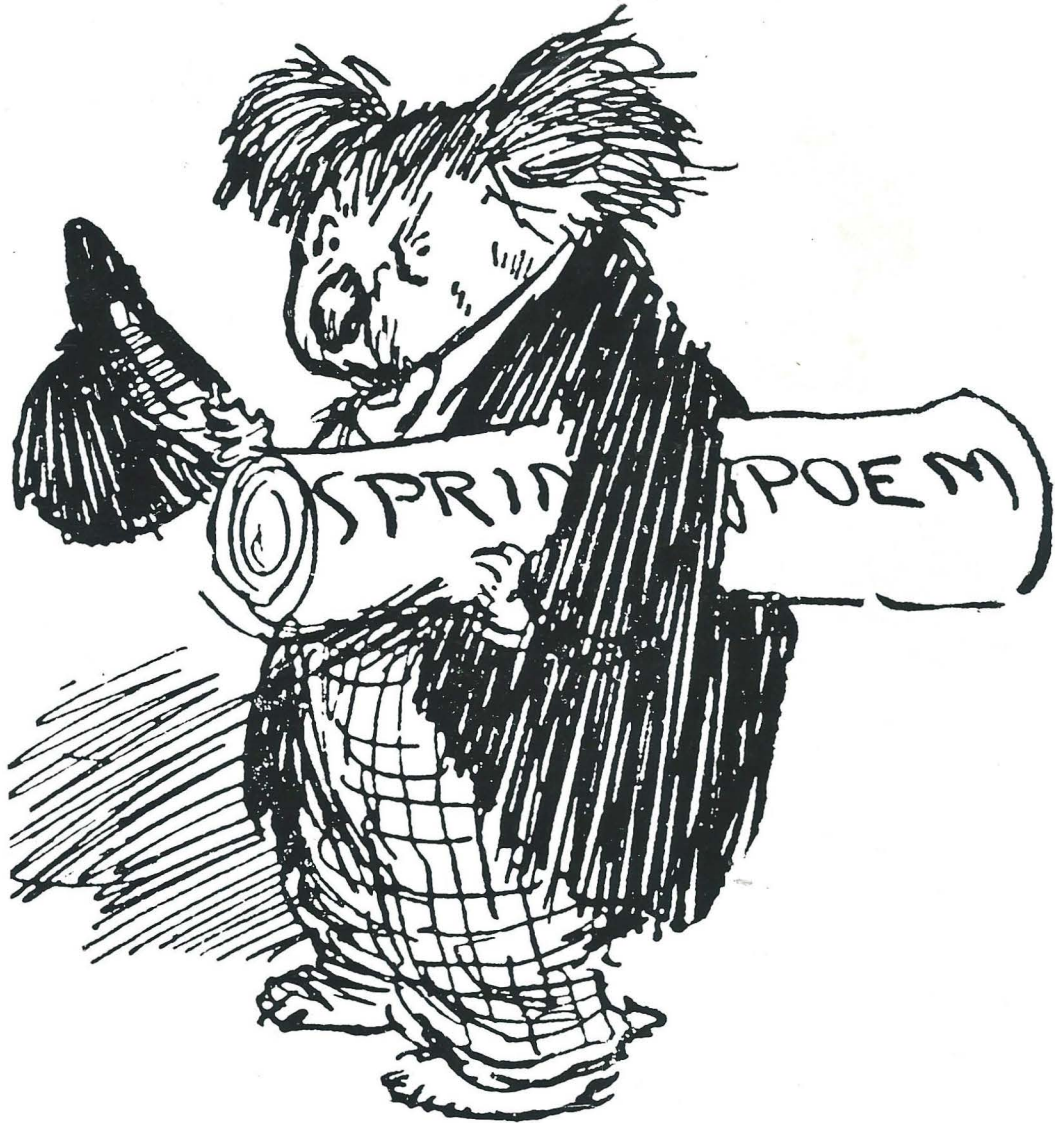


81 overland

features
stories
poetry
\$3



*The Sydney Bulletin —
a Centenary Survey.*



stories LIGHTS *Francis Walsh* 2
HIPHORAY *D. M. Poster* 15

features COMMUNISM AND THE INTELLECTUALS *Hugh Stretton* 5
AFRICA AND US *Naomi Mitchison* 10
SWAG *Nancy Keesing* 21
A NEW CONSENSUS? *Neville Wran* 23
A TRIBUTE TO ROBERT D. FITZGERALD
Rosemary Dobson 40
NEW GUINEA DOES NOT EXIST *G. C. O'Donnell* 42
THE EARLY BULLETIN AND LYRIC VERSE
Grace Keel 45
THE FADED LADY? *David Adams* 51
BREAKING THE SILENCE *Eric Irvin* 55
BACK TO CHILDHOOD *Frank R. Byrnes* 57
I WANT A HIPPOPOTAMUS *Arnold Zable* 62
BOOKS 64

poetry *Douglas Stewart* 25, *Val Vallis* 26, 27, *Nancy Cato* 28, 29,
Robert D. FitzGerald 28, *Elizabeth Riddell* 28, 34, *William
Hart-Smith* 29, 34, *Geoffrey Dutton* 29, *Mary Finnin* 29,
Gwen Harwood 30, *John Blight* 31, *Eric C. Rolls* 32, *Vivian
Smith* 33, *Noel Macainsh* 33, *Dorothy Auchterlonie* 34, 36,
Thomas Shapcott 35, *R. G. Hay* 35, *Ian Healy* 36, *Margaret
Irvin* 36, *David Rowbotham* 37, *Rosemary Dobson* 37, *Nancy
Keesing* 38, *Hal Porter* 38, *J. R. Rowland* 38

graphics Cover design and lay-out, *Vane Lindesay*. Cartoons from files
of the Bulletin.

Guest editor: *Nancy Keesing*

Printing: *Bob Cugley* and National Press

Type-setting: *Ern Lee*

Composer: *Gary Emond*

Overland is a quarterly literary magazine.
The subscription rate is twelve dollars a year (four
issues); for students, Niuginians, pensioners the
subscription is six dollars. Life subscriptions are
available for \$100 each. Manuscripts are welcomed
but s.a.e. required.

Overland receives assistance from the Literature Board
of the Australia Council 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.

Address all correspondence:
Editor, *Overland*. GPO Box 98a, Melbourne 3001.

Editor: *Stephen Murray-Smith*.

Associate Editors: *Ken Gott*, *Nancy Keesing*, *Vane Lindesay*,
John McLaren, *Barrett Reid*, *Leonie Sandercock*.

Contributing Editors: *Dorothy Hewett* (Sydney), *Jim Gale* (Adelaide),
Donald Grant (Perth), *Gwen Harwood* (Hobart), *Martin Duwell* (Bris-
bane), *Laurence Collinson* (London).
ISSN 0030-7416.

Temper democratic, bias Australian

overland

October, 1980

FRANCIS WALSH **Lights**

It was Adam's idea. His red face alive. He broke through the shouts and laughter, through the chattering of four years. Always caught the mood; drew it out; brought it to symbols.

We were quieter after he spoke. Someone put on an L.P. and before it had finished I'd agreed.

Of course nothing happened in the end. I wasn't caught. The excitement all folded into itself and became . . . For all the adrenalin there was nothing to fear. Even the fear all folded back into itself and became . . .

Jeff took me in his car. His black car. We drove to a dark side street and stopped just twenty metres from the streaming density of lights and cars and people. The Cross.

I was shuddering. I almost laughed . . . more cackled softly . . . in the darkness behind the windscreen.

In front, reflected on the curved glass, the slow pulsing of blurred cars and lights and people blending to make the road. People walking; walking back; looking at each other. The whole world moving easily, casually on one narrow road. The torn arterial.

"Okay, mate. You gonna go ahead and run? You know you don't really have to. Like it's just us and . . . um." Jeff lost himself in the dope he'd been smoking although his voice seemed measured and serious. I waited in that moment and the road wiped across my eyes. Into that valley of light, reflectors, chromium and indicators pulsing, I was drawn like a shivering kid.

Still staring I pulled the tails of my denim shirt out of my jeans. I pulled apart the studs that served as buttons and the clicks ran together like the quick roll of a drum. I drew my arms out of the creased sleeves and reached behind my neck to peel away the holed T shirt. The vinyl seat felt sticky and warm against my

skin. I lifted my leg and rested my right foot on the edge of the seat. I undid the laces of my gumboots. Same with the left, then slipped each boot off by pressing my toes down with the heel of the other. Socks off, my bare feet touched the gritty carpet . . . beach sand from last weekend's surfing at Curl Curl.

Jeff rested his chin on the steering wheel. His hair was short, tailored. His mouth was open, dreaming.

I unclipped the stud of my jeans, pulled down the zip and hooked my thumbs down the back. They caught my underpants too. I pushed my feet hard against the floor and arched my back, leaning my shoulders against the headrest. With one movement my jeans and underpants were down at my ankles and I sat down to kick them off. All my flesh rose in goose bumps. Cool air rushed all over. The vinyl sweated and stuck to my bum. I piled my clothes on my lap and tried to be calm . . . calm, calm.

"Listen. I'll be beside you all the time. I'll stop and let you in at the first set of traffic lights. It doesn't matter if they're red or green, ha, we'll transcend that tonight, heheheh." He started to say something else but exploded into a laugh that he suppressed, for my sake, into spluttering, choking, heaving. My face began to glow hot in the darkness. I waited a moment or two, savoring the adrenalin that had my heart punching in my chest like a fist.

Jeff got himself under control. "Adam, Jenny 'n' Paul'll be in the Valiant, just the other side of the lights. Mate. Good luck."

This was it. I hooked an index finger into a square of metal and the door clicked and clunked. I pushed it wide open. I slid my legs out and my feet touched the road. My bum squawked as I slid out of the seat. I was stand-

ing by the car. Jeff leaned over, slammed the door and moved the car up to the intersection. I hobbled, quickly, unevenly. I jumped over the gutter between two parked cars. I ran slowly and a breeze passed between my legs, oh my God, and up and over my bum, forming little spirals across my back. Then I was at the corner and the light of an all-night chemist took me into a cube that focussed a mosaic of tins and packets, signs with prices, boxes, bottles, spraypacks, all in primary colors, all glued by the clear white strength of the buzzing neon strips. I forgot that Jeff even existed.

People, their shadows, their reflections, came slowly towards me, all blending and rising and falling as they walked.

I ran.

No-one seemed to notice me. The shopfronts flashed by like fairy lights. I saw myself in a set of three blacked-out windows. I looked back. Everyone had turned to stare. Somebody loudly tut-tutted: somebody called out, "Dear God." People lost in shadowed doorways leading to black stairs looked out at my passing. Some never saw and must have wondered at the fuss.

There were four men. Dressed as American sailors, two by two. One whistled. One nudged his mate. The tallest, with a long solemn nose, half smiled then shook his head as though he could see through my nakedness. The clumps and clots of walkers spread apart as I surged down the street. My chest began to ache. My eyes took in snatches and glimpses.

My ears burbled then cleared for a word or half a sentence. The lighted signs slung from the awnings flipped passed like cards. The crowd became dense and some people stopped to chat. I crossed towards the gutter and ran down the thin corridor between parked cars and parking meters. Five full garbage cans. I cut back to the centre of the footpath and an old woman saw me coming. She held a bulging string bag in the crook of her elbow. With her other hand she raised a rolled newspaper above her head and shook it frantically. Her hair was greasy and flattened in strips across her forehead. I ran to her. Snatched the paper and her arm dropped. Her mouth of gums fell open. She walked on her way silently, as if nothing had happened . . . and nothing ever would on this endless track of lights.

Traffic lights. Red. That's it. I was blurred and couldn't quite remember what it was that I . . .

There was a girl. Twenty. Sat on the mud-

guard of a car. Sitting, watching. Shortblack-curlyhair. Tight jeans, creased like a boy at the crutch, and a light blue T-shirt with her nipples pushing through. Her breasts were slung low, but young, like an angel. She saw me and stared full length. Stared me straight in the face and then full length. I stumbled into the back of a man who had suddenly turned.

I stopped at the traffic lights. People watching all around. I stood in the red glow and remembered Jeff. I looked for his car and saw him through a windscreen waving. He was three cars back. One stopped on the wide white line to wait for the green. Another drew up behind. I started back towards the black car which suddenly reflected green. There was revving. The cars moved and as Jeff came up to me I reached for the door handle which shrunk away from my reach and was gone. I stood there watching his back window diminish, distorting all the lights. Stood there pale and naked.

Adam and the rest? There was no white Valiant anywhere. I ran dangerously across the road onto the footpath on the other side and a car coming the other way winked its lights and the young driver yelled something that turned into a groan. The window behind him framed a fleshy bum, cheeks spread apart by thin fingers. The car was immediately lost in swelling headlights and moving painted metal.

Two self-conscious guys came towards me as I ran the second block. Like a photograph. Brown shapeless coats, elastic sided boots, hats with brims turned down, like homestead verandahs. One looked into the three dimensional hard edge of a takeaway restaurant, the other looked at nothing. Nothing, until he saw me then he half crouched to applaud. The other smiled like a hick and said, "Fucking beauty!" As I passed he placed his hat squarely on the top of my head. The other grabbed my wrist and there was a beer can in my hand, splashing down my side, trickling and foaming. I took a swig and threw it down. It rolled heavily, spurting beer.

There was a burning stitch under my ribs. The soles of my feet were raw. Before I'd been smiling maniacally, now my face sagged like Jesus at the Cross. I kept running. I wanted it to stop.

A police car was coming slowly on the other side of the road. I watched the lit up POLICE sign coming closer. I swerved right up next to the shop windows and slammed into a man who was standing in front of a strip joint calling to the crowd to come in for the show. He had

half his head shaved and the other half parted neatly and oiled. He fell to the pavement and cracked the naked side of his head. Everyone stopped. I stopped. They looked as he got up rubbing his head and calling me a "stupid blind, motherfucking bastard". The police car stopped in the middle of the road and its blue bulb lights began to whirl. Two policemen ran towards me, spreading out to see if I could be cornered. One yelled at me. Commanded me to stop.

I sprinted away. Pushing people aside. Lungs burning. Leg tendons tearing at the muscles. Could taste blood in my throat. Hat lost. Face stretched in a hideous yawn. Pushed past shoulders. Someone yelling, "Hey!" Shoving. Straining. Traffic lights. Jeff waiting in car. Engine roaring. GO! GO! GO! Cars behind trumpeting. Arms out windows waving, threatening. Ran onto road. Headlights. Glare. Door. Slammed it. Inside. AWAY! GO! Jeff screaming, "Get your pants on. Fuck me. Get dressed. Jesus!" He steered to the left and down a black side street. I slumped into him, trying to get my tangled feet into my jeans. We slid down the steep street. Lights off. Old walls of three storey terraces staired all the way down to the bottom of the incline.

The two policemen, both holding their hats, reached the corner and stopped. I thought . . . through heavy breathing, "You get the number-plate?"

"No."

"Shit. Me neither. The bastard."

(Ahead a white car pulled out silently and was lost in the slow flow of other cars.) The policemen watched the dark flat shape whining down the hill, down, down down and then gone. They turned back to their car with the flashing blue lights. There was a jam and a minor accident with dented metal and shattered perspex.

Jeans on, I half buttoned my denim shirt. Jeff drove round in a wide spiral, turning left and left and left until we were somewhere down near the wharves of Woolloomooloo. He pulled over where the road was swollen for buses to stop and turn. There was an empty shelter shed covered in peeling green paint. There was a white Valiant parked under the shadow of a morten bay fig. Adam at the wheel with the window

rolled down, poked his elbow into the night. Jenny was somewhere next to him in the darkness and Paul was at the back seat window.

They cheered when they saw me. They laughed when they saw my clothes all askew. I swore at Jeff for making me run the extra block and swore at the rest because they'd obviously planned it that way.

Adam thumbed towards the back seat. "Get in, mate. We've got a chilum ready for you." In the back seat I leant down and cupped my hands around the stem. Paul flipped back his straight blond hair, struck a match and held it to the top of the chilum. The roof of the car glowed and burning smoke surged into my lungs making me instantly dizzy. I choked on a cough, holding it down. I waited. Waited. Then expelled a long widening stream of fine, grainy smoke that gradually filled the car then drifted, in pieces, out through Adam's open window.

I shivered. Somewhere a deep sonorous chord sounded. Jeff leaned against the outside of the car. He talked to Adam. Inside/outside. They decided to go to Adam's place. North Narrabeen. Jenny, smiled at me half turned in the front seat, smiled with her Mickey T-shirt. Then in the soft yellow light from the open glovebox she packed another chilum. Jeff walked back to his car.

We moved off, following ever widening roads. A tunnel. An elevated clover leaf to the bridge. Then freeway, highway, main road and hushed suburban night. Jenny and Paul were giggling, reliving the scene at the Cross.

I sighed. Becalmed and enclosed. Pressed up against the window to stare at liquid houses, dim street lights, gardens, backstreets and corner stores. I was hollow. Eaten out alive. Cold and clean like air. I sighed.

Adam looked up to his rear vision mirror. He bent it round to see me. He steered with his right hand and shifted, half leaning against the door. "Listen, mate. When you reckon you can handle it. You know . . . ready to do it again. I'll organise it. Promise it'll only be one block, but. You deserve that at least."

The rest of them laughed but I could see Adam's eyes. Solemn. Gazing steadily, like a priest. A glinting benediction. Living and dying. As though he knew my utterly profound addiction to the lights.

Communism and the Intellectuals

HUGH STRETTON

Overland welcomes Hugh Stretton to its pages. We have been trying to get him to write for us for many years. Former Oxford don and Adelaide professor, he teaches history at the University of Adelaide and has published three books of high repute: The Political Sciences (1969), Ideas for Australian Cities (1970) and Capitalism, Socialism and the Environment (1976). This article is a review of The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power, by George Konrád and Ivan Szelényi. Published in the USA by Harcourt Brace at \$US10, the same edition is sold by Harvester Press in Australia at \$30, so Hugh Stretton suggests you make up your own mind which issue you attempt to acquire. Although this review article was written before the recent Polish workers' struggles, Overland sees this as a particularly appropriate time to publish it.

What would be the best class structure for a socialist society? What sort of class rule should socialists and working classes hope for, and work for?

No, reader, don't respond too obviously. If you insist that socialist societies are classless, or ought to be, and that if they're not they must be reverting to capitalism, because the central aim of socialism must be to abolish class, then you are either a fraud or an innocent: not a useful or practical socialist, scarcely a serious one at all. For one thing you can never have been there, or not with your eyes open. For another, if you go on that way you're never likely to get there.

Through 1974 two Hungarian intellectuals, one a social administrator and novelist, the other a sociologist, rented a country cottage in the hills outside Budapest and retreated there to write a book about socialist society. They were not Communists and had not thought of themselves as Marxists; but in trying to explain the inequalities around them, they discovered the power of a kind of class analysis derived from Marx, as modified by Max Weber. They soon found themselves adding a new one to the short distinguished list of Marxist analyses of actual socialist societies—and burying the unfinished manuscript in the garden every evening, to hide it from any dawn police raids.

Soon after it was finished they were caught, imprisoned and exiled—Konrád to roam the world fairly restlessly, Szelényi to teach sociology at Flinders University in South Australia. The Hungarian manuscript had a longer history of narrow escapes, but was eventually published in German, then French, then English, in 1979. It belongs with Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed* and Djilas, *The New Class*, but I think it is better than either in its understanding of the problems of socialist government, and the kinds of reform to hope for.

Though not very long, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* is a richly complicated book, and in any of its four languages (I am told) it has its difficulties. It takes time to learn just what the authors (or translators) mean by words like 'ontological' and 'teleological', 'organic' and 'immanent' and 'transcendent'. But once learned, the meanings are clear, and so are the central themes of the book, though they are often surrounded by complicated explanations, defences or illustrations.

The argument begins with some questions about Marxist theory and sociology of knowledge. The authors think ideas are partly class-bound, partly independent, in proportions which vary with time and place and situation. It is a waste of time to ask whether ideas or their material conditions are 'primary'; they act and

react on each other continuously, in ways which also vary historically. These philosophical preliminaries are partly original, wholly intelligent, and too complicated to review. Among other things they make clear that the authors are not claiming any special transcendence for their own ideas. When they move on to the concrete history and analysis of Eastern European society, the bare bones of the argument are like this:

Ownership of the means of production is the basis of capitalist class structure and class exploitation, just as Marx said. But as Weber said, that is the central legitimating principle of capitalism alone. Other systems run on other principles. Marx himself identified a distinct "Asiatic mode of production" in which state power and traditional authority, rather than Western-style ownership, served to command the economic system, and to extract and dispose of the economic surplus. That Asiatic system had some similarities with Western feudalism. It also had a direct historical encounter with Western feudalism — over several centuries in Russia and Eastern Europe the two systems met, fought, and eventually merged to produce a range of 'command economies' varying from Russian feudal to Prussian military. When those societies modernized and industrialized, they did it in what Lenin called "the Prussian way" of state capitalism by order from above, rather than in the Western way of market capitalism by bourgeois pressure from below.

That history had critical effects on the Eastern middle classes. By Western standards they were weak and frustrated. They could not hope to become a rich ruling class of capitalist owners. They could only be obedient servants of monarchy or aristocracy. Doing the business for masters stupider than themselves was often humiliating for increasingly able, educated, indispensable people. But while the system humiliated them it also tempted them. It taught them how to manage and modernize economic systems from above — so they could dream of one day managing better, and for themselves. And why not? Why shouldn't a modern economic system be managed rationally, by people appointed for their knowledge and professional skills, rather than by a Western bourgeois class qualified chiefly by accidents of inheritance and ownership? Plenty of the official, bureaucratic intelligentsia came to believe in the general principle of the command economy. And so, for different reasons, did the revolutionary intelligentsia. The officials may not

have loved the revolutionaries before the revolution, but a *potential* alliance was always there, built into the situation and aspirations of them both. In the authors' shortest summary of a complicated history,

The bourgeois market economy did not offer enough employment opportunities to the Eastern European intellectuals, and so if they were not to slip back into a feudal situation they had to struggle for a society in which the intelligentsia itself, taking over the historic role of the bourgeoisie, would not only cast off the lingering shackles of feudalism but would rise above the laws of the market and subordinate the economy (and within it, of course, the labor market) to the class interests of the intellectuals.

(Interesting comparisons can be made between this account of the origins of fascist and communist 'command economies', and the explanations offered by Barrington Moore in *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*.)

In the name of what class, and what principles, could intellectuals hope to govern?

On the one hand Konrád and Szelényi agree with Marx that intellectuals have not previously constituted a class of their own. Instead, within the general social division of labor, they have functioned as the 'voices' of all classes, each intellectual group articulating interests and ideologies for some economic class to which it belongs by birth or adoption, or for which it works by choice. As Marx put it, the ideas of intellectuals were always conditioned by the interests of others. But as Konrád and Szelényi see it, that has become the monstrous false pretence by which intellectuals ruling for none but themselves now pretend to rule in the interest of the working class, or in everybody's interest in a classless society.

Ironically (and no doubt unintentionally) it was Marx who prepared this impious legitimation for the new ruling class. He did it by ascribing a dependent, representative role to all intellectuals, and by overrating the importance of ownership. In both cases he mistook a particular fact of capitalism for a general law of history. Those two mistakes generated two more: socialists were encouraged to believe that abolishing private ownership of the means of production would allow the development of a classless society, and that people qualified by possessing appropriate knowledge and skill — i.e., intellectuals — could be trusted to govern the classless society in the

interest of all, without any class interest of their own.

Lenin made that idea real in the Bolshevik party, then in the 1917 revolution and the revolutionary state. With the party as the vanguard of the working class, that class did not need other thinkers or other representatives. "The historical originality of Bolshevism lies in the fact that it substituted for the interests of the real working class the historic mission of the working class" —i.e. the party dictatorship (p. 141).

Abolishing private ownership of the means of production did not really remove the economic basis of class. In the West, ownership conferred the power to extract and dispose of economic surplus, so it did indeed define the ruling class. In the East the power to extract and dispose of economic surplus had always been based somewhat differently. The revolution based it differently again, and made it more effective than ever —socialist states extract a bigger surplus than other systems do, however inefficiently they often use it. But the actual power to extract and dispose of the surplus identifies the ruling class, as always; and it is used, as always, to exploit the working class.

When Milovan Djilas wrote *The New Class* in the 1950s there were still very harsh relations between the ruling communist parties and the mass of the Eastern European middle class —the professionals and intellectuals and technocrats of the old society working on resentfully or fearfully or uneasily under the new 'proletarian' regime. So for most purposes Djilas defined the vanguard party alone as the new ruling class. Konrád and Szelényi don't disagree. But much has happened since then in the developing relations between the party elite, the rest of the middle class, and the mass of workers and peasants; and it is in these post-Stalinist developments of the last twenty years that they see the educated class as a whole increasing its class power.

No short review can do justice to that complicated history of class and party conflict. It includes three-cornered conflict between party elite, technocracy, and workers. The elite has the power to kill and imprison. The technocrats are supposed to be able to manage the economy and make it grow, a condition of survival for party and technocracy alike. The workers have powers of sullen non-co-operation and some latent power to rebel. With those weapons the three contend, with shifting divisions and alliances. The party elite in its purist mood suspects the technocrats of self-indulgence and capitalist tendencies; in its

murderous mood it suspects them of wanting to displace the elite. But party and technocrats agree in wanting to control as much as possible of the economic flow, so as to make as much as possible of it available for capital growth and rational social redistribution. In Konrád and Szelényi's Marxist terms that means they want to extract the biggest possible economic surplus, i.e. they want to maximise the class exploitation of the workers. Among other things that requires the most possible wage labor, and the least possible independent production for subsistence or market, because independent producers have more control of their products and are harder to exploit. So the socialist abolition of private ownership of the means of production has not given the worker back control of his labor, or control of his product. On the contrary, it has stripped him of the last vestige of both. In Marx's meaning of alienation it has not ended his alienation, it has perfected it.

So much for theory. In practice, in their direct experience of the realities of Hungarian policy-making, the authors say the pervasive aim of economic policy is simple: it is to extract the biggest surplus that can be got without provoking the masses to revolt. Some of the surplus is then invested in economic growth. The rest is redistributed in money and kind, chiefly to the ruling class. Most direct distribution of housing, education, services and other advantages goes to increase inequalities of real income, not reduce them.

Two themes persist throughout the analysis of Eastern European realities. First, this sort of socialism generates inequalities in a new way of its own. Its inequalities are not capitalist remnants or relapses, nor are they mere 'shortcomings' allowed by venal administrators. They are systematic, in the logic of any elite dictatorship over a centrally administered economy.

Second, most of any apparent 'convergence' of capitalist and communist systems is illusory. Their basic forces work in opposite directions. In capitalist democracies the market generates horrifying inequalities, so the state intervenes to reduce the inequalities and sometimes marginally does so. In Eastern Europe, state production and distribution create most inequalities; independent production and marketing generally reduce them. Before they fell from grace Konrád and Szelényi did extensive and detailed research into housing and urban distributions, and into the ways in which 'administered prices' discriminated between

things mostly bought by intellectuals and things mostly bought by workers. Based on those official sources, some of this new book's most practical and savagely effective passages document the case against Left ideologists (of West and East) who condemn developments of 'market socialism' as pro-capitalist, anti-worker or anti-equality. In fact Eastern European workers and peasants do worst where they are administered most. They do best (though still worse than their rulers) where they can bargain and trade their labor or their products in a genuine market way.

That is not the end of Konrád and Szelényi's disagreement with other Left critics of 'actually existing' socialism. Many Left critics from the West, and some like Rudolf Bahro from the East, call for one or another advance (or return) to Marxist purity. Purified governments should act to eliminate any old or new class division, and should plan and enforce some purer, more equal, more communal style of socialism. Some of the critics, including Bahro, want radical changes in education and upbringing to transform whole populations into some nearer semblance to 'socialist man'.

Against all that, the heart of Konrád and Szelényi's argument is this:

Human nature (however reformed) and material scarcity make sure that every society must have some division of labor, some machinery for gathering and applying economic surplus, and therefore some conflicts of individual and class interest. For those elementary reasons no developed society whatever—feudal, capitalist, socialist, or any other kind—can be classless. Nor can any government or economic management be classless. Any people who claim to be ruling a classless society, or to be ruling in the equal interest of everybody, are frauds. Such frauds may actually represent some existing economic class, or alliance or compromise of class interests. Or they may be ruling for themselves, if they have managed to acquire dominant class power for themselves. So any honest and serious socialist needs to consider what would be the best (or least bad) class structure for socialist society; how it might be arrived at, historically; and especially, how its working classes might battle for shares of class rule, or defences against it.

If that line of argument sounds unrealistic it is merely because a short review cannot deal faithfully with the text. A most realistic part of the book is its discussion of historical possibilities.

Among other themes, two 'lessons from capitalism' seem apt. First, however vile capitalism is,

it is also variable. It is better without slavery; it is better now than when it sent women and children down coal mines; it is much better with democracy than (as in South America and elsewhere) without it. Class rule may be everywhere but it is not the same everywhere. And whether it is better or worse depends chiefly on the means which the exploited classes have to resist, bargain, vote or otherwise defend themselves collectively, and to make effective working and saving and spending choices individually.

Socialist societies should also be able to develop from worse to better, by much the same means. They will be better to the extent that their workers can genuinely choose whether and where to work; combine, bargain and strike about pay and conditions; choose to work as independent producers for subsistence or market; participate, bargain or otherwise influence the amount and use of the surplus created by their work; and have standard democratic influence over government, and standard civil rights and liberties under it. *Without* those defences the governed are always likely to be exploited in a normal class-exploitive way. *With* those defences they still won't have a classless or very consensual society—but in societies which have got rid of the exploitive kinds of private capital ownership, they should be able to bargain better private shares and public services—generally better class shares—than they currently get in either capitalist or socialist countries.

The second 'lesson from capitalism' is about the slim chances of ever moving the Eastern European dictatorships in those wholesome directions. In the West, the bourgeois revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries sought and got varying amounts of working class support, and could scarcely have succeeded without it. Partly to get that support, many of the class claims of the bourgeoisie were universalised, in ideologies of political and legal equality which the workers could and did use in their turn, sometimes against their new bourgeois masters. The workers were often enough deceived and cheated, and knew it and said so. But they did get and keep *some* fruits of their bourgeois alliances, and to this day they fare much better in countries with that sort of democratic history than in countries without it.

In Eastern Europe Konrád and Szelényi look for comparable opportunities in the continuing conflicts between the party elite, the technocracy and the more marginal (and critical) intellectuals. Out of these complicated, see-sawing conflicts has come the unsteady shift of power from the

elite to the whole middle class which supplies the title of the book. In the course of those conflicts the elite have often counterattacked the technocrats or the marginal intellectuals or both, and in doing so they have often used or threatened to use the working masses as allies — the extreme case was the Cultural Revolution in China. But other combinations are possible. Konrád and Szelényi pin most of their hopes (though still not very sanguine hopes) to this one:

The marginal intellectuals are well placed to offer some leadership and intellectual services to the workers. They are also well placed to persuade their technocratic brethren to use working-class support as their best weapon against the elite, and therefore an important means to winning full class power for themselves. If they did achieve that full class power they would try to cheat their working-class allies of any fruits of victory. But — like those nineteenth century allies of the capitalist bourgeoisie — the workers should be able to rescue a good deal, including an increasing capacity to battle for themselves. It is hard to see how the intellectual class as a whole could

finally remove the elite's terrible power to kill and imprison intellectuals, without also removing the power to kill and imprison workers and peasants. That power has been quite critical in the subjection and exploitation of workers and peasants — though little reported in the West, workers and peasants suffer much more killing and imprisonment than dissident intellectuals do. With that power gone, straightforward industrial and political class conflict should be able to begin. And in that, with no killing and no private or multinational millionaires on the employing side, the workers might not do too badly. Konrád and Szelényi are democratic *socialists*, not the 'welfare capitalists' that most Western social-democrats have come to be.

There are many more treasures in the book than this review has room to notice, including some wonderfully witty and candid indications of the authors' motives for writing it. Books may not change the world as they did in Marx's day. But if any still can, I think this one may, in wholly desirable directions.

The National Press publishes *Overland*.

The National Press has also just published

LATITUDE FORTY

Reminiscences of Flinders Island

by Jim Davie

This attractive little book, selling for only \$3 post-free from the publishers, tells the story of the Flinders Island community in Bass Strait over the last sixty years, as seen by one of its most active citizens — farmer, teacher, religious leader, editor, magistrate and public spirit.

Mutton-birding, wrecks, the great 'doctor' dispute which split the island, local government, community organizations: Jim Davie tells the story of one of Australia's most isolated and interesting societies.

NATIONAL PRESS

88 Nicholson Street, Abbotsford, Vic. 3067

NAOMI MITCHISON

Africa and us

A Letter from Botswana

Naomi Mitchison is one of the most distinguished of living British writers. Born in 1897, she has published over sixty books, including novels, short stories, plays, children's books and autobiographies. Once a Labour candidate for the House of Commons, she has played and still plays an active role in Scottish local government. Naomi Mitchison lives on the Mull of Kintyre, and spends much of her time in Africa. She visited Australia in 1978. Her brother was the scientist J. B. S. Haldane.

Halfway between you-all in Australia and us in Scotland, there is Africa which concerns us both. I go back there every year and when I get to Mochudi in Botswana it is just like going home. But don't think I mean this in its happiest sense. All those songs, stories and sentiment in general about home have been coughed up by men. No doubt the prodigal — or even the un-prodigal — son has a fuzzy golden vision of home and mum's cooking. Not so mum when she briefly escapes. Coming home is the taking up of responsibilities, unfinished work, demands on one's time and attention and affections. And that's how it is in Mochudi. People meet me and say in an aggrieved way "But Mma, where have you been?" Because I have been adopted as the tribal mother I ought to be around for much longer and do more for them.

In the early 1930s when I first went there I really could help. It was still Bechuanaland, a British protectorate, moving in a rather hesitating way towards independence but still mentally in a colonised state. For instance, all the English readers and history books were published in South Africa. It was the history of the triumphant hardworking Christian Afrikaaners keeping the blacks in their place. By then there were three or four secondary schools in Bechuanaland. They could try to prepare young Botswana for something they could barely grasp, yet even so a very few had struggled through higher education, their eyes fixed on medicine or law, or perhaps the veterinary service. But in order to pass the requisite exams they had to be able to

list the Burghers on the Great Trek and to give the right answers: that Shaka, for instance, was a bloodstained tyrant and Dingaane a treacherous coward. Probably there was an English history book as well, so they had to know the dates of the kings and queens and who won the War of the Roses! I expect you have come across a comparable state of things in Australia or perhaps in Papua New Guinea.

As for the missions, it was the luck of the draw. A good mission was helpful over hospitals and schools — but Christian teachers were essential — and general help. In the early days the help consisted in guns to drive off Boer marauders. My tribe, the Bakgatla, was rather unlucky. We were proselytised by the Dutch Reform Church, which is extremely strict. Any patient at the mission hospital had to go through a real catechism before treatment. Nor was the standard of cleanliness, bedding and drainage above what might be considered suitable for natives. Things are different now, with the new doctor who has other feelings, but ten years ago when I had a shoulder twisted out hunting I decided to be treated by a *ngaka*, a traditional African doctor. A herbal ointment and then manipulation did the trick. I have been back several times for other treatment — I have a bad habit of clumsily breaking bones or spraining joints. But Mr. Molefe Molefe can always deal with them after consulting the *ditaola* — what are vulgarly called the bones, though they include seeds and shells; I have learnt to read them a little myself.

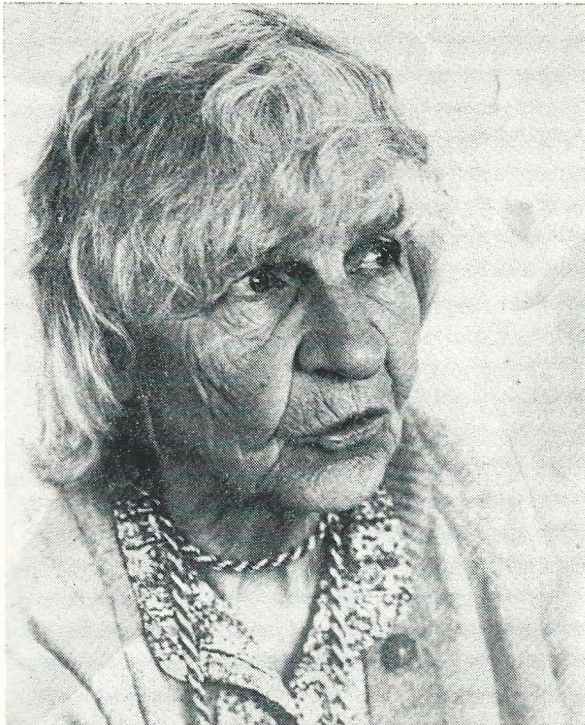
Well then, in the first years and after I had been accepted by the tribe, I did what I could to help with educational change. Incidentally I wrote the first history book covering the whole of Africa from the African point of view: not an academically perfect book I know, but at least readable. And I explained the background for the English set books, usually Dickens, reassuring the class that if they ever came to London they would not have to eat oysters (when I explained what these were pupils and teachers alike were almost sick with horror) and adding that it was inadvisable to address elderly gentlemen as "Old cove". At last came a year when they had one African book. It was Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. I said I would like to take the class through the background here as well; I knew Nigeria but none of the teachers had been that far. It was after that when the pupils, who often stopped me when I was walking along a path in the evening, began asking not only

the initiation groups, the *mephato*. I myself am Letshego. We had a splendid party once, all getting together to pound *Mabele* — sorghum — for the porridge and beer, while some helpful men slaughtered and jointed the goats for our cooking. We in Matshego are of course all women. As the evening drew on we all ate and drank together and some who were very poor brought tins to take back porridge and meat for their families. At last we were dancing together in the moonlight. One of the government people, passionately anti-tribal, tried to rebuke me, but I wasn't having any.

But today the tribal spirit is sadly enough weakened. My folk, the Bakgatla, have gone the way of the developed countries and think more about money than about anything else. The old laws mean less and less; there is violence and stealing and the wanting, wanting, that makes people unhappy. There is more drinking and the people of Mochudi no longer bother to keep the town tidy and clean but instead leave beer cans and cartons and plastic bags anywhere at all. In the old days the Chief could have called a meeting and told them what to do, but the anti-tribalism of government has taken away his authority, although oddly enough they still come to him to settle matrimonial quarrels, disputes over inheritance and minor crimes. Most young men would sooner have a public beating than a spell in prison; they can choose whether to be tried by customary law or the official Dutch-English.

Yet the enormous beautiful African sky is unchanged, the atmosphere in which the hills thirty miles away stand clear above the plain, the flicker of lightning round the horizon, the strange after sunset illumination that is reflected down from the dust very high up. There are the little paths I know so well, the wild flowers coming suddenly after rain. And I still have a few dear friends, most of all the senior uncle of the royal house to which I am assumed to belong. He is the tribal historian, remembering half forgotten inter-tribal dynastic problems and old fashioned wars — for he was born well back in the nineteenth century. And he keeps a lively hatred of the Boers, although he will admit that there are good ones to whom mercy should be shown.

For this is something we live with. The frontier double-fenced, patrolled at the far side, is only twenty miles away. A bomber could come at us in seconds. Beyond is the Republic



"How do I do long division?" but "What do you really think about polygamy?"

It wasn't only schools. It was the Community Centre. It was the Office. It was the Museum. It was the encouragement of all that was good in the old traditions and that might have been discarded in favor of what would be considered modern ideas. I was specially concerned about

of South Africa. Beyond is apartheid, the police, the shooting of Soweto schoolchildren, the prisons into which people disappear and somehow or another don't come out alive. They jump out of a window during interrogations. They hang themselves in their cells. We know better than to believe. So do an increasingly anxious minority in the Republic, including reporters on the two English newspapers who, however, must go very warily to get round the tight restrictions on freedom of publication. I myself cannot of course go into South Africa. Lots of people have banning orders, and I only hope it may mean an under-the-counter sale for some of my books!

The most formidable prison is Robben Island where they keep the major politicals, including the eight sentenced in 1963 after the Rivonia trial. Here are Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, as well as Herman Toivo Ja Toivo, the hero of the Namibian freedom movement, and above all Nelson Mandela. They are not allowed newspapers or radios, only government publications. Wives may visit once a month for an hour's talk by telephone with thick glass between those whom God had supposedly joined, and a warden to see that nothing of public interest is mentioned. Mandela was a great and noble figure, one who thought that non-violence would work and that the white rulers were bound sooner or later to see the light. Today there is a Free Mandela campaign. Has it reached you yet?

The government of South Africa would be very wise to listen. It is just possible that Mandela and some of his friends, if only they could be treated honorably and given complete freedom, could avert what is more and more likely to be a bloodbath. Nasty word, isn't it? But Africa has seen so much blood shed, mostly black, that such a word means little today.

Clearly the result of the elections in what was Rhodesia and is now Zimbabwe must have worried the South Africans. The Prime Minister Botha responded by some very mild proposals to soften some of the nastier bits of social apartheid and also to allow skilled African workers to do skilled jobs at (almost) skilled wages. This would please the employers but annoy the white trade unions. Nothing that he intends would really make that much difference, or even induce Boer farmers to think of their black laborers as genuine human beings. But even so the proposals were bitterly opposed. Better depend on more tanks, more planes, more modern and efficient methods of control, not just

old-fashioned bullets and bombing but nerve gases and — well, you can imagine the rest.

South Africa is of course one of the richest countries in the world with any amount of mineral resources, including gold, all firmly in white hands. With nuclear power, which no doubt can be switched to nuclear weapons, with increasing oil supplies, above all with the gorgeous climate where one can grow any kind of fruit, make good wine (not as good as Barossa Riesling but happily drinkable) and have ample domestic service. Yes, but. It is based on a very large, mostly very poor black African population, some of which works for the whites but whose families are discouraged, so that a great many live in the so-called 'homelands'. These are convenient labor reserves, so overcrowded, and mostly on such poor land (not for them the watered gardens, the flowers and vegetables), that the inhabitants are always on the verge of starvation and the men must go out and find work if they can. This is a very shaky base. Some industries have recently experimented with rather better pay and living conditions for their African employees. It is just not enough.

The people of Zimbabwe recently elected by an overwhelming majority the very intelligent Marxist leader Mugabe. Now people have funny ideas about Marxism, which is essentially a philosophical framework with certain very good ideas in it, especially that of the opposites coming together and producing a synthesis, something new. It has no necessary connection with the kind of Communism which means a central bureaucracy controlling everything. But the word Communism gets thrown about and many people were terrified of Mugabe. However he wasn't what they expected. After the electoral count he came on to the official television network and people gasped "He is wearing a tie!"

Some white Rhodesians have left. They realised that they would no longer be able to treat their workers as dirt or to remove whole villages when a piece of land is declared a white area. You know about this kind of thing, I believe? You've heard of a place called Queensland? Yes. But others have stayed on; they are likely to do as well as the white farmers round Lusaka in neighbouring Zambia. Mugabe wants to build up his country into prosperity and strength. There are great natural advantages; he can probably do it. But he certainly does not want a modern war with a heavily armed enemy. There are other ways.

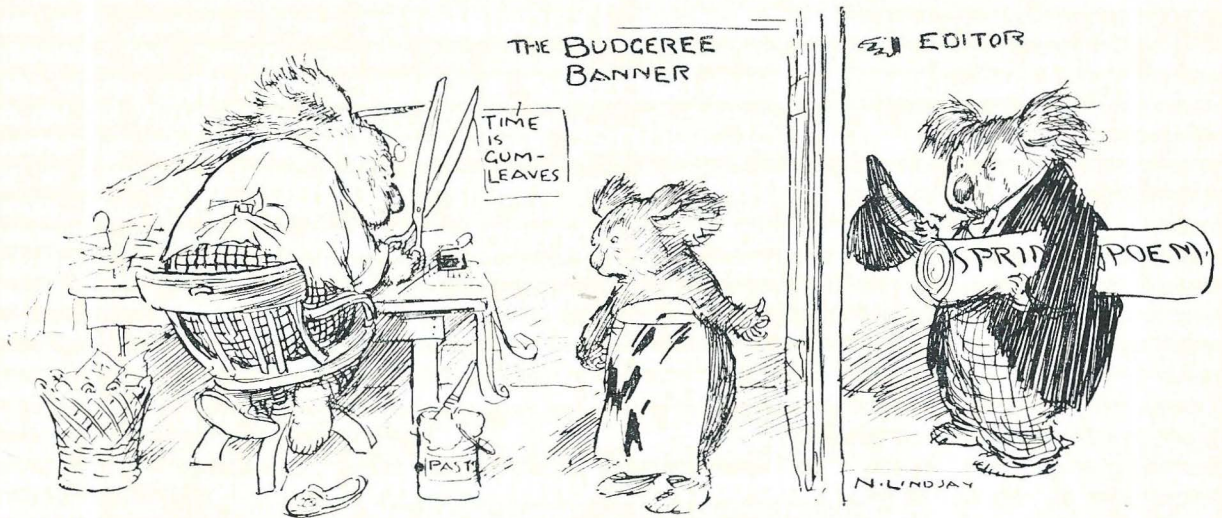
And in Botswana? Probably everyone was de-

lighted that Mugabe was elected. Clearly he was the best man. Yet at the back of it there is a certain anxiety, sometimes fear. Botswana depends so much on its enormously powerful neighbor. They are in the same customs union. The capital, Gaborone, with its hotels and shops and banks and government offices is largely dependent on South Africa, too dependent some of us think. Seretse Khama, the head of state, has to speak with two voices, one for African freedom, the other for big brother across the way. If for any reason South Africa wanted to put on real pressure — well, so far Botswana has managed.

And in Britain? The media and most public opinion had it that Bishop Muzorewa, Ian Smith's creature, would be bound to win a lot of seats. Clearly the Conservative government expected this. Everything would go on much as before and the terrorists, including that Marxist Mugabe, would be kept in their place. Some of us hoped that a Mugabe-Nkomo coalition might just get a majority. We knew that there

had been constant and violent threats — and worse — used by the Bishop's supporters and the Rhodesian government 'security forces' to stop the voters putting their crosses against Patriotic Front candidates. The results came out; the impossible had happened. And the British accepted it without a murmur. Lord Soames must have taken a deep breath but then he came out with the straightforward official welcome for the Prime Minister to be. In a sense it was a British triumph. The electors had believed us when we said the ballot was secret. The whites had actually told the truth. The African people for once had not been betrayed.

And in Australia? It's all a long way off, isn't it? But there is a new black leader who speaks with calm, modest and intelligent good sense, is willing to work with whites of goodwill, finds his new job difficult but not impossible. Well, there are some European, American and perhaps even Australian politicians who might take a lesson from him.



M.U.P. for **Top Shelf** Titles

The Golden Apples of the Sun

Twentieth Century Australian Poetry

by **Chris Wallace-Crabbe**

This new and beautiful anthology of verse reveals how richly varied and creative Australian poetry has been over the past 75 years. There is poetry here which will appeal to every taste and every response.

A delightful and memorable gift.

CLOTH **\$11.80**

Land of a Thousand Sorrows

The Australian Prison Journal 1840-1842

*of the exiled Canadien **Patriote**,*

Francois-Maurice Lepailleur.

by **F. Murray Greenwood**

(Editor & Translator)

This journal has become a source for the social history of Sydney in the early 1840's being a unique document among the records of the convict system.

CLOTH **\$25.00**

'From All Good Booksellers'

Recommended price only

Melbourne University Press

P.O. Box 278 Carlton South, Vic. 3053.

N.S.W. Mr. A. Sheppard, 26 4

Qld. Mrs. D. Chomley, 378 6351

W.A. University of W.A. Press, 380 3182



D. M. FOSTER

Hiphoray

From an unpublished novel

On a typical summer approach Hiphoray is a blue shape in the distant mist, a submarine mountain with its peaks above water. Sunlight roving through the cloud illuminates hills of tropical greenness. The reason for this fertility is seen at close quarters: this is one of the great breeding grounds of the North Atlantic, a bottleneck in the marine nitrogen cycle. Visible for half a day, so small, so tall, so jagged, so green in a cobalt sea, the island has a reputation for distracting sailors. There is something here that exceeds the imagination. MacIshmael clansmen, not noted for their poetry, vie each year for the privilege of conducting the world's most arduous scheduled rowboat service. But always, till now, in a dead calm.

With the exception of five hundred yards, the ten mile coastline is sheer cliff, rising over a thousand foot, bare for the first few hundred and offering neither landfall nor shelter. Were it not for Village Bay, Hiphoray's harbor, this archipelago would certainly be uninhabited. It is far from any shipping route, figures on few maps, and is visited only by the rent party, annually, weather permitting. Village Bay is protected from the prevailing south westerlies by the island of Hamalan, which across a strait of twenty violent yards, extends a mile off the south east coast of the main isle, coaxing Village Bay into a precise horseshoe. Hamalan is a vertical maze of caves on its weather side, with a profile like a child's attempt at its name. In dull cloud and now contending with a strong wind from the west, the Mugg men row round Hamalan to the west of Stac Churlish, the exposed, birdless rock in the mouth of Village Bay.

The stench of ammonia becomes so strong the ill are revitalised. Stac Lee is a pillar of smelling salt in a sea made cream by the droppings of birds. The little islander, thought to be

dead, begins an excited commentary. In the sheltered waters of Village Bay the MacDuffie exiles forget their ordeal, even their hunger.

The cliffs are pocketed with great sea caves, archways and overhangs. Each tiny inlet has a name. Na sgarain, says the islander, indicating one. Geo na Ruideig, Seilg Geo, indicating others. Mist alternates with sun every five minutes. It would be hard to guess the scale of this island from a photo, as there are no trees, apart from a species of dwarf willow found by the spring on Gleann Mor, which grows to no more than six inches. Hamalan is blue-black gabbro, a rock much liked by climbers for its tacky, almost adhesive grip. A ridge marked by a burn divides Hiphoray geologically, and the northern wall of the bay is red granite. Rubha Challa, shouts the islander: point of Coll!

There are rafts of sea parrot, or puffin, in the bay: their great breeding ground is Hamalan, which they have so undermined with burrows it is dangerous to walk on. Hamalan's vegetation is all the more lush for the absence of sheep. At the end of the island next to the strait are banks of lazybeds. Because of the salt — though six hundred foot at its highest point the island is soaked with spray in a gale — the potatoes in the beds do not thrive and never return more than threefold. The islanders think them only fit for cattle anyway. Across the strait on Hiphoray is Ruaival, and proceeding north at eight hundred foot, Mullach Sgar, Mullach Geal, Conachair and Oiseval, the last falling nine hundred foot in five hundred yards to the point of Coll.

A shag colony near Coll's point betrays its presence by a veil of excrement that looks as though an islander, setting out to paint a cave, had dropped a barrel of whitewash. At sea level loll seals, breathing as though breathing were the only vigorous act they knew. Despite these

attractions Flora stares at the village.

The approach to the bay is from the south east, and no one who has not rounded this island could possibly imagine, on a first visit, that Oiseval and Conchair, which tower over the village and create its dismal microclimate, fall away sheer to the sea. As they are so steep to the east it is difficult to imagine them steeper to the west. Though Hiphoray has many breeders, the fulmar holds it in special esteem: more than a hundred thousand fulmar nest on Hiphoray, but they rarely fly over the bay, preferring to exploit the updraughts off the huge sea cliffs; no bird exerts itself less. And though the island has sheep, cattle, crops and a boat of sorts, the people are pre-eminently fowlers.

The sheep, as many rams as ewes, are wild as goats and cannot be herded. The cattle are the usual black cattle of the isles, more often bled than slaughtered. The crops, which must contend with the worst weather and shortest growing season on the planet, consist of a few primitive cereals, most notably bere, an ancient barley with four rows of spikelets. Owing to the use of the same seed year after year the current crop, which extends from the village street to the beach, and is almost mature — that is, ready for the wholesale deracination that passes hereabouts for harvest — is inferior, in appearance, to the average contents of a roadside ditch on Albion. From the condition of the boat it is obvious not much fishing is done: the square sail of Old Brownny, as she is known, consists of twenty differently colored and sized pieces, each contributed by a separate family in an area proportionate to its share of the boat. The sheets and reefing are odd bits of MacIshmael garter and woollen string, tied together. So far as the sail is presently unfurled and the mast stepped, one might suppose the boat, despite its protective covering of turf, is prepared for immediate use. But no, it is just that August is a busy time. And though indifferent fishermen, farmers and shepherds, the men of Hiphoray are rare fowlers and architects.

The bay is that color called aquamarine: on Mugg, aqua is black, but Village Bay has a fine, sandy beach, up which the boat is dragged, then set next to Old Brownny, which she dwarfs in all respects. Relieved and exhausted, the oarsmen embrace each other and curse the chief.

Beyond the sand the foreshore is littered with boulders, grey granite to one side of a burn that washes seaward through a deliquescent furrow,

bluish gabbro to the other. Elsewhere rock extends to the waterline. That nearest the sea is covered with dark weed, like a cow emerging from a loch, and emerald slime. Bare patches have been grazed by worms. An eider duck leads her ducklings along the shore. The sea is deeper here and the tides less pronounced than on Mugg. The familiar call of the seapie dominates the land, though on this isle he sharpens a razor on a woman's head, in retaliation for his fine red bill being used as a shawl pin.

I don't see how they feed the people, says Lamech. Like Flora, he is amazed by the number of houses: the island is covered with beehive huts.

The factor laughs: he is glad of a laugh, having thrown overboard the sacks of seed the islanders were needing. Lamech makes the usual tyro error in mistaking these structures for homes: in fact, they are storerooms, known as cleits. Like the island's native wren and mouse, both fat, bold creatures, the cleits are unique and aboriginal.

They vary in size and some near the bay are immense. All consist of two drystone skins with an internal layer of small stones covered by a tight packed waterproof roof of turf and slabs. The walls are designed to admit the wind but condense moisture: a small doorway completes the resemblance to a blackhouse. There are more than a thousand cleits on Hiphoray, and others on the uninhabited islands and stacs. There are no mice on the stacs, and the cleits are used to dry meat, as well as store rope, peat and feathers. There are cleits half way up Oiseval, as well as on Stac Lee. There are cleits on the sea cliffs, in places where no sheep would climb. In general, there is a cleit within a hundred yards of any incline of not more than fifty degrees. A chocolate brown ram with a scrotum the size of a football and horns like an ibex is presently grazing the roof of a cleit near the boats. If the Cheviot is the sheepish masterpiece, here is the archetype.

The factor binds the little native's arms and legs. Just a precaution, he insists. In case there's trouble with the new rates.

So that's it, says Flora, no wonder no one's at our greeting!

Snow, says Lamech. They've had a heavy fall, by the looks. God, what a climate!

Leaving the islander they walk up to the village. Flora staggers like a drunk, can't keep off the bere. The island moves on invisible gimbals.

Five hundred yards from the beach under Conachair's eastern face of crag and heather, inches deep in dirty white snow, stands the village, twenty-one blackhouses interspersed with cleits. Each house is shaped like an upturned boat with its bow pointing at the bay. The houses and cleits to the south of the burn are darker than those to the north. The houses are streamlined, eight foot high with a door four-by-three in the north eastern wall. The walls are thicker than those of a cleit, with the cavity packed with peat and gravel. The roofs are of driftwood, thatched with corn straw which reaches to the inner wall and drains into the cavity. The moist cavity, fungal haven, drains to the outside, because of the slope of the wall, and acts as an insulator. The thatch is weighed down by stones and ropes of twisted heather, secured by gannet beaks. In the centre of each house burns a peat fire, which is never extinguished, and the houses are black because there is no ventilation, apart from the door. In common with many others who enjoy a vigorous climate and plenty of fresh air, the people of Hiphoray suffer an incidence of chronic obstructive airways disease exceeding that found down a coal mine.

There seems to be no one about, says Lamech.

No people, but fifty or so cows behind the back dyke. The cattle are home from the shielings.

I hope they get that corn in, remarks Lamech. There's a few headaches in that lot.

It's touch and go, says the factor. Twenty-one pecks to the laird. Lost the seed we meant to bring them, ah well: another time will do. I can never remember coming so late.

Poor people, says Flora. Snow on the ground at harvest!

Aye, says the factor, you'll need to rug up warm. In winter it's frozen solid.

It's not!

It is. The sea don't thaw for many a month. I sometimes think we'd be better off pulling a sled than rowing a boat.

The men enjoy this banter, but even at a hundred yards Flora can see there's something odd about the snow. You wouldn't be testing me, she asks.

I'm too hungry, says the factor. Where's my big triangle cake? Where's my bonnet for my head?

Who's steward here, asks Donald.

Gillie MacEsau, but don't expect to see him.

It was his lad Murdo in the boat. They're gone to the hills.

Feathers: the snow is grey and white feathers. The factor wades up the village street. Anyone home, he shouts. The whole village, like a neolithic dream of heaven, shimmers and floats on nimbus cloud. Flora hasn't quite found her feet. She feels drunk as a laird. The feathers wander in the slightest breath of air, up and down the street, in and out of doorways. They waft up the mountain and drift over the ripening awns. What a massacre. The least intimation of arm or leg is broadcast. Succumbing at last, two young MacIshmaels wrestle Flora to ground, laughing.

That's enough, says the factor. This is next year's rent, two hundred and ten stone of feathers he wants!

And what does he want with them, asks Donald. I never yet saw a feather on Mugg.

Sells 'em to the redcoats, says a veteran, unaware this order has been cancelled and the chief has five hundred stone in his bedroom on the Dun, awaiting a buyer. Here — smell that!

He picks up a feather and tickles Donald's nose. The feather is very pungent.

If you were a louse you'd be dead now.

I'm no louse, laughs Donald, but I feel half dead!

Fulmar, says the factor. Stuff your mattress with this, and you don't need a bugle to blow reveille. Now then, we'll go and see what we can find. I can't think till I've eaten.

Flora enters number one as the men disperse. The stench, inside and out, appals even a MacDuffie. The door is blocked by a pile of feathers, which conceals a number of putrescent seafoal and rancid bones. The inside, dark sooty and feathered, is filled with smoke from a smouldering heap of peats. At the back of the house is a small crub, set in the wall, containing straw and blankets. The main floor is a mixture of mud, ashes, birds' bones, human excrement and animal guts, stamped to a cake. There are three heterogeneous stools, one stencilled GREAT EXHIB. A pitcher with a chipped lip, a clay cooking pot, unwashed, and three dirty dishes sit by the fire. Next to the door is a stone lamp filled with fulmar oil, with a piece of peat for a wick. A stone quern, still holding corn, completes the inventory.

There is not enough meal for a mouthful.

Lamech appears at the four foot thick door, grinning.

They've found cheese, he says. Come.

By a cleit near the burn the MacIshmaels are making short work of a cheese. I've been thinking, says Lamech. They have no still here, it seems. I'll have to go back and fetch one. Will you come?

No, says Flora, I'll never return!

Right, says the factor, I can think now. In fact he would rather sleep.

Maybe they're on the cliff.

No, says the factor, they saw us coming and ran as in the old days.

Why?

The rent. He would increase it. I guess we'll have to collect it ourselves.

Couldn't we search for them?

The factor gives a tired, dry smile and rests his head on a stone. Why do you think the Pretender hid here, asks Donald sternly. When *he* had the mind to hide all the king's men couldn't find him.

It's true, says the factor. There are too many cleits and caves. I'm going to sleep now. Suggest you all do the same. Meet tomorrow and think of a plan. Harvest the crop ourselves
zzz . . .

The men retire to the houses. Flora pre-empted number one, and is just about to fall asleep, when she remembers the man.

Thank you darling, says Murdo, flexing his huge ankles, which are almost the girth of a Mugg man's thigh. Better now! Thou has shown me great kindness! The tide was coming in!

The people have hidden, says Flora. Why would a priest hide?

What priest.

I saw the ruins of the church!

And buried beneath it the ruins of the priest! the men Lachlann did this my dear.

When?

In the days of Malcolm Mor beloved, when men *were* men.

Oh. Then why are the people hiding? We mean them no harm.

'Tis not through lack of love, my dear, but the season of the year. Aye, that and the stranger's cough! Oh better we had never come than come at harvest!

I don't understand.

Dost thou not see the corn? Dost thou not

sniff the feather? The fulmar on the ledge is fully fledged, my dear. If the people grow ill at harvest, what will become of them? That chief is indeed a *cruel* chief, who wishes to harm his people!

You let him *go*, roars the factor. Our only hope!

And now you know why the chief will not have her on Mugg, states Donald.

What about you, asks Flora. He won't have you either.

They convene in the street, like the village parliament. The morning sky is a theatre of mist, with corn applauding sickle-billed snipe, whose display dives dominate the air with the ebb and flow of a siren at a crossing. Also appearing and disappearing are pipits, whitearse, seapies, wrens, herring gulls and lesser blackbacks. The blackback is a witch today, shrieking with delight at having found an eyeball for her lunch: the seapie is a mute being raped. In the mist all birds become fairy women, furious, demented, unfortunate. Sea cliffs no longer exist.

I don't understand, protests a veteran. Are we staying this winter or not? They can't stay hid all winter.

Do you think I would stay this winter having spent last winter here?

You won't get a clam in a week's time.

The salty mist, instinct with oil, lifts and falls at the level of the back dyke. Tomorrow, anxious to make good this defection, it will roll in at sea level. The corn, the grass, the thatch, the stones, the sheep, are dripping wet.

I don't want to stay all winter, says Lamech.

We won't stay, says the factor. The sea's behind us going home, and we know what fine seamen we are!

Listen, says Donald. Don't think you owe your lives to seamanship! The Host will take great offense!

Shony knows my heart, sniffs the factor. I have nothing to hide from Shony.

Poor heavens, sighs Flora. But my son will know God's will.

Tell me Flora; was it God's will to release that hostage?

Hush, says a voice: there's a man on Oiseval.

Don't look, says the factor. Don't anyone move his head. Just keep the discussion going, that's right. They mustn't know we see them yet. They have the advantage on the hills.

There's only one man. He's coming down.

Oh — only one man. It must be Murdo.

Can't tell. He's very short and thick.

Could be anyone. Don't look. Come now, laugh! That's right. He'll want a parley. He will say that because of the boat cold the people won't come out.

Is that the same as the stranger's cough?

Any excuse. If he's on Oiseval he's come through An Lag. Someone must go to An Lag and tail him.

I will, says Flora.

Rory — you know this island best.

Why do we need them, asks Lamech. We're going in a few days.

I am entitled, MacDuffie, to my daily cake and mutton on Sunday. Who's to cook it? Also, I can't see why we should have to load — that's women's work. Right, we're going. Rory, you slip in a cleit.

Is that you Murdo? The factor, half way up, steadies himself with a handful of heather. The mist has lifted from Oiseval, but Murdo blends in with the mountain, being dark and dressed in natural wool.

Murdo?

The mountain is contoured with sheep tracks, more easy to climb than it looks. On a clear day you can stand here and watch the cloud forming on Conachair a mile off, as the dense moisture-laden air at sea level is forced up the cliff face thirteen hundred foot. The whole sky may be clear, but the slightest westerly breeze ensures a cloud over the village, and you can count the days when a westerly doesn't blow on the fingers of one hand. Flora soon falls below. The view is so spectacular, she loses interest in the shouting match that's going on between Murdo and the factor, a hundred foot above.

Thy people darling, desire only that thou leave for two weeks, while they finish the killing! They do not wish to catch the stranger's cough now!

And where do they suggest I go Murdo? And what about my triangle cake?

The daftest play ever I heard of, admits Lamech. There's not an ill man in this party. *You* were the last man to cough Donald, and that was more of a bark at sea.

Donald grunts but he feels at home already, and does not wish to side with the present against the past. He knows this island well, having flown over it many times.

From seven hundred foot parrots are invisible, and fulmars don't rise above the peaks on a

still day; that would require effort. They can neither be seen nor heard. Snipe, whimbrel, plover, whitearse, pipit in the cleits, ubiquitous seapie — the birds of the upland moor. Flora rests against a doorless cleit filled with sheep dung. There is woodrush in the lee of the high cleits and polypody fern inside them. The east of the island has too much heather to give good pasture. On Mugg the heather blooms in August, but here it won't flower for another month and then it must battle the gales.

Among the heather, stunted bracken and spongy sphagnum moss that covers the hills, grow hundreds of differently colored flowers. Flora knows them all, but they are sometimes hard to recognise, being quite prostrate and almost sessile here. On the edge of the world, alpine tundra crawls from the waves. Flora lies on her belly: five and a half foot is a vast, unnatural height from which to survey this meadow.

Tell the people I am tired of their malingering!

The most common flowers, as elsewhere in the Western Isles, are thyme, eyebright, buttercup, ragged robin — pink, white, yellow, violet; the little blue deadnettle selfheal, which Flora knows as a three inch weed, is here no more than a button on the grass; yellow tormentil, pale blue milkwort, St Johns wort, cinquefoil, yellow heath bedstraw, pink bog pimpernel, butterwort the flyeater . . .

I was once very ill with the strangers cough my dear!

Don't give me that! You people make me *sick!*

And the color comes not just from flowers, but the hundreds of lichen that cover the rocks: white, chocolate, lime green, sulphur, gunmetal grey, every tint of ochre — what a bonny plaid the MacEsau could boast, if there were such a man and a white sheep on his island! The edge of the world is a jungle of lichen, arctic rain-forest, dyer's paradise. What a beautiful place, thinks Flora, who hasn't yet seen it in winter. By her foot is a pink spotted orchid. She thinks of picking it, but no, she decides that would not be right. There are not so many orchids here that one would not be missed.

That's it, says the factor, I'll parley no longer! We'll grab all we can, the meal, the corn, the feathers, the contents of each cleit, as much as the boat will hold.

Thou wouldst not be so cruel, pleads Murdo.

Thy people desire to pay the rent, but not today!

That's no good to me Murdo. My kind is here today and gone tomorrow. You go and tell the people what I told you. Ask them if a slight head cold and snuffle is worth this fuss!

Very well darling. But thou must swear by Bel thou wilt not follow me!

The factor feels safe enough here: he doesn't

realise the sun creates the wind.

MacDuffie and MacIshmael descend the mountain, leaping crabwise. Rory, dashing from cleit to cleit, follows the MacEsau along the ridge and down the western side of Mullach Mor, till he disappears over a cliff near the inlet known as Geo nan Ron on Glen Bay.



FIRST TRAMP: "Say, mate, where did you get the dorgs?"

SECOND TRAMP: "Well, yer see, they wus born outback here three months ago, and I ain't found enough water ter drown'd 'em in yet."

Frank Mahony THE BULLETIN 1900

NANCY KEESING

Swag

Grand to hear of OVERLAND'S initiative in spreading its editorial base so generously and sensibly. This really shows the spirit of a truly 'national' magazine. Stephen Murray-Smith is a very magnanimous man and Australian to whom state borders are only the demarcations of little government. (JOHN BLIGHT, 1980)

Hear, hear! To John Blight.

This is the first issue of *Overland* ever to be assembled and edited outside Victoria though not, of course, the first to include items from every part of Australia. There were several reasons for the innovation, all derived from Murray-Smith's desire to spread the journal's base more nationally in attracting writers and readers.

It is entirely fortuitous that 1980, the year of this innovation, marks the centenary of another experiment in a national magazine, the *Bulletin*, but the coincidence made it appropriate for *Overland* to congratulate the *Bulletin* and also to mark the occasion with a special event of its own. This is the reason for a poetry section devoted to writers who contributed poetry to the *Bulletin* during Douglas Stewart's outstanding editorship of the Red Page, effectively from 1940 to 1960.

John Blight's heading to this *Swag* is from a letter he wrote me, as did many poets, all expressing pleasure in and keenness for the project. Most submitted verse; a few no longer write poetry or had no unpublished work to offer, but the section stands as a splendid tribute to Stewart and *Overland* and is valuable in every way one can think of; at its basest it's a collector's item. Equally generous was David Adams's response to an invitation to review Patricia Rolfe's centenary history of the *Bulletin*, *The Journalistic Javelin*. Adams, at the time of the 1960 take-over by Consolidated Press, was the last of the 'old' *Bulletin* editors.

During this year the *Bulletin* unexpectedly an-

nounced a very welcome quarterly literary supplement to be "filled with verse and prose by both established and new writers" and to contain in each issue a piece to "arouse or continue to stir up some issue of national debate. Readers' reactions to this section will be welcome . . ." Geoffrey Dutton edits the supplement, whose first issue appeared on July 22. The venture as I understand it has been introduced because of the great success of the *Bulletin*'s Centenary issue, which Dutton also part-edited. Readers in sufficient numbers must have persuaded the *Bulletin* management that they *do* wish to read imaginative and enduring work in the journal, just as their parents and grandparents did.

Naturally this is good news for writers as well as for readers, but I'm sure its permanency will depend on whether it justifies itself commercially. In *The Journalistic Javelin* Patricia Rolfe offered several explanations as to why the *Bulletin*, some two decades ago, ceased publishing 'creative' writing, and there was a good deal of logic in her arguments, not all of which are invalidated or proved wrong now. (This is not to say I agreed fully with her arguments — on the whole I did not.) But times and community attitudes and requirements alter, and so do managerial responses. The new supplement will be judged in terms of commercial success or failure, and quite as toughly as certain features of the 'old' *Bulletin* were judged by new owners. It won't last a moment longer than it generates funds to pay its authors, make a profit and increase circulation. (Rates to authors are fair, indeed generous.)

I have no doubt that Archibald, one of Rolfe's 'heroes' and mine too, would have approved. *His* Bulletin sought and published good local writing and art-work because their inclusion sold the magazine and gained advertisers. He and A. G. Stephens, and their stable of staff and contributors, in effect did help to establish an Australian consciousness and to raise standards of taste, but that was coincidental to a basically commercial magazine.

After the Bulletin left the literary arena in the early 1960s, *Overland* and other little magazines including *Tabloid Story*, and in a limited way certain newspapers, did fill the void and provide forums and market places for writers. Most of the effective magazines attracted Literature Board subsidies. For the quarterly little magazines the Bulletin's welcome re-entry into that arena must pose some urgent questions, because the supplement itself is in effect a quarterly magazine. Its forty-five pages can easily be removed from the journal and kept separately and permanently. It is well designed and printed, and illustrated both with excellent black-and-white work and also with photographs of its chief authors. The poetry is particularly well presented over a grey wash that lifts each poem from the page. There is an outstanding sequence of twelve poems by Rosemary Dobson for David Campbell that covers a two-page spread and is better designed than anything of its kind I've seen in this country.

Where does this leave the little magazines? It is fair to make a few assumptions and some guesses: (1) If the Bulletin initiative succeeds other commercial journals may follow suit. In any event, authors will make first offers to the Bulletin. No little magazine, even with subsidy, can pay or distribute nearly so well. (2) Good Australian writing will reach an audience beyond the wildest dreams of any little magazine. Some writers may, as in the past, attain the kind of popularity that will make them household names. (See Grace Keel, page 45.) This will have stimulating implications for publishers and booksellers. (3) The little magazines should continue to fulfil their experimental and 'nursery' roles, but may increasingly fail to attract the kind of material that might increase their circulations. Already some of the best general and political material that would once have appeared in the literary and political quarterlies is sold to, or commissioned by, the *National Times*, *Nation Review*, the weekly *Bulletin* and

other commercial journals. (Again, writers and their agents understandably prefer good payment and large audiences.)

This has to sound gloomy for *Overland* and its congeners. But if change is foreseen it can often prompt very productive challenges. Keeping in mind that the Bulletin's advertising for its latest product was a proud "We Take a Giant Step Backwards", it might pay the little magazines to take a sideways step far enough to give them a perspective view of themselves. Who founded them and when and why? Are those people or their successors still keen and flexible? Are their purposes and philosophies still important, necessary, effectively transmitted? Do they cater for a cosy audience of the converted? If so, and remembering that the converted also have their rights and expectations, how can they appeal more broadly? What will be the chief concerns of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow and how can they be dealt with or at least compellingly foreshadowed, here and now? There are many things that independent little magazines can do, and do achieve, better than almost any other sort of journal which may have to be influenced by considerations of a commercial/advertising nature.

Dear Stephen — I know none of the answers and, with mean ingratitude (or so you may well think) for the privilege of being editor of this issue offer the above can of worms, and only partly open, too!

[STEPHEN MURRAY-SMITH writes: When the editorial board of this magazine agreed with enthusiasm to our first 'guest editor', and to Nancy Keesing's selecting the bulk of a complete issue so that it would represent a Sydney (or at least a non-Melbourne) slant on things, we had not been so sanguine as to expect the remarkable and varied material she has brought to this issue. The poetry itself is a remarkable and historic anthology, while Nancy has also been responsible for feature articles by David Adams, Grace Keel, Neville Wran, Gus O'Donnell, Rosemary Dobson and Eric Irvin. In addition she selected from the file on hand the two stories printed in this issue. I would like to express my appreciation of Nancy's dedication to this task and the success with which I believe she has carried it out.]

NEVILLE WRAN **A New Consensus for Social Goals?**

Adapted, with his permission, from an address by the Hon Neville Wran, Q.C., M.P., Premier of New South Wales, at a graduation ceremony at Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education on 7 May 1980.

This year the New South Wales Department of Education is celebrating its centenary. The passing of Sir Henry Parkes' Public Instruction Act on 1 May 1880 was one of the great land-marks in the history of education in New South Wales and Australia.

It did much more than create the administrative structure for the State schools system. It represented an historic settlement of a question which had bedevilled and embittered the political and social life of the colony of New South Wales from the earliest times.

As not infrequently happens when politicians involve themselves in matters of religion or when prelates involve themselves in partisan politics, the victims were the innocents, in this case the school children of New South Wales.

But Parkes's settlement of 1880 established a consensus which was to endure as the basis of the education system in this State for more than 80 years.

It was not until the late 1950s that the old consensus began to fall apart. This happened because of the explosion of the school population as a result of the post-war baby boom and the post-war immigration program; the massive expansion of the capital cities into the new suburbs; the steep rise in the costs of education; and the new demands of the community for infinitely greater secondary and tertiary opportunities than had existed before the War.

A new consensus had to be hammered out. Some of the landmarks in forging the new consensus were: the establishment of the Universities Commission by the Menzies' government, by which the Commonwealth became involved in

the funding of education for the first time; grants to non-government schools by the Menzies government and the Heffron Labor government in New South Wales in 1963; the re-writing of the Australian Labor Party's Federal Platform on education in 1969; the assumption of full financial responsibility for universities and colleges of advanced education by the Commonwealth in 1973; and above all the establishment of the Schools Commission and the adoption of the Karmel Report, also in 1973.

The two great elements of the new approach are national involvement and national responsibility for education; and assistance for all schools, government and non-government alike, on the basis of needs.

A college such as Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education is itself one of the fruits of the new consensus. Some of the present problems of this, and comparable colleges, arise from attempts by the present Federal government to revoke or modify the arrangements made between the Commonwealth and States in 1973.

Nevertheless, the basic consensus on education in this country still holds and is, I believe, one of the most precious possessions of this community. Anyone who remembers the pain and difficulty with which it was won; anyone who understands or experienced the division and bitterness caused by sectarianism in this country, and the damage and disunity that can result from it, will resist to the utmost any attempt to revive it or to disturb the consensus of the 1970s.

For my part, I do not believe that there is any reason whatsoever, financial, social, educational, political, and certainly not constitutional,

why the consensus of the 1970s should not endure as long as the first consensus established by my great predecessor Sir Henry Parkes one hundred years ago. Certainly the New South Wales government will do all in its power to ensure that it does so survive, on the basis of justice to all and equality of opportunity for all.

The need to maintain the consensus goes far beyond this specific matter of education. In fact a community such as ours requires a broad consensus on its major social goals, if it is to survive as a genuine community at all. We are not so rich in the unifying sources of history, culture, religion, or race that we can afford an indefinite deepening of our divisions over social goals — not merely the means by which those goals may be achieved (for differences about means are inevitable and natural) but as to the actual goals themselves.

For example, the 1950s and 1960s were, on the surface at least, quite turbulent years politically and industrially in Australia. The afterglow of the Menzies' era as some sort of golden age of tranquillity is largely a nostalgic myth. Nevertheless, throughout most of the period there was an underlying national consensus on certain great social goals. On all sides, and in the community at large, it was generally agreed that governments had the primary and proper role in creating equality of opportunity for all citizens, particularly the young, the old, the sick, the vulnerable and the underprivileged. It was accepted that economic growth was a legitimate and necessary aspiration for Australia. Above all, all parties took as a cardinal goal the maintenance of genuine full employment. All Australians shared in the revolution of rising expectations. It has been left to the present generation of young and often highly educated people to fall victim to the counter-revolution of falling expectations.

The relative social cohesion of the 1950s and 1960s owed much to common perceptions and nationally shared goals. We may date the beginning of the collapse of this consensus from the oil crisis of 1973. The new pessimism is not of course, a phenomenon limited to Australia or even most pronounced in Australia. It is the Western malaise of our time.

But the worst feature of national pessimism is that it breeds sectional selfishness. With regret

I must say that this pessimism is beginning to breed in our country a spirit of confrontation and sectional greed, and a degree of irrationality in the preservation and promotion of sectional interests, which if allowed to go unchecked will break up the cohesion of the Australian community.

I believe it is time for a new consensus, and that we as a community should re-assess our common goals and seek agreement on the means for achieving them. I am less cynical than a former British Prime Minister, Mr Harold Macmillan, who said it was not the job of political leaders or governments to provide moral leadership — in his words: "If it's moral leadership they want, they should apply to the Archbishop of Canterbury".

Political leaders *do* have a proper role in providing leadership. They are elected to do so.

But the development of a new consensus about social goals is a task for the whole community.

If a new consensus is to be forged it must be on the basis of the community having a collective responsibility for the welfare of all its members and of elected governments — Federal and State — having the primary responsibility to ensure equality of opportunity for all. For example, I mentioned that one of the great common goals of the 1950s and 1960s was the maintenance of genuine full employment. We must either reaffirm full employment as a social goal or accept the necessity of redefining the whole concept of work itself. It is hypocritical to enforce a work ethic based on the proposition that everybody who wants to work can find a job worthy of his or her skills and qualifications, yet at the same time impose economic policies which make it certain that one quarter of the young adult generation and their successors will not be able to get such jobs. The new technology is not something to be feared; nor is it something whose introduction can be resisted. Its undoubted benefits must be shared by the whole community.

These are the kinds of matters to which we must address ourselves as a community if a new consensus is to be created, if the new spirit of confrontation is to be quenched and the cohesion of the Australian community is to survive.

The poetry in this issue of OVERLAND has been contributed by poets whose work appeared in the Bulletin during Douglas Stewart's editorship of the Red Page from 1940-1960, and forms a tribute to him. It is not a complete record. Some fine poets — Eve Langley, David Campbell, Nan McDonald, Kenneth Slessor and others — have gone "into the silence." Others could not be contacted in time, or no longer write poetry, or had no unpublished work to submit — among them Ronald McCuaig, Roland Robinson and Judith Wright, who wrote of their support for a project which has grown into a unique collection of poetry spanning forty years and here published for the first time. NANCY KEESING.

RIDGETOP

Rock likes to be rock
Lazing warm in the sun
And never hurrying too much
Either uphill or down.

Deep in its bones it knows
It was no more than sand
Washing about in the waves
Till time took it in hand.

And now it has climbed to the sky
It knows that frost and rain
And crackling bushfire conspire
To crumble it down again.

Here on the top of the ridge
It breaks for a banksia tree;
Deep in the cave below
A ripple remembers the sea.

But rock cares nothing for that;
Having got up so high
It says it's in no great hurry
To drop down out of the sky.

It knows it has time enough,
One million years or two,
To sit and be warm in the sun
And that's what rock will do.

DOUGLAS STEWART

NAVAL EXERCISE

Hayman to Hook Island—1964

Already it is forgotten, as the sand is forgotten
Tumbled into the pitfall of a holiday beach
And only a childhood memory avoids
The lair of driftwood, paper and the hole,
The glass, the accident and the blood destroying
The white sea and the sky that summer day.
It is that time again. The season's appetite
Digesting pre-digested tourists. The minted sun
Bleaches the unwilting paper tropic flowers —
The beer cans and the broken bottles shy
Beneath the shore-line cottonwoods.

Then the south-easter
Spoiling everything, though one can sun-tan overcast;
Lucky, too, the indoor sport's arranged;
And from the "rec-hut" seeing the grey line
On the horizon, that spore of turbulent,
Bruised flesh of cloud, infecting sky and sea.

Taipan of south easter, vicious, unpredictable.
Already the fishermen of Bowen have moved their boats
Into the creek. The finger of the damp
Requires no cautious forecast to direct it —
"Unsafe for small craft." In that bruise of grey
There's blood to be let, one vein in the proud flesh.
Prouder than wind, the navy exercises.
Did the cartographers
Of cupids, demons sell their souls to be in league
with divining powers? The charts that Flinders drew
Showed "ripplings" here. The naval maps delete
Archaic references and demons both.

Well I remember as a child the horseboats anchoring
In our easy harbor without pilotage —
Two hawsers and the wharf-road dark with coolies
In twenty minutes. And the *Anzac* berthing
On a clear light-northerly day, for an hour manoeuvring
Against the commonsense of flooding tides —
Crashed piles, raised decking, dented bows,
But all according to the regulations.
There is no regulation that provides
Respect for the simple wisdom of the sea
That only working it accrues to men afraid
As often as fearless. Contour of island,
Funnelled flood and meeting backwater refute
The oracle of plotted isobars —
Amend the naval exercise!
"Exact for Sailing" says the Admiralty . . .

As Eliot might say "Between the Words
And the Event", "Death by Water" —
Just words — there are no symbols for stupidity;
Only monuments.

VAL VALLIS

THE ENQUIRY

Put out the chairs from Wilder's "Town"
In neat and tidy rows. They'll stand for people
At this most public hearing
Of unheeded warnings, tackle left to rot—
And not squeak comment.

Not death, "off Hayman Island"!

My "Fishing Season" back in '61,
Reviewed by Evan Jones, recalled an earlier death
By drowning off the Gladstone coast. "Such things" he said
"Are for the Aran Islands, not for here."
Would God the man's omniscience were true
And we, like Dassin's harlot, could applaud
The total company, including the four boys
For their performance in this comedy of errors.

No, no, their deaths are funnelled in the winds
That seep in through the cracks of our closed hearts.

Fold up the chairs of Wilder's Town.
No-one's to blame; the weather was exact
For Death.

VAL VALLIS

MRS MULVEY'S LAMENT

O my boy, my son—patches of love in the dark
The words are fretted away in the night.
I can imagine, (often did, your death by
Drowning), but not this death,
Half submerged, in a sunken, broken boat;
Cannot frame

The loneliness of your four night tears at sea,
And your friends slipping into the dark waves.
My love went out to you always across the waters,
But what can it do against the funnelling sea
Or hold last light to the edge of a breaking wave?

There is no image for dark, for the cold that the mind
Clamps to the heart's warmth; only numb speech
As you bear down through those straits of stone.

VAL VALLIS

INDIA

India was blue and orange
and gold, a land of silks and dazzling dyes,
a peacock's tail spread in the yellow sun,
glancing from bronze to blue, from blue to green
to bronze, with rich embroidered eyes . . . India
was a bird of moulded brass
inlaid with gay enamels, green and blue,
a wrinkled priest who carried in his arms
the young Gautama safe above the flood.

In childhood, India was
a gorgeous sari edged with bands of gold
and silver, jewelled slippers, jackets, held
in boxes carved from scented sandalwood,
brought back by travelling aunts
and missionary uncles passing through;
was beaten brass, bracelets of silver bells,
and graded rows of ebony elephants.

In India, peacocks posed on balustrades
of marble palaces, and maharajahs
rode forth in robes of orange, gold, and blue,
dripping with sapphires, rubies, emeralds . . .
No doubt it all was true,
that childhood vision, yet now looking back
I see a homeless coolie in the night
asleep on the hard, paved road which is his home
his workplace and his lonely bed of death;
and know that India, of all those bright
blue-golden dreams, is sorrowful and black.

NANCY CATO

ACROSS THE STREET, 1921

The climber stretched above your gate,
swinging in every breath that blows,
for sure is happy with its fate
in that it bears this clustered rose.

More privileged than rival flowers,
this watches you as you depart
hurrying through the early hours
and blesses you from its red heart.

Patience the while the sun tours round
its golden territory, the day;
then—joy as gentle as profound—
the sinking orb and one last ray!

For here and now do you return,
smiling, as underneath you go,
to see how feathery petals burn
even more red in sunset glow.

But ah! for me there's never a look,
as if invisible my state,
till envy now can hardly brook
the rose that hangs above your gate.

ROBERT D. FITZGERALD

THE PARTY

We sat in the midnight courtyard and
observed the moon
(and the moon us—our glasses, cigarettes,
the pretty faces and the young girls' fall of hair.)

"Now look how Mars and Jupiter" the lawyer said
"lean in towards the moon." Or did he say, are in conjunction?
"Once in a hundred years she draws them to her.
Mars is the red one, see how he glows. Jupiter is all gold."

There was a shudder on the indulgent night,
the loosening, leaving night slipping away
with the drink and the smoke,
the pretty faces and the fall of hair.

We were there to celebrate. Well, if not to celebrate
then to comment, to make a point. We were still alive
(though it might all end soon).

Suddenly it seemed that Mars and Jupiter, being so close
and dressed in red and yellow, dressed to kill
might take against one another
or worse, the moon. Or even us,
hurling us to the flagstones.

But the night stayed calm, the tremor passed.
Surviving, we sat with the glasses, the cigarettes,
the pretty faces and
observed the moon.

ELIZABETH RIDDELL

BAROMETER

The sea is full of half-moons . . . white
as the halfgrown moon which will sail the skies tonight
and now like a ghost of itself floats in the east.
A brisk southeasterly polishes the air,
birds fling, leaves sprout, from trees; needle's set Fair,
but my internal weather greys to rain,
with Change and Tempest threatening my rest.

The forecast's always wrong: the Scattered Showers
fall in an endless deluge, while the day
of promised Rain and Gales dawns calm, true blue.
The threatened Cyclone soon is clearing to
the usual summer seawinds, and the Eye
passes far off. Perhaps my weather, then,
may turn, in spite of portents, Fair and Dry.

NANCY CATO

SINKING

Stones and boulders sink

bury themselves
slowly and surely

they go down
together with old
abandoned tractors
derelict farm machinery
stopped with rust

harrow and rake and plough
lie all awash with grass

go down
with a green splash

WILLIAM HART-SMITH

SILVEREYE VIEW

Room for a bird on each wattle spray —
Room for a silvereye's feet
As a gold rush takes the gullies now
From Wattle Glen to Warrandyte.

O feet that scarcely run, but fly
Between a labyrinth of boughs
Breaking in gold, and spilling high
A yellow pollen-dust, that strews

Memory, to light the shadowed years
When I shall be beyond their sight—
Those chained-by-wattle prisoners,
Walhalla, Yering, Warrandyte.

MARY FINNIN

ON EDITING A COLLECTION OF UNPUBLISHED WORK

Suddenly the world tends to a web
And oneself, though not altogether cast as a spider,
Trembling at the centre
Waiting for what a wider
Mysterious air will deliver into the net.

It is chance and design. Sometimes they intersect
And some lovely moth on its furry flightpath
Or beetle of beaten metal
Cruising in half-light, half-
shadow, crashes silently, in silk set.

The spider and I, we are thankful for what we get,
Treasures with lacy wings, and a few inedibles,
But the spider never enters
That world beyond mandibles
Where a man makes love to a woman he has never met,

Where a woman talks as one of the elect
With stars or the secrets inside the stripes of tulips.
All round the continent
Are these people speaking through lips
Of silence, spending while deep in debt.

They too are spiders, but what they catch in their webs
They stroke back into life and set flying
Again, gifts for every-
one's birthday and sometimes dying,
Inexhaustible as the alphabet.

GEOFFREY DUTTON

OYSTER COVE PASTORALS

1. To the Muse

My fowls with heroes' names,
Hector, Achilles, Ajax,
crow me out to the pasture.
Helios gilds their plumes.
Fossickers in the rye,
they trust me with the axe.

If by some chance I wrote
a fine immortal poem
it would have a mortal theme.
All that excess of life
in museums of the mind
still there to contemplate!

Light fits a world together
from fragments of a dream:
another place, another
morning; a motto: Summa
Supremo, best and ablest.
Some happiness is forecast.

What consent do we ever
give to dreams that embrace us
with the energy of art?
Why do you come at sunrise
when frosty air is burning
my empty arms? I split

wood, light the day's fire,
warm my body at flame
invisible in sunlight.
That brief motto in Latin,
on what door was it written?
Tell me, what is your name?

2. High Noon

Ocean, heaven, the same color.
Bruny lies between
unruffled sky, unclouded water.
Colors of solitude enclose us.
Shadows of gentle green
brush the planes of thigh and shoulder.

In this room a whispered name will answer
the soft-spoken address
of eye and lip and loving gesture,
No need for language, the great mirror,
when the body's genius
lights us past logic into rapture.

Instrument and interpreter,
we are one; talk idly, improvise.
"How will you paint me this green air
and the distant fields' autumnal shimmer?"
— As you will sing a dream of leaves
through which the heavens fall like water.

3. Evening. "Et ego in Arcadia."

Even here, in Arcady, are graves:
the mortal part of Gabriel Fur;
Big White the leghorn; old Artemis,
smallest of bantam hens, and her
arch-enemy the feral cat;
the odd wren, the bright pardelote,
and the fantail with his cinnamon breast
who stooped to fly clean through the house
and struck the mystery of glass;
gone to their everlasting rest.

Look, where the grass grows more intense:
a bluetongue's skeleton recounts
his lost encounter with the fence.
If there were reason to give thanks
I'd say, earth gathers in her children
and all are equal, born again;
new dreams fire upwards in her thought—
that's earth's religion: fowl to iris,
cat to fresh catmint, lizard to grass,
grass back to geese in a fresh start.

Insect-spires, grass-heads, complex clouds:
nothing but light and surfaces
as the day dies. Autumnal shades
make substance possible. Come close,
friends, lovers, nightfall-visitors
from earlier times. My body wears
the light and substance of the dead.
Daughters and sons of Artemis
come close, and you, my hungry geese.
Here's wheat. The living must be fed.

GWEN HARWOOD

THE EPILEPTICS

I

As an epileptic, I gave
blood and drove a Rambler. This, my
doctors understood; and, I would
believe, I may have helped save lives
whatever black impurities
clotting in my veins brought on
blockages of time, a blank space
plotted in surveys of my face
when the mysterious ailment
brought convulsions to my frame, took
strange command where I had thought, alone,
I was to blame for losses: cause
of my tongue's stretched retreat towards gibberish.

II

Notorious malady that,
like an embarrassing friend, stays
on to sleep after a visit's
welcome ends, I learnt to serve your
eccentricities, to wait on
you as though you were my house-guest
interestingly new with your
cutlandish manners, high priest's charm:
confiding in me draped on your
straight arm avast, as though we cruised
through shallow straits of darkness on a
narrow lead that pilots ships through
locks of a canal connecting oceans.

After our embarrassments our
chagrin is repaired: we see the
adventurous diversion as a
means to our self-understanding . . .
Who paddles solely in one sea,
the oceans serve from shelves the same
commodity that, with tongues in
cloyed accord, contaminates the taste
without a pique, savoring the
commonplace. Alien seas stir
broths we fear to sip until brute
storms tip cauldrons up to scald
our lips, their tang to please our nostrils most:

when we seek mustards, peppers, salts;
and all the spices that the vaults
of ignorance had locked away
as though from childhood. Now, adult
we pay for flavors — not for food —
the higher price and launch our ships
assigning them to chance. We steer
where stars direct us to the South . . .
dolphins, like our daughters, dancing
for'ard of our vessel's prow
allemande and sachel as we
sway upon the curving decks, searching
starboard, port, some anchorage of comfort:

knowing all must sail the torrent's
crest tomorrow. Peradventure, one
sea crossed, there is another that we'll
sail anon. Suffice, our ship's at
riding, stable while we victual
holds with weevils, grain and rum — a
sheet spare and a shroud in case, a
spyglass . . . blank map furled in each
wry face . . . chronometers set for
longitudes that we may pass in
passage down the tropic steps of
latitudes, from Pole to Pole;
all men averse to us as of no soul.

Perhaps we dissipate into
the East's monsoons, the hurricanes
of northern climes — the gales, the storms
the Globe constrains, that never smash
the Earth's blue atmosphere (its glass
envelope); mass within, private
to us who know the halcyon
that nests at sea, broods through tempests,
rears chickens of calm that even
hounds may nose yet not destroy . . .
curs, the greater joy, returning
from such voyages that steer us
South, hollering white latitudes of blinding death.

III

Yet in our home ports, spindrift dry
upon our brows, secret longings
to laze across those bows again
and dream above the serried waves
en train, lend us that mystery
that scientist, medico, may
never solve . . . making gammon that
here lies the malady, symptom
of disease: far deeper than their
scopes may penetrate, their rays may
map for outlines, shadows. We have
sailed to continents unknown by
paddlers in a lake, captains of lagoons.

JOHN BLIGHT

MAN LOST

There were more than a hundred of us looking for Willy Arnold.
Some found out their neighbors. Some found out themselves.
We all lost more than a few days of our lives
And none of us found Willy Arnold.

The mailman it was said Willy was gone.
He found a shirt on a post, an axe in a stump,
A starving dog tied up at a camp
But never a sight of Willy.

The hills we had watched from a distance in all lights
Surprised us close-up by crude edges.
There were pockets of snow on stringybark ridges
And lantana tangled in the gullies.

Bluffs half-hidden in swirls of mist
Might have dropped any man to his death.
We could see Willy fluttering around danger like a sick moth.
The first night all of us shivered for Willy.

The next afternoon three men had to leave.
Their business was worth more than any man's life.
Someone said Willy had a wife
He'd go to any length to dodge.

The fourth day we searched for two of the searchers.
The police came out from town to take charge.
We acted a fine farce on a rough stage.
Both men had gone home without reporting.

Seventeen of us looked for Willy Arnold.
We criss-crossed the ranges for thirty miles.
There was talk that Willy's prints were in the files
And we were doing policemen's duty.

Two fat bloodhounds and a fat sergeant were sent from the city.
We let them smell a pair of Willy's socks.
Of course we had obliterated all the tracks
But the dogs bayed off on some ethereal trail.

They pulled their sweating handler to the river
Twelve miles away in the opposite direction
And gave a pair of muddy toe-marks full attention.
A man had clearly dived in off the bank.

The cold certainty of nets and grappling-irons
Hooked only rumor from the water.
There was talk of an official letter
That might have been Willy's army call-up notice.

Five of us couldn't think of Willy fleeing anything.
We owned stock-yards that he'd built to last.
Willy seemed as stable as a post.
He was seen in Queensland and Victoria and at a pub in the next town.

The mailman it was said Willy was back at his camp.
Willy produced evidence he wasn't dead
By a crumpled order for a loaf of bread
Spiked to a stick across the track. Willy himself wasn't about.

Willy thanked nobody and nobody congratulated Willy.
One couldn't help reckoning up the cost
Both in dollars out of pocket and reputations lost.
There's even a hard glint in the hills that wasn't there before.

ERIC C. ROLLS

CONVOLVULUS

The tendrils shoot towards us through the green
of plums and lemons wearing a shawl of leaves.
We drag at a single twine and the vine
trembles and the whole garden heaves.

A liquid lattice work alive as eels —
less than a week to rope the ficus in.
It celebrates with flags and festoons
and waits for the next foray to begin.

Each flower opens from its chrysalis
such tiny trumpets twining on their stems,
liqueur glasses balanced on the air,
flaring for bees, dreaming stratagems.

This is the time when nature starts to move
tangling with neglect and with repose.
The leaves are spreading like a waterfall.
They have designs on us and on the rose.

VIVIAN SMITH

THE TOWER

What was it drove us on that summer day
past the long fields and slopes spread out with hay,
the road with vines, and sheds that smelt of cows
and the warm brooding heaviness of dung —
was it an impulse that he too had sung?

Years ago we felt his gentle power,
reading the book that showed this martial tower,
its reconverted chapel and its trees.
But photos always simplify a scene;
this cannot be the way it would have been
across the road from service station, bar,
a half-deserted cafe with no name
and stickers for the tourist and his car
and all the life that flourishes on fame.

And yet how private still
the moment we step through the garden wall
and walk towards the well-lit narrow rooms
to see his writing table and his bed.
The house contains a peace we can't define
as if we really could speak to the dead
beyond the forced allusions of a shrine.

VIVIAN SMITH

AT SURFERS'

They have their place in Paradise.
Beyond them is the sea.
The yachts and gulls are very nice.
They have their place in Paradise
and sit there drinking tea.

They sit and read their morning mail.
It's lovely in the sun.
Far out a yacht leans on its sail.
They sit and read their morning mail,
and write, it is such fun.

They try their latest beach-clothes on,
put suncream on their skin.
The housemaid says the tide has gone.
They try their latest beach-clothes on
but do not care to swim.

They love at night the Cuban dance.
A tango throbs the air.
Stout men discreetly watch their chance.
They love at night the Cuban dance
though love is seldom there.

They have their place in Paradise.
It's spotless, not a speck.
Then one day when it's very nice,
they leave and, for their Paradise,
they slowly write a cheque.

NOEL MACAINSH

PACIFIC GIANT

Lying on his back like a beetle
he flung his arms out —
one hand clutched
a palm-tree on the skyline
the other sought his mother's hand
but she was in the bedroom
multiplying with her eyes shut.
Craving support
he stretched out his feet —
one foot idled on the Philippines
the other rested obliquely
on the Andes
showing its sole to the eastern seaboard.
His head was at Townsville
in the Memorial Park.
And when he spoke
his voice reflected from the ionosphere
all over the world
Mother, he said
through night and day
three times the round world around.
And the land shifted
and the fingers of an estuary
roved through his hair.
It was Mother Nature come to her boy.
The west-going shadow
came over his body like a blanket.
The islands of the Pacific
are his sole remains.

NOEL MACAINSH

CLIMBING EVEREST

The world's weather shifts, they say. And so does ours:
The droughts we've seen, the ebb and flow
Of tides, floods, capricious showers
Of hail, wrecking the fruit! And now the snow.

To turn to the snow on the dazzling height,
It is no light thing you do. But what of me,
Left with the darkness of snow, held in the night
Of its absence? Not to see, not to see
At night's end the finger of gold
Touch the bare crests with miraculous light;
Not to see the red response of the earth to the bold
Arrogant lover, her dark heart's pitiless sun.

Yet we know one another of old, the cold earth and I,
Veiled with the blackness of snow, as we wait for the one
Who brings back the day to the far high
Peaks of our being. Then let the dark time draw on,
Try us with snow, with inquisitorial cold,
The casuist winds that divide us and numb:
You will find me expectant like earth when you come
With your finger of gold.

DOROTHY AUCHTERLONIE

SILVER-EYES

Birds
falling like raindrops

small silent
olivegreen birds
birds with white rings
around their eyes

Silver-eyes
on a cloudless March morning

are raining drop by drop
into the garden

and all's so still

Here and there a thin
high
branch of a sapling bends
with the weight of a bird

like a raindrop
that drops to a lower twig

The Silky-Oak too
is taking a small bird-rain

in scattered drops that fall
to the ground and stir the grasses

Then all goes again
suddenly still

when the shower
the bird-shower passes

WILLIAM HART-SMITH

INTIMATIONS

The warning comes at night
when Venus climbs above the eucalypts
(or acacias or ironbarks, we never can decide
being ignorant in our urban way;
unconscious more, or unaware
what green the leaf should be, or brown or grey)
and the bird enters suddenly to sweep her wing
across the pale star's indifferent face.

Or it comes in the afternoon
as at Santiago when the soldier stuck
carnations in the muzzle of his gun,
a cold joke in summer. That was the sweating hour
when everything was closed
except the cemetery and the jail. Both gaped for custom.
The soldier smiled and lifted his smile to the sun
and then the flower.

Or it comes in the morning. No time to set the mind straight.
The day cracks open with a roar.
The mountain lories flash in the new light
and the sea heaves at the wall.
There is confusion and heat.
Whatever is broken must lie
where it fell in the night.

ELIZABETH RIDDELL

THE BLACK LIGHTHOUSE

The black lighthouse. Soft stone has no place.
Afternoon backs off: across the bay that sand warmth
basking in light, it glares back onto our faces.
Pale children scoop sand. Kelp rolls with small hands
that gesture into the tide. Silver gulls are familiar.

Those kids building sand offices
or breaking them apart. Beaches
are always too bright, sudden intensities
that dark allows out in the open.

On the headland the gloom shrub fawns and cringes
to the base of the black lighthouse, the sky's blue
is shot through with long edges of darkness you cannot see.

I look at the parents, then turn away. The naked boy
is wrapped in their large soft towel. The black
lighthouse waits for the moment when darkness
will be seen. Soft stone has no place. You
have no place. Children, indoors, are bathed
in white enamelled bathrooms.

THOMAS SHAPCOTT

CONCEIT

Yes it's a beautiful view and
you're beautiful too:
blue water, blue eyes; blonde hair, sunlight;
gentle hills, firm rounded flesh;
sly little jokes, small bobbing boats.
Landscape, seascape, stay out there;
you, perhaps, could get closer.
But in the long run, or
the short, I write a poem
and move on.
You and the landscape were and
remain, but invoke words,
because I was there and saw.
The landscape doesn't have much choice:
but what word would you like to become?

R. G. HAY

ST. ANTON'S PILGRIMAGE CHURCH

Garmisch-Patenkirchen

Up the hill path, zigzag. The first alpine flowers.
You have long silences. My mouth is a boot.
Yes it is beautiful, yes it is opened by the key
of association and the sequence we somehow
came out of (even us). Eleven Hundred Something
Lord Brentano knelt here, a plaque says so.
This steep pathway past the Stations leads to
an oval church. We are brought to stations
of wood-carved photographs, fading now. All
the town's young, dead in the 1940s: proud,
awkward, recognizable. There is a new town.
The dead look upon our silences. My tongue
like boot-leather crushing alpine flowers.
We jangle like keys, something
rubbed together.

THOMAS SHAPCOTT

AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY

From a series

1. Main Reading Room

No sign says silence, but the days and nights
Know only silence and a warmth of thought.

Men cannot hear the fortresses of fact
Smash the testudos of their ignorance.

2. Etchings of Cook's Pacific Voyages

The eyes behold and instantly one's held
In yesterday's embrace.

Islands are magic, anyway,
But seeing them two centuries ago,
The heart and mind are filled with florid quest:

One wants to be there, yet is glad,
Now being now,
It is impossible to go.

3. In the Map Room

Cartographers in olden days drew naked ladies
On their maps
To give frustrated sailing chaps
And cabin boys
Some pin-up joys
Before they fell over the world's edge into Hades.

IAN HEALY

THE MAIDEN AND DEATH

"Bin Freund und komme nicht zu strafen"

Death sits beside my fire quite often now,
I see him crouching, when I turn my head
Towards the darkened corner, out of the blaze,
Timid, apologetic, no word said.

And when I go to bed and cannot sleep,
He sits at the foot, and watches till the light
Calls up the petty tyranny of day,
Then fades into the last shadow of the night.

I shall grow used to his coming in and out,
Poor dark companion, doing what he can
To give me, like a dog, the truth of love
And faith, begrudged or bargained for by man.

His constancy will move me in the end,
Though we have nothing in common but our grief . . .
How can I see the anguish in his eyes
And not put out my hand for his relief?

DOROTHY AUCHTERLONIE

EURYDICE — A VARIATION

I

My mother wishes me to be
some other girl. Persephone?
I am as my nature is,
compelling the eyes of young Orpheus.
In his stolen backward glance
I see my darkest circumstance;
yet he is so in love with light
he cannot understand the night,
and sings and sings that I am where
flowers-of-Adonis will appear.
They say all this is just a myth,
that girls are often in love with death.
But who can prove in time that I
have more than death to live by?

II

Even far under, night moves on.
Torrents of darkness twist and turn,
streaming away like death or smoke.
This is Time. It is time I woke.

Never, O never before have I
known river, sky and sea
to meet like this in morning's estuary.

I sing; I move. Then I am still,
touching time hesitantly.
Nothing I do can trace or tell
how it was when the darkness swirled.

Now I can see,
not Orpheus, but the world
waiting out in the light for me.

MARGARET IRVIN

THE EUCALYPT

On a Californian slope of Spanish ledges
And over the Casbah in Algiers
The tree still grows thriving distantly
Planted by what hand or whom?
On an Indian summer, even, that I half forget,
I've seen the eucalypt at home
Like part of a Kashmir carpet—
Since when my thought has put forth such peninsulas
That they reach from the seed or sapling's origin
To branches breeding up through time.
It's a fancy from a planted fact
In unexpected places, without the incense
Of defection, for still the tree grows
Contemplation, witness, and all who pass
Pause to watch it flourish the leaf
Of its own curious nature.
With my wished will of causeway shall, I've dreamed to be
An act of similar hands—or whom?

DAVID ROWBOTHAM

DAILY LIVING AND DAILY DYING

5. Taking Flight

The booking-clerk speaks with many tongues.
We offer dialects, anxieties,
The heavy breathing of the perplexed.

Across the chasm from us this priestess
Smokes too much, hunching her slender shoulders,
Eyes fixed on the computer-screen.

I must await the print-out and its divination.
She has received it on her screen. Erinyes?
Images of birds, the black shapes of daemons?

She is noting numbers, encoded trivia.
But oracles are ambiguous. She hands me my ticket.
Will offer neither warning nor compassion.

ROSEMARY DOBSON

PURCHASE

28 Percival Terrace, Holland Park

The lighted cantilever bridge looks up
At my light. Range! You are living again
At height. The mountain bird and the star drop in
To drink at the window-sill; my pleased lip
Is as moist as the rim of the saucer's pool I've set
For them. I'm steeply drinking my own
Memory. With it I take in—
Tasting, savoring what as a man I've never
Met so well known till now, not seen as I saw
Boyhood once on the mountain, doubly whole
And masterly—myself the particle
Of all, climbing. The river, a slow, low
Reflection of everything electric, bends
Beneath its witness-bridge, vermiform
In an everwarm city gathered to a joined glow-worm
Host in the maze, cave, cluster that unwinds
In the light one valley.
How long ago did I look up
Peering into the cantilevered cup
Of the moistened bird and star—alive at height!
I watch loved years with winging eyes
And drink my purchase: rediscoveries
Which flood the river as the springs descend the peaks,
And, in a vigilance of lights, time speaks.

DAVID ROWBOTHAM

AFTER MONDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 1914 A.D.

My khaki uncles marched the streets
of that no-turning-back September
and, roaring *Goodbye, Melbourne Town*,
sailed off life's map. All I remember
is pre-Great War—their trilby hats,
those ox-blood boots and primrose spats.

Their masher eyes, macassared curls,
and ragtime ruby rings had glistened
while inner God-King-Country ears
(at all times pricked) with ardor listened
to pick up what they hankered for:
the Empire's bugles crying, "War!"

They quitted their ingenuous world
of horse trams, hansoms, stable-keepers,
of penny postage, oyster bars,
lamplighters, bootblacks, crossing-sweepers,
enamel placards artlessly
extolling cocoa, starch, and tea.

A guileless time: on twilight blinds
the idling candle shadows trembled;
the barber's fish-tail gas-jet showed
a shelf of shaving-mugs assembled,
some with an uncle's name still on
though he—and something else—had gone.

Sunbonnet girls in pinafores
still skipped; those funny men still chattered
on gramophones—but innocence
had lost its voice, no longer mattered . . .
no innocence at all since then,
never such innocence again.

HAL PORTER

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

The creekbed drums, resonates with blowflies.
Cans, cartons, sodden plastic nest
Round the stripped corpse of a kangaroo murdered.

It is an image of our new wilderness,
Sunday on motorbikes. So much for Europe,
For Literature, civility. So much for bareness

And the clean breath of aboriginal forest.
Neither the ordered world of sense and use
Nor the tangle of unpenetrated ranges—

We live between, in the blown newspapers
Of a bulldozed garbage tip at the forest edge.
And if at night the stars' miraculous

Slow wheeling passage is as clear as ever
It will not last—our pioneering spirit
Will dim them also, at the next stage of progress.

J. R. ROWLAND

Suddenly they have gone
Their rooms are empty.
A few books on bare shelves,
The walls repainted.

Knock, no one is there.
The wardrobe mirror
Gives back your bachelor face
Thirty years later.

J. R. ROWLAND

DOWN DARLING POINT ROAD

1

He was a jaunty old man in suit of grey;
His collar starched like ice, his hat aslant.
He never smiled. We saw him many a day
And knew his face and walk. He did not see
Small girls. He was a Very Important Man.
Aunt said: "Remember, that's Banjo Paterson."

2

In the naval base in Rushcutter's Bay
Lord Nelson's figurehead spies the day
Past a noticeboard at the frost-white gate
Which threatens death or more dreadful fate
To anyone who might venture in
Unauthorized. "Why, you too might be spying,"
Says father.

Our bulldog, John Bull, unable to read
Goes blundering through with expectant greed
For the sailors' food—they are always teasing
Those gullible, frightened, daughters Keesing.
"You ninnies, he's getting terribly fat,
Next time, chase him, you won't be shot,"
Says father.

3

For Christina Stead

Mr Arnold Resch walks a pale sad pug
Which snuffles. Aunt calls it "Arnold's Bug".
It is not on a lead. With a plaited whip
He taps its right shoulder
Or its left hip,
So the pug walks straight on the wide footpath
Ahead of Mr Resch. We laugh.

Mr Resch lives in a grey stone mansion;
It has battlements and gates of iron.
The Darling Point bus like a red toy tub
Drives past and toots
Mr Resch's pug
Which snuffles. Resch seems not to hear.
Aunt says he's a brewer of excellent beer.

But Patrick White has a tale that's worse.
He was marched every day by his patriot nurse
From Elizabeth Bay to that castle called *Swifts*.
At the gates of iron
Of the German's house
His nurse said "Now!" And she made him spit.
Innocence falters because of it.

NANCY KEESING

WEYMOUTH

The Manukau has many tongues of beaches and a mouth like a macrocosmic groper. Fish, gargantuan and infinitesimal, are what come to mind when one sees or thinks of the Manukau, mother of all mudflats, father of half the island's flounder breakfasts, great inward turning mouth of many tongues of beaches. One strip of grey-white sand at Weymouth is the launching place of one young fisherman whose father is important to the country's culture.

This man, father of sons and daughters, maker of stories about men and women in unremarkable, comical, tragical situations once lived with the Maori people as an adopted son and now chronicles the comedie humaine and that of the Pakeha, nervous usurper. This man's house and wife's home views through tall flax and native trees the fishing son's strip of beach and the great mist-grey reaches of the Manukau.

It would be a mistake and something like dishonesty to his subterranean or rather submarine stature to ignore the nine-tenths of unconscious iceberg of experience occluded by this frail body and wiry mind. As a religious being he accepts the omnipresent overlap of evil, only as something out of focus, crazy and unfunnily peculiar to humankind rather than to things and the whole of nature. The sour tides that overlap the porous and sucking mud where fitfully sleep the flat fish and toheroa are all a part of good to him and in extenso the spidery, bearded, priestly son.

His surest apprehensions of human evil are in the lone crazed will's saw-bladed course through other single lives or the white juggernaut of the Pakeha en masse or hiding behind the rigor of old one-sided laws. Despite this man's mild and frenetic by turns demeanor is a comical sinister

manifestation of occult monkeys, a ceaseless flood of nonsense mail that began more than a decade ago and will probably continue to amuse and embarrass him for the rest of his life and his family's. Tracts, house organs, manifestos, massive and minuscule advertisements, porn catalogues, seed catalogues, chain letters, live and dead letters, magazine subscriptions from architecture to zoology, dozens of dollars of stamps per year and all appended to a continuing welter of unsolicited mail.

And so a slightly crazy aura, a spooky something or nothing surrounds an otherwise down to earth reputation of penny-plain straightforward stories and only slightly obsessional anecdotes and adds lopsided dimensions to the slight figure and thin arms jerking and large hands making decisive gestures continuously proffering then holding back texts; the deep eyes not quite coming together in an otherwise symmetrical face, high cheekboned and narrow, with Pinocchio's fibbing nose and the bony jaws and long teeth of an old yet still adventurous terakihiki.

When I am with him the long flat stretch of the Manukau becomes world's end and I feel trepidation at the inevitability of his and my unavoidable launchings, putting out towards forever's nowhere. I would much rather walk towards the dark green hills of the Waitakeres or wait under one of the remaining pines at Ocean Beach for whatever call precedes the silencing of myself. But he will go out into his garden of high flax and flowering shrubs and point through the green at the grey and bone-white vista and watch Maui walk towards him on those waters.

BRUCE BEAVER

ROSEMARY DOBSON

A Tribute to Robert D. Fitzgerald

I welcome the opportunity to write about Robert D. Fitzgerald's collection of poetry, *Product**. For two reasons I am not attempting what would be considered a review of the book. Firstly, I choose not to write reviews of poetry; most certainly not reviews of collections by my peers. Secondly, I have read an excellent review of *Product*, and want neither to repeat, nor to avoid repeating, what was written there (H. P. Heseltine, *Meanjin*, no. 1, 1979).

It is a great pleasure, therefore, to write of *Product* as a significant and continuing part of Fitzgerald's total achievement, and pay my own deeply felt tribute to that achievement. My admiration goes back a long way — to being both sobered and elated at publication of Fitzgerald's third book, *Moonlight Acre*, which set the highest standards for such very young poets as I then was. In this collection there were established themes, pre-occupations, and characteristics which were to appear again and again in Fitzgerald's later work. More than any other Australian poet he impressed then, and impresses now, as "all-of-a-piece", totally consistent. "Essay on Memory" from *Moonlight Acre*, pre-saged the later long poems: "Heemskerck Shoals", "Fifth Day", "The Wind at Your Door", and "Between Two Tides"; works that are central to his achievement.

In *Product*, the longest poem, "One Such Morning", is a lighter poem altogether than any of the works mentioned above, being based on a single slight, amusing anecdote. Yet the same watchful craftsmanship has gone into its making. There is the same perceptible shaping and making of narrative, thought, and idea, the same call for a flexing of muscles by the reader. And

the conclusion, reached with integrity and conscientiousness, may offer little comfort; but how reassuring is its honesty:

And it is hard also to reconcile
bodily strength, mind's growth, and skills
attained
laboriously, with knowing what brief while
these are in one life's holding then distrainted.

It is typical of Fitzgerald that he has chosen for the title of this publication a single uncompromising word. But, again, how consistent this is; for a product is *made*, and the abiding impression of this poetry is that it has been worked for, experienced, earned and made. As poet and as surveyor Fitzgerald has always had respect for his tools of trade. Perhaps it should not be surprising that lyricism is rare, almost seeming a gift of chance when it occurs:

. . . like this white patch
of week-end miracle on tea-tree thatch.

So Fitzgerald wrote in "Week-end Miracle" (*This Night's Orbit*), a phrase which Douglas Stewart described in a *Bulletin* review as "positively unbridled in its restraint". In *Product* one still finds such rare brief flashes. "Movement" is a tribute of love which the poet sees as independent of time: "forty years gone and more are less/ than one breath-moment's happiness". This is a looking-back to, and a continuance of, several poems in *Moonlight Acre* which offer the same tribute.

More than all it is the vigor of thought in the poems from the first to the latest that impresses. In "Deep Within Man" and other poems from *Product* Fitzgerald makes plain the convictions that prompted him to take an active part in anti-Vietnam war protests, at a time in his life when

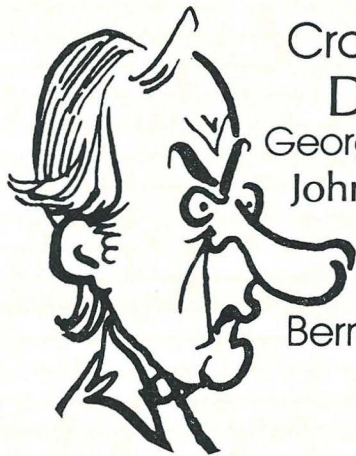
* *Product: Later Verses* by Robert D. Fitzgerald (Angus and Robertson, 1977.)

it would have been easy not to join issue. In spite of "Just Once" ("No doubt I have lived too long") it is youthfulness and energy of mind that give expression in these poems not only to love and compassion, but also to restlessness and anger.

What has driven FitzGerald is, one feels, "the chaos of man's will . . . the old pulse of unrest."

It is adventure, exploration, the pushing back of boundaries—whether of thought or in action. Though he writes of the dilemmas of others with compassion and humanity he does not compromise his own essential beliefs. I have said that I was both sobered and elated by the poetry of *Moonlight Acre*. No less am I sobered and elated by the poetry of *Product*.

Subscribe to the Australian **BOOK REVIEW**



Craig McGregor: Hayden
Don Grant: Hawke
George Munster: Drugs & Crime
John Hooker: The Mobil Book
Book Awards
Manning Clark
Bernard Smith: Pacific Dreams
Foreign Policy
Explorers



G. C. O'DONNELL

New Guinea does not Exist

Gus O'Donnell and his family walked off a sheep farm in the Riverina in the Depression, and he joined the New Guinea administration as a patrol officer in 1937. After the war he became a lecturer in colonial administration. He has lived in Sydney since 1952, has played an active role in the Australian Society of Authors, and has published a novel on New Guinea, Time Expired.

Perhaps, instead of asserting that New Guinea does not exist, I should ask the question: does New Guinea exist in our consciousness of ourselves as Australians; in our perceptions of history?

The New Guinea of which I write is half of the island that lies across Australia eighteen miles north of the most northerly of the Torres Strait islands, and was Australia's principal colony from the 1870s until independence a few years ago.

If the answer is no, New Guinea does not exist, and if the answer applies to sufficiently large groups of people, then we may have stumbled upon something of importance; and we may, it is just possible we may, exert ourselves to do something about it.

We who read this magazine and others like it, and occasionally write for them, are a coterie of literates. And as one of that coterie I am not going to challenge you to a discussion on that other question: what is history? Or even to ask you to think about objective and non-objective history; or about those divisions which some historians in the latter mode like to classify themselves — as from the working class, or with dialectic method, or from a certain philosophic ground.

What I suggest we do is stand outside ourselves and wonder whether, for example, Australia itself can be said to exist; let alone New Guinea; for large groups of people.

It may be that for very many ethnic groups of Australians the very act of migrating, of settling in a foreign country — and I do not exclude English, Scots, Welsh, Irish, Canadian or Ameri-

can migrants — denies them effective opportunities of knowing or perceiving our Australian history. The strain of discovering new patterns of living, of work, leisure and religion, and of adapting to them, is so great that only a conscious emphasis upon their own local or national history can support them.

In contrast, illustrating this idea from the other side as it were, is a story from Manus Island, Papua New Guinea. The people there, in a small group of villages on the South Coast, thought of themselves as the true Manus; and not without reason. Each village nourished a group of specialist historians, some learning and others professing the speciality. These men, four or five to a village, could establish the relationship of each man and woman to everyone else in the village, sometimes a village of a thousand persons. And not only for the present generation, but also for the past two, three or even four generations.

On the thread of their genealogies these historians could and did string together, with great oratorical skill, the beads of family happenings and public events. It was thus that the true Manus maintained their cohesion and identity. In villages where writing for the record was unknown and people were largely illiterate, these historians were a priceless repository.

In the years 1947 and 1948 in a complex social revolution, in village after village, the young men stripped their elders — the historians included — of position, place and power. Then the young men, secure in their new power, became worried. Would the historians in their anger at their demotion as elders refuse to dis-

charge their special duty as historians?

The young men need not have worried. One of the most distinguished of these historians said to me with relish, in answer to my question: "I shall go on telling my stories about what has happened in our village. And when I die other men will succeed me."

I asked a question of another historian, the late Gavin Long, war historian. I asked: "How many Australians had served in Papua and New Guinea in World War II?" Gavin Long replied that in his opinion over four hundred thousand Australians actually served in New Guinea; almost all of them men serving as soldiers in the militia and the A.I.F. For those of us to whom these figures refer, for our families and friends, New Guinea had then, and has now, a continuing reality. As soldiers and civilians alike we cannot forget our alternating hopes and fears in the months following Pearl Harbor, our near despair as the Japanese army and its navy seemed to be irresistible. Malaya — a whole British army lost with a full division of Australians — twelve thousand men; a navy lost and a great fort in Singapore; and the Dutch East Indies, all of the Dutch possessions; and Rabaul and the whole of Northern New Guinea; and Guadalcanal and all of the Solomon Islands. All lost in a few months.

And then came the heartfelt relief of the Battle of the Coral Sea, the battle that saved Australia. As the battle was being fought John Curtin, then Prime Minister, made a statement in the House of Representatives. The House and the galleries were packed. He said: "I have received a communiqué from the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces in the South West Pacific Area that a great naval engagement is proceeding there. I have no information how the engagement is proceeding . . . As I speak those who are participating are conforming to the sternest discipline, are subjecting themselves with all they have — and it may be for many of them the last full measure of their devotion — to accomplish . . ."

It was a moving speech. A call to the people by their Prime Minister, and the people heeded him.

Shortly after the Battle of the Coral Sea the Japanese tried again, this time landing troops at Milne Bay to capture the air-strip. They were defeated. It was the first time the Japanese had been defeated on land — and by Australians! They tried again to take Port Moresby, this time

across the Owen Stanleys and were beaten on the Kokoda Trail.

At the personal level, I remember that in the fourth year of war I was so weary with the strain of serving, almost always in the forward areas, that I only dared to take out my memories of my wife, to think about her, for a few minutes at a time, before I had to put her away again. I remember, too, being astonished when on the first of my two leaves my wife told me how frightened she had been for me, uncontrollably frightened, when my friends, themselves on leave, talked to her about incidents in my life. Incidents that she knew full well had happened weeks and months before.

For my generation these are events of history, but what of succeeding generations? The war in New Guinea exists for them in stories told by their mothers and fathers and in the moving and sometimes maudlin ceremonies of Anzac Day. For as we literates know we have written little history and less literature about that war.

In a paper, "Australian Attitudes to Papua New Guinea Area Since World War II" (Australian Outlook, no. 2, 1973) Don Aitkin and Edward P. Wolfers wrote: "Our survey of public opinion polls suggests strongly that during the last thirty years the Australian public has very little knowledge of the New Guinea Area and cared little about it . . . Papua New Guinea has simply not been an issue in Australian politics, and in consequence the electorate never possessed elaborated or strongly held views about it." It is as if the whole of the movement within Papua New Guinea and within Australia towards independence had not happened. That independence came as if by magic, the product of the right kind of wishful thinking; as if indeed the headlines and news reports were as truly ephemeral as they are always supposed to be.

Of course, it may be that we as a coterie should hold amongst ourselves that as Australians at large we are the best judges of what history should be, and that generally speaking if we wish to treat Papua New Guinea as if it did not exist, then we should not be criticized for doing so. This may well be so, but sometimes other people make other decisions.

In New South Wales the Modern History syllabus issued by the Board of Senior School Studies, as revised in November 1978, contains five options: Modern History from 1789, Revolution in the Modern World, Asian History, Australian History and Europe 1914-45. Only the

first three options were examined in 1979, but all five options will be examined in 1980. The option Australian History has ten sections; Aborigines, Migrants, Environment, Work, Government and Politics, Charity and Welfare, Women, Religion, Imperial and Foreign Policies and To Be an Australian. The notes on the syllabus and the bibliography confirm that for the Board of Senior School Studies and for the teachers and pupils they direct also, New Guinea does not exist.

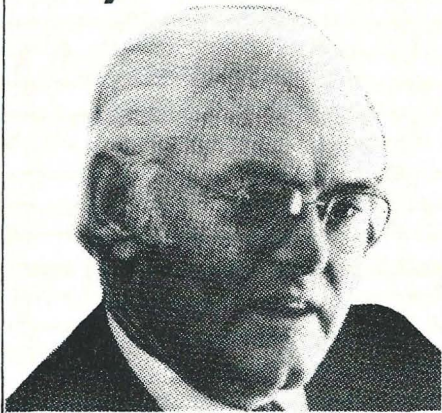
So much for the Board's choices of studies. They may be following fashion or a political idea of internationalism or even attempting to indoctrinate their students in one way or another; we do not know. What we do know is that the Board chooses. And for all of us, herein lie many difficulties and dangers. For people do like a history they can hold as their own, that they can feel is part of themselves as a people. In limited choice societies, particularly those with an ideo-

logical base, rulers choose what is or what is not history. In multi-choice societies such as our own, the question what is history supposes an assessment of many choices — made by many groups of people. It may be that limited choice societies are a popular form, as indeed they are around the world, precisely because their rulers offer their people a settled history. In multi-choice societies this is not so, and here in Australia we should rejoice in our good fortune, even if many of the choices made in our name have been made in London and Washington.

Like the true Manus we need to know what happened to us over past generations. We need to know the family happenings and public events in places like New Guinea with all its exotic separateness, and only then will we have the confidence we need to think of ourselves as the true Australians.

CHINA, COMMUNISM AND COCA-COLA

CHINA COMMUNISM AND COCA-COLA Clyde Cameron



\$14.95 hardback

- From the pen of an outstanding figure in Australian politics and former Minister in the ALP Government.

- Most books on China are written for American or English audiences. This is a book by an Australian for Australians.

- Published on the eve of his retirement from Parliament, Clyde Cameron's new book brings to bear a judgement and insight developed during his forty-five years experience of union and federal politics.

- Some of Cameron's chapters deal with ALP policy on China and Vietnam providing fascinating insights into the workings of Australian Government.

- "China, Communism and Coca-Cola" provides interesting background on the Gang of Four, the four modernisations, communes, housing, health care, travel, the breakdown of Chinese relations with Vietnam and Russia.

Published by HILL OF CONTENT.

Available from leading booksellers and newsagents.

GRACE KEEL

The Early Bulletin and Lyric Verse

Grace Keel, born 1944, has worked in the University of Sydney's Australian Literature Resource Centre. She now lives in the Snowy Mountains, studying Buddhist psychology and taking music and literacy classes.

It is popularly believed that in its first two decades the Sydney Bulletin, famous for its pug-nacious political nationalism, was just as exclusive in its literary preferences, demanding that the work of its writers should be, above all else, 'racy of the soil', if not actually 'aboriginal'. Banjo Paterson and Henry Lawson are the literary names that come most readily to the popular mind, perhaps followed by John Farrell, Will Ogilvie, Edward Dyson, W. T. Goodge and, from early this century, C. J. Dennis. Implicitly, the early Bulletin is identified with the ballad tradition of the 1890s, a tradition which is felt to be exclusively and peculiarly 'Australian'. Such a view, however, does small justice to the early Bulletin or to its editors.

A. G. Stephens, writing of "The Bulletin and Australian Verse" in the Jubilee edition of the Bulletin, 29 January 1930, noted that such a distorted view was already current. He did not approve. He felt that there was "much too much Lawson and Paterson" in the contemporary literary vista, not because Lawson and Paterson had not been good writers but because others had been as good or better. Many such writers, he said, had not written enough to make a book, many of the little books that had been compiled had "fallen out of print and publicity", and the anthologies, "striving for poetical form", did not represent these writers widely or, limited in space, did not represent fully those they included. The Bulletin, he said, had been "by virtue of contrast" a much better book than any of the volumes made from it: to concentrate on Paterson and Lawson at the expense of many writers whose work complemented or contrasted with theirs was to reduce the present generation's sense of the Bulletin's achievement.

The same is true today. Any historical, as distinct from mythological, account of the early Bulletin's contribution to Australian verse must examine seriously the lyric verse by Australian writers published there in the 1880s and 1890s. Though most of it has little appeal for the modern reader and is thus generally dismissed as 'light verse', too 'Victorian' to be taken seriously, much of it seems to have been taken very seriously indeed by the Victorians who first wrote, published or just read it.

The attitude to literature and especially poetry expressed in the early Bulletin was typical of that held by many Australian cultural commentators in the 1880s and 1890s. They were concerned with how an Australian art and literature could be fostered and customarily considered two elements: authenticity and accuracy in the depiction of landscape and life, and the degree to which the forms and conventions of foreign literary traditions could be used in accomplishing this. The Australasian of 14 August 1880 presents the typical commentator's solemn attitude to the need not only for a specifically Australian literature but also for the intellectual and aesthetic culture from which such a literature would grow:

No civilization is complete which does not include the highest elements of all — those, that is to say, tending to intellectual and aesthetic culture. And though by the necessities of the case we must in this respect be dependent on the great mother literature of the English race — the proud heritage in which we have a birthright — yet is it necessary, too, that the spirit of art and literature should come and be domiciled among us — be with us in our work, seize upon and fix,

and by doing so refine and elevate, the conditions of our life and surroundings that are specially Australian, and give the crowning grace of culture to our attainments.

This would not have been out of place in the *Bulletin* of 1880 except that that might have included French and American as well as British literature in the Australian's "proud heritage". Such a piece in fact did appear in the *Bulletin* of 19 February 1881, discussing the characteristics of a national art and concluding, obviously following Matthew Arnold, that it is the duty of all, including the state, to foster a taste for High Art so that national life and literature, which in Australia have typically been marred by purely material pressures, will be enriched. Everyone, therefore, said the *Bulletin*, will have

a part in the working out of the civilization of the future, for it must be obvious that in proportion as the aesthetic sense is cultivated and enlarged, the refining and humanizing effects of a higher civilization will be apparent.

The early *Bulletin* from time to time reprinted lyric verse by foreign writers and published comments and articles on their work. On 14 August 1880 it printed a translation of Francois Fenelon's poem "The Little Abbey of Carennac", observing that:

what Goldsmith, in his "Vicar of Wakefield" and "Deserted Village," was to his countrymen, so Fenelon, in compositions such as that . . . now given, was to the Frenchmen. For purity of sentiment and delicate beauty of language, Fenelon is unrivalled in any tongue.

In 1881 a contributor was advised by the *Bulletin* to "read Byron before you again apostrophe the ocean on paper" (May 21); readers were informed that the new edition of Mr John Payne's translation of the Poems of Villon, "the first of French sonneteers", would be ready very shortly (July 30); and the American poet Longfellow's treatment of characters and theme in his poem "Evangeline" was eulogized in an article on the Sisters of Mercy (Oct. 1). The *Bulletin* of 1881 reprinted Longfellow's new poem "Sea Music" (Jan. 22); a tiny poem in French, "Le Poete" by Victor Hugo (March 26); "The Spring of the Ocean" translated from the French of Hugo (April 9); and "The Story of a Life" by American Jean Ingelow (July 30).

In 1882 the *Bulletin* reprinted two of Oscar

Wilde's latest poetic Impressions, "Le Jardin" and "La Mer", observing them to be "full of peculiar conceits, but graven with a burin of gold for all that" (May 20). Later in the year it reprinted "Long After" and "Disillusion" by Rennell Rodd, apparently offering Wilde's observations on the work of this new English lyric poet as an expression of its own editorial opinion:

Some of these poems are as iridescent and as exquisite as a lovely fragment of Venetian glass; others, as delicate in perfect workmanship and as simple in natural motive as an etching by Whistler is, or one of those beautiful little Greek figures which, in the olive woods around Tanagra, men can still find, with the faint gilding and the fading crimson not yet fled from hair and lips and raiment; and many of them seem like one of Corot's twilights, just passing into music; for not merely in visible colour, but in sentiment also—which is the colour of poetry — may there be a kind of tone. (23 December 1882.)

In 1883 the *Bulletin* slated Australian writer Douglas Sladen's poem "Nausicaa", its chief complaint being that the poet had "copied the manner (which he has degraded into an impertinent mannerism) without having any of the matter" of William Morris. Morris, as author of *The Earthly Paradise* was, said the *Bulletin*, "a true poet, for whom we cherish a very tender feeling" (May 12). Again, on 14 July 1883 it eulogized Whitman in a long piece singularly advanced for its time: in the early 1880s neither Whitman's matter nor his manner were to the taste of the conservative majority. This fact itself may have helped endear the poet to the *Bulletin's* editors, and in the article we see the commentator's earnest attempt to go beyond Whitman's "unalluring" poesy and his "coarse crude stuff about humanity" to find those qualities considered of true value in the poet's work. The distinctive prose style of this piece suggests that it was either written by Archibald or carefully edited by him, a sign that he had a particular interest in the views expressed:

Passing the yellow-spear'd wheat,
every grain from its shroud in the dark
brown fields uprisen,
Passing the apple-tree blows of white and
pink in the orchards,
Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in
the orchards,
Night and day journeys a coffin.

This may not be very mathematical verse, but it has the rhythm of the winds murmuring in the great pine-forests about it. And in the last abrupt line one can hear the thud of the clay as it falls upon the coffin. But Walt Whitman is more than a writer of mystic runes — he is a great-hearted man, who loves his country and his countrymen, and the whole world, with an undying love.

In its leading article of 22 January 1881 Kendall was described by the *Bulletin* as “the uncrowned laureate of Australia”, a poet who, from his “first crude efforts”, could be seen to possess “a correct ear and an observant eye”, one who had developed his art to such a degree that “his life is now for ever identified with the fame and glory of his native land”. Kendall’s verse is full of the mannerisms of Tennyson, whose work he carefully studied; it not infrequently echoes Swinburne, a poet both he and Adam Lindsay Gordon are said to have found “enchanting”. This, far from being grounds for indictment, almost certainly recommended his work to the *Bulletin*’s early editors. For the *Bulletin* of the 1880s and 1890s both Tennyson and Swinburne were among the greatest English poets and greatly to be praised. Though, predictably, the “Baron Tennyson” who wrote “for lords” was seen as “only a crawling humbug”, the Tennyson who “wrote for the people . . . was a poet of genius” (22 May 1886). Swinburne occupied a place even higher than Tennyson in the *Bulletin*’s estimation at this time. He was described in the issue of 15 August 1885 as occupying

a prominent place among the best poets in the English language. Passionate, sensuous, spiritual, musical, he combines the intellectual buoyancy that gave Shelley wings with the physical force of words that gave Byron speed . . . No finer poem than his “Atalanta in Calydon” is to be found in any language, ancient or modern.

In 1894 Swinburne was still regarded by the *Bulletin* as the “most musical of English poets and the greatest living master of verses” (Jan. 6).

Kendall died in 1882 and in the same year the *Bulletin* made one of the first of its legendary literary ‘finds’, the lyric poet V. J. Daley, who thereafter wrote for it until his death in 1905. Daley’s ascendancy was heralded on 11 March 1882:

Mr Victor Daley, author of “Years Ago”, in the *Echo* of last Saturday, is the rising poet of this country. For a long time we have not had more melodious and imaginative verses from the pen of an Australian writer.

Thereafter Daley’s lyrics appeared regularly in the *Bulletin*, often two or three of them in a single issue. Even at the height of ballad fever in 1890 Daley was still for the *Bulletin* “one of the few Australian writers who are justified in styling their verse poetry” (23 August 1890). J. F. Archibald’s selection of verse for the *Bulletin*’s first book, *A Golden Shanty* (1890), is illuminating: it contains eight of Daley’s lyrics and one of his humorous poems, while Paterson has only two ballads (“Clancy” and “Old Pardon the Son of Reprieve”), Farrell (who had also been contributing since 1882) two, and Lawson’s verse is represented only by “Faces in the Street”. Daley’s verse occupies thirty-one pages of the volume, Farrell’s thirteen pages and ‘Banjo’s’ ten. Daley, then, in the *Bulletin*’s opinion was the representative poet, as opposed to the mere maker of verses.

This distinction between ‘verse’ and ‘poetry’, which appears constantly in the *Bulletin* of the 1880s and 1890s, may be illuminated by a passage in the *Bulletin*’s review of Thomas Walker’s *Bush Pilgrims and Other Poems* (28 November 1885). Walker’s verse is not admired and it is suggested that in future he would do well not to aspire to the heights of Parnassus, but to be content exploring the lower slopes of ballad verse: “It is not so steep a climb to reach the place of ballads . . . [and] on ballad levels Mr Walker may attain something.” The “ballad levels”, the levels of “verse”, were characterized in the *Bulletin* not only by bush ballads but also by politico-comic *vers de société*, among the best of which were Daley’s “Creeve Roe” poems, and, in the early 1890s, by “worker” verse which sought to inspire, through professed hatred of “Mammon” and the “tyrant’s iron heel”, a proletarian “red revolution”. “Parnassus”, on the other hand, was the realm of lyric poetry, the poetry of Swinburne and Tennyson and Kendall, of the many European and American poets whose work was reprinted in the *Bulletin* throughout the 1880s and 1890s, and of Daley.

If the *Bulletin* snaffled Daley in the early 1880s in order to grace its pages with Australian “Parnassian” poetry, it almost certainly secured A. G. Stephens in the 1890s in order to extend the Australian reader’s and writer’s familiarity with

world literature and thought. And this, of course, could not help but reinforce an already present participation in the writing of lyric poetry. Stephens had contributed a literary section very similar to his Bulletin Red Page to the Queensland Boomerang from January 1891. In it his admiration for American verse as found in contemporary American periodicals is obvious. This alone must have recommended him to J. F. Archibald, the Bulletin's editor then, for Archibald's admiration for things American, amply demonstrated by comment and recommendation in the Bulletin, was exceeded, as with Stephens himself, only by a love of things French.

At any rate Stephens moved to Sydney and became in the mid 90s the Bulletin's literary editor. From the beginning his literary criticism implicitly recommended to Australian literary aspirants the work of overseas writers. From late 1894 he wrote reviews of and comments on overseas books for sale from the Bulletin's book exchange, these being published with the book exchange lists on the Bulletin's inside front cover. From 1896, when this page became officially the Red Page, he chose verse to be reprinted there and wrote comments, reviews and articles on a wide range of literary and cultural topics. Many of his articles and reviews overtly recommended an overseas writer's work while others implied such recommendation or, at times, questioned the usefulness of a particular work as literary exemplar. Stephens obviously believed and constantly implied when he did not assert, that Australian writers must turn to foreign literatures in their search for models that would perfect their own art. On the Red Page of 25 June 1898, for instance, he denied that British literature alone could provide sufficiently diverse stimulus, asserting that:

the best prose models are in French. The strongest artistic stimuli are French. Much of the best history and philosophy is German. A little of the best poetry is Italian.

and made plain the implications of this for Australian writers:

We have the right and the duty — if we are developing a literature — to found it on the widest basis, the world wide basis. We are heirs not only to English literature, but to every other literature as well.

As part of his endeavour to keep Australian readers and writers aware of overseas literature

and current critical opinion, Stephens encouraged active participation from his readers, many of whom were also writers. There was local debate on Wilde's "Ballad of Reading Gaol", on the work of Robert Burns and of Tennyson; he published articles by Chris. Brennan on English and French poets and several views, including Brennan's, of the poet Mallarmé; he conducted competitions in which local writers were asked to translate French poems; and, in conjunction with the Bookfellow which he was also editing, ran competitions in the writing of lyric verse using the currently popular French forms villanelle, ballade and triolet. Prospective entrants in the triolet competition were advised that their entry must not only adhere to the triolet form but must also "have a distinct Australasian reference", a direction neatly in accord with the early 1880s dictum that Australian writers should both work from the best traditional models and inform these models with authentic Australian observation.

The entries published in the triolet competition included verses by Dowell O'Reilly, Frank Morton, W. H. Ogilvie and C. H. Souter. Ogilvie's presence is particularly interesting. At present he is popularly known as a balladist only, yet he was apparently considerably interested in lyric experimentation. In correspondence with Stephens he writes of having made ballades, villanelles and triolets.

Stephens' own preferences among local writers, and the critical vocabulary he used to describe their work, indicate his attitude to the relationship between narrow localism and participation in contemporary European literature. He devoted the Red Page of 15 October 1898 to his views on poetic aesthetics: following Poe, whose verse and critical writing he very much admired, he defined poetry as, above all, the expression of emotion. Then, implicitly emphasising the relevance of this universal, non-national definition to Australian verse, he ranked local poets in terms of it. Roderick Quinn, whose Celtic Renaissance flavored "The Camp Within the West", he praised as having "that glamour, that mystery, that sense of hovering on the verge of the inexpressible which is the keenest and rarest of all poetic emotions", and judged as "highest in *kind* of all Australian . . . poets". Kendall with his "rich, honeyed tone", Daley "peacocking it exquisitely in a garden of enamelled roses" and Ogilvie as lyricist each had qualities, he felt, that elevated them almost to Quinn's level.

Earlier in 1898 Stephens had hailed Daley's *At Dawn and Dusk*, the first volume by one of the Bulletin's lyricists to be published, as "the most memorable Australian literary event since the publication of Kendall and Brunton Stephens" — this despite the fact that Paterson's *The Man From Snowy River* (1895) and Lawson's *In the Days When the World Was Wide* (1896) had already been immensely successful. When Quinn's volume of lyrics *The Hidden Tide* appeared in 1899 Stephens implicitly emphasized its affinities as well as registering both his admiration of it and his willingness to present it as a representative of Australian verse, by sending a copy to W. B. Yeats. He then ceremoniously published Yeats' acknowledgement on the Red Page of 28 October 1899.

Yeats found little to say about Quinn's verse. The present-day general reader (as opposed to the literary and cultural historian) might not find much to say about the vast bulk of Australian lyric verse written here and published in and out of the Bulletin in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Yet A. G. Stephens sincerely admired much of it and felt it to be at least approaching the mainstream of contemporary lyric verse in English. Archibald, too, admired it. Randolph Bedford recalls that Archibald "often quoted Daley's 'Sunset Fantasy' and 'At the Opera' and 'Symbols'". And we have, in one of his few known extant letters, Archibald's observation to lyric poet Francis Kenna in 1896:

We have not seen any of your graceful lyrics lately. Why? Is the muse reluctant, or are you concocting an epic? Try and manage something for next Christmas number — or any number.

In the first decade of this century, following Federation, there was a concerted effort, begun outside the Bulletin but soon felt within it, to outlaw "non-Australian" elements from the work of Australian writers. The movement seems to have had its first forceful and extended expression in Vance Palmer's "An Australian National Art" published in Steele Rudd's *Magazine* of January 1905. Here Palmer had argued that Australia and its people needed a sense of national identity and that it was up to the poets and artists to help develop this. Since the individuality of the people as well as of the country itself, said Palmer, asserted itself best in the Bush, this should be a Bush art. And to be powerful enough to mould the national con-

sciousness it would best be produced not by "cultured" writers and artists but by "ardent nationalists". Though from the turn of the century there had been mutterings about the distortions caused in Australian literature by "alien eyes" and "English spectacles" it was not until Palmer's article that there was a definite suggestion that writers should abandon all non-indigenous literary models. Palmer's views gained a good deal of support from younger writers. Grant Hervey, for instance, writing in Steele Rudd's *Magazine* of February 1907, dismissed all but the most militant of Australian writers on the grounds that the poet's task was to bring about social and political reform; Louis Esson, in a letter to Bernard O'Dowd of 2 August 1910, observed:

I refuse to take seriously any book coming out of Australia that is not Australian, even aggressively Australian, full of the writer's own personal life and experience . . . Brennan, by a number of Sydney chaps, is regarded as the greatest poet in Australia. I prefer Lawson's worst ballad (and Lawson is pretty bad when he likes) to Brennan's most elaborate (and out of date, even in Paris) Symbolism.

and

I am quite certain if Wordsworth and Meredith had been brought up in this curious country they would both have humped Mathilda and mixed with shearers and Sundowners, and their work would have been full of red gums and space and sunlight and emus and magpies and dusty tracks and other provincialisms scorned by the academy . . .

Palmer's article of 1905 can be seen as the beginning of a new attitude to Australian literature among both critics and writers, an attitude which, though by no means universally held, played a significant part in channelling much of the work of the next generation, and created the conditions for the acceptance of the Nineties legend. What must be borne in mind is that by 1905 almost all the literature upon which the legend rests — Paterson's and the balladists, Lawson's and the short storyists, much of Joseph Furphy's and Bernard O'Dowd's — had already been published. Almost none of it was the product of a culturally exclusive nationalism. On the contrary, most of it was produced in a period which, while it maintained the need for just ex-

pression of the local environment, also acknowledged the need to develop literary skills and discrimination through the study of overseas models.

The early Bulletin certainly played a vital role in the development of an Australian literary tradition. It published the work of Paterson and the balladists, Lawson and the storyists, some of the work of O'Dowd, and Furphy's *Such is Life*. It also published the lyric verse of Daley,

Quinn, Brennan and a score or more of other lyricists. From a present-day vantage-point their work, too, can be seen as integral to the Australian literary tradition: that branch of it extending through Kendall before them, to Shaw Neilson, Hugh McCrae, Kenneth Slessor and others in the early years of this century and thus, via Douglas Stewart, David Campbell, Judith Wright and the elder poets of the mid-twentieth century, to the lyricists of the present day.



"What's happened to that jolly friend of yours who used to tell all those funny stories?"
"Oh, he will never do that again."
"Why! Is he dead?"
"No, married."

David Souter THE BULLETIN 1923

DAVID ADAMS

The Faded Lady?

Patricia Rolfe's history of the Sydney Bulletin

David Adams was the last editor of the Sydney Bulletin before it was taken over by Consolidated Press in 1960. Here he reviews Patricia Rolfe's THE JOURNALISTIC JAVELIN (Wildcat Press, \$23.95).

In 1929 a faded lady, well dressed, was ushered without notice into the Bulletin's "Wild Cat" office in Sydney by Jim Johnson, the one-armed telephone attendant and receptionist. She was asking for advice about her investments. I had been with the paper for two years, and was still the "wild kitten". I certainly had never been financial enough to buy shares of my own.

I was surrounded by shelves of dusty envelopes bursting with public-company balance-sheets, some dating back to 1896, and the packets were marked in many handwritings. James Edmond, S. H. Prior, H. K. Prior, "Kodak" O'Ferrall, Harold Burston, Jack (later Sir John) Williams and my reigning superior, Clyde Moyes (Edmond's son-in-law), all had a turn at starting or renewing a file.

A tattered blind shaded me from the western sun otherwise blazing into my face through the window at 214 George Street North. I sat in an old office chair that not only swivelled; through heavy usage it also rocked and rolled. (It had, in fact, been Edmond's editorial chair 20 years before.) I never felt at ease meeting even my relatively few visitors in these surroundings.

I did my awkward best for the lady. Her eyes just kept gazing at me. Then: "Mr Archibald wouldn't have treated me this way", she half-murmured. I tried to be more forthcoming. But she stood up "Mr Archibald would never have treated me like this," she declared emphatically, and out she went.

That was my first real awareness of the late Mr Archibald. He had died ten years before, had parted with the Bulletin in 1914, and ceased to be editor in 1903. My faded, elegant visitor

must have known him in those more leisurely and expansive days after he left the editorial chair and recovered from his temporary mental breakdown.

The following year, in 1930, the Bulletin had a jubilee issue celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of its founding by John Haynes and Jules Francois Archibald. Its history enthralled me. I started to know of Archibald, the incomparable sub-editor and picker of 'copy' and talent. William Macleod and Livingston Hopkins had died soon after I joined the staff. Edmond still dropped into the "Wild Cat" office and sometimes chatted. S. H. Prior I worked with; his personal interest and encouragement kept me with the paper. In 1933, shortly before he died, he asked me to go with him to Edmonds funeral.

Then, in 1950, as the fifth editor after Archibald, I arranged a seventieth anniversary issue — a Bulletin Pageant. Now, in 1980, the present proprietors have spectacularly celebrated the paper's centenary. In some ways the 1980 souvenir edition has been a toast to an absent friend, since the present-day highly prosperous and beautifully printed news-magazine shows a lively concentration on economics, politics and public affairs almost to the exclusion of the literary features, contributors' paragraphs and 'open-house' black-and-white art of the old independent "national weekly newspaper". Much of the change was inevitable, but the stories, verse and freelance art features are missed.

Another major event this centenary year has been *The Journalistic Javelin*, written by Patricia Rolfe in her own time and at her own expense, and published by Consolidated Press under its

Wildcat imprint. It is described as an illustrated history of the Bulletin, with a great array of black-and-white art from the paper's beginning.

The author has worked hard to produce the largest assembly of Bulletin information that till now has appeared in any one volume. The book stands out as a well-informed and readable narrative where it covers the paper's first twenty or thirty years. Here Miss Rolfe, like other writers, has had access to a large and annually increasing amount of contemporary comment and reference. Her exploration has been keen and productive. This Archibald period clearly appeals to her. Quotes from authorities of the time, including Lawson, Paterson, E. J. Brady and A. G. Stephens, tend to tell the story by themselves. Unfortunately for those "Aust. Lit." students occasionally referred to in the text, there are no page-by-page footnotes leading to sources, but these would have been voluminous, and intimidating to many general readers.

Apart from the literary side, more than five hundred cartoons, joke-blocks and caricatures are reproduced. It is a splendid parade, showing rather more regard for art and decoration than sense of humor. There are over forty gorgeous D. H. Souter drawings (with or without cat), but not one cheeky John Frith (fifteen years on the staff, and determined promoter of the one-line gag in the old Bulletin). There are several of Ian Gall's ornamental compositions, but nothing by Norman Hetherington ("Heth"), who drew for the Bulletin for fourteen years, including weekly page-strips, and now does the Mr Squiggle puppet series for ABC TV. Those natural, topical humorists Angus McGregor and Sid Black, who employed modern joke-block lines, are not represented. The modern joke-illustrator now limits his lines to the point of the gag. The jokes get better, the artwork simpler, or even primitive. It is warming, nevertheless, to see Ted Scorfield's humorous but anatomically perfect animals and rugged humans displayed again, as well as the superb work of the Lindsays, David Low and many others. There was an abundance of black-and-white riches from the arrival of Phil May and Hopkins in the 1880s, with a distinct falling-away in the 1920s, but a recovery later.

My deduction from both her story and the art in the *Javelin* is that the author is more interested in the smart, the urban and the decoratively domestic than in the rural and broader national political and economic scene.

Miss Rolfe mentions an agreement between Archibald and early managing-director Macleod that "no relatives" were to come into the firm, broken first when Norman Macleod was introduced. This whole matter of a 'close corporation' and later a 'family company', to be diluted somewhat by employee participation eventually, and the entry of one large outside shareholder, had a distinct bearing on the achievements and fortunes of the Bulletin.

In my own experience it allowed an independence of editorial purpose not likely to have been accepted in a public company where an annual airing of publishing results would have been required. It permitted a policy of encouraging and printing only Australian writing and art in a time when the lure of unbelievably cheap and popular syndicated material was too much for the resistance of the major newspaper and electronic conglomerates. But, apart from creating jealousies, of which I was conscious, the policy restricted the supply of new money and new business enterprise coming to the paper. No more than £5000 of cash-paid share-capital was put into the Bulletin during its first thirty-four years, and only £4000 in the next forty-six. Archibald and Macleod each took a fortune out of it.

The Priors continued the family-company principle. S. H. Prior, managing-editor, in particular extending it, in spirit, to include the whole staff as (he hoped) a happy family. Any such policy has its drawbacks. But it permitted a continuance of Australian content and encouragement of Australian aspirations. And the Priors were responsible for keeping enough money back for the Bulletin in 1931 to buy its own premises (at 252 George Street) for the first time. The building at 214 George Street North, occupied in 1896 and scene of the paper's greatest prosperity, had been owned by Macleod and Archibald personally as tenants-in-common. Perhaps they wanted as little property as possible to be available within the company should anyone be awarded damages in a libel action against it.

In a paragraph dealing with "the period between the wars and after world war two" Miss Rolfe says that "a number of people of talent were creating a magazine which was not any good". Taken literally, this seems to mean that in the period mentioned, 1919 to 1960, all the Prior-competition novels, all the short-stories that have found their way into books, all the verse, the Red Page, the Henning letters, all

the cartoons (including those by Lindsay and Scorfield) as well as all the political and economic writing of the period would have been better dropped into the Bulletin's celebrated waste-paper basket. They certainly were all part of this "magazine" which was "not any good". Covering a span of forty-one years, this is censure indeed. It is simply all too bad to be true.

Dealing apparently with the last decade of this period the author again comments: "All the same, it is difficult to see any single buyer [of the Bulletin], except a bored lunatic or someone on a long, slow train journey, reading more than 10 to 15 percent of its contents". (Even near the end of 1960 the average net weekly circulation of the Bulletin was 28,887.)

Then, acknowledging managing-director H. K. Prior's founding of the *Woman's Mirror* (in 1924), which "within a year" had "the highest circulation of any weekly in the country", she says, among some arguable things, that it is probable he "was not highly intelligent". Really! As one of Jane Austen's characters might have said, in deferential awe: "Such loftiness! Such condescension!" Are we to have IQ's mandatory in future biographies and *Who's Who* entries?

Concerning my letter to Norman Lindsay in 1958 terminating what he preferred to call his retainer of £800 a year, Miss Rolfe tells part of the story as it is related by his biographer, John Hetherington, and mentions a short, dictated typewritten note. I do not have a copy of my letter of twenty-two years ago, but I had thought I typed it myself; I disclosed in it the Bulletin's problems more frankly (if briefly) than to any member of the staff in Sydney. In Hetherington's opinion "the drawings and articles he [Lindsay] supplied after choosing semi-retirement [ten years before] did not justify such a salary when the Bulletin was fighting for its life and had not paid a dividend since 1955". In the Rolfe version Lindsay has now become "churlishly sacked".

The story, like hearsay, is building-up with repetition. But it might be mentioned that Norman, through his wife Rose, still held the 3600 shares he began with (they would have been worth £12,000 in the takeover). This was several times more than the holding of any of the remaining staff (other than the Priors) who, according to Patricia Rolfe (she joined the Bulletin in 1961), departed in a procession "within some months" of the takeover by Consolidated

Press. Nothing appears to have been churlish about these departures.

The *Javelin* contends that the old Bulletin, in its declining years, had little direct competition. But in discussing the decline in Bulletin sales it totally omits mention of television. For forty years the dailies had been creeping into the cartoon field. They now had catty and newsy financial pages, with daily instead of weekly topicality. In both fields, particularly after 1940, they took men trained by the Bulletin, finding it relatively easy to pay them star salaries; and we did not have the capital to finance glossy colour printing so much demanded by advertisers. Then came competition from TV. The electronic media largely took the place of printed periodical entertainment. Television also shook the cinema, the theatre and the dailies. All over the world weeklies and monthlies began to disappear — even, ultimately, the mighty Saturday *Evening Post*.

In spite of its impending fate, the Bulletin admittedly could have been bigger and brighter if it had had more paper. More artwork, more stories and verse, more special features, probably more serials. Even more finance. There was actually a world shortage of paper for ten years after the war. But there was another factor: the delay in raising the price of the Bulletin from sixpence to a shilling while there was still overfull employment and buoyant spending-power. I nagged for an increase, but it took five or six years to get.

When Consolidated Press took-over the Bulletin company in 1960 it paid £3 7s. 6d. each for the 124,000 £1 shares. We had, during the preceding decade, spent about £75,000 on new machinery, but income continued to fall and costs to rise. We were running short of money. Looking back, David McNicoll said in this year's souvenir Bulletin: "The struggle to keep afloat was gallant, but doomed." That suggested gut-feeling for the old paper, even though in his other comments he seemed to have forgotten that "one-liner gags" had been the rule in it for a quarter of a century before 1960.

To answer adequately Patricia Rolfe's censorious chapter based on Archibald's prophecy that the Bulletin would become "a dull old man" would require the writing of another history.

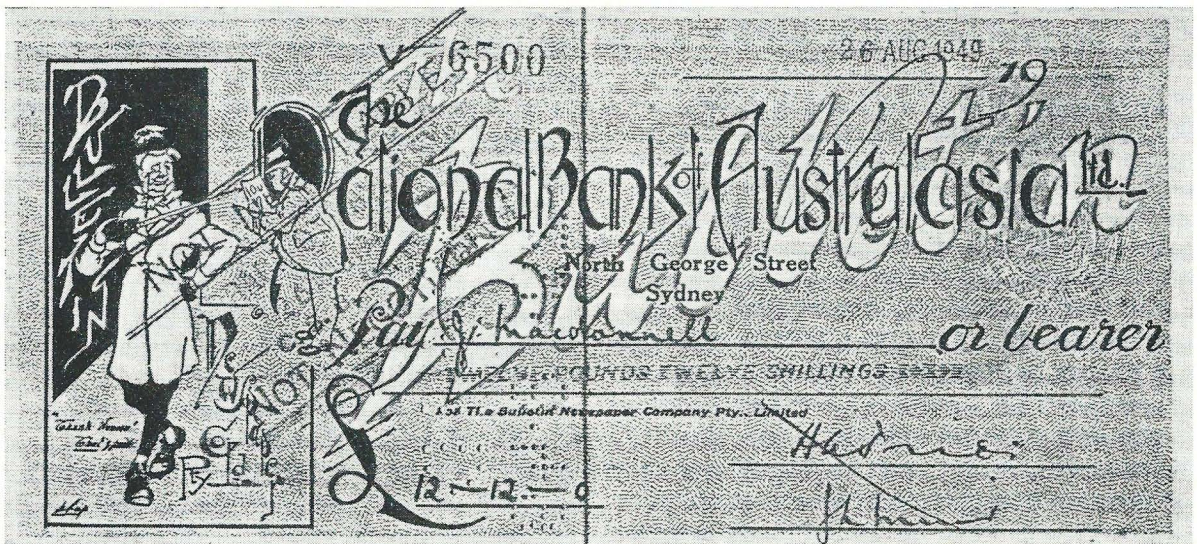
What is really needed is a several-volume anthology, including editorial matter, contributed paragraphs and topical verse as well as the traditional short-stories, serious verse and black-

and-white art, covering the whole period of Australian literary content. Edmond's wit, for example, sparkles brighter in his everyday work than in his short stories. And many short pars. from readers have made contributions to our idiom and national humor.

A couple of errors in the *Javelin* need mentioning. I was not "out of the country" when the takeover negotiations in 1960 switched from Murdoch to Packer. I was at Bowral, in N.S.W., and was kept informed by phone. And on the old Bulletin cheque-form the Micawber depicted by "Hop" is exclaiming "Thank Heaven *That's* paid!" (not "Thank goodness . . ."). Further, I believe Archibald's home in Darling Point was

"Beaucliffe", not "Roseville".

I find peaceful coexistence with Patricia Rolfe much easier in the earlier history. On the matter of the whereabouts of the Bulletin's first premises she correctly says that the Scandinavian Hall, which housed the first makeshift office, became the Tivoli theatre, then adds, "about where the Imperial Arcade is now." More precisely, the Tivoli theatre later became the Embassy theatre of recent memory, and what had been 107 Castlereagh Street, Sydney, in 1880 is now number 79. In or behind the area occupied at present by Percy Marks, the jeweller, is where Archibald for five months edited the fluttering young paper and helped set-up the type.



"Thank Heaven that's paid"
A Bulletin cheque designed by Livingston Hopkins.

ERIC IRVIN

Breaking the Silence

Eric Irvin contributed poetry to the Bulletin during the literary editorship of Douglas Stewart, and is well-known as a historian of the theatre.

What is translation? The obvious answer is: The rendering of a piece of writing from one language into another; or, as the dictionary has it, "turning from Greek, etc., into English, etc." The rub lies in the word "turning." Is translation meant to be literal or free, explanation or evocation? Must *chien* in French be translated "dog" in English, or is it equally correct to use any one of the many variants such as hound, cur, poodle, mongrel, canine, and so on?

The answers to these questions are influenced by such things as "for whom is the translation meant?", and "how is it to be used?"

"Translations," George Steiner noted, "range from those which traduce to those which transfigure."¹ The opening lines of Schiller's play, *Maria Stuart*, are: "Was macht Ihr, Sir? Welch neue Dreistigkeit! Zurück von diesem Schrank!" In a successful American translation these lines have been rendered: "What is this, Sir? More of your insolence? Hands off that cabinet!"² The literary purist recoils, but the stage producer sees in this version, from its opening to its close, a spare and therefore easily played and understood drama.

Who is right? Is either necessarily right or wrong? These questions the experts argue. And from all their arguments and discussions comes at least one inescapable fact: that translators, and particularly translators of poetry, tread a heavily-mined field. As a result, some produce what could be called parasitic versions, work which is partly their own translation and partly the result of influences exerted on them by the work of other translators; some produce imitations, and some what could be described as interpretations.

Many translators are hamstrung right from the start by such a dictum as: "You cannot hope for the purity of the original because if you want that, there's the original — if you can read it, fine; if you can't, then you get the second best; and at the best, a translation is a second best . . ."³ Others say that translation is not even an inexact science. Yet others stand by the "rules" long ago laid down by Dryden:

Whether most translators are aware of it or not, their alleged rules tend to fall within the scope of the categories established by Dryden three centuries ago. Here they are: *metaphrase* (word for word, line for line); *paraphrase* (the sense strictly preserved, the words not), *imitation* (free re-creation inspired by only "hints" in the original)!⁴

No one has yet been either daring or silly enough to say any particular way is the only way.

For many years now I have read poetry in translation, which I regard as one of the best ways there is of understanding what, for want of a better term, we call foreigners. French, German, Polish, Italian, Spanish, and Chinese poems will reveal their secrets if the poems fall into the hands of a good translator. With German, French, and Chinese poetry particularly it is possible to get hold of four or five different translations of the one poem. We can thus look through the several different windows these open on to "foreign" poems. Sometimes the result is not a translation at all, but what is called a poem incited to a poem, or an "imitation." Dryden described imitations as "the greatest wrong which can be done to the memory and

reputation of the dead.” But here I, and possibly hundreds of other readers, judge by results than by dogma. I would far rather have a good poem in English based on the foreign-language original, than a flat-footed near-hit in a prose version, or a halting metrical version. In any event, when it comes to translations we must take what we can, where we can.

Who would forego, for instance, the ineffable pleasure of reading Zbigniew Herbert’s “A Parable of King Midas,” his “Parable of the Russian Emigres,” or his “Elegy of Fortinbras” as translated by Czeslaw Milosz and Peter Dale Scott, even though some purists or literalists hint at what they say are shortcomings in the English versions? Who would forego Michael Hamburger’s translations from the German poets, or Robert Bly and James Wright’s versions of Pablo Neruda’s poems? There is no doubt that without translations of one kind or another most of us would, as George Steiner has said, “live in arrogant parishes bordered by silence.”

What are we in Australia doing to probe the silence out there? Need we be so ignorant of others as we are? Must we continue in our arrogant assumption that only the English-speaking peoples are the ones who matter?

Some few years ago I read in a book on Chinese literature the story of a poem about a hermit. He was so poor he had barely enough to eat, and the seagulls were his sole companions. When he walked from his cave by the sea they followed him, and would rise or settle at his command. The Emperor heard of this, and demanded that the hermit and the birds be brought to him so that he could see for himself how the hermit controlled them, and so that they in turn could see magnificence. The visit was a fiasco, for neither birds nor hermit were impressed by the Emperor’s splendor. On reading this I immediately felt how easily the story would “fit” as a poem. A former poem incited to a poem! I wrote it thus:

No Jade-Cloud Furs,
pearl Crown
or Dragon Robes
wait at home.
Only a cave,
a candle,
a fire for rice.
Down by the lake
bright clouds
of seagulls
drift and melt
at my feet.
The Great Lord said:
Bring me the birds
that they may see
true majesty.
Why should I frighten
seagulls
with a thought?

Some may say of this: “Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee! Thou art translated.” Others, perhaps more perceptive, may see beneath the surface and call to mind the final stanza of “A Parable of King Midas”:

We will drink a little
and philosophize a little
and perhaps we both
who are made of blood and illusion
will finally free ourselves
from the oppressive levity of appearance.⁵

¹ *The Penguin Book of Modern Verse Translation*. Introduced and edited by George Steiner. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth 1966.

² Schiller, *Mary Stuart, a Tragedy*. A new, unabridged translation with an introduction by Sophie Wilkins. Barron’s Educational Series, Inc., New York 1959.

³ Louis Untermeyer, quoted in *The Translation of Poetry*. Published for the Library of Congress by the Gertrude Clarke Whittall Poetry and Literature Fund, Washington 1972.

⁴ Lewis Galantiers, quoted in *The World of Translation*. Papers delivered at the conference on Literary Translation held in New York City in May 1970 under the auspices of P.E.N. American Center, New York 1971.

⁵ *Selected Poems*, by Zbigniew Herbert, translated by Czeslaw Milosz and Peter Dale Scott. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth 1968.

FRANK R. BYRNES

Back to Childhood

*By sports like these are all their cares beguil'd,
The sports of children satisfy the child.*

Oliver Goldsmith: "The Traveller".

Born in Orange and a fourth-generation Australian, Frank Byrnes was for many years a classics master in New South Wales secondary schools. He retired in 1971.

The world of children's games is not what it used to be. It has fallen apart and all the king's horses and all the king's men never can put it together again. Rarely now do children have to go small game hunting to fill in the next half-hour: they have caught the fox and put him in a box and they spend much of their time either watching him or imitating his doings. It was different when we were children sixty years ago. No radio, no television, not even a record player until our childhood was virtually over.

We lived in a country town on the Lachlan River; like the Mother Bear it was "of medium size"; it had a population of perhaps 7,000 people at that time. (Everything is relative; a few years ago I visited a town in Italy which had been described to me as "a small place", and it proved to have a population of more than 40,000!) Ours was the Land of Lots of Time. No need for daylight saving then; the days were longer than they have ever been since. And it was the era before the Space Age, when there was still plenty of space on this planet and especially in our particular corner of it. As far as we were concerned every year was the Year of the Child. With our friends from the neighborhood we seemed to be motivated by the American ideal of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (as though happiness was something to be run down and taken into custody). In the environment of home we were encouraged to read, to have hobbies, to play music and to pray. There were specific times for some of these activities, and sometimes I found it frustrating not to be allowed to go out and join the gang until I had done my piano practice, or

earned my Saturday afternoon matinee money by doing some chore or other; but in later years I reaped dividends a thousand-fold.

The house itself was surrounded by as many delightful resorts as the Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan. We could look over our side fence into an engineering works. Engines of any kind have an attraction for boys and periodically I decided that one day I would be an engineer. Alongside the works was a bakery. Many a morning I scaled our fence to buy a loaf of bread warm from the oven and would linger to watch the bakers in their queer white caps, pounding the dough or putting it into tins of various shapes, or moving the tins around in the huge oven with their long-handled wands. The smell of new-baked bread must surely be one of the most delicious sensations that life affords — especially at breakfast time; so, not surprisingly, there were times when I speculated whether it wouldn't be better to become a baker.

About a block down the street was a vacant allotment known as "The Buttercups" from the small yellow flowers which grew there abundantly. Here we played our versions of football and cricket with local rules adapted to teams of varying numbers. But a more universally popular game was Cockylorum since no equipment was needed, age was no barrier and there was no limit to the number who could play. The more the merrier. Several 'catchers' stood in mid-field, and the rest ran back and forth from one end to the other. All who were caught became additional catchers, until there were no runners left. Then the game began anew.

Just across from our home was Lawrence's

blacksmith shop, the only building in the block on that side of the street. Every afternoon about five o'clock old Mr Lawrence went through his ritual of fastening the door of his ramshackle smithy with a padlock and chain, before riding off on his piebald pony. This procedure always fascinated us, since it was possible to walk through the holes in the walls of the smithy in several places without the trouble of opening the door. There was nothing inside except a forge and a bellows and sundry tongs and hammers. The owner's departure was our cue to rally to the stretch of fine sand adjoining his shop; it was about ten or twelve metres long and some four metres wide. How it came to be there was a mystery; it was never used for anything and it remained there for years.

Here at "The Sand" we played such games as No Time for Standing, Cock-fighting, and See Fly Do It. The essence of No Time for Standing was simply that anyone on his feet became a target for everyone else to pull down, but since most of those trying to pull him down were standing up also, the game soon devolved into a general *mêlée* and seldom lasted long. In the rush of the modern world, adults nowadays seem to be engaged in a variation of this game called No Time for Standing Still.

Cock-fighting consisted of two bigger boys each carrying a smaller boy on his back as a 'jockey'. The aim was for one jockey to dislodge his rival or else cause the opposition team to collapse altogether. Several of these contests might be going on at the same time. The name probably had some connection with the old idea of being "Cock of the walk". It was a game in which shirts were wisely removed before operations began.

In See Fly Do It there was a leader called "Fly" who nominated various athletic tasks for the rest to perform. Generally the early tasks were easy enough for everyone to do and gradually harder ones were nominated. Anyone who failed a task was 'out'. However, at any stage a player who felt a task was beyond him could elect to See Fly Do It. If "Fly" succeeded, the challenger was 'out' without a chance to attempt the task; if "Fly" failed, he was 'out', and a new game began with the successful challenger as "Fly".

We went further afield for other pleasures. Right at the top of our street, only about half a mile away, was "The Hill". It dominated the town and from its crest could be seen practically all

the world we knew. Its rocky outcrops and grassy gullies were ideal for playing Cowboys and Indians or make-believe exploring (actually we knew every square foot of it). Apart from its nearness, it was in itself a magic place with a many-sided fascination. There was the fascination of grisly horror in the rock cleft where the murderer, according to legend, had once concealed his blood-stained saddle. There was the fascination of fear in the great purple rock-lizards that scuttled into the crevices of the huge rocks — wasn't it a well-known fact that, if one of them bit you, the wound would break out afresh every year at the precise time of the original bite? There was the fascination of challenge in the gaudy black-and-yellow banded goanna emitting his wheezy-hissing sound as he climbed a tree trunk in quest of birds' eggs. Who would be game to go close enough to prod him with a long stick and then run for safety? There was the fascination of forbidden fruit in the long sloping rock that served as a slippery-dip. Even with the protection of a hessian bag, a boy's trousers were not always left undamaged — they were likely to be "a seat of work" for somebody and so the aftermath at home occasionally proved unpleasant. Yet that did not lessen the appeal of 'The Hill'. Even when our early childhood was behind us it remained a magnetic and wonderful place.

We sometimes played war games, but I do not remember that we played them very often, apart from the rare "clod fight" from "trenches" a safe distance apart, the only danger being dust in the eyes from an exploding "clod shell". The Great War filled up a vital part of my childhood: I was nearly nine when it ended. Yet I remember only a few details about it, and mainly the night we received word it had ended. It is astounding what catastrophic events the mind can forget, and what trivialities it retains. I suppose we were too engrossed in our own games to pay much regard to the mass-murder games that adults were playing. Wars between cowboys and Indians were far more appealing.

It was through the pines towards the river that we went on our paper chases, those intermittent boyhood excursions into the realms of Tally-ho. We would devote several hours to tearing old newspapers into small pieces for the two 'hares' to cram into their shoulder-slung sugar-bags, so that they could leave a thin trail for the 'hounds' to follow. They laid, of course, any number of false offshoots to bamboozle and delay the pursuers. (The word 'pollution' had

not then swum into our ken nor into the public conscience). The 'hares' received about a quarter of an hour's start. When their paper ran out, they left the sugar-bags to indicate the end of the trail, and headed for home by the shortest route. The 'hounds' brought the bags back, as proof that they had been to the end of the trail and had not doubled back. The 'hares' were seldom caught, but often they were sighted before they got home, and sometimes the finish was exciting.

This was an activity everyone enjoyed, and more so as it occurred only rarely. It was also an excellent exercise for sharpening the appetite. Not that any outside stimulus was needed for that. In spite of all we ate at home, we seemed to have a perpetual hunger. Sometimes it could be appeased at little cost. We might buy from the corner-store grocer "a penn'orth of broken biscuits". The age of packaged food had not yet arrived, and housewives would not accept broken biscuits, so sometimes we obtained a liberal supply. Or we might buy from the fruiterer (now we call him the greengrocer) "a penn'orth of specks", for there was little sale for specked fruit, either, except at bargain prices for cooking. If these sources failed, we could peel cow-thistles and eat the white pith; or nibble marshmallow buttons or the monkey nuts from pine cones (now they sell these in health-food shops); or suck the gum excrescence we found on wattle trees (a cheap form of chewing-gum). Blackberries were like manna from heaven; clean mushrooms could be peeled and eaten raw; and privately-owned fruit trees overhanging the fence were helpful in season, or slightly in advance of it.

Before we were old enough to go swimming at "The Rocks" or fishing at "The Willows", we were restricted to "The Creek." This was quite useless for swimming or fishing, but there were a few pools where we could go crayfishing with a piece of string and a lump of chuck steak. The crayfish, dark green or black, varied in length from about two to seven inches. We always called them "crayfish" or "craydabs" — the term "yabbies" did not reach our neck of the creek until a few years later, and I always thought it was of city origin.

Crayfishing, like all our activities, was an expensive pastime. Even the steak cost nothing — the butcher would "chuck in" a lump for the cat! We used a billy-can or a large tin for a landing-net; or even put on a show of bravado by using our bare hands. This required a

nice exercise in judgment. Crayfish move fastest by projecting themselves backwards, but they cannot use their claws against an attack from the rear. So the meat had to be drawn smoothly upwards until it was about eight or nine inches below the surface. If it was brought any closer to the top, the quarry would spear itself backwards with a flip of its tail to the bottom of the pool. While one hand held the string steady, the other hand had to be brought around cautiously under water so as to seize the crayfish from behind and imprison both its claws. But distances are deceptive when you are looking into water; and sometimes, when only one claw was secured, the free claw would nip the inept hand quite sharply. Therefore, when the crayfish was seen to be an extra large one, we often had second thoughts and decided to use the billy-can after all.

The crayfish we caught were put into a kerosene-tin of water to keep them safe. Then as dusk began to fall, we would empty them back into the pool so that they would be there for us to catch another time! Simple days, simple ways. None of us liked them well enough to carry them all the way home — more than a mile — and cook them. So after concealing our kerosene tin somewhere nearby, we would troop home, a hungry band of wayfarers, as the mopoke was intoning his two-note farewell to the day.

During the hot summer months the creek sometimes dried up altogether. Then the small carp would join the crayfish in their mud holes in the creek bed, and all would remain there till the replenishing rains came, when they would re-emerge, seemingly none the worse for their waterless siesta. Small fish could be scooped out of the pools when the water got very low. I kept about a dozen of these in an old drum at home, changing the water several times a week, and feeding them each day with a handful of uncooked oatmeal. They lived for years. I recall only two of them dying. These were given a "fish" funeral: a Log Cabin tobacco tin served as the coffin: it was filled with water and the deceased was placed in it and buried with full fish honors in a corner of our yard.

There were other boyhood games that came in their seasonal sequence. This did not correspond with the four seasons of the year, nor with any particular dates: the transition from one game to the next seemed to be the result

of some divine intuition or mental telepathy. Judging from the reports of such men as train drivers and commercial travellers, the same thing happened simultaneously in various towns all over the state. One day boys everywhere would be spinning their tops, then virtually overnight tops would be "Out" and a different game would be "In".

The most popular pastime, and the one of longest duration, was marbles, a game so universal that it needs no introduction. After marbles came cards, which we played with the picture cards that came in packets of cigarettes. Any man seen opening a new packet (no women smoked on the street in those days) was likely to be rushed by one or more boys with the request "Can I have the card, Mister?" In the game itself, each player staked the agreed number of cards, and then the players "pinked" for order of play by flipping a card towards a wall a couple of metres away (often the width of a footpath). The card nearest the wall won first turn. Its owner threw all the cards high in the air, and they had to spin over and over like pennies in a Two-up game. A card which did not spin could be thrown again. Cards which landed face up belonged to the thrower. The next player then threw the remaining cards and took his winnings, and when all the cards had been won, the players decided how many cards would be "Up" (staked) in the next game, and pinked again.

Each player had his good-luck ritual for throwing the cards. Some players held them all face up; others held them face down; the shrewd divided them into two equal groups and held these face to face, or back to back, to try to ensure that at least half of them landed the right way up. But all was vanity and chance: sometimes all the cards fell face down and left the thrower lamenting; sometimes he won the lot and the opponents did not get a throw.

After cards came tops. Each player staked one or two tops, and these were placed in the centre of a ring (as for marbles). The players in turn threw another top from its winding cord, endeavouring to knock the stacked tops out of the ring. The thrown top had to spin, and it could itself be lost and placed with the other stakes if it "died" inside the ring. Hence it was a common practice to use a special top for throwing, one in which the sharp metal peg had been replaced by an ordinary screw. Such a top, spinning on the flat screw-head, would run clear of the ring instead of boring into the

ground in one spot. Of course, many boys got their enjoyment simply from spinning their tops, much as modern Yo-Yo players do. One aim was to see who could keep his top spinning the longest; another aim was to get the top spinning so perfectly on a hard surface that it seemed to be motionless: it was then said to be "asleep".

After tops came buttons. The object here was to throw the stakes into a hole about two inches in diameter from a distance of about two yards. The buttons which went into the hole belonged to the thrower; the remaining buttons had to be flipped, from where they came to rest, into the hole from the back of the player's hand with the forefinger of the other hand. If his opponent could span from the hole to the button in three spans, the thrower had only one flip at it; this was called a "nick". Otherwise he had two flips, called "a nick and a fill". As soon as a player failed in a "button-holing" attempt, the next player gathered up the buttons that were left and had his turn. When a boy had lost all his stakes he was said to be "mucked". (This term was used in all games.) It was not unknown for a player to wrench a button from his shirt or trousers to stay in the game. The season for buttons was thus relatively short — the supply of buttons that could be obtained, one way or another, was limited.

The town itself provided occasional diversions "to beguile the lazy time with some delight". We might join the spectators in the vacant allotment in the main street behind the hoardings on which coming attractions at the picture show were advertised. Here somebody might be exploiting the thimble-and-pea game; or using a sledge hammer to break a block of sandstone on his companion's chest; or making a political speech amid much heckling; or trying to sell cigarettes or other merchandise at bargain prices; or it might be just two schoolboys having a fist fight and settling some old score once and for all.

Sometimes we paused to listen to some street busker playing his violin or cornet outside one of the hotels. Now and then a bystander would give a shilling or two to have a request number played; and although the buskers never used any music, rarely were they unable to play the tune requested. At other times it might be a well-known Aboriginal identity who made periodical visits to the town, a bare-footed song-and-dance man known to everyone simply as "Old Marvellous". He would perform his chant-and-dance ritual at street corners for the few pence that watchers might throw to him; and at every

pause in his performance he would grin happily at the onlookers and say "I Marvellous!" He never uttered any other English words than this two-word formula, although people would often ask him questions and try to get him to answer. Boys often followed him along the street, like those that mocked Old Shylock in Venice, calling out "You Marvellous", and parodying his dance. He never showed a trace of annoyance or resentment. Perhaps his routines were once part of some genuine tribal ceremonial, centuries old.

Frequently we made a detour to watch the one-man cordial-works in operation. The machine worked open to view, but was railed off at a safe distance from spectators. It filled about a dozen bottles at a time with Lemonade, Orange, Kola or Creaming Soda, depending on

which of the four cordials was currently in production. Unhappily, the proprietor was not a generous man in dispensing free samples to thirsty boys who had no money. Therefore we approved the spectacle when every once in a while a bottle would explode from the pressure of gas being forced into it. Having seen this happen a couple of times, we could, with a more cheerful acceptance of the justice of things, resume our homeward trek from school. For, of course, we did go to school. Looking back I find it hard to credit that it was there we spent most of our time! There, too, we laid the foundations of what our future life would be, though at the time we did not fully appreciate this. Like Mark Twain, we were reluctant to let our schooling interfere too much with our education.



BOYS

I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas

ARNOLD ZABLE

I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas was a very popular radio tune that year, the year of *Cottage by the Sea*, 1954. And when I hear that song, I see red and black, I see Captain Freckles and Deputy Crewcut, and I see smiling matrons lying through their teeth.

Until that 'holiday' my universe had been the inner suburbs of Melbourne. Carlton was the centre of that universe. There were distinct boundaries to this urban world. On one edge stood the Melbourne General Cemetery, a vast field of tombstones, decaying flowers and buried spirits. We would sometimes roam far enough afield to squeeze through a gap in the cast iron fence that surrounded this vast burial ground, and we would run around, dodging graves, trying to find the oldest tombstones with ancient dates, or watch ladies clad in black silently weep as they put down their wreaths of flowers.

Older village kids took me on excursions to another horizon, Merri Creek, where they caught yabbies, dangling pieces of meat at the end of strings. In another direction the horizon stretched as far as the Edinburgh Gardens, where greying men and women played bowls in dazzling white flannels, the giant black bowls curving noiselessly along freshly cut grass . . .

It had been decided, at the local state school, that I, a seven-year old third grader, was to have the privilege of a holiday, three weeks at *The Cottage by the Sea* in Queenscliff, a chance to go far beyond my small urban universe.

I dimly remember saying goodbye to my parents at Spencer Street station, clutching my luggage as I boarded. I remember a long journey with strangers, an evening bus ride, the sound of waves, and eventually the scent of fresh white sheets on a bed that stood beside many other identical beds in a long dormitory. And I clearly remember early mornings, the sound and smell of

breakfast being prepared, and that wretched song, I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas, coming from the kitchen radio, sung in a wailing spoilt child voice. The kind of voice some people call cute.

Red hair and freckles was the leader of the pack. His ten-year old deputy had sandy yellow hair which suited crew-cuts so well. I see red hair, freckles and short-cropped yellow crew-cuts when I hear that song. And I see red and black.

There were, I think, a few reasonable days at the outset of this three-week adventure in foreign parts. Walks along the Queenscliff shoreline, gazing out at the mysterious wreck that was welded tightly to a rock about a mile offshore, playing among old dungeons half buried in the sand and undergrowth, cobwebbed slabs of cracked grey concrete. And always that vast sea, opening up a world that I had rarely glimpsed until that time.

But somehow, within the first few days, I started to become, in the eyes of the others, a wog boy. When this notion eventually became a permanent label, I don't quite remember. But once it became an established fact life was no longer quite the same at *The Cottage by the Sea*.

Captain Freckles displayed his poetic talents. He created a very popular song which became a runaway hit at *The Cottage*. A very catchy refrain:

Rice and Sago,
The dirty Dago.

This short succinct chorus was sung to the backing of knives and forks banging on the table at meal times. Captain Freckles and Deputy Crewcut took it in turns to conduct the heavenly choir. I had the honor of having a song, specially

dedicated to me, to serenade me as I ate my rice and sago.

Old dungeons, ship wrecks, an increasingly menacing sea, I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas, Captain Freckles and Deputy Crewcut, all became a regular part of my day at The Cottage. But the nights were different, always the clean fresh sheets that could be stretched over my head as I snuggled up, preparing myself for a very different trip. I took astral journeys back to Carlton. Back to the cobbled lane that led to the backyard of our house. Back to the recent winter's nights when the special long-awaited moment arrived to light up the large wood stove in the kitchen, to roast potatoes, and sit by the glow of flickering fires, watching the flames lick up the pieces of wood that fed the blaze.

The mornings brought me back to The Cottage, to the banging of knives and forks, and eventually to that special day when I was to see red and black. It began with a game of kiss chasy, a game with the simplest of rules. Boy chases girl, catches her, struggles with her until he is able to kiss her. Then it is her turn to chase one of the boys and extract a kiss. Any participation of a wog boy in such games was, of course, out of the question.

So wog boy hung around, watched the game, stared at the wreck offshore, thought about friends back home in that distant village called Carlton.

The game of kiss chase had come to a temporary halt. Captain Freckles had called his pack together into a huddle. They talked and laughed and pointed in my direction. The Captain came over to me, and told that they had decided I could play after all. There was excitement in their eyes. But as yet I could not perceive the true colors of that episode. I was glad to be playing. Very happy about it in fact, especially when a girl began to chase me. I ran and dodged and allowed her to come within reach. She caught me.

Yes, she caught me — and spat in my face. They all stood around, laughing.

They began to chant.

Rice and Sago, the dirty Dago.

She caught me — and spat in my face.

Suddenly I leapt at Captain Freckles. I clawed at him, I scratched and kicked and punched and pushed him to the ground and began to throttle him with my hands around his neck. And all that time, as I pounded him in my fury, I saw vivid red and black bolts of color streaking before my eyes, and I throttled him harder and harder, my hands tightening around his freckled neck. Someone was tugging at my shoulder, trying to drag me off him, but I kept throttling and seing shafts of red and black light. Someone was screaming, "You are trying to kill that boy", shaking me and screaming "YOU ARE TRYING TO KILL THAT BOY". The face of head matron came into focus. The colors melted. The anger drained out of my body, and I was led into the office of head matron.

"Look at his neck, look at that red mark. You were trying to strangle him. Why? Answer me you insolent boy. Don't just stand there. You were trying to kill him. You really were. I've never seen anything like this in all my years here. You were trying to kill him. Why? You wicked child. Why?"

There were no explanations given that day. A sentence was handed down. I was to spend a day in coventry, and I was no longer allowed to participate in the Sunday afternoon parties, when Auntie Dot would lead a singalong of Christmas carols and other songs from the good book, whilst the children had special serves of ice cream.

But there were compensations. Somehow, after that episode, Captain Freckles, Deputy Crewcut and the rest of the gang never recited that lyrical chorus again. They kept a respectful distance. I was left quite alone, free to wander back to my distant village.

I arrived, at last, back to Spencer Street. My father was there to pick me up. He asked head matron how I had behaved myself. "He was a very nice boy", I heard her say, "very well behaved". I checked up on that fact yesterday, before I was to write this final paragraph. My aging father confirmed it. It's true. That is what head matron said. I am a very well behaved boy. Amazing. Perhaps I'll get a hippopotamus for Christmas.

books

PORT PHILLIP PIONEERS

P. L. Brown

J. W. Powling: *Port Fairy — the first fifty years* (Heinemann, \$27.50).
Paul de Serville: *Port Phillip Gentlemen* (Oxford, \$27.50).

Days Before History, a nursery-schoolroom treatise, went from Geelong to Corio in 1913-14, accompanied by a print showing Roman soldiers constructing Hadrian's Wall with the forced labor of tribesmen whose brethren still attacked it.

In one's holly-and-ivy pre-and-primary school-days, Port Fairy seemed as far off, the perpetually sunset goal of a week-beginning train, crowded with commercial travellers, which halted at endless stations booming with clanging milkcans at least as far as Terang, one's furthest west. It was startling to learn from the Midgley and Skilbeck diaries, fifty years later, that the writers' first four children, born at Koroit, died as infants through want of milk caused by lack of cows.

Port Phillip was near and visible, but only as a projection of Geelong's Neapolitan mirror, or later as the expanse from which, beyond J. L. Cuthbertson's "windswept Avalon", the *Edina* (of old familiar to Port Fairy) steamed almost daily at lunchtime towards Geelong, often on sunny days seeming to float through a mirage backed by the then unencumbered cliffs of Point Henry. Atlases often printed "Port Phillip Bay" but nobody mentioned the contrast with "Port Jackson", or suggested a hangover from Victoria's Port Phillip District days. The distinction must have been innate, as natural as to a small boy the application of 'gentlemen' (in quiet confidential moments) to kind, clever, and humorous seniors like Don Black, at fifteen a champion

gymnast, whose practice equipment was glimpsed in the Mount Noorat shrubbery during that holiday visit which disclosed ostriches and yielded guinea pigs.

Now equally attractive books present both Port Fairy and Port Phillip gentlemen. Besides kindred titles and themes, same price, and same printers, they share the physical attributes of logical arrangement, plentiful apt illustration, convenient length and size, and — unevenly — scholarly apparatus. Their authors, divided in age by a generation, both write with charm and depth on significant subjects. For current literary feasts they offer stimulating courses: Mr. Powling's well-seasoned casserole of social history, blessed by the RLS echoes of Dr. Overland's foreword; Mr. de Serville's pavlova of special quality, decked by the art of designer Alison Forbes.

PORT FAIRY

The bay's European name was bestowed when it sheltered Fairy, a whaling cutter, or perhaps a satellite: which and when both uncertain; possibly 1810, possibly 1828. But the Port Fairy township — the oldest coastal settlement between Geelong and Portland — owes its unusual origin to the brief aberration of Lord John Russell's provision for the sale of Port Phillip District crown lands in detached special surveys of eight square miles at £5120, or a pound an acre. This induced action from some of the partly expatriate Protestant group, variously remarkable for initiative, talent, breeding, and fleeting wealth, which Mr. de Serville (himself an Old Xaverian) kindly distinguishes as the Irish Ascendancy. In 1843, a former army officer, James Atkinson from Antrim, based on Sydney, gained title to eight square miles within a stone's throw of the bay, across the Moyne river. By leasehold concentration, he established a private town, over-stamped "Bel-fast" until 1887.

Mr. Powling holds Atkinson's parchment grant, and related documents. No one was better placed to record the first half century of Port Fairy. As its third-generation solicitor, he inherited a legal practice which, with his reputation as a long-serving churchman, and the Dickensian atmosphere of his office, equipped him with the trust of the local community, and supplied the means and incentives for detached research. A visitor, sent to him for details of Port Fairy's celebrated marram grass planting, noted his many books, and also his comment: "A man can't go off to Melbourne every time he needs a good library." That was before the closing of the rail link with Warrnambool.

His text of some 300 pages covers a tributary district which includes the supposed location of the 'mahogany ship', and the Farnham special survey (one of two acquired by William Rutledge, "King of Port Fairy", another colonial sprig of the Irish Ascendancy) between Tower Hill and the sea. It consists of thirty chapters, judiciously grouped in five parts. These focus on initial settlement, early development and administration, post-gold progress and problems, a decade of gradual eclipse, and fifteen years of adjustment culminating in the final disposal of the Atkinson survey, jubilee celebrations, and the coming of the railway in 1890. "But now that the trains no longer run," he writes, "it is quite pathetic to read the speeches . . . All the high hopes so eloquently expressed have come to nought. The iron horse was . . . to prove a Trojan horse." Still, he makes no complaint against government-founded Warrnambool at this point, but merely suggests that Port Fairy was thwarted by central bureaucracy, and soon ends: "It has grown quietly into modern times . . . Luck may have been on our side after all."

Although it ignores black-and-white relations, Mr. Powling's work seems otherwise comprehensive. It makes connected sense of the snippets of information contained, for example, in *Letters from Victorian Pioneers* and Boldrewood's *Old Melbourne Memories*, and is immensely superior to the commendable *History of Port Fairy* (1896), rushed through in about six weeks by William Earle, the town's stonemason-mayor. One of Powling's achievements (his great grandfather arrived with John Griffiths' whalers) is to sort out and illuminate the various pioneers contemporary with Boldrewood (T. A. Browne). Another — perhaps his chief aim — is to upset Earle's verdict that James Atkinson's survey policy stultified local development. A third is his full account of "Ter-

rible Billy" Rutledge, a man whose commercial failure staggered the community, but whose character evoked a memorial tablet which declares the love and respect of the district.

This story of old Port Fairy is well told and well articulated, its workaday joints unobtrusive. Don't be put off in the very first chapter by the erroneous account of J. H. Wedge, which seems to be drawn from Earle, perhaps through Miss Grace Tyers in Victorian Historical Magazine, no. 47. Refuse to be dismayed at the statement in chapter four that W. J. T. Clarke "of course" obtained an 1841 special survey. The list on p. 31 of ten such surveys should be compared with the eight described at p. 101 of *VHM* no. 38, and with the seven detailed at p. 195 of *Kerr's Melbourne Almanac*, 1842. Both Ernest Scott, *VHM*, and Kerr reproduce a memorandum of an unsatisfied special survey order "purchased by P. W. Flower, Esq., of Sydney"; but neither's list mentions Atkinson. The second Rutledge survey fails to appear because it had not been located when Kerr published in May 1842. Powling suggests that Atkinson was considerably involved with "the big Sydney merchants, Flower, Salting & Co., the partners in which were Philip William Flower, of London", &c. (p. 30). It seems reasonable to deduce that the survey reserved for Flower became the Belfast one. Clarke bought under section 15 of the Australian Land Sales Act, 1842.

Mistakes occur in the best drafts, and may be missed through lack of thorough revision. More interesting than the foregoing comment, because research is needed to clear the matter, is Powling's apparent grafting of a crown grant on to a squatting licence (p. 28). At points like these his credibility falters through lack of explicit references. It seems likely that his library failed to furnish him with the first series of Dr. Watson's *Historical Records*. But where is the Sherlock Holmes on the Sydney-side, to follow up the assurance in volume 17 of a compensatory land grant to Atkinson? Where also is confirmation of Mr. Powling's statement (p. 29) that Atkinson must have been at Port Fairy in 1840, because he was made a magistrate for the district in that year? Not in Kerr's list of resident Port Phillip magistrates, published in 1841.

Mr. Powling knows most of his on-stage characters well, and notes the off-stage performances of minor figures. Thus he mentions Michael Connolly, partner with John Griffiths, as a former member of the Port Phillip Association, and records his death and burial. On the other hand, Nicholas McCann is sent off squatting at p. 23,

without any reference to his quick switch to Geelong, where as a successful stonemason he trained the founder of Australian Portland Cement Ltd.—his son Peter, born in 1828, the man responsible for the graphic record (p. 5) of the impression made by the great Port Fairy forest upon his scarcely teen-age self.

Yet Port Fairy's old inhabitants are so familiar to Powling that sometimes he overlooks their influence on general history. Thus he mentions only incidentally that the versatile Captain John Mason (whose description of the 'mahogany ship', as seen in 1846, appeared in the Melbourne Argus on All Fools' Day, 1876, when he was actuary of the Belfast Savings Bank—a description often quoted, from Earle in 1896 to Edmund Gill in 1976) had only a John Gilpin captain's ticket.

This book accords with the Midgley and Skilbeck diaries edited by Harry McCorkell in 1967. Neither seems likely to become irrelevant.

PORT PHILLIP GENTLEMEN

Mr. de Serville's book also belongs to this class, but it has a different origin. McCorkell and Powling both began where they were. So did de Serville; but his normal setting was Melbourne. He lived among notable libraries, and developed his theme from his M.A. thesis. The foundation was his interest in genealogy, which led to his present editorship of Ancestor, the Genealogical Society of Victoria's quarterly. In 1974 he gained background through achieving the first revision of Billis & Kenyon's *Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip*. This task introduced him to the dominant forces in local society before 1850-51, when Victoria quickly evolved from the Port Phillip District of New South Wales. His inclination and experience suggested de Serville's subject; but neither geography nor documents restricted it. He had to set limits himself, and chose arguably artificial but substantially practical ones.

"When Adam delved and Eve span . . .?" de Serville answered that question by using heraldry to define his title and range. His book is concerned with the few hundred early comers who set the prevailing tone during the romantic phase of the Port Phillip District's development, but who as a body lost leadership when tested by squatting economics and post-gold politics. Seven fully annotated chapters, supported by eight appendixes, an exhaustive bibliography, and a full index, quarter the factual ground; yet Mr. de Serville suggests (p. 27) that this group of cultured colonists might have passed beyond his-

torical reckoning had not Martin Boyd, a descendant, memorialized it in *The Montforts* (1928) and succeeding books.

De Serville does not seek to revive the Boyd or H. H. Richardson novel. His task has been to present, with full documentation, a representative picture of the gentlemen of Port Phillip and their style of life. Thus in his opening chapter, borrowing from Thomas McCombie, their first local historian, he describes them in general as a "most unfortunate set of colonists" (p. 16), then discusses the chief sources of information about them, before, from p. 35, he devotes the twenty pages of his second chapter to discussing their manners and morals, particularly the struggle for social standing which tended to overwhelm most of the gentlemen born.

Next comes a description of life within the recognized pale of 'good society', headed by C. J. La Trobe, whose "position was awkward and unsatisfactory" (p. 55). In this chapter, at p. 59, de Serville seems to have trusted too much to Georgiana McCrae's recollections. This at least is certain: George Smythe was a surveyor; in February 1841 his brother Henry married P. W. Welsh's sister-in-law at Launceston, and on 1 March arrived at Melbourne with her, her brother Aeneas Allan, and her sister Margaret Welsh (and child), to resume as government surveyor at Geelong.

A slight misquotation of Fyans by omissions (p. 84) slightly mars chapter 4, "The Gentleman Squatter", a discerning even-handed essay which clearly distinguishes the successful but voteless squatters of the bush far beyond Melbourne from the enfranchised freeholders, usually of less financial substance, who with professional citizens founded the Melbourne Club. In between were the gentlemen larrikins of the squatter 'mobs' from relatively close districts, most of them hardy youngsters from literate backgrounds who in the early stages relieved monotony by high jinks in town. "What could happen to young squatters who scorned the rules and order of good society . . . was touched upon by their fervent critic, J. P. Fawcner," writes de Serville, who quotes a JPF passage (p. 92), then comments: "The dogs bark, but the caravan moves on."

From Boldrewood, E. M. Curr, Henry Kingsley, and other describers of the squatting class, de Serville proceeds to mention its interest in hunting, then in his fifth chapter discusses the rules of honor which gentlemen tried to observe in their colonial environment, and finds the duel popular. "One obvious cause," he observes, "was

the general quarrelsomeness of the settlement . . . One suspects that men were far touchier about their rank in Port Phillip, where their origins and unbringing were unknown, that at home, where their position in local society was established."

The duel, however (so often farcical, or a practical joke) could be avoided by recourse to a private arbitration known as a court of honor, and of course most disputes could involve courts of law. Mr. de Serville presents examples of these encounters, and also of the contention between correspondents in the infant press.

His sixth and seventh chapters discuss the basis of colonial gentility (whether blood, merit, or money), and the decline of the pioneer gentry in what had become Victoria. He quotes as their best epitaph (p. 166) a description of the Port Phillip essence which the widow of Sir William Stawell (both being born members of the 'Irish Ascendancy') ascribed to her mother, Anne Griffith, the wife of Lt. William Pomeroy Greene, R.N., who arrived with her husband and children in 1842: "I can give you a happy life now, and there is no time like the present. Things are exceptional in Australia, we have brought our manners, our education, and our individuality with us, but left conventionality behind."

Perforce, heraldic convention governed de Serville in his selection of gentry. The first three appendixes in his book of 256 pages begin at p. 171 and respectively list: "Gentlemen by Birth" (from titled, landed or armigerous families—155, including several ladies); "Gentlemen in Society" (by profession, commission, or upbringing—247, of whom 50 are also recorded in the third appendix, and a few in the first); "Colonists Claiming Gentle Birth" (but probably not all in capitals, since their claims have not been established, and less than half of the 116 were "members of good society").

There is also repetition in the fourth and fifth appendixes: "Club Members" (4), "Magistrates and Committees" (5). From these authoritative heights de Serville descends to the contested ground of society's detailed exposure in "Duels, Challenges, Horsewhippings and Courts of Honour" (appendix 6). "A Select List of Insolvents" (50), and "Necrology"—the death-year of each of 67 persons—appropriately complete this section.

The first of these two books, although supported by local and other archives, is inspired by the on-site involvement of a fourth generation

family. The second commemorates a defunct society through records well handled by a perceptive student alert for future ignorance. The difference between the two, making one seem to mirror the country study, the other the city library, may be the difference between the correction of proofs from the common printers, who could be called 'almost faultless' if judged by Mr. de Serville's book, but censured as 'slightly slipshod' if judged by Mr. Powling's.

Surviving technical slips are few, however. But de Serville probably scanned his work so intently that at least once he failed to see the obvious, and ascribed to J. H. Belcher the functions of his younger brother, G. F. Often the outcome of too much close application to diverse sources, such mistakes may mean a succession of fiddling changes in a close-knit work. Another slight error is de Serville's 'and' (p. 181) which makes George Duncan Mercer, rather than his father, a member of the Port Phillip Association. For present needs, *Port Phillip Gentlemen* may seem overweighted, despite its pleasant style. But *Port Fairy* and it are twin beacons for benighted historians. In complementary ways, they emphasize Maeterlinck's pointer towards the bluebird of happiness.

Philip Brown, who is 76 and lives in Geelong, is one of the most distinguished living Australian historians. He is especially noted for his editorship of the eight volumes in the Clyde Company Papers series, a project that occupied him for some forty years.

REALISM vs. SYMBOLISM

L. A. C. Dobrez

Chris Wallace-Crabbe: *Toil and Spin: Two directions in modern poetry* (Hutchinson, \$9.95).

Wallace Stevens' jar in Tennessee had a simple but essential function. Without it Tennessee existed as undifferentiated flux, shapeless, spaceless. With it, Tennessee came into its own, a landscape converging on an alien object. The jar, by its very otherness, established the presence of the natural world around it—it in a way *created* Tennessee. Extending the parable to Stevens' poem we could say that its function is analogous to that of the jar since it is unlike anything else in the world, its effect is to bring the rest of the world into focus, like Sartrean consciousness

which, by distinguishing itself from objects around it, defines both itself and its objective setting. The difficulty of modern art is that, again and again, it is forced to begin from scratch, to assert what Stephen Dedalus would have termed its integrity, its separateness, and, in the same act, to give shape to the world about it. In short, modern art, and poetry in particular, is not unlike that jar in Tennessee. Looking at the same thing from another angle: the modern poet finds himself in the predicament of wanting to tell the truth—in a way that everyone will understand. The more he tries to be understood, the less he tells the truth; the more he tries to tell the truth, the less he is understood. It is, of course, possible to reconcile these aims, even in an age of division and dualisms. Chris Wallace-Crabbe suggests that some modern poets manage it in their best work. But for the most part it seems the artist is precariously poised somewhere between that household word, the Man from Snowy River, and the city of Dioce whose terraces are the color of stars.

Toil and Spin sets out to examine the tensions in twentieth-century poetry, tensions which originate in nineteenth-century trends towards realism on the one hand and symbolism on the other. For Chris Wallace-Crabbe these diverse cultural approaches emerge in modern poetry as conflicting but not mutually exclusive tendencies. The poet may opt for unselfconscious, direct speech, for a popular audience. In that case his concern will be for simplicity, for a public stance, for a poetry in touch with the realities of the world outside the mind. Or again, he may opt for a more personal, even élitist approach, turning his attention to the formal element in art. Now his emphasis will be on style, on the word, on the affirmation of an inner world whose elusive truths demand subtle and complex means of expression. Broadly, then, the choice is between toiling and spinning, terms which I assume carry connotations of honest factory labor on the one hand and the introverted activity of the aesthete's studio on the other. However, Chris Wallace-Crabbe is anxious to avoid crude dichotomies and oversimplification. Surveying the field of American, Australian, English and Irish poetry, he suggests Hardy, Paterson, Randall Jarrell, Bruce Dawe and Judith Wright as examples of the public voice, and Slessor, Pound, Lowell and Elizabeth Bishop as examples of the private; writers like Yeats and Auden belong to both camps. And indeed all of these and other poets are discussed in terms of individual talent, the aim being not simply to categorize but to indicate various possibilities

open to art in the twentieth century. In particular the book aims to explore the situation of the more experimental poet. Here it proposes two sets of extreme alternatives, the constructivist-expressionist and the élitist-popular. The constructivist is the cool craftsman, someone who *assembles*, like Pound with his city of Dioce and the Possum and Ben and la Clara hanging by the heels in Milan. The expressionist, like Crane or Francis Webb or Rilke, *transforms* the brute matter at his disposal. Thus we have Pound as constructivist/élitist and William Carlos Williams as constructivist/popular; Rilke as expressionist/élitist and Whitman or Lawrence as expressionist/popular. Still, Chris Wallace-Crabbe does not force his categories on the reader. His terminology is fluid and the effect is not one of jargon. In fact *Toil and Spin*, while it proposes large views on modern poetry, is for the most part absorbed in the analysis of particular poems.

Some of these analyses are especially attractive. This is very much a poet's criticism of poetry, lightly and sensitively done, impressionistic in the best sense: a kind of Heidelberg Berthe Morisot. It is also appreciative criticism, able to discriminate between good and bad poetry without being ungenerous. Of course most readers will question the choice of poets and poems in one way or another and some will disagree with particular judgements. I don't believe that Hardy is at all central to the development of English poetry, in spite of the case that has been made; I would give more credit to the Beats as a cultural phenomenon than Chris Wallace-Crabbe does; I am less impressed than he is by some of Bruce Dawe's poems. But then the book's analysis of poems like "The Voice" or "Former Beauties" undeniably shows Hardy to advantage; comments on Ginsberg indirectly give the Beats their due; and the discussion of poems like "The Rock Thrower" or "Public Library, Melbourne" certainly helps the sceptic towards an appreciation of Dawe's work. Chris Wallace-Crabbe is possibly at his best tracking down an evasive Auden, but many chapters of *Toil and Spin* offer convincing portraits of poets: Paterson, running—or riding—too fast to think or feel (and nicely contrasted with Kipling); Jarrell, gulping cold water from the pump of life, and, in "90 North", proclaiming his fine wintry manifesto; Lowell combining the private and the public voice in his response to the Cuban crisis in "Fall, 1961". There is also an illuminating discussion of American verse in what Chris Wallace-Crabbe terms the Poe and the Whitman traditions, the traditions of "closed"

and "open" forms, and a comparison of American and Australian poetry (whose point is weakened, however, by the choice of rather slight poems as examples).

Toil and Spin has a thesis, and each of its chapters deals with one or another aspect of the dualism in modern poetry. At the same time Chris Wallace-Crabbe does not set out to develop an argument but rather offers a series of reflections centred on a broad theme. Within this loose framework, we move easily from Wordsworth to Wilbur, Paterson to Plath. Often the quotations are so good that it is tempting to say with the author: "One doesn't want to make fancy critical comments on this poem. I just feel like saying, 'That's life. That's how it is. How does he know it so well?'" (53). Still, the commentary is there as well, and it does its job tactfully, with a minimum of toil or spin.

Livio Dobrez teaches in the Department of English at the Australian National University.

CLASSICAL VOICES SAYING YES

John McLaren

R. F. Brissenden: *The Whale in Darkness* (ANU Press, \$9.95).

J. J. Bray: *Poems 1972-79* (ANU Press, \$9.50).

Two new books of poetry by poets who are each in living touch with the Greek and Roman classics, and who have each made their reputations in professions outside poetry, tempt the reviewer to engage in easy generalizations about the gentile tradition of poetry as a pastime, about poetry as the ornament of the civilized man, about the well-wrought verse which stands in such elegant contrast to the rough-hewn rush of words that stands for poetry in this hectic age. However, although there is an element of truth in these generalizations in relation to these books, they would miss the point if offered as a judgement.

Certainly Bray and Brissenden write from a background which has been formed, at least in part, by the classics, but this background provides a vantage point from which to view the present time, not an escape from it. In each case, moreover, their poetry is given an edge by their engagement with the world. Theirs is not poetry of tranquillity, but the poetry which gathers strength ready for a fresh assault on living.

The affinity of the two poets is only that—they occupy not identical but neighbouring territories

against the common classical background. Bray's sympathies, however, would appear to be with the eighteenth century, whereas Brissenden, scholar of that century, is in his poetry a romantic.

Like his eighteenth century forbears, Bray writes a public poetry, drawing its strength from the tradition which gives it its forms, but its passion from his identification with struggling humanity.

The tradition enables him to view these struggles with a detachment which can vary from pride to wry amusement. Thus the opening poem is a peal of praise to Prometheus and all who have followed him in his determination "never to submit to Zeus" or to his generations of tyrannical followers. Yet the praise is effective because of the low key, matter-of-fact manner in which he describes the people in the theatre of Epidaurus, the progress of the play, and the culmination when the whole audience rises "clapping and cheering and shouting", to the consternation of the colonel's minions. Then there is Bray's quiet conclusion:

But I left with high steps, for the moment
convinced of two propositions,
Propositions I had always hoped and sometimes
believed to be true,
One concerning the power of the arts, one concerning
the nature of man.

As he says in a translation from Callimachus, "I detest heroic poems, strained out in grandiose modes." This avoidance of the grandiose gives precisely the right touch to his poem of heroism.

At the other end of his scale is the wry irony of his story, "some distance after" Ovid, of Iphis, brought up as a boy to placate a stern father, and miraculously changed into one on the day of his marriage by the intervention of the gods. Again, there is his variation on "Paradise Lost", in which Adam refuses—at first—to yield to Eve's temptation. The poem has all the delight of the unexpected, yet still shares with certain mediaeval heretics an insight into the human condition.

In Bray's poetry, the classics provide, as it were, a standard by which to judge the contemporary. For Brissenden, they represent an unchanging measure of human aspiration and fate.

Whereas Bray is absorbed by the subterfuges with which men try to cheat death, Brissenden, the romantic, invokes the ways we forget it, and the ways we enter into it—actually and vicariously. This book is in part a book of travel, in

part a book of love, and always a book of exploration.

The opening poem gives us the key:

Life burns toward the light—or is it light
That draws all living things? It is the world
We know that turns: but our blood feels the sun
Still lift at dawn with each new day that springs;
Our hearts move with the moon and stars that
wheel

Above our heads; our bones stir with their tides.

He is not, however, carried away with the romantic fallacy that we can be at one with nature—his poetry celebrates the offerings given at random by nature whereby we enter into ourselves, and those which for the moment take us beyond ourselves.

Brissenden's Indonesian poems are masterpieces of economy, capturing just what can be said of an exotic environment, with its images of love and oppression, without ever slipping into the colonialist trap of exploiting the exotic for its own sake. By contrast, the Greek poems restore the human to the mythical, as well as celebrating his own middle-aged odyssey.

Throughout the book, as with Bray in his very different way, we have the sense of an unillusioned poet "saying yes to life". Both books make life more worth the affirmation.

TEACHER IN INDONESIA

Charles Coppel

Shirley Deane: *Ambon, Island of Spices* (Murray, \$21).

Australians who have been lucky enough to experience living in Indonesia with its unique blend of excitement, enchantment, frustration and discomfort will find this book nostalgic, as I did, although I have never been near Ambon. For other Australians it should be required reading. The popular image of Indonesia, mediated through a press which finds only politics and war newsworthy, is foaled by the Yellow Peril out of East Timor. Shirley Deane reminds us, with humor and sympathy, that not all Indonesians are the same, that they share a common humanity with us, but that there are, nonetheless, important cultural differences between them and us. This is *not* to say that she preaches or glosses over the darker sides of Indonesian life. She simply tells it as it was for a volunteer teacher of English at a remote provincial university in eastern Indonesia.

She is, moreover, a superb storyteller with a gift for picking the revealing anecdote. One stands out in my memory. On her way home from the university one day, her bus grazed a child who had run on to the road. Although it was none of his fault, the driver fled into the jungle pursued by local people with machetes and rocks. The child was left unattended on the road, bleeding and crying. The passengers stampeded with panic to get out of the bus, breaking one of the author's toes in the process. They had good reason. "Not all the men had chased the driver. Some had remained behind to kill the bus. And in minutes they had destroyed it, attacking it with a concentrated ferocity which was appalling to watch. Soon it was just a flattened pile of metal and four slashed tyres." When she volunteered a statement exonerating the driver, the police were amazed (it was apparently an unprecedented event) and her landlord was appalled. By supporting the driver, she had automatically become the enemy of the child's relatives, and if the child died her life would be in danger too. Fortunately the child recovered and Shirley Deane never had to pay a bus fare in Ambon again.

Few of her stories are so horrific. She is wonderfully sensitive to the distinctive flavor of Indonesian life: the absence of privacy ("Where are you going? how old are you? are you married? how many children do you have?"), the incongruities (the Catholic boat anchoring off a small island at 1.30 in the morning, its siren blasting and the public address system loudly playing "Ave Maria" to announce their arrival while the Moslem captain played a powerful searchlight on the shore), the bizarre (the practically-minded witches from Ceram who fly on sago leaves across to Ambon very early in the morning to do their shopping because the market there is better) and the entrancing (Ernest, the head of the English department, dragging her from her bed to show her a flower come into bloom on the stroke of midnight which would only bloom once in a decade, then cutting it off and presenting it to her so that she could enjoy its six hours of life).

She writes with perception of the relationships between Moslems and Christians, and of the different ways in which individuals try to reconcile *adat* (the network of customs and traditions of the area) and modernity. She obviously learned much from her students and colleagues. The warmth of the affection she received from them is evident in the moving description she gives of the farewell party given in her honor.

Altogether, it is a book to treasure even if the historian in me rebels at the suggestion that the Portuguese had been trading for spices in the area for a hundred years or so before the beginning of the 16th century; a hundred years before Vasco da Gama or Magellan?

Charles Coppel is Senior Lecturer in Indonesian and Malayan Studies at the University of Melbourne.

BALANCING CROWN AND PEOPLE

A. G. Austin

S. G. Foster: *Colonial Improver: Edward Deas Thomson 1806-1879* (Melbourne University Press, \$15).

What a splendid title for a splendid book! In this slim volume the author has not only achieved his main objective of assessing the significance of his subject's contribution to Australian society, but has also provided us with valuable pen portraits of all the N.S.W. governors from Bourke to Denison. Working on a canvas as restricted as Ruth Knight's in *Illiberal Liberal*, Robert Lowe in *New South Wales 1842-1850*, Foster, too, has managed to give us a comprehensive view of colonial society.

His story starts ill enough, for here it appears is a perfect example of a Scotsman 'on the make', but once he was settled in N.S.W. (as the result of patronage) Thomson began to show his more attractive qualities. Appointed initially as clerk of the councils, though he was soon to become Colonial Secretary, he quickly found that a man of education and ability was forced to assume more and more responsibility for the running of things; this, in turn, meant putting himself above faction or party and seeking to do the public will. In short by becoming a colonial improver he was becoming a colonial public servant. And this in an age when there were no examples to follow.

His career is very similar to that of another colonial improver in Victoria — George William Rusden. Arriving in that colony in 1851 as Clerk of the Executive Council he soon became Clerk of the Parliaments, the governors' confidant and, at various times, member of a board on the leasing of land on the goldfields, a member of the Committee for Houseless Immigrants, temporary head of the Auditor-General's Department, the Immigration Department, and a Commissioner for National Education. Apparently there was no

limit to the range of opportunities for such a man. But Rusden survived all this and died peacefully in his bed in South Yarra at the age of 84; and Thomson after an equally busy and exhausting life died peacefully in his bed aged 80.

In the meantime his central concern, as Colonial Secretary, during the 1840s and 1850s, had been to strike a balance between the governors' necessity to serve the Crown and his to serve the true interests of the colonists. Allowing for the personalities of Bourke, Gipps, FitzRoy and Denison his ability to achieve this balance must be regarded as making him worthy of the title of "colonial improver".

A. G. Austin is Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of Melbourne. His work in educational history is well known. He lives at Airey's Inlet, Victoria.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Recent publications which, in the editor's opinion, are of special interest, but which there is no space to review in full.

John Cargher (ed.): *Melodies and Memories: The Autobiography of Nellie Melba* (Macmillan, \$16.95). Melba's autobiography, first published in 1925, is a great piece of self-puffery, but with many anecdotes throwing light on her personality and her times. It should be read if possible side-by-side with Beverley Nichols' acidic novel on Melba, *Evensong* (1932), if you can get hold of a copy. Nichols also ghosted this autobiography, the chief merit of which is John Cargher's crisp and informed introduction and notes. Most enjoyable.

Alexander Hasluck (ed.): *Audrey Tennyson's Vice-Regal Days* (National Library, \$21.50). Letters home, 1899-1903, by the wife of Lord Tennyson (the poet's son), successively Governor of South Australia and acting Governor-General of Australia. An admirable introduction and notes add greatly to this spirited period-piece, throwing much light on the colonial values of the day.

Lloyd Davies: *Past Master and other Stories* (Artlook, PO Box 6026, Hay Street East, W.A. 6000, \$5.25). The author is an old friend of, and contributor to, this magazine. This is a volume of deft and amusing anecdotal short stories relating to Lloyd Davies' practice at the West Australian

bar, and they reflect his sympathy with the underdog and wide forensic experience.

Allan Morris: *Rich River* (Neptune Press, 41 Shackleton Street, Belmont, Victoria 3216, \$8.95). Nearly thirty years ago Allan Morris, a teacher, found a great mass of records relating to the Murray River steamboat trade and produced the first edition of this book. He then wrote about his discoveries in early Overlands. This much enlarged edition is the third well-merited one.

Hugh Anderson (ed.): *Charles Thatcher's Gold-Diggers' Songbook* (Red Rooster Press, 13 Fernhill Street, Ascot Vale, Melbourne, \$9.50). Forty songs with music of the famous "goldfields minstrel". Hugh Anderson has worked for decades on this fascinating character, and has published a biography of him. Much work has gone into matching words and tunes in this collection.

Nancy Cato: *The Noosa Story* (Jacaranda Press, \$9.95). An affectionate local history of a Queens-

land coastal township. What raises this extensively-illustrated book to uniqueness is that the author turns her local history, in the second part of the book, into a scathing attack on local greed and the incapacity of local administration. A case study in how to bugger-up Australia.

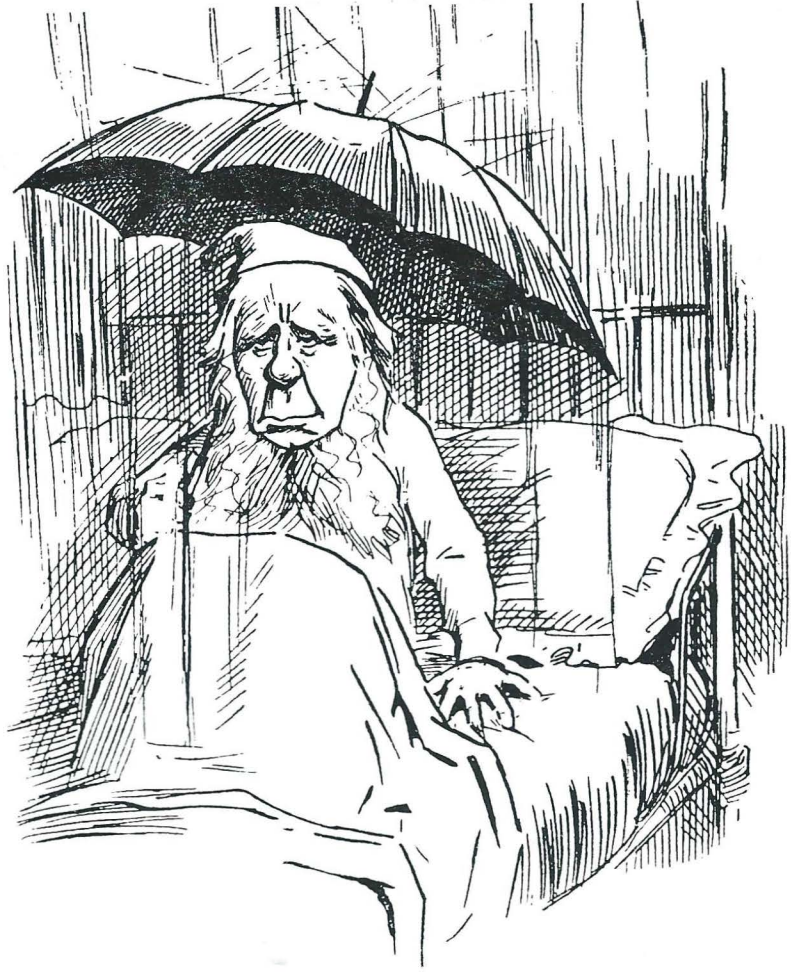
David Martin: *I Rhyme my Time* (Jacaranda, \$8.95). A selection of David Martin's most popular and accessible poems, put together in a beautifully produced and inexpensive book especially for young people—but, with Robert Ingpen's sensitive drawings, likely to appeal to readers of any age.

Veliko Micunovic: *Moscow Diary* (Chatto & Windus, \$41.75). The diary of the Yugoslav ambassador in Moscow during the Khrushchev regime, and one of the most important of all source-books on recent Soviet history. A remarkable insight into the shifting decision-making processes at work in the Soviet Union, and a good story as well.

floating fund

STEPHEN MURRAY-SMITH writes: A preliminary estimate (pending a full accountant's report) suggests that Overland lost about \$5000 in last year's operations. Certainly we don't have enough in the kitty at the moment to pay either printer or writers for our last issue, though we are expecting an overdue grant which should help to clean that up. All the same, it's a knife-edge we tread, and always have, so there is no question at all that, but for the support we have had from readers via the Floating Fund, we would be gone even if not forgotten. This time \$611 and many thanks to:

\$250 Anon; \$50 A&KI; \$42 KS; \$22 MW; \$18 DB; \$12 DD, EW, AS, PO, SC, DA; \$10 RD, LB; \$8 BB, SP, JH; \$7 CB, Bell Park HS; \$6 PM; \$5 GP, Prahran CAE; \$4 AG, BW, IW, JA, RS, DS, GP; \$3 GEM, RB, DP, HVS; \$2 MW, BH, TC, DC, HM, DMcM, HD, KF, JR, RJ, GMcK, AB, MR, Vealo, BN, BS, JS, PF, AL, RS, DD; \$1 MC.



PARSON (whose prayers for rain have been answered at last): "Now, Lord, this is simply ridiculous!"

Livingston Hopkins THE BULLETIN c. 1890

collectors' items.



A 1927 Seppelts Para Port will cost you dearly, assuming you can find one. Yet paradoxically, the aluminium can has become a collector's item, too. Last year, a record 176.2 million aluminium cans were brought to Comalco's network of buy-back centres. We paid out \$1.4 million in cash to the enthusiastic can collectors. And we recycled their cans into nearly 4000 tons of aluminium. This year, with our increased payment to

45 cents per kilo, or about 1 cent a can, we're looking forward to receiving and recycling even more collectors' items.

It all goes to show that, nowadays, the beverage consumer takes a keen interest in the product with the package that's too good to throw away.



Comalco Limited 20 Bond Street Sydney
Phone 231 3411: 95 Collins Street Melbourne
Phone 630 491.



COMALCO