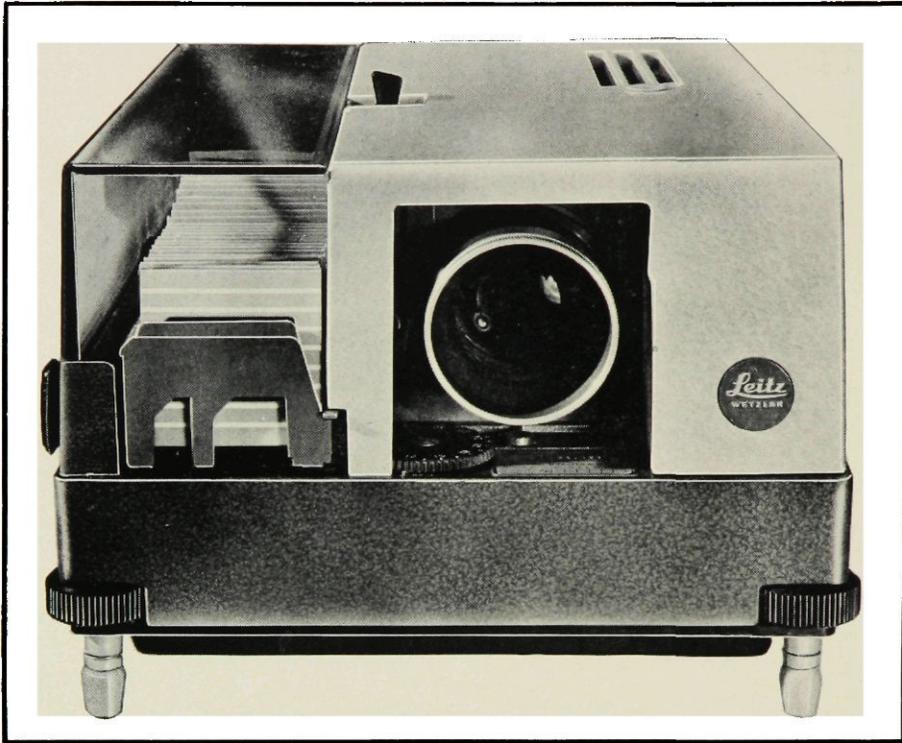


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YES, WE UNZIP BANANAS

She—and although she is so much the subject of this and so should be the opening of this, yet she can hardly be realised as she was never important for herself, but just because she was she—was not good-looking. She—and that was her essential, that she was she—was more than not attractive; even, perhaps, not unrepellent. She had nothing except herself, and, later, her reputation for being herself, to demand attention. But later that attention had little need to be demanded because of that reputation. Physically, there is little need to describe her more than that she was a woman. It might be remarked that she was thin. And, because it later became perplexing, wore jeans. An object, and, again, beyond that there is little need to go. Once, none did. And now, except as an exercise, one would go no further. Although as an illustration, the description might be justified, an illustration, that is, not of her, an illustration not of character, for her character lacks importance or even knowledge for what could be drawn, rather, perhaps, an illustration of certain ways of behaviour, of certain modes of conduct, not models. Though that could imply too unequivocally moral a purpose in the telling, which would be possibly hypocritical for the act would be related from enjoyment in the telling or the consumption, not for edification that the illustrated might be shunned. And if not hypocritical, anyway irrelevant: for the actuality, and most likely any future actuality, would not be affected. The act can never be altered. Its occurrence cannot be expunged or modified; morality, if lacking during the act, can climb on after, or explanation, or the thousand other things that ensue. But the act, sated, remains there still and unmoved.

This is just one act. "I was drunk, pissed, sloshed. Afterwards I felt sort of ashamed of myself. I don't know . . ." That was in the pub. Outside, on the pavement, walking down towards the pub, stepping to avoid the lines between the paving slabs, running hands casually along the sleek smooth sides of cars waiting in the gutters, watching tottering slim

ankles twitch past, then they had seen her walking towards them, and one had said, "Here she is," and the other had grinned in brave embarrassment, and the others hadn't then known the story. And she had passed them. "Hello," she'd said. "Hy," he'd said.

It was just that there was nothing else to do. The pubs were boring. They were boring in their sameness, battery of beer handles and bars, the dull repetition of dart boards and pint mugs. It was a boredom of every Friday night, and of every night; but the other boredom was worse, sitting at home watching the telly in a succession of banalities and the old man crouched there slumped in his chair good for bugger all after work and the old woman fussing around ironing maybe, ironing interminably on the rattling metal ironing board she'd bought from Woolies or somewhere that rattled and squeaked every time she ran the iron along the arms or tails of the shirts piled there, washing for ever washing, the old woman's existence; and cramped in an eleven by twelve boredom till the old man went early to bed and the telly was switched off so there wasn't any noise, cramped there was a hell of a waste; rather waste pounds on beer, pounds earned by wasting all way working, rather waste those all day wasted earnings of pounds than waste a breathing hour of moments; and so the pubs. Anything else might have been better but anything else existed only in the cars of those whose parents lent them, or in the fuller finer realer better existence of a bigger fuller better town; or in the imaginations or luck with randy women; and always imaginations or luck, or unluck and then the hell of marriage or anything else. And rather pubs than that, rather than the pointless hell of two of you and her mother, or two of you and nowhere else to live and soon three of you and the boredom and no hope; he knew; it was always happening; not often but always. So there was nothing else: a parade of pubs, the half timbered charm of the sunless back streets, the inns of a market town become the

cells of the homeless, cuckoos nests, doorways to the charmed land where if there wasn't birdsong at least there was the bubblingness of elated springs. Doors opening into passages, and bars; all basically the same, different in their beer mats and barmen, not barmaids much, even that slight renewal of hope was dying away. Who was there is immaterial. Bodiless they floated along the corridors and footpaths with the foam rubber soles of alcohol; indeterminate they merged before each other's straying eyes, distinct from the nudes on calendars and the ready cut wainscot, but facially reverted to the sameness of boredom where distinctions no longer dare to assert, but blankness noisily looks through amber glass.

It wasn't a real crawl because they had more than one round at some of the places; and they weren't trying to get anywhere; not that anywhere was there to be got to; but they had not even set themselves arbitrary limits to create some sense of having to do anything, of, even, doing anything; instead, the simple swimming which as it was a Friday night was liable to end up only at one place; fish and chip shop apart, nowhere was there to drift to except the jazz club; and, somehow, because there was nowhere else to go and because there was there to go, it was to jazz club they always went; not with a regularity; drinking first, something might happen, like hearing of wild mad orgies on the hills, or picking up a whole car load of randy blondes with spare seats in the car and cottages with beds or something; it wasn't through regularity that they turned up every Friday at jazz club.

He'd jived with her a couple of times at jazz club, linked their bodies with separateness in individual twists and turns, in the touch of the hand and the but only occasional and it seemed brush of breast against hand, hip against hip; and the separateness of jiving between them and the haze of the alcohol misting in front of his eyes and filling his body with desire and lassitude. Round them the teenagers, the thirteen and fourteen year olds, with their eager breasts and baby mouths, with their provocation that never came to anything much except the odd sad court case; and that very rarely and then with twenty defendants. So they danced; and the sweating band played beneath the sound of jiving feet and words; not conversation; because he and the rest were too muddled to speak much; and the rest

hadn't much to say anyway; except that god it was a boring hole. And beyond do you want a drink and nothing more because what was there to say, what was there to communicate by breaking down the tight barriers of self and coming out naked and defenceless in the whirl of predators with spiked heels to hurt the bared feet? And how did you say it, anyway? So nothing; and the sad wistful face of the girl J once saw in a department store standing with that still sad wistful face behind the counter; and once I saw it open and animated talk briefly, briefly; but to another girl also sad and wistful, lonely and bored. These faces; or the false brashness of the heavy mascara, but the curved tempting hips and the breasts provocative in tight sweaters and in loose sweaters, always provocative; and in the provocation and desire, nothing but the same boredom, jiving around, swung, swayed but no different. And round the edges the worse, the seats filled and silence there, or the false talk that pretended existence; sitting, watching, watching the feet move mechanically and the skirts fly round limply; and watching. So they jived, once, twice—it made no odds. And then he went again for one last drink, because now what else was there to do? and she too went for one last drink; because what else was there to do? and down in the pub at the eternal bar, the band still playing in the room at the back, there they saw how pissed they both were, and he bought her a double whisky, dimly, automatically, realising or hoping; no, not even that; it was just the stray chance; and what the hell was the five bob? eight times that much he had wasted that evening, and his life to the price of work per hour, the selling of himself for the five days of the week and save for what, save the five bobs for a house to put a telly in to watch and waste for ever looking at.

She, and she is not needing to be called other than she, nor he than he, because the story is, anyway, in the pronouns, she, sitting there on the wooden stool, leaning against the wall, had drunk enough. "I'm miserable," she said, probably because she was; and he something the same, something like it, to the effect that So am I. And perhaps he was, too miserable or bored or tired or pissed to think of talking just to talk to her as a woman; who anyway was wearing jeans. "I," she said, as if it perhaps were the big decision of her life,

but it wasn't, though perhaps it once had been, once, that first time, meant rather more no doubt than the near mechanical repetition. "I," and he leaned his elbows on the table and smiled into her nostrils, "Yes ducks." "I want to go home." They were monosyllables and clear.

They left into the chilliness of the night, chill after the drink and pub and jazz club and jiving, left, and headed for the canal. The tow path was, she said, a short cut to her home. And short cut; heated now, a short cut was not, or had not been, what he wanted; but the canal more than made up for the brevity in its desertedness. And snogging along the grit path, grit grey as the night sky and all cats there grey in the dark, his loins to use the unobscene biblical word ached with a growing pressure. And under the bridge, the old red bridge that merely led from one other short cut to another, carrying no traffic over it that was motorised, and at night little on foot, under the bridge he clamped her to him, and she responded and he the ache in his loins pleasant and unbearable and thrusting against her and he his hand under her loose shirt and she her hand clutching him to her and the sweaty groping hands inside their jeans and then, standing there underneath the bridge with it seemed miles away but in fact quite near the rumble of traffic on the main roads, and no noise from the stillness of the canal, no one, nothing, but the copulation.

He didn't tell it like that. The week or fortnight later on the piss up in the usual pubs, he just told who and where and when and how. Just the simplicity of the event and the length of time it took to tell it the only pornographic titillation. Because titillation really wasn't involved. The long and delicate excitation, the subtlest nuances of the sexual act, rather were ignored in the bareness of acting. But that alone was interesting enough. Perhaps not, to him, satisfying enough; the drunkenness would dully have blunted the enjoyment, even the ability to remember the detail. Nothing remained to him but—and this more than anything testified to veracity—but a sense of shame. To have admitted such a sense meant a certain, not repentance, but at least upsetting awareness. "Honest, no kid, I felt bloody ashamed of myself afterwards. You know, I sort of felt . . ." This, this triumphed over the natural, necessary desire to disbelieve,

to relegate the whole trousered girl to lies: this, and his normal integrity. But the inclination of the auditors, fuddled but proud, was envious refusal. Inclination only. For those who knew, knew she was known. She, it was known, would have shagged there under the canal bridge, piddled or not. And he. He was, as all were: even if, afterwards, for some few reasons, he felt ashamed. "You know, it was so bloody crude." Standing up, too, standing under the red chipped arch, that was not new, not novel, but less dull: to think you've got to do it 47 times even to try every way once, and even then you might not get the best out of them. He—and this an additional envy to those not envious on the primary score—he was nearer the half century of variety. But this variety, this and the jeans, nagged at desired disbelief. Her as they say notoriety was established: yet none of them there, drinking, felt any actual urge in any way to add to his repertoire of the varieties of sexual experience. She was an easy ride, but the danger of free wheeling is the brick wall at the bottom. Fancy—and always it was there, in friends' sad marriages—fancy fancy podding her, and being lumbered for the rest of your life knowing hundreds of men had ridden it, side saddle, pillion, all the 57 varieties, and hundreds, surely, more would. That, knowing that and looking at the mantelpiece, the mechanicalness of it all—"I was pissed"—none of them wanted to share his canal bank delights. Not in actuality. Mentally in the blurred beery fog, yes, oh yes: and then the mental twist of No no, and Did he? And indeed, did he? With the jeans; how did he? How did he manage it standing up? Did she take the things off, letting the cold wind slice across the canal, cooling her heated flanks? Did she take them right off, stripping her white lank legs, or let them drop to her spotted thighs? It was this, this in revisualising the story, that unsettled the authenticity.

But his integrity was sure. Shame and no lies. In the sweat of jazz club, months, oh months passed after, two giggling girls in the corner confirmed his veracity. Such a fright, climbing the stairs to the ladies' room and seeing on the level of her eyes as she climbed, blue, descending, a man's jeans. "But it wasn't," she giggled, no man inside them, but her, the heroine, "She can't get women's jeans tight enough, she says." And in their giggles his truth was confirmed.

CURL CURL TIP

my first tip since childhood
with tony i would search for tadpoles and whatever else wriggled
in the filthy water
there were dry trees in the swamp where we canoed and a tip on a
side behind reeds this was my first tip
playing with olde tyres bringing junk home i'd never use the
happie useless childjunk collected with delight treasure
and the way we used to squint when the sunball bounced off some ol'
tin with olde jam on its toothy rim telling me 'twas ye
olde breakfast toast-and-jam tin
ol' tyres and tins and straight wood for arrows was what we
looked for then—

but now the men at curl curl step from big gutsy trucks heavie
tippers and all search for
olde carpets worth £1:8:3 at auction olde drums scrap metal some
verie good finds recently sometymes olde jumpers and such
jes for workin in you unnerstan
i myself wear olde whyte pair royal english navy pants worn by olde
seaman h. jones trombone player borne last centurie in kent
a loooong way from curl curl how did it all happen

and when i had long hair shovelling a sand and brick load off a
two-tonner with a breeze whipping up a dust and the glaring
sundown as you bend around with empty shovel in late after-
noon

and children plaie there too

the junkman himself olde unhappie one-arm scavenger
sometimes he will guide you back with a heavie load no truck can
take a fierce broken bottle

and no poeme can take too heavie a load so i shall phinish and say
just this why don't you go see your local tip
it's a big story all over the ground.

ANDREW BURKE

BLUES FOR CROWLEY

The tips of my fingers are sore from too many long hours of pushing and plunking at the strings on my guitar. My throat is tired through three packets of cigarettes and wailing my time in dry-eyed terror for the future. Feeling almost like some intense sun burning into the back of my head, Freda Crowley's letter lies on my desk beside me. I am sitting now, in darkness. My den. I need nothing but more cigarettes, fresh hot coffee in my mug, and time. Much time. It heals, they say. I even tried looking out into the grey world about an hour ago, but Newcastle on a smelly Sunday steelworks morning is a severe depressant. So I pulled down the blind. It shuts off people. And reminders. Who needs reminders? Grey, gloom, chaos, sadness, misery, tragedy . . . they are all synonymous, with an end.

In this same city, three years ago, Lionel Crowley and I sat laughing around a kitchen filled with the juices of living and loving. We sat, sprawled, longed for, hoped for, shared with, talked about, and smoked each other's. I was settled, suspended inanimately. He was south-bound. Passing by. Thought he'd drop in. In two days he had come from somewhere well north of Brisbane. Crossed his old paths, he told me. His year in Brisbane had been a painful one. I recalled his letters from New Farm. Always panicking, hard times and low nights, refusing menial labour, yet worrying over lack of work. Photographing houses, trying to pass the products off onto the poor dwellers. Making no money faster than he worked. Sixteen hours a day. Sweat, tears and the muscular-ache that starts in the toes and moves right to the head. Then . . . whoom! He shot it all and went north. I heard no more until our old times were nothing more than a congealed memory. From nowhere came a carton. Just Queensland and New South Wales Railways marks on it. Stickers and things to say that it had come from Cairns. C.O.D. I was asked to pay three quid.

Today, that six dollars would mean nothing to me. But in my old job, that meant a lot of bills and cigarettes. However, for Crowley, since our teenage days of delight and damnation damsels, I would gladly have cashed in half of my books and most of my records; after all . . . bosom pals are supposed to be willing to sacrifice their lives for each other . . . and what is life but a series of words and music? But to evaluate friendship in terms of money; whether the old currency, or the new . . . cruel. Pagan. I paid. A day later a telegram arrived. From some place called Miriam Vale. I'd never heard of it. But it means plenty to me today, because it is an important stopping-off place when I ride back along the Crowley tracks in my masochistic journey to the past. One day I shall go to Miriam Vale and stand at that same telegram counter where he stood. I shall go right to Cairns. Further. Why? Well . . .

Crowley was barely forty-eight hours behind his carton. One of the girls in the office called me.

"Mr James! Telephone!"

"Right," I replied, wondering in a sharp flash of lust, whether the "Mister" would endure throughout an all-out attack. "Thanks Bet." And still with the excitement of Betty-dreams whizzing about inside my head, I lifted the handset. "Hello."

"Hey! I'm here!" It took a moment. Then I was back on the ground.

"Crowley! You old bastard! You owe me three quid!"

"Oh!" And a snigger. Betty was enjoying something. Perhaps she was dreaming too. Crowley had been silent for a moment.

"That's how much it cost, eh?"

"Yep. But forget it. I was only kidding. Where are you?"

"At the 'phone box down at the station."

"Well," and I looked at my watch, "I'll come down for a minute. Can't stay long, but

I'll direct you to my flat, and you can hang around there for . . ."

"No, you stay there, and I'll wander about till five. Where's your office . . . in Hunter Street, isn't it? I'll wait for you out the front."

"You won't find it. Hunter Street IS Newcastle, mate. There's nothing else but Hunter Street in the whole stinking place!" This followed by a snort of indignation from Betty. I covered the mouthpiece and politely told her what she should do, then returned to the conversation as Crowley was humming and hesitating.

"Well . . . okay . . . but what number is it?"

"Two hundred and seventy six. Three storey dump. Grey. Everything in this place is grey. Even the people. But you'll know it by the number." He laughed and agreed that we'd see each other at five. He was about to hang up the handset when I yelled.

"Hey! Just a minute. Listen, where've you been? I mean . . . you know, where've you come from?"

"I haven't stopped since I got a lift just down from the place where I sent that telegram. A bloke was going right through to Sydney. I was broke and he bought me a couple of meals. I had some cigarettes. He smoked most of them and reckoned that'd fix up my fare. So I've had some luck. But coming down from Port Douglas was a drag."

"Port where?"

"Port Douglas. Look, hadn't you better get back to work. There's a lot to say and plenty of time to say it. I'll see you at five."

"Right." He was more conscientious on my behalf than was I. At that exhilarating point in my day I was ready to tell the entire staff to go to hell and walk out into freedom, join Crowley and just start moving again. I have never been one for setting down roots. But each time I do, something holds me in the one spot. Usually, it is far too long before I pick up and go. I trap myself in a sticky web of security-consciousness. And I grow old ungracefully. Just the other day I awoke sweating. It occurred to me that it was my twenty-third birthday. Twenty-three. And what have I got? Fifty quid in the bank and I'm a clerk in an office. I earn about twenty-five quid a week with overtime when we're stocktaking. And I live in the past. I can't even get used to this dollars-and-cents bit. Sometimes I think

I'm so petty. I worry about not being able to call a quid a quid anymore soon. And what about the zack? Gone. And with it goes another year. Peeled off the calendar like an old skin.

"You'd better watch your language on the phone in future, Mr James." She half-giggled as she spoke. I turned. We were in the punch-line, clutching our silly little cards and waiting for our time to come up. Funny how we all queue up at five minutes to five, knowing we can't leave the building before the clock ticks the hour. My card already bore red figures all over it from my arriving too late in the mornings. It would look pretty sick on pay-days if I punched-off before five in the afternoons. But why do we stand like robots, waiting? Another example of a criminal waste of time. As I turned, somebody pushed her and Betty's spongy chest softly nudged my arm. She giggled again and apologised. Apology nothing. I knew a glad-eye when I saw it.

"I'm sorry if my conversation offended you, Bet. But then," and I wagged a finger at her in mock admonishment, "you shouldn't have been listening, should you?"

"Can't help hearing you. On my 'phone, and you speak so loud. Who was that bloke anyway? Sounded as if he's just come from Alice Springs or somewhere, the way you spoke."

"An old friend, Bet. Like to meet him? He's a very interesting bloke." I had other reasons for wanting her to meet Crowley, of course. A meeting, and a sweet word of persuasion, and she might come around to the flat . . . but then a warning whistle sounded and I remembered some advice someone had once given me. Keep it zipped up in the office. And let the office girls go home. Yeah. That's right.

"Not much. I've got enough friends of my own, thanks."

"That's a narrow attitude to take," I replied. But I was past the moment and I let it drop. WHIRRING! The clock went, somebody whooped with joy, and the punching began.

"But, perhaps, some other time we could . . ." She broke off, realising that she had gone one step too far. She should have left it alone. I breathed a deep sigh of relief. She had known what I had had in mind. She'd wanted to start something too. But her braking was bad. Over-anxious women I can do without. It means they're short of something.

That's why they hard-sell their goodies. Then one night, everything melts into ecstasy and . . . later on they come knocking and crying and claiming.

As I emerged into the noise of the baby metropolis, Betty brushed past me and sped down the footpath and away into the weekend. I guessed that by Monday she'd have forgotten the embarrassment, and I'd have forgotten the entire episode. There was Crowley, by the drainpipe. Somehow, he belonged by a drainpipe. Or squatting on a log in the middle of the New England snow as I remember him sometimes, from the days when we fondly imagined we were mountain-climbers and went about scaling the white winter cliffs around the Glen Innes district. I'd been a copywriter in a radio station up that way in those days, and Crowley had been on his way to Brisbane. He had left the Sydney-Brisbane journey and detoured to see me. We'd had a week of wild nature days and nights, camping out, digging for sapphires, filling film after film with images of history and crumbling pioneer graves, dangling cold feet in icy flooded streams, throwing rocks at waterfalls, and writing poetry in mudbanks. Crowley belonged in these places. He belonged wherever there was a lack of people, or a lack of activity. Where there was nothing but stillness. Because there was movement in him which demanded undivided attention.

"Who was that bird who just rushed past?" Crowley launched himself from the drainpipe and swaggered towards me. His five-foot-seven frame threw a shadow at my feet. I felt the wind whip at my trousers and watched the gust catch at his hair. He was smiling again. Always smiling outside, but usually grew serious or grim when inside. An outdoors man of sorts.

"Oh, just a little sort from the office. Don't worry about her. You said yourself we've got lots to talk about. Let's go." And I started in the direction of the bus stop. "Well, how the hell are you anyway?"

"Great. But starved. I'm sorry for doing this to you, but really, if you could put me up for a week or two, I'll wire my mother for some money, and then I'll go down to Sydney and stay there for a while."

"Your mother must be getting bugged by all these begging letters. Ever paid any back?"

"Hell no! If I did, she'd be insulted. Besides, she knows that if I run out of loot I'm just

as likely to land back in Perth. And that's the last thing she wants." He laughed again, and flung me a look that told of the same mischief and the same spark that Crowley always displayed. Through thick and thin, rich days or poor, he wore that familiar cloud of high spirits about his head like a vapour of victory. He always won his battles. And every battle he'd ever fought had been against life itself—or more accurately, against the pressures of life that tried to press him down into a groove. He kicked and shouted, punched and battered, screamed and smashed until at last he broke free. Time and time again. I admired his ability to persevere. It was this perseverance that I lacked. That is why I am never able to make my own breaks when I most want to.

"Tell you what," I suggested, "how's about we eat out tonight? I've just been paid. A celebration is the least I can offer you. Haven't seen you in an age, and I'll probably never see you again, so what about it?"

"Yeah. Hell, I'm going to feel pretty guilty after all this. Why the hell is it always you with the loot and me on the bones of my bum?"

"Ha! Because you have all the fun, that's why!" I knew a restaurant that served good meals and didn't charge like the proverbial wounded bull, and I steered Crowley away from the bus stop and down the road apiece. As we were about to turn into the doorway, he stopped me, gripping my elbow tightly.

"Not in here! We'll have to go somewhere else!"

"Why, for Christ's sake?"

"Because I already ate in here once today. And I didn't pay. Now, let's get the heck out of here." He broke into a trot and I quickened my pace, still puzzled. We found another place, a dirtier, but homely little restaurant that spruiked its menu on wafts of aroma. When we had seated ourselves and ordered, he explained.

"You see, after I had telephoned you, I had to eat. I was so hungry that I knew I'd eat all you had if I was to go to your place. So I pulled my favourite down-and-out stunt. I learnt it in Sydney when Deryk and I were broke. I put on a tie, tidied up my hair and so on, you know," and he gestured accordingly, "then sauntered into the place with this book," and he dug a small paperback mystery from his pocket, "under my arm. I have

smokes, so I lit one, ordered a three-course and ate it when they brought it. Oh, it was bloody marvellous!" He sat back in his chair and gazed at the ceiling. Silence. Just this confounded smile on his mouth.

"Well . . . what then?" Incredulous. The gall of the little bastard.

"They brought the bill. I ordered coffee. They brought the coffee." He smirked. "They changed the total on the bill. I drank the coffee really slow. I smoked two cigarettes, read the book, and kept an eye on the front door. Then when the place was quiet, and the waitresses were both out the back I just whipped out the door and ducked around into that laneway up the road. I took off my tie, mussed up my hair, put on my dark glasses, and walked up the hill. I just hung around up there until it was time for you to come out."

"Criminal!" Envy. I actually envied him. Though it felt good to spend money I had earned honestly, I envied him. I never ran out of money. Yet I envied him his courage, and his daring. Here was I, twenty-three, supposedly mature . . . while Crowley, two years my junior, jaunted about the country displaying juvenile attitudes and immature carelessness. And I wanted to be like him. Crazy, but true.

For those two weeks we sat long hours drinking traditional coffees and playing our combined collection of blues records. He lived out of his carton; wearing holed-singlets he had last laundered by the beach in a lagoon somewhere around Townsville, withdrawing books that he gave me with the promise that one day he would ask for them back again, and shuffling shyly through papers that he almost-reluctantly handed to me with the plea: "Will you read these and see what you think?" That is what hurts most today. The loss has not been merely personal to me. It is a loss the world will have to learn to endure. Crowley spoke beautiful words. I suppose it would have qualified as poetry. But whatever it was, it sang with the sheer excitement he felt for the enemy; those social pressures. He had rejected Christianity, yet I could see that he was loving his enemy the way no parson or priest I'd ever come across had ever preached it. I read his poetry and damn near cried every time. So we'd smoke another and drink another and then go out into the pre-dawn and watch it come up over the Pacific. Two weeks. And the

money arrived, we loaded his carton into the freight-van, I shook his hand, and he was gone. Steam and smoke. Poof!

I have never seen him since. I had not expected to see him for a long time; if at all. Our lives had crossed paths at times, but seldom had we been in the same place at the same time, for longer than fleeting moments. I see a year as but a flash of time . . . a second. I see a thousand years as the most desirable length for a lifetime. Time is nothing, if not everything. We revolve around time, or it revolves around us. I'm not sure which. But whichever way it goes, time has now faded from this world of mine altogether. Since Crowley's mother's letter has arrived, I can no longer agree to recognise time as an element. If something matters not at all, then it ceases to be of any strength, dimension or purpose. Crowley had gone to England. He lived with a Melbourne girl for some time. They drowned their initial miseries in love. London, fog-bound and black, had possessed them both. Then when he gained employment, Crowley took to swinging with the swift set. Wine. Pot. Methedrine. Heroin. You name it, he took it. He had told his mother that he needed money for his inspiration. 'Inspiration', he called them. Drugs! Christ! Where was Crowley's snow? What about his desert-boots with the toes falling out . . . the ones he said he didn't mind even though his toes were frostbitten? . . . because up there on the mountain with the snow, nothing mattered except that we were close to the real thing, that Tao Yuan Ming had said: ' . . . climbing the mountains of the east to the accompaniment of a liquid stream, chanting a few songs, till the time comes when I shall be summoned away, having accomplished my destiny, with no cares in the world.' Summoned away.

"Yet," wrote Freda Crowley, "as far as I know, he has not written anything at all in months. So much for his inspiration!" Now Mrs Crowley may well be my friend's mother, but I know now why he wanted to leave home when so young. A mother's lack of understanding. Tch, tch, Freda, what were you doing when Lionel bought his typewriter and sat at that little desk in his bedroom, sometimes for entire weekends? Where were you when he received his cheque for two hundred pounds from the television people, for his play? And what emotion spurred you when enclosing

those little gratuities in Express Delivery envelopes? Was it love, Freda? Or was it your conscience? "Julie returned to Melbourne and two days later she committed suicide," continued the letter, "and I think this must have upset Lionel when he found out." Upset! Christ! Was there no end to this woman's stupid unfeeling blindness? "So my husband and I wrote to him a few weeks ago, but the only word we received in reply was that Lionel had been confined in solitary to a mental institution . . ." And then my eyes became blots and splotches . . . I think I shall always be able to read those lines again . . . without consulting the page . . . "but that it was useless trying to write to him because he is in a critical condition and is not expected to live. He took an overdose of some drugs. I think it was Heroin. That's a very strong drug. He

shouldn't have taken it. Oh well, I thought you had been his best friend, so I wrote to bring you up to date on the news. Would you like me to write to you again if anything further develops?" My God! Is this woman true? Can she be a mother or, must she be the stuffed effigy of the mother Lionel might always have craved? I shall have to destroy that letter. I don't think I can read it again.

I have been sitting here trying to compose a blues number for him. But what would he like? Would he like a happy blues, or a down-low crying blues? Is he at present in a stupor, or is he happy? Is he alive? Is he able to think, to sing, to laugh, to dream? Or do my fingers pain for nothing . . . nothing, that is, but for the sake of demon time? Is the grey outside any gloomier than the blue in here?

CAN YOU DRAW BOUNDARIES

Sweet / can you draw boundaries in love
when we held
softly to each other
mixing movement in movement and
flowing together
in the one passion

and can you stop
one minute
that the world whole hung
on/
so tight
?

ROBERT CONNELL

A LOVER'S COMPLIMENT

It's as you say, I said,
To the girl with lollypop lips.
There is much sorrow in the world,
Misery, starvation, people cry for bread,
Complacency and suffering beneath one sun,
Murder and violence, people sick and sad—
It's as you say, I said.
Pouting her lips and straightening her skirt,
She looked at me with stupid cowlike eyes.
"I never said that," she said.

MICHAEL DUGAN

TO BE PRICKED BY THE EYE OF A NEEDLE, BUT STILL MANAGE TO LAUGH

Scene: Advertising office. A frail, disengaged young mod is doodling on a drawing board. Along side the board is a "Discatron" from which can be loudly heard the last 30 seconds of "We Love You", by the Rolling Stones. On the back wall is a poster proclaiming,

"FREEMEN, the walk shorts that don't wear you
but you wear them
when you wear FREEMEN"

As the record finishes a cigar-smoking, energy-exuding, middle-aged businessman enters and thrusts a cigarette pack at the mod,

Businessman: Here, have one of mine.

The mod takes it, lights it, stands it on its end and watches it burn until further notice.

The businessman places a hand on the mods shoulder and speaks slowly,

Businessman: You know, son, its a tough world, but if you're going to get anywhere in it, I always say you only have to remember one thing, and one thing only, (he steps back) Bulldozers can move mountains.

Mod: (sullenly and without looking up) Bulldozers break down.

Businessman: Mountains are but molehills, my son.

Mod: Molehills are the curse of the landscape.

Businessman: Clearasil can remove molehills, my son.

Mod: Clearasil dries out the skin.

Businessman: Wet skin breeds tinea, my son.

Mod: Tinea is only skin deep.

Businessman: University controlled tests have shown that lack of depth is the main cause of failure, my son.

Mod: Failure is only the definitional antithesis of success.

Businessman: Success comes only from hard work, my son.

Mod: (in mocking sing-song voice) And hard work is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration.

Businessman: (unabashed) Adam can remove perspiration problems, my son.

Mod: (again sullen) Adam is dead.

Businessman: But his spirit lives on, my son.

Mod: Lives on? But life is cheap and Adam is expensive.

Businessman: You can't get something for nothing, my son.

Mod: (tone unaltered) Nothing is not a four legged quadruped.

Businessman: (uncertain now) But that's a logical impossibility.

While the businessman is speaking the mod places "My Generation", by The Who, in the "Discatron" and plays the last 70 seconds, quietly at first. When speaking he now looks straight ahead.

Mod: A ha! But God made all the little logical impossibilities.
my father!

(Then recited quickly)

ah when your spirit is dead

and you find that Adam is for women

and hard work is the straw that breaks the camel's back

and there is only perspiration where the action is

thick skin where the Clearasil should be

and university controlled tests where the inspiration once was

in short, when the mountains lie before you

in the dried out landscape of your life

and your camel is broken down

(slower) have Faith, my father,

and the spare parts shall be added unto for nothing.

The mod now turns the record up loud, picks up the poster on his drawing board and nails it vigorously over the "FREEMEN" poster.

"FAITH, the four legged quadruped that doesn't swallow you

but you swallow it

when you swallow FAITH"

The stage blackens as the music ends.

B. TOOHEY

SOLDIER, SOLDIER

Soldier, soldier, will you marry me
With your rifle in your hand?
No, my dear, I must fight the enemy
Far off in a foreign land.

Soldier, soldier, will you sail away
With countless thousands more?
No, some will go and many more will stay
For our country's not at war.

Soldier, soldier, were you picked to be
With the bravest men of all?
No, my dear, you must simply wait and see
If your number's on the ball.

Soldier, soldier, do they take their pick
From those who want to kill?
No, my dear, if the killing makes you sick
You must fight against your will.

Soldier, soldier, will you recognize
Your foe, and make him yield?
No, my dear, he'll be wearing the disguise
Of a peasant in his field.

Soldier, soldier, will you take the blame
For those who mean no harm?
Friend and foe will look pretty much the same
When we burn them with napalm.

Soldier, soldier, will I kneel and pray
That the war may not be long?
No, my dear, it's for men themselves to say
That men shall do no wrong.

Soldier, soldier, will you love me now
And not wait for your return?
No, my dear, no child of mine shall grow
While wives and children burn.

Soldier, soldier, will you have me weep
While youth and love go by?
Each night in anguish while you sleep
Unchilded women cry.

Soldier, soldier, must I mourn the dead
Who will suffer at your hand?
Weep, my dear, on their cold and bloody bed
It is I who lie unmanned.

TIMOTHY KLINE

CONJUGATE THE VERB A'MAO

To compensate for having a
muse live in my
standard lamp, the fate
of a poet in every poe, and
to relieve the innate frustration
of watching a grieving sheep's
brain row a boat across
the moat at the bottom of my vermouth
flask I'm forced not asked to accept
my psychedelic dragon's concept that
sensational sodomy divorces
those trench-eyed lovers who died
like metallic lice over,
beside, on, and inside the ricepaper
quotations of yellow vapours in
a red plastic cover.

PAX VOBISCUM

The unique quality of spending
Sunday on a village green
is that church bells can be heard
but not seen in the distance
and while you laze
on the lawn the spawn of your
resistance to spiritual labour
grows when devotees show contempt
for an agnostic neighbour's
nose.

CIRCENSES

Even
when a Platonist
denies the existence
of his being
and lies spreadeagled
a sophisticate
camel-stitching philosophy
in the crack of youthful
cheeks between
his hands
Romans will wait
thighs itching
for hours
to pay their fee
and watch the ritual
from the
grandstand.

R. J. DEEBLE

WHO'LL TAKE A GLOVE ?

I wonder how many of you remember me? Billy Parsons. Not too many of the young blokes, I suppose, but there was a time when every man in Australia who was worth a cracker used to come and see my boys fight. Even though I do say so myself, I had one of the greatest troupes of fighters in the country.

Of course, what with the way things are today, the older people seem to have parked themselves in front of television sets for the rest of their lives, and the young blokes aren't interested much in fighting. If they want to impress a girl they do it by driving some fancy little sports-car at 100 miles per hour, or wearing crazy clothes, or having their hair long as a girl's, or something like that. They don't rely on being anything, if you see what I mean.

Now to my way of thinking this just doesn't make sense. People don't realize what they're missing. They just don't realize.

Let me try to tell you how it is when you drift into some town round about Show Day. You have with you maybe two or three abos (they're always big drawcards), and a couple of white boys. You move down to the show-grounds, and look around for the best spot, and then you pitch the tent and go to work. There are always a lot of blokes just nosing around and the sooner you get the boys moving about the more likely you are to create a good impression, if you see what I mean.

All around you there is activity. Stakes are being driven into the ground. Platforms are being erected. The great steel "Globe of Death" is being carefully pieced together for its frightening task. A shrewd-looking, foxy-faced man is erecting a giant spinning wheel with little numbers and hooks all over it. He is spinning it again and again, and fiddling with something at the back of it. The clowns walk about in their baggy trousers. And out on the oval the sleek trotters are shuffling around the circuit in a slow work-out, their coats so fine you can see the jagged line of the veins underneath.

In our tent there's plenty of activity too. In one corner a white boy works on the big

bag. There is the wunk-wunk as the big gloves strike home. The heavy bag jerks convulsively like some lifeless body. One of the boys has a strained leg. The smell of the training oil comes sharp against your throat as old Ted, the rub-man, works patiently on the glistening limb.

In the ring two boys work out. There is the sput , sput of the gloves as they warm up, moving in casually and catching the blows on each other's gloves.

Tat-tat-tat-tat as an abo skips rope. Abo skipping rope. Tat-tat-tat-tat.

The big day arrives. It is Show Day. Everywhere there is noise and bustle. People are pushing and jostling blindly, their feet stirring the earth to a fine powdery dust. The sticky-sweet faces of kids push among the crowd. There is a smell of sweat, dust and hot-dogs in the air, mingled with the sharp cries of the side-show attendants. Show Day.

Over at our tent we are preparing for the first afternoon show. The boys are standing along a platform erected outside the front of the tent, high above the heads of the crowd. The big abo heavyweight is beating on a bass drum. The rest of the boys are doing a bit of a shuffle around in their silk dressing gowns, stabbing their bandaged hands into the air and weaving about as if they were in the ring. And me, I've got the mike in my hand and I'm spruiking as hard as I can go.

"Roll up, roll up, ladies and gentlemen. Step inside to see the greatest troupe of fighters yet to tour Australia. See the great Charlie Cougar, the colossus from California —".

And here the big abo with the drum takes a bow, and I give them a lot of stuff about Charlie being a former Australian and Empire Champion. Of course, he isn't from California or anywhere near it, but that doesn't worry me any because the crowd, they love that sort of thing, and they expect it whether it's true or not, and I'm not a man to disappoint them. Besides, I bet old Charlie could have won all those titles if he'd really wanted to and put his mind to it. It's just that he prefers to drift around the country with me.

Anyway, after a bit more shouting and drumming and getting things up to a pitch, I ask if there is any local boy who wants to fight Charlie. Of course I have my own boy planted in the crowd, but this time it isn't necessary because there is a bit of a stir near the back and someone calls out, all rough and confident like, "I'll have a go".

The local boy is obviously a pug. I can see that from the way he walks up to the platform, even before I see the thickened eyelids and the nose that doesn't run so straight. Anyway I get him up on the platform and he's a big bloke, almost as big as Charlie, and I get them to shake hands, and Charlie does his old trick of trying to hang one on the local boy while I hold him back, and of course I immediately declare the meeting open, and the crowd pours in, and old Ted is there collecting the money so fast you can hardly see his hands as the crowd pushes past him into the tent.

My boys box a few preliminary fights to get the atmosphere, but the knockdowns are all fixed because I don't believe in letting my boys knock each other about—after all, that would be like burning your own house down, wouldn't it.

Then comes the fight the crowd have been waiting for. It is hot in the tent, and the air is so thick with tobacco smoke it hurts your eyes. The crowd is hushed, sort of expectant. The local boy gets out of his gown, and he looks pretty good, and I feel a little nervous just for a moment because I've offered a £100 purse to the winner. But then Charlie comes into the ring, and does a bit of a dance around, and I feel alright again. Gee, that abo's got a beautiful body! It brings a lump to my throat just to look at him shaking his arm there, the muscles flopping about under the oiled skin.

In the first few rounds the local boy doesn't look too bad at all. He keeps his guard nice and high and you can tell he's an experienced boy, the way he steers clear of the corners. I keep watching him very closely. I don't need to watch Charlie. I've seen Charlie fight hundreds of times, and it's just like I'm fighting myself when Charlie is in there. I can sort of feel how he's going. But I watch the local boy all the time, and I notice the way he's covering a lot of ring. He's feeling good in those early rounds, and he hasn't been hit much, and the whole town is barracking for him, and he dances around very fancy and covers an awful

lot of ground. Old Charlie just shuffles around in mid ring, close and economical, like he always does, but working away quietly and efficiently with his left. He's a real tradesman, Charlie.

It is not till they have gone four rounds that I realize it. I look at Charlie, there in his corner, and see the sweat on the great body glistening like rain-drops on an asphalt road. Then I notice something funny. The local boy is not sweating. He has gone four rounds and he is not sweating at all. Automatically I look at his legs, and I see the way the muscles in his thighs are fluttering. That's enough for me. I've handled a lot of fighters and I know the signs. The only thing to do is to make the fight last as long as possible, so I give Charlie the drill about back-peddalling and making his opponent carry the fight to him. If I'm right, and that local boy is a drunk been dried out this last week, he'll never go the distance.

It goes on this way for another two rounds, and it is just towards the end of the sixth that the bleeding starts. The fine scarlet trickle from the corner of the white mouth. I'm not even sure Charlie hit him. The crowd makes a little, hushed noise of pain as if it is they who have taken the punch.

In his corner at the end of the round the local boy lolls back and tries to look casual, but there is a queer, turned-in look about his eyes, and I give Charlie the message to step it up.

When they go out for the seventh the local boy is all covered up and careful, while my abo is standing high, proud and confident. Watching, watching. The solemn eyes in the black head very deep now, and the trickle of blood from the white mouth become a slick rivulet down the local boy's cheek. Stalking, stalking. The beautiful black body stalking the ring. It comes very quickly, and the local boy's head jerks back in a little scarlet spray, and I step in and quickly raise Charlie's glove while the local corner pick their boy up.

Old Ted pulls up the tent flap, and the crowd moves out, quiet and kind of thoughtful now, until there is no-one left. The sun shines in through the opening, and the tobacco smoke looks very blue in the empty tent. It's been a good day. I pick up the gloves from the canvas and move towards the rear of the tent.

Time for a beer.

IN WHICH AN AGRARIAN REFORMER HEARS A PROPHECY, OF THE DAY THE WORLD TURNS OFF

(Telling It Just Like It Was, In April, 1966, on the West Coast of America)

Having just planted the last of his quota, two dozen hard round kernels, seeds of Cannabis Sativa, Michael, a happy lad, goes dancing among dead weeds, below the freeway embankment where his sowing's been done; he's grip bag in hand talkin' halycon to himself, galumphing aged wingtips into circle turns and gypsy strides, cutting zigs and zabs in the marshiness of spring, sweeping the sky with the extension of his free arm.

"Ho!" shrieks Michael, and that rattles falsetto in the crotch of the built-up entrance and exit ramps for the fantastic white freeway, Federal Interstate 5, where it runs outside Eugene, Oregon, through the wide Willamette Valley, straight as J. Edgar Hoover, north, towards Portland, Oregon.

East are the Blue Cascade Mountains, Three Sisters, and to Michael's mind's ear, the snow's rotting there, ticking, from yesterday's föhn, the Chinook; west, well, west shows this Chinook's sun'll soon get forgot in the storm boiling up, climbing down the Coast range hogbacks west, like a dragon of black scarves. Michael shivers, breathes the smell of spring mud, sighs. Nods to a flower, a miniture blue diamond, caught in a cash of sharp shadowed sun.

He humps out to the apex of the north-bound lanes and the merging lane from the overpass complex (sits down on his grip, after removing a sign and a dismantable bamboo fishing pole, which, mantled, serves as a placard pole for the sign, that says *FREAK!* ('tis an arabesque silk screen design).

He thumbs with both hands, impartially, to the left as they merge, to the right as they go, northwards. They don't stop, but sometimes they stare, or even wave.

In an hour he tires of looking at long fields of sparse silver cartlidge remaindered of last summer's weed, just today licked by green flame beneath. Eighty years ago, it's rumoured, these expanses were forests primeval. But now they're alfalfa and Soil Bank. He stirs.

Rearranged, *FREAK!* placard twixt knees, he regards a text. The assigned reading covers alleged sexual repression amongst the Cheyenne, who apparently felt the amount of Holy Spirit to be doled out to each child was limited, and that if you wanted your kinds to have Lots of It, you'd best space them at least seven years apart. So dad practiced contraception by abstinence, and what's more, didn't even mess around, according to Pyle, Harvard, 1927, who hypothesized the braves didn't like it much. But Torgaard, the prof, says "Abstinence is no proof of frigidity—I have never met a Plains Indian incapable of orgasm." Torgaard was down on indiscriminate application of Freudian rubrics, he'd done his doctorate on Vagina Dentata symbols among matriarchal Southwest tribes, and was also a great gobbler of mescal buttons. "Facts, not Theories," Torgaard frequently thundered; rumour had it he laid randomly selected undergraduates. Good man, he.

The second hour; Michael hangs up Cheyenne hangs up, starts plotting a complex curve representing the volume of noise made by passing vehicles. Wind rush as they come, at the legal seventy or over, an explosion as they pass observer (A)—sometimes waving; the exhaust is more distinguishable as they tail off into the distance. Some semis pass within 6 feet of (A) temporarily deafening observer. Variables prove too numerous, or something; the experiment's abandoned. Note: cigarette

smoking quickens peristalsis. And then: the impotent fury of the stranded hitch hiker descends.

In a funk he asks God, "Will our hero be caught out in the rain?" Considers dismantling sign, becoming covert, perhaps moving from (A) to an unknown (B).

But lo! a crunch of gravel, a presence in deed: a well dinged '56 Cadillac Coupe de Ville, primered grey and black in imitation of a leprous Bantu, buggy whip antenna lashed bonnet to boot, and Shades of *Pain*—a sign inside the windshield saying *San Francisco CHRONICLE PRESS CAR!*

Michael black bearded, brown eyed to blue eyes and red beard through the tinted rollup window, joins in the reefing at the balked door handle. Out of respect for the lone occupant's fury, he gives this one pumping hand, and with the other attempts breaking down his banner's staff, gets frustrated, and overdoes it: There are little metal dick and poozle joints to interruptus, but Michael, flailing, snaps a bamboo section and says "Ah—heck."

The driver recollects the sesame, the door chunks open, in sits Michael with the ruins of his strange device. Both faces full of hair twist back over respective shoulders, and are assured no one is thundering up from behind. The great car whirrs hydromatically onto the horizon strip.

Slowly it attains seventy, and the driver takes his foot a half inch off the floorboards. Wheel well in hand, thick, thickly haired forearms, beneath the blond thickets old faded anchors, eagles and snakes.

Michael says, "hi."

"Where you going?"

"Portland."

"I'm going to Seattle," the driver says.

"Gets me there."

The driver nods agreement.

Michael asks, socially, "you with the *CHRONICLE*?"

"Nope." The driver casts sidewise eye on his passenger. "Smoke?"

"Sure."

The driver offers Lucky Strikes. "Look—got any matches? I figured to pick up somebody with matches. Ran out. Hate to turn off for such a peewaddie thing."

"Think so—yeah, here we go," answers Michael. He continues autobiographically,

"Happened to me in Mexico once; had to turn off 'cause we ran out of matches."

Cigarettes get lit—the driver would rather light his own; the freeway goes on in sameness, rushing a little at the front of the car, and the two don't talk for some minutes, smoking. Then Michael asks, "you dig Seattle?"

"I got friends there. Anywhere you got friends is a good place," instructs the driver.

"Oh yeah," agrees Michael.

"Go to school?"

"Portland State."

"What for?"

"Beat the draft."

The driver nods in approbation. "I once'n the Navy. Drunkenness my only excuse. Had to piss my bunk six weeks straight to get out."

"Maladjustment."

"Evacuation platoon. Medical discharge."

"Tougher to pull, now, I hear," says Michael.

They listen to wind buffets. Michael asks, "where'd you get the car?"

"I own it."

"It's beautiful."

"Isn't it?"

"Been down in 'Frisco, then?"

"Yep."

"Where?"

"Marin."

"I got a friend in Marin—two friends. One in Millbrae, one in Greenbrae," comments Michael.

"Must be a good place for you, then," the driver allows.

"Oh yeah," says Michael, and presses on, "What you do down there?"

"Teevee camera, some film camera."

"Who you with?"

"Freelance. Jack Douglas, some."

"Oh. This guy in New York wanted me to get work with Ideal Development in Tiburon. R-K-O group—know it?"

"Yeah. Pricks."

"Oh. Anyway, I never tried. I just got back from Africa and I had to duck into school."

"Africa? You in Peace Corps?"

"Nope."

"Oh—where were you?"

"West Coast, like Conakri, Dakar, Free-town."

"I thought you might've been Tangiers. I got a buddy Tangiers."

"Must be a good place."

"Oh yeah," smiles the driver, taking no offense. When Michael doesn't go on, he asks, "you work in Teevee?"

"Did. I do more artsy-craftsy stuff nowadays."

"Where?"

"At school."

"You kids take dope?"

"Some do, I s'pose," says Michael, judiciously.

"Oh. They take dope in San Francisco."

"So I've heard."

"Who told you?"

"I read it in the papers."

The driver appears to think about newspapers. His brows darken. He says, "I'm doing a job on dope in the schools, you know, researching it. To write a thing."

"For the *CHRONICLE*?"

"Not exactly. What kind of dope you kids taking?"

Michael mentally checks his pockets for stray seeds—evidence. "Different kinds, I guess."

"C'mon. Mary wana? Heroin? Acid?"

"Dope's dope, isn't it?"

The driver offers another Lucky Strike. Michael accepts. They light the cigarettes; the driver replies: "No son, I got to disagree with you there."

"Why?"

"Heroin's addictive. Mary wana isn't. You know that, don't you?"

"They're both highly illegal."

"Do you think pot'll get legalized?" the driver asks.

"I doubt it," Michael decides, after deliberation.

"Why not? It's safe, sure, don't do no one no harm?"

"It's highly sinful."

"How exactly do you mean that?"

"Don't you think it's sinful?"

"What do you mean," the driver says quickly.

Michael moves to the attack, saying, "I'll bet you smoke it all the time!"

"What is this?"

"Just an observation," says Michael, giggling.

"Do you smoke it?" asks the driver.

"All the time."

"Then you're one of the student drug takers."

"Tumbled to," Michael confesses. "You've found me out," he admits.

"Basically, it's pretty easy to pick—I can tell a head a half mile off."

"Oh, me too."

"Are you holding?" the driver inquires.

"Oh no. Buried the last of the sinful weed full three hours ago."

"Really? Hey, you must be one of the Planters!"

"Yep."

"I'll be damned. Hey, want to turn on?"

"O.K."

"Now I don't usually when I drive, but Christ, you're one of the cats been planting grass all over—you like hash? 'Course you do."

"Right."

"Feel up under the dashboard. Two pipes. No. To your right—gottem?"

"Groovey."

"Good." The driver reaches above the sun visor and finds a battered pack of Lucky Strikes. "There's a lump in there, somewhere. Prime 'em up, O.K.? I mean, you know what to do, don't you?"

"Oh yeah."

The driver licks a couple of thick fingers. Michael prepares the pipes, and having done so, says, "Where's there's dope there's hope."

"Uhm," the driver says, "Don't pack'em too tight. Matches?"

Michael begins giggling.

These pipe's cousins are shot at County Fairs, lit now and turning warm to the touch, and the smoke sucked into great lip biting holds of breath, sniffings to lay the smoke onto the area of the sinuses and the plush plumbing behind the face, french inhalings, chugging exhalations. The driver cracks a wing, and Michael giggles more, losing smoke, it seems, from the ears. "Yeah man, ventilate," exclaims Michael, eyes bright into a wrap: "You know I read a manual they give young fuzz on how to detect hemp abuse? You know you're supposed to smell the odor of 'cubeb' cigarettes? Cubeb cigarettes! Ineverhearofsuchathing, before or since! Anyone who smokes cubeb should be fine and *incarcerated!*"

"There is such a thing, I think, cubeb," the driver says mildly, "a kind of tobacco, I think. Wanna pack me 'nother hit or three?"

"Oh yeah, yeah."

"It's funny," says the driver, and then goes off. "See like all this paranoia about the law."

I mean, we sat here for quarter hour waiting for each other to show a *badge*. But, like cops, fuzz in fuzz suits, the actual boys in blue, I see at this party on Page Street over the weekend, standing over a tub, helping to shave bricks, which is where this stuff comes from.”

“Groovey—here’s you load.”

“Thanks, See, it’s already started, we’re turning on the flat feet, changes going to come, my son. They already got to get Feds in, because the municipal climate in ’Frisco is anti-bust. You know what happens when you turn on the cops, don’t you?”

“Beats me. A wart cure? Glossalalia? Flatulence? Hard rye loaves?”

“Maybe all those things. But what I had in mind is an important sociological *change*.”

“Oh, oh. Look. Hey. I boggle. I mean, I dropped 650 micros, uh, yesterday, yes, and now this has your friend the policeman pestled up for me is, like going to my head. Leave us leave off talking about changes!”

“YOUR STONED!”

“YES!” They giggle. Michael explains: “This car has a curved windshield. Ergo optic distortion. I tune in on a metaphor resonance. You rave on about cops, I get vertigo. Deep in my heart, I know the world is round, falling away, it’s easy to slip off.”

“Oh yeah.”

“Oh yeah,” echos Michael. The two simultaneously take huge lifting hits, until four eyes bug tearfully at the white freeway before them, iridescent tender spring green grass growing, going audibly away in a wake beside their black barge, beneath a corybantic sky writhing the invisible dance of its winds unwinding from the dragon’s baleful glare to the west.

A rain squall falls down the nearing hills, pummels the car with pillows and yowells. The two heads stare at the speedometer as the heavy car shudders in the gust. 45. “Heh,” they mutter in unison, and the driver puts his foot down on the floor; seventy is less conspicuous. The violet behind the storm seems to be the sun setting.

(Now these two wrap and rave at each other, stories too numerous and diffuse to mention here—you’d be high to dig them—so we omit them, all except for the last one, the story about the)

PEOPLE WHO TURNED OFF

The wind buffet from the vents slips into Michael’s cavernous head, rattles down the

halls, finally slips shizzing into the sinkhole in his cervical vertebrae. The driver says, “I’ve got this idea, see, it’s commercial. I mean, I don’t know how you feel about that, but it’s *real*. Hardly anybody is neutral about that part of the American bag. We all come up on it hard.”

“Oh yeah.”

The driver wrestles with himself: “You know, you bastard, you’ll prolly steal this and sell it yourself.”

“Calculated risk,” encourages Michael.

“Oh yeah. Anyhow, ’spose the world really does turn on? You know, pot planted all over the place nowadays.”

“Sure. We’re all planting it. Plant dope, give it away. As ye sow, so shall ye reap. Keeps the Black Hand out of it by lowering profits. Big spring planting drive. I personally planted two pounds of seeds this weekend, all the way between Eureka, California, and that overpass back there. Scattered over 210 miles adjoining the great white F-I-5.”

“So you told me.”

“Table Rock, Medford. Stroke of genius. Sowed most of the seeds up there. Sandy soil, plenty sun, good drainage. It’ll grow like the legendary Jaffe tree, it’ll grow sixteen feet high and the pollen will stone farmers and their stock in the spring.”

“Good piece of work, that,” says the driver. He has heard about the Jaffe Tree three times already, and interrupts. “Anyhow, as I was saying, in a few years, you kids will become legislators, take over gradually, and zap! Being high will become the new Righteousness, everybody will do their thing.”

“Go on.”

“Yes. Well, eyes shall be opened and there will be an end to petty shit. Work shall become sport, and nobody will never come down on nobody. Everybody will do their thing, plant that seed, hoe that—”

“—corn.”

“Yeah, well, maybe even corn, yeah.”

“Go on.”

“Yess. Well, troops begin digging each other instead of fighting, and all the generals beyond redemption bum trip and commit hari kari, and the generals within redemption become necklace jewelers and sandal makers.”

“Ho makes sandals,” interjects Michael.

“Ho is turned on,” says the driver, polemically.

"Ho is still fighting," says Michael, ever the skeptic. "Goddam warlock according to me. Pox on both camps."

"Anyhow," resumes the driver.

"Go on."

"Yes, well a new equilibrium is reached, what with everybody skulled. A new set of priorities, at any rate, a new order, or disorder, however you want to look at it."

"O.K. What then?"

"Trouble."

"Oh no."

"Oh yeah. Trouble. Somebody *turns off*."

"Got the picture, man," says Michael. "Alienation."

"That's right. Perfect symmetry."

"Just like in physics."

"Physics?" The driver tugs at his beard. "New one on me. Usually some bastard says, 'just like in Huxley'."

"I'd never say a thing like that," promises Michael. "Go on."

"Yes. Well, naturally, a social problem arises. Seems some people get addicted to being *down*, others just like crashing for kicks, and some of these people, when they crash, don't bounce. They shatter. See?"

"Oh yeah," says Michael. "Seen it happen, seen it happen."

The driver finally turns on the windshield wipers. Michael feels better for it. "Yes, soon there's an underground of misfits, malcontents, dropouts. They do their own things, they won't conform to social niceties, they develop their own mores. They invent a money system, and personal fascism, and repression, and all these other things to make social organization possible at their quantum level of psychic activity."

"Oh yeah."

"Now the normal people, the heads, treat them humanely, but naturally, since these drug non-takers are usually pretty unproductive by the standards of the community, there's discrimination, and legislation, and so on. Even when they're treated, there's a high incidence of recidivism, they've got inadequate personalities, see, keep drifting back to their old squalid situations."

"They refuse to acknowledge the error of their ways, they create a myth of their superiority, they proselytize, they spread the word: 'We're not doing anything immoral, we're unfairly persecuted, there's nothing wrong with being low.'"

"Liberal thinkers gradually come around to the position that people should be allowed not to take drugs. A great controversy rages. There is intergenerational stress. It develops that people in high places have come down. The new Cycle, see?"

"Oh yeah."

"I see it as a great new polarity," sums up the driver, "I foresee new Highs and Lows."

"Poetry," applauds Michael. "This is where I get off."

"Wow!" the driver exclaims—"Time has really gotten out of whack."

"Oh yeah," says Michael. "Anywhere 'bout here'll do. Lessee. Book, bag, flag, I'm all O.K. to jump."

They have come to the weird half-finished mangle of six lane freeway complete with triple decker interchanges, ramps, bridges, exits, entrances, truck routes, detours, overhead signs, blinking amber lights, underarm signs, and signs saying EMERGENCY PARKING ONLY which signify there are almost no shoulders to pull onto. The Cadillac sashays to a halt on the wet pavement.

"Hustle," the driver yells. "Some bastard sure'll rear end me!"

The door is jammed. Michael tries it several ways. The driver makes an ulcerous noise as three semis in indian file blast by two feet from his ear. Michael decides easy does it. The door opens. "Right, thanks man, later."

"Oh yeah."

The Cadillac goes bye-bye, cavitating. Here the rain falls straight down in heavy drops; a depression has occupied Portland, Oregon. In the last liquid light he darts across the screaming freeway, fear in his mouth. Survives, doesn't drop anything. Climbs the fence, ducks under the Ross Island Bridge, through a pedestrian tunnel decorated with neat haiku graffiti, up Kelly Street. To the commune. Past the hallway where Ed the landlord is having another argument with his invisible stepson, allegedly a Hell's Angel, past Ed's snappish senile Spaniel, up the stairs creaking, dripping wet. The door is locked. He knocks.

"Who dere?" inquires Tanya, in her stalling voice.

"Jesus my witness," declares Michael, "I am no cop, I am Ever Lovin' Holy Moses Bonaparte, your immortal friend."

"Well, why the hell'd you knock," shouts Rose.

"'Cause you locked the door, as ever when you're being sneaky."

The door opens. There's kanaka looking John from Chi, so intense, giggling and waving his arms over his head, in one hand a roach in a paper clip crutch, gunbarreling high, smoke spurting from his nostrils, that thus flared, were lighter than the rest of his face, except for the eyes. There's red headed Tanya sitting beside him on the floor, playing with his calf, making a try for the joint. And big bonny Rose, in her house coat, freckled all over. "Good to see you, you bistard," says Rose.

"Oh me, oh my, it's good to see you all, yes," says Michael, kissing Rose and then wrestling free to kiss Tanya, and John, slapping his ass as he pulls him up from the floor,

saying "Ho! Baboo! How ya onion, ya tomato?"

"Oh yeah, man, it's more better you should be here, Michael boy!"

"I want to f—," announces Rose.

"I first want to tell you all about my trip, and this man who picked me up and turned me on, and also of heroic agrarian endeavours," says Michael.

"That'll prolly take all night," wails Rose.

"Tell us later," suggests Tanya, ever the diplomat. "Rose is real horny."

"Real horny," John confirms.

"Yeah, tell us later," says Rose.

"Ah—heck," Michael says, taking the joint from John. "O.K."

"Promise you won't hurry, either," says Rose, "just so you can get back out to talk to John."

POEM

We are the meanings of our mothers' laughing
And our fathers' wide brown thinking
In the quiet spaces of the day.
We are held in the hands of houses
By fingers of waving light
And ears of noise and music.
We are taken up
And shaped
With art
From clay to bone
From bone to soul;
Bright-twisting fire
From our own heart
Forges deep the whole.

WENDY HOROWITZ

VESTIBULES OF GLORY

A breeze from the river.

I walked along the embankment, conscious of the crisp breeze rising from the river. Trees along the way retained the dark, bare intensity of the expiring winter yet, here and there, occasionally, a rounded suggestion of green heralded the approach of spring.

My feet tapped out brief slogans on the pavement. It was a time of hope, of renewal; a moment such as I was accustomed to experience as a young law student when Sheila, on one of her rare visits to London, would accompany me on a Sunday stroll to the precincts of the Middle Temple.

It was a period of transition. A phase in which contemplation and reflection are compelled by the implacable necessity of events to give place to action. I cast a last look at the Thames and turned to enter the vast, grey complex of Whitehall.

The envelope on the desk.

The porter, Jamieson, nodded to me as I passed his cubicle beside the entrance to the Ministry.

"Good morning, Mr Eliot," he said, deferentially; the greeting of a man who, after many years in the service of anonymous masters, was accustomed to conceal his natural familiarity beneath an air of genial formality.

He had a brisk, confident mind which, within the limited scope of its duties, functioned with unsuspected efficiency. I glanced at him keenly. The tone, although non-committal, had betrayed the hint of an inner meaning which had not quite become explicit.

"Good morning," I replied, briefly; but, even as I did so, cursing myself inwardly at having been forced into a posture of unnecessary heartiness; a reflection of the inner insecurity presently common to all members of my department in the face of the gathering crisis.

I slipped into my room on the second floor, thankful at having escaped an intolerable pro-

longation of a conversation which, in any event, was unlikely to advance or impede our cause.

The envelope which I expected, feared, and yet almost welcomed, lay face upwards on the mahogany desk. I recognized the firm hand of the Minister in the single phrase "Lewis Eliot" boldly squeezed into the upper, right-hand corner of the front.

For a moment, I was tempted to open it immediately. As if, by the luxury of impulsive action, to remove the oblique threat which this sober rectangle of paper represented. However, submitting to the discipline of years, I did not finally turn to the letter until I had settled some routine departmental matters, dictated one or two White Papers on Defence and drafted a letter to a colleague at Cambridge.

The message was clear and yet attended by that ambiguity which of necessity accompanies matters of importance. "I have decided to act. Phillip Goodman." The note-paper bore the seal of the House of Commons.

Sunlight on polished wood.

I turned the note over carefully and then read it a second time. Although, superficially, the import of the sentence was clear, already the internal meaning was becoming blurred by a cursory consideration of the available alternatives.

I put through a call to Margaret and, as the distant telephone commenced its insistent ringing, I watched the morning sunlight slant into the shadow of my In-tray.

Eventually, she answered. Immediately the deliberate normality of my tone roused her from her sleep as she grasped the sense of urgency implicit in the flatness of my voice.

"Good morning," I said. She waited for me to continue. By means of that peculiar shorthand of language which quickly establishes itself at the heart of every marriage, she had already comprehended the essentials of the situation.

"Yes, it is," she said, after a moment; carefully avoiding any reference to the extravagance of my silent emotions.

I read the Minister's message to her in full, aware that she would appreciate every innuendo, every nuance, every subtle gradation of meaning. Then, I said simply, "I am going to see him immediately."

A window over the park.

Three hours later I entered his room. The Minister was standing by the window, his attention concentrated on some incident occurring in the park below. He gave no sign that he was aware of my presence.

He was a large, powerful man who gave an impression of youth even though the first, grey suggestion of age had appeared at his temples. I wondered how his robust physique would stand up to the gruelling months ahead.

He had a firm, muscular intelligence which was capable of digesting intricate problems without apparent effort. His ability to absorb minute points of detail within the space of a few weeks would be of value to our cause both in the House and in the country.

He was not of my kind. He had been born into wealth and, from an early age, he took it as his due to have greatness thrust upon him. In ordinary circumstances we would have had little in common; might well have despised each other. As it was, allied by a bond of mutual interest, I felt a sudden surge of affection for him; as if the fates, predicting our collaboration, had, from that moment, prepared our hearts for fellowship.

"Good morning," I said.

Dust on the telephone directory.

He turned away from the window and looked at me with his crisp, grey eyes. The single, confident movement shook off any remaining impression of age.

"I'm glad you were able to come," he said. He crossed to the solid, comfortable desk in the centre of the room. After a moment, he added, "I have decided to act."

It was as though the utterance itself had severed the knot of indecision. He was brisk, hopeful, alive.

"Furthermore," he continued, "I have decided to act immediately." His face was full of passion.

For a moment, I envied his ability to grasp

the nettle, to respond to events with such vigour; that reflex-like inner confidence which made him such a formidable opponent in committee, even in the presence of a quorum. That assumption of authority which enabled him to appreciate and yet disregard the hazards associated with our enterprise.

Nevertheless, the habit of discretion is not easily put aside. Although as deeply committed as himself, I felt obliged to reiterate the familiar arguments which we had so often discussed both in public and in private conference.

My advocacy of caution was of no avail. He was adamant. We were to proceed. We were to proceed at once. He had already put in motion the procedures required to summon the appropriate committee. Assuming it commenced its sittings by the end of the following year, with luck, and circumspection, the entire matter would be resolved, for better or for worse, by the conclusion of the parliamentary session preceding the election three years hence.

"We're going to see it through this time," he said, his voice sober with conviction.

For a moment, we discussed in a desultory fashion what moves we could usefully make in the remaining two months of the present session but our attention, mesmerized by the burning immediacy of the issue, wandered.

I prepared to leave. Before doing so, I deposited on his desk the two memorandums I had prepared the previous July which posited the need for resolute action in the face of the gathering crisis. They differed only in that the first emphasized the need to ascertain all the facts before taking a decision while as the second, designed to prepare a line of retreat, stressed the unimportance of the facts already known.

As I placed this material on his blotting pad, I noticed that the dust on the cover of his telephone directory had been swept away. Our relationship was intimate. He would know that a mere facade of purposefulness such as this could not deceive an experienced subordinate. It could only mean that he was, this time, in fact, going to act.

The click of a distant domino.

I worked late that night. Unconsciously, I had absorbed and responded to the sense of urgency which prevailed around me. Occa-

sional scruples at the enormity of our enterprise troubled my mind but, on such occasions, I found industry to be an effective sedative.

In the course of the afternoon I had contacted several powerful friends who, in an unofficial capacity, might be of assistance to our task. Owing to the unusual nature of my appointment to the department I had, over the years, retained a link with various members of the scientific fraternity; my brother Martin and other strangers.

It was an exhausting afternoon but I managed to engineer several small triumphs vital to our cause. After a keen debate, I persuaded Sir Francis Getliffe to do nothing and impressed upon Martin the importance of not writing to *The Times*. He was a passionate man who was accustomed to do things at once because he thought they were right. Eventually, he conceded that, having decided to act, it was unwise to precipitate a deadlock by a premature display of overwhelming strength.

Before leaving the office, I put through a call to my old Cambridge colleagues, Crystal and Brown. Over the telephone they sounded their usual self as I had known them twenty years ago; friendly, tactful, humane. After I had reminded them who I was, they immediately became enthusiastic about the project.

I briefly outlined the background to the day's events and concluded by mentioning that we had decided to act. There was a brief moment of silence. Then, above the static, I heard a faint click which signified that they had moved another domino into place in the complex configuration which represented the current strength of the factions. They returned to the phone and, after a few polite exchanges, I bade them farewell. Although I am not a religious man, it was heartening to know that someone was keeping the score.

The press speaks out.

The following morning I arose early and waited gloomily for the arrival of the newspapers. Scanning them over a cup of coffee for news of yesterday's events, my worst fears were confirmed. The press was against us. There was no mention of the affair. The only item of any relevance was a paragraph on the sports page to the effect that the Minister would kick the first ball of the day in a testimonial match at Twickenham; an oblique,

gnomic reference to the fact that he would shortly find himself off-side.

The press was against us. I turned to the window; cursing at this folly. The editorial silence was articulate. It was the opening shot in what promised to be a stern, enduring conflict. We had to be careful; each step invested with hindsight and foresight. Like Fouché, it was necessary that we should survive both the revolution and the empire.

A strange interview.

Mid-way through the morning, Rose, the permanent head of the department, sent me, through the agency of his secretary, a pleasant lad who had delegated the task to a subordinate, a lengthy memorandum. In essence, it requested me to finish my tea and step across the corridor to see him.

Rose had style. He inspired trust, confidence, occasionally, as in the present case, loyalty. I responded with several pages of affable foolscap indicating my acceptance.

When I entered the room I was surprised to find that Rose was not alone. The Minister, Rose, his secretary and several others. The Minister glanced round briefly at my entrance but then returned his gaze to the window; his attention caught by some incident in the park below.

"Good morning," I said, anxious to put the matter in its proper perspective.

Rose took the initiative. "Eliot," he said, with some severity, "From the point of view of our enterprise, it is, perhaps, a better morning than you realise. I have brought you here to accept your resignation."

Somewhere in the distance a tea cup rattled.

He continued. "You have been a good man in the past. Indeed, we have become accustomed to your faces. You have contributed much. Your integrity is manifest. Your attitude to the weather constant. However, the fact is, and I must speak quite frankly, we find that you tend to be, in a manner of speaking, impulsive. Furthermore," he indicated several reams of paper on the desk, "we are suspicious of your prose style. You abbreviate overmuch. Although you appear to appreciate, and to give you your due, frequently apply, the cliché you do not appear to revel in it as a linguistic device. Your tone is blunt and to the point. Too often, your words are full of passion."

Concluding his speech, he spoke earnestly, his words were full of passion. "Finally, there is the question of the unusual or, to put it more brutally, the irregular nature of your appointment. There is nothing for it. You must leave us."

Rose had been in the service for many years. Previously possessed of a lively, independent mind, I was surprised to find that age had come upon him with startling speed. He inspired no confidence. My gaze travelled past him as he continued to speak, alighted for a moment on the face of his secretary, a sallow, mean-spirited fellow, and eventually came to rest on the Minister. His powerful physique, which seemed to some imperceptive underlings

the external manifestation of a vast, inner authority was, in fact, an ostentatious display of arrogance.

Quietly, decisively, I said, "Good morning."

I returned to my office; shaken, drained, exhausted. My wife was there. I do not know how she came there. I only know she was there. In that peculiar shorthand common to every marriage, she still has a note of the occasion. She was undoubtedly there. I needed her. We faced each other. I lowered myself into a chair. The whole situation was hurtful and unnecessary. It was intolerable. Overwrought, I buried my face in a White Paper. My wife looked away. Then, for two minutes, I wept; cautiously, gradually, spontaneously.

TWENTY-ONE YEARS

Twenty-one singles fold in my hand,
one for each year.
Filing a thumb nail down crisp edges
I feel what this means to them:
neat icing on the cake, a large golden key,
my name tastefully scrolled.

Why do those few minutes late
burn down my throat when I swallow?
Is it how little I cared for the party, saying,
it was theirs, not mine,
with cinnamon sprinkled, hazel-nuts cracked
to some ideal of their own, saying
any number of years is an arbitrary date?

For me, a duty to be done—
polish on my black shoes, not a brush to my suede;
polite replies to the hundred banalities
mouthed by relatives among memories of their own
lived years before I was born.

A long glass stems between fingers, opening
to the rim circled pink with sugar:
a brandy cruster cooling in my hand
that chafed raw between the grip of parents
when I lived at home with them, alone.

Twenty-one years lie in those pounds of raisins,
in the cake standing on the lace cloth.
How icing smooths over bumps.
Knife slips through layers
to a chorus of wrinkled throats, raucous;
no speech from me, though, not even a request.
So little could be said; so much omitted.

With relations gone,
crumbs brushed from the table,
I drink the last flat champagne,
saying my thanks with a sincerity
that could not be acted, not even by me.
My mother, eyes moist, says
in the elegance of their dining room,
she hopes I wasn't bored.

GRAHAM ROWLANDS

THE GOLDENFISH :

in my newlove days,
when I still trembled at the colour
of fire, hotter than my eye,
hotter
hotter than the winds burning the sky.
in my newlove days,
when I still shouted with childglee,
at the wavesongs, seashells
sang
in my ear; songs of seabells.
in my newlove days,
when I still felt the blooditch
pace quickly in my veins;
quickly
as fall the winter rains.
in my newlove days
I discovered a silentland;
a wormknitdamp wonderland.

exploring the undrained ponds;
trapped in scabs of saltmarsh,
which lapped the mainstreet
of my everywalking day,
in a stormtear, seeding the sand,
I caught a goldenfish in my hand.

my hunting net thrown aside,
I lay upon the poolbank
gazing
at the curling swampgrass,
watching
the dragonflies spear
my eye's reflection.
I traced furred patterns
across the pondcheek calm
and slid my hand
beneath the tight waterskin,
raking the pebblethick.
fascinated,
I watched a goldenfish
swim into my hand,
curling
its fins around my fingers.
I lifted the captured fish
from the coolpond
and marvelled at the intricate eyes
and finfrailty of the creature,
gasping,
slipping and flipping
in my fingers.

my palm held death only
for the goldenfish,
so I relaxed my grasp
on its sleekbody
and watched
it sliceagain
into the softwater.

the goldensplinter spun in the watercone,
nibbling at my fingers,
as if inviting me
to hold it
again.

I could only stare at the freefish
stirring in the windpushed current.
a shining body in the muddycoil of reeds,
feeding upon my strange-flesh fingerweeds.

the goldenfish memory
haunts me now,

as the sun batters my body
and stuffs the year's horizon,
savagely in my mouth.

the stiflingheaven or nothing,
no-love-nothing,

leers

closer to my face now

sneers

with a wink, at the soonend of my body's
freewheeling

desire.

the goldenfish memory

haunts me now

recaptures the handcapped beauty

I caught for an instant,

when I was a child.

I will never be a child again,
untroubled by saltlove's pain.

IAN TEMPLEMAN

REQUIEM FOR A BLOODIED FEATHER

I watched a bird
clip and swing in patterns within the wind,
hang teetering on a singing wire, and
thrust its freeborn breast into the gale.
I saw its pale shape fade into the soft rain
and felt its strong smooth wildness
as it rose and glided in the shoreless sky—

and now that bird
stretched awkwardly on dull wax,
is pinned with stainless spikes;
stiffened chest has felt the knife's hard blade,
and skin and fat peeled back,
reveal the war mosaic to the shadeless light of knowledge.
Pull out the moulded organs,
examine the still heart in its crimson cavity,
probe to the height and depth and
strip each cell of its soft dark mystery.
The head is covered by paper—
too close to reality, that
clotted eye and
strained beak and
wrenched wing;
better the textbook fantasy of gut and vein.
The bird, you understand, is dead now,
so draw and forget it—
don't think of it flying.

NOELINE BURTENSHAW

I SHALL JOURNEY

I shall journey quietly into nowhere.
Beyond desire, beyond ambition,
there I shall raise a perfect cairn of words.

Love in that place will never be a torment.
Humbler, more perfect than any dying star,
our limbs will start up quietly from surprise
and our mouths be at one with the lapping water.

There will be no talk in that place—or if there is,
it will be of the seasons, of sunlight on the rocks,
of love, or of the returning hand of beauty.

All the faces, the laughter, the voices forgotten,
there we shall know the wind's undying secret,
there we shall hear the forgotten language
of quick life pulsing beneath the soil,
the water, eternal and holy, the sky.

Waking each morning renewed and beautiful
I shall kiss your tender lips with my lips.
Hand in hand and smiling, young and in love,
we will disappear quietly into the distance.

GAVIN BURGESS

BIRD OF GLASS

Do you remember the peacocks
that screamed from the Gardens behind our beach house?
In the mornings
above the sea noise they would shriek, thin as silver,
sharp and viridescent as lettuce
and the old, one-eyed
emu would play mocker with his drum-thud.

It still reaches to the present;
but those peacocks' ringed feathers
are dull as brown soil mud,
tarnished as the pennies in our game of shops
that clinked down the stair rail
between rows of pins.

What a young child I was
to think those summers could be held under
a glass bell;
I spun a metal thread between thumb and finger
and was not cut.

Remember we played
Leap and Run with each other on the sandhills
till we leapt into dark?
We were like that photograph
of the sinewed negro children
caught mid-air, laughs frozen.

Who will go back?
A drag-hemmed lady
conducting echoes from a park rotunda
sees the Council
workmen coming, shouting chop, chop, chop;
Her eyes fill as they hack at the floor boards
and her skirt seems to cling with a child's fingers
as some loose threads catch.

RHYLL McMASTER

PROLOGUE FOR A SUMMERCHILD ONLY . . .

a prologue
for a summerchild only—
a funnykindof damp, tumbling gesture
for a tired acrobat like me.
the words will bump
their heads together and knock their eyes;
be laughed at,
be shuffled,
be ignored
or tacked to the windowpane
for every sniffing whisperer and secretlender
to see.

if only the fishpond
was not so small as small
and forced me forcibly
around round round
roundandround.

yet I gurgle out the words meaninglessly
thinkingonemust

THINK . . .

that
tomorrow after tomorrow and again aftertomorrow
he will catch the difficult to dissolve
truth;
all my coinin the slot-self
is spent in love.
sadly
the spendthrift
spindrifft
summerchild cunningly evades capitaltax.

a man for all seasons?
no a summerchild,
joyful only
in the wallow and swelter of summerflippancy.
in the shysharp winds the heart contracts—
no love thoughts fly
or warm words skip on paper
or dance down the miles.
insular in an igloo of selfindulgence
the summerchild
plays coy puzzles
with new shining eyes and clever tongues—
. . . . deaf to the quixote knights
howling in the unknown
faroff faroff faroff
oncestumbledupon land.

a change
growing up
growing away
growing faithless
growing arrogant
growing careless
growing couldnotcareless
or smaller.

somewhere along the way
a wonderful onceuponatime love;
clutching a book of seashells
has lost itself.
forever
I wonder?

SUMMERCHILD:

summerchild,
the temperate, lush curl of wave
and fishflecked sea is your season.
honeywinds puff,
and saltwords rattle
in the cans of heartbinned reason.
winterhood, breaks the softboned smile
and sundross weary dolls, bare hostile
eyes, that shout death.
winterman,
hauls down your sunkite heart
and bayonets the wistful, paperwinged toy.
cloudmasks sneeze,
and rainwounds bleed
across the winding sheet of salt tinged joy.
winterhood, breaks the softboned smile
and sundross weary dolls, bare hostile
weapons, which will kill.

IAN TEMPLEMAN

THE VIGIL

Her mouth gaps, as though surprise or boredom
Had set hard. A sluggish film of dribble
Slides down and wets the sheets—an old woman
So near dead it seems a sophisticated quibble

To call her still alive. The shut eyes wobble
As something swirls under the clayey pits.
Beside the bed, trying to keep his quick eyes
Still, the boy keeps his turn, and sits.

He sees the lip flap and whistle, to suck in
God's free air. She liked to feel his hand
On hers, to warm the yellow bone beneath
Its black crust. Too young to understand

He sits in judgment. "You're old"—always been
But not as bad as now—"and you've been good,
So why keep living? You're nearly dead already,
Die and go to Heaven. I know I would."

He aims his lively eyes at hers, and frowns
With concentration, reducing his whole will
To a single act of kindness. "Die.Die.Die.Die."
He thinks he sees her chest becoming still

But then her lids open, and there her eyes
Lurk in shadows, grope and find him. Grey
As stone her tongue rolls in her mouth, helpless
To speak, the wheeze a scream. She thrusts away

His hand. Too young, he stares at the terrible eyes
That rise from the edge of the pit, rise to glare
The curse of an old woman who loves life, then sink
Back to leave just an old man with an old fear.

BOB HODGE

HOUR GLASS

one day there will be
nothing to write about
and every thing under
the sun will be old
and I will sit on my
verandah with
my white
hair
and
a
pipe
and puff
smoke from
the corner of
my mouth the re-
-tired schoolteacher
and I will snort at the
younger generation and
wonder what the worlds
coming to and know
its not its going
from. and i'll
close my eyes
because
there's
no-
thing
new to see
and then i'll know
the world has been here
before and has left and
once again returned in
curiosity

P. BRADSTREET

CEMETERY

Two lizards
with dry, dispassionate tongues
dabbed on the fence
between time's flickering fractions
faced the anarchy of light
with cool flesh
until my instinct finger
cancelled their attendance.

Two lizards
at random on the fence
and swapping feet
with camera-shutter quickness
crossed my human palm
with brief magic
as again my finger
signalled disappearance.

Two lizards
on the white gum's sloping tusk
ducked the first stroke
of my dead friend's knife
the day we crowded signatures
on smooth bark
and staged the easy trick
of permanence.

with lizard fingers
faster than the eye of love
that old magician, death,
between time's flickering fractions
has softened my concern
and there are only
dry, dispassionate tongues
carved into stone.

NICHOLAS HASLUCK

GREEN-BEGGAR

Green-beggar 'Employ the older men.
The foliage of years Free the younger,' says the sign.
And universities For other work.
Reads job vacant columns. Ah, employment office,
No peasants sit downside My second home.
Smelling winds Dear Mr Public Servant,
From plains or seas King of the Mountain Files,
And dreaming. I have a family and a flat
Of revolutions? (Who's this bummin smokes?)
Ha ha. And the rent goes up
Is there no place And my baby's too young
For them to dream To go to war.
Of Earth, cool Mother? Yes Mr Public Servant,
Mother whose belly I know you are no SERVANT
Is carved But please Sir,
For factories. Yes Sir,
Mother, whose belly I will not start any revolutions.
Is not caressed And I promise of so truly
By songs or winds. To stay at this job
See that college. Manymany years.
Ornamental rose. Of course, the profits.
True-bloomed. It is tough these days.
Belly-cosy. But I love your little office here,
Farmers' sons them. So homely, the way the men spit.
Dreaming. Naturally, I'm dependable—
Good vultures them, Only thirty jobs in five years.
One day. Retrenchment.
Curse their content! (Can they clean the scabs
Their chamber lain From a Metho's face.)
Philosophies, Philosophies,
Full of finesse, Full of Finesse,
Go sprawling Of course I like work.
Like the hyacinths The Profits.
Of vendors And I love you,
In bleak-windy winter. Mr Public Servant.

RON GRAY



MUSEUM METEORITE

Totally static.
You cannot imagine
This lump of metal
Moving, or burning, or being originated,
Or being in any way different.
All you can say about it
Is that it is covered with pits
Like a swiss cheese.

It simply is.

HAL COLEBATCH



MATILDA^{oo}

THE ROAD TO MATILDA

On that strong, black river
at nightfall—coming down slowly,
troubled by that winding road
where coming down at all
moved mountains round each corner
and the sun, spindling through trees,
a bright spider at my shoulder,
shrugged off on the next corner
as the mountains moved on;
coming down in that way, coasting
on to a strange highway and gradually
picking up breath—then chasing
the white lines doubling into darkness
until signposts flapped and danced;
becoming conscious of the billabongs;
half-crescents of gravel, occasional,
cut off, crossing under the highway,
petering out, pale, floating into bush—
yes, they were easily seen,
the remnants of those older roads
straggling from the mountains;
and later, dipping the headlights
for a moment, I glimpsed a swagman
camped by a coolabah tree—there,
as promised, a bearded shadow,
the sullen ghost with gleaming eyes.

NICHOLAS HASLUCK



TIME BREATHES

Time breathes another like
-ness
new faces, other loves,
and
thighs will forget
 what
question was asked.

SWEENEY REED



GULLS ON A YACHT

Like conspirators disturbed at a plot,
With slightly guilty stares, yet unshakeably bold
Seven smooth gulls stand on a yacht
(Comic-book Prussians have eyes equally cold).

HAL COLEBATCH



WORDS AND FEELINGS

I have feelings too, she cried,
From the depths of some abysmal sorrow.
Feelings?
Feelings for what?
Your feelings are burned embers
That not even my fuel can kindle.
They fall to ashes,
Pallorless and grey,
And are dispersed in the wind.
Too many times have you asked:
"Do you love me?"
As if that can be answered
By words
And reason.
If I knew what love was,
If I could define it,
Then I would tell you,
But not with words.
As it is, now,
We don't need them—
Words.
For they are dead,
Like burned embers and ashes.
Try a public orator next time!

ROSS HAIG



THE EVANGELIST :

the evangelist
spat
spewed out
spat out,
a string of tiny words
tiny words with plump bellies
and undernourished heads
(wagging on scrawny pattern song necks)
his earnestness showed rudely
 between
 his ears,
sincerity riddled his white mouse skin
with holes
and his thin blood bibleosity dribbled
out, gushed
 rushed out,
knocking clean over the promenading
glasseyed, wooden legged soldiers
of virtue
he had marshalled together to shout,
shout
Hurrah shout,
when Gabriel,
virginal smiling won the fist cuffs
block,
knock
shock
and over
 the sales man.
 the evangelist's
 powder puff hands handled the singarments
 d e l i c a t e l y ,
 and he shook the naughty things
 between his television teeth.
 fastidiously,
 exquisitely
 charmingly
 he picked
 lovenits
 caught in the chinks
 of his tailorcraft theological teeth.
 these lovesins stained his smile
 and anyway they are subversive
 and may cause decay.
his arthritic humility
caused him as much concern
as his status gout.
(the reason gossip declares for his spiritual limp)
he humped around his humility,
like a pregnant woman humps around
he lumpy child in the belly.—

(proud of her swollen importance
but grateful when the burden can be delivered)
he too was expectant mother grateful,
when he could unhitch his humility hump
and put it in cold storage
and become
earnest once more.
coldly,
with detective squint and hunter's sniff
and God-cocked rifle at the ready,
he fell to sniping sin pigeons.
delighted,
when their full feathered bodies fell,
plop
red-wet at his feet.
clutching the sky edge
and in a voice as grave as the elements
he declared to his heavenawed son,
'Bloodsports make a man, little one.'

IAN TEMPLEMAN

FROM A YOUNG WRITER'S DIARY

A day, a night, a day, another night.
Frau Schmidt fingers her washing. It's still
damp.
Sunset hangs out its washing. That's not right.
Four days without a word—a sort of cramp
stiffens the heavy sameness of my thoughts.
I read the paper I've already read.
(Horrible sentence). So-and-so reports
from Moscow: Is the Russian Novel dead?

He can afford to travel, on that grant.
Rose, peach and saffron clouds invade the air.
A grand but natural style, that's what I want.
Light comes from nowhere and from every-
where,

rinsing the secret pathos from this room
until materials say what they are.
My things summon the visions they become.
That wineglass flares like an exploding star.

The west, solid with colour, glows above
earth that seems a mere pretext for the sky.
I stare at the chrysanthemums with love.
Night falls. Hell stirs again, and so do I.

Frau Schmidt is beating schnitzel. I believe
she's pregnant. Women have an easier life.
Blessed Franz Kafka, comfort me, receive
my prayer: what could I offer to a wife

or want from one? Grant me the honesty
of evil thoughts, of torture, nightmare, fear.
Messy poeticism clings to me
like sensual wax. Let me be quite sincere.

The banging stops. Frau Schmidt is practising
her English phrases in a lazy drawl.
She'll never master them. I've heard her sing,
sometimes, in her own tongue. Across the hall

life, life! They say that Hogarth tried to paint
The Happy Marriage and then gave it up.
I read the journal of my patron saint
and drink enchanting tortures from his cup:

last hopes of every kind, extremities.
Frau Schmidt comes out to put the spade away.
How like a gentle animal she is!
A night. A day. A night. Another day.

TIMOTHY KLINE

GOODNIGHT WITH APPLE

lying eating one red apple.
teeth close, bite.
chew.
in the fresh white flesh
i taste you; even
in the juice
the taste of after-shave, your
cigarettes.
(things go better with coca-cola. . . .)
I wonder, can you
taste me?
(things go better with coca-cola,
things go better with coke.)
nothing could be better,
only longer.
this apple will soon be eaten.
right-hand index finger
vanquishes all
sounds but that of
chewing. light
disappears, smitten by a switch.
black is an eternity of
colours. i summon
you in red; and in a breathless second
you are here. so thin
i could press you through
me; fragile
like dragon-fly
wings. now your face controls
my panorama, one sad
eye encloses me.
no tears, please,
no drowning,
cradle
me warm
within your lashes,
fold me like apple in
pastry
waiting oven warmth.
howling cats go home, this
house belongs to eunuchs!
this apple is now
no more than stalk and seeds.
i'll sleep
red lover;
wrap me in your smile 'til morning
when i go
to be with you in
more than
thought and dream. goodnight.
goodnight.

K. R. BAMFORD

POET TO PEASANT

Woman, what do you want of me?
A nice house, and a soft foam bed,
Respectable love, not too intense,
A tribe of pretty children making
Toplevel towers of suburban sweetness
Behind a painted lattice fence.
Woman, be warned. I stare at you
With elemental hunger through
The knothole of my sanity,
With a strange pulsebeat hammering
The radiant and malignant fluid
That courses in my veins for blood.

Sweet girl, be wise. What can you offer?
The frail cage of sobriety?
To love me until further notice?
Know I am linked to space beyond
Your honey cells, your boundaries,
By visions welling up like madness.
The world will move, but I shall stand
Still, still. Good housewives chatter
Fulfilment with their idiot beaks.
Dear singleminded girl, be warned:
I know a thousand ways of loving,
A thousand ways of saying love.

Once on a ferny ledge I lay
So still the least thought seemed a torture,
And watched a grey rat swim into
The mouth of a kingfisher's hole.
His rippling wake spread wide, and vanished.
Water responding to the sky
Showed nothing but kingfisher-blue.

I see my point-blank revelations
Decline to nothing in your eyes.
I know a thousand ways of loving,
But none is yours. Woman, be wise.

TIMOTHY KLINE

FOR THE TIME BEING YOU ARE

fragile
not as glass
because glass is glass
but you
are not
weak
not easily snapped
or shattered
of a delicate frame
or constitution
you

are the word itself

FRAGILE
as it appears to us
on cartons
travelling the length of the country
on lonely roads
and in warehouses
at dusk

fragile

seven letters
vaguely luminous

JOHN ROMERIL

RETURN

Leaves waver. The streetlight
Puckers the wet pavement
To a frown.

Like dice the flagstones
Tumbled once
And city blocks were jumping jacks
Which spread my days
In lucky numbers.

The pubs bellow.
The paper-boy has changed hands.
He drags a bulletin from his heart
And drowns my coin.
The clatter of bold type
Means nothing.

The leaves are doubtful.
Twelve times fallen,
They keep expensive company.

Leaves waver. The streetlight
Drops a warm shoulder, winks
And lets me pass.

NICHOLAS HASLUCK

RESTFUL DEATH

for D.D.P.

He saw the song bird drowned
Beneath a rising wave,
Borne to its shallow grave
On brute discordant sound;
Knew no leaf could quicken
No flower blossom where,
Once struck with bright cold metal
No bough first fruits might bear;
But down on waste land settle
Where wild sands pile and thicken.

DAVID AMBROSE

I STAYED HOME

there's dust on my sunglasses
but it
dozent mean the sun
ain't been out—
just i ain't.

ANDREW BURKE

BANK ROBBER

i'm outside the bank
i've just robbed—
standing at the bus-stop—
the cops don't even think of me.

the head cop is real ugly.
the girls won't tell him
anything.

and the tellers won't remember me—
i wore red shoes and then changed them—
now they say:
RED SHOES! he wore RED SHOES!
i remember—RED SHOES!

they search for fingerprints
but i wore camel skin gloves
and threw them on a passing truck—
now some cold store factory worker
will use them at work, pleased
with time and a half overtime
and his story—
HOW I GOT THESE CAMEL SKIN GLOVES—
for the wife and kids.

i know what i'll do with the money.
buy a V8 from the '50's! write my
bird's name on the back in
fancy red lettering!
blaze across the desert with a full tank
and a screaming wallet!

ANDREW BURKE

EPISTLE TO TONY

tony,
here i am
twenty years old

still wanting women of the east

loving the world like the carnal
smell of last night's loving hand

walking thru the puzzle of country
towns like a tired beast

loving the dawn dew-decked land

and / here i am
trying to keep hold on the seams
of my dreams

and / here i am
wanting my unborn child
knowing all our children are amongst us

again / here i am
all meek and mild
sitting on a bus.

ANDREW BURKE

PIG-TAILEY MONKEY. VK

How dare you sit and mock me with my
origins!

Obscene paunch thrust out mid-aged-like;
seriously contemplating.

But your child!
with limpid eyes of innocence
and shell-like, translucent ears,
he sits against mother—
all, like some barbaric nativity.

Child, your sad, sensitive face
and intricate hand (with hairless palms)
remind me of the stink of the jungle:
still strong in my nostrils.

PIG-TAILED MACAQUE: AB

who comes from Malaya,
is a weight-lifter.
i know a girl from Malaya—
she doesn't look like you.

LEOPARD: VK

What is that half-chewed wellington boot
doing in the leopard's cage?
The leopard, he frolics around—very happy;
because, mayhap, he dined on a not-too-
careful zoo-keeper.

LEOPARD: AB

walks
slowly away,
stands by the water pool,
then angrily
looks around,
crouches like a domestic cat—
and
pounces at
the invisible mouse
of a gnawed wellington boot.

HANUMAN MONKEY: VK

the bearded, side-burned philosopher,
sits with chin in hand
—contemplating what kind of animal
I am
and searching for the ultimate image
which will *just* capture
my essential essence.

HOKKAIDA BROWN BEAR: AB

my childhood
Panda ! Ferguson
y're beautiful
and big
and fat
and hairy.

y'd make a fine coat.

FAIRY PENGUIN: VK

Sweet and sentimental, hero-animal of my
childhood;
the fairy penguin,
shyly hides in its white castle.

GIBBON: AB

dances
with Javanese choreography
to the score
of an Australian bird.

who's that fellow
who sits disinterested
in yr cage?
eh? that guy,
all grey, who eats
lettuce twice a day
and is on a strict diet.

FOUR VICTORIAN PHOTOGRAPHS

1. *Miss McCandlish*

Six years Victoria's been throned;
At ten you shrieked the news—
Yet you span her reign, coquette,
Or slide back to a more promiscuous garden
Than this, with your look, eyes
Thin as a cat's scratch,
Two fingers on the briar's thorn
And your breath smearing a rose.

2. *Miss Susie Forster*

Already weary, you sit prayer book
And olive hand on your lost lap;
You have the Sunday School heroes pale by heart—
Africa is a sigh, Livingstone
A rap on the chair:
When you think of puddings consumed
And nights dripped like needles through a sampler
You think of what's left.

3. *James Nasmyth*

Here is the steam century's first cause—
Thought; and the prize of it
May not be measured by pistons' blows
Or by these compasses, casually held
Like an after-dinner cigar;
It plunges behind the screw of hair
That is absently plagued
By the hand at your forehead—
It is fixed by your calibrating eyes
And scanned by your hesitant
Inventor's smile.

4. *Poor Woman*

Despondent, apparently asleep,
You sit on a step in Dog Leap Street;
You are tanned, stretched and nailed
By poverty; you are a trophy
On the dark wall of the century.

ROGER McDONALD

HOW DELICATE THE DARcNESS MUST BE

How delicate the darcness must be
Where the child will grow
As it breathes through another's
Quivering love-nose.

How small must seem
The rumours of galaxies and presidents
As it clings, appended,
In the down of a mother's belly.

How fearful must come
The probes of bewildered men
That shiver, anguishly,
In places of milk and blood.

How much must roar
Through the hairless skull
Whose own darcness is shattered
As it breaks the womb and breathes.

RON GRAY

WORDS OF THOUGHT

What happens to people when they
the thought of dying really does
use of worrying about it, isn't
waking up, it must be, we die and
body. life after death, makes no
I am life and so is that radio
he sure is alive, words, life is
and posters everywhere you look,
words flying everywhere, sounds
'beer is best' . . . too right mate,
words; can't stand him anymore,
dying I guess, now you're on now
it's quiet, but there's more to
all the time, meeting new people
different; marriage, that is to
get married, no more freedom left
to live for it though, they sure
know what will happen when I die.
lost without words, life would be
thinking in words, can I think
words and in a way it's thinking,
wonder how other people think,
if it's not words then what is
nothing but it's always there,
never thought like this before,
why did she have to ask me that,
work and fun and love and hate
we die. and stop thinking . . . I
it frightens me. what happens to
sake don't be stupid, damn that

die, why did she ask me that,
upset her I guess, but what's the
dying like going to sleep and not
our mind is shut off with our
sense at all. life is right here,
announcer, talking his head off,
full of words; newspapers, books,
that guy on the radio knows his job,
like he's really enjoying himself,
but hell you must get sick of
switching him off is just like
you're off, sounds funny, gosh
life than words, things happening
arguments, good times, every day is
come I guess, no I don't want to
then, somehow most girls seem
are queer sometimes, how would I
I'm thinking in words, we'd be
useless, sounds stupid, but I am
without words, dreaming isn't
well day dreaming is anyway,
do they always think in words,
it, thinking's funny, it's like
scary, hell what is it, I've
what happens to us when we die,
life is just years and years of
and thinking and words . . . then
hope we do stop thinking, because
people when they die, for heaven's
girl; where's the wireless.

DELPHINE WALDRON

CHANCE

Here, by granite on the hill's top,
Darts the quick swallow that soon will rest
Soft in the talons of death.

Here, in a grey and splintered hut,
Is the farmer, who has dropped Burrs' Oil
And leans on his rifle to pick it up.

And here, wings back, eyes black,
Is the eagle,
Whose fall is his own design, without lead:

So thanks to the careless farmer for such dead,
That dying, cry once like twanged wire.

ROGER McDONALD

THREE VARIATIONS ON THE THEME OF DEATH

I

Do not speak of my death,
for I have forgotten it.
Let us speak rather of this peach
whose soft flesh parts between my fingers.

II

I have moved in death always
and (mostly sublimated)
awareness of the cosmos.

Also the padaroxical realism of:
the fluctuating universe
and your rhythmic body.

There is death in your eyes
and a transcience to your pain
O my love of many days.

III

. . . . like this full-blown rose here
with the dew still on it/
just plucked.

VIV KITSON

ALL THE BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE

All the beautiful people
Whiz by beautifully
In beaut cars.
I know.
All the ugly mugs
Stare ugh out of
The uglily strugglin tram.
At all them beaut boundin cars
Burblin up and whizin
Back down by our stand-still struggle.

We are standin still
Because
Them beaut cars
Are more beautiful
Because we stand still
Starin at them beaut cars
Burblin, unstrugglin
And because
We were born this way
Unburblin, uguglin, in a Melbourne tram.

RON GRAY

SEVEN POOR MEN OF SYDNEY

Seven Poor Men of Sydney, published in 1934, is Christina Stead's first novel. To this fact can be attributed some of its defects, especially its heavily overloaded contents. In a 300-page novel—short by Christina Stead's standards—seven characters important enough to figure in the title are three or four too many, and several characters are developed only cursorily, although always effectively enough to make us want to see more of them. We can also detect more general strands of interest which fail to come to any distinct definition—the overtly or clinically psychological is one, the theme of art another. However, it is an impressive book despite its flaws, and this analysis attempts to locate its principal interests and techniques. I do not deal directly with the relationship between the book's themes and (especially) imagery and those of the European novelists who treat the "underground man". This relationship is close and is made remarkable by the fact that Christina Stead did not read Dostoevsky, at least, until after she had written *Seven Poor Men of Sydney*.¹ Nor do I attempt directly to suggest in what ways it is "a signpost to important imaginative developments that have since occurred in the Australian novel".²

The poor man at the centre of the novel is Michael Baguenault (the name here, as always in Christina Stead, is significant: "baguenauder" in French means to trifle one's time or to loiter about). Michael is an illegitimate son in an otherwise respectable family, and the suggestion of separation or isolation which is attached to illegitimacy passes over into his whole life. He is continually unable to associate himself, or even to communicate, with society—he doesn't fit in at school, he is in bitter conflict with the church in the person of his childhood parish priest, he is a failure as a teacher and indeed never holds down any

job, but merely dabbles on a left-wing paper, sometimes selling it on street corners. Similarly in human relationships—he can't participate in family life; he falls in love, or thinks he does, but finds no response; there are clear indications in fact that the only possible sexual relationship for him would be an incestuous one with his half-sister; and his only friendship is with a cripple, Kol Blount—the association between Michael's crippled personality and Blount's physical paralysis is apparent. We are therefore surprised when Michael goes off to fight in the First World War, but this experience affects his mind, and later in the book we learn that it was then that he had broken himself morally by running away in battle. Although he is interested in politics, like almost all the characters in the book, he never becomes fully committed and is never at home in political activity. He scandalizes his communist friends by remarking how he would like to join a ship which is manned by a scab crew during a shipping strike:

"I'd like to join them," said a dull voice, "to see what it is like to join a lost ship, to be with the lowest of the low. It would be strange company. Can you imagine them eating together, sleeping together? The berths below teeming with lice, the food stinking in this weather, rations of rum served out to keep 'em happy till they clear the Heads, and in the back of their heads the idea that when they get paid they're going to clear out at the next port; no responsibilities and absolutely not wanted here: exiles." (1965 edn., p. 198.)

Michael finally commits suicide by jumping from the Gap in Sydney. This makes the climax of the book and it is one of its severe structural weaknesses that there follow a further fifty anti-climatic pages in which things are worked out between the other characters.

With Michael we must associate his sister Catherine. Catherine is very like him—"He is my *alter ego*," she remarks. She is a lost being, she wears old, torn and dirty clothes, likes to

¹ R. G. Geering, Introduction to *Seven Poor Men of Sydney* (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1965), p. xiii.

² Geering, *loc. cit.*, p. xv.

sleep in parks and refuges, and although she takes politics more seriously than Michael she finally acknowledges the hollowness of political aspirations for herself and goes to live voluntarily in a lunatic asylum. Both of these characters, and especially Michael, are shown as living at an intense pitch of imagination and consciousness; they see and feel, and often talk, as poets, romantic poets. Against them must be set their cousin, Joseph Baguenault. Joseph, no less than anyone else in the novel, is adrift in the world, but he has less grasp of his situation and makes efforts towards imposing conventional solutions on its problems. For some time he clings to religious conviction, but he drops this, for reasons that aren't clearly shown, after the death of Michael. The acquisition of knowledge is seen as another possible solution. Joseph, although he is not at all intelligent, respects learning and tries to acquire it, but he comes to see that this is in itself not going to make any more soluble the moral problems of human living. Finally, Joseph is married (and this is a danger signal, for in the world of this book only the morally unconscious or dishonest are married); he accepts the world.

They walked up and down the paths and Joseph realized for the first time how attractive the small front gardens were with their cement paths and standard roses. (p. 297.)

In an endpiece, Joseph is shown in later life as trying to write off the former anguish as merely that of youth:

"That was long ago. . . . Why were we so shaken then? Was it because we were young?" (p. 318.)

But the force of the book as a whole acts against this sort of dismissal. The final comment on Joseph is Catherine's:

"Simply a tranquil stupidity. He receives every impression with the same indifferent interest, like a mirror. Yet, it is true; it is true, by Jove, what you say. His dimensions are ambiguous, he has no depth, but he is very profound, nothing can sound him; you can see an infinite distance, if there is one to be reflected, but if you attempt to travel there, you strike an inviolable surface. . . . He is beyond salvation: I never attempt to trouble his repose." (p. 153.)

The other major character is Baruch Mendelssohn. He is the most sympathetic person in the book, certainly the most intelligent, probably the most mature, and this seems to be Christina Stead's own valuation. She has Catherine speak late in the book of his "golden sanity", and this is part of the description of him:

He had a wide and wandering vision which showed him all kinds of miseries more than physical. . . . He was so wretched to see these people swarming around him, with all these evils added to the burden of poverty, and this idea was with him, day and night, that he was obliged to relieve them in some way. (p. 140.)

Mendelssohn is a scholar, he puts his faith in political progress and the end of the book shows him only as carrying some hope as he leaves Australia for America where he has a secretaryship to an industrialist; whether he will fulfil his political vision or be absorbed into a vicious society we cannot know. It is significant that Mendelssohn is a friend of Joseph's, for we see in him a man who comes to terms with society, but only after a conflict and not, like Joseph, by sinking into it.

The other poor men of the title are Kol Blount, Michael's paralytic friend, Chamberlain, the owner of a printing press which employs some of the poor men, Withers, a printer, and Winter, a communist librarian. Also of some interest are the Folliotics. These are a wealthy couple who are dilettante communists, leaders of the political group with which most of the characters of the book are associated. They are shown as utter moral nullities: Fulke Folliot makes an absurdly precious speech to a crowd of striking seamen and in the violent emotional upheavals of the end of the book they are quite out of their depth and fade gently out.

These are the main characters of *Seven Poor Men*, and there are a number of others. But all through the book relationships between these characters are shown not as developing, but as breaking down or more often not even getting started—this is a central part of the book's vision. In the first chapter alone there are many examples: Michael's father and mother both try to form him in certain moulds, personal reaction against them sets in, Michael shies away from friendship with a little girl

who lives nearby, he has a slanging match with the parish priest and won't listen to his headmaster, he becomes friendly with Withers but when he suffers disappointments, "Withers, who never discussed and never burdened his life with other people's problems, let him go, and gradually gave up seeing him". There are conflicts between Michael and Catherine: Catherine leaves home, and when Michael finds her and offer to look after her she throws him out; Catherine herself has cultivated friendships with art students, and in return has received pictures of herself which we casually learn were not regarded as good enough to be hung.

The main character relationships of the book end in confusion and loss. That of Catherine and Michael ends before Michael's suicide, with Catherine unsuccessfully trying to stop him going away, but: "I'd like you better if you weren't always the hero-woman," said Michael, with cruel intent." (p. 212.) Then, ironically, Catherine spends the night in a women's refuge while Michael goes home and sleeps quite comfortably and quietly. This sort of misunderstanding dogs characters throughout. The only other two worthwhile relationships in the book break up: that of Michael and Kol Blount when Michael kills himself, and that of Joseph and Mendelssohn when Mendelssohn leaves for America.

It would be misleading, however, in discussion of characters and their relationships, to suggest that *Seven Poor Men* dealt with characters in the way we associate with the realistic novel. All that is here summarised is seen through the idiosyncratic medium of Christina Stead's sensibility as expressed in her prose style. This bravura style is variously dazzling and grotesque, frequently exciting, often startling, and always distinctive, but is all too clearly not here, or in the contemporary *Salzburg Tales*, at the consistent command of an ordering intelligence, as it is in the later book, *The Man Who Loved Children*. As a result, everyday speech frequently runs away with itself into a heightened poetic idiom. People have an amazing ability to express themselves fluently, even when what they are expressing is their inarticulateness, and they can reveal and talk lucidly about their essential characters and minds. We also get some clumsy and obvious exposition in this mode, but what

Christina Stead is doing is using a convention, and in general it is acceptable. The essential point is made by Barnard Eldershaw, who says that "She presents us with, as it were, a section through the subsoil which, for the purpose of making it intelligible, she has treated in terms of the surface."³ It *looks* like a realistic novel, but in fact only uses the appearance of realism as one aspect of a different sort of organisation and interest.

Through these characters, then, but only partly through the characters, and even then only in a special way, *Seven Poor Men* builds up a picture of a humanity that necessarily lives either in a state of moral alienation or else sinks into moral torpor. The characteristic condition of humanity is portrayed as altogether desperate, as in these speeches of Catherine:

"'They are alien,' said Nietzsche, 'so alien that they cannot even speak their difference to each other.'" (p. 311.)

"Under many hoods and hats, we are all the same creature all the time trying to make its way out of a thicket. There are cuirassed guards waiting to hack us down at every thinning of the bush, so we try to escape, as a bird, a bat, a floating vampire head, a shadow, a skeleton, a deer, a rat, and what you will. Stability, that is the only condition we have never—but we are always in that condition of delirium, folly, passion, or drunkenness, which is our life." (p. 150.)

Another way in which the novel establishes this picture of the world is through the general theme of poverty. On one level, poverty is treated straightforwardly by the techniques and with the interests of social realism. This is done very powerfully, and as a result poverty becomes a constant presence in the book. In addition, Chamberlain and Montagu, two business figures, are presented almost entirely through their part in financial transactions, and this keeps before us the complementary themes of finance and poverty. But poverty is more deeply rooted in the book than this: we come to see that it is partly due to its pervasiveness that people find themselves in desperate moral *impasses*, of the sort that in this novel lead to despair and suicide. Joseph expresses this dilemma:

³ Barnard Eldershaw, "Christina Stead", in *Essays in Australian Fiction* (Melbourne, M.U.P., 1938), p. 174.

A man such as he would spend all his fertile years scraping together a little sum to pay the mortgage on his father's house or to save up for a wife. After that, nothing: he was done for: only the dreary round of anxieties and every acquaintance a new responsibility. He did not see how he would ever afford to have a wife and child, for example. (p. 112.)

In the end, poverty also comes to stand for the moral condition of these people, who are as poor and resourceless in facing life as they are when they want to buy food. This use of a symbol points to one of the most important aspects of the book, its astonishingly thorough symbolic organization in language and incident and its use of linked images.

Almost all of these appear in the first few pages of *Seven Poor Men* and are developed in the course of the book. They constitute, in effect, another structural principle for the book, help set off its characters against one another and define more fully its values. The first sentence of the book shows the land "curled up" in the sea, and the contrast of land and sea persists throughout. Most of the characters live on or near Sydney harbour. Sea imagery has a number of functions. It is used to stand for the unknown and the mysterious, that which cannot be faced; so we read about Michael, "The day when he must get a job came closer and closer, like the strip of dark blue wind-stirred water to the rowing-boat rowing in the calm." (p. 22.) More often it stands in one way or another for the freedom and the attainment of fulness of life which none of the main characters can reach. Just before he commits suicide Michael sees a coastal collier putting out from harbour: "Some young boys leaned over the side pointing out bits of familiar landscape—perhaps harbour lads running away for a bit of experience as they often did." Catherine regards death in the sea as a desirable end to existence, as it is indeed shown to be: "'Come, sweet sea!' She added: 'Come, sweet death, I mean. . . . That is the sort of death I would like, to go down in the swilling storm-waters, ough, guff, gubble, gup, and you're drowned.'" (p. 136.) Joseph uses the sea as a medium for imagining illusory fulfilments: "He thought of sailing outside the heads and going to the old countries, where the morning sun gilded domes, palaces, royal parks and hives of cities. . . ."

p. 82-3.) Michael finds his death in the sea:

So he stood fixed, with fixed and troubled look cleaving the sea, in whose heart he had always found more repose than in any human heart, which understood his miseries through its own rages and revolts, his inconstancies through its tides, his longings through the bottoms grown with various plants and barnacles from foreign ports, and the turbines ploughing its waves. (p. 249.)

Another major pattern of this sort is that of darkness and light. The sea is frequently identified with darkness, especially by Michael and Catherine, and the values suggested by light are experienced as unsatisfactory. This point is made most clearly where Joseph sets out to be educated. Learning is associated with light, and Joseph goes to attend a course of scientific lectures on light with Mendelssohn. While he is listening to it he seems to discover a new order in the world and in his life, but the pressure of the realities of human relationships upsets any such belief:

His heart throbbed: "All can be seen, discovered: it is not chaos." . . . At the demonstration of the inflexibility of the physical order, he felt more a man, freer. He turned again—Baruch's dark hair and white thick-skinned profile leaning on his hand, looking melancholy downwards, the symbol of free thought without regulation, of dispute, confusion, sophistry, of man's untold aberration, anarchy, waste, disappointment . . . impinged on his demonstration-world, spoiled his gaiety. (p. 186.)

The opening describes the Bagenaults as rooted in the soil of normality, and the book takes up the suggested metaphor of trees and flowers as representing a stable and fruitful life; but again Christina Stead's characters are unable to attain anything like this state. Michael's father says,

"You can be absorbed in Nature, as—as in the sea, as if you melted in the sea and were diffused through the oceans of the earth. There is peace when her mysteries are an open book to you; in her inmost recesses she has perfect peace, even for the most fevered . . .",

and Michael is on the verge of accepting this. Left alone,

he looked around. A tall tree, whose topmost tips were now yellow in the setting

sun, waved delicately against the pale, high sky. Michael lifted his stick to the yellow leaves, smiling. "Only teach me to believe that . . ." (pp. 32-3.)

Later, when Michael looks up at the signal station near his home, we get a more characteristic application of the tree image.

In its mast and yards he saw the sign of his future, a monstrous pale tree, bitterly infinite, standing footless in the earth and headless in the heavens, a splinter sterile and sapless. (p. 40.)

When trees are used to describe Michael's sense of his own identity they become mysterious and horrible:

" . . . the trees were alive . . . they burst their cataleptic dream, with what horrible memories and unspeakable ideas drunk up out of the earth with the dead encysted in its flesh, I do not know. . . . Yet the trees were more alive than the men. Woe to the man who has the soul of a tree: such I am!" (p. 266.)

There are other more original and startling uses of imagery. There is a scorpion in the first sentence, and this is the first of a long train of images dealing with insects that runs through the book; we come to identify the struggling and futile humanity we see in *Seven Poor Men* with the febrile activity of insects as it is apparent to human beings.

The most pervasive, important and effective motif is that of houses, which come to stand for the qualities of being at home in the world, for stability, for full human relationships, things which, again, the aware and conscious people cannot attain. We have noted the incident when Michael finds his sister destitute in a room after she has left home; he says he will look after her.

She laughed loudly again, strode across the floor, opened the door and pushed Michael out on the landing. "Good-bye, old thing, thanks. I'll be better soon." She slammed the door. Michael hesitated for a long time on the landing, but in the end went very slowly down the bare stairs, listening at each step. (p. 36.)

A bizarre example among many such events in the book is when Michael goes in answer to an advertisement to rent a room, and the people he sees think he has come to buy cabbages; when they discover he wants somewhere

to sleep they offer him a poultry shed—the theme of the unhoused here links up with the theme of misunderstanding. All the implications of the house motif are drawn together in the two nights before Michael's death, when on the first night he goes home, talks to his mother but finds that family life still cannot satisfy him, and on the second night sleeps in the Folliot's empty house and in a dream sees it populated with ghosts from his life's memories, all memories of futility. For Catherine, only the lunatic asylum can be a home, while Joseph, again contrasting with his cousins, is seen on the last page of the novel going home to the domestic but empty life he has made for himself.

There are a great many uses of motifs of this kind through the book—whole episodes, small incidents, single words, are repeated with different characters, most of all with Michael and with Joseph, and always the effect is to suggest an utter difference and incomprehension, and to contrast the tortured consciousness of people who are aware with the nullity and mechanical qualities of the unconscious and unaware or cowardly.

Seven Poor Men of Sydney is a sombre book, but never merely gloomy, and it never luxuriates in pessimism. There is, of course, the character of Mendelssohn, with his humanity and his "golden sanity". Also there is humour in much of Christina Stead's presentation of her story, and this, although it does not in any way subtract from the force of her essential theme of men alien to each other and to the world, gives a certain distance between the reader and the characters of the novel, allows us to see them as personages and not to identify ourselves too closely with them or their points of view. There are pieces of social comedy, sometimes at the expense of suburban life (in the manner delighted in by Patrick White), but more often the comedy involves the principal characters. Of these, the most important is part of the chapter in which Michael kills himself. On the afternoon of that day he goes to the races and surely for the only time in his life he comes out of something as a winner:

He won in the first race on a horse called Trickster, and successively put his money on The Card, Lucky Streak, Artful Dodger, Jerrybuilt and Tinsel, winning on four, and coming out with £15. (p. 327.)

Shortly afterwards, when Michael meets Mendelssohn and they talk, we learn that his inability to appreciate or make jokes is one of the characteristics that cuts Michael off from social living, humour here being seen as a symbol of civilised communication. (p. 243.) Christina Stead also makes it quite clear that we are not to take Michael at his own valuation. Towards the end of the book the point is made more than once that there is a good deal of posturing in Michael's attitudes, as there is in Catherine's.

"Leave him alone . . . when a man postures there's naught to be done" (Withers, p. 210);

"Don't be so tragic. . . . It doesn't suit you to be a ham actor" (Catherine, p. 208).

I have mentioned the possible comparison of *Seven Poor Men of Sydney* with Dostoievsky.

R. G. Geering comments, "Like Dostoievsky's underground hero, Michael is the victim of an ennui born of an excessive sensibility; profaner and rebel he is, too, a man deeply divided against the world and himself."⁴ In Christina Stead's case, this describes intentions more closely than achievement. For the final word about *Seven Poor Men of Sydney* must be a limiting one. In ways that the foregoing sort of analysis tends to conceal, the novel has severe faults—it is frequently derivative, heterogeneous, and unsure of its intentions and tone. Perhaps the most revealing piece of information about it is that when Christina Stead began to write it she was desperately ill and alone in London and determined that if she died she would leave *something* behind.

⁴ Geering, *loc. cit.*, p. xiii.

HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY

The Editor is grateful to you for giving him the opportunity of considering the enclosed manuscript for publication. He very much regrets, however, that he is unable to make use of it.

"Welcome to the club." My young would-be writer friends said when I showed them the small piece of grey paper. My first rejection slip.

I was disappointed, naturally, but the exciting word 'manuscript', authoritatively applied to my work compensated for the feeling of failure.

I remember a slight quickening of my pulse, when, walking that day in Holborn, I passed the offices of the *New Statesman*. Somewhere in the building sat the anonymous editor who had read at least part of my manuscript.

The rejection slip was, in a real sense, a club membership card. It was proof of trying.

The young would-be writers of my acquaintance in London lived as I did, in cramped bed-sitters around North Kensington. We met in the coffee-houses and pubs of Notting Hill Gate, conscious that it was there that we would find our material, as others had before us.

Small round blue plaques on every other house around Notting Hill reminded us of our successful predecessors. "Somerset Maugham lived here." "Henry James stayed here." Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Conrad, Trollope, Huxley and Wilde, all had been at one time. The famous leaped pavements and centuries.

These constant reminders were our unceasing talking-point. They were a symptom of the London literary syndrome. How could so many of us would-be's succeed in the face of the famous, both past and present? London, we thought, was too big with us, had too few publishers sympathetic to us. Debate as we might the merits and short-comings of Heinemann, Faber & Faber, Penguin and Cape, the editors and copy-tasters behind the names became no less anonymous.

A number of the more hard-working young writers I knew in London had sold short stories and poems abroad, in America, Canada, South Africa and Australia. One of them once told me: "If you want to sell your work, go to Australia. They read an incredible amount there because in the outback there is nothing else to do."

When I came to Perth I knew the names of two West Australian authors, Mary Durack and G. M. Glaskin, who were as remote to me then as the most famous English writers.

Within a week of my arrival in Perth I had met Mary Durack, and shortly afterwards, G. M. Glaskin.

I found two differences in the literary scene. There were, I discovered, only about a dozen published writers under 30 in Perth, whereas in London new struggling young authors can be met every week, and the young writers in Perth were on first-name terms with many well-known W.A. authors. In London a young writer would be lucky to glimpse a famous literary figure.

After four years in Perth I find it hard to agree with John K. Ewers, who wrote of the young writer, in *Westerly* No. 4, 1967 "as things are for him today there is nothing for him here but a desperate lonely life in which he may secretly work on a novel which may be published in time somewhere, or secretly write poetry which he may perhaps read to his friends. . . ."

Would the Perth writer be less lonely or write less secretly in London or Sydney than in Perth? I doubt it. Writers are notoriously not gregarious in their task.

John K. Ewers sees *Westerly* as the one bright hope for the young local writer, but it seems to me that the editor of the *New Statesman* is, in effect, no further from the writer in Perth than he was from me on the pavement in Holborn.

Is any problem greater for the writer in Perth?

Viv Kitson, a poet published in *Poetry Australia*, *Under Twenty-five* and *Westerly*, was born in Perth and has lived here all his life. His most recent poems have been about Sydney, "Variations and Contrasts" and "Sydney Kaleidoscope". He says he finds no stimulation in Perth. He knows Perth so well that his reactions to it now are dictated by previous reactions. He hopes to move to Sydney and then to Europe.

John K. Ewers said: "I advise any young writer I meet today to leave Perth. I do this most reluctantly because I believe a *community has need of its writers. . . .*"

Viv Kitson believes he has no duty toward this community. A writer's only obligations are to himself, he says, and he is motivated by his ego, desire to communicate, and need for financial reward.

Here is the rub. An article, story or poem published in London or even Sydney does little or nothing for the ego of a writer in Perth if no-one reads it. The time soon comes when it is not sufficient even to receive the slip of paper that says . . . "The Editor has much pleasure in accepting your manuscript for publication."

How does a young writer in Perth communicate with his own community? asks John K. Ewers.

Aside from *Westerly* there are now and always have been small literary magazines in Perth, which rarely have circulations in excess of 500 and which cannot afford to pay their contributors.

They suffer the malaise of all infant industries. People will not buy them because they do not want to sample the work of unknown writers; and because they do not pay, well-known writers will not contribute.

As John K. Ewers has pointed out, *The West Australian* no longer publishes poems or short stories. *The Weekend News* and the *Countryman* are more receptive toward creative work, but their columns are only open to employees of the West Australian Newspaper Company.

Local outlets for Perth writers are, then, very few. The young writer, however, rarely has much to sell. His concern is not so much with gaining an income as gaining ability. He needs to establish himself on the literary scene.

What is a literary scene? Not dissimilar, I think, from the stage scene on which the principal actors are the ones best known to the audience. The young writer, like the untried actor, waits patiently in the background, hoping the critical spotlight will favourably show up what he has to offer. The good editor, like the good producer, learns to recognise hidden talent and to encourage it.

The only thing the young writer can be sure of as long as he is standing in the shadows is his own desire to find words that express his feelings and give form to people and places of his imagining.

Burning inwardly with this desire he searches round for some-one with whom he can communicate.

John K. Ewers, reviewing his early years, has shown the Perth literary scene of pre-world war days to have been extraordinarily alive, dominated by figures now legendary or long forgotten.

This early scene, formed out of literary friendships, sympathetic editors and occasional meetings with the famous, seems to me little different from today. Indeed, John K. Ewers was one who helped to make sure that the important props needed by young writers today come easily to hand.

The young writer in Perth today is probably far better able to lay the foundations of his literary education than his counterpart in any big European or Eastern States city. Here he can, without difficulty, approach the Fellowship of Australian Writers, take part in discussion groups, or summon the courage to ask advice of the already successful.

(If there are any mute would-be Miltons in Perth today, they can blame no-one but themselves. An edition of *Thrust*, due to go to press last Summer, has still not appeared because of the lack of contributors.)

The position of the *blooded* writer, who has earned himself a speaking part, is difficult—especially in Perth. Very few seem to find consistently the stimulus they need in W.A. The literary scene that is so easily accessible to the beginner grows wearisome to the old hand, who sees it unchanged from year to year.

Parochialism hangs like the albatross round the neck of W.A.'s literary reputation. The change that is coming over the State on the

Move has hardly created a ripple on the surface of many W.A. writers' consciousness.

Perth has long been recognised as the breeding ground of writers. What is now needed is some kind of injection that will give established writers the stimulus they at present seek elsewhere.

The most precious commodity for today's writer is Time. Few can afford not to work full-time and write in their spare hours. Full-time writers must be earning writers and earning writers must have time.

A State scholarship for creative writing would cost the government very little and would give some young writer the opportunity to devote a year or more to his art.

The news media, the University, the government and the Fellowship of Australian Writers are all in a position to give some kind of inducement to the W.A. writer, but they will not do so unless the writers themselves speak out.

It is perhaps a sad irony that what is a lone adventure requires so much outside support before it can properly begin.

BARBARELLA

Barbarella (in blue);

crys softly in
this moment,

as a transient shadow
of her former lover
catches her breath.

(B. who
stands
barefoot,
in her
Red Leather-Top Coat;
blows a stop-motion/kiss.

Click.
Click.
Click.

/kiss-es for air/not touching/
the girl with 'her poem'
searching through snap-shots,

finds the poet,
a-sleep in her
bed.

And runs down a highway at night
calling a shadow)

Barbarella
crys softly in
this moment

I touch her.

SWEENEY REED



Louis Kahan

HENRIETTA DRAKE-BROCKMAN

Henrietta Drake-Brockman was a very well-known and greatly respected local writer. Without being at all parochial, she was a true West Australian, fascinated by the history of the place, and responsibly concerned about its people and the quality of their lives. Her sudden and quite unexpected death on 8th March, at the age of 66 years, was an especially great loss to the local community, of which she was so distinguished and so prominent a member, as well as being a loss to the larger community of writers throughout Australia, in which she had early won recognition.

She died with her powers at the full. The author of five novels, a volume of short stories, several plays, as well as many descriptive and critical articles, she was at the time of her death a regular book-reviewer. Her historical study, *Voyage to Disaster*, which some regard as her major achievement, was published in 1963; and a critical study of Katharine Susannah Prichard, published last year, is reviewed in this issue of *Westerly*.

Although she loved writing, and always wanted more time than she had to devote to it, she was generous in giving her time to causes and institutions that she thought worthwhile, even at the expense of her own work. Notable among her activities was her work for the Fellowship of Australian Writers, which

she helped to establish in Perth, and of which she was made an honorary life member in 1967. As a member of the Advisory Committee of *Westerly*, she showed that enthusiasm and willingness to assist which made her such a valuable member of any organization.

However her writings and her public activities are assessed by the future, there is no doubt that those who knew her will remember her as an outstanding person: not so much a personality, as the term is now used, as a woman of character and depth of feeling. She was never afraid to speak her mind on the things that mattered to her, and her approach was marked by her integrity. Like many others, I remember her as a vital, intelligent and sympathetic woman, who was refreshingly simple and direct, and surprisingly youthful in many of her responses. As her friend, Jeana Bradley, wrote in a tribute: "Underneath the calm dignity she was as shy as a very young girl, with much of the enthusiasm and innocence of youth."

Her encouragement of young writers makes it seem appropriate that in this issue of *Westerly* devoted to the work of younger writers—a project which she supported wholeheartedly—we should honour her memory by inviting two of her fellow-writers to talk about aspects of her life and work.

JOHN BARNES

HENRIETTA AS HISTORIAN

Although an historian was the last thing that Henrietta Drake-Brockman wanted to be, for she regarded herself as essentially a creative writer, she became one perforce and eventually wrote what must be the first definitive work on one of the early Dutch ships to touch these shores. And I like to think that I had a hand in this.

In 1945 Henrietta returned from Melbourne to her delightful old house at Cottesloe. I visited there as often as she could have me, for she was in process of finishing her novel, *The Fatal Days*, dealing with the coming of American troops to Australia, a very topical subject, but a book which, even if fiction, will be of much use to the social historian of the future. One day, when I went down to lunch, she handed me a sheaf of typescript and said, "Sit down and read that while I go on with this, and tell me what you think of it."

Obediently I sat and read, and was enthralled. What she had given me was the first chapter of a historical novel on the wreck of the Dutch ship *Batavia* on the Abrolhos Islands in 1629. She had swung right into the drama of the situation, and had got the tragic and beautiful Lucrezia Jansz down on paper in a way to grip the mind. I remember leaving that afternoon, saying, "Henrietta, whatever you do, you must write that book." Life at that time, in the last days of the War, was still uncertain in its movements, but I knew she had the makings of a great book there.

But the next few years passed with Henrietta occupied in re-visiting the scenes of her youth and doing a series of articles for *Walkabout*, later published in pamphlet form as *On the North West Skyline*; and in producing for Oxford University Press a collection of Australian short stories in collaboration with Professor Murdoch, though in reality she did most of the work for it. Nevertheless, she kept turning over in her mind the story of Pelsaert and the wreck of the *Batavia*. She had long been fascinated with the story. As

a child of twelve she had read a novel, *The Captain General*, by W. J. Gordon (1888), which dealt with it, and through the years she had collected what information she could.

Her interest was stimulated again by a visit from a Melbourne business man, K. Wallace-Crabbe, who had also been collecting material on the Pelsaert story. After some correspondence between them, he gave her some of his material, and a photograph of an etching supposed to be Pelsaert which had been found in India. For reasons connected with her own research, Henrietta had her doubts about the picture and tried, though in vain, to trace its origin. By this time, she was well under way with research, which involved locating Pelsaert's Journals in Holland, and all the to-and-fro of correspondence which is so slow and frustrating to the leaping mind. She tells the progress of this research in the Foreword to *Voyage to Disaster*.

While it was going on she would give loud cries of anguish from time to time about the expense it involved for photocopies from the Dutch Archives, for microfilm and prints, and for translations from the Old Dutch in which the Journals were written. Very few people realize the actual cost of doing historical work. She would grumble about the time it was taking from her usual journalistic and short story writing. And, as was her habit when writing anything, she would talk about the characters and events she was absorbed in until those nearest her would get heartily sick of them.

She renewed her knowledge of the scene by visiting the Abrolhos Islands by crayfish boat, and got herself flown over the area in a reconnaissance plane. Later, when the wreck had been actually located, almost at the spot she had deduced for it in defiance of local tradition, she would take to the sea, although aged 59, and with an aqua-lung descend to see and touch the barnacle-encrusted timbers of the ship she had read about so much.

The work progressed. By 1951 she and I had had some notable battles because I thought that with all the research she had done, she should record it and write a factual work. It is strange the things that different people estimate as important. To me it was of paramount importance that she should record her discoveries and be the first person to publish the material of this very significant and earliest stage of Australia's appearance to the world. I wanted her to get the credit for it, which would go a long way to endorse any historical fiction she might write. With all she had done, it would be an authoritative and definitive work.

But she would not agree. She said she was first and foremost a novelist, a creative writer. She had done all this work to write a historical novel and re-create a great drama, and she had to get this out of her system first. Perhaps afterwards she would do the factual work.

So by 1952 she had digested the story revealed from records, and had written a prologue and several chapters of the novel. She gave them to me to read. It was an atmospheric prologue, to place the story in its geographic setting with all the imagination of which she was capable. And it began, "I am a shell . . ." and continued with a misty description of the haunted Abrolhos Islands.

It took a lot of courage on my part—for who was I to criticize—at that stage I was only working on my first book, a purely historical work: but I dared to say to her, "Henrietta, you *cannot* be a shell!" The chapters following the prologue were completely changed from the one I had read with such interest in 1945.

She dropped the shell although the prologue was still atmospheric. There is nothing wrong with this: sometimes it is necessary to say in a prologue the things that would be extraneous in a book.

The novel, *The Wicked and the Fair*, appeared in 1957. It was given a pretty-pretty jacket by its publishers, which maddened Henrietta not only for its lack of quality but because the artist had not troubled to achieve historical accuracy in the costumes. It had a reasonable success, although I am bound to say that I think it is not so good an historical novel as her first book, *Blue North*, set in 1876, nor *Younger Sons*, which

commences in 1830. In both of these her acute sense of period, and the research she had done for them was matched by a freshness and clarity of style that bore the stories along. In *The Wicked and the Fair*, she had met the problem that confronts all historical novelists—whether to make their characters speak in the manner of their time, or to pander to the reader by making them talk in a more natural way, even if not in actual vernacular. She talked this point over and decided she must stick fairly closely to the style of the seventeenth century. She may have been right, but it added to what was already, in my opinion, a good deal of over-writing. Henrietta had become obsessed with the historical detail of her researches: she could not bear to part with any descriptions. The sweep of the terrible drama, though it was in her mind and was transferred to paper, was slowed up.

After the book had been out some time, fulfilling my function of a personal gadfly, I reminded her of the need to write the factual account of Pelsaert's voyage before she had lost all the tiny threads the mind must retain for such a work. She was magnificent in her indignation: she had done the novel she intended to do, she was sick of the whole thing, it would need more research and she was not going to give up any more time to it, and so on, and so on. I took this for what it was—every writer knows the satiation point reached on the achievement of a book, the need for a fallow period and other interests. And I knew she was too intelligent a woman to let all that work go to waste, for she had a true sense of history. The story of Pelsaert and the Dutch East India Company made Western Australia different from the Eastern States. Its coastline was known and described while the Pacific shores were still a blank on the map. She had done much of the work to prove this; it was her duty to set it down. She was never a woman to turn aside from duty. So muttering and grumbling, and often castigating me for the years of her life she had wasted on this, she began *Voyage to Disaster*. To cheer her on, I told her it would assure her name for posterity, but she mutinously declared she liked the thrill of recognition now.

Once more the adventurousness, the splendour and cruelty of the times gripped her. She began to write, and at once encountered

the historian's problem—how much to quote from other works, what to do with letters and diaries, how to write in a totally different style from that of the novelist. She re-checked Pelsaert's Journals with Mr E. D. Drok, her local translator, and annotated them. Fretted by slow communications, she made sure that her references to Dutch archives were correct, the systems of reference of various archives being different. She procured photographs for illustrations.

She decided, wisely, I think, from the point of view of those who may wish to use them for later historical works, to divide the book into two distinct halves—her own biography of Pelsaert, and the translation of his Journals. And to add to the understanding of the Journals she gave a brief diary of events and a list identifying the 142 persons mentioned in them with Dutch names difficult to remember.

She was often puzzled by the indifference to the importance of Pelsaert of Dutch his-

torians and archivists with whom she was in touch. Again and again she remarked that they only thought of him as a failure, because of the wreck. They were uninterested in the discovery of an unknown coastline, which had often proved a nuisance on the way to the East Indies.

Before she died, she had been engaged on three short Western Australian biographies for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. There was very little in print about these worthies and she had to go to original sources for all her material. With her usual thoroughness she made herself acquainted with every facet of the times in which they lived and spent months of work to produce 500 words on each. But more than ten years of her life were given to the work for *Voyage to Disaster* (1963) and it will always be a reference work on early Australian history. Although I am quite sure she had not this regard for it, I see it as her major achievement, and a great one.

HENRIETTA

—and the Fellowship of Australian Writers

I cannot for the life of me recall exactly when I first met Henrietta Drake-Brockman; memory is an unreliable servant in these matters. But in a journal I kept on and off during the 1930's there is an item about four writers meeting the local manager of the A.B.C., Basil Kirke, to discuss the idea of a weekly broadcast on Australian books, old and new. The date was 18th July, 1935, and those present were Katharine Susannah Prichard, Professor Walter Murdoch, Henrietta and myself. This item comments on the change I saw in K.S.P. since meeting her six years earlier, which seems to indicate I had not seen her in the meantime. My position as secretary of the Australian Reading Circle (see article, *A Writer in Perth—Westerly*, No. 4/1967) had led to frequent contacts with Professor Murdoch. There is nothing in this journal entry to suggest that I had *not* previously met Henrietta, so it is pretty safe to assume that I had. But it would not have been often. Writers in Perth were pretty much loners in those days.

The significant thing about this meeting (apart from the fact that Basil Kirke agreed to a weekly radio session on Sunday nights) was that we four represented the oldsters and the youngsters of W.A. writers at that time. Katharine Susannah Prichard and Walter Murdoch had already each published many books. Henrietta and I were near the beginning of things. My second novel had come out that April; Henrietta's second was to come out next year. Both of us had had stories and articles published in local and eastern states newspapers and magazines. I have no written record that I met her again before August, 1936, when my wife and I left Perth—two innocents abroad—to see the great, wide, wonderful world. In New York, on our way to London, we met and were entertained by C. Hartley Grattan, American critic and sociol-

ogist, with whom I had exchanged letters. Towards the end of that year we had him to dinner in our London flat on his way to Sydney as Carnegie Fellow to study Australian life and conditions. So when in due course he came to Perth nine months after our return home in September, 1937, it was natural enough that most of the arrangements for his itinerary and entertainment were in my hands. And it was natural enough, too, that one writer high on the priority of those to be invited to a dinner in his honour should be Henrietta Drake-Brockman, who by that time had published her third novel. She came, together with ten others, and on that memorable night—6th June, 1938—at Billett's Cafe, Gledden Building, over a five-course meal at the extraordinary price of 3/6, somebody made the discovery that not one of those present had ever met all the other ten. As I have said, we were pretty much loners in Perth in those days.

The oldest person there, Mr J. E. Hammond—author of *Winjan's People* and *Western Pioneers*—urged the formation of a "writers' club" where we could get to know one another. Within a short time he was writing to me and I was writing to Gavin Casey, and out of all this came two meetings—one at the Lattice Tearooms and one in an upstairs room of the Shaftesbury Hotel. All present, and these included some who had been unable to attend the Grattan dinner, agreed that some kind of organization should be formed, but it was Henrietta who persuaded us to become a branch of the Fellowship of Australian Writers which had been established in Sydney some years earlier and which had writer-members in all States. I believe she and Katharine Susannah Prichard were at that time its only members in Western Australia. We might have called ourselves the W.A. Society of Authors,

or something similarly parochial, but Henrietta, with the wider vision she always showed, urged us to become part of what would in time be an Australia-wide body.

The parent Fellowship accepted with enthusiasm the offspring that was thrust upon it in October, 1938. There were some early difficulties. Sydney naturally enough had grown used to issuing press statements in the name of the Fellowship. After all, it was the Fellowship. But when it persisted in doing so without first consulting the newly born infant in W.A. that same infant squealed loudly. World War II began during the first year of the local Fellowship and, as in all wars, freedom of speech and truth were among the earliest casualties. There were matters on which protests *had* to be uttered, but however much we might agree with most of them we claimed the right of being consulted beforehand. The formation of other State Sections strengthened and established this principle, but what was really needed was a Federal body which could speak, when necessary, for all. This did not come about for many years but Henrietta Drake-Brockman was directly responsible for bringing it about. Following a visit she paid to most of the other branches, a Federal Constitution was drawn up, providing for Federal Executive power to rotate annually among the State Sections. Fittingly, the parent N.S.W. Section was given this honour for the first year and now the others have all had their turn. It's a bit cumbersome; it tends to slow up action; it imposes a heavy additional burden on the Secretary in the State where authority is temporarily vested. But for impecunious people like writers it's the only workable solution. They cannot afford to travel interstate to regular meetings, although advantage is now taken of Writers' Week, an integral part of the biennial Adelaide Festival of Arts, to hold an interstate conference there every two years.

But let us go back to the beginning of the Fellowship in Western Australia. Initially we adopted another of Henrietta's suggestions by electing not only a President, but also a Senior and a Junior Vice-President. The former would succeed the President without election, the Junior Vice-President automatically stepped up to become Senior Vice-President. The only one elected each year was a new Junior Vice-President. This meant that by the time he

came to occupy the chair, the President was experienced in procedure. It also gave a sense of continuity. This practice lapsed in early post-war years when candidates of the required calibre did not seem to be forthcoming and we have never returned to it. But it has much to commend it.

Henrietta was our first Junior Vice-President and thus became our third President. In those days we celebrated the end of each year with a formal dinner at which the outgoing President gave an address which was published in booklet form. This placed upon the ex-President the responsibility of attempting a serious contribution to contemporary thought. Henrietta's presidential address, delivered on 1st November, 1941, was called *Education for Life*. Australia was then approaching its darkest hour of World War II. The tide was running against its allies and in less than three months Singapore was to fall. She told us that she was not going to be tempted by the expediency the moment seemed to call for, that she regarded expediency of any sort as being for the writer "the absolute negation of that conscious selection and nicely weighed consideration of values which, at least until the present day, has been regarded as the hallmark of the master". She chose instead to examine those factors in the community which mitigated against the development "of a distinctive national culture". She reviewed the part played by Australian writers in helping to deepen our understanding of human values in the Australian environment and urged them "to maintain in the face of all ideologies the dignity and value of human personality, the unique biological significance of every human being". It was a well-reasoned piece of pleading and, while most of our Presidential addresses remained unsold by the score, very soon not a single spare copy was left of *Education for Life*.

It was typical of Henrietta that she should turn her back on expediency, even if it was, as she pointed out, "already a well-marked Australian attitude", developed in early pioneering days when we had been forced to make do with a great number of expedients. Perhaps it was her suspicion of expediency that coloured her initial attitude towards Tom Collins House. This was given to the W.A. Fellowship in 1948 by Samuel Furphy, only surviving son of Joseph Furphy, who as "Tom Collins"

was the author of the Australian classic, *Such is Life*. Furphy senior had built this house with his own hands; he had lived there and written there until his death in 1912. A condition of the gift was that the Fellowship should maintain it as a memorial, also using it if it wished as its headquarters. In those early post-war years there was an acute shortage of houses and to be *given* one seemed riches beyond all expectations. Not all members were equally enthusiastic about it and one who looked the gift-horse full in the mouth was Henrietta. She saw its unique value as a memorial, but ! It was a weatherboard cottage, forty years old, and its maintenance could be a heavy burden on a small body like the Fellowship.

She stood on the sidelines while the majority accepted the gift and the responsibility. In due course it *did* prove to be something of a burden. Then she threw aside her position of neutrality and flung herself with characteristic energy into raising money by public subscription to be invested in a Maintenance Fund. Her attitude was: If a thing's going to be done, let's do it properly! Of course, writers too made cash donations if they could afford them, but *all* were invited to contribute without fee items for an anthology published in 1959 as *West Coast Stories*. Henrietta as honorary editor had the unenviable task of selecting without favour material from her own associates to make a book of literary value. Some had to be left out and some were. But I never heard anyone complain that they were hurt by being left out and this, I think, speaks volumes for the respect we all had for her judgment and integrity. Royalties from sales were paid into the Maintenance Fund and later the publishers made available unsold copies at a nominal price for the Fellowship to sell for this purpose. Some are still available at Tom Collins House. The Maintenance Fund is constantly being added to and interest from the money soundly invested has proved sufficient to keep Tom Collins House in good repair and make the Fellowship in W.A. the envy of those in other States for being the guardian of this unique memorial and for having this building as the focal point of its activities.

I cannot resist here two lighter, more personal memories, yet ones which I feel are very much in character. For twelve months or so in

1940-41 we were near neighbours—our respective houses less than a hundred yards apart. During that time we came to know Henrietta and Geoffrey very well, and between Henrietta and our two-year-old daughter there grew up a very warm bond. When at the end of that time Geoffrey was transferred to Melbourne on military duty, the Fellowship gave a farewell afternoon tea to Henrietta at the Adelphi Hotel. As people began to leave, the guest of honour stood at the door of the reception room shaking hands. Suddenly our two-year-old, who had spent most of her time turning somersaults on the carpet, realized she was missing something. She took off like a rocket and hurtled into Henrietta's arms, knocking her hat awry. Henrietta continued to farewell the remainder, the youngster clinging with both arms round her neck, her hat at an angle, but with the consummate dignity of which she was in command at all times, and with a complete enjoyment of the situation.

When she knew she was going away she had come charging over to our house one day and had announced that I was to have her car—a Ford Prefect, nearly new—that I was to get my driver's licence and keep it "on the road". It was no good leaving it "on blocks" until the end of the war, whenever that might be. If and when the insurance and re-licensing became due and I found these too heavy an expense, I was to sell it for her. In vain I protested that I was not car-minded; she insisted that I was to do this. So I did. Henrietta was like that; she could be very insistent. At that time petrol rationing restricted me to two gallons a month, so that I hardly had enough use of the car to really feel at home with it. I'd arrive at some suburban destination, pale and trembling, but with a wonderful sense of achievement. When rumours of a Japanese move south made imminent the likelihood of bombs, I decided to send my young daughter with my wife to the country for a while. With petrol borrowed from a neighbour I set off on a 200 mile drive to a cousin's farm. That and the return trip on my own were the only occasions I had the pleasure of the open road. The car was already sold and next day I delivered it to its new owner. When I told Henrietta I had sold it for the absurd price of £150, she insisted on my retaining 10% as commission! Later, after she had come back to Perth, I said to her one day,

"You know, I was a fool to sell that car for you. I should have bought it for myself."

Her reply was typically hoity-toity.

"It wasn't for sale to you, John." (She always called me John.) "Your job was to keep it on the road for me, and sell it if you found it not worthwhile."

Of course, the wonder was that I didn't smash it up for her!

I have chosen to write of Henrietta Drake-Brockman in this way because it may perhaps shed light on some aspects of her personality which may not be generally known. There were two Henriettas. One was the woman who, during her thirty years of close contact with the Fellowship of Writers, played a leading part in fashioning its purpose and its functioning. The other Henrietta was the writer who was also a woman and a friend. In the first role she displayed sound commonsense, a wide vision, and the ability to drive herself as hard as she would drive others towards an end she deemed desirable. Some people, even possibly some members of the Fellowship, saw only this Henrietta. Many, on meeting her for the first time—especially young and untried writers

—found her formidable, even perhaps a little forbidding. I did myself in some of our earlier encounters. I'm inclined to think that she imposed a sort of testing period on newcomers or strangers, a time in which she measured them according to her set of standards. Those who passed the test and came to know her in a different way discovered the other Henrietta. They found her a person they could turn to in time of need, whether it was about some problem that was worrying them in their writing or even something which had nothing to do with writing. Although she always had a very full programme of work and many social commitments, she was never too busy to give wise counsel and to give it freely. There was a constant stream of visitors—local, interstate or overseas—to her city flat which must have been, at times, perhaps a little too easily accessible for the pressure of deadlines which every writer experiences. But she liked it that way. She liked people; she liked the brisk exchange of ideas and arguments. She was forthright in what she offered, whether of praise or criticism, and many, myself included, were heavily in her debt for help, advice and loyal support.

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It is a positive good in the world."*

Abraham Lincoln,
25 March 1864.

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KATHARINE SUSANNAH PRICHARD

H. Drake-Brockman. *Katharine Susannah Prichard*. Melbourne: O.U.P., 1967. 56pp. 85c. Katharine Susannah Prichard. *Happiness*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1967. viii + 189pp. \$2.75.

Henrietta Drake-Brockman's study of Katharine Susannah Prichard is the latest in the series, "Australian Writers and Their Work", formerly published by Lansdowne, now by Oxford University Press. On p. 8 of her monograph Mrs Drake-Brockman sets down the year of KSP's birth as 1883. In so doing, she is at odds with Miller-Macartney, H. M. Green, and Cecil Hadgraft, all of whom agree on 1884. On the other hand, 1883 is confirmed by KSP herself in *Child of the Hurricane*. The long span between either date and the present, however, serves to remind us of just how considerable a contribution to Australian writing KSP's has been. Her first book, *Clovelly Verses*, was published in 1913. For more than fifty years since then its author has occupied a stubbornly prominent position in our literary culture. Her recent novel, *Subtle Flame*, showed us that she still has new things to say. Now, in *Happiness*, KSP has made a selection from her three earlier volumes of short stories—*Kiss on the Lips* (1932), *Potch and Colour* (1944), and *N'goola* (1959).

In the matter of critical response, Henrietta Drake-Brockman is generally in harmony with her predecessors. Her achievement in this monograph is not so much to open up new perspectives on her subject as to refine existing opinions, to bring them into close relation with KSP's major books, which she considers both singly and as part of a canon. Nevertheless, Mrs Drake-Brockman still regards her enterprise as necessarily tentative in nature. Her opening paragraph establishes what she takes, so far as informed criticism is concerned, to be the limits of the currently feasible:

Katharine Susannah Prichard, both personally and as a novelist, is still the most controversial figure in Australian literature. It is unlikely that her work and influence will be justly assessed for another fifty years. Today judgement has a prevailing

tendency to appear clouded, however faintly, by political bias. Her work is extolled or decried, its impact multiplied or muffled, according to the ideological sympathies of readers and critics. One can but attempt to estimate her achievement in the terms of its place in time (tremendously important in this instance) and for its scope and power in aim and presentation. (p. 5)

From this modest opening Mrs Drake-Brockman proceeds to some generalizations (concentrated in the opening pages but scattered throughout the monograph) about the nature of KSP's work. They strike me as both accurate and illuminating. The issues of "realism", "romanticism", and "idealism" are confronted; the sometimes unresolved conflicts between her politics and her art; the Lawrentian elements in her writing. Almost any criticism which proceeds from or to labels like "realism" will sooner or later appear inadequate to the actual experience of texts; with a writer like KSP, sooner rather than later. Appreciating this fact, Mrs Drake-Brockman seeks to transfer the basis of her discussion from categories to qualities. "Fundamentally," she writes on p. 5, "Katharine Susannah Prichard is an artist of pagan sensibility." As a capsule judgment, this is probably as good as any, and better than most. (Though I shall try to suggest later that its value might have been further enhanced by an even more considerable shift in the terms of argument.)

In addition to the nicely judged generalizations, this monograph is notable for its commentary on the individual novels. Plot summary is efficiently dealt with as a prelude to critical explication and assessment. Starting from some unusually full remarks on *The Wild Oats of Han*, Mrs Drake-Brockman skilfully intertwines critical analysis and biographical information—a procedure especially useful in the case of *Intimate Strangers*. In every case, however, the comment seems to me both pertinent and enlightening, and is rendered particularly appealing by the tone of Mrs Drake-Brockman's own prose. Here is no author being dragged relentlessly to the

bar of critical judgment. Rather, one senses the effort to discover and make available to others the best and most characteristic qualities of a sympathetically understood artist.

The closing section of the monograph summarizes some of the previous assessments of KSP's work, many of which derive in one way or another from the notion of "nationalism", a critical category which is shown to be even more slippery than "realism" or "romanticism". In rounding off her own survey, Mrs Drake-Brockman cites some of KSP's indisputable historical achievements, and sets down a conclusion which, like her opening formulation, implies a greater trust in qualities of the imagination than in compartmentalization of the mind:

To sum up in Norman Lindsay's favourite phrase, Katharine Susannah Prichard 'affirms life'. To her, in the words she gave to Mark Smith, 'the immortal of mankind' is the fighting spirit, the courage, and common loyalty to human values that so often glorify the act of living. In her work, to repeat Forster's assessment of Lawrence, she 'sings' about the life she sees and in her singing shows the nature of the change wrought in human beings by environment, both physical and social. At the same time, she tries (on occasion to the detriment of her art) to point the way, prophet-wise, to the promised land of the Communist philosophies in which she so devoutly believes. (p. 54)

If any of KSP's major creative work receives relatively scant treatment in this study, it is the short stories. Discussion of the form (in which KSP has arguably achieved more regular and intense success than in the novels) is to be found principally on pp. 20-21 and p. 36. To be sure, on these pages Mrs Drake-Brockman pays tribute to the high quality of the writing, singling out for special praise the celebrated piece, "The Grey Horse". Along with "The Grey Horse", "The Cow" and "The Cooboo" are listed as constituting a "remarkable trio" (p. 21). Indeed, it seems fair to suggest that these three stories make up a paradigm of all that is best and most enduring in KSP's shorter fiction, a paradigm which, however, still awaits our more exact scrutiny and understanding. The publication of *Happiness* might well encourage other critics to complement, with a thorough study of the short stories, the general appreciation

of KSP's art so happily expressed in Mrs Drake-Brockman's monograph.

Any such study could, I believe, profitably attempt to fuse our familiar sense of KSP's themes with the forms which they assume in her shorter fiction. Her sympathy for the aboriginals is, thus, quite clearly a recurring "subject" of *Happiness*. It is there in "The Cooboo", "Jimble", "Naninja and Joey". Stories like "N'goola", "Marlene", and "Flight" extend the sympathy to the half-castes and force us to share KSP's righteous indignation at their plight. Nevertheless, isolation of the aboriginal/half-caste motif from the forms in which it occurs may, in some measure, damage our full understanding of KSP's art. Under any sort of formal scrutiny, for instance, it becomes clear that the primitivism of a story like "N'goola" finds its way into stories of white society such as "The Grey Horse" and "Josephina Anna Maria". The common element is less social protest than a deep, qualitative response to the strong, simple forces which govern all human life. The spark of KSP's imagination can be seen to ignite perhaps most often when she records the forms that the basic principles of generation and kinship take on in individual human behaviour.

Among adult human beings the principle of generation will find its obvious expression in sexual activity—as indeed it does in "The Grey Horse", "The Cow", and "Happiness". Yet one cannot imagine less erotic stories than these. KSP is not concerned with Old Gourlay or Bob Moriarty or Lucia for the sake of their private pleasures or pains but only in so far as their lives give shape to the im-
personal drives which make for the survival of the race. In the same way, the ending of "N'goola" need not be read as only or primarily an affirmation of N'goola's aboriginality; it is equally a statement about the operations of a more general principle of biological and human kinship. Or, a number of the stories in *Happiness* take as their "subject" child-bearing and babies—"N'goola" again, or "The Cooboo" or "Josephina Anna Maria". In every case the infant is female—not, I take it, simply because KSP is herself a woman, but because a female child is the appropriate form to embody her sense of life as patient growth, resilient endurance. The high value she places on the female principle as the matrix of life

results, indeed, in some of the most intensely realised scenes in *Happiness*. One thinks in this connection especially of Lucia's dark history in "The Cow".

The quality of stories like "The Cow" and "The Grey Horse" has been largely responsible for associating KSP with D. H. Lawrence. Nevertheless, a good case could be made out that the stories collected in *Happiness* are to be understood by reference to the Australian literary tradition as much as to any outside influence. Mrs Drake-Brockman senses this when she claims that "the publication of *Working Bullocks* sparked a renaissance of Australian fiction" (p. 51). What seems to me peculiarly interesting about KSP's work in this connection is that it did not merely revitalise elements already present in the pattern of Australian literary culture but significantly altered the pattern itself. It is commonplace to describe nineteenth century Australian fiction as representing humankind and the natural world in hostile relation to each other. Many of Lawson's best stories, for example, are based on a conflict between outback Australians and an inimical landscape, a conflict in which man is most often the loser. The harshness of the Australian scene is still amply acknowledged in KSP's stories (see, in particular, "The Curse"). Yet the regular aim of her writing is to discover a harmony rather than an enmity between man and his environment. KSP's men and women find fulfilment by submission to the natural order rather than opposition to it. They discover how their own petty lives participate in the larger cycle of creation and death. It may well be that future literary historians will locate the great achievement of the generation of short story writers which included KSP in the forging, between Australian men and the Australian earth, of a bond of harmony instead of hostility.

To speak of harmony as her great achievement is to impute to KSP a certain tone, a certain sense of values. Her style in *Happiness* consistently indicates that the participation of her characters in the great round of nature involves for her more than mere clinical understanding. For many of the short stories, indeed, the appropriate point of reference may not be D. H. Lawrence but Wordsworth. More central to KSP's vision than occasional outbursts of hysterical subjectivity is the recognition that man's truest content lies in his

accommodation of himself to the purposes of nature. In "The Cow" KSP speaks of "the dance of fertilization" (p. 39). It is Lucia's privilege in that story that she is allowed to join the dance; her misfortune that she cannot fully understand or accept her role. The tensions experienced by nearly all the characters in *Happiness*, in fact, are caused by their inability or unwillingness to subordinate the subjective demands of their own personalities to the immutable cycle of objective creation.

The figure of a dance is a joyous one; and Mrs Drake-Brockman is quite right to identify a joyous, celebratory tone as a regular feature of KSP's style. It is that tone, I suspect, which leads her to see her subject as "fundamentally an artist of pagan sensibility". The paganism (or primitivism) I take to be quite clearly a shaping element in KSP's fiction. What I would like to modify is the idea that she is an artist of "sensibility". One thing which, it seems to me, KSP decidedly is not is an artist of "sensibility", pagan or any other kind. In making such a suggestion, I wish to reflect on neither KSP's fiction nor Mrs Drake-Brockman's criticism, only to indicate a particular meaning for "sensibility". "Sensibility", I take it, is pre-eminently the property of those writers who explore the delicate area wherein a private apparatus of perception works upon particular experience. The result of such exploration is likely to be an extreme idiosyncrasy of style. Herbert Gold, quoted in Alfred Alvarez' book, *Under Pressure*, has made the point with respect to contemporary American writers:

The magnifying glass that the American writer tends to use is himself, almost without reference to the outside world. But if he's any good at all, the outside world is refracted through him. He doesn't have a theory. He has his energy, or his lasciviousness, or his desire to make a personal focus. It forces a high development of style in the best writers. He doesn't have a theory to lean on, so therefore he has to find only his personal voice. (p. 161)

KSP, unlike so many of the contemporary Americans, does have a theory or (at best) a vision, which is (or seems to be) external to herself. She is consequently under no compulsion to develop that intensely personal utterance which may be thought of as the language of sensibility. Her own language clearly does take on, from time to time, a certain zest and

colour. Yet when these features do enter into her prose, they do so not to satisfy internal need but to do dramatic justice to the objective phenomena which command her attention. The prevailingly plain style of KSP does not represent the dullness of a sensibility *manqué*; it can afford to be plain because it springs from a confident reliance on the explanatory power of a theory/vision of the world. One of our current difficulties in reading her work, it may be, is that in the fifty years since she started writing we have moved somewhat closer to the situation described by Herbert Gold and away from an immediate *rapproch* with the bases of her kind of art.

In any case, it seems to me that a thorough and unprejudiced stylistic analysis of KSP's fiction could yield insights as yet unstated or merely hinted at. An analysis of the structure of her stories would be equally useful in bringing her achievement into sharper focus. One would soon recognize, for instance, the recurring formal patterns which are the sign of an engaged imagination. Thus the principle of parallelism seems to be central to KSP's creative activity. In "The Grey Horse" the human situation is both reflected in and intensified by the situation of the animal. The same structural principle is at work in "The Cow" and "Painted Finches". Or, in stories like "Happiness" and "Josephina Anna Maria" the interplay is between two human individuals or groups of individuals. In every case, the persistent parallelism indicates that something more is at stake than a useful aesthetic tactic. It provides, in fact, the foundation for KSP's realization of her sense of the interdependence of all living things.

Variations on the yarn-spinning technique can, I believe, also be shown to be basic to KSP's fictional procedures. "Luck" and "Jimble" both start out in seeming conformity to the traditional, loosely anecdotal tale spoken by an invented narrator. Before either has advanced very far, however, KSP has stepped in and taken over full control of its development, reluctant, it would appear, to entrust her fiction to anybody but herself. Indeed, the only sustained exercise in the limited point of view, "The Prayer Meeting", is one of the comparative failures of *Happiness*. Throughout the collection KSP projects the feeling that the limited awareness of her created characters is inadequate for a full under-

standing of their invented situations. Her problem is to find a means of incorporating that full understanding into her stories without giving the appearance of incompetent authorial intrusion. Her solution can be the shift from anecdotal yarn-spinning to anonymous narration. As Mrs Drake-Brockman puts it, KSP's habit of third person commentary "suggests a body of opinion apart from, and greater than, the author" (p. 14).

Her methods of handling time represent for KSP, as for any writer of fiction, a further issue of major structural importance. The stories in *Happiness* manifest two chief approaches to the problem of time. A story may, on the one hand, deal with some single, critical moment which calls forth a deep and unpremeditated response. Of this kind is "The Cooboo", wherein Rose slaughters her own child; or "N'goola", which leads to the moment when N'goola acknowledges her aboriginal heritage. On the other hand, a story may have a time span of several years, through which KSP follows not the density and detail of social living but some basic drive in the life of an individual. In "Happiness" John Gray must answer his need for a wife; Nugget in "His Dog" comically copes with his twin needs for integrity and emotional sympathy. Some of the stories of *Happiness* synthesise the two main methods of handling time. In all, however, it seems to me that the temporal structuring must call into the question the utility of invoking the label "realism" in connection with KSP, especially when it is preceded by the epithet "social". The stories of *Happiness* reveal only a minimal concern for the complexity and deviousness of social interaction which I take to be essential stuff of any art which may truly be called "social realism".

KSP opens the Foreword to *Happiness* with the statement, "In these short stories I have gleaned fragments from the lives of the people", and concludes it by saying, "All the stories were inspired by an intimate sympathy with men and women in the comedy and tragedy of their lives". The whole volume suggests that her art derives in large measure from a belief in fiction as a means of achieving imaginative communion with others rather than sophisticated analysis; from an intimacy with the world untainted by social experience; from a sense of comedy and tragedy not as constructs of the human mind but as part of

the natural order. Its eighteen stories confirm many of the insights in Henrietta Drake-Brockman's admirable addition to the "Australian Writers and Their Work" series; they point to many new lines of enquiry in that full assessment which, as Mrs Drake-Brockman tells us, it is still the responsibility of criticism to perform.

Dr Heseltine's review was written before the death of Mrs Drake-Brockman.

LAWSON AND THE SHORT STORY IN AUSTRALIA

Short Stories of Australia; Vol. I, *The Lawson Tradition*, chosen with an Introduction by Douglas Stewart; Vol. II, *The Moderns*, chosen with an Introduction by Beatrice Davis; Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1967, \$3.75 and \$4.00.

Short Stories of Australia is the most ambitious anthology of its kind so far attempted. In two volumes the editors have set out to present "the best Australian short stories from the beginning of European settlement to the 1960's". Douglas Stewart collects 32 stories from 21 writers in the first volume, "The Lawson Tradition", which goes up to 1940; and Beatrice Davis represents 30 writers each with one story in the second volume, "The Moderns". The amount of space given to writing since 1940 is certainly justified by its quality, and the second volume, on balance, represents a higher level of achievement. Beatrice Davis has chosen "the most memorable stories, the stories that interested and moved me most" from among those published since 1940, leaving open the question of the relative importance of the writers thus included. Douglas Stewart, however, has been highly selective in choosing writers, and his volume quite explicitly directs the reader's attention to Henry Lawson and his influence on the short story in Australia.

Mr Stewart sees his collection as being "based on Lawson and his school", which provides "a certain unity of style and flavour". Who are the members of the Lawson "school"? Mr Stewart is vague on this point, but his emphasis is made clear in his departure from his own plan—which was to limit his selection to the work of those writers whose first books were published before 1940—in order to include two stories each by E. O. Schlunke,

Brian James and James Hackston, who were outside his time limit. These six stories are all competent and enjoyable—Schlunke's "The Enthusiastic Prisoner" has been one of my favourite stories since I first read it in the *Bulletin*—but they do not, it seems to me, represent the influence of Lawson as much as the influence of the *Bulletin*, which is not the same thing. Mr Stewart rightly says that Lawson stands out from the group of *Bulletin* short story writers fostered by Archibald and Stephens, but he does not grasp just how individual a writer Lawson is by comparison with his contemporaries. What I want to suggest here is that Lawson is not merely a superior example of the typical *Bulletin* short story writer, but an individual artist whose distinction can be seen most clearly in the difference between his work and that of his *Bulletin* contemporaries. The similarity in subject matter and in explicit attitudes has perhaps obscured the degree of difference, which I should claim amounts to a difference in the conception of the nature of the short story.

Edward Dyson's "A Golden Shanty", which Douglas Stewart prints here, was the title story in the first collection of *Bulletin* work; much anthologized, it is generally regarded as among the best of the *Bulletin* short stories. Dyson begins his story:

About ten years ago, not a day's tramp from Ballarat, set well back from a dusty track that started nowhere in particular and had no destination worth mentioning, stood the Shamrock Hotel. It was a low, rambling, disjointed structure, and bore strong evidence of having been designed by an amateur artist in a moment of vinous frenzy. It reached out in several well-defined angles, and had a lean-to building stuck on here and there; numerous out-houses were dropped down about it promiscuously; its walls were propped up in places with logs, and its moss-covered shingle roof, bowed down with the weight of years and a great accumulation of stones, hoop-iron, jam-tins, broken glassware, and dried possum skins, bulged threateningly, on the verge of utter collapse. The Shamrock was built of sun-dried bricks, of an unhealthy, bilious tint. Its dirty, shattered windows were plugged in places with old hats and discarded female apparel, and draped with green blinds, many of which had broken their moorings, and hung despondently by one corner. Groups of

ungainly fowls coursed the succulent grasshopper before the bar door; a moody, dis-tempered goat rubbed her ribs against a shattered trough roughly hewn from the butt of a tree, and a matronly old sow of spare proportions wallowed complacently in the dust of the road, surrounded by her squealing brood.

The scene is set with a deliberately assembled description, in which Dyson seeks a comic effect through a facetious tone and a piling up of detail. The main influence on the style would seem to be Dickens, probably by way of Bret Harte. Dyson's opening clamours for attention, and announces in no uncertain terms that this is a story. The voice that we hear in the prose is that of the nineteenth century magazine writer.

Contrast the opening of Lawson's *The Drover's Wife*, an early story which Mr Stewart includes here:

The two-roomed house is built of round timber, slabs, and stringy-bark, and floored with split slabs. A big bark kitchen standing at one end is larger than the house itself, verandah included.

Bush all around—bush with no horizons, for the country is flat. No ranges in the distance. The bush consists of stunted, rotten, native apple-trees. No undergrowth. Nothing to relieve the eye save the darker green of a few she-oaks which are sighing above the narrow, almost waterless creek. Nineteen miles to the nearest sign of civilization—a shanty on the main road.

The drover, an ex-squatter, is away with sheep. His wife and children are left here alone.

Four ragged, dried-up-looking children are playing about the house. Suddenly one of them yells: "Snake! Mother, here's a snake!"

The writing is extremely simple, seeming to be just a series of notes by a reporter with no pretensions to "art". However, the dispassionate surface of the prose should not blind us to the skill with which our sympathies are engaged and directed in this opening through the selection and organization of descriptive detail. Lawson strips his descriptions down to essentials, avoiding any overt appeal to the reader. The roughly-built house, the dreary bush setting, the absence of neighbours (with quiet irony Lawson notes that the "nearest sign of civilization" is a "shanty"—a bush pub—nineteen miles away), acquire their sig-

nificance without the author's having to insist, as we learn that the woman is here alone with her children. That her husband, the drover, was once a squatter is passed over here, to be developed later in the story, where it adds a further dimension to this human drama. The dependence of the children ("Ragged, dried-up-looking" relates the children to the poverty and hardship implied in the physical description of the setting) on the mother, and the everyday danger with which she lives is vividly evoked with the cry of the children on sighting the snake.

There is about such writing an appearance of casualness, artlessness, that creates a strong impression of authenticity: the conviction that has led to claims that Lawson is an outstanding realist. Behind the economy and simplicity of phrasing in Lawson's prose is a confidence in everyday Australian speech. He writes a story as a man might tell it. Whether he uses a narrator or not, the style carries the impression of a natural, unaffected Australian voice. His best group of stories is the Joe Wilson series, where the narrator confides in the reader in an unself-conscious manner. Take, for instance, the opening of *Brighten's Sister-in-Law*:

Jim was born on Gulgong, New South Wales. We used to say "on" Gulgong—and old diggers still talked of being "on th' Gulgong"—though the goldfield there had been worked out for years, and the place was only a dusty little pastoral town in the scrubs. Gulgong was about the last of the great alluvial rushes of the Roaring Days—and dreary and dismal enough it looked when I was there. The expression "on" came from being on the "diggins" or goldfield—the workings or the goldfield was all underneath, of course, so we lived (or starved) on them—not in nor at 'em.

The apparent digression on the phrase is, of course a very skilful and unobtrusive form of exposition, and a means of establishing a relationship with the reader. Many of Lawson's stories are "yarns", but a Lawson yarn has the *flavour* of yearning that is generally absent from the stories of his *Bulletin* contemporaries, in whose hands the yarns is no more than "a rattling good story" or a neatly pointed anecdote. It is the *presence* of Lawson that enriches his prose. Whatever his faults—and they are considerable—he compels attention by the strength of his feeling for his subject, a strength of feeling that involves the reader,

even when the style is quite dispassionate as in "The Drover's Wife".

In an article entitled "If I Could Paint" Lawson listed the human studies that he would attempt:

My ambition would be to paint Australia as it is, and as it changes: pictures that Australians could look through—and through a mist of tears, perhaps—back into their pasts: pictures that Australians could look through and onward to a brighter and nobler future. Pictures that the "careless" joker might stand in front of chuckling comfortably to himself, and feel less lonely and cynical in his heart than careless jokers are apt to feel. Pictures that might soften hard eyes and mouths, and so ease hard hearts.

And so on. The vein of feeling once tapped flows all too readily. The point I want to make is that Lawson here expresses an ambition to make people feel—characteristically, to make them more able to feel love and hope—and that such an ambition governs his writing. His interest in a narrative is controlled by his responsiveness to its emotional possibilities. In "The Drover's Wife", for instance, the episode of the snake, trivial enough in itself, is the structural device by which his compassion and understanding are expressed. Through this particular episode he can focus the feelings which the loneliness of the bush arouses in him. The drover's wife is anonymous and hardly meant to be thought of as a character. She is for Lawson a representative figure towards whom his admiration and sympathy can be directed. And it is the sympathy that makes him such a vulnerable writer, his generosity of feeling, especially for the weak and the alienated, tending to block the exercise of critical intelligence in his rendering of experiences which he found touching.

Discussion of Lawson frequently gets bogged down in talk of mateship: Lawson's insistence on the value of mateship is the mark of his limitation in handling the theme of loneliness and isolation. He *felt* the bush and its threat to the individual spirit, but his grasp of this theme was almost wholly intuitive and confined to relatively simple conceptions, such as "The Drover's Wife", "Telling Mrs. Baker", "Past Carin". Lawson has neither the intensity of Barbara Baynton nor the ironic detachment of Furphy when he writes of the bush, but he has a kind of sensitivity that no one else in

the period shows. The keenness of his feeling for ordinary people and their experiences is the basis of his "natural" Australian prose style, which is his distinguishing characteristic.

What of Lawson's influence? Steele Rudd, almost his exact contemporary, learnt from him, but Rudd is a Lawson reduced to the level of the anecdotalist, and without his sensitivity. Rudd's early sketches have worn very well—"Starting the Selection" and "The Night We Watched for Wallabies", which Douglas Stewart has included here, have an authenticity of feeling that disappeared as he relied more and more on comic formula. Rudd has an unpretentious style, perfectly suited to the chronicling of the comedy of a bush family. And it is this vein that Schlunke, James and Hackston continue. They are accomplished story-tellers, and more the heirs of Dyson and Rudd than of Lawson.

To trace Lawson's influence through these two volumes is an interesting exercise. In "The Lawson Tradition", apart from Rudd, only Vance Palmer, Katharine Prichard and Frank Davison could be described as continuing and extending the work of Lawson, and of these Davison is the closest in manner to Lawson. Palmer is an interesting case, as in his writing the narrative manner of Lawson is assimilated to a conscious exploitation of the short story form. He is more critically aware in his treatment of emotions, more exploratory of character and more interested in symbolism than Lawson; all of which goes to give Palmer a key position in the development of modern short story writing in Australia, an importance which this anthology does not recognize. At the same time, he fails to reach that easy simplicity of Lawson's prose, and falls victim to his own deliberateness. At his best—in stories such as *Josie*—it could be said that he writes like a man to whom Lawson and the tradition of Chekhov have been of equal importance.

How significant, then, has been the influence of Lawson on short story writing in Australia? The title of Douglas Stewart's volume, "The Lawson Tradition", does not seem to be justified, as very few of the stories show any influence of Lawson directly. Of course, Mr Stewart does not distinguish between the *Bulletin* and Lawson. The stories of Edward Dyson, James Edmond (hardly a story at all), Price Warung, Louis Becke, A. B. Paterson,

and Barbara Baynton all appeared in the *Bulletin* during Lawson's period, and owe nothing to him. The influence of Lawson starts to appear in the next generation, with Palmer, Prichard and Davison, as I have mentioned. Could we call this line a "tradition"? Looking at the second volume, "The Moderns", one finds little to suggest Lawson's continuing influence. Gavin Casey and Alan Marshall seem to be the only writers here whose prose owes something to Lawson. Casey is, of all Australian writers, the closest to Lawson in temperament and in style. But there the direct influence of Lawson comes to an end. A substantial number of writers in this volume continue what I should call the *Bulletin* line—Cecil Mann, Helen Meggs, John Morrison, David Rowbotham, Dal Stevens, Margaret Trist and Roland Robinson write the kind of story associated with the *Bulletin*.

But it is hard to see anything that could be called an Australian quality in this volume of modern short stories. Beatrice Davis, whose Introduction is most helpful, remarks:

A distinctive Australian quality that was a blend of humour and mateship, of epic themes and the evocation of the earth, has vanished or been modified.

And later:

We are citizens of a larger world, and no longer demand that Australian writing must be Australian in subject and background. Writers have accepted their environment and write from it rather than about it.

This puts the point fairly, I think. But it leads one to reflect on the absence of distinctively Australian styles among Australian short story writers. The *Bulletin* influence, the strongest and most continuous influence, is no longer central, and has produced a very minor kind of writing. Far from being a strong and creative influence today, Lawson seems to have become irrelevant and to be too limited to be a stimulus. The level of the writing in this volume is, comparatively speaking, very competent, as one can see by placing it alongside pre-1940 collections. In spite of the impression one has that the *Bulletin* brought to light a host of talented story-writers about the turn of the century, the harvest of that period is very small. More worthwhile short stories came out of the second period of *Bulletin* initiative—the thirties and forties of this century—but they were, generally speaking,

written within a convention that had its origins in the nineties: they view life through the unsophisticated attitudes of the bush, and stress the narrative element. That convention is no longer dominant, but what has taken its place? Beatrice Davis notes that "a third of the stories in her volume deal with childhood evoked or recalled". It's an interesting point. Some years ago, when collaborating on a selection of Australian prose writing, I found that childhood was a theme which Australian writers seemed to turn to with especial liking. Why? Is it that Australian writers feel during their childhood with an immediacy and fullness that deserts them as they grow up? Is it that they cannot handle the complexities of adult relationships with the same conviction?

Few of the stories gathered by Miss Davis confront the contemporary world, even as it must be known to most of the writers. There are some distinctive voices—Gavin Casey, Peter Cowan, Thelma Forshaw, Shirley Hazzard, Alan Marshall, Hal Porter and Patrick White—but only in the stories of Shirley Hazzard and Patrick White does one meet a distinctively contemporary sensibility engaged with a serious issue. "In One's Own House" by Shirley Hazzard is a delicately but firmly delineated image of modern anguish, which stands out by its cool elegance. White's "A Glass of Tea", with its symbolism and ironic tone, has a richness of texture conspicuously lacking in most stories. I don't want to suggest that these are the only stories worth reading—the other writers I have mentioned are all concerned in articulating a distinctive vision—but they seem to do so much *more* with the short story form.

The impression that Miss Davis's selection leaves is of a lack of experiment and of vitality among contemporary Australian short story writers; and I think that this is a fair representation of the situation. Some stories might have been omitted and others preferred, but her selection seems to me to be sound. I am less willing to accept Douglas Stewart's selection. On the grounds of quality I should have omitted the pieces by Penn-Smith, Brothers, and Robinson. Hugh McCrae's whimsical anecdote also has slight claims, and I can't share Mr Stewart's enthusiasm for the episode from Norman Lindsay's *Saturdee*. But having said that, I can't urge very strongly the claims of any whom he has omitted. Perhaps

Dowell O'Reilly, perhaps Myra Morris, perhaps Ernest O'Ferrall . . . I can't feel very strongly that Mr Stewart should have represented their work. But Lance Skuthorpe's "The Champion Bullock-Driver" should have been there.

Taken together, the two volumes, leave one feeling disappointed—but for this the anthologies are not to blame. Douglas Stewart's selection doesn't bring to light any writers of consequence that earlier anthologists have missed—which is to say that I am not convinced by Mr Stewart's claims for Penn-Smith. Beatrice Davis's selection confirms what one had suspected: that, with few exceptions, Australian writers of today do not see the short story as a form in which to attempt a serious artistic statement.

JOHN BARNES

REALISM IS NOT DEAD: IT HAS BEEN SEEN IN BOLOGNA!

Il tempo dell'immagine—Catalogue of the II Bologna biennale internazionale della giovane pittura; with full photographic documentation and three introductory essays, by Franco Solmi, Gerard Gassiot-Talabot and Edward Lucie-Smith, Bologna 1967, Edizioni Alfa, 3000 lire.

Modern abstract art has done realism the service of distancing it, putting it in a new perspective. When twenty odd twentieth century painters choose a realistic mode it is not because they think that the whole essence and aim of art is imitation, or because they imagine, simply, that 'we delight to view the most realistic representations in art'; it is for some other reason. The variety of these other possible reasons is demonstrated in the second Bologna Biennale, where over half the artists represented painted in a mode that the most academic critic could call "realistic", and in each case used realism as a medium, transparent and lucid, through which to express something else again.

There is nothing new about this. Realism has always been a staple of art, a medium rather than an aim; but mid-twentieth century realism enables us to see, with particular clarity, how realistic modes can be used, as language is used, neutrally and as a means

of communicating an indefinite variety of messages.

It is instructive and amusing to take an ideal ordinary man's view of painterly realism, and with this as a base line to group the Bologna exhibitors in order. But the list will not be simple, a mere ranking. Realism is the medium; the meaning of each painting is another thing again. And cross-referring meanings, one begins to produce a network of groupings, a list of intentionalities, which refuses to behave in any simple way at all. This is to be expected.

Colville, Monory, Rieti, and Klasen (if one counts only his *Porte entr'ouverte*) tie for first place on our ideal-observer's scale, with Colville a trifle more realistic than the other two. Colville's "poetic camera" presents two images: one, Wordsworthian and above all empathetic, of a *Crow up Early*, where we become the crow; the other, *Truck Stop*, celebrative and emblematic of modern life, a great complex road-truck set against a thin screen of pines, with a dog sniffing at one of its vast double-wheels, and behind it a gas station attendant with a broken arm in a sling. Here is the everyday commonplace, the contingent but tolerable burden of life. Klasen's door is an enigma. Like the realistic mode itself, a half open door seen with piercing clarity is neutral, transparent, and compatible with any joy, any tragedy—all that is clear is that some great emotion has heightened perception. Monory is a "surrealist naturalist" whose naturalism, blander even than Magritte's, merges into simple magic realism: but, like Tooker, he explodes the simple presence of objects with a *Doppelgänger* image, as in *Un Autre*. He shatters contexts like any surrealist, as in *Le Plaisir*; but in *Mian cassant*, the image of a woman fastening her brassière as seen in a smashed mirror, Monory reconciles realism and surrealism in a momentary alliance, analogous to, but subtly different from Pardi's *entente* between Chirico and the town-planners.

The photograph, black, white and abrasive, appears, imitated, in the work of Genovés, whose film strips and odd frames of panics, insurrections, cabals and executions provide a comment on what is intolerable in the contemporary condition: Genovés gives us Jean-Luc Godard's *Les Carabiniers* frozen, but with no breath of Brechtian farce to provide even false relief.

Fabio Rieti shows us no figures, only a meticulously painted photograph of a wall with a barred grating, and an enigmatic shadow—is it of a statue?—in *Angelo Guardiani*: or cobbled streets worn smooth, with neat concrete curbs and painted traffic arrows, overlaid with the same enigmatic shadows. His *Imperavit* and *Osanna* may simply bring together the full rhetoric of baroque statuary and the serviceable facts of life into a total image; or they may warn us, obscurely, of some unseen danger, of the mortality that lies in the present moment.

Dino Boschi's precise cages and wire fences contain enigmatic crowds, and they sometimes have ironic titles such as *Il tempo libero*. Like Genovés, Boschi demands to be read politically. These fences may be innocent, but then again they may not. Boschi parallels, curiously, Aillaud's cage-images, but Aillaud's personages are all animals, rhinos, snakes, lions and crocodiles—these last held back by curved spikes more formidable than their own teeth—totally alien but contented enough, in a well conducted zoo.

Sarnari's lovers, nude and presented in the high tones of over-exposed film stills, are all close up, enigmatic, romantic exercises in an eroticism so tender—or so cold—that one feels oneself standing at a great distance. Sarnari is an adult at adult cinema. Eroticism, and what one might almost call *morbidezza morbosa*, characterize Tindle's realistic but a-photographic heads and torsos, and his *Glass with dark rose* would be as sensual as it is, even seen apart from the rest of the *oeuvre*.

Ferroni can be a kind of surrealist, or he can, with his *Ragazza*, produce a timeless popular poster. The skirt is mini, the pout post-Bardot, but the proportions are classical: an icon of the cult of sexual exacerbation, contrived within the boundaries of a strict latin propriety. Gaerreschi combines naturalism of a hyper-realist sort, faces photographic and soft and tender enough for a cosmetic advertisement, with lay-out-style patterns and displays spiked with Hebrew characters: these are less surreal *poèmes objets* than montages, and they enfold the viewer in a kind of astringent charm.

Howarth's life size rag-people, realer than the most realistic of tinted and waxed Greek statutes, fetish objects from a Ray Bradbury world where, mercifully, the current has not

yet been turned on, are matched by the incredible round-in-flat realism of Gnoli's pop images: they are almost trumped by the close-up of the *Double breasted jacket*, each button so very neatly present, or the *Armchair* drawn as if to illustrate some immensely precious object for an archeological journal.

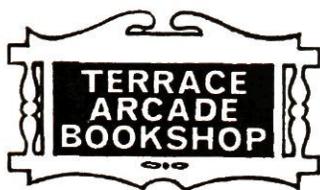
There is not much straight Pop—though Blake is there and Henri (primitive and slick at once, and full of obscure menace); but there is some Romantic realism, Aitcheson's negro heads, and McGarrell's romantic expressionist figures in interiors. Bosch presides in spirit over Landini's landscapes, erotic in a clinical way, with *Doppelgänger* figures and a sense of pure and eternal panic; these are matched only by the obscure horrors of Cremonini where the obscene lurks just beyond the edge of the frame and threatens our defences at every moment.

Within the given limitations of their realism, limitations which are to painting much what the sonnet form is to poetry, these twenty odd painters have made as many comments on the human situation.

Dott. Franco Solmi writes in his introductory essay: "If we admit that the existence of the artistic image does not consist in its *being*—as Heidegger's man or Robbe-Grillet's object—we have to agree that it is something more than, and different from, its *presence* . . ."; and he is, of course, quite correct. What is the 'something more'? The exhibition *shows* us, if it does not *tell* us, that this 'something more' which goes along with the artistic image is an explanation—and there are as many explanations as there are exhibitors—of *care*, of *significance*, of *structures*, of *states of thrownness*. The painters, like Heidegger himself, 'review the situation', and then they make what they can of it.

Realist pictures are like sentences, they are all in a natural language: but, like sentences, they can say innumerable different kinds of things. Art is not mere utterance, or mere presence, but intentionality and intensionality. A picture means what it can be seen to mean.

The current issue of *Art and Australia* (March 1968), contains an interesting retrospect on the Antipodean Manifesto of 1959, written by Barbara Blackman. Read together this article and the Bologna catalogue have a great deal to tell us.

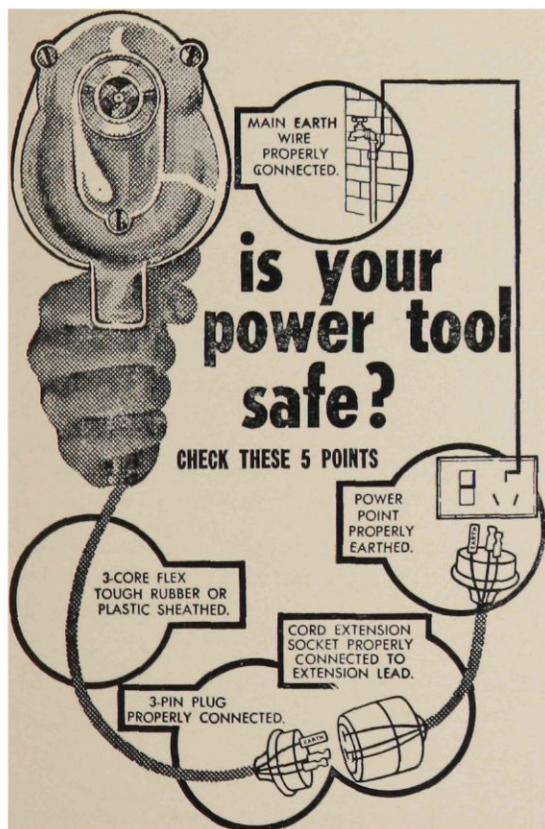


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YOUNG WRITERS—CONTRIBUTORS

David Ambrose—educated Scotch College and University of W.A. Has “maintained constant war of attrition on settled habits and academic discipline by random excursions to foreign lands—New Zealand, India, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Greece, Singapore, England. Has been truckdriver, wharf labourer, hotel cellarman, worked with shearing team. At present, in order to apply it to others, is learning the Law at W.A. University.”

K. R. Bamford—21—worked in State Library in Perth. At present in England.

P. Bradstreet—student teacher Graylands Teachers College.

Andrew Burke—24—educated St. Louis School, Claremont, W.A. “Encouraged to experiment with verse at school. At this stage first heard of Beat Generation writers through Time Magazine and friend who sat next to me at school.”

Gavin Burgess—26—graduate in Arts, University of Sydney. Has worked as storeman, clerk, company representative. Now a teacher. Travelled in Europe and S.E. Asia. Poetry in Bulletin, Poetry Magazine, Hermes.

Noeline Burtenshaw—matriculated Swanbourne High School 1967. At present studying Arts at University of W.A.

Hal Colebatch—22—politics honours student, University of W.A. “Once and future journalist.” Poems in The Realist, Poetry Australia, Poetry Magazine. “Interested in science-fiction, ancient history, Norse mythology, surrealism and the German navy.” At present working on poems, short stories, first stages of a novel.

Robert Connell—23—engaged in research in political sociology. Educated Melbourne, Sydney, U.S.A., Melbourne University. “Marital status—nil: politics—radical: sports—none: religion—none: drugs—none. Writing poetry for seven years, published almost none, believes in transformation of vision of

Australian society through cultural regeneration started by poetic revolution, hence abhors most of what is written in Australia today. Searching for the perfect poem but has not yet got it—quite.”

Terry Counihan—18—second year Arts student, Melbourne University. Assistant editor Fargago, M.U. student newspaper.

Michael Dugan—21—educated Wesley College, Melbourne. Worked in country and in bookshops in Melbourne. First book (for children) accepted 1967. Has “published a couple of dozen articles, one short story, and one poem”.

H. J. Gaskin—24—born in England, educated in Malaya and at St. Paul’s, London. Worked in City of London on leaving school and then as journalist and teacher in Iran, Turkey and Iraq. At present part-time journalist and full-time University student.

Ross Haig—educated Scotch College, Perth and University of W.A. Journalist, and has worked in radio. Worked with BBC. Travelled in Europe, Africa, India. At present working in Hong Kong. Published one book of verse.

Nicholas Hasluck—25—who also says he is C. P. Sleet. Graduate in law of University of W.A. and Oxford. Recently returned to Perth after three years abroad. Poetry in Westerly, Poetry Australia, Poetry Magazine.

Bob Hodge—27—Honours graduate in English, University of W.A., and Cambridge. At present doing research in English Literature at Churchill College, Cambridge.

Wendy Horowitz—21—doing fourth year English at Monash. Came to Australia four years ago from New York.

Murray Jennings—27—educated John Curtin High and Fremantle Technical School, and Technicians Training School. “Hardly indicative of the writers ideal educative require-

- ments', but then, an alternative education via people and places can be richly rewarding. . . . Lived in such odd places as Cottesloe, Sydney, Inverell and Newcastle. Find most places odd enough to inspire me, especially after having left them." Wide range of jobs, now in commercial radio. Would prefer to be writing full time—"but I also like eating". Married to actress Rosalind Ord. Writes a column for a Sydney music magazine.
- Viv Kitson**—22—journalist in Perth. Part-time student University of W.A. Poetry in Thrust, Poetry Australia, Jacaranda Under 25.
- Timothy Kline**—21—born Tasmania and lives there. Clerk, interested in boat building and canoeing. Working on a novel. Poems broadcast.
- Roger McDonald**—26—ABC Education Department. Poetry in Overland, Bulletin, Poetry Magazine, Poetry Australia, The Australian, and broadcast.
- Rhyll McMaster**—21—began writing when 17. Has worked in Dept of Agriculture at Queensland University. Now lives in Hobart where he has a part-time job as an editorial assistant with Australian Literary Studies. Poetry in Poetry Australia, Critical Quarterly, Jacaranda Under Twenty-Five, The Australian.
- J. C. Michael** (psuedonym)—22—born Boise, Idaho. Childhood spent in Louisiana and Oregon. "After graduating from High School, made some money in pop music industry. This was invested on an extended binge in Europe and Africa. In 1965 returned to U.S.A. Early 1966 it became obvious that, for persons of my description, America was uninhabitable." Now lives in Sydney.
- Tony Miller**—graduate in Arts, University of W.A. Going to Cambridge this year to read English.
- J. R. Morris**—32—been writing seriously for the past two years. Victorian State Govt. Short Story Award 1966. Stories in South-erly. Age, Australian Letters, Man.
- John Romeril**—22—part-time student Monash, where he edits literature club magazine. "Perhaps, somewhere hidden, there is a place where I take myself seriously. I am not especially aware of it. For the most part I work from an esoteric dictionary that lists dead events in alphabetical order . . . I have given the poems titles only because a page of printed poems without titles looks lousy."
- Graham Rowlands**—21—educated Brisbane Grammar School, now in final year English honours course University of Queensland. Writes lyrics, satire, social protest and comic poems. Believes "art to be a process vitalizing people's awareness of life rather than a series of objects to be aesthetically valued." Uses "different genres to give as total expression to my personality as merciless self analysis will allow . . . not concerned with labels or schools of poetry". Poetry in Sydney Morning Herald, The Australian, Southerly, The Bulletin.
- C. P. Sleet**—hides himself among the other contributors.
- Ian Templeman**—30—educated Wesley College, Perth; Claremont Teachers' College. Art teacher 1959-62. Taught in English Secondary Modern Schools, Berkshire 1963. Travelled Europe, North Africa, Israel, India. Works in Education Dept., Perth. Paints, foundation committee member CAS in W.A.
- Brian Toohey**—24—started writing two years ago while working as graduate-clerk. "Interested in song writing, and am making some movies, but I'm not sure if they're experimental."
- Delphine Waldron**—19—attended Graylands Teachers' College, W.A., last year. Now teaching in the country.
- Michael Wilding**—taught English at University of Sydney. Since returned to England.

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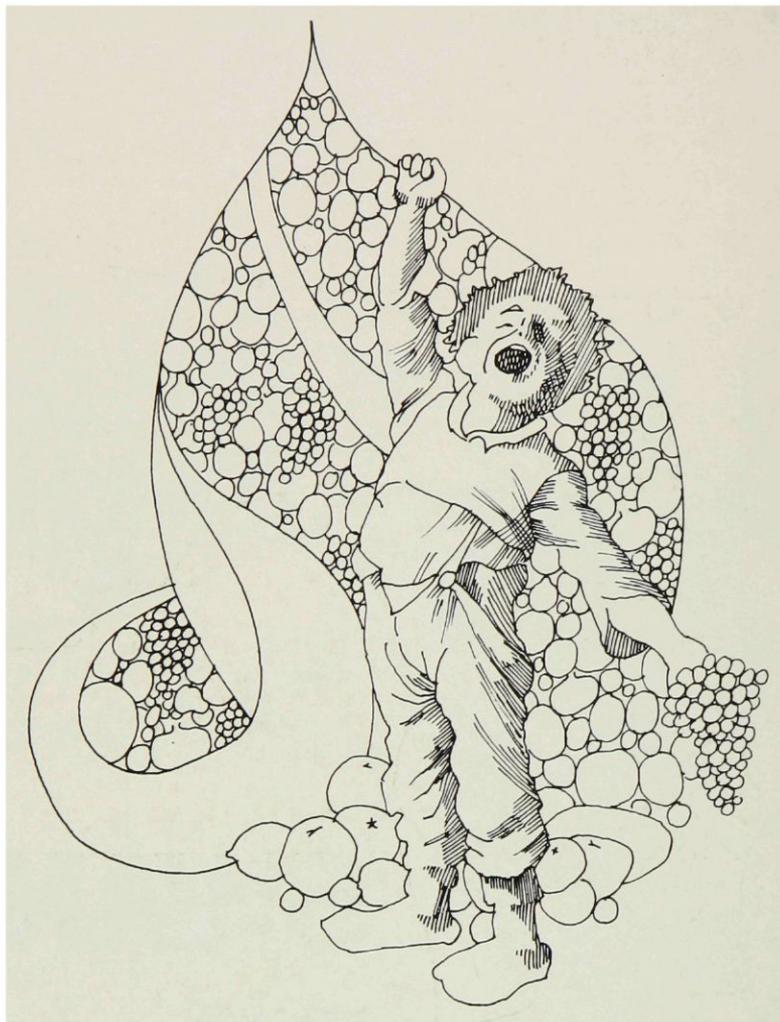
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