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OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

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# Overland

**Temper democratic, bias Australian**

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Spring 1969

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# Politics Is People

The Men of the Menzies Era

EDGAR HOLT

**Politics Is People** is a political biography of Sir Robert Menzies. It gives a behind-the-scenes story of the struggles for power that went on between men and parties from 1934 when Menzies first entered Federal politics to 1966 when he bowed gracefully out. Among the highlights are Earle Page's attack on Menzies in the House in 1939, and the extraordinary behaviour of Dr Evatt during the Petrov affair. An unbiased and amusing account of a remarkable era in Australian politics written by a well-known political journalist. Illustrated. **\$3.75**

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Edited by G. MASTERMAN

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ANGUS AND ROBERTSON

WARREN STRAKER

# faded jeans and banners bright

The nasal voice of a newspaper boy climbs out of the city din as the staring eyes of the whites and greys shuffle by. And still they come. Their minds silent; left in the third drawer of a desk. Down that corridor of catacombs. The dead watching the dying pass into the shadow of a golden sun.

Bronze bursts against bronze. The chimes shatter on stone and fall over the city and around the people. It is five o'clock in Martin Place.

But the demonstration made it different from any other night. The whole area appeared to be dotted with blue clusters of police officers, especially at the intersection of George and Pitt Street. They looked bored, but that's just the way cops are. They just stood there waiting for something to happen. The press had gathered on an opposite corner, far from any expected action, looking like a tin of sardines without the oil. They didn't ask any questions. They didn't need to; this story had been written many times before. Even the flower sellers had decided to make an early night of it and were busy closing their stalls.

I saw Mike first. He was standing on the steps of the G.P.O. with his back towards me, his Viet Cong flag sewn onto the back of his denim jacket. The flag had once been mounted on a bamboo pole, but he made the mistake of leaving it outside a pub after the previous demo. The story, as I heard it, was a passing bourgeois tried to sabotage it with his sports car. The spirit of revolution lives on. A sweet-faced old lady was telling him he should be conscripted. He told her if she'd been younger, she could have got a job entertaining the troops. She went away looking pleased. I don't think she fully understood what he meant.

I asked him if he had seen Pete. He replied that he was somewhere further up the street. He had been conned into dishing out placards and leaflets for the Vietnam Action Committee.

A GENOCIDE placard that had been waving gently above the crowd, suddenly rushed towards us. Above the noise of the city I heard my name called and there was Pete.

No matter how large the crowd, Pete will always find you. He never looks any different. The same

pair of old brown trousers and the same white shirt that isn't really white, but somehow never seems to get any dirtier—all covered by the same scruffy duffle coat, which he wears through both summer and winter. Since the button craze started he has managed to make a name for himself by covering it with a variety of buttons with messages ranging from LEGALISE POT to HELP THE BLIND. He rarely sells any and spends much of his social service cheque buying more. Even after Mike took him in he never bothered to take a shower, which in his estimation was a luxury he couldn't afford and the odor that drifted from his body was a mixture of dust and stale sweat. Some claim he hasn't had a bath or shower since he ran away from the mental home six months ago, but I find this hard to believe. I had gone out to see him but I was too late. The last time anyone saw him there was in the shower. After examining the layers of dirt on his towel, many thought he must have disappeared down the plug hole. He's a generous person—give you anything you wanted if he had it—only he never possesses a thing. He's always on the bludge—still he's a good guy, even if he isn't quite the full quid.

"Not a bad mob you've collected, Pete," I remarked.

"Can't tell yet . . . Few of the squares are still with us . . . Can't find their way out. Want a placard?" He handed me one that said VIETNAM FOR THE VIETNAMESE, and as far as I was concerned they could keep it.

Pete is very conscientious when he's working, which isn't very often and usually on something way out like this. He once claimed that a regular job would destroy his natural charm and he valued that over money.

I envy Pete. He can get away with anything. One night he went up to the Wayside Chapel wearing his collection of GOD IS DEAD buttons. No-one said anything. A few of the other bums gave him sheepish looks and after a while a couple came over and offered to buy some off him. I wore one into the Newcastle and some freds wanted to bash hell out of me.

I wasn't impressed with the placard. "They aren't very original—we made better ourselves."

"Yeah . . . Though it's easier this way." He examined one carefully. "Better quality paper . . . and they look more professional."

There's not much point arguing with Pete, you never get anywhere. I turned my attention to the crowd. They were mainly about my own age. The same conglomeration of students, anarchists, socialists, communists and North Shore kids who turn up at every demo for kicks. There were also some oldies who didn't seem to fit in. Some of the birds weren't bad. One was wearing a MAKE LOVE NOT WAR badge and I wondered if she did. Pete was still examining the quality of the printing when she verbalised her slogan.

"And I'll help you with that," I yelled, but she didn't want to co-operate and it looked as though war would break out between us.

"Do you know that girl?" I asked Pete. He looked around and caught sight of her.

"Oh yeah, her old woman's in the Save Our Sons movement, but she's the only son she's got."

"She's one of those?"

"So they say. Always hangs around with that other bird."

"I've always wanted to have a lesbian. It could be interesting."

The demonstrators had started parading up and down in a circle near the cenotaph. I followed the girl and was making a physical examination, when I spotted an old battle-axe bearing down on us. She gave me a dirty look and took the girl away. Well, I don't suppose I would have made any progress—she wasn't interested in anything but the demo. Maybe it's sour grapes but she didn't look so hot after all.

Ernie from the Tribune had propped himself up against a lamp-post with his notebook, which looked as though you could only get two words to the page. I dropped out of the ranks and went over to him.

"Like the demo, Ernie?"

He looked up from his scribbling. "It's getting a bit stale. Someone wants to find a new gimmick." He looked distastefully at the crowd and glared at me. "I hope your friends don't plan any trouble for the wharfies . . . They're on your side, you know."

Poor Ernie was always in the middle. He had to praise the demonstrators and at the same time couldn't afford to hurt the feelings of the wharfies.

I couldn't think of an appropriate answer, and we turned and watched the marchers. An art student was carrying a piece of masonite, thickly smeared with paint in the form of a green bloated head hanging to one side with a rope around its

neck. It bore the legend HANG ALL POLITICIANS. Very impressive.

Word was getting around that the march to the wharves and the ship Japaret was about to begin. Ernie was warming up to give another lecture, so I cut out and went back to where I had left Mike and Pete.

Mike was telling a journalist how he would end the war. He flung his arms about and fired little white balls of spit at everything about him. When I butted in the journalist muttered something about a deadline and fled.

Mike and I had flunked out of university in the same year. Even after that, he was more at home on the campus than anywhere else in Sydney. He took a room in Glebe, later sharing it with Pete and spent most of his time in the university library or talking with the other professional students. They lived on social service cheques, soya beans, curried rice and fruit; all washed down with sour red grappa. Mike wore a duffle coat for a purpose. It amply hid cafeteria sandwiches, supplies from supermarkets, and books which could later be traded in at the second-hand stores to buy cigarettes.

We must have made a colorful sight with our placards and flags, meandering through the crowds and across the streets. At Wynyard the phonies and beardless banker boys dropped away to catch a train home and only the hard core of crusaders marched on to meet the capitalist forces.

They weren't hard to find. In fact they found us. Below the station a group of sailors was standing outside a pub yelling abuse at us. You always found sailors in that pub. It wasn't because the service was any good; it was the only place they were safe and then only because it was always full of other sailors.

They had the hide to ask us to go over and get a taste of it. Christ! The only thing a sailor tastes in Vietnam is weak piss in a Saigon brothel. At least they had enough sense not to try to rough us about.

Some joker tried to push his way through our ranks. They wouldn't let him through and he did his block and pushed a Save Our Sons bird into the gutter. I don't know why he did it, but Pete turned around and bashed him one in the gut and he collapsed into a heap on the footpath. Pete ducked into the Newcastle. When this character got on his feet, he tried to find Pete and seeing he wasn't there found someone else and started punching into him. Real uppity he was. It was becoming a bit juicy when he started grinding this kid's face into the pavement, so we yelled for the cops. They took him away in the van.

Mike and I went in the Newcastle and found Pete sitting under the steps near the back door. We threw in and bought ourselves a beer. We felt we deserved it, after all you can't run a revolution on an empty stomach.

The beer tasted good and we downed it in time to join the stragglers going up Argyle Place. It seemed ironic. During the winter the street had been deserted except for the naked maples, their gnarled branches pointing to the sky in symbolic protest. Now the branches were hidden behind broad leaves and it was the demonstrators, like a forest of smaller trees, waving their placards in the air.

The street rose steeply past the old store houses and cut through a bed of sandstone, leaving high perpendicular cliffs on either side of the road. Our main group was passing under the largest of the two bridges over the cut. It was damp, with streams of rusty water seeping through the rock and trickling down the falls. Their cries reverberated along the tunnel and out into the street. One person would scream out a chant. If it was any good, it would pass like a wave through the other groups.

The rhythm of "Hey, hey L.B.J., how many kids you kill today?" was shattered by the discord of "Napalm—Johnson's baby powder," set off by a small group of girls, who in turn were shouted down by "Support the wharfies, black the Japarit".

At the end of the tunnel, through a small clump of trees, we could see the crowd gathering in the park. It was dusk and already hard to make out the dome of the observatory on the cliff above; the air was heavy with the smell of baked dinners and factory odors. The police were trying to keep us in the park and off the roadway, while the locals watched the whole scene from their balconies, without any enthusiasm.

A wharfie climbed onto a park seat and pledged the support of his comrades, while a petition and donation boxes were circulated amongst us. I looked around for Ernie, but couldn't see him. I didn't blame him for not coming down. Once you've seen one demo, you've seen them all.

The wharfie finished and a student took his place. He explained we would march down to the wharf and present the petition to the officer in charge . . .

I pushed my way back, through to the road and found a cop standing alone.

"I suppose you like this type of work?" I asked him friendly like.

He shrugged and made a noise.

"Expect any trouble?"

The same thing happened. A real conversation-  
alist. I could have continued all night, but he walked away and got into a car. I must have been

embarrassing him. The park was fairly crawling with cops, so I decided to try my luck with another.

"What do you think of demos?"

"I think you're all bloody well nuts!"

It was my turn to walk away.

At the wharf, the blue-white light from arc lamps cut through the darkness as the ship was being loaded with munitions. The gates were locked and we saw only the stern of the ship jutting out from behind a building.

A spokesman from the Vietnam Action Committee suggested we march back to the city and show ourselves to the people.

"NO!"

Someone started chanting "Walk off, Walk Off." It didn't catch on and died as a murmur. A volunteer was called to deliver the petition. Sergeant Longbottom's name was forwarded. Motion carried.

I had had enough. I found Mike and Pete.

"Feel like a beer?" We strolled around to the Hero.

It was still early and only a few of the locals were inside. The Hero isn't big on comforts. We had a choice of sitting on a long wooden stool near the wall or standing at the bar. We sat down. Peter was staring at a box labelled "Ned Kelly Outlaw Whisky" suspended from the ceiling.

"I haven't seen that around before," he remarked.

Before I had a chance to answer, Mike butted in.

"Bit weak wasn't it?"

We agreed.

"You never get anything out of demonstrations," he continued.

I couldn't believe it. One of them was actually thinking.

"You're right," Pete said. "We need action not words."

I was completely dumbfounded.

"We have a plan," Mike said. He studied closely the froth on his beer. "Now don't take me wrong, but why don't we try to blow up the Japarit?"

"Are you nuts," I exploded, "you wouldn't know how."

"You did chemistry, didn't you?" Pete asked. "We thought you might make us a bomb."

"The only thing you could blow up with a bomb that size is yourselves."

"We discussed this pretty carefully. I think we could at least damage the propellor—or something."

"You've never seen a flaming propellor."

"But . . ."

"Shut up or they'll put you both back in the loony bin."

They sat in silence and drank their beer and the hotel began to fill with other demonstrators.

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# HEINEMANN

33 LONSDALE STREET, MELBOURNE, 3000



## GRANITE

Grey outcrops of granite  
Please me much because  
I see this old planet  
Has bones under its grass.

And balancing one on the other  
With such surprising agility  
Or huddling like sheep together  
They have a strange look of fertility

As if the bare earth at least  
Whatever else was done  
By flower or man or beast  
Could grow a fine crop of stone.

But they are not merely mineral,  
They are a kind of altar  
Where anything, plant or animal,  
Hunted, can come for shelter.

Bacon-and-eggs that fears  
To have its head bitten off  
Fans out its golden flowers  
Low on the rock and is safe.

Thornbush believing darkly  
All creatures are its enemies  
Squats here stubborn and prickly  
Baring its fangs in the crevices.

Out of the dangerous paddock  
Of mattock and poison the briar  
Hangs up like notes of music  
Its berries of clear red fire;

And fierce as briar and thornbush  
In deeper dark recesses  
The copperhead coils in ambush,  
The blue-tongued lizard hisses.

I give the flickering rabbit  
Credit for one firm thought  
That here in a hole under granite  
No one can dig him out.

I see with equal pleasure  
The grey rock polished with wool  
Where sheep have crowded from the weather  
Against the lee-side wall.

But sometimes tall in the paddocks  
At noon or looming dusk  
When the stones are deep with shadows  
And the rock smells wild with fox

They seem no mere haven  
For sheep and the hunted ones  
But stand up brooding to heaven  
Like stones men worshipped once,

And seem so old and so stable  
One can lay hands on them  
And touch in each grey bubble  
Cool everlasting time.

I have stretched out my hand  
Or bent my forehead down  
Seeking to understand  
What voice might speak from stone

And though I never heard  
For all its giant brooding  
More than the silent word  
Of old stone saying nothing,

That touch of lichen and granite  
Silver and rough replying  
Seemed word enough for the moment  
And deeply satisfying.

DOUGLAS STEWART

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**SYDNEY UNIVERSITY PRESS**

JONATHAN DAWSON

# Canberra and the film industry

"Nobody objects to experimental film-making but it is the commercial and professional side of the industry which needs help"

The night before the Federal Budget came down in Parliament the Melbourne Herald carried a page one story headed \$3.8 MILLION FOR FILMS? For an hour or so things looked rosy. But, of course, there was no such grant. The total funds allocated to the Council for the Arts were 2.85 million dollars—to cover a second orchestra, ballet and opera companies, an Aboriginal dance group and so on. A mere \$300,000 was earmarked for "experimental" films. Once again the professional film industry is out on its own.

The Government has had ample opportunity to face the problems of the film industry. On the 27 May this year, the Council for the Arts had published details of a three-level plan which suggested that a national film and TV school be set up, that a film and television corporation be established to administer funds, market programs and so on (the capital provision for the corporation was set at an initial \$1m.), and that an experimental film fund be set up.

It is only the last of these suggestions that has received some attention in the budget. The \$300,000 is to be used to help "experimental film-making". It will provide money to buy television time to show results, and contribute towards founding a national film and television school.

As Sylvia Lawson has pointed out elsewhere, it is "the first practical help offered by the Commonwealth to film production since 1929". But is it really more than a gesture? Nobody seems very grateful. The Australian Writers' Guild thought it "useless, irrelevant". Roland Beckett, president of the Producers' and Directors' Guild of Australia, claims that "the government has chosen to operate on the periphery, not to concern itself with feature films, the bread and butter, but rather with highly special 'experimental' stuff which is the cream—and pretty expensive cream at that".

Of course, nobody objects to experimental film-making as such: but to favor it to the exclusion of more pressing needs seems a real misunderstanding of the problem. It is the commercial and the professional side of the industry which needs help, and it is **film investors** who need to feel greater security before they will commit funds to a film production. So long as the Government ignores the actual professional film makers, why should a businessman feel anything but insecure about entrusting good money to a film house?

Then how can a government help a young film industry? Last year a UNESCO seminar on film and television in Australia was held in Sydney. Lord Willis, internationally known as a film and television writer and at that time president of the Writers' Guild of Great Britain, was invited to attend. This is an extract from his report; after dealing with the immediate necessity for setting up a film school he talks of ways and means of helping the industry:

(1) By the introduction of some such scheme as the Film Production Fund in Britain (known as the Eady plan) by which a small levy is placed on each cinema ticket sold. This could be coupled with a levy, in proportion to size, on television stations.

(2) By an increase in the import duty on all overseas films and television programmes.

Of course here Lord Willis is talking about financing a film school. But his suggested methods have direct relevance to the setting up of an Australian Film Fund similar to the British Film Finance Corporation.

There is another school of thought which considers that money is only one part of the story. In a letter to the Australian earlier this year, Chris Stewart of Pacific Films said:

With the advantage of higher budgets, this year's local television film production does not

show, apart from a minor uplift in technical standards, any significant improvement in the dramatic quality of the films or the cohesion of the stories from films we were making 10 years ago on a fraction of the budget. This is largely because many film directors and writers have good ideas but are unable, because of a lack of technical expertise, to translate their ideas to film or film scripts.

With this in mind, one cannot but feel that the money allocated to the setting up of a film school, experimental films and the 'buying of television time', whatever that means, would have been better spent on bringing out several top film directors and writers to work with production companies here for periods to help upgrade their standards, as these are two areas where we need help.

In the third area, that of finance, we suggested to the departmental enquiry, to the Senate committee, and to various other meetings, that as well as the provision of loan money, an immediate boost could be given to film production if Section 77A could be amended to include investment in film companies.

Broadly speaking, this section provides that all subscriptions to shares (up to par value) in companies engaging in oil or certain mineral exploration are wholly deductible for taxation purposes. With a similar provision for investment in film production, an investor

already paying the maximum tax rate would make an investment of \$1,000 in film production at a real cost to him of \$320.

Mr. Stewart's second point is a useful approach to the financial problem. His first comment is less easy to accept. It is just not true that Australians lack expertise and knowhow. What is lacking is a creative outlook on behalf of managements—to permit talent its head. Shows like "Division Four" and "Contrabandits" represent a substantial increase in standards, techniques and complexity over shows made even three years ago. Yet these two shows stand alone as reasonable adult level dramas in a sea of Skippies, cuddly koalas and mock Australian efforts like "Riptide". It is up to the managements and production heads now—not up to the writers or directors. People want to invest in film, but is no guarantee of success just to import talent. A director or writer will only find a **genuine** Australian voice by continuous work at a **mature level** in the industry; never by imitation.

So whatever the Government does in the future (if anything) the industry will have its own responsibility in the matter. By all means let's have Film Funds to stimulate investment. But at the same time let's hear less about a lack of talent and skills and more about creative and intelligent decisions at a managerial level from production companies, film houses and above all, from the television channels.

### THREE ABSTRACT PAINTINGS BY AD REINHARDT

"... perfectly black squares." Letter to the Melbourne Age.  
 "... three green, red, grey and blue paintings which have been called black."  
 Letter to the Melbourne Age.

<p>it can't be all as black          which it is not          as the blackest night          leaves your eyes          bleached          which they are not          square as a plum          round or red          decoys the epicure          into eating green          and in haste          too frequented          a black thought          usually the same          reflects tomorrow          if the least scowl panics          brain          imperishably</p>	<p>galled as the world          unless looked at          from any angle          with love          blind          for present purposes          someone infallibly          but inaccurately          peering at headlines          under a microscope          finds they are black          winter woollies          is never night black          as the shadow of piers          glooming to reach          in a tomb of night          the far shag          lit blacker still</p>
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MICHAEL CRAIG

BERNARD RECHTER

# Melbourne Film Festival

It would be unfortunate if the bruhaha over censorship were allowed to obscure the fact that the dissatisfaction of many festival patrons in 1969 was due not to their being unable to see the film Senator Scott banned, but rather to the absence from the Palais screen of many worthwhile films reviewed in overseas journals recently.

This of course is not necessarily the fault of the festival organisers, or in particular of the Director, Mr. Erwin Rado. For the patron, however, who pays his \$8.50 in advance, the rub lies in the word "necessarily". He pays in advance, he has almost no information as to how big the pool from which the director made his choice was, and he does not know what other films were offered but rejected. Nor does he know what films were asked for but not forthcoming. He knows only what he sees on the screen. Only in response to post-festival comment has Mr. Rado given any indication of some of the fare which was in fact available. In an article in *Nation* (July 26) he gives enough information about some of the films he rejected to whet the appetite for a comprehensive and detailed report on the films he did not consider, those he considered and rejected and those he considered and invited.

One positive gain from the censorship furore was that, at last, Mr. Rado felt impelled to make a clear public statement about the constraints imposed on the festival by the gentleman's agreement with officers of the Department of Customs. That a film festival is only possible in Australia if the officers of this department choose to be co-operative should of course not surprise anyone already immunised to anger by the greater obscenities our political and social scene offers. Yet it is astonishing that year after year so many of us do not protest when we are admonished like elementary school children for not appreciating the fact that the festival is organised by an infinitely benevolent despot who has done all that is humanly

possible in the teeth of problems which would have sent a lesser man to a more congenial and simpler way of earning a dollar.

If the argument over "I Love, You Love" proves anything at all, it is the complete bankruptcy of the policy of behind-the-scenes negotiation as between reasonable men of good-will, which has been the pattern until now.

We have of recent years been treated to a sick exhibition of stuffed-shirted government officialdom at the ceremonial opening as, presumably, a small price to pay for favors granted. But is the price so small or the favor so great? And again, when, in what has now become a tradition, Mr. Rylah was in 1968 hooted by many in the first night audience, the admonition of 'bad manners' was voiced by a number of officials—it was hinted that the audience did not appreciate Mr. Rylah's positive contribution to its 'freedom to see and hear'. In the light of the 1969 experience is it any wonder that many of us, in company with Sydney festival-goers, if the press reports are to be believed, feel that the festival would benefit from a lot less pomp, a little less self-congratulation from the cavernous podium at the Palais, and a lot more information? How is the money spent? What profits are made and how are they used? Is the endorsement by FIAP (International Federation of Film Producers Associations) necessary and beneficial?

Film-lovers in Australia are in an invidious position. They can see the world's finest films only if commercial distributors feel there is money to be made by importing such films, or if they are selected for a film festival. It is a system which results inevitably in many fine films never being seen in Australia at all, and it is a system abetted by the present form of festival organisation. Worse still, in complete ignorance of the possibilities no intelligent debate on any alternative arrangements is possible. We are left only with the 'choice' of

taking what the Director likes (Mr. Rado's phrase, not mine) and joining in his protests on censorship when and to the extent he regards as useful to him. An odd position for an articulate segment of the Australian community to have assumed.

The desire to please those whose permission and benevolence makes the festival possible is not without its ludicrous aspect. Every session is by agreement limited to two thousand people. Just which films require this limit is not clear, for the Saturday day sessions are open to red and blue ticket holders. What happens for instance, if, as a result of a sudden ban, a film is promoted from day to night viewing? As a red ticket holder I was promised a daytime viewing of the Japanese film "Kuroneko". But, when this was promoted to a blue evening special I was unable to use my red ticket to see it.

On the question of censorship, to make comparisons with Sweden and Denmark is to invite the kind of pathological response which in the letter columns labelled Bjorkman a degenerate and found significance in the fact that Mr. Rado speaks with a slight (though charming) accent. But for a comparison we need look no further than across the Tasman. In New Zealand earlier this year, I saw "The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie". The film was marked R13, meaning it was not accessible to children under thirteen. The press reported that the censor, because the film contains much discussion about sex, had originally intended to mark it R18. However, he screened it before an audience of Wellington headmistresses and teachers, and after a discussion of the film he decided to mark it R13 in order that school children might see the film and discuss it in class. New Zealanders stated that this was no isolated instance. ("Ulysses" was shown, though to segregated audiences.) I saw no signs of the corruption and depravity one might expect. It was however a brief visit.

What of the films themselves? The daily and weekly press has long ago carried detailed criticisms. At the risk of exhuming what ought to remain buried, I will attempt to add a few comments.

In the case of the feature films one was left with the feeling of watching a series of journeyman efforts by skilled and faithful apprentices. Often the results were striking. "Fando and Lis", while being, as someone said, like something by Bunuel out of Fellini, depicted a harrowing journey into the unconscious which left the viewer wrung out as if he had been personally through the experience, instead of enjoying it from a safe distance. The fact that this odyssey was not cut by the censors, despite the handling of Lis by a coven of dirty old men, whereas "I Love, You

Love" was, adds to the feeling that capriciousness is the only constant in Australian film censorship.

Lindsay Anderson's "If . . ." remains clearly in the mind as exciting—at times tender, as in the scene in the cafe, at times comic and at the end openly violent. Some dissatisfaction has been expressed at the "far-fetched" ending; yet the very grotesqueness of the denouement came as a natural climax to this story of an English public school as a microcosm of a world best destroyed. This film was one of the commercial imports and is worth looking for by those who missed it.

Anderson's "The White Bus" will probably not be seen by the public—which is a pity. Its sardonic, low-keyed glimpse of a provincial city, seen through the eyes of a detached, uninvolved young girl, from London, was always interesting and occasionally, as in the 'civil defence' operation, quite stunning.

"Silence and Cry" gave us another opus by Miklos Jansco, whose "Round-up" was to my mind the most impressive of last year's films. The 1969 film was puzzling and self-indulgent to the point of self-parody. The apparently endless Hungarian plain starred yet again, and Jansco moves his human figures like puppets in a cosmic chess game whose rules remain a mystery.

Several shorts deserve a mention. "End of a Revolution", produced by Granada Television, was a model of TV journalism and a real scoop. Equally effective, in contrasting vein, was McLaren's "Pas de Deux", using multiple images with great delicacy in a formal little masterpiece. "Gavotte", an odd coupling of Rameau music to a tableau by several court dwarfs, was not everybody's idea of a cinema treat, but was fascinating in its very repulsiveness.

"Capricious Summer" and "Report on the Party and the Guests", from the Czechoslovak studios, represented a sad reviewing of a period of freedom already long extinguished. One can only presume that the nastiest of the members of the host's table in the latter film was a stand-in for Walter Ulbricht and that the Lenin goatee was no accident; the point of the message was never in doubt.

Enough has been said to indicate that the festival was not without interest. Nevertheless the complaint still stands. Since I began these notes several strongly critical comments have appeared in the more frequent periodicals. Disaffiliation with FIAP has been suggested, as well as a different (and more collective) approach to the selection of films. One can only nod agreement and hope that the festival directors do not misread their patrons' support in their battles with censors and customs officials as a blank cheque for the future.



JOHN MORRISON

## the writer and the swagman

One day, a year or so ago, Alan Marshall took me for a drive into the country at the back of Eltham, where he lives. We entered a rough tree-lined road, and after about a mile pulled up alongside a fence which had only recently been erected. It was a good fence, taut and true, the work of a craftsman: posts still unweathered, black iron droppers, and five bright wires, three plain and two barbed. Behind it a few sheep grazed in a cleared paddock which ran down to a belt of trees

along a gully. It was early winter, but the longest grass had the brilliant hue of spring.

It was a scene to delight the eye of a farmer, but it saddened us. We had gone to look for a block of land which Alan once owned, and which had rich memories. It was like a blow in the face for both of us to see it now, stripped naked of everything which had once made it, for us anyway, so very beautiful.

We sat talking for some minutes, lamenting that

so much had to be destroyed in order to feed proliferating humanity, then we went on for a few hundred yards to where the new fence ended, giving way to a collapsing old post-and-rail fence half buried in a tangle of ferns and creepers. Behind this was bushland, not yet touched by progress and bulldozers, one of the few surviving islands of that forest which not so long ago had covered all the country around Eltham.

We got out of the car and picked our way over the fallen rails. It was a bleak day, but we felt better when we stood among the trees, inhaling the aromatic odors of eucalyptus and rotting ground-litter. All around us were ancient red-box trees and stringy-barks, many of them heavily draped with masses of clematis, always so brown and dead-looking in winter-time. There was a sparse floor of heath, ti-tree, correa, sarsaparilla, and clumps of grey fine-leaved native grasses. There were also patches of bare earth, a greasy clay scattered with fallen leaves and twigs. No flowers, no rich colors except the soft bluish green of a few seedling gums. And no birds except a mob of funereal choughs that we disturbed, and which floated up and away with a chorus of angry croaks and a great flashing of white tails.

It was all rather dreary, but from the thoughtful way in which Alan was contemplating the scene I guessed that he was preoccupied as much as I was in investing it with the sounds and tints of another season. Perhaps spring, when the pallid cuckoos passed through calling for their mates, and the first orioles tinkled in from the north, and the air was alive with the excited chattering of parrots and honey-eaters and blue wrens. When the branches of the stringy-barks were tipped with the pink of new growth, and spider orchids pushed through the patches of hungry clay, and the whole hillside was speckled with color: blue love-creeper, yellow leopard orchids, the scarlet blobs of running-postman, and the pale stars of early nancy.

Neither of us spoke for some time, but my eyes kept straying to the green paddock seen through the trees, and I wasn't surprised when Alan asked quietly: "Remember old Albert?"

I had indeed been thinking of old Albert, trying in vain to pick out the spot in the featureless paddock where his little hut had stood, and reflecting how completely a man and all his associations can be wiped from the face of the earth. It came to me that there was a story in it. A story which began many years ago on a lonely stretch of highway in the north of Victoria.

Alan was on his way to New South Wales, and had pulled his trailer-caravan off the road to have lunch, when Albert came trudging along in the direction of Melbourne. It was a fine day, the door of the caravan was open, and he had the old

fellow under observation for a long time before he came abreast.

"Fair dinkum swagmen were getting scarce even then," Alan had told me, "and the closer he got the more I became interested in him. He was wearing ragged cast-offs, but he looked good, right out of the pages of Henry Lawson. He was complete: swag slanted over his back, tucker-bag hanging down his chest, billycan in one hand, and bowyangs tied around his pants. Even his walk was right, the forward-leaning walk of a tired old man, but one who still had plenty left in him. He had his eyes on the caravan as he came up to it, but he wasn't going to stop. I had to sing out to him before he came over. He was shy, suspicious. I believe he thought I was going to try to take some kind of a rise out of him. He just stood there, glancing down at his soggy boots and peering in at me. In the end he got rid of his swag and billycan and came in. I had to tell him twice before he sat down on the edge of the bunk, he was so afraid of messing it up. He was scruffy all right, but he had the face of a nice bloke. I placed him about the middle sixties. He just sat there with a childish smile, looking at everything, and trembling a bit with excitement. He told me he'd never been in a caravan before. I guessed it was years since he'd been in a house, had his feet under a table. He was almost too scared to eat. He was very hungry, fumbled with everything, but tried hard to watch his manners."

They got talking, and Albert gradually relaxed. It came out that he was a Swede, had arrived in Melbourne as a seaman forty years ago, got drunk, missed his ship, and found himself stranded in a strange country without knowing a word of the language, no money, no papers, and only the clothes he stood up in. Someone had pointed north and told him to go up to the harvesting, and thinking that "harvesting" was the name of a place he'd headed out into the blue, repeating the strange word over and over again, and begging his food by signs. He'd been on the roads ever since, working hard at anything he could get, fruit-picking, pick-and-shovel, fencing, wood-cutting. He'd never had a steady job, never married or had a home, never been naturalised, never filled in an income tax return, never registered as a voter. Legally he didn't exist. He was a non-person.

Alan asked him where he was making for, and received only a wry smile—anywhere—nowhere.

"There wasn't much I could do for him," Alan had told me when he first took me out to meet Albert, "but I'd just bought a block of land at Research, and I got thinking of a little hut that was on it. He was getting up in years, and winter was coming on. I told him that if he could find his way to Research he could live in the hut for



as long as he liked. It would be a roof over his head, and nobody could tell him to move on. I said he could probably make a few shillings for tucker doing odd jobs around Eltham. I gave him an old pair of pants and a jacket, and a pound to help him on his way, and so-help-me-bob he broke down and cried. Not that I was supposed to know. His eyes began to water, that's all. He said something about the cold getting into them, and wiped them with his sleeves. Anyhow, away he went, heading south. I didn't really expect to see him again. I'd given him careful directions, but his English was still poor, and I doubted that he'd be able to find the block."

As I have already indicated, the block was virgin bush when I first saw it, thirteen acres of it. There were a few old mining shafts on it, for gold had been found at Eltham in the early days and the whole district had been well worked over. Alan had had concrete caps placed over the mouths of those shafts, which the previous owner, the local sanitary contractor, had put to good use by emptying into them the contents of his cans. Drifting soil and rioting herbage had soon covered those caps, but I was often to find relics of the past rusting away deep down in the gully, where the contractor had finally dumped the last of his black cans.

However, what matters is that Albert did find the block, a good hundred and fifty miles from where he first met Alan, and in territory he hadn't visited for forty years. Alan was away from home for twelve months, and on his return was informed by his mother and sisters that a few weeks after his departure they had a telephone call from a friend at Warrandyte who said that a strange old man was wandering around those parts asking if anybody could tell him where Alan Marshall lived. A day or two later the old man himself knocked on the door of "Gurrawilla", Alan's home at Eltham.

Well, I know Elsie and Margaret, and have warm memories of Alan's mother, and can well imagine how Albert was received. It's the kind of thing they wouldn't go into details about, but I would like to have been there to see Albert taken in, fed, cleaned up, comforted with kind words, and given instructions on how to find the hut.

Alan drove out to the block on the morning after his return, and there, sure enough, was Albert in possession.

"It was good to see him," Alan told me. "Smoke was coming out of the cranky iron chimney. It gave the place life, a personality. A little way off I could see Albert himself. He had a long piece of fencing-wire, hooked at one end, and was wandering around pulling down bits of dead branch for firewood. I left the car and went in to him.

I thought he was going to cry again, he was so pleased to see me. His jaw dropped, and he just stood looking at me with twinkling eyes. But once he began talking there was no stopping him. He showed me how he'd fixed up the hut. It was a hell of a dump: bark sheets for walls, rusty corrugated iron roof, earth floor, a crumbling brick fireplace, a bed made out of potato bags laced over a frame of saplings, a packing-case for a table, and another to sit on. No glass in the window-frame, and no sign of any kind of lamp. But he was happy, content."

It was the beginning of an association that lasted for fifteen years. Albert became a fixture, and something of a local identity. He got enough odd jobs to keep himself in food and tobacco, no doubt with some help from Alan backed up by the good women of "Gurrawilla". It soon came out, though, that what Alan had suspected from the beginning was indeed true, he was a drinker. Not a rip-roaring roysterer, but just a lonely wine-bibber whenever funds permitted. Which meant that wine sometimes got preference over food. Alan told me he never saw Albert the worse for alcohol, but often smelled it on him. He kept his hut as tidy as circumstances allowed, but never got into the habit of a daily wash, never shaved, and trimmed his hair as best he could himself. Truth to tell, personal hygiene did present a problem to him, because water had to be carried up from the creek several hundred yards away at the bottom of the hill, and the habits of a lifetime made it easy for him to ration himself to what was required for drinking and what little cooking he did. He was an old man, and the hill was steep.

On his next visit Alan took out a cheap clock, a mirror, an oil lamp, and some books and periodicals: "He couldn't read English very well, but could make sense of it. He'd been a big reader in his youth and could talk intelligently about some of the classic Scandinavian and Russian writers. He knew all Ibsen's plays."

Those must have been good days for Albert. I remember well an occasion when, visiting "Gurrawilla", I found Alan on the point of leaving for the block. It was Christmas time, and the three women had been busy making up a big carton of presents. I had the job of carrying it from the car down to the hut, and the pleasure of sharing Albert's joy in unpacking it. There were groceries, a small joint of cooked beef, vegetables, fresh bread rolls. There were a few simple medicines and first-aids, tobacco and matches, more books, and a pair of hand-knitted socks. There was even a small bachelor's hold-all made up by Margaret: cottons, needles, patches, buttons. They all made a brave show spread out on the packing-case which did service as a table.

Good days indeed, but they didn't last for long. Alan was travelling a lot at the time, and it was impossible for him to keep a check on the old man. Research is several miles out of Eltham, and without transport his mother and sisters couldn't help. Forty years of humping the bluey had conditioned Albert to begging, but he never again brought himself to knock on the door of "Gurrawilla".

On returning from another protracted trip Alan found that things were not going so well with Albert. An Eltham greengrocer and a butcher, whose lawns he had been mowing and whose firewood he had been cutting, had both sold out and departed, and their successors would have nothing to do with the old man. Lacking enough money to buy food, he had taken to begging around the houses, and was sometimes surly when told to be on his way. He'd begun to talk to himself, and was liable to shout abuse at car drivers who refused to pick him up on the road. There was a lot of gossip about him in what was now a fairly well-to-do outer Melbourne suburb. Much of it was malicious and sheer snobbery, but some of it was probably justified. He must have looked thoroughly disreputable as he mingled with the well-dressed crowd on the main shopping street, but a lifetime passed as a social outcast had made him indifferent to what people thought about him. Except for the Marshalls and a few other kindly individuals he wasn't wanted, and he knew it. Stories began to grow up around him.

One day the local policeman rang "Gurrawilla", and probably thought himself fortunate when he got Mrs. Marshall on the line. Not for long! He said he had been receiving complaints about an unsavory character who was hanging around Eltham, and who he understood was part of the Marshall establishment. It was Mrs. Marshall who told me about this. She was a grand old lady, all heart, and as straight as a gun-barrel. She was then in her middle eighties, but it wasn't only age that made her voice tremble.

"The very idea, John! He talked about that dear old man as if he was a criminal. I told him he ought to be ashamed of himself. Believe me, I gave that constable a good dressing-down. I told him it was a pity the people who were complaining couldn't find themselves something better to do."

When Alan returned he found the old man rather dispirited. He'd lost weight, had a troublesome ulcer on one leg, and except for a piece of stale bread and some fat was without food.

It was about the time Alan was planning to begin writing "I Can Jump Puddles". He had been thinking of going up to some friends near Bendigo, in a quiet corner of whose farm he had already done much writing. He always did work

better in the bush, away from distracting telephone calls and visitors. This time, however, Albert's predicament made him hesitate.

"I couldn't leave him," he told me simply. "Anyway, the old block wasn't a bad place in itself, as long as not too many people found out I was there." He decided to write his book at Research, consoling himself with the reflection that he would be on a little-frequented road, have trees and birds around him, something of companionship in Albert, and "Gurrawilla" not far away if needs arose.

Again, golden days for Albert. Alan provided everything, even tobacco. He persuaded Albert to clean himself up a bit, solving the hygiene problem by getting a friend to fix up a forty-four gallon drum to catch water from the roof of the hut. He gave the old chap clothes, sent him in to Eltham for a real haircut, took him to Heidelberg Hospital to get treatment for the ulcer. There was an understanding that Albert was not to disturb him during the day, but every evening they ate the main meal together in the caravan, which was fully equipped. Alan cooked the meat on his spirit stove, and at six o'clock Albert would come up to the roadside with pots of potatoes and vegetables cooked over his open fire. Afterwards they would talk for awhile, mostly about Albert: about his boyhood in Sweden—"He told me he had often had his hair cut in Stockholm by a youthful Greta Garbo"—about his experiences at sea and on the roads in Australia, about the books Alan gave him to read. It isn't without significance that none of this material can be found in Alan's works. He doesn't, as was once suggested to me, involve himself in other people's affairs just to get stories.

Every Saturday morning they went in to Eltham for provisions. In telling me about these excursions, Alan evoked a picture which I believe was a good deal more amusing than he realised. Listening to him, I could imagine the two of them getting along Eltham's busy main street: Alan, smartly dressed as usual in well-cut sports coat and slacks, brogues, colorful cravat, and the latest style in hats. And Albert, unkempt in spite of all efforts, trailing along behind him with two string bags full of meat, vegetables, and groceries.

"He always insisted on walking behind me," said Alan. "He was terrified of getting in the way of the crutches and making me fall. They used to talk of me and my Man Friday."

Now and then they got a disapproving stare, but not often. Eltham is a friendly and tolerant community, with a strong leavening of artists and academics. Alan related to me how, one morning, they ran into Nina Christesen.

"I saw Nina coming, and I was wondering how she would react. I needn't have worried. She was

magnificent. We all stopped. I introduced Albert, and so-help-me-bob she greeted him as if he were a professor. She held out her hand, and he didn't know what to do with it. But you know Nina's smile. Next thing I know is she's asking us if we'd like to come up for lunch. There and then. We did, and we had a marvellous afternoon. Clem's eyes popped a bit as we walked in, but he was as good as Nina. They turned on the best of everything. Albert was overawed at first, but Nina soon thawed him out. After lunch she took him off to the kitchen. 'You and Alan stay here,' she told Clem. 'Albert and I are going to have a little chat.' She told me later she found him a charming old man. She's a good woman, one of the best."

There were some pleasant days for me too. I was working at Caulfield Grammar School at the time, and living at Mentone. Every now and then Alan would send me a note, and instead of going home from work on the Friday night I would take train to Eltham. Alan would pick me up there in the car, and I'd stay with him overnight, sleeping in the spare bunk in the caravan. It was my good fortune to follow month by month the steady progress on what many readers regard as his best book.

A few minutes after my arrival Albert would come over with his two pots of potatoes and vegetables, Alan would dish up the meat, and the three of us would eat and talk. Albert knew me well by then, and had lost his shyness. He had some good stories, and a way of throwing in shrewd little comments on life and people that often startled us both. Later he would go back to his hut, and Alan and I would snuggle down into our bunks. Only a few feet separated us across the caravan, with the pressure-lamp burning on the wash-up sink between us. There would be some idle gossip for awhile, then we'd get down to the real business of the day, a reading of what Alan had written since my last visit, followed by discussion which usually went on into the small hours of the morning.

I don't know what Alan himself profited from those occasions, beyond clarifying his ideas—which is important enough—but I know they were good for me. I was going through a lean period of writing myself, and it helped me over it, prevented me from going sour. And I like to think that nothing I said prevented a good book from coming out of it. It could so very easily have been otherwise, because Alan is receptive to suggestions, and no book of his was written with greater sensitivity.

Alan's two daughters, Katharine and Jennifer, were also occasional visitors to the caravan during this period, and I recall a devastating remark

Jenny once made to Albert, of whom, like her sister, she was very fond. Like all children, she was jealous of her special claims on her father, and rather resented other people dropping in while she was there. One afternoon the protracted stay of a man and his wife really upset her, and when they had gone she said to Albert: "You're lucky, Albert. You don't have any friends." Albert just gave her a benign smile, but it isn't difficult to guess what he was thinking.

There were some good Saturday mornings too. I've always been an early riser, and was usually up and about before Alan was awake. There were the birds to listen to, the fresh scents of the bush to breathe in, and a billy of tea to share with Albert in his hut. It was a lovely place in those days. It was because of the old man that Alan decided to stay there to write the story of his boyhood, but I think the book is all the better for it. I think the close relationship of writer and lonely swagman had much to do with the warmth of compassion which pervades every page of "I Can Jump Puddles".

However a time came when the book was finished, Alan had to move out, and the question arose again of what was to be done with Albert. He was in better condition by then, but obviously the time was approaching when he would be unable to support himself. There were long discussions about him at "Gurrawilla", and it was decided that the solution of the problem was to get him the old age pension. He was well past the qualifying age of sixty-five, and they thought it was merely a matter of making routine application. They underestimated the intricacies of officialdom and the fact that Albert had never been naturalised. That, on paper, he just didn't exist.

I've taken the trouble to check on the sequence of the moves which followed. They're worth relating, if only to demonstrate that, given a few men of good will, a way can always be found through the jungle of red tape.

It began with Alan making Albert have a good wash, rigging him out in some of his own clothes, giving him ten shillings for fares, and sending him in to the city with a letter addressed to the Officer-in-Charge, Department of Social Services, Commonwealth Centre. It must have been an amusing letter. Elsie, who saw it before it went off, remembered the gist of it:

I don't know you, but I have a feeling you're a nice bloke, and I hope you'll give this dear old man your complete and undivided attention. This is urgent. I can just picture you sitting there in your cosy swivel chair, with a white shirt and camel-hair jacket, a radiator at your feet, and a devoted wife waiting for

you to come home tonight. Take a good look at this old man. He has nothing in the world except a bark hut to creep into. He's wearing my coat, my pants, my shoes, my hat. I've been feeding him too. But I've been writing a book, and I'm now stony broke. I have to go away and earn some money myself. This man has worked hard in Australia for forty years, but he's euhred now. Do have a heart and give him a go! All he asks for is the old age pension, and he's years overdue for it.

No doubt, in the way of government departments, the letter and Albert passed through several hands, but it was his good fortune that he did end up with a "good bloke", one who entered wholeheartedly into the spirit of the appeal. Elsie told me there was nothing very official about the letter which came back:

You're a bad guesser, Mr. Marshall. I haven't got a devoted wife waiting for me to come home from work. I'm a bachelor, and I'm afraid my shirts are never really white. My chair doesn't swivel, I'm not important enough to have a radiator of my own, and I've never possessed a camel-hair coat in my life. But I like your old man. The trouble is that he isn't naturalised, and to get naturalised he must produce a birth certificate. He says he was born in Stockholm in 1882. Send him in to the Swedish Consul, who can attend to the matter of the birth certificate. When you've got that send your mate back here with a letter addressed to me personally, and I'll tell you how to put him through naturalisation. Once that's fixed we should be able to get him a pension.

That "we" made "Gurrawilla" feel really good. Back into town the next morning went Albert again, with another ten shillings for fares, and a letter addressed to the Swedish Consul. Once again it was a good man who received him, replying to the effect that he welcomed an opportunity to help a fellow-countryman, and that the matter of the birth certificate would be attended to. He was as good as his word, because the certificate arrived within three weeks. There followed another trip to town for Albert, and another exchange of light-hearted correspondence between Alan and the man without a devoted wife: "Albert must now advertise his intention to apply for naturalisation, in three newspapers," wrote the official. "He will also require the signatures of three sponsors who will vouch for his suitability to become a citizen of God's Own Country. That, Mr. Marshall, is your pigeon!"

A few weeks later, at a mass naturalisation ceremony in Melbourne Town Hall, the wandering old Swede became an Australian. A lecturing engage-

ment prevented Alan from being present himself, but he got a friend to drive Albert in and steer him through the formalities. It turned out that the friendly official from the Social Services Department was also there. He went in not only to see the results of his labors, but in the expectation of meeting Alan. There was nothing Alan could have done about it, but he was a bit conscience-stricken when he received a final and gently reproachful note: "Nice work, Mr. Marshall. But you funked it at the last, you know . . ."

"He was a nice bloke all right," said Alan. "It's a pity we didn't catch up with each other."

Soon after the Town Hall ceremony Albert made his last trip to the city, with his form of application for the old age pension duly filled in.

"It didn't take long after that," said Alan. "A week or two later he received his first cheque. It was wealth undreamed of for him. Seventy shillings a week for the rest of his life, and all he had to do was go down to Eltham once a fortnight and pass his cheque across the post office counter. I took him in the first day, and he came out fingering the notes, speechless with excitement. Up to then I don't think he really believed it would happen. I asked him what he was going to do with all that money, and he answered me in one word: "Tucker!" I thought some of it might go on grog too, but what the heck. He didn't have long to live, and a glass of wine was the only luxury he'd ever had."

It was true. Albert didn't have long to live. Two years, as far as I've been able to ascertain. Alan was away a lot during that time, but always on his return to "Gurrawilla" he found time to go out and see how the old man was faring. Sometimes I was with him, and I recollect observing the final process of decline, a slowing down of movements, an increasingly faltering speech, a tendency to repeat over and over again his favorite yarns. He never complained, though, and was always pathetically pleased to see us coming down from the road. In his own way he was as happy as we were. He was living high. Every alternate Thursday his cheque, the only mail he had ever received, was delivered by a passing neighbor, and he would trudge in to Eltham, collect his pension, and take a taxi back. It was Alan who talked him into the taxi; the idea of indulging in such an extravagance would never have occurred to him. Taxi, tucker, and no doubt a bottle of wine. He was in love with his bark hut, and often told Alan about new birds he had seen around the block.

One day, with a great air of conspiracy, he showed Alan a State Savings Bank pass-book with £16 in it, deposited in fortnightly amounts of ten shillings.

"Only the two of us were there," Alan told me, "but he couldn't help looking over his shoulder to make sure nobody was watching us. He never got used to the fact that he had nothing to fear from authority. He felt that there must be a catch to the pension, that it was just another kind of hand-out, and that it would stop if the powers-that-be found out he didn't need it all. Anyway, he was saving up. And d'you know what for? For my two little girls. He was as pleased as a dog with two tails. He'd hit on a way of doing something for me, for Kathy and Jenny. It never occurred to him that there were technicalities involved. If anything happened to him I was

simply to present the pass-book at the State Savings Bank in Eltham, collect the money, and give it to the girls. Just like that."

The end came in 1964, when Alan was on a visit to the Soviet Union. On his return his sisters told him that Albert was dead. A woman who lived on a neighbouring block had missed seeing him around, and on going down to the hut to investigate had found him lying peacefully on his bunk.

I have no details of what followed. To the best of Alan's knowledge Albert was given a pauper's funeral. No doubt the money in his State Savings Bank account found its way into the Treasury.

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## NEWS WEEK (MELBOURNE)

For BRUCE DAWE

When Monday's Home Delivery goes to press  
It's Sunday afternoon in London,  
New York's still in church,  
And putting up a story for the front page  
Is putting up a story for the front page  
Is

Not at all like Tuesday  
When the foreign page  
Bristles like a seismograph  
With coups and natural disasters,  
Crises, setbacks, deadlocks, and delays;

But  
No worries, see  
Because

Wednesday's the midweek special:  
There's night attacks by suicide squads,  
Rows in Canberra, courtroom dramas,  
Anti-hanging rallies, and the normal  
Peak-hour traffic, level-crossing, semi-trailer,  
Five-car smash.

On Thursday morn the reader may o'erlook  
The nadir of the week's misfortunes:  
A League fullforward's doctors have advised  
Him not to play again,  
The coalition's under threat,  
The drift of capital cannot be checked,  
And Whitlam's once again met a rebuff.

Friday (goddess of joy) restores our hopes:  
Crises averted, compromises made,  
The teams have been announced,  
A halfback flank's engaged to Miss East  
Bentleigh,  
The weekend rapist has been put away,  
A bank defaulter given bail.

Saturday's profoundly reassuring:  
Talks are to be held,  
A draft evader's been allowed  
To change his clothes,  
Inspectors have been named  
To check our fighter-bombers in the States.

Sunday of course has been abolished save  
For aliens who celebrate  
An un-Victorian rite  
(At Mr Rylah's Sunday morning service,  
The rustle of the tabloid is unheard).

There is a time for living and a time  
For reading what the papers say, a time  
For contemplating the benevolent  
Workings of the Press and Providence—  
Who could decry these vital rhythms,  
Not unlike the flow  
And ebbing of the tide,  
Communal feasts of rage, of grief, of joy?  
(I sometimes wonder what news editors buy  
One half so precious as the goods they sell.)

DENNIS DOUGLAS

---

## PLASTICINE

This morning walking through Woolworths' plastic flower department I was suddenly overcome by plastic hayfever and plastic tears rolled down my face. As it happened I was overcome near a three-dimensional picture of Christ and, as I looked at it, wiping my eyes with a plastic handkerchief, I thought of the Boy-Jesus standing in the corner as penance for answering His Mother back.

LEON SLADE

## GENERATION GAP

"We who were foundation members of  
The 8.15 generation being bound  
For distant offices, not out of love  
But sheer necessity—now that we stand  
Here, on the ultimate platform, find we've  
lost  
All urgency to read through to the end  
Our morning papers. This, then, being the  
last  
Of meetings and the train being late  
(That much still unchanged)—come, let's at  
least  
Look straight into each other's eyes: it might  
Be a gesture of a kind no longer rare  
Where we are bound for now, where they  
delete  
All reference to how we think things are,  
And the 8.15 meets up with the 8.04."

BRUCE DAWE

---

## TO THE OCEAN

The sea, old weedy mother of the earth,  
In sleepy gestures laps the shingle,  
Murmurs in the wide bed of the bay  
And dreams of time.  
Across the harbor  
Where her shoaling children hunt and doze  
Night moves in soft deep falling.  
Death beside her keeps his steady watch  
And all is well; as is the wind  
That wakes and takes her  
In his sharply resurrected flight;  
As is the tide that draws and shapes her  
To that sleepless primal ocean  
Lying awake, lying awake.

LOLA JACKSON

---

## AT REST

The sky is drained of color  
And I (for now) of love  
I stretch upon the hot sand  
Your arms cradle my head  
Through half-closed eyes I watch  
The tumultuous surf  
The circling gulls  
A beach flower pale as the sky  
Rests between your breasts  
(Drained of love? Not so  
The cup fills but slow).

C. B. CHRISTESEN

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PAGE FROM A SKETCHBOOK, 1959

for Kate Manifold

(Died 12 July 1969)

Serpent, mandora and guitar  
hang on their loops and nails between  
the hour achieved and the hour  
of taking down again:  
still before sounding.

Tuning her mandoline, she leans  
intent to fix the recorder's A.  
Fingers, listen, silence  
ripples her skirt in graces  
still before sounding.

See where her profile lifts, alert,  
poised in some bright full tide. That calm  
searched out the humble and hurt  
like a remembered song  
still before sounding.

Who played ballads there that night?  
and stroked the cats, and carried tea?  
roaring the Bandicoots'  
refrains, with John's hearty  
bellow resounding!

The man's part and the tender answer,  
who could doubt they sang themselves,  
John's Willy to Kate's Nancy!  
then whooped through free-for-alls  
wildly resounding!

Knowing her young, cat-lithe and wild,  
so much fine laughter in her face,  
he must have known what steel  
held our rich common bass  
still, still sounding.

Word from the desolate music-room:  
she falters and her song is pain.  
Our grief, her suffering seem  
mere desert air in stone  
unresounding

till we wake to thank our loss; and beyond  
find her, the harmony within  
new song, the new-found friend.  
Hang up her mandoline.

JUDITH RODRIGUEZ



## CONTRIBUTORS

Warren Straker lives in Parramatta, is twenty-two, and is a drop-out from two universities and one teachers' college. He works in a library and this is his first published story: news of its acceptance saved his typewriter from the pawnshop. Jonathan Dawson is twenty-six, working in film writing and film productions in Melbourne. Bernard Rechter is an educational research worker in Melbourne. Michael Craig, 38, was captain of the Australian hockey team in 1960, is now a Melbourne physiotherapist. Dennis Douglas lectures in English at Monash University, and Judith Rodriguez (Judith Green) at Latrobe University. Lola Jackson lives in Hobart. Peter Russell, 30, has been working overseas as an economist with a firm of consulting engineers, is now retired to an A.C.T. farm to "contemplate the past and decide whether the future is worth living for". Clement Semmler is Acting General Manager of the Australian Broadcasting Commission. Laurence Collinson is Overland's London editor, author of two books of poetry. Russell Deeble, Melbourne poet, has just published his third book, "High on a Horse with Wax Wings". John McLaren, author and columnist, lectures at the Secondary Teachers' College in Melbourne, and Frank Kellaway teaches at the Preston Institute of Technology in Victoria.

## FLOATING FUND

Many thanks to our contributors for a near-record response to the Floating Fund. As a response of gratitude we can promise readers that our next issue will not only be on time, for a change, but that it will be an especially interesting one featuring conservation as its main theme, and led off with an amusing story by Peter Mathers on this topic. Total donations since our last issue come to \$337.62.

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J. H. DAVIDSON

# South African notebook

Jim Davidson is a  
Melbourne University historian  
recently returned from  
post-graduate work in  
South Africa

October. One can learn much about South Africa from its trains. As they hurtle past on the suburban lines, one seems to see nothing but the dual language notices above each door: Net Nie-Blankes . . . Whites Only . . . Non-Whites Only . . . Net Blankes. Nailed on to the carriages as an uninspiring after-thought, they come out and whack you in the eye. The stations themselves range from the vacuous sumptuousness of Cape Town and Johannesburg to the tin sheds and the typical grey granite massed in frontier Edwardian style found on the platteland (Outback). But the people are the same everywhere. On entering, you will invariably pass two or three national service trainees, standing dourly in their brown uniforms; one or two porters, in their dull grey tweeds, will be lolling about on their barrows. They scarcely notice you, for their leathery wizened faces are thoroughly engaged in animated conversation—Afrikaans.

Pacing up and down, waiting for a train, is not the simple uncomplicated business it is elsewhere. At Stellenbosch I set about unravelling the mysteries of a timetable pasted on the wall, and then ambled off in the direction of the expected train. An attractive Colored girl gazed at me, indifferently; but with each forward step I took she visibly soured. I was intruding: that was **their** end of the platform.

It is the end where all the life is. At Cape Town I was struck by this when the train drew away: the whites stood sullenly about, a few hands clasped in compulsive farewell while uniformed figures, police and porters, stood back watching. The train drew away, quickening in pace. Coloreds ran with it, yelling and shouting, their eyes fixed on their own carriages receding in the distance. "See you soon again". My companions gaze out at them; one, amused by the phrase, repeats it. He is a young soldier with an old face; the others are a young man dressed a la Carnaby Street with

all the pinchbeck sophistication Beaufort West can muster, and another soldier—flat-mouthed and very dom. In fits and starts, conversation begins—in English, as we are in the Cape. Gradually they discover they are all Afrikaners, and so the switch is made. However they will happily talk in English to me, particularly as I'm an Australian (although one Afrikaner on a Free State train was surprised to learn that the taal isn't spoken there).

Enter a Colored, making the customary inquiry about bedding. He is mild-eyed, and with his rimless spectacles looks like an Indian physicist. There is a heated exchange with the second soldier, short and to the point and in Afrikaans, for he had apparently produced an invalid voucher. The Colored goes; Beaufort West remarks in English that "the Kaffirs are cheeky at the Cape".

We are left to ourselves, but not for long. A waiter comes, offering coffee, which we take. For just as the 'bedding boys' are always Coloreds, the waiters on the trains are always white—as they are nowhere else save in the swankiest restaurants. An imperious knock at the door, and in comes the ticket examiner. He reads out our names—prefaced by Meneer or Mr., for the distinction between English and Afrikaner is recorded even when making train bookings—and is answered as if by a group of shy schoolboys. A large man, he further intimidates by opening his coat and delving into an apparently endless armory of pockets from which he produces implements to clip the tickets. I hand mine over: it has already been ravished twice and looks a miserable little object to carry me such a long way. He looks at it carefully, checks it against the roll, delves into yet another pocket to produce a fob watch, and advises me to change at De Aar at 2.40 tomorrow afternoon.

Worcester. The door opens, and the leaves of a pot-plant are seen: behind them the fifth man, an Afrikaner of about thirty. He is good-looking

in his way, but his sallow skin and little moustache give him that peculiarly mousey look which is characteristic of his people. He is friendly, and looks at me as the one nearest his own age whenever he wants to make a point: but he speaks in Afrikaans. Later I tell him I don't speak the language, and why—he apologises, a not untypical reaction. The Colored re-appears to offer bedding, and our friend proffers a five rand note (\$6.25). It is declared unchangeable, but the man takes it and goes away. It never ceases to amaze me how difficult it often is to change a note in this country—it is as if three-quarters of the white population, let alone the black, constantly walk about with only a few shillings in their pockets. The great Johannesburger and the poor white of the provinces could live in different worlds: certainly they seem to function two separate economies.

January. The whole atmosphere is one of get-as-one-can. It is widely held that much of the crime here is not casual, but organised; and not organised by Africans, but by Indians and whites, who Fagin-like direct their employes. There are underground organisations that provide a steal-while-you-wait service: you nominate what you want, from clothing to grand pianos or diamonds, and sooner or later you get it. Consequently no-one in Joburg leaves their house empty for long; if they did, they would find it emptiest in the fullest sense of the word on their return. Furniture is carted out to an empty house in an outer suburb, "auctioned", and the by now impatient customer provided with a legitimising receipt. As Mike said, "When one lives in a criminal society one might as well take advantage of it", for which he cannot be altogether blamed. As a matter of course he expects to be burgled once if not twice during his six-year stay in Johannesburg.

July. But bourgeois life in this city is amazingly imperturbable and cocoon-like; earth tremors and burglaries scarcely so much as punctuate it. With his maid at home and his African driver in front of him, the great Johannesburger could almost believe, but for the grilles on the windows, that the tension of this city is entirely due to his own pushing and shoving. The Star and the Rand Daily Mail, excellent papers both, may occasionally prick his conscience, but in his heart of hearts he knows the system to be untenable not because it is unworkable but because it is utterly corrupt. As the hopeless husband says in the film "Poor Cow", everybody's bent. The great panjandrum of passes lives just around the corner in Westcliff. An impossibility on his salary, but that's not the half of it. Mike's servant Gideon, seeking endorsement (i.e. permission to stay in Johannesburg) had heard on the grapevine that it could be had—

for R5. Mike was incredulous, but Gideon duly handed over R10. The money was taken, but no endorsement followed . . .

We were joined for dinner by Thomas and Paula Wilson. Paula, a luscious Afrikaner, spoke impeccable English with warmth and wit; her stodgy, mining house husband was put completely in the shade, and knew it. A discussion on bilingualism soon became highly charged. Paula, who said that the two languages had given her great identity problems when growing up, had agreed with her husband's view that their child, as any child, should fully function in one language first (English), before learning another (Afrikaans). But the husband, under the combined assault of wine and Mike's pressing questions, soon made it clear that his views were really a rationalisation of his dislike of Afrikaners. His son was an Anglican, his wife about to become one. Paula did not demur; he must be bloody good in bed for her not to resent this fierce possessiveness. As he no doubt realises, the trouble is that in loose-living Johannesburg it would be relatively easy to find somebody better.

Afrikaner puritanism can always be relied upon to redress the balance. Not so long ago a production of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" was mounted at Wits. It seems it had run for three or four nights when a Cabinet minister in the audience expressed his displeasure, whereupon it was taken off immediately.

The NUSAS (Students') Congress has been on at Wits this past week, and this morning Dave and I went along. A large room immediately above the Great Hall was almost empty when we arrived, and the delegates drifted casually in, having been debating till 3 a.m. the night before. There were six Rhodes delegates; Harris, Kirby and Murray, the front bench, formed an effective team and seemed to have much influence with John Daniel, who in fact made a singularly disappointing chairman. The other delegations I found to be remarkably differentiated in character: Wits exuberant, irresponsible and radical; Natal ponderous and rightist, if not thuggish; Cape Town fairly amorphous save for a couple of very good liberal speakers, both rather academic in manner. One of these was Hughes, the author of the celebrated "God is dead" article that brought him a trial for blasphemy. He declaimed on most subjects in a distinctly Muggeridgian style, only the content was anaemic and the wit was lacking. The tangy BBC accent suggested that in another age he might have been sent out to govern India. There were, of course, some non-white delegates at the conference; but this morning they numbered no more than two or three and said nothing.

Rhodes speakers, though impressive, were divided. Harris had seconded a ridiculous motion from Natal calling on NUSAS not to consider international motions that had no direct bearing on student affairs, for it was argued that these had always resulted in people swallowing a 'line' at Congress which in turn stifled a genuine exploratory interest in foreign affairs on the campuses. Immediately I thought of the select six who came to hear a talk on Australia, and felt that a radical motion from NUSAS was perhaps the only thing that might stir some interest through the bulk of the student body suddenly discovering that its inarticulate prejudices were being improperly ignored. Fortunately the motion was seen by a great many speakers to be an invitation to isolationism; the only speech in favor worthy of any respect was given by a Cape Town student who argued that as this congress had sold out so completely on South African affairs it would be the height of hypocrisy to pontificate in the international arena. At any rate the motion was lost, by 44 votes to 15, with 4 abstentions. Rhodesia and Vietnam could now be discussed. But nothing particularly constructive emerged from either debate—in the former case the issue was smothered over by urging all responsible leaders to come to a settlement (do terrorists have responsible leaders?). So NUSAS, like it or not, is drifting rightwards . . .

(It should be explained that political clubs do not exist on South African campuses, and that the S.R.C.s are the instruments of student political action. Hence NUSAS reflects the tone not only of its constituent S.R.C.s, but also of the constituent campuses. By the same token, many student leaders, initially conservative, are compelled by the political pressures operating upon them to move further and further to the South African left, which in the Australian scale of values approximates to renegade Liberal. Such a one was Peter Harris, who together with the other members of the Rhodes

'front bench', Ian Kirby and Andrew Murray, were subsequently deported by the South African government to Rhodesia, their home country. The chairman, John Daniel, had already had his passport confiscated when he chaired this congress; a few months later he left the country on an exit permit, which means he can never return.)

The best sick jokes in this country come from real life. At the time of the passing of the Immorality Act, Terence was discussing it with a man who used to duck across the back fence and sleep with his neighbor's black servant. They got on to the matter of kissing, and the man shook his head disapprovingly. Terence looked at him, and muttered his surprise. "Christ no," came the answer, "You wouldn't expect me to kiss a Kaffir, would you?"

11 p.m. The lights are going out all over South Africa. Tonight's news headlines were: (1) a warning by P. W. Botha, Minister for Defence, that all South Africans must prepare themselves for terrorist incursions across the northern borders; (2) another speech made at the same meeting at Somerset East, in which Vosloo, Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration, told the English language press to stop making propaganda out of the Mafeje affair (when the government prevented the University of Cape Town from appointing an African lecturer in anthropology), and to realise that it would be wrong to allow him to take up the appointment when the Bantu people needed him themselves; (3) Smith crowing that Rhodesia was winning the sanctions war, and that the rate of immigration was as high as in previous boom periods.

That (3) runs counter to (1) few people will notice, for the spirit of the laager underlies them both. But that note of dissonance captures the spirit of this entry: a crazy week in a crazy country.

IAN TURNER

## swinging London

An Overland editor and well-known Monash University historian reports on the English scene

The revolution, in London, means all things to a few, and something to nearly everybody.

There's the frontal assault on the values of bourgeois society through the accepted media, for one. Australia has already seen a lot of it—TW3, Not Only But Also, David Frost, all savagely destructive stuff if you sit back and think. The latest is Q3 (QE2 — E + 1?), a calculated attempt by Spike Milligan and Australian John Bluthal to subvert the British Way with goonery. The bourgeoisie take it all in their (collective) strides: they can laugh-in as well as the next. Q3 is given the BBC accolade of color transmission (very expensive for the viewers, and the screens still tend to slip). David Frost is sold to the American networks for several times the price of a top soccer player.

The theatre is even rougher. Not "Hair" so much as "The Ruling Class", a black comedy in which the kinky but "sane" ninth earl accidentally hangs himself while stepping off a ladder in a frou-frou, while his heir is adjudged insane so long as he practices non-violence and love. There's no Lord Chamberlain to discipline the theatre these days; but one still wonders how the Establishment (you can't see it, but you can feel it all around you) can suffer this savaging and not hit back. Whatever it is, it's not the masochism of an effete and decaying ruling class. Lenin (was it?) was right—your British bourgeoisie are devilish cunning. They've read their Aristotle: the revolutionary masses switch off the telly, or leave the theatre, convinced (unconsciously of course) that once a wrong is exposed it's dealt with, and thoroughly purged.

Your Australian bourgeois isn't so clever by half. "The Ruling Class" seems unlikely to hit the Victorian boards: it has not only all the four-letter words but some idol-breaking anti-Christian cracks which are sure to get it rubbed out. But I read in Australia House (Not Open On Anzac

Day) that Jim Sharman Jr. is confident that he'll get "Hair" through. Maybe: it's certainly not so bloody-minded as "The Ruling Class". A simple and in itself inoffensive message—if only those oldies would leave us alone to do our own thing (pot and sex), all would be well. There might be objections to the language and the mimed copulation, but that could be toned down. Otherwise it's Thornton Wilder in rock-time. (A jaundiced middle-aged comment? Perhaps. But—while the beat was solid, and there were half a dozen fine Negro singers and some acrobatic happenings with fairy-lights—the music was so loud you couldn't hear the words, the lights were so dim you couldn't see the nudes, and love isn't all you need.)

Still, it's part of the Revolution—the West End of the underground (sub-culture, not subway). Other points at which the underground surfaces: IT, OZ and the King's Road, Chelsea. Once a parade-ground for London's literary and artistic bohemia, King's Road now swings for a younger (and less creative?) generation. Saturday morning is show-time; most of the styles are already familiar in Melbourne and Sydney (exceptions: fur coats for men, not only raccoon, and Dan'l Boone type leather gear; otherwise the NLF shopping-bags are pretty much the same), but there's more of it at one time in one place. King's Road has got everything that Carnaby Street has, and it's all very gay but very, very tatty.

There is nothing to worry the moralist in King's Road, except an occasional whiff of pot, but IT and OZ have both just been busted (add "by the fuzz" to complete the image). OZ's printers were raided on account of drawings of copulating couples. IT's offices were raided for replies to personal ads of the "Bi-guy seeks swinging couple for fun and games" kind. (IT's editors said that they regarded these ads as performing a public service and were quite prepared to say so in court.)

IT and OZ both assert the personalised, every-do-your-own-thing revolution. OZ seems to me to be pretentious and strictly for the giggles; IT is a well-produced fortnightly (financed, the rumor is, by a Beatles foundation) which argues its positions angrily and well.

IT is probably the most influential of the multitude of radical periodicals among London's young rebels, along with the Black Dwarf. Indeed, they are complementary—the Dwarf as vehement for the social revolution as IT is for the personal, and both with more than a bit of the Marat/Sade approach: "We want a revolution now." This impatience was voiced strongly at the National Convention of the Left, held in London late in April.

I didn't make the first day of the Convention. Instead, I went to see one of England's great folk festivals, the Cup Final at Wembley. The crowd was about as big as that for a V.F.L. final at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, but less colorful and—in their barracking—better disciplined. (Organised chanting of club songs and slogans, which would have drifted out of the M.C.G., boomed through the wholly enclosed stadium: Leices-ter, da-da; Man-chest-er Cit-y da-dit-dit-da-da.) Before the match began, all 100,000 of them rose and sang, right through, Abide With Me, and then God Save the Queen, as Princess Anne (tomato-red box-style mini-coat and black toque, so far as I could see) walked out onto the pitch to shake two dozen soccer-calloused fists. I was surprised by the fervor—for God, Queen and Country, apparently, as well as for Leicester or Manchester. The revolution hadn't reached Wembley yet.

(Manchester won 1-0. There has been a running argument about "soccer hooliganism" in the English press—that is, vandalism in trains and buses by fans after the match. One sociologist suggests that it is because the game has become so much a big business—one Leicester player cost his club £150,000—that the workers can no longer identify; so, alienation! My feeling is that anyone who can watch ninety minutes of football for a 1-0, or 2-1, or even 0-0 result, and not want to smash something, must have something wrong with his adrenalin. Kingsley Amis opted for a predictably bucolic solution: don't spare the rod.)

Meanwhile, back at the Left Convention . . . This was a gathering convened by Raymond Williams ("Culture and Society", etc.) to try to reach agreement on a left platform, and here several revolutions were in progress. Everyone was there: the Communist Party through several varieties of Trotskyist ("International Socialism" the most sig-

nificant of these) to the Marat/Sade Third-Worlders; libertarian conservationists through co-op activists to a dissident Labour M.P. All agreed that In Place of Strife was the end, but there was vituperative disagreement over what to do about it. International Socialism argued for a new mass party which would mount a revolutionary extra-parliamentary opposition. The Communists and the independent socialists urged continuing work through existing institutions. One side accused the other of adventurism, the other the one of betrayal. Raymond Williams, in the most brilliant piece of chairmanship I have ever seen, smoothed the tempers and secured a consensus for a radical platform; but the paper covering the crevasses was pretty thin.

I thought of offering some words of Australian wisdom—that many abominable performances by Labor governments and many challenges by more powerful lefts than that here represented had still not shaken the basic support for the A.L.P., and why should this be any different? But I reflected that the Old Old Left in Britain had never taken kindly to colonial instruction, while the New New Left has a profound contempt for the argument from history, so I kept my seat.

Sure enough, within a week or two Raymond Williams' patchwork was already springing leaks. The left had agreed on a protest strike against In Place of Strife. The forces gathered on Tower Hill, overlooking the Bloody Tower, where many an earlier rebel had lost a head. The Communists led their supporters off to protest through official channels. The Trotskyists and the anarchists, spurning parliamentary parasites, led their lot—a Eureka brass band playing "Just a Closer Walk with Thee" ahead and two hippies scattering soap bubbles behind—off to music, dancing and games at Bethnal Green.

Still, May Day was a beautiful spring day. Down at Padstow the traditional dancers were parading their hobby-horse, but that was two hundred miles away in Cornwall and I couldn't make it. On Tower Hill, politics aside, a refugee from the defunct music-hall tradition pattered on about his mission to the nation, to "Keep Britain Queer," and a showman appealed for a shower of silver to see his mate escape from a canvas bag and a swathe of chains. In the park the shrubs were starting to blossom and the trees to leaf. I hadn't realised before this what it was that all those English poets were on about. A Shropshire vicar's lady wrote to The Times: "I would like to know is any of your readers have noticed how lethargic and lacking in joy our modern lambs are." I hadn't—but I'm keeping an eye on King's Road.

DAVID MARTIN

## Russian hinterland

The novelist, poet and critic draws some vignettes from his recent Soviet travels

If I were to write down, more or less haphazardly, what I remember having seen in any country except the Soviet Union, I would not try very hard to convey balanced impressions. I would simply recall incidents, conversations and encounters, leaving the reader quite free to draw conclusions and to make a picture for himself. But old habits die hard. I still find it difficult to write about Russia as I would, say, about Holland. The pattern is full of contradictions, but so are most others. In dealing with the U.S.S.R. I am inhibited by my anxiety to be fair. There are many reasons for this, but I wish I could forget them. I wish we could all forget to strive for this balance—not to be achieved in any case—but we can't.

We drove into Moscow at night, coming from the airport. Half way into the city, perhaps at a spot from which it could be reached in an hour's or so walking, there is a monument, a memorial, in the form of a barbed wire entanglement. Lit up by floodlights, it glows like amber. It marks the farthest point of the German advance in 1941. There is another memorial where the Red Army stopped the Nazis just outside Leningrad. I think these are the two most important monuments in modern Europe. Not to understand their full meaning is not to understand—not to see—Russia.

The driver who drove us from Leningrad to Peterhof had a brother whom the Germans killed near Pskov. Rather, whom the Germans murdered in cold blood. He had a brother-in-law whom the Germans threw, still living, into the flames of his burning house.

A driver who drove us in Moscow had spent seven years in one of Stalin's concentration camps in the Bratsk region. (I found this out when I asked him about a strange tattoo mark on his hand.) His crime? He had been a KGB man and it was alleged that he had given incomplete information about his father's social origins. His mother died in banishment.

"Have you tried to rejoin the Party since then?"

"No. It's too far to walk."

"Do you feel bitter?"

"Well . . . That's revolution."

A few days later he told us:

"You know the friend who came driving with us last week? Yesterday I again had him in my car. Him and a girl. When we came to the woods she got out, took off her stockings and started to walk about among the leaves. Yes, took off her stockings! If she'd been my daughter I'd have given her a good hiding."

We were shown over Lenin's flat in the Kremlin. You have read about it: a simple unpretentious place where he lived with Krupskaya and with his sister. On his writing desk still lies a sort of teledex with the names and telephone numbers of people he closely worked with. Unfortunately you cannot reach over and pick it up; a cord prevents you.

What a pity! Unless they have been torn out there would probably be the names of Trotsky, Bucharin, Radek, Rykov and who knows how many others. No. I don't suppose it could really be his original teledex.

At Kolomenskoye are the ruins of a monastery, never completed, which its architect planned to be one of the finest group of buildings in the Empire. A remarkable model is still retained. When the Empress Katerina ran out of funds she ordered most of the edifice to be pulled down again.

There I began to understand the meaning of autocracy.

Last year every Russian, and especially every young Russian, who could get hold of it was reading Iris Murdoch's novel, "The Good and the Nice". There is an extraordinary, almost inexplicable, interest in her work in the USSR.

But a Moscow friend was more interested in Evelyn Waugh, on whose work as an ironist he

is preparing to write a thesis. He asked me to send him some of Waugh's books which had not been translated into Russian. To my amazement the list included "The Loved Ones".

I protested that, surely, this should have been the first of his novels to be translated. What other satirises so ruthlessly the whole emptiness at the heart of capitalism?

"It won't be translated for a long time," he said. "It's too impious . . . It's hard for most Russians to accept as literature something which treats death and dying so disrespectfully."

In Georgia I talked to a psychiatrist. He was exceptionally well-informed, and as far as I can judge thoroughly knowledgeable about developments in his discipline anywhere in the world. His wife was French. I asked him: "No other nation, except perhaps parts of the Chinese, has suffered as has the Russian since 1905. Three wars and a civil war, famines, the terrible upheavals of collectivisation, the white terror, Stalin's bloody purges, then the XX Congress and the subsequent disillusionment . . . and that's not even the whole tale. In your work you see people as they are, not as they would like to appear. What scars has all this left on the Russian soul, or on the Russian mind? I would think the trauma must be terrific."

He denied it. "I find no such trauma. Personal problems, of course, like everywhere, but no trauma. We know how to cope."

I looked doubtful. He opened a drawer and produced some photographs which he showed me. A girl kissing a boy, some men playing football, farmers building a barn.

"All this helps."

"Obviously it helps, but there is Eros and Xantos, love and death. In your country millions died. The fear of death is common to all humans. Has it not been reinforced among you in the wake of so much suffering?"

"I see no signs of it."

Later we discussed problems of sexual adjustment. "How, for argument's sake, would you deal with a woman patient who complained of frigidity, in herself or her husband?"

He laughed. "We get extremely few cases like this. Not because frigidity is unknown but because our women refuse to lay such intimate details before a doctor, especially a man. I regret it, and we have to educate them to be less shy, but the resistance is formidable."

In the same city we enjoyed the hospitality of a well-to-do university man who had travelled much abroad. Not only was his flat well-stocked with good examples of modern art from western Europe, but there were also new Russian paintings

of the kind officially discouraged. He explained that people who can afford it patronise advanced artists and keep them going by buying their work privately, even if it is never exhibited. My impression, however, is that this happens more easily in Georgia than in Russian Russia.

Tbilisi is a town of violent contrasts. Some recent architecture is very good, but it has shocking slums. And vandalism: in a certain quarter I did not see a single phone box which had not been put out of use or defaced. I saw a couple of scrawled swastikas too. A literally half-naked gipsy child, begging. (But no country has yet learned how to uplift the gipsies.)

Speaking of gipsies . . . in Moscow we went to see their theatre. The play, a Victorian romance, was a dead loss, but the audience was interesting. I've not seen one like it since the Bedford Theatre folded up in London's Camden Town. Hundreds of 'babushkas' and what looked like shop-girls and their slicked-up young men. They had obviously come for a good old, unsophisticated, bit of schmaltz.

Back to contrasts in Georgia.

We went to a book shop to try and buy some inexpensive art books. After the girl assistant had got out of her glass cases quite a number of unsuitable books, we chose a very ordinary little folder which cost only a few kopeks. The girl laughed with embarrassment, and our guide was annoyed with us.

"Very bad manners, to trouble the staff in this way and then buy only such a trifle."

Across the street we noticed a marvellous cinema poster. We entered, undaunted, were introduced to the manager, and he was delighted to give us half a dozen.

On the drive to a collective farm we stopped at a rural school and were shown the art room. A Georgian companion was furious at some of the exhibits, the work of older children. "You see how fresh the young ones are, and then they get Socialist Realism rammed down their throats and it spoils them."

A few miles on, overlooking a valley in the first folds of the Caucasus, we came to a memorial for men from this neighborhood who fell in battle against the Germans. I can remember nothing more moving. It was the figure of a woman, a mother, plainly hewn, standing with head slightly bowed, mourning her children.

Hungry after a long and stimulating visit to the leisure-time clubs of a big factory, a real cultural beehive. I want to buy some sausage. The huge store is sausage-packed to the rafters. Helped by my guide, I join the queue and at long last reach the counter to make my purchase. Says you! Back



to another counter, via another queue, to pay the cashier who works the abacus. Get my chit, get back into the original queue, get damned restless and start muttering about idiotic organisation, wrong priorities, and pregnant women who, in all these queues, have to wait half an hour for a few slices of salami. My interpreter mounts his high horse, says I'm a two-faced nogooodnik who flatters the committee of the Soviet-Australia Friendship Society, while abusing the Soviet behind its back.

I see red; there's a real quarrel. Finally agreed: to ask some queue-worn shopper what he has to say about it all. We accost a florid, middle-aged man.

"Citizen, this foreign visitor is disgusted with our arrangements here. He thinks you must be too. Your comments, please?"

"Anyway, there's enough sausage for all now."

"But he says we make you fight for it too hard in this store. He says if there's enough sausage, there should be more sausage outlets."

"Would make no difference."

"He wants to know why not."

"Because people have money now. Everybody wants to buy sausage. Open more stores, and you'll get more queues. It's simple."

For him, but I give up.

So many things seem so simple. Driving back from Babi Yar, where Kiev's Jews were massacred by the invaders, we talk about anti-Semitism. The Ukrainian driver breaks into the rather tense conversation:

"Our friend from Australia obviously doesn't know about Soviet education. Anti-Semitism? Here? Now? An impossibility!"

I ask, but not the driver, "Why, when it is claimed that Soviet Jews are eager to assimilate, and are not treated as a genuine minority nationality like the Uzbeks or the Kirghis, do they still get the word Jew stamped in their internal passports?"

"Because," I am answered by a certain, extremely likeable traveller in the car, "because what would happen if we didn't so stamp them? You would howl in the west that we've abolished our Jews."

And once more I give up.

In Kiev Anna Guzik's Yiddish troupe from Moscow presents dramatised excerpts from Sholem Aleichem in a packed hall. A stunning performance, though young love scenes are played by

actors in their sixties. At the end there is an ovation so long, fervent and emotional that it seems like a demonstration.

Kiev. The botanical gardens, vast and indescribably lovely, with a ravishing view over this gay and beautiful city. A mist of lilac. A woman passes with an armful of blooms. We exchange a few words and before she walks on she shares with us her flowering burden.

Moscow. In the Tretyakov Gallery the ikons, especially Rublov's, are, in the word's pure meaning, a revelation. There, too, hang the Repins. They alone are worth a trip to Moscow. But the gallery is fearfully overcrowded, like a jumble sale. Acres of depressing naturalism masquerading as realism. Over-accentuated muscles and limbs in a naive attempt to suggest the heroic. A bad painting, among many others, which yet somehow sticks in the mind: a winter scene with a central group: German soldiers hanging a partisan. In the foreground a Nazi army photographer is recording the execution. He is seen from the back, his neck bulging grotesquely. In fact a caricature, but strangely powerful and arresting.

Between Moscow and Leningrad. Dawn. The train hurtling through larch and birch woods, through landscapes of moor and sand, past villages which, from my window, look as lonely and untouched as they may have looked in Turgenyev's time. Block-houses, ponds, rough country roads beneath a pale cold sky. A poem of loneliness, yet homely.

Leningrad. Four corpses lie in open coffins in St. Nikolai Cathedral, awaiting burial. One old man, three shrivelled old women. One woman has a belly enormously swollen. Their little parchment faces are uncovered. They all died on Easter day, and so their souls, the believers say, will go straight to heaven.

Talking to a student in Moscow. He thinks Daniel and Sinyavsky deserved contempt because they sold themselves to foreign enemies, but mildly disapproves of their imprisonment and the way the trial was conducted. "Pasternak's case was another matter," he says, "We shall never forgive them for hounding him."

"Who is 'them'?"

"Well, you know. But I'm much more interested in literature than in politics. Anyway, there will always be a we and a them."

# Caspian town

PETER RUSSELL

"I lingered long enough to see, in the jaundice-tinted water of the hookah, the rocking body of a scorpion"

ALLAH is God! There is no other God but Allah! Practically every day they pass my window, the re-usable wooden coffin draped with a velvet cloth and carried on the shoulders of the male members of the deceased's family. As they pass, men on the footpath or sitting at their shop fronts trot out to lay a hand on the coffin and then peel off as others take over. The elaborateness of the drape corresponds with the wealth of the family, whilst the better off have a photograph in a frame as well.

I often see the outline of the dead man's shroud silhouette move under the jolting motion and wish morbidly for the cover to slip and give me a sight of the corpse. But it has never slipped and I'm told that the body is well wrapped anyway. Women are seldom buried with ceremony such as this; they are taken quietly away in the back of a vehicle.

Persians seem very blasé about their dead. But now the chant has passed from earshot and has, I suppose, reached the cemetery at the end of the street where the body will go under its plain cement block. Outside the bells continue. They hang on the harness of the horses that pull the brightly painted carts and are a curious sound in a tropical place. Even now, after three months, I still think of ski-ing in Zermatt or what Christmas is supposed to be.

Every place has its oddities and here it is those sleigh bells; and the dry cleaners. One would not expect a dry cleaner to make a living in Babol where the men are so scruffy and wear the same clothes day after day. But the women are well and modernly dressed under their chadors and must keep the cleaners in business. Anyway, there are a lot of them—the dry cleaners I mean—and I never cease to be amused by their exhaust pipes which hiss like fairground trains and puff little balls of steam at the feet of the passers-by on the footpath.

And these people seem amused by me. Maybe it's just my rarity value; being European, there certainly aren't many of us around. I feel like a pleasure battery. When I pass people in the street, they stare and when I stop they gather around to joke, smile and babble. I soon got used to the stares and have now developed an inflated view of my own entertainment value. I have only to

make the most orthodox of gestures to trigger broad smiles of approval from all around me. Such a friendly lot, not in the unsure manner of the African but with a respectful-but-equal attitude. Some of the multitude of children around my house have learnt to say "Hello", and to fire the word at me in semi-automatic spurts affords them endless delight. "Goodbye", with the accent laid heavily on the "good" has recently galloped into their English vocabulary.

The chorus of "Hellos" and "Goodbyes" pastes a bright prospect on the early morning and the stimulus is maintained by a harrowing drive through the narrow, walled backstreets of the town to the office. The situation is only slightly more frightening since I forbade my driver to sound his horn. We now seem to represent a more serious threat to the pedestrians who command these tributary labyrinths. Everyone sounds his horn continuously so that pedestrians know his precise location and can treat him with calculated disdain. But the purring approach of a non-horn-sounding vehicle presents a serious threat which must be avoided well in advance.

There are few beggars and even they are not a grovelling lot; it requires a practised eye to isolate them from the general populace. I can't do it yet and have to confine my charity to the few obvious ones. Even that has not been a success. Recently, I walked out of my way to press a five rial coin into the palm of a stick-like pauper crawling along a main road, his head inches from the wheels of passing cars. His deep night eyes first regarded the coin and then myself with supreme disapproval before averting in search of a more worthy giver. To me, the donor usually looks identical to the receiver—or worse! A few days ago on my way to work I approached a hatchet-faced man in a wheelchair in his usual position close to the corner of a house in a narrow street. Someone gave him something and it wasn't until we drew level with the donor that I saw he had no face!

\*

Perhaps the women too are a paradox. They cover their faces with their chadors but suckle their babies fairly openly. The woman that tends my house barges in quite unembarrassed though she sees that I have on only my underpants. She is always bringing her three teenage daughters to visit me. I wonder what they want? And yet last

week in Babolsar my friend and I were thrown out of the hotel discotheque for asking girls to dance.

The Caspian Sea attracts me by its disappointment. I'd always thought that the water was fresh, but it tastes almost as saline as the ocean. The sand is practically black and the holidaying Persians drive up and down it in their cars. Someone off their guard when leaving the water is in danger of being run over or else severely startled by the klaxon of a bus or truck. Still, as I sit in one of the flimsy wooden hotels thrown up for the brief duration of the summer season and watch the sun fall into the sea, I can almost imagine it romantic. The Khorassan earthquake in September gave the sea and its environment a hazed, unliving hue which I imagined as the fringe of a nuclear cloud.

It takes less than the Persian music played everywhere to bring one back to earth from such dreams, but the music does make a worthy opponent for the euphoria generated by vodka and caviar. They are both cheap here and one forces them down and fights against developing a permanent attachment which may prove costly when pursued in countries which have to import them.

I developed an early interest in the sturgeon and felt an immediate sympathy for the way in which the pregnant female was hunted and captured as she swam into the muddy mouths of the rivers in spring and autumn to spawn. I was revolted in watching the hygienic and almost ceremonial slitting open of the swollen belly and felt, rather old-maidishly I suppose, that the caviar would serve a more useful purpose generating a new set of living creatures than lying in the stomach of a wealthy man already engorged with a surfeit of other elaborate food.

Driving through the miles of paddy fields which encircle Babol bores me now and I am always looking for an excuse to go up into the mountains whose rain and melting snows water the Mazandaran Plain. Now that it is autumn, the nomads with their small flocks are unwinding from the dusty passes. Like the weather-blackened man with all his possessions piled onto the back of the white mule with resigned martyrdom in its eyes; grey striped blankets, lumpy tent material and pots. And on top of all, looking royally supercilious, a goose. The amusing bird was permitted to sit upright whilst his luckless companion fowls

were trussed up, flushed and uncomfortable below him; a comical phoenix on the funeral pyre of the fowls' red plumage.

That was yesterday, a Friday and the Moslem Sunday. The lunch in the open restaurant beside the Tajan River was the best I've had here on the Caspian. Chelowkebab, the commonest way of utilising the copious local supply of mutton and long-grained rice, but perfectly cooked and served with raw onion, raw egg, sumac, peppers and a palatable type of local grass. Of course the heavy trucks which never seem to be out of earshot ground past, but the tall trees and the sight of the river were a mental screen and, after I had noticed her, the proprietress commanded all my attention. As I walked to the bathroom behind the kitchen, she was at the front seated on a thick, low wooden stool. Her body was enormous and her visible skin, filled out and colored a mat pink and purple. A soiled cloth held back her straight oily hair and blended with a loose smock which allowed her bosom to rest on her knees and her doughy bottom to sag almost to the ground. Chunky, carpeted feet were planted wide apart and firmly screwed to podgy ankles. She regarded me with malignant eyes as I passed. The entrance to her mouth was linked to the blunt stem of a hookah by a sparkling web of saliva which she licked in with a red tongue. I smiled weakly but lingered before the grubby monolith long enough to see, in the jaundice-tinted water of the hookah, the rocking body of a scorpion.

Parts of yesterday had been interesting and I felt happy in the Land Rover on the way home. As we neared the house a girl of six or seven was standing on top of a pile of builder's sand close to a wall. With a look of aggressive delight on her face she was rhythmically waiving her arms and swinging her hips, whilst a fellow alley sylph clapped splayed little hands in accompaniment.

Beside the unpretentious mosque a young woman and an old lady stood before the alam, a brass religious object of a vertical spoon shape with a symbolic hand in place of the shaft. The young woman had just locked a padlock onto the attached bar where it hung together with many others interspersed with strips of cloth and lengths of ribbon. She bent and kissed the alam, having made her wish. I'm told that, when the wish is granted, her padlock will drop off.

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# BOOKS

ORWELL

CLEMENT SEMMLER

Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (eds.): "The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell" (Four volumes, Secker and Warburg, \$24.80).

I believe it is true of George Orwell, uniquely perhaps among the writers of this century, and certainly among the writers of his era, that he was a man of absolute and uncompromising integrity. If one were to take these books away to a desert island and read them over and over again, all 2,041 pages of them (which is the way they deserve to be read) one would come to no other possible conclusion. And it is a bonus indeed that they are so magnificently produced, and so lovingly and carefully edited.

It is this very integrity of the man that has given ammunition to his detractors who over the years have tried to shoot him down with charges of priggishness, of a holier-than-thouness which in most cases has stemmed from irritation that Orwell so very, very often was proved right in his stances and attitudes. As someone once remarked, Orwell was prematurely canonised. Because he acted what he believed and because he saw through many of the left-wing follies of his time, he became, in the years after his death, a little bit more than human. Yet the fact remains that though he was human to a degree (in those incredibly moving essays "A Hanging" and "Shooting an Elephant" he admits, in the former instance, to a dreadful desecration of human dignity and in the latter to committing an inhuman act "solely to avoid looking a fool") Orwell was a much better man than any of us could hope to be, and it is this fact which shines so brightly in these miscellaneous writings.

Although unfortunately these volumes include far too little of his splendid theatre criticism and book reviews, none of his film criticism, not enough of his broadcasts over the BBC and none of his magnificent despatches to the Observer from Germany in 1945, it would be carping to deny the achievement of what has been preserved. Volume I gives his writing from his first article "Why I Write" published in 1920 when he was 17 until 1940 when the war changed his way of life. I suppose one sees particularly here his development as a writer. It is especially interesting to read his balanced and unemotional judgments of writing: that "Tropic of Cancer" is a "remarkable book—I strongly advise anyone who can get hold of a copy to have a look at it" (this in 1935!); that "A Passage to India", while "not the perfect novel about India . . . is the best we have ever had and the best we are likely to get". This volume too includes I think his best literary essay, the one on Charles Dickens where he concludes with what indeed might have been his own epitaph: "a man who is **generously angry** . . . a nineteenth century liberal, a free intelligence, a type hated with equal hatred by all the smelly little orthodoxies which are now contending for our souls". There is also in this volume that celebrated essay on "Boys' Weeklies". As for his develop-

ment as a writer this volume re-prints a number of the jottings that became "Down and Out in Paris and London" (including "The Spike"—his almost revoltingly realistic description of a tramp colony) and extracts from "The Road to Wigan Pier" diary. Here more than anywhere else one realises what a superb reporter Orwell was ("perhaps the best of his generation," Philip Toynbee said once) especially of the agonies and heroisms and plain miseries of working class life in the Thirties. Who remembers now, and who cares? Orwell did, but then one realises too, reading these excerpts, that in those days unemployment figures, to the middle and upper classes, meant nothing at all in human terms, and that the working classes to them meant as much as the tribes of the Amazon. Yet, though he was their voice, Orwell's relations with the working classes were like a protracted, exquisitely-painful love affair; he could never be one with them and he knew it, but he could never leave them alone.

Volume II covers the war years up to 1943 highlighted by his unorthodox but stimulating "London Letters" to the Partisan Review, his monograph "The Lion and the Unicorn" (Socialism and the English Genius) with his classic description of the English character. When he writes "The heirs of Nelson and of Cromwell are not in the House of Lords. They are in the fields, the streets . . . in the four-ale bar and suburban backgarden; and at present they are still kept under by a generation of ghosts", he was writing with that same unblemished candor, terrifying in a way which led him to write about the same time in reviewing Hitler's "Mein Kampf": "I should like to put it on record that I have never been able to dislike Hitler . . . I would certainly kill him if I could get within reach of him but I could feel no personal animosity. The fact is there is something deeply appealing about him. One feels it again when one sees his photograph . . . a pathetic log-like face of a man suffering under intolerable wrongs". This volume also covers his two years with the BBC's External Service.

Volume III covers his literary editorship of the Tribune and his string of polemically entertaining columns for it under the title of "As I Please". But I feel the star pieces of this volume remain his "In Defence of P. G. Wodehouse" ("the petty rats are hunted down . . . the big rats escape"), and his so-prophetic indictment of pulp-magazines and railway bookstall neo-pornography, "Raffles and Miss Blandish". Finally Volume IV, where one finds so many of those brilliant essays for which one cherishes Orwell: "Decline of English Murder", "Books v. Cigarettes", "The Prevention of Literature" and perhaps most of all, always to be read with a wild mind-hugging joy, his everlastingly damning indictment of the public school system, "Such, Such were the Joys".

No reviewer I suspect could within a limited compass do justice to these writings. I have not mentioned the mass of letters—to his contemporaries and friends like Koestler, Victor Gollancz, Spender, Julian Symons, Anthony Powell and

dozens more. They, even more than his essays and reviews, reveal so much of his grimly-sustained personal philosophy—his recognition for instance that social justice (his concept of “socialism”) and the collectivist state were not synonymous but rather at odds; his hatred of British imperialism; his constant hammering of the theme that there could be no short cuts to the Utopia of the sort of socialism he believed in.

But inevitably, as I said at the beginning, one comes back to his integrity, his willingness, as no writer I have read before or since, to say fearlessly what he believed. Naturally I find, for instance, what he said about his two years with the BBC of particular interest. He minced no words. The BBC “as bookie, pimp and vet, Presenting Air Vice-Marshals set to cheer” (as he wrote in one of his satirical verses) had undoubted feet of clay. “Its atmosphere is something halfway between a girls’ school and a lunatic asylum,” he wrote in his War-time Diary; and to Alec Cornford “what a mixture of whoreshop and lunatic asylum it is”. When he wrote to Rayner Heppenstall that he was leaving the BBC he said he felt in its service like “an orange that’s been trodden on by a very dirty boot”. Yet he could justly and rightly laud its truthfulness in news reporting (in spite of its “foreign propaganda and the unbearable voices of its announcers”). He left the BBC because as he wrote he could no longer stand a situation where “most of the stuff that goes out from the BBC is just shot into the stratosphere, not listened to by anybody, and **known** to those responsible for it not to be listened to by anybody”!

All this, in those days (1942), took incredible courage and honesty to write, just as, in the lighter but no less iconoclastic vein he could deride the English obsession for competitive sports (how one would wish to see this essay “The Sporting Spirit” printed in a Melbourne newspaper at the height of the football season!). Surely, implied Orwell, only idiots could believe that running and jumping and kicking a ball were “tests of national virtue”; his conclusion was ironically and prophetically adequate that if you wanted to add to the “vast fund of ill-will existing in the world at this moment” you could hardly do better than by a series of football matches between Jews and Arabs, Germans and Greeks, Indians and British, Russians and Poles, and Italians and Jugoslavs. (Or one might add, according as the cap fits, cricket, ice-hockey or soccer matches!)

Finally, as in his novels, so in this collection is the crystal purity of Orwell’s prose style. Personally, I would write in permanent letters on the walls of every secondary schoolroom in our country Orwell’s basic rules for the proper writing of English (set out in his essay “Politics and the English Language”):

1. Never use a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
2. Never use a long word where a short one will do.
3. If it is possible to cut a word out always cut it out.

4. Never use the passive where you can use the active.
5. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.

## MATRIARCHAL DEATH

LAURENCE COLLINSON

Philip Roth: “Portnoy’s Complaint” (Jonathan Cape, no Australian price).

The more I consider the situation the more convinced I become that those governmental officials appointed to superintend the moral welfare of Australian citizens, and given the legal means of doing so, are absolutely justified in refusing to allow this book into the country to infect and, possibly, eventually to destroy our nation. For, make no mistake about it, this book is a major weapon of that international conspiracy of anarchists, agitators, and degenerates who are invading the entire Free World, and who have already established citadels of unspeakable permissiveness in such formerly healthy societies as those of the United States, Britain, and Scandinavia, which last contains that small but totally debased state of Denmark **where anything is permitted**.

I am not speaking merely of sexual matters. We live in a utopia where bronzed gods and goddesses sport wholesomely amid the white sands and translucent green surf, where our love of outdoor pursuits brings us into continual contact with glorious Nature, and where the gruff affection of male comradeship and the essential innocence of the weaker sex form the everyday pattern of our lives; the purity of our population keeps us in a condition of physical and mental perfection that can never be corrupted by even the most insidious of alien customs. What have we to do with the sexual malpractices upon which the book dwells? These perversions, which include fellatio, cunnilingus and lesbianism, are surely unknown among us, except perhaps for a minority of effete and contaminated individuals to whom we have so far shown a democratic but dangerous tolerance that must, for the sake of unborn generations, be reviewed. Normal intercourse, and then primarily for the sake of procreation, must be the pledge of every Australian patriot.

That this is a vicious book intended to undermine the vulnerable and immature citizen cannot be doubted. Obscene language and something that passes for humor besmirch every page. What, for example, should one make of the enormous number of synonymous expressions for masturbation (a subject that trails its slimy way across almost every page of the novel)? What is there original or creative about these phrases coined by the narrator, Alexander Portnoy, who refers to himself as “the Raskolnikov of jerking off?” How tasteless are his anecdotes! What possible value can these babblings have outside the darker regions of psychology or philology?

Pornography is everywhere, so cunningly interwoven with the fabric of the story (such as it is: the ravings of a neurotic to his psychiatrist hardly conform to **our** robust requirements for fiction) that the less analytical reader might suppose it to

be integral to the wispish plot. Great artists exercise tact, delicacy, restraint, but not the Jew Philip Roth who pads the book with every coarse physical and sexual detail he can think of to decoy the weak-minded and the unwary and thereby write himself a best-seller—a best-seller only in less fastidious countries than our own, I must add. Nothing is sacred to this man, not even the slogans of his own camp.

It surely never crossed my mind that I would wind up trying to free from bondage nothing more than my own prick. LET MY PETER GO! There, that's Portnoy's slogan. That's the story of my life, all summed up in four heroic dirty words. A travesty! My politics, descended entirely to my putz! JERK-OFF ARTISTS OF THE WORLD UNITE! YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT YOUR BRAINS!

There are no lengths to which people like Roth will not go in their efforts to blanket the world with excreta. Portnoy Senior may have suffered severely from constipation, but the author, through the mouth of the son, amply supplies what the father was unable to produce.

But all this, no matter how horrifying, is trivial in comparison with the book's primary function—nothing more nor less than an attempt to subvert the foundations of civilised Western society. This novel is the most insidious attack ever launched against the most noble concept of man on earth and God in heaven. It is a murderously mounted campaign, a veritable hymn of hate against—motherhood.

For every evil that besets the antihero Alexander Portnoy he blames his mother. True, she is a Jewish mother, but this is simply camouflage to allow the author to thrust home the wider implications of his thesis. Was not the mother of Jesus also a Jewish mother? The while Alexander Portnoy extends the argument to include fathers as well!

Good Christ, a Jewish man with parents alive is a fifteen-year-old boy, and will remain a fifteen-year-old boy till they die! . . . Doctor! Doctor! Did I say fifteen? Excuse me, I meant ten! I meant five! I meant zero! A Jewish man with his parents alive is half the time a helpless infant!

Do not be fooled. In reviling his mother for behavior that is to normal people frankly and purely maternal, Portnoy reviles all women. He does not even draw the line at good Christian girls, 'shiksies': he forces them to intimacy to revenge what he considers was his father's exploitation at the hands of his insurance company employers. How Portnoy hates Christians, the 'goyim', and Christianity!

What kind of base and brainless schmucks are these people to worship somebody who, number one, never existed, and number two, if he did, looking as he does in that picture, was without a doubt The Pansy of Palestine. In a pageboy haircut, with a Palmolive complexion—and wearing a gown that I realise today must have come from Fredericks of Hollywood! Enough of God and the rest of that garbage! Down with religion and human grovelling! Up with socialism and the dignity of man!

So, the truth at last! Down with religion, up with socialism! The apparently personal case history is in reality a propaganda tract.

As we might well have known! Portnoy claims that because his mother was over-possessive, he was never vouchsafed the natural ability of men to love women. Instead he was forced to manual substitution. And conversely his encounters with women became a substitute for self-abuse—to such an extent that he could never be satisfied with one woman, and hence could never fulfil himself, like decent men, in marriage.

Please, let us not bullshit one another about "love" and its duration, which is why I ask: how can I marry someone I "love" knowing full well that five, six, seven years hence I am going to be out on the streets hunting down the fresh new pussy—all the while my devoted wife, who has made me such a lively home, et cetera, bravely suffers her loneliness and rejection?

What are such confessions but an apology for a lack of self-discipline and a failure to respect womanhood? Women to Portnoy are nothing but instruments of physical relief. And is this not the identical way in which subversives throughout history have regarded women!

Portnoy ends up impotent. For this his mother is responsible—he says. Had she shown more respect for his masculinity, he would not have grown up as he did.

Here is how I learned to pee into the bowl like a big man. Just listen to this! I stand over the circle of water, my baby's weeny jutting cutely forth, while my momma sits beside the toilet on the rim of the bathtub, one hand controlling the tap of the tub (from which a trickle runs that I am supposed to imitate) and her other hand tickling the underside of my prick . . . Imagine! The **ludicrousness!** A man's character is being forged, a destiny is being shaped . . . oh, maybe not . . . At any rate, for what the information is worth, in the presence of another man I simply cannot draw my water.

Are we to allow such a book into this country, a book in which sexual abominations go hand in hand with the dangerous doctrines of revolution? Shall we permit this subtle manual to influence the minds of our young people and those of their elders who lack the experience, perspicacity, and sophistication to recognise this devil's dissertation for what it is? How ashamed, how dismayed, how despairing such readers would be to discover that what the decadent critics abroad have referred to as a joyfully obscene comic novel, superbly written with insight and gusto, is in reality an explosion designed to shatter the basic values and institutions of a free enterprise society.

We are right to ban this book. We cannot afford remorse that comes too late.

## WHERE A MAN BELONGS

JOHN McLAREN

David Martin: "Where a Man Belongs" (Cassell, \$3.50).

David Martin's latest novel is probably his most profound, or at least his most ambitious. The ambition does not lie in its scope, which, although it spans half the world, is less than that of "The Hero of Too". Nor does it lie in the social rele-

vance of its themes, although it deals with problems of war and peace, Jewishness and anti-semitism. It is unlike a novel like "The Young Wife", or even "The King Between", because the social themes are strictly subordinated to the exploration of the personal problems of a mere handful of characters. Its importance lies in its confrontation of the question of what constitutes the substance of a man's life.

It would be tempting to see the novel as tracing both its author's own spiritual autobiography and marking an important stage in that autobiography—his discovery that, whatever his past, Australia is where he now belongs. Such a confusion of the author with his principal character is encouraged by the fact that the novel is written in the first person. However, its narrator is a fully realised fictional creation who must be judged by the part he plays in the novel rather than by anything he might be supposed to reveal about his author. It is plain that he exists solely within the consciousness of the author, which understands more about him than he knows about himself.

The separation of the author from his narrator emerges quite clearly as the story progresses. The novel is centred around the relationship of the narrator, Max Stielgelman, a writer, and his friend, protege, enemy and alter ego, Paul Birtle, an ageing accountant who keeps fit with dumb-bells, and who travels to Germany in Max's company to marry Gudrun, the widow he has been corresponding with since he answered her advertisement in an introduction magazine. As Max sees the story, Paul is an amusing specimen of humanity who gradually becomes embarrassing through his incompetence and irritating through his dependence. His eventual death is a relief, closing an episode which, apart from satisfying a perverse curiosity, has been largely a waste of time.

The picture the reader gets of Max and Paul is, however, quite different. At first, we share Max's distaste for his companion, but by the end of the book it is Max's behavior, not only to Paul but to his father's de facto widow, to the priest he meets on the train, and to others which appears ungracious and self-obsessed, and Paul who earns our sympathy. This change in our sympathies is not brought about through any enlargement which occurs in Paul, who remains annoyingly uncomprehending, but by our gradual understanding that Max is using Paul as a foil for his own inability to come to terms with his past and consequently with the world.

The two central characters in fact share far more qualities than Max would care to admit. Max claims to have achieved a satisfactory relationship with women, but we know that his marriage has just failed and his new relation with Marion seems particularly one-sided. In fact, his main concern during his journey seems to be to come to terms with his own parents. His mother died during his infancy, but he claims to remember a love for her. His step-mother treated him with love, which he seems to have been unable to reciprocate because of his confused relationship with his father, who refers to him as Absalom after he takes the step-mother's side in a quarrel. The added facts of his exile and his resentment of all Germans make him truly a stateless person whose personal life lacks warmth or stability because he himself lacks a past.

Paul is similarly a failure, but in his case because he lacks any future in the light of his inability to find a woman. Max, obsessed with his own past, attempts to discover the real Paul by ferreting out the details of his parents, but these give us little understanding of Paul's present dilemma. He has built a past which he can believe in, based on an able but drunken father and a loving mother, and the clues of family aberration which Max discovers seem to have little to do with the sterility of his present life.

It is this lack of any doubt about either his past or about the rightness of his own actions which appears to infuriate Max against Paul. His advice to Paul about women is designed to destroy his confidence rather than enhance it, and he is constantly insinuating weaknesses which Paul ignores. For, although Paul to the outsider appears to lack either charm or talent, he has no self-doubt except on the sole matter of women, whereas Max, beneath his veneer of public success, is still unable to accept himself as a person.

Finally, Paul in effect abandons Max for the companionship of a bunch of former Nazi soldiers with whom he discovers a spiritual affinity, and Max discovers the truth about Gudrun's Nazi past. Max then ravishes Gudrun, so both finding his revenge for the past and appropriating for himself Paul's past and Paul's certainty. This action precipitates the destruction of Paul's hopes of marriage and, shortly afterwards, of Paul himself, who dies in India on the journey home, although not before Max makes another assault on his core of belief by attacking the legend of Anzac.

The destruction of Paul frees Max from his past and enables him to return to Australia and Marion with some hope of starting anew. The few moments of warmth in the book come, in fact, from the closing scene with Marion when they scatter Paul's ashes, and from the conversation Max has with Gudrun's daughter, who begs him for forgiveness, on behalf of the past, so that he may learn again to believe in love.

Thus barely stated, the book might sound like a bleak case study in guilt and hatred. To the extent that we see it through Max's eyes this is so, but behind his sour disenchantment the author constantly implies a richer possibility for those who can free themselves to grasp it. The bleakness in the book is not in the life it shows, but in the outlook of those who, lacking a past and a future, are unable to live in the present.

## TWO POETS

R. J. DEEBLE

Adrian Henri: "Tonight at Noon" (Rapp and Whiting, \$1.60).  
B. A. Breen: "Behind my Eyes" (M.U.P., \$3).

Adrian Henri—poet, painter, popstar, actor, and critic. A man who gets a fan letter with every rejection slip. A man typifying the success of, and the apparent need for, intermedia artistry in a society that believes McLuhanism is a lot more than the regurgitation of an Appollinaire treatise.

In "Tonight at Noon" (his first volume) Henri bludgeons the reader's senses and leads him dangerously along the perceptive path to a point where instant insanity becomes preferable to an acceptable paranoia.



The subjects range from last wills and testaments to suggestions for do-it-yourself poems:

"Try to imagine your next hangover".

"The next time you clean your teeth, think about what you're doing."

In two longer poems, "I want to paint" and "Fairground Poem", Henri reveals his obsession for compatibility between poetry and painting (according to the publicity, his strongest mediums):

My mind is easily corrupted  
Grateful to be fed on  
Candyfloss  
Hamburgers  
Brandynaps.

Having suggested smell and taste he offers color:  
I want to paint  
2000 dead birds crucified on a background of night

10,000 shocking pink hearts with your name on.

In other pieces he attempts similar expression but the voyage is not always successful. His choice of imagery is often not strong enough to overcome the obviousness of a number of disjointed phrases which rely too heavily on pivot words and repetitive lines to convey a sense of balance.

In shorter works Henri has more control, and its in this area of caustic comment and melancholy moments of mind that he has his forte.

Although there is a distinct reliance on the academic pursuits of his fellow poet, Roger McGough, "Galactic Love Poem" and "April Message" are excellent examples of his ability to get the most out of a few lines.

Owls were hooting when I went to bed  
And when I got up blackbirds were singing  
and I hadn't slept at all in between  
Thinking about you.

In a pot pourri of opinions to complete the collection, Henri sums up his position admirably when he says "What annoys me about the 'movement's' poems, for instance, is that they tend to be a whole poem based on one image, rather like weak Nescafe. Because I was trained as a painter, I think my poems are concerned very much with concrete images, often visual ones.

"As a poet I am interested in how far poetry can be pushed in different directions and still remain poetry".

In "Behind My Eyes", also a first collection, by the young Australian poet, Barry Breen, one becomes immediately aware of a sensitive voice pleading rather than demanding.

Technically the book withstands the acid test very well, which will undoubtedly assure him of an audience in the future. But for those who enjoy adventurous literature the collection is typical of the "Aus-lit" style where the garden path is familiar because the roses don't vary much in color from year to year.

In "General Clinic, Children's Hospital", Breen gives an inkling of the power he may command in time. The piece is perceptive and brilliantly descriptive.

He thought he was above them, of course-lower class, migrants mainly, sitting dull-eyed on short benches around the room. And one, young, fat, fell red-faced when she sat too near the end of an empty seat. God, he thought,

these bastards won't even move to help her up.

Another poem which has a similar aura is "Widow". There is no unnecessary embellishment

and the construction does not seem contrived under duress. As is the case with Adrian Henri, Breen appears to be more at home with shorter works where a natural flow is more easily managed.

However he often chooses unfortunate phrases, "prissily-sipped drink", "much-vaunted Gaelic charm" which tend to mar the effect of a poem even if it is supposed to be amusing.

In the section dealing with his experiences as a school teacher, Breen strives for an insight beyond his duties as purveyor of truth and enlightenment. And in "Problem Children" and "The Retard" he succeeds in convincing me that teachers weren't all that bad after all.

The poor girl's fat. It's not  
as if it matters that  
her voice is adenoidal, harsh,  
her brain uncomplicated by  
pretence of logic but  
the poor girl's fat.

The final section of the book is devoted to the thoughts of O'Flaherty, sections of which earned the author the joint Poetry Magazine Award for 1967.

Breen offers the reader ten fragments from the back of an Aussie-Irish-rough'n tumble brain that has all the earmarks of a C. J. Dennis expatriate.

A funny but sad character not quite skilfully drawn enough to suggest permanency in the annals of colloquial Australian literature.

## NEW POETRY

### FRANK KELLAWAY

Rodney Hall: "The Autobiography of a Gorgon" (Cheshire, \$2.50).

Geoffrey Lehmann: "A Voyage of Lions" (Angus & Robertson, \$2).

Bruce Beaver: "Open at Random" (South Head Press, \$2.75).

Craig Powell: "I Learn by Going" (South Head Press, \$2.75).

Cyril Goode: "War Poems of a Non-combatant" (Privately printed, 20c).

Dorothy Auchterlonie (ed.): "Australian Poetry 1968" (Angus & Robertson, \$2.25).

Clifford O'Brien (ed.): "Silence into Song . . ." (Rigby, \$1.60).

The poet's alienation from his audience has been a popular theme in poetry since the thirties and appears explicitly in two and implicitly in one of the books of poems under review.

Bruce Beaver's poem "Open at Random" berates the reader for coming to his poems with preconceptions about what poetry ought or ought not to do.

How dare we ask of poetry that which we may not bring to it, if it is there?

"If it is there" is of course the overriding qualification.

Craig Powell, in similar mood, menaces that he is going to: "mutter something you have never heard".

But for heaven's sake, many readers and some reviewers, though they can't help bringing their limited experience both of poetry and of life to poems, are looking for something rich and strange, or true and ordinary or illuminating or memorable—something new and meaningful which will break through their preconceptions.

Of course if we try and don't make the grade it may be our fault and not the poets'. The fact

is that responding to poems is very like responding to people. Two personalities at least are interacting and against a complex background of tradition (etiquette) and already established loves and hates. For this reason a great deal of poetry reviewing either reads like character assassination or like back-scratching. Every honest attempt to review poems involves the effort to avoid either, but perhaps we should resign ourselves to failure.

"The Autobiography of a Gorgon" is a new book of poems by Rodney Hall, a recent holder of the Canberra fellowship in the creative arts. The verse is tense and spare and one has a strong sense of a mature craftsman at work, but this reviewer looked in vain for a memorable line, an original thought, or a rhythmic movement which might indicate the emergence of a personal voice. The poems are often obscure as a result of what looks like private reference as in "Studio at Anticoli Corrado". Sometimes the thought is far-fetched and even silly: an example is the poem to Gwen Harwood called "Known Music". The danger of loving some tunes too well, he says, is that

These may come to hoard  
so great a part of us,  
that somebody we love  
begins to recognise us  
only in the music.

The best poems are those which develop a simple metaphor, "Fishing", for instance, about the poet's return visit to England, likens memory to fishing and ends,

But loss makes foreign, and when in reach  
the past is only fit  
for killing or throwing back.

The long sequence "Autobiography of a Gorgon" is an attempt to see the poet as a mythic monster and to explore the nature of his activities in relation to society:

Of my pursuit, of my career,  
it is enough for me to list my prey:  
the eloquent, the warm, the young,  
the swift, the self-possessed, the strong.

The verse is sometimes elegant, the utterance often gnomic, but as with most of the other poems one has the feeling that the poet intends more significance than the words will carry.

Geoffrey Lehmann in "A Voyage of Lions" presents poetry of a different sort. It is eloquent and free with conversational rhythms superimposed very often on a basic iambic pattern. There are occasional poems in stricter form like the villanelle "Fall of a Greek City" and—in some places—a sparing use of rhyme. It is poetry in what Professor Hope calls the "discursive mode". It is easy to read, has considerable insight into human motivation and achieves occasional moments of quiet beauty, particularly when he writes of dolphins.

Often at night a slave girl reads me books  
About the sea and soon my head  
Nods with the surge and sees dusk-tawny  
headlands,  
A salt-haze and those voyagers of love  
Who do not sleep or dream  
Playing endlessly in wave-crash and sun-  
spume.

The danger of this sort of verse is slackness and verbosity and there will be many readers who, after reading it several times and dwelling on a number of poems, will put the book aside with a sense of dissatisfaction. A lack of precision as well as looseness of rhythm and form contribute

to this. For example, while a male reader anyway is likely to respond to Joyce's image "the scrotum-tightening sea" with fascination at its exactness, the image in the following line and a half from "Observations for a Classic Coast" seem unintentionally comic:

Salt water smell  
as from the strong pure urine of a god.  
Clean-limbed pure-salt-water-pissing gods are a  
little difficult to take seriously.

Bruce Beaver occasionally uses traditional forms like the sonnet or sometimes the haiku (not very orientally) but more often aims at a personal organic form based on echoes and repetitions. My objection is not to the idea of doing this, but to his method which seems to me not nearly formal enough. "Communicant" is an excellent example of the strengths and weaknesses of his method. The first seven lines have a very beautiful, original chime and movement.

From wilderness of land and sea  
Say that I come with scarcely tongue to tell  
Of knowing beyond saying.  
Only say that you have ears to hear  
That which you do not know you know.  
Perhaps it is not too soon to try  
Too late to tell.

They excite expectation (perhaps the expectation which Beaver would not allow us to have) of formal felicities, but the shape distintegrates after this.

Like Hall, Beaver is preoccupied with the position of the poet and what his activity signifies. A sonnet with half rhymes and assonance in the first twelve lines and a concluding couplet, "The Red Balloon" is the most positive and eloquent statement on the subject. More often poems on this theme are disenchanting and satirical. In "Under the Wheels" he asks, for example:

How does one jump on the Big Chariot?  
Over the backs and on the faces, guts and  
genitals of others.

How did I fail to make it?

Surely this is rather an hysterical view of the literary rat-race. After all a good poem is good irrespective of what other poets write and what the reviewers or the immediate public think is not finally important.

However, some of his poems about the poet's struggle are moving. "Spilling It" has these lines:

It's the poet in me, lodged in my heart, my  
mouth  
Has developed a taste for words, a hunger  
for truth

Before and beyond the windy waste of saying.  
Time it retired or came forth like a birth,  
Out of the gates of, naming the gift of, breath.

The book contains poems about flowers, about a tom cat, about the Basset Hound, about the Capsicum and a number about places. All of them have moments of vividness but most are marred by pretentious phraseology or the lazy choice of a journalist's word.

Craig Powell, "I Learn by Going", writes in traditional forms but within them achieves cadences of a rich, personal energy. Like his friend Bruce Beaver, he is a sad, savage, witty, alienated poet, but in him the source of anger is not only his own suffering, but more usually the pain of others. This enables him to express compassion as well as anger and lamentation. "Sea Wind", a sonnet

about walking at night with an angry, suffering friend, is characteristic. It ends:

but afterwards I thought of you again  
as one who raged like sea wind over rock  
until he found the bleak door of his home,  
womb-dark and terrible, and began to knock.

Powell has obviously had a good deal to do with mental illness. Is he a doctor? There is something about "Nembutal Rock"—its spareness of language, its easy quatrains, its sombre theme under a brilliant, swiftly moving surface rhythm—which is reminiscent of Auden's ballads about Victor and Miss Gee. Powell's poem is at least as good in the genre and from some points of view more acceptable because less clever and more concerned.

There are a number of other poems about mental illness. All are informed by the same sombre compassion without sentimentality. However, it is in the poems about his own experience that the achievement is most satisfying. He has the ability to make what happens to him personally a matter of importance to men in general. Somehow in talking of himself he manages to keep himself out of the way. He seems to succeed because he concentrates intensely on the emotion itself and tries to render it with precise objectivity. "The Returning of One Loved", "Valediction", "Through Nightmare", "The Unborn" and the tragic poems about the death of his child are all moving expressions, in language which is muscular and form which is scrupulously controlled.

"War Poems by a Non-combatant" by Cyril Goode are sincere, warm-hearted expressions of naive sentiments. Unfortunately they are full of clichés and show no sensitivity to prosody.

As usual the Angus and Robertson anthology "Australian Poetry 1968", selected this time by Dorothy Auchterlone, is of a high standard and covers most poets of quality publishing in accepted literary journals: Meanjin, Overland, Westerly, etc. Of course it is always possible to criticise an anthology for omissions and often to do so is unfair or irrelevant, but in this case it is not merely a matter of detail. This anthology fails to represent the current scene, at least on the Victorian front, because it does not include any of the young poets who are reading their work in cafes round Melbourne, publishing roneoed periodicals like the Great Auk and involving a large number of people in the experience of poetry.

"Silence into Song" is an Australian anthology which appears to be designed for use in schools. While it contains a number of good poems the selection is unimaginative and the amount of period junk depressing. It would be a pity if it were used extensively.

## UNASHAMED EGOIST

A. A. PHILLIPS

Norman Mailer: "The Armies of the Night"  
(Weidenfeld and Nicholson, \$6.10).  
Norman Mailer: "Miami and the Siege of Chicago"  
(Weidenfeld and Nicholson, \$4.60).

It is a pity that the one essential virtue of a critic is to honestly record his reaction to what he reads; for it would be a great pleasure to set aside that demand so that one might take a hearty slam at Mailer and dismiss him with that. It would be no mere self-indulgence either, since the prime fault

of his writing is an artistic sin, certainly not venal, and which is becoming a habit, almost an accepted principle, of up-to-the-minute writing (for better and for worse, Mailer's writing is nothing if not up-to-the-minute).

That sin is a sloppy tolerance of near-enoughness in the use of words. The idea seems to be that the phrasing is okay if it gives the feel of the writer's subjective reaction. If it isn't explicitly intelligible, if it lacks a cutting edge of precision, so much the better. Its ambiguities will be suggestive or evocative or intelligently unobvious, or some other term which will signal applause from the up-to-the-minute claquers.

To accept such an approach is to connive at literary debauchery. Language is so full of ambiguities, so slippery an instrument, that a resolute purposiveness is needed to control it. One of its great values is that it compels its conscientious user to discover the exact nature of his conception, forcing him back to the labor of thinking when he had slipped into harboring notions instead of hewing out ideas. Inversely, it can betray its careless user into assuming that he is thinking effectively when he is in fact merely shooting off his mouth. If a writer does not accept a duty of verbal precision, he is denying the necessary right of the mind to absolute monarchy over the tongue, that unruly member.

Mailer is as hearty an anti-authoritarian in this field as he is in others. He seems to have decided that he will let the words come as they will, with a happy spontaneity. The result is often sheer slop.

Thus he can write: "a simile which would have delivered the simile of a cat licking cream if no previous inventor of the simile had yet existed".

Mailer seems to have been betrayed into this fatuous throwing about of words because he had thought up a platitudinous simile and wanted to disguise that humiliating fact. No really good writer minds occasionally using a platitude, if that is what he has thought. Only a fool would risk the fatigue inflicted on both writer and reader by an attempt at continuous originality; and only a prize fool would "deliver" the platitude and then try to hide it by a flux of verbalising.

I shall give one other example, from scores of notable specimens, this time of a good sentence ruined by its sloppy ending (the "he" referred to in the passage is Mailer himself): "The most powerful irony for himself is that he had lived for a dozen empty hopeless years after the second world war with the bitterness, rage and potential militancy of a real revolutionary, he had some influence perhaps upon this generation of Yuppies now in the street, but no revolution had arisen in the years when he was ready—the timing of his soul was apocalyptically maladroit."

The final phrase is a contemptible choice, not only because of the mismatching of the incongruous conceptions of apocalypse and maladroitness, nor because neither term really expresses the thought, but because of the suggestion of monstrous egotism in a man who regards his misfortune as apocalyptic.

Now it is true that Mailer is an unashamed egoist, often with very interesting results; but he is not the inflatedly pretentious egoist which his phrase suggests. Probably he accepted that word "apocalyptically" because he wanted a nice, big, impressive epithet, and didn't care much how accurately it fitted. The result serves him right.

If my examples represent a persisting tendency in Mailer's writing—as I think they do—they are fair grounds for dismissing him summarily. A merely clumsy sloppiness might be forgiven, particularly in a writer working to over-close deadlines, as Mailer must have been in these topical volumes; but a pretentious sloppiness like Mailer's cannot be condoned.

Unfortunately that demand for the critic's honesty in reporting his reactions remains—and I have to admit that despite my contempt for the pretentious sloppiness, Mailer's writing got me in. It has a rare freshness and vitality, which cannot be here illustrated by examples because the effect is cumulative, needing space for its achievement. His best passages usually consist of long charging sentences which swell and break and coil into each other like a high surf. His account, for instance, of the assembly of dissident youth under the windows of the Hilton Hotel at the Democratic Convention of 1968 creates in the reader both a sense of physical presence at the scene and of emotional involvement with it. Despite his gross writing vices, Mailer compels the reader's engagement by the positive qualities of his writing.

These two books deal respectively with the anti-war march on Washington of 1967 and the two party Conventions of the 1968 Presidential election campaign. They therefore belong to that kind of documentary reportage which, as an art-form, is the characteristic expression, almost the invention, of the mid-twentieth century—even though precursors might be cited as far back as Xenophon or St. Luke. It is a form which particularly suits Mailer. He has a contradictory knack of combining the objectivity of eye of the artist with an intensity of emotional involvement. That combination persists even in the numerous discursions into egoistic self-analysis. Here Mailer achieves not only the candor often characteristic of egoists but something as near honesty of self-appraisal as a human being is likely to attain. He has given an account of how he made an appalling public fool of himself while drunk; and it is near to a comic masterpiece. To attain the detachment needed for good comedy on the theme of one's own crass performance must take some doing.

As a political commentator, Mailer's stance has much of the anarchistic tendency characteristic of the artistic temperament—also, perhaps, characteristic of the younger generation of this period. It is obviously not the best point of view from which to analyse the tactical political movement which forms a large part of the subject-matter of these books. But Mailer's anarchism is—usually—tempered by shrewdness and a tough common-sense. His portraits of the engaged personalities penetrate to the significant features; and they are surprisingly fair-minded, considering Mailer's involvement in political partisanship and the effectiveness with which he describes the warmth, the uncertainties, the moments of chilled scepticism and the moments of surrendering enthusiasm, which his involvement brought him. Beyond that, he has also touches of imaginative insight into the deeper sources of the modern malaises.

Basically I believe Mailer's effectiveness rests on his freedom from class attitudes. He was educated at Harvard, but he cannot be typecast as either a Harvard man or as a self-conscious rebel against Harvardry. He is restive in his political alliance with the academic liberals who are too

pastel-tinted to suit his Rubensesque tastes, and he is at his best in his analysis of the limitations of such middle-class intellectuals as Eugene McCarthy; but he is also wary of the over-confident dogmas of the professional proletarians, although he admires their efficient professionalism.

In a curious way, and probably without conscious intention, he succeeds in representing the common man, or at least the common man who has escaped apathy. It is of course a 1960s and American variant of the breed for whom he stands—Mailer has a special value in his proud and shamed acceptance of being an American, in his understanding of the American tradition and its present dilemmas. The inflections of this common man's voice can be heard in Mailer's preference for the more garlicky flavors of living, in a scepticism which is not cynical, in his wariness of ideologies combined with an unsure hunger for idealism, in the habit of finding social conventions comic. Despite his distaste for the weapons of williness, and his self-scorn when he finds himself accepting a compromise, Mailer basically belongs to the party of the Good Soldier Schweik.

## DECAY OF GENIUS

S. MURRAY-SMITH

Colin Roderick (ed.): "Henry Lawson Collected Verse", Volume Two, 1901-1909 (Angus & Robertson, \$6.50).

Colin Roderick (ed.): "Henry Lawson Collected Verse", Volume Three, 1910-1922 (Angus & Robertson, \$8.50).

Some time ago we were pleased to welcome in the review columns of *Overland* the first volume of Colin Roderick's definitive and variorum edition of "Henry Lawson Collected Verse". The final two volumes of this monumental work have now appeared, and for the first time a complete conspectus of the total poetic output of the writer who most completely captured Australian hearts is available.

From the bibliographical and historical point of view this is a major contribution to Australian studies. Unfortunately it will not be recognised as such as widely as it deserves, for the historians are not interested in literary history and, by-and-large, the English departments of the universities have shown little concern for the connections between Australian writing and Australian life—though admittedly the situation has changed very much for the better in recent years, and names like those of Hadgraft, Heseltine and Ramson have made important contributions to the understanding of the cultural development of Australian society.

Roderick's trilogy is a standard work which will probably hold a permanent place in Australian studies and will be well-thumbed on the shelves decades after most of the scholarship of our day has been forgotten. It is a work which holds different merits at different levels: firstly, a "standard" printing of all accessible verse; secondly, clear indications of editorial tinkering and tampering and of other revisions of Lawson's texts; thirdly, in its extremely generous and detailed notes it provides such a wealth of new material of biographical interest that it makes obsolete most of what has previously been published on Lawson; and fourthly, we find here a great many hints of

the relations between Lawson's personal and artistic decline and the society in which he lived which throw new light both on the times and on the nature of the creative processes of at least one man.

It is certainly true, and Roderick does not burke this, that a great deal of Lawson's later verse is undistinguished doggerel. But we still need to know it, to judge Lawson by his own lights and by those of his contemporaries. Roderick has some astute critical remarks to make (in the introduction to the third volume) on Lawson's decline, and he rightly points out that the final judgments on Lawson's verse are yet to come: "It may well be that poems which do not much move us will touch the hearts and minds of generations yet to come".

Colin Roderick has fought courageously against the prevailing modes for many years to insist that Lawson's verse must be interpreted in the broadest critical context. But he has not been content merely to argue this case piecemeal, and in this trilogy he has, I believe, amply vindicated his stand.

## THE ROVING EYE

(Recent books of importance not otherwise reviewed)

### VINTAGE AUSTRALIANA

Fortunately for us all, the printing of early Australian texts in facsimile form has now become a minor Australian industry. In particular the reprinting of the very early colonial newspapers is a great joy: they are in many ways the loom of our history, they make absorbing reading, and the techniques of reproduction are excellent. And they are very inexpensive. Recently available are three further sets of the *Sydney Gazette*, covering 1805-6 (\$6.30), 1806-7 (\$10) and 1808-9 (\$10), all published by Angus & Robertson. Platypus Publications of Hobart have published the *Hobart Town Gazette* for 1818-19 at \$7.50.

By far the most vigorous and enterprising facsimile publisher in Australia is the South Australian Public Library. Those interested should write for a complete list of the important Australiana they have been putting out, but the following partial list shows something of the quality: George Bennett's *Wanderings in New South Wales* (1834), in two volumes, priced at \$10; E. M. Curr's *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria* (1883), costing \$5.50 (the recent Melbourne University Press new edition of this book is incomplete); James Bonwick's indispensable *The Last of the Tasmanians* (1870), which deals with the extermination of the Tasmanian Aborigines (\$6); John MacGillivray's *Narrative of the Voyage of H.M.S. Rattlesnake* (1852), in two volumes (\$10.50), and Phillip Parker King's *Narrative of a Survey of the Coasts of Australia*, also in two volumes and at the same price.

The complaint that many have of the rather cheap-looking plastic bindings of these otherwise splendid editions could not be mounted against two remarkable special publications in the South Australian series: a beautiful reproduction of William Bligh's *A Voyage to the South Sea* (\$10.50) and a leather-bound edition of John Hunter's *Historical Journal* of 1793, another bargain at \$13.

In addition the library is producing a most interesting series of reprints of early library publications of Australia, while all interested in natural history will be grateful for the reprinting of the rare *The Official Checklist of the Birds of Australia*, first published by the Royal Australian Ornithologists' Union in 1926.

The commercial publishers have also done well, with G. W. Evans' *A Geographical, Historical, and Topographical Description of Van Diemen's Land* (1822), issued at \$5.00 by Heinemann; John Morgan's *The Life and Adventures of William Buckley*, with its important observations of Aboriginal life, first published in 1852 and now republished by Heinemann at \$4.50; and *Reflections on the Colony of New South Wales* by George Caley. Caley, one of our pioneer botanists, had many interesting observations to make on the early society in which he lived. His papers are edited by J. E. B. Currey and published by Lansdowne at \$5.50.

### REFERENCE

Worthy to stand on the shelf beside the "Australian Encyclopaedia", but strangely little known in Australia, is the splendid three-volume *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, edited by Dr. A. H. McLintock and published by the New Zealand Government Printer in 1966.

This comprehensive and excellently produced work was six years in the making, and 359 contributors have written over 1,800 separate articles: biographical, historical, scientific, the range of coverage may be illustrated by some page headings chosen at random: "Air Transport", "Building Standards", "Geology", "Fungi" and "Sunken Gold".

The set is most reasonably priced at \$NZ15.00.

Penguin is publishing a *Companion to Literature* in four useful volumes covering the world. Already on the market are volume 2 (European) and volume 4 (Classical and Byzantine, Oriental and African). The former is \$3.45, the latter \$1.70.

The Australian Society of Authors has issued a valuable *A Guide to Book Contracts* (\$2.10), while Melbourne University Press has put out a revised edition of Geoffrey Sawyer's *A Guide to Australian Law for Journalists, Authors, Printers and Publishers* (\$2.85).

L. J. Blake's *Australian Writers* (Rigby, \$4.75) is a useful epitome of Australian writers and their books over almost two centuries, marred by too many small errors.

Three works of permanent reference value have been published by John Bennett, of the Victorian Council for Civil Liberties: *Freedom of Expression in Australia* (30c), *Abortion Law Reform?* (30c), and *Police Powers and Citizens' Rights* (20c). Available from Mr. Bennett at 89 Caroline Street, South Yarra, Melbourne.

### BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Of outstanding interest is *Kiki*, by Albert Maori Kiki, published by Cheshire at \$3.50. Subtitled "Ten thousand years in a lifetime", this is the story of his life since boyhood by a prominent New Guinea leader.

Julian Stuart was an outstanding labor leader particularly active in the Queensland shearers' strike of 1891. His lively and literate reminiscences are reprinted in *Part of the Glory* (Australasian Book Society, \$3.50).

Also at \$3.50 is a pleasantly produced little booklet containing unpublished correspondence of the early explorer William Lawson. It is published by Wentworth Press, edited by William Beard and entitled **Old Ironbark**.

Jacaranda Press of Brisbane took a punt recently when they reproduced in two volumes **The Collected Works of Thomas Welsby** (\$16.80). These constitute Welsby's six main works on the early history of the Brisbane area: works long out of print which have acquired considerable scarcity value. This is an attractive edition and the publishers have performed a public service by issuing it.

Two recent Oxford biographies of much human and scholarly interest are Francis West's **Hubert Murray** (\$7.50), the life of the first Australian consul, and Gwendoline Wilson's account of Hubert Murray's father, **Murray of Yarralumla** (\$8.50).

Louis Becke, so popular with our fathers or grandfathers, has had a critical and literary revival recently with A. Grove Day's **Louis Becke** (Hill of Content, \$4.95) and the same author's collection of Becke's tales, **South Sea Supercargo** (Jacaranda, \$3.50).

Two deeply worked biographies of international interest are Israel Getzler's **Martov** (M.U.P., \$8.50) and Hubert L. Matthews' **Castro** (Allen Lane, \$7.50).

#### HISTORY

One of the most beautiful of recent Australian publications is certainly Melbourne University Press' **Colonial Organs and Organbuilders** by E. N. Matthews, a study of the development of the industry in Victoria in particular and through the distinguished work of George Fincham in particular. The book appears in a handsome slipcase at \$15.

Melbourne has also published Campbell Macknight's interesting anthology of writing about the northern coast of Australia, **The Farthest Coast** (\$4.50). It has a valuable historical introduction. Macknight's book could well be read in conjunction with Douglas Lockwood's history of Darwin, **The Front Door** (Rigby, \$4.25).

Pacific history is well served, notably as a result of the School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University. H. E. Maude's **Of Islands and Men** (Oxford, \$8.75) is a scholarly but always readable collection of papers on aspects of Pacific history, written by a man who has himself helped to make it. The A.N.U. Press has published two important documents as the first in its Pacific History Series: **The Works of Ta'unga**, the records of a nineteenth century Polynesian traveller edited by R. and M. Crocombe (\$6); and **A Cruise in a Queensland Labour Vessel to the South Seas** by W. E. Giles, edited by Deryck Scarr (\$5). This latter is a first-hand account of blackbirding. Marnie Bassett has published the charming and perceptive letters she wrote from New Guinea many years ago: **Letters from New Guinea 1921** (Hawthorn Press, \$5.50).

Two historical works of New Zealand interest are W. H. Pearson's **Henry Lawson among Maoris** (A.N.U. Press, \$5), and W. B. Sutch's **Poverty and Progress in New Zealand** (Reed, \$4.95), a comprehensive general history of New Zealand with special emphasis on the development of the welfare state.

Interesting and/or important offbeat publications in the history field include Matt Kennett's history of the N.S.W. Teachers' Federation, **The Teachers'**

**Challenge** (Alpha, \$1.20); Enid Moodie Heddle's **Story of a Vineyard: Chateau Tahbilk** (Hawthorn Press, \$3.50); and John Bostock's important contribution to medical history, **The Dawn of Australian Psychiatry** (Australian Medical Association Monograph). Also to be noted are the well-produced Newcastle History Monographs produced by the Newcastle Public Library, including C. E. Smith's **Dr James Mitchell** (\$1.45) and Glennie Jones' **The Movement for Newcastle's First Water Supply 1875-1885** (\$1.80).

#### REPRINTS

One of the most welcome recent Australian reprints is that of Alexander Harris' **The Emigrant Family**, a vivid romantic novel of strong documentary interest set in the New South Wales of the 1830s and first published in 1849. It is excellently edited by W. S. Ramson and published by the A.N.U. Press at \$9.90.

It is also good to see E. J. Banfield in print again, with a new edition of **The Confessions of a Beachcomber** published at \$5.95 by Angus & Robertson. This account of his first ten years on Dunk Island has an authority and commitment rare in books of its kind.

Jacaranda has taken over from Angus & Robertson and republished after eight years Thea Astley's searing account of small-town school-teaching, **A Descant for Gossips** (\$3.50). Seven Seas Books in East Germany have republished John Morrison's novel of 1950, **Port of Call**, for which many readers have been seeking in vain.

Standard historical works to have reappeared in new, soft-cover editions include G. F. James' important edition of Alfred Joyce's **A Homestead History** (Oxford, \$2.75), Geoffrey Serle's **The Golden Age** (M.U.P., \$3.75), and Geoffrey Blainey's delightful history of Australian mining, **The Rush that never Ended** (M.U.P., \$2.85), now updated.

Wentworth Press has republished Vance Marshall's two pamphlets of his gaol experiences—he was imprisoned in Sydney for his anti-conscription activities: **The World of the Living Dead and Jail from Within** (\$2.75). Horwitz has reissued John Beede's remarkable novel of the RAAF air-gunners during the Second World War, **They Hosed Them Out** (\$1). Sun Books has published in soft covers three successful recent books: Thomas Keneally's **Bring Larks and Heroes** (\$1), Donald Horne's **The Education of Young Donald** (\$1.25) and Morris Lurie's **Rappaport** (95c).

Penguin Books have issued one of the classic novels of Stalin's Russia, Victor Serge's **The Case of Comrade Tulayev** (\$1.30), as well as Edward Thompson's brilliant recent history, **The Making of the English Working Class** (\$3.05).

One of the most popular of the nineteenth century Australian novelists was 'Tasma', and her **Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill** is still important for its insights into the social values of the Australian middle-class of her period. The novel was first published in 1889 and has been excellently edited by Cecil Hadgraft and Ray Beilby, and published by Nelson as a paperback at \$1.95.

#### LOCAL HISTORY

The development of local history away from the "Uncle John built the bandstand" approach has been a feature of Australian publishing in the 1960s. Three scholarly, carefully-written and readable recent books are Keith Clouten's **Reid's Mistake** (Lake Macquarie Shire Council, \$3.50), Niel Gunson's **The Good Country: Cranbourne Shire**

(Cheshire, \$6) and D. G. Bowd's **Macquarie Country** (Cheshire, \$7.50), the latter an excellent account of the Hawkesbury. A highly original local history which is almost in scrapbook form and is a dinkum piece of outback Australiana is Stuart Lloyd's **The Lightning Ridge Book**, available from 1 Apsley Cres., Mumbil, N.S.W. W. H. Bossence has completed his central Victorian trilogy with **Tatura and the Shire of Rodney** (Hawthorn Press, \$5.50), a competent and detailed history in the traditional mode.

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

Hand-in-hand with the awakening realisation that Australia is not as big a country as we thought and that urgent action is needed to preserve what we have left of the natural and the historical environment has gone the publication of increasingly authoritative works covering areas of concern.

It is particularly good to see Charles Laserson's work on the geological history of Australia, **Ancient Australia**, reissued by Angus and Robertson at \$7.25. It has been updated by R. O. Brunnschweiler. The same firm has published A. M. Blombery's **A Guide to Native Australian Plants** (\$15), a splendid and well illustrated work for the laymen, with a lengthy section on cultivation. An important work in a special area is **The Natural History of the Flinders Ranges**, edited by D. W. P. Corbett and published by the Libraries Board of South Australia at \$5.40. A valuable pamphlet on recent developments on the conservation front in Europe is Leonard Webb's **Impressions of Nature Protection in Europe**, 50c from the Wildlife Preservation Society, Science House, Gloucester Street, Sydney.

#### PAPERBACKS

Panther Books have recently introduced a series of high quality paperbacks which will challenge the hegemony of the Pelican Book in this field. Titles include Oscar Lewis' **La Vida** (\$1.90), Doris Lessing's **Going Home** (\$1.15), Harold Nicholson's **The Age of Reason** (\$1.60), Christopher Hill's **Puritanism and Revolution** (\$1.60), A. L. Lloyd's **Folk Song in England** (\$1.90), the first volume of Trotsky's **Stalin** (\$1.90), Rachael Carson's **The Sea Around Us** (90c) and Nigel Calder's extremely thoughtful and fascinating discussion of the psychological and material concerns of the future, **The Environment Game** (\$1.35).

Important Penguins and Pelicans of Australian interest include Alan Moorehead's **The Fatal Impact** (\$1), **New Directions in Australian Foreign Policy**, edited by Max Teichmann (\$1), Craig McGregor's **Profile of Australia** (\$1.30), and Asa Briggs' **Victorian Cities**, with a chapter on Melbourne (\$1.45). In addition, Patrick White's **The Burnt Ones** (\$1.30), **The Living and the Dead** (\$1.30), **The Aunt's Story** (\$1.25) and **The Solid Mandala** (\$1.35) are available, while Sun Books have issued **Four Plays** by Patrick White at \$1.65.

Other important Pelicans include three volumes of documents on Chinese history, **Imperial China**, **Republican China** and **Communist China** (\$1.30, \$1.30 and \$1.45), edited by F. Schurmann and O. Schnell, and J. D. Bernal's great standard work, **Science in History**, in a boxed four-volume set at \$13.80. Another big publishing event by the same house is the soft-cover edition of James Joyce's **Ulysses** (\$1.70).

#### NEW GUINEA

Ulli Beier and his wife, already famous for their work in encouraging cultural expression in West

Africa, have recently moved to Port Moresby. Under their encouragement a series of poetry booklets have already appeared ("Papua Pocket Poets"), as well as the first issue of the first New Guinea literary magazine, **Kovave** (from Box 1144, Boroko, Papua). These spirited ventures are of great interest and worth widespread support.

#### ART

The University of Queensland Press has published Rodney Hall's perceptive study of the artistic and personal development of **Andrew Sibley** (\$5.95), while Angus and Robertson have issued a revised and enlarged edition of Lionel Lindsay's standard work on **Conrad Martens** (\$17.50), which reminds us we need a book on the early colonial painters as a whole.

#### CRITICISM

John Barnes has edited a delightful anthology of literary documents from 1856-1964, **The Writer in Australia** (Oxford, \$5). Amongst other gems this collection contains A. G. Stephens' collected criticism of Lawson, and the Furphy-Stephens correspondence on the publication of "Such is Life".

New contributions to Oxford's 'Australian Writers and the Work' series include Evan Jones on **Kenneth Mackenzie**, H. J. Oliver on **Shaw Neilson** and **Louis Stone**, and R. G. Geering on **Christina Stead** (all \$1).

#### EDUCATION

Rupert Goodman's **Secondary Education in Queensland 1860-1960** (A.N.U. Press, \$10.50) is a most valuable scholarly addition to the limited historical literature on Australian education. It is, in fact, the most satisfactory single work on the education system of any Australian State, and, if formal ideas of what 'history' meant were less narrow, would be recognised as an important contribution to general social and intellectual history.

#### POLITICS

An offbeat work of very considerable Machiavellian interest is **Coup d'Etat** by Edward Luttwak (Allen Lane, \$4.50). Sub-titled "A Practical Handbook", this is a detailed and documented account of under what conditions the overthrow of a country's government is possible and how it should be planned. Only of academic interest in Australia—some may think unfortunately so—but important for all Africa-, Asia- and Latin America-watchers.

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