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# WESTERLY

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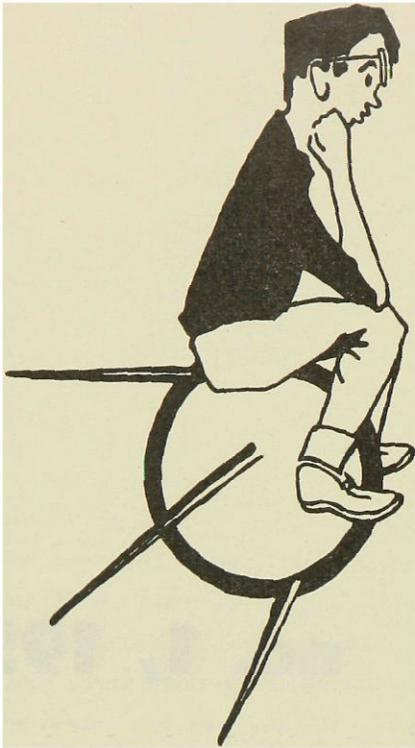
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On behalf of the Arts Union of the University of W. A., the editor wishes to express appreciation to the retiring editor, Mr. R. W. Smith, for the fine work he has done in creating and establishing this magazine. The high literary, critical and artistic standard which he achieved has provoked the respect and admiration of our readers, both here and in the Eastern States. The incoming editor hopes that he will be able to maintain this legacy.

editor **WARWICK WILSON**

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***do we wake  
or dream?***

## **view**

IN THE EMPTY public halls, in the decimated club meetings and in the dreary newspaper world there is one word sighed out by despairing organisers and disillusioned citizens—apathy. It is the signature tune of the public life of this decade, and no amount of reproach or exhortation produces a response. Seldom has university life seemed so lifeless, so self-centred or so smug. Little interest is shown in any public question except that which benefits or harms the individual directly.

Our political clubs, for instance, haggle over minutiae, their missionary zeal long since burnt out. Debating societies languish, Guild Council meetings drag by, and the annual camps arranged by the National Union of Australian University Students are mere echoes of their former selves—the organisers had to cajole their best friends along to prevent a fiasco. And the societies ghost along with a skeleton committee and a few faithful members. Little is achieved except a rehearsal of past activities and the uttering of a few pious hopes.

Yet, we are told, this is the era of expansion and prosperity. Seldom have we had it better. (The church could give a stinging sermon on “Not by bread alone”, but that is not my intention here.) Public buildings are already blocking in the city skylines, the standard of living is rising steadily, and public charities are extending their good works. Students are still getting their degrees, still doing high quality work and still criticising society as sharply (if not more cynically) as they were.

But little criticism is made publicly; very few people organise to reform, say, the old age pension, and little constructive criticism is uttered, even under the breath. This public apathy has of course been laid at the tomb of McCarthyism, whose spirit was haunting us a few years ago, even in Australia. But possibly apathy is part of a wider problem—the problem of insecurity, uncertainty, and disillusionment, largely engendered by the atomic armament race. And, too, the old dogmas of capitalism and socialism have lost their appeal. Possibly the most

# point

practicable aspects of each system have been absorbed into our social and political way of life, and even the idealists have had to assent to this modification and compromise, realising that it takes ideal people to work an ideal system. Very few would deny, of course, that there is still room for improvement and reform.

\*   \*   \*

IT WAS NOTICED by Duff Cooper in 1938 that rarely did bright young men from the universities enter public life. It is apparently even rarer today. When an eminent Australian lawyer decides to enter politics it is hailed with the comment:

"Australians who are genuinely concerned (irrespective of their party affiliations) with the *quality* of their parliamentary representation, will welcome (his) election. Too rarely does a man of his calibre enter the political lists." (*West Australian*, March 11, 1958, p. 12.)

Why is it rare for such men to serve their country with the very valuable talents that most are hoarding? Perhaps they have no 'cause', no vision splendid for which to fight. Perhaps they know that even if they actively pursued a progressive policy they would be met by the dull apathy of the Australian electorate.

Of course, apathy is not a specifically Australian disease. Several visitors returning from both Britain and the United States have commented on the universal apathy in public life. Traces of this, however, could be seen in Prime Minister Macmillan's speeches to the Australian nation, in which all he offered was another crimson thread of kinship. In Britain he is lampooned for painting the rosier picture of the year—despite an imminent financial crisis—while Eisenhower has been compared with Hoover, who said at the height of the Depression "You've never had it better". Election campaigns are fought with the cry "Look (but not *too* carefully) at all we've done for you!" or "We'll give you sixpence more for child endowment".

ARE WE GOING to create new, progressive policies for the rocket and space age which is just around the corner? Will we plan, particularly in the universities, how to meet the new problems—humanitarian and international as well as technical—which will inevitably arise from this new era? Or are we going to continue pouring warm water on the dregs of our old 'isms,' hoping to squeeze from them another drop of inspiration?

Of course, even if we do not wish to look so far ahead into the future, we can still plan reforms in our existing society. A close examination of our educational system will reveal many weaknesses, including those of overcrowded classes, narrow specialisation, immaturity of the university student, endowment of educational facilities and academic freedom. A rethinking of our attitude towards war as the ultimate arbiter of international conflict is also desirable, as Professor Titterton points out in his talk on page 21. These are but a few examples.

But what of those who argue for a new vision of society, claiming that socialism, though not State paternalism, has fulfilled its aims as far as possible and as far as the electorate will allow? Possibly they will envisage a *world* society, where aggressive nationalism fades before the picture of a space age (complete with interplanetary wars?). And on the home front a benevolent and streamlined paternalistic state will provide equal opportunities for all, having due respect for the value of the individual.

But whatever the vision, it should provide for a philosophy for each human being whereby he may become, in theory at least, an honest, selfless and actively informed citizen. Many see the answer in Christianity. (Many, too, agree with this answer, but never expect the execution.) However this may be, it can be said that democracy, no matter how much modified to suit the changing pattern of society, will die unless its supporters, both students and citizens, play an active and informed role in the government of the State.

## THE SCIENCE FICTION WRITER AS CRITIC

SCIENCE FICTION is not—as it sometimes pretends to be—a genre that has developed only in the middle twentieth century. Even Jules Verne or H. G. Wells were not really breaking new ground. The tale dealing with adventures in places remote in time or space, and inaccessible to the contemporary reader, has a much longer history than that, and so has the tale of the miraculous discovery or invention, presented not with the paraphernalia of the occult, but with all the documentation of realism.

To those who would object to my definition I suggest that the game is the same, whether it be called “Cowboys and Indians”, “Cops and Robbers” or “Reds and Freedom Fighters”—or even “Martians and Moonmen”. The essentials are the same; all that changes is accidental. It is the world that has changed, or at least our understanding of the world. In the Newtonian universe there is no place for the young lady called Wright

*Who could travel much faster than  
light.*

*She left home one day*

*In a relative way,*

*And came back the previous night.*

Time travel can only be managed by the convenient convention of the dream, or the Rip Van Winkle sleep. Wells' time machine and his country school-master who gets blown into the fourth dimension and comes back with his right and left sides reversed are necessarily linked to later speculation:

“There is no such thing as time by itself, that instead there is a space-time continuum. And that continuum is curved, and a great enough force could hurl matter from one part of the curve to another.” (Quoted from Edmond Hamilton's *City at World's End*.)

If space-travel is rare before the twentieth century it is for an obvious reason: the world was still large enough to contain many unexplored areas, and wonders could be found there. Lemuel Gulliver—as James McAuley has reminded us—came to Australia before Captain Cook. Raphael Hythloday visited the Utopians in South America as a partner in the voyages of Amerigo Vespucci. Bacon's “New Atlantis” seems to be somewhere in the South Pacific, and as late as 1872 Samuel Butler could postulate a satirical utopia “over the range” in New Zealand.

But now the unknown is being crowded off our planet, and at the same time travel into space has become less and less a fantastic dream (a bishop in 1638 sent a man to the moon on a raft pulled by large birds) and more of a practical possibility. Not before the present day, for example, could there have been a writer like Arthur C. Clarke, whose main concern—though he writes quite respectable fiction—is with the technicalities of space travel as he thinks it will really take place in the not very distant future.

The setting of the science-fiction novel, then, is a matter of fashion, and the fashion will continue to change. Mary Shelley's

Frankenstein created the first "Zombie" by means of the science of the early nineteenth century: or at least, the process is described in the terminology of that period. Doctor Moreau works on the basis of Wells' studies as a biologist at the end of the same century. What remained unchanged are the plot-material of these stories and—where they exist—their themes, their didactic purpose. Most of those turned out at the present day are simply tales of violent adventure. They are descended directly from stories about pirates, explorers' adventures in the jungle after the style of Rider Haggard, the exploits of Biggles or of Bulldog Drummond.

Such stories are translated into terms of space travel perhaps on the false analogy that if it's bigger it's better. A chase at 100 miles an hour in motor cars is more exciting than a chase at 20 miles an hour on galloping horses. At 400 miles an hour in aeroplanes it is more exciting still, and so on until you arrive at a speed that has to be stated in light-years per second.

These stories are ephemeral. They may sell huge numbers in their brief day, but once it is over they are forgotten, and for the later reader they remain only tedious

and absurd. However their very lack of distinction may make them an accurate index of their age. In them we shall perhaps find, along with the fantastic incidents and setting, the ideas and attitudes that met with acceptance in the common-place minds of their day.

This we shall not find in the more serious and permanent stories that choose a setting and events outside the current range of possibility. It is plain, I think, that from the *Utopia* to *1984* the best books of this kind—and a good many of the inferior ones as well—are what William Empson called "versions of pastoral". The new world that is created is created to contrast with the world we know, and to oblige us to look at the world we know in a new way. Inevitably the result of this fresh inspection is to make us aware of faults in the world and the human nature we know.

There are several different ways in which this created world can be related to the world of reality. It may be, as in *Utopia*, an ideal construction developed from the author's idea of how things should be, without any reference to what they actually are, and then reached by one of the simple con-



ventions of the genre: the storm and shipwreck (*Utopia*), the dream (*News From Nowhere*), the long sleep (*Looking Backward*) or the remarkable accident (the green powder of *The Plattner Story* that blows the schoolmaster into the fourth dimension). Then there are the mock-Utopias; those constructed in deliberate parody of certain features of our world, showing by exaggeration our absurdities and crimes. *Gulliver's Travels* is a good example here, or Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*.

More properly to be called scientific—and much more properly than the wilder fantasies of cops and robbers round the galaxies—are those tales which attempt to develop a known present situation into the future. On the simplest level there are stories about mechanical inventions which have not yet been made. Wells had remarkable success as a prophet with *The War in the Air* and *The Land Ironclads* for example. Even Sir Thomas More's Utopians invented the incubator:

*They breed an infinite multitude of chickens in a very curious manner; for the hens do not sit and hatch them, but they lay vast numbers of eggs in a gentle and equal heat, in which they are hatched.*

But inventions in themselves are only of adventitious interest: if they prove true prophecy we are appropriately astonished and if they don't we are amused. Much more important are the social impact of these inventions and the ways in which individuals and communities respond to and are affected by them.

Related to these tales of invention are the stories which assume—without being very specific—a continuous technological progress, and on this assumption project certain current social ideas and attitudes into the future. This provides us with the ossified Marxist class struggle of Wells' *Time Machine*: a humanity divided into two sub-species, the

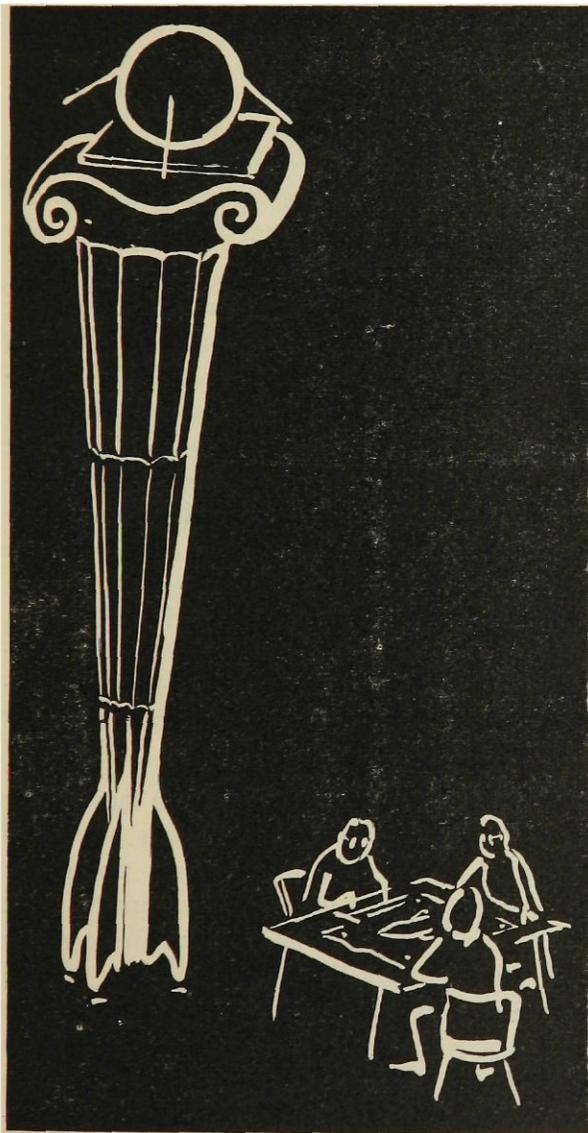
helpless childish beautiful Eloi and the subterranean and obscene Morlocks, who supply the Eloi with all their needs, and also eat them. The same kind of thinking about the future gives us the grimy substandard world of doublethink that obsessed George Orwell, and—though with more obvious satire—Aldous Huxley's contrasting but equally horrible *Brave New World*, or some aspects—four-wall television for example—of the fantasies of Ray Bradbury.

The main concern of some of the tales that deal with invasions from space, or transportations into the remote future when galaxies are united, is also social. The writers examine the reaction of ordinary people to conditions or extraordinary stress. The description of the panic flight from London to the East Anglian coast is among the most terrifying things in Wells' *War of the Worlds*. It is more terrifying than the man-eating Martians just because it is nearer to our own possible experience. For the same reason Wells' Martian intelligences with their soft tentacular limbs are more alarming than—say—the huge conical gastropods of a professional spine-chiller like H. P. Lovecraft. They are more alarming because they are closely linked to our established ways of thinking: they are explained in terms of evolutionary theory, and once on this world, for all their superhuman powers, they are limited by the same laws of nature that limit all human activity. The eight-foot high slugs of Lovecraft's *The Shadow out of Time* are not subject to these limitations, and in consequence can only frighten us on the more infantile level of the ghost story.

On a lower level than Wells, but still trying to preserve at least the appearance of conformity with scientific possibility, is *City at World's End*, where a group of "ordinary folks" is suddenly obliged to face an unprecedented perilous and—to them—incomprehensible change in their environment. Then

there are many fantasies which deal with the reactions of the few survivors after some monstrous catastrophe which may be natural—*The Scarlet Plague*, or the fall of the Moon in *The Hopkins Manuscript*—or due to man's folly and greed. Some are hopeful of "a new order" rising out of the ruins of the old; others predict a lapse into barbarism. Sometimes the cause of the disaster is unexplained and we are simply given a tale of "primitive" life in a future period, as in Richard Jefferies' *After London*.

It is remarkable that utopian fictions and



predicted societies of the future—whether intended as a reflection on our own world or not—have many common features. This is summed up best by saying that these societies are—in one way or another—collective. Early utopias owe a considerable debt to *The Republic*; they are near also to the hierarchical but closely-knit society of the middle ages, where the proper relation of the parts and the functioning of the whole was vastly more important than the possibility of "full self-expression" for any one of the individuals who made up the whole. The eighteenth century produced few utopian works, except in a satirical vein, and these were inevitably linked fairly closely to the social conventions of the time.

With the industrial revolution a new sort of utopia began to be described. In a violent reaction against squalor and hardship brought by industrialisation, they tended to present the ideal community as rural and simple: we have all heard of Coleridge's flirting with the vision of Pantisocracy on the banks of the Susquehanna and Thoreau's life in the woods by the Walden pond.

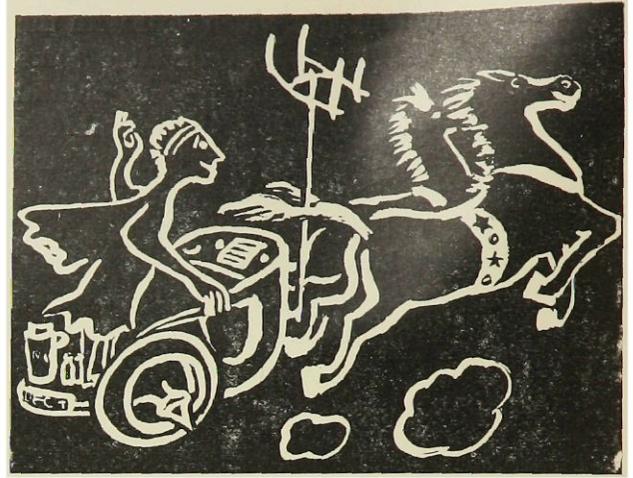
Later on the utopia of the machines began to appear: it was seen that machinery in the service of man could bring ease and grace to the lives of all, not just to the privileged few in the country house, supported by the labours of the many in Coketown—to adopt the convenient terms invented by Lewis Mumford. By many, though, the machine continued to be seen as an enemy. W. H. Hudson's *The Chrystal Age* describes a matriarchial agricultural community which has deliberately forgotten the machine, but by the selective breeding of humans as well as animals has developed both far beyond the limitations of our time. *Erewhon* is another of the anti-mechanical worlds, and in *News From Nowhere* (which in Greek is outopia) William Morris imagines one of the most attractive of them all.

But whether the utopias are of this kind, or present a mechanical dream-world, they almost all depart from the social organisation of the nineteenth century. Utopia and Atlantis are aristocracies, organised from above for the benefit of the whole. *Looking Backward* presents egalitarian state socialism. Morris's ideal community in the future has passed into that hypothetical golden age of the Marxist that follows the "eventual withering away of the state". It is a successful anarchy; successful because all is common property, and all have enough, and all work for their own pleasure: "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need."

In our own period, optimistic utopias have become far less common. This is not simply a result of the repeated and terrible disasters that the twentieth century has seen: in spite of them I would guess that the average condition of humanity is better now than at any time in the historical past (but perhaps I am a utopian). It is the result of a change of view. We look no longer for *the* ideal society, only for a satisfactory kind of society, and we recognise that there may be many forms of satisfactory society, and that if they are to remain satisfactory they must be subject to change. For this reason perhaps, our own time has seen more anti-utopias than utopias. The Controller explains to Mr. Savage in *Brave New World* that humanity was forced to choose between anarchy and self-destruction, or the order and happiness which a rigorously controlled world provides.

*1984* presents a different kind of collective world, where Big Brother sees all and hears all, and no-one knows who is betraying whom. In the third story of Helen Simpson's *The Woman on the Beast*, by 1999 all the world has come under the benevolent evangelical wing of "The Mother".

In 1905 H. G. Wells had recognised that *the Utopia of a modern dreamer must needs differ in one fundamental respect from the . . . Utopias men planned before Darwin*



*quicken the thought of the world. Those were all perfect and static States, a balance of happiness won forever against the forces of unrest and disorder that inhere in things. . . . But the modern Utopia must not be static but kinetic, must shape not as a permanent state but as a hopeful stage leading to a long ascent of stages.*

In *A Modern Utopia* he sets out to meet these requirements, but his brave new world leans heavily on those that have gone before it. Negative eugenics are insisted on as in the original Utopia; it has the academy for scientific research given the prestige of Solomon's House in *The New Atlantis* and the class of "Guardians"—the Samurai as Wells calls them—with their rigorous regimen of self-discipline owe a great deal to the *Republic*. By the end of his life Wells was far less optimistic about the future, and *The Mind at the End of Its Tether* is a work of almost complete despair.

In our own period, then, we have seen the dream of a collective society that had appealed so strongly to Utopians up to the end of the nineteenth century, turned to a nightmare. In most cases a clean hygienic and air-conditioned nightmare, but still a nightmare. What is more, it is a nightmare that has come steadily closer to realisation, and, if we are to survive at all, must come closer still. It is not a question of "Capital-

ism" against "Socialism", or of "Free Enterprise" against "State Control". That—and it is time a few more of us realised it—is a very dead horse to flog. It is a question of reconciling huge organisations with their inevitable bureaucratic control with the greatest possible individual freedom. The big commercial firm that must pursue profit, is as liable to be inhuman to those involved in its operations as the distant bureaucrat who is the bogey of the opponents of State control.

What is inevitable is that we cannot avoid a large degree of state control in the world at present, and that even in ostensibly anti-socialist countries it is bound to increase if we are to have a stable world, and we cannot avoid large corporations if we are to achieve the tremendous tasks that will be needed to create a stable world. A country town contractor could not undertake the Snowy River Scheme. The writers of "anti-Utopias" in the twentieth century have given us our warning, and it is up to us to search desperately for a remedy.

If my earlier suggestion is correct—that the average popular science fiction novel will reflect the ideas and attitudes in its days—and if the selection I have read is as representative as it is random, this is what we are certainly not doing. The distressing thing about many of these stories is that they

accept as normal a world ruled arbitrarily from above, where individuals—except for the superman hero—are of almost no account.

A writer of the calibre of Ray Bradbury has a good deal more moral insight. His vision of a society so dominated by the media of mass entertainment that it becomes highly suspicious to be out of one's house when the evening television is on has a certain horrifying truth. He is aware of the dangers in the direction in which our society is moving. However he has a great deal less to offer of a positive kind. After the catastrophe of atomic war at the end of *Fahrenheit 451* civilization is to be rebuilt by a group of ex-college professors who have managed to memorise—among other things—Plato's *Republic*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Walden*, *The Book of Revelation*, Schopenhauer, Albert Schweitzer and Aristophanes.

The intention no doubt is sound: it is through the humanities that we can find a way to avoid the ant-hill world which seems in science fiction so often to threaten us, but not so crudely, not so naively as Bradbury suggests. To throw science out of the window, and restrict our study to "the world's hundred best books" would be as foolish as to condemn the humanities as "of no use" and live by a materialist pseudo-science—and a great deal more difficult.

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## *such is life!*

### OUT OF TOUCH

"The headmistress of a Sydney girls' school chided the assembled girls the other day for scribbling names on their desks, and then said: 'Would Elvis Presley please step out of the assembly.'"—*Sydney Morning Herald*, 13/7/57.

### SPEED KILLS

"The City Fathers can seldom be accused of acting with rash haste in making decisions. When a complaint was received about the erection of a sign outside a city hotel, the City Council works committee spent weeks solemnly examining the matter. They finally decided last week that the sign would have to go, and gave the hotel just two years to pull it down."—*Adelaide News*, 4/9/57.

### DOWAGERS' BREADBASKETS

"Sections of Hampton Court Palace are grace-and-favour residences granted by the Queen to people, like Lady Baden-Powell, as a reward for service. The big old palace has no lifts, and many of the tenants on the upper floors found the tradespeople would not climb all the stairs to deliver the daily bread and milk. Now, however, they have found a solution. They suspend large shopping baskets by rope. Trippers on a tour of inspection of Hampton Court (it is open to the public) are often treated to the sight of some titled dowager hauling up her provisions over the side of a balcony."—*Daily News*, 20/7/57.

### ROLLER PAINTING

"Among the professional artists here there is much excitement and envy over the activities of a Mr. Yves Klein, who is selling paintings (for £A50 to £A62/10/- a time) which show only 'an unrelieved expanse of a single colour, without any design at all.' This colour is administered quite quickly with the aid, not of a brush, but, if you please, a do-it-yourself paint roller. British painters are reported lost in admiration for a painter who can get away with this. As one gallery visitor had it: 'If Whistler flung a pot of paint in the public's face, at least he didn't spread it out evenly with a roller.'"—*Daily News*, 13/7/57.

### LUMINOUS LINGERIE

"They're gay, they're provocative, they're daringly different! Sensational, new stretch-nylon Calypso briefs, dipped in a fluorescent dye that actually makes them *glow* with colour! Come in, be dazzled, they'll put a whole new slant on your Summer undies plan!"—*West Australian*, 18/9/57.

CONTRIBUTIONS ARE INVITED FOR THIS COLUMN. PLEASE ENCLOSE CLIPPINGS.

# *Blimps, Books and Bunyips*

J. Meddemmen

THIS ARTICLE attempts a definition of the indefinable. It lays down clear lines where there are no clear lines but only directions which if carefully followed may lead to the discovery of a pattern—the pattern formed by the weft and warp of the individual writers as they weave the cultural cloth of the nation. In this essay much attention will be devoted to nationality, the loom for the whole process.

But firstly, of course, there should be a definition of terms. *Nationalism*, as distinct from *nationality*, is generally considered as a militant doctrine of nationhood. *Nationality*, on the other hand, tends to be defined as the general habits of thought, outlook and behaviour of a social group. Thus nationality may cut across nationalism, because, for example, an Australian and an Englishman can often mix freely with a social group from either country. There are, of course, many instances where nationality is commensurate with nation, but the distinction desired here is that nationality comprises any group feeling and action experienced by people collectively as part of a certain way of life. This is the type of material that a writer will draw from, not from the empty bombast of nationalistic bragging.

*Nationalism*, though, can itself be the subject for literature and as such can be a valid subject if it is consciously chosen and raised to the level of artistic expression. Virgil, for instance, was one of the most successful artists in this field. But *nationality* is rarely a subject for literature—it is more the means

by which a writer consciously or unconsciously expresses the experiences of his social group. It is thus both the means of expression and the expression itself. A common language, common experiences and common beliefs and prejudices all form part of the distinctive group expression.

All men are born into such a distinctive social group and will as a rule own allegiance to it. The majority—slightingly referred to as the bourgeoisie—accept without question their social structure and the restrictions and conventions which it imposes on them. Whether a writer accepting the ideas, the directions and the aims of his social order can be a good artist depends on the social order and its state at the time of the artist. There are times when this can be done without compromising his integrity. But generally the artist is regarded not so much as one who accepts but as one who weighs and evaluates—and sometimes rejects. As an observer he should see more than the mere member of the group for whom he writes and by considering all the facts should develop a broad vision and depth of judgment.

Thus the position of the artist is either to affirm the prevalent way of life or to reject it, wholly or in part. But do what he may, he cannot escape it, for as much as language it is his means of expression. (He need not set his work directly in the social group in which he lives, but any other setting will be valuable for the light it throws on his own either by contrast or by similarity—thus enabling the discovery of 'universal truths'.

This, of course, assumes that he is an impartial observer, and that we ignore works whose difference is a mere interest in difference.)

A writer, then, is a man in a community who writes for it, using its common heritage and language as his medium. This is basic and indeed obvious, yet because it is so, it does not mean that social peculiarities are the sole concern of the writer; they are the accidents if his essence is man. But since man is a social animal, the subject for most writing is social life—people in relation to people.

What matters, then, is people. Environment is only important in so far as it determines certain things about them. Great art will concern itself with people in the social order, not the order itself, and it will continue to last and be read as a relevant statement of life.

It is true that groups of peoples at particular times have their own particular problems, but fundamentally these can be reduced

to things like intolerance, greed, and other general though perfectly valid concepts. Writers naturally write for their own times and about the current problems, but seldom specifically and exclusively as a member of any nationality; more generally are they concerned with an artistic, a human problem.

People, then, are the raw material which the author selects, cuts into shape and presents as the medium for his ideas in his finished work. They, or what they symbolise, are his ideas. In the choice of material and in the selection of what is relevant, the experience and imagination of the author play a great part. Thus it is the writer's ideals which, in the broader sense, provide the driving force for literature. It is because a writer has something he must say to the people for whom he writes, that he writes at all. And the more clearly he understands what he wants to say, the better he will be able to say it; and the more profound it is, the greater the work will potentially be.

the autumn issue of

# meanjin

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A selection from the Autumn issue:

FRAGMENTS FROM AUTOBIOGRAPHY, by Vance Palmer; HUGH McCRAE, by R. D. Fitzgerald, Nettie Palmer, T. Inglis Moore; A SURVEY OF TELEVISION IN AUSTRALIA, by Cecil Holmes and Newman Rosenthal; THEATRE IN EUROPE TODAY, by Ossia Trilling; GENTLEMEN OR SAINTS? by Charles Vereker; A MARGIN FOR HUMANITY, by Derek van Abbé; THE QUEST OF JUDITH WRIGHT, by T. Inglis Moore; with further contributions, stories, reviews and comments.

## meanjin

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This brings us to the question of form, the search for which is the next important task for the writer. Form is the most effective organisation of the material and this is a conscious process. Many works of wonderful characterisation, etc., will fail because of their form. Not that any scheme as preordained should be followed, but the writer must find his form (and if he understands his matter he will do so), and must not allow superfluity of material to overrule its predominant place.

Yet these three, idea, matter and form, are in the finished work as one; and the artist who writes, if he properly understands his matter and his idea from and through these, will find the best form in which to express them.

In the light of this, let us look at Australian writing, where the problem of nationality is quite marked. Australia has become a nation from a colony, and it has inherited not only the language and habits of thought, but also many of the institutions of the mother country. But, as was inevitable, fundamental environmental change brought about a change in many aspects of life.

A writer may accordingly find himself between two camps. At the beginning he may well write as an outsider (not an 'Outsider'), using not only the sense of values current in the mother country, but also its forms of expression. In this way, if critical, he can be an authentic, but outside, artist. Or he can write with the deep feeling he has for the colony, but using the forms of the mother country. Here the dichotomy will be apparent and the work consequently unsuccessful.

On the other hand, he may well concentrate too much on the 'Australian' side of life and try to be consciously 'Australian'. This can be dangerous. To be 'Australian' is a perfectly valid and necessary desire, but to be self-consciously Australian is to run the risk of concentrating on the accidents of the social order.

A writer, then, should write about the Australian people naturally, and work out his prose style on the basis of their speech. Australian life is different—distinctive, if you like—but what was said earlier about universal concepts still applies here. In other words the writer should neither make the social background an end in itself, nor let it come between him and anything he is trying to say, but seek for the essence of human experience in what happens to be an Australian environment.

A preoccupation with nationality, then, can become all too easily a preoccupation with superficialities—local colour by the yard and nothing else. The most such a writer could do would be to give his readers the thrill of recognition.

There is another point—the pioneer, the bushranger and the stockrider tend to become the stage props of really 'Australian' Australian literature. Once these become legendary—and many almost have—they become largely irrelevant. People should be encouraged to see Australian life as it *really* is. The reactions of audiences to the familiarity of idiom and the happy screams that greet the mention of "Young and Jackson's" are justifications of this.

And finally there is a sense in which the Australian can be too Australian. Most are not Australian in any distinctive or picturesque fashion. The majority of them live in cities and their speech tends to an excessive monotony. To such people, the stockrider has the same degree of reality as the bunyip. Being Australian 'the easy way' simply means that the writer is bringing out the stage props—with no effect whatever. The writer must come to know the average, *real* Australian and treat him as a person in himself, not as a distinctive being. Then his writing will form part of a national literature, and, as well, it will be Australian.

# ONE MAN'S BREAKFAST

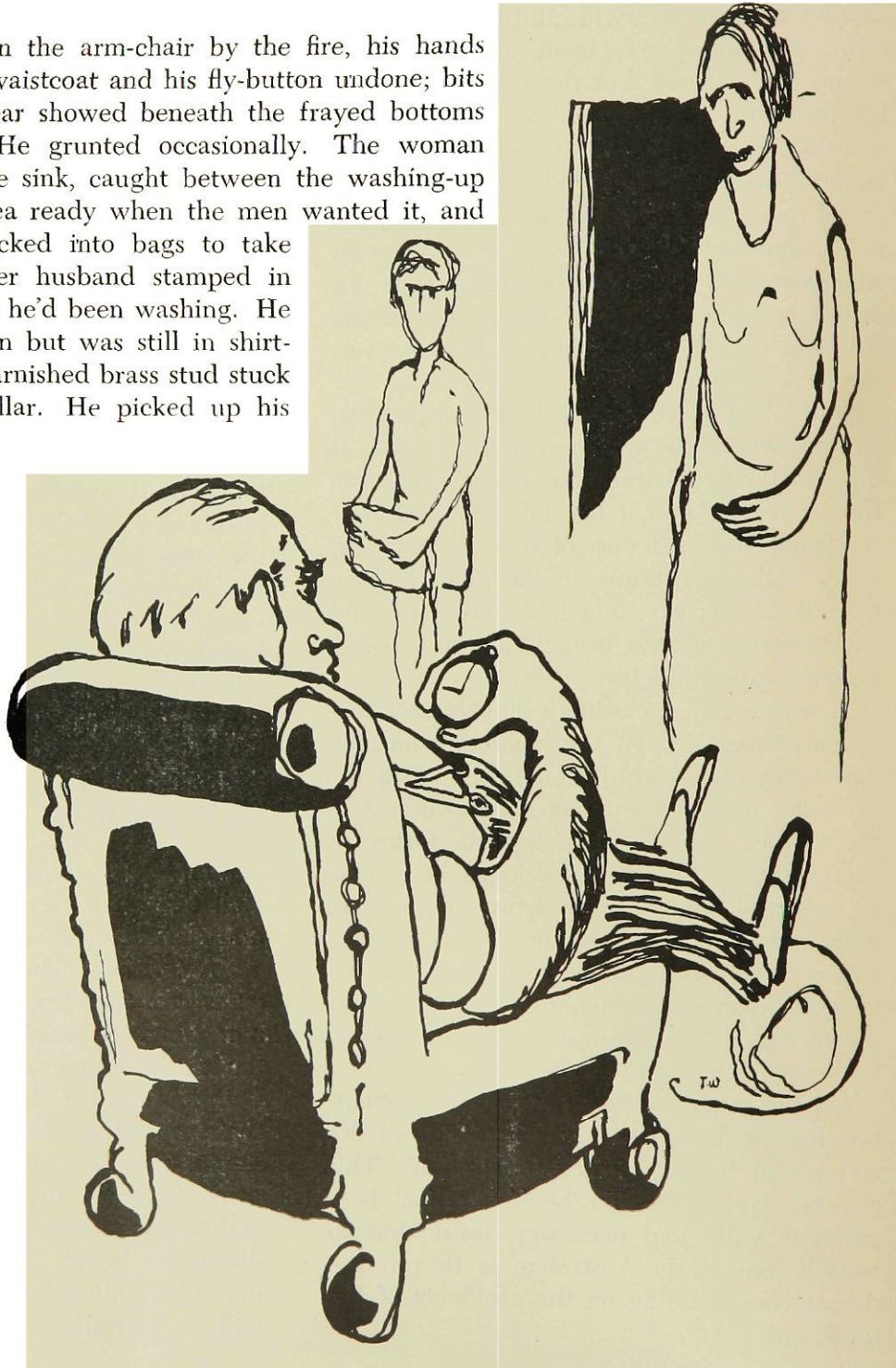
by Douglas Legge

THE OLD MAN sat in the arm-chair by the fire, his hands folded across his dirty waistcoat and his fly-button undone; bits of long winter underwear showed beneath the frayed bottoms of his cord trousers. He grunted occasionally. The woman busied herself about the sink, caught between the washing-up and having more hot tea ready when the men wanted it, and getting the lunches packed into bags to take out into the fields. Her husband stamped in from the scullery where he'd been washing. He had his muddy boots on but was still in shirt-sleeves and braces. A tarnished brass stud stuck out from the soiled collar. He picked up his working jacket.

"Got those lunches packed yet, woman?" he said.

"You drink your tea, nigh on cold it is, and the bags'll be ready as when you wants 'em," she replied sourly.

He grunted. The old man snored, opened his eyes, looked around and went back to his dreaming. He didn't go to work any more. He'd been a herder all his life and now that tractors and things were coming in he'd lost interest in the land and horses. He was always talking about the days when he used to drive horses all the way to Norwich market, sixty



miles off; herding them along the lanes and tracks come winter or summer. 'Them were the days' he would say, 'arr, them were times they were, but nowadays there aren't nawthin' t'eat, leastways, nowt like they were . . .'

"Tommy!" said the woman in a piercing voice, "what are you a-doing of on the floor—git yourself ready for school."

The boy, sitting cross-legged on the floor, flashed his eyes at his mother.

"Now do what your Ma says," said his father indifferently.

The boy looked at both of them again, then got slowly up. He scratched his head and went to the table and took a mug of tea, swallowing with great gulps. He put the mug down with a sigh.

"Have to take me coat?" he asked.

"That you do, boy, and mind you wear it, too! Don't want you laid up a-sniffing and a-snivelling—one's enough lying about the house all day and under your feet," she said with a glance at the old man, who took no notice. The younger man shrugged his shoulders irritably.

"Pass me them bags then, gal. I got to be off; late as it is."

"And wonder at it, coming in Lord alone knows what hour of the night. What was it this time, the darts club? Or . . . ?"

"Somethin' like it," he said.

". . . or that young tart from down the road they're all a-running after?" She looked hard at him. He flushed and turned away.

The old man was wide awake now, looking from one to the other. The boy took no notice, used as he was to arguments and sharp words, and well knowing that when they argued together they left him alone.

His father went out. He wouldn't be back till dusk, and then he'd come in, have his

tea and a shave, and go off down to the local.

"Come along, Tommy, you're late already. Just look at the time—five to nine and nothing done as yet. Want some more tea, father?"

The old man grunted and nodded his head. He dug into a waistcoat pocket and produced a length of tobacco twist. The woman poured his tea and then went back to the sink. Tommy began collecting the books into his satchel. He was always late for school; there was usually something on the way more interesting to see and do. Often as not he never got there at all and went roaming over the countryside looking for birds' nests or chasing rabbits; and then the inspector would come around and he'd get a hiding. Sometimes it was different, though, like when they all went to town on Saturdays in the bus that left from the *Six Bells*. Then he'd get a sixpence to spend and would be dragged about the stalls listening to all his mother's complaints and ailments at every friend they met. He usually fell asleep on the way home.

The clock made a sharp 'click'—it always did that just before the hour, although it didn't strike any more—and the old man suddenly woke up. He grunted and sat up and fumbled a large and battered turnip watch from a hidden pocket. He'd been given that at the county show years before with a prize entry of Punches.

"Only another two minutes" he said with anticipation.

"Who is it this time?" asked the woman.

"That George man from out Bristol way; the one what done-in that old woman."

"Oh, him. And quite right, too."

The old man was looking at his watch with a strange alertness, tense and excited.

"He'll be walking up they steps now," he said, and chuckled.

The boy munched a piece of bread and butter, and watched. It was always like this when there was a hanging; the old man lived for these mornings at nine o'clock. He knew all about the convicted men and their victims, and the cases and trials from every paper.

"Arr . . ." he growled, "he's gorn." He was contented now, and relaxed. "He's a gorn . . ." he started to go through the more notable parts of the now dead man's life.

"Oh, shut up, father, carrying on so. Makes the likes of me proper sad on a day like this . . . you and your executions. Come on, Tommy, be off with you to school; don't do a soul no good a-listening to him," she said with a jerk of her head at the old man.

The boy crept out into the cold and wet, and as he walked along the path to the school he was thinking: 'Hope I never do a murder.

I know I could, and it's just the sort of thing that would happen to me, and then I'd be hung, and Granpa would look at his watch like all the others. But isn't it funny, he's dead now, he just died, he knew he was going to die. He must have been frightened waiting for the morning and coming out into the cold to die, and not going to see his Ma again, or have a cup of tea, or go to the local . . . They've got no right to do that, to kill somebody; just stop everything like that. He's gone, but all the fields are still here, and there's the shop and the church and the rain. Soon we'll have Christmas. And we're all still here. I don't want to kill anybody and die like that, and never see all this again. I'd be frightened, and not sitting by the fire any more in the cold, and fishing in the summer or chasing the binder for rabbits.' He shuddered and turned into the school gate. 'I don't like school,' he muttered, 'but it's better than dying and not having tomorrow. I don't want to die, not yet . . .'

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# The Aesthete

by  
M. Hill

On my right hand smooth dusty grapes  
Lie in symbol,  
And the empty cup glints in my eyes.  
My old hands rest now—  
Sated with the touch of flesh to flesh,  
Sated with the very brush of velvet.  
Wrinkled cheeks, seamed not with righteous tears,  
And eyes light rest upon the land about.  
The flow of land,  
The ooze and undulation—  
The softness of my couch—  
And there before me,  
A solitary toiler;  
Young and searching,  
And seeing me deplores the ruin in my frame.  
But ruin's ruin—  
What's the care in how youth's spent:  
How our short store is lost—  
Mine's wasted  
So they say.  
But those who suffer and spend slow  
In age are but as joy bereft as I.  
Memories—who lives on those alone?  
Life's of the moment,  
And now mine draws close.  
Regret, I've no time for that.  
The sensual that fed me once is gone,  
But pleasure yet remains  
In less spectacular things.  
Talk not reform or ascetism—  
I'll grow old as I grew older.  
But still there's no joy in fast approaching age,  
There's little joy in brief youth,  
And less to last in acting  
Than in thought.  
But now my thoughts grow bitter—  
Envy's acid cloys,  
Time destroys,  
The beautiful are young.  
And little now remains to me,  
But to sit  
In the sun,  
And think.  
When once I acted without mind,  
Oh, those countless actions—  
Gone. And the mind stays on.

# Current Affairs

THREE DISCUSSIONS

from the W. A. UNIVERSITY

SUMMER SCHOOL by

**Dr. Ronald Taft**

**Prof. E. W. Titterton**

**Prof. Fred Alexander**

## AMERICA POST-SPUTNIK

BEFORE COMMENTING on the effects that the Russian Sputnik produced on America, Dr. Taft pointed out that any one observer will necessarily see a limited and possibly biased view of a given situation, so that some of his observations may be considered as purely personal interpretations. He did add, however, that he was trying to record the views of Americans themselves—Americans not only in the universities but in small towns, on buses and in the newspapers.

From these people he gathered, firstly, an impression of America pre-Sputnik; an America slowly reacting against a McCarthyism whose ridiculous political screenings had driven nearly all civil scientists from participation in defence projects. There were still traces of McCarthyism in the universities and in the Administration, but it was by then a spent force.

America, too, was wealthy and prosperous; the standard of living had seldom been higher and nobody as yet was really concerned over unemployment. International affairs were quiet and the Eisenhower doctrine was being applied as a soothing balm to the Middle East. At home the Little Rock

rebellion and the question of racial segregation was being hotly disputed until the launching of Sputnik drove it from the public mind. And lastly, of course, there was the firm American belief that his country held technical superiority in defence and scientific spheres.

Into this complacent scene burst the news of the successful launching of *two* Russian satellites and the failure of their own Vanguard rocket. The initial American reaction was one of consternation—a consternation expressing fear of Russia's unknown potential, surprise with her wonderful achievement, anger with their own government for not telling them frankly about the relative state of American and Russian science (and, of course, for not launching the satellite first), and a grievance that Russia had grabbed all the good German scientists.

This mood gradually changed to one of self-examination and scape-goating. Why had America not been able to launch her own rocket? Was it because the army did not want to reveal its secrets? Was it because the three defence forces' rivalry was stultifying any research projects? Was it due to

the poor opportunities and facilities provided for scientists (who had been associated in the public mind with A-bombs, espionage and mass destruction)? Or was it due to the inadequacy of good scientific education on the secondary and tertiary level? This last doubt led the more seriously minded citizens to review the orientation and values of their educational system.

While all these questions were being asked, the United States' Government was struggling to wrest diplomatic supremacy from Russia. Much was said but little was achieved, and when the 'Explorer' was finally set in orbit, it was the work of an ex-Nazi scientist. Nevertheless, no matter how poorly, America had answered the challenge, and did regain some of her self-respect.

The lasting effects of the Sputniks on America are perhaps more important than the first. There slowly developed more respect for the Russian achievement—no longer were they to be held in contempt as a country of down-trodden peasants. Intellectuals, too, were impressed with the moderation of Russia's attitude. There was little bragging and taunting—just the smug satisfaction of a well-fed cat basking in the sun.

In America there was also an attempt to restore to the scientist the respect and the remuneration which his work deserved. Those who claimed that they could build bigger and

better rockets were eagerly listened to, and huge sums of money have been allotted to defence and rocket projects.

Finally, there were enquiries into the educational system, into the Eisenhower administration, into the efficiency and stage of development of American science. These enquiries are still going on. Whether the necessary reforms will be made is another question. But, in the opinion of Dr. Taft, American science is on an equal par with the Russian. Where the Americans are at a disadvantage is in the fact that she is keeping the civil and military branches of science separated. In Russia both are united in the service of the State—a triumph in the civil field as part of the International Geophysical Year is also a triumph in the armaments race. It may be that the American army is reluctant to give away secrets, or it may be a result of the political screening of scientists, the effect of which has turned many loyal and top grade scientists from participation in defence work.

Whatever the reason for the poor display of American technological prowess, the Eisenhower regime has lost much prestige, because neither by challenge nor by the demand of its people was it able to produce anything equivalent to the Russian achievement. Often has it been said, "Less talk, more work." Nothing could be more apt.

RONALD TAFT

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## IS NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT FEASIBLE?

IN THE PAST TWO YEARS propaganda against nuclear weapons and nuclear tests has been actively pursued—in some cases almost to the point of hysteria as before the Christmas Island tests. Democratic citizens seriously trying to unravel the facts of the position find themselves deafened by the propaganda and uncertain of the true position.

There is a danger in this which arises from two main, though dissimilar, causes. Firstly, the man in the street does not understand nuclear energy—he tends to regard it as black magic and wishes he'd never heard of it—and secondly, the overwhelming majority of people rightly look upon war involving death and destruction with horror. The propa-

gandist recognises this. He sees to it that pseudo-scientific information (and indeed correct scientific information but with incorrect inferences drawn) is continuously circulated. He sees to it that the suggestion is kept well to the front that the stumbling block to assured peace is nuclear weapons.

The reason for this propaganda arises from the undisputed fact that Russia and her satellites have far more men under arms than does the West. This gross military unbalance has been redressed by the possession of nuclear weapons by Britain and the U.S.A. Throughout the years of fruitless debate on disarmament, the West has always maintained the right to use nuclear weapons against aggression if war should ever be forced on us, and indeed the announced policy of N.A.T.O. for the defence of Europe is predicated upon this assumption. This, simply, is the reason for the Russian-inspired cry of "Ban the Bomb"; it is equally the reason why the West can never agree to the unconditional banning of nuclear weapons.

To further our discussion, let us examine the scientific ingredients of the nuclear disarmament problem.

(1) Weapon tests—Are not dangerous compared with generally accepted risks. Thus the genetic damage from all tests to date is less than that which results if one wears a luminous dial wristwatch continuously. Strontium-90 and leukaemia are much used in propaganda. Strontium-90 has effects similar to radium and there is far more radium in our bodies than Sr.90. Sr.90 could only induce a small fraction of the leukaemia cases which must result from the widespread use of X-radiation for medical purposes. Thus the problem of weapon tests is largely irrelevant to the main discussion.

(2) Agreement to limit weapon tests and weapon production without any safeguards or inspection is completely unrealistic—suggestions that weapons can always be detected is quite unsound scientifically. It is possible to fire some present bombs without their being detectable and it is physically probable that a weapon without any radioactivity will eventually be made—and this would be very difficult to detect. Unless Western proposals for cessation of manufacture of weapon cores were agreed and inspection instituted to make it effective, the nations could go on making as many bombs of present types as they wished. Nothing would be solved.

(3) If cessation of manufacture were assured, what about the stockpiles? Could agreement to destroy weapon stocks be achieved? Scientific opinion is definite that, even with full inspection, there is no way of ensuring that bombs could not be retained and hidden away in preparation for a nuclear "Pearl Harbour".

(4) Just to crystallise the difficulty let us suppose it feasible to ban all nuclear bombs and ensure that all stockpiles were destroyed in their entirety. What would happen if war broke out? All three major nations have vast nuclear power projects involving nuclear reactors. Many small nations will have reactors, too. Every nuclear reactor can make bomb material and at the outbreak of war a race would begin to make nuclear bombs. If we are optimistic enough to believe that agreements would be kept and the new weapon stocks would not be used immediately on the outbreak of war, can we really believe that when one

side felt that it was losing it would not use the weapons which would avert defeat?

I hope that these remarks will show why I do not believe that a complete banning of nuclear weapons can ever be effected, any more than we can expect to ban completely all conventional arms and armed services. The most we can expect, especially in the beginning, is agreement to arms limitation, both conventional and nuclear.

People who claim that banning nuclear

weapons will solve the problem are either getting mixed up between cause and effect or are inadvertently (and, in some cases, deliberately) subscribing to the propaganda line. The fundamental problem before humanity is not nuclear weapons, but war. When we have solved the problem of settling international differences without war we shall no longer need to fear nuclear bombs—or the types of death and destruction which were inflicted on the peoples of London, Hamburg and Tokyo in the last war.

E. W. TITTERTON

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## HAS AUSTRALIA A DISTINCTIVE FOREIGN POLICY?

IF THIS QUESTION had been put in the past tense instead of the present I'd have been disposed to answer it in the negative. As the question is actually posed my answer briefly is that over the last ten to fifteen years we in this country have been feeling our way towards a distinctive foreign policy, but that a "three-pronged" Australian policy has been developed from above rather than from below and that it still needs the support of an informed and critical body of Australian public opinion.

Taking these several statements in turn, it is submitted that prior to World Wars I and II Australia was in general prepared to leave most questions of foreign affairs to determination elsewhere, chiefly in London. On certain regional matters such as New Guinea, the New Hebrides and New Caledonia we had long been sensitive and on occasion, self-assertive. Again, when British foreign relations threatened to impinge on accepted Australian domestic policies this sensitivity and self-assertion became very marked—as in the matters of immigration restriction and tariffs.

In general, however, with some significant

differences of emphasis and with exceptions which in the main served only to prove the rule, all Australian political parties and the great mass of the Australian people concentrated their pre-war attention on domestic development. It was more or less taken for granted that Australian security would be covered by the Royal Navy—with such assistance as might be provided by varying Australian defence programmes—and that if ever the United Kingdom were at war "Australia would be there," whether we had been consulted beforehand or not.

The fall of Singapore and its sequel shocked most Australians into belated realisation of the significance of geographic proximity to Asia as well as of historic and racial associations with Europe. The war also brought another new factor into Australia's political consciousness—the potentialities of United States strategy in the Pacific. As a result there gradually emerged the makings of an Australian foreign policy which would seek to reconcile the requirements of history and geography. Hence my reference to a "three-pronged" policy.

The first prong may be described as continued co-operation to mutual advantage within the British Commonwealth of Nations without prejudice to individual interests, aspirations and convictions. The second is recognition of strategic and other potentialities for Australia of the new role of the United States in world affairs generally and in the Pacific in particular. The third is the urgent need to shape economic and political relations with Asian neighbours in the form most likely to promote mutual prosperity and security based on increased knowledge and mutual self-respect. Together, it is submitted, these three features make up a post-war foreign policy which can be regarded as distinctively Australian.\*

This brief answer to the question posed may conclude with two statements of personal conviction. The first is that the third prong in this positive Australian foreign policy had begun to win increasing recognition in Asian countries during the post-war

\*For further elaboration of this argument and discussion of the influences tending to shape Australian foreign policy, see the writer's Chapter 1, "The Australian Community", in Greenwood, G. and Harper, N., "Australia in World Affairs, 1950-55" (Melbourne, 1957).

decade as representing a general attempt to apply an Australian policy which would be shaped in Canberra, not in London, and formulated in the light of an Australian appreciation of Australian ideals and Australian interests. It was for this reason alone I deplored Australia's action in "signing on the dotted line" in support of the Eden-Mollet action over Suez late in 1956. The evidence would, however, seem to suggest that this has in fact done Australia less harm in Asia than might have been expected.

My second conviction is that the post-war emergence of this distinctively Australian foreign policy is not the achievement of a single political party but is attributable to the work of successive Labour and non-Labour Ministers of External Affairs at Canberra (notwithstanding some significant differences in their emphasis) and the support of an effectively staffed Department of External Affairs. What this nascent Australian foreign policy still lacks, however, is a strong body of informed and critical public opinion which will subject particular applications of it by any government, regardless of its domestic political colour, to rational and not purely emotive comment.

FRED ALEXANDER

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# The Art of Chih Pai-shih

by

John Yocklunn

LAST SEPTEMBER the "grand old man" of Chinese painting, Chih Pai-shih, died at the age of ninety-seven years. He was a prolific artist and his works are well known far beyond his native country. Yet Chih Pai-shih was not only a great realist painter of the traditional school, but also a poet, calligrapher and seal engraver. For over seventy years he engaged in creative work, for which posterity is infinitely the richer.

His painting is easily distinguishable by his bold, individualistic style. Flouting many conventions of the conservative die-hards and traditionalists with his fresh and vital style, he really gave new life to traditional Chinese painting. And what subjects did he paint? Besides the birds, flowers, insects and fish which were the favourites of his predecessors, he also painted common, everyday things such as oil-lamps and children's toys.

It is this treatment of common objects which is one of the great merits of Chih Pai-shih's art, for his work is something that can be appreciated by not merely the intellectual alone but also by the man in the street—a

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John Yocklunn (Soong Ng-chung) was born in Canton, China, but has lived in Australia since 1938. He is now a final year Arts student (School of German Studies) at the University of W. A.



rare thing for contemporary art. Abstract and idealised art did not interest him. He always held that the painter should draw upon real life for his material, and he in his own work attempted—and succeeded—in capturing the very essence of life. His paintings of flowers, birds and insects really live.

This is achieved by his faithfulness to his subjects, though he did not believe in photographic representation nor mere imitation which is so often lifeless. But by using bold, simple strokes with an impressionistic technique, he gives us the spirit, the essence of his subject. For example, with round blobs of ink and wavy lines attached he creates tadpoles which seem to move and wriggle

before one's eyes. Then again, a few brush strokes, patches of ink, and colour and you have a charming picture of a trio of chickens under a palm tree. Simple things simply drawn—yet not only things of beauty but also evocative of living nature.

An example of his work is the fruit painting illustrated. This is not his finest work, but is typical of his style. A rough mass of brown with small red globules, broad black and dark-green lines to suggest the branches and leaves, and you have the total impression of a pomegranate bursting with ripe fruit. The seal and the calligraphy help to balance the composition and form a harmonious whole.

When drawing insects, however, he gives us minute detail and lavishes great care on the tiny creatures, so that in a dragonfly, for instance, you see the delicate tracery of its wings and its cameo perfection.

In some of his works he combines these two styles of painting—the impressionistic outline style known as 'hsieh yi', and the fine detail style known as 'kung hi'. Thus he has a fragile cicada resting on a branch of maple (suggested in broad outline by big splotches of red and black). This combination of the two different elements has been compared to the use of comic episodes in a tragedy for the purposes of dramatic contrast.

His usual medium is water colour and Chinese ink which he blends for strong and unusual colouring, though less for his insect studies. He will paint bright red lotus flowers or morning glories and add black leaves, but this does not seem incongruous or out of harmony—it is the total impression of life and vitality that counts.

Often Chih Pai-shih uses ink alone, just as if it were colour, but his studies of crabs, vegetables and fruits when so painted still seem to possess rich colours. Some of his best

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ink paintings are those of prawns—exquisite creatures, semi-transparent and full of the motion of living.

In conformity with the convention of painting “simple” as differentiated from “complex” compositions, superficialities and redundancies are left out (as in Chinese classical opera, where the setting is only suggested, but not painted). Often flowers are painted without twigs, or fish without water; yet the spectator supplies the background unconsciously. By such bold elimination the artist presents his main theme in a more concentrated and vivid manner which stimulates the imagination.

Calligraphy plays such an important part in Chinese art that specimens of fine hand-

writing are prized no less than a painting. The artist can convey his feelings through the beauty of calligraphy, and Chih Pai-shih does this, through a long poem or merely with his signature. In keeping with his style of painting, his characters are composed of bold, simple but strong brush strokes, so that the writing is a complement to the actual drawing.

Though dead, Chih Pai-shih will still exert an influence on humanity. His thousands of paintings will continue to be a source of beauty and pleasure. They will continue as ambassadors for international understanding, unifying peoples through their enjoyment of his art. Few men could leave a greater heritage.

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# leaves in the wind . . . .

## **£750 Contest for Writers**

The Queensland University has announced that it is awarding a first prize of £500 and a second prize of £250 in a literary contest to mark the fiftieth anniversary of its founding. Further details of the competition will be announced later, but the closing date for entries is December, 1959.

## **A.B.C. Encourages Australian Writers**

Donald Stuart has had thirteen radio scripts accepted by the Australian Broadcasting Commission for a series of broadcasts which commence this month. They are gathered together under the title “A Book of Gold”, and tell the story of the discovery of gold in Western Australia. As the author and his family lived for many years on the goldfields, his scripts will have the authentic touch of local colour, and those who have already heard Mr. Stuart on the air will look forward to his forceful and entertaining broadcasts.

## **Observing “The Observer”**

Last February there appeared another new magazine, *The Observer*, published by Australian Consolidated Press. It promises to be quite a lively magazine that spreads its interests over politics, foreign affairs, the Arts, economics, and book reviews. Most of the articles seem well-informed and brightly written. One only hopes that it will not glut the already crowded market of journals and magazines that has developed in the last few years, although this in itself is an encouraging sign of Australian literary vitality.

## **“Coast to Coast”**

Contributions to the ever popular *Coast to Coast* collection of short stories should be in by the end of March. This year the editor is the Australian author Dal Stivens, who has lived for some time abroad and who is therefore expected to give a different slant to his selections from those favoured by previous editors.

## Randolph Stow Again

The publication of Randolph Stow's book of verse, *Act One*, has excited even more interest than his novels in literary circles both here and abroad. Not only did one of the poems, "Complaint Against Himself", win a prize in the Cheltenham Festival of Art, Literature and Poetry, but the book itself, apart from being a Book Society Choice, has now been chosen by the Australian Literature Society as the best book of poems written by an Australian in 1957. (Voss, by Patrick White, was given a similar award for the best novel.)

It is most encouraging that the publishers, Macdonald of London, have enough faith in the value and quality of the poetry and in the future of their author to bring out a book like this, regardless of its economic prospects.

## More W. A. Publications

*Death Came Uninvited*, a thriller by Elizabeth Backhouse, has now appeared in local bookshops. It is already in its second impression in England, and a second thriller has been accepted by its publishers, Robert Hale, of London.

Also to appear in Perth soon are two novels by local writers, whose work is published by Robert Hale as well. *Quiet Brat*, by well-known short story writer H. H. Wilson, is already on the book stalls in London, and *The Lonely Shore*, by Freda Vines, is expected out very shortly. The Australian publishers, Angus and Robertson, are soon to bring out *Snowball*, by popular local writer Gavan Casey, together with a book of short stories by Peter Cowan.

## Japanese Art Exhibition

During the month of May the W.A. Art Gallery intends to display a series of Japanese paintings known as the "Hiroshima Panels". These comprise rice paper panels six feet in height painted only in two colours, black and vermilion. The two Japanese artists (man and wife) were among the first to enter Hiroshima after the A-bomb blast, and they have depicted scenes of the city—where some of their

family were killed—before, during and after the attack.

Their work has been compared to Goya's both for its artistry and its humanism. Before the war the artists were surrealists, but they turned to realism to execute these panels which are to be exhibited throughout Australia, already having visited many parts of the world.

## Is the Tide Turning ?

For some time now there has been a restive spirit amongst the newer writers, questioning the wisdom of indefinitely continuing what has become known as the *Bulletin* tradition in Australian writing. These people will no doubt echo the views of certain English critics who disapprove of D'Arcy Niland's latest novel *Call Me When the Cross Turns Over*. Apparently the cult of the billabong and the hairy-chested swaggie who does nothing but tramp the roads of the outback, drinking, fighting, wenching and occasionally working, is wearing rather thin. One critic seems to fear that true literary values tend to be drowned in what he calls a "veritable thunder of kangaroo hooves." Another commented wryly that our literature has tended to become essays in anthropology.

## Breadwinning Awards

The Miles Franklin Award of £500 has been offered for the best novel of 1957 which is 'considered to be of the highest literary standing and which represents Australian life in any of its phases.'

The Mary Gilmore Award, entries for which closed on March 1st, 1958, is for the best novel submitted on the life and aspirations of the Australian people.

The example of these two women literary figures might well be followed by other members of the community who wish to encourage the literature of their own country. The remunerations of writing are not growing any larger, and awards like these not only lure on aspiring writers but also keep the wolf a little farther from the door of those attempting to devote their whole time to a literary career.

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## PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

"The Men Who Made Australia", edited by Marjorie Pizer (Australasian Book Society, Melbourne, 1957); "Students in China", a report by the N.U.A.U.S. delegation (Melbourne, 1957); "Universities of New South Wales", proceedings of the Convention held in September 1954, and published in Sydney, 1957; "Socialism and the Novel" by Jack Beasley (J. Beasley, Petersham, 1957); "Southerly" number three, 1957 (Angus & Robertson); "The Moods of Love" by Laurence Collinson ("Overland", Melbourne, 1957); "Peking Review" (Pai Wan Chuang, Peking, 1958).

# The Crisis: Greater Love

Pale lids flicker and close. Pale  
As sheets smoothed under chin.  
Pale cheek, 'gainst pillow near to motionless.  
Death waits, cramped, baring teeth,  
But keeps apace.

Shadows fall across stained stones.  
Death's hollowed eye-recesses watch  
Youth's light of life, flicker and fall.  
Pain stroke on stroke, brain numbered to each  
Fresh knife-skewed trembling.  
Death, keep apace, apace.

Not yet. God seems to care.  
Dear voice, you too. Surround this still warm, candled-clay  
Gently with soft, protecting hands, cupped so to shield  
It from the Leveller's fiery breath.

Pray from the heart, no mockeries of prayer  
Nor Man-made outworn snatches from a book.  
The Everlasting Arms are underneath.  
Fear God, not Death, nor be afraid.  
The body's earthy sleep breaks suddenly.

Along the stony corridors, stained with dead blood,  
Death skulks, conquered by greater love.

Jean Lang

F. B. Vickers

## CAN WE ASSIMILATE THE ABORIGINE?

THERE HAS BEEN enough controversy ranging round Don McLeod and his work among the natives for me to want to add to it. But I must say now this is not a report, not a statement of right or wrong, or propaganda for this or that, but merely a few personal impressions gained from the native people themselves. There is some emotional involvement in it for me, for I have always had—since my first meeting with them—some affection for these very lovable people. So my visit to the Pindan natives was something like going back to the old home town to have a look at people one scarcely knew, but for whom one had retained an interest and some affection.

I strolled out to their headquarters camp at the Two-Mile out of Port Hedland on a Sunday morning. And there over a rise that shows evidence of once having been a rubbish dump is the camp on the flat of a valley. There were a number of huts and conveniences built of second-hand corrugated iron, some of them white-washed, all of them very clean and tidy. It was strange to see no litter lying about a native camp, strange to see vincas and Indian bell flowers growing in a little garden in front of the dining hut and kitchen. The stony earth looked to have been swept so clean that I was afraid to drop the match end after lighting my pipe.

Don McLeod was there, breakfasting alone in his hut. I knew McLeod pretty well, so well that we can now disagree without quarrelling. He knew that I wanted to see the natives, so he turned me over to them. The two native leaders, Ernest Mitchell and Peter Coffin, I had met before in Perth. But I had never met Daisy before. Daisy said she was the Boss woman at this camp. She is tall and thin and straight as a spear, and shrewd as your grandmother. She laughed and she was thoughtful, and everything she said was made expressive with a shrug, a pull of her face or a gesture with her big, long-fingered hands that looked a little grotesque on her long thin arms. Daisy was one of the original group. She it was who had led a band of men, women and children over hundreds of miles of heat-baked plain and conglomerate range to the first camp McLeod set up at the Twelve-Mile out of Port Hedland.

“Ah, but it was worth it. My people happy now,” she said. “We work for ourselves now. Nobody push us round.”

“And how do the young women take to it, Daisy?” I asked.

“Little tired fella at first. But I tell them, they work for themselves now. No trouble when they know that.”

And there seemed to be no trouble, for

there they were, young women all nicely and cleanly dressed, baking yeast bread, cooking, sweeping, making a batch of scones for me, the visitor. Some nursing their babies, and not a fly to be seen in a child's eyes, nor a sniffly nose.

A young woman came and sat at table beside me. She shone with health and happiness. Without any trace of shyness she said: "You meet my husband in Perth, yes?"

"And who is your husband?" I asked.

"Peter," she answered, pointing down the long table to Peter Coffin. "He told me you spoke for us in Perth."

"Oh, yes! I said a little for you in the Perth Town Hall."

She laughed. "I would like to have seen them black-fellas talking to you white fellas," she said, her face lighting up with pride in her man and her people. "They tell you proper. I like to have seen that. You like to see my home?"

I said I would, so she took me to a corrugated iron hut in which there was a double bed, a drugget on the floor, and boxes stacked to make tables and cupboards. It was a pioneer's home with little made much of; furnished with a woman's pride so that to me it was full of fine things.

"You like it?" she asked.



"Good," I said, for I could find little else to say just then, blinded as I was by comparisons. This humble hut made home by a woman's love and pride, and back a few years this girl seated over a smoky fire outside a mia-mia with little to live for and nothing to hope for.

"Thank you," she said.

A big American saloon car drove in to the camp and a white man got out. Some of the men strolled over to him and they spoke for a little while before the white man got back in his car and drove away.

"That fella squatter," Ernest Mitchell told me. "He wants a windmill man. He'd like a married man. He give them cottage and pay wages eleven pound a week."

I looked at the men clustered around me. "And don't any of you fellas want the job?" I asked.

They shrugged and then a half-caste man said: "We think it better to stay with the mob. We work for ourselves this way. We all together."

"But that's good money with the house thrown in," I suggested.

They shrugged. "Money all right. But much better working with mob."

They did not expect me—the white man—to understand. But for them it was right. The wage packet could not give them the satisfaction, the pride, or the stature that the mob could give them.

I went out to their camps strung out along the Condon Beach where the work is done. And in one of these camps I met Norris. He had grown up strong and tall, and was now wearing a white shirt and trousers that were just a little too tight for him. With a broad grin on his face he strode up to me and shot out his hand. "How you doin'?"

I could only say "Good," for I was blinded by the sight of a hungry little animal diving his hand into scraps of meat and bread, custard, rice, stewed apricots and tea dregs. And now that boy as a man, proud to show me how they winnowed buffle-grass seed, to take me over the hills to show me the wild kapok they gathered, to show me the fruit trees they'd planted.

"You think we grow'm fruit, Boss?"

I wanted to say, you've grown it, though in fact the trees would be a long time before they ever bore, and many would die before they did. But Norris had borne fruit, big fruit. He had grown out of a pig bucket into a man.

"Much better this way, Boss. No fella chasing black fella round. We sing for you tonight."

The old man, the Law Carrier as they call him, asked me did I want to visit the children's camp? Of course I did, for children are a society's weather-cock. They may be dirty, ragged, and hungry, but if they have got a wholesome spirit—if they can laugh and romp, then I think you will find that that society has got some heart and spirit, and the will to live.

I was surprised that the Pindan group had set up a separate camp for children, and said so to the old man. He giggled—and shyly, as if not to offend my knowledge of the Aboriginal and his ways, and explained to me that it was wise to keep young men and young women apart until they had learned the Law. Later I was to see the Law carved on wooden sticks and slabs, but he explained it to me simply. "When the young fella know what he do, when he know the Law of the tribe, then he take woman if he like. But him not know the Law—all time trouble. We not want trouble in the tribe, so . . ." And his grin and shrug said the rest.

I counted thirty-five children in this camp,

their ages—on appearance—ranging from six to, in the case of girls, about seventeen. The boys went out earlier. They were under the care of May and Lilly, assisted by two old women and two young ones who as yet had not found husbands. They looked a happy crew—a little shy as children are with strangers at first, but they soon dropped their shyness when May and Lilly began to talk to me. They worked, they said. They picked buffle-grass seed and kapok, swam in the sea and played. They brought picture magazines to show me photographs of Australia's scenic beauties and views of its cities, and asked "What place this? What did the caption say?"

"Nobody read," May said, looking very sad. "No school. They ask, but can't tell them nothing. Why can't we have a school? All the white children have school."

Yes, why? I was the black-fellow then. I could only say: "Maybe sometime you get school."

They took me into a bough-shed to see the doctor's box. A cupboard marked with a red cross that contained all the homely remedies for coughs, colds and cuts and bruises.

"We not let them get sick," May said quietly with that sad smile in her big dark eyes. "But we can't learn them nothing only black-fella way."

And that night I sat late round a camp fire while painted warriors danced and sang to the music of the sticks and the didjeridoo. And dancing in front of them—always with one eye on the men to see that they were doing it right—were three little boys putting all their energies and hearts and souls into learning the songs and dances of the tribe. But the clothes they wore when the dance was over, the food that gave them the energy to dance, had been earned in the white man's way—by trade. There was a combination of

two ways of life, the economics of living in a modern world allied to the fullness of life to be found in a native culture.

The old man, the Law Carrier, is conscious of this mingling of two ways of life. "Some black-fella ways not good now," he told me. And he added that they did not take the young fellows on the long walk-about now, that march of a moon's duration in which they learned to suffer the agonies of thirst and hunger to fit them for the task of being a warrior, a hunter for the tribe. "Tucker come in bag and boxes now. We stop in camp and work white fella way."

And this old man is trying to put into story, into their Law, the changes that have taken place since Don McLeod brought the scattered remnants of the tribe together again. This old man sees the forming of the Pindan group as a renaissance, a rebirth of his people. But the Law and their culture has to be amended, brought up to date so that the tribe can fit into a new set of circumstances and conditions. He recognises that the tribe must work and earn its bread in the white man's way.

But at the same time he knows that man does not live by bread alone; that the white man's culture is not for his people yet. So as he says: "We got to be black-fella till we white-fella"; they must keep their own values till man is neither black nor white, but simply man. But values have to be modified if the people are to move forward, and this old man is trying to re-write the Law of the tribe to fit in with the new conditions of living. It is a slow and painful work of creation which he carves on wood. He is having to evolve new characters that almost amount to a new language in order to be able to give expression to what for him has become a blending of two ways of life within his own people.

"Some black-fella ways no good now," he said.

It poses a question, don't you think?

# PROBLEMS FACING THE AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES

Alan Barcan

**W**ESTERN CIVILIZATION has always been characteristically a dynamic one, and its social institutions, including schools and universities, have always been in transition. However, in recent decades the rate of change has increased markedly, creating a sense of crisis in educational matters.

While the Australian educational pattern shares in the general problems of western civilization today, there have also been certain additional, specifically Australian, factors at work which have made the development of higher education in this country even more complex. These problems of Australian universities provoked the N.S.W. Universities Convention of September, 1954 (whose report was published late in 1957) as well as the Murray Committee on Australian Universities (whose report was presented to the Prime Minister in September, 1957). In the newspapers, too, there has been considerable controversy over the apparent failings of tertiary education in Australia.

The major problem facing Australian universities today include the provision of accommodation for increasing enrolments, problems of finance, the preservation of academic freedom, the respective claims of technological and liberal education, the maintenance of educational standards, and the needs of training as against research functions. Many of these problems are closely inter-related.

The problem of accommodation has already passed its crisis in the primary schools, is approaching its peak in the secondary schools, and will soon afflict the universities in full force. In the post-war period the lowest point of university enrolments was reached in 1953 with 28,792. By 1957 the student numbers were at 36,465; they are expected to reach 56,000 by 1962 and 70,785 by 1965. The source of this crisis is partly immigration, partly the natural increase in population, partly the great expansion of the professions. The crisis of numbers is also a reflection of the great era of economic expansion which Australia entered upon after 1941 and of the efforts of the welfare state to facilitate higher education and professional and technical training through scholarships, etc.

The economic crisis of the universities is partly bound up with the shift in economic power which has taken place in Australia since the war. The States have traditionally borne a great part of the burden of financing universities, but since uniform taxation (1942) the States have lost a great deal of their financial strength. In the early post-war years Commonwealth financial assistance to the universities has taken several makeshift forms. The Murray Committee and the Australian University Grants Committee which it recommends mark the beginning of greater participation by the Commonwealth.

An important characteristic of the economics of universities has been a change in their sources of income. Before the war approxi-

mately one-third of Sydney University's income came from governments, one-third from investments, and one-third from students' fees. Today over two-thirds of the income is received from governments, one-quarter from fees, and only one-twentieth from investments. The Murray Report quotes the figures for Australian universities as a whole (p. 24). Of the income in 1956 for general purposes (as opposed to that for special purposes) 50% comes from State Governments, 29% from the Commonwealth Government, 16% from student fees, 2% from investments (endowments) and the remainder from sundry other sources. We live in an age of State-intervention, and the universities, which obtain nearly 80% of their income from governments, share this characteristic. But this imbalance, this loss of economic independence, can have very dangerous political implications. Hence it is desirable that government monies should be allotted to universities through a University Grants Committee rather than directly; though even then much depends on the nature and constitution of such a Committee.

Of course, there are those who deny that the present pattern engenders any real threat to academic freedom, or who would argue that a completely new approach to the university's function in society must be accepted. At the 1954 Universities Convention the Vice-Chancellor of the N.S.W. University of Technology stated ("Universities of N.S.W.," p. 78):

*The expense of operating universities today is so great that there is no other practicable source of finance than the Government, though donations from industry and private donors will continue to be valuable for special purposes. It is clearly the duty of the Government to serve what it sees to be the needs of the community and to persuade its universities to do what that policy requires. It is the duty of the universities as free*

*and independent agencies to assist the Government in this task, and in their capacity as experts in university education to persuade the Government of the best ways of carrying out its policy. There is no truer saying than, "He who pays the piper calls the tune" and if the Government has to provide university finance, the Government will expect some say in how the finance is used.*

But many people would still support older concepts of academic freedom. In recent times there have been quite a number of cases of threats to academic freedom—the interference by the Council of the University of Tasmania with decisions of the lecturing staff on matters normally within their competence; the attempt of the Queensland Government to control the appointment of staff in the University of Queensland; and the application of political tests to applicants for positions with the University of Technology. And there is the general threat arising out of the increasing dependence of universities on governments and industry for their funds—the danger that administrators might show alarm when members of their staff express unusual or unorthodox ideas, ideas which might alienate potential benefactors. There is a danger that universities may become even more docile, that public controversy may be avoided, for fear of alienating groups or interests.

Another problem facing universities is that of standards. In recent years the failure rate has become very high. A survey of six universities shows that only 61% of the entrants in 1951 passed their first year examination, only 35% graduated in the minimum time, and only 58% were expected finally to graduate (Murray Report, p. 35). This is not merely a matter of overcrowded lecture rooms and over-worked lecturers. University standards are influenced by secondary, and even primary school standards. A science lecturer listed the prime causes of the high failure rate in

Australian universities as "the insufficiency of our system of secondary education; the immaturity of many of our students on entry; the system of unrestricted entry based on a minimum qualification; the enormous size of our first-year classes; and the inadequacy of our staff-student ratio" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 30/1/58). Only some of these matters can be rectified by giving universities more finance. Many are products of our total educational pattern.

At the present time universities are faced with the demand for greater stress on technological education at the expense of traditional liberal education and the humanities. The launching of earth satellites has encouraged this form of thought. Australia certainly needs expansion of her technical research and training. But neglect of the liberal studies is dangerous and could imply a devastating col-

lapse of our civilization and cultural standards. The fact that study of the humanities is becoming regarded as an alternative to technological education is partly a result of the increasing specialisation which is afflicting secondary education, as the matter of subjects is cut down and as more pupils leave school without the broader, balanced education of the past. Indeed, the introduction of courses in the humanities for all students at the N.S.W. University of Technology may be regarded as an attempt to supplement the inadequacies of modern secondary education.

Finally, there is the question of the university's function as a training institution as against its research functions. In the technical and scientific faculties as much as in arts the claims of a general education and stress on underlying principles has to meet the view of education as vocational training

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The advertisement is enclosed in a double-line border. It features a central illustration of a man in a suit and tie, carrying a briefcase, walking towards the right. He has a slightly distressed or tired expression. In the background, a small tractor is visible. The text is arranged around the illustration, with the headline at the top, the slogan in the middle, and the product name in large, bold letters. The background of the illustration has a halftone dot pattern.

concerned primarily with the immediate needs of an employing authority. The outcome is usually a compromise, but the degree of balance between the two concepts—general education as against specific training—is an important matter. A continuous defence of the view that one of the prime functions of a university is pure research and the advancement of knowledge is necessary if scientific and cultural standards are to be maintained.

It is clear, then, that the crisis in which the universities of Australia find themselves is far more than merely economic. It is also clear that developments in the university cannot be separated from developments at other levels of education, and in society generally. One further point needs to be underlined. The universities are in transition, their function is being modified by the changing nature of society, even though there is an essence which remains permanent.

It is a defect of the Murray Report that there is no attempt to trace the historical evolution of Australian universities. To say this is not academic niggling. A sense of the direction of movement is important for any understanding of Australian universities today. The Murray Report points out that "universities have a long history, and though superficially they have suffered changes, their purpose and their way of life have remained, and still remain, essentially the same" (p. 7). This concept of the absolute and relative features of universities appears to be lost, however, when the Report takes the view that "professional training should be the function of universities and all forms of non-professional training should be the function of the technical colleges" (p. 78) and that the N.S.W. University of Technology could become a traditional university merely by changing its name to the University of N.S.W. and adding medical and arts faculties (p. 88).

The enduring function of all real universi-

ties I imagine to be the advancement of knowledge, the fostering of an attitude of free and critical enquiry, and the giving of a liberal education. The earliest Australian universities were based on Arts faculties alone, catered for very few students indeed, and gave a classical-liberal education suitable for an upper class leadership in government and society. During the 1880's or thereabouts Arts and Science became the central faculties; the universities started to cater for the middle classes as well as the upper classes, became more democratic (admission of women, evening lectures, etc.). It was after World War I that the great period of professional training dawned in Australian universities, the number of faculties and students again increasing. Since World War II we have seen a new type of university appearing, one which aimed much more to be a "service station", designed to meet the training and research needs of industry and government departments and centred in the technical faculties—the new "mass" university.

In practice the distinction between the various types of universities has never been rigid or sharp. Nonetheless there is a real difference in aims, administration and governing structure, and in the methods of work in universities established in the various historical epochs. Clearly modern society needs various types of tertiary institutions. But it is blurring matters not to recognise the differences, and it would be wrong to imagine that all these institutions are equally favourable to free enquiry and academic self-government. Similarity of name conceals differences in nature and function.

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## A Prologue

**ACT ONE:** Poems by Randolph Stow (London: Macdonald & Co., 1957).

THE LEAST that one can say is that Randolph Stow is worth our attention, and that he ought to get it. How much can one add to this? Well, the writer of the blurb on the dust-jacket of *Act One* is prepared to add a good deal:

*Today, in an age of consolidation rather than experimentation, neither crude sincerity divorced from technique nor the mere parading of scientifically based information is enough to arouse interest in a poet. He must be a man who responds powerfully and intelligently to life, who is not afraid of strong feelings, yet has the self-confidence to discriminate amongst them and the self-discipline to shape them.*

Randolph Stow is a young writer, but we believe that he possesses talent of this order.

*It is of course no accident that such a writer should come from Australia, a country with strong literary ambitions where the veerings of intellectual fashion still matter less than the recurrent rhythm—beautiful but pitiless—of the natural order.*

*Though he has a deceptively light and pleasing touch, Randolph Stow is definitely a poet of the ultimate mysteries of birth, love and death, regarding them, however, as facts to arouse wonderment and reverence rather than as moral lessons. Seldom can a writer of such freshness of vision have handled words so excitingly and with such assurance at the outset of his career, yet have penetrated so surely beneath the surface of life.*

Doubtless, Mr. Stow would him-

self be embarrassed by such large claims, and would allow us a discount, perhaps to cost price. But how should we estimate this?

I have trouble with the title, *Act One*. Is this a one-acter, and therefore self-contained, or is there more to come? Three acts? Five acts? The act we are given is divided into two *Scenes*, with *An Interlude for Voices*. One might expect this to be a lyric section interposed between two sections of dramatic pieces, but the poems themselves do not support such a classification. The title of the book also leads us to expect a group of

dramatis personae and that the poems form a dramatically related series of incidents. This does not seem to be the case either, unless I have missed the point (a possibility which I do not mean to dismiss). Finally, the dramatic form might suggest either some unity of place, or if not that, at least that changes of scene correspond with the "scene" division. Even this is not so, at least in the obvious sense.

But if one puts aside such literal expectations, the outlines of a pattern can be discerned. There are no actors in this *Act*, but there are recurrent figures. One of these is the fox, who turns up in a variety of contexts; he is finally revealed:

*God the Fox, with the terrible  
love of the prey  
For the preyer, love where  
the end, where the act, is  
pain.*

Mr. Stow has a good deal to say on the theme of terrible love. 'April is the cruellest month,' for most of us, at least. The Farmer meets

The lady who a fox is, and a  
*witch:*  
presently they fall to, and  
*"His anger choked her down  
and bound her breath,  
His kisses stilled the scream-  
ing face beneath . . .*

Similarly, the Shepherdess sees the 'thin hide live with strength' of the wolf, is fascinated by its beauty, 'til the glory of it cried with her own voice'; she invites

# review

## SECTION

rape, and is left with torn breasts. Later we have an encounter between the panther and the unicorn, described partly for the decorative effect of black on snowy white, highlighted, of course, by the resultant red. The panther belongs to the negress, a black Diana, hunting for men. She puts in another fiery and lubricious appearance (supposing her to be the same negress, as the title suggests) as the subject of the erotic fantasies of the farmer's boy. Once we are told that this is *The Hurtful Love*, but often it is simply life seen through the eyes of country children, who

*. . . hear at night  
The vixen's scream of agonis-  
ed delight,*

see

*. . . the pony, lusty and  
unwise  
Follow his dam with hot in-  
cestuous eyes.*

Another recurring figure is The Poet. He begins with "An Apology for his Making" in a rather English literarish sort of way. His job is to see

*. . . legends in the  
seasons,  
Carols in orchards; and past  
this deformation,  
To stand and tell among the  
northern mountains  
The child no more is stranger  
to the man.*

But this task is difficult—'words are frail and shipwreck'—'our love makes islands, mocks communication.' This is all rather conventional. Matthew Arnold has said it better. Similar themes take on more vitality in "The Man Outside" and "A Fancy for his Death." In the former, The Man Outside (The Outsider?) is clearly The Poet, but whether or not The Poet is Mr. Stow is not quite clear. The poem reads rather like the pastiche of Dylan Thomas:

*From this high hill to the  
cities turning in time;*

Despite 'the plover-haunted land' and 'Indian deeps,' it is certainly Mr. Thomas's hill at Llareggub, although the mountaineer has a trace of T. S. Eliot about the eyes.

Stow's poems often give this effect of montage, although one can never be quite sure that it is intended. In "A Fancy for his Death" the Poet (and surely it is Mr. Stow this time) undergoes a vegetal metempsychosis:

*. . . his breath  
Died on the name of God in  
joy like hate.  
And in the wreck of his un-  
holy hours  
Lay by his hateful love, the  
earth, unburied,  
Till the tendrils of his veins  
grew green and sour  
And put out leaves of straw-  
berries.*

These are the main figures in the drama, but there is a colourful crew of extras: Vertumnus, Endymion, Tithonus, Don Joe Doe, Adam, David and Abishag, The Mad Maid—all pass across the stage. And what of the stage? What sort of backcloth does this bizarre cast play against? It isn't easy to say. On the whole, Mr. Stow is an I-love-a-sunburnt-country-man (if we remember that his joy is like hate); but his figures are sometimes figurines. We get authentic country children and the farmer's boy, but we also have the Shepherdess and the Pastoral Poet, so that sometimes the effect is of Dresden figures against a Drysdale background.

Such a recipe from the surrealist cook-book requires the confectioner's touch and a light hand with the pastry. The poet is well aware of his problem in this respect, and devotes a poem to it; but even when he is 'constructing a classical landscape the dead gum trees tend to show through the canvas. A simple practical example of the problem he faces is that we are not always clear as to when August is—midsummer?—or midwinter? Sometimes one, sometimes the other; sometimes neither, but the time when the rains begin to make themselves felt round Geraldton, and therefore Spring (but with a blistering summer around the corner).

This simple but tricky choice is typical of Mr. Stow's dilemma. His view of nature is Australian (the crows are always waiting), his publishers and most of his potential readers are—alas!—English, and his temperament and talents lead him to the urbane, elegant manner of Louis MacNeice or even Edith Sitwell, who, after all, uses many of the same stage-props, even the foxes and negresses; although, of course, her 'rough-headed satyr, the sun' sel-

dom pushes the mercury above 80 so that his satyriasis never lets virgin blood.

The poems which I find most satisfactory are those in which this predicament (when is August?) does not arise: I particularly like "Mahomet's Treasure," "Country Children," and "As He Lay Dying," a modern version of "The Twa Corbies." Having wrenched so many lines out of context, I would like to quote this in full.

*As he lay dying, two fat  
crows  
Sat perched above in a  
strangling vine,  
And one crow called to  
the other:  
"Brother,  
Harvest his eyes, his tongue  
is mine."*

*As he lay dying, two lithe  
hawks  
Caressed the wind and  
spied two crows;  
And one hawk hissed to  
the other:  
"Brother,  
Mine is the sleekest one of  
those."*

*As he lay dying, two eagles  
passed  
And saw two hawks that  
hung in flying,  
And one said soft to the  
other:  
Brother,  
Mark your prey." As he  
lay dying.*

Probably the best way to read this collection is to treat it thus: simply pick out the poems one likes, disregarding the title, which suggests a higher degree of organization than is readily discovered. Most readers should find something to their taste: the poems are all, with a little patience, easily intelligible, and they

show a technical accomplishment rare, not only in young poets, but in Australian poets whatsoever. Whether Mr. Stow will learn to solve the conflict between his talents and his vision remains to be seen. One can only wish him luck.

GEORGE SEDDON.

## Suffering for One's Country

**AUSTRALIAN LITERARY ESSAYS,**  
by Frederick T. Macartney (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1957).

I HAVE AN IMPRESSION of Frederick T. Macartney as a pungent—sometimes testy—and assiduous commentator on Australian literature. This collection of occasional pieces (some are more like reviews than essays) is seldom pungent and hardly ever testy. But the collection is a testimonial to Macartney's assiduity. He has read very widely in Australian literature. Much of what he read could not have given much delight, because he has gone down many dusty by-ways. The lack of delight is reflected in the tone of this collection. Many of the essays appear to have been written in the line of self-imposed duty and are not stimulating. They are not, however, without interest. Though many of the writers upon whom he comments are very minor figures, most of us find some fascination in the burrowing among the undergrowth beside the main way.

Not the least enjoyable piece is the slightest; an almost tender, affectionate remembrance of R. H. Long, "A Poet of Simple Occasions", a versifying neighbour of Macartney whose life ended on a note of ironic tragedy. Antipathetic to 'modern conveniences' he was killed by a motor car.

The essays (there are fourteen) range widely and include the more important writers O'Dowd, Brennan, Baylebridge and O'Reilly. None of these shows Macartney as a critic of original or penetrating mind, even though he does offer some views contrary to more popular ones. He is worth reading to consider these views. He may be too critical of Brennan. We will be able to judge better when the long-delayed definitive edition of Brennan's poetry appears this year; and he does appear sound in his criticism of Baylebridge's rather over-blown reputation as a philosophical poet.

Despite these "contrary views" one withholds the adjective "original". This may be because of the style of the essays. Those about individual writers tend to begin, like obituaries, with a few dry biographical facts. The critical comments that follow lack freshness and incisiveness. I do not feel impelled to read the neglected writers whom he recommends.

The clue to this failure lies in the first essay, "An Attitude to Literature". His Attitude is clearly reasonable and sane; but it is also unimaginative and dull. A reasonable middle-of-the-road attitude is only interesting if it seems to have been reached at the end of deep thinking and of more profound consideration of extremes on either hand. It needs to appear to be a conviction arrived at freshly; not original in itself necessarily, but at least the result of uncommon thinking.

This crucial essay is almost platitudinous. In pursuit of that *ignis fatuus* of critics, a definition of the distinction between prose

and poetry, he resorts to quoting M. Jourdain. That happy invention of Moliere's remains fresh in the play, but I tire of the use of that snatch of dialogue when writers founder in attempts to define the indefinable. This is rather typical of the essay. At the point where Macartney should make his own statement, he quotes others. The quotations are often hackneyed. It is almost as if Macartney is too widely read and his mind is a little clogged with the thoughts of others.

He is also insensitive to most of the innovations of modern poetry. He betrays an almost total lack of appreciation of the subtle possibilities of "the new motion of rhyme". Surely he has read Slessor's poetry, in the best of which the subtle cadences of modern technique are brilliantly effective. Macartney seems to hanker for the "plain old sort of rhyme". I wonder if that is not some sort of myth.

I feel that he takes risks in using the "Ern Malley" hoax as an argument against modern poetry. A good spoof is a tonic for everyone, but it is doubtful if anything is proved by the success of that hoax, other than that the most astute of us can still be gullible. It proved nothing about modern poetry.

Macartney must be commended for his courage. He has tackled darn near everything ever written in Australia. But surely a serious critic does not have to waste time in making sure "that nothing needed for the structure (of Australian literature) drops through its cracks out of sight". There is enough good writing to occupy him. He says that he has been prepared to "suffer for his country". That is a peculiar attitude. It may account for the joylessness of these essays.

D. E. HUTCHISON.

## Social Comment v. Characterisation

**SHARES IN MURDER**, by Judah Waten (Melbourne: Australasian Book Society, 1957).

COMPARED WITH *The Unbending*, Mr. Waten's latest novel *Shares in Murder* is somewhat of a disappointment. In the earlier novel the description of Anna Kochansky and her husband, the combination of critical detachment and compassion towards the characters, and the author's ability to write unaffectedly about Australian working men, seemed to suggest that Mr. Waten might soon become a widely acclaimed novelist. Of course *The Unbending* was not a perfect novel; it was in fact seriously flawed by the way in which Mr. Waten's interest in fully developed characters and his interest in social criticism tended to fly apart and form two separate centres of interest.

This seemed to suggest that Mr. Waten had not decided with sufficient exactness just what he wanted to write about, or that perhaps he had not been careful and selective enough in the definition of his themes. In other words, certain sections of the novel were powerful enough in their effect on the reader, but the novel as a whole lacked coherency. However, as this seemed to be the kind of fault which could be overcome in later novels, it is disappointing to find that in *Shares in Murder* the hiatus between character development and social criticism has continued; that instead of achieving intensity and coherency through a disciplined blending of the two interests, he has written a loosely episodic novel which attempts to describe a wide cross-section of Australian city life.

*Shares In Murder*, as the title suggests, is a detective story, though it offers the reader much more than a detective story usually does. It is a 'serious' novel, and contains social criticism and some exquisitely conceived characters as well as the conventional man-hunt. The central figure in the story, Inspector Stewart Brummel, is a member of a city police force. Through this character Mr. Waten is able to introduce some important evidence about the effects upon justice of money, politics, and the inevitable imperfections of the police force. Similarly, as the woman who is murdered is a rich socialite and as a jewel robbery is combined with the murder, he describes both a seaside hotel and a sly-grog den, and the characters include criminals as well as respectable lawyers. In this way Mr. Waten exposes the presence of greed (and corruption) in every section of the community he describes; and perhaps in general terms he means to describe the competitive struggle for money and social standing in a capitalist society as a savage and murderous business.

Mr. Waten, however, uses the minor characters to present his social comment, and each of them tends to appear in only one or two episodes. This apparently led him to restrict the development of his major characters in order to balance the structure of the novel; so that in such a short book, in which the story moves rather quickly, the author's message and characterisation is not as complete as it needs to be. In other words, Mr. Waten has again treated his two major interests separately and has attempted to deal with too many variations of his main theme. Hence in the selection of his large canvas and his effort to paint a

comprehensive picture of society, he has had to sacrifice the richness and intensity of the smaller, more focused type of work.

Mr. Waten is far more cynical in his attitude towards life in *Shares In Murder* than he was in *The Unbending*. In fact, in many of the seemingly less important details of the novel he reveals himself to be a thoroughly bitter and disillusioned writer. Very little admiration or sympathy is given to anyone in this novel, except perhaps to the jewel thief Norman Sim. And therefore it is impossible not to remark that Mr. Waten's view of life seems far too simple when the most likeable person in the novel is also the most downtrodden and unfortunate of his characters, and the two richest men in the story are also the two biggest scoundrels.

AXEL KRUSE.

## Sentimental

**THE SHIFTING HEART**, by Richard Beynon.

THE ELIZABETHAN THEATRE TRUST has sponsored this further successful play following closely on Ray Lawler's *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*. In the Australian theatre this is a phenomenon which invites comparison of the two. It should be conceded at once, no matter what one's private opinion of the relative merits of these plays, that of the Australian performances *The Shifting Heart* had the greater public appeal. This was achieved, however, by generous concessions to so-called 'popular' taste, in the artistically dangerous direction of sentimentalism.

The varied audience reactions to the two plays make an interesting comment on the character and composition of Australian theatre

audiences. Generalisations on this subject must be treated with caution, but undoubtedly many people who were moved by *The Shifting Heart* said of *The Doll's* uncompromising tragedy that they went to the theatre "to get away from that sort of thing." It is necessary to add that these same people would, and readily do, take "that sort of thing" from non-Australian writers, granted snob-appeal or a similar non-artistic attraction. In short, it must be realised that the majority of theatre-goers in Australia belong to the socially-conscious middle class, and all too often lack a genuine interest in drama as a medium of expression.

This is not to say that *The Shifting Heart* is a bad play, but merely a comment on its reception. Nevertheless, although it can be classed as a "social problem" drama, Beynon's play does not maintain the dramatic intensity of *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, nor achieve *The Doll's* universality of theme. What is more—and this is probably the cause of most of the play's weaknesses—Beynon as a writer is too condescending to his characters, lacking Lawler's feeling of identification and involvement. Hence many of the people in *The Shifting Heart* tend to be portrayed too much as stage 'characters' rather than as real human beings. Similarly, much of the dialogue loses its potency through striving for immediate effect rather than contributing to the development of situations, plot or character. Altogether, the play is not as simply conceived and as well constructed, nor such a truthful portrayal of reality, as is *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*.

Nevertheless, *The Shifting Heart* stands up well by current Australian standards, and without a doubt is a worthwhile contribution to our fast-maturing drama. But considering *The Doll's* over-

seas reception it may well be asked where *The Shifting Heart* would stand in world estimation.

\* \* \*

*The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* received the *Evening Standard* annual drama award for the best play of 1957. One of the English judges referred to John Osborne's play *The Entertainer*, which gained second place, as "a mirror of what is now going on in this country . . . a study in social dry-rot". If this is indeed a picture of the English cultural scene it is no wonder that *The Doll's* vigour and originality made its impact. Would *The Shifting Heart* make the same impact in the atmosphere of intellectual decline? Probably not, for it differs from the prevailing mood too much to be really 'acceptable', yet insufficiently to have a salutary effect. It is the type of play which, if written in England, would probably be relegated to the amateur theatre after a short run in the provinces.

The theatre in the United States is much more vital, continuing the realist tradition which gained such a strong impulse in the thirties. The English theatre never went through this phase, and that is why many American plays, such as *Death of a Salesman*, for example, have an effect on London audiences similar to *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*. This helps to explain, too, the cool treatment given to *The Doll* by New York critics, though let it be said that the American first-night audience was wildly enthusiastic.

One further point which requires comment: with *The Shifting Heart*, as with *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* and other recent Australian plays, our dramatists are finding the subject matter

which suits them. They are being influenced by the life about them rather than drawing inspiration from plays and films from overseas. Richard Beynon has tackled a theme of racial conflict which is very pertinent to social life in Australia today. The characteristic Australian flavour of Lawler's *Doll* is well known. These and other playwrights are drawing more and more on the life about them; weaving plots from their own experience; giving form and coherence to the hopes and fears they daily hear expressed; creating a truly indigenous drama.

Granted further encouragement from the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, material aid from the Commonwealth Literary Fund, and a consistently appreciative audience, the day may not be distant when an Australian play will no longer be a novelty. This will be a good thing for both writers and audiences. Perhaps it will also bring a greater sense of reality to producers and actors, thereby reducing the artificiality of performances. The end product could be a dramatic expression of the national outlook, attracting to the theatre a more truly representative audience. Australian theatre will then have come to life.

R. W. SMITH.

## The Good Old Days?

**HEMCOMING**, by Jiro Osaragi. Translated from the Japanese by Brewster Horwitz. (Charles E. Tuttle Company, Tokyo, 1955.)

THE PROFOUND disruptive forces exerted on Japanese society by the Pacific War and its aftermath are frequently drawn on as a scenario for local vernacular literature. Jiro

Osaragi's *Homecoming* slips fairly easily into the now hackneyed class of novels and studious works founded on the conservative estimate of the decadence and false values of new Japan. *Homecoming*, however, would fall into the respectable class of post-war writing. As it contains so much comment based on the old mores of Japan, with implied leanings towards the better days and values, the novel probably did not startle the easily-startled but decent literary circles of the nation.

It has been interesting to note the association of so much modern Japanese writing with the unethical. Intellectuals have been horrified by a boom in what they obviously class as a type of "penny-dreadful" literature, although it is often originated by name writers and boasts almost as much literary merit as general popularity. But when the literary circles asked a post-war Minister for Education to banish undesirable cultural and recreational matter, they were not aiming so much at *trashy* books, as at books allegedly advocating un-Japanese values.

Hence we can see that what forms the background of the respectable element in post-war Japanese literature is the nostalgia for the principles and way of life of the old days. Straight reportage of the Bohemian ways of life often found in Japan today, with implied advocacy of such ways, incurs the immediate wrath of critics and the usual coterie of defenders of public morals.

When a neo-realistic spate of brutal but well-written literature appeared shortly after the end of the Occupation, literary merit was ignored in favour of an outcry against the subject matter. Admittedly the themes dealt with were a little extreme. In one popular

novel, *The Season of the Hot Sun*, two brothers swap a girl, who dies after an abortion. Another rating considerable appeal was *The Room of Execution*. A young college student puts sleeping powder in his girl's beer and rapes her. An older brother steals his brother's girl and takes her out to sea in his sail-boat. The angered one chases them in a motor-boat, rams their craft, drown them, and then disappears in the offing.

Such exciting diversions from the Japanese literary convention are absent from *Homecoming* which, while incorporating some potentially interesting elements, treats the subject of modern Japan from the psychological viewpoint. Osaragi's approach would probably be interesting to a first-reader of recent Japanese books and journals. But after several encounters with "how changed is the new and how wonderful was the old" the reader might well want to criticise the very standard and hidebound approach to the problems tackled.

It is not too easy to agree with the, as usual, laudatory review which appears on the inside flaps of the jacket when the reviewer claims *Homecoming* offers a fresh, rich and different experience.

But what it does offer is an insight into the rather singular thought of the Japanese, and the nationally individual state of the Japanese mind. These affairs of the mind are subtly blended into the picture by contrasting the old and new through the medium of a Japanese who was forced into exile before the war and was unexpectedly able to return eventually to greatly changed national and personal circumstances.

The novel opens in Singapore during the Japanese occupation. Kyogo Moriya had expropriated some Navy funds for his Tokyo gambling forays and had fled the country some years beforehand. A sojourn in Europe intervened before he became resident in Malaya and involved with the Japanese occupation.

Moriya falls in love with a Japanese woman, Saeko Togano, who betrays him to the Secret Police when he learns of her smuggling activities. After the locale returns to Japan, we see the elements of modern Japan and the comment already referred to woven into a rather clever but often naive story of the forces intervening before Moriya and Saeko meet again for a not-to-be-disclosed *coup de grace*.

The novel is notable for its penetrating descriptions and its delicate handling of the Japanese mind. Better works in this class are available, but *Homecoming* could easily be recommended for an introduction to Japan's current literary trends. Not the least recommendation is that it is entertaining and contains the action elements of a good, exciting novel.

BILL HARTLEY.

## Old Books New Friends

**THE PASSAGE**, by Vance Palmer (Melbourne: Cheshires, 1957).

THE PASSAGE, by Vance Palmer, is a thought-provoking novel, as interesting today as it was 30 years ago to the judges who awarded it first prize in a *Bulletin* novel competition.

The Callaways were the pioneers of a small fishing village in North

Queensland. In Bob and Anna Callaway's time the struggling community worked together, and found most of its satisfaction in learning to know and love its natural environment. But with the first infiltration of tourists, and on the death of her husband, Anna becomes discontented with subsistence living and her slummocky neighbours. She goads the eldest boy Lew to provide for the education and self-advancement of the other children away from the environment of the Passage.

Her ambition did not bring contentment to the family. Resourceful obliging young Hughie pursues a remarkable business career to cynicism, bankruptcy and broken health. His sister Marnie marries into wealth and looks back with distaste on her humble origins. The youngest girl, following her mother rather than her own desires, is lonely and bored with her job in the city.

Most serious was the effect on Lew, who had something of his father's spirit. He was too absorbed in his natural surroundings to fret about himself: he enjoyed the fisherman's life of the Passage. Left undisturbed by his mother's ambitions, he would have found a way out of poverty not only for himself but for all the families round about without destroying the old sociable community life. Under his leadership, the less resourceful neighbours were not lazy, careless folk whom Anna despised, and they proved to be more loyal and honest than the snobs who befriended the Callaways on their social-climbing career.

The theme of the novel is that the competitive commercial spirit is destructive. As it is wasteful of natural resources — in Hugh's words, "everything is made to wear out as quickly as possible"—so also is it destructive of human resources. For the path Anna chose

led to the ruin of character and the breaking up of the family. And the Passage, which had all the promise of a flourishing port with increasing opportunities for its inhabitants, would have remained to her an idle slum—where even the fowls have a shabby, featherless look! But Anna's dreams of success were not fulfilled.

Without intruding ideas beyond the knowledge and experience of his characters, the author conveys to the reader these serious reflections on the nature of society. He tells the story simply, and because of his sympathy with the characters, through *their* thoughts, with the spontaneous imagery of people who live close to nature.

Memorable old Rahilly, "prowling about between the shed and the jetty in his bare feet and rusty maroon jersey, turning the sideways stare of a fowl on everything he saw"; and Uncle Tony on his death bed, meandering in his speech, going "round and round the subject like a sea bird with

its eye on a floating fish"; and the German storekeeper Kunkel, with his observations on "new countries" and working class leadership (which are so intriguing when the reader remembers that the book was written in the late twenties) are three of the numerous interesting people we meet in the book.

Although *The Passage* is a family story and covers several generations, it is not a dull chronological narrative, but so constructed as to emphasise the important aspects of personality and theme with an effect rather like that of the sea itself, in rhythmic alternation of calm and storm.

With the publishers one can agree that here is a book with a permanent and prominent place in Australian literature. This reprint will delight—and perhaps surprise—a new generation of readers. For it is indeed surprising how much worthwhile Australian writing remains to be resurrected from out-of-print editions.

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