God & God's peace be yours—

Walt Whitman

18

O'DOWD TO WHITMAN

August 31st/91
Supreme Court Library
Melbourne

My dear master

I have received and heartily thank you for the papers you have sent and the welcome copy of "Good bye! My Fancy". I have not wanted to bother you during your severe illness, hence my silence. But we have followed with interest any information about you especially the facsimile

letter which Dr Johnston of Bolton was kind enough to send me and an article in a late "Review of Reviews" with a sketch of your house and a little chitchat on your political opinions (I have much the same opinions myself of late years, but that is not surprising for they are simple deductions from the spiritual principle or the spirit of "Leaves of Grass".) I gave a lecture on "Walt Whitman, the Poet of Democracy" to an audience of 3 or 400 people at a Sunday night meeting of the Australasian Secular Association and was very well received. The subject was evidently unfamiliar but its reception gave me great hopes that it will not be so long in that quarter anyway. I made the acquaintance of another Whitman enthusiast at that meeting, Mr John Sutherland M.A., and I can assure you we have had some glorious evenings together since talking of you and with you. He tells me that he has only read L. of G. once, but wants to read it no more. He doesn't remember the words particularly, but the new mental attitude to things he believes he has thoroughly absorbed, and the world is different and life different to him since. "Tom Touchstone" sent another disciple, Mr Carr, to me and he is quite devoted. He was greatly pleased at a portrait I was able to give him. Mr Sutherland & Jim Hartigan want a copy of "Good bye My Fancy". Could you send price, please. Fred Woods would like one of those portraits where you appear with (as it were) storm tossed beard, your hat on, and a hearty, sea-captain-like look on you and, if it would not be too much trouble, with your name on it. He's a grand fellow Fred, and tossed as he was on seas of doubt & deserts of the barrenest materialism, you have become a virtual religion to him as you have to more than him. Mr Sutherland has translated Freiligrath's article on you (from Dr Bucke's

book). It is wonderful what misunderstandings are about concerning your poems of sex.

I do not fear, as you seem to do, that we shall separate from Britain. I advocated it once, nay started a society to bring it about, which I am glad to say soon died. For this change as for many others, I must thank you. I like to hear your ideas on Australians and would say much myself but that I don't want to bother you too much. We want a Walt Whitman here: ours is a democracy too with even more hopeful prospects than yours but with great dangers ahead (especially social). And here too the song of material interests drowns the other pieces in the chorus.

We love you all, and greet you with sympathy in your illnesses and with growing hopes for your speedy recognition by all men, as being as much their Walt as you are ours. Bernard O'Dowd

19

WHITMAN TO O'DOWD

Camden N J —U S America

Nov: 1 '91—Just a word anyhow while I am waiting for my supper—y'rs last rec'd is Aug: 31 —It seems you have rec'd "Good Bye"—some two weeks ago or more I sent you two more "Good Bye's" & a lot of pictures—have they reach'd you safely?—you & the friends can have what the portraits [sic] you & they want as I have plenty, & am cheerfully willing to send to you & them! —The doctor says I have a progressive paralysis, wh- is eligible to have a fatal termination any hour —so you must all take my letters & conveyances of friendship & affection (strangers as we are face to face) as my last missives—write me soon as you can
Walt Whitman

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APPOINTED ENDS

Graeme Kinross Smith



THE huge sliding doors at the front were blue. Inside hung sheep carcasses, still warm, and a sweaty, greasy, pink, just a bit transparent. The wintry electric light and the cramped inside feeling about the building made it claustrophobic, and the bodies were a mute crowd, stepping down on the stainless steel belt shamelessly, faithfully, from above.

A greasy hand bore down on a switch and a new room discovered itself. You started at the rows of darker red and yellow of the beef. Some young ones, with the shame of their white knuckles gleaming, were still in their skins to prevent the blackening of the tender flesh in the freezing. Velvety coats and, below the heads, a few spots of blood in the sawdust.

All the downstairs floors were wet. You slopped after the manager, and mounted the wooden steps, greasy through and through with years of fatty, blood-sodden tramping of boots.

Above was the smell of death and damp concrete. The big killing-room was hosed down and still. The captive-bolt pistol leant against a dirty window. The grate set up in the centre of the floor smiled along its steel teeth.

On the other side you all craned your necks over a low concrete wall, to drink in the explanation of the sounds that lost themselves in the corners of the roof, and the splash of sun at the door. The sounds were earnest and low; the shuffling of the sheep; their murmuring as they pressed towards the wall away from the imminent line separating life from death. This was the grating, richly coated

in blood. Just a few low words of uncertainty between the animals, and sometimes the clatter of a knife in a scabbard, or the rasp of a sharpening stone. Sometimes a grunted word between the slaughtermen. All polite and unfussy. All at the same party, and understanding each other.

But as you watched, you found that, in that silence, the noises of killing became horribly loud. The men panted as they moved in the same patterns of efficiency across the floor. The bare arms, brown-muscled, worked from the straps of work singlets, faded blue, as each man bent over his work. No uncertain pauses, just the grace of efficient movement.

There would be the sound of cowering, and tremulous stamping as all the sheep retreated to the wall. But they only had a few feet in which to retreat, and the arms would pounce and drag the next one out by the wool, the hooves scraping across the concrete. The animal would be silent, and would stare ahead with fixed eyes, and loll like a trusting toy as it swayed to the grate.

All you seemed to be able to think of as you watched it die was the same over-and-over relief: "Thank Heavens they can hose all this down. Thank Heavens they can, and get it shining wet, and clean. Yes . . . thank Heaven they can . . .

I'd want to be hosing it down every time . . . after every sheep . . ."

The man's knees pinched into the sheep's sides, his palm jerked the chin back, and devilish inconsequence made you notice how shiny and oiled the man's hair was.

For a moment it all looked like static symbolism. The white throat, laid bare where the dust hadn't penetrated the rich secret folds, was Purity. Injustice, the warm knife poised above it, making a right angle with the braced wrist.

Then—and it was all enacted in seconds—then the knife leaped into the white, and rose and fell in a rasping—against—bones, sawing motion across the white, and the red scuttled after it, first faithfully and then in unlovely spewing.

Done.

A thrust from the knees, and the sheep flopped down so that the gaping throat fell over the grate, and the blood recoated the steel and dripped below. The eyes fluttered stupidly under their white lashes and then fell into an intent stare. But the legs beat against the man's legs as he dragged the next sheep up. Pausing now, stretching, then beating again, but more feebly.

In the centre of the floor, beyond the grate, the men were pummelling the skin from the previous sheep, and there was the slap of the offal as it flew to the gaping china cisterns in the floor. The callous rapidity of this disintegration sapped you of all feeling of security for a moment.

Still you stood there, craning your necks until the men had killed enough to go on with, and came stalking into the empty cattle-room for a cup of tea, and a cigarette. Greasy-handed indifference.

*

You stepped out through the blue doors into the sunlight. You were pleased to return to the outside world, with its coming and going and its comforting, expected, maligned common-place. The passing of a dry-cleaning truck, an espresso coffee sign, and the odd cars on the roads becoming more numerous as people left the two factories and the shops and businesses of the town and trailed along the highway, home to lunch—you watched all this, and slowly the insecurity seemed to wane, and you thought for a moment you were reinstated.

And yet you were not. The image of the workers having their morning-tea was still an intrusion. You couldn't reconcile it with home, or a wood fire, or an armchair, or the daily paper and the breakfast session. The more the morning's experience seemed to threaten these things, the more strongly you suddenly valued them.

No, you thought again. It's all right. It's quick. They've worked it all out. Once the process starts on these frigid grey mornings everything is swift and sure, and there's no pause until the truck passes down the road, with the bleeding skins trailing over the side.

But that's not the point. Those slaughtermen, they should go through a process of purification at the end of the day, like workers in an atomic plant are decontaminated. Steps should be taken to see that they never look on the killing of those creatures, each with its joy of life, as anything but terrible—that's what it was, a terrible necessity.

Now an uncertain anger was backing the insecurity, and now you knew it wasn't the sheep or the slaughtermen that had been at the bottom of it.

There were other thoughts, bewildering, all intruding grimly one after the other.

You could picture those shelves along the walls of the topmost landing in the old library at the university. Each little cubicle had a glass floor, and the light from the cubicle below came through at your feet. That's where you found them, while outside it was one of those days, good for study, when through the rain the downtown buildings were all an indistinct grey, and the lawns reflected their green into the dripping air. You had been looking for an out-of-the-way book but you had come on the texts of the Nuremberg Trials, in three sober blue volumes, dusty along the top.

They spelt the end of work. The essay you were writing languished; the ribbed carpet with its metal edging, and the occasional squeak of a chair, and the rows of pondering readers, receded.

You could not cope with the nauseating, systematic extermination recorded in those pages. There it was in print, and pictured. Detached, but just as you could single out the stomach-binding pity in the fate of each individual sheep you could read the dry-eyed horror of each person as he or she walked. They were prodded across the damp concrete yard, their white bareness nothing but sickening. Yes, Anne Frank had lost her nerve under the gaze of their eyes—eyes too big for their body—as they passed her compound in the snow. You saw all you looked for in life, in love, in home, in friends, negated in those pages. You could imagine all the precious variations that these things must have had for each figure, lost, as the lines waited, sometimes for half a day, in the snow, and finally reached the chamber.

But you knew that you couldn't evoke the tasteless unrealness that they had felt in the shadow cast by belted guards, trucks of people going to anonymous disposal, and the spotlight in the hall, with the doctors behind it, directing the naked living to alternatives of contrived horror. It was hard to direct your anger, just looking at society's record of those things, but you could remember the anger at belligerence that you felt watching those army men, in the previous summer, each in his well-faded khaki, instructing in the ways of killing, exhorting the other platoon across the dry creek-bed, in the midday sun.

"Come on! The yellow bastards are coming at you. Yell and charge. Come on, yell!"

(They would run alongside an unwilling boy, yelling at him, setting him to sally, and jab at the bag, until the straw spilled from the stomach.)

"Come on! John Chinaman's wriggling on the end of your bayonet! You can't admire him all day. Prise him off with your foot. Come on you others. Yell, bugger you, yell!"

They were another segment in the vicious circle.

But what use was harping? What was Bertrand Russell; what was his wisdom against the manly average? What's Whitman? What's Eriquer Maria Remarque? Ernest Hemingway? What's Wilfred Owen or Anne Frank?

*

You were driving John through the outskirts of the town a couple of weeks later. Suddenly he asked, "What the hell's that place?"

"That's the abattoirs," you said.

"Crikey!" he said, giving it a long look, "Is that where they send the baa-lambs?"

IT IS TWENTY-FIVE YEARS SINCE THE OUTBREAK OF
THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR.

WE PRESENT TWO POEMS, AN ARTICLE AND A
REVIEW TO MARK THE OCCASION.



Spain

for Will Harris

Spain I must think of, when I think of
morning,
and—'God the country round here is like
Rose Bay!'

life as it's worked out the Australian way,
with all it holds of hero, bull, and warn-
ing . . .

Spain I must think of, when I think of youth,
an olive-branch from out the Flood sur-
viving:

Spain—in your image lives young Corn-
ford striving,

Caudwell and Guest, the murdered wits of
truth . . .

Spain I must think of, when I think of ter-
ror,

the women forever in black, and black the
horses,

black the police, who broke up the gypsy
city:

Spain I must think of, when I think of
pity,

poetry, Lorca's, the whole wild world of
error,

and, golden bough, bright sense of life's
resources . . .

AILEEN PALMER

Letter from Spain

A. A. Phillips

IT seems almost indecent to enjoy Spain as
a tourist, since its people suffer such
oppressions of poverty and ill government.
But enjoy it we did, and that with a clear
conscience.

For somehow the final victory seems to be with
the Spanish people. Elsewhere men and women
bend under the load of poverty, are visibly tight-
ened and diminished by its grasp. The Spaniard

rises above it with dignity; as his sombre eye
flashes into a fire of gaiety, he asserts a proud
invincibility.

Often enough we felt ourselves incongruous
intruders. We would stroll through a village in
search of a church, or merely of life. Of course,
the village was dirty and the smell was not Chanel.
How could it be otherwise, when the household
water must be borne in great earthenware jars
from the well in the square? The houses were
mere hovels, the men and women were in rags—
but not the children who were warmly clad and
brightly scrubbed. Surely no children are more
lovely and more richly loved than the children
of Spain? A father brings his three-year-old into
a tough-seeming little bar. The child is passed
admiringly from arm to arm, is smackingly kissed
by each of the waiters, and stuffed with ice-cream
(those Spanish ice-creams—but prose cannot do
them justice). Once my wife smiled upon two
cherubs passing in the street. Their mother led
them up to our cafe-table, recited their names,
and proffered them to be embraced. My wife
rose pretty well to the occasion, but she could not
fully manage the Spanish explosive osculatory
technique.

To return to our village, we would feel that our
presence must be resented. We were there in mere
curiosity, which was bad enough. About my neck
were two cameras, worth as much as a family of
that village might see in a year. Our clothes—
third-bests chosen to stand the wear-and-tear
of touring—seemed outrageously luxurious.

But we never were resented. Our word of greet-
ing would be returned with a gracious dignity.
If we needed help, it was rendered with a touch
of warmth that carried it beyond politeness and
which kept subtly short of familiarity.

Once we were running short of petrol between
bowlers, which tend to be widely-spaced in Spain.
We stopped in a township which seemed to be large
enough to have such an amenity. A man wrote
the name of a house on a piece of paper, and
directed us down side-streets. We bumped down
the dusty ruts, and inevitably became lost. A
woman then led us, pacing beside our wing. Soon
she was joined by two others. A fourth, on our
arrival, poured the petrol, while a fifth, massive-
bosomed and triple-chinned, appeared on the
balcony opposite, and shouted down ribaldries like
the nurse in "Romeo and Juliet". My wife pointed

up at her and said, "Carmen". I don't know if the allusion registered, but it was obviously meant to be a joke and the laughter poured in cascades. Soon we were all cracking mutually unintelligible jokes and enjoying them with gusto. When we drove off, the waving arms might have been farewelling a troop-train. Those peasant women must have wanted to laugh at our outlandishness—no doubt they did after we were gone; but as long as we were there, they laughed with us.

How to choose examples of the readiness of the Spaniards to give help to the stranger? There were so many. Perhaps our favorite was an eleven-year-old of Eciija, beautiful even by Spanish standards. We had just entered a church in the late afternoon, and were about to go out again, since it was too dark to see properly. The youngster would not have it—we must come and look. He danced liquidly ahead of us, turning on the lights above the images. Before each object of interest, he delivered a full guide-lecture. We could not understand a word of it, of course, but we were spellbound by his fluency and confidence. It took us forty-five minutes to escape from that church, and when we proffered the guide-fee which the boy had so charmingly earned, he refused it with shy firmness. Eventually we persuaded him to go back with us to the town-square where we knew there was a sweet-stall. The last we saw of him, he was passing the bag around the train of children, which, as in all small Spanish towns, had followed at our heels.

A little later an English-speaking young man came to our aid in a shop, when our needs had outrun our vocabulary. We took advantage of his presence to seek information about some excavations, apparently of a Roman villa, which we had just seen. The young man bowed; he was at liberty for half-an-hour, and would be glad to go with us and explain. Unfortunately he had misunderstood and took us back to the church (it had a little museum of Roman relics in its court-yard). Again we made the circuit with guide-lecture. Spanish helpfulness sometimes has its disadvantages.

Perhaps its most curious manifestation occurred when a passing muleteer made obviously warning gestures to us. We were puzzled, but enlightenment came when a little up the road we saw two Civil Guards lurking behind a building.

These are the special Franco police, very different from the pleasant traffic-cops who so often helped us on our way. The Civil Guards, armed with muskets, stand in pairs on lonely hill-top roads, guarding nothing in particular, existing, it seemed, simply as a threatening gesture. They were not pleasant people; they fawned on us a little, seeking from the foreigner the smiles which their own people denied them.

The Civil Guards could do us no harm, of course; the gesture of the muleteer had no practical point. As we worked it out, it was simply the natural thing for a Spanish peasant to warn his friends if Civil Guards were about; and we were strangers, and therefore, by Spanish habit of mind, entitled to the friendly gesture. I don't know if I have rightly interpreted the muleteer's action, but I am sure about that habit of mind.

Next to the Civil Guards, the most unpleasant manifestations of Spain are the priests, at least in the north—sour-faced, arrogant, ubiquitous. Perhaps, to the tourist, their nastiest trick is their habit of sending little girls round the street-cafes with collection boxes "for the Church". These children are as un-shooable as blow-flies, and their prim righteousness is maddening.

But in the gay relaxed atmosphere of Andalusia, nothing retains harshness, and even the priests are jolly. In a square of the humbler quarter of a small town we came upon four such pastors, bulging beamingly from an aged jallopy. They were playing a strange form of tiggly. The jallopy would be sent charging at ten miles an hour at a group of kids, who would scream ecstatically and leap out of the way; then the car would be swung round to charge another group. It seemed a queer amusement for the clergy and faintly dangerous; no doubt if there had been a miscalculation, the funeral service would have been on the house.

Of course there was much more in Spain that delighted us; the infinitely varied and always dramatic landscape, the drama, too, of the architecture, the pleasant unassuming wines, the El Greco portraits with the strange modernistic patterns of whites underlying the suave truth and depth of characterisation, the flavory dates, the disciplined fire of flamenco, the gentle fragrance of an orange-tree-lined Seville street after rain. But it was the people who moved us most deeply.

When at length we crossed the eastern frontier into France, we should have been enjoying the magnificent Pyrenean scene through which we twined; but a shadow of sadness lay over us. We had left behind the people of Spain, and it was unlikely that we would ever see them again. We wished them a government more to their taste and a mitigation of their poverty; and ran on towards the glowing landscape, the langorous folk and the vivacious wines of Provence.

Spain

The Moroccan generals seized Spain
and loamed her granite fields with all comers:
the farm worker in sheepskin,
the Catalan with downward gaze,
the joking Andaluz who wouldn't point a gun
and those who crossed the Pyrenees
on word of something or other, and joined
in battered regiments
to perish at Malaga with their only issue,
one pair of boots each and a cartridge belt.

The men who took eternity as personal
tried, but could not sustain their interest in it.
Calm as an ice-age, fixed in floe,
they dwell in the ground and are serviceable.
The earthworms shall incorporate them in a minute.

And Franco still rules Spain.
What can they be talking of, the exiles
who gather in the boulevard of a distant capital
with the imported journal
and the pipe winking in their mouths

not able, like the citizens
emerging from the bars now
to melodise their lifetime with a fart . . .
so many lonely adepts at revealing
the paltry severances of a gin-warmed heart . . .

What are they talking of
in the rare language Internationale
learned from a rural dialect,
while in the midnight fields their countrymen
prize bleak potatoes from the soil yet?

They talk of Barcelona,
the central plateau over-ripe with grain,
of vineyards, and the reverie
of free co-operative lives
they shared once, in the ruined hills of Spain.

IAN BEDFORD

The Spanish War

David Martin

YEAR after year one used to say: Why doesn't someone write the real history of the Spanish civil war? The war was one of the most decisive, most dramatic and best documented episodes of twentieth century history. It was a great event, and only awaited a great historian.

The world press has hailed Hugh Thomas' "The Spanish Civil War" (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 57/9) as the book which fills the gap. It has had brilliant reviews, though the ones quoted on the jacket flaps seem to be drawn only from the capitalist press, which may or may not be significant. Certainly on the Republican side this was essentially a workers' war, and one would like to know what the workers' press thought of the book. In one sense it is a memorable achievement: extensive research has gone into it and the material has been well digested. Thomas' history has sweep, drive and even a nice brand of impartiality, half-way between ironic detachment and humanist commitment. His style is often superb.

But it is still a disappointing book. Thomas' main problem must have been the organisation of so much material, of such comparatively recent impact and of so challenging a nature, without obscuring the central motif. I think it can be argued that any history needs such a motif, though in this case there are problems, for we already have a number of partisan histories. Hugh Thomas has tried to imply a certain preference for the cause of Spain's legitimate government, but at the same time he has written what he hoped might be the complete story "from both sides". He has collected a wealth of data, both official and personal; he has endeavored to paint not only the events but the background; and yet what emerges is an imbalance between background and event. For all its atmosphere-conveying asides and footnotes the real atmosphere has been lost, and the book has more wit than direction.

"The Spanish Civil War" relies heavily on personalities and biographical sketches. The author has a penchant for striking detail, too much of it perhaps, and he does not allow enough for changes in outlook on the part of his informants, especially on the Left. This leads him to give credence to the conspiratorial and individual rather than to the collective element. When one puts the book down one remembers less clearly the great outlines of the struggle and of the bloody campaigns than the profiles of the people who conducted them in and out of public view.

This tendency is manifested in Hugh Thomas' all-too-obvious bias against the Spanish communists and the Third International. He is, for example, fair enough to the P.O.U.M., but he fails

A number of Australians, including the Editors of Meanjin, Outlook and Overland, recently sent messages to the Conference of Solidarity with the Spanish People which met in Rome. The Conference, backed by many distinguished European cultural figures (including Spender, Carlo Levi, Picasso, Priestley) studied the most effective way to demonstrate solidarity with the Spanish people in their struggle for human rights, including amnesties for political prisoners and expatriates.

to grasp the real point at issue between it and the communists, and I think that, curiously enough, because he does not penetrate the mentality of the communists during the war, he does not in general understand what made the republican army tick. He allows too little for the pressure of events "from below" and minimises its effect on the conflicts "on top", as for instance in the conflict between Largo Caballero and his opponents. Hence his estimate of how the vital alliance between the "old" Republican and the communists against Caballero and his wing of the Socialist Party was forged is lop-sided. Similarly, he does not see the interaction at the base between the various groups on the Left, which was mainly expressed in relations between the Anarchist C.N.T. and the Socialist U.G.T.

The role of the U.S.S.R. he conceives as almost entirely baneful. Here, too, the focus is too much on intrigue. For when all has been allowed for, the Republic could not have survived for six months without Soviet help. On the other hand he scarcely poses the real issues involved in outside participation in the war on the Left, which had to do at least as much with fundamental questions of social politics as with the shifting needs of diplomacy in the period leading to Munich.

Important and militarily decisive movements, like the Brunete offensive, suffer from overcondensation. In the space of five pages Hugh Thomas gives us not only a rough sketch of a battle which, among other things, proved that shock troops would never win the war for either side, but also an evaluation of behind the scenes negotiations between the Germans, Italians and the Nationalists, sparked off by the battle. The reader begins to feel that all battles and all negotiations were, more-or-less, of equal importance. One is tempted to say that Thomas knows too much!

The rising of the miners in the Asturias—which in almost every sense was one of the most important events before the actual civil war—becomes just another, rather minor interlude, and the historian's sense of perspective is called into question by the queer importance that is attached to less than tertiary consequences, such as the great impression that the Moscow underground is supposed to have made on Asturian exiles. Because of the Moscow tube they returned home to Spain, full of enthusiasm for the Soviet Union! These are the men who defended Oviedo . . .

The sections on the International Brigades are fairly good, but there is too much on the British and not enough on the other formations, and again one has the impression that the writer is unduly fascinated by secondary, slightly gossipy matters related to internal discipline. We are not told exactly how the Brigades were stratified and functioned in action, or enough of their evolution into Mixed Brigades, nor yet enough about the huge problem of eventually creating a mass army. Maps and tactical generalisations are adequate, but an outstanding military collaborator would have been most useful.

I feel that Hugh Thomas is rather more successful with his view from Franco's side; at least he has a good grasp of the various forces at work there and of the deep conflict between traditionalists and right-wing innovators. His analysis of the Falange is first rate; easily the best we have. From this flows a good insight into the post-civil war set-up and the compromise structure over which Franco now presides. Franco himself emerges not very sharply, but this is understandable since his personality lacks definition. It does not, however, lack complexity.

In his powerful final chapters Hugh Thomas draws up a moving balance sheet of those epic, heroic and tragic years. There is no doubt that he does not lack love for Spain. My chief criticism is that he is too clever, which can be another way of saying too naive, in his approach to that side in the war which stood for dignity and daylight. To illustrate this let me cite a footnote from the long chapter on the origins of the war.

Fernando de los Rios, we are told, was dispatched to Russia as a rapporteur by the Socialist Party. The date would have been 1920. He met Lenin.

"But where is liberty?" asked the bearded individualist from Andalusia.

"Liberty," replied Lenin, "what for?" ("La liberte? Pour quoi faire?")

The translation of Lenin's revealing counter-question in this footnote is in a limited sense correct. "Pour quoi faire?" does, literally, mean "what for?" But here it doesn't capture the full meaning. Lenin did not ask de los Rios WHY there should be liberty but for what purpose there should be liberty, "Liberty for what?" is a better translation.

Without wishing to score a point or overstressing it, I feel that this small, not easily avoidable mistake may be typical. Abstract freedom was not the issue in Spain. For all that, this expensive and well-produced book has to be read.

Convalescent

We make our own symbols out of the passive world:

These winter bauhinias strangely making spring

flower too early in their branches, sing more than some freak of weather, they are filled

with such clear signs and welcomes to my chilled

and hospital window that the simple thing of their moving and blooming in all the cold and wrong

weather I acknowledge as sign of the old good world, the good world's theme.

And yet it was only last week, last week when they carried me in

I cursed these trees that mocked me as a sign

of the upset stricken world and the tortured ways

of our diseased times, a fevered wish for spring

in days when only fools believe anything.

THOMAS W. SHAPCOTT

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THE LOVE-LIFE OF A BOOZER

Thelma Forshaw

MY aunt always read three love-stories every week. In her youth they had been by Marie Corelli, Ethel M. Dell and E. M. Hull. In my time, they had given way to Denise Robins and Maysie Grieg.

I used to peep into them when she visited us on Saturdays, and had dumped her suit-case, taken out the bottle of wine and her form-guide, then settled down to an afternoon's punting with my mother.

How could I reconcile my aunt's bitter, crooked mouth, steel-rimmed spectacles, broken nose and her job as a cook with such lines as "I did but kiss thy little feet", and "If you are not ready in ten minutes, my dove, I will undress you myself"? Added to which were Adoring Glances, Tender (or Frenzied) Kisses and a lot of Straining Her To Him.

I studied her closely as she sat with her chin drawn in and her glasses half-way down her nose telling my mother that "Lady X" couldn't pick his nose and she only lost every time she followed him, also that Thompson wasn't a jockey's bootlace and that Night Lad was a goat.

It was some time before I became aware that Chiller Malley was not just one of our many visitors, nor was he a friend of my father's or any of my uncles. He was my aunt's lover.

He was about twelve years younger than my aunt, which made him about 36. He had a half-moon of balding head, soft blue eyes and a girl's curly mouth. He always sat in the baby's high-chair away from the table where my aunt and mother were punting, folded his arms on his chest, sunk his chin on his tie and despairingly dozed away the afternoon. All that ever roused him was a refilled glass pushed into his hand, or a volley of abuse from my aunt.

Then, one afternoon, I knew it all. It was the second week of the new year, 1934, and my aunt flounced in followed by Chiller Malley. She flung her suitcase down and said violently to my astonished mother who was about to hear the first race:

"After all the years I kep' 'im in booze!" She paused to pour three glasses of wine, and we waited impatiently while she gnawed at her writhing lips. She made angry ploppy sounds in the glasses because her hand was shaking with temper. "After all the years I kep' 'im in booze, he thinks no more've me than to sling me a packet of soap and a washer from Woolworth's." She began to cry. We realised that Chiller Malley had given her a Christmas present which had fallen somewhat below her expectations.

"S the wine," Chiller Malley remarked illuminatingly with a nod to my mother. He was crouched with his arms folded in the baby's high-

chair, and he looked like a blackbird on a perch with his sallow pointed face and dark suit.

"I don't take no soap and washer from a man I give up everything for," my aunt said, weeping, "an' I'll tell you what I done with it—"

My mother was listing 45 degrees towards Cyril Angles' voice because the first race had begun. She waved a hand for silence.

"—I done what any woman would of done in my place!" bellowed my aunt.

"They're off!" It came out in a shattering roar because my mother had turned up the volume for the dual purpose of hearing better and as a reproof against constant interruption.

There was the clang of the bell and my aunt sprang up, too, as if she were one of the starters and, postponing her dirge, ran to the wireless before the sound could fade as it quite often did.

Frozen in sympathetic quietness, I sat staring at Chiller Malley's pink half-moon where his hair receded. He lifted his head from his breast-feathers and his filmy blue eyes looked straight at me.

"Hasn't got a hope," he confided, "Brer Rabbit'll walk in."

My aunt shushed him so savagely her false teeth juttled a moment, and my mother thinned her lips at Chiller Malley's head which had ducked down to nestle on his kookaburra tiepin.

Brer Rabbit had run second-last and my aunt was bitter indeed.

"Brer Rabbit," Chiller Malley mumbled unwisely to his tiepin and my aunt stalked over and began shaking him furiously.

"You and your tips! That's the last bloody tip I take from you, my lad! All you Bondi push are the same—a lot of gab—"

"After all I done for 'im, Nan. Soap and washer from Woolworth's. Holy Father, if I'll ever forget it!"

She sat down and refilled her glass.

"I went outside, dug a hole in the yard and buried them." She shook her fist at Chiller Malley's curly half-moon. "But **him!** He dug them up. **Dug — them — up —** he did, and then he give them to his mother. The swine."

I looked at the books on the table. "Spring in My Heart", I read on the spine of one. "The Loving Stranger", on another, and "We'll Never Part". I looked at Chiller Malley dozing again in the high-chair.

I supposed he kissed her and so forth, or why would she be bothered with him. I looked at my aunt. She had a thin, twisted mouth, not at all kissable, and a big soldierly corseted body. I couldn't see them holding each other. I couldn't see him kissing my aunt's feet.

Oh well, she had her love-stories, and he had his booze. Somehow they stood it.

It wasn't my idea of Romance.

LONGMANS

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S W A G

OVERLAND has always been interested in the problem of state patronage of art. This is one of the central problems of our day. To what extent should we demand that the state step in to ensure that good art doesn't perish, strangled by commercialism and monopoly? And would this involve supporting some form of censorship, when censorship is one of the things we hate?

Well, that last question is now being tackled by a young writer whose work we hope to print before very long. But in the general problem of state patronage Overland itself is, of course, involved. Everyone knows that we have been knocked back time and time again from a Commonwealth Literary Fund hand-out, and that we keep on applying. Yet many readers and supporters are revolted at the idea of Overland's taking government money; they think it'll make us more "careful" and subservient.

If we were going to become subservient we'd have started bootlicking a long time ago. The time to crawl is when you're trying to get a grant, not when you've got it. In any case we have to apply. If we believe that democracy (a) should encourage nonconformity, (b) must be fought for, then this issue has to be put to the test time and time again.

I liked the points made about these matters by Perry Anderson in two brilliant articles he wrote on Sweden in *New Left Review* not long ago. The Swedes, he says, are painfully coming to the awareness that some political action against "the market principle in culture" just has to be taken. Because there's no such thing as free choice in our present society: you like what you get because you've been educated to like it, and education is determined by the nature of society. A "neutral" cultural humus is a myth.

The idea that state action in support of cultural standards spells "totalitarianism" is meaningless, Anderson says. Cultural initiative by the state can be either good or bad, depending on the government, the culture, the people themselves. It may be all right to distrust government intervention in politically and culturally immature countries, but in countries like ours we should have "enough self-confidence not to be permanently terrified of our own officialdom".

*

As far as I'm concerned one of the justifications for the existence of Adelaide is the presence there of Max Harris, the Gadfly of Gawler Place. Except that his influence extends far beyond Gawler Place and Mary Martin's bookshop (the best in Australia?), where he normally works, and his whole career shows how badly we need cultural gadflies, horseflies and mayflies in this country. I'm always amused at the sober shaking of heads at Max's exuberances. Of course he exaggerates. Of course his shafts often don't quite hit the target. But they make people duck. People look undignified when they duck. And they hate being made to look undignified. . . . No, my only worry is that, with Max more and more establishmentarianised (a quiver of magazines, A.B.C. critics' programs, C.L.F. grants and the like) he might cease annoying people.

All that by way of lead-in, to say that Max Harris remarked to me the other day that fiction is pretty well dead as far as the reader is concerned: people want interpretative, factual material to bite on. I think this is broadly true, certainly as far as the more serious magazines, here and overseas, are concerned. It's probably largely because the ambiguities of the work of art no longer seem reassuring enough guides through a wilderness where there seem, to many people, few established signposts any more; where annihilation may wait round the next twist in the track.

In general the increasing popularity of the "sociological" approach is a good thing. Social data leads to the formulation of theories; the theories stay and the data changes. All sorts of people get hurt when the structure tumbles, so let's keep abreast of the data. So far, so good. But, as Robert Brustein pointed out in a brilliant article in a recent *Partisan Review*, the social sciences in the U.S.A. in the fifties cast a "neutralising haze" over American intellectual life. McCarthy drove the eggheads to the conclusion that it was safer to be cool and statistical and cultural and psychological than to be political and indignant and committed and direct. "The end of ideology" was prematurely celebrated.

Sociology doesn't need to be like this, though it often has been. C. Wright Mills, the courageous and brilliant U.S. sociologist whose premature death occurred in March, was an outstanding exponent of the use of sociology "as a weapon of radical criticism of the existing order". In a recent issue of the Sydney socialist journal *Outlook*, Sol Encel (who reviews Professor Crisp's book on J. B. Chifley in this *Overland*) used that phrase, in the course of a perceptive article on "Sociology and the Mass Market". Encel, who is working at the Australian National University, makes a plea for the use of sociology for radical purposes, and claims that it is not "inherently more prone to conservatism and quietism than any other intellectual discipline".

*

What a host of useful, sociological-type investigations could be carried out in Australia. The surface hasn't been touched. In the educational field alone we know so little about hundreds of important questions (for instance, why children leave school) that there is room for a hundred sociologists where one is now working. And I'd personally be interested to see many more investigators working on the whole fascinating subject of social class in Australia. Should leftists automatically accept the working class (what is "the working class" in Australia?) as the "progressive" class in all respects? Is it not true that the working class, on the whole, has more primitive views on many important issues—capital punishment, for instance, or homosexual law reform, or, indeed, culture itself? Are there not thoroughly praiseworthy "middle-class" virtues? Richard Hoggart, a working-class boy himself, has recently suggested that they include "the capacity for rational and dispassionate reflection, the free play of mind, the literate and civilised qualities." If these things are true, are many of us frightened to admit them? And what conclusions should be drawn from them?

God knows Australian literature is already "sociological" enough, in the crude sense. Yet is a very crude sense. Perhaps if we want to shift our writing away from its preoccupation with myth and symbol referred to elsewhere in this issue, we'll have to see that our factual understanding

of our society and its relationships is much more profound than it now is. Without a lead-line everyone can guess how deep the river is—and everybody will be equally right!

*

Those of us who have been caterwauling for years about the disastrous state of Australian publishing are looking a little silly. I have no figures at the moment, but clearly a very remarkable revolution, a reversal of trend, has taken place in the last year or two. New and vigorous publishing houses have sprung up; existing houses have expanded output and quality; overseas firms have sent team after team of scouts into our territory seeking the expansion of spheres of influence and the signing up of almost any writer on anything who can string a couple of paragraphs together. Of course this picture I'm painting is too sanguine, but the tendency is there and it will, I believe, continue to grow. In publishing at least, perhaps that mysterious "take-off point" has suddenly been reached in Australia. Let's hope, at any rate, that some of the gravy sticks to the local boys' fingers. Authors, be warned: any day now you may wake up to find yourselves loved!

*

That useful publication, Australian Book Review, recently listed some publishers' programs for this year, and they made remarkable reading. But it's still true that, like our social services, there are nooks and crannies notoriously overlooked—notably, perhaps, the field of children's books (only ten books for children were produced in Australia last year, compared with nearly 2,500 in the United Kingdom). Thus it's good news that Australian publishers are joining together to produce, under the aegis of the Children's Library Guild of Australia, six to nine children's books a year. Titles now being considered include books by Robin Boyd and Frank Kellaway, and it will be possible to subscribe to the series.

*

Mary Durack writes elsewhere in this issue on Writers' Week at the Adelaide Festival, and I too was tremendously impressed: not so much with the speeches or the official program, but with the sense of esprit or solidarity or common-cause that I felt, for the first time, among a gathering of writers. The Festival authorities must be congratulated on drawing together so many writers from every State except Tasmania, to make what was undoubtedly the greatest single literary occasion this country has ever seen. It was an object lesson to me to meet men and women whom I had made my mind up on as writers and as people years ago: and to find I was disastrously wrong in my estimation. Nearly always the reappraisal was upwards!

*

This two-yearly meeting of writers at the Adelaide Festival will now become an occasion of national cultural significance. It will give us all self-respect as a corps, opportunities for personal knowledge of each other, a feeling that perhaps we matter at least as much as, say, the insurance salesmen who come together at Broadbeach.

And perhaps out of future meetings a greater readiness to see issues in relation to one another will grow. There were many complaints from writers, both in public and private, about the injustices of their lot. But there was also a fear of doing anything concrete about it—such as asking the Prime Minister for a Royal Commission into the lack of an Australian film industry. The Fellowships of Australian Writers, the only trade union

the writers (and others interested in our national literature) have got, were hardly mentioned.

Even Dr. Grenfell Price, Chairman of the Commonwealth Literary Fund, got an unsympathetic hearing when he appealed to writers to support the Fund's efforts to extend the benefits writers get under the C.L.F. to artists and musicians too, by the creation of a Commonwealth Arts Council. Similar lack of understanding marked the response to Dr. Grenfell Price's suggestion that an approach be made to reserve part of the National Arts Centre (to be built on Constitution Hill, Canberra) for literature. Yet suggestions like these, though on the surface they may be remote from the actual production of masterpieces, are very much part of the whole process of defending the writer's place in his society, and of emphasising it.

*

Some interesting light on the passing into monopoly hands of cultural media in the last thirty years emerges from some figures shown to me recently by Mr. H. A. Lindsay, of Adelaide. In 1928 there were 2490 short stories published in Australian periodicals. In 1961 there were 220. These included 56 in the quarterlies, 48 in publications of the K. G. Murray group, 36 in the North Australian Monthly, and thirty in the Bulletin.

*

Congratulations to the Department of External Affairs on their recent sponsorship of an Australian tour for the distinguished Indian writers Dr. Bhabhani Bhattacharya (and his wife) and R. K. Narayan. Although on a Governmental level (reciprocating last year's Indian tour by James McAuley and John Thompson) the Fellowships of Australian Writers in various States were more than pleased to welcome these visitors to Australia. We hope they are the precursors of many more.

*

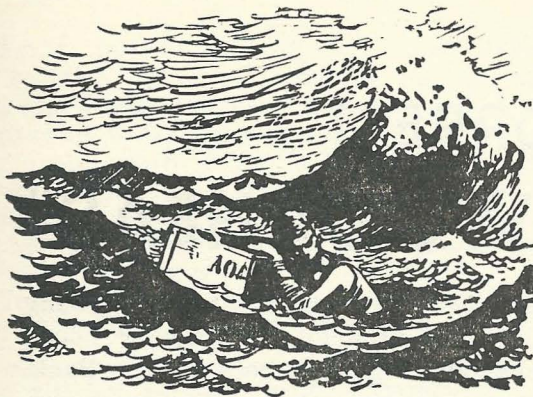
COMPETITIONS: 1962 Grenfell Henry Lawson Festival awards for verse and prose (statuettes); details from the Committee at Grenfell, N.S.W. 1962 Miles Franklin Literary Award for the best novel published during 1962 (£500); correspondence to G.P.O. Box 4270, Sydney. The 1961 Grace Leven Prize for a volume of Australian poetry was won by Colin Thiele, of Adelaide, for his book "Man in a Landscape". Patrick White has won the £500 Miles Franklin award for 1961 for his novel "Riders in the Chariot", discussed by David Bradley in this issue. A record number of 34 novels was submitted. Among others commended by the judges were Donald Stuart's "The Driver", Craig Stirling's "The Scarlet Blossom" and Colin Thiele's "The Sun on the Stubble".

*

VICTORY AT LAST! At the Fourth Annual Meanjin-Overland Test Match, held at Mount Eliza (Vic.) on 11th March, Overland won for the first time. The narrow margin of victory was 9 runs. There were many heroes, including Dr. Don Mackay, of the University of Melbourne, who retired after opening for Overland and scoring a smart 50. There was also one martyr: Mr. Eric Westbrook, Director of the Melbourne Gallery, who unwisely tried to stop a drive with his ankle. He was still seen hobbling around art shows at the Adelaide Festival a week later. Eighteen gallons of beer were consumed and everybody was very happy. Especially, of course, the loyal Overland barrackers. Mr. Gordon Bryant, M.H.R., presented the carved emu egg (kangaroo, emu and cockatoo) which is the perpetual trophy.

—S. Murray-Smith

The Floating Fund



We have received £178/3/- in donations since the publication of our last issue—more than the previous issue despite the fact that far fewer subscriptions fell due for renewal (and most people only send donations when they are reminded that their subs. have fallen due).

This is a very considerable tribute to readers' support of this magazine (the only unsubsidised one of its kind), and to their understanding of the job we are trying to do. And to their tolerance of our mistakes! Incidentally, the circulation of *Overland* is now rising more rapidly than it has for several years!

Very many thanks to:

TM £43/15/0; KJS £10; OD, TWRK £5; EWI £4/10/0; JMcl £3; MCE £2/10/0; WFW, NK £2; RWM, RM, LS £1/12/0; MEL, VMcd, DVM, RKL, CCW, NC, FPB, MF, CHN, FO, WD, RW £1/10/0; PL, CH, WFB, LB, GJR, JW, RBM, AD, GAJ, RDB, JMcl, HW, RWR, RDF, AGM £1; CAM 11/-; JB, FT, GC, HJG 10/6.

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Jean Devanny

JEAN Devanny, authoress and ardent socialist, died in Townsville, of leukemia, on 8th March. Writer of nearly two dozen works of fiction, she was a New Zealander by origin, born there on 7th January, 1894. Despite this her best-known works, such as "Sugar Heaven", are set amid strikes and upheavals in the North Queensland cane country she knew so well.

Jean Devanny lived a stormy life politically, and her dedication to the labor movement was reflected not only in her novels but also in her attitude, often uncompromising, to those who did not see eye-to-eye with her, especially in the literary field.

I first met Jean in 1934, not long after her return from an ambitious tour of Europe and the Soviet Union, where she spent some time in central Asia. One dusty evening in 1934 she arrived in the struggling little mining township of Mount Isa. She stayed with my miner husband and myself while she worked on "Sugar Heaven" and went about her lecture tour for the "Movement Against War"; the Movement may have been futile, but Jean wasn't, not by a long shot.

After the war Jean and her family settled in North Queensland, and it was there that I stayed with her at the "shack" (as she called their delightful little cottage by the Ross River) whenever I was in Townsville. We'd go out and cull mangoes and eat them and yarn and argue and laugh—mostly laugh. I loved to tell her yarns and she to listen, but she'd keep pulling herself up and saying: "Oh, do stop wasting it all. Get to the writing, do."

I wish I could sketch her in words, riding her bike round Townsville in her inimitable way. The families are legion that she stood to in bad trots. Right to the last she would dose herself with drugs and tablets to get to one of the meetings of the Townsville Cultural Group which she founded, and which has been responsible for developing a number of promising young writers. She was an indefatigable caller-in at the library, and generally had a bundle of books slung alongside her as she rode down the street. In the last few weeks of her life she battled to stay conscious to finish her tasks, one of which was to send a strong letter of protest to the press on the subject of nuclear weapons. At the very end she had her daughter bring her a great bundle of Barrier Reef photos—her love of the sea was great and she roamed the beaches so freely that they will now seem empty with her passing. Some of the photos she rejected, some she gave instructions to tabulate for keeping. "You can go now," she said when she finished. "That was all I had left to do."

A story:

Once, during the war, I remarked to some miners out at my Copper Top that she was a friend of mine. "Gawd," Snow said, "we blokes owe your mate money." When I asked him to explain he told me about the Mount Oxide strike in the old days. They were isolated and the strike hit them very hard—but they dug their toes in so stubbornly that they closed the field for keeps! Right in the middle of it, when they had been eating nothing but meat off cattle carcasses for weeks, the fifty or so of them received a letter from Jean. She said she had heard of their strike and was enclosing a hundred pounds for the fund.

And another story:

One morning, during a visit to the "shack," I was mooching around eating mangoes and talking everything from philosophy to jam recipes with Jean, who meanwhile was working like an old peasant-farmer at cutting back the shoots that threatened to smother the garden in their subtropical growth. Suddenly I missed her, but from the verandah spied her iron-grey head moving to and fro outside the fence, near the river bank. I investigated. There she was, shovelling dollops of soil over the ends of the cuttings she had just thrown over the fence, and stamping them down. She grinned sheepishly. "A good gardener **must** cut and prune you know—but I hate killing living things. They can live out here if they want. They have got the chance."

KAY BROWN

Stan Wakefield

WHEN Stan Wakefield's gentle piece of philosophising appeared in the last issue of *Overland*, Stan was already stricken with an incurable illness; he died in February.

He was so modest, so self-effacing that he was not well-known, but there is much about him that deserves to be remembered, not the least being that in Stan one felt the warm humanity and creative ability of ordinary people, of the battlers of this world.

For if anyone had to battle, it was Stan. Illness as a child meant that he missed out on education. In 1923, when he came from England to Australia as a youth of 17, he couldn't read or write.

Working in the bush in Victoria and the Far West of New South Wales, he found a mate who gave him (in Stan's own words) "a passion for Lawson and Paterson, and a great love for Australia."

He was well over twenty when he came across a trunkful of books in a house up Monaro way. He settled down to teach himself to read and write, and devoured the trunkful and much more—from Shakespeare, Walter Murdoch and Ruskin to Darwin and geology.

His favorite was Byron "because he was a rebel and a fighter."

From New South Wales he battled on to Mt. Isa, where he worked and organised and wrote. Then back to New South Wales, to marry and settle in Sydney, and teach himself the welder's trade so that he would no longer have to battle—only to find that life still consisted of getting the sack and looking for work, finding a job only to lose it.

Stan Wakefield's full flowering came after settling in Sydney. Association with the Bushwhacker group and the Bush Music Club (of which he became Secretary) encouraged him to translate his bush experiences into songs for which he wrote both words and music.

These "contemporary folksongs" have won considerable popularity. One of the first and most popular (it was praised by Alfred Hill) was "The Rabbiter":

A free and independent life,
 A life of simple joys—
 I camped beneath an old belar,
 And me tucker was mostly fried galah,
 And I trapped 'em near and I trapped 'em
 far
 For the Sydney market boys.

To look through the files of Singabout is to see how many such songs he wrote, folk yarns or personal experiences set to verse and music. Children, too, loved his songs—"Shining Moon", "The Kookaburra Laughed", and "Songs of Australia".

Many of his poems, too, stood on their own. Some dealt with his bush days—as this one of washing for gold on the Snowy Plains . . .

I must try my luck where the crisp white
daisies
Paper the flats afar,
Where the buck quartz spur makes the Duck
Creek stir
The sands on the diorite bar . . .

Others were of city toilers; Overland readers may remember his poem "Spring" telling of a factory worker idly gazing out the window . . .

Till an orange peel deals me a wakening
clout—
A warning from Wal that the boss is about.
I nod him a "Thanks" as I reach for the
wrench,
And screw down a nut on the greasy, black
bench.

But Stan will probably be remembered most for his songs, which will live and endure, because they breathe his gentle humor and spirit, and his devotion to Australia and its birds and flowers and animals, and its people and their hopes and dreams.

L.F.

Fred Byrne

JUST before our last issue went to press we learned of the death of Fred Byrne, one of Overland's oldest and staunchest supporters. He was in his eighty-first year when he died in Brisbane.

Fred Byrne was an extraordinary man, the kind of Australian about whom books should be written. Most of his life he was in ill health, partly as the result of a bad fall he sustained almost fifty years ago. Most people in his state would have regarded themselves as crippled—but not he. Among the many memorials he leaves behind are a share in the electrification of the Dandenong Mountains in Victoria, which he started before the State Electricity Commission, and the magnificent avenue of cherry trees which he planted down the main street of the Dandenongs' township of Belgrave, without waiting for official permission, when he was working as an estate agent in the hills.

As an estate agent he was all but unique: everyone who bought land from him made a profit and nobody ever lost a plot through him. He kept his clients going. He had very outspoken views, but such was his personal reputation that, it is said, he had never had a request refused when he approached people for some community effort. Nor did he stop at trees for Belgrave. In the early days of the Chinese People's Republic and once again off his own bat, he sent a sackful of eucalypt seedlings to Peking, where they are now growing.

His fearlessness was proverbial. In his last years an old chest tuberculosis became active, to add to his troubles. From a hospital bed in Chermside he kept up a fascinating correspondence with the undertaker. But also with members of Parliament,

TWO SONNETS ON DEATH

Death walked on suddenly; we shouted No!
Get off the stage, you goat, it's not your cue,
You'll wreck the whole darn thing, it's still

Act Two,

Now, come on, fellow, look, it's time to go,
No time for stunts, we need the rounded plot,
The play unfolding by the well-tryed rules,
The hero foils the villain and the fools
And gets the girl, the money and the lot.

He stood there laughing, then he stopped
to say,

And am I enemy or am I friend
Who comes to tell you childhood has to end,
Always the time must come to stop the play?
Then as the curtain sudden clattering fell
We saw that he was Death, but Life as well.

*

I could not see our cat as human, he
Had far too many purely feline ways,
The lordly arrogance of green-eyed gaze,
The separateness of one who loves to be
Hid in a box or high upon a wall
Or chasing beetles in the dead of night
Or crouched intense like tiger, in his sight
The sparrows playing where the trees are
tall;

Bemused by fur or leather or by wool
Or sleeping by the fire with such a grace
That no mere man could ever hope to chase,
Or tense and spitting when the moon is full.

But when he fell and broke his pelvis, then
I saw the things that cats may share with
men.

LEN FOX

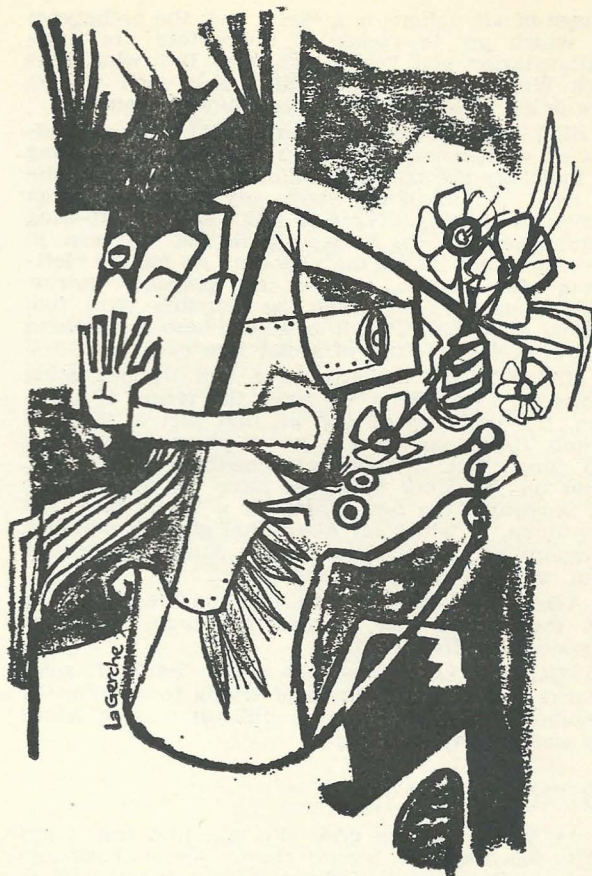
to whose broadcasts he listened and whom he bombarded with pleas and suggestions.

Fred Byrne was a lover of good writing and a friend to poets; he knew how to share his delight in their work. We know of at least one, fairly well known, poem of which he inspired the theme, out of an experience of life which, from first to last, was rich, active and single-mindedly devoted to the service of his fellow men.

THE LEGEND AND THE LONELINESS



A Discussion of the Australian Myth



In an attempt to get some kind of an appraisal of the present direction of Australian creative work—or of an important section of it—Overland brought together in March a group of writers and others to discuss the contemporary variants of the Australian myth or legend. The discussion was tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed and edited. If readers feel the experiment a success we may repeat it with different subjects and participants and perhaps in different cities. Details of those taking part will be found in a separate panel.

MURRAY-SMITH: About fifteen years ago the left-wing writers in Australia started to concern themselves with problems of national images. I think we helped to create certain legends, even if they didn't always very successfully get up on their feet and walk. It's natural, then, that we should be interested that a new Australian legend is being created today. Does anyone deny that in art, in film and in literature there's a new kind of spiritualisation of the elements of the Australian story—another attempt to typify its essence?

BURSTALL: What's happening today is different. Fifteen years ago the left was peddling a political legend: the Australian tradition was a left-wing tradition, the Australian heroes were left-wing heroes. This is why it looks so threadbare these days. The legend a Patrick White or a Sidney Nolan is trying to create is different

because it's approached from a much more individual standpoint, despite the latching onto national characteristics like the barren desert.

TUCKER: The "legend", if we have to use that word, started last century, not fifteen years ago. It's now getting more definitive, taking on a more precise shape.

MARTIN: What developments there are at the moment express themselves mainly in painting; there is no great shift as yet in literature. But we should remember that we live in an era of powerful nationalism, everywhere in the world, and the phenomenon appeared in Australia during and after the war just as it appeared everywhere else. Although the Australian Left didn't invent this movement for its own purposes, it's still true to say—with certain reservations—that the folk

image of all nations is a "left" one: the archetypes in which people recognise themselves are anti-authoritarian and rebellious ones. But what Patrick White and Randolph Stow and such writers are doing now is different and newer than this.

BURSTALL: It doesn't matter that only a handful of writers are doing this: the important thing is that they are the most influential. Patrick White is head and shoulders above any other Australian writer of the day. There is still a sort of left-wing establishment, and traces of it can be seen in Overland, but it's on the way out. As for the "left-wing" folk heroes, this is just palpably untrue. Both Henry V. and Ivan the Terrible were folk heroes of a sort. Punch is a folk hero—and about the most fascist kind of sadist I've ever seen!

MARTIN: We actually have two legends going different ways. First we have the return to Lawson, the bush legend and all that sort of thing. I admit there has been a lot of phony stuff going on there, but it expresses something pretty real. And on the other hand we have the new image of Australia, the new vision of a harsh, bare, hot continent, in which an Aboriginal ghost is walking. Perhaps both of them make the Australian legend. But which are we discussing?

ADAMS: There's nothing "left" in the new wave of the legend: the Eureka Stockade has been replaced by Ned Kelly.

TUCKER: Let's lose that word "left". It sidetracks the whole business of trying to analyse the legend or myth, which are difficult enough words to analyse anyhow.

THE OUTBACK HERO

ADAMS: Can we pose the question this way? Why has the new legend chosen the outback and the archetypes of Ned Kelly, Arthur Boyd's "Black Man and his Bride" paintings, Albert Tucker's "Antipodean Heads", Roo in "The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll", the various hero images that emerge even in "Voss" or "To the Islands"? Why is this new hero, cropping up in theatre, literature and art, an outback hero?

TUCKER: Because it's our most powerful single pre-existing image. It's a geographic image marking the great point of departure from the inherited and nostalgic images left over from Europe.

ADAMS: And yet these heroes mean very little to most Australians.

[Uproar]

BURSTALL: Nonsense. You're trying to suggest that the average Australian is the lawn-mowing suburbanite. Of course he is, statistically—but does he conceive of himself in these terms? Are his dreams of that sort? This is just the mistake that was made fifteen years ago—to think that stories should be about "men at work", that labor-relations were the secret of everything. But most great literature has been written around people making love, or other "remote" topics. What does Lawler do in "The Seventeenth Doll"? He asks: "What are the dreams of the Australian?" They're things like being married and yet having no responsibility, just going out, having a boozeup, going to the races, pulling out of society. And Lawler demonstrates how shallow and hollow this is.

MURRAY-SMITH: How does this relate to your own work—to this film you're making on Ned Kelly?

BURSTALL: Of course I want to make a good film, but films have to be made within certain conventions, and the convention that I choose for

Participants in this discussion were:

Albert Tucker, 47, Australian painter who has been overseas for a number of years but is now living in Melbourne. Represented in the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim Museum (New York), as well as in all Australian galleries.

Tim Burstall, 34, film producer and former public servant. Lives at Eltham (Vic.) where he scripted and directed the production of "The Prize", a recent award-winning film for children. He is also responsible for a series of short art films, including "The Black Man and his Bride" (based on the paintings of Arthur Boyd), "The Gold Diggers' Ballad" (based on the work of S. T. Gill), and "Dance of the Angels" (John Perceval's ceramic figures). Burstall is currently preparing for a feature-length production on the Ned Kelly theme, to be called "Man in Iron".

David Martin, 46, poet and novelist, living in Melbourne, and author of "The Stones of Bombay", "Tiger Bay", "The Shoes Men Walk In" and other books. His new novel, "The Young Wife", is to be published shortly by Macmillan.

Phillip Adams, 22, is TV Manager of a Melbourne advertising agency.

Stephen Murray-Smith, 39, is Editor of Overland and is doing research in educational history.

Overland desires to express appreciation to Mr. and Mrs. Peter Mann, who made technical facilities available for the recording of this discussion, and to Miss Jan Richardson for the transcription.

this purpose is the western. Now the difference between "High Noon" or "Shane" on the one hand, and Ned Kelly on the other, is interesting. In the classical American western, you have one strong man—the bloke who finally rights all the wrongs. Kelly, and probably Australia too, is like a western in reverse. You have a law-abiding town and Kelly and his lawless band moving in. Yet he appeals to us all. Why? I think it's got something to do with the enormous conformity that oppresses us in this country, the sort of reason we back someone like Simmons when we read about him in the paper.

MARTIN: This shows that the "new" vision of the Patrick Whites is not so new after all. It's significant that, despite the Communists' cries for portrayal of the Australian city, it was only when they went to the bush that they produced something that the public clearly wanted. Dick Diamond's musical "Reedy River", Noel Counihan's paintings on Eureka—there are plenty of examples. In all of this there is a search for what is Australia—Australian in the sense that the rest of the world hasn't got it. The new developments simply give a new turn to an old screw. There is something holding together the Jindyworobaks, the post-war left-wingers and realist writers, and the new imagists of the Whitechapel exhibition.

TUCKER: There hasn't been as much running away from the suburban image as David Martin suggests. Vassilieff was painting Fitzroy in the thirties, and in the early forties Bergner was painting Carlton and Nolan St. Kilda. There are other examples in other States, and I myself produced a whole batch purely based on the suburbs.

MARTIN: Yes, you all painted the romantic inner suburb with the big hospital walls and the pubs on the corners.

TUCKER: No, no, it was more an expressionist thing—we were being strongly influenced by European work at this stage.

ADAMS: Kramer in "The Wild Ones" made a film with an almost identical intellectual motive to that which Tim Burstall is making on Ned Kelly. Marlon Brando on his motor-bike creates havoc in a law-abiding town and emerges as the hero. You don't have to have a Ned Kelly to make this point. Are you just using him for the expedient of overseas interest?

BURSTALL: It's not just that. There are also all kinds of poetic and imaginative features in the Kelly story. There's the fairy-tale magic of the armor. There's the death-and-transfiguration ending at the burning pub—it's interesting how the public imagination has completely altered what really happened at the pub, so that most people would tell you that what happened was that "Joe Byrne was shot, the other two were burnt alive in the pub, and Ned struggled out firing at the troopers". The way the public mind has altered this story and improved its dramatic quality is at least as interesting as the actual story itself.

THE SEARCH FOR DRAMA

MARTIN: Yes, you are searching not so much for reality as for drama, and so is Patrick White. Look at the traditional view of the Australian farmer as a footloose individual with no attachment to the soil—a man who'll shift out a hundred miles further at the drop of a hat. How different from the European peasant! But along comes Patrick White and says that that's only half the truth. He has another look at this farmer (like the others, he still avoids the towns) and he finds that, after all, he is not so different from the universal peasant. He's not full of talk: he's tongue-tied. He may be very lonely. White is trying to universalise the old character. This is Dad and Dave on the psychoanalyst's couch, but it's still Dad and Dave.

TUCKER: He's using specific events to build universal archetypes where the drama can be played out.

MURRAY-SMITH: Now we are getting closer to it. But first let me say that Tim Burstall needn't be as scathing about the post-war Left as he appears to be: what Tim is doing now owes something to the fact that the Left sustained the legend, and he should recognise this. Secondly, it's just not good enough to say we want this legend because it provides us with something different, and that we go to the bush to find this because our cities are the same as cities anywhere. Barnard Eldershaw were saying this thirty years ago, and if this is the only reason we're still doing it, we haven't come very far. The reason why Tucker is painting like Tucker, that Burstall is making his films, that Martin is writing things which mark a development of his previous work, is that so many of us feel the need to push out the boundaries of creative experience. We feel a deep dissatisfaction with our psychological understanding of our society, our place in it, with the support and security it can give us. Not all the old formulas work any longer. This has often happened in history, and several times in Australian history. In catching up with the truth about ourselves many people are going to be shown something of the truth about themselves; in fact we're all going to be changed and disturbed, and people don't like being changed and disturbed.



BURSTALL: Martin's earlier point about drama is relevant. One of the points about Australian life which was violated by the left-wingers is simply that there is very little drama in it: even less than in England. And the great achievements haven't been within a dramatic mode. The enormous talent of a Patrick White is related to the fact that he's been able to unearth and trace all sorts of things happening under the surface of Australian life. He's been able to dig out those social tensions, probably more disguised here than anywhere else in the world, because of the myth of the place being classless. That's why I like the idea of programs like Rex Rienits' "The Stormy Petrel" on TV—the idea of going back to our early history to see the relationship of authority and the community in the act of being defined. This should help us to interpret it now.

MARTIN: Tim is getting near to it. He's shifting the emphasis from the writer or the painter to the people. The Australian as I see him is traditionally afraid of tragedy. He's the most easily-embarrassed human being in the Anglo-Saxon world, and that's saying something. Strong emotion in drama or art takes his breath away: he can't live with it. This is partly because the tough struggle with the environment didn't favor introspection. But in the twelve years I've been here I've seen a change begin. Our painters, our writers, our dramatists no longer will allow us to look away from ourselves. Patrick White may not be an Australian Joyce, but he tries to find the very big conflicts—men struggle with God, with themselves—the inner tragedy rather than the outer tragedy. What amuses me, though, is that, while there is an apparent dissimilarity of scene and subject between the old and the new wave, there is much that is very similar: two different kinds of dramatisation, of romanticism. Burstall, who denounces the pseudo-realism of the Left, at the same time makes a film still presenting Kelly as a conventional folk hero.

KELLY AS AN OUTSIDER

BURSTALL: I'm not interested in the leftish notion that Kelly was right and the police wrong, nor in Douglas Stewart's broken-backed kind of view that Kelly was a sort of half-fascist. Neither view comes to grips with the essential idea of an outsider doomed from the start, a reject. Why this is profound and related to us all is that the deepest fear everyone has in Australia is the fear of not conforming.

TUCKER: I think that myths develop when we use some specific circumstance to trigger off an archetypal drama in the human soul. In doing this we try to supersede human limitations because the possibilities of transcending our human condition depend on this. We can only reach universals by the complete realisation of a particular thing. This is where White has kept the issue clear—in universalising it he's purified the Australian story.

MURRAY-SMITH: And you are trying to do the same?

TUCKER: Yes, this is my drive. Until I left Australia at 32 I couldn't be bothered with the bush. It was a background I took for granted and all the things I did were on the urban level. After several years the feeling of continuous alienation in foreign communities shaped the Australian background for me. It was then I felt I could make these big generalisations about Australia and get them working against each other. I couldn't have done this in Australia, because one is simply suffocated under the data of Australian life.

MURRAY-SMITH: What sort of generalisations, what sort of images, emerged?

TUCKER: With me they were visual images, emerging in an almost completely abstract way. I developed an acute feeling for dry, harsh texture, and then also for a different tonal and color scale. I became conscious that in Australia we have a different light, and that the dry air and the lack of moisture weathers things differently and gives them a different surface. I was left with sensations full of gum-tree trunks, of rotted gum, of eroded rock, of just simply earth images. These are the things I started with. Later, when human shapes became associated with them, they had to be rudimentary, archetypal ones which mixed in with the landscape—where land images more or less consumed, devoured the human element.

ADAMS: This loneliness of the figure and the landscape is all very well, but most of us only experience it on an occasional holiday.

BURSTALL: But aren't you aware of this in Bourke Street, or the outer suburbs? These wide streets give me more sense of aridness than the desert. John Brack's outer suburban landscapes,

Drysdale's paintings—they suggest that one is only faintly human. And as far as cities go, most Australians, though they may be city-dwellers, don't lead the lives of city-dwellers. One-third of our houses are self-built. Everyone conceives of himself as a broken-down pioneer of some sort.

ADAMS: Why pander to this, as the American TV industry does, with its incredible density of westerns?

BURSTALL: Because art is about people's insides as well as their outsides.

MURRAY-SMITH: What makes some of the more traditionally-minded of us, or biased, or backward, a little bit uneasy is just this question of ambiguity. So much can be taken so many ways that one begins to wonder eventually whether they really mean anything much at all.

BURSTALL: In other words, art is hard. So is life.

TUCKER: The problem of ambiguity comes from a lack of scholarship. We need more of it here, more complexity.

MARTIN: The Australian is particularly disturbed by ambiguity, Stephen, more than the Frenchman or the Belgian. It's very good to upset him.

MURRAY-SMITH: But surely, at a time when the ordinary man is feeling less and less capable of determining, or even understanding, anything, art should be more than a reflection of this? On the contrary, shouldn't it help man understand things better by understanding himself better?

BURSTALL: Well, this art certainly won't raise production figures in the Urals, and I think it's ludicrous to expect it.

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MARTIN: There's no real conflict here—and production figures don't enter into it. The Australian is gradually beginning to recognise himself: this is what I think we all want. When I came to Australia I was moved greatly by reading "Capricornia" and by seeing Sali Herman's paintings of Sydney streets. These paintings made me say to myself: "This is right—this is what I've actually been seeing without recognising it." I was seeing, even in the crowded heart of Sydney, an emptiness and loneliness I hadn't seen in Liverpool or Antwerp or Budapest. I saw, for instance, the sky sitting on the streets. Everywhere in Europe there seems to be several layers—treetops, roofs—before you reach the sky, but not here. Look down Bourke Street towards Parliament House, and you'll see how the sky sits naked on the streets. An uncomfortable feeling. Most creative Australians since the war have helped this progress to-



wards self-understanding. There is no real conflict. Certainly you can't deny the whole Australian past, nor the fact that a certain tendency does run through it—whether you like it or not, a democratic tendency. Margaret Kiddle's new book on the Western District very efficiently and clearly makes the point that even the Australian squatter tried to cast himself in the democratic image—and to a great extent succeeded.

BURSTALL: Of course this is an egalitarian country. But that's not my point. Your squatters acted the way they did because, like Ned Kelly, they wanted to make themselves good fellows. This is what interests me.

MARTIN: I agree with you. Don't let's talk past each other. There are two Ned Kellys. There is the popular hero, the Till Eulenspiegel or Robin Hood, the man that Douglas Stewart sees who outbraves the best. But the other part of Kelly is where, in the Jerilderie pub, the people of the town predict that he'll be brought down by the small cockies who, though they may admire him secretly, want to go on and live and make money and have families. Here we have both the universal-romantic and the psychological elements. You can trace the psychological elements back from Patrick White at least to Xavier Herbert and Brian Penton. We will gradually get a merging of the two elements, and from it will come something more like reality.

BURSTALL: But the interesting thing is that, if you compare Patrick White with the earlier novelists, or Nolan with earlier painters, or Lawler with earlier dramatists, technically these people are so much better and command much greater insights.

MARTIN: I can't accept Lawler as a very efficient playwright, nor White, as a psychologist or master of prose, as coming anywhere near Henry Handel Richardson in "Ultima Thule". Our recent successful plays are not up to the standard of the pictures or books we have been talking about. In "The One Day of the Year" the aud-

ience titters and relaxes as soon as they hear a "bloody". Give them a few types to identify with, and they're happy. Let me say I enjoyed it myself.

ADAMS: But whether it's "Waltzing Matilda", a koala bear, a kangaroo or Ned Kelly, the Australian people will respond. All these images are of equal symbolic value. There are many of us who feel that there are suspicious, exotic elements being deliberately woven into the legend at the moment. Isn't it more than a coincidence that when Australian painters and film-makers and novelists want both local interest in their work and success overseas, they exploit this ambiguous and marketable legend? Can you deny such an influence?

TUCKER: No, I disagree with Phil. These things can't be stage-managed. People live a thing out at the point of history they've got to, and it either connects or it doesn't.

MARTIN: It's not simply a question of trying to impress the foreigner or catch an overseas market. Does it matter that the Australian loves a koala bear? Everybody loves something which is peculiar to themselves.

MANUFACTURED IMAGE

ADAMS: It means they love the public image, manufactured for them and used to hide truth, not reveal it.

BURSTALL: Each time it embodies a truth. People respond because there is something that has resonance.

MURRAY-SMITH: Do none of you, except for Phil, see any grounds at all for criticism of current majority tendencies in the arts in Australia?

BURSTALL: Of course the knockers will accuse Patrick White of being ungrammatical, or of writing "mandarin" prose . . .

MARTIN: White is a writer of enormous ability, but he has an over-strained style. Lawler's conflicts are trite . . .

BURSTALL: . . . The point to be made here is very simple. Australians are not only embarrassed by the notion of tragedy, as you said earlier. They are also embarrassed by the notion of effort, of doing something perfectly. The Australian winces at the opera because it's a convention that takes some time to understand. You have to accept the convention and move from there—and that happens to be the case about literature. Look at the philistine reviews Nolan got when the Ned Kelly paintings first appeared in Australia, and look what the same critics said twelve years later. We are dealing with a crass and philistine public.

MARTIN: The failure on the front of craft, for all that, is fairly characteristic of the Australian creative world. The difference between Joyce and White is that Joyce, however inventive and original he is, remains a novelist, while White tries to get away and become a poet. He tries to make the novel bear a symbolic weight which this particular art cannot stand.

MURRAY-SMITH: I still maintain that the developments we are discussing to some extent represent an escape, just as to some extent they represent a sensitising of our reactions to our environment which is all to the good. I would like to see an attempt to separate these two aspects.

TUCKER: It is pointless to ask this question. What we have has risen out of something real and is answering something real. Notice the peculiarly Australian disrespect and lack of charity

towards, say, Nolan's work. You want to see Nolan painting his Kelly pictures as some great P.R. job. The whole point is that these pictures were produced and ignored. This tendency and the appalling use of that American word "gimmick" is one of the terrifying aspects of non-criticism in Australia.

BASIC CONTINUITY

MARTIN: I may be an awful synthesiser, but I see a basic continuity here. The post-war realistic upsurge was a continuation on a more vigorous level of the work of Katharine Susannah Prichard and Vance Palmer. Eric Lambert is Hemingway imposed on Alan Marshall. There was a real foundation for this and there is a real foundation for the present situation: it's futile to criticise the present because it exists. We have had two types of romanticism in Australia—the proletarian type, which goes back to Lawson and beyond, and which is deeply rooted in our history, and the other kind, reinforced by Freud, Jung, Adler, the Hiroshima bomb, the neuroses of our time, a new way of looking at Australia. It would be altogether too crude to say that the truth lies between these things: both these things go together. What I want to see in Australia is something we have never had—a classical realism, like Tolstoy's, which takes a very broad picture of reality and tries to illuminate it solidly from all angles and all sides. Such a novel, when it comes, will be as psychologically penetrating as White's, but will also be rooted in social reality.

BURSTALL: It's too late for that. No such novel will be written anywhere in the next hundred years. Anyway, the chief argument isn't between say social-realist art and the people like White and Nolan. That battle is long since over, the front has moved on. The real battles of significance are between the imagists and the non-objectives in painting, if you like. Or Patrick White versus some version of Samuel Beckett, something much more abstract. There's no chance of an Australian "Anna Karenina".

MARTIN: I'm not looking for a new kind of "Anna Karenina". What concerns me is this. The Australian artist and writer does not yet take his background for granted. Look at Patrick White and see how he—and many other writers—describe in detail the atmosphere, background, color—the things James Joyce would have taken for granted in "Ulysses". The realists have tried to create an Australian speciality, the Whites and Nolans another new aspect of Australia. This aspect, the Australian loneliness, is more universal than it was before, and therefore more easily understood overseas: the whole world feels pretty lonely and frightened, so fear and loneliness communicate better. Australian cities and townships still look as though they could be dismantled in twenty-five minutes and carted away. But as the country gets civilised and settles down, our artists will neither have to explore for proletarian specialities nor work over our landscape for a view, a perspective which nobody else has. These things have to be worked through. When they are, and we take the background for granted, then we'll get masterpieces.

TUCKER: Yes, but what about the growth towards these masterpieces? Masterpieces become masterpieces because of the role they play—often the possibilities aren't discovered until long after the creation. You need historical hindsight to evaluate a masterpiece.

BURSTALL: Stephen obviously feels that our writing and art should be transmitting some kind of message which has a direct bearing on people's

lives. I feel that not only should art not do this, but that it can't. The main job the Australian intelligentsia—don't let's shrink from the word—have in the next ten years is to develop a cultural environment, to build on the existence of the weeklies and fortnightlies, to develop lots more talk and writing about art, books, music. We have to make an assault on the most hopeless public in the world, to get as many as possible to accept the values we think important.

ADAMS: As a member of the hopeless public I'm willing to be educated. But Tim and Albert justify the use of the images we have been talking about because they "ring a bell" in the Australian mind. So, unfortunately, does "I Love Lucy". Look, I agree that the social-realist school has had its day—but one of my complaints about the ambiguity of the kind of images you use is that they are so bloody ambiguous they don't knock the old left-wing hero-image at all. They leave it intact, and superimpose on it a rather twee little gloss or mystique. This makes everyone happy—it doesn't even offend the people who still like koala bears. Nothing that Tucker or Nolan have done, for instance, contradicts this tired old public image of Australia.

BURSTALL: What should be going on, then?

ADAMS: A lot of the desirable themes we have been talking about can be worked out without resorting to the visual cliché time and time again.

THE USEFUL CLICHE

MARTIN: It's become a cliché to think of France in terms of Rabelais, of Spain in terms of Cervantes. But before this can happen a whole national character has to be formed, out of many ingredients. In time this becomes that very useful thing, a cliché. Australia is in the process of creating her own clichés, but art is not a mathematical chess game: you experiment, you try.

ADAMS: Why is it, then, that an intelligent Australian would rather buy an urban American novel than a Lawson or even a White? Surely because this is more real to him than the tired old images? Why are they more likely to have a Ben Shahn print than a Drysdale?

MARTIN: The most common thing on the Australian wall, my dear lad, is what you'll find on all other walls: a fairly cheap print by Van Gogh. This is as necessary to the suburban house as a septic tank.

ADAMS: I'm afraid your socio-economic knowledge is rather limited, David. It's not Van Gogh, it's a picture of a green young lady with a big straw hat . . .

TUCKER: You've been going into the wrong homes . . .

ADAMS: . . . I asked this question at a big print shop: this has been their best-selling print for ten years.

MARTIN: You're bringing up an interesting question rather late: why are the painters and the Patrick Whites more successful overseas than here?

ADAMS: Because they both have primarily an exotic significance.

MARTIN: The overseas public is simply a little more sophisticated. Marc Chagall didn't sell in Poland, he sold in France. Picasso didn't sell in Catalonia, he sold in France. Our advanced Australian painters have most success where there is an advanced public. The fact that Albert Tucker sold paintings to the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art before he was represented in a single public collection in Australia doesn't prove that his paintings are not genuinely Australian, or that they are outside the tradition.

LEGEND INTO MYTH

A RECENT BOOK ON SIDNEY NOLAN



FOR the British art historian and critic Sir Kenneth Clark, the publication of a book on the paintings of Sidney Nolan* is an opportunity to assess Nolan's work in the context of the whole of the contemporary European high culture, to spell out the wider and deeper implications of Nolan's work, to suggest that beyond the statement of some Australian truth there is a strange and menacing imagination which joins the painter not only to the local legend but to the universal myth.

But for someone like the present writer, whose main concern is with the arts as a part of social history, the excitement and discussion aroused by this book, and by the publication of Patrick White's novel "Riders in the Chariot" (to which Nolan contributed a striking dust-jacket), provides a chance for a general comment about some very interesting things that seem to be happening, with Nolan and White, to the Australian arts.

We are seeing the absorption of popular tradition into the Australian "high culture"—that is, the "minority" culture, until now European-derived and oriented, supported by the Australian middle-class.

If we accept that the first statement of a distinct and recognisable Australian culture came from the working class, while the culture of the middle class, "second-hand Europeans pullulating timidly on the edge of alien shores", has in the past been obsequiously colonial, then what is now happening is not only interesting but new. Generalising (and grossly over-simplifying) the process, there has been a shift from the unselfconscious popular expression of a popular tradition ("Clancy of the Overflow"); through the conscious attempt to adapt the modes of expression of the high culture to this tradition, thereby assimilating the high culture to the popular culture (Palmer, Prichard, etc.); to the incorporation of elements of the tradition into the personal vision of artists whose starting points are in European culture, and the transformation of tradition or legend into myth.

Two qualifications should immediately be made. First, it might be quite wrong to assume that Nolan and White, and those who belong with them or are influenced by them, represent any lasting tendency in the Australian arts; it could be that their present repute rests on fashion, determined by their overseas success—another demonstration of the "cultural cringe". Secondly, there have been important tendencies which cut across this process, notably the 1920s revolt against both middle-class philistinism and radical nationalism by Norman Lindsay and the Vision school, and the continuing effort of left-wing artists to keep alive the popular culture and to build into it elements of socialist consciousness and social revolution.

But despite these qualifications the Nolan-White line of influence seems likely to predominate in

the Australian arts for some time to come, for two reasons. On the one hand it satisfies the first requirement of contemporary cultural fashion—it is private confession rather than public affirmation, and its values are those of the artists rather than of their audiences. On the other, it begins to resolve the schizophrenia of Australian high culture—the problem of roots—by rejecting the often selfconscious endeavor to find a popular manner of expression for the Australian legend in favor of a personal search for the inner meaning of the legend. Thus the universal element within the local manifestation is stressed, so that Australian legend becomes a continuation of all legend and begins to take on the nature of myth.

The purpose of this seems to be twofold. Firstly, to legitimise the Australian legend by equating it with Christian and pre-Christian mythology, thus removing it from the immediate context of radical Australian nationalism and the "unsophisticated," impersonal forms of popular culture and sanctifying it by giving it depth in time. Secondly, to personalise the legend by investing it with private as well as public meaning.

Of course White and Nolan are not necessarily trying to do the same sort of thing. They have in common this intensely personal, even private, expression of important parts of Australian reality (reality including here what people believe to be real—that is, legend). And both are minority artists: Nolan from the private meaning he gives to the widely known symbols he employs—explorers, diggers, convicts, bushrangers, Anzacs; White quite explicitly when he asserts the unique worth of a spiritual aristocracy, membership of which is confined to those few who participate—not from any conscious choice of their own, but because that is the sort of people they are—in the vision of man as god.

But beyond this Nolan and White are widely different, in intention and in manner of execution; their vantage points are directly opposed—White's earth-bound, harsh and judging, absorbed in individual tragedy; Nolan's olympian, gentle and forgiving, asserting the continuity of life. Nolan's preoccupation is man's hope; White's, man's fate.

These are the contradictory and complementary preoccupations of all culture; but whereas in popular culture hope and fate appear as external to man, in the high culture every man creates and destroys himself. It is this which distinguishes the use Nolan and White make of the Australian legend from the way it emerged in the popular culture, and it is this which has transformed the legend into myth. But whether hope and fate are felt to be externally or internally conditioned depends finally on social situation, on social class; for those who feel themselves to be in effective control of their immediate environment, the whole of their destiny appears to be of their own making; but for those, the majority, whose immediate

* Sidney Nolan (119 plates, 16 in color, introduction and comments by Kenneth Clark, Colin MacInnes and Bryan Robertson), Thames and Hudson, 90/9.

environment is not within their own control, fate appears as something which is beyond their will. Popular culture and high culture are the creations of these different classes, and reflect these different understandings.

How the high culture will react to this injection of elements of the popular culture is an interesting speculation. The outlaw radicalism of the Australian legend could be domesticated by transforming the rebel against his environment into the individual at war with himself. But this is too easy, for Nolan and White, although they enjoy considerable success with the cultural elite, themselves reject the values of bourgeois society—the one obliquely, by a lyrical affirmation of humanity, the other directly, by an angry rejection of smug conformity and material satisfaction. Nevertheless they remain artists of and for the minority, and this raises a difficult question for those who believe that a necessary part of a fully democratic society is a common culture to which all may contribute and in which all may share.

This is not a question that can be answered by the artists: the existence of two cultures is not the responsibility of their practitioners, but the consequence of a society which is divided into controllers and controlled. The resolution of this conflict can be achieved only in a social reconstruction which involves the whole of the community in the process of decision-making, thereby creating the social basis for a common culture. What sort of culture this would be, assuming that such a social reconstruction proved to be possible and in fact took place, it is impossible (and presumptuous) to say. But there is much to think about in Norman Mailer's comment: "You might say that the human function of socialism is to raise mankind to a higher level of suffering, for given the hypothesis that man has certain tragic

contradictions, the alternative is between a hungry belly and a hungry mind, but fulfilment there is never . . ."

In the meantime, it does not seem to me that it is the minority high culture which is inimical to popular culture, but rather the dehumanised products of a manipulative mass culture; artists like Nolan and White—men of intense sensibility and great talent, who are concerned to probe more deeply into the complexities of human experience and understanding—are likely to be threads in a common culture in which man, having finally mastered his environment, is at last face to face with himself.

This sort of general comment, which might of course prove to be far-fetched or quite wrong-headed, is quite apart from the personal response to the individual novels or paintings. So far as Nolan is concerned, I found the paintings in this book, as well as those on display in the recent collection of Australian paintings for exhibition in the Tate Gallery, London, warm and human and moving. I would have preferred more of the first series of Kelly paintings, which seem to me to be more direct and more intensely felt than the rather self-conscious Kelly-Christ symbolism of the later series; I would have welcomed something in color from the mysterious, beautiful rain-forest paintings which shone out of the Tate collection; and it is a pity that none of the Wimmera pictures—Nolan's first attempt to master Australian reality—are included.

But this is a fine and handsomely produced book, important not only for the work it reproduces but because it makes it possible for us, who will probably never have the opportunity of seeing a representative collection of Nolan's work, to see something of the development of this major innovator in the Australian arts.

ADULT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA

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"THE ARTS AND NATIONAL VALUES"

ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This School is being planned with two purposes in mind. The first is to give an opportunity to people from Melbourne and other parts of Victoria to see the splendid Regional Library and Art Gallery at Hamilton. The School will be held at the Gallery and its valuable and interesting collection will be open to members. Secondly, it has been decided to discuss some aspects of the Arts in relation to national values and national development. It is hoped that the inter-relation of local centres, such as that at Hamilton, and the State Institutions, such as the proposed Melbourne Cultural Centre, with National Institutions may be stressed. Broadly speaking, the theme of the School will be—"What is the place of the Arts in Australia Today? And what may we expect in the next few years?"

A very strong and extremely interesting panel of speakers has been brought together for the School, which is among the most important to be organised by the A.E.A. in 1962.

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AUSTRALIA THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS

PATRICK WHITE'S LATEST NOVEL

"There is no life-line to others' lives" (*The Aunt's Story*)

AFTER the quiet but brilliant achievement of "The Aunt's Story", with its delicately-created impression of feminine sensitivity, it has become increasingly difficult to see where Patrick White's strengths as a novelist lie. The further his search for a style goes, the more divided against themselves the novels seem to become. In "The Tree of Man" and "Voss" the deeply personal attempt to find the images which would express the life of this country, and, at the same time, to transcend mere local life by finding a language which might appear to be the local-in-the-universal (to make a peculiarly Australian contribution, so to speak, to the life of the human spirit) seems to me only partly successful.

White is certainly the most serious of Australian novelists, the most concerned; concerned not only with what the ubiquitous Philistines are up to, but also with his integrity and the truth of his experience as an artist. Australia is not only something that has happened to him, by accident of birth; it is also, in a sense, his subject. Yet, so far, he has neither accepted his environment nor subdued it to his purposes. Perhaps the flaw that runs through his work, and which has so far hindered him from writing a great novel, is a civil war between the *matter* of Australia and his conscience as an artist who happens to be an Australian.

One might mark the point by taking any page of a Randolph Stow novel. It is at once clear that Stow's is a sensibility which accepts itself as Australian as naturally as the leaves come to a tree. To use Stow's words in a recent *Westerly*: "Environment' is really nobody's environment. It has no observer. It is like Ronald Knox's tree when there's no one about in the Quad. And I can't believe that a writer with any sort of self-awareness would be able to say of it: 'This is my raw material.'" But in Patrick White's novels there are times when the author cannot stop picking at the navel of his raw material, when his "amo et odi" relationship with his environment overwhelms the clarity of his creative vision.

With the appearance of "Riders in the Chariot" (*Eyre and Spottiswoode*, 26/-) it is becoming increasingly obvious that White's metier is not the realism for which he has been so often praised; and that his art by-passes realism. He is, in fact, attempting to express a purely mystical awareness of the spiritual form of human souls far above—or beyond—the level of events, or things, or the involvements of day-to-day life. For White, the novel is not, in the end, concerned with holding the mirror up to nature (i.e. with interpreting life through fiction) but, rather, with passing through the mirror of fiction to a looking-glass mode of perception. Once through the mirror the shapes

of the mundane world appear ludicrous and incompetent. From the looking-glass world the processes of consciousness and logic (and even of language and the art of fiction itself) appear to be only "a spume that plays upon the ghostly paradigm of things".

The artist in White is tied to the real world only by his obsessive conflict with it, a conflict only relaxed at times in "The Tree of Man", where he achieved, above all, some splendid passages of comic writing.

Perhaps every Australian writer has to try his hand, at some stage, at the set-pieces of *The Flood*, *The Fire*, *The Drought*, *The Drunk*, *The Growth of the Town* and so on, but these things (successful as they are) in "The Tree of Man" occur only as structural hiccups in the process of a prose-poem about the growth of inarticulate sensibility in the souls of people whose real life goes on in the looking-glass world, beyond the level of conscious direction. In the early novel the set-pieces have an achieved quality, when set against the turgid poetics of the personal theme, which might well justify the critics who praised the local realism.

"VOSS" AND POETIC VISION

"Voss" explored the landscape of the looking-glass world more deeply. Though ostensibly based on historical research, the stuff of fact in "Voss" is treated only as a springboard for poetic vision, and indeed, the author deliberately avoids "explanations", leaving for the local-colorist (or, let it be said, for the rational reader) the prospect of an expedition to nowhere, undertaken by an incoherent mystic with severe disqualifications for the job (supposing the job were to get *somewhere*), who is nevertheless backed by allegedly hard-headed businessmen, for whom the prospect of solid returns is nil. Moreover, the Journey itself, and its importance to Voss, is largely filtered to the reader through Laura Trevelyan by a process which

we are not encouraged to think of in any other way than what the space-comics call E.S.P. This mutual soul-journey of Voss and Laura is set against an historical Sydney peopled by merchants and their wives. But the satirical comedy White makes out of the *bons bourgeois* devitalises and blurs them and their landscape into insignificance beside the splendors of the mysterious mode of perception available to Voss and Laura. Which, of course, was the intention. In "Voss", White achieved what "The Tree of Man" failed to be (or so it seems, in retrospect)—a novel without a surface.

It might also be said of the characters of "Voss" that they have no surface, and it is worth observing, at this point, that the greater part of White's novels are set in the more or less immediate past, and that his characters have never, before "Riders in the Chariot", had to meet the test of contemporary recognition and identification; so that their incompleteness, the eccentricities of their behavior and the oddities of their idiom have been veiled by strangeness.

*

Although it is an obvious over-simplification, it is almost fair to say that, in both of White's major novels, the reader is often confused by a sense of strain between his genuine novelist's eye for detail of setting and remembered gesture of personality (the surface of "real life") and the poet's desire to be free of all that, in order to write what Lawrence Durrell calls "pure psychograph". We are uneasily conscious that character and environment do not, in White's novels, interpenetrate in the way we almost axiomatically expect of other novels.

In "Riders in the Chariot" both environment and characters have undergone a double-dissolution towards psychograph. Moreover, the world of the characters (the fictional psychograph) has a more irritating tendency than in the other novels to become confused with the world of the author (the personal psychograph), the personal images being, too often, allowed to sit in the novel as mere uninterpreted **bulk**. For example, in this drunken meditation of Himmelfarb's on the city of Sydney:

As the darkness spat sparks, and asphalt sinews ran with salt sweat, the fuddled trams would be tunnelling farther into the furry air, over the bottle-tops, through the smell of squashed pennies, and not omitting to tear an arm out of its screeching socket. But would arrive at last under the frangipani, the breezes sucking with the mouths of sponges. Sodom had not been softer, silkier at night than the sea-gardens of Sydney. The streets of Ninevah had not clanged with such metal. The waters of Babylon had not sounded sadder than the sea, ending on a crumpled beach in a scum of French-letters.

Much of this is appropriate to the meditation of a Jewish professor of English, who has escaped by miracle from the Nazi gas-chambers, and who has just been rejected by the Australian counterpart of his father; but the author's personal satire on Sydney is confusingly obtrusive—drawing perhaps on recollections of a misspent childhood fouling-up tram-lines, and perhaps on a newspaper report of common accidents (since it's clear that no arm was torn out of its screeching socket on this journey). But is it satirical? Perhaps the most confusing aspect of White's style is that the direction of the author's comment is too often inscrutable. Do squashed pennies smell morally repulsive? Or do trams casually tearing off arms

make life more hideous, or more exciting, or just ordinary, or what? The vagueness, the lack of specification is characteristic both of individual passages and of the novel as a whole.

FOUR LIFE STORIES

Yet this novel is set ostensibly in the solid present, and its plot is built out of four life-stories, each one specific enough and fascinating in its way.

There is Miss Hare, the eccentric guardian of the decaying house with its memories of past grandeur; Himmelfarb, the Jewish professor, now working in Australia as unskilled laborer; Alf Dubbo, the half-caste painter, and Mrs. Godbold, the patient laundress with the drunken husband and six kids. Each of the four stories is quite admirably told, and although the four life-lines interlace at the level of events (in the outer-Sydney suburbs, called in the novel Barranugli and Sarsparilla), and also the far more important level of psychic perceptions, each moves clearly and absorbingly in a distinctive style which orchestrates subtly with each of the others. Miss Hare is a tender development of White's haunting image of the ugly-duckling girl who became Theodora in "The Aunt's Story". Himmelfarb's story is a very readable narrative at the level of events, and its background is a loving, laborious, and probably very accurate reconstruction of European Jewry, both as a collection of individuals and as a state of mind. In the connection in Australia between Miss Hare and Himmelfarb there is a maturer re-working of the Voss-Laura relationship.

Mrs. Godbold, the white marble pillar of virtue, remains perhaps more a symbol than a person, but Alf Dubbo the painter, though he is given less space than the others, does come through as a personality, and is perhaps closest to the author himself. It is the Aboriginal who finally captures the vision of the four Riders in the Chariot of God and holds it on canvas; and, as the artist, he is the image of White's own artistic aims. It appears clear at times that the author regards Dubbo's **painting** as more perfect and more natural than the novel that describes it, and that he writes into Alf Dubbo a great deal of his own feelings about the processes of creation.

That is perhaps natural, when painting is the dominant form of artistic expression in Australia. Writers talk painterly language and White's novel aspires to the condition of the plastic arts which present their symbols without comment. For example, in this interpretation of a landscape that might almost come from a painter's notebook:

And then, on a morning of deeper, dripping green, of blander blue, the train, which had drawn slower, silenter, far more purposeful, since a certain seemingly important junction, with its ganglion of silver, slithery lines, stopped ever so gradually at a little clean siding, paved with sparkling flints, and aggressive in its new paint if it had not been so peaceful.

So, too, his description of people as a writer needs no transposition into Alf Dubbo's vision as a painter: "As they marshalled the new arrivals, their teeth were as white as split apples, their mouths running with the juices of persuasion", writes White; and Alf Dubbo "had drawn Mrs. Khalil's two juicy girls, their mouths bust open like pomegranates their teeth like bitter pomegranate seeds."

For all White's painterly vividness there is, throughout the novel, a mistrust of language, or

rather, of meaning, which is endemic to the style and theme. White clearly would wish to find a form of language which could be said, "not to mean, but be":

Miss Hare sat making those little noises of protest reminiscent of frogs and leather. Clever people, she was saying, "are the victims of words."

She herself could have dwindled into a marvellous silence, her body slipping from her, or elongated into such shapes of love and music as she had only noticed long ago in dancers, swaying and looking, no more governed by precept or reason, but by some other lesson which the flesh might at any moment remember.

There is no retreat from meaning, however, when it comes to the theme of the novel: with one of the contradictions that we are now accustomed to in White, the looking-glass theme, on which so much care, so much over-writing, so much labored obliquity is lavished, can ultimately be seen in terms of simple and violent melodrama. Moreover the names of most of the characters and places have the plain significance of allegory. There is no puzzle about who the Riders are: they are the four characters in the novel, totally dissociated by birth, race and upbringing, but united by their intermittent vision of the Chariot of God, which is a symbol of many implications for all of them. They are united by their suffering, by humility, by the rejection of men, by their mutual vision of the deep horror of life, and especially of the life guided by Reason; by their patient cultivation in the darkness-of-the-mind of that other mode of knowing "which the flesh might at any moment remember". They are the blessed who cross with direct eyes. There are just four of them. One thing that seems to me wrong with "Riders in the Chariot" is that there are no more.

*

The novel is made rich and complex by the very many suggestive connections between the Four, but the actual significance of their detailed life stories is lightly touched on or only dimly suggested. By attempting to describe these lives at all, one runs the risk of making them into **explanations** of behavior, an implication which White is at great pains to avoid—but there are some faintly-suggested explanations which give the reader a foothold. Each of the Four, for example, has failed by omission in some responsible relationship in early life. Miss Hare has let her father drown in the well; Mrs. Godbold's young brother (when in her charge) was killed by a hay-cart; Himmelfarb,

in the moment of crisis, when the property of Jews is being burned, fails his wife, whom he never sees again; Alf Dubbo, perhaps with more excuse, fails the clergyman who has brought him up and who at last seduces him. Each of them holds life on sufferance thereafter, each of them turns completely towards the inner life, each of them finds a sense of destiny or election in suffering; on each the sins of society are unloaded. The novel is given fulness by the four variations on this theme—but in the end the shared vision of the Chariot is inexplicable in terms of human psychology; simply, some people possess the mystical assurance of Salvation and Truth through Revelation. Each of the Four could say with Himmelfarb: "All of them had put their trust in me. It was I, you know, on whom they were depending to redeem their sins". The notion of Truth discovered through Revelation—a notion which unites the artist and the saint—is the key to the novel.

A VISIONARY MELODRAMA

The story which unites the Four is a visionary melodrama—much of it composed of images that are painfully private to the author—in which the Elect are distinguished and set apart in their looking-glass world. The other third of the novel is made up of a mercilessly satirical picture of Australian life—the **matter** of the novel—which is seen as unredeemably evil, and which has to be hated with the greater vehemence because it is Australian. For it is our insidious, lazy, come-as-you-please life which seeps by night into the corners of the artist's brain, persuading him that he is, like his fellows, that abomination of abominations—a sociable and reasonable human being. In the interest of pure vision it has to be degraded to less than dust and relentlessly swept out. In "Riders in the Chariot", more so than in "Voss", the two halves of White's sensibility peel off—the mystic visionary has less and less connection with the savage censor morum. The intensity of the mystic is exactly balanced by the delighted horror of the satirist. White has not found a language in which to represent the life of the spirit through the symbols offered by the "real" world, and indeed his artistic aim seems to be to divide the two kinds of life and put as much distance as he can between them.

In the horrific comedy of manners, the sinister figures of Mrs. Flack and Mrs. Jolley preside over a charivaria of larrikins (both old and New Australians) who are allowed to discourse for page after page, in a sort of analytical imitation of Barry Humphreys, until they have fully revealed the

"The Great Australian Emptiness in which the mind of man is the least of possessions, in which the rich man is the important man, in which the schoolmaster and the journalist rule what intellectual roost there is, in which beautiful youths and girls stare at life through blind blue eyes, in which human teeth fall like human leaves, the buttocks of cars grow hourly glassier, food means steak and cake, muscles prevail, and the march of material ugliness does not raise a quiver from the average nerves."

Patrick White

depth of their damnation in boredom, brick houses, telephones, internal plumbing, the care of monstera deliciosa, beer and Sunday church-going. And above all in their vaunted Australian independence ("there is none of my girls as is not able at a pinch to mend a fuse, paint the home or tackle jobs of carpentry"). White's talent for mimicking the bitching of middle-aged women is so acute that he gives it far more licence than is justified in the novel as a whole, though it does provide some hilarious passages of sustained innuendo.

But Mrs. Jolley's world is frighteningly unreal. Not only because White, for reasons of his own, discards Australian idiom and makes his characters speak in a cross between stage-Irish and Runyanese, but also because this grotesque if often delightful comedy has to do duty as the opposite pole of the looking-glass theme. This is the life of Reason. "Will I see," muses Mrs. Jolley, in a confessedly improbable passage, "will I see the neat brick homes with sewerage, gutters and own telephones? Will I see an end to all madness and people talking as if it was stuff out of dreams? Nobody should ever be allowed to give way to madness, but of course they will never want to in brick homes. It is in these big old houses where the thoughts of people wander around loose. I remember when I would come down and turn out the rooms. I can remember the loose thoughts and the fruit peelings."

It is the Mrs. Jolleys of this world who will tear down the visionaries, poison the artists, bring the mad to violence and despair and the charitable to evil-fame. Perhaps so, in their blindness. But White surrounds them with suggestions of positive and active evil.

Such a theme—the unreason of Reason—was gently implicit in "The Aunt's Story". When the

psychiatrist arrives to take the eccentric Theodora away her (imaginary?) mentor Holtzius is made to say: "They will give you warm drinks, simple, nourishing food and encourage you to relax in a white room and tell your life. Of course, you will not be taken in by this, do you hear? But you will submit. It is part of the deference one pays to those who prescribe the reasonable life. They are admirable people really, though limited."

EXISTENTIALIST HORROR

In "Riders in the Chariot" the "admirable people" on the other side of the mirror have become deformed beyond recognition. They are monsters in whom even sociable good-feeling is nothing but an hysterical rictus on the face of violence, despair and bloodlust. One may sympathise with the existentialist horror of life which underlies this picture of Australian society, but one cannot say of the picture that it is concerned with the real affairs of men. One must sympathise with the frustrations of a writer who can only imagine himself writing for an audience of Mrs. Jolleys (for there are no other kinds of people in this book, except for the Four) especially when he writes of Alf Dubbo, as the artist:

On the whole he had very little desire to learn from the achievement of other artists, just as he had no wish to profit by or collaborate in the experience of other men. As if his still incomplete vision would complete itself in time, through revelation.

But one must wonder whether the novel, as a form of literature which implies the collaboration of many readers, can ever retreat so far from humanity without becoming redundant.

The key question for 1962: what is

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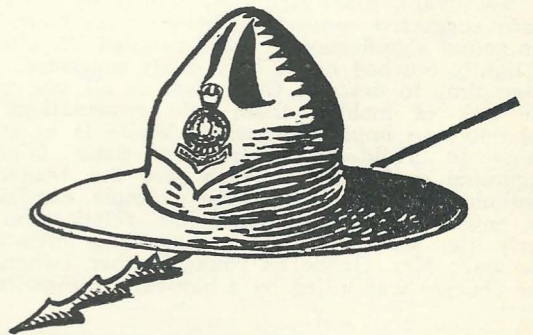
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The point that I haven't so far made clear is that the impressive and cloudy philosophy involving revelation, suffering and redemption is itself a language private to the novelist. It is, of course, like the orthodox language of Christianity and Judaism, but White is totally scornful of the claims and the practitioners of orthodox creeds, and, to mark the point, allows the story to come to a crisis in the actual crucifixion of Himmelfarb by his Christian work-mates in the yard of the Brighter Bicycle Lamps factory at Barranugli. Himmelfarb substitutes as the Redeemer and the two women as Mary and Martha. Alf Dubbo, who denies Himmelfarb, might be cast as St. Peter. But the parallel is, at best, factitious (it would take too much space to explain how great an artistic blunder it is), for White's "saints" do not redeem. Faith in St. Himmelfarb can only, Calvinistically, heat the fires of the lost a little hotter.

So far as White's myth of the Chariot of Revelation has a schematised theology it appears to place value, not on the redemption of mankind but only on the **difference** of the saints. The elect can make no human contact, except with others of the elect; except, that is, with those who have faced the horror, the boredom and the cruelty of life and seen it for what it is. It depends which side of the mirror you are on. We, dear reader, seeking our own hypocritical reflections, are the dead, the sightless, the irremediable—and even the lunatic and the poet are powerless to save us from our crass devotion to Reason and cream brick veneer. There is room for only thirty-six in White's chariot (we are told) and perhaps they are not all human beings: "Goats", says Miss Hare, speaking in the symbolism of the novel, "are probably the animals which see the truth most clearly."

A MORE HUMANE IMAGE

One does not wish to quarrel with a work which presents the act of worship as the central act of human experience, yet I was haunted while reading this book by another Chariot which suggests to me a far more humane image of life: the Chariot, described in Socrates' story, drawn by the horses of passion and reason, which, in their competition, are always threatening to throw the rider. That is the chariot most human beings are given to wrestle with; and in the sociable streets of the world they need a good deal of traffic sense. The author and the theologian can help them (both as horse-trainers and policemen) but in White's novel there are no reasonable people and scarcely any passionate people. Reason is beaten all round the town, and Passion has departed, leaving no addresses, except for a scum of French-letters and Constable McFaggott's braces in the paddy's lucerne.

There are, as in all White's novels, many fine things in "Riders in the Chariot", but much of it reads, both in manifesto and in practice, as the retreat of the artist-saint into his own world of private images. In that world he is no longer a man speaking to men, and there the social art of criticism is an impertinence:

"Have you ever seen an armadillo?" asked Miss Hare.

"No." Mrs. Jolley was very angry.

"Perhaps you have, though, and don't know it!" Miss Hare laughed.

"What," asked Mrs. Jolley, "is an armadillo?"

"It is an animal which, I believe, is practically invulnerable. It can be killed, of course. Anything can be killed . . ."

Then she looked up at her companion with such an expression . . .

To My Deaf Son

Do not bother to come in when I call,
Do not bother to lift your face and run;
The summons was unimportant, after all.
It is far better to brown your legs in the sun.

Take no account of lunchtime if you choose;
Your hours are loosely measured. In a while
You will come demanding food and I'll not
refuse
The insistent bribery of your eager smile.

You do not have to know that apples and
peuce
Don't tumble from the earth in a golden
stream;
Your sure acceptance is your own defence
Against the senseless shattering of a dream.

Wars, cost of living, foreign policy—
Let those about you argue as they please;
You will learn soon enough how life must be
Tempered with graveness in the face of
these.

And while your fellows shout and disagree
To your own thoughts stay stubbornly
sincere;
Their lips will never wound while you are
free
To obliterate what you don't wish to hear.

Let all their blundering chatter pass you by;
You are excused from listening to and giving
Tedious pleasantries, nor need you try
To blunt with words the joyous game of
living.

In manhood years, when girls may pause
with slow
Reluctant words and shyly shake their head,
Will you counter the pretence they make
of "No"
With your own pretence of not hearing what
they said?

And moving beyond dreary gates of speech,
Past clumsy limits of a groping phrase,
The tenderness that lies within your reach
Shall lend awareness to your nights and
days.

So do not bother to listen when I call,
Do not bother to leave your games and run;
The trivial is unimportant, after all.
It is far better to walk in the tracks of the
sun.

JILL HELLYER

AFTERTHOUGHTS ON THE

The Writers

Mary Durack

PERHAPS, after all, the Indian writer Bhabani Bhattacharya and his shy, intelligent wife, who so modestly and sensibly asked for a script of the discussions, actually took in as much of the Writers' Week talks at Adelaide in March as any of us. Or maybe others, better trained in this regard and less diverted by personalities, made clear written or mental notes of the seminars. My own scattered jottings seem quite inadequate for proving my worth as a delegate to the folks at home—or do they perhaps convey something of the atmosphere of a unique gathering of informal individualists in the formal setting of a university lecture room? These notes, like the remarks that prompted them, bounce about the pages like bubbles blown from clay pipes.

Have we been convinced of the "calamitous effect on Australian writers of the infiltration of canned overseas culture?" Is Tom Hungerford's dismal picture of the position proved valid or out of date? Does he continue to believe in it himself after Max Harris has enquired how long he has been out of Australia?

Then there is all that talk about "commercial writers" and "others"—presumably those of higher literary integrity. At first the assembly seems divided into two fairly distinct camps, but the motives of the "goodies" and the "baddies" became increasingly difficult to disentangle, and one by one we give the game away. All right—no one **really** writes for money. He writes in the first place because he wants to—even because he **must**. He then, being only human, he attempts to sell his wares to the best advantage—but some writers are slicker (or maybe more interested) than others in gauging and angling for a market.

Frank Dalby Davidson tells Tom Hungerford he "writes like an angel and talks like a commercial traveller," and later puts the point of view of the dedicated writer with moving sincerity. Does he, however, establish a clear case against the writer who compromises with commerce? No one seems inclined to deny that quality and the power of communication are the true touchstones of success, but does "cracking a market"—breaking into the high-paying glossies—necessarily mean selling out to the devil? A writer may be prepared to sacrifice something of individual style without forsaking his principles.

What top-ranking overseas writer except one (who was that again, Olaf?) has declined publication in the Saturday Evening Post, and not been pleased to make the grade—and the money? Lack of financial success **could** often enough be attributed less to lofty motives than to a lack of story-writing technique.

I dare not risk inverted commas on the following thought bubbles. Take them as they come and claim them if you will.

Society does not owe the writer a living, only the freedom to express what he wants to say, to communicate in his own way with his fellow men.

But doesn't the writer who achieves the highest circulation (and the highest pay) communicate the most effectively?

Communicate what? . . . Is immediate communication of a second-rate thought more valuable than the delayed recognition of an immortal work of art?

At least the Commonwealth Literary Fund has officially established the principle that commercial values are not all.

But does the C.L.F. provide enough? . . . Too much? . . . distribute its manna in the most judicial way?

Why not extend it to actors? . . . Pay short story writers on a pound-for-pound basis with newspapers and periodicals? . . . Set up an Institute of Australian Literature in Canberra? (Sit down, Hal Porter! They don't mean a club to provide free board and grog for broke writers.)

What are we going to do about take-overs? (Bill Lindsay states the position bravely against uncouth interjections. Tom Hungerford speaks firmly from the chair.)

Is the short story dead?

Apparently not—only suffering from tired feet and slow starvation, as rides on the vehicles available become increasingly harder to thumb.

David Rowbotham is prepared to go to the stake declaring that "writing is an act of faith." A sceptical voice demands a definition. I think the challenge was well met, Stephen Murray-Smith helping the case along by blowing in the word "sincerity". ("Integrity" also floats irridiscently about throughout the seminars.)

A South Australian poet adds his personal credo that writing is an Act of Giving in return for the Gift of Life.

Subject matter rises tentatively from time to time.

Have Australian painters become too obsessed with the Australian scene? Why not broaden their horizons?

Are too many writers escaping the discomfiting issues of our own society—unemployment—education—into the myths of Aboriginal dream-time?

F. T. Macartney deplores a loss of technique and euphony among modern poets, the untidy and salacious tendency of the short-story.

A young American asks where he can find these salacious stories, for which he has apparently sought in vain in Australian literature. He holds in his hand the Penguin Anthology of Australian Verse.

Professor A. R. Chisholm tosses in the vexed question of a Chair of Australian Literature, warns of the need for proportion and the responsibility of scholars in tracing, imaginatively, the trend of our tributary stream.

Here the bubble notes run out into sketches, suggesting the poetical features of Geoffrey Dutton, the studious attention of T. Inglis Moore, the reservations of various younger poets, the rugged magnetism of Xavier Herbert as he delivered his fascinating and vigorous account of the writing of "Capricornia".

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL OF ARTS

I felt that non-writers left with a sense of disappointment, even of disillusionment. They had hoped for "a solution" to something, but nothing was resolved. They were disturbed that writers talked so much about money . . .

The value of Writers' Week will never be proved or disproved in concrete terms because it lay, for the participants, in the field of intangibles. I doubt whether any of the forty-six writers present had come with the slightest anticipation of what this meeting would mean, or whether even the most subtle and facile manipulator of words could fully express its impact.

What was discussed outside the seminars? The Problems of Australian Writers? The general lack of outside recognition and interest in the local scene? Syndicated overseas material swamping the local product? The monster TV, weaning public attention away from the tender flower of "Aust. Lit." to the phoney toughness of America's wild west and the dreary crime routines of festering cities?

Something of all this inevitably crept in, but the economic factors proved, after all, to be no more than a background theme. "Talking shop" in a writer's sense means talking of anything you like. The universe is his warehouse, the world of material things and the outer spaces of concept. (Which is a high falutin' way of saying that we talked a lot of sensible nonsense, laughed a great deal and generally had fun.) Perhaps it was something in the Festival atmosphere that brought us so quickly to the point of communication that is the difference between **knowing** and **having met**. I don't know that any tremendous confidences were exchanged, but one was conscious of an unusual generosity of spirit, an open-hearted, away-with-humbug approach, a sense of comradeship that evoked from a more innocent age the convivial ghosts of Lawson and Furphy.

I had previously wondered at J. D. Pringle's remarks on the excitability of Australians. ("Surely," I thought, "we are the most phlegmatic, the most matter-of-fact people on earth!") Now I am inclined to agree with him. A great deal of really heated excitement—not entirely attributable to alcohol—was generated in these discussions, but being for the most part Australians first and writers afterwards, all concerned displayed the capacity for argument without anger, dissention without rancor that is the wonder and despair of so many Europeans. Why will we not glare at each other from right and left of the runaway, instead of yarning untidily together in the middle of the tarmac? And whence this ridiculous readiness to sink hatchets in beery graves? Have we no sincerity? No proper capacity for righteous hate? (Careful here, or we will have the subject matter for another seminar on our hands, and this is a tricky one.)

All right—was the party (let's face it) (a) worth while? (b) a waste of Commonwealth money and individual time?

Everyone will have his or her personal view on this. For me it was the most surprising and stimulating experience of a life-time. Hardly any group of people could have been more representatively Australian, from those of university and/or

"old family" backgrounds to self-educated sons and daughters of the soil (or do we still use the word "proletariat?"). "Sophisticated" writers whose Australia is the cities, academic writers, bush-whacking writers nervous of the cross-walks, Australians by birth and Australians by adoption . . .

"All are Australia's, in the blood of all there runs
The immortal swagman, chasing down the suns . . ."

It's good to know that Ian Mudie has recovered his voice after the Festival. I always like that emotive stuff of his but it never rang so true to me before I witnessed the mingling of this apparently ill-assorted bunch of creative individuals, the convergence of equally unpretentious bush bards and intellectuals.

How strangely it was felt, over this brief period, that

"The blazed trees and rounded ash
Of old camp fires left
By the forerunners,"

were flickering to vigorous life in a new wind.

For all apparent differences and despite the fact that, as Olaf Ruhen observed, we were "leaning at slightly different angles like a laboring camel team," we discovered with a sense of surprise that we were all going the same way.

Anyone interested in discovering **what** way had best take a deep plunge into the forceful current of Australian writing, as I intend doing myself—with infinitely more understanding and enthusiasm, but at the same time more critically.

The Dramatists

Laurence Collinson

OF the eighteen resolutions carried at the recent Australian UNESCO conference on playwriting, held in Adelaide during the Festival, only one unanimously passed by the nearly 50 full members has had no publicity anywhere: it was to the effect that all theatre reviewers should be executed. It was typical of the conference that only a few humorous moments of the six days were spent in a discussion of those whose profession is regarded by many writers, producers, and actors as parasitical on the sensitive organism of the Australian theatre. There was just too much else to talk about.

At the very end of the conference Australia's only drama professor, Professor Robert Quentin, of the University of New South Wales (whose charming and intelligent chairmanship prevented many a blind run down a blind alley), complained that members had failed to take cognizance of the theories and philosophies of drama that were engaging the modern European playwright. This was true to a degree, although Norman Marshall, Oriel Gray, Richard Beynon, Max Harris and

myself had led discussions on new techniques, "naturalism", indigenous drama, and drama as "literature" (Max keeping up his reputation by being slightly virulent at the expense of a couple of the "naturalistic" writers present); but it was unfair criticism nevertheless. Firstly, because theatre theory and philosophy, both modern and otherwise, had been considerably kicked around by members arguing with each other privately or at parties (there was a tremendous alcoholic haze hovering over Adelaide during the Festival period); and secondly (I realize the first reason is no excuse, but I mention it to show that conference members, if not the conference itself, were **aware** that a few changes are taking place in the contemporary theatre), because, as I said before, there was just too much else to talk about.

For the very first time a large number of playwrights and producers were able to come together to discuss the problems connected with writing and producing the Australian play. Most of us—even those who lived in the same city—had never had such close contact before, and we took full advantage of it. Saturday and Monday, the playwrights as a group and the producers as a group were reserved with each other—an indication of their mutual suspicion; and both groups (it seemed to me) were suspicious of the "top" people present—from the Trust, NIDA, A.B.C., and so on (where was the J.C.W. representative, by the way?). By Tuesday, however, the obvious concern of all members for the welfare of Australian drama, plus the friendliness induced by coffee, liquor, and barbecued meat, overcame the cautious smiles and discreet opinions; and from then on the atmosphere of the conference was, in general, intimate and easy-going. Everyone who wanted had his say, and while most playwrights were outspoken about producers and about the Trust, and most producers were outspoken about Australian plays and about the Trust, there was no animosity and no sense that anyone wanted to destroy whatever already existed. Only a distinct feeling that the conditions under which Australian plays were written and produced must be improved, and quickly.

This feeling was implicit in the resolutions, most of which have been published elsewhere, and all of which, I hope, will eventually influence for the good the organisations to which they are directed.

I went to Adelaide somewhat doubtful about the value of such a conference. I left a week later with scepticism vanquished—so enthusiastic, indeed, as to be almost evangelical. I do not believe that I was exceptional in this. It is quite possible that many of the ideas that emerged will quiver and fade as they jolt against the social, political, and aesthetic walls that frequently surround the Australian theatre. Even so, not all will fade; some will get through, implant themselves, and grow. At the very least Australian writers will take heart from the mere fact of recognition afforded them by the conference. Australian drama may well be taking its first unselfconscious steps . . .

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I have let the white man's prestige down,
I have eaten an ice in the streets of the town.
He guards the white man's prestige well
Who gets drunk at the Grand Hotel.

JAMES GIDLEY

Some Dramatic Demands

Important resolutions passed at the U.N.E.S.C.O. Conference on Playwriting referred to in the adjacent article have received little publicity in Australia. Indeed the evil effects of the close association between TV companies and the Australian daily press may be seen from the fact that, so far as Overland knows, all Australian papers have suppressed a Conference resolution asking the Australian Broadcasting Control Board to act to require all commercial TV stations, when telecasting dramas, to conform to regulations similar to those in the United Kingdom to avoid indiscriminate interruption of proceedings.

It should be noted that, in relation to these resolutions, in the three or more years of their existence the wealthy TV stations in Melbourne have not produced more than five or six live dramas, and the position is doubtless similar in other States. Overland hopes to prepare further material on this issue.

Among other issues the Adelaide Conference called for:

- The presentation of an Australian play at the next Adelaide Festival
- Financial help to the live drama and other arts from commercial TV, as in England
- Reconstitution of the Elizabethan Theatre Trust so that a separate organisation is created to aid the development of plays, as distinct from opera and ballet
- The Elizabethan Trust to make known its policy towards the assisting of little theatres in Australia
- The compulsory requiring of all commercial TV stations to produce at least six live dramas in Australia each year, at least three being based on Australian scripts
- The requiring of commercial TV stations to telecast one half-hour session of current affairs each week, in prime time, to be written by an Australian writer.

David Martin's Hinterland article, this time on the subject of criticism, has been held over till next issue, owing to lack of space.

GAVIN CASEY

CASEY at 55, slow-moving, a strong stick close to his chair, heavy-shouldered, head thrust forward, the eternal cigarette, agate eyes quick to light up with fun or fire, still the best conversationalist of them all, still head of the table; a man who has become a legend in his own time . . .

Gavin Casey has written well for thirty years. And now, to his amusement, he has reached the stage of being written about.

At 17, Gavin Casey was a slim youth heeled over on a flat-twin Harley Davidson taking the banked bends of a narrow concrete track, laid down for push-bikes in the early days, where a scraped foot-rest fired a graceful curve of sparks as the skidding machine sent broken timber flying amongst the spectators.

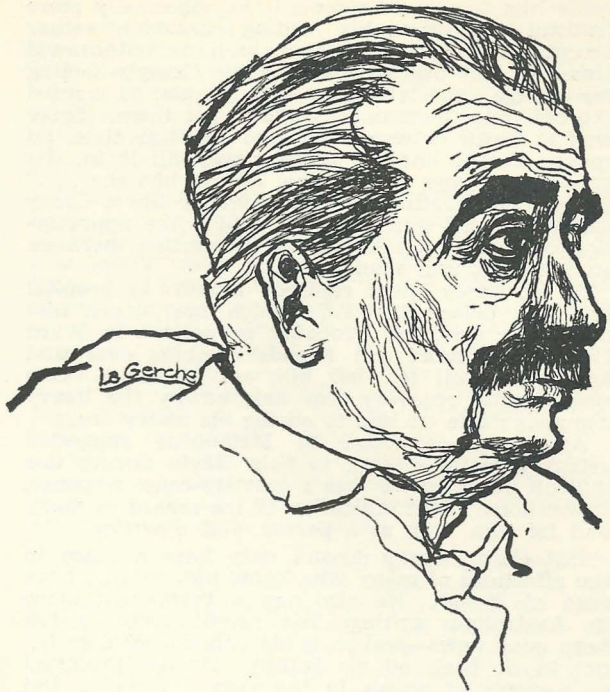
That picket-fence has gone from the Kalgoorlie Oval now, and an open wire mesh fence which doesn't obstruct the view has taken its place.

Actually Gavin only knocked a few of those pickets off. But a few years later he was to clear away a lot of the dead wood which surrounded the Australian short story. In writing Casey followed Archibald's dictum to the early Bulletin contributors to write only of what they knew and had experienced, and Casey had a full life when still young to draw from. He was born in Kalgoorlie where, in the twenties, a large proportion of the older people had brought with them living memories of the nineties, and as a boy he heard men talk familiarly of the writers and verse-makers of a past but still vivid generation.

Although writing eventually came easily to Casey, money always came the hard way . . . Casey at 25, a thin black moustache now, racing a four-valve Rudge on the Kalgoorlie Trotting Ground (a real dirt-track, that one) for a fiver prize money, to be shared with a group of mates batching in an old house in Lewis Street. In the mess of the depression years he was out of work many times. He sold cars and type-writers, worked on the mines, fired furnaces, promoted sports carnivals, sold advertising; circumstances forced him into many different jobs before he got a footing in journalism and some brief leisure to write as he knew he could.

Despite the depression, these were possibly the least depressing years of Casey's life. He had youth, good friends, confidence, an ever-present sense of humor and a healthy zest for everything that life had to offer. By the end of the thirties his work was starting to appear in the Bulletin: stories which showed him as a writer predominantly concerned with the social and economic insecurity of man. To this day few, if any, of our writers have been able to depict with such skill the industrial scene and the men and women in it: and it is probably no accident that Casey's stories started making their impact at a time when Australia, during the war years, was going through a great industrial revolution.

It was due mainly to economic factors that Gavin Casey became known primarily as a short-story writer. Some of his best short-stories were chapters taken from half-written novels, and re-written for the short-story market. He could not afford to



wait for the uncertain rewards of the novelist. Thus "Short Shift Saturday", perhaps his best-known story, virtually introduced the "long" short-story to the Australian scene.

In 1942 a Commonwealth Literary Fund grant assisted the publication of his first volume of stories, "It's Harder for Girls", and he has been consistently represented in the "Coast to Coast" collections (although it was Casey who years ago suggested this all-embracing title for an annual short-story collection, for some mysterious reason he has never been asked by Angus & Robertson to edit a volume).

Since he has been established as a writer Casey has published five novels: "Downhill is Easier" (1945), "The Wits are Out" (1947), "City of Men" (1950), "Snowball" (1958), and "Amid the Plenty". The last-named has recently been published and Gavin has only just returned to Perth from an eastern States' trip connected with this event. Despite this imposing list his reputation as a short-story writer continues to obscure his reputation as a novelist: yet "The Wits are Out", to take one example, is a brilliant piece of character analysis and, among other things, an example of Casey's sure ear for, and strength in handling, the Australian idiom.

Oddly enough there is a leisurely progression in Casey's short stories which suggests he is writing a novel. There is a speed in his novels which suggests that he is hurrying to finish a short story.

*

Casey has written of a small world. Most of his best stories are set within the narrow limits of his goldfields towns, and his characters are products of and are limited by their environment. He writes of a world he knows and seldom leaves his subject in flights of imagination. The characters in Casey's stories do not dissolve into symbols, because his situations and problems are real. How his characters stand up to the problems is another matter. This much can be said: Casey's characters don't rise bravely but hopelessly to challenge adversity. Gavin's observation of people

leads him to what he feels is an essentially more truthful conclusion: his leading characters rather accept adversity, or make an oblique withdrawal from it. But this is governed by Casey's feeling for change, especially change in people: "I wanted the old times back but I couldn't get them. There was so much between now and the last time I'd spoken that I knew I could never fill it in. I'd grown new ways of thinking, and so had she . . ." ("Short Shift Saturday".) As a writer Gavin Casey has a balanced concept of life and a fine appreciation of cause and effect, of interaction between environment and man.

At 52, Casey spent eighteen months in hospital in Perth before the T.B. which had struck him down was arrested. Probably no patient in Ward 17 has had more odd friends climbing over that low brick wall to visit him out of hours. One suspects his recovery was delayed by the heavy demands made on him to soothe his mates' fears.

And when someone in Melbourne suggested artists give their work to help Gavin during this difficult period there was a coast-to-coast response. It was some slight indication of the regard so many had for him both as a person and a writer.

But Gavin Casey doesn't only have a place in the affections of many who know him or who have read his books. He also has a permanent place in Australian writing. His recent recovery has been good news—and so is his announced intention not to sit back on his laurels. He has promised us a series of novels in the next few years, and publishers are expressing interest in a new collection of his stories, to include some of those that made so deep an impression when they were first seen. We can wave a greeting to Gavin Casey on his way—but we are very far yet from farewelling him from the literary scene.

TED MAYMAN

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Miscellany



Our Art Goes Over—Overseas

Adrian Rawlins

THE reaction of London critics to the exhibition of contemporary Australian painting, held last year in the Whitechapel Gallery, must have startled even the most hopeful plugger for our painterly talent.

The exhibition was a comprehensive cross-section of the work of major artists in all States, and of ten now living in London: in all 111 works of 55 painters were shown. Reviews appeared in 23 papers, five with reproductions, and only one paper—the *New Statesman*—carried a slightly derogatory notice. Most praised was the figurative work of Dobell, the two Boyds, Blackman, Pugh, Dickerson, Nolan, Perceval, Tucker, and the abstract work of Passmore, Coburn and Whitely.

It is not that the English have misperceived our art, because the best of our painters do have an integrity, transcending considerations of fashion. But there is implicit in these English reviews an element of condescension and of assessment in other than painterly terms: the view of Australians as pioneers in a harsh, unremitting landscape—an unfairly nineteenth century idea—and our art as “above all conscious of its peculiar regional advantages, of a country, a people and a myth which could bring new life to the painting of man in a landscape; and a landscape which is itself fascinating in its ancient, implacable strangeness . . . a national instead of international art . . . built out of its own vital resources,” as *The Times* critic put it.

Some people would call this exoticism: Eskimo sculpture and African bark painting are now old hat—something new is needed. But this is only part of the truth. There is another reason, a genuine want; again it is a reason which has nothing to do with the aesthetic of painting but has a lot to do with why the general (or great) public interests itself in art at all: the universal psychological need for a heroic mythology, what Arthur Phillips has called the *Odysseus* figure, the lone warrior pitted against nature in a search for home which keeps him free and adventuring, master of his own fate.

In the last two years or so Americans have taken to Albert Tucker's “*Explorer*” paintings in which the human figure grows organically out of the landscape environment, the two bound irrevocably together by a shared ruggedness of texture. The reason for this is obvious; Tucker has given them a new version of their own immense frontier myth. It doesn't matter that the setting is Australia and not America: the parallels both of landscape and figurehead are close enough to wipe out any differences. The English are now reacting similarly to the work of Boyd, Pugh and other Australians, to the freedom from urban strictures and elaborate behavioristic patterns that our art offers them.

This is possibly unfair to those painters who wish to be assessed in purely painterly terms, not literary ones, and to my mind seems dangerous in

that this sort of recognition is likely to destroy the very qualities which have been most praised. For the integrity of our painters is the integrity of creators working without thought of a “market”—none in the European sense existed here—and to give them a market and commercial dealers to handle their work makes demands which must alter the nature of their output.

Then again, there is the point raised by Ray Mathew: “. . . how innocent in Europe seems the figure-painter's assumption that isolated, personal, momentary vision can be an image of the world.” Many of these paintings will pall after the first shock of contact because most of our artists lack the technical subtleties that Europe expects and are possibly essential to durability. Painting is, after all, very much a matter of using paint creatively. That the London art world was looking for a “school” of little Nolans, of “poetic image-makers,” is patently obvious from the adulation heaped on paintings which aroused little interest here, such as Pugh's “*Rape of Europa*”, Perceval's “*Gannets Diving*” and the work of a decorative abstractionist such as Juniper.

It seems certain then that, however sincere the need for art centred on a heroic image is, the London reaction was largely the result of prior expectations. That the school to be singled out for most praise was the rather parochial Melbourne school is perhaps unfortunate. The bulk of young artists are moving forward into the realms of the abstract or at least more world-conscious styles; the lauding of figurative work in local mythology could be a retrogressive step and could lead to a tiresome round of rehashed Boyds and Nolans.

Yet the boom is on and nothing looks like stopping it. A selection of work from the Whitechapel show has just finished touring Britain for the Arts Council, the Tate will shortly exhibit 200 Australian paintings, supposedly concentrating on contemporary work, to be followed by a show of fifteen paintings (five each from Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney) as part of an exhibition to mark the opening of a new building for the Commonwealth Institute in London. Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum wants an Australian show and American interest has already been aroused with a very successful group show—the work of sixty painters—held during November and December in Los Angeles. This is to be followed by a string of one-man shows: John Perceval's extremely fine ceramic “*Angels*,” paintings by Lloyd Rees, Donald Friend, Paul Jones, Ken Hood and possibly others. Carl Plate, the first Australian abstract painter to exhibit in London, will hold a one-man show in New York in May, which will afterwards go to Toronto. At the same time, leading Sydney dealer Rudy Koman, who has a string of high-selling painters under contract, is also arranging regular exhibitions in New York.



Mere Point of View

Fairlie Apperly

NOTHING much to do in Alice really. Once you've done that memorial church and Flynn's grave and that something-or-other gorge, you know, the one that has to be photographed at twelve-thirty to get the sunlight through it; well there's nothing much else. Except the Mission though. That's not a bad day trip—I think they're on show twice a week, might only be once.

No charge, you know, once you get there. It's interesting to see how civilised they've become over the years. In a small way their community is not unlike our own. They live in cottages, some of them are quite clean, too. They build them under supervision. They keep a few animals. They've got a nice little school. Later on the boys are taught a trade and the girls learn to cook and

sew. Of course you can't get away from the fact that they're black and they smell—stink really (begging yours), and the kids' noses need wiping, and the fleas are at the dogs and cats, and the flies are at everybody, and you too, unless you remember to plaster the stuff beforehand. You don't want to go too close when posing them, you'll get some good shots, but you don't want to get pediculi capitis as well!

They get a free handout every week. Soap (not that you'd think so), smokes and sweets. Of course grog is banned; it's not fair to give it to them when they don't know how to drink, don't you agree? Anyway if they've never had it, they've no reason to want it.

Oh, yes, and they sell good souvenirs there, too. You know—really genuine native handcrafts; rugs and slippers and bark paintings and so on. Of course they sell ash trays and bottle openers with Alice written on them, too, but they're not *genuine* if you know what I mean. They're cheaper in Alice itself, anyway.

Yes, I think it's worth a visit. Naturally by the end of the day you've had it and all you can think of is a long, cold beer and a hot shower. Seriously though, when you come to think of it they're damned lucky to get it all on the free.

Damned lucky. What do you mean, suppose I'd been left behind?

THE LAST TREE

Old Simon Wells, well-thought-of pastoralist, who'd rather see the humus layer wash away from off his hills than feed one tree, let one ancient gum tree stand.

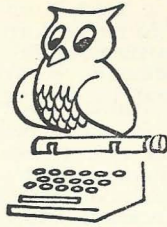
"It'll die soon enough," he'd say, "why blunt a decent axe on a tough old bastard of a tree like that."

Today old Simon died.
Scoured patches mar the hills
that until a few hours past
on paper were described as his;
yet still the one gnarled tree
stands by the topmost fence.
Its grey and twisted trunk
no two men could link hands around
appears to wear a ten-inch coat of bark,
scaly as a seven-foot goanna;

the two dead limbs
that were already leafless
when the greedy Simon knew them first
still sprawl against the sky
as if to give a blessing on the land,
and still a faint green fuzz of twigs
sprouts round its storm-snapped crown
as did the last white hairs
round Simon's toothless head.

And all today a crow,
perched high on one bare limb,
has cawed and cawed,
over and over,
more joyfully than mournfully,
as if to say
"Simon is dead; Simon is dead."

IAN MUDIE



Frank Dalby Davison (Vic.) writes:

I was delighted to read Alan Villiers' few pages of autobiography in the last *Overland*, and to learn that he intends visiting Australia in 1962. I have often wished to know more about him. His books are not easily come by, and I have read only one, "The Cruise of the Conrad," which I chanced to pick up as a paperback in a South Australian fishing port a few years ago. The book's quality is memorable.

In 1934 Villiers was owner and master of a vessel which he sailed round the world by way of the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Horn. "My ship," we are told, "was a single-tops'l full-rigged ship crossing three royals. She was 100 feet on the waterline, 25 feet beam, drew 12 feet, grossed 212 tons. She carried a big sail plan and could set 10,000 square feet of canvas: she had deep single tops'ls, triple reefed; topgallantsails, and royals on all three masts; she was equipped to carry studding-sails and her long jib-boom set three big headsails." And so he goes on, with no concessions, you notice, to the silly questions a landlubber might wish to ask. Note also the affection and pride of relationship quietly indicated in the first two words.

This is a keynote of the book. The skipper of the Joseph Conrad is a master of sail, holding himself answerable to masters of sail and to nobody else. There is no overt bid for the interest of armchair adventurers. The reader is made to feel himself aboard the vessel at every moment, but also to feel that he had best not get in the way of the working of the ship. This lends Villiers' book a very distinctive quality among narratives of the sea.

Villiers is obviously a romantic or he wouldn't—like the man who bought a hansom because taxis were on the way in—have set out upon a career in sail just when sail was on the way out; but, rather curiously, the romantic who is true blue and not merely a petty escapist, emerges as a realist if he pushes to the limit of the thing attracting him. This is the character of Alan Villiers. You feel that as readers of "The Cruise of the Conrad" he doesn't postulate you, me, and the other fellow, but the ghosts of all the great skippers before the days of steam, and that every word and act of his, every detail of his handling of crew and ship, the account of his improvisations in a sea-going emergency, will come under their merciless scrutiny. It is this that lifts his yarn—and it's a grand one!—out of the ruck of sea stories designed to coax the landlubber into an imaginary sea adventure, and makes it a distinctive contribution to literature.

From the name Villiers chose for his ship it is fair enough to guess that he is an admirer of Joseph Conrad. May it please him to know that at least one writer is of the opinion that "The Cruise of the Conrad" is a true companion-piece on the plane of factual narrative to the best of

Joseph Conrad's novels. It is the sort of book one could well imagine Conrad having written had literary ambition not led him to leave the sea to become a writer of tales. It seems likely to me that the peculiar and inimitable austerity of this book will gain increasing recognition and literary appreciation.

When Alan Villiers visits his homeland we should welcome him as a distinguished writer as well as one of the last great masters of sail. We should let him know in advance that we wish to do so, in order that he may not find himself wholly taken up with the Society of Ancient Mariners, the Prawn-fishers' Club, or the Royal Institute of Dinghy Captains.

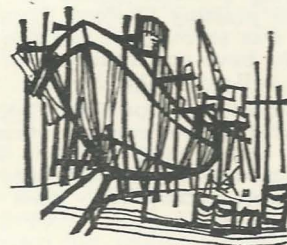
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Peter Samuel (Vic.) writes:

May I add briefly to your discussion on the Student Action movement, having myself taken part in it last year? It was an ad hoc organisation formed to demonstrate during the election campaign. Some have suggested that this particular form of activity—mass demonstrations with singing and placard bearing—is futile. But to demonstrate is not only a gesture of protest, but also an attempt to raise the issue in the public eye. Those who were active in the organisation also felt that it is useful training in the basic techniques of political action, of organising, pressurising and propagandising. It is part of a wider movement to make participation in things political a more important part of the life of young people. It is a dissent from that most anti-democratic of prescriptions, "leave politics to the politicians." Student Action is not just a matter of banner-waving and chanting. Less conspicuous was the distribution of pamphlets and handbills, innumerable personal discussions and arguments and debates. Also the opportunity (though very restricted) it gave through letters to editors, TV, periodicals, etc., to state a case.

On the particular issue of White Australia around which the demonstration centred there is a continuing body, the Association for Immigration Reform, with branches in most States. The closely linked Immigration Reform Group produced the booklet "Control or Color Bar" (a revised and enlarged version of which will soon be out as a M.U.P. paper-back). It was this which provided the intellectual basis for our attack on the White Australia policy.

While Student Action is at present dormant it can always be revived when the need arises.



BOOKS



Labor Leader

No book on Australian politics has attracted more public notice than "Ben Chifley" (Longmans, 50/-), Professor L. F. Crisp's biography of J. B. Chifley. The first edition was sold out in less than three months; within a few days of publication, the book had been reviewed in virtually every daily paper in the Commonwealth, many papers giving it pride of place on their leader page. Most of these reviews were written by parliamentary correspondents, who for obvious reasons concentrated on the two chapters dealing with Chifley's work as post-war Treasurer and with the unsuccessful attempt to nationalise banking. The wider significance of the book, however, has been largely neglected.

Whether Chifley was Australia's "greatest" Prime Minister is a question that is inherently unanswerable. Whether Curtin would have made a better Prime Minister than Chifley had he lived is, as Harold Laski once observed, an adventure in the historical pluperfect which is better left alone, like conjectures about the development of the Soviet Union if Lenin had survived another ten years. It is equally impossible to decide whether he was Australia's "greatest" Labor leader. Greatness, as recorded in the history books, depends on what a man does rather than what he is; and what a man does depends on his opportunities. There is no inevitable correlation between the scope of a man's responsibilities and his intellectual or moral stature. Life is full of village Hampdens or Cromwells guiltless of their country's blood. We can say that Chifley belongs on the short list of candidates for the highest honors in each case, but also that he led his party at a time when the tide was running strongly in its favor. Chifley himself, as Professor Crisp reminds us, regarded E. G. Theodore as the most outstanding political figure he had known, and his way of praising Stafford Cripps, whom he also admired, was to compare the two men. What Theodore might have accomplished under different circumstances will never be known.

For the occupant of a public office, the test of greatness is whether he leaves a permanent mark on the nature of his office when he leaves it, so that his successors come to be judged by criteria which he himself established. This is certainly true of Chifley, and the present biography provides a mass of evidence to point the conclusion. Professor Crisp quotes the panegyric pronounced by

Sir Keith Murdoch, no friend of Labor or of Chifley: "So far as Australia is a 'welfare state', Mr. Chifley is responsible. No Treasurer, and indeed no Prime Minister, so profoundly affected the domestic life and the future history of our country."

In his concluding chapter the author sums up the reasons for the remarkable prestige and affection accorded to Chifley both during and after his lifetime. The qualities he emphasises are the man's personal integrity; his combination of natural qualities of leadership with the ability to express "the authentic attitudes and aspirations of even his least articulate followers"; the great affection and loyalty he inspired among his colleagues, and the respect he drew from his opponents; and the religious quality of his devotion to the Labor movement. In the course of the book, however, Professor Crisp brings out a number of other reasons for Chifley's ascendancy as a leader and for his success as a practical statesman. One of these was the relationship which he achieved with his close advisers, the "official family" described in chapter 17. The mutual respect and confidence that grew up between Chifley and his official subordinates, most of them drawn into the government service from the universities and the professions, contrasts markedly with the traditional Labor man's suspicion of "academic theorists" expressed by Chifley himself in an early speech in the House of Representatives. The effectiveness of Chifley's partnership with his official brains trust, and the constitutional propriety which he observed in his dealings with them, placed him in a position of great strength vis-a-vis caucus and the rest of the Labor movement. The situation was appreciated, not without resentment, by Labor backbenchers. "Caucus critics contended that the whole constitutional principle of the party required him to look more consistently to Labor sources for advice and assistance . . . if the party itself had ordinarily been more active in policy investigation and formulation, the complaints of such caucus members would have possessed a measure of justification which in fact they largely lacked." The ineffectiveness of the A.L.P. as a policy-making organ was an important factor in underlining the strength of Chifley's position, which enabled him to transcend the short-term opportunism and the dominance of immediate trade-union interests that characterise so much of Labor policy (as distinct from its rhetoric). It was this relative freedom from such pressures that made it possible to implement policies of full employment, economic expansion, income redistribution and social welfare which represent the greatest single improvement in the economic and social position of the Australian working class.

Chifley's tact, insight and experience enabled him to ride a relatively smooth course among the cross-currents which have regularly upset the relations between Labor prime ministers or premiers and the party inside or outside parliament. But there is little doubt that Chifley, unlike the Duke of Plaza-Toro, led his party from well in front. He must surely have had his tongue in his cheek when he declared, in a parliamentary exchange in 1945, that he was proud to be the "mouthpiece" of the A.L.P.

The acid test of his leadership came, not with the bank nationalisation episode, but in the struggle over the ratification of the Bretton Woods agreement to set up the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, described at length in chapter 14. This was an old-style internecine Labor row, featuring the names of well-known stormy petrels such as Ward, Lang, and Calwell, and

replete with echoes of old feuds of the 1930s. Unlike many such rows, however, it not only resulted in a clear-cut victory for the policy of a Labor cabinet, backed by expert advice, but it enhanced and confirmed the strength of the Prime Minister's position. The Bretton Woods affair was also a victory for internationalism in the A.L.P.; significantly, the propaganda of its leading opponents exploited the traditional xenophobia of the Labor movement. Chifley played an important part in widening the international horizons of the A.L.P., especially because, as Professor Crisp reminds us, he acted as his own Minister for External Affairs for a total period of 17 months during Evatt's frequent absences.

The arrangement of the biography places great stress on the years from 1941 to 1949, taking up 12 of the book's 25 chapters. Like some cubist portrait, these chapters analyse the intersecting planes of Chifley's activity during these eight crowded years, and enable the biographer to depict each fact in detail. By thus presenting the subject through his doings rather than his personal relationships, the man himself tends to become obscured. It is to be inferred from this biography that Chifley was a simple character in whom ability, integrity and faith were almost perfectly blended. Dr. Johnson, the paragon of all biographical subjects, remarked that biography was justified because to read of another man's vices as well as his virtues was to relieve the ordinary erring reader from the burden of despair. It is difficult to believe in such simplicity of character in any man with a long record of political struggle. Was this, perhaps, his secret?

For this reviewer, the man comes alive most clearly in the chapter dealing with his fight against the Communist Party Dissolution Bill, where Chifley's qualities of mind and character emerge plainly. The contrast on this issue between Chifley and his opponents, both inside and outside the Labor Party, is one which Professor Crisp makes the most of, and it makes one wish that he had exploited the contrast between Chifley and Lang to greater dramatic purpose. No Labor leaders, except perhaps Forgan Smith, have possessed as much power and influence as each of these men in his own sphere. Their paths crossed on a number of significant occasions, generally as bitter antagonists. One of them used his power for dubious, the other for constructive purposes. Their appeal to the rank-and-file of the Labor movement was in some important respects similar. In a way, they represent the light and the dark sides of a single pattern of Labor politics, a pattern which is now passing away. The new generation of Labor leaders have different roots, and they have spent most of their adult lives in a different world—a world that Chifley helped to shape.

This book, which will surely rank as one of the outstanding contributions yet made to the study of Australian politics, provides an indispensable guide to the evaluation of this change.

S. ENCEL

Recent Novels

The essential purpose of art is didactic. This does not mean that a work of art should be merely the sugar-coating around the moral pill, as the classical critics believed. In fact, where a moral is needed the art has failed. Rather, the work of art, whether it be a painting, a piece of music, or a poem or novel, should enlarge the viewers' knowledge and experience of life.

This question of the audience is a critical one for the artist, for it is one of the limiting and shaping factors within which he must work. Unless a connection between the artist and the viewer can be established, the viewer can in no way participate in the artist's experience, and thus his own life will remain untouched. Learning has been defined as experience which changes future behavior, and every work of art should in this sense provide a learning experience.

It would seem to follow from this that the greatest works of art are those which are received by the biggest audience, but this is not so. A painting which establishes no connection with the viewers may still move them through its exciting use of shape and color, but the experience can still be no more than one of escape, which leaves their future lives unaffected. Then comes the diletantism which afflicts us with fashionable painters.

Or a work may be so cunningly designed to fit its audience that it merely clothes their existing structure of prejudice and insensibility without any visible effect. Thence escapism, which becomes more lurid and more sordid as the world from which it offers escape becomes more rotten and more cynically respectable.

Therefore the artist must not only connect with his audience, **he must also be capable of transmitting a quality of experience which is worth transmitting and worth receiving.** A person's life can only be changed radically by shock, and where literature, or any other art, merely delights or merely bewilders, the necessary jar is missing.

These principles are by no means exhaustive, nor are they universally acceptable, but in a world which is increasingly running away from life to aesthetics, and which is afflicted by such aberrations as the anti-novel and the cult of bad verse, they are worth re-stating.

The latest bunch of Australian novels falls between both extremes. None is so well-written as to be disturbing, but even the least ambitious is roughly enough hewn to retain the native honesty of truth, and to offer the reader a few gleams of understanding and compassion.

For example, "The Scarlet Blossom" (Heinemann, 21/-), a novel pieced together with amazing ingenuity and little structural skill, still does offer a few recognisable human characters, and gives us a little insight into topics which are too often left to the cold logic of public debate. Irene Morrison, a character who appears briefly at the beginning of the book, and again, unrecognisably, near the end, is the classic example of a woman who, having deserted her brute of a husband, is denied a divorce in order to satisfy his desire for a mean revenge. This could give reason for thought to the Family Defence Council. The very inability of the author, Craig Stirling, to sustain the plot or develop the characters through 361 pages enables the reader's mind to wander a little longer over these rather irrelevant points than he would be able to do in a better novel.

The question remains whether such a novel, which has no claim to be considered as good art, is bad art. The author has a certain honesty of purpose, and the failures of the book are glossed over by no sentimentalities or clichés, except of plot. The wilder coincidences, and the more improbable experiences of love-making, at least lend interest to the story. Although none of the characters seem to develop through their experiences, they do live credibly for static moments.

"If Golde Rust" by H. H. Wilson (Rigby, 17/6) is another attempt to grope with the significance of Australia's wartime experience. Like "The Scarlet Blossom", it is determinedly pacifist and anti-patriotic in outlook, and, also like the former, its outlook is betrayed by an equally determined pride in the true Australia which somehow emerges unsmirched by the dreadful experience. Its failure is possibly a failure of courage, for, apart from "The Girls", who never determine the course of the novel, there are no really bad characters. The censors no doubt noted that all the population was done for the highest of motives, and never for naked lust.

Mena Salthorpe's "The Dyehouse" (Ure Smith, 21/-) convincingly creates the atmosphere of one of those rather seedy factories which is too big for personal relationships and too small for efficient organisation, either on the union or the managerial side of the equation. It also shows the necessarily soulless nature of business administration, and the petty, narrow lives into which it forces its creatures.

The author is particularly successful in conveying the dignity lent to life by the small things. Patty, after nearly selling her soul to Renshaw, the boss who builds his self-esteem on bullying and womanising, finds understanding from Oliver Henery. The situation is a cliché, but the characters come to life through their stilted talk, their uncertain actions, their blundering thoughts. The older men are even more common stock characters. Barney, who has struggled on to build his own place, and finds his dreams collapsing when a new baby is on the way, is finally reconciled to the change in his life and accepts it, not with resignation, but with pride. His character however leaves the pages of the writer's notebook and takes on life in the abortionist's office, where human decency and selfish desire come into conflict within his being, and decency has a hard struggle winning. The fumbling marks of his affection and pride in his new son steer skilfully along the border between sentiment and sentimentality.

But the most successful character is Hughie, the craftsman who is put off after years of service and finds his dignity slipping away from him until he seeks death in the factory which has taken everything else from him. The author perhaps avoids the final desolation, but the pride in a skill, and the void which is left when the opportunity to exercise it is removed, are delicately and convincingly portrayed.

Another novel which deals with a work situation is Philip Jones' "La Bora" (Angus & Robertson, 18/9), which is centred around an immigration officer working on the selection of migrants in Italy. The author obviously feels keenly for the desperate situation of the migrants, and the human depravity which preys on them. His book is an intelligent and sympathetic notation on a remote facet of Australian life. It is perhaps marred by an over-dramatic emphasis on the importance of our conscious efforts on behalf of Australia's future. The author sees the characters as they are, rather than as they have been made, and thus he places a little too much emphasis on the possibilities of the careful selection of breeding stock, ignoring the shaping effect which a new country and a new society will have on all his chosen people.

Nene Gare is concerned, not with those who are coming to this country, but with those who have been put out of all the desirable parts of it. "The Fringe Dwellers" (Heinemann, 21/-) lacks both the dramatic conflict and the imposing personalities of Casey's novel "Snowball", which it inevitably

brings to mind, but it takes us further inside the way of life in the fringe settlements around our towns, and the obstacles before those Aboriginals who would raise themselves from it. This book is not concerned so much with the conflict between whites and those who are ready to be accepted by the whites, as with the conflicts among those who are concerned only with a better way of their own life, and those who want acceptance only on their own terms. What whites may consider the shiftless, drunken, lazy shack-dwellers are shown by their own values, with their own hopes and their own pride.

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"A Stranger and Afraid" by G. R. Turner (Cassell, 23/9) is a strange book which aims for more than realism and is defeated by its own negative view of life. Jimmy Carlyon, temporarily stationed in a country employment office, is forced to come to terms with himself when he finds his lost family and is told that, his temporary position becoming a permanent one, he must settle down in the same town with them.

The search for himself is well described, and the characters involved live convincingly complicated lives. Their social behavior and the little deceits of normal living are well observed. Yet in the end there is a reaching for the profound which fails to satisfy. Jimmy breaks his mother's hold on his half-brother, Alec Maclean, and we are told that he and his mother at last understand each other, and forgive each other "not an iota for it". But we do not find what they learn of each other, or of themselves, nor why, or what, they fail to forgive. Alec certainly finds himself as a man, but Jimmy is seeking something more, and the author cannot see beyond the hollowness to what lies beneath.

This book has some of the makings of an Australian "Main Street", but the picture remains incomplete. The characters have a greater depth of personal life, but they do not seem to live beyond the planes of social encounters and personal problems. The search for profundity takes the book further than realism, but does not carry it as far as the shore of significance.

"Low Company" (Cheshire, 19/6) is an enthusiastic romp through Sydney's Bohemia. The rorts do not achieve the zany madness of the true fictional binge, but they do achieve a high degree of alcoholic incoherence. However the fun is not laid on so thickly as to obscure the central theme of Byron Barker's meandering from innocence to awareness, a meandering which somehow takes him through the most perilous situations without actually denting that crusted innocence. Hugh Atkinson uses this modern search for the Grail to make some shrewd satirical thrusts at authority, the artistic fringe and humans in general, but while his satire penetrates, it is never misanthropic. Although the book does not take us very far, and its humor lacks the gimmickry of the "Weird Mob" school as well as the smartness of Cyril Pearl, at times it achieves a comedy which is clear enough to show the tears beneath. Byron is a Sir Galahad in a fragile and corrupt modern world, and the potential tragedy is understood, if it is not always shown.

Lastly, we have Colin Thiele's "Sun on the Stubble" (Rigby, 15/9), a sensitive evocation of boyhood on a farm in the German belt of South Australia. The least pretentious of all these books, it is also the most honest, and Dad, Mum, Grandpa, Bruno and his brothers live through it as large, and only a little less complex, than the people we meet down the street. The book has neither the

rough-house comedy of Steele Rudd, a writer from a harder time, nor the stubborn theme of Alan Marshall's "I Can Jump Puddles", but it owes nothing to either of these books, or to any other except perhaps Schlunke's short stories of the same type of community. This is a regional book which achieves a universal quality, not of idealised life, but of life as it ought to be and sometimes is, before the clouds come between the sun and the stubble. There are even villainous sheep-stealers, who are not only caught by the boys, but brought to trial in a brief court scene, where all the honors go to Dad and Grandpa, and the uppish lawyers are properly confounded by country common-sense.

A fair range of books, and a fair range of subjects. Although none achieve greatness, the last two at least are first class. But after reading them all, one is left with a slight feeling of disappointment. Perhaps it is that not one of them offers more than memorable moments, that not one has more than a neutral style which leaves events to speak for themselves without any aid from the author beyond his selection of what is significant, that not one of them touches both the heights and the depths to a sufficient extent to let the events speak for themselves regardless of style. In short, we are not disturbed, and although our vision of life may be widened, it is never shaken.

JOHN McLAREN

Lawson and the Russians

It is curious how when you are looking for an appropriate comparison for Henry Lawson's stories you always have to go to a Russian writer. You can, of course, as Stephen Murray-Smith briefly does in his "Henry Lawson" (Lansdowne Press, 8/6), visit Bret Harte and discover, as Mr. Murray-Smith hardly has time to do, how very much superior Lawson is: never, even at his worst, falling into the sentimental melodrama that so often takes Bret Harte's stories off the earth and into the nowhere of magazine fiction.

But, apart from this one American, who was the starting point from which Lawson raced ahead, it is always the Russians who come to mind. You would never think, for instance, of comparing Lawson with Maupassant or Conrad: which is just as well for his reputation, since whatever his compensating virtues, both these masters of their craft far outdid him in the architecture of the short story, in conscious artistry of style and in range of sensibility and characterisation. Beside Maupassant, Lawson lacks grace and sophistication; beside Conrad he lacks depth. I think, incidentally, that Stephen Murray-Smith could be misleading when he is discussing Lawson's artistry in "The Union Buries its Dead"; misleading by over-stating, or appearing to over-state, the degree of conscious artistry that went into that story's wonderful alternations of irony and tragedy. "This is a highly skilled method of literary craftsmanship": it is the word "method" I object to. Few writers really work by "method". They don't say, "Now I'll have a funny bit; now I'll have a sad bit". They just write, and it comes out that way. It is unconscious craftsmanship rather than "method".

Turning, then, naturally to the Russians, Stephen Murray-Smith makes a comparison with Gorki, quoting Saillens, and adding on his own account:

The larger waves of change, of course, intersected with the privations and uncertainties of the poor, both in the bush and the cities. To one of Lawson's observation and sensitivity, the pattern of reassurance that made most sense in such a world was a pattern that related to the fundamental

ethics of behavior: human being to human being. An interesting comparison with Gorki is possible here . . . The comparison need not be taken too far—there is a world of difference between Gorki's **understanding** of the relationship between literature and political life and Lawson's **expression** of the same phenomenon—but it has a validity: with Lawson, perhaps for the first time in the history of literature, a man from and of the lower depths was transforming the nature of the "high culture" itself. Indeed, in certain significant ways, and not least in his power of selecting and emphasising the typical detail, Lawson as a writer has much to show even Gorki.

I don't know about Gorki's "understanding" of the relationship between literature and political life—perhaps he **misunderstood** it; I never can believe anything has ever happened "for the first time in history"; and I cannot quite see the Lawson menage, with Henry reading "Poe, Marryat, Bret Harte, Boldrewood, Dickens and Marcus Clarke", as the "lower depths"; but the comparison was worth making and the tribute to Lawson's sharper selectivity most interesting. I haven't re-read Gorki to test out how accurate it may be; but it coincides in a way with the lasting impression I have of "Through Russia" (a very Lawson-like book in some ways) that there is a harshness, a revolutionary fervor, a waving of the Red Flag in Gorki (all those blood-red sunsets!) which is artistic and repellent and which, except in that awful poem about its being someone else's fault "if blood should stain the wattle", we do not find in Lawson. Lawson's politics, as Stephen Murray-Smith points out, were humane, gentle, and, if muddled, increasingly tolerant.

Why is that inevitably we turn to the Russians for points of similarity? Certainly it is not because of Lawson's women who, however ingeniously (and properly) Stephen Murray-Smith defends them within their limitations, are altogether lacking in the grace, the fluidity, the warmth and sensitivity of Chekov's, Tolstoi's or Turgenev's women. It must be, then, in Lawson's male characters that the similarity lies: and indeed his wastrels and his hatters, no less than his long-suffering selectors and their wives—with tragedy and comedy so mixed in their lives and a note of desperation, of **wildness**, sounding through either mood—would transfer very readily into, say, Gogol's "Dead Souls". It is the wildness, I think, that chiefly creates the similarity: wild country, wild people. The great Russian writers of the nineteenth century—how fantastically long it took them to wake up!—were engaged in the discovery of their own Outback. It was enormous; it was wild; it was harsh; it was often surprisingly hot; and its people, like Lawson's, were peasants struggling with the earth and with the narrow land-ownership that did so much to keep the poor man poor.

The Russian writer to whom Murray-Smith's booklet made me turn was not, however, Gorki, but a much greater writer upon whom he does not dwell: Turgenev. I am grateful to him for turning my thoughts that way, for every time I recall even the title of Turgenev's "A Sportsman's Notebook" it fills me with rare pleasure. It occurred to me to try to find out if Lawson had anything like Turgenev's marvellous nose.

I knew Lawson had an eye: that, with his simplicity and directness of narration, is his greatest asset. I think Mr. Murray-Smith is a little unkind in calling it a "camera eye", which could be taken as disparaging. It is a limited eye, not seeing anything it doesn't want to see, restricting itself in

color to a few stark yellows and reds; but it is an eye piercing, alert and selective beyond the capabilities of any camera. It is as sharp an eye as you will find anywhere in literature. I knew, too, that Lawson had an ear—an ear for exact and idiomatic language and intonation—which is a strange possession, when you come to think of it, for a deaf man: did his deafness, as some of his biographers have suspected, vary with his moods?

But, a nose. Nothing is more delightful in Turgenyev than the smells, the fragrances of the countryside that blow all through his writing. Nothing does more to bring his earth to living reality:

. . . Or take a summer morning—a morning in July. Who but a sportsman knows the joy of wandering through brakes at sunrise? Your footprints make a green trail across the dew-whitened grass. You part the dripping bushes, and are all but drenched with the concentrated warmth and fragrance of the night; the air is heady with the sharp freshness of wormwood, the honey-sweetness of buckwheat and clover. In the distance an oak-wood stands up like a wall and flashes and blushes in the sun; it is still cool, but already you can feel the sultriness to come. Your head is dizzy and languid, surfeited with scents . . .

Well, the Australian earth is not to be outdone by the Russian in the matter of delightful and intoxicating odors: the dry grass, the woolsheds which Shaw Neilsen loved, the bush. How much of it is in Lawson?

It was blazing hot outside and smothering hot inside the weatherboard and iron shanty at Dead Dingo . . . From the front veranda the scene was straight-cleared road, running right and left to Out Back, and to Bourke (and ankle-deep in the red sand for perhaps a hundred miles); the rest blue-grey bush, dust, and the heat-wave blazing across every object.

No smells. No beer-smell in the shanty. No heat-smells, earth-smells, blue-grey bush-smells outside it. And if you go right through Lawson, looking for likelier spots for smells, I don't think you will find them.

It is a small point. I daresay a writer can get along without a nose. But it is one of those absences, those insensitivities, those limitations (deliberate or unconscious) in Lawson's treatment of landscape which always make me suspicious of those dismal accounts of his childhood which Murray-Smith, though he has his doubts about them, seems on the whole to accept. I simply cannot believe that the country around Mudgee was no more than "one hole in the scrub after another". There are two words which I wish Lawson had never learned; one is "scrub" and the other is "wretched", and you usually find them put together.

Which, dealing with his art rather than his autobiography, is virtually what Mr. Murray-Smith is saying when, after paying due tribute to its power, he winds up with a protest from Katharine Susannah Prichard about its limitation—the "dreariness" of Lawson's picture of the bush. He should really stress this point more—the lack of color and charm—in discussing Lawson's verse; most of which can't finally be defended, though his point that it was novel and forceful in its period is a point worth making. But verse needs to be, like Burns' poetry or Paterson's ballads, good for all time.

"Henry Lawson" is one of those "bio-criticisms" (dreadful word) intended to introduce Lawson to

beginners, whether adult or in the schools. As such, half biography and half criticism, it is—with points of reservation noted—well done, useful and perceptive. The critical point I like best—or find freshest in it—is Murray-Smith's submission that, instead of merely writing a lot of scattered stories, Lawson was virtually writing one big book; creating a limited but still extensive world of his own. That is true, and worth saying. It gives us a way to measure him against all comers. The small writer writes a book; the great writer creates a world. The bigger the world, the bigger the man. Lawson's wasn't the great round world in all its richness; but it was large enough, and solid; about as big, take it all round, as from here to Bourke.

DOUGLAS STEWART

The Stuart Case

Enthusiasm for causes often wanes when the cause is on trial, because of the legalities of the trial and the mental blockage which many experience when considering a legal matter. In "The Stuart Case" (M.U.P., 27/6) Ken Inglis has achieved a rare feat. He has presented a trial in a manner which is absorbing and popular; yet he has maintained the historian's ideal of exactitude of detail and sense of perspective, without losing the essential idea that Stuart was on trial for murder, and that legalities were important.

On 20th December, 1958, a young girl was raped and murdered at Ceduna, South Australia. Very few Australians were aware of the existence of this town before that date, but by 4th December, 1959, Stuart's case had been argued in the Supreme Court of South Australia, the Full Court of the Supreme Court of South Australia, the High Court of Australia, the Privy Council, and before a Royal Commission. However the original verdict of "guilty" remained, and as a result Australia was even more aware of the problems inherent in a system which maintains capital punishment, and pays lip-service only to the problems of Aborigines.

Dr. Inglis has not written as an outsider, and his proximity has created both the strengths and the weaknesses of this book. Factually, impartially, and in language clear from jargon he tells a story of deep interest for the reader who is already even partly involved. But the general reader, with only the vaguest recollection of the case, will probably find "The Stuart Case" a struggle to get through, mainly due to the impression of legal complexity the reporting of extracts from various hearings gives.

The delay in the publication of this book is unfortunate, but is probably due to the laying of charges against the Adelaide News and its then Editor, Rohan Rivett, soon after the Stuart case ended. For Dr. Inglis' anatomy of South Australia is incisive, especially in the picture he gives of the determination of the Playford Government (despite its hidden worries) to stand by tradition and to scorn public outcry on this issue.

Indeed the main problem with the Stuart case was a feeling that the odds were stacked against the accused from the start, and Ken Inglis leaves no room for any other interpretation. Stuart could write no more than his own name, but it was his signature on a "confession" which provided the prosecution with one of its strongest pieces of evidence. The author's description of Stuart's ancestry, of his life prior to his fateful stop at Ceduna, presents a graphic picture of the plight of the Aborigines, their lack of understanding of so much of our "civilised" society, and our meagre

attempts to adopt a constructive towards their problems. Thus there can be no doubt that Stuart's confession was at times couched in language which would be unfamiliar to a person of his education, and Inglis gives details of the long preliminary interrogation of Stuart which leave doubt in the reader's mind as to the weight that can be placed on it. The problem of confessions made by individuals with only a limited understanding of English is all too common in the Australian courts today. Even so, Stuart's confession will long be remembered with especial feelings of disquiet.

The author outlines clearly the great problems which face an accused on trial. The basic one is a lack of money, and Stuart certainly suffered from this. He was well represented as a result of a legal aid system in South Australia, but no funds were provided to arrange for interviewing and transporting witnesses from other States. Another excellent feature is the highly intelligent attack on the preservation of capital punishment. Dr. Inglis provides sufficient evidence to turn sane and humane people away in horror from the thought of the death penalty.

It is unfortunate however that Ken Inglis has formed the opinion that Stuart was probably guilty. Thus it would appear that the only complaint can be with the form and not with the substance of the Stuart case. But Rupert Max Stuart did not appear to behave as a guilty man. In my opinion there are too many discrepancies to make this view tenable.

PETER HASE

Wind and Weather

Both Val Vallis' "Dark Wind Blowing" (19/6) and Thomas W. Shapcott's "Time on Fire" (21/-) are produced by Jacaranda Press, a lively Queensland newcomer to poetry publishing. This firm evidently has enough faith and initiative, with Commonwealth Literary Fund sponsorship, to place on the market two books which both look interesting and are elegantly produced; they have even promoted them among the bookselling trade with an unaccustomed vigor.

Val Vallis' book is his second collection; ten of the forty poems appeared in his "Songs of the East Coast", fifteen years ago. Dr. Vallis (a philosopher at Queensland University, though his poetry is far from academic) is wholly given to images of the sea (along the Gladstone-Rockhampton coast) and of sea-folk. He writes skilful little sketches of mullet-smokers and net-makers. On occasion, as with "Song for a Moonlit Night", which begins

O, lie with me, my darling,
As the moon lies on the sea;
With blade of silver claiming
Its midnight territory . . .

He can turn out a clear, sparse, genuinely moving lyric. Rather more often, in poems like "At Tintagel" and "Scholar's Song", it is a lyricism not so much sparse as banal, and laced with meaningful-meaningless phrases and epithets.

The major portion of the collection is of lyric-romantic stuff in a narrative mode. He has not written better poems than "Songs of the East Coast" and "Michael", where his expression, if not exactly new, is felicitous. But the rest of the poems would seem fragmentary.

Thomas Shapcott's book, a meaty (sixty poems or more) first collection, is, we notice from the blurb, written by "one of our outstanding young poets".

This we can well believe if we recall the sheer, lyric fire of those early poems like "River Scene" and "Denmark Hill", the polished sonnets, and that curiously over-wrought poem (or garland of

poems) entitled "Rhapsody on the Shortest Day", published in Southerly two years ago.

We may even then have noted his refreshing, quite original use of words, of words-in-a-rush, Hopkins-style, as in this description of finches:

A tiny spill of bird-things in a swirl
and crest and tide that splashed the garden's
edge—

a chatterful of finches filled the hedge
and came upon us with a rush and curl
and scattering of wings . . .

The first sections of this collection bring together his sonnets and the "Shortest Day" poems, with its mysterious last refrain, "And there is no final enemy". After this we come to a group of poems, the only ones specifically concerned with urban rather than country experience, which he wrote while living in Sydney for a time. The most notable of these is "Traditional Song", a poem of loss of innocence.

The poems which comprise the last section appear all to be on the theme of the poet's engagement and marriage: and since it is the last section, it is a disappointment. The poems involving acrostics can hardly be taken seriously.

Mr. Shapcott, then, is busily magic-making with his words. But does not a fresh, lively poetic usage pre-suppose a fresh, lively intellect and the imagination to continually re-freshen that intellect? The reader may wonder, in this final section, if the poetry has not become a wordy game, a matter of writing very many poems—some of which ought to have been discarded instantly—on an identical theme. And this is unfortunate as, sometimes, the poet has caught that fire he so wants his poetry to possess and hold.

The total impression of our reading of these two "Queensland poets" (the Courier-Mail reviewer, parochial as ever, has already claimed an eternity of fame for Mr. Shapcott) is that they have in common a romantic inability to state their themes other than in the terms and tones of nature-music of the worst Wordsworthian kind. Happily, in Tom Shapcott's work, we may anticipate that new themes will be presented to the poet by new experiences and that he will eventually shape his too easy technique into an effectual instrument.

DONALD MAYNARD

Case-book of Liars

Oscar Mendelsohn's "Liars and Letters Anonymous" (Lansdowne, 35/-) is a labyrinthine collection of the professional experiences of the author, an analytical chemist by calling, involving non-technical discussions on "questioned documents", with occasional digressions into remote byways of history and literature.

Although discursive and apparently undisciplined, "Liars" does in fact hang together very well. The reminiscences and anecdotes are amusing and instructive, and highlight many quirks of human behavior and human relationships. And, in his description of the scientific methods used to help establish the legitimacy or otherwise of documents and signatures, Mr. Mendelsohn has produced what appears to be the first Australian reference on this important subject.

L.S.

Henry Handel Richardson

Vincent Buckley's "Henry Handel Richardson" (Lansdowne, 8/6) continues this series' valuable work of providing a critical introduction to our authors of greater length than can be found in either Miller-Macartney's bibliography or Green's history, and yet briefly enough to be of interest to the general reader.

Despite this Mr. Buckley's work is a disappointment after the earlier booklets in the series. He gives an adequate picture of neither the historical background nor the personality of his subject, and thus his work must be judged as a piece of literary criticism. Yet criticism which so nearly neglects the two determining factors of any writer's work must have great merits as "higher criticism" if it is to be given serious attention. These merits are not present in Buckley's work.

His presentation involves a determined attempt to avoid the obvious, and he raises some new and important points in doing so. He convincingly points to the weaknesses of "Maurice Guest", and justly praises "The Getting of Wisdom". The minor works are dismissed with the small praise which would seem to be their desert, but when he comes to the major work, "The Fortunes of Richard Mahony", Buckley's grip on the whole seems to weaken as he scrabbles around after the untidy details.

Despite Buckley's praise of "The Getting of Wisdom" as a minor masterpiece, it is by the "Fortunes" that Richardson must be judged as an author. Buckley appears to have found it unsatisfying, but his failure to give a logical justification for his feelings suggests that they may result from a perverse desire to differ from others rather than from an objective assessment of the book. For instance, there is no doubt that Mr. Buckley is correct in drawing attention to Miss Richardson's frequent lapses in literary style, but he misses the point when he attempts to judge the book by its details rather than its overall effect.

If Mr. Buckley had conceded the point that Henry Handel Richardson might have intended her passages of apparent tedium to have just the effect they do have, he would have seen that the key to the novel's structure is the progress from undefined situations and a far-ranging social background, with many developing and entwining strands, to a stark concentration on the hero and his family. The tragedy unfolds through the endlessly trivial and repetitious details of family and social life.

Mr. Buckley discusses "Richard Mahony" as putatively either a realistic study of society or a psychological case-history. He decides that it is neither, and that it gains its momentum and its quality only when, in the third volume, it settles down to a detailed study of Mahony's final collapse. But he does not deal with the character who, with his wife, emerges in full human reality even from these early crowded and confusing pages of the book, and so he fails to do more than nibble at the edges of this great work.

JOHN McLAREN

Tree by the Creek

John McKellar, in his documented novel on the Burke and Wills expedition "The Tree by the Creek" (Cheshire, 17/6), adopts a tenderer approach to Burke than have most of our writers on this subject. McKellar sees in Burke, despite his vices, a touch of the saint and a touch of inspired leadership.

The means used to paint this unusual picture of Burke is a fictional "narrative" supposedly by John King, the sole survivor of the party's legendary ordeal. John McKellar's writing is suited to his subject; as lean and economical as the expedition's rations. We read in extraordinarily concise

form of the moving drama of heartbreak and gallantry, loyalty and treachery, that still make this sad exploit a kind of earlier Gallipoli in the Australian story.

J.C.

Two Fashionable Novels

"Incense to Idols" (Secker & Warburg, 22/6) by the New Zealander Sylvia Ashton-Warner, and "The Eye and the Heart" (Heinemann, 22/6) by Italian Carlo Coccioli, two recent novels fashionably repetitious, symbolic, and religious, seemed to this reader to have been written by highly intelligent authors who gave considerable thought and knowledge to their subjects. Yet the effort to be "contemporary" has, I believe, in both cases diluted the emotional effect both authors probably wished to impose on their readers. Ashton-Warner's musician eventually proves a tedious heroine, and Coccioli's artist a wearily introspective hero. Nevertheless "Incense to Idols" is worth reading if only for its sharp (and unflattering) portrait of a small New Zealand town; while "The Eye and the Heart", for all its pretentiousness, is, when the author permits, one of the most perspicacious novels yet published about homosexuality.

L.C.

Book Chronicle

AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

Among the most useful recent offerings in this field are Longmans' "Australian Landmarks" series, which have been strangely overlooked by reviewers. The eight pleasantly produced and informative booklets comprise David S. Macmillan on **Tall Ships and Steamboats**, A. P. Elkin on **The Aboriginal Australians**, Renee Erdos on **The Sydney Gazette 1803-1842**, Marjorie Barnard on **Australia's First Architect—Francis Greenway**, Stanley Brogden on **Exploring the Air**, Jill Ker on **Enter the Squatter** and Helen Palmer on **Fencing Australia**. The booklets seem most valuable when, like Helen Palmer's, they are drawing together material not available on a particular subject elsewhere. They cost six shillings each.

Charles Daley's **The Story of Gippsland** (Whitcombe & Tombs, 40/-) adds another to the rapidly growing number of local histories. Unfortunately it does not show the expertise of some of the more professionally-written of these histories in recent years, despite the attempts of a trained historian, Mr. A. G. Daws, to do what he could with what is essentially an antiquarian rather than a historical manuscript. It might have been better if Mr. Daley's son, in pious memory of his father who left behind the substance of this book on his death a number of years ago, had not been so anxious to make the point that "the great bulk of the book . . . in form and content remains my father's work". The facts are valuable and the assiduity with which they have been noted deserves much praise, but books like this can barely be called "history" these days. History is more than an accumulation of facts.

Three magazines show the rapid sophistication of historical research in Australia which makes Daley's book so old-fashioned. The last issue of **Historical Studies** (No. 37, 12/6 from Melbourne University) includes material on the 1890 maritime strike in N.S.W., on Brisbane occupations in the 1880s, on the Chinese in Victoria and on Billy Hughes. The first issue of the **Bulletin of the Australian Society for the Study of Labor History** (5/- from the History Department, Australian National University) contains articles by R. A. Gollan, N. B. Nairn and others, and information on the establishment of the Society. **South Australiana** is the title of another new journal, this time for the study of South Australian historical and literary manuscripts. It is available at 10/- from the Public Library of S.A.

Three other important contributions in this field are Alan Marshall's history of the Myer Emporium, **The Gay Provider** (Cheshire, 36/-), which overcomes many of the usual defects of "company histories", a new edition of Colin Simpson's **Adam in Ochre** (Angus & Robertson, 30/-), with an entirely re-written final section on the Aboriginal future which every thinking Australian should read and ponder (Mr. Simpson challenges aspects of the present official "assimilation" policy), and **The Pirates of the Brig Cyprus** by Frank Clune and P. R. Stephensen (Hart Davis, 26/-). In this work the authors have gone to the original sources for a re-telling of one of the most remarkable of the convict tales. Unfortunately, what with re-constructed dialogue and all, they still leave us in the dark as to where history ends and fiction begins.

AUSTRALIAN BIOGRAPHY

Ian McLaren's **C. J. Dennis** (privately published, 7/6) is a painstaking short account of the "life and works" of the creator of the Sentimental Bloke. One must admire Mr. McLaren's scholarship and initiative at the same time as one asks whether 125 footnotes in 25 pages are really necessary. However, while making the reading of this booklet far from a labor of love, they do provide survey pegs to references for future writers, and a most useful and complete bibliography of Dennis is included in the booklet. Again, this is "antiquarianism" rather than history, literature or criticism and, while this may be all Mr. McLaren intended, it still needs to be pointed out these days that fact-grubbing is not enough.

J. T. Lang's **The Great Bust** (Angus & Robertson, 38/6) is a humorless and graceless apologia and diatribe written by a compulsive justifier of his own actions. It contains a vast amount of factual material on the dramatic political history of N.S.W. in the thirties, though the facts are the facts as Lang sees them, and will probably be ultimately of as much interest to the psychologist as to the historian.

H. M. E. Heney's **In a Dark Glass** (Angus & Robertson, 45/-) is the second biography of Paul Strzelecki we have been offered in nine years. It is essentially a debunking work, valuable for its iconoclastic approach and its use of Polish source material not before available.

AUSTRALIAN POLITICS

Of special interest in this growing field of publication are **The South Australian Elections**

1959 by R. Hetherington and R. L. Reid (Rigby, 17/6), **Groups in Theory and Practice** by Peter Loveday and Ian Campbell (Cheshire, 15/-), which is the first of a series of monographs to be published on the basis of research at Sydney University's Department of Government, **Policy-making in the U.S.S.R. 1953-1961** by T. H. Rigby and L. G. Churchward (Lansdowne Press, 8/6), giving the differing views of two Australian political scientists, and **Australian Diplomacy and Japan, 1945-1951** by R. N. Rosecrance (M.U.P., 45/-), a detailed account for the record.

AUSTRALIAN—GENERAL

Personally, I like T. Inglis Moore's **A Book of Australia** (Collins, 17/6), both in content and production, more than any other book with similar aims that I have read. Under the headings of "places", "history", "pastoral", "people", "humor", "customs", "poems" and "traditions" Professor Inglis Moore gives us a most interesting collection of snippets, which anyone could read with the pleasure of finding many unexpected signposts to further investigation of an author or book. Ideal for the bedside or (pace the professor) the w.c.

Tradition in Exile by J. P. Matthews (Cheshire, 35/-) is the doctoral thesis of an Australian expatriate, now a Canadian professor, who "compares and contrasts" the traditions of Canadian and Australian poetry in the nineteenth century. Our readers will mainly be interested in the sections dealing with Australian literary origins, and here Dr. Matthews gives a competent but far from original survey of the field. His book suffers from having been written six or seven years ago and only having just been published: the important historical work of Russel Ward, for instance, and the critical work of A. A. Phillips, was not available at the time he wrote but now makes what he wrote seem relatively pale.

Albin Eiger's **Solitaries** is a hand-printed book of eight stories by a French writer who has settled in Australia. They are published on good paper and imaginatively bound by the Wattle Grove Press, of Newnham, Tasmania, and sell for 36/-. One must admire the initiative of the private presses, whose role in our literature has been a most useful one. Eiger's work seems graceful, mystical, often witty. Some of his other books are also available from the same press.

Recent Australian paperbacks in Angus & Robertson's Pacific Books series include Ernestine Hill's study of Matthew Flinders, **My Love Must Wait** (7/6), Ion Idriess' **The Cattle King** (5/6), Arthur Upfield's **The Sands of Windee** (5/6) and that beloved and unadulterated classic, Lennie Lower's **Here's Luck** (5/6).

OVERSEAS LITERATURE

Four volumes recently received by Overland deserve special mention. Of German origin is Bertolt Brecht's **Tales from the Calendar** (Methuen, 18/9), a collection of poems, anecdotes and most of the stories that Brecht himself thought most worth preserving. Included are the magnificent Mr. Keuner anecdotes, some of which have been quoted in a previous issue of Overland.

Of Russian origin are **Winter's Tales 7** (Macmillan, 29/9). This series is an annual collection of long stories, this year devoted to contemporary Soviet writing edited by C. P. Snow and Pamela Hansford Johnson (Snow's wife). It is good to see stories by Tvardovsky and Tendryakov, too little known in English, as well as by Sholokhov, Paustovsky and Yevdokimov. It is also good to read the editors' enlightening introduction, and their warning against reading Soviet stories "as though they were documents in the Cold War".

Of Indian origin is R. K. Narayan's **The Man-eater of Malgudi** (Heinemann, 20/-). Narayan, who has recently visited Australia, is one of the most witty and relaxed satirists writing in English, and has been spoken of as a possible Nobel laureate. This particular novel shows us Narayan at the top of his performance. It is a memorable anatomy of life in a small South Indian town.

Finally, from the U.S.A. comes John Masters' **The Road Past Mandalay** (Michael Joseph, 26/-), the second volume of his autobiography. This is a magnificent book, moving rapidly from one to another of many intersecting emotional and environmental planes. Whether Masters is talking of life in a Gurkha regiment, the heartbreaks of broken marriages, the intellectual fascination of a staff college course, mountain walking in Kashmir or of a bitter and gruesome war fought behind the Japanese lines, we realise we are always in touch with a magnificent story-teller and handler of words, and with a man of insight, humility and love.

OVERSEAS BOOKS: GENERAL

Notable recent publications in the field of history include E. H. Carr's brilliant 1961 Trevelyan lectures at Cambridge, now published as **What is History?** (Macmillan, 39/3). In discussing the relations between the individual and society in history, between history and science, or between historical facts and the historian's subjectivity, he writes with a sustained brilliance and insight. The *Times Literary Supplement* has called this book "the best statement of its kind ever produced by a British historian".

Also of importance is **Africa and the Victorians** by Ronald Robinson and John Gallacher with Alice Denny (Macmillan, 73/-). This is a well-documented and well-written "attempt to confront the myth of imperialism with the reality of its classic example": in other words the authors show that the motives behind the partitioning of Africa by the powers of the nineteenth century were far more subtle and confused than has often been admitted. A timely and useful work: a history of imperialism as it was, not as theories say it should have been.

In sociology Secker & Warburg have produced two important works in their "Britain Alive" series of investigations into "Life in Britain": they are Mervyn Jones' **Potbank** (life in the Potteries) and Ashley Smith's **The East-enders** (15/6 each). Louis Blom-Cooper's **The Law as Literature** (Bodley Head, 37/3) fulfils its sub-title ("an anthology of great writing in and about the law") more fully than most anthologies do, and Heinemann have enterprisingly published **Frieda Lawrence: The Memoirs and Correspondence** (51/6), containing the most important writings of D. H. Lawrence's remarkable wife and widow.

J. Bronowski's **Science and Human Values** (Hutchinson, 18/9) contains this remarkable man's

famous lectures made in America in 1953. Discussing the relationship between artistic and scientific work, Dr. Bronowski has shown the common springs of mental achievement. **Science and Human Values** is a genuine classic of our time and is, or should be, essential reading for every teacher and every student in sixth form or university today.

OVERSEAS PAPERBACKS

A sign of the increasing stature of Australian literature is the frequent appearance overseas of Australian writers' work in paperback form. Three novels have recently thus been republished: Patrick White's **The Tree of Man** in Penguins (7/6)—perhaps the novel of the White's that will eventually achieve the securest stature; and in the East German Seven Seas series Dorothy Hewett's **Bobbin Up** (7/6) and Xavier Herbert's **Seven Emus** (6/-). **Bobbin Up** struck a fresh and welcome note in "industrial" writing when it first appeared some years ago, and it is good to have it again available.

Among books dealing with contemporary issues of significance we also have an overseas paperback by an Australian, in this case Malcolm Salmon, whose **Focus on Indo-China** has been published in Hanoi by the Foreign Languages Publishing House (6/6). Malcolm Salmon worked in North Vietnam for over two years and his book deals with the historical background and (more especially) with the recent history of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Salmon's work certainly has to be taken into account in assessing the anti-colonial case.

Other useful books on contemporary problems are Penguin Specials (a welcome revival in attractive form) on **What's Wrong with the Church** by Nick Earle (4/6), who is a clergyman himself so not entirely dispassionate; **What's Wrong with the Unions** by Eric Wigham (5/6); **The Algerian Problem** by Edward Behr (5/6), which includes a useful historical survey; **Hanged in Error** by Leslie Hale (4/6) and **Hanged by the Neck** by Arthur Koestler and C. H. Rolph (4/6), two indispensable works on capital punishment; and Peter Benenson's **Persecution 1961** (4/6), "nine case studies of persecution, intolerance, and brutality in the divided world of the mid-century". Benenson is one of the founders of Amnesty, an organisation which is trying to get Communist and Fascist governments, and all shades in between, to exercise the quality of mercy. Included in this work are studies of communists under capitalist oppression, as well as of dissidents in communist countries suffering from the abrogation of human rights.

Works now historical but with a considerable contemporary impact include Mark Twain's brilliant feuilleton on the Belgian Congo, **King Leopold's Soliloquy** (Seven Seas, 4/9), Rosa Luxemburg's **The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism?** (Ann Arbor, 13/6), Leon Trotsky's defence of revolutionary exigencies **Terrorism and Communism** (Ann Arbor, 16/-), and Herbert Spencer's **The Study of Sociology** (Ann Arbor, 23/6).

Among historical works is the fine **The Penguin Atlas of Medieval History** by Colin McEvedy (17/6), covering the period 362-1478; Leo Tolstoy's **Sebastopol** (Ann Arbor, 16/-), among the greatest writing on war; **Musical Instruments Through the Ages**, edited by Anthony Baines (Penguin, 12/6), and A. L. Mongait's **Archaeology in the U.S.S.R.** (Pelican, 7/6). Dr. Mongait is himself a distinguished Soviet historian and archaeologist.

S.M.S.

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RECENT A & R PUBLICATIONS

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Marjorie Barnard has shaped the history of Australia from a great mass of material into an informative, readable book. It is soundly based on original research, and excerpts from letters and other documents admirably illustrate incidents and situations. The author's eye for the human story that brings her scenes to life make it the ideal history of Australia for people in all walks of life, as well as for students. 63/- (post 2/6)

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"This is the story of the Depression years and their forerunners, told necessarily from the Lang angle, but told pungently and vividly from the inside . . . a valuable and absorbing narrative of a tumultuous period. The thumbnail portraits of leading contemporaries are done brilliantly, if not always without malice." (Sun Herald). 38/6 (post 1/8)

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ECONOMIC GROWTH IN AUSTRALIA

The papers printed here were originally presented at the 1962 Summer School of the Australian Institute of Political Science, which was devoted to problems of growth in the Australian economy. Contributors include Colin Clark, G. D'A. Chislett, Dr. J. Vernon, Prof. Donald Cochrane, W. E. R. Francis, Prof. H. W. Arndt. 17/6 (post 10d.)

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