

# westerly

Registered at the G.P.O., Perth, for transmission by post as a periodical.



A quarterly review price 60c



# westerly

a quarterly review

EDITORIAL  
BOARD

*M. N. Austin*  
*John Barnes*  
*Peter Cowan*  
*Henrietta Drake-Brockman*  
*Mary Durack*  
*A. Edwards*  
*Tom Gibbons*  
*S. A. Grave*  
*Patrick Hutchings*  
*Alec King*  
*Nigel Prescott*

MANAGEMENT  
COMMITTEE

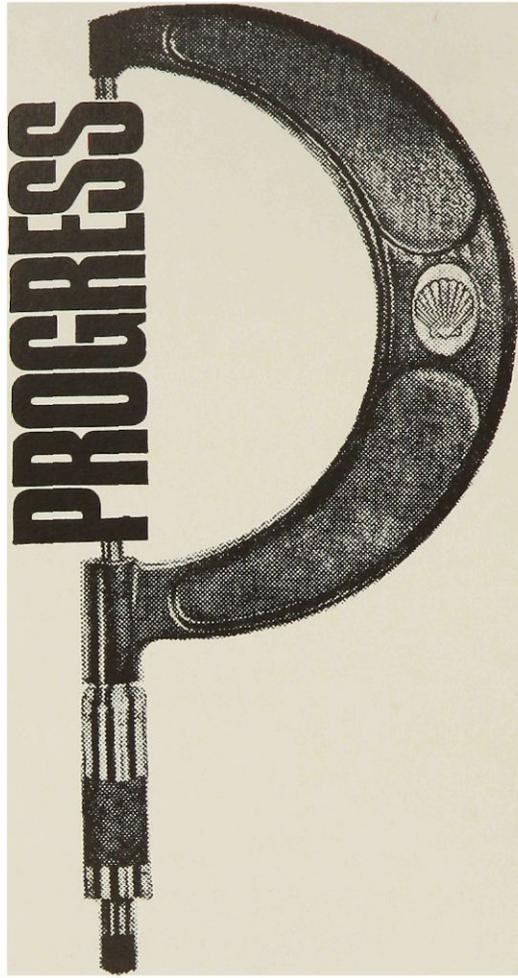
*Eric J. Edwards (Chairman)*  
*A. Edwards*  
*S. A. Grave*  
*Keith V. Benwell*

*Westerly*, is published by the University of Western Australia Press, with assistance from the Arts Union of the University of Western Australia and the Commonwealth Literary Fund.

Address all correspondence to the Editor, *Westerly*, University of W.A., Nedlands, W.A. Telephone: 86 2481 or 86 5531. Subscription \$2.40 per annum, plus postage (Australasia 20c, Overseas 60c per annum). Single copies posted 68c. Manuscripts must be accompanied by stamped self-addressed envelopes or there will be no guarantee of their return. All manuscripts must show the name and address of the sender and should be typed (double-spaced) on one side of the paper. Payment will be made upon acceptance of any contribution.



University of Western Australia Press



## HOW DO YOU MEASURE IT?

In 20th century Australia, oil is a good indicator of progress.

In 1901 when Shell opened its first small bulk installations at Gore Bay, New South Wales, Birkenhead, South Australia, and Williamstown, Victoria, there were barely 100 motor vehicles in Australia. Annual usage of petroleum products (mainly lighting kerosene) was a few thousand tons.

Today there are more than 3,500,000 motor vehicles in Australia and yearly fuel consumption has rocketed to 15,000,000 tons.

Shell now represents a £150,000,000 capital investment employing 6,000 people throughout Australia engaged in exploration, manufacturing, distribution and marketing and supplying the energy needs of transport, industry, aviation, agriculture.

**Shell in Australia —  
an organization on the move in a nation taking great strides towards a bigger, better destiny.**



SYNDICATE MEMBER

# westerly

*Editorial:* John Barnes, Peter Cowan, Tom Gibbons, Patrick Hutchings, John O'Brien.

AUGUST 1966 being 1/1966.

*Published Quarterly by the University of Western Australia Press.*

*Price 60 cents. Subscription \$2.40 per annum, \$4.20 for two years, plus postage (Australasia 20 cents, Overseas 60 cents per annum).*

## STORIES

FOR THE GOOD OF THE PEOPLE	5	<i>Judy Forsyth</i>
DRY SEASON	14	<i>Julie Lewis</i>
CALL ME BY MY PROPER NAME	21	<i>Griffith Watkins</i>
A GIRL DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE	30	<i>Shirley Thomas</i>
A QUIET EVENING AWAY FROM HOME	34	<i>Ron Smith</i>
ANOTHER WEEK	39	<i>Winston McNamara</i>

## POEMS

BIRDS INTO FLOWER	11	<i>Joan Mas</i>
FROM MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD	12	<i>Joan Mas</i>
I HAVE A LOVER	13	<i>Joan Mas</i>
THE MADMEN	19	<i>Nicholas Hasluck</i>
NOCTURNE	20	<i>Griffith Watkins</i>
GIRL NEXT DOOR	27	<i>Nicholas Hasluck</i>
AN OLD WOMAN FINDS A BOY'S CLASS PHOTOGRAPH, DATED 1910	28	<i>Elizabeth Kerr</i>
FOXING	32	<i>A. S. Hodge</i>
THE BARD'S LONGING FOR HIS COUNTRY	46	<i>Bryn Davies</i>

## REVIEW ARTICLES

THE FUTURE OF THE HUMANITIES	51	<i>H. W. Wardman</i>
CRISIS IN THE HUMANITIES	53	<i>Leonard Jolley</i>
WRITERS FOR A "NO" GENERATION	59	<i>Neil McPherson</i>



## FOR THE GOOD OF THE PEOPLE

‘**B**LESSED ART THOU, our Lord, King of the Universe, who has brought forth the fruit of the vine.’

Abie Katzen blessed the wine and the bread in a slurred sing-song and his wife and daughter sang out the customary ‘A-a-men’.

The table was laid as usual for Friday night’s dinner with a clean white cloth and two newly-lit candles in brass candlesticks. Set before Abie were a carafe of red wine and twin loaves of white bread, their plaited surface brittle and burnished with egg.

After the prayers Mrs. Katzen served traditional fare; tonight it was lokshen soup, chopped herring, veal and carrots with syrup, followed by rich, sticky sweetmeats.

She had been cooking all day, preparing the Sabbath meals. Tomorrow she would rest.

Abie had hurried home as usual after the twilight service, first tucking his tasselled prayer-shawl and black prayercap into their bag of velvet, embossed with a golden Star of David.

He brushed past the group of elderly men, standing, with ancient wisdom netted in their beards, near the altar, and emerged into the foyer of the synagogue. There young boys, dark-eyed colts, awkward in navy suits, larked it about, with prayer-caps set rakishly on their heads, their voices braying into manhood and echoing to the blue and white domed roof high above them.

In the tolerant dusk Abie walked quickly home; a small frail man, his step light to the seraphic descant of the choir boys still lilting in his mind.

As he passed through the front door of his house he touched the small oblong token nailed up high in the jamb, a miniature scroll containing portions from the Pentateuch. It was a defiant emblem of his race, a sign of his piety and a useful deterrent to those confident evangelists so rude with their Good News.

‘Blessed be the Sabbath,’ he intoned, as he closed the door behind him, and the old and the young woman within, always half-awaiting his footsteps at this hour, responded with the same.

Jaffa, his daughter, a thin girl with sharp features, glanced up at her father’s face as he came to the table. She had already declared her intention of

attending her weekly meeting tonight and hoped to read from his expression the temper of his resistance. Abie ignored her and turned to his wife Rochke, who smiled at him with her mild blue eyes, as she always had since their marriage, and served him, with honour, her delicious food.

Whilst they ate Abie discussed with her aspects of his business affairs. These consisted in some rather undefined transactions with the larger hotels for Matzos, the unleavened bread used during Passover, and in blessings and proper witness for two Kosher butchers. There were other, vaguer activities of varying profit, for necessity had become, for Abie, the stepmother of his halting ingenuity. Since his emigration from Poland fifteen years ago Abie had hung on the fringe of the new colonial economy like a tassel on a tablecloth.

After the meal Rochke superintended the dishwashing by their native servant and Jaffa went to her bedroom. Soon after, she came out, dressed in the uniform of The Zionist Socialist League of Youth of which she was an ardent member. She wore a light blue shirt and tie, a navy skirt, stout brogue shoes and short brown socks.

Her solid brown leather lumberjacket completed an ensemble suitable both to the climate of proletarian honesty and intellectual refinement.

In one hand she carried a scarf and in the other the 'Movement' flag, furled. She wore no make-up. They did not believe in it.

'I am going now, Papa,' she said shortly.

Abie answered her, 'Yes, you are going. Where are you going?'

'To our meeting.'

He let her stand waiting for his formal consent, then sighed at last with the resignation of continued defeat.

'Oh yes. You will not be home late tonight?'

'No later than usual.' She was tart. 'You know we always go to 'Barneys' afterwards.'

'I know. Can't you bring them home here?' he begged crossly. 'We have coffee too, and cakes.'

'It's not the same, Papa,' she repeated, while they sparred on the familiar routine.

'No, no. No, no. So you said. My house is not good enough for some of your friends.'

She covered her head with the white scarf and tied it under her chin.

'Well goodnight,' she announced with rough finality.

Then she added gently, as she bent forward and kissed him quickly on the side of his cheek, 'Don't wait up for me.'

Like many cherished youngest children she vacillated in a stacato rhythm between indignation and guilt.

The front door slammed behind her and the draught flickered the candles—their flames glowed like two amber beads in the long mirror on the wall behind them, and beyond, in the darkening room, reflected the image of Abie, sitting alone, with his hat on, head of his deserted table. He stared unseeing

at the slow-spreading blots of wine spilt on the white tablecloth before him, for his eyes were narrow gates to the ghetto within him.

The scarf around Jaffa's head had reminded him of the time when all three of his children were little, Chana, Riva and Jaffa, in Warsaw, playing in the snow with their small faces pink and pointed, framed in white fur-trimmed caps and their little bodies stocky in warm clothing, cuddly and charming. He remembered how, when they all returned from romping outdoors, he would rub their cold blue toes between his hands, teasing and tickling them, whilst the thin film of ice on their boots exploded into shallow craters and dribbled down into tiny pools of water on the floor and their socks lay faintly steaming beside them.

Chana and Riva—they had been gone now for five and three years. They had joined the "Movement" too as youngsters and had each, on turning twenty-one, emigrated to Israel to live and work there in a kibbutz. Chana was married now. She wrote seldom and Riva not much more often. There was no talk of sending him and Rochke the fare to go over there, even for a visit. Abie knew they were afraid to suggest it lest he should want to remain in Israel once he got there. In any event he would never ask them for the money—he was too proud to beg his rights.

If he went for a visit he would have to endure the misery of parting again, and as for going to live there he was shrewd enough to suspect that he himself did not want to be 'next year in Israel'. Yes, a man must have his ideals, but he does not necessarily want them realised. His little suburb of Johannesburg, Doornfontein, a shabby lower-middle-class area, populated mainly by Jews, was the nearest he would ever get to 'home' in his fundamentally stateless existence, suspended between a glorious historic past and a messianic future. If not for the loss of his daughter he could have been contented enough, at peace with his philosophy.

His fretted thoughts turned again to Jaffa. What would she be doing now at their meeting.

First they would all stand in a circle around the flag and sing their anthem, then maybe their leader would deliver a lecture on the history of Israel and later they would sing Hebrew songs and dance the 'hora' until they were limp and damp. Afterwards some would go on to the tearoom and others—others? Jaffa? It was whispered in the neighbourhood that couples had been found lying together on the ridge nearby and—oh God—did she? would she? In her maturity he thought her complexion as richly delicate and her skin as scented as an oleander flower. No—not she!

Yet what about those books she kept on her shelf—*Sex and the modern woman*? And where did those conversations lead, of which he would catch snatches, when, hotly debating the individual's need for privacy and self-expression, she and her friends took complete possession of his lounge?

If he went in they would stop arguing and sometimes, with a rueful smile and a twinkle in his eye, he would ask them,

'Carry on, please, carry on; what are you always talking about, explain it to me.'

'No Papa,' Jaffa would answer with ill-concealed scorn, impatient for him to be gone, 'you wouldn't be interested.'

And when he left again he would hear phrases of their arguments about Freud; their dogmatic assertions that no one has the right to make moral judgments, and the endless quarrels about something called "the Marxian dialectic".

He knew he was not an educated man, Abie, but he was not such a fool either. He had learnt a lot from his eldest daughters.

As he brooded the doorbell rang and Rochke hurried to change out of her slippers. She was expecting her sister Leah, with Max, her husband. Their daughter Sophie was newly engaged and she was also coming with her fiancé to receive the Katzens' congratulations. The fiancé was a handsome young doctor. They had met him a few times up at Max's comfortable home in Parktown.

Rochke opened the door to the quartet, which sang out its 'Good Sabbaths'. She embraced her sister, an older edition of herself, but smarter. Leah was compressed in black, resembling an overfull patent leather suitcase, its soft expensive surface unevenly bulging.

'Oi, Sophka, mine engela,' Rochke exulted over her niece, 'mazeltov, congratulations,' and taking the girl's face between both hands kissed her exuberantly.

Then she shook the fiancé shyly by the hand.

'Come inside, come inside,' she urged them all. 'Abie,' she called out, 'they have come. Max is here.'

Abie could put it off no longer and rose from the table as the visitors began to clutter the dining room.

'Good Shabbos,' Abie greeted his brother and sister-in-law, 'congratulations.'

'Good Shabbos Abie, thank you, thank you.'

Max took off his jacket and carefully dressed the back of an upright chair with it. Then he sat down on the sofa and pulling the chair close by, for his legs were stocky, put his feet up on the leather seat, careful that his green suede shoes did not touch the edges of his jacket. His corduroy sports shirt was rolled up at the elbows revealing thick black hairs which curled in impudent profusion up his forearms. They nestled also at his chest and pushed out over the open collar of his shirt.

Max waved a stubby hand at the fiancé.

'Make yourself at home, Cyril,' he said, Abie's your uncle now.'

When Max smiled he showed four gold-capped teeth; these constituted for Abie the ultimate affront.

'Certainly, certainly,' Abie assured Cyril shaking his hand, 'and congratulations to you.'

Then Abie embraced Sophie tenderly and for a moment tears filled his small eyes. What a lovely girl she was, dark-skinned and brown-eyed, with her heavy black hair hanging half-way down her back. She wore a soft blue nylon dress with a velvet sash and on her elegant feet were strapless high-heeled blue shoes. There was nothing of Max in her.

'Come and sit by me, my darling,' he petted her and drew her to an easy chair where she curled herself up, feline, along the arm of it, and put her hand around Abie's neck.

Her father always called Abie a pedlar but since a child she had found her uncle consistently gentle and even gallant in an old-fashioned way.

'Well, how's business, Max?' asked Abie, speaking in Yiddish.

'Fine, fine. Can't complain,' Max replied in English. 'You can't beat plastics in the shoe industry. It's a pity the Kaffers don't eat matzos, Abie old boy.'

Abie was silent a moment while he regarded his brother-in-law. Then he answered slowly.

'Just matzo-eaters we have plenty of amongst our own people. Since Joseph, good Jews you can't buy or sell.'

'Don't talk to me about good Jews,' Max snapped, 'I'm as good a Jew as you are, even though I don't go to "schul" every day. And a good South African too,' he added, meaningfully.

'Of course, of course,' agreed Abie.

There was a pause.

'How about a game of bridge, Abie?' Max suggested suddenly.

'Oi Vei, Maxie,' Leah reproved, 'not to quarrel so quick, specially tonight.'

Rochke judged this a good time to make tea and the women went into the kitchen together.

Abie ignored Max. He turned to Cyril.

'Well, how goes it at the medical school? I hear you are doing some research work up there. Cutting up cats these days, isn't it?'

He generously attempted humour to give the young man an advantage.

'But they're all Kosher, Abie, don't you know?' Max broke in.

'I should know, Max,' Abie retorted quickly with rare sarcasm, 'I do the blessings for them, don't I?'

Cyril guffawed suddenly. He warmed to Abie, this little wraith of a man, always so subdued up at Max's, and began to describe the project.

Max turned on the radio loudly and picked up the Yiddish newspaper, which he scanned at arm's length until the women brought in the tea.

It had all been settled in the kitchen that Rochke would make the wedding dress. Abie was to understand that she had offered. Abie looked at his wife with compassion. She had always been generous to her niece but he knew that she was doing for Sophie what her own daughters had denied her.

In the kibbutz rumour had it that the girls would doff their khaki jeans and borrow a navy skirt and a ring for the wedding ceremony, which was performed by an itinerant rabbi. True or not, in any case his girls had never written details when they got married, nor had they asked for clothes.

The visitors left soon after tea. On the way home in the car Max vowed that, but for Rochke's sake, Leah would never drag him down there again.

'Can't do a damn thing in that house on or after the Sabbath,' he declared. 'God wants us to be happy, doesn't he?' Max was emancipated.

'Why the man is so "holier than thou" he's a pain in the neck. Of course Jaffa wasn't there, Sophie. I told you she wouldn't be.'

'You should feel sorry for him, Maxie,' said Leah.

'And why should I feel sorry for Abie? He's asked for it for years. Ramming religion down his kids' throats since they were born. No wonder they want to run off anywhere—let alone Israel.'

Max drove contentedly home with his elbow out of the window and his family inside the car.

At the Katzens', Rochke went to bed and Abie sat down again at the table, thinking about Max. What had that oaf done to deserve such a daughter—such a son-in-law—such settled felicity? He visualised Jaffa in a blue nylon dress getting engaged to Cyril. No, instead she would be leaving soon, like Chana and Riva. A pogrom of anguish swept down upon him. Jaffa, his youngest, his angel, his pink and white furry-capped darling.

'Oh God, she is my last, you stayed the hand of Abraham upon Isaac, give me a sign to stay mine,' Abie prayed, looking intently at the candles on the table; their lambent flames were elongated and almost immobile.

Suddenly they flickered sharply, in response, Abie knew at once, to God's whispered command, and he rose to receive their kindling message of faith within his breast. Where she had strayed Jaffa would be waiting for him. He must go at once and bring her home.

Behind him the curtains at the window billowed softly in the passing breeze.

It was near to eleven and the streets were all but deserted. It was cat and dog time.

He almost ran along the pavement past the small houses of his neighbours until he reached the tram-lines and then turned left to the delicatessen where, behind the lighted windows, the counters were piled high with spicy goods. He did some business with them in Matzos and usually he calculated how many Egg-Matzos and how many Plain they might take this year.

But tonight he saw nothing of that. He was heading straight for 'Barneys'. She would be there, Jaffa; she was a good girl.

Outside the tearoom he paused a second and looked in at the windows. It was crowded inside with late-night customers from the cinema. The 'friends' from the Youth Group were there with Jaffa amongst them. They sat at four tables drawn up together and their loud laughter dominated the room as they seriously enjoyed themselves.

Abie walked quickly inside and approached his daughter. She was absorbed, chatting gaily with her friends and only saw him when he tapped her on the shoulder.

'Jaffa,' he entreated, speaking softly in Yiddish, 'come home.'

She looked up at him and at once blushed deeply. Then her face turned wicked with rage and her chair scraped a wound in the floor as she pushed it back suddenly and stood up.

She began to shout at him at the top of her voice.

'My God! This is the bitter end! Now you've taken to following me—how will I ever get away from you? You should know, you better than anyone, you religious fanatic, that I am not in this for myself. I am doing it, like my sisters, for the good of our people!'

She stalked out alone, while the blot of her fury spread in concentric circles of diminishing strength through the silent tearoom and slowly effaced Abie Katzen beneath them.

For what shall it avail Man to contend with a jealous God?

## BIRDS INTO FLOWER

O God,  
it took my breath.  
I saw five hundred birds as one,  
rise in the air and hang  
like a great flower of fire  
against the sun . . .  
then drift  
and break apart  
and fall to a red infinity of plain  
and desert sand,  
to settle there as single  
birds again.

JOAN MAS

## FROM MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD

Old-fashioned cabbage-roses, pink and  
warm as a woman's flesh; blue paling  
fences. Periwinkle and bird. Balsams.  
Everywhere, beetles like green beads; bees.  
Black and orange butterflies; clover; a  
patch of daisies like a child's pale face.  
Saturday morning. Suburbia. Someone's  
back-yard.

Suddenly, I am ten years old again, wading  
through seas of brown and yellow nasturtiums;  
watching sunlight, like water, moving  
among shivery grass. Climbing camphor-laurel  
trees, hands scratched and knees. Sometimes,  
falling out of branches. Somersaulting.  
Finding the earth, like a coin, gold  
and hard.

JOAN MAS

## I HAVE A LOVER

I have a lover,  
but would go now  
from the summer  
of his touch to the  
winter of other hands:  
feeling in friendship  
blue ice against my skin,  
after a yellow sun.

*JOAN MAS*

## DRY SEASON

THE BUT-BUT-BUT of the engine continued all night. More forceful than a two-stroke, it impinged on the threshold of consciousness to a maddening degree. Occasionally stronger concentration blotted it out. But not for long. Marg Patching threw back the damp sheet and lay for a moment, the heavy still air pressing on her like some physical thing, intolerably. Across the caravan the other bed was undisturbed, still empty. Marg Patching levered herself onto one elbow to peer at the distant glowing figures on the clock. Nearly three! And still not home. She tried to pin down what she felt. Not longing. Longing, like Bert, had long since ceased to be her bed-fellow. Nor disgust. She didn't care enough to feel disgust. Irritation perhaps. And certainly resentment.

She swung her feet to the floor, her nightgown clinging to her in moist, limp folds. God! it was hot! She flicked a switch and the rhythmic beat of the engine was thrown into a brief spasm before its throb resumed. The light, in sympathy, flickered and died once or twice before revealing in its yellow glare the glint of chrome and stainless. For a brief moment she was back in the city, in the safe suburban box that had been her home. She tried to recapture the night sounds of the city. The swift start and stop of the milkman's ute, the soft slap-slop of his footsteps, the crash of the milk crates, the clink of bottles. The throaty roar of the incoming jet, the meaningless yelp of a nearby dog, the steady whine of a car far away, but driven too fast.

With swift familiarity born of habit, Marg Patching lit the gas under the kettle, prepared pot and cup and sat to await the kettle's boiling. Nearly six months they'd been here. Six months and not even TV to pass the time. Her fingers left five little pits in the dust on the ledge. Red dust. Always red dust. The kettle boiled and she made her tea. Its steaming well known fragrance helped put things into a more acceptable perspective. She could even think about the other night without it hurting quite so much. There'd been a crowd of them and they'd all had a few beers. Bert's laugh was louder than most and his jokes were hovering on the blue side. The plump blonde girl, convulsed by giggles plonked down beside Marg.

'He's a bomb, that Bert, isn't he?' she managed between splutters.

'Depends how often you've heard it before.' Marg's voice was flat.

'Go on,' persisted blonde hair. 'Where's y' sense of humour?'

The girl's perfume, a modern version of the tawdry French imitation she'd worn as a girl, sickened her.

'I'm getting another beer,' she informed her persecutor.

'I bet a girl could have a bit of fun with him!' blonde bosom heaved, bottom wriggled.

'That's a point I'll take up with you,' said Marg.

The girl looked startled.

Marg pressed her advantage. She'd fix the little twit.

'I'm married to him,' she said.

But no. Blonde hair had the last word after all.

'Oh . . . I didn't . . . I mean . . . he looks so young!'

So it was on again. And here she was sweating out another night. But he'd be back. She ought to leave him. If she'd had the guts she would have done so long ago, but . . . it wasn't love that held her. Habit perhaps . . . or pride . . . or laziness.

She heard the car long before it swung off the main road to the track leading to the caravan park. The tea scalded her mouth as she hurried to finish it. By the time the car stopped with a scrunch of brakes beside the caravan, she was back in bed, tense.

His lumbering footsteps made the caravan lurch as he entered. He swayed slightly on the top step, yawned noisily and switched on the light. This time the engine rejected the load and came to a shuddering standstill.

'Bloody thing!' he muttered.

He stumbled along in the darkness and slumped on the bed. She could hear his heavy breathing as he bent and pulled off one shoe. It clattered to the floor. Then the other. She sensed his scrabbling for the shirt tail, heard it being pulled over his head. She caught a faint whiff of perfume, cloying as a soft gum jube, and almost overpowered by the strong male armpit smell. Her jaw tightened. She couldn't resist a jibe.

'So you have come home, then?'

He stepped out of his pants and flung them on the end of the bed.

'Can't a bloke ever get out without y' start t' nag?'

'You're always out,' plaintively, in spite of herself.

'I want t' live . . . not rot away!'

'You'll do worse than rot, the way you're going.'

'Aw go and get . . .' he stopped and gave a short laugh. 'Cawd, I'd take m' hat off to anyone that'd stir you up!'

She winced.

'You didn't think so once.'

'That was before y' froze up.'

'Can't you think of anything else? Ever?'

His bed creaked as he rolled over.

'Shut up will y'. I'm tired.'

She sought and rejected a dozen retorts, but the almost immediate rattling

snores told her she might as well give up. The unfairness of it all struck her like a blow and she turned her head into the pillow to bite it in her own frustration.

With the light, Marg accepted a return to dreary normality. The toneless kar-kar of the crows and the busy chatter of the cicadas were as familiar now as the flat brown land with its shimmering heat waves. She flopped on aged thongs to the shower block. The water was warm already and faintly brown. As it splashed over her dappled body she studied herself appraisingly. She wasn't bad really. Breasts full, still firm. Stomach flat. But who cared. You'd had it at forty.

Across the strip of powdery orange dust, Bert had his head thrust in the shed housing the engine.

'You've got a hope if you think you can fix it,' she called on her way back to the caravan.

'Yeah? Well you have a go then!'

They picked at each other as a child at a scab.

'For God's sake get one of the blokes from the depot t' come and have a look at it.'

He didn't answer, but was soon in for weetbix and tea and a piece of brittle toast. Then he was off, down to the depot and on to the job. The day was hers. She looked distastefully at the beds, the sink, the dust. So many things to do. So much time to do them in. She picked up an ancient magazine . . . *Confessions*. Some people lived! The bed was hot but as tempting to slip into as conversation with an old friend. She wallowed in a dream world of youth and love and excitement.

The sound of a car approaching fast recalled Marg to reality. What was he back for now? But the slam of the car door was unfamiliar. She frowned and peered through the window. A Zephyr. Nobody she knew. As she reached out for the magazine and prepared to lose herself again, from behind the car there came, casually, with torso bare, a young man. A stranger. Wearing brief tartan shorts. Self assured, swaggering almost as his feet sank into the powdery dust, little pools of it squelching up between his toes. He leaned in through the window of the car and brought out a packet of cigarettes and matches. With careful deliberation he lit a cigarette, glancing as he did at the caravan. Marg melted back. She slid off the bed and slipped her feet into the thongs, pushing back her hair in an automatic feminine fashion. From the window over the sink she could see him more clearly.

The perfection of his body made her gasp. She'd forgotten how slim a man's hips could be. The intricacy of his muscle structure fascinated her. She remembered studying a picture in one of those family medical books her mother had bought from a travelling salesman. It was a picture of a man, skinned, with every muscle fitting neat and smooth over and under the next like an elaborate piece of weaving.

She put the kettle on.

He was fossicking ineffectually in the engine shed as she left the caravan. He turned and grinned at her.

'Having a spot of trouble?' he said.

'Yes.' The turn of that calf muscle, the stretched tendon of the ankle . . . she couldn't raise her eyes.

'I told Bert I'd see what I could do.' He stared at her with a familiarity that vaguely disturbed her.

'So long as you can get it going by tonight,' she said. 'We've got gas for stove and frig.'

'Uh-uh,' he said, plunging into the gloom of the shed.

'What do you think's the trouble?' she asked, reluctant to lose communication.

He came out, wiping his hands on some old piece of rag.

'Your guess is as good as mine.'

His eyes, restless, flickered over her. There was a youthful masculine arrogance about him which unexpectedly excited her.

She swallowed.

'Can you fix it?'

'Dunno,' he said and gave a slow half smile. 'But I'd rather put in a day here than be down on the job.'

She felt a prickling in the base of her spine.

'Don't you have to get back?'

He drew the back of his hand across his nose.

'Who cares?'

She couldn't meet the challenge of his eyes, but studied instead her fingernails.

'Would you . . .' and hesitated '. . . like a cup of tea?'

He considered this for a moment. Then shrugged his acceptance.

'Sure,' he said. 'Whatever's going.'

She led the way into the caravan, very conscious of him close behind. She turned suddenly at the top of the steps so that he lurched into her.

'Watch it mate,' he said laughing.

'I'm sorry about the place,' she replied. 'It's very untidy.'

He raised both eyebrows slowly.

'Like I said. Who cares?'

The kettle was boiling. She rinsed the cups, and mixed some powdered milk. The spoon clattered against the side of the bowl. The tea was hot and sweet and strong. They drank in silence.

'Another?' she asked.

He shook his head, pushed his cup away. Took out his cigarettes from the pocket of his shorts.

'Have one?' Thrusting the packet towards her.

She took one and leaned forward for him to light it, guiding his hand with her own trembling one.

'You've got the shakes,' he said. 'Been on it, have you?'

She inhaled the smoke, not answering.

He studied her under lazy lids.

'Like it up here?'

'I hate it,' she said.

He blew a fine stream of smoke towards the ceiling, still watching her. She searched desperately for the right approach.

'It wouldn't be so bad if . . .' she looked up at him, '. . . if there was something to do.'

'Like what?' he asked.

'I'd have thought you knew all the answers.'

'Not all.' He paused. 'Most.'

'Well . . . ?'

Even the cicadas held their chatter.

He reached for his cigarettes. Suddenly brisk.

'I'd better get that engine fixed.'

'There's plenty of time.' Her hand groped towards his. 'Stay a while.'

His fingers crinkled as though they'd spent too long in hot water.

'You've got all day,' she whispered.

The insolent eyes stripped her from toe to head and back again.

'Turn it up, Ma.' There was a slow shrivelling inside her. 'What d' y' take me for?'

## THE MADMEN

We ran and we ran and we ran  
And lay puffing on the sand.

We held our toes and shouted.  
SHOUTED LOUD.  
And all the faces round,  
Turned round and looked on us  
With grave and silly stare.  
And looked on us  
And saw our shouts,  
Giggling in the air.

We laughed and we laughed,  
Until they laughed,  
And all the people on the beach  
Lay laughing in the sun.  
Hammered by glittering sunbeams,  
Eyes in a bubbling parade,  
We marched on the sea breeze lightly,  
Marched lightly,  
Till our morning was done.

*NICHOLAS HASLUCK*

## NOCTURNE

At night she changes into a sleek vixen  
and shines and is sly and manufactures  
clever kingdoms with the bright notes  
of her voice.

At night her teeth become sharp and  
gleam brighter than moonlight, and  
sometimes bite like the little foxes,  
which, saith the Good Book, eateth the  
tender shoots of the vines.

At night her carmine finger-nails  
dig her own vivarious history clear  
of all misinterpretation and point  
the way of others' ruin before marking  
me for life.

At night she walks differently than by  
day. At night she climbs soft drifts of  
adulation, her suave limbs confirming her  
predatory nature with sharp scythings.

At night her scent is morbidly exact.  
It pinches the muscles of the eye and  
throat, the muscles of the chest and thighs.  
It pitches angry blood into the hands and  
heart.

At night I become foxy too.  
I expand my audacities and measure her  
beauty with the growling of my lust.  
And forgetting the place, the predicament and time,  
I scheme her doom as she schemes mine.

*GRIFFITH WATKINS*

## CALL ME BY MY PROPER NAME

THE FOUR OF THEM, five if you counted the little boy, were at one end of table three. There was Mr. and Mrs. Tregonning who were enjoying the holiday Mr. Tregonning had put off from the year before because their youngest boy was finishing high school. Mr. Tregonning was a dentist. He had silver hair parted in the middle. He was fifty-one. Mrs. Tregonning was charming and dressed very nicely.

And there was Pam and David Beaumont. Mr. and Mrs. Tregonning were already calling them by their first names. David was twenty-nine and worked for the government. He was an analytical chemist. His wife had lovely bay coloured hair. She looked as if she had lost some weight about the face. There were pale freckles on her arms. She was having another baby.

And it was a shame about their little boy. He was obviously retarded. 'A moron,' Mr. Tregonning said to his wife in their cabin as he put on a tie for the midday meal. Mrs. Tregonning chided him.

'Don't say that, dear,' she told her husband. 'It doesn't sound nice.'

'No, I suppose it doesn't,' agreed Mr. Tregonning who was essentially a nice man, 'but you only have to take one look at the head on that kid and the mad way he stares at you and the way he's always whining and throwing himself into a frenzy to see there's something radically wrong with him.'

'There's marvellous things being done at those Slow Learner centres,' Mrs. Tregonning said, dabbing on a trace of perfume.

'I don't know,' Mr. Tregonning said half to himself as he looked out of their porthole at the graceful blue of the sea. 'I don't know if he really comes into the category of a moron. I think he's what they call an idiot.'

'He's a poor little dear,' Mrs. Tregonning said to defend him, 'and he's got the loveliest eyes.'

When Mr. and Mrs. Tregonning got down to the dining room they found Pam and David already there. Pam was cutting up some fish for the little boy and feeding it to him.

Mr. Tregonning stood behind Mrs. Tregonning's chair and pushed it in for her as she sat down. They all exchanged greetings.

'Did you have a nice sun-bake?' Mrs. Tregonning asked Pam.

'Yes I did, thanks,' Pam said. 'David took Garth for a walk and I dropped right off. Usually I find it very hard to sleep during the daytime.'

'It's the sea air,' said Mr. Tregonning enthusiastically and he reached for the menu.

'We visited the library,' Mrs. Tregonning told them as she took the opened menu from her husband, 'and I got out a book I've been meaning to read for I don't know how long.'

'What was that?' David asked her as he reached for the cold water.

'*The Forsythe Saga*,' said Mrs. Tregonning, 'by John Goldsworthy.' She began to read the menu carefully.

'I got a James Bond,' said Mr. Tregonning giving them a wink.

Just then the girl came through the door of the dining room. She walked with a good posture, her long, honey-coloured hair bucking gently about the shoulders of her mauve blouse.

David felt the hot prickle of recognition stiffen his arms. He stopped pouring the water and watched her walk to the far end of the dining room. Her name was Dixie Host. Seven years before he had almost become engaged to her elder sister.

He watched the girl seat herself, her very brown arms pulling the chair in under her. He watched the bulges ripple into her hair as she exchanged talk with her table companions. He thought of Morga Host and how badly it had all ended up.

'I think I'll start with some tomato juice,' Mrs. Tregonning announced, 'and then I'd like some flounder as an *entrée*.'

Pam said: 'Will you pour him a drink of water?' David took up a fresh glass. Some of the water dribbled onto the cloth.

'Mind,' Pam said. The little boy watched the water going into the glass with a lame kind of concentration. David passed the glass across. Pam held it up to the little boy's mouth. He gulped at it greedily. Mrs. Tregonning smiled and after making her order to the steward said: 'I see there's to be a Mad Hatter dance tonight. Are you two young people going?' Pam answered for both of them.

'I don't think so. We couldn't leave Garth on his own.'

'Bring him with you,' Mr. Tregonning suggested. 'He'll soon doze off. You can put him on one of the lounges.' Pam made a face.

'I don't think it would work out,' she said. So they didn't talk about it any more until Mr. Tregonning asked what they thought of the children's rumpus room.

'It's a beautiful room,' Pam said and the fine criss-cross of lines suddenly wormed themselves into place where her nose joined her forehead.

'Have you taken Garth there yet?' Mrs. Tregonning wanted to know.

'Oh yes,' David told her. 'I took him down there while Pam was resting up on the sun deck. We had a fine old time.'

'Why don't you leave him there after lunch,' Mrs. Tregonning suggested. 'The girl they have there is marvellous with kiddies.'

'We couldn't leave him,' Pam said.

'Why not?' Mr. Tregonning wanted to know, kindly.

'He breaks things,' Pam explained patiently. 'And whenever he gets near

other children he scratches them and pushes them over.' Mrs. Tregonning made a sympathetic face.

'It's a shame,' she said.

While Mr. and Mrs. Tregonning began their meal David looked across at Dixie Host who, with her back to him, was talking to a young man on her left. The young man's hair was quite thin on the top of his head. In profile, Dixie Host looked much older than twenty-three. It was her nose. It was a sharp nose and because of this and the helmet of hair about her face, her profile made him think of a Roman soldier. He watched her smile and start talking again. He could see her blink her left eye. He watched the way her lips made the neat, symmetrical motions—like her sister had done. Neat and precise.

Then Pam said: 'Could you take him for a while?'

He didn't say Yes or Certainly or Sure. He didn't say anything. He leant in Pam's direction and took hold of the boy under the armpits and brought him over the arm of the chair. As he did this the boy made a whimpering noise. Quite a few people looked in his direction. Some turned round in their chairs. In the second before Garth's body and head blocked off his view of the far table, David looked to see if Dixie Host was going to turn too. She kept talking to the balding young man beside her.

Afterwards, the five of them went up to the sun deck. The sea was very calm and the vaguest breeze dimpled its surface. Mrs. Tregonning and Pam settled themselves cautiously into their deck chairs. David and Mr. Tregonning joined them. The little boy had his harness and rein on and Pam sat him on the deck and gave him half an apple she had peeled before leaving the dining room.

'This sun is lovely,' Mrs. Tregonning said closing her eyes to the soothing wash of it which turned her dyed dark-brown hair to gleaming threads of metal.

'Do you know,' she said, as if to remind herself of something important, 'I'm thoroughly enjoying this trip.' Pam looked across at Mrs. Tregonning and smiled. The knuckles of Pam's right hand were sharply defined because of her holding onto the strap that ran to the little boy's harness.

'This is my first sea trip,' she said. 'Not counting ferry trips as sea trips of course.'

'There's nothing like a good sea trip,' said Mrs. Tregonning. 'Everyone is so gay and your worries can be forgotten for a while.' Pam nodded and closed her eyes too.

Mr. Tregonning sprawled in his deck chair. The lunch had made him lethargic and affable. He was saying to David:—

'Our eldest boy is at the university doing Dental Science. It's his last year.'

'He'll practise with you next year?' David suggested.

'No fear,' said Mr. Tregonning. 'I'm sending him to the U.K. to do post-graduate work!'

'And you have another boy?'

'That's right. Michael. He's a bit of a problem actually.'

'How's that?'

'He's got no ambition. At the moment he's working with a marine salvage firm. He's always been crazy about the water which of course worries his mother no end.'

'But he's happy with his job?'

'Yes,' said Mr. Tregonning, looking over to where the horizon showed piles of fluffy clouds. 'He likes his job and I suppose we should be thankful for that. We wanted him to sit for his Uni matriculation again but he wouldn't have it.' Mr. Tregonning gave a slightly subdued belch.

'Pardon me,' he said. 'They certainly have a good cuisine on this tub.'

When the little boy finished his apple and was becoming restless again, David told his wife that he would take him for a stroll.

The pair of them went down onto the promenade deck. At first his son seemed to want the walk but he soon became excited and tried to rush to the rail. When David restrained him with the harness the little boy stamped his feet and squealed with rage. David took a firm grip on the strap and made some soothing noises. Garth kept stamping his feet as if he was trying to put footprints onto the deck. He whined. People on the nearby chairs began to give them some attention.

When they reached the stern he found Dixie Host there. She was leaning on the railing watching the frothy turbulence out behind the liner. She didn't turn around until he was quite close. When she turned to look at him he felt the tension go into his neck again. And the warmth attached itself to his leg. He said her name:—

'Hullo Dixie.' And as she said his name he saw that she had the same squiggly acorn coloured eyes that her sister had. He saw that she was holding a piece of bread.

'I'm feeding the albatrosses,' she said shooting her eyes over the white delta the liner's screws had cut into the ocean surface. 'It's not against the rules is it?' He saw the birds sitting in the wake, both rocking and pecking.

'No. There's no rule about it,' he said, feeling himself grow clumsy with the old guilt. And added—'I saw your name on the passenger list at the Purser's Office. I thought for a while it might be Morga.'

'No,' Dixie Host said. 'It was me. M for Margaret.'

'Yes,' he said looking at her eyes again. 'I'd forgotten about that being your first name. I've always known you as Dixie.'

'That's right,' she said. 'I used to think that mum and dad were enjoying some kind of private joke giving me that nick-name.'

He was just about to ask her about her sister when she asked him a question.

'What's your little boy's name?' There was no pity in her voice. He wondered if she had noticed that he wasn't quite normal.

'Garth,' he said looking down at the boy who was now sitting on the deck scrabbling at his shoe laces.

She knew what to say.

'That's a nice name,' she said. He was looking at her sharp nose. It was much bigger than her sister's nose.

'How old is he?' she wanted to know.

'He's three and a half,' he told her, his mind remembering how Morag Host had cried when he had told her that he wouldn't be able to see her so often because his final examinations were getting close. And she, knowing that the examinations had nothing to do with it, but that he had fallen out of love with her.

And afterwards he heard that she had gone into hospital because of a growth on her leg and that they had amputated the left leg at the knee.

This had upset him a great deal and he had gone to see her at the hospital and later, when she went home, he used to call at least once a week. She was still in love with him and it was a cruel situation .

He escaped from it by getting a laboratory job in Adelaide. That was where he met Pam. She had been a school-teacher.

'How's Mog?' he suddenly asked Dixie Host, using her sister's nick-name which was the name he had used when he had been in love with her.

'She's very well,' the girl said, looking back at his son. And as he watched her he saw what he always saw whenever anyone began to realise that Garth was retarded. He saw the unmistakable softening of the muscles about the eyes and the mouth.

The girl looked up again.

'You knew Morga got married and went to Melbourne?'

'Yes,' he said.

'Yes,' said Dixie Host, almost enthusiastically. 'She married a nice Dutch chap. They've got three lovely little boys. The last lot were twins.'

He couldn't think of the right words to say. Dixie Host said: 'They have their own house now. Jan's doing very well. He's a chiropodist.'

David looked hard at her eyes. Suddenly he felt unbearably sad.

'And you're off to Melbourne on a holiday?' he said.

'I wish I was,' the girl said. 'I'm going to Melbourne to have my nose shortened.'

He looked at her nose.

'Does it worry you that much?' he asked her.

'It's worried me for years,' she told him. 'Mum and dad are financing me for the operation!'

'That's very good of them,' he said. 'How long will you be out of action?'

'About six weeks. That's for all the bruises to go and the scars to heal.'

He could see that she was enjoying talking about it because it brought it closer. She was anxious to get it over with.

'And you'll stay with Mog—Morga?'

'That's right.' The girl looked over the turbulence.

And at that moment the young man with the thinning hair came into view. He was perspiring.

'Oh there you are Margaret,' he said a little loudly. 'I've just teed up a game of deck tennis. Can you come now?'

'Yes,' the girl said. 'I'll come right away.'

'It was nice meeting you, David,' she said as she straightened herself up and stepped back from the railing. He mumbled something about it being good to see her too. He was thinking that perhaps he should ask her to give his regards to her sister. But then he thought that he would let it go.

'I'll see you later,' Morga Host's sister said as she began to walk away with the young man. He knew that they would both see that they avoided each other for the rest of the trip.

He said goodbye to her and watched her walk off down the deck, sunlight making her smooth and very brown calves glint as she swung the weight from each leg. The scissoring of her nice legs made him think of the way Morga used to walk.

Garth tugged on his rein. But he ignored him and turned and looked out at the frothing track lying out from the stern. He was thinking about Morga Host and her three strong sons.

## GIRL NEXT DOOR

An endless washing-up.  
Jumbled plates,  
The pulp of yesterday,  
Have aged your hands and crinkled joy—  
You rinse away  
The fragments of your love  
A crooning, summer night,  
Five years ago,  
Said nothing could destroy.

Was it for this you sang,  
Traced smiles in the air,  
Rock and rolled in stockinged feet  
Till dawn  
And in the rumped sand dunes  
Tasted salt,  
So sweetly tasting,  
In your lover's hair,  
Debbie?

This afternoon,  
When football claimed your Jack,  
You crossed my lawn—  
In desert boots and duffle coat—  
As though you had come back  
That teenage girl with trailing hair  
And radio I could not fix,  
Impatient  
With your latest boy.

But what am I to say,  
Debbie?  
Autumn leaves outside  
Scrape and trickle in the street.  
Perhaps,  
Transistors swing the shoulders of our joy.

*NICHOLAS HASLUCK*

AN OLD WOMAN FINDS A BOY'S  
CLASS PHOTOGRAPH, DATED 1910

“Jonathon Featherton,  
Martin Malone,  
Snowy O’Grady  
And Jeremy Stone;  
John with the surname  
I always forget,  
Frederick Milton,  
A bare sixteen yet . . .”

Jonathon Featherton,  
Eyes like a doe,  
Gentle and liquid  
Decades ago.  
Snowy O’Grady  
In sepia brown  
At the side of his friend  
Till the skies tumble down.

“John, whom I kissed  
At the End-of-Term ball  
When we hid by the privy  
Behind the huge hall  
To tease Jerry Stone  
Into kissing me too,  
. . . But the kiss was in vain:  
Jerry Stone never knew.”

The parties and dances,  
The fun and the games  
Fly like grim ghosts  
With the reading of names.

"Snowy and Jeremy,  
Always like brothers,  
Share a sea grave  
With eight or ten others.  
And Martin and Jonathon  
Under the ground.  
And Frederick Milton  
Shot down, never found."

. . . The old woman nods,  
And the old photo slips,  
And the slow smile of dreams  
Curves her moist pallid lips . . .  
The sepia corpses  
Will still breathe some breath  
Till at last the old woman  
Joins them in death.

*ELIZABETH KERR*

## A GIRL DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE

IT WAS ALWAYS the same when I heard the train coming: the overflow of excitement, the exquisite anticipation and the hope that this time I might get one. My brother had long given up this interest for more absorbing things but the usual bunch of kids was always there, their shrill cries of 'Pyper, pyper' penetrating beyond the snort and hiss of the engine through the windows to the passengers. The people always pushed down the windows and tossed out their newspapers which they'd bought to pass the time through a tedious journey that was now finishing.

Slipping out of the gate at first was in itself an art that had to be quickly accomplished before my mother caught me. But my long, thin legs carried me speedily across the road to stand beside the railway crossing ready for when the train came past. It slowed as it came through the crossing, within sight of the station some hundreds of yards ahead.

It was late afternoon when the train with the papers came. Eaglehawk had begun to die because the gold had been mined out before I was born and trains were an event in the day's quiet round.

The boys—there were no girls living anywhere near our place—were always home from school and well on the spot, waiting. As they were older by at least a year and more, I was not a match for them in the scramble but my five years' old mentality could not acknowledge this. They sometimes got several papers each but never gave me one. And I wouldn't really have wanted it. The thing was to get one for myself. To watch it sail through an open window or door of the train and to catch it over the scruffy heads and sure, clutching hands. To savour the joyous achievement of it. The only sign the boys gave that I was there was to push and jostle me out of the way when the papers flew. Not that they had their work cut out to do that. I could never get over a slight, scary feeling when the train reached the crossing and I hung back, which put me at some disadvantage from the start. As it drew closer and closer it became a black, heaving, spitting monster that towered up and threatened to pour sizzling steam over us, and in me even the desire for the papers was overlaid for the moment by fear.

Yet the yearning I felt to get just one of those papers was never stilled, although I could not have read a word of it, and I was there time after time on my futile quest, always disappointed yet just as stubbornly optimistic about trying next time.

It was not a disappointment like the despair I felt when the bully of the street broke my tricycle. The trike was getting old and a bit rickety but it was still rideable and it was mine, albeit it was secondhand, but I felt badly about its loss and its manner of being discarded without any possibility of repair.

It was not the sense of failure plus pain that I knew when I ran after my brother and his mate one day and they slammed the heavy, wooden gate on my hands because I was only a girl and they didn't want me with them, leaving the skin hanging, squashed and broken and grey on the sides of my fingers. They didn't do it on purpose; the closing of the gate was just intended as a means of slowing me down. This time I had come closer to catching up with them.

It was different, too, from the time when we all came home from an outing and the parrot was dead in his cage. Dead as a doornail, pronounced my brother, a phrase with unmistakable finality about it, definitely damning any hope of a possible revival of the bird which till then I secretly felt in some miraculous way may have happened.

Nor, for pleasurable excitement as in the expectation of competing for papers, was it like the thrill I experienced when I was peering through the pickets of the front gate one day. It was a hot, blue day and it seemed as though I was the only living thing in a silent world when it happened. Magically, a house was coming along the road. A whole house, slowly moving, its windows shining in the sun, taking up nearly the complete width of the road. That was something the boys couldn't take away from me; and, feeling that I would have had to face their scoffing derision if I had told them, I kept it to myself. It was a delicious knowledge.

But these things, bad and good, all had an ending. With the train there was always the tantalising thought of next time. That one evening I would beat a pair of patched pants and grubby pouncing hands. It didn't occur to me to think that they would have most likely snatched it from me anyway if I had attained the much desired prize.

I never ever did get one.

It took me a long time to learn and longer to accept that a girl didn't stand a chance in a boy's world, and that the things that seemed most worth doing were always the ones denied.

Travelling through South Australia not long ago I was surprised to hear a sharply reminiscent cry of 'Pyper, pyper' as the train went through a level crossing. Eagerly I scanned the small group of youngsters, absurdly interested. I didn't think kids did things like that any more. I looked again. There were no girls amongst them. I sat back, sobered. What had I, a woman now in a man's world, expected and how could I have forgotten? Over the years so many things change so much. Some things, never!

## FOXING

I dreamed  
and driving down a country road  
saw that it was  
the drowsy hour of afternoon  
when foxes lose ferocity,  
immobile wait defenceless  
for the hordes of sheep  
to turn and trample them.

I saw such fox poised  
helpless in the valley  
green and greyly  
sloping from the road  
hills dark in shadow  
sheep close-pressing  
And I plunged downhill  
and through the sheep  
but fox had gone  
and I knew he was watching  
somewhere.

As I turned  
he sprang for throat  
and scrabbling at those claws  
I found a knife in hand—  
a pocket knife  
once used in childhood—and  
conscious of the fox's  
glinting red-brown eyes  
I struck and stabbed and panted  
tearing ripping with that toy  
at furry throat I could not see  
until there was no struggle.

At that moment  
I knew I had killed  
had fought a fox and won—  
the blood proved that—  
and I was tired but exalted  
for I knew with slow surprise  
that I had never killed before  
except at long range once  
through telescopic sights  
and even that had turned my stomach.

Now I'd killed at quarters  
close as man and beast can meet  
I who fainted  
when he saw his own blood run  
had killed and knew  
that I could do again and gladly  
that destruction of a beast  
whose smell I'd loathed  
whose eyes I'd feared.

And now I even felt a small regret  
that in the throat I'd knifed him:  
wouldn't have been better  
for the pelt's sake.  
in the lean-stretched stomach?

A. S. HODGE

## A QUIET EVENING AWAY FROM HOME

TREVOR STOOD WAITING. The light on the corner said: DON'T WALK, in red letters. People scurried across the street, passing a car that stood across the yellow line, like the fast flowing currents of a stream around a boulder.

Opposite him shops were closing their doors and now people stood waiting for the red light to click back to green. Fifty feet down from the light others crossed with quick steps carrying brief cases, handbags or umbrellas, halting in the middle of the street to miss an oncoming car, then hurrying on to the footpath and on down steps to the trains or around the corner and down a block to where the buses stopped.

The girl walked up to Trevor, looking pretty in her green dress with dark black hair cut short in front but curled and full around the shoulders.

'Hello,' she said.

He nodded and smiled.

They moved on down the street, away from the corner. He wore a business suit, did not carry a briefcase, and the girl walked in high heels, matching his slow stride. The girl was tall and with the heels they were the same height. Walking to the left, they moved with a smaller current against the crowd which was pushing to get home.

'I'm glad you called,' the girl said. 'Where shall we eat?'

They crossed Bathurst Street, hurrying because the sign said: DON'T WALK, and Trevor answered, 'How about the Greek restaurant? We were there once before, remember?'

'Yes, all right,' she said. 'Am I glad *that* day's over.'

'Tomorrow's Friday,' he said. He took her arm as they turned in the doorway. He walked beside her up the stairs. 'After that, you can go to the beach and renew yourself.'

The restaurant was on the first floor and they took a table near a window which was closed and that you couldn't see out of. It was a small table with a white tablecloth. The waiter gave Trevor a menu. Trevor showed it to the girl.

'I recommend everything,' he said.

'Can we afford it?' They laughed and she tilted her head back slightly, which was part of her way of laughing. Trevor always noticed that this

made her neck seem very long, a gentle white curve, graceful like a swan's. Her lips were slightly coloured with a very pale red lipstick and her teeth were white and straight although he could see one small gold filling on the left incisor when he thought to look for it.

The waiter came and they ordered dinner. She had roast pork and he Vienna Schnitzel because it was what he had eaten the time before and he remembered it was good.

'It was a long time ago when we were here before,' he said.

'Yes. I don't see you very often, do I? There never seems to be enough time.'

'I know. How's the job?'

'All right, I suppose. The work's not hard. I have a lot of typing, but besides that there's just smiling and being polite to the customers. I thought I'd like being a receptionist, but I admit I'm bored. I'm saving my money though.'

'What are you going to buy?'

'I'm going to England next year.'

'Oh?' Trevor's eyes slid in the direction of the table behind her. A couple sat there, half way through their meal. The man held a piece of meatball speared on his fork and was talking to the woman. She smiled and drank from a glass. A bottle of sauternes stood on the table, and Trevor looked through the top half where the wine was gone. 'When did you decide this?' he asked.

'Months ago. But I wanted to be sure before I told anybody. I don't know how long I'll stay. Probably a year or two.'

The waiter brought them the meals, making a mistake with their orders. Trevor corrected him and he switched the plates. He had large grey hands with hair on the backs of his fingers and his shirt wasn't too clean. He grinned, said something unintelligible and went away.

'It'll do you good,' Trevor said. 'You should see some of the world before you get married.'

'I might bring a husband back with me. You can't tell.'

Trevor rested his fork on his plate and smiled. 'Make sure he has money.'

'You're just old and disillusioned,' she said. She ate slowly. Her fingers were thin and her nails manicured although not polished. 'I want a man with character, not money.'

'Men with character you can have. That's easy. But then *you* should have the money.'

She looked at him seriously, setting her fork down and holding her knife above her plate. 'Are you all right? Everything all right at home?'

'Yes,' he said. 'Everything's fine.'

'How is June? Still going to art class?'

'Yes. She's fine. No more than the usual complaints.'

'The kids?'

'Mark's got the measles and Betty has a bad cold. Richard hates his teacher.'

'Well, why not? With good reason, I'm sure.'

'Yes, but he'll settle down once he gets the routine. It's hardest the first year. I'm glad they don't all start at once.'

'Settle down when he gets forced into line, you mean.'

'That's right.'

'I promise I'll come out and see you soon. I keep promising that, but I will. Tell June.'

'She'd like to see you.'

'I know. I never seem to get out of the city.'

'We should have a party. Before you go anyway.'

She smiled, not wide enough for him to see the gold tooth, and raised her eyebrows. She always tried to raise one eyebrow but she couldn't do it. Her eyes were light green, although in the dim light they looked dark because the pupils were large. 'You mean I always found time to come to see you when you and June had parties and lived in Paddington?'

'No,' he said. 'It's just that I miss seeing you.'

'Well, you *had* to buy a house and live out there with the ordinary people.'

'I know. It's a long train ride. But you will come out?'

'I will. And I think a party is a good idea.'

'All right. We'll have one.'

'Although, I guess there are a lot of the people you don't see any more. I know I don't see anyone much. I think I've seen Bill and Dot twice since you moved.'

Trevor took a last bite and saw that she was only half finished. She never ate everything on her plate. It reminded Trevor of movies where people were always talking over expensive dinners and never eating them. He thought the same thing every time he had dinner with her in town and he always made a note of what she left. She didn't like potatoes and she usually left half her peas.

'We used to see a lot of each other,' he said.

'Well, it's not that I never see you.'

'No.'

'I'll write to you all about England.'

'Good. How's your roommate?'

'Joan has a boy friend at the moment. I don't see too much of her on the weekends.'

'How about you?'

'Boy friend? Hers has a creepy friend and they keep trying to get me to go out with them. But I'm not interested. I haven't heard from Ray.'

'He hasn't written?'

'No.'

Trevor looked at her eyes. She had short eyelashes and she used eye makeup very well. He knew the lashes were light but their dark shade looked natural. 'Shall we go?' he asked.

'Yes.'

'Are you sure you're finished?'

'Yes.'

Trevor went to the counter and paid a tall man with dark wavy hair who was not very cheerful. He put the change in his pocket and followed the girl down the stairs.

They walked two blocks to the bus stop and Trevor waited with her for the bus. There were other people waiting. Not many. Behind them people were in the park and sparrows hopped gaily on the grass. Trevor thought the birds looked happier than the people, who seemed quiet and subdued.

The girl reached in her handbag and took out a coin purse. She handed him some change.

'No, it's all right,' he said.

'Nonsense. Take it.'

'You can pay next time.'

'No,' she said. She took his hand and put the money in it. 'You can't afford to be taking working girls to dinner.'

'Maybe *you* should take *me* once in awhile.'

She smiled. Trevor couldn't think of anything to say. People were looking down the street at an approaching bus. Two young girls were sitting on the bench talking.

An old man got on the bus and it pulled away. The smell of the exhaust floated over them. Trevor watched the dark cloud roll over the cement wall and disappear in the park.

'I was thinking of seeing *Tom Jones* next week,' he said. 'Like to go?'

'I've seen it. Anyway, I've got a lot of letters to catch up on. I haven't written to my parents for a month. And Tuesday I wash my hair and Wednesday we're taking a girl from the office out for her birthday. Thursday I'll want to sleep and—you see, there's never enough time and it's not that I ever seem to get much done. But we can have dinner or coffee sometime.'

'Friday?'

'Yes, all right. I think that should be all right. I never know a week ahead. Give me a call?'

'I'll call you next week.'

Another bus was coming down the street.

'Give my love to June,' she said.

'Yes.'

Trevor watched her get on the bus. She was slim, with a narrow waist, and her hips were very round. She sat down by a window and smiled and waved at him.

He waved back and watched the bus move down the street. The exhaust coughed a few times, sending out gulps of black smoke.

Trevor walked towards the entrance to the station. He looked down the stairs as he walked past, thinking about the long ride home which he should be starting.

He walked down Elizabeth Street alongside the park, towards the Quay.

It was seven o'clock. It would be dark in half an hour and it would take him an hour to get home once he got the train. He passed St. James and crossed the street.

People were coming into town now dressed in evening clothes. All the workers had gone home, those that weren't on night shift, hidden away behind lighted windows. The theatres were opening and the restaurants and pubs were filling up. Even so, the streets seemed very quiet, as if the town went to bed early, around six o'clock, slept the night, and only dreamed about having a good time.

Trevor passed the St. James theatre and looked in at the people, participants in the dream, who were standing in the vestibule.

He walked to the end of Elizabeth Street and crossed over to the Quay. Passing through the bright terminal, he glanced at the ferries tied to the wharfs and heard the loud buzz of the turnstiles as people pushed through.

Leaving the terminal, he crossed a small area where cars were parked and walked along a stretch of lawn. He turned towards the harbour and leaned on an iron railing, gazing down at the water.

He could see the ferries from the side. One was coming in past the bridge and it was lit up with strings of lights that made it look like part of a ride in an amusement park, where all rides are painted yellow and red and have lights on them. The ferries looked like they were made to carry people off to parties or private adventures that promised only gaiety and laughter.

Trevor stood for a long time watching the water and the lights over on the north shore and listening to the trains rolling on the overhead tracks to his right and the swish of cars passing over the expressway that was a canopy for the railway line. Here life was pulsing in and out of the city, but within the city itself the pulse seemed to weaken.

It was dark. The kids were in bed. June was watching television. He had to get up early in the morning, the last day of the week.

He drew back from the railing, but held on with one hand. The water reflected the lights of the terminal as though the surface was covered with bright silver coins, but in the shadows of the wharfs the water was black and made slapping noises against the pilings.

'To hell with it,' he whispered, turned and walked towards the station. Above him a train pulled in, perhaps his train. He didn't hurry. He knew he couldn't catch it.

Trevor hesitated on the steps going up to the platform, listening to the train pulling out. There was nothing he could do about it. There was nothing he could do about anything.

## ANOTHER WEEK

**H**ALF A FATHOM beneath our keel and eighty horse-power through the stern-drive we went through the north passage out of Snag. Northwest towards Beagle; we had half an hour to where our pots were.

Rushing white water raced across a submerged reef on our right. Some silver gulls which had been following wheeled behind us and flew shorewards and then we were over eight fathoms with a sandy bottom.

Unequal swells of chopped water moved regularly shorewards, and at an angle we moved up, over, and down them. Then an instant of rest in the trough, then up again.

Max, his left hand on the top of the spray-shield and his right on the small wheel watched every surging swell, keeping "Marcia" always headed towards the grey smudge on the grey horizon that was Beagle.

'Hey, Bobby, start fixin' those fish heads,' he called back so I turned the bucket upside down and sat down on it, dragged the bag of stinking fish heads over, untwitched the wired mouth and started poking lengths of wire through the dead eyes, twitching the wire securely and tossing the head into a wire basket by the winch.

Some of the heads were putrid and part of the guts hung from them, slimy and wet as I poked the wires through. But they caught crays and every bag was worth four quid to me. But, jeez, you needed four quid to go out when the weather was this bad. Probably the only boat out today. Behind us there was no sign of either of the others coming out from Snag which was now merging greyly into the sand plain ridge that rose behind it.

They hadn't gone out yesterday either. They'd only gone out two days in the last week and even then they hadn't pulled all their pots.

'Sammy and Hoff haven't come out,' I said. 'Arr, they won't go out t'day,' Max yelled looking over his shoulder. 'They go up on the hill an' take a look at the water an' say, 'it'd be too sloppy out there t'day', an' go back to bed. They're frightened of gettin' their bloody clothes wet.'

'Yeah, but hardly anyone fishes through the winter anyway,' I said. 'Everyone else goes in May. Sammy and Hoff don't go because they don't have a house anywhere else.'

'Look, mate, they don't wanta get their clothes wet an' they don't wanta make money. I'll clear six thousand quid this year. Next year I'll get a'nother six an' then I'll have enough to get a farm an' I'll never put a foot

on a stinkin' crayboat's deck again. An' you'll be goin' t' Perth with a thousand nicka so you shouldn't gripe. Show me any other bloke of sixteen who's gettin' a thousand for eight months work?

I didn't answer; I already had a thousand in the bank.

'You're slappin' it in th' bank, aren't y'?'

'Yeah,' I said.

Spray showered over the shield and splattered on the back of my plastic jacket as "Marcia" thumped her nose into a swell. The sky was grey, the sea was so grey you couldn't tell sand bottom from rock bottom. It was all grey except our white hull and the white water breaking on reefs. I kept on wiring fish heads until the basket was full.

'Better fix some hocks, too,' he called.

I tied the bag of fish heads and opened one half full of bullocks' hocks and started wiring them.

'Hey, how much longer're we gonna fish?'

'Why?'

'Well, you said last week that we'd be finishing then or this week. We've caught over thirty thousand pounds and besides it gets too rough like today.'

He laughed.

'Arr, you'll be right, Bobby.'

He paused.

'We'll finish in a 'nother week. We ain't bin catchin' all that good lately an' we've lost some pots. We'll pull 'em out next week. Make this our last week. That suit y' mate? Then y' c'n roll y' swag an' be on y' way.'

'Yeah, but it'll take us two or three days to get all the pots in an' the weather might be too bad to get out for days; it's gettin' worse all the time.'

'Then we'll just wait till we can get out.'

In the sand plain ridge behind Snag I could see the notch on which we came in and went out getting more and more indistinct in the haze and distance.

Another week. Yeah, no more. Even if he gave me five quid a bag it wouldn't make any difference after next week. Four quid was all right and I'd reckoned it was okay to stay for four quid, but now it was too hard and every day the weather was getting worse and it was riskier. All the time when you were pulling you had to keep a lookout . . . just in case.

And Sammy and Hoff hardly went out at all now. We were all by ourselves these days. First good weather for a couple of days and they'd probably pull their pots out.

'Hey, what y' want a farm for?'

'Easier an' safer. Here I lose me pots an' boat in a blow, maybe, an' I got nothin' t' work with. Besides, Marcia likes farms y' know. Only went crayfishing in th' first place to get some dough together. Think I'll put it into a farm. Good life farm life y' know. But I dunno yet f'r sure what I'll do. Anyway, Marcia'll be happier when I get out of this. She gets sick of bein' on 'er own down there all th' time an' she can't stand it up here.'

Another crashing thump interrupted him and bounced my bucket seat off the decking. Spray scattered over me.

'When we were down las' month she was grizzlin' about it an' I said to 'er, "Look, I'm gonna clear six thou this season. I'll get another six next year, then I'll get out. Just one more season," I said "an' we'll be right".'

I sat there feeling the spray that scattered on my head and back and the occasional thump that lifted me off the bucket.

'Hey, look there, Bobby, albacore.'

I screwed around and saw the round, crescent-tailed albacore leaping clear of the grey water. The silver-grey shapes flicked out of the grey water and across the grey, choppy waves as the school played a hundred yards to the west of us.

I wired about three dozen hocks. We'd been fishing sixty pots till about three weeks ago but we'd lost ten in the last fortnight. We wouldn't need hocks in all of them so I tied the bag and stowed it away and went to stand up beside Max.

He looked at his black-faced watch and looked back to find the notch on the sand plain ridge and closed the throttle down.

'Mus' be aroun' here somewhere so keep y'r eyes open.'

We looked around, searching for the pitching red and white floats as we rose onto the crests of the swells.

'Maybe we're too far south, I'll go north a bit.'

We had the pots in two lines. This one had twenty-two in it. From it we went west to Banana reef where we had our other line and we had twenty-eight in that.

He opened the throttle and "Marcia" thumped northwards.

'There we are, Bobby, it's th' end one too. Lucky. Wait'll I see which way they're layin'.'

He looked at the tossing floats.

'Okay, you right? We'll pull from this end.'

'Yeah, I'm right.'

I picked up my apron, tied it on and pulled on the big red rubber gloves. I picked the killick off the side rail and stood ready to hook the floating rope.

'Okay, mate,' he yelled as he swung towards the floats, 'one here an' forty-nine t' come.'

I opened the flask and poured out half a cup. We'd finished the first line and I was wet and cold and so was Max. The wind was stronger from the nor'west and cooler.

'Whatsa matter, you cold or somethin',' Max laughed.

'Yeah, after pullin' all those and you sloppin' that water over me I'm bloody cold.'

I drank the half cup in a mouthful so I wouldn't lose any and had some more.

'Pour me one, mate.'

Bacon sandwiches and hot tea made at seven o'clock we had at eleven

o'clock as we jumped and lurched west towards Banana reef. I put the cups and flask back into our tucker tin.

We'd got three-quarters of a bag from our first line and we reckoned our second line would give us a bag. It took a long time to work pots when the water was this sloppy, always trying not to snap the ropes as the boat tipped and tossed.

'You comin' back with me next season, mate?'

'Dunno . . . might.'

'Yeah, y'oughta come back next season. Look, you'll make a'nother thou. You'll have two thou in y' kick by this time nex' year. Bloody lotta dough.'

'Yeah, but jeez, it's hard yakka y'know. All the time for eight or nine months. Every day.'

'G'on, whatsa matter with y'. Look, I bin catchin' crays fr six years. Took me a coupla years t' learn th' game an' get enough dough t' get a little sixteen footer. I worked that two years an' then I got this,' he rapped the spray-shield.

'An' all I need is one more season. An' I'll get fifteen hundred or so fr this when I sell it.'

'First season's always th' worst. My first year I worked a dago boat down at Jurien. Jeez, did I hafta work. Couldn't stand it at first. Every day by mid-day I felt sick in th' head. When we used t' get in I reckoned I couldn't go out again. But th' dough was too good t' pass up. But after that first year I ain't minded it.'

He looked at me.

'You'd be okay nex' year, mate. One season under y' belt an' you'd be right. Just a matter of gettin' toughened to it. You bin good this year, considerin' it's y' first year.'

The nor-wester blew stronger and the shield was all covered with spray and we looked over it. In front of us a grey blind came down as rain approached. But it wasn't much. Enough for the wind to make cold on my face. Beagle was much closer now, low and humped.

'These bloody swells're gettin' bigger, Max.'

'Nah.'

'They bloody well are. Look y'can see how they're comin' over Banana now.' I pointed as we tipped over the crest of a swell. A massive swell crumbled over Banana's south end.

'Looks bigger'n it really is, mate. I bin out here by meself when it's bin runnin' bigger'n that, an' pulled all me pots too.'

We were getting close to Banana. It was called this because two reefs, curved like bananas, lay north and south with their ends together and they formed a shape like a pointed oval. They were broken here and there along their length and you could get a boat through some of the breaks in calm weather. But when it was like this you could only go through the passages at the north and south ends which were about seventy yards wide.

'Don't be mad. We wouldn't be able to pull any pots if we did get through. Look at the water.'

Through the passage where the reefs swung away from one another the water was tossed into frothing peaks that combed and washed and rushed to crash onto the inner reef.

'Arr, I bin in there other times when it's bin like this. It's okay once y' get through th' passage.'

As he said this a swell, five feet higher than any of the others I had seen come over Banana, raced in towards the outer reef, breaking all the way along its curve as it swept towards the passage. Then it surged, held, and crashed onto, over the reef and filled the passage with a maelstrom of roaring, hissing foam.

'God, I'm not goin' through there,' I shouted. 'If we got through we'd never get out. I wouldn't go through that for fifty bags.'

'Cut it out. You'll always get a big 'un an' that was it. Now, you jus' sit tight an' when this goes, through we shoot.'

'I'm not goin' through there. Look at th' water.'

'Don't be bloody silly. I'm not passin' up thirty quid because you reckon th' water's a bit too rough. You're as bad as Sammy an' Hoff. There's a bag in those pots t'day an' we're goin' t' get it.'

I grabbed for my life-jacket and perked it on, laced it up.

'If you go in there I ain't pullin' no pots.'

He said nothing, just watched the water and the reefs.

'All right I'm snatchin' it right now, understand?' I yelled.

I had to make a grab for the hold-bar as he gunned the engine and "Marcia" jumped towards the swirling passage.

'Didn't you hear me?' I screamed, 'I said I've finished. I'm not pullin' no pots.'

'Yeah, I hear y', now shut up an' hang on. Hang on.'

She bumped, shuddered through the swirling foam, water rattling on the spray-shield and the bumping came right through the hold-bar to my hands and arms. The swell which had left this trail was rising onto the inner reef. Beyond the outer reef another was surging up.

'There's one coming, there's one coming,' I grabbed his arm.

'Quit shoutin', there ain't nothin' th' matter,' and he flung my hand off. I lurched against the side of the boat and my left hand slipped from the wet hold-bar and the side of the boat cracked into my back. My feet came off the decking and my head and shoulders went over the side.

His hands grabbed the front of my life-jacket and slung me inboard onto the deck at his feet beneath the shield. The chain drive to the rudder rattled past my ear as he whipped the boat out of the plunging arc it had made while he grabbed me. I rolled against his rubber-booted legs as the boat swung back. The transom sat deeper in the water as the engine roared with all its power. I saw the swell crash onto the outer reef and rush across it and into the passage behind us.

I pulled myself up. We were now between the two reefs and we had water crashing on either side of us. The banana-shaped reefs diverged further and

further as we went north till they were more than a mile apart half way along their curves.

His hair was saturated and his gingery stubbled face dripped drops from his square chin.

'There's th' first one comin' up now,' he yelled, pointing at two pitching, tumbling floats three hundred yards ahead.

'Now, th' sooner we get 'em pulled, th' sooner we get home, right?'

I didn't answer. My legs were weak and I still felt sick from almost going over. I just pulled on the gloves and picked up the killick.

The waves surged at us, lifted us and dropped us. It was so rough it took us two hours to pull the line, almost twice as long as when it was calm, and we lost three.

I let the tipper go and the last pot splashed into the water and the rope whizzed off the deck behind it. We were almost at the northpassage. He swung "Marcia" around and we headed the three miles to the south passage we'd come in by. On both sides and converging in front of us the grey seas crashed twenty feet down onto the two reefs.

I checked the box of crays for size.

'Full throttle all th' way in, mate.'

The transome settled deeper and the passage came closer. The waves were not crumbling across the outer reef now, but were breaking on it. Massive, grey. Rise, hold, crash, swirl.

Two hundred yards from the Banana's south passage he throttled back and circled the boat from it.

'Soon's there's a break, we go. So hang on because I won't be able t' haul y' in this time if y' go over,' he yelled.

I grabbed the hold-bar. The engine ran a little faster than an idle as we approached the passage again. We rocked up and down in the shocked water two hundred and fifty yards from the passage. Five waves crashed and swept across it.

'Now, hang on,' he shouted and "Marcia" flung forward. His hand jammed the throttle lever against its stop. My arms hurt at the wrench as the nose pitched into the air and spray swept over us. The bucket whisked down the deck and banged and clattered against the transom. I clung to the hold-bar.

Two hundred yards we had to race. Then we were fifty yards from the neck.

'Look out, there's one comin'. Turn round. Turn round.'

'I can't. Hang on.'

Through my legs and into my body and arms ran the hull's thumping. It seemed as though she must shake into pieces as we raced into the respite between the wave crashing on the inner reef and the one looming over the outer reef.

'You're too close this side. Get out. Get out.'

He was angling in as close as possible to the inner reef to escape the grey wall about to crash onto the outer reef. We were bashing through the boiling

water within ten yards of the inner reef and if we touched rock our bottom would be gone.

'You're too close,' I screamed. 'You'll have us on it. Get out from it, swing 'er out.'

The wave crashed onto the outer reef and swept across it into the passage. A van of feet-deep foam swarmed towards us before we were half-way through.

'Get out, you're too close this side,' I screamed, fear in all my body.

And then the wave was beneath us and was rising to break onto the inner reef. He spun the wheel frantically and our nose swung seawards on the face of the wave and we hung almost perpendicularly on it.

'It's got us,' I yelled and we were picked up on its face and turned and slewed by the great arch curving over us. Roaring, it curved more and in one motion crumbled and smashed down on us, bashing the transome onto the reef, the impact's force pelting me against the winch which still spun and burnt a scar across my arm. The white hill flipped Max over my head and the boat went over him. My face was dashed against the decking.

The white and grey sea swept me, cold. Hoff'll say we shouldna gone out . . . we shouldna gone . . . oh God.

# THE BARD'S LONGING FOR HIS COUNTRY

## Translator's Note

*Evan Evans was at Merton College, Oxford, and like many Welshmen at that time filled various curacies in England, while failing in his efforts to be presented to a proper living. However, he did a lot of work on old Welsh Mss. and corresponded with Thomas Gray, whom he supplied with the material for his translations from the old Welsh bards such as the Song of Urien. This original poem of his is typical of many which were exchanged between Welshmen who were employed in England at this time, and who were interested in reviving the traditional Welsh metres. I've translated it into a more or less 18th century idiom which is the sort of idiom Evans himself used in some translations he made into English heroic couplets. I've tried to suggest something of the Welsh assonance and consonance.*

BRYN DAVIES

## THE BARD'S LONGING FOR HIS COUNTRY

I was a bard, tall, dark and lean,  
Wayward and fickle, spluttering spleen;  
I left, regardless of the morrow,  
My birthplace to my bitter sorrow,  
Here to exist and pine among  
The lousy, lazy Saxon throng,  
With girls so sluttish and impure  
The prey of any drunken boor,  
Whose foul embraces could content  
None but these vicious sots of Kent.

Woe to the man of gentle mien  
Who does his heritage demean,  
And goes to waste his scanty store  
Of learning on a foreign shore.  
Better to live in poverty  
Under a kind, familiar sky,  
Than wander frustrate and in pain,  
Never one's homeland to regain.  
I left, a vagrant, wilful son  
My land of Ceredigion,  
Where in the love of kith and kind,  
In earthly bliss and peace of mind,  
I would have lived unvexed by doubt,  
Devoid of malice, and devout,  
And passing the long summer eves  
With a fair maid beneath the leaves.  
How different are the maidens there  
Who laugh and love without a care,  
From these grimalkins whose dark blood  
Runs rancid with the Saxon mud.  
Why did I ever leave my kind  
And venture here to eave the wind?  
Better forego all worldly good  
But keep my youthful eager mood,  
Than live among men rough and rude,  
Sullen without solicitude.

O Cambria of the foaming wave  
Where everything is bright and brave,  
Happy the man who blithely sees  
Thy healthy and high-lifting leas,  
Thy hedges and thy leafy dales,  
Thy banks and streams, thy flowering vales,  
Thy mountains where the great hawks fly  
The proud pretorians of the sky,  
The water on the ferny heath  
Springs like a sabre from the sheath,  
The streams in summer ripple by  
Pellucid in their purity,  
In flashing fords the valleys sleaving  
Like a sunbeam through a crystal weaving.

O Teifi, valley of my youth,  
Before I met with dole and ruth,  
Like Dafydd I would string my lyre  
And woo thy murmur with my fire,  
Would vaunt the vastness of thy tide  
Diminishing the ocean's pride,  
Thy brightness and the deepening sound  
Of the waters in thy bound;  
In song I would contend with thee  
To long outlast the raging sea  
And like the rising summer sun  
The brighter shine while time does run.

Alas for me, who can invoke  
The muse beneath the heavy yoke  
Of this ungracious English sky  
Which answers to no poet's cry?  
For who could sing these brutal churls  
And their dark, repulsive girls?  
No Welshman ever can conceive  
The dumb stagnation where I grieve,  
And true it is the healthy knows  
Nothing of the unhealthy's woes;  
So I, when young and unaware  
Left like a wastrel Wales so fair,  
Bitterly to regret the day  
I crossed the border here to stray.

Yet should I to the friendly strand  
Of Wales return from this foul land,  
I would find all the health and grace  
I lost when I came to this place;  
Days full of harping, full of song  
Buoyant among the happy throng,  
A maiden like a summer's day  
With whom the hours will slide away  
In dalliance pure among the dales,  
Delightful, of my lovely Wales.

And there amid the wine and mead  
Forget this misbegotten breed,  
Except derisively to vent  
A 'Huff' at the Saxon slaves of Kent.

Evan Evans (*Ieuan Brydydd Hir*)

**BRYN DAVIES**

# CRISIS IN THE HUMANITIES

*In the following articles, Dr. Harold Wardman, Senior Lecturer in French, University of Lancaster (formerly of the University of Western Australia), and Mr. Leonard Jolley, Librarian of the University of Western Australia, comment on some recent discussions of the Humanities in the Universities.*

## THE FUTURE OF THE HUMANITIES

THE TITLE, *The Future of the Humanities in the Australian Universities*, is somewhat misleading: one expects from it a discussion of principles. The two lectures concerned are about the organisation of research and degree structures. True, they are also about the quality of education and the production of original scholarship by "rare minds", so values are not excluded. But the questions raised by the two professors interest academics as a whole. Nevertheless, what they say is often worthy of being said and considered. Thus it is argued that "the root of the matter lies in teaching." On the other hand, it is regretted that Australia is more noted for its pupils than its scholars. The two contributors would therefore like to strike a balance between teaching and research. This is a praiseworthy aim but it is difficult to agree with J. H. McManners' suggestion that certain gifted teachers should be given a bonus for sticking to teaching. Supposing that they also felt like doing some research?

Two other criticisms can be made: there are certain unfortunate lapses into academic jargon, such as, "multiple chairs", "rotating Deans" and the inevitable "expertise". Further, and more important, while it is true that "It is not in our power to bring a whole society of age" it is possible to be too modest about one's efforts in that direction and to give the impression that scholars constitute a strictly mendicant and contemplative order.

*The Unity of the Humanities* contains the "contribution by the Faculty of Arts to the Golden Jubilee of the University of Western Australia". Flourishes are appropriate at jubilees and it is a pity that no natural scientist could be persuaded to take part in this one. Had that happened, the title of this book would have been

different. This would have pleased those who will tell you that these four lectures scarcely demonstrate the unity of the humanities, whatever is meant by the expression. We are all Alexandrians or teachers of subjects, each king in his own castle or "dogbox", as J. H. McManners prefers to say. For that reason we are like scientists and can communicate with them. For the same reason there are differences between the subjects making up the humanities. From this it might seem to follow that they have nothing in common but their differences. Naturally we resist this conclusion and rightly so, since where the imparting of a culture to the young is concerned specialisation has already gone to absurd lengths.

There is every reason therefore why as in this volume, scholars should at times address themselves to the general public. Even if the kind of public required does not exist, there is much to be said for trying to bring it into existence. There is, moreover, something to be learnt from all these lectures. After reading them one finds it all the more difficult to understand why the faculty which sponsored them seems so reluctant to exemplify the unity of the humanities in its degree structure.

In the works reviewed so far, the notions of "society" and "social responsibility" are not much in evidence, except in R. M. Berndt's lecture in *The Unity of the Humanities*. They are very prominent in *Crisis in the Humanities*. Some of the contributors to this book feel that they must move with the times, some that there is a right and wrong bandwagon and that they are on the wrong one.

Moses Finley thinks that Classics must not be afraid of "Classics in translation" and get rid of its obsession with Latin and Greek composition.

(See on this, for example, the first volume of the autobiography of Leonard Woolf who seems to have spent nearly all his time at St. Paul's translating into Latin and Greek. Admittedly, he turned out well in spite of it!) But we do need to be able to trust the translators into English and at the moment, where translation into French is concerned, it is not always possible.

According to Graham Hough, whose views on "stiffening" English one has met with before, English should never have become a subject. In any case, he doubts whether the claim of the humanities to "enhance the quality of the life we already have" is true. Nevertheless, he apparently does think it to be true because he wants to see "a considerable breakdown" between faculties and honours schools but also "some study of English" as part of everyone's higher education. Moreover, he thinks that literature can be of considerable help in forming right attitudes to life among the young. One would like to have heard more from him on this subject. But if literature is valuable in this way, why does it always have to be studied in relation to history? Is this true of symbolist poetry? Is it not "life-enhancing" in its own right? Finally, why is English so guilty? Why is it "disgustingly" called "English"?

J. H. Plumb shows a similar intolerance and moral fervour. In this dissatisfaction with historical specialisation he proposes to do no less than revive universal history in order to show how, for example, thanks to science, humanity has progressed. There is nothing against this, except that, unless the writer intends to become a mere zealot he will have to be as scholarly with his big themes as those he despises are with their little ones. (See the reply to this by David Thompson in a recent number of *Encounter*.) There is a messianism at work here which Donald MacRae criticises when, in his contribution to this book, he warns sociologists against the example of Comte.

As to Ernest Gellner, he may not be messianic but he is too angry and abusive to make himself clear. Again, by Donald MacRae's standards, as a sociologist he is deficient. He thinks too

much in terms of prestige. His main point seems to be that because everybody is now literate the prestige of the literary intellectual has declined. On the contrary, it might be argued, he is more necessary than ever as a guide to taste and as a custodian of past culture, because most people are literate only in the minimal sense of being able to read. This doesn't give literary intellectuals prestige; it gives them a function and a socially useful one. Who wants prestige anyway? Do scientists? Gellner writes also of the "towering cognitive superiority" of science as compared with, for example, the achievements of the "new critics". No one in their senses doubts the importance of science but can such achievements be compared? But what he seems not to realise is that as soon as we start talking about values we move away from science into some other territory—not necessarily sociology.

The best contributions in this book come from those least infected by its catchpenny title—Alec Vidler on divinity, Quentin Bell on "The Fine Arts", Donald MacRae on sociology and J. R. Sargent on economics.

Most of the reforming zeal in this field comes from the side of the humanities. C. P. Snow, however, was as much concerned to get scientists to read literature as he was to impress on literary intellectuals the importance of science. Schools and some universities are trying to bring this about. They will not produce Leonardos but the effort is worth making, providing that it is remembered that it is more difficult to move from literature to science than in the reverse direction. This is not intended as a reflection on either literature or science but as a statement of fact.

The public discussion of the whole question needs an occasional contribution by a scientist. In so far as science can be "explained to the layman" the philosophy of science deserves to become much more important than it seems to be. If it does become more important it is reasonable to expect that the standard of debate will rise to the level to which it was formerly raised by such thinkers as Macmurray, Ritchie, Collingwood, Dingle and Polanyi.

## CRISIS IN THE HUMANITIES

**C***risis in the Humanities* is a disappointing book, the publishers of which cannot be acquitted from a charge of bookmaking. Of the 170 pages, over two thirds are unconnected with the title. The essays on sociology and economics are by far the best in the book, but they are not related to the main topic, if there is a main topic. Both are imbued with a spirit of supreme self-confidence; sociology has become a major element in our culture; economics will be led on to greatness. Both are claimed to be sciences in as much as they are based either on a specialised use of language, or on mathematics. It is true that Mr. Sargent ingeniously relates his essay to the title of the collection, by insisting that the gap between the economists and the layman, can be narrowed only if mathematics is restored to the humanities. If we are to use humanities as another term for a general education, then there should have been essays on physics and chemistry. Dr. Vidler's essay deals with the possibility of introducing theology into general education and is more concerned with the mechanism than with the educational significance of such a study. The most remarkable example of departing on a tangent is Quentin Bell on the fine arts. This has almost nothing to say on its alleged subject, but is concerned with the Diploma in Art and Design and the place of art history in such a diploma. It is very largely administrative, and in any case is relevant to a discussion of technical education and not of general education. We are left then with four essays which might be expected to interest the reader who purchased this book from the publisher's list. "Crisis in the Classics" by M. E. Finley, "The Historian's Dilemma" by J. H. Plumb, "Crisis in the Humanities and the Mainstream of Philosophy" by Ernest Gellner and "Crisis in Literary Educa-

tion" by Graham Hough. Not a very great deal for one's 5/6d., particularly when the reader realises half way through Mr. Hough's essay, that he has read it all before in the *Listener* at a proportionately much smaller cost. The selection of authors cannot be considered representative—in particular Mr. Ernest Gellner would not be considered by most philosophers as to be in the mainstream of philosophy—and it would be better to have enlarged the book with different approaches, rather than padding it out with irrelevances.

To those of us who were brought up on Victorian children's fiction, or even on the works of Miss Ivy Compton-Burnett, the word "crisis" will always suggest to us that dramatic moment when the body has set before it the alternatives of life and death and makes its irrevocable choice. Penicillin has changed all that, we are told, and it may well be that in the curious post-mortem existence which western civilization has enjoyed since 1914 any concept of crisis is outdated. In that case, why not just drop the word instead of debasing it, to mean almost nothing. A more satisfactory title for this work would have been "Doubts and Difficulties in the Teaching of the Humanities". The difficulties are not the same in all subjects. Students of Latin and Greek have certainly declined proportionately and perhaps absolutely. Students of English and history have increased enormously and continue, every year, to increase. Modern foreign languages apparently do not come within the scope of the Humanities as far as the editor of this book is concerned, nor does music. Judged by external prosperity the humanities are flourishing as never before. According to reports in *The Times Educational Supplement*, the arts faculties of British universities are crowded out, whilst there is plenty of room for the scientists. Prestige also

falls to the arts student. An English Registrar probably earned the prize for the silliest remark of the year, when he announced to the Press "A human being does not want to become an engineer". The only shadow in this material prosperity is the announcement by the same journal that it is students from working class homes who are flooding the Arts Faculties. Their cannier colleagues from the middle classes still go where the money is. At the beginning of this century, modern history and literature were only just beginning to be taught in even the newer universities. Today their position in the academic establishment is not questioned.

It is true, of course, that material prosperity can conceal inner uncertainty or even despair. Such a condition for a teacher of the humanities, would not be rare. In most universities, until quite recently, the study of English was only made respectable by having added to it a completely meaningless burden of memorising grammatical forms of languages which not only had, in some cases, left inadequate traces behind them, but in others had never, in any real sense, existed. Anyone who has any doubts about the depth of intellectual and moral poverty to which a teacher of English, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, could descend, should read Philip Hobsbaum's article on Professor Moore Smith, in the December 1964 issue of *Universities Quarterly*. The really annoying thing about this publication is not so much the catch-penny title, but the smart manner in which the writers suggest that they have stumbled on a theme, hitherto hidden from the wise. It would be possible, without any great effort, to compile a bibliography of several hundred articles all dealing with the questions: What are the humanities? Why do we teach them? And are we teaching them successfully? The first international conference of University Professors of English, held at Oxford in 1950, was impelled to discuss what is the study of literature for? In 1962 a very useful little book appeared in celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the University of Wisconsin. This volume, called *The Humanities; an appraisal*, begins with a disclaimer—"Within the last three or four years, a number of symposia of the humanities have been held in this Country, and others are being projected. Books and many papers on the subject are continually being published." The editor therefore feels it obligatory on him to explain why yet another such a volume should

appear. In actual fact, the American volume, which admits that it is only one of many, is infinitely superior to this British production. The Penguin publication has all the marks of the high class British Sunday papers in which some of the contributors originally appeared. It shares all the intellectual dishonesty and moral degradation of the *Sunday Times* and the *Observer* in which idea-dropping is part of the social round, but any serious interest in a subject is definitely out. Opinions may differ about Mr. Cleanth Brooks as a critic, but no one could read his contribution to the American symposium "The critic and his text; A clarification and a defence" without at least being given every opportunity to understand what the close reading of a poem means. The reader of the English book has been given no more than a phrase with which to conceal his ignorance.

This is not to say that the book is completely without interest. Dr. Finley can always write smoothly, Dr. Plumb has spread himself with elegance on a great variety of subjects in the past, and will no doubt continue to do so in the future. Mr. Gellner is still a very bright young man. Their essays are scattered with comments which are intelligent and well expressed and occasionally display a new insight. It would be idle, however, to pretend that their collective effort either establishes a specific "crisis" in the humanities, or prescribes a resolution of this crisis. Sometimes their conclusions seem both wide of the point and unsupported by their argument. One could agree with Dr. Plumb, that history, if it is to be treated seriously, needs to be regarded as possessing some kind of significance. This is a very different matter from making the idea of historical progress the core of our historical philosophy. Mr. Hough provides some very interesting and penetrating comments on the weaknesses of the present teaching of English in the universities without really putting forward any satisfactory alternative. It is difficult to see that the broader and more general course, at which he hints and which he has described in more detail in his *Listener* article, would not be open to many of the objections he himself raises against the present method, and to some even weightier ones as well. When he brushes aside the solution of making a course in English literature thorough and exacting and reserving it for those who really want it, he is, by implication, stating that the real crisis is not in the humanities at all, but in university educa-

tion. If all university courses were made thorough and exacting and reserved for those who really wanted to study them, and were prepared to make sacrifices to study them, the problems of the universities, at least as far as they related to expansion and pressure of numbers, would disappear over night.

It is easier to tackle the incidental than the central problems of the teaching of the humanities. Much of what is wrong at the present time is derived from the unfortunate influence of the high prestige of the sciences. Because scientists choose to devote much of their time to research and are partly, at least, measured by the quantity of their publications, the university teacher in the humanities has been under pressure to adopt the same criteria of success in his work, without anyone really reflecting at much length on what research in the humanities means. The result has been an enormous and self-destructive outpouring of books and articles. In December, 1964 the annual convocation of the Modern Languages Association of America was held in New York. Over 10,000 language and literature people—an army, as somebody pointed out, rather larger than that which marched with Xenophon to the sea—assembled in the hope of acquiring material for a few more papers. Their president, Professor Morris Bishop, did his best to discourage them. Mr. Bishop expressed his desire to see a limitation upon the output of academic writing that now threatens to smother everyone in a smog of words. He anticipated a revolt on the part of overburdened libraries, administrations and scholars, and proposed that just as American farmers were paid for not growing corn or not keeping hogs, so scholars should be rewarded for not publishing. He proposed that the time had now come when three quarters or more manuscripts submitted for publication should be ploughed under.

The difficulty is that the humanists, in following the scientists, are already out of date. The Washington Conference on Scientific Information applauded a suggestion that "perhaps a contribution of this conference, would be to declare a moratorium on publication of inconclusive summaries of incompetent opinion, based on inadequate samples." A distinguished scientist has spoken of the danger of science crumbling under its information crisis, and Mr. Lewis Mumford has expressed the hope that humanity will not be buried beneath a mass of waste paper. Someone has calculated that the average number of

readers of a scientific paper is nought. It is hard to believe that the average number of readers of many literary studies is as high as that. If a man had nothing to do but read everything that was published on Henry James or even on Jonathan Swift, he would be hard pressed to keep up with the output and have little leisure to glance again at the works of these authors. How is the good to be filtered from the unnecessary? Because, despite all the outpouring of nonsense and all the vain repetition, scholarship and criticism do progress. The man who is discussing *Gulliver's Travels* with a class in 1965 and who has read some of the modern contributions to the criticism of this work, will discuss it much more satisfactorily than he would have done in 1935.

One of the *difficulties* of literary scholarship is that nonsense is much more easily recognised as nonsense than it is in the sciences, or even in the social sciences where there is always the suspicion that some point must lie behind all those mathematical symbols or professional terminology. Unfortunately the actual volume of nonsense is also almost certainly higher. And the tendency to follow sheep-like fashions of expressions and thought is even more pronounced. Anyone who questions this statement should read at least the first half of Dr. R. M. Frye on *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine*. It was after studying this work into the small hours of the morning that the writer of this review remains uncertain whether the identification of Falstaff as a type of Christ and the interpretation of the twopenny worth of bread to all that multitude of sack as a reference to the communion in both kinds, is his own contribution to the subject or whether he has been forestalled by some distinguished scholar. Equally valuable as a source of light entertainment is the distinguished American Professor whose work is reviewed in a recent number of *The Times Literary Supplement* and who has discovered that Sir Laurence Olivier, Coleridge, Bradley and all the others missed the point about Hamlet. For the first time, in this work by Professor Braddy "Shakespeare's Danish Prince is seen in his true light as a crafty schemer—the traditional Scandinavian trickster." The problem of nonsense received a fair amount of attention two years ago when the *Times Literary Supplement* of Friday 28th June, 1963, devoted its middle page to a review of Robert H. Walker; *The Poet and the Gilded Age*—387pp. University of Pennsylvania Press;

London, Oxford University Press, £3. This work, as will be seen, is issued under the auspices of two highly esteemed learned Presses, and would therefore have been purchased by all those university libraries which have moved into the modern age by selecting publications not by the author but by the publisher—at present these include all but one of Australian universities. Dr. Walker selected as his subject social themes in last quarter of 19th century America—a quantitative study—and he set out to read everything which was published in his period and to evaluate the authors as “extremely subtle, social critics.” This is, of course, a good old tradition well established. Learned Professor Havens, author of *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry*, claimed to have read everything that was written between the publication of *Paradise Lost* and some date towards the end of the 18th century. Dr. Walker set himself an even larger and even less attractive task, and certainly deserves a decoration for valour, if not an academic degree. *The Literary Supplement* reviewer comments “Dr. Walker is but one example (admittedly a pretty extreme case) of what happens to humane scholarship when its practitioners feel under an obligation to prove that their labours are scientific, their results measurable, their findings unique (in Dr. Walker’s case, correct) and therefore valuable (in Dr. Walker’s case, false). Perhaps this book will arouse some of the guilty heads of Departments of Literature to the dreadful state into which, forever complaining about their teaching load, they have allowed their obedient graduate students to collapse.” The publication of this review unleashed a whole mass of discussion. One writer pointed out that all the numerous authorities who preached sermons around Dr. Walker’s book, had, like the present reviewer, never read it. This, however, is an excusable condition in any reviewer. Dr. Leavis was not slow in joining the fray and, as could be expected, turning it into an interecine Cambridge wrangle. But Dr. Leavis, who thinks that the study of English is conducted exclusively at Cambridge, was at least right in pointing out that those who first began the teaching of English in British universities never supposed that research in relation to an English school could be anything analogous in status and essential importance to what it was in relation to the scientific departments. Dr. I. A. Richards, with a rather more balanced approach, welcomed the

discussion as helpful, if it led more people to ask more pointedly what studies in the humanities were for, and remarked wistfully, that there were times when those who opposed the English Tripos seemed to have been right, though for the wrong reasons.

An excessive readiness to publish is only one harm caused to humane studies by the influence of the sciences. The other is the desire to appear scientific and professional. Historians are always insisting on their professional status. They have been unable to produce any distinguishing marks of entrance to the profession, so we may be excused for thinking that a professional historian is distinguished from an amateur historian in the same way as a lawn tennis player. The other trend is the increasing use of specialised language, and here the historians are left standing by the literary critics. There are works of literary criticism which have been welcomed by other critics as adding new terms to the vocabulary of criticism. One difficulty of reading such works is that they remain unintelligible without the help of the dictionary, and no dictionary is available to help, since, for the most part, these critics make up their terms as they go along. This is not always the case. Professor Northrop Frye provides in one of his books a glossary of forty-one neologisms. It may be, as one critic commented, that it proved impossible for Professor Frye to attain adequate precision through the accepted if arduous method of gradually modifying existing meanings, or it may be that he thought it beneath his professional status even to attempt this. Other critics are even less responsible in the creation of terminology, but why worry. As a reviewer of Mr. Angus Fletcher’s *Allegory: the theory of a symbolic mode* pointed out: “To translate a point into hip vocabulary—“epistemology” “paradigm” and the like—is not necessarily to sharpen it . . . It may indeed have the opposite effect . . . Objections of this order however are in a way irrelevant. How can they matter if the only aim is to produce ideas, to contribute to the knowledge industry.” It is a feeling of inadequacy and impotence which produces all these aberrations. The task of the teacher of literature is a very simple one and an unbelievably difficult one. It is to help the student to respond to great works of literature. To carry out this task adequately and consistently demands intellectual, emotional, and moral resources which are well beyond the capacity of all but a very few of us.

To succeed sometimes and to be honest in our failures is a hard enough task. It is not made easier by irrelevant demands for publication. A man should publish only because he has no alternative and many a great scholar and teacher will shrink from the dangers of being forced to make utterance when he has really nothing to say, which will not be distorted or even destroyed by the artificiality of publication.

Another source of weakness is the extension of literary studies to include contemporary authors. Although such an extension provides a welcome change from the days when professors of English—along with bishops and prime ministers proclaimed detective stories their favourite form of reading, it carries many difficulties with it. In dealing with an earlier author the teacher of literature can at least fall back on the honest and necessary task of removing the obstacles to understanding which ignorance often puts between the modern reader and the older work. When he turns to critical judgments, there is an established tradition to be interpreted and if necessary modified. The attempt to deal in the lecture room with contemporary material has resulted far too often in a jumping of intellectual bandwagons and a riding to death of current catchphrases. Only a computer could do justice to the patterns of use and disuse of currently acceptable words and phrases in the journals of the past twenty years. It may be possible to hazard the guess that the fashion really started when Mr. Eliot became academically respectable. The obvious truth that a man is unlikely to be a successful teacher of literature unless he is passionately interested in contemporary literature does not mean that he should also teach contemporary literature.

But publication, research, pseudo-scientific terminology are all peripheral to the argument. They are not central to the doubts and difficulties which beset a teacher of the humanities. As Mr. Gellner said, the average scientist has apparently a great advantage over the average student of the arts. A mediocre mathematician, engineer, zoologist, etc., possesses some specific skills as a result of his training. Even an indifferent doctor is possibly, on the whole, better than no doctor at all. The claims of the arts are high, very high indeed, and it may be possible to justify these claims. But if they are justified, what does this do to the position of the ordinary average student of the humanities?

Many modern critics have represented criti-

cism as a form of moral exploration leading to a more satisfactory approach to the essential human decisions. The older claim for human studies was simply that they made men better or wiser. Professor A. E. Housman ridiculed this claim. Certainly it is no necessary indication of superior wisdom to devote one's life to the textual amendment of minor authors. No one would argue that the members of the faculty of arts in any university are necessarily better or wiser than the members of other faculties, but is this what the old claim implied? The average student of the humanities is unlikely to be particularly wise and he may not be particularly likely to be a very good critic. It may still be possible for him to have gained something from and have contributed something to a tradition which is of the greatest importance, and this tradition is as Wordsworth puts it that the understanding of poetry as with other arts is not a casually acquired social accomplishment, "but something that can be gained only by prolonged thought and unremitting devotion." Perhaps the main function of the student of the humanities is that sometimes at least he testifies by his actions that humane studies are sufficiently important to be worth giving a fair slice of one's life to.

It is not easy to recreate the atmosphere in which the professional study of literature in Europe began. Four hundred and fifty years ago Erasmus appealed "to all to whom liberal studies are holy" and looked for a transformation of the world, "if only literature in all its glory may be restored pure and unsullied to honest minds." In the narrower sense, literature has been restored for over four centuries and the expectations of Erasmus are far from fulfilled. To admit this is not to discredit Erasmus, or literature, or even scholarship with all its imperfections; preservation is after all an essential prelude to transformation. Perhaps indeed it is the same thing. Mr. Stuart Hampshire has written recently, "truth in criticism is a convergence towards general agreement, always postponed; for the slow discrimination of what is general and central from what is personal and eccentric is the point and purpose of criticism, and it is some part and purpose of literature itself, both for the individual and for the race."

The weakness of the book under review is that its authors have over-dramatised and falsified a real problem. Like so many of the prob-

lems of the present time, it is related to the enormous increase in world population in the twentieth century. If we now have ten thousand to gather at a convention eager to discuss modern language and literature, it is partly because there are so many more people in the world than there used to be. The problem is also of course directly related to the much greater proportion of this enlarged population which is being educated for a longer period. There may well be a crisis in higher education in the sense that it will soon prove impossible simply to provide more and more higher education for more and more people. Circumstances may force a complete transformation of the whole content of higher education.

There is no subject so open to misleading generalisations as a history of universities, and it would be unfortunate if one were to attempt to match the inaccuracies which disfigure the blurb on the back page cover of this Penguin. It may, however, be claimed that in the past universities have, with differing emphases at different times, served both as training schools for specialised professions and as finishing schools for a ruling class. If, as seems possible, it is the second function which is going to become even more important in the context of a much more widely distributed ruling class, then a complete

reassessment of the subjects taught in a university and the way in which they are taught can not be indefinitely postponed, but such reassessment will not be confined to humanities. It will impinge much more markedly on the teaching of science. It does not seem unfair to deduce that the present purpose of most science teaching in universities is to produce a chemist or a physicist, or an engineer. It is not aimed and it does not succeed in equipping anyone to understand better the world which science helped to create. A great deal of discussion has already taken place on the part which the humanities must play in this new general education. Nowhere has it been suggested that they do not have a most important part to play. To talk as if the humanities had occupied a clearly defined and unchanging predominance in university teaching from the middle ages down to a decade or two ago is of course nonsense. Most of the subjects now included under this heading have been taught for very few years and the method of teaching of human disciplines has constantly changed. That such changes will continue and will give rise to many doubts and innumerable difficulties is unquestionable. It is possible that the doubts will prove unanswerable and the difficulties overwhelming, but it is equally likely that they will not.

## WRITERS FOR A "NO" GENERATION

*Across the Sea Wall*, Christopher Koch, Heinemann, London, 1965, \$3.00.

*The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea*, Randolph Stow, Macdonald, London, 1965, \$3.15.

WHAT ARE THE dreams and the fears of those who write for the generation that has said 'No' to much of the post-war world? What future do they predict for the rather nonplussed older guard who lived a war but can't quite cope with the Bomb or the Pill? What are the songs they sing—those who would not put out more flags? Christopher Koch and Randolph Stow have chosen to be novelists, and we must therefore look to their work for glimpses for the light and shadows of an extraordinary generation of mankind. Undeniably, the men and women now in their twenties and thirties are a strange group. They have learnt to swallow fear on a scale that is still beyond the comprehension of their elders. They were born to a nuclear confrontation of world powers and can live with the presence of that little death that was instilled in them then and forever. When they turn on a fiveplate electric stove or even a light switch, there is no real wonder for them. What say the writers of the Age of Irony . . . of the Reign of The Cynic in mid-twentieth century Australia?

For a long time a popular complaint about Australian writers was that they wrote only of the rural setting . . . there were no urban writers. At first sight it appears that Koch fills the gap. But the city isn't his real setting . . . here is a vague dream world that *might* be the city, but it fades away before he comes to grips with it. Indeed, one way of summarising *Across the Sea Wall* might be to describe it as an escape from the city. The pity is that the reader is never informed just what aspect of the city caused the flight—unless we settle for saying that it was the city of the hero's twenty-fifth year. That magic year which marked the end

of possibilities and sealed off hope for any future.

In his comments about Stow and Koch in *Meanjin* No. 2 of 1961, Vincent Buckley listed the issues which he felt they had taken up (as novelists of psychological analysis or social commentary): the individual's place in a society which tends not to satisfy him (the problem of alienation); and man's religious imagination in a hostile, indifferent and nightmarish world (the problem of metaphysical identity). For the purpose of this review, I'll take the liberty of borrowing Mr. Buckley's terms. At this time, when novels from the pair have come onto the local market, one might well ask: How far have they progressed with the problems of alienation and identity? (I won't quibble with Buckley's choice of the term "religious imagination", except to suggest that it may have been misapplied in Koch's case.)

Christopher Koch's *The Boys in The Island* (1958), presented the reader with a deal of skilful storytelling and licks of promise of greater things to come. The writing was rough-hewn in parts—in general "patchy"—but always readable. Francis Cullen was a convincing sketch of a young Tasmanian who escaped to Melbourne, clutching firmly every young man's ideal dream of an impossible world. His experiences on the mainland; the death of love (for the first time), or as Mr. Buckley called it then, the lapsing of the paradisaical dream; the gradual recognition of the true identity of The City . . . of the real twentieth century perhaps . . . these were satisfyingly cast in warm and at times rich prose. There were indications of skill in the occasional flashes of ecstasy that were true poetry. They were, unfortunately, only flashes, and they fitted somewhat selfconsciously amongst the rest. One felt slightly annoyed with the hero for his apparent reluctance to admit the truth of his new and less embarrassingly adolescent view of the world. One had hopes for

him in his next encounter with Mankind. And one waited some time for the encounter. In *Across the Sea Wall*, the same hero reappears at last, this time to be known as Robert O'Brien—but who's kidding? Robert also pursues The Dream. His struggle has very little to do with any threat to the all-sensitive vulnerable soul of the Young Artist. Robert is not another hapless victim of the concrete jungle of a materialistic world. He's a misfit all right, but one is tempted to class him as an aimless and rather lazy individual. And here, indeed, is the dead end that Koch has written his hero into . . . the reader just cannot summon any sympathy for the character. Yet it's obvious all along that Koch expects a sympathetic reception for him.

And what was the dream? 'I dreamed of a place. It was somewhere in or near my Pacific world, yet remote as Asia. A place of pools of seawater and petrol, shining in the sun on a clean white esplanade going to tremendous distance; of the smell of young sun-baked skin, and the dry rumour of palms, . . . Those who die at twenty-five, as I did, have lived in the expectation of another impossible life. Sometimes it actually comes to us, and we squander it as though it will never run dry; my God, we even spit out mouthfuls: and then it's over.' Although there is a freshness, a childlike spirit of purity underlying the dream (and these are typical and endearing in Koch's writing), it never takes on any semblance of nobility which might lift it from the not so admirable world of mere fancy. In fact, there is no identifiable soul involved (I mean it in Buckley's sense); only shallow self indulgence goes to waste over the sea wall. And it's this aspect of the novel which divorces it so utterly from the harsher reality of an alien land in the Pacific Ocean in the nineteen sixties, where Asia is anything but 'remote'.

What shatters the dream for Koch's Robert O'Brien is the one really extraordinary aspect of the book. On the boat, on the journey of escape from responsibility and the legal obligations of his marriage, Robert has a dream during which there is a visitation from 'the Master'. Who is the Master? Is he the figment of that 'religious imagination' to which Vincent Buckley has referred? In the dream, narrated by the Master, a scene spells out truths which for O'Brien (and for Koch too it seems) are simply beyond the survival skills of all but supermen: Two brothers see the death of their own youth . . . and the subtitle reads: 'You remember when we were children? Things were different then.' . . . 'The lawn and trees are covered with the burning red eyes, the blinding rocket trails, the miraculous green rain of fireworks; and running

through childhood's winter night, obviously possessed by the cold and heavenly excitement of fireworks, come the two little boys, the brothers.'

There is a familiar ring to this. But what the dream and the comments of the Master convey to O'Brien and the reader seem to be little more than a plain and far more simply discernible truth about the Ages of Man. In every man resides his childhood self coiled and expectant. And the expectancy declines rapidly after the age of twenty-five has been passed. For Koch, twenty-five is the year of no return, a time when childhood hopes and dreams should be advanced on the way towards their fulfilment. 'Twenty-three is a peculiar age . . . ; I am still safe, I am not yet old; but I have been warned.' Such is the major preoccupation of *Across the Sea Wall* where all too familiar dreams are beached. But what of the Master who delivers the conundrums? As with other more familiar mentors from the clouds, he provides no answers to the questions. Koch hasn't briefed this one. But he has deftly sketched a small-time tragic-hero of our century. That O'Brien and his vision are such 'small deal' places him right in the centre of the chorus line of a vast group whose potential achievements in the world were signed over to the five fingers that will fell the cities.

Purely on the evidence of these latest novels, it would seem that, whereas Christopher Koch steers his heroes over the sea wall in search of escape, Randolph Stow prefers to explore the Australian landscape more thoroughly, in search of his grand theme. Koch seeks the climactic story in the outside world. We can be sure that the antipodean climate is claustrophobic for him. Stow meanwhile is allowing the great truths to seep up through local soil. One result is that *The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea* lacks the neurotic feverishness of *Across the Sea Wall*. Having firmly chosen his ground over a number of novels, Randolph Stow has forced himself to do more to shape an imaginative landscape to his artistic intentions. One danger which then confronts him, however, is inherent in the climate he describes. Are those the quiet rhythms of an ancient land that pulse through his novel? or the first hum and torpor of heat and glare exhaustion? Critical opinions of Stow's early books noted a steady improving technical facility and precision. And in this novel a further consolidation occurs. What is disconcerting, though, is that there are signs of a preoccupation with technique which couples uncomfortably with an introverted view of the world. In the extremely personal tone of most sections of the novel (particularly concerned with young Rob Coram), the reader begins to feel more of an onlooker

than an emotional participant in an experience of personal communication.

The structure of Stow's novel is based on a simple time-scheme: the first section of the book covers the early boyhood of Rob Coram and the passage of World War II; and the second, a period of adjustment and personal realisation for the boy, set against post-war emotional rehabilitation for the digger Rick Maplestead. Within that structure are the minor variations on the general theme of Time and its ravages. The merry-go-round in the sea is employed as a device intended to weld the elements of the story together.

Although there is considerable subtlety in the use of this symbol (one can detect that a great amount of effort has gone into its development through the novel), the artifice is not well enough integrated into the story . . . the intelligence of the writer intrudes into the world of the relatively unsophisticated country boy:

'What you can see is the mast and the iron things that hold the mast up. It just happens to look like a merry-go-round.'

. . . 'Have you been there?' he asked her, sullenly.

'Yes,' she said, 'I've seen it.'

'Well, can't I go then? Can't I go there with you?'

'No, we can't, Rob. We can't go there.'

'Why? Why can't we go there?'

'Oh—because of the war,' his mother said. Somehow he had foreseen that answer.'

He would never reach it, because of the war.

At the end, Rob has realised that the idealised characters on his merry-go-round, artificially rosy-hued, are all parts of a dream world that dissolves under the glare of the outback sun:

'Over Rick's head a rusty windmill whirled and whirled. He thought of a windmill that had become a merry-go-round in a backyard, a merry-go-round that had been a substitute for another, now ruined merry-go-round, which had been itself a crude promise of another merry-go-round most perilously rooted in the sea.'

Throughout the book, one has the impression that Rob is being guided firmly and directly to an extraordinary wise comprehension of the significance of life. So firm does this guidance seem at times that the reader is far from surprised to note that the final expressions of Rob's new maturity come not from his own lips but those of the author himself. In fact it is disconcerting to note just how inarticulate Stow allows Rob to remain. The one person who should best be able to communicate with the boy on a more or less equal footing is Rick

Maplestead. Rick is provided with enough of his own problems of readjustment to society; to the extent that Rob is excluded more and more. Yet the best sections of the novel are those scenes where the two (the immature returned soldier and the adolescent boy) are thrown together and where some conflict between two worlds is allowed to occur at a personal level. Those scenes where Rick endeavours to untangle his personal relationships with his girl and his ex-army companion, Hugh Mackay, are the least satisfactory. In fact, Stow always seems to me to be uneasy in his treatment of relationships between adults, whereas brief interludes between Rick and Rob are as delicately and skilfully handled as such a real situation demands. In general though, the most essential ingredient, conflict, is the one least applied. The author might have done well to leave the Rick-Hugh business as it stood in the scene at the prison camp on the eve of liberation:

'What are we going to do?'

'Dunno.'

'Well, think of something quick, the war's over.'

'Rick,' he said.

'Yeah?'

'We won't be doing the same thing, mate.'

'Funny,' Rick said. 'I knew you were going to say that.'

'I'm just facing facts. Peace is different.'

So much for the great Australian mateship legend? Rick continues to reach out for sustenance from that particular deception. One more spoke in the merry-go-round known only to Rick and left for Rob to discover in his own time. As for a vision of the outside world, the author decides that it is enough for him to have Rick say that he is bored with the wastelands of the bush and the city in Western Australia. Leaving aside the fact that such boredom could be traced to Rick's own deficiencies, we can note that Randolph Stow chooses for his "hero" a Walkabout in the world across the oceans with apparently the same intentions as Christopher Koch. There is the same premonition that the outside world will be just as unrewarding as the one being deserted.

Despite any reservations one might have about Stow's achievement with his main themes in this book, the more lasting impression is one finely chiselled prose in lyrically descriptive passages. Two techniques he uses, the fade at the end of a scene and the dissolves between one location or mood and another, are well suited to the atmosphere which drifts in from the beginning. Once again he has recreated a peculiar dream-like world of the Australian landscape. There is something unreal—a touch of Dreamtime?—

about Randolph Stow's bush settings, which though probably not recognisable as the places we know, are nevertheless valid as the poet's individual reaction to his environment. The skill with which that individual perception of the countryside is sustained, enables the novelist to create a place where anything is admissible. Once the reader has accepted the Geraldton and environs of this novel, all else follows. The very consistency of the portrait ensures that security for the novelist. However, where no alien impressions may intrude is also a sanctuary where the writer can escape the responsibility of giving some attention to the concerns of the real world of the nineteen sixties. The impression which follows a reading of the Stow books (and those of others of the present generation of Australians) is that he prefers to turn away from the real world to one he can shape and control. This is not uncommon in those novelists of the present age in Europe and America who feel that where re-examination of the past fails to satisfy the creative urge then one must turn from the dilemmas of the present to a controlled environment of the imagination. There is nothing illegitimate about this procedure of course; it just seems to be regrettable to see the young Australian escaping in this fashion. For what can we learn from them about the society of our

time? Who else is to be called upon to provide an imaginative and sensitive documentation of our times? Surely not the historian or the journalist, who possesses access to reality in its confusing bulk and is quite unable to synthesise and distil the essence. At the time for assessment of the twentieth century, surely what will matter will be the manner in which the twentieth century man's imagination was affected by events. The events themselves can be chronicled by machines even now. On entering Stow's imaginative world one never feels that there is any great significance in the outcome of any act or decision. Rob's merry-go-round belongs to the same timeless land as Rob himself. Because of this, the reader is inclined to feel in a very real sense merely a spectator, and as such is only occasionally able to detect where relevance to his own situation lies.

Despite the fact that these recent novels by Randolph Stow and Christopher Koch fall short of any expectation of "a major novel" we may have harboured, really reassuring aspects of their work remain: their technical skills are advancing, and both produce memorable scenes and significant human situations. They both possess imagination and craft. When their current preoccupation with semi-autobiographical material ends, we may well see the great Australian novel born.

*Newly published by*



UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA PRESS

TECHNICAL EDUCATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

*edited by C. Sanders*

\$5.50

also recently published

A GUIDE TO THE ARCHIVES AND RECORDS OF  
PROTESTANT CHRISTIAN MISSIONS FROM THE  
BRITISH ISLES TO CHINA, 1796-1914

*by L. R. Marchant*

\$3.50

FROM STRANGER TO CITIZEN

*by R. Taft*

\$3.50

HOW TO KNOW WESTERN AUSTRALIAN WILDFLOWERS  
PART III

*by W. Blackall and B. G. Grieve*

\$5.00

The  
**UNIVERSITY  
BOOKSHOP**

at the University, Nedlands, Western Australia

Specialists in the Service and Supply  
of University Text Books and organised  
for obtaining any work of Literature  
published overseas.

For Prompt Attention - - Ring 86 2481





JOHN KEATS  
Bronze cast from a life mask

. . . . . a heap  
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;  
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,  
And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon;  
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd  
From Fez; and spiced dainties, every one,  
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

from THE EVE OF ST. AGNES

KEATS'S GLOWING IMAGINATION COULD ONLY CONJURE UP EXOTIC DELICACIES WHICH  
IN THE MODERN WORLD ARE AVAILABLE AT EVERY ONE OF TCM THE CHEAP GROCER'S  
135 STORES THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA.



# w e s t e r l y

## EDITORIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

As the present editor, Mr. John O'Brien, is unable to carry on, we have agreed to edit **Westerly** for the University of Western Australia Press.

**westerly** No. 1 of 1966, is edited by Mr. O'Brien.

**westerly** No. 2 of 1966, with Dr. M. A. Jaspán of the Department of Anthropology as guest editor, will be devoted to Indonesia. It is due to be published in October.

**westerly** No. 3 of 1966 will contain previously unpublished work by Seaforth McKenzie, along with a selection of contemporary writing. It is due to be published in December.

**westerly** No. 4 of 1966 will appear in February, 1967.

We hope that regular quarterly publication will be resumed in 1967, and that **Westerly** will devote a proportion of its space to the experimental work of younger writers.

The Patricia Hackett Prize of 100 guineas (210 dollars) for the best original creative contribution to **Westerly** is awarded annually.

Contributions should be addressed to the Editorial Committee, **Westerly**, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, W.A. All manuscripts should show the name and address of the sender, and should be typed (double-spaced) on one side of the paper. Unsolicited manuscripts will be returned only when accompanied by stamped self-addressed envelopes.

Payment will be made for all contributions used.

John Barnes, Peter Cowan, Tom Gibbons, Patrick Hutchings.  
Editorial Committee.