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The War in Memory

Three Women Reminisce

The Battle for Buna

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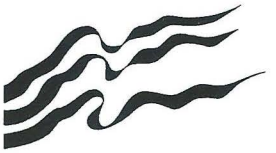

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ARTHUR PIKE

A River to Cross

DAWN ON THAT 1942 DECEMBER morning, after the quiet of the jungle night and the silent movement of Australian infantry up to the front, was a lurid spectacle of a blood-red sun, slowly rising out of the still dark sea then suddenly flooding in glaring light the dark, grey sands of the beach.

The sunrise cast the still sea in an ominous light. Behind the beach it was shadowy and cold in the damp dense jungle. The air was redolent with the smell of fungus from sodden vegetation and salt of the sea.

Richie, innocent, confident, full of a youthful excitement in anticipation of the unknown, in the shared security of a hollow scooped out of the sand, just in from the narrow beach among the twisted roots of pandanus palms, recognised familiar faces. These were the tired faces of ragged American troops, moving back from their front line. They had vacated their positions – trenches, foxholes – in favour of the Australian infantry who were to launch the new assault.

Lean and lanky Marty Svensen from America's Midwest, the chin strap of his helmet dangling down to his chest, slowly trudged along the shaded track running parallel to the beach. He gave Richie a thumbs-up sign and a friendly wink as he quietly passed in the semi-darkness. Richie grinned as he recalled Marty's waggish boast of being the "only foot soldier in the U.S. Army who can dig a slit trench on the run". Though Marty managed to put on a cheeky front with his wink, Richie felt that the haggard look on his unshaven face reflected his despondent feelings.

Richie was still trying to adjust to his newly-formed friendships with the men from this multi-ethnic land across the Pacific. Coming from a predominantly Anglo-Celtic culture, he was acutely aware of the differences between Americans and Australians, not only in their behaviour and mannerisms, but in their speech and use of words and phrases new to Richie. Almost at the risk of being dubbed a puritan he maintained a discreet silence when he first heard the Americans speak nonchalantly of cocksuckers and motherfuckers.

He liked their openness and friendliness and did not blame them for their failure to measure up to the expectations of their generals, giving orders from the rear: 'Take Buna at all costs!'. The shortcomings were not in themselves, but in those who had thrown them, unprepared and ill-equipped, into this maelstrom of violence.

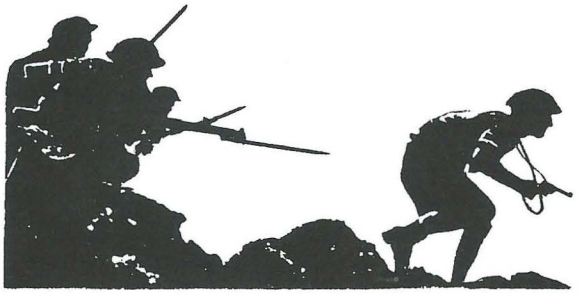
There was no surf here, not the turbulent surf that Richie had grown to master with his body-surfing at Bondi Beach, just a soft lapping of small waves gently licking at the edge of the beach.

Now, with only a matter of moments before the action would begin, all was relatively quiet. Occasional high-pitched, whining sounds of mosquitoes mingled with lapping water sounds, as the insects signalled the inviting attraction of so much newly-available unprotected flesh. Crouching in their shallow dugout, clad in their khaki shorts and rolled-up shirt sleeves, Richie and his comrades were inviting, open targets for the reserves of anopheles mosquitoes, conveyors of malaria, still seeking blood after their fellows had feasted well during the night. There seemed to be an unending progression of eager insects swarming about the dugout shadows.

There was a subdued air of anticipation among the Australian troops, now poised for the

move into the highly fortified coconut plantation on Cape Endaiadere.

Dense, tangled plantlife, a prolific, quick-growing vegetation, fed by generous rains, concealed solidly-constructed defence positions with a natural camouflage. In isolated places streaks of light seeped through the palm leaves to light up pockets of thick, dark green undergrowth. A cursory, unpractised eye sweeping across this overgrown plantation landscape, would have sighted nothing to attract attention. However, those waiting at the Australian jumping-off line knew quite well this seemingly passive scene was potentially lethal.



In this space-time of expectancy, Richie found himself preoccupied with the sight of two small hermit crabs in rapid flight towards the security of the shallow retreating waves. Watching the onrushing crabs led him, to recall his thoughts of the previous day, when it occurred to him that there were no bird calls to be heard around the Buna area. Like the crabs, the birds, he guessed, had fled the battlefield.

The breathing space, the expectant calm, was shattered by the fearsome opening of the Australian artillery barrage. Richie heard over the field telephone from his gun position that the promised additional weight of air support was not to be expected; overcast weather on the southern side of the Owen Stanleys had closed the airfields at Port Moresby. In a way, he welcomed this intelligence. Experience had already made him wary of aircraft accurately locating concealed targets in jungle recesses. Under cover of exploding shells from twenty-five pounder field and 3.7 inch mountain guns, Australian-manned tanks lumbered cautiously along the narrow beachside track to take up positions in support of forward sections of the Second Ninth Infantry Battalion.

When the barrage lifted all hell broke loose. Japanese snipers in palm trees and foxholes, riflemen and machine gunners in pillboxes opened fire as the leading infantry platoons and tanks advanced towards fixed enemy positions. Added to this was the mass of fire from the Australian side: rifles, machine guns, grenades and projectiles from tank artillery pieces.

Once Richie and his artillery support group were up and running from their sandy dugout, trying to keep up with the infantry, something from the back of his mind thrust itself forward. It was advice given him by an older, wiser man, an ex-infantryman: his father. When seeing his son off as the troop train was leaving Sydney his last words were "Keep your head down, son." Richie recalled these words, together with those from another old soldier, Sergeant Henry from the Artillery Training Depot: "You never have to worry about the shot you hear. It's the one you don't hear. That's the one that's going to hit you."

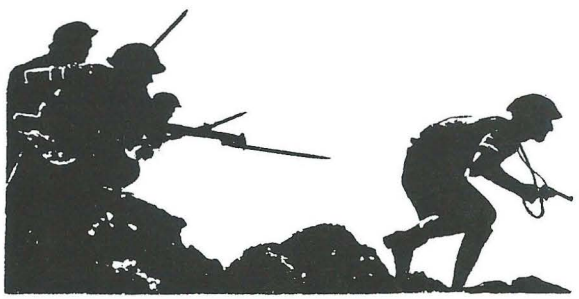
Later, in the quiet of the night, when he thought back on the events of the day, he dwelt on those grim words of warning from another war. He asked himself whether this advice had helped him during a day, a day of alternating heat and rush, quiet and calm, slow and fast movement, decision and indecision; a day when suddenly, in some ways, he broke out of his youth and entered manhood, but then still seemed to be young and full of an innocent sense of adventure.

What did his father's and Pop Henry's words do for him? Not much, he thought, other than giving him a warm feeling, a slice of nostalgia from the myth-makers of another time. As with those in the days of trench warfare, so it was to be with Richie and his comrades: while they survived they were to learn new things, new ways of coping with new experiences.

This was not trench warfare, with massive armies of men bogged down in fixed positions for weeks and months on end exchanging blows like two boxers in a ring. Here, one side had dug in, but the other side had no intention of allowing this to become a rerun of old trench warfare. Here, new tactics had to be employed. Richie's small mobile group, the artillery observation

officer, two signalmen and himself, the officer's assistant, all heavily laden with their weapons, packs, ammunition and reels of signal wire, were expected to keep up with the infantry, as they steadily, relentlessly urged themselves forward, wresting each yard of ground from steadfast defenders. All of them, young men not yet in their prime, the infantry, cavalry and artillery men, were subject to the same oncoming fire, the most unnerving being the Juki 'woodpecker' machine guns, spraying a cracking enfilade of hot metal about the forward moving troops. Then there was the distracting sensation of falling leaves, of branches dropping as the crackling fire ripped through the overhanging vegetation, giving a visible sign of deadly missiles cutting through the air.

Richie recalled his father's story about green American troops being attached to his battalion in France in 1918, not long before the war ended. At that time, the Australians, after many years in the trenches, had to teach the newcomers about trench warfare. He wondered whether the Americans had then been so cocksure about telling the Aussies they could go home, as they had done at Buna. So what consolation was there in veterans' advice, well-intentioned as it might have been, in this passing of experience to another generation?



Richie and his fellows knew that these were different times and warfare had changed. In France, they had not had snipers, wrapped in nature-coloured, body-size camouflage nets entwined with branches, firing down from the tops of coconut palms; nor were there concealed riflemen in narrow vertical foxholes, at times tossing out Molotov cocktails to envelope infantry and tanks in liquid fire. In this new warfare, men rewrote the book as they improvised to meet new conditions.

The American generals, including their Supreme Commander, had yet to adapt to new ways. They still wanted to fight their jungle war, relying on old ways, calling upon their limited experience of a few months of trench warfare in France in 1918, when they had belatedly entered the fray.

Lacking individual initiative and poorly led, the American division of Buna had failed to take its objective and for weeks had been stalled on the periphery of the overgrown plantation and in steaming swamp and jungle on the edge of the Old and New airstrips.

The Americans had not chosen the battleground. The Japanese had decided where they would make their last-ditch stand and fight from fixed defence positions; strong positions, seemingly impregnable, in key strategic locations dominated by sturdily constructed pillboxes, low-lying and built partially below ground – the tide-related rising and falling of the water table not allowing the defences to be dug too far underground – pillboxes which were securely protected by thick, sturdy coconut palm trunks, astutely covered with regenerated undergrowth and coconut seedlings.

It was against these strong fixed defences that the Australians were thrown.

One hardened, well-trained Australian infantry battalion, on its first day in action at Buna, made the breakthrough the American division had not been able to achieve in weeks. A few hundred men, strengthened by a hard core of experienced fighters, self-reliant men possessed of individualism and initiative, reached their first objective, the Point at Cape Endaiadere, in quick time on that bloody morning.

Despite what was happening in other places around the world, Buna was to be a key turning point in land fighting against the Japanese. This was to be a decisive day of reckoning after the push back from the earlier struggles in the Owen Stanley Range, up and down the slithery, muddy track which was to become known as the Kokoda Trail, and in the mud of Milne Bay where a determined Japanese landing force had been repulsed. Cape Endaiadere was to be a significant breakthrough which would lead to other

victories providing the much-needed foothold on the north coast of Papua.

EXHAUSTED, SMELLY and dirty, Richie Lawson and Ron Beaton lay back in the sand on the edge of the beach at Cape Endaiadere. A few yards away from them, the water still lapped gently, making light clapping-like sounds. They were too tired to crawl down to the water and wash themselves in the sea. Furthermore, they were wary about exposing themselves on open ground.

It now seemed as if Richie and Ron had spent a lifetime together. Ron in some ways had assumed the role and character of an older brother. Whilst they had joined the battery at the same time a few months earlier, their lives had never really crossed each other. Richie was a gunner and Ron was a signalman. Traditionally, in the artillery they performed separate tasks, almost lived separate lives, even though their roles in action complemented each other; any close connection that existed occurred mostly in action when the sigs maintained communication between the guns and observation teams attached to the infantry. The few days as part of the forward observation group had brought them closely together.

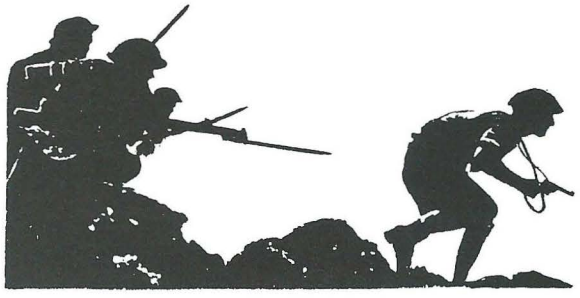
They were in background and experience as alike as a body surfer and a ballroom dancer, products of opposite places; one from a Sydney eastern beach suburb and the other from Sydney's urban inner west. Now, they were bound together by their being in the same place and time and each relying upon the other; and each holding to a sense of responsibility for each other. Both seemed to anticipate the other in their actions, likes and dislikes. All this had come into being in only a few short, action-packed days. The experiences they now shared would remain with them for a lifetime.

Lying back in the sand in their shared slit trench Ron grinned at his younger companion. 'Wouldn't be dead for quids,' he said.

Hot food had initially brought about a feeling of contentment that went with a full stomach. The battalion cooks had excelled themselves in getting dixies of steaming hot food up to the front line, when the troops had dug in at the end of the day – along the beach and across the plantation from the Point at Cape Endaiadere.

Curried sausages and rice was the first substantial cooked meal Richie and Ron had eaten since they had flown out of Port Moresby some weeks before. This turned out to be something of a reward for a job well done; there would be no repeats, for on the morrow there would be a return to the same old hard tack of other days in forward positions. Now, a few hours later, the unaccustomed rich food was starting to play havoc with their digestion. Ron said the meal had brought mixed blessings.

Tropic day had quickly turned to tropic night. There was an enveloping beauty and contentment in the quiet of early night. With the sun gone down, they sprawled in the rapidly cooling sand: two young men, a part of the liked chain of many men stretched out along the perimeter of newly-won territory, preparing themselves for what they hoped would be an uneventful night. Dampness from the lush undergrowth encroaching on the beach and sand grit added to their discomfort. However, they felt secure in the nearness of unseen others in the undergrowth behind them and along the beach. On the other hand, they also felt they were not completely secure, because a night counter-attack



could be mounted from any direction. They had not seen any of their own vessels patrolling the offshore waters, so they were even more vulnerable from the open sea.

Richie tried to recall what he had seen and experienced during the day. Overwhelmingly, he felt that he had lost a day, and yet he knew he had gained much from it, as it slipped away from him. Time seemed to have passed so quickly. Images and flashes: all seemed to

reduce the day to just those brief, hurried glimpses of rapidly passing events and sudden time-frozen pieces of still-life. Many of the day's happenings had slipped from his mind, but some incidents were graphically stamped on his memory ...

... infantrymen, some bent forward, some erect, scattered in a staggered formation, treading cautiously, tentatively, weapons at the ready, steadfastly advancing towards the first line of bunker defences; some firing automatic weapons as they moved, others stopping to aim and fire at seemingly hidden targets; some dropping silently to the cool, damp earth while those untouched by fire moved ahead ... the wounded tank commander, blood streaming down one side of his body, staggering across open ground near an already silenced pillbox, making his way unaided to the rear ... a tank, stalled and propped on a fallen coconut palm log, its gun pointing upwards, the cavalrymen inside firing shells aimed at slicing off the top of a palm tree which held a sniper ... the Vickers gun crew near the Point, spattering fire into dense vegetation to cover a thrusting drive by advancing infantrymen ... the resounding, echoing thump of a salvaged naval gun, firing at a flat trajectory, in desperation to arrest the determined infantry drive, its reverberating rumble bouncing across the water between each shot ... the slumped body of a Japanese sniper, half his face blown away, where he had turned his own weapon upon himelf, ending his lonely, isolated stand, maybe to die for his emperor, in the cramped confines of a vertical foxhole ... the contorted, scorched figure of the infantry company commander, his sweaty clothes still smouldering beneath him where he had fallen in the sand when shot as he had raced past a well-camouflaged sniper and then been engulfed with the consuming flames of a Molotov cocktail ... the surprising realisation that wounded men did not always cry out, not many even moaning or groaning; most appearing to quietly accept and bear the pain ... the strained, tired faces of quiet men at the bitter end of day ...

He held a vivid picture in his mind of a rifleman, only a few feet away from the Brigade commander, in close consultation with his intelligence officer, both men squatting over maps in the lush green undergrowth; an infantryman having slid down to a sitting position, his rifle held upright in his right hand and his left hand hanging disabled down his side, straining, looking in bewilderment over his shoulder, trying to see the wound inflicted by a camouflaged sniper firing from a coconut palm towering above him. He was one of the silent ones Richie had sighted during the day, one of the silent wounded. Richie questioned the acuteness of the sniper who had failed to pick off the inviting target of the brigade commander, who was just a few yards away, and a much larger target with his bulk seeming to melt into the ground as it spread out from around his ample waist.

Then there was this strong, all-pervading smell that seemed to envelop him. Throughout the heat and haste of the attack there had been the acrid odour of burning cordite and drifting exhaust fumes from the tanks; but as the day moved on, there was this other smell, a mixture of warm blood and sweat, this odour of violence, overwhelming in its intensity all other smells, of sea, swamp and damp vegetation. The cordite and fuel fumes had dissipated and the smell of blood and sweat became an overpowering, all-present something that entered into his very being. Even the tantalising aroma of hot food could not fully over-ride the insinuating presence of these battle smells. To Richie, they had become a part of him and they were to stay with him for as long as he lived.

His work as one part of the artillery observation team was all something of a blur, the all-recurring concern being that contact be maintained with the gun position behind the front line. This life-line of communication was the umbilical cord linking the forward infantry with artillery support. Much time and effort was expended during the day – and would be expended during the next days as the advance continued – in searching out breaks in the signal wire and repairing them. The main cause of breaks was tanks, running through the sig wires, or tearing them down from tree limbs, as they passed to and fro across the battlefield and to the rear for refuelling and ammunition. Occasionally, there were inexplicable breaks, and these were deliberate cuts, thought to have been made by free-ranging Japanese operating behind the Allied lines.

SOMETIME AFTER MIDNIGHT, the quietness of the night, broken only by the sounds of exploring mosquitoes and sea sounds, was abruptly shattered by rapid rifle and machine gun fire.

It started further up the beach and wildly, uncontrollably, erratically rippled all the way along the perimeter and down towards the rear, until it petered out, almost as quickly as it had flared up. Immediately Richie and Ron went on the alert, waiting for what they knew not. Their suddenly-awake eyes peered into the unknown darkness of the sea. Then Ron grumbled something about 'trigger-happy bastards'.

Ron's remark brought about a sense of delayed embarrassment in Richie. He was reminded of the time when he fired his own shot on that tense night when he first came down from Kokoda. He thought it curious that, when he had fired at something moving in the undergrowth, no other shots followed his. He also wondered why there had not been any discussion of the incident when he had fired his own shot in the dark.

He was denied the luxury of any further speculation as to the lack of ridicule from his fellow gunners. His speculation was broken into by the sudden emergence of two dark stumbling figures vaguely silhouetted against the reflection of the sea. One of the men was anxiously muttering, calling on anyone who could help him to find a doctor. He was distraught, half-holding up and half-dragging the other man along the beach.

Ron jumped up and pulled them both down onto the sand.

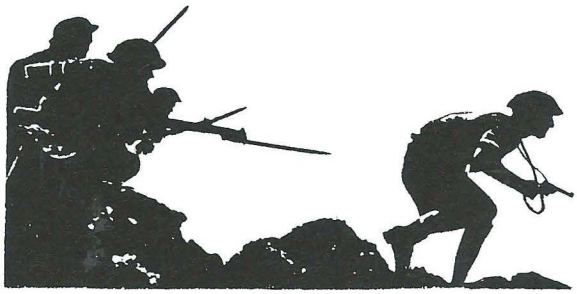
Once they were on the ground, the one who had been calling for help kept saying he had shot his mate. Ron tried to calm him. The wounded one collapsed on the sand next to Richie, who felt the sticky wetness of blood when he leaned against him.

It suddenly dawned on him that it was only on the previous day that he had been laughing and joking with these two agitated young men; they were about nineteen or twenty, same age as himself: 'reos', reinforcements who had joined the under-strengthed battalion just before being flown into the northern coastal area.

Richie slipped into the undergrowth behind the beach, into the battered plantation, following his sig wire in the dark, vainly seeking medical aid. He drew a blank, and so the wounded one and his mate were shuffled down the line along the beach to the rear.

Ron and Richie found out the next day that the young reo had stepped out of his foxhole to relieve himself. His companion, stirring from an uneasy half-sleep, had in the darkness fired a single hurried shot up from the ground. This had lodged in his mate's stomach.

Arthur Pike is a New Guinea veteran. This extract is from a novel in progress.



ROBIN GERSTER

World Wars: Why the 'Second' Never Comes First

" ... look at me. Am I not big and beautiful, the son of a great man?"
(Achilles to Lycaon, The Iliad)

TO TRAVEL SECOND CLASS, to play second fiddle, to be called second rate – the adjective 'second' carries a range of associations, few of them complimentary. The very word implies, at best, repetition, and at worst inferiority, subjection or even degeneration. The Second World War dwarfed the war of 1914–1918 in terms of loss of life, the extent of its destruction and its global spread. It was fought, on the Allied side, towards a clear, compelling and even noble goal. Yet it has never been granted the status of its morally and militarily vacuous precursor, the war that is still called 'Great'.

In Australia, the First World War – distant, but grandiloquently mythologised – has cast a gigantic obscuring shadow over the conflict which followed, a kind of cultural blackout to match the actual one of the war years. The 'birth of a nation' and 'baptism of fire' myths have so seduced cultural pundits that the more decisive but less easily romanticised Second World War has never been given its due. Having mined the historical landscape of 1914–1918 for every possible particle of significance, commentators are now reduced to wondering, 'What if the Great War had never happened? Would Australia have evolved differently?' Questions such as these preoccupied a conference on 'counter factuality' in Canberra last year – evidence of the clout that the war continues to exert in Australian military historiography.

The past five or six years have occasioned a string of Second World War 'fiftieth birthdays' – anniversaries of its declaration, the fall of Singapore, the battles of Milne Bay and El Alamein, D-Day, VJ Day and so on. Yet during this period of commemoration the earlier conflict has continued to dominate Australian military writing and to produce the most interesting original work, notably Alistair Thomson's *Anzac Memories* (OUP, 1994). The past two years have seen important new inquiries into the strategic and operational aspects of the Anzac Landing (Denis Winter's *25 April 1915*, UQP, 1994) and into the war's cultural and political aspects (Joan Beaumont, *Australia's War 1914–1918*, Allen & Unwin, 1995); they have also seen the republication of two classic Australian studies of the conflict, Lloyd Robson's *The First A.I.F.* (MUP) and Bill Gammage's *The Broken Years* (Penguin). *The Battles that Shaped Australia* (Allen & Unwin, 1994), a collection of articles about 1939–1945 edited by David Horner and commissioned by *The Australian* (a newspaper with a fetish for commemorations) attempts to redirect the spotlight away from the Great War, but it is fighting a losing battle.

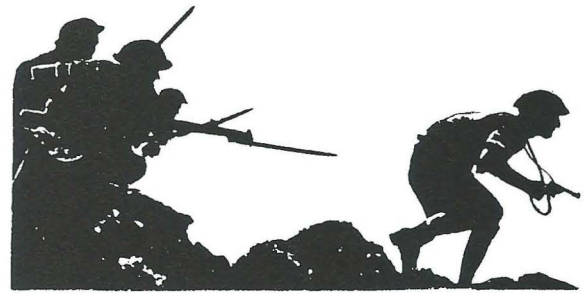
That generation of Australian men who fought the Second World War – survivors, many of them, of the Depression – have reason to feel aggrieved. (I specify 'men' because the cultural discourse of Australian military endeavour is essentially a male one.) Historically squeezed between the feted demigods of the Gallipoli epic and the ill-starred, lamented antiheroes of the Vietnam tragedy, they have a profile that is more prosaic than poetic. Suffering by comparison with their legendary fathers, they in their turn were often scorned by their own sons, young men who had grown up in the climate of generational rebellion of the 1960s and 1970s

and who had been politicised into rejecting the 'pro' war stance seen to be embodied by their parents.

In recent years, determined attempts have been made to redeem the Second World War. In the glossy two-volume history "endorsed by the Australian Defence Force", *Diggers* (Lansdowne, 1994), for example, the 1939–1945 conflict is apportioned double the space of the 1914–18. However the image of the Second World War veteran in the minds of younger Australians remains unfairly fixed in the image of RSL spokesmen like Bruce Ruxton, old men both grotesquely and irrelevantly conservative – in short, has-beens. In literature and other forms of cultural representation, the veteran is a comic caricature, like the belligerently chauvinistic Alf Cook in Alan Seymour's 1960 influential play *The One Day of the Year*, who sublimates his own sense of personal inadequacy (Seymour's novel of the play tells us that as a soldier he felt fell short of "the standards that seemed to have been set for him") by imaginatively inhabiting the Great War rather than the conflict he himself fought in.

Certainly, the Second World War is difficult to 'sell', its key events being revolting rather than in any way rousing. Just as the epic Battle of the Coral Sea is overshadowed, in Australian memory, by the atrocious Burma-Thailand Railway, the exhilarations of D-Day, for example, tend to pall next to the horrors of the Holocaust. It is hard to imagine a contemporary film about the storming of the Normandy beaches making as big a splash as *Schindler's List*. Auschwitz, Dresden, Hiroshima – the ghastly signposts of the war prohibit rather than enable understanding. Vicariously fascinated with such horrible events for their own sake, people have tended to overlook the quiet heroism revealed by countless millions of ordinary civilians and soldiers in the face of unremitting danger and hardship.

The war did, afterall, occasion the death of more non-combatant men, women and children than soldiers, sailors and airmen. It was a war in which, as the American critic (and soldier) Paul Fussell observed, "the maximum of physical devastation" was accompanied "by the minimum of human meaning". John Millett's sequence of poems *View from the Turret* (Five Islands Press, 1994), which focuses autobiographically on a young Australian airman, Clough, who flew with the RAF in bombing missions over Germany, articulates the savage insensateness of a war which came to be characterised by unimaginable technological brutality. The poem 'Combo' deals with one of Clough's wartime mates, who after the war lapsed for a time into the life of an alcoholic itinerant. Here, Combo addresses a meeting of the AA:



He spoke of World War II,
the 10,000 civilians he killed
as a bomb-aimer over Darmstadt ...

History's vicarious kill
made heroes of men like him.
Statues in parks hold them
in stone curves of a bloodless silence.

AS AN INTERNATIONAL literary event, the Second World War proved to be disappointingly mediocre; unlike its predecessor, it was not a profound imaginative experience. How was a writer to respond to the atom bomb? The overwhelming technology of the war made declarations of martial virtuosity look silly; the war, indeed, seemed so monstrous as to be beyond the capacity of human expression. And in any case, hadn't Owen and Sassoon, Barbusse and Remarque 'said it all' years before? To the British poet Keith Douglas, the scenes of carnage he witnessed in the North African desert in 1942 were mere 'illustrations' of the poems of the First World War.

Australian writers greeted the war with more ardour than those, say, in Britain, where in 1939

even an enthusiast like Evelyn Waugh could only greet the battles ahead with an icy realism. ("How is victory possible," Waugh wrote in his diary, "except by wholesale slaughters?") But Australians were motivated by a heroic national tradition stemming from Gallipoli which is almost uniquely anachronistic in the modern context. Inspired by the vaunted deeds of the First AIF, by what the novelist Eric Lambert called "the legends of the terrible, laughing men in the slouch hats", Australians could scarcely write a word about the new war without respectfully writing more about the earlier one. Its secondary status forever fixed by its nomenclature, the Second AIF itself was similarly influenced. In *My Brother Jack* (1964), George Johnston's fictional surrogate observes among the troops in New Guinea in 1942 an "almost pathetic desire ... for the right sort of publicity". It was up to the men of the Second AIF not only to illustrate once more the superiority of the Australian soldier, but to reveal to their fathers that they were 'true' Australians. They had to ensure that the breed was not seen to have become enfeebled in a single generation.

But it was difficult for the men of the Second AIF to escape the feeling that they belonged to the Second XI. They could only hope to preserve history, not make it anew. In numerous novels and personal narratives, they are revealed to be acutely conscious of their tenuous 'Sons of Anzac' standing and anxious, like the classical heroes of Homer's *Iliad*, to uphold their fathers' prestige. In Lawson Glassop's novel *We Were the Rats* (1944), Mick Reynolds, the son of a Digger killed in France in 1917, consciously pits himself against the historical exemplar. "What was good enough for my father was good enough for me," Reynolds remarks, and opts to join his father's old battalion. But Reynolds soon buckles under the weight of cultural expectation, ruefully remarking to a comrade:

> The trouble is the world expects so much of Australians ... They think we all swear like troopers, drink like fish, and fight like wildcats, and that we don't know the meaning of the word 'fear'. We can blame our fathers. It makes it hard for us ... All our lives we've read about the Diggers being the best in the world.

What might be called a kind of anxiety of influence is also evident in recent histories of the Second World War, or at least in the way they are promoted. Margaret Barter's *Far Above Battle* (Allen & Unwin, 1994), for example, is a scholarly account of the front-line combat experience of a representative Australian fighting unit, the 2/2 Battalion. Yet the blurb on the cover defers to the earlier war by boasting that the book "does for our understanding" of the Second War "what Bill Gammage did" for the First in *The Broken Years*. But *Far Above Battle* is better than that – thoughtful, meticulously documented and resistant (unlike Gammage's book) to the strain of exploitative nationalism that runs through Australian military historiography. It can stand on its own without being propped up by a pillar of Great War research.

Barter argues that the command and strategy aspects of the Second World War – those things of interest to historians like David Horner – have been thoroughly covered, as to some extent has the Home Front. But other than the 21,000 Australians who experienced Japanese captivity, the warriors themselves have received "scant attention". True, but Barter misses the point somewhat here, for the war's failure to capture the Australian imagination in conventional heroic terms may ironically prove to be its most enduring contribution to Australian culture. Those

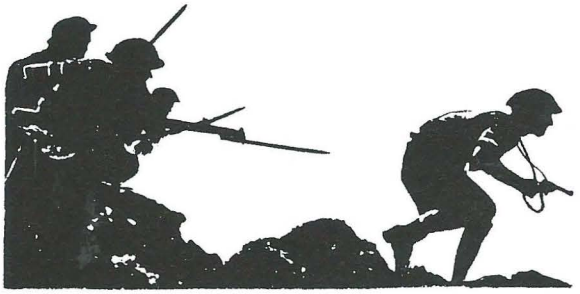
individual heroes the war did throw up tended to be non-warriors, like the photographer Damien Parer, the subject of a new study by Niall Brennan (*Cameraman*, MUP, 1994), and of course the extravagantly praised POW surgeon Sir Edward Dunlop, whose *War Diaries* was a huge popular success when it was published in

1986, and whose monumental biography, Sue Ebury's *Weary* (Viking) appeared in 1994. Dunlop's lionisation is especially significant because of what it says about changing perceptions of male heroism, for the towering figure produced by the war was a man who made his name away from the battlefield. In a national tradition which is premised on specifically 'male' virtuosity, it is a wonderful thing indeed that Australia's pre-eminent hero of the Second World War should be so archetypally 'feminine', a nurturer, a giver and preserver of life rather than a destroyer of it.

THE AUSTRALIANS CAPTURED and incarcerated *en masse* by the Japanese in the Asia-Pacific provided Australian society with a new, different and possibly more accessible role model. By definition, the POW is essentially an anti-warrior – he is, after all, out of the battle. Fighting a prisoner's war demanded a kind of self-sufficiency, courage and comradeship different from but not inferior to that associated with the active combatant. If readers are suspicious of the special pleading of prisoner-of-war writers themselves, their case is powerfully if dispassionately documented in Peter Henning's *Doomed Battalion* (Allen & Unwin, 1995), the history of a Tasmanian unit captured in Dutch Timor. Simply to survive, to keep going, is one of the characteristic motifs of contemporary existence – in a real sense, the POW is an essentially modern hero, a hero of our time rather than any other.

The more things change, though, the more they remain the same. The latest Australian POW memoir to appear is also one of its most unusual. Donald Watt's *Stoker* (Simon & Schuster, 1995) is the personal testimony of an Australian soldier of the Second World War who was captured in Crete, transported to Nazi Germany and eventually incarcerated in the death camps Belsen and then Auschwitz, where he spent an unimaginably frightful five months stoking the furnaces which consumed the bodies of thousands of murdered Jews. It is a shocking story of humankind's capacity for evil, which Watt tells as a retort to revisionists and conspiracy theorists like David Irving. The bald facts are dreadful enough, and for the most part Watt allows them to speak for themselves. But the publisher refuses to allow Watt to remain a mere witness and storyteller. He too has to be conscripted into the national pantheon: "Watt," says the blurb, "remains a hero in the tradition of the true Australian Digger". Yet again obeisance is paid to the Great War; yet again, the Second World War runs second.

Robin Gerster has written widely on war and war literature, including Big-noting: The Heroic Theme in Australian War Writing, *MUP, 1987).*



GEORGIA SAVAGE

VP Day, Heroes and Sloppy Joes

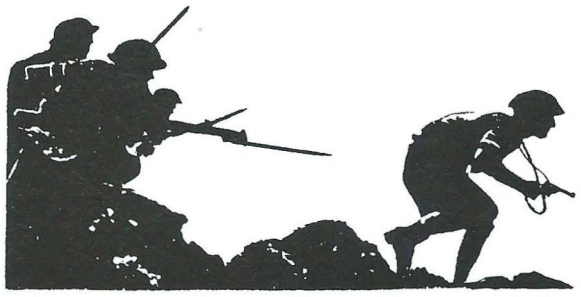
WE WERE PLAYING basketball that morning in August 1945 when someone rushed at us from the direction of the school buildings to say the war was over. We stayed at school for the rest of the morning, we even attended lessons but not formal ones. Almost every girl had a relative or family friend in the services and the mixture of relief and excitement in the air that day was something you gulped in with each breath.

It had been a long war and one which came close. I think it's fair to say there was hardly a home in Australia untouched by it.

After the bombing of Darwin in 1942 we waited daily to be invaded by the Japanese. In Tasmania where I lived, I toddled off to school each day knowing that my father, who'd fought at Gallipoli as a teenager, had a loaded shotgun on pegs in the back hall at home so that he could shoot my mother and me when the Japs landed. My guess was that when the time came he wouldn't be able to do it, but because I couldn't be sure I planned to try to cross the mountains to my Uncle Billy at Scottsdale, who was a police officer and imbued, I thought, with more common sense than my dad.

MLC in Launceston was roughly two hundred yards from the Elphin Showgrounds which had become a military camp. We knew therefore that immediately before any invasion our school could cop a bombing. This was regarded as rotten luck for Lesmore Wimberley, who'd been sent from England by her parents to shelter in Tasmania for what we spoke of as "the duration". Lesmore was big-eyed and tall and blond. How I longed to be like her.

Because of the bombing threat, school gardens everywhere were dug up so that slit trenches could be constructed. At our school, parents were allowed a choice for their child between the trenches and a newly reinforced area beneath the school stairs. My parents chose the former but I settled for the stairs so I could be with my closest friend, Shirley Tilley. It was there, during air-raid drill, that I first heard the song *The White Cliffs of Dover*. One of the teachers played it over the PA system and some of the girls sang along softly.



An early memory of the war is of seeing soldiers being herded into the Majestic theatre in the main street of town. Later, my mother told me they were shown a film about venereal disease before being shipped overseas. Shirley and I discussed this matter endlessly. We knew how one caught venereal disease, but what did it *do* to you?

Earlier in the war we'd been taken in crocodile formation to watch a parade of servicemen on their way to embark for battle. We cheered them till our throats were hoarse. One girl, Marie Kiel had a hand-siren, which wasn't something from a sex shop but a small metal object which wailed

when you flung it around on its handle. Her father had captured it from the Germans in the First World War. Marie made it wail among our cheers and now, more than fifty years later thinking of the sound, my eyes are wet with tears.

In August 1942 the gallant, battle-hardened Seventh Division came home to fight in New Guinea. Later, seeing Damien Parer's photographs of our exhausted, mud-caked soldiers and their Fuzzy-Wuzzy Angels, we at home were caught between sorrow and pride and sheer gob-stuck admiration.

My strongest memory of the war in the Pacific is of seeing people on the footpath outside Gearmans' fruit shop in Brisbane Street step aside to grant a soldier right-of-way. He wore a jungle-green uniform and his skin had been yellowed by an anti-malarial drug. Knowing that he and his mates had just saved us from the Japanese, I realised I was seeing a hero in the Leonidas mould. It was an extraordinary moment.

During the war years, my mother took in the odd paying guest. In order to keep face with the neighbours the boarders were passed off as relatives or friends and in time more or less became both. One was Peter Marsh, a young diving champion who worked at Repco and was a dead-ringer for Tyrone Power. In no time at all I'd given him top billing and pushed Lesmore Wimberley down a peg.

Early in the evening, I used to lurk at the top end of Crescent Grove to wait for him as he came home from work. He'd pick me up in his little Singer sports car and take me for a wild drive around the hills. Peter was as charming as he looked. Girls were mad for him. Then he joined the Air Force and married Val Briggs, the daughter of the Headmaster of Scotch College. Not qualifying for flight crew, he fought and fought to gain that privilege and finally did, becoming the pilot of a Catalina, a bomber so clumsy it was known as the Flying Tomato Crate. He and Val had a son and then Peter was lost over the Pacific. Having wished for him on a thousand stars, I waited for years after the war for him to come home. He didn't but, surprising me, he turned up in my latest novel *Ceremony at Lang Nho*.

During the last years of the war, American troops were everywhere in Australia but few came to Tasmania. Throughout the entire war I saw only one – a bloke of about five-five with steel-rimmed spectacles and a crew cut.

In the absence of the real thing, Shirley and I made do with *Life* magazine. We fell in love with Frank Sinatra and gorgeous Alan Ladd, wore sloppy Joes and, in place of unobtainable loafers, leather slippers over our bobby sox. This evidence of dissipation caused our mothers to have a conference. Sensibly, they decided to ignore us.

On VP night, wearing our sloppy Joes and ersatz loafers we went with the crowd to the Albert Hall where we jived, conga'd and did the hokey pokey with boys from Grammar and Scotch. Then, overcome by the dimension of the occasion, we threw caution to the devil and danced with boys from St Pats!

It was the happiest night – I can't tell you – the heroes of battle and prisoner-of-war camp were coming home, rationing would end and my father would stop putting mountains of butter on his bread in order to show the Japanese it would take more than them to change *his* lifestyle.

Today when young women ask if I'm a feminist, I say, "Of course I am. How could I rat on my own kind?" But every spring I cultivate a blaze of poppies in my garden and always when I see them I think of that young yellow-faced Australian Leonidas of long ago and I say a silent prayer for him and all his kind, knowing as I do, that they own my heart.

Georgia Savage is a Melbourne novelist.

JUDITH RODRIGUEZ

Wartime on the Brisbane Line

AS FAR AS I can remember – I was nine when the War ended – none of my teachers *taught* anything about the War while it was on. Except maybe about Dunkirk, and the Centaur, sunk with the Red Cross painted on it and the nurses in it; I remember the sharp intakes of breath. This continued to be the bench-mark for Japanese iniquity throughout the War, even when news came of POWs beheaded and beaten – instant mythology, the reminder of a theme that keeps people going.

I took in the theme, but destruction stayed far away. That near-unconsciousness was, I think now, heroic. Heroic of parents and teachers. Great normalizers. Long division as usual, capes and watersheds. When the point of view is high, the horizon is high on the paper.

Of course, school routines were models of duty. We saluted, we chorused set words about God and the Queen, teachers and parents. We stood when any adult entered the room. We drilled, just like the army, Australia's best. But maybe I only fancy that this was any more in earnest than before the War.

I counted over relatives in my prayers ("God bless Grannie, God bless Uncle Sam and Aunt Dorothy, God bless ...") but saw none, for the duration and longer, I didn't realise things could have been different. My mother and her sisters and brother, raised and all married in Perth, had not meant to be separated. Aunt Myrtle (I recently found out) came visiting us when Dad was working in Adelaide; after Aunt Betsy had her son Rodney in Melbourne in 1940, she took a trip back to Perth. For me, till my teens my aunts and their families, like Dad's in England, were rumours, letters read after dinner.

Dad was in the army; he enlisted in 1940 in the 'territorials', did small weapons training at Enoggera and then after his battalion became A.I.F., the 9th battalion of the 5th division did officer training at Duntroon. He believes in doing a fair share of any job that's going, particularly a dirty or difficult one, and he's still disappointed at not having seen active service.

Only a week ago, he said that men he'd trained with were among officers chosen for the 28th battalion of the 8th division, who were interned at Singapore.

"When I think of my wartime," he said soberly, "had I not been at Duntroon, there's a big chance I'd have gone with the 28th and been in Changi. The big tall men didn't get through – generally the big men had a higher casualty rate." He could have added, the older men.

Dad had been Queensland Manager of Electrolux Pty Ltd, and was put behind a desk in the Quarter-Master General's department at Victoria Barracks. He also travelled round Queensland (I don't remember his absences) and made himself popular requisitioning buildings for the Army. In 1960, hearing Papa Coronis in Charleville mention that his Hotel had been taken over by the Army, I came up with Dad's role; not unnaturally, I got blank silence and a long black look.

But that was way ahead. My brother was born at the end of my first year at school, in November 1941. It was a month before Pearl Harbour. In the middle of Brisbane's steamy summer, Dad dug a six-foot-deep, rectangular air-raid shelter in the hard red clay of the back yard. This was War – Dad, with a practised labourer's regular swing, tossing out spadefuls of the stuff. (In the Depression, he'd worked on farms and the Overland Telegraph line.) Like a red-clay giant oozing sweat, he climbed out for cups of tea I

eagerly carried to him – climbing up the deepening row of big wide steps he'd cut against the wall for when we had to go down and live in there, under the tin and earth piled on top.

In no time at all Brisbane's summer downpour reduced the clay to clag and filled the shelter.

We didn't have to live with it long. My second school year started over a hundred miles away, at Warwick, on the inland road south. Dad and Mum had agreed we should be "evacuated". Despite the policy of holding the "Brisbane Line", Dad told Mum that if the Japanese landed, she was to put us in the car and drive to Adelaide.

As we now know, there were landings and bombings – all hushed up, and minimised when anything did get out. But the Coral Sea Battle took place, and within months the Japanese invasion was "off". Nonetheless, we stayed in Warwick for the first half of 1942.

For the first and last time our family shared a house. My mother hated it even though we shared with friends: Aunt Dixie with her two girls, and her sister Jessie and children. Aunt Dixie and Uncle Geoff, a solicitor who'd 'joined up' with Dad, lived opposite our first place in Brisbane; sometimes, when Mum and Dad went out, I'd played with Margie and Creina and gone to sleep there. Now, Mum and the new baby, and Dad, when he came, were in one bedroom and my bed was on the louvred verandah outside its french doors.

There was a water-tank in the yard, and frost on the grass. As the winter drew on, Mum had to plead to get me out of bed – I had never imagined such cold. On the verandah one night I panicked at sight of a ghost, the only one I ever gave credence – Creina in a sheet, of course. On the front porch I was shooed away from my first redback spider. We spent a short time at a farm and I fell off the only horse of my childhood. My horizons expanded.

At Warwick State School, the windows were taped with black-out stuff. Zig-zag trenches were dug in which we squatted under the pepperinas, nose to collar, during air-raid practice. We had orders *never* to touch the sides. Each of us had to have a green rain-cape. The explanation I remember was that if Japanese bombers saw us on the roads, they'd think we were little green bushes.

Soon Warwick was a memory of pepperinas. We returned to Brisbane and I too began to follow the War as, with painful slowness, it moved away from us in the Pacific, and in Europe through bombings, U-boat campaigns, V-1s, V-2s, to the liberation of Europe.

I remember poring over the *Courier Mail*'s daily campaign maps of France, and following the Battle of the Bulge with bated breath, and later the island-hopping towards Japan. Baritone newsreels regularly accompanied films – the whole program preceded by 'God Save'. Britain published little war-time economy books about heroic war actions; and there were series, with First World War heroes (Edith Cavell!), Famous Symphonies, Great Composers, Great Writers, and colonial heroes – Drake, Clive, Livingstone, Rhodes, Scott of the Antarctic. No Australians, and scratching for women.

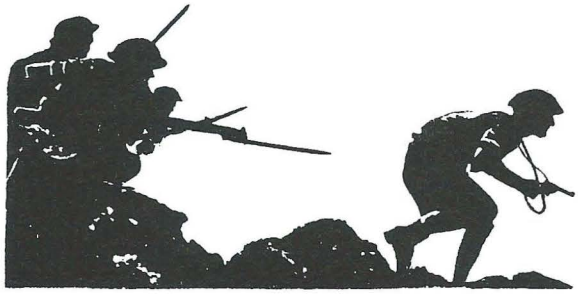
Much more lively were the Army publications Dad brought home. Besides the magazine *Salt*, some of which was naughty, there were books – *Khaki and Green*, *Jungle Warfare*. These were real anthologies of Australian literary and artistic talent. I've never forgotten the graphic style of *Khaki and Green*, its photos and colour plates by war artists, its cartoons getting at superior superior officers, its stories – one, of two boys transporting ammunition on mules – and poems so good I wonder if the poets survived and wrote afterwards. It was the jingles that I learned off, 'R.R.''s 'Song of the Censor', and my favourite, 'Mike – the Malaria Mo-skeeter', by NX116478.

This was probably the most sumptuous publication I had seen. It was broad-minded – there was a coloured drawing with wash called 'Prisoner of War – Soputa', by VX18229, showing a clearly compassionate attitude toward the dejected Japanese prisoner, and B3/77's 'Concert Party, Milne Bay', including a half-dressed 'blonde lovely' – a male entertainer in drag.

Meanwhile, there was rationing. May I never again meet junket, rice pudding, sago pudding, or tapioca pudding. I remembered ice-creams in 1941 – vanilla or orange or lime – and set no store by recipes for home-made milkless ice-cream. Of course, I was not really conscious of problems with the supply of clothes or butter. A piece of manners left till later was the setting of bits of butter and jam on the rim of the plate; it wasted food.

Backyards and some front lawns were dug up for serious vegetables – carrots, silverbeet, potatoes. The potatoes kept coming through after the grass was reinstated.

No, mine was an easy and even an interesting war. 'Legless soldiers' (so-called, no matter how much had been shelled or sawn away) from the First World War drove the lifts in older Brisbane buildings, but the absence of our War's death and disaster from my horizon is surely due to my parents shielding me. We did know Mrs Lake and her son Johnny, whose husband and father was in Changi. After Singapore fell,



someone who escaped told Mrs Lake her husband had a head injury and probably wouldn't live. But someone put a silver plate in Jock Lake's skull, and he came back.

With the war near its end, righteousness must have struck me like a virus. It was the school Anzac parade, the April before VP day; I was sure I saw Pam Hoffman *talking* during the sacred hymns, tribute, etc. And she was different; after all, *she missed Saturday sports*! I talked round; I really worked on it. Next thing I remember, I was on a chair in front of Grade 3, with Miss Colvin calling me *nincompoop*. To this day, I loathe the word.

The day the surrender was reported, I cut out the huge word PEACE from the *Courier Mail* and Dad drove us out to see everyone else smiling, shouting, all high with enormous happiness. I trailed PEACE out my window of the car till it tore, somewhere in Bowen Hills.

Afterwards came the refugees. I was disappointed in Mum. She had one German-speaking friend – a woman who wrote for children, whose son built an unmortared rockery and had to unbuild it to kill the snakes. But generally she refused to unbend. It took four years after the war for me to put my mother's family names (Spigl, Feinberg) together and come up with an answer. Forgive me, Pam Hoffman!

My mother is a mystery to me. She and her sisters had married out, but did she wonder about her Uncle Louis and Aunt Rachel in Paris, and their children? Her eldest sister had met these cousins in the 'twenties. When did she learn that her Uncle and Aunt had died in a prison-camp? And that their three grown children who were imprisoned, survived, and the youngest, Fernande, had been sheltered by friends?

It was decades before I knew; I have thought about it more than my mother intended.

With peace came family photos, and family holidays to photograph, and beaches and rainforest, and proper dolls with eyes that opened and shut (but I liked my old stuffed gingham Susan). There came also my father's cousin George, a Shanghai bank manager whose family spent the war in a concentration camp; the thin, overexcitable younger daughter was born there. They recuperated in Brisbane before returning to England.

Meanwhile, the tourist debris of war – a painted wooden New Guinea shield, a Japanese dagger, an ash-tray made from the chromed bottom of a shell – started on their way to meaninglessness.

Was I haunted by anything in those years? Yes, by the disappearance at nine or ten of a girl in my class. She had a birthday party so wonderful I'd never seen anything like it. Then she got polio and couldn't stay at school. She died at sixteen.

In due time, we got tired of playing Present Arms and At Ease and Right Wheel in the lounge. In due time I met my mother's sisters and brother. Dad filled in the potato beds. The War was over.

Judith Rodriguez is an artist, poet and critic.


BOOM!

FIONA CAPP

Unpleasant Nightmares and Television Dreams

A FRIEND OF MINE still occasionally dreams of Japanese soldiers invading the golf course at the end of the street where he grew up in a Melbourne suburb. They are headed for his house.

As a young boy he found the dreams frightening, but for the grown man they are simply a curious residue from the past. He harbours no hatred or fear of the Japanese. Why these images of men in jungle greens and helmets covered in foliage should persist in his unconscious is intriguing. My friend has no memories of the war because he wasn't even born when it ended. He is a post-war baby. His are television dreams. Dreams, he has discovered, that other people his age have also experienced.

He mentions these dreams as we sit around the kitchen table with our next door neighbour, who is my age – in her early 30s. Our neighbour laughs. She says that if she had a dream about the Japanese invading the local golf course, they would stop to play a few rounds and then they'd probably buy the green. I had to agree.

As a member of the post-Vietnam generation, the war in the Pacific has little hold on my imagination. My parents were children during the war and my grandfathers – a dairyman and a wool classer – were in reserved occupations. There is no family mythology to connect me to this period in history. Nor do I have memories of the post-war Anzac Day celebrations that had such a profound effect on my friend. He remembers the television being drenched with war footage and jingoistic commentary, documentaries on the Kokoda Trail accompanied by solemn music by Elgar. For the young boy, the Japanese were synonymous with the jungle. A jungle that was inexorably moving south.

When I grew up, there was no 'enemy'. I knew little about the Japanese involvement in the war, except that they bombed Pearl Harbour and Darwin and that they were heading our way before the Australian and American forces brought them to a halt in New Guinea. The Germans, with their concentration camps, were a more likely 'enemy' but they were far away. Much closer to home was the dropping of the atom bomb. As a kid I was glad it was 'our side' that had it, but I was also appalled by its devasting effect. The mushroom cloud seemed more a symbol of shame than of victory.

When I was 18 I went to Japan on a group exchange, staying with Japanese families as we travelled around. It was my first overeas trip and apart from the stock images of pagodas and women in kimonos and houses with ricepaper walls, I had few preconceptions. Certainly no baggage concerning the war. I did, however, return with a lot more luggage – most of it gifts. The Japanese people I met were extraordinarily kind, sometimes tearful when we had to say goodbye. I couldn't help feeling that if they came to Australia, the reception wouldn't be half as warm.

When we went to Hiroshima and visited the Peace Memorial Museum, my sense of shame deepened. The black and white photographs of charred bodies and bewildered faces merged in my mind with those graphic shots from the Vietnam war. The Americans again. In the surrounding park there was a hollowed out granite monolith hung with hundreds of ribbons of tiny origami cranes made by Japanese school children. Cranes represent longevity. If I remember rightly there was a crane for everyone who had died.

The most striking thing about Japanese parks is their air of stillness and contemplation. After the shock of the museum, this was the closest I had ever felt to the events of the second world war. Visiting the War Memorial in Canberra when I was much younger hadn't affected me in the same way.

My opposition to the dropping of the bomb remained unshaken until recently when I was teaching John Hersey's *Hiroshima* to English students at La Trobe university. It was the fist time I had been forced to think hard about the issues surrounding the bomb. Here was an American war correspondent who had, in keeping with the emotions of the war, reflected the prevailing hatred of the 'Japs' in his dispatches. Only one year after the war ended, he was writing about the bomb and its aftermath from the survivor's point of view.

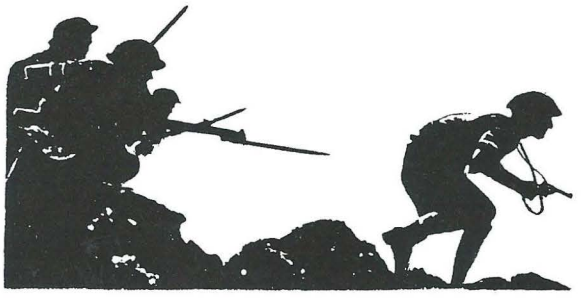
Hiroshima, it seems to me, is not only about the survivors' attempts to come to terms with the hellish world they had been plunged into, but also Hersey's own need to get inside the minds of those who had been demonised as the enemy, as inscrutably 'other'. He subtly captures the culturally specific ways that the Japanese responded to the bomb. One of the survivors, Dr Sasaki, describes, in a typically understated way, an "unpleasant nightmare" he had the night before the bomb was dropped. This restrained phrase "unpleasant nightmare" reverberates with irony throughout the whole book.

The great power of *Hiroshima* is that it resists the sweeping, epic style of the standard disaster report. By narrowing its focus, the enormity of the experience is captured on a human scale. But this exclusively local perspective also proves to be the book's major weakness. What is lacking is the context, the details about progress of the war in the Pacific, the historical forces that lead to the use of the bomb.

I decided to get my students to conduct a debate about how effective *Hiroshima* was as an argument against the bomb. At first it seemed that the debate would be very lopsided – those against the bomb had all the ammunition. Then a colleague put me on to an article by literary historian Paul Fussel, 'Thank God for the Atom Bomb', which changed my views dramatically. It forced me to recognise the depths of my ignorance about the war. Like most of my students I am opposed to the use of nuclear weapons on principle. But Fussell's informed and compelling argument made my criticism of the bomb seem dangerously mindless. To take a moral or emotional stand without full knowledge of the historical imperatives was just too easy and intellectually slack.

But Fussell's informed and compelling argument made my criticism of the bomb seem dangerously mindless. To take a moral or emotional stand without full knowledge of the historical imperatives was just too easy and intellectually slack.

In his essay to mark the 42nd anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Paul Fussell argues that those who were most remote from the action of the war tended to be the most critical of the bomb. Those who witnessed the ferocity of the ground fighting against the Japanese and faced the prospect of land combat during an invasion of Japan – infantrymen who were less educated and therefore less eloquent than the intellectuals who dominated the anti-bomb debate – were thankful for the swift end to the war.



It was estimated that it would take a full year and one million American casualties – not to mention the number of Japanese killed – to bring about a surrender through conventional means. "On Okinawa, only weeks before Hiroshima, 123,000 Japanese and Americans *killed* each

other. (About 140,000 Japanese died at Hiroshima.)'' While this is probably not news to a lot of people, these are facts that I had never confronted. There are so many horrific things about the A-bomb – the civilian deaths, the after affects, the nuclear age – that the equally horrible reality of conventional warfare is easily overlooked in retrospect. However, I find it impossible to believe that the Nagasaki bomb was necessary.

Japan has never been 'the enemy' for me, but America has come close. Of course, this made it easier to condemn it for dropping the bombs. I will always feel intensely ambivalent about the United States, its cultural imperialism and its self-righteous domination of world affairs. This is why I have had to force myself to consider America's justification for Hiroshima. Many people my age and younger have embraced American culture wholeheartedly but I know I never will. Mentally I have joined the Resistance. I suspect that the shift in alliances from Britain to America during the Pacific war has had a much more profound influence on me than the hostilities of the war itself. In peacetime, one's enemies are always much closer to home. They invade your livingroom at your consent and you can never drive them out of your head. Sometimes, it seems that there is no territory left to defend.

Fiona Capp is a Melbourne journalist and author.

THIS ANZAC DAY

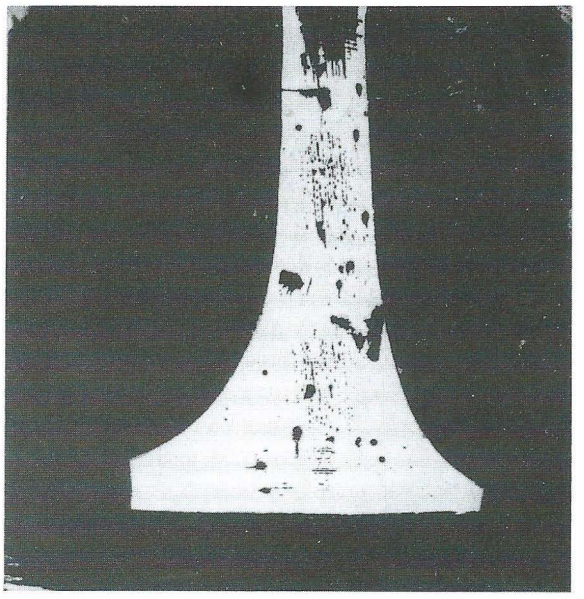
Slim gum leaves curve
along the narrow river valley.
Aroma of an old sandstone pub
wafting in the hazy air.
Irish music lilting.
The sun haloed through
a tumble of clouds
Gum tree
lithe, delicate brushing the sky
puckered here and there
its creamy trunk mostly smooth
Sound of guns, of wars
stilled. Grey clouds silver slashed
Sun slanting through
whisper of colour on cloud edge.
Uillean pipes – a wildness in pallid blood
Gum tree stands sentinel
this anzac day

COLLEEN BURKE

THE WINDOW
for Ann Granat

The wrong things rhyme.
Hourglass and mirror,
hatstand, clavichord,
the yellow bookmark flapping
in the dark breeze, the breeze
as it lifts like a sober musician
the intrusions and extrusions
of memory.
We pounce
upon sleep, the bedpost
catches the light, polishes the moon,
the hatstand dreams of the sea
and the clavichord sounds
its silent invisible music.
Across the way, a window
burns without explanation
and the moth carves a halo
round its bulb.
The book
flaps open, the pale leaf
is lifted on the dark breeze.
It drifts over midnight suburbs,
out over the glittering coast,
soaring high above
the intricate waves' hopeless rustle,
the sloping shore and the sand
reflecting sky.

ALEX SKOVRON



FOR MY LITTLE GIRL

Say goodbye to the terrace, the garden,
my little one, Anna Klara,
we're going to the apartment in the city.
I wonder: How many changes,
oh how many goodbyes
will shape your life,
just as you feel comfortable in the habitual,
how often, how many hard changes
will make you weep for lost paradises,
for every comfortable habit is paradise
and every change means its loss.

How I'd love to give you
a handful of country childhood
soft pasture under your feet,
distances joined and divided
by sunset dust raised by a herd of sheep.
So that you would have a memory
of your youth
from which the scent of sweet grass rises.
When you are older and wiser
this scent would play in your smile
the pasture, the trees and the cricket song.

Let's go now – the train waits,
so do the sooty station walls.
The train whistle will be your bell,
a novice's prayer to nurture you.
The iron gate will be your guard
to stop you falling as you learn to walk –
my little girl, you will be
just as your father was.

LÁSZLÓ FENYÖ
Translated by Judith Buckrich

With special thanks to Katherine Byrne, who is carrying out one of Ann Granat's last wishes in arranging for some of Fenyö's work to be translated.

About László Fenyö

László Fenyö was born in rural Hungary in 1902 and died either in Budapest or in a death-camp in 1945. Ann was his only child. His work mirrored his difficult and impoverished life. Although in his youth he wrote beautifully and positively, he grew more and more despondent as the terrible arms of Fascism gripped Europe harder and tighter. Because he was Jewish he was inextricably caught up in events and died as a result of them, but not before he faced a kind of soul-death first. His poems were published in several volumes between 1922 and the war, and were collected in a single edition in 1972, for what would have been his seventieth birthday, as *Memories and Messages* (*Emlékezés és üzenet*, Magvetö, Budapest). Fenyö's poetry reflects his deep sense of responsibility to humankind and his spiritual resistance to evil.

JUDITH BUCKRICH

'Call Me a Voluptuary'

Green glasses, dazzling earrings, proud hair and a wicked laugh – but paramount was a strong voice: one that was honest, at times embarrassingly so, but ever generous and unbiased.

Ann Granat in the past tense?

The auditory sensation may be no more but the vibrancy remains, in stories published in journals such as *Overland*, *Westerly*, *Outrider*, *Melbourne Chronicle*, *Storyteller* (edited by Ann, 1987/88) and in *Arrivals: Australian short story anthology* (which she compiled, 1987). Ann was also the author of *The Oyster Collection: Quotes, thoughts and feasts* (1985). There were, too, innumerable articles appearing in the *Melbourne Times*, for which Ann worked as a freelance journalist, plus tongue-in-cheek articles for various singles magazines.

Overt in everything was intelligence, discernment, wit and a delicious sense of humour. But there was also an underlying melancholy. Her particular strength lay in explorations of interpersonal relationships – frequently the emotions and intricacies of mother/daughter relationships. At the time of her death in April 1994 she was co-authoring a book concerning psychotherapy.

From the beginning Ann's work was well received. In both 1985 and 1986 she was awarded the Rolf Boldrewood Short Story Award.

For those who do not know her background, Ann Granat was born in Sopron, Hungary, daughter of the poet László Fenyö, and came to Australia as a young woman in 1957. Marriage, the birth of twin sons and divorce followed, but Ann meanwhile had enrolled at Monash University, where she topped the year in Classical Civilisations 1 and 2. She was awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship and in 1969 graduated BA Honours, with majors in English and Politics. Then began a career with the Education Department and work in various high schools, firstly as a teacher, subsequently as a careers officer. A number of postgraduate qualifications were gained along the way.

In 1986 Ann became a journalist for *Education Victoria*; then, in 1988, Public Relations Officer and Careers Adviser for the Victorian Ministry of Education – highlights in a difficult life, with the responsibilities of single parenthood.

As imaged in Alex Skovron's poem, Ann had a vibrant, multi-faceted personality. Intellectual, glamorous, eclectic, sensitive, demanding, flamboyant, with a zest for life, her passions included literature, fashionable clothes, music, physical fitness, art, vintage cars, nature, astronomy, good food, architecture, Brighton – and people, people, people, in an ever-widening circle of friends who responded to her warmth, intelligence, gregariousness and loyalty. Whatever she did Ann remained true to herself, fighting for what she believed in.

Cancer is always unexpected, but for Ann Granat death came with a swiftness which is still hard to accept. Defiant to the last, she died as courageously as she had lived.

SYLVIA IRLICHT

MICHAEL SHARKEY

I Travel, Not to Go Anywhere, But to Go

LAST NOVEMBER, I published a very dutiful version of a 1994 trip to Germany as guest of the Second Autumn Summer School on the New Literatures in English at Aachen. The formal title of the event was matched by the tone of my report – which might have been alternatively labelled 'Memoirs of Exhibit A: Australian writer abroad'; or 'Memoirs of a kinetic protegé of the Australia Council'.

Yes, it was flattering to be asked to go. That came about because Geoff Goodfellow (the man described by some Canadians as "the little Aussie battler from Central Casting") was double-booked: Aachen was a week-long show; Ontario offered a gig lasting several weeks, so Geoff took Canada. By storm? I haven't heard. I didn't mind that I was Aachen's second choice. I was grateful to them, and to Geoff, for nominating me. I was desperate to snatch some time to write, and to think over what I'd just done: published a collection of poems. I was also dreading the resumption of full-time (as opposed to weekend and vacation) teaching. Burn-out seems to come faster when you teach external students as well as those who live on campus; weekends and term-breaks are no breaks at all, because they're filled up with residential schools and tutorial sessions in Sydney and Brisbane as well as at Armidale. Add to this the insistence of administrative galahs that we (not they) should get involved with Open Learning, summer-schools, workshops and a dozen other things, to prove how good we are at earning money to support them (the administrators) and you don't wonder that so many teachers at the University of New England take early retirement: they figure they should live a little, before they die.

I was interested in living a little when the invitation came. Travel might add fresher images to my German collage. I haven't reached the stage where I consider every place home by virtue of the reason that I stay in homogenised hotels at someone else's expense. My travels have mostly been made at my own cost, in more senses than one. What images can be recorded as representative of a perennial dynamic, when the exposure to the experience lasts as little as one week? The same problem that one has with selecting which picture one will make with a camera. I do not like snapshots. Or 'taking' pictures.

I have an album of preconceived views of every place I've heard of: views as 'real' as the locations on dust-jackets of science-fiction novels by Jack Vance or Robert Heinlein. They are as close as I will come to visiting certain countries. The file or chamber containing Germany is no different. The views represent various facets of a multi-dimensional jigsaw.

There is the usual been-there-in-books dimension. German novels, poems, travelogues, histories: Latin histories, Minnesang, *Nibelungenlied*, Reformers, scientists and so on. School-day reading, required or otherwise, supplemented with all the trivia and arcana that comes from chasing faint scents. An old publicity volume from my father's teach-yourself days after the London Blitz: *Deutschland von Heute*, a black-letter glossy with photos of happy Hitlerjugend trampers covering Alpine scenery: how cool, to us on the drought-struck banks of the Nepean, or the heatwave paddocks of Smithfield. Huelsenbeck, Richter, Arp: the Surrealists we meet in adolescence, Adolf Hitler, German cars, aeroplanes: comic-strip battles, real-life memoirs of Speer and Galland and Co.

Music and film and paintings and plays are lateral and vertical elements of the simple collage: Basil Rathbone in a laboured wartime version of Sherlock Holmes (Moriarty preparing to sell the secret weapon to the Nazis); the classics, by Herzog and Pabst and Fassbinder, von Trotta; and *Werner*, the cartoon. And the lyrics, from *Carmina Burana* to Heinz-Willi and the Motions. These are not left behind, of course, when one travels. Nor is the language which, however mugged up beforehand, won't work so easily as it does in the mouths of those who employ it every day. In my usage, the words slip from grasp, phrases stagger and collapse onto amused or quizzical faces of interlocutors, Idioms fail to keep up with contemporary street use: 'Ah, I haven't heard that expression in thirty years: how quaint it sounds. Where did you find that one?'.

And other things make up the model of a country which one carries round. Meetings with people themselves, who are travelling, or who have left the place forever, much as anyone leaves anything forever. Architects and doctors, engineers who live on the verdant fringes of the eastern States, the ex SS-Waffen men hanging about the Kings Cross RSL in the late 1960s, the coffee-shop owners, the navvies, the dealers and junkies and students one ate, sang and slept with. We pick up experience wherever, however we can, without leaving our shores: never know when it's useful. Biases, passions and talents emerge from those half-lost routine nights and days: remembered things. How 'Australians take everything lying down. You never stand up for your rights'. 'You're a nation of convicts.' Oh yes: before the Cahill expressway, Opera House, and Sydney Square. When bills were paid without question ('Damn fools') or midnight flits were not exceptions but the rule ('You don't get the bond back, so stuff them: stay without paying and then go'). Not all those people were so cynical. Some went to the Council and objected. My mother-in-law, for example. "Sure we have three lavatories in the house, but do you think we make a point of using them simultaneously all day long? Why should we pay three lots of water-rates?" My landlord: "I tell you, you have overcharged me. This gas bill is outrageous. Do you think I'm running an extermination camp in Cremorne?" Yes, we have a sense of humour which is transportable, even if you think it is in bad taste.

All this gets carried back to Germany. With the experiences of Australian and German relatives during two wars. Great-uncles, aunts, uncles, mother-in-law, father-in-law, cousins, father and others: prisoners, citizens, soldiers, airmen. Remembered stock phrases on grey cards sent from a great-uncle in Schneidemuhl, via Switzerland, 1917, "I am being treated well" and so on. My mother-in-law, remembering concerts, cooking classes and the response of her neighbours to 'the Russian'. Onkel Andreas' ten years in an Archangel prison, selling paintings for food: it will be good to see him this year.

And of course, there is the professional contact. Artists, writers, musicians who have similar concerns, discuss technical procedures. Ziggy Köglemeier in Dunedin, making a wall of soft bricks in 1989 as the Wall he had jumped across was about to come down: unable to put the Wall behind him, just as I, and countless others from another place, have been unable to shrug off heavy freight. Plainly, 'postcolonial condition' will not do as a description of this mood. The phrase sounds as false as 'autonomic dysparaxia' to describe Oblomov's torpor. Some of us, and not only those who have literally lived in two countries, have been living in Germany, as well as Australia, America, England, and other imagined places for too long for the postcolonial assumptions to worry us into inertia. We cannot expel the images which assail us every time we employ an artefact or consult a production from another country. We make comparisons, express preferences, from other bases than that of having 'been there'. And we are not all so naive as to be seduced by the notion that people who live elsewhere must lead more sophisticated lives. In our own intellectual and geographical regions, there are secrets we might hesitate to divulge.

PERHAPS IF I still lived with some of my sentimental compatriots in the 1950s, '60s, or '70s I might seek refuge on a people-mover bound for London, San Francisco, or New York. But since 1965, when I had some choice in the matter, those 'places' became less appealing the more I recognised that those centres were already located in Australia – and in Germany,

Italy, China and Russia. I never lived in England or America in the flesh, though it is still hard to avoid sharing the spirit, when the eating, clothing, musical and recreational styles, and the very speech patterns of so many neighbours and transitory students is consciously directed to 'feeling comfortable' with the elision of autonomous Aboriginal and broader European Australian customs associated with the region I inhabit.

Younger, I knew something of my grandmother's attachment to her birthplace, and I understand my father's wish to please her by going to England's war. But one can admire Chaucer, Shakespeare, and the Cavaliers and still be at home elsewhere; London was, and is, as alien to me as Xanadu, and both places as dead to my imagination as those effigies of a town in a glass dome which sheds fake snow when the thing is turned upside down and returned to rest. I wouldn't want to live in such a toy. It is enough that we all live inside museums of our own curating. And England is a province of some districts of Australia, just as Hollywood, New York, and San Francisco are located in the heads of video borrowers who earnestly inquire what's new in the 'Action' section of the store. Theodore Dalrymple's moron citizens live all around me; I frequent more and better bookshops than I might find in many English counties' chief towns; my local politicians are thugs and liars who can give their British counterparts starting handicaps any day; I cook better than the chefs of half the restaurants reviewed in the *Spectator*; I drink better wine than the English dream of; I am as much or little read as I might be if I inhabited a provincial university town in the British Isles. I could wish for an income derived solely from writing poetry, or anything else. But I hope to outlive some of the dreadful writers, English and Australian who earn the rewards which should be reserved for me alone. I won't bother to dance on their graves, because I want their obscurity to be final and unalloyed.

A person who is tired of London, without ever seeing the place, is tired of British comedy, travel brochures and the pulps which go by the pranksome name of newspapers. Tits, bums, colourful guards, quaint ceremonies, pubs, and picturesque beggars have less to do with alarm at the very idea of staying in London and England than a lifetime of being subjected, in Australia, to cloying twaddle about the monarchy, British justice and fair play. A stopover might be enough. The English who work in Germany or Holland know something else. Some practise their German by working in pubs; others by teaching or working as architects, waiters, or what they can get. If academic life in Germany is frustrating on account of bias against foreigners (and especially against teachers of literatures other than English), it is also more interesting because one is part of an intellectual elite,

... academics stationed in Europe can scoot about to conferences and see England as it should be seen, seldom and fleetingly.

however much it is bastardised in practice. English and Commonwealth academics stationed in Europe can scoot about to conferences and see England as it should be seen, seldom and fleetingly. The students of such people are also, it seems to me, more likely to be critical, versatile, and self-reliant. Debate about common language highlights the advantage of living in Europe rather than in England or America: English is employed as Latin once was – or perhaps German itself, in Gunter Grass's novel about the writers' meeting at Telgte – as an intellectual trade-language.

This much is known before arrival in the country. And more. We assume that, consciously or not, we're going to reshuffle familiar elements, and carry away something conceived of, perhaps, but never realised with such pleasurable intricacy. What we will taste we only guess at, what we will see and hear and touch we cannot envisage until we turn corners, enter doors, and experience the relationship of parts, the perspective. To stand in a herb garden at the foot of a tower and look upward is not the same thing as to stand in a paved square in Melbourne or Adelaide or Brisbane and look up toward a spire, in spite of the dutiful sensation that these are all touristic or photographic clichés, accomplished with varying degrees of éclat depending on the company we keep, the hour of the day, what we have just come from, and what we are

about to perform. We will forget that one column is six hundred or one thousand years old and the other, one hundred and twenty or so, and consider that all are, as the liturgy puts it, the work of human hands. And we will feel more or less edified at the thought that people have been executed within earshot of the bells of all these memorials to vertical intentions or sublunary expedience. And so with food, which complements and forms an element of the configuration in which we live. If you grow your own food, you acknowledge the bounty of it; a meal is less a swilling of homogenised 'gobble-and-go' 'fast food' than a sacral occasion. It is the same if you take the care to patronise a fruiterer, a vegetable market, a real fishmonger, butcher, cheesemaker or baker. Coffee in a Konditerei is different from a cup of instant in the lunch-room or at the work-station. But who takes the trouble? There we have something European on which to meditate. Coffee is taken in public in sips rather than gulps, with attention, without hurry, in private as well. As if it is meant to be enjoyed instead of regarded as a distraction. Of course this style prevails in some Italian *trattorie* and Greek *kapheneia* in Melbourne, just as in the cafe of Luciano de Crescenzo's *Thus Spake Bellavista*, where the barman chides a patron for reading a paper while drinking coffee: "What do you think you're doing? Why aren't you paying attention?" Quite so. One might as well chew gum.

Coffee is taken in public in sips rather than gulps, ... As if it is meant to be enjoyed instead of regarded as a distraction.

Then the faces are different, of women and men in Germany. Especially the young women and men. Why are there fewer older people in public? And the manner in which people walk – from elegant brisk saunter to businesslike swagger, to earnest Spatzierung through forests and along river-banks. Is it a matter of 'We will now enjoy taking exercise. Come?'. Yes, and the sense of self-parody is strong among the young, who know that they are exhibits in a museum, and they must look their best, whatever that is: torn (Parisian) jeans, well-cut leathers, pierced features, bobby-sox, or business suit and tie.

It was, of course, unlikely that I would encounter rituals and etiquette so entirely different from all I had known as to be unrecognisable. The manner of living called 'lifestyle' is partly responsible for this illusion of having stepped from an aluminium tube and found oneself back home. The alterations of the ordinary are subtler; it's like varying the controls on the stereo-player to suit different recording levels. People will wear the same clothes, although nearly all the clothes will be made in Germany and will be expensive, since Chinese, American, and other imports are subject to stiff tariffs. Students and other employed persons will own, be paying for, and otherwise be at the service of automobiles, and they will consider the relationship perfectly normal. There will be speed restrictions in every city and village, and people will drive as fast as their automobiles will permit them to do so with safety on Autobahns between cities, and U-bahns beneath cities, except during those daily periods when vast numbers of automobiles conspire to keep drivers' progress pegged to a rate of four or five kilometres per hour for hours at a stretch. The automobiles will be, for the most part, German, although one may occasionally see a Swedish, French, or Italian coupé and, much more rarely, an English or Japanese sedan or sports car. In ten days in one city, I saw an Austin 1000, an MGB and a Celica. At the same time, several trainloads of new Volkswagen Golf automobiles passed daily from the northern factories to the southern markets.

FIFTY YEARS AGO, the railway junctions at Aachen over which the carriages loaded with Volkswagens now pass were rendered into sculpture by aerial bombardment. No one is unaware that the events of what Gregory Shortis calls Great General Unpleasantness Number Two have variously affected cohesion and division. To some councils and businesses, the disruption and destruction allowed for a fresh start to be made. Should the churches and other historic buildings have been restored? The Golden Room of the Augsburg Rathaus brings the tourists; so does the rebuilt cathedral at Köln, the Rathaus and spires of Aachen, and much else.

Bus loads of visitors store shorthand celluloid memories. Guides repeat "This is not, of course, original", "This has been rebuilt"; "This is of course a facsimile". In a crowded cafe in Aachen, someone recounted that a visitor, tired of this accusative litany, called out to the guide on such a tour "Yes, and who started it?". For an alternative to rebuilt cities ('museums' 'theme-parks', according to many under-forties) one should visit Bonn, which is as exciting as Canberra, though without the modern architectural wonders, and with excruciating traffic-jams added. The Rhine at Bonn is attractive not for the ruined castle on the western side, but for the calmative effects of a boat-trip which goes further, faster, and more peacefully than the road traffic at peak-hour. Beside the gardens, meadows and copses of the Rhine, some residents and travellers might claim to experience similar but less vectored emotions to those which provoked Schumann to compose the Rheinischer Symphony. In town, the 8 a.m.-to-7 p.m. peak-hour might also suggest to disillusioned observers why Schumann tried to drown himself in the same river. As in Australia, traffic, not tourism is the European fetish. And in both places it is a swinish god.

Lives, like poems, are variations on fundamental rhythms and concepts, some, exceedingly violent or repugnant. Some are alluring. German speech-constructions are so satisfying to sense that it's a wonder the language is not more widely taught in foreign schools, if only as a model of orderliness, to contrast the profounder absurdities of English, Chinese and Japanese.

WALKING DOWN JUDENGASSE in Aachen, Shantee Follmer observed, "A lot of people from here went on a holiday and didn't come back, last time the Germans went mad". On the steps of the Rathaus, punks with rings through noses and ears were drinking beer and improving the shining hour by making obscene suggestions to passers-by. In the evenings, bands of leather-and-black-denim-clad people in their twenties and thirties sat on the cobblestones at the intersections of alleys around the Platz, spraying each other with beer, stroking their Alsatian dogs, pissing against walls and shouting above transistorised music. Some foreign people I spoke with thought the police should disperse the street-dwellers. Shrewder locals told me that the police would never do so, because allegations of brutality would be brought against them, and the cops preferred to book motorists, so long as they did not have to get out of their own cars too much.

How familiar this was. In my own town, police are similarly reticent about making public appearances in the Mall and outside pubs. In Armidale, the police leave Aboriginal street-gangs alone, for fear of a scandal if anyone alleges brutality. Besides, there are insufficient police to station the mandatory custodian outside (or inside) every cell containing a suspected villain, in case the suspect should decide to commit suicide. In Westphalia as in New England, it is a case of God forbid that our town should become known for having hosted a death in custody. So the diffident and the dissident may piss in public, insult tourists and residents, and combine in gangs to terrorise shopkeepers and civil servants, vandalise premises, commit robbery and assault, and ignore the law, which can in turn busy itself with anything which falls outside the purlieus of securing the public from harm.

Giving humanity the benefit of the doubt, I never assumed that Germany would be more tidy, less hoonish, therefore more exotic than Australia. But I experienced the novelty of walking unmolested through streets in Aachen and Düsseldorf, even towards dawn. The beggars were thoughtful in their variations of patter: "I have not eaten anything all day" is standard code in Australian as well as German cities, so it was refreshing to be approached with "Would you like to give me a souvenir?". That people ate at pavement cafes, wandered from coffee-bar to theatre to pub was unlike anything I had experienced in Sydney, since the Sydney councillors or managers had banned residential living in the city in the early 1970s. In Aachen (a university town about my speed), people live above the shops and offices, the streets seemed designed for living in, rather than for shopping in and shutting up at 5 p.m. when the last salary-man and salary-woman scurries home to a bolt-hole barred and locked against the world.

Unlike the brash professional beggars and their freshly unemployed, more reticent amateur fellows, the punks alarmed some people with

their loutishness. "That's the future of Germany", a woman remarked to me, out of the blue, as a group of punks across the Square harangued passers-by at midday. But that's also the future of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland: wherever violence in homes, streets, or on playing-fields is not just tolerated but encouraged as character-moulding hi-jinks.

... the punks alarmed some people ... "That's the future of Germany", a woman remarked ... But that's also the future of New South Wales ...

While the punks in Aachen (and Düsseldorf, and Köln) were drinking and talking among themselves, I didn't mind them at all (shades of Byron's comment that "the Dandies were always polite to me"). Probably the way fellow-settlers saw Dr Jameson and his pals' high spirits just before his famous raid, or those of a regional chapter of the New Guard before the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, or of Benito Mussolini's adherents long before the march on Rome.

HAPPILY, THEN, I saw in a journey to Aachen a chance to promote new poems, published three weeks before leaving. I'd sent a parcel at exorbitant expense via Ansett, before I left Australia. More fortunately, I sold seventy copies, recouped the costs, and was saved the inconvenience of bringing an expensive packet back home.

My flight to Germany recalled how tedious long-distance trips can be. I don't get many of them, and I don't envy those who have to commute for non-rewarding purposes. Everyone should have some little bundle of joy waiting at the end of a twenty-five hour journey. Years ago I travelled on a bus for twenty-five hours from Toowoomba to Melbourne. That was utterly hellish: at least you can walk around in a large plane, and contrive to wash and shave in quarters which are a step up from the bogholes located at the back of a bus, or from the wayside outback service-station dunnies which are laughably called 'rest rooms'. A rest from aural pollution, perhaps, but a plunge into every other variety.

Two myths went for a burton at Frankfurt. The first was that Germany was as hag-ridden with bureaucracy as Australia. I know Australian Customs and Quarantine have discontinued spraying all incoming passengers with Mortein, Pea-Beau, and Agent Orange, but the tired business of declaring and demonstrating the facts concerning one's racial origins, recent visits to sewage-farms and piggeries, and quantity of chocolate bars, booze, gaspers, farm produce, poisons, perfumes and electronic devices secreted about the person (beyond permitted limits) adds hours to travelling time. I've also experienced the refinement of waiting for luggage to arrive at the carousel while sniffer dogs are brought in to traumatise travellers already demoralised by watching hours of in-flight films starring Charles Bronson and Clint Eastwood, from simultaneously listening to some bore's catalogue of symptoms of physical, social, intellectual and spiritual decay. When I arrived at Frankfurt, I was waved through the non-European Union arrival gate by a listless official and directed to the Düsseldorf terminal. No Quarantine, no Customs? Amazing. And at Düsseldorf? Another 'Guten Morgen' and a wave. No stamps? What's the point of having a passport?

From Düsseldorf, an hour's trip by car to Aachen, through lush dairy country pricked off with small villages in the path of the brown-coal industry. After months of travelling around drought-stricken New England, Westphalia's emerald pastures and rich crops were heartbreaking sights. At Aachen, I dropped my bag at a sumptuous three-storey guesthouse surrounded by oaks and birches, and went to the Rheinisch-Westphälischen Technische Hochschule, to meet some of the committee who had invited me (six postgraduate students and three lecturers who signed the bureaucratic chits). And on to an Italian café in the old town. The joy of Bitburger Pils and fresh mushrooms: the taste was not of Australia, though Pete Marsden and Simone Thissen were like people I'd known all my life: amusing, friendly and enthusiastic about writing from Australia, West Africa and other places beyond the UK-USA axis.

LETTING JETLAG GO HANG, I walked about the town. The student quarter is appealing because it is neither the university nor a city block which ceases to function after 5 p.m. It is a street or two of cafes, pubs, bookshops, dance-halls, residences, computer-shops, bakeries, kiosks and much else. Food prices are low (something people catering to students in cafes do not comprehend in Australia) and the food, like the beer, worth making something of (another thing likely to remain a mystery in Australia). In the evening a car-load of student-committee members took me to dinner at an English pub in Holland. All of ten minutes' drive. The closeness of things in Europe is a cliché: a museum of ikons in Holland; a naughty weekend in London (one hour by plane), a day's trip into Basel. Well: and it's six hours to Newcastle from Armidale. Less, if you take the direct road through Walcha and Gloucester. And pretty as you like. What is missing from either place? Frank and Ulla Joussen, teachers and writers in Erkelenz, admired the southern and eastern coastline of Australia, in the course of a recent trip.

Distance is no bother to many Europeans, who yearn for space between themselves and other people. I appreciate that. Who would live in Sydney or Melbourne, who can possibly avoid doing so? Ah yes, there's the opera, galleries: well, we can get there to see those too. And we may pine for the cafés of Carlton and Toorak. Or not. Hang sentiment: we will make what we can of every place. Before the last Good Night. What proximity appears to teach is a mode of deportment which suggests superficially tolerance of others, but which conceals a hair-trigger sensitivity to encroachment which manifests its outrage in a flurry of blasphemy, verbal or physical aggression. Nothing is as it seems: at a dance, I was approached by a blood-covered man in his late thirties who, taking me for the concierge because of my nearness to the door, demanded I hang up his leather jacket, and then demanded it back so he could remove his passport and stow it more securely while he cruised the dance-floor for another argument.

The English pub in Holland was a cheery sort of tavern in the basement of a rambling palazzo given over to offices. Guinness on tap, and traditional English tucker. The students I went with thought it was exotic. That, to me, was a nice touch, though I could see why mine host and his Dutch wife had jettisoned the Old Dart to take up residence in the heart of Europe. They could have it both ways: the memorabilia and an income. A regular clientele of non-English

What proximity appears to teach is a mode of deportment which suggests ... tolerance of others, but which conceals a hair-trigger sensitivity to encroachment ...

people who hardly glanced at the bottles, tins, posters, Boys' Own annuals, Toby-jugs, badges and bric-a-brac advertising Lovely Britain all over the walls and shelves. It wasn't exactly Holland. And the prices suggested Germany and Australia had one or two well-kept secrets in hand relating to food and drink.

Two weeks later, when I stopped for a coffee in a Maastricht cafe, I was to experience a similar bemusement, when I saw several ice-buckets full of Fosters beer on the counter. Why on earth anyone drinks Fosters in Europe is a mystery, though the Germans hardly need fear competition, even if their stuff costs twice as much as the Australian equivalent. I asked the landlord why he provided Fosters. He came from Whangarei, and told me Europeans liked exotic things. Point taken. He also suggested I should try his new café out of town: 'The Great Australian Bite'. When I considered that he was stinging his town clientele $30 for a mixed grill in the place we were in, I thought I'd head back to Aachen, where the $8 pasta, the $10 platter of Turkish metzes, falafels and kebabs, and the $12 schnitzel had their home.

More myths disappearing out the door: there isn't any German cuisine to be had in north-western Germany, unless you like to get stung in an eatery which caters to tourists. When I playfully mentioned Sauerbraten, or Würst, Sauerkraut and Kartoffeln to Aacheners, they looked amazed: "That's not German, that's Bavarian". They suggested Spanish, Greek, Thai, Vietnamese, Indian or Chinese dishes were the go. I asked about the Öcher cafe on the other

side of town. No way: the Öcher people were the 'original' inhabitants of Aachen, peasants whose language and identity were supposed to be as authentic as that of the people who dress up in medieval-type armour behind the Beaurepaire swimming pool at Melbourne University. "If it weren't for the department of Linguistics at the university the Öcher dialect would vanish. So much for local flavour, then: a slab of cow done in the time-honoured peasant style sounded in any case about as thrilling as a T-bone at the Cattleman Restaurant back home.

AND YES, I DID attend the Second Summer School on the New Literatures in English. This was a follow-up to the first event at Göttingen in 1992. Postgraduate students and a few middle-ranking academics arranged a seminar program, and asked foreign writers to come and read their works and lead discussions. This was a radical departure from the high-flying conferences which take place in Germany and elsewhere (including Australia). It's a bit like the first ASAL conferences in Australia, where the professoriat distinguished itself by neither initiating nor concerning itself with events. Like the early ASAL shows, the Göttingen Summer School (which actually occurred in Autumn) drew attention to the enthusiasm of students, teachers and general readers across the country for English-language writing from places other than England and the USA. The readings drew crowds, and the whole show was so successful that, while a spate of publications followed, the students set about staging another event in 1994. Volunteers from Aachen's university undertook to arrange the next meeting. Hence my presence.

The status of the New Literatures in English among German professors of Anglistik, Amerikanistik, and Philology seems about equivalent to that of Australian Literature twenty years ago in Australian universities. Some people have suggested the local status of Australian Literature or Australian Cultural Studies was pretty grim even five years ago: I guess that's so of some universities. At any rate, German students who develop an interest in other literatures than 'mainstream' English and American strands are compelled to make unusual shifts to obtain books, journals and adequate supervision. The students who came to the Summer School told me their supervisors generously bought materials from their own budgetary allocations to assist candidates. It's not unusual, though, for students to undertake doctoral research at institutions far removed from their places of residence, so that their lives are spent in commuting to and from meetings with supervisors, attendance at conferences, and travel to the countries which engage their interest.

... the Göttingen Summer School ... drew attention to the enthusiasm of students, teachers and general readers ... for English-language writing from places other than England and the USA.

There's a positive side to this, of course: the postgraduates I met had travelled much more than their Australian counterparts, were well-informed and had impressive language abilities, networks of contacts, and publications. Most of their research is written in English, and they were required to demonstrate knowledge of classical and other languages than their own, to qualify for candidacy in the first place. Some of the people who came to the Aachen Summer School were adept in other languages, though this wasn't uniformly so: my faltering kitchen-German was a case in point. I sat in on committee meetings and experienced something more than amused tolerance. And I was assured that, while Australians had a grim reputation for oafish behaviour at Munich, they'd had some terrific visitors to Göttingen and Aachen. Peter Goldsworthy, Geoff Goodfellow, and Lionel Fogarty were affectionately remembered – the former for their friendliness and impressive readings, Fogarty for his astonishing ability to negotiate German bureaucracy and get access to unlikely audiences, including German prisons and refugee hostels.

All the same, a barrage of reports on the booze-hounds in Munich provided a backdrop to my stay. Tony Paterson's report in the *European* newspaper was typical:

> Approaching the back of the dozen or so cathedral-like tents devoted to beer consump-

tion, I came across two girls in their early twenties each clutching a giant litre-sized masskrug half-full of beer, staggering out of a noisy black hole in the canvas and rushing towards a tree where knots of men swayed on their feet. A nearby grassy slope littered with sleeping and vomiting drunks provided an appropriate backdrop. Without batting an eyelid, the girls tore down their pants and began urinating on the ground while simultaneously convulsed by fits of giggles. The knots of swaying men burst into loud applause, whistling and hollering their approval. The girls hoicked up their pants and headed back for refills.

It sounded like something out of Breughel, Bosch or, as the *European* suggested, Dante's *Inferno*. The only louts I saw in several towns and cities were, mercifully, locals or Americans: the former, truculently obnoxious or semicomatose, the latter raucously advertising their peculiar claims to superiority in the matter of making hamburgers or getting drunk. One day in Aachen, I watched an Aktion (political theatre) which was continually interrupted by a bunch of drunken youths. Egged on by punks, a drunk man exposed himself to the crowd, while a drunk woman companion hauled up her pullover to reveal her breasts so that locals and tourists drew their children away from the display. The artists, Helmut Martin-Myren and Birgit Happ, whose show was disrupted, told me "That's the future of Germany". The punks sat and drank their Jägermeister and cheap plonk on the Rathaus steps, the disruptive man lay down in a stupor, and the woman weaved off to embrace a paralytic teenager.

No policeman came near the whole event: frightened, a bystander told me, in case of publicity. Better to stay in the station and compile statistics on parking offences. I'm not surprised. Every day the newspapers and radio bulletins reported fresh atrocities all across the country: a woman tram-passenger who went to the assistance of a man being victimised by louts was thrown off the tram so that her pelvis was shattered, while the victim was stabbed in view of the passengers; in another instance, a woman on a train directed the attention of two punks to a Ghanaian man: the punks stabbed the man and threw him out. In another city, a refugee hostel was burned down. It all gets crowded into a series of two or three-line grabs in a thin column on page 6 or 7 in the Australian dailies, while we celebrate interest-rate rises and the closure of schools.

... a woman on a train directed the attention of two punks to a Ghanaian man: the punks stabbed the man and threw him out.

Beside the daily clubbing from such horror-headlines, the freaky mass suicide-execution of a Swiss sect was small beer. So, to the delegates and visitors at Aachen, were tales of Antipodean outrages at Munich, though they struck chagrin into me and Brian Matthews, who came from London to deliver the keynote address at Aachen. Matthews looked over reports of Munich and noted the British press would lap up such 'news', in spite of the fact that the British contingents in Munich and the Costa del Sol were assiduously running down Britain's image in the same way.

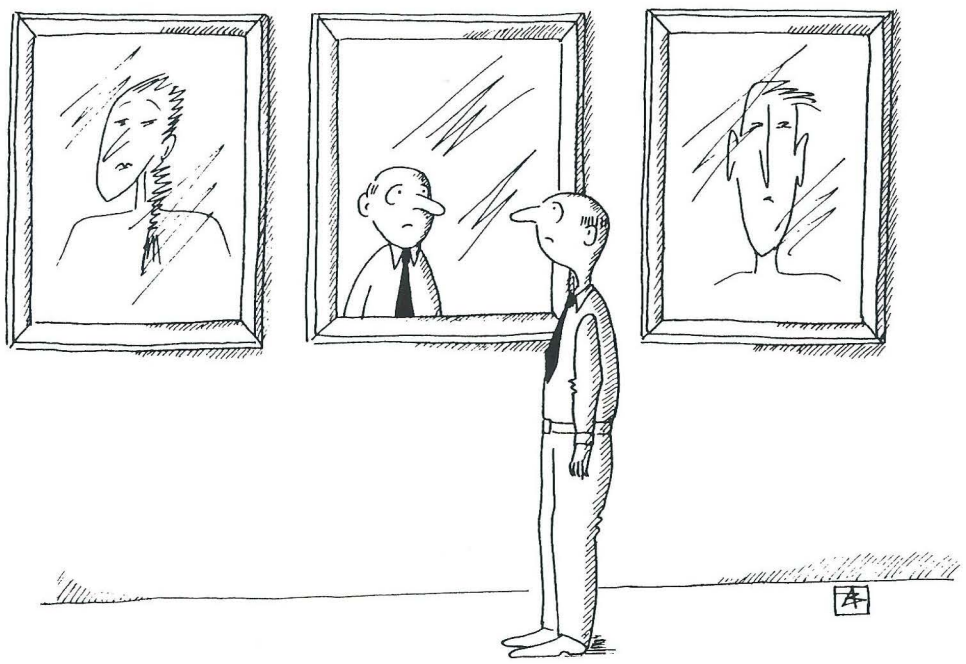
After Matthews' opening address, comments by people throughout the week indicated he'd struck a useful note: highlighting the particularity of every 'new' literature's origins and character, Matthews drew attention to the initial contrast between Aboriginal and European cultures, and outlined the importance of the Mabo decision, to suggest the dynamism of the situation in which all Australian writing was occurring. The audience took this as a timely reminder and throughout the remaining week criticised widely-held assertions about the academic shibboleths, postmodernism and postcolonialism. German students, and several of the teachers at the Summer School, were especially critical of the academic stipulation that they adopt and maintain a theoretical position located along the postmodernism-postcolonial fulcrum even before they embarked on their closer reading of primary sources for their dissertations. Things seem more tightly ordered in the Old World on this and other fronts. The impulse of every student I spoke with was to

dispense with frustrating prescriptions and follow an empirical bent: broad familiarity with a culture should precede theorisation and uncritical acceptance of received ideas. It was easy to sympathise with this view, since postgraduate study in the humanities departments of many Australian institutions still follows this humanist model.

But I wasn't in the thick of the academic debates which occupied sixteen separate seminars throughout the five days of the School. I read my own poetry and had the odd experience of meeting people who appeared to take me seriously as a writer. These included the packed audience at the Jakobshof hall, where jazz musicians like Pharaoh Sanders and Jan Gabarek were listed among contemporary performers at the venue. The proprietor primed me and Roger Hall, the New Zealand playwright, with a double Chivas Regal before the reading and afterwards refused to take any money. Roger Hall read brilliant speeches from four of his plays, and the Canadian Daphne Marlatt followed, reading from her novel *Ana Historic*, and from her poems in praise of Sappho and the lesbian tradition. Hall and Marlatt read first, receiving fantastic applause, and the crowd returned to drinking and talking through a long break while the cameraman went in search of a fresh battery for the video-camera. When my reading finished, I experienced that sustained applause and calls for encore that I'd seen at European concerts.

I thought to myself that I should see what happens in a longer space than three weeks: why, I suppose, I'm going back again.

Michael Sharkey is a poet and critic now teaching at the University of New England.



Bev Aisbett

A SPRING OF DREAMS AT WADI JIRM

For King Hussein Ibn Talal and the People of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

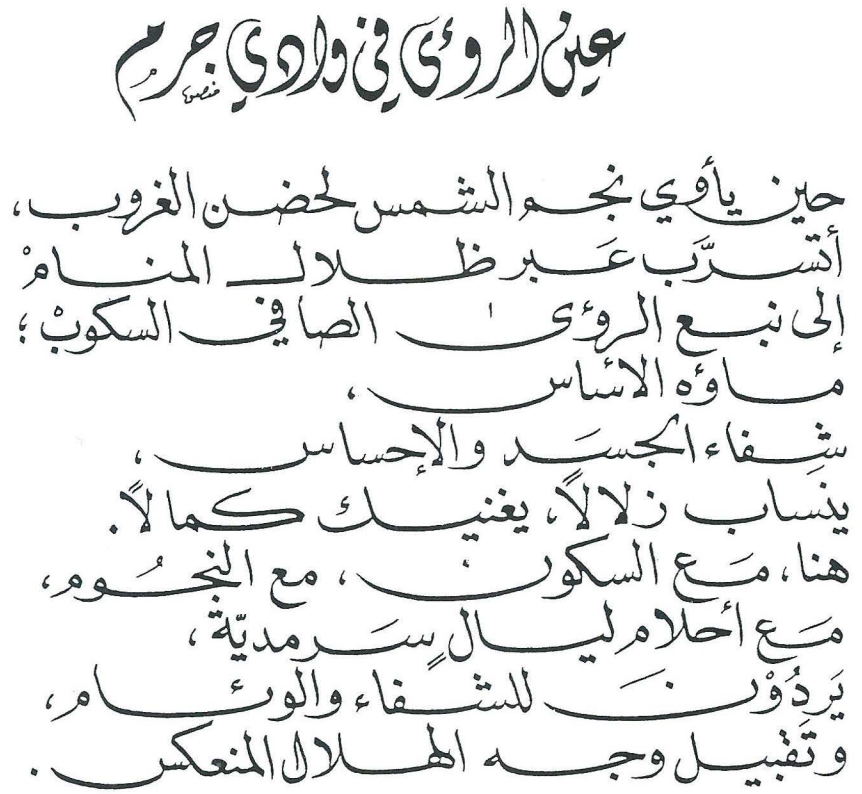
While the sun-star rests beyond the West,
I move through shadowed veils of sleep
to a lucent, spilling spring of dreams,
where, lustral to the flesh and soul,
the primal waters of this source
are spirit-flowing, making whole.
Here, in silence with the stars,
dreaming through aeonian nights,
poets drift to heal, console,
around a floating, crescent moon.

A girl whispered,"You are as free
as a hawk soaring above the sea.
I am Dabitum, a slave from Ur."
She showed her master's seal to me,
rolling it slowly across the clay
– a whip, a rope, a blade, a key –
engraved five thousand years ago,
its message is as clear today.
A slave from Egypt raised his hand
and pointed to a cedar chest;
"There my master's body rests.
See, rampant on the rounded lid,
two lions snarling, serpent-locked,
while ivory sun-disks measure hours,
Horus of Behdet's emblem gleams."
In a field nearby, shrouded in mist,
stood a Greek's slave, a Nubian youth,
amidst desert iris, each dew-blessed,
yet black as a Bedouin tent of hair.
"Here my master's stallion fell,
struck down by swords, bright as flame.
Look where his sculptured image lies,
his massive head and wiry mane,
cleanly etched by comb-toothed chisels,
eyes, stone-turned in soulful shame."

In the twofold darkness of my dream,
shadows of lote and tamarisk,
moving with the constant moon,
patterned Jebel abu el Khas
as I climbed the slope and over rocks
to enter an oak-beamed Roman house,
sealed against change. On the floor
lay a rusted awl and a dusty shoe
of layered leather, deftly drilled
and carefully stitched. Had its maker
pursued his craft in bondage too?

Tracing goat-tracks and a leopard's spoor
to the edge of time at Lisan Lake,
I watched along the pebbled shore,
men with savage, flint-tipped spear,
stalking deer and short-tusked boar.

Between the eternal and the hour,
deep within my dream I saw
fiercely flaming from the East,
light upon exquisite light,
drawing to its purity
vast tides of men. Dust darkened the sun
as they stormed across the sands as one.
The poet Al Khansa', in saffron robes,
spoke beside the brimming source,
"Leading our warriors is The Shareef,
their Standard Bearer and see beneath
the purple banners of their pride,
how they're swept along side by side,
by freedom's passion; how they ride
splitting rocks with fiery swords,
splashing their blood on our history,
fighting to death for liberty.
But Anne, across the ebb and flow
of nomadic seasons, on our maps,
self-serving lines were swiftly scratched.



Our struggle received a searing blow
from trusted friends and we were trapped
in the vaulted darkness of deceit.
Though hopes flutter like fraying shrouds,
always that radiant light remains
a symbol through each bitter year,
warming the pulse of our desert souls,
dispelling the shadows of our fear.
Betrayal will never become defeat."

Al Khansa' led me to Antara,
son of an Ethiopian slave.
"I long to kiss their swords," he cried,
extolling the valour of The Revolt.
"We Arabs must have our liberty,
yet mirages still pervade our minds
with the silken sigh of poetry."

Beside the shining spring of dreams,
I saw a man with eyes like stars,
a midnight iris in his hand.
He smiled, then gently spoke to me,
he was the pure, eloquent voice
of the prince of poets, Al Mutanabbi.
"A dreamer must hold fast to his dream.
Now our destiny is clear,
for the Central Wisdom of this land
is keeping faith with that sacred pledge,
proudly sealed with our martyrs' blood,
to bring our people liberty
and our nation peace and unity.
Light upon light is constant here."

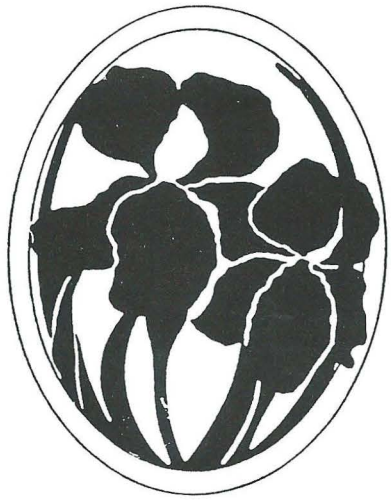
I awoke to feel the timeless breath
of another desert on my face.
In the cool silence beyond the wind
I watched with awe our southern stars
drifting on their cosmic course,
white as those in the sapphire space
above the spirits of Arab poets,
who, joined in echoing evocation,
gather at their dreaming source.

ANNE FAIRBAIRN

The idea of many of the images in Anne Fairbairn's poem came after she had researched the work of Professor Basil Hennessy at Sydney University. Professor Hennessy has been conducting an archaeological dig near Pella in Northern Jordan for eighteen years.

The poem was presented by Anne Fairbairn at the Royal Palace in Jordan in November 1993, to pay tribute to King Hussein Ibn Talal for his efforts in bringing peace to the region.

The Spring of Dreams was presented in handwritten calligraphy in English and Arabic. The illustration – the black iris, the emblem of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, was done by the poet.



JOHN SENDY

Where Sheep Tracks Lace the Paddocks to the Sky

On the trail of Anne Bell

OUR DIRECTIONS to Alma Station were quite precise: go through Booligal and along the Cobb Highway towards Ivanhoe, turn left along Mutherumbung Road and drive seventeen miles to Alma, in all thirty-six miles from Booligal.

The road up from Echuca had been lined with litter and dead kangaroos. Thousands of sheep and cattle grazed on the stock route bordering the highway, hungrily trying to outlive the terrible drought which ravaged the area in 1992. After Hay the dead 'roos gave way to dead sheep that hadn't survived. The litter had decreased only a little.

One Tree Plain unveiled the widest horizon and the biggest sky we'd ever seen. Mirages shimmered everywhere despite the modest winter sunshine. On plains across which I have travelled elsewhere in Australia and other countries there are always hills, mountains or forests somewhere in the distance to relieve the flatness, even if only slightly. But this was the flattest land one could imagine and so it is throughout most of the western Riverina. Treeless plains mean just that.

My father always spoke of Booligal as if it was the last place on earth. He'd never been there. Possibly, he believed the Banjo Paterson poem to which he often referred:

> And people have an awful down
> Upon the district and the town
> Which worse than hell itself they call;
> In fact, the saying far and wide
> Along the Riverina side
> Is 'Hay and Hell and Booligal'.

Certainly, Booligal has the reputation of being hot. We were advised by oldtimers not to go to the district in summer. Long ago, Frank Clune in his *Rolling Down the Lachlan* told the story of Father Murphy from Hay who once spent a very hot night in Booligal and said afterwards: "If I owned *all* of hell, and *half* of Booligal; I would lease Booligal and live in hell."

Yet such stories and opinions are understandably unpopular with some local people. Ethel Booth's booklet, *A Glimpse of Booligal*, compiled in 1982, makes this abundantly clear through its reminiscences, photos and poems. While Booligal may be past its prime there is truth in the poetic observations of a former postmistress:

> The dear old town lies dreaming
> In the remnants of its pride,
> The shady Lachlan River
> Flowing gently by its side.

The tree-lined Lachlan River enveloped in sky and quietness certainly is captivating in mild August weather, as we found. Butcher birds whistle with a marvellous throaty tone, kookaburras entertain and white-faced herons glide gracefully above waters magically transformed by tree reflections. Unfortunately, there seemed nowhere to get down to the river apart from the few yards on either side of the bridge which serves the Cobb Highway.

We were heading for Alma because the poet and children's writer, Anne Bell, had lived the first part of her life on that far-flung property. I had not heard of Anne Bell until a couple of years before. In *The Oxford Literary Guide to Australia* the entry on Hay concluded with a paragraph which intrigued me: "Poet Anne Bell spent most of her early life on her family's prop-

erty Alma at Booligal. Most of her early work is set in the area."

Maps showed Alma. My interest in the western Riverina centred mainly on Joseph Furphy and the setting of *Such Is Life*. But other writers were emerging: E. W. Hornung of Raffles fame who had tutored children at Mossgiel Station in the 1880s and now Anne Bell, very much alive. Such were the tracks we were travelling down Mutherumbung Road to Alma.

We ate ham rolls on the roadside under an immense sky with the Merrowie Creek tree line relieving the flatness. Occasional isolated clumps of swamp box provided the centrepieces for mirages which glimmered and glowed, rose and fell and came in and out of focus for our aging eyes. Dawn swore one was a building with the sun reflecting on iron. But mirages they were. Anne Bell captured such scenes:

> Where the phantom water lies,
> Coolibahs in summer skies
> Twice reflected dance and lift
> Wavering, the sandhills shift
> Strangely on the mobile plain,
> Rippling swiftly back again.
> Over them Quixote rides
> Pegasus with sweeping strides –
> Stockmen riding home in air
> Tilt at windmills never there.

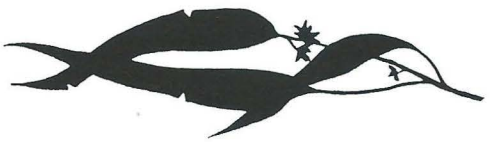
Across the plains not far to the north lay Coorain Station, site of much of Jill Ker Conway's bestseller, *The Road from Coorain*. She described these horizons and skies of her childhood with compelling accuracy: "Human purposes are dwarfed by such a blank horizon ... on the plains the horizon is always with us and there is no retreating from it. Its blankness travels with our every step and waits for us at every point of the compass."

While eating those rolls I realised the aptness of Anne Bell's line: "sheep-tracks laced the paddocks to the sky".

And so on down Mutherumbung Road past Mutherumbug Station to see 'Alma' writ large on the huge shearing shed. The Bells took over Alma in 1876. The family remained for nearly ninety years until 1964 when the Morphetts acquired it. Alma is named after a short river in the Crimea, the scene of a major battle between British and Russian forces in 1854.

Anne's grandfather, Lewis Bell, came from Annan in Scotland. Family legend has it that Robert the Bruce gave the Bells their first grant of land at Annan. "Why dispute it?" asks Anne. Lewis Bell's son, Lewis, married Isabel Waugh from neighbouring Clare Station. The Waughs, according to a local western Riverina informant, are "a very old well-to-do family". In 1938 Clare covered 300,000 acres which made it one of the biggest stations in the area, as it remains today.

Anne's father, Lewis Bell, managed Alma. According to one of Anne's governesses, Patricia Plunkett (née Andrews), he was a kindly, good-tempered and reliable person who spent long hours working on the property, in his homestead office and supervising the work of the station hands. In 1939 the work force included an overseer, four stockmen, an elderly handy man and two cooks, one at the homestead and another in the men's quarters.



The young governess regarded Mrs Bell with awe, for she strictly managed the household affairs and the stores and provisions for the homestead as well as working hard at household duties. "She washed, ironed, polished floors and scrubbed veranda boards with knees on the floor and hands on a brush."

By virtue of the remoteness of the property, Anne Bell's education had to be conducted by correspondence and assisted with governesses.

Young governesses from the city must have suffered a culture shock when they went to such posts: the isolation and distances, the seemingly endless saltbush plains, the heat, the simple and basic life, the impassable roads following rain.

Patricia Plunkett went to Alma in January 1939 at the age of seventeen to spend a year preparing Anne to enter Pymble Ladies' College, Sydney, the following year. Answering a newspaper advertisement, she got the post and flew

from Melbourne to Hay by light plane to be met by Lewis Bell. After spending the night at the now-demolished Tattersall's Hotel, where most of the pastoralist families stayed when in Hay, her new employer drove her the eighty miles to Alma.

She found Anne Bell easy to teach and a quick learner. The two girls, with only five years separating them, shared a love of horses and riding which they indulged each afternoon. They rode to neighbouring homesteads on visits, galloped across claypans or quietly took sheep from one paddock to another. On these rides Anne Bell pointed out to her city governess the various native plants, grasses and flowers.

Occasionally there were visitors who stayed for a while, or picnic races, parties and dances to attend.

Mail arrived twice a week, Tuesday and Saturday, delivered by a mailman driving horses in a sulky over a two-to-three-hundred-mile run. The mailman brought vegetables and other things, too, a time of great excitement. This mailman greatly impressed Anne Bell. Years later, she wrote an evocative piece about the man, his skills with horses and his nonchalant temperament. It appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

> The clearest picture I have is his arrival on Saturday mornings, flashing down from the great white, wooden gate that opened into our horse paddock, his feet firmly braced against the splashboard of the sulky, and foam flying back over everything, from the open mouths of the iron-grey ponies that trotted down that last stretch, their heads on their chests, their pounding hooves a bass to the treble of chain and bitring. The acrid smell of their sweat distends my nostrils still, and I can see the great gobbets of cream foam, coloured with dust and mud, that dripped from black flank and steaming belly, as they fretted and fidgeted at the garden gate.

As the years roll by she has only to listen to "hear the mailman on his way, handling time as nonchalantly as he handled his horses."

Patricia Plunkett recalls how the mail would be tipped out on the floor of the vast hallway mat and letters and parcels sorted out.

Merrowie Creek is less than one hundred yards from the homestead and is bordered by gnarled swamp box trees (*Eucalytus largiflorens*), pretty Mutherumbung (*Acacia cheelii*), canegrass and the introduced boxthorn which seems to bob up so frequently in the western Riverina. There is a small island and quiet pools. This is where Anne Bell often played as a child "and swam with ducks and swans and water hens – and occasionally the odd snake". Dawn and I explored the playground, a tiny oasis where one could easily forget the worst drought for twenty years. In pale winter sunshine, a huge white-necked heron floated down into the creek to fish, blue wrens flashed and darted, parrots chattered contentedly and pelicans and ibises regularly visit. Anne Bell celebrated those pelicans in a poem of that name:

> ... Each long, sweet summer, as a child
> I shared a muddy creek with birds like these,
> Ponderous on land, benign and mild,
> Thoughtfully probing the weed beneath the trees
> That traced the creek across the endless plain.

Mutherumbung trees, sometimes called Motherumbah, are named *Acacia cheelii* after the botanist Edwin Cheel. They are handsome weeping little trees providing good shade and spectacular blossom. Along the creek at Alma some trees grow low, almost horizontal limbs. Anne Bell's pet goats would climb along such limbs to nibble the foliage and in times of drought she would lop pieces off the taller trees for the goats. She had, too, a special Mutherumbung tree which had comfortable limbs on which she sat to read while her pony waited below in the lignum.

AT THE AGE OF TWELVE Anne went to Sydney as a boarder at Pymble Ladies' College. The wrench must have been great. She had never seen so many people before and felt quite desperate about being away from home: "Cried when I went there – cried when I left."

Sympathetic English teachers encouraged her to read and write and loaned her novels and poetry from their own collections. A poem she wrote during her last year at school appeared in the *Bulletin* under a *nom-de-plume.*

She finished at Pymble Ladies' College shortly after the end of the Second World War. She wanted to study journalism and get a BA degree but her father's health was poor, her mother was overworked and her brother, just out of the navy, also had health problems. She felt obliged to return to Alma as station hand and general factotum.

Times on the station were often quite appalling. "I would never again want to live through the droughts of the 40s", she writes. "Blinding and frightening dust storms, having to wheel barrow loads of dust and sand off the verandahs ... We had to shoot some of our old loved station hacks ... and the sound of a crow still stills my heart, old ewes with their eyes picked out."

Sometimes the floods came, inconvenient yet exciting. "I have left innumerable 'lastic sides in the mud of Alma pulling sheep out of the spreading water and having the mud suck off a boot. And I most certainly should have been drowned when I had a horse, not one of my usual accomplished swimmers, washed clean over the top of me in flood water."

Nevertheless, despite all the problems, she knew it as a wonderful country: "Unless you've done it, no one knows the joy of a good lively horse, a good season, the plains purple and white with sweet peas and everlastings, fat and lively sheep. It had its real rewards and true beauties."

The sweet pea Anne Bell praises is *Swainsonia burkittii*, the woolly Darling pea which surely must be spectacular in good seasons. She garlanded her pony bridle with them, took armfuls home to her mother and marvelled at their sight and scent.

Such are the things from which poetry comes – for some.

Anne Bell's interest in poetry grew early. Her father and her numerous aunts and uncles liked Australian bush ballads and bandied snippets about in everyday work and conversation. She was fortunate enough, she believes, "to have parents who pointed out the beauties of everyday life" and she "felt some compulsion to celebrate it, or the beauties or the things that were good and interesting." Such an environment helped fertilise a poetic interest and as she observes, "you have a lot of thinking time sitting on a horse behind a mob of sheep."

Her poems written at Alma or those influenced by that country and its people have a vitality and imagery which has real appeal. A drover draws a mud map:

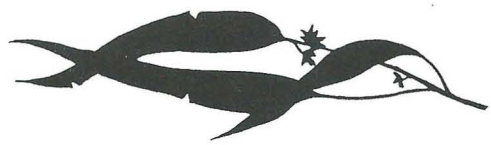
He'd a wall-eyed dog and bally mare
And eyes like amber tea,
And he sent the dog to hold the lead
And drew my map for me.

He smoothed the dust with his brown palm
As the leaders began to ring,
And cast a prick-eared kelpie bitch
Out to the spreading wing.

Another drover yarns while fondling his kelpie:

The action worn with years,
His eyes caressing horizons;
His hands, the bitch's ears.

BULLOCK-BELL AND hobble-chain, ancestors, tanks and troughs, Cootamundra wattles, plovers dappled eggs, these poems are embedded in the endless saltbush plains and the people and the life then lived there. Another place, another age, fine observations and the sensitivity to encapsulate them in verse which, although published sometimes in the *Bulletin* and other journals and although some literary prizes were won, received too little attention and insufficient readers.



These days, she has gained much more recognition as a children's poet. Her work has appeared in anthologies such as *Someone is Flying Balloons, Rattling in the Wind*, and *Pardon My Garden*. In *Apples from Hurricane Street* her poem 'Greetings' rests easily alongside the work of Tennyson, Edward Lear, Emily Dickinson and

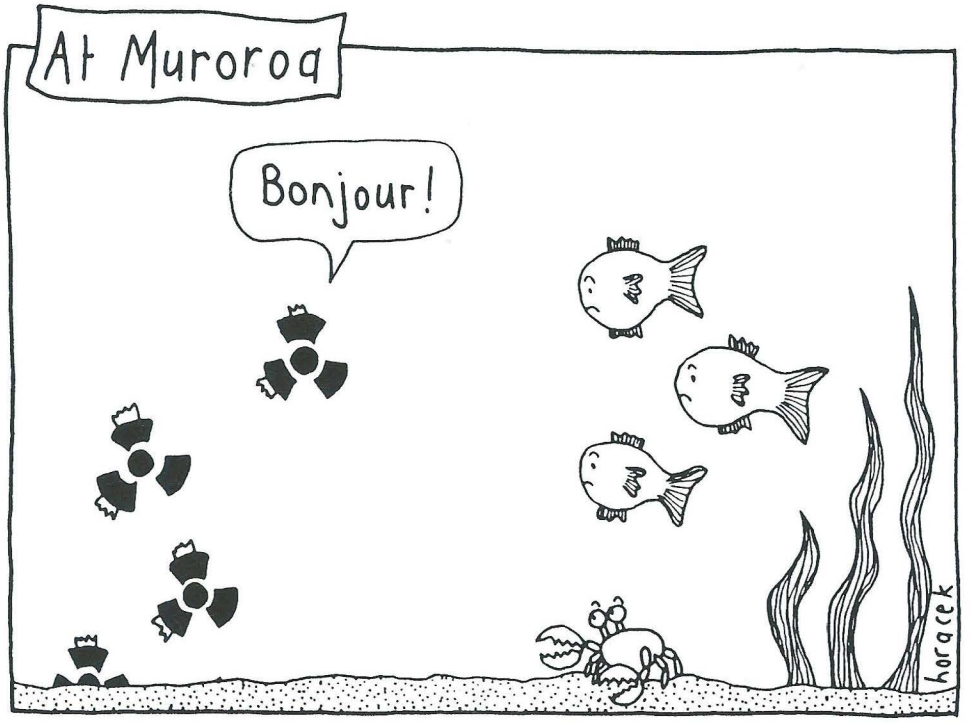
other great names of literature. Not bad for a girl from the saltbush plains.

Anne Bell left Alma in the 1950s following the death of her father and her marriage.

Writing now after forty years, a sense of loss dominates her comments about Alma and its surrounds. "The old slab stable, the horse yards, the cane-grass sheds are all bulldozed down ... channels and roads run where I rode out to the horizon, planes instead of horses ... The landscape has changed, the vegetation is now vastly different, not for the good, I think. Water has been channelled from the creeks and although I guess a blessing in some ways has probably brought various problems, not the least would be a comparative overstocking of the country. It is a fragile land. Grubs ate out the saltbush in large areas some years ago although I understand some of it is coming back in the more sympathetically managed places. Fires were virtually unheard of in our time and seem to be a fairly frequent danger now."

She now lives in a NSW country town busy with writing and craft work, doting on two sons, one a journalist in Sydney the other a landscape architect in England. Another children's picture book is due off the press and a volume of children's poems is being considered. She plants sunflowers for the ring-necks, rosellas and galahs, watches the finches under the sprinkler. There is little doubt though that part of her is still with the horizons, the sweat and dust, the wildflowers and floods, the horses and headaches of the Alma Station of forty and fifty years ago.

John Sendy is a Victorian writer and historian.



'Life on the Edge'

ALLAN PATIENCE

Fighting for Their Lives: Students at War in Burma

THE MILITARY JUNTA controlling Burma (which it has renamed Myanmar) is known by its James Bondian acronym, SLORC (State Law and Order Restoration Committee). It is a ruthless regime co-operating with drug barons in the golden triangle, with corrupt groups in the Thai military, and with China which views Myanmar as a pliable element in its strategy to gain access to the Indian Ocean.

In 1988 SLORC conducted a savage operation against students and workers in central Burma who were building a democratic opposition to the junta. The carnage in the streets was hideous. Thousands were slaughtered. Thousands more were imprisoned and tortured. Many died in the military prisons; others went mad. The remarkable leader around whom the political opposition was coalescing, Aung San Suu Kyi, was put under house arrest. She remains there to this day.

Thousands of the students and workers fled into the jungle, to states under the control of one or more of Burma's many 'ethnic minorities'. (These 'minorities' constitute more than half the population of Myanmar.) Many refugees from central Burma were middle class kids from high schools, universities, and institutes of technology in Rangoon (Yangon) and Mandalay. They joined insurgency armies organised by the leadership in the ethnic states. Arguably the fiercest and most successful of these is the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) in Karen State on the eastern side of Burma.

I spent July and August of 1994 in a camp of student-soldiers under the command of the KNLA. The camp was beside the village of Sa Khan Thit, about a week's walk through the jungle and across the mountains from what was the headquarters of Karen State in Manerplaw. (In January Manerplaw was overrun by SLORC forces.) To earn my keep I was asked to offer some classes for any students who wanted to attend. The camp leader (Than Oo) was particularly keen for me to teach an unequivocally political curriculum: democratic theory, human rights, international politics. I anticipated an easy class schedule, maybe one meeting a week.

But the students demanded *two classes a day*, one in the morning before they went out into the field, and one in the evening after their patrols and other duties were over. It was with real difficulty that I persuaded them to let me have the weekends off.

From the first class the whole camp (about thirty soldiers) turned up each day at 6.30 a.m. Than Oo was my interpreter. A battered whiteboard was nailed to the wall of my small house. Beside the board the students had stuck a poster of Aung San Suu Kyi ("Our Beloved Leader"). One dehydrated felt pen dangled on a string attached to the whiteboard.

Before each class the students propped their weapons against my front steps and sat silently on their haunches on the verandah. We had one text book – an American college text entitled *Democracy* – which was handled reverently by the students. Fortunately it was never read. Its triumphalist version of economic rationalism was hardly relevant to the situation the students were facing in the jungle.

In the two short months I was with them we discussed a broad range of theories about democracy, human rights and political freedoms. I was immensely humbled talking of luxurious abstractions to students who were fighting (and in some horrible instances, dying)

for the very ideas about which I was prissily lecturing. The students were amongst the keenest I have taught anywhere. Their mainly Theravada Buddhist culture puts high value on learning. Many of them had interrupted their studies to flee into the jungle in 1988. They thirsted for ideas and debate.

Apart from their regular brushes with death, the students had to cope with harsh living conditions, infrequent and poor food (the staple fare was rice, sometimes garnished with boiled pumpkin tendrils), and very rudimentary medical attention from 'medics' (dedicated people akin to the barefoot doctors of China). Malaria, cholera, TB, and hepatitis were endemic in the rain saturated jungle. It was heartbreaking seeing students sick or to learn of their deaths.

The only means of entertainment the students had was one battered guitar. Phone Kyaw, one of the liveliest soldiers in my camp, could play well. On most evenings he would sing us sentimental songs from central Burma, picked up on the radio and memorised.

When I was leaving I asked the student-soldiers what they would like most. They agreed unanimously that they wanted an electronic keyboard with which to make even more music in their spare time.

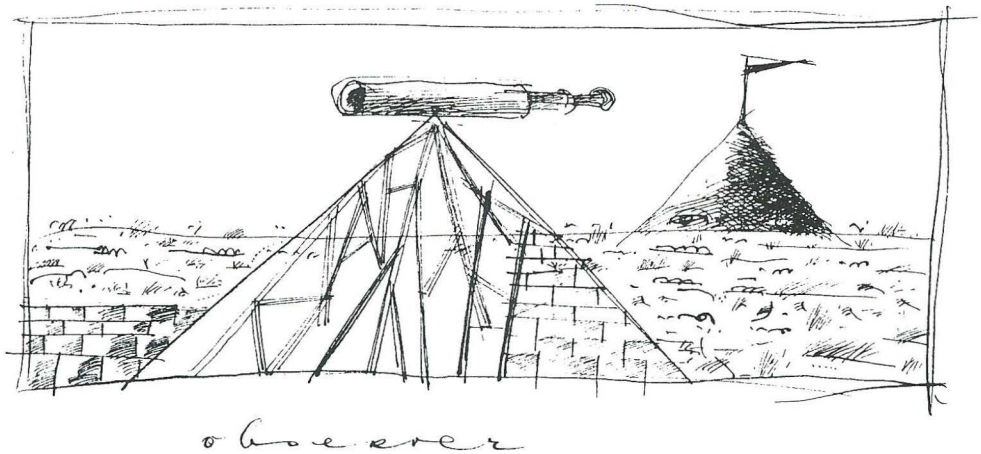
When I got to Japan I wrote to the students in a university I know well in Australia, asking them for some assistance in funding an electronic keyboard for their counterparts in the jungle. They contacted me to tell me that the music-making seemed a bit frivolous. They might agree to funding "something educational".

I also wrote to five Australian schools asking them to invite their students to correspond with the students in Burma, and maybe to send some funds. One (a poor Catholic parish school) responded immediately. Another wrote back inviting me to address a student assembly on my return to Australia. Three others (middle class, very rich, all professing "Christian values") failed to reply to me.

I told a friend of mine about these Australian responses to my request. He is a street worker among homeless teenage drug addicts and prostitutes in St Kilda. He told his street kids. A few days later he gave me $500 which the kids had raised for the students in the jungle.

And then I read of Bob Hawke's recent business trip to Myanmar. In his judgement, the military junta has a "genuine commitment" to improving the lives of the Burmese people. Who does he think he's kidding? The saddest thing is that he probably epitomises most Australians' attitudes to the great pain endured by so many in Asia. Thank God for poor parish schools and street kids.

Allan Patience teaches Politics and Asian Studies at Victoria University of Technology.



Jiri Tibor

DEATH A DAILY NECESSITY

I die at night. This is what is happening. Darkness is falling within. Birds have all gone. Nothing is left of my thoughts. Only something. Something so posthumous that I can only postpone to imagine. Something that is neither here nor there. Full of betweenness. You damned stupid thing! How you analyse!

Dying once a night is a daily necessity. Not in bed but at desk. Burying yourself alive in words. Against the world. Taking existence in a completely forgotten form.

Dying but is joy. How can birds sing after dying each night? All I lose is myself and time.

Dying for oneself is something no one will do. But so beautiful, so terribly beautiful that only the words will know. The dead man has himself to tell the tale to.

Dying at night. At desk. At heart, where one's only friends are his words who mourn over his dead body with these:

Die each night like birds
from whom the song ...

OUYANG YU

WHITE SPHINX

White sphinx
lies on the hayshed
roof
paws and skin
squeezing the latent
heat of the day
green eyes
eagle-scoping
a landscape
of mice possibilities
and all the while
his long white tail
churns
the air into butter
pats, the thick
edible air
of the autumn harvest.

LORRAINE MARWOOD

SLATE

How quietly they dispossess a roof,
jokelessly eradicating slate,
mossy dynasties frisbied
down like broken grace,
anthems savage, eviscerate.
All morning they work,
fluent vandals in their shorts,
indifferent to vertigo or politics,
unfussed by sermons of metal
or talk-back. Ruthless gymnasts,
they expose the guts of a roof,
its webbiest, blacksomest secret,
prepare the remnant frame for
whatever follows inopportune slate –
time's corrugated plate.

PETER ROSE

PROGRAM ABOUT THE CHILEAN WRITER

Scene: two hugging in a lonely
room amongst rooftops.
The rain is blown against the window.
She places the back of her hand
against his cheek.

Scene: water on sills and eaves.
It is the Pinochet years and her lover
has disappeared. She watches
the furniture being taken through
the window, tied in white sheets.

Scene: two chairs. The interviewer
says, "We won't talk about it."
– meaning the lover.
The writer's face is eclipsed
by pain. Another absence.
Her lover did exist.
She wanted to talk.

KIRSTY SANGSTER

BUSINESS CLASS EUPHEMISM

All these mornings

All this worldliness
meticulous, celerious

All these sunrises
tinting a dozed city

All these taxis heading nowhere
all this baritonal cheer

All this luggage
all these uniforms

All these heads
winged in tabloids
Everyman with his catastrophe

All these polished skulls
hymnals of appointments

All this elevation
suave predestination
doused in cologne

All this licence
all these collars
breakfasting on certainty

PETER ROSE

SCENES OF FAMILY LIFE

Through the curtain of vines like a peeping tom,
I watch them.
The intimate scenes of family life, pre-chick
unroll like a slick blue movie.
Leaning on the stick-dry trunk of a gum-tree,
I stare transfixed.
He dances deliberately, it's
a routine, thud-landings followed by Nijinsky
leaps.
Yesterday I heard the overture,
today the opera;
he offered her
all the songs gathered in the acoustic gully,
fully.
Whip birds, bell birds, Wonga pigeons and
kookaburras,
and every now and then, a rooster, goose or
dog.
What lovers
these lyre birds are and how odd
she moves indifferently higher,
apparently not inspired by her cock lyre,
but selecting tid-bits from the doona ground
the off-hand way girls will chocolate fossick
from a box offered
by a keen gonadal swain
at the tinsel cinema.
Give-it-her
he thinks in his cock brain,
and he does this again and again.
Though I peer through the live curtain,
I am not certain
to see the act of love-copulation.
They ascend unfurtively,
singing to increase their stimulation,
and high in the gully, commit creation.

BA PHILLIPPS

REPETITIVE

You've said that, she says & she's right.
Only fifteen minutes before I had
(dare I say 'said that'?)
Perhaps she thinks I think she's deaf.
Perhaps she thinks I think she lacks
savvy, sophistication or is, in short,
a fool which I don't & she isn't
because not only can she tell
one sentence from another sentence
but one sentence & the same sentence apart.
While not deaf as a post yet, I don't mind
a speaker speaking up a second time.
I wouldn't want to miss anything &
the seconds can provide, well, extra time.
But she's no harder of hearing than I am
as I've already said & I'm saying again.
I'm nothing if not emphatic but I'm

not expanding into the 0 & infinite o's of
the Great Ooooooooooooom of the universe.
Apart from the problem of gravity &
the unbearable heaviness of being 65%
water in the driest State of the driest
(I don't want to state the obvious
although the obvious wouldn't necessarily
be the same as repeating myself)
any repetition of words, words, words is no
foreshadowing or rescinding of the motion
of the earth's rotation & revolution
day & night day & night year in year out.
To To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow I'd
add Today & Yesterday & repeat myself (twice
each).
I repeat myself, therefore I am? No. No.
I repeat myself, therefore I am repetitive.
To say. Yes, but ah! To say again.
To underline, to italic, to bold
if I may be so bold as to embolden
even if there are two ga's in gaga.

GRAHAM ROWLANDS

STEPHANIE GREEN

Life and the University

MY HEROINES ARE the wicked witch, the dark-haired sister, Mata Hari, Vita Sackville-West, Karen Blixen, Diana Rigg; the adventuresses that I always wanted to be – when I didn't want to be Zorro.

Karen smelt a little of all of them. Perhaps it was her perfume, her clothes, her elegant Brazilian shoes, or the little, dangerous sensation she gave you in your fingertips that she was about to do something no one else would dare to do.

Karen went out of her way to speak to strangers.

She lay on her back with her knees apart on a refectory table and recited *The Lady of The Lake* all the way through from memory. She made mistakes, but no one knew.

Karen would never run to catch a bus, but once, beside the Hume Highway on the way to Sydney, I saw her walk out into the middle of Lake George in high-heeled shoes looking for water. She turned around and waved. I took a photograph. It was too far away to see if she was smiling.

I met Karen after a lecture by Dr Frederic Callahan on 'Death and Renewal in "The Winter's Tale" '. "It's a soft life," Karen said, rolling her eyes after Dr Callahan's departing paunch. "Imagine spending your days reading Shakespeare and coming in late to work."

Blonde and bored, with a Marilyn Monroe hairstyle and straight 'A's for her papers, Karen was unlike anyone else I knew.

Karen ran away from home at eighteen. She went to America and married a gay man just for a visa, so that she could live forever in the land of dreams.

Karen is divorced and has survived cervical cancer. She came home to Australia just so that she could go to university. She said, "I've seen enough of life."

She lured us in clusters, we girls far from home, who wore t-shirts and jeans and kept our good dresses for parties. Clever Karen, and beautiful, who wore leather and silk just to classes, who knew the things all of us secretly longed to know.

We sat around her in the refectory. We were her disciples, her confidantes, her friends. No one else could understand her. Everything bored her.

But, at any moment something might come along, a new adventure, a new lover, some surprise that could never be anticipated. Karen, soon to be forty, looked as if still in her twenties.

"Youth and beauty" she would say. "You can have anything when you are young." She took a little from each of us, fed on our youth, kept her complexion luminescent with our smiles and sighs.

Only her cervix would have displayed her age, and that she kept well hidden.

I was captivated by Karen's luscious, hard-headed talk, her stories of new worlds, her books by Lillian Helmann and Anais Nin. We sat on the library steps with our backs to the sun after morning classes.

"Old Hammerhead Hemingway," Karen would say, "old Snarling-Dog Cassidy and Jibing-Jack Kerouac. They are the dead ones. Read Dashiell Hammet if you must. Read William Faulkner. But – don't you think? – all men are obsessed with death."

We laughed at all of them. Snide Alexander

Pope, and the lugubrious tabloidist Dickens. Great big Ernest Hemingway with his guns and sentiment. We laughed at Shakespeare who thought Cressida could forget her Troilus, when really it was she that was betrayed, for he loved his war more than he loved her.

We mourned poor Portia who cut her own flesh to prove the weight of her love for Brutus, and tried to save him from his fate. She should have kept him in bed with her, we thought, but then they would have said she was a whore.

WE LAUGHED AT Dr Frederic Callahan with his porous skin and port-stained nose, his hideous cigars, and his sly preoccupation with the sexual in English literature. During lectures his forehead moistened his white curls. His soft belly lifted at moments of emphasis, pushing from his jacket and subsiding back again.

In tutorials Fred flexed his repertoire, 'The Changeling', 'The Duchess of Malfi', the poems of Lord Rochester, the bawdiest of Restoration plays. He smiled for the end of each wistful hour with his students then sent them back into the world again, shameless and elderly.

Students filled Dr Callahan's classes and sat quietly, never quite sure what it was they were meant to do or say. Here they were, the girls far from home, filing in for the execution. Eager as usual, they crossed their knees, surprised at this critical brush with sex. They expected something more romantic.

Fate seemed to press upon their shoulders, its fingers crept down towards their breasts, its insect feet crawled up past their knees.

But, it was only Dr Frederic Callahan asking a question. "What do you suppose the fellow in 'To His Coy Mistress' wants of her? What on earth do you think she is being coy about?" Fred asked, turning his head from side to side to stare at the class with one elbow bent, his arm pushed at right angles to his knee as if he was about to rise in irritation at such polished innocence.

In class, Dr Frederic Callahan wore his taste for literary sex like a neatly knotted tie. The girls covered their embarrassment with whispered jibes. *He's a pervert. He must be impotent* – they hissed, sleek and surreptitious, behind their paperback editions of the current text. They were piqued that their silence was taken for ignorance.

Fred himself never knew why his classes were more than two-thirds young women. He perceived the acid jaws of fate waiting to swallow them, which saddened him.

"This poem gives me a great sense of immediacy," said the middle-aged one, after an eternal silence, patting her chest and looking up at the ceiling. It occurred to him that he had encountered, perhaps not for the first time, a stupid woman.

"Sex!" I replied, in answer to his question, surprised at my own audacity. Fred has his faults, but I like him for his Jane Austen essays and will forgive him his other peccadilloes.

Actually, I think he was a little shocked.

I went to see Fred alone in his room, wrinkling my nose as he poured out vermouth into plastic cups.

He enjoys loosening tongues. Who knows what they will reveal, these young girls with their squirming burdens – success or failure, the loss of virginity, the survival of the planet. He likes to say he is good at listening – before he begins lecturing you on morality or literature.

Each of his classes produces some small crisis. Lawrence, for example, provokes romantic confessions. Rochester irks thumbs and awkward tongues. I have even seen outpourings from grave, new Christians brought down upon his wicked, old head.

We discussed fate in Coriolanus. I told him I didn't like the play, which he appeared to think scandalous. Despite his reputation, he is easy to shock.

He told me he was worried about me because I was "attracted to the submerged parts of the soul". He said curiosity would "only get you into trouble" which he thought was inevitable because I am young, and that he is "old enough to know enough of the world to stay out of it".

I took what he said as a form of provocation. So I asked him about his book collection – Being and Nothingness, Aphra Behn, Hazlitt's Essays. He talked. I listened, and thereby escaped unscathed.

KAREN PRAYED to the lipstick goddess before the altar of her silver bedroom mirror. She prayed for eternal beauty as she brushed her hair.

In a framed pre-Raphaelite poster on the wall

above the bed, the goddess wore a gold and ivory mantle over a purple shift. Karen saw her reflection in the mirror behind her head.

The goddess stretched her limbs and swung her hair over one shoulder, then slipped her feet into tall-heeled shoes and stepped down from her painted sofa. In Karen's room the goddess balanced herself along the top of the mirror frame. One foot dangled over the edge. Karen put down her brush. She glanced at herself in the mirror. Everything was in place, except her mouth, which was slightly open.

The goddess opened her palette and let loose her colours around the room. Desert Rose hovered above the window. Primrose brushed its fingers along the sills. Violet Gossamer delicately swathed the walls.

The goddess came down from the mirror and perched next to Karen on the make-up stool. She conjured an artist's palette onto the palm of one hand. "Crimson Death?" she asked, touching Karen's lips with her little brush."Azure Snow for the eyes? A little rouge? Here is a cloud of Marble Ice to whiten your skin".

The colours danced around Karen's face, skittishly. They hovered above her, chattering. They left gaudy smudges on everything they touched. This was not quite what she had asked for.

The lipstick goddess took Karen by the hand. "There are seven uses of beauty," she told her. "Beauty inspires love, calls up desire, disarms an enemy, acquires fortunes, incites jealousy and is a constant reminder of the brief flowering and fading of human life. Beauty causes nations to go to war. It is an art of its own making. Beauty will always be coveted. It will forever bind its owner to the whims of the external world. It can never be truly possessed by anyone."

The goddess wrapped Karen in her cloak. "Close your eyes," the lipstick goddess commanded. Together they stepped forward into the silvered glass. It was like swimming in cold, still water.

Once through, Karen opened her eyes and looked behind her. She could not see where she had come from. Everything around her shimmered. She was surrounded by surfaces of light. She appeared to be in a long room that was completely covered with mirrors. It was as if she was *inside* the mirror itself.

They passed through long passages. She could not tell one from the other. The goddess led her deep into the maze. Karen saw her own beautiful face reproduced thousands of times. In each vision, the goddess glimmered beside her. She did not know where to look, there were so many. She could not tell where the mirrors began and ended. Was the room enclosed or was it a corridor with entrances and exits concealed by the brilliant multiplicity of images?

Karen stopped for a moment to examine her reflection. Something seemed strange. She looked closely and realised she was looking at herself, as if she were her own reflection. Behind her face she could see her bed and bookshelves, her wardrobe, her clothes.

She turned to ask a question, but the goddess was disappearing. First the hairline, then the eyes and nose began to melt away. "Come back! Don't go. How do I get back? I don't know where I am," cried Karen. The eyes were closed in the perfect face as it faded, unsmilingly. The goddess was silent. Only her lips hovered for a moment, like lipstick on glass after a woman has pressed her face to a window.

She was alone; no books, no people. Karen was left surrounded by reflections of herself. "Which one am I?" she wondered. She was afraid, but she knew better than to let it show.

Or so she says, but I know better than to believe *her* stories – which is why, I suppose, I must make up my own.

ADORE ME, Karen whispered to young girls in the refectory. Surround me. Listen to what I have to say. You are everything to me. Take my hands. Ah, let me take yours. In parting will you not raise your lips to mine? Here, take my jewels. See how they become you. Put on my clothes. Oh yes, they are a perfect fit. Now you are ready. Let me tell you my story. It will be our secret. For I know only you will understand.

She did not need to say the words for them to be recognised. We leaned into Karen's circle. We all knew it was seduction. She would take each of us aside. She would say: "No one else understands me. I can reveal myself only to you." None of us knew how far we were prepared to go.

Karen whispered secrets. I listened. I am good at that.

"I once posed naked for my lover," she told

me. "He was a photographer, and a very handsome louse. He betrayed me, for he sold my picture to a pornographic magazine."

"I was beaten by my father who found my picture in that magazine. Imagine him standing in the aisle of a newsagency, flipping pages beside a row of other men. He found his daughter there. He was ashamed. He desired her image. It's funny in a black kind of way."

I saw a father, terrified that what he had created he might yet destroy.

Her mother told her that she must leave home. "Was she trying to protect me or destroy me?" wondered Karen. "I was nineteen. That was when I was at my prime. After that I went to America. I would have done anything, then, for a visa, just so I would never have to return."

Yet, she came back ten years later when the new world suddenly seemed ugly and old.

Karen, at forty, looked like a girl and had a way of turning towards you with her laughing eyes that seemed only for you. She asked constantly: "What is the point of it all? Don't you think existence is pointless?"

She loved to embarrass: "I know," she said looking slyly at me "that some of you are virgins. Aren't you curious to know what goes on?"

Karen said she came back to Australia for the education of *mind*. She had long ago achieved the education of body. She said bitterly, "We are creatures of pleasure, intellectual, physical, it is all the same. No one does anything for love. All the great lovers are dead. What is the point of it all? There are no true poets left. And I am past my prime."

Karen carried lipstick and poetry in her handbag and modelled herself along slimmer lines than Marilyn Monroe. She saw herself as the great unrecognised, intellectual erotiqueuse of her country and her generation. "Genius only exists in the past tense. You have to be dead before you are recognised."

Karen loved temptation and lived on the knife-edge of two lives. She had secrets and sometimes she would tell me what they were.

She put her lips right up close to my ear. I felt her lips touching my skin. I heard the moisture of her mouth. The heat of her breath was like kisses. I waited in a daze of sensation.

"Do you know," she said "that Fred and I are having an affair?"

LULLABY
(for Erica)

The weeping woman
is sitting on a cane chair
on the verandah listening
to the sparrows argue as to
who sleeps where in the tree
across the road in the park.
The absent minded moths
bump into each other
and apologise humbly
while the stars whisper
among themselves over
who casts the brightest shadow.

Moonlight shimmers
on the wings of a cricket
perched on the worn gate.
A cold wind stumbles
onto the verandah and blows
its drunken breath over her.
The weeping woman listens
as the cricket flexes its wings
and sings a lullaby to put to sleep
the dreams of ordinary people.
He has a lonely voice this cricket
singing a sad and beautiful song.

MICHAEL CRANE

I HAVE BEEN CALLED

just like her mother
nothing like her mother
hasn't got a mother
the one with no mother
needs a mother's touch
never had a mother's love
looks just like her mother
doesn't even look like her mother
all those years without a mother
had to bring herself up
had to be her own mother

acts like a mother to her father
like a mother to her father
like a wife to her father
does the job of a mother
carries on like her mother
stepped into her mother's shoes
never knew her mother
never knew a mother's love
doesn't need a mother
needs a mother
needs a mother's guidance
can't miss what you never had

the kid
glad I'm not her mother
expects me to mother her
expects me to be her mother
not my kid
wants me to be her mother
wants to be mothered
his kid
wants a mother for her
wants a mother

just like part of the family
one of the family
the daughter I never had
the sister we never had
daughter number three
as if she's our own daughter
just like my sister
my stepsister
my half-sister
really like an aunt
more than my own daughter
acts like she's my daughter
acts like she's her grandmother's daughter
acts like a grand-daughter *and* a daughter
pretending to be a daughter
thinks she's my mother's daughter
trying to take away my mother

looking for a substitute mother
looking for *that* sort of love

it's because she never had a mother
never had a mother
got a mother complex
a mother fixation
never mentioned her mother to me the whole time
wears her mother's clothes
lost her mother's watch
cries about her mother after all these years

will make a good mother one day
a born mother
a little mother
like she's my mother
can't wait to be a mother
hates the idea of motherhood
mothers her boyfriends
mothers her father
needs someone to mother
mothers everybody
just like my mother

SARAH CARMELA HELEN ENDACOTT

ANSON CAMERON

Whatever of Harvey

WE KNOW THE Ninety Mile Beach as a two-slab trip in third gear. But considering the target of our long trawl we decide beer is not enough. We take bottles of black rum. Harvey's drink for significant occasions.

And we take an esky and an orange compost bag to hold what we might find. Tony puts the bag by his feet in the back where we can't see it. He sits in the back despite him being Harvey's best man and that always giving him some rank over us in matters of Harvey. Because he's short and doesn't need the leg room. And not nearly pushy enough to argue himself into the front ahead of either of us on a trip when a front seat berth is so important.

We gun down the ramp and through the loose sand, fishtailing up onto the hardness where the waves reach. I turn west in the shallows. The weather is horizontal off a boiling brown sea. Big rain bursting on the side of the Cruiser. Tony mixes three rum and Cokes and passes two over into the front.

The beach has all the Strait can hold washed up on it. We're three days into a storm of south wind, and it's all here. Driftwood, bottles, whole trees, buoys, fish, birds, oil drums, livestock, washed-out rivers, mounds of kelp and again and again, stuffed koalas.

The police made their sweep of this beach in their Bell Jet Ranger three days ago when the news was hot but the wind was wrong. When no flotsam and no face-down seaman would appear. When the beach was clean of Harvey.

It's only now the south wind has filtered the whole Strait through this sand we will find him. Anyone who knows anything about the sea knows we'll meet Harvey today. What there still is of him. Missing now three days from hunting among the schools of giant snapper on the eastern floor of the Strait where its deep waters cascade down into the Tasman. Not fishing. Stalking the deck in a crouch. Hunting. For that one, again. That maybe you can't get, again.

Beside me Mick gives advice on what to drive over and what to drive around. Around piles of kelp and driftwood. Over koalas, fish and birds.

I've got Johnny Cash through the speakers. His sadder songs conspicuously solo. The duets with a tone-deaf, fish-mad family man over.

As we drive we start to tell our fool-tales about Harvey. To tear into him for the love of him. We wouldn't do it for any woman we loved. Her we'd praise and cry over. But I knew there'd be fool-tales for Harvey. Because I remember us telling them for my brother Colin the barefoot champion, after he cut the inside of a bend too tight and skied into a labyrinth of red-gum roots bulging out of the Victorian bank of the Murray and got tangled in there, a fish-belly pallid prisoner, until someone fetched a chain saw to cut him out. And by that time he internally bled deaf to our shouts of "Hang on, Col. We're here. We're coming."

At the wake we drank and told fool-tales about him 'til we'd traded the power to stand for the power to cry. And we'd run dry of insults and could finally say how we loved him. It's a gruelling session, but you get there eventually.

This search is our wake for Harvey, so we start on him. Mick, Harvey's big brother, fills our rums and asks if we remember the time Harvey was asked to address the Royal Auto Club and he drank too much Mallee Rally Claret pre-speech. And when his moment came he stood on the stage and offered what he called a

small word on truck drivers.

"Not every truck driver is a big, tattooed hood, he said. That's where the driving public makes its mistake. And a bad driver of trucks, like a bad car driver, should be pulled out of his vehicle and punched up. If you climb up into the cabin and find you've happened onto a big one, throw your arms around him and tell him driving Kenworth is a hell-of-a art form that has you in total awe. But otherwise ... job him. I've accounted for many a line-crossing, light-running long-hauler myself, usually so wired on caffeine they had to be put down twice before they'd stay. Because lenience to truck drivers only makes for unsafe roads. Thank you."

"And that was all Harv had to offer the road user that night," Mick says. We laugh. What a fool. What a drunk. What an outrage.

Tony leans into the front seat for more rum. We're silent and staring as we drive up to a red plastic bag that's half buried and filled and humped with sand and could have been anything. Out past the break terns are hammering themselves into the water. Getting a deep shot at what's there.

Past the red bag, I ask, "Who remembers the time Harvey caught that giant Skipjack?" His fish-of-awe. The fish every fisherman hunts. Fish enough to get the balding liars in the coastal pubs reaching way back past their memories into their imaginations to recall their own, prewar, leviathans. Get them shifting from cheek to cheek on their stools, wanting to be back riding the swell. Telling themselves lies about how they need the sea, not the grog. The fish that's had Harvey at sea these last fifteen years.

Harvey's fish-of-awe was a twenty-seven kilo Skipjack he'd hooked at the eastern end of the Strait where he wasn't telling. A fish full of records. He brought it into The Pacific where we were unemployed that summer and we raised a reverent fuss and took his drinks and slapped his back.

Then he took his fish to the VicFish chiller on the end of the pier to freeze it while it still had its stripes and its clear black eye and was worth varnishing and stuffing and sitting high on a wall. And he came back to continue shouting us what his splendid fish was worth. An all-afternoon session that ended only when Colin got his camera and insisted we get the event down on film.

So we all go down to the big chiller on the end of the pier. Harvey hauls out his fish-of-awe, which is by now dusted white and rock hard, unwieldy for a celebrating man. It's eye frost dead. Colin takes some snaps with us urging them both to put some art into it. Give it meaning, it's a splendid fish. Go on, Harv. Give it a kiss. So Harvey puckers up and a photo is taken. A tonguer, Harv. Slip it the tongue. Passion you wooden-faced fucker. It's a fish big enough to fill a hug. And Harvey, being full of beer and pride, goes for a deep kiss for the camera. Puts his tongue into that head of frosted grey metal ... and gets frozen in there. Welded to his fish by the sub-zero cling that sticks a kid to a fridge door.

Him and his fish-of-awe now one. Us dancing around them. Taking photos and saying it's lucky he's not glued on there by his old-fella, what with his lust for all things piscatorial. Saying what an appropriate freeze that would be.

Him roaring vowel-only asylum noises for freedom. Us not thinking of any other way to unfreeze a man off a fish but to piss him off. So we thaw him off his fish with our stagger-drunk inaccurate streams. Him moaning, eyebrow deep in spray, until our heat frees him into a violent string of abuse and he comes up off that fish like an unmuzzled heeler. The skin of his tongue torn by the freeze and stung by the piss.

"HARVEY AND HIS FISH. What a dill," I say. We are laughing with the memory. On the second bottle and no longer driving around driftwood.

"Harvey's a third generation fuckwit," Mick says. "And no man to scoff at family values." We laugh again. He is speaking of his grandfather's bankruptcies, his father's secretaries, and Harvey's fish. Mick, being Harvey's brother, can include his family in the accusations.

We drink and drive. Watching for Harvey. Waiting for Tony to open up on him with his hilarious memory. In the rear-view mirror I see him rub his eyes – whole face. I put the Desert Duellers to two more koalas, an albatross and an oil can and Tony is still silent, rubbing. I turn to the back seat, punch his knee, and ask, "Where's your memories, Tone? Or do you want us to

start stories you'll only butt in on when we miss a laugh or fuck up a detail?"

By the time I've asked and punched him two or three times we're heading into the surf. I get us back on course and Tony is still quiet.

"Tony?" Mick asks.

"It's the koalas," Tony says. "He was a scholar of rough water. Only something freakish out of left-field like the koalas could have sunk a man who knew his water like Harvey." He takes a drink of straight rum and shoots it in and out his teeth before swallowing. "What I see is he slides down the back of a twenty-footer right onto a ship-dropped container full of Korean koalas. Took his arse out in one foul swipe. And here they are ... Harvey's killers." He points to another koala out front.

Tony's theory. Good enough, too. But it's a replacement for a fool-tale. My eyes meet Mick's. We stare a question back and forth. There will be years to praise Harvey's seamanship. Decades to paint a blameless man. Why now? It's not time.

I give Mick a slow blink. Two full seconds of shut eyes. Where's the transvestite-groping story Tony needs no excuse to tell? The story of the Adam's-appled honey that Harvey shouted about twenty Midoris to get into an upstairs frame of mind. The story that ends with a white-faced Harvey charging back into the bar for fast double-rums and cursing the publican for his clientele. Swearing he'd rather live in a town peopled by golf-club committees than drink an hour with a debased liar like that and smashing the Midori bottle with a fine throw of his tumbler.

That story is Tony's signature tune. My guess is he won't tell it because he's brooding over the stand-off at the ramp back in Lakes Entrance, where he showed up with his decrepit Labrador and a twisted idea of this maybe being her most poignant retrieve.

"We're not taking the dog, Mick told him."

"Cammy's got a helluva nose," he'd said. "Brung in every bird I ever dropped in the rushes. And some I didn't," he smiled.

"What Mick's saying is, we won't take her because of how ignorant she'll behave when we get Harvey on board. Probably trying to roll in him or dine off him," I explained.

Tony stood fists-to-hips offended. "She loved Harvey," he'd said. "And she's trained. Obedient."

"Well tell her 'Stay'," Mick said. And maybe the thought of his Cammy, insulted, unemployed and fogging the windows in his car back in Lakes is what's put this silence into him.

I tell the Midori story. Uninterrupted. Then Mick tells one about a naked, hairless Harvey on the high-board. "A long-ago fuckwit pup," Mick says. We finish the rum and start some beers, laughing hard at the high-board Harvey.

When we stop for a leak Mick walks out ahead and picks a koala out of the foam. He brings it back at a run, holding it overhead like the Liberty torch. He tilts it forward face-down and it makes a noise like a lamb. A wrong Korean guess. He does it four or five times.

"Aha," he yells over the wind. "A confession."

Then he lobs the toy at Tony, who hooks it away with his beer can and surprising footwork for a drunk man in sand. I raise both hands high to signal six. But I drop them when I see the glare Mick is giving Tony. Beyond gamesmanship. More than that. Maybe new hate.

For a minute I think I have lost control of Harvey's wake. My whole knowledge of what we mean to each other tilts.

WE DRIVE THROUGH wet sand. The weather is still fast off the Strait. Along the beach a four-wheel-drive is coming east. Looming fast out of the day at us. The story I'm telling I leave hanging. Even before the number plate grows into HARV we know that's what it says, and that he outbid a statewide handful of other self-happy Harveys for the right to drive it around. White letters on light blue.

At the wheel is Freya. Looking strong. Putting the lie to Harvey's years-told joke that she would make him a fine widower one day.

She's had eighteen years of Harvey's sea knowledge boasted into her. She knows where and when to search. We park nose to nose. In the passenger seat is Deb, Freya's sister, who was mostly disgusted by Harvey in life and so wouldn't be unusually affected by him if she found him frayed by crab and sea-lice and blown tight by gas. A good woman for the search.

I DON'T KNOW ALL we feel at meeting Freya. Her having done thirty miles and us sixty and the whole beach having been covered between us. We feel empty, as the dread and the buzz of finding a friend's body leaves us. Sad, because the beach is driven, he is gone. Fully gone. And guilty, because we're drunk and we've got him in the Cruiser with us, buck's party naked and ready to commit more foolery. And us not being able to get this happy Harvey into her car where maybe he belongs.

Freya's put up with a lot from him. Less plumbing in the house every year. Less electricity. Less Harvey. More varnished fish.

We stagger out into the weather. We hug Freya and say, "Frey." We hug Deb and say, "Deb." Freya raises her eyebrows into the question. I shake my head.

"A seaman good as him should of been here," I shout.

"Not so much as a life preserver," shouts Tony.

"Not so much as a Harvey," shouts Mick, sweeping the horizon with his arm. "Drunken sunken Harvey. Washed up ... but never washed up where he should be," he shouts. "Mystery."

"You blokes having a wake?" asks Deb.

"A few drinks and memories," I shout. "The frozen fish story. The Auto Club debacle." She nods slowly. She knows we've got Harvey.

"And a koala theory," shouts Mick. "Come up with by the coroner here," he points at Tony with his can. But Tony is intent out at the waves.

"Are you blokes sober enough to come back to Welshpool?" Freya asks. "Your olds are coming 'round to share a bottle with the kids and me," she shouts at Mick. He is expressionless at her. He's never going to answer.

"Sure," I lie. Not being sober and not wanting to do the type of silent bravery his family will be doing. Having already shown our type.

But having been caught out here with my hand up Harvey's back puppeting his naked body into indiscretions I feel guilty enough to agree to anything. Over the June wind I shout, "Sure. We'll get some Chinese. Stir old Clarrie's gastrics and his prejudices up. Follow us."

"I'll come in your car," says Tony to Freya, and he moves towards HARV.

"No you won't. There's more to tell," Mick shouts over a lull in the wind.

"Way, way more," he shouts above no lull, in a wide-eyed passion for getting all of Harvey told.

SO WE CLIMB INTO my Cruiser again. Tony in the back, Mick in the front, with me driving. Freya does a U-ie and follows in HARV.

But back in the Cruiser it's not like Mick has said. Somehow there isn't any more to tell. Nothing urgent enough to lift into the fierce silence we are drinking and driving through.

The rain drums. I ride down in Freya's tracks over her thirty miles of empty beach back to Welshpool. Koalas, driftwood, kelp, bottles, fish, birds, silence. Tony passes more beers over into the front. Mick takes his and drinks down deep in his seat. Brown waves are turning white with the wind.

After two cans Mick comes up out of his slump. He leans forward and punches a number into my hands-free phone.

"Who you ringing?" I ask.

"Dinner arrangements," he says.

The phone only rings twice. "Hello." A woman's voice. He waits.

"Hello?" she asks. Shaky. Rain drumming where she is too.

"Freya," he says. And he turns to look at Tony as he speaks. "It's Mick. I just rang to say I can't do Chinese with you tonight. Or ever. And to say I'm glad the shoddy kisses of your middle age will go to a cheat as bad as you." Then he jabs END. And what's been clear to Mick for a lot of miles now is finally clear to me. Tony and Freya have been dancing the back door dance on a too-often-at-sea Harvey.

In the rear-view mirror I see HARV frozen in a line that takes it crashing through the canopy of a whole driftwood tree. Closer, I see Tony. His face with a freeze on it too. A horror that would get you white-knuckled onto a wheel.

"You bastard," he says. "You dirty bastard." And he's out of the Cruiser before I can slow for dismount. Rolling, staggering, running across the sand. Back through the hard weather to HARV.

Mick looks at me and looks out ahead. "I didn't twig about him 'til he wouldn't tell any stories about Harvey back there," he says. "I been suspicious about Freya for a while. But I

had no idea it was with Tony."

He has a drink. I move up into fourth. Get HARV shrinking in the rear-view mirror. "But when he wouldn't talk old times ... Well ... I twigged the bastard was deep in guilt then. You could hear it in his silence. And in his wanting to say good things about Harvey instead of take the piss." He shakes his head. "Calling me a dirty bastard," he says. "Him ... calling me."

We drink and drive. The silence is no longer vicious. It's a treaty between us. An empathy. Because this would have been a sad revelation at any time. But with Harvey dead it could be revelation enough to build hate on. We give it some minutes. There's a slow tick from his hand-flexed can.

Eventually Mick stirs. "Wanting to bring a fucking Labrador," he says. And he reaches over onto the floor of the back seat and starts groping around. He comes up with the compost bag we put on board to hold whatever of Harvey we came across. Shakes it in my face in a loud orange storm that stands my hair. And starts to wind his window down. I twist my left hand deep into the folds of the plastic and hang on.

"Don't throw the bag out, Mick. They don't need to see it. They must feel this pretty hard already," I say. The bag is stretching and tearing through my fingers, giving heat from the stretch. Mick is crying. His window is down. Huge raindrops are bursting on us.

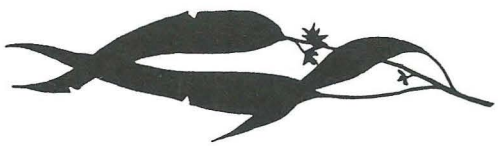
"Don't you throw it. Harvey pushed her into affairs. It was his fault. You don't know what he inflicted on her over the years. Physical things, Mick," I yell. "Physical, physical things."

It's a lie. A terrible lie to tell about a friend not dead enough for the bruise on my thigh where he dropped a transmission to have yellowed yet. What I should be yelling is: "Varnished fish. Varnished, varnished fish." That's all Harvey's inflicted on her. Varnished fish and the neglect they represent.

But he's dead and the perfect man to shoulder the blame. And I believe he would shoulder it gladly for them. And the lie does help Mick blame Harvey. It stops him throwing the bag. The plastic goes loose and cool in my fingers as he lets it go.

I grind down through the gears, bringing the cruiser to a standstill. Wanting to get this resolved. Seeing if we let our memories work on the anger they'll blow it into hate that will run a long time. Thinking if we meet them and damn them now one of us will surely break down and infect the others into pain and love and tears. Into how we need to be to get this behind us.

Mick says nothing as the motor dies, meaning he's bowing to my judgement on this. I watch in the rear-view mirror for HARV. We finish the beer. Two cans apiece while nothing appears in the mirror. Me finally guessing they have doubled back to Lakes. Probably for Tony's Labrador, which I had forgotten is locked in his car there and hungry and thirsty and lonely.



RICHARD HILLMAN

The Bottle at the End of the Story, 1994

THE CHILDREN FROM next door are talking about the anatomy of the opposite sex beneath my workroom window and the papers on my desk seem to grow by the hour. Andrew has sent me a lovely letter in which he mentions his dislike for the tone of my footnoting. Mark, a person who doesn't like being called an Aboriginal ethnographer, hasn't written since Stephen of *No Road* pre-fame discovered a problem with Substance; and John, a diarist of no-fixed-address, is trying to amuse himself with thoughts of a Space Station in a desert nobody can clean up. Allison has just mopped the floor outside my room and I can't walk on it for another hour; during the next hour I am forced to increase the size of the paper-stack on my desk.

THE LEBANESE MAN at the end of the table has just served up spaghetti bolognese, with a side dish of tri-coloured pasta, and brown bread. I was a trifle edgy at a recurring thought, that someone at the table would drink more wine from the bottle at the end of the table than I would. I moved the bottle closer, for comfort. Mark's words came back to haunt me, "Watch out for little editors trying to build large empires." But nobody ever listens, do they? I spooned a medium-sized serving of the spaghetti onto my plate, not wanting to appear indulgent, and took a swig of wine to relax myself before eating. I ate no bread or extra pasta. Within minutes, the conversation turned to gossip. Someone at the centre of the table asked, "Does anyone know what happened to Steve?" The little Lebanese man at the end of the table leaned forward, all ears.

I replied, "He wrote his Porsche off, his wife left him, and his students have taken him out on a rave to celebrate the after-shock." I appreciated the arrival of words at the commencement of thought. The bottle had moved closer, and the little Lebanese man at the end of the table was fumbling with something in his pocket.

As I had nothing else to say, just at that moment, I took another mouthful of spaghetti by the legs and surprised myself. I noticed the glass on my right had become empty; was someone drinking from my glass? The bottle moved a little closer.

Mark ventured to tell us all about the Porsche, the five cars it collected trying to find the driveway, how Steve asked his wife to tell the police, *after* they had arrived, that he was not at home. Lisa mentioned how the offer of a professorship came out of it all – in a small foreign country where no one would know his name.

After another quick glance at the bottle I tried to remember where I had parked my car. John said he saw it on the way over and that a couple of dubious-looking characters were standing near it. John made me feel, almost, comfortable. I decided to cadge a lift off someone later in the evening. Andrew was sitting next to me with a smile on his face. There appeared to be spaghetti sauce stains on his shirt but they could have been wine. I decided to finish the contents of the bottle off before anyone noticed. The little Lebanese man at the end of the table was fumbling in his pocket again.

"Did anyone read Sunday's paper?" Mark ventured. For the next forty-five minutes we heard about the latest scandal. The story was repeated three or four times to ensure that nobody in the room would forget an easily forgettable story. Another bottle of wine appeared

on the table and, for an instance, I thought I was seeing double. When I spilt the wine as I poured it into a second glass, I realised that I was.

There was a certain velocity to Mark's words which appeared to outpace everyone else's. I wondered why? Decided to rule out Mark as the mysterious wine thief. The chair I was sitting in gripped me from behind and, for another instance, I thought I'd be the second course. The little Lebanese man at the end of the table was asking if anyone would enjoy dessert. I offered no resistance. Someone had poured a glass of wine for me because I could not remember having done so myself.

I was becoming a little concerned, as I had still not discovered what the little Lebanese man at the end of the table had been fumbling with in his pocket. Perhaps it was poison. But I ruled that possibility out, after all, I was enjoying the light-headedness the wine had given me. Andrew was talking about his latest research project. I decided to listen for a while, thinking that I'd find that much easier than trying to think about what I was supposed to hear, and what I was not. Dessert had arrived between swigs.

Andrew was discussing the difficulty of addressing issues to be raised in Anthony Giddens' next book. Someone, it could have been John, was a feckle bemused at the thought of tackling someone's work, especially when that someone's work hadn't even reached draft stage. Andrew mentioned that he might write a paper about waiting for a paper that hadn't been written yet. I ventured to suggest the title 'Waiting For Giddens'. Somehow, this outburst from behind the bottle at the end of the table had a rather sombre effect upon the party, and I suddenly began to wonder just how long I'd have to wait for a taxi.

The bottle began to tip in my direction again, as if it had a will of its own. Someone had forgotten to tell me that it was empty as I tried to take the cork out with my teeth.

The party ended and I was left with the feeling that I might have forgotten something. Later that night I dreamt about picking little bits of cork out of my teeth. The next day I wrote down in my diary all the words that had been spoken the night before, using the tiny tape-recorder I carried in my pocket as a substitute for memory. And Mark had said, "Watch out for little editors ..."

THE FLOOR OUTSIDE my room has dried. I cross it, draft in hand, searching for Allison. I follow the sounds of a vacuum cleaner "oscillating wildly" in another part of the house. Allison stops for a moment, listens to the short story I read to her. When I finish I ask her what she thinks of it. "Yes dear, it's lovely; now that you've done what you had to do, would you mind bringing the washing in off the line." I leave the typing-up for later and take to the more serious task, of living.

See ya!

RABBITS

We spent our lunch-time reading things that
grew
Into experience; of loops of thread
Too thin to see for snaring hares; of how
You clubbed escaping rabbits on the head.

The shaggy bush and ragged paddocks jarred;
But then we'd dreamed so fervently, the fat
Cows, and sheep, and even distant flocks
Of starlings thrilled us. With the staves we'd cut
From gums we flushed the scrub, until the sun
Cooled our lust. Then, hopeful still, but tired
With talk of killing we shouldered our guns
And bag expertly, went home satisfied.

Till we met Scott Hanson with his brothers
Coming along by the river, a swag
Of fine rabbits strung on a wire. We grew
Up then, cursed our air-guns, our empty hands.

STEPHEN ANTHONY

SYLVIA GRAY

Vera

IT HAPPENED WHEN I wandered down the street and into the market in a half-hearted attempt to find my friend Vera, even though there didn't seem to be any chance of finding her amongst the crowd of people milling about in the market square, and anyway they were all looking skywards.

Naturally I looked too, yet all I could see were a few clouds above the mist that was rising from the river to shroud the twin spires of the cathedral towering above the houses and commercial buildings in this town. There being nothing at all to see, I reached the conclusion we were all exhibiting the human phenomenon of imitation ... if one person looks, points, or exclaims, every one else will look too. This is a kind of brain-washing, I mused, and governments have exploited it to perfection as we go willingly to war or to accept an authoritarian direction. Suddenly the crowd stirred and uttered a loud 'aahhh', and as I looked once again to discover what it was they were staring at, I realised the mist had drifted away to reveal a woman perched upon one of the pinnacles of the cathedral spires. It seemed to me even at this distance that she had a striking resemblance to Vera; was Vera, for who else would do such a crazy thing! What she was doing there was beyond my comprehension, even though I was used to her scorn for convention that often led to acts of daring or rebellion. Surely she wasn't going to die for her beliefs? I tried to shout a warning, but my mind was caught up in the tension that exuded from the crowd like syrup. Hundreds of people seemingly glued together at the sight of a woman sitting on the very top of one of the highest cathedral spires in the country.

It was at this point she began to climb down from her perch, and then she was gone – I knew not where. Yet now the great bell that hung in this tower began to chime ... clang, clang, clang ... and I had visions of Vera standing on its axis or even sliding down its bell-rope. I was right in this assessment, although I didn't know this until later when I got home to find her sitting in her favourite chair and bathing her hands in warm water.

"My God, but it was good up there," she said. "Everybody should try it. Smashing view, and that bell! Darn near blew my ear-drums out."

John McLaren writes: With the continuing uncertainty about continuing government funding for literary magazines, and in the absence of significant advertising support or sponsorship from the private sector, Overland continues to rely heavily on the generosity of our subscribers. Our hearty thanks are due to the following.

$1500 Anon; $72 R.M.; $60 A.P.; $22 J.C., J.S., C.C.M., J.M., B.B., T.T., R.G., M.H.; $16 D.F.; $14 F.S.; $12 M.M., F.S., R.P., P.S., A.S., E.R.; $10 R.B., A.K.; $8 M.L.; $7 B.H., A.S., S.D., R.W., H.F.; $5 M.McP., R.N.; $4N.A.; $2 B.G., J.R., L.S., J.S., A.G.; Total = $1997.00.

New Times - New Words. Linguistic Pioneering by Lofo

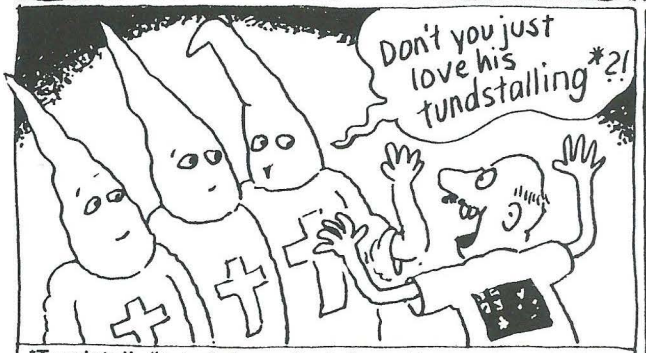
This is no furphy: Great men & women throughout the ages have given their very names to enrich our language. Zeppelin, Guillotin, Plimsoll, Plow Stumpjump, Stan Eucalyptus, David Reissverschluss... etc.etc.

***Skasy** ('skay-si), *adj.*, feeling an illness being diminished by positive stimulant. "Skase him out of here!" "Unexplicable skasing". "Fully skased" (miraculously recovered). Also Skasement (an unwellness that can be skased); Skasulty (a victim of skasing).

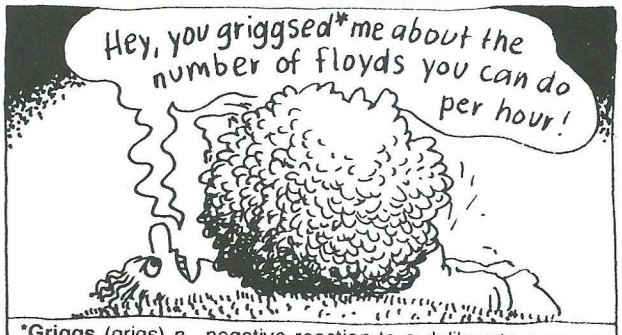
***Floyd** (fl'oid) n., illicit sex behind greenery. (After a Melbourne parks official who said that greenery encourages such activity and therefore advocates its elimination.) Also floydation and floyding. "Feeling floydacious". Floydacity (to do a floyd behind a scrub less than 20cm high).

***Chirac** or chirack (shee-'rack) *n.*, negative activity away from your own home. "To chirac rubbish over the fence". Chiracous (given to chiracking); chiraculation (regular chiracking); chiracosity; chiracanery; chiradicted (compulsivly chiracous), Chiracology (study of French politics).

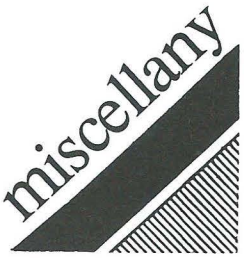
Harrisment ('har-is-ment) *n.*, to gain advantage through (usually sexual) favors, as practised in government circles. Sexually harrised; harricity (immoderately demanding harrisment), harrisogenous (leading a harrissing lifestyle). Harrisentment (regrets after excessive harrissing).



***Tundstall** ('tun-stal) *n.*, Gratuitous bigotry. Tundstalling; tundstallism; tundstallious; tundstallized (exposed to constant tundstalling); tunstallarious (apparently funny tundstalling); tundstallarming (intolerable tundstalling), tundstallathon (prolonged barrage of tundstalls).



***Griggs** (grigs) *n.*, negative reaction to a deliberate provocation (as originally caused by J. Griggs of the Melbourne Grand Prix). "She's a griggs in the neck", "those begriggsed decibels!", "to feel griggsy" (feel provoked by lies etc.), "griggsed off" (had enough of provocation). Griggsation (sensational lie); Griggolorium (spectacular propaganda based on lies).



Theory's Textolatrous Pathology

Damien Broderick writes:

While I was delighted to find Rosaleen Love's review of my MUP *Interpretations* volume *The Architecture of Babel: Discourses of Literature and Science* in the Winter 1995 issue, a few gremlins crept in. These ranged from the trivial (noting my title as 'forthcoming, 1994', and as the rather Foucauldian *Discourses on*, rather than *Discourses of*) to the comical (listing my recent Routledge title *Reading by Starlight: Postmodern Science Fiction* as *Reading by Silverfish*.) That last blue is really my fault, since Dr Love got it from a jesting note I wrote her when she was organising a review symposium on *Babel* for an academic journal. One ought not mix whimsy with Science and Literature, I guess.

In the same issue, handily enough, you ran an extract from *Babel* ('Writing Science, Writing Art'). Since Dr Love begins by advising readers to start my book with the last chapter, it would have been useful to mention that the extract was drawn from that chapter. Readers could then have tested Rosaleen Love's curious claim that "Broderick stays with the text, within words. 'There is no outside-the-text ... there is no inside-the-text'." Well, no; quite the reverse. I cite those dicta not as my own opinion but as parodic evidence of Theory's textolatrous pathology. In the extract (p. 38), I state clearly: "What's often seen in humane studies is a fetishism of the text ... Fetishism embraces the finger instead of looking at the object it is pointing at."

This is quite an important misunderstanding, because I go on to stress "the insistence in the scientific tradition of the *empirical* – the things in the world which are irresistible *there*, no matter how much we might wish it otherwise" (p. 40), and these, of course, include the human suffering that science and technology help to remit (and cause).

While science and literature are both deconstructable varieties of text, both are more than that, unless we start by assuming, rather stupidly, that *everything* is best seen as humanly constructed text. The great and articulate scientist Freeman Dyson puts it rather nicely in his new book *Nature's Imagination*: "One may believe that in science nature will ultimately have the last word, and still recognise an enormous role for human vainglory and viciousness in the practice of science before the last word is spoken. One may believe that the historian's job is to expose the hidden influences of power and money, and still recognise that the laws of nature cannot be bent and cannot be corrupted by power and money." And although the limitations of skill, temperament, memory and time force human knowledge into the apartheid of the Two (or Ten) Cultures, it is nature's laws – including the regularities of narrative and semiotics – that constrain the worlds we build, the words we speak, the architectures of Babel.

Clavell's Changi – A Fiction?

AN UNSIGNED ARTICLE, 'Clavell the Survivor', appeared in *The Weekend Australian*'s magazine section of December 13-14, 1986 (p. 3) which cannot be ignored without comment.

In the article, Clavell said: "Changi was notorious ... one in fifteen survived." He repeated this statement in a 1993 interview which was recorded in the Obituary columns of *The Australian* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* on February 9, 1994.

One in fifteen survivors would make the death rate at Changi about 93% which is absurd. Conditions there were not good but its percentage of deaths would be among the lowest of all POW camps and would parallel those of the several working parties in Singapore (under 5 per cent).

Conditions of all camps on the Burma-Thailand railway were far inferior to those of Changi. In 'F' force the Australian deaths were 29 per cent and the British 61 per

cent. The death rate of the Borneo party was 95 per cent – only six survivors.

All of Clavell's friends died in Changi, which was convenient as it left no survivors to identify him. He states that he was a young officer of seventeen years in the Royal Artillery when he was shot and captured in Java. Clavell, unlike most POWs, was captured only because he was wounded. He says: "You had guns but no ammunition" and "senior officers were bloody idiots".

" ... junior officers blamed senior officers" (Lionel Wigmore, *The Japanese Thrust*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, p. 511).

I am unable to find any reference to a British Artillery Regiment being diverted to Java. Curiously though, the American 131 Field Artillery Regiment, mostly Texans, was landed in Java without its guns.

Clavell has a small scar on his right cheek which he claims was caused by a Japanese bullet that broke his jaw. He declares that when he was imprisoned in Changi, the wound was still open. As there weren't any antibiotics, he stuffed the hole with cotton wool dipped in vinegar.

Where did he find the cotton-wool and vinegar?

He continues: "It didn't make much difference, there wasn't anything to eat."

Clavell would have been able to obtain medical attention in both Java and Changi where sulpha drugs and antiseptics were available. However, the mythical British artillery regiment would have had a doctor to dress his wound. It would be interesting to know how he survived without food.

No mention is made of an exit wound. Did he spit out the bullet or swallow it? Did it bounce out of the entry hole when it hit the jaw-bone? The photo of Clavell, accompanying his article, shows a somewhat flabby countenance and a perfectly natural jaw alignment.

All wounded men at Changi received treatment and, if Clavell is to be believed, he was the only one that was excluded. He comments: "In Changi the basic unit was four men. One guarded, one foraged, one was sick and one was about to be sick."

Clavell's unit of four would be young subalterns who did not fraternise with ORs and were not short of funds. There was a wide gap between officers and ORs. Working ORs were paid ten cents per day whilst officers, who did not work, were paid $30 per month and in Changi were able to buy palm oil, sun-dried whitebait, eggs and other extras.

Clavell's set-up of four men is peculiar. What was the man guarding against, the senior officers or the ORs? Why did one man need to forage? All foraging would have to be done outside the barbwire enclosure, an OR accomplishment. This seems to be pure make-believe. Leaving the barbwire compound was forbidden and all offenders caught were punished with solitary confinement.

Another peculiar remark was: "Changi taught me always to present a moving target." What was he a moving target for? If he was detailed to an outside working party as an OR there would be some substance to this remark.

In March 1944 the one thousand patients in the gaol hospital were moved to Kranji, Johore, which became the principal hospital area (ibid., pp. 525-530). Clavell seems to have missed out. Was he hiding behind the door?

Very few men left Changi voluntarily – they were conscripted into the various working parties. Leaving Changi was inescapable. The insoluble problem was hanging onto the status quo. About thirty thousand British POWs were committed to working on the Burma-Thai railroad. What strings did Clavell pull to stay in Changi?

Clavell goes on: "After Changi I was the only POW on the flat-top taking me across the Pacific ... one survivor out of fifteen is a substantial mortality rate and there wasn't much flesh on me." After release POWs quickly regained weight in a matter of days.

When Changi was liberated, ten thousand British servicemen were returned home on British hospital ships. Why was Clavell the lone British POW to miss out? The only British POWs that returned to Britain via the USA were those who had been captive in Japan.

Clavell's latest conceit (*Telegraph Mirror*, September 9, 1994) has it that "It was there (Changi) that he befriended surgeon Edward 'Weary' Dunlop who saved his life." What was his lethal affliction? Was he suffering from boredom?

Lt. Col. Dunlop is not mentioned in Clavell's 1986 interview simply because he did not know of 'Weary's' existence. Only when *The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop* was published would he become aware of this dedicated, practical Jesus of a man.

When the remnants of the various working parties from the Burma-Thai railway began to reach Singapore, all Changi POWs knew of the work of Lt. Col. Dunlop. In fact, a small select group of men known as the 'Changi Curia' canonised him.

Dunlop arrived at Changi from Batavia on January 7, 1943 and was sent to Thailand on January 27, 1943 having spent only twenty days in Changi. When the war ended he was still in Thailand administering to the more than one thousand very sick POWs and did not return to Changi. Clavell's meeting with Dunlop would have been an impossibility.

In conclusion, I find it reasonable to doubt Clavell's claim to have been in Changi or, in fact, Java or Singapore. It would be interesting to know in what theatre of war he saw service.

J. M. Akhurst

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John Blight

JOHN BLIGHT who died in Brisbane on 12 May this year, aged 81, was one of Australia's most distinguished poets. He contributed many poems to *Overland* 1980–1984. Our last reference to the poet was Kevin Hart's review of John's *Selected Poems 1939–1990* (Qld. U.P.). John began his career with a poem in *The Bulletin* in 1939 and the Red Page editor, the late Douglas Stewart, was an enthusiastic supporter publishing many of the 'Beachcomber Sonnets' which first made his reputation and which drew with their ironic complexity and idiomatic everyday language, the close attention of his fellow poets. Of all the poets of our time he became perhaps the poets' poet. Blight's talent never lacked recognition, one of his earliest admirers being his Queensland contemporary Judith Wright (who was 80 in May). His first book *The Old Pianist* was published in 1945, Wright's immediately famous first book the following year: *The Moving Image* (Meanjin, 1946). Blight moved forward from the tightly structured early poems to finely balanced, conversational free verse. He was impatient about the type casting of him, from his early work, as our best poet of the sea and made sardonic reference to this in the notable transitional volume (*Hart* (1975) with the poem 'His Best Poems Are About the Sea'. Despite the fact that Blight never had difficulty in getting published widely and in being well represented in all the standard anthologies there is a sense that his poems as a whole are not well known and we still await a fine critical work about them. Nevertheless he was much honoured with the Myer Award (1964) Dame Mary Gilmore Medal (1965), the National Book Council Award (1976) The Patrick White Literary Award (1976), the Grace Leven Award for *Pageantry for a Lost Empire* (Nelson) in 1977, and the Christopher Brennan Award in 1980. His later books were *New City Poems* (1980) and *Holiday Sea Sonnets* (1985).

I well remember being quite startled by a later long poem about an old man looking along a city tram at a young girl and by despairing angry poems about the mess we've made of the environment.

Blight's family moved to Queensland from South Australia when he was two and he spent all of his life there. He attended Brisbane State High School and after some time knocking about and doing a perish during the Depression, he qualified as an accountant and worked in a timber mill in the Gympie area. He later became part-owner of a group of mills, retiring in 1968 to The Grange, a Brisbane suburb. With a sigh of relief he became a full-time writer, assisted by the Literature Board in 1973. He was much honoured by his fellow Queenslanders a wide variety of whom regarded him with affection. Jack Blight is survived by his wife, Beverley, and two daughters.

He went. The door swung after
him. The room
resumed its shape, and in the
window's square
there blossomed like a rose within
the gloom
of Death's departure, Dawn with
yellow hair.

Barrett Reid

Where Have all the Wiyabul Gone?

FOR MANY YEARS I have wondered where were the Aboriginal people who once roamed the land my grandfather farmed near Booyong in New South Wales. My recent researches have made it clear to me how important historians will be in the formation of Republican sentiment.

I attended a two-teacher rural state school near Lismore in the 1950s, and there were no Aboriginal children in any of its classes. There were no Aboriginal children at the annual zone athletics carnivals which drew its participants from an amalgamation of several primary schools 'round our way' – the by-ways between Lismore and the coast, snaking off the main road that goes through Bangalow and the highway that Alstonville straddles.

There were a few Aboriginal kids at Richmond River High School in Lismore when I began there, only a few. And they kept to themselves. Quite a contrast to Tweed High where Richmond River went for inter-school sporting visits. The blackness of the Tweed's school population came as a shock – in 1963.

As kids, several of us persisted with questions about the lack of Aboriginal people in our area. The answers were always evasive. But years passed before I learned the tribal name, Bandjulung, of the people whose land we lived on. More years passed before I discovered the family my grandfather's farm displaced was of the Wiyabul linguistic group. Ron Heron, the Bandjulung historian

with whom I spent an informative afternoon at the Galingil Jindabah Centre, is Wiyabul.

The question 'where did all the Aborigines go?' stayed with me until recently. Perhaps prompted by *Remembering Babylon*, by David Malouf's insistence on native invisibility and settler ignorance and fear, I began a search, firstly to look through the manuscript collection in the State Library of New South Wales, to write to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Library in Canberra and lastly to visit the Galingil Jindabah Centre at the Southern Cross University, Lismore. I had to find an approximation of an answer – because I knew when my grandfather ordered a family of tribal people from his farm he did not quake with fear, nor was he talking to the shades.

True to say, Poppa was absolutely ignorant of Aboriginal tribal life and customs. He did not bother to inform himself of the tribal or clan names of the people whose land his father bought from the government to farm. Poppa had notions derived from his reading of the Bible that he was of 'the chosen people'. Aborigines did not rate a mention in his world view.

Nevertheless, Poppa owned and farmed the land in the second decade of this century. According to my mother, there were almost no Aboriginal people round 'our way' even in the 1920s. In the archival records I consulted, in those published brochures of the 1930s celebrating the Jubilee of Queen Mary and King George and the newness of villages, not one mention is made of Aborigines, yet a lot is written about the early years of settlement.

Over the years, I heard many stories about horrendous massacres near Evans Head and Ballina, and of picking women and children off at river crossings. N.C. Keats, in *Wollumbin*, (self-published, 1988), lists massacres, killings, poisonings and herding off cliff tops with reference to the Macleay, Richmond, Wilson and Clarence Rivers. Keats suggests white murderousness depended on the personalities of the settlers. Coutts (1840s?) of the Clarence was reported to have murdered by mixing arsenic in flour (for which offence he was acquitted); however, S. W. Gray and Joshua Bray of the Tweed 'developed rapport' with the local people.

When I read and heard of this history of murder, I looked at the family photographs and tried to imagine murderers. There is one of a row of men, all brothers. They are my great-uncles, most of whom you would be inclined to deal with cautiously. One among many photographs taken in the 1920s, it celebrates my great-grandparents' golden wedding anniversary. There is another of the family taken when they first arrived at Booyong in the late nineteenth century. They look tough. All fifteen of them.

My grandfather was a boy of eleven in that photo. He was the youngest of thirteen children born to a German mother and a Scots father, a migrant born *en route* to Australia. My great-grandparents were young when they married, after falling in love at first sight, so the old aunts told me.

IN THE 1890s, the family abandoned their East Kangaloon and Robinson farms to the blackberry for 'the new land' round the Wilson. They were not without means. They had the kind of confidence material wellbeing lends, and they meant to establish a grand style, an avenue of pine trees to a swept circle of fine clay-coloured gravel for the carriages to turn on, abundant gardens and orchards surrounding a deeply verandahed house and lace and embroidery and linen and starch. Etcetera. And they regularly travelled by steam ship down to Sydney 'to keep in touch', in their case with relatives and fashion and farm technology. They were practical people for whom the latest in ploughs and the newest plant species introduced through the Botanical Gardens at Sydney held special interest. The arts and intellectual endeavours weren't high on their list of priorities, unlike my Dad's people who annually steamed to Sydney from Byron Bay for the theatre and the bookshops.

Mum's people were high spirited, extroverts determined on materialism. Would they have murdered to secure their future successes?

Wherever I read in the unpublished memoirs of the early part of the nineteenth century, I was struck by the consistency of the opinion that Bandjulung were 'generous spirited' and 'sturdy'. Those people who were so inclined to write down their recollections wrote of cohabitation with them, not fear, ignorance or hostility.

Evidenced is another more official attitude which is fear, igorance and hostility peppered with derision. I developed an impression that for officialdom, the Aboriginal tribes did not exist and the white settlers were contemptuous. Largely the descendants of convicts and lower middle class go-getters, white Australians were useful when brutality was required. Hence, the perpetrators of the Myall Lake massacres were hanged not because they murdered people, but because they were the sons of convicts acting without authority. The law prevailed, not for the purposes of justice, but for establishing and maintaining British authority.

Officially, the land was held to be terra nullius even though the Bandjulung nation was populous. Since the Bandjulung didn't exist,

they were at best jokes, at worst obstructions to be exterminated. In this way, the Bandjulung were denied their heroic history of survival against foreign invaders, and the white people were denied an heroic history of invasion. Their activities were undeniably grubby and kept that way.

The law, British law, in Australian pioneering history always preceded rather than succeeded the settlers, unlike the pioneering history of North America where a period of lawlessness was followed by co-opting statutes to enhance claims, later to be coded, perhaps after some ameliorating refinements as law. Hence my guess that, if my great-uncles murdered Bandjulung, they would have been accompanied by the police, or their actions would have been fully sanctioned by the police. They would have been law-abiding, respectful of British authority, and not concerned with justice for a displaced people.

Perhaps the most heart rending account was recorded by James Ainsworth. In his pamphlet *Reminiscences: Ballina in the early days*, Ainsworth describes a massacre which took place in 1853 or '54 at Ballina, when he was a boy of about eight. At the time, his father, a beacon or lighthouse keeper, was the owner of The Sailors' Home, the only inn or hostel in Ballina.

From Brisbane, then within the jurisprudence of the Government of New South Wales, white troopers and their black trackers were pursuing some blacks who had allegedly killed white settlers to the north of the Tweed. But they did not disclose the purpose of their presence to the white people of Ballina. There was a large camp of about three hundred Bandjulung living at Black Head. According to Ainsworth, at 3 a.m., the white troopers shot at the people as they slept. Forty people were reported killed and many were wounded. When the white settlers sent a protestation to the NSW government, they were told to mind their own business or suffer the consequences.

State-sanctioned murder was not to be queried, least of all by people officialdom did not respect.

BUT BY THE TIME my mother's people were settling at Booyong, the Pastures Act of 1870 had done its worst for twenty-five years. That's when the fences went up. Hunting and food gathering lines were broken, and the movements of the animals were disturbed. With tree felling for land clearance, the habitats of many small marsupials and birds and reptiles were destroyed. Bush nut trees, later to become the fashionable macadamia, and many fruit trees, grasses and nutritious ferns, were rooted out and burnt. Aboriginal dependence on settlers for hand-outs of flour and beef and tea began. The fine sturdy and frequently handsome Bandjulung suffered health problems never before experienced. Was it then they became susceptible to European illnesses like the common cold and measles? Who knows?

More or less at the same time, mission stations, some run on the soppy stern idea that 'the savages' needed salvation, others more brutally practising a belief that 'the missing link' needed to learn compliance with 'civilisation', became a refuge for displaced Bandjulung. Family groups were mixed, and historically foreign tribes were forced into close proximity. Ron Heron explained to me that some families tried to live independently, but many gave up, perhaps in the face of white hostility, perhaps through a lack of the means provided by employment, perhaps from despair – because there was too much which was new and alien to come to grips with. The Wiyabuls my grandfather 'moved on' may well have been such a family.

There is also the question of terrain. The land in question, between the coastal escarpment from Ballina to Brunswick Heads and the river flats round Lismore, consisted of high and sometimes rugged, densely timbered rainforest ridges above bracken swamps filled with abundant bird and reptilian life. Ron Heron suggests not too many people could have lived in such dank and humid places, but, as children, we found evidence of camps, axe heads and middens, on timbered knolls between the extremities.

FAMILY SILENCE being what it is, I'll never know if the great-uncles lined up in the photographs killed any Bandjulung, specifically Wiyabul. In a way, it doesn't matter any more. They have lived, and I don't linger under the shadow of whatever they may have done because I'm alive in a totally different era in which the world is small. What's more, the Galingil Jindabah Centre is filled with people who are not only proud to be actively involved in their histories, they are also studying to resolve the immediate problems of Aboriginal health, housing and education to make living in the twenty-first century prideful. Hope has replaced despair. Mabo may have been the means for giving back more than land.

Overall, my persistence in this matter of Where have all the Wiyabul gone? has given me a sense of a people's history, one that isn't preserved as a static event dressed in army or police uniforms, but one in flux, moving and accommodating newness with oldness, whiteness with blackness, to assemble, without doubt, as the history of the people of the Republic of Australia. Then, forever the equivocator, I can set to worry about Nationalism.

Carolyn van Langenberg

On Being a Performance Poet

I'VE KISSED MY KIDS, kissed my partner, waved goodbye, and driven 682 kilometres to this motel room. Tomorrow, at the unpoetic hour of 9 a.m., I'll read my poems to 125 teenagers at the local high school. I'll do my best to hold their attention for fifty minutes, collect my cheque, go to the local Milk Bar, eat a salad sandwich, drive eighty kilometres to the next town, and read in front of another one hundred students in the afternoon. At night, after a walk down the main street, I'll share tea, Arnott's biscuits (cream assortment), and poetry with forty locals in the town library. The next morning I'll do it all again, and again, for the coming four weeks.

This year, I'm booked for twenty-one weeks of touring in Queensland, Victoria, NSW and South Australia. Next year it's Tasmania, NSW, Victoria and Canada. I've been doing this level of touring for five years. I've calculated that I've spent eighty-eight weeks away from home reading to over ninety thousand people ranging in age from eight to eighty-five (yes, I've asked).

I'm called a 'performance poet'. When I read in a rural library to those locals who've bothered to switch off *Sale Of The Century* and brave the uncertainties of a 'poetry reading', I'm proud of that term – 'performance poet'. When those people come up afterwards, buy a book, say they didn't think they'd enjoy it so much; say they'd like to see more events like this; when the librarian asks if I'll be back in town, or do I know any other poets coming through – then I love that label.

When I'm booked solid for twelve months in advance in schools and libraries and dusty country halls and pubs, and I know there'll be an audience who've never heard a poet read before but they've come along anyway, then I know that term is accurate, and honest, and positive.

When the local ABC radio plugs the show, gives me air-time to read; when the local paper does an article; when the regional Television News sends a crew along to shoot some of my show, then I know that term 'performance poet' is seen to be of interest, or relevance, or at the very least, entertainment value.

And all this without government assistance. My rural tours are Australia-Council-free zones. I survive as a poet by people paying to see my readings, or buying my books – by travelling the miles and doing the readings. Of course every year I apply for a Writers' Grant, only to be rejected because my work apparently doesn't have sufficient 'literary merit' or 'cultural significance' (the Council's terms, not mine). Every year I give thanks that ninety thousand people don't seem to agree.

The point I'm making here, apart from some shameless self-promotion, is that we poets need to do some lateral thinking and planning if we want to reach an audience, apart from the cafe/festival circuits of the inner-city. We poets need to get our hands dirty with business and the mass media if we want the public to recognise our profession.

My experience over the years has shown that there is a sizeable audience from poetry throughout the country. An audience that is willing to appreciate and support poetry, with or without government funding. Every local library, cafe, pub, restaurant is a potential venue for poetry. Every local radio station, newspaper, TV station, community arts council, is a potential supporter of poetry. This year I've read on fifteen radio stations, four television stations, and had articles in twenty-four newspapers. The reason why? Because I asked. Because I bothered to ring the producer or editor and send them a press kit. Because I had something to push – a reading or a new book. It had little to do with talent, much to do with commonsense, persistence, and sheer gall. In all of this, I've found that the term 'performance poet' is received in a positive way.

But not everywhere. I've given up counting the number of book reviews where the reviewer says, "it may work on the stage, but falls flat on the page". Every review is prefaced with five paragraphs on the reviewer's attitude to performance poetry. Every bloody review gives the book less space than the reviewer's dissertation on the perceived shortcomings of performance poetry. Has anyone ever read a review of a John Forbes book saying that "it may work well on the page, but falls flat on the stage"? Or a Geoff Page book? Or John Foulcher? Or John Tranter? Never! Why not? Isn't poetry about words? Isn't poetry part of an oral/written tradition spanning centuries?

That's when I hate that term 'performance poetry'. Because I know it's a red rag to the bull reviewer, snorting behind the bars of a university whose idea of a poetry reading is the Adelaide Festival every two years.

Enough. Every poet should be a 'performance poet'. Read Bruce Dawe, Judith Wright, Les Murray aloud. They'd hate to be termed 'performance poets', but it's unmistakable. Their poems work, on the page or the stage. They are performance poets. I wonder if they can be talked into doing a four-week tour throughout rural NSW next month?

One more thought on this term 'performance poetry'. From my experience it only has negative connotations in Australia. When I tour overseas, I'm invited to literary festivals and universities as a poet. They seem to accept that part of my job is to read my

poems aloud. I've had ten times the number of invitations from overseas universities compared to Australia. With one or two notable exceptions, the halls of academia here are silent. Poetry belongs in English 101, or in the library. Could there be some connection between universities and those afore-mentioned poetry reviewers? Surely not?

I'd better finish here. It's very late. My motel sign has stopped blinking. I've got three readings tomorrow, and another ABC radio interview (God bless you ABC producers!). This tour I'll read to four thousand teenagers and eight hundred adults. Ninety-nine per cent will not be fellow poets. None will be publishers. None will be university lecturers. None will be able to get me that special invitation to the next Adelaide Festival. But, all will make me welcome, and glad I drove the miles to read here. And I'll be back in three years' time.

Steven Herrick

Slippage

A GREAT DEAL of the criticism of Helen Garner's *The First Stone* comes perilously close to the kind of Stalinism that bedevilled socialist realism years ago. John Morrison, for example, was told by Big Jim Healy, then Secretary of the Waterside Workers' Federation, that the union would not publish one of his stories in its journal because it showed one unionist drunk and others defying union discipline to cover up for him. These things, according to Healy, never happened on the wharves. The writer was not free to show otherwise. In response to a similar demand that he subject his work for Party approval, Morrison wrote that once written his work was available for the movement to use as it chose, but what he wrote was his own business. I feel that Garner could reply similarly to her critics.

The central issues raised by her book seem to have been obscured by the rhetoric it has provoked. The first issue is whether Alan Gregory was guilty of the acts of which he was accused. The courts have found him not guilty, but he has been punished as if he had been guilty. The criticism of the College's action, or lack of action, similarly assumes guilt. The College Council can be critised for allowing a macho culture, which Garner has done, but not for failing to take action beyond what was demanded by the evidence before it. Finally, Garner can be criticised for failing to achieve her own purpose, if she has failed, but not for failing to write a different kind of book. The history of socialist realism suggests that books that seek an empathetic understanding of people and their actions have been far more useful to the cause of liberation than those that endlessly canvas the theoretical issues, or remain confined within theoretical orthodoxy. Garner can at least be acclaimed for her refusal to conform. Rather than review her book at this stage, *Overland* will commission a review article to examine the whole issue of the publication and the response it has generated.

FEMINIST DEBATE of a different kind is at the heart of Shirley Geok-lin Lim's *Writing South East/Asia in English: Against the Grain: focus on Asian English Literatures.* Lim anchors her criticism in her autobiographical traverse from one of a family of eight in a two-bedroom shack on the fringe of Malacca to academic tenure as a Professor of English and Women's Studies at the University of California in Santa Barbara. Lim has thoroughly assimilated the work of both French and American feminists, but finds it does not adequately explain her own situation. She speaks "as a woman in an interstice of class (in but not of an academic elite), race (a minority in a majority culture), and nation (of Chinese ancestry in a Malay-dominant state; and an exile-immigrant in a dominant native-born Caucasian society)." She resists equally attempts to classify her by gender or by descent. Rather, she emphasises that English for her is a language of choice, not of imposition, within which she writes from the material circumstances of being a woman in particular cultures and economies. Her work brings together the politics of class, gender and race that throws new light on all three, as well as giving new attention both to local writing, which deals with the specific forms of domination that continue to warp lives within the global economy, and to transnational writing that expresses the situation of the increasing numbers of people who, like Shirley Lim herself, choose to make their lives outside national boundaries. If Australia is indeed to have an Asian future, it is important that we listen to these voices from Asia as well as to the more traditional who emphasise the cultural past and the more brutal who envisage a future of unbounded economic exploitation.

Shirley Lim's book is available from Skoob Books Publishing, 25 Lowman Road, London N7 6DD UK, for £Stg12.99, or $US24.99.

THE EMERGING world order will be the subject of the 62nd World Congress of International PEN, to be hosted in Fremantle by the Perth Centre from 26 October to 1 November next. The theme of the Congress will be 'Contexts of Freedom: Freedom of Expression and Cultural Diversity'. The venue will be the gracious Esplanade Hotel, "close to the waters of the Indian Ocean and on the edge

of the city", where special rates have been arranged for accommodation. PEN is one of the world's oldest international human rights organisations, and concerns itself particularly with interference in freedom of speech and with helping writers who have been imprisoned, and often tortured, for their writing and speech. Visitors to the Congress can expect to hear about the abuses of human rights that are still rife around the world, but will also be able to participate in discussing the underlying issues and the prospects of a better future.

JOHN RUFFLES, of the D. H. Lawrence Society of Australia (PO Box 111, Randwick NSW 2031), writes to inform us that the magnificently titled 'Wyewurk', the house in Thirroul where Lawrence wrote *Kangaroo*, is still in private hands and has a renewed terracotta roof by courtesy of the NSW Heritage Commission. The Society's Newsletter includes reports of a visit to 'Wyewurk', an account of the house's history, a description of the Lawrence collection at the Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra, and notes on Lawrence and the law, Lawrence at Thirroul, and discussions of a predecessor of Lady Chatterley, Lawrence in Sydney and Lawrence in Western Australia.

DIARIES ARE always fascinating for apparently allowing us to enter directly behind the eyes and into the minds of the long dead. Andrew Hassan's *Sailing to Australia* MUP, $24.95, an account of shipboard diaries kept by nineteenth century emigrants, liberally illustrated with excerpts, extends this fascination into a discussion of the practice of diary-keeping itself. Starting with ideas from Frank Moorhouse and Paul Carter, he suggests that keeping the diary not only makes the experience more real to the traveller, but shapes the actual experience. The act of writing is more important than the outcome. Yet life never matches art, and the diaries record the contradictions between hope and fear of the new land, the expectation of making a new start and the determination to maintain continuity with the old life.

HENRY REYNOLDS continues his invaluable work of chronicling Aboriginal resistance to white invasion of Australia. His latest book, *Fate of a Free People* (Penguin, $16.95), described as "a radical re-examination of the Tasmanian wars", has a more confined focus and an immediate purpose – to explain the circumstances of George Augustus Robinson's 'Friendly Mission' to the Tasmanian Aborigines in terms of the preceding war, and to argue that the specific agreement he made has been dishonoured by successive governments. His book concludes with a quotation from John Locke that is doubly relevant at a time when cynical politicians leap on any disagreement among Aborigines about the nature of their claims as proof of the invalidity of any claims: "the *inhabitants* of any Country, who are descended, and derive a title to their Estates from those, who are subdued, and had a Government forced upon them against their free consents, *retain a Right to the Possessions of their Ancestors* ...

"If God has taken away all means of seeking remedy, there is nothing left but patience. But my Son, when able, may seek Relief of the Law, which I am denied: He or his son may renew his *Appeal*, till he recover his Right ... If it be objected this would cause endless trouble; I answer, No more than Justice does, where she lies open to all who appeal to her."

John McLaren

Sandra Burt writes:

I am the curator of a forthcoming exhibition at the State Library of Victoria titled "A bushman and bookworm: Joseph Furphy in the State Library of Victoria". It is due to open on 22 August, 1995 and continue until 8 October. A catalogue will accompany the exhibition which will be held in the Queen's Hall. It is timed to coincide with the release, in September, of an Oxford University Press edition of Furphy's letters, edited by Professor John Barnes of La Trobe University.

books

Beyond the Veranda

JOHN HANRAHAN

Barry Hill: *The Rock: Travelling to Uluru* (Allen & Unwin, $24.95).
Philip Drew: *The Coast Dwellers* (Penguin, $17.95).
Edmund Campion: *A Place in the City* (Penguin, $14.95).

BARRY HILL BEGINS his compelling book on Uluru with a vividly told story about going on a kangaroo hunt with some Pitjantjatjara people in the Mann Ranges, south of the Rock. He is horrified at the way the kangaroos are killed and the way the joeys are treated. In the name of cross-cultural kindness to animals, he risks offending his hosts by taking one of the joeys into protective custody. It dies. An anthropologist later explains to him that there are practical reasons why the kangaroos are beaten to death rather than killed neatly and kindly with a bullet.

This story becomes a fable that underlies Hill's attempts to understand, to respect and to be trusted by the people of the Centre without patronising or romanticising them. Hill opens with a comment about "my love affair with the Centre, of which this book is merely a transitional expression".

This love is both for the place and for the people who own it and who, perhaps more importantly, own the stories that have a home in the monolith of Uluru. His intention is "to meet, to encounter to the best of our ability – the Rock as the place of rendezvous of two cultures". He asks, "what kind of knowledge do you need to travel well in a place like this?" This book is a powerful attempt to answer this question, always aware that "no-one enters a strange place with an innocent eye, least of all anyone claiming to be educated".

Hill takes the reader on a journey to and around Uluru by deftly orchestrating three different songlines. One is the tourist trip in an air-conditioned bus given a blast of hot air by a garrulous driver. The second route follows the paths of Europeans who have gone before him: the nineteenth century explorers Stuart, Giles and Gosse; and their twentieth century successors, who since the sixties have been considered 'authorities' on what was then Ayers Rock, notably Bill Harney and C. P. Mountford, both of whom seem to have got quite a few things wrong. Hill has some respect for Harney, but he takes some pleasure in giving an account of T. G. H. Strehlow's exposure of the inaccuracies of Mountford, whom Hill accuses of "duplicitous paternalism".

The third songline is created by the people of the Mutitjulu community. Hill makes it clear how important it was to him personally to win their "trust". He is also too sophisticated and sensitive a writer not to realise how difficult this aim is. He speaks of the importance of a "bullshit detector". A counterpoint running through these songlines is the discussions (no doubt imaginatively re-created) he has with a Japanese tourist. His conversations with this intelligent man, Endo, bring yet another perspective to the understanding of the Rock and its people. "I confess to Endo: My mind swings to and fro. On the one hand, the last thing I want to do is commit any kind of offence against Aboriginal culture. Too much of that – and

worse – has happened already. On the other hand I want to know and understand, and as far as possible be trusted to understand."

Obviously I don't know, nor does Hill, how far he has been trusted. But as he tells the myths of the kangaroo and the snake, as he reports the stories that climb the cliff face of the Rock or lie resting in the caves, his prose strikes a note of authenticity, of questioning confidence and sometimes puzzlement. Already a growth of Euro mythology clings to the rock, as in the story of an Aborigine shot by a policeman in 1934 or in the story of a missing baby called Azaria.

It all happens under the steady gaze of the Rock. With lucid energy, Hill describes its beauty, its mysteries, its moods. The prose is lit with a confident humility and with an enthusiasm of wonder. Ironically for a man who refuses to travel with a camera, Hill's fine text is appropriately accompanied by a wide range of superb photos and stylishly designed maps.

PHILIP DREW IS ALSO concerned with place and Ayers Rock (no Uluru for Drew) is mentioned only to be dismissed as an aberration in Australians' sense of themselves. "It is Bondi, not Ayers Rock, that symbolises this country for the majority."

For Drew, two complementary images should characterise Australians' sense of themselves, the veranda and the beach. We Australians (and for Drew this means white Australians) are urban coast-dwellers. The veranda offers both shelter and openness. "The veranda is, in many ways, the perfect symbol for such an extrovert culture. The veranda is an exteroceptor, an architectural organ positioned round the edge."

I have no doubt that Drew has his demographics right. He is just a little short on both logic and imagination. He is obsessed with the notion of verandas. Give Drew a veranda and he will hand you back a Versailles. Worse, he is prescriptive about mythologising. His book orders (white) Australians to get their heads together and make our myths conform with "geographic reality". If you followed his logic, Troy, Mt Olympus, Atlantis and Shangri La would have no place in mythology because you can't buy a road map for them at your favourite service station.

When Drew attempts to dredge up facts he finds himself surfing in hot water. He claims that the drawing of the "Brisbane Line" in the Second World War upset people because it was acknowledging a "basic truth". The landscapes of Drysdale and Nolan present a rejected and rejecting environment.

When it comes to writers, Drew really fiddles the books. If a writer mentions a veranda, he or she is in with a chance of winning the gold medal for affirming the mythology of coast-dwellers. Lawrence is a short-priced favourite because of some of the sillier things he said in *Kangaroo*. Les Murray, that urban poet, is quoted out of context because he mentions verandas. Drew even quotes *Voss* to support a mythology of living on the edge.

This book is a shearing shed full of woolly thinking. And rammed with large statements. "A jetty is a maritime colonnade – the humble equivalent of Bernini's great St Peter's colonnades." It is also a symbol of "outwardness", of "externalism". "The cricket match is truly a case of spending the afternoon on the edge." Watching them put the covers on during a test match could also truly be a case of searching for the inland sea.

Drew's pose also leaps suicidally into making any object mean what you choose it to mean, which is Drew's right, except when he claims to be speaking for all (white) Australians. The Albury railway station, another veranda with delusions of grandeur, is "an intense maelstrom canonading its way towards the horizon". "Flags are a kind of heavenly carpet. The four wharves at Walsh Bay which, with Dawes Point for a surrogate thumb is literally a hand" is (are?) but one of many examples where Drew shoots himself in the foot (metaphorically speaking) in terms of logic, imagination and syntax.

Drew may well be right in asserting that Australia's preoccupation with the inland indicates our "inarticulateness", "lack of destiny", "the vacuousness of Australian cultural pretensions" and our "perpetual immaturity". But the lack of the guiderail of either evidence or logic leads him to fall off his own veranda. Or to fall down the side of the scorned Ayers Rock. But perhaps I do him an injustice, for this book is itself quite compelling evidence for the vacuousness of at least some Australian cultural pretensions.

Drew's solution to our cultural and social problems is simple. Have Glenn Murcutt design you a beachside house which is a verbiage of verandas having a love-in, and sit gazing out on the Pacific. Keep your surfboard handy in case any ship dare approach our shores carrying migrants. Should some foreigner risk such an impertinence, you then paddle out and blow them out of the water. Literally. And this from a writer who sits gazing out to sea, turning the veranda of his back on forty thousand years of culture.

ALL THREE BOOKS under review focus on sacred sites. Hill, as a secular man, journeys to Uluru with all the reverence that pilgrims once took to Canterbury or Jerusalem. For Drew, mention a veranda, and Bob's your uncle (for free), and say hello to Aunty Blanche. Father Edmund Campion's sacred site is St Mary's cathedral, Sydney, which he treats with the awe that a cricket worshipper might give to the Long Room at the MCG.

Campion has established himself as the master of telling Catholic stories, not owning them but passing them on with insight and narrative skill. It is a revelation of the late twentieth century that a Euro-Australian treats a sacred site that was once dismissed as pagan, even barbaric, with a greater sense of worship than a Catholic priest treats his own cathedral. And in this perhaps both Hill and Campion have something important to say.

Campion's Catholicism is not of the cathedral but of streets and kitchens. He convinces us that he draws strength and re-affirmation from, to use an old Catholic term, 'paying a visit' to the cathedral. He enjoys its "crepuscular serenity", its assertion of the "church's sacrality".

But his is a casualness of worship, and he uses the cathedral as a clearing house of narratives, as a jetty to moor stories to, even a slightly unconvincing sanctuary lamp to throw light on his stories. Unlike the Rock, the cathedral does not own the stories, they just happen to begin there – or thereabouts.

The cathedral is an almost casual focus of devotion. Campion reminds us that in the Christian ethos sacredness is a construct, an imposition on a place, on a very large house, rather than God taking over from the Grollo brothers and doing the bricklaying for a monument to himself. Implicit in Campion's book is the understanding that Bethlehem was still simply a stable that has just happened to become famous beyond Bart Cummings' wildest dreams.

John Hanrahan is a Melbourne writer and reviewer.

A Wark on the Wild Side?

BEN GOLDSMITH

McKenzie Wark: *Virtual Geography: Living with Global Media Events* (Indiana University Press, $29.95).

TOWARDS THE END of 1994, St Helena, the tiny island in the South Atlantic to which Napoleon was exiled after the Battle of Waterloo, ended its own exile from the global village by becoming the latest staging post on the information superhighway. Through the beneficence of Cable and Wireless, the residents of St Helena can now receive satellite television, and thus have access to the media terrain, the "virtual geography" of images, places and things known from a distance that is the subject of McKenzie Wark's provocative and ambitious book.

In one sense, these virgin viewers would make ideal subjects for research into the effects of information transference: the technology has not yet become familiar, environmental, accepted. These viewers are an aberration in Wark's framework however, which works from the initial assumption that the all-encompassing reach of telecommunications has made it impossible to 'defamiliarise' the viewer sufficiently to make critical judgements on the workings of the media vector – "the matrix of possible trajectories in which events occur" – by analysing 'normal' media coverage of global events. Instead, in order to create a window through which to view and analyse the operation of the global media experience, Wark chooses to examine what he terms "weird global media events": exceptional happenings that do not fit seamlessly into the artificially constructed nar-

ratives through which the media enable us to make sense of the world.

Wark's thesis relies on the notion that the viral nature of the vector which touches and corrupts every social relation (along the lines of Marx's thesis of capital as the virus of abstraction) is the key determinant controlling modern human culture: "We no longer have roots, we have aerials. We no longer have origins, we have terminals". The extent of the vector's reach leads Wark to consider that modern human culture may now for the first time be legitimately described as global. Yet while the development of the vector theoretically permits us access to global knowledge, we are doubly hindered in our attempts to utilise that knowledge. Wark argues that the nature of the vector itself, the speed with which television both requires and permits information to be warped around the globe, demands "simple but subtle, standardized but interchangeable narrative constructions" which serve to reinforce stereotypes and limit the opportunities for alternative, critical readings. The vector determines our subjectivities, drawing boundaries of difference between 'us' and 'others', since

> the guarantee of 'our' identity comes not from 'our' intrinsic qualities, not from our difference from the other, but *from the vector itself.* The vector makes this other possible, and makes an 'us' possible. The vector creates these shifting nodes of 'us' and 'them' that provide all of us with the trickster syntax of unexpected crossroads. As much as we may want to differentiate, the vector keeps throwing us together, pitting us against others, and legitimating the conflict with the contraband of images it traffics from one place to the other.

The exceptional events Wark analyses – the Gulf War, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the suppression of dissent in Tiananmen Square and the Black Monday stock market crash of 1987 – disrupt the regular flow of media by defying the attempts of 'vector-brokers' to manage the unfolding stories. In failing to fit neatly into predetermined narrative formulae, the 'weird global media event' can provide the space in which the operation of power, the active processes of identity formation and the management of perception can be glimpsed at the precise point at which that power is, if only momentarily, disabled.

> The temporal pressure of the event forces elite discourse to think directly in popular terms, rather than at some remove, protected by the obscurity of its forums and a cultivated mass indifference. The exceptional event is thus the point at which the machinery of brokerage and the theaters [sic] of operation are most likely to stand exposed.

Yet if it is accepted that the media vector is the dominant force in shaping identity and perception, and that the 'weird global media event' is the point at which that dominance is exposed, what can be done with this knowledge? How can we intervene in this process and exploit the window created by the weird global media event? Wark offers no answers, merely "a place to start speaking ... I make no claim other than to be searching for a way to write about the strange experience of the most abstract, instant and global vectors turning up increasingly in all aspects of everyday life".

Effectively Wark argues that we are slaves to the vector, which denies original thought, abstracts us from our everyday lives and, like a runaway train, has its own impetus and generates its own velocity. All we can do is consider our *experience* of riding the vector, since we can never control its direction or effects. Theory is no help in the quest for understanding, since as Wark rather prosaically announces at one point, "Critical theory does not master the image, it merely rummages through its underwear".

Wark raises many complex and contentious issues that undoubtedly will provoke much debate among academics and within journals that attempt to criticise and theorise the role and influence of the abstract monolith that is 'the media'. For these reasons it is a challenge to attempt to review the book concisely since many of the issues it raises deserve to be engaged with at greater length. Wark must be credited for the breadth of his research, and for attempting to generate discussion on what remains a vast, under-examined territory.

It remains to be seen whether Wark's ambi-

tious project to find new ways for the practice of cultural studies to think and write about the emergent cultural forms brought by the vector is heeded by other practitioners. It is difficult to see the book gaining a wider audience than this however, which may ultimately defeat its purpose in attempting to open up the debate. Will it be read on St Helena? And if so, will it assist St Helenans in responding to the experience of telesthesia, or "perception abstracted from the particulars of place", that is the inevitable consequence of connection to the immediacy of television news coverage? How will they react to the reforging of their identities by the vector? If Wark is to be believed, the future looks somewhat bleak. Perhaps someone should warn them what they are letting themselves in for.

Ben Goldsmith is a postgraduate student attempting to traverse the vector at the University of Queensland.

Two Colours Red

PHILLIP DEERY

Bernie Taft: *Crossing the Party Line: Memoirs of Bernie Taft* (Scribe Publications, $26.95).
Peter S. Cook: *Red Barrister: A Biography of Ted Laurie QC* (LaTrobe University Press, $29.95).

WHEN THE RUSSIAN POET and writer Yevgeny Yevtushenko launched *Crossing the Party Line* he turned to its author, Bernie Taft, and said "History has deceived you, something in history betrayed you". By history Yevtushenko meant the bright star of communism that once guided his country's destiny and dazzled millions in the west with its ideals. As both Taft's memoirs and Cook's biography testify, the history of international communism was liberally sprinkled with deception and betrayal. Now that the star is extinct, the need to understand when and why it all went wrong becomes stark. Both of these immensely readable and relentlessly honest books attempt to come to terms with this god that failed.

First, the Taft memoir. In 1932 Saul Beer Tugendhaft, a fourteen-year-old German Jew who heard Hitler speak in Hanover, joined the Young Communist League. In 1984, having climbed to the highest positions in the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), Bernie Taft left the Party to which half a century of his life had been devoted. In accompanying Taft on his long and crowded journey we glimpse some of the defining moments in post-war Australian history. At the end of the Second World War he bathed in the euphoric belief, not restricted to communists, that a socialist New Order was about to dawn. Instead the chilling winds of the Cold War blew towards Australia.

Students of the Cold War will glean a fresh perspective by seeing it from the inside, if only from one side. Taft effectively recreates the mental world of communists at home and abroad (he was an inveterate traveller): besieged and isolated, they retreated further into self-confirming dogmas. Little wonder that Party leaders initially dismissed Khrushchev's 1956 revelations about Stalin's crimes as a CIA fabrication and then stifled attempts at discussion.

So Taft's memoirs are not misty-eyed. Whilst he gives repeated acknowledgement to the selfless dedication of sincere, hard-working communists in their daily struggles to improve the lot of others, he also illuminates the signposts pointing to the Party's nemesis. He provides, for example, compelling evidence of the rigid, intolerant and doctrinaire style of leadership which within the CPA enforced obedience and smothered dissent. Some of the 'best and brightest' Party members like Rex Mortimer or Ian Turner either quietly left or were rudely expelled; the silences of those who remained simplified the choice between conscience or complicity. Taft spoke out but stayed on. He clung to the belief that an open, democratic structure was not only desirable but achievable by working from within. Alexander Dubcek and the Euro-communists were beacons of hope for Taft as he became immersed in a series of bitter and protracted internal Party struggles.

In explaining his journey in the Party from youthful embrace to final departure, the focus is not purely local. Overseas there were the Moscow show trials of the thirties, the ruthless imposition of authoritarian regimes in post-war

Eastern Europe, the crushing of Hungarians' hopes with Russian tanks in 1956 and the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Each of these nodal events created in Taft misgivings, unease or bewilderment.

Until the dreams of the Prague Spring were extinguished he managed somehow to calm his fears, rationalise the lies or swallow the unpalatable; after all he was "a good disciplined communist". But in 1968 he helped lead the lonely charge of the CPA onto the international communist stage to denounce publicly the actions of the Soviet leaders. The time of reckoning had come: the days of duplicity were past. The Party line must be crossed. However in his subsequent efforts to steer the CPA in the directions he desired, Taft admits failure. The result was his resignation in 1984. For him the Party was over.

UNLIKE TAFT, E.A.H. Laurie – the subject of Peter Cook's superb *Red Barrister: A Biography of Ted Laurie QC* – was unwilling or unable to confront the crimes of Stalin or attempt to come to grips with the 'birth defects' of Soviet Russia. He was a different colour red. Although he left the CPA in 1965 – twenty years before Taft – he clung obstinately until his death in 1989 to a firm pro-Soviet position.

He persisted in calling the Hungarian uprising a 'counter-revolution'; he was disturbed by the CPA's public denunciation of Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia; and regarded those Victorian communists (led by Taft) who had become convinced of the irrelevance of the Russian model as betrayers of the cause if not 'a pack of bastards' when they left the Party en masse in 1985. For his wife Bonnie, it was Ted who was betrayed, he who was deceived. The bitter postscript to her suicide note in 1977 was addressed, pointedly, to him: "There is no such thing as the international working class".

Yet Laurie was neither a hard-line nor high-ranking Party apparatchik. Unlike the ruthless and rigid Ted Hill, or Jack Blake whose "grip was firm and his politics as hard as granite", the Ted Laurie who emerges from Cook's biography is far softer, a communist with a conscience: "Right or wrong, he was humane and decent".

How, then, are we to understand why such a man remained so loyal for so long to the hammer and sickle? Part of the explanation lies in selective amnesia and moral myopia. Eager to denounce the corrupt, undemocratic and manipulative nature of modern capitalism, Laurie (like most of his comrades) was largely blind to the presence of these things and worse in the Workers' Paradise. In the years Laurie was an active member of the CPA, he chose to ignore the size of the Gulag in Siberia, or the length of Stalin's hand in Eastern Europe. He joined just after the NKVD had quietly murdered thousands of anarchists in the Spanish Civil War and just before Stalin and Hitler cynically carved up Poland in their non-aggression pact.

Of such duplicity Laurie knew little. But it is improbable that extra knowledge (which was available in "the lying capitalist press") would have delayed his decision to join. Nor would it have deterred his life-long commitment to the central role of the CPSU in world communism.

What Peter Cook attempts, amongst other things, is to explain this commitment which, in this post-Cold War age, could well be the source of either puzzlement or ridicule. He does it with an elegance and a wisdom, and with a sympathetic ear for the frailties of the human condition. He succeeds by enabling readers from this generation, so removed in time and circumstance, to empathise with what it was like for an earlier generation. In the 1930s people like Ted Laurie

> saw themselves as having been caught up in a world that had gone mad, and believed that something had to be done, had at least to be attempted, to bring it back to sanity. Men and women of the Enlightenment, perhaps. Certainly people of sensitivity, imagination and determination ... who saw in the Soviet Union a shining antithesis to their own feeble, greedy, directionless society.

So communism embodied hope. For Laurie it was a hope which received nourishment from the favourable climate of the war years, and which sustained him during the difficult Cold War period. To reject the Soviet Union meant rejection of communism. And that meant leaving a Party which alone led the march towards a new and better world.

When Laurie did, in a technical sense, leave the CPA it had much to do with frustrations

with the Party leadership, Ted Hill in particular: he believed they thwarted his ambition. Disillusionment with the model of the Soviet Union or despair with the idea of Marxism being the hope of mankind were not factors.

One reason his departure – more a gradual withdrawal than a dramatic exit – was delayed was the immense courage it took to cross the Party Line. For readers today unaware of 'what it was like' for those back then who toed the line, Cook's comments are once again salutary: "You joined the Party for life, the only exit was in the coffin, and otherwise there was never an excuse for leaving or a right time to do it." Elsewhere he writes (and I quote freely because of the lucidity and music of the prose):

> Expulsion was dreaded. It was to be reviled as a renegade, a deserter, an opportunist. To be outside meant, in a sense, to lose one's 'family', the group who had shared your life for years, in Laurie's case for seventeen years. It was to enter the wilderness. It was to be shunned by old friends, have them cross the street to avoid you, or suffer their anger and abuse.

Today Taft is still fighting for causes he believes to be good. Despair with the Party has not blunted hope for the future. He carries none of the bitterness or cynicism that often burdens those deceived by history. The past is too full of dimly remembered songs to be a source of regret. For Ted Laurie, whose journey from Scotch College through Spain to Marxism inaugurated a life through which ran "an unbreakable red thread, first thick, then a little thinner, and then thick again", communism outside the party had swung round to mean renewed belief in the Soviet Union when he, and it, were about to pass away. For Peter Cook, too, the end was near, painfully and prematurely. That his book was published at all, and posthumously, says much for the devotion he inspired in those who carried it through: they did it for him and they did it for the future.

> His generation was finished. The next, the young men and women from postwar and Cold War years, had been missed. Perhaps the next generation, or the one after, would build up the fire. The need was there, the cause was good ... history was still on the side of the great idea.

In these final words of *Red Barrister*, Cook's moving epitaph to Laurie becomes his own. Despite Taft and Laurie and a great many other intelligent, well-intentioned Australians having been seduced by Stalin and deceived by history, there was something laudable and lofty and self-abnegating about one's devotion to the ideal. The pity of it was that when the great idea was transformed into practice, only one colour red was permissible.

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The Taft File

Obtained by Stefan Heym

State Security Administration
Greater Berlin
Section XX/3 Berlin, 22/6/71.

Issued by the Federal
authority for the
documentation of
State Security
Service of the
former German
Democratic Republic

Operative Information No. 727/71

The informal reporter (IMF) 'Aust' reported the following on 21.6.1971:

On 20.6.71 the IM (unofficial collaborator) met with the Australian Communist Party representative to the 8th Congress of the SED (East German Communist Party). Taft, Bernie, member of the Secretariat of the Communist Party of Australia at the place where Taft stayed, the Sport Hotel Hohenschonhausen. When the

IM arrived at the Sport Hotel the former Australian citizen and present GDR citizen Loni Genin, living at 11 Scharrenstreet, was present. From Genin the IM learnt that she picked up Taft from the house of the writer Stefan Heym.

In view of Genin's presence the IM was unable to carry out directly the tasks allotted to him. The IM also had the impression that Genin had given Taft information about him, or alternatively that Taft asked her about him.

Asked about his impression about the 8th Congress, Taft stated that the Congress did not coincide with his perception of a Communist Party Congress. In his opinion there was not enough debate about ideological problems. He admitted the reality of the difficulties exposed at the Congress but declared there should have been debates about these difficulties. In explaining his position he did not deal with concrete problems and illustrate his position by specific examples.

In further conversation, the IM asked how Taft imagined the future relationship between the Australian Communist Party and the Communist Parties of the socialist countries. Taft explained that this will be decided in Moscow. As far as the Australian Communist Party is concerned, there was no intention to break off relations with the Communist Parties of the socialist countries, but it could be that the relationship with the Australian Communist Party could be broken off by the socialist countries. In connection with this he spoke about the appearance of the paper *The Socialist* in Australia and stated that on the basis of the quality printing and the paper of this journal, as well as of other characteristics, the CC of the Australian Communist Party was convinced that the publishers of this journal receive financial support from the socialist countries.

To clarify this, the IM explained to the collaborator (the person taking this deposition – the translator) that the Australian Communist Party split after the August events in the CSSR and the entry of the troops of the five friendly countries in the CSSR. About 30–40 per cent of the comrades oppose the position of the CC on this matter, as well as its position generally because of its revisionist aspects: A group of these comrades brought out the journal *The Socialist*, which opposed the Party paper *The Tribune*. Taft also pointed out that this paper (*The Socialist*) could be obtained in the CC of our Party. He had seen it there himself.

On the basis of the latest issue of *Tribune*, the IM discussed with Taft the position of the Party in relation to the youth. In this issue, there is an article about a *Gammler* (Hippy) well-known in Australia named Lennon, who has anti-imperialist traits in his ideological position. Cooperation with such forces is placed in the centre of the work of the CC. The IM explained that the Australian CC is oriented too little towards the working class and this will lead to a separation from the working class. Taft declared that he was not in agreement with this opinion and gave examples from Melbourne which showed that there was cooperation with the working class. At the same time he expressed the opinion that one had to cooperate with the revolutionary youth because they incorporated decisive powers for the class struggle. In his opinion the party still does not give enough attention to the youth. In this connection, Taft reported about his son who had declared himself as an objector to military service and who had given interviews to the press. The IM gave such an article to the security administration.

As all First Secretaries of the Communist Parties of the socialist countries were present at the 8th Congress, Taft thought the Congress was important for the International Labour Movement. But he immediately added that Rumania had not sent its First Secretary and that he himself is not the First Secretary. The IM assumes that Taft was sent because he speaks German very well and that he has all kinds of connections in the GDR, e.g. Stefan Heym.

Taft complained that because of the continual sessions he was unable to look around the GDR and he intends to come back to the GDR in the near future for about four to six weeks. The IM considers it significant that Taft knew nothing about an invitation in autumn 1968 from Comrade Ulbricht to the then representative of the CC of the Australian CP, Alec Robertson. Robertson had visited the GDR after the August 1968 events in Czechoslovakia and had had a personal talk with Comrade Ulbricht during which the invitation to the members of the CC for a longer visit to the GDR was issued.

From all the statements of Taft in relation to

international political questions, particularly on relationships to communist countries, one could feel a position of wait and see.

The IM estimates that in contrast to other leading members of the CC of the Communist Party of Australia one senses that Taft has an objective position. During his visit to Australia, the IM noted that the CC representatives who took up a revisionist position always tried to attack him and often became subjective.

The conversation lasted about an hour and was ended then as Taft was very tired. Taft flew back to Australia the following day, the 21.6.1971.

Signed Lieutenant Neumann.

Distribution:
1x to HA XX
1x Working File IM

Published by courtesy of Bernie Taft. (The informant was Professor Frederick Rose.)

Communist Women

MARGARET HUTTON

Joy Damousi: *Women Come Rally: Socialism, Communism and Gender in Australia 1890–1955* (OUP, $24.95).

SCHOLARLY ANALYSIS of women's part in the struggles for socialism and communism within Australia is long overdue. Joy Damousi's *Women Come Rally* goes far in redressing this omission and is to be hailed as a major contribution to the genre of Labour history. However, *Women Come Rally* is much more than an exercise in filling in the gaps in the historical record; Damousi has set herself the path-breaking task of writing Labour history in which gender analysis is pivotal to the overall design. In so doing she has thrown down the gauntlet to other historians of the Labour Movement to incorporate "a more rigorously theoretical understanding of gender relations" within their work.

Damousi's book originated as a PhD thesis on socialist women in Australia from the closing decade of the last century up to the end of the First World War. In reshaping her thesis for publication, Damousi significantly extended its scope to include women's experience in the first thirty-five years of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA). The book divides naturally into these two areas.

Damousi's chapter on women communists fruitfully examines the conundrum of women's gravitation to a political party which subordinated the issue of female emancipation to that of the class struggle and reveals the changes over time in the reasons women joined and stayed in the party. Her chapter exploring the gendered meanings embedded in communist iconography is also most compelling. The communist was constructed as a virile male worker; his powerful body wielded the hammer, the potent "symbol of historical change". In contrast, women's bodies were not represented in left-wing iconography and this reveals the devaluing of women as political activists within the party.

Women's voices were similarly absent from the genre of communist autobiography until relatively recently. Damousi uses the gendered nature of communist autobiography to reinforce her contention that women's experience in the CPA was very different from that of men. But here her analysis is somewhat flawed as she fails to note that for the most part communist women did not begin to occupy the autobiographical space until the emergence of the Women's Movement.

In order to highlight the gendered nature of the genre, Damousi selects the autobiographies of nine communist men, most of which were published between 1960 and 1980, and contrasts them with those of seven communist women, most of which were published after 1980. Ordinarily, there would be little problem in comparing the testimonies of men and women which were produced ten to twenty years apart. However, in the case of communist autobiographies there are significant difficulties. The CPA maintained some vitality up until 1980; the vast majority of those male communists and ex-communists who wrote autobiographies during this period did so with an overt political purpose.

Most of the autobiographies written by communist men selected by Damousi for analysis – *The Great Delusion* (Cecil Sharpley), *Once a Jolly Comrade* (Keith McEwan), *Australia at Stake* (Geoff McDonald), *Comrade No More* (Tony McGillick), *My Years in the Communist Party* (Ralph Gibson) and *Comrades Come Rally* (John Sendy) – were produced as self-conscious propaganda, to be used as political weapons in the Cold War. In contrast, the communist women who published autobiographies from the late 1970s onwards, had a different political agenda. Feminism has wrought profound changes throughout Australian society during the last twenty-five years and this is reflected in the autobiographies of female communists. It is unlikely that Zelda D'Aprano for example, would have written a gut-level feminist analysis of the virulent sexism rampant within the CPA if she had penned her autobiography in the 1960s rather than the late 1970s – all autobiographies show the marks of the era in which they were constructed.

Damousi is correct in her claim that the early autobiographies of communist men are a chronicle of achievements, recording the " 'Great Men' and 'legends' of the movement" with few revelations of the private and personal lives of the writer. Bernie Taft's recent contribution to the genre, *Crossing the Party Line*, published last year, certainly conforms to this pattern. However, other autobiographies published by communist men over the last decade that Damousi has excluded from her analysis do not so easily fit the mould – for example, the works of John McKenzie, Eric Aarons, Denis Freney, Russel Ward and Harry Reade.

Damousi contends that the life stories of the communist women autobiographers in contrast to those of the men "are not tales of political self-aggrandisement and justification but of self-discovery". However, this is equally true of many of the autobiographies of communist men written after 1980, particularly, Bernard Smith's *The Boy Adeodatus* and Roger Milliss' *Serpent's Tooth*. Damousi's exploration of communist autobiography would have been less skewed and more persuasive had she selected for comparison the works of male and female comrades published during the same historical moment.

Despite this criticism, *Women Come Rally* significantly adds to our knowledge of women's experience in the Labour Movement in the first half of this century. Its overarching significance is that it breaks new terrain with its successful melding of gender analysis with Labour history.

Margaret Hutton is a postgraduate student at Victoria University of Technology working on a Doctorate on 'National Security and Australian Communism 1940–1942'.

Truth, Lies and Fiction

PAMELA EADE McCASKER

Candida Baker: *The Powerful Owl* (Pan MacMillan, $14.95).
Laurie Clancy: *The Wildlife Reserve* (A&R, $14.95).
Georgia Savage: *Ceremony at Lang Nho* (McPhee Gribble, $14.95).
Nicholas Playford: *The Prisoner Gains A Blurred Skin* (Black Pepper, $14.95).

IN CANDIDA BAKER'S new collection of stories, *The Powerful Owl*, the author cleverly maintains an optimistic tone while hinting at the dark fears which inhabit the human psyche. Characters confront their own mortality, their fear of ageing, jealousy, betrayal, bereavement, sin, guilt and punishment.

It seems the same knowledge of mortality that gives life its edge gives these stories their power. However, ultimately Ms Baker's characters must grapple with something far harder to reconcile: their own loss of ideals, sensitivity and humanity.

In 'The Gypsy Story', the mother of IVF triplets rejoices in motherhood while mourning the loss of one baby. She wonders why so many eggs are implanted given that multiple births compromise the health of surviving foetuses.

The breathtaking plot twists of 'Nesting Instinct' are acrobatic stunts which make telling points about truth, lies and fiction. Melanie, a writer, who mines the lives of others for her art, always bases her stories on real life for maximum authenticity. When a friend tricks her into believing an untrue story, she uses it

anyway: "The ... point is (Elizabeth) told it therefore it happened ... in her imagination."

Ms Baker's title story, 'The Powerful Owl', is grounded in reality via vivid images of a weekender shack. Simultaneously, she leads the mainly credulous reader through a story rich in references to the supernatural. We are almost persuaded to believe in cats as familiars and in the omniscience of owls. Almost, but not quite.

Candida Baker's protagonists learn that for every joy life hands out, they will eventually suffer an equal and compensatory loss. As stern god-writer-accountant, she enjoys balancing the books.

In Laurie Clancy's new novel, *The Wildlife Reserve*, Terry Shaw, an innocent from abroad, with a dissertation on 'The Car in Twentieth Century Literature', clinches a job at Blamey University by proving himself a good all-rounder – on the staff cricket team!

In this addition to the campus genre the writing is brisk, the satire sharp, the dialogue apt, the observations acute. Clancy uses, as a recurring motif, the *Age* Odd Spot. These "compressed sagas of real life ... [these] ... journalistic haikus" allow Terry to escape the mundanity of politics, sport, and weather. Soon his own reality mirrors the surreality of Odd Spots. As Blamey Uni becomes familiar, the novel itself reads as a collection of prosaically-linked Odd Spots. As one bizarre event is piled upon another the words of a don become prophetic: " 'characters are mere signposts pointing the way to the next gag' ".

Unfortunately this novel is mainly peopled by laughable humans voicing less than laughable lines. Are we ready for a rerun of the old 'Fuck Hinn' joke from this writer's own undergraduate days? Whilst a wide range of emblematic Australian types is cleverly portrayed, this novel would work better with fewer uniformly awful characters to blunt our interest.

GEORGIA SAVAGE'S new novel, *Ceremony at Lang Nho*, is laden with appealing characters and sharp psychological insights, while remaining as engrossing as a whodunit. Fiona, a photographer, cannot start to live until she discovers what happened to her adolescent love; the boy with a "shining quality" against whom subsequent loves have been measured and found wanting.

In her quest for truth, Fiona uses her camera as a shield. She protects herself from the pain of loss by capturing the essence of loved ones and pinning them down on film. Viewing life through the distorting filter of cameras and memory, Fiona eschews hurtful involvements. But journeying towards understanding she learns to experience life firsthand.

This writing has the luminosity of the best sort of photographs: those that give a singular slant to reality transforming it from a static craft into a dynamic art form. One character says of a photo: "just a crooked pine tree. A bit of wet sand, the sea ... a little white moon ... There was nothing in it but there was everything."

Nicholas Playford's new collection of stories: *The Prisoner Gains A Blurred Skin*, teases the reader with its sense of dislocation. Many more questions are asked than answers given. In 'Encircling the Rose Garden', a story written rather confrontationally in the second person, the protagonist, contemplating a rose garden while struggling to accept the cooling of her lover's passion, is asked by the narrator: "How many thorns can you see? Thousands? The information is before you but you can't assimilate it." The author's writerly eye zooms in like a camera to reveal the micro world underlying the macro one: "The burn marks running down his deltoid ... tell of when you ate halva together."

These stories' sense of physical location is as sharp as the emotional landscape they inhabit is foggy. In 'Hinges', Harry, apparently employed to renovate an old house, is actually being put to a far more sinister use.

Playford further undermines our belief in his own vividly-drawn realities by throwing the reader off-balance with metaphysical data which makes nonsense of certainties. In 'The Fragmentation of Tyres', a spectral hitchhiker warns Emily: "our minds are potent, they can turn dream into bland reality".

Pamela Eade McCasker is a Melbourne writer.

Wasted Talent

CLEMENT MACINTYRE

Ross Fitzgerald: *'Red Ted', The Life of E.G. Theodore* (UQP, $24.95).

THE HISTORY OF the Australian labour movement has produced some unlikely stories. This is an account of an Australian Labor politician who started out with nothing, was elected to Parliament at a young age, rose to become Federal Treasurer before he was forty-five, was largely self-educated, yet was able to dominate economic debates. At the same time he was able to amass a considerable personal fortune and generate some hostility in the labour movement with the purchase of an expensive house in one of the most affluent retreats of Sydney.

It may be that the attractiveness of prime Sydney real estate to leaders and former leaders of the ALP means that this story is less uncommon than it once was, but Ross Fitzgerald's account of the life of E.G. Theodore shows this transformation to be a remarkable achievement. Fitzgerald describes the rise of Theodore from wandering prospector, to union official, State Premier, Federal Treasurer, publisher and mining magnate. It traces the transition from 'Red Ted' to 'Kirribilli Ted' which sounds like it should be a story of apparently effortless success. Paradoxically, however, it is an account of a life that in many respects was unfulfilled. The taint of 'funny money' and corruption was enough to deny one of the ultimate glittering prizes of politics to Theodore.

The first major biography of Theodore is now more than twenty years old, and yet the simple equation that Gough Whitlam presented in his foreword seems to still hold true today: "Theodore = Mungana = corruption". Despite the extent of his achievements as Premier of Queensland, as Federal Treasurer in the Scullin government and in business after he left politics, Theodore's reputation is still damaged by the allegations of corruption over the Mungana mine and bribery in connection with his preselection for a federal seat, together with a sometimes too close association with John Wren. While Theodore's latest biographer, Ross Fitzgerald, does not challenge this orthodoxy, he does offer a new appraisal that presents a sympathetic interpretation and argues the case that despite his failings, Theodore had much to offer.

According to Fitzgerald, the cost of hounding Theodore out of federal politics was considerable. He was one of the first Australians to read Keynes' *Treatise on Money* and, almost alone among Australian politicians and treasury officials, he had seen how the ideas of Keynes might ease the extent of the massive unemployment that came with the onset of the depression in the 1930s. Yet only days before he was due to bring down his first budget the spectre of a Royal Commission into the Mungana scandal was raised and he was obliged to step down as Treasurer. Similarly, after his reinstatement as Treasurer his proposed reflationary measures were blocked by a hostile Senate.

At the same time, Theodore had to face sustained criticism within his own party as the conflict between the rival plans for economic recovery brought NSW Premier Jack Lang into open criticism of, and then active hostility to, the federal government. The long-term consequences of this, Fitzgerald argues, were immense. He claims that it was because Theodore had been wounded by the earlier allegations he was able to be brought down by a combination of the conservative political forces and opposition within the ALP. Accordingly, "instead of voting for Theodore's advanced economic and fiscal policies, the country chose a mediocre compromise candidate, Joe Lyons, who presided over the sorriest decade in Australian history."

Throughout the book, Theodore is presented as a man who was able enough, and realistic enough to succeed at anything he turned his hand to. Fitzgerald shows the transition from a young, raw-boned, union leader to an older more conservative and wealthy businessman. What does not emerge so clearly, however, is the reason behind this change other than it being the natural progress of a man of consummate talents who was able to turn his abilities to a new challenge when his path was blocked. Certainly the lessons learnt by the fiery union leader and reforming Premier meant that he brought considerable political pragmatism to his later life, but I'm not sure that this fully explains the con-

servatism of the older 'Kirribilli Ted'.

It is as though Fitzgerald got so close to his subject that some of the larger picture was lost in the close detail. At times, Fitzgerald goes to some lengths to show us the extent of this detail – twice in less than fifty pages we are reminded that Sir Robert Gibson (Chairman of the Commonwealth Bank Board) was a Scottish-born conservative, and numerous friends and adversaries are identified as "teetotal" or "non-smoking" without the relevance of these observations ever being made apparent. At other times the detail is less exact: the date of Theodore's resignation as Treasurer is given as 6 July, 1930 (p. 263), and 8 July, 1930 (p. 278); in fact his resignation was gazetted on 9 July.

Yet, despite these criticisms, there is much to be admired in this book. Fitzgerald is at his best as he shows the complexities of the politics of the period and he is able to place Theodore's role in the negotiations and debates in a way that sets his contribution to these in some broader political and economic context. Despite the recent run of autobiographies from Australian Labor politicians, there has been a dearth of good political biographies – especially of those from the years between the wars – but with his life of E.G. Theodore, Fitzgerald has made a substantial and welcome contribution.

Clement Macintyre teaches politics at the University of Adelaide and is working on a study of conservative politics in South Australia.

Deep Throats

LEE CATALDI

Dorothy Porter: *The Monkey's Mask* (Hyland House, $19.95).
Bruce Beaver: *Anima and Other Poems* (UQP, $14.95).

DOROTHY PORTER'S *The Monkey's Mask* reads like a cross between *Heroin Annie* and *Les liaisons dangereuses*. It is a detective thriller written in a verse form which exploits one of the great unsung virtues of poetry – its efficiency – as in this particular moment of the narrative's crisis,

"You can't make
the mud stick, Jill,
you open your mouth
we'll sue."

she's smiling
her eyes
show the black pit
of the old woman
she'll become

The Monkey's Mask, like any good thriller, is absorbing, gripping to read, hard to put down. It is very well constructed, the way a good novel is put together. All the features of the work, the events, the relationships, the metaphors relate to what is central – here, as in other Porter writings, the nexus of sex, carelessness and death. The verse is swift, economical and transparent, but from time to time the particular virtue of poetry – its density – comes into play with, for example, this characteristically novelist manoeuvre, in which the apparently random accident of Jill's running over a pet cat, exposes the heart of the story, and her relation to it,

It twists
in a broken somersault
away from me

it's frothing blood.

Mickey's mother
I can't make her wait
a car stops behind me

please,
I say,
I'm in a terrible hurry

please
ring a vet.

A man
with furrowed burnt face
and slow eyes

uh huh,
he says
looking down
at the squirming cat

and I go.

The cross referencing of metaphor and plot, as in the lines quoted, is reinforced by a system of parallels which is subtle and unobtrusive, in particular the parallel trajectories of detective and victim. The physical centrality of the throat (the victim, Mickey, is strangled) is wittily reflected in the way in which the plot, of a narrative written in 'poetry', concerns poets (suspects), takes place in the poetry scene, and has clues embodied in poems written by the victim. These poems have to be interpreted by the detective for whom this type of reading is alien, coming as she does from outside the scene. It is interesting that coming from a milieu in which poetry is habitually read aloud, Porter can use *throat* as a metonym for poetry rather than, say, *letter*.

The Monkey's Mask is a perverse work. In detective fiction the emotions of the reader never enter the area of real danger. This detachment is the detective writer's contract with the reader, whereas in lyric poetry the poet's precise undertaking is to guarantee this danger. In *The Monkey's Mask* the poetry is stripped of almost all that makes it poetic: emotion, metaphor, the hidden. The medium becomes almost completely transparent, which is of course why it is so readable. Only occasionally does something from those depths reveal itself, those depths into which in order to get on with the job, the detective cannot afford to look. This tension, between these two cross purposes, and the wonderful tightness and symmetry of the narrative's construction, combine to make *The Monkey's Mask* a tour de force, one could even add dazzling. It should be read and re-read.

THE POEMS in *Anima and Other Poems* are all about vision and depth. I find this collection disappointing. Those moments of arresting vision, for example,

> The shore waves rose and lapsed like
> rapturous
> moving sculptures and on them and
> through them
> the surfers rode out their rhythmical lives

are few. It would not be out of keeping with the central image of the sea in this collection to suggest that it is in danger of drowning in its own fluency.

Bruce Beaver can write poetry which is witty, deft and tightly constructed, as in

> Rabbits set loose to gnaw and multiply
> To give their visitors a sporting chance
> And leave the rest to contemplate awry
> The island's eroded carcase, angry red.
> Alive with rodents, otherwise quite dead.

This particular island's ecological state becomes emblematic not only of what we have done to Norfolk Island and its environs but to the much larger island we live on, and this is done by the briefest reference to those Australian icons, sport, rabbits and red soil. The implications of these reverberate in the reader's imagination.

Unfortunately, if the poem, and consequently the reader, is so loaded with references to other art works, stylistic echoes of Milton, Wordsworth, T.S. Eliot, and repetitions of the image which diminish rather than enhance its force, there is no room left for the reader to imagine anything. In relation to much of the writing in this book, Blake's dictum was wrong; enough would have been better than too much.

There is also the danger which always attends autobiography; a nervousness about whether the author can legitimately praise the subject, who is of course the author. The 'I' which one sees in these poems is generous, open, particularly to the Australian landscape and its light, and gallantly optimistic. However, trying to avoid boastfulness can lead to a dreadful coyness, something from which *Anima*, the title poem of the collection, is not free. This was also a problem for Wordsworth. Can I paraphrase Blake? Blatant or not at all.

Lee Cataldi is a Sydney poet and critic.

Heady Stuff

IAN SYSON

Michael Wilding: *This is for You* (A&R, $14.95); *Book of the Reading* (Paperbark Press; no price provided) *Social Visions* (Sydney Studies, $25).

MARIJUANA, NOSTALGIA, PARANOIA. These are the staples of Michael Wilding's recent collections of short stories, *This is for You* and the slighter (42 pp.) volume *Book of the Reading*. The stories, most of which stand alone as real gems, come together to produce an overwhelming picture of failure, betrayal and despair. It's as if the whole is something *less* than the sum of its parts. Wilding's fictional world is, in the main, peopled by ex-lefty fifty-somethings with drug-fucked memories. Now their only form of action and escape often lies in taking more of what helped them arrive at this age of despair with fewer functioning synapses. In 'Smoke-Oh':

> They sat there, the publisher, the cab driver, the librarian, the public servant, the scholar. We often sat around like this. Rolling up joint after joint. Sometimes sitting there with the dealer with a great cardboard box of lightly packed fragrant uncompressed heads.
>
> We have such good ideas but so little likelihood of implementing them. We are pretty well surplus to requirements, marginal men, old teaheads of yet another lost generation, watching it all go up in smoke.

The tone is not ironic, this is no goad to lapsed radicals, nor is it a subtle, 'against the grain' clarion call to the workers. It is simple, direct and it sets the mood of *This is for You*. Elsewhere, characters repeat and reaffirm this resignation.

> Neither Lydia nor Marcus knew any of the words. Just the mood of sad acceptance sang to them, plangent, the playing always sure and vigorous, and a world weariness the dominant theme. And their own weariness of course.

A reader could be forgiven for concluding that Michael Wilding has lost nothing of his talent and all of his hope.

One of Australia's better living writers, Wilding has not always been a pessimist. Nor has he always produced a hopeless response in me. The first time I came in contact with him the effect was just the opposite. On one of those jaunts that academics go on, he gave a series of readings, lectures and seminars at the University of Queensland. As an undergraduate student there at the time I was completely convinced by his historicised reading of Marvell (which had the added bonus of making the poet sound interesting); I was moved (as he was) by his passionate reading of some of his own stories; and I was overjoyed when he scandalised many of those present at his seminar on Patrick White's *Riders in the Chariot* with his constant and shameless use of class as a critical and heuristic concept. As some in the audience pointed out, he said little more than Jack Beasley had in the *Realist Writer* (in the 1960s) about White's inability to represent the working class as anything but a vicious bunch of racists. True enough, but it was also worth repeating.

The situation was something of a revelation to me: here was one of a rare breed, an academic/writer who wanted to talk about class in order to affirm things like socialism and class struggle. He suggested ways to think about literature and culture outside the formalist straitjacket of new criticism and its recent manifestations within poststructuralism and postcolonialism. Here was a (pretty much unreconstructed and all the better for it) Marxist literary critic. Heady stuff.

So what happened in the meantime?

Another of Wilding's recently published works is *Social Visions* a collection of essays written over the years. In reading it I am sent back to that Marvell lecture. This intelligent critic, wonderful writer and engaging speaker, looking out of place in his (what must have been oh so hot) black suit (this is Brisbane remember) speaking to so few people. Not that the room was virtually empty, just that it's a safe bet that few were actually listening.

So, I am afraid, it is with *Social Visions*. From the opening essay on the politics of *Gulliver's Travels* through essays on George Meredith, two on Conrad, a particularly good long piece on Alan Sillitoe, and essays on Milan Kundera and Isaac Singer, Wilding is solid in argument and graceful in style. His political contextualisation of Swift's book is just exact. No more to be said. And once again he wields class well and often in making his readings. But who is listening? And what place do Marxist analyses of canonical and demi-canonical literary works have in this

post-everything creative nation of ours? I'm not sure.

It seems that there are two Michael Wildings, if these three books are anything to go by. One is the critic, still hammering away at those works that engage him, responding positively and optimistically to the challenges they pose, but doing so in something of a vacuum. The other is the acutely observant and contemporary writer, noting the resignation and pessimism around him and amplifying these moods through his own dour and slightly paranoid outlook. I can't help wondering what each thinks of the other and what might come out of a union of the two if they ever got their heads together.

Ian Syson is the Assistant Editor of Meanjin *and a Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne's Australian Centre. He is currently writing a book on Australian women writers of the 1950s and 1960s.*

Australia, Past and Present

GWEN KELLY

Patsy Adam-Smith: *Goodbye Girlie* (Viking, $29.95).
R. G. Hay: *Iris, It's Finished: A Childhood in Country Queensland* (CQUP, $12.95).

GOODBYE GIRLIE is the story of the further adventures of Patsy Adam-Smith. Chronologically it covers her life as an underage VAD in the Australian army, her post-war disastrous marriage, her six years at sea, her trips to the Kimberley droving cattle, her journey with the Anzacs to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the 1918 armistice, and much, much more. It adds up to an incredibly adventurous, or as she says "furious", journey through life. It ends with the deaths of her parents and her final discovery of the truth about their marriage. The text is clarified by a generous collection of photographs which enhance the closing nostalgia.

The story is at heart a sweep through the landscapes peopled with fascinating characters that constitute the core of Adam-Smith's numerous books and articles. The search for her own identity permeates the whole with the need to understand her own conception, including her near-destruction as a foetus by her maternal grandfather. This theme goes hand in hand with her search for personal freedom.

Adam-Smith has the skills of a natural writer. Anecdotes, humorous and otherwise spring to life in swiftly moving prose. Consider, for example, the story of the sea captain who refused absolutely to take the ship out of the safe harbour in which he had anchored. Such accounts are imbued with a joy of living, an empathy with the ordinary Australian that explains her popularity as a writer.

The least satisfactory aspect of the book is her account of adult intimate relationships where characterisation becomes sketchy and possibly one-sided. Her husband is shadowy and finally despicable. Yet, her own initial sexual ignorance must have frustrated him as well as herself. Her determination to live her own life, including six years at sea, is admirable but it must have seemed inexplicable to the kind of man she married. Her deep indignation at his infidelity and her firm refusal to grant his initial request for a divorce suggest there were residual prejudices of her own, not fully explored. Men in general are depicted more clearly as mates than as lovers. I feel the same reservations in her depiction of the children. Was her journeying always 'happy' as she suggests? Artistically it is the area where autobiography often falls short of the novel.

Such dissatisfactions are minor ones in view of the story's strengths. Adam-Smith's prose heightens at times to the emotional impact of poetry. Who could forget the singing of the Aboriginal stockmen to quieten the cattle bound for the abattoir or the feeling of deep silence in the Cathedral at Amiens on Armistice day?

THE DESCRIPTION "an unmetricated man" is given by Hay of himself. It is apt, for *Iris, It's Finished* describes childhood in the thirties and forties in a remote Queensland mining town, Blair Athol. It is significant because it becomes an account of the Australian way of life between 1920 and 1950 in any country town including the outer suburbs of the cities. The biography is divided into recollected moments introduced by poems that reveal an eye for

detail in precise, vivid language that enhances the feeling for people, animals and landscape.

Initially the story is weighed down by prosey sentences but gradually it meanders into the personal memories of the author himself. At times Hay repeats himself (at least one incident is given twice), but the drifting character of the narrative has charm. The story finally fades away like a modern rock song. The overall effect is a warm picture of a working-class family. Australians obviously had their own identity many years ago. Thus Hay recreates the everyday domestic life of the time: medicine without antibiotics, the dreaded bread poultice, carbide lamps, the incessant boys games of marbles. Hay's Ginger Meggs-type scorn for girls' ability in this area (they fudge) is typical.

On a more important level is the depiction of social consciousness. The description of his father's Scottish background is rewarding for it emphasises the Scots' contribution to our inheritance. His father's world is secular, at times Protestant. We see the effect of the depression on the miners and the economic impact of war which operated to their benefit. He was a good unionist, a man of integrity, a fighter, but softhearted. He relegated the killing of the chooks to Uncle Clarrie.

Through Hay's family, the old pattern of Australian social mobility is apparent. The children took the road to middle-class status via nursing or teaching. Hay himself became a teacher. It seems to have been a worthwhile journey.

Gwen Kelly is a veteran novelist and short-story writer.

Prison Hulks as Rehabilitation Centres

JOY DAMOUSI

Alan Frost: *Botany Bay Mirages: Illusions of Australia's Convict Beginnings* (MUP, $24.95).

IN THIS BOLD COLLECTION of essays a number of assumptions about Australia's convict history are rigorously challenged. Some of these are as follows: Frost claims that the prison hulks were neither a place of overcrowding, nor were they unhygienic. On some hulks there was a genuine rehabilitation program undertaken which was enlightened and inspired by compassion. In terms of the decision by the British authorities to sail to Botany Bay, Frost reiterates his long-held belief that New South Wales was selected because British naval stores were dwindling and flax and timber were needed. Contrary to popular opinion, Frost asserts, the First Fleet was not disorganised but was efficient and well equipped. In regard to terra nullius, Frost puts forward the view that had the "British not seen New South Wales to be terra nullius, then I believe they would have negotiated for the right to settle the Botany Bay area". He also believes that smallpox was prevalent during the early days of the British arrival, but the Aborigines contracted it "from a source other than the Europeans at Port Jackson". Given that those of the First Fleet started the voyage in good health, Frost argues that this was an important factor in restoring women's fertility. Women were actually better fed than their official ration would suggest and contemporary observers noted the colony's fecundity.

These essays are engaging, accessible and provocative. Frost attempts to debunk some of the longstanding arguments which have influenced convict historiography in Australia. Some of these are familiar (like the reasons for selecting New South Wales and the smallpox debate regarding Aborigines), while in other respects Frost offers new perspectives, like the question of women's fertility and the conditions of the hulks. These ideas are written in a lively and spirited way and deserve a wide readership.

Yet, in reinterpreting several of the 'mirages' which have been perpetuated by historians, I wonder whether Frost has simply replaced one set of 'mirages' with another. While he provides compelling evidence for his cases, methodologically, he does not move beyond the dichotomy of presenting an either good/bad view of Australia's past or an absolute right/wrong interpretation. Frost's own 'mirages' could be challenged as easily as those he contests. Moreover, in painstakingly presenting a positive image of the British authorities and prison conditions, Frost ignores the broader point that the penal system itself was based on asymmetrical

power relations. No matter how rehabilitating the hulks, or efficient the First Fleet, or well fed the convict women, or however little responsibility the British should assume in the prevalence of smallpox amongst Aborigines, the white, British men who ruled the colonies had autocratic power to do so. Finally, Frost is able to pursue his ideas in an iconoclastic way because he sets up straw arguments which rely too heavily on texts written thirty years ago. An engagement with recent works by Davidson, Neal and Byrne is alarmingly absent. A consideration of recent interpretations would have given his arguments further depth and scope.

Despite these reservations, this book is an indispensible text which will broaden the debates about Australia's convict beginnings.

Joy Damousi is a lecturer in the Department of History at the University of Melbourne. She is the author of Women Come Rally: Socialism, Communism and Gender in Australia 1890-1955, *and is currently researching aspects of gender and sexuality in Australian convict history.*

Like Pudding on the Page

BRUCE PASCOE

Wray Vamplew and Brian Stoddart, eds: *Sport in Australia* (CUP, $49.95).

IN HIS SUMMARY of these essays Stoddart says the aim was to illuminate "aspects of Australian Sports History" as well as "raising issues of gender, race, economics, media, politics, religion, education, the arts and more."

To examine sport as a component of social and economic history is not new, but it is quite new for Australia and this book will serve future students well. The research is densely annotated and there are enough dates, numbers and measurements to satisfy the most ardent statistician.

It is a scholarly tome and proves this by going out of its way to use a boring and ugly cover and in many cases photographs so crudely etched that it gives the book a 1950s appearance.

All the essays are written by academics from humanities and social science faculties, but why does this institutionalised writing always sit like pudding on the page? You turn the leaves praying that a Manning Clark, Dinny O'Hearn, Deb Verhoven or Georgia Savage will staple you to the page with the energy and panache of their passions. Academics don't have to write like crabbed pedants but too many do. As a consequence, the subject matter, which for a sports enthusiast should be one long read of fascination, becomes a burdensome cobbling of statistics and dusty history.

At least you could always rely on Clarke to insult someone and start a scorching flak of correspondence. Sometimes more history erupted out of these stoushes than the participants realised.

The introduction claims that many women academics were approached to write the essays but only one responded, but for netball, as just one example, to be essayed by a man seems ludicrous. Tracey Holmes of ABC sport would have been able to do it standing on an ear. She'd be entertaining without a doubt but would she be able to muster a footnote to compare with this?: "p. 43 *The composite bowl's place in the history of Australian bowls* is described in J. P. Munro *The Romance of Bowls Manufacture* 13th ed." (Thirteenth edition! You mean they reprinted it thirteen times and a good Australian novelist is lucky to sell a first print run of three thousand? Welcome to the real world, Bruce.)

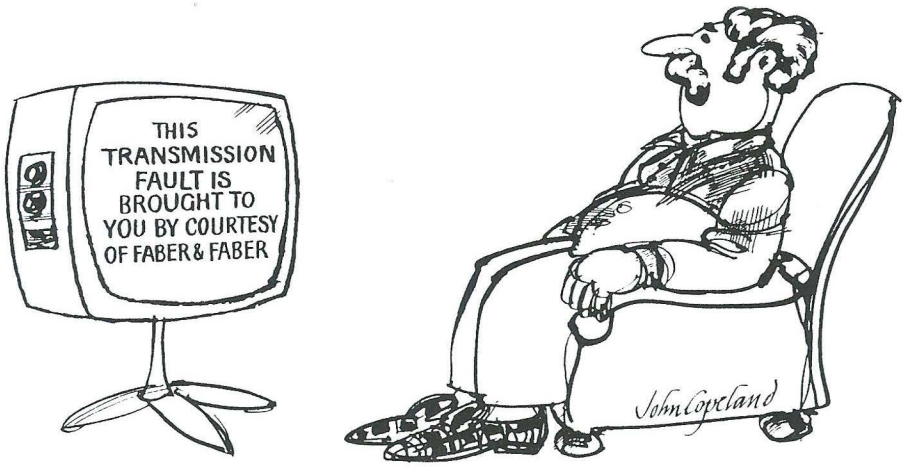
But *Sport in Australia* has many strengths and the greatest is bringing so much Australian sport between the same covers and placing it so meticulously in its social perspective: Stoddardt himself explained the basis of exclusivity of golf arising from the ability to purchase large tracts of prime real estate and establish private clubs upon it. The same goes for tennis and to a lesser extent lawn bowls.

John O'Hara on horse racing tears apart the myth of classlessness on the racecourse in the various treatments given to owners, trainers and jockey. The gentlemen trainers and owners went off to be toasted in victory champagne while the jockey went off quietly to have a drink "among his peers". But he doesn't mention the horse which as usual just got hay and at the first sign of a bowed tendon goes from Derby winner to dog tucker in one afternoon.

It's probably hard to muck up the chapter on 'Swimming, Surfing and Lifesaving' and thankfully Douglas Booth's approach is more refreshing and interesting. He reports on the role surfing played in breaking down repressive Victorian taboos on baring one's skin to the sun. He looks also at the counter-culture of surfing and the role of the specialist media, in particular the cartoon character Captain Goodvibes as he appeared in *Tracks* magazine. This is such a good window onto the culture you wonder why Roy and H. G. Nelson, Mike Williamson and Dawn Lake, the Punter to Punter Team, the Coodabeens and the Twelfth Man were not brought under the lamp in their respective sports interests. Say 'How are you love?' in a certain Dawn Lake voice to anyone over forty and immediately you'll be given a tip for the third at Flemington, mention the name Dr Turf to anyone over thirty and you'll be given a tip for the third at Flemington but for a different horse.

The social position of sport in Australia is evidenced by our willingness to crawl over broken glass to play and watch it but next evening we'll listen while the love of our life is lampooned mercilessly. What kind of social animal does that make us? *Sport in Australia* is destined to be used as concise research for the writers and researchers who follow but I hope they don't expect to be entertained.

Bruce Pascoe is a novelist whose latest novel Coucal *will be published by Magabala in 1995. Plays football and cricket for Apollo Bay.*



COLLECTED WORKS
Mid-Winter Report

PRIVATELY PRODUCED & VERY SMALL PRESS pamphlets & books include Shirley Thomas's *A Different Perspective* (Medal Poets, no.27, $5), a 5th collection of her typically precise observations & recollections. Similarly, Jocelyn Ort-Saeed's *Burning Bush* (Stillpoint, $19.95) continues her mystical & philosophical journey in her substantial 5th book. Ruth Cruz's 2nd book, *Simple Things, Special Moments* (K&R, $12.95) are poems from the heart. Along with Peter Elliott's *Be Meditated* (Black Hole, $6) and Wilma Birtles' *Time Like a Spiral Spinning* (Woorilla, $9.95) this poetry prefers sincerity to craft and guile, the very qualities which distinguish Basil Eliades' first book *Ohne Titel (abroad)* (p.p. $12.95). Urbane and accomplished, it's a poet's journal combining rake's progress and Cook's tour.

A FIRST COLLECTION from Marcelle Freiman, *Monkey's Wedding* ($12.95) is published by Island Press, over 20 years a poetry small-press in NSW. Philip Hammial is a prime-mover of this co-op and his 11th book, *Just Desserts* ($12.95) is both a reminder of rare poetic humour and skill and a reward for his unsung labours. Hale & Iremonger's contemporary Australian Poets adds Peter Bakowski, *In the Human Night* ($12.95), and Robert Hughes, *Highgate Hill* ($12.95), to its eye-catching, enterprising series. Both couples are as chalk & cheese regarding style; a good omen for poetry publishing. Round Table's *A Parachute of Blue: First Choice of Australian Poets no 1* ($14.95) is similarly & properly eclectic, an anthology selected from invited poets' first choice of best poem for 1993. New & old, from Bateson and Kissane to Murray & Zwicky.

BRILLIANT LONG POEMS and sequences from Britain should revive local interest in new British poetry! Douglas Oliver's *Penniless Politics* (Bloodaxe, $23.95), as profuse with characters as a Tranter or Wearne verse novel, is a satire/critique of America, in which the real & the metaphorical fuse in the kind of cracked oracle only possible at this end of Time! Andrew Greig's *Western Swing* (Bloodaxe, $24.95), subtitled 'Adventures With The Heretical Buddha', is an uproarious but poignant quest in Scottish brogue with Himalayan & Morroccan interludes! Frank Kuppner's *Everything is Strange* (Carcanet, $28.95) contains 'Last Eternal Moments' – 128 irregular pieces of self-questioning in which the contemporary is cast almost classically – and a 150 quatrain version of Richard Le Gallienne's Omar Khayyam. Also received are Alun Lewis, *Collected Poems* (Seren, $36.95) – a major event assuredly, fifty years after the war death of one of Wales' most promising poets; Tom Pickard's *Tiepin Eros: New & Selected Poems* (Bloodaxe, $24.95); & the women performance group The Poetry Virgins' *Sauce* (Bloodaxe, $18.95), their collection edited by Linda France.

NEW AMERICAN POETRY's several fronts could fill columns, but are represented here by four women of the more ''experimental'' variety. Joy Harjo's latest, *The Woman Who Fell From the Sky* (Norton, $39.95), comes with cassette – personal, political, topographical & (Native American) traditional. Lyn Hejinian's *The Cold of Poetry* (Sun&Moon, $26.95) collects ten previously published pieces; perhaps the most sensual of the deconstructionist ''Language'' poets. Carolyn Forché's *The Angel of History* (Bloodaxe, $24.95), her 3rd book & bearing Derek Walcott's eulogy, is a long poem of witness and testament attempting to bear the weight of the Holocaust and other 20thC horrors. Alice Notley's *Selected Poems* (Talisman, $21.95) can be read as either a species of the witty & vernacular New York poetry perfected by O'Hara & especially her first husband Ted Berrigan or as the canny writing familiar to Hejinian & co., simultaneously enactive & denotative.

PARNASSUS: *Twenty Years of Poetry in Review* (Michigan, $31.95) includes critics like Davenport, Vendler, Harmon, Stimpson, and poets like Rich, Dove, Herbert, Heaney on a range of poets and poetry from Zukofsky and Ashbery to Pushkin & Appollinaire. William Pritchard's *Playing It By Ear* (Massachusetts, $32.95) is a collection of essays & reviews ranging from Frost (his great subject) to Larkin and Ashbery, mentioning dozens of contemporaries and ringing in enthusiasm as well as opinion.

Kris Hemensley

All books mentioned above are stocked by Collected Works, at 238 Flinders Lane Melbourne.

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