# westerly

a quarterly review price one dollar registered at gpo perth for transmission by post as a periodical

STORIES, POEMS, REVIEWS, ARTICLES

## a new correctional era ?

THE
# UNIVERSITY BOOKSHOP

AT THE UNIVERSITY, NEDLANDS
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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

FOR PROMPT ATTENTION - - RING 86 5578
86 5579

# westerly

## a quarterly review

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE: *Bruce Bennett, Peter Cowan, Dorothy Lilley, John Hay, Patrick Hutchings, Leonard Jolley, Margot Luke.*

ADVISORY COMMITTEE: *Professor Mervyn Austin, Mary Durack, Professor Allan Edwards, Nigel Prescott.*

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE: *Eric J. Edwards (Chairman), Keith V. Benwell, Leonard Jolley.*

*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 Committee.

Correspondence should be addressed to the Editorial Committee, *Westerly*, Department of English, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, Western Australia 6009 (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: $4.00 per annum, plus postage (Australia 40c, Overseas 80c per annum). Single copies mailed: $1.10. **Subscriptions should be made payable to "The University of Western Australia", and sent directly to The Bursar, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, Western Australia, 6009.**

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

## PATRICIA HACKETT PRIZE

The Patricia Hackett Prize for the best literary composition to be published in *Westerly* in 1970 has been awarded to Barbara York Main for her story "The Pyrophiles" in *Westerly* 1, May 1970.

The editors wish to thank Mr L. R. Burrows, Associate Professor of English at the University of Western Australia, for judging the entries.

## ERRATA

In Graham Rowland's poem 'Mr Gyngell's Revolution' (No. 2, 1971, pp. 38-39) "strolled" (line 2) should have read "stroller" and "steers" (line 12) should have read "streets".

# westerly

No. 4, December, 1971


## CONTENTS



*Line drawings by Ted Pagram and Louise Reynolds.*

Cover photograph by permission of West Australian Newspapers Ltd. It shows warders at a stop-work meeting outside Fremantle Gaol on 9 June 1971, in protest against conditions associated with the escape of five prisoners from the gaol.

Trevor Williams

# THE PRISON IN "THE NEW CORRECTIONAL ERA"

In a number of countries, including Australia, attempts are being made to change the prison as an institution. In general, the kinds of changes which are sought entail a reduction in the official emphasis which is placed on the purpose of the prison as a place of custody and punishment, and a concomitant increase in the emphasis which is placed on the "rehabilitation" of inmates. The impetus for such change has come from several sources. In earlier times, it was provided by reformists who were mainly concerned to remedy the numerous injustices and barbarities which characterised prison life. More recently, the challenge to traditional penal practices has come from groups which question the view of crime on which these practices are based. These groups, which are comprised largely of psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and other social scientists, regard the offender's conduct as a consequence of his failure to satisfy his needs in society. Accordingly, they contend that the traditional practice of subjecting him to further deprivation is illogical and inefficient as a way of using the offender's period of incarceration. Instead, they argue for the adoption of methods of handling inmates which are conducive to the "rehabilitation" of the latter.

Penal change, then, is a consequence of both the increasing acceptance of humanitarian values within the prison system and of the growing influence of professionals, such as psychiatrists and psychologists, who are working in or otherwise connected with these types of institutions. However, it is becoming apparent that the dominating influence on the future development of prison services will be that of the professional. In other words, the innovations that are now being promoted are the product of the aspirations, interests and knowledge of the behavioural scientist rather than merely reflecting a humane desire to soften the rigidities of traditional prison life. This seems to mean that, to the extent that the professionals are successful in gaining acceptance for their ideas concerning the aims and methods which are appropriate for penal institutions, the prison will become less a place of custody and increasingly one in which the "treatment" of offenders is seen as the central institutional task.

The terms "rehabilitation" and "treatment", of course, are ambiguous. In the context of dealing with convicted offenders, they may refer to the beneficial effects which are sometimes considered to follow from imposing strict discipline on inmates. On this view, the purpose of imprisonment is to instill in the offender respect for authority and the habit of conformity. Institutions which provide for

Trevor Williams lectures in organisation theory at the University of Western Australia, and is conducting research into the effects of changing correctional goals and practices on uniformed staff in Western Australian institutions for adult offenders.

the teaching of new occupational and academic skills to inmates may also be described as serving the goal of "rehabilitation". Again, the terms are applied to institutions where psycho-therapeutic methods such as individual and group counselling are employed, with the aim of helping inmates to overcome personality problems or difficulties which they experience in relating to others. Finally, "rehabilitation" may be taken to involve using the total milieu of the prison for therapeutic purposes. In this version, the social climate of the institution is so arranged as to allow inmates as much freedom of expression as possible, while encouraging them to develop greater sensitivity to the needs of others and a sense of responsibility for the well-being of the entire group of inmates and staff. The approach entails the development of two-way communication between staff and inmates in interpersonal and group situations, the creation of a relaxed, informal atmosphere, and the participation of inmates as well as staff in making decisions about the operation of the institution. Usually, it also requires the involvement of the outside community in the treatment of offenders through work-release programmes, probation and parole, and various kinds of after-care services. An institution which is conducted along these lines is often referred to as a "therapeutic community".[1]

The idea of bringing about some long-term change in the behaviour of convicted offenders is basic to all these approaches. However, they differ considerably with respect to the aspects of behaviour in which change is sought and the methods which are considered appropriate for achieving such change. Moreover, where change is introduced into an institution, it will often display a combination of elements drawn from several of the approaches as well as aspects of traditional penal practice which are retained. In consequence, it is extremely difficult to assess the effects or implications of penal change by looking at prisons or prison services into which it has been introduced. Nevertheless, a major trend in the development of correctional or prison services seems to be emerging, namely, an attempt to transform the prison into an institution in which educational and treatment tasks (rather than those related to keeping offenders in custody) are regarded as the central ones.

This trend has given rise to several problems. First, existing knowledge about why offences are committed and about the effects of different methods of treating inmates on their post-release conduct is, at present, unable to provide an adequate basis on which to make decisions in individual cases. Hence, it is extremely difficult to determine how an offender should be treated while in prison and, because of the variety of factors which influence his subsequent behaviour, it is impossible to accurately assess the effects of treatment on the individual. Secondly, the introduction of institutional practices which provide for the individualised treatment of inmates and which allow them greater freedom of movement and association is likely to affect relations between the penal system and the wider society. Such change often seems to be accompanied by an increase in escapes and other disturbances which may arouse opposition from a public which still expects the prison to perform its custodial function of segregating convicted offenders from the rest of society. Thirdly, while the role and influence of the professional is expanding within the penal system, the overwhelming proportion of institutional staff is comprised of non-professional, uniformed personnel. In the foreseeable future, these people will continue to perform most of the work in prisons, and will remain the main point of contact between the inmates and the levels at which major policy decisions are made. Hence, the role of uniformed staff in the implementation of policies is of considerable importance. At the same time, because of their location within the penal system, they are likely to be significantly affected by any major policy changes which are introduced concerning the operation of the institutions. The reactions of uniformed staff to penal change are likely to have a considerable bearing on the outcome.

The first of these problems concerns the efficacy of the treatment programmes which professional staff are able to design for implementation in the institutions. Understandably, this question has received a great deal of attention in criminological and penological research. Inmates are the targets of the changes in treatment methods which have been introduced and, so long as the relationship between these methods and the subsequent conduct of inmates remains inadequately understood, research in this area is of obvious and continuing importance. However, even assuming that more effective treatment techniques can be developed, there remains the question of the institution's capacity to implement them. Public reactions, and those of institutional staff, to penal change are important to a consideration of this question. So far as relations between the prison and the outside community are concerned, the expectation that such institutions will continue to ensure that inmates remain in custody is a potent factor. For example, the Western Australian Department of Corrections has recently been criticised in the press regarding escapes from its institutions during the first half of 1971. The nature of this criticism is indicated by the following extract from an editorial:

> "Two multiple escapes involving five men in less than a week from Fremantle gaol is too much for the public to be expected to tolerate.... A total of 107 prisoners have escaped from West Australian gaols since January.... Doubtless this high figure is due partly to a more enlightened penal policy in which the debits are bound to be more spectacular than the credits.... But getting out of gaol has become alarmingly easy, even when allowance is made for the number of open institutions. The police say a big proportion of escapees commit further offences. Men who may be a menace to society are finding the barrier to freedom too easy to break."[2]

While rehabilitative policies might be approved on humanitarian grounds, they are likely to be seen, at times, as conflicting with the requirement that order and security within the institutions will be maintained. Hence, the extent to which these policies can be pursued without encountering serious external resistance may depend largely on the prison service's success in satisfying, to some extent, the constraints imposed by the custodial purpose of imprisonment. This is a question of organisational effectiveness, however desirable rehabilitative policies may be.

The question arises, therefore, as to why it has proved so difficult to increase the emphasis on rehabilitation without disturbing the order and security of the prison. In order to answer this, it is necessary to have some appreciation of the manner in which custodial control over inmates is maintained. It has often been remarked that instruments of physical coercion do not provide the most important or effective means of keeping order within the prison. Rather, even in the prison where emphasis is placed on custody, order and security seem to be achieved mainly through the manipulation of a complex and often informal system of social control in which uniformed staff play a crucial role. Basic to the operation of this system is the situation of conflict between inmates and the official hierarchy which is characteristic of prison life. Prisons, in varying degrees, deprive inmates of freedom and access to material possessions, sexual pleasure, and other satisfactions which are largely taken for granted in a more normal existence. Also, inmates are likely to regard the status which they are accorded in prison as relatively degrading, and to experience threats to their personality and self-esteem arising from the formal control which is exerted over most aspects of their lives.[3] These circumstances, it has been argued, tend to generate feelings of emotional tension in prisoners and to give rise to "forces impelling the inmates towards greater control over their own affairs at the expense of staff control".[4] Faced with conditions which they see as threatening and depriving, inmates are likely to seek support from within their own group and a system of social relationships may develop which is primarily a

response to the deprivations involved in custodial control. Hence, the prison often possesses two systems of control which are based, respectively, on the formal or official hierarchy and on the network of relationships among inmates. These do not operate independently, but rather affect each other in the daily operation of the institution. In the custodially oriented institution, uniformed staff usually occupy positions of considerable power and influence in this complex process, both in relation to the official hierarchy and the inmates. In such an institution, only uniformed staff are in close and continuous contact with inmates. In consequence, they tend to possess control over both the access to information about inmates which is available to other members of the administration and to outsiders, and also over the information which is available to inmates from outside the immediate prison community. At the same time, it has been argued that the effective exercise of such control depends on uniformed staff securing the co-operation of particular prisoners who are influential among the inmates as a group. For example, McCleery reports in his study of Oahu prison that a give-and-take relationship had developed between uniformed staff and influential prisoners, in which staff accorded the latter certain privileges and informally supported them in their positions of influence over the other inmates in return for co-operation in maintaining some degree of order within the prison.[5]

Apparently, an effective increase in emphasis on rehabilitation disturbs this system of control. First, the acceptance of rehabilitative aims and methods usually leads to a redefinition of the roles of uniformed staff. In Cressey's words:

> "Guards must preserve some measure of order and discipline since this is essential to a prison's custodial goal, but they must also contribute to accomplishment of an institutional therapy or individualised-treatment goal. Generally speaking, the latter goal can be accomplished only if guards are instructed to relax in custodial and disciplinary matters, to take the personality needs of each inmate into account, and to individualise the handling of inmates accordingly."[6]

Hence, uniformed staff are often expected to actively contribute to the pursuit of rehabilitative aims as well as performing their traditional tasks in connection with the maintenance of security and order. The new expectations concerning uniformed staff roles are usually communicated through policy pronouncements, formal training courses, conferences with institutional staff and the like. They also receive expression and reinforcement in decisions which are taken in concrete situations. For example, where rehabilitation is considered to involve the development of more personalised relationships between inmates and staff, the latter may be encouraged to try to avoid the use of repressive disciplinary measures and to employ techniques of persuasion instead. In actual instances where the question of discipline arises and an officer continues to employ sanctions such as reporting an inmate to the prison superintendent, the latter may dismiss the charge and advise the officer to make a greater effort to influence the inmates without using formal controls. In other words, expectations about staff roles may be reinforced in practice by withdrawing support for actions and methods which are disapproved and rewarding those which are approved.

Relations between uniformed staff and inmates are likely to be significantly altered by such changes. Where support for "purely" custodial practices is reduced, this tends to weaken the traditional control of staff over inmates. In a system of custodial control, inmates usually experience greater deprivations than in a more benign penal regime. Accordingly, the power of staff to make their existence either more or less comfortable provides them with a firm basis on which to exert influence over their charges. One general effect of rehabilitative policies seems to be that what were once regarded as privileges which might be conditionally granted to inmates become rights to which they are automatically entitled. Moreover, at least in the

short term, such changes may be accompanied by a process of "magnifying ingratitude" among inmates, as they continually press their claims for more comforts and gratifications. Understandably, when the rigidities associated with custodial control are softened, inmates often seek to discover how far the authorities are prepared to proceed in this dirction.[7] Hence, relations between inmates and uniformed staff are likely to become less stable, as inmates realise that traditional controls have been weakened and staff attempt to use techniques of control (such as persuasion) which are unfamiliar to them.

Another general effect of the redefinition of uniformed staff roles to include treatment activities is that they are drawn into closer contact with professional personnel, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and educators. The latter become increasingly influential in correctional work when greater emphasis is placed on rehabilitation. They usually play a major role in the development and implementation of training programmes for uniformed staff and treatment programmes for inmates. Moreover, their influence may extend to the making of decisions about the operation of the institution. The uncertainty which accompanies the introduction of penal change affects not only uniformed staff but also more senior members of the official prison hierarchy, and these may look to the professional for advice and guidance in the management of the institution. Hence, in addition to having to cope with the problem of handling inmates differently, uniformed staff may find themselves confronted with the expanding influence of a group of professionals who constitute a new dimension in the system of authority within the institution. Their former privileged position in relation to both the inmates and the official hierarchy is thereby eroded.

In principle, uniformed staff may react to these developments in either a negative or a positive manner. For example, Liffman has suggested three possible ways in which they may adjust to changes in their work situations. One kind of reaction is apathy, or a reduction in the individual officer's involvement in the work of the institution and in his commitment to its aims. Secondly, staff may dogmatically adhere to the custodial aspect of their roles and reject rehabilitative aims, at least insofar as these impinge on their own activities. The occurrence of these two kinds of reaction are likely to have negative consequences for both the custodial and rehabilitative purposes of imprisonment. The first leads to a reduction in performance with respect to both purposes. The second, while appearing to at least contribute to the fulfilment of the custodial purpose, may aggravate tensions within the institution to the extent that it draws custodial staff into conflict with those who are promoting rehabilitation. Moreover, it is unlikely to be a viable solution where administrative support for exclusive reliance on custodial techniques has been withdrawn. However, Liffman suggests that the adjustment of uniformed staff may take a positive form which contributes to the fulfilment of both the custodial and the rehabilitative aims of the institution. This would involve:

> "The individual making decisions on an individualistic basis. Problems are considered separately, and with regard to their specific situation, and responded to in the way which seems most appropriate to the fundamental goals, rather than to the means to which the organisation seems devoted".[8]

In other words, the prison officer remains committed to both broad purposes, but assigns and re-assigns his priorities by making judgements as to which purpose warrants the greater attention in each particular situation.

The manner in which uniformed staff react to the introduction of rehabilitative aims and methods is clearly of considerable importance to the success of the latter. Obviously, the promoters of these aims hope that such reactions will be positive, and a considerable amount of time and effort is often devoted to the tasks of explaining and justifying new policies and practices to staff and training them to

use new techniques of handling inmates. However, it needs to be recognised that favourable staff reactions to the changes entail a greater commitment to institutional aims and tasks in the face of developments which increase the difficulties and strains associated with this kind of work. Convicted offenders have been dealt with in certain ways for a long time. Around the custodial purpose of imprisonment there has developed a set of tasks and relationships between the staff who perform them which are based on the use of techniques of external control over inmates. In other words, staff have become used to dealing with inmates by issuing commands and instructions, through the use of physical restraints, and through the uniform application of rules to inmates as a class. It has already been remarked that rehabilitative aims generally require staff to treat inmates quite differently, and in ways which are unfamiliar to them. Moreover, their new roles will tend to be defined in more ambiguous terms than before. The kinds of instructions and rules which govern the conduct of staff in custodially oriented prisons can normally be formulated in fairly precise terms. On the other hand, it is virtually impossible to provide staff with unequivocal instructions concerning the use of techniques of personal persuasion and "leadership". In the first place, then, the prison officer's world of work is likely to become more uncertain and less clearly defined.

Secondly, different approaches to handling inmates tend to be associated with particular patterns or systems of beliefs about the behaviour of convicted offenders, the scope which exists for changing their modes of conduct, and the means by which such change might be achieved. The part which attitudes and beliefs play in staff dealings with inmates has been described by Emery as follows:

> "The role of prison officer is only meaningful in its relation to the complementary role of prison inmate. Hence ... it can be operated only by having some more or less appropriate picture of the inmates. In any contact with the inmates, an officer actually sees a particular individual or group of individuals in a concrete situation; before he can respond according to his defined role, he must interpret what he sees."[9]

In other words, staff beliefs impart subjective meaning to their relations with inmates, and are likely to exert an important influence on their actions. The attitudes and beliefs concerning inmates which are prevalent in a custodially oriented prison generally seem to be quite different from those associated with rehabilitative aims and methods. From the custodial standpoint, the inmate tends to be regarded as someone who has been put in prison against his will and who, therefore, represents a threat to the order and security of the institution. Rehabilitative aims, on the other hand, usually reflect a view of the inmate which lays stress on his individuality and on his capacity to change his behaviour in response to treatment. He is accorded a status which is similar to that of the mental patient. Hence, the introduction of such aims and methods into an institution where staff are used to handling inmates in a custodial manner seems to require not only that they learn new techniques of dealing with the latter, but also that they discard or modify their existing attitudes and beliefs concerning their charges. This feat may not be easily accomplished. The role of prison officer is generally accorded low status, both in the community and in the prison service. In fact, inmates are virtually the only people who occupy positions of lower status within the institution. The kinds of changes in staff-inmate relations which rehabilitative aims entail have the effect of reducing the status difference between these two groups. In this vein, Klare has remarked that:

> "The very fact of having had people in your custody carries the implication that you might be good, otherwise you would not be in charge of them. Prison officers were not sadists, nor were they inhuman, thoughtless or unkind. But having been deprived of a good many satisfactions and of a more positive

contentment in their work, at least they needed to feel good by contrast. And every time a progressive governor, or a penal reformer, appeared to take a little badness away from prisoners, it seemed as if a little goodness was being taken away from themselves."[10]

Hence, when inmates receive improved conditions, and the attention and training which is intended to equip them to lead more satisfying lives within the established order of society, staff may experience a loss of status relative to that of the inmates, especially when their conditions are not also significantly improved.

Understandably, many social scientists and penal reformers find the vision of a "new correctional era", in which the treatment of convicted offenders is based on a rational understanding of their behaviour, irresistable in its appeal. Thus, Maxwell Jones has contended that:

"It seems tragic that society cannot use the comparatively long periods which many people spend in prison as an opportunity to attempt some measure of social learning.... In my opinion, a therapeutic community is compatible with a maximum security unit. It is what happens within the restricted area, in terms of relationships and social learning, which is important, and not the presence of locked doors and armed guards."[11]

Many promoters of such a vision are sincere in their conviction that rehabilitation can be made the basis of prison life without seriously disrupting the order and security of the institution. Moreover, they argue that, if effective methods of treatment can be developed, the benefits to both the offender and the community (in terms of reducing the likelihood of further offences) will be enormous. These are commendable sentiments. However, the problems which are raised by the introduction of rehabilitative aims and practices into the prison should not be underestimated. Indeed, Emery has gone so far as to argue that:

"If we feel that we have to have the security afforded by the medium and maximum security prisons, then we should accept that these will be custodial not reformative institutions, and that certain other costs will be unavoidable. This is not to deny the importance of striving ... to eliminate self-defeating repression and of facilitating the operation of potentially reformative influences such as outside contacts, prison visitors, education and welfare workers."[12]

Professionals working in the field of corrections are apt to become impatient with this kind of statement, and with other expressions of opposition to (or reservations about) their ideas. Many of them feel that they are aware of the difficulties which confront the transformation of the prison into a rehabilitation agency, and that they are devoting appropriate attention to these as well as to the task of developing treatment programmes for inmates. There is some justification for this point of view. For example, one finds in Western Australia that considerable time and effort is being spent on the development of new methods of selecting and training uniformed staff. This is tangible recognition that new methods of treating inmates are unlikely to be effective unless prior attention is paid to the vocational needs of institutional staff.[13]

However, there is also something ironical about the approach which many corrections departments seem to be adopting with respect to uniformed staff. Rehabilitative aims derive from a view of crime which emphasises the social situation of the offender. In other words, it is implied that many offences would not be committed but for circumstances such as parental neglect, poverty, racial discrimination and the like, which have been imposed on the offender. Hence, rehabilitation often takes the form of attempts to create an environment for the offender which will provide the encouragement to adopt conventional norms and values which was lacking in his previous situations. Uniformed staff, on the other

hand, are expected to change *their* behaviour as an act of individual volition, given adequate instruction and guidance by the professionals and by their superiors. Admittedly, in the training of staff, use is made of behavioural techniques (such as group therapy) which are similar to those used in treating inmates. However, the important insight that human conduct is significantly influenced by the situations and circumstances in which people find themselves is seldom carried sufficiently far when dealing with the question of staff reactions to penal change. New policies which are intended to benefit inmates may adversely affect the situations of uniformed staff in a number of ways. Their roles are likely to become subject to greater conflict, uncertainty and strain. Moreover, institutional supports for their roles, such as their formal authority over inmates, tend to be weakened. In effect, they are being asked to accept, and to actively participate in the implementation of, policies which promise to make their work more difficult.

Apparently, the professionals expect uniformed staff in the institutions to share their enthusiasm for new approaches to the treatment of offenders. In consequence, they tend to overlook the difficulties which are created for those who must operate the prisons or to treat these in a condescending fashion. Yet, in the final analysis, the success or failure of "the new correctional era" will depend largely on the actions of uniformed staff. Therefore, the professionals and all who share their pious hope for the development of a more enlightened penal system should find cause for concern in the kind of reaction to change which is expressed in the following statement by the Western Australian Goal Officers' Union (see cover):

> "This union is concerned with the decline in security at the Fremantle prison over the past eighteen months to two years.... We think that this has resulted in the recent spate of escapes. We think that the decline has occurred for three reasons:
>
> - The relaxed attitude of the administration.
> - The breakdown of the training programme for prison officers.
> - The serious shortage of uniformed staff.
>
> We desire to maintain the humane treatment programme, but not at the expense of security.... We think the situation that has developed is subjecting officers to unnecessary danger and ridicule and is also subjecting the public and the police to great inconvenience. Officers are being made scapegoats for what is in fact a general decline in the standard of security."[14]

There are encouraging signs that the initiators of correctional change are beginning to critically re-examine their premisses concerning the impact of new policies and practices on the prison as an organisation and on the staff who run the institutions. It remains true, however, that the attention which has been devoted to this question is much less impressive than the efforts which have been made to assess the effects of new treatment methods on inmates. The problem is not one of how to overcome "irrational" resistance to change on the part of uniformed staff, although many seem to have adopted this attitude. There may be good reasons for the opposition which is apparent. Unless the implications of rehabilitative aims and policies are assessed within a much wider perspective than is being used at present, they are unlikely to succeed, and the commendable desire to alleviate human suffering among inmates may lead only to a state of affairs in which the burden of suffering is born by staff instead.

## NOTES

1 See Maxwell Jones, *Social Psychiatry in Practice: The Idea of the Therapeutic Community*, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1968, chapters one and four.

2 *The West Australian*, June 5, 1971.

3 See Erving Goffman, "On the Characteristics of Total Institutions", in *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and other Inmates*, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1968.

[4] F. E. Emery, *Freedom and Justice Within Walls: The Bristol Prison Experiment*, London, Tavistock Publications, 1970, page three.
[5] Richard H. McCleery, "The Governmental Process and Informal Social Control", in Donald R. Cressey (ed.), *The Prison: Studies in Institutional and Organisational Change*, New York, Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1966.
[6] Ronald R. Cressey, "Contradictory Objectives in Complex Organisations: The Case of the Prison", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 4, 1959-60, page two.
[7] c.f. McCleery, op. cit.
[8] Michael Liffman, "Role Conceptions and Role Strains Amongst Prison Staff", *Melbourne Journal of Politics*, 3, 1970, page twenty-three.
[9] op. cit., page thirteen.
[10] Hugh J. Klare, *Anatomy of Prison*, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1960, page thirty-seven.
[11] op. cit., page twenty-three.
[12] op. cit., page ninety-seven.
[13] This argument is forcefully expressed by Jones, op. cit., chapter four.
[14] *The West Australian*, June 10, 1971.

# KINDERGARTEN

My father the farmer's
hard at work into dusk.
He stoops against the darkness, patiently
stabbing flowers, weeds, down
to let the young trees grow.

He's buried snail-shell, beetle, calyx, buttercup seed
under that grey hair too;
the skin peeled off would show
veined leaves rotting
like moss between the follicles,
small glories pared away, christmas-candlesticks burnt
and forked under.
You pay for what you plant.

Now knowing a familiar rustle, he turns,
the rope of his mouth's muscle dredging up, dragging up
a memory of laughter to his face.
I watch myself grow
at his cornea, taking shape in
his mind

(but the blue-dusk light lies,
like water: I am no longer smooth
limbed, supple, but rough and refractive
as by wind
after absence from your fences)

yet here for a moment
my hand roots to his shoulder
against the world's bare weather;
I am moved by that habit of flesh
and affection, taking
my half-forgotten place
beside him, like any other green, obedient thing.

*DENNIS SCOTT*

# AT A PSYCHEDELIC ART EXHIBITION

The centre expands to devour
the ambit.
        The cat's retina cannot
        hold the fish-bowl, for the fins—
        amber, crimson, hectic red—
        are balls of fire
        dancing around a vacuity.
The motile pattern of the
Damascun carpet steps out of
its bounds to flow over
into the bare floor.
        The sunset broods over the serpentine
        bylanes of San Francisco;
        the men in the pavement-pubs
        drinking out of their Leviathan tankards,
        will soon roll down the slopes.
On the front wall, the Buddha's eye,
shaken out its potty quietude,
blinks hysterically,
under the throbbing neon-lights
        and the percussive music
        that leads one down the deep dark
        hollows of the snake-pit.
Let us walk through this canvas
to the room's end
where the crocodiles are meditating.

*SHIV KUMAR*

# MEMORIAL SERVICE

Lighter by bone and flesh
the dead man
on a brief furlough
comes riding on a dark horse
over the jasper sea
        to watch the kneeling faces
        feign their tints of yellow and grey
        waiting for the droves of hymns
        to work themselves out
before it's time to partake of
the sumptuous delicacies in the vestibule.
O Death, where is thy sting?

*SHIV KUMAR*

T. A. G. Hungerford

# LEADERS AND BREEDERS, THE MAN SAID

Leroy, the man whom Chu had come to see, leaned back in his chair and grinned across the table. It was bare, Chu had noticed immediately, except for a half-filled ash-tray and a lavishly doodled blotting pad. There were a couple of files in the OUT tray, and a conventional sort of family photograph of a smiling woman, and two jug-eared little boys scowling out of an antique silver frame. Leroy had glanced at it fondly, saying: *Mum and the boys—boomers, hey? You'll have to come out to dinner some time and meet them!* when he had noticed Chu looking at it.

Now, after half an hour of machine-gun talk, statistics, boasting, amiable profanity, he said expansively: "Yeah—we're in twenty-three cities as of this month . . . but it took us a long time to work up to this." He teetered the chair back on its beautifully articulated column of stainless steel to wave a hand around the chaste panelling of the office. Following its flight, Chu thought that they might as well have been in the sanctum sanctorum of some monolithic insurance office—no, much better: of a giant credit firm—as in the nerve centre of a . . . well, of a what? his mind demanded. Before he could frame an answer to it, Leroy went on. Although Chu spoke perfect, colloquial English, he had to concentrate with all his powers to follow the quick, slangy patter.

"Out in the scrub, we were—an old abandoned race-course in the foothills. Jesus." Leroy shrugged, grinning wryly to recall whatever privations he had endured on the way up. "We used to pay out a damn great swag of the take to the cops not to raid us, and another damn great swag to a mob of cockatoos along the road in, just in case they went back on their word, and now, by Christ, we're legit."

He lowered his chair and stood up. Without looking at Chu, he walked to the window and stared out into the white glitter of the floodlit night. In the silence that interrupted his monologue, Chu could hear the incessant gutbeat of some wild rock band down in the arena. It fought for his mind's attention against its lingering entanglement with Leroy's almost incomprehensible talk. *Paying money to a mob of cockatoos along the road in? Weren't they birds?*

Leroy crooked his finger over his shoulder, without turning his head. "Come here, and look at this."

Chu's plane had touched down into the sunset, the fabulous mid-summer sunset of this far western strip of coast, but what with customs and health checks and the usual paraphernalia of landing from overseas, he felt he had spent nearly as long in the airport as he had in his thousands of miles of flight. By the time he reached the stadium, it was already night. The great banks of floodlights had not yet been lit, and all he had been able to see was the dinosaur crouching shapes of the buildings around the black well of the arena. Now, when he looked through the

window across Leroy's shoulder, the whole immense set-up swam in a lake of hard incandescence that made the monstrous white-painted stands seem almost translucent, as if built of blocks of milky glass. The concrete track with its six lanes glowed like pale honey, each of the two hundred tapering steel flagpoles around it floating a different, garishly-coloured banner. On the grass circle enclosed by the track four groups of scantily-clad marching girls stood around, chewing, waiting for their turn to perform when the band had finished. The acres of ground-level seats were already fairly well packed, and the stands were filling rapidly from seemingly endless lines of people shuffling jerkily, like shooting-gallery ducks, against the immense, shimmering tapestry of those already seated.

"Twenty-five thousand capacity, and a seat for every one—and a pie and a drink too, if they want 'em", Leroy said. "One moment you're a crim, and the next you're a public benefactor."

"And a millionaire . . . ?" Chu ventured, grinning.

"Say la bloody vee", Leroy said. He turned from the window, walked back to the desk, and seated himself again. "What else you want to know?"

Chu shrugged. There was so much to ask. Eventually he said: "Do you have any trouble getting . . . performers? Competitors, whatever you call them?"

"Christ, no. Knocking them back with a stick. No sooner we lower the boom on one, there's a score howling for his spot."

"What's the come-on, then? After all . . ."

"*You* work it out", Leroy said, and then: "No, you don't have to. That scientist bloke worked it out for you, the one on TV last Sunday night." He paused a moment. "No, of course, you wouldn't have seen it, you weren't here. Reckons what everyone wants is identity. Screwing isn't the be-all and the end-all of everything, he reckons. You see a magpie sitting in a tree singing his guts out, he's not saying 'I'm the best damn lay in this neck of the woods'. He's saying: 'I got a tree to do my screwing in.' And the lady bird digs him, this bloke reckons. It's like that with these kids, only *we* got onto it before that scientist ever heard about it. We give 'em a tree to do their screwing in. They're *someone*. The titters run after them in droves, and they got thousands of slobs wearing badges with 'I love Red Rory' on. Stuff like that. And we turn on motel suites in the best layouts, and dough, and booze and reporters and all that. All *they* got to do is drive two nights a week . . . and show on Wednesday afternoons, when we let prospectives run around the track." He stopped speaking suddenly, and in the silence doodled on a clear spot on his blotting pad a chunky cross with a bird sitting on each arm. Then, carefully, he added a stick-figure Christ pinned in the middle.

Watching him, Chu said: "Yes, I see. That's for the driver. But what about the slobs . . . what do they get out of it?"

"They get identified with him", Leroy said patiently, looking up from his doodling. "Like the man on TV says—identity. They might get a bit of screwing on the side, too, but they wear his badge, and they all sit together in the stand, red with red, green with green, blue with blue—like that. They got their own club and their own songs and their own greeting signs, and all that crap. On the night he drives, they come along and scream their heads off—maybe come in their pants, I dunno. But whatever it is . . . all that stuff they used to go on with—remember? Or wasn't it like that in your country? Drag-racing on the highways, kicking the insides out of telephone booths, gang-banging stray birds, beating up old guys in parks? All that's stopped, now. They get rid of it all here." He laughed. "The casualty clearing section at the hospital, it's deader than a morgue, now. They're going to turn half of it into a bowling alley." He waited a moment for Chu to laugh. When he didn't, he said, brusquely: "Next question?"

"Well ... how do you decide to ... ah ... terminate a driver's contract?" Chu asked.

"They don't get any contract", Leroy said, and jerked his thumb over his shoulder. The wall behind him housed a panel about eight feet high and four feet wide. It was divided into six identical columns each headed by a name. Looking at it, Chu could see the name Leroy had mentioned. Red Rory. *I Love Red Rory.* Below it, and below the five other names, were the recognisable facades of computer panels. "*They* work it all out", Leroy said. "Weigh all the possibilities and probabilities, pros and cons and all that bullshit. On the right night, they lower the boom on the right guy. Sometimes more than one a night."

"You say '*lower* the boom'. But doesn't it come up out of the track?"

"Yeah—it does. Just a thing they say . . ."

"And *they* decide when?"

"Uh-huh."

"Nifty", Chu said.

"Don't be a bloody fool", Leroy said, testily. "That tin can's only a front . . . but you tell anyone and I'll have you picked apart with rusty tweezers. No shit." He doodled an olive branch into the beak of each of the birds on his cross, and a limp penis onto the Christ. "You think we'd leave a decision as important as that to a bunch of cogs and wheels?" He laid down his biro and with a sort of controlled savagery tapped himself on the chest. "*I* decide when they get the chop." He got up and walked over to the panel in the wall. He studied it for a moment, and then flicked a lever under the name of Red Rory. "That's for Red—tonight", he said. He glanced at the clock on the wall. "In about twenty minutes . . . we'll watch it from the window here—we got closed circuit, but I prefer it live. You should see what happens when one of the stars gets nobbled." He sat down again. "He's had a good spin—longer than most."

"How long?" Chu asked.

"Nearly three weeks." Leroy laughed. "Three weeks as king of the Wazzer."

"What's the norm, then?"

"None. We . . . *I* . . . decide on how things're going. Like playing a bloody piano in a whorehouse—you got to study the customer. Sometimes we take 'em out first night. Now and then we let 'em build up real big—gets the crowd in an uproar, wondering when. Every so often—twice a year, maybe—we announce that according to forecasts by the computers So-and-so's going to last forever, so we retire him honourably for life. Gives 'em something to go for." Leroy laughed. "It'd kill you —every one of those poor jerks thinks he's going to make it to the pension pool."

"Must cost you a lot?" Chu hazarded.

"We could stand it, whatever—but even so—it don't work out that way." Leroy winked at Chu's raised eyebrows. "Somehow or another, they all knock 'emselves off after a few months. Suicide, drugging, grog. They can't come down off the pedestal." He glanced at his watch and flicked the lever on his inter-office communicator. "Red", he said to the glowing crimson eye. "Tonight, Lap Six." He returned his attention to Chu. "Crazy . . . all those slobs screeching and fainting and wetting themselves every night, you'd think they loved the *guy*. Crap. All they want to see is him taking the long drop. The higher he goes, the longer the drop—almost as if those bastards could *see* him falling." He doodled breasts onto the Christ on his blotting-pad, then inked in a mini-skirt to cover the penis. "He's had a ball, that bloody Red. Nearly two thousand in his club, and never a night there's not half-a-dozen dolls in his suite. And I mean . . . but *dolls*. Well . . ." He threw his pen down and stood up. He walked to the window, looked out and once more beckoned over his shoulder to Chu.

The stands and bleachers were now crammed. The green grass of the arena was

alive with the automaton activities of the four groups of marching girls, while the members of the band they had replaced rested on the dais, their crimson shirts sopping with perspiration. Six cars were ranged across the track at the start-line, stock models from among the makes currently popular, but re-painted in devastating colours and combinations of colours. Beside five of them stood young men in shiny gold fabric overalls and helmets: from about the sixth, a sinister, unrelieved blood-red among the pyrotechnics of its companions, a group of four mechanics in dirty white uniforms peered expectantly up a pathway toward a big caravan in a clear space overlooking the track. The marchers' band signed off with a crash of jangling brass, the marchers stopped as if pole-axed, standing still as salt statues in their unwavering lines: and the hard white light sifted down like strange rain from the towers around the track. It all looked as if it had been cast in lead and painted, Chu thought, staring at it. Even the noise had ceased to intrude as noise, and seemed to hang suspended in a curious sort of hum . . . the hum of myriad presences which one heard when one knelt to the opening of a bees' hive, Chu thought, listening to it. Leroy glanced at his watch, and cursed under his breath.

"That bloody Red, of course. I bet he's putting through one for the road, before he leaves the caravan." He reached for the communicator on his desk, but as suddenly, withdrew his hand. "Well . . . let him. It'll have to last him a long time, by Jesus."

Almost as he spoke, the door of the caravan burst open. A figure in gold uniform and helmet emerged and began to saunter down the pathway.

"Red Rory?" Chu asked.

"Uh-huh", Leroy said. "Listen to those bastards bellow."

Pandemonium broke out as Red Rory stepped out onto the track. He stopped and waved, first with one hand, and then with the other, then with both. He walked to his car, and the four mechanics crowded around him, hugging him and pounding his back. He held up both arms to command silence, and in a moment it was as if an invisible, impenetrable wall had been dropped between the arena and the watchers at the window. He pulled something out of his pocket and held it up—a pair of vivid green panty-hose. Turning ceremoniously, deliberately in all directions, like a priest showing the monstrance, he displayed them to the crowd. The invisible wall dissolved under the assault of the noise.

"The bastard", Leroy said, but grinned.

Red Rory lowered the panty hose to his face, kissed the crotch, then, with a wealth of mimed low comedy, he tied them to the projecting rear mirror on his mudguard.

"The bastard", Leroy said, again.

The other drivers had all disappeared into their cars. Red Rory stood alone for a moment beside his vehicle, looking up at the packed, roaring stands. He raised his hand in a spare, archaic sort of salute, and slid in behind the wheel. The tumult died down again almost immediately, as if only he unlocked the throats of the crowd.

"When you lower the boom . . ." Chu said. He stared at the track below them. The mutter of brutal engines throbbed up to him. An official in red overalls was stepping up into a podium with a black-and-white flag. "When you lower the boom . . . does he know it?"

"Not a chance", Leroy said. As he spoke, the man on the podium dropped his flag. The six cars shot forward in a shattering blast of noise. It was impossible to talk, almost impossible to think. When they had gone half a lap, Leroy said: "Here—come and sit down. He's got a while yet, and if you know when it's going to happen, there's not much percentage in watching jerks buzzing around a track." He turned and walked to the table. He sat down, picked up his biro, and immediately began to adorn the hermaphrodite on his cross with black knee-boots. "No,

sir—he'll be doing anything up to one-twenty, one-thirty, when it happens. In any case, it's clear, and non-reflecting, and invisible . . . and bloody hard."

"What's it made of?"

Leroy grinned. "That'll *cost* your mob ... if ever you get to the point of installing one. Any more questions?"

"Why the eighteen to twenty-five age group?"

Leroy stared at the doodle on his blotting pad. "Wasn't our idea", he said, eventually. "At first, we'd just let anybody have a go, nine to ninety. For the dough. When the Government bought in, *they* clapped on the eighteen to twenty-five bit. Leaders and breeders." He looked up, and grinned at Chu. "You know about white ants? You knock the queen off, and you can do anything you like with the rest?" He nodded, in agreement with his own thoughts. "Although your mob'd be more interested in culling out the *breeders*, eh? We still got a *bit* of space left."

Chu glanced at the wall clock. The thought of what he was about to see crept up the back of his neck in a chill of excitement.

"Nearly time", Leroy said, following his gaze. He held his own watch against his face for a moment. "He's got . . . ah . . . exactly a minute-and-a-half." He lowered his hand, and for a moment stared at the open window. "Well . . . he's had it bloody good."

"And so . . ." Chu got up with him, and walked to the window at his side. "The king must die?"

"The king?" Leroy echoed him in momentary puzzlement, and then: "Oh—the King of the Wazzer, you mean?" He laughed indulgently, prepared to flatter this wog from Wherever-it-was, over the sea. "You cotton quick, eh?"

Together they stood looking down on the track, and the crowd, and the arena, and the red car hurtling around in the hard white light below them.

# SCIENCE TIME

on the opposite bench
seated on stains
and the clinical shadows
of apparatus
my innocents
assembled
smiling
in the room
of the machines

my little women
perched on laboratory paint
blue kneebones swinging
like a rank of hobbled moons
waited
for my voice
to slip back in its slot
and tune up once
for justice

i cruised above their faces
on my undistinguished elevator
my grey suit
a respectable cloak
over many colours
and i made
my introduction
to science
and its treaty with fear
while above us
the great
black
north american eagle
locked
in the sterilized sawdust
of his eyes
on a hook
of predatory steel
stares
like an imperial breastplate
down on my children
peeling science
from cardboard charts
and dares us
here
in our progressive room
to catalogue
his pain

*PETER LOFTUS*

Angus Baird

# A SENSE OF CONTINUITY

## (for Bob Burns)

The only Smokers left are in compartmented second-class carriages. Seat 102. I slide open the door. A rush of foetid air assails my nostrils: the smell of cloistered farting dogs, the fishiness of sulphydryl cross-links in hair lacquer. Seated alone in the compartment is a young woman fumbling with bags: string bags, handbags, travel bags and even a rattan bag that would safely house a pumpkin. I look at her, silently asking permission to sit opposite. She continues to rummage her bags. The train lurches out of Melbourne. She stands abruptly, closes the door then turns to examine me, her face puckering with the mixed antipathy and awe of a soubrette viewing a priest. Her eyes fix on the pipe erect in my top pocket. She re-opens the door half-way and sits.

The carriage lights brighten as the train gathers speed.... Today's meeting of the Shakespearean Society has irritated me: a long disputation on the shy-breeding Susannah Shakespeare, her marriage to John Hall the physician, the absolute sterility of their daughter Elizabeth, and on the Bard's frustrated wish for male succession, cannot be regarded as a seminal meeting! I had just transmuted this biological chit-chat to a study of Dr Cerimon in *Pericles* when they broke out the sherry and biscuits: which ritual returned the conversation to scurvy, chancre and syphilitic spirochaetes affecting various Shakespearean organs. Who cares if Elizabeth Hall had atrophic ovaries? I left early.... The woman's clothing, now the carriage is brighter, seems incongruous. She wears a mink coat, open in front, and a tawny cardigan. Red stockings fill the shapely gaps between her yellow slacks and puce velvet slippers: blue and orange scarves interweave around her neck. Her white felt hat supports a panache of peacock feathers. Her fingers glitter with diamonds as she deftly swops the contents of one bag into another. It's as though she has dressed for a hike, added the fur coat to ape that 1948 Betty Grable*se* opulence then the feathered hat to evince the picturesque reliability of an Alpine grandmother! A blue ribbon over her left shoulder is inscribed *Melbourne Show 197–*. Gold hairs streak her coat.... If I am lucky she will not speak. If she speaks I will humour her, as the Bard would have: with the door open, thank God.

Her bags pushed aside, the woman sits twirling her wedding ring in its diamond nidus. Her voice startles me—

'Either we sit here like two gigs or we talk, Mister.'

I shrug and smile as she persists—'You are the *least* sexy man I've ever seen. Do you know that? You're no older than me yet your stodgy tweedy poker-backed look just crumbles me. Do you know these things?'

'Madam, you overwhelm me', I reply, leaning over to slide the door open a little more.

'And that *pipe*! That's one Sherlock Holmes of a pipe, isn't it? Given a deer-stalker cap you'd transplant nicely to Baker Street, wouldn't you?'

'If you say so Madam.'

'I'll bet you're a plainclothes minister.'

'No.. No.. A doctor. Dr Watson.'

'Haw haw haw. Funnyman: funny grey man with a pipe instead of a doodle. I've met some squares on trains Mister, but you get the prize.' She disregards my frown.... 'Lots of ministers travel incognito these days. It's getting so you can't recognize the enemy. Last year on a train from Wagga I met a minister dressed like you: everything grey. He'd shown these chooks, Plymouth Rocks, at the Wagga Show, won a lot of ribbons too. I asked him if by any chance he was a Plymouth Brethren minister. Hell! he laughed. Then I tried to flummox him.... Why, I asked, did Jesus lob in fly-blown Palestine 5000 million years after Creation, ruminate for 34 years about just *who* He was, then ascend to sit on his *own* right hand side in Heaven leaving nothing, *personally*, written down on paper?'

'What was his reply?' I ask, tacitly pardoning her irreverance.

'He laughed again and said my theology is as antediluvian as that of the Brethren. Then he told me lots of jokes.... A great bloke that minister, even though he sneaked about with no collar. Say, I'll bet *you* never tell jokes, Mister.'

'I never remember them long enough', I reply, watching her loop the blue ribbon over her head and place it in a bag. She fiddles her rings again, leaning forward to speak—

'My husband *likes* lots of rings on women.'

'Oh', I reply, 'and very nice too.'

'I tell him that *husbands* should wear rings; only through their *noses*, like bulls.'

'Oh! ... Yes ... Quite.'

Speaking, 'You need no ring through *your* nose Mister', she darts like a minnow towards the bag containing her ribbon, knocking a huge handbag onto the carriage floor. The bag flips open spilling female bric-a-brac over my feet: lipsticks, vaseline, a volume of Radhakrishan, a rubber finger-stall, *English Made Easy*, tablets, two eye droppers, a bottle of oily liquid and several itemized documents, probably medical receipts. I help pick up these trivia, simulating disinterest. I hand her the bottle labelled GONADOTROPHIN, *For Infertility*, which she grabs hurriedly, impolitely.

'Someone sick at your house?' I ask. She hesitates, then answers—

'Hell no ... no ... these aren't for *me*.'

The conductor, a cocksure-grinning adolescent with an Hitlerian bang of hair peeping from beneath his peaked cap, enters the compartment carrying an elegant Chihuahua. The woman takes the dog gently and hands him a dollar. 'Only 'til the next station Madam', he says, 'else you'll get me into strife. How did we go at the Show today?'

'We won as usual', she replies.

'Where next?' he asks her, smirking a sardonic message to me as he clips my ticket.

'Ballarat, tomorrow', she replies impassively.

The conductor looks through a window at the sky. Melbourne's decrepit western suburbs flick by in the glaucous light of evening. Tilting his head to one side he grins at me and winks ponderously. 'Full moon tonight', he says as he leaves: 'Great night for lovers. Watch you don't get bit but.'

The woman sits, unsmiling, the dog lying quietly on her lap hand-licking in gratitude for this unexpected rescue from the next carriage, the van. I respond to the smelly beast by lighting my pipe. She equalizes. Withdrawing a deodorant canister from her travel bag the woman sprays me, my pipe and seat, everything

in the carriage in fact except the dog which busies itself by licking its backside.... 'Madam', I declare irately, 'God created dogs to comfort human beings, *not* vice versa.' Ignoring me, she cossets the animal and speaks at the carriage window—

'My husband is away in camp this week. He's an army officer.' She rotates a cotton bud, cleaning the dog's nostrils. 'We've been married nine years, nine months: he just *loves* his little bitch.' She tweezes an assymetric hair from the beast's left ear. 'This bitch won Grand Champion All Breeds at the Show today. She wins prizes at all the metropolitan shows, year after year. Do you know much about dogs Mister?'

'No Madam, nothing.'

'Bet you couldn't tell me which breed this dog is.'

Hesitantly, 'I'd say either a Scotch Collie or a St Bernard'.

'A *Scotch Collie*!' she exclaims, standing as though electrocuted. 'A *Scotch Collie*! Gawd, don't joke like that Mister.'

'I told you I know nothing about . . .'

'Which school did you go to?'

'Melbourne High.'

'Sounds like a good school to avoid.'

'We didn't study dogs in Biology Madam.'

'Orr . . . Gawd . . .' she exclaims. 'There's something you've *got* to know.' She removes her coat and blue scarf, dewlaps the orange scarf at her throat, pins the blue scarf to her slacks in a mock tail and mounts the bench, resting on her elbows and knees. 'Look Mister, a Collie is a big hairy dog like this', she says, gesturing expansively with her hands. Then throwing back her head she barks a convulsive bowel-growl . . . 'Whoof, whoof . . . whoof whoof'. Her feathers and tail quiver . . . 'Whoof whoof . . . whoof whoof.' I edge towards the door. Fusing images she is Mia Farrow, dressed as a peacock, playing Lassie in a Walt Disney animal saga. 'Chihuahuas make *tweeky* noises like this . . . Whuf whuf . . . whuf whuf.' She sits, straightens her hat and leans over to pick up the bitch. 'This is *Chi Chi*, a Chihuahua: a *little* dog with pointy ears, not a *big* dog like a Collie or St Bernard.'

'Thank you Madam, and well done', I respond, 'a splendid performance. I suppose you'll breed from her later on: she'd be a valuable brood bitch, surely? Fondling and brushing her pet the woman smiles inscrutably without answering. She extracts a tiny brush from her bag and debrides the bitch's eyelashes and vibrissae: then the bottle of oil and the eye droppers. Measuring an accurate dose of the oil she jets its tenderly into the bitch's mouth. Then, selecting the larger dropper, she turns to huddle like a man lighting a cigarette in the wind, aspirates more oil from the bottle and squirts it down her own throat.

'No', she replies, 'I won't bother about dogs once my little one grows too old. She's seven now: once a bitch has pups her tummy gets all ptosed and lax. If you're a champion like Chi Chi you've a*rrived*, haven't you.... You've fulfilled your natural destiny . . . you've won the wars there are to win, haven't you? Better that than to flop around the countryside dragging your guts on the ground like an old cow, eh?'

.... Duh duh dokk . . . duh duh dokk.... The endless anapaestic scansion of the train is soporific. I relax. Fully dressed after her descriptive orgy the woman meditates: her eyes still she stares through the carriage window. Trees and hillocks slide by, illuminated to a spooky chiaroscuro by the spring moon. I feel sorry for the woman. Perhaps, now, she will be quiet.

'You're having me on Mister. You knew all along what sort of dog Chi Chi is.'

'Yes Madam, I'm sorry', I confess.

'You think I'm crazy, don't you?'

'No. I think you're free, free like a bird: like a peacock.'

This pleases her. She licks her lips and peers ambivalently at me. As though I'm

a skunk cradling a large diamond between my legs. Her nostrils twitch like the nasal wings of a filly in oestrus.

'You look very married to me; *very* married', she says.

'I was.'

'Where's your wife?'

'She ran away and joined the Army.'

'Here we go again. I'm not coming-in *this* time.'

'She really did. I'm not *teasing* you this time.' The woman looks dubious. 'The Israeli Army', I add.

'I don't believe you.'

'I made the mistake of marrying a Jewish girl, carting her off to live in a country town. Jewesses don't like country towns Madam: they like the crevices of St Kilda. The town is quiet. My job, lecturing at the Teacher's College, is *very* quiet. We met at the University.'

Perhaps my voice convinces her, for the woman contemplates me more seriously now.

'Why did your wife run off to Israel?'

'Said it was her duty; to take X-rays for the Israeli Army. She's a radiographer.'

'I suppose wandering around a kibbutz in a pair of trousers is better than living with a boring man.'

'Ah, but my wife wanders around a clinic in Tel Aviv wearing a white coat.'

'What about your children? Did she walk out on them too?'

'We have no children', I reply, trying to think of some dog talk. The woman is pertinacious.

'That's not the reason, is it?'

'Yes', I insist. 'Her duty to the nation, her second nation; her religious cynosure. You know, the continuity of Jewish history-religion.'

'There's more to it than that. I can tell by your sad voice. Bet I was right. Bet it was because you're an ice-cold fish who froze her out!'

Is there no limit to this woman's probing? 'Madam, I am angry. You ask too many questions. I will tell you this because I want you to stop talking: *perhaps she left because I, too, have a lot of those doctor's receipts like those in your bag.* Perhaps it was *that* sort of thing.'

The woman suddenly goes pale then weeps quietly for some minutes.... 'Christ! *That* sort of thing.... Christ, I'm sorry Mister', she says, 'I didn't mean what I said about you being sexless. I was just trying to provoke you. It looked like being a dull trip. I'm sorry about saying that.' She weeps a moment longer then adds, 'And that's a *good* school you went to'.

'Please compose yourself Madam, it's quite alright.'

'Chi Chi's no good down below either', she says wiping her eyes. 'We're a nice old three aren't we?'

'Let's not talk. Here, let me hold Chi Chi for you.' She responds by handing me the Radhakrishnan instead of the bitch.

Here, read *this* Mister. *We* need a sense of continuity, too, don't we? It all started before Jesus the Jew, you know: He's just *one* of them. There are cycles and cycles. We might do better next time around, eh? You and I and Chi Chi.'

Now she is silent. Now she is still. By pressing my face against the window I can smudge the flicking phantasmagora of proximal objects: by focussing on distant hills, inert in the white light of the moon, I can erase the movement of the train to a stillness, a hush. At this moment, for the first time since my wife left, I feel at peace where I am: as though, through the talking, my wife is closer now.

Laurie Clancy

# THE WIFE SPECIALIST

Last Tuesday I went to a dinner party in Parkville. Thirteen people—six husbands, six wives and me. Three doctorates, four Master's degrees and two books.

There they sat along the long table, like the twelve apostles. But sexually emancipated. Six husbands, six wives. One for one. Matching couples. Him and her.

There I sit, like a rolling stone. Like a complete unknown. Knowing I'm on my own.

Professors now have an advanced taste in music. My host, the fortyish professor with advanced tastes, plays the Beatles and Rolling Stones. In a year or two he will be playing Jimi Hendrix and the Grateful Dead.

I sit there, fiddling with the sugar spoons. She loves me, she loves me not, she loves me . . .

A few nights ago I read a book on *Sophisticated Sex Techniques in Marriage*. Or out of it, I guess it doesn't matter.

My book says, 'Creative adultery is a means of relaxing marital tension. It is not a pastime for everyone. It can shatter a marriage if not kept under careful control. Preferably no one under thirty should indulge in it.'

Creative adultery.

I am thirty-five. I am exactly six feet tall and weight 172 pounds. I have relaxed the marital tensions of all six of my friends' wives here at the table.

And twenty-seven other friends' wives.

I keep in physical shape by playing squash regularly and by working out in the gymnasium once a week. My weight has remained exactly the same for seven years. Mens sano in corpore sane.

My host, the professor of French with the advanced tastes in music, married a psychology major whose father was something in breweries and whose marital tensions I relaxed six months later. There she sits looking at me. Like a rolling stone.

Shortly after his honeymoon my host held a house-warming party. Nine friends at dinner. Four couples and me. Jack and Jill, Buck and Doe, Senor and Senorita, Dames and Caballeros. He asked us for suggestions for a name for his house. In French. I staggered to the end of the table. 'Call it . . . *Chez Nouveau Riche*.' I have a talent for French phrases which no one recognizes.

He called it *Where Friends Meet*. And we meet now.

On my left is Alice and across the table from her, Don, one of my friends. Don and Alice were made for each other. Don is an architect with a leading firm in St Kilda Road. Alice is an attractive blonde with a rather becoming mole high up on her left thigh.

A little further down the table is Paul, one of the books, and directly across from him is Kate. Paul got drunk with me once and confessed that Kate is hard to arouse. Kate is hard to arouse in a bedroom but easy to arouse in a vacant block, in the back seat of a Valiant at a drive-in theatre, in a telephone booth.

I have often wanted to help my friend Paul but the etiquette of the situation makes it difficult.

Tom is a Reader in English literature and his wife works in the same department. He has written a book and six articles on D. H. Lawrence. He is a specialist on D. H. Lawrence.

I can see them all looking at me. Why didn't I bring someone with me? Some nice girl, from a good background.

Should I be married? Should I be good? . . .

For the last two years I have been seeing a psychiatrist. He is a friend and doesn't charge me for the sessions. I think he likes hearing about what I do. I show him my art photograph collection.

He tells me I have an identity crisis. Generativity versus self-absorption. Intimacy versus isolation. Integrity versus despair. Home ground advantage.

Integrity versus despair.

Last night I went to a party in a flat in Windsor. My host was a left-wing intellectual, a lecturer in political science. His wife is emancipated. She has read *Sexual Politics* and doesn't wear a bra. They have a very modern marriage.

The second thing she ever said to me was, 'We have a very modern marriage'.

I met a girl at the party who asked me what I was. I used to get very disconcerted by this question. Identity crisis. Integrity versus despair.

It doesn't do just to say that you sleep with women and leave it at that. It's too vague and people are apt to get a misleading impression. They need something more precise and scientific, something that they can grasp more easily.

At one time I would think for a long time before answering that question. I would think back to the women I had gone out with. Some were pretty and some were plain. Some wore glasses and some did not. Some were teachers and some were nurses and some were students and some were airline stewardesses.

They did not have very much in common except for one thing. The common denominator was that they were all married. So that was what I learned to say when a person asked me what I was. I used to say, 'I'm a wife specialist'.

They would nod knowingly and go away, satisfied.

Jean-Paul Sartre, a French intellectual, writes a short story about a man who has no identity. Until he learns to hate Jews. And then when someone asks him what he does, he says he's an anti-Semite. That gives him an identity. He's a Jew hater. That satisfies people. Generativity versus self-absorption.

I'm a wife specialist.

Mine is a lonely occupation. It's logical that I don't have too many friends, masculine friends. Most of them are upset when they find out I have slept with their wives. A host is lucky if he can still get six husbands to dinner with me.

I imagine I'm too awkward to have around now. You don't invite a wife specialist home to meet your wife. There is no superfluity of wife specialists but even one is a lot.

A few weeks ago I went to a lecture on "Sex and Society". It was cold comfort. 'Adultery', the lecturer said, 'has been the mainstay of Western imaginative literature, even of Western society for over two centuries.

Well, why not? I said to myself. Or in French, Eh bien, pourquoi pas?

'There are signs that this is changing.' Gloomily.

'Adultery is no longer taboo. With the world population explosion on everybody's mind, and the perfection of contraceptive techniques, the next sexual preoccupation will be incest.' I could well become passé.

I pour myself a drink and go back to my book on *Sophisticated Sex Techniques in Marriage*. Or out of it; it doesn't matter.

I read the chapter on "Creative Adultery and other sophisticated amusements". 'By the age of forty, one married man out of every two has been unfaithful to his wife.' 'By the age of forty, one married woman out of four has been unfaithful to her husband.'

Eh bien, pourquoi pas?

I am relieved, though, that they put it in simple layman's terms that I can understand. I feel frightened of statistics. When they say that 'The average Australian family has 2.4 children' I have a horrifying vision of all these hybrid mediocrities running around the kitchen, a leg here, a kidney there, another displaced and discreet organ somewhere else.

I read again. There is something peculiar about this. If twice as many men as women do it, who do half of the men *do it with*? Are they unfaithful with unmarried women? That is, do single girls do it with married men but when they become married stop doing it with even single men? Or does every married woman who is unfaithful do it with at least two men in order to compensate for the backwardness, so to speak, of her coevals?

Perhaps it could get to be a habit, once one started, like smoking or scrabble. Or other sophisticated amusements.

The English writer, G. K. Chesterton, wrote a book about the Club of Queer Trades. Perhaps we wife specialists should form a club. Though our profession isn't queer.

We would be members of G.K.C's. C.Q.T.

A secret handshake?

A guide to potential clients for new and prospective members?

Advertising. A slogan. 'When you're a wife specialist you're never alone.'

There are prejudices to be overcome. Too much literature has been against us. Everyone remembers Anna with sympathy but who has time for Vronsky? Though of course, he wasn't a specialist.

I think about the party again. It's strange how slow husbands are to realize. They could talk to you for years without knowing what your profession is.

But women ... often they know at once, just from looking at you. Or if they don't, it never takes them long to find out. That old antenna, all that sensory equipment has been going out for years.

Integrity versus despair. Most of the real professionals have gone. A bad workman blames his tool.

Is there anything else I could do? Could I aspire to distinction in some other field, in writing perhaps? Last week I bought a book called "*How to be a Writer*". My book told me, 'The only justification for autobiographical exposure is absolute excellence'.

A few hours ago, at the party, the girl who asked me what I did spoke to me and asked me to take her home.

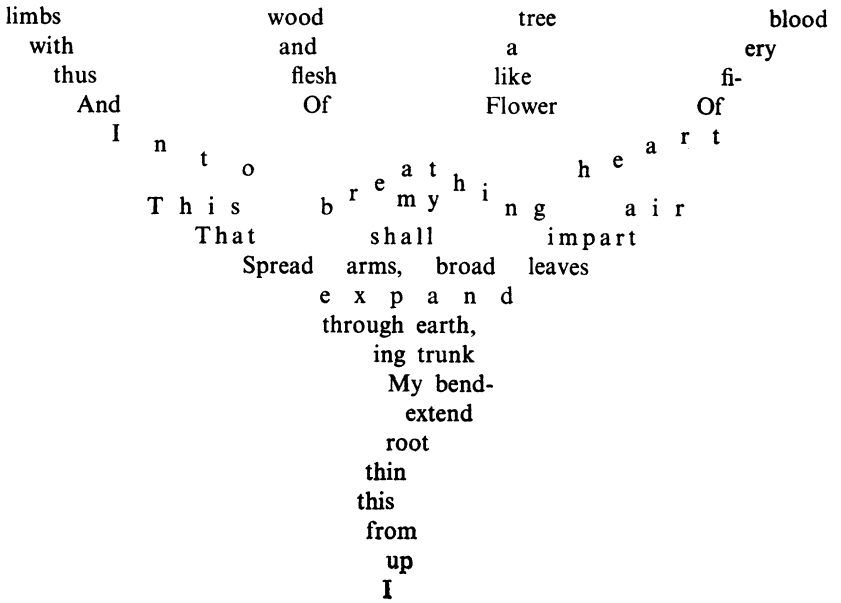
'Are you married?' I had to ask her.

She said no.

'Sorry, miss', I said regretfully, for she was attractive. 'I told you before, I'm a wife specialist.'

She gave me an odd look and walked away. I can't understand that look.

# LIFE




*DAVID LAKE*

Fairlie Apperly

# SAME SHAPE BUT NOT MY BROTHER

Why should I feel a sore thumb nag of guilt when I think of Rick?

Really, there was little that appealed about him and consequently little to remember beyond a begging inadequacy. From my side of the counter, he was simply one of several bores and boozers hungry for an ear, and, because of a preference for female company and because I couldn't run out on him, mine was hammered when the bar was quiet. Otherwise he was prepared to pay for a listener and would bail up all sorts of unlikelies with a beer, rarely reciprocated I might add.

As far as I know, the only good work Rick ever did was to will his eyes—a bloodshot pair at that—to be used for a graft, or research or something after his death. From time to time he used the card specifying his future sacrifice as a talking point.

Rick died on his ship about ten days after I last saw him. Not that he was knocked off or anything, but in a way his death sentence was handed out by the salt of the tax-paying public, you and me. It could have been suicide, it could have been so-called natural causes, doesn't make much difference except for the record.

. . . . . .

Rick could be remembered more for the whole uneasiness of him than for any gross lack or addition. His skin put you off, he had a veiny, boozy mauve and white look rather than a decent sea-going tan, and I noticed he had several nasty infections on his fingers. Although he kept himself reasonably clean, reasonably presentable, I felt an instinctive withdrawal from his physical presence even when he was cold sober. When he delivered a sloshed heart-to-heart monologue, it proved a butter-softness, in spite of the raw terms in which it was couched. Naturally I avoided such whenever I could, and so did everyone else which caused a vicious non-circle. To avoid the sting of avoidance, the likely sloshers got sloshed quicker.

Dully talkative, Rick's trouble was that he was not insensitively so, and knew it every time he got a knock-back. Most of the bores didn't know it and continued to bore each other and me, too, if they had the chance. There were faces I dreaded, simply because of the smiling blast they'd thrust on me, in a sort of cunning innocence every time they opened their mouths.

This time Rick was on three days leave. Came into the bar about elevenish, drank Remy Martin alternately with beer and, because the place was quiet, told me all about the stew he'd left cooking on the gas, figuring it was safe ground between us. He'd finally got the message that it was no go where loading cargo was concerned —crates winches and hatches produced in me an instant yawn, as did his wartime tales. He couldn't tell a good story.

"How long should I simmer it, like, Kathy?" he wanted to know. "There's topside and carrots and beans and chopped kidney. And onion, mustn't forget the onion", he told me, as if I cared.

"Don't know", I responded, but only just, "haven't you got a P.M.U.?" I clattered a few glasses into the dishwasher. Was that some relief, that shadow at the door? This is a smallish bar, quiet on weekdays unless it's hot. "Don't often make stew", I added, being polite, "just grills and things unless there's visitors then I make something out of the Round The World Cookbook, you know, a curry or something fishy."

"Round the world", he mused and went backwards over the years, rounded The Horn and brightened.

"That reminds me of when I was in the Argentine . . .", he began, but I couldn't stand it and backed off to wipe a few beer rings and rearrange the coasters. He sipped his Remy and offered sadly, "Quiet this morning".

"Sam and Millie 'll be in soon", I comforted with a three of clubs when he was begging for an ace of diamonds, for Millie was a full-scale bore. To make matters worse, she came from somewhere in the Old Country and it took all your concentration to understand one word in three.

"Always workin'." He turned to watch me empty an ashtray and sighed, hunching his back, C-shape, to the counter and seeking an antidote to the sight in his brandy glass.

"Well, it's m' bread and butter", I returned with virtue.

The doorway darkened and Millie came waddling in, lumpy with parcels and her own extra flesh.

"Well, speak of the devil. Kathy here was just saying you'd be in." He winked at me in an us-versus-Millie fashion, hesitated, then went to pull out a chair for her on which she plonked her parcels. "Wotcha done with Sam." It wasn't a question for the three of us knew he could go no further than the dry cleaner's, the T.A.B. or the Men's unescorted.

"Get us a coopla seven's, loov." Millie spread herself and her parcels to a third chair, leaving one for Sam. "He's slipped into the T.A.B. for the double."

"Number five on the first leg." Rick stated it with Remy-fortified surety and returned to the counter, seeing Millie had rejected his unspoken hope. She and Sam had been visiting his sister, and we were presented with a piece by piece description of the furniture that didn't go with the new, badly-chosen wallpaper. "Like, take the standard lamp . . ."

Rick ordered a steak sandwich, ate half, and asked me to wrap the rest for him to take home. Back to the beer and brandy. A few of the regulars drifted in. Boris, who often had a drink with Rick, devoted himself to a couple of foreigners and ear-bashed in his own lingo. Clive and Albie came together, talking megacycle and kilowatt kind of talk, pausing only to order their beers. Rick nosed round like a hoping dog, but his brain was never designed to deal in megacycles, quite apart from a present inability to cope with anything beyond an analysis of the weather and the test scores.

"Give me mates a drink", he whispered it exaggeratedly and, as they paused to identify the whisper, thrust a paper under Albie's nose.

"Here, take a geek at Peanuts", he insisted and laughed in a roar that held most of the sorrows of his fifty-odd years.

"Hm. Clever, isn't it", Albie frowned. "Listen, mate, thanks all the same but Clive and I are pinching five minutes off the boss, can't stay. See you later." He turned back to a diagram he had drawn, "See the circuit goes thisaway . . ."

It wasn't much of a day. People dribbled in as the showers started and made for the darkest corners, in no mood to expand, or to tip either, for that matter. And

the background music seemed to be of the brass band or pop sort that intruded rather than enlivened.

A girl came in and ordered a squash. She shook the rain from her coat and sat down, lighting a cigarette with a nervous hand. Finally she asked in a scared voice if the manager were about. She was hoping for a job.

"Poor kid." Rick had sidled across, the protector of all job-seekers. "Here, love, let me get you a brandy."

"No thank you, really."

"But you're shaking, dear. Here, let me . . . mind if I sit down?"

She said nothing, so Rick sat.

His voice was thick with love and booze, "Just you sit quiet till he comes—he's not a bad sort of bloke—just relax and get your nerve back. That there's Kathy, mine's Rick, what's yours?"

"I'd rather—oh, never mind. Dawn."

"Dawnie, I'm gonna get you something to drink, true, it'll help."

"Rick, leave her alone." I leaned across the counter.

"Orright, orright, but gimme a coupla brandies, Kathy, I'll leave one with Dawnie here and won't say a word. She don't have to drink it, right?" But he couldn't shut up.

"My God, the blinkin' stew stewin' its head off", he remembered importantly. "Got parsnips, carrots, beans, peppers . . . and onion, mustn't forget the onion", he invited us to respond, but I backed off to serve a couple of travellers and to seek out the boss.

He came and went and the hesitant girl went too, leaving her brandy untouched.

"May as well." Rick took it up. "M' last brandy—from now on it's beer only. I'm not full though, Kathy, well am I?" He spread his arms in an exposition of his almost-drunken state.

"Better hop home and check on the stew, Rick", I suggested. "Why 'nt you watch the telly for a while." Surprisingly enough he kicked off.

From sixish on, until I finish at seven-thirty, is a relaxed and convivial time which I rather enjoy. The bores have each other upon whom to fasten, and most remarks addressed to me are in a take-it-or-leave-it vein, as I'm busy enough to have to concentrate on the drinks I'm pouring, or change I'm giving rather than be able to join in any more than passing pleasantries.

Rick was back before seven, sad and more or less sobered.

"A beer, Kath." He looked round the counter to make a choice between a couple of executive types, a few of the bores or a hippie youth with golliwog hair. He hesitated between the bores and the golliwog, then settled for the known.

"Well, if it isn't me old mates Mickie and Albie holding up the counter, eh!" he enthused, his begging eyes hidden briefly in the wrinkled contours of an all-knowing seaman's grin.

"Hi, Rick", one of them spoke, without interest, for both. Come on you buggers, I thought, in a moment of involvement, it wouldn't kill you.

Rick downed his beer in a gulp.

"Give us another, love", he said, and moved towards the golliwog.

"Just visitin'?" he wondered politely.

The golliwog stared without seeing at the sound of Rick's voice, then returned to watch the universe in the rising bubbles.

"Drugs, I reckon", Rick turned to me knowingly, "you can pick 'em. Anyway, Kathy, how're you going, okay?"

"Sure, sure." I wiped some slops from the counter and thought I'd better try harder. "Look at the damn rain", I said.

"Yeah, set for the night in my humble opinion. I brought m' coat with me this time, so it doesn't matter. You got yours I hope?"

"No dammit", I remembered. "It was sunny when I left this morning. Never mind, I can borrow an umbrella and it's only two minutes to the station."

"Give us a beer, Kath." He leaned towards me and I realized my mistake. "Why 'nt you step over to my place—I'm only down the road—and have a bite of stew with me, true, it turned out lovely. I mean it, love, like I'm genuyne, I don't mean nothin' else, no hanky-panky or that. Have a bit of stew and I'll send you home in a taxi if it's still raining. Eh? How about it, kid?" His eyes visualized a cosy kitchen scene.

"Sorry Rick, can't do it. But thanks all the same, I appreciate your offer." It served me right for having unbent, I guess.

"Orright then, I can see you don't want to, just thought it might help you out, that's all." He looked disconsolate again. "Well, have a drink with me when you knock off, then I'll get a taxi from here. I'm not gonna take no for an answer, so you may as well settle for it, eh?"

Gee some blokes make it hard.

"Sorry, but I've got to keep work separate, completely separate, thanks all the same", I said finally and rather coldly.

"Kathy, come off it, gee, you're a mate of mine, aren't you? Come off your high horse, we'll cut out the drink and make it a taxi and I don't take no for an answer!"

"No." Gladly I pulled beer for two Yanks and allowed myself to be drawn into a discussion on the size of the glasses.

"Come seven-thirty and I'm getting you a taxi." I pretended not to hear—it was almost that now and Sheila would take over any minute.

"Here, Rick, take a look at tonight's paper." I thrust it across to deflect his thoughts.

"Later, later. I got a mission, lady, I'm going for that taxi. There's the dough." He'd left three dollars on the counter.

Sheila hurried in.

"Hi, Kath, sorry I'm late. Listen, Des is waiting outside, he'll drop you off at the station."

"Gee thanks, Sheila, that solves it. I'll buzz off pronto—give Rick that three dollars when he comes in, would you?" I retreated into the outside passage which gave onto the street.

It was hard to distinguish cars from taxis—and the latter were all occupied anyway—as they splashed past in the wet gloom. A glimpse of flailing arms and the sound of a penetrating whistle showed a determination I'd never seen before in Rick.

I yelled, "I've got a lift, Rick, Sheila's got your money", through cupped hands at the now-purposeful figure across the road, and jumped into Des's waiting car. I hoped Rick had heard, in fact I had a headache by the time I got home, wondering. Apparently he didn't go back into the bar and went back to sea next day without collecting his money.

No-one could hint that you and I, even indirectly, had anything to do with Rick's death the following week, how could they? I mean he was free and adult and if he was lonely, well, he could always go to the Seamen's Mission or something, or find a minister with whom to discuss his problems. No reason why you and I should feel responsibilities towards the likes of Rick. As I said, I didn't find out if it was natural or suicide, but what the hell?

Can't help wondering what became of Rick's eyes. If, in fact, the blind could see because of his gesture, well, it would be a sort-of miracle. I hope that's what happened, the hard part is the not-knowing. More likely, I guess, is that they got dissected on a glass slab and made some poor student feel sick as a dog.

Judy Forsyth

# AT HOME WITH CHARITY

Marie cleared the lunch dishes from the kitchen table and set aside Elizabeth's half-eaten bunch of grapes.

"I'll put these here for you, darling", she said, "next to the kettle, see, and no one else is to touch them, do you hear, children. Because Elizabeth has a cold. You can all three go out now and play on the verandah—and get your cardigans on, please."

She was still washing up when the rhythm of their skipping-chant, "Hullo, Mr *Fat*belly, *how's* your wife?" "Very, very *ill*, sir; can't save her *life*", was interrupted, and one by one they all trooped inside with their important announcement.

"Mum, there's a *man* to see you, a *man* to see you, Mum, a *man*!"

"What man?"

She hoped it wasn't the 'Good News' or the 'Encyclopaedia Britannica' again. A nuisance so early on a Saturday afternoon with Steve only just driven off to buy drinks for tonight's party.

She dried her hands on her apron as she walked towards the open front door.

The man leant against the flywire and addressed her through it. Below his battered hat his face was thin and red, and his cheeks were unshaven. His eyebrows and lashes were so pale as to seem almost absent, leaving his eyes as nakedly crafty as an old hen's. He was slightly built and his shabby black overcoat was too large for him; the sleeves partly covered his hands, and the hem, hanging low down over his calves, drew attention to the edges of his grey flannels, which were frayed and set with mud into uncomfortable whorls and bristles about his bare ankles. On his feet he wore soiled tennis shoes.

"Any knives, scissors, garden shears y'want sharpenin', mother?" he intoned his plaintive rote.

She hesitated. At least he wasn't begging.

Actually it was quite convenient. "I must get these scissors sharpened some time", she had said to herself only last week. She fetched them from the cupboard. "And what about the breadknife?" she thought. "That certainly needs doing."

"How much for a breadknife?" she queried, returning to the flywire.

"Thirty cents."

"And scissors?"

"Thirty cents. The same."

"Well, then, I'll just have the scissors done", she decided aloud.

"I don't suppose ya realise the cost of me files." His voice was suddenly loud and aggressive. "Seventy cents each they are, and they break as easily as that! I

mean, d'y'expect me to buy a new file every day at seventy cents a time? Pay me five cents if ya like, pay me nothin' if ya like, but a file costs me seventy."

"It's not", she answered quietly but clearly, "that I expect you to do it for nothing; it's simply that, at thirty cents each, I can only afford to have one article sharpened."

"Don'cha know I just can't make a livin' like this? I'm starvin'! Absolutely starvin'! Just give us a hunk of polony and I'll do the both for ya for thirty."

Pity and remorse snipped her like the twin blades of her scissors.

"I'll get you something to eat", she agreed, and turned at once to do it.

"And I'll get me tools. Left them up the street." He concluded the bargain as briskly as if it had been businesslike throughout.

The children followed her back to the kitchen to watch. Now the grey autumn afternoon held promise of entertainment for them.

How terrible to be so hungry! A hunk of polony indeed! Marie reached down the bread-bin and cut thick slices of bread, spread them with butter, cold meat and cheese, arranged them neatly on a plate and placed the plate on a tray.

"Are you going to give him a picnic?" asked Janet, the youngest child.

"A picnic?" She laughed. "Yes."

As she filled the kettle, Marie noticed Elizabeth's grapes and added them to the tray.

"Won't he get a cold?" Elizabeth's eyes were innocent.

Marie opened her mouth to reply but closed it again without comment, waited and then switched off the boiling kettle and made a cup of coffee.

"How do you know he likes coffee?" the child persisted.

"He likes it", Marie replied, with the slightest edge to her voice.

"Mum, the man's back!" Annette called in excitedly from the verandah, where she had been keeping watch.

Marie picked up the tray and took it over. Then she put it down again and reset it, adding a traycloth and a serviette.

She found the man squatting on the verandah alongside his ancient Gladstone-bag, which spilled out an assortment of files and rags.

"Sit down here and have this first", she invited, moving a grasschair near to the tray, which she had balanced on the low wall above him.

He looked up at her and then at his palms.

"Well, me hands are so dirty. I'd have to wash first, wouldn't I?"

Should she invite him to use the bathroom? Better not.

"There's a tap in the garden", she indicated.

"Oh, yes, I see now." He rose and limped slowly towards it. "Got m'bag from up the street", he began conversationally, pausing in front of her. "Half of them's out this afternoon. I used'a do all this part around here. Practically every house I used'a do. Just about nobody at home this afternoon. Gone to the footy, I suppose. And the rest of them, well, they reckon the stuff's still sharp from last time. Don't need doin' again, they say. My work's that good, it keeps on cuttin' long after I'm gone."

He smirked at her and breathed out stale beer and tobacco with his pride.

"I'm sure you do a very good job. I'll just get the things."

She retreated into the house, collected the scissors and the knife and laid them down next to his bag while he washed.

Back again in the kitchen she had hardly begun to dry the dishes when all the children reappeared.

"He's having it now."

She received their bulletin with genuine pleasure.

"Why can't we watch?" Elizabeth demanded suddenly.

"I didn't say you couldn't."

"Annette said we couldn't."

"It's rude to watch people eating, you said," countered the eight-year-old with nice triumph. "You did say so, didn't you? You always say so."

"Well, yes, I suppose so."

Marie was doubtful. Their vicarious pleasure had seemed harmless enough and a temporary occupation which, in a way, now she considered it, they were almost reasonably entitled to enjoy, since she had, after all, provided the means for it. The man would hardly be the one to mind. Why must the child impose such adult restrictions on the others?

"I don't know, though", she faltered. "I don't really see why not."

The others returned exuberantly to the verandah, while Annette remained with her.

"He's rather rude, that man, you know, Mum", she said presently.

"Is he? Why, darling?"

"Well, when he was washing he blew his nose on his fingers and wiped it all on the grass."

"Perhaps he hasn't a handkerchief, Annette."

"Ugh!" The child grimaced in disgust. "He was very hungry, though, wasn't he?" she added, Marie thought, rather kindly.

"He was", she agreed.

"Do you think, if he got so hungry, he would eat *people's* flesh?"

So that was it! Marie looked at her child with compassion.

"No, never. Never, ever", she repeated firmly.

"Ya there, mother?" the man called in shortly. "Scissors ready now. Just see if they're sharp enough."

"Coming. I'm coming", she called back.

In the hallway she met Janet, who ran towards her with the scissors and a small piece of cloth.

"Here! He's done them. Try and cut this, he said."

"Never run with scissors, please, Janet", she reproved as she cut the cloth.

"How are they, mother? Sharp enough? he asked her when she came out.

"Yes, yes. Fine, thank you", she acquiesced, though they were not much sharper than before.

"I shouldn't've given them to the kid, really", he remarked.

"No, you shouldn't."

"She might've gone and used them on somethin' else first and blunted them again!"

"Well, she didn't," Marie retorted curtly. She was becoming irritated by his bland conceit and tired of trotting in and out of the house to his direction.

But then she noticed that he had not eaten all his bread or the grapes either. He might feel obliged to leave what he couldn't manage at once. How terrible to suffer real hunger, she reflected again.

"I'll give you a packet and you can take them away with you, if you like", she offered pleasantly.

"I was that dry", he whined in reply. "Never could eat without drinkin'. I'll take coffee or tea, just whatever y've got."

"Oh! Certainly." She concealed the surprise in her voice, picked up the cup and took it inside. Cold clotted liquid and breadcrumbs slopped in the saucer.

Hunger or thirst—what difference? She ignored his manner in favour of his need.

As she refilled the cup her husband and son returned. They dumped the beer bottles down on the table.

"What's to eat, Mum?" asked the boy. "I'm starving."

She laughed.

"Starving, are you? Have a sandwich."

"No, thanks."

"Have a biscuit."

"Okay. Who is the old guy on the verandah?" he whispered, wrinkling up his nose.

"Someone else who is starving, my son", she retorted too brusquely.

"Okay, okay!" The boy shrugged his shoulders and withdrew to his bedroom with a handful of biscuits.

Marie furrowed her brow and bit at her fingernail as she slowly counted out seventy cents from her purse. After a moment's indecision she dropped back thirty cents and then carried the remaining forty and the coffee out to the man and put them down together on the tray.

"Well, that's another done!" He handed her the breadknife. "And sharp enough for ya, eh?"

"Thank you, yes, very nice." She accepted it without proof and waited for him to pack up and go.

Instead, he suddenly demanded, "Just come out here a minute, mother, will ya. Out in the garden, round here."

The children were all at the back. Steve was already in the bathroom taking a shower. Absurdly she entertained Annette's fear and clutched the breadknife closer.

"What is it? Why should I?"

"I want to show ya somethin'. That grass! Give us y'sickle and I'll sharpen it for ya."

"Oh, the grass! Well, I . . . ."

She followed him down the steps into the drive where the patch of kikuyu grass they had neglected grew two feet high under the bathroom window.

Steve had said himself that was where the rats were getting in now and they ought to have it cut soon.

"Have ya got a sickle?" he pressed the matter.

Had they? She thought they had somewhere, but she was guarded.

"I don't know if we have a sickle, and anyway I don't know if we can afford it just now."

"Give us a room for the night and I'll do it", he offered with practised spontaneity.

A room for the night? Had he nowhere to sleep, then? But where could they put him? In the garage perhaps if they moved the car out? No, of course not!

Marie felt the distinct need of Steve's protection.

"If you wait a moment I'll speak to my husband about the sickle", she pointedly reverted to his first proposition.

As she went indoors she heard from the bathroom the sound of splashing water.

"Steve! Steve!" she called outside the door.

"Yes? What?"

"The man wants to sharpen the sickle and cut the grass. Come and tell him we don't want it done!"

"Can't you tell him, Marie? I'm in the middle of a shower. Just tell him to go away now", he answered easily enough.

Marie went out again. The man was back at the tray, finishing his second cup of coffee.

"We don't want anything else done, thank you, and we haven't a room for the night."

She delivered her message abruptly.

The man looked at her with an expression of frank amusement.

"Oh, all right then, mother. Fair enough", he grinned, and moved to collect his tools.

She took a step towards him.

"Try next door", she advised, with clumsy concern.

He guffawed outright, picked up his bag and shambled off, over the road.

# THE STORY OF GINNY

I

I used to drive alone at night,
following tungsten stars
and the blip-blip scenery
of half-white lines.

some stars flecked,
moon shadows patterned the road,
an engine moaned its existence,
moled its way
through the wombs of night.
only the pools
from 100 deserts
stood between us, that
and the dirt smudges
on the windscreen. all
footsteps hit hard.

II

then you became my friend
we touched a lot

I stayed.
you soaked up all
the marks of me;
soon I only owned
a rock I found
in Broken Hill.

I am afraid
of living here with you

among your
one-of-a-pair chaos,
your front lawn amber-glassed
your evenings too musical.

III

we talked
as it swam in blackness.
I called down
readings, bearings,

tuna recipes
and how come he wasn't home yet;

it answered in braille
along the soft walls.

*TOY DORGAN*

Peter Andren

# WHERE WE GOIN' THIS TIME?

Alec and Pete crawled up the grassy slope from the river bank to the road. Drunk as lords. That's how Ivy, Alec's wife had often described them. And today wasn't any different. No two days are much different in an abo's life. Gilbey's Gin. The labelled cork top protruded from Alec's back trouser pocket. Once on the road the two men swayed in unison, then started a lurching journey towards the other side. One step forward, two to the left. Crash. The square bottle jumped from Alec's trouser pocket and smashed to the bitumen. Over the shattered bottle passed the shadow of Pete. Product of Gilbey's Gin said the raised printing on the still intact base.

* * * *

'Blackfeller country.'

The pilot swung his head from the port window of the Cessna 182, looking at the man beside him in the passenger seat.

'How can you tell?' asked Greg Smithfield, Sales Rep., Smallsons Engineering, Glebe. So his card said. He gave it to everyone. He looked like his card. As he spoke he was glancing nervously at the orange sandhills as they skimmed away beneath the plane.

'See that dark patch ahead at ten to six?' The pilot indicated a spot five thousand feet below to the north-east.

Smithfield squinted. 'Yep.'

'Nomad's camp. There's quite a few of the buggers. Still wander about the bloody desert, Christ knows why. That's a camp spot. We'll have a closer look.'

The little blue plane swung low and hard over the sandhills. A clipboard with flight schedule sat in the pilot's lap. He glanced down at it. COPLEY AIRWAYS, ALICE SPRINGS. PILOT: John Harris. PURPOSE OF FLIGHT: Tourist. AREA: Alice ... Andado ... Palm Valley ... Alice. The plane levelled.

'There it is!'

'Whatta those trees ahead?'

'They're gunyahs ... abo homes. Only used by nomads ... ah ... on their wanderings. Wish to hell they'd wander off into the desert the whole bloody lot of them ... and get lost.'

'Why do you say that?'

'They're bludgers mate.'

The plane nosed skywards once more. 'Bloody bludgers. Sit on their black arses in the towns and pick up their social service pensions once a fortnight. Come in from the hills and grab their money. Their money? Huh. Our bloody money. Piss

up the moola and come back for more. We should bloody well round them all up and shoot 'em like we did the camels. At least the old camel did a fair day's work.' Altitude meter checked, he levelled the plane out at six thousand feet. He glanced at his watch. 'Should be home in half an hour.'

* * * *

'Shovels?'
'Yep.'
'Torch?'
'Yep.'
'Food? Fags?'
'F—— lot.'

Inventory checked in the usual fashion, Alec and Pete clambered into the battered khaki ute. Theirs. One new tyre too.

'Where we goin' this time?'
'You nameit fella. S'longasthereza enough rock to bring back.'
'Les go t'Ernabella.'
'Mission?'
'Yere. They won chuck us out.'
'Orrright pally pally ... les see whatzout there.'

A grubby white chook beaked the track which happened from the tin humpies through the scrub to the main road. Unexpectedly ruffled, it retreated before flags of scattered dust as the truck wheezed off into the neverfail at the edge of the clearing. A black eye watched the departure through a rusty hole in one of the huts. Ivy knew they'd be back.

* * * *

'When'd you get back?'
'About 17 O five.'
'How was it?'
'Same as ever. Bloody country looks all the same after you've flown it half a dozen times.'
'Going to town?'
'Hop in.'

Harris frowned as he swung the car out of the airport towards Alice. Christ Almighty. Do I have to go through the same rigmarole every day? Same plane, same people, same small talk. Five years ... and what? Still piddling about with COPLEYS. Still stuck in the desert waiting for Qantas to give a man a go. Forever taking tourists to the Rock, flying home when'd-you-get-backing with the other pilot, driving to the Great Northern ... the same next day. Shit. It's not the flying. Could fly all day on my own ... or with Qantas ... steady boy ... all great talents must wait ... even in Alice. ... Even in Alice.

An ever-widening hole was torn in the sunset ahead of the Holden. The shadow from Alec and Pete's ute ran well before them. It slid from the road, up and over the Holden as the two cars passed.

'Abos.'
'Doin' a spot of cattle snatching tonight, I'll bet.'
'Nuh. They were three-quarters. Only the quarters with a few brains ... a few brains ... do any duffing. Bloody halves, three-quarters and fulls ... they're the real bad ones. They're the real bludgers.'

The plastic skeleton strung to the Holden rear vision mirror stopped dancing as the car hit the tar for the last three miles into Alice. Beside the road the sandy and gullied course of the Todd River, awkward and bare without water, slunk between Namatjira gums till it crept under the authority of the new concrete road bridge at the bottom of town. Cornflake cliffs sheered up from either side of the cutting

to vee the gap in a horseshoe range that almost crusts the town. Shimmers of December bent the sticky black road that pushes a mile from the river cutting to Woolworths, Coles and the T.A.A. Travel Agency with Cheap Gold Coast Holiday posters. Sprawling, beckoning the unsullied, her gnarled legs unashamedly apart. That's Alice. Her left breast nestling the BROWNS, JOHNSONS and Territory Trucking Tycoon, the right harbouring a colony of rogue cells, silently killing the pride of its members and the conscience of its cause.

This sad-eyed malignancy was screaming, whining, cursing and vomitting stubbies of Swan Lager as the two pilots dug their way into the beer garden of the Northern.

'In the bar ... out of this!' Harris shouted over his shoulder.

'Okay.'

A dark girl, probably half-caste, about sixteen and a bronze peace medallion chained to her neck, toppled backwards from a huddle of blacks. Harris stumbled into her. Staggering sideways, she grabbed a chair to haul herself half upright. Chocolate eyes coated Harris. She giggled. Satin brown skin, the bisected Y of the peace medal pointing down, down towards the warm line between two small breasts. Harris wondered if they were black too. The belt sitting surly on green hips ... tiny denim contours fanning upwards from the tightness of her crotch.

'John. JOHN.... for Chrissakes comeon.'

Harris looked up. Back in Alice, he shoved past the girl and into the bar.

'What the hell were you up to?'

'What a delicious bit of nookie that'd be.'

'She was black.'

'Yere.'

'What'll it be fellas?' The white shirt and black pants behind the bar swept up with his dirty wet sponge. Harris saw his own face in a damp patch on the counter. It was cut in two on the barman's backstroke.

'Two stubbies.'

Phhtt. Clock. Stubbies appeared, sides dribbling Harris's everynight.

'Did you come through the floor?' grinned the barman.

'Eh ... What? How do you mean?' Harris was still in the beergarden.

'You're the first blokes through that black jungle in twenty minutes.'

'Wish to Christ they'd defoliate it like Vietnam.'

'Oh, they're not so bad. No worse, no better than most.'

'No worse!' Harris flared. 'Black lover, eh? Bet you wouldn't get out there drinking with them.'

'Listen mate, I'd let my daughter screw with one' ... he paused ... 'if he was the Aga Khan.' Guffawing and sloshing his Wettex he moved off down the bar with a 'What'll it be mate?' His punchline went down unnoticed with the last gulp from Harris's stubby.

Outside in the beer garden a tangle of black figures squatted, leant, fell or swayed in that gravity defying day unknown before aborigines had beer. A crinkled gin took occasional sips from a stubby as she peered over the shoulder of the black man pressing her against the door of the Mens. Beside them, another aboriginal urinated into a tin that held a hundred smashed stubbies. Nine or ten black faces swelled through diamond shaped gaps in the wire fence about the garden. They whined for drinks from their more moneyed mates inside, their pink fingertips clinging like monkey paws. With a blast, The Happening Thing erupted on the beer crate stage. Long hair sweeping an arc on his shoulders, a half-caste singer swung into 'What Have They Done To My Song Ma'. The sloppy cement courtyard wriggled alive with aboriginals of all tones twisting their bodies in absurd shapes, their hushpuppied feet stamping out a million years to the beat of another culture.

Away from the pub, on Todd Street, Chinamen, Whites and Aboriginals swung

along the footpath in a razzle of swirling calf-length cotton dresses, checked shirts, outsize shorts and tropical white. The Gem Cave, Macy's, and the Oasis Motel winked their virtues from suspended moth-festooned neons. A group of abos, wine bottles clinking everywhile, sat about a park corner jabbering in the glare of a huge billboard Namatjira transparency. Two of their kids squatted unnoticed on a gutter in a side street. Occasionally they slid their bottoms along the edge. They shared the valve caps from the parked cars. The Happening Thing drifted through the Saturday night, over the people in the streets, past the abos and up towards the ranges shadowing the town. It stopped there, for there's nowhere else to go from Alice.

* * * *

She was waiting near his car when Harris finally left the pub. He faltered, then strode to the Holden. She drifted from the half-light over to the passenger window.

'Got two bub . . . mista?'

Harris looked at the high cheekbones, thin lips and the smooth brown throat. A hint of Chinese narrowed the girl's eyes.

'Why two bob?' It was all he could think to say.

'Wanna buy beer mista.'

Harris glanced past the girl towards the beer garden gate. No-one was looking.

'Hop in.' He leant across and shouldered open the door. 'Crouch down.' She almost fell onto the front seat as he dragged the door shut.

'Where we's goin' mista?'

'For a drive.'

The car swept into Todd Street and accelerated towards the river bridge. Just over it, Harris pointed down a track between scrub to the river bank. While turning off the lights, he silenced the motor. No-one could see the car from the road.

'Why'd you bring me here?'

'You know honey.'

'You like me?' She'd sat up and now leant back against the door watching him. Harris grabbed for her and she didn't try to stop him. The loose-knit blouse slid easily up from her jeans. Warm skin found his palm and he felt her stomach muscles tighten as his hand dashed upwards. He clasped a breast, which instantly hardened.

'You like that?'

'Yez . . . mista.'

Her tongue searched his mouth the moment their lips collided. Harris reached back, pushed up the door handle and the couple, still locked, flowed from the car to the grass.

Her levis and his khaki work trousers were bundled at their feet when they parted.

She spoke first. 'That good mista?'

Harris looked at her . . . tiny breasts still trembling, narrow waist, smooth stomach and long thin legs. Then he looked down his own length, his shirt and tie still on, no pants but socks. He shuddered.

You get home girl and don't say anything to anyone. Okay?'

'Okay Mista . . . see you tomorrow night?'

'Piss off.'

She dressed quickly and went while Harris fumbled to zipper and button up his dignity.

* * * *

Sweatness dribbled from Pete's chin onto the pick handle. There it quickly dried . . . sucked out by the numbing heat. A thousand flies formed a mobile saddle across his shoulders, shoulders glistening and swelling as he lifted the pick to swing

it down into the chalky soil. Twelve feet the trench was now. Piles of ore clods fenced the pit. After each few blows Pete reached down to crumble a piece of newly cleaved rock, or to examine the deepening cavity. At the other end Alec looped a shovel in never varying pendulums, lifting checked and unwanted ore up and onto the growing piles. They worked well. They had to, for the few dollars worth of crysoprase or sometimes opal they were able to find. Pete the pick, Alec the shovel. It never varied. Pete was the boss. It had never been said, but Alec recognised it. Nine, ten hours a day they would work until Pete murmured 'Okay'. The shovel would stay upright where Alec's tread had forced it into the loose ore. Pete would dig the pick into the face above his shoulder and haul himself up. Then, kneeling, his long arm was there for Alec. The night was beef grilled on a fire dug into the still warm soil. Day one was like the rest. Now it was day nine, Alec remembered. Ten pounds of cheap opal potch was all they had. Not enough for even a new shovel or the new dresses Pete had promised Ivy and young Sal.

He ran the back of his hand around his chin to cut off an itching dribble of sweat. Straightening for a moment, he looked about the twelve feet deep by twenty-feet hole, neat and solid, but empty. He started digging again. 'Hup'n bag 'n up 'n down', murmuring his labour under breath.

'Hey. ALEC.'

The noise startled him. Pete had dropped his pick and was dragging with his fingers at the trench face. Hands went in, fingertips at a vee, and hauled black clods. Pete looked closely at this section.

'What's up?'

'Look.'

Alec ambled up and looked. He'd already looked twenty, it must be, times today.

'What's this?' A cream clod, not unlike any of the millions Alec had already piled on the heap had been thrust into his hand. He looked.

'Scratch it.'

He scratched the clay-like surface. A dark coaley line glistened. He scratched again. The crumble came away easily and the black face winked in the glare.

'Black opal; Black ... Carn be ... black ... black? Is it black rock?'

'Reckon, pally.'

'How much?'

'Look 'ere.'

A vein of black, three inches high, ran an angle across the hollow Pete had chipped out, and disappeared again into the chalky wall where the pick-end last struck. They stood and looked, arms dangling aboriginal by their sides. Alec tipped back his ringer's hat and scratched.

'How much ... how much is black stuff worth again?'

'Measured by the carrit fella. Measured by the carrit. Not much about. I'd say the liddle bit you've got in your hands worth ... three thousand dollars?'

'Nuh. Nuh. Kiddin. Nuh.' But Alec knew Peter never kidded.

'Who we gunna tell?'

'No-one ... yet. Let's take this to the mishun and see what Sister 'elen's gotta say'.

They drove off towards the skyline, along the road they knew but wasn't. The ute's departure settled over the hole. Nothing else moved on the orange stage. Dust filtered down to talcum the tunnel dug by Pete. Some chalked the exposed black seam. The shininess disappeared ... for the time being.

* * * *

'Where'd you say you found it?'

'Twenty miles across ... near Crombie Bore.'

Sister Helen turned the opal over in her hand. Pushing back her head she looked

through her bifocals at the rippling colours in the rock. As she puckered her lips, the heavy ridges on her face shuddered.

'Well ... that's mission area all right. But as I said, I've spoken to the mines department man in Alice, and he says he'll be out tomorrow.'

'Do we keep it?'

'The stone?'

'Nah ... the 'ole.'

'No, Pete ... you know that. You've been around here long enough. It's all Crown Land.'

'Crun Lan?'

'Belongs to the Government and they get what comes out of it. Even this.' She gave the stone back to Pete.

'Don we get anything mum?'

'Well, if we all say what good boys you are, you might get a job there.'

'Thas all?' Alec spoke this time.

'That's all.'

'Maybe we don tell anyone where it is?'

'If you sell opal like that, Pete, the whole territory will be down here. There's no way out of it.'

'What we do?'

'Leave it to me.' Sister Helen left them. Pete and Alec stayed there, in the mission sister's office, unable to move, both staring at the piece of ore sitting on the palm of Pete's hand. The sun had long set behind Mount Everard to the west of the station, and it was getting darker by the minute in the room.

* * * *

Cloud whisps to the east unclasped the fingers of day. Mounds of grey began to swell here and there across the flat plain. Skeleton winch frames stood astride each mound. Low humming, then a growl, drew the tiny black shape out of the eastern sky towards the camp. Soon it was overhead, blue and glistening as it banked then drooped low over the miners' huts. Harris ran the Cessna back towards the lighter sky, dipped, dropped, swung about and glided down onto the gravel strip. Puttering up to the largest of the three iron buildings, he cut the engines as the shed door yawned. Three men, army trousered, one carrying a map, waited just outside as Harris walked up.

'Wake you up boys?'

'Nah ... been awake for hours.'

'I bet.' Harris stopped in front of the man in the middle of the group. 'Where today?'

'North forty miles. Surfis survey. Take Jack agin.'

Harris smirked and looked at the other men. 'Why in Christ's name can't they put one of you other guys in charge here? This jerk's only fifteen bob. There's nothing up there. No change in the land ... no colouring ... nothing worth looking at.'

'Who's running this show, Harris?' The man with the map stared at the pilot.

'What's the use Jack? There's bloody absolutely nothing worth looking at up there."

'You're the pilot, I'm the surveyor mate. If the manager wants you to take me north ... north you go, or we ask old man Copley for another pilot. Okay?'

I'll listen to you Jack. But I don't take orders from a bloody boong.'

Pete turned and walked slowly back towards the shed. He hesitated near the door, then veered away in the direction of a smaller building about twenty yards across the yard. Reaching it, he went inside.

'Jesus you're hard Harris.'

Harris looked at the surveyor. 'Hard? Of course I'm hard, Jack. Do you think I haven't seen what lazy, dirty, bludging blots on humanity the abos are?' He waved his arm in frustration. 'And you ask me to take orders from one of 'em.'

'Pete's different ... and Alec.'

'Well, Alec's on his own, and works well. He's not too bright, but will go flat out from breakfast to bunk. Pete's pretty cluey, considering. He's just brought his missus and young Sal, his girl, out from Alice, and he reckons he'll make a go of this if the Government people let him.'

'He won't make a go of it. You blokes are carrying him. Admit it.'

Jack dropped his eyes to the map, still scrolled in his grip. His eyes returned to Harris's. 'He'll make a go of it.'

Harris laughed. 'Bullshit. There's not an abo who deserves to make it, let alone stands a chance.'

The door of Pete's shed was opened. A girl emerged, carrying a baby. Her brown eyes met Harris and the bronze medallion still clung to the neck his lips had explored the year before. Head quickly lowered, she scuttled on barefeet to a clothesline that drooped between the side of the building and an old blitz wagon. Taking a napkin from the line, she slid, baby on hip, back into the shed.

'Pete's girl.' The surveyor spoke. 'Got herself up the duff to some white bloke in Alice. Goes to show we're fussy when it comes to helping the blackfeller, but not too fussy about screwin' his women eh?'

Harris didn't answer.

As soon as he got back to Alice that night he went to a phone booth. Flipping through the H's he came to HAMER, K. L., GOVERNMENT MINING OFFICER.

The five cent coin clinked as the call was answered.

'Hello?'

'Keith?'

'Who's that?'

'John ... John Harris.'

'G'day John. How's the survey work? Bit of a change from the tourist flights?'

'Yere. Listen, do you know that abo guy you've got out at Ernabella?'

'Pete or Alec?'

'The manager.'

'Pete. Yes. Why?'

'He stole a transistor radio from my plane this afternoon.'

'You sure?' There was a pause. 'John ... that bloke's a decent abo. I find it hard to believe.'

'Do you doubt me?'

'Have you proof?'

'Yes.'

'Well then, how can I doubt you? How did it happen?'

'He helped me fill the plane before I came back from the camp. The radio was on the front seat before we started. He went to the door while I was up on a drum looking at the levels. I saw him go to his shed with the bloody thing under his shirt.'

'Did you say anything to him.'

'No. I thought I'd leave it to you.'

* * * *

Pete and Ivy, Sal and the baby and Alec in the back returned to Alice and the old humpy about ten o'clock next morning. The men unloaded the tea chest with its chipped crockery, tattered hessian floormats and the three or four dresses Sal

shared with her mother. Ivy dragged this glory box from the front entrance to the still-flat spot in the corner of the dirt-floored room where the box had always sat except for its brief two-week visit to Ernabella.

A mile and a half away in his hotel room, John Harris woke late that morning. His head was fuzzed after a long silent session alone at the Northern. Silently reaching across the dressing table, he fumbled for his transistor radio. The ABC News suggested it was half past twelve. He switched it off.

Back at the humpies Alec started the ute. Gripping the steering wheel he looked across the cabin at Pete.

'Where we goin' this time.'

'You nameit, pally pally.'

# NOT INCOMPATIBLE

My hero-enemy
you cannot be. Our colours merge
and there is no cause for division.

We even like each other,
quivering beneath the upward thrust
of the picket-fence people—
two who just seem to belong
in the same garden.

My steely-eyed hero
you can never be. On winds of September
we drift by together.

For us there are no complications.
While all around
the ground sputters its green anger,
our colours softly swirl.

*SHIRLEY KNOWLES*

# GULLS WITH HUMAN VOICES

Don't take me past the headland.
That rocky wall is bulwark
against other winds.

Quiet.
Waves melt on sand, the afternoon shines on.
Somewhere a shell clicks,
while in that pool a hermit crab,
frail as a flower, slips sideways.

Don't take me any further.
I want to keep on tinkling over this expanse of barnacles,
broken from the sea.
Above the headland
gulls with human voices tear the sky.

Ravenous,
they wheel and plunge for fish or unguarded nest
and all the while their pterodactyl appetites
sharpen for me, the softest pickings
on all this beach.

*SHIRLEY KNOWLES*

# THE TRILL

The phrase of a bird,
in which the wordless is spelt
with little love unless for seasons,
comes to a point at that recurrent note
on which all seasons and all loves are built

—the expanding trill
as pure and pitiless as an instinctive hope—
I await your return
your return, turn, turn
to return . . .

*ANNE ELDER*

# FLAG CEREMONY

"Salute the flag!"
I hear the master's voice, rough in the hot sun
beating on my skull
it simmers my brains: I think confusedly,
Which flag?
I have been a schoolboy in four countries
in three of which we worshipped the flag
in two of which we swore to a God to defend it—
none of these flags or gods the one of my birth-tribe.
Are we in Panjandria now
or Janpandria?
Last year it was Janpandria.
Oh, well, I might as well swear loyalty
to this tribe's totems:
it's by far the safest plan.
But, brothers, when I'm twenty
you won't see me for dust.

If the worst ever comes to the worst
O Panjandrians
or Janpandrians
I think I'm going to shoot to miss
everyone except my own officers.

*DAVID LAKE*

# Theophile Gautier: RONDALLA

*Rondalla*, says Gautier, is 'the name the Aragonese give to the serenade.—The lover stations himself under the balcony of his beloved and sings his verses while accompanying himself on the guitar, which he scrapes with his fingernails and strikes with the palm of his hand for better accentuation of the rhythm. His friends stand guard at both ends of the street and prevent anybody from entering, even the local inhabitants. If two gallants discover they have a love in the same street, a fight is inevitable'.

Lass of imperial haughtiness,
Dove with a falcon's daunting eye,
You loathe me; yet a fond caprice
Plants me below your balcony.

Plucking the strings, slapping the wood,
Foot cocked on the post, I woo you now,
Intent your gloomy casement should
Light with your lamp and radiant brow.

No guitar else—I have decreed it—
Shall strum within this neighbourhood.
Your street is mine: I barricade it
To sing my love in solitude.

And the first chord-twanger I catch
Bawling his rhymes, whether good or bad,
Before this room where you keep watch,
I'll lop off both his ears, by God!

My knife stirs in its sheath. Who'd care
For a blob of bright incarnadine
A flash blade would delight to wear
On his neck-ruffle for garnet pin?

Blood fidgets with boredom in its vein:
Its temperament is to make a splash.
The weather's foul, look out for rain!
Scurry home, cowards, don't be rash!

Come, bully boys! bold blusterers!
Wrap cloak round forearm, show your paces,
That I may slash, you mangy curs,
My bloody cross on your craven faces.

Let them advance! I'll flinch no whit
Come singles, come battalions.
Your glory, Love, demands I slit
The nostrils of these fanfarons.

This gutter taints your promenades,
Could sully your white feet, who knows?
By Christ, I'll bridge it with brigades
Of rigid braggadocios!

Name who you will, I'll run him through
To prove how true's the love I've vowed.
Satan himself I'll brave, if you
Will give your two sheets for my shroud.

The pane is blind, the door is deaf—
Yet surely you can't fail to hear.
Like a wounded bull I roar my grief
Till maddened dogs howl in despair.

Oh knock, at least, a nail in your door
To hang up my heart so rent and spent.
What should I take the wretch home for,
Rage-crazed and dead with languishment?

*L. R. BURROWS*

# THE LADY OF THE HOUSE BREAKS DOWN

## I

I am afraid
The house is quiet for you
And this suburban boredom.

Be not afeared: the house is full of voices
And I afraid
Of morning
Dishes chattering manically at the sink
Washing that slobbered and sloshed through wash and rinse
Spinning breaks to a long high whine
Rending in every fibre;
They have quiet ones too
Gas with its sibylline hiss
Insinuates some wisdom not quite caught
For the shout of the two-timing clock
And the crack of the stove making dirty jokes
About spilt milk;
On chairs and tables
Poised for a sly-corner nudge in sentient ribs
A thin malicious giggle
Whispers the dustless face
And I afraid
Of night
The wind-dark garden reeling
To the shriek of the black bird clawed by the velvet cat
Waking to wailing
The child in the womb where no child is
Fluttering lost in the nightmare passage of time
Forever uncomforted
And I afraid

## II

Close my eyes
Against the clock
Which knows at what precise second,
Tick tock, tick tock,
The long-strained will, like spent elastic,
Quivered, sagged,
"Can't, can't, can't go on."

"I can go"
Said the heart,
"Metronome wise,
Tick, tock,
But lost my music years ago
Of not being heard,
Hush, hush."

Imagination, sour and spited,
Buzzed at the ear
"Here now, hear how
In cobweb silence
The night-bones rustle
From the world's dead corner
Unswept, unwept."

Fold my hands
Against the broom,
Close my eyes
Against the clock,
Stop my heart
Against the tears,
Drip, drop: tick, tock.

*JENNIFER STRAUSS*

## FELO DE SE

Yesterday, laughing, in another country
The season Spring,
I thought of you
A year since dead and buried—
Whom neither wit nor beauty,
Husband, child,
Duty nor even grief
Could bind to life—
And silenced, flinched before that dark.

I willed to write for you
With grace and quiet
An epitaph of classic light,
But now will not
Resign you so,
For still these tears are brimmed by rage
And I have heard my blood
Beat 'Traitor, traitor',
Against the dark—and you.

*JENNIFER STRAUSS*

# ABANDONING SHIP

Firstly, an appearance
must be preserved.
Saunter past the
passengers, hands in pockets,
look at the sky, whistle
if you can.
Let them think you
are carrying the lifejacket
almost accidentally. Perhaps
to have the stitching mended.

Let your officers do
likewise. On no account
interrupt the shuffleboard,
tennis, or any other deck-game.
Let the winches be greased
so the boat may be lowered
quietly, without
attracting any panic.

Thus, passenger morale
may be maintained
as long as possible.
Pumps should be started
as the last officer leaves.

It is suggested a tape
of inspirational music
preferably "Abide with me"
be relayed over the ship's
public-address system,
timed to begin
when the pumps fail
and the first
watertight bulkhead gives way.

Observation of these
instructions may ensure
an absence of disorder
at least until the keel
begins to swing
clear of the water, and thus
much that is best
in the traditions of the sea
may be preserved.

*HAL COLEBATCH*

B. E. Richardson

# THE IMAGE OF THE OUTSIDER IN THE WRITING OF MARY DURACK

In the context of Australian Literature, Mary Durack has had a significant, if unspectacular, career. As well as being the author of a number of children's books (some of which have been illustrated by her sister, Elizabeth), she is the author of three major works: *Keep Him My Country* (1955), a novel about relations between aborigines and whites in the Kimberley area of Western Australia, which is reminiscent of, and surely must have been influenced by, Katherine Susannah Prichard's classic, *Coonardoo*; *Kings in Grass Castles* (1959), which traces the history of her family from the time they left Ireland in the middle of the last century to the death of her grandfather, Patrick Durack the "cattle king", in 1898; and *The Rock and the Sand* (1969), which is an account of the early missionaries' attempts to bring Christianity to the natives of Western Australia.

In all of Mary Durack's "adult" writing, the consistent focus has been on the world of the outsider: the aborigine, the rebel Irish minority in *Kings* and the grudgingly-tolerated missionaries in *The Rock*. This consistent focus seems to be a function of her personal history and her Irish ancestry. *Kings* is a work which not only serves the intention of chronicling the Durack's pioneering ventures in three states; at another level it also suggests a desire to understand the formative past, to come to terms with an alien land and establish an identity. In fact, reading the work, one gains the impression that the last chapter rather than the first should have been entitled "Roots". Indeed, Mary Durack's underlying purpose in *Kings* is neatly summed up in Keith Sinclair's poem:

> "No people can possess a land,
> Where every single sod and stone is
> strange . . . ."

In the work she chronicles the integration of a country from the looseness of the soil, and in doing so establishes her own relationship with the land to which her ancestors had come as outsiders.

The same impulse to understand the past, and her family's relationship to their adopted country, also accounts for her abiding interest in the figure of the aborigine. Like the Duracks, the aborigine is a member of a minority group, but, unlike them, his life exemplifies a natural harmony with landscape, which makes his life-philosophy a function of the land itself. Thus, Mary Durack's interest in the aborigine is twofold: in the first place she sees him as a kindred spirit, one who is also an outsider because he is a member of a dispossessed minority group, who has been forced off the land is very much the same way as the Duracks themselves had in Ireland; in the second place she is captivated by the aborigine's capacity to live in tune with his environment, his religious beliefs one and indivisible with the country in which he walked.

In *Keep Him My Country*, a novel which is a strange amalgam of lyric beauty and didactic purpose, Miss Durack is concerned to point to the need for a spiritual harmony between man and nature, a harmony which, the novel states, the aborigines have acquired over generations of patient and unquestioning acceptance, and which the white man must acquire too, if he is to achieve fulfilment and integrity. In the novel, the country is represented in the figure of a

native girl, Dalgerie, who becomes a numinous figure, symbolizing the abiding qualities of the landscape. The young station owner, Stan Rolt, falls in love with her but, after an idyllic time together, she is reclaimed by the tribal law. Following her return to her own people, Rolt finds that even though he consciously wishes to leave the country, escape is impossible:

> "Even with the ache and heat of fever in his head ... it was clear now. The bonds which he had feared and fought had tightened beyond escape, but the hold was no longer irrational.... It was here that he knew he belonged by reason and right for the country knew him and had given him its heart." (*Keep Him My Country*, pp. 187-188.)

It is only when Rolt becomes reconciled to the fact that the mystic bond he has forged with the land through his relationship with Dalgerie is irrevocable, that he achieves a serenity and peace of mind which the other whites in the book do not possess. At the end of the book he is at one with the land.

But the other aspect of *Keep Him My Country*, and one which is not entirely happily domiciled in the larger artistic intentions of the work, is Miss Durack's concern to protest at the tribal dismemberment of the aborigine, which has forced him into a racial no-man's land, where the tribal law and the civilization of the invading whites are equally beyond his grasp. In the novel, the dilemma of the racial no-man's land is embodied in a number of aboriginal characters. At one point in the novel, the young aboriginal, Dickie, reflects on the meaninglessness of his initiation:

> "Not for him the slow unfolding of the mystical lore. He would never travel the secret ways of the forefathers, or find their magic emblems hidden in the sky...." (*Op. cit.*, p. 76.)

The aborigines, like the characters in many recent novels dealing with the theme of the assimilation of migrants to the mores of Australia,[1] are caught between two worlds. On the one hand, their primitive instincts often induce a passionate longing to return to the life of their forefathers, while the demands of European civilization, and its associated work-structure, increasingly prevent the possibility of satisfying this cogent, though inarticulate, need.

In *The Rock and the Sand* (1969), Miss Durack returns to the landscape of the Kimberleys to illuminate the problem of contact between "the people of the clock" and "the people of the dream". In this work, her sympathy for the aborigine and her Irish Catholicism are happily united in her preoccupation with "the outsider". The missionaries, who stepped onto a soil which was as alien to them as their morality was to the indigenes, are finally seen as heroic not because of their doctrines, but because of their self-sacrificing dedication to a set of ideals. Indeed, the aborigines, for whose beliefs Miss Durack shows a considerable sympathy, were often implicitly opposed to the individualistic bias of Christianity, and perpetually frustrated the early attempts at conversion.

The book moves through several abortive attempts to establish a mission, to the gradual development of the settlement to the present day. But underlying this is a strongly humanitarian theme which demonstrates how the mantle of the church, in spite of creed and doctrine, came to protect the aborigines from a treatment so callous that even from this point in time it is difficult to absorb its enormities. At the highest level, it is possible to view the work as being about two groups of outsiders who ultimately overcame their differences in belief in a common endeavour to make a way of life which was safe from the destructive inroads of the larger world.

In Mary Durack's writing, her sympathy for "the outsider"—the underdog—can finally be seen as the result of her personal history. The common bond linking the three works is the change of European personality to the demands of a new environment, not in any physical sense, but in the spiritual and moral. As a member of a minority group, she is concerned to explore her formative past with a view to establishing a harmony between culture and country such as she sees in the vanishing tribal life of the dispossessed inhabitants of this country. It is, perhaps, ironic that her forefathers should have contributed to the pattern of dispossession, although it makes her sympathy for the aborigine none the less deeply felt or real.

*B. E. RICHARDSON*

[1] There is a distinct thematic parallel with such novels as David Martin's *The Young Wife* and Judah Waten's *Alien Son*.

Dorothy Hewett

# POETS ALIVE

Alexander Craig (ed.): *Twelve Poets 1950-1970.* 253 pp. Qld.: Jacaranda Press, 1971. $2.95.

J. M. Couper: *The Book of Bligh.* 88 pp. Melbourne: University Press, 1969. $3.00.

Bruce Dawe: *Condolences of the Season.* 118 pp. Vic.: Cheshires, 1971. $1.95.

Grace Perry: *Two Houses.* 80 pp. N.S.W.: South Head Press, 1969. $3.50.

John E. Tranter: *Parallax.* 62 pp. N.S.W.: South Head Press, 1970. $1.00 (Poetry Australia/34).

Thomas W. Shapcott: *Inwards to the sun.* 87 pp. Qld.: University Press, 1969. $3.25.
*Fingers at Air.* n.p. Ipswich, Qld.: Privately printed, 1969. $3.00.

Robert Adamson: *Canticles of the Skin.* 40 pp. N.S.W.: Illumination Press, 1970. $2.45.

David Malouf: *Bicycle.* 60 pp. Qld.: University of Qld. Press, 1970. $1.00 (Paperback Poets/1).

Michael Dransfield: *Streets of the Long Voyage.* 77 pp. Qld.: University of Qld. Press, 1970. $1.00 (Paperback Poets/2).

Rodney Hall: *Heaven in a Way.* 61 pp. Qld.: University of Qld. Press, 1970. $1.00 (Paperback Poets/3).

J. S. Harry: *The Deer under the Skin.* 55 pp. Qld.: University of Qld. Press, 1971. $1.00 (Paperback Poets/6).

Peter Skrzynecki: *There, behind the Lids.* 32 pp. N.S.W.: Lyre-Bird Writers, 1970. $1.00.

Wilhelm Hiener: *William Street,* 32 pp. N.S.W.: Lyre-Bird Writers, 1970. $1.00.

Robert Gray: *Introspect, Retrospect.* 36 pp. N.S.W.: Lyre-Bird Writers, 1970. $1.00.

Tim Thorne: *Tense Mood and Voice.* 32 pp. N.S.W.: Lyre-Bird Writers, 1969. $1.00.
*What of Sane.* N.S.W.: Prism Poets, New Poetry, 1971. $1.00.

Does many a swallow make an Australian summer? It's a question that seems to worry the critics as the great rash of slimmer, slim, and thicker vols. of Aust. poetry proliferate.

It's all due, according to Dr K. L. Goodwin, Poetry Chronicle 1969-70, in *Meanjin*[1], to over-generous handouts from the C.L.F.

With novels almost impossible to sell, Dr Goodwin claims that the publishers have decided that "subsidized volumes of poetry may be a viable proposition".

Poetry published in Australia in 1970 doubled preceding years, and 1971 has also yielded a sizeable crop.

I cast my mind back, careful to remember that Sylvia Lawson in a review in *The Australian* of A & R's last "Australian Poetry" Anthology complained that so many Australian poets are inclined to nostalgia.

I remember that in the comparable pre- and post-war years how exciting it was to be young, and already published in the little magazines of the time, Flexmore Hudson's "Poetry" "Angry Penguins", the Jindyworobaks, and yes, *Meanjin.* The Jindyworobak's published paperback collections of promising new poets, William Hart-Smith, Paul Grano, Ingamells, Mudie, Victor Williams. We were influenced by Judith Wright's first collection, "The Moving Image", Kenneth Seaforth Mackenzie's "The Young Desire It", and Christina Stead's "Seven Poor Men of Sydney". We took sides over Ern Malley.

Why was the period comparable? Because there was a kind of poetic Renaissance in the

[1] K. L. Goodwin: Poetry Chronicle 1969-70. *Meanjin Quarterly,* Vol. 30, No. 3, 1971, pp. 361-365.

air then too. We were nearly all imagists (of a different kind perhaps), and we were trying to come to terms with suburbia and all the paraphernalia of our environment, jazz, the war, politics, aeroplanes, getting drunk ... the reality of NOW (then). Some of us mixed it with a kind of Aubrey Beardsley erotic romanticism.

I'm not suggesting that the poetry climate has gone full circle. The young poets now are tougher, they have more technical expertise, they take their environment for granted, which results in a casual rather than a declamatory style, but it's true, I think, that that early Renaissance helped to form some poetic gurus today, and ensured that many a swallow endured for more than one summer, and even survived through the dreary fifties.

Quantity is not necessarily a bad thing. It tends to create a climate of enthusiasm and intellectual stimulation, sadly needed by a one-armed bandit who takes Vincents still with confidence.

Dr Goodwin criticizes the "instant poetry" of the young poets, seeing it mainly as a collection of memoranda of a wild life in suburbia. Is this just data collecting, is it naive this verse for the here and now, or are these poets, by using the detailed stuff of life, hoping that an intrinsic picture of 1969-71 will emerge?

All we can believe in is the NOW ... a disposable art for a disposable culture, they seem to be saying. What we can touch, see, hear, is all we can say. We cannot believe past this, or more than this. Is it enough?

"I look at these poems submitted to Poetry Magazine and think of good old Blake who caught the Philistines—who call energy evil, destructive. Out of the mouths of madmen-babes", writes Robert Adamson, born Sydney 1944, one of the editors of "New Poetry", and praised for his first collection of "Canticles of the Skin" (1970). "How fecund is the marriage of maturity and vision?" Adamson asks in a series of rhetorical questions. "How hard must the poetic artery be? What's the reward for long and faithful service to the Poet Party? Even if it's frightening we're here uprooting ghost gums to know the slums of the city of men and women ... here we must learn to take bearings from within ourselves and quickly ... no time to spell out. Here we must learn to look hard and state our briefs pointedly. Now's the time for indignant questions.

"Now any failure has more to teach us, more than another minor, well-rehearsed success ..."[2]

The statements, the questions, are rhetorical, romantic, self conscious, self congratulatory, but they do reflect a demand to be taken seriously, to see poetry as a "profession", a way of living, and this *is* important. The problem for these young poets seems to be to extend the caught moment, to give it a universality, a context, and that is perhaps where the marriage of maturity and vision has relevance.

"What a heap of old rope has hung us up", says Adamson, "all this juiceless counsel about maturity of vision and expression."

But the kind of juicelessness he is condemning has not just been the province of the older generation of poets.

In 1966 Rodney Hall and Tom Shapcott wrote an introduction to their anthology "New Impulses in Australian Poetry", not published until 1968.

The aim of the anthology they said was to clarify the accomplishments of Australian poetry in breaking fresh ground, particularly since 1960. The anthology included "no poems of the accepted hierarchy". There was to be "no going back to previous assumptions and previous standards". Two years later Alexander Craig, editor of "12 Poets 1950-1970" makes this damning assessment of "New Impulses in Australian Poetry".

"The impulses in it are generally older ones, and the book's flavour on the whole is somewhere between mainstream and conservative compared with other English mainstream poetry."

Yet the only additions in Alexander Craig's anthology are Peter Porter, Michael Dransfield and Richard Tipping. He has excluded Evan Jones, Charles Higham, Geoffrey Lehmann, David Malouf, David Rowbotham, Vivien Smith, Andrew Taylor, John Croyston, Craig Powell, Tom Shapcott and Kath Walker (what on earth was she doing in Hall's Impulses?)

Craig makes a special point of regretting the exclusion of Evan Jones, J. M. Couper and

[2] Robert Adamson: ernie hates his pater and loves his mummy the black goddess/the slight jumps in syntax obscure the more blatant possible meanings. *The Poetry Magazine*, 1969, Vol. 17, No. 2, p. 3.

John E. Trantor, but his method is to use fewer poets than Hall and Shapcott, and give them greater coverage.

In a review of "New Impulses in Australian Poetry" written at the time by Robert Ward in Australian Book Review, Ward wrote:

"Perhaps the most outstanding features of this new poetry are its niceness and politeness. These poets never raise their voices either in love or outrage, but prefer rather simply to note a small irony here, a quaintness there, a slight unease of conscience, a satisfied chuckle. With neat forms and generally effective images, well behaved at all times, one sees that the new orthodoxy is also an old rank conservatism."[3]

Is it then all in the eye of the observer? Not only are today's revolutionaries tomorrow's establishment, as Tom Shapcott admitted in his article "Hold onto your Crystal Balls"... "It is no doubt chastening to realize by 1980 they (the new poets )will be well and truly considered the passé generation"[4]... but to some readers, today's "new directions" are "rank conservatives" already.

The editors of "New Impulses" and the Editor of "12 Poets" maintain that they do not and cannot seek to be objective. Their choices are individual, yet this does not explain why Alexander Craig chooses nine of the same poets as Shapcott and Hall, and yet seems to consider most of them "liberated traditionalists" in his own anthology, and mainstream and conservative in Hall and Shapcott's earlier anthology.

Perhaps the explanation lies in the fact that very few of the poems overlap. The great proportion of poems chosen by the poets themselves are quite different in "12 Poets", and I think it would be fair to say that, on the whole, they are livelier, and perhaps more experimental, if not in form, then in attitude.

This is Alexander Craig's point. He does not make the same large gestures as Shapcott and Hall. He is content to say that "some of the experimentation is unobtrusive". These are not experimental concrete, serialist or kinetic poets. He makes the important point that all the poets of the 1950's wrote "in the long shadow of Ern Malley" (mid 1944), and that the Malley hoax was not just directed at experimentation in Australian poetry, but against the new Apocalypse poets in England, the American modernists, Dylan Thomas, and even Eliot and Pound. The result was an inhibited, overcautious poetry in Australia, which, in my opinion, still acts as a straitjacket on poets who tend to distrust the large gesture, and use the neutral tone.

It is an atmosphere beautifully caught by Chris Wallace Crabbe in his "A Wintry Manifesto"... the stoic resignation, the shrunken neighbourhood

> "And what we drew on was not gold or fire,
> Not cross, nor cloven hoof about the pyre,
> But painful, plain contracted observations:
> The gesture of a hand, dip of a bough."

Thus Wallace Crabbe makes a virtue out of necessity, but knows that

> "a whole dimension
> Has vanished from the chambers of the mind."

One of the interesting aspects of "12 Poets" is that the dating of the poems enables us to see the development of the poet. One of the most noticeable changes is in the poetry of R. A. Simpson, who says, "I feel and hope, my poetry has moved from pre-occupations with formal neatness towards a kind of poetry that is more flexible". Simpson wants his poetry to be far more interesting in terms of form, and this takes him closer to the younger experimentalists, particularly in the poem "Being Demolished".

To me Bruce Dawe is also a poet of his own "wintry manifesto". At best his satire and his occasional tenderness has a good cutting edge, at worst it tends to be flat and banal as the suburbia he writes about. His poetry is often very disposable. It celebrates a newspaper headline or an item of news that loses relevance with the passage of time. Dawe wrote a satirical public poetry at a time when this genre was sadly lacking in Australia, but, in this anthology and particularly in his recent "Condolences of the Seasons" gathered from four collections, with nineteen new poems, it is possible to see Dawe's strengths and weaknesses, and to trace what seems to me to be a slackening off of tension and bite.

For me too Rodney Hall is one of those poets whose self-consciousness and icy self-control

[3] Robert Ward: Poetry. *Australian Book Review*. Vol. 7, No. 8, 1968, p. 165.

[4] Tom Shapcott: Hold onto your crystal balls or: Cocksure in the 70s. *Poetry Australia*, No. 32, 1970, p. 47.

sometimes result in a brutal strength, but more often chills with intellectuality, and lack of passion. He has gone on record as saying that he distrusts the large gesture.

He is enormously industrious and hard driving, having published six collections since 1961, and exercises a good deal of power in the poetry scene, through his job as a poetry editor of *The Australian*, where his policy is to deliberately encourage and publish the young and experimental.

The strongest poets in "12 Poets" are for me Francis Webb, Vincent Buckley, Gwen Harwood, and Randolph Stow. Sensuous, tingling alive, because the poetry has a muscular, straining intellectual control, Buckley has developed enormously in the last ten years. I agree with Alexander Craig that Gwen Harwood is the best woman poet in the country since Judith Wright. She manages too to walk that tightrope between passion and intellect. They run together and create her fascinating amalgam of autobiographical experience passionately recreated, but never allowed to be self-indulgent.

Randolph Stow is a romantic, who creates a regional landscape that extends into universality. His poetry is rich and sensuous, but he too controls his romanticism with a gentle self-mockery. He has a gift for satire, and a gift for the rhythmic cadence, which is not often used in modern Australian poetry. Many of the younger poets could learn a great deal from him, because he has managed to do what they in their plastic disposable world have been unable to do ... universalize experience.

Francis Webb's great, strange, surrealistic web of poetry is perfectly described in his own introductory note to his ten poems ... "I said, thinking of poetry and its range 'All beauty, all joy? Yes, and all pain and disfigurement'." Francis Webb, since he was "discovered" in the 40's has gone his own way, but he has had a central influence on serious poetry in Australia, and Michael Dransfield, who is only twenty-one, may come up from the "underground", but shares qualities with Webb, and perhaps with Stow. There is the same essentially romantic disturbed dark vision, the fantastic hallucinatory imagination, spoiled in the younger poet by posturing and attitudizing. Like all these younger poets Dransfield has a problem with the limitations of imagism. If you only have images how can you make images more exciting, mean more, tell more? In his first collection, "Streets of the Long Voyage", Dransfield is trying to fix random, broken images into patterns. There is a contemptuous isolation in his poems which is a long way from the tenderness of a Francis Webb, or the wry self-amusement of Stow. Self absorbed in his bric-a-brac Gothic world he is a rather frightening example of the end result of the romantic rebellion. He tries to control his extravagances by being coolly detached and rational about savage experiences. The result is a black comedy tone reminiscent of "Loot" or "Entertaining Mr Sloan", which has its limitations too.

"Among the mirrors, crystal palaces, tunnels
of unaccountable
reflections, images, baffled eyes
glimpse now and then some echoing
hint of reality. a month or two
of corridors and halls, passages, music
like the tracery of endless inventive
spiders who will involve me in their enchanted
scheme of poisons, prisons subtleties great
rococo
intricacies doubled by a looking
glass, trebled, endless and frozen in sight."
(Biographies. I Barcarolle)

Richard Tipping, born late in 1949, and co-editor of the underground Mok magazine, uses typographic innovations, headlines, concrete poetry, shapes like tears, humour, satire, radical politics, lyricism and irony. Alexander Craig chose these two young men as representative of the last three years in Australian poetry, and they do give a radically different flavour to the anthology.

Imagist ... romantic ... the two terms might just as easily have been used in praise or blame for the pre- and post-war young poets, before the chill set in ... and perhaps for the same reasons.

We were young ... we were almost as uneasy with the future as this generation. Therefore we too tended to believe only in the moment, the here and now, to grasp at the concrete image, smell, see, hear, touch the world, prove it on our senses, and, because we were young, sensuously identify. We too became radical, social, public in our responses.

J. S. Harry (Jan Harry), the Sydney poet, and contemporary of Dransfield and David Malouf, has described the credo of the new

imagists in her review of David Malouf's collection "Bicycle".[5]

She sees Malouf's poems as "full of the details of a person's living, salt, sandgrit, sun, galoshes and angels". A number of poems "present their world through a steady build up of objects. It is a world that can be seen, felt, heard and consequently one that can be readily entered into ... the surface is crowded with small sharp or bright details that create a kind of tapestry weave".

If you put "12 Poets 1950-1970" beside the pleasantly produced and economical Paperback Poets, the useful, just as cheap, but not so attractive Lyre-Bird Writers, plus Robert Adamson's "Canticles of the Skin", you'll give yourself a crash course in Australian poetry now, and probably be pleasantly surprised at its diversity, energy and potential.

And what comforts and sustains me is that in spite of their brashness, posturing, clumsy derivatives, uneasy rhetoric and deliberately limited vision, the young now are better poets than we were, there are more of them and, apparently, they have a bigger audience than just themselves.

The student revolution has more fish to fry than straight politics. Perhaps one of their greatest strengths is that they refuse to separate the components of living. Poetry is a kind of demonstration too, against the philistines, and admass culture; a great raid on the inarticulate by a generation brainwashed by McLuhanism.

In a country like this it's doubly important, where the tribe's dialect is overdue for a big dose of purification.

[5] J. S. Harry: Bicycle and other Poems [by] David Malouf. *Poetry Magazine*, 1970, Vol. 18, No. 6, p. 49.

---

# DEATH BY WATER

On the first day he floated face down, hair
spread fanwise. Shrimps caroused and in the swell
and heave of waves a ring fell from one finger.

On the second day his face
was blue and swollen, its expression more
childish, more petulant. The skin around the mouth
was coming loose, and pulled by little fish.

On the third and fourth, it passed
into smooth babyhood.
Eyes, hair and skin were gone. Below
the head the body floated out
in bursting bluish rags and dullish bones
that swayed and wavered with the tides.

Upon the fourteenth day the skull remained
attached to half a spine
and half a set of ribs.
Thus, on the fifteenth day, at a fishing
village of red nets, blue sky, old women,
goats,
Phlebas the Phoenician came to land.

*HAL COLEBATCH*

# FROM THE SURVIVAL MANUAL

As you leave your cave
be sure you offer
your competitor
no chance.

He will probably be
as frightened of you
as you are of him.

A burning branch
may drive him back,
or he may be scared off
by a brandished club.

As a last, and most
atrocious resort
you may use
a sharp stone
to break his glasses.

If you can stomach
doing this
he can then be used
as sport for your
children who, with something
else to use
their teeth and claws on
may for a while
stop casting sidelong glances
from eyes slipping like mercury
under their shaggy hair
at your
white belly
and scrawny limbs.

*HAL COLEBATCH*

# REVIEWS

Keneally, Thomas, *A Dutiful Daughter*. London, 1971. 183 p. $3.95.

Keneally's last three novels, which form a natural group, all deal with the situation of a man wanting freedom from a person or institution, but without the will to take the freedom which is always available to him. The person or institution has strong matriarchal qualities, and is loved as much as hated: loved for the protection and exemption from responsibility that it affords the man, but hated for the manacles with which it holds him. Holy *Mother* Church is such an institution in *Three Cheers for the Paraclete*, and Maitland is such a man. The two Leemings are, for different reasons, each such a person in *The Survivor*, and Ramsay is such a man. In *A Dutiful Daughter* it is the matriarchal Irish Catholic family that is the institution, with Barbara Glover at its head, and Damian is the man wanting a freedom he will not take. Because it dealt with life in religion, a life that Keneally had thought of espousing, *Three Cheers* may have seemed to be the central Keneally novel, but that place is occupied now by *A Dutiful Daughter*, which deals directly with the kind of family and cultural background that have determined Keneally's interests. A concern with religion, whether on the part of author or reader, is necessarily a concern with secondary causation, for it takes account only of the moral and rational sides of mankind, leaving out the more basic emotional side.

In the relationship between the matriarchal person or institution and her son, there are distinct Oedipal overtones. There is a sort of marriage between mother church and her sons. Ramsay in *The Survivor* is doubly haunted by his adultery with the older Belle Leeming and by his part in the death of Stephen Leeming, a Laius figure. Damian Glover has sex with his sister Barbara, who is the real mother of the family, having infantile parents and brother dependent on her strength. These Oedipal implications are in themselves enough to induce strong guilt in the man. In addition, guilt is heightened in Maitland and Damian by their dependence, which involves an abdication from the adulthood that their self-respect would demand of them. But the Oedipal relationship and the infantile dependence cannot easily be renounced, for they cater to the man's need for a strong, protective mother figure. That is why Maitland cannot leave the Church in *Three Cheers*, and that is also why Damian will not take the freedom offered him at the end of *A Dutiful Daughter*: the adult male role is too frightening for them. In the final sentence, we see Damian "crying for his remarkable sister". The novel is essentially about Damian, and not about the dutiful Barbara of the title, or even about their parents transformed into half-bovine form. Through the title and the sensational aspect of the Glovers' transformation, Keneally is trying to conceal the fact that he is still writing much the same novel as before, about a weak man seeking a freedom that he does not anyway fully want, and plagued with guilt at his weakness.

Although Damian is a figure without a clear role or a concept of a role for himself, he stands at the centre of the novel. Barbara's problems are certainly a valid subject for study in themselves, but they are skimmed over, and our interest in her ends with her death. And the parents' transformation into half-animal form does not mean that the novel is to be read as a fable or an allegory—nothing in the novel supports such a reading. Their metamorphosis is simply a symbolic representation of the montrousness of parents who fail to prepare their daughter for a crucial stage in life, her first menstruation, and who are quite incapable of dealing with the situation even when confronted by it. For Barbara and her young brother, who have waked the night through in terror, the experience is traumatic. The Glovers' transformation takes place appropriately at this time, and expresses appropriately Keneally's hatred of such parents. They transmit to their children the concept of anything connected with sex or physicality as filthy and shameful—which may well be why Damian views with disgust the symbols of their adult sexuality, his father's twelve inch penis and his mother's "dreadful udders". Not Barbara or the half-animal Glovers occupied Keneally's chief attention, but Damian, the survivor, left "In the awful tower of his freedom", a freedom that is theoretical only.

*A Dutiful Daughter* is the slimmest of Keneally's novels, probably because he is trying

here to control certain features which have drawn down criticism upon him in the past. Chief among these are a too great concern with theological content and an overpreoccupation with the theme of obsessive guilt. Keneally has curtailed treatment of these two elements in *A Dutiful Daughter*, but he is unable to eliminate them altogether. Theological elements enter through the treatise on sexual morality read by Barbara and through the notion shared by Barbara and her mother of being marked out for special destiny, the one as a kind of Joan of Arc, the other as a sufferer for humankind. The obsessive guilt in Keneally's characters is probably one of the most irritating features of his novels, especially in the repetitious *The Survivor*. Its main manifestation in *A Dutiful Daughter* is Barbara's belief that she may be responsible for her parents' transformation and so bear the mark of the beast. A checkup with the doctor does not help to dispel her obsession, for although she is pronounced physically normal, she feels she knows otherwise: "there were marks and marks, Barbara knew."

Because they are sharply curtailed in their treatment, the theological and obsessive elements are not well incorporated into the novel. It could be a sad comment on the parents that Barbara should so lack her own concept of sexuality as to have to read a theological treatise on the subject (whose teachings she flouts anyway), but Keneally does not indicate that he intends such a comment; indeed, he does not give any clue as to why he introduces the treatise at all. And the notion of being marked out for a special destiny could fit in with Keneally's wider theme of the lack of choice of a personal destiny; but again he provides no clue to his reason for playing with this notion. The idea of the mark of the beast is also dropped after Barbara's visit to the doctor, even though Barbara herself is not reassured. One of the irritating aspects of this book is that theological or superstitious concepts are raised by Keneally to be pooh-poohed, one feels, yet are allowed to linger, to obsess characters and perhaps also their creator. The end of the novel is a good instance of this: after Keneally has Barbara argue a persuasive case in theological terms for justified suicide by herself and her parents, he dispenses them all from the necessity of suicide by drowning them in the floodwaters. From a guilt that cannot be alleviated by knowledge of fact or by theological condonation, what freedom, either for author or character, is possible?

Keneally is in fact not so much an institutional novelist, as he has been called (by Michael Wilding in *Southerly*, No. 1 (1969), p. 72), as an obsessional novelist. His novels take place somewhat out of normal time, in a world that is geographically isolated and circumscribed. This world, time-free and remote, is appropriate to his expressions of obsessive guilt, for guilt is unaffected by passage of time or change of locale. It is also an appropriate background for the depiction of ingrown relationships, like that of Barbara and Damian. *Three Cheers* takes place in a seminary; *The Survivor* takes place in a remote rural university and in Antarctica; and *A Dutiful Daughter* is set in the northern rivers area of N.S.W. where the Glovers have no near neighbours. *The Survivor* exists largely out of time, for one hardly gets an impression of the characters ageing over some forty years; in *A Dutiful Daughter*, too, time is blurred so that the events of fifteen years or seven months ago are as vivid as the events occurring in the present.

As in his previous works, Keneally is more interested in the state of mind or conscience of his characters, or in contests between characters, than in the broad sweep of characterization. Characterization is not his forte; like his own characters, he sees intensely within a narrow field. Again, confinement of range goes hand in hand with obsessiveness in Keneally. He does excel at contests between characters. Between men, the clashes are not so violent, and Keneally often manages them wittily and with keen insight. Between a man and a woman they are sometimes amusing (as between Denis Leeming and Ella Ramsay after the play in *The Survivor*), sometimes embarrassing (as between Maurice and Celia at the airport in *Three Cheers*); they always involve the discomfiture or humiliation of the man. Between women, the contests are nakedly violent (as between Barbara and Helen in *A Dutiful Daughter*). Keneally has less tolerance of women than of men, and does not in fact handle women characters well: he has the dubious distinction of containing within his pages the largest gallery of bitches within Australian fiction. Mostly they are the aggressive

kind, like Celia or Ella, spoiling for a fight; but sometimes they are simply bossy and domineering, like Helen here. Let us in particular not overlook the barmaid Mrs Placer in this novel, who manages in spite of her very brief appearance to win my vote for Australia's fictional Bitch of the Year. Not that Keneally's men are much better than his women: they are for the most part weak and ineffectual, haunted, guilt-ridden characters who would rather writhe in their situation than try to free themselves from it. Damian would not have freed himself from either Barbara or Helen by his own choice or action; and even Barbara's death does not release him emotionally, for in the final sentence we see him longing for Barbara's protectiveness.

Keneally is the first important Irish Catholic novelist to appear in Australia. The depiction of that culture, however, is already long established in Ireland itself and in the U.S., and it is the literature of those countries that sheds light on the culture depicted by Keneally in this novel. From the works of authors like Joyce and O'Casey in Ireland, and O'Neill, George Kelly, F. D. Gilroy, and William Alfred in the U.S., one recognizes familiar patterns in Keneally's latest novel, simply translated into an Australian environment. In particular one recognizes the matriarchal setup already mentioned, the overwhelming sex guilt, and the unusual vehemence in that culture.

Among Western cultures, the Irish is conspicuous for its deep sense of sex guilt. It is sex guilt that prevents the Glovers from having mentioned menstruation to Barbara, and that leads the mother to regard even her question about her bleeding as dirty: "'All right, all right', the mother shouted. 'Don't talk filthy'." The guilt that the Glovers feel over any sexual activity continually propels them to acts of violence. So Mr Glover kills with an axe a newborn calf that could be his own offspring, and drowns a young heifer after intercourse with her, both out of guilt for his sexual activities. Barbara slugs Frederic after oral sex with him, no doubt out of her guilt; perhaps she would have felt still guiltier had she engaged in conventional intercourse. Damian thinks of intercourse as "bursting ramhood" and as physically damaging to the woman ("You might crack her spine or crush her ribcage"); he is accordingly racked by guilt afterwards, even though Helen had presented herself at his bedside. Sex in *A Dutiful Daughter* is a one-time experience, disagreeable and weighed down by guilt. Both Barbara and Damian feel obligated to marry their sexual partner, and their partners seem to share this ethic, since Frederic proposes to Barbara and Helen visits Damian's home to stake her claim on him. Sex guilt in this novel is evidently a common problem.

There has always been a vehement quality to Keneally's novels. *A Dutiful Daughter* is vehement to the point of violence, both physical and emotional. Apart from the violence connected with sex, there are further violent incidents like Barbara's vicious spilling of boiling water over the fat girl's arms and the equally violent retaliation by that girl's mother, the death of the truck driver, the beating up of Frederic and Damian in the hotel, the fight between Barbara and Helen over Damian, and the intended suicide pact near the end. None of this violence is counterbalanced by love. One is not convinced that the relationship between Barbara and Damian is love: it is more an alliance born of their isolation and their inability to relate to the world outside their own family.

Keneally is one of the finest novelists presently writing in Australia; over the last decade his work, especially in *Three Cheers*, has surpassed that of Patrick White written in the same period. One admires Keneally's tremendous intelligence, his wit, his well-shaped style, his keen insight into power and personality clashes within a hierarchical setup. But one also deplores the fact that he thrives on clashes and does not deal with more productive personal relationships. There are few sympathetic characters in his novels: his women are appalling and his men feckless. His range of characters and themes is limited. He is still writing much the same novel, the chief difference being that *A Dutiful Daughter* finally deals with what most haunts him, the Irish Catholic family that forges well-nigh unbreakable manacles upon those born into it. In his earlier work, Keneally has dealt with disguised versions of this story; now that he has dealt with it directly, one hopes that he will let his obsession go and turn to a new range of character and theme congenial to his impressive talents.

*JOHN B. BESTON*

Lancelot Giles, *The Siege of the Peking Legations, a Diary*. Edited, with Introduction, *Chinese Anti-Foreignism and the Boxer Uprising*, by L. R. Marchant. Foreword by Sir Robert Scott. University of Western Australia Press, 1971. Price: $A9.60.

As Sir Robert Scott comments, in his foreword to this publication, the Boxer movement in China, culminating in the siege of the Peking Legations in 1900, has been the subject of considerable scrutiny by Sinologists and others. Indeed, the admirably thorough bibliography compiled by the editor of the Giles diary bears witness to this interest, while incidentally demonstrating that few major studies of the topic have been published since 1910.

This being so, one is led to ponder as to the utility of yet another published account of the siege of the Peking Legations, even if unexpurgated. However, this reviewer concurs with Sir Robert's statement that the Giles diary is, in fact, "a document worth publishing for its own intrinsic merits". On the other hand, *pace* Sir Robert, the Giles diary does not seem to be "an appropriate peg on which to hang a study of anti-foreignism".

As the editor stresses, this particular diary is one of the few accounts by a British official. The bibliography indicates that about a dozen other accounts of the siege itself, as distinct from the Boxer crisis in general, were published by persons directly involved, including several other British participants. The Giles diary itself was originally published in expurgated form in 1900, by the *Christ College Magazine*, Cambridge.

Although Lancelot Giles was a comparatively inexperienced Student Interpreter in the British Consular Service, having been stationed in Peking for only a year, he was certainly a highly alert, vigorous and intelligent young man, and a keen observer of events. Again, as a son of the famous Sinologist Herbert Giles, to whom the diary was addressed in letter form, Lancelot possessed background knowledge in excess of that normally associated with a youthful Student Interpreter. On the other hand, neither the father's erudition nor his sympathy for the Chinese was transmitted to the son.

The diary unquestionably contains a wealth of interesting and often amusing comment on the actions, attitudes and personal characteristics of the principal actors in the siege on the allied side. Thus, the Russian defenders are described as "over eager to shoot at anything and everything on suspicion"; the French Minister, Pichon, is termed "a poltroon"; the Japanese are "undoubtedly the best soldiers"; the Germans are "too reckless and expose themselves too much over the barricades"; the "lack of discipline" among the Americans is "astounding". Giles also notes the general dissensions between the various allied commanding officers, with "the French and the Russians being worst in this respect". All in all, one can readily appreciate that publication of the unexpurgated version would not have been welcome to the British government in 1900.

The contents of the diary also throw considerable light upon the nature of Giles' own personality, and on the extreme brutality, xenophobia and racism manifested on both sides during the siege. In his robust, no-nonsense, Kiplingesque approach to the crisis, Giles displayed attitudes fairly typical of British 'China hands' of the late Victorian era. His conception of appropriate diplomatic behaviour, together with his considerable physical courage, is indicated by an incident at the outset of the siege, when Giles, accompanied by a fellow Student Interpreter, encounters Chinese looters at the race-course: "We charged them [on horseback] and scattered them right and left." At another point, Giles proudly relates his success in instructing Chinese 'coolies' in the use of a chain in passing buckets of water, adding: "I am a very good organiser of Chinese coolies for this sort of work, being able to trot out some language that makes them sit up."

Giles's profound distrust of and contempt for the Chinese is made manifest in the diary, and again it should be stressed, in all fairness to him, that this attitude was quite typical in Peking, and, of course, not unprovoked by the Chinese, particularly the pro-Boxer faction at court. Throughout the diary, the methods of disposing of Chinese prisoners are retailed with no apparent qualms, and, indeed, implied approval. Thus, for example, an incident in which twenty Chinese were captured at the French Legation:

> "Three were shot, but then the French corporal, suggesting it would not do to waste so many precious rounds, killed fifteen with his bayonet. Two were kept to be examined."

Again, Giles relates how three Chinese prisoners were cross-examined, "but their answers were so self-contradictory that they were shot". On the other hand, he stresses that there can be no question of the allies surrendering, "seeing what barbarians the Chinese are", an understandable comment, certainly, but nevertheless somewhat incongruous when placed beside the aforementioned incidents.

Further revealing evidence as to the foreigner's attitude toward the Chinese is afforded by Giles's comments on looting by allied soldiers and diplomats. Thus, on returning from one such expedition, he states: "Much better we should get it than the Chinese who were there looting everything they could lay their hands on." Later, he reports that, "Everyday, looting parties go out and get what they can. I have done some splendid looting already".

Despite the considerable privations involved, Giles was undoubtedly in his element during the siege, whether commenting on the virtues of "ponymeat" ("not at all bad, rather like beef"), or pondering over the similarities between the Peking siege and the earlier heroic exploits of the British at Lucknow ("about half the lines in Tennyson's poem apply equally well here").

In all, then, the diary itself is a fascinating document, of considerable interest both to the Sinologist and to the undergraduate student seeking to 'get the feel of' an important incident in Chinese history. Again, on perhaps another plane, the diary could also be enjoyed by the layman, whose appetite may have been whetted by a certain Hollywood production, starring David Niven, Charlton Heston and Ava Gardner.

Turning to the introduction, which is, in fact, much longer than the diary, the qualms which this reviewer wishes to express relate not to the standard of scholarship displayed, which is of high quality, but rather to the format and the nature of the task attempted.

As a specialist in the Kuang Hsu period, the editor is well equipped to annotate and introduce the Giles diary, and to relate it to the background events in China, whether military or diplomatic. Indeed, his discussion of the events immediately preceding and accompanying the siege is lucid and incisive. In particular, the judgments expressed as to the tactics, abilities and personalities of certain of the chief diplomatic actors are most apt, and are often enhanced by a dry sense of humour.

This reviewer would agree with the editor's judgment that, "there is no need to go far back into the history of the movement, as home historians do, to understand the Boxers at the end of the nineteenth century". This being so, it might have been wise to confine the introduction to an exposition of the immediate origins of the Boxer phenomenon, together with the resultant clash between the Chinese court and the foreign powers. This might have permitted a slight expansion of some of the excellent material contained in the latter two-thirds or so of the introduction.

It is not implied here that the early part of the introduction, dealing with Chinese anti-foreignism and Western attitudes to China, and with the prelude to the Boxer crisis is of no value. On the contrary, the material is well-chosen, and the argument is lucid and systematically presented. In essence, the problem referred to here is illustrated by the fact that the writer is compelled to dispose of the whole complex topic of Chinese anti-foreignism and its Western counterpart in some twelve pages, with a further fourteen pages devoted to the specific manifestations of Chinese anti-foreignism in the late nineteenth century.

At one point in the introduction, the writer indicates that he is aware of the problems involved in attempting to use the Giles diary as a "peg" on which to hang a scholarly and thorough study of Chinese anti-foreignism, when he comments:

> "There is no need to trace and describe the whole course of anti-foreignism in China in order to understand the Boxer Uprising. That would take far too long and in any case the Boxers rose in the midst of special circumstances."

Sir Robert Scott is quite right in pointing out that very little scholarly work has been done on the topic of Chinese anti-foreignism. He may or may not also be correct when he implies close similarities between the Boxers and the Red Guards of the 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution'. (This reviewer would certainly require chapter and verse on that particular point.) In any case, a detailed examination of Chinese anti-foreignism, taking in this and other comparative studies, would be most welcome.

Again, there appears to be ample room for a further major study dealing with the Boxer crisis itself, with particular reference to the domestic policies and factionalism of the Chinese court, and the diplomatic policies and rivalries between the foreign powers in China at the time. It would be churlish to complain that Marchant has not produced either of these major studies, when such was not his intention in introducing the Giles diary. However, in performing that task, he demonstrates that he is suitably equipped to engage in either or both of these major research projects, and it is this reviewer's hope that he may do so.

*R. P. L. HOWIE*

W. E. Giles, *A Cruise in a Queensland Labour Vessel to the South Seas*. D. Scarr (ed.), A.N.U. Press, 1968. 124 pp. with 4 plates. $5.00.

By far the greater part of work written on the history of the Pacific area has viewed the area in grandiose terms tinged with romantic and moralistic ideals. The range of such works extends from the rather formal *Western Invasion of the Pacific and its Continents* at the serious academic end to the provocative but more journalistic approach of *The Fatal Impact* at the paperback end. The common denominator is an awed preoccupation with the seemingly irresistible momentum of the expansion of advanced European technology. The common reaction is outrage at the arrogance exhibited by the members of the superior European civilization.

This view is not without historical precedent. In the middle of the eighteenth century Europeans knew very little of life in the Pacific but the philosophical concept of "the noble savage" was becoming a fashionable device in the salons of Europe as the age of the enlightenment grew to maturity. Early explorers in the Pacific—Wallis, Bougainville, and Cook—reported the most obvious attributes of the societies they saw: the absence of industrial technology along with the absence of clothes. This was the stuff of high romance. Treasure Island had receded as expansion had rolled back the limits of the known world, but the dream finally came to rest in the South Seas. It was coincidence that Cook should spend so much time on one of the most attractive of the South Sea islands at a time when that island was in its most tranquil state. Tahaiti confirmed the philosophes' claim that European society had degraded the simple virtues of man. The murder of Cook jolted the dream as nothing else could.

The only answer possible in the intellectual *milieu* of Europe at the time was that European society had reached even into the South Seas and contaminated the noble savage. Stories began to filter back to Europe as the numbers of traders, explorers and whalers in the South Seas increased, and the descriptions of depravity shocked the sensitive. On the other hand the information disseminated by the mission societies and humanists to gain support for their work tended to dwell on the blacker side of the native cultures. Popular opinion was offended by the accounts of brutality by the white man who should have known better. It became the fashion, indeed still is, to regard the peoples of the Pacific islands as the innocent and child-like victims of the avaricious and brutal Europeans; sometimes reacting to this invasion with force but inevitably succumbing to its momentum. The caricature of the bigoted missionary systematically destroying all that was pure and simple in the native cultures is only a slightly more recent construction. The island peoples are pitied for their lost virtue while the Europeans are held accountable for the introduction of original sin.

Thus far, the work done has been in the scale of multitudes. Generalizations and sweeping statements have been made and perpetuated. High-sounding accusations and moral judgements have been made and perpetuated. It is now time to view the area, not as a macrocosm but as a microcosm, to view individual traders, missionaries, chiefs, travellers, teachers and other individuals, native and foreign, who played a significant part in the area. This is being done to a large extent by the Department of Pacific History in the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University. In this volume by Giles and in other companion volumes to be published soon* is an attempt to present the man-to-man aspect of history against which all the generalizations must ultimately be weighed in the balances. History at eyeball level.

* There has been a gap of three years in the production of the Pacific History Series for which Giles's journal is the second work. There are several books in the pipeline but no publication dates are available from the A.N.U. press at the date of writing. The projected works are:

Giles's journal of his trip in the labour ship *Bobtail Nag* throws light, by way of comment from "an ordinary character", on an episode in the history of Queensland and the South Western Pacific which is clouded by vituperation and emotion. As is stated on the jacket, "the narrative of W. E. Giles is the fullest and least biased account of a voyage in a labour recruiting vessel which is known to exist".

It was not easy to remain unbiased about the labour trade in Queensland in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. On the one hand the continued existence of the cane growers was at stake. On the other hand the weight of urban middle and working class opinion was brought to bear in public debate for the abolition of the trade. The debates in the Queensland legislature on the *Pacific Islands Labourers Act* of 1880 illustrate well the spectrum of opinion as well as the plight of the kanakas themselves, caught as they were between two extreme views, facing a serious mortality rate and harsh working conditions with few legal safeguards. In 1877, when Giles wrote, the mortality rate among the islanders was 51.11 per 1000 as against the state-wide average of 14.64 per 1000 (Qld P.D. Vol. XXXII, p. 350). Although the political tension generated by the problems of kanaka labour did not reach a peak until a decade after Giles wrote, the excesses of emotion were certainly in evidence. To most of the population the Pacific islanders were ranked on a par with the Chinese and Japanese as enemies of the Australian utopia. Yet they were preferred to the Indian coolie. The *Wide Bay and Burnett News* of 5th August 1882 claimed

> ... the Papuans would be far more desirable temporary colonists than the Coolies as permanent residents, and this we freely acknowledge, on the principle that it is better to live with a devil you do know than a devil you don't ...

The emotional aspects of the problem were cemented into Queensland politics by Griffith's liberal party which was formed largely around the platform of abolition of the labour trade. Griffith could do little in the 1870's as the landed interests in the Queensland parliament were too strong, but with victory at the polls over the McIlwraith conservatives in 1883 Griffith was given his chance. A Royal Commission inquired into all aspects of the trade in 1884. Legislation followed, born along on a wave of popular urban indignation, providing for the demise of the trade by 1890. However, as is often the case with shibboleths, the abolitionist propaganda had taken control of the liberals to the point where it was not politically expedient to adhere to a balanced judgement on the issue. Suffice it to say that Griffith was forced to reverse his stand in 1892 and allow the trade to continue until it was abolished by the Commonwealth Parliament in 1901 in return for a subsidy on sugar cane—a subsidy which is paid to this day.

In the midst of all this Giles, on holiday in Rockhampton, had his attention drawn to one of the labour ships as he wandered along the quay. He had known kanakas on the sheep stations of the interior and decided on the spur of the moment to make "a voyage in the vessel and see the mysteries of the trade for himself". After persuading the owners that he was not a press reporter he was accepted for the voyage in return for a contribution of 30 guineas towards her expenses. As a result of the voyage, which lasted 18 weeks, Giles saw and recorded most aspects of the labour trade and a great deal of the life of the people of the New Hebrides group. His observations are detailed and show a keen interest in all aspects of the voyage. It is evident that Giles actively pursued every opportunity which presented itself to him, and indeed created many others by his own initiative and sense of enquiry. His own preconceptions do come through his writing in a definite fashion and the log is not without inaccuracies. However, Scarr has paralleled Giles's account with other accounts and material, most especially the official log of Arthur Nixon, the government agent assigned to the *Bobtail Nag*. The result is somewhat

---

D. Shineburg, *Trading Voyages of Andrew Cheyne: An Account of Voyages in the Western Pacific 1841 to 1844.*

G. Denning (ed.), *The Marquesan Journal of Edward Roberts, 1796 to 1806.*

Ian Diamond (ed.), *The Fijian Diary and Narratives of Edwin J. Turpin.*

P. France (ed.), W. Cary, *Wrecked in the Feejees.*

S. H. Riesenberg (ed.), J. F. O'Connell, *A Residence of Eleven Years in New Holland and the Caroline Islands.*

In the interim, however, the press has produced a major work for all interested in the Western Pacific in the form of:

J. W. Davidson and Deryck Scarr, *Pacific Island Portraits*, A.N.U. Press, 1970, $6.50.

A review of this work will appear in the next issue of *Westerly*.

akin to a comparative table of the synoptic gospels. The additional information is provided in copious footnotes and errors are noted and corrected. The combination of footnotes and Giles's account results in a combination which affords a great deal of detailed information while not impinging on Giles's own very readable style.

To set the context of Giles' account is thirty-odd pages of introduction by Scarr discussing aspects of the trade in which he shows the *Bobtail Nag* along with the three score other ships engaged in the trade during the period. He shows the New Hebrides in the context of the Pacific area and especially in its relation to Fiji which he is eminently qualified to comment upon, having published *Fragments of Empire: A History of the Western Pacific High Commission, 1877-1914*, A.N.U. Press, 1967. He discusses the merits and defects of other journals and accounts concerning the trade and comments on Giles's faults and quirks of observation. It is a pity that Scarr does not extend his introduction to cover in greater detail the political situation in Queensland along with the other factors such as the annexation of New Guinea, the White Australia Policy and the cessionist movement in North Queensland which were in various ways connected to the labour trade. Perhaps the feeling was that these subjects were touched upon by works such as G. C. Bolton *A Thousand Miles Away*, Jacaranda Press, 1963, and J. D. Legge, *Australian Colonial Policy*, Angus and Robertson, 1956. Nevertheless it would have enhanced an already informative production to have included greater detail of the Queensland background which so obviously had great influence on the way Giles viewed the trade, disinterested as he undoubtedly was. This, however, does not detract from the value of Giles's journal in its own right. The editorial work of Scarr has augmented this and produced a useful package deal in social history.

*B. N. PRIMROSE*

# THE HALF CHILDREN SOMEWHERE IN ME

the girls
will have rain for hair spray
the boys
will smell like fresh cut grass
both will wildly throw
smashed confetti seashells
run naked
and dance
our yellow spotted failures,
and when they are called
to make some justification
for their outrageous lives,

they will laugh loudly
turn around and fall dead.

cellophane and suitcases
mud sun leaves and beer
buildings and guts.
they will be everything
I am not.

*TOY DORGAN*

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

Abraham Lincoln,
25 March 1864.

**KEMPTON, MORRILL & CO.**

R.E.I.W.A.

**REAL ESTATE AGENTS**

176B HAMPDEN ROAD, HOLLYWOOD

**86 4819**

**86 7483**

who are happy to extend their best wishes for the continuing success of "Westerly".

*westerly* is published by the University of Western Australia Press, set in Times type-face and printed by Alpha Print Pty Ltd, Perth, W.A.


SWAN
LAGER
EMU
Bitter
BEER
SWAN
SPECIAL
DRAUGHT
BEER
SWAN
DRAUGHT
EMU
EXPORT LAGER

# Beer is Best