The Batavia Mutineers

stories

WESTERLY

poems

reviews

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westerly

a quarterly review

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University of Western Australia Press

Guy Grey-Smith, a Western Australian artist with a strong interest in Asian art, was invited by the Cambodian government to teach in the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Phnom Penh, between September 1969 and May 1970.

The four wash drawings reproduced in this volume are based on some of the contents of the Museum of Phnom Penh and the ancient ruins of the Angkor region in northern Cambodia.

They form part of an exhibition of the artist's work at the John Gild galleries, Subiaco, from 29 November to 14 December, 1970.

westerly

No. 4, December, 1970

Illustrations to the Batavia Mutineers from Jan Jansz Ongeluckige Voyagie—1647 by courtesy of the Library Board of Western Australia.

Murray Bail

PARADISE

BREAKING INTO LIGHT, the long silver bus. It comes rumbling from its concrete pen. Grunting away. It reaches North Terrace by stopping and yawning, and its full length swings. Yawns left, climbs past Rosella, hesitates at Maid 'n Magpie, take the left, roads are empty, petrol stations are empty, car yards are empty, shops are empty, hold her steady, chassis doesn't pitch then, there are couples behind curtains, there's a dog, watch him, man on a bike, shiftworker in a coat, now the road's stirring, milkman turns a corner, leaves the road open, driver taps his steering wheel, enormous view of life in the morning, foot taps excited by it.

The bus had PARADISE printed on the front, sides and back. It was a long run to the suburb. At the outer reaches it specialised in young married women with prams; and Merv Hector had to smile. From his position in the driving seat he could see the new generation hair-dos, skirts, worried eye-brows. Gentle, slow-eyed Hector waited for them, was happy to be of service. When one of them waved between stops he would stop the great silver machine every time. His conductors were quick to see they were riding with a soft heart; straight-forward characters, they were quick to assert themselves. "Be an angel, Merv. Stop at the shops there for some smokes." They also went to him when sick of things.

This time his conductor was Ron. His voice, tightly pitched. "Getting up at this hour really makes me wonder. We're not carrying a soul. It makes me sick."

Merv shook his head. Through the pure windscreen the road was alive ahead of him. Below his feet the bus was really travelling. It made you feel alive.

"There's the people we got on the way back," Merv said.

He made a long sentence of it, as he often did when contented, and heard Ron's breath come out dissatisfied.

"There's too many of them. We should have two here serving them. All the kids; they never have to pay properly. What time is it?"

They were entering Paradise. As usual Hector waited to be thrilled by it, he stared and was ready, but a disappointment spread like the morning shadows. Streets were golden but it seemed more like a finishing sunset than the beginning of a day. When Hector stopped the bus it seemed to be further away—Paradise did. New tiles pointing in the sky of course spoilt the purity. But Paradise could be close by. It definitely felt close by. The air light, bright; he was at the edge of

something. Hector's stubborn fifty-four year old eyesight produced these messages for his heart but he was required to turn the bus, and he turned the bus around.

"Hell, we're going to really get hot and crowded.'
It was Ron at Hector's elbow.
"We'll be right," said Hector.
"Hang on a sec, let us out at the shop. You want some chewy?"
Stopped. Merv Hector was mild cheese from Norwood. At the MTT he was considered slow and forgetful. But he was dependable enough, and voiced no objections to long early morning runs. His moon-wife was stupefied by his sincerity. He was older. Their garden grew weeds. His watch was inaccurate, and he stumbled near the garden. "Dear?" he sometimes said to Hazel, and faded out. The distance to Paradise with the great screen framing all kinds of life gave him this gentle advice: move, slow down, stop, let them get on, move, see, Paradise. The world was beautiful. It was plainly visible.

Now Ron said something again.
"Look at all the kids. Just what I needed."
The bus grew squatter and fatter with the weights of everybody. Ron battled through, and the air was hot and human. They were now channelled by houses near the city, yet it was confusing.

A green bread van turned while Merv wondered. The shape was instantly kissed by the metal at Merv's feet and the whole green turned over and over like a dying insect, a round pole came zooming forward, Hector's world lept to it, and splintered, smashed hard. Glass splattered. A crying uniform over Hector's shoulder cracked the windscreen.

There was the crash, Hector remembered. And the memory of Paradise persisted. If there was a beautiful place he could watch for like that.

He was wrinkling, and gave a twitch.

HE found other work.
"Morning."
"Morning. Six, thanks."
"Six, and?"
"Eight."
"Right there."
"Two for me."
"Back a bit, sir. Up we go."

Inside a driver's uniform again. They hold their breath and stare at lights blinking, 4, 5, feel the altitude moving below the toes, turn the lever, doors, further up: whrrrp! abrupt stop, men breathe into ears, business face veins, right this little lift will help, reach-the-top, an essential task in the latest glass architecture.

I'll go to Heaven.
Merv Hector settled on his stool in the lift. Shuffling and throat-clearing squashed the space into a noise-box. Like the run to Paradise, he was at the entrance with a mild face, helping them: they stepped out at certain intervals, sped down fluorescent tunnels for special meetings. These repetitions gave him the most gentle pleasure. He was in the centre of activity, and happily assisting. His placid role in giving this regular service, regular service, settled his features.

In the mornings a lemon-headed man unlocked the building and the lifts.

"How are you today?"

"What are you this early for?" the caretaker answered.

"Well," Hector began.

The caretaker cut him off. "If the others come here late, you've got to get here at this hour."

"It's a good building you've got," Hector suggested in all seriousness.

"What's good about it? The bloody place."

The caretaker was pale.

Hector had to take some keys to him one morning on the eighteenth floor. He was touched by the high silence. Outside the wind scratched at the glass, and inside currents of cool air tugged at his sleeve like the mysterious breathing of a giant snowman. It was some height, near the clouds. God, Hector marvelled. His veins, his eyes seemed to be swelling. Was this pleasure? It must be nearer to heaven or Paradise up there.

"What's your trouble?"

The caretaker came up behind him.

"Give us the keys, and scoot. They're buzzing you."

"Right then."

He went back to the lift.

"Is it alright if I bring my lunch on the roof?" he called out.

"Christ Almighty," the watchman said.

Why, the roof was high. It was peaceful. Hector could watch noises made by the street people below. And clouds closed in; could almost touch me. And someone had placed pot plants along the edge and the wind trembled their green. Did the lonely caretaker put them there? The slow question gently surrounded him with pleasure, and near the clouds he chewed on Hazel's sandwiches.

The lift was always crowded. He kept going up down, up down, all day. Now he preferred going up to down. Going down it was back to the street, hot and old. So he kept going up, and late one morning kept going, kept going, and wondering, crashed into the ceiling. Roof hit roof—or there were springs to stop him. But it was enough to jump him off the stool, and the caretaker arrived yelling.

"No-one's ever done that before, you bloody fool."

"Strike," Hector said.

He was dazed.

Merv Hector continued. His hour on the roof was something to look forward to. I'm very near it, he said in the silence. Full of pretty, dazed visions he slept past two, and was immediately fired by the caretaker.

"Even if you come here early," said the caretaker, signalling up and down with his arm.

HAIR on Hector's head looked electrocuted. It was fifty-four year old stuff flaking and greying: always looked as if he had just left a speedboat. He wore brown eye-glasses. Sometimes he touched his lips with his fingers vibrating exactly as though they played a mouth organ.

Home with Hazel she carried on a bit

But she noticed something. He had been weeding the garden. One finger was cut by a buried piece of china—a broken pre-war saucer of some description—and self-pity moved him to silence. He seemed to dry up. More or less alone he shaved vaguely. He didn't say much. He was not his cheery self, she said.

"Why don't you get another job? We can settle down after."

Hector started again.

"You sit there," the young man pointed. "When the phone goes write down what they say. The Bureau rings at about every half hour. Arrange the switches like so. You can make any words they tell you. At the moment it's RAIN DEVELOPING."

Hector looked through the tiny window, looked across the wall of the building, and there, printed in enormous lights, was the signal RAIN DEVELOPING.

"It's a pity we haven't got an automatic system," the young one stated briskly, "you wouldn't have to mess around with all these bloody switches. But it's easy enough."

"Yes," admitted Hector absently.

So this is how the weather lights work, he thought.

This is what I do.

The room was tiny concrete: enough to depress anybody. It was high in the dead part of the building, ignored by the air conditioning.

The black phone gave a sudden ring. A voice told Hector to change the message to RAIN. After selecting the right switches he turned them on. Through the window he saw the sudden change in message and automatically he wondered what the people below thought. Would they believe in his sign? Would they notice it? How many would be caught without coats, umbrellas and shelter? But there was no rain—yet. Standing at the window he felt concerned. He looked at his message, and looked down at the people shapes moving casually. Then miraculously, it seemed, rain began hitting and splashing. His sign shined in triumph; the thought that his warning had saved people filled him with specific pleasure. It was good, and he clenched himself. He looked up then at the clouds. They seemed to be pressing down on his room, around his life, enveloping him, showering his vision with rain. God, he wondered.

Down on the street saddened figures ran from point to point. The shining traffic stayed queued, and three silver buses waited bumper to bumper. His experience recalled sitting behind the steering wheel as giant windscreen wipers scanned repetitiously like radar, squish-a-squish. Now he stared through the glass window at the clouds, up into the rain again. He felt settled, sure, safe, glad to be there; he thought of home, and his Hazel.

Nothing's the matter, he said. I'm fine he wanted everyone to know. On the panel he moved across and switched the message to "FINE".

Th huge bright lights said FINE as the rain kept splashing down. Altogether Merv Hector marvelled at every single thing; he stared at his sign. He loved those clouds. It was another world, and he was there. The phone began to ring.

CONTRARIES

On a Picture by William Blake

clasping each
brother
by the
hand

while friend
and self
together
stand

the
antagonists
lock bodies,
and

are in their
septed
being
stunned

mix in their
wrestling
round to
blend

the opposites
that met
and
groaned

their limbs,
as though a
circling
wind

when he
received the
blessing
wound:

of fire joined
archangel
and
fiend:

this paradox
had
Jacob
learned

a
dragon-comet
here con-
strained

in loving
battle
of the
mind—

D. J. LAKE

ELEMENTS

(Three Poems for Georgia)

i

Cruising your Sprite
down windy aisles
of Sunday, high
on flagon red,

I watched you lean
far back, then toss
bare feet against
the sweeping glass:

for bones, maybe,
the logical
arrangement—for me,
a genuflection

to private gods
of wine and air.

ii

That Friday night:
your tongue soft-rough
with smoke and whisky,
your body hard
against the blues,
our shadows tracing
on the walls
a lithe prelude
to love. Georgia,
we could have done
it then, but in
some yet dry corner
hung, half-seen,
the unasked question:

long grey Sunday
afternoons,
light rain, dry wine,
and Mozart in the trees.

iii

We drove
through sun, up gravel
to the mountains:
the sky stood in
around us
as we stopped.
Warmed
by someone's dying fire,
we drained the white,
and smoke in drifts
reached up
through the absolute
black of your hair.
All afternoon
across the gully,
pale fat birds
hung motionless in trees,
and slow talk
turned
in wine-scrawled circles
of two
who'd stepped beyond.

At four the cool
inevitability of rain,
blowing in over the pines.

GEOFF PAGE

TROIS EN LIT

I first noticed him
When I had to get up unexpectedly
In the middle of the night
He was lying on the other side of her
Sleeping peacefully, his hand
Resting familiarly on her hip.
By the time I returned he had gone
Although, in her sleep,
She still inclined after him.
As I pressed close against her warmth
I wondered if he came every night now
And if he would come again tomorrow
And on the night after that.

BILL WARNOCK

Toy Dorgan

A DEMO IN NEW MEXICO

John Brown Circle Hawk. Johnny at school, John later on. The brother's tan, or was it dirt? hand painted runny letters on the white enamel board. "Bloodfoot Circle Hawk Performing Genuine Indian Dances—10, 11, 12, 2, 3, 4."

It was that word. Like five years ago in Albequerque, the circus dogs in yellow tutus, hopping around on two legs; the bear on the bicycle; the lions leaping through fire hoops. When they should have been out slashing the sides of gazelles. Something wrong.

"Hey John, you shouldn't be hanging around here in those clothes. Go get into your outfit. Father wouldn't like it if he knew you were in those jeans while there's people here."

To the side of the adobe building. Picking plaster off the fake-clay wall. 66 on the left. LA to Chi town by way of the Indians. Route 66—the two lane cistern of America. The runners. From towns. To towns. Through holidays. Gas stations, bars, cafes, souvenir shops and hock shops. That was all of 66.

To the right, the plains. Stark. Cruel to the eyes, slicing the inside of the blue ball in half. Everything placed. Oh, my father's father's father's father. Why me? You. The buffaloes, the cavalry, the pinto ponies, the woven blankets. But not me. Either with you, spirit-whooping, flying down chipflint hillsides, or away from you. But not like this.

I am. I am my father's son. Woven blankets come from Japan. I have snipped the tags off for years. My brothers and I have found blue rocks and glued them to jewelry. Put them in plastic boxes and called them hand-tooled-tourquoise gifts. But it never concerned me. For I am my father's son, born to glue pages of Milton and Shakespeare into me. To see to touch to put on paper. Not to keep on here.

The cloud began to push its way out again. The swelling black-yeast monster. Father is very sick. The money? The food to be bought, the shoes to be bought, the insurance to be paid. The shop to be run. 'John Brown Circle Hawk, you are my first son. It must be you.' To snip tags, to gather blue rocks. But only as a boy. Then, the university. Now, the ghost-wet-leather-strap dried around his neck. And the cloud boiled, but inside.

Mulrokka, laying in the sun, enduring it. Asleep. Dead. Except for twin air shoots barely messing the dust. Two years ago—a pup. Leaping, yapping, running, attacking rags on sticks. Now he walked everywhere. And only sniffed. It has to be. First son, it must be you.

"Johnny—you're not ready yet. Hurry up, get dressed. Do you remember all the words and stuff that papa told you?"

The inside shade much shadier. Tennis shoes, jeans, red checked shirt, hat, underwear off. Nice to stay in here. Even to dance naked would be better. Snapping on the ankle feathers and wrist feathers. Yellow red blue. A ten-cent Woolworth's snap. The beads, the leather leggings, the plastic leggings? No, they *were* leather. The paint; oh, the wristwatch. Painting the light covered-up-skin band blue. Then the brush stroking, tickling the cheeks. Something you could not stop. Finally, the paint, squeezing up, invisibly puckering. It dried. The face was set. The rattles last. Made with rattlesnake tails. He had caught them years ago.

Out under the blue bowl, the straight eye starred.

"Oh look Mummy. Is he a coloured man?"

"Naw. Stupid, that's an Indian."

"Alright. That'll be enough from you Paul. No darling, now just watch. He's going to do a rain dance. To make it rain."

The unblinking eye-father, who had sucked up all there was to suck. Who had watched the hawks scar all the dawns. Who had slowed the dog. The thumping came. From the growing one inside, or from the drums? Watching the one-being, hitting his ground, making scuffs of dust, which rose like incense. Moaning the words of the dance. That father had. No no. Milton. Where is that place?

Twisting, turning, hopping, turning, hopping. The toad bloats its cheeks. The thing could not come out. There was just nothing you could do ... shutting off the light. Keeping it in through his eyes. But it was no use. The moans grew with it. The yells. The jumping, the shaking. Yelling his words. Telling them telling him telling. Screaming, rattling hate for Japan. The sky, the father, the dog that was a puppy. Spinning, crying-out, screaming, spinning-out. A pain somewhere (kicking the pony cruelly) foaming horsehides, insides of thighs, faster faster, over the rocks, down hillsides. Flint clatter.

The sun spun, spiralled the sky. 66 jagged. The blue bowl rattled overhead. Rattles underneath. The snake's applause. Applause. Auditorium applause because Milton was there. A scholarship applause for John Brown. Winner applause. Appl. . . .

"Hey good going Bloodfoot."

"But daddy. Daddy, it's not raining."

The sentence stopped all but the breath. And the wind that waved the ankle feathers. A photograph was taken. And the smallest boy threw a quarter to Bloodfoot.

Vicki Viidikas

MICE. IN DREAMS PERHAPS

Plain walls in his room. I think I'll paint the walls almost black. Black. Yes. Drama. Doom. Break up the monotony. He has a ladder by his bed to paint the walls deep almost black. Yes. Sitting there in black crepe slacks impeccably ironed, Italian leather boots, Scottish wool jumper, leather bracelet, leather things, tentative hands. I don't believe in handshaking do you? It's not what I think one ought to do. Do you think? All these formalities. Rituals. Mmn. He moves lightly. Pieces of raw silk rip up the light.

I'm tired of Bunny, I think I'll give him up. Yes? And Clayton is such a bore. Really. He sighs. It's not that sex is hopeless, really, it's just that the more I lose interest in myself, the more I lose interest in it. Got it. It. Tube of emotions. Funnels. And Bunny and I aren't very good in bed anyway. He's rather inhibited, like a squirmy eel wriggling away. I've always thought there was something repulsive about him. He looks so wet! Gasps for breath. I can't stand people breathing on me in bed! God! Suffocation.

He pushes at something invisible in the room. He stands near her lifting his neat eyebrows, meaning to penetrate . . . I think the room'd look good painted black. Yes. And yellow sheets'd go well (that you've never been in), show up the complexion.

They go on. Apart. She lifts her cigarette and he asks her to ash it in a special bottle. I want a bottle full of ash. Nice? And glass jars with coloured water in them, nothing else in the room, a bed perhaps . . . Mmn that'd be beaut.

Who's giving who? They lean and fall about the room. Together. Apart. They can hardly breathe at times, the spaces become so close. So close. At times.

Images poke through her mind, some padding and softly. She thinks of a lover. Someone. Him—the man from the theatre. Kissing her. Unloosing a mouth. Removing clothes and sliding a tongue over an entire body. His ear, openings, releasing —flood of time, movement, around. Another time, awkwardness. Balloons in her mouth. Pushing down. Someone rushing instead of waiting. Needing. Is needed. How much and how little. Need.

Smoking
Falling
Riding
Touching
Chimes. Unrealised areas. Breaking.

She couldn't go on. Memories are rice paper, crumpling, transparent. Easy if you want them to be.

She was back in the room, having never really left. And Steven was making coffee in the corner, very black, strong. Ears built with honey. Murmuring and fluttering in front of her, over, bumping her foot, she moving the foot away, he apologising, placing the foot somewhere else, drinking coffee, looking away. Some other distance.

Forward. Shuttle of lips and eyes. How's Joel, are you happy with him? Yes . . . she paused to, then looking up—we've had a few flares, oh, anyway, but yes we've been making it okay. Mmn. I guess. She fiddles with her earring, ashes again in the bottle.

And he really meant—is he a good lover? His lips slim. And she thought about it, in the silence. Yes, they'd had some wonderful times together, very . . . free? that wretched word . . . made things free. She looked up at Steven—there's very few people who are totally uninhibited, if it's possible, I mean most of us have some sexual inhibitions somewhere . . .

Yea, Bunny's like that. I think I'll give him up. And Clayton's a bore but we're pretty good in bed. I think. You know I've realised one can be very good in bed without having to care about it at all. I mean, all this nonsense about love, jerking his leg, it leaves one cold. Cold. There comes a time when one just realises there are more worthwhile things to do, to get on with it. Don't you think? One could spend a lifetime worrying about love and such things, and caring, you know, being considerate, when one really ought to get on to the more important things.

He held himself very still, looking at her. She stared deliberately back, then—but Steven I believe in love, I mean . . . I've had some wonderful times with people and it's been because of . . . Joel and me, we've made love till we couldn't move anymore, and that's because of . . . love, hesitating, or caring . . . move, anyhow, something. Something.

Steven dropped his face. Twiddled buckles on his shoes, flicked bits of fluff off his trousers. And she frowned, thinking we shouldn't be talking about . . . I should say . . . or . . . He crossed one leg over the other, feeling more this, feeling he was not feeling, that she was no more important than anybody else. That all the philosophy he'd read, that. No. He knew she was saying, that she could affect, that . . . that there was something, love perhaps? Some closer possibility or reality. Reality?

And then he didn't want Bunny or Clayton or, he wanted . . . no! Why should I? I can't stand. No. No. Maybe the sky is, maybe sex is on a level I can't, what is sex?

My boots hurt, my brain is so heavy, I read too much, I am sick of philosophy, I find people gross, I am, I need a new tube of lubricating cream, I am concerned with concepts, I, I must study more logic, more Kant, Mills, Nietzsche, Hegel.

Steven lay in bed smoking a Cuban cigar, making his throat retch—even this, feeling one ought to go in for stronger things: coarser cigarettes, stronger coffee, thicker belts, sweaters, bigger lovers, shoes, blacker clothes, eyes. One ought to do this, one ought to do that. Yes. No. Tedious. Really. How tedious.

He picked up "Good and Evil" by Nietzsche, mmn, that photo on the cover, he felt a similar likeness, turning his head, had another puff of the cigar, was bored, bored, sighed dropping the book on the floor. Perhaps I should turn on, perhaps I should go overseas, give up sex, improve my body, take up yoga, be a theologian, vegetarian, bi-sexual, go to elegant parties, give up speaking for five years, thinking. Thinking. How dreary.

Monday he was round again to visit her. Nice. He brought a flower. She thanked him. Flattered. But he had already explained they meant nothing to him. And he sat on the bed saying I think one ought to forget about people altogether, stuff them, forget they exist. She listened (as usual) and sighed. No Steven, I don't . . . No? I've given up Bunny, he announced, and only intend to see Clayton once a fortnight, for sex. Oh, I don't care, I don't know.

She turned her back and went to the wardrobe to get out a dress. I got a new dress (change the subject). They were aware. Changing in front of him, he watched her body, (he hadn't touched) breasts, what were they like? anything, the space between her legs. Do you think it suits me? She liked to show him her clothes, talk about appearances. He complimented her. She was aware. They had hugged once or twice a long time ago. Or had he kissed her on the cheek? She couldn't remember. They were friends. He didn't come on to . . .

She hated him sometimes. His selfishness, was it? Or was it herself? The potential cat and mouse. A devouring. In dreams perhaps, perhaps she only realised it in dreams.

Mmn, it makes you look like Theda Bara. They both laughed, she whirling around in the dress. Some admiration. Mutual tongue licking. And he felt transfixed, staring—legs from cupboards, fingers, crotches, pubic hairs lining drawers, nipples, water. Salt in his eyes—my mind, my mind—he was silently nauseous. Tongues, hairs, sweat, smells. Tongues like whips, hands like whips, words all whips. Ash.

He left the room. And she wasn't concerned, he often did that, rushed off suddenly. She'd never bothered to ask him why. Or think why. Why. He stood on the back steps fitting blocks in his mind, tightening, stoppers in bottles. Held his hands very tight.

Silently, without odours or screaming he walked back into the room. And sat down again. Begin.

SALTMARSH, ETC.

Morning, in the saltmarsh, I watched the birds
wading for food, watched fish and crabs
move in the reeds. Smelt and heard
the loneliness of mudbanks. Mud
and guano on my shoes. Copper nails
remained of vanished dinghies, enigmatic
scraps of clothing, almost lost in mud,
hinted at buried corpses (I found none)
and of a French letter, the unmistakable
rubber ring remained. Otherwise,
under grey sky the saltmarsh
was simple saltmarsh. I wished
I had boots instead, or boy's bare feet.

The low-lying mudbank plants
were dullish pink. The mud itself
looked warm. I wish, My Love
you did not still
rot there and round my guts, my lungs.
(As kingfish rot in shallows, jaws,
guts, teeth all on display
too big to be decent, too big
to kick aside)

One little crab
picked at a dead shag
and beyond the point
some boy scouts sailed a cutter.

HAL COLEBATCH

EDUCATIONIST

"By gee, I'll nail you all."

Perhaps it was over-confidence, or plain
Neglect that caused their failure to appoint
A cockatoo. At any rate, a score
Of boys had organised a two-up game,
Located in an alley near the school,
So that a footloose teacher made the scene
And instantly cut short the spinner's reign.
The Deputy took action, and he lined
Them up at after-lunch assembly on
A Wednesday afternoon. His nasalized
Australian rhetoric harangued the school,
While I, just in from outer darkness, stood
Aware of the electric quiver of
His jowls, as if he were an eager hound
Hot on a trail. He snarled, twisting his mouth
Into a football shape, concave, that framed
The molars on the left side of his jaw:
He swore that he would nail them every time,
The trumpet in his voice, epiphany.

That evening, as I drove along the coast,
With screwed up eyes against the watery sun,
An unasked revelation came; I sensed
A presence on each passing eucalypt
That planted leaning, bore the wires of
All gentle light and warmth, and saw, he'd nailed
The lot: each pole wore one small, squealing shape,
Some upright with the nails through hands and feet;
But then, in ennui of the commonplace,
Some were spreadeagled upside down, their hair
Asway, and blood or sunset on their clothes;
The last three poles were shaped like Christmas trees,
With tapering limbs and torsos neatly nailed,
And over each, a head screamed like a star.
I swung the wheel and turned in from the coast;
Hallucinations of despair—I laughed
At daymares and macabre imaginings.
The reassurance of suburban streets
Consoled, and gave the prosiness I craved—

Until I saw him there, outside his home.
He hid the hammer, moved his mouth, and waved.

WILHELM HIENER

GALL TRIPARTITE

I. Cold Ham for Sigmund

Heriger, bishop of Mainz, saw a prophet who said he had been carried off to hell. Amongst other details, he revealed that hell was surrounded by dense woods. To this, bishop Heriger replied with laughter: 'In that case I'll send my swineherd to that grazing ground and get him to take my thin pigs with him.'

From the MS. of St Augustine.

The clever cleric knows the rules,
A recognized authority
On all the grids and cul-de-sacs
Of limbo, hell and purgatory.

Good citizens of Mainz rejoice
That Heriger is in the chair!
If what you thought was hell today
He'll let you know it wasn't there

Tomorrow. Arch-rotarian, he
Will send his cheerful pigs to make
Reconnaissance, investigate
Infernal sprawl, pronounce it fake.

So keep it underneath your hat
If demons seize you by the hair,
For Mainz prefers its porkers fat
And heavenly fodder's everywhere.

II. Look here, Vladimir . . .

You! European you,
With the pained fastidious bones!
Take off your exclusive cross and hush
Your cheery omniscient groans.
What makes you suppose yourself
To be so final an authority
On the stink of suffering's rose?

Do I have to wave an Auschwitz stump
To attest my fitness,
Pour mieux comprendre
The pacific equine rump
Of Bosch, the wart
On the conjurer's nose?

III. Plus Ça Change . . .

Old Henry commiserates with Hedda,
(A rusted pistol rattles to the floor)
Manipulates as *beautifully* as ever
Seraphic permit to terrestrial door.
Both find that they have in them to agree
Upon the source of their infirmity.

The screw turns aimlessly into the silt,
Hélas, it only pricks a barren spring;
The coupled squeak with boredom from the
quilt
Mechanically doing their own thing.
Observing simple pleasures never cloy,
Our pair retrieve their winding sheets with joy.

FAY ZWICKY

POINT OF ORDER

Some people would call it madness
Of some kind
All this jargon
In defence of the indefensible
When who-knows-best
Knows even less
Than the man next door
Because he put the fence up last week
To protect his chickens from one thing
And his wife from another.

ROBERT C. BOYCE

A LADY AT AN INVESTITURE

is she a queen
or a mother now?
she ties the ermine robe
around the man/son/prince
the to-be king
and smoothes down
the fully tamed furs.
composure falters.

the million-facet glass eye
focuses a certain
sorrow into living rooms.
he is lost from her
into an identity of his own.

she knows
the flags and plumes
bards and swords
of ceremony
will be reshelved.
practicalities
of appointments
existence
strikes and snipers
will furrow and weather
today's face
too soon.

TOY DORGAN

CONCEPTION COUNTDOWN

there is a time
assigned
to me.
a certain second
when I will falter
and mistakenly
only complete
half a respiratory cycle.

the race of the unknown distance.
now the numbers
segmenting eternity
grow bigger,
always approaching
a particular instant of stillness.

TOY DORGAN


G. Gray Bennett
'69

Graham Sheil

MAD LIKE LASSETER

Twice, now, he had come to the verandah, to stand gazing past the row of pines beside the drive to where the yellowish quartz-gravel track left the road and turned in at his front gate. The gate stood open. Beyond the pines, the gate, the road, he could see the valley where bare limbs of Halleran's orchard shivered in a wind that would bring rain. Closer, the tops of the pines were rocked by the wind; and he thought of boats rocking at anchor off-shore from northern beaches. When the frosts began, he and the wife would go north again. He was waiting for winter. More particularly, this morning, he was waiting for Desmond to return, bringing Catherine. Catherine, he peevishly reflected, who was not great, with her narrow hips and niggardly bosom.

He had come to dread the oncoming cold. At sixty-four a man should not be old; but he—after a lifetime of deserts and dried watercourses, of outcrops of reef beneath rotten granite and 'blows' of quartz among shale—he had come to feel old. It had begun when his lungs went on him and the coughing began. The tablets began, then, too; the injections; the eyes of the wife following his actions, counting quantity of food; then began, too, the long drives north for the winter.

This morning, however, he was not aware of age. That presence had left him as he became buoyed on anticipation of the morning. Of this particular morning. For which he had schemed and stage-managed with a sense of occasion: almost, indeed, of ceremony.

Bracing his slightness against the wind, buoyed on anticipation, he wondered was he all too ready to arrange his affairs? Was it necessary, just yet? He could, perhaps, wait another twelve-month, shot lungs and all. Another two years. Another six. Was he all too anxious?

Anxious or not, he was committed to this morning. A week previously he had told Desmond to bring his Catherine on this day. He had avoided saying for what purpose; but Desmond would know. Oh, Desmond would know, all right. And when this day came, he had risen early, had taken cups of tea to the wife, then to Desmond. To wake him and remind him and to insist on the time. Ten o'clock, Desmond had agreed. Well, not later, then; no later, he had said, taking away the saucer and the cup.

It was near eleven now, and he was still waiting. He was not sure about Desmond He did not feel toward him what he thought a man should feel, could feel, ought to feel, what he wanted to feel, toward his son. 'A child of late loins'—he had read that somewhere, and perhaps that was the trouble: the years between them too many and too different. Perhaps if he had settled and married younger . . . . Yet perhaps

—and now he could acknowledge that it was this he had schemed—on this morning the years would be bridged.

Part of what he had planned was already accomplished. The lesser part. That part to do with the wife. After Desmond had driven out in that third- or fourth-hand, dented and oil-burning Austin A40 of his, he had entered the kitchen where the wife was working over the bench beside the stove. She was rolling scone-dough. The width of her back was to him and the reddened underneath of her arms flapped back and forth, just a little, as she rolled and rolled.

'Nance. Nance, you know . . .' He coughed. 'You know I'm going t' show Desmond t'day . . . But y'self, Nance: there's what I put away—you know where. I doubt there's much of it I'll needs-be touching. So, then, as well as the pension, when you need it, there it is. Sufficient—p'haps more—if handled right. Don't sell it cheap, though. Not t' the gov'ment: on the black where you c'n get a good price. Sell enough at a time t' make it worth his while, and you'll get your price, all right.'

He coughed and held out to her a piece of paper. Her fingers smudged and scattered flour. She held the paper at arm's length until she had read the address there, then she folded it and tucked it beneath the sleeve-band where it was tight against the plumpness of her arm.

'Don't go overdoing it t'day,' she said. 'And don't expect too much of Desmond.'

Now he stood, waiting. After a time he walked with deliberate slowness to the front gate and needlessly pushed it further back among the tussocks. He walked back along the drive, beneath dark arms of pine.

He began to wonder if, after all, Desmond would come. But he could wait. Even for another occasion, if necessary; for another morning. What his mind had taken months to prick and scribe its own blueprint of, would not be set aside by an hour or a day. And perhaps, really, it had been more than mere months in the planning; for it seemed to him it had begun when he first chose the tracks his life would follow. And now this morning, or another, was to be struck from a die different from other mornings that he might see where his life's tracks had brought him.

Roll of gravel beneath tyre-treads caused him to turn. A small grey sedan with hand-painted pink wheels, had turned from the road, between gate-posts, beneath arms of pine; bringing his son and his son's intended to him, on this morning that was to span the years between.

It was a different car, a Vauxhall he had bought new three years before, in which the three of them drove over ironstone stained quartz-gravel, then bitumen, and again gravel. They were silent across the front seat. It was seldom that he could find words to speak to his son; which was odd, as he was a great yarner, a great teller of stories. He had been a great one for reading-matter, too. Perhaps it was because of the months at a time without company that he became like that. He still carried in his pocket the gold he had smelted and melted into a sinker-mould and had attached a swivel and a wire trace. He had shown this in pubs and bush post-offices and stores and, more recently, at northern caravan parks; and had told people he always fished with gold sinkers himself. The joke was not often a success for only the very knowledgeable and the very naive accepted it to be gold. However it enabled him to tell of Tennant Creek and the harsh Peterman Ranges and the harsher Granites, of Chapman and Lasseter and what he had seen men do for gold.

They were now in the valley, with the orchard on one side. Just where the bare trees ended and the scrub began, one of Halleran's sons was grubbing out an old fruit tree. He had dug out in clods the grey soil from beneath the tree, making a mound on one side, and his short axe-blows clubbed at the roots.

Soon the track became narrow and began to rise and wind among flinty hills

and scraggy gums whose foliage bucked and strained at their branches beneath clouds that flowed like a great grey river in air.

'Much further?' Desmond was asking.

'Oh, twenty, twenty-five, minutes. Then there's a stiff walk.'

Desmond was taller than he, though just as thin. But there are different kinds of thinness, and Desmond had not the sinewy wiriness of his own slight build. Desmond's nature was different, too. His five years of working life had been as a packer in a bacon factory, and since he started courting Catherine, he had taken to religion. Catherine's father managed a grocery store he did not own and was a lay preacher. He had not approved of Desmond at first; but Desmond's steadiness, then his regular church attendance, brought him first to accept, then to welcome him, as his future son-in-law.

He himself had never been one for religion, though he liked the stories well enough. He though Ruth to be a story of great beauty and in life had known men with such a relationship, though never women; and in desolate places and with stores running out he had watched crows and had longed for the ravens of Elijah.

The car no longer travelled over gravel; it followed wheel-tracks, then gaps between trees and tyre-furrows among bracken. Finally the car was brought to a stop where the way was barred by scrub.

He watched Desmond get out and stand leaning with his arm along the top of the car door. Desmond held the thermos and the brown paper bag of scones tight against his side, and he stooped to peer along the front seat, past Catherine looking steadily ahead, to where he watched.

'How long are we likely t' be?'

'Oh, sometime. Hours. Two or three hours.'

Desmond remained bent forward. He was looking at Catherine now.

'You *could* wait in the car, you know.'

'I *said* I'd come.'

'Orright, Cath. Orright. But you *could* wait if you wanted to.'

She did not reply. She abruptly slid along the seat and got out with the air of performing something that apparently *had* to be put up with, and so might as well be got over.

He led them between spindly gums, then the scrub ended at a hill-top and they passed an old poppet-head scarred black by fire, with its dumps of mullock and sheets of rusting iron laying about. Then they were enclosed within the wind-movements and sounds of scrub again. They were following an old mine-road thick with dead fallen twigs and leaves. Beneath the debris of scrub the road was quartz-hard and rose steadily, following a ridge. Twice he stood waiting for Desmond and Catherine. They climbed to where he waited, walking side by side yet without being linked either by hands or words; and he became aware of some tension that both joined them and kept them apart.

The second time they climbed to where he leaned against a bank, he asked for the thermos and they scalded their throats with tea and smudged fingers and lips with floury and crusty scones. He told them it was not far now, and he scrambled up the bank. The hill dropped steeply away and they descended across the slope, grasping the fibrous trunks of trees and slipping among the dead leaves. They passed mounds of quartz protruding from the leaves and long-abandoned shafts sunk to depths of ten and twelve and fifteen feet.

When he came to the place, he again waited. Catherine had fallen, it seemed, for there were leaves on her skirt and jumper and she had allowed Desmond to take her hand.

Here some fault or caprice among rocks had caused the side of the hill to be incised by sudden scarps of shale that dropped sheer for thirty or more feet. The incision was perhaps a hundred and twenty yards long. The walls were smooth,

except at odd places. A few ferns grew precariously in cracks and in the narrow bottom.

Desmond and his Catherine stood back from the edge of the scarp. He motioned them closer. Desmond edged forward a few steps; but Catherine was gripping his hand, holding him back.

'Desmond, my boy, you c'n come right t' the edge: it won't cave. And you'll needs-be seein' the bottom.'

He stepped aside so they could stand where he had stood; but the couple only shuffled forward sufficiently to see over the edge by leaning forward.

'Well-l-l, Desmond,—there it is.'

His gesture was grandiose: it might have been that of a rajah exhibiting rubies.

'There's your independence, there, Desmond. It hasn't been pegged and registred—that c'n be done in your name.'

The couple looked at each other and at the long incision in the ground and at him, as though the fault were not merely geological.

He had seen that look but walked quickly along the scarp edge saying he would show them, there was a place where they could all get down. He eased himself over the edge. His boots groped for footholds. Then he edged himself forward and down, made a sudden leap to a protrusion and carried-on by momentum stepped across a smooth face of rock then scrambled and slithered down a less severe face to the floor of the fault.

He stood among ferns, looking up.

The couple were stark against moving scrub and cloud. The girl had slipped her arm through Desmond's and they were standing very close.

'You do it quick,' he called up to them. 'All in a rush, once you get a foot-hold. There's little risk.'

'We'll just watch . . . We'll watch-from-here!' Desmond shouted down to him. Not that shouting was necessary, as there was no wind between the walls of shale.

He stood, looking up.

'Go-on,' Desmond shouted. 'Go-on, we'll watch—won't we Cath?' The girl leaned, clinging to Desmond's arm.

So there was nothing he could do except to point out to them where the reef was exposed and to uncover the trench he had dug along one side of the bottom and had covered with brush, and to call up to them it was the same reef the shafts they had seen on the ridge were sunk to; and that you could follow it by open-cut for twenty-yards, then tunnel for forty yards, possibly less, to where it 'blew' further down the slope.

To all this Demond nodded tolerantly. Catherine clung to an arm.

'It's only a narrow reef—nine inches in parts, never more'n twenty; an' shallow —but the gold's thick enough t' dolly be-hand. That's what makes it such a good'n: you won't haveta put it through a gov'ment battery an' you c'n get a good price on the black.'

Desmond was nodding. Oh, very tolerantly.

'Well, Dad, this's been int'resting f' Cath t' see—hasn't it, Dear?—She's never seen anything like this b'fore—have you?—so it's been quite int'resting f'her.'

But he had caught what the words had not said.

'Desmond!—This's no Tennant Creek, it's no fortune—the gold peters-out 'fore the reef blows on the slope—but there's enough here, boy. Enough t' set y'self up: a poultry farm on the paddock next the house. Enough f' that. Or something else. Six months, nine months, work here—and *there's* your independence, boy.'

'What's that?' He heard Catherine. 'What's he saying.'

'He's on about a poultry farm again.'

'Oh,' she said. 'That.'

'Desmond!—It's your independence that's here. It'll be the end of havin' t' boot-lick in that bacon fact'ry an' soon as the poultry's bringing a return you c'n afford your own place; 'stead of livin' with her parents an' havin' t' say grace over tinned salmon.'

Desmond was very patient.

'Look, Dad, I've *told* you: it's all right at the fact'ry. It's a safe job. It's secure: there's superannuation. And it's not hard work. It's all right—though you won't ever believe well, I know that f' some reason y' think y'self superior t' Cath's parents . . . And Dad, it might've been all right f' you t' spend your life scratchin' an grubbin' out in the bush; but I could never—'

'Desmond!—It's your future that's here. Don't y' see?'

'But I *got* a secure job.'

'Desmond, my boy. It was men scratchin' in the bush that made this country. If it hadn't been f' them, they'd be no Australia an' no bacon fact'ry an' no tinned salmon.'

'Orright, Dad. Orright! But that's past. You're like a man from a different age. Men've walked on the moon, and here you are expecting me t' scratch bits of rock out the ground.'

'Desmond my boy . . .'

But he suddenly turned. Grasping and slipping and scattering shale, he climbed with hands and feet and knees up the slope. He had felt the sudden rise of anger.

For it seemed to him that men on the moon were part of his side of the argument, not Desmond's.

At the top he stood, confronting the couple. Now he was aware of his own breathing. It came rasping back and forth from lungs to throat, it burned in his mouth with a taste of nausea. He stood. Breathing.

'Dad, you're a hero, all right—isn't he, Cath? They make books an' T.V. shows bout people like you. Like they did bout the one you knew that died crazy in the desert.'

Lasseter . . .

'Possum' Lasseter!

'Possum' Lasseter!

Oh, Lasseter's death among blacks was the stuff of legends, all right; and little more than a year later he himself had followed into the Petermans where Lasseter left his bones, then north to Tennant Creek and The Granites. He had been one of the first there; at The Granites—Australia's last gold-rush. And he had won much gold there, at the last and most desolate of gold fields, keeping some of it for years, to sell where and when he could get his price. He himself believed it was The Granites that 'Possum' Lasseter had found and had died trying to find again. And perhaps he had been lucky at that: to have died with the dream growing and growing even as he wrote he would trade a reef worth millions for a loaf of bread, and his bones fell apart. Better that, than to have what you staked your life on rejected for narrow hips and a lifetime of packing in a bacon factory.

Along the buried track back to the car he began to cough. The wind had eased and clouds no longer flowed but piled on top of each other like great dark hills of mullock. He did not look behind. He knew *they* would be linked by hands, for their mingled voices reached him. And laughter, kept low.

In the car he had a spasm of coughing. When that had passed he felt resigned and drove beneath a lowering sky. But when he passed the place where Halleron's son had grubbed out the tree and there was now only an empty hole, the coughing began again.

Once he had read where a journalist or a politician had said that those who had died in the desert had not died in vain, for others with their spirit would follow and the country would be opened up and one day bloom. But that he

could no longer believe. So his body coughed and his mind sobbed for all who had lived among rocks and deserts and who lived and died crazy with thirst and dreams; and whose manner of living and of dying would go unredeemed in a world of Desmonds.

That night he would not eat. He sipped tea and his wife's voice came to him as though from a distance, telling him he had overdone it again, he always did, up there, and he had better have a good think about making that the last time.

In the morning he lay in bed. He had always been an early riser; but the sight of Desmond taking his brown paper bag and his thermos of Milo to the bacon factory, was something which this morning he could not bear.

When he at last dressed, he walked out of the house and stood among the wet grass behind the woodheap and gazed long at pearls of moisture on the beards of thistles. Thin winter sunlight kindled a little warmth. The sky had been wrung blue by rain in the night. He had lain listening to it tramping on the iron roofs, running a banker in the gutterings, purling into the tanks. And from the night he had taken this honesty: that the manner of his living had been neither for a stripling son nor a stripling country—it had been for the living itself.

What right had he, then, to expect more?

Yet in his pocket his fingers closed round the gold sinker with its swivel and wire trace attached . . . Oh, the hundreds of stories he had listened to and had read; the hundreds more he had told: his own story told hundreds of times. And perhaps, once, where people had gathered in a pub or a post office or at a caravan park by a northern beach, there had been one who had heard his story and thought it worth telling again. Then *he* would tell: people would hear. Or *he* would set it down, that people would read. Then his living and that of those he had told of . . . the people and the places and what it had been like . . . would be redeemed in story after the end of living.

Even long after the wife had called out to him to come inside and that the toast and tea were going cold, he continued to stand there, among sunlight on thistles. He had lived as he had chosen to live, and now it seemed to him that it had not been an unsatisfactory life.

EASTER SUNDAY

Woodman's Point.
In a glimmer of evening
we walked the hard sand where shells cemented
become limestone,
the bone of all this shoreline.

Ahead the hulk of an old ship "Alacrity",
built in France for a naval depot that
never was founded.

Out of the dead ship there glows a beauty
it never knew in life

Between black ribs, hollows balloon with
light
while beneath in the boiler room, the waves
wash out
old memories and iron.

There is someone walking with us.
Who is that other
whose presence shakes the air,
whose footprints score the sand,
misshapen.

Yet when I turn my head
there is only a dazzle of late sun.
We speak another language,
we turn new soil.

Easter Sunday.
Under the sky warm as amber
the world is white-shining and I
walk the waves' edge with my lover

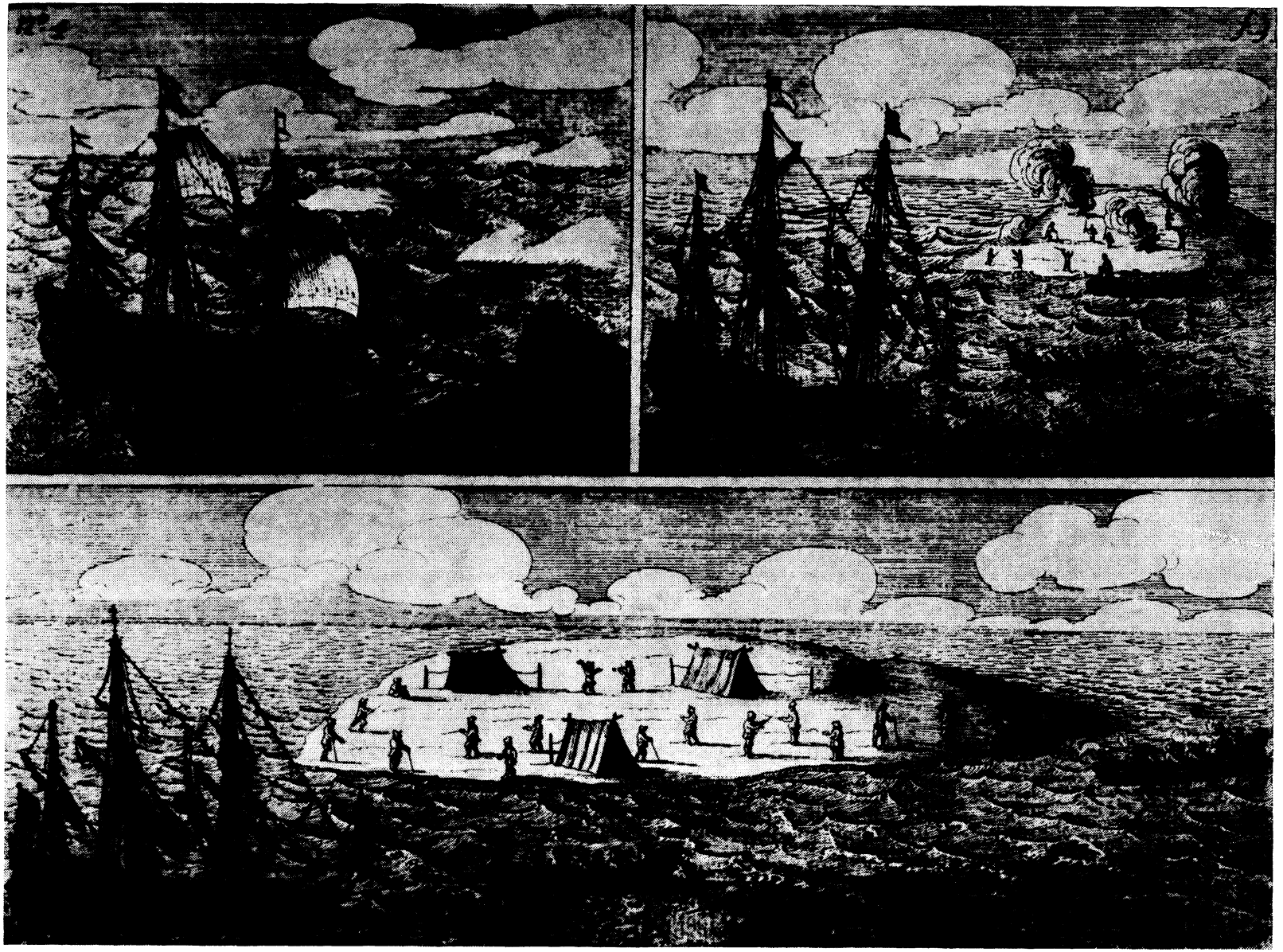
while behind that other
has melted into sunhaze.

Beneath the waves an American schooner
and far out where the buoy bobs
a submarine lies foundered.

Why resurrect the dead? There is a haven
for all drowned seamen, where cool weeds
and barnacles
will cover all their sins.

Leave them to the water and walk on
past old wrecks buried deep in the green of time
and memory, and walk on beneath the last
crossed lights,
the length of the sands.

SHIRLEY KNOWLES



Philip Tyler

THE BATAVIA MUTINEERS:

Evidence of an Anabaptist 'fifth column' within 17th century Dutch colonialism?

'Only the hand that erases can write the true thing.'
(Meister Eckhart, Dominican mystic, c. 1260-1327)

'Let the tares all puff themselves up as much as ever they like . . . The living God is sharpening his scythe in me, so that later I can cut down the red poppies and the blue cornflowers.'
(Thomas Müntzer, Anabaptist leader, 1489-1525)

'I will have you removed if you don't stop . . . I have a little system of my own.'
(Hippie leader Charles Manson to Judge Older, Sharon Tate murder trial, Los Angeles, 6th October, 1970)

The events surrounding the loss in 1629 of the Dutch vessel the *Batavia* achieved such notoriety within the lifetime of some of the participants that by 1663 a published account had run through eight editions in Dutch and one in French.[1] The tale of mutiny, privations and murder appears to have seized upon the imaginations of the commercially-minded Western European nations in much the same way as the Anabaptist risings had done in the previous century—and with which by various removes it seems to be related. The main contemporary source are the *Journals* of Francis Pelsaert, who had been appointed Commandeur or Fleet President by the Amsterdam chamber of the Dutch East India Company, in which he recorded the trial of the mutineers and an account of the events on the Abrolhos Islands as told to him by the survivors.[2] Though these *Journals* have a number of shortcomings, some obvious and some rather more subtle, they furnish an adequate outline of the sequence of events which was to shake the confidence of the Dutch East India Company for some little time and to provide a theologically-minded people with an example of the workings of divine Providence.

On the 29th October 1628 a convoy of seven vessels, headed by the newly constructed *Batavia* as flagship, set sail from the Texel bound for what is now Djakarta in the East Indies. The *Batavia* herself was one of the biggest and finest armed merchantmen in service at that date with a cargo capacity of 600 tons,[3] though on this outward voyage under ballast about 316 soldiers, sailors and settlers of both sexes were pressed amongst the vessel's 28 main cannon. Overcrowding forced many to defaecate into the bilges[4] despite mercantile regulations, and there can be little doubt that the general squalor of living conditions within a vessel

little more than 160 feet from stem to stern heightened the ever-present disciplinary problems of shipboard life. The oversight of all matters concerning discipline, security and the conduct of the voyage was the responsibility of Francis Pelsaert, an experienced administrator, who was in turn directly accountable to the Amsterdam Chamber of the Dutch East India Company. After Pelsaert, the Company's most senior representative was a former apothecary from Haarlem, the Undermerchant Jerome Cornelius. Taking advantage of the antipathy between Pelsaert and the *Batavia*'s captain Ariaen Jacobsz, Cornelius persuaded the skipper to mutiny and, as a first step in the plan, on leaving the Cape of Good Hope Jacobsz detached the *Batavia* from the remainder of the convoy with the intention of seizing the ship as soon as the Australian coast was sighted.[5] However, as a result of a navigational error, one day before the expected sighting the *Batavia* was wrecked. In the early hours of 4th June 1629 she struck a reef off the Wallabi Group of the Abrolhos Islands which lie about 48 miles from the coast of Western Australia.

Following the wreck and until the arrival of all the survivors at Batavia on 5th December, the Fleet President's *Journals* provide an outline of events—though naturally drawn very largely from Pelsaert's viewpoint. On the day the *Batavia* struck what is now known as Morning Reef, 180 passengers were landed on nearby Beacon Island, leaving between 70 and 80 still on board. Within two days of the vessel being wrecked, the majority of the sailors induced or perhaps compelled Pelsaert to leave the survivors in order to seek help from Batavia. Forty-eight survivors, mainly sailors, were crammed into an open longboat which reached Batavia after an epic voyage of at least 1200 miles under oar and sail—a feat which was acknowledged for more than a century afterwards by the inclusion of Pelsaert's presumed route in some world maps.[6] Pelsaert's voyage from the Abrolhos to Java had taken thirty days and ironically on the day he arrived in Batavia Jerome Cornelius, having assumed control over the castaways in the Abrolhos, embarked upon a calculated series of murders which accounted for 125 men, women and children.[7] The wave of horror aroused in the Low Countries and elsewhere by these killings is remarkable in an age when life expectancy in Western Europe was virtually the same as it had been a thousand years before and the Dutch East India Company calculated on having between a 60% and an 80% turnover in personnel and dependants every five years. What to us is a catastrophic rate of mortality was the accepted feature of Dutch colonial development: between 5% and 30% of each ship's crew died during most voyages to the East and of the soldiers employed by the Dutch in India and the East Indies only about 10% are traceable as still being alive after five years' service in the East.[8] Apparently, therefore, the nature as well as the fact of the killings caught the attention of contemporaries, striking chords in their consciousness which are now only dimly appreciated.

Of course at one level the seizure of power by Jerome Cornelius—regarded as mutiny by Pelsaert—was both predictable and justifiable according to 17th century practice. After all, once Pelsaert had left the islands Cornelius was the senior Company employee on the spot and was both by custom and education the natural leader of the apathetic and demoralized survivors. Their number, despite 20 deaths from thirst and exposure on Beacon Island, had risen to about 200 as the *Batavia* began to break up and 40 of the 70 or 80 people remaining on board managed to cross the mile stretch of reef waters to reach dry land. Irrespective of the strength of his charismatic personality, only Cornelius—holding as he did a recognized position in the Company hierarchy—could organize the survivors. In sociological jargon only he could structure an unstructural situation. Similarly, it was only to be expected that the Company cadets should provide Cornelius with some of his ablest lieutenants. Apart from their being at a young and impressionable age which

played into Cornelius' hands, they were usually drawn from the class of lesser nobles which the ruling group in the Low Countries, whether Spanish or native born, had found difficult to accommodate within the existing social and economic framework. This type of noble had a reputation for disaffection dating from the earliest days of the Low Countries' revolt against their Spanish overlords. Such nobles had formed the hard core of the 'Sea Beggars' who had made open war inevitable by seizing Brielle in 1572 after a career of thinly disguised piracy directed against monastic and other religious institutions.[9] Religious radicalism with undertones of economic dissatisfaction permeated this water-borne group of revolutionaries: a connection which had been a feature in Western Europe since some of the Protestant exiles of Mary's reign had used their ships for freebooting ventures directed against the Spaniards in the Channel.[10] From the existing records it is doubtful if they were as orthodox Calvinists as Pelsaert might have hoped. In any case, even before the *Batavia* was wrecked it seems that many of them together with Cornelius had established a strong group interest—an interest so binding that only Wiebbe Hayes and his soldiers on West Wallabi Island were sufficiently well disciplined to put up a successful resistance.

At first sight the succession of murders instigated by Cornelius seems to have been governed solely by opportunism. Cornelius divided up the survivors into groups sent to different islands to conserve supplies and to search for water, then, having kept most of the arms on Beacon Island, set about eliminating the isolated parties of castaways. On Beacon Island the stronger men whose loyalty he distrusted were murdered first in secret and then openly; groups of survivors were enticed on board small boats and home-made rafts on the pretext of being transferred to other islands and then drowned; lastly raiding parties were sent out to massacre the island groups. So it was that by the time Pelsaert returned from Java just over three months after the loss of the *Batavia*, the only group capable of resisting Cornelius was a party of 47 centred on a core of soldiery which Cornelius had sent to West Wallabi Islands soon after the wreck, there to die of exposure. Five miles away, on Beacon Island, the mutineers had formed a cell of 26 men when at full strength though this excluded ten men and women whom the mutineers had reduced to serfdom.[11] Of the 268 men, women and children left by Pelsaert in the hulk of the *Batavia* and on the nearby Beacon Island, about 60 had died of exposure, thirst or drowning and a further 125 or 126 had been put to death by Cornelius' group. Cornelius' motives in ordering this wave of killings do not emerge clearly from Pelsaert's *Journals*. True, a whisper of the shipboard plot seems to have escaped but in the prevailing mood of despair and thirst-induced delirium on Beacon Island it is doubtful if much attention would have been paid to it by the authorities in Batavia. Also, though the waterless nature of Beacon Island remained a threat, Pelsaert noted in his *Journals* that Cornelius' plan of extermination was put into execution after several heavy rains at a time when both food and water were relatively plentiful.[12] So far as the motives of the rest of the cell are concerned, only their blind obedience to Cornelius seems to have given any coherence to what we can trace of their thought and action. Cornelius almost certainly used the tensions and uncertainties of the castaways' cramped existence on Beacon Island to strengthen his control over his group. He apparently recognized that some of his half-crazed followers could only find relief from strain and achieve their new identity as his minions or co-religionists through killing. One wretched youth was reported to have lapsed into hysterical tears when not allowed to behead a blindfolded boy to see if a sword was sharp and to have daily run around Beacon Island 'like a man possessed', calling out: 'Come now, devils with all the sacraments, where are you? I wish that I now saw a devil. And who wants to be stabbed to death? I can do that very beautifully'.[13] Recognizing that such hysteria could shatter the cohesion of his group, Cornelius seems to have permitted

or instigated a number of apparently random and senseless murders to give his followers an avenue for psychological release and to canalize tensions and antagonism outside what we might recognize as his cell or sect. Cornelius' function in this respect is markedly similar to that of African witchdoctors in what survives of the tribal setting in parts of southern Africa to this day,[14] and despite the gaps in both period and culture between the *nyaka* and the apothecary from Haarlem, both seem to have been deeply influenced by the ideological pressures of their respective backgrounds.

With this in mind, it is difficult to dismiss the episode on the Abrolhos as a resurgence of primitive violence and irrationality. Our assessment of the 'rational' and 'irrational elements' in former cultures tends to be based on a subjective appraisal of what constitutes 'reason' and 'motivation'. Not only is it to be expected that Cornelius' responses and actions would be governed by premises largely foreign to us, but in addition to this the personal nature of Pelsaert's *Journals* ensures that any evidence recorded about Cornelius' cell will be implicit rather than open. Nevertheless, the hints which do survive form a distinctive pattern in the context of the 17th century religious experience, one which would be horrifyingly familiar to Northern European ruling cliques.

The rule of life on Beacon Island was based on an authoritarian code devised by Cornelius and enforced through a council of his own nominees. Against an anti-intellectual background where orthodox religious instruction was forbidden and heretical beliefs openly taught,[15] an alien code of life was enforced. Traditional class divisions amongst the survivors were disregarded and a strict direction of labour was practised.[16] Though property was allegedly held in common by the whole group, in actual practice the possession and distribution of goods was at the whim of Cornelius who acted as though they had been bequeathed to him.[17] In an age when dress was an indication of status, Cornelius' supporters were distinguished by the splendour of their dress[18] and their easy access to a number of women held for common use.[19] All infringements however trivial of the code were punishable by death and there appear to be ritualistic undertones to several of the recorded murders. Pelsaert's favourite secretary was forced to strangle an infant to gain admission to the cell[20] (an initiation rite believed by contemporaries to be a common practice amongst occult and libertine groups) and it seems significant that it was Cornelius himself and not his council who ordered such child murders.[21] Again, though the references are far from being explicit, it seems that Cornelius ordered the murder of a suspect to coincide with an attempt to overcome Wiebbe Hayes' resistance[22]—perhaps a propitiary act aimed at securing some warped form of atonement for the group. Further, it seems apparent that the roots of this rising amongst the *Batavia*'s survivors went deeper than shipboard disaffection. The total membership of Cornelius' group was never disclosed despite torture and Pelsaert was aware of this[23] even before the ringleaders at the scaffold warned him to beware on his return voyage to Batavia.[24] The lack of reliable witnesses amongst those who remained on Beacon Island throughout the whole period bedevilled Pelsaert's enquiries[25] and he was reduced to using his former secretary to record the activities of the judicial tribunal despite his links with the murderers.[26] The secrecy which surrounds the recruitment and membership of Cornelius' group was characteristic of many cells of the period, and in the case of the *Batavia* mutiny was sufficiently effective to ensure that Cornelius retained sympathies amongst the crew of the *Sardam* or even within Wiebbe Hayes' resistance party. For a month prior to his execution Cornelius had been a prisoner of first Wiebbe Hayes and then Pelsaert, yet despite the fact that he must have been searched for Company property, he was able to take poison in an attempt to cheat the executioners. Nowhere does Pelsaert explain how Cornelius—isolated and imprisoned as he was—obtained the poison though he had already been

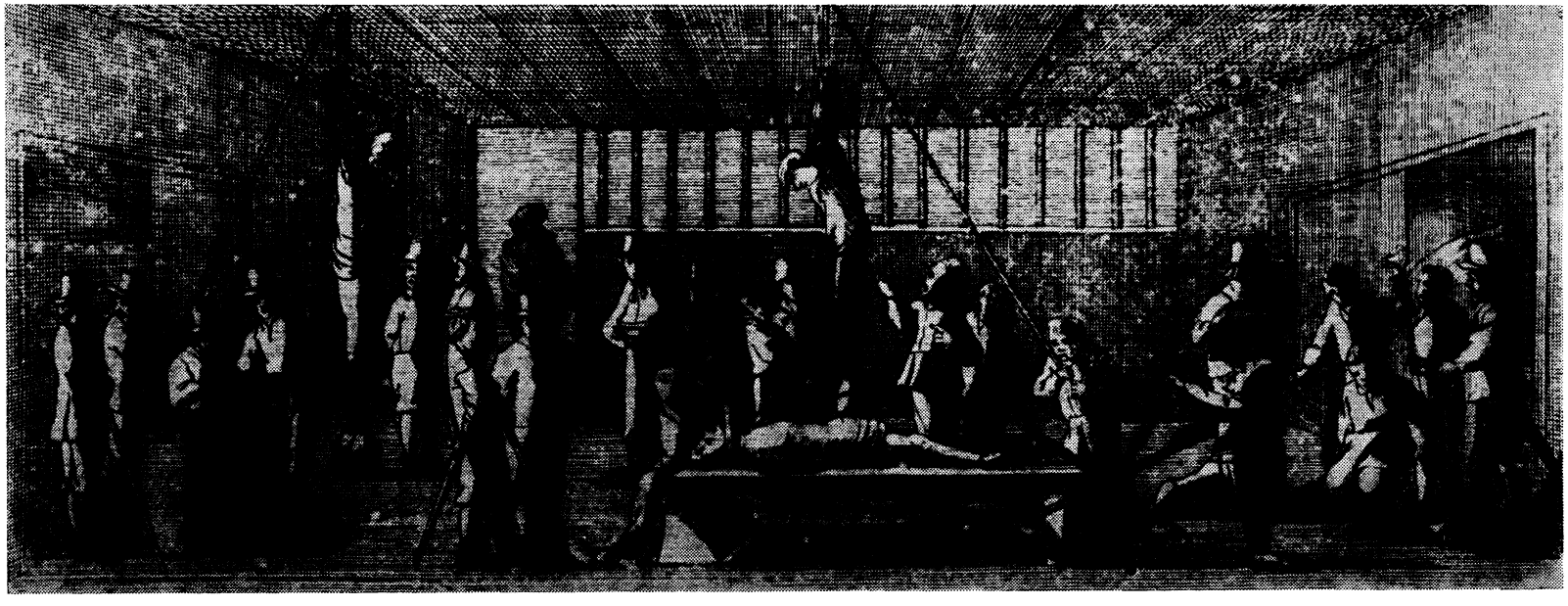
forbidden the use of a knife to thwart just such an attempt.[27] The most likely explanation is that poison was passed to him by a sympathizer known and trusted by Pelsaert and the guards.

So it seems that even in adversity Cornelius retained a hold upon a proportion of the *Batavia*'s survivors even during a period when misfortune and loss of status were seen as evidence of God's rejection. With hindsight, Cornelius' opinions and actions fall into an easily recognizable pattern, one which has a number of parallels in 16th and 17th century European history. The Undermerchant's rule over his nightmare kingdom on the Abrolhos was characterized by a complete confidence in his own rectitude—so much so that without conscious hypocrisy all who resisted him could be classed as godless mutineers.[28] The former apothecary seems to have considered himself to be so identified with God's will that his own nature was transformed, thus raising him above the normal human condition. Good and evil defined in normal human terms would therefore have no meaning to Cornelius and his disciples who were convinced that their special relationship with God ruled out the possibility of their sinning.[29] Cornelius may well have been preparing himself for such a change during a large part of his adult life. He seems to have had some connection with the painter Torrentius van der Beecke (a talented profligate whose opinions seems to have had some connection, however debased, with the tradition in European mysticism represented by the Spiritual Libertines[30]) and there is little doubt that he had progressively dissociated himself from the Calvinism then practised in Holland. Though about thirty years old, Cornelius claimed that he had never been baptized[31]—which in itself is highly unlikely unless this was a euphemism for an earlier rejection of his baptism—and like the true Ranters or 'Angels' of Cromwellian England he seems to have believed that his nature had become united with God's outside the bonds of orthodoxy. This is the only satisfactory explanation for his conduct during the last days of his life. At a time when oaths were regarded as sacred, truth or deceit seem to have had no relevance for him,[32] his derision for orthodox worship and civil justice was open,[33] and he seems to have believed almost to the very end that Pelsaert would be prevented by some force from executing him.[34] Cornelius apparently died firm in his beliefs, confident that divine justice would support his actions and that he would be avenged by some human or divine agency.[35]

On this basis there seems little doubt that Cornelius saw himself as the organizer and 'prophet' of an Anabaptist settlement. In doctrine, outlook and organization, Cornelius' cell was closely related to other groups of this type which had periodically menaced north-western Europe for two hundred years before his birth.[36] More specifically, there is a marked similarity between the activities of Jerome Cornelius on the Abrolhos in 1629 and those of two other Dutchmen, Jan Matthys and John of Leyden, who had led an Anabaptist revolt at Münster in 1535. In true Anabaptist tradition, all three appear to have convinced themselves that in some way they had 'become God';[37] all three wielded absolute power, recruited by intimidation[38] and dictated all forms of law and behaviour, inflicting the death penalty at will.[39] Just as Andries de Vries was openly murdered on Beacon Island for talking to Cornelius' concubine against orders, so all Anabaptist leaders seem to have used terror as a disciplinary weapon.[40] In Münster as on Beacon Island there was a strict division of labour,[41] the leaders of the elect were distinguished by the splendour of their dress[42] and their absolute control over all forms of property.[43] The bonds of an unregenerate society devised by those 'crude in spirit' had to be broken by those of the elect or 'the subtle in spirit' before a just society could be established on any part of the earth. Acting on this belief which was as old as the movement known as the Bretheren of the Free Spirit,[44] positive virtue could lie in murder, polygamy[45] and even incest.[46] On Beacon Island as in Münster, refusal to comply with the new morality was punishable by death owing to the nature as

well as to the fact of disobedience.[47] As the Anabaptist leaders in both the Abrolhos and Germany were convinced that they had already passed into a new world beyond good and evil—in this way becoming united with God—any opposition to their orders was opposition to God. Both in action and intent therefore, disobedience was thus a sin and this factor alone may go some way towards explaining Cornelius' petulance and hysteria in face of resistance. The bonds of secrecy and obedience which enabled the Anabaptists to launch so many unexpected risings in Holland and Germany[48] also most probably enabled him to avoid detection for so long. As a result, in the confusion on Beacon Island, Cornelius was left to organize the survivors on lines dictated by conviction as well as expediency. Cornelius' rank forced him to assume some form of command on Beacon Island in the absence of Pelsaert and this gave Cornelius the opportunity to translate what Cohn calls 'eschatological phantasies' into reality.[49] Against the background of Anabaptist activity in Europe, Cornelius' actions on Beacon Island appear to have been prompted as much by a rival vision of a just society as by incipient megalomania. Like many men with his sympathies, Cornelius had probably sought rebaptism to express his voluntary separation from the unredeemed world—from which Anabaptism derived its name[50]—and against this background the events in the Abrolhos have more of a logical and coherent pattern to them than the savagery of many of the murders instigated by that 'tiger animal' Cornelius might lead us to expect.

If this is the case, the question remains why Pelsaert's record of the events on the Abrolhos and the motives of the principals is so sketchy and incomplete. The impression left with the reader is that Pelsaert was completely unsuspecting and had no reason to perform anything more than the most routine actions before setting sail. If this was so, then Pelsaert seems to have been naïve to the point of culpable negligence. Writing after the event, the preacher Gijsbert Bastiaensz claimed in his letter that Cornelius had been known on board the *Batavia* for his 'Godless proposals' which suggests that the religious complexion of Cornelius at the very least was known to some sections of the ship's company. For over a hundred years before the *Batavia* sailed, Holland and north-western Germany had been the centre of the Anabaptist movement, sending out recruits to other areas. By 1534 the movement had virtually come under the leadership of Jan Matthys (who, like Cornelius, came from the industrial centre of Haarlem) and Matthys in turn converted another Dutchman, John of Leyden, the future leader of the Anabaptist revolt at Münster.[51] Though the movement tended to go underground after the sack of Münster in 1535, the political unrest in the low Countries which culminated in the Revolt of the Netherlands made the threat of further Anabaptist risings an inescapable part of life. During the lifetime of Pelsaert's father, an Anabaptist group had seized and held for a time the Town Hall of Amsterdam and a larger group, including fugitives from Münster, established themselves round Cleves and survived as a robber-band until about 1580.[52] The attitude of the authorities also seems to have complicated matters. To avoid political embarrassment and inconvenience they appear to have permitted or even encouraged some sectaries to emigrate. This short-term solution seems to have been used by the English establishment on occasions—for example to rid itself of one of the hard core of Nottinghamshire Puritans[53]—and the relative ease with which Torrentius was able to gain asylum in England may be another example of the working of this tacit policy.[54] Whether or not Pelsaert took this attitude on the part of the authorities at its face value is hard to say, but it seems very likely. The oversight of all matters connected with the safety of the fleet was the responsibility of the Fleet President—and this included ensuring the orthodoxy of the passengers and crew—and it is apparent from an oblique remark made by Specx and the Council in Batavia that even before the mutiny 'different



persons of strange opinions' had come to the East Indies.[55]

Apparently Pelsaert had failed to take the necessary precautions, and in an age which saw a close link between divine displeasure and earthly misfortune,[56] Van Diemen and other prominent Dutchmen felt justified in implying that Pelsaert's slackness had invited God's wrath. Pelsaert was guilty of negligence in that 'it is certain that a completely Godless and evil life has been conducted on the mentioned ship'.[57] In face of such suspicion, Pelsaert had every reason to avoid stressing the heretical element amongst the *Batavia* survivors and to conceal the extent of the sectaries' influence within the flagship. Just as Pelsaert glossed over the circumstances in which he abandoned the castaways on Beacon Island and in the hulk of the *Batavia* to escape hostile criticism,[58] so he may have minimized the sectarian aspect of the mutiny to prevent the incident being used as ammunition by both his and the critics of the Company. If so, his confidence in the Company's compassion was misplaced for it allowed him to linger on in disgrace until his death in the following year. If these or similar considerations were in the back of Pelsaert's mind, many of the apparent omissions in the *Journals* are understandable. It was not in either the Company's or Pelsaert's interests to draw attention to the fact that the mutiny was not a proletarian backlash but had, on the contrary, recruited some of the ablest cadets and most reliable artizans. As such it fell into the familiar pattern of many sectarian groups in Europe, though nowhere does Pelsaert hint at this. Also, of course, like the Anabaptist cells in Holland and elsewhere, the complete membership was rarely known to the authorities—nor the specific reasons for recruitment. How many of the potential mutineers on board the *Batavia* were sympathetic to Cornelius' religious beliefs is now impossible to determine, but Pelsaert appears to have had little confidence in the solidarity of the ship's council[59] and it was in circumstances such as these when the traditional bonds of authority were slipping that sectarian movements flourished. Though it was certainly within Pelsaert's power to inflict the death penalty for a range of crimes, one of the puzzling facts about the mutineers' sentences as recorded in the *Journals* is that the specific capital offences are not listed and itemized against the name of each man. The death penalty could be inflicted for mutiny, stealing or misappropriating the Company's goods, murder and a range of sexual offences. In these circumstances it might have been expected that Pelsaert would have kept a fuller record of the mutineers' careers if only to enable him to justify his decisions when he returned to Batavia. As a result, it is now impossible to judge how each of the mutineers was recruited—whether by greed, intimidation or by religious affiliation. Hence the Company officials could never learn the total number of mutineers and sympathizers, nor how far they had been impelled by 'damnable heresy' which Cornelius continued to preach even after he was captured and was about to be executed.[60] Pelsaert himself makes a pointed reference to his delegated authority from the Company which enabled him to pass sentences of death[61] and there is no doubt that Pelsaert used this authority to sentence the heretic Cornelius 'in order to turn from us the wrath of God and to cleanse the name of Christianity . . .'.[62] Yet there had been for some time a sharp distinction between civil and spiritual jurisdiction within Dutch legal practice and in these circumstances Pelsaert would have been justified in bringing him back to Batavia to be tried by a more competent authority. Despite this, Pelsaert apparently had Cornelius and the other principal mutineers executed largely on the grounds of security.[63] In so doing the Fleet President seems to have overlooked Wiebbe Hayes' company of loyal soldiers which might have been trusted to guard some at least of the eight ringleaders on the voyage to Batavia. Though there is little doubt that Pelsaert felt himself to be under an intolerable strain, in executing the ringleaders on Long Island Pelsaert falls under suspicion of closing mouths in order to prevent embarrassing disclosures in Batavia or at home.

If this was the case, the Company's policy may have provided Pelsaert with some justification. Had detailed enquiries in Batavia shown that heretical beliefs were sufficiently deeply entrenched to present a security problem, the Company's scale of priorities might have had to be revised at great inconvenience and expense. The Company's policy was determined by the demands of trade and these were sacrosanct. Had this relatively uncomplicated goal orientation been disturbed not only would the organization have been subject to alien strains but the profit margin of Dutch enterprises may have been whittled down. The loss of the *Batavia* was a sufficiently heavy blow as it was without drawing attention through a stringent enquiry to the whole range of shortcomings in the Company's affairs. The *Batavia* episode had revealed that even the Company's flagships were not immune from disaffection. It seems obvious from Pelsaert's *Journals* that, irrespective of any Anabaptist tendencies amongst crew members, it lay within the power of the more influential seamen to make a determined effort to seize one of the most powerful ships afloat. This must have been as ugly a shock to the Dutch East India Company as the mutinies at Spithead and the Nore were to the Admiralty more than a century later. From the snippets of information recorded in the *Journals*, it seems that the original plan was to reduce the ship's company to 120 sailors and soldiers, revictual probably in Mauritius and then use the *Batavia* for piracy.[64] Taking into account the size of the vessel and the number of her cannon, this was virtually a skeleton crew, and unless additional men were recruited in Mauritius or elsewhere, the *Batavia* would have stood little chance against the Dutch convoys. Probably the plan was to pick off stragglers and whatever native ships came their way. Once sufficient booty had been amassed, the mutineers intended to sail back to Europe, pass through the Straits of Gibraltar, and reach the 'Barbary Coast'. There they would have joined many of their countrymen already in the service of the Bey of Algiers. From 1600 onwards Dutch renegade seamen had played a major part in transforming a galley fleet into an ocean going striking force capable of reaching as far north as southern England and Ireland. Most probably the *Batavia* mutineers would have had the choice of entering the Bey's service or of continuing their piratical career, giving up a proportion of their booty in return for the use of Algiers as a refuge and base. Presumably the Anabaptists amongst the mutineers would have left the ship at some point before this to avoid death or forcible conversion to Islam. How many of the seamen who rowed and sailed Pelsaert to Batavia after the wreck were mutineers we shall never know, nor how many had been influenced by Cornelius' heretical beliefs. Nevertheless Cornelius' beliefs were certainly aimed at weakening all traditional bonds of discipline and Pelsaert's emotional denunciations of the former apothecary seem to indicate that he had little confidence in any group of men which had come under his influence. Pelsaert's reticence is frustrating but understandable. Had the flagship of the Dutch East India Company passed into the hands of the Barbary pirates, the United Provinces would have become the laughing stock of Europe—and Pelsaert must have been aware of this.

As it was, the Dutch East India Company was able to avoid any significant rescaling of its priorities. True, following the mutiny the Company appears to have tightened up its regulations designed to ensure the religious orthodoxy of its personnel and senior Company employees were forbidden to leave the survivors of any future shipwreck, but these were only marginal adjustments. Commercial considerations continued to dominate Company policy to such an extent that between 1653 and 1678 the Company was to reach the height of its prosperity under a Governor-General, Joan Maetsuycker, who was widely considered to be a crypto-Catholic. To the historian the events surrounding the loss of the *Batavia* illustrate a number of the cross-currents within the religious life of the period. One of the tasks of any Established Church is to support either openly or covertly the pre-

vailing social and civil order. The events on the Abrolhos Islands demonstrated that this normative function of the Calvinist Church was a dead letter in any area or set of circumstances where the Company's authority did not run. Perhaps more important still, the cast of mind which could trigger off such a series of selective murders is understandable against the contemporary religious background. The growing literacy or semi-literacy of some groups in Europe since the Later Middle Ages has resulted in an increasing diversity of approach to religious problems—especially those surrounding what many believed to the the imminent Second Coming of Christ. The preparation for such an event tended to dominate the religious outlook of many groups, and their concern was heightened by their economic and political grievances. In these circumstances, parts of the Christian mystical tradition were taken out of context and used to justify a militant Chiliasm —a self-imposed duty of certain groups of the Elect to destroy the ungodly and their society in order to hasten and facilitate Christ's rule on earth.[65] So the teachings of Eckhart could be moulded to suit the Anabaptists' cosmic vision: a vision, moreover, which re-appears in an increasingly warped form today in societies under pressure such as the U.S.A. Jerome Cornelius was the product to such a tradition and to it he seems to have reverted when faced with a situation beyond his experience. The events on the Abrolhos Islands seem to confirm Horace's maxim: 'Those who cross the sea change not their affection but their skies.'

NOTES

1 H. Drake-Brockman & E. D. Drok, *Voyage to Disaster* (1963), p. 4.

2 An accurate translation of Pelsaert's *Journals* was published by E. D. Drok in his joint work with H. Drake-Brockman, *Voyage to Disaster*. A popular account of the mutiny and the discovery of the *Batavia* wrecksite in 1963 can be found in Hugh Edwards' book, *Islands of Angry Ghosts*.

3 The precise dimensions and cargo capacity of Dutch *retour* ships like the *Batavia* are unknown owing to the absence of blueprints and shipbuilders' scale models. Cf. Drake-Brockman & Drok, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

4 The high concentration of phosphates and sulphides in the black conglomerate found throughout the stern area of the *Batavia* wreck is explicable in this way. Fragments of gristle from meat and cereal husks also indicate the presence of human faeces in what most probably were the bilges. I am grateful to Dr B. E. Balme of the University of Western Australia's Geology Department for a preliminary report on the chemical composition of a sample of this conglomerate.

5 Confessions of Allert Janzen of Assendelft, Drake-Brockman & Drok, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

6 *Ibid.* pp. 12, 61.

7 Report of Van Diemen dated 10th December, 1629. *Ibid.* pp. 49-50.

8 Cf. C. R. Boxer, 'The Dutch East Indiamen: their sailors, their navigators, and life on board. 1602-1795' *The Mariner's Mirror*, vol. XLIX (1963), pp. 81-104.

9 Pieter Geyl, *The Revolt of the Netherlands* (1966 ed.), pp. 113-4. Also Charles Wilson, *Queen Elizabeth and the Revolt of the Netherlands* (1970), pp. xii-xiii, 26-28. See also Drake-Brockman & Drok, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

10 Christina Garrett, *The Marian Exiles* (repr. 1966), pp. 37-8.

11 Drake-Brockman & Drok, pp. 165-66.

12 *Ibid.* pp. 100, 144, 176.

13 *Ibid.* pp. 210-11.

14 Cf. P Tyler, 'The pattern of Christian belief in Sekhukuniland', *The Church Quarterly Review*, vol. CLXVII no. 363 (1966), pp. 230-1.

15 For example, Examination of Jan van Bemmel, Drake-Brockman & Drok, *op. cit.*, p. 209; also 'The Letter of Gijsbert Bastiaensz, Predikant', *ibid.* p. 265.

16 *Ibid.* p. 265.

17 *Ibid.* p. 146.

18 *Ibid.* p. 146.

19 *Ibid.* p. 146.

20 *Ibid.* p. 231.

21 Confession of Jan Hendricxsz, *ibid.* p. 179.

22 *Ibid.* p. 175.

23 *Ibid.* p. 151.

24 *Ibid.* p. 213.

25 *Ibid.* pp. 96, 226.

26 *Ibid.* pp. 172, 226.

27 *Ibid.* p. 212.

28 *Ibid.* p. 148.

29 *Ibid.* p. 212.

30 *Ibid.* pp. 212, 248.

31 *Ibid.* p. 211.

32 *Ibid.* p. 170 *inter alia.*

33 *Ibid.* p. 212.

34 *Ibid.* p. 212.

35 *Ibid.* pp. 212, 213.

36 For a readable account of this movement see Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millenium* (1962).

37 Cohn, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

38 *Ibid.* p. 287.

39 *Ibid.* p. 300.

40 *Ibid.* p. 300.

41 *Ibid.* p. 292.

42 *Ibid.* pp. 279, 301.

43 *Ibid.* p. 298.

44 *Ibid.* pp. 181-2.

45 *Ibid.* p. 294.

46 Cf. Drake-Brockman & Drok, *op cit.*, p. 211.

47 For the position in Münster see Cohn, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

48 *Ibid.* p. 302.

49 *Ibid.* p. 271.

50 *Ibid.* p. 274.

[51] *Ibid.* pp. 276-283.
[52] *Ibid.* pp. 302-306.
[53] R. A. Marchant, *The Puritans and the Church Courts in the Diocese of York 1560-1642* (1960), p. 160.
[54] Drake-Brockman & Drok, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-75.
[55] *Ibid.* pp. 76-77.
[56] Cf. *ibid.* p. 41.
[57] *Ibid.* p. 58.
[58] Pelsaert left the impression in his *Journals* that he had been 'practically kidnapped' at the time of his departure in the longboat to seek help, *ibid.* p. 42.
[59] *Ibid.* p. 41.
[60] *Ibid.* p. 212.
[61] *Ibid.*, pp. 98-100, 239.
[62] *Ibid.* p. 176.
[63] *Ibid.* pp. 151, 239.
[64] *Ibid.* pp. 152-3, 162, 175, 195, 198.
[65] For the most recent discussion of these and related problems see Gordon Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages* (1967) vol. i pp. 1-47.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to Dr I. Durack and Dr F. J. A. Broeze of the University of Western Australia's History Department for a number of suggestions made during discussions. However, in a conjectural article of this type which has to be based almost exclusively on the one major documentary source at present known, any false emphases and errors in interpretation remain my own responsibility.

Westerly No. 3, 1970.

THE WRECK OF THE *BATAVIA*—Trevor Williams

On page 62, the sentence: In reality, then, there is no sharp distinction between policy-formation (theoretically the function of the bureaucracy)—should read:

In reality, then, there is no sharp distinction between policy-formation (theoretically the function of the government and parliament) and executive decision-making (theoretically the function of the bureaucracy).

Tony Thomas

CHRISTINA STEAD

The Salzburg Tales
Seven Poor Men of Sydney

The same darkness and pessimism revealed in *The Salzburg Tales* pervade Stead's first novel, *Seven Poor Men of Sydney*. The first sentence sets the key: 'The hideous low scarred yellow horny and barren headland lies curled like a scorpion in a blinding sea and sky.' (p. 1) The speaker is the author, but similar sentiments recur in the words of her characters. At the end of the novel as a madman chants: ' "... the sea draws back and the hideous submarine floor is revealed".' (p. 303) Clearly both author and character are sharing the same morbid or estranged vision. The idea of this horror latent in natural things is also expressed by a third persona, Baruch Mendelssohn:

> 'Look how bright the fire is!. . . it warms wine, it is the source of civilised life, yet it dies in a moment and in a moment more is nothing but a hideous sight, charred ends of wood and grey ashes, ready like an expiring serpent to bite the heel of the child spurning it as he jumps over it.' (p. 141)

The adjective in 'barren headland' is linked to the theme of barrenness in the story of the three characters Michael, Catherine and Joseph. 'Scarred' refers to an even wider theme: a world in which the social order is disrupted and diseased by the depression, and in which the aspiration of youth is thwarted and corrupted. The image of the scorpion and the reference to 'blinding' sea and sky point to the hostility of the milieu in which the characters exist.

Some of the horror could have been drawn from reality. One recalls the incident in *The Salzburg Tales* when a wounded soldier gropes among putrefying corpses in a mortuary. It is paralleled in *Seven Poor Men* in Michael's recollection of the living and the dead on the Western Front:

> [His friends'] faces were white and childish as the dark smoke-black warriors of Satan rising from the mud surrounding them, shouting inaudibly, waving their arms tall as forest trees, horribly blown out and lacerated, some with their eyes gouged out, each with a gun cocked. (p. 234)

At other times, the horror is fanciful and grotesque, as in the madman's vision:

> 'Only a brief memory of the paraclete flies across a welter of beings pouring towards the deep in a cataract of grimaces, brandished arms, legs in a windmill, grinding teeth and a rain of carcasses, bile, convulsions, and of wounds, eruptions of viscera, and of monsters, falling for ever through the black humours into the gulf.' (p. 303)

In similar vein, Catherine speaks of ' "the ambushed snake, Terror, which is eternal and circles the world . . ." ' (p. 310)

The concept governs to a significant extent Stead's selection of even the most mundane detail. As Baruch and Joe Baguenault go window-shopping, they revel in the picturesque wares displayed and pass by 'A pool of blood on the pavement, with several clots . . .' (p.121). Children in a neglected park find 'bloody rags and torn clothes displayed by larrikins.' (p. 144)

The tramps sleeping on the Domain are not mere symbols of poverty, but visible manifestations of the darker dimension, ' "like dead leaves, or bad fruit fallen out of the trees . . . shadowy emanations from the ground, abor-

tions".' (p. 266) The sleeping beggars recur. Stead reacts to them with a strong emotion. 'A bundle of rags in the roots of a giant fig indicated a beggar-woman sheltering there.' (p. 134) 'In a cave two unemployed men, rolled in newspapers, lay behind the embers of a small fire.' (p. 135) And on the novel's penultimate page: '. . . the poor people who sleep under the wharves in Ultimo move their rags closer to the bank, and rats leave their holes.' (p. 318) The associations are with putrefying corpses ('bad fruit'), with sub-human species ('in a cave') and vermin ('rats'). Recalling the sleeping tramps of 'Silk-shirt' in *The Salzburg Tales*, who were supernatural agents, one sees in the image a symbol of a depressed, inhumane society, of despair and of dark, negative forces.

The concept of disease is central to the meaning of the novel and operates at many levels.

Physically, Kol Blount, Michael Baguenault and his sister Catherine are infirm and pain is an important factor in their outlook. Michael says:

> 'If [God] were present . . . he would know . . . the degree of pain even in a poor creature like me, for instance; all too heady for the thin vessels we are. Are we to be damned for such cruel potions and purges put by him in a phial too weak to hold them? We burst in pieces on the floor.' (p. 31)

Catherine is 'always half-sick' (p. 144). Kol, paralysed, is not reconciled to his condition. It is a constant source of torment to him:

> 'I say aloud in the middle of the night, Free me, free me, force that sometimes comes to paralysed limbs, to the numb, weak dying.' (p. 206)

Even the rational Baruch is not well, troubled by fevers, headaches, and lassitude caused by inadequate diet (p. 140). Joseph, though not ill, has inherited a stunted, feeble physique from generations of deprived ancestors. Winter is ' "in bad shape . . . He nearly died last winter . . ." ' (p. 316).

It is an easy step from these people, afflicted with disease and malaise, to a society in the throes of a depression, a disease of the economy. The depression permeates and colours the physical landscape. Stead's details are confined largely to the poverty-stricken elements of Sydney. Her view of society is partly related to the Marxists'—the humility and dignity of the working class contrasted with the sordid scheming of the employers and entrepreneurs: 'All sorts of squint-eyed tales, clumsy business plots, mean usurious combinations between friends tumbled out of their mouths like dirty little bits of paper and danced round the room in the soft summer breeze.' (pp. 108-9) In this milieu of dog-eat-dog and jungle law (p. 108), the social virtues of industriousness, citizenship and piety become warped. Life for the 'poor men' is a mere blundering among blind alleys. The only solution suggested is that of flight (Baruch's choice). Baruch has millenial hopes, but Stead does not altogether endorse them.

These warpings of the physical order are to be found also in the mind. To a large extent, the novel depicts the overthrow of reason and rationality by the sub-consciousness, which manifests itself in visions and dreams. Stead's idea of reality is not the everyday reality of the senses. Through her oft-used image of the 'veil' between the mind and reality she suggests a world of irrational forces and primitive animism. The tensions between different concepts of reality are maintained through the novel.

The religious dimension to life is referred to many times, but generally in a spirit of iconoclasm. Stead, through Michael, describes a priest's jaw as 'stupidly prognathous like a foetus' (p. 18). 'Prognathous' is also a quality of the allegorical monster, Disorder (p. 304).

Stead discusses science as a possible solution to the mystery of life. Joseph's reaction to a science lecture is significant in the evaluation of Stead's own ideas:

> Joseph perceived through a great door in his mind's eye, a sort of internal cathedral, in which the five senses were as five ogival windows; it was the slow and stable architecture of the universe, in which all was perceptible, computable. His heart throbbed: 'All can be seen, discovered: it is not chaos.' . . . The universe seemed more perfect and orderly than it did to the lecturer . . . 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, whose relation to him was as a chemical affinity, but dimmer than the relation of the atoms, and troublous, round whose radiant attraction his little dark world

had for a time swung out, this strange profile impinged on his demonstration-world, spoiled his gaiety. Darkly, with a pang, the bottom fell out of his jerry-built heart. (pp. 185-6)

Stead is clearly disavowing science as the final answer to life. The soul of Man is incapable of regulation; it is not amenable to orderly analysis and contains within it chaos and 'aberration'. Stead's view of Man in this novel is not that of an idealist. She makes no reference in this passage to Man's higher potential or aspiration to divinity. Her vision is not tragic. Mankind is merely playing an eternal game against loaded dice. As the madman cries:

'Reason flowers as slowly from as dark a root and dies as suddenly. All else on earth is lost in the cries of the demented, the prayers of the religious, the murmurs of old women muttering their vengeance as they go along the streets after a lifetime of disappointment.' (p. 303)

The tone is at times one of disillusionment, of lack of sympathy with humanity. The treatment of the 'workers' friend' Fulke Folliot is largely cynical, and culminates in a scene in which Fulke makes an implausibly stupid speech about his bourgeois tastes to an audience of striking seamen. For the middle-class she appears to have no sympathy, as can be seen in her contrast of Joseph with the man-in-the-street:

He was a stranger. It was marked in his face, which, of a dingy pallor, by some effect of skin or reflection appeared with the masterly distinction of an etched face, it was grotesque but more real, more human than the high-nosed, red-skinned, clapper-voiced, mussel-mouthed faces around him. (p. 96)

The Folliots, Baruch, Catherine and Michael are all of bourgeois origin but all choose to live and identify with the workers, a sort of cleansing operation. However Stead never commits herself beyond a certain point to Marxist ideas, despite what seems to be their inherent attraction for her. The Marxist, for example, would argue that the vices of the common man are a function of the viciousness of class society and that if class oppression ceased, a New Man would evolve who would be self-disciplined and eager to work for the common good. Stead's view of Man is more pessimistic. Baruch says, for example, 'I underestimate the profound capacity for evil, jealousy and hate in men. Nevertheless, I remain an idealist.' (p. 146) Earlier he catalogues the vices:

. . . those who are for ever in the green-sickness of an unrequited love or desire, and those who work out newfangled systems to detect fate in her workings, those who are swollen with pride and those who creep in dejection. He was so wretched to see these people swarming around him, with all these evils added to their burden of poverty, that he often fell into a fever, and this idea was with him, day and night, that he was obliged to relieve them in some way. (p. 140)

In other words, he sees the vices as additional to, rather than consequences of, poverty.

Baruch, however, is the most tolerant and humane of the poor men. Kol Blount's view of humanity is outright rejection and nihilism:

'Imagine my misery. To see your fatal errors and degraded manners and have to live among you, have to carry you in my breast like a diseased heart . . . I only live with a lot of slaves and pigs of Circe. You live like niggers, glad of your bonds, and licking the hand that whips you and singing to the Lord to make you meek. God, I can't stand it any more . . .' (p. 206)

The speeches by Blount represent the pinnacles of passion in a novel where the tone is generally passionate. They are mostly in character, and adequately motivated by his frustration and paralysis. They also contain the novel's most poetic writing, modulated from burning intensity to the most delicate of dying falls:

A thin heart must always be rubbing shoulders with crowds and sitting in the sun to get a little heat . . . But a strong passion moves in chaos and associates with death, its foot goes among hermits and ravens. Love, love passing through many frightful experiences, retchings and convulsions, draws sustenance from them; they only show it the measure of its fortitude. Even so its skin is dyed with the mess it feeds on, but it lives. From the fierceness of its discontent it craves all violences, pains and perversions, and feeds on its disappointments. It shuns joy, sympathy, good; it will rifle, plunder, kill, and always arise purer and more triumphant, and more truly love. It desires to do evil, to crush opponents to death, to stifle critics, to drive the breath from rivals, to cleave the world asunder and let the smoke out that curls in its entrails. Venus should

be black: that is the colour of love, the rite of the night. My good sun-born friends, suckled on watered town-milk instead of blood, as I, unlike me you have not had time to fathom the heart . . .

'What is love? It is the pest in a city: there is no sleep at night, but tolling of bells; the ears do not hear, but they start; the eyes see, but ghosts rage; the body does not feel, but the earth burns and freezes. One is in love with a monster, a creature too much like an angel, too cruel, too feeble, too intimate and too powerful to be human. To love you must dissociate yourself from humanity, as with all great passions. But why should I say all? There is only one.' (pp. 61-2)

The beauty of the prose—with its rhetorical pattern suggesting Swinburne—partly disguises the sadistic nature of the sentiments. In *Seven Poor Men* Stead treats the sadistic impulse as an important element of the personality. In this respect the portrait Michael sees of Catherine as 'an emaciated naked woman lying dead on the quays' (p. 36) sets the tone. Michael, Withers and even Baruch are subject to sadistic fancies, which I shall describe in chapter four when discussing de Sade's influence on Stead.

In *The Salzburg Tales,* the only positive solution suggested by Stead was an extreme asceticism carried to the point of self-extinction. In *Seven Poor Men*, however, there is a dream as well as a nightmare. The dream concerns perfect understanding between individuals, and sympathy in which the psychological barriers are broken and communion is complete. Michael and Kol Blount can achieve this at will, by sitting together, withdrawn, in a silence that has mystical overtones. These two people are special cases: Kol is a paralytic; Michael is congenitally incapable of social life. Their relationship is presaged in *The Salzburg Tales* though with a slightly different emphasis. The link is strongest in the relationship of Lilias to Rachel, who says, in the early story 'On the Road', ' "Your students, friends, and I drown many a care drinking at your mill-pond, and it is inexhaustible. None but I has seen the fine rain fall that fills it".' (p. 295) The Antinous/Flavian relationship is a similar one of passive strength providing nourishment for an active acolyte.

For Michael's sister Catherine a sense of wholeness and spiritual equanimity comes only at the close of her relationship with Baruch, before he leaves for America:

> They talked for a long time about odds and ends, while they felt the blood rushing through their hearts to a new measure. They talked automatically and disjointedly and unnecessarily, so that the conversation would soon drop and a silence would come when they could look at each other with full glances, questioning and responsive, understanding, hesitating. They grew more corpulent spiritually, they felt stronger, they grew to their full height. Innocent fancies filled them, they had a temptation to speak with a familiar simplicity which made them smile to themselves. They lived thus for several hours. (p. 276)

Joseph, the young man who finds no sense or pleasure in soul-searching, settles down with a girl like himself. Critics, for example Green (1968), assume this to be a surrender to materialism and suburbia, because of the passage:

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

On the other hand, Stead refers a little later to a 'cement path between bushes of roses' (p. 312) with no suggestion of a symbolic meaning. In the Epilogue, Joseph battles through the storm to the security, comfort and love of his household:

> And so he sits long into the night, with his hand in his wife's hand, and tells her the history of him, Joseph, of Michael and Catherine, his cousins, and of many others who surely live no more: for they cannot have a sequel, the creatures of our youth. (p. 319)

Apart from the muted optimism of such human possibilities, Stead incorporates certain positive symbols into even her darkest visions. In Catherine's surrealistic tale of despair (p. 301), the travellers' vision of an ideal community, gay and prosperous ' "flags flying . . . new houses with bush above them . . ." ' is extinguished by the reality in the valley: ' ". . . all is silent, naked, untrodden, windless".' But she qualifies immediately. ' "There is *perhaps for the young* a field of heath and daisies, a pile of rock and patch of rosy pigface, a patch of daffodils, a light copse".' (p. 301, my emphasis). For the others, there is only despair and anarchy.

Similarly, in the Madman's tale (p. 303) there is a moment of joy before the arrival of night, remaining as 'a brief memory' of the chaotic crowd of people falling 'into the gulf':

> 'When the dove cleaves the sky it sheds a clear equal light on heaven and earth which fades into crepuscular gloom in which some flower, some far-off tower, some cleft in the mountain-head, some milestone, some beetle hovering between cloud and field, some sound of a bell rung in a distant village, some whitecap in the bay, appears instantly, glinting, and as soon is lost.'

The symbols—flower, village bells, flying beetle —are pastoral, with associations of tranquility and security.

Kol's long narrative at the asylum is horrific in content, yet more significant is the way in which the tale leads to rapport between narrator and audience, tenuous yet breaking down the human isolation:

> At other times the person felt a wild, rich, angelic joy as if the universe were a globe of light and his face being approached to the tenuous globe, the light poured through him: it was neither the subject, nor the words of the bard, but the tone of his voice, his passion, his rapture. (p. 309)

The episode ends with pastoral symbols similar to those mentioned above: '. . . a few minutes of perfect silence, during which one heard some faint evening sounds, of beetles winging and a bell ringing for vespers . . .' (p. 309).

All these momentary insights into a better existence are incorporated into the vision of life which Stead expresses in the epilogue, but I postpone discussion of it until the end of this chapter.

This, then, is the generally sombre environment of the novel. The force which dominates and animates it is the force of fever, a sort of disease of the rational mind which sets loose the intrinsic irrational components. The spiritual history of Michael, and to a lesser extent, Catherine and Kol Blount, is largely a chronology of fevers, delirium and dreams, each one a turn of the kaleidoscope shaking reality into a new and dazzling pattern. Michael, his brains 'addled' (p. 6) by the hot sun is suddenly aware of the mystery of time, and pretends to see many moments of time simultaneously. A bull-roarer creates in him a delirium of primitive impulses, 'to throw himself savagely at the lawny slopes and bite them, like an animal . . . to leap from the cliff among the seagulls, ending fatally but sweetly in the sea'. (p. 8) Catherine explains candidly:

> 'If I find myself in a calm I have a brainstorm, a fit of tears, based on nothing, to break it . . . Stability, that is the only character we have never—but we are always in that state of delirium, folly, passion or drunkenness, which is our life.' (pp. 149-50)

Speaking of Michael and Blount, Marion says:

> 'Their life was nothing but a dream . . . and incoherent when told. [Michael] was a man who could attach no one solidly to him.' (p. 260)

In the epilogue, the concept of dream widens to embrace the entire narrative, incorporating particularly the dreamlike quality of the distant past, when memories become as disjointed, piquant and insubstantial as a dream:

> 'Long ago! Now it is only like a dream from which you awaken and feel tremulously near to tears without knowing the reason', murmurs Joseph . . . 'Why were we so shaken then? Was it because we were young?' (p. 318)

In such states, Michael is drawn to a more direct contact with reality, in which the normal contact through the intelligence is short-circuited. The concept is first hinted at in a passage he reads: ' "the maniac was merely too much awake . . ." ' (p. 10) and he experiences a vision in which time is accelerated 'and all animal and vegetable creations were aware of the sun, wind, sky, shadow, and of their neighbours and of the footfalls and shadows of men, *through prehensile senses*' (p. 10, my emphasis). For Michael, these visions are more real than normality, which is the machinery of the world reflected in 'his mind, a cracked and yellow mirror . . .' (p. 16). For this reason he will be unable to control his own destiny. He lacks the equipment and in any case it would be at the mercy of the visions. ' "I will never be captain of my soul" ' he says (p. 16).

However, the reader soon begins to appreciate that the fevers which recur through the novel are not all subjective but consist also of fevers in nature itself. An animistic idea of nature is part of Stead's private mysticism. The idea is not a youthful aberration but a belief

which lingers across her decades of writing. For example, the most sustained image in her writing is that of the mirror and the mind, each capable of reflecting a reality but not *the* reality. Given the unreliability of both minds and mirrors, the way is open for such hypotheses as animism.

' "Listen, is the world full of spirits, as the mind?" ' asks Michael (p. 17), and for Stead it is no rherotical question. ' "How blunt our senses are, how many thick veils hang between us and the world . . . There is plenty that we miss; I feel my brain turning to think what we miss".' The image of veils, too, recurs throughout Stead's work. Veils can shield one from reality—in her first book and in her latest (*Cotters' England*) there is a woman whose veil hides her disfigurement. Veils are also the barrier that prevents one reaching out to higher forms of reality. Tear aside the veils of the flesh (p. 11) and one sees the multitudinous lives of the cells. Michael's importance is that he is a mystic:

> 'The *veil is thin* between me and the spinning chamber of the fates; when I die I will go there and dip my hands in the *unwoven raw material of life*, for once.' (p. 221, my emphases)

In what, then, does Stead's supra-reality consist? What is Michael driving at when he says, ' "There is plenty that we miss" '? Initially, Michael seeks in nature the peace he lacks within him. He finds an evanescent tranquillity in the graceful, day-lit tree:

> A tall tree, whose topmost tips were now yellow in the setting sun, waved delicately against the pale high sky. (p. 33)

His analytic mind, however, rejects it, in favour of the restless reality of the ocean, sleeplessly circling the earth. To the restlessness he adds a living quality:

> '. . . long conversations and much lamenting among the waves on the seashore, when the moon was away. And at night in the bush is interminable bickering and soughing. Then I am not alone with my tears and restlessness and there is no peace.' (p. 33)

The passage is not merely metaphor and verbal conceit. Michael's rapport with the ocean helps to drive him to suicide:

> 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 . . . (p. 249)

The same concept, still relatively conventional and undeveloped, is part of Kol Blount's thought. On learning of Michael's death, he begins to shiver, '. . . horrible forests, black, mountain-perched, mossy, cloud-soaked at the end of existence, began to toss'. (p. 261) The fantastic element has begun to gain ground; the forest is no longer merely an anthopomorphic one, but belongs to some other dimension 'at the end of existence'.

Michael, in 'Catherine's Narrative', attempts to define the precise quality of that dimension:

> '. . . everywhere in nature and in the building materials of the city . . . I saw a movement, a breathing, upwrenching, freeings and unhappy motion: I felt the trees had the souls of men prisoned, nature was full of gagged voices. Isn't Kol exactly like that?' (p. 266)

He describes a walk through the Domain among the sleeping tramps:

> 'They were not alive, but the trees were alive. Awfully they began to move and bend over me; they crowded together in their congregations and unholy intercourse began. I was as invisible to their senses as their speech inaudible to my outward ear.
>
> 'When the wind comes off the bay, as it often does at nightfall . . . then 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, but I was always afraid at that hour. 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)

This, in other words, is the reality behind the ' "veils" '; Michael identifies himself with it, attunes his perceptions to it. Thus he is able to experience the unearthly, surrealistic storm which Stead describes purely in symbols and verbal effects:

> 'The cloud of dust was full of people, rushing past with songs and kickings, old mutterers singular and angularly breaking into yells, bad children, fairies, old professors, confessors, aiders and abbesses . . .' (p. 269)

The madman in his tale (p. 303) operates within similar conventions, and uses the same symbolism. To him the 'veil' becomes 'a magnificent Chinese curtain' which, drawn back, reveals the anarchy behind 'the fair outward false semblance of things . . .' (pp. 303-4)

So far I have not demonstrated Stead's involvement with animistic concepts, only her characters'. Indirect evidence can be seen in the pervasiveness of the idea. A sermon by a priest (p. 33) expresses the concept of humility and orderliness in the unconscious forms of nature. Michael rejects the concept, not because he believes that nature is inanimate, but because he believes its animism is violent and anarchic. Moreover, the notion of animism is put quite arbitrarily in the mouth of Winter the Marxist. Winter is speaking so little in character that Stead neglects even Winter's speech-conventions such as 'yer' for 'your' and 'shadder' for 'shadow' (p. 170). Winter tells an anecdote (p. 313) about 'a dryad' at a Party camp. It turns out to be a tree making music through a natural aeolian harp. The anecdote ends, '"Mrs Hanngartner, you know, believes there are souls in nature".' (p. 314) Finally, and conclusively, there is the epilogue, narrated in Stead's voice:

> The trees raged in the park, which is always turning back to wilderness; they lifted their arms and tossed in the darkness of the under-cliff. The souls of trees are freed in storms, they struggle, arise and commingle in the lower air. Wild flutterings, reedy laments and cries of inhuman passions fill the ear . . . Let the wind-buffeted man run past with his overcoat squatting on his back and his hat running along of itself before him; he is out of his elements. The children of the storm strain and howl, taking no notice of him and oblivious of his world in their recital of lugubrious mysteries, earthy deeps, lost rivers and subterranean caverns. (p. 317)

One sees at once the link with Michael's 'unholy intercourse' of trees and Kol's 'horrible forests'.

The epilogue is Stead's struggle to express in poetic terms the sense and meaning of her novel.

> Now between Joseph, the traveller hurrying on with head thrust forward, and the nearest star something moves which may be a silk mesh such as conjurors used. Underneath is a giant gulf in which rushes the sea: the stars appear therein with intermittent flashes. The threads of the mesh appear and are woven of the bodies of flying men and women with the gestures interlocked in thousands of attitudes of passion. Thought flies along their veins, they move and gesticulate with old motions lost in memory . . . The wind blows up again from the south; the curtain of cloud rushes across the immense sky. As it blows, the delicate beings aloft shiver, they wither and fall apart like thin dry leaves, they fall to earth and perhaps fall into the sea. The sea is fretted with a thickening web of shade, the dark pours into the sea. What were those creatures? Men, or dreams, or magellanic clouds? (pp. 317-18)

The gulf, the dark sea and the fiendish, frenzied trees are elements of the hostile universe which Stead takes as the setting for human life. The mesh of flying beings is Stead's image for the paradisal state for which Man strives, in which there are no barriers to communication and in which the state of alienation disappears. The passion and the fervour are symbolic of youthfulness and innocence. Time and guilt destroy the web and wither the beings who compose it. Some of them fall to earth to become the snoring, hutted people of the suburbs, 'like dry leaves fallen from the heavenly tree' (p. 318)*. Others, like Michael and Catherine, 'fall into the sea', that is, 'live no more' (p. 319). Joseph becomes 'the traveller' (p. 318) outside and beyond the maelstrom, and now functioning as commentator. Since he never had youth, or anything but a rudimentary spiritual life, he is remote from both the darkness of the supernatural world and from the ecstatic web above; he travels between them.

It is necessary now to survey similarities and differences of theme in *The Salzburg Tales* and *Seven Poor Men of Sydney*.

Both depict a sombre, even terrifying universe; they share a nightmare reality of war and suffering and despair. Moreover, the dark-

*cf. p. 66:

Within, Mrs Baguenault's heart was a stuffed chasuble continually repeating 'Om, Om', with censers swinging and the tin cashbox clinking, making a sort of perpetual low mass in her soul—if she had a soul; but it was no soul; it was a dried leaf. It had once fluttered on the tree, but that was in spring; now it was winter.

ness of the external world is matched by the darkness within the personality, in which hate, cruelty and the death-wish are more prominent constituents than love, compassion and spiritual wholeness. Behind the external and internal realities is yet another reality—the realm of the irrational exercising a malignant influence on the natural course of life.

By inversion, love is usually seen not as a source of hope but as 'the most hideous of passions', a source of disorder and anarchy. Man's hope is not in positive action but in turning his dark passions away from other victims and inwards upon himself. By this process of cauterizing, his soul is purified of its dross and his anguish ultimately stilled.

Each work, as will be seen in chapter four, is in the tradition of Romantic decadence, with immediate ancestry in the *fin de siècle* movement beginning in France with Baudelaire. This is typified in *The Salzburg Tales* by the decay and necrophilia of 'To the Mountain' and the perversity of 'A Colin, A Chloë'. In *Seven Poor Men*, one finds the spirit particularly in the ennui of Michael, the incestuous leanings of Michael and Catherine and the moral inversions of Kol Blount.

It is important to note, however, that the pessimism in *Seven Poor Men* is to an extent qualified. In certain circumstances, and particularly for the young, some hope is offered beyond the negative hope of peace through self-extinction. In moments of insight two people can achieve a perfect and mystic communion, and the 'special cases' Kol and Michael can make of the moment a way of life. The relationship of Catherine and Baruch Mendelssohn illustrates the human potential (though here unrealised) for happiness, and Stead hints at it elsewhere in her imagery and symbolism.

There are three other areas of contrast. *The Salzburg Tales* involves more serious treatment of conventional Christianity, not merely in the tales about Saints, treated without irony or scepticism, but in occasional use of religious symbolism, as in the story of the fish merchant Jamie (pp. 305-8), a modern Christ-figure. In no other work of Stead's is religion taken so seriously. Christianity in *Seven Poor Men* is handled in a spirit of iconoclasm and aggression. Certainly for the old and humble (for example, the mothers of Michael, Joseph and Kol) life has been a vale of tears, but their religiosity is treated as a pathetic clutching at a straw. One hears echoes of Marx, that religion is a crutch of the weak.

In treatment of the supernatural generally, *Seven Poor Men* is more sophisticated than *The Salzburg Tales*. The tales use the occult partly for its own sake, to provide a striking situation or to complicate and resolve a situation (e.g. 'The Gold Bride'). In *Seven Poor Men*, the supernatural is embodied in forms more acceptable to the modern temper, that is, through dreams and fantasies, projections of the subconscious. A certain category (viz. animistic beliefs) not explainable in these terms is largely incorporated into a system of poetic symbolism or metaphysics.

The third contrast is the arrival in *Seven Poor Men* of a social conscience; the novel includes a concern about injustices in capitalist society, partial identification with the 'workers' and rejection of the 'bourgeoisie'. This contrasts with *The Salzburg Tales*, with its opposite point of view—the world seen largely from the Establishment's point of view, with privilege taken for granted.

Extract from an M.A. thesis by Tony Thomas, Nightmare World, A Study in the fiction of Christina Stead.
Page references, *Salzburg Tales*, Sun Books 1966: *Seven Poor Men of Sydney*, Angus & Robertson 1965.

REVIEWS

Franz Kempf by George Berger, Adelaide, Hyde Park Press, n.d. (1969), pages unnumbered: illustrated.

Franz Kempf's technical mastery comes through very clearly in the plates which illustrate this booklet. The etchings from *The End of Days* retain their silky texture, even on these small, marginless pages; the colour plates recall at least some of the sumptuousness of the oils.

The reproduction of *The Gentleman from Cracow* reminds one of the richness with which Kempf realizes his mysterious, and often mystical symbols: colour, form and plane blend in an aesthetic ambiguity which is complex and ambivalent, but fundamentally *ordered*.

The exquisite use of textures as a mode of imitation, characteristic of some of Franz Kempf's best work, comes across in the photograph of the drypoint-aquatint *Winter Solstice*: scratches on a plate become vegetation, grass, trees, earth, rain and wind, with a sensitive and economical simplicity. The feeling of a season finds a beautifully apt symbol.

Dr Berger's essay is useful, if a little staccato, and he has collected together a number of remarks about Franz Kempf's work which are interesting and illuminating. One would, however, have preferred to have precise references: newspaper notices, just because they are so ephemeral, ought to be cited with exact date and page reference. The booklet, small as it is, already has an apparatus of a kind at the end: it might just as well have been a complete apparatus.

P. HUTCHINGS

Mary Gilmore: Selected Verse. Angus and Robertson; second, enlarged edition, 1969. $3.75.

Here I, dreaming a dream of justice, bring
This thread of thought to twine from it a chord
To make my land a native harp, whereon
Some day the wind may blow, and one who hears
Draw from its slender note a song profound.

The above lines, concluding Mary Gilmore's 'Lament of the Lubra' could be a dedication to her Selected Verse. They sum up the chief roles which the "I" of her poems assumes: patriot, prophetess, dreamer—and song maker.

This latest edition of her verse, published seven years after her death in 1962, enables us to see the best of Mary Gilmore's work in perspective. Undoubtedly, her work benefits from pruning, a job which the poet herself supervised before her death, helped by Robert Fitzgerald and Tom Inglis Moore.

This selection differs from the 1948 edition of Mary Gilmore's verse in the addition of 24 poems from *Fourteen Men*, published in 1954 when the poet was 89. For reasons difficult to fathom, the selections from each of her nine published volumes of verse are here published in scrambled chronological order. Perhaps it was the author's wish that her work should appear to move from the war-torn concerns of *The Passionate Heart* to the stiller, more contemplative verse of *Fourteen Men*. But to read this collection in chronological order of publication is to become more sharply aware of the real directions in which her poetry moved. The most obvious movement is from the song-like, often elegiac quality of the earlier verse, arising out of a close acquaintance with the ballad and the hymn, towards a more controlled, epigrammatic style. At the end, the poet's chief concerns are, as earlier, with justice and the needs of the common man, but their expression is more impersonal, less a cry from the heart, and in general the better for this:

Nationality

I have grown past hate and bitterness,
I see the world as one;
But though I can no longer hate,
My son is still my son.

All men at God's round table sit,
And all men must be fed;
But this loaf in my hand,
This loaf is my son's bread.

Few of the earlier poems achieve the fine control of 'Nationality', in which didactic comment is subordinated to the rhythms of a mind balancing an insoluble dilemma. The poems in "*Marri'd and Other Verses* (1910) and *The Passionate Heart* (1918) show two sides to Mary Gilmore's idealism. As in Bernard O'Dowd's symbolically entitled collection *Dawnward*? there is in Mary Gilmore's first two collections of verse a forward thrust, based on a belief in youthful protest and progress (Youth is the passion of time / As blood is of life. / *Years cannot measure it; Nor saving treasure it.*), but this is countered by the backward look into the night of suffering, questioning and doubt. These conflicting impulses usually appear in separate poems in the early collections; only later can the future be viewed with an equanimity based on understanding of the past.

It is perhaps surprising to find a nostalgic, regretful tone so early in her work, until it is realised that her first collection was published in 1910, when the poet was 45, had worked as a teacher, journalist, member of the first executive of the Australian Workers Union, organizer and participant in the ill-fated communal settlement scheme in Paraguay and Cosme in the 1890s, and was wife and mother in a family where relationships were strained, finally to the point of separation. In the 1920s Mary Gilmore's life was closely connected with the Labor newspaper *The Worker*, into which most of her creative energy went. Her concerns as a journalist, the social, economic and moral problems with which she concerned herself, are particularly apparent in *The Tilted Cart* (1925), *Under the Wilgas* (1932) and *Battlefields* (1939). Journalism again became a major concern in 1952 when she became a regular contributor to the Communist newspaper *Tribune*. Throughout her writings the treatment of Aborigines is a recurrent theme, as is the responsibility of the government and community toward women, children, the old and the helpless. She established in the journalism, as in the verse, the need for an awareness of Australia's history, a need reiterated in the verse of a latter-day follower in her poetic traditions, Sir Paul Hasluck.

Her themes, even in many of the lyrics, are 'public' themes which perhaps do not lend themselves readily to poetic treatment; and the major fault of much verse in this book is that it descends to the glib journalistic phrase and substitutes slogan for genuinely realised imagery or situation. Examples of her worst work in this respect are the poems of praise, 'Edwardian Coronation Anthem' and 'Ode to the Pioneer Woman'. Here bald statement parades as golden locks and invites ridicule.

'Let us now praise famous men' is an injunction to which Mary Gilmore seems to have responded awkwardly, imbued as she was with strongly egalitarian sentiments. Perhaps because her aspirations were so firmly allied to the 'high dream' of human brotherhood, she never developed a satiric side to her personality, at least as it appears in her verse, and this may further suggest an insufficiently developed habit of self-criticism. The two pieces on Henry Parkes illustrate the direction in which too much of her verse moves. The first, 'Sir Henry Parkes' (from *Under the Wilgas*, 1932) pictures her hero as a giant who, like a great rock set in the middle of a rising stream, divides the currents and deflects the shock, nurturing peace. Although it has an awkwardness of phraseology here and there ("The pedestalled upon their country's need, / Men stand like giants in the public eye"), the central image is commanding and demands respect. The intention of 'Old Henry Parkes' (1939) is apparently similar: it is a poem of praise. It opens vivaciously, presenting the aggressive, eloquent side of the protagonist and his imposing, leonine appearance, as well as his 'vision', which is also clearly the poet's:

> Commonwealth and Empire, brotherly and brother,

This State and that State, all linked together. But the following lines shatter this piece of myth making:

> And Parkes was a king,
> A king among men;
> Men were his stubble,
> Where he bound the best in sheaf;
> And men were his sheep, that, line after line,
> Orderly as sheep, followed after him . . . .

The jingling metre here only serves to trivialise Parkes and his followers and the poem plunges over the brink of bathos, taking its subject with it.

Inspirational or exhortatory verse is always liable to appear awkward or silly once its occa-

sion is past; and it is hardly fair to judge it against the same criteria as lyrical or even satiric verse. Mary Gilmore's verse is often blatantly kinetic: its intention is to move the reader towards action by presenting him with an ideal and enlisting his sympathies for a cause. This technique is most effective as art when the didactic tone is kept veiled in the background and attention is focussed on the subject. ('The Square Peg and the Round' does this far more successfully than "Second-Hand Beds', for instance.) But unfortunately, her habit of mind is to state rather than suggest.

Most memorable among the poems in this collection are those which achieve a balance between the 'thread of thought' and the 'song profound', where contemplation and lyrical impulse infuse each other with meaning. Such are the early poems in *The Wild Swan* and, despite its unevenness, the impressive longer piece, 'The Disinherited'. These poems build up their own atmosphere and momentum, and their imagery and rhythms serve to dramatise their themes: here means and ends are in unison. Even her best verse is not strikingly original—Mary Gilmore as poet was not a notable innovator—but it incorporates some uncommon wisdom in diction and rhythms close to the language of ordinary men.

BRUCE BENNETT

Rorabacher, L. E., editor, *Two Ways Meet.* Stories of Migrants in Australia. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1967. pp. 7-205.

In this reprinted edition, we are presented with a cross-cultural medley, underlining the diversity which we in Australia have come to regard as part of the contemporary national scene. The contributors themselves are predominantly 'homegrown' (in terms of birth): the alien-in-origin among them come from England, New Zealand, Hungary, Poland and Russia. The editor herself is a North American who feels at home in Australia because, she says, it is so much like the United States. I am sure she's correct in that assumption in view of our growing economic (etc.) ties with the United States —however uncongenial this may be to some 'First' and 'Old' Australians, if not to 'New' ones! The relationship between England on one hand and the United States on the other *vis-à-vis* Australia has provided us with a remarkable parentage: the former our 'mother', the latter our 'father'—but whether as *pater* or *genitor* is not exactly clear. However, to change the sex-image, the editor (p. 10) suggests that the relationship between our country and the United States is more like that of two daughters of one mother—an elder-younger sibling relationship. One element we have in common, so we are told, is that each nation 'displaced rather than absorbed a primitive indigenous population'. This, of course, is quite misleading, although we can perhaps expect such statements, along with others, in a work of fiction.

That aside, the genealogical problem is not irrelevant, especially when one considers migrants—and not *just* those of recent times. The editor recognizes this (p. 11). From initial contact, she says, the problem of immigrant assimilation entered with 'the first white arrivals and their aboriginal hosts'. But the tremendous impact of non-British migrants, from early settlement of this country, is not really considered. Nor is the problem of how we've managed over the last century or so to achieve a nice 'balance' between informal heterogeneity and nominal assimilation (to what?). But the image of a younger sister (Australia, of course) reliving the experience of an elder (the United States, of course), skewed as it is, has just enough substance to be truly alarming.

One point that Louise Rorabacher makes has long been a contentious issue among social scientists, some of whom claim that the works of Proust and Balzac and Sinclair Lewis (for example) convey the same substance as sociological treatises and do so at least as skilfully. Studies like Zubrzycki's *Immigrants in Australia*, she says, 'can't compete with fiction as an avenue of understanding'. I won't take up this question, but I suspect that a lot depends on what *kind* of understanding.

This is, also, not the place to embark on an analysis of each story (there are 22 of them), except that one should keep in mind that the majority were written by authors born in Australia—which itself provides a commentary of sorts on the attitudes they embody. I should imagine that, if all or most of them had been written by persons born outside this country, the overall impression would have been rather different. The theme the editor sees emerging

is that of reciprocal-assimilation; but within that frame is a full dose of prejudice and misunderstanding, as the characters in the stories are made to cope with new roles to which they are not sufficiently adjusted. Rorabacher supposes (p. 16) that the source of prejudice is primarily economic: but this is only partly true. Economic equality, stratum-wise, was in fact one measure of social acceptance (in the past as it is today), and with the acquisition of skills it could be achieved fairly easily within the heterogeneous Australian socio-economic system. The real source of prejudice and conflict was not this at all. It rested on socio-cultural or ethnic differences—like language, customs, belief and family organization: and this applied, and applies, in regard to Germans (for instance) as to Chinese. Rorabacher dimly perceives this to be the case when she notes that conflict between Old and New Australians 'is often an innocent product of differing backgrounds' (p. 17): but for 'innocent' we must substitute 'ignorant'.

This slight volume is not to be disparaged. It does supply ethnographic data for the social scientist, and makes its point in an infinitely more meaningful fashion than do the undigested multitudes of statistical tables which are often mistaken for social scientific contributions in their own right.

Rorabacher, L. E., editor, *Aliens in their Land.* The Aborigine in the Australian Short Story Cheshire, Melbourne, 1968. pp. 1-242. $A4.75.

A collection of stories about Aborigines by non-Aborigines is always welcome, if only because through them we glimpse the degree of knowledge the authors have of Aboriginal life and the problems facing these people. The result in this case is uneven, as one would expect. Most of the stories present a view from the outside, looking in; and the 'inside' is often the projection of what the writer thinks is going on there or what he believes to be how the Aborigines, full-blood and part, rationalize their actions.

Rorabacher's Introduction (pp. 1-25) does not do justice to the stories or place them in proper perspective. In this respect, it would be much more useful to their readers if the literary-inclined were to restrict themselves to an evaluation of the stories themselves without commenting on wider social issues; or if they feel they must attempt this, they should at least seek advice from a specialist on this subject. For instance, we are told that the Australian Aborigines had no name for themselves. Certainly they had no overall name to cover the large number of more or less separate societies (each named) which occupied this continent at the time of first settlement. Australoids are not 'Astraloids'; and Rorabacher adopts, uncritically, Dr Marie Reay's reason for not capitalizing the words Aboriginal and Aborigines (a usage which has now been generally adopted in reference to Australian Aborigines in particular, as contrasted with indigenous, aboriginal peoples elsewhere). This enables her to say that 'it is somehow appropriate that these faceless people should be nameless too'. With this springboard into the realms of fiction (which, of course, is 'somehow appropriate'), we are told that 'it is equally fitting that the origins of this anonymous people should be shrouded in mystery'!

Fiction, then, has its own kind of reality, reflecting *and perpetuating* some of the issues which, in this context, were crucial in the impact of two very differently based cultures. The editor accepts the once well-entrenched view that Aborigines were, and presumably are, products of a Stone Age, inherently 'primitive' (an attitude which the stories presented here bring to the fore). The past is inadequately sketched and evaluated. This section (p. 7) ends appropriately, and still uncritically, with a quotation from Daisy Bates: 'civilization was a cloak that they [the blacks] donned easily enough, but they could not wear it and live'.

The 'present' commences in the early 20th century, and is heralded by an upsurge of interest in Aboriginal life along with some serious study. However, Baldwin Spencer was not a trained anthropologist and Kaberry's name is not spelt 'Karberry'. Rorabacher attempts to cover developments which have taken place within the last few decades and also to present a measured picture of what Aboriginal life was and is like. With the compression of a wide range of information in a limited space, both readability and accuracy have suffered. The picture that emerges is not only incomplete but fails to satisfy the canons of empirical fact. The Dark People (the editor seems to like this label) led a 'primitive nomadic' life because of

some lack in their environment, and 'getting a grip on the aboriginal problem at present is like trying to shake hands with an octopus' (p. 9). The misconceptions arise from generalizing too broadly on one hand and, on the other, failing to understand the basis of traditional belief and the effects of an alien impact.

In a short review, it is difficult to cover these points satisfactorily. The earlier controversy concerning the ignorance of physical paternity is revived: but one can't have this both ways, as the editor suggests, when she says that part-Aboriginal children were looked down on by members of the Aboriginal community (p. 11). No full-bloods today live 'completely apart' from outside influence. And one reads with surprise that South Australia 'has relatively few aborigines of any degree'. The coverage of the tremendous changes that have taken place over the last few years, in relation to administrative policy and the lifting of discriminatory legislation, is far too summarized and incomplete, and the contributions of persons of Aboriginal descent are only vaguely noted (p. 13). Comparisons are drawn between Australia and the United States in relation to the Indian and Negro, and these are only superficially relevant to our own scene. The conclusion that people of Aboriginal descent are quite powerless and are forced, as they have always been, to take their cue from 'the white world' is very far indeed from present-day fact.

Not content to rely on what others have written, Rorabacher considers the 'Future'. Dr Reay's remark (p. 14) is taken out of context, since she is speaking of Aboriginal identity. And, contrary to the editor's view, this is being firmly established. The goal of assimilation has been considerably modified within recent years, and it has been more generally recognized that all of what is categorized as Aboriginal need not disappear entirely. But it is true to say that what will remain will be very different from that which is observable today: too much has happened, too much has been destroyed.

All of these comments simply constitute a prelude to the stories themselves. And the stories are worth reading, if for no other reason than that they exemplify very clearly indeed Australian-European attitudes toward the First Australians—a mixture of good intentions and sympathy, coupled with sheer exploitation (sexually and economically) and ignorance. Too often, one reads such a story as a single entity. Its setting and its characters, like the ideas which motivate them, seem unreal and far removed from the sort of life most city dwellers have come to know—while, in that urban context, people of Aboriginal descent are in a minority and interact only infrequently with members of the majority. The impact of 23 such stories, all in the same vein, all demonstrating the pathos and the virtual hopelessness which has dogged and continues to dog these Aboriginal people, should make an impression which perhaps no systematic scientific study can do. This impression will be all the more striking because it is an *outside* one; and, despite developments to the contrary, it remains primarily this, as Rorabacher has noted. But those *within* are more articulate than they were: it remains for them to react to such contributions, and—perhaps—retell them, themselves.

RONALD M. BERNDT

White, Patrick, *The Vivisector*. New York, The Viking Press, 1970. 642 p. $8.50.

White's latest and longest novel is on the whole less impressive than his first, *Happy Valley*. And while I suspect that it may be a more important book in some ten years' time in what it has to say about the problems of a creative artist, there are offputting things about it that will always remain so. It is an unhappy book, depressed and depressing; it is also an unpleasant one in which the artist vivisects himself and mankind. Insight into others, White shows clearly, does not make the artist a happier person; indeed, it can increase his unhappiness and sense of alienation. *The Vivisector* is evenly sour, never touching the depths of despair but also never rising above a sense of apartness from common concerns. It leaves unresolved the artist's conflict between feeling his creative gift as a kind of deformity and as something beautiful, though the emphasis is on the side of creativity as a deformity which must just be borne: "Almost everybody carries a hump, not always visible, and not always of the same shape."

There is no joy in the book, no lightness. The prevailing sourness is in large part responsible for the book's dreariness. But there are also other factors making for the lack of appeal.

Sexual nausea hangs heavy over the book and is accompanied by a preoccupation with excretion. Direct sexuality has never played a big part in White's novels, and is rarely recorded as a pleasant experience. There are more sexual encounters recorded here than elsewhere in White, but they are mostly a series of "bleak orgasms" that Hurtle pretends to enjoy. And the sexuality is tainted by White's extraordinary preoccupation with excretion. The vocabulary of pissing, farting, and shitting occurs with a frequency unmatched in the earlier White. Excretion and sexuality become closely associated in this novel, producing a distaste in the reader which comes to extend itself to a distaste for Hurtle and even, to some degree, to the book itself. The preoccupation with shitting has a further significance in that the book has a constipated quality about it: it is a series of strained and abortive episodes.

Furthermore, the book has a sterility unique in White's fiction, perhaps reflecting a sterility that the author currently feels within himself. Reading *The Vivisector* is not an enriching experience: one rarely feels that he is gaining insights into life or people. One is always very aware that he is reading a novel, and sometimes feels as if he were reading the novel over the author's shoulder as it is being written: the book never has the extra spark that makes it seem like a real experience, part of one's own life. None of the characters comes to life, there is no progressive narrative line, and there is no central theme, only a number of recurrent preoccupations.

None of the characters leaves the pages of the book to become more than a fictional creation. This weakness is most serious in connection with the main character, Hurtle Duffield, since we follow his lifespan and see most of the incidents from his viewpoint. Although not a first-person narrative, the story is frequently told in Hurtle's idiom and is seen from his viewpoint: Part 1 is told in a child's language, and passages in Parts 9 and 10 are in the language of a man who has had a stroke. Hurtle has the misfortune to be both unlikeable and uninteresting, a fatal combination. That one of his emotional sterility should be a major artist is conceivable, since there are many kinds of art; the problem is that it is difficult to accept Hurtle as an artist at all. We do not see him early in the novel as thinking in visual, color, or concept terms sufficiently, and there is too long a period in his early life when he seems to be doing nothing creatively. With the sterile dilettante of *The Solid Mandala* still in our mind, and without clues to Hurtle's quality or potential, we are understandably prone to have early and abiding doubts of his quality, even after he is offered a knighthood. It is understandable that White should write of a painter, for many of his own observations show a painter's awareness—to textures, for instance, to flesh hues, or to facial expressions. But while these are his *forte* as a novelist, they are also pretty much his *limits* in conveying a painter's visions. Paradoxically perhaps, White has more of a painter's eye than his own painter, and for all his apparent current sterility, is less sterile than his own creation. That he should create such an unattractive character to reflect his own broodings bespeaks a current self-contempt that is surely without foundation.

It does not dispose the reader well to Hurtle that two women, Nance Lightfoot and Hero Pavloussi, die on him—he simply isn't interesting or "worthwhile" enough to merit survival. Since the author is controlling the events, one might reasonably expect some significance in their deaths or his survival. Perhaps my irritation proceeds from the fact that Hurtle remains largely untouched by his experiences with Nance and Hero, so that the fairly long sections in which they appear fall flat and seem pointless, abortive. Of the important characters, only Rhoda outlives him, a significance she does not seem able to support. If she is a Mrs Godbold/Mrs Poulter, if she as cat woman is to be associated with the goat woman of *Night on Bald Mountain*—all those other three women receiving White's endorsement as perhaps a sort of earth mother—then she is the least acceptable of all in this role. She is a very ordinary old woman, whose comeback is somewhat surprising. Her function is not quite clear. It is true that she and Hurtle have analogous deformities, she with her literal hump, he with his figurative one; but it may be that she in her concern for stray cats is an anti-vivisector versus Hurtle the vivisector. If so, she does not have the warmth or strength, beyond a will to survive, to fit that role appropriately. Rhoda's role is made too big for her. There is no discernible reason why the cold Olivia Davenport should experience such strong emotion on seeing Hurtle's portrait of Rhoda, and it is not even clear why Hurtle should have painted that

particular portrait of Rhoda. It is not surprising, perhaps, that Hurtle, aware of their common hump, should invite her to live with him, but it is odd that he should then ignore her so completely. Rhoda and her role are amongst the most ill defined aspects of the novel.

As notable as the nonvitality of the characters is the unattractive slant they are given. White's emphasis is on their worst qualities. (There is a distaste for people involved here, and it is connected with the author's own self-disgust that permeates the book.) At times we may even find ourselves protesting at the manifest unfairness with which White treats some of his characters. Both Courtneys, Harry in particular, are given scant credit for their positive qualities. Alfreda is no doubt somewhat silly and vain, incapable of accepting Rhoda's deformity realistically, and unwisely seductive in her dealings with the young Hurtle, but she is usually generous and is not lacking in affection. It is hard to believe that she is as destructive as Hurtle's personality might lead us to believe. Considering the age at which Hurtle came to her, her influence on him would be quite secondary to that of his mother, of whom we do not see enough in significant experiences. In the total portrait of Hurtle, there is too much irrelevant detail, too little significant detail; the result is that this least mystical of White's novels is as elusive as his most mystical. Harry Courtney, along with Alfreda, is hard dealt with. On the evidence available to us, he is a rather attractive character, but his appellation, "decent Harry", seems to damn him as Hurtle uses it. Hurtle's inability to respond to them stems no doubt from his problems, but I feel that the rejection is also White's own: the novel is not so exclusively from Hurtle's viewpoint that the author could not have provided some balance.

Hero Pavloussi, too, is presented to us as sillier and more unpleasant than the evidence makes acceptable, especially when we consider that the unloving Hurtle appears to fall somewhat in love with her for a while. One does not understand what it is about her that produces this change within Hurtle, and one wonders what Olivia Davenport saw in common between them in order to bring them together for a planned affair. A pandered affair, too, does not easily bloom as love. What the "ultimate degradation" in sexual activity it is that Hero practices eludes my imagination, and may indeed puzzle the sexually haunted Board of Censors here. In any case, I do not find that this vague charge makes Hero any less worthy of respect.

The book lacks a strong narrative interest, and indeed has no clear narrative direction. Only the first three parts, about one quarter of the book, are interesting, those parts dealing with Hurtle's life in his original home and with the Courtneys. After that the book becomes steadily less interesting: the Nance Lightfoot section is more interesting than the Hero Pavloussi section, which in turn is more interesting than the Kathy Volkov section. The book comes to develop, like *The Solid Mandala* before it, an almost claustrophobic quality. In both books, one feels hemmed in by both the people and the geographical confinement. These are the only two novels in the White corpus where both factors, characters and setting, work together to produce a stifling effect on the reader. Other White novels have been confined geographically—*Happy Valley*, for instance—but there is in them a breadth and depth in the character survey that gives them an expansiveness and a freshness that this latest work lacks. The one excursion outside Australia to Greece in *The Vivisector* is impotent. White's inaccuracy in having Hurtle leave a Sydney spring to arrive by plane in a Greek spring is probably significant: it is as if White himself does not quite believe the change of scene.

After the account of Hurtle's life with the Courtneys the book loses both direction and interest. To say that it is episodic does not give sufficient sense of its disjointedness: rather it stops and starts again at each major section. There is not enough narrative tempo or interest in the central character to carry the reader over this disjointedness. As said, he is never likeable. Waldo in *The Solid Mandala* is at least interesting in his hatefulness, and the growth of his neurosis is made clear; but Hurtle does not change or develop in any noteworthy way. The various people in his life seem to leave him unaffected, so that he and with him the book become curiously uninvolving. It is this uninvolving quality rather than actual tediousness that mars the book: there just isn't enough going for the book to make one want to finish it. To compensate for the slight action and introspective aspect, there are at times melodramatic elements that can jar upon us. This use of melodrama to cover slight narrative content has always been a tendency in White, but is more marked in his recent writings. It is

conspicuous in the contrived suicide in *Night on Bald Mountain* and in Waldo's death in *The Solid Mandala.* Utterly unconvincing in *The Vivisector* are the suicide-accidental death of Nance Lightfoot and the suicide attempt of Hero—induced by her seeing a portrait, of all reasons!

No clear theme emerges from the book. Not that one necessarily wants clarity from White, but his usual elusiveness is not compensated for in this novel by an ultimate richness. *The Vivisector* in fact is not a thematic book but rather a kind of emotional autobiography in the sense, not that it records White's life history, but that it reveals his major preoccupations at this stage in his life. The chief preoccupations that emerge are his notion of the artist as vivisector, his desire to be reborn and, associated therewith, his search for a pure spiritual childhood.

Behind such preoccupations lies a low self-image. The artist creates, according to White, in order to feel purified and rejuvenated (p. 430), and to present to others something more acceptable than one's own self (p. 157). The desire to be reborn also bespeaks self-distaste. It goes hand in hand with a need to be "renewed by someone else's simplicity of spirit" (p. 293), expressed particularly in the search for the pure spiritual child. Such a search is bound to be fruitless, and may even end in cynicism. Perhaps that is why Nance is presented as a prostitute, why Hero is portrayed as sexually debauched, and the gifted Kathy Volkov as something of a harlot. Hurtle's spiritual children turn out to be as self-interested and calculating as he was during his own childhood, and so he is left with a reflection of his own unsatisfactory self—which, White is saying sourly, is pretty much what one would expect of life.

The chief value of *The Vivisector* finally lies in what it reveals of White the man, who till now has remained behind a veil. It is unfortunate that the man he reveals is White at his most troubled, alienated and antagonistic, lacking in the compassion that accompanied his earlier writings. Knowing that the book will invite an analysis of his makeup—indeed, he virtually invites such an analysis—he chooses nevertheless to lift the veil. As Hurtle remarks at the Art Gallery reception near the end, it is "A bit of a give-away though . . . To see your life hung out—your whole life of dirty washing" (p. 524). To which the Director replies, "How can you avoid it? Not if you're an artist of any account."

JOHN B. BESTON

George Seddon—Swan River Landscapes. University of Western Australia Press, 1970. pp. 133. $7.50.

Perth and the Swan River used to be synonymous. However haphazardly the city site was chosen, once established the town adapted itself to the slope of land towards Mt Eliza and the wide curve of the river, achieving a rare harmony with its environment.

Or that's what we like to tell people. A kind of pre-war story, becoming a little boring, like all such fading tales. And pre-war there were many visitors and temporary residents who found the river more interesting than the city.

We've changed all that—or if not all of it, at least the river bit. Our fascination with freeways and traffic patterns has provided another landscape. At the present time there are likely to be more inhabitants of Perth who have never known the river before the Narrows Bridge and the era of river filling than there are those who remember the quiet and beautiful sweep of the bay below Mt Eliza.

But Perth and its river are not yet entirely separated. If the river has no longer any commercial importance to the city, it is still a setting, a background, something from which the city once took a part of its character, and may —perhaps—do so again. *Swan River Landscapes,* then, is surprisingly the first book of any scope to consider this aspect of city and river environment.

Rather optimistically the book is addressed to the general reader. It is a pity it can not be presented to the general user of the river, that happy individual whose litter falls indiscriminately on river and beaches wherever he goes. Or to those equally happy town councillors so busy remodelling the river to some twentieth century parking lot. Unfortunately, this book is likely to reach mainly the converted.

But it will delight them. It's a pleasant conceit to think of such a book mirroring something of the beauty of its subject—but this book does.

It is splendidly designed and printed. The less said about much of our local colour printing the kinder to all concerned, but this is certainly not the case here. The colour reproduction is almost uniformly excellent, and the photographs take account of varied lights and seasons. The layout of the plates offers variety, and allows the photographs to make their proper statement—as, for example, a glance at such contrasting subjects as those on pages 5 and 96 shows. At a time when Australian printing seems to have quitted the field in favour of overseas—usually Hong Kong—skills, it is good to be reminded that local craftsmanship can in fact be superior.

The essay itself, as George Seddon calls it, takes in the area of the river from the city to the port. Many readers will regret that the upper reaches of the river are not included, these areas could have offered a contrast, and would not too much disturb the unity of the area chosen for discussion.

Within its chosen locality the book ranges widely. The discussion of suburban tidiness in private homes and its larger application in the desolating tidy wastes beloved of town councils illustrates the cleft between the natural landscape and that which urbanisation has imposed. It is in this discussion of general landscape, of man's urge to remake indigenous patterns of water and rock and vegetation, that the book makes its most enlightening comments. We have never been willing to accept the Australian landscape as it is. It is fashionable to blame our forebears for importing their ideas of English and European landscapes and gardens, but if they did bring with them their lilacs and figs and hollyhocks—and memory of a climate much more blessed by water—then at least they built often from the local stone and the local materials to create a harmony with the land itself that we still seem unable to approach.

Mr Seddon discusses the use of the local materials, and his photographs illustrate the kind of harmony and beauty these may achieve. A book like this should not provoke only agreement—as an example, page 31 may provide a sizeable argument about the statement "when the architecture is so good, and the buildings are in a common idiom and well related, the advertising on the shop in the foreground and even the telegraph pole can be assimilated, giving vitality to the street scene". That kind of vitality may, today, be inevitable—though one might hope this book points to the fact that it is not—but it is certainly not easily assimilated.

The book is addressed to the common reader —whoever he may be. It is perhaps because Mr Seddon is never clear about this mythical creature that his diction at times seems out of place, given the topic he is discussing. In fact he seems to adopt two modes of expression—one for the discussion of landscape, concepts of gardening, the geology of the area—and another for the wildlife. The former mode enables him to make his points clearly and stimulatingly. The latter seems apologetic, rather coy. For instance, the whole section on the birdlife of the river is superficial, very incomplete. The tone is facetious, jokes to the effect that recent research suggests that the Black Swan is completely vegetarian, and that Swans generally mate for life "although these two facts are not necessarily related" may provide an excrutiating piece of academic whimsy. But it suggests the writer is a little short of material, or not really certain that he should include this section at all. The comment that "the Red-capped Dotterel . . . has been known to 'nest' at City Beach" is meaningless. Birds' nests and nesting habits are as varied as the species of birds. One can only wonder what the bird was up to at City Beach.

But it is not with such minor complaints in mind that one lays aside this book. In fact, it is a difficult book to put aside, it demands to be taken up again and again for its insights and for the beauty of its printing and design. It is stating the obvious to borrow a phrase from the advertising current at this season of the year and suggest it makes an excellent gift.

PETER COWAN

OLD POETS

One could only say on reading them:
never again.
But something has tempted,
and lifting up our pen
we learn that points of our own
are *obiter dicta*, that
the main judgement goes on,
independent, determined by the case,
and not by those beings
we might have thought it was.
We learn,
and joking loud at night
know we have said nothing
when the thing itself has not said—
only viewpoints, *obiter dicta*;
and chattering, wait within,
while the main judgement goes on.

NOEL MACAINSH

"Property is the fruit of labour.
Property is desirable.
It is a positive good in the world."

Abraham Lincoln,
25 March 1864.

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