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a quarterly review

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Westerly is published quarterly by the University of Western Australia Press, with assistance from the Commonwealth Literary Fund. The opinions expressed in *Westerly* are those of individual contributors and not of any member of the above Committees.

Correspondence should be addressed to the Editorial Committee, *Westerly*, Department of English, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, Western Australia (telephone 86 2481 or 86 5531). Unsolicited manuscripts not accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope will not be returned. All manuscripts must show the name and address of the sender and should be typed (double-spaced) on one side of the paper only. Whilst every care is taken of manuscripts, the Editorial Committee can take no final responsibility for their return; contributors are consequently urged to retain copies of all work submitted. Payment will be made for all contributions published.

Subscriptions: \$2.40 per annum, plus postage (Australasia 40c, Overseas 80c per annum). Single copies mailed: 70c. Subscriptions should be made payable to "The University of Western Australia", and sent directly to The Bursar, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, Western Australia.

Synopses of literary articles published in *Westerly* appear regularly in *Abstracts of English Studies* (published by the American National Council of Teachers of English).



University of Western Australia Press

westerly

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REVIEWS — *B. N. Primrose, Leonard Jolley, Dorothy Hewett*

NO MORE THAN YOU CAN AFFORD

Tom Logan looked up from a long, concentrated stare at the carpet and found his wife's eyes on him, over the top of the morning paper she had been reading; tired, and just far enough above the blur of print for him to see also the shallow mauve troughs of weariness below them. The hazy preoccupation of his mind could hardly have been called thinking, a vaguely mutinous realisation that as he stared at the carpet in his livingroom on the old, familiar earth, the men whose white-toothed, crewcut pictures he had seen on the turned page of the paper his wife held were, even then, shuffling around like immense grubs on the dusty, frozen, unimaginable surface of the moon. No, more than that. Those men were of roughly his own age, physical makeup and mental ability, but while they probed gingerly at what lay outside the wall, in preparation for whatever forays might be made in their wake, he, Tom Logan, had done nothing at all but to establish a firm base for himself inside the pallisade, to marry and beget children in the immemorial pattern of Joe Blow, the yardman at the pub . . . and, if you wanted to take it a bit further, he thought, with a wry grin, by Joe Blow's dog. Not a comforting reflection.

In answer to the unspoken inquiry in his wife's eyes, he lied. He gestured toward the light-and-shadow fleck on the pale umber pile, where the mid-morning sun fell on it through cream lace curtains deprived, for the time being, of their anodized gold venetian protection.

"Remarkably like a camel."

On the previous night they had lain on the livingroom floor, she propped up with cushions, he sprawled like a black starfish on his back, and had listened to most of the recording of *Hamlet* he had bought her for her birthday, a month or so before.

"Or shaped like a weasel", Nesta said. She strung along with him, but tiredly. She was well into the eighth month of pregnancy—her fifth in the fourteen years of their married life—and as usually she had been having a hard time of it. Her ankles, normally no more than a little thicker than normal, were gross, the skin stretched tight and shiny over apparently boneless trunks of lardy flesh, and she was up and down all night to the beautiful old flowered jerry which her mother had resurrected for her from some family glory-hole when she had first began to complain about what she and Tom referred to as the Ord River Irrigation Scheme. He could joke with her about her condition—could make himself joke with her—but as always he was repelled by it, inclined to blame her, even without wanting to, for getting into it. Resentful of the hiatus it caused in their physical and social lives.

"Did you stay up to the bitter end?" she asked. "Last night?"

"No, Ness. I packed up soon after you. You were asleep when I came in, though." His eyes dropped to the carpet again as he spoke, and he said: "What's all this about wall-to-wall? They say it like a sneer, these days. It looks pretty good to me."

"Who says it like a sneer?"

"Julie Syme, for one—and if she's saying it, so's the world. She hasn't had an original idea since she decided to latch onto Joe."

"When did you see Julie Syme?" Nesta demanded suspiciously. "And how in the name of God did the talk get around to wall-to-wall carpet?"

"I didn't, and it didn't. I haven't seen her, let alone spoken to her, for—God, ten years at least. Tony Shaw was talking about her at the club, Wednesday afternoon. Joe had been punishing his ear about her. Joe's youngest sister's getting married, and she was choosing the carpet. According to Joe, Julie told the kid wall-to-wall was for the bookmakers, or something like that. Made the kid howl. You can't blame Joe, even if what they say is true."

"What *who* says is true? And what do they say?"

"Tony Shaw, in the club bar, Wednesday. Joe was there, nineteenth-holing in fine style—the fourth day in a row, Tony said. And when Nancy Rolands left, Tony said: Watch this! And Joe took off after her like a bitch in heat—her, the bitch, not Joe. Tony said they'd been playing boys and girls for a month or more. And apparently Julie's the only one doesn't know about it."

"You think—I hope for Joe's sake he's not banking on *that*!" Nesta raised her eyebrows derisively. "You damn men. I thought you went out to the club to play golf. I can just see you all huddled around in the locker-room, talking about who's sleeping with who."

"An engrossing subject—especially in my line of business. Pays to keep the ear to the ground. Today's golf partner might be tomorrow's client."

"And write all the names on the walls, like in the men's johns?"

"It's nothing to what you see on the walls in ladies'," Tom said.

"When were you ever in a ladies' lavatory?"

"Oh—tons of times. Not lately, though—at Uni. The bloke I used to take English tutes from, there was only a ladies' on his floor—the gent's was down one flight of stairs. So we used to keep watch for each other, and duck in."

"What if there was someone in residence?"

Tom laughed. "We used to check first. We'd sing out: Anyone in there? And if there was, we'd just bake it for a while."

"Carefree Uni. days!" Nesta said. "A good name for a popular song." Her voice was tinged with nostalgia for something she had never had, and with a little spite because she had never had it; not because her parents hadn't been able to afford it, or because she lacked the intelligence, but because of the privileged enclave of her set at the time the "University mob" had still been considered a bit pushy. She was one of the old-family clique, five generations from some middle-class English go-getter with a bit of capital and a lot of cheek who had arrived early—although not in chains—and had so prospered that his grandson had been able to select a spot for himself among the circumscribed gentry of the moribund little capital already stagnating beside its dreaming river. The family fortunes had been established first on farmlands in the south of the State, but more spectacularly, later on, with a livery stable in the city. Hesta's grandfather's tight-lipped acumen, and her father's luck, had midwived the change from horses and buggies to the biggest car agency in the city, and later had added service stations. In the process the image of the city tribe had become somewhat tarnished by its deep immersion in trade, but there remained still the unexpected treasure of more-or-

less ancestral lands and homes at several dismal whistle-stops in the South where, a century and a half before, family properties had been established in the wake of straying cattle, or on some good soak or river, or simply where the exhausted, dusty woman in the bullock dray had been unwilling, or unable, to drag the bellowing children one inch further. Nesta had taken Tom to visit one of these storied pioneer homesteads on their honeymoon—a ruinous but still graceful two-storey farmhouse falling apart around some nice old cedar furniture and exquisite joinery, with a dreadful barn of a kitchen where blizzards of blowflies yearned over the encrusted dogs' bowls on the floor, and butted the perforated-zinc sides of an ancient meat-safe suspended by a chain from a jarrah beam—but hand-adzed—in the ceiling . . . and all presided over by a grimy harridan in a man's felt hat, whose grandfather had built the house, and whose sixty-year-old maiden daughter, whom they didn't ever get to meet at all, hovered like an uneasy draught among the tattered lace curtains at an upstairs window all the time they drank their afternoon tea, gingerly, from chipped Rockingham cups in the rank garden below. Nesta had begun agitating to leave almost as soon as they arrived, and had remained remarkably silent throughout the entire visit: apparently it had been a long time since she had visited Great-Aunt Hollie's. Tom, then a successful young lawyer who didn't know—or care—where any of his grandparents had been born, felt much better about things after the visit. Before his marriage to Nesta, he had lived somewhat in awe of his plump, loving, proper girl's name and background, her forebears in the State's legislative bodies and mentioned quite frequently in its meager historical records of exploration and gentle extermination of the blacks; but even while driving back to the capital, on that day, he had permitted himself the great pleasure of admitting to himself what really he had known for quite a long time—that whatever virtues of virility and resilience had driven the early Summerfords across those miles of malignant, sentinel bush to found the heritage, all had deteriorated, in Nesta's father, into mere squalid acquisitiveness and a sterile pride in name and bank account; and that her mother, never-forgetful great-grand-daughter of a pioneer Greenough horse-breeder whose stock had been the talk of Imperial messes in India a hundred years before, had the look, the smell and the texture of an old bank-note. It was something that engrossed his random thought for some time afterward: that while any number of great European families had flowered in presence and prestige throughout the centuries, and in some cases still dominated the stages prepared for them by their ancestors long before Western Australia was ever heard about, most of the founding families of his own community had dwindled into abject poverty of either estate or blood—or both—in less than two. They had inbred fiercely, of course, tucked away in their outrageous nether end of the world. With nothing but servants, convicts, cousins and aborigines to choose from, it was inevitable—although none at all of the alternatives to the cousins had been entirely passed over. He had never brought the matter up with Nesta, although he had sometimes meant to. In the earlier years of their marriage he had desisted from delicacy, even though, then, she might have laughed, or at least might have discussed it objectively. But all of a sudden, with no mellowing middle-age to their association, she had begun with tragic prematurity to look vaguely like her mother and to sound acutely like her father. He had known for some time, now, that he would never bring it up unless to hurt her or to best her in one of their increasingly frequent brawls: *For Christ's sake, your old man's grandfather was a gin-chaser, wasn't he? or, It's just as well you married a peasant, isn't it? Or our children might have been f . . . albinos?* This probability, even the accusations, had occurred to him long before this morning when he sat in the livingroom with her, making an effort, and

conscious that she too was making an effort, to behave as though no fourteen corrosive years had passed since that visit to Great-Aunt Hollie's.

"I'll say, carefree", he agreed.

"Did you ever sleep with her? Then?" Nesta's diffident, breathless tone informed him, as explicitly as words might have done, that she had been waiting, perhaps for years, for the proper occasion to put the question without seeming to want, over much, to know. "With Julie, I mean?"

"No, I didn't sleep with her, ever", he said, earnestly—and then with a sudden purposeful change to gutter coarseness, because her terrible delicacy enraged him, as ever: "We didn't often do it where we could sleep. But I screwed her plenty—parks, beaches, a few times in the lecture-rooms. Like corned-beef at the boarding-house in those days. Always on. Until she woke up that she was giving away something she could get a good price for."

"Oh, no?" Ordinarily Nesta would have reprimanded him primly for his crudeness, but as she stared back at him now, even though she formed her lips in conventional disapproval, her eyes glittered against their mauve drapes. "Not for money! Did She?"

"Christ, no! Not that I ever heard about, anyway. I never paid her. She was after . . ."

"Little pitchers", Nesta said, pointedly, and when he turned his head, he saw Nella, his elder daughter, standing in the doorway. At twelve, she had her mother's long, coltish legs but his own dark good looks, refined in her case to a rather conventional black-hair-blue-eyes-clear-skin Celtic loveliness which, he hoped, she would grow further into rather than out of, as she got older. His own sister, a beauty at fifteen, had been just another desperately winsome Australian-Irish brunette at twenty-five. Already, particularly when he had been drinking, he had begun to hate the young man who would take his darling away from him, who perhaps even now in some other house in the very same suburb was beginning to feel the urges which would culminate in the dreadful abduction of his daughter away from this house to a bed and to raptures in a world which Tom Logan would orbit like a sputnik, permitted to land only when he got the signal from the controller.

"Hi, lovey", he said. "Where you off to?"

She touched the deep blue skirt of her Girl Guide uniform and smiled at him adoringly. She had a snowy white lanyard clipped to her shoulder with a silver whistle dangling at the end of it, just between her already forming breasts; and the upper sleeve of her right arm was covered with brilliant flashes for cooking and bushcraft, map-reading and sewing and first-aid and half-a-dozen more of the subjects she had been immersed in, it seemed to him, since she had begun to walk. "Get with it, buster", she said, breezily. "Do I look as if I'm going skating?"

"How would I know? You kids wear anything anywhere, these days—jeans to Government House, bikinis to the supermart." He smiled at her. "You OK for dough?"

"Uh-huh. Thanks." She turned to her mother, aging five years in a second; it was something else which intrigued him—that while with him she was still the schoolgirl, with her mother she acted almost as a contemporary. "Mummy—I've waited long enough for Bernie to ring. If . . ."

"Hey", Tom interrupted. His heart had fluttered, almost as if a moth, trapped in his shirtfront, had begun to bumble about. "Who's this Bernie character? Why haven't I heard about him before?"

"Berenice Cohen, smartie", Nella said, articulating the syllables with glasslike purity. She smiled conspiratorially with her mother. "Boys! Who *wants* them?"

To Tom she said, with a resumption of the glassy tone: "She's new at school, and she's my *girl-friend*."

"Plenty of dough?" Tom said. He rubbed his hands and stroked his nose suggestively.

"Oh, Daddy!"

"Come and give us a smooch, then."

The door had hardly closed on the swish of her blue skirt when Nesta got back to Julie Syme.

"You were saying about Julie?"

"Oh—Christ, it wasn't important. I was just going to say that she got what she was after, and quit. She didn't go to the Uni for a degree. She was after a husband in a certain bracket, and she got him. It could have been anyone, but it was Joe."

"You?" Nesta said, and he knew that she had arrived at the nub of her inquiry. "Could it have been you?"

"Maybe—for a while. But I think Joe outranked me. All those ancestral acres and that old home down Dardanup. Like your Aunt Hollie's."

Nesta ignored the dig. "Well", she said, breathlessly. "You've got your damn nerve, telling me I got you on the rebound after *she* ditched you for Joe Syme. Just like that!"

"For Christ's sake, Ness—you asked me. And it was five years before I met you. And she didn't get me, she got Joe."

"*And* a nice lift, too", Nesta said, spitefully. "What was her father—manager of some little chaff-and-grain store out in East Widgiemooltha?"

"Three Springs", Tom corrected her.

"Wherever. Precious little wall-to-wall in those days, and now it's not good enough for her!"

"Maybe she's just matured", Tom said. He counted up to ten, the tip of his tongue pressed against the back of his front teeth. It was Nesta at her worst, looking more like her mother and sounding more like her pudding-faced old man, than he would have thought possible. What the hell if Julie *had* turned it on? Women had been branded for doing it, once, and now they did it as casually as they had their hair set. A damned sight more casually, a lot of them—you had to make a definite appointment for a hair-do. *Good or bad?* he wondered. Julie just happened to be a trail-blazer on the way toward the Nirvana of the Pill. On today's standards, she would be considered as square as the base of the Great Pyramid.

Thinking about the Julie Mason he hadn't thought about for years, he found himself thinking also, with a breathtaking immediacy and more clearly even than he could recall the last time he had made love to Nesta, of what he and that Julie had done in the parks and the lecture rooms he had mentioned—even in the biggest of the parks, it had seemed, just the two of them, with maybe a moon or a mopoke to share it; and then suddenly, with a jolt to his heart that brought tears to his eyes, remembered one particular lecture room on one particular afternoon, twilight, quiet except for shouts from the quadrangle below the windows, and a slammed door, somewhere; still warm with the grassy exhalations of early summer days, and her breath, sweet as a cow's, her hair, the taste of her lipstick, the moist, greasy texture of her closed eyelids as he stared at them in the deepening shadows and quiet; once more, after only two days that had seemed like the Long Vac., the swooning pressure of her breasts against his chest.

"Which brings us back to where we started", he said, crisply. He still stared at the carpet between his feet, knowing that if they didn't return immediately to their customary trapline of domestic banalities, he might reveal something of what he

had just been thinking; of what had been simmering beneath his consciousness for months past, and was at that moment threatening to lip the crater. "What's so terrible about wall-to-wall, all of a sudden?"

"Fashion", Nesta said, delicately adjusting her pace to his. She was far more aware than he realised of what he thought he had kept hidden, but in many ways she was not yet ready for a showdown. She was a relatively uncomplicated woman, fond and mulish, who in the fifteen years of her association with Tom Logan had seen him changed bit-by-bit from follower to leader, and had lacked either the wit or the will to stay a jump ahead, or even to keep level. From aspiring to her world, as he had seemed to during their engagement, he had soon come to regard it as a sort of toyland for grown-up children—or un-grown-up adults—and he made no secret of his opinion of it and the people who shared it with her. The pictures, records, books and whatever he bought for her birthdays and their anniversaries were far beyond her capabilities to understand in any but their simplest aspects; they were really for himself, and she knew it. As he rose in his profession, and among the people related to it, she pursued a perfectly horizontal line of development; inevitably, each year drove a wider wedge between them, until the children were almost their only point of contact outside the bedroom. It was one of the reasons why she continued to let herself fall pregnant, long after most of the women of her set and age had sworn off babies, and even had begun to laugh at her for what they called her old-fashioned sense of duty. In the matter of contraception, as in most things, she had no strong opinions one way or another, but she calculated that she would need Tom for at least another ten years, by which time she would be nearly forty, anyway, and the child about to be born would be well-established, and Tom would be in a position to make the kind of settlement she had in mind. Then, she planned, she would lead him on to disclose what he really thought, and wanted, and even muttered about wildly sometimes, in his sleep.

"Fashion?" he echoed her.

"They talk you into wall-to-wall", she explained, "and then, when everyone's got it, they start a whispering campaign against it. Non-U. Julie Syme's just the sort who'd fall for it."

"Like minis", Tom said. He ignored her crack, to edge further into the safety of the shallows. "Now it's all maxis, and you sure as hell can't let a mini down to a maxi."

"You seem to know a lot about it?"

"I've got a good model to study." He looked directly at her, and smiled—dark, eyes blue as a girl's, with shiny, long lashes, but masculine as a rooster. All she had ever wanted in a man; and suddenly, as she stared back at him, she was suffused with panic to realise that however coldly she might plan for a future without him, he was all she would ever want. Seeing the realisation naked in her eyes, he softened in fondness for her. "By hell, I wanted you last night", he said. "When he was on about the thing that lay between a maid's legs. You know? Wow!"

"A bit impracticable at this stage?"

"Oh—I don't know. Old women used to say—maybe *still* say—that a husband should. Right up to the last week, or so. Feeds the baby, they reckon."

"Good God. I can't imagine how." Nesta's tone was thin with the sort of prissy distaste that drove him wild. "I'll stick to the formula, thank you. And *after* the event."

"Oh, hell . . ." His glance had dropped to the carpet again while she had been speaking, but he jerked it up again sharply at the very end of the leash he had fastened on his hot Irish temper. "I wasn't trying to . . ."

Nesta had raised the paper to her face, and was speaking to him from behind it. "It's the McMorrow auction, today. Why don't you go?"

"That old queen", Tom said, savagely.

"Is he?" Nesta said, without lowering the paper. "I didn't know. But I'd always thought he was some sort of nut."

"That settles him, then. Once you called a bloke a queer, and it was the end. Now it makes no impression—everyone's doing it. You have to say he's some sort of nut, to stop the traffic. It implies just the right degree of decadence. Something with ducks, like."

"He's a distant cousin of mine", Nesta said, with a hint of reproof. She still hadn't lowered the paper.

"Oh, hell! *Old-family*—old queen, then—makes all the difference. But I'd still keep it dark, if I were you."

She rustled the paper. "Anyway, it says: *Gentleman's residence, four bathrooms, four bedrooms . . . dah, dah, dah. Here it is. Quantity genuine Georgian silver, flatware, English and French antique china. Carpets and rugs. Aubusson and Turkish.*" She lowered the paper at last, and looked at him inquiringly. "You might be able to pick up a couple of nice rugs, and get rid of this wall-to-wall drag . . . like Julie Symes. Why don't you go?"

"Where are the kids?" he demanded irritably, stung again by her needless reference to Julie, and by the suspicion that the name he had so thoughtlessly dredged up from the past, and the disclosures he had even more thoughtlessly made about himself and its owner, had already been installed as a staple of Nesta's conversation with him for a long time to come. "I only get one morning home a week, and they shoot off like rockets into the wide blue yonder as if they couldn't stand the sight of me."

"Do you *have* to go to golf every Sunday morning?"

"Do *they* have to be out every *Saturday* morning?"

"Nell's at Guides—you know that. They're arranging a fete for funds for World Health. Terry and Joe are at cricket—they go every Saturday. You know that, too—you enrolled them. And Maudie's at the Learn to Swim class at Crawley. She will be, every Saturday morning, for the next four weeks."

"Huh. Will they be home for lunch?"

"Yes—all of them. One-ish. So why don't you go down to McMorrow's?"

For the first time he really considered her suggestion. The old McMorrow place was on the way to the club, anyway; if there was nothing there, he could push on and spend a couple of hours chewing the fat with the Saturday morning regulars in the bar. "The silver, I might be interested in", he said. "As an investment. It's skyrocketing—they just can't get it. What time does the thing begin?"

"Eleven. You'll be a bit late, most likely miss the first few lots, but . . ."

"Why don't you throw something on and come along?" He knew she would refuse, and knew also that if he had thought for a moment that she would agree, he would never have made the suggestion. "It'd take your mind off things."

"Good God. And have that hobbledehoy mob looking me over and wondering when?" Nesta dropped the paper and presented him with the vinegary face of distaste which he particularly detested, and which he certainly couldn't remember ever having seen before they were married; the cat-crap-under-the-nose-bit, he called it.

"Or who", he cracked, before he could stop himself.

Her fine, arched eyebrows levitated, and for a moment a dull fire of acute dislike, almost of hatred, glowed in her tired eyes. "You really are a bastard", she said.

The auction was already in progress when he arrived at the McMorrow place, perched high on a bluff overlooking one of the most expansive—and most expensive—panoramas on the river. The double-storey new wing in mid-Thirties stucco-and-tile neo-Californian-Spanish loomed incongruously above the lovely proportions of the 125-year-old single-storey settler's homestead, under whose white-painted iron roof, Tom had been told, the original shingles were still sound and dry and ready to serve as when the first McMorrow—the first antipodean McMorrow, that is—had placed them there with his own hands. There were cars parked for hundreds of yards or more on both sides of the streets, in the shade of huge, ancient gumtrees, and the driveway was crammed. As Tom got out of his old black Riley, he was almost stepped on by the shining brown riding-boots of the man who had pulled in behind him in a Silver Wraith Rolls. He looked up. It was Charlie Doughty, an ex-bricklayer who, after the war, had started out as a builder with nothing but his deferred pay, and who by the time he was forty, or so Tom had been told, had been able to sign his name to two million—*before* the change-over to decimal currency.

"Hi, there, Chas", Tom greeted him. "Don't trample me to death with those damn great plates of meat. Where'd you hitch the nag?"

"Bloody bunnrush", Charlie Doughty said. He elbowed Tom in the ribs. "The old poofter certainly did his boy-friends proud, eh? See in the paper, this morning? *Four* bloody bathrooms. Antique silver, Turkish carpets? F . . . me!" He was sporting narrow cream moleskins with his ridingboots, a tan hacking-jacket and a Paisley scarf tucked into a daffodil silk shirt, but his brown cheeks were still hard as grano, and the nails of one of his thumbs and the middle finger of his left hand were irretrievably, undisguisably, gnarled and busted among their manicured and tinted fellows.

"What're you after, then?" Tom demanded. "Or did you just come along to snoop in the halls of vice?"

"Christ, seen plenty 'a them. You should'a been in Singapore with us, last time. In one'a those massage joints. I asked this Jap sheila if she'd give me a French job, and strewth! Almost before I'd got my fly unzipped . . ." They had turned in at the gateway. "Doll wants me to get some of the silver. You know how they get. Ruby glass, then spinning wheels, then nick-nacks, cedar chairs—the lot. Now it's silver, and every cupboard in the joint's crammed already."

"What you get today won't fill any cupboards", Tom said. "You're going to have to fight for it, if it's the silver you want."

"What—Nesta too?"

"No. Me."

"Christ." Charlie Doughty grinned at him. "You didn't used to visit here when the old chap was alive, did you?"

As they walked up the driveway, the old garden enfolded them serenely, quiet, with trellises of old-fashioned roses no longer sold at the nurseries, elephants ears and huge clumps of pampas grass that had weathered the years of disfavour to find themselves, along with old kerosene lamps and buggy wheels, once again high in public esteem; over it all, the steady drone of the auctioneer's voice evoking for just one more morning every single pollen-weary bee that had ever plundered its sun-muzzy oleanders and camellias and drooping golden wattles throughout a hundred summers. As they reached the french-windows leading from the wide, cool verandah into the ground-floor livingroom, which was as far as they could edge in, he was displaying a large china bowl decorated in a riot of blue, magenta and gold. "This superb piece, ladies and gentlemen", he intoned, sensuously, as he spoke, stroking the bulging sides of the tureen. "Davenport Iron early nineteenth century, part of an incomplete service which we're under instructions to sell

piecemeal. You'll observe the gorgeous chinoiserie of the pattern—peonies, phoenixes, the little temple—see?—tucked away among the verdure. A collector's piece, ladies and gentlemen, even divorced from the remainder of the service." He rotated it again, adoring it, for a moment as if forgetting the peasants who would buy it and probably put plastic roses in it. "What can we say for it, to start it off? Fifty dollars?"

The bidding was launched by a woman deep among the press around the fireplace, almost at right-angles to where Tom was standing. Charlie Doughty commented, from the side of his mouth: "Some po, eh?"

"It's magnificent", Tom said. "Not just the look of it, but . . . how in hell does it *survive*? Think. A hundred-and-fifty years ago those big, fat, fox-hunting squires were milling around it, swilling their punch out of it. They're gone, long ago, but it's still here." He stared at the bowl, poised high above the heads of the crowd, like a monstrosity in the reverent hands of the auctioneer. "And I bet there's some technique they don't know about yet, that could bring up their fingerprints on it, too."

"Sorry to stop you in full gallop, cock", Charlie Doughty said. "But it's a soup tureen, not a punch bowl. Doll's got a stack of 'em."

"Well, then, their soup. I'm going after it."

"And I'm going over there to talk to Mollie Love. See you later."

While they had been speaking, the bidding had reached eighty-five dollars, and when Tom moved in the woman by the fireplace had the bid. Within a minute or two, it had resolved itself into a contest between their alternate nods, the woman finally taking it out for a hundred and fifteen dollars.

"To the lady by the fireplace", the auctioneer announced, happily—he had not expected the piece to reach a hundred. "But don't go away, Mr Logan. There's the rest of the service, yet." He turned to the fireplace, smiling archly. "That's if Mrs Symes will let you get off with it."

Surprised into almost undergraduate breathlessness, Tom craned around the bulk of the woman, and between the shifting heads of a score of people saw Julie Syme threading her way toward him. She seemed to have altered little since their last meeting, which had been at a club ball a year after his marriage to Nesta: and, in fact, not much more since he had known her as Julie Mason. She moved with a world of assurance that the bursary girl from Three Springs could never have known, but Joe's money would have seen to that. And to the clothes; the perennial slacks, sweater and sneakers Tom remembered from their association had given way to what he recognised as a Chanel suit, black with white braid, and a coral-and-diamond cluster over the right collarbone. The thick, wavy, sun-bleached, sweet-smelling hair which he recalled was still thick and wavy but not so sun-bleached—although, he could tell by looking at it, just as sweet-smelling. Her makeup was a suggestion, rather than the dogmatic psychedelic statement favoured by every other woman in the room. Her bust was high and firm beneath the cheeky little jacket, her legs slender and smooth below the knee-length skirt, the feet narrow and trim in their spindle-heeled black patent leather shoes. She was suddenly beside him.

"It's . . ." they both said, together, and then laughed. She finished the sentence for both of them. "Been a long time?"

"Sure has", Tom agreed. "We might as well live at the North and South Poles as at the opposite ends of little old Perth."

"Well . . . there's no real reason, is there?" She shrugged, and with one hand, fondled the jewel at her shoulder. "Strange, though, you should bid against me, and I not know. Did you come specially for that piece?"

"No. I just took a fancy for it. Sorry—I must have cost you twenty or thirty bucks?"

"Give the cat another canary. What *did* you come for?"

"Heard you were here."

"Go on."

"The silver. Providing it doesn't go sky-high."

"Console yourself—you've saved a packet. About twenty people came just for that, and they put it up first. The Horrockses from Bunbury bought the lot. They bought themselves some family portraits in Melbourne last time they were there, and now they're shopping for the rest of the deal."

"Still the bitchy little bitch, eh?" Tom grinned at her, and she wrinkled her nose at him. Tom said: "You know, you've scarcely altered at all. It's fantastic." He stared at her again, a long look which became far more searching than he had intended. She returned it, steadily, without embarrassment, and he recalled that whenever Nesta might be paid any similar compliment, she would bridle and curtsy and would finish up by producing, as though it were a pearl, any of a dozen banalities she seemed to have always at the tip of her tongue to suit any occasion. He took a deep breath, and broke their locked gaze by turning to the podium. "You going to buy the rest of the set? If you are, you can have the tureen at your first bid."

"Thanks. But it's too pricey by far."

"Then since the silver's gone, I think I'll go too. Pick up the kids on the way." He held out his hand. "It's been nice seeing you again, Julie. I mean it."

"I'll walk out with you", she said. As she passed in front of him to the door, and he caught the warm scent of her body and her hair, he was appalled, almost, to feel once again, across the otherwise unbridgeable gulf between him and his student days, the insolent, lazy uncurling of desire in the pit of his stomach. The garden still slumbered, but more deeply now in the greater heat and hush of almost noon. The thick curtain of wisteria over the verandah drowned the voices from inside the house. Long folds of gumleaves dripped low to the browning lawns, and several children ran in and out of them in silent exaltation, their mouths opened soundlessly in their ecstatic faces, their brown limbs glistening among the glittering leaves. The throbbing of doves high above reminded Tom Logan of something he couldn't materialise in his mind, something about his own childhood which suffused him with a gentle sadness. Julie laid a hand on his sleeve, and they stopped beside a huge old camellia bush covered with plain, old-fashioned pink blossoms.

"It's sad", she said. "Such a lovely old home, and now—before you can say knife, twenty-storey flats."

"And twenty families get the view instead of one", Tom said. "In any case—what can you do with a place like this, these days?"

"Live in it. Mr McMorrow did. Did you ever meet him?"

"Christ, no", Tom said.

"Don't say it like that. You didn't know him."

"Did you?"

"We used to come here—a few times after we were married. He was a wonderful host. He was civilised. Before his sister died, they used to entertain a lot."

"He used to do quite a bit of entertaining after his sister died . . . hear tell."

"Hear tell. I heard tell enough in there today. It was the main topic of conversation—and you can imagine how it was handled." She picked one of the camellias, and as she held it before her face, he saw that her hands were still slender and brown, the nails warm pink and filed close, no flaky cuticles or ragged lacquer. The hands in which she used to take him, and hold him, without self-

consciousness or mawkishness. Reverently, with love, he thought suddenly, looking at them. As the auctioneer had held the soup tureen. "Love", she said. "That's all he wanted, really. I hope he got it, somehow." She glanced up at him. "Do you ever think of the old days?"

"No. Not really."

"No. I guess not."

"It's a long time ago, Julie."

"So long?"

"That's a lie", he said, knowing that he should not, but saying it, anyway. "But only just. I thought about it today. An hour ago. I thought about that afternoon, late afternoon, in 'C' lecture room, in the Arts building. You said you'd be there, and I came over after cricket practice." He laughed softly, and without embarrassment smiled into her inquiring eyes. "I was thinking how easily we could cram it all in, those days, and bob up for more. Study, cricket practice, parties, love. Do you remember the day?"

"No. We're . . . looking at different sets of pictures. I remember a lot, though."

"You think of it a lot?" he asked, and the ancient serpent in his groin stirred again.

"Off and on. Right now I'm remembering a winter night in the boatshed, cold as charity. Those wet boards!" She shuddered elaborately, but smiled back at him. "Funny. You remember summer, I remember winter. We must have been a steady old couple. A year, anyway."

"It looks as if people are beginning to come out. Maybe it's breaking up in there?"

"You said a funny thing a moment ago. Love. Study, cricket practice, parties and love. Did you love me, or was it just screwing you meant?"

"No", he said. "I meant love. I loved you."

"But not marrying love. Not—" she paused a moment, and looked at him with unassailable honesty. "Not respect? I was too easy?"

"If a man suggested that to me, I'd flatten him", Tom said. "You believe me?" She nodded, and he said: "I don't think I thought of respect, then. It was all of a piece, whatever it was that I felt. I respect you now. I mean, I now respect the person you were then."

"No kid?"

"You were honest. You didn't try to trap me, or to ride me. And it wasn't just all screw-screw-screw. We had fun. Remember?"

"I got engaged to Joe", Julie said. "You and I'd been out the night before, down to City Beach in Colin Forrest's car. And I got engaged to Joe the next day. I thought you'd raise blue murder."

He shrugged. "Like in the song. No tears, no fuss, hooray for us. We were intelligent people."

"Yes—intelligent." She nodded, in agreement with what he had said, or with some thought of her own. Watching her, he couldn't tell. "After all, that's what I went to the Uni for, in the first place—to get a husband with money. I wasn't about to go back to Three Springs. You knew, didn't you?"

"I guess."

"You guess—you canny lawman! I shopped around a bit, too, and you knew that too, didn't you? Then why do you think I picked on Joe?"

"You loved him."

She inclined her head, non-committally. "Spoken like a true Aust. Gent. I married him, anyway. And now . . . I'm going to divorce him." He raised his eyebrows, and she shook her head with a touch of impatience. "Oh, come on!

You must know about it, it's all over the place. Out at the club—Tony Shaw would know, for one. He and Joe are thick as thieves.”

“Nobody has mentioned divorce. Tony mentioned that Joe was sleeping around.”

“Six times a week and twice on Sundays”, she said. “And I guess you think I’ve been, too. As the twig is bent, eh?”

“I told you, Julie. I’ve never thought about it at all.”

“I haven’t”, she said. “Not one God-forsaken time. Because of his mother, if you’ll believe me. I started out hating the old bat. Joe had taken me home a couple of times—to the town house—and she could see how things were between us—bedwise, I mean. So on the third visit she said, very gaily, girl-to-girl: ‘Of course you wouldn’t think of *marrying* Joe, a nice girl like you. He’s such a reakhelly young man.’ Which in rough translation would mean: ‘Stick with the chaff-and-grain, kid. You’re OK as a hack, but not as a brood-mare.’ So of course I was more determined than ever that if things fell out my way, I’d hook Joe . . . and he wasn’t such a bad sort in those days, either. When we *were* married—icicles formed on the ceiling then, I can assure you—I decided she’d never have the chance to say ‘I told you so’. After a year or two, I got to know her, and she got to know me . . . they’re not all inbred morons, Tom. Joe’s behaviour before and after our marriage crucified the old girl, and when the kids came along, she moved more and more into my camp. We’re good friends, now, and I’m as glad for her sake as I am for my own that I didn’t do what she expected me to do—and, to be perfectly frank, what I expected myself to do, too. I’ve been what you might call an exemplary wife and mother—if I say it myself that didn’t ought to.”

“How does the old girl feel about the divorce?”

“Advised me to get it—began advising me years ago.”

“Then why did you hang on so long?”

“The kids”, she said, simply. “But they’re grown, now, both of them. The girl was married this year. The boy . . . he can take care of himself.”

“But . . . a daughter, *married*? We’re about the same age, aren’t we?”

“I started seven years before you—remember?” She dropped the ruined camellia, and stood with her hands still at her sides, looking straight into his eyes. “I’ll level with you, Tom. You’re the only one I loved, use any definition you like. The only one I ever loved, and I think the only one I will ever love.”

“Then why did you do it?” Tom shouted at her, in a whisper she could hardly hear: the question he had been too proud to ask then, and which had rattled around in his head ever since. “Why, why? Why *Joe*? Jesus, only the night before . . .”

“You never asked me”, Julie said, evenly. “It’d been a year, and you never said a word.” She reached out and took his hands, and for a moment was so close to him that he could see plainly the grey in her fair hair, and the tiny lines at the corners of her eyes. She had the same clean smell, and her hands were firm and cool. “I’m going to be available again, Tom”, she said. “You want to, don’t you?”

The still warmth of the garden was the still warmth of the lecture room, which he had remembered, but she had forgotten. His heart kicked viciously against the side of his chest, and after a moment he began to nod in time to its almost suffocating beat.

“But I can’t”, he said. “My kids are still kids, Julie.”

She dropped his hands. “I see your point”, she said, gravely. She turned away from his gaze and looked at the house. “People *are* beginning to come out. Good-bye, Tom.”

When he got home, Nesta was still sitting in the livingroom in her housecoat. There was a smell of lunch cooking, and the television was on. Maud, his youngest daughter, was squatting in front of it, her dark hair still damp from her swim. When he came in, she scrambled to her feet and ran to him.

“Daddy! I *dived* today. Off the *third* step”

Nesta looked expectantly at his empty hands, and then into his face. “You didn’t see anything you liked?”

“Nothing I could afford”, Tom Logan said.

BEACH POEM FOR J. G. BALLARD

HOTELS ARE WHITE ABOVE THE SAND
STANDING IN A CRYSTAL LAND
WHILE BLACK-GREEN NIGHT HOLDS UP ITS HAND
ACROSS THE EMERALD BEACH.

WOMEN WITH LEONINE FACES
WATCH THE DOCTORS RUNNING RACES.
SHADOWS LINGER IN THE PLACES
WHERE HUNCHBACKS' FINGERS REACH.

SNAKES WITHOUT BRAIN-CASES ROAR
STARLIT GREEN AS LEPERS CLAW
AT THE DOCTORS ON THE SHORE
WHO NO-ONE HOPES TO TEACH.

HIROSHIMA TAKE-OFF CHECKS
BLOW BETWEEN THE PILED-UP WRECKS
AND NAKED GIRLS RESOLVE TO SPECKS
ON GEODESIC STONE.

PALMS ARE SHAKING WITH GREEN LIGHT
ABOVE THE SNAKES BRIGHT BIRDS TAKE FLIGHT
AND WAR-DEAD SIT UP THROUGH THE NIGHT
ALL MADE OF BONE.

GREY KAFKA CLERKS IN PONTIACS
PURSUE ALL OVER SAND-REEF TRACKS
BUT FROM THE EAST THE SONIC CRACKS
STILL LEAVE THE BEACH ALONE.

GIRLS WITH DEEPS OF RUNES FOR EYES
SEE VAPOUR TRAILS IN WESTERN SKIES
WHERE HIGHER THAN A BOEING FLIES
DEAD ASTRONAUTS ARE BURNING.

CHESSMEN MADE OF CARBON-STEEL
ARE LINED BEFORE A TURNING WHEEL
WHERE INTERSECTING HUMANS FEEL
WITHOUT A HOPE OF LEARNING.

LANDING CRAFT WITH WHITE-HAIRED SLAVES
PASS THE SHIP WHERE AHAB RAVES.
UNDER ALL THE GREEN-LIT WAVES
CRO-MAGNARD BONES ARE CHURNING

HAL COLEBATCH

THE WATERTIGHT VW

Having been left flaked out after New Year's Eve in the VW, and feeling the next morning no physical discomfiture ascribable to the car, he reconciled himself to spending another night in it by remembering that previous one. But his memories curled backwards from that oblivion to its preceding hours, to watching Helen's eyes bright against her now sun browned skin, as in the huge pub the Irish cane-cutters sang mournful ballads in one corner, and the Scots replied in the other, expatriates who had been cutting cane, if they were to be believed, for fifty years; and still remembered their distinct celtic traditions. Though they did all combine for the Wild Colonial Boy, which Helen pointed out to him smiling they sang in the American version. Whoever heard of a prairie in Oz? But he was less concerned with the authenticity of the idioms, than of her emotions which she hid behind her smiling eyes, her light ironies, that protected her when Andrew and Pat went off for cigarettes or money or something. He regretted that he had respected the protection, that he had not capitalised on their being left together. It was her very carelessness that protected her. Had she erected defences, he could have worked round them, held on to them as guides, levers. But she erected nothing; except that irony that might have been a defence, or a derision at the lack of attack. So that her emotions were always hidden. And now it was he who was hiding, defended in the VW, from seeing, from hearing, from being touched in the still night, by her proximity to Andrew, who was now thrusting himself into her carelessness. Andrew no doubt was grateful for his hiding now, but expressed gratitude for nothing; if anyone, it would be Helen who would be grateful, who would thank him for his discretion in a silence at some mid-day drink, to silence them all the more. He lay crosswise on the back seat, as when, tired after stretches of driving, he had lain half sleeping with his head in Helen's lap, wanting to touch her, to reach his arms round her; all the while conscious of Andrew and Pat and the driving mirror, afraid his movements, her likely rebuff, would be conspicuous. He wondered now whether she would have stirred herself to any rebuff. But he had wondered then whether it had just been her youthful kindness still residual, or her naivety, or her inability to refuse something so natural; and in the context of their joint wish for safe driving it might have seemed natural that he should have been enabled so to sleep. Supported by no lap, he tucked his head down into the angle of the seat to keep out the light, for the night was not totally blackened despite the threat of the rains. He didn't really believe the rains would break, but he had used the chance as a pretext for sleeping in the car away from them all, just as Andrew and Helen had used it for sleeping in the hitherto unused tent. Pat decided to chance the rains, but to dive for the tent should they come. And as the tent took only three, he was

left the choice of sleeping out altogether, or of taking the car. He knew he could not sleep in the tent unless it did rain, what reason would there be? And if it did rain, he preferred to let Pat have that privilege, let her be kept awake by their joint breathing. He did not believe the rains would break. But he could not bear to sleep on the sand. He preferred to encapsulate himself in the VW, away from them. Though if the rains did break, he would not be sorry, for then they would have to drive south and curtail the trip. He should have acted on New Year's Eve, like the one-handed cane-cutter who had proposed to her; and he had acted after all, dancing with her and with his lips against her ear begun to whisper he loved her or to kiss her until some Queenslander had seized his shoulder and said we don't want that sort of thing here and stopped him. While the one-handed cane-cutter was stopped by nothing, and would thrust his severed stump at everyone for them to shake, as a mark of fraternity, that he was no different. Life will be hard, he said, in a European accent, it will be hard, and a struggle at first, but soon we will have sufficient to retire and I will cherish you and build you a house with my own single hand and we will live in absolute love, and she had smiled at him and never refused him and had let him lay his handless arm about her shoulders and tell her of his life, his history, his aspirations, and the house they would have with mangoes and bananas and coconuts and peaches all around them shedding their fruit into her lap, while his good hand would pluck up scaly pineapples and rich fresh sugar cane. And they would live amongst those raw red fields, tracks scored through the thick cane like powdered blood, in that ceaseless sun. And they could have fitted an iron claw.

He lowered one of the windows, momentarily fearful of dying of suffocation; but not too much, lest sounds should become distinct, like all those past nights waiting for sleep on the beaches, hearing the scratch and rustle of air-mattresses grazing the sand, the pregnant indications that Andrew and Helen were awake, waiting perhaps for him to fall asleep and so move their single sheeted beds adjacent, or move to share one. It was like a game of noughts and crosses that he could never win; for no matter who moved first, with only three of them Andrew could always lie one side of Helen. While Pat slept distant, her camp bed—and she alone bothered to erect one—tied to the VW's over-ride, lest an alligator tried to tear her away, or marauders steal the car. He would not again lie there tense lest they should decide to ignore him, sleep or wake, and choose to sleep together; tense at the lost possibility that he should have moved decisively to her, inaugurating himself, may be, the shifting of the lilos, on that night when they had both woken up, the moon bright, whitening the spreading duned sand and shadowing the sparse crops of frizzy scrub. Distantly they had heard voices, tramping feet, and both had lain rigid, frightened in their exposure on that low emptiness. And a huge solitary bird had crossed the sky, its soughing wings shadowing them, the slow beat of its huge span frightening. And knowing she was awake—his body so tense, so taut, vibrating to each sound or change—he spoke whisperingly to her. But should have moved alongside, close alongside her, against her, to share their fear on that huge empty beach, always deserted, so marauded by sharks. But here, now furthest north they had reached, the reef provided its shelter and there were no sharks, no sound pounding him asleep, just the soft susurrous of the lapping water, the quiet crackle of a breeze in the eucalypts, trickling through the full-laden humidity.

The rain flung on the car first woke him, a staccato scatter like machine-gun fire, merging with his vanishing dream of being beside her when the distant voices passed over the dunes to open fire on them so that, together, they were discovered and mown down. But waking she had dissolved like the bullets and he was as alone as ever in the car, the night dark with the pouring rain beating now on the car roof, streaming down the windows, the wind howling as it caught amongst the

trees, the dull thump as coconuts dashed to the beach. And even so he was not fully awake, but warm in the encased dry darkness, untouched by the great release of the rains and not comprehending its import.

His isolation was rent open by Pat, seizing angrily the door handle, grating out as ever her Jeez, as she struggled to throw parts of the half dismantled camp bed into the dry car, Jeez I can't see the rotten tent, the bastards must have blown away, her hair, her sewn up cotton sheet sleeping bag blowing and swirling in the rain and wind as she tried to force everything in. He sat up. And when she bent over to step into the back seat, the roof light, come on from the door's being open, shone, her loose top hanging free, on her breasts, naked, firm, full. And he had not, hitherto, thought of her in the context in which he had before seen, thought of, naked breasts, and it had been so long, it seemed, since he had seen any nakedness, had been close to any girl; and now, he wondered, should he reach out above and through the loose neck to touch them, or put his arm around her to fondle them. And he felt sure, he felt, that she would be willing, would welcome his hands, his discovery, the door closed now, the car darkened, outside the rain streaking into the ground in lines as long and firm and harsh and cutting as the fields of cane, and the thump of coconuts blown crashing to the beach. For not only he felt would she welcome some gesture of interest from him, but he was sure she too felt excluded by the patent sexuality of the other two, missing now, missing while the rain rammed rods into the ground, pitted funnels into the easily parted sand, funnels that filled and spread and merged and dissolved. But he held off touching her for he could not superimpose the image of Helen on his conceptual embrace; nor could he lose the image and be content with another. Not, anyway, with Pat for whom he had felt no response on the ten days drive; and the ten unresponsive days discouraged response now, a response now, he felt, that could only be aberrant, indeed, that had to be aberrant, or days had been wasted. He could not agree to wipe them off like that. He simulated a sort of sleep to discourage Pat from speaking. He did not want her to speculate with him about where they were, why they delayed, why they chose to remain outside in the teeming rain.

He could not tell how long it was before Helen suddenly opened the door, unseen, unheard, in the black howling night until she opened the door, her hair plastered down making her head larger, her skull bonier. But her eyes were bright, hot, as if they would steam when splashed by the pouring rain that did indeed splash bouncing upwards from its impact on the sand, the trees, the car. But their brightness expressed nothing new, shone with the same smiling glaze of impenetrability. He looked, watching he suddenly found himself, for a glimpse of her nakedness, but though she reached over to click on the light permanently, her sweater was too high, though sodden it clung tight against her breasts, outlined surely her nipples firmed with excitement. Jeez what are you doing, Pat shrieked above the wind, for the door not shut at once was letting in gouts of rain. Emptying my shoes, Helen said. And shut it. But she could only before have been fucking Andrew, this the first night they had not been slept round by others, the only night alone in the tent. And his wondering whether they had indeed begun before the rain poured down, was already answered by his realization that they could only have delayed, in that downpour, that time after Pat's arrival, for one reason, their naked bodies sluiced round by sharp rain, carelessly naked in it as their tent broke away. Which she claimed she had been helping recover. And which Andrew was now struggling with. Ian sniffed, silently, as if dog like he could detect the mingled odours of her and Andrew. And his thoughts of Pat were gone, forgotten. But he could sniff only damp wool, damp cotton, damp hair, which she combed, to employ the released, the perhaps interrupted, energies.

Andrew came with surely a smirk glimmered till he switched off the light, a

damp smell of self satisfaction. But his voice had an edginess, a nervousness, responsive to the knowledge, the hostility of Ian and Pat. The tent had blown along the beach but he had caught it, he said, settling himself into the driving seat heavily, solidly and, it seemed to Ian and Pat, with his heavy thighs assertively; neglecting the fact of his discomfort, impeded from sleeping readily by pedals and wheel, that should have given them satisfaction. But they took no satisfaction, only watched for his hand to steal across to Helen's, to rest on her thigh or lie on her breasts. The dampness filled the car with its cloying stale woollen smell, like wet dog, the rain pounded on the roof as if it would chip the enamel. Ian looked in the windscreen for a reflection of her eyes, but there was no light. Just the stifling damp-laden exudation of their bodies, the noisy breathing as they sat cramped. He could not sleep, the air too stuffy, the proximity too noisy, and his stomach sick with agitation at Helen's loss. He thought of thinking of Pat, but in the cramped car, such thoughts were futile. He could not even masturbate with them all there. He could hope only that the rain had interrupted them, lost them their fulfilment. He closed his eyes, though it made no difference whether they remained open or were closed, and decided to fantasize what he would do when he returned to town, but could not glide over the five inevitable nights to pass on the drive back. Five nights of Helen lost to him, her loss so present. He wondered if the rains might come down so quickly as to flood the beach into the sea, and drift the VW, which was advertised as water-tight, away towards the barrier reef, and beyond.

TERMINUS

Beatrice Hefner, dream with me of my infernal
paradise for two; you and I in our lapin
lined bath, filled to the ears with soft warm
seawater. And you will read to me from Eliot
or else we'll soak up pregnant silences
in our burrow warmed by boiling oil. You
like a strange black flower sit by
the fire, your feet snug and dry in their fur
collared slippers. Few of us at this time have
strange black flowers dying in the lounge room.

Down the hill in Highbury Road, the automatic
drove itself. I could see up the next rise
a patch of grey lifting the drab red and green
surround of suburbia. At closer range,
the graveyard disintegrated to separate unkempt
plots, memorials to monumental masons,
with dead flowers drooping in dried out preserve
bottles. Like love, they were once fresh
but they fade and fall away, naturally.

Eyes close to watch Aphrodite wading from
the sea of flowers, impatient for the cress
to fall from her hips, to watch the plunging
thighs lift and show me the strange black flower.
Then you speak; speaking with you is like
reading T. S. Eliot slipped between the
centrefold of Playboy Magazine.

LEON SLADE

ALMOND HILL

Once almonds here,
after the soft brown speakers passed,
sang in the book a first page, and a last,
fled to the fading evening gullies
and the cliff.

Were almonds once,
long acres, breathing late July
white to the clouds and wind,
drifting like snow, inspiring greenness
in small shy leaves, from the August air.

Here now stretch Acorn Street
and bare straight avenues up the hill;
feature windows flashing back the sun;
stepping-stone lawns and driveways
bright and black with oil.

Along the fretwork spine and ribs
of regimental backyards, here and there
a knotted stump survives, behind a shed
or, in a clutch of packing cases,
seeks the sun.

Here once the almonds
hailed in petalled snowbursts coming spring.
These stumps, forgotten relics, brown with loss,
climb the air with supple fingers, green
and whole with life.

But where the men,
the soft brown walkers, paused and sang,
no blood sings forth, no bones grow old.
Late on this subdivided hillside strikes
a sunset cold.

JOHN GRIFFIN

WAITING: WARD 7

It all runs down to this—
From X-rays and warm hours
in Pix-Peopled waiting rooms;
from shadows and the ready beds
for spring planting; the firewood
tumbled in chaos in the shed;
from stencils for my class, work
for a month or more; and a desk
bare-free for shining, with no piles
of futures waiting for a past.

It all runs down to this—
the breakfast trolley's white steel loom
outside; the slipper-sly passing
of white-capped angled heads, quick
in my mirror's corner, soon and lost;
the cleaning away
of things I want about me, books and pen;
and rails that track the ceiling, running shrouds
of white, whipped secret for shaving
and enema. Comes to this.

Art Koch, from Cummins, twists and coughs.
Low clouds whisper and chase, their haste
to be lost in the sea of the mountains.
Gladioli arch and rub
their stiff backs on the day; below,
the thick plunge of proteas, and the wounds
of blood carnations gasping at the air.

I am a waiting morning.
I have run down to this.

JOHN GRIFFIN

TO HORACE

“How sweet and fit, for fatherland to die —”
Your bland official voice,
Horace, charms half-truth to a double lie
That still bemuses boys.

It's not (to start with) pure self-sacrifice
That's laid down in the drill:
In Father Caesar's service that's a vice—
True Virtue means to kill.

And, come to that, it's never sweet to fall
With metal in your guts:
It smells, and hurts—sweeter far from it all
To tumble girls in huts;

For fathering the country, fitter too,
Since Nature made that wound
And tooled the weapon fittingly, as you,
Friend Horace, must have found

After you dropped all causes with your shield
And sensibly kept warm
With loyal odes far from Philippi's field
On your snug Sabine farm

Where you sincerely celebrated wine,
Love, fireside—as to war,
You praised the patriotic death divine
And broached another jar.

D. J. LAKE

PROGRESS

It seems among the old Romans, palace pools
Of fish, flower gardens crowding out the plough
And shade trees ousting fruit, gave much offence:
We've changed things now.

No more do myrtles occupy good land;
The olive is not uprooted for the bay;
No mullet-ponds where wheat grew would offend
Horace today.

For laurel trellises, we've concrete towers;
For perfume gardens, factory chimneys;
Oil rigs, not villas, insolently thrust
Into our seas.

And in the court of our most worshipped lord
We plant no plane-trees; Horace might have his wish:
In Pluton's modern fanes the radiant pools
Will breed no fish.

See Horace, *Odes* II. 15 & 18

D. J. LAKE

VERANDAH

adept if careful,
we can still enjoy
our lax mythology of jazz:
its careless power
in skilful indoor fragments floats
unorthodox & comforting:
so dry against the darkness,
fighting
that cinematic subtlety of sky

(the spray eroded fences stretching
from here to the blond dunes are hiding
the gardens of the moneyed & the aged.)

night separates
in skeins from its weave
every whisper
& the doorglass dusks, nervy
with wind-woken lace

blackly,
the trees mirror rain
the skin
thins with cold,
the pulse
is blunt, uneasy,
real

(but homelight
still offers
its cleanest, apple taste
is cosy
with the dangerous charm of any
door opened slowly
by day, by accident)

from the raw ribs of the bay
a soft
but feral stormwind purrs
at our arms for harbour, sly.
despite the carpet,
our footsteps scrape like thirst.

(cold colours open
along our faces
intricate
with speaking:
the empty lighthouse—
automatic, dying—gleams/
gleams, remote as venus, on our eyes.)

J. MAIDEN

THE LAST RESORT

No sunbronzed australians, still once a year we leave our customary environs for a fortnight at a seaside resort, away from it all. But most of it all is there in the flat we take with the addition of sand and an increase in the number of neighbours.

Days are spent stretched on the sand, shopping in the resort's annual business peak or extending our wanderings by motor car. At night, we watch television or, when that's not part of the deal, reading or listening to that old novelty, the radio.

At ten we flop into bed, exhausted by the unaccustomed exercise, the mythical sea air or the absolute boredom of it all. The strange surrounds, the hard pillow, the night noises keep us tossing. The people above have many children. Apparently they never go to bed. At any minute the ceiling must give way. They are running races or practicing jumps from their beds onto the floor or shifting the furniture. They do it all day but the night amplifies it. Occasionally there is a hiatus. Then the lone mosquito comes to us for comfort. One of us gets up to go to the toilet. Strangely we fall asleep. But the night noises, the unloved mosquito, the calls of nature break up the night, so that we pray for the short interval of day to give us some relief.

It is overcast today, so we leave the bayside beach behind and head across the peninsula towards an ocean beach. The highway runs almost along the bayside beach, yet from the moment we first leave the highway, heading across country from sea to sea, the traffic, the hurly burly of the holiday making business disappears. The road narrows. Sand edges each side of us, encroaching here and there, savagely gentle, onto the road. Cornering, I ease as I see the skid marks of other vehicles in the sand spread more noticeably at the bends. About us a wilderness of sandhills drifting into the distance covered by dirty looking dried grass tussocks and bloated sponge green scrub. Very occasionally, a shack leans on its piles of sand and everywhere estate agents' boards or handpainted notices invite us to invest in this 'Ocean Estate'. One desperate bid offers us no interest, no deposit.

I told you I am no sunbronzed Australian but all the same this day, for some unaccountable reason, I am in my relatively new, relatively brief swim suit on the beach. I have been sunbaking for half an hour and the flies have driven me almost crazy. I get to my feet and start wading. If one were a swimmer one would not

be here. The water is only inches deep a hundred yards from the shore. At last my knees are wet. Mercifully the flies have stayed on shore and, as I turn to face the beach, the seawater gently lapping the backs of my thighs, the sandbathers look like so many flies themselves. Some solitary, others in little clusters along the ranks of black-weed-edged-sand.

Tonight they have taken their myriad children out into the open area in front of the flat. Someone has set up a barbecue. First the smell of methylated spirits and burning driftwood floats through our panoramic windows. Children shout, squeal, throw their balls perilously close to those same windows. One bounces off the windscreen of our parked car. Then the fire dies down, the smoke gradually clears. We open our door for some air. Now the meat is thrown onto the griller. The smell floats in. We curse tolerantly to ourselves.

I see her start from the shore and she starts splashing out towards me. I watch her, expecting her to veer away to swim or paddle on her own, but she comes on towards me. She is suntanned deeply but with a slight red aura, fresh from today's sunbake. Her brief bikini is no match for her ample body. She is not a teenager nor is she built in the fashion of the day. She is reminiscent of Venus, Venus emerging from the sea. Rich, ripe, round Venus. Within ten yards of me she stops, stoops and splashes herself with handscoops of saltspray. It is too much for me. Big as a sperm whale, my trunks become uncomfortable. She won't go away, I can't go back to the shore with the rest of the flies. I back out into deeper water till it reaches my waist and, as she bubbles and bobs, I turn my back.

I glance in my rear-vision mirror. Behind me is a Holden about five car lengths off. It is the same model as mine. It is a pale sick green, mine is a deep shit brown. I glance at the speedometer. We are doing fifty miles an hour, only easing on the sandspread bends. Sick green keeps its distance. There are six people in it. Nowadays we hear much of the unisex look. Unifolks would be a better description of its adherents. Blue denim trousers and sometimes a blue denim jacket over a navy tee-shirt. Long hair, pimples, hard eyes. Six unifolk behind us in a sick green Holden. Sick green's headlamps suddenly switch on. Why I wonder. We pass the turn off to the ocean beach I was heading for. Lit sick green is still there. The road narrows, the sand encroaches more and more. Another notice pointing to an ocean beach whips by. Lit sick green remains. A fork in the road and we swing left and so does sick green. The road rises, we top the crest and the road fades into an infinity of dunes. I brake gently, put her into park and get out. I walk slowly around the car, check my tyres, the petrol cap, the lights front and back. Then I remember sick green, but he she or it is not there, has gone.

Finally it is ended. We've got it over with, we're heading home. I've our car up to the concrete apron outside the flat door. So we start to load our holiday impedimenta. The suitcases go in the boot, the half-consumed groceries, my typewriter and wireless are on the back seat draped with sheets, towels and the clothes we couldn't or wouldn't put in the suitcases. Our noisy neighbours are leaving too. They have backed up their two identical American station sedans. Doors are banging, children shouting as we drive away from it all.

THE DESIGNER

He's angry with his exercises
bored by banalities of the company song
sick of suggestion boxes, he's
scribbling words all over his design
breaking his pencil
throwing it on the floor, he's
running frantically down two miles
of people at machines.

Entering the control room
passing through distorting mirrors
he begins to laugh savagely
then more controlled.
He knows he's different from the rest
for he won't need to bash the dummy of the boss.
After all, he planned the room.

GRAHAM ROWLANDS

SERIAL NUMBER: 05/ztm

no words echo
in the test tube's
intricate landscape
to
trace each photon
caught for a silent eternity
between sandgrains
and the salt-white sun

and
(see the pink enamel flake
from the cheeks
of your forgotten children

in attics
where a million
greygold moths
tremble in the
remaining light . . .

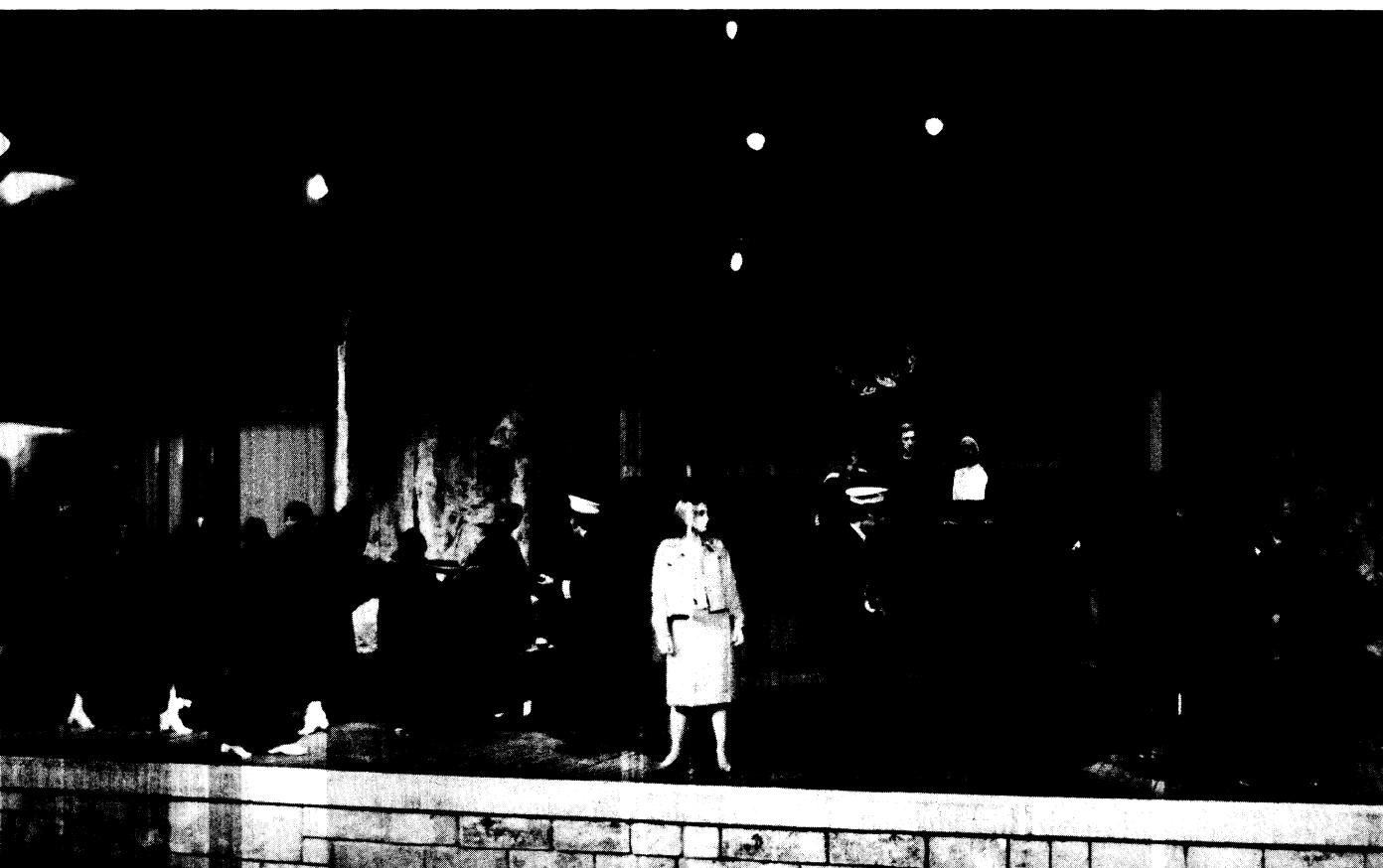
like a cloud.
or
like
a continuous flutter
of false eyelashes)

then the dream of our ancestors
dissolves

& we
stare
at
eachother . strangely .

J. JENKINS





Dorothy Hewett

“THE CHAPEL PERILOUS”

THE TRIAL SCENE — ACT II

“The Chapel Perilous” is set in a provincial Australian city between the years 1939-1985.

It chronicles the search for a personal identity of Sally Banner, from rebellious adolescence till death.

Throughout the play the set consists of three highly stylized judging figures, the Headmistress, the Canon, and the Anglican Sister, seated at three rostrums beside a central altar.

Behind these Authority Figures, a chapel tower with a stained glass window made in Sally’s image and likeness, dominates the stage.

In the following scene Sally, nearing forty, faces her past and her future in a symbolic trial, where old lovers, parents, actions and beliefs bear witness against her.

David and Michael are both former lovers, Judith was her schoolgirl love, Saul is the political leader who influenced her youth. The playing of multiple roles by the three Authority Figures is intentional.

All characters in this play are wholly imaginary and have no reference whatsoever to actual people. However any resemblances to the notorious Petrov Trial are intentional.

THE TRIAL SCENE

CANON . . . HEADMISTRESS . . . SISTER polka out from behind stylized Authority Figures. They sing and caper about the stage, the Canon and Headmistress together, the Sister solo.

MUSIC: “Let’s all Dance the Polka”

Let’s all dance the polka,
With Stalin and Gomulka,
Stuff your wig up your thingamejig,
Arse up with care.

Sold me soul for brandy,
And rode outback on Andy,
Flogged me ol’ wig for twenty quid,
Stuff all the nation.

Jiggerup, pokerup,
Way down in Widgiemooltha,
I'm mounted on the squatter's wife,
One, two, three sir.

Let's all dance the polka,
With Stalin and Gomulka,
Stuff your wig up your thingamejig,
Arse up with care.

Enter Chorus in black cloaks and balaclavas, gambolling, flapping, anonymous . . . they take up positions massed on either side of stage. Authority Figures take up positions behind altar, pound with gavels.

AUTHORITY FIGS: We de-clare this . . . Royal Comm-iss-ion o-pen, and we call

CHORUS: Who do they call? Who do they call?

(whispering) Sally Banner . . . Sally Banner . . .

WHO? (loud roar)

SALLY BANNER.

VOICES OVER AMP: SALLY BANNER . . . SALLY BANNER . . . SALLY BANNER

CHORUS sing and polka round stage. Enter Sally, led by two policemen. She moves as if sleep-walking, and confronts the three Judges. Policemen take up positions on either side.

MISTRESS: Sally Banner what would your parents think?

CANON: Look out for number one, that's my advice. (Bangs gavel)

SISTER: Sally Banner you are charged that on the fourth day of the fifth month at six o'clock in the afternoon . . .

CANON: On June 5th, 1949, you met a man in a brown hat carrying a black briefcase.

MISTRESS: I thought she had a rendezvous in the Botanic Gardens at six o'clock on an afternoon in June under Governor Phillip's statue.

SISTER: No, no . . . it was on the sixteenth on the Friday evening at half past seven she met at Queanbeyan in the vicinity of Young's store at eight o'clock at night. There's the receipt.

MISTRESS: Where's the receipt?

CANON: She received 2,500 pounds and regards from Sadovnikov.

MISTRESS: And Paknananov.

SISTER: She sold her soul for six bottles of brandy . . .

CANON: and twenty quid . . .

SALLY: . . . I never.

MISTRESS: You never have?

SALLY: No, never . . .

CANON: Why not?

MISTRESS: Answer the question.

SISTER: Surely the Commission should have the support of all loyal Australians?

CANON: No reliance can be placed on HER evidence.

SISTER: She has violently opposed the Commission.

MISTRESS: Do you remember the eighteenth of October . . .

SISTER: The twentieth of December . . .

MISTRESS: The second of January . . .

CANON: The first of August?

SISTER: What day of the week was that?

SALLY: That would be Sunday.

CANON: And do you remember the preceding day?

SALLY: Yes, on the Saturday.
 MISTRESS: All day?
 SALLY: All day.
 SISTER: On the sixteenth.
 SALLY (exasperated): On the sixteenth on the Friday evening at half past seven ...
 CANON: Stop making speeches.
 MISTRESS: And answer the question.
 CANON: An extraordinary exhibition of truculence, evasion and lying.
 ALL: GUILTY ... GUILTY ... GUILTY ... GUILTY ...
(Canon bangs with Gavel)
 CANON: Order in the court. If there are more demonstrations of this nature I will be delighted.
 SALLY: I object.
 SISTER: I object to you.
 CANON: Objection sustained.
 SALLY: There is no justice.
 SISTER: This is not a court of Justice.
 MISTRESS: This is a court of law.
 CANON: I wish to cross-examine the prisoner ...
 ALL: Cross-examine the prisoner.
 CANON: Are you now or have you ever been a member of any political party?
 SISTER: Did you ever discuss Communism with your sister?
 MISTRESS: Do other members of your family share your political view?
 CANON: Were you active on the Democratic Rights Council, a shareholder in the People's Publishing and Printing Association.
 SISTER: Did you in fact join the Australian Society for Scientific Research, the Legion of Christian Youth, the Australian Russian Society, the Christian Socialist Movement ...
 MISTRESS: The Australia-China Society, the Council for Civil Liberties, the Housewives' Association, The Australian Arts Council, Sheepskins for Russia, Soviet House, The Civil Rights Defence League, The Russian Social Club to disseminate the communist faith and propaganda?
 CANON: Are you a member of the CP, are you sure? When did you cease to be, did you join the CP, in short you joined the CP.
 SISTER: This inquiry must not restrain or suppress freedom of thought.
 MISTRESS: This inquiry will not be used maliciously to smear any person's reputation ... *(Exit Mistress)*
 CANON: Did you know of it, what did you know of it? Have you ever been to Marx House?
 ALL: GUILTY ... GUILTY ... GUILTY.
 CANON: She has a scandalous reputation. In all my years on the bench I have never had a more disgusting, a more depraved, a juicier, dirtier ... kiss me ... kiss me ... kiss me ...
 KISS ME HARDER ...
 SISTER: Hide your eyes, hide your eyes, hide your eyes.
 CANON: Ahem! Call the first witness. *(Exit Canon)*
 ALL: First witness.
 MOTHER (coming forward): Sally say after me, make the tea, mop up the blood-stains. Write 100 times "I must not tell lies against my mother".
 ALL: Sally say after me.
 SALLY: I must not tell lies against my mother ... I must ... I must not ... Mother, Mother a man is exposing himself under the black horsehair sofa; Mother, Mother the sun's going down, there's a madman rattling the long French

doors in the bedroom, the wind shakes and shakes, the knob comes off in my hand... MOTHER... MOTHER.

MOTHER: She's got such a remarkable imagination my Sally. (*Exit behind mask*)

SISTER: Call the second witness.

ALL: Second witness.

MUSIC: "Fred Carno's Army"

FATHER (comes out from behind Canon mask... in white transparent veil): Sally, say after me, two and two make four, four and four make nine, God Save the King and forget me not.

SALLY: God save me and forget you not.

FATHER: There's a low bed in the earth for the world's cold; Sally, say after me...

Come through the glass Sally
Come through the glass,
Come where the dead blue ladies pass
Come through the glass Sally
Come through the glass.

REMEMBER ME, REMEMBER ME (*Father back behind mask*)

SALLY: Between the devil and the deep blue sea you lay across my bedroom door, listened for the gnawing mouse, the lusting boy.

ALL: Sally say after me...

SISTER: Call the third witness... (*Enter Mistress behind altar. Exit Sister*)

ALL: Third witness.

THOMAS (comes from behind Canon's mask): Sally say after me, I must not commit adultery, I must not desert my child, I must not let it die...

ALL: Sally say after me.

SALLY: I must not commit adultery, I must not desert my child, I must not... I must not... I must. (*Thomas goes back behind mask*)

ALL: What day of the week was that? What day of the week was that?

SALLY: No... No... No...

MISTRESS: The witness shows a distinct inability to remember, or speak the truth. Call the fourth witness.

ALL: Fourth witness.

SAUL (coming from behind Sister's mask): With the events in Poland and Hungary a number of our members have adopted an anti-Soviet position, an anti-socialist position, an anti-working class position. I will have none of this thinking.

SALLY: Aggression, invasion, occupation, suppression or freedom...

SAUL: Intervention is merely an academic question, a case of who gets there first. We are not liberals comrades.

SALLY: I have disobeyed the Party. I have read the text of Kruschew's speech on Stalinism. Stalin stood for genocide, murder, anti-semitism, spying, torture, careerism, hypocrisy, bigotry...

SAUL (gabbling): You are expelled from the Communist Party of Australia for conduct violating the rules of the Party, factional and splitting activities, flouting the constitution, refusing to recognize the leadership, ignoring directions, villifying the Soviet Union, and the mass working class movement for economic gains, unity and peace. (Puts up his hand to stop interruptions) ... Furthermore... I denounce Sally Banner, minstrel of the grubby bedroom, lover of the seamy side of life, pseudo-revolutionary, ideological leader of intellectual delinquents, decadent, bourgeois, revisionist, factionalist... (*Moves back behind Sister's mask. Enter Canon*)

SALLY: I make my own pattern.

ALL (laughing): Martyr, saint.

SALLY: I believe in the brotherhood of man. I am a citizen of the world.
 CANON: Sally Banner, citizen of the world, how do you plead?
 SALLY: How am I charged?
 CANON: Sally Banner you betrayed the system . . .
 SALLY: GUILTY.
 MISTRESS: Sally Banner you believed in freedom . . .
 SALLY: I did everything I could.
 CANON: Sally Banner you walked naked . . .
 SALLY: A condition of complete simplicity costing not less than everything.
 CANON: Sally Banner, for all our sakes, it is necessary that you be guilty.
 ALL: GUILTY . . . GUILTY . . . GUILTY.
(Voices rise higher and higher, menacingly dance and sing "Let's all Dance the Polka". Sally, still very much mistress of the situation, faces the audience, with her back to Authority Figures.)
 SALLY: It matters not how strait the gate,
 How charged with punishment the scroll,
 I thank whatever Gods there be,
 For my unconquerable soul.
(Judith comes from behind the mask of Sister of the Church . . . she is dressed in grey Sister's robes, and stands grimly on the dais with folded arms.)
 JUDITH: It's too easy Sally. *(Sally swings round shocked.)*
 SALLY: Jude!
 JUDITH: This is the time of justice. I call Witness Number Five.
 ALL: Witness Number Five? Witness Number Five? Number Five?
 CANON (banging gavel): Order in the Court, order in the Court. Recall the prisoner. *(Policemen bring Sally back to foot of altar.)*
 ALL: Witness Number Five.
(Enter Michael in Spot.)
 MICHAEL: Sally Banner, that bitch I lived with. I'm not likely to forget her. Said she loved me. Love? It was herself she was in love with. Didn't give a stuff about me. *(To Policeman)* Haven't got the price of a drink on you have you dig? Caught short this week *(Laughs)* Ah, well, worth a try wasn't it? World fit for heroes to live . . . *(Exit Michael)*
 JUDITH: What were you looking for Sally?
 SALLY: Love. I was looking for love.
 JUDITH: You don't know the meaning of the word. You were looking for yourself.
 Cursed are the scornful, cursed are the arrogant.
 ALL: Plead, plead . . . how do you plead?
 SALLY *(whispering)*: Guilty.
 JUDITH: Cursed is she that perverts the judgement of the stranger. Cursed is she that maketh the blind go out of their way.
 SALLY: I believed it, I believed it all . . . Russia, the holy city, Jerusalem.
 JUDITH: No doubts, no questions?
 SALLY: It was sincere . . . dishonesty.
 JUDITH: In this case ignorance was inexcusable.
 SALLY: I was innocent.
 JUDITH: It is always easier to be innocent.
 SALLY: It seemed the way out then, to replace oneself by the world.
 JUDITH: To be saved by Thomas?
 SALLY: In the public square I forgot . . . the private virtues.
 JUDITH: Creativity, love, warmth, freedom . . . YOU forgot those?
(Sally downstage centre to audience.)
 SALLY: It was annihilation. I could never accept annihilation. The shadow of it lay

over everything I did. My whole life has been a struggle to be identified with someone . . . something . . . anything . . . that gave me even a brief sense of my own immortality. And yet I've always known, even when I struggled hardest that annihilation was the end of it. Even when, no, especially when, I was wild with joy because I thought I'd found, even for a moment, that immortal otherness at last.

JUDITH: So it was . . . deliberate perversity?

SALLY (turns back): It was . . . a deliberate decision. (*They confront each other.*)

ALL (gleefully): How do you plead, how do you plead?

SALLY: Guilty and I'm back where I began.

JUDITH: Where are your children? (*Pause . . . Sally, agitated, strides about stage.*)

SALLY: Both my children are dead.

JUDITH: Why did you destroy them?

SALLY (challengingly but despairing): For a great love. (*Court nudge each other . . . snicker . . . rock with laughter.*)

ALL: A great love . . . A GREAT LOVE . . .

JUDITH: What was that . . . great love?

SALLY: Love of *myself*, You said it. I wanted to live so completely . . . a dozen lives . . . to suffer . . . everything.

JUDITH: Why? Why? (*She is moved towards Sally a little . . . suborned in spite of herself.*)

SALLY (proudly): I heard a voice from Heaven say unto me . . . "WRITE!"

JUDITH: And what did you do?

SALLY (defeated, turns away): I wanted my substance.

JUDITH (triumphant): Cursed is she that perverts the gifts of Heaven.

ALL SING: Poor Sally she never made it,
No matter how hard she tried,
She tried hard not to know it,
But she was a minor poet,
Until the day she died.

ALL (closing in for the kill): How do you plead, how do you plead?

SALLY: I walked naked through the world.

JUDITH: Very few of my acquaintances ever looked very good stripped. Minds seem to be much the same. Those I know who go about being brutally honest, without a rag of concession for the outraged reticence of others are a nuisance.

All exit . . . except Sally, who comes downstage centre for song "My Love on Whom the Good Sun Shone".

SALLY'S SONG: I passed my love on the street today,
He looked through my head and he looked away,
When I searched in the dust I could only find
A man with his lips and his eyes gone blind,
And all that we were, and all that we knew
Has gone with the wry, dry dust that blew.
O where has he gone, O where has he gone,
My love on whom the good sun shone,
With an ache in his mouth and a crack in his song,
That golden boy to look upon.
And he'll never come back and I'll die alone,
Flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone.

Sally moves right, sits on dais. David enters dressed in underpants, carrying his trousers. He sits beside Sally, looking somewhat ill at ease.

DAVID: That's a job that needed doing for twenty years, and we did it so well.
You've got a marvellous set of muscles between your legs darling.

SALLY (brightly): Isn't it lucky David, you caught me between husbands.

DAVID: I'm married Sally.

SALLY: Not successfully.

DAVID: Not very. I drink too much, stay out too late, treat her badly. She only says, "Oh! Davie, not sloshed again?" (*He mimics cruelly a college accent.*) Hallo darling. (*Pushes back her hair.*) You're still rather beautiful.

SALLY: Stay with me David, stay with me tonight.

DAVID: I'm expected home early.

SALLY: I wouldn't ask for much. I'd be the most undemanding mistress. Just reassurances now and again.

DAVID: That's something I can't even give myself.

SALLY: David, that night by the University pool, when you knocked me back. Why did you do it? I've wondered about it for years and now I'm old enough to ask you why.

DAVID: I couldn't get . . . you're not going to believe this . . . I couldn't get my army issue trouser buttons undone. I was a very raw recruit.

SALLY: God, why does everything I do turn into such a farce? Lysol and stomach pump, marriage and adultery, all for the sake of a stiff trouser button. But I don't believe you David. That wasn't the reason. You just . . . didn't want me. (*David pulls her into his arms, kisses her.*)

DAVID: Leave it at that darling. You were the golden girl. I was the clumsy boy. Leave it at that.

SALLY: I can't leave it.

DAVID: You'll have to.

SALLY: David you're knocking me back aren't you? You're doing it again . . . after twenty years. (*She turns away.*) If I hadn't made it such a big deal? If I'd played it along easy, it might have been all right mightn't it?

DAVID: Possibly.

SALLY: I never learn do I. Sally, make the world whirl. Sally the aggressive.

DAVID: You put me at such an absurd disadvantage. All the roles reversed and I feel like the foolish virgin.

SALLY: Let's start again. Have dinner with me?

DAVID: Please Sally. We'd only finish up in bed again.

SALLY: It's not just sex. I'd love to be with you. (*David puts on his trousers.*)

DAVID: Leave it. I don't want it to get complicated. I'm always very bad on the follow through.

SALLY: David, please . . . ?

DAVID: I'm just a shit Sally, just a cold shit. Put it down to that.

SALLY: I'd warm you.

DAVID: Something that needed doing has been done, an error of omission rectified. And now . . . goodbye sweetie. No phone call, no letters. Is it a bargain Sally? Don't look back.

SALLY: I might turn into a pillar of salt.
 (*David moves back behind Sister's mask.*)
 (*Enter Mother, old and vacant, in a commode chair, pushed by nurse. Sally rises, moves upstage to Mother.*)

SALLY: It's me Mother. It's Sally. I've come home . . . for you to look after me. You always wanted me home Mother.
 (*Mother peers helplessly at Sally from chair.*)
 It's me . . . Sally. You remember me? SALLY! I'VE COME HOME.
 (*Nurse wheels commode chair closer. Mother grips Sally's arm. She tries desperately to mouth something, then begins to cry. Nurse tucks her in*

firmly, wheels her offstage. Sally goes to follow. Enter Judith right in Sister's robes. Sally crosses to Judith.)

SALLY: Jude, let me stay with you. Now we can have a life together.

JUDITH: No.

SALLY: I loved *you* always Jude.

JUDITH: I can't live with you Sally. I live at the school now. Look! *(She spreads her robes.)*

SALLY: Forever?

JUDITH: Forever.

SALLY: A kind of perpetual Sister Rosa still demanding that I bow.

JUDITH: Yes.

SALLY: Is it any kind of an answer?

JUDITH: It's a . . . sanctuary.

SALLY: So I took a ride on a roundabout. Close the circle and I end where I began. You're safe now Jude. I can't touch you now . . .

JUDITH: You make every post a suffering winner don't you Sally?

SALLY: So is that all there is in the end, to accept oneself, to be finally and irrevocably responsible for one's self. Jude, I wanted to find in this dirty, scheming, contemptible world . . . something, some kind of miraculous insight . . . *(She moves downstage to audience.)* I had a tremendous world in my head and more than three quarters of it will be buried with me.

(EXIT SALLY left and JUDITH right. MUSIC swells into chant . . . WITH TIME WITH TIME . . . WITH TIME . . . TIME . . . TIME . . . time . . . time . . . on amplifiers. Stage darkens.)

An excerpt from ACT II of "The Chapel Perilous"
or "The Perilous Adventures of Sally Banner"

by Dorothy Hewett,

which played a two and a half week season in the
New Fortune Theatre, University of Western Australia
from January 21, 1971.

DIRECTOR: ARNE NEEME

ORDEAL BY FREEDOM

A carve-up of Sally or Society?

"... the sort of view that comes out of *The Chapel Perilous* will I know be neither tragic nor mysterious, but a big broad send up."

Dorothy Hewett (programme note)

To squirm or not to squirm. So ruthlessly is the balance of sympathy manipulated both for and against the romantically driven central character that one questions the target. It seems to depend on questions that raise hydra heads from the central theme, inviting decapitation and dissection which could go on endlessly, until one realises that one situation remains as dominating as those subjective horrors (resembling a cross between Blake's visions and Don Quixote's windmills) which symbolise the authority and sterility that Sally Banner consistently reacts against, but from which she never escapes.

The campaign between rebel and restrictive society is fought out from complex motives and in wild emotional terrain. It is in one sense an unusual version of the great romantic revolt in that it is seen from a courageously feminine point of view. (St. Joan, Hedda Gabler and Ann Veronica were written by men.) But there is more to it than that. When the antinomous quests for love and freedom are pursued without an explicit map of the wasteland, so that the audience must follow Sally by unravelling threads of symbolism through multi-role characters in recurring situations; when the idols of the market place have a stage army of hostile adherents to represent her contemporaries (while the real ones are biting/sharpening? their nails in the audience); and when the one mob is infiltrated among the other to reinforce that subtle point—then, though a fair interpretation might elude Ariadne herself, the total situation is too challenging to forgo the attempt.

The first challenge is to identify the combatants and inspect their weapons. War against society appears to be declared on account of its choice of values. From the opening to the close of the Headmistress speech, the authority figures display a battery of irrational attitudes, cleverly mixed and juxtaposed to show up the seemingly rock-like integrity of Sally.

("I gave her a reference of course. I had no evidence she was not a clean living young christian." "I'm certain I never gave her a reference. I had no evidence she was a clean living young christian.")

Yet, when the irony is played for laughs it produces sufficient detachment from the central character to avoid any didactic display. Sally is not equipped for such a direct attack. Paradoxically her worst vulnerability is that she is not walking through the world as naked as she imagines. She is playing St. Joan in obedience to her own idols, whole 'voices' entice her to an inevitable emotional martyrdom.

("I'm leaving—with a copy of D. H. Lawrence . . ."
"I wanted to be another Edith Sitwell.")

If programme notes are to be taken into consideration, one also suspects that a youthful misinterpretation of Eliot's sexual-spiritual sterility metaphors has had something to do with her over-enthusiastic rejection of mind in favour of the supposedly un hypocritical flesh. Mind is merely what Sally learns to distrust first. Thus she abandons rational weapons, weakening her position (and adding to her interest as a character) by over-reacting. She follows her preconceived grail vision with the fanaticism of St. Joan herself, whose image dominates the central set.

Stage positions appear to be worked into the symbolic structure. Centre stage is associated with Sally in her beleaguered position in the same way that other characters are associated with right or left hand idols. It might also be important for the understanding both of symbolism and of character to note that Sally is both attracted to and repelled by different characters connected with the figure on her left, whose significance could be interpreted as 'Sterility' (in league with 'Authority' on her right). Sister Rosa, Judith, David and Saul all fit into the sterility image—in very different ways.

However, just as one tries to work out whose fault it is that with every clash of opposing egotisms, the components of Sally's multiple quest seem doomed to turn into their opposites, another head of the hydra intervenes. This one is armoured in an even more invincible layer of irony: the chronicle of defeats is an apparent success story. This makes the anti-hypocrisy crusade dramatically effective, and combines with the free technique to create a mood flexible enough to take on the bulky biographical content. Though misery seems inevitable, the chain of events leading to it are arbitrary, depending on impulse and chance meetings. Yet individual scenes have their own sensitivity and compactness, and personal relationships burn fiercely in the light of self-ignited funeral pyres.

Universal moments flicker to be swamped only by the 'particularness' of the central character. If two thematic heads thus roll: 'Individual as threat to society' and its twin 'society as threat to individual' it is because Sally is not sufficiently free to represent 'universal' individual. But the flickers, while they last, illuminate much. Clever manipulation of atmosphere both helps and hinders. Balance is hindered by artificially throwing sympathy onto Sally's side by showing other characters in a disproportionately shallow and cruel light—and simultaneously restored when the cruelty results in the vulnerability of the woman showing through the earth goddess which her particular brand of idealism puts her in danger of becoming. This vulnerability is heightened by the 'naked in the world' atmosphere that is produced by the hostile attitudes of the ever-present 'crowd'. (Coupling of the vividly bawdy song with the nuptial failure produces dramatic poignancy, while the hypocrisy theme is reinforced by more ironically juxtaposed attitudes: it is sophisticated to lose one's virginity in the Palace Hotel, but not on the grass.) Universality only seems to be built into the incompatibility of the male/female relationships. Sally is no more universal woman than she is universal rebel; she is also the poet whose creativity is closely bound up with what she and other characters label egotism. There is an echo in the burning of the poems not only of St. Joan—but of Hedda Gabler with the roles reversed.

Here there seems to be a moral in Michael's subsequent down and out appearance, signifying spiritual bankruptcy to contrast with Sally's "Thank God for my immortal soul". At this same time, his appearance coming in the trial scene suggests that she feels his destruction to be part of her own guilt. Such multi-interpretation of intention can be made throughout, though the dramatic power varies, depending on other factors.

Sympathy for the central character is balanced by a corresponding detachment in, for instance, the Lysol scene, when egotism on both sides results in incongruity of attitudes that makes the black comedy comic. Such cruel laughter is only possible

as a result of seeing both sides in perspective. Sympathy breaks down most in the political aspect of Sally's quest, to an extent which changes the mood. Rebels are rarely interested in other people's causes except where they fulfil their own needs. And that Sally is not politically aware is evident from her Part 1 reaction to that Chamberlain cum Sellers speech ("It's nothing to do with me"). But the ironic humour of the first part is lacking. Her ideals now begin to show themselves as incompatible, which is the most crucial stage in the mood of the play. The carefully built up 'integrity' is in danger of collapsing into insincerity. Her 'atom bomb lullaby' can be accepted as historic colour—but "a mother's tears are never dry" betray a self concern that is unhumorously ironic in view of the fact that she is about to abandon the child in pursuit of her original concept of 'love'—the undeveloped vision of her adolescence.

Fortunately, despite the parading of the Red Herring and the vibrant, but equally irrelevant number 'Overtime Rock', the structural symbolism continues to work. The idols of authority and sterility still dominate St. Joan in all the aspects of her search. The Thomas/Canon character identification shows its brilliance when Sally accepts the Marxist credo as blindly as she rejected the liturgical one. And the sterility of this part of the quest is suggested by identification of Saul the Party Organiser as another hydra like aspect of the complementary idol.

The multiple characters seem to be another indication that the clue to both Sally's character and the interpretation of the relevant theme, lie in the very recurrence of her problems. There is then one simple way to resolve all the paradoxes, by dissolving them in a subjective solution and acknowledging that the surrealism manifest in the polka and trial scenes has been present all along. The catcalls and the sniggers are not then so much society's view of Sally, but her own idea of society's view of her. Thus any formal battle against society must be lost by reason of having been fought not rationally, but as an inner struggle, partly against herself. She has 'recreated' society in opposition to her own image. As the sinister hooded forms perform their crazy dance (signifying that Sally has never made sense of them) it is suddenly clear why the mob had to be so cruel and the lovers too shallow and unpoetic of soul. In her blind groping to "make her own pattern", Sally experiences society as the opposite of her distorted grail vision. And with the partial collapse of her ideals it becomes as chaotic as her own emotions. It is her own interpretation of society from which Sally can never become free.

To do so it might be necessary for her to abandon the unchanging quest for love, freedom and immortality. But, having rejected mind as an ally, she is unable to explore the ramifications of her own beliefs; and perhaps that is why she is "only a minor poet". Values are experienced on emotional, not intellectual, levels. The clash is presented romantically and ironically never as an exercise in polemics. Even the sardonic commentary of the songs is subject to emotive rhythms which express the character's vitality besides being in sympathy with her values.

The political aspect can then fall into place as part of Sally's emotional life. The political speech in competition with the fairground strippers becomes symbolic ("Naked minds are as ugly as naked bodies"). And the strippers themselves suggest the exhibitionism of the rebel. This effect, with an element of masochism cast into the balance, is heightened by the technique of putting the heroine in front of a series of imaginary hostile audiences with which the real audience is made to overlap (not only by mingling of the 'crowd' but also by frequent use of characters with microphones).

Sympathy returns with understanding, and one is thus able to take the final scene as Sally's subjective estimate of her chronicle of triumph and failure; to evaluate the ordeal which has been the price of following her visions, and to

question whether the martyrdom resulted, after all, in any kind of freedom. From the romantic point of view, a triumph in terms of a narrow society must rank as a defeat, or at best a hollow victory. It is obvious at the end of the play that nobody's values have withdrawn an inch. The headmistress remains a mouthpiece of social hypocrisy, while Sally succeeds in making the image of St. Joan her last, mute, protest (ironically—at last in a socially acceptable form).

The emotive symbolism of the death mask behind the veil and the significance of the taking up again of the suicide position suggest pity and terror without producing it. It is a spiritual stalemate in which the opposites of death and immortality now seem ironically blended.

The author's achievement of such an effect has been facilitated by use of the above combination of subjective checks and balances to attack the audience from two positions at once. On the one side, sympathy for Sally fights with artificially induced identification of the audience with the role of persecutor—from which guilt emerges to trigger the defensive response of hollow laughter. On the other hand, changes of mood can render such laughter black enough to be quite silent.

It is from this position that the hydra like theme must stand naked in the world—so that the “send up” can be identified as not being directed at Sally or society as much as the relationship between them. It is a particular social situation of a particular rebel from which all the problems raise their mocking heads. Given their stranglehold, then only such indirect subjective probing could have evoked repressed rebellious streaks and freed the imagination to respond.

For the recurring situation in question is a painful one. Nobody can be free unless everyone else interprets freedom from the same angle. The same, of course, goes for love. Perhaps after all, the best defense is to laugh.

RESEARCH IN ANTHROPOLOGY IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Origins and prehistory

This is an exciting time for those who are interested in the original peopling of Australia in general, and it promises to become increasingly interesting for those concerned with the west in particular. Much has been done in the last ten years. And this new work has inevitably exposed gaps in our knowledge and posed new problems which await solution.

Ten years ago we asked how many thousands of years human groups had occupied Australia. Now we ask how many tens of thousands. We envisaged the first Australians as entering our continent not more than ten thousand years ago, at a time when their Asian and European contemporaries were at a "Mesolithic" stage of culture, relatively impoverished hunting groups eking out an existence in the woodlands which had spread over the northern part of the Old World as climates warmed up after the retreat of the great ice-sheets which had earlier dominated much of the northern hemisphere. Now we know that the original occupiers and developers of the Australian continent were contemporaries of the great "Palaeolithic" hunting groups who based their elaborate, technically sophisticated and richly artistic cultures on the exploitation of the great herds of reindeer, horses, bison and cattle which dominated the tundra and cold steppe-lands of Europe and Asia during the series of glacial maxima from about seventy to twenty thousand years ago. Quite how early they came we still do not know. It was certainly more than twenty thousand, probably more than thirty thousand years ago, and it may well have been more. If so the first men entered Australia when Eurasian populations were not of completely modern type, but included the robust and stocky, though large-brained, Neanderthaloid groups, who braved the worst rigours of Eurasia at its coldest.

Australia, too, must have been very different when the general expansion of human populations in the later Palaeolithic reached shores which are now submerged. Much of the now dry centre, under cooler conditions had a lower evaporation and a higher run-off, so that lakes now dry brimmed with water. The fauna included initially large marsupials, not yet decimated by the hunting skill of the new arrivals, though these gradually disappeared from the fossil record in region after region as Aboriginal groups, by hunting and by fire, fundamentally affected the game and vegetation of their new homeland.

The "oldest archaeological site . . . yet dated in Australia", containing artefacts of a "distinctively Australian culture" and essentially modern cremated bones, was investigated by Dr Rhys Jones and colleagues from the Australian National University during 1969 in the core of a sand-dune on the eastern shore of Lake Mungo

in the Murray-Darling basin in New South Wales, and dated to a phase when the now dry lake stood at a high level between 32,000 and 25,000 years ago. Not 200 miles away at Kow Swamp, remnants of individuals with extremely archaic characteristics, which could well, anatomically, be anything up to half-a-million years old, have given radio-carbon dates which are much younger. Will such a "survival" population also be found in the west? How will the dates compare? The western New South Wales examples are from dunes along the edge of lakes now dry. What have our own dry clay-pans to offer along their shores?

An early spread is not, after all, surprising, for access to Australia must always have been by movement along what are now the chain of islands to the north, and although there must always have been water to cross, the crossings will have been narrowest when worldwide water levels were lowest, when most water was tied up in great continental ice-caps at the glacial maxima. While one possible route lay via the Celebes, Moluccas and New Guinea down to Cape York, another possibility was a series of hops eastwards from Java to Timor, and then across about 100 miles of sea to the emerged continental shelf north of the Kimberleys, bringing the first groups into the north of Western Australia, before they spread south and east, and across to what are now the offshore islands of South Australia and into Tasmania. A map of the oldest carbon dates for human occupation in various regions of the Tasmania—Australia—New Guinea landmass certainly suggested a northwest to southeast trend, with the dates of 30 to 20,000 in Arnhem Land, the Nullarbor, and the Murray-Darling basin; dates of 20 to 10,000 in eastern New Guinea, Cape York, Queensland and Victoria; and dates of less than 10,000 years east of the Great Dividing Range and in Tasmania. Recently earlier dates east of the Dividing Range have modified this neat picture. The great gap and the great question mark lie in Western Australia.

The artefacts throughout this wide area and time-range are heavy hand-held choppers, core scrapers including the so-called "horse-hoofs", flake scrapers, and flakes, belonging to a specifically Australian tradition now formulated as the "Australian core-tool and scraper tradition", of an antiquity at least comparable with the first truly modern men in Europe. Such a tool tradition persisted in Tasmania until the time of European contacts. On the mainland, e.g. at Kenniff Cave, it was gradually added to, and finally almost completely replaced, by a complex of smaller stone artefacts, some of which were set in gum on a haft. The regional details and sequences vary.

Dr Richard Gould of the American Museum of Natural History, working in association with the Department of Anthropology of the University of Western Australia and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, has thrown considerable light on this transition in trial excavations 1966-7, and a major campaign in 1969-70 in a rock-shelter at Puntutjarpa near the Warburton Mission in the Western Desert Region of W.A. Small flake-adzes which could most easily be used set in gum on the end of a spear-thrower, come from levels stratigraphically earlier than hearths dated between five and six thousand years B.C., though heavy unhafted tools persist alongside the innovations for many more millenia. A variety of stone blades blunted along the back for hafting may show this new tradition to be unexpectedly early in the west.

These West Australian excavations emphasise the two major themes of Australian prehistory: continuity and change. The changes are obvious—the shrinkage of lakes, impoverishment of fauna, changes in emphasis in artefact-assemblages, drying up of waterholes, shifts in settlement pattern, abandonment of many cave sites, to take advantage of the remaining sources of permanent water, greater mobility possibly, but still occasional visits to the old sites even though they were no longer continually habitable, still a persisting interest in the art on the walls

and the myths associated with the landscape features. Nowhere in the sequence is there an abrupt displacement of one cultural tradition by another.

This over-riding continuity makes it possible for Australian archaeologists to interpret past remains in terms of present usage in a way which would not be legitimate elsewhere. Tindale, Love, Mountford, Thompson, Gould and others have observed e.g. the use of hand-held stone tools in the preliminary blocking-out of a spear-thrower, and of adze-flakes of a distinctive shape and wear pattern set in gum for the later stages; the scarring of stones by grinding and seed-pounding; and from present methods of manufacture and use, and its results, have interpreted archaeological occurrences of similar material.

Can similarly continuing traditions be used to interpret sacred sites, stone structures, or art? In the Clutterbuck Hills Dr Gould was able to observe a stone alignment in ritual use, and to collect the myths associated with it. A spectacular serpentine rock alignment on the dry bed of Lake Moore was interpreted by aboriginal informants as a representation of the totemic Water-Snake. It is fair to see other similar structures as capable of similar usage and interpretation, though in areas without a living sacred tradition we shall never know the details of each particular site.

During 1970 there has been considerable activity in W.A. in discovering and recording Aboriginal stone structures, extending not only the previously known geographical range, but also the elaboration of types known, particularly in the southwest of the state. New examples of the already familiar settings of small stones have been recorded e.g. by Mr R. H. Pearce from the Yilgarn area. Slabs propped up on one or both edges occur at Yilgarn; and among a group of structures recorded by Mr W. Dix near Jerramungup (where they are supposed to be lizard traps). An archaeological field survey by the Department of Anthropology has recorded an extensive group of raised exfoliated granite slabs, some roughly propped up, some raised at one edge by neat pillars of dry stone walling, others complete slab-roofed stone-walled structures, in the Bannister area. Half a mile away other walled structures, one roofed, are associated with an elaborate rectilinear stone alignment of tall upright stones, exceptional in this part of the state. Recently Dix reports a stone-walled enclosure of similar construction to the Bannister examples in a commanding position on the Darling scarp.

The most impressive body of recent archaeological work in W.A. has been concerned with Aboriginal art, which poses very difficult questions of interpretation and of dating. Mr F. D. McCarthy, now Principal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, produced reports on the engravings of Depuch Island and Port Hedland, and Crawford later extended the Depuch Island survey when the engravings were threatened. Dr Crawford, now Senior Curator in Human Studies in the Western Australian Museum, has published a magnificent résumé of Kimberley art, which he presents as part of a rich culture worthy of respect and admiration. When Dr Crawford made his expeditions in 1962 to 1966, he found "some of the artists—still alive" and able to "explain the significance of the painting, why they made them and how". This is the true marriage of archaeology and anthropology. It does indeed "aid prehistorians to gain a deeper understanding of paintings in other countries and in other parts of Australia where the Aboriginal cultures have disappeared". We can not simply admire the great Wandjina paintings, but realise that they represent spirit-ancestors whose migration paths criss-cross the whole of Kimberley, and that they have power over the monsoon rains and are sources of human and animal fertility, so that if the paintings fall into disrepair natural species will cease to reproduce. Besides these paintings, which remain of literally vital significance, there are others like the elegant little red "Bradshaw figures",

dancing and hunting with weapons not used in Kimberley for the last two and a half thousand years, which are probably much older.

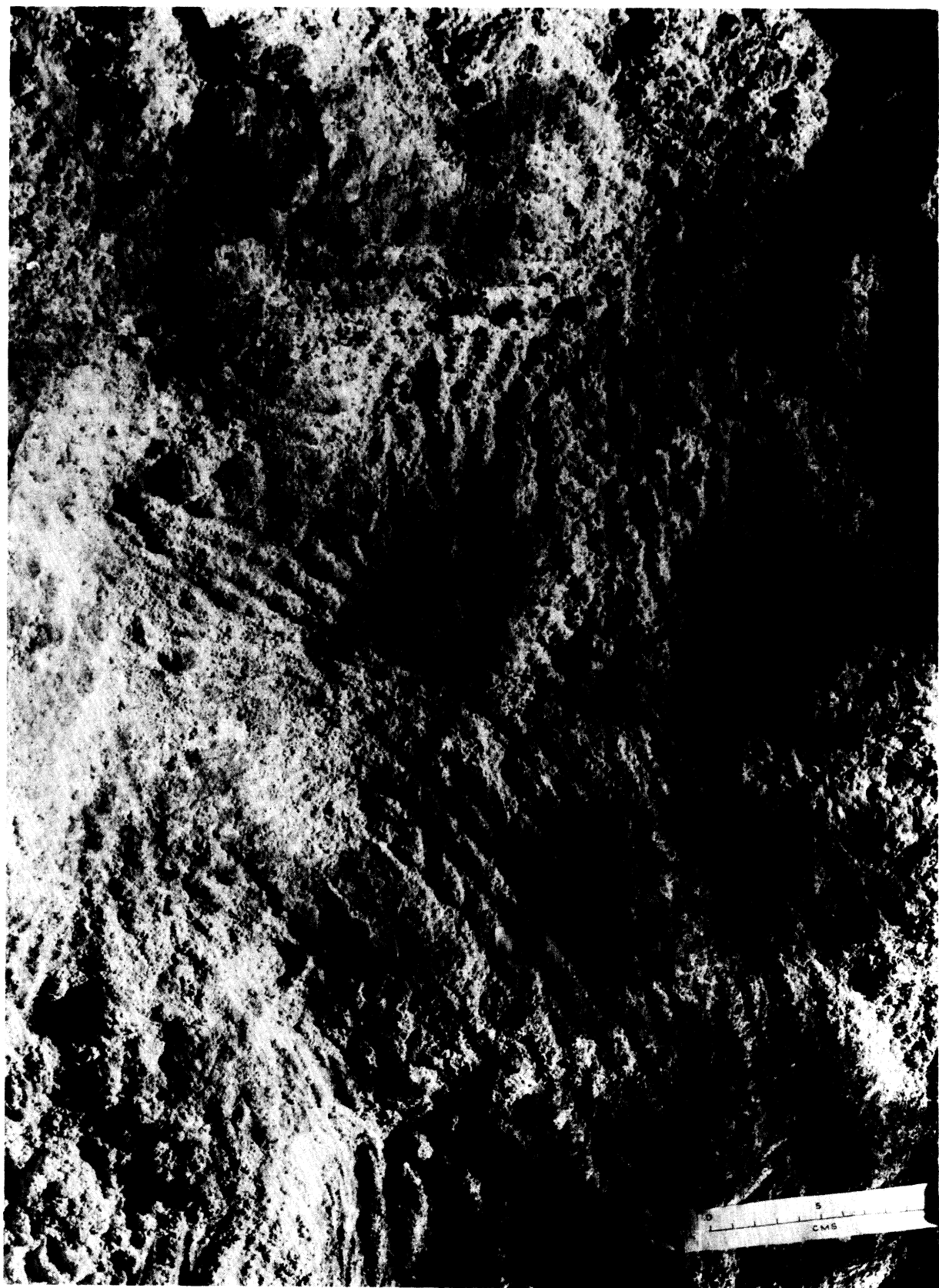
In the Pilbara also the art is of more than one age and tradition. Here Mr Bruce Wright, when he became headmaster at Roebourne in 1963, began a study of what with pardonable exaggeration he describes as "without doubt the richest and most exciting region of rock engravings in Australia" and "one of the richest rock-art centres of the world". His later work was aided by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, which in 1968 published the Memoir in which he records and analyses over 850 figures from a hundred sites on 19 pastoral stations. A long time range is suggested by the range of weathered condition, variety of styles, and superimpositions. In the Upper Yule area, for instance, there is a sequence from the oldest abraded outlines, in which the grooves have weathered to the same colour as the ungrooved surface, through at least two intermediate phases, to the fresh unweathered "Kurangara" figures, for which the songs and "law" were still current, and which seem indeed to be a recent spread into the Pilbara and the Kimberleys. Mr Wright is continuing his work in the northwest, filling gaps within his original area, and extending his coverage, e.g. to link via the Ophthalmia Range area with work by the Rev. D. L. McCaskill in the Waldburg Range area, and the well-known, but little-studied, art of the Murchison.

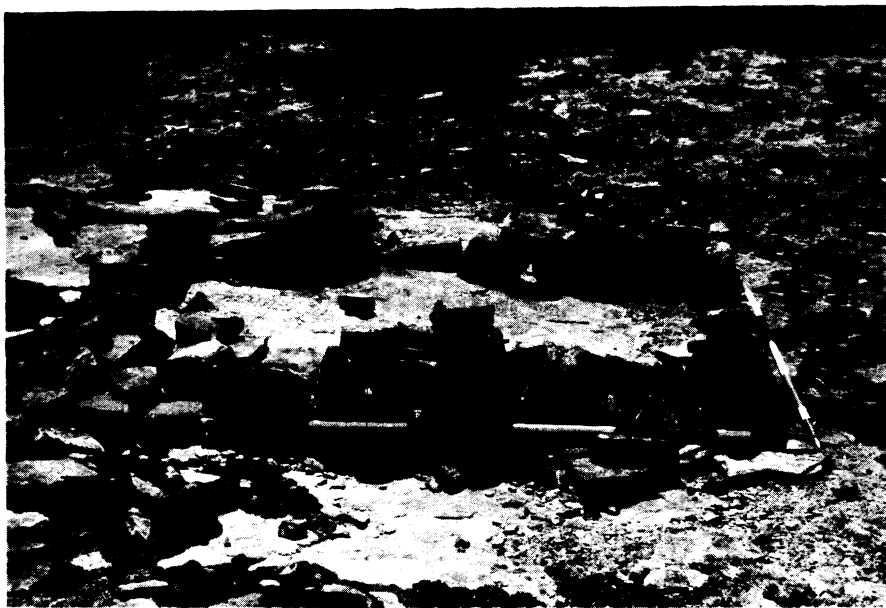
Among the animals engraved in the Pilbara was a vertically-striped mammal with a stiff straight tail from Juna Downs. Further work on engravings in the north may throw light on the replacement of the "Tasmanian wolf" by the dingo in mainland Australia during the last few thousand years.

Mr Warwick Dix has recently been appointed Registrar of Aboriginal Sites, and is engaged on a thorough indexing of sites reported throughout the State, thus helping to focus the vast potential reserves of local knowledge and enthusiasm which must be brought to bear to explore the archaeological riches of the state. The Museum has just appointed Mr Charles Dorsch, Curator of Archaeology, and he will bring to the study of crucial sites an expertise in excavation and typology gained in the classic areas of Palaeolithic studies in Europe, under giants like François Bordes. Already he and Dr Duncan Merrilees, Curator in Palaeontology in the W.A. Museum, have turned their attention to a cave in the southwest where earlier, palaeontological, excavation by Professor Lundelius had shown evidence of human presence in levels now dated to at least 10,000 years ago.

The University Department of Anthropology, generously supported by the Institute of Aboriginal Studies, initiated in mid-1970 an archaeological field survey in the Perth area, which most West Australian archaeologists would regard as relatively poor in surviving sites. Beside the stone arrangements already mentioned (Plate 1), and an unexpectedly wide range of material from surface campsites, the survey has already produced an extension of the known range of two distinct and probably early art styles, and led to the excavation of two stratified archaeological deposits. From the first, a limestone cave on the coastal plain north of Perth, discovered by Mr Ian Murray, has come a rough limestone industry and a modern-type fauna which would accord with an early, but not Pleistocene, date for activity in the cave, and presumably for the production of the extraordinary pattern of engravings on the cave roof. A few are groups of straight lines, but the major part of the "decorated" area is criss-crossed by a maze of curving groups of parallel lines (Plate 2), reminiscent of those in Koonalda Cave on the Nullarbor Plain, with carbon dates of about 20,000 years. Our carbon dates are awaited.

A complete contrast is provided by the second site, a cave in the Avon Valley, with a simple frieze of parallel painted strokes running from end to end of the forty-foot rock overhang. This is one of four caves now known in the area with





simple geometric designs and stencilled hands. The faded condition of the paintings suggests considerable antiquity. It is hoped charcoal from trial excavations undertaken in the occupation deposits of the floor of the cave will yield a date range for the activity within it, and so a probable time-span within which the paintings may have been executed. Delicate backed blades occur in all levels, suggesting comparison with microlithic material dated to 2,000 B.C. from a cave in New South Wales, excavated by Dr Isabel McBryde, where similar, but engraved, designs occur. How many similar shelters await discovery and record?

Much has been done in the last ten years. Much remains to be done. Western Australia will certainly share in confirming the Pleistocene antiquity of Australia's first colonists. It may well be in Western Australia that we shall find the clues to these later population movements which brought new tool traditions (and, Professor Golson suggests, the dingo) across the wider seas to this continent. The west will have its own contributions to make to the study of the ecology of its early settlers, their spread and adaptation to a variety of environments, and their rôle in shaping the Australian landscapes which the first European settlers encountered.

Photographs: Plate 1. Detail of groups of parallel lines engraved on the roof of a limestone cave north of Perth.—R. Webber.

Plate 2. Views of parts of a group of stone arrangements, Bannister area.— S. J. Hallam, B. J. Wright.

ETHICAL PROOF IN THREE SPEECHES OF R. G. MENZIES

In the Aristotelian sense ethical proof—that proof which resides in the moral character of the speaker—is an “artistic” proof, as also are emotional and logical proofs. It must be invented by the speaker according to the needs of the situation in which he finds himself and the rules or theories of rhetoric.

Aristotle's concept of ethical proof seems to constitute a distinct contribution to the theory of rhetoric for we may examine the ideas of his predecessors without discovering much systematic description of this proof. The Sicilians seem to designate the proemium as the proper place to get the listeners' goodwill, but in their case this goodwill is being sought to secure acceptance of questionable proposals. Reference to the use of ethical proof is found again in the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, where the speaker is advised to adapt arguments to his listeners and to establish his own authority with the audience.

Isocrates gives advice that is more specifically concerned with ethical proof: his ideal speaker—the orator-statesman—should seek to improve his persuasion by showing himself to be honourable: he is to be trained in ethics, and should know how to control himself and show respect for others, while in invention (in choice of speech materials) he is to observe propriety and avoid excess.

The Platonic conception of rhetoric posits a speaker who is intelligent, informed of the truth, but eschews the consideration and presentation of matters of opinion: of propositions, of value and policy. The Socratic speaker should be able to understand his audiences and have some skill in adapting arguments to them; he should have a high moral purpose. These qualities are summarized for us by Socrates' speech in the *Phaedrus*, in which he shows the dimensions of Plato's ideal rhetorician:

... first you must know the truth about the subject that you speak or write about: that is to say, you must be able to isolate it in definition, and having so defined it you must next understand how to divide it into kinds, until you reach the limit of division; secondly, you must have a corresponding discernment of the nature of the soul, discover the type of speech appropriate to each nature, and order and arrange your discourse accordingly, addressing a variegated soul in a variegated style that ranges over the whole gamut of tones, and a simple soul in a simple style. All this must be done if you are to become competent, within human limits, as a scientific practitioner of speech, whether you propose to expound or to persuade.¹

Aristotle presents ethical proof as an important practical concern to the speaker. Since rhetoric deals with probabilities, the audience will inevitably need to place confidence in the intelligence and character of the speaker, whose ability to use

ethical proof is therefore vital to his persuasion. By the speech itself he must create a favourable impression of his own character, showing that he is honest and is not misrepresenting the facts of the case; that he understands the facts and is able to form a judgment; that he is well disposed toward his audience, and will recommend the best course of action. These ideas are set out in Book I of *Rhetoric*, where Aristotle presents an analysis of the virtues which the speaker should manifest to establish his character and sagacity, thus making himself worthy of the audience's belief.

In addition to these views of ethical proof as a function of the speaker's character, Aristotle also presents an idea of *ethos* as it relates to the audience—essentially, its characteristics. Thus, the speaker must study the forms of government; the different ages of the audience (youth, maturity, old age) and the different orders or groups of the audience (rich, noble, powerful) in order to adapt his speaking properly to his listeners. Further, Aristotle points out that if the speaker is to conciliate his audience, he must understand not only the general classifications by which the audience may be described, but also the distinguishing traits or characteristics of these types. For example, he reminds us that the motives of youthful and mature groups differ, and that the character of the wealthy differs from that of the poor. The speaker must adapt his speech accordingly.

There appears to be another area in which *ethos* takes on meaning: this is the area of style, which Aristotle discusses in Book III. He tells us that the speaker should be able to use a style appropriate to every character that he wishes to describe, since this will give reality and truthfulness to his speech and increase the audience's trust in the speaker. The language of the speaker should be current and informal; it should be characterized by propriety, moral purpose, and some elegance, which clothe the action with interest, and hence reveal the speaker as one committed to justice, honour and expedience. In addition to these considerations, the choice of appropriate language would be based on certain fixed values held by the speaker: expediency, justice, honour.

An examination of the concept of ethical proof permits us to make two observations: (1) The use of ethical proof always involves choice on the part of the speaker, and is made manifest in his invention, arrangement, style, and delivery, which are affected by the purpose of his speech and the nature of the audience itself. To a certain extent the speaker is revealing his character as he makes his choices. (2) The distinction between ethical proof and emotional proof is not always clear. Baldwin comments on the order in which Aristotle presents the three proofs—ethical, emotional, logical—and states “that the three are not mutually exclusive is evident and must have been deliberate”.² On the other hand, Thonssen and Baird suggest that “*ethos* refers chiefly to what the speaker chooses to do; *pathos* to what the reaction has done to the listener”.³

As we study the problem of *ethos* as it is used in speech, we may observe a speaker doing some of the following to create a favourable impression of his character: (1) telling what establishes his own virtues; (2) linking his opponent's cause with what will discredit him; (3) associating himself with what is virtuous; (4) counteracting a previously harmful impression of his character; and (5) showing that he is sincere in his inquiry into the problem.

The speaker may establish his intelligence by (1) demonstrating that he is well informed; (2) showing that he is interpreting and presenting the facts fairly; and (3) showing a sense of propriety and good judgment.

Finally, he may demonstrate his goodwill to the audience by (1) showing a willingness to permit public scrutiny of his motives; (2) tolerating dissent; (3) establishing an appropriate identification with his audience; and (4) demonstrating his competence to speak without going beyond the bounds of his authority.

In summary, *ethos* is found to be an artistic proof that depends on the speaker's moral character. His successful use of this proof depends upon his ability to make good choices at every step of the speech process, and upon his ability to understand his audience.

These comments on ethical proof will serve as the basis for inquiry into the parliamentary speaking of Sir Robert Menzies during his first government. Those things which demonstrate his character, sagacity, and goodwill will be analyzed in relation to the speaking situation and the classical concept of rhetoric.

Menzies' puzzling inability to develop rapport with his fellow parliamentarians has often been noted. His speech of April 20, 1939,⁴ in which he defended himself against charges by the prime minister, Sir Earle Page, deserves to be examined, for it indicates the generally hostile attitude of the House toward him, and the way in which he dealt with its direct expression.

Upon the death of the prime minister, Joseph Lyons, on 7 April 1939, an interim government was formed with Earle Page as prime minister. He was charged by the Governor-General with the recommendation of a new Government. The choice would very likely fall on Menzies as head of the newly reorganized United Australia Party, but Menzies would have to obtain the co-operation of the Country Party to obtain the majority necessary to form a government.

Explaining the nature of the responsibility placed upon him by the Governor-General, Page said that he "was compelled to consider the qualifications of the new Leader of the United Australia Party". He noted that the nature of Menzies' leadership within his own party was "entirely a party domestic matter", adding, however, that "if the leader of that party was to become the leader of a united national effort, I was entitled to consider whether he possessed the qualifications necessary for his high office. I had to ask myself whether his public record was such as to inspire the people of Australia to maximum unstinted effort in time of national emergency."

Thus he prefaces an openly vicious attack on Menzies, wherein, contrary to his expressed purpose of examining Menzies' "public record", he brings charges based on matters that are, in two out of three cases, of private concern to the accused. He bases his judgments of Menzies' unfitness on three incidents: (1) Menzies resigned his portfolio of Attorney General 24 days previous. (Page charges that this action was a "desertion" that cost millions of pounds because valuable programmes were left undirected); (2) Menzies made a speech 24 weeks ago in Sydney, which Page regards as an attack on the party leader, Prime Minister Lyons; (3) Menzies resigned his commission in the Melbourne University Regiment 24 years ago and had not gone to war. [This last charge was received with cries of "That is dirt!" from one of the members.]

Ethical proof plays a large part in Menzies' reply: he points out the inappropriate, unparliamentary nature of this "most extraordinary speech", describing it as an intemperate expression of Page's political opinions "as Leader of the Country Party", and not the statement of a responsible prime minister. The rashness of the attack extends to its delivery "at a most inappropriate time", when "difficult problems" must be "attacked successfully only by a concerted effort". Menzies casts doubt on the character and intelligence of Earle Page, who seems ready to jeopardize the tentative stability of the interim government in gratification of personal motives.

Recalling "whispers occasionally about the reasons for the refusal of the Country Party to co-operate with me in the formation of a government", Menzies declares the reasons "not only offensive and personal, but also paltry". In contrast to the pettiness of his opponents, Menzies promises to speak "with due restraint—indeed, with more restraint than I might have felt disposed to display on another occasion".

In refusing to descend to the level of his opponents, Menzies enhances his own integrity.

He denies any ulterior motive in resigning as Attorney-General (though it was a move which effectively freed him for appointment as Prime Minister), saying that he had quit his post because of the Government's failure to implement a national insurance scheme, concerning which "I had given a specific pledge in writing to my electors". Thus he attempts to establish his integrity. He is undeterred by an interruption at this point, remarking that "in due course, the honourable gentleman may have an opportunity to give his [views]. After all, I am the person who has been attacked—nobody else". This illustrates his use of sarcasm in coping with parliamentary exchanges. Nothing stops the development of his argument, and in making a witty reply he seems invincible to attack. In most instances of this nature Menzies does not turn off the attack with a mild tone, and his stinging replies force the point of the remarks back on his opponent, yet these episodes probably chagrined those who instigated them without building up much ethical proof for the speaker.

Defending his conduct in this matter, Menzies asks: "Is it a contemptible thing for a man to keep his word? Is it the mark of a coward for a man to keep his word on an issue which is far from popular? I have no apologies to offer for my resignation. On the contrary, I regard it as one of the more respectable actions of my public life." These rhetorical questions name the qualities which all his hearers would acknowledge to be essential in a public servant, and so Menzies establishes the probity of his character by identifying himself with these virtues.

Menzies calls the second charge "an amazing effort at ingenuity". Recalling the circumstances of the speech, he wonders "whether any honourable gentleman was present on that occasion and heard the speech?" In it he had made the point that the test of a successful democracy was leadership, and loyalty to that leadership and the context of the remark "was a homily which I was addressing to myself and every other person in Australia who occupied any public position involving leadership of the people". Having stated the facts of the case, he declares, "I am not responsible for the manner in which my views may have been twisted". At a loss to know the source of such misinterpretations, he points out that "conversations which I had with my late leader and friend were completely inconsistent with any suggestion that he regarded my speech as an attack upon him". He has shown the harmlessness of his words, demonstrated their interpretation as such by the man he was said to have maligned, and turned the malicious aspersions from himself to his opponent.

Menzies says that the charge of his shirking military duty while a university student is "no novelty. It represents a stream of mud through which I have waded at every election campaign in which I have participated". The charge "You did not go to the war" may as conveniently be directed "to some members of the party led by the right honourable gentleman" [Page]. Menzies tries to show that his opponent lacks good judgment and a sense of propriety in prying "into the private reasons for the actions of other people", and notes that his accuser "discovered some facts concerning my action at the time he mentions, but failed to discover others", thus suggesting Page's dishonesty in his use of evidence. Menzies states that the true nature of the case was that, "in common with other young men . . . [I] was a trainee under the then existing system of compulsory training. . . . When my period of university training expired, my activity in connexion with the system also expired. I did not resign anything." This is a blunt statement and Menzies insists on his right to conduct his personal life on his own terms: "I . . . had to answer the extremely important questions—Is it my duty to go to the war, or is it my duty not to go? The answers to those questions cannot be made on the public platform.

Those questions relate to a man's intimate, personal and family affairs . . ." He shows his awareness of the situation and rebukes his opponent for artlessly rehearsing the same criticisms that have been made so often.

In concluding his speech, Menzies expresses his distaste at the "very disagreeable" attack and asks his audience to appraise him by "the only judgment as to a man's capacity, a man's courage, a man's fortitude that has any relevance to his public conduct . . . the judgment of the people who have known him and worked with him". Thus he attempts to counteract the deleterious impressions of his character. In his final appeal he expresses his belief that he is "capable of leading them", saying, "I am vain enough to hope that I have capacity enough to discharge that trust, and in the discharge of it I shall exhibit none of those miserable attributes . . . suggested by the Prime Minister in the most remarkable attack that I have ever heard in the whole of my public career."

His conclusion is decidedly an appeal to the fair-mindedness of his hearers; however, it also reflects Menzies' use of ethical proof. He is content to submit his case to the scrutiny of others, confident that their good judgment of him will counteract the aspersions of Earle Page. In this case the limitations of such an appeal are evident in the political context of the situation: Menzies may reinforce the sympathies of his fellow party members, but the extent to which he could hope to influence the opinion of Earle Page and the Country Party is questionable for James Jupp, writing in *Australian Party Politics*, says that "Menzies was political anathema to the Country Party leaders . . ."⁵ On the day that Menzies was elected head of the United Australia Party, the Parliamentary Country Party resolved that:

In spite of past harmonious co-operation in government with the United Australia Party and a willingness to continue similar co-operation to maintain stable government, the Party is definitely unable to co-operate in a government with the Hon. R. G. Menzies, K.C., as its Prime Minister; nor is it willing to give any undertaking to support such a government if it be formed.⁶

John Curtin, the Leader of the Opposition, spoke to denounce the "personal aspects of the controversy", declaring he had "no confidence whatever in either the United Australia Party or the Country Party".

Kevin Perkins writes that "the attack not only made members embarrassed, but shocked the nation".⁷

In his recent autobiography Menzies recollects the events in the House and the effects of the Page speech:

Page, who had no friendly feelings towards me, was furious. His temper, which he could seldom control, got the better of him. On the floor of the House, speaking still as Prime Minister, he made a bitter and entirely false attack upon me; in the making of which he did himself more harm than he did me. Several of his own party members sat apart thereafter, to mark their disapproval of his performance.

My wife was in the gallery when this abuse was hurled at me . . . [She] never forgave him and never spoke to him again.⁸

And Sir Earle Page himself has written that his speech "gave the newspapers a field day. I at once became the object of vigorous and hostile comment . . . my words were studied, dissected, and interpreted with an absorption seldom equalled in Australian journalism, their reiteration, while aimed at me, only fixed the role of Menzies in the public mind".⁹

This exchange did not mark the end of Menzies' difficulties: "the United Australia Party was itself in a state of turmoil. Menzies' leadership was accepted only

grudgingly.”¹⁰ He formed a coalition government with the Country Party, re-organizing the structure of his cabinet twice in two years to achieve harmony. His willingness to forget personal matters in the interests of governmental stability is shown by the fact that he subsequently included Earle Page in his Cabinet as Minister for Commerce and Transport.

As Prime Minister of Australia, Menzies declared war on Germany in his speech of 3 September 1939,¹¹ within an hour of the British declaration. In this speech he gives a detailed examination of the events leading to the creation of a state of war between England and Germany, including the role of Australia in this action. Participation in World War I had made Australia aware of the hardships of war; distance from Europe made her reluctant to participate in European quarrels. Australia, “like the peoples of the other Dominions and their governments, had backed appeasement to the hilt”.¹²

Perhaps sensing his countrymen’s mental unpreparedness for war, Menzies used the speech to set out the complete details of the diplomatic correspondence between England and Germany prior to the declaration of war, remarking at the same time on the role he played in representing the Australian Government. He needed to establish the inevitability of Australia’s commitment to the war. Another consideration which must have influenced the approach Menzies took in this speech was his awareness of the growing criticism of his conservative political regime. Conservative politicians had controlled the Government since 1931, and as Australians recovered from the depression they felt they needed a government which would provide greater security for the average citizen and independence from too much overseas fiscal and political control. Thus, Menzies also needed to establish the good faith of his Government in setting aside domestic programmes in order to pursue the war.

The speech is therefore matter-of-fact; it is largely a recital of facts, not an impassioned call to arms. Its organization shows a brief introduction that conveys a tone of calm acceptance of the role Australia must take in the war, and a resolution to carry out the role successfully. The body of the speech is almost tediously lengthy, as every detail of the diplomatic events leading to the state of war is reviewed. The conclusion is by far the most emotional part of the speech: it appeals to Australians’ national honour, creates goodwill for the speaker, and concludes with the rhetorically commonplace and classic hope that the course of the war will be swift, and its victories secure.

Ethical proof is used conservatively, yet effectively, throughout the speech. Menzies wishes to make it quite clear that he has not irresponsibly led his countrymen into war—that Australia’s declaration of hostilities has been justified by a very real threat. He wishes them to conclude this for themselves on the basis of their own examination of the facts. In providing his audience with the facts he is establishing goodwill and demonstrating his reliability: “In order that honourable members may have before them, and in order that we may have on record, some accurate statement of the affairs leading up to this tragic consequence I am today laying on the table a White Paper, which contains the relevant documents exchanged between the Governments, together with such explanatory matter as may serve to connect one document with another.”

Continuing his introduction he establishes his own credibility by refusing to promise an easy outcome to the war: “Nobody can foretell the course of events. Nobody can foretell how this war is going to be fought, what special dangers Australia may encounter, or what are the best services which we can render to Great Britain and the Empire.” Menzies makes a patently candid appraisal of the situation; the appeal for service enhances his purpose by associating Australia with the cause of justice and recalling her past honours in dutiful service to the

Crown. The closing phrases of the introduction underline this appeal and create a favourable impression of Menzies by identifying him with the national honour and justice: "but we do know that we are together in this struggle, and we are confident that our unity and determination, being based upon justice, are bound to succeed."

Much of the ethical proof is employed indirectly; i.e., by associating Australia with what is virtuous, Menzies implies his own virtue, since he is the national leader. This method of establishing ethical proof is evident in the body of the speech, also, when he recalls the series of broken German promises, assigning blame to her and indirectly giving praise to Australia. He seeks to create a favourable impression of his own intentions and abilities when he recalls his role in the negotiations:

. . . I can say for myself that I took the opportunity on that Sunday to convey to the British Government what I thought were the views not only of the Government of Australia but also of the great majority of the people of Australia. What I said to Mr Chamberlain I repeated in substance on subsequent occasions in relation to the circumstances as they developed.

Menzies stresses that he neither seeks reckless entry into war, nor condones German aggression: "I went further and suggested that it should be emphasized that there was amongst all the British peoples a genuine desire for good relations with Germany, but this desire was not inconsistent with the determination to fight Germany in what seemed a just cause . . ."

In his reiteration of faith in a negotiated solution, Menzies demonstrates his sincere desire for peace:

. . . it would be a tragedy if we should fight, each believing his cause to be just when unprejudiced discussion and desire to understand each other's point of view might have avoided it. . . . I would not dismiss proposals made by Herr Hitler simply because they were vague or occasionally meaningless . . . our approach to the problem should be liberal and generous so long as generosity was at our own expense. . . .

He also creates a favourable impression of his character when he insists that Poland should receive fair treatment: ". . . we must not connive at a Polish settlement which would leave Poland at such a disadvantage in the negotiations as would render it probable that its future history would resemble that of Czechoslovakia." This "liberal and generous approach to the problem" was contained in the Note sent to Germany by England—"a document which exhibited a really earnest desire to arrive at a settlement".

Closing his documentation of events, Menzies ascribes blame fully to Germany, saying, "had Germany not desired war, there would not be a war today in Europe", and calls for "a clear-cut condemnation of Germany". Even here he is reluctant to indict the whole German population: "I cannot believe that what we may term Hitlerism, as exhibited in these negotiations, can possibly represent the free will and free decision of any civilized community." He thus captures a nice balance between too little blame of the enemy and too much. Wholesale, unrestrained accusation would have made him seem a ranting demagogue, as unethical and irresponsible in his speaking as any dictator. This is essentially a reasoned speech and Menzies clearly does not wish to incite inflammatory reactions in his audience.

The Conclusion to the speech opens with an avowal by Menzies to permit free expression of opinion in Parliament: "However long this conflict may last, I do not seek a muzzled Opposition. Our institutions of free speech and free criticism must go on." He hesitates to invoke any restrictive measures, however the wartime

situation might permit their institution, which in the long run would weaken the vigour of Australia's parliamentary system: "It would be a tragedy if we found that we had fought for freedom and fair play and the value of the human soul, and won the war only to lose the things we were fighting for. Consequently, I shall welcome criticism; but I do want to emphasize that our great task, however long this struggle may endure, is in common. If we remember that, all criticism will find its right place and its true perspective." Menzies' clear statement on this topic surely makes untenable the charge, smacking of partisan cynicism, that he did his best to undermine the parliamentary function in Australia. His announced toleration of dissent and willingness to permit public scrutiny of his actions further demonstrate his goodwill to the public. His final statement is an expression of the hope that the war "may be won so quickly as to permit a just peace, a peace that will really end war, and not a peace which will sow the dragon's teeth of bitterness and hatred and distrust".

Menzies' specific purpose in this speech was to persuade Parliament to approve the printing of the White Paper, and hence to ratify the Government's declaration of war against Germany. An important factor which affected his speech was the current Australian view which placed highest priority on domestic reforms, and regarded the Munich aftermath, in Chamberlain's words, as nothing more than "quarrels in a far-off country of which many had scarcely heard". He faced the problem of uniting Australians in an unwelcome war effort, although this problem was not as apparent at the time of the speech as it later became.

In dealing with his problems on this occasion Menzies used ethical proof in the following ways: (1) to establish his own good character by linking himself with a just, virtuous cause, and showing a genuine interest in maintaining peace; (2) to establish his intelligence by demonstrating a profound knowledge of the facts and the ability to make a wise interpretation of them and their outcome; (3) to demonstrate his goodwill to the audience by candidly inviting examination of his role in the declaration of hostilities, and indicating his willingness to hear criticism.

On 24 January 1941, Menzies left Australia to attend meetings of the War Cabinet in London, visiting Australian troops in the Middle East en route. He spent ten weeks in Great Britain, attending meetings of the War Cabinet and conferring with Churchill and other officials.

In these talks Menzies pointed out the growing menace of Japan, knowing that Australian reaction to such a threat would be withdrawal of support from Great Britain in order to defend her own soil.¹³ Menzies felt that the defences of Singapore were insufficient and made specific recommendations for reinforcing them—realizing that British and Commonwealth resources were already strained, and any effective war in the South Pacific would have to involve America.¹⁴ As he has stated, the official reaction to his proposal was reserved: "I kept coming back to this matter during the rest of my stay in England, but without material success."¹⁵ He then made a public speech in London urging formulation of a Japanese policy and expressing a desire for frank discussion on all sides.¹⁶ His persistence in this matter is evidence both of his political and military realism and of his sense of responsibility toward his country.

While returning home to Australia Menzies visited the United States, where he had talks with President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Menzies was convinced that American sympathies lay with the cause of Britain and her Commonwealth allies, and in the several speeches he made to Americans during his visit he reiterated that this was their struggle as well as others'; he felt that "the key of the door was in Roosevelt's hand; that, whatever he did, the people would back him".¹⁷ Of his discussions with Roosevelt, he has written, "I was left in no doubt—though there were no actual words of commitment—that America would not stand by

and see Australia attacked".¹⁸ In another instance Menzies had apparently voiced the message of the Australian people effectively.

On his return to Australia he felt what he has described as "a lively sense of the gravity of our position",¹⁹ and set about planning for an organized war effort. Criticism of his government seemed to have abated. In England he had been troubled by the problems of securing a united war effort in Australia and felt that a National Government should be established, stating that "If my leadership and characteristics stood in the way. I should clearly efface myself".²⁰ But when John Curtin issued a press statement on 27 April 1941, in which he declared that "there is no political disunity in Australia in regard to the prosecution of the war",²¹ Menzies was pleased; he was further encouraged by a message from his colleagues in Australia, congratulating him on his efforts in England. This was the background for his speech to the House on 28 May 1941.²²

Ethical proof is not abundant in this speech: Menzies received no censure for his four months' stay abroad and he felt it unnecessary to justify his absence. He writes, "I had no doubt that things had gone reasonably peacefully during my absence. My own visit to England had clearly been well received."²³ Criticism of his visit was raised several months later, not at the time of his return.

In his Introduction Menzies says that his trip has been "the most valuable experience of my life", and hopes that his impressions will "be of value to this House". In his desire to bring the facts directly to his audience he is showing goodwill. He does not have to impress his audience with the importance of his subject; he does try, however, to impart a realization of the value of his own efforts when he lists the twenty-one countries "in which I was able to have some discussion and make some investigation". Menzies describes himself as "much more than a mere sightseer", and as "astonished to realize in how many of those countries Australia has some specific interest and how important to us are their policies and actions".

Imparting a world view of affairs to Australians was probably not easy. However, Menzies' interest in establishing wider horizons for his countrymen shows his ability to analyze Australia's problems and to grasp basic issues. Pacific defence was vital to his audience, and Menzies indicates his vigilant attention to this matter in "some discussion on the spot with those responsible for the defence of Singapore, which is one of the great key strategic places of the world from the Australian point of view". Menzies further builds goodwill for himself by describing his visits to Australian troops in the Middle East.

He proceeds to a description of his activities in London; his impressions of the English and their leaders; the general progress of the war. He does not outline any disposition for the speech, but the material is generally arranged chronologically. Throughout the speech he evokes admiration for the courage of the English; praises the mettle of Australian combat troops; exhorts the audience to greater sacrifice in the war effort. The fact that his statements are made from first-hand observations of the events and people he describes adds to his authority as a speaker.

He does not doubt Australia's capacity for waging war, but he does fear that political factionalism will hamper her efforts. In the conclusion of his speech he describes himself as "sick at heart at having to come back to play politics"; he insists that he is "offering no criticism [of] any party", and "we must have the proper machinery for an effective attack upon this problem". The machinery to which he refers is the "machinery of state", and he fears it will be upset by lack of co-operation.

Attempting to mollify the effect of his words, Menzies asks that members "not impute to me any desire to criticize the effectiveness of the co-operation which

I have received from the leader of the Labor Party. I have always acknowledged the value of that co-operation. I have at all times paid tribute to the attitude of my opponents." He declares that consideration for the welfare of Australia has prompted his statements. His intention is to conciliate his audience by showing that he is acting in their best interests.

He does not mention the formation of a National Government, which he had proposed when he was in England, but this is clearly the implicit solution he sees to Australia's parliamentary disunity and her unco-ordinated war effort. That Parliament could not see the need for such a government was apparently a clear proof to Menzies "that the realities of this war have not yet struck home". A National Government had been formed in England, "and there no political party has abandoned its identity, though all are co-operating. . . . I found them all animated by a common determination to preserve the freedom of their people."

The remainder of his speech is a plea to put away "the marching and counter-marching of politics" as it "must necessarily distract the minds of the country's leaders from the duties which at this time should be paramount". He implores his hearer to "put all these things away. . . . forget these differences"; the end of the war will bring time to "resume the mock battle of politics".

His conclusion shows extensive use of emotional proof, which also establishes ethical proof to the extent that it shows good sense, good character, and goodwill. Throughout his speech he has attempted to establish his good character by basing his authority on his personal experience; showing that he is sincere in his inquiry; and associating himself with what is good and expedient for his audience. In the conclusion he seeks to establish his intelligence by displaying a sufficient knowledge of Australia's problems and world events.

In referring to his own political difficulties, however, I am not so sure that he is using common sense. At the time the speech was delivered there seemed to be parliamentary willingness to unite in the war effort. If such unity actually existed, Menzies' plea for establishment of a National Government might have been interpreted as a stratagem for solidifying his own political career by allowing him to remain as prime minister.

The speeches selected for this paper were chosen because they permitted an examination of Menzies' use of ethical proof, and because the circumstances surrounding them gave the speaker the opportunity to deliver a purposeful, substantive speech. The speech of 20 April 1939, was significant because it forced him to defend himself in an immediate reply to a personal attack. The charges he faced in the speech were significant, in that they were used against him many times in his political career. The speech presents Menzies in what was to be a typical role during his first term as prime minister: establishing his qualifications to lead Australia. The speech of 6 September 1939, shows Menzies leading his country into an unwelcome war that he realizes will require the postponement of important domestic programmes. In the speech of 28 May 1941, he speaks under conditions when his personal prestige should have been exceedingly high. The threat of political ruin and personal abuse is still there, however, and Menzies senses it.

An examination of the parliamentary record during Menzies' Government reveals a great many occasions when he found it necessary to use ethical proof, and the ways in which he used this proof show varying degrees of effectiveness. There seemed to be little confidence in his leadership; members seized the opportunity to attack him on any issue or any occasion, from awarding contracts for an addition to the General Post Office in Sydney to accusations of installing microphones in the House for monitoring their private conversations. A passage from the house debates on Menzies' speech of 28 May 1941, indicates the kind of

abuse which his opponents employed. The speaker is Mr Brennan, the Member for Batman; he is referring to Australians' realization of the seriousness of war:

... the people of this country maintain an attitude of cheerfulness. They live out their lives believing that they serve no useful purpose by listening to jeremiads preached in boudoirs by slippered Prime Ministers who expose themselves to no greater peril than the peril of lecturing and hectoring other people.²⁴

In reviewing these three speeches of Menzies it should be noted that there are several factors which influenced his speaking: one is certainly his thorough education and early high distinction in law, which developed his talents for speaking in situations where much was at stake. No doubt that early success made him an object of certain jealousies, while it spurred his ambition. Legal training gave him readiness in debate, but little patience with non-reasoned ways of solving problems. His character and personality were shaped by these factors, so that he found it difficult to be content with anything mediocre. He often seemed discontented with the modest scope of the Australian parliament, but had no difficulty making his way among important world figures and English royalty.

Menzies' own writing sheds some light on these considerations, as he recalls the period of his first Ministry:

It would be stupid to deny that these events did not constitute a bitter blow to my pride, and even to my self-respect. In a very great crisis in my country's history, I had been weighed in the balance and found wanting. And yet I felt that I had done a great deal. I had not spared myself; I had worked seven days a week for at least twelve hours a day. This was, perhaps an error, for it so absorbed my mind that I soon appeared to be aloof from my supporters in Parliament and to be lacking in human relations. But when the blow fell, it was like the stroke of doom; everything was at an end. . . .

I had enjoyed a very rapid rise to the top position. . . . There was not much precedent for this kind of advancement, and perhaps some resentment of it. True, I worked hard, though some of the press commentators promoted the usual legend that I was a "brilliant idler".

But with so much to do officially, I do not doubt that my knowledge of people, and how to get along with them and persuade them, lagged behind. I was still in that state of mind in which to be logical is to be right, and to be right is its own justification. I had yet to acquire the common touch, to learn that human beings are delightfully illogical but mostly honest, and to realize that all-black and all-white are not the only hues in the spectrum.²⁵

These statements are invaluable in the consideration of the deliberate and extensive use made of ethical proof in his First Government speeches, and of its relative lack of effect.

NOTES

¹ Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. R. Hackforth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), pp. 160-161.

² Baldwin, *Ancient Rhetoric and Poetic* (New York: Macmillan, 1924), p. 11.

³ Thonssen and Baird, *Speech Criticism* (New York: Ronald Press, 1948), p. 386.

⁴ Commonwealth of Australia, *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 159, 15th Parliament, 1st Session. 20 April 1939.

⁵ James Jupp, *Australian Party Politics* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1964), p. 16.

⁶ Sir Earle Page, *Truant Surgeon* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1963), p. 274.

⁷ Kevin Perkins, *Menzies: Last of the Queen's Men* (San Francisco: Tri-Ocean Press, 1968), p. 79.

⁸ R. G. Menzies, *Afternoon Light* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1968), p. 13.

- ⁹ Page, *op cit.*, p. 279.
¹⁰ Jupp, *op cit.*, p. 17.
¹¹ Commonwealth of Australia, *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 160, 15th Parliament, 1st Session, September 3, 1939.
¹² A. G. L. Shaw, *The Story of Australia* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p. 253.
¹³ Shaw, *op cit.*, p. 254.
¹⁴ Menzies, *Afternoon Light*, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.
¹⁵ *Ibid.*
¹⁶ Menzies, "The Problem of the Pacific". Speech delivered to the Foreign Press Association, London, 3 March 1941. Printed in *To the People of Britain at War* (New York: Longmans Green, 1941), pp. 21-28.
¹⁷ Menzies, *Afternoon Light*, *op. cit.*, p. 134.
¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 135.
¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.
²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 50.
²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.
²² Commonwealth of Australia, *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 167, 15th Parliament, 1st Session, May 28, 1941.
²³ *Ibid.*, p. 52.
²⁴ Commonwealth of Australia, *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 167, 15th Parliament, 1st Session, June 19, 1941.
²⁵ Menzies, *Afternoon Light*, pp. 56-57.

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FRANK DALBY DAVISON'S LAST BOOK

Before he died in May last year Frank Dalby Davison had the satisfaction of knowing that the novel which he regarded as "the major and culminating effort in my writing life"* was finding a wide and sympathetic audience. *The White Thorn-tree* took him over twenty years to write, and is the most ambitious of what he called his "essays in human understanding".* Although very different in subject-matter from the works by which he is best known, it is an expression of his deepest pre-occupations throughout his writing life. The earlier works are varied and on the smallish scale: this novel is a mammoth, the dimensions of a trilogy, longer even than *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*; and it is, like Joseph Furphy's *Such is Life*, an attempt to give what Tom Collins called "a fair picture of Life, as that engaging problem has presented itself to me".

Frank Davison had realized that *The White Thorn-tree*, which meant so much to him, might never find a publisher, despite his reputation as the author of *Man-Shy* and *Dusty*, and despite the success of his collection of short stories, *The Road to Yesterday*, in the 1960s. Local publishers were daunted by *The White Thorn-tree*—it was too big, and too much concerned with sex. Remembering how publishers had refused *Man-Shy* in 1931, Frank Davison felt that he had come full circle. Once again he was ready to take on the financial risk of publishing his own work. Finally that wasn't necessary, as the National Press, a Melbourne printery which had published *Angry Penguins* at one time, offered to issue the novel in a limited edition of 500 copies, to be sold privately.

That edition sold out quickly, and the publishing firm of Ure Smith has since re-issued the novel in two volumes, the first of which appeared only a few weeks before Frank Davison's death. *The White Thorn-tree* is now available for all to read in an attractive format. Although it is over 500,000 words long, and the narrative moves slowly, it is, for the most part, smooth-flowing and easy to read; and no-one should be put off by its bulk.

"I am not a stylist, not consciously; I just fix my eye on my subject and try to write about it in the way that it seems to demand", Frank Davison once told me in a letter; and the varied but consistently unpretentious style of his several works bears out his claim. To anyone who has known him, the most striking aspect of the writing in *The White Thorn-tree* is the way that it conveys his robust personality—the man is there in the work, in the shifts of tone from the gravely factual to the ironic, in the slightly dated turns of phrase, in the shrewd, pithy observations on people, and, above all, in the almost blunt honesty with which life is viewed. He is throughout aiming at plainness and a sense of the ordinary, determined not to "write-up" or inflate his subject. He does not avoid flatness,

however, and one often wishes that the writing were more sensuous or more dramatic. The polite circumlocutions in the sexual descriptions are certainly an inoffensive way of overcoming a period difficulty, but it seems a pity that they were necessary.

The subject of *The White Thorn tree* is the sexual behaviour of men and women. As he explains in the Foreword,** Frank Davison intends to portray the conflict of natural impulse and social conventions. This is not a new theme, but Davison's treatment of it represents a kind of breakthrough in the Australian context. Tracing the lives of a group of middle-class Sydney people he insists upon the physical facts of their sexuality, upon the sort of detail that was omitted or scarcely hinted at in Australian writing of the past, and now, more often than not, tends to be included for its sensational value.

In the decade of *Another Country*, *Couples* and *Portnoy's Complaint* explicit descriptions of the varieties of sexual behaviour and the naming of parts are no longer unusual. But Frank Davison's novel was begun in 1946, the year in which *Love Me Sailor* was declared to be an "obscene libel"; and it concentrates on just those aspects of our daily lives about which Australian writers have been most inhibited. In its original conception and in its assumptions, this is a novel which pre-dates the current public attitudes to sex in literature and in life.

The White Thorn tree probably wouldn't have been thought fit for general publication only a few years ago, but in many respects it is a novel out of its time. "It is possible that *The White Thorn tree* will eventually be read, not as a novel of the late sixties but as a belated one of the late thirties", its author has remarked, adding, "I'd settle for that".* To an audience with a taste for experiment and sophistication, it must appear solidly old-fashioned, having more in common with the technique of *The Old Wives' Tale* than that of, say, *The Aunt's Story*. Its effects are gained by the slow accumulation of detail to form related and contrasted patterns, which are commented upon by the omniscient narrator. It is a bulky novel, and the obvious problem for the novelist is how to keep control of the material without losing the range and inclusiveness that the theme requires. Davison does not always avoid over-schematization—in the early part of the novel one is especially conscious of the author's manipulating hand. The young Jeff and Norma Mitchell, around whom the action centres initially, are introduced with what amounts to a dossier on their sex lives, in which parallelism has been carried to extremes; and several of the main characters appear to have been included in order to illustrate a type of behaviour.

Frank Davison's approach to the writing of fiction in *The White Thorn tree* is in the tradition of the Naturalists: he documents the sexuality of commonplace people in the manner of an investigator. The novel can be read as a criticism of an especially unenlightened society, but it is least successful on the level of the social problem novel. For instance, characters like David Munster (eventually hanged for rape) and Roger Tesdale (who suicides after killing one of his wife's lovers) are more case studies than living people in whose fate we are sympathetically interested: they seem to be too obviously illustrating the author's arguments. However, while he is critical of the social attitudes of the 1930's, Frank Davison is not so naive as to suggest that social changes would put an end to individual sexual troubles. At the heart of *The White Thorn tree* is a painful truth which the reader is brought to acknowledge: that no set of conventions or laws can ensure man's sexual happiness.

The real strength of the novel derives from that insight, and is located in the account of middle-aged love, which occupies the greater part of the narrative. It is a theme as old as Euripedes—the destructive effect of sexual passion. Davison dispassionately details the torments and dreams and loneliness of the group of

middle-aged couples—the Mitchells, the Gillespies, and the Tesdales—whose domesticity is shattered by their attempt to grasp at a happiness they have not achieved in marriage. He sees with disturbing clarity how people cheat and use one another in their sexual need, and how far short of the romantic ideal they dream of is the frustrating reality they enact. The contrast between romantic love and sexual necessities becomes the dominant theme in the later stages of the novel. The white thorn tree of the title is the symbol of the unattainable ideal love in pursuit of which men and women play out the tragi-comedy of sexual deceit and failure. Davison doesn't spare us by glossing over the facts. The trivial, the sordid, the vulgar and the farcical all have their place in this narrative. To leave them out would be to tell less than the truth as Davison sees it.

Although there are amusing episodes in *The White Thorn tree*, it leaves an impression of sadness and disappointment. Of all the characters, only Tom Gillespie and the widowed Iris achieve a happy union: they have missed "the unblemished romance which the poets sing" but they have struck "a bargain with life", accepting their imperfections and inadequacies. The novel ranges widely, but it doesn't finally capture the largeness of life. Davison's world, it could be objected, is too exclusively one of sexual failures and misfits; and although it is a world of married couples with children, very little sense of family life is created.

These limitations are partly the result of Davison's commitment to a purpose which circumscribes the play of his creative imagination. There is, in *The White Thorn tree*, a strong strain of didacticism. It is a work directed at the attitudes of the reader, to whom it is respectfully dedicated; it is intended to jolt us into recognizing ourselves; it is, as Frank Davison himself once remarked, "a cautionary tale". This conscious design tends to restrict his handling of character: he is inclined to present his people as sexual specimens, neglecting the complex interplay of motives and feelings and relationships which make up the tissue of living. A sense of "man alive" (to use Lawrence's phrase) does not emerge from the novel, despite the care with which the realistic detail is assembled.

The White Thorn tree appeals to me less than Frank Davison's earlier writing, and it isn't likely, I suppose, that it will ever be as popular as *Man-Shy*. Yet, whatever the criticisms of the book's artistry, there is no doubt of the strength and honesty of feeling with which the book is written. At a time when "sex" has replaced "romance" as the indispensable ingredient in the recipe for a best-seller, *The White Thorn tree* impresses as a sincere and deeply serious study of sexual relations—and, considering all the circumstances of its writing, as a courageous endeavour.

It seems to me to have been characteristic of Frank Davison that he should have faced up to such a difficult and challenging theme, and that he should have carried the work through to its conclusion in spite of discouragements and doubts. He cared more for the integrity of his writing than for immediate success with the public.

As a writer Frank Dalby Davison was rather like the red heifer of his *Man-Shy*—he prized freedom and defied fences, and in *The White Thorn tree* he tackled a fence that none of his Australian contemporaries had dared to jump.

NOTES

* Quoted from a speech delivered by Frank Dalby Davison at a dinner at Union House, University of Melbourne, on 12 November 1968, on the occasion of the publication of *The White Thorn tree*, and published in *Southerly*, No. 2 of 1969.

** The Foreword to *The White Thorn tree* was published first in *Westerly*, No. 3 of 1967, together with an interview with Frank Dalby Davison and extracts from a work which was never completed. Readers of that issue should note that on page 17, lines 26 and 28, "facetiously" has been incorrectly transcribed as "factitiously"; and on page 21, line 4, the title of the book should be *Dusty*, not *Man-Shy*.

REVIEWS

R. M. Younger: *Australia and the Australians*, Rigby, 1970. 869 pp., several maps, no plates. \$10.95.

The immediate response to having this tome dropped upon one's desk is to ask: "Why another general history of Australia?" There have been so many already, most so general as to be suitable for only the most general reading and each repeating the generalizations and perpetrating the errors of those which have gone before. The jacket of this one proudly boasts of being "A New and Concise History". As the prospect of 823 pages of text being concise is somewhat tantalizing, to say the least, one wades in. Besides, the paper is nice and the type is pleasant.

But is it "new history"? The bibliography indicates the work is a survey of published material, rather than a product of original research. However, it is heartening to note that the majority of sources used were published since the late 1950s. Many of the works of Australia's leading historians have evidently been consulted and several of the newer works covering economic and social development have been listed for further reading. With slightly raised heart, one turns to the text.

There is little in the text which could be counted as "new history". For instance the same generalizations are made about the discovery of Australia as were made by Wood in 1922. Assumptions made then which have since had doubt cast upon them remain unqualified. However, by the time Younger deals with the infant Sydney town, he has begun to incorporate some of the more recent fruits of historical research. From Chapter 4 on, the work could be regarded as the most modern of the general histories of Australia, though the material presented is not original in any sense of the word.

One gathers that Younger is intrigued by the question of the real character of Australia and at last felt able to concentrate the results of his many years of research, travel and interviewing in one definitive book. We look, then, for an analysis of the great Australian psyche. There are glimpses of this. While the development of the motor car is being related we are told:

The four gallon "tin" (the method by which petrol had been sold from earlier days) was no longer the only means of delivery; from the mid-1920s the motorist could drive up beside a tall roadside "bowser" and see the petrol hand-pumped into a graduated glass bowl before it gravitated down to the petrol tank. (p. 518)

By mixing such cameos of the ordinary and mundane aspects of life with the details of politics and economics, Younger does try to make his narrative "come alive". The technique might succeed in a shorter work but in this case the characteristics of life become inundated by the dry detail of political move and counter move.

So much for the claims made for the book by the publishers.

Younger, himself, only confesses to wanting to tell the story of "the ideas, events, and people shaping Australia's destiny down the years, and particularly with the central experience of the Australian people: the continuing process of settling a continent". (Preface)

He brings to this task his experience as a journalist and an editor of encyclopedias. The book shows evidence of this experience as well as an enthusiasm and a sympathy for the task. As an extended piece of writing it gains a sense of coherence by reason of the narrative style, but reliance on this has contributed to a lack of penetrating analysis. Encyclopedia-like it covers a vast area; but encyclopedia-like it rarely penetrates beyond the superficial. It seems to fall between two stools; too long to be interesting reading and too general to be of scholarly significance.

B. N. PRIMROSE

OCTAGON LECTURES 1969: Man and his Environment. Edited by R. T. Appleyard. University of Western Australia Press, 1970. pp. XXII, 198. \$3.90.

No one who was present at the first Octagon Lecture is likely to forget the excitement and enthusiasm which marked this extremely important development in the activities of the University of Western Australia. Even the most time-worn and cynical were surprised and delighted to see the Octagon Theatre filled to over-

flowing with a very large number of students from all Faculties and a small sprinkling of University staff. This large audience obviously followed the lecture with the greatest interest and attention. That all this was no result of mere novelty was shown as the series progressed and as the numbers and the interest was fully maintained. A considerable proportion of the University was eager to take the opportunity to hear persons of academic eminence, both within and without the University, talk on subjects of general significance. It is no disrespect to the eminent outside speakers to suggest that particular interest was attached to hearing members of the University. The personality as well as the intellectual interests of the lecturers were revealed to many to whom they had been, at the most, names and this was a significant contribution to giving reality to the concept of the University as an intellectual community. A modern equivalent of the 19th Century University Sermon.

How far is this excitement revived or its validity confirmed by reading the lectures in published form? The answer is not much. A series of lectures delivered at weekly intervals can range over a very wide number of topics. As the Editor admits, there is no very precise unity to be found in the themes of the different lectures. The reader normally looks in a book for a greater precision of aim. The real difficulty is that a lecture is a lecture and a book is a book and that the two are not interchangeable. A good lecture by no means always lends itself to publication. The lecturer works within a time limit which is quite arbitrary as far as a published article goes. A good lecturer can, through the expression of his personality, awaken an interest in his audience in a subject in which they would normally show little concern. A good writer can do the same thing, but the methods he employs are quite different. All these Octagon Lectures were very good lectures. They do not all read equally well. Some give the impression of being thin and some are even a little embarrassing.

The problem is a general one. Professor Ziman has protested bitterly against the general assumption that it is desirable to publish the papers given at scientific conferences. His case is somewhat similar to that sketched above although expressed more powerfully and more forcefully. Another aspect is that there is so

much published on all subjects that the common core of shared reading which we imagine once defined the educated public has disappeared. It is not really a question of an information explosion. The greater part of what is written is either frank repetition or duplication which adds nothing essential to what is already known. This is where the lecture can prove its value, even though it takes much longer to sit through a lecture than to read the lecture when printed. In the spoken word, the man who has made a profound study of a subject can say what he thinks without having to justify every point he makes and without having to guard himself against future misinterpretations, or worry whether someone has said it before. His scientific rivals are unlikely to be seated in the audience and in any case the spoken word is fleeting. When the lecturer knows in advance that his lecture is going to be printed, then much of the spontaneity and freedom which marks a good lecture is at once made much more difficult. A good lecturer can well leave his audience unsatisfied. He sets up trains of thought and raises questions which the listener afterwards goes away to pursue in private conversation or even in systematic investigation. To the reviewer the most impressive lecture of all was that given by Dr McCall. It reads well but when read lacks the excitement and quality of the original lecture. It is not merely that the impressive and attractive personality of the lecturer does not make itself felt as strongly. A listener welcomes the simplified assertion. A reader demands a more qualified and complex approach. "After all", he may grumble in his ignorance, "there are authors who have maintained that it is not so easy, or so significant, permanently to reduce cholesterol levels as Dr McCall suggests and overweight is not always in direct proportion to the amount eaten or to the exercise taken. And how do we reconcile Professor Kidd's views on mental health with Dr McCall's figures on suicide?" No doubt, all these questions can be answered. The point is that they do not need to be answered in a series of lectures. They ought to be answered in a published work. To determine what information the ordinary intelligent man needs to know and how this information should be conveyed to him is one of the most important tasks which face our society. It may well be that the 19th Century solution of the weekly and the quarterly is still the best but

under modern economic conditions, established weeklies which go in for popularisation at a high level such as *New Scientist* have shown that they are not profitable enough for their publishers.

All this is not irrelevant to the work under review. The theme is man and his environment. It is a high sounding title and could be more accurately rendered "Man and a Few Fragments of his Environment". Part of modern man's environment is the enormous battering he receives from radio and television and newspapers, journals and books. Intellectual pollution is likely to prove at least as dangerous to man's survival as industrial pollution and by substituting for the spoken word which informs but does not clutter, a book of this character, the publishers have in their own small way added to this pollution.

LEONARD JOLLEY

Intimate Portraits and other Pieces: Essays and articles by Vance Palmer, selected with an introduction by H. P. Heseltine (Cheshire, 1969) and *Vance Palmer* by Harry Heseltine (University of Queensland Press, 1970).

Harry Heseltine's study of Vance Palmer and his collection of Palmer's essays, articles, portraits and pieces, will do much to redress the lack of real critical attention which Heseltine sees as the unfortunate lot of Palmer's generation of Australian writers; born too late for the critical "boom" centred on the writers of the 90's, too early for the critical interest in the growth of modernism around the 1940's.

Stylishly printed, workmanlike, sympathetic and engaged, both these volumes are, in many ways, models of a type of publication still lamentably rare in Australia.

If there are, in this study of Palmer and his writings, only tentative suggestions towards a deeper reading, Dr Heseltine has covered himself by his insistence that his aim is only to suggest some of the directions these explorations may take, and to go part of the way along the road.

And if I feel that both his tentativeness and his partisanship of Palmer have their roots rather in a shared sensibility than an objective critical approach, then I have no real way of proving it.

Dr Heseltine's strictures on the too facile labels that have been applied to Palmer's novels . . . social realism, pioneering and bush sagas . . . his insistence on the intimate and important relationship between Palmer's work and his concern for a national culture, are valid points and they are well worth making.

This collection of Palmer's *Bulletin* and *Meanjin* articles, his ABC broadcasts on *Writers I Remember*, show Vance Palmer at his best and most valuable as critic and man of letters, exhibiting that "trained poise of mind" he considered the rare mark of the civilized.

The late autobiographical *Intimate Portraits*, some sections hitherto unpublished, add up to a fascinating and intimate portrait of an Australian artist in boyhood and youth. The translucent style, the intimate, relaxed tone of voice seem to me to be the very peak of Vance Palmer's achievement as a writer.

They were written at a period when, in his short stories, and even in his Golconda trilogy, he was learning at last the richness and the power inherent in letting the birds of his imagination fly.

A careful reading of these *Intimate Portraits* would do much towards answering some of the tantalizing questions Dr Heseltine only suggests in his *Vance Palmer*.

I agree with Dr Heseltine that Palmer's career as a writer is "central to the sociology of Australian letters", and that it is unfair that he should be "written down as one who by his practical efforts made things easier for his successors". There is a lot more to Vance Palmer than this, and a lot that is crucial to our understanding of the pressures and limitations of the creative life, even in Australia today.

It is the grounds that Dr Heseltine chooses to attack the common case of the majority of Palmer's critics that I find unconvincing, the hints of more than special pleading, particularly in his concluding chapter.

Bias towards the negative, lack of force, tentativeness, timidity, lack of vitality, these phrases recur again and again in the criticism of Palmer's novels, and Dr Heseltine attacks what he calls all "the charitable misconstructions".

"This majority opinion is accurate in describing the effect of his failures", he writes, "inadequate in diagnosing symptoms rather than causes."

Fair enough! Yet Dr Heseltine's suggestions for diagnosis seem no more satisfactory than what has gone before, in fact they often appear to cloud the issues.

"What may appear in Palmer as a lack of vitality is not the failure of the normal creative energy of the novelist", he maintains, "it is the breakdown of a method and sensibility so unfamiliar in Australian writing as to have been regularly misconstrued, if not ignored."

Here the separation of creative energy from method and sensibility seems questionable, and "the breakdown of method and sensibility" the crucial and unexplained question.

According to Heseltine the main problem for the critic is in finding "the angle of vision apt for revealing the idiosyncratic quality and worth of Palmer's books".

There is an echo of this judgment in John Barnes' article "The Man of Letters", in the special 1959 Palmer issue of *Meanjin*.

"Palmer is an elusive writer who seldom shows his hand", Barnes says. "The themes in his writing can easily be missed because of the delicacy with which they are suggested in the movement of the action."

John Barnes then goes on to suggest that this is particularly so in the Palmer short stories, and that the elusive and delicate style is admirably suited to the short story form.

But it is Jack Lindsay, A. D. Hope and Palmer himself who Dr Heseltine sees as "charting the true map of Palmer's imagination".

In support of this he quotes Hope's statement in the *Southerly* article, Vance Palmer Reconsidered, No. 4, 1955, that Palmer rejected "mere insight for something more profound: vision. Primarily it is the vision of the poet", and Jack Lindsay's assertion, in the Palmer issue of *Meanjin*, that:

"He is a novelist of the stature to which we cannot deny the term greatness, even if it is possibly only in *Legend for Sanderson* and *Golconda* that all his qualities find full play in defining a complex pattern of spirit and social change."

Lindsay, who is passionately partisan, discusses "the intellectual vigour of the fiction", "a rich dialectic of conflict and growth", "a dynamic unity", and it is worth noting that he is speaking here of Palmer's novels, which are commonly considered to be inferior to his short stories.

Can we equate then Lindsay's assertion of "intellectual vigour" with Heseltine's "normal creative energy of the novelist", or does Heseltine, who is more cautious in his assessments than Jack Lindsay, mean that Palmer has the aspirations of the artist, but something goes wrong in the execution?

If so, then surely the division, although interesting for the critic, is useless as a gauge of the final worth of the work of art. Or is Heseltine rather saying that it is the reader and the critic's failure, because they are unable to find the right perspective angle by which to view the work?

Quoting a letter written by Vance Palmer to Clem Christesen, editor of *Meanjin*, on May 1, 1959, only ten weeks before he died, Dr Heseltine suggests that Palmer himself "should be allowed to hold out a final signpost toward the right reading of his books".

Rather than "a signpost towards the right reading" the quoted letter is perhaps some kind of a signpost towards understanding the climate of critical opinion, the attitudes, which surrounded Vance Palmer, and his own limitations as a creative human being, limitations which I consider fatally circumscribed him as an artist. Inevitable perhaps in the ingrown society of Australian writers and critics (particularly in 1959), the letter makes painful reading of a kind quite different to the pain of "accumulated hurt and protest of a lifetime's misunderstanding", as suggested by Heseltine.

The letter is in connection with John Barnes' article in the special edition of *Meanjin*, which had been shown to Palmer before publication.

"I am sorry I read John Barnes' article. It may seem churlish to react against a piece as brimming with generosity and goodwill, but that first deadly sentence fell like clods on my coffin. And if even half the strictures on my work were valid ('limited in tone, lacking force', 'material often dull', 'characters not imagined dramatically', 'range of sensibility narrow') there would be no excuse for the kind generalities at all. Unless the whole thing were to be regarded on another plane as a 'tribute to a "good Australian"'. "

Looking up the first sentence in Barnes' published article we find this: "For many years Vance Palmer has been the centre of the growing literary life of this country, during which time he has written novels, short stories,

poems, critical and biographical studies, and a great deal of uncollected journalism. But no mere summary of his published work can explain the significance of his place in Australian literature; for, as M. Barnard Eldershaw pointed out more than twenty years ago, Palmer is a man of letters, a statesman in the republic of writers."

The partial explanation comes in a footnote to Heseltine's Chapter 9: The first sentence was "apparently revised in accordance with Palmer's wishes."

This statement seems to me to show with brutal clarity the limitations imposed on Australian criticism, and the limitations of the Australian writer of reputation in the face of honest criticism. The "all friends together" syndrome of writers, critics and editors, with their interchanging of roles, inevitable in a small literary community made growth almost an impossibility.

The protection of a writer's limitations, the fatal conspiracy of silence, combined ironically to close Vance Palmer in that iron maiden of "tribute to a good Australian" he so despised.

This is part of the tragedy of Palmer's creative life, as it was part of the tragedy of other writers of his generation (e.g., Katharine Prichard).

Another letter to Christesen quoted by Dr Heseltine and dated July 20, 1955, seems merely to underline the tragedy:

"Perhaps I've been more silent than I should have been on public questions. And perhaps my main work lacks 'passion', as you imply. But what is 'passion'? I've seen it attributed to countless young writers who've got over the fever quickly. And I've kept some sort of fire alight for over fifty years!

This is swagger for which I ought to be struck dumb. But I'm tired of the way, over the years in Australia, the rather hysterical emotionalism of (say) Lloyd Ross, or the artificial gusto of (say) Lindsay and his young men has been taken for passion, when it's really an attempt to induce feeling by gestures."

True enough, but Vance Palmer was too fine a critic not to know that the passion Christesen was speaking of was not the spurious passion of hysterical emotionalism, or artificial gusto, it was a serious and perceptive criticism of his limitations.

"To have kept some sort of fire alight for over fifty years" was an achievement, particularly in those dreary years between the wars, but it was not enough to excuse his limitations.

The tone of these two letters seems to me to show only too clearly that Palmer was hurt by the criticism simply because he was too perceptive not to have known that they contained an important and bitter truth for him.

The hurt was not so much in the misunderstanding as in that truth.

"Palmer deliberately allowed himself to be possessed by the daemon of the ordinary", Dr Heseltine concludes. "Therein lies the paradox of his literary achievement; he was the artist of the usual, the illuminator of the everyday.

When his daemon deserted him, he could fall prey to all the flatness with which his critics have tasked him. When it returned, his work burned with a pale fire nourished by a slow wisdom, a ready compassion, and a uniquely personal hold on the humanist vision of the world."

A much more illuminating comment seems to me to be contained in Dr Heseltine's brief comments on the short story, *The Search*, from Palmer's collection, *Let the Birds Fly* (1955).

The Search is a story set in Barcelona in 1936 and is frankly autobiographical. It is about the corruption of the heart, about those who "shy away from conflict through softness of heart, through laziness, through sheer incapacity for pursuing things through to their logical end. How good to meet with such innocent corruption when caught in a jam".

Palmer understands this "innocent corruption", this bias towards the negative, because he shares it with his narrator, and this gives the story a sardonic insight which jars and frightens because of the unknown depth of this corruption, depths of which the author is cynically, ironically and amorally aware.

"Nowhere else in his fiction did Palmer make such direct acknowledgment of those qualities of mind and imagination which could interpose themselves between himself and his highest achievement", writes Heseltine.

Essentially an artist, a solitary, combining within himself the lonely Richard Mahoney-type figure who was his scholteacher father, and the mandarin culture values of his English orientated family, reading Dickens in the Bundaberg schoolhouse at night, Palmer tried to

heal himself by communication with his country. In the idealized human warmth of the mass, using a style deficient in passion and individuality, a deliberately "common voice", he saw himself as a "litterateur of the tribe".

He tried to identify himself with the spirit of his country, but because that country was deficient spiritually, and there was no ideal audience of the imagination, he was forced to conform to its mores, to be both self-conscious and romantic about its limitations.

The effort of reconciliation is rather beautifully summed up by his wife, Nettie Palmer, critic, essayist and biographer in her own right.

In one of her *Talking it Over* essays in 1932 she writes:

"There is no standard way of being sensitive to wonder and beauty in the natural world. A navvy is just as likely as a company promoter to feel the wings of a rainbow bird brush his head with its dazzling flight through the air: more likely indeed, since the nature of his work leaves him open to such impressions."

Perhaps so, but neither company promoter nor navvy share the sensibility of the artist, and the only character in Palmer's short story, *The Rainbow Bird*, who feels the wings of the bird brush her head is the pre-adolescent Maggie; the navvy figure is represented by the Honey Man who, in his clumsy blindness and unthinking brutality, destroys the symbol, the moment of creative joy.

Vance Palmer's favourite poem from his collection, *The Camp* (1930), was a poem titled

These are my People. It is instructive to put a significant line out of that poem . . . "These are my people and I'm with them to the end" . . . against a revealing speech of self-explanation he puts into the mouth of Macy Donovan, the trade union leader who becomes Labor Premier, in the last volume of his Golconda Trilogy, *The Big Fellow* (1959).

"He was vaguely aware of a division within himself that was less a matter of ideas than of feeling. All his life he had been drawn towards the human warmth of the mass, all his life he had been held back by his contempt for other men, both those who opposed, and those who followed him."

In his sixties Palmer's walls began to grow windows, those pragmatic walls that Arthur Phillips so shrewdly spoke of in *The Australian Tradition*:

"The Australian writer in his need to identify himself with the spirit of his countrymen has accepted art within walls, without windows", wrote Phillips.

In *Let the Birds Fly* (1955) and *The Rainbow Bird and Other Stories* (1957) the birds were let out of their cages, and the girl-child figures represent some freeing of the spirit, a vision of art and imagination held for a precious instant before the burdens of maturity begin.

It was only in those last years that Vance Palmer shed the mask of the smiling public man, and found some enterprise in walking, at least partially, naked.

DOROTHY HEWETT

BY THE SEA

Through the pools of dappled shades and shadow
I trace the faint impression of my step
In the ashen haze of twilight, here
By the mottled granite sea. There is no love

Here, where the gull poises on the lip of the wind
And the sombre-grey waves linger, softly whispering.

R. A. MORAN

POEM

About the sea,
It is never as they claim,
Nor could it be
With our horizons so well defined.
Here, despotic Certainty
Perches like a crippled gull
Unsure upon a rock.

R. A. MORAN

*"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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