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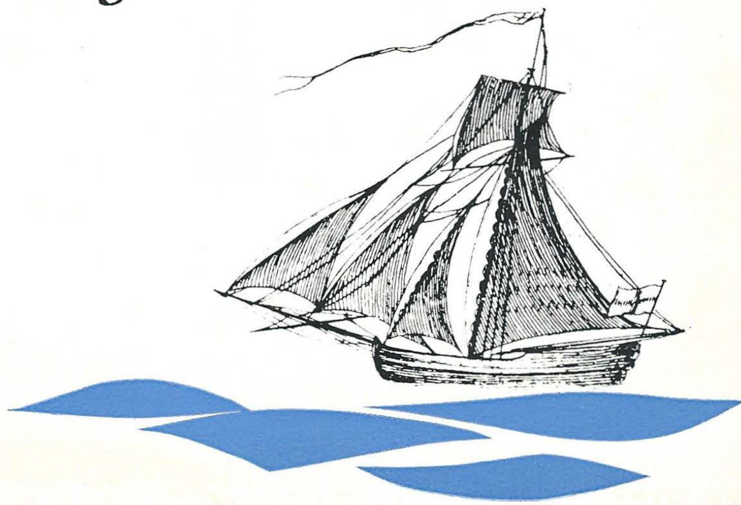
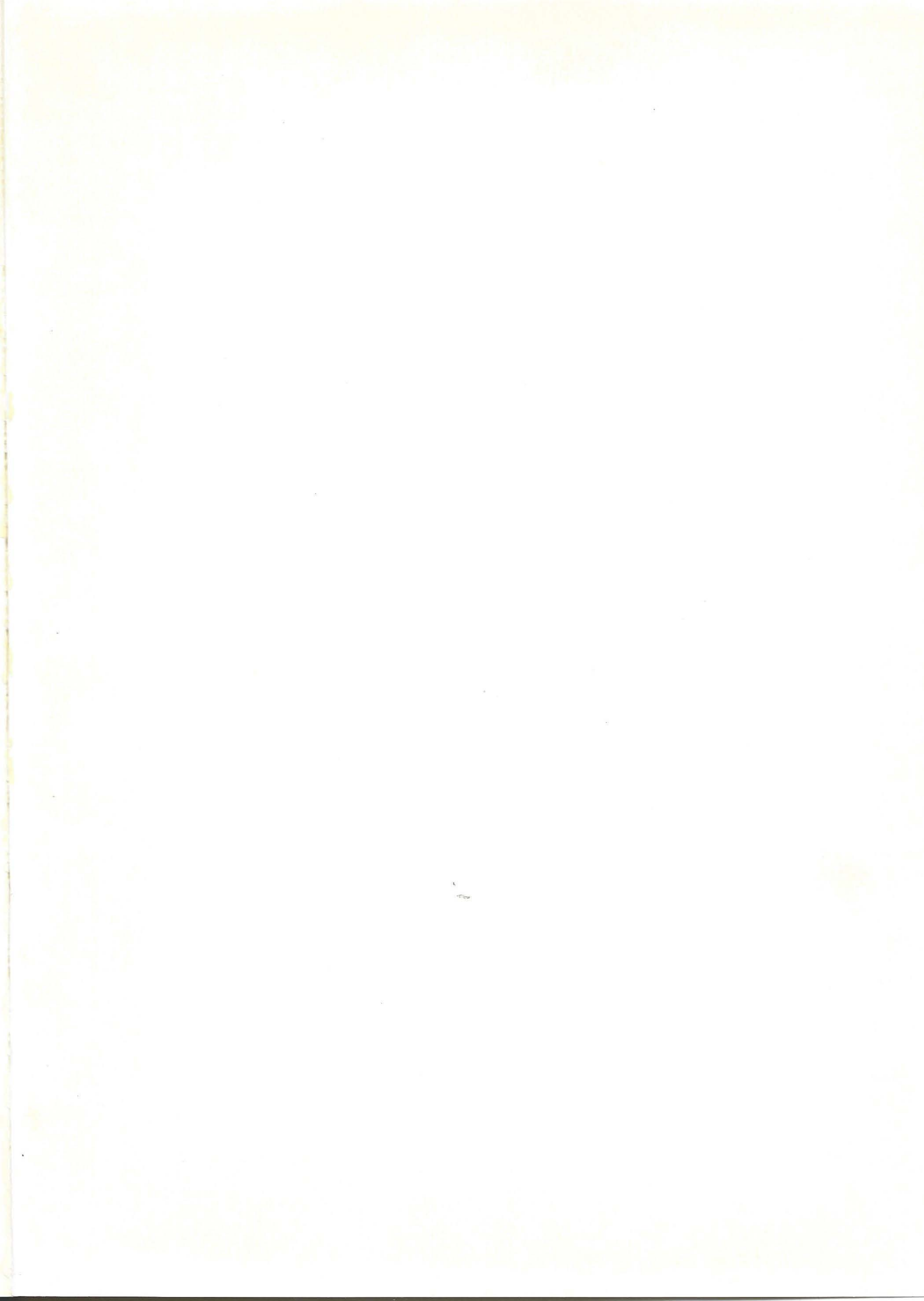
An Unpublished Manuscript of Matthew Flinders





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Temper democratic, bias Australian

Winter 1973

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Overland is a quarterly literary magazine which tries to appear every three months. The subscription rate is two dollars a year (four issues); for students and Nuiginians the subscription is one dollar. Manuscripts are welcomed, but should have a stamped, addressed envelope for return. *Overland* receives assistance from the Commonwealth Literary Fund, which insists that we state *minimum* fees: so, let us say twenty dollars for a story or feature and ten dollars for a poem or book review. We normally pay far more than this.

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T. M. PERRY

Matt's Cat

FLINDERS, Capt. Matthew, R.N. (1774-1814) essayist . . .

None of the biographical dictionaries begin their entry *that* way. Matthew Flinders is not remembered as a literary man. His fame lies in his explorations, his skill as a navigator, his innovations in hydrographic cartography, his experiments on magnetism in ships (no one before had noted that the cannon and other ironware in ships affected the binnacle compass), and, depicted in sepia-toned steel engravings on the margarine-and-mustard colored walls of countless primary-school rooms, his self-appointment as chief barber to the Aboriginals on the shores of Lake Illawarra. Though K. A. Austin has published an article on Flinders's writings he has rarely been styled "author", let alone "essayist", and perhaps he would be the last to claim for himself either title. But his "Biographical Tribute to Trim the Cat" is in the style and tradition of the late-eighteenth century English essay. So far as I know this is the first appearance of this essay in printed form.

While preparations for the departure of *Investigator* were under way Flinders had reservations about his ability to write the account of the voyage that would be required of him, and he had already discussed the possibility of help from literary friends. Publication of his *Observations on the Coasts of Van Diemen's Land* left him sure that "authorship sits awkwardly upon me", but already his pen was busy and becoming a more familiar tool as a steady stream of letters went ashore from *Investigator* to Sir Joseph Banks, the Lords of Admiralty and the Navy Board seeking to hasten the departure of the ship. During the voyage comprehensive and detailed observations of all the places visited swelled his Journal, and from Sydney reports of the voyage's progress and disasters went to Sir Joseph and Their Lordships. During his imprisonment in Mauritius authorship, sitting a little less awkwardly, became more familiar. He was busy writing: writing letters and reports of his imprisonment to everyone who might be able to obtain his release, writing an edited fair copy of his Journal for presentation to the Admiralty, writing the first of his papers on magnetism in ships, a memoir on the construction of his charts and methods of establishing latitude and longitude and variation of the compass, a manual on spherical trigonometry and navigation, and, late in his imprisonment, the "Tribute to Trim".

"This contrived little essay", however one evaluates its literary merit (remembering that it was written in the age of grand-scale verbosity) is of interest for two reasons: for the light it throws on early-nineteenth century shipboard life, and especially for its revelation of its author. It shows the same keen observation of cats and men that is seen in the careful description of places in the *Voyage to Terra Australis,* his sense of fun and boyish humor, and above all the warmth of his affection, not only for Trim, but for men, that is to be seen in his treatment of his crew and the close touch that he kept with many of them after his return to England and the closeness of his friendships with former shipmates long after personal contact had been severed for years. He must have been an amiable and likable man and a congenial companion. And among his friends Trim must have held a special place; he joined Flinders soon after he had taken his lieutenant's examination in Cape Town while the *Reliance* was there getting supplies for hungry Sydney, he

shared the voyage to Moreton Bay in the *Norfolk,* and to England in the *Reliance,* the excitement of preparing for the *Investigator's* voyage, and the joys of early married life before the ship left England. He circumnavigated Australia and like the rest of the ship's company endured malnutrition and illness off the Arnhemland coast, survived the foundering of the *Porpoise* and, after six weeks on Wreck Reef, rejoined his master on the tiny *Cumberland* to go to England but to be detained at Mauritius. He was involved in the period of Flinders's greatest achievements and his loss, coming soon after most of the ship's company had been repatriated, was at a time when Flinders's fortunes seemed to have reached their lowest ebb.

Besides writing Flinders had other interests on Mauritius. He was reading widely in both French and English, he was teaching a group of children mathematics, had an interest in a plantation (that was not particularly successful) and played the flute (he took it to be repaired soon after arriving in London). Anger, frustration, and illness plagued him but there was also a resignation to and acceptance of his situation: he was imprisoned but none the less interested and busy. It is as evidence that, despite imprisonment, the human qualities of the man endured that the "Tribute to Trim" is important.

James D. Mack finds it "uncharacteristic of Flinders's other writings" and comments that it shows "an unmistakable boyish warmth in the man, a warmth that comes as a pleasant surprise at this stage of Flinders's life". *(Matthew Flinders,* pp. 209-210.) It is uncharacteristic in so far that his other writings were official and scientific. They were respectful and decorously worded letters and reports to his superiors and patrons: not places for wit, or fancy (though they do contain occasional glimpses of impishness — the naming of Antechamber Bay, The Pages and Backstairs Passage; and the naming in honor of Admiral Troubridge, who ran aground during the Battle of the Nile, of the largest shoal in Spencers Gulf). But it is not uncharacteristic of his private letters and diaries: "My appetite is so good that I believe it has the intention of revenging me on the Governor by occasioning a famine in the land." The "Tribute", a *jeu d'esprit,* may be surprising after six years detention, but it is sure proof that while Decaen and Mauritius held the body, the mind and the spirit were unconfined.

MATTHEW FLINDERS

A Biographical Tribute to the Memory of Trim Isle of France—1809

I can never speak of cats without a sentiment of regret for my poor Trim, the favourite of all our ship's company on the Spyall. This good-natured purring animal was born on board His Majesty's ship the Roundabout in 1799 during a passage from the Cape of Good Hope to Botany Bay; and saving the rights and titles of the Parish of Stepney, was consequently an Indian by birth. The signs of superior intelligence which marked his infancy procured for him an education beyond what is usually bestowed upon the individuals of his tribe; and being brought up amongst sailors, his manner acquired a peculiarity of cast which rendered them as different from those of other cats, as the actions of a fearless seaman are from those of a lounging, shame-faced ploughboy; it was, however, from his gentleness and the innate goodness of his heart, that I gave him the name of my uncle Toby's honest, kind-hearted, humble companion.

In playing with his little brothers and sisters upon deck by moon-light, when the ship was lying tranquilly in harbour, the energy and elasticity of his movements sometimes carried him so far beyond his mark, that he fell overboard; but this was far from being a misfortune; he learned to swim and to have no dread of the water; and when a rope was thrown over to him, he took hold of it like a man, and ran up it like a cat. In a short time, he was able to mount up the gangway steps quicker than his master, or even than the first lieutenant.

Being a favourite with every body on board, both officers and seamen, he was well fed, and grew fast both in size and comeliness: A description of his person will not be misplaced here. From the care that was taken of him, and the force of his own constitution, Trim grew to be one of the finest animals I ever saw; his size emulated that of his friends of Angora: his weight being from ten to twelve pounds according as our *fresh-meatometer* stood high or low. His tail was long, large, and bushy; and when he was animated by the presence of a stranger of the anti-catean race, it bristled out to a fearful size, whilst vivid flashes darted from his fiery eyes, though at other times he was candour and good nature itself. His head was small and round, —his physionomy bespoke intelligence and confidence, —wiskers long and graceful, —and his ears were cropped in a beautiful curve. Trim's robe was a clear jet black, with the exception of his four feet, which seemed to have been dipped in snow; and his under lip, which rivalled them in whiteness; he had also a white star on his breast, and it seemed as if nature had designed him for the prince and model of his race: I doubt whether Whittington's cat, of which so much has been said and written, was to be compared to him.

Notwithstanding my great partiality to my friend Trim, strict justice obliges me to cite in this place a trait in his character which by many will be thought a blemish: He was, I am sorry to say it, excessively vain of his person, particularly of his snow-white feet. He would frequently place himself on the quarter deck before the officers, in the middle of their walk; and spreading out his two white hands in the posture of the *lion couchant,* oblige them to stop and admire him. They would indeed say low to each other, "See the vanity of that cat"! but they could not help admiring his graceful form and beautiful white feet. Indeed when it is known, that to the finest form ever beheld, he joined extraordinary personal and mental qualifications, the impossibility

that the officers could be angry with him must be evident; and they were men of too much elevation of mind to be jealous of him. I would not be an advocate in the cause of vanity; but if it is ever excusable, it was so in this case. How many men are there, who have no claim either from birth, fortune, or acquirements, personal or mental, whose vanity is not to be confined within such harmless bounds, as was that of Trim! And I will say for him, that he never spoke ill of or objected to the pretensions of others, which is more than can be said for very many bipeds.

Trim, though vain as we have seen, was not like those young men who, being assured of an independence, spend their youth in idle trifling, and consider all serious application as pedantic and derogatory, or at least to be useless: He was, on the contrary, animated with a noble zeal for the improvement of his faculties. His exercises commenced with acquiring the art of leaping over the hands; and as every man in the ship took pleasure in instructing him, he at length arrived to such a pitch of perfection, that I am persuaded, had nature placed him in the empire of Lilliput, his merit would have promoted him to the first offices in the state.

He was taught to lie flat upon the deck on his back, with his four feet stretched out like one dead; and in this posture he would remain until a signal was given him to rise, whilst his preceptor resumed his walk backwards and forwards; if, however, he was kept in this position, which it must be confessed was not very agreeable to a quadruped, a slight motion of the end of his tail denoted the commencement of impatience, and his friends never pushed their lesson further.

Trim took a fancy to learning nautical astronomy. When an officer took lunar or other observations, he would place himself by the timekeeper, and consider the motion of the hands, and apparently the uses of the instrument, with much earnest attention; he would try to touch the second hand, listen to the ticking, and walk all round the piece to assure himself whether or no it might not be a living animal; and mewing to the young gentleman whose business it was to mark down the time, seemed to ask an explanation. When the officer had made his observation, the cry of Stop! roused Trim from his meditations; he cocked his tail, and running up the rigging near to the officer, mewed to know the meaning of all those proceedings. Finding at length that nature had not designed him for an astronomer, Trim had too much good sense to continue a useless pursuit; but a musket ball slung with a piece of twine, and made to whirl round upon the deck by a slight motion of the finger, never failed to attract his notice, and to give him pleasure; perhaps from bearing a near resemblance to the movement of his favourite planet the moon, in her orbit round the primary which we inhabit. He was equally fond of making experiments upon projectile forces and the power of gravity: If a ball was thrown gently along the deck, he would pursue it; and when the gravitating principle combined with the friction overcame the impelling power, he would give the ball a fresh impetus, but generally to turn its direction into an elliptic curve; (at other times the form of the earth appeared to be the object of his experiments, and his ball was made to describe an oblate spheroid.) The seamen took advantage of this his propensity to making experiments with globular bodies; and two of them would often place themselves, one at each end of the forecastle, and trundling a ball backwards and forwards from one to the other, would keep Trim in constant action running after it; his admiration of the planetary system having induced an habitual passion for every thing round that was in motion. Could Trim have had the benefit of an Orrery, or even of being present at Mr. Walker's experiments in natural philosophy, there can be no doubt as to the progress he would have made in the sublimest of sciences.*

His desire to gain a competent knowledge in practical seamanship, was not less than he shewed for experimental philosophy. The replacing a topmast carried away, or taking a reef in the sails, were what most attracted his attention at sea; and at all times, when there was more bustle upon deck than usual, he never failed to be present and in the midst of it; for as I have before hinted, he was endowed with an unusual degree of confidence and courage, and having never received

* The greatest discoveries are sometimes due to accident. It must now be evident, that some celebrated cat of antiquity, perhaps one of those which entered with Noah into the ark and from which Trim was probably a descendant, gave rise, by the great profundity of his meditations, to the personification of wisdom adopted in the hyeroglyphic paintings and sculptures of the first ages. When afterwards Minerva was made the emblem of wisdom, she was long accompanied by a cat, to mark the attribute she represented; and with all deference to the F.A. Ses, I presume to conjecture, that it was not until about the time of Pericles, when all the divine attributes were made to take a human form, that

Ron Edwards

anything but good from men, he believed all to be his friends, and he was the friend of all. When the nature of the bustle upon deck was not understood by him, he would mew and rub his back up against legs of one and the other, frequently at the risk of being trampled underfoot, until he obtained the attention of someone to satisfy him. He knew what good discipline required, and on taking in a reef, never presumed to go aloft until the order was issued; but so soon as the officer had given the word—"Away up aloft!" up he jumped along with the seamen; and so active and zealous was he, that none could reach the top before, or so soon as he did. His zeal, however, never carried him beyond a sense of dignity: he did not lay out on the yard like a common seaman, but always remained seated upon the cap, to inspect like an officer. This assumption of authority to which, it must be confessed, his rank, though great as a quadruped, did not entitle him amongst men, created no jealousy; for he always found some good friend ready to caress him after the business was done, and to take him down in his arms.

In harbour, the measuring of log and lead lines upon deck, and the stowage of the holds below, were the favourite subjects of his attention. No sooner was a cask moved, then he darted in under it upon the enemies of his king and country, at the imminent risk of having his head crushed to atoms, which he several times very narrowly escaped. In the bread room he was still more indefatigable; he frequently solicited to be left there alone and in the dark, for two or three days together, that nothing might interrupt him in the discharge of his duty. This is one of the brightest traits in my friend Trim's character, and would indeed do honour to any character: In making the following deductions from it I shall not, I think, be accused of an unjust partiality. 1st. it must be evident that he had no fear of evil spirits; and consequently that he had a conscience above reproach. 2nd. It is clear that he possessed a degree of patience and perseverance, of which few man can boast; and 3rd. that like a faithful subject, he employed all these estimable qualities in the service of His Majesty's faithful servants, and indirectly of His Majesty himself. Alas! my poor Trim, thy extraordinary merit required only to be known, in order to excite universal admiration.

Trim was admitted upon the table of almost every officer and man in the ship: In the gunroom he was always the first ready for dinner; but though he was commonly seated a quarter of an hour before any other person, his modest reserve was such that his voice was not heard until every body else was served. He then put in his request, not for a full allowance, he was too modest, —nor did he desire there should be laid for him a plate, knife, fork, or spoon, with all which he could very well dispense; —but by a gentle caressing mew, he petitioned for a little, little bit, a kind of tythe from the plate of each; and it was to no purpose to refuse it, for Trim was enterprising in time of need, as he was gentle and well bred in ordinary times. Without the greatest attention to each morsel, in the person whom he had petitioned in vain; he would whip it off the fork with his paw, on its passage to the mouth, with such dexterity and an air so graceful, that it rather excited admiration than anger. He did not, however, leap off the table with his prize, as if he had done wrong; but putting the morsel into his mouth and eating it quietly, would go to the next person and repeat his little *mew:* if refused his wonted tythe, he stood ready to take all advantages: There are some men so inconsiderate as to be talking when they should be eating, —who keep their meat suspended in mid-air till a semi-colon in the discourse gives an opportunity of taking their mouthful without interrupting their story. Guests of this description were a dead mark for Trim: when a short pause left them time to take the prepared mouthful, they were often surprised to find their meat gone, they could not tell how.

Trim had one day missed a fine morsel from the hungry activity of one of the young gentlemen (the present Captain D.) who dined in the

this Grecian divinity could dispense with the presence of her companion. It was not the presence of Minerva which shewed the cat to be the personification of the wisdom of the great Ιαο — Πατηe or Jupiter, but that of the cat which explained what Minerva was intended to represent. I could go still further, and shew, that by a simple transformation of all the letters Σoφια (wisdom), and (cat, domestic happiness) have the same etimological root, or are rather identically the same word. It would be worth enquiry to know whether this holds good in the Cophtic, Phenician, and Chinese languages.

[Editor's note: Mr. George Gellie of the University of Melbourne has kindly provided comments on the above. The first Greek word above (which sounds like "Jupiter") is actually a combination of a cat sound and the Greek word for 'father'. The gap above, before "(cat, domestic happiness)" is blank in the manuscript. It is possible Flinders intended to place here the Latin word for 'cat', *feles,* sometimes *felis,* which is of course close to the Latin word for 'happy', *felix.*]

gunroom; seeing him, however, talking and eating at the same time, my persevering gentleman did not give it up, though the piece was half masticated and only waited for a period to disappear; but running up the waistcoat of our unsuspecting guest, for Trim was then but a kitten, and placing one paw at each corner of his mouth, he laid vigorous siege to his morsel; and whilst the astonished midshipman inarticulately exclaimed, G--d d--n the cat! Trim fairly took the piece out of his mouth and carried it off. This was pushing his enterprises too far, and he therefore received a reprimand which prevented them in future.

The gunroom steward was, however, more particularly Trim's confident; and though he had dined with the masters, he was not too proud to sit down a second time with the servant. William had such an opinion of Trim's intelligence, that he talked to him as to his child, whilst my four-footed master looking up in his face, seemed to understand him and to give rational answers: They had the following conversation after dinner on the day of Trim's audacious enterprise just related:

Do you know, master Trim, that you have behaved very ill?—Me-ew?

It is very well to play your tricks with them that know you, but you should be more modest with strangers.—Mew!

How dare you say that I gave you no breakfast? Did I not give you all the milk that was left, and some bread soaked in it?—Mou - wow!

No meat! What! you grow insolent? I'll chain you up; do you hear Sir?—Me-ew.

Well, if you'll promise to behave better, you shall have a nice piece off the cold shank of mutton for your supper, —you shall.—Mew-wew!

Gently, master Trim. I'll give it you now, but first promise me upon your honour. We-wee.

Come then, my good boy, come up and kiss me.

Trim leaped up on his shoulder, and rubbing his face up against William's cheek, received the mutton, piece by piece out of his mouth.

In an expedition made to examine the northern parts of the coast of New South Wales, Trim presented a request to be of the party, promising to take upon himself the defence of our bread bags, and his services were accepted. Bongaree, an intelligent native of Port Jackson, was also on board our little sloop; and with him Trim formed an intimate acquaintance. If he had occasion to drink, he mewed to Bongaree and leaped up to the water cask; if to eat, he called him down below and went strait to his kid, where there was generally a remnant of black swan. In short, Bongaree was his great resource, and his kindness was repaid with caresses. In times of danger, Trim never shewed any signs of fear; and it may truly be said, that he never distrusted or was afraid of any man.

In 1800, the Roundabout returned to England by the way of Cape Horn and St. Helena; and thus Trim, besides his other voyages, completed the tour of the globe. Many and curious are the observations which he made in various branches of science, particularly in the natural history of small quadrupeds, birds, and flying fish, for which he had much taste. These, with his remarks upon man and manners, if future leisure should enable me to put into order, I may perhaps give to the world; and from the various seas and countries he has visited, joined to his superior powers for distinguishing obscure subjects, and talents for seizing them, these observations may be expected to be more interesting than the imaginary adventures of your guineas, shillings, or half-pence, and to possess more originality than the Turkish spy.

Trim was not only a stranger to England, but also to a house and to the manner of living in it: The king of Bantam's ambassador was not more inexperienced in these matters than he. I took a lodging for him at Deptford, placing him under the guardianship of the good woman of the house, who promised to instruct him in the usages of Terra firma; but she knew not what she had undertaken. He would go out at the sash window to the top of the house, for the convenience of making his observations on the surrounding country more at ease; —it came on to rain, —the sash was put down. This would have been an invincible obstacle to other cats, but not so to Trim: he bolted through the glass like a clap of thunder, to the great alarm of the good hostess below. "Good Gad, Trim," exclaimed she on entering the chamber, "is it thee? They said thou wast a strange outlandish cat, and verily I think thou art the divil: I must shut thee up, for if thou go'st to treat neighbours thus, I shall have thee taken up for a burglary; but come, I know thy master will pay the damage: hast thou cut thyself?"

Woe to the good woman's china, if Trim got into her closet. Your delicat town-bred cats go mincing in amongst cup and sawcers without touching them; but Trim! If he spied a mouse there he dashed at it like a man of war, through thick and thin: the splinters flew in all directions. The poor woman at first thought an evil spirit was playing pranks in her cupboard; —she opens the door with fear and trambling; when to her infinite dismay, out jumps my black gentleman upon her shoulder: she was well nigh dead with fear. Seeing how much mischief was done to her dear china, the pride of her heart, she seized Trim to beat him soundly; but instead of trying to escape, the droll animal rubs his wiskers up against her chin and falls to purring. She had no longer the heart to strike him; but after a moment's hesitation, she heaved a sigh and picked up the pieces.

I took him up to London in the stage coach, and as there were no fine ladies to be frightened at the presence of a strange cat, he was left at full liberty. He was not in the least disconcerted by the novelty of his situation; but placing himself upon the seat, and stretching out his white paws, conducted himself reasonably like any other passenger; to the admiration of two gentlemen who did not cease to make inquiries concerning his education, manners, and adventures, during the whole way to town.

A worthy acquaintance in London took Trim into his family; but he soon requested me to take him back, for "such a strange animal, said he, I never saw, I am afraid of losing him: He goes out into the streets in the middle of the day, and rubs himself against the legs of people passing by. Several have taken him up to caress him, but I fear some one will be carrying him off." I took him on board the Spyall to make a second voyage to the South Seas. Trim now found himself at home; and his gentleness and extraordinary confidence, joined to the amusement his droll antics furnished them, soon made him as great a favourite with his new shipmates, as he had been on board the Roundabout. We had several dogs on board the Spyall, but Trim was undisputed master of them all. When they were at play upon the deck, he would go in amongst them with his stately air; and giving a blow at the eyes of one, and a scratch on the nose to another, oblige them to stand out of his way. He was capable of being animated against a dog, as dogs usually may be against a cat; and I have more than once sent him from the quarter deck to drive a dog off the forecastle. He would run half the way briskly, crouching like a lion which has prey in view; but then assuming a majestic deportment, and without being deterred by the menacing attitude of his opponent, he would march straight up to him, and give him a blow on the nose, accompanied with a threatening *mew!* If the dog did not immediately retreat, he flew at him with his war cry of Yow! If resistance was still made, he leaped up on the rail over his head and so bespattered him about the eyes that he was glad to run off howling. Trim pursued him till he took refuge below; and then returned smiling to his master to receive his caresses.

During our circumnavigation of Australia in the years 1801, 2, and 3, Trim had frequent opportunities of repeating his observations and experiments in his favourite science, natural history, and of exerting his undiminished activity and zeal for the public good. In the Gulph of Carpentaria, from the unhealthiness of the climate, the want of his usual fresh food, and perhaps from too much application to study, this worthy creature became almost grey, lost much of weight, and seemed to be threatened with a premature old age; but to the great joy of his friends, he re-assumed his fine black robe and his accustomed portliness, a short time after returning to harbour.

Only once was Trim known to be guilty of theft: he had a soul above it; but one unlucky afternoon, a cold leg of mutton in the pantry tempted him. Being unable to carry it off himself, he got the assistance of Van, a Dutch cat on board; and they had so far succeeded as to get it down off the shelf, and were dragging it together into the hold; when lo! the steward came and surprised them in the fact. Van made his escape, but Trim, ever confident, made no efforts, and was seized and beaten soundly. He took the blows with philosophical patience; but no sooner was he set at liberty, than he ran after his false Dutch friend, and repaid him with interest the beating he had received. The recital of this unfortunate anecdote of my friend Trim, will I hope be received as a proof of the impartiality of the history; and I advertize the reader not to seek in it for any political allegory; but to be assured, that the facts were really such as they are here related.

The Spy-all being found to be rotten, Trim embarked on board His Majesty's ship the Janty to return to England, and was shipwrecked with us upon a coral bank in the Great Equinoxial

Ocean on the night of Aug. 17. 1803. The imagination can scarcely attain to what Trim had to suffer during this dreadful night, but his courage was not beat down. He got to Wreck-Reef Bank with the crew, and passed there two long and dreary months; during which his zeal in the provision tent was not less than it had been in the bread-room, and his manners preserved all their amiability. When vessels arrived to our assistance, Trim preferred following his master on board the Minikin schooner, to going with the rest of the ship's company to China in a large vessel, giving thereby a memorable example of faithful attachment. The Minikin being very leaky, was obliged to stop at the Isle of France; and there poor Trim, his master and few followers were all made prisoners; under the pretext that they had come to spy out the nakedness of the land; though it was clear as day, that they knew nothing of the war that had taken place a few months before. Trim was confined in a room with his master and another officer; and as he possessed more philosophy than we did, he contributed by his gay humour to soften our strait captivity; but sometimes also he contrived to elude the vigilance of the sentinel at the door, and left us to make little temporary excursions in the neighbourhood. It is probable that he made some new secret acquaintances in these visits, for they became more frequent that was prudent; and for fear of accidents, we were obliged to shut him up after supper.

On our being removed to the Maison Despeaux amongst the prisoners of war, a French lady offered to be Trim's security, in order to have him for a companion to her little daughter; and the fear of some clandestine proceedings on the part of the soldiers of the guard, induced me to comply, on finding it would give no umbrage to His Excellency the French governor and captain-general. A fortnight had scarcely passed, when the public gazette of the island announced that he was no where to be found; and offered a reward of ten Spanish dollars to any one who would conduct him back to his afflicted little mistress. My sorrow may be better conceived than described; I would with pleasure have given fifty dollars to have had my friend and companion restored to me. All research and offers of recompense were in vain, poor Trim was effectually lost; and it is but too probable, that this excellent unsuspecting animal was stewed and eaten by some hungry black slave, in whose eyes all his merits could not balance against the avidity excited by his sleek body and fine furred skin.

Thus perished my faithful intelligent Trim! The sporting, affectionate and useful companion of my voyages during four years. Never, my Trim, "to take thee all in all, shall I see thy like again"; but never wilt thou cease to be regretted by all who had the pleasure of knowing thee. And for thy affectionate master and friend, —he promises thee, if ever he shall have the happiness to enjoy repose in his native country; under a thatched cottage surrounded by half an acre of land, to erect in the most retired corner, a monument to perpetuate thy memory and record thy uncommon merits: And this shall be thy epitaph.

To the memory of

Trim,

The best and most illustrious of his Race, –
the most affectionate of friends, –
faithful of servants,
and best of creatures.

He made the Tour of the Globe, and a voyage to
Australia,
which he circumnavigated; and was ever the
delight and pleasure of his fellow voyagers.
Returning to Europe in 1803, he was shipwrecked
in the Great Equinoxial Ocean;
This danger escaped, he sought refuge and assistance
at the Isle of France, where
he was made prisoner, contrary to the laws of
Justice, of Humanity, and of
French National Faith;
and where, alas! he terminated his useful
career, by an untimely death,
being devoured by the Calophagi of
that island.

Many a time have I beheld his little merriments with delight,
and his superior intelligence with surprise:
Never will his like be seen again!

Trim was born in the Southern Indian Ocean, in the
Year 1799, and
and perished as above at the Isle of France
in 1804.

Peace be to his shade, and
Honour to his memory

Fifteen years hard

in a

Rectangular Room

Absolutely alone
The old con looks across the empty room. Fifteen feet by ten. Dusty boards.
He squints at his lost youth smoking away in the wicker chair.
He pours his ghost another beer.

They gulp it down and the stone sparrows mumble in the cupboards. It is the same talk.
He looks at himself, the boy, again, and hurts.
It is fifteen tears ago. Cups of weak tea and twisted men.
Good wardens grinning at him. Leave the boy alone; he whimpers.
Their teeth are rusted iron bars

Barking promises of sacred walks in the long green earth graves.
Go to your death with your girl friend, Jack. Christ if he could have.
Forged ten quid notes. The failed suicide. The swinging dry rope of his wife's arms.
Telegraph posts and places to hide in the ruthless daylight.

The way his kid swung her legs on the kitchen table top.
The toy horse he cut out of wood. Diphtheria in the Collingwood hospital.
The marble grave; dearest Gwenda . . . His wife gone mad. The bloody bawling.
The electric relay of fear and money roaring through his wired heart.

What could you have done that night, Jack?
Draw a perfect circle?
Taken Jack Johnson in five?
Helped Lill in with washing before it got dark?

Clean up the backyard?
Forget it. Set 'em up again and let's see the color of your money.
Phar Lap in the third? Even money? Is it still 1932?
The clock still works. Ticking could drive you mad.

Collingwood. The Liverpool slums dragged across the English bought sea
With a handful of mirrors for an Aboriginal chant. Brick by brick.
They set them up like they set me up.
I never shot that cop. He had that hole in his head with he joined the force.

Look at the table. A few butts. A single to Altona, four empties
And a room full of ghosts.
Never had much time for the neighbors. Spike got a few of his chooks.
Good dog that, quick. Tore Mick's mongrel to pieces.

Look at those hands, mate. Like a bloody map. All the roads I been down.
All the stone gates I wrote Lill's name on.
Ah well! I'll turn it in. Chuck the bones in a heap.
And so you shall sleep, old Jack and your swag full of ghosts.

BARRY DICKENS

TWO POEMS BY JOHN BLAY

Battling Ambiguity:

The Crunch

kept looking at me
one eye at a time

name: lugarno, or
maybe she lived there
something like that
it doesn't matter now you see

the egg shell's broken
electronically

will not focus?
keep on trying

crunch crunch
crunch
and say

the tree of heaven is
a noxious weed

Off Cuttagee

Beach

A battleship rides out there today
protecting
                    the horizon from marauders
sharp lines must be kept sharp except of course
for the outline of the protector
                                        fiddly and grey
with its guns and its radar and missiles
enough to ruin any sort of reasonable seascape &
the plastic
                    I thought I'd seen the end of it
take any deserted beach like this: sand, but also
plastic can always be seen as splashes
of wildflower
                        color
                                blobs of grease
the fish won't eat get a filigree
of shellwork by some coral organism
& with a few mussels
they pass for rocks
unless you tread on them

spewed up by the sea last week
while it took away two thirds of the beach
                                                            & parking area
and closed the lake
& the fishermen have been waiting
in a truck up on the headland
with a dinghy and nets
                                    waiting for the salmon
to move into the new channel along the beach
so I suppose you must protect the horizon these days
you never know how it might subtly change
while you sit finding your relation to it
before it explodes in your face

THREE POEMS BY ROBERT ADAMSON

When Soft Voices Die

As we are pulled over the surface of our city
pain is so great we don't cry out
We wake to find projections of our dreams
soft girls calling us back

There is nothing worse than being hurled down
a tunnel like a hawk its wings
no use to it Radio is like this also as we are
drawn into listening

Again and again the soft voices
Then our vision goes misty we sense our bodies
being carried off in directions
we do not desire

There is nothing to hold her back
Her voice folds the hawk's wing and as she goes
down with the bird she moves

from our minds and gushes also from the memories
of dead relatives Radios are baffled
for centuries we have imagined these voices
existed We have listened as

girls singing have pulled us through this abasement
of ourselves at war

Soft girls cry out in rage

A Wind without Flags

Oh this is another one of my lies.
I say to myself, *homosexual*
it hardly matters these days.
When I go to the local park utterly
bemused by white-lies
I stumble on: no desire, desire

to hunt comes from the shock.
Between midnight and dawn often I go
back; only to find those
sentimental girls who once wanted to
marry me. They have forgotten
now; though would die

of fear if they only knew
what I have made of them. Some things
are meant to last, I tell myself
some things I say to myself.
There is the kite high again swinging
on the breeze: brown

paper sign, held to the field by
some kid. I walk back, sure
of my way now. I walk back naming
the pigeons, *blue-bar, checker, flighty,*
O my sad road-peckers.

Sibyl

Then with my white sails and bad luck
with the wind I am beautiful
each dawn there is more resentment towards me
the fishermen cannot look

as the sun catches my hair turning
spokes on their decks
too quickly

So again I depart from the side of the planet
the boy who sleeps with me
Why speak

song
4
australia

(2 bsung in parks by all those who know the truth)
come
take my hand hesitantly (asa new found lover)
& let us seek out australia 2gether

but "u take the high road & i'll
take the low road & i'll
b in kings cross b4 u"
"u can have the opera house
joan sutherland dr. faust
i'll have fish&chipsrafferty
& emu parking by the c"

& mayb we'll meet each other amongst
the muchmeddled veterans sleeping the park
or the lonelylovers groping in the dark

so "u take the arty road & i'll
take the rough road & i'll
b a bronzedboy b4 u."

GRAEME PITT

Dining
with a
Friend

My friend and I dined on his life
last night, we ate
until his bones became hangers
from which shirts of skin hung;
mouthful by mouthful, piece by piece,
eyeing his wife eyeing me, he reached
in to tighten his belt —

"Do you believe in God,
or yourself?" I answered Yes —
licking his wife inch by inch,
sipping her tongue, until she soaked
entirely in my mouth . . .

Then he began to count karma coins
piece by silver piece, the debts
I would pay for eating, and causing —
he offered me "more wine
young friend?" Listen —

I'll splash the water, pernod,
even his best wine — Debt
is my own perception; Cause, my own
recognition! . . . Anyway

I can always refuse to see.
I can always die. I can always
go back from where I came.

Come on honey! . . . he's counting on our skin
to finish the job.

ALLEN AFTERMAN

All Bells in Paradise I Heard Them Ring

MICHAEL DENNIS O'ROURKE

Strange wet smell of the city this night, coal smoke and dead leaves, comes in brief waves and imperfectly perceived on the cold wind that would freeze tears, it seems, and has numbed the exposed parts of my body. As I walk with the muffled tread of the popular rubber sole through this suburb of the oppressed, dispossessed and disgruntled. And some of them no doubt just lazy, stupid or careless, the poor people. Not to mention the industrious migrant the sinister nonconformist and the university person. The terrace houses are filthily genteel and decrepit for the most part though still quite beautiful with their spare lines and flowering white iron. It takes some effort of the imagination to believe that this was built by men whose purpose, it is charitable to assume, was to construct a magnificent aggregation of warm, safe places where comfort and sustenance would soothe the weary provider and protect his family from violence and want. With such laudable intent, they set to with hearty good will and created an environment rivalled only by the Antarctic in its bleak hostility to all forms of life, and lacking even in the beauty and grandeur of that continent. Only the vermin and well-served. A man could starve in this street, but the rats will never want a crust. Make a note for future investigation—are we kept by the rats as useful pets, providers, beasts of burden?

Some of the houses have been improved and modernised. How I transformed my quaint dwelling into something that was not fit for a pig to live in with only several hundred dollars and an abysmal lack of taste. Still, these old buildings are all very well, but what a cage for a man who dreams of a new suburban brick home with all the natural invisible machinery of automatism, with a geometrical picture window through which he can proudly display his ordered life to the censorious eyes of the savage clerkly pedestrian. Warm livingrooms and dry rot in the residents.

But my feet froze, hands numb on this cursed bell, I shall ring it again, though the street be empty: there, take that. I feel like a pebble dropped into the drear silence. Though these clanging notes are singularly unlike ripples as they skitter away in all directions, small misshapen, brass-armed goblins. This bell lacks purity of tone. Would it not be fine, though, to sit winkled down in a warm armchair in front of a hot TV set and drift, make my decisions out of the sure stuff of mass opinion. No more to swim laboriously against the current. Now I know how a salmon feels, the desperate driven leaping towards the clear upland springs. Ding dong, that's the dead, Sir. Who am I though, hey? to speak for all those people under the ground, this very earth perhaps holds sharp broken Aboriginal skulls and do they demand anything but silence? —all those sad memorials. Who am I indeed? My mouth dries up with questions. I must think positive as my dear father taught me or go down the drain. But what better place? There must be a good living to be made down in the sewers. One would be out of the weather, safe from nuclear attack, and could derive damp amusement from the symbolic aspects. The wrought iron, no, cast iron, cold under the streetlights. Why should I see clearer than my elders. Doesn't one acquire balance with age, a kind of ease? Or do the senses retire.

—Sir and madam, you are wrong, mistaken in your views. Believe me.

—What views. That is to say, which of our views?

—All of them.

—If we are wrong, then why is it you who is out in the cold?

—I have a home to go to. Don't misunderstand me.

—Why are you not there then on this bleak night?

—You are wrong and I wish you to know. I am evangelizing.

—We have Christ. We affirm. You can only deny.

—I affirm life.

—And so do we, living as we do to the best of our ability within the limits of our income.

—Do you really affirm life? eh?

—Of course. Why else should it be we who are warm and happy and you cold and miserable?

—That is a question that I am much perturbed by, myself.

—Go home and think it over, clot.

Not even the solace of conversation. I am treated with ignore. Not an argument or a word of scorn to lighten my burden. The false kindness of anonymity, no one will throw the first stone. Let the state take care of it—am I my brother's keeper? No personal impact.

The streets are beautiful in the wet state, the slippery animal cars nipping sly corners or cruising with imperturbable glare in the glittering fans sprayed up under their wheels, the cobbled lanes glancing with reflections, lights splashed broadly on the pavements and the bitumen, the grass luminously green in the corpselight of the fluorescents. And there is a pub wherein no doubt we have warmth and jollity—now, the odd jar would go down very well. But I don't think I want to sit alone at the long bar, to drink carefully and inoffensively in the stale unfamiliar atmosphere, my skin prickling with the incurious hostility of the regulars. Anyway they might laugh. It's not every day that somebody walks into a pub, calm as you please, wearing a sheet and carrying a bell. I could take the sheet off. Ah what the hell it's not worth the trouble. And I could imagine their reaction. They wouldn't care, really, if I spoke would refuse to listen, though of course I have nothing to say. What kind of men are those who have sparked off revolutions in the howling flatlands of the human soul. Such awesome conviction.

So far I have scored but a few sidewise glances and one jeering laugh. There must be something wrong—maybe I should try a new line of approach. I could sing. Melodee from old Ireland. Or a whole carillon of bells, mounted on a frame with castors or wheels, on which I could play popular tunes—but no, a barrel-organ would be better for that purpose, or better still a player piano on a cart drawn by two or three men: seated before it a longhaired young man, in fantastical dress, ferociously miming the ecstatic posturings of the usual concert-pianist caricature. You could make a lot of money that way. All the same, I wish I could manage the carillon. I remember waking one morning in a strange house, having crashed in a convenient bed during a party, to hear the loudspeakers of a nearby church joyfully pealing that wellknown hymn "With His Finger", the melodious clang counterclang rolling out most obscenely in the crisp Sunday air.

Just be careful what you do
For the Lord is after you
With his finger
Halleluiah
With his finger.

I wondered if they knew what they were doing. Should I go over and complain that they were disturbing my Sunday devotions with lewd music? On the street footed the courtly churchgoers with graceful step, in time to the traitorous bells which rang on with verse after verse of this scurrilous song.

Virgin Mary meek and mild
Gave herself a holy child
With her finger
Halleluiah
With her finger.

And the bells of St Paul's throwing long running garlands of notes that could almost be caught, like strings of apples: last Sunday night, over the chilly clamor of the streets, the dim spires looming under a low slate sky, the bells wild and desperate in the dead evening. I'm inclined to think that everything, traffic, conversation, all movement, should come to a halt every evening, for a few minutes, while every churchbell is rung in the glorious silence. People could use a bit of meaningless ceremony. Brighten up their lives every day.

I might substitute with wine glasses, a series arranged to give a full octave, and with my fingernails give each a fillip to make it cry Twang. There is no doubt that the business of the street musician is wide open for some imaginative hardheaded entrepreneur; it has been neglected for too long. But then, there is probably a law against it.

Housing Commission highrise flats, now, colorless hives like office blocks, or perhaps more like gigantic shithouses planned to seat millions. If I was able I would ring down your walls like waterfalls into grey rubbleheaps; then somebody—not I, I suppose, but there are people who are of this persuasion and I am not antagonistic to their projected methods—somebody could enlist you in your cold and anger to go out and tear down the buildings of the Government. Even to live in them, that were disruption enough. I spy strangers, cries an outraged backbencher whose seat is now occupied by a small tent, before which is a blazing fire of important documents under a pot of savory stew; the whole guarded by a small but determined woman who, with ease and nonchalance, twirls an axe between thumb and forefinger.

But what if I, shrinking huddle here in the wind, what if I could call down (or up as the case may be) some great burning tiger of the world on to this broad street, these narrow streets, to chew up the streets like licorice which they closely resemble and leave us with no smooth thoroughfares? Some day I must arrange a meeting with a tiger. I shall offer him licorice and see if he accepts it. And to breathe furnaces down the carefully confined nature strip. It is an exhilarating prospect, but I must be careful to refrain from becoming intoxicated with apocalyptic visions lest I should be tempted to be uncivil towards the citizens. O those lighted windows.

—Now, how nice to meet you here. Won't you step into my parlor and drink yourself gaga with us on mulled claret? I have a daughter.

—Thank you, my good man. I hope she has big tits.

—And by all means take this money. I approve of the work you are doing.

—Sir, you have a kind face.

Or mulled ale. Or coffee laced with rum, there is no drink quite so grateful to the chilled bones. But what if somebody should speak, after all, what would I say? If I could tell them why I was doing this then I wouldn't need to do it. Whatever it is. Awareness, now. Does that sound like a reason? I'm all in favor of this awareness business. But who isn't? Define your terms. I want you all to come out in the cold for a minute and think about what your lives would be like. If they were different. If you were like me. But what am I like, after all? Like you. The bells of hell go ting-a-ling-a-ling for the whole poxed lot of us. Wake up, come out, down you, the Gauls are attacking the ramparts with spears and arrows, the Vietcong have trained whole battalions in endurance swimming and the sea about our shores is black with helmets. I shall change my name to Scringe and regale you with filthy carols, revile you with obnoxious mummery. I shall cause small shit from the sky to fall.

Ah, a poster, a welcome touch of color. Vertiginous loops leaps sweeps and swirls of pink, yellow, red, purple. Join the revolution it says. There will be a revolution Saturday night St Matthew's church hall. Organised by the St Matthew's Younger Set. Band: The Revolution. Postscript—have you heard the electric guitars of your soul and answered yes to them? God stone the crows. Well friends, my soul is nonelectric. I have a roundhole flattop steelstring soul, or nylon at a pinch. I am definitely acoustic in my private internals, thank you, and I will also thank you to leave revolution alone or it will go the way of love. It walks by night, the dreaded creeping metaphor. A harmless churchyteenyboppers dance is all on a sudden a revolution. What next? Is this devaluation intentional? If so, who's doing it? Come out, you vile nightcrawlers. Perhaps it's the CIA. I am loath to believe in that organization. If one accepts the existence of the CIA it seems to me that one must also necessarily postulate the existence of a God.

Back to the old houses, but no more terraces. I feel exposed, colder. Well, perhaps it *is* colder. Still the cast iron railings impale me, shiver along my nerves as I pass. The whole world frozen! Iron and rock precariously solidified, racked and congealed in fantastic form to hold up the city! If somebody, or thing, should light a fire under us the whole structure would disintegrate. So easily. Wood will burn—a fragile weed of desolation: like man. But the metal and rock relaxing as the temperature rises, running off to find their own levels. Right now it seems a rather pleasant idea, though I imagine I would object if it ever came to pass. Happy and carefree: flux: that car over there, released from unnatural bondage, trickling off to find momma. It comes to me that metal fatigue is explicable in terms of the universal desire of each ore to return to the seam. Ding dong, I bring the jubilee. To frozen souls.

Two people approach on foot, young man and woman, about my age, coated booted and muffled against the cold. They look decent; open-faced, talking and laughing as they walk. I shall sing them a mournful ditty with bell accompaniment.

> All the good clang are past and dong
> Little darling don't you ding clang dong.

—Hey loony, looking for the bin?

Thank the good Lord, he spoke.

—If you'll let me explain.

—Royal Park's that way. Jerk of the thumb.

—Wait, please.

—Got no money mate. Thanks for the tune.

They walk off laughing. The girl with a backward look and a derisive giggle. May you both acquire brains and may they bring precious little happiness to you, you sow's gets. Ah well, I have no idea what I would have said.

This is a good night for paranoiac delusions. The houses look shuttered and blank, indrawn like wholesome body cells shrinking from a passing cancer. Hah, beware: I aim to infect you; my limbs are *not clean.* I shall ring your passing bell until the final ramshorn blast tumbles you from your secret beds of selfconscious suburban sin. O but we want to wrap everything up so tidy, you and I both. Too many explanations, a plethora of theories. None of them explain everything so we all go quietly and rationally mad. Raining now, a light drizzle, strangely warm on my face. To hell with the scheming systems, this is here, and now.

My dream of the suburban street. Two years ago—walking through warm afternoon sunlight, the pavement awash with moving treeshadow. giggle and shriek of children playing in broad holiday gardens. Ho there kids, what cheer? my god they have knives, agleam in the slanting sun; sharp rise and fall, flicker of blades. No blood, they laugh and cry out as in ordinary play but some of them lie quiet and do not move; no marks but I know. Into the shadowy cool house where sit mum and dad silently doing nothing. Your children, I cry, they have knives. No answer, unmoving. Killing each other. Father's dead eyes. They're in the garden, playing. No harm. No no, killing each other. Look. Three of them. Dead. Let them enjoy themselves. But dead! children, they have knives, killing! dead! I hit the mother, soft, like dough; punch punch at her plastic body in the thickening air. The man like plasticene, faceless. What's all the trouble about? he says peevishly. I repeat. Who cares, he says. Who cares who cares who cares. Then I say all the words again but can no longer remember what they mean. Nothing. What is dead what is killing after all. It happens all the time says father. What happens. I don't know. Outside, the children play hanging.

Street like this street. I still remember it, the dead feeling. I dreamed it only once, but was depressed for days after. It frightens me still, a little, but not so bad.

—Hey you!

Ah, a householder. Perhaps we can exchange pleasantries.

—Sir?

—What do you mean wandering about in the middle of the night with that bell thing?

—You mean this—this bell here, ah—

—Keeping decent people awake.

A small gentleman at his door, in casual attire, dressing-gown and slippers, lurid striped pyjamas.

—Ring out the old, ring in the new.

—What's the big idea then, why don't you piss off? Shouldn't be allowed, this kind of nonsense.

—Sir, I am doing my thing.

—Your what? You bastard, are you laughing at me.

—My *own thing,* so to speak. You may have heard the expression. It's a modern expression.

—You're one of those university louts. I'm calling the police.

—Sir, I do not wish to be associated with that university place.

—You're a communist agitator then. I know your sort. I'm going to get the police onto you.

—Herbert! Herbert, what is it?

A voice from within, the lady of the house. I smile, or try to. Politeness is very important.

—Good evening, madam.

—And there's that sheet you're wearing, too. Now I'm calling the police, comrade, so you'd better get lost.

Door slams. Murmur of voices. Ring the police. The dried-up old bastard probably will. May the devil enscab your eyeballs and inflict torments on your syphilitic offspring. The police. O alas. O me. Perhaps I will turn a corner here and get lost by a circuitous route. They will never find me. Or will they, let us not underestimate the constabulary. At least I got a reaction, he'll remember. At least I tried. Christ the police. Didn't I consider that? Evidently not. How absent-minded of me. I should stay and confront them, I suppose; but such a course would be easier in warm weather. It's too cold and lonely for martyrdom. And if they arrest me—I could never manage the soft answer than turneth away wrath so they probably would—then that curious man would see his convictions, if you can call them that, upheld by due process of law. He must be wrong, they found him guilty. Well. Guilty of what? O what matter, they'd find something if they really wanted to. This sheet is getting all tangled up with my legs which are going faster and faster. Was

that a siren? Don't be ridiculous they wouldn't use a siren. Tear off the sheet, I cannot keep up the masque, if that's what it was; stuff it into the bell, wrap up the cold metal.

Here a church. Do they still give sanctuary in churches. We shall try. I presume this smaller building to be the residence. Knock knock, with my poor muffled bell. Do I hear footsteps in the road? I should nip in among the trees and shrubs and there nurse my shattered self-esteem. And now it comes back to me that one of my more cherished nightmares has involved my being torn to pieces most pitilessly by a vast mob of agitated clerical persons. Collars awry, mouths full of chewy scripture. Large fat men, small dried men with eyes and mouths like seagulls, crabbing at my clothes, plucking at my throat. I lean against the doorway, sick with indecision. O good heavens the hall lights go on. Feet shuffle at the door. Will there be more than one of them? Can I take them on by myself? The door opens. O dread the man is a giant. Six foot six at least.

—Yes. Like a football forward rather than a man of the cloth. Ah well, give it a go.

—Sanctuary!

—I beg your pardon? says he, taken aback.

—I am about to be apprehended by the minions of the law.

—What? what's that you say?

—The police.

—I'm not illiterate.

—Then let me in.

—I can't. I can't do that. Go away.

—Don't be frightened. I was ringing a bell.

—Bell? whose bell?

—This bell.

—I can't let you in. You might be an axe-murderer.

—I'll explain inside. Please, I shiver.

—No.

He closes the door but my foot is in it.

—If you decide that I deserve to be arrested, you can call the police and I won't try to leave. I promise.

—Well— —

—Do I look dangerous?

—Maybe. How should I know?

—I beg of you, do not turn me away.

—I'm a peace-loving man.

—In the cold. Among the wolves. Would you have an innocent person taken away?

—Get up off your knees, man.

—Let me in!

—All right then, says this fine gentleman, developing a nervous twitch on the left side of his face. Come in. Come in and explain, you lunatic.

Into the hall as my estimable friend and savior closes the door with clear misgivings.

TRAPPED IN HALL WITH BELL-WIELDING MANIAC

There I was, your Honor, said handsome, hirsute clergyman Arnold Twigg, 34, of St Luke's. He persuaded me to admit him by the use of subtle blandishments. Having gained entry, he then proceeded to hold my profession and myself up to ridicule, comparing up with seagulls or ostriches and using far-ranging classical allusions which evidenced learning beyond his years. I attempted to evict him, whereupon he smote me hip, thigh and head with the said bell. When he had thus belabored me into a semi-conscious state he committed certain depredations and escaped uttering what I can only describe as laughter. Case proceeding.

I am saddened by the guilty conflict in his eyes. A tall muscular man with a neat beard and a haunted face, a slight stoop probably from exchanging greetings with dwarfish parishioners at the church door. Hesitant in manner. He looks at me, I look at him. Tied game.

—Now, he says, drawing a deep breath and hastily contorting his face into an expression of authoritative suspicion that is almost ludicrously unconvincing. Will you please explain yourself. Are the police really after you?

—I'm not sure. I think so. I was threatened.

—What do you mean. I don't understand.

—By a gentleman in the next street. You see I was merely walking along ringing this harmless bell when a strange man accosted me and told me he would ring the police. So I ran.

—But if you've done nothing wrong, you've nothing to fear.

—I wouldn't be too sure of that.

—Well. But where are the police?

—They're probably out there looking for me. Don't worry. They'll never find me here.

My clerical friend apparently finds sinister import in this. He shivers.

—Why should he call the police just because you were ringing a bell?

—He thought I was a communist agitator.

—Aren't you?

—No.

—Your story is implausible to say the least.

—Yes. I'm sorry.

—You can't get sanctuary in churches these days you know.

—Oh.
—Why that? why were you ringing a bell?
—Awareness. I suppose.

Judge Quilley, presiding, today in court asked the following question: What is awareness? Proceeding.

—I'm afraid I don't understand.
—I find it very difficult to explain. I used to think I knew what it was all about but I'm not so sure any more.
—Ah.
—My name is Hugh.
—Mine is Arnold Twigg. The Reverend. Arnold Twigg.
—Pleased to meet you.
—Are you one of my parishioners?
—No.
—Ah.
—I'm sorry.
—It doesn't matter. I have more than enough already.

Silence. I smile at him. He smiles tentatively back at me. How beautiful, the first faint stirrings of friendship, eh? The shy suspicious lowering of guards. We shuffle our feet at each other in the hall. Smell of warmth in distant kitchen recesses.

—Would you like some coffee?
—Yes, yes.
—I can offer you some coffee. Come with me.
—Thank you.

Down the hall, second door on the right. A small well-equipped kitchen where an electric fire glows in a corner, gleaming crockery on polished wood shelves, table and chairs of natural dull-shining wood, not a trace of the plastic life, but for the electric fire and I forgive him that. And a pile of empty take-away pizza cartons near the sink. Some of the plates and mugs are stoneware with a goldbrown glaze. A small single window, leaded glass with decorated side-panels; the paint on the walls and ceiling, white and yellow ochre, is bright and new. The Reverend Arnold fills a copper kettle, puts it on the stove. A marvellous range with recessed eye-level oven. Do all the clergy live this well? Hardly. Not a rich parish nor a big one. Perhaps his parents have money. Or else he got it all on the hire-purchase. Money-lenders. Scandal in the temple. Parable of the talents.

—Excuse the disorder. My wife is away for a fortnight and I don't have much experience at housekeeping.

—I see no disorder, I reply gallantly. You should see my room.

He glances at me, I guess the thought: *I'll bet.*

—Please sit down, Hugh.

I select a chair and sit as directed. Solid smoothgrained wood, hard and warm under my aching buttocks; tired, as I suddenly realize. And my feet, at rest now, tingle with relief. I have trodden three sides of a rectangle. Miles. The chairs have a band of chipcarving across their backs. The Reverend Arnold sits also. A huge, kindly, puzzled man in clerical undress of black sweater and grey trousers. It seems to me that his genial bewilderment is not unique to the occasion. He wears it becomingly; it is evidently habitual. Waves an embarrassed hand at the pizza cartons.

—My wife has gone to visit her parents. I'm not much good at cooking. Judith arranged with some of the parish ladies that they should cook and clean for me but I persuaded them that I enjoy looking after myself. I don't think I could stand having a brood of women fussing around me all the time. Also, this way I can indulge my weakness for pizza and hamburgers.

—Your wife's name is Judith?
—Yes.
—That's my sister's name too.

Having said this I feel vaguely ridiculous, scarcely a remarkable coincidence, but he smiles gladly; I have finally established my bona fides, having associated myself, however tenuously, with his wife.

—That's interesting. What a coincidence.
—Where do they live? your wife's parents.

The thought crosses his mind that I may wish to visit them with a bell. He deplores the idea of his wife's parents being afflicted with a madman, however quiet and harmless, who would ring down the universe upon them on a still evening when they least expect it.

—Hobart.

Now I am stuck with the problem of finding something to say about Hobart. I have never been there.

—A friend of mine once went to Hobart.
—Indeed? and did he like it?
—Nobody knows, I reply, reluctant to unearth the mystery of Joe Demaris. Nobody knows whether he liked it or not because he never came back.
—What? what? is he all right?
—That's what we'd like to know. He just went down there to give political speeches at the university and he never came back.
—What about his parents?
—They disowned him years ago. When we

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told his father that Joe had disappeared he said, *good*. And the university down there claims he never arrived.

—What could have happened to him?

—Oh, any number of things. We don't like to think about it.

—The poor fellow. The Reverend Arnold is genuinely distressed.

—Oh, he's probably happy enough, wherever he is. He had a gift.

—I certainly hope he came to no harm.

—Some of his old friends claim to have contacted him in a seance.

—Did they? what did he say?

—He said I am well and happy. Fear not and remain faithful. I will come again.

—Good heavens, says the Rev. Arnold with a credulous grimace. Did he really say that? how extraordinary!

—Nobody really believes them. They're pretty crazy. Anyway we can't be sure that he's dead.

—No, I suppose not. Are you a university student yourself?

—I am in the way of being an academic, I reply with reluctance and caution.

—What course are you doing? or are you a teacher?

—Indeed no. I did Arts for two years. Then switched to Medicine.

—Ah yes, he says, pleased. The healing art. A bubble of pain and indignation punches up into my throat and engulfs my head in a black distorting bowl.

—No.

—No? He is surprised and a little concerned. Is it all that obvious, the visceral shock.

—Not healers. Scavengers. We patch up the few bits of corruption that come our way while we live in filth.

That's torn it. I try to smile but the effect is evidently intimidating. Ah let me be rid of anger I will assassinate my soul.

—Can you understand, I say, swallowing the hurtful bubble with difficulty, a doctor who sees the proliferation of engines of destruction, and does not speak out? Who carefully tends a fellow human being and then is in favor of his going away to war? Can you understand that?

The Reverend Arnold is not happy. I sense resonance but he will have to argue. Let it be over quickly. I am obsessed, I know this, I hate and fear obsession but it overtakes me always, the sharp bite, the feverbug of fanaticism, I cannot keep silent.

—It's not as simple as that, surely. And anyway, what can you do?

The old helpless question, Prometheus bound with fire in his hands and ice in his mouth.

—We can speak out. We can disagree publicly. At least.

—What good does that do? What good has it ever done?

He does not quite believe that to be the final say on the matter, I can tell. But it is the only thing he can say to shut me up. If he agrees with me he knows, I know, I will be off again and take him with me. Thank god he does not want that. I must stop now. Turn away from the familiar destructive fascination, opposed equal vectors. And me between.

—Forgive me. I shouldn't have said that. I shouldn't be talking like that. I fear I trespass on your hospitality.

—Not at all.

—I will tell you if you like exactly what I was doing with the bell.

—Please don't disturb yourself.

—By no means. It's all right. I was just walking along the street ringing it. You know. Like a herald. Crier.

How embarrassing to say it in cold blood.

—The sheet?

—I was wearing the sheet. I was ringing the bell to bring people to themselves. Do you understand?

—No. You have already told me that. Awareness.

—Do you mean you do not understand specifically?

—Yes.

—Then it is all clear. I mean no specifics.

—Ah, a general protest.

—Please, don't use that word. I wanted—I suppose I wanted them to remember, and then afterwards, perhaps years afterwards, suddenly understand, make a connection, think to themselves yes, that was what he meant; but it was the bell that was important, not explanation.

I lift the bell up off the floor, unwrap it, stand it on the table. A fine, heavy bell, standing about twelve inches high, cold metal, brass-bound wooden handle; god knows for what purpose it was used, but now obsolete. A secular bell ignomiously and unscrupulously sold to a junkshop. From which I fervently redeemed it. It has authority. The room seems smaller. The Reverend Arnold, reaching out, touches it.

—But everybody ignored me.

—Naturally, he says with weary humor, what

did you expect. Nobody listens to my sermons either.

—That is not a sermon, that is a bell. Your bells are more important than your sermons.

—You like bells, don't you.

—Yes, I do, rather.

—But they ignored you.

—Yes, well. There seems to be a flaw. A hitherto unsuspected fault in the reasoning.

The kettle is boiling. He rises to his feet, takes down two large mugs from their hooks; spoons out coffee powder, pours the water, and adds milk. Gives me one of the mugs, places a sugar-bowl on the table. It ill befits a guest to ask anything extra, but the temptation is too great.

—You aren't by any chance a teetotaller?

—No, why do you ask?

—Do you have a small sup of rum? Rum with coffee is most heartening and invigorating.

—I believe there is whisky. Will that do.

—O yes, excellent. If it isn't too much trouble.

—No, no.

A bottle of malt whisky, dusty and unopened, is extracted from a cupboard and after preliminary skirmishing to settle whether or not he was keeping it for a special occasion, is duly opened and added generously to the coffee. Warm my hands around the cup and drink. Fragrant fumes fill my mouth and nasal passages, the hot mouthful trickles down and invades my abdomen with a satisfying thermal buzz. Quiet thinks: only a month past I had some coffee and rum on a chilly morning sitting in bed beside dear Barbara, who in a temporary access of insanity refused to ever see me again a fortnight ago and has not yet relented. After we had gone to visit her parents who live in the more desirable part of South Yarra.

—Now remember, she had said during my final briefing, be a little more careful of my father this time.

—Don't worry, I said. I'll be patient with him.

—You'll be patient? What about last time? You provoked him into a frenzy by asking him to define every word he used and then to define the words he used in the definitions.

—He attacked me, I replied with dignity. He said, and so what are you going to make of yourself?

—And you said, what is make? what is self?

—So I did, I said, with a quiet giggle of pride.

—Don't do it again, that's all I ask. Make an effort. Be meek.

—I don't see it. Why go through with this? He doesn't like me, and that's that.

—But he *wants* to like you.

I should have known, then, that is was no light matter. Nobody undertakes such self-delusion but for good reason; but I had mistakenly attributed to Barbara a sound head and clear eye in all things, really too much to expect of anybody. He did want to like me, of course, wanted me to be anybody else but me, whom he detested, so that he could decently like me with a clear conscience.

—He's really a very good man, she said, at bottom.

—His hinder parts, I wittily replied, are not my concern. If he's such a fine fellow, why did you leave home?

—If I hadn't, where would we be now?

Not showering together, that was certain.

We dined in dim light with music by Mantovani. I spilt a few drops of claret on the white cloth and everybody laughed. Talking of garden shrubs, condition of the roads, Persian carpets, the decline of individual craftsmanship (though my proposals for re-establishment of this happy state were stifled by the watchful Barbara), the superior artistry of Mantovani and others of that ilk, the good nature of cows, dogs and horses, and the genius of Michael Angelo. Then Barbara having gone off with her mother and sister, the conversation of her father and I turned to politics. There seemed nowhere else to go. He attacking mildly with blunted weapons, I parrying with a foam-rubber shield of evasion and equivocation. The strain proved too much for both of us. He wanted to know about my future, my prospects. Did I not want to get ahead? Had I no ambition?

—Good heavens no, I replied with a mad laugh.

This compact, handsome, grey-haired corporation executive looked at me in bewilderment and anger, and impatiently required me to be serious for once and have done with my puerile jokes. Regretfully I informed him that it was no joke. From there the situation rapidly deteriorated. He would have it that I was a shiftless lout who was probably conspiring to overthrow the government, or at best, who cared nothing for responsibility and the finer things of life. I claimed that any person engaged in commercial activity was a cheat, a thief and a scoundrel. He accused me of wearing my hair long; I opined that any man who would spend good money on a record library featuring Mantovani and Laurence Welk had no right to this money, having proved himself devoid of taste

and intelligence. He said that I should have a bath for a change; I advised him to soak his head. He ordered me out of the house.

I stood on the pavement, seething, with Barbara; her fists clenched, teeth bared.

—If you go near that bell again I'll have nothing more to do with you!

—But that had nothing to do with the bell. It was a foul blow; I was paralysed by its irrationality.

—Can't you keep your stupid mouth shut for more than five minutes on end?

—But your father. He. It was him.

—You're both pigheaded and impossible. You're no better than him. This is the last straw. Get rid of the bell and come and see me when you've done it.

—My bell? Still stupidly trying to puzzle out the reasoning behind this attack.

—Don't for God's sake whimper like that. It's the bell or me.

And of course I didn't believe her, so it was her. I am expecting her to come to her senses any day now. It is disappointing to see Barbara engage in such shoddy blackmail but perhaps she has been worrying unduly; maybe we can just have a big argument and gnash each other's teeth and everything will be all right. I am still the captain of this foundering soul. But O Barbara, I will give you salvage if you will stay till spring. Tra la.

—Yes?

—Uh?

—I thought you said something. You're not ill?

—No, no. Forgive me. I was distracted.

I remember a summer afternoon when I chased her round her flat, she naked and I cackling hoarsely with lust. And in the shower, that night, and not since for too long, her breasts all slippery with soap. But what is this? What madness informs my senses and inflames my imagination? I am thinking myself into an erection. That will never do in this godly household. The night has been too much for me. And the whisky percolating into my blood. I swallow the last of the coffee and put down the mug.

—Thank you. I must go now.

—Will you get home safe, do you think?

—O yes. I'm sure I will.

—I could probably drive you home. How far away do you live?

—Walking distance. Please don't bother.

—That much easier for me to drive you. Come.

So protesting faintly I follow him out to his car and we are whisked off through the streets by the wonders of the engine of discontinuous combustion. Despite the frantic explosive activity going on within the machinery, only the hiss of tyres is audible. Marvellous what they can do these days with plastic. The ways silent, deserted. O you beautiful city of gleaming streets in this drizzle, of the nature strip and the innumerable ethnic isolate, of struggling self-consciousness and your pregnant cathedral overhanging the colonial tramlines, and your river, at the bottom of which I happen to know lies a bugle; when are you going to develop a point of view? I give directions and finally home. The livingroom lights are on.

—Thank you, sir, for your kindness.

—Arnold.

—Arnold. Thank you.

—Don't let things get you down. We never lack the resources to make ourselves whole.

—But others?

He wants to say something that will help. When engaged with a lifeline that has evidently tangled itself into a helpless knot, one's impotent and urgent desire—mine, anyway—is to dramatically unsheath a shining blade and like Alexander, shear through all the complexities; to let the shy little worm wriggle free and go its own straight way. Of course that never seems possible, unless the response is one of emphatic irrelevance or physical violence. A Zen master said to a pupil: some masters, when asked a question, reply *Wu,* others strike the questioner with a stick. Which do you think is the better response? *Wu!* cried the pupil, one up for once. The master unhesitatingly struck him on the head with a stick. Which he carried for that purpose. The Reverend Arnold gazes at me with tragic cow's eyes.

—Let them solve their own problems.

—A heartless instruction.

—Do you want to help them or destroy them?

—I don't know. Sometimes I wonder.

—Rejected love that leads to hatred can not have been love at all, but lust.

—Who said anything about hatred?

—And pride is sinful. If you will forgive the expression.

—Is it pride, though.

—You should know that.

O spare me the sermon. I've heard it all before. Let me work this out as best I can. You have been hospitable, but that does not entitle you. At least he's made no attempts at conversion.

—Teach by example. It's the best way.

—I don't want to teach. I have no idea what

I want to do, really. Maybe this is important, maybe it's just a safety valve, I don't know. If I was really preaching, no offence, I'd be afraid that I was trying to convince other people, so that I could realize that if I could convince so many people, then what I was saying must be the truth. Does that make sense?

—Unfortunately yes.

—But that's not it at all. I'm not saying anything so far as I can see.

—Ah.

Deflated quite. Not the solid conviction to make a good minister of religion. A Jehovah's Witness walked uninvited right into our livingroom one summer Sunday afternoon, the front door open for the heat, strode merrily in with broad palms extended from his chest, a complete stranger; sat beside my father on the lounge, clapped him on the knee, smiled at my mother and I, and said, *I've got some good news for you.* Our hearts stopped. We had a ticket in Tatts. The stranger rested his paunch on his knees, and with hoarse joy gave us the word. Christ is coming, he said. We threw him out. How dare you, I snarled as he backed defensively to the gate, throwing pamphlets at my feet, how dare you disturb peaceful atheists at their Sunday rest with all this obnoxious trash? My parents, who are not atheists, were displeased. The Reverend Arnold is beating his forearms on the steering wheel. I open the door in hopeful promise of my impending departure.

—I don't understand, he says. Wistful. He's been not understanding for a long time, I should think.

—It won't seem important by daylight, I reply, knowing full well, after all it seldom seems important to me, either, by daylight.

—Thank you for everything. Goodnight.

—Good night, Hugh. Call around again if you wish.

He drives off, accelerating wildly down the street, probably trying to reassure himself with the simple causality and control of driving, the limited and faithful response of the machine. I have done him violence in some way, I fear, and that was not my intent. It seems that I'll have to take stock of the situation properly, I've never wanted to put it into words, but that might be necessary. Light in my room, ah bed, Judy will have the fire going. The house stuffy and familiar. I shut out the black night and enter the livingroom, where sit my mother, knitting, and my father, whose silence is either contented or ominous, he has a controlled face, my father, the bedside manner.

—Hello, Mum and Dad. What a nasty night, eh?

—Where have you been with that bell you young maniac?

A fine homecoming after the perils of the street. What can I say? Out. Mother make my bed soon.

—You've been ringing that bloody bell again. For I'm sick at the heart and I fain would lie down. I used to do it from the window of my bedroom, toll doleful peals down on passers-by until parental opposition congealed into a peremptory ban.

—I won't have it, Hugh, I won't have you acting like this, making a fool of yourself in public. You'll ruin yourself, get yourself arrested, maybe even certified. We're not putting you through university just to have you roaming the streets with a bell. You must be mad. What's wrong, can't you tell us what's wrong? You must be mad!

—He's not really hurting anybody, you know.

I must take up knitting one day. Such settled calm, healing relaxation. My father glares, having probably had no help at all in keeping his anger alive and healthy against my return.

—Oh, isn't he. Only us, his family. And himself. I won't allow it. I've said before that I won't allow it.

His eyes hurt and puzzled, despite the anger. The good doctor. I do believe that he understands, better than almost anybody, my obscure motivations, that is unless they are obscure only in my self-conceit; he has been through it at some time himself, I suppose, though he never talks about it. Wanted to insulate me, afraid of his own imbalance, afraid that I, too, will lose my footing and spend the rest of my life wondering what the hell happened, and now here I am: asserting my independence by going mad. Perhaps he will say now, where did we go wrong. The old old story, eh? Signature tune, violins, andante, doloroso, fadeout, episode next week. I am embarrassed, my predictably cynical reaction; it seems that a major cause of the increasing eccentricity of my generation is that all the ordinary and sane things have Already Been Done, as indeed have most of the crazy and interesting things as well; everything we think has been thought, even that. Our most vital movements and proceedings have become hashed-up cinematic platitudes.

—Can't you even answer me, you silent bastard?

—What do you want me to say. I can think of nothing to say. I'm sorry.

—Damn you. You might get picked up by the police, did you ever think of that? Look, Hugh, maybe I've got a hidebound mind, but can't you at least risk misunderstanding and try to explain this thing? And you didn't even tell us you were going out. Three and a half hours. Not knowing what might happen to you.

Anger frightens me. I am quite often angry myself; I must be a coward. Well, I don't mind. But his questions, I can't answer his questions, I can't explain, and will he understand why? Unfair to resent his wanting explanation. If he were as insanely tolerant as I'd like him to be, then I suppose I'd feel socially underprivileged. You can't win. But what can I say? It all comes so easy in the dark hours. Any reason I had before has evaporated before this real, complex, forceful anger, this transformation of a customary and stable relationship.

—What have you got to say for yourself?

—Nothing. Nothing, I suppose. I'll go to bed.

—Give me that bell.

—I bought this bell. It's my bell.

—Give it to me or get out of this house.

What, never darken his door again? I didn't realize. Am I putting him under such a strain? He doesn't mean it, but I cannot, will not hurt him by refusing to accept the ultimatum for real. Then he would have to back down or else really throw me out, both painful courses, distasteful, for both of us. I must play by the rules.

—I mean it. Give me the bell.

Decisions, decisions. This humiliation, undermining, sapping my will and personal strength, what there is of it. I am being absorbed, contained, surrounded and smothered. He doesn't know how much he asks—that I relinquish my right to make my own way. Yes, he knows, but thinks, this time, it has gone too far, that I am no longer responsible. And who can tell, he may be right. I give him the bell. Immediately, his fatal weakness: he regrets the necessity, wants to apologize. I shall not take advantage.

—You understand, don't you. I don't want to—

—I know. I'll go to bed. It's all right.

—I can't let you do it.

—Yes. It's all right. Good night.

—Why can't you just demonstrate like all the other students?

A joke. He is telling me I am not disowned. I kiss my mother who has perhaps not noticed what has been going on. She hums a few notes at the shapeless mass of wool on her knees. My father stands shifty-eyed, holding the bell on his upturned palms as if it were valuable, delicate or uncomfortably hot. My boots soft on the carpet up the narrow stairs, my hand falling naturally to touch the banister, the fabric of this house so usual and secure. Judith sits on my bed looking into a fire which she has lit some time ago, now dying. The pervasive odor of brown coal. Judith, who is eighteen years old, slender, blackhaired, smells of soap. Her bedroom has no fireplace and we often share a fire in winter, studying. I close the door and sit on the bed beside her.

—He's finally got the bell.

—I know. I heard it all. Have a cup of lukewarm tea?

—No thanks. I had some coffee a while ago.

—I've been studying in here. A fire helps.

—O yes. My goodness.

Last year, or was it the year before, I investigated a commotion in the uni cafeteria hoping to find that it was the start of a popular revolution and not wanting to be left out. But it was only Max Carpenter lighting a fire. Isn't it lovely? he said. Lood at the leaping shadows on the wall. Listen to the shouts. Why should we sit here in the gloom and freeze? Ah. Warm your hands. I advised him to leave as quickly as he could before somebody got him. But I can't leave it here by itself, he said. Somebody might extinguish it. So I took him by the arm and led him outside, then tried to persuade him to go to the Library and hide until the uproar died down. They won't let me in, he said. Remember the great fire among the periodicals? They aren't sure it was me but they aren't taking any more chances. I've still got some kerosene left, you could smuggle me in through a window. I haven't seen Max for ages. I wonder what became of him. They probably got him in the end.

—Hugh. What a silly thing to go wandering around with that bell.

—Um.

—But really, what a silly thing.

—Is it.

—Well it's all over now, anyway.

—He'll put it where I can find it. Remorse for trespassing.

—Hugh.

—What's wrong?

—Oh, don't. Leave it alone.

—It's important. The gratuitous act. It's gotta be did.

—Maybe it is important. But the way you're

going about it, it's too self-dramatising. That's the only reason you keep it up, isn't it?

—It is my precious.

—Isn't that the reason.

—I have no interest in this do-it-yourself psychoanalysis. And should I wish to engage in it I will most certainly do so in private.

—Don't be angry.

—I'm not. Perhaps you're right.

—Then please leave the bell alone.

—I'll consider your suggestion carefully.

—Are you feeling okay. You look pale.

—No. Rub my head. It has the ache.

—I will get you the pill.

—Do. And then rub. Hurry. My nerves are tied in knots.

—That isn't news.

My desk and bookcase piled with books. Some great heavy volumes there and enormously expensive to boot. One day I suppose I will sit in a small office with green paint and louvres and a bookcase full of authoritative texts to cow the patients. Why did I ever take up Medicine? What a time to be asking that question. Was it my father. He was delighted when I decided to switch. Save mankind from the little beasties. Longleggit things that go bump in the intestines. Stacked and scattered pages; rules, laws, techniques. Will I ever be able to stand it, being the last court of appeal before the merciless God they believe afflicts them? Doctor I think I am in a certain condition. Madam you are twelve months pregnant and we will put you inside to have your tubes tied, have you made your will? Doctor I have another boil on my fat furuncular arse. Doctor tell me I can stand it. Yes madam your husband is absolutely rotten with cancer. The question as I see it is does the cancer have as much right to live as he. More I would say because there is more of it than there is of him. With the proper cultivation we would keep him up, madam. O doctor you are so good. By no means, do not derange yourself. Of course he won't be alive. A cancer farm, a cherished project of mine. I intend to train this cancer to perform simple tasks and run errands. Bless you doctor you are a great man and smart too. Ah the drama of it all. Tending all those biologic machines. Feeling up young women. Oo doctor your hands are cold. Yes my dear let me test your nipple-tweaking response. O Barbara. *Self-pity*. Was that self-pity? Have to watch that. Mental health. Possibly laughable in my case. Self-pity is not a good thing as everyone knows but how to recognise it? Little warning light on a wrist-monitor. But it's not really Barbara, not only, she has just added an unnecessary complication which can be solved, if I can find the strength. That fire is very pleasant, now. I can never see any pictures in flames. Just flames. Not many of them with briquettes, though, the bright coals, fluffy grey ash. Pale flicker here and there.

—Here. Take these.

And a long drink of water. Judy begins to massage my head. Ah blessed relief. The warm pressure of her fingers on my strained forehead, my aching headbone. I go limp. When I met Barbara: it was, as I thought at the time, as if I had been frowning all my life. Unaware of the slight muscular tension across my forehead, aware only of the nagging ache; then suddenly realizing it, relaxing.

—Better?

—Much. Keep at it.

—You shouldn't go walking around in this weather.

—I know. I'll catch my death of cold.

—I don't imagine there's any particular satisfaction in martyrdom, but it'd be even worse just to catch cold and die of pneumonia as the result of a fine heroic gesture.

—You're getting too uppity and self-assured. It's that university place. I know it. You used to be such a sweet young girl.

—Yes. You mean I never had any opinions.

—That's what I mean, yes. However did you manage to acquire opinions at the university? Very few people there have any that they can call their own.

—It was your influence, dear brother, what did it.

—God forbid.

—Now that the bell's out of the way you can go and find Barbara.

—It's not just the bell. It's the whole thing.

—Yes is was just the bell. Don't be such a defeatist.

—I'm a passionate defeatist.

—Is that enough? Headache gone?

—Almost gone. Thank you.

—Find Barbara tomorrow. Go to the uni for a change.

—It may not be that simple.

—I know. But find her anyway.

—You think she's a good influence. Don't you.

—I think she's marvellous. I'll wake you in the morning and you can come with me.

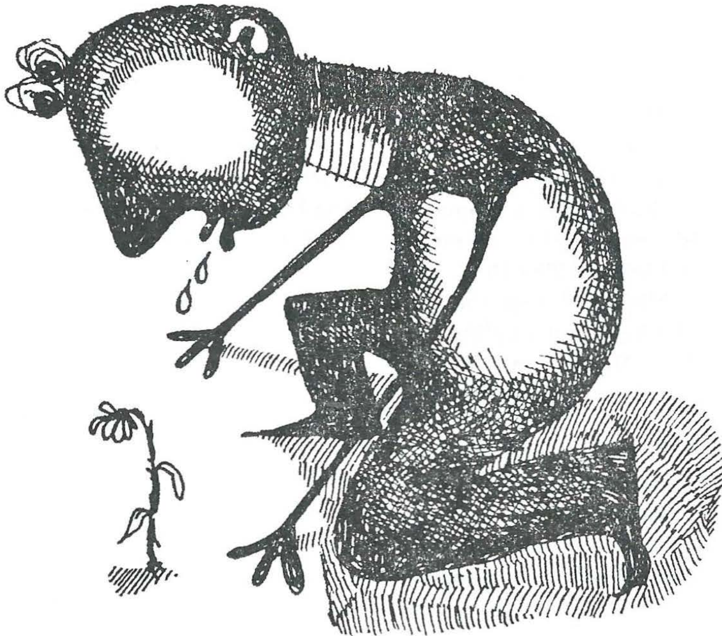
—Perhaps. Good night.

My sweet retiring little sister. I remove my clothes slowly, piece by piece, with blank spaces between consecutive bursts of activity; during which I am supposedly thinking, or already asleep. I put on my pyjamas, switch out the reading-lamp and into bed. Warm on one side from our sitting on it. Try to find an image of Barbara.

Somewhere there is one that springs on me when I least expect it. It hides. Her face. Have I never properly looked at it, that I can't remember? but her body comes clearly to my hands, her thighs, neat breasts, pale hair, shoulder and back. Knee, for some reason, this is sharply imaged, back of the knee. The smell of her, some distinctive odor, what is it? I would not have realized that I'd noticed it, but as the memory of it comes I have awareness of her presence that is surely stronger than I've ever felt when with her. How much of Barbara is inside my head? Damn it go to sleep. MacHugh hath murdered sleep sleep sweet sleep and so on. And what of you, you line of sceptred kings with your neat business suits and your Ronsons blown out in the great wind and your crowns awry. The beast of the world which is me, gentles, is gathering in the waistband of its shorts and preparing to spring. I would be willing to lead the quiet life if you would only let me alone, ease the implacable harrows that score my flesh, the subtle fingers of passionless discord that irrigate my brain with blood. O you captains of industry, clerks, and advertising men, you are secure enough, for money will take care of itself and you too. I pat your little pointed heads. Look, I am unarmed. My only weapon a vast indignation.

The birds of the air, now, they sow not, neither do they reap; but our arms are loaded, our mouths gagged, with our tremendous, indigestible, bitter harvest. I will say a poem concerning this.

How generously flaps the little bee;
I grundly wish indeed I might be he!
He never has to think, or make the tea.



Jiri Tibor & Wladek

MICHAEL DUGAN

Children's Literature Here

How do you evaluate a children's book? Millions of children enjoy Enid Blyton's stories, yet adults find them trite and repetitive. Perhaps a really good children's book is one that can be enjoyed by both children and adults.

In Australia during the 1940s there was a flood of bad children's books published, because import restrictions during the war created a ready made market. Most of them were formula written, badly illustrated and poorly printed, but they did awaken an interest in the potential for Australian children's books that probably affected the better children's writers who began to publish during the early fifties.

Nan Chauncy was the first of these, and her *They Found A Cave* actually appeared in 1948. For a first book it is an accomplished, straightforward adventure story, only lifted from the run of the mill by its characterisation. Nan Chauncy came into her own with her stories about a Tasmanian bush family in *Tiger In The Bush* and *Devil's Hill*. Both were published during the late fifties, and they are particularly outstanding for their portraits of the boy Badge, and for the Lorrenny family's unpretentious appreciation of their bush surroundings.

The novel I hope Nan Chauncy will be best remembered by is, however, *Tangara*, a poetic and gentle account of a supernatural friendship between a little girl called Lexie and a Tasmainian Aboriginal girl. The book has elements of fantasy rather akin to those of Clive King's *Stig Of The Dump*.

Nan Chauncy's books are not easy for children to read. Few good children's writers give their stories on a plate. Children need escapist fiction as much as adults, but Captain W. E. Johns' books could not be regarded as *children's* literature any more than could John Creasey's be considered as literature. To qualify as children's literature a book should in some way extend the reader's experience and appreciation of life.

One of the most underrated Australian children's authors is Patricia Wrightson. Her output is not extensive—half a dozen books in fifteen years—but each of them deserves a place in every school and children's library. It is unfortunate that Angus & Robertson have allowed her first three books to go out of print. *The Crooked Snake*, published in 1956, is a Ransome-ish story about real children who form a club to protect wildlife. With the current interest in conservation it would well stand reprinting, as could its successor *The Bunyip Hole*.

Patricia Wrightson is a sensitive writer with a close understanding of how children feel. Comparisons could be drawn between her books and the best of Arthur Ransome and Richard Church. In her most recent book, *I Own The Racecourse*, ordinary children face the responsibilities of their friendship with a retarded boy in a sympathetic but realistic way.

The writer at present most identified with Australian children's literature is Ivan Southall. After a series of mediocre escapist boys' books about a Biggles-type character called Simon Black, Southall produced *Hill's End* (1962), a very powerful story about children cut off from adults by flood and having to fend for themselves.

In subsequent novels Southall has continued to explore the theme of children on their own, and the development of strength of character through the facing of adversity. Like Nan Chauncy, Southall is considered by some a "difficult" writer for children, although this is due to some extent to the impression that his books are suitable for primary school children when they are far more likely to be appreciated at junior secondary level.

Southall's books contain plenty of action, drama and terror. His portrayal of young people awakening to a realisation of themselves as individuals is masterly, but his novels are weakened by the absence of humor. *Finn's Folly,* in particular, is one long nightmare of almost unrelieved horror, and through all Southall's books runs the feeling that perhaps the author is taking himself too seriously.

With *Josh*, Ivan Southall has become the first Australian to win the British Carnegie Medal. *Josh* is an introspective dreamer who becomes the bait of a group of less sensitive kids. The story gives the impression of being autobiographical, is highly charged with emotion and moments of what could almost be called black comedy. The adolescent who shares *Josh's* introspection and aloneness could be helped to an understanding of his own character from this book. I feel that the majority of readers, however, will have little sympathy for *Josh* as a character.

H. F. Brinsmead is another author whose books are perhaps wrongly described as "for children". They are all about, and for, adolescents, and Mrs Brinsmead has a remarkable facility for describing young people at this transient stage of their development. This is particularly evident in *Beat Of The City*, whose main characters have emerged from childhood to an identification with the teenage ethos. They are not as they were and not as they will be, but Mrs Brinsmead has caught them *now*.

Mavis Thorpe Clark has also had considerable success writing about adolescents for adolescents. She differs from H. F. Brinsmead in that we can see the adults her characters will become. She served a long apprenticeship as a children's writer before publishing anything outstanding. Her first book was published when she was herself a teenager, in 1930, and, although she published several quite good books in the intervening years, it was not until *The Min Min* appeared in 1966 that she really won recognition as a writer of children's literature.

The Min Min is a stark but human portrait of rather deprived children growing up in a tiny fettler's settlement on the Adelaide-Perth railway line. Her latest novel, *Iron Mountain*, portrays an 18-year-old boy's search for identity when he hitch-hikes to Mount Tom Price after a brush with the Melbourne law. It is an especially interesting book for its insight into a boy who, by his own upbringing and environment, is little able to rationalise and verbalise his own experience.

Colin Thiele started his career as a writer for children almost unknowingly, with *The Sun On The Stubble*, a book of autobiographical sketches of childhood on farm in South Australia. Although not written as a children's book it has become very popular with children from about eleven up.

The best of Thiele's books, like Southall's, explore the young person's reaction to his environment. Like Southall, Thiele does not avoid the harsher realities of life, but his books are more rounded than Southall's by the introduction of humorous incident. *Storm Boy* is a novella set in the Coorong about a boy and a pelican. *February Dragon* is a novel on a bushfire theme which unfortunately suffered from being published just after Southall's *Ash Road*, as it is perhaps the better book. *Blue Fin* is Thiele's first exploration of an adolescent character, and is a tough but sensitive novel for teenagers.

Two writers who have been working for some time but whose more recent books have not maintained the standards set by their earlier titles are Joan Phipson and Eleanor Spence. Joan Phipson's novels about the Barker family were well told family stories set in western New South Wales. In later books, such as *Peter and Butch* and *The Haunted Night*, she has tried to explore teenage themes with less success.

Eleanor Spence is a far less uneven writer than Joan Phipson but, to me, her recent historical novels lack the life of her earlier books, in particular *The Summer In Between*, a very sensitive account of a 'growing up' summer holiday experienced by a girl about to start high school.

Occasionally a writer for adults produces one or two children's books among his general output. One of these is Randolph Stow's *Midnite*, a brilliant satire on the bushranging theme which can be read with enjoyment by just about anyone over ten. Frank Kellaway's *The Quest For Golden Dan*, a goldmines story, is another case of a writer producing an individual book which leaves regrets that he has not continued to work this vein.

Two successful writers of adult fiction have recently turned their pens to writing children's books with similar success. James Preston's *Jeedarra Country* is about two children who become stranded in the Nullabor area. The theme may sound hackneyed, but the book is an impressive portrayal of the characters of both the children and their searchers.

David Martin's *Hughie* is a well-plotted teenage novel about an Aboriginal boy and his relationships with his white peers. An an adventure story it succeeds but, as a portrait of contempo-

rary teenagers, it is unconvincing and dated, with its characters using expressions that would be more suited to an English public school story. Martin's second children's novel, *Frank and Francesca*, is about a group of young teenagers of mixed nationalities in an inner Melbourne suburb. A strong story line and interesting characters will hold the attention of most twelve-year-olds, although once again the effect is marred by stilted and archaic idiom.

Although the author is not Australian, Reginald Ottley's 'Yamboorah' series of books is a very evocative account of station life as seen by a boy rouseabout. Ottley is an idiosyncratic writer best appreciated by teenagers, although his recent book, *The Bates Family*, is for younger children.

Australian writers seem less successful in writing for children under ten than they are with books for older readers. Betty Roland's Jamie books are perhaps the best in this area, although Colin Thiele has begun to write successfully for this age group with *Flash Flood*. In an in-between age are S. A. Wakefield's *Bottersnikes And Gumbles*, which deserves to be better known, and artist Ted Greenwood's *Aelfred*.

The role of the Australian Children's Book Council is a difficult one. Each year it awards a prize for the best children's book, and in recent years this has tended to go to books more suitable for younger teenagers than for children. The main objection to this is that prizewinners such as Southall's *Bread And Honey*, which comparatively few children could appreciate but which is an excellent story for early adolescents, are identified as "children's books". Because such books win prizes as children's books they are bought by primary school libraries and parents as suitable for ten to twelve year olders. These children try the books, find them difficult and boring and, because of this initial impression, don't come back to them at a later, more suitable age. This situation would be helped by awards in junior and senior categories.

Why should adults read children's books at all? Perhaps to help them know their children and to avoid foisting rubbish on them, and perhaps because any good book is worth reading by anyone.

Revolution from Within

by J. D. Blake

'J. D. Blake's book, sub-titled 'a contemporary theory of social change,' is doubly welcome for its boldness in confronting the larger challenge, and for being the first book of its type to come from a modern Australian writer.'

Brian Abbey - *The Advertiser,* Adelaide

'For most of his political life Blake operated on the notion that the revolution in Australia would be like the 1917 revolution in Russia. His book is a rejection of that model. He now acknowledges that the differences are greater than the similarities.'

Humphrey McQueen - *Canberra Times*

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MICHAEL WILDING

Tell No More

I cannot tell any more.

How do you tell an informer? You never know an agent at the time. Only afterwards, sometimes you hear stories of how he was found out, some time in the past. Someone always eager to help with arranging amplifiers, offering contacts for printing, always willing to be present on the platform or providing the transport. Yet never central, never the initiator. Supporting decisions that achieved support, following through, always following through. And everywhere. In every scene, in every place. Against war, oppression, exploitation, repression. Energies spread so widely. Into so many scenes, present, collaborative. Always there. The face at every meeting, beside every platform.

I used to look. After I had begun involvements I used to look out for the likely figure. The uncertainties were always there, but no one ever had any name for his suspicion. The situations were there for the role, yet who was there to fill it?

Myself. Which I do not say with the resonance of melodrama, the great furling sweep of the cloak on the staircase. It was not a revelation I had Satanically been holding back. The satanism was all elsewhere, and the revelation, now deadened in words, then devastating to me. And inescapable. For who else had hovered on every edge, offered every collaboration, swum in and out amongst the rocks and reeds, grazing here, nibbling there, scratching in the mud a bit somewhere else?

How it could have happened I did not know. Inevitably. For had I known I would presumably have resisted. Had I known I would not have gone along infiltrating those worlds. That I knew at all was the result only of empirical deduction. Making a behaviorist assumption, maybe. But though amongst the protestors behaviorism was protested against, the manipulators believed it. And how better to reach the manipulators than to accept their world picture and see where it directed, to what it pointed. My behavior pointed to me. Somewhere along I must have been suborned, implanted, programmed, hypnotised. A radio transmitter inside the head; a dream scanner above the bed; a chemical trace they could always follow and beam in on; the technical details did not disturb me. The technical details, after all, could well be beyond comprehension; it would be futile to waste time trying to detect them. It would alert them, anyway, to see me scrabbling away, x-raying, wave-jamming, not sleeping. The minutiae were to be avoided. It was the overall plan, the total reaction, that had to be faced.

And the months of thinking led to only one face. Those skull engravings on postcards in my room. I could never remove the implanted devices; I could never remove the eternal stigmata. If I withdrew from those worlds, then I would be hounded by their inhabitants to rejoin them; and if I did not rejoin, they would begin to suspect. It is when an informer stops frequenting his usual places that people question his past behavior; his withdrawal makes them reassess his earlier presence. I could not face facing their conclusion. How could I tell them it had been all unwilled, unconscious, unknown. How could I say, I had now withdrawn to protect them? Who could believe that, who would care, what could it matter now if I had betrayed so much already? And I would be driven by the manipulators, too, to plunge back in, to reach for further pearls and abalone, deeper betrayals.

To save the causes then in which I did believe there was only one way. I brooded a long time.

I had no eager wish for it; but saw no alternative. To save those worlds, to save my shame, I could do no other than die. And having decided on it, I felt surer, clearer. A decision at least lifted.

Yet decisions do not remain. The eternal sea wears against them. The certainty of the cliffs powders to sand. Who knew that my decision was my decision? Perhaps once again it was the will of the manipulators. Perhaps they had done with me, my usefulness outworn. And now they needed me eliminated that no one would ever know they had infiltrated, I had been. And my decision to die to beat them, their decision to save themselves. Perhaps the transistor receiver, or the hypnotic wave, or whatever, whoever, however it is, had sent me this instruction. Perhaps dying would only help them. To resist I should live.

I cannot tell any more. Outside in the streets police club the frail necks of demonstrators with their truncheons. Cans of gas are shot along the pavements and explode in doorways. Above, the helicopters hover, directing fire. The short waves are jammed with messages. There are barriers across the highways, and in other cities house to house searches. I do not listen to the radio nor watch television. I do not answer the phone nor open the door. I make cups of black tea and do not go down to buy milk. The books and magazines I leave still on their shelves. What I write might be the tickertape from their headquarters. Or what I write might be going into their headquarters as ticker tape. Or communications might now have ceased. I cannot tell any more.

Australian Literary Reprints

The Hillyars and the Burtons
by Henry Kingsley

The Hillyars and the Burtons (1865) is Kingsley's second 'Australian' novel, published six years after *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn.* As 'A Story of Two Families' it has the romantic and narrative appeal of the earlier book, but it presents a very different view of Australia. Now restored to print for the first time in this century, *The Hillyars and the Burtons* compels a revaluation of the accepted views of Henry Kingsley, and marks a fresh place for itself among Australian novels of the colonial period. This facsimile text has an Introduction by Professor Leonie Kramer.

448 pp. Cloth, $6.50. Paperbound, $3.95

The Miner's Right
by Rolf Boldrewood

Although Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms* has been many times reprinted, *The Miner's Right* (1890) has been out of print for many years. It has a more melodramatic element in it than *Robbery Under Arms,* and is the best Australian goldfields novel. This facsimile text has an Introduction by Professor R. G. Geering.

416 pp. Cloth, $6.50. Paperbound, $3.95

Old Tales of a Young Country
by Marcus Clarke

A collection of fifteen historical tales originally published at irregular intervals during 1870 and 1871—years during which Clarke's more famous work, *His Natural Life,* was appearing as a serial in the monthly *Australian Journal.* More than half the stories in this collection deal with a single remarkable character, and most celebrate human courage, or endurance, or hardihood. A facsimile reprint with an Introduction by Joan Poole.

244 pp. Cloth, $6.00

Poems [1913]
by C. J. Brennan

Brennan's *Poems,* published in 1914 in a limited edition, was planned by the author as a *livre composé,* a form he had found in French literature, and which he described as 'a book of verse conceived and executed as a whole, a single concerted poem.' By reproducing the original text in facsimile, this edition presents the lyrical-dramatic structure of the *Poems* as Brennan intended, making his work accessible again on his own terms for the first time in over fifty years since its first publication. The volume has an Introduction by Professor G. A. Wilkes.

218 pp. Cloth, $7.00. Paperbound, $4.00

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Discussion with Dennis Altman

Last year Dennis Altman, lecturer in Government at the University of Sydney, published his widely-read Homosexual Oppression and Liberation *(Angus and Robertson). Here Chris Hector interviews Altman for* Overland.

HECTOR: How did you come to write your book?

ALTMAN: Well obviously there's both an inlectual and a personal genesis and in a sense I've tried to synthesize the two. It seems to me to be one of the most important things that one ought to be trying to do at the moment in any sort of social science writing. Intellectually I can see certain strands going back quite a few years before I started writing about Gay Lib, in fact before Gay Lib existed. An interest in America which stemmed from the time I was a graduate student in 1964. An interest in the counter culture which probably stemmed from the time I re-visited the States in 1968. A suspicion of the hard left Marxist position. Now that seems to me to be the background. I started thinking about writing a book because I was in New York at a time when Gay Liberation was beginning to become fairly big. I became involved in it originally through working on a Gay Lib paper called *Come Out* and I got involved in a blitz on *Harper's* magazine. They had run this article by Epstein, which was a quite extraordinary expression of his hostility to homosexuality and ended up with the classic statement: "I'd rather my sons were anything but homosexual". And among a number of other people, I wrote a reply to that. None of the replies were published by *Harper's*, but that in fact led on to me thinking . . . oh well, I'll go and write a book about it. And that's essentially how I started doing the book.

HECTOR: How much do you think that the intellectual framework of your book is dependent on Herbert Marcuse's writing?

ALTMAN: I think that that's probably the wrong way of looking at it. I was very strongly influenced at the time I was in America and starting to think about this by Kate Millett, probably more than by any other single writer. When I then found that I had to then formulate some theory of liberation, I went back to people like Marcuse who I'd read a few years before without understanding. I discovered that I understood him much better because of the developments in my own life, and I was also forced to go back to Freud and Reich, both of whom were obviously pretty essential if you're going to deal with Marcuse's sexual theories.

HECTOR: It seems to me the important and valuable thing about your book that, unlike many of the women's liberationists, you are prepared to take Freud seriously and integrate Freud's theories into a theory of sexual liberation. It seems to me so strange that women's liberators are so hostile to Freudians.

ALTMAN: I think the women's liberation attack on Freud is perfectly justified, and I think that the conclusions that they draw from that is totally unjustified. That is, it is perfectly true that Freud was a bourgeois Viennese living in a bourgeois, upper middle-class environment, and this obviously affected his attitude towards women, and his attitude towards the family and his attitude towards society. But it seems to me that there is still an enormous amount of very valuable insight in Freud and while people like Kate Millett are attacking Freud, at the same time they're drawing very heavily on Freudian ideas. It may be that it's easier for a homosexual than for a woman to take Freud seriously, because, in fact, Freud had more understanding of homosexuality than most of the people who now call themselves Freudians. But I consider it quite impossible to develop any theory of sexuality at all which didn't go back ultimately to

Freud. As Paul Robinson points out in his book on Freudian radicals, Freud is open to interpretation, either in a conservative or a radical direction. It seems to me very important that one draws out the radical implications of Freud, rather than saying that one should scrap Freud because there are things in Freud that one doesn't like.

HECTOR: It seems to me very interesting that both in women's liberation and Gay Liberation it has been an Australian who has written one of the key books. Do you think this is possibly because Australians are in the movement but outside it, in a way that, say, Americans can't be?

ALTMAN: It's very strange. Undoubtedly Australians have had a very large impact on not just the sexual liberation movements but also on the counter culture. You've got people like Richard Neville and the whole Oz thing in London. Gay Liberation, as a movement in Britain for example, has a lot of Australians in it. Also a lot of South Africans interestingly enough. People who presumably just can't stand it any longer in South Africa. I don't know the full answer. I think it's partly what you suggest and I think it's also partly that the nature of sexual oppression in Australia is a very peculiar one. That is, superficially Australia is extraordinarily repressive to sexuality. In reality I suspect that Australians are less hung up about sex than either the Americans or the English. It might be that peculiar combination added to the fact that people like Germaine Greer and myself go abroad and are in an alien environment, or a semi-alien environment, so that we have much more freedom than people who actually live there all the time.

HECTOR: In the reviews of your book everybody's seen it as a book about homosexuality but I read it as a book about the end of homosexuality.

ALTMAN: I think that's perfectly true. In fact, I rather regret that the title of the last chapter, "The End of the Homosexual", is not the title of the book. It think it's basically because people cannot accept homosexuality, except in a patronizing way. That is, we've reached a point where people are prepared to talk about homosexuality and where people have in fact switched the line from "it's something that's sinful and evil and sick" to the line that "it's something that's rather sad and these poor people should be pitied". There's also a whole element of titilation involved. But of course for a reviewer to take seriously the thesis that homosexuality is a socially conditioned product, which will eventually disappear as sexuality in general becomes less repressed, would be for a reviewer to admit his or her own homosexual potential.

HECTOR: Do you see this break-down of homosexuality as happening? I know that one friend of mine said that he joined Gay Lib and then through Gay Lib discovered that he wasn't a homosexual but he was bi-sexual.

ALTMAN: Not necessarily. I think that there's a lot of confusion about this and I get attacked from both sides. What I would argue is that people must come to terms with their potential for both homosexual and heterosexual behavior. I don't think this necessarily means that everybody is in fact going to behave bi-sexually. Ultimately I would see it vanishing as an important distinction, but this won't mean that there won't be men who most of the time have sex with other men and women who most of the time won't have sex with other women and the reverse situation. What's happened I think is that the sort of movement you're talking about seems to me to have occurred more often in women's liberation. There's a lot of women through being involved in women's lib have discovered their homosexual component. And in fact, in Sydney now there's a very large movement of women within Women's Lib who are trying to come to terms with their homosexual feelings. I haven't become very aware of this happening within the Gay Movement yet, because I think that people who go into the Gay Movement are by and large pretty defensive and are seeking a feeling of identity and a feeling of self-esteem as homosexuals. Ultimately one would hope the need for this group identity disappears.

HECTOR: So you feel this is some sort of transitional phase in the way say that Fanon described the emergence of colonialist peoples with their own culture for a period of time, and then moving out of that rigid position in the way that black power people have done. That one needs to identify very strongly with an exclusivist position for a period so that one has the strength to move into a liberated state?

ALTMAN: I think that's probably true and I think of course that it does happen on a personal level. I've found since everybody knows that I'm a homosexual the onus is then on them to try and come to terms with my homosexuality, rather than the onus being on me to somehow try to get it across to them that I don't accept the heterosexual view of the world that they hold. I would

hope that it is a transitional thing. I think the analogy with black power is perfectly valid. I think the dangers in it are equally analogous to the dangers in the Black Power position. There is the problem that what one hopes is a transitory stage in fact becomes rigidified, and that movements reinforce in the end the distinctions they are trying to break down.

HECTOR: Do you really feel this as a strain—the feeling of having to act in a basically heterosexual situation? It would seem to me that, at least among young people, that this was becoming an increasingly irrelevant distinction.

ALTMAN: No, I don't think that's true. I don't find it a strain now. I think a lot of people who inter-act with me find it a strain because they're so aware that I'm a homosexual they don't quite know how to behave. I'm teaching two seminars at Sydney on oppression and liberation, and obviously homosexuality has come up quite a lot. The kids are very honest, they're much more open than I think people were when I was an undergraduate, but they don't deny that they're hung up and it seems to me that it is a myth that the counter-culture kids don't have hostility and prejudice against homosexuality. There's still an awful lot of disquiet, particularly among guys, when it comes to accepting the possibility that they themselves may have homosexual feelings. I can really freak out my students if I say to them, "I find you attractive".

HECTOR: This does seem to be slightly more difficult for guys, in that women have fewer barriers placed in front of the recognition of their own homosexuality. Women aren't supposed to have any sex anyway so it's not terribly threatening for women to go round holding hands together, whereas if a couple of guys walk along the street holding hands that's a major freakout.

ALTMAN: I'm not sure about this. It's more difficult for men to express emotion because men have been socialized so that they don't express emotion, but I think that, when it comes to overtly sexual emotion, it is equally difficult for women. That is, it is only possible for it to be easier for women to walk along hand in hand because they don't see this as a sexual thing. Now if they become aware, as women are becoming increasingly aware, of their sexuality, then I think they are going to find themselves in the same position as men are, and they're going to feel threatened. If a woman knows that the other woman wants to go to bed with her, I suspect that the nominally straight woman would find that just as hard to deal with as the nominally straight man does in a similar situation.

HECTOR: It seems to me vitally important, if one is hoping to get some kind of communitarian thing going, that it is necessary for nominally straight men to recognize their own homosexuality as a way of breaking down things like sexual possessiveness and jealousy within the group. And there's going to be something called Men's Liberation necessary if we're going to have a rethinking of our sexual position, where guys become aware of the repressiveness of heterosexual role-playing.

ALTMAN: Well, there is of course a men's liberation movement. I don't think it exists in any real way in Australia. It only exists in a real way in America, but so far from their writings they seem almost totally preoccupied with their relations to women. They're still thinking in heterosexual terms. They're willing to break down sex roles, but only within a heterosexual context. Now it seems to me that the obvious first step is for men to break down the barriers against just showing warmth to each other. Part of this is getting away from the total stress on genital sexuality, and accepting that sexuality is much more than this and that men have, by and large, lost the capacity to express any sort of emotion to each other other than aggression, and this is I think why two guys who really like each other can only express this by fighting. In the film, "The Last Picture Show", where one guy nearly gets his eye ripped out by the other over a girl, in a funny way that fight is also an expression of the love they have for each other. But they've been so denied any possibility of expressing that love other than by hitting each other.

HECTOR: Amongst people that I know there is increasingly less and less taboo on touching, on putting your arms around another guy.

ALTMAN: I wouldn't want to deny that there's an enormous change going on, possibly more here than in other countries. There's this whole Australian myth that we are behind everyone else. My impression is that Australia is far ahead of the United States. Among people our age and people younger than us, a lot of the old barriers have in fact evaporated more quickly and more noticeably than in America.

HECTOR: Men are now feeling at liberty to dress themselves up, and there are men's hair boutiques and things like this. Men are beginning to see themselves as sexual objects, which doesn't seem to me to be a necessarily bad thing, although

the women's liberators would have us believe it is.
ALTMAN: I would agree that it's good for straight men to see themselves as sexual objects. But I think gay men have objectified each other to such an extent that there is an enormous need to get away from that. And in this sense the position of gay men is much more analogous to the position of women in this society than either of them are to the position of straight men.
HECTOR: Perhaps many of us who are nominally straight, intellectually are prepared to say yes I must recognize my own homosexuality, but the gut reaction is still there, and the process of getting rid of the gut reaction is not easy. We need some kind of radical therapy for all of us to get our guts catching up with our heads.
ALTMAN: Exactly. In fact, I very much doubt if it's something that can be changed within one generation. It seems to me that all of us are too old now. We've all been too well socialized to break out of it, and in this sense I feel that liberation is a process, something that will take a very long time and may in fact never be attained. We don't know what the limits on the possibility of changing human behavior are.
HECTOR: Do you find anything significant about the increasing use and interest of people in techniques for personal liberation, be they 'encounter groups' or Zen Buddhism or whatever kind of thing they're getting into? People are actively thinking about ways of freeing their minds and giving vent to a totality of their humanity.
ALTMAN: I think that's partly true. I think the other side of it is that a lot of it seems to me really a by-product of the fact that traditional authority structures, like say the family, the church and the schools, are obviously collapsing, and that people are looking for substitutes, and often the sorts of things that pass for liberating are no more liberating than the forms they're replacing. Communes have ended up being more restrictive on the individual than the family structure they're trying to replace. Very often these movements represent the same search for security that, say twenty years ago, was represented by becoming active in your local church.
HECTOR: Or the Communist Party.
ALTMAN: Yes.
HECTOR: But it does seem to me significant again that my generation has grown up without any kind of church at all, and it seems to me that people I know can exist in a value vacuum in a way that no previous generation has done.
ALTMAN: Yes, that's probably true in part. I think there are, however, enormous strains among people who do live in a value vacuum. I'm very aware of this talking to students. They find that having rejected any sort of total value system they are left in a sort of limbo. I suspect a lot of people who are in this limbo are the sort of people who, say, become junkies because this provides some sort of apparent solution. This seems to be truer in America than is true in Australia, but whether this is because authority structures have not really collapsed in Australia in anything like the way they have in America . . . I don't know. Maybe we're all fooling ourselves and in fact most people have only apparently rejected traditional values. In fact, by and large they still accept them, although they don't use the rhetoric any longer.
HECTOR: A lot of people I know, you say to them "When did you become a radical?" and they say "I don't really know, it just seemed to come to me naturally over a period of years". Do you see a significant difference from the previous generation?
ALTMAN: But isn't that because being a radical today involves a much greater rejection of traditional norms than being a radical did in the thirties? Being a radical meant then that you adopted a whole set of social and political theories, but you didn't necessarily reject traditional ways of relating on a personal level. So that, for example, people who went into the Communist Party were just as committed to the traditional view of the family and marriage, in fact probably more so. Being radical now is much more an entire consciousness. How do you measure it any more!
HECTOR: What kind of role do you see drugs playing in the development of the new consciousness?
ALTMAN: I'm very very scared of drugs because when I lived in New York in '70-'71 for six months I was involved with people who were in the drug scene, and I in fact had an affair with someone who may well be dead by now from drugs, and this has made me really quite terrified of any sort of hard rugs. I'm also rather frightened of LSD, because of what I've seen it do to people. A few years ago there was a belief in the superiority of pot over alcohol, and that somehow if you got high on pot this involved some sort of rejection of traditional society whereas if you got high on alcohol it was merely reinforcing it. I begin to wonder if in fact this is true and whether or not it may not be that pot is very little different

to alcohol. Alcohol seems to make people more aggressive but not to lead them to question social values. And this is why I say that it may well be that alcohol is in fact a very effective way of making people accept a rather unpleasant day to day life. Pot doesn't tend to have the effect of bringing out aggression in people, and it's therefore I think acting against the traditional concept of masculinity. But as I say, I've become much more sceptical of these sorts of arguments than I was say two years ago, having read reports of G.I.'s going out and killing off hundreds of Vietnamese under the influence of pot.

HECTOR: We were talking about you and Germaine Greer as Australians; it seems to me that Germaine's fairly specifically influenced by the Sydney libertarian tradition, and that in a sense her analysis is peculiarly Australian or very Australian derived. Do you find your own analysis of sexual liberation influenced by the same school of thought?

ALTMAN: No. I've always been rather estranged from the libertarians, because the libertarians are basically very anti-homosexual. This is beginning to change. It's not true of the libertarian women, for whom I have much more regard than I do for the libertarian men, most of whom I think sit round complaining because the women have done much more than they have. But I've never been part of the libertarians in all their various forms in Sydney. I think the only place where my Australian background comes in may be that there's a certain Australian bawdiness. That certainly comes through in Germaine. That seems to me to be a very Australian sort of tradition, one which I think is much more evident in Germaine than it is in me. You see, I didn't live either in Melbourne or Sydney long enough to become involved in what was considered the main intellectual streams in the two cities.

HECTOR: Although it would seem to me, reading your book, that you were not working in a Marxist framework, you were nevertheless working in re-action to a Marxist framework in a way that Americans are not.

ALTMAN: One of the things that really struck me in talking to people in Gay Lib in America is that none of them were even aware that say in *Eros and Civilization* Marcuse talks quite specifically about the homosexual as being a potential revolutionary. Now this was something that the Gay Movement in the States had just not hit on and I think that this is probably due to this total lack of any sort of Marxist background. It's of course becoming less and less true. The present generation of young Amercan radicals are in fact becoming more interested in Marxist thought. I think the very sad thing is that they're going back to very crude forms of Marxism. Again I think here we're much further advanced—though that might be the wrong word—in Australia because in fact the Communist Party did survive, and people on the Left here have been aware of Stalinism, have been aware of the dangers of terribly crude economic determinism. The New Left in Australia doesn't make the quite extraordinary crude assumptions that you find New Leftists in America making and I think they're making them because essentially there's been this great hiatus since the thirties, because the C.P. just vanished.

HECTOR: It does seem to be a difference between your book and Germaine's book that Germaine has no philosophy for social change whereas you seem to be at least aware of the need for linking up the sexual liberation movement with some sort of sociological whole. And it does seem to me that you again have rejected the myth of the working class as the agent of social change whereas Germaine still hangs on to it rather religiously.

ALTMAN: I think there are two obvious factors here. One is that I am a political scientist, whatever that word means, whereas Germaine is academically involved in literature, and the second is that my foreign experience is in America whereas Germaine's has been in Britain. Now in America to maintain the myth of the working class as a revolutionary force requires a religious fervor which I just don't possess. You have to be totally myopic I think to see the working class as making any sort of revolution in America. You have to be less so in Britain. There is a distinguishable working class. Old sorts of class divisions, the classic Marxist classes exist in Britain in a way they don't in America, where poverty is something which is not found among the workers and where the union movement is one of the most reactionary and right-wing forces in the society. The other thing is that I think Germaine and I wrote different sorts of books. I wanted to write a book that would look at Gay Liberation partly at least as a social movement, and try and link it with other social movements that existed in America, and I think the crucial social movements in America are, by and large, not based on class.

HECTOR: But in a sense it is still based on class. It's not the class that Marx's writings led us to expect to be the class, but it's almost uniformly and drearily the sons and daughters of the bourgeoisie who are moving to a radical stance whether it be Gay Lib, or women's lib or . . .

ALTMAN: No. I don't think that's true. Because that's talking about the whites and the whole point about American radicalism is that you have the non-white segment which is very crucial. Groups like the Panthers or the Young Lords are by no means the sons and daughters of middle class Blacks and Puerto Ricans. It makes the situation of the left in America a much more complicated one. I mean I don't necessarily think of the non-white radicals as part of the New Left. I don't think they are. But I think it's also an oversimplification too, when I start thinking back, to assume that everyone in the New Left white movement are in fact the sons and daughters of the affluent. I thought that too until I discovered amongst Gay Lib people in New York who I worked with that in fact a lot of them did come from working class backgrounds.

HECTOR: You're about the only person I know around who's still using the words 'New Left'. When we were both at Monash in '66-'67 there was something called the New Left, but since then it seems to me there's been a polarization within the Australian young radical movement . . . on one side you've got a tiny minority of Maoist crazies who seem to be an anachronism from the thirties, and on the other side an almost apolitical lifestyle. This seems to me to be a two-pronged assault. One from the Maoists with their anti-intellectuality, and the other from the drug culture, which is also anti-intellectual.

ALTMAN: I think you're perfectly right. There isn't a New Left. There may well never have been. But what I'm saying is that among the kids today who reject traditional life styles and the conventional political system you find more from working class backgrounds than academic sociologists have led us to believe. One of the reasons for this of course is that academic sociologists are all middle class and are unaware. I look at a class of students and I think they're all middle class. It was one of the most constructive things that has ever happened to me in the university when I started learning something about the class background of the people in this particular seminar. Most of them came from the western suburbs of Sydney, they had parents who worked in factories, and they were very, very conscious of this. It may well be that among the radical young there is more class consciousness than certainly I would have two years ago expected to find.

HECTOR: Do you see the possibility of a revolutionary change in Australia? And from which direction is it going to come?

ALTMAN: I see the possibility of very major changes in social norms coming about. I think if you look at the things that are being talked about in the respectable political arena today, and compare them with what one can remember was being talked about five years ago, the change is in fact fantastic. It's not all that long ago that there was the *Lady Chatterly's Lover* trial. I can remember that. Equally I don't see any conventional type revolution taking place in Australia. I don't think we have any revolutionary force here. I think we have groups who may well feel the need for revolutionary change. Obviously there are militant Aboriginals who quite rightly feel there is a need for revolutionary change, but I can't quite see any way in which they could mobilize any large number of people in Australia to support that. What I think we're going to get is a combination of political reformism, stemming from an A.L.P. Federal government, which will have all sorts of flow-on effects. The whole tenor of respectable political debate will move to the Left. At the same time I think we're going to get simultaneously a sort of cultural-type revolution which I think is already beginning, where you'll find quite large scale rejection of traditional moral values and traditional institutions such as the family. More and more people just won't get married. There's not going to be a revolution that's somehow just going to abolish marriage and take it out of the law books. There's just going to be a general rejection, by increasing numbers of people, of these sorts of institutions. So that it seems to me that the most likely picture in the next ten years or so is a combination of patchwork reformism at a government level which will bring us to something like the position of countries like Holland or Sweden if we're lucky.

HECTOR: In my more pessimistic moments I feel that there's some kind of finite limit on the counter-cultural life style.There seems to be some kind of limit of the number of jobs available for people to carry on in this freewheeling, liberated manner. This posits a sort of impossibility of it ever being other than a tiny minority ghetto group.

ALTMAN: There's no doubt that the people who extol the counter-culture have done so from

a highly privileged position, and I'm a pretty good example of that, if you want to point to someone. But I think at the same time it seems to me that as society becomes more complex and as Australia becomes more and more like what people in America call post-industrial society, that is as more and more of our resources are devoted to tertiary services rather than primary or secondary production, that also there will be a greater range of jobs that do not require the same strait-jacketing that, say, being a clerk or being a factory hand do today. If the country were run intelligently, it is perfectly possible to maintain a high standard of living and to greatly expand the number of jobs that can be held on a part-time or a flexible basis. As is now happening in Germany, where an increasing number of employees are allowed to make their own working hours. That sort of thing it seems to me is increasingly possible. If for example we had a genuine re-structuring of our education system, it would be possible to revolutionize the teaching profession and expand the potential for people to be much freer in their work situation. If social welfare got away from its nineteenth century legacy of doling out charity to the undeserving poor, and became a field in which people could work creatively with individuals, then I think here again you might find quite a large scope for people to develop jobs that in a sense embodied a lot of freedom and a lot of creativity. So it seems to me in this sense that technology—I think this is where I am very heavily influenced by Marcuse — technology it seems to me has an enormous potential for liberation. And this I think is why it's going to become increasingly possible for a more flexible sort of life, which is really all that ultimately I would want to advocate. To become accessible to a greater number of people.

HECTOR: There seems to me to be an enormous potential for an authoritarian backlash within our society.

ALTMAN: There've been a lot of attempts in recent years to dig up that authoritarian backlash. The D.L.P. at the moment are obviously banking on it, but this sort of line is not going to be very effective, and I think what Ian Turner once said, that Australians are by and large lazy authoritarians, is very true. There is an enormous gap in Australia, thank God, between what people say and what people are actually prepared to do. In the United States kids get shot for the way they look. I don't see this sort of thing happening here.

HECTOR: But it does seem to me that we're a peculiarly fluid political situation—that the traditional division of the capitalist party versus the worker's party is breaking down. Increasingly the issues that are important in the public consciousness are more inter-party in that Don Chipp lines up with Moss Cass on the most important issues against Arthur Calwell and Killen.

ALTMAN: I don't agree with this at all. The most important issues are still ones of maldistribution of resources. I think if I drive through the western suburbs of either Sydney or Melbourne one just becomes terribly aware that there's an enormous amount of sheer economic deprivation in Australia that's totally unnecessary. I don't think that in this sense the old party divisions are unimportant. And secondly, I don't accept the idea that on these issues there's a line that cuts across the parties. I think unfortunately there is a line within the Labor Party, but there is hardly anyone in the Liberal Party that seems to me genuinely committed to radical policies on these social issues. Don Chipp it seems to me has managed to sell himself to the Australian public as a small-L liberal. In any other country but Australia, in any other party but the Australian Liberal Party, he would in fact be seen for what he is—an intelligent conservative.

HECTOR: Increasingly we're getting a middle-class leader of the Labor Party who's much more comfortable on issues like censorship, quality-of-life stuff than on things like the redistribution of wealth.

ALTMAN: I don't think that's true. Whitlam is at his best and most comfortable when he's talking about what it's like to live in the western suburbs of Sydney, because in fact Whitlam lived in the western suburbs of Sydney. It seems to me that the Victorian idea that Whitlam is totally uninterested in traditional socialist concerns about poverty and about inequality is based on a complete misapprehension and misknowledge of his position. I think it's interesting for example that Whitlam has become very close to Tom Uren, who's always been thought of as one of the 'good' Labor people from N.S.W. And the thing of course that's brought them together is that both of them are aware that two-thirds of the population of Sydney live in these dreadful, flat, badly-serviced, ill-equipped, poor suburban areas. And I think in this sense the Labor Party is still going to be predominantly concerned with questions of inequality. I don't think for example that the problems that homosexuals face in our society are

ultimately problems that the political parties have to deal with. I think that there are limits, and they're very strong limits, within a society like Australia, as to what you can achieve through party politics. I see party politics as being most effective in issues like redistribution of income, like increasing quality in education. Whereas the sorts of social issues that Women's Lib and Gay Lib are concerned with have to be fought out through quite different methods and through quite different institutions.

The End of the Ice Age

RUSSEL WARD

In the Autumn issue of 'Meanjin Quarterly' Professor Russel Ward looks back over the twenty-three years of anti-Labor government in Australia, points to important socio-political changes that are now taking place, and to the possibilities for the future that are beginning to open out. 'An exhilarating thaw is breaking up the ice in which we have been frozen for a generation. Let us hope that it heralds not merely a brief interglacial period but a new era in our national life.'

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MICHAEL LIFFMAN

De-Mystifying Welfare

For one day, back in June last year, London had its very own "no-go" area. Residents in the North London suburb of Islington set up barricades across both ends of their street, effectively blocking it off to all traffic. The barricades were removed the same night by a large and slightly bewildered contingent of policemen. The following morning some sixty social workers, employed by the Islington borough council and working in the immediate area, marched on the town hall, declaring their solidarity with the residents of the street, threatening mass resignations, and demanding a change in the council's policy for the area.

The whole incident was peaceful and harmless, and although the example was that of Belfast and Derry it was, unlike those situations, a publicity exercise rather than a military one. The barricades were a demonstration of opposition to the eviction, by the council, of several families which had been squatting in the street for some time; they were also a more general protest at the council's overall redevelopment policy for the area.

In the face of this emerging confrontation a short-term compromise agreement was, of course, reached between the council and the residents. In the long run it is unlikely that the council will make any substantial changes to its policy, or that the grievances of the residents will be given meaningful redress. The dispute is a highly political one, which will proceed on a largely tactical and pragmatic basis and in which the outcome will be determined by the resources which both sides can bring to their aid. This being so, the residents cannot afford to be too optimistic.

Yet the incident is of interest, not least because it vividly illustrates an important development in political life in Britain over the last few years: the active, and politicised, involvement of citizens in the operation of the welfare state. In fact, the somewhat over-publicised events in Islington are only a rather dramatic instance of a process which has been occurring around the country for some time, which I believe to be of some real significance, and which it is the purpose of this article to discuss.

In the somewhat unreal terms of ideological political debate, a constant theme has been the purported dilemma about reform or revolution. Not surprisingly, the debate has been a clumsy and largely unproductive one; and one of the reasons for this, particularly in Australia, has been its failure to enquire intelligently into the capacity of the state to provide an adequate level of domestic welfare and prosperity within a reformist, parliamentary system.

The standard parliamentary assertion that the system does have this capacity is contained in the concept of the welfare state. However rigorous examination, theoretical and empirical, of the substance of this concept is seldom undertaken, either by its advocates or its critics. Certainly, examinations of this sort are not easy, and may get no further than the discovery of the (obvious) fact that, in spite of the complex systems for welfare provision which exist in such countries as the USA, Britain and Australia, poverty, deprivation, unequal opportunities, need, neglect and gross social injustice are fundamental facts of the lives of a great many citizens.

Yet if the debate is to be a valid one, such examinations must be attempted. It is the purpose of this article, which is based on two years' experience studying and working in the field in Britain, to discuss some of the ways in which the viability of the welfare state model are being

tested in Britain today, and their relevance to Australia.

It is not surprising that polar ideological discussion appears to ignore "the welfare state" as a feasible model of society. It is, in many ways, an *extremely unsatisfactory concept*. The 'welfare state' is generally used as little more than a political slogan, and as a concept lacks any substantial and rigorous theoretical literature, relying instead for any appeal that it might have on its gradualist, pragmatic and compromisist nature.[1] Its basic assumptions are both simple and doubtful, i.e. that, in contemporary society, government and industry have the will and the capacity to work together to ensure that economic resources and opportunities are equitably and adequately spread over the entire state. And that this can be achieved without substantial changes in power relationships in the state. The naivete of these assumptions is staggering, and the conclusion of would-be reformers, that the welfare state approach is simply a glib and wishful *ad hoc* political response to a claim which strikes to the very heart of the state's responsibility, an understandable one.

Thus large sections of the left have been very sceptical of the welfare state approach, preferring to oppose it—as a token, ameliorative measure disguising the continuation of an unjust system—to ignore it altogether, or to employ it only as part of a more general scenario of substantial structural redistribution of power. At the same time traditional conservatives have been equally unenthusiastic about the welfare state, running as it does counter to those aspects of conservative ideology which emphasize free enterprise, laissez-faire, and individual self-reliance.

The position has therefore arisen that substantial elements of the political thinkers and activists of western societies have disavowed themselves of the one concession to the demands of social justice which governments are prepared to make—moderate welfare provision. This has left the creation and administration of the welfare state squarely in the parliamentary arena, so that its fate has depended almost solely on the extent of initiative and innovation which parliament can produce.

In many ways it is logical and appropriate that this should be so. By definition, the welfare state *is a gradualist, political operation, and it will be* shaped by parliamentary and administrative processes. However parliament is, collectively, rarely an enlightened, progressive or selfless institution, and is very substantially constrained by the nature of our political system from ever becoming so. Likewise, theoretical considerations and intellectual rigor find little place in our legislative processes. Policies undertaken within the limits of parliamentary imagination, powers and willingness are rarely as intelligent and humane as they could be, given a wider involvement of other 'publics' in their development. This virtual boycott of the welfare state by political theorists and activists has thus done a considerable disservice to the reformist cause. The welfare state arose as an attempt to appease, if not meet, the most undeniable demands of social justice at the least cost to those interests of whom—rightly—those demands were being made. As such, the creation of the welfare state must be seen as, at best, a superficial response to a situation of the most fundamental importance, and one made undeservedly easy by the failure of the left to become substantially involved in it.

At the same time this unwillingness to become involved in the politics of the welfare state has unreasonably directed the intellectual and activist resources of radicals to a disproportionate concern with ideological politics and a neglect of realist politics. Furthermore, it is largely due to the virtual monopoly which parliament has therefore had on the welfare state, that it has been able to present this approach to the electorate as a real solution to the problems of inequity, and an alternative to real structural changes in the distribution of wealth—while in fact making only the most modest attempt to create a real welfare state.

The above observations are highly general and speculative. I risk them only because it does seem that developments of considerable significance are taking place in welfare state politics in Britain, and that these can be understood partly in terms of such an analysis. Radicals are now involving themselves in the welfare-state, applying some of their basic ideological tenets to fairly local political situations, and seeking to demystify the notion

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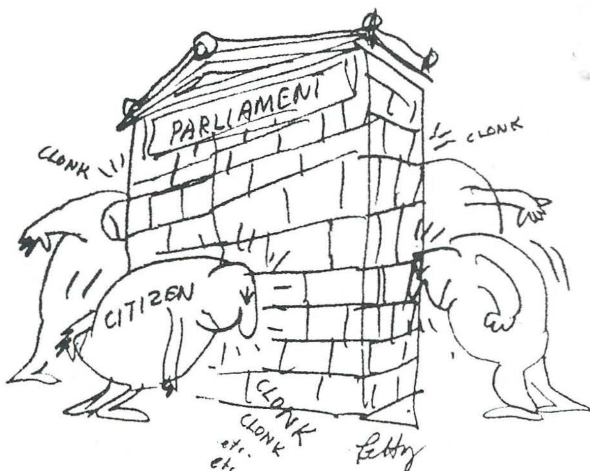
[1] Having said this, it may seem that a further definition and analysis of the concept of the 'welfare state' is required for this discussion. However, it is not my purpose here to attempt an inquiry into the concept itself; rather I am concerned with the role the concept has in England and Australia today—its meaning, usage and prospect. Accordingly it seems appropriate simply to use the term in the loose sense employed above, which probably proximates the popular and polemical understanding of it.

of the welfare state by subjecting it to highly political processes. And at the same time the radicals can claim, with considerable truth, that they are doing no more than finally holding the welfare state to its word.

Probably the two most important concepts underlying the new approach are 'citizens rights' and 'public participation'. That neither of these, when stated in the abstract, sound particularly novel or radical, adds support to the claim that the radicals are only demanding that the state in fact act in accordance with the promises it has been making; and certainly it is in the specific applications of these principles made by the radicals, rather than in their general invocation, that the real force of the new approach lies.

What follows is little more than an account of some of the forms this activity takes. It would be a very considerable, although very important, task to attempt to describe and evaluate this activity in all its detail; but all that can be offered here is an indication of the range of ideas and approaches currently being developed.

It is under the claim of 'citizens rights' that the most energetic and successful aspects of the radical challenge can be seen. Although the principle of 'right, not charity' is claimed to be one of the fundamental tenets of the welfare state, the behavior of both the administrators and the recipients of services suggests that in a great many areas this is not so. Frequently, eligibility for particular benefits is influenced by punitive or deterrent considerations, or by highly stringent and discretionary criteria. Even where benefits or services are universally available, publicity information about them is meagre, and procedures for taking advantage of available services cumbersome and complicated. Survey results and official figures show that many services are taken up only by a fraction of those people entitled to them, and that ignorance and stigma account in large part for the failure to take up. In other areas, there is not even a nominal right to services essential for the welfare of the citizen.



One of the pioneering and most publicised forms of challenge to the welfare state was that of the squatters. Faced with the shocking housing conditions, acute shortages, long waiting lists and ill-considered redevelopment plans of London and other cities, groups organised themselves to move into houses taken over by local authorities for redevelopment and standing empty for long periods of time. The buildings were physically occupied (generally illegally and sometimes forcibly), made liveable, and made available to homeless families who would then not vacate them until suitable alternate housing was provided. The pointedness of this action, the publicity it secured, and the popular support and involvement which it achieved, resulted in the squatting movement becoming a pressure group of real force, and a continuous threat to particularly negligent housing authorities, as in the recent Islington incident.

Partly as a result of the activities of the squatters, there has come into being a very active and effective organisation called Shelter. Its main functions are research and publicity into housing needs, and suggestions as to strategies for dealing with housing problems at a legislative level. Shelter itself also offers an emergency housing service, and in the short period of its existence has become a significant pressure group.

Similar action, though less dramatic, has taken place in inner suburban areas with desperately inadequate play facilities for children. Here local residents — often mothers — came together and took over areas of waste land, derelict buildings, bomb-sites, areas scheduled for long-term redevelopment (often as car parks) or restricted-access public gardens. These areas, at first sight totally unsuitable for children, were then converted, by a combination of sheer physical effort and ingenious improvisation, into self-contained, environmentally stimulating 'adventure playgrounds'. A system of constant supervision by local residents was organised, and sometimes funds were raised to employ a trained play leader.

This type of vigorous, and often highly political, assertion of the rights of the citizen is ex-

pressed in a variety of other ways. Neighborhood law services, for instance, operate in many areas, with professional lawyers, acting without pay, offering free legal services on a less restricted basis than that of the official, state-organised scheme. In addition, several organisations offer services beyond the purely legal, involving the provision of bail money, accommodation, counselling and medical assistance. These schemes deal particularly with young drug-users.

One of the most interesting and boldest expressions of this approach is the recently formed network of Claimants Unions. Strongest in areas of heavy unemployment, these groups consist largely of men and women relying on National Insurance pension schemes, or Supplementary Benefits (the revised National Assistance Scheme), and are concerned broadly with ensuring that the administration of these benefits is consistent with their status on rights, and not charity. As the level of payments is often low, the procedures for receiving them highly bureaucratic, and the scope for discretionary decisions by local paying officers considerable, there is a great deal with which these groups can concern themselves. Their specific activities include informing individuals of the benefits to which they are entitled and the procedures for obtaining them, offering the services of experienced (and where necessary, legally trained) advocates to people appealing against a decision of a local office at an appeal tribunal, and bringing publicity and pressure to bear against local officers seen to the operating inequitably. In some areas, 'shop-front' offices have been established, offering a comprehensive 'welfare rights' information service, and regular newsletters are being produced. But the real force of their activities arises out of the fact that they are giving direct political expression to the concept of citizens' rights, and that they are operating at a truly grass-roots level, amongst the people whose disenfranchisement from the welfare state has, until now, been its most telling failure.

A considerable amount of valuable political and intellectual force is given to the Claimants Unions by the Child Poverty Action Group, which is essentially a middle-class pressure group, finding most of its support amongst universities, the social work profession, and discontented Fabians, and which is becoming an effective research body and political lobby, especially to the Labour Party.

The real importance of all these activities lies not merely in the effect they have in ameliorating urgent social needs. It is in the attitude to the welfare state assumed by them that the real challenge to accepted thinking lies, and that the real impetus to innovation is found. Informing these activities is a confident belief that the rights of the citizen in a welfare state are real and enforceable; and that these include the right to demand that a certain standard of service be provided, to participate in deciding what that standard is to be, and to take action to ensure that that service is in fact provided. The change is from submissive dependence on the benevolence of the state to aggressive assertion of its obligations; and to this extent at least, a parallel can be drawn between these developments and the early history of the trade union movement.

Although the notion of 'participation' may be a somewhat newer one in the political environment of advanced industrial society, it, like citizens' rights, can easily come to be used in such a way that its meaning is rhetorical rather than substantial. Certainly, it would be unfair to attribute this solely to the duplicity of 'the system': the emphasis of contemporary political theory and analysis has largely been on representative democracy at the central, parliamentary level, rather than active participation at local levels, and the concept of participation is itself highly imprecise, and bedevilled by questions as to its relationship to actual decision-making.

The demand for 'participation' is therefore a demand for the creation of real opportunities for citizen involvement at various levels of decision-making. In particular, it is argued that urban

development and housing policies must take account of the expressed wishes of local people; and that decisions made by local councils, committees, public servants, and so on, in terms of a general electoral mandate, should be made with more specific reference to the people affected by them. This argument draws in part from the desire, strong in much 'new left' thinking, for a return to small, localised communities which provide meaningful social roles for their members. But the demand for participation also has more immediate origins—in particular the undeniable failure of so many post-war housing programs in Britain and elsewhere.

The impetus towards participation arises, almost inevitably, out of the specific activities of local groups working on certain aspects of welfare rights, and assumes more force when, as a result of a variety of these activities operating in a particular area, some sort of real community action develops. Tangible achievements are rare, and generally require the support of a professional community development worker, but their potential is real enough. In the Notting Hill area of London, local initiative produced a number of community schemes, and last year elections were held for a 'community council'. Twenty-eight per cent. of the residents of the area voted in the poll, and the Golborne Neighbourhood Council is a striking instance of the possibilities of radical community action. Local community associations, tenants' associations in housing estates, community centres and the like are becoming very widespread in Britain, although there is considerable variation in their activities.

Nevertheless, community development is rarely a wholly spontaneous or indigenous activity, and not necessarily even a particularly radical one. It is, in fact, an established area of social work (owing much to the activities of the early Settlement Houses in Britain and the U.S., and of some of the more benevolent colonial administrators of the British Empire), so that the extent of a particular project's radicalism depends largely on the particular workers involved.

One instance of this is the Young Volunteer Force Foundation (with which I have been employed in recent months). This is a government-sponsored organisation set up in 1968 as a type of domestic 'Peace Corps', to involve young people in voluntary community service. From this rather tame beginning, YVFF rapidly became radicalised, and is now involved in a number of community projects around Britain. These include work with 'unattached' youth (young people not catered for, or attracted by, conventional youth facilities), and the introduction of community studies programs into school activities. But YVFF's most significant work is in community development and community action. With a budget of almost £200,000 a year, eighty young workers employed in eighteen centres around England, and a very liberal interpretation of its official brief, YVFF is possibly the most significant source of innovation at the grass-roots level in the country today. Some of its projects are, by conventional standards, rather radical—for instance, the promotion of community resistance to urban redevelopment in Newport, Wales, or the attempt to secure the rehousing of the whole population of a particularly grim (although post-war) housing estate in Newcastle. Overall YVFF's projects include virtually the whole range of activities described in this article. (Not surprisingly, the Conservative government has heavily pegged YVFF's grant for the next year, and the Foundation may have to curtail its activities.)

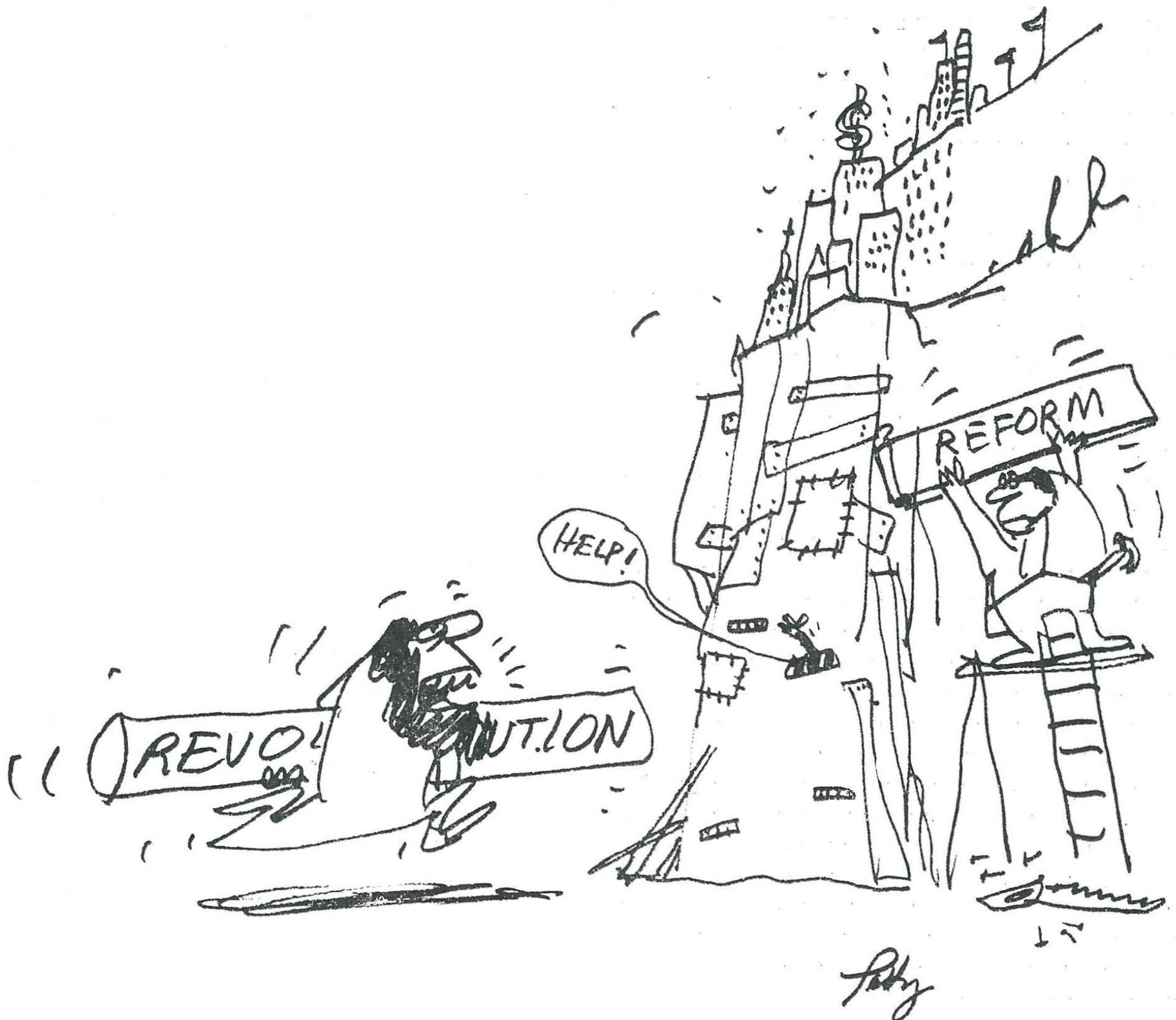
Another example of community action can be found among the ethnic minority groups, and especially the West Indians. To suggest glibly that even widespread developments of this sort will result in meaningful change to the nature of welfare provision and citizen participation in modern society would be naive in the extreme. Much more theoretical and empirical work needs to be done, and scepticism as to the ability of these processes to develop and become of real significance is not unreasonable. Nevertheless the spirit which informs them is a healthy one, and, in at least some cases, does offer a radical challenge and a prospect of some real success. At the least it provides the system with a real test, and enables the debate about it to become a little better informed.

But a further point must be made. It will not be the radical critics who will succeed in transforming the welfare system in Britain, or in creating an alternative one — and this is even more true of Australia. Ultimately, given the nature of our society, the creation of a real welfare state can only be undertaken by government action. Britain's advantage is that the government has, to some extent at least, accepted this fact, and has established some of the departments, resources, procedures, etc., which are the necessary machinery of a welfare system. There *are* sources of expertise, will and action in Britain, so that

loci of responsibility and possibilities for change can be identified and the challenge directed at them. The demand for real welfare rights does not ring quite so hollow, nor sound so wishful, as it does in Austraila.

Space will only permit a few examples. Every local authority has a Social Services Department, whose statutory duty it is to provide family casework services, home help, child care and so on, and recent legislation has implemented the report of the government's Seebohm Commission which requires that these departments set up a 'shop front' service in which the local office becomes the central accessible point for any citizen requiring welfare provision. Britain's National Health Service does provide a free medical and hospital service. Supplementary Benefits does provide some financial support to those whose needs are not met by the basic pension system. The Home Office is itself setting up community development projects. "Counter-revolutionary tokenism" maybe, but the people who pay the price for resistance to government welfare provision, on the grounds of ideological purity, are rarely the ideologues themselves.

As important as the fact that the state has established some of the machinery necessary for the provision of welfare services is the fact that it has no monopoly on this provision. Voluntary social service, and movements of social change and reform, have a long and active tradition in Britain, so that the welfare state is a relatively pluralist one. Within it there are numerous sources of highly professional expertise and innovation, upon which the government can draw for assistance, and which subject the government to rigorous criticism. It is almost certainly the case that such commitment as the government in



Britain does have to the welfare state is largely a result of the activities of these middle-class, reformist, professional or academic agencies, and their traditional association with the labour movement.

The Fabian tradition, in particular, remains strong in established Labour circles, and much of the teaching, research and publicist work done in Britain today results from it. The most direct contribution of the Fabians is through their sponsorship and publication of numerous research monographs on welfare matters, and their association with the Labour Party. Less directly, but very influentially, the Fabian tradition is expressed in the social administration and social work departments of the British universities, of which the most distinguished is that of the London School of Economics.

Space does not permit further discussion, but the point is obvious. And so is the contrast with Australia. One looks in vain in Australia for any of this—for research, discussion, thoughtful and flexible innovation in social policy. Without professional, critical engagement with the welfare state from established participants in, and radical critics of, political decision-making, the reformist cause can indeed have little credibility.

To end with a specific proposal. Australia cannot rely on an established tradition of concern with, and competence in, social policy to create this engagement. Social policy in Australia has been largely a result of *ad hoc* political decisions. An essential requirement for Australia is an independent Institute of Social Policy (or something similar), generously supported by the state, with a broad brief to conduct and sponsor research, encourage innovation in social policy, provide financial, training and consultancy support to activities in the field, establish a regular journal along the lines of Britain's *New Society*, publish occasional papers and support full-scale publications, provide local and travelling scholarships, liaise with universities and similar institutions, and so on. An ambitious, complex and ill-defined proposal maybe—but little enough to ask as a first step in the demystification of the welfare state.

P.S. In Britain, the Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust has announced its intention to establish a Centre for Studies in Social Policy. The Centre will have an annual budget of £150,000 and will be concerned with the "relation of social analysis and research to the discussion and development of social policy generally". The Centre will be equipped with a library and conference room. Staff will include four or five appointments at professional level, and an appropriate number of lecturers and junior assistants to support them.

JOHN MORRISON

How True is That Story?

I believe that the question most frequently asked of writers is: Did that really happen? How much truth is there in that story?

Most of us reply that there is always a large measure of truth. It can usually be taken for granted that if the writer had not had a certain experience he would not have written the story. It's what he does with truth that makes story. And I'm not necessarily speaking of one particular truth/experience; more often than not several are used, whole or in part. It's a matter of selection and arrangement, construction. Starting with a significant incident, perhaps placing it in a more colorful setting, and acting it out with characters who are also out of life, fitting to the situation, but who were not actually involved in it. The process can be developed *ad infinitum:* the weakness or strength of one person combined with the appearance of another, a real house placed in the wrong street, and some simple problem of human relationships dramatised by a plausible extension. In this way fiction is achieved and the improbable avoided.

"The Battle of Flowers" is probably that story of mine about which readers have shown most curiosity. It tells of two spinster sisters, the Misses Theresa and Isabel Haven, between whom a trivial disagreement grows into a all-consuming hatred. All their affection and interest to begin with is concentrated on each other and their garden, but when they quarrel it is the garden which becomes the instrument with which they ultimately destroy themselves.

Did those two sisters really hate each other so much? Did they really go so far? The truth is that they didn't. I worked for them for several years, half-a-day a week in a small garden which was a long way from Beaumaris, where the story is laid. They must have died many years ago, but when I last saw them their relationship was precisely as described in the opening paragraphs of "The Battle of Flowers".

The story was probably born the day I had an accident there. Isabel had asked me to break up a large mallee root some time during the morning, and in doing so I swung the axe over a loose clothes-line. Had there been a little more slack in that line, or a keener edge on the axe, I would at least have shorn off my right ear. Hours later a doctor was to put six stitches into the wound, but all I knew at the time was that something had crashed into me. I was still trying to work out what it was as two panic-stricken sisters helped me to my feet and began guiding me towards the house.

Full consciousness was slow in returning, but there were images, impressions, which were to nourish the idea of "The Battle of Flowers": a small, disorderly kitchen heavy with a smell of curry; Isabel bustling around getting towel, cotton-wool, and a big bowl of hot water; Theresa supporting my bowed head with one hand while with the other she soothingly patted my shoulders; the horrified exclamations of both women; the whispered argument over whether to call doctor or ambulance, an argument of which I was sufficiently conscious to stop; Isabel's hand gently dabbing where I believed my ear used to be; a smell of antiseptic, and the water in the bowl rapidly a rich crimson.

I got my wits back at what—story-wise, let us say—turned out to be the critical moment. The bleeding slowed down, Isabel's hand almost ceased to move, and suddenly something warm began to drop on to my bared forearm where it rested on the table. I thought of blood, but when I glanced

aside I saw that it was clear water. I suppressed an impulse to look round at Isabel, but managed a swift turn of the head to squint up at Theresa on my left, and the expression of her face told me everything. She was regarding her sister with what I can only describe as an expression of astonished disapproval. Tears. Isabel was silently weeping.

"I think you had better go to your room and lie down, dear," she said gently, and as Isabel went out she took up a fresh pad of cotton-wool and continued the operation.

The incident might have given me little further thought had it not been that in the following weeks I became aware of a subtle change in both women. Perhaps I was just romancing, but Isabel *was* the more feminine of the two, and it seemed to me that she withdrew into herself, became less inclined to talk to me, and reluctant to look me in the eyes when some matter concerning the garden did make communication necessary. Correspondingly, Theresa took on an unaccustomed air of authority, more of the employer to me and more big-sisterly towards her twin.

I began to wonder if I was the innocent catalyst which had released in Isabel what, in "Blind Man's Story", I have called "the capaciy for compassion which is in all women", the need to help, to nurse, to give. And over several years question succeeded question. What kind of wives and mothers would those two spinsters have made? How content were they, really? What did they think of when they retired at night to their separate beds? The garden? Each other? Did they ever have a difference of opinion? Supposing they did, and it grew bigger, got out of hand? What would they have left?

The answer was not hard to guess. They would still have what they had before, each other and the garden, but their relationship would no longer be based on affection. And if their quarrel were over the garden it would become the soil in which that quarrel would flourish and become hatred. Age had crept up on them, and they could never now back out of the delusive little pocket of life into which they had shut themselves.

And so the idea behind "The Battle of Flowers" took shape. No man or woman is sufficient unto himself or herself. At least one critic has given the story a wider interpretation, seeing in it a microcosm of the class struggle, with the haves in the persons of the two idle sisters and the have-nots in the person of the useful craftsman, the gardener who gets caught in the cross-fire after cynically exploiting them both. An interpretation I hesitate to dispute, because it is consistent with much of my social thinking, and I know that a writer often projects more into his work than he intends.

Another garden story about which there has been much curiosity is "To Margaret". It tells of a young gardener who falls in love with his employer's daughter, is quietly sacked one morning without any explanation being given, and at a moment when he has just finished 'dressing' and planting a flower-bed with seed-sown annuals. He has, however, been forewarned by the housekeeper and two weeks after his departure the shattered romance reasserts itself in the germinating seeds: "TO MARGARET, painted in letters of vivid green right across the square of rich brown earth."

The story is written in the first person of the gardener who succeeded Romeo, and time and again I'm asked, Did *you* do that?

Yes, I did. But I got away with it because I was old enough to be the girl's father, and everybody in the family thought it was a charming idea. There were three other women in that household, and they fairly drooled and clucked over that bed of Fairy Bouquet linaria. Daddy, a medico straight out of Dr Finlay's case-book, was undemonstrative, but paternal gratification oozed out of every pore of his skin. From the girl herself I got a spontaneous hug and kiss when I turned up for work the first morning. It was not, however, enough to make a story in itself, so I integrated it with another family, another garden, another situation:

"Mr. Cameron", of "To Margaret", was really a retired colonel of artillery whose Toorak garden I kept, one day a week, for several years. A man born to the Royal Brass if ever there was one. He'd moved straight from the army into a first marriage and the board of directors of a big real estate company, but still had high explosive in his blood. Nothing of the ludicrous, blustering Blimp about *that* colonel. He was a lean, stern, silent, and as uncomplicated as an axe. His garden was the most beautiful I ever worked in, but disfigured by a 1914-18 field-piece set on concrete at the end of the lawn. Inside the house, to which I was occasionally called for an odd job, it was all war: a collection of small arms in the smoke-room, with crossed swords over the fireplace, and sporting trophies from Duntroon Military College adorning book-case and drink-cabinet; in the dining-room a set of fire-irons with bayonet

handles, gilt-framed portraits of Haig and Kitchener, battle scenes, and a large photograph of the colonel arriving at Buckingham Palace to receive his O.B.E.

Caught up in all this fratricidal nostalgia was Barbara, the colonel's wife, one of the most gentle and charming women I ever met. She, and not the Dutchman of my story, was the real architect of that garden. I think it was all that made life worth living for her, because, consistent with the barrack-room airs of the house, the colonel had decreed that the two young sons go out to boarding-school. He held the opinion that women were a weakening influence on growing boys; they needed men, discipline, and no nonsense.

I learned from Mrs Evans, the middle-aged maid-of-all-work, and a typical kitchen gossip, that this latter was a particularly sore point with the colonel's lady. I would have known that something was wrong anyway, because there were two different ladies: the one who dutifully saw the colonel off to business every morning, and the one who joined me in the garden for most of the day afterwards. Mrs Evans and her husband constituted the domestic staff, and punctually at 9 a.m. the uniformed George Evans, who had been the colonel's batman, would run the car round to the main gate. Simultaneously the colonel would stalk majestically down the garden path with his lady, groomed but still in dressing-gown, on his arm. A routine which irresistibly called to mind the title of a picture that hung in my parents' home: "The Duke of Wellington departing for Waterloo". The Colonel, granite-faced, head up, eyes fixed straight in front; she, slightly flushed, eyes downcast, and lips set in a tight line as if to keep them from trembling. At the gate, the most perfunctory of kisses, with George Evans waiting outside on the footpath ready to fling open the car door at just the right moment. He did everything but salute.

Mrs Evans, whose pro-Barbara prattle I didn't trust, confided that there was hardly any communication between man and wife, that He rarely brought any but male company to the house, that She wasn't encouraged to have visitors of her own, and that She always looked forward to Thursday, my day in the garden. I also learned that the colonel had some "beautiful" sets of toy soldiers with which, in the company of some other retired Brass and a bottle of whisky, he re-enacted the battles of World War I.

He just couldn't leave it alone, but in the first year I worked for him I caught him with his military pants down. It was regarded as almost a sacrilege then to work on Anzac Day, and that year it fell on a Thursday. For me it was a case of no work no pay, and on the Tuesday evening I phoned the colonel to ask if he would take the Saturday afternoon. And I can still hear his peevish voice over the line:

"Anzac Day? — yes, I know. But I think we can stretch a point where the garden is concerned. You could leave the lawn until next week."

Everything hush-hush—don't let the neighbors know. It was with cynical amusement that, early in the afternoon, I observed the colonel, accompanied by the general who had led the march, came up the garden path with a great clinking of spurs, medals, and scabbards. Lest we forget . . .

Anyway, many years later that colonel and his lady gave me just the man and wife I needed for "To Margaret". Barbara was, as it were, the second barrel of my Dutch Romeo's gun, and it was I who dreamed the joy of pulling the trigger: "To Barbara". As for Mrs Evans, tough spouse of the colonel's batman, she wasn't what I required for the part of the tired old housekeeper of Mr. Cameron. Again, that really belonged somewhere else: another family, another garden, another situation . . .

I was working for a contractor, and one day he sent me to a new job he had taken over in Dandenong Road, Murrumbeena.

'Kantara' turned out to be a sprawling, weatherboard, colonial-style house set in a wild garden surrounded by a high cypress hedge. The entire property was in a state of utter neglect: yellowing, run-to-seed lawns, overgrown shrubs, withered flower-beds, flaking paintwork, shrinking boards, and rusted iron roof. It was impossible to tell if there were curtains at the dusty windows, and when I found the kitchen at the rear a stale smell came at me through a door from which the flywire hung loose.

"Mrs Briggs", of "To Margaret", hurried out of the shadows when I knocked, handed me the key of a shed where she said I would find tools, and withdrew after throwing me an uneasy, beseeching glance that made me wonder what mysterious business I'd interrupted.

There's a temptation to describe 'Kantara' in detail, but suffice it to say here that over the entire establishment there hung a stink of age and decay, and a brooding silence that went well with the furtive air of the housekeeper.

It was a hot January morning, and I began work in the shadow of the house, steadily hacking

my way along a tradesmen's path that looked as if it hadn't been used in months. Quite deliberately I set myself to absorbing scene and mood, reflecting that it would be a fine place to lay a crime if ever I got around to writing a whodunit. But before I could settle even on method a window only ten feet away was stealthily pushed up and there came into view the head and shoulders of an apparition straight out of a Hollywood movie female madhouse: tousled hair falling around a pale pinched face with sagging jaw and glittering eyes, two claw-like hands clutching the flaking window-sill, dark-colored dressing-gown melting into a featureless background.

One of the skinny hands came up from the window-sill, extending a one-pound note, and a pitiful whisper drifted off into a strangled croak:

"A bottle of gin, please. Keep the change. Please . . . you look a nice man. It's just down the road . . . don't let them see you . . ."

I thought instantly of a great pile of empty bottles I'd discovered behind a cluster of tumble-down outbuildings, but before I could make up my mind what to do someone entered the room, and as the Apparition angrily turned its head I stole away to occupy myself somewhere else.

Nothing more happened during the rest of the morning, but soon after twelve o'clock Mrs Briggs came out to the quiet corner of the back garden where I sat eating my lunch. She brought with her a plate covered by a napkin — "I thought you might like a hot scone" — but it was soon evident that what she really wanted was a gossip. And within half-an-hour I had the family story, much as I describe getting the family story in "To Margaret".

The lead-in was the garden: "It's got into a terrible state. We used to keep a full-time man, but it's like everything else . . ."

Once started there was no stopping her. She'd been with the family for thirty years, involved in every step of its decline. It was not, however, a bullying barrister and a brow-beaten wife, but an alcoholic mother, a despairing father, and an enslaved daughter. A tragic story of a good man driven to distraction by a tippling wife; of an only child growing up in an atmosphere of sordid and bewildering happenings; of a tightening bond between father and daughter as a bleak world closed in on them; of urgent discussions about poor Mummy's latest escapade; of brief intervals of blessed peace while poor Mummy dried out in some private hospital; of searches for hidden bottles; of physical struggles, smashed crockery and broken windows; of frantic hunts through sleeping streets in the dead hours of night for a woman wandering about in a bloodied nightdress; of lost friends and wrecked romances; of an ever-accelerated impoverishment; of three lives going steadily down the alcoholic drain . . . suicide . . .

Comprehension wasn't difficult for me, because it brought back some scenes of my English boyhood. My parents were both Presbyterian missioners, fanatical temperance evangelists, and around my tenth year waged a long struggle to save two once-wealthy people who came to live next door to us. A struggle which ended when the man died in delirium tremens and his wife flung herself to death from the high cliffs on the foreshore.

Mrs Briggs dabbed at her eyes. No mention of her own devotion. "He just couldn't take any more, gardener. I had to go in to the morgue and identify him. Since then she's gone from bad to worse. We've had to get a full-time nurse in. Miss Helen would have had a breakdown herself if she hadn't gone away for a bit. She's up at Bendigo with her aunt. She's thirty-six now. And she was a lovely girl. She could have married ten times. You'll meet her next week . . ."

But next week in that context never came, because I'd hardly resumed work when I became the centre of one of poor Mummy's predictable explosions.

I was working close to the front verandah steps when there was a sudden crash somewhere inside, as if a table with crockery had been pushed over, scuffles and pantings, and a hysterical voice that ended in a thin scream:

"Take your lousy hands off me, you big bitch! I want . . ."

A moment later the Apparition broke free, flung open the flywire door, scampered out to the top of the steps with the pursuing nurse hard on her heels, and stood there with one hand gripping the near post, the other groping forward as if trying to bring me into focus of the blinking eyes.

"And who the bloody hell do you think you are? Who sent you here? Who told you you were a bloody gardener . . ."

Fortunately, the nurse *was* a big bitch, but it was a distressing experience to stand there while she efficiently overpowered the poor woman and hauled her inside, with Mrs Briggs lingering behind just long enough to tell me not to be upset:

"It's happening all the time, gardener. We can't keep anybody on the place. If they won't get her drink she abuses them."

It was a one-day job. Later that week my employer told me he had received an embarrassed phone call from the daughter to the effect that she'd had to make other arrangements. A pity, because I'd like to have met that staunch woman. But there was story material in it, and years later the Apparition fitted well into an episode of my second novel, *Port of Call.* An episode based on an incident which took place fifteen years before 'Kantara'.

I was then nineteen years old, out from England only a few weeks, and working on Zara Station in New South Wales. I'd palled up successfully with my hut mate, Frank the groom, who not only had roamed all over the outback but had also been a blue-water sailor. It was he who taught me to ride by taking me out with him early every morning to run in the horses. He was a wild character, who, with some modifications, became 'Jim' in *Port of Call*; just as Zara, also with some modifications, became the scene—and the scene only—of Kulpinka of that novel.

Tied up at a point where the Moulamein Creek ran within sight of the homestead there was a boat, strictly for 'the heads' only, and one night Frank asked me if I'd go voyaging with him. I felt flattered, but didn't realise at the time the peculiarly Australian flavor of his reason for picking on me:

"All these other bastards have been here too long, Jack. Never trust a bloke who's been more than twelve months on a job; you can bet he's a boss's man."

It was a Riverina night, warm and still, with a diamond-studded sky, water black as ink outside a ribbon of gold cast by a full moon, and a silence broken only by the occasional cry and shuffle of a startled duck. It was a wet season, and in that flat country there were many places where the course of the creek was hard to follow among the partly submerged trees. We got lost, rowed all night through the dreaming bush, and made it back to the homestead just as dawn was breaking. We talked little. There was something in the tranquil magic of those hours that must have moved the wandering bushman-sailor. As for me, it was the night I fell in love with Australia. I tried to re-capture something of it in that chapter of *Port of Call*, but the "bibulous spouse" of the squatter was, in fact, the transplanted Apparition of Kantara. Just as, in fact, the wife of the owner of Zara was a most cultured and attractive woman.

Out of Zara also came "The Sleeping Doll", which was told as a true yarn one night by a young boundary-rider. It didn't really begin to ferment in me, however, until three years later, when a soporific swagman who fitted the part like a glove dumped himself in my hut on Wainui station in the Western District of Victoria. He was, indeed, the only man I ever met who could fall asleep—but not stay asleep!—standing on his feet. An extraordinary character, he spoke in a rasping voice with a pukka English accent, told me with cynical pride that he was known as Leo the Liar, and expounded, with a logic that left me tongue-tied, a theory that if Jesus Christ *was* the Son of an all-powerful Creator then that Creator could only have been the triumphant God of Evil. Basis of the theory being that He had given us a house (the earth) of limited size and resources to live in, and at the same time made the act of procreation the greatest ecstasy of which the human body is capable. To make sure that we succeeded in setting up a sweet little hell on earth for ourselves He'd built in an uncontrollable lust for possessions and power. Finally, and just for the heck of it, He'd reached out and connected the organs of sublime joy with our drainage systems. Leo thought it a scream, dwelt with fiendish glee on such a simple explanation of the Great Mystery, and drew a far-fetched and blood-curdling analogy between it and a certain ancient tribal custom:

"What a laugh! My friend, there was once a country where, when a woman was found guilty of adultery, she was sewn up, along with a live cat, in the skin of a freshly-killed cow and placed out in the hot sun . . ."

In "The Sleeping Doll" I needed only his genius for sleep; in *Port of Call* I let loose his poisoned tongue. It was I who had that hectic drive from Wanganella to the homestead of Zara with a drunken swagman, but the latter was not the stuff of which stories are made. I had to mix up Leo the Liar, the Apparition and Mrs Briggs of 'Kantara', Frank the sailor, and myself, to create

the escapade which led to Jim getting the sack from Kulpinka station.

"The Lonely One" also came out of Zara. He was, indeed, the rabbiter of that station, a great, gaunt sixty-years-old with sunken cheeks and watery eyes, still brooding his life away over a wife who had deserted him many years before. I got the story in startling detail on my very first night on the job, my second in Australia. There were just the two of us left in the big hut, the twenty or so other men having drifted off to their several quarters. I was too green then to fully comprehend the human tragedy, but the seed was sown, and long afterwards I was to recall the pathos of old Jack's very words:

"Women's no good. Not married to, anyway. You git too wrapped up in 'em. If anything goes wrong you got nothing left. You git old, nobody wants to be bothered with you. You're young, lad, you don't know what it is to be lonely . . ."

I learned a lesson that night. I'd just come twelve thousand miles from home, family, mates, familiar streets, and had been feeling lonely myself, envious of a company of twenty men because they already belonged. To what?

It was a story.

Another that fell into my lap almost fully-fashioned is "The Welcome".

I was no longer working on the Melbourne waterfront when I read in the *Herald* one night (1950) that a shipload of immigrants from war-ravaged Europe had tied up that morning at a South Melbourne wharf. She was to be there for only a few hours, and those passengers, including many children, who were going on to Sydney were not allowed ashore. The report told how an ice-cream vendor appeared on the scene and found business slow—until the wharfies woke up to the fact that the immigrants had no money, passed round the hat in the good Australian tradition, and distributed the entire stock to the ice-cream-hungry children lining the ship's rail.

I found it a moving and deeply significant occurrence, worth more than a dozen lines tucked away inside an evening newspaper. But in order to make story of it I drew on my own experience as a wharfie, peopled it with the flesh and blood of some of my old mates, and had them threaten to stop work when their officious supervisor ordered the ice-cream man off the wharf on the grounds that his activities were bringing down the tonnage rate. An enlargement of the incident which was completely consistent with the mood of the Australian waterfront.

Clarrie, the hatchman in that story, could have been any one of fifty deck-hands I knew on the Melbourne wharves, but I had in mind a particularly colorful character who lived near to me in Mentone, and with whom I made more than one trip down the darkened Yarra, as told in "Nightshift". In "Bo Abbott" I gave him a story all to himself, after using him already under that name in *Port of Call*.

Joe, to give him his real name, was one of the finest men I ever met, generous, courageous, and as straight as a gun-barrel. I believe it was Joe who first brought home to me the importance of being able to distinguish between knowledge and wisdom, which don't always go together. It was during a smoko, when he got into an acrimonious argument with a fellow-wharfie who was better informed, and trying to drown Joe in a welter of indisputable but inconsequential facts.

Joe's opponent tapped his forehead: "You know, Joe, I've got something in here, and I use it. I think . . ."

"I'm not saying you don't think, mate," retorted Joe. "The bloody trouble with you is you don't get results."

Joe had been reared somewhere in the big timber country of Tasmania, received little schooling, spent all his working life on ships at sea and in port, and had probably never read a book. But he'd *lived,* and knew men through and through. For a writer to have him as a friend was to be given a gift from the gods. He stood only five feet six, but was a real man, and the stuff out of which stories are made.

books

COMIC GENIUS

Owen Webster

Peter Mathers: *The Wort Papers*
(Cassell, $5.50).

A second reading of Peter Mather's second novel discloses no new dimensions beyond those yielded up on a careful first reading, for that is not the way with comic masterpieces. One re-enters them as on a track through a beloved landscape: the weather is different, and one's mood: changing the tones and juxtaposing the colors differently, bringing new emphases to familiar sights and all of it so prodigal of life and variety that one knows the delights are inexhaustible.

The Wort Papers is more than a beloved landscape; it is a beloved and exasperating continent, a map and a metaphor of all Australia. "It is an epic account," says the publisher's blurb, "of the Australian experience." Yes; and also a documentary account of the Australian incompetence: as dense and sprawling as primary bush, as unstructured as Australian social life, written with larrikinism of larrikinism, with felicity of failure, and as magical and colorful as Ayers Rock, standing just as monumentally in a flat cultural desert.

For Mathers has no peer in Australian letters, unless one goes back to Furphy. To find some comparison one must look to other lands and even other languages. Some, once every few generations, erupt with a comic genius of the stature of Mathers. In English I can think of only one, at least in our time, and he enjoyed a similar neglect in his lifetime. Flann O'Brien has done for the Irish experience what Mathers does for the Australian. Compare these two extracts, the first from *At Swim-two-birds,* the second from *The Wort Papers:*

In the old days, recalled Lamont, they had what you call a draught. It was brewed from weeds — deadly nightshade, you know. It got you at the guts, at the pit of the stomach, here, look. You took it and you felt grand for half an hour. At the end of that time, you felt a bit weak, do you know. At the heel of the hunt, your inside is around you on the floor.

Lord save us!

A bloody fact now. Not a word of a lie. At the finish you are just a bag of air. You puke the whole shooting gallery.

If you ask me, said Shanahan quickly, inserting the shaft of his fine wit in the midst of the conversation, I've had an odd pint of that tack in my time.

A laugh was interposed neatly, melodiously, retrieved with skill and quietly replaced.

If you want to piss off to the Kimberley don't expect me to mind your family and bring you back.

I could make my fortune up there. There are camels too. There's money in camels.

You've got to leave this farm, it's getting you down. It's the grey dust, it gets in the lungs, clogs the brain. You *go* to the Kimberley. You'll get camel dust and from that camel-trachiosis, the ruin of many a fine Arab singer, not to mention singers from England travelling through the Suez Canal, and singers going from here to there, Melba for instance, had a touch of it in her later years.

There's also the matter of the Jews. They're on the grab again.

What Jews? You leave the Jews alone, Will, they'll eat you, kosher or not. You leave them alone.

They want to take over the Kimberley. I read about it.

It is so easy to find such parallels that it would not be unreasonable to infer an influence—whatever that means. Mathers may have assimilated O'Brien, but the accent is unmistakably Australian, and the coloring hasn't a trace of emerald.

He certainly couldn't have read, during the five years he was at work on *The Wort Papers,* that

South American comic masterpiece, *One Hundred Years of Solitude,* for it was not published in English till 1970. Yet as Gabriel García Márquez encapsulates all of South American history, dream, legend, folklore and riot, so Mathers encircles all the hubris of white Australia with his dingo fence of a book. Compare the following passages, from Márquez and Mathers respectively.

> There were three regiments, whose march in time to a galley drum made the earth tremble. Their snorting of a many-headed dragon filled the glow of noon with a pestilential vapour. They were short, stocky, and brutelike. They perspired with the sweat of a horse and had a smell of suntanned hide and the taciturn and impenetrable perseverance of men from the uplands. Although it took them over an hour to pass by, one might have thought that they were only a few squads marching in a circle, because they were all identical, sons of the same bitch, and with the same stolidity they all bore the weight of their packs and canteens, the shame of their rifles with fixed bayonets, and the chancre of blind obedience and a sense of honour....
>
> Martial law enabled the army to assume the functions of arbitrator in the controversy, but no effort at conciliation was made. As soon as they appeared in Macondo, the soldiers put aside their rifles and cut the loaded bananas and started the trains running. The workers, who had been content to wait until then, went into the woods with no other weapons but their working machetes and they began to sabotage the sabotage. They burned plantations and commissaries, tore up tracks to impede the passage of the trains that began to open their path with machine-gun fire, and they cut telegraph and telephone wires. The irrigation ditches were stained with blood.

> Russell built the Hall, a weatherboard place on the side of the hill, the front a few steps above ground level, the rear on six-foot stumps with boards across to stop empties rolling down the hill. The Hall appears to rest on a mound of bottles. From some angles the glass looks like igneous rock exuding from the earth, as though this is active volcano country. Fifty feet away on flattened ground is the official bottle heap ordained by several Hall Committees. There were several attempts to market the bottles, particularly in the Depression. One truckload went through a bridge and another went off the road on a hairpin, sank into a shoulder and tipped. The two loads were flushed into creeks and the river by twenty inches of rain in three days and began bobbing past the town of Peeny. In fact they went through Peeny, for the river rose and put ten feet of water through Main Street and its tributaries, and after the rain the sun shone and people could not see for the glare on flood and glint on bottle, and reporters, photographers and cameramen came in and recorded for city people the bobbing bottles and convinced them Peeny was the booze town of the world. A Salvation Army relief team had to be forced to stay but got its revenge by claiming that the deluge was God's punishment for drunkenness. And Peeny never forgave Uppersass. They even blamed Uppersass for the eddy responsible for bottling them (quite true in one sense: the waters swept down because so much hill country had been cleared; shaved, even, with gullies and potholes running sores and sunken pimples). A couple of infuriated ratepayers took to their chimneys and sniped bottles. Other marksmen, in joy, took up the challenge. Three people were wounded by ricochets, and later, in the mud, there were many gashed feet and boots, and a week later when cleansing rain fell dozens of houses leaked. Where the river joins the ocean the vast spread of alluvium in the ocean was bottle-markered.

Another comparison could be made with *The Tin Drum* of Gunter Grass, and the game could be pursued into the classics: Rabelais, Gogol, Cervantes. But it ought not to be necessary. Mathers ought to be acknowledged in his homeland as a unique Australian voice; and would be, but for a note in that voice and integral to it that resonates with the cultural cringe whereby the "world-class" (revealing phrase) can be recognised only by the measures of the rest of the world.

> Ten pounds of gelly, detonators and fuse for the stumps down the bottom, I said. I wish you wouldn't, Mum said. Sometimes you've got to, said Dad.

Tom Inglis Moore supplies a fair example of the cringe before the whole truth about Australia when in his *Social Patterns in Australian Literature* he refers to the "savagery" of Peter Mathers in his earlier novel, *Trap.* It's a symptom of the humanist blight, both the cringe and the failure to see Mathers as a great tragicomedian, by Buster Keaton out of Jacques Tati, but in prose.

To commence to review *The Wort Papers* is, as Dennis O'Hearn remarked with proper homage when he wrote brilliantly of the book in the *Age,* to realise the immense abyss between criticism and the creative literary act. The only way to appreciate it is to read it, to enter it like an experience, abandon yourself to it, letting it accumulate layer by layer and wave by wave, the whole pullulating, wild, disorderly, organic, teeming mass of it, and when you have done, recovered from the tears and the laughter, the puns and the punishment, you may know as you have never known before what it means to be Australian.

> Two thousand miles he travelled home and when he arrived he was hardly recognisable. Sandy-blighted, humped like a camel, his skin like camel

> leather and spotted with skin cancer where clothing had not protected him. Stripped-off he looked like a starved camelopard. Sand. S and. S &. Sampersand. Sam Persand, a pity his name was William Wort.

Oh yes—oh dear yes—William Wort is the father of Thomas and Percy Wort, the former a successful executive in a vast Packeresque communications organisation, the latter . . . an underdingo, larrikinetic motorcycling visionary predicament hunter:

> When Percy went to town, pensioners spat at him, the sergeant followed him, the publican gave him dirty glasses and the bank people refused him a clean blotter.

Thomas is telegraphically haunted by a mysterious Matters who eventually sends him a butterbox with the words on the reverse of the address label: Literally a Disinterment.

> Musty. Crumbs of soil. Butterbox crammed with stinking paper and rag. . . . Get rid of it quickly, waste no time. Return it to Matters before silver fish devour. Is fit for a midden scratcher but nobody else. Perhaps it *is* the work of Matters. The whole business. Percy couldn't have done all this. . . .
>
> Ants, silverfish, cockroaches and mice have munched, mated and nested in it. Little words have been ingested and voided as points and commas.

It's the Notes from Underground writ dirty. Percy had most certainly dunnit. Dunny tit. Don't eat it. But Thomas had to eat it. Like sipping at a spittoon, the rest of the contents followed ingestibly: all those words about their lives from share farm to share farm and earth to city, written by Percy in the hole in the ground down which he escaped from Thomas and a lynching party after geligniting all those bottles for the art of it.

> The sun on the glass glittered and sparkled. Necklaces shone round trees and posts and window sockets were diamanted. LAD rapped mournfully in the only breeze of the day, clapper against the cracked bell of the Hall and round and about in silvers and splinters the I and E and S.

It is the vengeance of the earth for the hubris of modern man.

And where better than Australia to exhibit it? This vast sprawling scruffy disorganised island of acts of God and sports of evolution, so old that it remembers the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse when they were young boundary riders, but so young that agriculture hasn't properly made it here yet. Percy's papers would cause any share farmer to walk off, and even a suburban gardener to think twice each time he started his lawn mower. This land has endured man only as long as he apologised for his intrusion; but modern man knows naught of apology—least of all *homo Australiensis*—who sows the wind in an arrogant fart and reaps the red dust in a whirlwind. Travel with Percy on his 500 cc. Norton down the coast north of Newcastle, and offer a prayer of thanksgiving whenever you reach Flinders Street intact after taking the train from Richmond.

For Mathers a blackberry shoot is as instinct with apocalyptic foreboding as an oil refinery or a housing commission development. It is the vision of a Van Gogh with the fantasy of a Kafka. He will see more incident, comedy, teeming variety, in ten minutes of standing and staring in Hyde Park than most of us would see in a month. Man is no more than he has ever been since the dawn of time: an insignificant accident in an indifferent universe, surviving against impossible odds from one miracle to the next with *nothing* but his hubris to support him. Whether the odds are of his own making or not, the gods punish him regardless, like lion's play, but he bobs up again, that bottom-heavy doll, with the same absurd hope and the same purblind incompetence. Politics may be the art of the possible; but living, for Peter Mathers, is the art of the impossible. Sisyphus, Prometheus and Icarus are alive and well and living in Australia.

POLITICIANS AND PLAIN VOTERS

Rod McConchie

Peter Blazey: *Bolte: A Political Biography* (Jacaranda, $5.95).
Neal Blewett and Dean Jaensch: *Playford to Dunstan: The Politics of Transition* (Cheshire, $3.95).
Max Harris and Geoffrey Dutton (eds.): *Sir Henry, Bjelke, Don Baby and Friends* (Sun Books, $1.95).

Attractively presented, this book, and so is its subject. The ameliorative tone is in part due to the fact that Blazey is more concerned with celebrating success than with assessing its implications. The effect of power on Bolte is hinted at rather than explored for its intrinsic interest and relevance. As an example of his method, he concentrates, rightly, on Bolte's 'quotableness', but seems often to evade the issue of why he is so. He quotes in an appendix (p. 240) Bolte's statement on returning from a world trip: "I'd just as soon have an afternoon's run in the Dandenongs." It seems fair to comment that this remark effectively devalues the kind of trip the average

voter cannot make, while making a massive appeal (the greater for its being so grossly Falstaffian) to a parochial complacency and inertia—in fact a fatally seductive appeal to support the status quo. Why dream about going overseas when we can all do what Sir Henry prefers himself? Other analyses of Bolte's comments could be offered, but Blazey is usually content with the observation that he is quotable. He does see, however, that "Ordinary Australians saw themselves in Bolte, and Bolte's power and eloquence reinforced their prejudices" (p. 235).

In other respects, Blazey seems curiously unaware of implications. The early chapters are rather heavily larded with suggestions depending on some event in Bolte's early life. On page 10: "We may infer that Henry Bolte's staunch patriotism and belief in the monarchy were instilled at Skipton State School at this time." Surely; but the reader could have inferred it for himself. Neither is there any comment on the curious relation between this remark and the anecdote which follows concerning Henry as a selector for the local junior football team: "Every time a new kid was picked, Henry would take him aside and say: 'Now listen, I'll be watching you today. If you don't pass the ball to me, you won't be picked next week'." We don't hear where Henry learnt that.

In all the book gives the impression of being an extended journalistic exercise rather than a fully-fledged biography. It is a public view of the man, insofar as the more intimate and telling paraphernalia of biography are (necessarily) missing. Political events, not private and personal conflicts, dictate the direction of the narrative. Blazey adds new material of this kind which is valuable and of great interest. It is perhaps inevitable then, that the book comes to a kind of climax with the Ansett affair—a Boltean *coup de grâce,* whose idiosyncrasy and outrageousness are undeniable. Nevertheless Blazey can do no more than accept the rhetoric of the *Age* on that occasion—"Sir Henry has broken the rules, offended the financial world. But what a politician!"

That unfortunate creature to whom Blewett and Jaensch make reference in their introduction to *Playford to Dunstan: The Politics of Transition*— "the intelligent and interested layman"—is too often the victim of attempts by academics to open some meaningful discourse with him, rather than the glad recipient of such overtures. However, this book seems to be a finely judged attempt to be of interest both to the academic and to the layman, and deserves praise for this.

There is clearly a considerable amount of research and analysis of information in this work, and the account of ideas and opinions which forms so much of the meat of the book makes absorbing, stimulating reading. It is also worth noting that use has been made of the ephemera of day-to-day politics—"material supplied to us in writing and in interviews by many of the protagonists themselves"—as well as the media. Contemporary material of this kind, presented with discretion, is of great interest because of, rather than in spite of, its partisanship and lack of insight. The use of comparative tables (set out in a mercifully pleasant fashion) to emphasise the relationships between the 1968 and 1970 elections shows a thoroughgoing methodology, and adds much to the book's credibility. Techniques of arranging tables and figures are also adequately explained. Much of the material of the study is suggestive; for example, the analysis of voting patterns in relation to electoral campaign propaganda, or to indices of social status.

The examination of the particular appeal of the protagonists is admirable, so much so that the book gains most force from this rather than from its scholarship. There is always a firm grasp of the implications of personal characteristics and idiosyncrasies as live elements in the political game, and it is the pervasive effect of the juxtaposition of Dunstan and Hall as people that animates the book and makes it dramatically absorbing. The authors have managed to resist irrelevancies in dealing with the human aspect of politics, and yet seem also to have avoided becoming obsessed with statistical puzzles and curiosities—the kind of research which makes one wonder whether one is concerned simply with numerology after all.

The period dealt with in this book is of great essential interest, and Jaensch and Blewett have made the best of it. Both for those who bewailed the fall of Playford, and for those who found themselves in the streets in support of Dunstan, the times were exhilarating, and the book gains a fresh and forceful narrative drive from this. To have handled so much information with this vigor is an achievement, and it should ensure that it is not merely the professional political scientist who will gain from reading the book.

It is not so easy to be laudatory about Dutton and Harris's *Sir Henry, Bjelke, Don Baby and friends*. It gives the impression in the "Overture"

of being amiable and chatty, and full of seminal information for the Plain Voter. Not that he is likely to read it, since he will find that the chat is ever so slightly condescending, and at times almost gossipy. For example, Bert Shard (A.L.P., South Australia): "He is a nice enough bloke, but . . ." (p. 81), or ". . . R. L. J. [sic] Hawke, latterly Oxford University beer drinking champion and of ACTU fame." (p. 78) This remark about beer-drinking, incidentally, is apropos of nothing whatever. Dr Barnard just couldn't resist it, I suppose.

The rather brittle, faintly witty prose which informs a good deal of the book leads one to suspect the claim in the introduction: "Purposely our contributors haven't involved themselves in personal judgments—merely provided basic biographical material and intellectual history." In the light of this claim perhaps the most successful portrait is that of Clyde Holding —in any case the section by Ian Baker makes most impact. His writing is lively at times, and he seems to see political phenomena more clearly in their historical context than the other contributors.

Perhaps it would have been better had the contributors not undertaken to limit themselves in this way—we might then have had contributions which had a coherent if biassed viewpoint, and could therefore be more honest, rather than relying on vapid and indirect hints. The book is, it seems, not what it claims to be, but a publication for the delectation of a smaller, more informed, and more patronising set of readers. But didn't the title give it all away in the first place?

A REACTIONARY CARGO

Robert Adamson

Michael Dugan (ed.): *The Drunken Tram* (Stockland Press, $1.75).

The blame for this eccentric collection must fall largely on the editor. Michael Dugan is probably best known so far for the great unevenness in his own poetry, from his memorable "Rock Poem" to the smug attitudinising of "To a Poet" and "To a Trainee Accountant", both included in Shapcott's Sun Books anthology. In that anthology Dugan introduced his poems, saying that he tries "to write objectively, without artificial contrivance. Dislike revisionism but am guilty of it in some poems." Possibly Dugan's "dislike" for what he calls "revisionism" explains the inclusion of so many sloppy and often trite verses by poets who like, say, Buckmaster usually write strong and controlled poetry. At least in the introduction to this volume he sticks to facts, except for the final sentence: "The main common factor in their work is an involvement with their own generation and a genuine concern for the social environment of their time." This is the type of sentiment that indicates our younger poets *seem* to have high ideals. It is merely rhetoric, and the social awareness that the poems themselves reveal is either narrow moralising or political naivete.

All six of the poets represented here have had much better work published in magazines or in their own books. Bad as both the cover-art and the title page are, the blurb and all but a few of the poems are even more frightening to someone with a concern for the future of Australian poetry. One great saving grace is that the poets, with a medium age of 26, are not "young" poets. There are much younger writers, such as Jennifer Maiden, Laurie Duggan and John Forbes, who have already accomplished far more.

If there is a "main common factor" in this book, it is the idea that readers might like having the experiments of our grandfathers pushed under our noses, as if overlooking the continuity of the last sixty years of worthwhile poetry. Are Gertrude Stein, Apollinaire and dada any more in need of 're-discovery' than, say, the Treaty of Versailles, the Tennis Court Oath, or Calvin Coolidge?

It is amazing to learn from Mark Radzyner's introduction that he is "at present writing M.A. thesis on contemporary American and Australian poetry". In these poems he makes no attempt to come to grips with the contemporary world, either in his themes or in his handling of rhythms. There is a verbose *fin-de-siècle* heaviness about such lines as:

> some, mired in quicksand, that quickened their roots
> some, walled by dark wood, panels of pain
> some, enclosed in rich confines
> that neither belly nor heart knew egress

and the cloying "Psyche and Eros". Radzyner is far better when he avoids the temptation to slide into hyperbole and the lines come out as clean delineations of the poem's structure, as in:

> but this I know
> for certain: July the 4th is dead
> winter here. I'm numbering
> myself now
> among thousands:

Stephen Grey avoids excesses of language, but his poems rarely are more than trite. In none of the pieces here does he show himself prepared to take a risk. Consequently he does not bury his commonplaces of thought under gimmickry or verbiage. They stand out pitifully open, particularly in his final lines.

Garrie Hutchinson, in his introduction, gives as one of his 'primary loves' someone called 'charlie olsen'. It has to be hoped that, having got so close, he goes on to read (and learn from) Charles Olson. The selection of Hutchinson's poems here tends to point up his worse faults, particularly the way he tries too hard for a superficial contemporaneity by liberal use of the ampersand and the slash, and by a sprinkling of words such as 'neon', 'ads', 'plastic' and 'napalm'. He is capable of effective imagery, but he tends to build images up towards a "message" rather than a *poetic* statement. There is nothing inherently wrong with this type of didacticism, but it needs behind it something more than the lightweight thought-content we are offered in the poems here.

The best (and, incidentally, the youngest) of the poets here is Charles Buckmaster. He is not pretentious with subject matter and his craftsmanship is adequate for such themes. Even though he suffers from the unintelligent selection made here, there is evidence of the control he displays in his book *The Lost Forest*. He can play cleverly with syntax but he, alone of the poets in this book, can also *work* with it. "Glen Ewart", "Photographs" and the untitled poem beginning "The empty circus . . ." can make one forget the unfortunate lapse which led him to add yet two more pages to the ever-growing heap of 'Vincent' poems.

For the last four years Australian poetry has been climbing out of a great hole. What there is about this anthology which makes it a danger is that, while making its great leap backwards, it gives the impression of being very with-it and chic—the printing's good, the new-leftism plausible. However there is no substitute for talent, nor is there any excuse for hypocrisy. These poets, with the exception of Buckmaster, are either incredibly stupid or diabolical opportunists. Here we have My Lai, Hiroshima, "pollution" and of course Dugan's "genuine concern for the social environment of their time" thrown together with some strange kind of anarchic iconoclasm. And to boot we have Stephen Grey's "bad winds blowing" over everything from "slag heaps" to his quaint "glowing candle". It all sounds very familiar. Bob Dylan had it all blowing in his Machiavellian wind, but at least he had it blowing in tune. And importantly Dylan could always laugh at himself: "lies that life was black & white—quite clear no doubt, somehow". These *Drunken Tram* poets are astonishingly humorless, not to say witless. This anthology is a vessel that holds a more reactionary cargo than the ships kept afloat by CIA, ASIO, KGB or even the AACF.

MY GOD, THAT'S ME!

John Morrison

Graeme Kinross Smith (ed.): *Mankind's Spies* (Cassell, $1.50).

This slim, attractively designed collection of confessions and reflections is aimed at students, would-be writers, and the general reader. But you will profit from it more than writers themselves. There's a lot to be said for any book that sets one exclaiming: "My god, that's me!"

No doubt writers *are* mankind's spies, but the content is best indicated by the sub-title "How Writers Work": by discipline or by inspiration, by day or by night, with pen or with typewriter, standing or seated, in isolation or in company, tensely or calmly. Most correctly, though, the emphasis is on *why* they write.

What is it that drives a man—or a woman, of course—to want to write in the first place? Material gain? "Novel writing is a business like selling calico", asserts Arnold Bennett, but it's a lonely voice. "Fiction is an art, not merchandise", responds Erskine Caldwell. And Georges Simenon: "Writing is considered a profession, but I don't think it is."

Not a vocation, business or profession? What, then? Some writers claim to be driven by a concern about life at large. "For God's sake keep your eyes open. Notice what's going on around you," urges novelist William Burroughs. And Henry Miller: "An artist is a man who has antennae, who knows how to hook up to the currents which are in the atmosphere, in the cosmos." Some, such as Dylan Thomas, see authorship as an instrument with which to explore and subjugate the secret self: "I hold a beast, an angel, and a madman in me, and my enquiry is as to their working." Several—and I suspect that many who are living close to writers will smile knowingly—confess to a selfish dedication. "The only obligation that any writer can have is to himself," declares Truman Capote, although neither he nor any other contributor goes as far

as William Faulkner: "The writer will be completely ruthless if he is a good one. Everything goes by the board, honor, pride, decency, security, happiness, all, to get the book written. If a writer has to rob his mother he will not hesitate."

On the whole the argument emerging is that a writer writes because something moves him, haunts him, something felt or seen or heard to which he wants to give form and—hopefully—immortality. A deep experience he hungers to fix and to share. At the highest level, a wrong against which he feels an irresistible urge to protest. It seems to me that no other lays it on the line as clearly as George Orwell: "My starting point is always a feeling of partisanship, a sense of injustice. I write because there is some lie I want to expose, some fact to which I want to draw attention, and my initial concern is to get a hearing. But I could not do the work of writing a book if it were not also an aesthetic experience."

One of the most interesting areas of this debate among authors is the question of how much of the work of creation is already done when one of them sits down at his desk. "I've still got the tendency to start writing something when I'm sure what I want to say, and hoping that by the act of writing I'll sort out my thoughts," says Australian Geoffrey Blainey. "Each man has his own way," says American Henry Miller. "After all, most writing is done away from the typewriter, away from the desk. I'd say it occurs in the quiet, silent moments, while you're walking or shaving, or playing a game or whatever . . . So when you get down to the typewriter it's a mere matter of transfer."

I think that each of these writers overstates his case, but in any event both are in step with the fraternity of the possessed: writing is hard work, whether it's taking shape in the head or dribbling off the end of a pen. But they would have understood Frank Dalby Davison, who once said to me, with deep feeling: "John, I dread the day when I won't be able to write."

Mankind's Spies is not restricted to writers. A few painters, composers, sculptors, and film producers also have their say on the problems and idiosyncrasies of creation.

BOOK CHRONICLE

A selection of the more important of 'books received'. Mention here does not preclude subsequent review.

HISTORY

Phillip of Australia, M. Barnard Eldershaw's account of Phillip's years at Sydney Cove, long a rare book, has been republished by Angus and Robertson at $4.95. A similar facsimile republication is Marcus Clarke's lively series of sketches of colonial events and personalities, *Old Tales of a Young Country,* with a useful introduction by Joan Poole (Sydney University Press, $6).

J. D. Bollen's *Protestantism and Social Reform in New South Wales 1890-1910* (Melbourne University Press, $9) throws new light on the social role of the churches in the difficult years of the nineties and in the early years of Federation. *Pioneers of Australian Education,* volume two, edited by C. Turney (Sydney University Press, $8.50) presents seven valuable essays on significant educationists of the later nineteenth century. Extremely useful aids to research are Kathleen Thomson and Geoffrey Serle's *A Biographical Register of the Victorian Parliament 1859-1900,* and D. B. Waterson's *A Biographical Register of the Queensland Parliament 1860-1929* (both Australian National University Press, $4.50).

Alexander Tolmer's important biography, *Reminiscences of an Adventurous and Chequered Career,* has been published in facsimile by the Libraries Board of South Australia ($13.35). This gives *inter alia* some interesting comments on the Victorian gold-fields.

For decades one of the least amiable aspects of minor Australian printing has been the shoddy, inaccurate booklets on the wrecks around our coast. Beguiling, perhaps, to the tourist after some cheap, romantic and vicarious thrills, these pamphlets have seldom relied on hard checking of the original sources, and have perpetuated much misinformation. So it's cheerful to see Charles Bateson's *Australian Shipwrecks: Volume One: 1622-1850* (Reed, $8.95), carefully researched and well printed, and filling a long-existing gap. A careful reading suggests few serious errors or omissions.

LITERATURE

Colin Roderick's impeccable editions of Lawson continue to give us the first reliable examples of this writer's work. *Short Stories and Sketches 1888-1922* (Angus and Robertson, $10) gives us complete and authentic texts of the stories, including some not published before. *Autobiographical and Other Writings 1887-1922* (Angus and Robertson, $10) presents Lawson's non-fictional

prose, collected in the main from periodicals and manuscripts, and certainly the most important contribution to Lawson studies ever presented within two covers. In particular this gives us, for the first time, the full text of Lawson's fragment of autobiography preserved in the Mitchell Library.

Dorothy Hewett has edited a regional anthology by forty-five West Australian writers, *Sandgropers,* very pleasantly published by the University of Western Australia Press at $6. Bill Wannan's delightful anthology of *Robust Ribald and Rude Verse in Australia* is published by Lansdowne ($4.95). Much of this material is from Wannan's own assiduous collecting, and has not appeared before. The University of Queensland Press continues its editions of Steele Rudd's work with the dual volume, *On Emu Creek and We Kaytons* ($4.50). All mountain lovers will respond to the delightful Reed edition of David McLeod's anthology *Alone in a Mountain World: A High Country Anthology* ($7.95), and will wish that Australia could match this New Zealand collection.

C. J. Brennan's rare *Poems* [*1913*] has been republished in facsimile by Sydney University Press ($7 and $4), with an introduction by G. A. Wilkes.

Macmillans are performing the special service of republishing much of Edmund Wilson's work, and on hand are his classic study of the rise of European socialism, *To the Finland Station* ($14.95), and his important studies of Russian writers and the Russian language, *A Window on Russia* ($10.95).

BIOGRAPHY

Rohan Rivett has written an able biography of his father, Sir Robert Rivett, one of the key Australians of this century, in *David Rivett: Fighter for Australian Science* (Rivett, $5.95). Mollie Skinner has always been of literary interest because of her collaboration with D. H. Lawrence in *The Boy in the Bush.* She tells her own story in her posthumous *The Fifth Sparrow* (Sydney University Press, $6).

New booklets in the valuable Oxford series 'Australian Writers and their Work' are W. H. Wilde's *Adam Lindsay Gordon* and Alan Brissenden's *Rolf Boldrewood* (both $1.15).

WILDLIFE AND ENVIRONMENT

The second volume of Stanley and Kay Breeden's sumptuous 'Natural History of Australia' has recently appeared: *Australia's South East* (Collins, $16). This is superbly photographed, sensitively written and beautifully produced.

The definitive scientific work covering 2500 indigenous and exotic species to be found in the central coastal region of New South Wales is *Flora of the Sydney Region* by N. C. W. Beadle, O. D. Evans, R. C. Carolin and Mary D. Tindale (Reed, $13.95).

Torres Strait is in the political news and a timely publication is *Bridge and Barrier: The Natural and Cultural History of Torres Strait,* edited by D. Walker and published by the Australian National University Press at the modest price (for its size) of $5. Contents comprise sixteen geological, biological, anthropological and geographical papers presented at the 1971 Torres Strait Symposium at the Australian National University.

PACIFIC

David Lewis nearly killed himself over Christmas in sailing alone to the Antarctic. His earlier Pacific voyages are chronicled in what, for once, can properly be called a 'fascinating' book, *We, the Navigators: The Ancient Art of Landfinding in the Pacific* (Australian National University Press, $8.50). Dealing with topics such as swell patterns, phosphorescence, birds and clouds, not to speak of the history of ocean voyaging by Pacific islanders and anecdotes of great sailors, this is surely a classic armchair book.

Saul H. Riesenberg has edited James F. O'Connell's *A Residence of Eleven Years in New Holland and the Caroline Islands* (first published 1836), one of the mere fourteen books which give an account of the Pacific islands before the islands were overtaken by European penetration. Some interesting notes on early Sydney are included. Published by the Australian National University Press at $6.95, in their exemplary Pacific History Series.

MISCELLANEOUS

Pete Seeger, the American folksinger, has many friends in Australia who respect him both as a highly professional musician and musicologist, and as a publicist, agitator, man-of-conscience who dignifies the image of the country he belongs to. With *The Incompleat Folksinger* (Simon and Shuster, New York, $US12.50) Pete has given us a splendid stew of recollection, musical talk, songs, "comments on the many vocabularies of music, speech and other ways of human expression", and simply his thoughts on his travels and the human problems that interest him.

Plan for Melbourne Part 3, by Ruth and Maurie Crow, is published by the Victorian State Committee of the Communist Party of Australia at $3. This book takes the argument, already cogently put forward by the authors, a stage further. Particularly, it is concerned to prevent the fragmentation of the metropolis by growth outward in a number of directions, and seeks a solution in one major growth-route towards Gippsland. Generally, it discusses the problems of a city in an advanced and degenerative stage of capitalist growth, and presents alternatives. Important, closely argued, expertly informed and thought through. Available from the Crows at 52 Victoria Street, Carlton 3053.

PAPERBACKS

Recent Penguin releases of special interest include a remarkable photographic essay on Trotsky and his times, edited by Francis Wyndham and David King, and entitled *Trotsky* ($4.50); Thomas Keneally's novel *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* ($1.20); F. R. and Q. D. Leavis on *Dickens the Novelist* ($2.10); Kenneth Allsop's pioneering study of the American migrant and his culture, *Hard Travellin'* ($2.10); Ronald Blythe's moving chronicle of life in an English village, *Akenfield* ($1.35); and J. M. Freeland's *Architecture in Australia: A History* ($2.95).

Recent Wren paperbacks of especial interest include John Rowe's vivid novel of the Vietnam war, *Count your Dead* ($1.60); Ian Downs' controversial novel on the future of New Guinea, *The Stolen Land* ($1.75); Osmar White's still-fresh account of jungle warfare in New Guinea, *Green Armour* ($1.75), and the same author's brilliant background study of today's New Guinea, *Parliament of a Thousand Tribes,* now updated ($1.75).

S.M.S.

floating fund

STEPHEN MURRAY-SMITH writes: Many thanks to the well-wishers listed below, who help to keep us going with their money and their encouragement. Readers may be interested in some of our figures for the financial year 1971-1972, which have just become available. Sales of *Overland* amounted to $3128. Expenses were $7748, major items being printing ($2448), casual labor ($1162), artists' and authors' fees ($1546), postage ($689) and stationery ($247). Operating loss was $3716, from which Commonwealth Literary Fund grants of $2055 are to be deducted, leaving a final deficiency for the year of $1661. Total deficiency in funds was $2636. Not much of a way to run a railroad, but we have no intention of closing down the line!

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