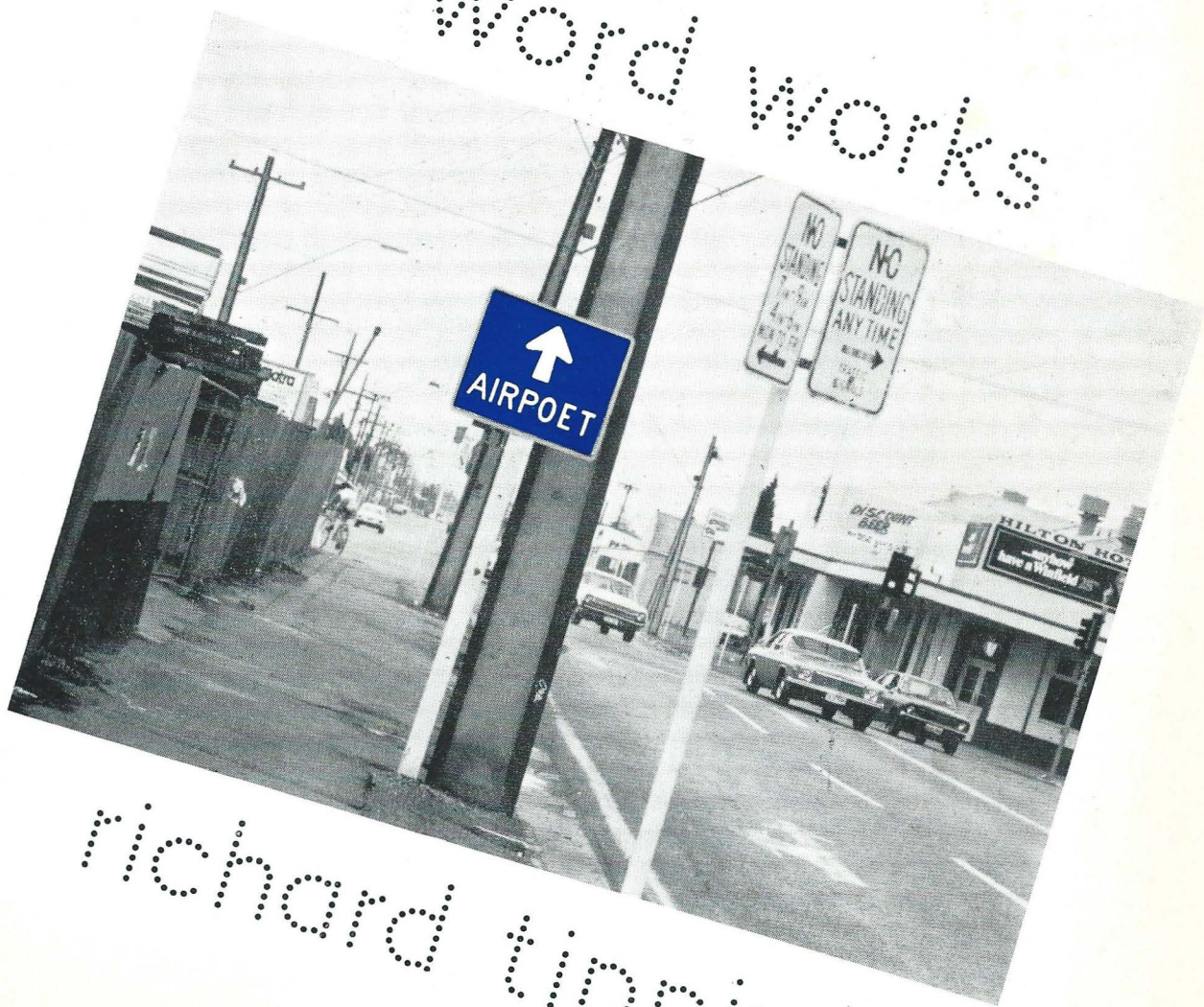


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JOHN W. ...

1879

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MANIPULATED READYWORD *1 — Burbridge Road, Adelaide, 1979. Standard road sign with addition using professional fluorescent tapes; subsequently produced in a limited edition fullscale by the signmaking company, and as a postcard and small badge. Photograph by Ian de Gruchy.

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Temper democratic, bias Australian

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RAY WOOD

Smoko

This story recently won the Australian Council of Trade Unions' Henry Lawson Short Story Competition. The prize was \$750, the judges George Seelaf and John McLaren, who was deputizing for Alan Marshall. The ACTU Mary Gilmore Poetry Competition will be held in 1980, and another short story competition next year. Overland plans, by arrangement with the ACTU, to publish winning entries.

The sudden shriek of the siren split through the throbbing noise of the factory floor, cleaving through a hundred headaches.

Smoko!

Greg, robot-like after three hours and countless hundred repetitions at his machine, switched off the power and switched on his mind.

He echoed the sigh of the settling hydraulics and mingled with the men in oil-stained overalls who were slinking to their rest areas. All around him he saw men with blank expressions, delving in lockers for cigarettes, sandwiches and racing papers which they carried with little conversation and less enthusiasm to various dingy corners.

Greg wandered to one area where a group of men were perched on old packing cases. A card game was already in progress: tattered cards were slapped down with oaths and old jokes on an upended 44-gallon drum.

One of the group noticed him: "G'day. New, encha?"

Greg started explaining how he'd just started, how he'd left his small bush town to find more money in the city.

The other cut him short with an "Anyhow, I'm Jacko and this is Perce and that's Davo . . ." and a hurried round of introductions of which Greg caught few and remembered fewer. He felt slightly uneasy. It was a different world, coming from his familiar three-man workshop in a town where a wander down the street meant a dozen conversations. He glanced around the endless rows of drab green machines.

"Big place this, isn't it?" he said, more to make conversation than anything.

"Yeah, said Jacko. "Big bloody dump. Half the bloody machines are unsafe. Still, can't make too much of it — plenty of poor bastards out on the dole queue waiting to take our place and the foreman'd be happy to get rid of any of us given half a chance."

Greg looked puzzled.

"Pays him to keep up a good turnover, see," explained Jacko. "Then we don't get too united, don't start getting militant. Still, there's plenty of us been here for years. Long-termers you might call us, with no time off for good behavior."

While Greg and the others laughed dutifully at Jacko's joke, another man called out: "Got a team yet?"

"Sorry?"

"Got a team yet. Gotta have a team if you work here. Everybody's got a team. Couldn't have a smoko without talking about teams.

"Course, I'm lucky, I follow the real footballers — you'll come and barrack for my lot if you've got any sense."

Immediately a dozen voices broke in with various colorful descriptions of the geriatric and paraplegic qualities of the teams supported by the others. Greg sensed it was an often-repeated discussion, with stock phrases used to avoid the need for thinking up fresh conversation during the brief reprieve from the throbbing, vibrating, mind-numbing machinery.

"Bloody football," Jacko's voice cut through the others. "All you lot can ever talk about."

"Well, at least with a match you can see a result," said the man pointed out as Perc, a

small wrinkle-faced man who had stayed silent until then. "Beats this bloody life. Working day in, day out. No end in sight. Start with the siren, eat with the siren, pee with the siren, go home with the siren. Bloody machines going all day so you can't even think. No wonder a bloke goes to the footy — he can see something different, something happening, have a good yell and see a result at the end of it."

From the look of the others, Greg gathered this was a rare occasion, a fresh line of discussion.

"I know what Perce means," said another man, spitting out bits of a chunky cheese sandwich. "Fair drives a bloke crazy working here. Don't know what you're making, just churning out bits of metal."

"Bloody bosses don't care," cut in another worker. "We're just like the little bits of metal to them. Units of production. They use us as a buffer — if times are good they take us on, if they muck things up they lay us off."

Perce returned to the discussion: "At least we've got work most of the time. Plenty of poor sods out in the streets haven't worked for years."

"Yeah," said another man. He stood up as though to lend emphasis to his remarks, at the same time thumping down his mug with a force that splashed tea on to the cards. "My lad's just turned twenty and still hasn't seen a job. And you know why? 'Cos of people like you!"

"Whaddya mean?" asked Perce, red spots appearing in his factory-sallow cheeks.

"You bloody know what I mean," said the newcomer to the conversation. "Your missus goes out to work. You've got a nice color telly and that boat you go out fishing on. And my kid's out of work — and the bloke next door. While you take in two incomes. You lot make me sick."

Again a dozen arguments broke out at once. Greg sat, bewildered, while the theories flowed. He could tell the arguments were emotional rather than rational — those with working wives had all the counter-arguments to those without.

Jacko, who evidently saw himself as some sort of leader, tried to restore amity by changing the subject.

"No good arguing among ourselves," he said loudly. "Might all be out of a job this time next month."

His comments had the desired effect. The others stopped squabbling and looked silently at him.

"Whaddya mean?" asked Perce.

"Well, I've heard the firm's being taken over," said Jacko. His attempt to look grave in keeping with the nature of his message was almost overcome by his pride in being the centre of attention, bearer of a new rumor.

"My boy's got a mate who goes with a girl whose Dad's in the accounts section here and he says there's talk of some other firm buying the people who own this place — and you know what happens to blokes like us when that sort of thing goes on."

"Who owns this place now, anyway?" asked Perce.

"Don't really know," said Jacko. "Last time they changed the letter-heading it was some fancy name. In the small print it mentioned a company. Apparently one of the shop stewards tried to look it up but found it was mostly owned by other companies and it got too hard for him — bloke at the place where you look things up got a bit shirty anyway because he was in scungey working clothes and made the place look untidy."

"Don't they tell you these things?" Greg asked innocently. He looked bewildered when the others laughed, though he could tell the laughter reflected bitterness at a situation, not derision of him.

"Tell us," said Jacko. "Tell us! That's a good'un. It breaks their bloody hearts to have to pay us, leave alone tell us anything."

"Remember that consultation committee thing they set up a few years back," said Perce. The others made sneering comments.

Greg asked: "What was that?"

"First thing we knew was when notices appeared round the place saying they had set up a consultation committee to involve the workers. Some bloody consultation — didn't even consult us in the first place."

Perce took a long swig of tea from his chipped and cracked mug.

"Well, some of the blokes thought it was a trick, something to undermine the union or get more work out of us or something. Anyway, we decided to give it a go. Old Joe Buckley was our bloke on the committee — bloke who got killed when the boiler door blew off last year. Still see the marks on the wall. It was in the papers. Only time in his whole life he did anything to get his name in the papers and he wasn't there to see it.

"Anyway, he'd noticed there was this big stockpile building up in the out stores so he

asked them if they were planning to lay people off. 'No', they said.

"Next week, stockpile was bigger. Same question, same answer — no layoffs.

"Third week, could hardly move for bloody stockpile. All round the place, crates everywhere. All the garages were used and they piled stuff up in the paddock next door. Old Joe asked them again about the situation. 'Don't worry,' they told him. So he came back and told us we were safe. Know what happened?"

He paused dramatically.

"What", asked Greg.

"Next day — next bloody day — they put off three hundred of us. Didn't have the guts to make announcement or anything. Just put notes in the pay packets so the blokes found out when it was too late to do anything.

"Anyway, after that the consultation committee rather fell apart, you might say."

Perce finished his tea with a dramatic flourish, tilting the mug back and banging it down on the oildrum. The card game had been forgotten as the workers crowded round to back up Perce's story, nodding and shaking their heads in chorus to emphasise his points.

"But couldn't the union do anything?" Greg asked.

Again voices broke out, using well-practiced arguments and counter-arguments.

"Bloody union," said Perce. "Top officials are all busy trying to get into parliament and haven't got time for us, the organisers all spend their time in the Industrial Commission and the shop steward's only interested in studying Marx at night school."

Seeing a heated argument was about to break out on Perce's views, Greg got in quickly: "But surely there are laws and things."

"Course there are," said Perce. "But the laws not on the side of the workers, is it? And if they are meant to help us, nobody obeys them. Look — see that drum there."

He pointed at the upended 44-gallon drum which served as card table and resting place for their battered mugs and flasks.

"See that label?"

Greg felt rather silly as he twisted his neck to read the upside-down label. He tried to pronounce the multi-syllable chemical name and faltered.

"What is it?"

"Exactly," said Perce as if Greg had made his point for him. "What is it? They brought it out for use in some of the processes. Blokes

found it helped keep the machinery clean so they started using it.

"Then they started coming out in blisters. Got worse — bloody agony for some of the blokes. Eventually they twigged — it was this chemical wasn't it? Apparently it should only be used with gloves. Did they tell us that? Did they issue gloves? No bloody way."

Greg persisted: "But isn't that illegal? What about the Department? . . ."

"Department," snorted Perce while others chuckled. "Bloody Department. Well, for starters they've got so much work and so few inspectors they only get round here about once every ten years. Then the management usually hear they're coming and get the place cleaned up until they're gone. Even if they can find something wrong they can't do much — some 'order' or a piddly fine which doesn't mean anything to a firm like this — they'll just sack somebody and pay the fine with his wages instead."

Greg felt slightly sick. He felt he'd grown up suddenly. It had all been so simple back home, where everybody knew everybody and there wasn't a manager or owner who was not in the same sports team or service club as at least some of his workers. "So what happened?"

"Oh, we got the union in," said Perce. "But the firm said they weren't to blame and the makers said it wasn't their fault and the union lawyer said it would be hard to prove and the union didn't have the funds for a long test case with the money those bastard lawyers earn so it all petered out. The blisters went — from the hands, anyway. Still a few blistered minds around."

Jacko evidently felt he had been out of the limelight too long and stuck out his chest in prelude to a statement.

"What made me sick was the foreman's attitude," said Jacko. "Remember him, old Eight-fingered Eddie. One of the old school. Said we were a lot of bleeding pansies. Weren't in the industry until you'd lost at least a finger."

"Is he still here," asked Greg.

"No, he got his in the end," said Jacko. "Tried to clear a jam on one of the big machines without switching it off. Ended up in little bits all round the shed. Served the bastard right."

"Course, I blame the wogs," said a burly, bucolic man who had been silent until then.

"Here we go again," muttered Perce for Greg to hear.

"Yeah, we'd have a strong union if it wasn't

for all them dumb wogs they bring in," said the burly man. He looked round as though expecting a challenge.

"Too stupid, that's their trouble. Don't understand unions. Last time there were layoffs half the silly buggers went and asked for their union fees back — thought they'd been paying into a credit union. Can't speak English proper, that's their trouble. Shouldn't let them in unless they speak English."

Nobody countered him; the murmurs seemed to reflect some agreement and some opposition and a general disinclination towards debate. Once again, it was Greg who played the straight man.

"What about teaching them?" he asked the dogmatic speaker.

It was Jacko, however, who answered. "We all said that once. After all, most of them seem good blokes once you get to know them. But the firm wouldn't pay for any lessons. The union tried to get a course going but most of them wouldn't go because it was too far away and anyway they had to get home because Mama had a night shift so they had to look after the kids. Bloody firm of course was too mean to let them off for lessons during the day. Costs them a packet in compo, though, every time one of 'em loses a finger or something through not being able to read instructions."

"Can't they just translate things," Greg inquired.

The burly man took up his tirade. "That's the bloody trouble. Firm did that once. Put round pamphlets in all those wog languages — turned out most of them couldn't even read their own language."

"But don't they have a leader or someone among them who . . .?"

"They're even worse," said Perce. "One of their blokes got elected shop steward. First of all there was trouble 'cos he started looking after his own. He always backed his own people in a dispute against the others and we nearly ended up with bloody tribal wars. Then it turned out he wasn't even looking after his own people. Ripping them off, he was. Taking about twenty dollars a week off each of them telling them it was union fees, put the fear of God into them that he could get them the sack at any time, and translated everything his own way to twist it to suit himself."

Jacko spoke up again: "Personally, I feel sorry for them. Poor bastards come all this way,

leave everything behind, come to a strange country, can't speak the language."

The fat man grabbed his chance. "Then they should bloody well learn," he crowed. "And they should stop congregating together and mix with proper people and eat proper food."

"How many languages do you speak?" Greg asked quietly.

Jacko chortled. "He's right you know." He told the fat man. "Who was it who was moaning about his holiday overseas and how the natives didn't speak bloody English properly and he couldn't get a decent steak. Who was it, then?"

"Yeah," Perce joined in. "And I don't blame 'em sticking together. If I went to a foreign place I'd stick with people I knew. Look at that film on telly the other night about Aussies in London with their own bloody pubs and what-not — and that's in a place where they speak the same lingo. Well, almost."

The big man subsided into mutterings as others took up the theme. It was as though Greg's initially diffident challenge had released pent-up feelings.

"Some of 'em come straight from tiny little places to the big city," said Perce. "Imagine coming from some Greek version of Whoop-Whoop, where you know everyone and a traffic jam's when two donkeys come down the road at the same time. Then come to a place like this."

"That's true," — Jacko couldn't allow himself to be left out of any argument, especially if people were swaying one way. "I've heard some of them haven't hardly seen a town of a thousand people before. Then they get flung here in a factory with more than five thousand. No wonder they go bananas."

"I heard of one woman over in the other block who was found bawling her eyes out in a corner," said Perce. "Turned out she started that morning and got lost going from the personnel office to her workplace. Broke down in the end. They had to ask all round till they found somebody who spoke her language. Bloke took her home — and the bastards docked his pay for the time he was out."

"Bloody personnel office," said Jacko. "Personnel, pig's arse. Don't think of us as persons. Just names on a filing card, that's what we are. Wonder they don't bring in a law making us all use numbers instead of names to make it easier for their computer."

"Now take young Greg here. Did they fill you in on conditions and things when you joined?"

"Not much. They gave me a form for the social club and told me which shed to report to."

"Typical," said Jacko. "Bloody typical. Got a locker — no, thought not. Bloody factory fodder, that's all we are to them. Don't even allocate a bloke a locker. Bet if you was one of them smart-arsed clerks starting work in the office, bloke with no apprenticeship or nothing they'd have bloody escorted you to your bloody desk and issued you with your own rubber plant and all."

Laughing, Greg moved to the empty locker Jacko pointed out to him. Rust patched the dull green like dried blood on a jungle floor, under a layer of Penthouse centrefolds. The shelf had long since broken, the hooks had gone. On the floor lay an archaeological layer of debris, souvenirs of past occupants. Greg gathered up cigarette packets and old racing papers, a well-thumbed sex magazine and sundry festering sandwich wrappers. In the corner he spotted a dogeared old paperback. It was in a foreign language.

"What's this then," he enquired casually. "Someone been brushing up for their long service leave trip?"

The others fell quiet. Strangely quiet, almost guiltily silent.

"Must have been Old Reffo's," muttered Perce.

"Who's Old Reffo?"

Perce shuffled uneasily. None of the others answered. Greg looked round and eventually Perce said: "Well, it was a long time ago now. Forgotten about it, really."

"Old Reffo had that locker at one time. We called him Old Reffo because he was in that lot of refugees they brought in after the war and nobody could make out his real name. S'pose we couldn't even call him Old Reffo now or Al Grassby would be after us."

Nobody laughed.

"Anyway, he had this thick accent and nobody could understand him. Not that anybody tried much. Fair bit of prejudice then against foreigners."

Greg looked at Jacko and the fat man quickly. No irony seemed intended.

"Anyhow," Perce went on. "He kept himself to himself. Good at his machine but never one of us, if you know what I mean. Never came down the pub. Didn't even follow a team. Just sat on his own at smoko. Sometimes he read them books in his own language. Often he'd just

sit and do calculations. We all reckoned he was half nuts. Sat there, face like a bloody bulldog, never smiled, scribbling away.

"Then it all came to a head. Had a row with the foreman one day. Real bastard we had then — makes this bloke look like a bloody fairy. Anyhow, it all started when Old Reffo tried to tell him something, some modification to the machine or something.

"Foreman started getting impatient because he couldn't really understand him. Then he told him just to shut up and get on with his work. Real bloody ding-dong in the end. Foreman carrying on, yelling and swearing, telling him he was a stupid refugee bastard and lucky to be allowed in let alone have a job."

"Told him he was paid to work, not think," Jacko supplemented.

"Yeah," agreed Perce. "Still, they all use that one. If I had a dollar for every time I'd heard that I wouldn't need to work. Anyhow, you could see that it hit Old Reffo hard. Didn't say anything, mind. Never did. Just got on with his machine. But he — well, he sort of . . . sagged.

"Next day, didn't turn up. Day after, neither. Personnel people ended up sending round to his place. Done himself in, he had. Gas oven job. It was poisonous in those days. Before natural gas.

"Anyway, when they cleared up his flat they found his papers. Not newspapers like, papers from universities and things. Turned out he had more degrees than a bloody thermometer. And he'd just been scraping a living in this shit-hole. Worse in those days, too. Not as many Acts and things."

Jacko paused, his sense of the dramatic again working at least time-and-a-half.

"But you know what was really funny?" he asked Greg. "Not funny, comical, like, but funny strange."

"What?"

"Turned out he'd only designed the bloody machine, back in his own country. Shit-hot expert he was in the old days. No wonder he could make suggestions. Trouble was in all the mess after the war he couldn't prove his qualifications and immigration was up to here with reffos claiming they were doctors and so on.

"Glad to get a job, he was. Here! Had to stay alive. Till the bloody foreman killed him."

They were all silent, in a silence of embarrassment rather than reverence for the dead or remorse at the tale.

The fat man broke the silence by noisily slurping his tea.

"Strewth," said Perce. "You always sound like bathwater going down the bloody plughole."

It was not very funny, but they all laughed, from relief.

At that moment a newcomer to the group waddled over — an immense, whale-like man who flopped onto a packing case and only just drowned its protesting creak with his wheezing sigh. From the ribald greetings, Greg learned that Arthur was the name of the workmate, whose bulky frame was almost grotesque from a diet of beer and telly interspersed with fish'n' chips and fast foods. Further jokes indicated that Arthur was a bachelor who looked after himself, badly, backed slow race horses, and revelled in the sole glory of being a cause of bantering bad humor.

The jokes were old, almost hallowed by tradition. Today, however, there were obvious signs of fresh emphasis for Greg's benefit.

"See yer've got yer gorgonzola shirt on," said Perce, nodding at the ripped and hole-spattered grubby blue singlet wrinkled over Arthur's enormous belly and framed by the gape of his grubby overalls.

They all laughed as though it were a new joke, presumably to convince Greg it was.

"Get it," Perce nudged Greg. "So many 'oles it looks like a gorgonzola cheese," he explained in case Greg, being a bush bloke, didn't grasp the subtleties of suburban sophistication.

"Gruyere," said Greg.

"Yer what," said Perce.

"Gruyere," Greg repeated. "It's gruyere cheese which has the holes, not gorgonzola."

They all looked at him. He realised he had offended an unwritten code: some faces registered suspicion of a superior knowledge, others resented that he had smart-arsed a change into their ritual routine ribaldry.

Jacko broke the ice which was rapidly forming. "Gruyere — don't know where it grew but if that belly of Arthur's grows much more it'll be falling over 'is bloody knees" — and for the second time that smoko there was a burst of laughter heavily tinged with relief.

The laughter faded as the siren shrilled again. Faces changed, as though in Pavlovian reaction to a signal to stop smiling and thinking and living.

"Smoko over," somebody muttered. Cards and papers and teamugs were put away. Men began scuffling back to their machines, their animation drained by the succubus siren.

As Greg headed for his bay, Jacko caught up with him.

"Anyhow mate," he said, "Welcome to the gang. We're not a bad bunch of blokes when you get to know us. You'll soon learn the lurks and perks. Beats being on the dole, anyway.

"Tell you what, why dontcha come to the footy with me on Saturday?"

He punched Greg lightly on the shoulder, bestowing the knighthood of the shopfloor and the pub and the terrace on a Saturday arvo.

"After all, you're one of us now, mate."

Greg looked round at the long rows of men, suddenly anonymous, switching on their machines and switching off their minds for another bout of endless repetitions making things they didn't know for people they didn't know in a world that didn't know them.

"Thanks," he said. "Thanks."

MARTIAL: BOOK 5 No. 81

If you're poor today comrade, you are always poor.
dividends go only to those who can invest.

K. F. PEARSON

RUPERT LOCKWOOD

Wimmera Boyhood

Rupert Lockwood has been intimately associated with the radical movement in Australia since the days of the Depression and the Spanish Civil War. He was a key figure in the Petrov affair, a prolific journalist and pamphleteer on the Left, and lived for three years in Moscow. His most recent book was the well-received Black Armada, an account of Australian support for the establishment of the Indonesian Republic. He works as a trade union editor in Sydney. We print here part of a forth-coming autobiography.

RUPERT LOCKWOOD writes: *Half the children at the Natimuk state school in Victoria's Wimmera, when I was a child, bore German names. In starting to write my memoirs I soon found that European history cut across my childhood reminiscences, and discovered a story largely neglected by historians — the story of what the frenzied jingoism of the Great War epoch did to our hapless Germans and Wends, descendants of pilgrims and post-1848 refugees who sought freedom here from Prussian despotism. I remember the burning of Lutheran churches, the hounding of innocent people, enforced name-changing, wanton internments, closure of schools and the concoction of conspiracies. And I remember in particular what happened on the night of my father's second marriage; the bride had a father who had been born in Wendish Lusatia, near Berlin, the Wends being Germans of Slavic stock.*

Lockwood children awakened on the night of 15 March 1916 to the clatter on the iron roof, as men fixed the red, white and black banner of Hohenzollern Germany — a hate totem to all Australians cherishing the British heritage. After this it was not so easy to grow up feeling British to the bootstraps. The future Prime Minister's father, James Menzies, came at election times to my father's West Wimmera Mail office at Natimuk in Victoria's West Wimmera to seek space for his campaign to be returned to the Victorian Legislative Assembly as representative for Lowan, the local electorate dotted with farm

settlements often German to the bootstraps. Venerable, grey-haired James Menzies, speaking from a table-top horse lorry to a crowd standing on the dusty road outside Natimuk Post Office, was, I remember, heckled angrily by railway navvies from the tent camps. (The steam engines puffed and wheezed so protestingly as they hauled wheat trains up the hill to Natimuk East that teams of pick-and-shovel workers were hired to reduce the railway grade.) But German-origin farmers present had reason to applaud him. Once the Krupp cannon opened fire in 1914 atavistic instincts were rampantly aroused; open season was declared for the persecution and slander of Australian citizens bearing German names. When the smell of smoke from a burning Lutheran church was on the wind to Jeparit, and extremes of homage to Britain demanded the closure of Lutheran church schools, James Menzies belonged to a tiny minority of politicians declining worship at the altar of brute jingoism. And, as he knew from experience, Lutherans were more to be trusted to meet after-harvest credit accounts at Menzies' Jeparit general store than many an Anglican, Methodist or Presbyterian.

March was the most sparkling of months in the Wimmera, a time when we deserved to be free of the pornography of racism and war. The tensions of distant battles of which we knew little were intruded on our lives by the disgrace of that enemy flag on our roof, its colors a combination of the Prussian black and white, borne

in victory and nearly as often in defeat by Frederick the Great's dragoons, and the red and white ensign that once flew as a symbol of Germanic commercial aggression on Hanseatic League trading posts from Novgorod in Russia along the North Sea-Baltic coasts to London.

Early autumn was much kinder than spring, too often windy and rainy after winter frosts had yellowed the grass and infested our socks with its pointed seeds. By Christmas and into January and February the thermometer was prone to pass the century. Fence posts danced in the heat haze, birds panted for breath and sheep were driven from the sparse dry grass to the ungenerous shade of the gum trees. Dust clouds formed a canopy over roads rumpled and rutted by iron-tyred wheat waggons, superbly crafted by Bill Kubale and his expert wheelwright, Otto Grohs, in a Natimuk foundry.

March 1916 promised to furnish settings for elegiac pastorals, if any around could compose them. The killer drought of 1914-15 had broken. Streams ran, the myriad lakes and swamps of the West Wimmera glistened, and no blasting wind from the north stirred the grey dust and silenced the birds. Indonesian rainbow birds in a farewell flash of color began to leave their burrows on the sandy slopes of the Mallee fringe for their annual return flight across the Arafura Sea. The milder sun after the rains meant swagmen could again tramp with their black billies, earning the odd loaf of bread or remains of a cold leg of mutton for cutting an armful of stove wood.

In the West Wimmera we could not sing to majestic ruins; we had no edifices to revere. The German and British pioneers created no solid splendors among the weatherboard, limestone, mud and brick houses, the shop verandahs, horse-hitching rails and slab sheds. Nature was called on to compensate over the tongue of black soil that spread across the leisurely Wimmera River to Natimuk's eastern hill, onward through the township and the creek valleys to Mount Arapiles. A ring of twenty-seven lakes could be counted from the bluff of Arapiles, along with the river and creeks; and what they libellously called the Little Desert rolling away to the north-west and the South Australian border was a mass of wild flowers and wattle and gum blossoms, and dotted with nest-mounds holding the buried eggs of the Mallee-fowl or lowan, after which James Menzies' electorate was named. In the crisp air of March we awoke

to bird music; these were days of rest for farm families between the summer harvest and the crop plantings and white frosts. Happy greetings in English and German were heard in Main Street. The harvest just garnered and the weather were *schön*. The golden sun was more like a caress than a curse as we trudged up the town's western hill to school.

Nature had smiled again, the brassy sky, the parched earth and the withered wheat belonged to the past, and few had any inkling of the multiple indispositions about to afflict rural society. The record 1914 drought cut Australia's wheat harvest to a mere 25 million bushels. The showers fell benignly on the 1915 plantings and the 1915-16 harvest was bounteous: 170 million bushels. Britain desperately needed the wheat, but her shipping faced munitions and trooping priorities. The wheat was stacked by the railway stations till the ships could be found to move it all. The mice behaved as if they knew all about it: they bred in millions. One Saturday afternoon we killed 110 mice in our chaff-shed. Hordes of mice descended on the wheat stacks. At eight Victorian rail sidings in 1917 thirteen tons of mice were killed in three days. The cats got sick of chasing mice. The Natimuk wheat stacks were surrounded by galvanised iron barriers, with kerosine tins, half-filled with water, sunk into the ground at gaps in the fences. The mice had to drink and fell into the water to drown and stink. The "mouse plague", as it was known, struck at men's skins—a nasty, itchy rash. But in March 1916 the invasion of the rodent armies had still to come. The immediate problems were the distortions of spirit and self, the blackly embittered relationships the news from the battle fronts was engendering, and the doubts raised whether members of Lutheran congregations had the right to remain within the concord of Anglo-Australians.

One of the rift-torn German-Lutheran community's churches faced the Wimmera River and the sunrise on the eastern hill of the Natimuk valley; the other was on the western hill, looking to Mount Arapiles where the sun went down. On the morning of 16 March 1916 the sunrise first lit the cleft bluff of Mount Arapiles, an orphan upthrust many miles from the long blue line of the Grampians range in the south-east, where people climb to see the rock drawings of patronless Aboriginal artists, served as supper to the crows so that redundant Scots officers from the British Army might confiscate their

hunting grounds and make certain that no heirs would live to draw with stone tools and ochres in the sandstone caves.

Arapiles was, as far as we knew, our only link with Britain's war on the Napoleonic French. Major Thomas Mitchell, the first British explorer of Australia Felix, named the mount in 1836 after a hill by the Tormes River in Spain. As Wellington in the 1812 Battle of Salamanca "beat 40,000 Frenchmen in 40 minutes", Major Mitchell's brother was among those who fell on Arapiles to Marmont's fusillades. St Petersburg in Russia furnished an artist to memorialise Arapiles — Nicholas Chevalier, violinist, painter, fluent linguist in Russian, French, English, German and Portugese. The artist, who painted in Russia, Switzerland and Italy, for Queen Victoria in London and on the Australian gold-fields, was struck by the strange, lonely silhouette of Arapiles, and so carted his brush, palette and blankets to the lower slopes in 1874, when Aborigines still camped at the mount and Germans had begun to till the black soil plain below. The artist painted with the expected mat of bush flies between his shoulder-blades and mosquitoes dining from his face and arms, exchanging tobacco and tea brewed from Arapiles spring water, blackened by falling eucalyptus leaves, for the Duanbarap tribal survivors' wallaby meat.

Douglas Lockwood traced the original Chevalier painting of Mount Arapiles and, anxious to bring it into the family, asked the art dealer the purchase price. "Come back when you've won the Opera House Lottery," he was told. Arapiles meant more than a landmark to this community of German and British origins. When dry spells turned lakes and creeks to caked mud, the surface soil lifted to sting our faces on the walk to school and the ring-barked gums swayed like wraiths in the hot north wind. Mount Arapiles loomed over the scene like a monument to immortality.

From Arapiles' summit the sun rays would move down to Melville's Lookout, a verandah cave used by the bushranger Captain Melville to maintain a covetous watch on Captain Alexander Tolmer's Gold Escort, transporting by waggons and packhorses fortunes from Victorian gold diggings to Adelaide bank vaults, under armed guard sufficient to deter Melville. Melville robbed stray gold-diggers. This gave Arapiles another appeal: we dreamed of the day we would unearth Captain Melville's secret

billyfull of gold our elders swore he had hidden in a cave.

The sun took only seconds to throw its light from Arapiles to the lowest point of the valley, at the junction of the two Natimuk creeks, where the West Wimmera Mail office and Lockwood home stood. The Big Creek ran in front, the Little Creek, often called Lockwood's Creek, formed the western boundary of our garden. A resurrected Caxton would not have felt out of place if he had walked into the weatherboard Mail office. He could have picked up a printer's stick, sat on a stool before cases of 10-point primer or nine-point bourgeois (b'joice, we called it) and hand-set type just as in the basement of Westminster Chapel. The account forms for local butcher, baker, grocer and saddler and handbills for dances and concerts were produced on a foot-pedal job-printing machine; the tumbler press that printed the four-pages of the West Wimmera Mail one page at a time required one to feed the paper into grippers, another to "fly" it off the tumbling cylinder and another to turn the handle of the propulsive wheel — tasks none of the Lockwood children escaped from about the age of nine. Behind the printery the many-roomed Lockwood home, with iron-laced verandah on two sides and garden and orchard on three sides, accommodated the family labor. In heavy-rain years the creek floods would spill across the garden, under the house and printery, and force lifting of carpets and piano out of the waters' reach. Grey-ringed native perch would be stranded in backyard pools as the flood went down.

The Lockwood establishment of old-fashioned printery and home was something of a social centre. Townsfolk dropped in for a yarn, or to tell my father local news. He was well respected — his funeral was to be the largest ever seen in the district — and he was elected and active on committees devoted to community interest, including wartime patriotic bodies. Yet here we were on that March morning, two little sons and only daughter, under the abhorred red, white and black, caught by the sunrise in the light mist of early autumn. These were the colors flaunted by the Uhlans as they rode over ravished Belgium — colors become the symbol of mustard gas, the *Lusitania* sinking, zeppelin bombings of our Mother Country, the firing squad that poured lead into the bosom of Nurse Edith Cavell and designs of conquest reputed to embrace Australia.

The warp and twist of war kept worsening. In our Box 2, Natimuk Post Office, we collected packets holding replicas of iron crosses. They were neatly crafted from sheet iron. The Kaiser, we had been told, awarded iron crosses for killing British soldiers and torpedoing passenger ships.

How could we Lockwood children, regularly taking our pennies, threepences and sixpences along to Natimuk State School for the Red Cross and having relatives bleeding overseas, come under this red, white and black shadow of disloyalty? Our British credentials were impeccable. Great-grandfather Lockwood, a Sheffield civil servant, supported the People's Charter that contributed so much to parliamentary government in Britain and the Dominions. When Chartism was fading in barren conspiracies and political repression, the Chartist Lockwood felt that golden Australia offered more breathing room. He emigrated to Gold Rush Australia. An impressive total of eleven Lockwoods, including grandfather Matthew Lockwood, were on the sailing ship's passenger list. One of them, Wright Lockwood, lost his footing in a Bay of Biscay storm and was swept overboard. By this carelessness he became remembered more than others: Alfred Wright Lockwood, my father, had sons named Douglas Wright, Frank Wright and Allan Wright Lockwood.

On my mother's side, grandfather Henry Francis came from the petty Devon gentry, Tavistock region. He was related to Sir Humphry Davy, the innovative British chemist from Penzance. (One of my mother's nieces told me that we of the Francis clan were descended from Sir Humphry Davy. I cancelled the story when the British scientific historian, J. G. Crowther, told me: "I wouldn't persist with that ancestry if I were you, Lockwood. Davy died childless — and of syphilis".) Henry Francis of Tavistock disappointed his family by not going into a profession. Instead he became a forty-niner to the Californian gold rush. He struck it rich in California before moving on to the Australian rush. He struck it rich again, this time at Whroo, now a ghost town in northern Victoria. My mother had a brass-studded chest which, family legend insisted, was once filled with Grandpa's gold.

Henry Francis' daughter, Alice Ellen, my mother, went to Presbyterian Ladies' College, Melbourne, getting wisdom along with Ethel Florence (Henry Handel) Richardson, and

doing nothing to get into trouble, as did the girl who was to become the world's greatest singer in her time, Nellie Melba. My mother was a diligent student: I still have some of her PLC prizes. She learned to be a music and art teacher — the Francis family were brilliant at music, but I inherited none of it.

In her 'teens the attractive Alice Ellen Francis was given her first posting to Glenrowan State School, between Wangaratta and Melbourne. Glenrowan was under the cloud of the Ned Kelly hanging, sequel to the last stand of the Kelly Gang of bushrangers against armed police at the Glenrowan Hotel. Riding her horse side-saddle, as all nice girls of her day, young Miss Francis arrived at Glenrowan State School to teach relatives of the dead four of the Kelly Gang. She treated them with compassion, and laughed when elder brother Ernest Francis, also a teacher, sent her a gift rifle for her protection. She shot rabbits with the rifle. What more immaculate testimonial could Australian children claim to a fidelity of citizenship, than a mother who taught Kate Kelly's son — Ned Kelly's nephew — how to draw black swans and kangaroos?

My mother dreamed of a purer Britain and Australia, free of the demon drink. When she lay dying of breast cancer, she handed her sister Emily a letter to be opened by me on reaching twelve years. Her letter exhorted me never to smoke, swear or drink alcohol. The substantial financial backing given by her gold-gathering father, Henry Francis, to the rising Australian brewing and distilling industries — the treasure chest was emptied over many a bar counter — may have influenced my British-to-the-riding-boots mother. Alas for those nuggets, now worth a king's ransom, slammed down on the counters of shanty inns to buy drinks all round for the rough crowds of English, Cornish, Irish, Scots, German, Yank, Latin migrants and Van Diemen's Land runaway convicts who contributed to the din and sin of the Victorian goldfields . . .

So dedicated was my mother to exorcising the demon drink that, when she spotted my father slipping into Newton's hotel for a sly beer or two, she cleared out to the home of her eldest sister, Julia, in Welshpool, Gippsland. To her horror she discovered that Julia's husband was unashamedly partial to much more beer than my father, and so she had to return to Natimuk, town of two pubs and one wine saloon. Not long after her death an English temperance

gospeller, Tennyson Smith, came to Natimuk. We Sunday school children went along to hear him vindicate all my mother had said about the link between grog and the devil. Tennyson Smith unfolded a banner, telling his uninstructed audience the origin of the word wouser: We Only Want Social Evils Removed was the slogan that gave the acronym. After hearing the hair-raising stories of what drink had done to men and women, I signed the Band of Hope pledge never to touch intoxicating liquor. (Later I became a journalist and hope flew out the bar-room window.) I joined lustily in Tennyson Smith's theme song to a rollicking hymn tune:

When the drink is swept away,
Then the nation will be richer and we'll
all get better pay,
When the bars are closed forever,
And the drink is swept away.

I never forgot Tennyson Smith's warning text: "What is that which biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder?" None in Natimuk was daring enough to ask, as happened in England: "Where can I get some of that stuff? The local brew is too weak."

The printer's ink and type dust scrubbed from his hands by sand-soap, my father sat down to the evening meal and there kept us informed of the Kaiser's iniquities, amid sentimentalised tributes to Britain and reflections on Irish ingratitude. He lived till his death in 1956 in the has-been world of Britannia's rule of the waves, of thin red lines of heroes ensuring dominion

over palm and pine and deeds of holy memory that won the Empire. Warmed by the unremitting sun of British civilisation, the editor of the West Wimmera Mail could think of no foreigners not inferior to the English. His main connection with Britain cost him sixpence a week. After they had lain on the Natimuk Mechanics' Institute library table for a fortnight, he paid three-pence each for the *Illustrated London News* and *Tatler*, regularly bringing us by coal-burning P. and O. mail liner the doings of London high society.

Thus my father was clinging like a tendril to all that stood for the British-Australian partnership. It was almost a mystical incantation: British meant quality, integrity, courage, benefactions to lesser colonial breeds and primacy in just about all fields, whether it be British justice, British woollen worsteds, British fair play, British steam-engines, British soldiers and sailors or the British type-fonts used to hand-set the West Wimmera Mail. Why, then, did those who nominated themselves as janissaries of the British interest in Australia seek to spatter mud on the Lockwood family? Not a soul was sufficiently tutored in our history to show us the link between the plunging guillotine blade of the Place de la R volution, displacing the heads of a Bourbon king and a feckless Hapsburg princess, Marie Antoinette, and the red, white and black flag fluttering over our house by the bank of Natimuk's Little Creek. And not until long after we left school would we hear the name of Prince von Metternich, chiefly responsible for the presence in Australia of Germans with whom we now had closer association.

IRIS MILITUNOVIC

Letter from Devonport

Iris Militunovic is a well-known short-story writer. Her recent book, Talk English Carn't Ya, is about the migrant experience in Australia. After many years in Western Australia, she has moved back to her native Tasmania.

The weather boys must have their current forecast of sunny cold weather spot on. Outside our big window the purple ribbon of the early morning river is as smooth as silk. It is still rather dark and across the Mersey Devonport, still festooned with lights, rises towards the climbing, encircling hills. In spite of regrets and vicissitudes we are incredibly lucky to have had the opportunity and courage to buy this old, old cottage which we are slowly renovating towards comfort.

My husband likes it as much as I do and he is gradually shaping the neglected garden towards his vision and our needs. Although so close to one of the districts main arteries where, from about 3 a.m., great freight trucks roar and clatter, and a little later every kind of commercial and private vehicle adds its share of noisy pollution, our home is in a delightful cul-de-sac away from it all. Next door but one is the Mersey Yacht Club where elegant small craft decorate our river view, and almost the only traffic is from members' vehicles.

That same charming yacht club dented my susceptible ego very efficiently a week or so ago. As you know, due to a combination of no vehicle, no money for taxis, an arthritic knee, which can't cope with bus steps, plus other exacerbating ailments of age, I'm now almost housebound. No matter how pleasant are the relevant four walls, such constriction can become a mental and physical handicap. In the past, in W.A., the remedy was an hour or so on a local pier or rock, fishing, or more often pretending to fish. The combination of sky and water, with a rod to occupy hands and the possibility of a bite for mild interest, has always soothed this

sometimes savage beast, restoring shattered equilibrium and banishing frustration.

The Mersey Yacht Club has a much used pontoon and a seldom-used pier, so I phoned the secretary asking if I might use the latter occasionally from Mondays to Fridays. I didn't much fancy being part of the scenery during busy weekends. Although I hoped it wouldn't be necessary, I offered to pay the club joining fee of \$30 plus. The secretary was most pleasant, thanked me for my courtesy, said there was a committee meeting that night and that he'd let me know their decision.

A week or so later the secretary arrived just as I was stirring a sauce, something he could scarcely have anticipated. The committee's answer was a definite and devastating NO. "Our committee", he stated, "does not wish anyone to fish from their property. They are currently putting up notices of prosecution to trespassers." When I asked what would be the reaction if I joined the club, I was told that committee members were against people joining just to make use of facilities. Exactly as my peppery Welsh grandmother would have reacted I was first 'taken aback' and then angry. Comparatively few yacht club members own yachts, so their objective must be social usage, which I am told includes a lot of comfortable grogging-on. And indeed, why not? That's their privilege.

I don't remember what I said to that innocent carrier-pigeon of bad news. Upon calmer reflection it appears likely that I am one of many affected by the current climate of removing senior citizens from view, as well as from parity with the more financial and physically able rest of the

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community. We should stay in our own back yards.

Fortunately there are more pleasant things to write about. My delightful cousin, Dame Enid Lyons, is recovering from the stress of her visit to Canberra as an official guest to meet Mrs Thatcher. Cousin Enid always stretches herself a bit far and often needs bed-rest to recuperate. It was bad luck she wasn't well enough to come down the day you were here, as she has always wanted to meet you. I grew up on stories of my famous relation whom my father always insisted was a "fragrant rose of a girl". What fascinated and fascinates me is the wide range of her skills. She cooks like a down-to earth angel, was a truly skilful dressmaker and still uses needle and scissors with ease. Quite recently she made me a flock of pretty cushions. When I stayed in her home in Valley View Road in Malvern, just after she lost her Prime Minister husband, I was astounded to find that the delightful green period suite in her sitting room had been upholstered and covered by those small busy hands. Dame Enid still plays the organ in church and at home, and does household jobs like painting and even a little carpentry and tiling now and then. As well, there's all her known public work and her reputation as a writer, and Australia's best woman speaker. *And So We Take Comfort* is a most enjoyable book and my favorite of her works. Milor delights in Enid and says of her she's "a good woman and pretty too". Apart from all those talents my description would include wisdom and kindness and the wish to help others.

Another nice thing about Tasmania is the luck we had meeting Deda and Dick Burgess and their nice young son Johnny. Captain Dick owns and skippers a sizeable ketch and he and his well-known and highly respected forbears have fished Bass Strait for generations. Dick is a marvellous looking bloke — like a large craggy mountain with a handsome smiling face and a really wicked sense of humour. Inside their beautiful old home are more well-read books than in many a small library, and not a condensed volume amongst them.

When Deda first married her sea captain she left a promising career as an artist to crew for her husband and father-in-law, until the latter died at sea. She continued with Dick until home and a family put an end to what must have been an exciting, difficult and dangerous period of her life. I met Deda in hospital and fortunately for

me we became friends. She is well-known locally as an artist, and her stage sets in particular have adorned some Tasmania's most successful productions.

I suppose that after living successfully and with a modicum of happiness for thirty years in Albany, Milor and I were a bit silly to pull up so solid an anchor to try to return to my beginning. My husband believes in families being together as it was his suggestion we come here, but there were a lot of things I'd forgotten to take into account. Traffic along the north-west coast is at times quite appalling, especially where the highway is only two-lane. We are also geared to the warmer climate and more relaxed attitudes in the State of Excitement. Worst of all is the loss of our W.A. friends: a constant grief and loneliness.

I was born in a pleasant house on Bass Highway just near Cooee Creek. The small hamlet was vastly different then. When my parents first lived in that seaside home the railway line hadn't spoiled one of the world's loveliest coast lines. My father kept a row boat in our yard and was able to put it straight into the water down a spillway made from telegraph poles.

When I was young and green hills and paddocks were that way too. Along the white ribbon of Cooee's main road red-roofed houses stood in flower-decorated front gardens. Behind these comfortable small homes fruit trees and vegetables burgeoned and flourished. Fat red and white cattle fed on the lush pasture and in autumn the grass was starred with field mushrooms. There was no so-called Golden Mile, Cooee Creek ran sparkling into the unpolluted blue of Bass Strait, and every bridge, reef and suitable rock had its quota of fishermen. It's different now. Most of the time fish wisely keep well out to sea.

While I was still very young we moved up to the old cottage above the brick works which my father managed for the Van Diemen's Land Company for over thirty years. That small industry gave intermittent work to upwards of a dozen local men and now there is no sign that it, or the Rockliffe Cordial Factory which ran off the same water power, ever existed.

The dam which conserved the water for the turbine was beautifully situated — a generous stretch of deep water held by a high man-made wall, and naturally high grassy banks with a cliff-like rocky hill where the wall of the dam

was built. Further up, where the dam was fed by a sizeable creek, ferns and wild flowers encouraged small animals and birds. On the water, ducks of all kinds and an occasional swan lived in well-fed peace. On summer evenings after brickmaking had used enough water to expose a metre wide ledge on the water side of the big concrete wall, platypuses used it for a playground. They swam over from the clay and rock natural wall which was their home. Painted coppery bronze by the setting sun the little mammals climbed up, pushing and shoving like happy kids — and playing a kind of “off and on” game which, if we were quiet, went on for a long time. Sometimes there were more than a dozen and we never knew we were looking at rare and fleeting history. Now of that century old industry there is nothing. No big box-kilns, no neat piles of wood, no sand shed for drying bricks. Nothing — just storage space, which surely could have been found elsewhere. Tourists might have enjoyed that trout-filled, fern-fringed stretch of water where those fabulous little creatures lived and played. I haven't asked what happened to the platypuses. Knowledge can be painful — and in any case, I think I know.

When I grieve over changes to this lovely island I try to remember that many of the industries which cause unpleasant side effects also provide families with employment. The environment is of immense importance but so are people.

East Devonport is a pretty place and where we live particularly so. Shop prices are perhaps a little higher than in Devonport itself, but not enough to matter. Before we moved this side of the river we thought the town of Devonport pleasant enough. I could remember the area

where we were then living as a Chinese market garden with a creek running through it. It is interesting to know that Lord Casey's father, or perhaps it is more likely to have been his grandfather, once owned a lot of central Devonport. I have a copy of an old map dated 1870 of what was then the County of Devon in the parish of Northam, showing a plan of allotments in the township of Formby which were the property of C. G. Casey, Esq., M.D. This area is part of modern Devonport's centre.

Perhaps we were foolish to leave Albany where we were well known, for a place I only thought I knew, but there are compensations and this cottage is one of them. For me people are usually more important than places and my consolation for loss comes from the gain of such friends as Margaret Giordano, secretary of the Tasmanian Fellowship of Australian Writers and her school teacher sister Jennifer. And there is, thanks be, Sally Packet, who lives at Latrobe — just too far for frequent calls, though Milor and I have visited her beautiful hillside farmhouse which has the town spread out like a picture below. Not, mind you that Sally and I agree on all subjects but we do share tastes and certain areas of knowledge and don't necessarily expect our friends to duplicate personal beliefs and opinions. I truly can't think what I'd do without this friendship and the frequent talks we have by telephone.

But no doubt my greatest personal luck is in my friend and husband Milor, industriously tending his wonderful garden, and looking after everything including his wife. Oh dear, how I do run on and on.

KEN GOTT

Swag

Recently I heard an old mate, Jim (now Mr Justice) Staples give the annual Chifley Memorial Lecture organised by the Melbourne University Labor Club. Jim quoted Ben Chifley to the effect that “we affirm for every man the right to receive a fair return for his labor, enterprise and initiative”.

Enterprise and initiative? Was I hearing correctly? Surely these two words were Liberal Party property? Virtually copyrighted by Menzies, Holt, McMahon and Fraser? Yet Ben Chifley was being quoted accurately. I made a mental note to consult George Orwell when I got home, for no modern man has so perceptively explored the nuances and connections between words and politics and the psychology underlying successful propaganda.

On the way home, however, it became clear. Enterprise and initiative are obviously praiseworthy qualities, whether in football, in the arts, or in life in general, rather like honesty, courtesy, diligence, accuracy and so forth. From about 1949 onwards the Liberals appropriated (or, since I'm an ALP member, I should say misappropriated) these words. Rather than fight for them, Labor surrendered them to the Liberals. From then on, reactive knee-jerk politics began to operate. Because the right trumpeted so much about initiative and enterprise, the Left became hostile to these qualities. Reactive politics, in their crudest form, is looking at Malcolm Fraser's positions and concluding that appropriate Labor ones must be 180 degrees different. It's a great way to paint yourself into a corner.

I think the above observation is relevant as a prelude to some comments on Leonie Sandercock's response (Swag, Overland 80) to Stephen Murray-Smith (Swag, Overland 79). Both are obviously concerned about where the Left stands and where it is heading, as was Jim Staples in

his recent lecture. At times, however, the Stephen-Leonie contributions have something of the flavor of a USA-USSR United Nations debate of the late 1950s: an American roasts the Russians for invading Hungary and the Russian replies with a speech about the American Negroes.

I don't think Leonie's analysis of the Left's present troubles, based as it is on a reification of “the Right” and “the Left” with the latter being “stunned and traumatised” by Whitlam's dismissal, thus leaving “the Right” free to move into “the subsequent moral and ideological vacuum” is entirely adequate. It is a neat schematic diagram, but it ignores the fact that there are people (and I don't want a capital letter for them) who vote governments in and out. In Australia, we cannot, as Brecht satirically suggested, “repeal the people” as a means of implementing our political dogmas. Our electoral processes, for all their faults, reflect a popular will.

If we put people, rather than abstractions, at the centre of our analysis, I think we have to recognise that there has been a shift in attitudes towards taxation, education, the state role in the economy and other matters mentioned by Leonie. I don't think the right wing have engineered this change, so much as they have perceived it and ridden its wave to power in Australia, the UK, and most recently the USA. Friedmanism, except for its esoteric monetarist language, has been around for a long time.

Unless we can note the changes in the aspirations and attitudes of ordinary Australians as our starting point and build democratic socialist values and programs from that basis, we are going to be in the wilderness for many years. Leonie Sandercock's repeat prescription of the 1972 Whitlam program makes her appear as the “old Leftie” rather than Stephen. We need new approaches to the injustices of inequality of incomes, educa-

tional opportunity and the like. The guaranteed minimum income is one concept that might be explored.

I don't use "old Leftie" in any derogatory way and I'm sure Leonie didn't either. In fact, believing with Marx that the economic system and its ability to produce goods and services efficiently is a very basic matter, and sharing Engels' admiration for the achievements of science, makes me feel at times that I'm an antiquarian Leftie. I'm rather dismayed therefore, at Leonie's advocacy of a steady-state economy. One day, perhaps, but certainly not now. In Marx's categories, a steady-state economy belongs to the era of communism rather than to that of socialism.

A steady-state economy at this point would be a sure way to leave our unemployed permanently jobless. If our gross product could grow by 10 per cent per annum (something we've never achieved, although some Asian economies with virtually no natural resources have done so) we could mop up unemployment fairly quickly. With 2 per cent annual growth, we hardly make any inroads into unemployment, while with zero growth unemployment rises.

Zero growth, at this stage of our society, would aggravate the very injustices about which Leonie complained, and in a long-term perspective its political implications are horrible. Feudal Europe was a no-growth, steady-state society and its accompanying political superstructure was extremely authoritarian. I doubt whether at our

present stage of economic development, a steady-state economy could operate except under a dictatorship.

I'm sorry to harp on economic matters since I know they bore many people, but decades of Liberal rule have left us with an elaborate system of economic mutual masturbation, made up of subsidies, handouts and protection to favored groups behind a facade of slogans about private enterprise and initiative. This surely should be a fruitful field for Labor policy-making if we can master the words "waste" and "inefficiency".

Anyway, I'm encouraged to hear that the liberal Democratic circles in the US which contributed so much to our awareness of the environment, civil rights, inequality and poverty have recently added capital formation and productivity to their agenda.

None of us, I feel, take the international setting sufficiently into account when discussing Australian affairs. To steal a thought from Donne, no nation is an island today, least of all economically, although many of the prescriptions advanced by the Left seem to assume that Australia can be made into one. Hostility toward the inevitable (and in my view desirable) growth of economic interconnections between Australia and other countries has become an unfortunate hallmark of the Left. There is a place for nationalism, but there is also a place for internationalism. Saying that, puts me right back with Bakunin and Rosa Luxemburg, very old Lefties indeed.

Compulsive talkers call for violence.
They talk to you when you need violence.
One answer I should like to know
Is, where compulsive listeners go.

JOHN MANIFOLD

Les Murray's Single-minded Many-Sidedness

MICHAEL SHARKEY

Michael Sharkey teaches in the English department at the University of New England. Aged 34, he has published two books of poetry and has recently edited an anthology, No Standing: Twelve Poets.

Les A. Murray, poet, critic, resident in Sydney, has achieved much since publication of his first collection *The Ilex Tree*, with Geoffrey Lehmann, in 1965. Editor of *Poetry Australia* and a series of contemporary poets published by Angus and Robertson, Murray is well known (at least in New South Wales) for his book reviews and for the inclusion of his *Selected Poems: The Vernacular Republic* on a Higher School Certificate syllabus. His publications include *The Weatherboard Cathedral* (1969), *Poems Against Economics* (1972), *Lunch and Counter Lunch* (1974), *Ethnic Radio* (1978) and *The Peasant Mandarin: Prose Pieces* (1978). A further volume of poems, *The Boys Who Stole The Funeral*, recently appeared.

A clue to Murray's underlying assumptions in his poetry is offered in the reviews collected together in *The Peasant Mandarin*. These include the conviction that each object in the poetic field of perception exists as a symbol of a transcendental Christian dispensation. The poet's role accordingly consists of turning over images of the 'hidden' order of things to convince his readers of the truth of his ostensible belief.

Murray avows his intention or tacitly promotes it within a framework of descriptive verse that does not waver or offer tentative possibilities of interpretation, but self-convincedly drives to a preconceived conclusion or solution. Thus, to a large extent Murray's poetry represents a rehearsal of his theme of salvation through the assumption of faith. Significant images of this belief include repetitions of a considerable deal of European

interpretations of man's relationship to landscape. Inherently, Murray follows a Romantic tradition which goes back through McAuley, O'Dowd, Brennan, Kendall, to English precursors. Murray's view of the proper concerns of Australian poetry are derived not so much from an experiential or experimental consideration of relationships in the Australian landscape and areas of human behavior, but from 'received' revelation. His work tends, therefore, to offer distortions of the reality of the country he uses as image. In his views of contemporary poets such as James McAuley and Robert Gray, Murray indicates the approximate limits of his poetic dualism — or, perhaps, his double-standard.

Murray outlines what is by now a familiar list of prejudices against heresies in Australian verse, with small changes in the catalog of the 'dead-lies' among the cast. In his efforts to assert 'Westernism' against the 'deadening' influence of the East (more correctly, from an Australian point of view, the Near North) Murray reveals some conceptual limitations, even while he disclaims a monopolistic view on the objective status of objects in poetic 'process' or 'event'. He is not a tentative thinker, as Thomas Shapcott observed: "his poems are conclusions rather than explorations" (in "Australian Poetry Since 1920", *The Literature of Australia*, ed. G. Dutton, Penguin 1976, p. 126). Yet to date there has been no substantial questioning of the progress of Murray's polemic.

Murray is in effect not the subtlest beast of all the field that his worst detractors might see in him, chiefly the proponents of the 'New Poetry'

in their editorial throwaway putdowns from time to time. Robert Adamson and Kris Hemensley and others in the small magazine business have tended this way. He is, however, the self-creator of the situation in picking up the Elijah's mantle of James McAuley.

McAuley's dogmatic and political conservatism is veiled by Murray in an aura of Virgilian republican virtue, but the noumen still resides there. The essay on Peter Porter's interpretation of Australia ("On Sitting Back and Thinking About Porter's Boeotia", a version of Murray's essay "On First Looking into Chapman's Hesiod", in P. K. Elkin, *Australian Poems in Perspective*, U.Q.P., 1978, pp. 171-184) is a case in point. The title itself gives pause, in its assumption that the time has come to sit back in judgment of Porter's achievements so far. A deterministic estimate comes to us here in the guise of a theory of poetry. To which, moreover, Porter does not subscribe; the equivocation of Porter's tone in the "Chapman's Hesiod" poem is utterly missed by Murray as he plunges after corroboration for his own cultural theory of what Australia owes to the Aboriginals. In effect, Murray has raked over his own early poetry in "The Human Hair Thread", *Meanjin* (December 1977), in an attempt to "prove his own awareness and indebtedness". The argument is at least naive, and possibly specious or patronising, as he reads into his own work things which simply are not there—like the implication that in "Lament for the Country Soldiers" or "Novilladas Democraticas" Aboriginal overtones are intended or suggested.

Thomas Shapcott also mapped out the formalism of Murray's thought:

Murray's consistent view of civilisation is almost military in its scorn of soft small-l liberals and those who have cut themselves off from the vigorous disciplines of survival.

Shapcott pointed to Murray's scorn for "revolutionary idealists" (p. 127); he might also have added that Murray's options are not open to a vast majority of those who comprise the citizenry of the "Vernacular Republic" either inside or outside Murray's poetry. The group which makes up "those who have cut themselves off from the vigorous disciplines of survival" requires to be considered more humanely. For those who do not reside in cities and simultaneously manage to involve themselves with an ancestral farm, or who have no roots in the areas outside the cities of Australia, the "disciplines of survival" are no

less rigorous by being conditioned by urban rituals. An early poem of Murray's, "An Absolutely Ordinary Rainbow" may be seen in broader perspective to represent an extraordinary piece of self-indulgence by one who cannot cope with such a vigorous discipline as the city imposes. And the imagined reactions of the passers-by represents an attempt to infer the hollowness of dwellers in cities—a pre-salvation state where those who have "fallen away" from presumably 'Boeotian' verities may wander in search of such thaumaturges as the poem's weeping man. This is loading the dice considerably in favor of a fantasy view of Australia.

Murray's appeal, judged by his essays on Porter, is to ancient values, European or Indo-European, 'Western' in a word, which have been endorsed by custom, use, habitude. He refers to an agricultural past older than the white history of Australia, while attempting to co-opt Aboriginal history into the Boeotian grab-bag:

Some, the black Australians, have been here for tens of thousands of years, and their culture is a Boeotian resource of immeasurable value for us all.

("On Sitting Back and Thinking About Porter's Boeotia", p. 183.)

In the poem "Sanskrit", Murray says:

To be of Europe is also a horn-dance,
cattle knowledge. Even here, where Europa
dumped rusty in her disgrace, gathered child-
hood afresh
by the draywheel's mercy, on creeks of the far
selections.

(*Vernacular Republic*, p. 60.)

In Murray's canon, the origins of Europe (in the Europa myth) are predominantly the origins of Australia. The Aboriginal theme is no more than an attempt to graft one more 'authority' to his own essentially Christian and sacrificial worldview. The rape of Europa is significant for the blood-connections of Australia and Europe, and a general metaphysical line that infers rebirth of European culture and 'civilisation' along the old lines. Murray cannot have it both ways. Christianity has several guises in his work: what he calls his "visionary" theme in "The Burning Truck", or more overtly acknowledged "Eucharistic" poems like "Blood" and "Towards the Imminent Days", with its "heraldic, medieval, gargoyles—and-cathedral-carvings side" (*Twelve*

Poets 1950-1970, Jacaranda, 1971, pp. 218-20), and is part of the Australian-Boeotian inheritance for Murray. In seeing the cities of Australia as "scattered, half-Boeotian garden cities" ("On Sitting Back", p. 181) Murray shows that he interprets Porter glibly. The garden cities represent for Murray a Romano-Athenian decadence in art, a threat to his vatic notion of the poet as "craftsman, with some remnant of priestly dignity". The dichotomy grows alarming as Murray lumps together Bohemians, Roman satirists, Dada, the absurd, and performance artists as enemies of the poet who stresses "Works" and not "Life" and "Death" ("On Sitting Back", p. 182). Beneath all this threat to his favorite 'cultural' line, Murray detects a socialist 'influence' that causes artists to make self-conscious "'proletarian' gestures". In his report of the Rotterdam Poetry International in 1979, Murray included Allen Ginsberg in this category, somewhat incongruously for one relating to himself bardic status based on rival ideology, but with no less insistence on the role-playing:

Also, the presence of the unspeakable Allen Ginsberg, working through his mandarin fake-proletarian act, did a lot to put me off my Heinekens. ("Europe, Polycentrically, Courtesy KLM", *Notes and Furphies*, no. 3, October 1979, p. 5.)

It is clear that Murray is angling for legitimacy to sanction his own polemic. The Hesiod to Virgil via Theocritus tradition which he traces and which culminates with Wordsworth, Frost and two old mates, David Campbell and Geoffrey Lehmann, is entertaining as a stab at mana, but worth little more: it's playing dodgem cars with the old masters.

Murray writes poems that purport to borrow the styles of these 'models' and, to a degree, they become reshufflings through familiar counters and tropes. What is more significant is that he takes these figures as models at all. What they largely have in common is urbanity. After Hesiod, it is unlikely that any of the writers he lists would claim the rustic genealogy that Murray traces. Theocritus least of all, as a 'metropolitan' writer. Virgil's nationalism—like Murray's—would also set him apart from the Hesiodic impulse. Murray appears closer to Virgil in fact: the stripped-down republican virtues elucidated in the accounts of Aeneas's acts and progeny posit a countryman's familiarity with pioneering skills, and an educated, civic-minded keenness of intel-

lect that peruses urbane or city things to measure them against the 'rustic' standards. Murray also attempts the compiling of a syncretic account of a national history to its present forms of government and behavior, together with remarks upon the direction it is taking. Poems like "The Swarm" and "Futures Exchange" in *Ethnic Radio* push beyond the Whitlam scene to postulate 'engulfment'. Murray does not have, obviously, the grandeur of incipient empire for his theme. And presumably, his account would require Whitmanesque cataloguing efforts to embrace all the gear and tackle of the components. There is an inverse pride in all the diversity of wonderment in Murray's work, since there is no Imperium to focus upon. In Murray's work, the sources are the variegated histories of the individuals, tribes, clans, urban 'tribes' and concatenations that make up Australia.

The common feature of all Murray's groups and classes and castes (since he admits caste into his scheme as constituting an inescapable socio-economic reality in Australia) is not so much that diversity itself, but the fact that each group is 'Australian' by location only. Like Whitman's Americans, Murray's Australians are made equivalent by accidental geographical assembly. Furthermore, of course, Murray's fellow-countrymen are equivalent under a Christian dispensation, a creaturely, though hierarchic rather than democratic status. Within this fellowship, they gain a transcendental identity that suggests they might act for some purpose other than that defined by self-interest alone. At least this is the emergent myth in his work. And it is elevated into a nationalist as well as national ethos in *The Boys Who Stole the Funeral*, starring a dead Anzac whose wish to be buried in the place of his youth up the country is honored curiously by two layabouts who acquire a reflected grace thereby. "Up Home" is a recurrent concept in Murray's 'personal'-relative poems, and in the wider area of analogy reflects his Christian theme.

The other poets in Murray's list include some disparate theoreticians. Wordsworth, Frost and Campbell are permitted entry into the circle of the ancients on the grounds presumably that they combine provincial interests with studied application to idiosyncratic style. Murray plainly loves a local or regional poet. Robert Adamson is admired, in another place, for his adept revisions of the Hawkesbury, which place of origin "will save him", Murray contends ("More Wow than

Flutter", *Peasant Mandarin*, p. 196). In this regard, it is interesting to observe Murray's criticism of Adamson for the latter's "forcing himself to work so often beyond his intelligence, and his fundamentally opportunist style put together out of imitations" (p. 195). Undoubtedly Adamson's poetry evokes stunned embarrassment for his own gaucheries as when he vouches us a Duncanesque voyeur's glance toward a 'vision' of Anadyomene at Double Bay (*Cross the Border*, Prism, Sydney, 1977), but Murray is equally serious when he tells us in a note to his own poem "Spring Hail" (*Twelve Poets*, p. 219) that "Mircea Eliade's writings on shamanism, which I read years later, may provide useful background reading". These two Sydney city poets both claim prescience and other 'gifts', and both allege Catholic symbols in their work; the desire to find a myth that makes sense of the 'alien' environment of Australia drives both to Freudian significances or other post-Romantic versions of what things 'mean' in some psycho-structural way, yet it is predominantly the appeal of the Christian scheme that is overt in Murray (and cryptic in Adamson).

Murray's major premise is an implied pre-occupation with salvation—of others as well as one's self. A sort of crusading mission is always possible in this view, and he adopts the tone at times. Archaisms suggest the theme, in a poem like "Blood": "Looking down, we praise for its firm flesh/ The creature killed according to the Law". The antiphonal diction is reprised in a more recent poem from *Ethnic Radio*, "The Figures in Quoniam", where a passing-strange locution tends to Gongorism. What emerges is not a fascinating word-game but a thesaurus entry as Murray seeks to image a word in the Book of Kells: "entwined, interlaced, gemmate, lacertine, boucle,/ spirate, labyrinthine, cloisonny, tressured and tressed" and so on. In this poem, all the accoutrements of worship are ultimately reduced to an imitation of the vocabulary, for Murray to have a sort of private joke with Christ. The proper place to seek a similar tone is not in the works of Hopkins but in David Jones, whose ornate *Anathemata* and other works recall the game that Murray plays.

Murray's comments on James McAuley's *raison d'être*, summed up in a eulogy on the day following the older poet's death, are significant here:

He was concerned to assert and to restore the primacy of reason and a certain classical clarity

in art over against romantic portentousness and formlessness, and he fought to revive the high style. In the former aim, he had some success for a time; he and one or two others made a certain 'Augustan' tone dominant in Australian poetry for more than a decade after the Second World War. In the latter, he never really prevailed against what I think is the central and best tendency of Australian poetry, an enlightened, inclusive, civil mode of writing which belongs ultimately to the middle style, but allows itself to dip up and down at need, and at best abolishes all the levels by reconciling them.

(*The Peasant Mandarin*, p. 189.)

The notion of reconciliation has to do with both the realm of political theory and religious polemics. Caste is posited by Murray, as his poems infer—such as the autobiographical "Employment for the Castes in Abeyance". Other poems have also treated this aspect of Murray's thought, like "Sanskrit" and other works in the "Walking to the Cattle Place" section of his third collection, *Poems Against Economics* (Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1972). The poem, about 'employment' at the Institute as translator, claims "I was Western Europe", and in the process of describing what passed for small-talk in Departmental employment hours, slips us an attempted allegory of a takeover by the 'Left': it is Communist Scare material, as well as Christian parable (although the inter-linkage has a pedigree in Australian poetic practice, particularly since McAuley's intervention in critical polemics and poetic expression with the idea—a piece of local color that represented the Democratic Labor Party's contribution to Australian poetry, and the National Civic Council's dead hand on the arts). Murray has summed up in his poem his own years of unemployment—"I was getting over a patch of free-form living:/ flat food round the midriff, long food up your sleeves" (p. 23)—and his concept of Australia: "peace and cover,/ a recourse for exiles, poets, decent spies, for plotters who meant to rise from the dead with their circle". This is magian, Guy Fawkesian stuff: poetry is raised into Romantic bearer of glad tidings, the Alternative Gospel.

Murray offers us here nothing less than a revamped claim for Shelleyan 'unacknowledged legislator' status for himself, and he lays down the polarities with a comparison of scientists with poets and other 'translators': "they were translating the universe into science, believing that otherwise it had no meaning". The paradox implies there is no meaning without belief, of course;

and science is put-down by the ensuing "I heard that machine translation never happened: language defeated it. We are a language species" (p. 24) and, more to the point, "Prince Obolensky succeeded me for a time/ but he soon returned to Fiji to teach Hebrew". The Biblical 'joke' is only bait however: the declassè "Prince" who bears the language of the chosen people into others' consciousness is emblematic of Murray's role as bearer of the evangel by 'poetic' means (not, significantly, the poetic evangel for the sake of poetry). In the demolishing of what he sees as the dialectical 'method' of science it does not appear to register with Murray that his own view of life as 'employment' is subject to no more satisfying resolution than his sum of life's pursuits. Remarking, in a quasi-biblical adaptation that "In the midst of life we are in employment", Murray defines life's characteristics jocularly as "seek, travel and print, seek left-right-travel-and-bang/ as the Chinese typewriter went which I saw working/ when I was a translator in the Institute". This apparent aimlessness in poetic terms is at utter variance with his dogmatic 'belief' in ethical values being situated in historical Christianity.

With McAuley, we have according to Murray "one of the three or four best known and deservedly eminent poets in Australia. Of all the scholar-poets, he was the most incisive and provocative theorist" ("James McAuley—A Personal Appreciation", *The Peasant Mandarin*, p. 185). The belief in personal salvation is so strong in Murray as to provoke his assertion that he has located a kindred believer, and necessarily the tone of the fellow-traveller is adopted; the bias inherent in "classical charity" in art against "romantic portentousness and formlessness" does not reflect rigor: it is not critically honest, and Murray is in his full cry after his 'master'. Earlier in his summary of McAuley's beatitudes, which accurately sees McAuley as a great maker of "religious poems", Murray remarks that McAuley's "polemical" poems nevertheless "fail to escape that slightly peevish tone that has so bedevilled much Catholic and conservative writing in the last century or so, that defiant making of brilliant points to a public one knows deep down is not listening" (p. 187).

Murray's own tone is not so much peevish as contemptuous, in dealing with the same issues that raised the hackles of McAuley, and provoked his part in the Ern Malley hoax. That debunking of the experimental is everywhere regarded with

regret, even by Murray, yet the way out of peevishness of tone adopted by "catholic and conservative" writers has been for him in much of his poetry and reviewing stances an ex-cathedra assuredness.

The assuredness hinges upon the Resurrection, for which Murray, like McAuley, has opted, and the solace of knowing some sort of public at least acknowledges the fact of the poet's existence. This is not to imply only a flair but self-advertisement; a considerable lyric talent is not obstructed in McAuley or Murray by their obeisance to a cause that relegates their poetry to subservient status. "Toward the Imminent Days" is a case in point; Murray's transcendentalism informs the entire poem, but is held in check from irrupting into polemic, as he holds to his celebration of quotidian events, even while the imagery threatens to overrun the 'pastoral' limits Murray infers with "For your wedding, I wish you the frequent image of farms" (*Twelve Poets*, p. 218). The images are to do with Advent, the Millennium, and other manifestations of 'imminence'—and immanence. And yet, predominantly, an impression of countryside is conveyed as Murray heaps up the bric-a-brac of works and days that he has observed.

The country matters that Murray chooses to illustrate, to exemplify control and order, imply a significant alteration of objects in the perceptual field by humans of a particular sort, and the consequent conceptual alteration of events. Murray's notion of 'history' or chronological events involves recension and redaction to conformity with a thesis that value derives from 'use' of the land, with pasturage and clearing, the concomitants of settlement, and the importation of European husbandry into the Australian continent. Entailed with a sense of 'right' response to landscape is the suppression of what is unfamiliar, literally non-hereditary, the Aboriginal way of life in chief, and any possibility of confronting the land without seeing farms and cities superimposed. The comity of beings that Murray describes in his poetry is hieratic; co-operation and reciprocity do not enter the scheme of things. Man always stands at the top of the catalogue, like Adam, as being responsible for the disposal of all beasts in view: the smallest as well as the largest come under this human trait, made into an 'obligation'. The cattle are everywhere representative of human presence or 'control'; no less subjugated are the other inhabitants of earth, "Toward the Imminent Days" has Murray "walk-

ing skewways over worm-ocean that heaps/ Between skid and crumble with lumped stones in ambush for feet". The 'retaliation' of the land is as effectual as that of the stones. Intent is not limited to man, but resides in a hostile universe.

For Murray, a cosmic war is being waged that has for its antagonists mankind and the rest of creation—and at times, mankind struggles with an interior enemy. The characterization of the strife is at times sacrificial; in "Blood", the victim is a pig. Discussing literary 'flaws' in Hesiod's *Theogony* Professor Dorothea Wender comments concerning the unexciting depiction of conflict: "It is something to do with a limited point of view; Hesiod can only see one person on stage at a time. When he is writing about the castration of Ouranos, his mind is rigidly fixed on Kronos and his terrible act, to the complete exclusion of the victim." (*Hesiod and Theognis*, ed. D. S. Wender. Penguin, 1973, p. 19.) In the same way. Murray's victims are devalued—the character at the centre of the stage serves to convey the barbaric 'truth' to the audience: other events in the field are reduced to stage props, cotangential circumstance. The 'I' of the poem "Blood" offers us "revelation" after the killing (the world is recognised as composed of phenomena which all have a "holy place"), just as in the poems making up "The Police: Seven Voices" series (*Vernacular Republic*, pp. 93-102) the 'victims' are vehicles for the enlightenment of their persecutors ("Men have died of falling downstairs/ have ruptured their spleen eating pies/ have confessed to God's death"—p. 93). The revelation is plainly stated in the Police poems by one of the 'voices', that of "Discontent, reading Conan Doyle". It is that which Murray postulated in McAuley, 'reasons': "We still defend logic", and "our mystery's the Score" (p. 95). In short, "the Score" is the secular version of what is directly acknowledged to be "the Law" in "Blood".

Another version of the war to the knife that Murray traces in human dealings is revealed in his attitude to the landscape itself. There is no sense in which the land is observed objectively: it exists for Murray as symbol, and as symbol of an older dispensation. This might be well enough if it were a reminder of the "Edenic" order only. There is more to it, however, and it becomes apparent even in such an early poem as "Toward the Imminent Days". Murray wishes his friend at last "the frequent image of farms" for their epithalamion, and earlier advises that "on summer mornings, a farm boy can see through the

hills/ The roots of pumpkin vines knotting clean under New England" (*Vernacular Republic*, p. 39). The 'order' which is brought to the 'new' land of Australia by the first settlers is indeed token of what their own land used to be. Without regard for the nature of the new land itself, or its Aboriginal inhabitants' relationships with it, a truly 'sacrificial' attitude is imposed, that seeks to 'restore' what in "Laconics: the Forty Acres" Murray calls "Our croft, our Downs,/ our sober, shining land". (*Vernacular Republic*, p. 139.) Again, the sacrificer's ultimate and utter contempt for the victim is manifest: in pursuing the welfare of 'self', all 'other' is devalued completely. The Romantic elevation is revealed finally as hubris, even while the 'theory' of sacrifice speciously attempts to imply a linkage that is ennobling in the death that is perpetrated. In this respect, the most recent opus, *The Boys Who Stole the Funeral*, Murray's sonnet-novel, goes beyond the wish to create a 'New' England; the myth of Anzac is romantically elevated to a nationalistic rallying-point again, with a corpse as 'symbol'. The fiction is another attempt to offer a focus for an essentially pluralist culture; and whether the mass of sonnets sustains such an epic wish's fulfilment, or whether the superstructure flabbily collapses under such an imposition of romance, the core of meaning is itself the most incisively recurrent feature of all Murray's work to date.

Against this view of the land and all it contains as 'symbol', the poetry of Robert Gray, which Murray reviews only to deliver a caution against as tending towards preaching Zen, "a dead end for Western poets" (*Peasant Mandarin*, p. 115)¹ offers at least an escape from the sacrificial death wished upon the entire country by transcendentalists like Murray. If Murray locates in Gray's work a "slightly sad, slightly valedictory" note where he turns to the North Coast (p. 114), it is because where Murray as traveller sees only quiet-spoken older respectful men in "Sawmill Towns", Gray perceives the autumnal nature of human pursuits in a larger fashion. The "almost affectless equanimity of the uprooted modern person which can come out as deep melancholy" (p. 115) is unavoidably a product of such a world-view as that bequeathed by the colonial founders of Australia to their successors—a desire to recreate the impossible Eden, a New England.

Murray's personal allegiance to the older 'Western' culture entails antipathy to any view that sees the land as other than symbol, as 'victim'

to be possessed or ritually despoiled—not as material for contemplation concerning relationships, but as ‘prime bush land’ to be ‘husbanded’ in order to reproduce a further concordance for sacrifice. What Murray calls ‘Homeric’ many-mindedness, and a sense of wrestling with complexities of sense and music that has been the spinal strength of Western poetry (p. 116) in opposition to the ‘knack’ of Zen poetry is another false lead. The ‘many-sided’ or many-minded vision that he speaks of in relation to his own line is finally Cyclopean, and distinctly more myopic than that view which permits participation by the reader, to perceive what the true state of the ‘revealed’ world might be.

Note

¹Murray astutely perceives Gray’s over-riding tendency, one which interrupts the clarity and opacity of Gary Snyder’s work in the USA, yet he fails to observe that as well as showing a dogmatic face to the reader, Gray’s best work (and notably in his recent volume, *Grass Script*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney 1979) also offers some tentative explorations of the landscape of Australia. Murray also fails, in his criticism, to account for the long ‘sceptic’ and Epicurean traditions of the West that he so firmly claims to be more truly represented by Hesiodic dogmatism.

Meanjin

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This special issue—it’s over 200 pages—is devoted largely to contemporary writing, buttressed by statements from the contributors concerning their work and practice. Poets represented include Gwen Harwood, Vincent Buckley, Tom Shapcott, Les Murray, Robert Gray, John Forbes, Nigel Roberts, Eric Beach. There’s prose from Robert Drewe, Murray Bail, Barbara Hanrahan, Helen Garner, Elizabeth Jolley, Barry Hill and Barry Dickins; a playscript from Jack Hibberd, and an interview with Louis Nowra. Other features include a photographic essay on life inside a mental hospital, a group of articles on little magazines in Australia and elsewhere, and a discussion of biography. To say nothing of the Ned Kelly centenary.

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LEN FRENCH

RICK AMOR '80

Joseph Mallord William Turner's definition of the activity which occupied him from first to second childhood—"It's a rum business"—is still one of the most precise and honest statements made about art by an artist. Consider for a moment the present case.

Here we have a large body of work produced in Australia in the shabby dying half of the twentieth century which is almost Byzantine in its structure and in its sonorous color, and which carries a cargo of literary reference. This aspect alone, because it is concerned with the pain and passion of Homeric heroes, an English Catholic martyr, or follows up the drift of Gericault's raft with never a bushranger in sight, alone puts the work into a special category, but when the work is produced by one whose levels of experience include the signwriter's trestle, the stewards' galley in a passenger ship, and the conduct of classes in cake-decoration at the William Angliss School of Catering, surely it is as rum as the career of the young genius from the barber's shop who lashed himself to a ship's mast to get a close-up of a storm and who became, complete with brass telescope, Captain Puggy Booth—drunk on hard liquor and Venetian sunsets.

There is in fact more than a casual parallel between the two men. Like his predecessor, the Australian had a less than adequate classical education, but chose to take on the great classical themes for his early ventures. Both men were obsessed with heroic voyages before they had experienced the seas upon which those voyages were made. The Aegean Islands through which his heroes wandered were not to be seen and lived on for many years after he had decorated a Greek café, a café which moved itself from Bourke Street to become a good restaurant in Lonsdale Street, taking with it both the panels and its name, "The Legend". (The Greek con-

nection may not be so odd in Melbourne, but it seems decidedly odd that this same restaurant should now use as its symbol, on everything from menus to book-matches, a stylised round-bottomed ship whose three symmetrical masts are also the Crosses of Calvary.) This "Legend" series would seem to be a useful point of departure. Fine as each of the individual panels is, they still only offer hints of the promise to come. The School of Paris influence is heavy, but who else in the local scene chose the Orphism of Robert Delaunay rather than the Fauvism or Cubism of the bigger stars? But the choice was as right, as have been most of the choices made since, and to ally classical and Christian iconography is to challenge his repeated denials that he is neither a religious man nor a religious artist. All his work, from the "Legend" panels through the "Campion" series, proclaims it. His preoccupation in both enamel and glass has not been either abstract pattern making or the use of themes which happen to be convenient taking-off points for a purely aesthetic statement. His work has a literary basis and is all the better for that.

If his career is not unlike that of Turner's, his artistic kinship is with the artist-craftsmen who are the true creators of the great European cathedrals. He is in fact an artist (and here one willingly risks a cliché) who has been born out of his time, for cathedral building is no longer an everyday activity. It was therefore probably inevitable that he should be attracted to, and later employed upon, the structure and decorating of those buildings which in our own time have, for most of the community, taken over the role of the cathedral. It is to art galleries and libraries that people now go for their major non-material experiences. In the same way as the members of a medieval community not only purged themselves of their daily dross inside the cathedral, but felt its very

presence as a good influence, so in our own society it is clear that many people half-consciously feel that the art galleries, libraries and theatres into which they might never penetrate have somehow a benign effect on their lives. When the major festivals occur in the form of the great and expensive temporary exhibitions from foreign parts, the visitors after mortifying the flesh by hours in queues do not participate actively in the ceremony, but are awed spectators to the rites performed by those priests and acolytes of our time, the curators and display artists. It is only right and proper then that these modern temples should have ceilings, windows and panels of glass which assist in the mysteries, and it is equally right and proper that an artist denied the chance of working for the glory of God should work for the glory of Governments.

In appearance, especially in leather apron and with mallet and chisel for animating the glass, the round close-cropped head is that of his forbears, but they would be essentially Celtic forbears, for however constant the flirtation with things Greek, the man is a Celt. He loves a good pub and would be welcomed in a hundred establishments in Dublin; although, with a gathering reputation and its attendant rewards, wine has tended to replace beer. Over the drink he loves a good malicious story; if it needs a little bending of fact to improve its literary quality, the temptation often goes unresisted. Both body and face have filled out since, as the first Exhibitions Officer at the National Gallery of Victoria, he rattled both the building and some innocent visitors. The cigar which Mr Amor has awarded him and the O.B.E. awarded by the government are both fairly recent; they are allied to the narrowed eyes of a highly-skilled stirrer, and the larrikin grin which robs the stirring of hate.

He has travelled very widely under differing conditions of comfort, from working his way back to Australia from the slums of the Antwerp docks, to the studio and campus life appropriate to a Harkness Award-winner in the United States. The promotional trips with Mr. Rudy Komon, during which no expenses account was spared, have taken him into the more gilded corners of art patronage, and yet it is to his considerable credit that however much the trappings of affluence have grown around him, they have had

no apparent influence on his attitude to work. He is, as he has always been, obsessional about the hours he spends in the studio, and still makes the same demands on himself, and now on those with whom he collaborates, as he did in his poorer past. It seems clear that the distinguished architect of the Victorian Arts Centre, perhaps expecting a grateful and uncritical decorator, emerged from the encounter as close to being chastened as he is ever likely to be.

Perhaps the main concern for both the artist and those who are still courageous enough to admire him in spite of changes of fashion is how he can break out of the corner into which he has painted himself. Recent works show clearly the problems which he must face. The style which he has wrought is so personal that any major departure from it would risk the support of an assured and by now somewhat complacent audience and, at the same time, lead him into an area where his technical weaknesses would expose him to some withering winds. He seemed (as in the "Raft" series), to wish to move to a more specifically figurative range of images; but here his lack of ability to create through drawing a convincing three-dimension form, made him turn back at the last moment. The loading of layer-upon-layer of enamel, collaged strips of material and gold leaf are beautifully sustained, and he is one of the few painters in this country whose surfaces can be enjoyed inch-by-inch, and relished by the eye in a kind of visual tasting. But this encrustation can become an end in itself and less and less form can become more and more richly built up.

He is far too fine a designer, and has far too much to say about the subjects which possess him, to allow himself to be led merely to more exquisite surface making. These problems are, by the nature of the medium, avoided when he works in glass, and it would be sad if the approaching economic Dark Ages prevented architects from using him to the full. Perhaps the counter-forces which are leading us steadily and happily away from the black, white and charcoal of the architectural puritans will act as a counter-measure, and a great building, perhaps in such rich States as Queensland and Western Australia, will provide him with greater opportunities than ever before.

I'M NOT PROUD

I'm not proud
that's just what she'd say
me mum
in her 'new' coat
seven years ago
she bought it
& it's still th one she wears for 'best'
2 days' wages
that's th most money
she spent on herself
30 years of married life
6 kids
& th old man
who hated buses & had to bike to work
when he won at th races
he took us all in 2 taxis
10 miles to th beach
2 icecreams each
mum licked that one hollow
10 miles?
mum once walked us that far
4 of us
it's my turn to be carried
" " " " " "
& now I live second-hand
where pants are purple
& peas are canned
who shot those fur coats with th mange?
don't pull faces —
th wind might change
hard knocks & 'opportunity' shops
for
th poor
pawn shops & charity balls
th signs of a long-standing 'liberal' rule
& I'm on th dole
bludging's my role
sign round th corner says
INACTION KILLS
there's no williams here:
only bills
& I walk around
in an endless rhyme
killing time
shooting pool
playing chess
& eating chinese
can't afford th dentist' fees

ERIC BEACH

THE SCHOONER OF ROSES

1.
another ABC morning the radio tea and toast
a sleeping pill hangover and a sinkful of glasses
last night's dinner dishes piled like a skyscraper
about to fall.

there is no hot water in my kitchen the kettle
is out in the yard it boiled dry once too often.

there are roses in a beer glass on the table stolen
from the General hotel it is called a schooner and sounds
almost elegant. how long since somebody brought me flowers?
the canopy of velvet petals thank you for making me smile

the newsreader reports the state the water in the saucepan
boils and i wash the dishes they gleam in the rack
on the right side of the sink the water disappears down
the hole and there is a scum clinging to the stainless steel
i slap at it with a sponge and it goes away.

i rinse my hands my fingernails are very clean i bite one
and look at the paring the roses have thorns they bite
at their stems and are not softened in water i turn down
the radio until it is just a whisper a jet cuts through
the day the schooner of roses looks like wine red white
and rose.

i put on the saucepan for another cup of tea today
i will drink in the roses someone else can have the wine
the lawnmower in the distance sounds like the sea thank you
for bringing me flowers.

2.
the red petals of the roses have curled into black
she says i am the mutant pink rose with the deep secret
centred the heart a bronchitic lung you are the rose
the bloom carves a jagged empire and lives with
the tulip of the wine glass among women and the authentic
love song to a disc jockey the radio is a faceless friend.

marijuana soothes the feckless you hang on to your dope
like it's something important you are more frankie teardrop
than i the pretenders are playing i want to hear suicide
turn up the paranoia i want to hear screaming i observe
my wild and untamed nature the rose disintegrates i analyse
the ravings of a madwoman charred edges the dark curl
of friendship roses discarded dreams.

JENNY BOULT

IN SEARCH OF A FINE POEM

i travel the world over
in search of a fine poem
seen only in dreams

locked in four corners of mortal
wanderings often the dying light
outside indicates a passing
century in trouble

& the poem that i have heard sung
remains an unsolved mystery under
stars of the beyond that are silent

RUSSELL SOABA

TRURO DINNER 1980

tonight I eat seafood
at your table
drink vintage Barossa
and contemplating the art
of sipping wine
from a paper thin glass
I sense that fault
that hairline fracture
as we eat
the flesh
breaks apart
at the seam
and picking without interest
at an after dinner conversation
I watch the man pluck a rose
from the table
it shakes
as he snaps
the stem
Adelaide
the split runs deep
your wine is fine
you murder your daughters
beneath the glasshouse
the bedrock trembles

DONNA MAEGRAITH

HONEY-EATERS IN A POINSETTIA TREE

Their pale bellies polish the sky
with elegance
in the rouged branch tips
rascalling
the warm afternoon.

Striped beige heads steeped in lips
give and take
hop
twig
to
twig
drink
disturb nothing but the faint quiver of the breeze
in sweet fists full of clustered red.

With well fed luxuriance the honey eaters
leave the red clothed eating tree
to the night's devices
gather in the mild pink wax tree
to argue or discuss
nest or sleep.

They have no need to hoard
no insistent greed,
the tree with no leaves
will still be there
tomorrow.

JENNY BOULT

1980s

the 70s was a difficult decade for flowers the 80s open
even more ominously

the purchase of plant threatens to become prohibitive as
O.P.E.C. manipulates petroleum prices that multiply like
aphis on the stems of arab oil-rigs and our governments
encourage the infestation feasting on the sticky manna

however even at our mines' opencuts exhausted gaping
without backfill acacias will sprout and bloom on the
hillocks of overburden

gold will grow out of a desecration where there was anger
and sorrow at the stripping of the eucalypts a gladness
will be profuse for bees

a few ghostwhite mortals surviving where the fucked mines
lie in the bush like bungled backyard abortions will eke
an existence as itinerant apiarists eating honey

Madame Blavatsky will be forgotten and the fabled Pacifica
will swamp all memories of a diluted Atlantis the birds
occupying a once again blue heaven in lieu of soggy fish
that used sunken cities' windows as doorways

Australia will become finally the Great Desert Island from
Cooktown to Perth from Melbourne to Broome

a region for prophets only who know inherently that des-
erts blossom profusely without time's dicta definitive
of a day a decade a century or any damned calendar
indices of phenomena calibrated by scientific divinities

JOHN BLIGHT

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RIND /PEELS BACK TO MONDAY

(Meat comes again
out of the butcher's shop
scrapformed for cats

& the dog
comes out of the yard)

Weekends
when there are no
scraps left
with the meatscents
outside on the pavements

nights
a cat may sit on a butcher's
roof
& look at the moon Some
may sing for it

There will be a black
labrador close
locked in a black
backyard that by
that same moon
will see the cat sitting on
the butcher's roof
& bay for it

People
lying awake
in small rooms
dark & airless
hearing
the dog's bark
black & painful

will see only
the white
curve of the moon

Hours they will peel it
whiter & whiter

Dawn it goes green
like a potato

Trees come out

J. S. HARRY

THE HUNTING 'WOODS'

heads
are where we've climbed to—
often at rest for hours

like birds perching in them

tightgripped to thoughts
frangible as twigs

as out on the naturally recyclable,
vegetable floor, under trees,
a rat moves now, stopping—
that damp patch—to excrete, &

the eyes leap out;
the rat thought MOVES
twitching over leaves

fur paws skin tail teeth complete!;

& *plunge* their talons in

if the kill
was good, & if
there's a bounty on rats,
that year that place—we eat—

. . . out in the black
interior woods the torndown animals scream
as they must, as they do in those other,
alienwoods . . .

pierced, lifted out of the hunting place, & flown
to a still, white space for a flench & clean,
a different 'animal' screams . . . the dream of a scream . . .

the 'movement' stops the 'rat' 's pressed flat

ultimately there's no blood at all
on the magazine

J. S. HARRY

LAMPLIGHT

Mother who gave me life,
I think of women bearing
women. Forgive me the wisdom
I would not learn from you.

It is not for my children I walk
on earth in the light of the living,
it is for you, for the wild
daughters becoming women,

anguish of seasons burning
backwards in time to those other
bodies, your mother, and hers,
and beyond, speech growing stranger

on thresholds of ice, rock, fire,
bones changing, heads inclining
to monkey bosom, lemur breast—
guileless milk of the word.

I prayed you would live to see
Halley's Comet a second time.
The Sister said, "When she died
she was folding a little towel."

You left the world so, having lived
nearly thirty thousand days:
a fabric of marvels folding
down to a little space.

At our last meeting I closed
the ward door of heavy glass
between us, and saw your face
crumple, fine threadbare linen,

worn, still good to the last,
then, somehow, smooth to a smile
so I should not see your tears.
Anguish: remembered hours—

a lamp on embroidered linen,
my supper set out, your voice
calling me in as darkness
falls on my father's house.

GWEN HARWOOD

OUR SAD MONARCHIES

Is there a structure that stands up to time,
That whistles in the wind when we're away
With the same tune? Do details hold their line,
Do the proportions stay?
We have added ourselves to make reality,
The selves we add being dreams and being there;
Without the dream, things lose their credibility
In quite another order:
These familiar limbs,
the closest animal,
Turn into toms,
Merge in the real—
Grown out of chaos to kill us, the linked teams
Of atoms have their iron priorities:
To claim the bodies and ignore the dreams,
Smoke from the pyre of our sad monarchies.

B. R. WHITING

IN DEFENCE OF DRUNKS

No, man, it's not like that at all.
I just want to be a drunk with dignity,
not despair.
I am not a fool.
It is not with drunkenness that I allay life's fears.
I have no sense of guilt and even less of guile.

I am a drunk.

I too can see as well as you the birds flying,
the soft tossing of leaves, can scent the flowers
and the hard perfume of a man walking past
in the wilderness of an afterwork afternoon.

I am a drunk.

It is the soft flow of time I need,
the gentle flame of booze through my veins
lubricating the synapses,
electrifying the dawns.

I am a drunk.

Yet passing down the street
catching a girl's glance
I still can feel that weakness at the knees.
It is not from chagrin that I drink, you see,
but so the lights of eyes
grow soft yet sharp.

We are not the fodder of your fears, we drunks,
but would rather be regarded as the food of your dreams,
that fluid part of you which ends on the verge of a tear.

SHELTON LEA

SMOKE SIGNAL

No, you can never be lost to me
even if I do not know
exactly where you are
but it's better if my eyes go
searching in one direction
hand over brow
like a blackfellow

for I do like to know
approximately
where you are
and what you may be doing
so that I may look and see

far away to the south
a thin blue thread
of smoke rising
so inconspicuous and still
it could have gone unnoticed

then I can concentrate
and think the thoughts you think
and smell the fragrance of your skin
and taste the taste of your mouth.

WILLIAM HART-SMITH

MEG GOING TO BED

She undresses unconsciously although she knows I watch her.
She ignores the sleeve turned inside out on her jumper
Like a child hurrying into bed.

The gay blouse I bought her may crumple on a chair back.
She reaches to undo the hooked elastic on her bare back
And stoops to drop her breasts free.

They swing as she straightens. Cold stiffens the nipples.
The areolae stained in pregnancy are bronze as apples.
She scratches where the cups rubbed

And huddles into a pyjama coat as shapeless as love.
She balances each foot athletically to remove
Shoes, socks and jeans.

She strips off her panties, teases her pubic hair,
Picks up the pyjama pants she decides not to wear
And drops them at the foot of the bed.

Then she crawls towards her pillow. Her coat rides out of reach
Of her buttocks and displays her cushiony arch
Framed between her thighs.

She curls beneath the blankets, picks up yesterday's newspaper,
And props herself lightly on her side. But, a sudden sleeper,
She soon lies among crumpled pages.

And when I join her, awake or asleep
She moves to welcome me, if I am not too cold, and I keep
Aware of her integrity.

ERIC C. ROLLS

AN AUSTRALIAN STREET

And Hitler with the Siegfried youth
That he suckled with such artistry
Broke into this Australian street;
And Tojo, with shining Shinto and more youth;
Till Hiroshima wiped out
The whole incredible show
From Pearl Harbor to Burma to Belsen:
And none remembered these
Except the dead and the broken living
And least of all new youth,
The angry anti-tongued
Flash with the symbol of enormity that dumped them;
It didn't go off or up again;
Disarmed they turned from Aldermaston Marches
To the marshallings of another power
Incredibly the same.

The body in the bunker
Went to its resurrection, Russia,
And Tojo to the Sun.
Young man, dare show me once
Your salute of the clenched fist outstretched —
Nazi, Fascist, Communist-Hammer
Or Samurai-Kamikaze—
And I'll kick your teeth in
With the muddy boot of my barbarous memory
Before you are suckled further
By the bullet that you bite,
Subtly put there by the Che Guevaras.
Try to imagine the smell of Gallipoli,
Or to think of Anna Frank;
Or of John French, posthumously V.C.,
Who lived in this Australian street.

DAVID ROWBOTHAM

ONCE IN A LIFETIME, A PERFECT RAINBOW

On the very same day my wife tossed out
my mother's wedding photograph
with my agreement
but without my
last look

while I was weeding easy to weed soursobs
my fork, as if a divining of water,
struck a weed's greening out of
an empty shell once
a snail.

It was as if all green through pine & grass & vine
had coiled into the one swirling &
swivelled out of not only
the earth but
the sea

& the sky's mist caught the sun in a rainbow
arched so far that wife & I
had to turn our heads to
find the sky divided
into halves —

once in a lifetime,
a perfect rainbow.

GRAHAM ROWLANDS

FOR JOEL

I begin to feel what it is to be old.
It's not the agues and aches that plague us
rather it's the death of friends
when we begin to feel that there's no-one left
whom we knew in the springtime.

It becomes more difficult to find a butterfly
in the eye of the wind,
hard to be enchanted
by a daffodil dawn,
the carapace of age begins to blind us.

It is the passage of time, like the passing
of a fly, that disturbs us,
that constant buzzing of a dream
where we fall, endlessly.

It's as if the morning after has already come
and we are benumbed by that simple fact.
And though we see the superb tracery
around a pigeon's eyes
with the iris, so pink,
and blinking so fast
we barely watch it now.

Now grief like a stumbling cheque forger,
comes tripping across the threshold
of the supermarket heart.
It's the one we don't try to arrest.

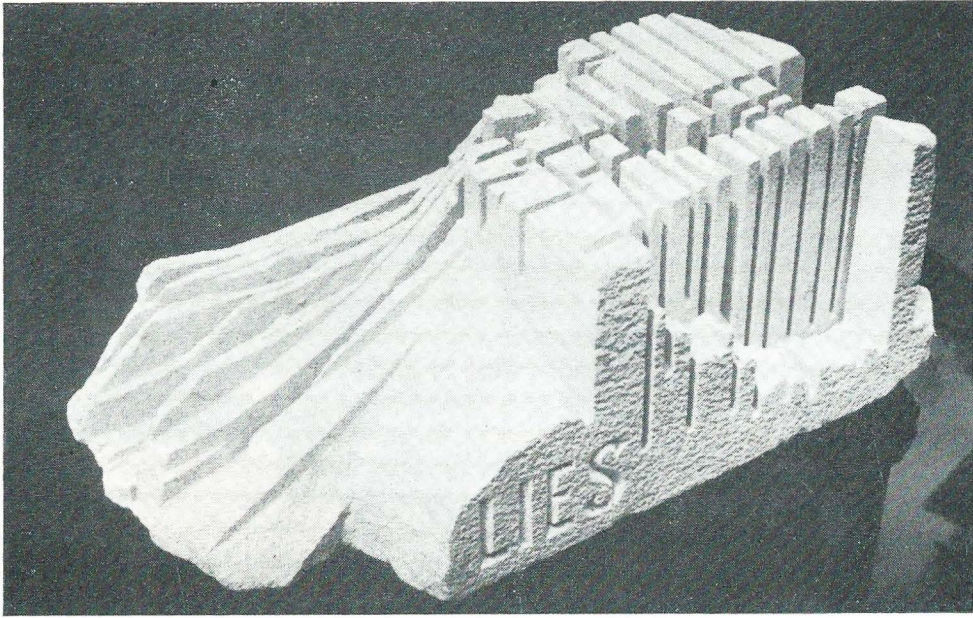
SHELTON LEA

RICHARD TIPPING **Word Works**

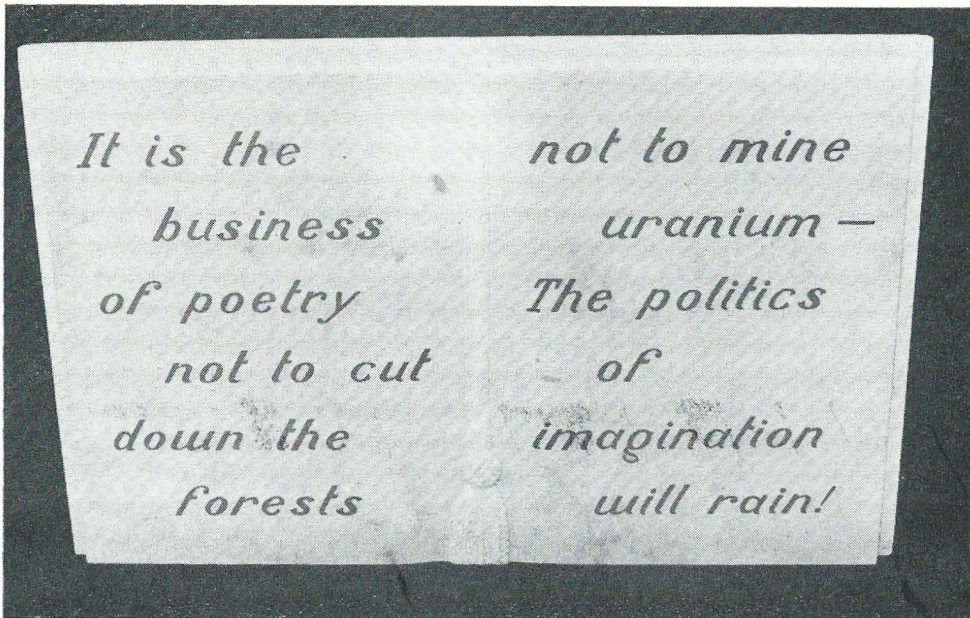
*Richard Tipping is known as a poet through two books, *Soft Riots* (1972) and *Domestic Hardcore* (1975), as well as wide publication in Australian magazines and anthologies. He is also an editor, a film-maker and photographer, a songwriter playing ukelele-banjo and didjeridu, and a 'word worker' whose fifth exhibition, WORD WORKS 2, was held in Melbourne in November at the Powell Street Gallery in South Yarra. The following pages show some of his recent 'word works', about which he comments:*

Poetry's roots are in performance, not in objects, beginning from the oral and immediate arts of music, dance and song — but the invention and development of written and then printed language not only changed spoken language (including poetry) but invested words with a concreteness as graphic forms. The idiosyncrasies of spelling and grammar are so forcibly imbued in us that we tend to assume them as absolutes. We learn to speak (sing) our own language, our vernacular, almost intuitively and then face the hard slog of learning to write and read. This is all very well, but we should remember that not so very long ago William Shakespeare signed his own name with six or more different spellings. Written language is as formal and mathematical as a musical score, and is used in this way by poets as a means of recording a very particular kind of speech. The printed poem has a certain visual character (including its layout, the linebreaks, punctuation and typography), but this is usually a means of showing how it is intended to be voiced rather than a deliberate graphic effect.

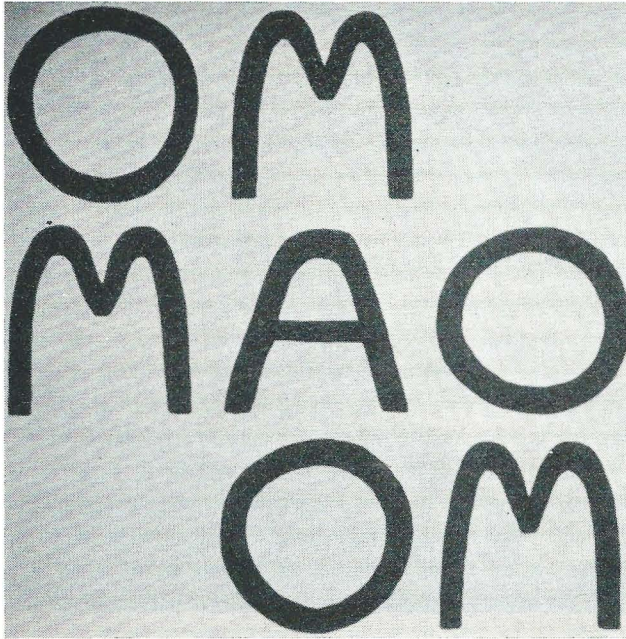
It is possible, however, to consider the written word as an object which is open to graphic manipulation (to illuminate ambiguities, arrive at new meanings, enhance its effects, and so on) and/or presentation in surprising contexts. In the work shown here in granite, marble and sandstone I've taken 'found objects' and worked with masons to engrave words into them, with completely different intentions in each case. It should be noted that the photograph is the final result, and that the object has been dematerialised, in a sense, through this process. With "Airpoet" I carried out a one letter change to a standard one-word road sign (it had originally been a typing error!) and with "Poet Tree" followed the idea through to the production of a brass plaque. Barrie Reid commented to me recently that there are more words in our everyday environment, heard or seen, than trees or birds or stars. My word works may be a way of exploring this. [For "Airpoet", see cover.]



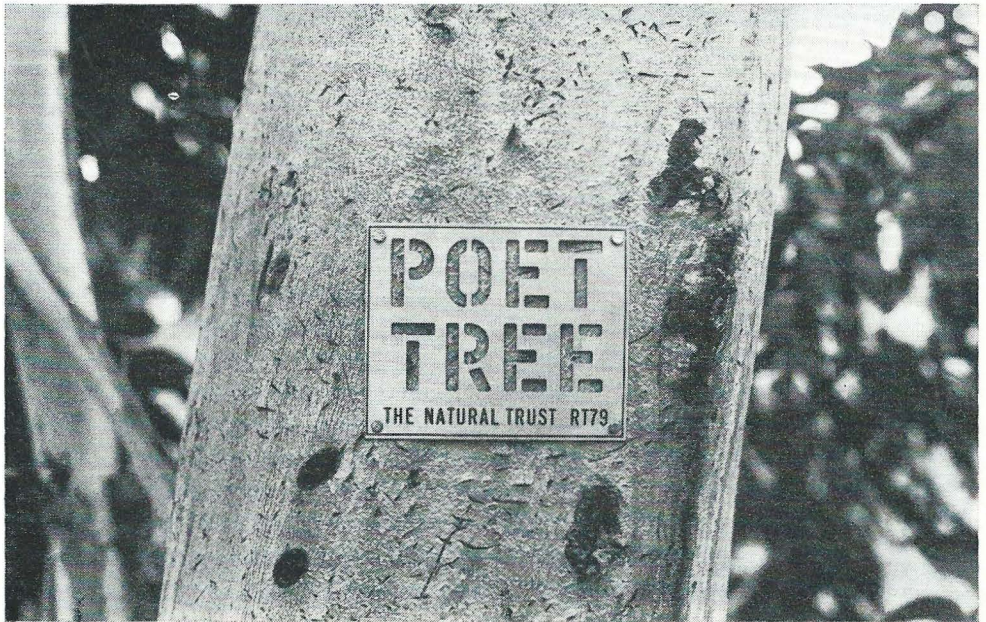
CITYSCAPE, 1977/79 Sandstone, used for honing circular-saw blades in granite cutting. With John Glasson, Adelaide. Shown at WORD WORKS, Robin Gibson Gallery, Sydney; collection of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.



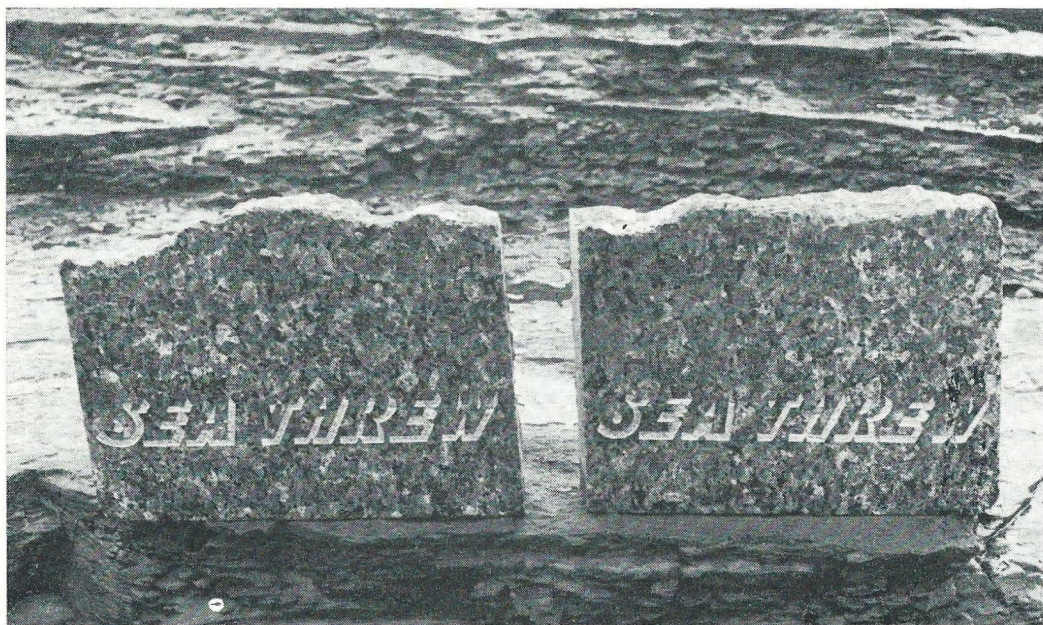
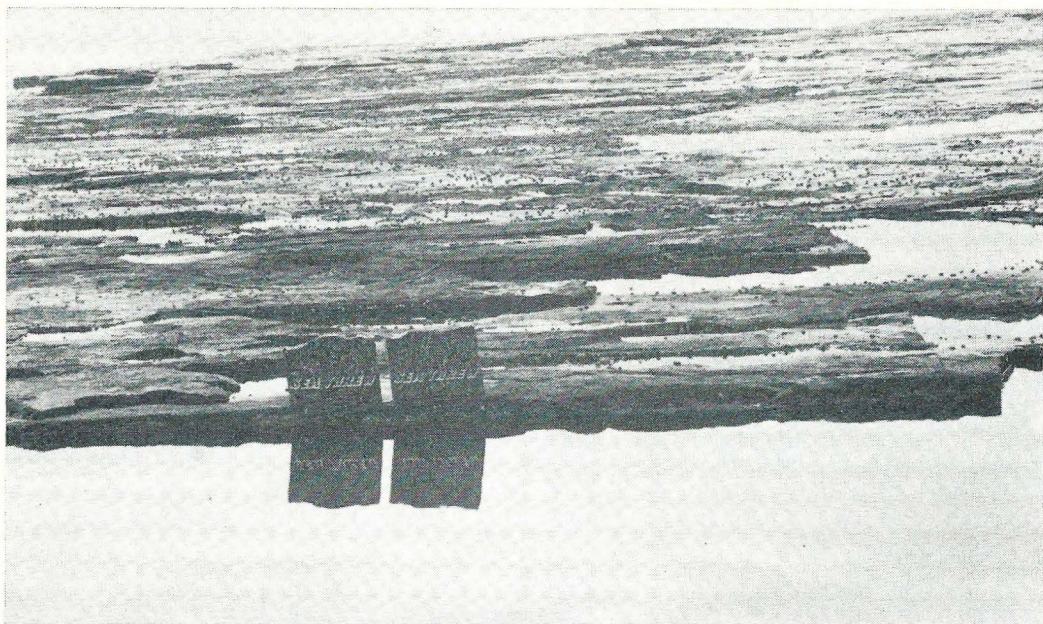
GOSPEL, 1979 Italian marble, shipped as a blank “book” to Melbourne; lettered, sandblasted, lead beaten in and smoothed in several stages, the last with cuttlefish bone. With John Glasson, Adelaide. Photography by Karen Turner. 61 x 39 x 5.5 cm.



MONUMANTRA, 1973 Painting, about 1.5 m square, shown at SOFT RIOTS exhibition, Watters Gallery, Sydney, 1973. Collection Clive Evatt.



POET TREE, 1979 Handcut brass plaque, 10 cm x 8 cm. Prototype for an intended edition.



THAT WHICH WE CALL AROSE, 1977/79 Blue pearl granite. With Patrick Daley, Adelaide. Each piece is 28 x 20 x 5 cm, engraved with *shadow block* lettering, finished with goldleaf. Photographed at Austinmere, NSW, by Karen Turner.

BARRY OAKLEY
ROWAN CAHILL

Sydney and the Moorhouse Years

Frank Moorhouse's anthology Days of Wine and Rage, recently published by Penguin Books at \$5.95, sets the intellectual and political history of Australia in the 1970s against events in Sydney during those years. Moorhouse's theses, both stated and unstated, constitute what is likely to be an influential interpretation of aspects of our recent past, and we have thought it germane to ask two writers to comment on it.

BARRY OAKLEY writes:

Moorhouse writes in his preface that this is a personal book, a Sydney book, a Balmain book. But he says that what happened in Sydney also happened in other cities, so that their experience, if not described directly, is at least reflected.

But there's more to it than that. In the seventies there was a Melbourne time, a Melbourne truth, a Melbourne reality. Distinctive, with its own character, and not reflected in any other city. There were parallels perhaps but not reflections.

I don't want to boast (but I'm going to). Just as Moorhouse was obviously, from the evidence of *Days of Wine and Rage*, at the centre of every liberating, exciting, literary, political and pleasurable Sydney movement in the seventies, so I was in Melbourne.

In the bistros and watering places of Carlton, I was number one. It's embarrassing to have to confess it. Moorhouse gets over this embarrassment by using the royal plural. This gives an impression of modesty, anonymity: he's there but not there; it's all happening through and to him, but he's no egotist about it.

Though sometimes it sounds a little odd — "we got my copy of the book out of a bookcase and found it wasn't ours" — from the royal to the republican to the royal again in a short sentence — I don't see why Balmain should have divine right over it. So I'm going to use it too. To mean me.

If he was with it in Sydney, so were we in Melbourne, and here it all is, for the record.

OBSCENITY AND THE LAW

"We did feel guilt about some of the material we published, but to have obeyed the guilt would have been to act as agents of a sexually fearful society." (Page 6.)

We were right in there writing, talking and acting dirty to show up the censorship laws. Like Frank, we wanted more pornography, not less. Shock the community, that was the deal. We used to loiter in Lygon Street in an overcoat and when someone who looked sexually fearful approached — a granny, a blue-rinse, a crippled vicar — we'd whip our coat open on a whole lot of dirty pictures. Confront them with their own guilt. Make them blush or look away.

Wendy Bacon appeared in Sydney Central Court, says Frank approvingly, dressed as a nun bearing a notice on which were the words — "I have been fucked by God's steel prick". But we went one better. We took the fight for freedom onto the streets. We used to wait outside a Fitzroy convent with a condom, inflated to enormous proportions, secreted about our person. When a nun came out, we would dart forward and hit her on the head with it. Painless but pointed.

UNMASKING, DEMYSTIFYING

Obscenity, says Frank, can also be used to reduce the mystery of rank. "By putting out a poster saying that the Chief Secretary 'munches muffs' we restored him to human proportion." (Page 11.)

One to Frank and one to Balmain. We didn't think of this. The best way to deal with any

politician is to hit him right where it hurts most. In the mouth.

HOMO AND HETERO

"I've had full orgasm in homosexual relationships . . . I've had full orgasmic experiences which have made me weep." (Page 35.)

Frank's experimented with sexual relationships, that's obvious. He knows his stuff. He's laughed, he's cried, he's slept around. But we were in there before him.

Under the cover of developing an indigenous Australian theatre we organised a homosexual coterie that was the talk and scandal of Carlton. While our plays were extending the frontiers of Australian drama in the front theatre of the Pram Factory, we were at work in the back passage, evolving an indigenous Australian sexuality.

We practised the Australian crawl, lope and crouch. We abolished sterile latinisms like *fellatio* and *cunnilingus* (when we first met Frank, we thought they were a firm of Italian solicitors). We sold the lavatory lollies as sweets to unsuspecting bourgeois in the foyer. We taught women's liberationists what posture to adopt so they could use male urinals. We crept under the seats and interfered with the most respectable from below. "What are you doing?" they'd shout. Outraging your conventional sensibilities, we'd reply.

VIOLENCE AND THE NEW AGE

"He then outlined his position on violence. He thought excessive violence in the media was desensitizing society. There was far too much of it. We said we'd argue the opposite." (Page 42.)

So Frank was hanging on in there with the violence number. Violence as existential protest. He "wanted more realistic violence, especially on the news". We didn't just want it. We did it. We were violent. At Stewart's Hotel, at the Albion, all over Carlton, we were feared. Known bullies and layabouts — even the Clancy brothers — pressed themselves up against walls when we entered, hoping not to be noticed.

We fought with A —, who gave us a bad review, then fought with him again because the violence wasn't realistic enough. I was violent, and applauded it wherever I could find it. In Kojak, in Matlock Police, and on the news.

POLITICS AND THE NEW VISION

"After a long lunch with Donald during the constitutional crisis of 1975, we sprawled on the

floor of the living room of his house, while he was being interviewed by 2JJ over the telephone." (Page 108.)

We too have sprawled on the floor after long lunches with important people. In 1972, we lunched with, then sprawled on the floor of, Doug Anthony. In 1973 we sprawled on Rupert Murdoch's floor, but without lunch. In 1974 we lunched with Bob Hawke without sprawling.

"One day, in 1974, over lunch, we sheepishly agreed that, out of character as it was for both of us, we felt oddly protective towards Whitlam and his government." (Page 111.)

We too have agreed, sheepishly, with a number of leading people, and have felt oddly protective towards Whitlam. We have protected him, oddly, at dinner parties in Camberwell, Balwyn and South Yarra, and have agreed, sheepishly, with people in some country areas. This got back to Whitlam and he thanked us for it. The telegram began "We thank you . . ."

THE GOOD LIFE

"So much of our life was lived in bars and restaurants — things planned, relationships begun and ended." (Page 269.)

Every hotel in Carlton, every restaurant was known to me. We were saluted as we came in, and diners moved, knowing that we were either going to end or begin an affair. We would take a woman to Tamani's to start a relationship and to Comedy Café to finish it. We would do it gently, painlessly, knowing that others were waiting, indeed eager, to begin with us on a new adventure.

Now we have moved to Sydney, leaving many broken hearts and marriages behind. At the moment we live in Paddington. But one day we will move to where the life, the parties and the action are. To Balmain. Where one day we will be king.

We sit here and await the call, confident it will come any day now.

Barry Oakley, 49, the Melbourne-bred playwright and novelist, now lives in Paddington, Sydney. His most recent book is The Great God Mogadon and other Plays (University of Queensland Press), and his play "Scanlan" is at present on the stage in Melbourne.

ROWAN CAHILL writes:

In his preface Frank Moorhouse points out that *Days of Wine and Rage* "is a personal book and

not a comprehensive book". So it is. I suppose in a sense it's not really a new book either.

What Moorhouse has done has been to collect from the pages of little known magazines, underground publications, and pamphlets of the 1970s, articles and poems that have appealed to him for one reason or another. To these he has added a batch of his own articles of the period, published mainly in the *Bulletin*, and linked them all with autobiographical meanderings and explanations. In the end what we get is a sort of scissors and paste job, an urban literary-bohemian's version of Reader's Digest.

The Penguin publisher of *Days of Wine and Rage* claims big things for the book; it "explores the tempo and shifts in mores and style of a dynamic decade [the 1970s] in Australia's cultural development". However Moorhouse is less grandiose, and disarmingly down to earth. In attempting to piece together a book which captured his view of this decade, he explains that he created instead "a homage to Sydney", in particular that part of Sydney which has long nourished and supported him in his development as a writer—Balmain, the inner-city ghetto of the lumpen-intelligentsia.

Balmain of course means people, and for Moorhouse "the people" tend to be 'the Push'. As Geoffrey Serle explained it (in *From Deserts the Prophets Come*, 1973) 'the Push' is a "weird small group of Sydney Libertarians . . . inspired by doctrines derived from Anderson, Marx, Sorel, Freud and Reich, in a philosophic free-thought tradition . . . a remarkably original provincial cult".

Weird is the operative word. Moorhouse has created a literary Jekyll and Hyde. The publisher says *Days of Wine and Rage* is one sort of book. Moorhouse's preface says that it is another. And the book itself says that it is something else again.

In short *Days of Wine and Rage* is an exercise in egotism. To put it simply, Moorhouse sees himself and his friends as frontiersmen and women in the struggle to shape "contemporary Australian mores and style". For Frank and his mates the 1970s were a golden decade. The years after 1972, when Whitlam's Labor Government was in power, are referred to in the book as "The Golden Years". For these were the years when Moorhouse and many of his Push mates became 'successful' in their various creative pursuits—made successful films, wrote successful books and plays, many financed by Commonwealth grants; while

others secured positions of power on various government instrumentalities. Manna from heaven after years of struggle and neglect.

Quite rightly, Moorhouse sees the 1970s as a dynamic decade in Australia's cultural history. But in viewing that decade with himself as central observer/participant/hero and his cronies as the rest of the heroic cast, things sort of get distorted.

Still it is an interesting, amusing, even vital (in the sense of 'energetic') read. Like the Reader's Digest, you can just dip here and there. Of course the subject material is different: behind bars in a women's prison; the low down on publishing 'pornography'; the difference between a good fuck and a bad fuck; the pleasures of bisexuality; who slept with whom, when and where; getting pissed; a day in Court for spitting at a policeman; hassles with the police; playwrights shredding each other (Bob Ellis vs. David Williamson); finding Christ; and much, much more. . . .

But for me *Days of Wine and Rage* is an annoying book. Annoying I suppose for what it is not. What I want to know is how can you honestly create a book about the 1970s without rooting it firmly in the 1960s, as Moorhouse has failed to do? Of course Moorhouse was in control of the book's creation, it's his book, and he's boss. But no matter how you look at it, *much* of what happened in the 1970s had its origin in the upheavals of the 1960s.

Out of the turmoil of the Vietnam War and conscription a dissenting creative spirit grew in Australia. The offset press was 'discovered' by a young generation; broadsheets, small magazines, newspapers emerged and flourished; the art of civil disobedience was developed; an educated market was created which would later support journals like *Nation Review* and the *National Times*. If anything the culture of Australia changed in the sixties. The seventies were only the frosting.

It was in the sixties also that the punishing, tiring, frustrating hackwork was done by a legion of faithful that led in 1972 to the election of the Labor government. Virtually on the eve of that election, Moorhouse confesses, he and his mates had no inkling that great changes were in store; indeed he seems to have subscribed to the idea that the difference between the Liberal and Labor parties was negligible. This is also annoying.

I remember the sixties in the backwaters of Balmain, and those stale spew-hung red-wine guzzling rounds of interminable parties Moor-

house has such affection for, when our hero and 'the Push' were at their cynical best. I remember the way many of them continually put down those of us who were engaged in politics—our political involvement then being teach-ins, sit-ins, demonstrations, draft resistance, and, later, the Moratoriums.

It riles also to see featured as a hero, in *Days of Wine and Rage*, Donald Horne. Now I've never met the bloke, and I don't want to. I respect him, and yes I do note that he has in recent times been at the barricades on behalf of Whitlam, and a republican Australia. But for me Horne is again part of the sixties. For my generation of twenty year-olds, those of us who were caught up in the first rolls of the death lottery marbles, a large part of Horne's image must be as the person who piloted two ruthless journals, the *Bulletin* and *Quadrant*, both of which have

much to answer for to a generation of youth that was betrayed, to the hundreds of Australians who died in Vietnam, to the thousands who are now maimed in some way and plagued by war-related psychological problems, to the yet unborn who will suffer, courtesy of Agent Orange.

In the end I suppose I have this to say about *Days of Wine and Rage*. It is an interesting book, it is a welcome book; still I have this basic reservation, the gut feeling of revulsion I get in seeing heroes created when there is no heroism, of people claiming to have been the movers and shakers when in fact they are claiming a glory that is not theirs.

Rowan Cahill is a teacher and freelance writer, and lives in Bowral, New South Wales. He was a prominent student activist in the 1960s, and a conscientious objector during the Vietnam war.

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Into Europe: Travel Diary 1979

TOM SHAPCOTT

Tom Shapcott, born 1935, lives in Brisbane. An accountant by training, and formerly by profession, he is one of the most widely published of contemporary Australian poets, and is also well known as an anthologist.

23 May: The long Alitalia flight from Sydney (only one disembarkation stop, Tel Aviv, where we were lined up, searched, left to linger twenty minutes, and allowed to re-board). Lost the animated, frizzy-haired girl headed for a Kibbutz, and the bulky many-coated, waistcoated, cardiganed and wrapped-around old Rabbi, the one who calmly munched a tin of food-paste in the transit lounge. Now, sitting beside me, two large larded Calabrian ladies, part of a group party with priest returning from the Holy Land. Dawn sight of Italia (Calabria, indeed, and Sicily clear to our left in the classic blue ocean), brings applause. The old Italian/Qld. farmer behind me dredges up a quavering rock-a-bye Patriotic Ballad, some old village memory. His twangy farm-string Qld. wife, her accent a nose in falsetto, hushes him. She has no word of his language, though they have all that mirror-look of people rubbed together over several decades. But Italy! Our pilot must be in sentimental thrall, too; he lovingly follows the clear coastline all the way to Naples: there's Paestum, right below, where I nosed down almost exactly a year back; and Salerno; the steep cliff-edge villages, hairpin roads, clear as any eagle could wish today. Vesuvius. The air grows more smoggy, we come to Rome's orbit. Last minute gatherings, tidying. Airport queues, passports, entry and currency sorting. All my luggage bubbles up over the volcanic rim of the rotating baggage lava-flow (the traveller's first—and last—concern). The 1500 lire bus from airport to the central station, cheapest sightseeing tour in the world perhaps: through the flat eucalyptus plains (last winter's frost has given them the stunt and dieback, the ragged

edges truly appropriate; not dense and lush like so many exported gumtrees); we skirt the incomplete satellite suburbs (no glass egg-crates here, the new Italian confidence leaps from the bright colors, the adventurous designs), skim past the Tiber and the hot, old-looking, post-war high-rise, glare enough for anyone. But from there on in: Old Rome, Renaissance Rome, Baroque Rome, the central City even London, Paris, New York, cannot reach us with. Arrival thoughts. Everywhere posters—the Italian elections next weekend and the European elections exactly one week later. Italy has 13 competing political parties. It's not: will the Christian Democrats or the Communists win? but how much will each lose? Which of the other parties (extremists, middlers, muddlers) will gain pickings? And what will that mean? The Radical party is surely the most vivacious, supporting ecology, gays, and writers.

My hotel: the Atlas, at the gate to the National Gallery, within strolling distance to all the Baroquery I want, more clothing shops than I would dare linger at, and, if I tell myself midday walking is good fun, close enough to strike out for the Forum, the one thing that does not close down. But first, clothes off, a shower, the long awaited shave.

24 May: A phone call last night from David Malouf, so this morning 9 a.m. to Avis and, without flinching, show I mean business with the traffic. I am warned "Lock the boot. All times." The Avis man shrugs: "It is not safe, Italy." A gear fumble ("You know the Fiat, good".) and

I'm into the traffic all right, greyhound out of the kennel (at 12 stone, some greyhound, huh!). All one-way traffic for a start (the worst trap), but last year's month of European driving stands me in good stead, and I'm in there with the lustiest of them. The Via Aurelia, taking me north to Grosseto, begins right next to St Peter's. The traffic flow tells me how to nose over there, which bridge to spin onto. I nuzzle among buses, tourists, sightseeing-horsecabs, taxis, moped cyclists, up to Bernini's embrace of columns, then a swing to left, by the gelati and hotdog stands, and I'm on my way: Via Aurelia, tree-lined, wide, well-used, feeling its long push up to the north like the pulse in the jugular. Start. Stop. Start. Stop. The ubiquitous traffic lights (they even print STOP, as if it were some U.S. Patent) put the necessary brake on my eagerness. First intermediary point: Civitavecchia. I decide not to use the Autostrade, though it is faster (and has tolls). Went that way last year, and saw cars. This way I see trucks, transports, motor bikes—and cars. But I also go right through towns and villages; out of Civitavecchia I pass along the shore (gravelly, the water here discolored, flat hummocks, bathing sheds). Petrol is still 500l. per litre, same as last year—but still nearly double Australia, though we are trying, trying. Costs about \$15 for first day's drive. Along the road at various points, police. Sometimes they wave down a motorist, never me. The high of arrival is easing, now, into a limp tiredness. In the shimmering arvo light, a still haze across hillslopes the way I suddenly remember from last year; little red-tiled villages crowd onto their high ledges from the once unhealthy plains. Fields slashed with poppies, capeweed. A few hedges: hawthorn, past flower. The eucalyptus windbreaks. 16 km. south of Grosseto (Mussolini's Fascist stronghold) complete familiarity: the Agip service station with its empty four-storey motel behind (who ever uses it?), stuck in the middle of nowhere—flat paddocks of the Maremma—and that turn-off to the Marina di Alberese. The basket-and-caneware drive-in, town edges. And the maze-like one-way streets (they can swivel you into the walled old city before you know it). I'm a monster of hubris: I turn correctly into the avenue of stunt-lopped eucalypts, four deep between footpath and road (equal that in Australia, anyone?) then turn right at the instantly remembered gelati place, out on the Siena road by the hospital, the blasted Army barracks (ruins are the most expressive Italian remembrance:

must not say 'tribute', Fascism has been discredited, most towns are Communist here). Past, also, the great hillside gash of the marble quarries at Roselle. Further along these same hills, some of the oldest Etruscan sites, still being excavated. Rosemary Wighton, last year, went there with David and I believe stumbled on shards, fragments, handbag full. I, my turn, saw nothing.

Campagnatico. Last year, when I did not know where my life, my marriage, or my future was going, I came over to Italy for some months. David was lodging (4000 lire a day full board) at Il Convento, the crumbs and edges of an ancient retreat, outside Batignano, a few hill-bumps over from Campagnatico. It was run and half-owned by Robert Brain, once Tasmanian of the Vivian Smith/Chris Koch 'promising young' period. Robert, an anthropologist, has published a novel, a vol. of pop-sociology called *Friends & Lovers*, and last season's coffee-table spectacular, *The Last Primitive Peoples*. I took lodgings, also, at the convent, until David completed the agonising process of buying his Campagnatico place. I drive the half dozen kilometres to David's village; the same subsidence, half way, still 'temporarily' under repair; the fields sun-colored, but different, earlier hedge and field flowers.

27 May: To Florence. Maggio Musicale, with David and his friend Carlo Olivieri (Mutti conducting the Berlioz "Romeo et Juliette"). I next to Renata Olivieri, but conversation hesitates (her English, D. mentions, is good but remember the Australian quiet voice, the gulped syllables . . .); Mutti, a son of Florence and idolised as a son (how non-Australian) has a packed house, immediate ovation. His conducting is full theatre, but he also gets full theatre out of the Festival orchestra, no mean feat. The Berlioz magic, which works by a cross-current of French Opera crust and spicy secret-recipe filling, moves most strongly in the quietest bits: the orchestral monologues, all 'cellos and rests; or the extraordinary Queen Mab scherzo, that no record ever gets—tingling string harmonics, pianissimo secondary-resonance vibrations, exploring timbres that make the moderns, Cage say, or Varèse, seem very clumsy. After, dinner prepared by Carlo, crunchy salad and a cold chicken specialty. The talk, politics and the elections. My ignorance, I sense, is the typical Australian blur. The issues are explained. There is some comment on the awful incineration of a Somali scholar, by a group of

teenagers last week in the Piazza Navarone, the day I was there; were they politically motivated? What connections? Teenagers, in Italy, cannot be apolitical. But someone's remark that English-language journalists had simply called him "African", not "Somali" hits a guilt-nerve in my conscience.

Italy itself seems to have learned you can continue without any government—so long as Supply does not become a political whiphandle. Nobody expects the new election to solve a thing, no party will get a majority, no coalition will bed down together. The two-party system, though, is still resisted; look at all these alternatives. Italy survives, largely, because Germany and France cannot let it not survive.

28 May: Florence still, and hot, 34 degrees today. Florence has caught the current Wagner revival: "Das Rheingold", conducted by Zubin Mehta and staged by Luca Ronconi, his La Scala version. Florence had boasted they'd tackle the full "Ring" cycle, but are discovering (like Australia) that's still one of the all-time challenges: get the voices, get the space to do it in, get the impetus to keep it always active . . . Mehta fudges by taking "Rheingold" too fast, blurring and turning the mighty Niebelungen hammers into a senseless rattle. Ronconi pinches his wheels-and-behind-scenes-machinery clearly from Patrice Chéreau's current Bayreuth success, which is the model for most new interpretations: Industrial Man as Pillar/Pillory. Visually, the opening mill-wheel abstraction, with its suggestion of Rhine Turbines as well as rainbows and cycles of being, look splendid. The Rhinemaidens are mimed by three naked dancers with huge wigs, who look that fin-de-siècle erotic which has become harmless. The actual singers work fruitlessly, muffled, somewhere backstage. Alberich, clambering about this machinery, slipping on its gravity-rise, is the perfect earth-clod we can all feel in the initial tug of water . . . later, tedium of long-draped gods and unisex goddesses, Erda rising ("on a dentist's chair" David whispers), endless clambering up and down stairs, walls of mirrors (you see backstage): I'm told a huge God's Head in papier mâché rests in the back alley, a little bit of grandiosity that didn't get in.

11.30, drive to Campagnatico, summer night balm. We pass Siena as if it still were a medieval city, so few lights.

1 June: Carlo is down for the weekend. I'm writing a poem about the beach, Marina di Alberese and show it to D. Useful hints. So many poets I know have played tennis this way with their poems: you can't properly challenge the intent of a poem, but the realisation of that intent, the language play, yes, or the (jeez) clumsiness . . . Walk out through village to farm owned by Joan Tessai, one of David's English friends; she's in London with her kids, and a couple of young, very handsome, Milanese friends are caretaking: feeding the watchdog and the lapdog, watering her English garden: Marco, Rosealba. A large green/yellow snake slithers into the wheatfield. This is viper country. (It's the small ones are dangerous.) We flop, hot. Yes, the beach. It is narrow and grey-dusty, like the less favorite bits of Moreton Bay. Soft haze of midsummer light and long twilights. Horizon's a blur: the sea fades in haze; the hills, with their scattered ruined forts, falter behind the foreground sand dunes (white daisies between clumps of marram grass) and the huge acres of umbrella pines. Walk a couple of hundred yards from the roadway and the girls are all topless; a bit further, it's full nudity. Some of the braver (or prouder) ones even stroll everywhere naked. Certainly nobody minds. Whole families assemble, from grandmas with birth-scars to the berry-brown toddlers. This is the country where public kissing was once prohibited?

11 June: Train towards Germany; Carlo has suggested we stop overnight at Bressanone (Brixen), his father used to holiday there, an admiral who sought Alpine variety; and there's an Abbey, Novacella, Gothic roccoco'd . . . we arrive 8 p.m., discover ourselves in an Italy where German is the language, beer is the custom, and 6 p.m. the mealtime. The prices, though, are Italian, the lowest in Europe.

18 June: Augsburg. We are housed in the splendid new conference centre behind S. Ulrich church, a sort of classy motel for bishops, perhaps: sauna, swimming pool downstairs. And, we discover, a chef and kitchen staff who have plundered the tastiest recipes in Germany; our appetites grow voracious. Meet Jennifer Strauss in hall. Mark Macleod. Back into a little world called Australia, in these rooms, these corridors. Fifty enrolled, thirty of them Europeans, another ten expatriate Aussies; the balance—Australian academics and the three token writers: me, David, Les Murray. And Katherine Gallagher is here;

opening night Jenny Strauss and Mark Macleod start things off with a reading of their own poems.

19 June: The papers. Find myself with a heightened awareness of Australian dialect — the range of Aust. dialects; and the wonder, just how much feeds into our German friends' understanding? Are they used to mumbles, trailing sentences, vowels strained between clenched teeth? Alex Porteous from Tasmania leads off with the obligatory Patrick White paper, passing round diagrams, and Anna Rutherford makes us sure we are all, somehow, Irish Catholic Australians. (Eat your heart out, Fay Zwicky, we're on to potatoes not pastrami in our angst sandwiches.) Peter Holloway gives a good countdown on drama, and we're off to a lavish reception by the Australian ambassador from Bonn (Max Loveday — Max). A small consort of musicians in costume sing Augsburg music from the heyday of Maximilian: Heinrich Isaac and his school; the ghosts live in close proximity to us, the Fuggers are still a big name (so, again, is Messerschmitt). We spread out, in our Aussie-English, in our balloon of self-consciousness.

20 June: Four papers, down to business. Eliz. Webby takes a slightly jerky sprint through the short story (Lawson to Lee) and Carole Ferrier worries K. S. Prichard to what I suspect is more life than her goldfields trilogy merits. After another rich lunch, Jenny Strauss etches Harwood, Dobson, Wright into focus (example poems circulate), then Mark Macleod discovers (for me) Patricial Wrightson's use of Aboriginal material. At night, David, Les, myself do our reading, singing for a particularly tasty supper.

21 June: The summing up. It is clear that the groundwork of people like Anna Rutherford in Aarhus, and Bernard Hickey in Venice (his absence is remarked on by many) has been both timely and pertinent: the seemingly universal expansion of course areas, this last decade, has focused on either "The Third World" or "English Language areas outside the U.S. and U.K."

Australia slips into both, and because of its body and homogeneity (and Patrick White's Nobel prize) shines as a particularly graspable lode for digging. Someone mentions Colleen McCullough, too, her book is everywhere ("Les oiseaux qui se cachent à mourir": in French it might read wondrously). Göttingen's recent purchase of the complete Colin Roderick library (150,000DM; everyone grabs for a pen) will make Göttingen the resource centre of Aust. Studies here, surely. The usual complaints about how to get texts — a visible gasp of interest when Anna Rutherford commends Aarhus campus bookstore for stocks, supplies, promptness. If it's as efficient as she says it should become the distribution centre for Europe, could solve a problem that's been a headache since the first days of the Lit. Board. One thing certain: there's more potential for 'export' of Aust. Lit. packages to Europe than to England, that drawbridge-up retreat. To them, we're still the poor they shipped out. To Europeans, surprisingly, we seem more and more *us*. Addendum: to one or two (thirty or so) we are good project material. Still, ten years back, even one or two might have seemed almost an exaggeration. Ten years hence?

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JOHN SENDY

Red Retrospect

John Sendy, born in 1924 in Adelaide, joined the Communist Party in 1942 at the age of seventeen. He held many positions in the party, including that of national president, 1972-1974. He subsequently relinquished all posts. His recollections, Comrades Come Rally!, were published in 1978. He lives at Kingower, Victoria, writing fiction and material on Communist Party history.

*The grand debate,
The popular harangue, — the tart reply, —
The logic, and the wisdom, and the wit,
And the loud laugh, — I long to know them
all, —
I burn to set the imprisoned wranglers free,
And give them voice and utterance again.*

Cowper

Upon learning that the 60th year of the Communist Party of Australia was to be marked by a conference designed to examine the Party's history some people laughed derisively. Others merely smiled, either sad about Communist failures or cynical at the continuing efforts to keep the Communist Party alive. Still others expected a circus when hearing that breakaway leaders Ted Hill and Pat Clancy were to be speakers, along with Trotskyists and people who had either left the Party over the years or had been expelled for many different 'offences'. A few Communists, with pasts to protect, were worried at the prospect of a wide-ranging probe leading to God knows where.

However, apologists, critics and cynics were all equally confounded. In my estimation most of the 800 people, predominantly young, who registered, paid, and attended the Communists and the Labor Movement conference at the Melbourne State College on August 23 and 24 last, left with feelings of respect and expectation.

It was a memorable weekend, informative, exciting and uninhibited, and very much an organisational feat. Nine work-shops were in session at any one time plus a continuous film program. Approximately 160 speeches discussed seventy subjects which were as varied as the

Meaning of Stalinism, the New Feminism, Trotskyism in Australia, the 1949 Coal Strike, Militant Film Making and Jean Devanny and Katharine Susannah Prichard. Apart from former Communist Party heavies the speakers lists included: historians Robin Gollan, Brian McKinlay, Eric Fry, Wendy Lowenstein and Alastair Davidson; cultural figures Bernard Smith, Judah Waten, Stephen Murray-Smith, Frank Hardy and Amirah Inglis; the Aboriginal lawyer Pat O'Shane and the Adelaide Queen's Counsel Elliott Johnston; and a small army of activists from the depression days, the trade unions, the anti-war movement, the armed forces of World War Two.

The idea of the conference pleased me. For years, in speeches and writings, I had been advocating that Communist history be examined, discussed and written, sometimes despairing that nobody seemed to care about the wealth of positive and negative experience.

In my booklet, *The Communist Party. History, Thoughts and Questions*, published in 1978, the following paragraph appears:

By 1945 the CPA had acquired a membership approaching 25,000, an extremely large influence in the industrial and trade union movement, a substantial press circulation, important parliamentary and local government voting support and a significant following in literature, art, science and education. It then proceeded to lose most of this membership, support and influence. This whole development cries out for analysis. Why did it happen? Any serious political party must attempt to answer such a question. Apparently little effort is extended by Communists to probe our rich

history and extrapolate lessons which may be useful in ensuring a meaningful future for the CPA, or its descendants. Probably the frightful neglect of our history is a major reason for the decline over the years.

However, the arrival of the invitation to speak on a panel, with Laurie Aarons and Pat Clancy, about the 1971 split and the formation of the breakaway Socialist Party, presented a different problem. Seven years before I had voluntarily vacated official positions in the CPA for a variety of personal and political reasons, some of which were associated with the in-fighting surrounding that split. I had clashed with old friends in the national leadership of the Party over many attitudes and policies: they had considered me right-wing and conservative, while I had accused them of being ultra-left and politically unreal.

After being a full-time functionary for twenty-six years departure from the scene proved a gut-tearing business. Though the intervening seven years had helped to reconcile the decision, burdens of guilt and areas of emptiness remained. Real and imaginary hurts still ached. The failure of the Party still gnawed. The past and the actors loomed as constant companions, and the campaigns, policies, arguments, good times, and insults still tumbled around the mind. After all, work in the Communist Party, championing its cause, battling on, was the only occupation I ever got to know in depth. It had been the biggest slice of my life. Thirty-eight years before, in 1942, I had joined the illegal CPA. The first fifteen or sixteen years had been spent trying to win a broad political support. The second fifteen years were devoted, primarily, to ideological squabbles within the Party and their results. The last seven years to brooding over and writing about it all.

So, initially, the invitation threatened to replace the daily parade of ghosts in quiet central Victoria with a return, even if only briefly, to trading real ideological punches, re-hashing past rows and re-opening old wounds. Possibly too, it could bring bruising or awkward personal encounters.

But agreement was reached that I would speak on the panel about the 1971 split and lecture separately on "Communists and Communist Leaders: A Critical Appreciation".

The Polish strikes were in full swing when I arrived in Melbourne. The young conference organisers were jubilant, confident of big numbers attending, but cursing the daily press for empha-

sising old age and nostalgia and implying that the CPA was almost dead and gone. Then, on the Friday morning, Ralph Gibson was interviewed about the conference on Frontline and a review of his new book, *One Woman's Life*, appeared in the Age, and mentioning the conference.

That night the upstairs bar of the Eastern Hill Hotel was packed with conference-goers. Most were young people unknown to me. Pushed around by the crowd I talked to militant unionists, social workers, historians, old timers. Doug Olive, a veteran of the North Queensland sugar workers' strike of the 1930s, was anxious to master the technical difficulties associated with an interstate visitor placing a bet with the TAB. Joe Owens, of the NSW Builders' Laborers and of green bans fame, jibed, "You've been wearing that bloody jacket ever since I've known you." Wally Clayton, made notorious by the Petrov Commission, looked fit and well; Evan Phillips, the former miners' leader, still tall and straight up and down like a drink of water. Linda Rubinstein, of the new brigade, was understandably full of her trip to Vietnam and Kampuchea. Warmth that night was not only generated by the beer or the density of the crowd.

At 9.15 next morning there was no opportunity to hear Eric Fry and Alastair Davidson on whether the CPA was an Indigenous Growth or an Alien Reality. Likewise Lloyd Churchward and Ralph Gibson on the Comintern had to be missed, as well as the galaxy of speakers on women in the Communist Party. I had to speak myself.

Communists have been "idealists who organised, sacrificed and fought against odds, against conventions, laws, public apathy, and were often victimised and sacked, ostracised and ridiculed, arrested and gaoled." In the past:

— Communist Party members and leaders were all trained and influenced by the Stalin period, the theories and practices of Stalin and his disciples. They studied Marxism as it was interpreted by the Stalin regime. They studied Lenin too, but, to a considerable extent, Lenin as explained and interpreted by Stalin. *The Short History of the CPSU(B)*, in which all deviations from Stalin were so harshly dealt with, was the bible of Australian Communists for long years, likewise Stalin's methods of organisation—stern discipline, merciless attitudes to all opponents of the leadership and to all 'revisionists' to anyone who showed 'weaknesses'. Those not favoring the violent overthrow of the capitalist system, and who

contemplated a peaceful transition to socialism, were traitors to the working class. The ALP was to be treated as the Bolsheviks treated the Mensheviks—basically as enemies. The main blows were to be directed at the waverers, the reformists. The effect of such attitudes, theories, habits and methods was far-reaching, long-lasting and greatly detrimental because it *devalued* local Australian conditions and *dehumanised*, to some degree, the Communist Party. It dogmatically insisted that nearly everything, right and wrong, in the Russian experience was good for Australia.

I felt inadequate and nervous. The audience seemed passive. Even the adaption of Wu Ching-tzu's gem from the 18th century novel, *The Scholars*, advising Party leaders to piss on the ground and look at their faces in the puddle, didn't seem to go over that well. I handled the questions poorly and left for the eleven o'clock coffee break rather dissatisfied with myself.

For the second session my choices narrowed down to "Theories of the Australian Labor Party", "Marxism Today—All Dressed Up And Nowhere To Go", and the *Power Without Glory* Struggle. I picked the first and listened to Jack Blake, Brian McKinlay and Mavis Robertson address a large crowd. Regrettably my mind wandered a lot, contemplating the afternoon ahead.

After lunch the theatre was packed to capacity to see and hear some of the chief antagonists of the 1963 split—Ted Hill, Laurie Aarons and Bernie Taft. Video lights glared, press and cameramen hovered, the atmosphere seemed almost inflammable. In the chair Dave Davies, grave and bustling, for the first time in my memory failed to crack a joke. The speakers sat side by side: Hill grim-faced, looking away from the others; Aarons smiling fixedly; Taft appearing pleased with the proceedings. The air was thick with a tension which seemed to grip speakers and audience alike.

Seventeen years ago I'd last seen Hill. Was it when he stormed out after a hectic meeting at Unity Hall snapping, contemptuously "Goodbye, John"? No! It must have been in his legal chambers when he practically drove Ralph Gibson and me out of his office, emphasising that he had an entirely different political position. I believe he was right.

As he spoke one sensed the large, young audience extended a certain personal sympathy. But there was no support for the grotesque poli-

tical line revealed. He was hard, determined, courageous, proud of his isolation, but slightly conciliatory and self-critical. "Harsh things were said," and "I will name no names today." My memory flicked over the outrageous abuse of the not-so-distant past when his former comrades, myself included, were branded publicly as police agents, renegades, traitors; and Whitlam, Cairns, Holding and Hawke were all agents of the United States imperialists. Yet today the US and Fraser have become "realists" and belong to the front against "Soviet social-imperialism".

Hill had expelled, savaged and pursued opponents in the Party. He had ruled with an iron hand. His political career illustrates that only a thin line separates idealism from fanaticism, and that ideology and visions for better societies can sometimes poison humanitarianism. "Everything for the cause" can lead to mercilessness which thoroughly distorts and changes. Of such stuff come the Stalins and the Pol Pots of this world.

Despite everything a little sympathy or sorrow entered more than one breast that afternoon. Here was a man who had devoted his life to what he thought was correct. If ruthlessness and steadfastness were qualities to be admired then he possessed them in quantity. He had split away from the CPA but seventeen years later his own small organisation had itself been rent apart several times. Furthermore, his Chinese mentors, according to rumors, were terminating support for the splinter groups encouraged by the Mao regime following the Sino-Soviet conflict. His haughty comment when a section of the audience laughed at one of his more bizarre statements, "I'm quite used to being in a majority of one," spoke sad volumes. How lonely it must be!

Meanwhile in the other theatres and rooms the Anti-fascist Struggle, the Lowe and Petrov Royal Commissions, the Battle against the Groupers, the CPA and the Aborigines, and other subjects also attracted several hundred people.

There was no time for a cup of coffee before taking my seat on the platform for the panel on the 1971 split. One was reeling from split to split and the ghosts were popping up thick and fast. But I was seeking a few minutes in private to work over notes.

The heat was stifling under the glare of the video lights as Pat Clancy and Laurie Aarons took their places and the theatre filled to capacity again. Laurie and I chucked each other; we could still do that despite past and present differences and arguments. We had been closely acquainted since 1946. His father, Sam, and his

brother, Eric, had been my friends, too. Somehow my mind kept returning to a little public meeting we addressed with Eddie Robertson in far off Quorn in the middle of the Flinders Ranges in 1947. Some thirty men had gathered in the Town Hall for a Communist election meeting chaired by the local Mayor. It was a big meeting for Quorn. It went well but for an old bloke in the front row who not only went to sleep during Laurie's speech but commenced to snore loudly. This prompted Laurie, somewhat incongruously in the small hall, to utter several shouted comments in order to wake him up.

But no one went to sleep that afternoon. Laurie competently put his case. The near-blind Pat Clancy, all guts and sincerity, groping for the microphone, answered him from the breakaway Socialist Party point of view.

A former ACTU Executive member for many years, Clancy is Federal Secretary of the Building Workers Industrial Union and President of the Socialist Party of Australia. I often recall him on the night of 22 August when the hurriedly-convened CPA National Executive met in Sydney to condemn unanimously the occupation of Czechoslovakia. Impatiently, I had been annoyed for months with his defensive attitude towards the Soviet Union, and was again that night by his obvious reluctance in supporting the decision. He was a worried man that night. His worry should have concerned me more personally. Worried comrades should receive compassionate understanding rather than just stern political argument.

Yet despite the physical affliction which had beset him in the intervening years, and the tenseness of the occasion, worry seemed far from him. Without benefit of any notes he gently put his point of view. His mildness, reason and courage earn respect even from those who disagree with his arguments.

My turn at last! Perhaps other audiences have listened to me as closely, but not too many.

"I've had a gutful of splits—right up to here! And the proceedings this afternoon have not relieved that feeling of fullness. For long years I fought my way through splits, explaining them and explaining them away, and picking up the pieces afterwards."

The sessions on the two splits were the biggest of the conference. Young people attended in large numbers, apparently in the hope of hearing the reasons and seeing the principal actors. Probably they weren't disappointed.

From all reports one of the best conference

sessions was held that same afternoon. Many people spoke of Amirah Inglis' talk on the significance of the USSR to Australian Communists in the 1930s, which was illustrated with recordings and photographs and amplified by frank discussion from the audience.

The conference dinner that night was large, warm and cheerful. I found myself among a group of metal workers, rank and file leaders and trade union officials, good-humored, experienced, sensible. A large number of veterans were present: Tom Payne, a foundation member of the CPA, who had met Lenin and Trotsky in 1922 while attending the Fourth Congress of the Communist International; Joan Goodwin, former Secretary of the Party in South Australia during the war; Lloyd Edmonds, of International Brigade fame; Clarrie O'Shea, the hero of the 1969 penal powers dispute; Tom Hills, the old Melbourne waterfront identity. Handshakes, drinks, jokes, arguments, food, the Nationwide cameramen hovering around.

Next morning I heard the art critic Charles Mereweather discuss Communist artists of the past, and that marvellous man, Bernard Smith, penetratingly and wittily told of his association with the CPA in the 1930s and 1940s. No trace of regret or bitterness was apparent. Particularly memorable was his story of how, initially, he'd thought the Left Book Club was an organisation dealing with remaindered books!

The conference provided a wealth of material for historians—descriptions, anecdotes, reminiscences, analyses, statements. All of the conference was taped and some of it videoed.

Passing one theatre on Sunday afternoon I had heard shouting. A young woman drinking coffee said to her companions, "I love the way they say 'Comrades' and then tip the shit over one another." But, in fact, while some heat and passion was displayed, and criticism and difference of opinion abounded, there was a surprising lack of rancor. Point scoring, personalities and bitterness were generally not appreciated.

The lack of penetrating discussion on the *prospects* and *perspectives* of the socialist movement in Australia constituted the major weakness. Can the socialist movement in Australia gather strength? What sort of strategies and organisational forms should it adopt? Does the Communist Party have the possibility to assume real political flesh and blood, or is it doomed to be merely the conscience of the movement, as Ian Turner quite often characterised it. Why has the Com-

unist movement failed to achieve sizeable and lasting influence in Britain, the United States and Australia? Are there potentialities for a future reformation of socialist forces in Australia, on a broader basis and with a wider appeal? Should such an attempt be made outside the ALP? Such matters require discussion but it may have been premature for the conference to have tackled them.

Probably the older generations of Communists and ex-Communists (the biggest political force in the country?) are not the best people to attempt to answer such questions anyway, for all are tarred with the brush of the Stalinist past, in one way or another. Dogmatism, timidity or cynicism are not, perhaps, the ideal starting points. Few, if any, can afford to be unrepentant or self-righteous about their own roles in the past, or about the answers we gave. The socialist movement deserves new people and new approaches. Capable

young people are gathering again. They may be able to learn the lessons of the Stalin period and its aftermath and explore the new approaches that the older generations, hidebound and fearful, would not attempt, or, curbed by doctrine and authoritarianism, were not permitted to try.

Those who wipe off the Communist Party, or its possible successors, as being irrelevant, may have to think again. Society throws up problems. Is our future safe with political cavemen like Fraser, Court, Bjelke-Petersen? Do the Haydens, Hawkes and Wrans measure up to the challenge? The profit motive is still supreme and destroys, corrupts, degrades and exploits. While that sort of society lasts idealists will always try to change it. And so they should. May that movement of the future make people better, for as Joseph Furphy, wrote, "Unless the democratic movement makes people better — more intelligent, conscientious and humane — it is not worth support."

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DUNCAN WATERSON

Prescott Clarke, 1935-1980

Prescott Clarke, Monash University history teacher and close friend of Ian Turner, died after a sudden illness earlier this year. We only have room for one of the several tributes we have been asked to publish. Duncan Waterson is professor of history at Macquarie University.

In 1969, when I was standing for Parliament, Pete Clarke volunteered for a full day's polling booth duty. Deep in the Dandenongs, Menzies Creek voters—all fifty or so of them—were confronted by a Boston Brahmin of formidable appearance, Maoist views and New England accent. An unlikely recruit indeed for a bunch of amateur democratic socialists of the Antipodean variety. But, then, this was perfectly in character with the man.

So was his commitment to his friends (Pete was the quintessence of mateship in its best and widest sense), the university that he served and the society he usually enjoyed and always enriched. Australia's experience of overseas specialists working in our tertiary institutions has been not uniformly happy and successful. Clarke's life, however, demonstrated to me that it was, and indeed must be, possible to live in three worlds—and tolerably balance the three. He was not a watcher but a participant; yet a participant who, as John Legge noted at his funeral, never lost his feeling for the place from whence he came.

To me he was the finest type of American, combining in his person a concept of service and attachment to people derived from his seventeenth-century Puritan ancestors, a love of Chinese civilisation and an enthusiastic adherence to those aspects of Australia he thought were unique and

worthwhile. It pained him to see this country hell-bent on copying and extending those crude materialist forms and responses he so detested in his own country.

Pete was never anyone's man. His driving passion was for an understanding, improvement and concern for humanity, particularly the largest segment of all living in the People's Republic of China. A Sinophile, yes, but he was often misunderstood in terms of both his commitment to, and critical awareness of, China's history and people. His delight in Australian Rules football, the pub, and bush was genuine—a quality not always maintained or shared by all on the Left.

Prescott Clarke's legacy, like that of many teachers in subjects outside the domestic culture, is as yet difficult to assess. Certainly his enthusiasm for China and Chinese civilisation, his concern for, and particular guidance of his Australian students, and his wholehearted involvement in some of the rites and customs of our society, coupled with his last stoic reticence and laconic courage, made this man of the Left not only visible but also a memorable and, above all, humanely civilising personal force. Clarke's life should serve to remind us not only of our own defects and sensibilities but also of Monash and Melbourne's good fortune in retaining the most fruitful teaching years of this American-Australian scholar-enthusiast's life.

LOUISE INGLIS **Darwin**

The cyclone is still inescapable. Pylons stand like old columns amid tangled blocks of land. Some chose to rebuild underneath their houses, using the floor as a roof and the pylons as the framework. There are the stories . . . men dressing as women to board the outgoing planes, unwarranted arrests and police brutality, shootings, the imprint of a fridge on a one hundred foot high water tower.

They say that things just aren't the same in Darwin any more. The atmosphere has changed, the people are different and the good old days done—but some are still wearing the Salvos' handouts that they received in Adelaide. There's the B.C.-A.C. division, but also the resident-transient one. I'm not sure of my status yet.

The transient population is an interesting mixture. The majority of the increased population between May and October seem to be young and unemployed, and are commonly termed the "dry season blow-ins"—sometimes affectionately, sometimes not. The hard-core long-standing Darwin residents don't have a great deal of time for them. Some visitors find houses or flats to share, rents being exorbitant. Some sleep on the beach. Some sleep with friends. By day many of them hang out in the park I was warned against on my first day, Raintree Park. Some come to escape the southern winter chills, some to look, many as a stepping stone either to or from Bali, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and India. Others, like me, seek easy employment and good money. Then there are the seasonal tradespeople and laborers, contractors and sub-contractors. Most of the building is done in the dry and, come the rain, many pack their trades and tools into the caravans and head off.

Unemployment on the whole in Darwin is prevalent but paradoxically there is great opportunity to become involved in a variety of pursuits, artistic, cultural, musical. After I'd been in Dar-

win a week or so I was dining at the Rockmelon cafe. Sometime during the evening my playing the guitar was under discussion; the proprietor, ears pricked, approached me and asked whether I'd play there a couple of nights a week. I was delighted, with the hundred dollars I had on arrival dwindling steadily.

My search for regular daytime employment took me to the public service. I passed their typing test and found myself sitting nervously behind a machine in the Criminal Section of the Magistrate Court Branch, Department of Law. That was April. By August, I was an official of the court. Knock, knock, knock. "Silence. All stand. Darwin Court of Summary Jurisdiction is now in session." Bow. Call defendants, swear or affirm witnesses (what a farce), chase and organise solicitors, placate magistrates, label and convey exhibits, attempt to make those charged a little less petrified and rush a chair under them before their quivering legs give way, pour water for nervous witnesses and generally keep order in the Court. That's the orderlying. The monitoring involves recording, on reel-to-reel tape recorders, the proceedings, and keeping log sheets with dates, names, addresses (also some juicy bits and swear words) for the purpose of transcribing. Being a monitor also has some rather delightful lurks, including travel. Darwin C.S.J. serves the main towns in the Top End—Katherine, Gove, Groote Eylandt—as well as the settlements—Maningrida, Oenpelli, Port Keats, Gaboro (a new addition) and Garden Point. The latter are day trips out over the escarpment country in a six seater. The towns are trips of from two to five days, with well-endowed travelling allowances.

On a cultural/musical view, I have also been lucky. In March someone from the Women's Centre rang me at work saying that she'd heard

from someone else that I sang and played the guitar very nicely and would I like to sing at the Margaret Roadknight concert as part of the Northern Territory Women's Festival. Would I! As it turned out it was at the Jeannie Lewis concert that I sang, about a week later. After losing my plectrum under the spotlight I sang some songs I'd written. It was not my first public performance but it may as well have been.

A couple of months later another phone call and it was Sand Williams, who had stunned me with her singing at the same concert. She asked me if I would like to join Brown's Mart, home of the Darwin Theatre Group, to write and perform songs in the play "Crossfire" by Jennifer Compton. Eight weeks later there we were, singing original compositions in two-part harmony and taking the town by storm. Even got on the radio and television! Never in Melbourne would I get a toe-nail in!

But there are a lot of women in good positions. Two of the five A.B.C. radio and television announcers and newsreaders are women, and there are others with their own shows. There are several women journalists.

People who live in Darwin tend to be involved in a wide cross-section of activities. Because of the pace and atmosphere of the place it's easy to unwind quickly from work and start on squash, tennis, swimming (but not in the sea between October and May, on account of the dreaded sea-wasps), sailing, bowling (ten-pin and lawn), football, rugby and Aussie rules, hockey, softball.

Of course there are others — those, for instance, who hang in the parks getting drunk on port, sherry, beer or meths, fighting and sleeping, getting picked up, visiting court, visiting the can, or maybe just being thrown in a cell under 33A of the Summary Offences Act for Protective Custody. Ruby, the woman who has been singing

and drinking in the park for about ten years, who swears in court the longest stream of obscenities without repetition that I have ever heard, and who had no less than ninety charges of street offences in 1979, has been sent to Adelaide under the Mental Defectives Act. The city seems empty without her.

Alcohol plays an enormous part in Darwin's culture. Amongst the eight or nine pubs there are twenty-odd bars with varying standards of dress, depending on the type of clientele being encouraged or discouraged. Then there are perhaps as many licensed grocers, countless sporting and social clubs, discos and, more recently added, the Casino. But they are just the commercial outlets. Drinking is such an integral part of life in Darwin that it is difficult to escape its clutches. Some of the hard-core have their own stubbie coolers (or chilly bins) which live behind the bar of their regular halts, and it's common to have them bound in leather with the owner's name embossed boldly upon it. The esky is ever evident — at the beach, in the restaurant, at the footy, in the backyard, in the ute and down the track. No worries. Surely all this beer drinking is to a purpose? Of course! It's so we can build boats for the annual beer can regatta. . . .

They say life's a joy
In down-town Nhulunbuy,
And tropical fruit is really beaut on Groote,
I hear there is a telly
In the town Oenpelli,
These facts I tell that no one can dispute!

They reckon life is sleek
Down the track in Tennant Creek,
More so than Katherine, Elliot and the rest,
And life could not be sweeter
Than out in Maningrida —
Mate! Just put our territory to the test!

books

FIRE ON THE ICE

Phillip Law

Roland Huntford: *Scott and Amundsen* (Hodder & Stoughton, \$45.95).

The question of leadership is a particularly complex one. Different fields of activity demand different types of leaders. The captain of a hockey team may not make a good leader on a bushwalk; a good housewife and mother may not be capable of leading a contingent of WAAFPs but may be the accepted maternal authority in her home street; a good general may not necessarily make a good prime minister. A single person *may* succeed in several quite diverse fields, but this is because his qualities satisfy the specific demands of those fields.

Essentially, to lead in some form of human activity one must show competence—and preferably outstanding competence—in that activity. The captain of a football team for example must perform at a level that commands the respect of his men. There are, of course, certain personality traits that contribute towards success as a leader, and the obvious nature of these has led to the widely-held fallacy that a successful leader in one field is likely to be equally successful in another. Self-confidence and the ability to inspire others, some element of personal magnetism, extensive reserves of physical and nervous energy—these are valuable attributes in any leader; but without the high competence I have mentioned they stand merely as a facade.

Leaders may be classified into three major types: autocratic leaders, democratic leaders and laissez-faire leaders. The society of a certain period tends to produce the type of leader that conforms most closely to the mores of that society. We should not be surprised to find that the concepts of

leadership held by our egalitarian society today differ markedly from those of nineteenth century communities.

The leadership of an expedition of exploration is a particularly difficult job. There are the psychological strains of living under demanding conditions with a small group of people in isolated circumstances. The leader must knit his men into a cohesive team, give them each an adequate sense of personal achievement, and make them feel that they are all contributing to the objectives of the enterprise. Logistic organisation and administration must be at a high level of competence if the rigors of the tough environment are to be reduced to acceptable levels. And major decisions need to be made with keen judgment if mishaps, or even tragedies, are to be avoided. The total responsibility of such a leader is a daunting load.

Scott and Amundsen is essentially a book about leadership. Roland Huntford has examined in great detail the expeditions of these two polar explorers and has contrasted their methods, decisions and styles of leadership. Having lived for a number of years in Scandinavia and having acquired a sound knowledge of the Norwegian language, the author has been able to probe the original sources of information about Amundsen's life and exploits to an extent not previously achieved.

Huntford, as a result of his research, developed an immense respect for Amundsen and, feeling that the explorer had received inadequate recognition in the English-speaking world, set out to remedy the deficiency. Amundsen thus emerges as the hero of the book.

It is a pity that the treatment of these two men is so one-sided. It is not too strong to say that Huntford's attitude to Scott is one of con-

tempt. He has hardly a **good word for him** in the whole of the book.

The author unearthed a **great deal of interesting material** from hitherto **unexamined and unpublished sources**. He could have critically analysed the Scott legend in a **cool and objective manner**, for there are many aspects of Scott's methods, judgment and leadership that can be faulted. But, instead, he adopted the stance of a 'knocker' of Scott—and the British—and seems to have searched diligently for anything in the sources that could even remotely support his stance, not only bending statements to fit but elaborating upon what in many cases were quite meagre facts to produce passages of questionable authenticity.

There is hardly a page concerning Scott that does not contain some denigration or derogation of him. Huntford uses a technique that consists of quoting some fact of evidence and then extending it by a number of unsubstantiated statements to produce an effect far beyond that justified by the original evidence. Unfortunately his intimate and imaginative style creates the illusion that it is history one is reading.

But Huntford is not a historian, he is a journalist. He is a very fine journalist and a prodigious researcher, and he has written a book of absorbing fascination. It is one of the most interesting Antarctic books I have ever read, but it is slanted to a degree that can only be deplored.

Much modern journalism suffers from this sort of approach. One perceives it in the various media—newspapers, books, radio and TV. The author or director adopts a point of view, generally one aimed at attacking a person or an event or an accomplishment, and then proceeds to select only evidence that backs his point of view and to bend and distort it to obtain the greatest effect. It saddens me to reflect that the Huntfords of this world probably do not consciously understand the significance of their methods—they are the products of this age and the ethics and mores of our present-day media.

First, the valid criticisms. Scott did little to prepare himself, either by personal experience or through examining the literature, for his Antarctic work. He lacked Amundsen's thoroughness in detailed planning. His prejudice against the use of dogs and of skis led to fatal mistakes. He was an authoritarian leader (but, then, so were most of the leaders of his era and particularly those with service backgrounds) and he was reluctant to consult and to take advice from others. The

choice of Petty Officer Evans for, and the late addition of Bowers to, the planned Pole party of four were further fatal blunders. Scott's timetable for the Polar journey set a return date that was too late in view of his and others' experience of seasonal conditions on the Barrier (p. 395, p. 534). He did not allow himself enough margin in either provisions, fuel or time (p. 434) and his travel techniques were faulty (p. 519). (The erection of trail markers was an example.) There are some pretty telling criticisms of Scott by Oates (p. 420), Wilson and others quoted from their diaries and letters.

Now for the unsubstantiated criticisms, in which the author draws from records conclusions far in excess of what the records justify. Huntford sets the stage for his treatment of Scott on pages 115 and 116.

"These intimations of [national] decline seem curiously personified in Robert Falcon Scott. He was born on June 6, 1868, at a watershed in English life. In 1870 Dickens died. Darwin's last great work "The Ascent of Man" appeared in 1871. Livingstone died in 1873; Wheatstone, the English inventor of the telegraph, in 1875. The race of giants which had adorned the early years of Queen Victoria's reign was passing away." ". . . in a manner familiar in history, an age of greatness was starting to fade. Within the edifice of Imperial grandeur, the structure was beginning to rot. In almost every field the story was the same." ". . . 1870 or thereabouts may be taken as the manifest start of the collapse of British power. If Scott's birth had been chosen as a symbol, it could scarcely have been better timed."

This is an exceedingly shallow statement about the state of Britain at the turn of the century. One could name a number of new giants who were just emerging, but no matter. The point is that, by association, Scott is doomed from the start.

Later in that chapter, the author mentions that Scott, as a junior naval officer, had been given temporary command of a torpedo boat for manoeuvres and promptly ran her aground in Falmouth harbor. He continues: "It was an odd incident in a first command. There is the suggestive image of excellence in theory and deficiencies in practice following hard upon one another. There is the glimpse of an unlucky officer. Scott left 'Vernon' with a tiny question mark hanging over him."

The Royal Geographical Society and the Royal

Society of London (chapter 10) had established a Joint Committee to set up the first Scott Expedition. Huntford says, "There was among them considerable hostility to Scott. He seemed to have a black mark against his name. Rear Admiral Sir William Wharton, the Hydrographer of the Navy, clearly mistrusted him." No evidence whatsoever is advanced for this statement.

On 30 January 1902 Scott discovered King Edward VII Land. Huntford says (p. 150), "mildly intoxicated by the sensations of discovery, Scott pushed eastwards to add miles to the map. He was *rashly plunging* into one of the *most dangerous* parts of the whole Ross Sea, with *treacherous* swirling pack ice. Early on 1 February, Royds came on deck to find Shackleton 'explaining to the Captain that we were going round in a circle'. They were embayed in sea ice with a hint of rafting floes encircled by a ring of virtually indistinguishable icebergs. It was not the first time that Scott, *in his ignorance of ice*, had *got the ship into a trap*. With some difficulty Royds managed to convince Scott, who seemed to be in a state *bordering on panic*, that Shackleton was right, and *extricated* Discovery from *danger*. Scott now *precipitately retreated*, making for the west again."

This passage is a highly exaggerated account of events and I have italicised the emotive words. Chapter 5 of *The Voyage of the Discovery* should be read for Scott's unemotional version. My assessment of the situation is that it was neither rash nor dangerous. I have often been in somewhat similar circumstances. Further, Scott was below, sleeping, when the ship entered this berg-encircled area.

On page 190 Huntford discusses the treatment of Shackleton in Scott's *The Voyage of the Discovery*. He says that the book omits all references from Scott's diary of the southern sledge journey proving that Shackleton fought through to the end, and that the book was written so as to suggest that he broke down completely, becoming a passenger and a drag on the return. I have read again this portion of my copy of the book and can say that Scott's account, while underlining the seriousness of Shackleton's condition, does not lead one to think he travelled other than on his own feet and skis except for two short occasions.

On page 250 the author again reads overmuch into a casual statement by Scott. In a letter to Dr. Charcot, Scott had said, "It [his marriage] does not stop my plans for my work in the South, which is as well, for I tire of this life of regu-

larity." Huntford comments, "This is a revealing hint of the essentially negative impulses driving Scott. Fear was at the head; fear of professional failure, but fear of boredom above all. The power of boredom is great; it has stirred men to do much. Unfortunately, it involves the mentality of escape, and thinking by reaction, which means dangerous emotionalism and rashness." And so on.

Commenting on page 322 on Scott's receipt in Melbourne of a cable informing him that Amundsen intended to attempt the South Pole, Huntford says: "By temperament and character Scott was unsuited to emergencies; they exacerbated his fluctuating moods and heightened his already taut nerves. Outside Melbourne, on 'Terra Nova', waiting for the tide to turn, he was in a state of considerable tension, torn between complacency and fear; convinced that plans were running to perfection, gloomily afraid that something would go wrong. Amundsen's cable had knocked him off balance." All this is conjecture.

Again, on page 360, commenting on the atmosphere on board Terra Nova after encountering Fram in the Bay of Whales, off the Ross Barrier, Huntford says: "Campbell was in particularly low spirits, events at the Bay of Whales had been depressing in more ways than one. Comparisons beyond the number of dogs obtruded themselves. Framheim, with its evident meticulous planning and smooth organisation, was far from the muddles at Cape Evans. Even more dispiriting, perhaps, was the contrast between the aura of quiet, yet aggressive self-confidence surrounding Amundsen and the sour undertones of Scott's profoundly defensive mentality. *Campbell did not put it exactly in those terms* but he sensed the superiority of the Norwegian's leadership." (My emphasis.)

It would have been more useful for Huntford to quote what Campbell *did* say rather than to weave still another pattern of unsubstantiated derogations.

On page 471 Huntford makes quite a vicious surmise: "On New Year's Eve. Scott ordered Evans' team to abandon their skis and continue on foot. This is quite staggering and Scott nowhere gives his motives. . . . He had patently decided by then to take his own team on to the Pole, *and wanted to break Evans* ("Teddy" Evans, not P.O. Evans) *so as to ease the task of sending him back.*" There is absolutely no justification for the statement I have emphasised. It is a despicable concoction.

Towards the end of Scott's final sledge journey, when only Scott and Bowers were keeping any records, Huntford says (p. 534) "At this point one is thrown back on deduction". In view of the numerous deductions and inferences developed without recorded evidence in the rest of the book this statement has a strange ring to it. One of these unjustified deductions follows on the next page when Scott writes in his diary, "I don't know what I should do if Wilson and Bowers weren't so determinedly cheerful over things." The inference that Huntford draws is this: "As a leader Scott had collapsed, and Wilson had taken over." It is the expression of absolute certainty in this derogatory statement that appals me, apart from the partiality that has drawn such a deduction from what I can see only as a very normal sort of statement from a leader in such circumstances. But I think I have quoted enough examples to demonstrate the technique of the author.

There has been a reaction to this book from another quarter. The *Geographical Journal* of March, 1980, contains (p. 161) a letter from the Rev. Canon Gervase Markham objecting to the following statement by Huntford on p. 125 in *Scott and Amundsen*: "Though married, with a daughter, Markham was a homosexual. He sometimes went south to indulge his proclivities safe from criminal prosecution. He liked earthy Sicilian boys. At home he kept his affairs decorous, or at least discreet." (He refers to Sir Clements Markham, elected President of the Royal Geographical Society in 1893 and mainly responsible for organising support for Scott's first expedition.)

Huntford's basis for his assertion comprises three passages from Sir Clements' diaries. Canon Markham quotes these. They leave no doubt in my mind that the same exercise of the author's imagination has embroidered these innocent sentences to produce the dramatic but damaging assertion I have quoted. The technique is that used so often in the book; the result is the same.

But Huntford continues on his dogged way. On page 545 he states: "By a melodramatic improbability, Nansen and Kathleen Scott had been having a love affair while Scott was on the Southern Road. It was consummated in a Berlin hotel while Scott was facing defeat at the Pole."

Lord Kennet, the son of Lady Scott by her second marriage, defends his mother in a review of the book which he has written for *Encounter* (May 1980). Extracts from her letters to Nansen make a convincing rebuttal of Huntford's state-

ment. The rest of Kennet's review exposes further specious assertions in Huntford's book.

Huntford has quoted from various expeditioners' diaries, but not from those of any of the scientists other than Wilson. Most scientists write diaries on field trips. Could the author not gain access to them, or did they not provide him with the sort of ammunition for which he was looking? In the Discovery expedition were Hodgson (biologist), Ferrar (geologist) and Bernacci (physicist). In the Terra Nova expedition were Simpson (meteorologist), Taylor (geologist), Nelson (biologist), Debenham (geologist), Wright (physicist), Priestly (geologist). I knew Taylor, Priestly, Debenham and Wright personally. Had the leadership been as bad as Huntford has asserted, I am sure I would have heard some comments from these four on the occasions when I spoke with them about Scott's expedition.

Turning to Amundsen, I find the record more honest, but somewhat colored by the hero worship of the author. There can be no doubt about the energy and single-minded purpose that Amundsen devoted over the period of his life between the ages of 17 and 28 to the conquest of the North West Passage. After that he raised his sights to the conquest of the North Pole, and it was only the force of a number of circumstances that switched him towards the South Pole. The deliberate way in which he trained and prepared himself for these exploits provides a model for any aspiring adventurer — ski journeys in Norway, sealing in the Arctic, service in the merchant navy to gain his mate's certificate, more mountain skiing and, finally, an appointment as second mate on *Belgica*, the ship of the Belgian Antarctic Expedition of 1897-9 under Gaston de Gerlache.

This was one of the classical Antarctic voyages, for the *Belgica* was frozen in and drifted all winter in the pack-ice south of 70°S. latitude. Its crew were the first men ever to winter in Antarctica, and Amundsen gained invaluable experience.

In 1900 he gained his master's ticket and in 1901 bought the ship *Gjoa* and spent the summer sealing in the Arctic. In 1903-5 he made the first traverse of the North West Passage from east to west, charting much unknown coast, fixing the position of the North Magnetic Pole and gaining valuable information about the eskimo way of life and the techniques of dog sledge travel.

With the fame and prestige that this exploit earned him he was prepared to seek support for his proposed drift across the North Pole. He

sought and obtained the release of the Fram from Nansen but had great difficulty in raising the necessary funds, particularly as at that time the news broke that Cook and Peary had both claimed to have reached the Pole.

Huntford analyses carefully Amundsen's decision to try for the South Pole and the deception he practised in delaying the announcement of this until after he had sailed ostensibly on an expedition to drift across the North Polar Basin. He then narrates the details of Amundsen's southern voyage and his successful dash to the South Pole.

It is now known that Amundsen's route up the Axel Heiberg Glacier was a more difficult one than Scott's route up the Beardmore. Nevertheless, the ruthless drive of Amundsen and the professional competence of his team, together with the meticulous planning and preparation that he had done, robbed it of any great drama. It all went well and smoothly, in marked contrast to the pitiful struggles of Scott and his companions.

Huntford is critical of Amundsen in regard to one episode during his Antarctic expedition. This is described on pages 409-413 and tells how Amundsen, in a rush to return to base from a false start too early in the year, goes ahead with the leading dog team and leaves his companions to follow with theirs. They got into trouble and the last pair, who had neither food, fuel nor tent, were lucky to get through in a temperature of -50°C . They came in with frostbitten feet, exhausted, eight hours later.

One of the pairs, Johansen, criticized Amundsen next morning for deserting his companions. This led, together with other background incidents of rivalry between him and Amundsen, to Amundsen excluding Johansen from the Pole party and maintaining on the homeward journey a refusal to forgive Johansen for his rebellion. Back in Norway, Johansen relapsed into former drinking habits and, in January 1913, committed suicide.

The last chapter of the book is a sad one. The author deals with the concluding years of Amundsen's life, leading to his death during an unsuccessful attempt to rescue the Italian airman, Nobile, from the Arctic. It is hard to recognize in this portrait of a bitter loser the great hero whose magnificent qualities are so extolled in the earlier chapters. Apparently Huntford's techniques led him in the end to demolish his own hero!

I have a few minor comments concerning certain statements in the book. On pages 336-7 an inset

map portrays the state of Antarctic discovery in 1910. The area shown as having been explored is far too extensive. On page 401 Huntford says the field clothing of Scott's expedition was manifestly defective and plugs for Eskimo furs as used by Amundsen. He returns to this theme again later. However, men of modern expeditions have never used fur clothing. During the IGY, Australian expeditions had probably the most effective field clothing in Antarctica and it did not differ much—and certainly not in principle—from that developed by the expeditions of Scott, Shackleton and Mawson. It should be noted that Huntford himself states, on page 458, that Amundsen abandoned his fur clothing at the Devil's Glacier for his push to the Pole over the plateau and proceeded, in temperatures of about -20°C , in gear very much the same as that of the British.

Huntford criticizes the British polar pyramid tent on page 423: "Incompetent design penetrated into most details of equipment . . . His [Scott's] tents . . . slipped over a cumbrous framework of poles, like a tepee, were difficult to erect in a gale." Yet the pyramid tent, supported by four poles, is still the safest, most durable, most capacious and most widely used tent today for extreme polar conditions. Huntford himself says on page 148 that Koettlitz had "made a notable advance in polar equipment by inventing the pyramid tent".

In various places Huntford refers to the art of driving sledge dogs and the difficulty of learning it, the object being to underline the extent of the Norwegians' accomplishments. On page 163 he says, "Normally dog-driving takes at least a year or two of hard practice to learn." This is nonsense; each year certain men of my expeditions learnt to drive huskies effectively in a few weeks of practice.

One of the arguments used by the British to excuse Scott's defeat in the race for the Pole was that Scott's expedition was a scientific one and Amundsen's a racing team. The only scientific program Amundsen included in his program was some oceanographic work during the Fram's voyage. Both Scott's Antarctic expeditions on the other hand had broad scientific objectives and they produced great quantities of valuable scientific information about an almost unknown continent. As a result of the Discovery and Terra Nova expeditions there were published 32 volumes of scientific reports. This important aspect of Scott's endeavors is avoided by Huntford.

THE DEPRESSION: POINTS OF VIEW

Stuart Macintyre

Ian Reid: *Fiction and the Great Depression. Australia and New Zealand 1930-1950* (Arnold, \$11.50).

In cold facts, what did the Terra Nova expedition accomplish? There were the explorations of the Terra Nova itself, from Oates Land around Cape Adare, down the western side of the Ross Sea and along the edge of the Ross Ice Shelf to Edward VII Land. There was the elaborate mapping by land parties of the extensive Victoria Land coast with its impressive mountains and glaciers. Scientific observations of great value were obtained in a number of disciplines—physiography and cartography, geology, glaciology, geophysics, meteorology, marine biology, zoology and biology.

And as for the polar journey, Scott and his party *did* reach the Pole, distant about 800 miles from their base. With support party routes the total distances covered exceeded 2,000 miles. This is a not inconsiderable achievement in any terms! A responsible review of Scott's Terra Nova expedition should at least record these accomplishments by the British team.

To the records must be added those achieved by the earlier Discovery expedition: cartography, geology, zoology, geophysics and meteorology.

To sum up, I consider the book a major contribution to polar literature in respect to the authentic detail that the author's research has exposed. It is also enthralling reading. If the author had maintained the objectivity of Marjorie and James Fisher, who carried out much the same sort of task in their biography *Shackleton*, he would have created a masterpiece that would have been a standard book of reference on the subject of Scott and Amundsen. As it is, the author's obsession with destroying the Scott legend has led him on a crusade of vilification. So much has been embroidered by his own fancies that one cannot but distrust much of the unsubstantiated comment.

The Scott legend has, for over seventy years, provided more inspiration and stimulus for adventurous youth than any other in the English language. If it had to be debunked—and I am not sure that I agree it should have been—it is a pity that it could not have been done with sympathy, compassion, and above all, justice.

Phillip Law, who has made twenty-eight visits to Antarctic and sub-Antarctic regions, was Director of the Antarctic Division of the Department of External Affairs from 1949 to 1966. He has written and published widely on Antarctica, and is active in many areas, including Antarctic research and marine sciences.

Amidst the current unemployment and widespread hardship it is hardly surprising that the Depression of the 1930s grips our imagination. Those times are lodged in our historical consciousness. Over the past decade there has been a spate of memoirs and novels, films and television series, oral and analytical history, all concerned with the Depression and its consequences. I mention analytical history last despite the quality of academic work—notably Geoffrey Bolton's *A Fine Country To Starve In*, Ray Broomhill's *Unemployed Workers* and several unpublished theses—because the dominant impulse is not analytical. Rather, it is to recapture the immediacy of the experience, to recreate the reality of the lives of ordinary men and women.

What is happening here? In part there is the desire of an older generation to tell a younger one something of its past before it is too late. This is to be welcomed, and the popular reception of Wendy Lowenstein's *Weevils In The Flour* should encourage others to follow her example. Much of the current enthusiasm for oral history is surely an enthusiasm for the prospect of a genuinely popular history, in which the voiceless are allowed to speak and restrictive disciplinary boundaries are broken down. But the genre of oral history is not without its dangers, not least the possibility of confusing popular history with mere nostalgia.

Let me clarify the distinction I have in mind by use of an example. At the recent Communism and the Labor Movement conference there was a session on the unemployed workers' movement of the 1930s. A Melbourne veteran described some of the tactics and strategies which mobilised the unemployed to fight for improved relief and to prevent evictions. The audience included several people who are involved in current unemployed activity, and discussion turned to a comparison of then and now. Much of what the veteran had to say had concerned those simple but basic organisational tasks on which any successful working class activity depends. It became clear in the discussion that we have lost many of these skills of popular agitation. And while the speaker expressed his confidence that they can be learnt again, and new ones developed, it was evident that he and his generation have much to teach us.

People's history, correctly understood, is not merely commemorative; it is a history that serves the people by contributing to their understanding and helping them to act.

There is in any case a dilemma confronting those who seek to present in unalloyed form the actual lived experience of the Depression. Oral history can help us to penetrate the human reality behind the statistic, the official record or the opacity of the newspaper, but the fact remains that those days are past. The elderly men and women who recall them cannot free themselves from the cultural effects of forty years, they cannot recapture their youth in an unmediated form, and they cannot speak for their parents.

Readers of Frank Hardy's collection, *Legends from Benson's Valley*, will recall the episode when a group of the unemployed queue at the police station for their dole ticket and give the names of Australian cricketers — Bradman, Woodfull, Richardson, Ryder, Kippax, and so on. Easy-going Sergeant Flaherty takes down the names without a smile, then calls out, "Is Bill Ponsford here? If so, we've the full test eleven." Except that Bradman is missing, exactly the same story was told twenty-eight years earlier in Kylie Tennant's *Tiburón*. The coincidence does not detract from the quality of Hardy's collection (which contains some of his finest writing), and no doubt the story was in circulation before Kylie Tennant picked it up. The point about such stories is that they are part of popular folklore which is only reinforced by their appearance in print. They both express and come to stand for the response of the indigent to their lot.

It is this process of encapsulation and reinforcement which has become increasingly problematic in the recent renewal of interest in the Depression. Just as those who lived through it grow older and are outnumbered by those who did not, so the historical experience of those years has been translated into a variety of images, images which seem all the more convincing because they are concerned with tangible human experiences. Whether in *Caddie* or in *The Sullivans*, we are shown a picture of the past and told this is how we were.

Nor, incidentally, is the phenomenon a specifically Australian one. Historical nostalgia is a world-wide phenomenon, as is the willingness of an audience to rejoice in a self-portrait which is manifestly contrary to its own experience. One particularly striking example is the enormous popularity in South Wales of the novel and

television series, *How Green Was My Valley*. It celebrates a cloyingly romantic picture of life in a mining village which its audience knows to be nonsense, and yet which evidently satisfies some inner need.

Ian Reid's study of *Fiction and the Great Depression* has two purposes. One is to compare Australian writing on the Depression with New Zealand writing, and suggest how the differences reflect differences between the two societies. My knowledge of the other side of the Tasman is too limited to evaluate the success of this project. I suspect that a binary opposition is too simple, and that just as the Western Australian response to the Depression has to be distinguished from the response in New South Wales, and the behavior on a coalfield is unlike behavior on a dairy farm, so there are variations within New Zealand. Nor am I persuaded by Reid's argument that class differentiation and class consciousness are unimportant aspects of New Zealand society, and several recent articles in the *New Zealand Journal of History* provide evidence to the contrary. But perhaps Overland might invite a New Zealand opinion. Certainly, the comparison is worth making, and the inclusion of New Zealand is an attractive feature of the book.

The book's second purpose is to explore the complexities of the relationships between literary images, popular consciousness and the historical actuality of the Depression. It is on this enterprise that I concentrate my comments.

Reid opens his survey with the critic's stock-in-trade, a rap over the knuckles for those unlucky enough to have looked at the subject before him. One of these unfortunates is the editor of *Overland*, and his error is the greater because it appeared in "a handbook which circulates widely", namely the 1964 edition of Geoffrey Dutton's Penguin survey of *The Literature of Australia*. In his article on "The Novel and Society", Stephen Murray-Smith remarked that despite important novels by Kylie Tennant, Leonard Mann and Alan Marshall, there was a surprising lack of contemporary Australian writing on the effects of the Depression, and of radical writing in particular.

Reid contradicts Murray-Smith with a list of fourteen novels. I am not sure how useful it is to regard *Seven Poor Men of Sydney*, *Power Without Glory* or *Intimate Strangers* as Depression novels, and the radical credentials of others are dubious. But this is a game that anyone can play and I leave it to readers to decide on their

criteria and compose their own lists. The more serious problem is the looseness of Reid's chronology for, as his subtitle indicates, he embraces two full decades from 1930 to 1950.

I shall not argue the toss over 1930. Reid is not writing economic history so we should not make too much of his failure to notice the economic stagnation and the considerable unemployment that marked the 1920s. I find this oversight less worrying than the lack of awareness that there had been an earlier severe depression in the 1890s, and that its social effects prefigured several of the themes that were to recur in the 1930s. An appreciation of the similar circumstances shaping the literature of the 1890s and the 1930s would save him from some of the errors committed in his airy dismissal of the democratic literary tradition.

In his choice of 1950 as a terminal point Reid gets the worst of both worlds. First, it exonerates him from tracing through the gradual and uneven recovery of the later 1930s (it is in just this context that many of the novels — Leonard Mann's *The Go Getter* is a good example — are set). Second, as a means of following retrospective literary treatments of the Depression it allows only for the wartime and immediate post-war viewpoints. Even these are treated with an astonishing historical naivety. For example, Harold Wells is commended for his *The Earth Cries Out* (1950) because he wrote it after he left the Communist Party and therefore achieved "a balance between sympathy and objectivity". Those who know the novel will recognise it as a political autobiography in fictional form in which the operative historical forces are those of the 1940s, and which are set against the Depression in order to argue the new irrelevance of class conflict. One would have thought that Reid would at least have looked at Edgar Ross's history of the miners before pronouncing on the objectivity of *The Earth Cries Out*. But of the origins of the Cold War and the domestic political atmosphere, of the strike of 1949 and Wells' role in the miners' union during these years, there is not a mention.

Objectivity is the cardinal virtue in Reid's literary canon. Katharine Susannah Prichard, Alan Marshall, Frank Hardy, Leonard Mann and others are all found deficient and taken to task for their vehement emotional partisanship, the didactic tone of their writing, their axe-grinding, and so on. Even Kylie Tennant, who is awarded points for her wryly ironical tone, loses some of them for allowing an emotional timbre to enter her voice.

Now there are important issues at stake here. In nearly all the novels which deal with the Australian Depression one can observe a tension between the intention to give a faithful description of hardship and misery, and the search for evidence of popular solidarity and class mobilisation. Reid thinks that the search for political comfort triumphs over realism and that the "finger-waving and fist-clenching" partisans have translated Marx and Engels into the vernacular of Furphy and Lawson. As he presents it, Moscow drops the flag on indigenous radicalism in 1935 and the Party faithful boil the billy.

But what if this radical tradition does communicate something real about popular consciousness? What if it is not merely literary and not merely exhortatory, but a cultural expression of contradictions which exist within Australian society? Seen from this perspective, the radical tradition is as much a comfort as a scourge. It offers men comfort in mateship, in sardonic humor, in the high premium placed on grinning and bearing it, in its reinforcement of sexual inequality. All these themes are present in Frank Hardy's story "The Load of Wood", a story that explores the parameters of resignation and revolt among the unemployed of Benson's Valley in a masterful fashion.

I approached Ian Reid's book in the expectation that he would throw light on these issues. He does not. Instead he constructs standards of political neutrality that disqualify Hardy and other committed writers, the writers who shed light on the Depression experience, from serious attention.

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A "WRETCHEDLY HAPPY LIFE"

Graham Rowlands

Michael Dransfield: *The Second Month of Spring*, collected and edited by Rodney Hall (U.Q.P., \$6.20).

Call them Dransfield's last poems. Everyone who loves his work as I do would have wanted him to go out finishing his greatest poems. It didn't happen that way. Perhaps it was always impossible. And anyway, he'd written his last poem many times over at the height of his powers. Even so, "horrors, the" is as good as any of his

drug lifestyle poems. Which says a lot. It's one last perfect defiant triumphant assertion that the junkie's ecstasy is worth the agony.

Hall has done everyone a service by leaving the poet's allegedly inferior poems to researchers. There are quite enough unrealized pieces here as it is. Hall explains that the motorbike accident, knife attack and return of the drug habit impaired Dransfield's concentration. The poet admits that revision is beyond him. Certainly revision could have eliminated self-references and expanded shorthand references to films and music.

I'm afraid, however, that it wasn't only revision that was beyond the poet. He'd lost his great gift with images. An irreparable and irreplaceable loss. It's true that he'd often used bald statements. These, however, had counterpointed the imagery. Without the latter his social criticism becomes banal, rhetorical, sentimental. Moreover, where his subject is himself and the world, his Romanticism becomes threadbare. As well as the usual list of traditional (and legitimate) pet hates, there are some downright ignorant attacks—particularly on Freud, whose creative process and physical suffering must have been as arduous as Dransfield's. The poet had exploited his paranoia before; here, excepting the anti-political, political poem "a strange bird", he just thrashes about.

Readers wanting more drug trip poems like "bums' rush" should return to *Voyage Into Solitude*. It's at least arguable that he would have written better trip poems in October 1972 had someone supplied him with heroin unlimited. "heroin wednesday" (the closest he comes to equalling his earlier masterpieces) is more vivid than "friday" where he scores only benzedrine. Observations about dope and junkies become the main drug poems here. I'm not ignoring his magnificent love, loss and regret lyrics (here only approximated in "the last two on the shore" and "look at my watch") when I say that, in the end, as often in the beginning, dope was stronger than everything else. He wrote best about dope because he *knew* more about dope than he knew about anything else. Even his bald statements work best in his drug lifestyle poems, such as "i see by your outfit" and "a waste of time". Dope opens up magic worlds for him and he sacrifices his life to recreate them in words. When the visions become impossible, he even writes about their absence. He despises the drugs doled out in hospital where, dying, he is surrounded by the dying and those trying to die.

Both the biographical and artistic meaning of

his last poems is the struggle to *write* when, paradoxically, he's without the will to *live*. His pain stops him from writing well about not caring whether he lives or dies. He'd said it already. These factors produce self-reference, repetitive titles and obsessive (often corny) punning, such as "homage to catatonia".

Fortunately, language games are only the tail end of an extraordinary facility. It came as a surprise to me to find in *Voyage Into Solitude* several superb poems where he sent up himself, art, his martyr-heroes, indeed all his most serious concerns. There, the games were refreshing among many fine serious poems. Just as his generalizations here cry out for images, so the playful poems here need a context of serious quality work. I'm afraid there just aren't enough. Despite this, rather than quote "horrors, the" which I wish could have been his past poem, I quote a successful lighter piece. It and poems like it in *Voyage* form the most exciting new direction of his posthumous work, a direction that qualifies his Romanticism:

i'm not dead
sure of the poems

life seems
to suffer a bit

in the translation

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DIPLOMATIC MASTERPIECE

Walter Crocker

Paul Hasluck: *Diplomatic Witness* (Melbourne University Press, \$25).

The Australian political world, unlike the political world in England, has produced few writers, even on politics. Sir Paul Hasluck's performance would be uncommon even in England; in Australia it is unique. He got to the top of the political world; after twenty years as a Minister he spent five highly distinguished years as Governor General. Since his retirement he has given himself to writing. His 450 page book on the Australian administration of Papua New Guinea and of his own orienting the administration towards independence, *A Time for Building*, is an indispensable source book, and not only for students of New Guinea or of colonial policy. His brochures on the office of Governor General

and on Sir Robert Menzies are also indispensable to the student, while his account of his first thirty-five years, *Mucking About*, combines truth with charm in a way which promises it a long life.

His latest book is an account of the years 1941-47 as seen by a participant; crucial years for the evolution of Australian foreign relations as also for the shaping of international relations on the world scale, and especially for the founding and shaping of the United Nations. Sir Paul, then a young man in his thirties, educated, serious but neither solemn nor narrow, sharp-witted, alert, observant and motivated by personal commitment of the idealistic kind, was in the thick of it, in Canberra, in London, in San Francisco and in New York. The three hundred pages of his material is skilfully organised into twenty-seven chapters followed by a select bibliography and a good index and illustrated with some revealing photographs. I found it compulsive reading.

Its value as reliable historical evidence is enhanced by the quality of the writing. Sir Paul is a professional writer; his early years benefited from the rigors of old-time journalism. But he is also a natural writer; and the pen though disciplined and factual is lightened by the spirit of the ironist — not for nothing that Montaigne has been a formative influence — and by the eye of the poet. There are some delicious vignettes, some memorable phrasing, and both humor and good temper.

The years were crucial for Australia as well as for the world. Not long after Sir Paul arrived in Canberra from Perth, on temporary secondment to the Department of External Affairs, the government of Menzies was replaced by that of Curtin. We get vivid glimpses of Evatt taking over the Department and soon giving it a stamp which has not yet been lost; of the small and rather ramshackle Department feeling its way towards visions of the world which would be following on the war and of Australia's part in it. The young Hasluck was a key figure in this new orientation. Milestones on the way were the Mount Tremblant Conference in Canada in late 1942, the Australia-New Zealand Conference in Canberra in early 1944 and a second Australia-New Zealand Conference held in Wellington later in the year. He took an active part in all three conferences. By then the end of World War II was in sight; and in sight too was the San Francisco Conference of 1945 which was to work out the new world order and more particularly, the constitution of the new body which was to be

the successor to the League of Nations. In preparation for the conference was the London meeting of the members of the British Commonwealth. The San Francisco Conference itself, attended by representatives of forty-six countries and lasting for ten weeks, was the culmination of nearly five years of effort. It launched not only the ill-starred United Nations but Evatt as a world figure — at least of a kind and for a time.

The story of this memorable fateful conference gives full scope to Sir Paul for his irony, especially the conflict between Deputy Prime Minister Forde, the titular head of the Australian delegation, and Evatt, the *de facto* head, restlessly ambitious, thrusting, brilliant, devious, and paranoid. It was the conflict which makes the title of "The Calf with Two Heads" to one of the chapters so fitting.

The concluding chapters show the UN taking on life, in the Executive Committee in London 1945-6, in its first General Assembly, in its deciding to make New York its headquarters, and in the beginnings of the Security Council. Sir Paul represented Australia throughout. His sudden resignation in 1947 caused a shock of a kind at Lake Success; a shock which I, at the time inside the UN Secretariat, have not forgotten. The facts in the case were not clear, but the sympathies were for Sir Paul. The facts are now quite clear.

The title of the book, *Diplomatic Witness*, is well chosen. He was a witness of great events, of notable players, and of much strangeness. He was also someone participating with a force and effect above his official rank. He does not exaggerate his part, though in fact at certain points he was Australian policy itself; and some things he could only witness from the outside.

But what testimony!

The book is a necessary source for the fateful San Francisco Conference, especially as seen through the zestful eyes of an Australian official. It is a necessary source for the evolution of an Australian foreign policy and of an Australian foreign office and foreign service. We had virtually none of these three things in 1941 when Paul Hasluck arrived in Canberra. It is a delightful source for life in the bucolic Canberra of those years. As for Evatt, who dominated these formative developments, it gives what surely will come to be seen as the classic account of this strange figure.

Few people saw more of Evatt for so long a stretch as Sir Paul; and few had the intellect or

the insight to see him whole, good and bad, or the charity to make allowances, or the gift of words to express what he saw, as Sir Paul had. The cumulative effect, a sentence here and there, this chapter and that, an account of one episode and then another, for instance Evatt's fear on aeroplanes, the sulkings at the New Zealand Conference, the inviting and receiving a snub from Churchill at his most Churchillian, the betrayal of secret British documentation to the Russians, the jealousy for colleagues, the equally unbalanced suspiciousness, the tantrums, the touch of masochism, the powerful if lop-sided mind, the Napoleonic capacity for work and concentration, the baffling tangle of mixed-up capacities, incapacities and motives. The effect of Sir Paul's depiction is never petulant and never petty, but it is devastating. It carries conviction in a way unexcelled by any other account of Evatt I have come across: a story not without tragic elements of great talents somehow denied fruition.

I write this review as an old man, having—though outside the Australian circle—participated in those years and seen at close hand many of the persons and events recounted in this book, in some ways a history of old unhappy far-off things and battles long ago and of the hopes of the world about to dawn blasted into the realities of the UN we now have. I write, too, as one whose professional life required him to look at political matters and politicians as a doctor looks at patients. The sharpest single lesson left by this profession is that very few men can be entrusted with power. Curtin or Chifley or Baldwin or Lincoln escaped from the corruption of power; a tiny minority. Men who are the most ambitious for power are generally the last to be entrusted with it with safety. Evatt was a *locus classicus*. That human society, the weakly organised state, can be taken over by the Stalins, the Idi Amins, the Emperors Bokassa, the Khomeinis, is bad enough. Still more disquieting is the nature of men who often get power in the better-organised, long-established democratic societies. Evatt was not alone among democratic leaders who at times comported themselves like madmen.

Evatt of course is not the whole of Hasluck's story by far. It is a relief to see the glimpses he provides of sane, disinterested and often highly gifted men like Bruce, Curtin, Owen Dixon, Garran, Giblin and W. S. Robinson; or to read his justified tributes to many colleagues and especially to old-time public servants like Mulrooney and Rodgers, or to such fruitful men as Jenks of

the ILO or Alister McIntosh of New Zealand, two of the ablest men who came my way. No man at any level or in any role in public life in New Zealand made such a contribution as did McIntosh over a thirty year period.

There is unfortunately no space to discuss Sir Paul's information and comment on such important matters as the relations between Ministers and public servants, the structuring of the public service, the change in the Executive or on how the full employment clauses got into the UN Charter.

Sir Paul has written a masterpiece on his years as a foreign service official. It is to be hoped he will now go on to write of the years when he was in charge of Australia's foreign relations.

Sir Walter Crocker has had a distinguished diplomatic career, and served in the United Nations Secretariat between 1946 and 1950 as a representative of the British Foreign Office. He subsequently became the founding Professor of International Relations at the Australian National University, and then served Australia in a number of high diplomatic posts abroad. He is Lieutenant Governor of South Australia. A book of memoirs will be published shortly.

THE LEICHHARDT MYSTERIES

Warren Bonython

Gordon Connell: *The Mystery of Ludwig Leichhardt* (Melbourne University Press, \$12.20). E. M. Webster: *Whirlwinds in the Plain* (Melbourne University Press, \$28.60).

Two new books on Ludwig Leichhardt, issued almost simultaneously by the same publisher, throw fresh light on the lost explorer and on the long-debated mystery of his disappearance—but how different they are!

Gordon Connell's book is concise, readable, has characteristics of a modern 'whodunit' and deals mainly with Leichhardt's last expedition, while Elsie Webster's is a weighty tome of 460 pages, is packed with the fruits of detailed historical research, is not light reading (clearly not meant to be) and deals predominantly with Leichhardt's associates and those interacting with and about him, both during his lifetime and afterwards.

The Mystery of Ludwig Leichhardt purports to solve the puzzling disappearance of this German explorer that has bedevilled Australian historians for the past 130 years. Connell turns what seemed to be a loose collection of isolated,

suspect and often conflicting clues into a series of clear pictures which integrate into the final conclusive one.

With the skill of a detective-investigator he weighs evidence, forms conclusions and builds up a cast-iron case for his final assertion that the Leichhardt party was massacred by Aborigines at Wantata Waterhole on the Diamantina about the end of 1850.

The mystery had remained so long unsolved that to many it seemed, after a century and more had passed, no final answer was ever going to emerge. If Connell's plausible conclusions stand up to cross-examination by present-day historians his success, coming so long after the event itself, must be hailed as remarkable.

Formerly conflicting pieces of evidence are shown in Connell's interpretation to fall into their harmonious place. Lindsay's L-tree at Arltunga, partly "behind" (i.e. on the west side of) the Simpson Desert, is explained by Leichhardt's having travelled south down through the Northern Territory before turning easterly to round the northern end of that desert on what was intended to be his home journey. The discovery in 1938 by the S.A. government expedition in an old Aboriginal campsite on the Finke River, fully "behind" the Simpson Desert, of coins and other European objects, from which Connell adduces evidence of a link with Leichhardt, is now — far from being anomalous, or even the result of a hoax — explained away by their having been subsequently carried there from Wantata by Leichhardt's murderers.

Connell tends to quote repeatedly the same or similar evidence, but this is probably necessary for the comparison of the same events reported by different witnesses and of evidence from different sources, and to thrash out such vital issues as there being only seven massacred in the Aboriginal legend while there had been eight in the original party.

In considering evidence he sometimes proceeds to a conclusion before justifying it. Here he is really stating a hypothesis which he is about to prove. "Near the waterhole was a piece of old shoe." Later he says: "The shoe was Leichhardt's. J. F. Mann described him on his second expedition as wearing low boots — these would have been shoes. His expenditure for his last expedition shows that in Sydney he bought four pairs of boots and two pairs of shoes."

One might deem such summary handling of evidence and deduction superficial. However, the

impression comes through that Connell did, in fact, carefully weigh his judgement but has not written down all the detailed argument in order to preserve the succinctness which is the chief attribute of this work.

The book is compact, well printed and illustrated, and includes four maps. Although numerous bibliographical references are provided, the absence of an index is disappointing.

Whirlwinds in the Plain is nothing like Connell's book. While Gordon Connell concerns himself mainly with Leichhardt's last journey, for which no journals exist, Elsie Webster has carried out a veritable *tour de force* of scholarship on those other journals, papers, books and letters of and pertaining to Leichhardt which have come down to us, and on all those press references to the long-drawn-out aftermath of his disappearance. Her treatment is extraordinarily thorough, the opinions she records on the many disputes seem well-balanced and her judgement sound.

Because of its comprehensiveness the book sometimes seems heavy going — one struggles along, as did the Leichhardt party through the insect- and fever-ridden scrubs and swamps of the Mackenzie River on the second, abortive expedition — but the going improves as one becomes enmeshed in the fascinating web of life stories that she spins and whose threads she pursues relentlessly. The reader is left with feelings of amazement at and admiration for the labors of Elsie Webster.

The inevitable conflict between the "gentlemen" and the "working men", so frequent in early Australian exploring parties, comes out with Leichhardt's expeditions too. Recent revelations, like the Daniel Brock diary (*To the Desert with Sturt* — 1975) affecting Captain Charles Sturt, form part of today's vogue for 'de-bunking' formerly highly respected explorers. The de-bunking tends to reveal explorers as less virtuous and more prone to human failings than we had been taught in school.

However, with Leichhardt the denigration started in his lifetime and went on for more than fifty years. There was less a charge of class bias against him than a series of frontal attacks on his character, scientific competence, ability as a leader and bushmanship by numerous associates, the most formidable opponent being a jealous fellow explorer.

The chief objective of Elsie Webster's book appears to be the clearing of Leichhardt's slate of all these misrepresentations, and to sheet home

the blame to the culprits. Her detective work in unearthing these deceits is every bit as interesting as Connell's, a notable example being the tracing of the posthumous travels of the diary of Gilbert—killed by Aborigines on the first expedition—and explaining the mysterious marginal notes by others, as well as the nefarious use to which extracts were apparently put. The jealous, self-opinionated and scheming Sir Thomas Mitchell has already been effectively de-bunked, but this book further indicts him. Also demolished are the credibilities of several others, not least that of Leichhardt's biographer, A. H. Chisholm.

Other interesting facts emerge. The theory that the utter disappearance of the Leichhardt party was due to their being swept away by a great flood in the Channel Country—popular in the 1930s, the reviewer recalls—was first canvassed by John McKinlay in 1862. Also, who knows that Leichhardt made an earnest but unavailing attempt to have the first *Diprotodon* skeleton kept for Australia? (It went to the British Museum.)

This book also is well-produced, and contains a number of interesting half-tone reproductions of expedition drawings. There are twenty-two pages of references!

Warren Bonython is well known as businessman, conservationist, author and explorer, and for his many community interests. He is 63, and lives in Adelaide. He has recently published Walking the Simpson Desert.

NOT A GOD BUT A CHILD

Graham Rowlands

Vincent Buckley: *Late-Winter Child* and *The Pattern* (O.U.P., both \$7.50).

Until these two books I've always found myself constrained to *respect* Buckley's poetry without necessarily *liking* it. At least he wrote political poetry, even if he directed his moral guns more against Russia than America. Moreover, he wrote at least two kinds of religious poetry. I respected his prayers and confessions ending "Oh my Lord" as an anthropologist observes and respects tribal religious behavior. Later, in "Golden Builders", when his faith was far from certain, I respected his persistence with his "soul" when the most intense imagery seemed to require only a resolution of his identity, true self or even his most basic role.

I positively *like* his new books and I like *Late-*

Winter Child immensely. Consider these lines which, although not extraordinary in themselves, are nevertheless extraordinary for a vocal and articulate Catholic intellectual:

Your touch [was] the heat that upheld me.
Believing nothing, I could hope
to see, not a god, but a child,

Moreover, the existence of children means that "there is no death".

Clearly, Christian belief is irrelevant to *Late-Winter Child*, which is one man's informed, intelligent, sensitive and sensual response to the pregnancy of his younger wife and the birth and babyhood of their daughter. It's full of the seasons, of his awareness of ageing *and* his easy acceptance of his wife's ageing. There's no coyness, sentimentality or over-protectiveness. There's empathy. But it's not that presumptuous delusion of many an expectant father that *he* is having the baby. This, despite Buckley's wife being as close to him as a vein in his arm.

There are crucial lines that will pass the test of the most exacting feminist:

The nurses bent like rowers
flailing you onward I rubbed
rubbed the moist skin
of your hand

Much of the book literally and figuratively presses and pressures down until birth. It's not that the world is about to give birth; rather that rooms, houses and weather conditions are all vividly imaged in terms of conception, pregnancy and birth. Moreover, sex and labor can be interchangeable:

Mouth and womb open together;
the eye, too, seeking birth.
Sometimes, I can hardly breathe
for the smell of pregnancy a tiny
bud-creature altering the hormones
so that I smell the change in your limbs,
in your hair-parting,
a second lust.

Given those magnificent lines it's all the more pleasing to find that, after Buckley's intensely rejuvenating experience of becoming a father again, he'll still allow the child her independence:

Janus-child.
One day she will give back, or jettison
your youth, my age,

your growing up, my waning,
our ears ringing
with the cold air.

The Pattern doesn't have the same impact. It's not a sequence. Isn't as concentrated. It combines Buckley's family memory of the Victorian countryside with his historical and pilgrim's memory of Ireland. He's dug peat and potatoes for poetry before, and there's no doubt he can dig up vivid, loving detail, e.g. "Membrane of Air". But these poems lack the personal urgency of *Late-Winter Child*. They aren't new feelings. Perhaps the poet is too consciously, even self-consciously the historian of immigration from Munster to Australia. Despite superb sarcasm at the expense of British imperialism, the odd humorous pun and a rare dash of bawdy, too many poems seem too solemn. Several endings lapse into sentimentality and rhetoric, although his awareness of imperfect memory processes and the admission that he's "hoping for nostalgias" qualifies the criticism. It's often difficult to empathize with ethnic affection, particularly the more ritual forms.

Despite these reservations, I find that Buckley succeeds in poems not unlike those where he fails—or almost fails. He repeatedly evokes Irish countryside in magnificent imagery:

Each house fits, a stone,
into the stone jumble; black
smoke wavers on its surfaces
as if, having calved, it bore
stretch-marks;

The Australian landscapes, however, aren't as vivid. (This might be because of their differences.) Although I find his portrayals of immediate ancestors rather too much like portraiture, one of his most stunning poems is "Your Father's House". The ending is revelation; not summary. "Depression III" virtually ceases to be poetry. By contrast, the equally political "Orangemen" creates his affinity with workers in these fine lines:

I think that, like ourselves,
they'll go on living
forever, finding earth
a treacherous landlord.

To say that these differences are technical is a truism opening up non-technical questions no reviewer can begin to answer. "The Blind School" would have been excellent without the last two sections. His poem on James McAuley's

dying contains some of his best *and worst* lines. Like this poem, then, *The Pattern* is uneven. Read *Late-Winter Child*.

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.

Frank Morley: *Literary Britain* (Hutchinson, \$26.20). Some readers will remember happily Frank Morley's earlier book, *The Great North Road*, a splendid, idiosyncratic mix of history, literary lore, personal opinions, geography and much else. *Literary Britain* is from the same stable, and has about it the same air of a friendly but informed companion gently persuading us to use our eyes and our intelligences. The blurb tells us that what is important about *Literary Britain* is that it is *not* "haphazard" but a contribution to the understanding of regional differences. Well, personally I like a book like this to be haphazard, and as Morley takes us along the literary associations of England's great arterial roads, and the country that lies around them, it is the unexpected and random nature of the facts and opinions he throws at me that I find such a delight. Sub-titled "A Reader's Guide to Writers and Landmarks" the book fits into no recognized genre; the great knowledge is worn and retailed lightly, and the work is not a line too long at 500 pages. For the lovers of literary trivia, wisely and pleasantly presented.

Paul Theroux: *The Old Patagonian Express* (Penguin, \$4.95). Paul Theroux and Bruce Chatwin (who has also written on Patagonia) are outstanding among the new generation of travel writers. They travel the best way—they set themselves a goal and then get ambushed by the small, human, personal things that happen to them on the way. Theroux left a comfortable home in London to travel by every variety of train (mostly atrocious) from Boston to the south of South America. He was equipped with an acquaintanceship with the literature of Latin American travellers in the nineteenth century, a notebook, unbreakable boots that leaked, a capacity for frequently regretting his own foolishness, and an unsentimental but compassionate eye. Again, something of a new literary form.

Brian Lewis: *Our War* (Melbourne University Press, \$18.60). Many readers will have been wait-

ing for a successor to Brian Lewis's *Sunday at Kooyong Road*, a remarkably effective vignette of Australian childhood written with an adult's insight into social history. *Our War* is a continuation, taking the young Lewis through "The Grown-ups' War" seen through schoolboy eyes. It retains many of the qualities of the first book, but in my view suffers from an over self-conscious effort by the author to inject a contemporary feeling through newspaper reports and the like. This leads at times to a suspicion that the author's latter-day research is coloring his recall of childhood. It remains, however, an important picture of middle-class Melbourne in one of its nastiest manifestations.

Stuart Sayers: *Ned Herring* (Hyland House, \$18.95). A over-detailed but highly competent biography of a man on whom fortune always smiled and for whom nothing ever seems to have gone wrong. Country town boy, Melbourne Grammar, school captain, Rhodes scholar, successful first world war career away from the holocaust of France, successful law career, successful second world war general, Chief Justice, strong on anti-

communism, strong for the Church . . . and so on. Depressing in its way—Herring never seems to have looked on the less fortunate with anything but a paternalistic eye, never seems to have had a doubt, never even seems to have committed a *faux-pas* at a dinner party. But, like Brian Lewis's book an important contribution to a debate which will surely come—on the impressive strengths *and* the appalling weaknesses of the Australian middle and professional classes, *circa* 1900-1950.

Lennard Bickel: *In Search of Frank Hurley* (Macmillan, \$18.95). Hurley was not a middle-class boy. His father was a steel-worker in Lithgow, and Hurley became a famous photographer by an astute use of his native Australian wit, by his courage, by his determination and by luck. He was a great Antarctic photographer, a controversial war photographer, and something of a pioneer in the cinema. Apart from that he seems to have been a rather unpleasant and shallow person, and his case is not helped by Bickel's gee-whiz prose. But a very interesting and, in the end, rather sad, story.

floating fund

STEPHEN MURRAY-SMITH writes: There has been an exceptionally generous response to the Floating Fund this issue, and we are profoundly grateful for it. Though not yet out of the woods, this money has blazed a long part of the track. As a mark of thanks to our readers and helpers, we have changed plans to make this a 64-page issue and have made it 72 pages instead—thus, we hope, offering you a bit of extra holiday reading. Happy Christmas, and I wish you a happier 1981 than I think at the moment we are going to have. Total donations: \$850.

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