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overland

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Registered for posting as a periodical, Category B. Spring 1974

stories

poetry

features

Cover drawing by Barry Dickins

Overland

Temper democratic, bias Australian

Spring 1974

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Overland is a quarterly literary magazine which tries to appear every three months. The subscription rate is four dollars a year (four issues); for students, Niuginians, pensioners the subscription is two dollars. Manuscripts are welcomed but s.a.e. required.

Overland receives assistance from the Literature Board of the Australian Council for the Arts and from the Victorian Ministry for the Arts. We pay minimum rates of twenty dollars for a story or feature and ten dollars for a poem.

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ISSN 0030-7416

You can't get to Heaven without Saints

DESMOND O'GRADY

Seated on the pedestal of a column facing St Peter's square, Cesare might have been one of the drivers of horse-drawn carriages who waited there for tourists. He shared their weatherbeaten air and limitless patience. But in his case it was the confident patience of a man used to wielding influence. He sat like a dignitary holding court in the open. After all, he was beneath the window of his friend, absolute monarch of the territory, and was irritated rather than shaken that there had been no reaction to the letters he had directed on high over the past three months.

Cesare was uneasy to insist on a recommendation he had requested only reluctantly, for the sake of domestic peace, in the first place. Pina, cousin of his wife Angela, had claimed that with a slight push from the Vatican her son would obtain employment as an electrician with the Italian state broadcasting corporation. Because that afternoon she had visited Angela for the third day running, Cesare sat now in St Peter's square.

He felt the lack of response to his letters as only the slightest threat, like the edge of autumn chill on the evening air, to his reputation as a benevolent patriarch. Cesare looked the part: there was something slow and ceremonial in his bearing, a natural dignity undiminished by an overbright artificial eye. His other eye was held in a perpetual squint, which may have contributed to his reputation for shrewdness. He was as solid as a tree, his hair was carbon black, his bony ridge of a nose was all-of-a-piece with his other large features, features which seemed designed for recognition at a distance by an acclaiming crowd. But Cesare did not seek that sort of acclaim: he was satisfied with his own comfortable niche like a minor statue in St Peter's. He had found positions for a whole tribe of relatives and friends because for a short period he had been altar boy for the priest who was now Pope. That was a fortune, as Monsignor Lancini had said more than once, "like winning a lottery". Lancini introduced Cesare to people as "a friend of the Pope". And sometimes added that the problem in the Vatican was to discern what to render unto Cesare. Cesare was untouched by Lancini's irony. He would protest that he had merely known His Holiness many years ago but, in his heart of hearts, he considered the Pope his friend.

Monsignor Lancini, black-haired, swarthy and sleekly rotund, reminded Cesare of a seal, and a performing seal at that. He would have preferred to deal with Lancini's brusque offsider Monsignor Jacsin, who had a less curial style. Lancini's joviality was slightly patronising, and his worldliness contrasted with the dedication of the Pope as Cesare remembered him. But the unacknowledged reason why Cesare resented Lancini was that he had come between him and the Pope.

Cesare had been able to visit the future Pope from time to time when he had worked in the Secretariat of State, but the higher he rose the more difficult was each meeting. Cesare became increasingly conscious of the difference between his calloused hands and those of the priest, between his rough manners and the cleric's elegance, between his simplicity and the prelate's sophistication. Once he had been elected Pope, direct contact ceased. Cesare continued to send greetings for occasions such as the Pope's birthday, and always received back a personal note. His requests for recommendations and help of various kinds were also addressed to the Pope but never received direct acknowledgement: Monsignor Lancini saw to it that the requests were satisfied. Once

Cesare had visited Monsignor Lancini in his office but the reception had been sufficiently glacial for him to seek other interviews, as now, through casual encounters. Energetic Monsignor Lancini frequently hustled through the streets near the Vatican, stopping at a bar opposite the St Anna Gate or sweeping out for an afternoon walk over the Janiculum hill and along the Tiber. Cesare had seated himself on a column of the colonnade framing St Peter's square hoping to intercept Lancini who, if he had gone for a walk, could round it off by taking a turn around the square's central obelisk.

In fact, shortly after the sun had sunk behind the dome of St Peter's, Monsignor Lancini approached along Via della Conciliazione. Lancini gave Cesare a particularly warm welcome, saying that he had hoped to find a friend of the Pope somewhere in the Vatican. Cesare had enough experience of such types to suspect that the warmer their welcome the less friendly their intentions. Nevertheless, as they strolled past cars being washed by spray blowing from the fountains, he mentioned his unacknowledged letters requesting a recommendation for Pina's son.

"You can't expect every request will be satisfied," said Monsignor Lancini, unusually direct, although smiling.

"They always have been," Cesare replied, sure of his rights.

"Do you think that should be the case?" Lancini asked academically in his soothing voice. "Anyway, you should realise that times change."

"How?" Cesare stopped near the obelisk, confused by Lancini's words. Was it a threat? Cesare looked up to the Pope's study window just as the light came on: he felt fortified, it was as if a strong shout would bring his friend to the window and he could settle the matter without Lancini's sly questions, his coded talk.

As if he had followed Cesare's glance and thoughts, Monsignor Lancini became more conciliatory. Taking Cesare by the arm, he led him towards the right colonnade. There, where the Pope's window was no longer visible, he explained that qualified people were in such demand they could find positions without recommendations. Cesare was sure the Vatican ran things at the broadcasting corporation as elsewhere, and that Lancini merely did not want to help.

Lancini asked if Cesare never had qualms about worrying the Pope. Worrying the Pope . . ! As if it would worry the Pope to help a friend when it was within his power; it would be a pleasure. Cesare realised that the glossy monsignor, from the start of the conversation, had wanted only to separate him from the Pope.

On the way home, Cesare stopped at a dismal wine shop he did not usually frequent; for the first time he drank alone. He would have to fend-off nagging Pina when she returned, but his deepest concern was trying to assess Lancini. Cesare had always been deferential towards him because the prelate expected it. But Cesare had believed he held the whip-hand, as Lancini's role was to satisfy the requests he made of the Pope. Today, however, the channel of all graces had turned sour. Obviously, Cesare concluded, ordering another litre of consoling wine, the man is jealous. He heard again Lancini's facetious ". . . a friend of the Pope" and the envy in his "for Cesare, it's been like winning the lottery".

Some lottery, Cesare told himself, if the prize was a janitor's post in grey, old Vatican-owned apartments where salaries never rose. He had seen some of the new apartments built by Vatican-controlled firms: dream worlds where the janitors lived amid wood panelling and administered a push-button kingdom. All I've done, Cesare told his white wine, is to bring needy cases to the attention of an old friend only too happy to help. Jealousy, he was convinced, was eating Monsignor Lancini, which was as he expected from someone wearing skirts.

The wine was helping Cesare to see that the situation was fluid. A word to the Pope that Lancini had turned nasty and the monsignor would change his tune. What would happen to Lancini if the Pope reacted, as well he could?—demoted to parish work, banished from Rome to some god-forsaken hill town, sent to teach a group of snivelling children? . . .

Imagining Monsignor Lancini's various punishments and his own contact with the Pope restored, Cesare was happy in his kingdom for the last time. It was no wonder he sought to recreate that bliss later by the same means. Until he awoke with a hangover the following morning, however, he did not face the question of how to reach the Pope when Monsignor Lancini straddled the lines of communication.

A letter to the Pope in a month's time, on the anniversary of his ordination, he decided, should be sufficient. Monsignor Lancini could not block such a letter; the Pope would surely notice if it did not arrive. Better still if Monsignor Jacsin called on one of his rare visits to a friend at the

apartments, and Cesare had a word with him on tactics. Jacsin was as intense and straightforward as Lancini was affable and slippery. Thin to the point of emaciation, he was tall and stooped, with sparse black hair parted in the middle and the sour expression of a stomach-sufferer.

The month dragged for Cesare. He oscillated between exultation and depression, and in both states sought the consolation of solitary drinking. At times he felt that he had been cast out of the kingdom and reduced to a cypher. In other moods, he saw himself as a respected distributor of favors once more, after a merited punishment had removed Lancini from the company of the righteous.

He was seated in the janitor's cage in the upbeat phase, enjoying the hazy afterglow of a winey afternoon, when Monsignor Jacsin appeared like a gaunt black bird. As Cesare fumbled for the lift key, his heart thumped overtime, for he wanted to broach the subject of Lancini's veto. But Jacsin came straight to the point and later, when Cesare thought back over the affair, he was sure Jacsin had appeared that night merely to deliver his terrible message. But at the moment, as Cesare stood waiting for the lift to wind down, there was only the impact of Jacsin's words. They drove the wine haze from his brain leaving it blank: he was aware solely of the lift descending like a bucket being slowly lowered into a black, bottomless well.

Cesare was still under shock when, two days later, he found Monsignor Lancini in the coffee bar opposite the St Anna Gate. But the shock seemed to have converted him into a court jester.

"Don't greet me—you're quite right" was his opening gambit as he breasted the bar beside Lancini who, intent on managing a crumbling pastry, had not noticed him.

"Ah Cesare! What's that? I didn't see you there . . ."

"Of course not," Cesare's voice rose sharply, "you don't shake hands with the dead. But you should make the sign of the cross . . . if you're a Christian. Dead, by now a cold corpse, rotting, no?" He crossed to the other side of Lancini whose swarthy expression darkened further as Cesare continued, "You've even said a Mass for me, haven't you?"

"What are you saying, Cesare?" was all that Lancini could reply. The other customers' conversations trailed to a halt as they watched Cesare, now more pathetic than challenging, and Lancini who stood holding the last morsel of the pastry in his carefully manicured hand. There was curiosity and embarrassment: what had begun, apparently, as badinage had become dramatic.

"I'm not mad," said Cesare defiantly half to Lancini, half to the onlookers. "I'm defunct! 'The late Cesare Angillo'. That's why Monsignor doesn't greet me. He should know: he's said a Mass for me—for the repose of my soul. If he were a Christian, he'd make a sign of the cross over me."

"I'm sorry Cesare," said Lancini with a show of patience overstrained, "but I've an appointment."

"Dead and forgotten," said Cesare, following Lancini with one hand outstretched imploringly, for if the monsignor did not even recognise his protest he would live in a limbo, "you can't leave me like that, Monsignor."

On the footpath, Lancini conceded to talk to his assailant. He advised him not to make such scenes in public, then explained that, as there had been a misunderstanding, a Mass had been offered for Cesare. "No harm done," he concluded, hoping to carry-off the episode lightly, "and I'm happy to see you're in the best of health."

Cesare pressed for details. Lancini reluctantly explained that an attempt was being made to save the Pope work and worry. All requests were being handled directly, he continued, and it should be possible to do something for Cesare's relative. This concession had no apparent effect on Cesare. Lancini added that because Cesare's letters were no longer reaching the Pope, he had the mistaken idea that Cesare was dead and had said a Mass for him. Lancini's manner was suave, he tried to recapture his paternalistic tone, but still did not sound plausible. Cesare guessed that the idea of his death had been planted in the Pope's mind by Lancini, who had not had the courage to backpedal when the Pope surprised him by deciding to say a Mass for his friend.

Satisfied that he had seen through Lancini's imbroglio, Cesare recovered his self-assurance. "Don't worry about the job for my relative, Monsignor. If you'd wanted to help, you'd have done so weeks ago," he said slowly, savoring in advance his conclusion. "Worry about your own job when the Pope finds I'm alive—and kicking."

Monsignor Lancini stopped in his slow progress towards the St Anna Gate to reassess Cesare. "I'm sure you're more responsible than that, Cesare," he said weightily. "Think of the conse-

quences. The Holy Father is not a person with whom you play jack-in-the-box." With that, he tipped his glistening, black-felt monsignorial helmet, crossed with the green light and passed through the St Anna Gate into the walled Vatican.

Cesare saw a vanquished enemy retreating to his fortress but was confident he could dislodge him. He would only need to be in the crowd on a big public occasion and draw the Pope's attention. He could ask Monsignor Jacsin's advice as to the most suitable opportunity: after all, he had confirmed his friendship by slipping out word that there had been an obituary Mass for Cesare. As he cut through the colonnade and crossed St Peter's square, Cesare concluded that Jacsin must be angling to displace Lancini. He was only too willing to lend him a hand.

He pictured the scene: the Pope gravely saluting the crowd with slow gathering motions of his forearms, then his amazement and pleasure at the sight of his old friend who he believed dead, a hurried exchange and blessing, the Pope's recognition that he had been duped, the swift punishment of Lancini. Here Cesare's imagination failed him: would the swine be defrocked? Certainly he would be banished from the court whose sovereign he had misled. From the edge of the square, Cesare looked up to the wood-shuttered window of the Pope's study on the third and top floor of the Apostolic palace. He had the impression that he could open the shutters if he stretched out his hand.

Cesare did not, as was his recent habit, call at the wine shop on the way home. His wife, relieved to find he had recovered from his tetchiness, at last dared to ask about the recommendations. Cesare, euphoric, gave her assurance that all would be well, then rooted among his tools and paint tins. During the past weeks he had let the apartment block deteriorate but now, whistling fitfully, he set about repairs, watered the plants and polished the handrail of the stairs.

Friends of friends again sought Cesare's help and he assured them it would be forthcoming. Angela was surprised to hear how generous he was in his promises and how vague about their fulfilment. But Cesare was convinced of the eventual restoration of his influence, so convinced, in fact, that he was doing nothing to hasten it. Rather than himself seek the best occasion to see the Pope, he was waiting for a visit from Monsignor Jacsin.

When, like a bird alighting, Jacsin did appear one evening, ostensibly to visit his acquaintance in the building, Cesare invited him to his quarters for a drink. As Cesare added water to cloud their sambuca, Jacsin mentioned that it had been possible to put in a word for Cesare's relative, the young electrician.

The news pleased Cesare but, as he sat across the kitchen table from Jacsin, he pointed out that there was a bigger question to settle. "A dead man can't ask help for his friends," he said, "it has to be the other way around!"

"You want my advice?" asked Jacsin unnecessarily, as if forcing Cesare to commit himself.

Cesare said he would do what Jacsin suggested.

Tight around the mouth, Jacsin leant across the table to say: "Don't do anything."

It could have been gibberish for all Cesare understood. Jacsin repeated his message: "Listen to me, Cesare, and don't do anything."

"And let Monsignor Lancini bury me without trace?"

"It's nobody's fault," Jacsin said, "but that's the way it's gone. Remember the Holy Father has offered Mass for the repose of your soul. Think of that and try to keep in a state of grace."

Cesare thought of it. It seemed to him an enormity, somehow evil. He was oppressed by its spiritual weight. He drank his sambuca in one gulp. Was Jacsin a sanctimonious hypocrite or did he mean it? Was he in league with Lancini, each jealous of the other but both still more jealous of something they shared?

"You must take me as stupid, Monsignor, if you think I'm going to let myself be buried like that. Anyway, the Pope should know." Cesare straightened in his chair, dignified and indignant, but his artificial eye was that of a dead man.

"I'm glad you're thinking not only of yourself but also of the Holy Father, Cesare. For his sake you shouldn't do anything silly."

Cesare, sensing that implacable Jacsin would get the better of him in a long discussion, objected that the Pope would be delighted to see he was still alive.

"But his pleasure would be followed by bitterness," explained Jacsin, "because of the unfortunate way things have gone. It could have a dangerous effect on His Holiness."

Cesare was unconvinced.

"You seem to forget that His Holiness is an old man."

It took Cesare by surprise. Unconsciously he preserved an image of the Pope as the young priest he had known when he was an altar boy.

It was more real to him than the distant figure in the Vatican. Now, with Jacsin's words, came the realisation that the eager young priest had become an old man and his altar boy was old too, that he had had most of his ration.

Jacsin, he realised, was much younger, a little soured by whatever it was that twisted his mouth, but full of disquieting determination. Even Lancini, despite his paternalistic pose, could not be more than fifty, reflected Cesare. He is not merely a case of careful clerical conservation. He felt a tiredness, but at the same time a need to assert himself against Jacsin.

"You're as afraid as Lancini that I'll give the whole game away, aren't you? That a janitor you thought you could bury will upset the horse-and-cart."

"Aren't you afraid to do so, too?" asked Jacsin, and even though Cesare had lost all faith in the man, he recognised he had a threatening kind of dedication.

"The Holy Father is not merely old. Keep this to yourself: he's also a sick man, sicker than we'd want anyone to know. I'm only telling you this because you knew him many years ago. I'm sure you wouldn't want to add to his worries or shorten his life. A very sick man—and our only duty is to protect him."

Cesare felt it would be painful to breathe too deeply. He sensed they had trapped him. Jacsin spoke as if he utterly believed what he was saying, yet there was an undertow of ambiguity in the man. Cesare tried to resist the appeal the words had made. He was conscious that the silence spread all the way from his drab kitchen to the Vatican. He rose to break the spell that he felt Jacsin, so composed and black, was casting. He paced the room praying that the Pope would let him know what he should do.

Although his will was failing, he threatened once again to make his presence known on a public occasion. He said the Pope would not suffer even if Lancini and Jacsin did.

"You could deal a fatal blow to an old sick man," said Jacsin with deliberation, "and what would happen afterwards? Have you ever thought about that, Cesare? Think it over." Jacsin rose and took his broadbrimmed, black-felt, monsignorial helmet. "No one holds a position for ever."

No one. Jacsin's final thrust got home. Cesare thought of the Roman saying: a Pope dies, another is made. No one's position lasts for ever. He had not thought of that, nor contemplated the Pope dying. And when he did, his own position? That could depend on the good graces of Lancini and Jacsin. Cesare felt all fight go out of him. He did not want to start looking for a position at his age; he felt at least ten years older than he had before the conversation. He offered the monsignor another sambuca but the crow declined, saying he would have to be on his way.

Cesare called the lift for Jacsin, but the monsignor explained that, as he had spent longer than he had expected in the kitchen, he would postpone the visit to his friend. Cesare was sure that Jacsin had not intended to make that visit, that he had come solely to threaten him. The unwanted lift creaked down like a bucket being lowered into a dizzying well. Jacsin delayed his departure for a moment to say that Cesare could still write if he wanted help for his friends.

"To the Pope, Lancini or you?" Cesare croaked almost inaudibly.

"It's all the same," said Jacsin with a rare, condescending smile, "but don't forget, Cesare, that 'no' is an answer also."

Jacsin's last words remained in Cesare's mind as if to protect him from replaying the rest of the conversation. For a long time, that night, Cesare sat stock-still in his janitor's cage, not turning even when the trundling of the lift announced the descent of the building's inhabitants. He was trying to convince himself that Lancini and Jacsin, the Vatican bureaucracy, the Roman curia hated him. He was resisting the realisation that for them he was not even a dot, nothing.

In the following days, he carried out his tasks mechanically. It was Pina, come to thank him for her son's assumption by the State broadcasting corporation, who remarked to Angela on the change in Cesare. Angela said she preferred him serene rather than irritable.

But he was more sere than serene. He began wandering the streets late at night. He returned to his solitary drinking but sipped his wine slowly, inducing at most a slight fuzziness. He changed physically. It was not merely that he went days without shaving and the beard which emerged was white in contrast to his still dark hair. He seemed a shrunken version of himself, as happens to men who have suffered a severe stroke. But no doctor could detect Cesare's stroke. His good eye had become as opaque as the other was fixed. It no longer looked shrewdly outwards.

Cesare took to attending St Peter's square of a Sunday for the Pope's noon appearance. He stood

among the polyglot crowd as they waited for the window to be opened, for the arras to be let down, and then for the white, elevated dot to appear. As the Pope spoke a few words each Sunday before leading the people in prayer, an atrocious suspicion grew in Cesare: that Lancini and Jacsin had substituted a double for the Pope. His voice sounded like a poor recording, his words were anonymous, his stiff gestures could be a mimicry of a pope's gestures. It was not only that Cesare was dead for the Pope; the Pope was dead also, and that pair had substituted a puppet Pope. Cesare dug out an old pair of binoculars and took them to the square for the Sunday appointment. The double was too perfect: it was the Pope all right, and haggard at that.

Cesare felt that they had grown old together, the only difference being that the Pope had remained slim while he had thickened. He began to keep vigil at night when the traffic died, when the square was vast and dark with only the two fountains, Scripture and Tradition, plashing in unison. Seated by the obelisk, he would see the light in the Pope's study switch-off, the light in his bathroom go on, then, finally, that in his bedroom. It was always the last light in that great dreaming stone city, and while it was on Cesare felt the link unbroken. When it snapped off, he was alone in the cobblestoned square, facing St Peter's facade. This reminded him of a bank entrance, overlooked by the histrionic statues of the saints which lined the colonnade, overshadowed by the stone mass of the Apostolic palace.

He was pleased when the Pope's light began to be doused sooner, for he himself was tiring earlier. Indeed he had been dying at an accelerated rate since Monsignor Jacsin's last visit, just as surely as an Australian Aboriginal will die once the bone has been pointed against him. He was more understanding with Angela but in a distant way, and attended slowly to his janitor's tasks like the old man he had become. He did not bother the curialists with requests for help for friends of his friends who, in any case, were diminishing. To his annoyance, he often recalled Jacsin's phrase: " 'No' is an answer also." He had come to understand, in his nights spent in St Peter's square, that there was something greater than the Pope, but he was uncertain whether it was God or the Roman curia. He could not hear the apartment lift trundling down without seeing a bucket descending into a bottomless well as black as a broad-brimmed, felt, monsignorial helmet.

STEPHEN MURRAY-SMITH

The Hothouse Society

New Guinea Notes

It's ten past one in the morning of 5 May 1974, and we are coming in over the Coral Sea, starting our descent into Port Moresby. Thirty-two years ago I was down below standing on the deck of the *Taroona,* with my Bren gun on its A.A. mounting pointing to the sky, as we rolled our way to an appointment with the Nipponese. The plane is full of tired people and mine is almost the only light on. Then I was a young man in the peak of condition, now a fat old fellow stuffed too full of sandwiches and beer and crammed into too small a seat. It's starting to get hot and muggy. Then we were off to the wars, now to an exercise in nostalgia, academic status-seeking and the satisfaction of a curiosity to see New Guinea again before independence.

Port Moresby. There's a teachers' college on Ward's Strip, and a suburb at the Bootless Inlet turnoff, where we were once camped well out in the bush. Murray Barracks is now a trim-and-tidy, grass-lawn mini-town, one of the last places you can see the Australian flag flying. I thought I could distinguish the hill where I fired that Bren gun magazine at the low-flying Zero — I like to think perhaps the first shots fired in anger by the AIF on the New Guinea mainland. The town and harbor seem much the same, but suburbs on the Canberra pattern now stretch well out into the savannah. It's strange to see shops and markets — a reminder that the New Guinea I knew was very much a closed military society. The villages at Kila and Hanuabada are now built of bits of galvanised iron instead of pandanus, and the natives wear shirts on their backs — strictly forbidden in the old days! I was lucky to be in New Guinea early enough in the war to see the fag-end of the Hubert Murray era, and to live in the bush with the men of that era. I am amused to have this colonialist perspective. Incidentally, John Gunther tells me that no-one now is precisely sure where New Guinea Force headquarters were!

I find the university attractive, but I do have the advantage of living in the vice-chancellor's house! The concrete architecture is tropical brutalist, rather strange in the impermanency of New Guinea, but with touches of informality (the 'great hall' is simply a space between two buildings which has been roofed over) and even of whimsy (the betel nut palms planted in John Gunther's honor) which I like. And the roving and colorful population of students, and of women and children wandering around too, give it a homely atmosphere. To find a better bookshop than you would see on any Australian campus is a delight. Interesting to see how in the Waigani seminar sessions, held in the main lecture theatre, blacks occupy the seats at the sides and back, whites at the front and middle. Yet I'm also told that never at a Waigani seminar before has the stage largely been held by blacks, passionately arguing their positions on education here and its future.

This is fine though there are overtones of the gilded youth abusing the institutions that are gilding them. Much talk about the need to eschew educational trappings on the Australian model and to get back to the villages to lead the simple life and — presumably — to lead the people from the grassroots. However there are rich pickings in an expanding and 'localised' New Guinea administration for graduates from university, teachers college or administrative college, or indeed for drop-outs; nor is there much evidence that relatively sophisticated proto-intellectuals are

any more welcome in the villages, or any more happy there, than we were when we went back to our parents' homes from university. Certainly both John Kasaipwalova in the Trobriands, and John Kaputin on the Gazelle Peninsula, are grass-roots men — but, one suspects, largely to build up politically-important local power bases. I was sorry when Kasaipwalova told me that he had virtually abandoned writing — he has been amongst the most impressive of the up-and-coming New Guinea literary men.

I introduced myself enthusiastically to Kasaipwalova at a party at the Inglises, hoping to do some good for *Overland* — we once accepted a story of his, but owing to crossed lines it was printed elsewhere before we got round to it. He didn't seem interested. I'm told a lot of the New Guinea intellectuals are sick of the patronage of white do-gooders. Hank Nelson has a piece on this in that admirable Penguin book of his, *Papua New Guinea: Black Unity or Black Chaos?* Yet I'm not so sure. It probably depends on how it's done and what obligations are implied. I worked fairly hard in New Guinea on a proposal that Australian literary magazines launch an annual fellowship for a New Guinea writer — a month or two in Australia, actually living in our homes — and got a perfectly civil and interested response from people like Vincent Eri — author of the first New Guinea novel, *The Crocodile* (also in Penguin), and (at the time) director of the New Guinea Office of Information. Writers may be proud people, but how many will knock back a free lunch? And I see no reason why they should.

One beaut thing about New Guinea is the informality, in public as in private life. Jim Griffin has an attractive theory that in many ways the Melanesian and Australian life-styles overlap, which is one reason why we have been better colonialists than one would expect. (For a corrective on this, see Hank Nelson's book, particularly on the whites' attempts to run the House of Assembly in its earlier days.) Two examples of this. I told one of that small band of Australians who have served the emergent New Guinea government so well as advisers, because they have identified themselves with its aspirations, that I would like to see the old Government House, on the verandah of which Hubert Murray held his Legislative Council meetings and no doubt decided *inter alia* what punitive expeditions to send in what directions. (*Most* unfair to Hubert, who was a Good Thing in many ways.) My friend ran me up in his rattle-trap car, past the policeman on duty, and while we were having a gig Mrs Critchley, only a week in office as Mrs High Commissioner, came out and spent the best part of an hour showing us round and giving us a drink. An hour later, after lunch in that hangover from the colonial time-before, the Hotel Papua (waiters in white lap-laps), I asked him whether one should tip in New Guinea. He excused himself for half-a-minute, went across to another table in the dining room, then came back and said: "The Minister for Finance says No!"

I told another of these 'white advisers' that I hoped when he was finally marched to the plane by some future New Guinea government they would at least pin the Order of the Bird of Paradise on his breast before they deported him. "I just hope the pin's not too long," was his reply. Many of the advisers are beginning to feel their continued presence no longer compatible with the dignity of the New Guinea government, which seems a pity in a way, and Somare told me he

has every intention of using useful white men indefinitely.

One incident I didn't like during the Waigani Seminar was when (a) a Samoan teacher now at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji gave a speech denouncing colonial hangovers in Samoa, the derivative architecture etc. and the sapping of an indigenous life-style (b) a white colleague of this man's got up and said (in effect) "I'm tired of you black people going on like this and adopting postures when you're getting the best of both worlds" (c) the Samoan then denouncing the white man for making an unfair personal attack on him (I had personally thought it a perfectly fair comment which needed a restrained answer) (d) the white man at a subsequent session produced a written apology. As Hank Nelson suggests in his book: Race relations will be satisfactory when it is possible to call a pompous black man an arrogant bastard. The Samoan, I regret to say, is a novelist of some repute.

I caused a little offence one night at a dinner by remarking that, while I felt the atmosphere of the University of Papua New Guinea was admirably liberal, nevertheless the egghead-government nexus in Port Moresby struck me as just as stifling, swollen-headed and incestuous as the similar nexus in Canberra. I hardly think one can demand that New Guinea academics stop influencing government, quite the reverse. It's obviously got spin-offs for teaching as well as for sane legislation. Yet when one gets across the Owen Stanleys one realises how unrepresentative of New Guinea Port Moresby is, and how tempting it must be for those living there to see it as the centre of all things. I think there's a case to be argued for the view that the establishment of the Australian National University in Canberra was the worst thing ever to happen to Australian university life. The difference here is, of course, that Port Moresby, for all its ethnocentrism, is very much a teaching university, which helps it to keep its feet on the ground.

But the Port Moresby liberal establishment is a danger in another way. A week or so making delighted contacts with white teachers and administrators around the University and the Creative Arts Centre, appreciating their involvement with and knowledge of New Guinea, their patience, humor and sometimes courage, and one starts to get the impression that New Guinea is well served by its foreign population ('expatriate' is the euphemism). Nor can one help but be impressed by the paternalistic virtues of some of the old-time planters who have held on — men in their sixties and seventies who in many respects *are* New Guineans. The cure for this fantasy is to see the scores of hundreds of whites in some of the boozing clubs in the towns, or see some young Australian drop-out, trying to look like a patrol officer in moustache, shorts and desert boots, yelling at the blacks because there's no-one left in Australia at whom you can yell. The Ugly Australian who's in New Guinea for the rip-off is as much in evidence as ever, I suspect; and for every white liberal who gives a village woman with her great burden of kau-kau a lift to the market, there are probably dozens up there for an end-of-Empire ego trip.

John Gunther, may his tribe increase, took me one day to the Creative Arts Centre at Moresby, which is one of the brainwaves of that extraordinary man Ulli Beier, who with his wife has done more for the arts in New Guinea in ten years than the Australians did in fifty. One of my regrets is that I failed to meet him. The Centre, gouged out of a little valley near the university, is an informal hostel for village artists and writers. Hundreds apply every year, and a dozen or two get a scholarship of about fifteen dollars a week to come and live here, learn about tools and materials, rub up against other Niuginians and get on with their work: screen-printing, carving beams, drawing, painting, metal-working, acting or just sitting down and writing poetry. Gentle Tom Craig, with his soft Scottish accent, was surely an inspired choice as director, though it's hard to imagine him being very directive about anything, unless it's watching the booze consumption and seeing that a fair day's work is done. Nita and I were extremely happy to meet, for instance, the Chimbu artist Kauage, who looks like a pug and I'm told is pretty good in a scrap, and who's making a big name for himself in *repoussé* work; and the delightful little Akis, from Simbai, inland from Madang, a lithe figure with a permanent grin, whose black and white drawings of traditional figures are exciting, humorous and inexhaustibly fertile. While collectors are paying hundreds, if not thousands of dollars for traditional Sepik masks and the like, you can get a Kauage copper relief for fifty or sixty dollars, an Akis drawing for thirty, and (in the Girl Guides' shop in Moresby!) a Chambri Lakes two-faces pot, which it wouldn't be hard to pass off as a Picasso piece, for five dollars!

I'm not priding myself on picking up cheap pieces, because these are not cheap by New Guinea standards, but I am mentioning the prices because I think this kind of vulgarity is always interesting, and also because it is pleasant to be in a land where bloody good art is still relatively accessible to the consumer.

I was fascinated to learn that, while Niuginians may want independence (actually on a strictly statistical basis probably most of them don't), republicanism seems to have as little currency as theoretical socialism. "The day we get independence," Michael Somare told me, "there'll be a letter in the mail to London applying for membership of the Commonwealth. It costs nothing and there's lots of advantages." It was common knowledge while I was in Moresby that pressure had been put on the Queen to award a number of gongs during her recent visit, but that she had demurred because honors can only be awarded twice a year. Since then I see that Sir Paul Lapun and Sir Horace Niall have been 'created'. (Horrie Niall once told me, in 1942, not to read at the table when I was having breakfast with him, which now makes me feel quite distinguished. He and I were joint denizens of Leahy's Farm in Wau, and the only inhabitants of the whole Bulolo Valley, at that time!) I'm also told that an imposing honors list is being arranged for post-independence. One up against Gough's duck-house!

We were constantly surprised driving around Moresby, and later on at Goroka and in the Markham and Bulolo valleys, at the lack of resentment towards people with white faces, the readiness of the workers on the roadsides to help with advice and directions, the easy friendliness with which a Papuan girl will slip into the car saying "Oh, Hubert Murray's grave isn't all that easy to find, I'll take you there myself and show you". I know there are sometimes unpleasant incidents on the roads — murders following what are sometimes quite minor accidents — and these must make any driver uneasy and certainly do nothing for New Guinea's image. And Imelda Palmer says she noticed scowls from young adults around Moresby. But generally, on the roads, in the villages, in the towns, Nita and I were treated with courteous dignity. Even the peddlars are never obtrusive about their wares, but wait patiently for the purchaser to initiate a deal. I think too of how our son David spent three weeks over Christmas staying with a family in a village on the island of Misima — an island where there are no white people and where his hosts had only a few words of pidgin at their command. Yet they built on a special kitchen before he arrived so that he could be better catered for! I wonder how many Australian families would take in a strange young Niuginian on similar terms. Talk about culture shock!

There was a lot of talk about languages at the Waigani seminar, and argument about whether, for instance, English should be used in primary schools. Actually Nita and I were astonished at how well some of the little boys we met from village schools could chatter to us in English. I think I was more surprised, however, at the inroads pidgin (or 'Neo-Melanesian' to give it its polite title) has been making, even in Papua. It's only fifteen years or so since I was being denounced around the ANU as a corrupt neo-colonialist for saying a few words in defence of pidgin as a *lingua franca* — but now it's academically respectable. I'm at a bit of a disadvantage with modern, 'civil' pidgin: it has words like *senis* (change), *bilasim* (to decorate) and *bung* (market) which were no part of our military world, while words we used all the time, like *braspan* (haversack), are little known now. Even the pidgin pidgin which is all I can now speak is immensely helpful in getting around, though it's disconcerting at times to ask someone for assistance in pidgin, to be answered in excellent English by a bloke who turns out to be an inspector of schools!

Who discovered the highlands? Not, according to some anthropologists, the ancestors of the present inhabitants. There were some *Urvolk* around somewhere. Not, according to the new nationalists, the white man. However if we get away from that tendentious word 'discover', and ask who were responsible for bringing the New Guinea highlands into the ambience of contemporary consciousness, I suppose no-one would deny the role of Jim Taylor, the patrol officer, and Mick Leahy, the prospector. Mick Leahy pushed west from the Bismarcks in 1931 and found the Bena Bena River. Two years later he joined forces with Jim Taylor and penetrated the Wahgi and the Mount Hagen country. (Jim Taylor went on to explore the country west of Mount Hagen in a fifteen-month expedition in 1938-1939.)

Leahy and Taylor stumbled on a whole new

human population of perhaps a million people. It was certainly the most dramatic discovery of the twentieth century, and the last great opening of a new world that mankind will see. In some ways it was our equivalent of the discovery of the South Seas in the eighteenth century, for the existence of this vigorous, relatively healthy culture and people had hardly been expected. Despite Colin Simpson's writings it remains a strangely little-known epic, meaningful to anthropologists and administrators and to the politicians who realise only too well that the highlands people, working as a bloc, could dominate Niugini, but as an event overshadowed by the war and a world in post-colonial turmoil.

Leahy and Taylor are still healthy men in their early seventies. Taylor lives near Goroka, Leahy at Zenag on the Wau-Lae road, where his property commands a magnificent prospect of *kunai* country with a backdrop of the Buang Mountains. To meet and talk to them is, as I understand Tony Morphett once said, "like meeting Hume and Hovell". Both gave us generous hospitality, Jim and Mrs Taylor at a splendid Melanesian *muu-muu* in their magical garden at night, Mick and Jeanette Leahy on the verandah of what in Australia would be called their homestead. Both men are sensitive and thoughtful, and knew the significance of their 'penetrations'. Taylor's patrol reports are of considerable literary quality and are now being prepared for publication by Peter Ryan, of Melbourne University Press. Mick Leahy has always been a dedicated photographer — he described to us how he developed and preserved his thousands of 'first contact' photographs on the march — and his priceless collection, both movie and still, is happily now safely housed at the National Library. "Have a look at this panorama. Now that's the top of Mount So-and-so, and there's Mount What's-its-Name, and there's a show of gold just beneath that ridge, and there you can see the spear-park — we always got them to park their spears: you can dodge arrows, but spears are nasty."

If meeting Taylor and Leahy is like having a beer with Hume and Hovell, seeing the Goroka show is like seeing the Lascaux caves being painted fifteen thousand years ago. It was the insistent urging of others which drove us to Goroka for the show, rather than our own instincts — we had feared something rather shoddy and commercialised. To fly up there early that Sunday morning and spend the day at the showgrounds was one of the most memorable things we have done in our lives. As one landed in this beautiful valley and stepped out of the plane drumming and chanting filled the air. On the way to the showgrounds our Land-Rover, stalled in the middle of the road, was charged and surrounded by hundreds of armed tribesmen ululating as they jogged up the road to the assembly points. For six hours we watched, heard, smelled six thousand men and women dancing, cavorting, mock-fighting in the arena: the mud-men, the grass-men, the moss-men, the men with fire on their heads, the warriors with fire in their bellies, the superbly decorated and accoutred villagers from fifty miles around and more. "It is like a human aviary," my colleague Diana Heath said. There can surely be no ethnological event with the vigor, veracity and immediacy of this anywhere in the world. There would have been two or three hundred whites, visitors and locals, watching — no more. And this for the last great spectacle of its kind the world can mount!

A bonus was seeing the armed and feathered warriors, with their bare-chested women (Nita admired those firm breasts) shopping for meat from the deep-freeze in the local self-service stores next morning. It's worth mentioning because, although the fierce emotions and hardly-hidden aggressions at the show could easily have been (and sometimes were) terrifying, it was moving to see how the whole complex organisation was controlled in good humor by a handful of young men wandering through and between the rival groups with walkie-talkies. There have been fights during the shows before, so much so that there has been some talk of banning them. This year, fortunately, there was none, though one contestant's wives killed each other because he had taken one to the show and left the other at home. I asked a police officer at the showground when the winners were going to be announced. "Next week, I hope", was his reply.

Anthropologists and archaeologists are in the pooh throughout New Guinea. "The anthropologists come into our homes and ask us impertinent questions and the archaeologists dig up the bones of our ancestors." I happen to believe that people should be asked questions (though preferably not impertinent ones) and that Truganini's bones should be left in the Tasmanian Museum. These attitudes are more rational than the opposing ones, which doesn't mean to say they will win in emotional political situations. Unfortunately the

resentment of scholars comes from the top as well as the bottom in New Guinea — *more* from the top than the bottom, I should think — and they are used as whipping boys by just those educated indigenes who should be behind what they are trying to do. New Guinea needs a history for its own self-respect, and while it is not only the archaeologists who will give them one, in a paperless society what they are going to have to say is obviously vital. Some day the descendants of the contemporary New Guinea leaders who denounce the interfering white researchers are going to thank god that the records, films and artifacts now being produced are in existence. Old New Guinea is disappearing so quickly that the recording of languages and cultures needs every encouragement from the New Men. I am told, incidentally, that among Niuginian students there is often a psychological 'block' about the past, and that, shown films of (say) cannibal grandparents, they have protested that the films were faked and have refused to watch them.

I spent many months outside Lae in 1942. One day we would patrol down the Markham Road — as the lead man of a three-man patrol, I remember once reflecting that I was the aggressive spearhead of the entire allied land forces in the Pacific, as indeed I was — and another day the Japs would come up. I remember sitting miserably and sweatily with Rob Hamilton on midnight sentry duty at the Ngasawapum turnoff, wondering if that noise was the Japs coming to cut our throats or a pig kicking a tin. And I remember the raid on Heath's Plantation when we achieved the distinction of being perhaps the only Australian army unit whose first man killed in action was its commanding officer. Nita wanted to see the bridge near Heath's which three of us blew up that night, and strangely enough our bus from Goroka broke down just as we passed over it. A more imposing concrete structure now than the telegraph-pole bridge we sent up!

So actually driving straight down the Markham Road into Lae was like entering heaven on rollerskates: it was as weird a feeling. And I never realised, back there in the bush, how beautifully situated Lae is, with its vistas of sea and backdrop of mountains. It was strange walking around our ambush sites with Keith Knoblett, then one of our officers and now a dairy farmer near Lae, and entering villages to talk to old men who remembered our secret camps. Nita was kind enough to say that these experiences here, and at Wau, were the most moving she had in New Guinea. For myself, I'm not sure. Always behind me there were ghosts of other young men and of myself. I felt a *voyeur*.

Since coming back to Australia I've read again the journal I wrote back in the wartime years. "Hm, not as bad as I had thought," was my reaction, but I was pulled up by one phrase — a reference to the "disgusting habit" of chewing betel nut. Good god, could I have ever written that! Boozing and smoking are obviously much more disgusting (though, to do myself justice, I had neither vice then). It reminded me forcibly how superior and priggish we must have been — and ignorant — for all our close association with the natives and for all the fact that we AIF blokes never much liked those old hands who prided themselves as "coon-bashers" (a phrase I also noticed in that earlier diary). How easy it is to mentally re-write your own personal history.

Why the "Hothouse Society"? Well, for a start, it was bloody hot. But, more than anything, I got the impression of New Guinea today as a forcing ground. A nation *manqué,* seeking ways to discover itself, trying to assimilate experiences not yet its own and to learn lessons only partly rooted in its own past. Anger, frustration, humor, courage, fear. Rex Mortimer, now professor of political science at Port Moresby, telling me how marvellous his students from the villages are, but how, in a society without a book and newspaper tradition, they find it extremely difficult to understand even how Australia ticks, let alone Indonesia, their neighbor. Yet, as the old Canadian radical poet Joe Wallace wrote once, "we learn by doing, not by being told". New Guinea has its problems, not only the fissiparous ones but some much harder. Once you've aroused expectations and aspirations, can you dampen them down again? (Young people who have a dream of being doctors and nurses, without a hope of making it, either educationally or financially.) If you can dampen it down, doesn't this simply mean more power to the indigenous (and possibly ruthless) elites? How do you get off the back of the educational juggernaut? (This was largely what the Waigani seminar was about — pity we don't have some of them down here.) The Japanese are doing well in New Guinea now, winning the second world war at a late remove. (Somare is supposed to have said to a friend of mine: "You Australian colonialists are upset because we're letting them have a slice of the cake as well as

you".) Get the Japs to harness the Purari? What political guarantees will they want before they — or anyone else — pour hundreds of millions into New Guinea? What is the point of industrialising New Guinea? When will the industrialists demand the payoff, and in what kind of trade goods?

The Niuginians are a splendid people. Quick to learn, responsive, generous. We met journalists, politicians, teachers, artists and writers, administrators, taxi-drivers and airline hostesses with qualities one would like to see among their Australian equivalents. Somare himself, and the people he has gathered around him, can only inspire admiration and respect: though he has to put up with some awful no-hopers in and around his government too. (So does Whitlam.) To visit New Guinea in 1974 reminded us of going to live in Prague in 1949: the dew was on the revolution and "the dawn brings forth a brighter day", to quote that old song we sang so earnestly. Although so many Niuginians view independence with foreboding, around Moresby at any rate one felt spring in the air and spring in the step. To move from the Australian beer-guts society to this was like a triple shot of adrenalin. I would like to have the courage to take a job there for a while. But — I hope they get away with it. It's a rich country, in resources as well as in people — far richer than we ever realised when we were soldiers there. In a world moving into an apocalyptic environmental and population crisis, I hope New Guinea is not too rich to survive.

FOUR POEMS BY GEORGE MOUSSOU

George Moussou's native tongue is Rumanian. He has lived most of his life in Athens. He writes his poetry in English.

Australia's indigenous spirituality leads us to existential gestures. Our poets essaying a new world in an old country find themselves desperately alienated. Australia is not our home but our limbo.

George Moussou embodies in his combination of spiritual homelessness and Byzantine intensity something of the same feeling about a Europe that is no longer a provider of homes.

In the world there are fewer and fewer places to which people can feel they belong. Home is at best a sort of airport transit lounge.

It is this parallel which makes George Moussou's poetry so strange and yet so relevant to an Australian readership.

As with Pablo Neruda, Borges, Patrick White, Robert Lowell, the writing that follows expresses the cri de coeur *with which we communicate one to the other in this sad age.*

Max Harris

That the Monster should Deserve

Moon marvel of the TV,
Marvel TV of the moon,
TV moon of the marvel,
Give us this day!

Trying to be originally complicated
and/or intellectually confusing,
the historian of tomorrow,
like the one of yesterday,

—like the woman who delivered
under anesthesia,
and happily died
before she realised
her baby had two heads, one her husband's,
the other looking like good, funny uncle Tom—

will put all italics, but his signature,
to make both text and name
stand out by optical contrast.

He will write something,
that the monster should deserve,
something like the anonymous
infant of multiple heads,
and title the product,
Peace, or something.

Song For M.M.M.M.*

Sign of life
and instant heroism.

Protect us, Lord,
from the mob
and the dangers of the glass.
Give us Hellas
and a throb,
or at least a nod
to approve our hedonism.

Kyrie eleison
Kyrie eleison
Kyrie eleison
I may be praising badly, but
I don't praise you enough.

Signs of life.
Oh, Galbraith of the judo school,
and sweet Socrates of the lake,
of the lake,
of the lake,
keep your cool,
be with us
over this night
over this good night.
Amen.

*My Most Magnificent Majesty.

Immigration

Let us sing,
Let us play,
Oysters on a fiddle,
Breakers on a flute,
Sea-gulls on a cello.

Let us sing,
Let us play,
Tear-drops on a whisper,
Whispers on a cross,
Crosses on a mast.

Let us sing,
Let us play,
Hide 'n seek on a football,
Sinners on a tombstone,
Lovers on a chessboard.

Let us sing,
Let us play,
Roamers on a pebble,
Settlers on a dollar,
Killers on a bed.

Corruption

Come on,
said one angel to another:
Let's gather some misery!
Maybe we can sell it at the junk shop
and get ourselves some scratch.

Or, maybe the man on the top floor,
the writer, you know,
will see the business in it
and pay us a good price.

Or somebody can make it into a work of art
and put it in some gallery to sell,
so we can get a commission.

GEORGE MOUSSOU

Or, maybe we can melt it ourselves
on the flame of your sword (mine has just run out of fuel)
and make it into nails to nail cradles, coffins,
emergency exit doors, managers' desks, or
mahogany wainscots;
they must always pay something for that.

Or why not make it into a horse-shoe
for a new Western with John Wayne?
or into an engagement ring with a green stone for hope;
or into an empty tank to fill
with oxygen in a hospital;
or into a complicated cross to screw
on some pointed roof by an avenue;
or into thumb-tacks to tack some regulation or announcement,
or some notice on a notice-board.
They pay, I am sure, for anything of that sort.

Or, if we are so lucky,
into a detonator or a trigger or something . . .

So, why not gather some misery, right from here?
God won't get mad at us for an extra, quick buck.
Look at yourself! Your halo needs shining so badly!
Come on!

Anzac Veteran

After a newspaper photo, Melbourne Anzac march, 1968.

I

Marching to the same songs
with some of his mates
the dream clings —
its sweet and sour taste.
Over eighty
he tells the Press he's
hardly missed a year:
uniforms, music, crowds
bullets
on the route to memory's
trenches

II

His bravery is talked about,
written in his photo, stance —
the legend of years

ignored in a march of warnings
as someone shoots haywire into the crowd
the dream, the dream set to music
among antic front lines
I'm afraid of.

KATHERINE GALLAGHER

Famous Blackfridays

the beasts in the valley the signals
we send across it
it's true, they exist simply
for the shoe —
sock-sound of it, but don't
stop delivering the train
we're close
to so much suppleness our Tabbys are kneading
harder than ever our children
are stuffing their codpieces with cotton they're ready
to give us their blessing

"A Place to Maintain the Duck" we'll call it
& the commandments will be few:
one feather covers everyone
don't talk with your arms full
don't whisper with your fingers
don't let your elbows flutter out from the egg
& give us away

as they did on that second of many
famous blackfridays when hunters shot beads
from their guns & down they fell
& beasts became & now
it's a circus train we wait for, that crawls
beneath our feet, with cages like calligraphy.

PHILIP HAMMIAL

Alba Bondiensis

Powderpuff in smog
  Smooger sun,
    Pale urine air,
      The beeswinged Pacific
A sea of unstirred, cold soup

  Stoplights blink
  Rosemintcadmium, rose
  Mintcadmiumrose

Thurifers of blue monoxide
Perform perfumatory rites
And eddy round the acolytes
  whose spit
Is flying like prawns
In a swarm in a kerolamp
  whose spit
Is flying like
An Archerfish Olympics
  (who are
Spitting a fair bit),
And clearing their throats
  to welcome
  The new-foaled day.

DENIS KEVANS

Archbishop

Archbishop has a way of saying Jeez-sus,
He uses the "us" of surPLUS, and resuscitate,
He susses down on the second syllable thus
  Jeez-SUS,
And codas with "he that is called the Kharyest,"
  or the cry as in "Karysler"
The two "ch's" seize in the gear-race,
  "ka-awled the Kharye-eest" — THUS
"Where is Jeezsus, he that is ka-awled
  the Kharye-eest?"

And as Archbishop does not khar-air to
  answer the khar-whest-chun, let us suggest
that Jar-eez-scus that is khar-awled
  the Kharye-eest is where

Everyone else who is poor, indigent,
Outcast, unclean, low caste, Asian,
Improvident, suspect, fatherless, black,
Inspired, broke, subversive is

  at the bottom
of the Khar-ist-chun
  invitation list.

DENIS KEVANS

Ribbon-gums

Left behind unaxed still
Holding to the ends
Of streamers, the ship gone.

Bark grates on wind and
Fist of green fingers,
A bough waves a tattered hand.

Grief creaks in black
Cockatoos flap like crape
Cutouts of hill mist.

With the Koori people
As on lakes swans,
Even the ghosts are dark.

DAVID CAMPBELL

HIM

Today, Monday, 9.20. 14, I had a strange dream: homosex., with my own double as partner. Strangely autoerotic feelings; the impression that I'd like to have a mouth just like mine to kiss, a neck that curves just like mine, a forehead just like mine (seen from the side).
Bronislaw Malinowski: *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*

That night he came to my bed and lay by my side, and his eyes
locked upon mine, not looking as from a mirror
but curious, intent, though all that I am he knew;
and his lips, so other, so known, were fevered and soft
on my mouth, and I burned, yet till then had not dreamed such passion.

All things of which I was innocent he knew how to impart
and nothing was strange between us, and nothing was withheld
for his eyes had no single secret, his hands knew everything;
and to every part of him I delivered up all myself
in a guiltless joy, since he had such claims on me.

And nightlong, lifelong, through all the dreams shifting landscapes
we clove together, childlike, and yet, like warriors, grave
till an instant before the dawn. And then I wept, and reached out,
knowing such grief as a child bereft knows forever,
watching my only lover, my own self, walking away.

RANDOLPH STOW

humanity vs industry
(from a series)

it is written
man is higher
he can think
BUT
after "carefully considering
your honor
the curious habits of dogs"
we find man
guilty of
self-slaughter
defamation of character
SIEG HEIL:
the whips crack
the cogs jump
the circle continues
the mindless circle i mean
SIEG HEIL
dogs
also
chase tails
artists
stand/write together
stop this wheels disease
can't turn back the clock
but we can
set the alarm
they never have listened
but will they listen now here we go round the mushroom cloud
the mushroom cloud
the mushroom cloud
here we go round the mushroom cloud
on a cold & frosty
hot & sweaty
a tishoo
a tishoo
puff

will u listen?
17th century england
promised land
no hassling hyping
complete freedom
all matters from beginning to end
hands & hearts of men proud of their craft
the child their's
their's the soil ploughed
their's the seed sown
their's the wheaten bread
their's the woollen cloth
& around the fire
father played the flute
children sang the song
& in the kitchen
baking
was being done
all matters from beginning to end
hands & hearts of men
but greed
led to mindless inventions
unemployment
lowering of wages
thinking
lowering of HUMANITY
where was god?
church encouraged INDUSTRIOUSNESS
encouraged factory children
prostitution
pollution
encouraged
SIEG HEIL
in 50 years
man the individual
became
man the vegetable
&
all i ask is
how's your garden?

GRAHAME PITT

There they go and I suppose we'll never hear the end of it.

IAN TURNER

My Long March

With a discussion of Mr David Caute's fellow-travellers

It didn't take me long after I joined the Communist Party in 1945 to learn that, behind the immediate hands I reached out to grasp, there was a whole world of men (mostly) and women (a few) who were 'our people'. Actually, I had counted myself a communist from 1943 and a socialist from 1938. The conversion came surprisingly easy for a boy from the bush . . .

A small, hot, dry Wimmera wheat town called Nhill. The mile-post opposite our front gate was a big deal; it was just halfway along the highway between Melbourne and Adelaide. North of the town, the over-cropped Mallee land was turning itself into sand and swallowing the fences and the rough bush roads. A few miles to the west there was a patch of unworkable semi-desert. Going south-east, you were into better wheat country, brown-soil plains studded with stark white silos pointing accusing fingers at a sky which didn't offer enough rain. A popular local story told of a farmer who had come into town to ask his bank manager about an overdraft. The manager said that he would have to go out and inspect the property. "Don't bother," said the farmer, pointing out the office window. "There it is blowing past."

When I was nine or ten (that is, in 1931-32) my father, a stock and station agent, was telling his clients, who were also his friends, that the price of wheat was down again, and that their wool—I think it was cross-bred, but it may have been merino—was fetching only twelve or fourteen pence a pound. If it was fine, the bagmen slept in the culvert outside our front gate. If it was wet, they preferred the stock-pens in the showgrounds across the road, though the local shire council liked to keep them moving. Most days there was one or more of them at our back door, wanting a billy of tea and a bite to eat. It was always the back door; they knew their place.

Clearing sales were great occasions. They were conducted on the property—the life of a man and a woman going under the hammer. Neighbors from miles around gathered to see it all go up for sale: the stock, the implements, the stores, the furniture, heap after heap of the scrap metal which accumulates around every farm. The wife provided the lunch—cold mutton, mashed potatoes and tomato sauce, and a tank-full of strong white sugared tea. After the sale was over, the family owned nothing; they could walk off their land, free. I was my father's runner and penciller; occasionally I was allowed to help Mr Mac, the auctioneer, call the bids. At the time it was high drama; later I recalled it as bitter tragedy.

It was many years before I knew that John Shaw Neilson had lived and written in Nhill, that Bob Menzies was born in Jeparit, that Percy Leason was a Kaniva boy. In those days the hero was Ludo Schultz, a muscly ball of a blacksmith who carried the Nhill football team almost single-handed and who could do a jack-knife and double flip off the top tower at the swimming pool.

At night there was the wireless. I remember "Dad and Dave", "Martin's Corner" ("Number 96" minus forty years) and Charlie Vaude tapping his pencil on the studio table as he intoned the latest news from Lords: "And Bradman hooks a loose ball from Bowes to the boundary for another four." There were books to read. I remember the Saint, Hopalong Cassidy, the Scarlet Pimpernel, Bulldog Drummond and Billy Bunter. Our bookshelves carried a complete Dickens, but I never got past the first chapter of *Pickwick Papers*.

We were a solid middle-class family. That is, we mixed with the doctors, the lawyers, the bank-managers, and a selection of teachers and farmers.

Not with the station-master, the postmaster or the shopkeepers—the stratification was clear. Some concern was expressed when it was discovered that I had swapped my meat sandwiches for the tomato-sauce sandwiches brought to school by my mate Pat, whose father was an Irish laborer, out of work. My father was officer-class and sound R.S.L. He also belonged to some mystery which I suppose must have been the Masons. Years after he died I discovered (rather, my sister did) that he was descended from a long line of British town clerks and clerics. My mother was upper middle class, of the Scots landed gentry, and Nhill was not her cup of tea. Metaphorically speaking. In fact, everyone drank tea all the time — except when supper was served during bridge parties, when milk-coffee was *de rigeur*. Oddly, no one except the doctors and the lawyers had booze in the house, though it was whispered around the school that the younger teachers drank and performed even less mentionable acts on the quiet.

My mother was a member of the Australian Women's National League, the ladies' auxiliary of the U.A.P. My earliest political memory is of a U.A.P. leaflet (a cartoon of John Curtin front stage with Jack Lang leering out of the wings, the caption 'Who is the man behind the Curtin?' —it must have been the 1933 federal elections) and of handing out how-to-vote cards in the same cause.

Mostly I topped my class at school. I would have preferred to have excelled at swimming, running, playing cricket or football or marbles, riding bikes or horses, but I didn't. I was better at school. That, and my class origin, destined me for higher things. Besides, my paternal uncle was a lawyer in Nhill, while one maternal uncle was a doctor in Sydney and I was fancied to have "surgeon's hands". The Nhill educational institution was a higher elementary school—that is, it stopped at merit certificate, two years before matric. Between them, my mother and the local vicar (in whose choir I sang for a time, reluctantly and out of key) coached me for the scholarship exams, including Latin. If I was to become a professional, I had to get out of Nhill. I made it, with a scholarship, to Geelong College as a boarder.

College, note, not Grammar. Grammar was the toffy school from the Collegians' viewpoint. Besides, it was beyond the Turner family pocket. Happily, I can't remember much of my time at boarding-school. The taste and the names of a few items of food—"sinker" (steamed pudding), "B.O." (peach jam), "boiled baby" (baked suet roll with jam). A schoolboy infatuation on which the masters frowned — it took me some years, until I read Alec Waugh's *Loom of Youth,* to understand why. Hovering on the fringes of the First XVIII. An occasional Saturday night in Melbourne, and sneak visits to the Tiv, where Mo played Queen Elizabeth or Henry VIII ("Gad! What I do for England!") And jazz and politics.

My friend Joe and I discovered jazz — Nat Gonella and "Tiger Rag", Louis and "Jeepers Creepers", Ella singing "Rock It For Me" with the Chick Webb band. He experimented with trumpet, I with clarinet; we were not successful. And we discovered socialism. It must have been Joe's initiative; he moved fast. Later he became a pilot officer and a lawyer and abandoned both jazz and socialism. I was a slow developer — I stayed with both.

What we thought of as jazz was our own discovery. Politics wasn't; there we had a little help from the younger teachers, the two Bobs. Under their influence I joined the Left Book Club; I saw a local amateur production of Odets' *Waiting for Lefty* (which must have been at about the same time as I was singing in the chorus of a school production of *H.M.S. Pinafore*); I read John Strachey's *Why You Should Be A Socialist* (surely the single most important socialist pamphlet since the *Communist Manifesto*); and I was hooked. The next time I caught up with Big Bob, he was something grand in the A.B.C. Little Bob, I heard afterwards, had been a Trotskyist; he killed himself.

I was passionately involved with Spain, as my children's generation were with Vietnam. *Homage to Catalonia* came much later. And with Czechoslovakia. I wrote a poem on the Nazi invasion for the school poetry prize; I was told it was the best poem but I never got the prize—my first taste of political discrimination. Home at Nhill, during 1939 second term vac, I listened with my father to the radio announcement by R. G. Menzies (whom I knew because his sons also boarded at my school) that the country was at war. For my father, it was close at hand; he was back on the Somme. For me, it was ten thousand miles away.

I was seventeen, and the University was coming up.

This was the moment of liberation. Every idea in the world, every experience, was suddenly available—or so it seemed. There was, at least, enough to keep me busy. Some politics—I listened to the radical speakers; I paid a sub to the Labor Club; I bought an occasional copy of the *Workers' Voice* until the Menzies government declared it illegal; with 'Turk' Wann, a talented young writer who drowned untimely, I went to a brilliantly stage-managed performance in the Princess Theatre at which Jack Blake argued the case for lifting the ban on the Communist Party. But politics for a time took second place to the liberating effect of the avant garde. I do not carry in my conscious memory any single painting or piece of literature or music which was given me by school, except *Hamlet*. Perhaps because the learning situation did not create involvement; perhaps because the curricula ignored all that was new and exciting. I caught my first glimpse of the world through new eyes in the Melbourne Town Hall in December 1939, where the *Herald* had sponsored an exhibition of the European post-impressionists.

For two years I lived on the edge of the Melbourne avant garde, loving the life and eager to learn. I swallowed everything that was put in my begging bowl, in lofts and garrets and scungey back rooms which served as studios, in Norton's and Dooey Din's and the Union caf.—without discrimination and often enough without understanding. It was enough that it was new and vital and that these were the ideas and the creations of men and women I could see around me, to whom I could listen. They would not remember me, because I was a shadow in tentative corners, but I remember and am grateful to them. Josl Bergner's loft in North Carlton, where he painted Ruth. Max's room near the Shop, where he introduced me to Stravinsky and Wyndham Lewis and tried unsuccessfully to seduce me. John Sinclair's loft in Parkville, the only loft I knew with its own grand piano. Sid Nolan's rooms above the condemned greengrocer's shop in Russell Street, where he held his first one-man show. Margaret, who shared a canoe with me on the river at Studley Park. John Reed's refectory table at Templestowe, where I blushed when someone said "fuck" in front of John's wife, Sunday. Alice's room in Royal Parade, where she entertained a famous novelist whose initials would make him indiscreetly obvious. Joan, who shared a couch with me in my study at Ormond College—but only until five o'clock, because women had to be out of the College by then. Geoff and Mamie Sawer and Mamie's brother, Bill, who talked untiringly about books and music and theatre. Des Connor's and Joy Youlden's flat in Caulfield, where we drank to the success of Yetta Bardas in Wilde's *Salome* (I had a walk-on part as the third slave). George Fong, who looked Chinese, talked Australian, and taught me to distinguish Duke Ellington from Nat Gonella; he died in the war. Bert Tucker's paintings and Joy Hester's drawings in their studio in a lane off Little Collins Street. Alastair Kershaw drawing on a pair of fastidious gloves before taking a copy of the *Workers' Voice* out of his briefcase to deliver a witty, but to me unconvincing, diatribe against communism. Dick and I drinking 'champagne' at sixpence a glass in Warrington's Wine Saloon, near the corner of Elizabeth and Flinders Streets, and standing on the counter to sing the Marseillaise. Paintings by Tucker and Nolan and Bergner and Noel Counihan and John Perceval and Arthur Boyd providing the backdrop for Graeme and Roger Bell and Ade Monsborough playing the first live jazz I ever heard, at the Contemporary Art Society's exhibition in the upstairs lounge at the Australia in 1941. I felt then—as I still believe, though my tastes have hardened into familiar moulds—that there is no barrier, indeed that there is a necessary communion, between what is innovatory and exciting in the arts and in politics. Both offer new ways of seeing the world, new ways of living; the individualism and anarchism of radical art are needed to temper the collectivism and authoritarianism of radical politics.

Although I lived in Ormond College and was submitted to the rigors of the month-long initiation ritual—does any written record of that insanity remain?—I wasn't a good College man. My heart wasn't in it. I ate out as often as my ten-shillings-a-week spending money (which I supplemented by part-time work in the shirt department at Myer's) would let me; the frequency varied with my wins or losses at poker. (In those days a dish of chow mien cost 1/3 at Dooey Din's, and rice threepence; and you could get a three-course meal, with a glass of red thrown in, for 1/6 at La Tosca or La Scala. *In extremis*

there were two courses for tenpence or three for a shilling at the pensioners' cafes in Lygon Street. And there was always Tilley's pawnshop as a last resort; sometimes I wondered whatever became of my dinner suit.)

There wasn't really time to study for the law, for which profession I had been entered as it meant four years at the Shop while medicine meant six. (I'm not complaining; I would have made a lousy doctor.) Except for Kathleen Fitzpatrick and Geoff Sawer, the caf or the river or the pub were much more exciting than a lecture, and almost anything was more interesting than a tut. (I didn't have Max Crawford as a teacher until much later.) I hate to say it in the light of my later career, but I even managed to fail Political Science I. Ian Milner was prepared to give me a supp—apparently I had written something about Marx in my exam paper which suggested that I was not beyond redemption—but by that time I had been called up.

The war had been going for two years; the 'phoney war' was over; the nazis had attacked the U.S.S.R. and the 'Grand Alliance' had come into being; men we knew had dropped out of the University to join up; but still it all seemed a long way off. The government, however, took it more seriously. My age group was conscripted for home defence. The prescribed unit for us students, and assorted fringe-dwellers, was the Melbourne University Rifles. Our destination for the 1941-42 long vac was Bonegilla, a large army camp outside Albury-Wodonga.

We were sworn in in advance. It proved impossible to convince the officer in charge of that ceremony that I had no religion; if you happened to get killed, someone had to bury you; all the atheists, including me, were C. of E. So my identity disc, or 'meat-ticket', recorded for the rest of the war. We were issued with uniforms, but not with rifles—they were in short supply. We paraded on Spencer Street station at 7 a.m. on the morning of 7 December 1941, to be told by a yawning mob of journalists that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor and that we were in for the duration.

I suppose Roger Bell was the most unlikely soldier I ever saw; his uniform crumpled around him and his hat refused to slide into place. I never saw Arthur Boyd in uniform; nor Sid Nolan (he defended the wheat sidings in the Wimmera, painted his Dimboola pictures, and visited my mother for afternoon tea)—they must have looked even more improbable. At Bonegilla, I was paraded at the barber's, along with all my friends. I made my first investments at two-up and Crown and Anchor, both illegal but tolerated. I drank in the wet canteen and listened to the drill sergeants lead the troops in the traditional army songs—"If you want to find the generals, we know where they are" and "We are the boys of the R.A.E.". I manhandled cases of rifles and ammunition from one train to another in Albury—this was long before the uniform gauge—and stacked shells at 'secret' caches scattered through the district. I learned to manage a rifle and a Lewis gun, to throw a hand grenade (using a bowling motion, as in cricket), and to drive a bayonet into the belly of a straw-man Jap. And in the glowing summer evenings I walked and talked with my friends over the gentle hills which surrounded the camp, until the bugler blew the sad, beautiful cadences of the Last Post.

The journos were right. We were in for the duration. Thanks to the exigencies of modern warfare, my first posting after basic training was as a staff-car driver at the artillery depot in Batman Avenue. By some extraordinary logic the high command had reckoned that ex-university students, being by definition intelligent, would be good security risks as staff-car drivers, that they could be trusted not to repeat any indiscreet comments on allied troop movements they might hear. In practice, of course, we were all ears—and tongues. All that saved the allied troops was that our passengers didn't have much to tell. They talked readily enough, assuming that their drivers were deaf and dumb. So completely did they ignore us that on one occasion I nearly killed a staff officer, a distinguished industrialist (Sir John Butters) and myself. The officer and I had picked Sir John up at the Windsor at 8.30. We toured the camps on the Mornington Peninsula. At each of them—including Portsea, where my passengers disappeared into the officers' mess for a two-hour lunch—I was instructed to stand by. I was a recent conscript, not yet used to scrounging. By five o'clock I was very hungry, and seething. I streaked between two very large green tramways buses on the brow of the Punt Road hill. My passengers passed the rest of the journey in silence.

Batman Avenue was a nine-to-five job, except for some weekend unpaid overtime. I visited my friends. They sympathised; the war was necessary, but it was a pity that anyone had to fight it. In Swan Street, Richmond, I found the People's Library. I think Ken Miller must have been running it—Ken who was later a close friend when we lived in the same block of flats in Richmond, and he worked on the *Guardian* and was framed on a carno charge by the local 'groupers'; the prosecution witnesses collapsed and the case was dismissed, but that was fighting a long way below the belt. (Ken later left the C.P. with Ted Hill to form the C.P.A., Marxist-Leninist. He began to study for a law degree, but died of a heart attack before he could finish his course.) I borrowed Auden and Spender and Macneice from the People's Library; one book, an issue of John Lehmann's *New Writing,* I was reading when my unit was ordered north. I still have it.

It took the convoy a week to drive from Melbourne to Esk, thirty miles or so north of Ipswich in south Queensland. I was in charge of a three-ton truck—my first long-term encounter with a crash gearbox. Somewhere near Coonabarrabran the convoy paused to let the dust settle. Out of nowhere, there came a horse ridden by the original bush maid. The command officer signalled, and the convoy moved on.

The Esk pub had barrels of beer chocked up on the counter and an ample supply of Beenleigh Rum (usually drunk with milk), but a desperate shortage of girls. Fortunately I was back on the staff-cars and commuting regularly to Brisbane. Not that there were many girls available there either—the Yanks had cornered the supply. I remember: the queues outside the brothels, then officially licensed—the only area of desegregation in the U.S. army. The 'Battle of Brisbane', when the Aussies and the Yanks had a shoot-out in (I think) Ann Street, outside the American PX. A night in a pub bedroom, sitting naked and drinking with the R.C. padre, whom I drove regularly. (He later came on more heavily, with a bottle of Scotch, in a tent on top of — appropriately — Mount Mee. The whisky won.) Sitting through two consecutive sessions of Olsen and Johnson in *Hellzapoppin.* The gargoyles around the main Brisbane university building, then commandeered by the army. An evening with a beautiful girl on the banks of the Brisbane River. Books from the Brisbane municipal library—Gertrude Stein's *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas,* Hemingway's *Death in the Afternoon,* Boris Souvarine's hostile biography of Stalin.

I must have discovered the communist bookshop, though I can't now remember where it was, for it was at this time that I began to read *Progress,* the weekly paper of the Hughes-Evans N.S.W. State Labor Party, which had been declared bogus by the Federal A.L.P. because it was held (rightly) to be communist-infiltrated. Len Fox and Rupert Lockwood, who later became friends as well as comrades, were writing for *Progress,* and I was greatly impressed. I bought a copy of Stalin's *Dialectical and Historical Materialism.* (It was originally a chapter of the anonymous 1938 *History of the C.P.S.U.* and was only later credited to Comrade Stalin.) My staff-car was mine; I serviced it, and tightened up its rattles, and kept it clean. On the way into Brisbane, the officer I was driving opened the glove-box and took out Stalin. Forty miles later, he asked me what I thought. Not having read the pamphlet, I parroted Souvarine and said that the style was turgid. When I finally read it, it became a central part of the gospel.

Six months or so and a thousand miles later, we were on the Atherton Tablelands. The trip up took six days by rail. My truck and I were on a flat-top. All that I remember of the trip was that I had a raging toothache which I cured with Aspros; that I couldn't piss off the back of the moving flat-top; and that beer at the wayside stops cost four shillings a bottle (the price of Richmond beer before the war was eleven shillings a dozen, delivered to your door in a plain van). And that the railway ran down the middle of the main street in Rockhampton, which, I later discovered, was my father's birthplace. I read most of the way—a side benefit of being a driver was that you could carry your books with you — but I can't remember what. Maybe *Angry Penguins,* or *A Comment,* to which I was by then subscribing.

The next three years are mercifully foreshortened. I spent some time on the Tablelands; then by 'liberty ship' (the troops believed that the hulls were welded instead of rivetted and were therefore likely to split in half) to the north coast of New Guinea; then back to the Tablelands.

Some pictures remain. Ranging over the Tablelands, and down the one-way road to Cairns and Innisfail. The astonishing new sight and smell of canefields. Swimming in the mysterious circle of Lake Barrine, reputedly linked by an underground channel to its neighboring Lake Yungaburra:

local legend was that the body of an Aboriginal, drowned in one lake, had surfaced in the other. Chasing the elusive beer from pub to pub, and eating, drinking, and dancing with the landlord's daughters at the pub in Atherton while Johnny Hanson played piano. An art show in Cairns, opened by Jean Devanny, with George Luke as principal exhibit. Taking part in unit theatre organised by Grant McIntyre, later a senior public servant in the Department of Labor, and Henry Legerton, a dancer—a revue; Elmer Rice's *Judgement Day; Maria Marten, or The Murders in the Red Barn.* Nights sprawled in the canvas deck-settees at the local picture theatre, jeering the villain of the weekly serial and shouting encouragement to Betty Grable and Lana Turner, and the yells of "What about Joe?" as the national anthem came to an end. My truck and I on loan to an American paratroop company; going up with them in a clapped-out transport plane and watching the men sweat it out before they jumped. A fervent correspondence with a childhood girlfriend, rediscovered, which might have led somewhere but didn't.

Down the side of a troopship by Jacob's ladder, onto a heaving pontoon, and ashore by 'duck' at Buna. The luxury of real eggs and bacon and real 'java' in an American mess: the Australians commented scornfully that American landing operations proceeded in two waves—first the marines, then the refrigerators. Nights in the camp commandant's office tent, where I was now working, talking about art and books and life with Tom Le Page, a talented commercial artist, and watching him draw the elegant women who stood for Lournay perfume; Tom killed himself soon after the war, and I never knew why. A languid day and night on the deck of an island trader, on the way to set up an advance HQ at Finschafen, carrying an edge of fear of enemy submarines. A tent on the rim of a low plateau overlooking jungle which seemed peaceful and well-ordered from a distance but which was violent and threatening from close at hand. The surface calm of the atmosphere charged with the electricity of its own destruction. A Negro quartet singing superb blues. A two-up school hidden in the jungle, where the Aussies were teaching the Yanks how to play. Marx and Engels, Hewlett Johnson and Edgar Snow; Brian Fitzpatrick's *Short History of the Australian Labor Movement;* Christopher Caudwell's *Illusion and Reality,* which I had bought second-hand in Brisbane; Donald Friend's *Gunner's Diary,* which I had asked my father to send me; the Reed and Harris books of poems by Geoff Dutton, Alastair Kershaw and Harry Roskolenko, an American poet with whom I was to swap political reminiscences many years later; Max Harris's *The Vegetative Eye.* Six days of dengue fever, at the end of which I found myself with fifty more soldiers than my daily returns should have held; I killed them off or transferred them to other units over the next few weeks. Sliding in my jeep off a track thick with New Guinea mountain mud—fortunately into a wall of earth, not into air.

I was neither a good nor an enthusiastic soldier. I fired no shots in anger and very few in fun. The only enemy who came anywhere near me was a lonely Japanese airman who dropped a solitary bomb a mile or so away. I believed strongly—perhaps even passionately—in the war, and I followed its progress in Europe, Africa and the Pacific, largely through *Salt* and the army newspaper, *Guinea Gold.* But I was happy to do my bit in the non-lethal station of army life to which it had pleased the military gods to call me.

Indeed, the most important thing that happened to me during the war was that I joined the Communist Party. I spent a few days thinking about it, but it seemed a natural thing to do at the time. We were on the Atherton Tablelands. Bill Brown had played Georgi Dimitrov in *Judgement Day,* a play about the Reichstag fire trial. He was appropriately cast: he was an eager and attractive young communist, and Dimitrov was one of his heroes. For a long time—until he backed away from a confrontation with Ted Hill over the meaning of the 20th Congress of the C.P.S.U.—Bill was one of mine. We talked and drank our weekly ration of two bottles of beer together, and he drew my limited experience, my unsystematic reading and my emotion together into the logic of communism. My name went onto the party membership lists in Sydney, and I was part of a new extended family whose *patres familiae* were Stalin, Lance Sharkey and J. B. Miles. The *Tribune* began to arrive weekly, the *Communist Review* monthly — political pornography, as it were, under plain wrappers. There were four of us in our unit — a major of engineers, a staff sergeant, a corporal (Bill) and a private (me—I had been a Temporary Acting Lance-Corporal but

had been demoted for insolence and insubordination). The military hierarchy didn't prevail; the staff sergeant, an experienced trade union comrade from Wollongong, was our political leader. It was against AMR&O to hold political meetings on army premises, so we met in the chapel, after dark. It was, after all, a kind of religious observance. We discussed the progress of the Red Army, the future of Australia under socialism, and a program of immediate unit demands. On one momentous occasion we escaped from camp to attend a clandestine gathering of comrades from units all over the Tablelands, addressed by Jack Henry, a famous battler among cane-cutters who features in Jean Devanny's novel, *Sugar Heaven,* and who was almost as much anarcho-syndicalist as communist.

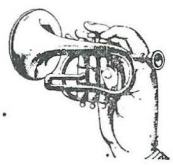
By that time I was in the Army Education Service. Tom Inglis Moore had liberated me from the drudgery of army paper-work and had had me transferred to A.E.S., at a time when I was distinctly out of favor with a very status-conscious redheaded Westralian major who was my C.O. Tom told me about his time at Oxford with 'Inky' Stephenson, how they had both worked for the T.U.C. during the British General Strike and had collaborated on an early translation of some of Lenin's pamphlets. He talked about his days as a leader writer on the *Sydney Morning Herald,* and about Australian writers other than the *Angry Penguins* group, writers of whom I had never heard — Hugh McCrae, Kenneth Slessor, Vance and Nettie Palmer. He tried unsuccessfully to curb my naive enthusiasm for the U.S.S.R. Another major, Harry Coppock, told me more about Stephenson, through into the Australia First movement and the internment camp, and gave me a copy of the single issue of Stephenson's *Australian Mercury.* Yet another of my A.E.S. officers, a captain from Sydney, a debonair cynic, had me drive him and his nurse for an illicit weekend at Innisfail; I slept on the beach with the mosquitoes and a couple of bottles of beer (by courtesy of the officers' mess) while they screwed. Army nurses were enviously, if somewhat unkindly described by the other ranks as 'officers' groundsheets'.

The head of A.E.S. was Colonel Bob Madgwick (later Sir Robert, of New England University and the A.B.C.). He was an uneasy buffer between the army brass, who thought that A.E.S. was riddled with commos, and the officers and men under his command. The suspicions of the brass were pretty right. Army education was an obvious point of communist concentration, and comrades all round the army tried to transfer in. Besides, the times were radical; the Russians were popular, and the dreams of post-war reconstruction were grand. From the editorial offices of *Salt,* in La Trobe Street, Melbourne, where there worked, among others, Vane Lindesay, Frank Hardy, Amby Dyson and my future father-in-law, Itzhak Gust, to the lecturers and librarians in the field, the A.E.S. personnel were overwhelmingly on the left. (Just where was not so important in those days: the relations between communists and Labor men, other than those dominated by Bob Santamaria, were good.)

In my part of A.E.S., which was attached to a corps headquarters, the officer-in-charge did the thinking and maintained a working relationship with the higher echelons. The N.C.O. looked after the range of secondary, technical and university mail-order courses which were available to ambitious servicemen. I did the lecturing, screened the films, arranged the concerts of recorded music, organised art shows and discussion groups, fixed the distribution of *Salt,* A.E.S. discussion pamphlets and circulating box libraries, maintained the hall and reading room which was the A.E.S. centre, did the typing, filled in the necessary returns, and kept the files. I was a private until the captain from Sydney got me promoted to acting corporal; I like to think that that was recognition of my talents, or just an expression of friendship, rather than a concession to implied blackmail. The job had its advantages, all the same. As caretaker of the A.E.S. centre, I slept on the premises and had room for pictures on the wall and a shelf of books; and I was able to escape both church parade and the emu parade (which was the alternative offered to conscientious objectors to religion) by using Sunday mornings to tidy up the hall. And, most important of all, I could arrange my own program and I had access to a jeep.

After the first time, when I was confronted by a whole battalion, formally paraded, lecturing came fairly easy. I talked mostly about current affairs—the war, politics, economics and post-war reconstruction. All of us A.E.S. lecturers were threatened with the sack (that is, transfer to less rewarding pastures) if we loaded our presentation of the cases For and Against Dr Evatt's 1944 constitutional powers referendum, but we were usually able to ensure that the right side won. (The services' 'Yes' vote was considerably above the national average.) Mostly I showed docu-

mentary films—Frank Capra's splendid *Why We Fight* series, Paul Rotha's *World of Plenty*, John Grierson's *Nightmail* and *Drifters*. I screened Basil Wright's *Song of Ceylon* so many times for myself and my friends that I began to sleep with stone buddhas. I had a milk run of feature films, too, which we borrowed from the Yanks; one night I robbed an American unit of a song-and-dance movie by plugging a projector designed to operate on 115 volts into a 230 volt circuit—it blew up. It was a battle to get permission to start a wall newspaper to which unit writers and artists could contribute; the Westralian major quite rightly suspected my motives. Finally we won, though my immediate superior had to act as censor. We didn't uncover any great talent, except for Harry Memmott, then an aspiring painter and today a well-established potter, but it was a lot of fun. Occasionally I talked to American units about Australia; my lecture on Australian trade unionism—drawn largely from Fitzpatrick—met almost total incomprehension and unbelief. They hadn't heard about the Labor government. I ransacked the reference library for commentaries on classical music, about which I knew next to nothing (as I still do), and managed to scratch up enough records for a program of jazz. (Late last year I was watching Johnny Dankworth and Cleo Laine on the A.B.C. The phone rang. I cursed and answered it. The caller said, "Are you watching Channel 2?" I said that I was. "I thought so." "Who's that?" "It doesn't matter—you introduced me to jazz on the Tablelands in 1944." That made me feel good.)



It was a kind of combined operation — part adult education, part entertainment, part political propaganda (though I tried not to make that side of it too heavy) and part an army extension of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts. I don't think I ever worked out consciously just what I thought I was doing. Looking back, I suppose my unstated premise was that a combination of radical politics and the universal spread of knowledge and culture would make the world a better and happier place to live in. Not much class struggle in that, but at the time it seemed to be a reasonable way for a fledgling communist to act.

Then, late in 1944, the government decided that the war was all over bar the mopping up, and that those of us whose university careers had been ripped untimely from our hands might have an accelerated discharge. I grabbed it with both hands. I posted off the books I had managed to accumulate, had a final beer with my friends (only four of whom I ever saw again), and headed for the discharge depot at Royal Park. I walked out with a university place, an honorable discharge, a receipt for my blankets, a clothing order, and five pounds. The following Sunday afternoon I walked down to the Yarra Bank and listened to the party speakers—Ralph Gibson and Jim Coull, I think. I wasn't sure what I would do—my commitment had been part of the army life I had just left, and I had a measure of uncertainty and apprehension about renewing it. The time came for the collection. The comrade carrying the hat was a slight, dark, intense young man with a gammy leg; I later found out that he was Frank Main, who shared a Collins Street basement with Bob Matthews, a large number of books, and the impedimenta which went with making films. I walked over and said: "Here's a quid. I was in the party in the army, and I want to join again." Some time later I learned of the party myth that no one ever left the C.P. of his own free will: ex-members either died or were expelled. That was in Comintern times; in the more relaxed war and post-war days, it was possible for a party member to drop out. But in 1945 I accepted that I had taken on a lifetime commitment.

All this is by way of introduction to a review of David Caute's *The Fellow Travellers* (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, $15.25), an account of the distinguished British, French, German and American intellectuals who travelled the same road as the communists for the half-century which followed 1917, without actually joining the party. One of the difficulties about Mr Caute's book is that he was born in 1936, the year Franco rebelled against the Spanish republic; he was nine in the year I joined the Communist Party; he was twenty, and presumably just beginning a sophisticated political awareness, in the year that Comrade Khrushchev denounced Stalin before a secret session of the 20th Congress of the C.P.S.U. It is hard for those who knew and lived communism as a profound emotional experience to recognise themselves in the account of someone for whom the experience was foreign. Or, put the other way, it is near impossible for anyone who did not live

the experience to recreate it.

Given hindsight, it is all too easy to say where we went wrong, and even why, to put the finger on where we were deceived and where we deceived ourselves. Of course we should have known that the Moscow trials were phoney, that Trotsky had not betrayed the revolution, that Orwell was right about Catalonia. And much more for which there was more than enough valid evidence. But these were witnesses and evidence that we did not accept as being in good faith. It was their word against the party's, finally against Stalin's. The bourgeoisie had always used words as well as guns against communism, which was, we believed, incarnated in the U.S.S.R. And whatever the intentions of Trotsky and his followers, or humanist socialists like Orwell, the bourgeoisie used them. That was only to be expected. So why should we accept them?

Besides, we were both an embattled minority, huddling together for warmth, and part of a world-wide family within which we found mutual aid and affection. If you travelled interstate, there was always a cafe to eat in, a pub to drink in, a bed. Going by ship to Europe in 1950, I had no difficulty finding comrades in Colombo, Bombay, Marseilles and London (Aden and Port Said were more difficult). If you were interested in theatre or film, in music or painting or writing, there was an appropriate party group. If you wanted to study, there was Marx School. It was an ideal world within the real; we were "forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old"; and we lived and socialised and married —and expected to die—within it.

Mr Caute says several times that he is aware of the danger of hindsight, but he does not always escape it. Nor can he resist a donnish humor—which I take to be an amalgam of wit, superiority and malice—to score points off his characters. He is long on facts; he covers virtually all the distinguished international personalities whom I thought of as 'our people'; he writes briskly and his judgements are acute; but, for a man who, I imagine, counts himself on the left, he is short on empathy. (By contrast, David Aaron—whose *Writers on the Left* covers some of the same ground, the writers in and around the American Communist Party during the twenties and thirties and what became of them—ranges less widely but is broader in his sympathy.)

In Mr Caute's account, a fellow traveller is in essence an intellectual who sympathises with, even acts as an apologist for the U.S.S.R., but who has little time for the communists in his own country, little interest in a home-grown revolution, and no desire to live in the first workers' state. This profile is altogether too tidy, as anyone who has lived in and around the communist movement will know. Mr Caute rejects the common sneer that fellow travellers were true believers who lacked the courage of their conviction—quite rightly, for most fellow travellers were men and women who made their stand in public and who caught both the wrath of bourgeois society and the contempt of anti-Stalinists such as George Orwell or Harry Roskolenko. But in reaching out for an archetype, he forces incompatible elements into one mould and leaves out too much.

My fifteen years in the Communist Party were spent in 'broad work'—at the University, in the peace movement, in the Australian Railways Union, in the literary world—so that I was continually involved with 'fellow travellers' or 'sympathisers' or people who were prepared to work with communists on one or other specific issue. It seemed obvious to me then that the most significant role a communist could play was that of organiser or full-time functionary. Maybe my concern was with the power and prestige which seemed to go with a functionary's job, but if so I wasn't aware of it; what surfaced in my mind was that to become a 'professional revolutionary' was the single most important act of dedication. Many aspired to become functionaries but few were chosen; I worked in the 'broad' areas to which it pleased the Party to direct me. (I did not doubt that the Party had the right to direct me.) My experience suggests some qualification to Mr Caute's archetype.

There weren't many fellow travellers in the University in the immediate post-war years; almost all of them joined the Party. (Twelve years later, older comrades who had known us student communists said of me and others who broke with the Party in 1956-58 that we had been fellow travellers who had joined up by mistake.) At its peak the University branch had about 120 members who met off-campus in dingy rooms behind the Savoy Theatre (the 'Temperance Hall') in Russell Street —we thought in secret, but we had unknowingly recruited an ASIO agent. He had a mass of finely crinkled red hair and a red moustache and was therefore known as 'Blue', and he wore his RAAF overcoat (without service markings) while he sold the *Guardian*; in the course of his espionage work he became a convert to communism. Later he confessed the circumstances under which he had

joined up—and was expelled by the Party as a 'security risk'.

The branch 'heavies' were three ex-service comrades (Noel Ebbels, Steve Murray-Smith and me) and two comrades who pre-dated the ex-service invasion (Rex Mortimer and Ken Gott). There was some tension between the ex-servicemen and the younger comrades, because we ex-servicemen thought we knew more about the world. There were legitimate complaints from the women comrades (though they didn't use these terms) that the men comrades were male chauvinist. And relations between the University branch and the party 'centre' were sometimes strained—particularly when we issued a leaflet describing ourselves as an "independent, self-governing unit" of the Party; Sam Samson, the organiser responsible to the State Committee for our activities, made it quite clear that there was no such thing as an independent, self-governing branch of a democratic-centralist party. But the strongest and warmest memory I retain is of the extraordinary camaraderie. I use that word instead of 'comradeship' because it transcended politics. We worked and struggled together, certainly—but we also talked and studied and ate and drank and slept and lived together. We accepted the slogan that "the first task of a communist student is to be a good student" (a far cry from the self-doubt of the radical students of the sixties and seventies), but we didn't think of ourselves as academic rivals. We exchanged ideas and notes and helped one another with our essays. We tried to bring marxism to bear on the subjects we studied—indeed, we organised counter-courses in a wide range of subjects; it was a pretty mechanical marxism, as Stuart Macintyre has pointed out in a recent critique of some of my writings (in *Intervention 2*), but, in those pre-Gramsci/Marcuse/Lukacs/Althusser days, we did our best. Sexual relationships were formed—and occasionally (because, although we weren't puritanical, we were mostly monogamous) reformed—within the group. Many of us lived in the first student hostel, a three-storey delicensed pub in Brunswick Street, Fitzroy (it is now the headquarters of the Divine Light Mission) which was known to the crims and pros who drank in the Perseverance Hotel across the way as "Queen's Castle".

A schnitzel or a *Bauern Frueschtuck* at the Old Vienna, or a meal upstairs at Chung Wah (where those who were most adept with chopsticks did best with the communal dishes), was routine before branch meetings. At the meetings, we discussed the international and national situations (in that order) and problems of marxist theory, and we decided what was going to happen on the student scene. We put forward a 'minimum' program of immediate reforms (student housing, health, travel, living allowances, a book exchange) and we organised socialist education. We urged solidarity with Greek and Iranian and Indonesian revolutionaries, and we campaigned for bank nationalisation and national health and the 40-hour week. We enjoyed, in the 350-strong Labor Club, a community of immediate purpose and good personal relations with Rationalists, members of the Student Christian Movement, and supporters of the A.L.P. It was an unbeatable combination in student politics. I was, in successive years, joint secretary of the Labor Club and co-editor of *Farrago,* and secretary and then president of the Students' Representative Council.

It wasn't all politics, of course. Not that there was much time for studying law. I scraped through a law degree with the help of a few charity supps, and then—having decided that I wasn't interested in looking after other people's property—I moved, with Noel Ebbels, into history and politics. That was a different matter. The 'method' seminars run by Max Crawford and Perce Partridge (a Sydney academic, temporarily in Melbourne, who had been influenced by John Anderson and who had been roundly denounced by Lance Sharkey because of his criticism of the Soviet bureaucracy) were always exciting battles of ideas. On the side, from Fred Emery, we were introduced to Weber and Pareto and Michels. And there was the magic of Australian History with Manning Clark. I don't think I had consciously recognised Lawson before then, and I had certainly never heard of Miles Franklin or Joseph Furphy. For the last seminar of the year we were asked to present our summation of what it had all been about. I swapped papers with Syd Ingham; Syd offered my hard-line marxism while I presented a liberal Catholic line.

In the time left over from politics and study, there were the arts. It was an exhilarating moment when the first shipment of Modern Library publications hit the bookshop in the Australia Arcade—that meant James T. Farrell's *Studs Lonigan* and John Dos Passos's *U.S.A.,* and Ring Lardner and E. E. Cummings, and Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky and Romain Rolland. I ran the movie gauntlet through Roger Manvell's Pelican book, *Film,* from the Odessa Steps sequence to the

'Rosebud' image in *Citizen Kane,* and I chased Marx brothers and Chaplin revivals on the pillion seat of Alan Durre's motor bike, from Camberwell to Clifton Hill. (Oddly, it took me another 25 years before I caught up with Buster Keaton.) And always jazz—long hours of listening to the latest Armstrong and Spanier and Mezzrow and Beiderbecke releases, for which Ray and Max Marginson and Ray Bradley had scoured the Melbourne record shops; and euphoric nights with the Bell Band at the Uptown Club. There was, also, the ideological struggle. Jazz was associated with subversive politics, and there was always a battle over what band we should engage for the student balls; happily, we had the numbers for the Bells. Not that it was all plain sailing within the Party. I remember a formal debate with Noel Counihan at a branch meeting in 1945 about the revolutionary pros and cons of avant-garde painting; the debate bogged down in an inconclusive argument (because nobody knew the answer) about the number of sixteenth century Londoners who watched Shakespeare at the Mermaid Theatre, and we walked out of the meeting into Collins Street to hear that Attlee had won the British elections. We celebrated as best we could; that was long before ten o'clock closing, and booze was in any case nearly impossible to buy. (I drew a weekly ration on Saturday mornings from Jimmy Watson's in Lygon Street—two bottles of claret, one of port, one of sweet muscat, and one of "banana-wine liqueur cocktail"; mixed together, they were not all that palatable, but they were effective.) And I remember a denunciation, in the *Communist Review*, of Bessie Smith as decadent and counter-revolutionary, which I did my best to ignore. And the occasion when Steve Murray-Smith and I, in the main street of Hobart in 1946, read A. A. Zhdanov's dogmatic and illiterate attack on the expression of individual emotion in the arts; Steve was properly angry, while I (as the ranking comrade present at the time) mounted an inadequate defence.

I was the first comrade ever to dine at the Melbourne Club—at least, so Sir John Medley told me. At the time, the University was, because of the weight the Labor Club carried in student politics, under attack in the State parliament as a "hot-bed of communism". Medley was a good liberal and a sympathetic man; he defended himself and the students and the University against the attacks, and he invited me to dinner. (Later I learned from my sister that my great-grandfather had been a foundation member of the club, but I doubt whether that would have earned me an entree.) I don't remember what I ate—it must have been roast beef and Yorkshire pudding—but I do remember the uniformed butler who opened the imposing front door, and the mounted stags' heads in the entrance hall, and the excellent claret. It was soon after that—while I was still President of the S.R.C.—that I publicly declared myself as a communist.

I was eating with Alan Durre, a good non-party friend and a promising scientist who died unhappily young, at the Omonia, a Greek cafe much favored by students for its large serves at reasonable prices of spaghetti and pastitsia and lamb-with-almost-anything. The two men at the next table were happily drunk and reading a copy of the *Guardian* which they had bought from Charlie O'Shaunessy, who wore an eye-shade and sandshoes and a leather cash-bag and spent most of his nights selling party literature around the Chinese and Greek cafes in Lonsdale, Russell and Little Bourke Streets. Three plain clothes cops came into the cafe and began to question our neighbors; after a heated exchange, they ordered them outside. There wasn't anything that Alan and I could do about it except smoulder, so we finished our meal. A week or so later, in the back bar of the Swanston Family—into which the entire Melbourne left-wing intelligentsia, together with interstate visitors and ASIO agents, regularly crowded — Brian Fitzpatrick described the arrest of two men on charges of assaulting the police, and how the police had in fact assaulted them. The men were our neighbors in the Omonia; they were the painter, Jim Wigley, and his civil-servant brother, Bill, and they were suing the police for assault. Alan and I volunteered our evidence. The first question that Ray Dunn (for the police) asked me in cross-examination was: "Are you a communist?" I agreed that I was. We had a brief exchange about communism and anarchism and attitudes towards the police, which I thought I won. But the Wigleys lost their case against the police, and Bill lost his job. I was reprimanded by the Party for making my membership public, and the right-wing moved a motion of no confidence in me as S.R.C. president. (I was already in trouble for having refused an invitation to a reception at Government House.) The whole of the left rallied; we called a general meeting of students, and we won. That was in 1947. Two years later, under the pressures of the cold war and the overt communist challenge to the Labor

government, the united front shattered and the A.L.P. Club was formed. It was twenty years, and Vietnam, before the left again became a dominant influence in student politics.

The point of the story is that collaboration for immediate objectives between individuals and groups of different ideologies is a reasonable proposition so long as the areas of difference don't exceed the areas of agreement; and that remains the case even where one partner carries more weight than the others (as the communists usually did, because of their tightly-knit organisation) so long as the stronger partner does not use his strength for ends other than those appropriate to the partnership. (There are also hard-nosed considerations. A particular association might be counter-productive no matter how worthy its objectives; thus, at the height of the cold war, the majority of Australians would probably have voted against free beer if the communists had been seen to be advocating it.) The case of Jean-Paul Sartre is pertinent. Mr Caute treats Sartre as an ambivalent fellow-traveller, but Sartre can scarcely be pressed into the Caute mould. Sartre was not wide-eyed about the Soviet Union, and was certainly no apologist; at most, after making the kind of calculation suggested above, he buttoned up his differences. It was simply not rational for any radical Frenchman, appalled by his country's actions in Vietnam and Algeria, to stand apart from immediate co-operation with the French Communist Party; to do so would have been to deny himself access to and credibility among the French working class. The fact that the P.C.F. had ulterior motives was relevant, but could scarcely be the over-riding consideration. Sartre's testimony against Soviet imperialism in Czechoslovakia carried weight precisely because of his testimony against French imperialism in Algeria and Vietnam. The argument has special strength in France, where the communists have the support of the majority of the working class, but it was also persuasive in Australia during the Vietnam involvement. And the people who assert that those who collaborate with communists in anything become the tools or puppets of international communism (the Russians or the Chinese) in all things might consider the Australian example: the independence of mind of many of those condemned as fellow-travellers was surely a significant factor in the C.P.A.'s final break with apron-string attachment to either Moscow or Peking.

The forties and fifties were harder going. The university branch, of which I was then chairman, suggested to the party in 1947 that we should initiate an anti-war movement along the lines of the pre-war Movement against War and Fascism. Ralph Gibson, the party functionary who—because of his intellectual background and cultural interests—carried most weight with student communists, persuaded us that the time was not opportune. After the Wroclaw conference of intellectuals and the Paris conference of the Partisans of Peace, it was. The post-war Australian peace movement had its origin in a top-secret meeting of party members and close sympathisers in Melbourne early in 1949. That meeting agreed to initiate a broadly-based Australian Peace Council. I dropped out of my post-graduate studies to become its first organising secretary—in time for the Stockholm Appeal and the first Australian Peace Congress at which the Dean of Canterbury (Caute: "one of the most perseverant fellow-travellers of his time") and an American theologian, the Rev. Joseph F. Fletcher (Caute: "contributed prominently to communist causes for many years"), were the keynote visitors.

The internal politics of the peace movement were complex. For the communists, it was simple. The imperialist tigers (paper or not) had not changed their stripes. They were preparing an aggressive war against the Soviet Union; they were determined to crush indigenous social revolutions, as in Greece and China, and national liberation movements, as in Iran, India, Indonesia and Indo-China; and they enjoyed a monopoly of the atomic bomb. When communists repeated the party slogan, "the struggle for peace is the struggle for socialism", they meant it—that is, that peace would enable the example of the Soviet Union to shine, and the revolutionary movements to endow their peoples with freedom. In retrospect, it is obvious that, as Arthur Koestler had suggested in *Darkness at Noon,* the Soviet Union tried to manipulate the various international movements for its own great-power purposes (though whether those purposes were defensive or aggressive is another question). But that was the way it seemed at the time.

It was no secret that the Communist Party was interested in the peace movement. The headquarters were in the old Australia-Soviet House in Flinders Lane; John Rodgers, the secretary of the Australia-Soviet Friendship Society, was a leading member of the Peace Council executive; my affiliations were known. Local communist organisations and communist-led unions provided

most of the movement's muscle. Non-party people who associated themselves with the peace movement accepted that—as they accepted, at least in part, our reading of the world, and that we were sincere in our endeavors. The problem for the communists in the peace movement was how to reconcile our personal support for the day-to-day shifts in Soviet foreign policy with a more broadly acceptable peace objective. Sometimes we were over-manipulative and took too much for granted; among those who broke early with the Peace Council because of this were Jim Cairns and the novelist Leonard Mann. Others, because they saw the Peace Council as the only effective mass anti-war movement, forgave us our stupidities and stayed right through. Outstanding among these were the three 'peace parsons', Alf Dickie, Frank Hartley and Victor James. They were very different men—Alf, for whom every new crisis was a moral dilemma which had to be resolved in doubt and certainty; Frank, whose emotional response and bubbling enthusiasm demanded immediate action; Victor, a cool, sophisticated and wily politician who examined the likely consequences before he made up his mind—but they complemented one another well, providing mutual reinforcement against the fire they drew from within their churches as well as without. Their years of swimming against the cold-war current were validated when the current reversed its flow, at the time of Vietnam.

The tensions inherent in peace movement politics surfaced at the beginning of the Korean war. The Peace Council was following up its spectacular successes at the Australian Peace Congress — Melbourne's Exhibition buildings were filled on two occasions by crowds of around 10,000 who came to hear the 'Red Dean'—with a series of public meetings in the Town Hall. (We had to campaign vigorously for the right to hire the Town Hall for our meetings, but we won that one.) Two days before the meeting scheduled for June, 1950, the news came through of the outbreak of the Korean war. My instinct was that the correct position for the peace movement to take was: 'It doesn't matter who started the war, the point is to stop it.' The party, in the person of Ted Hill, insisted that we condemn the imperialist (U.S.-sponsored South Korean) aggressors. I was the lead speaker at the Town Hall. The majority of the Peace Council executive wanted us to take a neutral position, but I did what I had to do. It was a lively meeting. Our marshals (bouncers, by courtesy of the wharfies) moved in on the interjectors; a press camera was smashed. The next morning, at an executive meeting in Victor James's manse in East Melbourne, it was apparent that Alf and Frank and Victor were unhappy about what I had done, but they stayed with us. Gwyn Miller, a sensitive and dedicated young Presbyterian minister, resigned. Walking back to the city with John Rodgers, I burrowed for an explanation: "It's right, you must have faith in the Soviet Union." John looked quizzical, and didn't reply.

A few months later, at the World Peace Congress in Warsaw, I thought I detected a difference between the Soviet and the Chinese lines. The Russians (Fadeyev was their spokesman; he later killed himself) seemed to be saying "Down with the imperialists". The Chinese (for whom Kuo Mo-jo spoke) seemed to be saying "Stop the war." My retrospective reconstruction is: both sides—the North (supported by the Russians) and the South (supported by the Americans)—were probing across the borders, and both sides were spoiling for a fight. It doesn't matter much who started it in June, 1950—once it was started, both sides declared it on. The Chinese communists weren't happy; they had just won the civil war, but they had barely begun to consolidate their regime. But once Macarthur—nominated by the Americans to command the so-called United Nations force—began to brandish the atom bomb, the Chinese were left carrying the can. I've read a lot of science fiction since 1950, but I could be right.

Some relevant vignettes. The abortive conference at Sheffield (the British government had refused visas for many of the Congress delegates) where Comrade Picasso sat almost within reach. An inconclusive discussion in an out-of-Sheffield pub with a brother of Ralph Parker, the *Times* man who had recently 'gone over' to the U.S.S.R. The night flight to Warsaw, and the welcoming crowd of kids—"they were begging for chocolate", said Chapman Pincher in the London *Express*; "bullshit," said I. The bitter argument about whether the Yugoslav delegates should be credentialled (the Cominform had recently denounced Tito and the C.P.Y.)—they weren't. A request to see my wife's uncle, who was a government official in Warsaw, and the reply that he was

on holiday in Bulgaria—he wasn't, but for 'security' reasons we were not allowed to meet. (I learned this some years later, after Henri had broken with the Polish communists, taken refuge in France, and been sent to gaol there as a spy.) An intense relationship with an American Negro girl, and the emotional climax when we revealed to each other that we were comrades. (The revelation was an act of faith. The Americans were bedevilled by Joe McCarthy, and we Australians by the fear that we should return to find our party underground.) The faces of the famous—Aragon, Ehrenburg, Joris Ivens (remember *Indonesia Calling,* the film he made of the refusal of Australian wharfies to load Dutch ships en route to suppress the Indonesian revolution?) A long lunch at an estate outside Warsaw, and the assembled delegates—British, French, Latin American, African, Australian—bursting into a multi-lingual version of the Internationale, which "unites the human race". Drinking vodka at the dinner-dances at the Hotel Bristol, and telling Poles who asked if I could help them escape that they should be ashamed to run away from socialism. The negotiations within the Australian delegation (political leaders: Jack Hughes of the Clerks' Union and Jim Healy of the Wharfies, both members of the C.P. central committee) about which Australian delegates should visit what socialist countries, and my disappointment that I was allocated to Sofia rather than Moscow-Mecca. The frozen faces of my Bulgarian hosts when I mentioned Kostov (he had recently been tried and executed as an imperialist-Titoist spy). Filing past an embalmed Georgi Dimitrov in the memorial crypt in Sofia. Listening to "Take It From Here" on a short-wave radio in a rest camp of the Bulgarian political police. On the way back to London, a happy night in the U Fleku beerhall in Prague, with my Australian comrades, the Gotts and the Murray-Smiths.

I didn't last long in the peace movement after I got back to Australia. There had been some internal faction fight in the party—I never discovered just what it was—and I was out. Alec Robertson, a journalist on the *Argus,* who had worked closely with me over the previous twelve months, was to take my place. The verdict was delivered by Ted Hill at a meeting of the state secretariat in the 'board room' at party headquarters at 49 Elizabeth Street. A long, sparsely furnished room which I knew very well, its bare walls underlining the precautions taken against ASIO attempts to bug the place. Ted spoke coolly and colorlessly. I had had no advance warning and responded emotionally, but I was told that the party had decided that I was to resign my job. I was a disciplined communist and I copped it sweet.

When I asked what I was to do next, there was a puzzled silence. Apparently it hadn't occurred to the secretariat that I should still regard myself as at their disposal. They told me to go away while they thought about it. A couple of days later, Ralph Gibson told me that the party thought I should get a job in the railways—for 'industrial experience'. The first available job was as a carriage cleaner at the West Melbourne depot, the dingy, decrepit sheds opposite Festival Hall (then still the Stadium) in Dudley Street.

This move into the working class sounded fine in principle, but there were some practical difficulties. Not even boarding school and the army had adequately prepared me for the discipline of a timeclock. The work—sweeping, mopping, dusting, window-polishing, cleaning shit-houses (6d extra a day for that!)—was not arduous, except at holiday times when every ramshackle car in the yard was set rolling. But it was dull and repetitive and unrewarding, even when I was promoted to membership of the aristocracy of carriage-cleaning—the gang responsible for servicing the sleeping cars on the Overland Express. A regular twelve-day fortnight left little time or energy for off-the-job interests, and what there was was mostly consumed by the party. A wage only marginally over the basic was (even when supplemented by generous aid-in-kind from my wife's parents) a continuing battle with a wife and baby, especially for a financial incompetent like me.

But all that was manageable. What really hurt was the realisation that my political expectations were absurdly romantic, and that the cultural gap between me and my fellow-workers was impossible to bridge. I came quickly to respect their ability to do a competent job with the least possible labor, their solidarity on the job, their loyalty to the union. I flaunted an old army greatcoat and shabby clothes in a stupid and hurtful attempt, born of frustration, to convert myself into a proletarian by changing my external trappings. Once the word got around (spread by the

'groupers' in an attempt to isolate me) that I was the only double-degreed carriage cleaner in the business, I was the object of some curiosity and suspicion. But I lived that down. I learned to get along with the blokes on the job—particularly the 'characters': Monty, who kept a paternal eye on the newly-arrived Italians to see that they joined the union, and was a source of home-made grappa; 'Rabbits', who raffled poultry and game around the waterfront pubs; Johnny, who held the world record for wheeling foot-warmers; Charlie, who described himself as a 'fitter and turner'—he fitted hoses to taps and turned the taps on and off. And I grew into a deep affection for my comrades in the railways—for Jack Kelly and Jim Smith at Dudley Street, Alf Leno at Newport, Clem Berman at Jolimont, Merv Feehan and Joe Herrin in the Guards.

But there were two walls. It goes without saying that I shared much common ground with my comrades, but my first concern was political while theirs was industrial. Maybe I just wasn't good enough, but I found it almost impossible to use either the party or the union apparatus to enhance the political awareness of the workers on the job. It was even a battle to get effective job action against the 1951 referendum to ban the Communist Party. There's nothing new about that, of course: Lenin diagnosed the condition, in *What Is To Be Done?*, as 'economism'—the submergence of revolutionary politics in the struggle for immediate economic demands, and the Australian party leaders often criticised the trade union comrades in just those terms. And there were occasional patches of black prejudice. I shook with rage one day when a workmate, nominally a communist, burst out with a blistering attack on the Jews; the fact that my wife was Jewish gave an extra edge to my anger.

The second wall was, in the broad sense, cultural. My off-the-job interests were miles apart from those of my fellow-workers. Politics had put my interest in cricket and football into hibernation, and my interest in racing was nil. The films and music and radio I was interested in (there was no TV in Australia then) were not theirs. It sounds silly and snobbish, but I could not suppress a shudder when I heard a workmate describe a copy of *Women's Weekly* or *Pix* or *People* as a 'book'. I knew then that the barrenness of much of working-class culture was the fault not of the workers but of a social and educational system which denied them access to the best of the high culture. I know now, much more than I did then, something of the richness of working-class and popular culture. But I still found that a gulf I could not cross.

Like most communist activists, I had a multitude of jobs to do. Within a year, I was chairman of the local shop committee, a member of the central council of shop committees, a delegate to the state council of the A.R.U., editor of the militant newssheet, and secretary of the party organisation which was supposed to provide leadership for these multifarious activities. For the union elections, we organised one of the first 'unity tickets' against the groupers—indeed, I think we may have invented the term.

Our operation in the Railways Union was a tight one, run by the state secretary, Jack Brown. 'Brownie' was an ex-seminarian turned red, and a champion rope-skipper. He was (and still is) intelligent, tough-minded, energetic, and enormously popular with the men—one of the many top-flight communist trade union leaders of those years. The objective was to defeat a determined bid by the groupers to take over the union. These were the years (1950-52) when 'Movement' activity in the trade unions and the A.L.P. was reaching its peak. At the instigation of the Movement, the Victorian A.L.P. had formed 'industrial groups' whose purpose was to win the unions away from communist leadership. They were working in a favorable climate. The communist-led unions, including the A.R.U., had overused the strike weapon in recent years; they had won some significant victories, but there was an undercurrent of discontent. And the broad front of militant unions had suffered disastrously in the coal strike of 1949.

The grouper tactics were to take the union ballot out of the hands of union-appointed returning officers, who conducted the ballot on the job, and to turn it over (via an Arbitration Court order) to the Commonwealth Electoral Officer, who would conduct it through the mail. A postal ballot helped the groupers because they could then use the Movement's parish organisation to spread the anti-communist message—and to pick up blank ballot papers wherever they could. Our tactics were to stall the 'court ballot' for as long as possible, to campaign on the job (we had no locality organisation), and to strengthen the united front.

The groupers had the official blessing of the Victorian A.L.P., but there was no way that the A.L.P. could stop those of its members who were militant unionists from standing on a unity ticket

with communists. There aren't any workers among Mr Caute's fellow-travellers, but militant unionism is a major part of fellow-travelling. It might be that the communists had an ulterior motive—that they were aiming to create chaos and wreck the economy—while the non-party militants were simple souls who were conned into supporting red disruption because of their naive desire to improve the lot of the workers. But I don't think so. No matter what the party leadership had in mind (and there is no doubt that they were thinking way beyond the immediate industrial demands at the time of the 1949 coal strike), in my experience most communist trade unionists were militant unionists first and communists second. The party often complained about it.

Unity tickets were as significant an expression of fellow-travelling among trade unionists as was, say, the peace movement among intellectuals. They were a continual source of political embarrassment to the A.L.P. Long after the leading groupers had been thrown out of the A.L.P. in 1955, and the groups had been disbanded, unity tickets still caused bitter arguments inside the Labor Party. It was only the fragmentation of Australian communism in the 1960s, and the slow run-down of the cold war, which took the heat out of that issue. Unity tickets still exist—mostly directed these days (at least in Victoria) against the D.L.P.—because they represent a legitimate trade union sentiment, the need to transcend political differences in order to mount an effective resistance to the boss. But the same point should be made as about other kinds of fellow travelling: the need of communists for unity tickets (which is related closely to maintaining a rank and file base) conditions the policies they can successfully pursue in the trade union movement, and this spills back into the C.P. itself.

Despite all the work we put into the 1952 A.R.U. election, we narrowly lost out. It was a reasonably clean ballot. A few crook votes went in from both sides, but they probably just about balanced out. I was again a candidate for state council, but in between the closing of nominations and the opening of the ballot I had been sacked. It was a nice piece of victimisation, though I wasn't able to convince the Arbitration Court of that. The charge was that I was absent from the job without adequate excuse. It was set up by the job foreman, Jack Schmidt—known inevitably, after Jim Russell's comic-strip character, as "Schmidt der Spy". Who put him up to it, I don't know—but I had a tail on me, which I presume was ASIO. I had had a good deal of time off the job—when my father died, when I stood as a C.P. candidate for the unlikely seat of Glen Iris. This time I had booked off for two days without pay, and the authorities moved in. Brownie did his best, but the groupers by now had the numbers on the union executive, and they wanted me out. In retrospect, I value highly the two years I had in the railways and the A.R.U. —it taught me a lot. But I'm not sorry that I got the sack.

There had been a fair press coverage of my dismissal and of the subsequent High Court and Arbitration Court cases, and I didn't fancy my chance of getting a job. A party sympathiser gave me one, under a bodgie name. Being new to a double life, I had some difficulty sorting that out with the Taxation Commissioner. For six months I stacked great bales of waste paper (exhausting but tolerable), drove a truck delivering bits of engineering (fine), and worked at the end of a production line turning out papier-mache containers for eggs (so that's what they mean by alienation?—I occupied my mind by composing texts for bawdy songs). And then I moved back into the united front.

The Australasian Book Society grew out of the experience of Frank Hardy and Eric Lambert, two promising young communist novelists. They had written (with more than a little 'socialist competition') their first novels—*Power Without Glory* and *The Twenty Thousand Thieves*. A combination of the cold war and the depressed state of Australian publishing made it impossible for them to find publishers. As Frank Dalby Davison (*Manshy*) and Leonard Mann (*Flesh in Armour*) had done during the depression—but for a different reason — they decided to publish themselves. Frank Hardy has told the *P.W.G.* story in *The Hard Way*. Publication of *Thieves* was organised by Joe Waters, a stubborn, shrewd, quick-tempered, witty Geordie who occupied a minute corner of Collins House. Eric's book had a jacket by Amby Dyson, son of Ambrose and nephew of Will and a very talented (and very funny) cartoonist in his own right. It was designed by Jack Mullett, a jackdaw of Marxist literature and jazz records, a typographer and scientist *manqué*. Eric and Amby and Jack all died much too young.

Selling the books was just as difficult as publishing them—most of them were flogged through the movement. (A note to sort out a linguistic confusion: the 'Movement' [cap. M] refers to Bob Santamaria's outfit; the 'movement' [lower case m] refers to the left wing or labor movement.) It was Frank Hardy who suggested the answer—a book club (like Readers' Union, but more like the pre-war Left Book Club because it would encourage an active membership) to publish and sell the books of thwarted Australian writers. Among his many qualities—larrikin, big spender, bon viveur, raconteur, lair—Frank was a good salesman. The party bought the idea, and the A.B.S. was born. Its first secretary was Bill Wannan, now a well-known folklorist and a well-established author. His first book, *The Australian*, was published by A.B.S.; its jacket was by 'Blue' Lindesay, who these days designs *Overland* among many other distinguished publications, and its typography was by Jack Mullett. I'm not sure just how I came to be the second secretary, in succession to Bill, in 1952. I presume that it was because the party thought that A.B.S. needed someone who was more pliable than he.

From the start, the A.B.S. was beset by difficulties. It had no capital. It never recruited enough members (a couple of thousand was perhaps the maximum) to become a viable proposition. But the core of the trouble was politics. The debate opened over the publication of the first two books. The decision was made that they should be Ralph de Boissiere's *Crown Jewel,* a rich novel of life in Trinidad by a young West Indian writer who had migrated to Australia, and Frank Hardy's rhapsody in red, *Journey into the Future.* (Frank took his title from a comment on the U.S.S.R., made by one of Mr. Caute's most famous fellow-travellers, the American writer Lincoln Steffens, in 1918: "I have been over into the future, and it works.") The decision took full advantage of Frank's drive and organising ability —but were these two titles the appropriate openers for an *Australasian* Book Society?

The argument heated up when the A.B.S. published the first two parts of a long novel by Frank and Sally Bannister, *God's Own Country* and *Tossed and Blown.* It was a picaresque novel; it didn't have much politics, but it had a nice human touch. These were the years in which the C.P. was hooked on the most dogmatic variety of socialist realism. Two of the party heavies, Jack and Audrey Blake, denounced the Bannisters' book in *Tribune*—it was anti-working-class and anti-party. I don't remember whether the article was headlined "Whither the A.B.S?" (as a 1958 *Trib.* article was headlined 'Whither *Overland*?') but that was certainly the question. Of all the Stalinists I knew, Jack and Audrey were the most profound and the most relentless in their self-criticism, but that came, unhappily, some years too late to help the Bannisters. It was a sad moment when I visited Sally—Frank was by then dead—in King's Cross to tell her that, even though there had been a change of line, it was still not possible to publish the third part of her book.

The same argument came up over Bert Vickers' first novel, *The Mirage,* a story about a Westralian part-Aboriginal who was torn to pieces between the black and white cultures. It had been rejected by every publisher in Australia, and had ended up with A.B.S. The word from above was that it was no good—it lacked a positive hero, a socialist message, and hope. We fought that out and won; *The Mirage* was published and had a modest success.

The heart of the matter—and this is where it relates to fellow-travelling—was again the nature of the united front. Within the party milieu, in the Realist Writers' Group, we argued out the finer points of Stalinist literary dogma—critical realism and socialist realism, the positive hero, the typical and the average, the collective and the individual hero, the responsibility of writers as 'engineers of the human soul'. (Fortunately some of the best writers associated with the group—John Morrison, David Martin and Eric Lambert —had the good sense to stay away; they knew how to write without being told.) The question was: were these also to be litmus tests for the A.B.S.?

Maxim Gorky's encapsulation of socialist realism was that it should be "national in form, socialist in content". What 'national in form' meant seemed obvious enough; we had the Lawson tradition to look to. But 'socialist in content' was rather more difficult—did this imply a positive revolutionary message, or merely a realistic account of working-class life? And in any case was a socialist content necessary for books published by the A.B.S.? Finally we settled for nationalism and for a radical social critique, for a democratic and populist approach. *Overland,* which Steve Murray-Smith created out of the *Realist Writer* in 1954, and the A.B.S. both moved that way. This was a realistic approach; if the literary movement was to develop broadly, it

had to be along these lines. But it also grew out of the way we felt, out of the radical nationalism to which we regarded ourselves heirs. The party tolerated this approach because it seemed to work, but there was an aura of ideological suspicion around. At the time, I believed that we were acting in a flexible, non-dogmatic way; it is a shock to read in Zoe O'Leary's biography of Eric Lambert, *The Desolate Market,* that Eric found us quite otherwise.

My main concern was organisation: partly the publication and sale of books, and partly the popularisation of the Australian arts. The A.B.S. had a board of management and lots of voluntary helpers, but administratively it was very much a one-man show. Or rather one man plus one woman—then a kind of office manager with ill-defined responsibilities, now a senator. (Later, the party moved Les Greenfield in from Sydney, to try and sort out the administrative mess and to act as a political watchdog. Les was a super-whiz book salesman, and much more efficient than me, but the problems still proved intractable.) I enjoyed the publishing side — reading and editing manuscripts and seeing the books through the printers. I don't think I made many mistakes about manuscripts, though I did knock back Xavier Herbert's *Soldiers' Women* (then called *Of Mars, The Moon and Destiny*). I wrote to say, that, at 300,000 words, it was a commercial impossibility, which was quite true; I didn't add that I thought I had Buckley's chance of getting it through the Board.

I hustled books in factories and workshops, on building jobs, on the waterfront, at house meetings, over a lot of eastern Australia. I was a good propagandist but a bad salesman and hopeless at handling money. (Later, when I had been expelled from the C.P. and had in consequence left the A.B.S., the rumor was spread that I had embezzled some of the proceeds; fortunately, I was able to establish that I hadn't.) Among the many activities: an organising trip to Sydney and Brisbane with Steve Murray-Smith, during which we discussed the implications of the rehabilitation of the Czech communist Slansky and visited William Dobell at Wangi, to see his portrait of Mary Gilmore, which had been commissioned by the Sydney A.B.S.; evenings in honor of living Australian writers and in tribute to the great dead—Frank Davison, Len Mann, Vance Palmer, Arthur Phillips, Lawson, Furphy, Franklin; a night to mark the first Melbourne production of Ray Lawler's *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll;* with Andrew Fabinyi—a good liberal, quite reasonably suspicious of communists, who gambled on my honesty of purpose and won—organising the first Australian Book Fairs in the Melbourne Town Hall. I did not do all that on my own — there were Judah Waten ("the fox"), Betty Vassilieff, Joe Waters, Jean Griffiths (now Melzer), Steve Murray-Smith, Jack Coffey, Lionel Stone, and many others. But that, for six years, was my life. I like to think that it was not entirely wasted, that it helped to keep alive something good.

And that is the last point I want to make to Mr Caute, who has written an instructive and fascinating book. In 1958, after two years of torment and bitterness, I was expelled from the Communist Party. That is another story, but this much is relevant. Losing communism is like losing any other total commitment and faith. It is a shattering experience—but I did have a choice. I could have created (by accepting) the circumstances in which I would have remained within the C.P., but I chose not to; I chose to be expelled. And the major reason for that choice was that fifteen years of working in united front situations, with men and women whom Mr Caute might well describe as 'fellow-travellers', taught me to humanise my socialism—to reject chiliastic answers in favor of reaching agreement on limited objectives, while at the same time seeking by explanation and education to enlarge the areas of agreement. These days, I am invited to become a member of a united front, rather than acting as host, and it gives me an ironic pleasure to watch the process from the other side. But I am still sure that the real question is not what constitutes the archetypal fellow-traveller, so much as who is travelling where with whom.

NOEL HILLIARD

Anita's Eyes

Her name was Anita Wood and I never got close enough to her to see more than her eyes. Anita lived in her eyes. Some people live in their mouth or physique or intellect or presence, some women's hair is the most vital thing about them, others their voice or figure or hands. But Anita had eyes that made you see blood, mountains, beer, imbeciles, the sea, murder, boils, cooking, and a foetus quicken. They changed with the light and looking into them you felt you were learning by turns about knots and religion and bastards and how green leaves turn yellow and why babies are born without teeth. They had seen everything and tried everything but I am certain they had never known defeat.

She had two sets of eyes: those she was using, and the unchanging eyes behind the eyes you saw. These had a single look, always, composed of cunning and wariness and, I think, a massive self-respect. She knew, experience had taught her, how to modify her glances to suit the company she was in, she could assume a mask of idiocy in the presence of idiots, especially drunk ones, she was intelligent and perceptive, she could laugh without laughing, she could be gay or lewd or bored. But the single look remained there deep in the eyes behind the mask she was putting on, it did not come and go according to the topic and the company. It frightened and awed me in its immovable strength and its glowing fixed intensity.

The bar was crowded, glasses were being passed over heads to the tables at the wall, they were coming and going at Anita's table and I stood in a corner and watched how she adapted to each. No drama producer, no student of Chaplinesque mime ever knew as much as this girl. I was glad that through the din I could hear no word that was spoken at her table.

She was not beautiful but her face had a symmetry in which all features combined to enhance the eyes. Had it been otherwise the effect would have been lessened but not spoilt. Each particular of the face, and notably the lips, had its function in drawing attention to the play of the eyes. The whole was a unit, cleverly synchronised and so closely organised its movements and transformations had become habitual. She knew, either from instinct or from trial and error, the most effective ways to shape and hold her face; and custom had made this modelling so artless as to seem natural.

Through the tobacco-smoke I watched, and remembered; and at last I penetrated the dumb-show and discovered those other eyes behind the eyes, the eyes that were sunlit windows on to an integrity of person, of inner being, that had allowed nothing to shake it. When at last I knew they were there I drew myself away from the eyes behind the eyes and concentrated on the proscenium performance. It was something to see: she was by turns coquettish, eager, languid, arch, irritated, amused. And on returning backstage I found no change in the eyes behind the eyes; for all her eager engagement she had given nothing of herself, not a thing.

They were amber, unflecked with black as amber eyes often are, and the iris was always at f.11. She seemed never to blink. Always there was that intent look to indicate an awareness of what was being said; the brows would collapse suddenly into bars of rounded shiny flesh, the cleft between the eyes would tighten in a frown of concentration or amused disapproval, the head dip forward. And behind it all those backstage eyes showed me the veteran mocker who did not believe or give a featherweight of value to a word

of it, who had heard it all so many times before that she knew it by heart but was too shrewd to say so.

I wondered if it would be possible to catch her unawares. What differences might one see in the eyes? She was on duty now, active and alert, talking by looks, busily combining all her features in a series of expressions each with its special purpose. But what about when she was off guard? Perhaps when she awakened from sleep?—that instant of time held suspended before consciousness takes command? Would one see her then as she really was?

I doubt if anyone had ever found out. She was in an occupation in which, I am told, the overnight visitors always turn away from her when finished and awaken with their faces towards the wall.

JOHN K. EWERS

The Day of the Mushroom

Tom Bartlett walked slowly towards the station with plenty of time to catch the early train and not caring whether he caught it or not.

The hills air was crisp at that hour. Down in the city it would be steamy hot. The young grass that had come up with the first rains stood in erect green spears on each side of the road. Something white in the grass drew his attention. He went over to it and knew, even before he bent to peer at it through his bifocals, that it was a mushroom. A real beauty, five inches across! Alongside it the earth was cracked and lifted and he knew that others burgeoning there would soon be ready for picking, perhaps tomorrow or the day after. This one was ready now, but he couldn't very well carry it to work in his satchel with the sandwiches Oriel had prepared for him and packed in the white plastic lunch-box. It would break to bits. He scraped up a heap of leaves and spread them over the mushroom to hide it from the eager eyes of school-children. With a bit of luck it would be waiting there for him when he returned home that night.

As he straightened up a girl ran past him.

"It's late, Mr Bartlett," she said, looking back over her shoulder. "I heard the train whistle. It's left Hilltop."

"Thanks, Margaret," he said, but still he didn't hurry.

He hadn't heard any train whistle, but then his hearing wasn't as sharp as Margaret Vandermeer's. The Vandermeers were Dutch migrants. Hank Vandermeer did gardening jobs around Fernbrook and most nights he and Tom shared a few beers in the pub after work. He was a stringy-built, easy-going chap, slow-speaking but with a natural flow of idiom that made him seem more like a dinkum Aussie than a Dutchman. His wife was a bustling, dominant woman, bulging out of her corsets, imperative in her demands of this new country for her husband and her four daughters. Sometimes she battered Tom into a pulp with her flow of words.

"Australia is lazy," she told him one day. "It already make Hank lazy. No ambition. How do you get on if you haf no ambition?"

Tom Bartlett smiled his slow smile.

"What is getting on, Mrs Vandermeer?"

"It is what we haf to do. All of us. For that we came here."

"And when you have got on, what then?"

"It is for the future. You haf to see that your children are well married and settled down."

"Yes," said Tom.

But as he had no children to see married and settled down it did not seem at all important to him. He watched Margaret, the eldest of the Vandermeer girls, running towards the future her mother desired for her.

A blue wren dived out of the sky on to a bare branch. As Tom paused to look at it, he heard a thin piping whistle. The sound caused him to turn away from the wren and he saw the yellow and black striped face of the diesel as it tore out of the red ironstone cutting a few hundred yards from the station. It looked like a hornet. He watched it as it pulled up, then after another thin, ineffectual squeak of its whistle begin to move off, gathering speed as it curved out of sight round One Tree Hill. Well, that was that. Now it would have to be the later train. When he looked back at the tree the blue wren had gone.

It didn't matter which train he caught. The first would get him there before anyone else except the accountant, Terry Saunders. Young and ambitious, Terry always arrived early and stayed late.

When Tom came in he would look up and say, "Good morning, Tom", and as quickly look down again. Sometimes Tom ventured what he thought was a witty remark like, "Did you sleep here last night?" or "What's up? Got insomnia again?" But Terry only grunted and Tom would walk over to his table, put his satchel on top of the filing cabinet, hang up his hat and wait for the wheels to start moving. There wasn't much he could do except crack a word or two with the typists as they came in and began a leisurely repair of faces and hair before their little handbag mirrors. His day would begin when Oscar Shellabeer, the manager, breezed in and, with a nod here and there, went straight to his office and slammed the door behind him. Then Tom's phone would buzz and the boss's voice would crackle out of the handset with the command to bring this or that file—and make it snappy. For twenty-five years it had been like that, first under old Oscar Shellabeer and now under young Oscar. Tom had no ambition. That was why he had been a filing clerk for twenty-five years. And that was also why he didn't care which train he caught. The later one would still get him there so that he'd be at his table by the time the boss arrived.

A car flashed past him. There were four men in it. One of them leaned out and shouted something to him but the words were lost. That would be Alec Robins taking Bill Burchett, Lance Crowe and Peter Thompson down to the city. He had tried it for a while soon after he and Oriel shifted to Fernbrook. But after a few months he had gone back to travelling by train. It was more leisurely, more comfortable. He would take out the morning paper, or that part of it which did not contain the women's pages—by agreement he left these for Oriel—and read each item of news carefully. You couldn't read in a car, you could only talk, and in that confined space you *had* to talk. Tom Bartlett was a good talker if the talk was about the cultivation of roses or camellias, or how to combat black scale on orange trees. Sometimes it was that sort of talk. But mostly it was about golf or bowls or cricket or football, and all competitive sports bored him. Or sometimes it was about the latest model of a car, equally boring to one whose ten-year old model sufficed for what running about he wanted to do at week-ends or holidays and was likely to suffice for some years ahead, as far as he could see. So Tom had given up commuting. As the car disappeared round the corner he felt sorry for the four men in it who would scream down the slopes of the hills to the flat country and there join the stream of other cars that would grow thicker and slower in its pace as the city drew nearer, with endless stops at traffic lights. So they would jolt their way towards another dull day. And in their little metal box they would talk and talk and talk.

A gravel road ran off the bitumen just ahead, dipping sharply down to a white wooden bridge. He had twenty minutes to spare and there was nothing he liked better than to have an early morning look at the river. He turned left down the gravel road and took a well-worn path that branched off just before the bridge. Soon he was standing on a ledge of rock polished smooth by the feet of youngsters who used it for diving into the deepish pool below. There was no one there at that early hour. It was as if nothing else existed—no settlement, no railway station, no hornet-faced diesel rushing down to the city, no Oriel with her hair hideous in curling-pins. On the opposite bank two willows bent in a perpetual curtsey to the brown water which in this autumnal season had scarcely any movement. In a few months, swollen by winter rains, the river would lap at the base of the willows and swirl in wild eddies under the bridge. But it was placid now, just as Tom Bartlett was placid at all times.

He put his satchel on the grass and returned to the ledge. He knelt down looking at his own image in the water. He lay flat, putting his head close to the water until his image blurred and he saw through it right down to the brown muddy bottom of the pool. He liked doing this. Everything was brown down there, brown and, for the most part, still. Only an occasional fish moved, pinheads darting here and there, a catfish advancing stealthily out from under a rock, its whiskers wavering. Midway down, another fish about six inches long seemed to lean unmoving against the side of a rock, a young carp probably. It was all very beautiful down there in that brown world of almost no movement.

In a nearby tree a yellow robin sang. Tom looked up to catch its song throbbing in its throat, then back again to the silent depths. He lay there a long time before turning over on his back to gaze upwards at a thin streak of cloud in the morning sky. As he watched he saw the cloud was growing thinner and knew that presently it would disintegrate. It had just about done so when he heard the thin whistle of a diesel. Tom Bartlett leapt to his feet, grabbed his satchel and was halfway up the gravel road before the absurdity of his precipitation dawned on him. He

glanced at his watch 8.25! He stood stock still. Momentarily he felt sick. He had on occasions missed the first train, never the second. There was not another until half-past ten. Having satisfied the needs of the workers, the railway department was content thereafter to provide a train every two hours for womenfolk wishing to do a day's shopping in the city. The 10.30 was a slower train, one of the few remaining steam trains still running. Tom hung there for two or three indecisive minutes, then turned and walked back to the river.

He sat on the grass, opened his satchel and, unclipping the white plastic lunch-box, took out an apple. He lay back on the grass munching the apple. What would they think down at the office when 9 o'clock passed and there was no Tom Bartlett at his usual place alongside the filing cabinet? What would Mr Shellabeer say when he rang for him and there was no response? There would be a second ring, more insistent than the first. Then a third, and the boss would come storming out of his office.

"Mr Bartlett, where the hell are you?"

He would glare round the office.

"Isn't Mr Bartlett in today? Is he ill? Hasn't he sent word?"

The typists would look at him round-eyed, their fingers idle. Terry Saunders would look up and say quietly,

"We haven't heard from him, Mr Shellabeer."

The manager would grunt and turn back towards his office, saying over his shoulder as he went, "Very well. Put someone else on the files, and get me the Western Timber Company's file at once!"

It had never happened before. Never in twenty-five years with either old Oscar or young Oscar. But it had happened today and Tom Bartlett was worried as he munched thoughtfully at his apple.

A pair of wattle-birds flapped into a tree and hopped from one branch to another, their harsh cries shattering the silence of the hollow. Love-play, no doubt, thought Tom Bartlett. The female skittered to the end of a branch and then flew off. Her flight was an invitation and the male followed swiftly. Their antics evoked the memory of a time when he had pursued Oriel like that, but it was only a memory. Oriel didn't skitter any more. She sat firmly on chairs, uninvitingly. She seemed to regard him as if he were a chair or a table, something equally fixed about the place, something occasionally of use and there when needed. That was how they regarded him at the office, too. It never dawned on them that he would not be there.

But today he was not there. Glancing at his watch he saw it was a quarter to nine. There was lots of time yet and he lay back on the grass, his hands behind his head. He wondered what he should do. He could go back to the house, ring the office and say he was sick. But that would mean making tedious explanations to Oriel, explanations she would never understand. It was much easier to contemplate facing Mr Shellabeer.

He sat up, clasping his hands about his knees. On the scraggy limb of a gum-tree well downstream a kookaburra sat with its head on one side. Tom watched it, wondering if it would laugh at him, reminding him that he was breaking one of the man-made laws by which men lived. But the bird did not laugh. It sat perfectly still, intent on something immediately below it. Suddenly it dropped straight down as if it had gone to sleep and slipped off its perch. But it rose almost at once and flew to a tree across the river. Tom saw something in its beak but it was too far off to tell what it was.

A movement on the ground attracted him. A hornet, yellow and black like the diesel, was dragging a spider across the grass. The spider was not dead; every now and then it moved its legs feebly as if in protest. But its protests were useless, Tom knew, because the hornet had anaesthetized it and it would remain in that state, its tissues preserved for the appetities of a generation of hornet larvae to be hatched from eggs yet to be laid. He thought that he was like the spider, anaesthetized each morning and dragged by the yellow and black diesel to the office where he served the needs of Mr Shellabeer, producing files to answer demands of business deals still unborn when he had left work the night before. Day after day the same. The yellow and black diesel. Why on earth was he there, sitting beside the river doing nothing?

This troubled him for a while. He was doing nothing when birds and fish and insects, all the creatures of nature about him, were being active in their own way. But his own inaction was apparent rather than real, because inside him was a ferment of change. This was not the same Tom Bartlett who had arrived at work on time yesterday and the day before yesterday and the day before that. He had missed both his usual trains and somehow he felt different. He lay back on the

grass and closed his eyes, wondering about the difference.

Overhead the blue sky enclosed him in a world that only he inhabited. The sun warmed him. He heard bird-songs in the trees, sometimes near by, sometimes far distant. Gradually the peace of the place entered into him and his misgivings gave way to a feeling of ridiculous happiness. Fancy him, Tom Bartlett, lying here like this when he should have been at work! Nevertheless he kept glancing at his watch, partly to measure the slow delicious minutes and partly to be sure he wouldn't miss the third train. At twenty past ten he sat up and zipped his satchel. For a moment he thought it mightn't be a bad idea to stay there the rest of the day. But he shook his head slowly and clambered up the steep track until he came out on the gravel road.

"You're late this morning, Mr Bartlett," said the station-master.

Tom acknowledged the remark with a slight nod. He said nothing, but strolled along the platform where three women were sitting with their shopping bags. All friends of Oriel's and one of them was that damned Rhoda Mansfield who knew everyone else's business. That was the worst of a place like Fernbrook, you couldn't help bumping into people you knew. He pretended not to see them. But he felt their questions boring into his back: why was he catching the 10.30, was Oriel ill, was he on holidays? Presently the train came out of the red cutting, chugging importantly till it came to a stop with the steam hissing out of its engine. Tom opened a carriage door and got in. It gave a deep-throated blast—not a thin bit of pip-squeak like those diesels—and the train shuddered into motion. It lumbered its way slowly round One Tree Hill and down the slopes to the outer suburbs, hurrying its hardest towards the city and Mr Shellabeer. But its top speed was a poor thing compared with that of the diesel and Tom Bartlett knew he would be very, very late. But somehow he didn't care.

When he entered the office with an air of bravado the typewriters stopped dead. The junior clerks became immobilized into statues. Terry Saunders in the act of opening a ledger let it fall shut. He did not utter his usual greeting. Instead he said "Are you all right, Tom?"

"I'm fine," said Tom, going to his table and putting his satchel on top of the filing cabinet. He took off his coat and hung it in its usual place. Then he began to rearrange the files on his table, glancing briefly at them as he made two neat piles. He smiled slightly as he picked up the handset and pressed the button that gave him direct communication with the manager. Everyone in the room heard the crackle of words that followed. They heard Tom say, "Yes, Mr Shellabeer." They watched him get up, go to the cabinet, extract a file and walk with it under his arm towards the manager's office. There would have been a buzz of chatter had not Terry Saunders prevented it by a sharp command: "All right. The circus is over. Snap into it."

The typewriters clacked busily. The junior clerks became fluid once more. Terry reopened his ledger. But all kept glancing at the door, waiting for it to open. When it did, two men came out as one man. Mr Shellabeer had his arm on Tom's shoulder. They caught the words ". . . couldn't find a damn thing. Bloody glad to have you back with us again" before the one man became two. Mr Shellabeer went out to lunch and Tom sat down at his table.

For a while there was again a buzz of tongues that even Terry Saunders hesitated to silence. He had expected the boss to blow his top, but instead he'd come out with his arm on Tom's shoulder as if it was the most natural thing in the world for one of his employees to arrive at a quarter to twelve. "If I did a thing like that . . ." he began thinking. But he couldn't continue with such improbable speculation. He rapped his ruler on the table and the typewriters started up their click-click-clacketty-click-click.

Tom Bartlett sat there with nothing to do, partly elated by the ease with which he had broken the habit of twenty-five years and got away with it, and partly nonplussed by it all. This mixture of elation and bewilderment persisted until lunchtime when the office emptied out and he took his plastic box of sandwiches to St Andrew's Square a few blocks away. The afternoon passed smoothly and swiftly and he found himself at the end of it hurrying along with the five-o'clock crowd of office-workers towards the station. He wasn't feeling tired as he felt at the end of most days. He walked with a buoyant stride, bought an evening paper and settled happily into a corner seat. He wondered whether he would have the courage again to miss both the early trains, not by accident, but by deliberate design.

When he alighted at Fernbrook his first impulse was to go over to the pub. Hank Vandermeer would be there and he had a vague feeling that there was something he wanted to talk over with

Hank. He couldn't have said at that moment exactly what it was. Then he remembered the mushroom. He set off down South Road in the gathering dusk and at the point where he had seen it that morning he went over and knelt among the young grass. The covering of leaves he had made was still there. He brushed it aside and with his pocket-knife cut cleanly through the stem. He turned the mushroom over. Its underside was a delicious pale pink. He lifted it and smelt the fresh earthiness of it. Wrapping it in his evening paper, he set off towards his house. Oriel was partial to mushrooms.

She turned from the table as he entered the kitchen and he held the parcel out to her.

"Guess what!" he said.

But Oriel wasn't guessing. She made no attempt to take it from him. Her voice was like ice.

"What were you doing till half-past ten this morning? You left here in time to catch the first train. But you didn't catch it. Or the second either. Where were you till half-past ten? Who were you with?"

Hell, thought Tom, this is why I didn't go back to the house this morning, I knew she'd nag at me the rest of the day, I knew she'd . . . Aloud he said "It's a mushroom."

"I get up at daybreak, cook your breakfast, cut your lunch. I work myself to the bone all day long. And I'm just going to start getting the tea when Rhoda Mansfield rings and asks if I'm all right. She'd just got back from town, she said, but she'd been worrying about me, she said, because she saw you . . ."

Damn Rhoda Mansfield, thought Tom, she would stick her bib in. But still meeting the storm with a gentleness natural to him, he put his satchel on a chair, unfolded the newspaper and thrust the mushroom at her.

"It'll make a tasty bite for you," he said.

Oriel didn't look at it. Her words swept round the room, bouncing off walls and back into his ears, hammering at him. There were the repeated questions: "Who were you with? Where did you go? What were you doing till half-past ten?"

Suddenly anger rose up inside him and spilled over.

"Oh, go and put your brains in a matchbox!" he shouted and flung the mushroom on the floor. For one dazed moment he stood looking at the disintegrated mess, then turned and went out, slamming the door behind him.

When he entered the pub there was Hank, elbows on the bar, and before him a half-finished middy. Tom slapped him on the back.

"Where you been?" asked Hank. "You go home virst?"

"Yair. I went home first."

Hank drained his glass and Tom pushed it across to the barmaid.

"Two more," he said.

Hank was studying him carefully.

"You look somehow like you don't look the same," he said.

Tom allowed the shadow of a smile to play on his lips, but he wasn't offering any explanations. When the refilled glasses were set in front of them, he lifted his and said, "Cheers!"

"Cheers!" said Hank.

They set their glasses down, and gazed at the froth-patterned sides, two men with something in common that was best expressed in silence. It wasn't till four beers later that Tom said "What about you and me, Hank?"

"What about us?" asked Hank.

"I've been thinking maybe we could work roundabout. Get a ute and go round doing jobs together. You and me. There's plenty to do, isn't there?"

"Too blutty much!"

"No sense in working too hard, Hank. With the two of us together it would be lighter, eh?"

Hank nodded into his beer. They drained their glasses and Tom called for another round although it wasn't his turn. When Hank protested and put a dollar note on the counter, Tom pushed it aside.

"You had a start on me," he said. "I went home first."

"Yes, you went home virst. Why'd you go home virst, Tom?" He wasn't arguing about the money, but was careful to see that the barmaid took his dollar instead of Tom's proffered silver. "Why'd you go home virst, Tom?"

"Oh, skip it! You know, it'd be good. We could go away together sometimes. Up Moore River way, do a spot of fishing."

Hank didn't know about fishing. He hadn't done any fishing in this country. And he didn't know about Tom, either. He said "My chob is hard work, you know. You like hard work, Tom?"

Tom began to answer but wasn't quite sure what to say. Did he like hard work? He liked pottering about, but hard work? He couldn't remember when he'd done any except in short bursts. Like spraying the roses or the fruit trees and that never for very long. He quickly got tired of filling and refilling the knapsack spray and

pumping its handle. Sometimes the thing got stuck up and had to be taken to pieces. Or at the end of winter there'd be the grass and weeds to pull out before the sun got too hot and baked the heavy loam into something like cement. He'd do short bursts there too, and go inside where it was cooler. Would he like doing that sort of work all the time? That and digging? He hated digging.

"I could try," he ventured.

"Maybe," said Hank.

They sat together till the pub closed at ten, Tom now and then adding a fresh chapter to a dream that was beginning to fade even as he added to it. They lingered a while outside in the crisp hills air white with moonlight washing the only street in Fernbrook. Then they shook hands solemnly.

"You think about it, Hank," said Tom before they set off in different directions. But he had a feeling that somehow Hank wasn't going to think about it. He walked along South Road where the young grass glistened in the moonlight. In the cold air his bifocals misted over and he couldn't easily make out details in the haze of white light surrounding him. He was looking for the mushroom patch and after several false ventures off the road he found it. For a moment he stood looking down on it, then began dancing in fury over the burgeoning mound. He wanted to destroy every memory of it.

But the memory was still with him next morning as he walked to the station. Deliberately he didn't look at it, but at the station there was Margaret Vandermeer waiting with others for the first train.

"Good morning, Mr Bartlett," she said brightly, her little breasts thrusting at the world she was about to conquer. "You didn't miss it this morning, did you?"

It was a question that didn't seem to call for an answer. He contented himself with a sombre "Hello!", looking at her and thinking what a pretty kid she was and wondering if she'd grow into a bitch like her mother. And Oriel! Hell, the things Oriel had said to him when he got home from the pub! The house had been in darkness and he'd thought her asleep, but when he blundered in, a little uncertain in his movements, she'd bounced up from the bed as if on a spring and had lashed at him with her tongue till he'd cried "Oh shut up, blast you! Shut up!"

But even as he flung his clothes from him and dragged on his pyjamas he'd known it was no good. He'd known that Hank didn't think it was any good, either. That was why he was there on the station when the diesel slithered to a stop. He got in, found a seat, opened his paper but he wasn't reading it as the train gathered speed round One Tree Hill. He was looking glumly out of the window. The hornet had him again and was dragging him down to the city and to the office and to Mr Shellabeer.

floating fund

STEPHEN MURRAY-SMITH writes: Since the recent postal increases it now costs us 33c to send a single copy of *Overland* to a subscriber. It is true that we try to send as many copies as possible by bulk post on publication, and that that is a lot cheaper, but inevitably we post hundreds of copies of each issue in single lots. Before October 1973 it cost us only 7c to send the same single copy. In other words, a rise of nearly five hundred per cent in one year! This represents an impossible attack on the dissemination of ideas, and will in due course put many magazines (and, incidentally, booksellers) out of business. May we ask all readers to protest to their local members? And thanks to those who are helping to sandbag the levees against this kind of flood, to a fine total of $384.60:

$100 PP/L: $26-25 DM; $16 TE, RDF, RM, MC; $10 CM, DD; $6 JM, MM, CC, KS, DB, NM, VO'C, JMcD, JC, JO, GH, AC, VB, KC; $5 RB; $4 JJ, BW, AW, JB, JC, ER, JD, JG; $3 RW; $2 FH, DB, BW, HH, GS, HH, BS, KS, TG; $1 PT, AMcC, FD, EP, EF, OS, GK, RC, EP, PN, DMcL, JB, NK, PO'C, HMcM, RE, MR, ME, AJ, RW, ML, MT, CR, TB, BM, DM, DMcA, AB, PG, PMcL; 75c JC; 60c WG; 50c GK, SH.

Patrick White
A Reply to Dorothy Green

JEAN CROWCROFT

Much as one may sympathise with the concern shown by Dorothy Green that Patrick White's novels should be properly appreciated and evaluated, rather than indiscriminately praised or attacked, one cannot let some of her comments in recent articles pass unchallenged, in particular those concerning his Nobel Prize (*Overland* 57).

Although she acknowledges the general excellence of White's work, Mrs Green has expressed a great many misgivings about the award, and while she claims that her reservations should neither diminish nor add to one's estimate of White, her suggestion that his Prize was fortuitous, even coincidental, implies that in her opinion it was not well-merited. Of her reservations, two are really matters of logic. The unbecoming haste of certain journalists to associate themselves with White's success does indeed leave a nasty taste in the mouth, but this has nothing whatever to do with White. As regards earlier European writers not recognised by any award, Mrs Green herself acknowledges White's own modesty in this, and in any case to conclude that an award should be denied to White because deserving persons in the past did not receive it is rather odd reasoning.

However, these are minor matters; it is far more valuable, critically, to put forward and make a case for some other artist, as Mrs Green does for Christina Stead. One cannot but join Mrs Green in regretting the almost wholesale neglect of this novelist which, curiously, seems not to be the result of active hostility or passive indifference (*The Man Who Loved Children,* for instance, was well-received, and *House of All Nations* is being re-issued in Britain). One can only assume — though it is cold comfort — that it is one of those odd and unfortunate quirks of the bubble reputation.

Whether Miss Stead's work, however, warrants an international award is a moot point; what one must take exception to is Mrs Green's implied criticisms of the Nobel Prize committee. To begin with, an award can hardly be said to be "fortuitous" when the recipient has previously been rejected in favor of other writers. On at least two occasions White was considered, but instead the Prize went to Samuel Beckett and to Solzenitsyn. Do these awards reflect the "idealistic tendency" Mrs Green sees in the operations of the Nobel committee?

The members of the committee are also chastised for the ignorance revealed in their citation, "an . . . art which has introduced a new continent into literature." But, surely, for Mrs Green to feel the need to assert that there has been fiction about Australian life for over a century is to read the citation at the most literal level? How many Australians, let alone readers elsewhere, have read anything by Alexander Harris, for instance, or even heard of him? How much of what he and other early Australians wrote can honestly be classed as 'literature' in the noblest sense? Certainly White's place on the roll of honor is not yet unshakeably established, but Mrs Green herself would reserve a mention for *Voss* in even a short history of world literature. There, indeed, is the crux of the matter: it needs to be remembered that the Nobel Prize is given on an international basis, and what White has indeed done, in *Voss* and elsewhere, is to bring Australia to the notice of discriminating readers throughout the world.

Since it is not impossible, then, that the members of the Nobel Prize committee know what they are about, perhaps one may venture, very hesitantly, on a further speculation apropos their citation. In view of White's express concern with the 'country of the mind', his explorations of the soul's landscapes, could it be that this aspect of

his work is also being alluded to in the citation? As a rule the soul is an area not directly investigated by novelists; the great Russians, especially Dostoievsky, approached it, but seldom so insistently as White attempts to do.

It is this aspect of his work that leads to the problem of his prose, and Mrs Green is less than fair in implying that only the claims made for his style have been extravagant; some of the charges laid against it have been equally extravagant, one at least having passed into legend, namely A. D. Hope's condemnation of *The Tree of Man* as "illiterate verbal sludge". However, as Alan Lawson has reminded us in his timely and useful articles (*Meanjin,* September and December 1973) about the corpus of White criticism, Professor Hope also expressed much respect for White's work. Mr Lawson's resume also demonstrates that most of the reservations felt by critics generally have centred on the style.

That it does present difficulties cannot be denied; in an age of pre-digested, mass-media communication, any style that demands active concentration can be disconcerting. One plausible argument runs that White should so shape his style that the reader is not thus compelled to wrestle with the text. There is a strong case for supposing, however, that White is being neither wilful nor negligent. Many of the peculiarities seem on investigation to be deliberate provocations towards a more attentive response. McLuhan maintains that our long association with the printed word, indeed its very appearance of linear progression, has accustomed us to expect certain things; furthermore, in the act of reading we assimilate not a word at a time but groups of words which we assume will form units of sense. Consequently, any disruption in the fulfilment of these expectations makes us uncomfortable. Unexpected punctuation, unusual inversions, emphatic auxiliary verbs, paranomasia of various sorts, pull the reader up short. We cannot absorb this material like so many sponges; willy-nilly, we must stop to do a little thinking, a little working-out, and in doing so we may see something in a new way, as if we were to wake up one morning and find that the rose tree on the lawn was unaccountably in a different corner. Lawn and rose tree and much else besides would, for a moment, be seen afresh.

Some of course would maintain that in making us do so much ourselves, White is shirking his responsibility. For the moment, certainly, we must admit that while White's idiosyncrasies of style sometimes have a salutary effect, they also sometimes border on the infuriating. For example, while "the immaterial, material things" is illuminating, "the sulky became rather surly" is just clever play. Similarly, it is hard to find an occasion when the apparently arbitrary use of "that" rather than "which" to introduce a non-defiining adjective clause serves any purpose.

Apart from the difficulties raised by the technicalities of the style, there are those of the language itself. White has been charged with vague, inflated, evasive prose which pretends to describe an experience with words themselves impressive but which in fact contribute nothing to our understanding. (For instance, "silky" and "whirling" of the departing soul in *Voss,* chapter 10[1].) Indeed they do not, if we interpret 'understanding' solely as the intellectual grasp of something. But, as we remarked earlier, White is attempting to convey the stirrings of the soul, the glimpses of the divine, and no amount of approved Royal Society-type prose would suffice for such matters. *Pace* Mrs Green, the masters of prose she lists in no way provide a fitting comparison for White, for their aims were not his; they were not attempting to investigate the experiences of the soul in the literary form of the novel.

In fact, and with notable exceptions, the whole tendency of the novel in English has been to explore man's relationship with other men rather than his relationship with god or his own soul—to cover a horizontal rather than a vertical span. The movements of the spirit have been more the province of poetry. In White we have a writer who is using the stuff of poetry in the shape of the novel, and who thus undertakes a two-fold struggle. For him the *mot juste* will not be the word with the most accurate dictionary definition but one which will also, or perhaps even instead, have the appropriate emotional and sensual connotations. This is, of course, where vagueness becomes almost inevitable; language of this kind cannot by its nature be contained within well marked boundaries of meaning, and for no two readers will such language have exactly the same significance or associations. What we understand of it therefore depends partly on what we bring to it or what we can imagine from it. Thus in this way, too, White's novels demand much of the reader.

Paradoxically, perhaps, White's prose is often more objectionable when he is dealing with non-mystical matters, for then White the man sometimes seems to take over from White the artist. At such times there are fewer obstacles to overcome; the words flow too easily; occasionally,

as others have remarked, from a pen dipped in venom. There is, however, the more serious complaint of his authorial presence, his intrusions in the narrative to comment and to insist. While it could be argued that this is understandable in a writer so anxious to share what insights he has gleaned, it could equally well be argued that since in other ways he compels the reader to participate actively or observe attentively, he should credit that same reader with sufficient intelligence and imagination to share those insights without his insistence. As Mrs Green maintains, such intrusions are damaging, and this not so much because they disrupt but because they draw our attention away from the work to the writer, whereas his more successful disruptions of syntax focus our attention on the work itself. Had White written in an earlier period, of course, he could have assumed a certain basic 'religious literacy', if we may call it that, in his audience, and would therefore have been spared some of his anxiety. His difficulty is precisely that he can make no such assumptions, and in this too he is therefore contending with the habits of a secular age in which so much fiction consists of slices or slabs of 'real' life.

It is surely this re-introduction of a once familiar mythic and mystic element that leads critics to hunt so happily in the religious and metaphysical realms of White's work, rather than that — as Mrs Green suggests — they have never been to Sunday school or sung hymns; one must assume that critics and academics are familiar with the sources of their cultural heritage. White's "seeming" novelty *is* actually new compared with much modern fiction. That White may deal in the great commonplaces does not mean that their re-statement is not valid; were it so, then much religious writing since the Gospels could be dispensed with.

Oddly enough, "religion" and "commonplace" appear together in Leonie Kramer's article in *Quadrant* (May-June, 1973), but there it is in connection with Mrs Godbold, of whom Professor Kramer complains that, since this lady thinks only in commonplaces, she can hardly be a visionary. In fact, the two attributes are not mutually exclusive, unless we are to conclude that only the articulate and the well-read are to be among the illuminati. The whole tenor of White's work leads one to assume that for him the simple, the trusting, the humble, are perhaps a little closer to the ultimate truths of existence than most of us. Himmelfarb is surely speaking for White as well as for himself when he says that the intellect is not enough.

Professor Kramer has other doubts about Mrs Godbold, wondering why, for instance, her saucepans are sacred while Mrs Rosetree's Mixmaster is not. A similar question is raised by Mrs Green about Sister de Santis, in her review of *The Eye of the Storm* (*Meanjin*, December 1973). Fundamentally, the difference is not in the objects, but in the attitude of their users towards them. For Shirl Rosetree, the ladies Flack and Jolley, and other such, the objects are possessions, mentally labelled MINE, and indicative of their 'niceness', their social acceptance. For Stan Parker, Mrs Godbold and their kind, objects are to be respected as having value in their own right. This sounds sentimental, but it is an extension of a notion familiar to all craftsmen, that a good workman respects his tools.

If one shares the difficulties in accepting Mrs Godbold, it is for a different reason. We are obviously expected to approve of and admire her behavior, but in one respect at least it is so contradictory that the reader is bewildered. She seems

not to scrutinise her daughters, being content to love them, and as a result they grow up to be "straight white shafts" halting the darkness. But, to her husband, Mrs Godbold permits no such privacy, and displays much the same need to see into his heart and head as did Amy Parker, though for the nobler motive of saving his soul. That this particular aspect of Mrs Godbold should be presented for our approval seems to go against the implication in White's work generally that we cannot, and should not, attempt to probe another's mystery. It is true that she recognises her error in following Tom to the brothel, but when she listens to Himmelfarb on a later occasion, "evil was only evil when she bore the brunt of it herself" — and this is still dangerously like spiritual arrogance. At the very least one cannot avoid the suspicion that Mrs Godbold drove her husband away, and we are therefore unable to regard her quite so uncritically as White seems to wish.

At all events, she is quite different from most mothers in these novels, many of whom are rejecting and domineering, as Mrs Green remarks when drawing our attention to the many repetitions of character-type and relationship (*Meanjin,* December 1973). No doubt it is this sort of repetition she is referring to in her *Overland* comments on the Nobel Prize. "Repetitiousness" is too damning a word — 'recurrences' may be nearer the mark. This is not a quibble, for while the resemblances between certain characters are undeniable, there are as many dissimilarities. Each sibling relationship, for instance, revolves around different conflicts, occupies a different position in the novel, and illuminates different aspects of man's nature. Likewise, the mothers, the artists, the retarded or deformed, move in and out of the foreground, and different facets are presented to the light.

For Mrs Green, however, the similarities predominate, and this leads to tedium, a tedium not enlivened or relieved by the pace, which she compares with Charles Morgan's. It is worth noting *en passant* that Charles Morgan enjoys a greater reputation in France than in England, perhaps because the French are more accustomed to the novel of ideas, to the stimulus of intellectual exercise in their reading. For most English-speaking readers Morgan's work does not merit such attention because we feel we profit little by the effort, whereas the density of White's prose at the very least re-alerts us to the already familiar. Perhaps Joseph Conrad's novels provide a more appropriate comparison, for they move at much the same pace and with much the same density — and with much the same attendant difficulties and longueurs which invite, indeed, much the same criticism of being 'misty in the middle as well as at the edges'.[2] Conrad, too, was concerned with ideas, not so much ideas of religion, of course, but ideas of morality and truth and man's ability to live up to his own highest conception of himself. He too uses a prose often oblique and suggestive, employing symbolism and imagery to universalise the particular and to render states of feeling rather than statements of fact, above all to make us *see.*

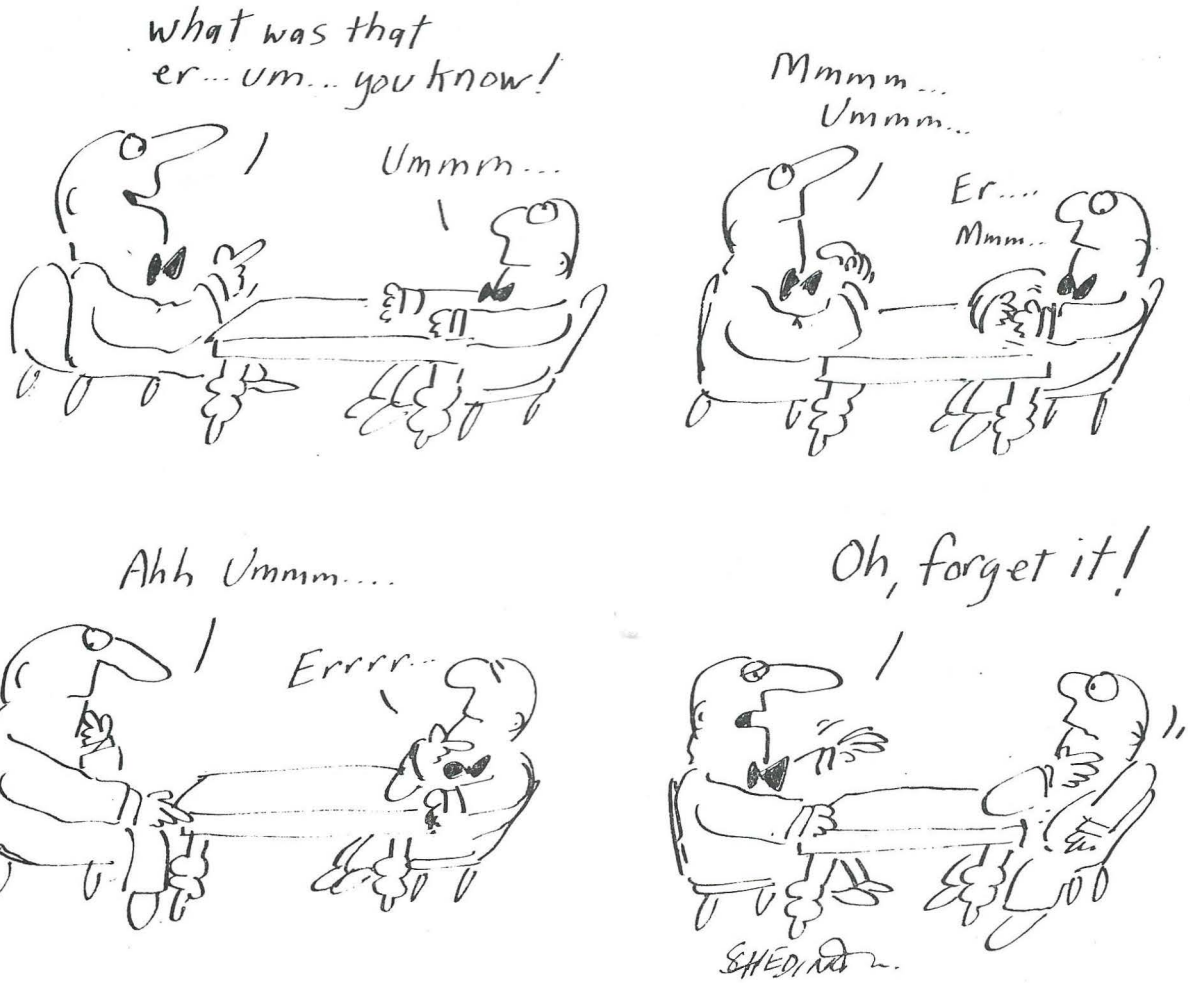
What we see, of course, is selected by the artist, who also attempts to determine how we see it. Even so, our reactions will differ. Mrs Green, for instance, discerns in *The Eye of the Storm* a disgust with the physical processes, but, if it is there, it is nothing like so anguished as that felt by Swift. Merely writing about nausea and shit does not necessarily indicate disgust; indeed, in many of White's novels we are reminded that the processes of decay are the prelude to rebirth. Perhaps the occasion when disgust is indeed the most appropriate reaction is that in *The Vivisector,* when Duffield smears his self-portrait with his own excrement — and then the disgust prevails precisely because it is Duffield's own overwhelming emotion at the time. Sister Veronica Brady mentions a similar disgust surrounding Alf Dubbo[3], but again the mere presence of smells and sputum is not sufficient cause for such response. "The lot" that Mrs Green refers to indeed includes all these things, with commodes, incest and lesbianism for good measure, but *The Eye of the Storm* also includes tenderness, devotion, moments of beauty and peace, and are not these too part of "the lot"? Besides, whatever one's interpretation of White's beliefs may be, it is clear that he would have us recognise, unflinchingly, all aspects of experience, even that impulse in man that consigns his fellows to the gas chambers.

Nevertheless there are corresponding impulses towards the light, and these are, as Mrs Green suggests, acts of faith. She reminds us, too, that faith and grace are not comfortable permanent states; they alternate with darkness and may be present in the moments of harmony, the epiphanies, occasionally vouchsafed to those who are in any way receptive. In spite of his apparent insistence on a spiritual elite, White hints that there is hope for almost everyone, even perhaps for Mesdames Flack and Jolley once they begin to practise thought upon themselves.

White's novels invite almost endless speculation of this kind; even the names of people and places

suggest all sorts of allusions, though it is dangerous to ask whether the name of the solicitor in *The Eye of the Storm* is a reference to Pauline doctrine when it is not Wyburn, but Wyburd. One fears that an industry of name investigation will follow hard upon the explanations offered of White's religious and metaphysical beliefs, and Mrs Green's plea for some objective assessments of other aspects of the work is well justified. It is, of course, discouraging to the artist, particularly one so sensitive to criticism as Mr White, to be the subject of what may be misinterpretation, however devoted, but novels so dense with implication and on so epic a scale cannot be reduced to pat explanation and paraphrase. So, paradoxically, Mr White can perhaps take comfort from the fact that it is precisely because his art has the qualities which won him the Nobel Prize, such sweep and resonance, that it permits of misinterpretation at all.

[1] See Rodney Mather's article on *Voss* in *Melbourne Critical Review*, no. 3, 1963.
[2] E. M. Forster, a note on Conrad in *Abinger Harvest*, 1936, quoted by M. C. Bradbrook, *Literature in Action*, London, 1972.
[3] "The Hard Enquiring Wind"; unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, 1968.



Stephen Scheding

JOHN McLAREN

swag

The criticism of the Council for the Arts in the last issue of *Overland* highlights one aspect of a problem which has bedevilled the Labor government since it took office. In one sense, the problem is the vast gap between expectations and performance. The government took with it into power a vast fund of goodwill from all sections of the community. That much of this goodwill has now turned sour is in part the fault of unrealistic expectations, of a belief that high intent was sufficient to overcome not only the opposition of a bitter and arrogant Senate but also the realities of the social and economic environment. Moreover, the necessities of electoral rhetoric obscured the fact that the planned redistributions of power and affluence would necessarily cause pain to some parts of the community. More seriously, however, the disappointment with the government springs not from regret that it has failed to implement all its policies, or that its management of the economy leaves more to be desired than its array of expensive professional advisers would allow one to believe possible, but from concern that it has lost touch with the people it claims to represent. Its real achievements—mainly in education and foreign affairs—do not seem part of any grand, or even humane, design, but just the fortunate result of individual initiatives which have emerged successfully from the constant power struggle of caucus, cabinet, departments, unions and industrial lobbyists which, since the first few heady months of office, has been the image the government has displayed to the nation of its activities.

From this point of view, the government's activities among the arts seem merely the product of the personal enthusiasm of one man, the Prime Minister. Certainly, without Mr Whitlam's drive and interest it is unlikely that so much of real value would have been achieved, not only in areas under the direct authority of the Council for the Arts but also through such projects as the development of the collection for the National Gallery under the leadership of James Mollison. The procedures for buying works of art for this collection have all the necessary attributes of a successful project in the arts. A clear objective has been set—the development of a collection of art works of world significance—a firm budget has been provided, and the Director and his expert advisers have then been left free to carry out their task. The mean-minded criticism which has greeted their efforts has been both a disgrace to the Australian press which has encouraged it and further evidence of the need for such projects, in order to widen our horizons beyond the parochial. Yet the attention evoked by the art purchases might have been more properly critical, have risen beyond the level of personal preference and public malice, had the whole program of encouraging the arts been justified in terms of social significance rather than national pride or personal ambition. It is good that an Australian government should see a major art collection as a monument to the nation and to itself, but it should as a socialist government see it also in terms of the social function of art, which has nothing to do with monuments, nationalism or propaganda.

This is the nub of the criticism of both the Council for the Arts and of the Bill to give it statutory form as the Australia Council. Despite its protestations to the contrary, and despite the money it has channelled to worthwhile endeavors, the Council has become a monument of bureaucratic sterility. The very office block it inhabits in North

Sydney is a perfect example of the air-conditioned metropolitan ugliness which is the antithesis of the arts. From here it imposes uniform procedures on every Board, every State and every artist. Like the wanderings of the Elizabethan court, the periodic peripatetic onslaughts that the various Boards make to receive submissions in foreign state capitals merely serve to enhance the central control. The peasants on the outlying estates are graciously informed how they may draft their case so that it may be received favorably by their liege lords in Sydney.

That the system operates with greater success than the structure would indicate is due to the efforts of good men and women within it, and to the effects of novelty. The renewed enthusiasm for the arts, the sudden access of unprecedented funds, the appointment to the Boards of new people with new ideas, have led to initiatives in all directions. The government has attempted to retain the spirit of initiative by its policy of limited tenure for most of the members of the Council and of each Board. The effectiveness of this policy is, however, reduced by the retention of public servants as permanent members. The theory is that there should be administrative continuity and artistic innovation, but it remains to be proven that the ideas of successive appointments of new and inexperienced Board members will be able to survive the continually accruing experience of the administrators.

Whatever the membership of the Boards, however, their relationship to the artists is fundamentally misjudged. The Council and its agencies are seen as the policy makers, the artists—writers, directors, painters, craftsmen or whatever—as supplicants. If Mollison had been subject to this arrangement in his pursuit of works for the National Gallery, he would have had to make a full application before reaching any finality in any of his negotiations, rather than merely seeking the endorsement of his arrangements by his expert committee as the last step in each negotiation. The guaranteed income scheme of the Literature Board reflects a similar relationship between sponsor and artist, where the Board's role is limited to agreeing that this person is a proper person to receive support. With other schemes, however, the detailed planning required by the Council before approval means that the Boards can exercise the most intimate and detailed control over the details of the projects they sponsor. As the final decisions are made in Sydney, this means that neither the individuality of the artist nor the particular needs of the local community can be properly considered.

A fundamental inability to understand the nature of the arts and their relationship to society is crystallized in the wording used in the Australia Council Bill to describe the functions of the Council. The language, with its references to excellence, appreciation, knowledge and recognition, is that of the dilettante, the cultivated amateur who regards the arts as an item of consumption to be enjoyed as relaxation from the true business of life. The Council is also exhorted to "foster the expression of a national identity by means of the arts", an injunction redolent of a thousand speech night ceremonies and Anzac Day parades, and a phrase which ensures the Bill its place as an historic document enshrining a concept which has done more than any other single idea to inhibit the development of the arts in Australia. A Council committed to these functions is unlikely to bring the arts back into the control of their creators, or to further their role in raising our consciousness of the possibilities of life.

The problem of the Labor government in the arts is symptomatic of those it encounters in most other areas of its endeavor. In order to promote the neglected areas of our national life, it must take a national initiative. Funds are provided from Canberra, and a national structure is set up. But this national structure then determines the way in which the funds can be spent, and thus stifles the very liveliness which they should nourish. It is on this rock that the Aboriginal program has foundered, so that local communities in Queensland, in the Northern Territory and in the Kimberleys continue to starve while state and federal officials wrestle with the momentous problem of who signs the cheques, and a white backlash develops from Brisbane to Wyndham, and from the Murray River to Townsville, against policies which are still not in operation. Similarly, programs in urban development and education are failing to have effect in the communities for which they were designed because a vast bureaucratic structure comes between the policy makers and the people. In both the areas, the problem has been compounded by state bloody-mindedness, most obviously in the Deep North but most deviously in N.S.W. and Victoria. Yet the problem with the states, like the problem with the rural com-

munity, should have been anticipated, and has been exacerbated by the arrogance and insensitivity of the Canberra mandarinate. The real problem with the public service has not been that it has been hostile to Labor, but that Labor has been too ready to go along with its ambition to see all decisions made in Canberra. The tragedy of the public service is that, like the doctors, its pride in its own professional expertise prevents it from concealing its contempt for the people it serves.

Other disaster areas for Labor have been conservation, the media and communications. In each case, the cause has been that the government has preferred to listen to the experts rather than pursue a policy of social need. Cabinet approved the case for the Black Mountain tower on the grounds that the submissions by the Post Office engineers were unanswerable — as they were, on their own assumptions. The alternative assumptions are revealed by looking at the skyline of Canberra. The failure of the media department to take any initiative in developing an alternative form of radio represents a major victory to the forces of domination in the public media, and deprives the public of a major opportunity to reassert control over its own affairs. This failure is probably of greater importance to Australia's future than anything that has been done to promote the arts. Finally, the government's continuation of the policy of previous Liberal governments in reducing the services and increasing the costs of postal and electronic communications further isolates the individual, and further concentrates power in the hands of the vast corporations and public bureaucracies. Again, this single administrative act has more effect on the ability of people to maintain access to each other, to spread their ideas and receive the ideas of others, than all that has been done by the Council for the Arts.

It would be ungracious not to acknowledge that the Prime Minister has, by taking the trouble to write a personal letter in response to the last Swag, effectively destroyed one of our doubts, that the pressure of office and the perquisites of power were isolating him from criticism. For this, we are grateful.

John Morrison writes appreciatively of Arthur Phillips' essay in our previous issue, but adds: "My father would have been tickled to death if he'd known that he would go down in history as Curator of Sunderland Museum. He was actually a postal telegraphs construction foreman. It's also incorrect that I left the Museum to go to sea. I left that most blessed of jobs because I outgrew it, didn't have the education to move on in that line of business—and went gardening because it was the most attractive way of escaping outdoors."

We were rather proud of ourselves in publishing "A Primer for Poetry Readers", where poets 'explain' their poetry, in our last issue. We thought it at least a start at building a bridge between the poet and the consumer, though we recognise the right of poets like Dorothy Hewett and R. D. FitzGerald to tell us to jump in the lake. But not one reader has referred to our initiative in either correspondence or by word of mouth, so we hardly feel inclined to continue. However Katherine Gallagher's poem "Anzac Veteran", was left out of the last *Overland,* though she had prepared a note on it. Since it is now printed in this issue, we give her comments: "I found trying to explain the poem was distorting its balance, especially at the end, where I want the distinction between traditional fighting (wars) and haphazard violence (on the street) to come out. So my only request to readers is to ask them to read 'Anzac Veteran' at least four times, letting their imagination run riot, as it were. It is the reader who creates and re-creates the poem, thus expanding it." And, similarly, Denis Kevans has this to say about his two poems here: " 'Alda Bondiensis' is Latin for Bondi Dawn. The poem parodies classical poems in praise of dawn. It attempts to capture in a sad and humorous way the beauty and the profanity of a dawn in my own city, Sydney. 'Archbishop' stems from an Easter address I heard an archbishop give in Hyde Park, Sydney, under a banner reading 'Christ the King'. He was assisted by folksingers who 'turned on' the crowd which, after it had been ground down by His Grace, went away gloomy and beaten. A couple of us were handing out our leaflet 'Christ dies everyday in Vietnam', and I felt hatred for the archbishop in his tyranny over those who crumpled our leaflets but smiled at us as they walked away."

D. R. BURNS

My Fat Brother Stan

My brother Stan, by the time he was thirteen and attending the Brunswick Technical School, had become an Ishmael doomed to a sad sort of wandering. I do not know if he believed every man's hand was against him, but certainly he trusted no one, he kept his own counsel. He plainly felt there was no one who cared for him. He rejoiced in this, after his own giggly fashion.

Auntie Maggie sent him to the Tech "to learn a trade, not like your father just in the factory". He'd never been at all regular attending the primary school where teachers as well as classmates sneered at him because he was fat. One day, after he'd been at the Tech for a month, no more, he came home with his hands and his plump knees caked in mud. He was late, and giggly. He carried a big sealed jar on a slant, under one arm. In it, fish swam about through gritty water. Or tried to, for there must have been about thirty of these mites and they knocked against each other.

"Where have you been to get those?" she sighed.

He stared at her, raising eyebrows.

"Eh? Where had the blokes been to get 'em you mean, don't you?"

"What blokes?"

"What blokes? Teachers of course. What other blokes you 'spose they got at the Tech?"

"What would they be doing with fish at a technical school?"

There was a touch of contempt in this, for the Tech and for the working men, mere tradesmen, it turned out. I was her favorite and I would be be going to the high school where they might study intricate things like fish.

"Whadder you always thinkin' he's tellin' lies for?" I demanded.

"Botany," Stan scoffed at her. "Botany studies of course."

"Then why would they let you bring them home?"

"Because they were excavatin'. They were makin' the pond bigger."

He held the jar up to the light. I wondered about the mud on his hands and his knees. That didn't really fit with his story.

"See 'em? they're old 'uns. They were throwin' them out. All the kids got some."

"Where y' gonna keep 'em?" I asked, now eagerly.

I had a sudden vision of our private aquarium, Stan's and mine, a room where light quivered through water, a room of great shimmering glass tanks.

"I'll keep 'em in a tank," he told me, and, to cut me in on the enterprise, "We'll have to get some oxygen biscuits too."

Auntie Maggie stared at the fish. We were all silent, standing there in the kitchen for a moment, watching the fish kick and glide through the grit.

"You can't have those things in the kitchen," she declared.

"We'll set it up in the back verandah," Stan decided. "The baker'll have to knock at the front door. So he won't disturb 'em."

"What about goin' to the lav?"

"You'll have to be quiet, pullin' the chain."

"Well, so will you."

"Go on, take them out," Auntie Maggie sighed.

She turned to the stove so as not to see him if he disobeyed her. He wandered out, carrying his jar, his eyes glittering with his own very private thoughts. I followed. He glanced around the little skillion roofed verandah. His tech school cap was still firmly tugged down over his hair. Greasy strands escaped to dribble down to his eyebrows.

"We'll have t' board it all up."

"Why?"

"T' stop the rain gettin' in on the tanks. Rain kills 'em."

"Huh! What about fish in rivers?"

"Why'nt y' let me finish? It kills 'em if they put their heads out in it."

"Well, how y' gonna board it up?"

"Get some planks."

"Where from?"

He gave me his most condescending, know-all look.

"Kid I know at the Tech. His dad drives a timber truck."

Disbelief swept through me, distaste for all the mucky lying and dreaming he went on with.

"You're not gonna make any tanks. You're just talkin'."

He pursed his mouth, like a girl.

"Who says I'm not?"

"Ar-r-r."

I growled and stamped off.

"Wait'll you want a look," he jeered after me, "when Ian's helpin' me."

That was a shrewd one. But I shook off any thought of him, settling down to read until tea was ready. I sat at the kitchen table, while Auntie Maggie shuffled from stove to sink to dresser, and the roast sizzled. My book was Arthur Mee's *Heroes of the World*. I was reading about Joan of Arc. In the line drawing she rode a charger and she held a streaming pennant. "It is not true that there is no blot upon the Flag," the caption ran. "The foulest of deeds was done by the Race. It was to put to death the Maid."

Out of the window, beyond the fly wire, beyond the asparagus fern which screened the lavatory trellis, there was cold, white sky. Above the top of the page I could see the red core of fire in Auntie Maggie's stove. Little white tongues of flame licked across these coals in a contented way. Auntie Maggie hummed, very happy to have me there, behind my book. I could hear Stan scraping about in the verandah. Time passed. I was reading now about the treachery of the Bishop Cauchon. I heard one of Stan's own special giggles. It was throaty, wet and it did not come from the verandah. It came from the lavatory, from the "little house". Auntie Maggie had not heard it. I rose and walked casually out of the kitchen. Then I tip-toed across the backyard concrete and in behind the lavatory trellis.

He had his fat bottom toward me, as he bent over the lavatory bowl. He fished in the jar, raised his arm, there was a plop, and he giggled again. I stood still. I was working up a great righteous anger which would suddenly gush forth and paralyse the villain. In the stillness, over his breathing, there was a faint lapping from the lavatory bowl where the little fish now slithered. It could only be a matter of moments before he took out his dick and actually pissed on them. Then a splendid way of venting the wrath which God must feel occurred to me. I leant forward, clutched the grip on the cistern chain, and pulled hard.

There was a clanging, a sucking, a great roaring of waters.

"Let them die," I cried, like the prophets. "Go and let them die then."

He swung around, his face appallingly white. I felt horribly guilty. I might have killed him with the shock. Tears started in his eyes. I wanted to hug him and tell him how sorry I was. I hated myself. I felt I must give him everything I possessed, spend my life making up to him for that fright. The cistern's roar subsided. Only a whisper came to my tongue.

"I couldn't help it, Stan."

He had clenched one fist, so that the mud peeled away from his knuckles. But he turned his back and smeared away the tears. Then he looked me over.

"What's the matter with you?"

"I should'na done it."

"Should'na done what?"

The maddening business of the endless questioning.

"Pulled the chain of course."

"Huh! 'S just what I was gonna do."

"Yeah. Well what'd y' get a shock for?"

"Eh? What shock?"

I turned away, I wrung my hands in exasperation, rage. I was the one who felt like weeping now.

"Y' poor fool," he jeered after me. "Fishes like it."

I didn't believe there was anyone who could beat him at his game. It was his way of getting back at the world which made him feel he was a fat boy who didn't belong to anyone. The end of any bout of words with him was the moment when you felt yourself about to launch a killing punch, one that would smear his knobbly nose across his fat cheeks. He'd suddenly look stricken, hunted, and you'd have all this pity and self-contempt welling up.

The fish were just the first item of a whole series of things he brought home with him "from the Tech". Some plaster sheets were next, the peak of his cap and his grey school socks smeared white when he walked in with them. An ancient sherry decanter, in the shape of a lady with a billowing crinoline, was next. Later there were three metal plates bearing street names we had never heard of. He told us that the plates were "rejects". They carried the new names for streets "near the Tech".

"Yeah," I jeered, "and when are they gonna change the names?"

"Eh? Who said they were gonna change them?"

"You did."

"The mayor was gonna change them. That was five years ago. He was mad. He was taken off."

"You mean real mad?"

"Well, he's in the asylum. That's how real."

"How'd y' get them?"

"Fellow came to give us a talk."

"What on?"

"Local district hist'ry. 'S the new subject. Local district hist'ry."

It went on like that for three months. Then our father, worn down by Auntie Maggie's worrying, took an afternoon off from the factory to go and see the school principal. Stan had been attending only two or three days a week since he started there. There was some mix-up about whose form he was really in, or perhaps they didn't care much, so nothing had been done. What to do with him was a problem because Auntie Maggie knew he couldn't be kept there. He was too slippery for her. And there was a feeling that if he was driven too hard he might just slip away so that we'd never see him again. Certainly, for the moment, he never looked like getting a belting. It had been pleasant for our father to take the afternoon off from work and go out, spruced up, on family business. The principal, as he said, was "a decent sort, nothing put on about him". He reminded our father of the policeman who came that night to tell us about Auntie Maggie's accident.

"Same type of build," our father explained, with everyone listening. "Very deep voice. Rolled his own I noticed."

After going into the Education Department herself with Auntie Ruby, Auntie Maggie got permission for Stan to leave school when he was still thirteen. Then he started out on a series of apprenticeships, to a draper, a grocer and a bicycle maker. In each case the articles had to be cancelled. In the evenings, now that he was working, he dressed in a flash brown suit and a pork pie hat and went off to the pictures. He never did anything else. By the end of the week he would be borrowing his admission money from Auntie Maggie and he would have covered a circuit of cinemas in Moonee Ponds, Essendon, Brunswick and Ascot Vale. Auntie Maggie encouraged him in his hunt for further films to see. She considered, I suppose, that he had to be filled with entertainment as we all three, motherless boys, had to be filled with beef and jam pudding.

Ian and I hardly noticed him around after a while. We went to the pictures once a week, on Friday nights, with our mates at the state school. We were a tight knit bunch because we were all in the football team. At interval, in the milk bar across the street, we might see Stan. He would sidle up to tell us some monstrous story about a car crash in the next street. Or about a much better film he'd seen the night before. Then Ian and I would mock him, for shame of his fatness, of his lies, and our mates would join in.

"Garn Tub. Tell us another."

"Look out, Tub. Y' lid's comin' off."

Sometimes I would catch the way the neon light lay on his face as he stared at us. Or our looks would cross in the mirror behind the bottles and the bar. In the soft light he might look ruddier and younger than Ian. And his prim mouth would have a funny, snakey curl in one corner. In such moments the pork pie hat seemed a terrible thing. It signified his casting out, the bending of his back to a grown-up's work while Ian and I were still safe and sheltered at school. Then I would stand, stricken with pity, wanting him back with us on the tramp to school in the snug winter, three sets of gum boots together.

From a forthcoming novel to be published by Alpha Books.

Conservation Consciousness and its Origins

G. M. STOKES

A Speculative View

In a recent Builders' Laborers' Federation journal a speech by Patrick White nestles side by side with an article titled "Workers Control: fucking the system". Not since the 1890s has Australia witnessed the singular combination of artistic talent and union fervor seen in the recent mutual endeavors of Patrick White and Jack Mundey. Rarely have the conventions of 'mateship' been stretched to cover what would initially appear as the irreconcilable class interests that these men ostensibly represent. Whatever the misgivings, however, the link is there. Mr Mundey, as he has often been politely termed, now finds himself on the same platform as architects, lawyers and budding middle-class conservationists. This brittle paradox requires some appraisal. Why is Jack Mundey now in this position, and being requested to address university gatherings over Australia? What has brought two disparate groups and their representatives to their tenuous but politically powerful link, and what are the chances of the link surviving?

The answers to these questions can only be tentative at present and focus upon a unique combination of special issues, personalities, favorable economic conditions and the apparent politicisation of previously disinterested groups of Australians. The last factor concerns the 'new' approach to politics among middle-class radicals and concerned professionals. Their coming to political maturity can perhaps be explained by recreating their evolution through various political and even sexual trends of the 1950s and 1960s. Many of these 'new' radicals still retain the newspaper cuttings on the 'reds' and communist infiltration of their own university days. If not these, then they would carry vague impressions of idealism that haunted them during those times. The cuttings, however, betray the fact that the idealism was much blunted by the hysteria of anti-communism, and that all but the staunchest were pressed away from association with the extreme left or radical activism.

Such were many of the people who entered their professions, generally with their *principles* subdued but with the belief that, if a job was worth doing, it was worth doing well. That is, they immersed themselves in their work because of its inherent value and importance in society. If this was 'done well', their partial debt to society was being rewarded. The other part of the debt needed no repayment, because this was based on and justified by their own initiative, drive and self-motivation. In a world of apparent security, however, many of these people were to produce the not-so-content offspring that would enter the universities of the late sixties and seventies.

As the earlier generation were consolidating their careers, the universities that bred them had been slowly transforming. Becoming a little less like teachers' colleges, universities became the base for a change in the climate and nature of radicalism. If no passion born of direct experience in or under war backed up the ideas of the younger radicals, the indirect transmission of world-wide political conflict and violence on television made their political questioning more potent. Within the developing university, nearly every student found it necessary to question his own place in the system. The indirect pressure of large student meetings and demonstrations, along with the more personal and direct pressure of an evolving peer group, placed many students in an acute personal crisis of political and sexual values. This critical analysis could not but come to be directed with some vehemence against the

implicit values of their parents' lives and their parents' assumptions about political and social change. The touchstone of student radical purity became the strength with which one would denounce the bourgeois values of one's family. Only in this way could one locate oneself on the map of 'true' social awareness.

No simple causal link can be made, but it would be reasonable to assume that the vitriol of these attacks did make some intellectual impact —if only on these previous apprentices in academicism. Over a wide area the main points of this attack were probably accepted, but had to remain undigested until the assailants were no longer in close personal proximity. That is, the critical offspring had to leave home for their own bourgeois existence or drop-out sub-cult.

Similarly, those who had been to university in the early sixties would need to be at least some years removed from their critical peers and perhaps just over the dilemmas of setting up house with its complement of early family joys, crises and responsibilities. The seeds of these critical barbs would have to remain dormant until they were aroused on crucial and personal areas of their own life and livelihood. The room to move and adapt would have to be reduced; perhaps numerous hours would need to be spent pondering in traffic-jams. More crucial still, they would have to personally come up against external and imposed authority in some way. They would perhaps have to be frustrated in their legitimate attempts to preserve heritages or conserve areas of interest or of inherent natural value. Some issue would have to develop where they saw that authority was indeed exceeding its legally assigned role. Within the general climate of political questioning, this analysis would become clearer to comprehend and perhaps easier to approach. Their re-entry into the political atmosphere would also have to be protected, while action based on beliefs and criticism would need to be taken in legally 'safe' ways. They would need to feel that they were not isolated in their thoughts and actions, and also that they were not just behaving like the traditional *bete noire* of the middle class, the trade unions.

Even more unusual then is the link that came about between the unions and middle classes. The crucial issues were conservation and ecology, the unconscious anti-capitalism of an evolving bourgeoisie. For people with some historical and artistic perspective, conservation and ecology were issues that would grasp their imagination and bring them to conscious action. The earlier belief in the lack of principle in politics developed into the action that such a belief implied. People acted on clearly perceived principles, often believing that, because their action was principled, it was not political. Whether this was their initial assumption or not, the problem of politics and power would soon have to cross their paths.

The initial forays into conservation foundered on the naivety of their previous political viewpoints. It was assumed that people in power could be persuaded to change their minds and plans, if only one went about that formidable task in the 'right' way. This required personal communication either by letter or interview. Such action was as successful as paper or mere words would have been in blocking the paths of bulldozers at Kelly's Bush. There the dilemma began in earnest, when the new activists found themselves physically powerless to resist the commands of council and developer. Strategy thus demanded that the activists seek aid, and their options were limited. They had to rely on the men of unions, the men *least* likely to act on issues of heritage and conservation, but men *more* likely to be effective in curtailing the demands of authority.

The process by which the *unions* came to view and accept their mutual interests with conservationists is equally complex. The tradition of militancy amongst itinerant or mobile workers has been strong in Australia. The shearers of the 1880s and 1890s, the rural workers in the early twentieth century, have all, at one stage or another, been fertile ground for direct action on a variety of often contradictory but usually humane grounds. In the booming 1970s, the builders' laborers are their modern-day, urban equivalent. The high annual turnover of building workers, their insecure tenure, the difficult and often dangerous nature of their work, all make many of them receptive to militancy. Militant leadership, achieving success in traditional union areas like wages and conditions, has retained members' support in the less traditional areas of the green bans. With imaginative and strong union leadership and union communication, builders' laborers evolved potential new forms of union action. The actual work of the builders' laborer was also strategic, in that no building or construction project could proceed without his conscious or unconscious acquiescence. Before any tradesman or professional could commence, laborers must have either begun digging the foundations or demolishing the roofs.

Given all this, the gap still remains between the unions and conservationists. The unique characteristics of Jack Mundey appear to be central in the evolving relationship. Middle-class suspicion about basic motives in the man would need to be quelled, and some re-assessment of unionism would need to be undertaken by both groups. The conservationists would perhaps need to see a man who held a wider view of unionism and the role of radical action in their society. They would also require to communicate with a person who would not openly threaten them and their less socialistic values and principles. Builders' laborers and unionists would also have to accept someone who had been scorned by less adventurous, more established and more orthodox union officials. Full assessment of Jack Mundey's role will have to be left till later, as the union develops with the alternative methods of leadership he has encouraged. Whatever the final judgment, it is clear that the union leadership all round has also been radicalised by those very events that many of the middle-class radicals has avoided. Vietnam moratoriums, Springbok protests and arrests all played their part in the growing militancy of people like Jack Mundey and Bob Pringle.

Through his activism Mundey has acquired great respect from people who have found themselves bound by authority. In this process, however, he has also acquired the enmity of others in the labor movement, unaware of their own impotence and resentful of the apparent personal advances of the man. These are in addition to the enmity of developers who are directly and financially affected by the 'green bans' of the builders' laborers.

The union of the conservationists and unionists, as previously suggested, is then quite tenuous. It depends on the mutual and hitherto unknown confidences traded between two unlike groups. It depends upon the suppression of traditional fears and prejudices of unionism on the one hand, as it depends on the efforts of leadership to persuade their following of the benefits of their extraordinary strategy on the other. The new union strategies on these issues, however, are only implemented at the direct request of resident groups and committees. Without this essential pressure, no new strategies would be possible.

All could collapse if widespread unemployment comes about or, more specifically, if the building 'boom' begins to collapse. Hasty or intimidatory action by the union upon other middle-class areas of interest, for which the union has no sanction, could also threaten the link. The first would naturally and effectively limit *any* sphere of the unions' activity; the second would re-introduce previous middle-class fears and abhorrence of unionism. The retirement of Jack Mundey from union leadership may also provoke policy disputes between the supporters of either industrial or environmental action in the union. Whatever their aims, new leadership could well remove middle-class support by lack of tact or diplomacy.

While the link is there, the conservationists can be gratified that they are succeeding in resisting the encroachments of industrial society. The builders' laborers, on the other hand, can also be gratified. They are not merely acting out the roles assigned them by both public and private authority, or by the wider community. In their action they have become partially self-directing and often selective, and thereby creative, in their work. Their activity is also important in building up a reserve of public favor for the times when they do press firmly for their own industrial demands of permanency and union hire.

The symbol of the 'green ban' has become historic for the unique grouping of forces and strategies it represents. Its more dearly creative contribution will be assessed when the projected 'People's Plan' for certain areas become implemented. In the short term, however, in a society that has managed to severely curtail much political freedom and stifle originality or meaning in most work, the 'green ban' demonstrates the real potential of co-operative effort between people.

In this sense the action represents the union of several rarely harmonious trends in Australian history. The traditional militancy of unskilled workers and the more aesthetic aspirations of middle-class dissidents here combine in the pursuit of essentially utopian goals. It remains to be seen whether the movement will tread the path of previous Australian utopianism.

EVAN WALKER

...and a Comment

Stokes' article is intriguing. As he points out, it is a speculative thesis and therefore reflects his own personal insights. But the reader is drawn to the logic and substance of the argument because it 'feels' right, it commends itself, it is a perceptive piece.

His speculations, however, do seem too narrow. He seems to have made a selection and interpretation of the factors as he sees them, particularly in his grouping of people and his imputation to those groups of corporate motivations. This needs further explanation.

A thesis of this kind is inevitably built around observation of specific people and their activities. Such observations are then built into a general theory — in this instance the general theory is applied to a group called variously "new radicals", "middle-class radicals", "middle-class dissidents", etc. It is natural for the reader then to test the validity, or otherwise, of the thesis against individuals of his own acquaintance who should fit the general case. If the test fails often, then the writer's credibility is challenged, as in this case.

Again, Stokes' tracing of the political evolution (his term) of the concerned professionals and middle-class radicals from an early fascination with left politics to a non-political conservation involvement is more like a pet theory than well-documented history. It could well apply to some conservation activists with whom he is acquainted. There seems to be as much evidence, however, that those who might be grouped under the general title of "old lefties" (or their sons) have not, by and large, moved into the activist conservation area. They might be found editing magazines which study the cause, or as resource people behind the scenes, or even as somewhat cynical bystanders because this particular cause is too 'soft'. The more likely contenders as activists are those for whom this cause is the first taste of radicalism of any kind—not radicalism revisited. Stokes' own description seems pertinent here . . .

> . . . they would have to personally come up against external or imposed authority in some way . . . Some issue would have to develop where they saw that authority was indeed exceeding its legally assigned role.

That is not a description of an "old lefty". He has been confronting imposed authority all along, and the trauma of early exposure in what became a most hostile environment in Australia (early fifties) has, for the most part, minimised any possibility of his re-entry into the public sector of activism, political or social. This is so much so in Victoria, for instance, that the Labor Party suffers the loss of a whole generation of leaders, a factor not unrelated to that party's present low state electorally.

A third difficulty is Stokes' contention that a generational break is necessary for the student radical to establish his or her own "true" social awareness. It is quite possible that a confirmation or development of one's parents' beliefs (be they socialist or conservative) could land the younger generation in the ranks of the radical conservationists. Herein lies the necessary distinction between the Green Ban cause and the anti-Vietnam cause. Stokes' generational break theory might apply more easily to the latter, but the former seems to recruit from both ends of the political spectrum, from all social strata and all age groups.

And it's not necessarily an "unconscious anti-capitalism of a evolving bourgeoisie" that spawns interest in conservation and ecology. In another sense, it can be a deep-seated capitalism with

longer term goals and well-entrenched instincts for future freedom to "exploit wisely" that motivates many. The true capitalist or free-enterpriser is more than a get-rich-quick exploiter, particularly if that includes ripping-off and disenchanting the greatest asset of all capitalist economies — the contented consumer. The true capitalist is more subtle. He has more of a get-rich-permanently mentality. He understands time better, and maintenance of the status quo. Today's avaricious developer (the despoiler) is opposed from both sides, but for different reasons.

In similar vein, it's too simple to assume that Jack Mundey's basic motivation is socialist and egalitarian in its radicalism. There's a strong streak of the private enterpriser and of the entrepeneur in the way he functions. As Stokes so rightly points out, Mundey has acquired the enmity of many others in the labor movement. But it may not be the jealousy of the relatively impotent at all. It could be the rejection of a style which subjugates the movement to the man, a dangerous tenet in any leader of a left-wing organisation. To be canonised by society's sophisticates is heady stuff; to taste individual power is highly seductive; and to believe that a tenuous alliance for good must be maintained with or without movement approval is very dangerous. True, the instinct to return to laboring and anonymity for re-education is creditable and has obvious counterparts elsewhere, but re-entry into the ranks is difficult in our society with its different reward structures.

In reality, Jack Mundey is not simply a representative of a group or the symbol of a grassroots change of attitude, he is the embodiment of a new approach and it must not be loosely interchanged with the encompassing body (the Builders Laborers Federation) or the movement (trade unionism) as Stokes is wont to do. The three are not synonymous at all. Consequently one must realise that the article is primarily about Jack Mundey and his new-found mode of activism and not necessarily about the trade union movement at large. That's why a strong affinity can grow between Jack Mundey and the Patrick Whites of this world, because they have much in common. And that's why the present alliance is tenuous, because it is special and structured around individuals and a particular mode of activism at a particular time.

The conservation cause, however, is not dependent upon this obviously tenuous alliance. It is here that Stokes has made his essential misjudgement. He suggests that with the breaking of the present circumstances (e.g. the disappearance of Mundey, a downturn in the economy, etc.) the radical conservationist cause will dissolve. Not so. The Green Bans as presently used may go, and the cause will seek other avenues of power. The origins of conservation consciousness are widespread. They range from a world awareness of future necessity to limit use of non-renewable resources to an individual awareness of the need to reinforce 'liveability' in one's own neighborhood or town, and for that reason the cause is here to stay. It is strong enough, furthermore, to 'radicalise' its adherents from whatever social, cultural or political background they come. Jack Mundey and the Green Bans are an early and very effective manifestation of what will become a continuing and growing stream of unusual power alliances directed not towards utopia but towards survival.

Geoff Stokes is doing post-graduate work in the politics department of the University of Adelaide. Evan Walker is a well-known Melbourne architect.

Waldsee Postcard

a salt lake's opal cameo, stud in desert,
this fifty-seventh weatherdust year,

at scripture and stricture of motherpause,
she gropes for something of his manhood

that, still, may caravan crossroutes of the world,
those appian labyrinths to colony and empire

vacated from the courtyard of his smile,
the weedy trellis of his face

that saw, and spoke of, as off a postcard
with roneod pleasantries not to cause worry;

posted from the mailbox on port augusta station,
a scrawl on nullarbor parchment.

it's not far down the road to Waldsee
reads the card, go round the bend

from the krupps' arms, pass i.g. farben chemist,
and follow your nose to the siding.

gates list, limp with light by the silo's cairn.
that sparkle in the gums the metho-drinker's shack

lemon peels of wattle wink-ting ginger tin.
a strike of mother of pearl on the sheets at night.

go easy along this track, watch out for twigs,
the river panics at the approach of a man;

Waldsee is here, corella scream the tote,
ghost gums grow midstream in the river Sola.

a shaggy fossicker dips his pan, will sluice the
aggregate for a welcome stranger, a clinker of a friend;

who kneels by the water, cups some in his hand
in the red extent, the bo-fig's bubbling oil.

MALCOLM BRODIE

books

LAMBERT HAD NO LUCK

David Martin

Zoë O'Leary: *The Desolate Market* (Edwards & Shaw, $4.95).

Eric Lambert and I did not like each other much, possibly because in certain ways we may have been rather similar. I never knew him well — less well even than I know Frank Hardy, with whom he shared so many experiences — and I can recall with clarity only four of his novels — he wrote seventeen in a span of fifteen years. Among these four is *Ballarat,* to my mind a far cry from his first and best, *The Twenty Thousand Thieves.* I have always thought of Lambert as one of those writers who fight all their lives to catch up with, or surpass, their maiden book, and whose problems can to some degree be understood in this context. To kick off so well is not necessarily a sign that the gods adore you.

But he has always fascinated me and I think he had a remarkable talent. I can recall long discussions with the late Jack Mullett, who knew more about him than anyone, except Zoë O'Leary, to whom we must be grateful for this biographical labor of love. I feel that Lambert was exceptionally unlucky. It emerges from this paperback that he had leanings towards the occult (which amazes me): so you could say he was born under unpropitious stars, or at least under an ambiguous constellation, if there are such things.

He gained recognition in the years when the communist movement was entering its deep crisis. It entered it in a way which was bound to sharpen all his own personal difficulties and problems. I go farther: the atmosphere in which the left-realist literary tendency in Australia developed in the late forties and in the fifties was even more dangerous to him than to the rest of us, which is saying a lot. In one sense it brought out the writer in him. He responded to both the social challenge and the general 'excitement'. And it led him to involve his 'personality' in a manner peculiarly risky to an individual of his type.

Drama, melodrama and self-dramatisation are all very close to each other. To write fiction is to lie: every good writer is on one level a truth-teller and on another a fantast. Lucky is the one in whom these tendencies grow in some kind of harmony, luckiest of all he in whom in time they become mutually reinforcing, to the advantage of his work. There are writers who also want to be men of action — Ambrose Bierce, Jack London, Hemingway — and in the right circumstances, which are extremely rare, they nearly bring it off. As a rule they don't, because the action of the truly reflective man does not take place on battle fields, though it is no less full of perils. Yet communists, as revolutionaries, want (or wanted) to act out their convictions as much as possible "in reality". Important parts of the theory of socialist realism play up to this desire. At any rate it tends not only to stress literature as action, but it also makes much of the role of the writer as 'activist.' It actually flatters his masculinity and disparages his other, more resonant, qualities.

What manner of activists they will become depends on the most diverse circumstances. Frank Hardy would never be the Hardy he is if he were not an Irishman from Bacchus Marsh. (Among other things it helped him to understand John Wren.) Acting out in 'reality' was a shade less dangerous in his case, precisely because his kind of talent, rooted in his whole individuality, however much socially conditioned, is not contradicted by such extroversion. With Lambert it was

different. If I'm not altogether mistaken his more lyrical, more private, more shock-prone gift could not flower on the rostrum — to which he was drawn by other character traits, traits which Zoë O'Leary, for all her intelligent sympathy, scarcely helps us to comprehend better. My criticism of this valuable and straightforwardly written memoir is not that it is too partial to Lambert the man — it opens by affirming that it is the recording of a friendship — but that it does not look at the writer through time's perspective.

To some extent the author still seems to write out of the spirit of the days in which she knew Lambert. This comes out, for example, in her view of *Power Without Glory*. The years have not altered her idea that, when you measure it against the genuine literary value of Lambert's first war novel, it is "brilliant propaganda." I don't think this judgement reflects agreement with the academically-minded critics, but is rather a projection of the old Hardy *v.* Lambert (or vice-versa) controversy. Propaganda . . . literary merit? It's not quite as simple as that. Of the pair Lambert was certainly the superior stylist, but even that observation would need a great deal of qualifying.

Miss O'Leary is right in believing that one can exaggerate the significance of Lambert's famous gasconades, his own dust-jacket fiction about his having been a Rhodes scholar, a noted cricketer, a Japanese war prisoner, and so forth. But one can also underestimate their relevance. She tries to adjust the balance by citing Lambert's many well-proven achievements; she also realises how pathetic some of these claims were. But to defend the dead against themselves can be a little pointless. What is far from pointless is to inquire, as deeply as one still may, into the causes of these claims. How did the gap between fact and fancy come about? Did it force the man into attitudes which complicated his creativity? Did his creativity also profit — did it need self-engendered heat, and the stimulus of provoking the hostility of others? How did it link up with his melancholy, his aggressiveness? Why, when and how did Eric Lambert try to turn into the unachievable hero of his own considerable inventiveness? Is there a pattern in his books, especially the later ones, which can enlighten us?

To inquire like this is not to act the amateur psychologist — and that's not bad either, if the psychology is sound — but to acknowledge the dominance of anatomy over eulogy. We need never fear that there can be something unkind, indelicate or destructive about pursuing such questions boldly. It is essential if you want the truth about a writer. We are still far too hung up on this, as if ghosts were watching us. Dame Mary Gilmore was another great 'fact inventor', and the how and why thereof could teach us a good deal about her and her work. She was luckier than Lambert because she was a poet, because she was a woman, because she was old and venerated and because, whatever demon she had, it was more amiable than his. (Lambert too wrote verse, more of it than I realised.)

What his demon was I don't know, but he seems to have been plagued by him even during the war. There are some hints here about the difficult relationship with his mother, but if there were other clues they have not been followed up. In the books of his I have read, including *The Veterans,* there are no three-dimensional women characters, whether or not they were taken from life. When he touched emotional complexities he often sounded jejeune. Zoë O'Leary maintains that his childhood was happy, which I cannot believe. Happy boys do not become unhappy men, and when I knew Lambert, in the Melbourne Realist Writers' Group, he was sometimes cheerful and boisterous, but he wasn't happy. (However, he must have had much physical discomfort even then.) I know some of the women who knew him well, and I doubt they would claim he had much happiness. A little of it could have softened the obsessive strain in his rivalry with Frank Hardy — those fraternal publishers of their own first books! — which at the time I thought so remarkable.

There is very good stuff in these pages. Zoë O'Leary has had access to Lambert's war diaries, and she and Marjorie Pizer, her research assistant, have benefited from long acquaintance with his principal correspondents, including the editor of *Overland,* who bore with Lambert as affectionately as he did and does with the rest of us. She was on the inside of events when Lambert helped in the founding of the Australasian Book Society, the "ABS" which quite a few of its begetters saw, fairly legitimately, as a possible vehicle for their own powers or Powers, and which began to languish when these hopes withered. She has a firm grasp of the conflicts of that decade.

That Lambert died so young — in 1966, at the age of 48 — was a tragedy, though no-one can tell whether he had not damaged his springs through writing too fast, or, at times, too much for the desolate market. His strength lay in his wonderful, poetic economy, but he must have found it hard to find the themes that would libe-

rate it. War was such a theme. He could write laconic dialogue nearly as effectively as Lawson, and his soldiers are memorably drawn. He had wit and humor. But it is senseless to compare him with Remarque, as one or two have done. I see him much more in the mould of Alexander Baron, the Anglo-Jewish novelist: *Thieves* is a good deal like *From the City, From the Plough,* especially the climax. Who knows, the tension between Lambert's Englishness and his view of himself as a slouch-hatted Australian could have been another factor in his life. How full it was of opposites! So much tenderness in his work, and so much virulence in all other ways; a kind of purity and a lot of beer; and somewhere a terrible sense of inferiority, an urge to prove to the world, and to himself, what, alas, he could only have proved by sitting still. "Winning is the thing," he wrote, but he lacked the winner's faith in himself. (Why didn't he have it?) He might have won too, if he hadn't tried so hard — but he couldn't help it.

The book mentions how Lambert and I met for the last time, and how unfortunate a meeting it was. This was in London, in a pub, practically immediately upon his return from Hungary, during the uprising in 1956. I admit that I was not quite sure whether he really had been there, which does not mean I thought he lacked the courage. He had some very strange friends with him. He behaved oddly in that pub — I too, I dare say — and I had already come to view him as a bit of a romancer.

The Hungarian events were hardly less turbulating to me than to him, though he was quicker than I was in judging them correctly. I didn't want him to rush to Packer with his story, without at least first trying it on the *News Chronicle.* (The *Chronicle* would have attempted to check its veracity, and it was a liberal, not an out-and-out reactionary, paper.) But he ridiculed me and my proposal. I guess he had already sold his copyright; he seemed to be, quite literally, in a desperate hurry. There is no end of possible reasons, and one is that he may have thought it would cut his Gordian knot — free him, with one mighty stroke, from having to go on playing the tiring role of the young and brave, or of the other Frank Hardy. Good heavens! did we not all have very mixed motives then? Who among us did not skirt the edge of disaster?

I wish he had listened to me, assuming there was still time: not because the truth can never be printed in the Sydney *Sunday Telegraph,* but because such knots can't be cut like this. Lambert merely pushed himself more inextricably into his own hell. He wasn't a survivor, which is also one of the talents most writers need. He was enormously ambitious, and suicidal to boot. Explain me *that* contradiction!

I would like to put him into a novel, along with, perhaps, Frank Hardy and myself. I might just know sufficiently little about them to succeed . . . To me they are quite as interesting as their books, but the problem is that I have the gift, or the weakness, of being able to shed a whole period (unless I am deceiving myself). I believe it is too late now to recover much of what has been, memories of the Realist Writers' Group, recollections of our painful censorships, all those perverse and warm and stimulating happenings. Everything has changed radically; half the stage has fallen in. One would have to project the action against a much wider background; to make it true it would have to take in many other, apparently unrelated, conflicts . . . Were I to attempt it it would end up, among other things, as a lament for Eric Lambert. I believe I would come to love him as I wrote. Eric, after all, was a part of us — the part that spurred us on and that we had so much trouble with.

Come to think of it, that is the one book that might have saved Eric Lambert — if he could have written it himself. It is not impossible that it would have narrowed the split, but nothing could have abolished it. Unlucky, unlucky! Had he hung on a few more years he might, despite all, have managed it. A writer rises when he learns to write 'against himself' at the same time as he writes 'with himself', against his gift *and* with his gift, and this Lambert never gave himself a chance to do. When you have no patience and can write only 'with yourself' your shadow hurls itself too far ahead of your substance.

Eric slew Lambert, or Lambert slew Eric. It is always touch and go, of course, but to have any hope at all you must have some trust in the future, if you are the sort of artist who keeps proclaiming it.

I suppose the whole thing turns on love. It's not just that in some way you have to have it — you must also be able to convert it. Lambert, for some reason, couldn't convert it — not sufficiently, not to his satisfaction. The lover and the fabulist and the poet and the superstitious rebel and the immensely talented and cruelly frustrated boy, the ambitious lower middle-class kid with a patchy education, the poor boozing beggar with the ulcer, the soldier and narrator of soldiers, the sardonic tribune, the lad so angrily in love with

the world which did not love him enough, yes — the Cricketer and Rhodes scholar of his dreams: they never came together on one big swatch of pages. I could be wrong, and he may not have had it in him, but he wrote *The Twenty Thousand Thieves* and *Watermen,* and that suggests he had.

CONTAINERIZED LITERATURE

Derek Marsh

Frank Kermode and John Hollander (eds.): *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature* (Oxford University Press, two volumes, $19.50).

The appearance of this Giant Economy Size anthology of English Literature, clearly aimed at the American college market, has already caused a good deal of unfavorable comment, together with some approval, but in general blame has outweighed praise ever since the *Times Literary Supplement* announced in *The Times* late last year that it was about to publish a "merciless" review. The promised review duly appeared, eliciting letters of protest from Professor Frank Kermode, one of the general editors, and from C. H. Roberts, on behalf of the publishers. It isn't my intention to rehash those arguments, but when a well known critic and professor of English, then at London and now appointed to a chair at Cambridge, accuses one of the best known literary review journals of incompetence or worse, and both editor and reviewer remain unrepentant, it is clear that strong passions are at work. It may be interesting to try to see why.

To begin with, the task attempted was enormous; in my opinion, impossible. Even with the decision to exclude all works written outside the British isles, the attempt to provide what the general editors call "a selective canon of the entire range of English Literature from the beginnings to recent times" was necessarily doomed to failure, for there is a limit to what any market can stand. Much of importance had to be left out, like the English novel. To quote again from the general editors' preface: "In the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sections it was our general policy to exclude the novel, for obvious reasons of length". So in the "selective canon of the entire range of English Literature" one looks in vain for Richardson, Fielding, Jane Austen, George Eliot, Dickens or James. But one does get Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,* Lawrence's *St Mawr* and *The Prussian Officer,* and some bits and pieces of Joyce, more because they help to pad out the Modern British section, which might otherwise be a bit thin, than because of their intrinsic merit, or their representative qualities.

The declared intention of the anthology is downright misleading, and this is all the more serious because one is dealing with what is in effect a branded product. Anyone seriously concerned with the study and teaching of English literature has come to trust the Oxford University Press imprimatur on texts. For years the Oxford standard authors, the period anthologies of verse, the works of reference, have come to be accepted as accurate, orthodox and reliable. One might find oneself in disagreement, as one always can, with any particular anthologist's choices, but one could depend on, say *The Oxford Book of Seventeenth Century Verse* being a representative selection of the poetry of the period, chosen by a reputable scholar, who is at least aware of the consensus of scholarly and critical opinion. Mr Roberts makes the point in his letter to the *T.L.S.* of 16 November 1973 that *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature* is not a reference book, but one would have to be very naive not to recognise, somewhere, an attempt to cash in on that Oxford reputation. Would there have been quite the same market, one wonders, if the exclusion of the novel had been announced, not in the general editors' preface, but in bold letters on the dust-jacket? Or if it had been made clear that literary values had sometimes been sacrificed in order to achieve a neat historical coverage within a managable space?

It is tempting for the reviewer of any anthology to play the game of proving his own superior taste and critical acumen by suggesting his own inclusions and exclusions. All that this usually proves is that, in matters of literary judgment as in most other things, individuals can be expected to differ. But when the selection offered claims to represent the whole of English literature, what might otherwise be a matter of taste becomes an important matter of principle. For example, it is at least arguable that the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century produced a quite uniquely great flowering of English literature, and that the work of a single man, Shakespeare, is perhaps the most astonishing achievement of literary genius that the world has ever seen. Yet the drama of this age is represented by only two plays, *Dr Faustus* and *The Tempest,* and a masque by Ben Jonson. The greatest figure of the age, or any age, has one play, and that by common consent neither his greatest achievement nor his most

typical. It is true that the editors have also included some twenty-five sonnets, some songs from the plays, ten stanzas from *The Rape of Lucrece,* sixteen from *Venus and Adonis,* and that baffling poem, *The Phoenix and the Turtle,* but is this really the way to do it? Perhaps a choice of any three, say, of *Volpone, Hamlet, King Lear, As You Like It, Henry IV, The Duchess of Malfi, The Changeling* and *The Revenger's Tragedy* would have been a difficult one to make, but ought it not to have been made in order better to represent the one truly great era of English drama? My own North American experience leads me to believe that this anthology may very well be the only text used by many students of English literature who will therefore not have the experience to see that literary value and even historical importance are not to be equated with the amount of space allocated. It is all too likely that William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Oscar Wilde, John Gay, George Bernard Shaw and William Congreve will be thought to make up the "selective canon" of English dramatic excellence, and that they will all share that honor equally.

This is not to say that the very distinguished team of editors, all but two of whom are Americans, have not in general done their work of selection quite well, but the limits imposed by the nature of the enterprise are crippling. To take another obvious case, any long poem suffers dreadfully, for how can the quality of poems of the length and structural complexity of *The Faerie Queen* or *Paradise Lost* or *The Prelude* be communicated in extract, through samples taken, as if by some critical diamond drill, from points designated as promising by the particular editor? The inevitable result will be a damaging comparison between the fragment taken from some greater whole and the integrity and intensity of a short, complete lyric poem. Even poems that one would have thought were of manageable length share this fate: Marlowe's unfinished *Hero and Leander* is presented only in extracts, and by an odd quirk of thematic organization is *preceded* by extracts from Chapman's conclusion to it. But *Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight,* though translated into modern English, is given in full, which seems at best of doubtful value, and probably represents a compromise between the desire to go back to "the beginnings" and the awareness that the students for whom it is intended couldn't read it anyway. (Can such students read music, one wonders, or is the inclusion of the odd page of musical notation another piece of window-dressing?) It is, of course, possible to argue that it is better to read *Gawaine* in translation than not at all, but there is no doubt at all in my mind that it is much better still to read *Hamlet,* or *Troilus and Criseyde,* or *The Four Quartets,* all of which are at least available in the language in which they were written, and do not need to be filtered through the intermediate sensibility of a translator.

The difficulties of making the kind of selection promised by the title were always insuperable, but they were further compounded by the decision to include as well brief comments on the characteristics of each period, brief critical and biographical introductions to the authors, and also the current obligatory genuflection in the direction of interdisciplinary studies, by the inclusion of photographs of buildings, paintings and manuscripts. If there is not enough space to do justice to or even to mention some of the greatest works in the language, any intelligent reader is going to resent being fed the common-places of English literary history, or suffer the insult of finding that Donne's *Meditation XVII* is broken, literally in the middle of a word, to accommodate 32 pages of plates ranging from a diagram of the Ptolemaic universe to a photograph of the interior of the Banqueting House, Whitehall. Such cross-cultural gestures offer only a superficial trendiness, which, if recognised, may be innocuous enough, but which may be much more dangerous, given the students at which they are aimed. They might be convinced that the book contains all that they need to know, all the literature they need to read and all the necessary critical judgments on it. Shortage of space gives little scope for the demonstration of such judgments, which too often are merely assertive. In the brief introduction to each author, one is told what to think of his work, *before* one reads the poem or prose passage. And because each major period has two editors, the judgments are often quite contradictory, or made from entirely different critical premises, with nothing to indicate to the presumably bewildered student that there is any difference of opinion involved.

"Containerized literature" was what the *T.L.S.* reviewer called it, and one cannot help but agree. Packaged background material, packaged critical judgments, and principles of selection which are in part determined by the ease with which any particular work fits the dimensions of the package, make for a unimpressive totality. Even the unique works of literary imagination that make up by far the greatest part of the anthology seem to lose

their individuality and become part of a depressing, seemingly interminable stream, arranged for convenient identification, with convenient critical judgments provided, which can then be conveniently forgotten, together with the works they describe.

Of course the editors make a great number of intelligent and interesting comments along the way. They are sensitive and intelligent readers and teachers. But the enterprise as a whole is self-defeating, and one hopes that it will never be imposed on Australian students as a text book, and that they, in turn, will never be so foolish as to mistake it for an authoritative work of reference.

A WINDOW ON OUR PAST

Gwyneth M. Dow

C. M. H. Clark: *A History of Australia. III. The Beginning of an Australian Civilization 1824-1851* (Melbourne University Press, $9.60).

There are not too many big books of history that one would seize for diversion when job weary; but Manning Clark's third volume is such a history, written as it is with compelling lucidity, with warmth relieved by apt cynicism. Clark has the style and the courage of a novelist. His pen portraits (the book is studded with superb vignettes) and his penetrating interpretations are possibly only because he is so steeped in the times that his ample footnotes cannot give the full clue to the sources he draws on. He does not squib revealing his own inferences when facing the human dilemmas that our history throws up, and so it is not surprising that every now and again one suspects that he slides a little into the realm of fiction. When so, his guess is probably better than most:

> In 1869 he [Charles Sturt] asked to be given one of the new knighthoods specially created for men with a distinguished record . . ., but when the letter saying 'Yes' was on its way to Cheltenham, the kingdom of perpetual night took him. Her Majesty graciously allowed his wife to use the title he had coveted. Lady Sturt lived on with that droop of disappointment at the corners of the mouth as a hint of what she and the Captain had done to each other, and what life had done to both of them. (p. 456)

To savor Clark's irony fully here one needs to have read the brief but absorbing passages on Sturt, where Clark so adeptly intertwines characterization, biography and narrative. He does this for the big and the small men. Much has been written about W. C. Wentworth, for example; but Clark gives us a new perspective. We need to read volumes two and three together to understand the subtlety of Clark's unravelling of the dynamics of W. C. Wentworth (on p. 290 mistakenly confused with his father, D'Arcy Wentworth), but here is merely one example of Clark's grasp of the individuality of a man who made an ambiguous contribution to his country and was, by the same token, changed by it.

It takes Clark only about a page in all to show, without comment, the dangers of generalizing about convicts. There was John Mitchel, transported for fourteen years for articles in the *United Irishman* advocating deposing the Queen from the Imperial Crown of the United Kingdom. He saw himself as fighting for the rights of tenant farmers, laborers and artisans — "in the eyes of the world he was a cultivated, high-minded, passionate man, who believed in God and looked for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come" — but he was "treated as a common convict, obliged to sleep with every species of scoundrel and to work in a gang from six o'clock in the morning to six o'clock in the evening", being "next to starved" (p. 438). Whereas Timothy Kidney repeatedly came before the magistrates, was emancipated and soon appeared before the courts again, only to " 'cleanse his ways' . . . because death took him to a place where his tormentors and improvers could not reach him". And William Linneen, who "wanted to be saved . . . but his potter had planted in him a 'riot of passion' to madden His handiwork". Transported to Hobart in 1843, his "moments of madness never left him" (p. 327).

Those who fought against reviving transportation found moral justification. Some, petitioning in 1846, declared that " 'the worst days of Sodom and Gomorrah were not so bad as the present days of Van Diemen's Land' ". Convicts were "vicious men", "the very dregs of society" (pp. 326-7). The "solid bourgeoisie and virtuous workers could not bear to think of their wives and their children being corrupted by convicts", they said, with tears running down their cheeks. Those whom transportation suited found equally moral justifications. Many squatters agitated for the renewal of transportation to solve the labor shortage — "their wives had been obliged to wash dishes and mend clothes" — while proclaiming that "the system of transportation and assignment was the most humane and reformatory punishment

that had ever been devised". Some of them strengthened their hand by seeking colored labor. James Macarthur declared his preference for Irish Catholics to "Asiatics", and the *Atlas* warned readers that convicts were better than coolies; the idea of Buddhist temples side by side with churches was unimaginable, "or, worse still, imagine cannibals, fresh from their last disgusting banquet of human flesh, landing in New South Wales". Thus Clark cunningly exposes self-interest parading as virtue.

He is not afraid of eliciting from his material a view of life that is highly individual, though tempered by a deep concern for the intractability of so many of the country's problems. Perhaps nothing illustrates this better than his treatment of one of the many themes running through the book — his revelation of the "culture-clash" between black man and white. All too often what others have written of the encounter is sentimental, patronizing, or simply imperceptive. This is true of books used in our schools and lessons taught in them. I have often in despair wished that history teachers would leave the Aboriginal question to those better qualified to deal with it. But without any of the verbal paraphernalia of the anthropologist, Clark sees the series of misunderstandings and clashes as an irreconcilable tragedy beyond the control of even the most altruistic actors in our history. Although he does not shirk making implicit judgments, in this all too complex question he can merely lay the details bare in a way that suggests their complexity but indicates no remedy. At this point, as in so many in the book, one can see the significance of Clark's quotation from Ibsen at the beginning of the book: "there must be ghosts all over the country — as countless as grains of sand. And we are, all of us, so pitifully afraid of the light".

The poignant thumbnail sketch of Truganini, the last of the Van Diemen's Land Aboriginals, illustrates the point. As a child she hunted on Bruny Island "where in June 1777 the mighty Captain Cook had given each of her ancestors a string of beads and a medal which they had received with great satisfaction". Early in the 1830s she tried to persuade the blacks to "surrender to the white man"; in middle age she was nearly hanged for murder in Port Phillip. Later she despaired on Flinders Island, "soaking the earth there with her tears", and in old age she could be found at Lalla Rookh, Hobart, comforted by beer and tobacco by day and hot ale spiced with ginger and sugar at night.

> By then her face expressed the horror of what had happened to the people. The occasional gusts of ferociousness which still swept over her face were the sole sign of the suffering of her people. As the intimations of death became unmistakable she was seized with the terror that the white man would again use her body for the advancement of his science and learning. On 3 May 1876 she called her housekeeper, Mrs Dandridge, to tell her of yet another terror: the devil was on her hand and would not go away . . . In the middle of that great torment she fell into unconsciousness, the power of speech was lost to her and she passed away to her eternal rest . . . (p. 459)

How much is implied in this highly-packed account of Truganini!

Another thread throughout the book is the importance of the sheepmen, from early pioneers to squatters. We grasp something of what influenced them, whether the offspring of convicts or not. We see the brutality of life for the anonymous small men who had to be tough in the outback. The challenge of this strange land of ours, and its even stranger human story, emerges vividly. We see many shades of opinion about what sort of a democracy, if any, men were striving to attain, and how they came to modify their opinions as their fate changed. And Clark gives us big but tenable interpretations, like the ambivalence of Australians in resorting to imperial authority (see pp. 311 and 353, for example) while battling against it when it suited them.

It would be churlish to draw attention to omissions; but there are some strange ones — for example, it is odd that, with Clark's unerring interest in the dramatic, in his account of the 1842-3 depression he merely refers to the bankruptcy of Hughes and Hosking, despite the fact that this was the most sensational bankruptcy in our history to that time, and would be hard to beat in world history. But other readers could no doubt produce their own favorite omissions. Clark anticipates and answers such criticisms. The book, he says, is "what one man saw when he opened a window on our past".

In writing an Australian history Clark has solved the problem that has daunted many other historians: he has easily dealt with the origins of the different States in Australia today, and has shown their distinctiveness. Yet, as the story progresses, the sub-story of each separate State retains its identity while being enclosed cleverly into a web which makes it an integral part of the whole saga. This book is structurally and stylistically elegant.


BLUEY'S
BLA
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DINK