



Over land



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Temper democratic, bias Australian

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Psycho-Historical Arse-Grass

*'And stooping, caught this fellow at a libel—
No less on history than the Holy Bible'*

Byron: "Vision of Judgement", Canto LXXXVI

I.

If Ronald Conway had had a sense of humor, not to say a sense of his own limitations, he could have pulled off the greatest hoax since Ern Malley. For, with a flashy and impudent pen he has lured a number of the most experienced and, one would have hoped, intelligent and well-informed reviewers in Australia into accepting him as a knowledgeable, perceptive and brilliant observer of Australian mores. From September to January *The Great Australian Stupor* (Sun Books, \$1.95) sold over 20,000 copies in three printings. This enabled Conway, prior to his first trip overseas, to be interviewed at length by the American Broadcasting Corporation on a television feature scheduled for 80 million viewers (*Review* 22/1/72). He has managed this with, as I shall show, a minimum of erudition and with obviously a quite limited range of personal experience. It is a decisive coup—but it does give us an acid test for the phoney and the sciolistic in Australian intellectual life. Its enthusiastic reception must reveal some extraordinary crisis of identity in our society which, unfortunately, it is beyond my talent to analyse. I simply intend to place on record some evidence to reassure the 'fraternalist-anarchics' who keep *Overland* going that they need not feel psychologically pulverized by Conway's coup and that they should keep their subscriptions running.

If *Stupor* is as bumptious and intellectually thin as I say it is, then it is important to record some of the eulogies from among the ten reviews I have read. "The best book on Australian manners and morals since Donald Horne's *The Lucky Country*," says J. D. Pringle, ". . . full of marvellous and often profound observations. His

chapter on religion, in which he trounces impartially all the Australian churches, is a delight. And it is written throughout with a passion, an intelligence and a respect for ideas . . ." (*Sydney Morning Herald* 16/10/71.) In the *Bulletin* (11/9/71) Peter Coleman treated Conway's psycho-history with grave respect and seemed gratified that it showed himself up as a patrist-conservative type who would have been more at home in Edwardian Australia (presumably that of George Reid rather than that of John C. Watson). In the *Australian* (11/9/71), Max Harris spread himself over two-thirds of a full Saturday page. Although he found the book "infuriating" and discerned "a grossly sloppy approach to his historical homework", the book was "creative, exciting and original because it doesn't deal with surface generalisations derived from uncommitted social descriptions and journalistic observation." I would have suspected Harris of having a specific interest in Sun Books if Mary Martin's Bookshop monthly book list had not alerted me to his more general interest in the trade. It said: "So many smarty-pants journalistic books from *The Lucky Country* onwards: we're all weary of slick diagnoses, surface impressions, sweeping self-criticism. This book is the first to work from a serious theoretical framework, to grapple with the Australian psychology, to discover underlying patterns." Bruce Muirden in the *Review* (22/10/71) said there was "formidable evidence of a sharp intellect, wide reading and extensive experience of humanity under strain. Above and beyond all this he uses words beautifully. He is continuously beguiling and quotable."

However, perhaps the two most remarkable of the ten reviews I read were by the Very Rev. G.

G. Daily S.J., M.Ed.(Harvard), B.D.(Innsbruck) B.Sc., recently Rector of Newman College, Melbourne and himself a psychologist, and by Dr. Frank Knopfelmacher, whose wares need no bush. Daily was lavish in the diocesan weekly, the *Advocate* (20/1/72). He praised Conway's historical knowledge and his "reverence" for truth and not only urged him to write more but recommended *Stupor* as a text for Catholic schools. *News Weekly* (17/11/71), organ of Santamaria's National Civic Council, had a blow-up of Conway on the front page looking very normal with a spumy glass of Courage in his right hand while his left elbow braced the bar. The two centre pages had a review by Knopfelmacher "What makes Australians tick?" and four photos: another of Conway ("Tory among the plebs?"), one of a scuffle of student demonstrators (fraternal-anarchics), one of "Trade Union Vigilantes Wrecking Building Site" and one of a bald, porcine, idiotically sun-tanned male basking on the beach, form-guide in hand and an Eskie full of coldies beside him. Knopfelmacher saw Conway as having "a wide critical intelligence . . . a cultured, urban [sic] mind, with profound historical and sociological insights into his own society—a rare feat." However, after mildly expressing some pertinent reservations, Knopfelmacher lapsed into this cynicism: "Space and fraternal interest in increasing the author's royalties forbid me to say more." Indeed, K. is no fool, as they say. Not only is he personally cited as an authority three times in the book but he must have enjoyed the bullying and ebullient jargon. And, of course, Conway touts in his odd way for the D.L.P. I can only guess what K. would have written about a similarly pretentious author of another color.

The blurb tells us that "Ronald Conway is Senior Psychologist to St. Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne. He holds degrees in Arts and Education from Melbourne University and has been a senior schoolmaster and counsellor. A Catholic layman of decidedly independent, though not necessarily radical, views, his two favourite avocations are freelance journalism and the theatre." Max Harris tells us he is a forty-four years old bachelor and "a Catholic layman of the new breed, able to promulgate a philosophic conservatism without endorsing retrograde and reactionary social attitudes" (*Australian* 11/9/71). However to know Conway well you need to read the *Advocate*, for which he was a clever and quite

liberal film reviewer for fifteen years, a slick reviewer of records who knew how to re-word the sleeves, and a bouncy theatre critic. He produces plays and writes moralities and poems. Like so many other Catholic journalists he would have earned the reputation of being a polymath even if he did not write a weekly column, *Here and Now*, which is one of a number of columns by know-all laymen (e.g. Niall Brennan) which the *Advocate* uses to try to dispel its clericalist mood and prevent sales from dropping to a disastrous level.

When Conway began *Here and Now* (25/9/69) he "vowed to set aside all considerations of party politics and try to see political events in terms of 'people' as well as policies". "Put simply I see myself as a conservative with a strong belief in individual dignity which frequently causes me to change sides in many controversies. Both the gentlemen [sic] of the Left and those who believe in hard cash, are always dreadfully predictable" (1/1/70). The only time until late last year, however, that he seemed to have disagreed explicitly in print with the (unpredictable?) B.A. Santamaria was on the question of tolerance for homosexuals. That is if you exclude the issue of conscription for war service outside Australia which, in late 1969, Conway "believed to be morally unjustified at the present time". However, while he used a favorite word, "moderate", to describe his attitude to the Vietnam war, he nevertheless said his was roughly the Nixon-Agnew view (!) and certainly, while he never seems to have mentioned the morality of conscription since, he has consistently taken a hard American line. Yet as he does not wish to appear reactionary, he deplores the "paranoia and counter-paranoia" of debate, he has declared the issue "wearisome" and simply "a basis for bitter pathological fixations which are poisoning the whole of civilised discourse" (quoted in *Catholic Worker*, February 1970). In *Stupor* he deplores the fact that "Up to 1969 more ink was spilled in the Catholic press about Communism and the rights and wrongs of Australian involvement in Vietnam than the whole range of domestic issues put together" (p. 201). Moreover, "only 400 Australians have died in Vietnam and this is much less than the annual road slaughter" (p. 234). Frankly, Conway seems to have trouble following an argument through.

Perhaps his irenic Christmas Day message for 1969 better illustrates his style. He busily rapped

the knuckles of those who condemned the My Lai massacre and, after reminding his readers of Dresden, the Katyn Forest massacre and the rape of Hungary he wrote, "All are informed enough to know about Indian aggression against Pakistan over Kashmir, about the mass genocide now being practised upon Tibetans by Red China" (*Advocate* 25/12/69). When he found out his mistake about India he apologised handsomely: it was Colin Clark's fault because he had been reported as saying that India was "imperialist" and, even more, it was the mass media's fault because they had reported Clark out of context. He immediately swung over to India's point of view: "Hence if India has recently shown signs of truculence over Kashmir there seems to be some reasonable cause for it. Moreover, Pakistan's current love affair with Red China gives all the free nations of South-East Asia some reason for additional disquiet" (15/1/70). Conway's depth of information then is matched by the rigor of his logic rather than by his flexibility.

Conway has a wide range of passionate opinions. From a random bunch of *Advocates* I consulted here in Port Moresby, he detests the A.L.P., the G.P.O., the state of the universities and the cowardice of vice-chancellors, affluence, the four-day week, the policies of the V.S.T.A., trade union activities, moratoriums, Bob Hawke, "Jacobins", republicans, "the viciously-based Jewish left élite" who run the mass-media in New York, motor-cars and pollution, the "new" Eucharistic theology, the apologia of ex-priests like Michael Parer and Charles Davis who are lumped together as "neurotic", current female fashions, Indonesian independence (he thinks the Dutch should still be there!), decolonisation in New Guinea, ecclesiastical policies which would give South American Catholics bread before beautiful cathedrals and so on. A self-elected "patrician" himself, he is in sympathy with other patricians like Otto von Bismarck, Spiro Agnew, English Tories, the South African cricket team . . . but generally Conway prefers to scold people in his column. It all has that clericalist-punitive, horror-of-change ring about it.

Conway may also seem to be in the old clericalist tradition in being sensitive about his bachelorhood. But there is a new pragmatic twist to his apologia. He describes himself as "an unrepentant single man. . . Speaking frankly, nobody suggests that the average spinster suffers from lesbian tendencies, but the single man often

has to suffer suspicion that he is a homosexual—or that at the very least he may be carrying on secretly with a mistress in a secretly-furnished flat. . . For my part, I simply could not successfully manage my many vocational and social commitments if I were not unmarried." He makes it clear that he has *chosen* neither to marry nor to burn. His chaste state is not an old-fashioned gift from God. This blend of the old and the new also comes out clearly in his approach to birth control. In the *Advocate*, though not in *Stupor*, he is quite clearly against "unnatural" birth control and in favor of Pope Paul's encyclical, *Humani Vitae*. But that does not mean he is not alive to overpopulation. So, in a fastidious phrase, he scolds Catholics who have "indiscriminate litters". One staunch opponent of birth control who himself has a large family and was no doubt mindful that his Church had, until recently, enjoined it on Catholics to have large families, protested against the animality of this metaphor. Conway, fortunately, had a jaunty answer: "As for Dr. Hemingway's belief that I must abhor children, I think that a man who has been eight times a godfather might fairly plead not guilty" (19/2/70). And, obviously, he has no intention of having a spiritual vasectomy.

Similarly Conway can be quite testy about female fashions but, unlike the old-fashioned dyspeptic priest, he does not avert his eyes before he fulminates. The stance is more confident, more impervious. "Consider also the modern miss of the generous derriere who persists in wearing trousers stretched to the last seam across a pelvic structure which was never designed for such a garment in the first place" (26/3/70). "Hiding among the Christmas stock I saw a diverting advertisement for panty-hose: 'Feel Naked for only 43 cents.' Dear me! to think that I was born that way for absolutely nothing . . . girls, you don't have to be naughty or depraved to respond to that panty-hose advertisement—merely stupid" (25/12/69). How appreciative this is of femininity must be a matter for dispute.

All this is not irrelevant to Conway's book as he himself, as a percipient psycho- and social analyst, would no doubt be the first to point out. It is claimed that he has placed *homo australiensis* on the couch. As he himself is a subjectivist and despises "arid" quantification, it is useful to know who owns the eyes through which we perceive.

II.

In view of the publicity *Stupor* has received, there is no need for me to elaborate on what the book is about. Conway, from the start, makes a virtue of "inescapable bias" and aims "to write a book about the psychological development and private behaviour of Australians from a specific viewpoint and personal set of values rather than follow the arid example of much learned social and psychological enquiry to date." He draws on what purports to be training in the disciplines of history and psychology. He was senior history master at a leading Catholic college, which it would be unkind to name for reasons which follow. His first three chapters ("Towards a Case History") give an interpretation of the Australian historical background in the light of Freudian psychology.

It would be difficult to imagine a more garbled, inaccurate and pretentious piece of historiography from a adult. I am not here quarrelling with Conway's attempt to throw a psycho-historical grid over our history in order to interpret it, nor am I questioning Karl Popper's view, which Conway quotes, that 'history must be *selective*' and that we should write "that history which interests us". But Conway omits to quote Popper's sentence that immediately follows: "This does not mean that we may twist the facts until they fit into a framework of preconceived ideas, or that we may neglect the facts that do not fit." In adopting, expanding and applying Gordon Rattray Taylor's theory of social identities based on oscillations between matrist and patrist domination, Conway not only shows himself uncritical of analogies between family and community but quite unable to check even simple time-slots to ensure that the whole of Australian history is covered by his grid. Thus in dividing our history into patrist-authoritarian, patrist-conservative, matrist-indulgent, fraternalist-anarchic phases there are periods (1847-51; 1862-70; 1900-20) which are just not accounted for. Moreover, lumping the periods 1850-1862, 1890-1900 and 1930-1939 together as fraternalist-anarchic and thus characterized by "imitative herd behaviour", atheism, Marxian-socialism, communism, and infantilism, Conway ingenuously invites a scrutiny not just of his sources but of his motives and mentality. The 1850s and 1890s, having regard to the challenges of the time, and not necessarily from a left-wing standpoint, were

possibly the most constructive decades of the century.

I do not hold it against Conway that he hints at having done significant original research but obviously has not. Also I can pass over the pretence that he is a veritable omnivore and is steeped in the despatches of Hunter, King and Macquarie, in Swan River letters, in the newspapers of the 1920s and so on. By all means let him use secondary sources for his synthesis. However his very limited range of secondary sources not only shows that he is utterly out of touch with Australian, not to say British, historiography but he has not understood what he claims to have read and, in fact, he lays himself open to the charge of having hardly read these books at all.

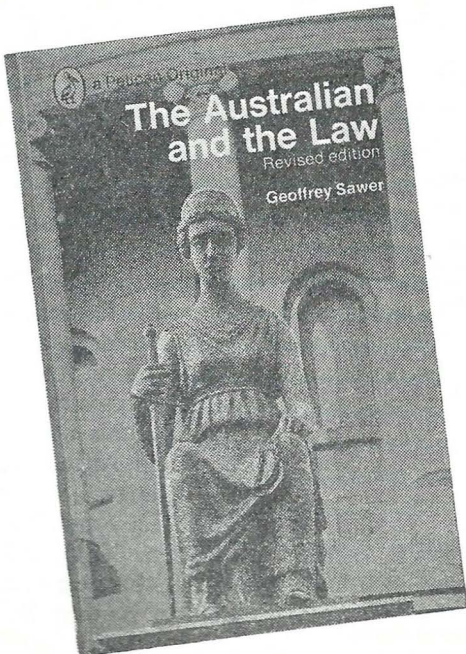
This may seem an unnecessarily nasty remark but let us look at what he does with Robin Gollan's *Radical and Working Class Politics* which he quotes twice. He says he "is compelled" to agree with Gollan (a fraternalist-anarchic!) that J. D. Lang's "Vision of the Australian future was of a petty bourgeois utopia. It would be a land inhabited by independent farmers, sturdy artisans and respectable merchants and manufacturers". Conway then explains. "It can be seen that the dream of the great Scottish radical was already a little old-fashioned . . .". Actually if Conway had felt *compelled* to read the rest of Gollan's paragraph he would have read that the "popularity" of Lang's thought rested "on the fact that it was in line with much of contemporary English radical thought and because the utopia appeared to many people to be realizable in Australia."

Much more crass is his failure to understand the very title of Gollan's book. In his anxiety to show that 'liberals' were much more sensible people than 'radicals' (i.e. fraternalist-anarchics) he quotes Gollan as saying that, by Federation, the Labor Party's "policy owed more to liberal thought than to the socialist ideas and militant trades unionism that had been responsible for its formation". Conway here confuses 'socialist' with 'radical', though half of Gollan's book makes it clear that Graham Berry and Alfred Deakin are the 'radicals'. It is not so strange that Conway did not pick this notion up in La Nauze's biography of his hero, Deakin (e.g. pp. 30-1), although he (quite ineptly) quotes from that too (viz. p. 39). Conway's reading seems to be just an unlucky dip here and there.

Conway bumptiously lectures historians on having missed the *real* point of Australian history and of being too tardy in coming to obvious conclusions. So, in order to disparage the fraternalist-anarchic decade of the 1850s, he says, "In recent years, the popular view that the population influx caused by the gold strikes of 1851 *completely* altered our national characteristics has been under fire by scholars—and *not before time*" (italics mine). Now every well-taught schoolboy knows that W. K. Hancock (*Australia*) said this in 1930 in a book Conway claims to have read. But that does not stop Conway from taking someone just familiarly called "Portus" to task for obtuseness. As there is no footnote for Portus, perhaps Conway just did not know the source. "Portus" is one of those historical pop-tunes Geoffrey Blainey talks about. Again, taking an unacknowledged cue from I. D. McNaughton's chapter in Gordon Greenwood's *Australia*, he sees Jeremy Bentham as the high-priest of Australia's cultural and moral sterility. He gets Bentham quite wrong and the footnotes show that his information on Bentham comes from a book on the philosophy of J. S. Mill. He is unaware that L. F. Fitzhardinge published half a biography of W. M. Hughes in 1964 and that even reading the preface of it might have saved him some embarrassment. He boxes the ears of Man-

ning Clark and Frank Crowley for having reservations about his patrist-conservative hero, Alfred Deakin. Crowley, who is too contemptible to be named, is snubbed as just "a *Meanjin* reviewer" for "gleefully" reminding readers of La Nauze's biography of Deakin that our premier statesman had, rather oddly, written dispatches for the London *Morning Post* while occupying public office. Conway calls this "selective spite" and, showing no understanding of issues of public probity, says, "What was so shameful in Deakin's dual role the reviewer naturally failed to make clear."

Conway says on page 46 that "Australia has never produced a satisfactory philosophy of education" partly because "she has never produced a genuinely influential philosopher" and then on pages 222-3 he refers to Australia as "having produced its Alexander in philosophy". I need only refer to the clericalism and *romanità* of Australian Catholicism to show that "the roots of traditionally approved forms of religious faith" were anything but "shallow" (p. 4) as Conway admits when he refers to the extraordinary loyalty of Australian Catholics and to the fact that the Catholic school system "has been one of the wonders of the Christian world" (p. 186). Sillier still he opines, "There is, as yet, no comprehensive history of ideas in Australia and it has



Australian law may derive from and in places closely resemble English law, but time and geography have given it notable differences. It is on these differences that Geoffrey Sawer lays the emphasis in this Australian companion to Ronald Rubenstein's *John Citizen and the Law*.

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fallen to an American scholar, Dr. George Nadel, to give some impression how marked the impact of Whig utilitarian ideas has been upon the development of the Australian way of life." Michael Roe's *Quest for Authority*, for example, was published in 1965. George Nadel graduated at Melbourne in, I think, 1948 and he was afterwards a history tutor there. Conway was allegedly reading history at Melbourne at the same time.

It is unnecessary to show that Conway really has not read Stephen Roberts or Anthony Trollope carefully, or at all, that he cannot distinguish between urbanisation and metropolitanisation, that state intervention in Australian economic life (e.g. financing railways) was not dictated by a policy of "bread and circuses" but by the need for grain, and so on. I'm prepared to bet—but I haven't 'quantified' it—that at least two-thirds of the statements in the three historical chapters are either downright inaccurate, misleading or nugatory. But I almost forgot: the depth of absurdity comes when Conway instances a "typical case" of patrist-authoritarian-anal-sado-masochistic pater-*ter* in the 1880s (p. 32). It is an ugly story of a brutal father who sexually exhausts his wife, psychologically cripples his seven children and leaves physical scars on at least one son. It has the embarrassing air of a home truth about it and it turns out that the only one of the seven who married was Conway's own mother (*Herald* 11/11/71). Fortunately for Conway there are more typical things about him than his grandfather and his family history.

III.

Part 2 of *Stupor*, "Social Image and Private Reality" contains some attractive journalism and an original framework of discussion. The chapter titles are challenging and the material is lucidly presented with clever epigraphs to grip the attention. There are sensible homilies on family life, child nurture, sexual education, concern for the aged and tolerance for homosexuals. Here too the prose is less verbose, less pompous and even less alliterative. But there is nothing original about this. I just wonder how many decades ago it was when we read Van der Velde under the desk at school, and how many homes don't have a copy of Dr. Spock? Needless to say Conway tries to score off other psychologists and, it may well be, with a little more success than off historians. But his range of reference is narrow and he relies

more on his own personal perception—of which he entertains the highest opinion—than on "arid" quantification for his views. His quoted personal experience ranges from his teaching days, which were not concluded till the early sixties and were in a Catholic boys' college, to his clinical practice in private rooms (again, almost certainly, predominantly Catholic) and at St. Vincent's.

On pp. 176-7 he gives a splendid example of his method (which is unremarked by the above reviewers). After criticising "cross-sectional studies of young people because these do not reveal much about their inner life and search for identity" he instances a study "done in depth" by himself on the fifty sixth-form students whom he taught in 1960 (and who are therefore in Melbourne Catholic circles readily identifiable as a group, which raises a nice issue of taste). ". . . it was possible to derive a good deal of day-to-day knowledge about such vital side-questions as their truthfulness, their degree of self-insight, their points of vulnerability and their personal assets, which would not be available to the outside research student . . . They were not the usual 'random sample' favoured by research students; the only factors uniting them were a common religious value system and a common ambition to pass their Matriculation examination." Conway found that twenty-seven of them had "tense, uneasy or openly conflicting relationships with their parents", but only eight of them "*admitted* it in interview" (*italics* Conway's). Twenty-nine had abnormal sexual tensions; nine were "emotional isolates"; only eleven were really contented. Conway followed this up seven years later with forty-four of the original fifty. Four had then been psychiatrically hospitalized; another nine had sought psychiatric or psychological aid; "five admitted to hasty or imprudent marriages, while only thirteen appeared to be really happy and satisfied with their jobs or chosen social goals." Conway concludes that "youth in Australia may be far more troubled than academics have been able to concede. Facile optimism, the refusal to recognize any signs of real difficulty or crisis, is one of the hallmarks of the matrist society." This takes not a little digesting if you recall that Conway was teaching these students *history* and some must have been able to see through his dilettantism (if that is not too polite a word). In fact, you can only imagine how Conway *had* to conduct his classes when free discussion and enquiry would have shown up his own "truthful-

ness, . . . degree of self-insight, . . . vulnerability and . . . personal assets" as a history teacher. To have such a teacher making a gratuitous, confessional probe should have been enough to make more than eight of them reluctant to admit anything. Only God knows what they would have told him had they known the results would be published in this way and what the principal of the college thinks about the probe now. Also Conway at this stage jibs at stressing that the students were Catholic, but if his probe has any value it has to be set beside other remarks of his about neurotic sado-masochistic attitudes "notably in Catholic" schools and "the impossible dilemma [faced by Catholic students] between a crushingly specific sexual code and the example of a part-Christian society which hardly gives a curse one way or the other". Does the Catholic sub-culture really produce more neurotics, alcoholics and criminals than most others, as the Orange Lodgers say? Conway will not abide the question, no more than he will say whether he approves of pre-marital sex or not. As only the gifted few can be chaste and self-disciplined in his scheme of things and traditional repression is harmful, pre-marital sex must be the anodyne for the crowd. Such a conclusion would not, of course, please the *Advocate*.

Conway's other quoted experience extends to bars, trams, hetero- and homo-sexual parties and the gymnasium where he brings his inordinate 'perceptiveness' to bear on people. For example, in deploring the way Australians neglect their "often superb physiques" he writes: "Despite an increasing number of city gymnasiums only schoolboys, the mature narcissist, the porky but desperate businessman and a handful of the self-disciplined [e.g. Conway?] would care to be seen exercising in them. The average Australian male frequently develops astonishing legs, huge ankles and whacking thighs rather anticlimatically merging into a forward pelvis, broad but thin shoulders, flaccid biceps and a flat chest" (pp. 245-6). I must say that I hadn't noticed. I long though for Conway's description of the Australian girl.

However, it seems that it is the average Australian rather than Conway who is in "a sexual muddle". The Australian would do well to look to Freud's theory of the three stages of human psychosexual and social development through which we all pass. (N.B. Any scholarly reservations about this theory are "quibbles".) In Australia parents destroy or cannot control narcissism

and apparently rob children of the "self-confidence and self-sentiment necessary for all creative social encounters". The father is chiefly to blame. He is aloof, churlish and beer-sodden. When he has provided home and food, he thinks he has done enough. He is not "a tender, virile sire". Thanks to Bentham he has no spiritual values and no awareness of self, Australia or the world, and so he cannot guide his offspring.

The lack of appreciation of Freud's second phase, the homoerotic, shows up in Australian mateship. The Australian is only acquainted with his mates; he does not have real friends. He is afraid "to plumb the depths in the heart of a friend". The Australian "cannot see that he must bring with him the best fruits of the masculine encounter if his alliance with a woman is to be successful". This is mere assertion and must rest on Conway's personal observation. Which class or groups of people is he talking about? I can only say that this incapacity for friendship is very far from my observations, both here and abroad. Similarly I am not sure how Conway links this up with his remarks on homosexuality in Australia. "Few societies," he says, "have been more bitterly hostile and intolerant towards the homosexual than the Australian. The studied abuse and mockery levelled at homosexuals by a normally casual heterosexual majority is, in fact, too excessive to be explained merely in terms of moral fervour or healthy distaste. Behind the ignorance and the mocking brutality of many heterosexuals lies a deeper subconscious fear—that somewhere inside one's own psyche there lurks a homoerotic need." Ragging 'poofters' is an ugly part of our folklore, that is true, but whether this attitude may not have been, in the chain-gang and the shearing-shed, a salutary check (having regard to the manners and conscience of the time) on aggressive homosexuality must be a matter of opinion, even of taste. Such attitudes can be passed down like racial and religious prejudice without stressing some fearful latency. We should be wary of *tu quoque* arguments even in psychology. Margaret Kiddle (*Men of Yesterday*, p. 119) quotes the "Vandemonian who apostrophized his place of exile: Squatters' heaven, prisoners' hell, Land of Sodom, fare thee well." She continues: "The island was notorious for the prevalence of homosexuality amongst the convicts, and the practice was fairly common among the first emancipists who came to the Western district [of Victoria], as it was through

inland Australia at the time." Most ex-convicts, we can infer, did not marry. Was it so unfeeling for adults to pass down to children, in the fashion of the time, a horror of sodomy? After all Conway (p. 139) tries to excuse St. Paul's fierce asceticism because of the allegedly stuporous condition of his age. He does not suggest that Paul was a sado-masochist pervert, but this is an interpretation one can put on things—if one wants to. Perhaps it is too easy to confuse precept and nurture in trying to discern how *homo* is *australiensis*. Hard laws against homosexuality have been common in European countries. Are Australians, in the fashion of this age, so much slower in changing them? What happens in Ireland or Uruguay? Conway says that "the number of males who have had at least a passing homosexual dalliance after their tenth year represents at least 35 per cent". There is no hard evidence given for this. It sounds like a threat. Most incredible is his misreading (p. 133) of Kinsey whose report indicates, he says, "that slightly over 37 per cent of male American orgasms were derived from homosexual sources", whereas Kinsey is simply referring to a percentage of single males between 36 and 40 who have some homosexual activity to the point of orgasm (*Sexual Behavior of the Human Male*, p. 259) and says (p. 610) that "6.3 per cent of the total number of orgasms is derived from homosexual contacts". Now how does a psychologist get this wrong? How did Knopfmacher miss it? I note again that on a rare occasion when Conway has disagreed with B.A. Santamaria in print it has been over the issue of tolerance of homosexuals. Catholic spokesmen will probably carry the hard line to the end. What does Conway mean to suggest about his co-religionists?

There is another curious lapse of taste on Conway's part (pp. 144-5) which may shed light on his approach to *our* homosexuality and his patients. He cites the case of Gordon, an unfortunate man, who will certainly recognise himself if he reads the book. Gordon "claimed intercourse with nearly 150 different girls over a period of five years". He was, however, a latent homosexual who was "finally picked up by the police for indecently exposing himself on the steps of the public library—hardly the most promising spot for an exhibitionist" (says Conway waspishly). This case illustrates "how latent homosexuality is coped with in *our* society". Again, I can't say I've noticed, and when Conway says

that Gordon was really "nursing a Don Juan complex" I have to remind myself that the great amorist was a Latin. It also occurs to me that Australians have yet to lend their epithet to a kink of eroticism, e.g. 'vice anglaise', 'maniera romana', etc. Conway treats Gordon with so much distaste that I wonder how the therapy went.

Conway says that the Australian's failure to cope with the homoerotic phase leads to heteroerotic failure. He is a lousy lover (unlike the Latin?) and his wife is often frigid. Our women, who are more resourceful than Australian men, compensate by taking over the masculine role in a matriduxy, if not a matriarchy. They *decide* though they do not nominally rule. Objections are obvious enough: if we have not had enough measurement of these traits, we are left with Conway's own (Catholic) experience and (bachelor) acuity, and these may turn out to be very limited indeed. Is it desirable that better educated and more autonomous wives (than in the past) should be subordinate? Perhaps we need a different means of socialization nowadays. This is not an issue to be settled with new pejoratives. Moreover, Conway wants to give the impression that he is conversant with the great world overseas but he does not say that at the time of writing this book he had never been out of Australia. Dagwood Bumsteads may be becoming commoner in all affluent societies. It is fortunate that Conway has gone overseas. Living abroad is often a great salve for feelings of Australian inferiority, and even for tolerance of our suburbanity.

Our bachelor author is critical of the boxed-up nuclear family and airily and pretentiously looks to the Asian extended family for inspiration (or regression) without the slightest notion that it may be a major factor in Asian underdevelopment (not that he cares about that) and corruption, and that it may discourage that industry and providence which Conway thinks the Australian worker lacks. Speculation about kibbutzim may be more profitable but Conway has not been to Israel either. For the moment, like some in Women's Lib., his attitude to the family life of others is basically punitive, and his lack of compassion for the males of his own generation is notable. It is interesting how he tries to reassure autocratic Catholic bishops that they are the products of their nurture, and so are less culpable. But the parents of hapless Australian children get

the full chalice of guilt. What Conway will not face up to is a radical reappraisal of the family system (e.g. are group marriages practicable?) or, more sensibly, the social engineering which might help the nuclear family to function better. In the *Advocate* he can talk of people's "fitness" to have children, but he jibs at eugenics, a detested word in Catholic circles.

We should be able to learn a little more about Conway by examining his chapter on religion (Pringle's "delight"). His remarks on "evangelical sectuaries" (sic) and the "whinnying parsons" of Anglicanism hardly rise above smart gossip. Only a tridentine Catholic could believe that the Bishop of Woolwich practices "a religion shorn of reference to the life of the spirit" and he deplors the "modern loss of belief in an imminent [sic] God". So the parson compensates by going in for politics. This is a breathtaking comment for a Movement-oriented Melbourne Catholic. Conway says of such Protestant parsons (p. 191): "The very existence of 'political priests' in a pluralist society like ours suggests a lack of inspiring spiritual leadership and patrist wisdom from above as much as a muddled idea of social commitment from within."

After that one would expect the "distinguished layman" at least to have some perceptive remarks about contemporary Catholic life, even if his history is garbled and his theology minimal. And especially about Melbourne where the Catholic action is. But not at all. There are clichés about the "mindless uncritical clericalism" of the laity and a daring asseveration about the dullness of bishops. Conway, however, will only dare at a distance—of at least 500 miles. We hear nothing of the asinities of Bishop Fox of Sale, formerly of Melbourne, though he is the Henry Bolte of clerical life. But Cardinal Gilroy and Bishop Muldoon are scolded (through the words of Henry Mayer) for lack of "dignity and grace", though this is not really their fault but ours, because of "the low quality of Australian life". There is also "a close link between the extreme moral 'conservatism' of Catholicism in New South Wales and the notorious 'Tammany Hall' tradition in the State Labor machine [which] will not escape the perceptive observer" (p. 198) or, presumably, the Communist.

When we come to Melbourne, however, the issue is different because it has been guided by two patrist-conservatives, Archbishop Mannix and B.A. Santamaria, whose friendship was in

part "an attempt to free some Right-wing [sic!] attachments in this country from squalid 'anal' money-grubbing and urban corruption". Conway finds the Catholic intellectuals' preoccupation with politics "tedious", especially on Communism and Vietnam. What he does not say is that Mannix and Santamaria made it so when they tried to make it a mortal sin to vote for the Labor Party, and were brutally insensitive to the consciences of those who legitimately disagreed with them, or that Santamaria suffers from what Conway might call a "crisis mentality". Conway's reaction to an historian who documents his serious reservations about the Mannix-Santamaria partnership is to ignore the evidence and call this "raking over old ordure" (*Advocate* 5/2/70).

Again, Conway's reference (p. 200) to the failure of bishops to take lay "counsel on many matters ranging from education to architecture" is a thickly veiled rebuke to his own archbishop, Dr. Knox, a patrist-authoritarian if ever there was one. Conway has emerged far enough out of obscurantism to agree that the dismissal of the Director of Catholic Education, Fr. Patrick Cruden, for facing up to the inadequacies of the system was a butcherly act. He would certainly dislike the despoiling of the fine building of St. Patrick's College, East Melbourne, which was done in such a shifty manner and in contempt of the National Trust. But he seems reluctant to do it openly. It is difficult to see Dr. Knox tolerating it in the *Advocate*. It is more convenient to look for motes in the eyes of Sydney. And Max Harris will still be able to say that Conway is "a Catholic layman of the new breed, able to promulgate a philosophic conservatism without endorsing retrograde and reactionary social attitudes".

Conway's remarks on sex show up his uncertainty. His laudable, fairly extensive and sensitive remarks on tolerance for homosexuals show that he is not hidebound by his Church's traditional morality. He allows modest masturbation, he approves of fellatio, he seems more concerned about unloving relationships than the strictest adherence to chastity, and he approves of birth control. But in his book he is quite evasive about the big issue confronting Catholics: what sort of birth control? "Endless discussions about the 'ovulation method', 'the pill' and 'natural law' seem to be developing into a kind of complicated liturgy with its own special jargon." Such arguments then are *tedious*, and need not be

thought through. Conway will not say anything definite. Perhaps he does not want to be thought *square*. Also Dr. Knox is watching. In the *Advocate* he is quite explicitly on Dr. Knox's side (5/2/70). In his book, however, there is a splendid *lapsus linguae* which is to the point. After mentioning (p. 202) how "Catholic schools fostered cruel guilts in many children who felt obliged to love even those silly, neurotic or restrictive parents who were undeserving of the boon," he continues: "In the self-indulgent, matrist climate of modern Australia, sacrifice is thought a nasty chore, and the uproar over contraception now threatens to obscure the fact that many psychic riches come from embracing it" (i.e. contraception?).

IV.

That is enough. The other parts of the book are just as callow: Conway is a garish bird but he has few feathers to fly with. He has no program to stop the Australian rot but then he does not believe in reform. "Citizens have never been made tolerant or good by acts of parliament." We want men, not measures! Otherwise we would be in politics (where Santamaria, a true Augustinian, says you lose your soul!). That means either *anal* dealing on the Right or *oral* wheeling on the Left. Really mature blue-veined genital types do not DO, they BE. They are *self-aware*. They have *mana* which, Jung says, "is an unintentional influence on the unconsciousness of others, a sort of unconscious prestige, and its effects lasts only as long as it is not disturbed by conscious intention". Conway himself, Conway implies, is one of the "perceptive who have the simple courage to be outsiders", just as he is one of the gnostic few who can rise above sexual necessity.

This puts him so far up Olympus that he can ignore canons of evidence, inconsistencies, even the right of an author to have his books quoted accurately, because evidence is obscured by a presbyopic psycho-historical grid. He can prescribe a syllabus of errors which temporarily creates an aura around himself even if it ends

up in a dustbin of historiography. As he says (p. 197), "public eminence may be craved as an opiate for inner frustrations". What his frustrations are I am hardly qualified to discern, but anyone who would like to begin Conway's campaign for self-awareness could well start by trick-cycling the psychologist. Certainly he is bewildered not only by that clinical evidence before his eyes which his own education is unable to absorb, but probably by the introspection it has engendered. And he imagines that taking the pose of a hierarch will somehow enable him to cope. The place for a researcher to start is probably in the pages of the *Advocate*, paying regard to both the columny and the context. He may find there even more authoritarian personalities than Conway's in grotesque pictures of mocked-up liberality, and it may help to explain some aspects of Catholic politics and society, and what sort of a fight will occur in the last fosse of obscurantism. More difficult to explain will be the barracking of certain secularists, like the reviewers above, who have succumbed to a vision not so much of emperor's clothes as of papal pastiche.

"The pillars of the phoney temple of mate-ship," says Conway, "support the critics no less than the criticized and it would be a Samson indeed who had the guts to pull them down in lieu of something better." I do not see Conway in this role though he is obviously purblind and owns a powerful ass's jawbone. Meanwhile Australians will go on living unwittingly to a formula not unlike Bentham's "felicific calculus" until someone presents a better case for the beatific than Conway—or his episcopal masters—is able to.

V.

Perhaps I should explain the title which came to me before I began to write and found that I lacked the wit to sustain it. In the Highlands of New Guinea the men wear a clutch of *Taetsia fructicosa* behind, no doubt for modesty, and to keep the posterior cool, but also perhaps to avoid the mockery of that certain vertical smile. It's a breezy title; so I shall leave it.

at
scavenger
house

We're here today by courtesy of Mr. Eye—
Forever and forever, with the lint
the bathing box and eighteen Centigrade.

Nobody may leave the building until
the larder and lavatories are searched,
comments to be *sotto voce*.

While you're waiting, a tape of a run-over cat
will be played,
a German Interviewer is approaching
at 33,000 feet.

They'll tell you it's rehabilitation of the senses,
all are to be sent to dig irrigation ditches,
we have rejigged the major scales and Bannockburn.

If it were possible to be with the Skalds
and have heroic syntax, that would be well—
watching the mast as the helm goes over,
fish in the panel of a wave—
No, it's not possible, and neither is New York.

We shall prove to you blue is not a color.

We defy you to say that this is just a dream.

By courtesy of Lichfield, migraine has hit Europe,
trains at Rohrau are turning back,
grease wanted for the guillotine.

Make it new! This afternoon you can choose
between *Malleus Maleficarum*,
The Scratch Orchestra and *Persuasion on Swings*.

Correction, there is also a Ballet Concrete
entitled *Pluralism, Compassion and Social Hope*.
I was under a yew tree in a churchyard
when a poem crawled on to my collar:
it's in a bottle for the children,
we must find out what it eats,
God will be pleased.

Calling Mr. Ear, there is a call for Mr. Ear,
will Mr. Ear come to the Front Desk please?
News from the Moon, an opal outcrop of tears,
Unrepeatable (suggestions?) (bargains?)

And Judges job and Bishops bite the town
And mighty Dukes pack cards for half a crown.

Now melancholy walks the mossy Grange,
quiet and birds contend in multiple leaves
beside the White Garden and the piled-up banks
of rhododendrons—
the stars are thinking
thoughts which may be mercantile—
so grave a night
for loving and repairing love.

'The muscles of the under-dead are stirring,
rippling like roots that lift the concrete path,
straying from the house to track the goldfish
who rise to question Kipling's outheld hand,
then scatter to seek fantails of the dark. . .'

Something has been found below the elms,
it's on the billiard table—
please call for Mr. Nose, will Mr. Nose report
to the Matron immediately!

We need his expert advice,
we think this soft and jellied thing is peath.

Oh, Mr. Eye, Mr. Ear and Mr. Nose,
we'd like to introduce you to Mr. Mouth
who takes all things into him.

He's the owner of the house, his family
has all fishing rights, his books
are rarer than Monckton Milne's—
when you get to know him you'll agree
living and dying are his business.

A toast to Mr. Mouth, the good and bad,
our benefactor, Mr. Mouth, Last Georgian,
Last Aristocrat, he shuns the demotic
vagina but he'd lend his toothbrush
to a friend. A true soul, Mr. Mouth.

And, as in Peacock, they went on talking through the
night
till the postman brought
sun and thunder to the door,

The goldfish woke for another hundred years
and a tip of ivy reached
the highest brick on the sunless North Facade.

PETER PORTER

proletarian poem

I am St. Francis (Interim)
of Zandvoort on the sea;
a gang of Nordzee sparrows has
been hustling around me.
These birds brake bulbously before
they impudently land,
a clump of cheeping puffballs shuffling
just beyond my hand.
I smile at them; they squint at me
in cunning comprehension;
sceptical, without a doubt,
of my divine intention.
Five advocates flick missionary
portions from my plate;
our meeting is my festival;
my festival their fate.
Why don't they show humility
at my self-sacrifice:
poor sandwich sulking nakedly
without its upper slice?
I ought to take offence, I know,
at their ingratitude . . .
Are they not aware of the
morality of food?
They are but birds, of course—birds,
the idle darts of God,
spinning bewildered hieroglyphs
at the Old Man's nod.
As meaningless the bird's flight,
so meaningless the man
who flails against Omnipotence:
a failed Utopian.
To man so discontented
He will not grant His grace;
His eye is on the sparrow—if
the sparrow knows its place.

LAURENCE COLLINSON

chomp

the apple
he said
my friend,
has no sense
& therefore
doesn't feel
the bite;

right it is
to say that
verily
the kangaroo
belongs in the can,
the whale in the perfume;
would you have us then
all growing thin!

we watched him fatten
thru the spring
like a lamb,
till coronaries
took him by the hand
reducing him
bite
by
bit.

PETER HARNEY

shocking conversation

When I heard him say that, one of my heads fell off!
Well, I mean, he said,
"If you've seen one naked woman you'll seen the lot."

Unfortunately that particular head had my best ears
on it,
so that I'm not sure if I heard his next statement aright.

I think (mind you it hardly seems possible),
but I think he said,
"One woman is the same as another in bed with the
light out."

This so surprised me that I regret to say,
six of my arms fell off,
effectively preventing me from replacing my best head.

Otherwise I might have heard him say,
"Those pinnacles of god-shouldering ecstasy only exist
in stories."
or, "Day and night are much the same to a man in
an unlit cell."

"RICH," he had said to me, "I AM RICH."
poor man.
I must try to pull myself together now that he's gone.

MAURICE STRANDGARD

German Notebook 1971

S. MURRAY-SMITH

These are incidental notes made during an officially-sponsored tour of Germany last year. They were not intended for publication, and have not been re-written. They are published at the suggestion of other *Overland* editors. Of the people mentioned, Nita is my wife, David my son.

At the time these notes were written I had not seen Albert Speer's remarkable book, *Inside the Third Reich*, which I subsequently read during a tour of Canada, and which I found of absorbing interest in throwing some of my German preoccupations into sharper perspective.

MUNICH-NUREMBERG

DACHAU on the sides of the trains and on some street signs.

Strong feeling of self-satisfaction, and conservatism. The beer cellars and somewhat self-conscious folksiness are apparently allied to this—what should be gay is somewhat sinister.

Fine sense of style—superb, original, modest street fountains—many of them. One of a little child with a wolf. It reminds one of the dear little children fed into the gas chambers by these people or their parents or relations. I wonder if it ever reminds them of that. Even with Emil, my self-possessed, cool, human guide and helper, I didn't know how far to go. I mentioned a visit to Dachau, but didn't press it. He raised the matter again once. Neither of us took it further. Yet if the new Germany *is* new, should I not assume that they don't flinch from Dachau, that they want this in their consciousness? Or is it perhaps Germanic of *me* to demand this degree of logical self-assessment?

At the light opera—Strauss's *Gipsy Baron*—nice piece of genre corn. Second row from front. Emil asked David to come and got a free ticket for him. Bullied by elderly woman attendant for smoking my pipe in corridors at interval. On our return to our seats a whole row of well-dressed middle-class Germans, all *already standing* and looking accusingly at us as we filed into the row!

The Gipsy Baron—charmingly romantic, these gipsies. I wonder how many in that theatre thought of how the Germans exterminated the European gipsies. Udo, at Nuremberg, tells me later that no one would have had the same thoughts as me, and neither would he: people go to the theatre to forget the world, not to remember it. Udo is (like Emil at Munich) another mid-twenties 'permanent' university student—the mature-age aspect partly a function of the late *Abitur* (18-19) and of military service, and also perhaps of the liberality with which scholarships are given and renewed, even though they are worth little (DM200 per month in Udo's case), as well as of the length of the uni. course. Udo is like a fat-faced Saxon soldier with a pill-box cap and a drooping fair moustache in a World War I photo (the Bairnsfather "It was not a mouse, it was a . . ." type)—but a man of moral concerns and worries about values, perhaps less 'removed' and materialistic than Emil (who told David and me today that he thought one of the virtues of the German youth was their "materialism"—presumably because they are looking for 'things' rather than 'ideas').

Udo works with the Christian youth though he doesn't consider himself a card-carrying Christian. He won't vote Christian Socialist (Bavaria) or Christian Democrat (Federal) because the Nazi fringe voters have swung to them. He fears the youth wing of the SDP—considers them too close to communists—doesn't like the label slung from the university left as such as he—*Scheissliberalen* (“shit liberals”)—doesn't like disposing of others' opinions in this 'certain' way. On the whole admires best the FDP—the Liberals—but quotes the saying: “There are three parties to vote for—Pestilence, Gangrene and Cancer.”

This seems to me, as indeed it did in Eastern Germany in 1950 (“Because I know people I love animals”—the slogan I saw on an office wall and quoted to my communist hosts, to their chagrin, though I suspect they would never have noticed it themselves), to be part of the Freudian memory-hole protection-against-trauma bit. Udo says that you can't reflect on what you haven't known. Those who have not known freedom don't know what they are missing. Those young people like he, who have never known nazism, cannot identify themselves with the moral issues arising from the nazi era. They do not ask their parents, of course: and are constantly surprised at how it is impossible to find anyone who held his hand up in the nazi salute in the Third Reich photos with which they are familiar.

Udo says that Germans over forty, in their cups, may be heard to say that Hitler has been unjustly vilified—at least he built the autobahns, made the streets safe to walk on, and did something about the Jews.

Note: In a Munich bookshop a thin-paper, popular edition of Chassidic tales. In a coin shop window, Israeli coins for sale. A square in Munich dedicated to the victims of National Socialism.

IN TRAIN NUREMBERG-FRANKFURT

A busy sightseeing day in N. with Udo. I leave with a feeling of depression only very partially accounted for by my usual reaction to continental railway stations, especially at night: sinister, impersonal, confusing and frightening—too many echoes of “The Lady Vanishes”, as Nita and I were telling each other the other night in Munich during those traumatic few hours of arrival from Vienna, finding the station, and getting Joanna and Cleeve onto the Paris train.

No, I'm depressed partly by loneliness and a sadness at being parted and at being so far from home in London and home in Australia. But the other part, and more immediate part, of the depression is really this country. Nuremberg is, superficially at least, a far more attractive city than Munich (and less than half the size). The rebuilding from almost total destruction of the centre is of course impressive. It's good that only two per cent. of the art treasures and only six thousand people were lost in the great raids (especially the US raid of 2 January, 1945). But for me at least there was not much impression of joy, not much of humor, not much of intellectual behavior or thought. How much can one learn in a day? I think I can get a pretty good idea of a place in a day—particularly a day questioning an intelligent man like Udo who believes fascism could return to Germany, who would either leave Germany immediately or fight it from within if it did, and who went off tonight after the ceremonial handshake at the train to his planning meeting for his church youth club—though he despises many aspects of church life.

A drunk in the street—glimpsed from the tram—Udo says he's probably either denouncing the government or applauding the nazis.

Nuremberg—the place of the *Parteitags*—the grass-grown steps of the stand of honor; the plinths where the searchlights stood, and the flagpoles; the avenues for marching men, with railway stations at each end. A used ticket on the ground—for the recent Germany-USSR soccer match in the stadium nearby! The drums and trumpets and crunch of boots and shouts and salutes seems long away when you see the dilapidation of the whole arena and the Führer rostrum. There is no menace here. The remarkable, novel film show, multi-projected on swinging screens, at the Castle has some good anti-Hitler feet in it—but Udo tells me it was devised by Ludwig Svoboda of Prague (*Lanterna Magika*) and that a German wouldn't have given the Hitler era (“only thirteen years in our long history”) such prominence. (In fact a matter of thirty seconds or so, in 13-15 minutes.) I suggested to him that (a) the Hitler era started long before Hitler, and that its roots must be sought, inter alia, in nineteenth century romanticism and the lack of a liberal tradition; and (b) that thirteen years or not, Auschwitz was in human, moral

terms, the most important world event since the birth of Christ. He didn't argue.

I suppose what depresses me is the sense I get that to these people the past is irrelevant—the memory hole here is on a national *and* individual level, especially the latter. In the USSR it's a purely state matter. Here in Nuremberg, history is important if it's about Dürer. But if it's about yourself, it didn't happen.

FRANKFURT

Nice point from Erika, a young student I had an introduction to here, on our way back from a restaurant in the taxi: "There are 700,000 people in Frankfurt, plus 100,000 foreigners." (Meaning Italian, Turkish, etc. workers.) But perhaps I am unfair to her.

Erika has just told me that the flats the students are occupying are owned by Jews, that the police have orders to evict the students because the owners are Jews, and that the Jews are behind most of the major new building in Frankfurt and are becoming unpopular with the people again. Perhaps I was not unfair to her after all.

Udo said that the Germans he admired most were Bonhoeffer, Schweitzer and Stauffenberg. Bonhoeffer and Stauffenberg I can understand: Schweitzer I would have thought a paternalist rather than a . . . than a what? An internationalist? I suppose one has to allow Schweitzer his method and his achievement, despite the de-bunkers.

David's eighteenth birthday—he is hitchhiking nearby—I wish he were nearer, that I could see him. This loneliness is enhanced by being 'crook in the guts' these last two days, miserably sweating in bed and weakly walking around out of it.

Fed up with lying on the bed I took a taxi and saw Barbara's friend Joan this afternoon—and her boy friend (I presume), a Palestinian Israeli, Rashid, banned from finishing his law course at Jerusalem because sentenced by a military court for harboring a terrorist, and the only Arab member in Germany (he says) of the Israeli Revolutionary Action Committee abroad, the rest being Jews, and all having Israeli passports. He seems to have a good story of forced land seizures and other inequalities. I told him and Joan that,

having just been in Czechoslovakia and now being in Germany, I was too depressed with the communist and fascist problems at the moment to start to re-enter the Arab-Zionist one.

Joan says she was so depressed at the immanent cruelty in Europe and Germany when she first came here from Australia two years ago that she would sit in tramcars weeping. But she questions whether the Germans, however many are fascist in the heart, should have the monuments of the *Konzentrations- und Vernichtungsläger* about to harry their consciences.

Germany is a rebuilt nation. To an historian, or an antiquarian, depressing (again that word!)—nothing is as it was—except, Erika tells me, a small town called Rothenburg, or some such name, south of Würzburg. (And surely Bamberg, which we visited on our way to Prague, too?) The rebuildings are no doubt faithful, but don't carry much conviction, even in Nuremberg—they lack a complete dimension of veracity, they carry a Disneyland effect. Once the dust of the centuries has been disturbed, the old bricks carried off to the *Trimmerhügel*, it seems a sad exercise in pretending it didn't happen. But that's the German theme.

The liberal Catholic editor of *Frankfurter Hefte*, Hubert Habicht, whom I met yesterday, was probably the most impressive German I've met yet—cool, committed, human, ready in defense of the left youth, perfectly willing to accept the validity of the questions I put on guilt and the national ethic generally (Minna, my interpreter, was, I suspect, rather offended when I mentioned the *Zigeuner Baron* and the extermination of the gypsies to Habicht, and later said to me that there was no more reason why Germans should think of the extermination of the gypsies at the *Zigeuner Baron* than Americans should think of Hiroshima at *Madame Butterfly*), and working for a patient, liberal logic in national affairs, slowly brought about by the influence of a minority intelligentsia and a minority press working on the mass media. He saw the liberal future and the moral survival of Germany based on the cadre of thinkers in the churches, press and political parties.

I am continually concerned here in Germany about the actual question of *information* about

the past. I overheard Erika telling Habicht yesterday that she learnt nothing at school and her parents have told her nothing. Habicht says after the war there was ample chance to learn all—but shrugged his shoulders when I said that was a long time ago. There are supposed to be a couple of occasions in the school curriculum when German crimes against humanity are touched on, though they apparently didn't coincide with Erika. But are the Germans, and the young in particular, ever reminded, e.g. on TV documentaries, of the human apocalypse, the mind-bursting end of man's self-image?—the guillotine executions behind the curtain from the judges in Pankrac (see Jan Hajshman's *The Brown Beast*, which I read in Prague twenty years ago), and above all the mother arriving at Auschwitz disowning her own child, in that terrible opening of that most terrible book in the world—so terrible I don't want to remember its name or author, though it's by a Polish survivor of the camps who later killed himself.*

Today the *International Herald Tribune* publishes the story of the beatification of Maksymilian Kolbe. Kolbe was a Catholic priest imprisoned in Auschwitz. Franciszek Gajowniczek tells the story . . .

Palitsch told us the escaper had not been caught and ten men would be selected for the hunger death. Fritsch then walked slowly past our ranks pointing at a prisoner every so often, saying this one . . . this one. Then a guard would grab him by the collar.

When he stood facing me I knew that was the end. I was about the fifth to be pointed at.

At this point Gajowniczek muttered: "It's a pity I must leave my wife and children". Father Kolbe heard, stepped forward with his cap in his hand, smiling.

Fritsch angrily asked: "What does this Polish swine want?"

Kolbe said: "I am a Catholic priest, rather elderly. I want to go instead of that chosen prisoner."

After a fortnight Kolbe and three others were still alive. As they were too long dying, they were poisoned.

* Tadeusz Borowski: *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* (Cape, 1967).

See, on Germany (though about Russia) Nad-ezhda Mandelstam's *Hope against Hope* (London, 1971), p. 289:

It is difficult for us to confront [the past] because so many people were implicated, either directly or indirectly, in what happened—or at least silently acquiesced in it. It is perfectly clear what people . . . would like: they are simply waiting for the moment when they can give their blessing to a new generation of like-minded but more sophisticated heirs to Stalin's [Hitler's] empire.

Just, in fact, as Konrad, our old Prague friend and old Bolshevik and Auschwitz survivor, saw Dubcek and his supporters as more *sophisticated* heirs to the Stalinist terror and fear of ideas, not liberators from it.

Also from Mandelstam:

The twentieth century has shown us that evil has an enormous urge to self-destruction. It inevitably ends in total folly and suicide. Unfortunately, as we now understand, in destroying itself, evil may destroy all life on earth as well.

Also from Mandelstam:

When I used to read about the French Revolution as a child, I often wondered whether it was possible to survive during a reign of terror. I now know beyond doubt that it is impossible. Anybody who breathes the air of terror is doomed, even if nominally he manages to save his life. Everybody is a victim—not only those who die, but also all the killers, ideologists, accomplices and sycophants who close their eyes or wash their hands. . . It is an illness that is passed on to the next generation, so that the sons pay for the sins of the fathers. . .

Joan agreed this afternoon that Europe is full of a cruelty that Australia doesn't know, that it is covered in blood, as our writers have so often said. But, she said, she would stay here because, on the whole, she saw this as the necessary lot of man. I said that, on the whole, I would return home, both because I couldn't stand it (the

present, and the weight of the past), and because I don't concede her point.

I suppose the problem is to stop becoming righteous. *Because* one is Australian it is easy to be righteous in terms of communist and fascist bullies and executioners. But, shit, there's got to be a bit of righteousness around. Would the world be a worse place if we asked more rude questions and made more uninvited interventions? If we don't do this while we are safe, we won't be able to after the deluge.

BERLIN

David says that memorials to the victims of Hitlerism, in for instance Munich or Frankfurt, are there to appease the Nitas of the world, not to help the Germans face up to their past.

David tells me that neither the tourist office in Munich, nor passing pedestrians, would tell two Canadian girls the way to Dachau. The tourist office said that it was a travel office and that Dachau was just a monument. The passers-by gave directions to "Dachau-street" in Munich, and the like obscurations.

David says he finds that the young Germans shy well away from discussions of the Nazi past. They seem concerned about the image of Germany in the foreigner's eye.

I may be fanciful, but Minna in Frankfurt seemed to bridle considerably when Habicht said it was possible for an honest man to be a communist, but impossible for any man who understood stated nazi aims to be an honest man.

Udo was and is wrong to think of Hitlerism as "only thirteen years of German history". As an historical interlude this is of course what it was. But Hitlerism was only incidentally an historical interlude. It was, far more significantly, a moral watershed for mankind, and as such involves not only all who were alive at the time, anywhere, but all those who come after, including the youth.

My new interpreter and guide in Berlin is Gerda. These interpereters make interesting contrasts. First Emil, the cool young operator, who will make the system work for him (his word for himself is 'detached'); intelligent and very generous; with his record collection of nearly a thousand

discs and his disgust at the piggery of the student flats in which he lives. Then there was moon-faced Udo, the man with a conscience, and, incidentally, the man who knew his history and had really mugged up on his buildings. I like the way, the evening I arrived, he took me up on to the roof of a parking station from which, in the marvellous light of a rising full moon, the floodlit towers and walls of Nuremburg rose out of the city below, in a great, dusky, soft panorama. Then Minna in Frankfurt; again, a kind girl, but with a smooth, efficient, tight-lipped, knowing-where-she's-going, quality about her. ("I decided I had to get out of University so I decided to work.") She was a good and patient guide, but the most defensive and the least open on the broader issues—possibly, because she hadn't thought about them or knew little about them. And now Gerda, whose husband teaches history at the Free University—older than the other guides, lively, small, with a good sense of fun, plenty of self-possession, and giving the impression of being able to talk about the bigger issues without any particular hang-ups. A lot of what she says rings true, too: "I never spoke to my aunt again after she divorced my uncle (by marriage) because he was a Jew—after she married him because he was a doctor."

Gerda goes, it seems to me, with Berlin: lively and of life. The despondency which has affected me throughout Germany has lifted here: it is the only German city, of those I have visited, that I could possibly live in. To walk down (or was it up?) the Ku-damm last night in the dusk, shopping, as the lights came on and the dark storm clouds of an autumn evening drifted over, and as the Berliners pressed past and around and ate and drank in the sidewalk cafes, was the nearest I have had to an exhilarating experience for a long time. Of course I was on my own, and that helped. And spending money on myself, and on presents, which I like doing. *And* perhaps I like Berlin because to be here means I'll soon be home, to London and Australia. But I still think I like it for good reasons of Berlin's own.

But I was really depressed on return from East Berlin yesterday—David and I went over for the morning. The border inspection, the delays, the inhuman spaces of the Alexanderplatz, the queue in the post office where we bought stamps—all these and other things made me say to David, walking wearily back to the Schweitzerhof from

the S-Bahn station, how badly I wanted to be at peace again among my own trees and friends. I am not ashamed of this, though to say I am not ashamed shows, of course, that I am at least aware that perhaps I should be. Later on, back in West Berlin, I felt much better: the combination of Germans *and* communism was perhaps a little strong for me—though I must say that in East Berlin one senses and sees (and one has been told) that there prevails a far less ambiguous attitude to the fascist past and all that it entails.

The most amusing experience there was spotted by David—while I was looking up, or trying to look up a telephone number in the Haus der Lehrer on Alexanderplatz. Every five minutes the concierge opened a drawer, took out a long ruler, and pushed the hand of a large electric clock above his head on by five minutes!

Last night's four or five hours with David's student friends was a most heartening experience. A most delightful mob of young people—I would

call them liberal socialists, though the term would horrify them. They consider themselves 'reds' of course, but have nothing but contempt for the bureaucratic state capitalism of the eastern bloc. They are uneasy about the Red Cells, conscious of the ever present threat of manipulation and of being manoeuvred, but tolerant of them in other ways, and prepared to work with them.

Golden youth certainly, in a sense—supported by their families through long and apparently not desperately demanding years of study, much of which time they spend attempting to devise ways to send their parents to the lamp-posts. I could hardly prevent myself smiling at their resentment of the provision of the new liberalising higher education law which stipulates a maximum time for attendance at the university—they felt themselves cheated at this blow against the—surely expensive, for Germany—luxury of the near-permanent student.

On socialism, they struck me as naive. They seemed to find it strange that I should argue that feudalism, colonialism, imperialism and capitalism were all in their time progressive forces. Although they all felt Marx the greatest German, quite clearly, I felt that they were essentially utopian socialists, yearning for an equitable society, agreeable to the proposition that socialism has never been tried, unable to think of a way, or uninterested in thinking of a way, to achieve or run the desired society.

They seemed even puzzled at the suggestion that they might learn from some of the people they despise if they listened as well as lectured: that is, that they might learn of some way to win the support of such people. They were in agreement with the environmental arguments and accepted them as good politics, but I got the impression that they thought of them as *part* of a party platform, rather than as a potential starting point for a new political philosophy.

But nevertheless they were looking for a way out in the personal sense of interhuman morality; agreed that their agitation was only about a small part of what education should be about; but of course thought that the idea of working on the increase of compassion and response between all individuals in society would have to wait on an overthrow of capitalism.

They were attracted to the idea of communes as a way of living a decent ethic within what to them is a repulsive society. Thus one couple had worked for some considerable time on a kibbutz

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in Israel, which they thoroughly approved—but left Israel because they couldn't stand the way Israel leans on the USA. They were indignant about a supposed government secret communication to real estate agents saying that larger flats should not be leased to students (in case they started living a communal life in them—the implication of the students being that the government fears the development of a new ethic). They asked about the possibility of finding space in Australia to set up a commune of their own: the young dentist doing finals, and convinced that bourgeois dentistry is a disgusting profession, particularly keen on this.

On the German past I found them refreshing. They claimed that they *were* exceedingly well informed of the details of the atrocities—though they disagreed about whether they were taught nothing, or something, or a lot about this in school. They accepted my point that for Marxists they didn't show a great deal of interest in understanding history; but they accepted the guilt of their fathers, and/but thought of themselves as the 'fatherless society', and quoted Mitscherlich's book on this, which they greatly admired. They were not impressed with the idea of having their noses rubbed into German war crimes, and said that "many didn't know" (any more, David remarked, than Nita and I and our friends "knew" about Stalin)—though very ready to agree also that many didn't want to know and that many did know.

They argued, or would argue, I think, that the moral enormity of it all is too big a matter to ask one generation or even one people to bear: that it will take time to work out the meaning of Auschwitz, and probably a long time.

I felt secure with *these* young Germans, and felt that they were on the whole taking the right course. They see no point in breast-beating, but neither do they pretend 'it' didn't happen. The fight for a new Germany for them is in part, a large part, I suspect, the fight to exorcise German guilt. In a word, I felt they were a sensible, civilised, kindly and genuinely internationalist mob of young people, and I only hope that many young Germans are like them.

Dr. Walter, on the staff of a literary institute, was impressive yesterday. Dark, bald, goatee-d

and about my own age, he was by origin a Czech Jew. "We had a family conference in Prague in 1939. Members came from all over central Europe. The decision was that things weren't going to be that bad. We couldn't leave our flats and our family graves. Those who thought that way are now in those graves."

"How do you like living among these people?" I asked Dr. Walter through dear Gerda—who was marvellously unrattled and interested in all these many exchanges of mine on 'hot questions' (in fact last night, at the 'Jews in Berlin Society' historical exhibition at the Museum, I heard her rousing up the attendant because the exhibition didn't contain visual material on *Krystallnacht*, the *KZs*, etc.) (Incidentally, 165,000 Jews in Berlin in 1933, 5000 in 1945, about 6000 now.) "I'm in an in-between position," Walter said, shrugging. He has a German wife and child. He sees his role in part as trying to make the Germans face up to the question of the German arts in exile. "Neither in the GFR or the GDR has there been a confrontation with the German literature of exile: why our writers and others went into exile, how they lived there, the social and intellectual adjustments they had to make, what they created there. The years 1933-45 are a literary vacuum. [The memory hole again?] The collected edition of Mann avoids any comments on his years in exile. Von Horwach was unknown until a recent exhibition here restored him to attention. And the same applies to Piscator."

Walter says that what the German artist produces is quite different from what he thinks. Diplomats *always* behave with a diplomatic front; German writers only some of the time.

Dr. Walter says that in the East Brecht is treated as a classic—effectively they have Brecht in aspic (my phrase, not his)—otherwise his radicalism and his ideas would be an insufferable encouragement to change.

But his little girl, at her kindergarten, was recently asked to say something about the crucifixion of Christ. "It was the fascists who did it," she said. "Oh," said the teacher, "your father doesn't know much about history. It was not the fascists who killed Christ—it was the Jews." You wouldn't get that in the East.

ALAN SEYMOUR

Living and Wholly Living?

I had come as close to praying as a man with no God can come that the same sanity which had prompted earlier kidnappers to release their captives would again prevail.

One Saturday in June 1971, high summer in Turkey's Aegean city Izmir — Smyrna as it was from about 800 BC through to early this century — I found myself suddenly alone. That morning I'd seen my closest friend off to London to launch the next cycle of his life. My Turkish friends were, most of them, on holiday; the bourgeoisie in their family beach houses down along the southern shore of the Izmir Gulf, the poorer at the seaside village resort nearby. (But what news of Salih who had evaded the police and was said to be hiding in the hills beyond Ankara?) I'd recently returned from a business trip to London and knew I'd probably be moving on again soon, but for now it was Izmir.

Because I'd expected to have left Turkey altogether by then I'd given up my apartment and was at that time staying a little inland at Bornova in a house (over a century old) owned by one of the tough old British families who for two hundred years have been supervising and exploiting the local dried-fruits-figs-nuts industry. (But things are changing and, much to the British community's horror, these industries are coming increasingly under indigenous control.) The rooms were high-ceilinged, cool, the house surrounded by a decidedly mind-expanding garden glowing with butterfly colors and afloat with dazing perfumes. The air was clear and clean, a relief from the sometimes dusty atmosphere of the city itself where I'd lived for the previous four and a half years.

Here every window looked out on close low-lying mountains, and on trees, cypress, cedar, olive, fig, magnolia, poplar, almond, lemon, apricot, pomegranate, the fruits and flowers of that coastal strip between mountains and sea known,

since long before Alexander the Great charged through here, for its rich fertility. Beyond the mountain barrier lay the bitter plains of Anatolia and the arid frugal life of over thirty million village peasants. But Izmir has always been a characteristic seaside city, the living easier, for most people. (And Metin? Is it true that he was picked up by police in that restaurant we all used to go to and is rumored to have been taken to jail in Istanbul?)

On that brilliant, hot Saturday I took a bus into town, strolled the boulevard near the fountained entrance to our Kültür Park. Passing the pavement barrows piled high with hundreds of peaches, their tangy sweet perfume simultaneously attacking, Proust-fashion, one's nostrils and nostalgia, I decided to call on Yilmaz, whose uncle's auto repair shop was tucked into that congested area where half-a-dozen narrow back streets converged. Here, among the scruffy one-night-stand hotels and small kebab restaurants where working-class customers sat at tables set out on the pavements, Yilmaz — a dandy by night — worked hard with his hands. He always looked up with a welcoming, disarming smile, called to the boy — there is always a boy, an apprentice, overworked and poorly paid — to bring a chair. I was sat down outside, the inevitable small glass of *chai*, tea, was conjured up from up a *chai* house, there is always a *chai* house too, not far away.

Yilmaz told me that he and a friend were going late that afternoon to Kushadasi down the coast. Why didn't I come along? As always the first reaction was guilt. Should stay at home, should work, the new novel I was trying to finish, the new play . . . But it was hot, I was ill at ease as so often now, probably wouldn't get through

much work anyway. I have been grateful for that rationalising ever since. The weekend, in its lazy way, encapsulated most of the preoccupations of my life in recent times.

At five I boarded the bus, a smooth young Izmirli in floppy white beach pants and Italian-style sailor shirt came to sit beside me. Jelal, the friend of Yilmaz. He talked better English than I did Turkish, we conversed in the usual bi-lingual cocktail all the way down. Yilmaz had gone home to clean up after work and came aboard at his district high on the hill above the city with its generous panorama of the deep U-shaped gulf edged by mountains.

Out of town, at the first main road junction, we had to stop. Since the army's "request" in March to the conservative business-men's government to get out because of their failure to attend to long-awaited reforms, we had been living under martial law. Some politically motivated bank robbers, some militants, were missing, and at junctions outside every city all vehicles had to go through a passport check. I always carried my passport now. Jelal in the rush had forgotten his and looked nervous as the army officer, quietly, with a careful gravity, moved slowly towards our seats at the back of the bus. The officers were always courteous to foreigners, part of the Islamic tradition of hospitality to the traveller. The religion was born in the Arabian desert where not to offer help, water, coffee, food, to someone staggering in out of the dust could have meant his death. Turkey's modern cities are a long way geographically and metaphysically from the desert but conditioning is slow to change. Now, after much observation, I was impressed that the officers, unlike some officials encountered in my travels, did not exploit this opportunity to exercise petty power, but were gentle with their own people too. Against a proven criminal, non-conformist, transgressor, they could be, as I'd seen, fearsomely aggressive. But mostly the pervading gentleness of Turkish life was sustained even now. The officer listened patiently to Jelal's explanation, offered with rather practised charm, then murmured that he must remember not to do it again.

The bus went on its way. Turks and Greeks have more in common than either knows, or would admit, and one thing is an eagerness to discuss politics. Even now, with the situation tense and unsettled and people being imprisoned for

promulgating left-wing views, Jelal showed no reticence. "They say they are arresting communists. These writers, directors, actors, even folk singers who are going into jail, they are for reform which everyone knows we need, they are socialist maybe, and some, yes, some are communist. But all? It is an excuse."

This imprisoning was being done not by the army and not by the reactionaries of the ousted government but by the new semi-"liberal" coalition. Its left-of-centre members — alarmed by extremists of the left as much as by those of the right — were co-operating with the conservatives to have militant leftists locked up. Certainly the country had been a madhouse of student gun battles on street and campus, of violent demonstrations, of robberies and kidnappings. But this blanket attack, penalising not only moderates but with a clear bias against extremists of the left and little done against the religious fanatics of the right, embittered the intelligentsia, and especially the students.

The hour-and-a-half run to Kushadası I had done many times. I knew and looked for landmarks along the road, the small hills and valleys silver-green with olive trees, the scruffy villages strung (Moslem-fashion) haphazardly along the road. If I catalogue, without comment, in the manner of a 'new' novelist of the mid-'60s, enough of the modest wonders of this bus-trip, would that convey the pleasure of living in Aegean Turkey? The ruin of a Byzantine castle perched high on a flat mountain-top commanding what must have been, in the thousand years of Byzantine rule, a strategic view . . . The flat green stretch near railway and stream where in summer there is always a small camel-train standing in a reflective browse, the feed good . . . The plateau covered with cotton fields, a deep almost crimson hue now, white in September . . . Suddenly, stretched along the roadside in a gasp of color, is the open-air market for plates and vases, hand-painted in all shapes, sizes and patterns, my favorite the rich turquoise blue with intricate black arabesques turned out by the small potteries of the town of Kütahya.

A few kilometres further we round a bend and see ahead the small acropolis, with Byzantine walls, of Selchuk. When Ephesus fell into mediaeval decay and its silted-up harbor became a malarial swamp, the residents withdrew to make a new town at the foot of a nearby hill. Camels go by, bronze bells a-clunking. You can buy a

string of such bells to hang in your living-room. (We once bought the smaller sheeps' bells and they made a good earthquake warning, being the first to shake and often waking us in the middle of the night, ready for immediate death, exhilarated and scared, gladly deflated when it did not come.) Souvenir stalls are draped with brilliantly-stripped materials woven in the deep reds, browns, golds, pale greens and blues typical of local patterns. Brass trays, copper dishes, onyx vases, rugs, carpets, meerschaum pipes carved — in the shape of sultans' turbaned heads — from the white clay of the town of Eskişehir, the market is less stridently commercial than those of Istanbul, its modest proportions pleasing to the eye.

Selchuk itself, below the acropolis, has its charms. Remains of Roman aqueducts, tall columns of reddish brick, nowadays support the huge nests of storks who winter in Africa and come back to us as a sign of good weather each spring. The small Selchuk museum is an archaeological delight with its two imposing statues of the fertility goddess Artemis whose temple, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, stood only about a kilometre away, not a pillar of it left today. On my first visit to this museum I stared, breathing almost stopped momentarily, at two statues, horizontal on the floor, of dying soldiers, prisoners of war, found at Ephesus and dating from the 4th century. They call to mind the last great anguished works of Michelangelo — the slaves, unfinished, striving to break out of the stone, one can see in Florence and the Louvre. But these minor masterpieces, unmentioned in any guidebook, yet so moving in the tortured line of their bodies and the anguish of their expressions, were done one thousand years before Michelangelo was born. Above all, in the Selchuk museum, one always looks again at the tiny bronze version of the ancients' recurring theme, a boy on a dolphin. This one was found in the sea down the coast not far from the birthplace of Herodotus. The boy sits atop the dolphin, his legs forward, braced, one hand flying backwards, his smile riding triumphantly down the centuries. A little beyond the museum an Ottoman *hamam* (Turkish bath) is being restored, but that has more to do with the blossoming tourist trade than with historical piety.

Ten minutes beyond Selchuk we climb a little and break out on a vast view of sea and coast, and follow along a cliff-top road looking down on

small turquoise bays guarded by steep grey rocks. Already the run-in to Kushadasi has been ruined. Once it was right beside the sea and a strip of white sand and Erol's Beach with its own small restaurant under a bamboo thatch. Now all that has gone as the bustling mayor urges them on. The road has been widened, concrete smothers beach and sea, a marina awaits rich tourists' yachts, and concrete blocks and iron stand in a mess of construction.

The bus stops in a transformed square. When I first knew this place five years ago it was a quiet town, a modest local resort. Now it has hotels and motels and eight discos, quayside restaurants hung with fishnet and starfish and a main street like an open-air arcade, a parade of multi-colored rugs, carpets, embroidery, leather and suede, hanging outside almost every shop. It looks more warmly inviting than it did before and the young locals love the new liveliness of the town. We long to say to the mayor: "Know when to stop. Don't build and build until it has all disappeared."

Yilmaz, who never plans, is confident of finding a room. But the town is full of Izmirli folk down for the weekend or on vacation. We end up in the same hotel I stayed in years ago, the Deniz Palas, the Sea Palace, high on a hill with a panorama over what has been called (admittedly by the proprietors) the most beautiful bay on the Aegean. It is a dusty walk up to the Deniz Palas and like most Turkish hotels bearing that name it is no palace at all. But it is worth staying at for the pleasure of waking up in the morning to that view.

By the time we get into our room it is almost sunset, a still, breathless sunset on which the day's heat still hangs. The hotel overlooks a bay within the bay. On the right is the long quay at which ships off-load their package-deal tourists for a hasty half-hour scamper around the great stone and marble city of Ephesus. On the left a narrow concrete pier runs about a kilometre out to the small hill-shaped island which gives the town its name, Bird Island, though the birds have mostly gone and the island's graceful castle, an Ottoman one this time, built in the time of the admiral Barbarossa, has been turned into a disco, a come-down from its lusty past but a strangely fascinating dancing place, its strong stone walls rising on each side to vanish into the darkness of a high vaulted roof.

Where the narrow pier joins the land is water of a deep dark green, great for diving. We run and burst through the air, bracing ourselves for the

shock of cold. But the water has no chill in it and we dive again and explore the deeps and then climb out to stroll the length of the pier to the swimming-place under the island's steep cliffside. No breeze disturbs the water's surface, it is flat and still. I float dreamily, at peace for the first time in months, under a sky shading from pale afternoon lemon to the deep rich pink and orange of a luscious Turkish peach.

Yilmaz and his friend are amused when I impulsively decide to wear my glasses in the water for once, as I resent missing the views from the sea itself which other swimmers take for granted. Now, glasses on, I slip feet first from the rock ledge into the water.

Words flat on a page cannot communicate the aching sense of magic and love and loss — for I guess this will be the last time here — I feel at this sea-level gaze about the wide curved bay. The foreign community of Izmir — the Americans, British, European Levantines — have always thought my attachment to the place and its people excessive, incomprehensible. But Turkey has not only been my dwelling-place for five years and given me a sense of feeling at home that I have had nowhere else in the world. I came to it first at a bad time, after illness and disappointment in my work. I was soured, drying up in spirit, crooked, as the poet said, on the world. The Turks returned me to the human race.

Well, try to put it down as it was, as it is. Aegean water is, as all the writers have said, a unique blue, sometimes pale, transparent, sometimes shadowed with deeper purples and gleaming (again the hackneyed but authentic word) turquoise so glossily thick it looks as though it has been painted on. This water stretches away from my chin now to the sweet curve of land, cradling the town with its tiled roofs and white-washed walls in uneven terraces up the hillside, a few pale stone minarets rising from the huddle. The quay and its cruise ship and, where the quay joins land, the colored lights strung about the waterside restaurants already alight. And behind all this, low hills with the usual cover of olive trees. It sounds simple enough. A hill. Olive trees. I know no way to explain what those trees and that hill in the soft but clear-cut light of fading afternoon can do to satisfy, to restore me.

I've had Australian visitors come through, who nod, repeat "Oh yeah, olive trees" and look away untouched, uninterested. I say to them I've

wondered why we haven't grown olives on this scale in Australia, how softening they are on a hard landscape, how they give shade against heat, how they hold the shifting soil and grow more grand and magisterial with every generation, every century, until the old trunks thicken and twist and curl into bizarre shapes inviting anthropomorphic reactions in the extreme. No response and I feel foolish. Me and olive trees? I was born and grew up in a city, a suburban person as most Australians are. Poetry in peach trees, philosophy in olive groves? I was de-cultured as so many city people are and grew to understand something of this mystery only in recent times.

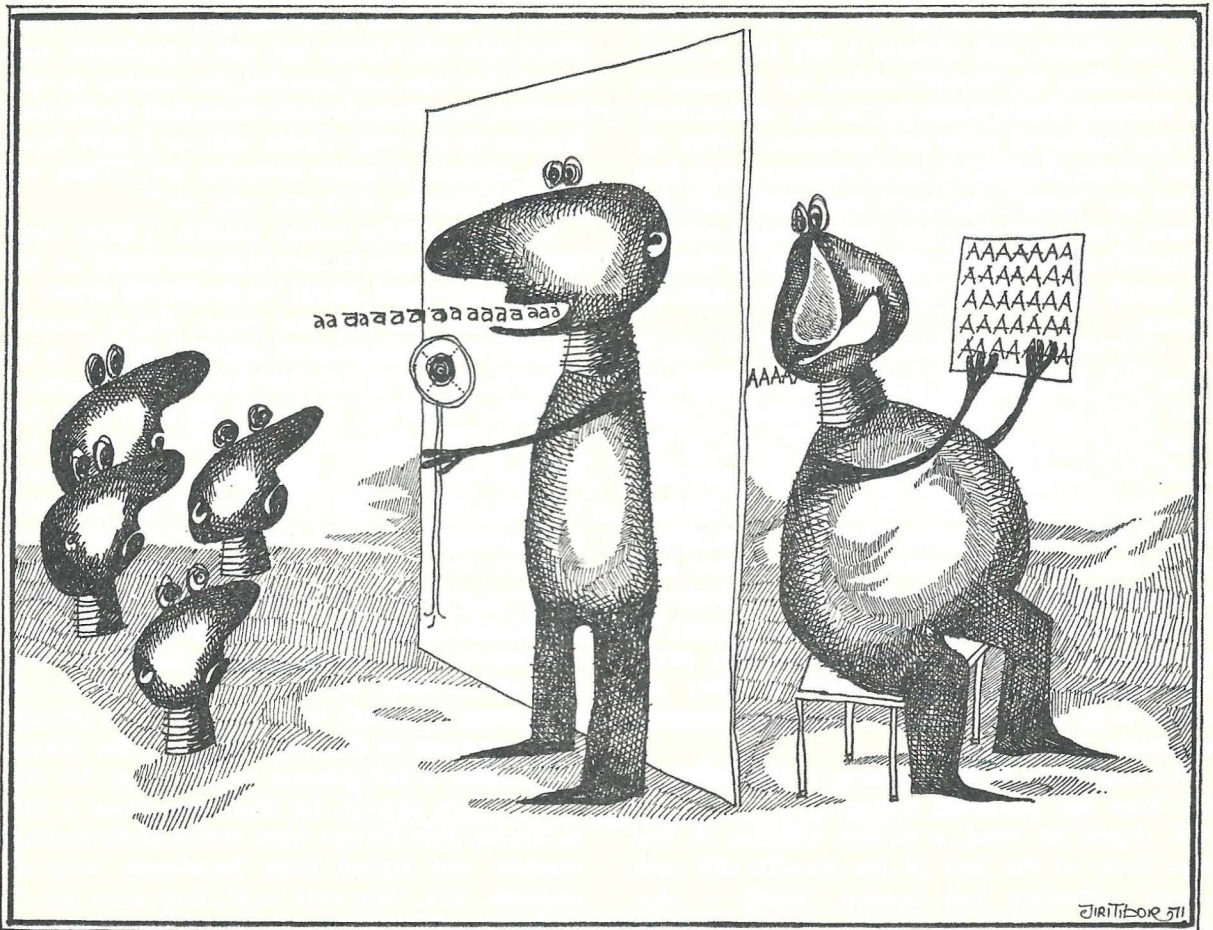
We walked up the hill again, talking dreamily, our dusty town-stiff bodies now unflinching. Watched the afterglow from our window, had a beer on the covered terrace, then dressed and wandered down to the quayside to sit at an open restaurant by the water, darkness gathering. We ate crisp fresh fish and picked at the usual small white plateful of salad and shared a bottle of *raki*, which is usually too much for my hepatic liver. Yilmaz and Jelal then strolled off to look for girls. They had seen two they fancied and had the Mediterranean man's delusion that a local girl will for some reason be ready to surrender her prized virginity to them although she is strongly obliged by local custom to offer it before marriage to no man, as they well know. Of course the girls went respectably to the open-air movies with their parents. Of course the boys wandered back looking cockily over-confident in recompense. Of course they switched and started making a play for two local youths who were strolling the length of the quay and back again as the townspeople do. Even from a distance I could guess at the misunderstandings in the air. For all their supposed knowledge of their own people Yilmaz and Jelal seemed lacking in elementary insight. These two youths looked villagely, unsophisticated, uneasy and so a little aggressive. Their manner towards the two Izmirli convinced me that they were assuming Yilmaz and Jelal to be fully and only homosexual. Yilmaz and Jelal were, like the youths themselves, like so many Mediterranean men for reasons of custom and history, not exactly heterosexual, not homosexual, not bisexual. Just sexual. But a man thought to be exclusively homosexual tends to be looked upon as something less than fully rounded and, if too overtly eager for a partner, to be cast in the role of victim. As my two Izmirli friends

did not see themselves in this light I watched with amused misgivings as the four, after much discussion, went off towards the path up to the hotel, some basic conflicts of interest ahead.

Voices at a nearby table got through my absorption and registered with an old familiar plangency. I glanced towards them. Not your average package-deal tourists, they looked like one of those small parties who overland together from India up through Afghanistan and westwards to Iran, Turkey and on to Europe. They were breaking up now, going, it seemed, to a disco, leaving one slower drinker behind. Tall, lean, blond, tanned so deep one immediately remembered the term's association with leather, he sat back holding his tall glass of Tuborg and gazed around. I spoke across the tables, he joined me, we talked. He surprised me. "Oh, you're the Australian writer who lives in Izmir." Two years ago, on a previous trip through Turkey, he had been swimming in the

warm springs at Pamukkale, a few hundred kilometres inland from here, and got talking to two young Americans, one white, one black. "Mike!" I laughed. Mike at the time had told me of the meeting: "This Australian guy said you'd written some play that was quite well known about ten years ago, that really dated you, baby."

This time David was on his way back to London after a year with his family in Melbourne. How was it? Had it changed? How would I find it if I went back? My questions were more than academic. Should I go back next year, shouldn't a writer, indeed any man, get back to his roots, etc., etc.? Dave's answers had a special relevance for me in my present confused state. He was intelligent, careful to search for the right word. He talked of one recurring theme which had made his visit less than comfortable. "They don't want to know anything you saw, did, liked, appreciated abroad. It's permissible to mention foreign parts only if you compare them unfavourably with Aus-



tralia, which is what the natives want to hear. Even to mention in passing, with pleasure, any place you've been to is to see the eyes glaze over with boredom." It rang true. I realised that before leaving Australia I had been guilty of exactly that sin of indifference towards returned travellers or European visitors. "Overseas" then had seemed so remote as to be irrelevant. "But," he was continuing, "that meant through all my stay I had to impose a self-censorship, to cut out virtually all mention of the last ten years of my life!"

We started another Tuborg and David talked of the nicer things he'd found at home. In the half-light of the promenade the two local youths were returning, scowling. Something had gone wrong. "It is more informal than English society even now, you can break through quickly to people, there's a sort of instant acceptance, instant friendliness." I saw other places, heard voices from other times. London and the student in the flat downstairs who thought himself so far out but introduced himself as "Mr. Poole". Sydney and the dislike and distaste I felt for a loud-mouth calling me "mate" within ten seconds of our meeting. Perth, years ago, in my adolescence, and my feeling of pride and acceptance when an older, gentle, thoughtful, much respected man first called me "mate", the word meaningful not devalued. And I was here too, sitting under colored lights, salt still tingling my skin, and on the air the gently tinny music from the distant open-air cinema.

I was only half-listening now, hoped Yilmaz and Jelal were not in trouble. We strolled a little, I felt tired and thought I should get back to the hotel. We agreed to meet the following morning at the swimming place out by the castle. I climbed the hill again and found Yilmaz and Jelal sitting on the terrace. A cold mutual silence. Desires had overlapped, each accused the other of jealousy and one of the youths had asked for money. To someone uninvolved it sounded funny. But, pride wounded again and sorely frustrated, they intended to go down to the waterside to hunt again, separately. I went to bed.

We met Dave in the morning, didn't move all day from the protected corner of sun, sea and rock. Again no wind, a perfect stillness. A few steps away at the foot of the island's cliff wall a new restaurant had opened, simply a blue awning over a few tables and a modest charcoal

grill for shish-kebabs and köfte. We lunched lightly there, returned to stretch out on the warm sea wall running along the pier. I liked to look down on the bay's calm water on one side and the choppy blue of the open sea on the other. A slim black adolescent boy, a descendant no doubt of Africans brought back as slaves during imperial Ottoman days, picked his way with delicate assurance about the rocks between castle wall and open sea. A fishing boat passed and he smiled and waved. A girl in a swimsuit adorned with mauve and blue art-nouveau curlicues was stretched flat on her back on a rubber raft floating by.

One of Dave's party had joined us, a tall young Mexican, a professor of sociology, which fascinated the children and teenagers who gathered around to talk as they often do at the sight of strangers. I translated their questions, Carlos smiled and answered lazily. He gave us his version of the incidents in Mexico City that Olympic year when the police gunned down the students. Then he had been a student and may have been killed with his friends had not a professor, concerned for him and guessing the coming danger, invented a message for him to do that day to keep him out of the way. Carlos said, as I have heard many students in many countries say, "There will be more trouble. It is not over yet."

Jelal and Carlos talked politics. Yilmaz slept. Dave sat talking to a few kids who hung on and on. I swam again, alone, and tried to dream of nothing but this day and place. But a memory came. I was sitting up in bed half awake as the voice from the B.B.C. on shortwave announced the news. Each day that week the main story had been of the kidnapping of Mr. Elrom, and I had listened and come as close to praying as a man with no God can come in the hope that the same sanity, humanity, which had prompted earlier kidnapers to release, unharmed, their American captives, would again prevail. But the voice in its chiselled English said, "In Istanbul the Israeli ambassador has been found murdered, shot through the head" and I cried out and turned my head away as though to avoid a blow. A peculiar sharp sourness in the chest signalled the distaste and despair I had guessed would come. An idyll broken? Not exactly, for there was never a time in Turkey that I'd not been aware of its political troubles and argued them ferociously with the students. Yes, they were right, they must get rid of the American military presence, yes, they must

have more political and economic independence, yes, they must hammer their government for reform and change. But as the conflict polarised and each extreme produced its fanatics and the killing began, I pulled away. And now this murder seemed not only inhuman but politically futile. I expected it would bring—and later it did—more severe legislation and a fiercer official hatred of dissident youth. I was aware that most of my intellectual friends now felt contempt for the characteristic gutlessness of my liberal stance. Like Carlos I could see no joy ahead.

Yilmaz called. We said our goodbyes to Carlos and David who hoped we might meet again in London. I didn't know where I'd be even a few weeks later. I hoped to be moving on but to where? The talk, my memories, the sheer dazzlement of peaceful perfect day, had induced a mood of not disagreeable melancholy. So useless in his melancholy, the good liberal.

As the bus moved out along the cliff road I

smiled with pleasure at a last glimpse of the bloated sun hanging a moment on the horizon over the sea. "Sheftali," I said, the Turkish word for "peach". Yilmaz smiled. "Chok, güzel. Very beautiful." I agreed.

Once during our long correspondence Catie Duncan had remarked on my ability to flick, within a sentence, from deepest pessimism to a sudden delight in passing detail. This trick of living—to the hilt—in the moment and for the moment was one thing I had gradually learned from Turks. In recent difficult years it had seemed the only way to keep going, to sustain a life. But wherever I go next, I wondered as the bus moved back past ancient ruins, can it be the same? Or had that capacity been ruptured, for good, during that long week of listening hour by hour to the radio to the names of friends in the list of those wanted by the authorities, and, in the days after the death of Mr. Elrom, half-expecting every hour to hear those one had most respected and loved named as murderers?

GEORG LUKACS

The Winter issue of *Meanjin Quarterly* contains a brilliant essay by Jack Lindsay, 'The Achievement of Georg Lukács.'

Other features include: 'Some Myths of the Right,' by Graeme Duncan; 'New Australian Drama,' by Margaret Williams; 'The Feminine Frontier,' by Coral Lansbury; 'The Alien Antipodes,' by Alan Healy; 'A Portrait of the Artist in Patrick White's *The Vivisector*,' by Terry Smith; 'The Popular Arts,' by Andrew Bear; 'Violence, the Aborigines, and the Australian Historian,' by Henry Reynolds; 'Henry Handel Richardson — Minus Ned Kelly,' by Dorothy Green; 'Voice of the People: A Note on Opinion Surveys,' by R. W. Connell; 'P. R. Stephensen and the Mandrake Press,' by Richard Fotheringham; Short Story Chronicle, by Richard Wilson, 'Neo-Patronage of the Arts,' by A. A. Phillips.

Contributors also include: Arthur A. Calwell, A. D. Hope, Barry Smith, R. D. Fitzgerald, John Temple, Bruce Hanford, Philip Thompson, Colin Hughes, A. A. Phillips, G. W. Leeper, Cecil Hadgraft.

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in the giving vein

The evidence, like the weather, is from
An inner storm; the poem, like every poem,
Will be merely a beginning, the dark work
For Venus' mirror, a heap of ashes,
Never to be finished, though complete:
The mirror must be walked through
And the one of many million crosses
Borne—the pollen cloud dispersing, spruce
Sadists and armorial villains stand
Plausibly among scales and trumpets,
Violence and punctilio masked by falling
Almond blossom; then from the dream
A voice proclaims the flag and day of evil,
Indifferent to irony or liberal shame.

This is the gift I would refuse—I'd take
Well-water from a town of towers,
Make history of grey femurs and hot
Processions watched from reedy rivers—
The ingredients are myself, a nuisance
In a marmalade tomb grinning at
Centuries of cards, a savant with
A Cockney grammar interrupted as
The aristocratic plane drops, a storm
Of poets landing like Columbus' men
To bring back a pox to infect the twenty-six
Letters of the alphabet. There'll be no home
But that low-water amniotic
Whose sounds are caucus to the will to live.

No pressure on my chest and yet I'm not
In the giving vein. I have about me
Those moveables of eyes that dreams
Have sanctified. The weather is dull, no mist,
The lake is flowing in the wrong direction,
Early to work and the postman with
Words that fall down if they're leaned on.
Extraordinary that victory can be snatched
From such small things—a shift in
The weight of nouns, a new nickname
For God, a flower lasting an extra day—
We're in a fire, singing; I'm the one
Whose voice you can't hear; perhaps my round
O is agony, I shall insist it's praise.

PETER PORTER

this lady counts...

This lady counts in transcendental numbers:
the rational is not for her.

One and two and seventy-four
are monochrome and dull;

she, princess-like, prefers by far
bright jewels like e and π and $\sqrt[3]{101}$.

For her, $e + 3\pi$ eggs make a dozen
and sonnets have $10\sqrt{2}$ lines;

and on her special tree
are $\ln 5$ parrots and πe^2 leaves.

I love the glittering imprecisions she demands.
Yet I am glad the number of her eyes, lips,
breasts, and nipples is rational and correct;
and that, between her exact two thighs,
she settles for precisely one.

John Philip

timor mortis

As Schopenhauer's coach rolls
the worms in the pannelling
start a *schottische*—

Sister and brother in the mitral dark,
when we go we are single,
our handclasp's broken—

But clocks are still clocking,
strangers are dreaming
identical dreams—

Hailed out of nothing and with
nowhere to go but a spread sail
of theory. Ever and ever—

We would escape if
the raft could hold all of us:
I'm in the painting—

Touch is the touch paper,
the fuse in the tail,
the sermon in silver—

The plague town behind him,
relaxed with a nosegay,
Schopenhauer mutters—

'Man is ridiculous; if
it weren't for his death, he'd
have no value whatever—'

PETER PORTER

orphanage odyssey

the grass has married the concrete
where the footway are bare of feet,
& the trees have pushed thru the asphalt
where gold chariots use to ride.
(or in short/these things have changed.)
the neon beacons in the night
have stopped their sacred glowing,
& the bars where we could once forget
we've now forgotten.

& where did we go
where did we go
or am i ? wrong.

now

the days are blind
the mornings deaf,
autistic edens filled with fear,
bill-boards rattling in the dead wind.
& if anything moves it isn't here
& if anyone lives they're hiding.
hiding from the horror the analyst unleashed
(we cry we cry we cry)
having broken all the mirrors
i'm content to ripple ponds
(continuously/dissolving my image)
& can we ever have the presence
to face us once again?

i am a child of the state
a child of the state
a child of this state of mind
(where some words break like napalm
& as exploding/unsettle all the time)
theres vodka in your river veins
tobacco plantations in your lungs
aspirin crawling thru your brain
where hypos are driven by nuns,
& everywhere is nowhere
& nowhere is everywhere
& everyno is wherewhere.
& when they find me out / (of my head)
they'll no doubt rip out my computer
& replace it with a transplant from a female pig,
& i'll probably do the funniest things
you've ever seen
& i'll probably do the dumbest things
i've ever done
& they'll probably say
Al
& let me go home free.
(where)

i drink from rusty coffee cans
i eat with plastic spoons,
i am coat-hung in the closets
of all these mechanical rooms.

PETER HARNEY

poem

Adelaide Adelaide
When I arrived you were in your long white nightgown
Parks wound in bandages round varicose streets
Your sky a fat adolescent in black panties
(Her hairs haven't grown yet)
Moon sat like Nanny in a walk up cafeteria
Worrying about the statues down North Terrace/
The bronze cough of the tubercular dream
Cool, calm, selective service
The civic fountains of two world wars
Pissing in the wind
Adelaide, I smelled the zoo under hoop skirts
Stiff in black leather, iron lace
The menagerie creaks, starched in sweat
I clipped on a nose, downwind from sleep
Woke up in the morning migrations, flights of stairs
The wing collar of a pre-teen bra in the river
Strangling an image of Byron, a limp fish
For someone else to wring a tale
Out of the underpinnings Adelaide
Out of your legs, that end like dolls.

ERIC BEACH

Mandelstam: Socialism and the Person

JACK LINDSAY

What constitutes moral and intellectual integrity in such a situation as the Soviet Union under the domination of Stalin?

Osip Mandelstam was a highly talented poet of the earlier years of the Russian revolution. In 1934 he was arrested for composing a poem on Stalin, which he recited only to a few friends. Someone denounced him and he was exiled for four years. Then in 1938 he was rearrested and soon afterwards died in some prison-camp in unknown circumstances. In 1956 he was officially rehabilitated and his poems were scheduled for republication, but fifteen years later the volume has not yet appeared. His widow Nadezhda survived as a teacher of English in provincial towns; then in 1965 was allowed to return to Moscow. She had never paused in her devotion to Osip's memory and by various devices had managed to preserve manuscripts of his poems. "In a sense," she says, "we really do live in a pre-Gutenberg era: more and more people read poetry in the manuscript copies that circulate all over the country." Anna Akhmatova also remarked that Osip "does not need Gutenberg's invention". After her return to Moscow, Nadezhda set about putting her recollections in order—it is not clear if she had previously made notes—and the result is a remarkable account, *Hope Against Hope*, of what life was like for a dissident intellectual in the mid-1930s. Only occasional digressions give us a glimpse of things before or after that date.

The great achievement of the book is the way in which it evokes the very physical feeling of those days. We feel the burden of fear and uneasiness, of uncertainties and suspicions pressing in from every moment, every encounter, every silence; and this conjuring-up of the texture, weight, unslackening anxiety, deadening oppression, of the situation, is achieved, not by talking

about such things, but by the directness and immediacy of the presentation. In the process of that lengthy presentation countless little pictures of the social milieu and of various literary characters emerge; but in order to evaluate these, we need first of all to get inside Nadezhda's own character and estimate the extent to which she understood what was going on. And then we need to check her impressions and judgments with a much wider knowledge than she had.

First come the obvious limitations shared by both the Mandelstams. He grew up in Petersburg in a rich Jewish family, his father a leather merchant. "So many French governesses were hired to look after me that their features have become blurred," he tells us in a memoir of his youth. The evening promenade left him with memories of "the ring of spurs, the languages of England and France, a living exhibit from the English Store and the Jockey Club". Though a slight touch of Judaism, like "a little bit of musk", pervaded his youth, so as to give him a sense of difference, he never once heard Yiddish, and only "once or twice in my life I was taken to a synagogue as if to a concert". He developed in a literary world that was reacting against the racialism of 1905, even though that radicalism had made only a meek demand for a less obviously harsh, more "European" régime. Nadezhda, born 1899, grew up in Kiev, in an art-environment; her family travelled widely. She met Osip, eight years her senior, in 1919 when she was twenty.

The Mandelstams were unprepared for the revolution, even though Osip had idealistically written for a revolutionary renewal of life. He was aghast at the violences and the furies, yet carried along by a feeling that something of great

potentialities was happening, from which he did not want to be excluded. He held that his "oath to the fourth estate" involved him in an acceptance of the Soviet system; but he felt hopelessly divided. In poems of the early 1920s he uses images of himself such as that of "the drying crust of loaf long since taken out" of the oven; he is a "sick son of the age, with quicklime in his blood", a "doubledealer with divided soul". Nadezhda in her book shows no awareness of what the revolution was about. The 1920s, she insists, consisted wholly of the destruction of old values, with nothing being created at all. She blames Herzen for replacing the idea of popular education with "the political concept of indoctrination". She even shows a sad middleclass primness of scorn at the pre-1917 radical girl-student with her "dowdy dress" and "nondescript hair done in a bun".

Perhaps I may be allowed to cite here a version of my own of one of Osip's poems in which he is trying to accept the revolution without falsifying his own qualms, his mingled sense of triumphant releases and implicit disasters:

Brothers, let's glorify freedom's twilight,
 the great crepuscular year of years.
 Into night's seething waters is drowned
 a heavy forest of snares.
 O Sun, you are judge and people
 and you rise in stonedead years.
 Let's glorify the fateful burden
 the people's leader with tears assumes.
 Let's glorify power's murky burden,
 its intolerable yoke. O Time,
 he that owns a heart must hear
 your ship as it goes down.
 We've organised into battle-legions
 the swallows, and nowadays we doubt
 if we can see the sun. All nature
 stirs, comes alive, flutters about.
 Through the snares, the thick of twilight,
 the sun's lost, the earth floats out.
 Let's try. A clumsy enormous turn
 makes the helm creak. Earth's floating now.
 Take heart, chaps. And we'll remember,
 cleaving ocean as with a plough,
 even in Lethe's chills: the earth
 was worth a dozen heavens, we'll vow.

How erratic and subjective was the way in which Mandelstam thought is illustrated by an early essay on Pushkin and Scriabin, of which

only fragments remain. He argues that the death of Christ to redeem the world makes it superfluous for others to die in art or to save the world; what is left is just to enjoy it all. Thus Christian art is free. The roots of his culture were middle-class, though he tried to modify his reactions in the early years of the revolution. "What don't they like about the middleclass?" That class is "the most stable section of the community and everything rests on them." His first small booklet had been published in 1913, with an enlarged edition in 1916. *Tristia* came out in 1922, and with a new title in 1923; in 1925 came the biographical prose work, *The Noise of Time*; in 1928, his collected poems, a book of criticism, and *The Noise of Time* retitled *The Egyptian Stamp* (after an added novella). Later he tried to appease Stalin with an Ode in his praise. In his reaction to this work of conscious subservience he wrote many of the best poems which describe his torn state of mind:

Unhappy is he who is scared as by his own
 shadow
 at dogs barking and down by the wind is
 scythed,
 and unhappy is he, who, himself halfalive,
 begs a shadow for alms.

Here is a sonnet, "Leningrad", written in 1930:

I've reached my city known to the edge of
 tears,
 childhood's swollen tonsils, the blood in my
 veins.
 You're back. Then quickly swallow across
 the years
 the river-lamp's cod-liver oil. You're home
 again.
 Quickly accede to the brief December day
 with air that egg-yolk and foul tar-vats brew.
 I've no desire to die yet. Here I'll stay.
 All my phone-numbers, Petersburg, are
 with you.
 I own addresses by which even now
 I'll tap the voices of the dead. Come back,
 I make my lodgings upon stairs of black.
 Torn out with the flesh, a bell strikes in my
 brow.
 Nightlong I wait for guests I long to see
 who'll rattle at my doorchains clankingly.

It was obvious that, as Stalin clamped down, such a poet would end in a bad way. In any event that end was made inevitable by two things: the poem attacking Stalin as a monster, and a close connection with Bukharin. It has not been noted by the critics that the two aspects were closely linked. Knowing how Stalin developed in the later 1930s, we are sure to read a poem of 1933-4, which calls Stalin a murderer, in the perspective of the later events. But in fact what is upsetting Mandelstam is the agricultural policy of Stalin, and in this matter he was close to his protector Bukharin. First, the poem, which is not one of Mandelstam's best:

We live, deaf to the land beneath us:
ten steps away no one hears our speeches.

But where there's so much as half a conversation
the Kremlin's mountaineer will get his
mention.

His fingers are as fat as grubs
and the words, final as lead weights, fall
from his lips.

His cockroach whiskers leer
and his boot-tops gleam.

Around him a rabble of thin-necked leaders:
fawning halfmen for him to play with.

They whinny, purr or whine
as he prates and points a finger.

one by one forging his laws, to be flung
like horseshoes at the head, the eye, or the
groin.

And every killing is a treat
for the broadcasted Ossete.*

In the version that came into the hands of the secret police, lines 3-4 read, "All we hear is the Kremlin mountaineer, the murderer and peasant-slayer." What Mandelstam is commenting on is the treatment of the kulaks. For some years long

* This version is that given in *Hope without Hope*. I have cited my versions of other poems above because the book has no other example of his verse. Ossetia is to the north of Georgia, with people said to be of Iranian stock; there were stories of Stalin having Ossetian blood.

arguments had been going on between Stalin and Bukharin. The latter held that war was not imminent and there was no hurry about building heavy industry; Stalin thought differently. Bukharin, with Kritsman and others, declared that the kulaks were "the bearers of progress in agriculture"; "the kulak has an advantage on his side, cultural political experience". Preobrazhensky in reply insisted that heavy industrialisation was necessary and would be "carried out at the expense of the countryside, first of all at the expense of its bourgeois strata". The Bukharin line was defeated, and the large-scale effort of collectivisation of the countryside, depicted in all its hurry and crudity by Sholokhov in *Virgin Soil Upturned*, was initiated. Mandelstam shared Bukharin's views and he saw Stalin's agricultural policy as the destruction of the peasants, of the last surviving strata of the middle-class he idealised. This analysis robs his attack on Stalin of some of its glamor; at root it is a lament over the kulaks.

This is not to say that he did not feel a wider menace in the way things were going. Even if he did not fully have Bukharin's confidence, he must have known many of his views. Bukharin had arranged Mandelstam's journey to his darling Armenia "in view of the impossibility of finding employment for the writer in Soviet literature", though it was Molotov who got him a pension "for services to Russian literature". (It is not clear if a distinction is intended here between Soviet and Russian literature.) Certainly, when the secret police were given a copy of the Stalin attack, it was Bukharin who saved him; he wrote to Stalin with a suggestion that Pasternak, who enjoyed Stalin's favors, together with "literary public opinion", was highly disturbed by Mandelstam's arrest. Stalin rang up Pasternak and remarked, "If I were a poet and a poet friend of mine were in trouble, I would do anything to help him." Pasternak seems to have taken a rather equivocal attitude in his replies, objecting to the term friend and countering Stalin's comment that Mandelstam was a genius by saying, "That's not the point." He said something else which Nadezhda refuses to cite, "since it could be held against him by people who did not know him". Tamara Deutscher says that her husband in Warsaw in 1958 heard "a somewhat blunter version", which he did not repeat as he had no definite proof of it. Mandelstam was hardly a great poet, as he is now represented in the West; but he certainly was

a genuine one, with a highly individual voice. There was no reason why he should not have made his contribution to Soviet literature, unpersecuted. We should then have had the definition of the outgoings and recoils of a sensitive spirit seeking to find a niche in a world of revolutionary change. As things were, much of his verse expressed only the anxious recoils. It thus has its place as a fine seismographic record of the suffering and outrage inflicted on the Soviet peoples by Stalin's methods.

Considering his work and the devoted account of his anguish and martyrdom by Nadezhda, one is forced up against the question of what constitutes moral and intellectual integrity in such a situation as that of the Soviet Union under the domination of Stalin. For a man like Mandelstam, there emerged the naked choice between sheer defiance or humiliating subservience. But neither he nor his wife could realise what were the issues for somebody like Fadeyev, a communist, who felt entire unity with the general movement of the society, but came more and more up against abuses of power. And who at the same time felt an increasing threat of imperialist attack from outside on the young socialist world. If we only had some records as honest as that of Nadezhda Mandelstam, but expressing the qualms and sufferings of such men as Fadeyev—and hundreds more in the intellectual field—we should be better able to estimate how many of the leading intellectuals felt, how they tried to explain away to themselves disquieting things, how they acted to modify the terror, and so on.

One has to raise these points if one is to get into anything like a full perspective the many pictures that Nadezhda gives of Soviet writers. Some of the latter certainly were time-servers who deserve the most abusive of epithets. And indeed one of the most horrifying aspects of Nadezhda's remorselessly detailed account is the effect of pariahdom that grew up round those marked down as suspects. In such a situation—apparently it was one of Osip's intimates who gave the Stalin poem to the secret police—we can understand only too well why Nadezhda remains uncertain as to the motives of many persons during their difficult years. Chapter 76, which deals with Fadeyev, is a good example. On the face of it he seems to have done his best to help Mandelstam, though vainly, but Nadezhda, while admitting this possibility, proceeds also to put the worst interpretation on his actions. She

admits however in the last resort that she simply does not know. Her variety of reactions is natural enough for someone standing helplessly in a world of lies, cheats, hypocritical twisting of fine words; and yet from my own contacts with Fadeyev I feel that the essential truth is stated by Antal Gidash, a Hungarian writer who has lived most of his life in Russia, in an article in *Yunost* (July 1964):

Looking back on those darkest years, I think the one unforgivable attitude was cynicism. And there was no hint of cynicism in Fadeyev. He never set his conscience aside, but neither were he and his conscience always at peace. He was engaged in relentless struggle with himself, not only with his feelings but also with his thoughts . . . Fadeyev was head of the Union of Writers for many years, and in what years! Yet had he wished he could have stepped aside—he was sufficiently talented and famous to do so. But Fadeyev belonged to the generation of Communists (even if other motives sometimes came into play) who believed themselves responsible—however pompous this may sound—for events of universal, of historic importance. (Incidentally it is hard to give up this way of thinking even when times are easier.) . . . I am convinced that had anyone else been in his position the “severe years” would have accounted for many more writers. . . . He was often unable to defend people whom he certainly wanted to defend. . . . I bear witness to the fact that Fadeyev absorbed the shocks of the earthquake as best he could, or at least he tried to do so.

Such a defence indeed leaves many questions unanswered, many problems unsolved. What is the point to which a man, working in a cause in which he devoutly believes, can carry on trying to palliate the evils he sees being perpetrated in the name of that cause? What is the point at which he must make a break with the system if he is to see himself as at all truly embodying the values to which he has dedicated his life? In his last years Fadeyev was certainly near breaking-point, drinking heavily; perhaps as things eased, the tensions, which he had kept bottled up inside himself while he felt that he was “absorbing the shocks”, tore loose and brought him down. (I have been told that a Jewish writer spat in his face

in a public place, and it was then he went home and shot himself; I cannot vouch for this piece of Moscow gossip, but it has a ring of truth.)

His death strongly affected me, and I should like to quote a few lines from the poem I wrote at the time:

Your last words yet are glinting in a winter
of Moscow,
a grey flash in the closed room, and your
alerted head
takes a shy poise of youth, wary and resolute.
I thought I saw it all, but now I see other
things.
The past is changed by the future that it
changes . . .
What I then thought was strength was the
last appeal of a fear
and the hand unclaspt on the tablecloth was
the hand of drowning man.
What is this fear, this flaw, between our
minds
which makes the compact of a common
cause
the reason of the lie, the unreasoning fear?
You understood it all and I understood.
We understood nothing, diverted by the fear.
Now everything's clarified by the crack of a
bullet.
What could not be explained in a wrangling
year
is grasped completely in a timeless
moment. . .
Let me not die in the pang of an angry
truth.
Let me not die in the crack of a blind
revenge.
Let me not meet you again, since we met
unmeeting.
Forgive me the accusation in my accents.
Forgive me the fear that I still see only the
mask,
the mask which is you become the mask of
myself.
Let us meet again and say what we feared
to say,
and then I am free of you, friend. Then I
need not fear you
and fear we are still at that amiable table
of Moscow
correct correct correct
while the mask is cracking:

your hand goes up and the bullet cracks the
mirror
and over you topple into the grave of my
life. . .

The noblest spirits do not fall
by easy lures. Their price is tall.
The tempters know it. They can hurt you
most deeply by your dearest virtue.
Draw on the tablecloth with a judicious
fingernail
the slight and difficult line where honesty
changes
into the unctuous hush of the lie and ac-
complice echoes
chime inescapably on in your lofty voice
and the small piteous face wails in the
heart one moment
and then goes out. . .

And so on. I find, as I reread the poem, the same vacillations as in Nadezhda's account, but something different, a fixed point in the fluctuating doubts. She had only the desperate quest for a secure point that could be trusted, in a world where every face, caught offguard, hardened into the mask of betrayal.

We still didn't realise the extent to which people had been corrupted, nor did we know that heads of departments were always required to countersign lists of their subordinates who had been arrested. In 1938, however, this particular function would have been carried out by Stavski rather than Fadeyev—or so people say. The trouble is that we cannot be certain about anything: the past is still wrapped in mystery, and we still do not really know what they did to us.

Less than a year later, during a party in Lavrushinski Street to celebrate the award of the first Government decorations to be given to writers, Fadeyev learned about the death of M. and drank to his memory with the words "We have done away with a great poet." Translated into Soviet idiom, this meant: "You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs."

A moving passage, and yet I feel that Nadezhda falls below herself in belittling Fadeyev's remark, which in such a situation had its mark of courage. As Gidash said, Fadeyev, whatever he was, was no cynic; he meant exactly what he said.

In some cases I feel that I can comment with some confidence on the accounts that Nadezhda gives. Thus she declares:

Everyone knew for instance that Marietta Shaginian never allowed any police spy to come near her. If one tried to, she made a terrible fuss, not caring who heard her. In 1934 she created a scene in my presence, and I thought I could see what her game was. We had come out of the State Publishing House together and she started asking me about life in Voronezh—this was in the early days of M.'s exile there, when nobody was yet afraid of being seen with us because the story of Stalin's conversation with Pasternak had spread far and wide. Suddenly the poet B. came running after us—he also wanted to inquire about M. But Marietta rounded on him fiercely. "I have friends in the Central Committee," she shouted, "and I will not put up with police spies." I tried to stop her, saying that I knew B. well. But she wouldn't listen to reason, and I had the suspicion that the whole scene had been deliberately contrived by her; she attacked completely decent people in the hope of frightening off real police spies, whom she would not of course have dared to treat in this way. But, as I say, Marietta was an exception, and for the most part the informers who surrounded us had a completely free hand and became more and more brazen.

If Marietta did not speak out against the informers, then she wasn't an exception. But I have known her well and I have no doubt that she was acting in good faith throughout, determined to face her fears and bring them out into the open.

In matters such as this, and many others that Nadezhda raises, one can only judge her comments to the best of one's ability, on the basis of such knowledge of the actors as one may have. It is a great pity that we lack, and will probably continue to lack, frank narratives of the kind that *Hope Against Hope* gives us. We should then be able to build up something like a reliable general picture of the situation and the parts that various people played in it.

One of the many points that this astonishing book does help to answer is the question: How

did the ordinary men and women react to the arrests and deportations? On the one hand we find people, even children, so acclimatised to the situation that they failed to react any more, even to notice what was going on. By an instinct of self-preservation they averted their eyes and minds; the arrested person ceased to exist as a human being, became a ghost, a cipher. But among the workers, Nadezhda found, there was often much sympathy and kindness.

Moscow drew us like a magnet all the time—we went there for gossip, news, money. . . Each time, remembering where we were, we raced for the last train back to Kalinin, fearful of getting stranded for an extra night in the forbidden city. Occasionally people offered their seat in the train and talked with me in an oddly compassionate voice. M. happened to mention this to Piast, who laughed in his peculiar way (it was like a horse whinnying) and said: "That's because they think she's the one, not you." At that time I wore a leather jacket, and Piast meant that I got all this sympathy because I was taken for an exile. As so many people in Moscow avoided us like the plague precisely on this account, the kindness of these working people was an unexpected bounty. The leather jacket, incidentally, was of secondary importance, since I got the same sort of consideration without it.

This picture of the workers as distinct from the world of officials, intellectuals, and all who had risen one way or another inside the Stalinist system, is set out at length in the account of the textile township Strunino, where Nadezhda worked for a while in a factory. Among the workers she found an unceasing bond of friendship and tenderness; and her story of how they treated her is very moving. She adds, "I never hid the fact that I am Jewish, and I must say that among the ordinary people I have yet to encounter any anti-Semitism. In working-class families and among collective farmers I was always treated as one of them." Among the semi-educated things were different. "Anti-intellectual feelings are a greater threat than crude anti-Semitism as such, and they are rampant in all the overstuffed institutions where people are furiously defending their right to their ignorance. We gave them a Stalinist education and they have Stalinist diplomas. They naturally want to hang on to what

they feel entitled to.” (We can see in the novels of Kochetov the kind of anti-intellectualism to which she refers.) In the factory she was called a hundred-and-fiver, a *stoptatnitsa*: a woman forced to live beyond the hundred-kilometre limit. When as an educated woman she attracted the suspicion of the personnel officials, the workers decided that she had better leave hastily.

When the night shift ended, workers kept coming to the house and stood talking to us by the window. Some said I should go away at once, and put money on the window sill for me. My landlady packed my things, and her husband and two neighbours took me to the station and put me on one of the early-morning trains. In this way I escaped a new disaster, thanks to these people who had still not learned to be indifferent. Even if the personnel section had not originally intended to hand me over to the police, I am certain they would never have let me go free after seeing how the workers had gathered to say goodbye.

Nadezhda tells how the Strunino folk always looked along the tracks after a night-train had passed, to see if any notes had been thrown out. If they found any, they put them in envelopes and posted them to the address upon them. If prisoners were seen in a day-train “everyone tried to throw them something—food or tobacco behind the backs of the guards as they paced up and down”. The workers referred to Stalin as the Pockmarked Fellow. They knew who were informers and whom they could trust. “This is the great advantage of living in a village.” She cites Yakulov as saying to her, “The Russian revolution is not cruel—the state has sucked out all the cruelty and passed it on to the Cheka. The folk naturally could not estimate the extent of the repressions; they interpreted the situation as resulting from some inexplicable fight going on among the men on top—a fight from which they themselves contracted out. The Russian primary group has always been particularly warmhearted and protective; from other sources we can see that at the level of workshop and the like it acted to cushion its members against much of the impact of Stalinist bureaucracy—but inevitably at the cost of slackening the work-drive. These are matters on which it is hard to get much direct evidence, and Nadezhda’s account is all the more valuable.

The one writer from whom Nadezhda had a total respect was Anna Akhmatova. The latter, with her reticent controlled personality, was in many ways the diametric opposite of Mandelstam, with his quivering nerves and fervid temperament. Her sibylline calm helped to keep him within bounds, and at the same time she drew on his often wild originality to extend and deepen the range of her own form and content. Nadezhda gives a fascinating account of the way in which Mandelstam composed his poems; we can hardly speak of writing them. The poem hit him organically, a force impacting as much physically as spiritually. As with Akhmatova it emerged first as a musical phrase, ringing insistently and demanding its full extension. “The whole process of composition is one of straining to catch and record something compounded of harmony and sense as it is relayed from a unknown source and gradually forms itself into words. The last stage of the work consists in ridding the poem of all words foreign to the harmonious whole.” When thus seized by a poem he had to abandon himself to it, returning to normal humanity only when the final stage had been reached.

With such a character it was not surprising that on his arrival in Cherdyn in 1934—on the Pechora river, some 200 miles north of Perm—he managed to throw himself out of the window in the local hospital. The restrained, deeply-felt style in which Nadezhda tells of this episode is typical of her whole long book. She seems to have decided at all costs to avoid sensationalism, to counteract the extreme strain of almost every event and moment of her story by an evenness of tone, which is saved from flatness by the intensity of the underlying emotion.

Suddenly—I sensed this through my sleep—everything changed place: M. was all at once on the window sill and I was there beside him. He put his legs outside, and I had just time to see him begin to lower his whole body. The window sill was a high one. I reached out desperately with both hands and managed to grab the shoulders of his jacket. He wriggled out of the sleeves and dropped. I could hear the sound of his falling—a dull thud and a cry. His jacket was left hanging in my hands. I ran screaming along the hospital corridor, down the stairs and outside. Some nurses raced after me. We found M. on a pile of earth that had been ploughed up to make a flowerbed.

With her usual laconic insight she notes that, when Mandelstam became a prey to hallucinations and was pursued by voices, he was aware of the facts of his situation and knew correctly what was coming; but when he recovered and was once more "sane", he lost a true sense of reality "and began to believe that he was safe".

This book, together with Mandelstam's poetry, will remain as a permanent testimony to the enormous wastage of humanity under Stalin; but the prose and verse enshrine much more than that. They also testify, as do Solzhenitsyn's novels in a more challenging, comprehensive and epic way, to the great powers of endurance and renewal in the human spirit under the most crushing and degrading of conditions.

In the introduction to *Hope without Hope* (the Russian manuscript has no title and the English title embodies a pun on her name, Nadezhda, which means 'hope' in Russian), we are told how in May 1965 the students of the Mechanical Mathematics Department of Moscow University organised on their own initiative the first memorial evening of Mandelstam's poetry to be held

in Russia. Among the speakers were Ilia Ehrenburg, Nikolai Chukovski, A. Tarlowski and others, who contributed reminiscences or readings of the poems.

At one point Ehrenburg mentioned with some hesitancy that Nadezhda was in the auditorium. "She lived through all the difficult years with Mandelstam, went into exile with him. Saved all his poems. I hesitated whether I should say that the poet's widow was at this first evening. I don't ask her to come down here." There was thunderous and prolonged applause. Everyone stood up. At last she too stood and said in the hush, "Mandelstam wrote: 'I'm not accustomed yet to panegyrics . . .' Forget that I'm here. Thank you." She sat down. But the applause went on for a long time.

Hope Against Hope by Nadezhda Mandelstam (Collins/Harvill, \$8.45). See also Tamara Deutscher, *New Left Review* No. 68, 1971, pp. 89-96; and, for Bukharin and the kulak question, E. H. Carr and R. W. Davies: *Foundations of a Planned Economy 1926-9*, vols. 1 and 2 (Macmillan).

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Jack Lindsay: A Man for the Moment

JAMES CORBETT

I was in bed when I first met Jack Lindsay. He entered the bedroom, having awoken me by tapping gently on the door, murmured "Good morning", and gave me a cup of tea. I regard the event as significant.

It occurred in a flat in central London, and it was about 1950. I was visiting London, and had been provided with accommodation in the flat by the organisers of a conference which I was attending, and at which Jack Lindsay was a leading participant in his capacity as a writer, scholar, and Marxist. I have long ago forgotten the details of the conference, but recollect that it concerned what was then spoken of as the threat posed by the coca-colourisation of Britain's cultural heritage. I daresay, too, that I enjoyed the amazing occasion. Unanimous indignation is peculiarly satisfying, and the Americans, politically, were not entirely lacking in guilt. I doubt if they took much notice. For that matter, nobody else did at the time, except those connected with the conference, but it did signal a resistance, a vital re-evaluation, which still continues as the conflict between greed and need intensifies. Twenty years ago, the conflict, with the U.S.A. as the principal capitalist protagonist, was something of a novelty. It had an element of delayed surprise which gave way, in Britain, to a permanent mood of despair. Men and women, for whom victory had, in the then vilest war in history, promised a peaceful, decent world, were to be systematically disappointed as the post-war Labour government abandoned its vestigial socialism in return for American guarantees to defend British imperialism against national liberation movements abroad and socialist measures at home. The cost was economic, political and cultural subservience. People

said, and they meant it with puzzled regret, that victorious Britain had become second-rate. Against this betrayal, and its pervasive consequences, Jack Lindsay spoke at the London conference. Exactly what he said, and how other speakers drew their topical lessons and, doubtlessly, underlined them, I forget. I do know that for him participation in the conference was nothing erratic but part of a consistent, and continuing, process in which writing and public commitment are inextricably interwoven. His life-long support for peace movements is a prime example.

Oddly, perhaps, this process has its origins in a deep interest in the ancient world. A classics graduate of Queensland University, son of a talented artist, he came to the present from the past in an effort to understand and relate both and, on the basis of understanding, to look ahead. The writing of three early novels set in the period of the Roman empire, a novel with an English civil war background, and the impact of the fascist attack on Spain, in 1936, clarified his approach—plus an intensive study of Marx. Underlying all was his abiding, and practised, sense of poetry. He had, as a boy of fourteen, detected the possibility of men creating a real world of truth and beauty by their own endeavors. For him, these complementary qualities remain essential if men are to fulfil themselves as complete human beings. Keats, he would maintain, was right. Otherwise, all human life deteriorates into a farce.

Such a desire for a life in free accord with man's potential requires more than a constant demand for truth and beauty, or the repeated denunciation of ugliness and lies. Bullets continue to find billets. Beggars persist, the hungry starve,

the poor are always with us, and the unemployed trudge inadequate cities. A better way than sympathy alone must be found to overcome the oppression, valuable though sympathy is in exposing the facts, and Jack Lindsay found the way in his world outlook, an outlook which combines observation with action. Even so, some of those who see clearly on which side, and how, their bread is buttered, dismiss truth and beauty as words. They put the words under the searchlight of semantic scrutiny, not to illuminate, but to dazzle. They end by blinding themselves, and others, with their own limited brilliance.

Writing about this dubious activity in "Meetings with Poets", published in 1968, Jack Lindsay observes: "In our smugly disintegrated culture such positions may well stir the superior smiles of those who know perfectly well how pointless is life, how cribbed, cabined, and confined in absurdity, how condemned to treadmills of the viciously-circular self with its traumatic compulsions. But bad as things are, I feel that they are continually trembling on the edge of a genuine upheaval. . . In the darkest night of society and the spirit, if one believes in poetry, one also believes in the possibility and inevitability of renewal, in the revolt of the young, in the miraculous gift of sight for the nation of the blind, in the return of the consuming hunger for wholeness. And this is not in the least a blind faith. Rather it is a defensible belief that when contradictions seem about to rend all things apart, they are also on the point of stirring a new consciousness, a sense of all that goes beyond them."

The struggle to attain wholeness is a recurring theme in his work. All his work demonstrates a personal striving towards its enhancing human richness. And in the varied aspects of his work the consciously developed inter-relationships and inter-connections confirm his grasp of the problem. The theme antedates the London conference, but it was only subsequently that he was to analyse more fully the conditions for a better life. The analyses are as concerned with the causes of failure in the achievement of wholeness as with the inherent possibilities of each situation. We learn, with luck, by our mistakes! Jack Lindsay has expanded the theme via historical surveys, memoirs and art criticisms, not as disconnected fragments, but as component parts of a vast mosaic. The task is not merely of academic interest, either. By its range, and intensity, it increases resistance to the forces of alienation by

providing a basis of knowledge and precept, and compels, by its re-evaluation of the bases on which British, and European, society is built, a more perceptive realisation of the magnitude of the required change. It is a cultural arsenal which arms resistance. In this respect particularly, the speakers at the London conference, even if long-winded, were correct: the connection between art and life is vital. Destroy, or unman, the arts; eradicate memory, or distort history, and human life collapses. None knew this better than the fascists.

But the presentation of the alternative to an insane society, and the very act of establishing an alternative society, is known to be infuriatingly difficult. Mistakes, and worse, are committed, and loyal defenders of truth and beauty, like Jack Lindsay, are attacked from both sides. Nevertheless, his commitment and integrity place him firmly on the side of socialism. It is a loyalty that has cost him academic and literary honors, for if he had recanted, if he had stated that nothing different was possible, or preferable, he could have been very wealthy, and loaded with awards, and would have received that ultimate accolade of regular television appearances which constitute the life of lesser figures who have shut up or given up. Instead, Jack Lindsay has shared his considered hopes and fears with the readers of his many books. He has provided profound insights in a library of novels, biographies, autobiographies, histories, art criticisms, plays, poems, and translations. In all these areas, he has brought new understandings, new conclusions, new truths and new beauties. He is an original and remarkable writer, honest, or, to use an English synonym, mad. After all, it is only "common sense" that anyone with such talent should never allow himself to speak out frankly and persistently.

Persistence, though, has advantages, especially in a country, like England, where whatever, or whoever, continues, for any length of time, regardless of worth, is accepted as respectable and sane. This veneration explains why redundant British politicians, instead of dying, become members of the House of Lords. In the case of Jack Lindsay, now in his early seventies, durability has not meant redundancy, or a slackening of his powers. On the contrary. And it gives his contemporaries, and younger people, a chance to catch up. Of course, this lag will be familiar to any who have heard Oxbridge oracles pronounce on the obvious—fifty years after the event. Now,

a few of them, and many of the younger people, claim Jack Lindsay as their own. The popularity, and scholarship, of his recent monumental studies of Cezanne, Turner and David, of his pioneer books on the origins of alchemy and astrology, of his, to me, spectacularly revealing examination of the life and times of King Arthur, testify to the validity and correctness of his persistence. Ahead, there is a detailed study, the first in English, of Courbet; a further book on the development of science; an examination of the Helen of Troy legend; and a history of the Normans. It is hardly surprising that he works a seven-day week.

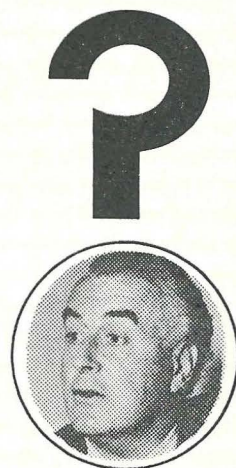
A lively and entertaining man, a stimulating host, Jack Lindsay lives and works in a house,

built largely by himself, in rural Essex. There, with his wife, Meta, a professional potter, and their children, Helen and Philip, he maintains, as he has done all his working life, a steady output of books and articles and reviews. Always, he regards himself as an Australian, although he has never returned home since leaving shortly after the first world war, and it may be that he is an Australian who visualizes sunshine and white beaches, rather than motels and drive-in cinemas. Certainly, he is an Australian who fell in love with the past to become enamored of the future; an Australian who awoke me to wider horizons, who gave me a word of greeting—and a cup of tea.

TWELFTH MAN

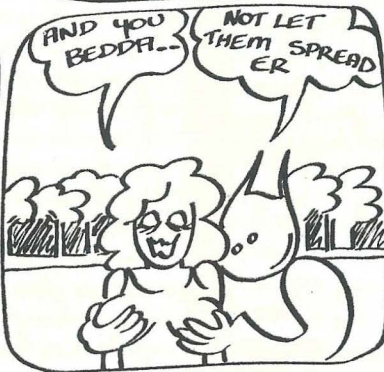
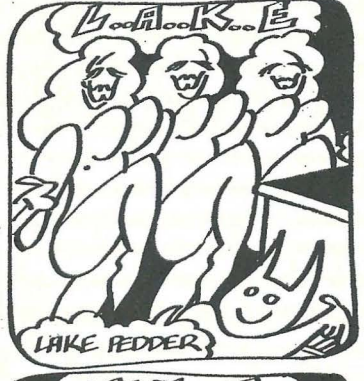
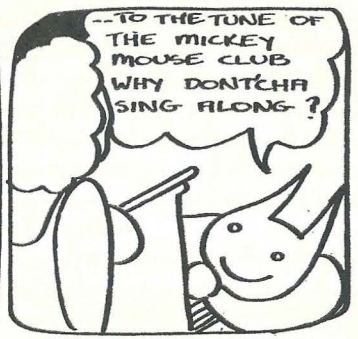
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DENNIS DOUGLAS

Notes on some recent Australian Poetry

Tadpoles and tomatoes. J. S. Harry's tomatoes first, mentioned in her poem, "The Gift". They were, it appears, ripened to a perfect scarlet by warm weather, and would have been given to a friend, but that—the friend might have used them that night at a poetry workshop.

Used them how? As missiles? As a subject for a poem? The ambiguities of Miss Harry's polite gesture are not pursued, and perhaps we, too, should be equally discreet. What is certain is that poetry workshops have become an accepted ritual in the life of poetry, and jokes can be made about them.

The tadpole belongs to Judith Wright. It is not a lively tadpole, as tadpoles go. In fact, it is frozen into a sheet of ice. What the poet gives it to say places it in the tradition of semi-allegoric images which poets use as metaphors for their own unease. Not as heroically dignified as most, but held in a trance of self-division:

I am neither one thing nor the other, not
here nor there.

I saw great lights in the place where I
would be,
but rose too soon, half made for water, half
air,
and they have gripped and stilled and en-
chanted me.

Towards her tadpole Miss Wright is uncompromisingly unsentimental. He is not a tragic figure, nor pathetic, simply a freakish anomaly in the scheme of things, a victim of the cosmic sense of humor:

The comic O of his mouth, his gold-rimmed
eyes,
looked in that lustrous glaze as though they'd
ask
my vague divinity, looming in stooped sur-
prise,
for rescue or death. But neither was my
task.

In the end, indeed, he loses his identity entirely, and is submerged by the task he has imposed on the poet, the task of writing a poem with which he has in the most literal way become identified in the poet's mind. "I remembered him," Miss Wright concludes, "as a poem I had to write." The writing of the poem no longer represents a way of coming to terms with, or transmuting, experience, but a process before which experience is of secondary significance. The tadpole is not a subject for a poem. He *is* a poem. That is his primary function.

There is no false elevation about the concept of poetry in either of these poems. It is accepted in a matter of fact way as the centre of the poet's life, much as a craftsman might view his weaving or his pots. To treat the writing of poetry as a natural part of life rather than as a privilege or a curse seems to be the aim of many working poets in Australia at the moment. Poetry is being de-mythified.

Roll over, Friedrich Schlegel. The order of reality to which you claimed the poet-genius gives his readers access, that true empyrean of human thought, has undergone some curious transmutations in its time, but none so atavistic as the present. Who would have thought that the past

age, when poets were such sober, moralistic fellows, might precede an age in which the poets seem to see themselves as the anarchist delegates of the imagination.

Yet we have Ron Simpson, as decent, and friendly, and law-abiding a family man as lives in Murrumbidgee, imagining, in one of his poems, how the neighbors would feel if, one evening when they were having a barbecued dinner in the garden, one of the sunflowers turned into a human skull, joined in the conversation, snapped at flies.

And Corinne Kerby's hero is another messenger from another order of reality, a skywriter "sweeping speech across the sky".

For many younger poets the theme of levels of reality underlying the normal one took on a new immediacy as drug addiction spread in the late sixties. By 1971 it was accounting for a record suicide increase in the 16 to 25 age-group. If you could call it suicide:

Waking under a bridge in Canberra to chill
scrawl

seeing the designs we had painted on its concrete like gnawed fresco
Venice with princes feasting while Cimabue
sank deeper into cobweb
as the huns approached in skin boats
back in the world Rick and George on the
morgue-lists of morning

one dead of hunger the other of overdose
their ideals precluded them
from the Great Society they are with the
angels now

The lines move between a drugged fantasy—in which graffiti scribbled on a bridge-pylon seems as beautiful as an Early Renaissance mural—and cold reality—which slaughters illusions like a horde of vandals descending on the civilised world. (The mind protects its dreams by picturing the reality-principle in terms of barbarism.)

Beyond the reality-principle, the morgue-lists of morning, which do not lend themselves so easily to mockery as political clichés like the "Great Society".

In the last two lines, the absence of punctuation drains emphasis from words like "hunger", "overdose", "ideals", and the reader is left wondering whether Rick and George's ideals did not constitute a glorification of one or the other Cause

of Death blandly lifted from a coroner's report. In context, "precluded" seems vague, but the meaning of "set apart" is as important as the sense of "excluded". "they are with the angels now" is the more horrifying for being tacked on as an absentminded afterthought, a well-intended, conventional remark made by a pious relative at a funeral, or an item from a commercial news broadcast—reflecting wryly on Rick and George's preference for the "other worlds" of their private drugged delusions.

The possibility of unifying social ideals and aesthetic experience seems to be implied in the Japanese concept of "satori", a moment of insight triggered in a heightened state of consciousness by a poem, an image, a thought. In this poem Michael Dransfield uses the idea of "satori" to suggest that the world he knows is in a state of schizophrenic dislocation, that his culture has two poles of reality, carbon monoxide and money, the individual and collective instrument of suicide and the individual and collective instrument of adaptation:

I dremt of satori a sudden crystal wherein
civilisation was seen
more truly than with cameras but it was
your world not ours
yours is a glut of silent martyrs money and
carbon monoxide
I dremt of next week perhaps then we would
eat again sleep in a house again
perhaps we would wake to find humanity
where at present
freedom is obsolete and honour a heresy.
Innocently
I dremt that madness passes like a dream.

It is a mark of Michael Dransfield's distinction that words like "glut", "silent", "innocently" operate here in terms of their full weight of meaning, the silent martyrs picking up Lyndon Johnson's notorious reference to the "silent majority", the economic denotation of "glut" (an embarrassing excess of production) reinforcing the mild shock of its intrusive ugliness in terms of sound, and "innocently" indicting both the poet and his society, pinning down the inner and the outer insanity.

The most vivid and sensitive evocation of the tragedy of addiction is to be found in Marc Radzyner's "The Politics of Experience", a long poem written in a taut, eloquent tone of remini-

scence, from which any quotation is likely to be inadequate:

Mont Park . . . Larundel . . . Royal Park
sounded so fine, so neat,
the lyrical names
of welfare city
and they told what they saw
their eyes were really fixed
and it hurt more than they could gather
their flowers were plucked at random

and random was no gesture
no jest like non-conformity or that—
random was like spies
peeping at their souls

and soul, that carnate work,
I shuddered when I thought
soul was not the depth
the height or orgasm of fate

soul was just the guts
and spies peeked at their guts
probed, when they could, and said
nothing or little in the intervals

they couldn't tell how
much it hurt

Is poetry inevitably a product of disquiet? In Leon Slade's hands the trivial rituals of the suburbs are given the mood of shy jocularity that seems to have no weight but its own awkwardness:

Spring will soon
be here and gas fires out and we'll all
be eating with the flies and the smell of
burnt flesh, while father covers his embar-
rassment
with a laughable apron.

Yet the poem from which that quotation comes begins:

Today, Rachel Cohen opened her baby blue
Volkswagen and drove to the gasworks
to settle a debt.

And its imagery suggests a landscape of people and things, cars, hoardings, bridges, without a single natural object, except a strip of lawn and

a flight of gulls, both of which are treated as though they were another form of urban pollution:

Across the khaki river, near the heliport,
a grass-green strip, edged with meters
of cars parked since morning, is littered
with gulls. Over the gullery, stretched on
the railway bridge, a giraffe invites us
to reach for a Guinness.

And the poem, entitled "Menopause", ends,

I can't concentrate. From my window
I see a disemchimneyed afterthought of
smoke
listing over the docks, an empty chain
of cattle trucks rattling over the stretched
giraffe,
Rachel stepping on the gas, getting the works.

I have not given the whole text. There is, for example, a firm that paves patios called the "Vatican/Terrazo Co. (Proprietors, Monti and Pace)". But I think I have quoted enough to show the Dance-of-Death grimness behind the puns and double meanings. A diversity of tone, from paranoia at one extreme to affable self-deprecation at the other, is all that holds the complex of implications at a distance, creating the terms on which the experience can be faced and controlled.

Another poet, David Malouf, recently described himself as:

a tightrope walker

and still a practitioner
of the delicate sidestep, keeping
my nerve and a grip of syntax
as I venture on thin air.

Such images are common enough in modern poetry, but for David Malouf the practice of poetry is very much a matter of channeling tension and disciplining it:

We are not safe—
not here, not anywhere. The old anguish
breaks in, that daylong, nightlong rages close
outside, and closer still under the skin.
minor hazards
we live with, climbing
to sleep in the giant's mouth.

We bleed our soul's
darkness to the sky through pin-pricks barely
felt in the night's excitement.

The focussing of a generalised anguish into the specific confrontation of man and his meaninglessness is Bruce Dawe's particular skill. "Birthday Poem" plays with a real and a metaphorical threat, using the metaphor of a street fight, and a colloquial dictation as raw and vital as the poem's sense of urgency:

The sun circles me like a great ratbag
there is no getting through to, really.
He hands me my weapon daily (a shadow,
a broken beer-bottle)
and he says, Come on, now,
let's see what you're made of . . .
I follow him as he flares,
lunging with this opaque, jagged thing.
To what end? Facing the champ
you're entitled to crumple a little, surely,
exorcise the ghost of a chance
before it's put a permanent crease
in your style!

The jokes are not permitted to cheapen the emotional force of the dilemma. Rather, by evoking a weary, casual toughness, such as one might encounter on a building site or factory floor, they sharpen the tension in a poem at once very concrete and very metaphysical:

Only at midday
when the siren blows
from the gritty island
and all the Odysseans lay down their tools,
and at dusk, when they rush
the quick turnstiles, does the taunting cease.
Was there another way to live?

The conclusion imposes sets of temporal perspectives on each other in a way that reveals Bruce Dawe's firm grasp on the mere topicality of the merely topical:

The smoky sky, in front of which clouds
ramble
in hunched gangs, in mobs, in singing groups
like schoolgirls,
ages like a factory-wall.
Bills shuffle off, slogans fade:

SHARKEY and ELVIS merge
with the brick-work
and the sun leans against it
like a lord.

Bruce Dawe's consistent use of topical themes, like his use of colloquialisms, does not seem to me inconsistent with the profoundest seriousness. Some of this duality is suggested in Chris Wallace-Crabbe's reminiscence of Bruce Dawe as a student, from "Losses and Recoveries":

Film has no tenses, the latest pundit says,
poems have tenses and nostalgias though
like anything, and when I get to think
of the mid-fifties, flashing through my slides,
I see you slope past Chemistry, blue-chinned
in military shirt and a maroon
figured art-silk tie with—look—I'm right—
Ciardi's *Inferno* splitting away to cantos
and well-thumbed pages in your jacket
pocket,
verse on your tongue of mice in evening
dress.

*

There is a new rhythm in some recent Australian poems. It is an *aware* rhythm, but a relaxed one, alert enough to respond to random impulses, but fresh and spontaneous in the way it responds. It is most noticeable in the work of poets under thirty, particularly fantasists like J. S. Harry. In this extract she isolates each of her bizarre images in a rhythmic unit of its own:

The little grenade
wanted poems that explodexplored
or pushed candles
inside the pumpkin people
to make flames sputter and drip
where their darkness bulged.

The he that was a friend of the little grenade
liked poems that sat fatly in the middle of
stillness
waving their feelers.
the poems that he wrote were lumpy mat-
tresses
stuffed with kapok. Or flock.

Although imagery and content here are jejune in the extreme, the movement of the lines reflects the movement of the mind. An older poet will play

line-endings against syntax, as David Malouf does in "birthday poem, at thirty":

Brightboy goes plain-sailing
till mother's apron-strings
snap! How far, how far
do we fall? What country after
is solid to our heel?

With the newer movement goes a more fluid organisation of material:

He's friend the little grenade
once had a book Hegel who said:
 "If reality is inconceivable,
 then we must contrive
 inconceivable concepts."
Most of the things the he could not imagine
had happened.
He read aloud alone:
 "If reality is simple
 must we contrive simple concepts?"

In a related poetic form the whole poem makes up a single statement lightly sketching in a single situation. J. S. Harry's "waiting for the express, to go north to Osaka" represents a model of economy and indirection:

At the station
they said it would be three hours.

People
did not come.
They knew.

Soft white flakes
sat
on your sleeve.

We were afraid
to go away.

You did not
touch my hand
in the new style
but
the snow
melted on your eyes.

Those three hours sat as lightly
on our hearts
as the snow upon your sleeve.

Such poems do not involve new themes. They operate very much within the range of the poet's traditional concerns. But because there is little elaboration or dramatisation of emotion, because mood and feeling are expressed in a restrained fashion, shades and nuances take on a special importance. The anxiety of J. S. Harry's couple not to miss the express train is translated into the apprehension of love. "We were afraid/to go away." comes to mean a great deal.

There is a poem of John Romeril's about selfishness, in which the selfishness is also a love of life which the poet observes with joy:

i shall be buried
among overcoats
in a junk shop not far from here
when it is winter
when it is winter and all the people
come in off the street
rummaging
among overcoats
they will find me their hands
will be cold on my cold body
changing their minds
they will walk out down the street
thinking
winter's not so bad
when it is winter

If there is a comic tradition based on the all-too-human reaction, the impulse to escape, the sudden awakening of self-interest, the sudden awareness of vulnerability, this poem belongs to it. The discretion of "changing their minds", a patent rationalisation, the increased pace of "they will walk out down the street" so that it suggests a movement at once irresistible and surreptitious, may indicate why John Romeril's poems are not better known. Most of his work has been in the form of plays written for the experimental theatre movement in Melbourne. Dramatic writing has absorbed most of his attention.

In *Australian Poetry 1971*, Chris Wallace-Crabbe printed an extract from an unfinished sequence by Vincent Buckley entitled "Golden Builders", in which one passage is clearly intended to recall Blake:

The hammers of iron glow down Faraday.
Lygon and Drummond shift under their
resonance.

Saws and hammers drawn across the bending
air

Shuttling like a bow; the saw trembles

The hammers are molten, they flow with
quick light

Striking; the flush spreads and deepens on
the stone.

The drills call the streets together

Stretching hall to lecture-room to hospital.

The wish to employ allusions to give poetry a substratum of references to the past is shared by younger poets influenced by recent American poetic practice. It is as though poets are strongly aware at the moment of the relevance of the poetic tradition. Here, for example, is Robert Adamson re-working Blakean motifs in a different way, and combining them with suggestions from Whitman and Hopkins:

Thus John sang

Against the Trinity as King Hiram sang
against

Jehovah in Tyre 'If any man shall add unto
These things God shall add unto
Him the plagues . . .'

I take this as challenge

As the word *Wormwood* proceeds

My hand aflame to sing

Wildly and as clear as the Final Singer
beyond

A prophet droning

through

hundreds of years

The hand aflame an encyclical to turn mental
things

In their graves restoring

Truth to its original lineaments

in rumour

The argument here depends on the Gnostic tradition, which forms the basis for Blake's *Book of Ahania* and incidents in Blake's longer prophetic works. According to this teaching, knowledge must be imperfect, because a breach occurred at a certain time between God and his wisdom, the principle of the divine Sophia. In Robert Adamson's poem the muse of poetry is Rumor, and all human discourse from the prophecy to the encyclical participates in her imper-

fection. Only the Final Song beyond all songs is perfect.

This extract is from "The Rumor", a long poem in which each section picks up a particular poetic mode, in this case the prophecy, and adopts it as formal principle while treating it as theme. Thus the lines quoted above have the technical freedom of prophecy but take for theme its function in relation to political and theological polemic and its characteristic tone, a dogmatic combativeness.

The image of "the hand aflame", a visual image in Blake's illustrations to his prophetic works, is one of a number of motifs used as linking devices throughout "The Rumor". Another is a series of references to Coleridge's "Christabel". A third is an image of feathers that may relate to Mallarme's constant use of plumes, in the "Fan" poems, in *Un Coup de Des*, and in "Le vierge, le vivace, et le bel Aujourd'hui". In the second section, for example, Adamson links together Coleridge's insistence that poems like "Christabel" and "Kubla Khan" sprang from hidden depths of consciousness and Mallarme's tortured struggle with the formal surface of poetry, to suggest the duality of the relation between poet and muse. (The Distributor is clearly Wordsworth—his sinecure was a Stamp Distributorship—but perhaps also refers to disturbing intruders like the visitor from Porlock who was blamed for the incompleteness of "Kubla Khan", unconscious symbols of the disparity between the poem's symbolic core (Source) and its eventual, more or less adequate, embodiment:

She works on me

seems lain down before the verse begins
and problems of structure

fly-up sharp feathers

in the face and sting

again Salvation as Rumour untangles
herself from a fictional

Source

and the Distributor

looks me up (if the diction's smooth
is it his manner?)

in conjunction if images
develop every conceivable embellishment
bears

down on the page as an

irrational Mallarmiste

might bear down on the Muse.)

The grasp of his allusions and the use of texture to create witty implications marks Robert Adamson out as possessing a literary intelligence of no mean order. The final direction of "The Rumor" is towards the Open Poem, a current literary concept which Adamson exploits both seriously and ironically. Notice, for example, the double inappropriateness of the final word in this passage:

to beat form into
life Who is it now Duncan who'd give us
a sign? my freedom a set
of sonnets in their skin

I've learnt what virtuosity
exposes Shelley
running his rhymes
down thirty or so blank pages

of 'Adonais' (So now the pre-
amble self-justifying
itself or me) nor
casting what you call magic just poet to
poet question to
question clearly Robert Duncan
'organic poetry' is done for
who cares though we've our
listing

I assume that a listing is a reference in some totally unreliable index of contemporary poets as well as the angle to which a leaky vessel tilts before it sinks. Despite the bite of the irony, the tone is good-humoredly self-deprecating. The history of Australian literature is strewn with careful exercises in modish forms, few of which have worn well. Nevertheless I would like to think that "The Rumor" is witty enough, and disciplined enough, to outlast its generation.

Immediacy was the aim of much of the poetry written by younger poets like Bill Beard and Ian Robertson over the last five years: to give a situation the sharp edge and rough finish of actuality. To point a moral or construct a tale seemed alien to the solidity and manifold inter-connectedness of the reality they saw about them. A good example of the tendency is Robert Adamson's account of a walk along a beach in "Action would Kill it/ a Gamble":

And it seemed
a strange thing for us to be doing;

the surf right up the beach, wetting our
feet each wave.

On that isolated part of the Coast, counting
over
the youngest politicians.
Huge shoulders of granite grew higher
as we walked on, cutting us from per-
spectives.
He swung his arms and kicked
lumps of quartz hard with bare feet, until I
asked
him to stop it . . .

He didn't care about himself at all, and the
sea
just licked his blood away.

Genuineness comes through the anomalies, illogical self-maceration at odds with the peacefulness of isolation, young politicians and granite bluffs competing for attention, the perplexed rhythms of action giving way to a realisation which almost embodies love, "He didn't care about himself at all", and the automatic, purposeless intervention of the sea. There is selection, organisation, and concentration here, but their *appearance* has been avoided.

A similar vividness is found in the nostalgic re-creation of life in the forties that many Australian poets have written of late, drawing, quite often, on early memories of childhood.

Some of these poems depend on acutely sympathetic insight. Bruce Dawe, describing a family of itinerant rural workers, brings to light the paradoxical optimism of the drifting life, and its craving for permanence that finds an obscure satisfaction in movement:

One day soon he'll tell her it's time to start
packing,
and the kids will yell 'Truly?' and get wildly
excited for no reason,
and the brown kelpie pup will start dashing
about, tripping everyone up,
and she'll go out to the vegetable-patch and
pick all the green tomatoes from the vines,
and notice how the oldest girl is close to
tears because she was happy here,
and how the youngest girl is beaming be-
cause she wasn't.

And the first thing she'll put on the trailer
will be the bottling-set she never unpacked
from Grovedale,

and when the loaded ute bumps down the
 drive past the blackberry-canes with their
 last shrivelled fruit,
 she won't even ask why they're leaving this
 time, or where they're heading for
 —she'll only remember how, when they
 came here,
 she held out her hands bright with berries,
 the first of the season, and said:
 'Make a wish, Tom, make a wish.'

The details are reasonably accurate, the kelpie
 pup, the loaded ute, the incongruity of domestic
 paraphernalia like bottling sets, even the placeless
 'here' of the situation.

In an urban setting, change is shrouded in
 mystery. Distancing the past, in "Iconoclasm",
 Leon Slade abstracts spatial patterns to objectify
 recollection, the curve of a line in a print, the
 arrangement of a group of china ornaments, and
 triggers off a landslide:

In the living room, a little room,
 diminished by time, where the faded
 Botticelli print has always hung, the goddess,
 the whorl of pale wavelets under her whorled
 shell, have lost for me their childhood
 divinity.

And the china horses, posed upon
 the mantelpiece, that always seemed just
 right,
 are out of place and riderless. This whole
 house,
 relatively untouched, crumbles about me
 like a sandcastle left to sink while its builder
 swims.

The confusion of metaphors conveys a sense of
 confused emotion, perhaps guilt. The past is never
 more inclined to impinge on the present than
 when it has been safely thrust back into a frame-
 work of forgotten pieties. Notice how the polished
 floor in the final stanza threatens to turn into a
 slippery slide:

As I approach the end of the line,
 the end of this last tour of grandma's
 house, across from St. Mary's, a stone's
 throw
 from St. Stephen's, I look back past the
 grandfather
 clock and down the polished hall to see that
 I haven't marked the floor.

Not all nostalgias are so worrying. There is a
 delightful vignette of the war years by David
 Malouf in which he tells of his mother's exploita-
 tion of a market for secondhand fox furs among
 the girlfriends of American soldiers in Brisbane.
 She would advertise in the *Courier Mail* and the
 girls, "rather/the worse for war" would drive
 around in taxis to make their purchases. The last
 stanza is packed with atavisms, hints of time-
 honored sexual rituals and ancient savagery, pin-
 pointed by a cool, sharp wit:

Among my mother's show-pieces:
 Noritaki teacups, tall hock glasses
 with stems like barley-sugar,
 goldleaf demi-tasses—
 the foxes, row upon row, thin-nosed, prick-
 eared,
 dead.

The cry of hounds
 was lost behind mirror-glass,
 where ladies with silken snoods and finger-
 nails
 of chinese lacquer red,
 fastened a limp paw;
 went down in their high heels
 to the warm soft bitumen, wearing at throat
 and elbow the rare spoils
 of '44: old foxes, rusty red like dried-up
 wounds,
 and a G. I. escort.

The most threatening nostalgias are the nearest
 in time. Michael Dugan's "Rock Poem" injects
 a solid note of menace into memories of a good
 time had by all:

Here it was Preston Town Hall,
 Johnny Chester and the Fabulous Thunder-
 birds,
 the smell of sweat, free fags and
 a pick-up at the night's end.
 Bouncing with some mascara'd bird
 on the back seat of a souped-up
 FJ to the sound of Little Richard
 burping on the car radio.
 Stone walls, dirty streets.

Did moon glow?
 Or did neon glare
 mark the boundaries of our nights?
 And the leather coats we wore,
 were those painted skulls
 our prophecies?

The examples of Williams and Olson have inspired some attempts to create a historical vision reaching beyond the war and the depression; but our Golden Ages tend not to be situated in the past. Australia's arid plains show a surprising propensity for bringing dreams of a renewal of life to germination. A recent representative of a worthy line is Charles Buckmaster's "Wilpena Pound", which links a re-discovered landscape to dreams of a new life style:

'to think that we could
climb down that path, into the forest,
to the centre of the Pound

and never
return again.'

(Taking up your axe—the trees
for your home

. . at some un-marked spring—bathing your
child
in the water of the mountains

. . Gardens about your cabin

. . Within the voice of the forest . .)

It may be revealing that the vision of the Pound conjured up by the last sight of it in this poem is, nonetheless, that of Paradise Lost rather than Paradise Found:

Sunset. To the west, etched
in a sky of all color—a lone tree against
light:

and to the North, the Pound: a circle of fire.

The poets of the fifties who most clearly sensed a possibility of spiritual rebirth here were also the savagest satirists of the Australia they knew; and among Charles Buckmaster's generation Australia's cultural sterility is as strongly felt as its Arcadian potential. In "goliard", Michael Dransfield meditates on emptiness as the truck that has given him a lift roars down the Hume Highway:

Next I'll go
either to gloomy Launceston to visit
Hofmannsthal's friend, my publisher,
or west to wildflowers and the nickel hills.

The driver wonders what I'm writing
but with the superb manners of an Australian
merely asks, "Got enough light there, mate?"
We stop for beers at the Surveyor General,
night fills the wheelruts left by Cobb and Co.,
the people in the bar have foreign voices.
Progress erodes tradition. When that's gone
nothing is left but fashionable landmarks
marooned by emptiness, and carved into
a vandal's library of huff initials.

Of course the Australian Tourist Bureau's
photographs of Ayers Rock rarely show the
initials painted on by generations of visitors.

A more abstract anti-Utopia is the Cythera of
the last poem, or prose fantasy, in Chris Wallace-
Crabbe's book, *Where the Wind Came*. Its sur-
rounding landscape is regularly patrolled by blind
huntsmen:

Out on the hills aimless figures are moving
about against a carpet of luxuriant green and
from slope to slope there echo the sounds of
gunfire. Unnatural and dangerous wander
these diminished men. What law can govern
their wandering or direct their shooting?

Every once in a while the blind are
brought out here for a jaunt in the open
air, are given the run of this property, shoot-
ing for whatever game takes their fancy.
Everywhere now glassy eyes are narrowing
over the sights. It's a great relaxation, a
blessing for them all.

But what law, what reason, can govern
their wayward fusillades?

What can you be afraid of? Listen to their
cheerful shouting and laughter. Since the
landlord of these estates has foresight,
nothing will go amiss.

I do not wish to labor the element of political
satire in a passage whose focus is unmistakably
universal rather than specific; but there are times
when it is as well to be reminded that the forces
of destruction available to humanity are not
always employed in such a way as to bring peace
and harmony. Indeed, an observer of the current
situation might be pardoned for taking the view
that the calculations of statesmen and generals are
based on premises as personal and imprecise as
those on which poets erect their frail memorials.

I am not losing sight of the impertinence of
imposing a political reading on a poem whose

subject is not the shortcomings of our leaders, but a more general one, the potential destructiveness of the blind. The poem is not a political satire—a marked feature of recent Australian poetry is the absence of anything that could properly be regarded as political satire. Poems written on public issues are almost invariably serious. They may denounce, they may be sad or violent, but they rarely set out to parody or mock. Perhaps satire requires a dogmatic assurance, a confident sense of the firmness of one's grasp on the nature of things, which few of us share. We do not live in an age of certainties. Moreover, the great satirists have been amused by the follies they censured, amused even, in a more bitter way, by the crimes they deplored. We may employ irony to attack the sterility or coarseness or arbitrary violence of the age. We may invert Utopian fantasies, or use them to shed light on our own, or the age's imperfections. But in the context of public life we do not laugh any more. Is it because we feel too vulnerable, too unsure of our own wisdom, or too much implicated, to afford to?

The poems quoted in this article appear in the following books:

Robert Adamson, *The Rumour*, Prism Poets,

\$1.00

Charles Buckmaster, *The Lost Forest*, Prism Poets, \$1.00.

Bruce Dawe, *Condolences of the Season*, Cheshire, \$1.95.

Michael Dransfield, *Streets of the Long Voyage*, University of Queensland Press, \$1.00.

Michael Dugan, *Missing People*, Sweeney Reed, private circulation.

J. S. Harry, *The Deer under the Skin*, University of Queensland Press, \$1.00.

Corinne Kerby, *The Living Thing*, Hill of Content, \$2.95.

David Malouf, *Bicycle and Other Poems*, University of Queensland Press, \$1.00.

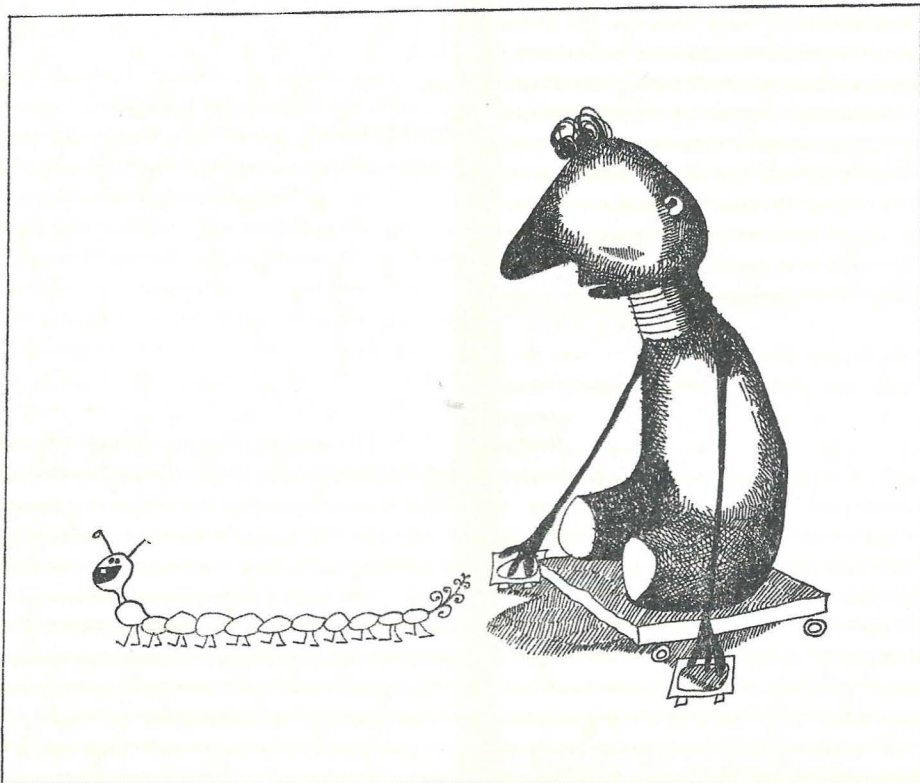
Andrew Taylor, *The Cool Change*, University of Queensland Press, \$1.00.

Chris Wallace-Crabbe, *Where the Wind Came*, Angus and Robertson, \$2.95.

Chris Wallace-Crabbe, *Australian Poetry 1971*, Angus and Robertson, \$2.95

and forthcoming publications by Ron Simpson, Leon Slade, and a group of six Melbourne poets including Marc Radzyner.

The poem by John Romeril appeared in *Lots Wife*, and the poem by Judith Wright in the *Australian*.



Wladimir Wladimir

books

NEW NOVELS John McLaren

Thomas Keneally: *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* (Angus & Robertson, \$4.50).
John Bailey: *The Wire Classroom* (Angus & Robertson, \$4.50).
Judah Waten: *So Far No Further* (Wren Publishing Pty. Ltd., \$5.25).

Thomas Keneally's familiar themes of brutality and the lack of human understanding appear again in his latest novel, *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith*. Keneally is not concerned, however, to exploit the violence of his subject matter so much as to make sense of a world in which such things happen. The events of his story, therefore, are placed in the framework of three conflicting frameworks of interpretation—the traditional mythology of the Aborigines, the evangelical christianity of the whites, and the humanistic evaluation of the author.

In this novel Keneally has abandoned most of his metaphysical speculation to his characters. There is the occasional heavy-handed symbolism, as when he attributes sacramental qualities to a piece of barley-sugar, thereby reversing his theology as well as betraying his artistry, but through most of the book he is concerned with the human motivation of his characters. This does not mean, however, that he has lost sight of the metaphysical dimension. On the contrary, it acquires a greater reality than in his earlier books because it is now shown as the pattern by which his characters interpret their own lives rather than being a pattern imposed by the author on his narration of events.

This change in style means that the author's evaluation arises from within the novel and is thus humanistic, rather than being derived from a metaphysical system outside the novel. We are therefore able to accept the real value of the tribal customs which Jimmy Blacksmith abandons while still realising that they cannot support life in the modern world of greed and poverty. Similarly, we can even sympathise with the blinkered view of the whites while seeing its destructive force and appreciating the barren soil it offers for the growth of any true human values.

The story of Jimmy Blacksmith's attempt to abandon the code of his people and enter the white world is doomed from the start. The more he accepts white values the less he is able to understand their actual conduct, which contradicts their precepts. The harder he tries to succeed, the more he affronts them, and therefore the closer he brings his inevitable destruction. He earns the hatred of the whites not because at first they fear him but because they are totally unable to comprehend him. This lack of comprehension ultimately stems from a complete lack of self-knowledge.

Keneally does not dwell unduly on the physical details of Jimmy Blacksmith's revenge, nor on the hanging by which white society in due course avenges itself on Blacksmith. Through the figure of the hangman, however, with his lack of curiosity and prudish concern for efficiency, he contrasts the two societies, black and white. The black society is in tune with the rhythms of the blood, and its vengeance is bloody but personal. White society, on the other hand, is obsessed

with cleanliness, decency, the expected, and reacts to the murders with a delighted horror until it is able to sweep the murderers, and its own guilt, safely out of sight and settle down again to the abstract game of politics in the new Australian federation.

The weakness of the novel lies in the alternative it balances against the clinical and repressed world of the whites. The wanderings of the two Blacksmiths and their captive through the Australian bush maintains the excitement of the chase, but the characters' intuitions of a deeper spirituality remain meaningless gestures. On the other hand, each of the characters in the book, black and white, even those who make only the briefest appearance, is given a stubbornly resistant life of his own.

This is not true of John Bailey's novel, *The Wire Classroom*, the story of a young teacher's efforts to survive as headmaster of a native school in the Papuan jungle. The subsidiary characters in this novel are not endowed with independent life, but remain props against which the narrator plays out his drama. Their lack of reality is, however, in keeping with the world into which the narrator is plunged. They are what they have become, like his assistant teacher, the ineffective Tau. But the narrator himself and his other assistant, Cromwell Jonathan, are still actors attempting to make something of the world rather than accept the parts handed out to them.

Cromwell Jonathan is a revolutionary who accepts leadership of a strike at a neighbouring plantation, is defeated and transferred, but still looks to the time when he will come into his own. Charles Cummins, the narrator, has been precipitated almost heedlessly into his position, and lacks the initiative and drive which he would need to change any of the facts of his situation; but he does achieve a human relationship with Cromwell, and if he weakly surrenders to the wishes of the RSL club he does eventually repudiate it and flee to become his own man.

The interest of John Bailey's novel is primarily documentary, the problem of the well-intentioned white in a plantation culture moving towards rebellion, but it also has the wider significance of a study of a man's struggle for integrity.

Judah Waten's latest novel, on the other hand, could almost be described as a study of a man's struggle to lose the integrity imposed on him by

a code of values he cherishes but can no longer completely accept, and his efforts instead to fulfil himself by giving himself to a human relationship.

The setting of the novel is the contemporary university and the suburban life from which its students come. The story revolves around the clash of cultures, both those of the old and the young and those of two migrant communities, Jewish and Italian. The clashes stem from the love of two students who have to free themselves not just from their parents but from the whole value systems which their parents represent.

Judah Waten gives reality both to the emptiness which forces the parents to cling to old ways and the urgency which drives their children from them. The campus world, with the conflict between critical questioning and vocational ambition is equally well realised. Unfortunately, however, the author has chosen to render the speech of his characters in flat standard English, and this denies them the spark of life needed to make them real to the reader.

The book is, however, a significant one in that it does link together two important contemporary problems and treat them unsentimentally and without imposing false solutions. There is a nice eye for the social details of life in such varying milieux as Toorak, a Richmond greengrocery, and the sumptuous domestic temple of a Jewish mother. The characters are not judged, but are presented with their separate and irreconcilable ambitions. Like the father in one of Judah Waten's earlier stories, they are unaware that for none of them is there any turning back.

BOTANY BAY'S FIRST FRUITS

A. G. Maclaine

John F. Cleverley: *The First Generation: School and Society in Early Australia* (Sydney University Press, \$6 and \$3.50).

This is the first detailed account in print of the early development of education in the colony of New South Wales. The scope of the book is extensive. Dr. Cleverley describes the early demand for education in the colony, also overseas models for colonial schools, and the genesis of public (government) education in New South Wales, against a background of daunting difficulties and an evolving theory and practice of public school

education. He goes on to give an account of the administration of colonial schools, the educational contribution of the early missionaries, the establishment of colonial orphanages for destitute children, the provision of schooling for Aboriginals, and the advent of private education for the children of the upper crust of early Sydney society. Finally, he discusses the emergence of a colonial tradition of public education in Australia.

The main emphasis in the book is on the period 1788 to 1809, but the author traces some developments in and around Sydney through to the end of the Macquarie era in 1820. By that time some educational ventures had also been started in Van Diemen's Land, but only scant and passing references are made to them and, in any case, these activities were based at that time on educational practices at Sydney.

One of the attributes of the book is the attention given to the emergence of Australian colonial education in the context of British practice and precedents to which the early colonial governors and Colonial Office in Great Britain naturally looked for guidance. However, one of the most striking features of the initial educational efforts was the way in which British antecedents were modified or ignored in the light of the peculiar circumstances of the infant colony. The prevailing British view that the provision of elementary education for children of the lower classes should be left predominantly to the Church or to philanthropic and private initiative was not tenable in this antipodean outpost. In New South Wales, conditions soon forced the early governors to take positive action to provide a measure of official public education despite the general lack of support by the British government for education in the 'Home Country'. There was no established colonial church or philanthropic organisation to undertake this task, and it was felt that some education had to be provided for the children if only as a means of correcting the demoralizing environmental hazards to which they were exposed in the morally debased convict community where, in 1807, illegitimate children outnumbered the others.

The actions of the early governors were not matters of policy but of expediency and improvisation. Soldiers, convicts, missionaries and other literate persons were used as teachers and supervised by the colonial clergy, despite the general lack of teaching qualifications among the latter. Barracks, churches, storehouses and private build-

ings were utilized as schools. To finance public education, the governors made direct land grants, issued rations, and assigned convicts; they received funds from the London Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts and from public subscriptions, and they made grants from public revenue and diverted money from fines.

The research on this early period has indicated the extent and significance of the distinctive contributions of Governors King and Macquarie to the early growth of education in the colony of New South Wales; in fact, King may be regarded as the first notable Australian educational administrator. In addition to providing education for the poor, including the foundation of orphan schools, these two governors strongly encouraged the growth of private schools for children of the middle-class element in the colony. To Macquarie must also go the credit of establishing the first school for Aboriginals. Dr. Cleverly also gives quite a considerable amount of attention to the several educational endeavors of the Anglican churchman, the Reverend Samuel Marsden, and this cleric appears in a more favorable light than in some other accounts which have dwelled more heavily on his personality and his various other activities.

By the year 1800, as a result of the emphasis on education in the colony, more children attended school in New South Wales in proportion to the population than were in attendance in many English counties. At the same time, however, the book gives a clear picture of the dreariness and drudgery of elementary schooling at that time and of the low status and qualifications of the colonial schoolmasters, despite some early efforts that were made to introduce and improve fundamental teaching techniques.

During the foundation years in New South Wales government intervention in education was essential and relatively successful. In fact Dr. Cleverly gives some evidence to show that, by 1820, the native born were quite remarkably not only more literate but were held in higher regard in society and had a lower crime rate than convicts, emancipists and free immigrants. He argues that at least the comparatively high level of literacy of the first generation was due in part to the schooling received by several hundred youngsters from 1792 onwards. However, the most significant aspect of initial and sustained government initiative in the provision of education and the conscious fashioning of a truly public

education was that this became part of a continuous tradition in Australian education which outlasted the convict era.

The basic and extensive research on the genesis of education in the settlements in and around Sydney and at Norfolk Island was first carried out by Dr. C. Turney of the University of Sydney but this still remains largely in thesis form. Some important findings in this field have also been unearthed and published by Professor A. G. Austin of Melbourne University. Dr. Cleverly has continued and extended this work and has performed a real service by bringing this material forward in print. The thoroughness with which he has approached his task is evident in the uniformly high quality of his book. It is a scholarly and adequately documented piece of work in the compilation of which there has been extensive recourse to primary source material. At the same time, the book is eminently readable and should be of absorbing interest to anyone who has any desire to learn about the beginnings of education in Australia.

MARITIME WILDLIFE

Nigel Wace

- D. L. Serventy, Vincent Serventy & John Warham: *The Handbook of Australian Seabirds* (Reed, \$8.95).
Isobel Bennett: *Shores of Macquarie Island* (Rigby, \$3.75).
Philip Bodeker: *The Sandgroppers' Trail* (Reed, \$4.50).

Australians spend a lot of time by the sea. We mostly live in limpet ports which are the State capitals, we recreate ourselves sailing, surfing, skiing, and swimming in the sea, or just sunbaking on the beach. But until recently we have not had many books to inform us about the natural history of the world surrounding our continent, on whose fringes so many of us play. These three books all discuss the wildlife of that other world, but from very different standpoints.

The Handbook of Australian Seabirds is written by three ornithologists who know their subject well. According to the authors, their purpose has been to "enable seabirds to be correctly identified, and to record the known facts of their habits". Although it is rather large for use in the field, it fills the authors' purposes admirably. The descriptions are set out in clear non-technical language, with plenty of photographs and line illustrations. A number of the birds described will

be unfamiliar to landlubbers, or to those who only go to sea in the summer, for they include many species which breed in distant places and qualify for inclusion only because they visit Australian seas in the winter. Nor is it a book for the casual bird-spotter who wants a handy guide with whose aid he can easily identify any seabird that he sees: it assumes some knowledge of at least the major groups of seabirds.

The book is in four parts. An introduction on the geography of Australian coasts, habitat types and water masses is concluded with a rather weak section on the supposed Pleistocene history of Australian coastal environments. There are some interesting discussions in the following part on the biology of seabirds, drawing largely on overseas research. Seawater drinking, sense of smell, orientation and possible methods of navigation, guano occurrences and other topics, are all the subject of short readable discussions, with references to research papers. Since most people observe seabirds only on the wing, it is a pity that nothing is included on the spectacular and beautiful soaring flight of the albatrosses and petrels.

The main part of the book is a systematic account of some forty breeding and about sixty visiting species of seabirds in Australian seas. Only those feeding mainly at sea are included; thus the shore and freshwater feeding waders are not dealt with, although their relatives the gulls, skuas and terns are. The descriptions are clearly drawn up, and among the best features of the book are the comparative diagrams showing the differences between related species, and the discussions of differences in breeding behavior and timing over the whole range of the species described. There are four pages of color photographs, which although picturesque do not add greatly to the use of the book as a guide to identification.

Although the authors take the sensible view that "a scientific name is a label for practical use, and hence consider that stability should be its prime characteristic", it is a pity that they do not quote at least the common synonyms of the species described, so that comparisons can be made with other accounts. Anyone who has tried to sleep within cooee of a broad-billed prion will find the descriptions of its voice in this book very different to the raucous croaking and argumentative squarking with which these birds enliven their domestic affairs. Common noddies breed in the

Tristan Islands, which are hardly "subtropical". Any reader will find small points of this sort: they hardly detract from the value of the book as a complete and accurate account of all the seabirds known to visit our waters or breed on our shores.

Inevitably, as with any book on wildlife or wild environments these days, there is a section on conservation. It is strange that the remarks on seabird conservation problems in Australia are restricted to the impact of man on their breeding colonies on land. Far more ominous for the future of these creatures is man's total effect on the marine environment, as the products of his recklessly expanding technology end up in the sea—the last and biggest rubbish dump that we have left. Oiled seabirds are a common enough sight on European beaches—they will presumably become so here. Concentrations of DDT building up in the tissues of Bermudan petrels and Californian pelicans have made their eggshells so thin and brittle that few are successfully incubated. The phlegmatic disregard of Australian governments towards imposing controls on DDT use here presumably means that our petrels and pelicans will go the same way. It is unfortunate that these more general problems receive no mention in a book which will undoubtedly become a standard work of reference on the seabirds of a large part of the Southern Ocean.

Macquarie Island is the breeding place of many of the seabirds of southern Australian seas. It is also the resort of numerous seals, and of the comparatively few plants and land animals that have managed to reach it and survive its wet gloomy subantarctic climate. Dr. Isobel Bennett, a biologist with an interest in intertidal life, has written a readable short account of the island, which she views as an outlier of the Antarctic and as an integral part of the life of the Southern Ocean, rather than having anything much to do with Australia (of which it is politically a part).

The history of the island and the present activities of the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition scientists there are briefly described in the first two chapters. Macquarie Island was not discovered until 1810, when it immediately attracted the attention of sealers. Uncontrolled slaughter of seals and penguins, and the depredations of the gangs living ashore on the albatrosses and other birds, and the effects of the rabbits, cats, rats, and other animals intro-

duced to the island greatly reduced the wildlife. In 1933, following disputes between exploiters and conservationists, the island was declared a sanctuary, and in the ensuing 40 years the wildlife has to some extent recovered. Wandering albatross have returned to breed, and penguins and seals have increased in number, but some of the introduced animals, especially cats, rats and rabbits, are now a permanent part of Macquarie's fauna. The smaller seabirds will never again achieve their former abundance, and rabbits continue to upset the stability of the tussock grasslands which are an important component of the island's vegetation.

Dr. Bennett describes the marine creatures of the island, and the life on its shores, with an open and almost childlike delight. Her account of the intertidal zonation of animals and plants is perhaps the best yet written for laymen on that of any subantarctic shores, although diagrams of the zonation would have helped. The photographs, both in color and black-and-white, add much to the reader's enjoyment and understanding.

The book ends with a plea for the conservation of Macquarie Island's wildlife, but it is tempered with the anguish of the naturalist who senses that little can really be done to save these vulnerable products of evolutionary isolation in the face of expanding human demands for space and food. Now that whaling is almost finished as the larger species are forced into extinction, the possibility of commercial harvesting of krill and plant plankton in the Southern Ocean threatens to cut at the base of the food chains of almost all the marine life that breeds in such abundance on Macquarie Island. Again, the effects of man on the total marine environment hold greater dangers for the survival of marine wildlife than man's predatory activities on land.

Mr. Philip Bodeker took his wife and family in a caravan on a fishing safari from Shark Bay along the West Australian coast to the Kimberleys. "We wanted to see it all before it was too late. For the North-West was changing with the advance of industry, oil and minerals. Bulldozers, cars and people were taking over, and the animals, birds and fish there today might not be there tomorrow." According to the dust jacket, the author and his family caught between them just about every type of fish there was to catch. For this reason, the book will be of considerable

interest to fishermen, for there are many details of baits, lures and the habits of fish, suitably illustrated with pictures of fish out of water (but none in their element). The book is written in a racy style which suits the modern pioneering spirit of this family venture. Some may wonder whether Mr. Bodeker was not unduly hastening the process of change in the North-West, whose effects he sought to avoid, by getting in first.

NEW ZEALAND REDISCOVERIES — Chester Eagle

William Satchell: *The Land of the Lost* (\$5.05), Jane Mander: *Allen Adair* (\$4.45) (both published by Auckland and Oxford University Presses).

These two books are part of a series of reprints (four out, two in preparation) of early New Zealand fiction. Editorial policy refers to increasing interest in books long out of print; "these new editions . . . will [give] a clearer picture of our literature and society in development."

There is an interesting comparison with Australian literature. One might compare and contrast the lives of Jane Mander and our Miles Franklin, or perhaps find similarities between *The Land of the Lost* and *Robbery under Arms*, in that both combine elements of an unfamiliar setting with readers' more conventional expectations of an adventure story.

The opening of *The Land of the Lost* (first published in 1902) raises the eyebrows and one's expectations. William Satchell is trying to emulate Hardy's description of Egdon Heath (*The Return of the Native*, 1878). Hardy's famous opening is followed by a chapter entitled "Humanity appears upon the scene, hand in hand with trouble", and Satchell could well have borrowed this expression too. But the trouble which follows lies also in Satchell's writing. His figures are cut-outs, or, as a friend of mine once said, "they clank along on pre-determined motives". There is a mystery about the hero's origins: what is Hugh Clifford doing here in this remote colonial gumfield? (Gumdiggers used to probe the earth with spears, searching for lumps of gum from the long-vanished kauri forests.)

And there's a heroine:

Rendered helpless by the injury she had received, subject on the one hand to the volcanic outbursts of her father and on the other to the frozen silence and arctic countenance of her lover, while she herself,

seeking in vain to discover a rational reason for the attitude of either . . . was it to be wondered at that her thoughts constantly turned to the young man who had so chivalrously defended her? Or that once . . . she fancied for a moment she beheld him kneeling beside her, his eyes full of solicitude for her suffering . . .

There's a great deal more in this vein. Clifford's fingers tremble as he undoes the diamond brooch at her throat and loosens the collar of her dress and sprinkles her face and neck with water, and so on.

Though the story is extremely conventional to the modern reader, where it touches the settings they are made to fit well enough. Satchell knew his gumfields, and had an appreciation of the Maoris, though they play little part in the book. Unofficial, or un-establishment, life is shown well enough; it is the formal plot which looks dated now. Villains are villainous, the virtuous a bit hard to take. One can't help wondering how future generations will view the activities of our J. Bond and various TV crimebusters; perhaps as I view this book—an enjoyable romp, a museum piece well worth putting on display once in a while.

Allen Adair deserves more serious attention. Jane Mander's portrait of her central figure is quietly studied and completely credible. Allen is a loner, a man inarticulate even to himself. Unable to settle down to office or business life, or to gain any benefit from Oxford, he breaks with his family and goes north. At first he runs a mail and transport boat in the Kaipara Harbor region, then he buys a store and post office on those same northern gumfields where Satchell's book was set. He marries, though more from need and loneliness than love, and has several children, but his wife is an urban and gregariously active person. The gap between them widens with every passing year.

The book deals also with Allen's relations with Geraldine, the wife of a business colleague, and with another well-bred Englishman, Dick Rossiter. But it needs to be said that, credible as Jane Mander's character portraits are, she sees her story more than the working out of character; it is the process by which a certain type of man 'finds himself' in the business of opening up country; he revels in the hardship and remoteness and yet, by his work, he brings

the isolated area into ever closer contact with the city in the south. Here is Allen early on:

It was absurd that he should be so pleased with himself. It was nothing to be starting a little country store. But somehow it seemed . . . part of an exciting procession of events in the transmutation of bush land into prosperous farms, of isolation into settlement, of lonely tracks into railway lines. Already he saw the train of the future speeding along . . . already he saw the cream factories . . . And he believed in the thing that was going on about him.

Apart from Geraldine, whose embryonic relationship with Allen Adair is never explored, the other important figure in the book is Dick Rossiter, who has similarities with Hugh Clifford in *The Land of the Lost*. Mystery surrounds Dick's presence in the gumfield; he is shy, sensitive, well bred, something of a flag for the public school and Oxford Englishman. Though living in a gum-digger's shanty, he maintains "standards" in this wild place and keeps up that air of innate superiority which was probably the major weapon in Britain's emotional armory when it went a-colonising. One feels that Allen's attraction to Dick Rossiter is also New Zealand's for the type; the mystifying but credible thing about the ending of the book is that Allen can accept his new life in the city because it promises a trip to England. Here are the last lines:

How much of his life was defeat? How much victory? He did not know.

And still he had adventure. There was England and Dick Rossiter. In one sense he was beginning again.

I imagine that if I were setting out to study New Zealand literature I might begin by trying to define the equivocal thing about this ending.

LIVING IN A HOLE

Nancy Phelan

Rena Briand: *White Man in a Hole*
(Phuong-Hoang Press, \$2.95).

Coober Pedy, in northern South Australia, must be about the toughest town in this country. The population, drawn there by the hope of finding opals, honestly or otherwise, is made up of transients and permanents, miners, migrants, dealers, murderers, con. men, swindlers, thieves, drunks

and derelict Aborigines. Gambling, prostitution and venereal diseases flourish, the climate is ghastly, heat, dust and violence are the background to daily life.

Many of the inhabitants live underground in caves and dugouts for coolness and comfort. Dugouts vary from bare holes in the ground to elaborate establishments with hot and cold water, bars, stereos and swimming-pools. This troglodyte way of life is implied in the name of the town: Coober Pedy, which is corrupted Aboriginal, means White Man in a Hole.

To this bizarre settlement came Rena Briand, a young French photo-journalist, full of initiative, courage and vitality, interested in people, with a strong feeling for animals. She set herself up in a rickety caravan with a dog and a gun and made friends with the locals. Her ambitions were modest—she just wanted some opals to wear—but, though she did not get very far with mining, she became so interested in the town that she decided to "research" and write a "documentary" about it.

In a brisk, businesslike way she describes the life and the types she encountered—sexy Greeks, knife-happy Jugoslavs, crooks and toughs of all kinds; a dotty English gentlewoman, an old man who talks to God, a goodhearted welfare officer with "vigilant features and a raucous voice". Nothing gets her down, she is indefatigable, driving round the country in an old utility, drinking in bars, listening to yarns, making notes, taking photographs, tracking down information, writing it all up.

Though for the most part the material is interesting, the book itself is rather disappointing. Too often there is the feeling of listening to conversations about people you have never met (including those "screams" and "real characters"); too much pointless dialogue and tedious detail—who shouted the drinks, who said what to who, etc.; and though the author tells us she is fascinated by the extraordinary countryside and its wild-life, she gives us no sense of sharing, of having been there—one is never pulled in and identified.

She writes more from the outside than from within, and is more inclined to go out and round-up than wait for voluntary surrender. This may work with people, up to a point, but not with elusive intangibles such as the spirit of place. The results are factual and journalistic rather than imaginative and evocative.

Yet it must be admitted that Rena Briand herself does not claim to be producing more than a

“documentary”; and though the atmosphere does not come through in her writing she is far more successful with her color pictures. Clear and concise, they really do give a sense of space, of the ruthless light, the strange pastel beauty of this austere and terrible landscape.

BOOK CHRONICLE

The object of this section is to give readers early notice of the ‘pick of the crop’ of books received. Mention here does not preclude subsequent review.

ENVIRONMENT

Derek Whitelock’s *A Dirty Story: Pollution in Australia* (Sun Books, \$1.65) is an excellent, angry primer on the despoliation of a nation, its value for the general reader perhaps enhanced by the fact that it is written, not by a scientist, but by an enraged man of affairs. Just the thing to start Auntie Mabel on her campaign of revolt against the established Australian political parties.

Rupert Taylor’s *Noise* (Pelican, \$1.20) is an important, semi-popular work written by a professional man on an often-overlooked aspect of pollution. His message is: “If we want quiet, we can have it, if we pay for it”, a common enough cry these days, which overlooks the problem of getting political leaders who will take the initiative in seeing that we *do* pay for it—and with special reference to those who make the noise. (And when did *you* last complain about the inane ‘piped’ music in restaurants and aircraft?)

Conservation (Pelican, \$2.20) is edited by two Australian scientists, A. B. Costin and H. J. Frith. This should be the basic textbook for the developing Australian anti-growth movements, especially the Australian labor movement, if it has enough intelligence, courage and sense. Chapters cover, *inter alia*, minerals, water, wildlife, national parks and land use. Judith Wright has said that it’s splendid that young people in particular are on the conservation front, but deplorable that they think that ‘feeling’ is enough. This could be a book for the hip pocket of the blue jeans.

FACSIMILES

Of major interest in the recent output of the facsimile publishing program of the South Australian Libraries Board is their beautiful edition

of Sydney Parkinson’s *A Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas in His Majesty’s Ship The Endeavour* (\$13.75). Parkinson, according to J. C. Beaglehole, appears to have been “an ardent, observant, humane, pleasantly romantic, very hard-working young man”, and his account of Cook’s first voyage remains a primary source. The plates in particular are magnificently reproduced.

Other recent publications in the same series are J. W. Bull’s *Early Experiences of Life in South Australia* (1884), a work of considerable anecdotal interest (\$7.50); and *South Australia, in 1842* by ‘One who lived there nearly four years’, a short handbook (\$2.40).

HISTORY

Naomi Turner’s *Sinews of Sectarian Warfare?* (ANU Press, \$8.50) is a discussion of the issue surrounding state aid to the churches in New South Wales between 1836 and 1862. It is a welcome contribution to our understanding of the attitude of our forbears in their often frenetic debates over freedom and justice for their different brands of religion and, as Dr. Turner says, throws light on the educational controversies not only of the nineteenth century but also of our own day.

Keith Isaac’s *Military Aircraft of Australia 1909-1918* (Australian War Memorial, \$6.50) is the first volume of a projected four volume work which will comprise not only a definitive account of all aircraft types used by Australian forces but also the first complete history of military aviation in Australia. Numerous illustrations and appendices, and a bargain at the price.

EDUCATION

Ian Hansen’s *Nor Free Nor Secular* (Oxford, \$12.50) is the first detailed study of Australian independent schools: surely long overdue if we take into account the fact that probably a higher proportion of Australian children attend private schools than anywhere else. Mainly concerned with the detailed analysis of questionnaires circulated within the six most important boys’ schools in Victoria, the quality of Dr. Hansen’s historical prologue makes one wish that he had spread himself more lavishly and perhaps more boldly in discussing his data, which is often of great educational and social interest. Dr. Hansen finds many aspects of his schools admirable, and has performed a notable service in making it clear that the ‘radical critique’ of the private schools of

Australia must seek to understand and appreciate the strength of these schools in the Australian community, and indeed to learn from them.

ART

Bernard Smith's basic — and classic — work on *Australian Painting* (Oxford, \$17.50) is now re-issued, after ten years, in a second edition which assesses, at considerable length, the impact of the 1960s. This handsome book includes 65 illustrations covering the 1960s, and in all 440 illustrations, over 50 in color, which in themselves are a history of Australian painting and, the publishers rightly state, "constitute the most significant selection that has yet been reproduced".

OTHER

Surprisingly few Australian readers appear to know of the American 'Twayne's World Authors Series' which now includes some distinguished dis-

cussions of individual Australian writers. Most recent is Professor Herbert C. Jaffa's *Kenneth Slessor* (\$6.90).

Robert Dentry is the pen-name of a distinguished Australian journalist and author who, in *Encounter at Kharmel* (Wren, \$5.50), has produced an adventure thriller with the highly professional gloss of an Alister McLean. Set in Pakistan and a Himalayan state, the book is compulsively readable and a first-class work of its kind.

Australian Capitalism, edited by John Playford and Douglas Kirsner (Pelican, \$2.25), is a collection of eleven studies from the Left seeking to develop a principled, informed socialist critique of contemporary Australian capitalism. Issues discussed include the power structure, education, economic power, arbitration, the ALP and Australian imperialism.

floating fund

STEPHEN MURRAY-SMITH writes: This is the first issue of *Overland* for which I have taken direct responsibility since I left for England early in 1971. Issues 47, 48, 49, and the double issue 50/51, were brought out by the editorial committee of *Overland*, and I would like to express my deep appreciation of the work and new ideas contributed by Ian Turner, Barrie Reid, Vane Lindesay and Shirley and John McLaren.

Some readers may be puzzled at the fact that, untrue to past form, this issue of *Overland* appears so soon after the issue 50/51. The answer is that it is this issue that is on schedule; the previous issue was delayed by its unprecedented size and also by industrial disputes in which our printers were involved. In an endeavour to keep abreast of regular quarterly publication, and to extend our technical facilities, *Overland* has, through the kind offices of Mr. Bob Cugley, of the National Press, Melbourne, now adopted a new printer.

We are grateful, as ever, for the donations listed below, and would like to say again how important these are both to our working morale and to keeping our financial head above water. But one matter that does concern us, apart from the matter of straight donations, is the fact that we find so many names of persons we *know* approve of our magazine and its 'line' are still missing from the subscription lists. Each reader could help greatly by placing a regular order with us, and by mentioning us to like-minded friends. If they're too lazy to subscribe themselves, then extract two dollars from them and send the money to us on their behalf!

\$100 Anon; \$8 PH JS; \$7.85 KWF; \$6 RRM; \$4 AO'D RG; \$3 JSE HH JMCD VO'C BB DHR TPD HMCM KB RL NDM HS GG; \$2 IM WJW MD PEM GK GMCI PL WMB MC; \$1 MrsR RZ MP CW PN RJ LP RP APM MH ON RAW JB; 55c EL; 50c SH DM. Total \$209.40.



