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LAURIE CLANCY

The Annual Literary Test Match

Six weeks after returning from London, complete with a brand new English wife and an even newer Ph.D., Terry Shaw was in excellent spirits. Despite what he had been told by everyone was an absolutely closed market he had already been short-listed for two lectureships, one of them tenurable, and faced both interviews within the next two weeks. On the strength of these boundless prospects, he went into Fletcher Jones and bought himself a suit he could not really afford.

The first appointment was with a Professor Krutch of Batman, Melbourne's most venerable university, and was set for next Tuesday at eleven. Terry was up early on the day of the interview, having been virtually unable to sleep, and paced up and down the kitchen of his flat in Ivanhoe, posing possible questions to himself and providing answers of appropriate brilliance. By nine he was on his way down to the station dressed in his new summer suit, far too early for the interview. "You should have taken along a sleeping bag and camped outside the main entrance," were Emma's parting words of encouragement to him. "You know, like queueing for Wimbledon."

But the actual interview itself proved to be quite anti-climatic. Krutch held it alone, and it lasted less than ten minutes. Krutch was a small, slight fair-haired man of just over forty, who had the most abstracted air of anyone Terry had ever met. He appeared mentally, so to speak, always to be looking over one's shoulder, addressing himself to the person next in line, so that Terry had to fight the temptation more than once to look behind him. He asked no searching questions, but was inclined on the contrary merely to tell Terry about the department of which he was chairman.

"We've striven for a very balanced department, you understand," he explained. "We have one Christian on the staff, one lesbian radical feminist, a Leavisite, a structuralist, one right-to-lifer, one ocker,

one male chauvinist pig, one Englishman, one homosexual, one Roman Catholic, one Tasmanian and one WASP. I don't think that anyone can get at us any longer on the grounds that we show discrimination."

"It doesn't sound like it," Terry agreed.

"But you . . ." Krutch peered at him. "I've looked over your qualifications and you seem like a good man. But I just don't know how you'd fit into our team." He leaned forward hopefully. "I suppose you don't have any Aboriginal blood in you, do you?"

Terry shook his head in apology.

"Pity. I'd have loved to get a black on the payroll. I'm looking for a New Zealander too, but they're getting quite rare."

"My great great-grandfather was of convict stock," Terry offered. "He came out here in 1823. He got two years for raping a servant girl, and another ten for stealing a loaf of bread."

Krutch considered. "Not really enough, I'm afraid. That's hardly unusual in Australia, is it?"

On the steps of the Humanities Building a few minutes later, Terry stopped and breathed in the sorocco-like air of Melbourne in February. He sneezed violently and fumbled for his handkerchief. He had forgotten Melbourne, the sinus and hay fever capital of the world. Four years of London smog and diesel fumes had not bothered him in the least. As Krutch had seen him politely to the door, without even asking him what his thesis had been on, he had said in a cordial tone of voice, "Well, good luck. And I hope we'll have the pleasure of meeting you again." It was, Terry understood, the academic equivalent of Show Business's "Don't call us, we'll call you," and spoken in a tone of voice that implied the extreme unlikelihood of the event to which the speaker looked forward so affably. Batman had gone a lot further than merely being an equal opportunity-affirmative action employer. They had abolished distinctions of quality altogether. "Maybe," he ex-

plained to Emma in bed that night, "I should have told him I barracked for Essendon. Maybe they don't have an Essendon barracker on the staff."

"Well," she said sympathetically. "There's still that other place, what did you call it, Blamey? Would you mind going there?"

"No, I wouldn't mind. It's a relatively new university, Blamey. The only thing it's known overseas for is its wild life reserve."

"You mean, the staff club?" Emma asked satirically.

"No, seriously, it's got a huge reserve, nearly a hundred acres and a large variety of species of animal life. They're trying to duplicate the conditions that existed in Australia before the white man came. But that wouldn't affect the English department. Probably."

The Blamey interview was not until Friday the following week and for the next ten days Terry moped at home, unable to get down to the task of carving up his thesis into a series of acceptable articles while he awaited a reply from Batman. When Friday came around, once again he set out nervously and so early for the interview that even though he spent half an hour wandering lost around the campus and becoming distracted by the wild life reserve he still arrived with about twenty minutes to spare. There were three mustard-colored chairs outside the office of the chairman of the department, placed so low to the ground that Terry was uncomfortably reminded of the scene in "The Great Dictator" when Hitler tries to undermine Mussolini by placing him on a chair with minute legs. One man was already seated, reading a copy of the New York Review of Books. He looked up as Terry lowered himself into the chair next to him.

"Come for the one year lectureship, eh?"

Terry nodded.

"You'd be Shaw, wouldn't you? Melbourne, then London uni.?"

Terry nodded again. "How did you know?"

The other man smiled complacently, evidently having expected that question. "I have a file on every potential competitor in the state. I thought you'd be in for this job. I'm Proctor, by the way. Hector Proctor." They shook hands. "They advertised it once before but didn't fill it. I didn't bother to apply because it was so temporary. Still, a foot in the door. Very nasty selection committee. The Gang of Four. Do you know them?"

Terry shook his head.

"Manners - he's not too bad. Elderberry, Lugg and Twatt. I checked them out. Lugg's got this standard question he starts off the interview with, reckons it

always throws the applicant off, never been known to fail. He says, now, recite one of your favourite poems by heart and tell the committee something it doesn't know about it." A chill came over Terry. "I've prepared for them" Proctor said smugly. "I've got this case about a William Carlos Williams poem that will knock them dead. Then they follow that up by asking you how you would teach, say, "Sailing to Byzantium." It's always casually said, but it's always "Sailing to Byzantium."

"Why is that?"

"Oh, I don't know. It's a tradition, or something. They've been doing it for months now."

At that moment the secretary came out from the room, carrying a form which Terry recognised as identical to the one he had had to fill in. She looked questioningly at the two men and then down at her card.

"Doctor Proctor?", she said inquiringly, looking at Terry.

"That's me . . . I," Proctor said.

"Will you come this way please? The committee will see you now."

As he bounded forward eagerly Proctor turned to look back at Terry. "You can't say I haven't been fair and warned you. One poem. You've got fifteen minutes." He disappeared, as Terry leaned back against the chair and tried to concentrate. One poem. It seemed as if every poem he had ever learned had gone out of his head. It would be cheating to quote "The Sick Rose." Only thirty-five words. Besides, he didn't know anything about it that in all probability the committee did not already know.

Thirty minutes later Doctor Proctor emerged from the interviewing room and walked past Terry without a word. He looked white and shaken. My God, Terry wondered. What are they doing to people in there? Sometimes he wondered if he were really meant for the cut and thrust of academic life and should not, instead, go into business. Stuff them, he decided suddenly. He had no chance of the job but at least he would go out in style.

"Your turn, Doctor Shaw," the secretary smiled at him. He felt obscurely and slightly cheered, and strode confidently into the room, tripping over the mat just inside the door.

"Welcome to Blamey university," Manners said affably, and introduced his colleagues. There was certainly nothing especially fierce about their appearances, Terry decided, though the thick one looked as if he might bite.

After they had all sat down, the usual civilities were exchanged. Manners reminisced over London,

which he said he regarded as his spiritual home, though he had been born in Footscray. He stroked his beard fondly.

"Alma mater," agreed Elderberry.

"A home away from home," Twatt murmured.

Only Lugg remained immune to this display of sentiment. "Would you mind reciting a poem of your preference to the committee and telling us something about it that we don't know already?"

At the familiar ring of this, the others snapped back to attention.

"And don't start off "Of man's first disobedience. . .", Manners said jovially, "or we'll be here all week."

"The other chap had a plum poem," Elderberry muttered. "Don't like plums."

Terry tried to squirm and look terrified at the unexpectedness of the question. Finally he announced, "Well, here we go, the best I can do at short notice. Newbolt's "Vitae Lampada". Drawing a deep breath, he announced loudly, "Vitae Lampada." By Sir Henry Newbolt.

"There's a breathless hush in the Close to-night—
Ten to make and the match to win -..."

A glazed look settled over the faces of the three men. When he had finished, Terry, who had declaimed the closing lines with histrionic fervour, sank back on his chair as if exhausted. There was silence for some time. Finally, it was Manners who spoke.

"Thank you. And what was the new information you were going to supply us with about this, ah, poem?"

Terry smiled proudly. "That was the first poem my mother ever taught me," he confided. And then, with the air of generously imparting a second pearl, he added, "And it left me with a lifelong passion for cricket."

Elderberry looked across at his colleague. "I think he's got you, Lugg", he said. There was unconcealed satisfaction in his voice.

Manners intervened again before things became too tense. For the first time, he showed some faint interest. "You play cricket, do you?"

"A little," Terry said modestly. "My greatest distinction is that I once got Derick Randall out in a social match in England."

"Randall, eh?" Manners was looking more and more interested. "We have a cricket match coming up on Sunday, as a matter of fact. It's the annual Moomba Review versus Sliprail Quarterly Test Match. Would you like to join the Sliprail eleven - of which I'm *defacto* captain," he added pointedly. "Elderberry

here plays for Moomba, but your side's settled, isn't it, Jack?"

"Not exactly," Elderberry looked rather nettled. "We can always fit . . ."

"Look here," said Lugg, still looking discomforted. "Fascinating as no doubt they are, the applicant's cricketing abilities are hardly germane to . . ."

"Well, that's settled then. Ten for ten thirty on Sunday. Here's your invitation." Manners handed him an impressive gold-embossed invitation he had withdrawn from his pocket like a calling card.

"And about the job, sir?"

"What job? Oh, yes. We all meet on Tuesday and we should be able to let you know in a day or two after that." The interview, it appeared, was over.

Terry returned home in a state of great excitement. "Em," he shouted. "I've been invited to play in a social cricket match. It's a real chance, the annual literary event of the year, the Moomba Review versus the Sliprail Quarterly."

"The what?" She took the invitation from him, put her glasses on and examined it carefully. "Australia's two leading left-wing nationalistic literary and cultural journals." What does that mean?"

The two magazines had conducted what they called their annual Test Match for over twenty years, the prize being a large stuffed cassowary which the winning editor-captain was privileged to mount proudly in his living room, to the chagrin of his opposite number and disgust of his wife. Moomba had kept the cassowary for three years in a row, so Terry had heard, and Sliprail were desperate to reclaim it before it passed into their permanent custody.

"How did you find all this out?", asked Emma.

Terry looked smug. "I took the secretary out for a cup of coffee after the interview. The thing is, you see, manners plays for Sliprail and Elderberry for Moomba, and they sounded as if the rivalry was pretty keen." He frowned. "My problem is how to make Manners happy without antagonising Elderberry. I asked Debbie, though, and she said, given a choice, go with Manners, he's got the clout."

Emma frowned not very approvingly. "You're more devious than I'd ever have given you credit for."

Terry preened again. "Thank you," he said.

The weather was perfect for the Sunday on which the game was to be played, warm, cloudless but with no wind to blow dust in their faces. When Terry and Emma arrived around ten o'clock it was to find that already a crowd of almost one hundred people had

gathered on the grassy edges of the oval in Royal Park, complete with the traditional apparatus of Australian hedonism, the Esky, ice bought from the local petrol station, barbecued chicken in its grease-proof paper similarly acquired from the local take-away, and the millions of flies preparing themselves for a feast of extravagant opulence.

Out on the ground, annual cricketers were blooming like new chrysanthemums, wielding bats and balls with varying degrees of proficiency or recall and wearing a stunning variety of cricket apparel. Terry observed one portly balding man of about fifty dressed in nothing but a pair of purple Bermuda shorts and dirty runners for a while before recognising him with a shock as Ted Potter, the most gifted and tender lyricist of his generation. The field echoed with the click of arthritic knees.

Manners saw him and beckoned him across with a gesture of his pipe. "Good to see you," he said casually. "Come and meet the Sliprail chaps."

He was indeed, Terry soon realised, in very distinguished company, if not in terms of cricketing ability then at least intellectually. Some of the faces he recognised, even more of the names he knew. Apart from manners and Dyer, the editor of Sliprail and a fervent cricket follower, there were Potter, Professor Krutch who shook hands as he looked past Terry, the publisher Molesworth and several academics whose names were familiar.

"What do you do again?", asked Manners, as he took him aside.

For a moment he did not understand. Then he said, "Oh. Well, I bowl and bat a bit, but I prefer batting."

"Excellent. We're a bit short on bowlers ever since Andrews took that chair at Kingsford-Smith. You can open." While Manners was planning strategy, Terry noticed, Dyer was handling the social arrangements and publicity. He had set up an eighteen-gallon keg under a striped awning near the changing rooms and was now hailing the crowd through a large loudspeaker, challenging the noise of a traditional jazz band who were tuning their instruments behind him. With his cream pants, blue cap and patriarchal white beard he looked rather like a sea captain, evidently a thought that had already occurred to him.

"Now hear this," he was saying. "Now hear this. Moomba have won the toss ("for the third year in a row," he added darkly to Manners) and have elected to bat. The match will commence at 1115 hours, Sliprail players to be out on the ground by 1110. That's in," he glanced at his watch, "exactly seven minutes." A tiny buzz went through the crowd but otherwise

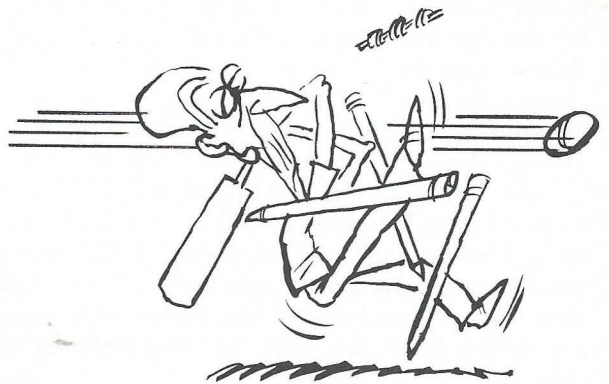
the announcement seemed to have little effect. Occasionally one of the figures stretched indolently out on the lawn would stand up and stroll towards the dressing sheds.

Looking across at where the Moomba players were gathered together, listening to a violent address from their normally benign editor Forscott, Terry noticed again a man he had seen several times who looked familiar but whom he couldn't place.

"Who's that?", he asked Potter, who was standing next to him, "the chap wearing the jeans and the American flag T-shirt?"

Potter looked at him in surprise. "That's Tom Bell, the American poet. He's writer in residence at Blamey. Didn't you recognise him?"

Tom Bell! Of course. A distant relative of the founder of the Bell Telephone Company and sometime Montana cowboy turned Whitmanesque bard, Bell had been to the generation of the seventies what Kerouac had been to the fifties and Scott Fitzgerald to the twenties. His poetry readings had filled halls with wildly cheering youths, in a manner not seen since Dylan Thomas and Yevtushenko. Lately, he had turned novelist with immediate best-selling success; *Their Peckers Are in My Pocket* had been advertised as "a bawdy intrigue of sex and politics in Washington."



The openers were walking out. Terry moved across to Emma, who had managed to strike up a conversation with Potter's wife, members of a deserted tribe. "See you in a couple of hours."

He took his place with the others. The opening batsmen for Moomba, he noticed with surprise, were Professor Elderberry and a youngster of about fifteen. He came running in casually for the first ball of the innings, bowled a yorker, and the middle stump of Elderberry went cart-wheeling. Suppressing his normal simian yell, Terry merely nodded sympathetically.

"Bad luck, Professor." Elderberry, however, said nothing but merely knocked the stump back into the ground with the handle of his bat and replaced the bails.

"No ball," said the umpire.

"What?" Terry turned around indignantly.

"He can't be out before he's scored. Unless you dismiss him three times."

A pity that hadn't been explained to him before, thought Terry. It was a rule that, if applied to the Test arena, would make Greg Chappell's average look pretty interesting. He drifted in and bowled a gentle half-volley which Elderberry pushed nicely through mid-off, worth an easy two. Evidently the man had been talented once, but his back lift was too high and his reflexes too slow.

"Come on, Professor," yelled the kid at the other end, and started off.

"Wait," commanded Elderberry, the whip of professional authority in his voice.

Manners motioned to his players and placed all nine pointedly behind the wicket, in an arc from point to square leg. Terry bowled another half-volley and Elderberry drove it again, this time through mid-on. The kid, who was half-way down the pitch, walked back disgruntled to the bowler's end at Elderberry's loud negative call.

Manners came across to Terry. "This is a new low in sportsmanship." He sounded envious that he had not thought of it himself. "Typical of an Oxford man. He's using the no ducks rule to bat himself in and get a look at the ball. There's nothing you can do. I'll just have to take you off and bring on one of our rabbits. That'll shame him into scoring."

Terry pondered. The next ball was a leg break that bounced twice before it reached the batsman eventually. Desire fought with calculation in Elderberry and desire won. He gave a mighty swing and the ball went high over mid-wicket, landing and stopping a few metres inside the fence. No one bothered to chase it.

"Come on, Professor," the youth screamed, and reluctantly Elderberry shuffled off down the pitch to open his score and render himself vulnerable.

In his third over Terry bowled him for ten. Elderberry departed, giving him a meaningful stare that seemed to promise dole queues for decades to come. The young opener, who turned out to be the son of Batman's vice-chancellor Copeland, batted well, scampering up and down the pitch with a speed and enthusiasm that drove his older partners to furious protestations. Runs and wickets both came quickly until, after three-quarters of an hour a halt

was called to play and the fielders headed with more speed than they had shown all morning for the keg near the marquee.

This was to be the pattern of the day, Terry was beginning to discover. After two sojourns to the bar what little professionalism the match had begun with had disappeared in a plethora of alcoholic cheerfulness and incompetence. A kind of gentleman's code was supposed to apply between the sides. If a bowler looked like dominating proceedings or killing someone he was taken off, and if a batsman scored forty or fifty runs he was retired but, although Terry had taken five wickets, Manners showed no disposition to relieve him.

"Not tired, are you?", he came over and said at one point. "We like stayers in our department." There was clearly tension between the two sides, probably exacerbated by the fact that Moomba's sales had dropped back to three figures last year while Sliprail's were drawing close to them.

Terry toiled on. The fielding side had a continually changing personnel, like an American football team, as players collapsed in the heat or wandered off to relieve themselves and fresh enthusiasts were hauled from the bar and sent out on to the field by Dyer. The century came up for Moomba, after much laughter, when Forscett chased a wide from his opposite number Dyer, out on the field for the first time during the innings, and managed to connect for a single. He was run out immediately afterwards, when he fell over in the middle of the pitch and overbalanced as he tried to stand. He retired to desultory applause. The American poet Bell strode to the wicket, swinging three bats, two of which he discarded when he arrived. He had in his youth, he informed the fielding side, been a minor league baseballer, but he didn't understand this crazy game.

"I'm sorry, Professor," Terry told Manners. "I can't bowl against Bell. He was my adolescent hero." Something of the game's Byzantine ethics was beginning to infect him. But Manners took it well enough.

Bell took his stance aggressively, bat held high, as Krutch dawdled in and lobbed one of his gentlemanly, scholastic full tosses in the air. Whack! The ball went soaring high over square leg, over the fence and into a gum tree overhanging the railway line adjacent to the ground. Bell hurled away his bat and began to run around the oval.

"Wait!" A couple of Sliprail players stopped him. "That's a six. You don't have to run."

"Motherfucking home run, I guess," said Bell,

looking pleased with himself, and beginning to walk off the ground.

Once again he was stopped, and three or four players began to give him different instructions as to how the rules operated.

"You mean I get to go up and face that fucker again," he finally grasped the point, "until he strikes me out? Jesus! Hank Aaron should have known this game."



He took up guard as before, swung mightily at Krutch's second lob and missed. The ball ballooned over the top of the stumps, missing them by a hair's breadth. "That's strike one, I guess," said Bell. The next three balls he dispatched over the fence in a manner similar to the first, the last one with a stupendous hit that cleared the gum tree and landed on the other side of the railway line. This necessitated another ten minute break while one or two of the younger players were dispatched to fetch the ball back and the rest had another drink. With his last ball, Krutch finally managed to land one on the pitch and bowled him.

"Four home runs," said Bell, on his way back to the tent, "and he only struck me out with a foul ball." The score had shot up suddenly to a quite respectable seven for 125.

With Bell out, Manners brought Terry back on to bowl, which was fitting as Moomba, plotting carefully, had held back their best cricketer Stallard, the

tall, dark-haired, glowering structuralist from Batman. He was clearly very competent and all Terry could do, tired as he was becoming and with only an old ball, was to try and contain him and keep him away from the strike. Two more wickets fell and then the last man came in. It was F.G. Mathiesen, the Grand Old Man of Australian letters, now in his nineties, barely able to do more than totter, but nevertheless still renowned for the ferocity of his purblind castigations of contemporary Australian writers, especially those in whom he detected any un-Australian sentiments. During the fifties he had become the Senator McCarthy of Australian literary nationalism, and his collection of literary essays published at the end of that decade, *She'll Do Me Mate* was the classic defence of the nationalist position. While one of the fielders held the bat for him he took block.

Manners strolled across to Terry. "You'd better go easy on old F.G. He's a living legend. Just lob him up some slow ones."

Terry stepped in a pace or two and tossed the ball up in the air. Mathiesen's brows knitted together in ferocious confrontation. As the ball came tantalizingly within a few centimetres of him the expression changed to belated recognition and he swung mightily but too late. He landed on the pitch, surrounded by stumps.

After Mathiesen had been picked up and placed back in position again, Terry lobbed the second ball up, higher and even more slowly than before. Mathiesen lunged again. Once again the wicket-keeper began to pick up the stumps and replace them, while the fielders propped the batsman up. "I'm getting the hang of it now," gasped Mathiesen.

One more ball left in the over, thank God. Terry came in as before, released the ball but this time it slipped from his sweating fingers and went up in the air, up, up, until it seemed to hang there for ever then at last it began to descend. Mathiesen waited hopefully, bat held out before him like a rifle, but he did not so much as glimpse the ball before it landed on his bald dome with a loud crack. Down he went like a stunned mullet. "Jesus, I've killed him," said Terry.

From everywhere players gathered around the prostrate form on the pitch, discussing what should be done, until finally Elderberry stalked through the throng, picked up the frail old man and carried him away. As he did so, Mathiesen stirred and could be heard to mutter, "I kept my not out." Since he was the last batsman, the Moomba innings was declared closed and the players retired for lunch.

The afternoon grew steadily warmer. At two o'clock

(or 1400 hours according to Dyer's loudspeaker) the Moomba eleven or so straggled out on to the field, full of chicken and white wine and facing the task of fielding during the hottest time of the day with less than full-blooded enthusiasm. Those among them who had not brought hats had managed to acquire some form of headgear and together they sported a bizarre cornucopia of cricket caps, berets, tennis hats, army digger hats, handkerchiefs dampened and knotted at the edges and (Bell's of course) a baseball cap.

Terry watched them with satisfaction, glad his own part was over; Manners had told him he would bat near the tail. Beside him Emma was packing the remains of the picnic lunch and preparing to leave. It was too hot for her and she had found a lift with another of the wives who felt similarly but who had her own car.

"Mad dogs and Englishmen," she commented in mystification.

It was true. This was the quintessence of Melbourne social life. The crowd now sprawled around the oval, occasionally glancing at the cricket and even more occasionally applauding in desultory fashion a wicket or a shot, could as easily have been sun-baking on St Kilda beach. Thinking these thoughts and pulling a towel over his head Terry went to sleep. He was woken some time later by Potter.

"Didn't see you under there. We've been looking for you everywhere. You'd better put some pads on."

"What's happening?"

"We're six for about fifty. Stallard's terrorising people out there. He had the batsmen colliding with the square leg umpire. He's getting a bit tired now, though." As he spoke there was a yell from the field and Terry saw Manners walking slowly back towards the keg.

He fastened his pads quickly, grabbed the bat and gloves that Potter handed him and walked out to the pitch feeling stiff, burnt and somewhat dazed. The transition had been a little too sudden for him. Stallard came thundering in, the usual scowl on his face, and Terry like an automaton cut the ball perfectly for four. Instinct, reflexes were beginning to reassert themselves. Down the other end of the pitch, Percy, the chairman of the Literature Board, winked at him reassuringly. He played a couple of balls from Stallard and found that Potter had been quite right. He was obviously very quick at his top but he had tired in the heat and Elderberry, realising the same thing, took him off.

There was nothing in the rest of the attack and with Percy, still a competent bat though a man in his

fifties, taking singles at will and Terry scoring freely the score quickly mounted. Past one hundred. Then Terry's fifty and some scattered applause.

"Retire," called Forscett, now off the ground.

"No compulsory retirements," hailed Dyer, still triumphantly retaining possession of the loudspeaker. "Moomba kept their best bowler on till they thought they were certain of the match."

Terry felt uncomfortable in the innocent centre of these Borgia-like intrigues. Percy, however, solved the problem by getting himself bowled attempting to hit the ball out of the ground. As he passed Terry he murmured, "Stay there and get the runs. Don't let old Forscett get you in. Or out. He plays it very tough. And we only have two more chaps we have to give a hit to."

Terry had been joined by the librarian Rolleston, a thin bespectacled man who looked as if he had read a lot about cricket but never actually played it. His stance, as well as his clothes, were impeccably correct and he moved behind the line of the ball but somehow without ever actually connecting with it. After every ball he called "Wait", imperiously but also quite superfluously. Winning was becoming a question of time as much as runs, Terry realised, as Dyer called out ominously from the boundary fence, "Sliprail need twenty runs to win, three overs and two wickets left." After every change of strike the field would spread out for Terry and then move back in for Rolleston. With desperate, hair-raising running between wickets and several overthrows from those fielders capable of reaching the wicket they managed nine runs off the next ten balls. Then Terry pushed a single off the next ball in order to retain the strike for the big assault in the last over. Off the last ball the gallant Rolleston hit a simple caught and bowled chance. One over to go.

The last batsman came out. Terry recognised him as the man Manners had introduced to him as Tom Wilkins, a colleague in the English department at Blamey.

"I'm Terry Shaw," Terry said, coming to meet him and shaking hands. "Incidentally, I'm in for a job in your department."

"Destiny stands by sarcastic," Wilkins murmured.

Terry stared at him in puzzlement. "We've got ten to make" he said, "and this is the last over. Better let me keep the strike."

Wilkins nodded. "A blinding light," he said, blinking, and made his way to the other end.

Not surprisingly, Moomba had saved their biggest card to last. Stallard, whom Terry had noticed limbering up at the bar during the previous over, was

back on the field refreshed and had been given the ball. Once again, his great pounding run even longer than usual, he came charging in. His first ball was straight but on a perfect length and Terry had to hurry his defensive shot a little; after the bowling he had been facing for the last half hour he had forgotten what it was like to face a real bowler. The second ball was slightly over-pitched on the leg stump and Terry pushed it through mid-on towards the nineteenth-century novel man Hughson. Hughson trotted in as fast as he could, bent to pick up the ball, discovered he was too corpulent to do so but then, remembering his soccer days at Oxford, flipped it deftly with his boot towards the bowler. Stallard glared at him as he picked the ball up, rubbed the dust off and tried to smooth out the spike mark. They had run two. Four balls, ten to make.

The next ball Terry cut for four, the next was well wide of the leg stump and Terry failed at it unavailingly, and the fifth ball was similarly wide of the stumps as Terry charged down the wicket, swinging furiously.

"Well struck," sneered Stallard, speaking to him for the first time.

"If you had the guts to put them on the wicket," Terry said, "I'd hit them all right." But all looked lost for Sliprail.

Stallard said nothing but Terry knew he would respond to the challenge. He came pounding in again and hurled the ball at faster than his normal pace. A bumped, beautifully pitched and coming up towards his face. Instinctively, Terry took a step back and inside, and hooked. Even as he did so he was thinking that he must loft it, four runs were not enough. The ball sailed towards deep backward square. Terry gasped. The only fieldsman out there, just inside the fence, was F.G. Mathiesen, who had insisted on staggering back on to the field and completing the match, and who had been placed so far from the pitch for his own safety. Any faint chance he might have had of dodging the ball was lost through the fact that the sun was shining directly into his eyes. He was smiling confidently as he sensed the ball coming towards him.

"Christ, not again," Terry thought in horror. What was the penalty for killing an institution? "Duck!", he screamed.

"Catch it!", snarled Stallard.

The ball landed directly on Mathiesen's bald and bony head. Once again he dropped like a pole-axed steer. The ball ricocheted off at a rising trajectory and skidded over the fence into the bushes at the edge of the ground. Terry, assisted by Mathiesen, had headed in the winning runs.

A desultory cheer went up from the crowd as Dyer excitedly announced the result. With a resigned look on his face Elderberry had begun to walk down to deep backward square. He was joined by Terry.

"I think you might have done for him this time," Elderberry announced casually, pressing one of the eyes of the unconscious Mathiesen and then allowing it to drop. "Still, a damn fine shot, I have to admit. Never seen Stallard hooked like that before." The body still did not move. "He looks rather pale. I think we'd better get a stretcher." Proctor and another player came running out with a thin green canvas stretcher and the still motionless body was tied on and strapped down with a harness borrowed from a baby carriage belonging to one of the spectators.

"Steady as she goes," hailed Dyer, as the stretcher dipped dangerously at the bottom and Mathiesen began to slide downwards. Elderberry was a good deal taller than Proctor. Despite the accident, though, there was jubilation among the half of the crowd who supported Sliprail at the return of the stuffed cassowary. Several of their players tried to pick up Terry and carry him from the ground but slipped over and fell. While Mathiesen was carried to a hastily summoned ambulance Dyer was already making the victory speech, expressing both his regret at the accident which had felled one of Australia's finest literary pillars and his pleasure and pride at the return of the famed trophy to his magazine.

All was over. Spectators and players began to pack up their belongings and throw the scraps of food to the milling seagulls while a few more seasoned drinkers gathered round the keg, determined to empty it before leaving. Terry joined them, hoping to negotiate a life and Dyer, noticing him, shook his hand into which he placed a glass of beer.

"That was a damn fine innings of yours, a match-winner," he said. "How would you like to write an article for Sliprail? Sign you up, as it were?"

"Thank you," said Terry in surprise. "What did you have in mind?"

"Oh, anything you like, if it's cultural and more or less Australian. What was your thesis on?"

"Repression in twentieth century fiction."

"Well," said Dyer soothingly, "You just find a repressed Australian writer and give us two to three thousand lines on him, something like that."

"Thank you," said Terry again. From out of the corner of his eye he was observing Bell being interviewed by an adoring undergraduate who was apparently writing her thesis on his work. "Professor Bell," she had begun hesitantly. "Could you tell us

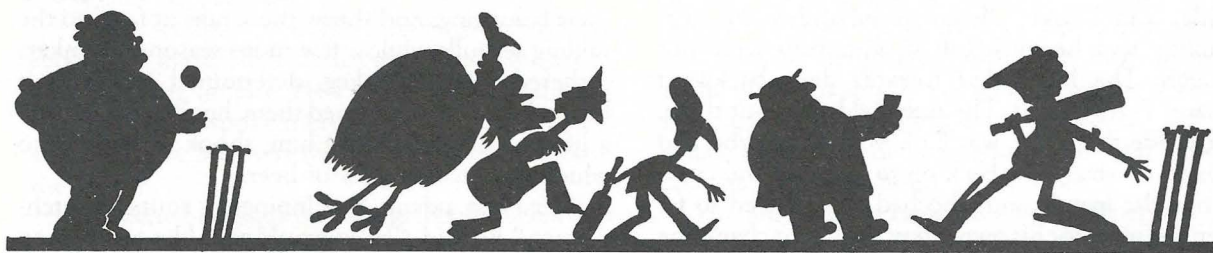
what part writing plays in your life, what it means to you?”

Bell looked sombre, world-weary. “Writing?”, he said slowly. “With me, writing is merely a way of passing the time until the footsteps walking across your heart finally stop.”

Terry looked away, towards the keg, where Manners was speaking. “A pity about old Matheisen.

You know, we’ve just received word from the hospital that he’s dead. Still,” he added thoughtfully, “he’d had a good innings. And he went just the way he’d like to have gone. In harness.”

Dyer called to Manners for assistance. The last Terry saw of them was of their staggering towards Dyer’s station wagon carrying a large stuffed cassowary between them, en route to Dyer’s home in Hurstbridge.



Since 1972 National Press, which means the veteran printer and philanthropist Bob Cugley, with his staff, have been printing Overland. The relationship has been the happiest, a family relationship I would be tempted to say, were it not that families often don't relate. On Bob's side we have had an interest in and understanding of what Overland has been trying to do, and with it printer's bills which have been pared to the bone. From our side we have had the knowledge that we were getting quality work from Bob's staff -- also personally interested in the magazine -- and the comfort that all problems could be solved, if need be, over a beer or a glass of wine.

We have been very fortunate, but the era has passed. 'Hot metal' printing of the kind we admire and have adhered to has finally lost out to the nastinesses of photo-setting and offset printing, so that the very word 'press' has finally lost its ancestral meaning. After a lifetime of service to good causes of all kinds Bob Cugley has had to give it away, his machinery dispersed, his shop now an empty shell. Though still nominally the printer of this issue, in fact it has been set and produced 'out'.

Our problems of finding a new printer with whom we can hope to have something of the same happy relationship as with the National Press, and at a price we can afford, are serious ones, and readers will have to be patient with us while we make the necessary transitions. For instance, I don't think we're going to get out a fourth issue for the year before Christmas. But these problems are less to us than the passing of the old order, the victory of a 'technological imperative' which we are reactionary enough to deplore, and the consequent passing from the active printing scene of Bob. Bob's son, Bob, his grand-son, Brian, and his staff are for the most part moving to other work in the printing industry. Bob himself, at 81, is hanging up his em-rule.

But not, we hope, passing out of active service. He

has hundreds of friends, grateful not only for his labors on their behalf but for his friendship, his wisdom and his wit. They are rallying to ensure, not only that Bob's work and life is adequately recognized, but that the fact that he remains important to us all, and has much still to contribute, is brought home to him.

I shall be pleased to hear from readers who would like to be kept informed.

It is appropriate that, at the time we publish Don Grant's article in this issue on the neglect of Australian studies in this country, we are able to announce the formation of the Australian Studies Association. Its aims are to promote Australian studies in education, to facilitate communication between writers, teachers and researchers in the many areas of Australian studies, to encourage research and writing and to support Australian studies overseas. Inquiries to Dr Stephen Alomes, School of Humanities, Deakin University, Victoria 3127.

Autobiography, as I have often said, is the neglected child of Australian writing. Perhaps it could even be thought of as the start of Australian studies: we need to know so much more of each other. I recently had printed, in a book of reminiscences of Melbourne University, a piece on my student days there, and I was startled when old and intimate friends came up to me and said: "Now we understand a lot about you that we never understood before." So I am delighted to draw attention here to Amirah Inglis's *Amirah: An Un-Australian Childhood*, just published by Heinemann. Amirah (her first marriage was to Ian Turner, long associated with Overland) arrived in Australia as a two year-old in 1929. Her parents, of Polish-Jewish origin, had met in Palestine. Both were communists. Amirah's book is the story of her growing up among

Australians, and her painful growing into Australia; she says she doesn't think she felt Australian until the end of the second world war. This is warm, detailed, emotional yet objective story which tells us much about ourselves as well as about Amirah. We're shortly going to get a spate of scholarly histories relating to the bi-centenary. I hope there are going to be more books like Amirah's, to tell us the personal side of the story too, and from some manuscripts I have seen and literary gossip I have picked up I don't think my hope will be disappointed.

Would readers please note that owing to some bureaucratic post-office rules it is necessary for us to accumulate a considerable number of copies of *Overland* before we can mail them at concession rates? This means that those who order or are otherwise entitled to copies *between* normal publication dates may sometimes have to wait several weeks to get them. We apologise.

Finally, two quotations I thought I might share with you all. Anthony Burgess, reviewing a book on *Writers at Work* in a recent English Sunday paper, discovered that Gore Vidal had referred to him as

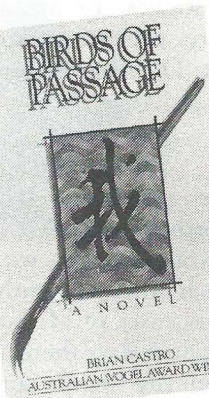
'poor' Anthony Burgess. Burgess's comment: "Very funny, but he should not have said 'Poor Anthony Burgess'. I am glad now that I arranged for him not to get into the current *Encyclopaedia Britannica*."

And InCite, newsletter of the Library Association of Australia, quotes the *Age* (8 April 1981): "Both Treasury Chief, Mr John Stone, and Public Service Board Chairman, Sir William Cole, declined to speak to the *Age* newspaper about freedom of information."

Which reminds me that there is considerable concern at the moment among editors and publishers at the possible implications of the current Commonwealth Attorney-General's discussions with the States on libel laws. The position in Australia is already extremely restrictive and dangerous. If, because of horse-trading or for any other reason, it becomes more difficult to plead the truth of a statement as part of a defence, and perhaps above all if it becomes a general offence to libel the dead, critical writing in this country is going to become much more difficult. Many writers, editors and publishers would certainly be driven to consider seriously whether they should shut down altogether.

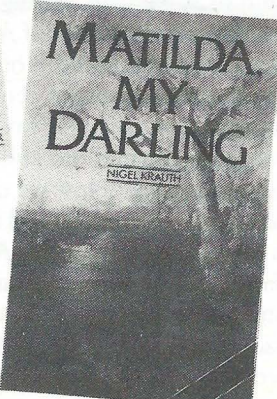
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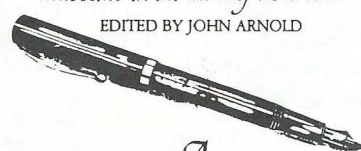
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BARRY HILL **Saying Too Much**

We have lived in this town a fair while but I'm not sure that it has been long enough. I would say that I have a few mates here but I'm not sure that mates is the right word. There is Tom, who fished out of Welshpool most of his life, and there is Bob, who wears the overalls of a boiler-maker and has never actually said where he's from. Both blokes have retired, and each morning they take up their positions against the north wall of the new library, leaning on the balustrade like a couple of Apexians having a night out. Winter and summer, it's the best spot in the town to catch the sun.

Tom is a little bloke with a terrific smile, and every morning - much earlier than I ever go past - he is there in his gaberdines, smoking, coughing, and watching things out of the corner of his eye. I got to know him when he took a shine to our boy, Max, when the kid was just walking. We would come around the corner, and there, across the lawn would be Tom and Bob, hanging around waiting for the pub to open. Max would blunder, toddle, blunder across the lawn between the dog dirt, and Tom would step around the rail and come out to meet him on all fours until they met up at the tap. Max liked a drink too, and Tom would turn on the tap for him, "You little beauty, you little beauty," he said.

One morning Bob bent down behind the rail and asked me if I wanted a drink.

"Nup. Not really thirsty." But I was lying, as it was already a muggy morning, and what I was trying to protect was worthless. Bob passed me the brown paper bag and I took a swig of the beer. Tom and Max were splashing about behind me, and the beer was good and cold.

Just then Ian Forster strode past on the way to get his paper. Ian Forster is an ex-colonel from the Fort, and he has served several terms as mayor. As far as we, Mary and I, can gather, he has proposed telescopes for the foreshore and sewage for all, and

opposed, to date, the Mitsubishi Corporation developing the lakeside. Forster was one of the better mayors, and he has recently given his moustache a tour of the Greek islands, leaving his wife at home in their manse that was once the old vicarage, and returning with a washing basket full of color slides that he projects on his dining room wall. The silver poplars in the vicarage look down into our back yard and on some nights the light from his projector illuminates their more naked branches and it was with the idea of the man's renaissance in mind that I was about to pass him the bottle for him to have a swig too, except that he was heading along the street as if Helen of Troy was at the end of it. He has never spoken to me since. You soon realise, in a town like this, who you can rely on and who you can't.

When Max got tired of the tap, Tom led him back to me. As we got up to go, Tom produced a ten cent piece from his coat pocket.

"No, she's ok," I said.

But Tom spoke only to Max. "Get your old man to buy you an icecream," he said, "Go on," and Max pocketed the money.

"Thanks Tom," I said.

Tom and Ron would then head off towards the foreshore while Max and I went into the supermarket to get yoghurt and fishfingers. Fishfingers are a staple of the town, as the fishing boats that are left only go out for crays. Those slow, coral blue boats crawling out towards the ocean are a sight to see, and from the library corner you can watch them leaving the pier, their sharp little hulls framed by the stone and cypress and Monterey pines that often remind me, as a matter of fact, of Greece, so that hardly a day passes when one of us, Mary, or me, or Max, does not have some inkling of what people might have once called the vision splendid. I remember one afternoon when I thought I was seeing things. I was looking through the trees towards the sea and saw a green figure, pale

avocado green, moving about like a creature dispossessed of itself. I took a closer look and saw that it was Nugget Wood.

Nug used to work for the council, and you would see him, from time to time, standing on a pile at the back of a truck. The other blokes would be on the road sweeping or digging but Nug, whose black eyes had been pushed in towards the bridge of his nose, and whose knees seemed to lock together like a terrier's with distemper, Nug would be up on the pile, waving and waiting till lunchtime. He was such a skinny coot he wouldn't have been much help on the ground anyway. The other test of enduring for Nug came at the end of the day. You would see him walking ahead of his wife, a woman of similar build without the distemper, as she herded him back from the pub, pushing and shoving him as far as the opening that has once been their gate. They lived in a pre-fab joint that looked out on the pine trees.

In any case, I always waved back to Nug, and over a period I supposed I hoped that he could see that in some ways we shared similar attitudes to progress. So when I saw the green shade almost wafting down there between the trees, I went after it, and I caught up with Nug as he was heading up towards the cliff top, his head down. "Hey, Nug," I called and he pulled up.

He was wearing shoes instead of work boots, and the green turned out to be a double-breasted suit. He had on a canary-yellow tie, and I could only assume that he had come home from the pub and his wife had pushed him out for a run before they set off to some wedding. It was late Saturday afternoon.

"What are you celebrating?"

Nug laughed. "The missus" old man has kicked the bucket."

"Oh, I'm sorry. Are you OK?" He had tottered as he spoke.

"She's right," he said, and for some reason he started to shake my hand. "We're mates," he said, "We're mates."

"Too right we are," I said, "have you seen anyone from the band?"

"What?"

To take his mind from his misery, I began to tell him about the morning I had come down into the park and stumbled upon another vision. Max was on my shoulders as we came down under the trees and heard the music. We looked, but couldn't see anything, no speakers, no bus loads, no convertible driven by Italians, but the music got louder as we moved towards the sea. There was no mistaking the sound of bagpipes. Then further down, beneath one

of the tallest trees, under the cathedral of stumps and cracked branches, there was the piper, a white-haired Highland piper in his red and green regalia blowing his bags so hard, and so well, that he was oblivious to us standing beside him. I put Max on the ground. By the time the tune had finished two other kids were standing there as well, and which meant that as he lowered his pipes, there were four of us to clap.

"Where's the band?" I asked.

"No band. Spent the night over there," he said pointing to the pubs. "They wouldn't let me practice inside before breakfast." The next day the piper had gone. No one has seen him since.

"Fucking good thing, too," said Nug, confirming that there are limits to mateship.

There are three pubs in the town and Nug, Tom and Bob drink in the bottom one, the place that has had its verandah ripped off because the council likes to protect the safety of us pedestrians. I spend more time in the second pub because it has a better view of the water, and its back lane gives me a straight run home to our place two streets away. But I have a bit of a mate there, a bloke I met a couple of years ago and who I still say hello to even though we almost fell out completely one day. His name is Les, and for twenty years he worked in the post office, and for the last ten has lived in the pub. I first met him in the car park. I was walking through and saw this bloke leaning over the steering wheel of his Consul. As far as I could tell he was trying to switch the ignition on, but nothing was happening. I opened the door and he fell out onto the ground. When he got up, he said, "Give us a push."

I tried to move the car away from the fence, but it was hard going as Lex had got back into the car. "Give us a blasted hand," I said gently, and he got out and stood against the fence looking offended. "Sorry mate," I said, "she's too heavy for me," and I went inside for a drink - firm about my decision, but still uneasy that I might have let a bloke down. I was pleased when I saw him a few days later - in the driver's seat, roaring along as if he was the Chief of the Fire Brigade, crossing the intersection with the confidence that only the cops have in country towns. They have taken the car away from Les since, and they have moved him out of the pub because the joint was, a few months back, bought by city people. To begin with, the new proprietors carried on as before: Les kept the upstairs room near the men's dyke and every day of the year he came down for his first beer at a minute past ten. Then he took his glass to the wall and drank it slowly. He always paid the

rent, often had exact money for his drink, he didn't blue, and no one could have said he was much trouble, except that the wife of the proprietor doubted if he had changed his socks since 1950, and she was convinced that if the place was going to have a future something needed to be done. Every now and then you'd spot her in deep conversation with Les; or rather, you would see her talking while Les stood beside her, as Les was not renowned for his conversation. He had sandy hair and hazel eyes as dusty looking as a worked-out quarry. Then one day he turned up in a new tweed jacket with a snappy cross-belt at the back, and another day his shoes changed color so one could only assume something had been done about his socks. But he was moved out, and I heard that he was sleeping with the Social Service mob down at the Dolphin, a cosy little hostel with a lounge room that kept three TV sets going at once.

Les wasn't going to change his drinking habits though, and it was when he began to come into the pub as an outsider that our relationship reached its high point. All summer I had been saying hello to him as we passed, and all summer he had grunted in reply. It was not clear what he had said, but by the autumn I realised that it was something like "G'day." Then a few months later he threw me completely with, "G'day Roger," and soon after that, in a fit of demonstrativeness, he launched us into discourse. We were standing side by side by the fire in the bar, when he said, "She won't go round."

As far as I could see, there were no women in the bar, and the ads on the TV had been about electrical appliances. I took a sip of my drink.

Les was looking straight ahead. He was a past master at looking straight ahead, and one of the barmen, another import from the city, was once so impressed by the vacancy of his silence, that Les had for a while been known as "Swami Les."

Finally I said, "Yep, she's been in the north for three days now."

This took some of the tension out of the situation, but it was also obvious that I had said too much. Any fool should have known what Les meant, and I, for a minute, had not; and as a result I had said too much. Les didn't bother to say any more, and afterwards I put my glass down and quietly went home.

Outside our place the trailer was still backed into the gutter and the old carpet that I had been trying to lift onto it the day before was still on the nature strip. I had another go at lifting it and failed. What I needed was a mate. Across the road from our joint is a hostel

even bigger than the Dolphin, and, in some ways, a step or two down from it. It admits old people who are never entirely sure where they are, and this means that most days you can come out and see a group of them standing, bonnets on, noses running, the other side of the cyclone fence. They wave, you wave: or you wave, and one of them might wave, and I don't mind saying, if I can without premature self pity, that I anticipate, between visions, the day when I'll be over there and confined to drinking warm tea with the lot of them.

But just then I needed a mate, so I called out to the person nearest the street, the fella who looked most like absconding. "Can you give us a hand?"

Wally Dan came across the road. Wally is the only Aboriginal in the town. It's hard to tell his age, but he came across the road in the perfect knowledge that a fast truck comes down our hill once in a generation. "What's up mate?" he said.

"Bit too heavy for me," I explained.

When we had the carpet on the trailer, Wally shuffled, and ran his tongue along his top lip. "Got a smoke mate?"

I whacked my pockets, "Sorry, don't smoke."

"Got two bob for me to buy some lollies?"

"Just a tick," I said and went inside to get Mary's cigarettes and the housekeeping purse. Wally went back to his companions behind the wire, and I saw him pass around the cigarettes before heading off towards the milk bar.

"What the hell are you up to?" Mary said. She had been watching out the window.

"Helping a mate," I said.

"But he'll be back knocking on the door tomorrow."

"Lots of people knock on doors."

"He'll be asking for something every time I go out."

"He did me a turn. I did him a turn."

"He's using you up."

"We all use each other up."

Mary and I then had a long conversation about the Third World. I was surprised at her attitude as she is a generous and beautiful and compassionate woman, but to give her credit, she had spent the day at the Town Hall, and the councillors down there are so hungry for pats they should be made to eat every meal at a hostel. The council wants to cut down the pine trees, and Mary is campaigning to stop them; her argument is that trees are nice to walk under, and their's is that the branches of mature trees can do vicious damage to the motor vehicle, and that when the Japs come, the foreshore will need to be cleared for the trampoline centre. "Anyway," Mary was saying, "I said too much."

She pointed out the back. Across the lawn, crushing the daisies, there was a Monterey pine. It stretched from one side of the yard to the other, and the canopy fell into next door.

"How come?"

"They said, if I cared so much about trees I should take one home with me and try looking after it."

"Who got it here?"

"Bert Fitch," she laughed. Fitch was one of a dozen plumbers who had come to the town during the building boom. The boom is now over and there are some plumbers who will cart anything for a dollar.

I said, "that's ok, I've invited a few people for tea."

"Who?"

"Nugget Wood, Tom and Bob and Les, and," I

said, "Wally Dan."

"We can't feed all of those people."

"Someone should. I bought fish fingers. I'll cook lots of chips."

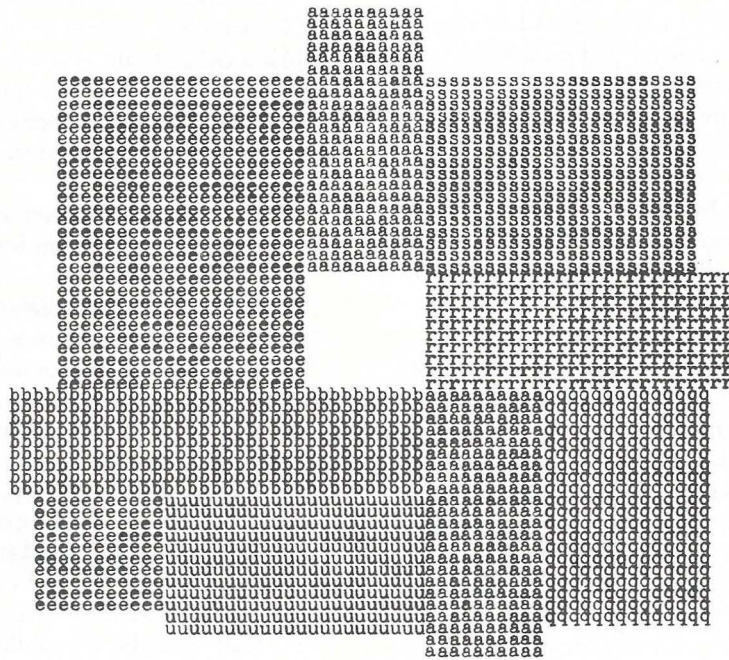
"We haven't got enough chairs."

Outside, I could see Max climbing around in the tree. He had found a very comfortable branch to sit on. I had a vision.

"We'll eat out there," I said, "a barbeque."

"Did you get sauce?"

"We have plenty of sauce." Then I had another vision we were lobbing the sauce bottles over into the old vicarage. It was a pity Ian Forster was still not mayor. The present mayor owns a garage, and he is selling his cut-price petrol well out on the highway.



Christina Stead

TALKS TO RODNEY WETHERELL

Christina Stead died early in April this year, a friend of this magazine and what it stood for, and one of the very great Australians of our time. As a tribute to her we print here, for the first time, the complete version of an interview she gave Rodney Wetherell of the Australian Broadcasting Commission in September 1979, subsequently broadcast by the ABC on 24 February 1980 and 2 May 1983.

RODNEY WETHERELL: Christina Stead, you were born in Sydney, and you're now living in Melbourne. How many cities have there been in between, where you've lived?

CHRISTINA STEAD: I've visited many of course, but when I left here in twenty-eight I first lived in London for some time, not very long, because the crisis of 1929 came, and the man I was working with, who became my husband, went to Paris and took me with him and we both worked in the same bank, in dix-huit Rue de la Paix - eighteen Rue de la Paix, and we lived in Paris for years and years, working in the bank.

After that, I think we went to the States for some time. Yes, we were years and years in the States. Of course he was born there, and we lived in New York; and at one time during the Second World War, just at the beginning, we went to Hollywood, and we lived in Hollywood some time. About three months, a bit more perhaps. Then we came back to New York and stayed there till the War ended when we went back to Antwerp, where my husband's partner for many years had had a grain business, which had been taken over by the Germans, I think, and then at that time the Belgians had a socialist government and they had "Manager of Grain" - I forget his title. He was some kind of minister or something like that, who had been the Manager of Alf's (that was the name of the partner) grain firm, which was Rue de la Bourse, in the commercial part of Antwerp - Antwerp's mostly commercial of course. We went there for a while, but things were very unpleasant and they didn't like any foreigners there. You can't blame

them. The place looked practically like things look in a Nazi film when we got back, and we had to dodge about in the Channel, because of mines and in the Schelde-that's the river, because of mines, and Belgium was devastated. At any rate they didn't want foreigners. So we went to England and we stayed there quite a while, and England looked terrible. The men who came to take our bags at the station - we were ashamed to hand them to them, because they all looked as if the wind would blow them away. They were wisps of men, through starvation of course.

Anyhow, we stayed in London for quite a while, and you know I'm not quite sure how we got about but we did go to Switzerland, and this was shortly after the war; and we were somewhat suspect, because a lot of refugees from various countries had gone to Switzerland, but naturally we weren't in any trouble, and we lived there quite a while in Basel, in Montreux and then in Lausanne. It's very nice place to live. Those three places are very good places to live but especially Montreux and Lausanne. Montreux is right on the Lake of Geneva of course. And then . . . oh yes, we had gone back to Paris after the war and then we went from there to Switzerland, because Paris was in a very sad state. It was really starving, half starved, so we went on to Switzerland, we felt a bit ashamed, and then we went to Holland. Yes, we lived in The Hague for a couple of years. My husband liked to travel and he was . . . he knew all about a country before we got there. He loved it, you know.

RW: There must have been a great restlessness in you, too, right from early days.

CS: No, not at all.

RW: You were very determined to leave Australia, for example.

CS: I wasn't. It had nothing to do with that at all. We read about, heard about all kinds of countries. My father was a scientist and he went abroad once or twice. He went to Britain to buy trawlers in 1914, just before the war, and so on; and the sea - we were all closely connected with the sea. It was part of our lives, you see. Now the sea is a continent with no passports and no ports and nothing, it's a country in itself. We felt we belonged to the sea. It wasn't a question of leaving Australia, nothing to do with that at all.

RW: But I think I read somewhere where you said there was quite a lot of you in the struggle that Teresa Hawkins has in *For Love Alone*.

CS: Yes, it's quite true.

RW: She has quite a desperate struggle to leave Australia.

CS: Yes, yes, that's quite true. It is I, it's me.

RW: She was saving very hard . . .

CS: For years and years. I remember they gave me a twenty-first birthday party and I was so bored by the whole proceedings. I thought: What are they talking about? This has nothing to do with my life at all, you know.

RW: You had quite a few jobs in those days, before you left Australia, I mean. You worked in a psychology laboratory?

CS: No, no. I trained as a teacher in Teachers' College in Sydney University, and there I was - I liked psychology of course. It was natural to me. They kept me on to do psychology and I did these Binet-Simon Tests in all the schools, and the sorting out you have to do afterwards. Then I went into the schools for a year, but my voice failed, because I've always had a very weak voice - unlike the rest of my family who are all great singers, I don't mean "great" singers, but they sing like mad. So my voice failed and they sent me to a correspondence school, which used to deal in those days before radio with the outback, children in the outback, and then they took me back to Teachers' College to do a fourth year in psychology, and I went to Sydney University as part of that course, you see. We didn't do anything much but it was my chief . . . it

was my interest in a way, not my chief interest, but an interest.

RW: Do you have a professional sort of writer's interest in psychology?

CS: No, I was never a professional writer, and I am not now. This is quite true. It's a thing I do, but I'm not a professional.

RW: You have a long line of books which make you appear to be a professional writer.

CS: Yes, but it was . . . something you do, you know. I had never any idea of being a professional writer.

RW: I've always wondered where you fitted writing into your life actually, because especially during the time when you were in Paris, obviously working very hard in the bank and so on, and yet you were . . .

CS: No, I was not working hard, no no, I was not working hard. I was attached to the bank because of my husband, and of course I knew two languages, I always knew French from high school, because I liked it very much, and all writers are linguists, because they know words in their language - other people know about three or four hundred and they get along with that O.K. But writers happen to take a great interest in the language at large. So they're linguists. So when you come to another language like French or German or whatever it may be, this helps you and you get on, you see. So I always loved French and when I went to France, it was easy for me.

RW: You had a great passion for Guy de Maupassant at school, I've read.

CS: At school, I think in the fourth year high school, Girls' High School, Sydney, we did Guy de Maupassant. And I thought that he was a very good writer. I liked him very much. But I read all the French books in the Public Library that I could lay my hands on. We used to get two library tickets per girl, and about five of my friends didn't want any, so I had about ten library tickets, and I used them all.

RW: What was it about you that propelled you so strongly into French culture?

CS: I like the language. I learnt it at high school. The year I entered high school, German had just been banned because of the war, and they were banning Beethoven and Brahms - you know what they were doing. You don't know, but that's what they were

doing. And so otherwise I would have learnt German as well, because I have quite a feeling for German.

RW: Have you ever written in French, by the way?

CS: I could, in the old days. I don't say I could now. But what's the point of writing in French when there's Guy de Maupassant and all the other people writing in French. I certainly couldn't equal them.

RW: You've always been very attracted to the short story form, haven't you?

CS: Partly.

RW: One of your early books, *The Salzburg Tales*, has what, forty . . . ?

CS: Fifty, yes, but I'd written a novel before that. I went to Salzburg. My husband sent me, and I became enraptured with Mozart's music. They had six weeks then, and when I came back, I had . . . my husband had submitted - I had never submitted any manuscript - submitted my first manuscript, *Seven Poor Men of Sydney* to Sylvia Beach, who was a well known character in Sydney - sorry, in Paris - and she had started the famous writer Hemingway on his way. So my husband, unknown to me, took this manuscript to her and she said "Send it to an agent," you see. So he did, without telling me, and she sent it to this publisher Peter Davies. It happened that Peter Davies liked . . . he was a well-known character. He was a godson, I think, of Sir James Barrie, and he was Peter Pan. Sir James Barrie met him in Kensington Gardens when he was a little boy, and he made him Peter Pan. And he was famous in London. And he'd had some good luck with some Australian authors, and he believed in Australians, although he was very much a London Englishman. He read this manuscript, and he wrote to me in Paris: "I liked this, but I'd like you to do another book first." So I had just come back from Salzburg, and I sat down in the kitchen of our flat and I wrote *The Salzburg Tales*, right off from beginning to end, except one day I would do a story, next day I would fix it up a bit and do the connective tissue. Next day I would do a story, next day connective tissue, next day a story, etc. I did this from beginning to end right through, because I'd just come back from Salzburg and was inspired by Mozart, because he was the most marvellously connected and creative brain in the whole world, I think. Anyhow for me. And so I sent it to him, Peter Davies, and he said "Well, we don't like to begin with a book of short stories, so I said "too bad!" So he did begin with a book of short stories, and it had a very good . . . *succes d'estime*, as they say.

RW: Peter Davies must have even then recognized you as a very different sort of Australian writer. Presumably the writers you mentioned that he was keen on were in the Lawson tradition or the . . .

CS: No they weren't. That's a fixed idea people have that Lawson dominates Australia. Just as English people and Americans always base their . . . when they talk about you . . . one, they say "Well of course she was deeply affected by Dickens and D.H. Lawrence" - of all things! - and because they can't imagine that an author in Australia, above all places, down there, you know, near the South Pole, is affected by French authors and Russian authors and German authors and so forth. So you've got to be affected by D.H. Lawrence and Dickens.

RW: But you're probably one of the earliest writers to be in that European tradition - apart from Brennan, say.

CS: I don't know anything about that. I must admit that when I came back in about 1974, I was very surprised to see how Australian writing had moved into the cities; but that was because I left long before, you see. I left in 1928 and I came back in '74. There was a slight difference.

RW: The novels you wrote in the thirties, which were then published, were among the earliest Australian novels about educated people, city people.

CS: But I lived in cities of course. Abroad I mean. Well, Sydney is a city too, of course. It's very like Manhattan. When I went to New York first a local lad said to me "Well, aren't you impressed?" I said "It's very like Sydney." And it really is. It has the same narrowing right down to the waterfront, you know. It's very confined there where the big city, where the real city is, just like Sydney, and it has many waterways and all the back-country, Brooklyn and Queens and all those places like our south-eastern suburbs. Manhattan has not got the beautiful North Shore which we have.

RW: I thought it was very interesting in your novel *For Love Alone* that the Sydney that Teresa Hawkins was escaping from, was not really the boring philistine place that it has very often been represented to be.

CS: My dear, she was not escaping from Sydney. I've always loved Sydney. I had no feeling of escaping, I didn't want to escape. This mistaken idea has re-appeared again and again, and I just think "What can you do about it?" I was not escaping, I liked Sydney. Sydney was fine. And as for the suggestion that I found the culture narrow - that's ridiculous. I was full

of Australian culture. I wanted to go abroad. A lot of people see that as sin and a crime, but that is because we're a big country. Russians, people from the U.S.A. and Australians think it's a crime to leave their country. Now little countries don't. If England thought it was a crime to leave the country, why everybody practically would be a criminal, you see.

RW: Still, it is an unusual view of Australia. I mean, Patrick White for example, has often written of Australia as a very philistine and constricting kind of place. This is quite absent from your writing, this sense.

CS: Look, I love . . . Patrick's a lovely boy, I like him and he's a friend of mine, but I don't see things the way he does. I'm very full of Australia. My mother died when I was very young, a baby, and my father used to talk me to sleep every night. He was a young scientist then, you see, and he *loved* Australia. And the things I heard as I went to sleep was all this about . . .the geography...underneath my bed - I didn't have a proper bed because there was a little girl in the house, my cousin, who had the cot. My bed was made up on a packing case - I've heard this several times before, I know-in which there were Japanese spider crabs and every kind of animal. This is another aspect of the sea that I was brought up with-and the sea was in a sense my country, and I knew that. While I was lying there and he was talking about Australia and the inland and the blacks and all the things, because he was a great lover of Australia. I had all these things underneath me, and then I suppose because I was talked to sleep-I wouldn't be quite asleep-and things would be talking to me, probably because I was being talked to. And everything was having a conversation around me. The wardrobe, and the cupboard and the bed, the big double bed was there, in which he was alone by then of course, and the bit of mat-it wasn't a carpet-they were having conversations with each other; and all the conversations about oppression, oddly enough, though he never talked about oppression. I don't know how this came in at all.

RW: Did they suggest stories to you?

CS: No, they were talking to one another. The drawers in the . . . what do you call it?

RW: Chest-of-drawers.

CS: Chest-of-drawers, that's right. They were saying: "I don't like being pulled in and out like this, it hurt me," and the floor was saying: "And all these things are standing on me and I don't like it, it's too heavy," and that sort of thing. I was only a little tiny thing, you

know. But this was sort of dramatic instinct, you know. Very curious, because nobody talked to me about oppression.

RW: That must have been even more pronounced in human situations, observing people.

CS: I was too small. I didn't see that. In fact I strongly disliked or strongly liked people. I didn't ever think of oppression, I never thought of that, in those days. Well, I was very tiny, I was little. Before I went to school, we had moved to Bexley, to this big house in Bexley. My father had remarried, and I went to Bexley Public School.

RW: That sounds a wonderful old house at Bexley.

CS: Yes, it's interesting. They filled it with . . . they made a museum of it, and it's nothing like it was when we lived there of course. People have made donations of china and old beds, fancy beds and all kinds of things. Rockdale Town Council owns it, I believe, and it's being used for a museum. They show people through. It's nothing like it was, cause the whole half . . . It was built after the model of a European, of an English stone farm. It's built entirely of sandstone, slightly chipped sandstone, and this looks very nice, so it can't decay; and then there was an entire householding system, domestic system - a flagged walk leading to a large kitchen built of the same sandstone, and a cellar underneath which was never used, at least in our time. There was a brick yard, there was a large wash-house, a very large wash-house built of the same sandstone. There was a groom's room and a maid's room, which of course we used for other things, and a coach house and a stables, and down some stone steps a stone W.C., all in the same sandstone. Now everything was cut off from the house, and all that stone was sold. So now you don't know what it was like. And it had three and a half acres with paddocks and things.

RW: Which are now built on, I suppose.

CS: Oh yes, indeed, but it still has the marvellous view. You could see between the heads of Botany Bay - Cape Banks, Cape Solander - and most days which were clear you could see straight through to the Blue Mountains, because the owner - that was the grandfather - had kept the place opposite the front gate open, so you could see straight through, over the valleys, the gullies and things, straight through to the Blue Mountains. And that view still exists, of course from the attic.

RW: What about all your animals that you had? Where did you keep all those?

CS: Oh, in the brick yard outside the kitchen. It was quite a large place, and in one place we had little . . . what d'you call them? . . . and we had pigmy opossums, then we had two real opossums - possums they call them now, no "o" - possums, one honey-colored, one black, and we had a cage of snakes, and I'm very fond of snakes, and you weren't allowed to keep many things, you know. We had a kookaburra, you're not allowed to keep kookaburras but it had injured its wing, so we had it - and we had a seagull. You're not allowed to keep seagulls, but we had an injured seagull, in the stables - we didn't have any horses then. There was a large carriage drive leading to the stables from the front gate, which isn't there now.

RW: You must have learnt an immense amount about all that from your father.

CS: Oh yes, of course. And I . . . at my sister's the other day I found the reading book we had in, I don't know what you call it - third class, I think it was; and there's an awful lot about nature and Papua New Guinea - it was called Papua then I think, and that sort of thing. There's a lot of it in the reading books too, which was quite right, because we were perched all round the fringe of a continent, you know. It meant a lot to us.

RW: I've seen him described as a Fabian socialist. How strong was that in your father?

CS: He didn't know anything about Fabius or Fabianism. He was just an instinctive socialist who believed in state socialism, as it suited him. But he was not a theoretical man at all. He was not a Fabian. He knew nothing about Fabianism, I'm quite certain.

RW: From Bexley, you moved to Watson's Bay near Sydney Heads. That seems to have had quite an impact on you, judging from the books.

CS: Yes, it's a wonderful place. The house was on South Head, right under the military encampment, and it's a very slender spine of land there; and in big storms the spray from the Gap used to come right on the roof of our house. It's so close to the ocean. And all the ocean liners, and other ships, mercantile ships and so on, came right in front of our house. The pilot ship was always there, anchored there, and they used to stay there for quarantine. We saw all the ships that came into the harbor, it was very thrilling. And this was another reason why going abroad seemed so natural, because these ships were always in and out, in and out.

RW: There's quite a memorable passage in *For Love Alone*, where Teresa and Jonathon are walking back

to Watsons Bay, and there's the cries of lovers in the night and so on . . .

CS: Yes, yes . . .

RW: Did you experience that sound?

CS: Oh yes, that little park there, which is right at the end of the pier, lovers used to go there. It is a very narrow peninsula, or whatever it is, like a club, you know, little narrow part. The Gap is there where people used to ritually jump over and commit suicide, and I used to worry about them, because right underneath is a kerosene shale platform and they would probably hit the rocks, you see, instead of the sea; but higher up there is a place where they could jump into the sea, just below the lighthouse, jump straight into the sea. But we used to see sometimes . . . I saw a suicide in a rowboat just anchored off the pier one day. But apart from that, yes, lovers also used to make love in the park, under the Gap, right under the Gap.

RW: The young Teresa is mystified, but not entirely mystified, she knows what's going on, but is a bit puzzled by it.

CS: Well, she was a little reserved in that respect. She felt passion, but she didn't know anything about these antics, you know. I mean, she knew about them but never experienced them. But she wasn't uncivilised in this respect. You know what young girls are.

RW: The family life described - the Hawkins family at Watsons Bay - has some happiness about it, but a great deal of unhappiness, too, tension between the family members. In fact there are a lot of unhappy families in your books.

CS: Are there?

RW: Well, *The Man Who Loved Children*, for example.

CS: Ah well. But that's quite a different thing. That's the celebration of unhappy family life. But otherwise I can't remember.

RW: Does it have a connection with the life you lived at Watsons Bay?

CS: Of course, it's exactly word for word. And plenty of words. Well, of course she didn't try to poison her stepmother, but she thought about it, because of the fearful unhappiness.

RW: How did the other people in the family react when the books came out?

CS: I don't know, I was always in another country, luckily.

RW: But they would have recognized themselves if they had read the books?

CS: Yes, I changed the children a bit - not quite the same number or sex, and so forth. I was very lucky in that whenever my books came out I was always in another country, so I've never concerned . . . and I think this was lovely and lucky and I was never concerned with the reception or anything like that. This is still true.

RW: The relationship of the author character with the father in both the novels *For Love Alone* and *The Man Who Loved Children* is a very complex and hostile one, but she doesn't seem to engage with them, in a way. Her weapon against them is a sort of invective always. She doesn't . . .

CS: No, she leads a life of her own.

RW: . . . and fends them off as far as possible?

CS: Doesn't really bother about them in a sense. She's self-integrated, she - whatever goes on, she doesn't really care.

RW: But they care about her. They try to possess her all the time.

CS: No, they don't. She was very lucky in that she was a semi-orphan, a sort of orphan, and therefore didn't have to be thoroughly involved, and was not thoroughly involved. And this was the saving grace. Donated by fate, I mean.

RW: But also rather tragic, I'm sure.

CS: Not a bit tragic. It was very lucky. I've always thought it was very lucky. There's no tragedy in this life, that you're speaking about. It was all very very lucky the way it worked out. I mean that.

RW: Does that mean redemption through suffering or something like that?

CS: It means nothing religious. It means a genuine material situation.

RW: Out of enormous tension and conflict, nevertheless.

CS: There wasn't much tension. And there wasn't any conflict in an interior sense.

RW: Within the family I mean, families as described in those books are . . .

CS: Oh, what about them?

RW: Well, there are enormous tensions and conflicts.

CS: Yes of course there are, and I've no doubt it shows, but . . . but children live through a lot, most

children live through a lot. And this is a true picture of family life. The idea that those are the happiest years of your life and all that, is as you know, pure nonsense. Most children live through, if not that, something like that or some other complication. Most children live through great tragedies and they grow up and they're just normal and ordinary and it's good for them. It strengthens their character - and I mean that. I don't mean they should be put into an orphan asylum and beaten and that's good for them. I don't mean that at all. But I mean ordinary human situations are good for you. You've got to live in society.

RW: It couldn't be good for people to live with a mother in the condition of Henny for example, in *The Man Who Loved Children*.

CS: No, not good for her, of course not.

RW: Or for the children.

CS: No, I suppose not. I must tell you that Henny has now become a heroine in a narrow sense . . .

RW: But she must have been an extraordinarily difficult woman to live with.

CS: No. She married the wrong man, that's all. And that's extraordinarily difficult.

RW: But she took it out on the children a lot.

CS: Not really. I wouldn't say that. In no way would I attack Henny, who in a sense won their sympathy by her quite obvious situation. Henny was trained to be the daughter of a rich man. Her father was a rich man, and she was trained in a not very common Australian way, to go to a young ladies school away from home, and she was intended to be what I said, so she didn't. That was all.

RW: Do you like the fact that Henny has been made a symbol by the women's liberation movement?

CS: I don't care.

RW: You have been taken up by them quite a bit actually in recent years. Do you think they're using your work in the right way?

CS: You know, I don't really care. There's a firm in Britain which is bringing out my books and they are . . . I think the managing editorial board is women. They're interested in women's work, but I notice they've brought out a few classics by males too, recently, which pleases me, because I don't believe in segregation of any kind, and I think men and women should unite to fight the battle. All the men I've known have been in favor of women's success.

RW: I can see why the women's liberation movement

might light on the book like *For Love Alone*, which is about a girl's struggle to achieve independence and so on.

CS: I don't see why. It's a struggle to achieve union with a man, that's what it is.

RW: Very much as an equal though. She's determined to escape from the rather trivial role she sees for women.

CS: No she isn't. That has nothing to do with it. That's not the intention of the book at all. And this thought never entered my head. I never felt inferior to men, and men never made me feel inferior. Men were always very good to me - brothers, lovers, husbands, whatever. I never had this feeling.

RW: The character, though, has a certain disgust about the wedding that she attends, and she is very critical of all that.

CS: But many women are this. It has nothing to do with women's liberation. It's simply that this was going to be old-fashioned by that time. That's all. The old ritual - throwing the bouquet and all that sort of thing. And the girl's longing to be married, and that's a natural thing. It was only a kind of sensitive feeling about girls showing their poverty, that kind of sensual poverty, so much. That was all. It was nothing to do with women's liberation except in the sense of taste and behavior and demeanor. But this is just the feeling of a proud and resolute girl, who is not going to be like that, but it's nothing to do with women's liberation.

I know what they're after in women's liberation. Many of their manifestations have nothing to do with the ordinary woman who needs to be liberated. The poor little struggling housewife who's doing a job to help to keep the family going and, so forth - she doesn't want these vociferous girls who are leading the movement. She wants some ordinary women to sit about and talk about her troubles with and think what they can do about it. These purely political types don't appeal to women, and in fact by their hatred of men among all other things I think is a thing so hateful, even if some of these women are unhappy with their husbands, it does not represent human truth. And they know it, because they've been married and had their children, and the man has kept the house going to the best of his ability, and even if they don't like him, they know this. The worst thing about it is their hatred of men, but men and women are made to love each other. It's only by loving each other that they can achieve anything. This separation of women from men is the most disgraceful thing and

disorderly thing in the movement, and that's why I'm against it. Not that women don't need to be liberated from many unpleasant things and bonds, but the way they're behaving and alienating themselves from men, who are our friends, our companions.

RW: But the ordinary suburban woman you talk about might well feel greatly liberated, stimulated say, by reading some of your books, do you think? I mean, there are there pictured very independent minded, very unusual, stimulating . . .

CS: No. They do not read my books, number one. Number two, they have their own troubles. I asked a woman I knew quite well in the family, who was the ordinary suburban woman, and she said "Yes, we do like to talk, but we don't want any lawyers, any members of Parliament, anybody like that, we just want to talk amongst ourselves." And they don't care about those pugnacious types, who do not represent them or their issues or anything like that. Something else must be done. Now, a kind man could do more for them than an aggressive woman who's nothing like them, you know.

RW: But you do think that a great deal does need to be done on a political level?

CS: Yes. Yes of course.

RW: But it could be equally well done by men as by women?

CS: Of course, You see, of course the women's movement has had a big effect on men who never thought about it before. A great many men have thought about it. I can't help noticing in newspapers that men editors and reviewers are a little hesitant now about expressing views about a woman's book in case anybody will think they're, you know what they call them.

RW: Sexists?

CS: And something else too, but I'm not saying it. Of course a lot must be done. I'm only speaking of the manner in which it's done, and the idea of isolating men - I've never known a man who didn't want women to be liberated and have a better time out of life. I've known a lot of men too. In every way, I mean you know friends, publishers.

RW: Could you talk about the life you had in Paris when you were working in the bank and I presume writing at night, after the . . .

CS: No. No, no. I had very little to do in the bank. I knew English and French, so I could translate if necessary, but a lot of them naturally didn't know English and . . . but they gave me a room of my own in

the bank. They were very friendly fellows. It wasn't a traditional bank at all. The man who had started the bank had gone over with the La Fayette Division. He was an airman, and they had gone, I think that was in the First World War; and he was very interested in money, in all sorts of money. And he even made a living, when he was still in the La Fayette Division by selling American telephone books to Germans, because Germans and other mid-Continentalers wanted to know the names of relatives or apparent relatives in New York, and then they would write to them and ask for money. So he began with little tricks like that. Then he came, I think, to Paris and opened an exchange booth - it wasn't a booth, it was some kind of shop or place where he gave very, very good rates to American travellers, and so with that he founded this very smart-looking fashionable bank. It had been Place Vendome, but it moved to the Rue de la Paix. And it was right in the centre of fashionable Paris, and had many fashionable people of all nations there. The reason I called it that - that's the reason though - it refers to something quite other.

RW: This is the world described in your very large book *House of all Nations*, of course.

CS: Yes.

RW: Would you describe that as a documentary sort of novel, almost?

CS: It was badly received in Wall Street, because it was so true. (*Laughs*) And they said: "The author", naming my name, "writes as if she had been concealed under the desk while they were talking."

I wasn't concealed under the desk, I was *at* the desk. Because people love to talk to novelists. By this time, I was a writer of course.

RW: They revealed more than they otherwise would, because they knew you were a writer?

CS: Yes. They revealed everything. They had no shame or didn't mind. They didn't care.

RW: They wanted their lives to be written down?

CS: Not exactly, but they were free-spoken people, and they were free-dealing and in general - well, wandering minstrels of finance, you know.

RW: It's very glittering world you portray in that book, very sophisticated, and corrupt, I suppose.

CS: Well, corrupt is the way you see it, you know. If you have very strange ideals about any kind . . . part of the world, you don't know it. You've got to be in it to know it.

RW: Would you say there was a definite political intention behind that book?

CS: None whatever.

RW: Although it's an attack on the existing system, I suppose.

CS: It's not an attack on the system, it's a picture of the system. If a picture is an attack - but it's a picture without animosity; there's a certain amount of amusement and love in a way, of the system. It's not an attack at all. I'm not a polemic writer.

RW: People I know who've read the book have been amazed that an Australian person should be able to . . . well, get into that world and understand it so well - the world of high European finance, and wheeling and dealing.

CS: In the first place they told everything. In the second place, I was brought up by a naturalist, and I *am* a naturalist. I see what I see, and if you see what you see, you understand it. That's all.

RW: You recorded it almost in a spirit of zoological, biological cataloguing?

CS: Yes, I'm not at all critical. When you're a little girl and you look in an aquarium and you see fish doing this and that, and snails and so on, you don't criticize and say they should do something else. And that's the way in which I was brought up, and in which in fact I see people. What I mean is, you don't criticize dingoes for being dingoes. You can't say "Bad dog" - that sort of thing. They are, and they exist that way, and that is the only way to see things truly, in my opinion.

RW: But you weren't inspecting that world from the outside. You were right in the middle of it, weren't you?

CS: I wasn't in the goldfish bowl, no.

RW: But you were working in the bank, you were operating . . .

CS: I was working in all those things, and I . . . Out of the spirit of fun, and because I delight in the things I see, I wrote what I saw, that's all. We were not then in the bank. We had gone to Spain. Oh, I forgot to say we lived in Spain, yes. Also on account of Bill's partner-Bill was my husband - the man in the grain business who was a great merchant, and an honest merchant too, but a really great merchant. He had made his own money, started off as a poor boy, and made it in the grain business because he was exceptionally good at it, and the news was that everybody was fleeing Spain, all rich people, and that there were many estates to be had, and all that sort of thing. Some people may have known that a civil war was coming but he did not and we did not; and he wanted to

import perfumes from North Africa where they have many sorts of perfumes which would go in Spain, and he wanted to nose the situation out and so he sent us - Bill first, and of course I went too, and we liked it. We were in Ronda - I can't say the Spanish 'r', but it's a sort of Gibraltar in a great deep valley, it stands just like Gibraltar on land. It's a lovely place. The first bullfights in Spain were in the arena at Ronda. It's a famous old place and a lovely place to live in, but we saw some very strange things. Some days we would see a whole army of men, working class men, not an army, a crowd, marching down the street, going up to the fields to discuss things; and another day I saw a man walking round one of these deserted palaces round the walls and round the roof, and it reminded me of something that Andre Malraux the French writer had written about in *La Condition Humaine* - The Human Condition - where before the Revolution in China men used to walk round the yards of great palaces and so forth and inspect them, as hide-outs and places for guerilla tactics and that sort of thing. And Bill became very ill, because they eat lots and lots of proteins in the south, and it's a quite hot climate. So we went north to the French border, but in Spain to . . . oh, famous . . . San Sebastian, yes, San Sebastian, that's a huge bay, and a little place just near there, the name escapes me for the moment. It's just across, there's a tiny little river separates Spain at that point from France. That wasn't the reason we went there. We went to San Sebastian because it was the north and Bill was feeling sick with the heat and the proteins. He couldn't take so many. So, we heard the bombardment of San Sebastian and . . .

RW: By the Franco forces?

CS: Yes, And there were refugees by that time, in the hotel. A Danish girl from the Danish Embassy in Madrid, who was very terrified and had a little shotgun, a little revolver by her, and a very cowardly priest who was there with a rich Spanish family. Rich families had their own priests. He was in the hotel. A lot of funny things, but it was tragic too. Then the fishermen couldn't go out any more, and finally - we were of course eating the food, and food had become difficult to get hold of. We felt ashamed and we went to the ayuntamiento, the majoralty place, and we offered to leave. But they were very proud. They were a lot of very proud young men on the revolutionary side and they said "Certainly not. We are the Government", and all that sort of thing. So we stayed a bit, but still it got to be a bit obvious that we were eating the food they needed, so we went to them and we told them we would leave. So they gave

us a boat - you couldn't go across the bridge, because the bridge was guarded.

RW: You were definitely in some danger, I suppose.

CS: Oh, not really. We didn't feel bad. It wasn't a cowardice at all. We were *for* that group of people, but we felt ashamed of eating the food when it was clearly getting less and less, you see. So they gave us a row boat and we got across the Bidassoa. That's the name of the little creek, tiny river and we got into France, where they treated us as refugees and they put us in a dark room, in a secret place in the hotel and shut all the shutters, and gendarmes were out in the garden and that sort of thing, not against us of course, but because they thought it was safer for refugees from Spain. (*Laughs*) We had no reason to be in France so we went back to Belgium again, and stayed there. Belgium recurs in this story, but only because of the grain trade.

RW: Did that situation, the Spanish Civil War, did that awaken the polemic instinct in you, or . . . ?

CS: I have no polemic instinct. I don't like fights or arguments or anything and never go in for them.

RW: But you felt you were definitely taking sides in the war.

CS: Well, I was naturally on the side of the . . .

RW: Republicans.

CS: Republicans. But I've always been naturally on the side of . . . you know, democrats. That's not polemic. That's just nature. My father was a socialist. I mentioned before, a state socialist.

RW: And your husband too, of course.

CS: Of course. He was a Marxian.

RW: Critical articles and works on your books have often seen Marxist influences and points all through them.

CS: I don't doubt that they exist because I adopted or felt my husband's point of view. All our friends were Marxians in New York, almost all, I wouldn't say all. But I'm not political in the sense of . . . not the go-to-meeting type. I think this may be simply that I don't like argument, dispute and dissertation and all that. I think that's all. It's not that I object to people taking sides.

RW: Sam Pollit in *The Man Who Loved Children* is of course a kind of socialist, and yet you give a fairly devastating picture of him personally as well as perhaps politically. He represents, I suppose 'New Deal' socialism, or . . .

CS: He represents himself and nothing else. As he really did in life.

RW: He is a great admirer of Roosevelt for example.

CS: Yes, Teddy Roosevelt though, it was. Because he was a conservationist, I think.

RW: Were you there at the time when the Marxian world of America, New York was under such attack from the McCarthyites and so on?

CS: It was, just before he left, but it was under attack before McCarthy. I forget the fellow who came before. Oh, it was under attack for years and years, but society in New York with your friends of more or less the same beliefs - I'm talking about literary people of a nice kind, not the V.I.P. boring kind, just ordinary people - are very nice warm people, lovely to live with them. It wasn't a political society in that sense, our society of friends, although a lot had strong political beliefs, yes.

RW: A great number of writers, perhaps the majority at that time had definitely socialist leanings.

CS: Oh yes, of course. There was a thing called *League of American Writers*, I think. I belonged to that. They asked me to join. I joined. That was all.

RW: Could we talk about the process of making a novel? How does the novel begin to grow, with you?

CS: I get an idea, and it grows for some time. This is happening now, in fact, and I don't rush about it. I'm never in a hurry to do something. I don't have a plot, but when a fairly entire scheme is in my head, then I write it all down on one page, then in a little while - I never worry about tempo - I write the introduction, if I feel like it, and that's generally *the* introduction, the beginning, I mean - there is no introduction. Once or twice I was stuck in the early years and I wrote the introduction in French, because this kind takes you out of yourself and then you can go back all free and start it again. Then I write characters, because really I'm a character writer. I'm interested, not in plot but what they do with their lives and what their lives do with them. I never twist a character to suit an end, because they come to their ends.

RW: You have quite complex plots, in several of your novels at any rate, but one does feel that if you come to a situation which particularly interests you, you rest with that situation.

CS: These plots are real plots that occur in life. The plots in people's lives, how they are manipulated by society or surrounding circumstances or other people. But I don't invent it. I see what's going on. That's all.

RW: But you have an extraordinarily fertile imagination

in inventing short plots, short stories as in the *Salzburg Tales* and *The House of all Nations*. There are a thousand plots there, and yet with the novels one feels that the plots are rather secondary to the characters.

CS: Novels are descriptions of entire situations, of course. It's the situation that's there, and the people in the situation. No plot in the formal sense.

The short stories are quite a different thing. That's just something that comes to you, you know. I have a story about the carpet weavers, and I told this to a girl who wrote to me from Armidale - she was very pleased - about how to write. I don't usually give advice to people how to write, because you can't tell anybody how to write. But I once saw a picture somewhere, on TV I think, of the carpet weavers in I think North Africa, and they used to have people to come and tell them stories, natural story tellers, and they paid them with a cup of coffee if they had it or whatever they had, some little thing like that, and that is the origin of the short story, and that's how I feel the short story, and when I want to write short stories, I say to myself "The carpet weavers are calling" and that's it. And then these stories come out by themselves, if you think that way. But also not only did my father tell me stories, talk me to sleep every night with stories, when I was very very small - I'm talking about two or three years old - but when my brothers and sisters were small, as I was considerably the eldest, by five years, I used to sing them to sleep and rock them to sleep; and when they were very little and later on I used to tell them stories, talk them to sleep, just as my father had done, except I told different stories. They were mostly out of Grimm and Hans Andersen. I was always very fond of those two and still am, and later on I made up some of my own, and that's how it all started.

RW: How do you know when you've got a complete story?

CS: I know it's there, that's all.

RW: There is a sense in your writing of it coming rather easily in a great flow.

CS: Yes. That's so. Yes. I never struggle. I never have any of this furrowed brow stuff that they always depict writers as having, and as for this business about starting and tearing up a sheet and throwing it in the waste paper basket! Writers never do that. They don't waste paper that way.

RW: Well, I think some do. But do you also write rather quickly? For instance how long would you

have spent on a very long book, like *House of All Nations*?

CS: Wrote that in six weeks in Ronda, Spain. The climate suited me. It was dry, then we had a thunderstorm at four o'clock regularly every afternoon, otherwise it was completely regular weather, and it was chiefly that the climate suited me, I think. It was dry and sunny and I liked Spain. I like all countries to tell you the truth, but I really like Spain. I wrote it in six weeks straight off.

RW: That's seven or eight hundred pages in six weeks. It must have been an extraordinary experience just living through that.

CS: No no. I'm a fast writer when I get going.

RW: Do you bother with routines, or do you just write as it comes?

CS: No. I have no routines. I write as it comes. When I got to London, where we eventually went from Antwerp, because I told you, there was an American editor from a publishing house which knew me very well, and I showed him the manuscript of *House of all Nations* and he said: "Well, we want you to fix it up and write it and re-write it", and I said "Nothing doing," because I never re-write. So it was published like that. But not by that publishing house.

RW: There's a great deal of very dramatically written dialogue in your books, particularly in something like *House of All Nations*. Have you had it in mind to write a play or a film script or anything like that?

CS: Never. I'm very bad at plays. I haven't the slightest idea how to begin. It's a different type of mind, you know. When you write a play you must have a very strong feeling about the three-sided room as the stage is called, and the exits and entrances and all that. I have no such feeling.

RW: Could we talk about influences? What were the main literary influences on you in the early days?

CS: Shakespeare. I hate to say that, because people think it's ridiculous, but it's quite true.

RW: And a number of French writers, I'm sure.

CS: Oh well, later on, yes. But in the early days some relatives were rather friendly to me, one gave me *Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare*, and I read it and I thought "Shakespeare cannot be famous for this stuff". So I looked in the volume of Shakespeare, which I mentioned before, and I saw that he had different stuff.

RW: The real thing was much better . . .

CS: Yes, and from then on - not not then, but when I was at high school I used to read Shakespeare

through from beginning to end every . . . once a year. That was a routine. And that was really . . . And then I was very fond of some of the early playwrights, like Webster, especially Webster, and he was a great, great playwright. He really is.

RW: What about the classic nineteenth century novelists? The Balzacs and the George Eliots?

CS: Oh, Balzac yes, I fell overboard for Balzac, when I was . . . as I said I learnt French quite easily, and I had these ten tickets from four other girls, maybe it was twelve tickets - a lot of tickets, and I read all the French books in the Municipal Library in Sydney, and Balzac was one of my main discoveries. I loved him. Yes, and I still do. I think he's great.

RW: But not D.H. Lawrence, I take it.

CS: I didn't read D.H. Lawrence until much later in life, when I was in England, I think. I don't know why, there is always so much to read you know. You don't read everything, you know.

RW: There's something Lawrentian about Jonathan Crow, isn't there, in *For Love Alone*?

CS: Jonathan Crow is Jonathan Crow, and not Lawrence in any manner, shape or form. He's a genuine person. I got the name, I regret to say - it's really horrible, of a funeral directors, I won't say in what city. (*Laughs.*)

RW: What about Australian writers? Were there any who had a significant influence on you?

CS: Well, in my father's library they had Henry Lawson, Banjo Paterson and I think I still know a lot of Banjo's work and . . .

RW: Henry Handel Richardson for example.

CS: Nooo. . . that was far too literary for my father. And I didn't read her till I came back to Australia, or a long time after. I'd never read her until, oh, I was more than adult. No. *On our Selection* that was in my father's library.

RW: Did you regret not having read Henry Handel Richardson earlier?

CS: No, not at all.

RW: What about the various scientific books that must have been around your house?

CS: Yes, there were no novels. For some reason my father didn't approve of them. So when I was about fourteen or fifteen he had a great friend whose name I forget, but he called him "Old Charlie." He was a sort of mentor of his, and old Charlie told him, that since I was interested in literature to give me a copy of the

works of Shelley, and in fact he did. This had a tremendous effect on me, because I always adored Shelley. When I was adolescent, I was madly in love with two or three men, Shelley was one of them. And I think, ah well never mind. They were all of that type, you see. But that was later on. But early on, I read Charles Darwin because Dad was a great Darwinian, and I enjoyed it immensely, the *Origin of Species* and *The Voyage of the Beagle*, and he also had a thing which I read later when I was about fourteen, called . . . they were Schliemann's Excavations of Troy. I thought that was fascinating. Well that's all. There were other books. There was one on . . . what they call it? Some disease you get from sexual indulgence. I enjoyed that. It was about . . .

RW: Venereal . . .

CS: Venereal disease, yes yes. I forget the name of the thing. And this book was all about it. I suppose my father as a young man had got it, because he was very cautious; and it had some poems in written by mad people, and some stories about nuns in a convent, dreaming or imagining that the Devil jumped over the wall and that sort of thing. I thought it was fascinating. It just appealed to my sense of drama and personality and psychology naturally.

But I didn't go in for scientific reading. That was just . . . Bur Darwin is extremely easy to read, he's a clear talker.

RW: I'd like to ask you about your husband and the life you had together. It must have been a marvellous intellectual companionship.

CS: It wasn't . . . "intellectual" gives the wrong idea. Of course we had more or less . . . liked to look at the world in the same way, but that wasn't it. We were fond of each other, simply and . . .

RW: But you shared a great number of intellectual interests, I suppose.

CS: No, that's the wrong way to put it. Because it gives an idea of two people sitting around talking highbrow stuff, and that wasn't it at all. He was a very amusing, witty man, and in fact I had all the luck in the world that I met him. I really did. Because when I was working for him, he went to see this man that I went to London to see, to find out what kind of a man he was, and he came back with very negative opinions, but in the meantime this man had said, that I thought I was a writer, or words to that effect. I don't know the exact words. I wasn't there, of course.

CS: And so he asked what I had written and I showed him my first manuscript which was *Seven Poor Men of*

Sydney, which I had written not at all with the idea of publication, but because when I first went to London I was very weak from years of privation. My own fault, I was saving up and I madly started that same thing again in London. I had to save to go to the Sorbonne, because I was fond of French. It was a mad idea, but I used to walk from Euston, where I was living, down to the city, the centre of the city where I was working until I got too feeble for it, but in the meantime I bought a small typewriter, and - one or two other things, I forget now, but . . . and I didn't realise the connection between my walking and this continued privation and my feelings, and I thought I was going to die, and I thought 'Well, I'll leave something behind me', but I did not intend it for publication. This was a purely instinctive thing, so I wrote *Seven Poor Men of Sydney*, and that was the manuscript I showed him. He took it away one weekend. We weren't friendly - well we were friendly, but we weren't close. And he brought it back and he looked at me, he had beautiful brown eyes, he was a brunette, and he looked at me with absolute astonishment when he sat at the desk opposite me, he called me in from my little typist den and he said: "It has mountain peaks." That's the beginning. That's all. But I owed it all to Bill, you know.

RW: Was he already a writer then himself?

CS: No. He'd been a Wall Street writer on a financial newspaper.

RW: And he kept on writing of course, in later years when you were living in Switzerland.

CS: In later years he wrote. We were living in Antwerp when he wrote his first book *The World is Mine*, and this was quite successful too, very successful. He wrote very fluently. We were both very fluent writers.

RW: What about coming back to Australia after all those years away? You were back in '69 fairly briefly, and then in '74 or so you came back to stay.

CS: I think it was '74, yes. Well, you know, all big cities these days are the same. Sydney was like New York, more or less. Of course less, but still, like Chicago, San Francisco, Melbourne - not Melbourne exactly, but still in a way, with the high rises and that sort of thing. Sydney is remarkably like New York in situation and all that, and the only change that I disliked was the hills round Sydney Harbor used to be green, you know, the lower hills, and by this time the rash of red roofs had covered the green hills. That was about . . . otherwise I didn't notice any great

change. Oh, except a ridiculous infection which I expect will go away soon, which I read in papers about the cultural cringe - I had no idea what it was. It's an abject and contemptible expression and . . .

RW: You don't think it's a reality?

CS: Of course it isn't. It's invented by somebody, because when I was here before, we . . . there was culture everywhere, France, Britain, and we had British culture. We had nothing to worry about. I mean, I never even thought it was a worry, there was no worry. Everybody had culture, and the Australian background was very present to me because of what I said about Banjo. I still love Banjo Paterson and so on, and my father was very well acquainted with the countryside, because he was Fisheries Inspector to begin with, and he knew the whole country because he had to inspect all the dams and rivers and hatcheries and that sort of thing, and sometimes I went with him. So, the country was very present to me.

RW: It's become almost a cliché that in the sixties and seventies Australia underwent some sort of cultural explosion, became more aware of the rest of the world, we . . . there was a lot more writing going on,

more film making and so on, but you didn't feel there was any significant difference?

CS: Look, before I left, there was a young man in Watson's Bay who was the son of the Greek fruitseller on the pier, and he was engaged in one of the first films. So it wasn't exactly *new*; and as for writing, Australians have always done a lot of writing and reading and theatre and so forth. I don't know. A lot of talk goes on which is really puffed up and blown about and people like to chat, it's really jargon. It comes and goes. You've got to wait for it to go, that's all. There's nothing to it.

RW: And what are you planning to write in the future?

CS: I don't plan, it comes to me. I mean, an idea forms. I've been very slow about it, because I haven't been as strong as I was when I was fifteen for example, but and also, ah. . . the loss of my life companion has made a slight difference of course. I'm hoping to write something, but I'm not going to say any more about it, because I never talk about it.

RW: What's your favorite among the books you've written so far?

CS: I have no favorite. My favorite is the next one. That's all.

ANOTHER 'RED' LADY

a red
parrot's head
framed
in a brown
hollow of gumtree

the mate
stands sentinel
eyeing
the picture
adding
a little ch ch
anger/danger

as the two
two-legged groundwalkers
get too close

the red head
withdraws
back into the hollow
leaving
the gum frame
innocent
of bird

J. S. HARRY

THE REBELS ARE OLDER NOW

The rebels are older now,
those who survived
the Passion and the Blood;

now, in chintzed chairs,
bound by books,
they tell their tales

of Terror and Imagination,
dilate on details to deny
the waste of tears;

recall the deeds
of those whose names
dwindle in the index.

Obscured by apparatus,
accounted for by footnote,
confounded by catalogue,

what course remains
for those whose days
distance into literature?

Thin fingers picking
at the arms of chintzed chairs,
eyes misting in memory,

who do not die
are victims of survival,
casualties of recension;

their exploits curious aberrations
absorbed by History:
the Literature of the Victor.

JOHN CROYSTON

THE ARTIST AND HIS FATHER

I play the role
of limited probability / poke fingers
thru flesh coloured gloves / scratch the paint up &
across a taut canvas / the way I was taught to wait
between spaces. The hand is moved into drawing a line;
what becomes an egg (a tube of ultramarine
squeezed across pink
bitten fingernails) or the
thought of people beating their own egg of mortality.
Farting at thunder son
my father would say. A fragment of light
& a hint starts it up in the dark
a blue line around a black line / this is a face
holding two eggs two eyes these places where the rain gathers
in chariots to the body's plynth / to the memory
of dreams / when I was a child
I stood on a tall building & looked down
at the Mondrian lines of the city
red yellow white & blue/s edging their way
along the lines of the city.

My father said *Things get further away*
with perspective.
I always think of a Shetland pony.
My father & the postman
visit at noon. I am wearing a moustache.
I look like a cricketer.
Didja win that at last night's disco?

This is a busy lunch.
Television my father & a brown envelope.
Drawing quickly about the stamp a stamp of the Queen with medals
on her coat.
I draw three arrows
pointing towards her medals
Dear
it's not addressed to me it's to the next
door neighbour / his house is moth shaped.
He talks to the dog. Listens to the radio. Stares at his vegies.
My father talks to me of New Guinea / how
the dead bodies of soldiers blew up like bloated pigs
in the heat & the stink of the jungle / how
the burial party went out into the heat & the stink
of the jungle & stabbed the dead bodies in the guts
the guts
that squirted all over the faces of the burial party;
the party that my father was in.

He sits there talking
patting a cat / the eyes deep in his face
like rotten fish / he sits there talking
about the harbour's blue surface. I imagine small white
pyramids of sail
something I can grasp / truth
& misconception &
their relative juxtaposition.
Taxidermy suits
some people / not me.

My father his mind & the odd sock that goes missing
each fortnight carries a loaf of bread into my studio
& talks to me of New Guinea / I paint
the petrol's blue flame
all down the neck of a Buddhist monk. My father says
It looks like a snake hissing at a bushfire.

My father steps out into the
afternoon with his pain theory & it's
ultimatums. *I had no shoes when I was
a paperboy — during the depression I
scrubbed creamcans / went golf caddying
for the rich — I earnt a quid son.*

I
think of my only victory / clawing away at the earth
with a laborer's sunburnt body / digging
in the ground like a furious germ; my father smiling
at the numbers on a yellow paypacket.
I sit in my studio & paint the fungi I swim in / I choose
the dreams I want to symbolise / my father says
Leave the dream alone / it will analyse itself.
I watch his small body step into a large car / I watch
him drive further away.

A can of red house paint hits the floor
in my studio / splashes

all over my face
(thick blood for a moment)
all over the canvas
the red house paint.

My father said
*In world war two we used tommy guns.
Now it's all atomic.
Now it's all atomic.
He'd repeat
The gun is funny son.*

My father's car whirrs down the street like an out of tune violin.

ROBERT DRUMMOND

A SHOT OF WAR

while those disintegrated by exocet
are unable to be present,
mrs thatcher, well wrapped
against the 'killing' chill
by a several foot
thickness of photographers,
& 'fortified'
by the champagne-bubble-knowledge
that the war
was 'justified' politically
by being a success in general
with the british public
& in particular
had improved
her popularity,
in january 1983
visits the falkland islands,
lays wreaths on the ground
above
'the british war-loss'
& 'plays'
at being the one
to 'fire'
a military gun

a salon hair-do's blown to pieces
by the force of the falkland gales
which, earlier, pushed up those seas
through which, on which, & under which
particular, british, & argentinian,
soldiers, sailors, & de-planed airmen
were struggling, freezing, & dying,
& she 'jumps' like an ordinary
first-time-soldier
pushed back by the noise
& power of the gun

'kittenish'
behaviour drops from her
at this sound so 'like'
a shot of war

underground the
recovered, drowned, burned, shot,
blown up, or frozen
are unable to oblige
by 'doing it again'
for the publicity-picture

J. S. HARRY

YOUNG MICK, THE ALKY

And he is where
The likes of you and me can only stare

He's out on the ground
He got picked in the twenty
He wears a wine cask like an aqualung

He stands in the centre
With a compassion the size of the MCG

Any anything we say
Will only trivialize his position

'He's the Wild Man of West Footscray'
No, that's only a joke of a life

'He's the biggest pisspot out'
No, this is not the Guinness Book of Records

Or even this stuff -
'He's as sad as Christ'
He's the working-class Buddha'
No, he doesn't need this crap going on

He won't even like me writing this
Let's get off his back

MICHAEL GOODISON

POETRY 1983-1990

It is hard luck. Often now the '80's poets rattle their cages, roar at their captors. We, buy comparison, loll arrogantly on floating temples across the harbor towards Potts Point. Even the poet whose book we published has been silent; he thinks exposure will consume him. It is a luckless age; the writers are examining their portraits on gallery walls.

They are old faces
out of which many bland visions were born.
The '70's poets are all separated or divorced; their magnificent projections set them apart from their mates: true, that growth is a personal insight worrying the individual to despair, then, perhaps alienation. To this end—the realisation that the self is merely understanding what we are, people facing an ordinary day, cereal for breakfast, and a journey somewhere into the commonplace—is hard to accept. And see there, the '60's poets are rotting with neglect. Their self images have no cure for abandonment. I turn around and see a group of men in a bar— some relaxing with drinks, some playing cards, others drawing circles on wet tabletops beneath an air conditioner rattling blindly in its cradle. They talk of beneficiaries who will take them from their ruins. Publishers are in the pool room, sipping wine, *Cabernet*, *Brut*, watching them jostle in the dim light. They speak lightly of endeavour: language is going the way of all commence.

BARRY O'DONOHUE

FOUND

It was a day of finding, as sometimes happens,
And I found her again yesterday
Her laughter curling on the sea
Fast and turning like a dolphin's leap
You might easily miss if your eyes were dry.
Her hair was hidden too in the dark pine needles
Softer than lavender but piercing memory.

Then she stepped bloomed and bonneted
From a faded photograph
To dance on the windy grass
Skipping from childhood to death
And back again like a joyous haunting,
Her time-looped eyes drinking in the world
Curiously, eternally.

Her look touched us as she passed,
I was electrified. How could it be
From that other dimension?
But that regard was real enough and opened
Doorways in the mind.

You were there too, a guide,
Unlocking this time-machine
With keys fashioned of long loving
And with a hand that passes through mirrors.

So I had a guide of lithe and humorous mind
With a boy's heart that blazed
Like a near star through the mists of flesh.

It was a day of finding, as sometimes happens,
And I found you too and entered your pyramid of words
And knew why, within a rare geometry,
Lost blue-eyed kings marked with poems and images
Their journey through the underworld
So that they might be found again.

I found her again this morning
In a bathroom small and blue with rose floors.
She looked through a small window
And the soap slipped from my hand
And the tears and steam resounded with her image.
This time she will not leave my heart.
I have found out where she lives.

NADINE AMADIO

TWO POEMS FROM SELECTIVE AFFINITIES

Love and Daring

On the cliff, on a narrow ledge,
Sixty feet over the sea
The ospreys have built their nest.
They have no enemy

But their instinct is to be private,
No stranger will take their fort.
Launched, they are in full flight,
And so their chicks are taught,

Fly, or else fail, and learn
There is one enemy
Closing the wings of a bird.
Death is gravity.

The nest of dry ropes
Of the creeper that hangs from the stone
Has a little wall to hold
The eggs in the nest alone,

But what, later, of the chicks
When the parents are away
Hunting the wave-thrashed cliffs,
With the wind to lead them astray,

Whispering in downy wings?
They know about the edge, to pause,
Not try to fly, nor swim
The air with their thin claws.

But one day it is time,
And no time for turning back,
It is done, they are flying,
It is only fear they lack.

Love and Life and Death

All day in the scalding light the salt yearns for the sky.
Washed full of trembling air, the lake is hard and dry.

Brumbies drumming on the salt-pans are the desert's only sound.
High clouds make nonchalant gestures, horsetails in the wind.

Love still has something of the sea, but this salt lake
Is below the level of the sea, no waves nor hearts break.

Months of lazy wandering away, the Queensland rain
Sends slow rivers lapping inland westward down

The gentlest sloping channels to the heart, not ocean-
ward to be lost in salt, but to find in salt the first motion

Of life reborn. Frogs and yabbies and fish descending
The fresh flood meet the brumbies, and pelicans landing

Along the line of waves over the vanished salt.
The moist exploring fingers of the rivers curl and halt.

The desert is touched to the heart and the mirage has become real.
Where light struck bone the sun is now jovial.

New colours have arrived, by the red sandhills a rush of green.

Come back in a year. The pure desert has become unclean.

Bordered with stinking fish, the lake-sea is shrinking
To a pond, and the salt is sidling out of the water and strangling

The panting frogs. The easy pelicans are too fat to fly
But will soon depart, in dwindling circles pinpointing the sky.

It seems those other rivers were not lost in the sea,
But replenishing, still circulating endlessly

Over its mysterious fertile floor, while the salt-lake gazes
At the sky all the white day through the veils of its mirages.

GEOFFREY DUTTON

At school they'd always thought that he should do history at university. He had the feel, he remembered the dates (which is History, or historiography, at least). He'd (Ric, that is) shown also a certain reverence for footnotes that would stand him in good stead. And, since his final year, teacher Vale was also writing history: of a suburb, then the two notions of history, dates and key figures, intertwined.

They also liked Australian football. A scholarship followed.

Ric was less certain about history. Was it always to be dates and the analysis of the Delian tribute list? Ric felt he was being trained but didn't know for what. There'd been a recent film, a kids' adventure story, about heroic archaeologists, but that was only fiction. And his story was clearly fictionless. You found, first the reference, then the artefact; finally (Ph.D somewhere in the middle) you found living people.

So, in '81: a kibbutz. Is Raya making history? Does the capital letter disappear when you're making love? Luckily it does, because history is pragmatic and value free.

Though not for Raya.

White against gold
Bleached sand against the clay
The village waits . . .

Raya had several advantages: one of which was that she lived History out, saw it through. She didn't need the props that Ric brought along.

Why bother to be a marxist? Didn't he say that the pianist was not a worker but the composer *was* . . . or something? But composers have air raid shelters. Their piano isn't vulnerable to any degree . . . well, is it?

Ric remembers that the Russians used something

called an organ against the Germans. Pipes in ranks, laying it on the nazis. Wagner blown up by Rachmaninoff, or some Armenian.

Meanwhile, Raya, who knows what it is to colonise the desert, licks at love with her historian.

What is

that thing called . . . history? Not a vehicle you can shoot from. They know that. Ric starts writing a small mono

tonous history of the kibbutz, he treads warily, a gentile in a land where Goy

a has already had enough to sketch for a thousand notebooks. Suddenly it seems silly explaining about Whitlam and all that. Raya feigns interest, but what the hell, what did it matter apart from reactivating a few frankenstein monsters to clank about and spill their Hunter Valley Chablis.

Still, he'll try a trip to the archives in Tel Aviv.

And suddenly, while Ric's away, the notes are torn up by bullets, the soft leak of broken bottles and bleeding.

But a Ph.D goes on digging. He once appropriated the walled fortifications of the fifth century B.C. Why not these newer ones?

A bar is necessary to sort out the time/lag.

Raya has made two mistakes: one she is in love with Ric.

Australia, darling, seems a world away . . . who cares, you seem to know already, what it's like to live hard. But Ric knows that Rupert Brooke would have had a better answer to that one.

And I love what you are doing, digging us out.

I'm not digging anybody out. You were always there. Anyway, I needed the bones, the pots for my thesis, so . . . ?

It goes that Raya feels she is the less honest, staying in

the kibbutz, knowing the uzi. But where, anyway, is Australia?

In Tel Aviv Ric met Anna and Joel. Both captains, both crinkling and lovely. Why should they give a damn about history?

Joel won't mind, sweet. He knows what I do. Even when . . . But tell me, is Australia really all desert like this? And she sucks him dryer than grit.

Dear Dr Swift,

I have begun my oral history, finally. I suspect I've done with Tarzan's Grip, brushes and old pots. I'll send on the first draft of KIBBUTZIM 1956 . . . in a week or so.

And still the oral lessons go on, drier postcards following:

Dad,

Glad you've packed it in. Bet the Royal Melbourne is a lot greener than all those memos. All my love to mum.

Can you be more desiccated than that? Wet and dry. Tel Aviv and Anna are sending him away. Joel back from some obscure detail, they drive down to see Raya. That day the Omans were not good.

But still, the telegrams of loving keep coming. Ric and Raya and the rest go to the dig but a minor war has erupted*. Ric knows that the pottery is there. But when big Joel falls, and all that first year medical student study material leaks out, he lies down, like the rest, and watches the reeling wires of bullets move slowly overhead.

O fons Bandusiae
Splendidior vitro

being totally inappropriate springs into his mind as blood jets from Anna, dancing, as her body cannot escape the mental intrusion. By dawn there will be no bodies, no casualties indeed. What price a Ph.D in archaeological evidence? There'll be no evidence here. Just moister sand until the sun comes up. Ric knows, suddenly, that between theory and knowledge there is no awful and deadly gap.

*courtesy A.A.P., Agence France, Reuter.

To the archaeologist there are only the dead (we call them artefacts). But there is no pottery here: just the bleaching of blood.

In a room in the dodgy part of Tel Aviv they lie. Joel and Anna had once been making love not far from here. Why deny it?

But for an Australian boy who remembers the days in Acland Street, or the salaried moments in Double Bay, what do you do? Raya looks at Anna, biting her upper lip. Heading for that clever nose.

Ric thinks of sociology now, because At least I'm dealing with the living, not talking about the dead ones. And at least I can talk to them, and get down the answers.

Raya answers with a few scribbled lines:

Some die in the sand,
Dreaming of Chelsea or Rome,
Some fell and stayed, thinking of lovers

But the saddest
stories
were of the living
Knowing they would take up careers,
have business lunches,
and . . .

What the fuck does that mean, Ric interrogating, the Australian rampant . . . then reading again, becomes a critic. The first few lines do it all. Excluding him, finally.

But later, and the scene is one you'd like: a diesel Landrover moves back into deserted but archaeologically rich territory. Ric, with his old inch rulers and Raya with her ideology: bombs and shells are waiting for them. Tough. But in retaliation Ric will turn to fiction, all histories dead. All mouths. He tells Raya (shyer than Anna).

I warned you that it was a short story.

So rewrite. You bastard. You . . . and Anna. I saw her face.

So had Ric. But after, always after the explosion.

Move the mine. The shells. This accident will stumble into a brief quiet in the battle zone. Raya forgives the dead. Ric has stopped writing about them.

But, whatever you do, the skulls will outlive the pottery.

JOHN MORRISON **Some Thanks Delayed**

Some time ago I was invited to contribute to a series of articles run by an educational magazine, articles in answer to the question: What books influenced you in your early development as a writer? In responding I gave the question a wide interpretation, starting out by explaining that early influences in my case were not, strictly speaking, certain books, but were my father, access to a well-stocked public library, and the literature-oriented periodical John O'London's Weekly, available then for a couple of pence. Only from that point did I go on to name the first books that inspired me with dreams of becoming a writer.*

It was an enjoyable exercise, one which I was reluctant to confine within the wordage limit imposed by the editor. Not so much because more could have been said about those early firings as that something should have been added about subsequent fuellings, fuellings without which the flames of literary aspirations could have flickered and gone out forever. I refer not to the continued influence of good reading, but to the words of encouragement which, all fortuitous and long after the Joseph Conrad explosion, came my way from a few notable Australians. A clap on the back from the mighty can be as stimulating to a young would-be writer as it can to an up-and-coming young athlete.

The first of those words of encouragement came from Dr J.C.V. Behan, then Warden of Trinity College, Melbourne University.

It was in the middle 1920s. I'd got myself a job with a contractor who was grading and otherwise 'making' the first mile or so of the Olinda-Monbulk road in the Dandenong Ranges. The section known as Mernda Road. At that time it was no more than a wide and deeply rutted track. There were few houses. Tourism, as it is known today, was in its infancy, most of the traffic being connected with Woolridge's

Nursery and with the Dulce Domum Hotel which was situated deep in the scrub well out from Olinda township.

As a pick-and-shovel laborer my main work was to break up the many outcrops of stone which obstructed the line of progress. The technique employed was as old as the pyramids: stoke fires on top of the boulders throughout the day, and then, late in the afternoon, go along with a horse-drawn Furphy tank and crack them with sudden dousings of cold water. Admittedly primitive, but the contractor, only a small operator, had evidently worked out that it was cheaper than employing a licensed powder-monkey. It was also more laborious than it sounds, because in between stokings with firewood cut and dragged from the surrounding scrub I had to finish off the previous day's firings by digging out the fragments after further shattering them with a sledge-hammer.

Hard work, but I was as fit as a trout, and the job suited me for two very good reasons. Firstly, I was assured of a weekly wage for at least three months. I'd been baching in Sherbrooke with a mate (he was caretaker-gardener on the property which later was to become famous as "Burnham Beeches") and making a thin living at whatever I could pick up in day-work. But casual jobs also were not easy to come by, and it was precarious going even when supplemented by occasionally hiring out my tractable hack, to some visitor at Grendon or Sherbrooke Lodge, the two classy guest-houses.

Secondly, I was able to find accommodation right on the Mernda Road, accommodation which met the needs not only of the physical man and his tractable hack, but also those of the budding writer. An eccentric Englishwoman, a spinster rather past middle-age, who made her living going out as a versatile daily help, was only too pleased to let me throw my blankets on the floor of one of a conglomeration of unfinished rooms which she dreamed of one

*Educational Magazine (Victoria), Vol. 35, No. 2, 1978: "The Books that Drove me On".

day developing into another Grendon. She was the woman who became the character Miss Taft in my novel *Port of Call*, although I should add that the dramatic ending of my association with her in that book is, however plausible, pure fiction. She never talked about her background, but her speech indicated a good school, she knew her literature, and she was sympathetic to my ambition to become a writer. A lonely woman, she obviously welcomed my request for a place to doss down in for a few weeks. There was no problem in regard to food, because I was well able to look after myself, and all her own meals, except for a breakfast of coffee and toast to start the day, were provided wherever she happened to be working.

As for the budding writer, I was busy at the time on a the final polishing of a long story, almost a miniature novel, and saw the situation as an opportunity to work under better conditions than had existed in Sherbrooke. My bachelor mate used to get irritated by the tapping of the typewriter.

It was the typewriter that brought the budding writer to the notice of J.C.V. Behan.

Several times in the first week I'd seen a middle-aged couple strolling along the road. It was during the summer holiday season, and everything about them indicated that they were people of leisure from one of the weekend retreats which even then were beginning to appear along the by-roads of the Dandenongs. After so many years I retain only a vague image of the woman, but about the man there was an air of distinction, of authority indeed, that aroused in me an instinctive feeling that he was 'comfortably placed' for reasons which had nothing to do with accumulated wealth. Tall, lean, with the smooth relaxed walk of a man in good physical shape, sartorially casual but in excellent taste, and with a fine head, he would have drawn more than a second glance on any city street. Each time they passed there was a pleasant smile from the woman. No smile from the man, but there was a world of courtesy, an almost Papal benevolence, in the slowly raised hand and the dignified nod that went with it. I asked Miss Taft about him, and had a pleasant sense of vindication when she informed me that he was a big-wheel academic.

"That would be Doctor Behan. He's Warden of Trinity College. He and his wife have a little holiday home along the road. I look after it for them."

One morning the couple stopped, a short distance away to windward of the smoke, and stood for some minutes watching my operations with evident interest.

I believe they had a mind to come over and talk to me, but there was no real communication until the weekend, when, on the Saturday afternoon, I met them on my way back from Sherbrooke, where I'd been to fetch my typewriter. It was a standard office 'Monarch', bought second-hand in the days when typewriters were built like battleships, and the only way for me to transport it was on the back of my tractable hack. Held precariously before me on the pommel of the saddle, it turned out to be a more difficult undertaking than I'd anticipated. Not only because I had to proceed at a walking pace, but because I had to go the long way round by road through Sassafras and Olinda townships instead of taking the direct route via Kallista, Beagley's Bridge, and up the steep and badly rutted side of Hackett's Hill. It did, however, have the ultimate result of bringing me into proper contact with the Behans.

I met them head-on about a mile out from Olinda, and there was no mistaking their amused curiosity in the spectacle of a stone-breaking bush-head riding along a country road with a typewriter stuck on the saddle in front of him. Poor old Mac had sulked all the way from Sherbrooke, and with his drooping head and weary gait must have added a touch of the lugubrious. The Behans stopped while I was still some distance away and moved off to the edge of the road, eyes frankly fixed on the black oil-cloth cover with MONARCH still clearly blazoned in white across the front. I passed them almost within arms-length. With both hands fully occupied, a salutation from me was impossible, but I went on my way cheered by a crisp masculine voice wishing me a polite good-afternoon.

A couple of evenings later Miss Taft arrived home to tell me she'd been talking to Dr Behan and that he'd expressed a wish to meet me: "He thought the typewriter was for me, and was very interested when I told him about your writing. He's a very nice man. I think he's going to ask you to show him some of your work."

It was a rather awed young man who turned up at the Behans' cottage on the following evening, but I needn't have worried. Miss Taft must have done a good job in selling me, because the atmosphere was relaxing from the moment when a smiling Mrs Behan opened the door and led me into a small sitting-room, where the tall lean man of Papal benevolence was already on his feet waiting with outstretched hand to greet me.

What came of it? Nothing as a direct result, but very much indeed in a lift of the spirit, an infusion of

confidence and enthusiasm that had much to do with sustaining my tenacity in the following years. That particular novelette was destined never to be published, but the good Doctor was sufficiently impressed to take it with him when, some months later he went overseas on sabbatical leave: "I don't want to unduly raise your hopes, but I'd like to hear the opinion of a publisher friend of mine in London. In any event I urge you now never to give up writing. You do have talent." Words to that effect, anyway, and some sound advice on subject matter.

Apart from some further passing encounters with J.C.V.B. on the road, I met him only once again. That was when, long after the Olinda job finished, and in response to a message that came to me through Miss

Taft, I went down to Trinity College to retrieve my manuscript, along with the verdict of the London publisher: Not good enough, but full of promise.

To this day it's on my conscience that when, over twenty years later, my first novel was published, I didn't send an appropriately inscribed copy to Sir John Behan, as he was by then. I did think of doing so, but was inhibited by a feeling that it would be an intrusion on an important person. I was wrong, of course. The story is told against the background of the early stages in the encroachment of suburbia on the Dandenong Ranges, a process which the good man must have watched with a sad heart from "Silvermist", his little retreat on the crest of Hackett's Hill.

ONLY ABOUT MY BOOKS

You won't worry about me buried
in my books' soliloquys. Seeing
the beautiful shells vacated by
their fish, wave-tumbled on the
ocean beach persuades me always
beauty is new, is young, cannot
endure desertion; quickly, as a
shell destructs to rub and dull
on the illimitable sands, shape
with the grains. This is all in
a library, this anonymity: this
book never to be taken down and
re-read. No reference to ME has
been intended; only to my books

JOHN BLIGHT

DON GRANT **To Know Ourselves:
Canada and Australia**

Before we came we were told that the favorite conversation topic of Canadians was the weather. Having now experienced part of a Canadian winter, I can understand why. But even more than the weather, I suspect, Canadians like to talk about themselves, not as individuals, but as a people--what it means to be Canadian.

One morning I was listening to a talk-back programme on C.B.C. radio. On this occasion the comment by Canadians listening was not impressively informed, but the topic was close to their hearts figuratively, and to their border geographically, and nothing pricks Canadian reserve quite so sharply as that combination. The question for discussion was, "How are Americans different from Canadians?" Canadians, of course, are not Americans. That term is used by them to describe the people who live south of their border, who send them "acid rain", Macdonald's, and un-Canadian television program, but who (regrettably!) also own Florida in which fortunate Canadians may escape the winter.

The answers given by callers to the question did not surprise this Australian visitor, who had spent the last five months looking at how Canadians study themselves. "Americans seek an individual solution to their problems," listeners were informed, "whereas Canadians seek a corporate solution." "Canadians are wary of strangers, more suspicious of visitors than are Americans." "Americans abroad act as if they own the host country; Canadians act as guests." "Americans assume that everyone else in the world wants to be an American; Canadians are sometimes surprised that foreigners should wish to become Canadians." "Americans are more confident than are Canadians." "Americans know who they are; Canadians are still not sure, which is why they constantly seek answers to questions such as the one we are discussing--Americans would not even think to ask such a question."

I wonder if Australians ask the question any longer? Overland's banner still proclaims that its bias is Australian; presumably its editor knows what it means for something to be Australian. But apart from those of our literary critics who still participate in the search for identity in Australian literature with the same fervor that I, as a boy, joined the search for the golden boomerang in a radio serial, how many Australians are now asking, "Who are we?", "Are we different from other people?", "Does the Australian experience have something unique to offer the world?, or even "What's it matter anyway?"

I thought it mattered a few years ago when we succeeded in establishing, as part of the Bachelor of Arts degree at the Western Australian Institute of Technology, the first major course in Australian studies in any tertiary institution in Australia. In the following ten years there were very few successors. WAIT's Centre for Australian Studies is one of only two or three in Australia, and abroad there are very few centres for Australian studies, the most important being the one recently established with Australian government support at the University of London in association with the Institute of Commonwealth Studies.

It would be easy to say that the apparent lack of interest in Australian studies can be explained historically in terms of Australians' general lack of interest in themselves, at least so far as that is reflected in the courses taught by Australian universities. After all no Australian university introduced a full course in Australian history until the 1940s, or in Australian literature until the 1950s. Perhaps it means nothing to Australians that universities in Canada were teaching courses in Canadian history in the 1890s, that Stanford University in California taught the first course in Australian history in 1907-08, that in 1982 about twenty institutions in the United States offered Ph.D.

programs in American studies, that in the same year twenty nine institutions in Canada had formal undergraduate Canadian studies programs, and that in 1978 courses dealing in whole or in part with Canada were offered by about 420 overseas universities, involving some 2,800 staff and 20,000 students.

But that explanation will not do. The general lack of interest until quite recently by our universities in studies Australian, and still today in Australian studies, does not, I believe, reflect a similar lack of interest by most Australians. To support my belief I need turn only to the pages of magazines such as *Meanjin*, *Overland* and *Westerly*, which for more than the last quarter century have been concerned, consistently and bravely, with the study of Australia. Eighty years ago Joseph Furphy proudly described his novel *Such is Life* as "offensively" Australian! Before and after Furphy, from W.C. Wentworth to Bruce Dawe, other Australian writers have been both students of and guides to their own country. So too have been our painters, and the list could go on, But most important, for me, has been the enthusiasm and commitment of Australian students when given the opportunity to study their own history, literature, geography, art--their culture and their heritage--to engage in other words in Australian studies.

So, after a decade of teaching Australian studies in an Australian tertiary education environment, not hostile now, no longer even scornful, indifferent and benignly amused perhaps, I still thought those questions about being, feeling and identifying as Australian mattered. The opportunity came to examine how another people, comparable in many ways with Australians, were contemplating their navels. And so I went to Canada.

It soon became clear to me that the Canada I saw in 1982 was very much the result of agitation, conflict and self-analysis, strident in the sixties, working itself to compromises and conclusions in the seventies, and still giving the occasional belch in the eighties. I must add a qualification here. The Canada I was looking for was a restricted one: it was the Canadian perception of itself (Canadian studies) and, naturally I suppose, I searched most assiduously for this Canada in the education system.

The decade of the sixties was a special one for most Western countries, thanks mainly to the United States' Vietnam war. Canada was no exception, and today many Canadians tell you proudly that their country refused to become part of the U.S. war machine, indeed that Canada consistently sought an

active role of moderation and mediation. Others remember, nostalgically one cannot help thinking in the case of ageing university professors, their own participation in the underground which helped thousands of U.S. draft dodgers cross the border to the shelter and protection of Canada and in many cases to courses in Canadian universities. That some of these U.S. refugees later joined large numbers of their countrymen as academics appointed to the staff of Canadian universities was a contributing factor during the sixties and seventies of a surge of Canadian nationalism frequently linked with anti-Americanism.

Canadian nationalism in the sixties was not all negatively inspired. The international success of Expo '67 in Montreal was seen both as a symbol of Canadian independence, know-how and sophistication, and as a pointer to what could be achieved in the future. The Canadian economy was booming, and Canada was a world leader in some of the latest high technologies - nuclear power plants and the satellite industry, for example. But as always in Canada the shadow of the U.S. darkened the brightness of the domestic picture, especially as it was felt in three crucial areas: the economy, the media, and education. Today most Canadians would probably feel that so far as the economy and the media are concerned the U.S. shadow is even more foreboding. But the situation has changed in education. Welcome as the sparkling sunshine in a Canadian winter have been the results of two major inquiries, both originating in the sixties, into the Canadian education system, one at the elementary and secondary level, the other concerned with tertiary education, and both focusing directly on Canadian studies.

Compared with the second, the first study was modest indeed. It was the National History Project, a privately sponsored study in 1965-67 initiated by the members of the governing body of Trinity College, Port Hope, Ontario, under the direction of A.B. Hodgetts, and published in co-operation with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education under the title *What Culture? What Heritage?* Hodgetts described the National History Project as "a two-year fact-finding investigation into the teaching of Canadian history, social studies and civics in the elementary and secondary schools of all ten provinces." He was especially interested in "the influence of formal instruction in developing the feelings and attitudes of young Canadians toward their country and its problems, and the knowledge on which these attitudes are based." What the National History Project succeeded in doing, according to one observer, was "to hold the

mirror up, to let us see ourselves and see for ourselves.”

The picture seen in the mirror shocked Canadian educators and informed members of the wider community. The publication of *What Culture? What Heritage?* led directly to the establishment of the Canada Studies Foundation, a project whose aim was to improve the quality of Canadian studies in elementary and secondary schools across the nation. The Foundation took as its premise the report of the National History Project which argues that “the shortcomings of Canadian studies took on the dimensions of a national disgrace both for individual students who deserved a more rewarding learning experience and for Canadian society whose future was very much at stake.” Ten years after that publication, A.B. Hodgetts in association with Paul Gallagher, and with support of the Canada Studies Foundation, published another book, *Teaching Canada for the '80's* (1978).

In this book they pointed to the “tremendous surge in Canadian studies (in the past decade) and the experimental efforts of the Canada Foundation and many other groups.” But the authors were still far from happy with what had been achieved. There was a need, they wrote, “to redouble our efforts to find more effective ways of helping young Canadians to understand the country in which they live and whose future they will partially determine . . . The need now is to go beyond the broadening of the consciousness of Canadian teachers to work together across linguistic, cultural, and geographic barriers, beyond the design and development of new books and materials. The need now is for a co-operative and systematic nation-wide effort to improve the quality of studies of Canada in Canadian schools.”

The second study was commissioned in the early seventies as a result of pressures which had been mounting through the sixties, especially in the Canadian university community. Numerous articles and books had pointed to the need for more attention to Canadian circumstances in the curriculum of the country's universities. Public meetings had also been held in many parts of the country and committees had been established in some communities to discuss the state of Canadian studies.

Finally on 28 June 1972, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada appointed the Commission on Canadian Studies “to study, report and make recommendations upon the state of teaching and research in various fields of study relating to Canada at Canadian universities.” In October 1975 the first two volumes of a projected

four-volume report were released. The effect of the report (popularly known as the Symons Report) on the university curriculum has been significant. By expanding its terms of reference, the Commission on Canadian Studies was able also to explore areas of Canadian studies and make recommendations in fields outside Canadian universities, for example in Science and Technology, the Professions, the Community Colleges, and Canadian Studies Abroad.

Tom Symons, the Commissioner, said recently that “the first task of the Commission was to suggest why it was important for a reasonable amount of attention to be devoted to their own country by Canadians . . . We found there was a tremendous doubt about whether it was academically appropriate or worthwhile or legitimate or dignified for scholars and teachers to pay attention to Canadian questions. Also there was just downright hostility or disdain—a kind of academic or intellectual snobbery: something that's Canadian is small potatoes, second-rate almost by definition.”

Chapter 2 of the Symons report is titled, “To Know Ourselves: The Rationale for Canadian Studies.” The chapter seeks answers to the question which was fundamental to the whole enquiry: “Why be concerned with Canadian studies?” The Commission found many answers to the question. I shall give only one here, but it is a telling answer and one which I suggest, when translated into Australian terms, might also be a starting point along the way to an answer to the questions I posed at the beginning of this article and the additional one, “Why be concerned with Australian studies?”

The most valid and compelling argument for Canadian studies is the importance of self-knowledge, the need to know and to understand ourselves: who we are; where we are in time and space; where we have been; where we are going; what we possess; what our responsibilities are to ourselves and to others.

But before the quest for such knowledge can begin, an individual or a collectivity must first be conscious of being Canadian. Unless Canadians recognize their distinctiveness in time and place, and are sufficiently interested in themselves and in their society and country, what motivation is there for self-study?

The Symons report, like the report of the National History Project seven years earlier, held up a mirror in which Canadians could see of what little importance they regarded the study of their own

society. "There are few other countries in the world," the Commission reported, "with a developed post-secondary educational system that pay so little attention to the study of their own culture, problems and circumstances in the university curriculum." Another of the Commission's conclusions was that "the general domestic neglect of Canadian studies . . . has been paralleled by a neglect of Canadian studies abroad . . . It is little wonder then, that our image abroad is vague, when it is not a complete distortion."

Altogether the Commission on Canadian Studies made some one thousand general and three hundred specific recommendations aimed at improving the state of Canadian studies. Five years after the Symons report was released, Canada's Department of the Secretary of State commissioned another study to document the impact of the Symons Report. This study by James E. Page was published as *Reflections on the Symons Report: The State of Canadian Studies in 1980*. In many ways Page's *Reflections* is as valuable to the student of Canadian studies as is the Symons report itself. Page concludes as follows:

The findings reported here document the massive response to the Commission's report and give substance to the view that the Commission has had, and is having, a profound impact on many aspects of teaching, research and publication about Canada. Certainly no other commission on educational matters has elicited such broad public interest . . . There is still much to be done to make Canadian studies healthy . . . Canadian studies will continue to develop only if we make a commitment to know and to understand Canada.

It's time to return home. Do we Australians want Australian studies to develop at all? I was able to inform Tom Symons that there is certainly one other country in the world with a developed post-secondary educational system that pays far less attention than does Canada to the study of its own culture, problems and circumstances in the university curriculum. Does this mean that we Australians are not particularly concerned with those things Symons mentioned in the Canadian context: our distinctiveness in time and place, who we are, where we have been, where we are going, what we possess, what our responsibilities are to ourselves and to others?

On almost every count it could be demonstrated that Australians are doing less in Australian studies, at home and abroad, than Canadians are doing in

Canadian studies. The Symons report on Canadian studies is entitled *To Know Ourselves*; the Commission believed that "the most valid and compelling argument for Canadian studies is the importance of self-knowledge." Yet as far as I know there has never been any suggestion in Australia for an enquiry into Australian studies.¹ Do we already know ourselves? Oddly enough many Canadians seem to think we do. "It's obvious," they said to me, "from those superb Australian films of the last few years." In particular they point to "Breaker Morant" and "Gallipoli" as displaying sturdy Australian independence and self-awareness as well, of course, as some defiance of British imperialism.

I suggest that the work of a few film-makers and that of some of our writers and magazine editors is the work of a minority, albeit a valiant one, attempting to move towards some understanding of Australia's "distinctiveness in time and place." How can we even begin to know ourselves as a people when much the same situation exists in Australian universities today as was described by historian Geoffrey Serle ten years ago in the preface to his book *From Deserts the Prophets Come*?

I deplore the attitude of nearly all teachers in Arts faculties at universities who happily tolerate a situation in which their graduates depart without more than a nodding acquaintance with the life and work of one or two of Australia's best writers and painters, and without having read or even heard of the major works of scholarship which have been written around them. And most of these graduates become teachers! In this, as in other fields, the universities are still too preoccupied with their great task of transmitting the world's learning and are paying inadequate attention to their additional duty to study the immediate civilization to which they belong.

The time is long overdue for a major inquiry into all aspects of Australian studies.

¹ Editor's note: Since this article was written, the Australian Bicentennial Authority has announced that it is considering an inquiry into Australian studies throughout the education system.

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NAOMI MITCHISON **Endangered Species**

K.G., as he was mostly called, was back in the city. His tour had been rather a success, the villages friendly. A fresh tiger skin for sale had been spotted; this had been traced back to the sportsman-poacher who had shot it and all the existing Indian law had been brought to bear, without compromise. It was made abundantly clear that it does not pay to shoot tigers. There had also been words overheard and brought to his ears. A back lane had been pin-pointed with a finger flip and a young tiger had been found shut into a narrow barred cage in a court-yard.

It had not been totally easy to get the cage moved, even when the tiger was duly tranquillised, but between cash and threats it had been carried to the edge of cultivation. K.G. had stood by with his rifle, just in case, but, when the young tiger woke and stretched and found the bars gone, it had disappeared into the jungle in two splendid bounds. J.G. wished now he had taken his camera instead of the gun, but if he had could he have induced the locals to lift the cage? Now he must find out which zoo - or possibly, in India, a private owner - had offered how much. Stupid when tigers breed so easily in captivity. But people are stupid. Breeding like tigers. No thought.

K.G. enjoyed walking, even in the city. He took his usual short cut to the office: a lane jammed with sellers of grain, meal, pulses, spices, weighed out for bargainers into screws of newspaper, next to them cloth folded or hanging, nails, tinselled marigold garlands, tin mugs and brown cooking pots, bicycle tyres, cigarettes, kettles, sweets, cheap Japanese enamel ware, bangles, bamboo ladders, anything and everything one might but didn't want spilling out of the dark little shops, to be peered at, handled, tasted, praised and complained over, the din of voices and radios momentarily scattered by a honking bike, the exhaust stink mixing with spice smell. He stood back from it among the bargainers, avoided stepping on a pile of fruit skins, and took the shouting, scurrying

main road, the jam of buses and trucks and cycle taxis, back to his office. Always a rush hour in India.

He unlocked the door, switched on the fan, picked up a letter which blew gently off the top of the pile. To His Honour, Mr. Krishnan Gangajaram; he smiled, and then again smiled at his wife's photo and carefully dusted a little smudge off the glass; soon he would be at home with her. The whirr of the fan replaced the violent street noises, became too backgrounded to hear. The letter was a reassuring one about his special clause in the Nature Bill, soon to come up. He took up his report, re-read part, looked up across his desk: was it strong enough?

There was a photograph of a tiger on the wall across from his desk, a good enlargement from one he had taken from the hide with his new lens. Full face. He stared at it for a moment. It stared back. Yes, it was one of his very best photos. You don't always get the eyes like that. Advancing out of the frame, flickering with tiger color. The genuine thing. He blinked and it was still there. He could hear the heavy, snarling purr. The tiger. It was communicating.

"Sir," said the tiger, "They killed my wife, but it was you who saved my son. I am the Tiger Rajah. I wish to thank you."

"Please" said K.G. courteously, half rising from his desk. "It was the least I could do. Delighted, dear sir, that I could be of assistance."

The Tiger Rajah came nearer, the enormously powerful paw stretching out of the frame. But the claws retracted. It appeared also that there was a collar of thick, polished gold, whose jewel drops reflected tiger colors round his neck above the immense thrust of shoulder muscle. "I will give you a wish" said the Tiger Rajah. "Do you wish for success in your work?"

"Well, I do not want to appear boastful," said K.G. "but I believe I am already successful in my work." No, he didn't want outside help!

"That is good", said the great tiger, "but would you care for a rich and supremely beautiful wife?"

"No, please!" said K.G. "I am married and although my wife was not rich or much interested in riches, and although she is not perhaps supremely beautiful to others, she is to me."

"Enough, enough", purred the Tiger Rajah, "some wish will come to you. I will wait." And he withdrew himself into the photograph and perhaps, thought K.G., perhaps the tiger had never stirred from it. Perhaps a wisp of sleep had come on him and he had remembered his grandmother's stories. Tiger Rajah and Cobra Rajah. Well, cobras were not yet an endangered species.

He flicked through the correspondence, drafted two letters to be typed, checked a report, making notes against some doubtful figures. If only people thought less about pleasing him and more about accuracy! Then he switched off, locked up, walked out. And now home; Vaneeta would be waiting. The light was beginning to tilt up towards the tree tops and balconies, but night was a little way off. He walked strongly, but constantly halted by little crowds, shopping, standing, talking, looking on. Better take a cycle taxi. He hated doing this, hated the kind of poverty that drove men to this ignominy, not even owning the wretched thing, but turning in their miserable takings. But home was waiting for him. He chose a terribly battered-looking one, the man on the cycle thin and drawn, the hood tattered. Even the pride of decorating it no longer there. In some cities they were at least painted up. Not here. Pressure on people all the time. Poor bloody India. Too many people.

A cycle taxi pushed past them, two women with shopping baskets and billowing saris. His own taxi was slowing down a little, the man's leg muscles bulging and contracting as he half stood on the pedals. Another came level with them, a thin boy pedalling two men sitting back with their slick attache cases, each of them twice his weight. K.G. hated having it all again, the noise, the horns, the thump and clatter, the harsh, always irritated, voices. They seemed to be stuck now at the back of a loaded lorry. If only he were on a jungle path with nothing but the faint scrape of leaves, the gentle converse of birds. There or home, only not in this sea of trucks, cars, taxis and cycle taxis, people, people. The street was further compressed between advertisement-covered buildings all densely crowded; at the back of the shops, room after room with couples copulating, with women cooking, talking, eating, giving

birth. I wish, he said, half aloud, there were fewer people.

It seemed to be a total traffic jam. Well, they were near the big crossing, the concrete fountain that never worked, the policemen in their raised box. Another corner and they would be there. After the crossing the crowds thinned out. Oh, better to walk! He paid off the man, got out and wriggled his way across to the pavement. There was a string of trucks, there were bullock carts, and only the bullocks not shouting, resting unmoved. But the people. Suddenly there were people running back from the corner, pushing, screaming. He had better see. They were terrified. He might be able to help, at least quiet them.

He had seen terrified faces before. He thought momentarily of a jungle fire, five years ago. But that terror was nothing to this. It was spreading, drivers and pedallers had jumped off, were running, women had dropped their baskets, were screeching inhumanly. In the small shops they were putting up their shutters. Twice he caught at someone running from the corner, asked but got no answer but a shudder. He pushed his way through them to the corner.

The Tiger Rajah leapt out of the sky into the street, the so empty street. No people. It was, yes, astonishing but not really alarming. Only take care, be calm, be wise. No people, only smashed trucks, taxis run off the road, no drivers. The Tiger Rajah said: "I have started on your wish. It was a wise one."

"But what have you done?" K.G. said, trying to keep his voice steady. "My Lord Tiger, where are all the people?"

"You wished for fewer people," said the tiger. "I agree. Now there are fewer people. But perhaps not more than a quarter lakh fewer. I shall continue."

K.G. looked down at the crossing where the policemen had stood, directing so much traffic. Nothing. "Where are all these people, Lord Tiger?"

Tiger Rajah gave a purring laugh and stretched out a paw. "I caught them" he said and K.G. noted with a certain interest the unshathing and sheathing of the talons.

"And then?"

"They are no more. None of them."

"But - "There was no blood. Nothing. "Where?"

"That I do not know. Not in India. Not on this earth. Where? That answer is not given to me. Come, my friend, I shall go elsewhere in the city. It is easy for me. Your wish shall be fulfilled."

"No!" said K.G. "This is not the way. I un-wish it.

If you do this once more I shall begin not to love tigers.”

“As you will, my friend. But see, it was their karma. Had it not been, how could I have fulfilled it?”

“I am not sure that I believe in karma,” said K.G. He pulled up an over-turned stool and sat down, his head in his hands.

The Tiger Rajah lay down beside him and looked up with eyes as green as still waters shadowing thick growth of paddy fields. Without thinking K.G. had reached out a hand, brown and smooth against white and orange fur, to pet the great tiger between his ears. “What, then, do you believe, my friend?” the Tiger asked.

“I suppose I believe in progress,” said K.G. Some small birds had come down and were pecking at the grain bubbling out of a sack in front of an empty shop. It was so quiet. The Tiger Rajah must even have silenced the loud-speakers. How soon would it be before the emptiness was filled up again?

“Progress is competition, I have heard,” said Tiger Rajah, “and that is a snatching of rupees from weak to strong. Does that make happiness?”

“Well, no, not always, but much happiness for those that ride on the back of progress.”

“That is to be like tigers.”

“Perhaps. But remember, my Lord, even tigers, even strong tigers in thick jungles, must be wary of traps and guns.”

“But also they have friends,” said the tiger and licked his hand; it was startlingly rough. “If there is progress you must run, run, and you will never catch it. It is many years, I think, that you have had progress in this city. Progress and competition, running after rupees. How few of those who were here before your wish were happy! Perhaps if I had found one truly happy I would have left him, who knows.”

“My Lord Tiger,” said K.G. “you may be partly right, but I am now very unhappy because I made a foolish wish, not understanding.”

“Do not be sad, my friend,” said the tiger, “it was your karma to have this wish, as it was their’s to be here. Karma is happiness because there is no more competition. No progress, you would say. The soul rests. And now, if my friend does not wish me to fulfil his wish, I will go.”

“But wait,” said K.G., “ask all your tigers to know my wardens and never to hurt them, and perhaps also you will turn the hearts of the State Legislature so that my clause in the Nature Bill will go through!”

“All shall be done, my friend,” said the Tiger Rajah and, raising a paw, he flipped at his golden collar and

then in one bound was far, far, with K.G. staring after him into the eye of the sun.

K.G. stooped and picked up the jewel from the collar. In his mind he was picturing it lying between Vaneeta’s breasts. He walked slowly away towards the real world. Beyond the crashed and empty buses, beyond silent streets. To people. In a while he found himself back in a street, a normal street of people and traffic and noise. Had it happened? No, it could not have happened. And then he saw a knot of men, more and more coming, discussing, gesticulating, shouting, already someone making a banner: Demand Government Protection! So, yes, it happened and suddenly it came to him that just possibly Vaneeta had been in that street. She did not usually do her shopping there, but if she had wanted something special for his homecoming and this thing had happened and there would be no more Vaneeta. He signalled wildly for a taxi, told him to hurry, hurry. They lived in a small modern flat with a balcony, you could see it from the street, her flowers but not herself. He paid, he ran, raced up the stairs, knocked, yes, it was all right, she was there in the kitchen, her voice, her smile, perhaps nothing had happened, it was all a dream. No, he had the jewel in his hand. “See,” he said, “I have a small thing for you.” She exclaimed over it, for it was very beautiful and she had so few jewels. Her father, a good man, had not been rich and as for herself and K.G., they were modern, not worrying too much about dowries and such. Ah look, it must surely be a ruby!

“But where did you get it?” she asked. He answered that a friend had given it to him. She frowned just a little, a sweet dear frown: “But what had you done for him?”

“Oh, nothing wrong,” said K.G. “I had helped his son over a small trouble. That was all.”

They sat together in the scent of the balcony flowers, looking up from the food into one another’s eyes, happy. She had found a ribbon and twisted it through one of the gold loops in the ruby’s surround, a master goldsmith’s work surely! Now it lay on her throat, moving with her breath, just as he had imagined it would. Setting off the delicate, so much loved, creamy brown of that kiss-soft skin. The tiger’s ruby tamed. Yes, all was well. She took the dishes through and switched on the radio.

He began to listen. Yes, and his skin tightened, yes, there had been a terrible disaster in the city. Scientific opinion definitely states a new type of offensive weapon, creating a vacuum. Two or three voices of announcers now, crossing one another.

Army chiefs deny - the Americans - many thousands totally disappeared. Prominent banker's empty car. Buses and trucks careered into one another, smashed but always empty, no corpses - the police say - the army - an industrial accident - the professor of Physics says, could have been a black hole loose in the planetary system - jumble, jumble - some who escaped babble about tigers - a disaster fund has been set up - widows and orphans - unheard of catastrophe.

So, it was true. It had happened. In reality. He had made it happen. Or had he? Surely not? Their karma as the tiger had said, that was it. If he could accept it.

But could she? He glanced at the ruby, the Tiger Rajah's parting gift. And in what world had it been before homing to Vaneeta's silk-smooth throat?

She had been listening too, standing beside him, starting down at the little black radio, horrified. At last she said: "I think we should give this very beautiful jewel to the disaster fund before I begin to love it too much" She put her hand to her throat, to break the small thread that held the gold loop. There, it snapped.

"Vaneeta" he said, "you are always right."

WITHOUT ROSES OR VIOLINS

i am embarrassed
i dont know how to begin

That nervous reporter, the poet, is brandied.
Take him to the hospital; feel the dance, sing.
The films from my bronco past are screening
to audiences apathetic & yawning.
Cafes fill with lovers
plotting over midnight wine.
The autumn breeze rustles from the sea,
scatters petals & menus at their feet,
enchants the love-sick
with promises of discovery or escape.
Gentle fingers caress pulsing necks.
Lips part & close on other, softer lips.
Time is valerian, drifting on waves.
The scene is setting for tomorrow.
There are no cameras, only slow revolving stars
who waltz between the silent props
of this warm set, leaving wordless traces
of a breath, a dream, a night.

BILL FEWER

Comment

Clive Faust writes:

John Tranter is over-capable of taking care of himself, so I won't adjudicate on the *justice* of the ad hominem remarks by Bruce Clunies Ross in his Article in *Overland* 92. The matter of the worth of the academy and the possibility of its compatibility with poetry is more fundamentally at issue.

Tranter has been accused --for all I know rightly -- of inadequacy in fulfilling such scholarly standards as competency in understanding theory, accuracy with facts, sophistication in categorisation. Whether there could be different standards a *poet* would need to fulfil is not canvassed, nor whether such standards would be compatible with scholarly ones, or --not necessarily the same -- ones of the academy. It is not obvious that any two such sets of standards would be identical or compatible.

Let me cite the moral problems I, as a poet, have with incorporation into the academy, and do some short examination of them. First, scholarship is, rightly, vehicular, hearkening to rules and conventions developed prior to the particular works as they arise, which then are assessable according to these rules. Secondly --a problem which, unlike the first, is for scholars as well -- the academy, as it has developed, is in vast organisations run by people who, whatever they might have been, are no longer scholars but administrators --by profession and act. The organisations have aims of their own, and there is no reason why such should happily and invariably coincide with those of scholarship.

The first. I have repeated three of the requirements Clunies Ross himself lists for the scholar, above. To them could be added thorough background, knowledge of the area, knowledge of the theories already relating the material in the background and foreground together. Caution and precision are the meta-qualities needed for guidance in all this. *Essentially you do not make mistakes.* There are standards scholarship is meant to attain to.

To attain standards, for a poet, is to repeat the words of the past. Or the music of the past. But we have it there already in the past; and *they meant it*. We, in repeating it, are *seeing* if we mean it. But this is the attitude of an onlooker. It is essentially *unserious* to be repeating somebody else's life: we should be living one of our own. And the consequence of such distancing from our own lives is the disgusting vice of *wit* in poetry. And I believe you know the sort of wit I mean. It is the scholar's job to distance himself, for an aseptic view. But then he is not *aping* the past, either.

"I am therefore even more surprised, "more Clunies Ross, that John Tranter repaid the hospitality of a university by using the opportunity it afforded him to attack, by means of insinuation and aspersion, people he refers to as 'academics' without, it appears, any shame that he was doing it in their own precincts, at the invitation of one of them."

Let me deny, for a start, that the academic concerned *did* invite Tranter there. Did she foot the bill? It was the organisation which she was authorised to represent that did the inviting. Personal attacks should not offend institutions. They're big enough and ugly enough to take care of themselves --and of you.

And the scholars in them should have, as their objective, truth, not the prestige and 'dignity' of the institution with which they identify themselves. And this gives the reason why they should *not* identify themselves with the institutions, even collectively. Over the long haul institutions will constrain into sufficient bending of the truth to accommodate their own needs --as *they* see them.

It's an old problem, which is always down the line when you get *paid* in searching for the truth. Sophists-in-little are in a way the most perfidious sophists of all. I am glad Tranter yet again exposes the

double jeopardy poets are in when funded by such institutions. The more he is *within* such institutions the better placed he is to make the warning. For of course the other leg of Clunies Ross's attack, following the normal pattern, would be: if you're not within such institutions you don't *really* know what's involved.

As a seeker after truth of any sort, one is obliged -- let us hope under life oath -- to know what such institutionalisation entails. To sit back in comfort being offended by rude words is not to demonstrate such knowledge of institutions. One should realise that they butter one's bread only on the understanding that one is force-feeding the cow. No moral reason why one should be bound by such a pact; but it is much easier to go quietly, or noisily, about it.

Bruce Clunies Ross replies:

I agree that the issue Clive Faust raises is important. It is therefore a pity he overlooks the numerous qualifications in which I concede some of the criticisms currently being levelled at universities. ("I have no wish to defend the many sins of modern educational institutions . . .", "Teaching poetry is not the best way of appreciating it . . .", ". . . a lot of what literary scholars do . . . has nothing to do with literary appreciation, an activity . . . some of them view with horror . . .", and it does not sound as if I was rushing to the defense of academic prestige and dignity, and it is surely enough to suggest that, far from identifying with them, I take a critical view of some of the activities which go on in universities under the guise of literary education.

Mr Faust, like Mr Tranter, seems to want an uncomplicated world where 'academics' and universities can be labelled and dismissed as irrelevant or hostile to poets and poetry. It is a comforting delusion, sustained by setting up the simplified definitions and characterisations of scholarship and universities which both, in their different ways, proclaim. Both, having discovered a fragment of evidence which confirms their prejudices, refuse to look for any more, particularly if it might upset their easy dualistic view of things. But useful argument can only proceed if the whole subject is examined, especially to see if it yields contradictory evidence. Both fail to do this in developing their arguments about the negative effects of teachers and universities on poetry and poets. Instead they resort to figments of their own imaginations, like Mr Faust's invention of an institution he calls 'the academy'. There is no such monster.

Universities are not all similar monolithic institutions. They are enormously varied in their histories, internal structures, cultural functions and relations with society, and these variations have been influenced, among other things, by the ideas and activities of their individual members. You do not have to belong to a university to find this out. Ideas still circulate and are valued and criticised in universities, which provide their members with scope for individual initiatives as to the work they do, how it is done and how made public, even when these initiatives run counter to other views and ideas in the university. Seminars involving participants from outside the university are one way in which university teachers try to develop or communicate their work, and there is a precise sense in which scholars who take such initiatives are responsible for the invitations to others to take part. Whether Dr Kirkby or someone else actually invited Mr Tranter I do not know, but to prove my point, let me hereby invite Mr Clive Faust, when he is in northern Europe, to come to Copenhagen University and talk on "Poetry and the University", provided he is prepared to accept a modest *honorarium* and gives me time to make the arrangements. His bread shall be buttered (thinly), even if he strangles the cow.

Mr Faust thinks it is important to know who finances these activities. If he makes enquiries he will discover that nowadays universities contribute very little to the funds for congresses. The money usually comes from a number of other sources, including the pockets of scholars, who pay to attend, and thus subsidise the fees of honored guest-speakers, who are sometimes poets.

One of the ways in which universities are more varied and flexible than Mr Tranter and Mr Faust allow is that, despite their institutional nature, they still harbor disinterested and scrupulous scholars whose activities as teachers (and poets, some of them) are useful in all sorts of ways to writers. For example, Mr Faust's speculations about poetry and wit probably owe something to the theoretical and critical writings of university scholars. Because some scholars still deserve respect, I object to the use of the labels 'academic' and 'academics' to dismiss everybody and everything associated with universities. It is a false oversimplification, dangerous because it saves the user from having to think.

I have never denied that universities also contain ruthless professionals who hope to advance their careers through gratuitous displays of cleverness, and

they are usually the noisiest. It is partly because both positive and negative aspects of Mr Tranter's case seem to have been influenced by some of this kind of work that I ventured to criticise it. Incidentally, my criticism was not directed against Mr Tranter, or his poetry, but specifically at his contribution to *The American Model*. Even on Mr Faust's definition of the art, that is not a poem. It is an argument presented to a symposium or debate, and thus subject to the same standards of reasoning which apply to all discussions among grown-ups. Mr Tranter's case is flawed. I pointed out why. Mr Faust does not challenge this, so I should not have to repeat myself.

I make no apology for my "*ad hominem* remarks". They were inspired by precisely the same procedure in all the contributions to *The American Model* and intended as counter examples to Mr Tranter's argument *ad hominem*. I thought that was obvious. If Mr Faust can bear another confession let me add that in the debate between literature and the universities I am usually to be found on the opposite side. I agree substantially with what Les Murray says about the matter in "Patronage in Australia" (*Australian Quarterly*, September, 1972; *The Peasant Mandarin*, St Lucia, 1978). There is something wrong with a world which rewards parasites better than poets. But just as there are university teachers and scholars who

give value for their hire, there are versifiers whose work does not entitle them to patronage. Refusing to see this by invoking starkly dualistic modes of argument not only conceals the efforts of the virtuous, but provides a spurious justification for the villains.

Peter Coleman writes:

Stuart Macintyre's review of *Quadrant*. *Twenty-five Years in Overland* 92 contains some errors. The only American-based organisation with which the Australian Association for Cultural Freedom ever had an "intimate" association was the now defunct Congress for Cultural Freedom. No cheque to the Association ever came direct from the United States. The Association's Secretary, Richard Krygier, was unaware of the C.I.A.'s role in secretly funding the Congress for Cultural Freedom. The idea of intelligence activities by members of the Congress or any of its associated groups is false.

The Congress for Cultural Freedom brought together most of the best people in the cultural world. That Richard Krygier established an affiliate in Australia is an achievement for which he should be, and is, honoured.

Peter Coleman is Editor of Quadrant.

WAITING FOR CONSENSUS

why's it on for young & old, dancing in th streets?

we voted for consensus today

why such inaction in th Senate?
why do th Senators sit & pass no laws?

because we voted for consensus today
they also serve who only sit & wait

following th form, that's what's important
it's Melbourne Cup Day, both ways on democracy

& cover your bets with consensus

why is our leader going it alone?

because our leader is a man in a million
after all, our leader has given up drinking
that mankind might drink, at least

that's th general consensus

why are th government & th members of th opposition
sitting so quietly in parliament?

because they are listening
to th massed voices chanting on th steps of th parliament
because those inside have jobs & those inside do not

& why are th lost legions digging up their banners?
who are these mad people marching to nowhere?
why are they wasting their breath
when they should obey th great god, Economy.

because they've got nothing left to lose, not even consensus
consensus was for those with something left to lose

ERIC BEACH

TRAIN, WIMMERA

(Sidney Nolan, 1943)

For reasons best known to itself, the eye begins its tour on the lower edge of the work, on which there are found two upended shirt-pockets and a cluster of three thick cigars. Believe it or not, a train has just passed between these two shirt-pockets. Already it is over the river, where we also see a few button-like trees and the brown patch of a paddock hung like an old tea-towel from the horizon. Due to the smoke belching from the engine, the artist will have to wash this paddock again and once more hang it out to dry.

But what is this? Only now do you notice that the last carriage on the skylarking train sports a harvest moon and the letter A. Like a man who prefers to believe that he is a boy in the moon, the painter is in the process of relearning the alphabet of the world. It is for this reason that we find him playing with chuff-chuff trains.

GARY CATALANO

FAR FROM HOME, THE BLOWER

Close off one end of the didgeridoo
and look down the other —
that's how black he is, this Kimberley man.
He has come to the school for the didgeridoo.
He wants to take it back to his cell;
but I cannot give him permission
immediately. This is a maximum security prison,
procedures must be observed. So
he is playing it now in the literacy room.
I tell the officers, He will be staying
for the afternoon. He is playing it now.
His eyes are closed and he is tapping
the plastic seat with his thumb-nail
as the pipe drones at his feet.
Abruptly, in a gesture of harmony,
he breaks his rhythm. *That lillgah*
he says. I do not understand.
Lillgah, he says, slowly, several times.
I cannot get it right. *Lillgah-like tuning.*
Making didgeridoo same as singer.
He plays again. A singer silent to me
is chanting in the channels of his ear.
He listens, trying to match his music
to the key and rhythm of the voice.
We always do this, start
with lillgah. If the singer not happy
with one blower, he get another.
Me a deep blower. He blows again. Indeed
the drone is deep. But I never knew
it could be otherwise. *Some singers are high.*
You know? Clear. He throws his head back,
taps his throat. And he sings — high, nasally,
rhythmic, in "language".

ANDREW LANSDOWN

ON LEROS

Beyond the village
on the headland used by the Navy with bunkers
we look down into clear sea:
rocks smooth as bubbles, water grass,
remains of a roadside shrine --
the detached crucifix distorts
as it breaks the waterline
embedded with shells and conglomerate.

Smell of herb and jessamine. Flies
with bright familiarity and dark quickness.
It will be hot again by ten
and the first bathers down by the pebbles
stretch out like grapes, ripening.

"The Chapels to the Virgin are built on sites
to Artemis", Adonis tells us,
whose cottage is built on land
bequeathed, by Leros convention,
to the eldest daughter.

We meet Adonis again, on his moped at the water.
"Hi Tony. What is the story of this affair?"—
a nod at the crenellated tower of a discarded mansion:
iron fence, trees, unpainted shutters, broken.
Tony shakes his head, a slow sigh. "An Egyptian millionaire,
his wife was famous at La Scala. When Dimitris my brother
played the violin he made concerts with the daughter."
Tony's face is rich leather. "They were both young."
"So?" "She ended in Athens: drink, addiction.
After the parents divorced the father neglected to pay taxes."
At one door a sign now reads: LEROS YACHT CLUB.
No boats in sight: are we too early? The old man squints.
One can learn nothing overnight. He crams our haversack
with tiny, ripe plums and a pair of gnarled, heavy lemons.
"Tony, your brother - in Australia we have heard him play
still, we have made music with him. We've heard his violin."
Tony is hard of hearing, and our accents perhaps are improbable.
Eucalypt trees line the walled garden. They are thought to be
Aegean.

Dimitris has written us, instructing,
and we must gather the local herb, thrimbi.
It is unique to Leros. Under gumtrees
that attract the moped-buzz of cicadas
we crush a purple bush. Flies. Mosquitoes.
Smell of sun-scraped gumleaves. Voices
across water. We look up.
On the opposite headland the white chapel
gleams in rock-coloured enclosures
of an ancient fortress. Last night
Adonis shook as he described
the three hundred German parachutists
who in 1943 were caught among eucalypts
just above this property. Three hundred
dangled till their bodies rotted.
His cottage, among his sister's olive trees
is fresh painted, gleaming. Grapes on the terrace
fill outwards ripening. When we first met
he said, "I am poor. I am old. I have nothing."

THOMAS SHAPCOTT

THE REBELS ARE OLDER NOW

The rebels are older now,
those who survived
the Passion and the Blood;

now, in chintzed chairs,
bound by books,
they tell their tales

of Terror and Imagination,
dilate on details to deny
the waste of tears;

recall the deeds
of those whose names
dwindle in the index.

Obscured by apparatus,
accounted for by footnote,
confounded by catalogue,

what course remains
for those whose days
distance into literature?

Thin fingers picking
at the arms of chintzed chairs,
eyes misting in memory,

who do not die
are victims of survival,
casualties of recension;

their exploits curious aberrations
absorbed by History:
the Literature of the Victor.

JOHN CROYSTON

PARA-DICE BOURGEOIS

Suntan oil Tax evasion
Switzerland is so Australian.

On the coast there, its expensive
(tasteful).
Drinks, advertised breezes off
the sea, "tropic" /
like an island cold beer bikini wax(ing lyrical)
like an island we dream gold sand
like an island the night lowers itself slow, gently
like a lover
with a back problem.

LES WICKS

FROM SEVEN QUOTATIONS

CHANCE CHIDES SONG'S SOURCE

Because lovers are spurning my every attempt to resuscitate.
Because a prolonged dip is not what I had in mind.
Because with a little stretch of the imagination we could all hang
by the same neck.

Because I've been so inclined for too long.
Because of an indiscretion in the innermost circle.
Because I'm confined to one hole.
Because they won't play dead in anything but their own language.

I'm lumping them indiscriminately together.
I'm swallowing it whole.
I'm choking on a conviction.
I'm muffing my line.
I'm squandering my communication.
I'm refusing to answer in kind.
I'm making my yes insufferable, my no untenable.

PHILIP HAMMIAL

MANGROVE COITAL

Through this ancient bubble world of swamp
(sliding like a croc: half-crested saurian
but rippleless ...)

this EYE

steaming bulbously
SUN

through dimness of warm black mud, jungle
or a faecal green

- is undulating towards its world end now —

where, glittering,
you wait:

through weed, the secretion spreads
it is egg - gravid oil from the vulva

coming to the sunk nostrils
thin as an eel's back & breasts pendulous

claws, tail, hair

(in the darkness)

piled up high, plastered smoothly with mud

I turning towards you,
you, from the Mangrove thickets, from

the black ripples, teeth curved & pointed
backwards into your throat

slowly, inch by inch, crawling towards me

(as a bed, seen through a hole of moon - blue
oxygen, with brass poles starting
to fluoresce —

among the wrecked cars of starlight on
a deserted lot

where the torn corner of a sheet whips furiously)

PETER LLOYD

CLUB MAD

1. EDUCATION

A holiday, sea (of course), the dead season just
a few drunk fisherman and the distant trudge of
winter waves like
tired feet or city traffic.

Screeching soldier birds spend daylight chasing
one pink galah. Two young men sit under trees discussing
"cunt" as pursuit continues above, motion
in useless circles.

Nearby two parents squint-eye bent shepherds of their
small, retarded child.
Two parents large laughs thick mouths life
by association their motel the cheap one beside
the country club. There's nightmares if we thought . . .

2. RELAXATION

It's hard work, this fun. Lie in bed late today, puzzle
time's slow passage discover
your watch has stopped.

3. GAMES

Storms have brought the sharks in close but it's cold and
nobody swims. The streets are quiet . . . a few
unhappy old fish like myself and
the predators of course, now at peace,
cruising,
waiting for the sun.

LES WICKS

YOU REALIZE

1.
The park's too crowded to see in. The light, covering people,
changes its aspect. Later, I look far up
over the trees, the air, the buildings,
and wish illusion would go
like they said. Traffic smirks through your brain
like a record. This is the 20th time today I haven't used stairs.
You feel a way through the grey air-conditioning.
2.
The band plays the nothing that we feel.
Your attention floats away, whistling between the carriages,
getting knocked and all this red lounging smoke
You know it again this week and it's stupid.
She puts her blue dress over this novel I'm reading.
The landlord says beadily We have 2 rules.
I look in the phone-book for another category,
but get lost on cars. God on Sunday
hovers through the cemetery. The islanders sing
like layers of cloud making Him look better.
3.
You won't be happy when concentration moves stars.
He's actually wired into one. They learn English and ask if it's turbulent.
Your private life fishes through your head's glassed tract.
She says It's more of a problem since I cut it.
He watches from his mission her quiet smoke blow like a sickle,
and his remains go up.
Luckily there's news. Bits of the world blow up.
Nostalgia pours through the speakers
when you come down the hill
into the demonstration's crowd of dreams, inappropriately pouring
like The Patty Duke Show. Behind a curtain, India disappears.
But you've got South America. You realize and realize.

GIG RYAN

DAVID WALKER **Knights Against Labor**

The Letters of Lionel Lindsay

The letters of Sir Lionel Lindsay in the Mitchell Library are a rich source for the historian, particularly the labor historian, interested in the process of political stereotyping. Sir Lionel was a particularly ready correspondent. "He was," Sir Robert Menzies maintained, "one of the last of the great race of writers, and he was a magnificent conversationalist." Moreover Lindsay had a reputation for speaking his mind without minding the consequences. Menzies noted that although Lindsay was a generous and affectionate man he still found time for a "certain amount of hearty intolerance and well-selected hatreds". This reputation for directness is evident in his letters, particularly as most of them were written to long-standing friends who deplored the Labor Party. The intimacy of his correspondence is evident in Lindsay's letters to Harold Wright. Theirs was a friendship which allowed them to "write on everything, without the faintest inhibition, a very rare happening."

The full strength of Lindsay's political views are particularly evident in the 1940s. At the beginning of that decade Sir Lionel Lindsay's political hero, Robert Gordon Menzies, resigned as Prime Minister and, after a "shameful" Labor interlude he returned to power as the leader of the newly formed Liberal Party. Lindsay's picture of political life in this period is strikingly at odds with the light-on-the-hill analysis of what Labor sought to achieve. The value of the record lies more in the tone and force of Lindsay's utterances than in their political content. He was a prejudiced by-stander who was neither close enough to Labor people nor disinterested enough in his observations to augment our knowledge of how Labor governed. But his letters do reveal a great deal about how Labor was received by a man who moved among an exclusively conservative circle of people, including the man who was to become Australia's longest serving Prime Minister.

Lionel Lindsay was the eldest son of Dr Robert

Lindsay and his wife Jane. He was born in Creswick, Victoria, five years before his better-known brother, Norman. The family background is recounted in Sir Lionel's autobiography, *Comedy of Life*, in various other Lindsay writings, including Norman's strife-ridden novel, *Redheap*. The adolescent hero of *Redheap*, Robert Piper, was based on Lionel Lindsay, a fact which led to an acrimonious exchange of letters between the two brothers and ultimate estrangement.

Boredom drove Lionel out of Creswick in the mid 1980s. "It has become usual," he wrote towards the end of his life, "to sneer at the troubles and pains of youth, as if they were assumed and fictitious, but they are relentless and real for any lad of independent spirit who wishes to clear the horizon of a country town." Lindsay's experience was similar to that of Robert Menzies, then a schoolboy in the small Victorian town of Jeparit. Lionel Lindsay moved to Melbourne, where he eked out a living selling hand-painted Christmas cards and advertisements until he found employment on the *Hawk*, a cocky but unprepossessing sporting journal. From the *Hawk* he moved through a succession of engagements with the journals of the day, including *Free Lance*, an offshoot of the *Bulletin*, and *The Clarion*, an ambitious publication organized by Randolph Bedford. All the while, Lionel was developing his skills as an artist with a special interest in etching. In this early phase of his career there is little to suggest that Lionel Lindsay had any Labor sympathies, although he would later claim that the Labor politicians of the 1940s lacked the integrity of Fisher and Hughes and that the working-man of the 1890s was a better type than his successors in the 1940s.

By 1940 Lionel Lindsay's hand-to-mouth bohemian days were well behind him. Now in his mid-sixties he was comfortably housed in one of Sydney's very best suburbs, Wahroonga, with his wife Jean. Towards the end of 1940 he learnt that Menzies had recommended him for a knighthood. After some

hesitation he agreed to accept the title, noting that this would place him alongside Sir Arthur Streeton and Sir John Longstaff. That Menzies made the offer added lustre to the tribute: "I liked Menzies from the first moment, and on every occasion since . . . I speak of an extraordinary man with a real reverence for the things that count." The year of that first meeting was 1937. The occasion: the founding of the Royal Academy of Arts, an institution created to wage holy war with the modernists. From that time until his death in 1961 Lionel Lindsay displayed an unwavering enthusiasm for Menzies, whom he judged to be a statesman, not a mere politician.

The flow of letters from Lionel Lindsay to Robert Menzies was one-sided as Lindsay had more time for letter-writing, but the two saw a good deal of each other and there can be no doubting their mutual respect. Lionel Lindsay also corresponded at length with Sir Harold Wright, Sir James McGregor and Sir Han Heysen. While there were no doubt differences of emphasis and involvement among these men, they were generally agreed that the past was more impressive than the present, that the modern world demanded statesmanship, and that Labor politics was one symptom of a decaying social order. At times Lionel Lindsay's opinions on these and related subjects degenerate into pure blimpishness. Consider this sentence from a letter written in 1956: "Everywhere the madness of politics affects the coloured races, who go Commo naturally, outbreeding the rabbit — and over-population diminishes the importance of the individual."

Before looking in more detail at Lindsay's response to Labor, some general observations are necessary. By the 1940s Lionel Lindsay was fighting a rearguard action against a world which he believed was becoming progressively more trivial, more incapable of art. His own reputation as a craftsman/etcher had been consolidated in the 1920s. It would appear that he was receiving good prices and firm orders for his work. In happier moments, the future looked auspicious. However the 1920s also brought new modernist challenges to the representational principles which Lindsay took to be the basis of good art. By the late twenties it was obvious that modernism was more than a silly fad: it was a major movement and one that Lindsay deplored with every fibre of his being. The height of his challenge in the late 1920s also coincided with the onset of the great depression, which confirmed, for those who needed it, that the world economy was in disarray. For Lionel Lindsay, the depression had the further effect of undermining the local art market. It would appear

that Lindsay did not experience again the same demand for his work as in the best years of the 1920s.

While there is nothing very 'representative' about Lionel Lindsay the man, his situation was far from unique. His secure material hold on the world had been shaken by the great depression and shattering changes in fashion which he could not and would not understand. It appeared that fewer and fewer people were taking his art and his views seriously, yet he found it impossible to concede that there was any real merit in modernism. These circumstances explain much of Lindsay's stridency and the value he placed on friendships which reaffirmed tried values; the virtues of Empire and the white races; the courtesy and reliability of the middle-class; the essential truth of representational art. Lindsay's letters reveal a desperate, often anguished, attempt to resist a despised social order. The political fortunes of Menzies were an immensely important part of this resistance, and Lindsay was delighted by Menzies' electoral successes from the late 1940s onwards. While it was a great comfort to have Menzies in power, Lindsay remained convinced that the modern world was in decline and that Menzies was a statesman besieged among mere politicians. Increasingly, he came to see himself as a "survivor" from another age, struggling to keep a dishonored tradition alive.

Aside from the grand themes of Lindsay's correspondence, there is the sheer force of his vituperative, gossipy charges against individual Labor leaders, their party and the movement they represented. The letters allow the historian to assume a fly-on-the-wall position, while a group of disgruntled but influential conservatives discuss the sins of the labor movement. While the picture has a certain consistency there are some fascinating shifts in opinion, notably in Lindsay's assessment of Russia from 1940 to the height of the Cold War in the mid-1950s, a theme to be resumed later.

After an extended stay overseas in the late 1920s, much of it spent in Spain, Lionel Lindsay returned to Sydney early in 1931. It was to be a vintage year for those hostile to Labor. The federal Labor Party was badly divided within itself and at war with Lang and his followers in New South Wales. By the end of the year the party had split and fallen from office. After some wire-pulling within non-Labor ranks, in which Robert Menzies was closely involved, Joseph Lyons became Prime Minister and leader of the newly created United Australia Party. In a letter to Harold Wright in London, Lindsay announced that he was hoping for a real crisis that would destroy the Labor Party. He looked to the growth of patriotic leagues

and mentioned the possibility of farmers coming down to Sydney to set the political house in order. Although he did not mention it by name, the New Guard also reassured Lindsay as a patriotic, anti-communist organization which could be relied upon to maintain essential services in the event of a crisis. Not surprisingly, Lang was the chief villain of the piece for Lindsay: "... a low rogue, a paranoid and one with the Communists who rule the state Labor caucus." Lindsay was no doubt delighted at the fall of the federal Labor government and the later dismissal of Lang by Governor Game.

Apart from these few telling observations about his hopes for 1931, Lindsay's surviving correspondence is patchy until we reach 1940, when the flow of letters to Harold Wright runs in a steady stream for the next twenty years. Politics was not the main purpose of these letters. Art, etching and the state of the art market were the main topics, but political comments kept intruding, as indeed they had to since Lindsay invariably expounded a world view with clear political implications. He made the same point himself in April 1941: "I regard the last 40 years of the chaos as a decline is not merely art values, but as an exposition of modern soul." Again: "this damn modernism has done as much harm to civilization as the socialists to Government". The decadent state of Modern Art now exercised Lindsay very much. He resigned from the Society of Artists over the issue, and was mentally preparing a riposte to the modernists which would later emerge as a small, and in the opinion of one reader, "wormy", book called *Addled Art*. This mood of discontent quickened Lindsay's appreciation of the old Bulletin and the artists of the 1890s. His letters of the 1940s are a classical example of a critic using a mythologized past to rebuke the paltriness of the present.

This distinction between a clear, authoritative and traditional view of the world and the muddle of modernism was now fixed in Lindsay's mind, along with the image of Menzies as an embattled statesman who, Lindsay once commented, knew men and loved Burke. Nevertheless, Lindsay feared that the Australian people were too ignorant to grasp Menzies' greatness, and that he would have to stay in England if his influence was to be felt to the full. It was at this time that Menzies was making overtures to the Labor Party about the need for a coalition government. Labor's refusal to co-operate made Lindsay hopping mad. It put the pettiness of the Labor Party beyond dispute, although he still found a kind word for John Curtin. On 26 August 1941, three days before

Menzies resigned as Prime Minister, Lindsay wrote:

We are worried about the Government . . .
One squirt of an independent holds the sword of Damocles—a single bloody vote that may put out the Govt. Instead of being proud of Menzies for his work and status Labour (I exempt Curtin who's a decent man) is determined on office. Dr Evatt a jumped up Smart Alec hopes to become Prime Minister.

When Labor achieved office in October 1941, Curtin became a less agreeable fellow, although he was never as severely criticised as "Smart Alec" Evatt or Chifley. By 1943 Lindsay simply regarded Curtin as a "weak" man, the tool of an unscrupulous, boorish party. Since "Labour is envious of the well-educated and exalts the moron", it was hardly an honor to lead the party. Reading Lindsay's letters from 1942 to Curtin's death in 1945 one is struck, not so much by the criticism of Curtin, but by the relatively temperate nature of Lindsay's attacks. Certainly, Labor was despicable and Curtin a weak leader, but this was to be expected. The tone of the letters changed dramatically in the post-war years. Chifley's Prime Ministership enraged Lindsay; he could not abide the notion of an engine driver as a Prime Minister, and the sharpening hostilities of the cold war drove him into more extremist positions.

For Lindsay, Chifley was a symbol of Australian democracy and a sign of the times. His Prime Ministership showed that a sudden inrush of unpalatable beliefs and practices had overwhelmed Australia, creating a society which Lindsay looked upon with disgust. Lindsay was unable to express this disgust through his art (as Louis Ferdinand Celine was able to do in the novel) for to have done so would have betrayed the poised, aristocratic, ordered world of his imagination. Yet Lindsay's letters reveal a cruel conflict between the poised, Menzian image of a craft-oriented society guided by a masterful rhetorician, and the disordant realities of an industrial democracy. His letters show how dramatically the old order was mythologized into a costume-drama history of sublime artist, while the new order became a nightmarish reality from which there could be no escape.

It is one thing to discover this demonology in Lindsay's letters, another to attribute similar responses to his most intimate friends. We are not justified in supposing that Menzies had the same lurid imaginings, although it is worth noting that contact with Menzies appeared to confirm many of Lindsay's beliefs, and that the two men shared a number of common

assumptions about the morality of the modern world and the virtues of the middle-class. Late in the 1940s Lindsay admitted that,

The Australia of today with its aeroplanes sciences and its machine mind has no real existence for me. The real Australia is that of the Early Bulletin, the awakening of the Australian mind to a consciousness of Australian character.

The best that could be hoped for in the present world was a convincing re-enactment of qualities possessed more fully by earlier generations. Menzies could only hold Lindsay's esteem so long as he remained a convincing replica of an Empire Statesman.

One of the costs of Lindsay's ahistorical, moralised version of the past was that he was never able to account for the forces he opposed in other than personally derogatory terms. There were no philosophical engagements with Labor principles, since he refused to acknowledge that they might exist. Labor was a disease, not a political party. Writing in 1949 he declared:

But what a farce the labour ideals (sic) are. Grouch and loaf. More races, dogs, football, all sorts of gambling devices . . . anything to distract the mob . . . I see that . . . the middle classes have given the world its best brains, and they are forced to the wall today.

According to this view, working-class culture had to be debased and vulgarised. And the "mob" that Lindsay alluded to with such ready disdain was never moved by reason, but by its basest instincts. He considered this a particularly Australian affliction, since Australian commonness was worse than other kinds. The Australian accent was particularly bad because, as he once claimed, it had been "let loose" by the Labor Party.

Chifley was the most blameworthy of the Labor leaders, the man who gave the keenest offence to Lindsay. He derived a pained relish from the (false) allegation that Chifley had deserted his engine at the height of the First World War. It was a story he repeated in separate letters to Harold Wright written soon after Chifley's death. He confided:

I'm nauseated with the fulsome praise of Chifley who was a good enough Party man but like De Valera a stubborn Irishman (3rd generation) who really never got over his "victimisation"

—He was an engine driver and during world war one left his engine and was degraded to cleaner. He was no statesman: a miser, very rich, never spent a bob on anything but who-done-its and tobacco.

His letter a week later repeated most of these charges, but he added that Chifley had hardly bothered to disguise his communist leanings towards the end of his life. Chifley's Irishness was a great disqualification in a politician, whereas Menzies' love of England, Churchill and the monarchy were, yet again, marks of the statesman. In this context, it comes as no surprise to learn that Lionel Lindsay was scandalised by the appointment as Governor-General in 1947 of McKell, "a racing and sporting magnate, an Australian and a former Labor premier". The issue was discussed in December 1946 at a gathering which included the host Sir James McDonald, Robert Menzies (and his son), Sir Frank Jordon, a high court judge, and Dr Waddell, a Sydney solicitor and onetime chairman of the Sydney Wool Selling Brokers and Director of Associated Newspapers Ltd. In February 1947 Lindsay confessed that he was "profoundly depressed" by the appointment, adding that Labor consisted of "Toughs, grafters, liars and cowards".

The comment came as the cold war was intensifying. Lindsay's outbursts against "commos" were becoming more frequent and sounding every day more like the cold war pronouncements of that "low rogue" Jack Lang. Lindsay had never had a good word to say for "commos", but his view on Russia had undergone a striking change, as one would expect, in the 1940s. January 1941:

How all our papers lied about Russia. Now that she has turned the tables on the Hun there'll be no namby-pamby forgiveness but inexorable justice dealt to the Nazis. I believe that Stalin and Molotov, both Russians, have had enough of the Jew Revolutionary World Communism and the liquidation of Trotski was a necessary prelude to this great Russian Unity.

These views foreshadowed a new appreciation of the advantages of a totalitarian system and its "inexorable justice". Democracy, by contrast, was weak and ineffectual. Lindsay was also determined to separate what was Russian and admirable from what was Jewish and therefore communist in the Russian system. By February 1943, Lindsay could write: "Russia is simply superb . . . Stalin is a great mind."

Lindsay was convinced that Russia had developed a stern, but efficient system of government which was altogether more admirable than the muddle of democracy. And it was characteristic of him to trace these strengths to the Russian "soul", an altogether more impressive phenomenon than its Australian counterpart. He was helped to this realisation by reading Chekhov's short stories in the early years of the war, an experience which undoubtedly helped him to see Russia as a society which answered his "preference for takes of the people and peasantry". He contrasted this agreeable folk image of Russia with the distasteful superficialities of "polite society", and decided that "common humanity" had always interested him more. It is clear from the correspondence that to be entirely acceptable "common humanity" had to be distant from Australia either in time, or geographically, for Lindsay found little to admire in the "common" Australian of his own day, especially when he became Prime Minister.

By mid-1945, Lindsay had lost much of his enthusiasm for Russia. The impact of communism on the labor movement began to trouble him; disparaging references to "Holy Russia" appeared more frequently in his letters. By the middle of 1946, Russia was "bullying and self-seeking" and, slightly later, out to "dominate and destroy European culture". There is nothing in the letters to show how Lindsay accommodated his previous views. It would appear that he simply abandoned them in favor of a new version of Russia which now emphasised negative features: imperialist ambitions, nasty political principles and a soul which, since Lindsay had last looked into it, had grown coarse and aggressive. In February 1947 Lindsay hailed the *Bulletin* as Australia's "only politically honest paper", since it was "very loyal to Britain and Anti-Russian". In July 1949, with the coal strike at its height, Lindsay advised Harold Wright of his solution to the Russian problem, although he knew that neither Attlee nor Chifley had the "guts" to act as he saw fit. He wanted to see Russia "wiped out completely".

Just as Lionel Lindsay wished to "wipe out" Russia, so did he approve all attempts to ban communism domestically. He was unequivocally in favor of banning the Communist Party and was eager for a victory in the referendum of 1951, but was uncertain of the outcome:

The Government has done no propaganda and all Bob's meetings have been packed with yowling Yahoos, though his wit, and ability to be heard by the public (over the air) always gets

his message through. Evatt has poisoned the wavering, sobbling middle-mob by lying about the Bill or pretending that they will lose all their liberties.

To Lindsay's disgust the referendum was defeated. The consequences outraged him:

Evatt's winning of the Cowardly No Vote has paralysed the Government which can only act under the Crimes Act. Australia could have been miles ahead but for Labour's support of Communism, not of course overtly but by defending it and by relying on its anti-Menzies Vote . . . When Bob Menzies called the decent Middle classes the Forgotten People he stated a great Truth — and a Gorilla workman gets a bigger salary than a brainy and capable man in any intellectual sphere.

It was central to Lionel Lindsay's whole philosophy of the modern world that the wrong people were becoming dominant. He was living in a dysgenic world, not a eugenic one as he would have preferred. The "Gorilla workman" was one symptom of the problem, Labor "ideals" another. The most distressing example of modern perversity was the growing dominance of Jewish people and Jewish "ideas", in particular communism and modernism in art. "Jewish hate", he once wrote, "was really the inspiration of Marx." As for modernism, it was, as far as Lindsay was concerned, almost entirely Jewish in inspiration. Indeed, a discussion of Lindsay's anti-communism can hardly avoid his hostility to modernism, since he considered both to be part of the same disease: "It (modernism) is exactly the same everywhere, for the malady is like Communism. True to type in Glasgow, Sydney or San Francisco . . ." And wherever the malady appeared, Jews were likely to be the germ carriers.

Lindsay's anti-semitism links him with P. R. Stephenson, author of *Foundations of Culture in Australia* and the main contributor to the *Publicist* and oddly, in view of their political differences, with Jack Lang in his phase as a cold warrior. In a letter to Lionel Lindsay, in which he thanked him for his subscription to the *Publicist*, Stephenson congratulated Lindsay on opposing the "jew invasion" of Australia's art world, a subject that recurred throughout the *Publicist*. While Lindsay obviously knew of the *Publicist* and no doubt approved many of its stands, he did not contribute to the journal, at least not in his own name. Stephenson's aggressive Australianism no

doubt annoyed Lindsay, a devoted anglophile.

Lindsay always appeared genuinely irritated at being called anti-semitic, although on the evidence of his letters and his pronouncements on modern art in *Saddled Art*, it is hard to see how he hoped to avoid the charge. He dismissed Freud as a "revengeful Jew", but Picasso (whom he referred to as Picassio for many years) was harder to evaluate: was he "cuckoo or just the shrewd Jew playing to the gallery?" In either case he disliked the theoretical sides of his work, believing that true understanding was too intuitive and random to be encompassed by a theory. What annoyed Lindsay more was that Jews stood apart from European culture and had no love of European past. Accordingly, they were always ready to embrace modernism because it was essentially destructive, a view of art Lindsay expressed in his own peculiarly pungent way towards the end of 1949.

The ferocious age of Picasso is that of a confirmed hater, the incarnate anarchist . . . Henry Moore started splendidly but for no reason that I can see except sex lunacy and lazy, theoretical pre-primitive fancies threw overboard all he knew to make monstrous bums and breasts and became infamously famous.

He later commented that ". . . a rabid hate of all past art and the lust to hurt and destroy are the basis of all Picasso's dismemberments and distortions".

Individualism was an integral part of the traditions Lindsay admired, and which he believed Jews were incapable of upholding. He was ready to believe that they were incapable of living on their own, believing, with Pio Baroja, that no Jew could be a Spanish conquistador or a Dr Livingstone, "a profound criticism". Echoes of this view recur throughout Lindsay's correspondence. In the worst days of the war, when Labor politics caused Lindsay so much irritation, he confessed that only the men of action who made up the RAAF and AIF were able to excite his admiration. Years later he still maintained that the root cause of the modern muddle was simply an inability to maintain "that iron discipline which upholds the man of action . . ." The loneliness of the great human beings and the heroism of men of action are touchstones to Lindsay's world. Menzies had the Livingstonian quality. He emerges from Lindsay's letters as a man spurned by the press, misunderstood by the people and cruelly distrusted by his own colleagues. He was the lonely leader of men, whereas Labor leaders were manipulated by their party and dominated by machine-made ideologies and the

mob. After listening to a "Wharfie" denounce Menzies in hateful and envious tones he averred that he had "recognised immediately . . . Chifley's master."

The individualist tradition was also under siege from other quarters. Again and again, Lindsay maintained that overpopulation had diminished the importance of the individual. Moreover, this condition had been worsened by the fact that the wrong types were doing all the breeding. In Australia, the "gorilla workman" was propagating his kind more speedily than the "decent middle-class", while in the wider world the white races were being overtaken by blacks and Asians. The essence of this belief was summarised in the single sentence quoted earlier in the article, and by Lindsay's view that his generation's worst fears about "the rising tide of colour" were coming to pass. Understandably these views grew more intense through the 1950s, with the admission of new African states to the British Commonwealth.

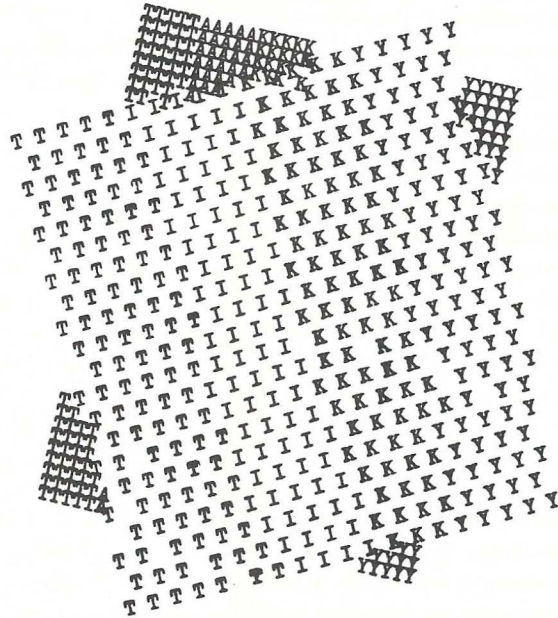
Though drab and despicable the fifties also produced some grand moments. Lindsay was thrilled by Menzies' handling of the Petrov affair, and never once questioned his motives. This whole episode, more than any other, underlies one of the qualities Menzies may have found attractive in Lindsay: his fierce loyalty to Robert Menzies. Menzies could open a letter from Lindsay or sit with him at a dinner party confident that he would receive generous praise. No niggling questions or motive or intention would arise unless the Labor Party became the topic of conversation, in which case Lindsay would growl his disapproval. Although old and infirm, Lionel Lindsay was given tickets to attend a hearing of the Petrov commission. An ardent follower of Menzies' radio broadcasts, he also listened "enthralled" for two hours as Menzies delivered his famous attack on Evatt. Lindsay's allegiance to Menzies is nowhere better displayed than in the way he described the speech to his old friend, Harold Wright:

Bob made one of his greatest speeches in tearing Evatt to rags and defending the three Judges and the Commission. If you could have heard him you would have been thrilled by his clear and utterly truthful account of the Petroff (sic) defection and his scathing denunciation of Evatt's Communistic affiliations . . . In riposte his wit scored a gold every shaft, when the mongrels yelped and he is never better than when attacked by the leftists.

The charge has been made against Menzies, most tellingly by Donald Horne, that he avoided the company of those who were critical of his performance, his politics or his personality. The relationship between Lionel Lindsay and Robert Menzies can hardly be adduced to prove the proposition, but it certainly supports it. There can be no doubt that in Lionel Lindsay Menzies found a relentless admirer.

More interesting, is the evidence the letters provide of the tone, style and content of a scabrous anti-Labor oral tradition which Lindsay virtually transcribes for his overseas friend, Harold Wright.

David Walker, a historian and author of Dream and Disillusion, teaches at the University of New South Wales.



DENISON DEASEY **The Puzzle of Roy Campbell**

At last a life of the great South African poet Roy Campbell is out, and we can hunt for the answers to the questions which have been so long unanswered.

I remember sitting in the old Mario's restaurant after the war, drinking a bottle of St Cora and listening to an anecdote told by Alister Kershaw. Campbell had been interviewed by some smart interviewer in London who put the question: Mr. Campbell, as a poet, what distinguishes you from ordinary men?" And the South African answered: "Nothing! Which is what distinguishes me from other poets." I liked that, and found it hard to reconcile with rumors of fascist sympathies and Campbell's involvement in the Spanish Civil War.

When Al reached England he and Geoff Dutton were welcomed by Roy with a big handshake and pints of that awful warm English beer Campbell, unlike most English intellectuals, thought it was great to be Australian, and a poet at that. After I had arranged with John Kirtley to take over my old Albion printing press, paper stocks, and type faces, and set Adrian Lawlor's long novel *Horned Capon* on the way to publication, I took off to England on the same hell-ship in which Al had made his five weeks journey.

I had never had any wish to go to England, but in 1947 we were forced to go there. The only way out of Australia was to accept a bottom-deck berth on a Ministry of Transport ship and land in England. You were then forced by currency controls, visas, food-rationing permits and whatever the bureaucrats could think up to enslave the post-war Brit, to remain there.

But there were a few Australians trying like myself to get to hell out of the fog, and there was Roy, sombrero, forked stick, wide grin and pint pot, in the

Peter Alexander: *Roy Campbell: A Critical Biography* (Oxford, \$38).

George somewhere near Oxford Circus. Here he started by apologizing for being something at the BBC: "I answered this letter telling me to report to the BBC man, and I thought they wanted a commissionaire to bow to the big shots. So I put on all me medals, and stood to attention when I walked in the Director's door. But they landed me as Director of Talks instead, you see."

"How do you manage it, Roy? "I asked the poet while he drained a pint pot without swallowing (fact.)

"Well, its easy, man, because I've got this good secretary and she reads all the scripts. Every tenth one she puts on my desk and we see it goes on the air. If you've got a talk of your own give it to me tomorrow and I'll do my best."

The price of a talk got Al across to Paris, where he met another poet and man of letters, Richard Aldington. Telling Aldington about the dreadful food rationing position in London, where Roy had a wife and two girls to support, brought a quick response: an enormous turkey was bought in the Latin Quarter and sent airmail to the Campbells for Christmas. Campbell's biographer Peter Alexander quotes Roy as saying that the turkey was the size of a baby Austin. I can hear Roy's voice adding, as he told the story at the pub, "No man, that's the truth, and I'll swear to it."

The fantasy and poetry of Roy's mind were mixed with extreme loyalty to his friends and their causes. I never heard Roy speak of fascism or drop an anti-semitic comment; yet I had been told he had been linked with fascism in Spain, and had even fought there on France's side.

Reading through the biography of Roy I searched line by line - and in vain - for a description of much an episode, which had earned Roy so much hostility from anti-Fascists in England. Puzzled, I turned back to the beginning of the book, to that section (which I usually skip) called "Acknowledgements". There I

found this statement by the biographer (who had Mary Campbell's help and approval of the work): "*Light on a Dark Horse* . . . contains a note informing readers that Campbell fought in the Spanish Civil War, and that during the Second World War he went with a crack fighting unit to Burma. These entirely false statements probably originated from Campbell himself".

So, having had reservations about Roy, or at least a degree of puzzlement, during many years, I now find that I need not have bothered: he was not a Falangist bravo at all.

Walking down Great Portland Street in those seedy post-war days, Roy would stop to greet old charwomen and broken-down flower-sellers, handing out some silver with some tangled reference to a past kindness they had done him: "He's me friend, man, you'll want to meet him," and in the George I would meet "me friend Dylan and me friend Jack."

Looking with respect at the gloomy figure of Dylan Thomas, I would rack my brains as to who Jack was: Jack Yeates was the only connection I could make with the arts, but after a few pints some rambling story of Roy's brought the light: he and Jack had once run a young men's boxing club together in pre-war London.

The London literary celebrities were not Roy's mates at the time; walking back from the pub it was disconcerting to hear Roy yell at a respectable citizen on the other side of Oxford Street: "Hey, there, Louis, give us a kiss now will you, man?" while the grey-suited MacNeice hurried on without a greeting. I admired MacNeice's work and, after Liam O'Flaherty, he was the man I would have now liked to meet. But the wounds of Roy's MacSpaunday satires had not healed, and so the biographer tells us the two poets had exchanged blows in the George, and MacNeice had landed one on Roy's nose, tapping the claret. Stirring scenes in dull London . . .

Disapproval of Campbell's personality and views led to neglect of his verse. Glancing back at John Lehmann's very influential *New Writing in Europe* (Penguin, 1940), I can find thirty-seven references to W.M. Auden, and none to Campbell. Spender (who was almost as much admired as Auden at the time) seems to have had second thoughts about Roy and his work, which in fact he admired: "the main reason why I never wrote about Campbell during the 1930s was Auden's very critical view of him as a poet." This revealing statement was made in 1958, after Roy's death.

Behind the Campbell with the injured hip, his poetry neglected, and tied to a desk-job in a city, was

the young athlete, boxer, horse-breaker and fisherman of the twenties and thirties. The legend of his life had been written outside austerity-ridden England, in the same Latin countries we had left Australia to seek.

But, of course, we couldn't get there, and I remember sitting in a basement café off Oxford Street (run by a Canadian, of course) with Albert Tucker as we racked our brains to answer the question: how was Albert to get across to the art galleries of Paris and how was I to reach the sun and sands of Provence?

When Aldington moved to a rented villa on the Mediterranean, he generously employed Alister Kershaw as secretary, and maddening letters came back postmarked Le Lavandou, describing the Mediterranean, unrationed food, and a careless way of life. Even Australia, with a large wool surplus, followed England's lead and refused permission to her nationals to travel in Europe, but I was finally granted thirty pounds (of my own money) to spend in France. This was only after production of medical certificates showing that a spark of sunshine might be good for a patient who had just had pleurisy and T.B.! What an epoch, as the French put it. Albert, taking the beast by the throat, packed his bags and left for Paris in the winter, saying he would sink or swim in the Seine.

Roy Campbell escaped, too, one summer and turned up with his wife and daughters on the Moorish Coast. Here was a different Campbell, chatting with cronies in Provencal slang, that large boxer's fist claspng a glass of pastis at the café-bar in the square. Aldington, in spite of his international celebrity as a writer, had no car, was struggling financially, and couldn't put the Campbells up at the villa. I starred as chauffeur with a second-hand car bought in England, ferrying the Campbells over to the villa for lunch. (The "large car" of Aldington's referred to by Alexander in this biography must be my own pre-war MG, stabled for a time in Aldington's empty garage.) As Aldington wrote every morning from six to twelve, and worked again in the evenings, no guests were invited for the evening soup.

One evening I drove over with Catha Aldington, a ten-year old English child attending a small French school, who loved to hear Roy's extraordinary mixture of English (with a Natal accent) and French (learned on the fishing boats or in the bull-rings). "And so, man," Roy was telling me within the space of two pastis at the bar, "so this big Frenchman was walking over to fight me yesterday because we hadn't paid the rent. Then I recognized him from years ago

when we both toured Nimes and Arles as boxers in a travelling circus: you can ask Mary and she'll back me up on it, - so he won't take a sou for the rent, will he Mum, and we can have another pastis on me!"

The village, 'Bormes of the Wattles', on a summer night in the 1950s, bouillabaisse when we were flush and fish soup when we weren't, and Roy living again the happy days when the girls were small, he worked as a fisherman at Martigues, and trouble with his tough French brother-in-law had not yet led to that fight: "The hardest fight I ever had, and he beat me."

When I read this biography I was looking for an answer: what had happened to that athletic Roy, the young successful poet who had boxed and laughed his way round the Midi?

The answer seemed to lie in their sudden flight from France when the English pound collapsed in the 1930s. They left their books and furniture behind them and went, of all places, to Spain. Their arrival in Barcelona before the Civil War coincided with an outbreak of violence in the streets, and Mary chose this time to become a convert-to Spanish Catholicism.

Even then, they found a small village house where they were comfortable, and off the beaten track, but Campbell's mother arrived from South Africa and decided this was not good enough for them. She removed the eldest girl to school in England (so dividing the family), and the Campbells rented a larger house in the dark Spanish mediaeval citadel of Toledo. Mary refused to move, even at the approach of the Civil War, and there, among the convents and monasteries, they stayed.

When the fighting began in 1936, they were in the middle of it, and Roy, frightened for their safety, put up a Union Jack, of all things! to claim neutrality, but "took it down hastily when it drew the fire of both sides. Later, in Spain, he had a fall which gave him serious and lasting hip trouble, involving arthritis and the end of his life as an athlete, horse-coper, fisherman, and would-be *torero*.

From these years of life in Spain came the unfortunate achievement of *Flowering Rifle*, written in praise of the Nationalist cause in Spain and finally dividing the poet from other eminent writers in England. But when his brother wrote from South Africa to ask him if he were now a Fascist, the poet denied it, writing a confused letter to explain his position.

Roy just did not have a political position, and as the biographer puts it, "he was a political simpleton". In conversation he would talk to me admiringly of his brother-in-law, the Martigues fisherman and Com-

munist, his friends in Spain included two Norwegians one Communist, one Nazi!, and it was a Communist mate again who helped the family to escape from Toledo under fire.

Campbell's marvellous poetry has been neglected, and his personal reputation has suffered gravely since the disaster of Spain and the Civil War. He was a great mate, loyal to his friends and especially to fellow-'colonials', dominated by fantasy and some Hellenic dream of physical glory. His biographer does justice to the poetry, and only seems to miss out on the essential gusto and flair of Roy in conversation, the fun it was to be with a man who despised convention and glittered in his talk on any subject.

One may hope that, in the next biography, more source-material will be available from Rob Lyle, the poet and friend who loyally sustained the Campbell family for years both in London and in Portugal. Much of the basic material on Toledo and Spain seems to be drawn from interviews with Mary Campbell and from her collection of memorabilia.

Roy was never in my view an *Anglo-Saxon* poet, but the accident of his birth was a windfall for readers of English. He was a poet of the "wet and the wilderness" of Hopkins, of dreary plains like the Camargue, which can fragment into a thousand pink mosaics when the flamingoes are disturbed. Zebras, wild horses, lonely islands and the veldt touched his imagination, and what he was doing in London, let alone Oxford (in his 'twenties) is beyond me. In one of his later poems he described how

I feel

The absent reins within my empty hand;
And ghostly spurs that jingle at my heel,
When limping down the Broadway or the Strand.

After dinner at a flat in Holland Park in 1950 or thereabouts, I watched an Australian academic provoke Roy to defend his feelings about religion. Out of courtesy to the lady who had cooked us a good dinner, Roy kept his hands on his knees and his temper under control. The language he was speaking was English, but as the powerful metaphors poured out, I was sure that he was thinking in Spanish. No Anglican since the Reformation has spoken with such strength about his Savior.

Whichever way Roy's life went, it seemed destined for conflict, and in the poem already quoted he developed the theme of the poet as fighter:

Pour down your songs of mingled wine and fire!
When raptures clash is when they best accord.

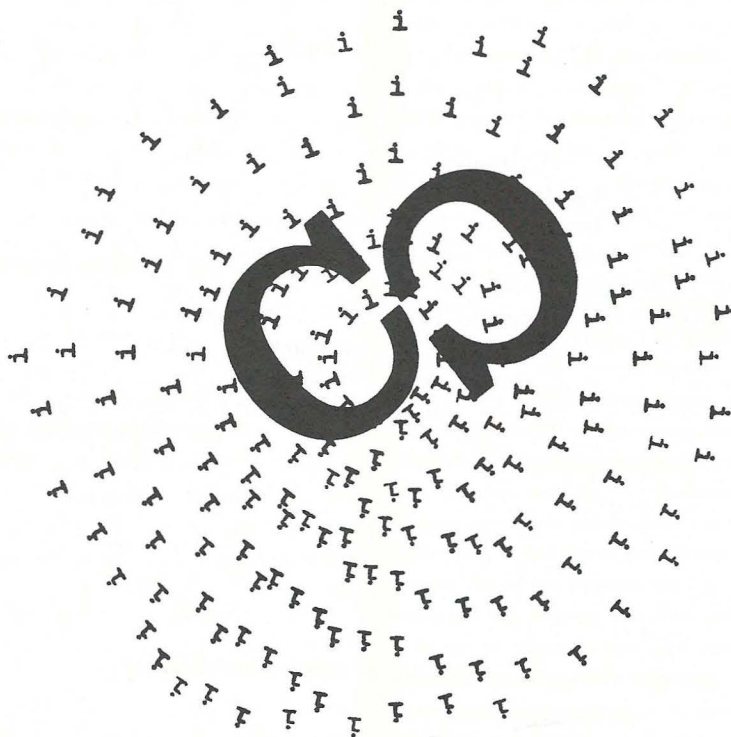
To mate, as in your thunder-winged lyre, Hosannas,
and the honing of the sword.

The sword, as T. E. Lawrence reminded us, also means cleanness - and death. It may have been the fighting spirit in part-Celtic Mary which helped their fusion in a marriage which tested them both, to the end. Together they went back to the violent Peninsula after the war, taking up residence on a small farm in Portugal.

Anna had married a Spaniard, and Tess a Portuguese,

both of which alliances ended unhappily. Roy made lecture tours of the United States and astonished the audiences of America. One day in 1957, out driving in their small Fiat, they crashed into a tree. Mary survived, but Roy, in the passenger seat, died soon after.

Denison Deasey, traveller, teacher, author, publisher and taxi-driver, lives in Melbourne.



Concrete poem: Peter Murphy

FRANK KELLAWAY **Distinguished Fiction**

Brian Castro: *Birds of Passage* (George Allen and Unwin, \$12.95)

Bruce Daw: *Over Here, Harv!* (Penguin, \$4.95)

Barry Hill: *Headlocks* (McPhee Gribble, \$7.95)

Fay Zwicky: *Hostages* (Fremantle Arts Centre, \$7.50)

The stories in Bruce Dawe's *Over Here, Harv!* were written in the fifties but not collected into a single volume until 1983. They come to us ready-distanced. We have had plenty of time to think about that period and to become accustomed, from seven intervening books of poetry, to Dawe's particular humane and ironical view of the world, his humorous, compassionate response to people. In a way it's as far away, in another as immediate, as reading Lawson, though these stories are on the whole more light-hearted. They are written in the vernacular of the period. Some of the slang has died and been forgotten, for example "that's a monty", meaning "that's for sure", and "I had a quick screw", meaning "I had a quick look". However the reader is never in any danger of misunderstanding; the context always makes the meaning clear and the rhythms, the syntax of the vernacular and the tone of voice all come across with ease and naturalness.

Headlocks, Barry Hill's latest collection of stories, is a reflection of the violence and unease which are so prominent a part of our current mental landscape. The publisher's claim that they "illuminate the human spirit" (if that means anything) seems questionable. Certainly the stories display keen insights with a sometimes ghoulish surreal fancy and they are presented in admirably vigorous prose. The first tells of a father bringing a drunken ex-army cobbler home to tea with his wife and son. The cobbler, Ed, starts showing the son the finer points of unarmed combat. The game gets out of hand; father and son kill their guest and burn the body on the garage roof. The description of the unarmed combat game getting out of hand is splendidly convincing. The mother's

ineffectual efforts to stop it are a crucial part. The killing and burning, on the other hand, during which the mother makes no protest, seem literary and unreal. I confess I don't know what meaning is intended.

There is a wide range of tales here, all of them with a resonance which suggests more than the events and the dialogue. Hill is particularly skilful at exploring the relations between a man and a woman in "Making The Island" (a bracket of three), the husband's primitive male responses breaking through his veneer of sophistication. This notion of the primitive lying in wait for the sophisticated individual is handled in a different way in "A Swim at Open Bay", where in a sense the civilised triumphs. There is a story about a kid keeping lizards, about a young man working in an abatoirs, a visit to eat a meal in a gaol after listening to and participating in a concert, an unpleasant study of three actual or potential suicides, a story about an artist obsessed with the skeletons of birds.

The piece I liked best was the surreal "Travelling off the Wall", in which the narrator describes to his girl-friend his vision of figures on a hoarding near the sea, moving off the wall and walking across the water. She takes him to meet her mum, a freak who 'travels' on various astral planes: "on the red plane mostly". The currents of tension between mother, husband, daughter and narrator are brilliantly suggested, and the zany world in which mother and husband live is evoked with convincing clarity.

There is no doubt about the assurance of Barry Hill's writing. He is most often concerned with those aspects of experience which are violent and cruel, and his evocation of them is chilling.

Fay Zwicky's stories in *Hostages* are as distinguished in their way but gentler, their subject-matter frankly autobiographical. She says she writes out of "a need to order the chaos of experience and give shape to a

curiosity which may take more decorous form in art than in life. Kierkegaard wrote: 'Only thieves and gypsies say that one must never go back to where one has once been.' For better or worse, others go on attempting to return . . ."

The first stories are agonizing re-creations of adolescent revolt which move into equally miserable accounts of marital incompatibility and conflict; then there are a number of amusing satires of literary life, and finally a curious travelogue about a train journey across the continent from east to west with various quotations, autobiographical vignettes and reflections on Australian life. Stated baldly like that it sounds dreary, but the force of the writing makes many of these stories memorable experiences; they are all informed by intelligence and buoyed by eloquence.

The first tells of the narrator's rebellion against her mother and a music teacher who had been a victim of the Nazis. Its concluding paragraph gives a good idea of the poignance and eloquence of the prose.

"But that night I ground my face into the covers of my bed, no longer a place of warmth and security but a burial trench. At the mercy of my dreams appeared Sophie Lindauer-Grunberg, pale as brick dust. Her face wasting, crumbling to ash, blasted by the force of my terrible youth. And, waking in fright, I mourned for the first time my innocent victim and our shared fate."

Again and again the brilliant phrase of the poet embodies the essence of a moment or a situation which reaches back and forward in time. "To live for yourself? What does this mean to either of them who years ago promised to live for each other? Who have given each other the rich unhappy hoard of their patience?" That is good enough to stand on its own without explaining its context in the story. Because of phrases like this and the longer one quoted above, I found this by far the most enjoyable and rewarding of the books under review.

In the company of three such distinguished established writers, Brian Castro, whose first novel *Birds of Passage* shared the 1983 Vogel award, need feel no embarrassment. It is an impressive performance; complex and well-structured, it skilfully intertwines the story of Lo Yun Shan, who came to Australia in 1856, and Seamus O'Young, an Australian-born Chinese who believes his real name is Sham Oh Yung and who more than a century later identifies with his countryman Shan, whose journal he has found and is translating.

I have not read anywhere else (not even in David Martin's lively but tendentious *The Chinese Boy*) so

vivid a re-creation of the life of the Chinese on the Australian gold-fields from their own point of view. The tale of racial discrimination and persecution is balanced against the more subtle pressures on the Australian born Chinese in our own day. However, tendentiousness at no time takes over. The non-Chinese characters are always as well-drawn and as complex an amalgam of good and bad as the Chinese: Edna Groves, Seamus's foster mother; Fitzpatrick, alias Clancy, the socialist and later would-be-murderer of Shan; Mary Young, de facto wife of both in turn; Fatima, Seamus' lesbian wife; Anna Bernhard, who loves and cherishes Seamus at the end. All these emerge full of convincingly contradictory impulses, and many other characters, though less rounded, are deftly drawn.

There are remarkable dramatic passages like the death of Tzu and the attempted murder of Shan. Throughout the style of the writing is very concrete giving a strong sense of the look, feel and smell of how it was. "He felt the broad heavy blade. There was a roughness along the edge, and the powdery rust came off on his fingers." "Lightning sparks the hills and a smell of gunpowder sits in the heavy air. Leaves spin down from the trees on the opposite slope. We are shoring up the collapsing walls of our graves."

This is a highly intelligent book by a young writer, and suggests many possible exciting lines of development. The publishers promise us that he "is now working on a tragi-comic novel dealing with religion and the problem of the weakening imagination in an increasingly sinister world." That is indeed something to look forward to.

Frank Kellaway, poet and critic, lives at Tubbut (V.).

FILM --ADVENT OF A STANDARD TEXT

Chris Long

Graham Shirley and Brian Adams: *Australian Cinema - The First Eighty Years* (Angus & Robertson, Currency Press, \$24.95).

At last! A cinema history written by professional researchers. Messrs. Shirley and Adams have drawn together a readable and concise narrative, focussing on a fascinating industry. It is a compendium of cinematic data, germane criticism and analysis of unprecedented excellence, couched in simple, accessible terms. The usual pretentious artistic drivel is totally avoided, baring a solid core of research to the reader's scrutiny.

This book undoubtedly overshadows a series of earlier publications on the subject by other authors, who either lacked adequate factual material or lacked the necessary narrative skill.

I can find few errors of research throughout the work. Names are occasionally misspelt. The Cornwell brothers, who made Australia's second feature film, "Eureka Stockade" (1907), have their names given as Cornwall consistently, though this is a minor criticism.

The omission of several key films and industry figures is slightly more disturbing, indicating some bias in editorial choice. For instance, the anthropologist Alfred Cord Haddon is not mentioned. Haddon led a Cambridge University expedition to Torres Strait in 1898, taking the earliest known films of native dances in situ. His work with the camera induced Walter Baldwin Spencer to follow suit after 1901. I was surprised to note that Spencer was allotted only a fleeting mention, while there is no mention of Haddon. This probably reflects Graham Shirley's interest in narrative fictional cinema, which subtly pervades his work.

Several interesting films, including A.R. Harwood's "Night Club" (1952), rate no mention. While this and other shoestring productions were insignificant for their narrative content, they often provided a vehicle for the recording of important stage ephemera. Linked through a minimal story line, classic acts like those of Colin Crane, Joff Ellen and Johnny O'Keefe were preserved in this way, especially before the introduction of television. In the instance of the latter performer, Lee Robinson's "Rock 'n' Roll" (1959) is mentioned only in a footnote. I would have preferred to read more about this fascinating 'B-cinema' genre, which has enjoyed a long history in Australia.

Relationships existing between the Australian stage and cinema industries could have received more attention, particularly in a nation as small and unspecialised as ours. There is a tendency among Australian historians to classify and limit their sphere of interest too precisely, forgetting that such divisions were less clearly defined in the past. The further back we reach into Australian history, the less specialised does each individual and industry become. Applying modern conceptual models and strictures to industries in the historical context can confuse interpretation.

For instance, Shirley and Adams seem to assume that cinematic narrative was devised in a historical and technical vacuum. While they briefly mention that important predecessor of cinema, the lantern slide show, they see its main impact only in relation

to the slide-and-film religious presentations of the Salvation Army.

Photographically illustrated narrative was introduced to Australia as early as 1854, when a lantern lecture of the funeral of the Duke of Wellington was presented in Hobart. Shirley and Adams correctly emphasise that the lantern slide show had reached a high state of sophistication by the turn of the century, producing "a whole range of optical effects including simple animation by means of successive overlapping slides." In fact the shows included spoken commentary, music, mechanically animated slides, and even 'cinematic' innovations like fades, dissolves, wipes, titles and superimposition. But the most important concept which these shows introduced was that of visual narrative - the telling of stories in photographic pictures, using actors, sets, and conceptual techniques like 'time compression'. Though there is a continuous intellectual thread running from slide narrative to movie narrative as technological changes occurred, the tendency is for the text of the book to imply that such narrative techniques were specifically invented only for the motion picture. A scrapbook assembled by the Perry family, who were involved in the presentation "Soldiers of the Cross" (1900), indicates that this presentation was only distinguished from others by the *addition* of the use of film. That in itself was not a great departure from their earlier shows, except in technical detail.

This example is indicative of something which I fear is the major fault of the book. Shirley and Adams have refined, to perfection, a formula for historical analysis which was established less successfully by earlier writers. But they do not challenge these basic historical precepts and methodologies. These were originally borrowed from cinema historians in America and Europe, where the core of film production lay with the fictional feature film. This was not the case in Australia until relatively recent times.

Differing from many of its foreign counterparts, Australian cinema *was not* a predominantly indigenous medium at any time in its history. Melbourne's Performing Arts Museum holds a significant collection of early cinema handbills, which indicate that Australian films were rare, even in the earliest shows of 1896. Even in the peak years of Australian film production, immediately prior to the First World War, there is no evidence to suggest that local films predominated in local cinemas. The scrapbook of programs issued by the T.J. West cinema circuit between 1909 and 1915, also held by the Melbourne Performing Arts Museum, is a valuable reference to this period. Although it was run by one

of the earliest champions of local film production, the Australian footage presented by this chain rarely comprised more than 10 to 20 per cent of their program.

Dominated by the exhibition of foreign productions, local film was nearly always shown in a supportive or supplemental capacity. Feature production in Australia was the exception, rather than the rule. Documentaries, shorts, newsreels and advertisements provided the industry with its bread and butter. Most cinema historians tend to read too much into the artistic intent of the early feature directors, concurrent with a lack of perception of the creativity applied to non-fiction film. Ken Hall, the doyen of early Australian talkie directors, has repeatedly stated that commercially successful Australian films were produced to the requisites of socio-economic demand. Artistic expression was a secondary consideration. A small local industry, without governmental assistance, simply did not have the scope to move into anything more pretentious without incurring the wrath of financial backers.

Some years ago, accompanied by Graham Shirley, I interviewed Arthur Hansen, a cameraman and laboratory technician active in the film industry between the wars. During the late 1920s Hansen worked for the De Forest studio in Rushcutter's Bay, which operated one of only three properly equipped film studios in Sydney. He told us that most of the film produced by the company consisted of 'leaders' and 'tails' bearing the company trademarks of local distribution agencies - protective ends placed on reels of imported film to aid projectionists in threading their machines. The "industry" of those days really *was* unpretentious.

A history of Australian cinema should therefore be predominantly a story of conservative documentary and news film production, in which the production of fictional features gradually became more viable as a side-line. Feature film production became more important as the industry, concurrent with increasing public sophistication, grew and diversified. This is not the general picture presented by Shirley and Adams' book, which concentrates on narrative fictional film, though they do go further than previous historians in outlining the scope of non-fiction production.

I was happy to see that the old and unsubstantiated cliché about Australian film production being in a "state of collapse" between 1945 and 1970 has been moderated by the following statement, which will invite comment:

Sponsored documentaries, industrial and edu-

cational training films and commercials - all non-fiction films - experienced upsurge at a time when feature production was in decline. During 1961-62, when only one local feature was released, non-fiction film producers completed a total of 610 sponsored short films. (p.191)

However, in reference to these shorts, they note that "little . . . of a recognisable movement or philosophy developed from these films." There is little evidence provided to back this up. Is this comment therefore based merely on a lack of interest in this product on the part of the authors? It's impossible to come to any conclusion without the facts.

I also fear that the Sydney base of both authors has allowed them to research the industrial history of cinema in that city meticulously, while details of cinema production in Perth, Adelaide and Hobart are sparse. Sydney has traditionally been the centre of Australian film production, with Melbourne usually running a distant second. Production in other centres may have been slight but it was not insignificant. Tasmania has a long history of actuality and documentary production, beginning with the Higgins brothers at the turn of the century, and culminating recently in the Tasmanian Film Corporation. For Adelaide, some outline of historical context would have been illuminating, particularly as its recent product includes "Sunday Too Far Away" and "Breaker Morant". There is hardly any information given on early film production in Perth, though I understand that Ina Bertrand has done some research in that area. Some effort directed towards this sort of regional approach would have been fruitful, particularly as cinema personnel in remote areas were generally ignorant of parallel effort in other states. Tasmania, for instance, newsreel 'stringers' were usually drawn from the ranks of the professional portrait and landscape photographers. In most areas, the relationship between still and movie photography was extremely close, and this could have received more attention.

Television also sits indecisively in the context of Shirley and Adams' narrative. There is very little examination of the extreme impact of the medium on Australia's visual consciousness and viewing habits, its effect on documentary film production, its absorption of technical personnel and so forth. There is a brief mention of the small local proportion of television drama production, but the medium is chiefly seen as drawing a reaction from frustrated

potential producers of narrative film for theatrical exhibition.

Can we continue to regard television as being outside the context of Australian cinema history? In socio-economic terms, the family target audience of television was the same target audience of the cinema in the 1930s. Post-television cinema attracted less of this general audience, and was aimed at a more discerning and sophisticated minority, attending cinema as a 'special event' rather than on a regular basis. In these terms, television is more the present cultural extension of the old film industry, while the modern Australian cinema audience is closely allied to that minority attending film society screenings fifty years ago. The existence of this social discontinuity in the history of Australian film has never been carefully examined. Shirley and Adams could have gone much further with their explanation of the events of 1956. It is difficult to find any direct historical conceptual or stylistic continuity between the Australian fictional features made prior to television, and those produced today.

In spite of these limitations, Shirley and Adams have broken a lot of new ground with their research, providing a scholarly companion volume to Cooper and Pike's *Australian Film, 1900 - 1977*. With these two books at the disposal of scholars of Australian cinema history, few other references will be found necessary. A decade of solid research has been invested in the work by Graham Shirley, whose published results more than fulfill all of my expectations. I can not say that anyone else was capable of doing such an excellent job. To have increased the scope of the book to meet some of the criticisms I have made would have involved the authors in an impracticable amount of extra work.

The book is simply outstanding, and is sure to become a standard text.

Chris Long has been active in research into and the restoration of early Australian films, photographs and recordings. He is at present working at the Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston.

POETS NOT ON THE PENSION

Graham Rowlands

Robert Gray and Geoffrey Lehmann (eds.): *The Younger Australian Poets* (Hale & Iremonger, \$12.95, \$6.95).

Australian poetry deserves a large anthology called, say, *New Poets of the 70s & 80s*. It would cover all

kinds of available poetry. It would probably include some poets who couldn't be described as young or "younger" but who nevertheless started publishing quality work in this period. It would certainly include all the new poets under forty.

It would draw poetry not just from collections published by so-called major publishers but also from magazines, newspapers and small presses. It would be as familiar with W.A., S.A., Tasmania, Queensland and provincial N.S.W., and Victoria as with Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra (of a decade ago). It wouldn't need a policy of affirmative action in order to publish a fair share of women. Its selection process wouldn't be based on snobbery, friendship or the quality of dinner parties or breakfasts. I have in mind an editor (or editors) who would be as professional as a male who successfully edits a women's magazine or vice versa. Objectivity wouldn't be achieved. Something more than gross subjectivity, however, would stand a chance. Finally, if the editor is a poet, he or she should be represented by the *least* number of pages in the anthology. A formidable list? Possibly.

Unfortunately, the present anthology achieves only two of these criteria. Firstly, it covers poetry by poets using both the world and the library as their subjects — although the Modernists such as John Tranter and John Forbes are assessed by "human values and communication" criteria they would find laughable. Secondly, it contains much quality poetry from young or younger poets of the 1970s and 1980s. These two achievements are valuable. Moreover, they may be all that some readers require. Many readers, however, will expect more from an anthology with this title and published now.

It's at least a decade since Les Murray reflected on the tendency to regard Australian poets as eternally young. Even Gray and Lehmann couldn't include Murray in an anthology of *young* poets. After all, he's forty five. He's often been anthologized, including appearing in one anthology that stretched back to 1950. Perhaps "younger" can include every poet not on the pension, opening up the question of Murray's inclusion and *their* exclusion.

I wouldn't mind the bias towards the same much-anthologized poets in their thirties and early forties with many of the same poems (Page, A. Taylor, R. McDonald, N. Roberts, McMaster, Forbes) rather than new poets in their twenties if I were convinced that these inclusions didn't stem from editorial laziness and conservatism. The chosen few are overwhelmingly from University of Queensland Press and Angus and Robertson, who ceased being major poetry publishers half a decade ago. Moreover, the

ANTARCTICA'S HEROIC AGE

Phillip Law

Christopher Ralling: *Shackleton* (British Broadcasting Commission, \$24.95).

very few new poets they continue to publish aren't necessarily the best. They're simply lucky. They appeal to the publishers' poetry manuscript readers. Gray and Lehmann haven't looked for all those *other* poets comparable to Vicki Viidikas, Jamie Grant, Gary Catalano, Allen Afterman, Peter Kocan, Christine Churches and Andrew Sant. The editors, of course, say they've searched high and low. I remain, however, unconvinced.

The omission of Rae Desmond Jones, Eric Beach, Jennifer Maiden and Philip Neilsen is simply indefensible. How much more rewarding it would have been if the editors had been less generous with their own poetry, thereby freeing space for Joanne Burns, Philip Collier, Wendy Jenkins, Peter Murphy, Jeri Kroll, Billy Marshall-Stoneking, Chris Mansell, Stephen Kelen, J.S. (Jan) Harry, Richard Tipping, Lee Cataldi, Alan Wearne, Jane Zageris, Larry Buttrose, Kate Llewellyn, John Scott, Gig Ryan, Tim Thorne, Donna Maegraith, Peter Goldsworthy, Jenny Boulton, Cornelis Vleeskens, Katherine Gallagher, John Griffin, Rory Harris and P.O. The list would, of course, need to include much poetry I dislike intensely — Kris Hemensley, John Jenkins, Philip Hammial *et al.* It would, however, include a representative percentage of women. (It's good to see Susan Hampton and Marion Alexopoulos, but why not *other* comparable women?).

The above list isn't an attempt to be clever by concentrating on poets who have come to the fore while the anthology was under production. They're the more established of the apparently unestablished. Although it's pleasing to find poets who haven't as yet published collections, such as Alexopoulos and Dennis Haskell, their inclusion opens the way for numerous others. Major South Australian examples would be Jeff Guess, Mike Ladd, K.F. Pearson, Rob Johnson and Jan Owen. As a national editor, of course, I'd make it my business to be equally well-informed on all states and territories — particularly on poets living outside the capital cities and especially those outside the capital city of N.S.W. Would anyone like to make me an offer?

Graham Rowlands, 36, in his South Australian anthology *Dots Over Lines* allocated seventeen poets twelve pages each while confining himself to 4 pages.

Why have the events of the 'heroic age' of Antarctic exploration made such a profound and imperishable impact upon the minds of men? A number of ventures were ill-considered, most were not very productive and some ended disastrously. (Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition qualifies on all three counts.) Yet the glories of the exploits live on undiminished. Courage, fortitude, determination, comradeship, human frailties and conflicts and the over-riding influence of malevolent fate—the classical narratives provide them all.

The expeditions of the 'heroic age' were essentially 'amateur' expeditions. They were generally 'one-off' events which, in Antarctica, can never be fully effective; they were largely privately financed, which meant immense efforts on the part of the leaders in fund-raising that would have been better spent in organization; and they were generally lacking in preparation and training, as well as the backing of any headquarters organization. It was not until around the middle of the present century that professional expeditions emerged, such as the British Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey, the Expeditions Polaires Francaises, the United States expeditions from "Operation Highjump" onwards, and the Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions. What these expeditions failed to do one year they picked up the next, and their experience was thus cumulative. Their finances were assured by the backing of their governments, and their competent headquarters' organizations made for better logistical support and the publication of their scientific results.

Looking back on the early Antarctic expeditions it is easy to be critical. They made mistakes and they got into trouble; but they were the *first*, they were entering a largely unknown environment and they faced the psychological hurdles that such pioneering involved. Their adventures at that time were unique, and the accounts of them were devoured by a public eager to enjoy vicariously the exciting experiences of their polar heroes.

Tragedies and mistakes make dramatic news. Would Scott have become as famous if he had survived? Would Shackleton be as well known today if the "Endurance" had not been crushed? I doubt it.

Really successful expeditions, those in which all planning and preparation have been so immaculate that no untoward events have occurred, generally sound pretty dull. They just haven't the same news value.

It is with some exasperation that I see a book like *Shackleton* appear, treating yet once again the old material, turning it over and re-hashing it in a different form. Sure, it is fascinating stuff; certainly the public, as ever will be interested in it and buy it; and, in this case, the book has the added justification that it was the basis of the B.B.C. television series "Shackleton" (which, incidentally, has not yet been seen in Australia).

But what of the modern expeditions? Most of the exploration of Antarctica occurred *after* 1950, and there are wonderful stories waiting to be told. I wish a few authors would write up in English the Russian leader, Mikael Somov, the Russian glaciologist Andrew Kapitza who led the longest journey ever undertaken in Antarctica, the Japanese Masayoshi Musayama, the American glaciologist Charles Bentley and my Australian colleagues, Syd Kirkby, Ian McLeod and John Manning. They present aspects of man's conquest of Antarctica that are quite different from those with which we have become so familiar from the records of Mawson, Scott, Amundsen and Shackleton.

Would such books sell, or is the magic of the old names and our nostalgic attachment to the past so great that we have no room for later generations? This might well be so. However, it is high time that the complex story of Antarctica was told in full, with the first stumbling efforts of the early explorers rounded out with the vast accomplishments in both cartography and science that have resulted from the multi-national application of huge resources—human, financial and technical—that started with the International Geographical Year.

The blurb on the jacket of *Shackleton* describes the book as "his Antarctic writings selected and introduced by Christopher Ralling". Following an Introduction and Foreword by Ralling, this book presents selections from Shackleton's two narratives, *The Heart of the Antarctic* and *South*, interspersed with commentaries by Ralling which are lined in the margins of the pages to enable the reader to tell when the book deviates from Shackleton's own words. It is an effective device. Ralling has researched his subject thoroughly, and the book includes material not previously presented, including letters from Shackleton to his wife and several of Shackleton's own poems.

This material rounds out the picture of the man with his strengths and weaknesses, and gives us an understanding of his goals and motivations.

The selections from Shackleton's narratives are well chosen. The most interesting sections of the explorer's two large books, now long out of print, are here reproduced, and the new reader has thus an economical method of acquainting himself with these classical works while having his understanding of the episodes enhanced by the well-designed commentary and embroideries that Ralling has added.

The well-known black-and-white photographs of Frank Hurley and other expeditioners have been augmented by dramatic colour plates from a variety of modern sources. While the photographers of most of the latter have been acknowledged, the acknowledgements for the black and white photos are to institutions rather than individuals, which is a pity. Also, the acknowledgements are given separately at the end of the book, where most readers will not bother to turn. Acknowledgements for photographs, to be effective, must be printed with the captions.

The map of Antarctica in the endpapers, contains two crass errors. One large area of Antarctica, Marie Byrd Land, is labelled "Bird Land", while the label Queen Maud Land, which should refer only to Norwegian Antarctic Territory, has been wrongly extended to cover Australian Antarctic Territory in the regions of Enderby Land, Kemp Land and MacRobertson Land. And there is not much point in drawing meridians of longitude when none is numbered! One wonders why the B.B.C. did not consult the R.G.S. or one other of the numerous experts in London knowledgeable about Antarctic maps.

Phillip Law was for many years Director of the Antarctic Division, and had visited Antarctica some thirty times.

AN ENGLAND OBSERVED

Stephen Murray-Smith

Nancy Phelan: *The Swift Foot of Time* (Auartet Books, \$18.95).

Travel writing often doesn't rank high in the literary stakes, perhaps a hang-over from the many tiresome slide shows we have seen, and the turgid accounts of travels to overseas conferences and the meeting of Quite Important People that enthusiasts self-publish and distribute with quite alarming diligence. (My wife says that I fit in here somewhere.) Yet good travel writing -- as several recent anthologies have reminded us -- is literary artifice of a very high order

indeed, combining on the one hand ostensible realism -- we like to think that our authors have really seen what they write about -- with great skills of presentation, cutting, selection and arrangement. Of all literary forms, it is perhaps that closest to film.

Nancy Phelan has an enviable reputation as a travel writer -- Turkey, Chile, Morocco amongst other places. Unfortunately I don't know these books, though I hear them mentioned so often that I intend to go to them. What I do know of Nancy Phelan's writing, however, is her marvellous account of an Australian childhood, *A Kingdom by the Sea*, first published in 1969 and still available in paperback, and now *The Swift Foot of Time*.

The Swift Foot of Time is the story of an impecunious young Australian in England between 1938 and 1945, and it falls broadly into three parts: waitressing and 'demonstrating' in London and the provinces before the war; sheltering from the bombs, now with a baby, on an antediluvian Devon farm; and then moving to live in a rectory on the Chichester estates, also in Devon. It is social history of a rare kind: that roving and selective eye unerringly locates what is to be seen -- the menace of dark settling on the concealments of the English countryside -- and describes it with a directness and immediacy that reminds the reader of Parson Kilvert. The ear holds the rolling passages of rural dialect, the sound of a dying organ in a church. The mind meshes with the cadences of patterns of life passing out of existence: the superstition and misanthropy of isolated rural life in a community divided against itself and, by contrast,

the paternalism and sense of community in another village, this time based on seigneurial relationships both detested and accepted.

This is a precious, important and absorbing book. I am tempted to say it is all the more precious because it is the kind of book that Australians, with their fear of exposing themselves in art and writing, do least well. Yet it's a tease. Travel book or autobiography? Neither really, and perhaps all the better for it. On the one hand it follows on from *A Kingdom by the Sea*, in telling us more of that enchanting young woman and her responses to life, the richness she seizes from experience, her judging but never judgemental view of others: yet we are not told so much -- where did the husband come from? the baby? the long spell in hospital? So not really an autobiography, for so much is still locked away. But travel? Hardly. There's not much travel: these are set-piece studies. And the author grows and develops in her new environments in a way which is certainly part of the secret of good travel writing, but which takes on a deep-rooted quality not normally found in a travel book.

Sui generis, then. Call it a kind of diary. That is perhaps the hardest art form of all, perhaps the most seductive, certainly the rarest in achievement. Just give thanks for Nancy Phelan, and also reflect that she has given us -- and the English -- an opportunity of listening to a New Zealander standing on Westminster Bridge, the colonial returned to gaze on the oddities and irrelevancies which were the springs of her own society.

floating fund

STEPHEN MURRAY-SMITH writes: Many thanks to our readers for the splendid total of \$789.50 received in donations since our last issue. This is of the greatest importance, especially in tiding us over the pains and problems of changing printers and much else besides, which I mention in Swag.

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