overland

FEATURES
STORIES
POETRY

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—the Johnson-Burns fight of 1908
Rowan Cahill: THE COLD WAR AND BEYOND
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CRAIG McGREGOR

Day Trip to Surfers b/w Get Lost Adorno

We decided to leave early so we could make it in one day. Dad said it would save the cost of a motel. Mum said it would give us an extra day's holiday. Jack Junior said he wanted to spend a week in the heart of the beast. Minnie, who's the young one, and me just went along.

The alarm went off at 3.30am. After two hours of arguing and packing we were ready to leave. We got as far as Oxford Street when Mum decided she'd left the stove on when she'd boiled the eggs. We drove back, very sceptical. She had. The saucepan was still boiling. "Could've burnt the bloody place down," said Dad. "Would've been better if it had," said Jack Jr, who is very into pessimism. He is trying to form a rock band with me as lead singer. I am writing a Lou Reed-type number for him called "You're so Negative".

About Hornsby it started to get light. We got as far as the S-bends leading onto the Newcastle Expressway before Brian the Dog threw up. All over the back of the station-wagon. He gets carsick easily. We'd starved him for a day but he still threw up. Maybe that's why. Minnie came to his defence. "Look at his tail, he looks like a little teapot you could pour out," she said. Everyone fell asleep.

First stop was the Oak milk bar near the Pacific Highway turnoff. It was packed with daytrippers eating scallops and chips. Brian kept barking at a small pale dog with a cur-like tail in the campervan parked three cars down. Mum came back with some cups of coffee and noticed the dog. "Whippet! Whip it good!" she said.

After that everyone cheered up. The car reeked of Pine-O-Kleen instead of dog spew. Dad heard some cicadas in the bush just past Raymond Terrace and began singing, in mock-Spanish, "*CI-CA-DA!*" He reckons I get my voice from him but I hope not. Jack Jr put on a Divinyls tape to drown him out. Dad insisted on singing along with it; he likes the part where Chrissie Amphlett flaps her lips like a dumb punk. "Next time I'll bring along a Charlie Parker tape," said Jack Jr. "See if he can sing to that."

Myall Lakes. "Myall is what Aborigines call white people," said Mum. "It means ghost." Jack Jr said: "They're the ghosts."

Minnie found some cobwebs in the rear window slot. Then she found a spider. Our last car, a rustbucket Holden, was infested with cockroaches. We're like a travelling Mr Flick ad. Our family is very ecology conscious. When we passed a truckload of pink Berkshire pigs Mum was concerned; "I hope they're not sunburnt," she said. Then we passed some swans swimming in that artificial lake outside the power station north of Newcastle. "Those swans are too low in the water," Mum said. "They look normal to me," said Dad. "All swans are too low in the water, they look as though they've got weights on their legs," Mum said. "Oh my god," Dad said.

Between Coolongolook and Rainbow Flat, which is a goodly distance, Minnie insisted on recounting, scene by scene, the entire story of the Life of Brian. Brian the Film can only stand so much retelling. Brian the Dog snored on.

The day was hotting up. Dad was still driving, Mum was in the passenger seat looking at a map, Jack Jr and me and Minnie were in the back seat, and Brian was lying across the luggage in the station-wagon section. He woke up when Dad swore at a semitrailer and kept trying to infiltrate the back seat. He stunk. There was a lot of traffic on the road and we had to keep passing caravans at speed. We had so much gear on the roofrack that the roof started flapping up and down like a tent. "If they made that sheet metal any thinner you could roll your own with it," Dad said.

Once we passed a low-loader with one of those huge three-storey ocean-going marlin launches on it. "Doctor," said Dad. "Lawyer," said Mum. "Political chief," said Jack Jr. A bit further on there was a Rest Area which Mum calls a Lay-By. "Can you help me pay if off?" I whined. It was my first joke of the trip.

At Taree we stopped for petrol and to give Brian a chance to have a piss. He refused. Sometimes Dad has to piss into the bush beside him to give Brian the idea, but the petrol station was a bit public. Dad slammed the tailgate down and we set off again. Brian seemed strangely immobile; he'd stopped slithering over the luggage towards the front seat. It was about five minutes before Minnie realized his tail was caught in the tailgate. "At least it stopped him trying to drive," said Dad.

Jack Jr is trying to work out a name for his band. We spent about fifty kilometres helping. "Call it something sexy like the Aphro-disiacs," said Dad. "Deck yourself out in big bushy black hairdoes." I suggested a sort of

Latin/Oz fusion: Carlos Lantana and the Weedkillers. Mum said G-Spot was a good name but she didn't know what it meant. Dad said he didn't either. Mum said what he meant was he didn't know where it was. Jack Jr said a sparring partner was a blonde in a jacuzzi. We passed a sign saying KOALAS PASS HERE. Dad reckoned he could see the bear droppings. Minnie reckoned Bear Drops was a good name for a nudist cold cure. I had a sudden flash: "Why don't you call the band Drop Bears?" "Don't be stupid," said Jack Jr. "Who would ever listen to a group called Drop Bears?"

Near Coppernook there was a big stand of gnarled angophoras. "Nature abhors a straight line," said Dad, who is collecting aphorisms. His own. A bit further on there was what Mum called a classic Australian scene: a range of hills in the distance, shining blue bitumen, a bit of old truck tyre, and a dead wallaby on the side of the road. "One of Australia's fur-lined highways," said Jack Jr. Minnie said: "The kids at our school call the Vietnamese kids slopes." "Racism," said Dad. I said: "Do you know how many Californians it takes to change a lightbulb? Eighteen. One to change the bulb and seventeen to share the experience." "More racism," said Dad. "Better than tokenism," I said, practising my feminism. "There's nothing wrong with tokenism as long as you're at the top of the token-pole," Dad said. Jack Jr started making pig noises. Mum joined in. Dad drove on.

We were well into the Central Coast and cruising through a little place south of Wauchope when we noticed a policeman standing on the side of the road. Incongruous. He had a notice board in his hand. It said PULL OVER. Radar trap. Dad was breathalysed and then booked for doing 79 kph in a 60 kph zone. "They're practising for 1984," said Jack Jr. "This is 1984," I said. "That's what I mean," said Jack Jr.

Dad got back into the car grumbling about the cops picking on him because of the surfboards on the roof-rack. "Didn't realize I was a family man on holidays," he said. Just north of Port Macquarie the police-magnet problem was solved abruptly when the boards flew off the top of the car. They went bouncing down the bitumen and the car behind had to swerve to miss them. As the driver went past he shouted out something indecipherable. It was probably a compliment. We went back and rescued the boards. Dad's Malibu was all right but Minnie's foamie had a big hole chopped out of it. She started to cry.

"It's all right darling," Mum said, "we'll get the dings fixed in Surfers Paradise."

"You can't fix dings in foamies," Minnie sobbed.

"Heaps bad luck," I said.

This time Dad roped the boards to the roofrack instead of using octopus straps. I climbed into the back seat and put my arm around Minnie. "It's all right for you," she said. "You're not learning re-entries." I put my mouth up against her ear, the one with the coral earring – when she's not a surfie she's practising to be a droog – and whispered: "Dad's a turkey!" She almost smiled.

At Telegraph Point Mum said she could do with a cup of tea.

At Kundabung I said I'd like one too.

At South Kempsey a semitrailer with a sign on top saying THE RESURRECTION nearly wiped us off the road.

At Poisonous Passionfruit Creek Dad tried to overtake a caravan without giving himself enough room, ran into double yellow lines, and pulled back just before a Nissan Turbo charged into us head-on.

"I think it's time we stopped, Jack," Mum said.

At the next place, which didn't seem to have a name, we had a cup of tea. "Unreal," I said when I saw the Space Invaders machine. Mum said she thought the bloke behind the counter was gay. She once said flying Qantas was like Oxford Street in the air. She's a hetero. I assume Dad is. I'm bi by style, separatist by philosophy, but conformist by inclination. Mum says I'm multifaceted. Dad says I'm all over the place like a dog's breakfast.

I prefer Mum to Dad.

Mum took over the driving. She's good but slow. Approaching Nambucca heads we got caught behind a truck for kilometre after kilometre. The cicadas sounded like the roar of a reef break. "Have I got a godmother?" Minnie asked. The cicadas roared. The roof-rack hummed. It was getting near midday. We had travelled maybe five hundred kilometres since dawn. The truck was still up ahead. "Sounds like the cicadas we used to have on the farm near Mullumbimby," said Dad. "They love she-oaks. I remember the first time Granpa and Granma and the family moved there. The cicadas started up down by the creek, just about sunset, and I'd never heard them so loud. And then this other noise started up, a deep sort of rumble which seemed to echo all around the hills. I thought it must have been a neighbor's petrol pump or milkin' machine." He paused. "Tree frogs. At least that's what they reckoned. Seemed to be up every tree, bloody deafening. It was years before I realized they were havin' me on. Different sort of cicada, starts up when the others leave off. Little black buggers. Black Princes we used to call 'em. Others were Greengrocers ...'

He stopped. Everyone was asleep except me, and I was pretending. The story dribbled to a halt.

Dad's got dark splotches on his arm, just like Aunt Freda did when she died. He's going to die, too, one of these days. Edna Everage reckons you can tell the widows on tourist buses because they've all got their hubbies' wristwatches on their arms. Me, I like freckles; I've got 'em. But I don't like old-age splotches.

About Sawtell we decided to help Jack Jr name his rock band again.

"What about Funky Nipper?" said Minnie.

"Lead singer, Nip Jagger," I said.

"It's a political group, we want a political name," said Jack Jr crossly.

"What about Gramsci, the Group?" Mum said.

"What about CHE?" I said.

"What about Che Sera Sera?" said Minnie.

"The next punster gets punished," said Dad.

"Forget it," said Jack Jr.

We stopped for lunch at Coffs Harbour, at the Big Banana. Mum said the Whitlam government had been going to turn it into a major city; they were going to

rename it Gough's Harbor. The Big Banana is the biggest asbestos cement banana in the world; you can walk through it. Minnie crawled through it backwards. The souvenir shop was full of stuff from Taiwan. The milk bar sold chocolate coated bananas. We ate rolls and had a banana-flavored Dairy Freeze each in the open-air cafeteria. Tourists in funny hats were pouring in one end and walking out with trays at the other. For fast food it was pretty slow. The loudspeakers were tuned to the local radio station; they pumped out UB40, David Bowie, the Angels, Mentals, Bow Wow Wow, Spandau Ballet, Wham, Sharon O'Neill, Grand Master Flash, Goanna, Haysi Fantasi, Culture Club and Dylan. In between the ads. There was no band called Lantana. Bobby sang:

Capitalism is above the law
They say it don't count unless it sells . . .

Jack Jr looked up from his Chiko roll. "It's never gunna change," he said, "until it's all torn down."

Mum said: "That's all very well, Jack, but in the meantime we have to resist it . . ."

Jack Jr said: "You can't resist it. Adorno says it pervades everything, we're all manipulated and given artificial appetites and turned into consumers . . ."

Minnie said: "I'm still hungry."

Dad said: "Have another Chiko roll."

I said: "Who's Adorno?"

Mum said: "If we wait until it's all torn down we'll be in our graves; what do we do in the meantime?"

Jack Jr said: "He's a Marxist."

Mum said: "A somewhat omniscient one."

I said: "You mean he's a control freak?"

Bobby sang:

Democracy don't rule the world
You better get that through your head
This world is ruled by violence
But I guess that's better left unsaid . . .

"Look at this!" said Jack Jr, gesturing around at the Big Banana. "This is our culture! Created and sold to us proles because we don't know any better. Pop culture is a control device. It makes you sick."

"I like it," I said.

"I sometimes think," said Jack Jr, who was warming up, "that Vitamin C is the perfect capitalist product. You can only absorb so much, your body disposes of the rest. Then next day you have to absorb some more."

"I reckon your Mother's right," said Dad.

"I'm going to the Men's," said Jack Jr.

"You went at the last Shell station," said Mum, who is a schoolteacher and keeps track of these things.

"I'm going," Jack Jr said, swaggering to his feet, "*because it's there.*"

We all trooped out in the glaring sunshine to the carpark. Brian was asleep on top of the Christmas presents. At least we didn't have a double tail-gate. As we pulled out onto the Pacific Highway two police cars came powering down the hill like American stock-car racers. The front one had its siren going. We joined the line of traffic heading north.

"I don't care what it is," said Dad, who had taken over the driving again, "as long as it's not an accident."

A few minutes later there was another siren. A big Ford F100 ambulance came up behind and then disappeared up ahead. No-one said anything. The traffic had slowed down perceptibly.

About ten kilometres ahead we came across the accident. We could tell because the cars heading south had their headlights on; a couple flashed them. There were two cars on the opposite sides of the highway, badly damaged. One was upside down. There was a crowd of people talking to the police, arguing.

There was no-one lying on the road shoulder, no-one kneeling down.

"Thank God for that," Dad said, and overtook the car ahead.

Brian farted. Jack Jr blamed me. Everyone opened the windows.

"I'd like a big dog when I grow up," Minnie said worriedly, "but I don't know what sort. Red setters are dumb. Alsatians are too fierce. Dobermans get fat. Sheep dogs are a worry. Greyhounds are ridiculous. Terriers are too yappy. Cocker spaniels get ticks. Great Danes cost too much. Boxers are vicious. Whippets are cowardly . . ."

"WHIP IT! WHIP IT GOOD!" everyone shouted, and fell about the car. It had become a family serial joke.

We passed Woolgoolga at 110 kph.

"Living in Woolgoolga," said Jack Jr, "must be about as interesting as watching a plank warp."

Late afternoon. Mum was driving again. Dad had his head propped against a pillow on the passenger side window. The bitumen had that harsh afternoon glare to it. Driving through a State Forest the tree trunk shadows flashed on and off like a disco strobe.

Everyone was getting tired. We started arguing. I said I might become a hippie instead of a rock star. Mum said a resistant culture was more important than a counter culture. Jack Jr wanted a go at driving. Dad said he wasn't experienced enough to handle holiday traffic. Mum said he'd never get experience if he didn't drive. We pulled up at a Golden Fleece service station. Jack Jr said if he wasn't allowed to drive then he wasn't going to bloody well wash the windscreen either. Minnie got a milkshake. Brian got another chance for a piss. Dad got a packet of Fantales. The first wrapper had a thing about Boy George on it. "Fantales aren't what they used to be," Dad said. "If I wanted to read this shit I'd have asked for a packet of Androgynes."

Nobody laughed. We had been on the road for twelve hours.

At the Byron Bay turnoff we all wanted to go for a surf – we being the kids. The boards are buggered, said Dad. A swim then. We'll never get to Surfers, said Mum. By the time we'd finished discussing it we'd reached Tyagarah. The highway stretched ahead. We'd passed the turnoff. "How do you spell authoritarian?" Jack Jr said at the

back of Dad's head. "A-D-O-R-N-O," said Mum. Sometimes she's smart.

At Brunswick Heads we all cheered up again. The prawn trawlers were sliding down the estuary in a line, heading for the open sea. We stopped and watched them hump up and over the swells coming past the breakwater. There were seagulls and campers everywhere.

POPULATION 18,000, said the sign back on the highway. "And 80,000 in the hols," said Dad.

Murwillumbah. Houses on stilts. "There are those who think the Queensland border starts at Tweed Heads," said Mum, "and those who *know* it starts at Murwillumbah."

"I can feel my neck turning red," said Jack Jr.

The sun was going down when we reached Queensland. We couldn't see the border. The traffic was bumper to bumper all the way from Coolangatta through Kirra, Miami, Burleigh Heads, Palm Beach, Copocabana and Broadbeach.

When we finally got to Surfers all the skyscraper lights were on. It looked like Future City. The lights stretched all the way along the beach-front and shone on the sea. The reflections bounced about in the surf. I could hear trannie music tumbling along in the summer night air.

"It's falling into the ocean," said Dad.

"Capitalism's last stand," said Jack Jr.

"I like it," I said.

"At least we're here," said Mum.

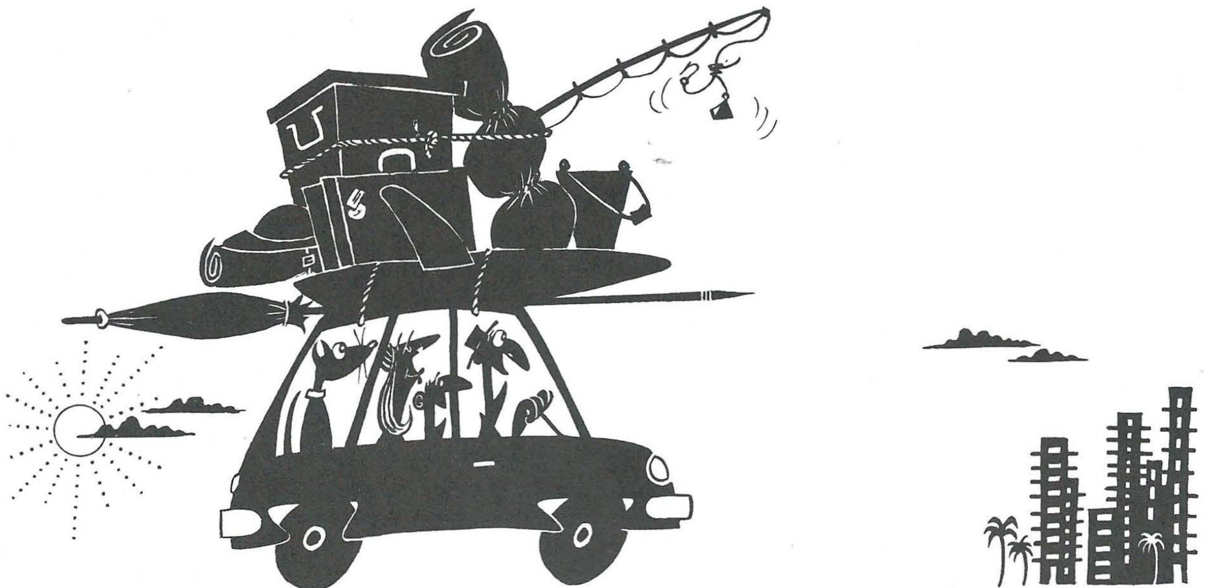
Minnie yawned. "Day trips are such a bore," she said. "Nothing ever happens."

End

COMMENTARIES (THE DAY AFTER):

Jack Jr: The trouble with this story is that it perpetuates the myth that it's possible to live a valid, resistant life as a sort of floating enclave within the capitalist system, whereas we know in fact that the system so dominates our lives it is impossible to escape it. Even the forms and styles of our attempts to escape are simply responses to the dominant order; I mean here's the family driving along in a hire-purchase car they don't even own, spending money they haven't yet earnt, buying everything on credit, and ending up in the most vulgar symbol of contemporary capitalism of all: Surfers Paradise. Some escape! Like Douglas Stewart's "Silkworms", they think they are free but they're not. The relationships in the family are all conventional: nuclear, male-dominated, hierarchical, a sort of reproduction at the personal level of the economic order – which is what you'd expect. The culture we swallow in the car and in the Big Banana is coercive and manipulative. My sisters seem to like everything indiscriminately – I've told 'em that before, but they're young. The argument doesn't do anything like justice to Adorno. I like my own parodic role in the story, but the whole narrative is weighted against the reality of how things are.

Mum: I'm a bit sorry I'm reduced to Mum instead of being a real person. Art imitating life. Still, I liked the sense of community in the car, which in a way answers Jack Jr; we try to enact in our present lives what we demand of the future. That's the way we resist. Jack Jr's right about a lot of things, but I think he's a bit pessimistic; if everything's as controlled as he says we might as well give up. Me, well, I think we've got to resist even if



we think it's futile because it's the moral thing to do, and anyhow I don't really think it's futile, it's like kids' play-dough, the social order reflects every thumbprint ... also you can create alternatives ... if it were impossible to resist in any way I can't see how you could ever have reform, revolution, any sort of change at all ... the story *feels* like our family, it's pretty democratic despite Jack, Jack my husband ... but he's learning, the kids have educated him ... anyhow I've tried to explain to Jack Jr that of course we absorb everything around us but we modify it too, choose and reject ... he's a bit determinist at the moment ... testing it ... I like the idea, though it's a bit fanciful, of a car full of cultural sub-machineguns ... the story needs a sequel really ... at the moment it's merely evocative because it presents a series of ironies.

Me: Well, I think the story's a bit unfair to me because I come across as a sort of gormless teenager who likes everything, except of course I do *see* everything even if I don't say much, which is how I sort of think I am, at the moment anyhow, also I like the way everyone's good-humored, more or less, a long car trip can get you down; Dad's quite funny but I agree with Mum most of the time; Jack Jr's okay for a brother; I agree with a lot of what he says in the story because most of the stuff I see and listen to is junk, I know that; I just don't feel so fierce about it. I take what I like and leave the rest. Minnie's still working it out; I suppose I am too but I know one thing, it's going to change in my life because I'm going to change it. I think. The story describes the way things are for the moment, so it's got to be wrong.

Dad: I thought it was a story about a car trip.

Editor: I'm not sure the sequel works, but we'll leave it in for now.

Reader: (please fill in) ______________________________

____

____

____

This story will appear in Craig McGregor's forthcoming collection Real Lies.

THE NEW AUSTRALIAN NATIONALISM (ON TV)

excuse me, what are you doing
with a flag in your hand?

the tv sports world
has a military feel

underneath that tracksuit
beats a heart of steel,

a natural resource,
a national naivety –

the new australian nationalism
prime time, on tv.

MIKE LADD

The Other Side of the Ocean

DESMOND O'GRADY

Andrew Sinclair's biography Jack *and research on London's Australian sojourn provided background for "The Other Side of the Ocean", but it is not documentary. The Jack London story set in Sydney, "A Piece of Steak", gave more insight into London than do his letters from Australia. The London-Crewe meeting is invented.*

The various scenes of the play flow into one another as they occur in Jack Crewe's memory.

Production notes:

Black and white should be the only colors used.

Sections from the film on the Johnson-Burns fight are to be used. An edited version of this is held in the National Film Archives at the National Library, Canberra. This could be run without cuts in theatre foyers before the play begins.

Norman Lindsay's fight illustration (The Bulletin, 26 November 1908) can be used to advertise the play.

The letter of 2 May 1909 is from *Letters of Jack London* edited by King Hendricks and Irving Shephard (London 1966).

This play has been revised since being 'workshopped' at the Australian National Playwrights' Conference, Canberra 1982.

Characters:

Jack London	Author
Jack Crewe	Journalist as a young man Journalist as an old man
Tommy Burns	Boxer
Tassy Short	Wharfie
Andrew	Aboriginal
Nakata	London's Japanese houseboy

Sydney: the present and late 1908 to early 1909.

SCENE I

Old Crewe is seated front left. An unseen interviewer has asked him about London and will run a film of the Johnson-Burns fight to stimulate his memory.

CREWE: London? Course I remember! Buckingham Palace, Marble Arch, Pall Mall . . . HE SINGS FEEBLY "You can see him walking down the Strand with an independent air . . . BREAKS OFF Eh? Oh! *Jack* London! Too right I remember. Famous writer. *Call of The Wild; White Fang; The Sea Wolf.* Spent a lot of time with him for an article: "London in Sydney".

People thought Jack came over here to cover the Johnson-Burns stoush but he was just convalescing from a bad spell on his yacht in the Solomons. He was a worse case then than I am now in this home for wrinklies. Bit of a shock for Jack who made such a thing of his physique . . . the Blonde Beast . . . Adonis . . . all that sort of thing. We all find the old body jacks up on us – London earlier than most. Ready? The film'll help me remember.

CREWE COMMENTS AS FILM BEGINS

BURNS SPARS That's Tommy in the gym: short-arsed bastard but if he let fly I reckon he'd snap the other feller off at the hips. JOHNSON FIGHTS AN UNKNOWN OPPONENT That's Johnson rubbishing someone. Look at the size of him! Chased Burns around the world to get a go at him. SHOT OF RUSHCUTTER'S BAY STADIUM Here we are – the stadium built at Rushcutter's Bay just for the fight. Warm day it was. RINGSIDE SHOT There's Jack at the ringside – in the cap. And that's me beside him! FILM STOPS Did you pick me? I wasn't always an old codger. Know what Johnson did? Swilled water and spat it over Jack. CHUCKLES Knew who he was, see? Jack wanted to climb into the ring to get at him, but it was Johnson's show all the way.

Sensitive soul Jack – sensitive about himself, that is. Know the type? It takes time to get their measure, only to find they've had yours all along.

Red-ragger he was called. *The Iron Heel, People of the Abyss*: a prophet of Socialism and Brotherhood. Only he arrived with a bloody Jap servant in tow – the first socialist millionaire.

You should've seen him tear into his tucker – always underdone, red-raw. Wolfed it down. That was his nickname – "Wolf". More a loner than a packleader for mine. Lived half-a-dozen lives by the time he was thirty-two, but I was with him on his thirty-third birthday and he seemed an old man.

How'd you get on to me anyway? Scraping the bottom of the barrel, aren't you? Mine was just a run-of-the-mill article about Jack, but if I'd written what I knew I'd've

made people sit up. The London story was my big chance – and I blew it.

First spotted him at the gym where Johnson and Burns trained. Ever been to a gym? It was my first time – never forgotten it. STANDS Punching bags and speed balls ... red knickers ... long johns and rugby jumpers. Shadow boxing before full-length mirrors ... pausing every now and then to admire themselves. Jabbing at nothing ... thumbs flicking their noses, backpedalling, hissing like air brakes. They circle, weave, jab, uppercut – a ballet gone mad! A regular ten-ring circus. LONDON APPEARS DOWNSTAGE RIGHT There's London breathing it in, high on sweat and linament. He's London the laborer today, slacks and open shirt, cap on his tousled hair, servant nowhere in sight.

And there's me, HE GIVES HIS HAT TO YOUNG CREWE, WHO ENTERS FROM LEFT twenty-three years old and green as grass. Breath deep – our sparring begins. OLD CREWE EXITS

YOUNG CREWE: Mr London?
LONDON: Jack'll do.
CREWE: I'm Jack also. Jack Crewe.
LONDON: It'll have to be Crewe then. I've handled many.
CREWE: Can I spend some time with you for an article? We're after your real story – and what you think of Australia.
LONDON: Australia! Look what your goddam doctors've done to my cheek! I can thank them for this scar.
CREWE: It's thumbs down?
LONDON: Don't expect me to welcome being scarred.
CREWE: But how ...?
LONDON: Experimenting with arsenic. Try it on the Yankee drifter, he's so far gone he won't know.
CREWE: They couldn't be that callous.
LONDON: Incompetent then. Look, at the moment, covering the fight's as much as I can manage. Read my books, plunder my articles.
CREWE: I've read everything. I'm after the true story.
LONDON: By now there isn't any: there's only the public prints. They're my script.
CREWE: There must be more.
LONDON: More? I've lived more lives than a cat, and you want more.
CREWE: ...The story behind the stories.
LONDON: Stick to the script, Crewe; it's safer for both of us. And it makes your work easier – go away and write it from clips.
CREWE: Things must look different here ... the other side of the ocean.
LONDON: You jab on the break like the Boston Tar Baby, dangerous infighter ... It's the same ocean but things *do* look different. You wonder if you should keep going, circle the world, or head back home. "The other side of the ocean" – not bad Crewe, for a beginner. You surprise me; maybe you should hang around. Try this telescope.
CREWE: In here?
LONDON: What do you see?
CREWE: I spy Tommy Burns, as far away as Wollongong, bamboozling his sparring partner. And zombies prancing like lunatics.
LONDON: Because you distanced them. Take a look at yourself in the mirror.
CREWE: A shiner! Practical joker on top of everything else.
LONDON: Trick telescope. My Christmas present for Tommy – the only way he'll get a black eye this season. You'll never understand anyone, Crewe, from a distance. Those zombies'll be slum kids trying to leave the slums behind. It's rock honest to fight your way up. You a city boy?
CREWE: I grew up in the country.
LONDON: So those washed-out eyes are from staring at far horizons. Your kind can be slaughtered before they realize they've been in a fight. How long've you been hounding headliners?
CREWE: Been on shipping rounds. This is my first feature. It'd be great if I could get my by-line on something special.
LONDON: You think I'll let you rip my heart out for that? To give you a leg-up? You count on that sheepish smile taking you a long way.
CREWE: No I don't ... it's not ... I ...
LONDON: Bullseye Crewe. *You* want it. Remember it's you against me – and there can only be one winner. You'll simply see another zombie, though, if you keep your distance. Get in close but never drop your guard. You don't look tough enough to take it on the chin – you missed a slum schooling. San Francisco's slums are tough as any. Brawling on the wharves at fifteen. No real home, mother too busy looking after my sister's boy, father ... a question mark. Slums are where you look up the backside of capitalism. And see that, if you don't fight back, the Chinese and Wops'll take over. I was handy with my fists: had to be. Look at this photo.
CREWE: Past it now?
LONDON: Don't you believe it. I could go a few rounds with Tommy. He can give me five years but we're the same build, same height. CALLS Tommy – Tommy! For this young cynic's benefit, I'd like to go a few rounds. HE RIPS OFF HIS SHIRT, CREWE HELPS HIM WITH GLOVES, HE IS WEARING GYM SHOES
BURNS FROM A DISTANCE; IRONICALLY: Don't wreck me, Jack, before I get at L'il Arthur.
LONDON: Gentle workout, Tommy – keep that in mind.
BURNS: Come in fightin'.
LONDON SMACKS ONE GLOVE AGAINST OTHER: Great sound – sweeter still when it's sinking into Johnson's gut. Easy now Tommy.
BURNS: Go for my head HE BLOCKS LONDON'S LEAD No. HE WEAVES OUT OF RANGE No.
LONDON: Watch it Tommy – these fangs are real. BURNS CONTINUES TO BLOCK LONDON'S LEADS BUT JACK SWITCHES TO A BODY BLOW
BURNS: Ouch – I said the head, not the ribs!
LONDON PUFFED: Expect sneaky tactics from the nig.
BURNS MASSAGING HIS RIBS: You got some weight into that, sailor. Can't track a moving target but you're no novice. Wouldn't like to tackle the coon yourself?

LONDON: When I'm fit again Tommy.
CREWE: For training, Johnson runs down kangaroos, hunts rabbits and wrenches their heads off!
BURNS: Only there's not going to be a rabbit at Rush-cutter's. Don't worry: Johnson's more yellow than black. I'm off for a rubdown. AS HE LEAVES, HE HUMS "DANNY BOY"
LONDON: Pull these gloves off, will you Crewe. HE STILL BREATHES HEAVILY That took a lot out of me. Barely moved but feel filleted. Ah, the smell of leather! As a boy I dreamed of arriving here. I used to look past Alcatraz and think: you can go anywhere through the Golden Gate, to Japan, China, Australia ... they're just waiting for you. Well, here I am. Did I look as if I could blacken Tommy's eye even without the telescope? I'd rather win a big fight than write the great American novel.
CREWE: I wouldn't punt on you.
LONDON: Put it all on Tommy against Johnson – he'll thrash L'il Arthur. What a stupid nickname: L'il Arthur! Mine wasn't a bad showing, though, for a convalescent. HE SHOWERS
CREWE: I can't get keen about such a vicious sport.
LONDON: Violent, HE SHOUTS ABOVE THE SHOWER not vicious. A sneer's worse than a punch in the teeth. And you've more defence against an uppercut than against some canned food.
CREWE: It's making money out of one man bashing another man's brains in.
LONDON: No one forces 'em into the ring. Ask Tommy if he's unhappy with his £6000 purse. He'll wish there were more of these ... Boxing Days. Takes most professional men six years to earn as much. And Johnson'll be happy with £1500 for a sock on the jaw – better than being a longshoreman in Galveston. More than twenty thousand'll be willing to pay up to ten guineas for a seat. Best thing that's happened since I've been in Sydney. PUNCHES WALL I want to see Johnson thrashed so much it hurts. Throw me a towel. AS HE DRIES HIMSELF, HUMS "DANNY BOY" After a workout, you see the gym with new eyes, Crewe. You should try it.
CREWE: Not my cup of tea.
LONDON: Keeping your distance – you need to slum a little. ANDREW APPROACHES
ANDREW: Boss, is you waitin' t'see Jack Johnson?
LONDON: Yes boy, I'se waitin' to see him thumped.
CREWE: He's training here later.
LONDON: What a model for any darkie!
ANDREW: I want to learn here.
CREWE: You'd have to pay.
ANDREW: I sell bloody possum skins. Already I fight good.
LONDON: What's your name?
ANDREW: Andrew.
LONDON: Not Andy – Andrew! That hair could be coon or kanaka.
CREWE: He's half-caste. Try after the fight, Andrew. You might be able to help around the gym.
ANDREW: Are yous boxers?
CREWE: He is. I'm just a writer. "DANNY BOY" IS HEARD
LONDON: That's Tommy's team having their Christmas party in advance. Let's join 'em. When they're carousing again after the victory, I'll be sending the good news to the States: they'll be dancing on Broadway, lighting fires on Nob Hill! "DANNY BOY" IS HEARD MORE STRONGLY

SCENE II

LONDON AND CREWE DRINKING IN A BAR

CREWE: Wasn't Burns' party enough?
LONDON: You don't think I'm here to drink, do you Crewe? LONDON IS ALREADY A LITTLE DRUNK I'm here to get my money on Tommy.
CREWE: Why'd Johnson have to chase Burns around the world if Tommy's so strong?
LONDON: They couldn't fight in the States because if by some low trick Johnson won, the nig'd get uppity. Johnson doesn't know his place: thinks its yours – or mine. Something you can't understand here. But Tommy's grey matter's white – that's what counts. He's psyched Sambo. He's told the world he'll whip Johnson – the flash nig's never run up against someone with twice as much spunk as himself. Moreover Tommy's tough as rawhide, lightning fast – comes from being a lacrosse champ. And packs a godawful kick in both hands – he can throw sleepers from any position. Johnson won't hashhouse Tommy.
CREWE: But he's only five-foot-seven – he's giving away six or seven inches and two stone.
LONDON: Did you see Tommy weave away from my leads? Johnson'll be like those zombies thrashing air before it's over: L'il Arthur'll be wondering if he's L'il Martha. That's the story I want to tell America. What's that sinister green liquid, Crewe?
CREWE: Squash – so I can take accurate notes.
LONDON: POURS HIS BEER OVER CREWE'S HEAD In the name of the Herald and the Holy ...
CREWE: Hey lay off! I'll smell of beer. ANNOYED, DRIES HIMSELF
LONDON: Join the crowd. Unwind. At least have one now. ORDERS Two ... schooners. Take a swipe at me if it'll help – I can't even last a round, as I found out against Tommy. But I was fit to sail around the world when I set out on the *Snark*: she makes everything down there on the harbor look fit for the scrap heap ... if I have a long talk to her, she could just about sail around the world by herself. But *I'll* never make it, Crewe, never make it now. No Crewe, I'm not broken, I'm fused. In the Solomons, the world's edge – you peer over and see the pit, cannibalism, disease ... One day we accepted an invitation to accompany blackbirders: the boat was full of disease-ridden kanakas. Ringworm, ghastly tropical sores, blood poisoning: a fine lot you're getting to cut your sugar cane. Bloodthirsty!
CREWE: Is all this fair dinkum?
LONDON: Fair what?
CREWE: On the level.
LONDON: You've got an exclusive, Crewe.
CREWE: But is it true?
LONDON: Why worry? If you don't want to write it, I will. We ran aground on a reef and, like vultures out of the blue, boats full of screaming warriors arrived. They

were already licking their lips when another blackbirder rescued us.

CREWE: Can't we get beyond the same old adventure story?

LONDON: Prefer horror? I had eight yaws, bad as tumors; fainting fits; ulcer in the arse; teeth a torture; yellow fever. I couldn't cut a piece of meat with knife and fork. My toenails grew as thick as they're long even though I filed them each evening, my hands swelled like boxing gloves. Agony to touch the helm.

CREWE: It's just too much. I can't believe it.

LONDON: No matter Crewe. Readers will. I took a steamer for Sydney – and hospital. Your doctors scarred me but got me on my feet again. Most other physiques, they tell me, would've packed up. There's life in the Old Wolf yet.

CREWE: You want to be a wolf, marauder? Blackbirding's a fine sport for a socialist! Kanakas are treated worse than slaves.

LONDON: Do you want to get a story or get indignant? We whites've always been robbers – on land and sea. In our blood, we can't get away from it. But at least we make something of what we rob. It's the only reason you've got a spanking new nation, Crewe, so don't get on your high horse. Where's the bettor you said was coming?

CREWE: A bunch of them always drink here.

LONDON: Can't you realize I'd go blackbirding just for the hell of it? No good sitting there sober as a judge passing silent sentence. We're two of a kind, Crewe: you want to make your money out of flesh, sweat, agonies: mine! In your quiet way you're a headhunter yourself; ever think of it? Headhunter. And I suspect you . . . shrink'em. LAUGHS

CREWE: "Socialist's Success Story" – that's the editor's angle.

LONDON: His timing's bad. Success story! . . . The light in the tropics, blazing white, seared me. Now I'm uneasy about it even in Sydney. Still it's not bad here, a white man's country if you're careful, but up in the islands it's molten, the sea a mercury mirror.

Too much depth's the problem now, Crewe, not too much distance: way out of your depth. No good staring as if I'm a sea monster – that's the shortest way back to shipping rounds.

SHORT: This your mate with all the money? I'm Tassy Short.

CREWE: This is Jack London.

LONDON: Want to bet on the fight, do you?

SHORT: I'm easy. Fancy Burns?

LONDON: I know what a mauler Tommy can be.

SHORT: Saw him beat our Bill Squires here last August. A machine. I reckon the champ's a two to one favorite.

LONDON: Ah no. Odds are better elsewhere.

SHORT: Nice to have met you, mate.

LONDON: What's your hurry?

SHORT: Try elsewhere.

LONDON: OK. Tommy'll maul him at any price. I'll take twos. Can you match this?

CREWE: That's a fortune!

SHORT: She's apples.

CREWE: Sure?

SHORT: Stick to your squash, blondie.

LONDON: How can I be sure I'll collect?

SHORT: Me mates here'll stand for me.

LONDON: Well I've collected in tougher dives than this. Crewe, let's run around the Domain. Don't believe me? If you're awash with squash, forget it.

SHORT: How'll I collect?

CREWE: Everyone knows who he is.

SHORT: We don't know *what* he is though. Where's he stay?

LONDON: The Metropole. Don't worry – I'd come here but I won't have to; I know boxing from the inside.

SHORT: Know a thing or two about it meself – apart from having a soft spot, as a wharfie, for me mate from Galveston. And what I know is, if it's an honest fight, a good little man's never yet beaten a good big man.

SCENE III

"LOOP" OF JOHNSON REPEATEDLY KNOCKING DOWN BURNS IS PROJECTED
LONDON'S HOTEL ROOM AS LONDON AND CREWE ENTER
NAKATA, LONDON'S HOUSEBOY, IS READING A COMIC

LONDON: You need an earthquake like San Francisco's to get rid of these hotels.

CREWE: At least open the window.

LONDON: It'll still be muggy. OPENS THE WINDOW AND LOOKS OUT Only thing that keeps me sane is that I see a slice of the harbor. Nakata, didn't you get my medicine?

NAKATA: It wasn't leady, Mr London. I glo again in five minutes.

LONDON: Crewe – Nakata. Fine boy – honorary white man. Better nurse than any in your hospitals. I've been weak and wobbly here. Miserable. Hospitals and hotels: that's all I've seen of Sydney and it's hard to say which's been worse for me; probably the Stadium today. Looked like a casualty ward when Johnson was finished with Burns. Sit there. INDICATES TYPEWRITER How'm I going to tell this? It was the slaughter of the Armenians! Try: "Personally I was with Burns all the way. He is a white man and so am I. Naturally I wanted to see the white man win . . ." But a white midget couldn't win! What a thrashing! HE DRIVES HIS FIST INTO HIS PALM, THEN HAMMERS IT ON THE TABLE Johnson's punching bag. Give me a tot of that rye, Crewe, and help yourself. Hair of the bitch: it stopped my pain in the tropics, it might help now. TELEPHONE TRILLS I can't see anyone, autograph hunters or journalists. HE HANGS UP BUT IT TRILLS AGAIN. TO NAKATA Do we know a Tassy Short?

CREWE: That's the fellow you bet with.

LONDON: Tell him I'll see him at the pub, I'm working. HE HANGS UP BUT THE PHONE RINGS AGAIN Five of them? A posse! If you can't handle'em, let one up – only one. TO CREWE Doesn't trust me to pay up! Couldn't you've found some other bettor?

CREWE: I'm not a betting man.

LONDON: I can believe that. Nakata give the caller this. HANDS HIM AN ENVELOPE. KNOCKING HEARD: NAKATA OPENS DOOR

NAKATA TO SHORT: Mr London tell me to glive you this.
SHORT IGNORES ENVELOPE AND ENTERS: Goodday. Couldn't believe me eyes – I mean your pay-out clerk.
LONDON GOES TO CONFRONT SHORT: I'm working.
SHORT: Nice work if you can get it. Liquid lunch; I wouldn't say no.
LONDON: I have to work on my fight article.
SHORT: We're all workers mate – but it's time to change trade when you can't break for a yarn. Felt sorry for Burns – I'll never forget Johnson guying him for thirteen rounds, then ripping him apart in the fourteenth.
LONDON: I'd rather forget it.
SHORT: For me it was wharfies-of-the-world-unite.
LONDON: Take him downstairs, Nakata, and give him the envelope at the exit.
SHORT: If you was boss, mate, the union'd jack up on you in no time. Colored labor too. ON WAY OUT, TO NAKATA Hope your boss knows more about writing than boxing.
CREWE: Johnson looks lazy in the ring, that's what beats me.
LONDON: Beat Burns too. It's not laziness though – it's relaxation. L'il Arthur can fight, no two ways about it. But I can't stand his acting in the ring: rubber face for the crowd, waving to them, mugging for the camera. I want to see someone shut that mouth.
CREWE: I *like* the way he talks: "Ahm givin' you yo' medicine in small doses, Tahmy." Strong medicine.
LONDON: Pass me another dose of mine: I'll need it to get through the article. I'm not giving him a wider audience for his smartass remarks.
CREWE: Aren't you going to tell it straight? What about: "Yo' white – like the flag of surrender."
LONDON: You're making that up.
CREWE: You must've heard it. You're just angry because he spat water over you.
LONDON: Spotted me straight away. Should be up a tree in Africa.
CREWE: Says our abos are smart to make their hunting weapons. And that his favorite author's Herbert Spencer.
LONDON: Herbert Spencer! That's a name he must have picked up from me. He's really flash. Holding Tommy and waving to the crowd: "*Ah* can see Tahmy though he's so small." Should be in vaudeville: "A hundred-to-one he won't black ma eye." That won't be in the article either.
NAKATA OFFERS LONDON MONEY: Mr Lassy sent this back.
LONDON WITHDRAWS HIS HAND AS IF BURNT: I gave you the right amount. He's getting at me.
NAKATA: Mr Lassy say probably you need it.
LONDON ANGRY: You'd've done better to pocket it. Keep it – and get my medicine quickly so I'll have the energy to describe that Ethiopian butchering a pygmy.
CREWE: But you'll leave out the best bits. You're no reporter.
LONDON: If you could handle this better, Crewe, *you'd* be covering it for half-the-world.
CREWE: People'll see it at the cinema anyway.
LONDON: Writers never had to compete with a movie camera before. But they'll read me first. I'll leave out Tommy's stupid comebacks – "you cur! you big dog!" Johnson won the slanging as well as the slugging: everytime he got Tommy's goat, he had a sitting target. Tommy should've continued to refuse to put his title on the line – he did it just for money.
CREWE: That carries weight coming from a socialist millionaire.
LONDON SINGS: "O Danny Boy ..." Bah! And photographed on the steps of St Mary's with Cardinal Moran! Didn't do him much good, did it? Tommy – he's so stingy! Invited me to lunch last week and left before paying. What a hiding! I'd have done better myself – if fit. Give me another swig – I'll start training tomorrow. Tommy was an angry little cocksparrow. That's the trouble: he's really a Wop – no control, blew up every time Johnson baited him. Tommy Burns? Don't believe it. Real name's Brusso – Noah Brusso. You've got to go below the surface, Crewe. Brusso, not Burns. I should've kept that in mind. Against Jack Johnson what odds'd you give Noah Brusso? Canadian Wop. I should've known he'd blow up.
CREWE: That fits: a Wop-hater too.
LONDON: You love 'em all, Crewe, because they've never got at your gonads. Ever seen a buck nigger eyeing a white woman? Jim Jeffries always refused to fight a nigger for the championship. Tommy could've done the same if he weren't so greedy. Now Jeffries'll have to come out of retirement: AS IF READING A HEADLINE our great white hope. He's so big he'll make L'il Arthur look a midget. Let's drink to it. Here write this: "Jeffries must emerge from his alfalfa farm and remove that smile from Johnson's face. Jeff, it's up to you!" Haven't you got it?
CREWE: The what-farm?
LONDON: Alfalfa.
CREWE: Alfalfa. Spell it?
LONDON: Just as it sounds – alfalfa. I've never worried about spelling.
CREWE: Alfalfa? What is it?
LONDON: You tell me. You're the country boy.
CREWE: Never heard of it. What's it look like?
LONDON: Cattle feed. Grows about that high. Green. You dry it and cattle think it's Christmas – or Boxing Day.
CREWE: Lucerne! That's it.
LONDON: Lucerne – I thought it was only in Switzerland.
CREWE: I thought London was only in England – made life a lot easier.
LONDON: To the wandering wens. THEY DRINK Why do I have to write this rotten tribute to Johnson? I'd rather sail off – anywhere. What do you say, Crewe?
CREWE: Alfalfa!
LONDON: Alfalfa!! LAUGHS Here's to alfalfa! THEY SWIG Sounds like another lousy Wop champ: Al Falfa. Brusso-Burns is more than enough. You've been useful, Crewe; you're a white man. Almost human when you've had a few drinks, less like a recording angel. Word to the wise – the pace's quicker here than down on the farm. Get into some other game where you don't have to hit below the belt: More in your line. When it's you or the next man, you'll never decide that he has to go under.
CREWE: Alfalfa. She'll be right, Jack.
LONDON: Alfalfa. That's it. We'll stick with "alfalfa",

otherwise readers could think Jim Jeffries has a snow farm in the Alps. Lucerne! LONG DRAWN OUT Al-fal-fa: seems to grow on you. If you like Al Falfa, wait till you hear his musical sister, who was born with drums in her ears and plays on the linoleum: Doremi Fa! Jim'll be stronger than ever after alfalfarming . . .

CREWE: Alf-alf-a. Alfa-can't get me tongue around it. This comes easier. DRINKS FROM BOTTLE THEN PASSES IT TO LONDON

LONDON: The alfalfa cure for L'il Arfur. Only one thing wrong with alfalfa, Crewe. You can't make rye from it. Pity, 'cause rye's my cure; rye'll set me right.

SCENE IV

LONDON IS SKIPPING IN THE GYM

LONDON PANTING**:** New way of convalescing.

CREWE: Now you're one of the gym zombies.

LONDON: No, I'm coming back to my body. My best mate: sterling service in the Klondike. We had to carry packs fourteen miles up the Chilkoot pass. The lower slopes were so hot we steamed up in our underwear. You don't take notes anymore, Crewe . . .

CREWE: Not of what I already know backwards. Chapter Twelve: London triumphs against all odds – again. Don't you get tired of rehashing the same story?

LONDON: You know I didn't want to go ahead with this.

CREWE: The only new thing's the Solomons-scare story, but I want something else.

LONDON: You've only two problems, Crewe: you don't know what you want and you're determined to get it.

CREWE: I'm waiting for you to talk about when you're not conquering the world. How do you live with yourself?

LONDON: What about you Crewe? What's the real story? Married?

CREWE: No.

LONDON: Too risky, eh? Still under the parental roof?

CREWE: I board at Cremorne.

LONDON: Board at Cremorne! It's not exciting enough to sell any papers Crewe. BURNS ENTERS DOWNSTAGE I recognize that smashed-up old man: Signor Brusso!

BURNS: Just picking up my training gear – I'm off.

LONDON: A few days too late. You look as if you've been through a mangle, but you asked for it. Couldn't you have kept your mouth shut?

BURNS: Why don't *you* do that for once?

LONDON: Easy-up; I meant why didn't you get on with the fight and ignore the slanging match. Why'd you have to fight him, anyway?

BURNS: That's my job. What's yours?

LONDON: I'm seeing if I couldn't do your's better.

BURNS: We could see that straight away.

LONDON: Calm down, Tommy. I need a good meal: you owe me one. Remember?

BURNS: I'll buy you one when *I* have to write about *you*. Anyway you invited yourself to our Christmas party.

LONDON: Stick to lacrosse, Tommy.

BURNS: Here's your trick telescope, sailor – you know what you can do with it. HE LEAVES

LONDON: Still world champ – but of soreheads now. Where was I?

CREWE: Crazed with cold in the Klondike. Ten thousand miles from telling me what I'm after.

LONDON: You're not with me, Crewe: you don't see that's the way capitalism wants us. In the Klondike, we grubbed for capitalist gold. You must've beaten someone else for your job, Crewe. Did you offer to stand aside for him?

CREWE: You'll be different when socialism dawns?

LONDON PAUSE**:** I don't know Crewe. PAUSE It's not going to happen tomorrow.

CREWE: How'm I to explain to my readers a socialist with a $30,000 yacht and a Japanese servant?

LONDON: Don't explain it, they'll love to hate me. Anyway, Nakata's a deckboy – I'm keeping him with me because I like him. ANDREW APPROACHES The Woolloomooloo gouger again – suppose he thinks *he* beat Tommy.

ANDREW: Did ya see 'im boss? I bring skins for Mr Johnson.

LONDON: You won't find him here: he's paid even for training now. Search the vaudeville theatres: if he's not on stage, try the chorus girls' dressing room.

CREWE: You'll be giving Andrew ideas – Johnson's his hero.

LONDON: He's every coon's hero – back home they'll be celebrating in the streets, kicking up a terrible din and picking off a few whites.

ANDREW: Mr Johnson punch like thunder. Andrew like to do that.

LONDON: Only your opponent throws both thunder and lightning. You have to be able to take it: that's where your kind falls down. Let's see what you're good for, darkie.

ANDREW: Uh?

LONDON: Not if you're scared.

ANDREW: I get changed

CREWE: Jack, he's only a youngster.

LONDON: And since seeing Johnson, he can't wait to smash a white face.

CREWE: Fighting him's a crazy idea.

LONDON: Crazy ideas spark me. Ever heard of a dog reverting to a wolf? A crazy idea which made me a mint. ANDREW RETURNS Want to break the news about the Marquis of Queensberry to him, Crewe, or will it be too big a shock?

CREWE: You know the rules Andrew?

ANDREW: Yair boss, no hitting low.

CREWE: Where's the bell? I'll clap instead. AS HE CLAPS, LONDON HITS ANDREW

LONDON: Taste that! I'm not going to chase you. Can't hit you until I see the yellow of your eyes. LONDON HITS ANDREW AGAIN Walk up or you'll never be another L'il Arthur. LONDON HITS HIM AGAIN Don't like it, eh? Customary Jim Crow courage. LONDON HITS HIM ONCE MORE Not used to a feint and then the old one-two. Thought white was weak. LONDON HITS ANDREW AGAIN

CREWE CLAPS TO STOP SLAUGHTER**:** That's enough Jack. You're puffed.

LONDON: No, I'm enjoying this. Teach him a lesson – if

he's game to continue.
CREWE: You all right Andrew? Can you go on?
ANDREW: Me good punching bag boss. Can I hit 'im?
CREWE: Haven't you been trying?
ANDREW: No boss.
CREWE: Try or you'll be flattened. CREW CLAPS
LONDON: Don't hang back. LONDON HITS ANDREW AGAIN One to remember me by. ANDREW HITS LONDON That's better. ANDREW HITS LONDON AGAIN Where'd you learn that? Let's see what color you are. LONDON HITS ANDREW BUT HE COUNTERPUNCHES Ugh ... Ugoaaah.
CREWE: Go easy Andrew. ANDREW HITS LONDON AT WILL You're supposed to be only sparring. CLAPS. ANDREW STOPS, THEN LONDON FELLS HIM Jack! That's a foul!
LONDON: We fought tough on the waterfront – it's all nigs understand.
CREWE: He's not moving!
LONDON: Where are the salts?
CREWE: Killer's hack.
LONDON: You going to preach fair play while they smash whites to smithereens?
CREWE: I won't let you get away with this.
LONDON THICK COUGH**:** The old lungs've had it. Worn out. HE WHEEZES I need help, not threats. Here's the salts – they've got no resistance that's it. WORRIED He's taking a long time!
CREWE: It'll go bad for you if he doesn't ...
LONDON: Good, he's coming to. Don't know what got into me. Must be the treatment – makes me cranky. COUGHS Lungs gone. Have to stop smoking. All right, darkie? Saw stars, eh? Ayee! Forget him: my leg! Massage my damned calf. Cramp. Ayee! Ah, that's better. Couldn't have fought on.
CREWE: Why'd you get him into the ring?
LONDON: Breath deep, darkie; that's it. Up you get. If you want to train here, I'll pay. OK? Say for six months.
ANDREW: Thanks boss.
LONDON: Make it a year. Keep quiet about me paying, that's all. Let's get on the harbor in the next few days, Crewe. I have to get away from my hotel. And if you want any more out of me, leave this goddam fight out of your article.

SCENE V

LONDON AND CREWE ARE SAILING A DINGHY ON THE HARBOR WITH THE AMERICAN AT THE TILLER.

LONDON: Ease that sheet.
CREWE: It's OK. I know the harbor.
LONDON: But I know how to sail. Ease it, goddammit, or we'll keel over.
CREWE: We should put a reef in. Why'd I let myself in for this? You enjoy sitting there giving orders.
LONDON: Steering's not just sitting here – but I sure am enjoying it, especially as it's overcast. Bay's narrower than San Francisco's, different kind of challenge. Over there could be Sausalito.
CREWE: It's Manly.
LONDON: There's nothing, Crewe, like driving a hundred tons of wood and iron through a thousand tons of wind and waves.
CREWE: Didn't you have enough of sailing with the *Snark?*
LONDON: A fiasco – but because of sickness. We all had fever, two went mad. I dream of the *Snark* crew. They bob along behind me. I don't want to sail that way again.
CREWE: Following Dad from one country station to another, I dreamt of getting to Sydney, the harbor. When I came on holidays, my cousins took me fishing for leatherjackets but I was dead scared of sharks ...
LONDON: The bay's too cold for sharks. We've got seals – and fog. I couldn't wait to get into it. I slaved in a cannery until I saved $6 for an old centre-board skiff, then sailed all day on the bay – riding the steamships' rollers, following the clippers headed west, to Shanghai, Sydney ...

CREWE: We could clear the heads and light out for the Golden Gate.
LONDON: Nothing'd stop me if I were fitter and had the *Snark*. But I'd need a better deck-hand – lift that centre-board a bit. A bit, I said. Should've brought Nakata.
CREWE: What's wrong?
LONDON: Watch the boom: I learnt that from a cracked skull on my first sloop, *Razzle Dazzle*. I bought it when I was sixteen – for $300, and Trudy went with it.
CREWE: Whoa! If you were so slum-poor, where'd you get $300?
LONDON PAUSE**:** Mammy Jennie lent it.
CREWE: Mammy Jennie?
LONDON: My wet-nurse.
CREWE: Really! ... Mammy Jennie. And Trudy who came with the sloop?
LONDON: A great oyster pirate. We'd raid the beds. I'd

fend off rivals with a shotgun while Trudy collected oysters. A beauty too, in a wild way. At sixteen, I was Prince of the Oyster Beds. Rival pirates burnt the *Razzle Dazzle*. So I joined the Fish Patrol and arrested oyster thieves at gun-point. Exciting work.

CREWE: Have I got that right? First a pirate, then one of the pirate police?

LONDON: Sure I ... had to work the bay, I was a youngster.

CREWE: Pirate and policeman, millionaire and socialist: which side are you on?

LONDON: For you socialism's something you've read about. For me it's seeing what capitalism does to men in canneries, on sealers. The opportunists who call themselves socialists'll never bring about the big changes. Their socialism's flapdoodle. They're frightened of the Revolution.

You think all'll be well with a few more Labor votes. It'd be more help if you blew up parliament: picric acid's the thing. Politics is another game that's tougher than you think.

CREWE: I'm a Labor Party man; if I had a servant, a ship and a million dollars, I wouldn't keep spouting about socialism. I try to *live* what I believe.

LONDON: LAUGHS You'd refuse to write for the Hearst press, would you? Answer when you've had an offer. What were you doing at eighteen, Crewe?

CREWE: Shipping rounds.

LONDON: When I was eighteen, I marched on Washington with two thousand unemployed to found the Commonweal of Christ. That's where I first heard about socialism. I ended up in Eyrie jail. I'd dreamt of being in a madhouse, beaten by keepers and surrounded by screaming lunatics. Eyrie was worse: keepers not only beat the inmates, they mutilated'em. Men who stood up for their rights were thrown down steel stairs – they don't forget that lesson for the rest of their crippled lives. I've been running from the Black Pit ever since ... PAUSE dammit, the sun's coming through: ultra-violent violence.

CREWE: Don't know what I'm going to write.

LONDON: That's your worry, not mine.

CREWE: The story of that fight with Andrew, thought it'd make readers sit up.

LONDON: You're coming on, Crewe. Didn't think you had it in you: blackmail.

CREWE: I need ...

LONDON: Some succeed by talent but, if it's not there, you have to use what comes to hand. The important thing's to get your story; I mean it.

CREWE: Either the abo's story – or yours. The real one; if you still know which is the real one.

LONDON: Finally we clinch, Crewe. PAUSE some of the stories are well ... tarted up. That San Francisco fighter stuff. Rival oyster pirates did burn my sloop so I joined the Fish Patrol. Great feeling to edge through fog, invisible, ready to pounce – but I never arrested anyone at gunpoint.

CREWE: The truth at last.

LONDON: I knew it – for you, truth's always low-toned, cut-down. It takes courage to believe anything else. The tarted-up versions of my Bay adventures have their truth too. There are big men, Crewe, and little men living in a little place in a little part of the world because they haven't the courage to believe anything else's possible. You'll stay a good staff man, Crewe. And remember what your Tassy Short said? A good little man's never yet beaten a good big man.

CREWE: Trudy – the girl who went with the sloop?

LONDON: Figment.

CREWE: The $300 for the sloop. The dollars must've been real – if there was any sloop.

LONDON: From Mammy Jennie.

CREWE: Who was Mammy Jennie?

LONDON: NO REPLY

CREWE: Come on. I need something better than the story of you fouling Andrew ... who was she?

LONDON: Mammy Jennie. She ... looked after me because my mother was too damned busy.

CREWE: That *is* something. I thought only black women did that sort of thing.

LONDON: Mmmmmmm ...

CREWE LAUGHS**:** You mean Mammy Jennie ... was black. AFFECTS SOUTHERN ACCENT A black mammy. Oh my!

LONDON: Forget it Crewe. My mother could've ...

CREWE: Lawdy, Mistah London, ah think ah'll die. An' yo' still runnin'! Black mammy even had to buy yo' boat? Couldn't yo' stepdaddy afford it?

LONDON: He was only a nightwatchman. But as a boy the best times I had were fishing with him on the Bay ... just lazin' away, drowsing in the sun. I had so little boyhood, Crewe; you can grow old looking for the rest of it.

CREWE: A great story: at last, the real Jack London.

LONDON: Can't you see that jib's still too tight? Look out! Timber! SLOOP KEELS DANGEROUSLY Thought you knew the harbor.

CREWE: Thought you knew how to steer. There are sharks down there!

LONDON MEANING THE SAIL**:** Let it go! We can still go over. Have to bring her up into the wind.

CREWE: Stone the crows, that was close. Give us a hand with this centre-board. It's stuck.

LONDON: I can't.

CREWE: Give us a hand. MANAGES BY HIMSELF That's better. What's wrong?

LONDON: Cotton wool instead of muscles. Some days I'm OK, the next I tremble most of the time. It starts all of a sudden and makes me feel like a jellyfish. Frightens the wits ... A man never knows how many fights he's got in him – you find out only when you're losing the last.

CREWE: That's part of the story I want to tell, the real Jack London.

LONDON: You hit a man when he's down. But you get indignant when I fouled Andrew.

CREWE: What do you mean?

LONDON: It's just the same, Crewe, me fouling the young darkie and you showing me up like some Cremorne pensioner. Just the same: better if you admit it and go all the way. Go ahead Crewe, expose a convalescent's Calvary. It'll be a chance for the pack to savage me if you start the carnage.

CREWE: The real story's stronger than the legend.
LONDON: But I'm not strong enough for it to be told now, Crewe ... hell, look at me. Do I look thirty-three? I feel it's my ninety-third birthday and I'll never see the ninety-fourth. Stick to the San Francisco Fighter, the Klondike Kid, the Revolutionary Rouser ... and give me a chance.
CREWE: Why'd you tell me, then, about Mammy Jennie and the rest?
LONDON: I told you as a friend, Crewe.
CREWE: Don't know if I'll get another opportunity like this. Blast! Just my luck.
LONDON: A little thing like friendship shouldn't stop you, Crewe, if you want to become a Sydney shark.
CREWE: Well if you told me as a mate I wouldn't ... don't worry – I won't savage you.
LONDON: I need a breather. Maybe things look black simply because I'm run down. No wonder it's called "down under". Look Crewe – dolphins: they'll chase your sharks away. I'll never get their leaping, blazing beauty out of my brain. I caught some in the Marquesas. Blue, after being struck they turn pure gold; then, before they die, change into all the colors of the rainbow. Doomed but beautiful. I'd settle for that. It's the way to go Crewe: all the colors of the rainbow, none of your drab tones. It mightn't be long now. Steer straight Crewe. Jack's tired, Jack wants to go home.

OLD CREWE RETURNS AND SITS DOWNSTAGE LEFT.

OLD CREWE: He couldn't have been any tireder than I am now, but at least *he* had a home to go to. I didn't think that then; only that he was suddenly old, on one knee. I couldn't hit him when he was down. We'd become mates, I wouldn't expose the Blonde Beast as a mammy-reared thirty-three year old child lost on Sydney harbor.

I wrote an article but hid the real story that the strongman act was coming apart, Adonis aging. Did the decent thing instead of going for the kill and never hit my stride afterwards; before long I was shunted onto supplements, then administration. A quiet life. No regrets; or not many. But if I'd made a killing out of Jack, I wouldn't be here, treated like dirt. They never even take us to see the harbor ...

I got in close, as Jack advised, but dropped my guard. Jack warned me, I suppose. Never had a letter or postcard from him – what you'd expect from a mate. To read a letter from Jack, I had to buy a book of'em! Here's one he wrote on his voyage home. He says he's boxing every day. Listen: "The First Mate has a couple of beautiful black eyes I gave him. My straight left to the Second precipitated a gumboil ... And the straight lefts ... to the Third yesterday have swollen his nose to twice its normal size ..."

That was the invalid who begged me to lay-off. Next thing, he was watching a bullfight in Quito, farming in California and writing a whole library of books. Out here he was, well, pathetic, but he was smart enough to restrict it to an audience of one, then sealed my lips. To shut me up, see, he'd tried bullying and bluffing but finally succeeded by dragging his wing.

I wasn't even aware of it at the time, that's the beauty of it, but he cut my journalistic balls off. Kanaka-hunter from way back and that time it was my k-nackers. Less a socialist than a Survivor with a capital S – that's his story. Jack's ship was sinking in Sydney. But he saved himself before his Crewe.

Mr Hawke's Australia Day

DON WATSON

Overland is indebted to Don Watson and to Max Gillies, of the ABC's Gillies Report, for this transcript of a little-publicized but wildly-popular speech made by the Prime Minister in Canberra on Australia Day this year. Don Watson comments: "Incandescently silver under a silvery spotlight and moon, clinging to the mast of a miniature Australia II, the Prime Minister sailed past many thousands of adoring and rowdy Canberrans, gathered in the dark among the gum-trees lining the shores of Lake Burley Griffin. [Yes, this did happen – Ed.] *The following exhortation was delivered, after which the Prime Minister departed to the accompaniment of a mind-bending laser and fireworks display."*

The Prime Minister sails ashore to "See, The Conquering Hero Comes", full blast. He is accompanied by two bodyguards with ginger moustaches and poor-quality suits " the contemporary equivalent of a couple of courtiers. They facilitate his disembarkation in a laconic sort of way, proffer a Perrier, give him a brush, flash a mirror, dental inspection.

Hawke takes hold of the mike, as the aria ends. Big grin.

Ahh, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, ahh people of Canberra ... people of Australia as a whole as I understand this is going out on the telly to the whole of Australia where all Australians live, ahh, as a whole. First, let me say thank you to the organizers of this magnificent show for that world-class rendition of the song as I came on – what was it boys? I couldn't quite catch the words. See the ... see the conquering hero? Well. In respect of me? That's great. But just let me say that irrespective of who it was in respect of it'd make a bloody great national anthem – at least as long as I'm Prime Minister.

Now, ahh, second, let me in addition say thank you to Alan Bondy for lending us his sail and I suppose the Almighty for putting wind in it – but I've never needed him in the past and I don't see why I should now.

But, ahh, people of Australia, you know and I know, that there's more to national pride than winning at boats and losing at cricket – I mean we get excited on the day – I reckon I was the first bloke in history to get pissed on Perrier the day we won – but on a day like this, Australia Day, we remember all the other things of which I'm proud and of which all Australians are proud ... ahh of ... We ahh ...

LOOKS AT WATCH Ahh, did anyone hear what won the seventh at Harold Park? – Mickey had a nice tip. Ahh, by Mickey I mean the Special Minister of Stakes, I mean State. Try and find out what won, will you mate?

Now on a day like this, as I said – try not to interrupt me in future, pal. Good boy. As I said, on a day like this we remember those things, in the past mainly, which make us proud ...Ahh, ahh, ... for example ... ahh, I mean ... well, ahh. No, no ...

TO ONE OF THE AIDES Where the hell is a speech? – this is a perfect job for Freudenberg. Jesus Christ.

No, no ... well if you want to sneer ... yeah, well go on, the sneerers among you, the innuendo mongers, the Richard Carltons – it's easy for you. You've got time on your hands to sit around under the banyan tree contemplating your collective navel and remembering the things that make you proud on days like this, but as Prime Minister of this bloody country I've got a fair bit more on my plate.

But I'm still proud, let no-one question my pride. You don't stop having pride in your country just because you're Prime Minister of it.

But look, it's not my game to be divisive as you know – and , ahh, I can sense a certain tension out there – so perhaps I could tell you a joke, a joke you'll all like. CACKLE.

It's in respect of the Japanese Prime Minister and, ahh, CACKLE, CACKLE and the Queanbeyan geisha you see CACKLE, WHEEZE and Mickey Hodgeman GURGLE, Mickey Hodgeman's there GASP and Mr Nackers ... and, ahh GURGLE ahh ... ahh. No ... no, I won't go on with that joke. It's a sexist joke, and in the final analysis it's a racist joke – it's a divisive joke. And I'd like you to know I'm not proud of it. And I'd like you to forget it, as I'm going to try to ...

So, ahh, let me say that on a day like this I'm proud to be an Australian, and we all should be – irrespective of the cricket team put there by the mildewed minds of the national selection panel who wouldn't know a cricketer from a cow pat.

No, look, while I've got you reciting I wonder if, in the

spirit of Australia Day, we couldn't altogether run through "My Country". You know, "Core of my heart, my country". Now some of you will be of ethnic origin in respect of the country in which you were originally born and you probably won't know the words, so I'll run through it first and if you still can't pick it up imagine you're in church and just hum.

I love a sunburnt country
A land of sweeping plains
Of ragged mountain ranges
And droughts before it rains.

I love a happy country
A land where there's no strife
A land that's fit for heroes
And heroines are rife.

Right, let's hear you wrap your tongues around that.
Fourth verse. A bit of shoosh.

I love her variable climate
I love her, ahh, deep blue sea
Her beauty and her sorrow
It reminds myself of me

Sorry, that's "droughts and flooding rains," I think.

Good, let's hear you. And let's get it right the first time – perhaps the informal voters would like to go and get an icecream while we do this. Right. Second verse:

I love her broad horizons
I love her azure skies
These days the going's hairy
But so are women's thighs.

No, no, no, I'm sorry. Someone ... it was sabotage. Try and forget it. Third verse. Right.

Right everyone – we'll take it from the top!

We should all be proud of our achievements – our other achievements, like, ahh, Paul Keating, and we should look forward with overwhelming confidence to the future of this country, whatever our occupations and equally those who in respect of their occupations are, ahh, without one.

And it is in this spirit that I want you to know that from this day our great and our, ahh, great land will be known as Australia III.

Now the reasons for this should be pretty clear. Australia I was before Australia II which changed everything –

we, as you know, turned the corner with Australia II; but Australia II was Bondy's, so this new Australia will be known – logically – as Australia III. That's with *Roman* numerals of course.

It'll be Australia the third – not, ahh, of course the third republic, though it may or may not be the first republic depending on how everyone's feeling at a time in the future. But Australia III *will* be a third era, let there be no mistake – ahh, more of an age really, an age in Australia's history, and going on history it will inevitably be known colloquially by reference to the appelation of the dominant figure of the period which in this case is pretty plainly myself.

So, ahh, just as in past ages we've had the Georgian Age after a king of the time, the, ahh, Elizabethan Age, say, after the queen of that name, the, ahh, pre-Raphaelite Age I think there was, ahh, after before Raphael, so we'll have an age of myself – a Bobbian Age. That's pronounced Bobyan, as in Banyan. Perhaps you'd like to practice it – Bobyan. That's right, Bobyan. Okay.

And let's put some passion into it – extend your emotional range! THE WORDS DRONE AROUND AND ACROSS THE LAKE – HAWKE LEADING THEM.

Ahh, that was very nice, but I'll finish it off if you don't mind. This is a very moving passage.

An opal hearted country
A wilful lavish land
All you who have not loved her
Can't underbloodystand.

(Let no one call me a philistine!)

Ahh fenders, innuenders . . . benders . . . splendors.
Though earth holds many splendors
There is no better sight
Than a country of consensus
And no bloody Patrick White.

Okay. Okay. Thank you. Thank you. Righto, I've got to skedaddle. Rod Marsh and Aarvi Parbo are coming over for a hit under the new lights.

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ROLF HEIMANN

Flowers for the Russians

The War in Europe ended forty years ago.

Even before we refugees had swelled the numbers in the farmer's household it had been a large one, boasting no less than three grandmothers. They were called Black Mother, Grey Mother and White Mother. In the beginning that sounded funny to us newcomers, like something from a fairy tale. After a while we got used to it and it sounded perfectly normal. We were told that the names had been established many years ago when the women had had black, grey and white hair. Now they all had white hair. One of them was so old that her hands were always shaking. She couldn't even pour her tea. But when the Russians were about to enter the village she was more than shaking, she was almost dancing, with all her body; "Just look at me," she moaned, "I can't stop shaking, oh god oh god oh god ..." We were all assembled in the kitchen, crowded together like frightened sheep.

Nobody knew from where the Russians were going to come. Would their tanks roll in directly from the east, churning up the fields and crashing through fences and chicken sheds; or would their soldiers suddenly materialize behind bushes, like Indians, carrying clubs and yelling war cries? Or would they come on foot, like an unstoppable army of ants streaming along the highway below that was now lined with the burnt-out and overturned wrecks of German army trucks? One thing was sure: they *were* coming.

On the previous day a dishevelled column of retreating German armored cars and trucks had arrived in the village; maybe they had run out of fuel or maybe they had thought this to be a convenient place to exchange uniforms with civilian clothes, and to melt away into the population. "It's all over," they had said.

Then they had bartered their army stuff for a bit of food and old clothes. The farmer who was our landlord got a number of more or less useful items in this way, like the big box full of toothpaste, enough to ensure sparkling teeth for all his huge family and their descendents to the third generation. "Deserting? Who is deserting?" the soldiers had laughed. Deserters were shot, or hung. One of the women in our refugee household had seen a deserter hanging on a lamp post in Pirna, with a sign around his neck. She said he looked about twelve years old, and he had apparently suffered severe diarrhoea during the last minutes of his life. The soldiers in our village said: "Hell, we're not deserting, this is retreat by consensus!" Even the most zealous military police patrol would have to think twice before hanging a whole column of armored cars engaged in retreat by consensus.

"What shall we do now?" the villagers asked the soldiers, who for so long had protected them so heroically. And the soldiers had said: "Hang out white flags and wait. It's all over." They had melted away, dressed as stable hands and common laborers – and one even as a butcher complete with apron! – they looked normal again, like anybody's uncles.

The villagers had gone and taken white sheets from their drawers and even from their beds (it meant we were to sleep on bare mattresses and blankets for a few nights), and had hung them out of their windows, all around the houses so that they would be visible from every point of the compass. There were white flags everywhere. For sheer number of flags we would have left any Nuremberg Rally for dead.

Many villagers had made fires to burn all incriminating items. Most of these items were of paper and burned easily, but some gave off acrid smoke that mingled with the persistent stench of burnt rubber from the abandoned vehicles and drifted through the lilac bushes down by the mill brook. It was May.

Our farmer was a very prudent man. He had dug a hole between the barn and the wood stack, and believing himself unobserved (he had not reckoned with us children!) he buried all his things, wrapped tightly in wax cloth; maybe he thought it safer to hang on to them, just in case the tide would turn again. The long extruding part of the parcel was probably his shotgun, the rest could have been membership proof to organizations that would be frowned upon in future, and the medals of his father who had been killed in the previous war.

A plane had swooped down low over the village while this was going on, and everybody had dived for cover. This time there were neither shots nor bombs, even though it wasn't "one of ours". There was nothing "of ours" left. The fighting was over – no more shots in anger; the shots to come would be of pure hate, and of exuberance, the shots of executions and of vandalism.

It did not help White Mother's shakes when our farmer came dashing down the stairs, yelling "Here they are,

thick as flies" – and he meant the Russians. He had been watching from an attic window with the army binoculars that he had acquired the previous day. These binoculars, battered and scuffed, must have seen a lot in their day; maybe they had even once glimpsed in the distance the towers of Moscow or Leningrad.

There was the rumble of tanks. We children were told to stay away from the windows.

One of the grandmothers prayed loudly – if one could call the repetitious "oh god oh god oh god" a prayer. The farmer said, trying to sound calm: "Here they come here they come."

The tanks did not roll over fields and chicken sheds, but used the highway, and they came fast. They did not stop, but rumbled on, looking from the distance like perfectly working, meticulously modelled toys. When the column broke off we thought that we had seen the last of them for the time being, but then more tanks came around the bend, and trucks with troops, armored cars, motor bikes – there seemed to be no end. Who would have thought the Russians could make things like that, and so many, and all working perfectly and coming all the way from Russia without breaking down. Russians, so we thought, were of limited intelligence, they were also cruel and deceitful, and when they occasionally got the upper hand it was entirely due to their numbers and to their unscrupulous vicious character. We children had thought they would come with knives in their mouths, like we had seen in cartoons.

But these men did not look very much different from Germans. They had uniforms and helmets and held guns in their hands. They looked relaxed as they trundled past in their trucks, and well they might. Who would dare to take potshots at this mighty phalanx! Some of the trucks had red flags flying and looked positively victorious.

Then one of the trucks pulled off the road and stopped on the path leading to our cluster of houses. Soldiers got out, and for a moment it looked like they were going to come towards us. White Mother moaned another prayer; she must have thought that this was the end of civilization as we knew it, or even worse: the end of herself and of her loved ones, and of her vegetable garden and everything. But the soldiers only looked at the burnt-out vehicles; a motor-bike with side-car also stopped, and somebody took photographs. One of the men was an officer, with braids on his uniform, and a peaked hat instead of a combat helmet. He and his soldiers looked at our houses and seemed to discuss, while calmly smoking their cigarettes, whether they should blow us up right away, burn us to the ground, or to see first what they could find to kill and rape.

The occupants of one house down the road could no longer contain themselves, instead of cowering in the basement they began to wave their white flags from the windows, to make sure they were noticed. Then they sent out their children with hastily picked bunches of flowers. The soldiers didn't even raise their guns as the children approached hesitatingly. It seemed that not even Russians could shoot children who brought them flowers. Maybe they wouldn't even shoot parents if their hands were full of flowers.

From all the other houses people emerged, mainly children, waving flowers and greenery. "Look at Naumuller, that swine," hissed our landlord, half-surprised, half-enraged. Naumuller, a neighbor, had been an ardent Nazi who had been feared and hated for his quickness in denouncing his fellows for telling Hitler jokes – and many men had been killed for lesser offences. Some days before he had still advocated throwing deserters in the millpond, with a heavy stone around their necks. Now he was out there with the Russians, offering the officer a glass and a bottle, and no doubt ingratiating himself. (If anybody then suspected that Naumuller would be on top again in the new regime, they would have been right.)

When children came from all the other houses it made our own look suspiciously unresponsive and sinister and glum, like a secret arms depot or a hide-out of soldiers. So we children were allowed to do as the others, and we rushed out to greet the Russians.

I was only five years old then, and many of my memories must have been colored by the tellings of others, but one thing I do seem to remember vividly, how I, with the other children, entered the almost sacred flower garden that was usually protected by a stout, bolted gate from dogs,

chickens and children, and how I hurriedly, in fear of being left behind, pulled at some brightly colored flowers, marigolds maybe, or pansies – and the whole root system came up in my hands. And how the Russian soldiers laughed when the five-year old boy in rags pressed on them that bundle of roots with their little crushed flowers on top. I was lifted up, photographs were taken. Adults had dared to approach as well, all carrying flowers and grinning as if this dreaded day was the happiest one of their lives. A stubble-chinned farmer drew a swastika in the sand, and then spat and stomped on it; one had to communicate somehow. Such scenes were not original, this is how, according to my uncle, German soldiers had been greeted as they had entered Russia, to 'liberate' it from the communists, and he had taken photos to prove it.

I rushed back in high spirits and told my mother who had stayed in the kitchen with the other women, how the Russians had given me a lift in their side-car motor-bike, up and down the driveway, without killing me in the least. But the women were as scared as ever. From now on, they knew, there was no authority to give them protection, even if their menfolk could have been here they would have been of little use; resistance and self-defence in this new era was synonymous with suicide.

The column outside continued to roll on. "They must be in Pirna already," said one of the women. I had never been in Pirna, but thought of it as the place were twelve-year-old boys were hanging on lamp-posts. Their fly-blown bodies could now be cut down and handed back to their crying mothers. My own mother, hugging me, and having no reason to cry, again shed her boring old tears which I knew so well: they tasted like the salty water she used to soak the cauliflower in, to drive the bugs out. And she was telling the other women what I had heard before, and would hear again throughout my childhood, even at times when it was clear there would not be another war, not after *this*. My mother actually planned to hide me when "they" would come to turn me into a soldier. I believe she was quite serious – she meant to furnish a little hide-out in the cellar or in the attic or in the forest, where she would conceal me from the authorities, and at night bring me food. She would lie, steal and scheme, but they were not going to get her little boy, who even then was impatiently looking over her shoulder, and who longed to rush back outside to the others near the road, to see the mighty, dusty tanks thunder past, and the cannons that were so big that their mere weight would crush an elephant, and where, if one stood close enough, right in the fumes and the dust, the noise was so terrific that one could not hear a word that was spoken, but saw mouths move silently as in a home movie.

Rolf Heimann came to Australia in 1959 from Germany, and is 45 years old. Well-known as a cartoonist, he skippered the Australian nuclear-protest yacht to Muroroa Atoll in 1975.

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swag

STEPHEN MURRAY-SMITH

I've recently been putting myself through a course of Rolf Boldrewood. By reading *In Bad Company* (a collection of reminiscences) and two novels, *The Colonial Reformer* and *The Squatter's Dream,* I think I have learnt more about the nineteenth century in Australia than from any three books I have read. He doesn't have much to say about the towns, of course, but he gives what are, so far as I am aware, unparalleled insights into the squatting life and to attitudes to selectors and Aboriginals. And many of his throwaway remarks are revealing of bigger issues than perhaps he realizes – the rise of the Australian 'lower orders', for instance, and problems of religious belief, not least when it comes to shooting Aboriginals. What is particularly interesting is the contradiction, and unspoken tension, between Boldrewood's patrician and Anglophile social stance and his affection for the Australian scene and success in drawing his minor, 'currency' characters. His works, too, makes him an early Nevil Shute in that he tells you how things work and describes in detail how things were done by pioneers in the bush.

Like most readers, I had been familiar only with *Robbery Under Arms* and *Old Melbourne Memories.* The extra reading left me with an affection for the humanity and common-sense of Boldrewood, and some surprise that his books have not been more thoroughly exploited for, as they say these days, his 'text': the hidden meaning and significance. There's a splendid passage in *The Colonial Reformer* where the English lady tells the Australian slavey to be content in her station, whereupon Tottie answers: "I've read about self help, and all that, and heaps of people beginning with half-a-crown and making fortunes. Ought they to have thrown the half-crown away or the fortune after they had made it?" A beautiful example of the problems middle-class Victorians had in trying to promote self-help without encouraging social mobility.

I got my copies of some of these books from what, I think, is Australia's best book-searching service, Jack Bradstreet's, of PO Box 422, Hawthorn, Victoria 3122. A deserved free ad for a fellow who has helped thousands to locate the books they want.

Talking of the nineteenth century in Australia, I was cheered to read some remarks by the Age music critic Kenneth Hince (who is also, as it happens, a distinguished antiquarian bookseller). Kenneth was reviewing the Victorian State Anniversary Concert, last May. In part this consisted of a commissioned cantata called "Antipodes" by Barry Conyngham, with a text by Murray Copland. Kenneth Hince commented, in part, as follows:

> Writing after only one hearing and without much chance for reflection, I have to say that I found Copland's text facile, puddle-shallow, and age-ingly trendy.
>
> His note says that it was written as "a celebratory piece for the 150th Anniversary of white settlement in Victoria, [in which] it seemed appropriate to attempt to express some representative facets of the experience of those white settlers and of their descendants over the years, together with that of more recent arrivals."
>
> What he has given us strikes me as a farrago of the fashionable causes that have been so loudly banged up by the dry-sherry left in the past two decades.
>
> The virgin Australia is Rousseau's noble savage land, with a token pitched in for the Aborigines – Trevor Phillips has to sit through the whole fifty minutes or so to "suspend the entire piece in a dream-like timelessness" with his electronic digeridoo for a few minutes at the beginning and at the end.
>
> The Colonial Brits are the usual twopence-colored stereotypes, Collins Street swells with sheeny top-hats, debauchers of Aboriginal women, boozers, scabby-sheep capitalists, refeened ladies wasting out their lives pining to be back Home.
>
> There is a cheerful Greek song which shows how prettily the Greek immigrants have adapted to the "drawled elisions, devious phonetics" of the Colonial Brits, and how their candid hearts survive exposure to the "clashing rocks of blandness" which the Colonial Brits have built out past Kooyong.
>
> And then comes an apocalyptic vision of a

nuclear holocaust, foreshadowed by a movement describing the 1983 bushfires at Cockatoo.

As a second prelude to the holocaust we have a rapid patter account of the generation gap, in which the Colonial Brits have wilfully sired (and mired) the Alienated Generation because they have "no compassion" and "call us weirdos". And so on and so forth.

In a text to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of white settlement in Victoria, this is about as appropriate as a plate of pork chops at a private picnic of Jewish vegetarians.

It is also, by the way, a libel on the general nature of Colonial Brits.

Certainly we had swells and remittance men and scabby-sheep capitalists and crooked politicians and milk-skinned girls from the west country.

But the Brits gave us also men like Phillip and Watkin Tench, protector Robinson, La Trobe, Edward M. Curr, the stern builder Macquarie, Ullathorne, Maconochie the compassionate penal reformer, and countless men without name who sinned and endured, as people did everywhere.

At the time, the world had nothing much better to offer, and maybe a good deal that was worse. Native or colonist, red, brown, and white, no men behaved differently. It is about time that we set the actions of our Colonial Brits against the world-conscience of their own time, and stopped scourging them with the new scruples of our multiculturality.

I had a week in Blackwood recently, an old gold-mining town in the mountains near Ballarat, buried in a dip in the mountains. One of the penalties we pay for having spent most of our free time, in the last twenty-five years, in Bass Strait is that we know too little of the hinterland, and it was almost with a sense of rediscovery that we visited several of the towns on the Victorian Divide.

We drove over to Daylesford through the Wombat State Forest, partly because my wife Nita used to be taken to the Hepburn Springs nearby as a child. We found an excellent small second-hand bookshop in the main street, with a good stock of Australiana and of nineteenth century classics, some from dispersed mechanics' institutes collections. (Last Resort Bookshop, Dianne and Peter Parsons, Old Victoria Hotel, Vincent Street, Daylesford 3460.) It was a considerable surprise. Motoring around England and Scotland we have usually found such a shop in towns of Daylesford's size, but I had long since given up hope of such itinerant pleasures in Australia. And not only that – the shop stocks Meanjin and Scripsi, and readily agreed to take Overland as well.

On leaving this little shop and its pleasant proprietor, Nita asked what I thought a distinctly supererogatory question: "Is there another shop like this in Daylesford?" God help us, weren't we lucky enough to find one? But – "Yes," said Peter. "Down by the lake." And there we found one of the most splendidly-sited and best laid-out bookshops we have seen anywhere – Lake Daylesford Book Barn, Kerry and Ann Bolton, 1 Leggat Street, Daylesford 3460. With great windows overlooking the lake, a huge stove roaring, and a remarkable collection of books, including some rare and moderately-priced Australiana, it was indeed a place of resort, and I was torn between chatting with Kerry Bolton over coffee about his book-buying and book-selling and making sure I didn't miss anything on the shelves. I ended up buying – or rather, my dear wife gave to me – a remarkable account of a castaway in the 1820s on the Crozet Islands and an account by a "Connecticut Yankee" of his visit to the Ballarat goldfields in the 1850s. Plus, thrown in for good measure by our host, an excellent copy of Norman Douglas's autobiography.

Free ads for the stalwart book-selling community, none of whom will ever be able to buy up 20th Century Fox? Well, why not? But there's more to it than that. A similar bookshop has started up in Ballarat. A good new-books bookshop has opened in Castlemaine. Bookbinders are carrying on their worthy trade in local towns. Susan St Leon, former headmistress, has not only launched a remarkable old-roses nursery at Kyneton, but has included a branch of Australia's finest booksellers, Margareta Webber's of Melbourne, selling gardening books in a delectable bluestone replica of an old shepherd's shieling.

All in all, I reflected, this is a more startling demonstration of Australian cultural maturity than the whole of the Australian film industry, with perhaps a large part of our literary endeavors thrown in. As with our local historical societies, this development has crept up quietly on us to enrich our lives, and not a penny of public money devoted to these initiatives. Is it happening elsewhere? It's obviously part of the drift back to the bush which has been statistically recorded, at least in Victoria, but is it a national phenomenon? I write this as a red alert to the historians and sociologists of cultural shifts.

Talking about it to Barrett Reid, our poetry editor, he agreed with me. But he had something to add. "Herbert Read," said Barry, "once said that you can judge a country's cultural maturity by its pottery. Maybe that's going a bit far as a search for an indicator, but certainly you can judge, not only by second-hand bookshops but also by a country's gardens." And he will write on this in Overland. Both Tom Garnett, at Blackwood (a review of his *Stumbling on Melons* in our last issue), and Susan St Leon at Kyneton, have done and are doing sterling work, not only with their remarkable gardens but also in reviving the reputation and inventions of Alister Clarke, the rose-breeder. Garnett is writing a biography, Susan St Leon is re-establishing Clarke's varieties. There's plenty of gold still in those hills!

John Patrick's *The Australian Garden,* which Barrett Reid is to review, has one of the great dedications in literary history:

To my two contrasting garden influences: Muriel

Ikin, who introduced me to gardening, and my father, John Patrick, whose search for self-propagating concrete ended in inevitable frustration but always offered hope!

Drusilla Modjeska has asked me to point out that in my editing of her introduction to the forthcoming Angus and Robertson edition of the poems of Lesbia Harford I did not make it clear that Drusilla is joint editor with Marjorie Pizer who – as the extract we published made clear – has done much of the groundwork for the collection. Marjorie Pizer's own poems are reviewed by Frank Kellaway in this issue.

We published an extract from Maria Lewitt's forthcoming novel in our last issue, and noted that the novel was to be called *Australia – There it shall be.* Heinemann have now informed us that the novel is to be called *No Snow in December.*

One of my habits is to rise in the small hours and spend an hour or two reading. Edward Gibbon makes a splendid companion during these dark hours, always good for a phrase such as (referring to military talents): "the battles won by lessons of tactics may be numbered with the poems created from the rules of criticism." However I read a bit too far the other night. Referring to a work of the Emperor Constantine's, Gibbon mentions its publication in 1751 in a magnificent edition – "with such lavish praise as editors never fail to bestow on the worthy or worthless object of their toil."

In our last issue Sir Keith Hancock had some barbed comments on the contemporary re-writes of the Bible. I thought it might cheer him up to know that Penguin Books are producing a modern, scholarly version of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. Where Edward Fitzgerald wrote:

> Alas, that Spring would vanish with the Rose!
> That Youth's sweet-scented Manuscript should close!
> The Nightingale that in the Branches sang,
> Ah, whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

the modern translators have:

> Alas, the book of youth is finished,
> The fresh spring of life has become winter;
> The state which they call youth,
> It is not perceptible when it began and when
> it closed.

I am indebted to that excellent publication, the Society of Editors Newsletter (PO Box 176, Carlton South, Victoria 3053), for the information that a newspaper in Zimbabwe has circulated to its journalists an internal memo which states that on no account must talks, held between President Canaan Banana and visiting dignitaries, be referred to as "fruitful".

Poet and publisher Rocky Marshall, of PO Box 116, Oaklands Park, South Australia 5048, is seeking traditional Australian ballads and poems, preferably with a 'folk' flavor, for an anthology.

Australian poets are invited to submit work (by mid-August) for the international issue of Poetry Canada Review to Robert Billings, 307 Coxwell Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

For those puzzled by the title of Craig McGregor's story, namely the phrase "b/w Get Lost Adorno", may I report that I asked Craig what it meant, and he replied in kindly but somewhat pitying tones that "b/w" is a familiar phrase to the young, and that it applies to the other side of a gramophone record. In other words, "backed with".

Before any of youse reach for your word-processors to tell us that, in illustration to the aforesaid Craig McGregor story, one male child and a Mum are missing, let me explain that I have already asked our artist Vane Lindesay about the matter. He tells me that one of the boys is scrabbling on the floor for a dropped bag of potato-crisps, and that Mum is a skinny woman and is obscured by Dad.

R.N. CALLANDER

The Killing Ground

After Frankfurt, on the small Lufthansa 737 to Hamburg, and nearing her destination, Magda finally began to feel some excitement. One of the passengers, a man, had also been on her Jumbo flight from Melbourne, and as he walked back along the aisle, he bent over and spoke to her in accented English. "Excuse me. I have seen you since Melbourne. Are you going still further?"

He was around her age; sun-tanned and quite good-looking. She smiled inwardly, this is like something out of Mills & Boon, and decided, contrary to manners, to answer him in German, to establish that she was not an Australian tourist.

"Only to Hamburg, where I come from."

"But not recently," he grinned. "They will hear that you are an Aussie already."

He pronounced Aussie to rhyme with Horsey.

"How long has it been?"

"Twenty years. But I have been back once, ten years ago."

"Then you saw many changes, but you will see even more, this time."

He apologised, and introduced himself, making a token bow, and producing a card from his top blazer pocket. "As you see, I have business here, as well as in Australia. If I can be of service during your visit. Even if only to talk in English for a change . . ."

The stewardess, needing to pass with a trolley, saved any extension of the contact, and Magda dropped his card into her bag, while he moved back along the aircraft.

They were already approaching Fuhlsbüttel in a steep descent and, passing through a layer of cumulus, the plane rocked and bumped a little, causing her to grip the armrest. Magda watched the pattern of fields below through a side window, and caught a glimpse of the wide winding Elbe glinting in pale sunshine. She did not notice the businessman return to his seat.

The welcome was overwhelming, claustrophobic. A pressing throng of relatives, embraces, flowers; loud voluble aunts and nieces, the cigar-smoking uncles. Faces and names to remember, the old but strange-sounding accents. Everyone talked at once, asking questions which she was not given a chance to answer. It seemed that everyone was shouting, laughing – were they always this noisy? And, apart from tall, gaunt Uncle Dix, they all appeared overweight.

Magda's mother cried, her make-up smeared, and wore another of those ridiculous hats with a slanted feather. Her voice was becoming shrill, and Magda wondered, again, how long it would be before their first argument.

Not long. After the short drive in Mercedes convoy, and the reception at Aunt Ilse's apartment in Niendorf (cream cakes, coffee, and schnapps), she drove with her parents back to their house in Wandsbek.

Her mother insisted Magda should travel in front, next to her father, but it immediately created a frontier, putting them on their traditional opposing sides of old. The complaining mother, harping and criticizing in the back, and they, long-suffering victims, allies and sometimes conspirators, together in front.

At one point, mid-tirade against something to do with Aunt Ilse's apartment manager, Magda's father reached a rough gnarled hand across to gently pat hers in a spontaneous gesture of affection, and it attracted the immediate reaction of the back seat passenger. "Are you listening then, or are neither of you paying any attention to me as usual? Would you rather be alone? I can get a taxi." Magda recognized her mother's feeling of exclusion, and tried to compensate, by joining what was a boring and seemingly pointless conversation. She spoke gently. "I'm listening, Mutti, and you know Papa is as deaf as a tree."

"There is nothing wrong with his hearing, if only he will adjust his *Hörgerät* properly. He does it on purpose. You should be here to see how he does it; he switches it off."

And this was where I used to step in, she thought, to excuse or defend, and the fight would start. At first her mother's indignation, then her raised voice arguing, insisting, accusing. And finally the deliberate, lashing-out attempts to hurt, the cruel words, tears, migraine, slammed doors and fits of sulking.

But not this time, Magda decided. This may be the last visit. For Papa's sake, this time, this short time, I will avoid all friction, even if it means acting a role for two weeks.

She remembered the last disastrous visit, ending in a terrible shouting-match, after which she and her husband David moved out, to spend the last week of their trip with one of Magda's schoolfriends, Freda, managing to see her

father secretly twice in the Öjendorf Volkspark nearby.

It took half a year before relations improved enough for contact between mother and daughter again (Papa had kept writing faithfully throughout), but nothing could heal the wound between mother and David.

He had said: Maggie darling, there is nothing else I wouldn't do for you. But I will have nothing to do with that vicious, vitriolic old bitch ever again. By all means go (although you owe her nothing), but please do not ask me to go with you, because after everything she has done to you, I do not think I can keep my hands from her throat.

And her mother, hurt of course (it was another proof that everyone was against her), but not hurt enough to mention David's name, even in a letter. They had each wiped the other off the books; but for Magda, it was not so easy, because of Papa.

Dear dear Papa, when he brought a suitcase up to her room, pretending there was a piano in it for weight, she rushed to hug him again without the restraint of her mother's presence, and he asked huskily; "How goes the business tycoon?"

And she whispered; "He told me to bring you a bottle of the best Cognac, which I have." Dearest Papi, he had no difficulty hearing her whisper.

At the weekend, there was a second, larger reception; a family reunion including even more cousins, uncles, and aunts – particularly aunts. Even the ones whose men had survived the war had not managed to keep them alive through the peace. A land of widows.

There was too much food, and the noise was overpowering. Magda, who never suffered from headaches, now had one trying to concentrate, maintaining a fixed smile, keeping a watchful eye on her mother in case of some crisis which could spoil Cousin Griet's party.

Everyone seemed so prosperous. The clothes, the shoes, the furnishings, the kitchen gadgets. On their last visit there was a feeling of Australia's being a modern land of promise; but now, a subtle difference, as if Australia were naive and old-fashioned, compared to this prosperity.

They were discussing their summer holidays, but no longer impressed by Dubrovnik and Majorca. Now it was the Canary Islands and Seychelles, or Nairobi.

When they got home, Magda was exhausted from language fatigue, from ... what? Tension? Her mother complained: the meal she gone to so much trouble over would be wasted if Magda ate nothing. But, then, nobody cared how much trouble she went to. It was a different thing when someone else like Griet had prepared a meal. And they might have noticed how Albrecht and his sister had completely avoided her at Griet's; if they had paid any attention to her ...

In bed, in the quiet of her room, there was still a drone of her mother's voice, with an occasional pause broken by Papa's husky *Bitte?* Followed, no doubt, by a repetition which he didn't really want, and probably didn't listen to. Magda finally slept, exhausted.

By Wednesday, she had sidestepped a score of disputes, had pretended to agree to dozens of complaining viewpoints, and had allowed herself to be bullied into, or out of, doing many things.

How can I last the distance? she asked herself. Another week to go.

They had been through the photo-albums, the visits, the sitting-room discussions of who had done what; the feuds and scandal and family rifts. Magda's mother had a catalog of relatives, neighbors and former friends who had turned on them (meaning herself), or who had been deceitful, ungrateful, and insulting.

Papa let it wash over him, his head nodding to his own thoughts, his hand shaking a little as it raised the glass of aquavit to his lips, dying slowly in his resigned and beleaguered gentleness.

That night, curled up under the eider quilt, Magda imagined that her mother would die, so that Papa would come to live in Australia, laughing and joking again with David, taking walks in the sun with her and the dog, Spud. Then, with a flood of guilt, she buried her head in the pillow.

On Friday, they drove to visit Uncle Dix at his farm on the East German frontier near Lauenburg, and as her mother was unwell ("Because your father drives too fast"), the day was calmer.

At the big farmhouse, after lunch, Aunt Marianne made Magda's mother go and lie down in a guestroom, while Papa dozed in front of the fire surrounded by dogs.

Magda went for a walk with her uncle, rugged up against the piercing wind, through the birch forest, and along a canal already iced on the surface. Their boots crunched on frozen stubble, and their breathing formed clouds in front of them.

"Don't you take the dogs for a walk?" She asked. Uncle Dix smiled sourly, hands in pockets, pointing his chin across the canal towards the barbed wire defences.

"I've lost two good dogs to that *Scheisse*." He stopped, pointing. "See there, the anti-tank ditch? On the other side, the cleared space – the killing ground. There are mines, and automatic guns which blast away by trip-wire, by infra-red, God knows. Even sometimes by frost."

He looked up at the grey overcast, threatening snow. "No people, you see, in the killing ground. Only rabbits or hares, which attract my dogs." Uncle Dix stood gazing towards a far distant oberservation tower, his watery eyes pale blue, his face weathered. "Of course there are warning signs; *Eintritt Verbotten! Todesgefahr!* ..." He shook his head and turned away from her, his voice changing. "But my dogs cannot read."

On Saturday, she phoned David. At first it caused a fuss, but when she suggested phoning from Freda's her mother coldly acceded, and insisted on going out for a walk, "So that you can talk about me more easily."

And as she fixed that stupid hat at the front door mirror, she called back detailing instructions on how to make the call, and not to bother about asking *Zentrale* for the cost of the call, even if it was expensive.

Papa hung about shyly so that he could talk to his son-in-law, to thank him for the Cognac and other gifts.

Magda smiled fondly at her father's halting efforts to

speak English to David, knowing that David at the other end would be struggling to speak German.

Her chin trembled as she took the receiver back from Papa. "I miss you," she said. At the other side of the world, his voice came back, "I miss you too; hurry home."

She was helping her mother to clear away after a meal.

"On Tuesday, I think I will go to the city."

"On Tuesday I can't come. Let's go on Monday, we can take the *S-bahn,* and walk the shops."

Magda's voice was perfectly controlled, friendly. "Fine, let's go shopping Monday, then. But I would still like to go Tuesday, just to look around on my own."

"On your own?" Her mother slammed a drawer shut. "Why would you want to go on your own?"

The old man looked over his spectacles, lowering his paper. "Why not on her own? Can't she have some time to herself?"

(Please, Papa, she thought, don't take my side; and she hurried to intercept, to repair.)

"It's not important, really. I just wanted to stroll around some childhood memories."

But it was too late; the frontier had been drawn, and the bitter woman manned her defences against them both, ignoring Magda's attempt to defuse the scene.

"Why not? Why not? Why does a young woman want to walk the streets alone? Yes, ask your little *Schatzi* that! To pick up a man?"

He shouted at her, protesting, "Renate, stop!" But her voice became shriller, spluttering. "Go, if you want a man! Go to St Pauli! Go to all the Turks hanging around the *Hauptbahnhof*!"

Close to hysteria, the elder woman blundered from the room, her progress through the building punctuated by slammed doors.

Magda took her father's offered hand and held it, smiling sadly at him.

"She doesn't mean it," he said. "she says thing she doesn't mean."

"I know, Papi, I know."

"It's not just you, *Schatz*; she does it to others."

"I know, Papi. Especially you." She forced herself to ask him, as she had always wanted to ask him:

"Why have you stayed with her, Papi?"

And the old soldier looked at her, surprised, as if it were the most obvious thing in the world.

"But she needs me, Magda."

To make some concession, Magda phoned another schoolfriend, Inge, and arranged the city stroll with her for Tuesday, making sure that her mother overheard. Her mother was always impressed by Inge, who had "married well", not to some *Ausländer*.

It appeased her and, although no mention was ever made about the outburst, the elder woman was almost pleasant during their shopping day on Monday, partly because Magda gave her no opportunity for conflict.

She agreed with everything her mother said, went where she suggested, even bought a ghastly (and expensive) frock her mother insisted Magda try on, at C&A.

They lunched at a restaurant in Neuer Wall, where her mother criticized the young waiter, and Magda tipped him in sympathy, when the other woman was not looking.

The first snowfall had melted. Neons and car lights reflected on the wet streets, and tyres buzzed on the cobbled surfaces.

On Tuesday, Inge picked her up in a sporty Opel Manta with a Sylt sticker on the window, and Inge was quick to set her programme as she drove fast into the city.

"Your call couldn't have been more timely, Magd, it suits my devious purposes. Listen, we have two hours, and then I am off to meet a lover. I'll pick you up again about three, and we'll have coffee at the Alster Pavilion."

Magda must have looked as surprised as she felt, staring at Inge, who turned, and seeing Magda's face, giggled.

"Oh, Magdlein, you're not shocked, are you? Don't you have a lover? With your looks, you must have had dozens. I want to tell you such a lot about Paul; he's young, and has a fabulous body ... oooh! And he's madly in love with me, of course.

Magda laughed, astonished. "Inge, I can't believe it; you

with your beautiful family, and handsome Dieter . . ."

"Don't worry, honey. I love them, and I give them everything. Everything. They own me. Put Paul is my sport, my hobby – instead of those boring women at the tennis club. But enough of that, tell me about Australia, and that husband of yours. Is he still as sexy as when he was here?"

Big, loose snowflakes, like moths, settled on her face as she crossed the street. She walked down Jungfernstieg, Colonnaden, Büschstrasse; but was unable to enjoy her childhood memories.

Somewhere near the Goosemarket there used to be a toyshop with an exquisite doll in the window, which she had secretly wanted more than anything in the world . . .

Suddenly there was another memory, unbidden, of her mother screaming at her, striking her with open hands over head and shoulders . . . What could that have been? She buried the memory again.

It was one-thirty, and she thought of Inge, making love somewhere in this city. In an apartment? In a motel room? Is that what it has come to?

She remembered the businessman on the plane, who had given her his card. Was that an invitation to make love in an afternoon room with the shades drawn? She blushed and turned away from the thought, wanting David.

She suddenly wanted to be home. Home. There, she had defined it; home. Not here, which she had always called home, where she had been born, and gone to school. Home, with people she knew and understood. People with open faces and another *Mentalität*. The bright sunshine, the whistling paper-boy, and the Liquid-ambar on the nature-strip.

Away from the frontier, away from her mother, away from the home to which she had been attracted, like Dix's innocent dogs to the killing ground.

comment

Elizabeth Perkins (Queensland) writes:

Martin Duwell's review of Dorothy Green's *The Music of Love* indicated very cogently those qualities of her thinking and writing which contemporary reviewing most urgently needs. Like other alert readers, Martin Duwell appreciates that the pieces in *The Music of Love* are something more than mere reviews. He concisely summarizes the deep concern they express that literature should always be in a fit state to expose the malaise of intellectual life and preserve all that has permanent value in the creative thinking of a generation. He accurately characterizes Dorothy Green's prose style as "forceful and clear while at the same time retaining a quality of explorativeness". These are qualities that Martin Duwell's own training as a poet will lead him to appreciate.

I feel, however, that his comment that Dorothy Green's range of interest is "rather narrow" is so far wide of the mark that it must be amended. Had the criticism been restricted to the range of *The Music of Love*, it might be superficially relevant in that the collection was obviously selected with some continuity and unity of theme and interest. Martin Duwell supports his comment, however, by referring to the chiefly Australian nature of Dorothy Green's bibliography. Even if a writer deals exclusively with Australian literature, which is not the case even in *The Music of Love* since it concludes, for example, with an analysis of Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* which has long been highly regarded by those concerned with Tolstoy's work, it is inaccurate to see concentration on Australian literature as indicative of narrow interests or a narrow play of intellectual activity. In Dorothy Green's case, the mere suggestion is ludicrous.

The Music of Love alone demonstrates that this writer brings to Australian literature a vision and scope of reference that ranges over the culture and history of western Europe; long before Oriental studies were widely appreciated here, she began her exploration of Eastern ideas and culture. It would be less surprising if a reviewer complained that the wide-ranging ideas contributing to *The Music of Love* distracted the reader in search of homogeneity.

Finally, when Martin Duwell objects to Dorothy Green's review of *Australian Poetry Now*, and finds evidence there that she is not a good reviewer of contemporary poetry, he overlooks the fact that the review clearly appreciates what the editor, Tom Shapcott, was attempting to do with that collection. Other reviews she has written of contemporary poets are never indulgent, but pay the poets the serious, well-considered attention they must surely want in a reviewer. It is difficult to find reviewers who will give ideas worth any consideration by the writer. Martin Duwell's comments on reviewing are worth recording, and he agrees with the quotation he cites from Dorothy Green's work, that "a review of reviewers is long overdue". In making this comment she was not , of course, "thinking only of a specific instance", but of the general run of flabby and self-indulgent reviewing which not only fails to advance, but actively hampers, literary activity.

JACK CATT

Alice recited
ballads on the Domain
Jack Catt heard her
½ an inch taller than Christ
with his sleepy almond eyes
he was almost
expelled from the Party
he went back to his ship
with a ream of typing paper
& decided to be a writer

they lived
in a jarrah & fibro house
on the river
cranes & ibises
fished the shore
pelicans settled
in giant white clouds
on the shallows

she slept with Jack Catt
in an iron bedstead
with one knob missing
her hair grew down to her waist

serving afternoon tea
on bone china
under the paper-barks
she felt like the heroine
in a Chekhov story
the pleasure boats
waved from the river
the boys built rafts
like Huck Finn
& poled to the estuary
her eldest son
walked down the towpath
balancing the river's history
in a tin trunk
on his shoulders
she lit the oil lamp
its pearly shadow
leapt & glowed on the walls
in the dry yard
the madonna lilies
sprung up on fleshy stalks
their undersides trembling

a queen bee
she swelled like a striped pod
the stretch marks
criss-crossed her belly
her water broke
& she had 2 golden daughters

a wild goose
sat on the jetty honking
she could see its moist feathers
if a memory stirred
of an owl or a peregine falcon
she folded it carefully away
with the camphor balls

the cobblers
with poisoned fangs
lay in the black mud
her retina detached
& the landscape shimmered

women are destroyers
& you don't want
another kid!

warming her fingers
over the gas
she types at the kitchen table
Bluey walks the linoleum
whispering *will I kill her*
tonight or tomorrow?

in the backyard
he is burning her poems
in a cut-down drum
under the choko vine
the children watch
sucking their thumbs
9 years go up in smoke.

next morning she leaves
without saying goodbye
remembering how he'd said
One day when things get tough
you'll take the kids
& go back to the bourgeoisie.

DOROTHY HEWETT

From "Days of Violence Days of Rages" in Dorothy Hewett's forthcoming collection Alice in Wormland

COWS

Their bovine lack of conversation
bothered me at first. I suspected
them of mooing bar-pianists into
tuberculosis. But that disease came
with unpasteurised milk and it was
mainly children who died of it.

Cows don't remind me of cows,
but of imitation cowskin couches
and ditto bars; of quadruped extras
in Texan movies. Did you never notice
the cattle next to the drive-in fight
to catch a glimpse of their favorite star?

Cows' eyes contain basically the same
glassy matter as ours, give or take
a molecule or two – Oh, had they but
wings! I'd be free of doubt then:
to see them take to the air, deliberately,
on rough and tumble, crow-type wings.

Yes these, and not the slick smart-tipped
sails of gulls and pigeons, those would make
them overdressed like double-breasted bosses
or typists with harnessed knockers. Cows should
come ploddingly overhead, flying the way
they walk, their udders shining down on us.

Look, a cow jumped over the moon . . . it tried
to catch a glimpse of its favorite star.

DAVID WINWOOD

GULL TRIPTYCH

Part of the wind is dressed in grey
and haunts the homing fishing-fleet
for vagrant scraps.

Part of the air's silver stillness
stands on one leg,
idling away the beach, shell by shell.

Part of the featherdom whiteness of light
hovers over the furthest sandbar,
soars along an arc of crystal,
and fades into blue sleep.

R.H. MORRISON

THE CARRIER OF STONES

Was it Carnac,
will it be Cairns,
is it India
where i carry stones dug up at night,
from left to right, right to left
in the shadow of an overseer
from South-East Asia? She who knows
what I was in another life,
she who knows
what I'll be in the next,
she who speaks the language of stones
is never compassionate
to a carrier of stones, she who chooses
the pit where to be born a poet
is to be born a hexagon: six ways
to unload the burden;
an octagon with eight exits
to choose a path; a dodecahedron
with twelve faces to mask the strain
and she who watches
how bones snap in weightlifters
trained for lapidaries
never stops
the bones changing to gods,
awesome weights on the simple mind
of a fakir who'll weep for his dead cobra,
never more to sway with dolmens
the hypnosis of stonehenge,
never disturbed by dogs barking
to name the place, the country, the stones.

SILVANA GARDNER

DAVID AND THE WHALE

David told us how in San Diego
he gazed near-hypnotized into the calm eyes
of that killer – eyes like chips in the black
and bath-white enamelled head whose smoothness

broke open in a deep, wide hack of mouth,
toothed with ivory knives – and didn't flinch,
although its predecessor bit the legs off
a bikinied co-star; some untrained flip

of memory demanding seal-meat. So
David stroked the whale with the Eskimo name:
stroked, searching its face with a lover's purpose,
while its whistling goodwill spouted and sighed

like a breakfast kettle. He was reminded
of the communion queue by the man behind
complaining, *Hey, I brung my kid all the way*
from L.A. to pet the whale! Beat it, huh?

PETER KIRKPATRICK

SHARING HIS STORY

Outside the Builder's Arms pub
last night's action
paints the footpath
a circled clash before retreat
the blood trail
heads to Brunswick Street splat! splat! splat!
then faster! more than one to each step taken
the downpour races along

A direct line dashes past the Royal Hotel
crosses George and Little George Streets
to take a breather near Napier Street corner
where splats! one on top of each other
centre the pathway
then splat! splat!
splat! to a dribbled parking meter

Beeline to the fence splat! splat! splat!
a heavy shower diluted by his relief
and a zig-zag of splats splat!
splat! splat!
before sprinkling another meter!

The stumbling line trickles across Brunswick Street
to the Rob Roy Hotel doorway, entry unmade
the splats jay-walk towards Victoria Parade splat! splat! splat!
along the footpath
then a drunk's waltz one two three splat!
one two three splat!

Perhaps a return of courage, Go back! try another round!
but meandering north again splats continue splat! splat!
splat!
until they enter the gateway
of a derelict's harbor . . .

A jellied pool covers cracked tiles
on the verandah where it seems at last
the tide ran out

CHARLES RIMINGTON

CHRIST CHURCH SCHOOL, *circa* 1953

On going back with a camera in 1985

Get the camera down to three feet
off the ground for this one. And
watch the lighting. We're going
through two gothic arches, or two!

In the chapel of the church-school
at five years-of-age with the spectre
of God and a cool darkness where no
light had ever coalesced. We were

bound to have arguments afterwards
and a relationship problem none of
the subsequent years could heal.
Beyond the facades of those awful walls

it all comes back in so many disguises.
My mother used to give me mandarins
for morning-break and walk me to the bus.
The grating of bus-gears; the sweet-rind

and unaccountable smell of mandarins
confounds me still. Confronts me in spite
of everything with that first cold and
dark: constants in the vast stretches

of all time and space. *But I digress*
and yes – I'm sorry, it's impossible to
film anything in here. Not without the
right equipment. This hand-held stuff

won't do. The bloody light is impossible
and Christ it's cold. Nothing
will print, I'll tell you now. It wasn't
worth coming back for, nothing will take.

What did you expect to get, Mary and all
the angels! Just a place at the back in
the school yard – there used to be a tree
where the sunlight congregated endlessly.

JEFF GUESS

THIEF OF TIME

A sundial erected in the grounds
of Liberal House more than 80 years
ago has been stolen.

Newspaper Report

What an operation
and underneath the nose
of the greatest
larcenist of all!

There will be cover-ups
newspapers will retract –
kill the story before it
gets a chance to spread.

Silence will the same on
the biggest job since Eve
to take a little time –
steal a few hours away.

Though all they really
got away with was record
of how much
was left behind.

They won't be
Made For Life
get a breathing space
or even *The Last Laugh.*

But at least can boast –
the robbed
who dared to steal
back from the thief.

JEFF GUESS

PORT FAIRY

Here nothing stands between you and the wind.
Wind and sea. For twenty years I've come
Back here from cities that I love. Tonight
In Seacombe House again, I hear the gusts
Beat at the walls, and the sea's loud. Both call me
Out to walk. The pines in Sackville Street
Vie with the roar from the East Beach, the South Beach.
Behind me the ancient ship lies in its dunes.
I face into the south, the solid dark
Beyond the last street lights: imagine the first
Light struck here by European hands
To glimmer in a window, solitary
Across the blackness of new land, old land:
Small, impertinent, almost swallowed up.

*"It is good also to be poor, and listen to the wind."**
Ten winters back, weak from the flu, I came here
With a line from a poem echoing inside me.
Upstairs in this old house I saw the streets
Shining black with rain. No one about.
Switched off the radio, wanting not even Mozart:
"It is good also to be poor". Voluptuous
Austerity. No human sounds. I listened:
Unbroken roar from the East Beach. Then, closer,
More intimate, new rain against my window.
And lay down, sure of healing. Sleep, wind, sea.

PHILIP MARTIN

* From Robert Bly's 'Poem against the British'.

BARTOK

From Bateman's Bay to Kiama
He travelled with us, this
Last ditch stand of the romantic,
Welling, pouring from our windows,
Such seriousness, as comfortable
As desperation can ever be.
And while pondering friends
In the 'trouble spots' so beloved
Of newsreaders, one European
Enclave sped through Australia's
Endless landscape, realizing
That what draws communities together
Has little of economics in it, but
Much daring in suffering
And loving the mutations from
What might mistakenly be called
A common field.

SHANE McCAULEY

CIRCLED GELIGNITE

You Jif me
clean, towel
scratch me dry.
White bathroom
white.

Disinfected,
almost bowel
dissected, I
try to remain
fragrant sweet.

Pigs are red,
love's unsaid,
I wish I were dead.

Obsessive little
thoughts dangle
like a noose in
my head.

Ironed straight-stiff,
sucked vacuum-dry,
or rinsed, rinsed
rinsed, I remain
self-obstructed.

Fretting for bed,
I lean longingly
doorwards, to its
baby-sheeted comfort.

You relentlessly
kitchen and lounge
room me down.

Concentration
lacking, I
scamper the walls,
run waywardly riot,
hair pulling, and
string tied
to circles of hate.

Exploding at
nineteen, I
blew into your
therapeutic office.
Now at twenty-six
I just want
a gelignite stick.

FIONA PLACE

NO

water. Does not drift, drip or dance on the deserving. Who are
the undeserving? Tongue shrieks at dry ice. A hand feels the air;
dry thumb rubs against scabby finger; where are you?

These remember ten scarred unco-ordinates, digits,
steeped in their abacus of sticky peppercorns. Pungent
skin wearing another skin, the centre unfound, furled.

This man has taken for granted Man. Rattling himself into
prayer, each wisdom sucked, like a mouth-round white stone,
can only give slow milk. His spittle sets a jagged crust on his lips.

2

Looking out from a house of dust, through this window
of sand, the eye sees that it is the dry
that combines. What is inside searches. What searches finds.

Spiders have bound the corners with secret whispers of thread,
promising to be undone. The Huntsman, bold artist, body and soul, stretches
his canvas anywhere – designs of fly extract, self-slobberings;

owns nothing and strives not for satisfaction nor masterpiece; tells
the Huntswoman who likes to be seen busy when hoped-for rain has driven all
other calloused bug and beetle and battler deeper into mud-brick cracks: No.

3

Further from here, between the elbows of mountains
and the knees of rivers, a little is let out
here and there, springs, soaks, percolations,
creeks with rocks frost-shattered, unravelled yarns with streams,
streams bogged down with themselves, rivers shrieking
thick-pus piss into the ocean.

Eels are tip-toeing overland, sniffing the breeze,
changing sex with every step. Fish, left behind
in the river pools, are extracting rusty hooks
from each other's lips, talking each other out of the water,
gulping stir-fried air, indigestion, a dull death.

4

Of all the body, the hand is the most worthy of Congratulations.
Unrewarded scratchings, pokes, fumbles, soothings, caresses.
Alternately, it feeds the thankful mouth and wipes the thankless bum.

In the drought, when the hand has done all the things saved for
rainless days, when the soils sighs and crumb shifts away from crumb
with every whim of wind, when nothing will grow, be grown or begun,
clouds hurry overhead, ashamed to be barren, middle-level, white, floating

yes into no. Today, the hand thanks God for its mate. Though encircled by
a bracelet of arthritic-easing bronze, the rubbing, the knuckle-cracking,
joints worn smooth in eyelets of gristle, their praise is not less, but more.

The sealess oyster clouds taunt them, their shells void
of salt-seed. It is not a day for pearls.

5

Closer to home, two men are holed up beside the reservoir,
sharing two flagons of White Lady. They have rigged up a sheet
of black polythene over their heads, but nothing to keep sog
out of brains. Hands brush away imagined mosquitos;
ants crawl over their feet, picking out a winter's food
from between their toes; they speak one to the other:
each word with silence, each yes confirmed with a no.

6

On a sulphurous lawn a woman kisses
a man's white bottom which is farting rich clouds
of garlic. She has licked him all over like a cow with calf.
He is turning the first shades of silver, lip-hooked, with dried
scales of sputum, and is almost ready to be laid.

7

Out of the trees they have drifted down, all morning
gormandizing, birds of a feather. Each one must sus and
survive. Under a spudbaked skin of dirt, the spirits of worms
in astral travel have risen, dreaming of rain. Spirits of birds
are picking out their pearly eyes, leaving little sucked-out
flaps of skin all over the spirits of grass.

Behind their window, hands are holding off, consuming
each other's imagined rub. As one worries over a wart on the other,
it is not surprised at the conceit of its own tuft of sympathy.

Snail and slug are fist-rubbing their eyes after a gritty slumber,
dreaming of percolating sod, nursing shrunken brains.
Slater and earwig have drawn up eiderdowns of wood-rot,
savoring balls of agate dung. Aphid and mealy-bug, cabbage-moth
and white ant argue about humidity. Green mould, sooty-mould,
collar-rot and die-back leap all over apple and apricot
in an indulgence of self-indulgence. Lizard has nodded off in a snooze;
believes she has attained enlightenment as a dryland prawn.

8

Drought lurks over soil and plant, licking, picking over someone else's
suckbones, cleaning its teeth incessantly; smiles, wherever it rests,
lets down thick dusty roots, fingers gripping last drops
of moisture. It catches this fellow's breath in the groin,
that one's old Smack-wounds. Now there is no consuming it
nor calling it off, its white mouth of dry dog-froth;
again and again it swallows its tongue.

9

A little moisture would have destroyed the upper afternoon lips of
the ladies from the CWA; despite the striving for conversation,
their cleavages infilled with crumbs of blistered merangues,
they are not being burdens to anyone but themselves.

10

The goat stands on and begins to suck in the ribs of the wood-shed
roof as it ends – not in tears, not thunder – in shitstones.
The tongue speaks through slit. Give, a pregnant virgin cloud. Mark
the drop. Rain, like an oriental postman, has a way of delivering: No.

TERRY HARRINGTON

SMARTARSE RHYMES

I

The barking owl may sometimes howl
or scream like a demented woman,
although that isn't very common.
The boobook hic-cups a 'cuckoo',
but in Australia after dark,
though we may hear both cough and bark,
no self-respecting owl has ever,
in any circumstances whatever,
been guilty of "to wit, to woo."

II

At the back o' Bourke
in the dry countree,
a drover's ghost came up to me.
He said, "Help you heaven or help you Hell,
"before you go on, you've gotto tell
"how many bullocks graze in the sea."
I was quick on the draw
for I knew the score.
"As many as tuna and barramundi
pickled to eat in a salmagundi,
perch in the boughs of myall or gidgee,
or lyre-birds swim in the Murrumbidgee."
"You can pass, smart-arse, it's easy to see
you know your nursery rhymes," said he.

III

There was an old fellow of Tubbut
said, "My floor's in a mess I must scrub it
but I feel a bit blue
and tomorrow will do . . . "
so he still has to scrub it at Tubbut.

FRANK KELLAWAY

CORGIS REVOLTING

From: A Helping Hand for the Laureate

The moon hides.
Darkness is drawn down over the Palace, and they
Savage.

PHILIP MARTIN

Ted Hughes the nature poet – "He can make even a thrush seem menacing" (Alison Groggan) – is the new British Poet Laureate.

TV DINNER

Never bite the news that feeds you
as nurses from microphones
ladle out continental soup,
the nightly dosage of adrenalin
in a flavorless world.
Out of the fat, into the fire.

A famine from Africa
howls safely behind the screen
while I chew my chicken
right down to the bone.
I'm Pavlov's dog, salivating
at every blast of news.

How will they serve up
bomb-blast victims tonight?
Rare, medium or well done?
Dues are paid to the cannibal club,
its branches in every
gut of the globe.

My lamb is wrapped in Lebanon,
my sirloin sauced in Syria.
Such mid-east, mid-night meals
slink altars in every house:
self-immolations in slow motion,
crucifixions replayed every hour.

An animal keeper with make-up
pours news all over the map,
headlining deeper into the colon
as color-coded cancer.
But wait, let me see:
what shall I have for dessert?

Why not machine gun me in the kennel?
It's the final edition, surely.
I'm the expert on indifference
so you'll find cameras in my stomach
spotlighting what I can never switch off:
these foul odors of my own collaboration.

TONY PAGE

LITTLE DEATH

Little death rushes across the city
Sweating against time

He never walks to the window
Looking out at 1.45 blue.m.
For miles without moving

Little death sells cigarettes
In Sydney, Athens, Como and London
Little death is in the ash at Auschwitz

Little death flies a B52
Like a sparrow
Low across Ethiopia

Little death signs the lease
Drinks too much, coughs behind you
On the bus, on the train

Little death smiles weakly at the scene of an accident
Falls with the rain
Soaks through the skin, gradually

Little death walks the yard at Pentridge
Like a rooster, but stupid, like a death
Like a little-by-little death.

LYNDON WALKER

PICASSO EXHIBITION 1984

At last we have world culture
in the antipodes. The experts ecstatic.
We all sing along. Here is the fracturing
of Europe: the great flowing female
hitting back at last in ambiguities.
She enters from unknown dark,
rolling, providing, threatening.

The white horse screams and suffers.
The bird barely flies. The black bull
is led eastward through a golden world
in a moment of innocence.
The masked woman, lashed by contempt
becomes an iron harpy
and man a monkey with panache.

I should sink in admiration, agree
with the catalog, applaud such bitter
beauty, but find more life
in the skeleton of Barramundi,
more of nurtured earth in faded
Wandjinas, iron-stained ochres
closer to man, to woman
than those wild greens and greys
and the hard sexuality of possession.

CONNIE BARBER

THE PRO IN THE GRASS

Now who brung her?
Is your name Tom? she asks.
Yes, it is. But haven't you
got the wrong room?
No. Room 109. No. At least
Big Daddy got the number right
anyway (this little number)
before opening the window. Opening up.
That was very wrong of Big Daddy.
Couldn't be more wrong. Couldn't be.
Right for him, though. Right out –
sinking six zeros down with him
like white buoys on a lead line & sinker.
Paid her first – & last dollars.
The right thing for the wrong boy.
So why push it? she, shrugging.
Big Daddy didn't need it. A push. A pusher,
for that matter. Who the hell was she
who the hell was he (the son)
to pick right from wrong
dead, off the bitumen? (The cops,
of course, had their job to do.)
Maybe Big Daddy *had* been a little hard
on the boy – running his life for him
like an oil rig, getting him
to get things right –
not off with but right off
Miss Right & onto Miss Wrong
flip, flap, flipping Miss Right
into out-flapping Miss Wrong –
not right for her, though, or Ma.
Still, even her Ma must see
there's something wrong with a girl
who screams I'm pure, Ma,
I'm pure, Ma, in the bath –
a, the condition of being Miss Right.
Dead wrong, obviously. Well, almost:
three years on the funny farm.
So here's this pro,
the Union Pacific down her left arm
& the Trans Pacific down her right
& pretty jack of the mafia
& possibly with the jack –
certainly not the Tom.
Here's this pro. She's all
that's left of Big Daddy,
her male right handshake &
his lips whitening on no anger left
in her ever/never lovin' body.
Junior tosses left to right
right to left, left to right,
burying his head in the pillow
& after ninety seconds, she splits –
certain it's the right thing to do
with the money & (Ah, fuck!)
the ingratitude.

GRAHAM ROWLANDS

BILL SCOTT

John Manifold

A Tribute

I first met John in 1956. A mutual friend told me that there was "a bloke down at Wynnum who's interested in those old songs you're always talking about," and drove me down to see him. In those days John and Kate lived in an old wooden house on high blocks, set on top of the ridge overlooking Lytton, the Fisherman Islands and the Boat Passage at the mouth of the Brisbane River.

John was working in a little room under his house, making what he described as "a pup lute". He was bending and glueing timber to make the frame, and he talked easily and laughed a lot as he fitted the carpenter's cramps. Then he left the embryo instrument to dry, and invited us in. His wife made a cup of tea for us, and we talked about folksongs and poetry. Perhaps we sang a song or two. His two small children came home from a neighbor's home where they had been playing, and I met them. It was all so simple and easy.

I saw him often during the next six or seven years, though we never became close friends. We were engaged in a number of projects together to try to encourage interest in our fellow-countrymen in the traditional songs that were their heritage. Along with some other enthusiasts, we performed at venues ranging from the Ironworkers' Union Annual Picnic to concerts for charity in the Brisbane City Hall; singing bush ballads and other folksongs.

Each year during the late fifties there was a kind of Eisteddfod for bush bands and bush singers held at John's home. We called them "Ballad Nights". There were competitions for senior bands, for individual performers and children's bands, many of whom performed on home-made instruments. John acted as Master of Ceremonies and Musical Director; my own role was that of helper to John Callaghan, to transport his sound recording equipment to Wynnum, help set it up and assist while the whole proceedings were recorded. (The tapes still exist!)

Stan Arthur and myself had made a small recording of folksongs in 1958, recorded by the indefatigable John Callaghan and released through Wattle Records, of Sydney. The lead song (and the one that gave the record its title), was one I had learned from John, "The Billy Goat Overland". In 1959, Queenland's centenary year, Stan's band, the Moreton Bay Bushwhackers, combined with John's band, the Bandicoots, to produce a long-playing record called "Folksongs From Queensland". This also was recorded by John Callaghan and released by Wattle Records. It is a collector's item now.

In the same year John edited *The Queensland Centenary Pocket Songbook*, which was published by Edwards and Shaw of Sydney. It too, is a rarity these days. After 1960 my close association with John ceased, though we remained friends and encountered each other with enthusiasm from time to time.

In 1964 John published the first of his two major contributions to the study of the folklore of his native land; a book called *Who Wrote The Ballads*, sub-titled *Notes on Australian folksong*. Soon afterward he was approached by Penguin Books to select and edit the well-known *Penguin Australian Song Book* which quickly became a primer for the rapidly increasing number of people in Australia who were responding to our long proselytizing and beginning to learn and perform their native songs. Along with John Meredith, Alan Scott, Ron Edwards and Wendy Lowenstein, John Manifold became known as one of the trustees and recorders of our heritage of folk music. Yet John was so much more than that.

He was born in Melbourne in 1915. He came from one of the pioneering families of the western district of Victoria and spent his early childhood there. Later he attended Geelong Grammar School, and went on to Jesus College, Cambridge, to 'complete his education' in the traditional style of the squatting families who kept strong links with their country of origin. Yet this man was different. Like his poetic contemporaries Judith Wright and David Campbell, who hailed from a similar social background, he felt small sympathy for the native land of his forbears. His heart was on the other side of the world, native of a wider country. He had known this since childhood, remembering in his later years when he wrote, in his sonnet "The Land":

> The hurt I hated most at nine years old
> Was separation, not from kith and kin
> But from the land, the factual tawny-gold
> Acres whose barley brushed a rider's shin ...

John enlisted in the British Army and served in West Africa and in Europe. His first collection of poems, *Selected Verse*, was published initially in the United States, a British edition becoming available in 1948. Critics loved the poems, one going so far as to hail him as "the first important Australian poet"! With such a reception he might easily have considered remaining in England and becoming a 'literary figure'.

John chose to return to his own country. Perhaps the hurt of separation from the tawny-gold land drew him homeward. Whatever the reason, he came back in 1949 to settle eventually in Wynnum, in the high place overlooking Moreton Bay and the islands offshore.

The experience of being in Australia often has an unsettling effect upon a sensitive visitor from overseas. John Betjeman, for instance, while on the east coast during the making of a television series said in conversation: "How do you live so easily here, when just out *there*, west of the mountain range, *all that* is lying in wait!"

The Russian poet, Yevtushenko, was a guest at Writers' Week at the Adelaide Festival of Arts. When an interviewer asked the banal question, "What do you think of Australia?" He replied: "A restaurant on the edge of a desert!"

This sense of illimitable distance, of emptiness which could oppress the spirit of some from an older culture, must have been commonplace among early settlers in Australia. Perhaps this is why some of our ancestors clung so closely to the idea of England as 'home'. It isn't strange that most writers in Australia did not begin to feel at 'home' in their own land until the third generation. (Slessor is a notable exception, but Slessor was a city-dweller, and Sydney was his world.)

So many of the fine poets of the 1940s and 1950s had come from the background of the open country, from the mountains and the valleys; to them it was not an oppressive scene but merely the one of which they were part, from which they took their being. Judith Wright, David Campbell, Colin Thiele, Dorothy Hewett, Geoffrey Dutton all celebrated the land and the people of the land in their work, and so did John Manifold.

Even the immigrant New Zealand poet, Douglas Stewart, who so quickly found himself in the Australian scene, chose to write most of the country, rather than the city. The very circumstance which awed Betjeman – the impassivity and remoteness of the empty land – is what sparked some of Stewart's best poetry. He encompassed the empty distances of the Birdsville Track with his love and simplicity.

John Manifold also used such simplicity of words and expression to achieve his best work. His personal reaction to the soul-searching which informs much modern writing in Australia is clearly stated in his sonnet, "Interview":

> An artisan, my workshop is my chateau
> Where I can chip-carve words into a sonnet or
> Odd pieces of bamboo into a flute.

His commitment to his ideals shows in the whimsical yet savage humor of some of his writing, particularly in the short prose piece, "Bougainville And The Bunyip", published in the fifteenth issue of Overland. It shows also in the poetry, for instance in "A Hat In The Ring", and "A Satire On Liberty". He can be forgiven the bitterness he felt when watching some of the ideals he treasured being ignored, or, worse still, being paid lip-service to by those who would pervert them for their own reasons.

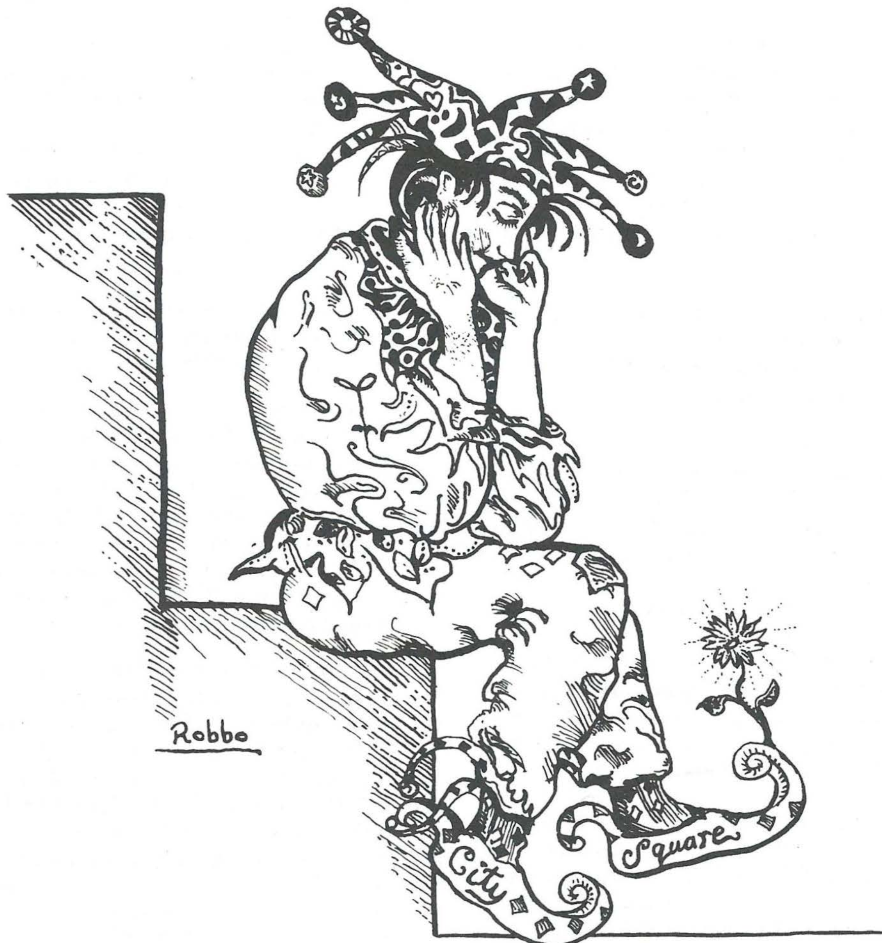
The best poems written by Australian poets during and about the second world war are significant in that they do not celebrate war, peddle hatred or attempt to justify ends. John Quinn wrote the poem "You Can't Argue With A Dead Man" and it is a great shout of anguish. Judith Wright wrote "The Company Of Lovers", David Campbell "Men In Green", and Slessor what is possibly his finest short poem, "Beach Burial". Val Vallis remembered the drowned seamen as well, in the felicitous imagery of "The Twenty-nine Ships".

What of John Manifold? While serving in the British Army he got a letter telling of the death, on Crete, of one of his closest boyhood friends. A quote from the letter heads the poem John wrote – "The Tomb Of Lt John Learmonth, A.I.F." – which begins:

> This is not sorrow, this is work: I build
> A cairn of words over a silent man,
> My friend, John Learmonth whom the Germans
> killed ...

The poem says it all. So too do the other poems. They form a record of his hopes and goals, his yarns and whimsy, and the songs that were so much part of the man. At his funeral, Rodney Hall, John's biographer, spoke movingly of his accomplishments and achievements; but I suspect that most of the people there said their farewells to John while two of his friends sang a couple of his songs. The poems and the songs are his legacy to us all

Bill Scott is well known as a Queensland folklorist and writer. His most recent book is Shadows among the Leaves *(Heinemann), and he is writing a book on the Redlands Shire, near Brisbane.*



I am Monarch of all I Survey

MICHAEL WILDING

We went to see the hippy king, living in the mountains. He was in exile from his kingdom which had dissolved. And now he was like the Duke of Windsor or King Zog, in mufti.

We were not especially fond of the mountains. I lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. But that is to lift your eyes towards them, which is different from going up to them, let alone living in them. From the distance they were a calming blue, but to be in the source itself isn't necessarily the same experience; and anyway, the rocks and gum leaves are not the source of the blue, no one knows what the source of the blue is.

We got as far as Homebush where the slaughterhouses are and death lay like a miasma over flat paddocks and seeped across the roads and railway lines. That was where we realized we had forgotten to bring the address or the phone number, so we turned round and went back. And this in a petrol strike too.

He had dictated the directions on the phone.

"Have you got paper?"

"Yes."

"Have you got pencil?"

"I've got a pen."

"Fine. That'll do. Right. You go up the mountains to – "

And I inscribed, "go up the mountains to – "

"And the first turning after the shops – "

"First turning after the shops – "

"Right. You don't go down there."

"Don't go down there."

"Then you come to the second turning – "

"Second turning – "

"Don't go down there."

"Don't go."

"The third turning – "

"The third turning – "

It has to be the third turning.

"Don't go down there either."

"Don't."

"Then you come to – "

I hold off writing it down.

"That's the one you take. You go along there to a crossroads. Disregard them. And then it becomes a dirt track, take no notice of that – "

It was like the ten commandments: thou shalt not, thou shalt not. Very Old Testament. And then Sara who was getting pissed with Sam while I took down the directions on the phone scribbled wiggly lines all down the map I'd created from the negations. "We've already got the directions," she said.

"This your wife? Lily?" he says.

"Yes. Well, we're not married, but – "

"But you live together – "

"Well, yes – "

"I'm just making sure of her name," he says, "not checking on your marital state."

"Ah," I say.

We go through the house onto the patio. It is a house with a patio.

We have met his wife as we go through the house. She keeps her own name. Now we meet a big bold blonde who stands on the patio like living sculpture. We are told her name but I don't catch it.

"She makes porno movies," King Zig-Zag tells us. His wife stands by looking enigmatic.

Lily sits down with her back to the view. The view stretches across chasms to mountains. I sit and look at it. It is an impressive view if you like views. You can look at the view and not look at the people. Or you can look at the people and keep your back to the view. We don't seem to be able to do both, except jointly. Which means that one of us is always ignoring the people and one of us is always ignoring the view. I feel like one of those people who won't look people in the eye. I won't look people in the eye. Some things I cannot bear to see. I lift up my eyes to the hills, for help.

"Do you make porno movies or do you act in them?" Lily asks.

"Oh, she acts in them," says King Zig-Zag.

"I'll put the sausages on the barbecue," says the Duchess of Windsor.

We are given wine in crystal goblets. I drink mine and then get a can of beer I brought and put in the fridge.

"I am sick of drinking out of vegemite glasses," says Lily, "it's so nice to drink out of crystal goblets."

I suck up the beer from its aluminium can. I have no commitment to aluminium cans, but I also have no commitment to crystal goblets.

Sam and Sara were going to arrive early but when we get there, there is no sign of them, and we arrive two hours late. We decide not to wait for them before eating. The big bold blonde has a train to catch back to the city. So

briefly flashed before us, so rapidly snatched away. Perhaps they had the orgy last night. The marinated flesh is put on the barbecue and we gaze at the view.

"When I used to smoke a lot I would spend all day just gazing at the view."

Now he doesn't smoke a lot. Now he doesn't smoke at all it seems. They pour out these wines from bottles. None of the cardboard and foil cut-price, bulk-buy wine casks here. But I only notice this when it is pointed out later. I am looking at the view, getting used to the idea that there are no drugs. I wonder if Sam and Sara managed to score.

"I'd forgotten people still ate meat," I say to Lily.

"That's because you never visit anyone," she says.

Ah true, we are all in exile from our familiar places.

I think I eat pork chop but try not to think about enjoying eating it.

"I dropped a trip," says Sam, behind his hand, as we walk out to his car.

"Did you get any dope?"

"Yeah, yeah, don't panic, I got some good stuff, you'll really like it. But what happened was Bob'd got this acid and he gave me a trip and so we sort of got held up."

"Where's the dope?"

"Relax," he says, "it's here somewhere, it's nice stuff."

We walk back to the house.

"Anyway," he says, apropos the trip, "if anything happens, any weird stuff, just you and Lily leave, just go, we'll be all right."

Sam shuffles out to the patio with his shirt-tail hanging loose and his Greek bag full of poems and books and panadol and serapax and antacids and a bottle of bourbon. He gives King Zig-Zag a copy of his new book. King Zig-Zag is stoking the barbecue and impaling pork chops and chicken breasts, he is preoccupied by the haute cuisine of the hills and Sam presses on his attention like a blow-fly on marinated dead flesh. King Z-Z graciously accepts the book and puts it on a table. Sam stands with his cock-robin stance, shuffling his feet to get the toes exactly on a line and not going over it, lined up exactly for permission to speak, for the intensity of breaking through to impermeable inexplicable self-proclaimed authority.

The big bold blonde picks up the book.

"Ah, poetry," she says.

"Would you like one?" says Sam.

"They're ten dollars," says Sara.

"Would you like one?" says Sam. "Would you prefer to buy one or be given one?"

The big bold blonde exudes all her honey golden charm.

"I'd prefer to be given one," she says.

"Why?" says Sam, "why would you prefer to be given one?"

"Because it would mean more to me."

"Then I'd have to fuck you," says Sam.

She smiles.

She turns out to be American. She travels the world. She has been to Afghanistan, Ayers Rock, Bangkok, Nicaragua.

I roll a smoke. Nobody seems to have any dope but everyone smokes it. Sam writes an inscription in the book he is giving the American. The Duchess of Windsor is driving her to the station and sits in the car hooting the horn. Sam is in the throes of inspiration. A personalized inscription. He writes things and crosses them out, gets half-way through a word and forgets it, the car horn keeps hooting, the American keeps telling Sam she has to hurry, and it only slows him down.

In the end she gets away to meet her contact in the city.

"That's what they do," says Sam, "they use these attractive girls, send them round the world."

We think of attractive girls sent round the world we have known.

"Attractive," says Sara.

King Zig-Zag reappears in his Marcel Proust t-shirt. There is a collection of Ezra Pound's war-time broadcasts from Italy on the kitchen table, we notice as we are shown round the house, the renovations, the timberwork, the matting, the tiles.

"Specially for us," says Sam. The literary touch. To remind us of what happens to writers who get involved in politics.

We walk round the grounds. It is not all his, theirs, the land to the horizon, but a lot of it is. Some was once laid out in terraces and fountains.

It has a literary history, it belonged to someone or other, King Zig-Zag tells us.

"I think that's rather nice," he says, "a continuity."

"The enemy," says Sam.

Like Winston Churchill, King Zig-Zag has been building walls, drystone walls to hold back soil.

"It'll fall down," I tell him. There's an art to dry-stone walling. I do not tell him what the art is, how could I? All I can tell him is where it is lacking.

More fine wines are produced, more savoring of the crystal goblets.

"What they do now," says Sam to Lily, "what they do is at all these business things, if they want to get somebody to sign a deal, they serve special sorts of wine, or if they want them to freak out they serve something else or if they don't want the deal to go ahead they serve them something like a downer, they've got all these chemicals they use for making the wines, they've been doing it for centuries and now all the chemical companies and big business are into it, it's just like you get people pissed so they tell you everything, well this is like that only more complex, that's all."

"The other thing they do," said Lily, "is coat the glasses with some chemical, then everyone has the same wine but they make sure that certain people get certain glasses."

"Mmm," says Sam quizzically, his lips a tight line, waving up and down like a French mime artist performing the line of beauty, "mmm."

The Duchess of Windsor returns from the station. King Zig-Zag disappears into the bedroom and comes out in his Dostoevski t-shirt. Now for the abyss.

We are herded into the company car and roar down a bush track between flashing gums and expressionist horrors. Then we stop at a point beyond which even a

company car cannot be taken.

"It's not far," they tell us, coming across like rural hippies at our urban fear of walking.

The Duchess of Windsor carries the hamper with gateaux and champagne. We file along behind her, along these narrow ruts like sheep tracks, except there are no sheep, other than us.

Suddenly the ground drops away several thousand feet in front of us. About three feet in front of us. There is no warning of this horrific experience. One moment you are struggling along a bush track, head down, next there is just the abyss in front of you.

We concede it is a splendid view.

Splendid.

"Shit," says Sam.

You could've walked right over it and never seen the view. Except momentarily at something per something feet per second.

Then she wants us to climb out on some devil's promontory and perch there eating chocolate cake and drinking sour, fizzy wine. I stand well back. They laugh, they mock. I remain immovable. Sam reacts somewhat similarly except that he is far from immovable. He stumbles around, I can see him stumbling down the devil's promontory and bowling everyone ahead of him into the abyss. He stays well back too but that's no good news for the people squatting between him and the abyss. I stay well behind Sam.

The gateaux are all right. They were bought in town. Where we have just come from, only a more expensive suburb. But my stomach is not quite into gateaux. The crows wheel around beneath our feet. Or their feet. I am not close enough to see the crows but I imagine they are wheeling around waiting there. I have been in a number of temptation scenes in my life, the high building number, standing up on the umpteenth floor of the Arts Council building and surveying the city beneath. But this time, on this precipice on the mountain, I cannot see what is being offered. Perhaps now we only get the sense experience, not the offer. This is less a temptation than a test, a threat; has King Zig-Zag read one of those reviews of my work that talks of recurrent images of vertigo? And ascribed it to my psyche rather than to the architecture of our times and too much TV? Like his car chase in the company car, these media images for instant excitement penetrate our consciousness, we believe they are our images, our perceptions, our lives. How much superman has the hippy king absorbed? But his feet are firmly planted on the ground. We can expect no jump from him.

Sam raises his hand. Can we go back now?

If he has dropped a trip I can see that all this might be rather excruciating for him. It is for me and as far as I know I haven't. Not consciously.

The boughs bleed as the car brushes past them. The soil burns as the tires spin. Oh no, don't say we have to get out and push. But we don't. Big motor, big tires, vrrrm vrrrm. The earth could open and swallow us. But doesn't.

Then we are back in the house for chocolates and more fine wines and the dope now diminishing as I roll a few numbers to relax by. One, two, three. And the Duchess of Windsor tells us about her poetic leanings and then Sam demands a record player to play a record he's brought up in his bag but they haven't got a record player, I don't believe it they haven't got a record player, well we've got a record player but it's packed away, well unpack it, says Sara, you're supposed to be the hippy king, where's your record player? Well it's packed away, well unpack it. Maybe they're into cassettes, casettes in the car, casettes beneath the pillow, headsets for jogging, etc. It is all getting shrill now, Lily is weeping in the kitchen for some hard-luck story the Duchess of Windsor is telling her, I sit in the arm-chair in the living room or whatever they call it here, the library, there are a lot of books here so maybe it is a library, Sara decides the Duchess of Windsor is making a line for me so comes and sits on my lap to protect Lily's interests, now the darkness has swirled round the house, chocolates and fine wines and Sara insists Sam should read a poem, they've brought him up here they should sit here and hear a poem, here here says King Zig-Zag, remembering his cheer-leader days for the debating team, especially if there is no record player, I don't want to read I just want to hear this record, says Sam, read damn you, says Sara, so he reads, which means going into the preliminaries of setting the scene, the composition of place, a street in at the Cross, Sam drunk and picked up by the pigs, more prison experiences, let me tell you my hard luck story, the cell floor flowing in piss, this is real damn you, says Sara, this is what it's like being a poet. Well, I can see it's difficult, says King Zig-Zag, woof woof and other such woof-woofing, then the Duchess of Windsor reads a poem, from the collected works of Stevie Smith, against whom we have nothing personally, but it's all getting a bit like charades. Oh, I'm so frustrated, Sara suddenly yells out, and then the Duchess of Windsor suppressed a yawn and made discrete intimations of retiring, and King Zig-Zag started talking about making tracks and one last cup of coffee for the road and Sam said he'd have the coffee but wasn't ready for the road yet, it still being early in the evening, and besides he couldn't go right now and drive having dropped a trip. It didn't seem to matter whether he had or hadn't, or if he had some eight hours earlier he should be down by now, and the fact that no one had remarked anything till now showed clearly enough it wouldn't matter and no one would ever know the difference, but King Zig-Zag freaked and Sam had gained a delay. It went on for several hours. He was prised out of the house once or twice but usually scuttled back in or had other people scuttling back in for lost objects. In the end we did what he'd told me to do, just leave, and we just left them sitting in the car on the bush track, Sam and Sara, the lights coming on and off, the motor stopping and starting, and at some point Sam threw his greek bag full of books and records and his scrapbooks into the abyss, but a bushwalker's mother phoned them up a couple of days later saying the scrapbooks had been found and did they want them back, which was good since he's just been able to sell them to the National Library for a few thousand dollars, since even poets of the most chameleon variety cannot live on air and the free lunches always turn out to have their price.

The Cold War and Beyond

ROWAN CAHILL

A discussion of Australia's First Cold War 1945–1953, *Volume I: Society, Communism and Culture, edited by Ann Curthoys and John Merritt (Allen and Unwin, $24.95).*

Reagan, amazing new science-fiction weapons, arms race, talk of war, paranoia about nuclear armageddon, spies, belligerent foreign policies ... a sense of déjà vu. *I am reminded of the 1950s, when I was a kid. I am a child of the Cold War; born in the shadows of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, promised World War III some fourteen times to date, had atomic-blast emergency drills and fall-out shelters shoved down my throat before I was ten, was terrified in early adolescence by Nevil Shute's haunting* On the Beach.

One night during the Falklands War I sat in the lounge-room with my seven-year-old son, watching a TV report on the sinking of the General Belgrano*; the boy cuddled into me as close as he could and looked into my face to ask me in an afraid, halting voice, was there going to be another World War. I said no, but felt he was not convinced. I hugged him and felt anger that he could not grow up* innocent. *At the same time my mind shifted into reverse to another time, another lounge-room, another father. My son was me, and I was my own old man. Same question, same concern;* déjà vu.

I

The Cold War tends to lie on the pages of Australian history and text books as a bland term; a neat pigeon-hole in which to deposit a decade or so. Few have gone out of their way to make the period live, to recreate it. For many Australians it is simply the 1950s, a period which saw the release of youthful exuberance via the importation of American rock-and-roll; a bit of tension here and there, but basically a quiescent time. Forgotten or ignored are the fears and the shadows; the police spies; the *agents provocateur*; the informers; the progressive people who were subjected to frame-up attempts for crimes as diverse as carnal knowledge and spying; the intimidation of liberals and leftists, the police raids on their homes and offices; the bashings; the imprisonment of some leading left-wing identities; the censorship; the hate and loathing whipped up by a lap-dog conservative press that transformed lies into 'facts'; the hate and loathing that festered under Parliamentary privilege; and the people who were frightened into silence ...

There are exceptions to my generalization. For example, the Roger Milliss autobiography *Serpent's Tooth* (1984) was a courageous, trail-blazing attempt to add literary flesh to historic bones; and before him, and still amongst my favorites, Ralph Gibson's modest volume of memoirs *My Years in the Communist Party* (1966); Don Watson's biography *Brian Fitzpatrick: A Radical Life* (1979) made its contribution; so too did Ian Turner's autobiographical essay "My Long March" (Overland 59). Memoirs by John Sendy, Len Fox, Jack Beasley, George Stewart and Nancy Wills have helped to make the shadows move; Richard Haese in *Rebels and Precursors* (1981) has charted some of the cultural terrain. Frank Hardy's neglected *The Hard Way* (1961) graphically captured the paranoia, danger, fear, and loathing of the period. But in spite of all this the night remains. And generally the Cold War is neglected.

There are reasons for this. The period is only now beginning to shake itself free from the restrictions placed on research by the thirty-year rule straight-jacket on archival sources; obviously researchers have been put off by the inaccessibility of some material. But there has been, and still is, a plethora of oral-history sources; and the private collections of some Left bower-birds are available. I suggest that part of the explanation for the neglect of the Cold War in Australian historical/cultural writing lies in the fact that a true history of the period would involve transgressing the laws of libel and defamation that so inhibit investigative writing in this country. For the Cold War was a time when a lot of people, conservatives, small 'l' liberals and leftists alike, acted in ways they would today be ashamed of; and there are quite a few reputations built on sand. Lillian Hellman's memoirs of America in the 1950s were aptly titled *Scoundrel Time*; these words equally fit the Australian scene during the same period.

More important however is that, if we are to understand the Cold War, we have to also understand the politics and culture of the late 1930s and the 1940s. And if this is to happen we will have to expose some monstrous skeletons collecting dust in their various closets. The biggest is that which centres around the Brisbane Line controversy of World War II, and I can only echo and support the words of Humphrey McQueen here: "There are reasons for believing that the 'Brisbane Line' was not a military line – but a political one; that it marked the border between those parts of Australia which would

be conceded to the Japanese to be administered directly by them and those sections of Australia which would be run by a Vichy-style government in Canberra".[1] Vance Palmer in a 'Crisis Number' of Meanjin, March 1942, referred to the Australian quislings: "whisperers, fainthearts, near-fascists, people who have grown rotten through easy living ... "

In my biography of Rupert Lockwood, in progress, I will have something to say on this subject; for the moment I merely note that the main players who were willing to betray Australia in the 1940s were still on, or close to, the political stage during the Cold War. Their manipulation of anti-communism in the 1950s was ironic, given its emphasis on fifth-column traitors and the politics of betrayal; *they* knew all about it. When R.G. Casey (Minister for External Affairs in the Liberal government) referred in Parliament in May 1952 to a 'nest of traitors' in Australia, in a sense he was correct. Only they weren't on the Left as he intimated; and he was about twelve years too late.

Traditionally the Cold War in Australia has been dealt with by researchers in political terms. But it was more than a political phenomenon; it was a cultural one as well – a conflict between the hegemony of an old, doomed, one-dimensional Waspish Australia, and an emerging New Australia of which the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) was in many ways in the vanguard.

II

The recent publication of *Australia's First Cold War*, a collection of eight essays by ten authors, edited by Ann Curthoys and John Merritt, is welcome and thought-provoking. The book constitutes a pioneering study of the Cold War in the antipodes; it breaks ground by seeking to view the impact of the Cold War not only on politics but on social movements, the literary world, suburban life, and ordinary Australian citizens. Publishers George Allen and Unwin should be congratulated for their initiative.

Which is not to say I do not have a quibble. The editors have selected the period 1945 to 1953 as constituting the Cold War; that is, the period when real war between the USA and its allies, and the USSR, "appeared likely". To my way of thinking the 1953 cut-off point is unsatisfactory: it excludes the Petrov Affair, some of the nastiest work of the Industrial Groups, the ALP split, SEATO, the 1958 Senate Inquiry into the maritime unions, and the manipulation by conservative forces of anti-communism throughout the fifties and into the sixties. As a sixties New Leftist I vividly recall being on the receiving end of some torrid and violent anti-communism. No doubt, however, had the editors expanded their time-scale they would have ended up with a project beyond the scope of the modest essay collection envisaged. As it is the editors claim they already have enough material for another volume of essays, which they promise at a future date. I hope the publishers are so heartened by reaction to the present volume that they do go ahead with a second. Having said that, let me endorse the editors' contention, implicit in their title, that the period 1979 to the present is Australia's Second Cold War.

The book begins energetically with an essay by Stephen Alomes, Mark Dober and Donna Hellier, an attempt to recreate the feel of life in the late 1940s and early 1950s. This has been negatively commented upon by some reviewers, but I find it comprehensive, lucid, mind-jogging, entertaining and, for those who are too young to have known the period personally, as good an introduction as will be found. The authors take us for a quick trip through a suburban world, in places still characterized by degrees of pioneering as the urban sprawl of the capital cities pushed out into the bush; an isolated world about to be changed by mass-immigration, mass-production, and mass-communication. A conservative urban world, reeling from the horrific revelations of Japanese barbarism against Australian troops, marvelling at the glories of the new electric and atomic technologies, and underscored by anti-communist, "socialism equals communism", paranoia. Marriage, home-ownership, mortgage, family, overtime, and the suburban garden formed the still points in a turning world.

Memories flood back to me: a middle class boyhood on the suburban fringe of Sydney. Without a family car to whisk us away to other venues, the nearby bush provided our entertainment and adventures – rabbits, snakes, goannas, eels, yabbies, cicadas, caves, bush fires. China pear, loquat, persimmon and lilli-pilli trees were part of this suburban environment; so too were market gardens, orchards (declining into ruin) and swarming choko vines. It was a time when the daily milk supply was collected in a billy can from the horse-drawn waggon, when bread was baked in fiery bakery ovens; the ice man called a few days each week; the dunny carter once. Radio was King, and we kids had crystal sets.

Mum was in awe of electricity. A country girl, she knew about the slow combustion stove; after a city stint she had some experience with gas. But in 1952, when dad put an electric range in our new house, she preferred to barbecue in most weathers, rather than have to confront and dirty her technological miracle. This went on for three years.

As for Dad, he performed small miracles. With bush rock and leaf-mould he turned a small sloping block into a garden of Eden, complete with chooks, that provided all our vegetable and fruit needs. And sometimes at night when the guns and searchlights of the coastal batteries practised in post-war tensions, he told me about the falling Asian dominoes, the yellow peril, and praised Robert Menzies. For Dad was a Depression youth who had ridden with the New Guard.

Hard on the heels of Alomes and company is Bruce McFarlane. Using recently released archival material, he examines Australian economic policy, 1947–1953. He shows how Australia's Cold War alignment with the US and UK against the USSR adversely effected the Australian economy, unbalancing it and causing some sectors to stagnate, the inflation which dominated economic policy a result of our trying to combine development *and* defence. Australia found itself a sort of victim, caught up in a web spun by American policy-makers intent on protecting their initiatives and economic interests at Australia's

expense. McFarlane's essay is a timely piece of research and analysis that should serve as a warning to our current policy-makers, given the recent dismantling of financial regulation in Australia, hints of an impending full-scale assault on the Australian labor movement by the international banking community that threatens to follow on as a consequence,[2] and US expectations that Australia should willingly fit into its Star Wars/Pine Gap missile and spy webs.

Meredith Burgmann contributes two thorough, interesting, and original essays. The first examines anti-communism in the ALP, 1945 to 1949, and untangles the different attitudes of the Labor Party towards the CPA at the federal leadership and State branch levels. Burgmann shows how the federal leadership of the ALP was less hostile towards communism than were the State branches. She also shows that "the ALP leaders kept a distinction in their minds between Russian communism and Australian communism", so that no matter what was happening in Australia on the anti-communist front, in the realm of foreign affairs this did not poison Australian (Labor) government attitudes towards the Soviet Union.

In her second essay Burgmann studies Dr H.V. Evatt as a statesman, and his relationship with the USSR, 1945–1949. She rescues him from the conservative historians who neglect him, or portray him as a marginal, unstable character; and from the New Leftists who tend to depict him as a willing tool of the Americans and a betrayer of the socialist cause. Burgmann forcefully argues that: "Evatt played a substantial role in moulding the postwar world and . . . stood alone as a Western statesman who did not wholly embrace the world concept provided by the Americans". A few copies of this essay circulated around Canberra today might not go astray – especially amongst those needing a bit of backbone.

Frank Cain and Frank Farrell detail the war Prime Minister Menzies waged against the CPA, 1949–1951, and his two attempts to ban it. Their account of the legal preparations leading to the framing of the Communist Party dissolution bill (April 1950) makes interesting reading, showing how Menzies, realizing he was about to take a dicey politico-legal step in trying to ban a thirty year-old political party, attempted to make his action appear constitutional, legal, and democratic.

As it turned out Menzies failed to ban the Party. The narrow rejection of the anti-communist referendum in 1951 finally saw to that. Had he got his way the post-referendum history of Australia would have been frighteningly different. Secret plans for the establishment of an internment camp for communists on Flinders Island (in Bass Strait) symbolize the possible – and probable – direction of events.

Geoffrey Dutton has noted that there is in Australia an unfortunate "bias against the Left among those intent on creating and maintaining a canon of Australian literature . . ." His point is more than butressed by the recent publication of *The Oxford Anthology of Australian Literature*, edited by Leonie Kramer and Adrian Mitchell; excluded from its pages are people like Kylie Tennant, Frank Hardy, David Martin, Judah Waten, and Alan Marshall![3]

Two contributions to *Australia's First Cold War* examine aspects of this phenomenon. Susan McKernan looks at the small Australian literary community of the 1950s, how it was divided by the Cold War, and the tensions, conflicts, and distrust that were generated. Outstanding is Allan Ashbolt's essay, a model of forceful, controlled, committed writing which gives a detailed account, in part based on personal records, of the attack on Vance Palmer (from 1952) by right-wing MPs Standish Keon, W.C. Wentworth and others. Taken to its crudest extent the attack alleged that Palmer, using his position as Australia's foremost man of letters, was involved in a communist conspiracy to subvert literary standards and take over the literary arts. Ashbolt makes the point that this vile attack was a manifestation of a general Australian suspicion of creative writers, and part of a politico-cultural climate "edging writers towards a discrete withdrawal from open political activity and from any sort of writing that seemed to be politically motivated or coloured". In this essay Ashbolt captures the feel of the times and its paranoias; he details the conspiracies of the conservatives, and demonstrates Palmer's dignity, nobility and courage, at the expense of his health, as he reacted to, and fought against, both the politico-cultural filth and its purveyors.

III

John Docker is one of the few contemporary writers on Australian cultural issues who can be read for pleasure and insight without having first been privy to a specialized arcane vocabulary and epistemology. His *Australian Cultural Elites* (1974) and *In A Critical Condition* (1984) challenged, elucidated, and entertained. Rare qualities in contemporary Australian left writing. His essay in the volume under discussion does not sit comfortably with the others, being a provocative blend of cultural exegesis, academic iconoclasm and autobiography, free wheeling through time and themes, setting in motion a host of thoughts and ideas – another of his strengths.

Docker examines a wide range of aspects of the Australian intellectual arena in the fifties – from radical-nationalism and radical-conservatism through to communist conceptions of culture and education; he concludes with an important discussion of aspects of the New Left of the 1960s, perhaps the key point of the essay. This is a logical step; the New Left was in many ways a product of the Cold War.

For Australian communists in the fifties the state education system was seen as being of benefit to the working class; *knowledge was power*, and could be used to enhance working-class capacity to defeat the upper class. Communists therefore encouraged their children to succeed at school, and enter tertiary institutions.

But things did not turn out as planned. Undergraduates became radicals, "but probably not in the image their parents might have wished". Concepts of class and class-consciousness were dropped; the radical potential of the working class was seen as a blunted force; a radicalism based on the transformation of bourgeois society by marginals was adopted – the idea of Herbert Marcuse in

One Dimensional Man (1964) that hope lay in "such disruptive characters as the artist, the prostitute, the adulteress, the great criminal and outcast, the warrior, the rebel-poet, the devil, the fool – those who don't earn a living, at least not in an orderly and normal way ..."

The long-term effects of this process were cataclysmic. First, the CPA was destroyed "as a movement of the working-class and supportive professional middle-class intellectuals dedicated to the liberation of the (traditional) working-class." Although Docker does not make the point, the 'marginals' philosophy has had, and will have, a wider social impact. The New Left graduates have taken their intellectual grab-bags into the ALP and the trade-union movement; the increasing concentration on marginal issues by teacher unions, for example, and the consequent alienation of many rank and file members, is one area where the effect is pronounced.

The second effect Docker deals with is the way in which the nature of left intellectual life changed; the tyranny of professionalism and credentialism emerged as the student radicals became intellectuals and found employment in the expanding tertiary teaching staffs of the 1960s and 1970s.

As Docker explains:

> That intellectuals should associate in their own 'sphere' became an assumption, as natural as breathing, of many of the New Left-Vietnam war generation of intellectuals. They had, that is, successfully absorbed an ethos of specialization and professionalism through their tertiary training, a characterizing ethos of the professional middle class. They had acquired a consciousness that would look down on anyone who was not 'trained', was not specialized, as having no legitimate right to talk intellectually in public. The 'amateur' was intellectually contemptible, embarrassing; the specialist talked to other specialists. And if you became a radical specialist, you talked to other radical specialists in your area.

A sorry state of affairs, and one that can only be to the detriment of the left, leading as it does, and has, to the creation of self-supporting sects preaching to their own closed circles in equally impenetrable vocabularies. Further, it leads to arrogance, a lack of tolerance, and a certain blinkered existence.

Writing in 1980 as someone on the Left of the political spectrum, Richard Hoggart criticised the situation in England with regard to education and the arts, whereby people feel disinclined to attack "any left-wing activity" for fear of appearing to identify with the right. As a result "left-wing writers have got away with murder".[4]

Something similar has developed in Australia during the last ten to fifteen years. The institutionalized, New Left radicals have tended to create a canon of Left orthodoxies and a list of taboos; a sort of catechism of accepted Left ideas and positions – in its own way a variant of the much-despised and ridiculed intellectual Stalinism of earlier eras. In the process, freedom of debate tends to go out the window, intolerance, or the sneering dismissal, becomes the name of the game, and debaters who have more in common with the Left than the Right tend to be forced into right-wing orbits. I have already seen it happen, particularly in the context of education – one of my fields of interest. And I believe we are seeing it, for example, in the so-called 'Blainey debate'.

Geoffrey Blainey's 'crime', as I interpret events, was to open up debate on Australian immigration and challenge the simplistic public notions expounded in the Hawke government's 'lack of thought' propaganda. Blainey thereby violated a Left taboo (discussion of immigration policy in a critical manner) and was therefore seen as a reasonable subject for punishment. Stereotyped, his friendships questioned, subjected to threats of violence, personal abuse, and a Left-phalanx attack by fellow academics on the quality of his historical writing, Blainey appears to me a classic victim of a contemporary type of McCarthyism; albeit coming from the Left.[5]

Docker, in his discussion of the New Left, emphasizes the role played by radicals coming from a communist background – his own origins. But the damage did not solely emanate from that quarter. Middle-class students with no working-class or radical background had a significant input into 1960s radicalism. I was part of that.

Arriving at Sydney University in the early sixties, I was a middle-class discontent of an eclectic, individualist, even anarchic type, my mind reeling with a flurry of ideas fuelled by Huxley, Russell, Joyce, Lorca, Whitman, Blake, Shelley, Lawrence, Freud, Jung, Oz magazine ... a lot of this courtesy of an Andersonian school teacher who helped channel my adolescent discontent in literary and philosophical directions.

Conscripted in 1965, deferred courtesy of my student status, I kept out of the Army's grasp and over the next few years developed into a radical of some notoriety ... street violence, arrests, finger-prints, conscientious objection, days in court, nights in jail, pursued by military police, hiding, strange things happening to the phone, tampered mail, near-breaches of the Crimes Act, speeches, articles, pamphlets, publishing; organizing, marches, sit-ins, teach-ins ... and with this the tensions, the family divisions, the loneliness of the dock, the panic surge of claustrophobia when the cell door slammed.

In the late sixties, at the height of the Australian student revolt, when the idea of a student-worker alliance hit us after the success of the student-worker uprising in Paris (1968), I recall the attitude held by myself and my tertiary compatriots as we fleetingly met with various union officials and addressed stop-work and lunchtime meetings of rank-and-file unionists. It was that we, the students, were the catalysts of social change, and also the embodiment of wisdom. Looking back I think that when we spoke we tended to *count* but not *weigh;* we spoke aggressively about democratic values, but undervalued those with whom we dealt, regarding them with a submerged contempt. We knew the rhetoric and some of the theory of socialism but failed, I believe, to discern its soul.

For me this began to change as the sun set on the sixties, and I was approached by the CPA to write for the Tribune. I started my wanderings on the traditional Left;

at first I met and got to know the journalists Alec Robertson, Malcolm Salmon, Pete Thomas; then cadres like the Aarons brothers, John Sendy, Laurie Carmichael, Bernie Taft; later I met people like Helen Palmer, Rupert Lockwood, Len Fox; and later still, when working with the Seamen's Union, the legendary Bill Bird and E.V. Elliot.

I was with the Seamen's Union for two years and encountered many members of what Docker calls the "upper working class", leftists who had educated themselves, who regarded it as their right to have an informed opinion on everything from politics to the arts. I well remember an occasion in the mess room of the old rusting *Iron Monarch* (now a victim of Asian scrappers), chatting with seamen about Australian literature and the novels of George Johnston in particular. I browsed through their shipboard library – some 500 volumes; their latest acquisition, the complete works of George Bernard Shaw.

The point is that I had experiences that many of my Left compatriots did not. Gradually my elitist fallacies were undermined as I came to realize that education and culture are not the sole preserves of the ivory towers of academia or of the mandarins they produce; nor should they be.

But this was not a widespread legacy of the sixties and early seventies. And, as Docker suggests, with the rise of the New Left and its subsequent professionalizations, traditions that were amongst the best in the old Left were destroyed. With regret I think we can also note that, as socialist writing and thinking has been hijacked by the academics, so too has it tended to lose much of its poetry and humanity.

IV

Cold War kids like me grow up, and old. For some of us circumstances, various records and files, and a track record for 'political unreliability', have dogged our careers and helped us escape professionalization. These days, as I nudge forty, I see a lot of sense in what Jack Blake wrote in 1971: "If we bear in mind that no single formula can embrace a complex process of social development, it is still possible, in a sense, to say that in pursuing the defence, broadening and development of democracy in qualitatively new ways we will emerge at the end with socialism."[6]

Looking around there seems to be an increasing tendency towards pessimism on the Australian Left; prominent Labor politicians in power act morally and politically like descendents of the Borgias, and in the process elevate the sell-out and betrayal of principles to a cynical art form; significant elements of the labor movement are shown to be firmly entrenched in the cogs and webs of corruption (making a refamiliarization with Frank Hardy's 1950 muckraking classic *Power Without Glory* yet another exercise in *déjà vu*).

Internationally there seems little to draw hope from. Third World liberation governments adopt tired hand-me-down Marxisms to form a bullpen of left-wing fascisms, while the tentacles of Soviet and American imperialism wrestle for Lebensraum. In response the Western Left, its moral voice lost somewhere in the mists between 1956 and 1975, looks about with either a blind eye or a jaundiced romantic vision. It has been sidetracked, hooked as it is on the addictive drug of nuclear armageddon (and the hand-me-down apocalyptic visions of the Book of Revelations) with all its opportunities for melodrama, self-importance, and the peculiar adrenalin politics of despair.

And all the while as our part of the world, courtesy of satellite technology and television, locks into the illusions of Reagan's America, the greater part of the world is stalked by hunger, famine, drought, its human and natural ecologies ravaged both by conventional weaponry and the cheap germ-warfare technologies of European chemical combines.

In confusing and desperate times like these we need, I believe, to emphasize and assert values like intellectual freedom and political democracy, and go forward with a vision in our minds of a socialism that is tolerant, democratic, and as free as possible from the crippling vices of sectarianism, paranoia, and pessimism; for there is much to be done. I know this is a dated, unscientific, non-trendy, non-European-Marxist thing to say; but there is no dishonor in that, and these days this pretty well describes me.

NOTES

1 Humphrey McQueen: *Gallipoli to Petrov* (Sydney, 1984), p.156.
2 Brian Toohey: "Prisoner of Love", National Times, 3–9 May 1985.
3 Geoffrey Dutton discusses aspects of this bias in chapter 10, "A Note on the Left", in his *Snow on the Saltbush* (Penguin Books, 1985), pp.169–178. A scathing critique of the Kramer-edited *Oxford History of Australian Literature* (1981) by John Docker is worth reading in this context; see John Docker, *In a Critical Condition* (Penguin Books, 1984), pp.163–179.
4 Richard Hoggart: "The crisis of relativism", New Universities Quarterly, Winter 1980, pp.29–30.
5 My view of the Blainey debate has been reinforced by the A.T. Yarwood review of Blainey's *All for Australia*, Overland 97, and by Blainey's recent comments on the practice of history, and particularly the role of 'misunderstanding' in historical debate, in R.M. Crawford, Manning Clark, Geoffrey Blainey, *Making History* (McPhee Gribble/Penguin Books, 1985), pp.69–81.
6 J.D. Blake: *Revolution from Within* (Outlook, Sydney, 1971), pp.163–164. Ian Turner's essay "Temper Democratic, Bias Australian", in *Room for Manoeuvre*, edited by Leonie Sandercock and Stephen Murray-Smith (Melbourne, 1982), is also, it seems to me, a relevant piece of politico-cultural writing.

THE ARTISTS CONTINUE TO DRAW MISSILES

I

The magazine implied 'You will be successful
if you wear a cowboy hat.' The artists go about
their business as usual dressed up in paper hats;
an artist has a vision (once in the morning
twice over lunch / the same numbers in kindergarten
were used by Albert Einstein.) An artist
has a vision & draws on the wall with pink spray
can lettering 'one to nine' smudged at the beginning
& at the end / the angry mud disguised as paint.

II

Something is amiss / they pardon themselves from life
'but you are life' is also written on the wall
in blue; an artist has a vision 'to take a walk along
the ocean floor / see how the continents are joined.'
Of this / thinking alone inside a rectangle / the
jigsaw of days the sky at night a quiet memento of
hemisphere; the stars ignite on the end of a brush
two worlds asleep / awake the heart & brain most
obviously a paradox; time fattens in skinny waves.
The artist continues to draw a missile.

III

A gob of yellow butter is rubbed down a green wall.
An artist looks out through a long window / where
traffic lights are; & draws in the moisture on the
glass with an index finger thick as charcoal. The
traffic lights turn to red / energy lines appear
a man appears in the window / fending off dogs
with a tri-colored pen / clutching the briefcase
ready for the old doorknock.

IV

An artist appears in the street / hammering a fist
biting the wings off a fly / even no satisfaction
in anger / what then of light's monotony?
Pushing on the wall & the wall pushing back;
dumbfounded thumping their drums friends keep telling
them
anathema is a strange word your own kind all speak the
same language / gristle-tongued moving your brushes
in puke. The artist draws a missile on the footpath
thin & pointed at the top / thinking of religion
& the fine edge it & anarchy share or philistines
who just caught the lift up from hell / geiger
counters & time-wearied economics in hand
who state / art is an illusion / footpaths don't fly.

V

The artist continues to draw a missile
on footpaths on walls on doors & asks who is this
God who are these Gods holding office
on the roof of the world?

VI

Hear those strange rumblings / hear the earth.
All stare into one another's eyes
below & above in the place where they would
lobotomize each other; as is the custom / as
if there were magical escapes / or radio-
active-proof suits / guilt leaves
a peculiar residue / maybe a dog-
eat-dog syndrome. The artists continue
to draw missiles / thin & pointed at the top.

VII

The art critics wish they were clairvoyants
& write on the wall under 'one to nine'
'it is 1984 / where is art heading?'

The artists walk outside
one takes off a paper hat & hangs an unfinished canvas
in the sun.

Politicians with briefcases
go door-knocking across
the roof of the world.

ROBERT DRUMMOND

POEM

we aren't really a family
like they say at camp assemblies

we're all orphans

the grown ups are going to
patch things up &
pull the pieces together

but i don't want to live
in a frankenstein world

there's no tv & no lunch
everything smells of scabs
& the fences crackle at night

there used to be people who
adopted orphans

but i had parents then

JENNY BOULT

FOR OLD TIMES' SAKE?

life's an amusement park & you
are the kid who takes the same ride
over & over in order to know
exactly what it does

who gets as much out of it
as possible & then moves on
to the next thing.

remember how you used to do it
over & over until you were staggering
& people said "that kid's green.
let's go quickly."

you know that ride
it's the one they closed down.

people tell you
"you're not a kid
life's a *serious* business
it's not about fun."

when they're only waiting
for you to go up there
& have fun for them

they double dare you
& you find yourself
walking away green again.

when you're on a diet & into ghost trains
water slides & crazy mirrors
they want you on the mad mouse
& into pop-dogs.

it was easier when you were a kid
with a strong stomach   no nerves
no paranoia   you weren't
as conspicuous then.

they're still into dodgem cars
when you know there's a *challenge*
grand-prix track across the street
& the lap-charge is the same

you're broke (that's not unusual)
its a fickle world (they tell you that)
yesterday a star today a dirty ash-tray

you're busking in the car park
wondering whether to take the dodgems
for old times' sake or the *grand-prix*
for the thrill

JENNY BOULT

EVEN THE SEA

Even the sea looks washed out
As though they'd rinsed it one
Too many times
Bleeding its green

A deep blue line
Snakes across the horizon
And sits
Under my eyes

You were red-haired then
Sienna sausages of curl
Streaming through Lodz

The beauty of the town
They said
And clever so clever

I look up
The sea is creamy
Milked
By your empty bags of breast

Your red locks
Scream stiffly
Loudly masking a desolate tune

Your poor face
That once haunted
And teased
Has broken

I am clutching you
Here with the sea
With me mother.

LILY BRETT

TRUE RELIGION

A boy is slowly making his way into the far corner of a
shed.
Engulfed by the warm and chaff-smelling dark, he reaches
for
the heavy flap of the big hessian bag which stands in the
corner,
then bends down and sinks the tin he is clutching in the
bag's
unseen belly. As the grain rushes into the tin and fills it
nearly to the brim, he hears a sound like that made by an
army
of roller-skaters. Yes, the roller-skaters are passing him
by at a distance of fifty or so yards.

When he reappears in the open door of the shed and once
more
stands in the sunlit world, he is surprised to discover that
the only things to be seen are the chickens in the nearby
run.
The road along which those skaters should be moving is
empty
of people or traffic. He weighs the tin in his hand, then
steps over to the run. An ambassador of darkness who
dreams
constantly of roller-skates, he has come to these heathen
creatures charged with a single commission – and that is
to
spread the true religion of the big hessian bag.

GARY CATALANO

WHO NEVER TO HIMSELF HAS SAID

I suppose they have to have a picture on the cover. And,
since it's a map of Queensland, they want something
representative.
A peanut or a raw prawn might be misunderstood,
bananas
are hackneyed, and anyway, Coffs Harbor isn't in
the Sunshine State. So they chose a pineapple. But this
being
the arse-end of the twentieth century, not
a real pineapple, but the Big Pineapple: a successful
gimmick to give tourists a concertina'd sample of
a fruit farm without sweat, skin-cancer, taipans,
market gluts, or all those little things that give
farmers permanent frowns, a wary stance, and a tendency
to look uneasily over their shoulders on sunny peaceful
days.
I'd like to be able to protest: claim we're not
well-represented
by a plastic and cement monstrosity. But I've seen
the representatives of the people of this great state. If
only you could fashion them into the arse-end of
some giant man, then take that Big Pineapple and –
but there'd still be cyclones and sandflies, so what's the
use?

R.G. HAY

THE BED

This bed has seen a lot of action
trouble toil and sorrow
if it was a soldier it would have a medal
if it was a nurse it would be a matron

stout and carved
it was made to last
a wooden rose of York
decorates its head
like a dowager's tiara

it's wise it's old
it's seen the lot
the horror that is marriage
the joy that it once was
sick children brought in
for comfort in the night

Christmas mornings opening presents
when paper quilts the spread
the cups of tea I've thrown
at a cheeky son retreating round the door
the gossip with my women friends
talking out our love

it's held me while I've read and wept
and wrote and slept
and when I fed my babies
naturally my husband used it for his mistress
I got in young and came out old

it's heard my drunken snores
and my sounds of grief
and in the worst despair it held me
when I couldn't walk
and simply crawled on hands and knees
to make a cup of tea

I've grasped its head
when making love and rowed it like an oar
it saw my tender lesbian attempts
and my world of men

it knows my waking and my sleeping habits
it is my ship in life
I do everything but sunbake on it
more faithful than I've ever found a man
it accepts me for what I am
and in return I love it

KATE LLEWELLYN

THE BREAST

In the morning   the breast remembers
the night
it peers out behind a satin strip
stretching like a lazy woman
inside the red dressing gown
it smiles to itself
confident
as only things that don't speak
can be

it remembers
when it became the moon
and turned the world round
as if it were a hand

and how it hung over the world
as if the world were a pond
reflecting the moon
and a hand
in a shimmer among stars

and how gathering a mouth into its arms
it rested groaning and dreaming
linking Cain, Abel and Eve

and how it became a river
in which a man swam
becoming a fish
leaping back to where he was born
determined as the axis of the earth
to do this before death

KATE LLEWELLYN

LATE AFTERNOON

It was odd the energy they showed dying.
Gap-mouthed and bug-eyed they folded at the knees and
watched
their companions drift away.

Sometimes it was a cancer, a raw hole where a nose had
been,
or an abscess that had sloughed off the horn of the toes,
sometimes you couldn't tell.

Ten miles from the yards,
no room on the bike for me, two dogs, a tool-kit and a
cripple,
I took out my pocket-knife.

Blunt from cutting poly-pipe, filed to a point
for digging out splinters, at first it didn't even break the
skin.
I stretched her neck harder around my shin,
she didn't even kick as I opened her wind-pipe.

Finally, as a bubbly red froth appeared,
with a toothless smile she began to thrash,
paddling the air with her front legs, claiming it was all a
mistake.
She really could have walked that far,

and those stretched and cracked teats would have suckled
another lamb. Really. And sighed and shuddered
against the approaching chill.

PETER HANSEN

JAMES M. HOLQUIST

Promethean Scientist

Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay and E.M. Webster's Moon Man *(Melbourne University Press, $33).*

On 20 September 1871 the Russian naval corvette *Vitjaz* sailed into Astrolabe Bay on the north-east coast of New Guinea. What then occurred was one of those events so rare we have no single available term to describe them: a collision between two groups of men so radically at variance each was able to conceive the other only in terms of a completely different ontology. The Russians had never encountered Papuans before and thought they were something called savages; the Papuans had never met Russians before and thought they were something called Gods. Rare as such encounters are, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed several of them, especially in the western Pacific. This particular meeting, however, had certain features that made it unique: the Europeans on their great ship almost immediately sailed away, leaving a lone Russian (with two servants), the twenty-three-year-old scientist Nikolai Nikolaevich Miklouho-Maclay. This self-marooned young man would soon become famous all over Europe and have his countrymen name the prestigious ethnographic institute of what is now the Soviet Academy of Sciences in his honor. Still known to every Soviet school child, his fame abroad has now dimmed, which is a pity, for although the nineteenth century was an age of great travellers, scientists and eccentrics, often all rolled into one, none travelled farther, offered themselves more self-immolatingly on the altar of science or were more wildly eccentric than Miklouho-Maclay.

The bare facts of his life are quickly told: born in 1846 into a family of the impoverished minor nobility, he studied natural science at Saint Petersburg University, from which he was dismissed in 1864 for reasons unspecified, but probably having to do with the extraordinary political unrest of those years. He then went abroad to study medicine at a series of German universities, finishing in 1868. During this time he was chosen by the already eminent Ernst Haeckel to accompany him on a scientific expedition to the Canary Islands. Thus began a life of wandering in the dark places of the earth that would take Miklouho-Maclay not only to New Guinea several times, but to most of Oceania, uncharted areas of the British and Dutch East Indies, South America, and the Queensland outback. Punctuating these travels were flying visits to European capitals to report on his work and to seek funding for further exploration.

No matter how far from civilization Miklouho-Maclay penetrated, he never escaped the need for money, and some of the more tragic and hilarious chapters in his career are tied up with the need constantly to scrape together funds to travel and, in the last years, simply to support himself and his family. At intervals he spent a number of years in Sydney, where he opened the research station whose building still stands in Watson's Bay, and where he married the daughter of Sir John Robertson. His Australian bride followed him back to Russia when he decided to settle there. In his later years he became a champion of native peoples against the swarming slavers and colonialists pouring into the western Pacific. Weakened by years of suffering from tropical diseases that would have killed most other men, and under intolerable financial strain, he died in 1888 and was buried in the city from which he had set out on his odyssey twenty-four years earlier.

Such details are sufficient, perhaps, to explain why Miklouho-Maclay is regarded as a semi-legendary figure in at least three different societies: in the Soviet Union he is remembered as an intrepid exemplar of the radical intelligentsia that formed in the 1860s, a man who 'went to the people' in the islands of the South Pacific rather than going to provincial villages in Russia; in New Guinea he is perceived as a benign founding father; and in Australia, when noted at all, it is usually as a bright spot in the sometimes tenebrous history of Australian dealings with native peoples. In each of these cases the man himself has been subsumed into a myth serving local interests, almost as much a totemic figure in the Soviet Union as he literally became in New Guinea. While such claims on the biography are not in conflict with its larger outlines, they obscure other aspects of Miklouho-Maclay's life which are not without their interest. The first of these is the human story of an extraordinarily complex individual, a lacuna that has now been filled by E.M. Webster's remarkable new book.

The Moon Man is a beautifully written account of Miklouho-Maclay's life after 1864. It is based on five years of research, including not only total immersion in the *Collected Works* published by the Soviet Academy of Sciences in the 1950s, but much material as well in Australian and British libraries and archives that will be incorporated in a new edition of the collected works the Academy is now publishing in six volumes (to be completed for the centenary of Miklouho-Maclay's death in

1988). It is fair to say that, although many accounts of Miklouho-Maclay's life exist in several languages, this is the first biography of him, insofar as no other approaches its wealth of detail or its meticulous scholarship. Since it is unlikely that any major new sources will turn up after the exhaustive review made by Professor Putilov's team in Leningrad for the new edition, and since Miss Webster draws on most of that existing material, it seems likely her account will remain definitive for some time to come.

Biographies described as definitive are often ponderous, so I hasten to assure the many readers this book deserves that it is highly readable: the author has a whale of a story to tell, and she does so in clear prose and a style informed by ironic restraint throughout, with effects that are sometimes amusing and sometimes quite moving. A good example of the author's humor is provided by the coda she appends to a grisly scene in which Miklouho-Maclay has just cut up the corpse of his native servant to obtain a Polynesian brain, an operation in which his other servant, a hapless Swede named Olsen, has been forced to assist: after disposing of the body in the lagoon, "with a kind thought for the sharks," Miss Webster says of Olsen, "Much as he feared New Guinea, he had one comfort. As a European he was not interesting. His master would never cut him up." Exemplary of the eloquence Miss Webster achieves through her restraint is the desciption of Miklouho-Maclay, after all the years of wandering in the tropics, dying in the Petersburg winter: "It did not matter now whether Maclay fell victim to the mysterious malignancy of countries he had loved or to Peter's improbable city, founded on swamps and corpses. Visitors were becoming intruders, the doctors mere conscientious torturers. Hemmed in by everything he had tried to escape, he existed alone on the final island of M."

The great strength of this book is its singleminded attention to the man Miklouho-Maclay. As Miss Webster says in her preface, "On concluding this work I am very conscious of how much I have been compelled to leave out ... and I have indeed given more attention than is usual to some phases of the traveller's career. For this I can only plead what seems to me an overriding reason: these matters were important to Miklouho-Maclay." This is very much a life, then, rather than a life and times, a strength that is also a weakness. One can only admire the author for taking time to learn the various languages required to read archival material in the original. And the degree to which she has immersed herself in the history of the several sciences to which Miklouho-Maclay sought to make contributions is impressive: the epilogue in which she assesses Miklouho-Maclay's importance as a scientist is a model of erudition lightly worn. But one senses that much of the cultural distinctiveness behind the German, or especially the Russian, languages has been slighted. And while the careful totting of Miklouho-Maclay's place in the history of nineteenth century science needed doing, to do so without going further into the peculiar status of that science is to ignore, consciously or not, factors that are crucial in any evaluation of Miklouho-Maclay. It should be said in all fairness to Miss Webster that as a specialist in Russian intellectual history I am no doubt perceiving her book from an unnecessarily narrow angle. But it does seem to me that by virtually leaving out of her otherwise generous account the formative years Miklouho-Maclay spent in Russia before he left the university – a period covering half his short lifetime – Miss Webster gives Miklouho-Maclay's life an unearned freedom from intellectual currents that arguably determined some of the more exotic aspects of that life, precisely those which otherwise make him in isolation seem so unique.

Miss Webster has performed an important service in correcting some of the more egregious misconceptions about Miklouho-Maclay. She has put many of the fanciful myths that attached to his name into a more realistic

perspective. But by so wittingly focussing on the day-to-day details of his life as an individual man, she unwittingly contributes to another legend, one dear to the heart of Miklouho-Maclay himself. That is the legend in which he is the great loner, the singular genius purusing his star through desert and jungle. The first biography of Miklouho-Maclay in English, by Frank Greenop (Sydney, 1944), was called *Who Travels Alone*. The suggestion of that book, and virtually of all other material concerning Miklouho-Maclay's life before and since, has been that he was an absolute original, a "man from the moon" not only for the natives of the Rai coast, but among Europeans as well.

Miss Webster has admirably avoided most of the cliches that now encrust Miklouho-Maclay's life. But even she seems to share the prevailing view that Miklouho-Maclay was a quintessential outsider avidly cultivating his aloneness, as at the level of his daily life he certainly was: at best a quixotic tilter at the windmills of nineteenth century imperialism, at worst an almost pathological deviate from general European norms of behavior. By so relentlessly ignoring the context of Russian and West European intellectual history the better to see the individual man, the author excludes those features of his times which make Miklouho-Maclay not only less unique, but almost predictable, including those aspects of behavior that drove him to seek solitude in exotic places. Mannoni's psycho-analytical study of colonialist mentality in the nineteenth century (London, 1956) ascribes to a definite socio-psychological type the lust to be alone with themselves that characterized so many of the men who fled Europe for the jungles of Africa and the atolls of the Pacific. This is an important step towards putting Miklouho-Maclay into a larger, less personalistic perspective, as Miss Webster herself agrees in her preface. But on this view the major initiative for Miklouho-Maclay's action is still to be found in his character, even if that character is a type. A different perspective on Miklouho-Maclay's behavior becomes apparent as soon as we perceive that his travels were all in the service of a mythology that was far from being his own, but rather one he shared with many others in his time: the myth of the promethean scientist, a myth which dictated Miklouho-Maclay's career at several crucial points.

The rule-regulatedness of a career is obvious in certain earlier modes, such as hagiography, or in more traditional societies which have not only very well defined roles such as warrior, shaman, etc. but highly articulated rites of passage connecting one stage to another in the prescribed lives appropriate for warriors or shamans. The algorithms that compute possible biographies in our own culture are more difficult to perceive, not only because of their enormous (but not limitless) variety and complexity. But they are there. Somewhere between the statistical predictability in the behavior of whole populations, and the unique contingencies that are present in the lives of individual persons, there is the mediate category of profession. Orcar Wilde stated only half the truth when he defined a profession as a conspiracy against the laity, for he assumed the jargon and rituals professions use to define themselves work only to exclude. But they are at least as inclusive as privative, and have their most powerful effect on those who – as we say so accurately in English – belong to them. Much as rhetoric traditionally laid down rules for speaking, usually expressed in catalogs of tropes for shaping words into their most effective sequence, a profession inculcates norms for living, more often than not expressed as formulae for shaping acts into a sequence of behavioral tropes presumed to be proper at given points in the progression of a whole career.

Few biographical genres have been as highly rhetoricized than that of scientists in the nineteenth century, when a career in the natural sciences was truly a vocation: one was called by voices from a culture in which sceintific truth occupied the structural slot from which it had only recently displaced religion. Victor Frankenstein, the new Prometheus who steals the prerogatives of the Gods, is the phantom who haunts the age, not his feckless creature.

Nowhere does science come more to resemble the belief system it was meant to displace than in nineteenth-century Russia. The government, it must be remembered, was still a theocracy: science, then, was not only, as in other European countries, a threat to organized religion but, insofar as it was, it was also a challenge to the emperor, which is one reason why so many priest's sons who lost their faith in God and the government found it again in science and revolution. A typical example would be Nikolai Kibalchich, the man who built the ingenious bomb that killed Alexander II. Shortly before his execution, Kibalchich drew up his last testament which took the form of a blueprint for a jet propulsion engine. Appended to the technical matter was a note in which Kibalchich says, "I meet my death calmly, knowing my idea will not perish with me, but will live on among mankind for whom I was ready to lay down my life . . ."

It is this pathos-charged conflation of science with religion that lies behind Miklouho-Maclay's declaration to Tolstoy, who had praised him as a moralist but condemned him as a credulous victim of "science", when he says "I shall not discuss your attacks on science, for the sake of which I have worked all my life and for which I am always ready to sacrifice everything." This is said in 1887, shortly before his death, but it picks up a theme that runs throughout his life and which Miklouho-Maclay stated many times, as he does in 1882, when he writes "What I did, I did for the sake of science and for it alone."

If we keep this quasi-religious conception of science in mind, Miklouho-Maclay seems less a sport of history, for many other figures in his age felt compelled to perform extraordinary feats in the name of science, feats that now seem difficult to reconcile with science as we currently understand it. The Russians make almost too easy a source for parallels, so I shall mention only two other examples from German history. The man who guided Miklouho-Maclay's first steps in his scientific career, Haeckel, also travelled a great deal to exotic lands in the name of science. And like Miklouho-Maclay, he too in his later career became involved in politics. But it is his role of moralist that makes him most akin to Miklouho-Maclay and, like Miklouho-Maclay, he put an exalted concep-

tion of science at the heart of his actions and philosophy. Haeckel was not only the author of such fundamental works in comparative zoology as *General Morphology*, published the same year Miklouho-Maclay joined him at Jena, but wrote as well a number of works used in his own version of Darwinism as core for a new faith, such as the fantastically popular *Riddle of the Universe*, which claimed that in the universe there were no riddles because science had already solved, or was about to solve, them all. The book was denounced by philosophers such as Friedrich Paulsen, who correctly perceived that Haeckel was using the profound new respect the exact and natural sciences had won in the nineteenth century to provide a legitimacy for concerns far beyond its legitimate scientific bounds. The book nevertheless went through ten editions in as many years and was translated into twenty-five languages. Haeckel's aura of scientific certainty combined with his philosophical claims, accompanied by beautifully drawn evolutionary trees looking more like druidic oaks than technical oaks, was popular for the same reasons Miklouho-Maclay's legend was popular. Both appealed to the primitive need for certainty in the moral world, felt by most people and traditionally addressed by relgion.

Another German scholar who was important in Miklouho-Maclay's life, and who provided a considerably more attractive example of science over-flowing its bounds was Rudolf Virchow, to whom Miklouho-Maclay sent frequent reports and of whom he said, "he is the only person in Europe who can appraise the true worth of my scientific work and understand the importance of my travels for science." Virchow had virtually four careers, but it is as a politican and anthropolgist that he is relevant to an understanding of Miklouho-Maclay. Although Miklouho-Maclay was a kind of one-man research station wherever he went, performing experiments of various kinds, measuring the temperature and depth of the sea, gathering local specimens of plants and animals and collecting artifacts from the various tribes he visited, he was essentially a physical anthropologist, which is why he invested so much in the opinion of Virchow, the doyen of that science.

Physical anthropology has been so largely eclipsed by cultural anthropology of one sort of another in our own day that it is sometimes difficult to understand the passion of nineteenth-century specialists for such apparently *outre* details as cranial measurement, toe-nail shapes and, above all, the texture of human hair. Almost all the great founders of modern anthropology, such as the Russian academician with whom Miklouho-Maclay was most involved on his first trips to New Guinea in 1871, Karl Ernst von Baer, or Virchow himself, began their careers as biologists. It was only natural they should apply to human beings the same Linnaean principles of classification that had served so well to order the seeming chaos and randomness of the rest of the animal kingdom. They used their knowledge of the human body as a means for classifying the otherwise bewildering variety of peoples who were so rapidly coming onto the world stage in the nineteenth century. Darwinism, as understood by such prophets as Haeckel, raised questions about whether the newly discovered traditional societies of Africa and Oceania represented a lower, more primitive version of human evolution than as present in Northern Europe. Cultural Darwinists, such as Haeckel, believed there was a strict correspondence between physical characteristics and moral and material progress, leading to such dicta as, "No woolly-haired nation has ever had an important history."

Virchow, like Miklouho-Maclay, was opposed to such determinist and elitist ideas, and thus sought more accurate knowledge of the pysiological characteristics of different races, measuring not only the crania of aboriginals all over the globe, but even those of ancient Egyptian mummies and of the hapless Eskimos and Hottentots who came through Berlin as freaks in travelling shows. And it was for this reason Miklouho-Maclay collected skulls and cut out brains (as he did to his native servant) and analysed the hair texture of the local population wherever he went.

Virchow not only helped to define the kind of purely scientific work Miklouho-Maclay saw himself as doing; as well he provided a model when Miklouho-Maclay felt compelled to involve himself in the politics of European imperialism in order to protect the Papuans of what he himself came to call the Maclay Coast. This is not the place to go into Miklouho-Maclay's sometimes comic-opera efforts on behalf of the natives, and it is, in any case, a story that Miss Webster covers in admirable detail; suffice it here to mention that these efforts involved him with statesmen from Britain and other countries, as well as negotitions with the Russian imperial family itself. There is a certain element of self aggrandizement in this activity, especially as it extended to schemes for utopian communities presided over by Miklouho-Maclay, compete with a personal flag made up of his own initials intertwined with the Russian navel ensign. But all this activity was the almost predictable response of a Russian *intelligent* of the 1860s generation to some of the worst excesses of nineteenth-century imperialism. Miklouho-Maclay failed, of course, and after 1884, when the Germans announced a protectorate in the area, Miklouho-Maclay wrote angry letters to Bismarck, acting as a kind of plenipotentiary for the Papuans. On 9 January 1885 he sent the Chancellor a telegram declaring "Maclay Natives Reject German Annexation."

This involvement in politics, and especially with Bismarck, is another feature Miklouho-Maclay shares with both Haeckel and Virchow. The former was an ardent admirer of the Chancellor and arranged for him to receive the first honorary "Doctor of Phylogeny" degree at Jena, because Bismarck had given birth to the German nation. Virchow, on the other hand, was a man who fought on the Berlin barricades in 1848 and who later moved into the Reichstag, where he proved a major stumbling block to Bismarck's ambitions in the 1860s. The Chancellor, enraged by Virchow's fight against increased spending for the Prussian army, personally challenged him to a duel in 1865, an honor the little scientist had the wit to decline. Miklouho-Maclay, then, like his colleagues in Germany, found a sanction for political

activity in his essentially ethical conception of science as a new morality.

In all this we can see the continuation of a pattern confirmed by many other details of his career. Science in the Russia of his youth had been an essentially political enterprise; and if, instead of throwing bombs as many of the more radical nihilists who lived into the seventies and eighties did, Miklouho-Maclay instead sacrificed himself in the jungles and negotiated with representatives of colonial powers (and even the Czar himself), it was to accomplish by other means many of the goals of his radical student years. When Miklouho-Maclay saw Turgenev again after many years in 1882, the dying novelist confided to his diary that he found Miklouho-Maclay somehow objectionable, although, as he added, "the devil only knows why." Miklouho-Maclay was already deeply involved in his political intrigues, and we know from his own account of this meeting that he shared his plans quite openly with Turgenev. We may perhaps speculate that Miklouho-Maclay disturbed the old novelist because he saw in him the spectre of what his own nihilist, Bazarov, might have become had he not become a martyr of sceince before his time.

Miss Webster's book is probably the best account of Miklouho-Maclay's daily life after 1864 we shall ever get, and we must be grateful for her scholarship, her style and wit. If I have dwelt overlong on aspects of the traveller's times she is forced to ignore, it is less to suggest she should have written a different kind of book than it is to suggest a dimension to the life that seems to me necessary if it is not to be perceived as ultimately freakish.

After Miklouho-Maclay's departure from New Guinea, life for the Papuans changed dramatically. A host of new religious explanations sprang up to account for the disasters and to explain how the natives might get a larger share of the white man's goods. The various reactions of the Cargo Cult went through several phases, until after World War II it found a creative theologian and organizer in a man named Yali, a much-decorated veteran of the New Guinea campaign.* By the time the political unrest associated with Yali's activities had quashed, Miklouho-Maclay had been incorporated into the myths about the traditional spirits and was perceived to be related to them, or was in fact himself the great god Killibob. What shall we made of this strange twist that turns a man whose only faith was in science, who fought against superstition all his life, into the god of a minor cult? Is such literal deification merely an ironic commentary on the peculiarly religious overtones that hover about the exalted view of science in the nineteenth century and in which Miklouho-Maclay was so deeply implicated?

Surely he deserves better than that. As Miss Webster documents so carefully, he may not have been a very great physical anthropologist; in that sense not a very great scientist after all. It is not for his analyses of hair among the Polynesians and Papuans he will be remembered. Tolstoy, who told Miklouho-Maclay to abandon the scientific delusions of ethnology, was perhaps right. He was certainly right to recognize that Miklouho-Maclay was a daring traveller and a no less audacious fighter for the rights of the native peoples at a time when everyone else sought only to expoit them. In the end Miklouho-Maclay may be said to have served the science Tolstoy said he himself served: "the science of how people should get along with each other."

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*On Yali, see Brian Cooper, "Birthpangs of a Nation", in Overland 20, 1961; and also W.R. Stent, "An Individual versus the State", Overland 79, 1980. – Ed.

JOE RICH

Roosevelt in Australia

A discussion of Michael Roe's Nine Australian Progressives: Vitalism in Bourgeois Social Thought 1890-1960 *(University of Queensland Press, $40).*

Michael Roe's book is the story of nine middle-class Australians born between 1861 and 1881 – four medicos (J.S.C. Elkington, J.L.H. Cumpston, James Barrett and Richard Arthur), two industrial arbitrators (Jethro Brown and Albert Piddington), a journalist-publisher (G.A. Taylor), an economist (Robert Irvine) and a librarian, philosopher, psychologist and literary historian (E. Morris Miller). All made important contributions to Australian life, and for that reason alone these finely-etched portraits are of great interest. What makes them particularly welcome is the author's definition of the themes linking his subjects, from whose lives he has, with skill and subtlety, distilled a significant constituent of the developing Australian ethos.

All nine were influenced by that cluster of ideas, attitudes and aspirations known as 'progressivism', taking its tone from the policies of Theodore Roosevelt, US President from 1901 to 1909. That is to say they were 'racial' nationalists and imperialists, bent on improving the health and welfare of antipodean Anglo-Saxondom and carrying its benefits to the less-fortunate inhabitants of nearby Asia and the Pacific.

They championed causes ranging from conservation, town planning, the improvement of food supplies, housing and working conditions, to the provision of better amenities in rural areas and the strengthening of the family by eugenic means. Pressure-groups formed and supported by them demanded positive government action in such areas as national defence, industrial relations and the application of learning and technology to social problems.

However, their outlook was not without its internal tensions. Although generally democratic in temper, they were devotees of 'efficiency' and 'scientific' management, stressing the role of expert bureaucratic elites as agents of reform.

According to Roe, they were also imbued with the vitalism of Nietzsche, Bergson and William James, especially with that quintessentially twentieth century conviction that truth is neither fixed nor absolute but determined by human ends. They rejected mechanical adherence to dogma and celebrated spontaneity, flexibility, intuition and passionate expenditure of energy with what Roe calls "unprecedented force". Their Dionysianism, however, like Nietzsche's, had to be harnessed in the service of "creative evolution"[1] – evolution impelled by the intelligent activity of human will.

Roe's book is an impressive demonstration of the fruitfulness of this model, and therefore – by the relativist standards of 'vitalism' – of its truth. He has woven a complex web of interconnecting threads, imparting meaning and unity to a wide range of phenomena. That the nine were indeed Rooseveltian progressives is amply substantiated, as are their links with other figures whose aspirations significantly overlapped theirs – from aviation pioneer Lawrence Hargrave to Jindyworobak poet Rex Ingamells. In addition, the integrative power of Roe's central organizing principle draws together activities as diverse as the decentralization of industry, the two-pan system of disposing of human excreta and the use of feathers in women's fashions.

A sharper definition of the Australian paradigm could, no doubt, have been achieved by showing more precisely where it converged with and departed from allied ideological categories, such as the New Liberalism. One misses the crispness of Tim Rowse's contrast between Robert Irvine's social theories and the "narrower marginalist economics" of D.B. Copland[2]; and also that of Robert Wiebe, between the goals of the American progressives and the autonomous urban communities sought by their reformist predecessors.[3]

Nor does Roe always give a satisfactory account of the nature and strength of *competing* viewpoints and interests – either as perceived by the participants or by the analyst. I would have been particularly interested to learn the extent and nature of opposition among Australian librarians to Morris Miller's exemplary progressive belief that libraries existed not to accumulate books, but to provide a service to readers "with a view to elevate their life-ideals and render them efficient in their capacity as citizens."

The author identifies occasions when certain of his subjects consciously co-operated in pursuit of individual progressive goals – such as when Elkington and Cumpston worked to create an effective Commonwealth quarantine service. But is the *total* progressive syndrome in Australia only an observer's construct, or did the participants also perceive the unity of their ideas and consciously work together systematically to transform

their society? Roe's definition would have been enhanced had he dealt with this question.

Where his account is found most wanting, however, is in its treatment of the influences that shaped his subjects' beliefs. He makes no reference to Frederick Taylor, whose immensely influential theories of systematic 'scientific' management created new standards of efficiency in the nineties, or to Robert G. Valentine, who revised Taylor's theories, giving them greater flexibility and, therefore, a greater range of application.[4]

Another important omission is that of G.W.L. Marshall-Hall, hapless first Ormond Professor of Music at Melbourne University, and prime exponent of the vitalism detected in Australian literature by Vincent Buckley, which insisted "on the almost metaphysical status of sheer *Will*".[5] Marshall-Hall identified energy with the Platonic Idea, and prized the "possession of an energy which cannot rest" but which, with due Apollonic restraint, must be guided "into right . . . channels".[6]

Roe acknowledges Marshall-Hall's connection with James Barrett, but does not recognize how close their relationship was. In the late 1890s Barrett unsuccessfully defended the Ormond Professor against a battalion of local wowsers demanding his removal from the university. Then from 1903 he headed the committee which managed the Marshall-Hall concerts. That this brought him into constant contact with the ebullient ex-professor during the ensuing decade is amply documented by correspondence in Melbourne's Percy Grainger Museum.[7] And it is hard to believe that the musician did not play an important part in shaping Barrett's outlook and, indirectly perhaps, that of Barrett's friend Morris Miller.

While acknowledging the importance of Lloyd George, Winston Churchill, and that quintessential Birmingham Rooseveltian, Joseph Chamberlain, Roe understates the British influence on his subjects. He makes no mention of the reports of social reformers such as William Booth and Seebohm Rowntree, who revealed the abject *fin-de-siecle* squalor of urban England, nor of the 1904 Physical Deterioration Report, which showed that a high proportion of would-be Boer war recruits had been physically unfit.[8] These disclosures caused a considerable stir 'at home' and were widely reported here.

Nor does he consider the twentieth century legacy of what Matthew Arnold had called *Hebraism* and *Hellenism,* the latter emphasizing flexibility of thought with a view to "seeing things as they really are", while the former stressed energetic obedience to a "fixed law of doing we have got already".[9]

Together they encapsulated two predominant strands of progressive vitalism – its high regard for flexibility (a corollary of the belief that truth was relative and protean) and its esteem for energy expenditure. In the high Victorian period tension between the two was maintained by Hebraism's preoccupation with, and Hellenism's mistrust of, that part of Christian morality concerned, not with the progressive goal of enhancing humanity's temporal welfare, but with reducing the amount of gambling, drinking, smoking, theatre attendance, sabbath desecration, mixed bathing and similar activities. As late as the 1890s, Renate Howe points out, Melbourne witnessed "the triumph of traditional Protestant support for temperance and moral reform over more radical programmes for social change".[10]

But the twentieth century saw a weakening of this preoccupation. And that presumably freed a good deal of Hebraic energy to seek alternative outlets, one of which was (plausibly) the progressive drive to transform social life. It was an option that would have been suggested by the activities of such non-Hebraic evangelicals as the Reverends Charles Strong, L.D. Bevan and E.H. Sugden, who had long been active in bodies like the Anti-Sweating League.[11]

And it accommodated attitudes likely to attract the Hebraic mind. The notion of efficiency, as Roe points out, embodied anti-hedonist elements – a regard for austerity and a distrust of luxury and self-indulgence. Some of his subjects, such as anti-gambler, temperance and purity crusader Richard Arthur, exhibited this characteristic more conspicuously than others, such as the vacillating sybarite Jack Elkington and Morris Miller, defender of Norman Lindsay's 'obscene' drawings and (over thirty years later) of Sydney Sparkes Orr. But all of them would have applauded Cumpston's deprecation of the "fundamental impulse in human nature which prefers the course of least effort with its known dangers to the strenuous and self-denying life". That Australian progressivism represented (in part) a convergence of Hebraic and Hellenic viewpoints seems therefore a tenable hypothesis.

Finally, the glimpses given into the private lives of these progressives are tantalizingly brief, even though one, Albert Piddington, published a book of childhood and undergraduate memories and the son of another, Jethro Brown, has written a 'personal biography' of his father.[12] We do learn that Irvine's later career sustained the influence of his youth, that Miller was conscious of the part played by his early experience in his subsequent development, and that Barrett's family history – he was the eldest of a large family whose mother died when he was young – may have shaped his temperament. But there is little elaboration.

Roe's treatment of Elkington in this regard borders on the perverse. We hear very little about his mother except that she was the sister of botanist W.R. Guilfoyle. The father, we are told, became involved in a number of scandals, partly related to his heavy drinking, and was active on the Melbourne Hospital Committee and vice-president of the Australian Health Society. Elkington junior, the most self-indulgent of these nine progressives, became a doctor and made his career in public health. Yet Roe flatly maintains that the "Guilfoyle strain was probably dominant in shaping the man."

A possible clue to the psycho-history of progressivism is Adler's contention that the child's inevitable "feeling of inferiority" in a world of physically larger, stronger and more adept adults always produces "a compensatory movement towards a feeling of superiority". Boys who are made to feel particularly wanting in certain 'masculine' characteristics – such as courage, assertiveness, endurance – tend to compensate by adopting "an attitude of aggression", which can turn anti-social.

Those whose childhoods were less threatening are more likely to compensate by means of "social interest" – seeking "victory over ... difficult enterprises" by contributing to the well-being of their fellows.[13] So one reason why Roe's progressives strove to improve people's health and working conditions instead of stoushing toffs in Spadger's Lane may be the self-esteem they acquired in childhood – although their blood-thirsty responses to the First World War may indicate a degree of ambivalence in their self-perception.

But none of this should obscure Roe's very real achievement. This has been the American century. American influences have affected national life everywhere in a manner previously undreamed of by the greatest military and commercial empires. Roe has made a significant contribution to the history of this phenomenon with his pathfinding application of the seminal paradigm of Rooseveltian progressivism to the Australian scene.

He has not been well served by his publishers. The book contains more than its share of misprints. And one can only regret that it is not 'normally' to be stocked by book sellers, but must be obtained by writing directly to Queensland University Press.

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NOTES

1 The expression is Bergson's. See his *Creative Evolution* (first published 1907).
2 Tim Rowse: *Australian Liberalism and National Character* (Melbourne, 1978), p.26.
3 Robert Wiebe: *The Search for Order 1877–1920* (New York, 1967), pp.165–6.
4 See e.g. *ibid.*, p.151.
5 V. Buckley: "Utopianism and Vitalism in Australian Literature", Quadrant 10, Autumn 1959, p.46.
6 Weekly Times 30/12/1899; Musical Standard 20/6/1891.
7 Argus 14/7/1900; Percy Grainger Museum, Marshall-Hall papers, M-H 9/1- to 9/10-.
8 William Booth: *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (London, 1890); B. Seebohm Rowntree: *Poverty A Study of Town Life* (London, 1901).
9 M. Arnold: *Culture and Anarchy* (London, 1955), pp.15, 145.
10 R. Howe: "Protestant Social Christianity and the Ecology of Melbourne 1890–1900", Historical Studies, vol 19, no 74, April 1980, p.60.
11 *Ibid.* pp.62, 65, 71; Tocsin 7/7/1900, 15/9/1894; Argus 20/10/1901; Southern Cross 1/7/1898.
12 Quoted in H.L. Ansbacher & R.R. Ansbacher (eds): *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler* (London, 1958), pp.95, 98, 313; A. Adler: *What Life Should Mean to You* (London, 1933), p.8.

CHEAP POEM, WINKING

As a shadow, she's much bolder
than I – looms much larger
takes more risks, stretches out and
intrudes: she
ignores bolted gates, and enters
other people's homes; has no fear
of anything concrete, anything private
anything closed. Unafraid
and irreverent, she touches
those I fear, and smothers
those I love
has no shame, no sense of place
reaches out: no restraint.
In a mirror she's much sharper
than myself – she's much
lighter, more quick; so much more
the creature of light
being of color
of angles, much more
somebody's dream, someone's
image – a reflection, my opposite number
laughing back at me, wherever I
look: winking up
from whatever I make
I create
spotlit flirt, knowing
on paper
she's more brilliant, so much braver
much more startling, more broad
for your dollar
(more a tease)
more alive, even disguised
even dismissed, even derided and
tossed off as a
cheap poem

ELLY McDONALD

D.J. O'HEARN

The Australia Council

There is no ideal art-funding situation, nor one that will dispel criticism, disappointment to certain groups or individuals or bitter accusations of inequity. However, arms-length funding is essential to any sense of a fair deal.

The situation with funding from the Australia Council, as it exists at the moment and has existed for several years, is unacceptable to people in Victoria at least and something needs to be done about it – something a little more daring and imaginative than setting up a fairly constantly engaged toll-free telephone number and periodic visits by breathlessly enthusiastic project officers, or a patronizingly-concerned Chairman who will deliver us a fresher's lecture on the need for an Arts Accord.

People in whose interests it is to deter criticism of the current state of affairs have carefully tried to trivialize such criticism by referring to it as Sydney-Melbourne rivalry. The director of one Board even went so far as to suggest that we in Melbourne are *envious* of our counterparts in Sydney. That suggestion is not just trivial, it's risible.

The reason, some years ago, Jack Hibberd, Peter Corrigan and I stirred up a fuss and suggested that the Australia Council be moved to Canberra, was because we were fed up with the glaring inequities in the funds being given out by the Council to various states – particularly the sharp difference in funding between New South Wales and Victoria. We were also concerned about access and accessibility to the Council, the accountability of the Minister, the selection of personnel, appointments to the Board and Council, direct-line funding to certain companies, the definition of excellence and the question of centralization.

Our suggestion that the Council be relocated in Canberra was not whimsical or mischievous. We considered that the location of the Council in Sydney had established a nexus between the artistic community there and the national funding body and that that nexus needed to be broken. There is nothing particularly surprising or sinister in that nexus. In fact, it would be surprising if there were none.

Large institutions, however hierarchically shaped, function through the activities of full-time bureaucrats. It is they who shape agenda, prepare documentation, write minutes, have access to statistical information and to whom, generally, the community have access. Part-time Board or Council members of the Australia Council, no matter how diligent, cannot have access to all available information. The full-time staff of the Council live in one city and it is natural that their tastes, contacts, friends, mates and cobbers, will be determined by that city. They know the names, or their friends know the names, of the up and coming. And they see the shows, visit the exhibitions in that city. They are directly accessible by local phone-call, cab-rides, meetings in foyers or at dinner parties to the artistic community in that city.

The Minister in a letter to me of 3 May 1983 argued against relocation of the Council on the very grounds of this nexus. "One further important consideration is that the Australian Council Staff in Sydney has established personal links with the lifestyle of a major Australian city and a change from Sydney to Canberra would sever these links and not replace them with any new ones . . . " This is an extraordinary statement. The very reason we adduced for shifting the Council is argued by the Minister as a reason for leaving it where it is. (I don't know why the Minister believes the Staff would not forge new links . . . would they be isolated and huddled together insularly anywhere else but Sydney?) Our argument was and is that the forming of such links is inevitable, but that the 'lifestyle' of Sydney is far from being common to the rest of Australia. The culture and tastes of any one city are different from those of another. Too close an identification by key staff of the Council with the lifestyle of one capital city could make them ignorant of, and, in terms of taste and judgement, antithetical to the lifestyle and tastes of other cities.

There is a case for saying that, increasingly in Australia, the differences between life-styles in different cities and in the various States are becoming marked and permanent.

We are therefore faced with a situation whereby a national funding body may become a body subject to the cultural hegemony of one city, and many of us would argue that it has already become so.

That situation constitutes a basic problem, a problem intensified by the vast geography of our country and the sparse population centres. How can a national body recognize and encourage artistic endeavor in communities where tastes, expectations and aims are increasingly disparate?

The Minister seems to feel that as long as the staff of the Council are plugged into the lifestyle of a major city then that peculiar nexus will serve the nation well. We argue on the contrary that the growth of that nexus has had an alienating effect and is a major source of antagonism.

This is not to claim malice or corruption or malfeasance on behalf of the staff of the Australia Council, many of whom work hard at difficult tasks. We must realize that networking, a more neutral term than mateship, is endemic to the various arts communities and naturally to the people who serve them. So are patronage and, unfortunately, the struggle for power and influence.

Let us assume that the statistics show – though they do not – that Victoria receives as much of the national arts funding cake as New South Wales. Let us also assume that the New South Wales government subsidizes the Arts to the same extent as the Victorian government (which it clearly does not; after all, the New South Wales government does not have to cover gross deficiencies in Australia Council funding as the Victorian government is forced to do). Let us assume further that the Federal Minister, Mr Barry Cohen (from New South Wales) does not engage in mateship appointments, and that the recent appointment of New South Wales people, such as Donald Horne or Diana Yerbury, or the Premier's wife, has nothing to do with their state of origin. An unlikely list of assumptions which strains the imagination, but what if all this were the case? Would our problems be solved?

Resoundingly no! For whether or not a distinct bias in appointments or funding exists, or can be shown to exist, what is important is that people perceive it to exist. And a national funding body must, to be effective, both be, and be perceived to be, impartial. If it fails to be so perceived – and in this the Minister and the Council have distinctly failed – then it has failed as a national funding body. It does not retain the confidence of the community.

When attacked, in the past, various Directors of Boards have argued that the demonstrably higher rate of funding for New South Wales springs from a higher rate of applications. They also occasionally mention the difference in success rates. They rarely question why there is a higher rate of applications from New South Wales. Allowing that we cannot prove that New South Wales has not, for genetic and sociological reasons, a pool of artistic talent superior to that of the next most populous state, we might nevertheless argue that talent, theoretically, is spread fairly evenly across large communities, though it can obviously pop up anywhere. What we do know from history is that artists follow money. What we also know is that distance does tend to tyrannize, and that proximity to money and power is helpful to artists. The concentration of government institutions, the ABC, Film Australia, the Australia Council in Sydney, has of necessity attracted private funds and artists to that city.

The location of a national funding body is therefore crucial. If that location can never be neutral then at least it should be neutralized as far as possible. What location could be more artistically neutral than Canberra?

I realise that many people in the artistic community are strongly against the relocation of the Council to Canberra. I do not see it as an ideal situation, but I believe it is the best of all alternatives. Such a move must be seen as coinciding with the setting up of strong regional offices. A small central office in Canberra would allow several regional offices in all states. Without the establishment of regional offices any relocation would be pointless. If the Council were moved from one city to another every decade or so the basic problems would remain unsolved.

If we tie a move of the central office to Canberra with the establishment of small, but strong, regional offices throughout the nation, then we break the perceptions of hegemony and disestablish claims to a particular nexus of bias.

Such a move (or a series of moves) would not destroy arms-length funding. That we cannot have removed. Nothing would be more deadly than a Canberra cultural commissariat. But a nucleus of an office in Canberra might help to get more money for the arts. It might also help to gain more status for the Ministry itself in Cabinet, and give it more seniority and weight by not having it as a dogsbody tied to Home Affairs or Heritage and the Environment. It might even make the Minister more responsible and perhaps help him cut down his travel bill.

Because the Australia Council is a statutory body, shifting it to Canberra and establishing regional offices would be a decentralizing move, rather than the opposite. The Minister claims the move would be too costly ($2.5 million); I have seen the figures and strongly disagree. In any case, the Minister seems about to approve a move from one location to another in Sydney which it seems will cost much more. People argue that the quality of the personnel of the Australia Council will diminish. That seems nonsense to me. There are some very bright young public servants in Canberra who would love to do a stint in the arts bureaucracy. Movement within the bureaucracy would be an excellent advance for the Council and the people concerned.

When we saw the ferocity and scorn which met our modest proposal that the Council be relocated, we knew we were on the right track. Such passions are aroused when vested interests are threatened. I am more convinced now than before that such a move would be beneficial to the arts community.

I want to make one or two remarks about ancillary matters raised earlier. The first is the concept of excellence. This is a notion to which we all pay lip-service, and rightly, but it is a confused concept. What is deemed excellent in one place, because it suits the prevailing taste and times, may be deemed disastrous in another community. "Candide" did well in Sydney – it was a failure in Melbourne. Nick Greiner has said in the New South Wales parliament that Hibberd's "Stretch of the Imagination" is a "litany of urination and fornication". Audiences in Adelaide and Perth loved it. The concept of excellence must be aligned to community and cultural diversification. It is not a certain group of people in one or another city who declare an art work to be excellent, all others paying obeisance to that proclamation. Works of excellence can spring from anywhere, but they each need a supportive community somewhere in which to nestle

and grow. That is why we have consistently argued for regional offices, and against the consolidation of an entrenched single-city cultural monolith.

Organizations and institutions function adequately, depending on the nature of their personnel. Attention therefore must be given to the apppointment of such personnel. Here I am talking about ministerial appointments as well as the nature of selection committees, and about public accountability. Without a public interest in, and inspection of, selection committees, *ad hoc* apppointments, formal ministerial actions in these areas, then the door is wide open for jobbery. *Quis custodes custodiet?* One of the reasons for arguing that the Council should be relocated and regional offices established is that such a move would permit members of the arts community, across the nation, not only more access to the Council itself, but more access to the various appointment-tracks of Council personnel. We must also press for representatives of the industry to have an *ex officio* position on the Council and on Boards.

People seem to accept that Ministers, once appointed, cannot be shifted – that Managers or Chairmen have to see their terms out, and that they, the community, are largely impotent – their concerns limited to tub-thumping, and easily dismissed. But I believe we can do something to improve the situation and we must not be fobbed off by dismissive gestures from on high. My own view is we should break the nexus which currently exists whereby Council staff identify with the lifestyle of one city and, in the resulting re-arrangement, ensure that changes are made which will benefit the national Arts community – even if this means demanding a new Minister.

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floating fund

STEPHEN MURRAY-SMITH writes: We have again to thank our readers for a handsome donations list, a total of $1311, and all the more timely because we will be going deeply into the red to produce what we hope will be a memorable 100th issue next time. Our gratitude to: $500 Anon.; $250 A.P.; $100 C.G.; $50 K.I., R.M.C.; $34 G.S., G.S.; $25 D.R.; $20 B. & D.I.; $14 J.S., D.N., P.H.; $10 C.M., R.G.; $9 N.G., J.D., P.D., M.D., R.B., C.C., K.S., E.W., L.B.; $8 R.E.; $5 S.J.; $4 S.B., T.G., M.L., M.S., D.W., K.D., B.M., J.K., I.G., P.W., N.A., R.S., L. & J.S., H.J., V.F., J.L., T.G., B.G., J.B., P.B., J.K., L.F.; $2 J.W., K.W.

books

Houses On The Ground, Values On The Hoof

Hugh Stretton

Alice Coleman with others: *Utopia on Trial: Vision and Reality in Planned Housing* (London: Hilary Shipman, 1985. Copies from Wakefield Press, PO Box 588, Cowandilla, South Australia 5033, $35 and $19.95).

This book about British housing policy invites reflection on the timeless and topical question of public service commitment or neutrality.

Everybody knows the public housing towers were a mistake. But Alice Coleman's research suggests that the towers are only the tip of the iceberg. Most other British public housing built since the war is as bad or nearly as bad as the towers. Expensive efforts to improve the worst estates have usually made them worse still. And the bureaucrats of the central government's Housing Development Directorate who were responsible for the towers and all following offences are still there, unrepentant, and still offending.

The book is interesting for a number of reasons. It reports research of exceptional scale and quality. It is a tense mix of cool quantitative research and angry advocacy. It corrects the complacent view that height was all that was wrong with the towers. And it brings its mass of hard evidence to bear in a murderous attack on the design principles of the Modern Movement in general and Le Corbusier in particular.

Any of those themes might interest Overland readers, but this review will be confined to a question about government. *Why* have the offences persisted so obstinately, for so long, in the face of such contrary evidence? Why did similar policies run for fifteen years in Melbourne, then flourish briefly in Sydney just as they were finally descredited in Melbourne? And with hindsight, how and by whom should they have been stopped when their shortcomings were first proven?

Alice Coleman was (she says) an unpolitical scholar interested only in land uses and methods of mapping them. She had no strong views about government – until she began to map the damage done by post-war housing policies. That has turned her late in life into a passionate privatizer, unable to believe that government can do anything good. Democratic socialists, social democrats, Liberal 'wets' and other progressive Overland readers who dislike the current lurch to the Right and its privatizing impulses should come to terms with Alice Coleman's reasons. If she is right about government, so are the privatizers and free marketeers. About housing forms and residents' needs she is absolutely right, and as long as their offending policies lasted those British, Victorian and NSW governments were absolutely wrong.

There is good reason to think they should always have known better, from common sense and every politician's and public servant's own householding experience. But conceding that new ideas, risks and all, must sometimes get fair trial, when should the flat-building mistake have been recognized and stopped?

The postwar British Labour government passed a New Towns Act and a Town and Country Planning Act and began the second generation of New Towns. To rebuild the bombed East End of London they began with a reasonable mix of houses and small three-storeyed blocks of flats in the Lansbury Estate. 1951 brought a Tory government with Harold Macmillan as Minister of Housing and a commitment to attack the housing shortage by somehow building more and faster. His servants, believers in the 'high and dense' principles of Le Corbusier's 'Radiant City' blocks, persuaded him that high and dense, with maximum prefabrication, was how to build fastest. The horrors began.

In the same year Michael Young tired of trying to get the Labour Party leaders to value and attend to the quality of family and neighborhood life, resigned as director of research in the British Labour Party, and began to study family and neighborhood life in Bethnal Green, and the ill effects of bulldozing it and rehousing people in fabric which made family and neighborhood networks much harder to develop or maintain. With Peter Willmott he published *Family and Kinship in East London* in 1957. It was widely read and understood – the bureaucrats did not miss it, they wilfully *dis*missed it. From that date there has been no valid excuse for them or their bulldozing, battery-building policies.

At about the same date the Victorian government sent

around the world the two senior officers who were due to succeed its retiring Housing Commissioners. They came back and wrote a long report which advised that high flats should not be built, or if they must, families with children should not be housed above the first two or three floors. They inherited power – then, incredibly, built all the infamous Melbourne towers and housed children on all floors to the fortieth. Despite minor amendments and occasional rhetoric to the contrary the essentials of the policy lasted as long as they did and ended only when they retired. As soon as those policies began, David Scott and others from the Brotherhood of St Laurence began to monitor them. Their reports were more cautious and conditional than Alice Coleman's twenty years later, but they still left the Victorian government very little excuse for continuing the damage.

In Britain, dislike of the high flats accumulated. When the Ronan Point block collapsed and the government stopped scaling its subsidies to the height of the buildings (the higher, the more), most people supposed the trouble was over and all bad policies reversed.

Some years behind the Melbourne Brotherhood, the Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust funded some British research. Though better than nothing it was poor in scope and method. It polled residents' likes and dislikes in Glasgow, the *only* city where residents of the new flats came from other, worse, high-and-crowded concentrations – the notorious Gorbals tenements. More than half of those polled liked the interior of their new flats but disliked being in such monster blocks. Of the minority who liked being in the blocks, most liked their location and surrounding services rather than their form. But to the final question "*On the whole*, are you satisfied with living here?" ninety per cent, fresh from the Gorbals, answered "Yes". On that Glasgow fragment the London bureaucrats justified a further decade of gigantic battery-building.

American research had more resources and ingenuity. In *Defensible Space* (1972) Oscar Newman reported a detailed study of the levels of crime and vandalism in all the public housing projects in New York: 4,000 blocks of flats in 169 estates. Troubles correlated well with specific qualities of design: size, anonymity, numbers using each entrance, numbers of alternative entrances and exits, unclear boundaries between public and private land. In Britain some on the Left rejected the message for various bad reasons, and many welfare administrators rejected its physical determinism, however proven. The Home Office commissioned a study of fifty-two London housing estates intended to refute Newman's thesis. Its interim and final reports confirmed Newman's thesis. The only stronger cause of social malaise than bad design was the density of children housed. Outrageously, the authorities decided that if they advised local authorities to house less children, they could go on building the bad designs.

Alice Coleman's team worked for five years from 1979. They arrived at a list of fifteen design features suspected of causing most trouble, and six measurable indicators of the less-measurable realities of personal stress and social breakdown. Like Newman, they chose a huge sample: two whole London boroughs and an Oxford suburb: over 4,000 houses, over 4,000 blocks of flats, totalling over 100,000 dwellings and a quarter of a million residents, and including enough owner-occupied houses and privately owned flats to control their results for type and tenure as well as particular design features. Then yard by yard and census return by census return they *mapped* the occurence of each one of their design items and social items in relation to each one of their more than 100,000 dwellings. Their statistical work, including their controls for social and other non-design factors, was wholly competent and their conclusions are convincing. Many things besides design affect residents' experience and behavior. But bad design has strong and damaging effects. 'Bad design' as defined by ill effects on residents' experience and behavior can be compendiously summarized as every single thing that distinguishes Le Corbusier's 'Radiant City' blocks from the inter-war British semi-detached suburbia, which proves to be the most socially-successful fabric of all.

The Housing Research Directorate has already shrugged off this work too. Of that and all the earlier dismissals, Alice Coleman writes with feeling:

> The ideology of the official design recommendations existed at two levels. In a broad general sense it was *environmental determinism,* the belief that if the environment is changed, human behaviour will also change. In a more specific sense it was the Radiant City/Garden City dogma – the belief that if the environment is changed in the ways prescribed by these ideologies, human behaviour will improve and human happiness increase.
>
> When the evidence began flooding in that the prescribed designs were not producing the postulated benefits, their advocates had the choice of several interpretations. One logical course would have been to retain the belief in determinism while acknowledging that the Radiant/Garden brand of it was not successful and seeking more effective alternatives. What the DoE housing research staff chose to do was just the opposite. The renounced determinism, asserting emphatically that architecture cannot influence people, and went on recommending the same designs. This ploy was a masterly stroke in self-preservation. It absolved them from blame for any ill effects of their designs, it rescued them from the admission of error, and it provided them with a dirty word, determinism, to fling at critics . . . In one bound they went from determinism to *possibilism,* namely that it is perfectly possible for everyone to be good and happy regardless of the nature of the environment and, if they were not, it was because they were problem people. The concept of 'sink estates', populated by the dregs of humanity, followed in the wake of this volte-face.

While the flats were thus achieving none of the generous things expected of them, they were achieving none of the meaner things either. They were not cheaper but dearer,

both to build and to maintain, than house-and-garden forms. They did not save land, they wasted it. "Flats certainly pack in more litter to the acre, more crime and more vandalism to the acre, and more social malaise in general. But they do not, in Britain, pack in more dwellings to the acre. Densities ... are usually *lower* in modern flats than in the demolished houses that have been superseded." The flat sites would have housed more people in traditional house-and-garden forms on the ground. Besides direct savings, that would also have saved some civic, health and welfare costs.

Were sinister interests at work to explain such persistent, outrageous wrongdoing? The program was actively supported by its designers, many design schools, and the few-and-big contractors it enriched. Up north there was some corruption. Down south nobody was caught. ("They're smarter down south," they say up north.) But although both helped, the weight of evidence suggests that capitalist pressure was a minor cause, and professional and bureaucratic ideology was the major cause, of the program continuing. Helped by a lot of lying: anyone gullible enough was encouraged to believe that the program saved land and money, and thus saved rural England from suburban sprawl.

When should it have been stopped and reversed? In Melbourne it should never have started, because those who started it already knew better. In London it should not have survived Young and Willmott's first book in 1957. Alice Coleman says, rightly, that to replace it by better policies it would first be necessary to replace the people responsible for it. Those miscreants could neither devise good policies nor accept or implement good policies devised by others. This is a creative field in which experience suggests that policy-makers, like artists, designers and other creative people, have to believe in what they are doing to do it at all well. It is not practical to ask people who deeply despise semi-detached suburbia to provide it for the people who like it and thrive in it. The values have to be live, on the hoof. The first step in any radical change of direction must usually be to change the directors. Marx came to that conclusion about government in general after seeing what some of the old public servants did to the new revolutionary governments of 1848.

There is no need to rehearse the opposite, orthodox view that a neutral, obedient, adaptable public service should be able to do anything its masters ask of it. Most systems compromise. Ours are currently allowing incoming Ministers, if they insist, to choose their heads of department and a handful of temporary advisers. Instead of allowing that flexibility equally to all departments, it might be more fruitful – though politically difficult – to distinguish the areas of government in which neutral service generally works well from the areas in which it often doesn't. As far as I know, neutral service has a good record in tax and customs and police administration, corporate affairs, census and statistics and national accounting, and the service of parliament. But not in macroeconomic policy-making, energy and conservation, urban affairs, housing, or women's policies. Where there are substantial conflicts of interests and values, and beliefs are changing, new brooms are likely to need new teams.

None of that is Alice Coleman's conclusion. She wants to get government out of the act altogether: repeal the Housing and Town and Country Planning Acts and leave land use and housing entirely to the market. She can think of no other way to make sure that ordinary people get the housing forms and tenures they actually want.

Coming from an able empirical researcher, there are two things wrong with that.

First she repeatedly includes the Garden City movement and the New Towns, along with Radiant City and the battery-blocks of flats, in her anathema. But she offers no evidence whatever about the New Towns. In fact the social record of most of them is good – better than average, better than the equivalent areas of unplanned outer-suburban sprawl with which it is appropriate to compare them. Where they were peopled with 'bulldozed' population the bulldozing was wrong (as Young and Willmott reported). But most of their people have been willing volunteers, most of their housing forms are as Coleman recommends, and their success should not surprise her. She should also acknowledge that the big-city congestions are less by the numbers attracted to the New Towns.

Second, it is also on zero evidence that she says that unaided market forces provided all the semi-detached development of the inter-war years. In fact semis were the standard form of the substantial public housing programs of those years, and planning controls were general from 1931. Hundreds of thousands of working-class people got secure tenure of houses and gardens by public action, who must otherwise have continued in worse housing, often landless, crowded, ill-maintained, insecurely held, and rack-rented by private landlords.

It is a disadvantage of strictly objective quantitative research that it can't see what isn't there: in this case the quality of housing and landlording which would be likely if half the British population still depended on private landlords – Gorbals landlords, Rachmann landlords – and if that landlording operated with no public housing competition, or planning controls, or tenant protections.

About eighty per cent of Australian children are brought up in houses and gardens of their parents' choice, from which as owners or public tenants they don't have to fear eviction. About eighty per cent of Australian adults retire owning their houses, able to trade them for other housing if they want to, able to leave that much capital to their children. Twenty or thirty of those eighty – mostly those who would otherwise be the poorest and least secure – would not have achieved those advantages without public housing aids. Coleman is a fool to want to deprive people of such aids to secure tenancy and ownership, aids which serve precisely her own values.

She is also a half-blind researcher: extremely careful to measure what *is,* but extremely careless in assuming what otherwise *might be.* She has researched and written an excellent, authoritative, conclusive condemnation of some very bad government. She rightly thinks it should be corrected by removing the people responsible for it. But what ought to replace bad government is good govern-

ment, not no government. And if she can't *imagine* good government, she could *study* some: in the British public housing performance between the wars; in Buckinghamshire and some other cottage-building counties since the war; in Norway, Switzerland, New Zealand; in Australia in general and South Australia in particular.

So there are short answers to the questions with which this paper opened. About 1958 the British Minister for Housing should have asked Peter Willmott to replace the then head of his department and make any other staff changes he deemed necessary. About 1964 the Victorian Minister should have issued a like invitation to David Scott, the welfare director of the Brotherhood of St Laurence. I don't believe the consequent changes would have been too difficult. They would certainly have been popular, and greatly increased the sum of housing happiness.

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Lawyers at Variance

Stuart Macintyre

Roger B. Joyce: *Samuel Walker Griffith* (University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, $40).
John Rickard: *H.B. Higgins. The Rebel as Judge* (George Allen and Unwin, $29.95).

The working of the Commonwealth Constitution shows the Australian genius for turning issues of principle into points of law. Conceived and prepared by lawyers, its pivotal clauses have kept the profession busy for the past eighty-five years. A quarter of the first House of Representatives, two-thirds of the first Cabinet, were lawyers, and the profession has been prominent in parliament ever since. Whenever a skeleton drops from an administrative cupboard, the first instinct of government is to appoint a Royal Commission in the expectation that the problem can be buried under the sheer weight of Queen's Counsel. If we have not matched the rampant civil litigiousness of the United States, we have our own habit of institutionalizing social relations into public rules that must be interpreted by men wearing wigs.

The jaundiced tone of my opening paragraph cuts clear across the expectations and aspirations of the patriarchs who appear in history books as the Federal Fathers. Those who animated the proceedings of the federal conventions of the 1890s, and then dominated the business of the first sessions of the Commonwealth legislature, harbored a lofty conception of their enterprise. They might have arranged little more than a customs union but they liked to think of themselves as the consummators of Australian nationhood. In laying out their new jurisdiction they hoped to elevate public life above the ruck of parochial interests. Even when they haggled over the allocation of revenue or tried to dignify their racist immigration policy, their close attention to forms and rituals – extending even to the choice of the daily prayer – sprang from a conviction in the importance of their enterprise.

In all this lawyers played the leading role. Barton, Deakin, O'Connor, Turner, Kingston, Griffith, Higgins, Isaacs and Reid. They read like an inventory of Canberra's suburbs, they were in fact all lawyers to the fore in the making of the Commonwealth. The process included few pastoralists or manufacturers. The election of sixteen Labor Members to the House of Representatives came as a surprise in 1901, but the Labor Party would not achieve a majority until 1910. For the time being the initiative rested with Deakin's group of liberal protectionists who sought to span capital and labor, and who believed that it was possible to extend the operation of the state in ways that would reconcile the imperatives of national development with the achievement of social justice.

As part of this federal machinery they established the High Court, and to it they appointed Barton, O'Connor and, as Chief Justice, Samuel Griffith. Griffith had coveted and canvassed for the plum job, though upon obtaining it in 1903 he predicted that "I think it will be some time before the profession and the public fully realize the extent or the power of criticism and determination that is vested in the Court."

Another instrument was the Arbitration Court, where Henry Bournes Higgins succeeded O'Connor as President in 1906. Taking his lead from the Deakinite doctrine of the New Protection, Higgins expanded the function of his Court from the mere settlement of industrial disputes to the determination of wages and conditions, the prescription of sex boundaries in the workforce, and the wholesale regulation of economic life. He claimed, indeed, a whole new province for law and order.

The two men shared remarkably similar origins. They were born six years apart, Griffith in 1845, Higgins in 1851, on the very fringes of respectable society in outer regions of the United Kingdom. Griffith's father was a Welsh Congregational minister, Higgins' an Irish Wesleyan preacher. The two sons both threw off these demanding faiths for a rationalism that was no less austere, and the nonconformist influence remained clearly visible. They both came with their families to the colonies in search of wealth and health and, though they prospered, accordingly retained a somewhat romanticized attachment to their homelands. Both turned to the law as the most accessible career for intelligence and limited means – and they were rewarded with opulence and eminence.

Both were intensely private men, with few intimate friends; they shied away from emotional intensity and found refuge in literature, especially the classics. They went into parliament as an almost natural adjunct to their professional careers, and brought to politics that liberal concern for orderly progress within the rule of law.

Yet, with all these similarities, the constitutional history of the early twentieth century was played out as a conflict between their different interpretations of the role of government. In essence, Higgins wished to extend the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth, while Griffith wished

to contain it. Even here there was a further paradox. While Griffith was not present at the conventions of the later 1890s because of his position on the Queensland Supreme Court, he had played a leading role in the initial step towards federation. Higgins, on the other hand, had been a prominent critic, principally because he thought the constitution too restrictive. After 1901 he came to treat the realized Commonwealth as a force for progress, while Griffith vigilantly policed the limited terms of the compact.

Higgins' most celebrated Arbitration Court decision, the Harvester Judgement of 1907, was quashed by Griffith's High Court. His findings in some of the principal industrial disputes of the period, including the Broken Hill lock-out of 1909 and the Brisbane general strike of 1912, were overturned. In a series of High Court cases brought by employers, where he and Isaacs habitually dissented from the majority judgement, the Court narrowed and eroded his arbitral jurisdiction. If Higgins became the *bete noir* of the employers because of his alleged sympathy for labor, Griffith's High Court was in fact a major impediment to the realization of union aspirations.

Both careers demand explanation. Griffith's trajectory may seem unremarkable – the subsequent examples of Latham and Barwick remind us that humble origins are no guarantee of sympathy for the underdog in the discharge of judicial duties. But the remarkable feature of Griffith's story, as presented here, is surely the futile emptiness of his two decades on the Commonwealth bench. The adventurous, even rackety, youth and the resourceful Premier gave way to a robed negative.

With Higgins the task of interpretation is sharper. Little in his rise to professional eminence suggested that he would become a hero of the labor movement. The cast of his mind was formal and legalistic; his mode for life far removed from that of the wage-earner; his marriage to the daughter of the headmaster of Geelong College bound him into Melbourne's Presbyterian establishment. And yet his beliefs and actions were so alien to that world that a young relative, who met Higgins while she was walking in the Treasury Gardens with her mother, was astonished that the two adults were on speaking terms, so vituperative was the criticism of Uncle Henry over the family table.

John Rickard's biography confronts this paradox directly. Paying particular attention to Higgins' early life and emotional concerns, he gives us a picture of a sensitive, vulnerable man whose devotion to reason and order protected him against threatening uncertainties. Higgins earned a reputation as a rebel, not because of any far-reaching radical beliefs, but because his attachment to principle did not allow him to compromise. He did not seek notoriety when he stood out against the Boer War, but the vilification that was heaped on him because of his stand strengthened his recalcitrance. Even when he served as Attorney-General in the Labor Government of 1904, he remained at a remove from his colleagues. "The poor fellows need encouragement," he told Deakin.

On the bench he guarded his independence jealously. He reached his judgements not in any partisan spirit but in the belief that he was weighing the claims in the balance of equity under the Light of Pure Reason. When, at the end of his career, he broke publicly with Hughes, it was because he could no longer tolerate the Prime Minister's propitiation of striking unionists. "A tribunal of reason cannot do its work side by side with executive tribunals of panic."

So persuasive is this portrait that Rickard might almost have inverted his book's subtitle, "The Rebel as Judge". Higgins was no iconoclast. Not for him the demonstrative dissidence of an Evatt or a Murphy. His manner was austerely judicial, his probity beyond reproach. Economic justice was for him a necessary guarantee of order and civilization, strengthening rather than weakening the social fabric.

This interpretation of Higgins is consistent with that offered by Nettie Palmer in her fine memoir of Uncle Henry, whose merits Rickard acknowledges. Palmer's is in some respects a more satisfactory account of the achievements of Mr Justice Higgins – for her they were fresh and real, despite her reservations, while with Rickard there are occasional signs of weariness as he goes back over the territory he covered so well in his earlier study of *Class and Politics* in the federal period.

This book breaks new ground, however, in its treatment of Higgins' emotional life. Much of the psychological analysis is necessarily tentative, and Rickard is careful not to push it too far, but he unquestionably establishes its significance. Our understanding of the public Higgins, the lawyer, politician and judge, is deepened by Rickard's attention to the private Higgins, the son, husband and father. At long last an Australian historian has risen to the challenge of the biographical form, and breathed new life into it. The writing is lucid and supple, enlivened by epigrammatic touches and parenthetical flourishes. *H.B. Higgins* richly deserved its *Age* non-fiction award for 1984.

The late Roger Joyce's biography of Griffith is different in method and scope. It embodies more than a decade of research which produced an initial draft of nearly 800,000 words! By cutting and summarizing, that draft was halved and halved again. It was perhaps unfortunate that the publishers could not accept the penultimate version, for the process of compression has left some loose ends. Thus we are told on page 286 that Griffith "still wrote to Barbara Baynton" but the earlier references to her have been relegated to a footnote.

The more serious limitation is that the all-inclusive, blow-by-blow life and times leaves little scope for reflection. There are observations and insights aplenty, but they are tied to a narrative that pushes doggedly on. The reader who looks for a measured evaluation of Griffith's political career finds instead a detailed inventory of his administration. Summaries of one High Court case after another stand in place of a sustained interpretation of Griffith's contribution to the federal jurisdiction. The book totters under the weight of its material.

This comparison of the two biographies may be unfair. Rickard's is a carefully proportioned exercise in writing,

its chapters arranged thematically and exploiting opportunities for selection and arrangement. Joyce's is a vast compilation of material that will be quarried by future researchers. His memorable entry for Griffith in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* suggests that he could have shaped and interpreted his subject in subsequent writing had his life not been cut short.

Stuart Macintyre teaches history at the University of Melbourne. He has recently completed the 1901–1942 volume of the forthcoming Oxford History of Australia, and a book on social justice in Australia, Winners and Losers, *which will be published in August.*

High and Low: Ranges of New Poetry

Frank Kellaway

Kevin Hart: *Your Shadow* (Angus and Robertson, $9.95).
Julian Croft: *Breakfast in Shanghai* (Angus and Robertson, $9.95).
Cornelis Vleeskens: *The Day The River* (UQP, $9.95).
Gary Catalano: *Slow Tennis Poems: 1980-1983* (UQP, $9.95).
Paul Hasluck: *Dark Cottage* (Freshwater Bay Press, 14 Reserve Street, Claremont, WA 6010, $12.00).
Doris Brett: *The Truth About Unicorns* (Jacaranda Press, $9.95).
Dorothy Porter: *The Night Parrot* (Black Lightning Press, 53 Hill Street, Wentworth Falls, NSW 2782, $7.95).
Michael Sariban: *At the Institute for Total Recall* (Queensland Community Press, PO Box 36, South Brisbane, Queensland 4101, $4.95).
Gig Ryan: *Manners of an Astronaut* (Hale and Iremonger, $7.95).
Jean Lang: *Pillows on the Thorn* (Beeloo Publishing, 6/99 McCabe Street, Mosman Park, WA 6012, $4.95).
Marjorie Pizer: *Selected Poems 1963-1983* (Pinchgut Press, 6 Oaks Avenue, Cremorne, NSW 2090, no price given).
Mal Morgan: *Statues Don't Bleed* (Wildgrass Books, 1 Elsie Street, Boronia 3155, $8.95).

In the case of the last two poets listed above I must declare an interest: they are friends of mine.

Marjorie Pizer's *Selected Poems 1963-1983* was published, like her previous books, by Pinchgut Press, the publishing house which she and Muir Holburn set up in the 1950s. The photograph of her on the fly-leaf shows the same sympathetic face as the poems. I will quote one of her best short pieces in full. It shows her frontal attack, her humane concern and her limitations.

Christmas

Here on this empty beach
I have escaped from the hustle-bustle of mad Christmas,
Away from car-filled roads and anxious shoppers
And the whole hypocrisy of happy families
And holy family.
Here I can think of goodwill and love
And wish it more in evidence than it has been
In this century of war and the gas chamber.

Marjorie Pizer's sympathies are humane and rational. The book has recommendations from Manning Clark, Ron Haddrick and Faith Bandler.

The other poet in whom I have an interest through friendship is Mal Morgan. His best poems are concentrated and gnomic.

There is an American influence which I deplore. We've had enough of Frazer and Co. selling us to the Yanks without our poets selling the Yanks to us. Still, the poems have a jazzy, humorous life of their own. The other influences are Jewish and surrealist. Chagall and Apollinaire are important names.

To quote the foreword I wrote for this volume: "Mal Morgan writes deceptively simple poems which are like folksongs in that they are tender and resonant and use the symbols lovers have always used, the moon, a rose, a leaf . . . and yet they are fresh and mean more than their syllables seem to say."

"the word came", "poem to myself", "wiggle your ten little marxists", "canary yellow", and "notes to my sons" are among the poems in this collection which seem to have achieved a crystalline being of their own.

The poet of those under review who has rewarded me most for the time I have spent reading and thinking about his work is Kevin Hart. The blurb's claim that he has been "scandalously neglected by critics and reviewers" seems to me to be wildly far from the mark. I have read and heard nothing but accolades. Indeed a distinguished critic reviewing Hart alongside one of our most profound and beautiful elder poets made an unwarranted and irrelevant comparison in Hart's favor.

Hart is a metaphysical Catholic poet of great power and resonance. He has developed a range of subtly musical free-verse paragraphs which are always structured by the syntax dictated by rigorous thought. His images are vivid and concrete but they flow and change as the thought changes.

But see the wind,
how it can find no home
amongst the trees, how the stones
care nothing for the earth, their roots
curled up within themselves.

Calm beyond reason
they ask us to accept the solitude
of homeless things, to forgo the sunlight growing wild upon the water,
so we might see
the pure darkness inside the stone.

The book starts with a quote from St John of the Cross: "If an object is opaque and dark, it makes a dark shadow; if it is transparent and delicate, its shadow is transparent and delicate." This theme in precise and yet suggestive elaboration gives the whole book a satisfying unity. Though always individual, it reminds a little of Donne's treatment of the shadow, never as robust as Donne but often as intricate. There are four poems called "Your Shadow" at pages 2, 12, 25 and 31, followed between pages 41 and 46 by six songs titled *Your Shadow's Songs.* The first of these begins, "The angel of death is older now / and finds the pleasures of the flesh / too tiring, closing dead men's eyes / a job he'd rather do without." The last of them ends, "Don't worry, put things out of mind, / put all your sorrow and dark thoughts / upon the dark side of the moon. There is so much within your reach – / the sun's home in the honeycomb, / the quiet waters, the fragrant field."

Towards the end of the book there are some very moving poems. "The Companion", for example, which is something like "The Hound of Heaven" but without the nineteenth century sound and fury. A lot of these later poems are about death, but one of them manages to be splendidly humorous in spite of its underlying seriousness. "Till Sotel Deth Knocked at My Gate" is a very funny poem. I can imagine it appealing to the musical humor of Hugo Wolf, who might well have created a superb song out of it.

Another rewarding poet is Julian Croft. He's much less metaphysical than Hart. His concerns are often with particular places and people. He has a good narrative gift, a sense of irony and a feeling for the inevitability, the pity of it all. Yet there were times, as in the first sad poem, "Graffiti", when I wondered whether it were really as inevitable as he makes it seem.

His sense of history and of the trivial, ephemeral nature of much experience informs poems like "Breakfast in Shanghai" and those that follow it in that section.

The section dealing with relationships between sons and father-figures seemed to me less convincing, but the final part called "Drunk on a Mast", a series of short poems commemorating John William Croft (1870-1913), show him at his best, with narrative power well developed.

Cornelis Vleeskens' *The Day the River* is a lively series of autobiographical pieces in free verse. The manner is jaunty and the poems often strike sparks of wit. "Night Driving" begins like this: "We're gaining too much speed in monosyllabic overdrive, / unable to avoid dust-filled ruts / picked out too late by failing headlights. / Throw this conversation into another gear . . ."

Some of the poems are a series of vignettes of exploration and discovery, "Toward the Discovery of New Holland", "Touching on Red Cedar", "The Search for Mission", and "For Young Tom Petrie", for example. They have brilliant flickers of images illuminating the landscape and some sly, historical irony, but I couldn't help reading them as somehow a continuation and extension of the autobiographical narrative, as though the poet were putting himself into the historical context to continue his own private exploration of the country, past as well as present.

The poems I liked best were "From This Ramshackle House" (about first experiences in Australia), "Salted Herring" (mainly reminiscence of childhood in Holland) and the last section of the book, three poems about living here after marrying and settling down. These lines from "Ramshackle House" give a wry sidelight on Europeans newly come to this country.

> . . . I had never
> seen a snake except in illustrations
> of the Garden of Eden, and rumour had it
> that they lived in bushland
> surrounding this glittering migrant hostel.
>
> We armed ourselves with sturdy branches
> and pocketsful of rocks
> on our sunday walks around the perimeter.
> We never saw one, but were startled at every step
> by rustling noises in the dead leaves and
> undergrowth.

The voice of this poet is a very attractive one, though I can't help wishing that the poems were a little more tightly structured.

Gary Catalano's book *Slow Tennis*, which comes from the same publisher, also uses free verse and talks about life in the country. It hasn't got Vleeskens' gaiety but the verse is more controlled, more interested in ideas which are usually couched in a mildly surreal imagery which is quite individual. I believe the best poems are "Slow Tennis", "The Simple Isles" and "The Falling Woman".

The first of these begins: "There is a tree / at the far end / of my thoughts." It ends: "How can I be sure / it is really a tree / – and not, say, a grey / frayed and unstitched ball / propelled / by an opponent / on the other side / of the world? Slow tennis / could well be the name / of this game: the object of it / is to whack these / battered, deflated trees / from one half / of the brain / to the other."

The end of "The Simple Isles" shows him at his most metaphysical: "We could compose / that perfect world, / a world whose maps / will fail to show / the simple isles / of Yes and No." "The Falling Woman" is more like "Slow Tennis", combining the idea and the surreal image: "I crawl towards my falling / ball-like woman. With these / slow hands of mine / I hope to catch her / at her quick passion / for gravity." These passages also demonstrate Catalano's sensitive ear and fine control of musical values.

Paul Hasluck's *Dark Cottage* is a great improvement on his previous book, though there are still too many cliches and amateur fumblings, inversions for a rhyme etc, as well as Victorian poetic diction: "Where run the startled hares", "Strength to my heart earth gives . . .", "I looked on Beauty's face", and "Whence came this castaway of fate?" Still there are some eloquent poems without these blemishes: "The Weaving of the Martyr's Shroud" which

ends "But now my hands are weaving death / And nowhere can a hope be found / For weakened faith to grip. / And, at the last, my utmost skill / Is under bond to those who kill." "Nullabor Plain" is also good, and perhaps his best is "Space Probe".

Doris Brett's *The Truth about Unicorns* "weaves a spell of place, creature, myth and dream", according to the publisher's blurb. Certainly I found the mythic or fairy-tale poems the most affecting. The title poem has these lines: "each of us dreamed of riding on unicorns, / saw the secret slipping on of leg over haunches, the easing / forward for the hollow, that one particular spot where you fit, sit over muscles bunching like bananas, big / and splitting the seams of your senses . . ." The two fairy-tale poems, one about Snow White's stepmother and the other on the Sleeping Beauty, were also very fine. I believe strongly in the significance of these tales and in the value of retelling them, giving them a modern context and modern language. However, the mythological and archetypal interest declined towards the end of the book. The more immediate pieces about travel and personal relationships were less affecting, though "Love at Second Sight" and "Washed-Out" both came across strongly, and "Literary Lovers" is witty and very satisfactorily sensual: "You . . . run your fingers / down its spine instead / of mine. The pages / lie inside, unpeeled / and maidenly . . . I . . . am more moist / than dry paper. / And notice, if you open / me correctly / you can expect more / than all my knowledge."

At the beginning of *The Night Parrot*, Dorothy Porter quotes from the *Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds*: "No living ornithologist has reported seeing the night parrot in the wild," and more to a similar tune. The bird becomes a symbol for the rare, wild spirit which as at once the well-spring of her poetry and the central motive of her life. "When the night parrot / is at the wheel / the top 40 / becomes hot ice, / and I throw these burning songs / from hand to hand / with my pulse / ticking like a gaudy grenade."

The night parrot dominates the first thirteen poems and then disappears. The last long piece, "Auroral Corona with Two Figures", builds a metaphor of her personal life from the Antarctic winter and the Aurora.

From time to time throughout there seems to me to be a too self-conscious striving after modernity, as in "The Radium Chocolates", but the poems are always vivid and I believe best when they are direct and passionate. "White Calendar Day" is probably Dorothy Porter at her top.

Michael Sariban's *At the Institute for Total Recall* is a first book. It is clever and at times eloquent. He has a fair range of scientific and technological information and he uses it skilfully in his poems, as for example in "The Buck Factory (a DNA Sonnet)". Like many poets he is preoccupied with the nature of art and communication. His poem "Opera House" has these lines: "Public art always seems to end up / biting its tongue. One man's kitsch, / another's postcard . . ." "Lidice 1942" gives quite a different view of public architecture. "Pioneer 10" introduces an irreverent science-fiction element into the debate.

A few poems as he suggests in "Darkness" are perhaps too private: "my waiting eyes are showered / with white-lights-only fireworks (not white / but washed-out gold) too private, confined / behind my lids, too difficult / to share". I think "That Letter" and "On Learning of her Marriage" are perhaps tainted in that way, but it is heartening to find a gifted young writer genuinely aware of the problem of communication. The most successful poems include "Devolution" (my favorite), "Looking Glass" and "Present Ghosts".

I don't believe Gig Ryan is concerned with communication at all. *Manners of an Astronaut*, like the poems of Dransfield and Buckmaster has a strong hallucinatory quality. It is the poetry of mystery, antagonism and hurt: "See in my head, the hole they're shooting? / What happened to those buildings, that maze? / Does everything crumble, or hurt?" ("Various Wars"). There is an undeniably powerful use of language: "His hands blanch when he lies, / and their slow flesh is going down the chair / and her voice so bending it spills thickness / up the funnel of this house, my life, / and you can't stop feeling misspelt, the room's black obstacle."

But just what satisfaction, truth or insight (probably words they don't use) her enthusiastic, though small audience gets from these poems I don't know. Martin Johnston says that her vision is "bullshit-proof". That seems merely to mean that she rejects everything and everybody outside herself. As she says in "Better than You" (a significant title), "I'm not responsible to anyone." Her "New Morality" seems to me as full of bullshit as most others.

Jean Lang's *Pillows on the Thorn* contains pieces in free verse on a wide variety of subjects: parachute jumping, a sundial broken by a skidding car, a computer operator, a clearing sale, the export of live sheep, etc. They are occasional poems with no unifying theme or strong underlying poetic compulsion. Most are competently turned and four of them have been successful in poetry competitions. The book is illustrated with wood-cuts by the author.

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The Necessity of Choice

Kylie Tennant

Ross Davy: *Kenzo: A Tokyo Story* (Penguin, $5.95).
F. Sionil Jose: *Mass: A Novel* (Allen and Unwin, $14.95).
John Webb: *Midwinter Spring* (Fremantle Arts Centre, $12).
Barry Dickins: *The Crookes of Epping* (Pascoe Publishing, $5.95).
Jean Bedford: *Country Girl Again and Other Stories* (McPhee Gribble/Penguin, $6.95).

All great literature seems to be written around the drama of choice and freewill. Tragedy results not from the Fates hounding a hero but from the hero's own decision to embark on a certain course of action. The more skilfully a writer follows life the more clearly does he show how the hero's persistence is his or her Fate: obstinate adherance to one's own choice is ruin. This cheerless news does not seem to have penetrated to modern novelists, who prefer to see characters blown by external forces inevitably and helplessly.

Kenzo: A Tokyo Story has certain strengths and weaknesses, but the strength of the characters is not one of its virtues. Kenzo, a Zen novice priest, occupies the three first chapters in homosexual episodes of rather wearisome repetition and, if you wade through the explicit details of how homosexuals behave in Tokyo, plus one orgy, a rather meaningless murder by Kenzo and his almost accidental death saving a friend, the rest of the book improves and reaches a really dramatic climax. The grammar is a little loose. There are the women – two Australian school teachers – influenced by Kenzo; other Japanese influenced by Kenzo, Zen meditation techniques, some excellent descriptions of Toyko and some banal ones: "Her body tonight, with its occasionally emptying stomach and filling bladder, seems to Harriet like a great useless suitcase to be lugged through the crowded air terminal of busy Zen terminology and paid exhorbitant Customs for." Probably one of Ross Davy's strengths is his knowledge that life is far more weird, odd, chaotic, than we are willing to admit.

Mass: A novel by F. Sionil Jose, is a Filipino translation, and Sionil Jose is among the most eminent writers of that unhappy country.

Written with powerful simplicity the book describes the advance of a handsome Filipino Candide from his native village to university in Manila where he joins – because his friends are doing so – a nationalist organization. He lives with a kindly reformist priest in the *barrio* – the worst of Manila's slums. The inhabitants, who would settle for clean water and a sewerage system to cut down the typhoid, are a constant study for sociologists. Jose Samson, the hero, is faced with a choice. He can marry a rich beautiful girl who loves him or he can 'go to the hills' and become a guerrilla. He is taken to gaol by the secret police and tortured. He shoots a corrupt politician who is betraying the Brotherhood, the revolutionary party. He takes the man's collection of guns and he is on his way. No rich girl, no luxury. As he boards his bus with the collection of guns in a carrier bag, "A joy which had always eluded me filled me to overflowing." He does not really believe any revolution will succeed; he knows that it will be betrayed from within and the usual power-hungry will come out on top. But he has made his choice. This powerful book could be a treatise on how to mould and make a revolutionary fighter out of an amiable young man. It is going on all over the world with the corrupt rich, the secret police, the torture, the gaols. We send our contribution to Amnesty International and cower back into comfort.

In *Midwinter Spring* John Webb sinks into a 'cave', a house dug into the hillside of a French village – or rather his fictional main character does so. The book is, loosely, a diary of an Australian teacher who has retired to lick his wounds from a broken marriage. "I came here to escape all sense of responsibility," he says. Gradually "the landscape drew me from myself so subtly that I did not even notice the dialogue begin, and then, though I sought to deny it, I became part of the human landscape." In the end he acts with resolution to save the life of a man unhappier than he. Loosely constructed, the book has its own charm. "Thank God I am here in France, the country of the cahier. Here they do not mind if you publish the notebooks. Across the channel it is as if one has deliberately dropped one's trousers." Fremantle Press is building up an interesting and intelligent release list. The Literature Board of the Australia Council and the Western Australia Arts Council are to be commended for their support.

Back to the land of booze, sex, and the overworked word "shit". *The Crookes of Epping,* a suburb of Melbourne, are supposed to be working-class Australians. Father has a job, loses it, goes on the grog (he was never off it). One son is an artist, one is a "genius" – naturally they don't work. The women drift sadly into nervous breakdowns. The binding is atrocious. One cautious foray into this burlesque of sex and booze in the suburbs sees the 'rambunctious' novel literally falling to pieces in your hands. I don't even like Barry Dickins' drawings. Yuk! Call those slobs Australian workers?

Jean Bedford's crisp, vigorous and honest stories are occupied mainly by Australian women dissatisfied with their lot in both town and country – and rightly so. "The Woodheap", a story which sums up the hard toil, shows a girl making a choice to leave a subsistence farm. "He said: 'That's what killed your mother that bloody woodheap. Don't let it kill you too'."

The binding is better on this book but the cover is marshmallow over the hard-centre stories. Wonder who chose a cover like that?

The most recent of Kylie Tennant's many novels is Tantavallon. *She lives on a farm in the Blue Mountains, the main product of which is "instant squalor", and which is run as a kind of relief agency for the local unemployed. She is writing an autobiography.*

Two Women Rebels

Gary Catalano

Oriel Gray: *Exit Left: Memoirs of a Scarlet Woman* (Penguin, $7.95).
Colleen Burke: *Doherty's Corner* (Sirius Books, $9.95).

Oriel Gray's *Exit Left: Memoirs of a Scarlet Woman* begins with a description of its author's first real visit to the theatre at the age of seventeen and ends with her decision to leave the Communist Party of Australia. There are twelve years between these two events, twelve years in which Gray passes into maturity, acquires two husbands, gives birth to two sons, and becomes the author of plays with a strong political message.

Her autobiography does not indicate any great awareness of the problems inherent in the genre. Who am I? How have I become what I am? Can I legitimately talk of a single 'I'? It demands little or no familiarity with psychological thought to know that questions like these are fundamental to the genre. The first thing we ask of any autobiography is that it candidly acknowledges the self's persistently uncertain knowledge of itself.

In view of her youth at the time, it is only to be expected that Oriel Gray knows little of herself when we first encounter her in the audience of Sydney's Conservatorium Theatre, where she is watching a performance of Irwin Shaw's anti-war play, "Bury the Dead", in the company of her sister Gracye, her elder by nine years. Over the previous eleven years Gracye has been far more than a sister to Oriel, for their mother had died when Oriel was only six.

Gracye is someone whose character is insufficiently explored.

Although we are told that she immediately left school on her mother's death in order to look after her family, the author fails to acknowledge that this may have entailed some sacrifice on her part. Oriel Gray seems the kind of person in whom the natural egotism of youth remains unchastened by a lifetime of experience.

At the time when they make their visit to the theatre Oriel is sharing a flat in King's Cross with Gracye and Max, the first of her sister's romantic attachments. The sister's father visits them on the following weekend and, on hearing Oriel's breathless account of the play, he urges her to visit another theatre which has recently staged an anti-Nazi play. The theatre, of course, is the New Theatre, then located at the Circular Quay end of Pitt Street.

Oriel soon acts on his suggestion. Although she is disappointed with the dramatic content of the evening's program, she finds herself moved by the audience's enthusiasm and the general ambience of the theatre. With its passionately indignant audience and the wine bar underneath, the theatre managed to be both bohemian and committed. Oriel is enchanted by it. She is also enchanted by one of the members of the cast and sets about writing him a letter. Though her expectations of romance are quickly dashed (at their meeting the actor calls her "comrade" and hands her a statement about the aims of the theatre) Oriel knows she has found something to which she can devote all her time and energies. The theatre rapidly replaces her family as the bulwark of her life.

The consequences of this sudden shift in loyalties are saddening, for when her father falls ill and enters hospital Oriel is so taken up with her new life that she repeatedly neglects to visit him. Put off by the length of the tram-ride and further discouraged by the reappearance of her father's sisters, who had disapproved of his marriage, Oriel keeps on delaying her visit. And when the telephone rings one morning she steadfastly refuses to believe what Aunt Cis's cold voice tells her: "Your father is being cremated at Rookwood Crematorium at twelve." Oriel forgets to inform Gracye, and neither girl attends the funeral.

Gray writes a rough-hewn and haphazard prose. The casually constructed sentences and the frequency with which cliches or stock phrases occur suggests that the book was composed on a tape-recorder, though it may well be that these oral qualities are due to Gray's long experience as a playwright. Direct speech is, after all, her medium. In any case, we are certainly invited to view the book in theatrical terms: its four sections are called acts rather than parts, and now and then the entries and exits of people are managed in a suitably dramatic manner. Often we know nothing of their 'characters' until they make their unheralded appearance. This abruptness helps to preserve the textures of life and constitutes one of the book's virtues.

Exit Left is likely to be read for the insights it offers into Australian theatrical life and, more importantly, into the history of the New Theatre. As Oriel Gray pictures it, the ambience of the theatre in the late thirties was a unique mixture of amateurism, political idealism, and avant-garde experimentation; those familiar with the theatre will know that the same was also true thirty years later.

One of her more entertaining anecdotes about the theatre relates the deference with which the communist leader J.B. Miles was shown his seat at the performance of one of her plays, and her eagerness to learn of his reactions. "Did he laugh at this point?" she demanded of one stage-hand. "What at?" One imagines that other stage-hands suffered the same interrogation when, in later years, Laurie Aarons attended opening nights at the same theatre.

But Oriel Gray was not the good party member that this anecdote suggests. That waywardness and lack of steadfastness which characterized her personal relationships also made her recalcitrant to any higher authority. Although she tried hard, she was temperamentally unsuited to believing that the party elders had a monopoly on wisdom. In the ten years between the final defeat of the republican forces in Spain and the fall of the Chifley government she became more and more disillusioned with both the rhetoric and the actions of the party.

Of course, other believers experienced the same disillusionment in these years. There must have been many a party member who, on hearing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, had to be reproved with the question: "Do you think you know better than Stalin?" Gray's disenchantment was sharpened by the fact that eccentrics invariably won her

instinctive sympathies. On one side lay the grey and puritanical men who ran the party . . . and on the other those colorful birds of passage who drifted in and out of the theatre and caused both consternation and surprise. Take your pick: here is Polonius, and here a fool. On viewing the drama of Gray's life the fool one remembers most clearly is a young pianist, at one moment playing a tune for a punch-drunk ex-boxer and, at another, composing a song for a satirical revue called "I'd rather be left". He was a talented man. His name was James McAuley.

It's difficult to know what to say about Colleen Burke's *Doherty's Corner*, which deals with the life and work of Marie Pitt. Far from being a biographical study, Burke's presentation of Pitt's life is little more than a recitation of biographical facts, each one of which is augmented with liberal quotations from Pitt's journalistic writings and poetical works. As the method is wholly lacking in any breadth or amplitude, Pitt never emerges as a flesh-and-blood being.

This is a pity, for what we are told of Pitt's life suggests that it deserves a more sustained treatment. The first of seven children born to an Irish father and a Scottish mother, circumstances were against her right from the start. Only in odd moments could her struggling parents afford to send her to school, and these moments were made more irregular by her father's habit of quarrelling with his daughter's teachers. When her labor could be spared young Marie went back and forth from one small Gippsland school to another. Needless to say, both parents did nothing to encourage their daughter's attempts at verse.

On her marriage to a miner at the age of twenty-three, Pitt moved to Tasmania and lived for twelve years in a succession of mining settlements on that island's remote western coast. During this time she bore four children (three of whom survived), became interested in the union movement when the Amalgamated Miners' Association established a branch at Zeehan, and once more began to write verse. After her husband contracted phthisis, the family returned to Victoria in 1905. The aspiring poet was now responsible for the maintenance of her family. Despite this, Pitt still found time to involve herself in the Victorian Socialist Party and to contribute her passionately denunciatory articles to its newspaper, which she jointly edited for a brief period.

Not unexpectedly, Colleen Burke is openly admiring of her determined, energetic and over-worked subject. This exemplary heroine is faulted on just one count, and that is her support for the White Australia Policy. According to Pitt, the entry of colored people not only threatened to undermine the living standards of white workers, it also posed a sexual threat to white women. She insisted that the brotherhood of man could and should be achieved without miscegenation.

Colleen Burke suggests that Pitt's poetry offended the powers that be. That may well have been so, but the selection of forty-three poems at the back of the book does little to support her belief that Pitt was an outstanding poet whose work has been unfairly neglected. Like that of most late romantic poets, Pitt's governing theme is the inexorable passage of time. Generally her poems begin by contrasting a dissatisfying and circumscribed present with the plenitudes of a remembered past:

> There's no bush today at Doherty's Corner
> Only strange green hills and the glint of a far bay;
> Time has come like a thief and stolen the wonder
> And magic of yesterday.
>
> There are no fairies now at Doherty's Corner,
> Where dusky spider-orchids and wild white daisies grew;
> Time has stilled the heart of the singing forest
> Has stolen her fairies too.

This moves well enough, but not one word suggests that its all-too-common emotions have been deeply apprehended. Lines like these have the same relation to poetry that playing a pianola has to extempore composition.

More often than not, Pitt's poems employ ostentatiously literary diction like that found in the following quatrain from "Bairnsdale":

> One headland where the wattles pour
> On his brown bosom as of old,
> From Spring's green chalice brimming o'er,
> Libation of September gold.

Pitt was seen by her contemporaries as a masculine poet, for she insisted that anger and scorn were legitimate emotions for poets to express. I have the unhappy suspicion that we are meant to be dutifully angered by the following lines from "Rejected", which deal with the plight of a workman retrenched because of his age:

> No more in the arena of today
> His place shall know him, nor his strong arms wrest
> From youth-accoutred foes the piteous prize
> Of daily bread – and wherefore shall he turn
> To learn new arts and wield new weapons, now
> That tower of many strength, which stood the shock
> Of deadly combat, totters at its base,
> And reels before the dastard strategy
> That binds his chained limbs to the conqueror's wheels?

The lack of any concrete detail in these lines makes them completely forgettable.

Though Marie Pitt was clearly not the poet Colleen Burke takes her to be, her life was certainly an interesting one. It needs, however, a more ample treatment than that given it in this book.

Gary Catalano's book of poems, Slow Tennis, *was published last year. He writes on art for the Melbourne Age and is working on a monograph on the Melbourne painter Peter Booth.*

Sam Sawnoff and the Shorter Oxford

Chris Borthwick and Linda Jakab

Brenda Niall: *Australia through the Looking-Glass* (Melbourne University Press, $25).

Leonie Kramer and Adrian Mitchell (eds): *The Oxford Anthology of Australian Literature* (Oxford University Press, $40, $25).

Blinky Bill's brief fling as an icon of the left seems to be over, the Builders' Laborers Federation having more urgent campaigns to fight. May Gibbs, on the other hand, is enjoying something of a mini-boom: it is possible to return from Lygon Street with gum-nut babies on curtain material, wrapping paper, bookmarks, statuettes, t-shirts and earings. It's slightly more difficult to find the books, though, and the dolls are expensive enough to be for display only. The appeal is to adult nostalgia, not to childish acquisitiveness (children are all now into He-men and Masters of the Universe figurines with accompanying battle cats).

If the kids had been consulted I think the villains would have got more of an outing. Snugglepot and Cuddlepie were, after all, fairly characterless, notable only for a more than Disneyesque display of naked bottom, while the Bad Banksia Men were a real imaginative creation – a combination of racist fears (Aboriginal coloring, legs, lips and pidgin) with sexual psychoses (hairy bodies studded with vagina dentata) in one crisp botanical analogy.

Brenda Niall rigorously puts aside any speculation of this kind on the cultural, historical and polemical uses we make of our children's books. She has confined herself to the view from the other direction – what the books tell us about the authors' perceptions of Australia. To further narrow her task she considers only novels, excluding Cole's Funny Picture Books, Ginger Meggs, the Hobyahs, and serials in the Boys' Own Paper. Because the book renounces any ambition to be a history we get only a few tantalizing glimpses of the publishing contracts, readership figures and literary grants that would enable us to set these novels into a context of authors and readers. With these self-imposed restrictions, and without this context, it is difficult to know what purpose the book serves and who is expected to benefit from its research.

The first thing to note about Australian children's books, for most of the period covered by *Australia Through the Looking-Glass,* is that they were not the books of Australian children. Brenda Niall quotes with approval a French social historian who said that pre-war England could be reconstructed from its children's books. If that claim is to be made about Australia, however, the problem is that it must be made largely about the same books, and they are not the books that this book is about. Any consultation of memoirs of Australian childhoods will show that *The Wind in the Willows, Just William,* and G.A. Henty loomed as large as role models, romances, and social statements for Australian children as for English: Australian books are mentioned a good deal less frequently, and generally as local color. The content of Australian books is less significant than their absence. The staggering irrelevance of all those green fields and dorm feasts to suburban Australia certainly deserves examination, but it can't really be dealt with simply by writing it out of the terms of reference.

I know, I know: reviewers are supposed to review the book in front of them, not the book they would have written themselves given the opportunity. How otherwise to explain, though, why the first half of *Australia Through the Looking-Glass* is interesting and informative and the second half, dealing with the moderns, a limp recital of plots, than by saying that the first has a point and the second doesn't? I am sincerely grateful to Brenda Niall for having read through an enormous quantity of colonial literature of no merit whatsoever in order to extract a small number of insights on English and Australian views on Aboriginals, temperance, wombat-shooting and the like. The moderns do not offer up their lessons so patly, we are too close to them to see their assumptions as automatically comic, and she flounders. The impression given is that having done all that reading Brenda Niall set it all down in the hope that a direction would emerge, and it hasn't.

When it come to pointlessness, though, the *Oxford Anthology of Australian Literature,* edited by Leonie Kramer and Adrian Mitchell, is in a class by itself. The anthology is a whacking bumper volume (just right for a pillow on a train) with as much functional use for the student of Australian literature – or, for that matter, the casual dipper-in – as a coffee-table book on the mating habits of the Zambezi tsetse fly.

Australian literature is evidently a vague collocation of journalism, commentary, the odd bit of literary criticism (coincidentally agreeing fairly frequently with the views of the editors[1]), short stories and a token sauce of contemporary Australian fiction. Australian literature does not include novels.

The selection policy for material is riddled with inconsistencies. A poet of the calibre of C. Harpur[2] (large bore) is ceded sixteen pages in which to demonstrate the utter futility of imposing eighteenth century versifying on the horrors of the Australian bush. And at the other end of the sectrum A. Taylor rates a full page and E. Jolley doesn't get a guernsey. And where is the Bad Banksia Man, D. Ireland?

Journalism is well-represented. The journalist and historian C.E.W. Bean exhorts us to be careful in the reckless destruction of the Australian bush lest we expose Australia's cheekbones "all shiny red and bare and useless". Points are given for pieces that talk about other pieces, the only possible explanation for the inclusion of a flaccid D. O'Grady story involving H. Lawson and for making a B. Oakley play about H. Kendall the only representative of Australian drama.

P. White for once dons the critical cape, and is given space to indulge in a diatribe against A. Kershaw's analysis of Australian literary banalities. He also gets a short story. C. Stead and H.H. Richardson, renowned for dense and prolix prose and great fat books, also get a short story apiece. OK, but you'd never know from them

why anybody would consider Stead or Richardson major Australian writers.

For better or worse, Australian literature is largely made up of novels. To rule these out of consideration, as the editors do, on the grounds that they don't approve of excerpting, makes the whole exercise nonsensical.

Who is this book intended for? South African students taking Aust. Lit. courses? The only people who won't find it radically misleading are those who've read enough Australian literature not to need it at all. It isn't a collection of the best writing, it isn't an adequate historical survey, it doesn't muster a consistent critical argument, it isn't sufficiently individual to be interesting reading in its own right.

Chris Borthwick wrote the script for the film "Annie's Coming Out". He and Linda Jakab work as administrators at the Lincoln Institute, Melbourne.

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1 "This was only brought into my conscious mind two years ago, when I read an essay on my work by Doctor Leonie Kramer of the University of New South Wales." Quoted from *Day of My Delight*, by M. Boyd.

2 A minor but irritating tic is the listing of writers in the header by name and initial rather than recognized name – H. Lawson and M. Boyd, as one might say (or as one never does say) J. Austen or O. Wilde.

God, King and Money

John McLaren

Stuart Macintyre (ed.): *Ormond College: Centenary Essays* (Melbourne University Press, $19.95).

To anyone who, like the present reviewer, has enjoyed a number of years in residence at Ormond College in the University of Melbourne, this collection of centenary essays will provide the pleasures of both nostalgia and illumination. The essays do not provide a history of the college, but rather place it in its context, provide portraits of some of the leading personalities who shaped its destinies, and discuss some of the stranger customs which have marked its evolution from asylum for adolescents to academic community.

The publication of the book by the Melbourne University Press rather than by the college itself suggests however that it has something to say to a wider audience than those directly connected with its subject. The recent decision of the federal government to cease making any direct contribution to residential colleges similarly highlights the major question implicit in all the essays – is a college like Ormond anything more than a vehicle of indulgence in a society unable to provide any adequate tertiary education for the generality of its citizens?

Certainly, on the evidence of this book, Ormond has had a major impact on our society. The study of its relationships with medical education shows how it, and comparable institutions, have generated networks of interest and influence which, at least until recently, have dominated the lucrative field of specialist medicine. The author of the chapter on lawyers suggests that such direct links have not been significant in this profession, but his argument rests on conversations with individuals rather than on the kind of statistical analysis of the educational origins of the bar which would be needed to sustain it. Certainly, the roll-call of Ormond lawyers who have become judges – four members of the High Court are named, although the author counts only three – eminent counsel or senior politicians suggests at least that membership of the college provided a useful start to a career.

The paradoxical nature of Ormond as an institution is revealed best, however, in the portraits of its founding fathers, and in the incidental pictures of college life given by Ian Maddocks, in his study of the doctors, and by Stuart Macintyre, in his study of the institution central to the old Ormond, the initiations.

Although never exclusively denominational, Ormond has been from first to last Presbyterian in style, and thus representative of a dominant element in Melbourne's ruling class and ruling ethos. Characteristically, the church contributed not a penny to its foundation or development until 1953, when it voted £27,500 to be given over a period of ten years. Equally characteristically, Ormond is the only college which still occupies the whole of its original land grant, and it has built around the perimeters so that this situation is now likely to remain in perpetuity. Again, however, it has repeatedly been in advance of government policy in such matters as providing access to the financially disadvantaged or participation to students in its governance.

The Presbyterian ethos is best characterized, however, in the dour and unyielding quality of its founding fathers – the earnest patron Francis Ormond, portrayed by Jim Davidson; the forbidding but affectionately remembered Ulsterman John MacFarland, the first Master, portrayed by Geoffrey Serle; or his successor, the cranky, unlovable yet persistent Digger Picken, whose educational philosophy was to prescribe prayers and proscribe alcohol. Their disputes with society, with the church or with their rivals in the associated Theological Hall were the more intense because they were motivated by intellectual passion and the certainty of always being right. However much they may have differed on most issues, they shared the conviction that God was incarnate in Britain, the Empire, and the wealthy classes. Yet they also shared a commitment to their social duty which is utterly foreign to today's conservatives.

The other side of Ormond's Presbyterianism is explored by the editor in his chapter on initiations. These were not only the expression of the ocker chauvinism of the older Ormond, and an affirmation of male togetherness, but were also a symbolic rejection of all that the schismatic and stiff-necked Scots and Irish Presbyterians stood for. The pagan god Mickey and his acolytes were descendants of the lords of misrule. The new Ormond is saner, wider, more academically valuable, less exclusive for their absence. But, if it is now a better community, it

may be less of the home which its founders hoped it would also be.

To answer the question with which I opened, the evidence of this book gives no reason to doubt that it would be an indulgence for any government to continue assistance to Ormond or any other residential college, although it should pay students enough to afford the kind of accommodation they prefer. Among the choices open to them, Ormond will remain a valuable option, but its future should be its own responsibility. Meanwhile, its story remains as a monument to the achievements and follies, the divided loyalties, overarching visions and cranky pettiness of the men of a church now swallowed by the wider homogeneity of ecumenism and the new technologists' bible.

John McLaren teaches at the Footscray Institute of Technology. He is editor of Australian Book Review.

Satire, Sentiment and Delight

Mary Lord

Criena Rohan: *Down by the Dockside* (Penguin $7.95).

While one wonders what future delights may turn up in Penguin's Australian Selection of "lively and enjoyable books which have been lost for too long", for the moment it is enough that this splendid novel of working-class life in Melbourne around the time of the Second World War has at last been restored to us. It was originally published by Victor Gollancz in 1963, the same year that its author died of cancer, aged 38. Her first novel, *The Delinquents*, had been published in the previous year, and it is known that she had completed a third, of which the manuscript has not been discovered.

On the evidence of *Down by the Dockside* alone, it is clear that here was a remarkable literary talent, an engaging raconteur and a shrewd observer of manners and mores. The novel is not simply the story of its main protagonist, Eilishe Cahaleen Deirdre Flynn, known as Lisha, though this is rich in dramatic incident and her character develops in predictable ways. Lisha grows up in Port Melbourne, part of an immigrant Liverpool Irish community bound together by a shared racial and religious heritage and by the grinding poverty that was their lot during the Depression.

Rohan focusses squarely on slum life by the waterfront, on the options facing children who grew up there, on the virtues and vices of the members of a section of society we would these days regard as deprived. She is social historian and social critic, though she is much too clever a writer to descend to the overtly didactic or the rash generalization. Her gifts tend more towards the telling phrase and the ironic aside. Take, for example, her introduction to the two boys Lisha walks to school with each day:

> Swede was a great favourite with the nuns, being a very polite and quietly spoken little boy, and a talented server on the altar. Not only was his Latin word-perfect, but his hands were so deft and his every movement so soft and well co-ordinated that any other boy serving with him always seemed a clod-hopping lout. Take, for example, Charlie Barton. Charlie was a dear little boy with snowy curls and, as far as anyone could make out, two left feet. It was his ambition to be a priest. (He had an extremely religious mother.) But every time he went on the altar he stuttered so desperately and stumbled around so consumed with nerves that to see him move the Book to the Gospel side was to witness a sort of ecclesiastical obstacle race.

As with other characters in *Down by the Dockside*, Swede and Charlie become integral to the evolving story, not simply for the roles they play in Elisha's life both as a child and a woman, but for the way Rohan uses them as examples of environmental determinism – they both become gangsters.

Barrett Reid, in a foreword to this edition, places Rohan firmly in the Australian social-realist tradition, which I think is both unfortunate and misleading. The crispness of her wit, the vitality of her style, and the unabashed but superbly controlled mixture of satire and sentiment, is far removed from the mainstream of social-realist writing which Patrick White once, and with some justice, described as "dun-coloured". Reid is much closer to the mark when he compares Rohan to Dickens.

Like Dickens she offers the reader a panoramic view of the world she chooses to write about and, like Dickens she presents her characters and incidents dramatically, that is through action and dialogue. Her characters are somewhat larger than life yet instantly recognizable types, like the silver-tongued Uncle Shaun, the restless seafarer with a streak of Robin Hood in him, or Grandma, the practical Stoic, seen by Lisha as the fount of love, security and wisdom.

Background is important too both in the attainment of realistic effect and in providing a visual, almost filmic dimension, so that her scenes set in sleazy dancehalls, disreputable hotels, workers' cottages, and gangsters' mansions excite the mind's eye to a degree that is all too rare.

Above all it is the carefully-paced plot and the reader's concern for the fate of Lisha which makes *Down by the Dockside* diverting on the level of sheer entertainment. Lisha, the daughter of fly-by-night parents, has to fend for herself at fifteen when Grandma dies. More or less cast adrift in wartime Melbourne and thirsty for life, she experiences rather more of it in the next few years than is the common lot, and this provides the substance for the plot. What Lisha means by 'life' is escape from "the misery, squalor and injustice . . . that was like a physical pain." What she finds is a love affair, a miscarriage, the experience of living as a kept woman, marriage, motherhood and widowhood all by the age of twenty-one.

I suppose it ought not to be surprising that for Lisha and her girlfriends escape meant marriage. It was their ultimate goal and did not necessarily involve romantic notions about love:

What did my family think of love? My aunts did not mention it. My father said it was a matter of sexual compulsion. My mother said it was a lot of silly nonsense, believed in by oversexed people. I had years to go before I began even thinking of marriage, and when I did marry I would find that when I had my own home and car and every debt paid, love would come. After this rigmarole she would issue her final statement on sexual morality: 'Remember, anyone can get presents if they wish to make harlots of themselves. A smart woman gets presents for no return. Always remain a virgin – you are in a three hundred per cent better bargaining position.'

Marriage for love and money was obviously the ideal, but it is implicit in the plot that the financial security a man provides was a woman's first goal: marriage is desirable though not essential. Though Lisha is always able to provide for herself if necessary, she is by nature and upbringing, dependent, wifely, incomplete without a man.

There is little in the novel to suggest that Rohan herself does not share this view of the relationship between the sexes, although she is obviously critical of the virginal code espoused by Lisha's mother. One of the minor characters, "the beautiful Phyl Foley", is used as an example of the passionate spinster who has missed her man because she believed the conventional wisdom about how to catch him:

"Never let a man know you love him."
"Let him make the first move."
"Never let him take you for granted."
"Men don't want women that run after them."

Another example is Miss O'Connor, who remained single to raise her orphaned brothers and sisters, loses her mind and is abandoned by them when they have established social positions.

It is ironic that, while the young women manoeuvre themselves into marriage, the examples of marriage offered in the novel reveal some of the realities behind the illusions surrounding it. Lisha's parents separated early, denigrate each other to their children and have no contact with each other, except to dispute over the welfare of their children about whom neither seems to care. There are several examples of widows struggling to make ends meet without a breadwinner to provide for them and their children. Mrs Phillips married "the greatest cad on the astral plane", and Uncle Shaun left his child-bride to die of pneumonia in a foreign country where she could not bear the cold, knew no-one and could not speak the language.

Criena Rohan, whose real name was Deirdre Cash, belonged to a middle-class family of left-wing Irish intellectuals; she cannot have had first-hand experience of slum life. While she has more than a little in common with her heroine, *Down by the Dockside* is by no means autobiographical. Even so, it is written in the first person, and with such verisimilitude and conviction that it is tempting to read it so. It is indisputably anchored in real life, partly in the life experiences of the author and partly in a sympathetic engagement with life observed. It is important to remember that the novel was written nearly twenty years after the period it so evocatively re-creates, and that its conscious structural ironies exploring attitudes linking love, money and marriage were written in a time when the old values were seriously under question and the modern move to liberate women from the male yoke was about to begin.

While *Down by the Dockside* is informed by a powerful sense of social justice, this is by no means its guiding-principle. It is the carefully-crafted work of an artful storyteller, whose aim is to delight as much as to instruct.

Mary Lord is the Executive Director of the National Book Council and lives in Melbourne.

A Class Apart?

John Herouvim

Kosmas Tsokhas: *A Class Apart? Businessmen and Australian Politics, 1960–1980* (Oxford University Press, $25).

Dr Tsokhas has distilled and compressed a large amount of material to provide an invaluable source for anyone interested in the organization of the Australian capitalist class and the means by which it converts economic power into political power. *A Class Apart?* revolves around this conversion process. In its pages we meet the who's who of *Who's Who*, the leaders of peak employer organizations. These organizations are the councils, chambers and associations through which capitalists mobilize to influence Australian government policy.

The book is an almost entirely descriptive and highly schematicized history of manufacturers, pastoralists, miners and bankers, their organized interaction with the federal government and bureaucracy, their internal disagreements and competing interests.

Tsokhas reveals the economic bases of intra-capitalist conflict, demonstrating that the capitalist class/businessmen/bourgeois – the terms are used interchangeably – encompasses a cluster of often contradictory interests. It is riven, for example, by the opposing interests of foreign and local capital. Domestic capitalists have long been critical of the 'open-door' approach to foreign investment. The restriction of Australian research and development and the fetters placed by foreign investment on the development of Australian exports are but two of their objections.

Manufacturers lobbied for the retention of protective tariffs while primary producers and exporters lobbied for the opposite, fearing overseas retaliation against their own products and a general contraction of foreign markets. Graziers supported strong legislative action against restrictive trade practices, which benefitted manufacturing and retailing oligopolies while increasing graziers' costs.

On other issues the bourgeoisie was united: its hostility to the Whitlam Labor government; its opposition to 'excessive' government expenditure; and its pursuit of reductions in real wages.

Through the sheer weight of detail Tsokhas demonstrates the relative autonomy of the state in relation to the capitalist class. The organs of the state are not simply the lap-dogs of capital, and the relationships between the two are mediated by a number of factors. The capitalist class, he argues,

> is not a monolith which dominates the state in a uniform way, for the state, or more accurately its different branches, does not passively reflect the interests of particular sections of capital. Also, departments, boards, commissions and agencies develop their own organizational character, which is influenced by the ideologies of their leading decision-makers, and by their particular tasks.

The most disappointing aspect of the book is that it conveys no unitary sense of "a dominant capitalist class". Yet the relations which "represent the formation and reproduction" of this class are said by the author to be central to his argument. Partly, this failing is the outcome of the book's structure. Of five chapters, four deal in turn with manufacturing, pastoral, mining and banking capital, and their individual relations with the state. These chapters are subdivided into areas of economic policy which were important in that relationship. The fragmented arrangement of the book imparts an equally fragmented, even disjointed picture of the capitalist class.

Puzzlingly, the author eschews analysis. The book is almost entirely narrative. It is often difficult to see how its conclusions, briefly stated at the end of each chapter and at the end of the book, arise from the text. There is a paucity of theoretical elaboration. Yet theoretical argument alone could establish, for the reader, a connection between the descriptive sub-sections of which the book is comprised and the arguments which the author claims to have demonstrated.

In 1975 Robert Scheer, former editor of the radical American magazine Ramparts, spent a month with Nelson Rockefeller, researching the Rockefeller family. As part of his project he attended a meeting of the Business Council of America, a group of the USA's top two hundred industrialists and bankers. Of this meeting he wrote:

> After fifteen years of doubts, college debates with professors and confusion about whether America really has a ruling class, I had suddenly found myself right smack in the middle of it.

It is the Australian equivalent of this class which is the subject of Tsokhas's book, and the author holds that this class is the ruling ("dominant") social class in Australia. It is this dimension, of the capitalist class as ruling class, which the author fails to impart.

John Herouvim is a Melbourne teacher, and is completing a postgraduate study of the Maoist movement in Australia.